

## **Turning Schoenberg Inside Out: The Representation of Inner Thoughts Expressed Outwards in Schoenberg's Opus 35, no. 1**

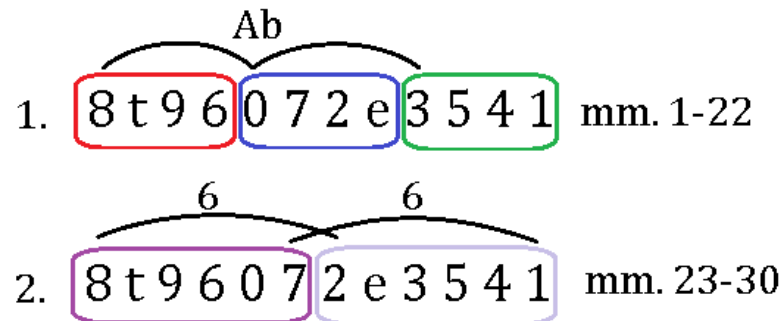
### **Introduction**

Arnold Schoenberg's opus 35, a set of six pieces for male choir, involves an expression of several philosophical subjects: the texts for "Das Gesetz," and "Ausdrucksweise" (mov. 2–3) are ontological in nature, juxtaposing natural laws against the idea of miracles<sup>i</sup> and considering whether one can truly understand their place in the world;<sup>ii</sup> "Glück" (mov. 4) follows the ideas of Schopenhauer, presenting happiness as something that is either unattainable or, at most, fleeting;<sup>iii</sup> finally, "Landsknechte," and "Verbundenheit" (mov. 5–6) deal with ethics<sup>iv</sup> and utilitarianism.<sup>v</sup> The first movement ("Hemmung"), whose text deals with the difficulty of accurately communicating inner thoughts, sets the stage for the rest of the philosophical work. The idea of inner thoughts being expressed outward is reflected in Schoenberg's organizational choices, as he repeatedly shifts the middle tetrachord (order numbers 5,6,7, and 8) of his chosen 12-tone row to the outsides (beginnings and endings) of statements.

### **Structure of "Hemmung"**

The row utilized by Schoenberg is not presented clearly and in a contiguous manner until mm. 23–24, at which point it appears in the second bass. Yet, it is clear by the partitioning of pitch classes that the entire movement deals with the same permutation of the row; in other words, the complexity of the work is not derived from transformations of a row as seen in a matrix, but by the reorganization of the tetrachords and hexachords within the prime row. Figure 1 shows these partitions, and the colors that I will use to diagram them. It is notable that the first

itches of each tetrachord form an Ab triad, while the outer limits of the hexachords form tritones:



*Figure 1*

The Ab triad is projected into mm. 1–15 from the tetrachords, as shown in Figure 2. The section controlled by hexachords (mm. 23–30) at first brings out the tritones inherent in them, taking both an outer and inner pitch (8 and 2, or 7 and 1); however, as the piece concludes, the dyads brought out are 8 and 1, followed by 7 and 2. So, the piece concludes with a movement inwards, from the outer limits of the row to the center pitches. This information is shown in my annotated score with green circles (not connected to the use of green in mm. 1–22).

Considering the use of tetrachords versus hexachords, it seems that the movement divides into two parts: Measures 1–22, which partition the row into three tetrachords; and mm. 23–30, which partition the row into two hexachords. However, an additional structural division can be placed at m. 16 because of a change in the organization of both the text and the partitions. Within the tetrachord partitions of the row, the pitch classes are retrograded from the original; yet, this is reversed starting in m. 16. I believe that Schoenberg wished to reflect the change of tone in the text at this point, as m. 16 also marks the moment that the text switches from interrogative sentences to exclamatory sentences. The entire opus 35 features a search for answers, as anything with a philosophical lean might, and this desire is expressed by the “correcting” of retrograded

partitions at the moment that the text moves on from asking questions to providing answers.

Additional criteria for formal divisions are given in Figure 2:

Measures	1-15	16-22	23-30
Text	Interrogative	Exclamatory	
Partitioning	Retrograde Tetra	Prime Tetra	Prime Hexa
Cadence	[7803](AbM7)	[68e1] [2356]	Dovetailing/canon

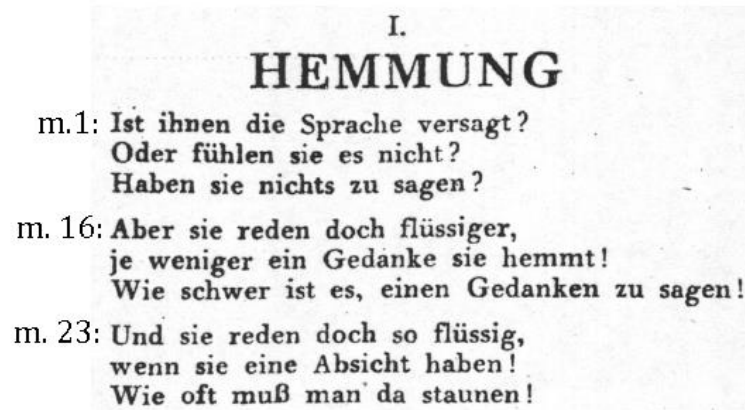
compaction: 11  $\xrightarrow{\quad}$  7  $\xrightarrow{\quad}$  4  
 $\begin{array}{c} \text{4} \quad \text{3} \quad \text{4} \\ \text{m. 5,10,15: } 8 \quad 0 \quad 3 \quad 7 \end{array}$ 
 $\begin{array}{c} \text{2} \quad \text{3} \quad \text{2} \\ \text{m. 19: } 6 \quad 8 \quad e \quad 1 \end{array}$ 
 $\begin{array}{c} \text{1} \quad \text{2} \quad \text{1} \\ \text{m. 22: } 2 \quad 3 \quad 5 \quad 6 \end{array}$

Figure 2

Underneath the table in Figure 2, I show that the resting points (which I refer to as cadences, due in part to the fact that they line up with ends of statements in the text) gradually compact. The sets presented in each “cadence” are connected by a shared symmetrical structure. These points of rest come to an end starting at m. 23, as the texture is taken over by dovetailing statements (usually through simple canon); because of this, the four voice parts do not sing their texts in unison again until the end of the movement.

I chose to use dotted lines at m. 16 to represent weak divisions within the categories of partitioning and cadences. I see the overall use of tetrachord partitioning versus hexachord partitioning, and compacting cadences versus dovetailing statements (no points of rest) as delineating a two-part structure; the reversing of the retrograde tetrachords, by itself, only creates a weak division at m. 16. So, were there no text, I would divide the movement into two broad sections (this is evident from the use of colors in my annotated score). Similarly, if I were dealing with the text alone, I would divide it into two parts (questions and answers). It is the combination of the text and music that I believe enforces a three-part structure (mm. 1–15, 16–

22, 23–30). If we are to take Schoenberg's organization of the text as a reliable indication of the intended form, it is likely that he felt this way as well:



*Figure 3*

### Projecting the Inside Out

The text of “Hemmung” focuses on the difficulty of communicating thoughts and challenges the perception that those who are silent are so because they have no worthwhile thoughts to contribute.<sup>vi</sup> In the view posited by the text, important thoughts are so difficult to express in words that only those who are empty-headed can speak volumes.<sup>vii</sup> Notably, Schoenberg uses text-painting to represent fluency of speech with triplets and sixteenth-notes, the fastest note values in the piece. Due to the canonized nature of these statements, the text becomes unintelligible; this is another clever trick Schoenberg uses to communicate the limitations of “fluent speech.”

The primary issue addressed in the text is the projection of what is inside (our thoughts) to the outside (to others, through speech). I believe this concept is reflected by Schoenberg's decision to organize his three tetrachords in a way that shifts the middle tetrachord [0721] to the outer limits of each statement. He does this specifically in the first three statements of the

movement (mm. 1–5, 6–10, and 11–15); in each case, members of tetrachord [0721] are the first and last notes heard in the statement. Only after the text becomes more exclamatory and the retrograde is “corrected” does the middle tetrachord (diagrammed in blue) begin to shift back to its proper position. This can also be seen as a correction of sorts, as the text suggests that inner thoughts should be left where they reside and only lose their power once they’re expressed in words.

The restriction to a single 12-tone row, even when there is an inversional hexachordal combinatoriality available to Schoenberg (see matrix at end of annotated score), means that “Hemmung” does not behave like a typical 12-tone composition. Therefore, it would be misguided to judge the piece by the standards of what a serial work should or should not do. Nevertheless, it is striking to me that the only clear statement of the row occurs in the middle of the composition. Beginning a work by clearly stating the parameters for the piece is not only typical of 12-tone works, but is the foundation of most musical forms: sonatas begin and end with an identifiable theme group, with development in the middle; fugues begin and end with an identifiable subject, with frequent developing episodes between statements. Yet, “Hemmung” begins with the row already in development, not to be stated clearly until the middle of the work, only to return to a developmental state. Once again, what should reside on the inside, has been projected out, turning the expected organization of the movement inside out.

## **Conclusion**

The first movement of Arnold Schoenberg’s opus 35 questions the worth of verbal communication, choosing instead to value the potency of inner thoughts. The idea of inner thoughts being expressed outward is reflected in Schoenberg’s organizational choices, as he

repeatedly shifts the middle tetrachord of his chosen 12-tone row to the outsides (beginnings and endings) of statements. The same idea may be seen in the overall form of the movement, as the developmental material surrounds the parameters of the piece (the clear statement of the 12-tone row). Finally, the movement ends with a movement inwards, from the outer pitches (8 and 1) to the inner pitches (7 and 2), as if to state, “in the end, this is as it should be.”

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<sup>i</sup> “*Daß es ein Gesetz gibt, dem die Dinge so gehorchen, wie du deinem Herrn, das den Dingen so gebietet, wie dir dein Herr: Dieses solltest du als Wunder erkennen!*”; “That there is a law to which things obey as thou thy Lord, who commandeth things unto thee, as thine own lord, that thou shouldst recognize as miracles!”

<sup>ii</sup> “*Was wir wirklich sind, wir wissens so wenig, wie, was jeder einzelne ist.*”; “What we really are, we know as little about as what every single one is.”

<sup>iii</sup> “*Oder: wenn mans nicht benennen kann, nicht weiß, worin es besteht, nicht glaubt, daß andere es kennen: solange man es nicht begreift, ist es Glück.*”; “Or, if you cannot name it, do not know what it is, do not believe others know it: as long as you do not understand it, it is happiness.”

<sup>iv</sup> “*Oho, es riecht nach blut? nach unserm blut und fleisch. also dorthin gehts? werden wir jetzt schon geschlachtet? man sollte flichen: man ist gelahmt! was könnte es nützen?*”; “Oho, it smells like blood? Like our blood and flesh, so this way? Are we being slaughtered already? One should flee: One is paralyzed! What would it help?”

<sup>v</sup> “*Du läßt den greis nicht liegen, fallst einst selbst so, du hebst die last des schwachen, ohne lohn, du hemmst im laufe das scheue pferd, schonst dich selbst nicht, wehrst dem dieb, schützst des nachbarn leben, ohne zögern bringst du hilfe.*”; “You don’t leave the old man behind, in case you yourself will once be like that, you heave the burden of the weak, without reward, you hem the shy horse walking, don’t take yourself back, defend against the thief, protect the neighbor’s life, without hesitating you bring help.”

<sup>vi</sup> “*Haben sie nichts zu sagen?*”; “Have they nothing to tell of?”

<sup>vii</sup> “*Aber sie reden doch flüssinger, je weniger ein Gedanke sie hemmt!*”; “But they can speak the more fluently the less that they by a thought are constain’d!”

## Annotated Score

Mäßig (♩ = 88)

**Tenor**

1 *pp* 2 0 3 2 4 0 5

Ist ih - nen die Spra - che ver - sagt ?  
May be speech to them was de - nied ?

2 *pp* e 7

Ist ih - nen die Spra - che ver - sagt ?  
May be speech to them was de - nied ?

**Baß**

1 *pp* 6 9 t 8

Ist ih - nen die Spra - che ver - sagt ?  
May be speech to them was de - nied ?

2 *p* 1 4 5 3

Ist ih - nen die Spra - che ver - sagt ?  
May be speech to them was de - nied ?

6 7 8 9 10 *mf*

O - der füh - len sie es nicht ?  
Or can they not feel these things ?

7 4 5 3

O - der füh - len sie es nicht ?  
Or can they not feel these things ?

*pp* e 7

O - der füh - len sie es nicht ?  
Or can they not feel these things ?

2 0

O - der füh - len sie es nicht ?  
Or can they not feel these things ?







19 *mf* 8 *t* 20 *b* 21 *b* 3 *b* 3 *b* 3 *b* 9 *b* 6 22

Wie schwer ist es, ei-nen Ge-dan-ken zu sa-gen!  
*How dif- fi- cult 'tis, when a thought we would ut- ter!*

*mf* 0 7 2 3 3 3

Wie schwer ist es, ei-nen Ge-dan-ken zu sa-gen!  
*How dif- fi- cult 'tis, when a thought we would ut- ter!*

Wie schwer ist es, ei-nen Ge-dan-ken zu sa-gen!  
*How dif- fi- cult 'tis, when a thought we would ut- ter!*

*f* 3 4

Wie schwer ist es, ei-nen Ge-dan-ken zu sa-gen!  
*How dif- fi- cult 'tis, when a thought we would ut- ter!*

23 *pp* 2 *e* 3 5 4

Und sie re-den doch so flüs-sig, wenn sie ei-ne Ab-sicht  
*Yet they speak with so much flu-en-cy when-e'er they have a*

*pp* 8 *t* 9 6

Und sie re-den doch so flüs-sig, wenn sie ei-ne  
*Yet they speak with so much flu-en-cy when-e'er they*

*pp* 2 *e* 3 5

Und sie re-den doch so flüs-sig, wenn sie  
*Yet they speak with so much flu-en-cy when-*

*pp* 8 *t* 9 6 0 7

Und sie re-den doch so flüs-sig, wenn sie ei-ne Ab-sicht ha-ben;  
*Yet they speak with so much flu-en-cy when-e'er they have a pur-pose,*



24 *cresc.*

1 8 t 9 6 0

ha - ben; und sie re - den doch so flüs - sig, wenn sie ei - ne Ab - sicht  
pur - pose, yet they speak with so much flu - en - cy when - e'er they have a

*cresc.*

0 7 2 e 3 5

Ab - sicht ha - ben; und sie re - den doch so flüs - sig, wenn sie ei - ne  
have a pur - pose, yet they speak with so much flu - en - cy when - e'er they

*cresc.*

4 1 8 t 9 6

ei - ne Ab - sicht ha - ben; und sie re - den doch so flüs - sig, wenn sie  
e'er they have a pur - pose, yet they speak with so much flu - en - cy when -

*cresc.*

2 e 3 5 4 1

und sie re - den doch so flüs - sig, wenn sie ei - ne Ab - sicht ha - ben;  
yet they speak with so much flu - en - cy when - e'er they have a pu - pose!

25 *f* 7

ha - ben!  
purpose!

4 1

Absicht ha - ben!  
have a pur - pose!

26 *f* 4 5

Wie oft muß man da stau - nen;  
How of - ten that a - stounds us;

1 3

Wie oft muß man da stau - nen;  
How of - ten that a - stounds us;

27 *p* 0 6

man that da a -  
that a -

8 t

man that da a -  
that a -

1 4 5 3

ei - ne Absicht ha - ben!  
e'er they have a pur - pose!

Wie oft muß man da stau - nen;  
How of - ten that a - stounds us;

Wie oft muß man da stau - nen;  
How of - ten that a - stounds us;

wie oft muß  
how of -

28 29 30

stau - stounds - nen; us; wie oft oft! man that da - stau - stounds us; wie oft oft! muß man da stau - stounds us; wie oft oft!

pp pp pp pp

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

	I8	I <sub>t</sub>	I9	I6	I0	I7	I2	Ie	I3	I5	I4	I1	
P8	8	t	9	6	0	7	2	e	3	5	4	1	R8
P6	6	8	7	4	t	5	0	9	1	3	2	e	R6
P7	7	9	8	5	e	6	1	t	2	4	3	0	R7
P <sub>t</sub>	t	0	e	8	2	9	4	1	5	7	6	3	R <sub>t</sub>
P4	4	6	5	2	8	3	t	7	e	1	0	9	R4
P9	9	e	t	7	1	8	3	0	4	6	5	2	R9
P2	2	4	3	0	6	1	8	5	9	e	t	7	R2
P5	5	7	6	3	9	4	e	8	0	2	1	t	R5
P1	1	3	2	e	5	0	7	4	8	t	9	6	R1
P <sub>e</sub>	e	1	0	9	3	t	5	2	6	8	7	4	R <sub>e</sub>
P0	0	2	1	t	4	e	6	3	7	9	8	5	R0
P3	3	5	4	1	7	2	9	6	t	0	e	8	R3

RI8 RI<sub>t</sub> RI9 RI6 RI0 RI7 RI2 RI<sub>e</sub> RI3 RI5 RI4 RI1