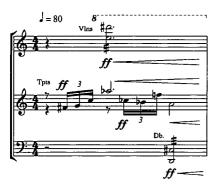
## Letters to the Editor

## From David Matthews

I am happy to take up Mark Doran's suggestion to elucidate the tonal background of *A Survivor from Warsaw* (*Tempo 218*, p.55). I think it can be clearly demonstrated that in Schoenberg's later twelve-note works in general, a tonal background becomes more audibly evident. In many places in *A Survivor from Warsaw*, for instance, the harmony and the melodic lines contain tonal allusions. Moreover, the piece has from the start a strong attachment to the tonality of C, as the opening fanfare shows:

Ex.1



Ex. 2

fanfare inevitably suggests E (major or minor), then moving to A flat major; but at bar 88 C major is triumphantly attained, the high E natural a resolution of the E flats in bar 86 (see Ex.2: words omitted).

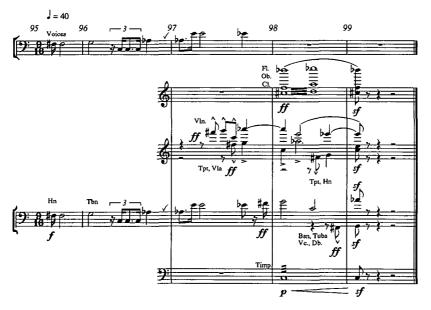
The chorus part is doubled throughout by trombone, and so is audibly the *Hauptstimme*, but its tonal allusions tend to be contradicted by the orchestral harmony, except in bar 84 where the bass underlines A flat major. The last three bars of the piece, however, show an unprecedented tonal clarification (see Ex.3: words omitted; most orchestral parts omitted in bars 95-6).

We have here a succession of overlapping canons on the four notes of the opening fanfare, plus E and the E flat that strives towards E, which are the culmination of the chorus part. Schoenberg cuts off the canons at a point where C major is most powerfully implied, with the trumpets sounding C and E (the C reinforced by the four horns), the G in the bassoons, lower strings and tuba, and a timpani roll on C. A flat is still strongly present in the final bar on the trombones but, just as in the opening fanfare, it leans down to the G that is sounded beneath it. There is, in addition, the (fairly unobtrusive) woodwind tremolando that supplies the remain-



Despite the prominent A flat here (and in the ensuing four bars), I hear the suppressed background tonality as C major rather than C minor: the A flat wants to go down to G, the high D sharp to E which is sounded with it. This urge towards C major is confirmed by the last 20 bars of the piece, the setting of the  $Sch^{\tilde{c}}ma$  Yisroel for unison male chorus. The vocal line uses 109 notes; that heard most frequently (sixteen times) is C, followed by E (and C sharp: eleven times each). C is prominent in the first five bars of the vocal line, though the transposition of the initial ing six notes of the series, which though Methodically necessary is musically somewhat questionable; but I won't start an argument about serialism here! The slight tonal ambiguity is in any case right for the piece: initial horror (the opening fanfare: reveille at the concentration camp) has been turned into triumph, but it is a grim triumph: these men are about to die. Unsullied C major would be too easy a gesture here.

Writing in the 1920s about his twelve-note technique, Schoenberg always stresses the necessary avoidance of tonal implications. In his 1946 Ex.3



addendum to the essay 'Composition with Twelve Tones (1)' (see Arnold Schoenberg, *Style* and Idea, London 1975, pp.244-5), he permits a relaxation of some of his original strictures – against octave doubling, for instance – but insists that these should not lead to the reintroduction of tonality, and he seems to be criticizing Berg for doing just this in *Lulu*. Yet Schoenberg contradicts himself in the music he was actually writing at this time, and I believe that in reincorporating elements of tonality into his music he only made his language richer and more eloquent, as A Survivor from Warsaw testifies.

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