Variations
on a theme by Webern
for guitar

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Seattle, March 1987

B&C Music
Seattle, Washington
Variations on a theme by Webern
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mm 39-42

row rotations

mm 42-46
Notes on *Variations on a theme by Webern*

Row: 0 3 4 1 2 5 6 9 10 7 8 11

Order numbers 1 and 3 in Webern's row (the row used in his *Variations for Orchestra*, op. 30) are rotated to create the row used in this composition. This preserves hexachordal pc content and symmetry, but alters the musical character of the row.

Guitar music sounds an octave lower than written except harmonics (°) which sound as written.

**Theme (m.0-9):** Tetrachords presented linearly, moving through T₀, RT₀, T₀°, RT₀°.

**Var. I (m.10-17):** Harmonic structure of second T₀ tetrachord (m.6) is used as the basis for unfolding the tetrachords of the following sequence:

\[
T₀ \quad T₈ \quad T₄ \quad T₀
\]

\[
RT₀ \quad RT₈ \quad RT₄ \quad RT₀
\]

**Var. II (m.18-27):** Tetrachords subdivided into dyads. Tetrachords I and III emphasize intervals 1 and 2 (and inversion), tetrachord II emphasizes interval 3. Alternation of these differing harmonic areas creates tension and release.

Sequence:  
\[
T₀° \quad T₅° \quad T₁₀° \quad T₃° \quad T₈°
\]

\[
RT₀° \quad RT₇° \quad RT₂° \quad RT₉° \quad RT₄°
\]

**Var. III (m.28-35):** Row forms melodically in free counterpoint. Common tones are frequent and are usually repeated in close temporal proximity and
in the same register. Centers of symmetry (A and E♭) are distinguished by repetitions an octave apart, but are otherwise not exploited.

Sequence:  \( T_{10} \)  \( T_2 \)  \( T_6 \)  
\( RT_{10} \)  \( RT_2 \)  \( RT_6 \)

Var IV (m.36-43): Retrograde of theme. Harmonic aspects of tetrachords is emphasized.

All row sequences used in this composition are modifications of sequences found in Webern's Variations for Orchestra op. 30.

This piece was written in a day. Creating a masterpiece requires much more time than that.