

A Level Notes

Bruckner: Mass in E Minor (1869)

Sanctus at a glance

The style = Neo - Renaissance

Diatonic Harmony

This refers to the sharpened 6th and 7th notes in a minor key. Bruckner uses intervals of 7ths that his contemporaries avoided.

Dissonance

2 or more notes sounded together that disagree. Bruckner applies lots of dissonance in the Sanctus from his use of 2nds and 7ths.

The opening of the Sanctus shows conflict. Firstly there is a conflict between the major and minor keys and the music is set around the following keys: C Major, E Minor, G Major, A Minor. Chord progressions through the relative keys. Perhaps also interesting that music opens with a G which is the relative major to E minor. Showing an in built struggle between major and minor. There are also lots of unresolved 7ths.

Polyphony

Inter-weaving melodic lines of equal importance. Bruckner demonstrates this with his use of the canon. A motive that he uses in the 5th below and 4th above Palestrina's original.

Palestrina's Influence

One of the most striking aspects of Romantic music is its fascination with Bach and Palestrina (Italian: c1525-1594). Many composers, including Bruckner, re-worked their compositions.

Palestrina style is seen most clearly in his Masses. His voice parts are of equal importance, with a new melodic motive for each phrase of the text. Canons are also by no means lacking in his later Masses. Another trait was that in a time when composers were normally writing for five or

In your own time try and find out more about Palestrina and the Mass. Make your own wall chart for the type of features to look out for when analysing Music from this style. What musical language should you use?

Benedictus at a glance

Chromaticism is important in this movement as the music moves in chromatic movements. There are rich chords in the Wind section. The wind section also introduces the motivic patterns that are shared between the oboe and the 1st soprano.

The music starts in chord V^7d of C major. Although it passes through other keys there is a sense of a prolongation of C Major. The diatonic perfect cadence at the end of the example passage links the music to the Sanctus.

Voice leading

Occurs occasionally between parts and can act as a clue to the disguised keys. Also chromatic voice leading at bar 10. Voice leading seems to resolve some of the dissonance.

Homophonic

Parallel movement in voices. Homophonic texture. (a single melody where all parts tend to keep rhythmically in step with each other) Bruckner uses an a capella homophonic passage from bar 10.

Wagnerian Influence

The use of the leitmotifs with simple and charming folklike melodic material is one of Wagner's most common influence. (As Bruckner uses with his melodic motive.) Bruckner has also adopted a Wagnerian style to use many dissonances and chromaticisms.

In your own time find out about Wagner's style of composing. What is meant by the term 'Leitmotif'? How would you recognise his music. Read about and listen to as much of his music as you can.