Second Viennese School: Alban Berg and Anton Webern

- There were many other composers in the group, but Schoenberg, Webern and Berg are the main ones.
- Each developed a very personal style, very different from each other. Generally, Berg used Schoenberg’s more conservative aspects as point of departure; Webern used more radical aspects.
- **Alban Berg** (1885-1935): Became Schoenberg’s pupil in 1905, early works are late romantic
  - shared Schoenberg’s interest in counterpoint; pieces have very linear style
  - made rich use of tone color
  - works tend to be very lyrical despite their dissonance
  - never completely gave up tonality, although it was used more for effect than functionally in his works
- **Best known work** is the expressionist opera *Wozzeck* (1921)
  - Based on the play Woyzeck by Georg Büchner (1813-37), based on true story
  - Uses Leitmotives and Sprechstimme
  - Draws from ideas behind Wunderhorn texts: folk character and deliberately folk-like music Berg composed for certain parts of the opera
  - Wozzeck is expressionist, but also socially relevant: Berg comments on sad state of downtrodden people, and the dark, nightmarish place into which circumstances push them
- **Anton Webern** (1883-1945). Of the three main Second Viennese School composers, Webern made most complete break with tonality.
  - His style is very economical: every thought stated as simply as possible, then varied but never repeated.
  - He used very soft dynamics, and most works are very short
  - He seldom used large ensembles, but sometimes unusual combinations
  - He liked to use instruments in extreme registers
• He sometimes wrote melodies with each note in different instrument or
  *Pointillist:* each note is a miniature pinpoint of sound. In these passages, color is at least as important as pitch, a different kind of *Klangfarbenmelodie*

• Example: *Five Pieces for Orchestra*, Op. 10 (1911-13)
  • extremely short, no repetition of ideas
  • sounds very abstract, but some allusion to nature in 3rd piece: suggests cowbell