



## Unit 3 Music

### Into the Twentieth Century

#### Poulenc: *Trio for Oboe, Bassoon and Piano, Movement 1*

This analysis is based on the text of the edition of the work published by Wilhelm Hansen, Copenhagen (WH19245) ISBN 978-87598-0392-9. These notes are to be used in conjunction with that edition and are intended to support teachers with their preparation and delivery of content relating to the set work.

Rehearsal numbers are included in the edition, but bar numbers are not. These notes refer to bar numbers, which will need to be added to copies, and which are shown in all examples and figures, and rehearsal letters from the score are also included where appropriate.

These notes are intended to assist music teachers in their preparation and delivery of the set work. They are offered as outline guidance and contain suggestions as to the necessary musical content and background for study. However, they are not meant to be an exhaustive resource, or the only analytical interpretation. Other supported analyses are possible.

#### Poulenc: Background

Francis Poulenc (1899–1963) was born into an affluent family in Paris. He developed a love of music from an early age, initially learning the piano from his mother, from whom he also developed a love for Mozart, Chopin and Schumann. However, his parents hoped their son would become a businessman, like his father, and prevented him from attending a music conservatoire. His early musical development was therefore largely self-directed. In 1916 he began to study with the Spanish pianist Ricardo Viñes, with whom he developed proficiency at the instrument, and from 1921–24 he studied with the composer Charles Koechlin, focusing on improving his skills in counterpoint (although this rarely features in his music).

Poulenc's musical language embodies lyricism, wit, elegance and simplicity, and his gift for melody shows a clear influence of Mozart, whom Poulenc declared to be his favourite composer. His musical style draws on various influences, perhaps inevitably given the prominence of Paris as a cultural, artistic and musical hub in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Poulenc was a member of 'Les Six', a group of young French composers whose music sought to reject the romanticism of Wagner, as well as the impressionism of Debussy, favouring instead a sense of clarity and economy, often drawing upon influences from popular musical styles. Poulenc's music is almost always tonal, although the *Élégie* for horn and piano (1958) is a rare exception, and there are clear influences of Stravinsky's neoclassicism and Satie's directness throughout his musical output.

Poulenc's works tend to be short in length – although there are exceptions, particularly from later in his career – and several of his early works are chamber pieces for wind instruments. The Sonata for Two Clarinets (1918), Sonata for Clarinet and Bassoon (1922), and Sonata for Horn, Trumpet and Trombone (1922) are all examples of Poulenc's early chamber music, and are all written without piano accompaniment. The *Trio for Oboe, Bassoon and Piano* (1924–26) is the first such work to feature Poulenc's own instrument, where its role is clearly more than simply accompaniment; the composer described it as 'much more important than my other chamber works' (Southon, 2014, p. 240). Poulenc



## Unit 3 Music

### Into the Twentieth Century

revised the work over a protracted period, and an undated letter (likely from April 1926) from Poulenc to Stravinsky thanks him for 'all that good advice' and continues 'I've modified the first tempo of the trio. It is completely different' (quoted in Nichols, 2020, p. 64). There are clear influences of Stravinsky throughout the Trio, especially in the harmonic language of the opening music of the piano.

The work is in **three movements**: Presto – Andante – Rondo – and Poulenc said of the form: 'the first movement follows the plan of a Haydn Allegro, and the final Rondo the shape of the scherzo in Saint-Saëns's Second Piano Concerto. Ravel always recommended this method to me, which he often followed himself' (Southon, 2014, p. 240). This account is from later in Poulenc's life, and provides only a very broad overview of the structural features of the work, but nonetheless provides useful insight into the influences upon its conception.

#### A note on the analysis

##### Harmonic reductions

Harmonic reductions are presented here using Roman numerals, with major chords shown in upper case and minor chords shown in lower case. Diminished and half diminished chords are represented in lower case with appropriate superscript symbols (° and ⁹, respectively). Chord inversions and extensions are shown wherever possible using superscript Arabic figures (for example, I<sup>6</sup> denotes a tonic major chord in first inversion, while V<sub>5</sub><sup>6</sup> denotes a dominant seventh chord in first inversion). Where this is not possible, (as in the case of a dominant chord with an added b<sup>6</sup> in the bass), clarifying explanations are included.

Key areas are shown in musical examples and figures using encircled upper-case letters for major keys and encircled lower-case letters for minor keys. Secondary dominant (and diminished) chords are shown with a slash, to indicate which key area the chord serves to tonicise. For example, in the key of A major, a chord of F#<sup>7</sup> would be labelled as V<sup>7</sup>/ii if it had a clear secondary dominant function.

##### Pedal points

Pedal points are shown underneath the Roman numerals which designate the chords, with pedal pitches accounted for in the chord descriptions where possible, for example a supertonic chord over a tonic pedal is described as ii<sup>7</sup> (rather than ii<sub>2</sub><sup>4</sup>), with the pedal point indicated separately.

##### Scale degrees and chord extensions

Scale degrees are labelled using Arabic numbers with carets, for example  $\widehat{7}-\widehat{9}-\widehat{8}$  or  $\widehat{3}-\widehat{2}-\widehat{1}$  when describing voice leading. Chord extensions are presented as numbers without carets, however, in order to avoid confusion. For example, b6-5 refers to the resolution of pitches in relation to the root of the chord, rather than to the tonic of the key. In relation to a dominant chord, these would be scale degrees  $b\widehat{3}-\widehat{2}$  (and in a major key would hint at the minor third of the scale – usually as part of a cadential resolution).



### Existing analyses

The only existing complete analysis of the work is an unpublished master's dissertation by Ruth Allison (1947). Allison's sonata form reading of the movement is problematic particularly in its designation of the 'development' section. While teachers and students may wish to consult Allison's analysis to inform their understanding of the movement (and, indeed, the whole work), the present author does not find her account entirely convincing.

Other more general descriptions of the Trio can be found in Keith Daniel's (1982) survey of Poulenc's musical style and Wilfrid Mellers' (1993) short study of the composer, where a brief account of this movement draws poetic comparisons with Lully, Gluck, Mozart, Rossini, Offenbach, Satie, and Stravinsky (p. 14). More substantial biographies, such as those by Henri Hell (1959) and Roger Nichols (2020), as well as Poulenc's own correspondences, as collected by Nicholas Southon (2014), also provide valuable insights into the work.

### This analysis

These notes present a single – and inevitably biased – interpretation of the movement, drawing on specific features of interest to the author: they do not claim to be definitive or exhaustive. These notes describe the music in a modified ternary form, although parallels with an (alternative) sonata form plan are also considered. This analysis gives a separate label to each 'theme', which is not clearly derived from or an extension of an earlier idea, in order to outline the episodic nature of Poulenc's approach to melody and structure. Some of these 'themes' are as short as four bars in length and contain only a single phrase before being abandoned and replaced with a new idea. However, the A section is heard as a continuous whole, with each idea functioning as an 'episode' within the wider section, rather than an independent theme in the traditional sense.

Indeed, as is typical of Poulenc's musical style, there is little evidence anywhere in the movement (or, indeed, the work as a whole) of the kinds of thematic development typically associated with the classicism of the eighteenth century. Some features – such as descending scales and arpeggio-like movement – are inevitably common to several themes. The labelling of themes in this manner is intended as a means of understanding the formal layout of the movement, rather than as an attempt to trace the developmental trajectory of the individual ideas.

Reasonable alternative perspectives on the movement will be credited in examination responses, providing appropriate assessment criteria are satisfied.

### Structural overview

Like the opening movements of several of Poulenc's chamber works, this movement follows a modified ternary form plan. There is a slow introduction, which clearly evokes the feeling of an overture in the French style, followed by a *Presto*, which marks the beginning of the movement.

Poulenc himself may have remarked that the movement 'follows the plan of a Haydn Allegro' (Southon, 2014, p. 240), but this is true only in a loose sense, rather than a literal one. There is some sense of the expected tonal framework which would necessarily



## Unit 3 Music

### Into the Twentieth Century

underpin such a movement but, while several thematic ideas are presented, none is subjected to the development processes typical of sonata form. Keith Daniel suggests that the movement is 'episodic, with the themes or sections following one another in sequence' and that the 'distinct tunes or motives' are presented 'with no development or evolutionary order' (Daniel, 1982, p. 60). This becomes a key feature of Poulenc's musical style throughout his career. Daniel proposes this may be because Poulenc's melodic themes are 'too dependent on their specific harmonic setting to encourage development' and suggests that 'the composers whom he admired and emulated as he was learning his craft – Chabrier, Debussy, Satie and Stravinsky – themselves eschewed traditional processes of development' (Daniel, 1982, p. 60).

The A section begins credibly enough as a sonata form exposition, but an abundance of themes is presented in quick succession in or around the tonic key. Similarly, the parallels between the A1 Section and a sonata form recapitulation are readily apparent, although this progresses very quickly to what feels like a coda. The middle section is most problematic in this reading, however, in that it is clearly contrasting, rather than related to earlier material, and therefore it does not serve as a development.

An outline of the movement's structural plan is shown below, with the sonata-form parallels shown in the rightmost column. Note that this sonata form reading differs from that proposed by Allison (1947).

Section	Thematic material	Bars	Key(s)	Sonata-form reading
<b>Introduction</b> (bars 1–16)	Dotted motif	1–16	A minor, E♭ major, B♭ major, A♭ minor, A major	Introduction
<b>A Section</b> (bars 17–160 <sup>1</sup> )	Theme 'a'	17–28 <sup>1</sup>	A major, E major	Primary subject group P1
	Theme 'b'	28 <sup>2</sup> –32 <sup>1</sup>	E major	P2
	Theme 'c'	32 <sup>2</sup> –47 <sup>1</sup>	A minor	P3
	Theme 'd'	47 <sup>2</sup> –65 <sup>1</sup>	A major	P4
	(Includes a transition-like passage, and a brief return to theme 'a').	(55 <sup>2</sup> –62 <sup>1</sup> )	A minor, B♭ minor	False Tr.
	Theme 'e'	(62–65 <sup>1</sup> )	A major	P1 fragment
	Theme 'f'	65 <sup>2</sup> –81 <sup>1</sup>	A minor, D minor, E major	P5
	Theme 'd1'	81 <sup>2</sup> –94 <sup>1</sup>	A major	P6
	(includes a modulatory bridge/ transition passage)	94 <sup>2</sup> –102	A major	(P4 fragment)
		103–105	F minor – (V prep.)	Tr.



# Unit 3 Music

## Into the Twentieth Century

Section	Thematic material	Bars	Key(s)	Sonata-form reading
	Theme 'g'	106–134 <sup>1</sup>	F minor (D♭ major) (B♭ minor) F minor – (V prep.)	Secondary subject group S1
	Theme 'c1'	134–146	F minor	S2 (P3)
	Theme 'h'	147 <sup>2</sup> – 160 <sup>1</sup>	F major	Closing theme/ Codetta (C)
	Bridge passage	160 <sup>2</sup> – 164	A minor	
<b>B Section</b> (bars 165–191)	B Section theme	165–184	A minor, G minor, F minor, C minor, B♭ minor, A♭ minor, G♭ major, F♯ minor, D (minor)	Unrelated to previous material
	Dotted motif (from introduction)	184 <sup>4</sup> – 191	D (minor), A major – (V prep)	V prep.
<b>A1 Section</b> (bars 191 <sup>2</sup> – 238)	Theme 'd'	191 <sup>2</sup> – 195	A major	Recapitulation P4
	Theme 'a'	195– 206 <sup>1</sup>	A major, E major	P1
	Theme 'b'	206 <sup>2</sup> – 210	E major	P2
	Theme 'c1'	210 <sup>2</sup> – 219 <sup>1</sup>	A minor	S2 (P3)
	Theme 'h'	219 <sup>2</sup> – 230 <sup>1</sup>	A minor / A major / (F major)	Coda
	Theme 'a'	230 <sup>2</sup> – 238	A major	

### Introduction, bars 1–16

The work opens with a stark homorhythmic four-bar phrase from the solo piano. Beginning on an open fifth (A and E) doubled in both hands, the opening gesture establishes the tonal centre of A minor and the four-bar phrase ends on what is essentially an imperfect cadence. However, Poulenc employs strong dissonances that destabilise the



## Unit 3 Music

### Into the Twentieth Century

key, and several of the chords in this short phrase include chromatic alterations which defy conventional labelling: even those chords that can be easily labelled are devoid of clear harmonic function in this context. The second chord in bar 3 is a clear example of this, and no label has been given. The chords on beats 3 and 4 of the same bar may be slightly more easily considered as altered versions of chords ii and IV respectively, although the false relations and the use of inversions which place chord extensions in the bass obscure obvious functional relationships. The D<sup>9</sup>/E chord on beat 4 may be a harmony commonly heard in popular music – where it generally functions as a V<sup>11</sup> (or more simply chord IV over the dominant) at cadential progressions – but it is not neatly represented in figured Roman numerals. Here it is labelled as IV<sub>2</sub><sup>7</sup> progressing to V<sub>6</sub><sup>7</sup>. The striking harmonic language here is not the playful 'wrong note' harmony commonly associated with Poulenc – and which indeed is found throughout the movement – but rather starker with clear echoes of Stravinsky.

This, together with the slow tempo, and chorale-like texture immediately establishes an atmosphere of seriousness.

#### Extract 1

Lent  $\text{♩} = 76$

@ i<sup>5</sup> i<sup>6</sup> i<sub>2</sub><sup>4</sup> i<sup>6</sup> i ii<sub>2</sub><sup>4</sup> IV<sub>2</sub><sup>7</sup> V<sub>6</sub><sup>7</sup>

An angular dotted figure is introduced in the bassoon, evoking the character of a French overture, which is not only a clear example of a neoclassical facet of the introduction, but which also further contributes to its serious atmosphere.

The melodic line is largely disjunct and makes frequent use of leaps of sixths and sevenths, which are mostly descending, and often treated sequentially, and occasionally inverted too. The ascending major sixth (B-G#), which opens the melody, initially resolves downwards to a G natural in bar 6, moving the tonal centre away from A minor. However, when these pitches are restated in bars 14–15, the leading note function of the G# returns, with the resolution to A major finally occurring at the start of the *Presto* in bar 17. Despite the disjunct movement, the melodic reduction on the next page shows that the fundamental line predominantly descends in seconds and thirds, with the falling intervals of a semitone and a minor third (derived from the opening major sixth) being especially prominent and featuring throughout the movement. The trill-like ornamentation serves at once to emphasise the descending stepwise resolution at phrase ends, and to establish a Baroque sensibility.



# Unit 3 Music

## Into the Twentieth Century

### Extract 2

The musical score consists of five staves of music. Annotations include:

- Bar 4: A2 sounds as m3. M6. M6. 11. sequential. M7. M7. m7. triadic. M6. M6.
- Bar 5: A7 (sounds as P8; enharmonic shift).
- Bar 8: triadic. sérè. major scale. Oboe. m6.
- Bar 10: P8. 11. triadic. M6 inversion. Piano. m2. m3.
- Bar 14: descending sequence of bars 12-13. Oboe, Bassoon. M6 inversion. (enharmonic shift). ②. m2.

Poulenc draws upon a colourful harmonic palette in the introduction, including several extended chords, which are rarely in root position, and conventional functional progressions are frequently avoided. For example, the  $E^{\text{add9}}/G\sharp$  in bar 4 moves to a  $G^{(b9)}/A\flat$  in bar 5, with an enharmonic shift in both the melody and bass lines, and then onto  $E\flat/G$  in bar 6, which establishes a new tonal centre, if both remote and relatively unstable. The bass line often moves chromatically, although with frequent octave displacements, and the voice-leading creates the illusion of functional relationships where they are not necessarily present. The example on the next page shows how the progression in bars 5 to 6 shares the voice leading of an entirely conventional cadential progression even if, in real terms, these chords are tonally remote from one another.



# Unit 3 Music

## Into the Twentieth Century

## Extract 3

5

$E_b$   $V_2^4$   $I^6$

The harmonic trajectory of the remainder of the introduction is outlined below, with figured Roman numerals to indicate functional relationships where they exist: labels are not given where no clear functional relationships exist. The second chord in bar 7 can be heard as a German augmented sixth chord (Ger<sup>+6</sup>) in the key of Eb major, and this is a chord frequently found in Poulenc's music. There are two problems with describing the chord in this way, however. Firstly, this label does not account for the C $\natural$  which sounds alongside the C $\flat$  on which the chord is built. Secondly, the conventional voicing of this chord would have the  $\flat 6$  in the bass, with the  $\sharp 4$  an augmented sixth above, with both resolving outwards to  $5$ : in this case, however, these two pitches are inverted – with A in the bass and C $\flat$  in the middle of the chord – and so the resolution of both pitches to B $\flat$  is inwards rather than outwards. The alternative labelling of the chord as a diminished 9 (vii<sup>o9</sup>/V) better accounts for all the pitches it contains, and also its functional relationship with the B $\flat$  major chord that follows. However, this reading of the chord is also problematic: enharmonic respelling of the C $\flat$  as a B is necessary for the label to make sense and even then this pitch is a major ninth above the root (A), which is somewhat at odds with the symmetrical nature of the diminished 7 chord created by the other pitches. Nonetheless, this reading is supported by what is essentially a repetition of the progression in bars 12–13, now without the ambiguity of the additional pitch.

## Extract 4

10

14



## Unit 3 Music

### Into the Twentieth Century

The B<sub>b</sub> major chord in bar 8 marks the end of a four-bar period in the bassoon melody, and the cadence can be heard as imperfect in E<sub>b</sub> major or perfect in B<sub>b</sub> major. The B<sub>b</sub> chord is sustained for two complete bars, as the bassoon outlines its pitches in a cadenza-like descent spanning two octaves. The B<sub>b</sub> at the bottom is the lowest pitch possible on the instrument, and this is subtly emphasised in the piano. This is one of only three points in the movement with a distinct pedalling instruction in the piano, and here it allows the piano to capture the resonances as the bassoon reascends, this time through the B<sub>b</sub> major scale.

The oboe takes over the melody at the end of bar 10, playing what is broadly a sequence of the opening bassoon line, although the music is now much less assured. The harmony moves to B<sub>b</sub><sup>o7</sup>, and then to A<sup>o7</sup> in bar 11. Another vii<sup>o7</sup>–i progression leads to a chord of A<sub>b</sub>m<sup>add9</sup>, with the melody landing on the 9<sup>th</sup> (this is an add 9 chord as there is no seventh). The piano assumes the melody in bar 13, and a minor seventh is now added at the bottom of the A<sub>b</sub>m<sup>9</sup> chord at bar 14<sup>2</sup>. This progresses chromatically to a diminished 7 chord, with another enharmonic shift, and again the chord serves a dominant function, leading to an interrupted cadence landing on a chord of F<sup>#</sup>m<sup>9</sup> on the second beat of bar 15. At this point the oboe and bassoon take up the melody, mostly in sixths, in a cadenza-like descending gesture reminiscent of an operatic duet, and this leads to a V<sub>b</sub><sup>9</sup> chord, which prepares the arrival of the tonic major at the beginning of the *Presto*.

#### A Section – *Presto*, bars 17–160

The A section is by far the longest section in the movement and contains a string of discrete themes or ideas which progress effortlessly from one to the next – such was Poulenc's gift for melodic invention.

##### Theme 'a', bars 17–28<sup>1</sup>

The *Presto* begins with a vigorous and declamatory statement whose purpose is to firmly establish a jovial mood and the key of A major. It is curious, therefore, that Poulenc immediately undermines the tonality with an A minor chord on the second beat of bar 17, before again replacing the C natural with a C# in bar 18. For the next two bars, A major is heralded both with ascending arpeggios in the piano, and ascending scales in parallel compound 3rds in the oboe and bassoon.



## Unit 3 Music

### Into the Twentieth Century

#### Extract 5

17 (2) **Presto**  $d = 104$

**ff sec** **f** **ff**

**ff sec** **f** **ff**

**ff** **mf**

**loco**

**8ve basse**

**A:** I i I

Theme 'a' is properly stated from bar 21 and begins with a quaver anacrusis, like most thematic ideas in the movement.

The theme is comprised of an A major scale which descends a complete octave from C $\sharp$  to C $\sharp$ , presented as five staccato quavers followed by a dotted quaver figure, and this is heard twice in a row to complete the first phrase. All three instruments are involved in the theme's presentation, with a simple homophonic texture in three voices: the melody, the harmony a third (then a compound third) below, and a repeating tonic pedal. The forces are used in a playful manner, with the instruments changing roles when the idea is repeated, affording variety both in terms of register and sonority.

#### Extract 6

20

**Melody**

**Pedal**

**Harmony**

**Harmony**

**Pedal**

**Melody**



## Unit 3 Music

### Into the Twentieth Century

The theme concludes with a four-bar phrase built on the sequential treatment of two conjunct descending fragments, both with an anacrusis. There is some textural interplay with the melodic line initially doubled in monophonic octaves in all three instruments punctuated with repeated chordal interjections from the piano, including a bass line that jumps downwards by an octave. The phrase modulates to the dominant and ends with a mostly conjunct descent in the oboe, with the line doubled a third below in the piano.

#### Extract 7

24

ascending sequence

descending sequence

③

**oboe**

**bassoon**

**piano**

(A) V<sup>7</sup> I (E) V<sup>7</sup>/V V<sup>7</sup> I

#### Theme 'b', bars 28<sup>2</sup>–32

Theme 'b' comprises a single four-bar phrase in the key of E major, played by the bassoon and doubled and accompanied by the piano. Again, it begins with an anacrusis, this time leaping upwards by a perfect fifth, and then from here the melody is almost entirely conjunct. The melodic idea in the first two bars is developed in the final two bars and the melody is harmonised in thirds throughout. A defining characteristic of this theme is the appoggiatura-like movement from C♯-B, which occurs in both bars 30 and 32, and delays the resolution to the tonic chord until the second quaver of both bars.

The harmonic outline is again very simple, using only chords I and IV, and the theme is underpinned by a decorated tonic pedal which is repeatedly approached from the leading note (hinting at chord V although this is actually sounded only in passing on the second quaver of bar 31) in a pattern of alternating octaves. The texture is once again homophonic, with contrasting articulation between the bassoon and piano.

#### Extract 8

28

ff très marqué

**bassoon**

**piano**

(E) I IV<sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub> (decorated) I ped. IV I



## Unit 3 Music

### Into the Twentieth Century

#### Theme 'c', bars 32<sup>2</sup>–47<sup>1</sup>

Theme 'c' emerges immediately from the end of theme 'b', with the tonality now shifting to A minor. The melody begins in the oboe with an ascending octave anacrusis on the dominant (E) before returning back down, again by a leap. After three more Es, the melody moves down a tone to D and ascends another octave, this time triadically. This two-bar unit is repeated through descending sequences with slight modifications to the arpeggio figure, and the eight-bar phrase is completed with a conjunct descent towards the tonic, via the leading note.

#### Extract 9

modified sequences

32

*f*

*p*

*f très sec*

*mf*

*f*

*a:* i<sup>6</sup> ii<sup>7</sup> vii<sup>7</sup> i VI<sup>7</sup> bII<sup>6</sup> (N<sup>6</sup>) V<sup>7</sup> i i<sup>6</sup>

(4)

The bassoon contributes a bass line which also functions as a lyrical countermelody. The piano accompaniment changes to a simple legato broken chord figure, with the LH pitches doubling the bassoon line in staccato quavers.

The harmonic progression of theme 'c' is more complex than in the earlier themes, with diminished chords ii and vii serving what is essentially a dominant function in bars 34–35, before returning to i at the end of the first four-bar period in bar 36. This is nonetheless a typical progression reminiscent of the classical style. More unusually, the second four-bar period begins on a chord of F<sup>maj7</sup> (VI<sup>7</sup>), which itself has a dominant relationship with the B<sub>b</sub><sup>maj7</sup> (bII<sup>7</sup>) which follows in bar 38. This is a Neapolitan 6<sup>th</sup> chord, serving conventionally as the pre-dominant chord before the perfect cadence in A minor.

A repeat of theme 'c' begins in bar 41, with the melody now played an octave lower in the RH of the piano and the broken chord figure is taken over by the bassoon with staccato articulation and marked *très sec* (very dry). This repeat is truncated, however, with the fifth bar of the original phrase now elided: the VI<sup>7</sup> chord is omitted from the progression this time, and the second period (now only three bars in length – a typical neoclassical adaptation) begins on the Neapolitan chord before cadencing exactly as before.



## Unit 3 Music

### Into the Twentieth Century

#### Theme 'd', bars 47<sup>2</sup>–65<sup>1</sup>

The material of theme 'd' bears a resemblance with the closing phrase of theme 'a', particularly regarding the use of texture at the outset: both the chordal interjections and the octave leaps in the bass line are revisited here. However, the melodic content is not sufficiently similar to suggest that the two themes are clearly related in a developmental sense.

The music returns to the key of A major, and a four-bar phrase unfolds from another conjunct two-note motif. The melody, played at the same pitch by the oboe and piano RH, begins with a chromatic anacrusis from D♯-E and then descends conjunctly via D natural to C♯. The phrase is completed mainly using pitches from the supporting cadential harmony. A double suspension features at the end of the phrase, with the V<sup>7</sup> finally resolving to I on the second quaver of bar 51.

#### Extract 10

The four-bar phrase is then repeated in bars 52–55, now with all three instruments playing the melody in octaves. The melody is slightly altered the second time: E replaces F♯ on the second beat of bar 54, and the double suspension is removed at the end of the phrase so that chord I arrives immediately on beat 1 of bar 55.

The character changes at bar 56 and the music enters a six-bar phrase that is both melodically and harmonically unstable. The texture here is sparse with rarely more than two pitches sounding at once. Indeed, bars 58–59 introduce a feature of texture and sonority which Poulenc will revisit later: a continuous quaver melody in the bassoon is partially doubled in the piano, which plays every other note from the bassoon line. This results in a scalic pattern in one instrument being punctuated by what is essentially a broken chord in the other. The same effect is later utilised in bars 66–70 in theme 'e', where the roles between these two instruments are reversed, as shown below.



## Unit 3 Music

### Into the Twentieth Century

#### Extract 11

For the first time since the opening bars of the movement, the chords in the passage from bar 56 defy conventional labelling and are largely devoid of clear harmonic function. A minor is suggested in bar 56, as the melody descends chromatically, and this leads to the outline of a chord built on F in bar 57, although this variously contains both major and minor thirds and sevenths (F, Ab, A, C, Eb and E are all sounded in the bar).

A sense of dominant function is fleetingly implied as the bass moves to Bb in bar 58, with a minor third sounding briefly above. The melody is taken over by the bassoon, and descends conjunctly through the pitches of the Bb Dorian scale, starting and ending on Db, as shown above. This can also be heard as a Db Lydian scale, although the Bb in the bass suggests a Dorian feel. There is perhaps a slight echo here of the descending scalic idea in theme 'a' – both start on the mediant of their respective scales (indeed, the starting pitch of both is enharmonically equivalent) – although beyond this, clear similarities between the two ideas are scant.

The music remains unsettled, and in bar 59 the Eb in the bassoon is simultaneously spelled as a D# in the piano, where the harmony moves from an implied chord of Bbm directly to one of B major. A clearer sense of tonality emerges from here, when the bass line continues its chromatic ascent arriving at a chord of Am/C in bar 60 – this is the first clear triad since the perfect cadence in A major in bar 55. The progression continues with Dm7/C to E major, suggesting that the phrase will cadence in A minor, but when the tonic arrives in bar 62, it is A major, and heralds an exact repeat of the declamatory statement from the opening of theme 'a'. The alternation between tonic major and minor triads is apt here and slightly prolongs the tonal ambiguity. While previously serving as an arresting opening gesture, this four-bar phrase now affords a sense of closure to the most restless episode of the *Presto* so far.



## Extract 12

It is interesting to note that if the movement is conceptualised in terms of sonata form, the passage from bars 56 to 65 begins as though suggesting the transition section, indicating a clear move away from the tonic key, and perhaps towards a second subject area. However, this reading is undermined as within a few short bars, the music returns precisely to where it began, both thematically and tonally.

## Theme 'e', bars 65<sup>2</sup>–81<sup>1</sup>

Having re-established the key of A major, Poulenc immediately returns to A minor at the beginning of theme 'e' in bar 66. However, this quickly dissipates as a tonal centre and the first phrase of the theme cadences in E minor in bar 69. Sequential treatment of the theme leads to a cadence in D minor at the close of the second four-bar phrase.

While theme 'd' shared some of the qualities of the closing part of theme 'a', theme 'e' combines features of both themes 'b' and 'c'. There are clear similarities in the opening gestures of themes 'e' and 'c', where an initial ascending leap returns immediately back down to the starting pitch. All three themes then include a repeating pitch which continues over the bar line and resolves down by step in an appoggiatura-like manner. From here, theme 'e' exactly replicates the rhythm of theme 'b' and the pitches also follow a similar trajectory. Theme 'e' then continues with a descending sequence of this complete four-bar phrase, as did theme 'c' with its two-bar unit. The harmonic progression is also similar in themes 'e' and 'c', with both using what is essentially a typically classical I-V-V-I, although in both cases the dominant function of diminished 7 chords is exploited to afford variety.



# Unit 3 Music

## Into the Twentieth Century

A direct comparison of themes 'e', 'b' and 'c' is shown below.

### Extract 13

Theme "e" Descending sequence

Themes "e" and "b" Ascending then descending leap, followed by (also in theme "b") a repeating pitch, then a conjunct motion, appoggiatura-like descent.

Themes "e" and "b" Identical rhythm, similar conjunct motion, appoggiatura-like ending.

Theme "c" Descending sequences

Theme 'e' is played by the oboe, and like themes 'a' and 'b', the complete line is harmonised a third below in the piano. The accompaniment takes the form of a descending E harmonic minor scale in the piano, lasting three bars, with every other pitch doubled in the bassoon, as discussed above. This leads to an ascending E minor arpeggio in the fourth bar of the phrase. The complete phrase repeats in bars 70–74, now in the key of D minor, with the bassoon doubling all the pitches in the LH piano line from bar 71.

### Extract 14



# Unit 3 Music

## Into the Twentieth Century

Theme 'e' is extended from bar 74 with a passage that quickly modulates to what feels like an imperfect cadence in A minor, but the use of a secondary diminished 7 chord clearly takes the music to E major. The music spends several bars here in what is essentially dominant preparation for another return to A major at the start of theme 'f'.

The decorated tonic pedal from theme 'b' makes a return at bar 76, as the bass line alternates between D $\sharp$  and E for the entire passage until bar 81. This time, each D $\sharp$  is fully harmonised to create a V $6_5$  chord, which repeatedly alternates with I in quavers. A held inner dominant pedal is also sounded throughout these changes, and the first metrical disruption of the movement occurs with a brief change of time signature to 3/4 in bar 77. Also, for the first time in the movement, there is genuine antiphonal interplay between the piano and the woodwind instruments. The alternating V-I progression in the piano gives way to a quick burst of staccato quavers outlining a vii $7$  chord (functioning as V $b$  $9$ ) which lasts a whole bar before returning to the tonic, and the piano figure resumes. It is interesting that the woodwind quavers move in similar motion during tonic harmony, and contrary motion during the diminished 7 chord.

The section ends with an ascending scale in the oboe, which functions as an extended anacrusis into theme 'f'.

## Extract 15

74 (6) *ff sec ff*

②  $\text{iv}^6$   $\text{i}^6$   $\text{ii}^{06}$   $\text{vii}^{07}/\text{V}$   $\text{V}$   $\text{V}^6$   $\text{I}$   $\text{V}^6$   $\text{I}$

78 *mf*

$\text{vii}^{07}$   $\text{I}$   $\text{V}^6$   $\text{I}$   $\text{V}^6$   $\text{I}$   $\text{V}^6$   $\text{I}$   $\text{V}$



## Unit 3 Music

### Into the Twentieth Century

#### Theme 'f', bars 81<sup>2</sup>–94

Theme 'f' provides a sense of contrast in that it is noticeably more lyrical than the preceding material and commences with an extended anacrusis lasting a bar and a half. Moving entirely conjunctly (first ascending and then descending) the antecedent phrase ends on an appoggiatura-like 4-3 suspension in bar 85. The consequent phrase is again largely conjunct (although not entirely) and a sense of balance is created with another (now double) suspension, this time ascending from 7-8 in bar 89. This entire opening phrase is played by the oboe with a simple chordal accompaniment in the piano.

The bassoon enters in bar 89 with what begins as an exact restatement of the theme 'f', although it is quickly disrupted by metrical transformations which truncate the material, and the mood becomes more sorrowful (the bassoon is given the direction *céder à peine*). The harmony is maintained as before until bar 93, where there is an unexpected  $\flat\text{VI}^7$  ( $\text{F}^7$ )– $\flat\text{II}$  ( $\text{B}^b$ )– $\text{V}^7$  ( $\text{E}^7$ ) progression, the  $\text{B}^b$  triad being a Neapolitan chord (in root position) leading to the dominant 7 which remains unresolved. Bar 93 also introduces duplet crotchets in 3/4, resulting in an interruption to the crotchet tactus which has been maintained throughout the *Presto* up to this point, with the effect of slowing the music down. This further emphasises the unusual harmonic progression, and the lack of a resolution to the phrase.

#### Extract 16

81

mf f mf

$\text{A}$  V  $\text{V}^9$   $\text{IV}^6$   $\text{V}^9/\text{IV}^6$   $\text{I}^{4-3}$   $\text{ii}^6$   $\text{V}^7$   $\text{I}^{7-8}$

7

$\text{f}$

90

$\text{f}$  *céder à peine*  $\text{f}$

$\text{f}$

$\text{V}^9$   $\text{IV}^6$   $\text{V}^9/\text{IV}^6$   $\text{I}^{4-3}$   $\flat\text{VI}^7$   $\flat\text{II}$   $\text{V}^7$



## Theme 'd1', bars 94<sup>2</sup>–102

Theme 'd' returns in bars 94<sup>2</sup>–102, again in A major, although as it begins with a dominant 7 chord, the resolution of the preceding phrase is delayed until bar 96. The theme is initially presented here almost as it was in bars 47<sup>2</sup>–55, although there are some minor changes to the scoring. All three instruments now play the melody at the beginning: the piano continues the line throughout and the wind instruments take turns at doubling it, starting with the bassoon. When the oboe re-joins the melody an octave above, the bassoon moves to double the bass line.

As in bar 56, the music takes a new turn in bar 103: this time a sudden E<sup>o7</sup>chord is followed by a brief series of ascending thirds which descend sequentially in the piano RH, broadly outlining the pitches from the chord although with the addition of G<sub>b</sub> and E<sub>b</sub>. The bassoon and piano LH punctuate this with another descending line, this time marking out the pitches of a C major triad, which leads to some biting semitone clashes in the middle to low register. This is typical of the 'wrong note' harmony associated with Poulenc, and the chord functions as a dominant b<sup>9</sup>, cadencing in the key of F minor in bar 106, for the beginning of theme 'g'.

## Extract 17

103 (8) *un peu plus animé  
très chanté*

*sf* *f*

*sff sec f*

*sff* *f*

(f) vii<sup>o7</sup> V<sup>9</sup>

This brief three-bar phrase is perhaps the closest parallel to the transition section of a classical sonata form, in that it serves both to modulate to a new key area and leads to new thematic material. Until this point, all the themes have either begun in A major (or A minor) or quickly ended up (back) there. However, that tonal centre will now not return for the remainder of the A section, and features only briefly in the B section, although it is, of course firmly re-established in section A<sup>1</sup>.



## Unit 3 Music

### Into the Twentieth Century

#### Theme 'g', bars 106–134

Theme 'g' continues the sense of lyricism established in theme 'f' and is the first melodic idea in the movement to begin directly on the first beat of the bar with no anacrusis. The four-bar phrase opens with a strident ascending minor sixth (C–A $\flat$ ) in minims, marked *très chanté*, then descends conjunctly in quavers for an octave through a complete harmonic minor scale, beginning and ending on the mediant. Both the ascending sixth and the descending scale echo features of previous thematic material, although again, direct thematic development is avoided. This is followed by a six-bar phrase featuring a repeating quaver-quaver-crotchet idea which centres around an enclosed leading note.

The harmonic progressions are entirely functional, and the broken-chord accompaniment is underpinned firstly by a tonic pedal in bars 106–11, and then a dominant pedal in bars 112–115. The use of pedal points is typical of Poulenc's harmonic language, and this is the first time that sustained pedals have been used in the movement. It is interesting that in bars 112–115, the harmony repeatedly alternates between C major triad and a D diminished triad (over a C pedal). The downwards resolution from D–C and A $\flat$ –G is emphasised in both the bassoon and piano LH, whose lines repeatedly cross over one another, while the movement between F and E (via D) is foregrounded in the oboe melody.

#### Extract 18

un peu plus animé  
*très chanté*

106

*f*

*mf*

*f* *mf*

*f*

*f* > *mf*

i vii⁰⁷ i V½/V V #vi⁰⁷ V (etc.)

i ped. V ped.

The theme continues with a repetition of the opening four bars (with an added G $\flat$  in bar 118), with the melody now played by the bassoon. This statement is reharmonised, with the bass line moving up a minor third at bar 118, tonicising D $\flat$  major. Poulenc repeats this gesture at bar 120, with the theme now played in sixths, then thirds, by the oboe and bassoon, as the music moves via secondary dominants first to B $\flat$  minor and then to C major, which is sounded in continuous quavers in the piano, climbing steadily higher through inversions in the RH to bar 130. It is interesting that a single Dm<sup>7</sup> chord is sounded as a quaver at the beginning of bar 127.



## Unit 3 Music

### Into the Twentieth Century

#### Extract 19

116

9

fff ff

f

i V<sup>7</sup>/VI VI V<sup>b9</sup>/iv

124

ff ff

iv V<sup>§</sup>/V V (vi<sup>7</sup>)V

The four-bar passage in bars 130 to 133 replaces the strident ascending minor sixth minims with quavers which ascend in minor thirds from B to Ab (outlining a diminished 7 chord) before descending conjunctly again through an F harmonic minor scale, which this time continues beyond the octave. Wrong-note harmony is plentiful here, with unrelated diminished chords punctuating every beat, and settling on the pitches of a Vb9 chord in bar 132, which descends for two bars.

#### Extract 20

130

f

fff mf V<sup>b9</sup>



## Unit 3 Music

### Into the Twentieth Century

#### Theme 'c1', bars 134–146

The music unexpectedly returns to the material of theme 'c', the opening of which is restated briefly in the oboe and the piano, now in the key of F minor, in bars 134–136. There is some development of the leaping octave feature of this material as the music becomes agitated. The harmonic progression in this passage is as it was in bars 41–46, again making use of diminished 7<sup>th</sup> and Neapolitan 6<sup>th</sup> chords in an Alberti-bass style broken chord accompaniment, leading to a forceful arrival at the dominant at bar 139, when the music resumes a flavour of the mood at the end of theme 'g'.

This is clearly a point of arrival, with the dominant chord coloured by chromatic extensions including major 7<sup>th</sup> (B) minor 9<sup>th</sup> (D<sub>b</sub>) and a flattened 6<sup>th</sup> (or 13<sup>th</sup>) (A<sub>b</sub>), which pass fleetingly but repeatedly. The dominant pitch (C) is foregrounded and is repeatedly approached by semitone both from B<sub>1</sub> in the oboe and piano, and from D<sub>b</sub> in the bassoon, with the pitches overlapping one another in different octaves. The broken octave gesture continues in the oboe, and the piano repeats its four-quaver pattern – including an A<sub>b</sub>, which further adds to the dissonance – an octave higher each bar for four bars.

At bar 143<sup>2</sup>, the harmony shifts back to a chord of G<sub>b</sub> major (another Neapolitan chord), with all three instruments moving through descending pitches of the triad for three bars. A V<sup>7</sup> (C<sup>7</sup>) chord is reached at bar 146<sup>2</sup>, and the music cadences into F major at the start of theme 'h'.

#### Extract 21

134

*très sec*

*sec*

*ff*

I<sup>6</sup>      ii<sup>9</sup><sup>7</sup>      vii<sup>9</sup><sup>7</sup>      i      bII<sup>6</sup>

139 (10)

*ff*

*sec*

*ff*

*ff*

*sec*

*mf*

V      bII      V<sup>7</sup>



## Unit 3 Music

### Into the Twentieth Century

#### Theme 'h', bars 147–160

Theme 'h' concludes the A section and arguably parallels the closing theme (codetta) of a sonata form movement plan. There are clear links between this theme and theme 'a', with the rhythmic outline of that theme now presented in augmentation (here in crotchets rather than quavers), though both still in duple metre, and the scalic melody is now ascending. The parallel between these themes is perhaps the reason that Allison (1947) considered bar 147 as the beginning of the development section in her sonata form reading of the movement – although she does not explicitly draw this parallel. Both themes are presented in harmony, with the simple thirds of theme 'a' now replaced with first inversion triads which move in parallel motion. Both themes also include a tonic pedal in octaves, and this is maintained for the entirety of theme 'h', moving from the bottom of the texture to the top at bar 157<sup>2</sup>.

#### Extract 22



The piano LH sustains the tonic pedal (F) in the lowest voice from bar 147, while the pitch is repeated in crotchets an octave higher – presenting pedal points across several octaves is a typical feature of Poulenc's music, and this is a feature of the B section as well as of the slow second movement. Every second bar, the first upper pedal F is replaced by a G a major ninth higher, which then returns back down on the second beat.

The descending triad dotted figure in bar 149 is repeated twice more with slight changes in bar 150, to complete the phrase. A repeat of the theme begins at bar 151<sup>2</sup>, with the melody now doubled an octave higher in the oboe, and the texture further enriched with a trilling inner dominant pedal in the bassoon. The melodic line extends gradually downwards, with the dotted figure replaced by crotchets from bar 154. The harmony begins entirely diatonic, but becomes more chromatic as the theme progresses, with chords borrowed from the parallel minor key, and with the inner voices often descending by semitones, such as in the  $\text{ii}^7-\text{vii}^{\text{o}7}-\text{I}$  progression in bars 154–155.

The concluding cadential progression in bars 158–160 is particularly interesting. Here, the tonic pedal becomes inverted, transferring from the piano LH to the oboe (and initially the bassoon) and the harmony oscillates around B $\flat$  minor, which is briefly tonicised, before arriving on a dominant chord (C) with an added flattened 6<sup>th</sup> (A $\flat$ ) in the bass at bar 159. As with the dominant B $\flat$  chord in bar 156, this dissonance resolves downwards by step, resulting in a second inversion V $^7$  (V $^4_3$ ), which finally resolves to I. The A section therefore concludes not with a decisive perfect cadence with a clear  $\widehat{5}-\widehat{1}$  bass progression, but rather with a softer  $\widehat{b}3-\widehat{2}-\widehat{1}$  line which evades a sense of finality.



## Unit 3 Music

### Into the Twentieth Century

#### Extract 23

151

*mf doux*

*p* *tr* *tr* *mp*

*I ped.*

*(F)* I ii<sup>7</sup> iii IV V I ii<sup>7</sup> vii<sup>9</sup> I I<sup>9</sup> (V<sup>9</sup>/iv)

156

*mp cèder un peu* *p*

*p cèder un peu*

*mf cèder un peu* *p*

*(I ped.)*

ii<sup>7</sup> V<sup>9</sup> I V<sup>7</sup>/iv iv I<sup>6</sup> ii<sup>9</sup> vii<sup>9</sup> V<sup>6</sup> (in bass) V<sup>4</sup> I

#### Bridge passage, bars 160<sup>2</sup>–164

A brief recitative-like transition section serves as a bridge between the end of the A section and the beginning of the B section. Lasting from bar 160<sup>2</sup>–164, the passage is almost entirely monophonic, with the exception of a single chord in bar 162. An initial five-note utterance in the bassoon spans a minor 6<sup>th</sup> from E to C, although the line is almost entirely conjunct (E–F–G–F–C). After a crotchet rest this is repeated an octave higher by the piano, and finally another octave higher by the oboe, this time without a break. The oboe's phrase lands on a B rather than a C, and is supported by a single accented E/G♯ chord in the piano which is revealed to be V<sup>6</sup> of the A minor tonality which briefly emerges at bar 165.



## Extract 24

The bassoon continues in bar 163 with a plaintive three-note melody which foregrounds the dominant pitch (E), which alternates with the  $\flat 6$  above it. This clearly relates not only to the repeating fragment in the preceding two bars, but also to earlier  $\flat 6$ -5 resolutions. The repeating fragment is decorated by an acciaccatura G, which creates a false relation against the E major chord at the beginning of bar 162. This gesture too is repeated in ever quicker succession as the quaver rest is omitted at the end of bar 163. A scalic oboe flourish ascends a compound minor 6<sup>th</sup> leading to the lyrical main theme of the B section in bar 165.

## B Section, bars 165–191

The B section provides contrast not only in terms of its thematic content, but also in its harmonic language. Like several of Poulenc's works with opening movements in a similar form, for example the Sextet (1931–32) and the Clarinet Sonata (1962), this middle section also has a slower tempo than the A section.

## B Section theme, bars 165–184

Unlike the disparate thematic ideas of the A section, the B section thematic material feels more unified and organic with a lyrical simplicity that belies the complex tonal and harmonic shifts which underpin it. A lilting syncopated chordal accompaniment is maintained in the piano throughout most of the section too, which further enhances the sense of coherence and wholeness.

Constructed almost entirely of periodic four-bar phrases, Poulenc's skill as a melodist makes each phrase in this section feel as though its trajectory is wholly inevitable. And yet, tonal centres are fleeting throughout the section, and keys are abandoned almost immediately as they are established: several phrases end in a different key from that in which they began. For example, the phrase in bars 165 to 168 begins in A minor and ends in F minor (a relationship which Poulenc has already explored in the A section).

Poulenc achieves this tonal ebb and flow through a nearly continuous circle of fifths progression in which almost every chord has a dominant relationship to the chord that follows it. Furthermore, most of the chords contain several chromatic alterations, which affords those which are left as simple triads a real sense of clarity (such as in bars 169–172). It is interesting that most of the progressions cadence into minor keys although the melody itself rarely contains the  $\flat 3$  or  $\flat 6$  prior to the cadence point. The 'tonic' chords are almost always minor 9<sup>th</sup> chords too (with the 9<sup>th</sup> generally resolving downwards by step, as we shall see). This enables Poulenc to quickly transform each 'tonic' chord into the supertonic in the next key in a near continuous series of ii–V–i progressions. For example, the Am<sup>9</sup> which underpins the melody in bar 165 is quickly treated as chord ii as the harmony shifts fleetingly to an altered D chord (V) and then to Gm<sup>9</sup> (i) at the beginning



## Unit 3 Music

### Into the Twentieth Century

of bar 166. This in turn also becomes chord ii as the music moves through two different altered C (V) chords in quick succession, and then onto Fm<sup>9</sup> (i) in bar 168. All of this happens within a single four-bar phrase, as shown below.

#### Extract 25

165 (13)   
 Treble and Bass staves. Key signature changes from G major to F minor.   
 Harmonic progression:   
 Bar 165:  $\text{G}^9$  (i<sup>9</sup>)  $\text{G}^9$  (ii<sup>9</sup>)  $\text{V}^{b6(\text{add } b9)}$  (V<sup>b6</sup>)  $\text{i}^9$  (i<sup>9</sup>)   
 Bar 166:  $\text{V}^{13\#11}$  (V<sup>13#11</sup>)  $\text{V}^{b13}$  (V<sup>b13</sup>)  $\text{i}^9$  (i<sup>9</sup>)   
 Bar 167:  $\text{i}^9$  (i<sup>9</sup>)   
 Bar 168:  $\text{i}^9$  (i<sup>9</sup>)

The melodic line frequently refers to the descending minor 6<sup>th</sup> interval with which it begins, which helps to create a sense of wholeness despite the persistently unsettled harmony that underpins it. This combines with a turn-like figure which also features in several of the phrases, and which can also be considered as an inversion of the semiquaver figure from bars 160–161.

#### Extract 26

165 (13)   
 Oboe:  $\text{m}6$  (m6)   
 Bassoon:  $\text{m}6$  (m6)   
 Turn-like pattern   
 169 (14)   
 Oboe, Bassoon, Piano (8ves):  $\text{m}6$  (m6)   
 Turn-like pattern   
 Ascending m6   
 173   
 Turn-like pattern   
 m6 (m6)

The melody is afforded further internal coherence thanks to Poulenc's sequential treatment of a recurring pattern of intervals. The first two-bar sub-phrase (bars 165–166<sup>3</sup>) ends with a (decorated) falling major second from A to G, supported by a harmonic progression suggesting the key of G minor as shown above. The second two-bar sub-phrase also ends with a falling major second, this time a tone lower from G to F, with the harmony now suggesting the key of F minor. Indeed, the two sub-phrases share more of their shape than this: both end with the pattern of scale degrees  $\hat{6}-\hat{7}-\hat{9}-\hat{8}$  in their respective keys.



# Unit 3 Music

## Into the Twentieth Century

## Extract 27

A contrasting melody is played by the bassoon in bars 169–172, with a wider range than in the previous phrase. This phrase does not contain sequential treatment of the line, but rather the wholesale repetition of a series of pitches at a lower octave. This phrase also contains the characteristic descending minor 6<sup>th</sup> interval and the turn-like figure.

## Extract 28

Repetition an octave lower

169

m6

turn-like

This phrase stands out because it remains in the same key (C minor) for its duration, and its harmony is generally simpler than the surrounding phrases, using mainly triads. Like several of the A Section themes, this phrase includes a Neapolitan 6<sup>th</sup> chord, which occurs twice in quick succession. The first progresses to V<sup>7</sup> in third inversion, which in turn resolves conventionally to i<sup>6</sup>. The second Neapolitan chord resolves to an unembellished chord V triad in bar 172, an imperfect cadence, with the melody here also landing on the dominant.

## Extract 29

169

$\text{C}_2$   $\text{BII}^6$   
( $\text{N}^6$ )

$\text{V}_2^4$

$\text{I}^6$

$\text{BII}^6$   
( $\text{N}^6$ )

$\text{V}$

The syncopated accompaniment is replaced with staccato quaver broken chords in bars 171–172, which further emphasises the moment as the music builds towards the next phrase.

The four-bar phrase in bars 173–176 is a modified repeat of the phrase in bars 165–169, with the closing  $\widehat{9}-\widehat{8}$  melodic shape preserved in its first sub-phrase (which moves from the key of C minor to B $\flat$  minor) and the complete  $\widehat{6}-\widehat{7}-\widehat{9}-\widehat{8}$  pattern ending the second sub-phrase, cadencing a further tone lower in A $\flat$  minor. The melody here is expansive, doubled in all three instruments across several octaves and marked *très expressif*. The syncopated chordal accompaniment is resumed in the middle register of the piano, creating a rich melody-dominated homophonic texture.



## Unit 3 Music

### Into the Twentieth Century

#### Extract 30

The harmony in bar 173 returns both to the succession of ii–V–i progressions, and the use of richly chromatic chord extensions, as in the first phrase of the theme. Similarly to bar 167, there are two different alterations to the dominant chord (E<sub>b</sub>) in bar 175.

#### Extract 31

The melody, now played by the piano, becomes noticeably more chromatic from bar 177, but again the interval of a descending major second features prominently. The key at this point is G<sub>b</sub> major and the scale degrees repeated throughout this phrase are 6–5. A dominant pedal is sustained in bars 177–179, spreading across two octaves in the piano LH, as is typical of Poulenc's piano writing. The phrase ends with a rapidly descending diminished 7 chord outlined in the oboe, coming to rest on a C<sup>#</sup> as the music shifts enharmonically into the key of F<sup>#</sup> minor.

#### Extract 32

A harmonic reduction of bars 177–180 is shown on the next page, with enharmonic respellings shown in brackets.



## Unit 3 Music

### Into the Twentieth Century

#### Extract 33

177

$\text{G}^{\flat} \text{, } \text{V}^9 \text{, } \text{V ped.}$

I

$\text{vii}^9^7/\text{V}$

$\text{V}^{13}$

$\text{V}^{99}$

i

The melody continues in the oboe in bars 181–184, beginning with a chromatic descent, and once again both sub-phrases close with a  $\widehat{9}$ - $\widehat{8}$  movement in their respective keys of E minor and D minor.

#### Extract 34

181

$\text{G}^{\sharp}$

$\text{@}$

$\widehat{9}$

$\widehat{8}$

$\widehat{7}$

$\widehat{9}$

$\widehat{8}$

$\text{@}$

The circle of fifths progression continues through this phrase, although the music comes to rest in bar 184 not on a chord of D minor, but rather  $\text{Dm}^9(\flat 5)$  (or  $\text{D}^{\flat 9}$ ).

#### Extract 35

181

$\text{G}^{\sharp}$

$\text{@}$

$\text{ii}^9$

$\text{V}^9$

$\text{i}^9(\flat 5)$

$\text{@}$

$\text{ii}^9^7$

$\text{V}^{7\flat 6}$

$\text{i}^9(\flat 5)$

Despite its inherent dissonance and instability, this diminished harmony is sustained for several bars. The flattened 5<sup>th</sup> (Ab) is afforded particular prominence: it is doubled in three separate octaves and is also the only pitch to sound at the beginning of bars 185, 186 and 187.

#### Dotted motif (from Introduction), bars 184<sup>4</sup>–191

The dotted motif from the introduction returns in the bassoon at bar 184<sup>4</sup>, now commencing with a leaping octave, rather than a major 6<sup>th</sup>. Whereas in the introduction the phrase resolved downwards by step, here it returns precisely to where it began, resulting in a sense of stasis, further emphasising the pitch of Ab.



# Unit 3 Music

## Into the Twentieth Century

## Extract 36

4 *ff librement* 11

184 **15** *mf* 11

This melodic stasis is mirrored in the harmony, with the D diminished chord (now without the minor 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>) sustained for three more bars from bar 185. The bass line descends chromatically from F–D in syncopated crotchets, with the root of the chord only sounding on the last quaver of the bar: this is repeated exactly in bars 186 and 187. The dotted motif is repeated an octave higher in the oboe at bar 186<sup>4</sup>, with the phrase still avoiding a resolution, and the Ab shifts enharmonically to G# in bar 188. The pitch is sustained for two more bars and is doubled in the bassoon for even further emphasis.

The leading note function of the G $\sharp$  becomes increasingly apparent as the D diminished harmony finally resolves to an E<sup>13</sup> chord in bar 188. The various extensions of this dominant chord are sounded in passing as the piano RH plays a quasi-melodic figure in thirds, which first descends in bar 188 and then re-ascends in bar 189. The LH moves in contrary motion, affording both a sense of drive and a textural contrast from the stasis of the preceding bars.

In bar 190, the sustained G $\sharp$  finally moves upwards to an A in the oboe, and downwards to an F in the bassoon. However, a harmonic shift to a brilliantly colourful B $\flat$ <sup>maj9(#11)</sup> (Neapolitan) chord at this point, means that a sense of harmonic resolution, which has been denied since bar 184 (with the pitch then as an A $\flat$ ) – is further delayed. Indeed, the dominant (E) pedal at this point places the #11 in the bass, further enriching the dissonance. At bar 191, the harmony finally resolves to an unembellished E major chord – the first simple triad with clear tonal function since the F $\sharp$ m in bar 180 – concluding the B section on an imperfect cadence, and preparing for the return of Section A<sup>1</sup>.

## Extract 37

185 (15) 188 190

③ iv<sup>o</sup> V<sup>13</sup>  $\flat$ II<sup>maj 9#11</sup> V

V ped. \_\_\_\_\_



## A<sup>1</sup> Section, bars 191<sup>2</sup>–238

As the A section bore similarity to a sonata form exposition, so the A<sup>1</sup> section corresponds to a recapitulation: returning thematic material is now generally presented in the tonic key. The section opens not with theme 'a', however, but rather with a four-bar statement of theme 'd'. There is a clear parallel here with the passage in bars 93–98, where an earlier restatement of theme 'd' interrupted theme 'f'. In that case, as here, theme 'd' was preceded by a Neapolitan  $\flat$ II–V progression.

## Extract 38

93

190

(16) **Presto**

A major,  $bVI^7$ ,  $bII$ ,  $V^7$ ,  $bII$  major 9#11,  $V$ ,  $V^7$

Theme 'd' is presented here as it was in bars 51<sup>2</sup>–55, with the melody doubled in octaves in all three instruments. At the theme's conclusion, the music proceeds to a complete statement of theme 'a' in bars 195 to 106. The material and scoring is identical to bars 17 to 28, with the exception of the omission of the tonic minor chord from bar 17<sup>2</sup>: the previous tonal ambiguity is conclusively replaced by A major in bar 195. The textural similarities between the opening of theme 'd' and the close of theme 'a' are also worth re-stating at this point: in again uniting these themes together, Poulenc affords them a further sense of coherence. While the original statement of theme 'd' in also concluded with the declamatory statement from the opening of theme 'a', the parallels between these two themes were less apparent there than they are here.

Theme 'a' transitions directly to theme 'b', at bar 206<sup>2</sup>, exactly as it did at bar 28<sup>2</sup>, and this material is again presented in the dominant key, E major. Theme 'b' in turn progresses not to theme 'c' but rather directly to theme 'c1' at bar 210<sup>2</sup> (now in A minor, as was theme 'c' at bar 33), and themes 'f' and 'g' are omitted entirely from this section. Theme 'c1' again opens with a five-bar phrase, and the jumping octaves proceed via another Neapolitan chord to a forceful arrival at a low sustained dominant (now E) in the piano LH at bar 216. This pitch is doubled by a trilling oboe as the piano RH ascends through chromatic chord extensions and alterations, although these are different from those in



## Unit 3 Music

### Into the Twentieth Century

the same passage when it appeared in bars 139–143. The groups of four quavers (two pairs of simultaneously sounding notes, and two single notes) now include both major and minor thirds (G and G♯), with the major seventh (D♯) and minor 6<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> (C) returning here. It is notable that this figure is not repeated exactly this time around, with the first RH pitches in bar 216 being A and E, while in subsequent iterations they are E and B (as they were throughout the earlier appearance in bars 139–142). Other differences are that the passage lasts only three bars this time, rather than four, and the leaping octave motion previously in the oboe is no longer present, nor is the semitone  $\flat 6$ –5 alternation which was previously in the bassoon.

At bar 219<sup>2</sup>, the music progresses directly to theme 'h', this time without the descending broken chord  $\flat II$ –V<sup>7</sup> progression which previously led into it in bars 143–146. The melody is played by the bassoon and doubled at the top of the chord voicings in the piano RH, and the texture is again homophonic. However, the presentation of this section contrasts strongly with the previous iteration of the theme 'h' and a clear sense of restlessness and excitement emerges: the music feels strongly like a coda. While the tension between A minor and A major was eliminated in the return of theme 'a', it returns here and the music struggles to settle in a clear tonality. The theme appears to begin in A minor and conclude in A major, but a B♭ major chord (with no clear function as a pre-cadential Neapolitan chord) and a persistent F natural challenge the security of A as a tonal centre: the clear diatonic harmony from bars 148–149 is now much more ambiguous. This theme was originally stated in F major, and there is evidently a pull in this direction from the alternating pedal which oscillates between F and E in the piano LH, always with F on the strong beats of the bar. The first three chords of the theme include the IV and V in F major (without any chromatic alterations), while the following three chords create a cadential progression in A major (albeit tinged with major/minor ambiguity on IV(iv) and a  $\flat 6$  (F) underpinning chord I. Even when this tension briefly resolves, the tonic chord remains in second inversion, and the dissonance quickly returns.

This tension and resolution between alternating semitones, both  $\flat 6$  to 5 and  $\flat 9$  to 8, has featured several times in the movement (including the close of theme 'h' in the A section at bars 159–60, as well as in the earlier repeating harmonic progression in bars 112–115). In those cases, however, this was in the context of clear functional relationships (and generally over a dominant chord). This instability under the tonic alludes to a sense of bitonality: while the music never really establishes itself in a tonal centre of F, it is certainly not securely based around A.



## Unit 3 Music

### Into the Twentieth Century

#### Extract 39

219 (18)

*ff*

*très marqué*

*ff*

*ff*

*V ped.*

*V ped.*

(F) iii⁴ (A/a) i⁴ IV⁴ V⁶ bII⁴ III⁶ IV(iv)⁶ V⁷ I⁶ in bass(I⁶) bII⁴ III+⁶ IV(iv)⁶ I⁵ vi⁶ 2 7

Alternating V-bVI ped.

The two-bar phrase repeats immediately at bar 221<sup>4</sup>, now with the oboe also doubling the melody an octave higher, and with slightly altered harmony: what was previously a C major chord is now C augmented, further destabilising the harmony.

A brief metre change to 3/4 also shifts the rhythmic emphasis of the phrase, and tinges of A minor/F major finally disappear as the oscillating pedal comes to rest decisively on E – first in the piano LH and then trilling in the bassoon. The music is devoid of any chromatic alterations from the key of A major until bar 227, although root position tonic chords remain elusive.

The dotted figure at the end of the melodic phrase is now extended, descending not only through the pitches of an A major triad, but an additional F# is added at the bottom, outlining what can be heard variously as an F#m<sup>7</sup> or A<sup>6</sup> chord. The music at this point has a strong pentatonic flavour, although the fleeting semiquaver Ds in the melody mean it is not truly pentatonic.

The melodic material is derived entirely from either the scalic idea at the beginning of the theme's opening phrase, or the descending triadic movement at the end.



## Unit 3 Music

### Into the Twentieth Century

#### Extract 40

The semiquaver figure introduced in the piano and oboe at bar 224 also bears some similarity with the bridge passage at the beginning of the B section, as shown below. Both gestures ascend and then descend conjunctly before leaping upwards a perfect 5<sup>th</sup>. The idea is repeated in bar 226, now with the oboe playing a rhythmically similar gesture, but using the pitches from the extended arpeggio.

#### Extract 41

At bar 227, the piano presents a series of block chords, which serve to affirm the tonality of A major, and which derive from the melodic outline of bars 155<sup>2</sup>–157 in the original statement of theme 'h'. It is also notable that this phrase itself clearly draws upon a combination of descending conjunct (including b6–5 resolutions) and descending triadic movement.

#### Extract 42

The colourful harmonic progression includes chromatic alterations, including a chord that sounds as a Bb<sup>ø7</sup>, although it is not spelled as such, and another minor chord iv (with an added 9<sup>th</sup> in the bass, perhaps alluding to the final chord in bar 3), but ends very securely with a V<sup>7</sup>–I cadence in A major.



## Unit 3 Music

### Into the Twentieth Century

#### Extract 43

227 (19)

(A)       $\text{ii}^7$        $\text{IV}^{\text{add}9}$        $\text{ii}^7$        $\text{iv}^{\text{add}9}$        $\text{V}^7$        $\text{I}$   
(V ped.)

This leads to a final statement of theme 'a' in bars 230<sup>2</sup>–234, now presented only in parallel thirds. While the pedal is now omitted, tonic harmony is clearly implied throughout the whole phrase. For the first time, the wind instruments descend for a full two octaves through the A major scale. At bar 235 a final gesture continues the descending scalic idea, now in alternating descending fifths and with syncopated accents further disrupted by another brief metrical shift to 3/4. When each pair of descending quavers is assimilated together, this creates a parallel  $\text{V}^7$ – $\text{IV}^7$ – $\text{iii}^7$ – $\text{ii}^7$  progression, which leads to the final perfect cadence of the movement.

#### Extract 44

230

ff très sec

ff très sec

ff très sec

(A) I

235

ff

ff très sec

ff arraché

$\text{V}^7$        $\text{IV}^7$        $\text{iii}^7$        $\text{ii}^7$        $\text{V}^7\text{sus}^4$        $\text{I}$       8ve basse



## Unit 3 Music

### Into the Twentieth Century

It is worth noting that the harmony in this final section of the movement includes some quartal chords. The bare fifths of the opening bar return at the beginning of bar 223, (now as bare fourths), and even chords that are not truly quartal are presented in voicings which emphasise the parallel movement of bare fourths and fifths, as in both bars 223 and 225. The penultimate chord, sounded in bar 237, is a  $V^7sus^4$  with the leading note not sounded before the final tonic chords in bar 238. This is particularly interesting on account of the significance of the relationship between the leading note and the tonic (and other semitone resolutions including  $b6-5$ ,  $b9-8$ ), which has been present throughout the movement. The sense of tension and resolution is all but eliminated in the final passage, and the movement concludes abruptly and excitedly, very clearly in A major, with all previous tonal ambiguity now banished. The texture is entirely homorhythmic from bar 227, and the final staccato chords move in contrary motion covering a wide range of the piano, with the direction to play *arraché* (ripped).

#### Acknowledgements and bibliography

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