

# **Beyond Simplicity**

**Analytical Strategies for Contemporary Music**

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# Abstract

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Focusing on a repertoire which has often been dismissed for its apparent simplicity, this thesis indicates appropriate strategies for analytical study of this significant body of contemporary music, often termed 'minimalist' or 'post-minimalist', but in fact escaping any such easy classification. Traditional analytical approaches have most usually failed to account successfully for this music, concentrating on the more obvious aspects of its construction and ignoring the complexities that arise when perceived. As a result, the current approach marks an explicit turning towards a consideration of effect, capturing the ways in which different parameters interact and how traditional models of expectation are subverted. Viewed as the means of refining the intentional representation of an individual piece of music, analysis is reinscribed within a cultural network of understanding, both losing its pretence of objective formalism, and gaining a particular and well-defined role within a contemporary musicological context. The evolution of a number of different strategies is a response both to deconstructive and postmodern approaches to text, a recognition of the multiplicity inherent in the repertoire involved, and a general avoidance of clearly theoretical orientations for a more *ad hoc* process.

Situated within discussion both of analytical considerations in general and of this repertoire in particular, the analyses of seven representative pieces of music considerably extend those that have been offered previously. Approaches adopting different aspects of deconstruction are used for discussion of music by Ligeti, Nyman and Andriessen, displaying a number of 'Disorderings' of traditional concepts of how music behaves; further analyses of pieces by Feldman, Reich, Skempton and Monk place greater emphasis on aspects of sound. Illustrating in concrete terms the application of the analytical understanding evolved earlier, these various strategies mark an extension and deepening of the conceptual framework within which this music is usually considered.

# Table of Contents

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<b>Preface</b>	5
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	8
<b>Chapter 1</b>	
<b>Simplicity in Theory</b>	
Asking the Question	9
Posing the Problem	12
Approaches to Analysis	18
<b>Disorderings</b>	36
<b>Chapter 2</b>	
<b>1. Towards Analysis</b>	
The Resistance to Analysis	37
Techniques and Strategies	43
‘Long, Slow and Quiet’	53
<b>2. Reasserting the Temporal: György Ligeti’s First Piano Étude (1985)</b>	
Analytical Context	60
Disordering <i>Désordre</i>	64
<b>Chapter 3</b>	
<b>Crossing the Borders: Michael Nyman’s <i>MGV</i> (1993)</b>	
The Infinite Context	82
Analytical Points of Departure	86
Segmentation	90
Foreground and Background	93
Motivic Process / Development	103
Harmonic Articulation	110
Emergence of Overall Form	116
Re-Context	122
<b>Chapter 4</b>	
<b>Past, Presence and Absence: Louis Andriessen’s <i>De Stijl</i> (1985)</b>	
Past and Presence	125
Models and Figures	129
Overall Form	133
Make-up of Material	139
Over-running the Structural	151
Past and Absence	156

**Chapter 5****Hearing the Wood for the Trees: Morton Feldman's *Three Voices* (1982)**

Analytical Issues and Procedures	166
Large-scale Form	169
Segmentation of Material	176
Words	186
Repetition and Variation / Reiteration and Change	191
Between Categories	199

**Chapter 6****Listening Through a Gradual Process: Steve Reich's *Four Organs* (1970)**

Process and Product	203
Systems and Material	206
Hearing the Changes	214
Process and Sonority	217

**Chapter 7****Variations on a Theme: Howard Skempton's *The Durham Strike* (1985)**

Sections and Categories	221
Analytical Strategy	225
Ambiguity and Interplay	242

**Chapter 8****Consistency, Contradiction and the uses of Confusion: Meredith Monk's *Arctic Bar* (1990)**

Score and Performance	247
Types of Material and Process	250
Musical Layers and Aspects of Consistency	254
Combinations and Contradictions	262
Expectation and Confusion	265
The Voice and the Intangible	269

**Chapter 9****Afterwards** 273**Appendix 1: Graphic Representation of *Four Organs*** 280**Appendix 2: Transcribed Score of *Arctic Bar*** 283**List of Primary Materials** 286**Bibliography** 288

## Preface

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The title of this study, *Beyond Simplicity*, represents a deliberate reference to Edward Cone's now famous article, 'Beyond Analysis' written some thirty years ago (Cone 1967); despite Jonathan Dunsby's characterisation of this notion as being 'quite a hoary old idea' (Dunsby 1995: 134), Cone's consideration of what is, in his terms, beyond analysis still indicates a number of the starting points for the current examination of analytical strategies applied to a significant body of contemporary music. Cone takes as an example a serial composition, and asks whether a retrograde version remains equally valid, since it may be considered 'analytically' equivalent; as far as a composer's initial choices are concerned, 'they are so fundamental... as to belong... among its basic assumptions. They are determined by what may be called *absolute decisions*, i.e. decisions for which no adequate analytical reasons can ever be adduced' (Cone 1967: 43). However, as David Lewin has pointed out, there seems to be a confusion here between Theory and Analysis, and although the two are not wholly separable, he does reinscribe some difference between them in the application to Cone's particular problem: 'analysis certainly *can* tell the difference between up and down, sooner and later, even if serial theory can't (yet)' (Lewin 1969: 67). This view of analysis tacitly places emphasis on consideration of effect rather than simply of structure, and this distinction is fundamental within the current study.

The repertoire which is considered here has generally been badly served by analytical reflection. One of the main contentions of this study is that this music may be 'rescued' for such reflection, partially though a rehabilitation of analysis within a context which places much greater importance on effects rather than structures. This emphasis, which involves a more critical approach, also marks a move away from seeing analysis as a reflection purely of 'what is there in the music', toward considering whether the structures which are observable make any effect on the aural level, and how this is achieved. Within Cone's terminology, this means that very little remains 'beyond analysis'; instead, as Arnold Whittall has commented, 'perhaps we should think of things which are beyond singular analysis rather than beyond any kind of analysis' (in Dunsby 1995: 134). An important aspect of this process is how the type of analysis which is

discussed and practised here does not seek to provide a singular explication of a piece of music, but rather to capture something of the multi-dimensional way in which it is perceived, and to inscribe a particular hearing within a more general currency of understanding and listening. For the current repertoire this means avoiding lapsing into generalisations and assumptions regarding which features of the music are either the most conducive to analytical discussion, and therefore 'important', or are insignificant and 'merely trivial'; as a model of analytical rectitude this is hardly controversial, but there is a tendency when discussing the most recent music, and particularly the range of styles considered here, to suspend such considerations.

The indication of a number of 'analytical strategies' within the title is a part of the recognition that the requirements of the music indicate a much less rigid approach than the establishment of a new, distinct methodology; the status and analytical reach of these strategies will become clear through the current study, and they are inserted at a particular point within contemporary considerations of approaches to the study of 'texts'. Although it has become fashionable in recent times to talk about numerous disciplines as 'modes of writing', here this aspect of the analytical process is emphasised. As a result, what may be viewed as the 'rhetorical' dimension of the analyses becomes increasingly important. In analytical contexts which view the process as recording levels of objective knowledge, the particular situation of the analyst within the text, and the textual strategies employed, are considered as a marginal aspect; with a slightly different orientation, such as that adopted here, the persuasive elements gain greater weight, and the process of *writing* is seen very much as a part of the analysis itself.<sup>1</sup> This emphasis means that the analyses presented here explore a wide variety of approach, and manner of presentation, again reasserting the multiplicity of the strategies used, a multiplicity which seems better to reflect the profusion of styles that contemporary music offers.

In this, the current study marks a deliberate response to the often-discussed 'simplicity' of much of the music upon which it reflects. This response is situated at a particular position within the discipline, and endeavours to move past the analytical impasse that often seems to block acceptance of this repertoire. In considering issues such as the multiplicity of analytical approach within more general concerns of discourse within the humanities, as well as inscribing a number of these pieces within a complex

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<sup>1</sup> For a consideration of the way in which what Marion Guck calls 'analytical fictions' evolve, even within 'objective' accounts, see Guck 1994a.

network of contemporary ideas, these analyses represent an extension of the conceptual framework within which this music is most often considered. Rather than illustrating the resistance to musical analysis, this study rehabilitates analytical study for this repertoire in particular. This music is thereby revealed not as being 'beyond analysis', but rather, in order to capture the particular and individual effects involved, requiring an analytical and conceptual approach which marks a distinct and conscious moving 'beyond simplicity'.

## Acknowledgements

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Acknowledgement should also be given to the following for kind permission to use copyright material for the music examples: Louis Andriessen *De Stijl*, reproduced by permission of Boosey and Hawkes Music Publishers, 1997; Morton Feldman *Three Voices*, reproduced by permission of Universal Edition (London) Ltd.; György Ligeti *Désordre*, reproduced by permission of Schott & Co. Ltd.; Michael Nyman *MGV*, © Chester Music Limited / Michael Nyman Limited. Reproduced by permission of Chester Music Limited; Steve Reich *Four Organs*, reproduced by permission of Universal Edition (London) Ltd.; Howard Skempton *The Durham Strike*, © Oxford University Press 1996, used by permission.

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my Father.



# Chapter 1

## Simplicity in Theory

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### Asking the Question

‘With music this simple, what is there to analyse?’ This is one of the most important questions that this study seeks to address, for the repertoire on which it focuses has generally been ignored by those who examine music in analytical terms, being dismissed as much for the perceived strengths and failings of analytical methodologies as for a general attitude that the music is not of sufficient interest to merit this attention. Perception of this musical ‘worth’ (defined in analytical terms) depends upon a reformulation of some of the analytical questions which need to be asked of this music; such a process indicates that this repertoire, often disregarded as being overly simplistic or reductive, does possess a high degree of complexity, but a complexity that has firstly to be recognised through the application of analytical strategies which are tailored to the task in hand.

The indication of a number of differing *strategies* rather than a single, more general *methodology* is a part of this process of attempting to retain some sense of difference, both in terms of the analytical approaches that are employed, and in a general refusal to group the music under any larger rubric, even if what is actually quite a diverse range of pieces could be classifiable in such a way. Such classification does sometimes fulfil a need, in that it can indicate quite precisely what type of music is being considered, but more often involves an over-generalisation, a desire to place music into easily-identifiable groups, so that, in this case, it becomes increasingly easy to dismiss as it falls under a single, often pejorative, heading. The most obvious of these labels is that of ‘minimalism’; without endeavouring to go into a discussion either of the roots or of the aesthetic basis of minimalism as it appeared in the late Sixties and

early Seventies,<sup>1</sup> the one piece represented in this study that may clearly be labelled as such is Steve Reich's *Four Organs*, which has now gained almost classic status. However, the remaining six pieces do not fall as easily under this heading: Louis Andriessen and Michael Nyman are two composers often called 'minimalist', but their work, as represented here, is very different from that of Reich, Riley and Glass written one or two decades earlier. Similarly, although Morton Feldman's *Three Voices* and Howard Skempton's *The Durham Strike* both use what may be termed a 'minimal' amount of material, the treatment of that material is far from the concentration on logical processes found in *Four Organs* (and the multiplicity presented by *De Stijl*, despite its minimal labelling). In addition, although György Ligeti's *Désordre* places emphasis on the importance of a simple process giving rise to a more complex result, its harmonic language and general sense of musical style differentiate it from its American 'cousins'. However, this piano Étude does pay an important debt to composers such as Reich and Riley (first acknowledged by Ligeti in his *Selbstportrait* of 1976), and in this respect it shares with all the other pieces the fact that it could probably not have been written were it not for the arrival of minimalism some years earlier. This itself suggests another label, that of 'post-minimalism', at least in terms of chronology, a term increasingly applied to Andriessen and Nyman, though again somewhat less suitable for Feldman and Skempton. Their music has more often been described as 'experimental', a term also extended to cover Reich and Glass, and which, in its indication of the creation of complexity from single-minded processes does characterise many of the pieces considered here. One drawback of the experimental label is that its application tends to be rather wide and insufficiently precise (consider, for instance, the scope of music involved in Michael Nyman's *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond*, Nyman 1974), so that, for instance, Cage's music also falls within this grouping, although it is mostly very different from that considered here. The problem with all such terminology, including such other current favourites as 'New Simplicity', 'Neo-Romantic' and, of course, 'post-modernism' is that, as Steve Sweeney-Turner points out, 'the buzzwords have finally come home to roost, even if everyone means different things by them' (Sweeney-Turner 1995b: 599); he goes on to

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Strickland's *Minimalism: Origins* (Strickland 1993) gives an overview of a number of starting points for the musical genre, and his *American Composers* (Strickland 1991) has some useful interviews with its main proponents; Jonathan W. Bernard also discusses minimalism in music and the other arts (Bernard 1993). For discussion of the evolution of Reich's music see Schwarz 1981 & 1982, and for Glass' music see Glass 1988; further consideration of these, and other, composers can be found in Schwarz's *Minimalists* (Schwarz 1996).

suggest that ‘perhaps... we should start thinking of a different way of labelling music to the stupidly proliferating field of post-isms we are currently - and belatedly - getting into’ (: 601), a position with which I would concur.

Having indicated that the music under consideration in fact escapes any too simple grouping, it is worth considering why it is often labelled in such a way, as well as indicating some common areas of concern that *do* emerge and, in fact, account for the inclusion of the various pieces here. The most potent pejorative label is that which might be termed the ‘minimalism - simplicity’ rubric, which considers the music as being of insufficient compositional interest to be taken seriously. Such discussions usually focus on the limited amount of basic material, for instance, the single chord of *Four Organs*, the continual repetition of three-note cells in *Three Voices*, or the piano part in *Arctic Bar*, and equate simplicity of means with simplicity of effect. Even those pieces which involve a greater variety and density of material, for instance, *De Stijl* or *MGV*, are to some extent implicated in this process, in that their use of repetition, even when not of the same order as found in *Four Organs* (and often involving various similar groups of material rather than literal repetition) is viewed as demonstrating a lack of ‘musical sophistication’, which is again equated with absence of musical effect. What such a classification illustrates is a two-fold process. Firstly, there is a rather too-simple identification of the music’s worth with either how it looks *in the score*, or first strikes the listener; for example, in the case of Reich’s *Four Organs*, unless listeners pass through the stage of concentrating on the fact of there being only one chord, they are unlikely to perceive the features of interest that do arise. In fact, almost all the music considered in this study, but particularly the works by Reich, Monk, Feldman and Skempton, *look* deceptively simple when written down, which both presents a barrier directly to those who expect their reading of the score to resemble closely the sounding result, and tends to indicate a particular ‘listening mind-set’, where the expectation of simplicity prevents a listening strategy which remains open to the complexities which result. This is, of course, the second aspect of the process outlined above, where, because in many cases this music does not sound complex, or even particularly ‘new’, the expectation is that it needs to be approached in a traditional way, without considering that, like much other contemporary music which is regarded as more ‘difficult’, a somewhat different orientation is needed.

An important part, therefore, of the analyses in this study is the evolution of processes of understanding that allow the complexities of this music to be discussed, to circumvent the critical attitude that considers only its written appearance or which refuses to engage with the music, dismissing it rather on the basis of a few, over-applied labels. Such an approach obviously relies upon a particular understanding of what musical analysis seeks to do and a consideration of its aims and also its critical blindnesses. The remainder of this chapter falls into two parts. In the first, the pieces to be examined are briefly introduced, along with an indication of the problems that each presents, and how this sample provides a broad range both of types of music and of analytical tasks. In the second part, the analytical orientation of the present study is outlined, along with some indications of the general strategies employed and the overall aims of the approach.

### **Posing the Problem**

Some indications of the types of problem that are encountered have already been given above, but it is worth stating these in a more formal way. In addition, the particular difficulties posed by each piece need to be examined, as do the reasons for its selection here. In very simple terms, this music has in common the fact that it does not seem to be particularly well served by either of the main analytical methodologies that, at least during the Seventies and Eighties, were the mainstay of analytical writing: Schenkerian analysis for tonal music and Set-theoretical analysis for non-tonal music. In more recent years, what has often been seen as the hegemonic nature of these two particular discourses has been eroded, as the aims and approaches of the analytical discipline have themselves been subjected to critical scrutiny, and the object of study has often moved away from the traditional canon of music from the Eighteenth, Nineteenth and early-Twentieth Centuries to embrace a wider consideration of different styles.<sup>2</sup> Despite this, the music examined here has not generally received the level of analytical attention that

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<sup>2</sup>This move has been one of the most fundamental changes within the discipline over the last fifteen years or so, and even a representative sample of literature would be vast. However, in so far as an indication of influence for the current study is concerned, see, of course, Kerman 1980 and 1985; for some discussion of Schenker, particularly his organicism, see Solie 1980 and Snarrenberg 1994, and for a more critical perspective Kramer 1992b, the reply by Scott Burnham (Burnham 1992) and Kramer's further comments (Kramer 1992a); for discussion of canon formation see Morgan 1992, and for the role of analytical, structural listening in this process, Subotnick 1996: 148-76.

one might expect, and some of this neglect is partly due to the critical attitudes outlined above, but also to its apparent resistance to analytical discourse.

At the risk of over-simplifying, the main point of resistance is that the music is neither tonal or non-tonal, and thus falls rather easily into a kind of no-man's land. Although much of it employs the building blocks of tonal music, in fact, often concentrating heavily on simple triadic constructions, the way in which these are manipulated over the course of the piece does not present the type of long-term directed structures that Schenkerian analysis is particularly good at reflecting, nor any interplay between different levels of structure from which such a reduction could be prepared. In addition, even if the music does display more localised feature of directed voice-leading, in many cases this seems one of the least important issues in how this music is perceived. Coming from the opposite direction, this use of 'tonal' building blocks means that in many cases attempts at application of a Set-theoretic taxonomy result in a meaningless 'blandness', where the absence of differentiation in terms of the sets employed results in analysis which merely serves to illustrate what was already obvious, for instance, that most of the harmony is triadic. Of the seven pieces examined in the current study, five principally involve triadic (or derived) structures, whilst the remaining two, Feldman's *Three Voices* and Ligeti's *Désordre*, are more chromatic and thus might appear to be more susceptible to this type of analysis. However, in both cases, the amount of information that such an approach produces seems insignificant in terms of its effect, so that, in *Désordre*, the main focus is on more global processes, and in *Three Voices*, although prime-form labelling is used in the analysis presented in Chapter 5, the relationships between sets is neither particularly systematic, nor that important in the perception of connections and overall form. Paradoxically, perhaps, Skempton's *The Durham Strike* involves the most systematic manipulation of chromatic sonorities, though in this case these are formed by the extensions of more triadic structures and operate in relation to a perception of modality.

This refusal to coincide easily with either of these two methods is one barrier to the analysis of this music, though it does not mean that these approaches may not be modified in some way to be more useful. (As will be discussed, the present analytical approach borrows from a wide variety of techniques, without the wholesale adoption of any.) However, there is an important difference between this and other contemporary music which does seem to be susceptible to this type of 'modified technique'. For

instance, the music of Harrison Birtwistle and Peter Maxwell Davies has received a large degree of analytical attention, which seems to account for its effect reasonably well; in addition, composers who have worked in a more strictly serial manner have never been short of analysts prepared to demonstrate the processes used in composition (though, as will be discussed below, whether this forms an ‘analysis’ in the terms employed in this study is a debatable point).<sup>3</sup> Much of this analytical work has concentrated on issues of contrast and unity, which analytical methodologies have always been good at examining, and, without wishing to lapse into the generalisations that were criticised above, remain important features of musical modernism. For instance, in discussing Maxwell Davies’ output, Arnold Whittall focuses primarily on the creation of oppositions and the manipulation of conflicting stylistic references in the work of the Sixties and Seventies within a more overreaching ‘prevailing unity’ (Whittall 1994: 546). Even in the more recent works, Whittall identifies a concern with integration and balance, as well as the maintaining of a sense of local contrast and disjunction, so that ‘coherence [emerges] from a well-wrought balance of opposites’ (: 550). This reinscription of concepts of contrast and unity within different terms serves to illustrate the ongoing importance of these features within a significant body of contemporary music (and reflection on that music). However, with the pieces under consideration here, these processes seem of much lesser importance, for, in some respects, the need to uncover unity is neutralized, as the basic similarity of much of this music means that it becomes more important to elaborate difference. This is in itself simply to invert the distinction, however; instead, this repertoire does not seem to rely so firmly on such concepts, involves a quite different effect, and requires alternative modes of understanding.

As was suggested above, part of the analytical problem is the difference between how the music looks and how it actually sounds (true for all music, of course, but particularly marked here), and a successful approach has to be able firstly to identify what its effect involves, and secondly, to indicate how it is controlled. In the present study the repertoire is deliberately limited in order to facilitate that process. For instance, in all cases but one, a traditional score is used, which (generally) allows the desired effect to be reproduced exactly; the only instances of some aspect of

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<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of analytical issues within Birtwistle’s music, and how concepts of opposition and coherence may be approached, see Cross 1994; Alistair Williams’ discussion of Boulez’ *Répons* primarily concentrates on ‘constructional’ aspects, but distanced within an Adornian perspective (Williams 1994).

performance freedom comes in the number of repetitions of each bar in *Four Organs*, and in choice of speed, dynamic and pedalling in *The Durham Strike*, all of which are commonly features of a great deal of music from the Twentieth century (and elsewhere). Monk's *Arctic Bar* is rather the exception to this process of creating a 'score heritage', but the use of a composer-supervised recording and a clear sense of which features are necessarily consistent and which subject to a process of controlled variation means that the main additional problems of dealing with music that is indeterminate in respect of its performance are avoided.<sup>4</sup> This restriction of repertoire means that music such as John Cage's late 'number' pieces, such as *Fourteen* and *Five*, are not considered, nor is music which relies upon graphic or other forms of non-traditional notation (again *Arctic Bar* is a slight exception to this rule). Such limitation stems from the desire to deal as clearly as possible with the problems of analysing music about whose identity we can be at least as precise as with that from earlier periods (music often analysed successfully), so that the issues are not complicated by additional issues of indeterminacy and iterability.

Despite this, the range of analytical problems is actually quite varied, and, indeed, part of the process of selection was determined by a desire to examine music which presents a number of different effects and techniques, and which therefore requires a corresponding array of analytical strategies. Before going on to consider the overall orientation, the problems posed by each piece in turn may be considered, as their effects are in many ways distinct. Taking the pieces in the order in which their analyses are presented in this study, the first group of three, subtitled 'Disorderings': *Désordre*, *MGV*, and *De Stijl*, are generally characterised by multiplicity and abundance. Ligeti's Piano Étude presents listeners with a huge number of notes of which they have to try to make some sense; part of the issue here is to account for how this music creates such a sense of forward momentum and the analysis presented in Chapter 2 concentrates on its temporality, why it proceeds in one direction only. Nyman's *MGV*, although making use of a much less frenzied basic tempo, and also of a much more clearly diatonic palette, presents a multiplicity in terms of form, with many short sections which place similar material in different contexts and thereby create continually-shifting emphasis. *MGV* illustrates many of the analytical issues at stake throughout this study, in that although the music often appears very simple, its total effect is actually quite complex.

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<sup>4</sup> The issues of improvisation and determinacy in *Arctic Bar* are considered in detail in Chapter 8.

Whilst *MGV* presents a multiplicity in terms of the rapid progression of many short segments, *De Stijl* displays its multiplicity through the layering of different strands of material. In addition, this piece plays with concepts of stylistic identity and offers a complex interaction of different ‘affects’; an analysis faces the problem of attempting to make some sense of all this apparent diversity, whilst at the same time, not reducing these differences to a bland uniformity. In common with the other two analyses in this section, Chapter 4 makes explicit use of a strategy of deconstruction, hence their grouping; although there is a general common purpose and overall aim, the differences between the pieces involved means that each depends upon a distinct orientation and analytical focus.

The remaining four pieces, whose analyses are grouped as ‘Soundings’, could be termed as being rather more ‘single minded’ in their approach, as they rely more upon the concentration on a limited amount of material rather than the multiplicity, either of notes, sections or styles, which characterise the three earlier pieces. As a result, the analytical focus shifts somewhat, from attempting to make sense out of a complex result, to dealing more directly with the effect that these pieces have, an effect often more clouded than revealed by the simplicity of means. Morton Feldman’s *Three Voices*, in its length and general lack of contrast, presents a quite complicated manipulation of time, producing a disorientation of memory and anticipation which has to be considered if the overall effect of the piece is to be delineated; despite the length of the music, a precise outline is required if the danger of falling into over-generalisations about this ‘long, slow and quiet’ music is to be avoided. Reich’s *Four Organs* is perhaps the prime example of a piece of music which produces maximum effect from a minimum amount of material, although here the clarity of the process often results in a refusal to be suitably explicit about the *effect* of that process; rather than taking for granted a simple identification between the two, the main analytical challenge here is again to be specific about the various ‘by-products’, and to deal with an analysis of sound and not simply structure. In its attempt to ‘listen through’ the more obvious surface process, the analysis in Chapter 6 is perhaps a touchstone to many of the others. The final two pieces in many ways act as extensions of those already examined, as both present quite complex aspects of form and processes of expectation and contradiction, created through apparently simple means. With *The Durham Strike*, the reduction of musical material resembles that of the Feldman piece, but the effect is



quite different (as, of course, is the timescale), with a complex formal understanding arising from the interaction of similarity and difference, with sonority being again very important. The danger with this piece in particular is either overdetermining it, so that its particular effectiveness is lost, or not attempting to deal sufficiently seriously with this simplest of music. Meredith Monk's *Arctic Bar* presents a similarly limited palette of material creating a quite complex formal result, though, as with *Four Organs*, coupled with an emphasis on the physicality of the sound itself, so that the analytical problem is to account for both these levels, as well as capturing some of the ambiguities which this music creates and upon which it depends.

The choice of pieces in this study thus represents a wide range of analytical problems and a cross-section of music within the confines of this particular area of repertoire. The investigation of a number of pieces which present different analytical obstacles means that no one methodology is likely to be generally applicable (the earlier indication of the evolution of *strategies* is a recognition of this fact, as well, as will be discussed below, of a desire to escape from any too-unthinking procedure). However, this flexibility of approach means that a number of common threads from the analyses may be taken and used further, so that the analytical work undertaken here is of more general application elsewhere. It is important to stress, however, that these pieces are not simply presented as excuses to try out as wide a range of analytical strategies as possible, but are primarily selected because they are considered musically interesting and challenging. Part of this analytical work is an attempt to evolve new understandings of the music, and this applies on a personal level as well. In seeking to unlock some of their 'mysteries', these analyses are a record of an extended engagement and increased familiarity with these pieces, and the working through of how and why they *work as music*. In the same way as each analysis does not attempt, or pretend, to be exhaustive, this process does not exhaust the possible meanings of these pieces of music, so that readers, as well as myself, will hopefully continue to listen; to appropriate a phrase from Steve Reich: 'even when all the cards are on the table..., there are still enough mysteries to satisfy all' (1974: 10).

## Approaches to Analysis

As a first stage, the analytical orientation of this study needs to be outlined fairly briefly, before considering in more detail how this position is related to a number of current concerns both within analytical discussion and a wider currency of discourse within the humanities. Such a bite-sized approach obviously runs the risk of rather glib oversimplification, but should only be considered a brief outline of the issues to be discussed in the remainder of this chapter. In the decade that has passed since Joseph Kerman published his critique of analytical writing (Kerman 1985), one aspect that has undoubtedly changed about the discipline which he attacked is that analysts are now considerably more explicit about their approaches and orientations, even if this only has limited effect on the analyses themselves.<sup>5</sup> As part of this (welcome) tendency, the following remarks summarize the overall direction of the current analytical project.

This position may be outlined under four basic headings. Firstly, there is a scepticism towards any large, overall theory: in analytical terms this means that there is no exclusive use of any specific analytical / theoretical method which is seen as having general and over-reaching validity, (although one might be visited as part of a more general inclusivity), nor is there an attempt to establish any new method as such. This move away from explicit theorisation means that the analytical readings are themselves situated at a particular point within an ongoing debate regarding theory in more general terms, and within characterisations of approaches towards text which are generally termed 'postmodern'. This avoidance of theoretical approaches for analysis is part of a realisation of the partial nature of all readings, and of the lacunae existing in any attempt at codification; of course, in discussion of musical effects, 'theory', in its broadest musical application, is unavoidable (pitch, rhythm, etc.), but here this term is used to indicate the adherence to specific methodologies.

Secondly, the analyses chart a movement away from structures towards effects: the concentration is explicitly shifted from examinations (solely) of construction and composition towards consideration of how the music strikes the (this) listener. Although most analytical writing claims to be concerned with the effect of music, the current study seeks to be as clear as possible in looking beyond aspects of the score (the

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<sup>5</sup> An instructive comparison may be made by considering a number of the theoretical positions outlined in *Theory Analysis and Meaning in Music* (Pople 1994a), and the analyses by some of the same authors in the companion volume, *Analytical Strategies and Interpretation* (Ayrey and Everist 1996).

simplicity of much of this music when written down has already been referred to), so that it can deal with the complexities that this music creates as perceived; this involves consideration both of the effects which arise from the (non-obvious) interaction of different parameters, and of the ways in which networks of expectation are created, often through the evocation of traditional models which are then subverted. This second aspect blends into the third, where analytical writing is positioned as the process of refining the intentional object of a particular piece of music.<sup>6</sup> Part of this process is the recognition that the analyst does *not* present a fixed ‘explanation’, ‘explication’ or even ‘description’ of a piece of music, but rather that the analysis can become a part of the ‘baggage’ of the music within a cultural framework. As a result of this process, new levels of meaning are accumulated, which can inform both a more abstract consideration of the music and how it is heard; analysis thereby reveals itself as the process of thinking about specific pieces within a limited frame of reference, suggesting different modes of understanding, which in turn feeds into the process of listening.

The fourth part of this orientation has already been suggested above, which is the continued belief in the value (and importance) of the examination of specific pieces, a process of ‘close reading’ which considers those aspects which are often termed ‘the purely musical’. There are a number of problems with this characterisation, which is usually set against a more historically or culturally-orientated view of music, but it is worth using this label as an indication of the type of approach undertaken here. This emphasis on ‘the music’ will be discussed more fully below, but it has an important corollary, which is that the analysis is generally considered as a separate entity from what the composer has to say on the music. Of course, it is easy to overstress this aspect, as in most of the analyses in this study some use is made of the composer’s own writings or commentary, but this is often treated with a degree of skepticism (the most explicit indication is found in Chapter 5, with the analysis of *Three Voices*), and the view is taken that the interpretative activity of analysis should not be constrained by

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<sup>6</sup> ‘Intentional’ is used here in, as Richard Taruskin has concisely explained, ‘the highly specialized sense adopted by phenomenologists, for whom it denotes something that can exist only in thought (or in understanding). Such thinking about a piece of music does depend upon the prior existence of score or performance or both, but the piece cannot be wholly identified with either. The score is a plan for the work and the performance an instance of it, but the work as such is a mental construct only’ (Taruskin 1995: 206). For further discussion of the status of musical ‘works’ see, of course, Ingarden 1986 and Goehr 1992.

those indications given by composers: in refining the intentional object they have no particular priority in determining the direction in which this process may move.<sup>7</sup>

To take the first aspect of this orientation, this study is an attempt to evolve general strategies rather than specific methodologies, and this focus is part of the overall non-theoretical outlook. This is primarily an endeavour to avoid reducing a specific critical *practice*, where emphasis is placed on the exigencies of particular readings, to a cut and dried method. A clear indication of this process may be observed in response to the deconstructive strategies of Jacques Derrida, where his manner of reading, itself continually flexible and alive to the nuances of the text to which it is 'applied', is often taken out of context and presented as a recipe for further work; Thomas Docherty points out that in a pedagogical context, 'the teacher finds it increasingly necessary to offer critical methodologies rather than to discuss specific critical engagements, as if it might be left to "our servants" to negotiate such menial tasks as actually having specific things to argue about specific texts' (Docherty 1996: viii).<sup>8</sup> In addition, Derrida's own discussion of the illimitability of the contexts within which any sign may be placed, and the necessary alteration that such a process works on both the sign cited and the context itself, indicates that a particular critical engagement is not easily transferable from one context to another, let alone generalised so as to form the basis of a particular 'method of reading'. This is clearly also a part of Jean-François Lyotard's 'incredulity towards metanarratives' which he sees as a defining attribute of 'The Postmodern Condition' (Lyotard 1984), within which knowledge is repositioned as localised within a heterogeneity of different language-games. In the current context, this means that specific methodologies are not seen as either revealing 'the whole truth' about a piece of music (or even 'the truth'), the process of transference from one analysis to another must always be surrounded by difficulties, and an analytical approach needs to be subject to a process of critical evaluation each time it is employed.

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<sup>7</sup> This separation of the composer's intention obviously recalls Nattiez' tripartition of the 'total musical fact' into three objects: poietic processes, esthetic processes, and the 'neutral level' (see, for instance, Nattiez 1990: 15), and indeed is also a part of the general model of semiology he proposes, where the music does not purely 'transmit' the meaning intended by the composer, but the listener rather acts upon and interprets the symbolic object, creating a multiplicity of meanings (Nattiez 1990: 17). However, this does not mean that Nattiez' concept of the neutral level is also adopted here, for, as will become clear, the current study takes an explicitly esthetic view of analytical orientation, so that the structures examined are immediately (and *a priori*) considered in terms of perception; for indication of those aspects of Nattiez' semiology which are adopted here, see Chapter 2, pp. 48-51.

<sup>8</sup> Anthony Pople draws a comparable conclusion within a musicological context when he identifies that unless 'the analysis of critical writing... using deconstructionist methods... successfully promotes a two-tier professional system of criticism and super-criticism it will eventually run out of materials' (Pople 1996: 286).

Before discussing this particular attitude to analytical methodology in more detail, what analysis 'is' in the current context needs some further clarification. As was outlined above, the analytical process is viewed as refinement of a particular intentional object; Nicholas Cook expresses a similar position in slightly different terms when he writes that:

Schenkerian analysis is not a scientific explanation, but a metaphorical one; it is not an account of how people actually hear pieces of music, but a way of imagining them.... musical culture is, in essence, a repertoire of means for imagining music.... (1990: 4)

He goes on to suggest our emphasis on how sounds are perceived rather than produced is a rather ethnocentric one, and that our rationalisation of these aspects is partly a cultural habit, determined by those features that have traditionally been considered to be important. What Cook is indicating here is, I feel, that analytical activity appeals to the mind, and, rather than indicating ways in which the music 'should be heard' (he adduces numerous examples to indicate that unless specifically asked to do so, people tend not to listen in what might be termed an analytical manner), analysis provides an enrichment and deepening of our imagination, our mental representation of a piece of music which we carry about with us. This does not necessarily have to coincide with perception, in fact, Cook considers that the 'ubiquitous discrepancies between the manner in which musicians conceive music and that in which listeners experience it are endemic to musical culture. Indeed, they define it' (Cook 1990: 223). Anthony Pople makes a similar point: 'that an analysis does not directly describe a process of listening is obvious, despite the origins of the personal / empirical aspect in real or simulated listening and the potential, through the critical / didactic aspect, for analysis to condition real or simulated listening' (1994b: 111); instead, analysis 'draw[s] on the experience of one musician in order to inform the experience of another' (: 121). This experience within the current context is viewed as a mental object, susceptible to continual refinement in a number of different directions.

Such a view of analysis is distinct from believing in the explicating power of such constructions as Schenkerian reduction or Pitch-class set genera to provide revelations about 'what the piece does'; instead, analytical activity presents 'only' a partial reading, refining aspects of the meaning of a piece of music but not attempting to present any final, analytical statement of how it 'really is'. Marion Guck emphasises this role, particularly in the adoption of what has traditionally been seen as 'metaphorical language' into analytical writing, and the importance of explicitly

situating the analyst within his or her text, so that ‘accounts of musical works acknowledge the relationship between piece and perceiver, and examine how that relationship is created, which means not just the musical “structure” evident in the score, but how the piece affects the listener’ (1994b: 35). Guck’s earlier characterisation of the analytical process confirms the importance of its interpretative nature:

I take it that analysis is the means to change and refine hearings and therefore that, when analysts write analytical texts, we are offering readers the possibility of recreating a hearing that we have found particularly worthwhile.... my analyses cannot have the *identification* of musical entities and relations as their goal, but must go on to weave what I identify into *interpretations* of the musical work. (1993: 307)

To state this somewhat more explicitly, analysis becomes a part of the *culture* of meaning which becomes attached to a piece of music as it ‘swims down the gutter of Time’ (to appropriate Laurence Sterne’s memorable phrase).

Lawrence Kramer, in a review of Cook’s work, criticises what he sees as the division, or rather, the duality, between what Cook characterises as Musical and Musicological listening, that is, between listening which is based on direct involvement with the music, and that which involves a more self-conscious concentration on formal aspects, tending to be more reflective. As Kramer points out, Derridean deconstruction in particular has ‘questioned, not to say scourged this binary opposition of immediacy and reflection. On the one hand, the immediacy of experience is understood... to be discursive and reflexive through and through.... On the other hand, this derivative character of experience presents no hindrance to pleasure...’ (Kramer 1992d: 66). Kramer goes on to suggest that a way out of the impasse between these two approaches to musical form might be to see music within more cultural or historical frameworks, as agencies of culture; I shall return to this approach in a moment. However, another way of circumventing Kramer’s objection is to re-emphasise the cultural role of analysis. In this view, a piece of music is not just ‘the score’ or ‘the sounds’ or the totality of all its performances, but rather a cultural artifact, existing as an intentional object, to which all these factors become attached, including analytical reflection. What this means is that both musical and musicological processes of listening become parts of the same overall process, but reflecting different emphasis. The process of ‘simply listening to the music’ becomes a mediated experience which prioritises the succession of individual events and finds meaning in an interplay between them (and often stylistic expectations as well), whereas formal, analytical listening places greater emphasis on a similarly reflexive consideration of generally larger-scale issues; both processes take

place within a cultural framework, where individuals are predisposed to take account of features that the cultural history of the music has accrued (and of course to find extensions which lead into new areas of understanding). This is distinct from what Kramer sees as an 'ignorant or idealized' pleasure which is purely 'private and appropriative' (1992d: 67); it takes place in a context which includes all previous engagements with the music as possible bases for understanding.<sup>9</sup>

For analysis, this can usefully be considered in terms of Kramer's own discussion of music and language, which, he points out, have traditionally been seen as lying on 'different sides of an epistemological divide', usually mapped onto the inside and the outside:

The inside is a figure of music as a full, immediate presence, music in the metaphysical position of form and essence.... In contrast, the outside is a figure of language as rupture.... Knowledge is abraded by the nonidentity between speech as the means and music as the object of knowledge.... The fact that language has, and music lacks, a constative dimension becomes foundational and determinative. Language is denied access to music, it cannot represent musical reality. (Kramer 1995: 15)

This position, Kramer argues, leaves musicology two choices: either to consider only what are traditionally seen as the contexts of music (performance history, performance practice etc.), or attempt to use a technical language that endeavours to be as unambiguous as possible about musical style and structure, with this second option, the 'apprehension of the innate character, the complex unity-in-diversity, of the musical process itself' (1995: 16) becoming the goal of musical analysis. However, the recognition that music can be understood as a speech act, possessing illocutionary force, and thus become like language a part of an economy of communication means that music 'can no longer be opposed to reflection, and, in particular, can no longer be opposed to language. *Immediacy becomes a performative effect*' (1995: 17). This in turn leads back to the conclusion that was discussed above, that musical immediacy needs to be considered in terms of its function within cultural or 'non-musical' forces.

In this respect I am in agreement with Kramer's position, but the main differences that I would seek to advance are an alternative view of analytical writing (or rather, what analytical writing could be), and the importance placed on understanding

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<sup>9</sup>This approaches Nattiez' discussion of the function of analysis as a symbolic fact, which 'states itself in the form of a discourse... and it is consequently the product of an action; it leaves a trace and gives rise to readings, interpretations and criticisms' (Nattiez 1990: 133), and which, because open to an infinity of interpretants, may always be adapted in new directions. Here, however, the way in which previous analytical approaches effect understanding of a piece of music is given greater emphasis than Nattiez' concentration on the potential of analysis to colour the poietic strategies of the next generation of composers (see, for instance, Nattiez 1990: 146-7, 213-4).

music in a more overtly historicist mode. As indicated above, analysis seem to be viewed most usefully as taking part in the very process of curation, so that part of the meaning of a piece of music becomes this analytical reflection. In attempting to present refinements of the intentional object, this type of analysis becomes inextricably linked with how the music is heard, itself a type of mediated process which involves a complex network of related forces which are brought to bear on what has often been regarded as one of the most ‘unthinking’ of activities.<sup>10</sup> In this respect, analysis itself conforms to Kramer’s model for musicological rectitude: ‘from the postmodernist standpoint I have been advocating here, listening is not an immediacy alienated from a later reflection, but a mode of dialogue.... It follows that the aim of musicology, ideally conceived, is to continue the dialogue of listening’ (1995: 32). Furthermore, in its recognition that it no longer possesses an overall explicating power, such analysis becomes one of Kramer’s modes of writing that are ‘always also critical, in the dual sense of performing both criticism and critique’, and which are continually ‘conceding and indeed affirming their own “rhetorical” and “subjective” character’ (1995: 18). However, in so far as this analysis remains firmly rooted in the specifics of individual works, and retains a confidence in the process of ‘close reading’, it marks a break both with Kramer and with most approaches to music that tend to be bracketed under the term ‘the New Musicology’; such a break stems from two factors, one of which has already been hinted at, and both of which need further unravelling.

In fact, they are somewhat related, both being concerned with the cultural position for music that Kramer sets out, but one is a more general point of disagreement, whilst the second is more directly tied up with the particular repertoire involved in this study. After affirming the ‘“rhetorical” and “subjective” character’ of his ideal of postmodern musicology, Kramer continues:

[it would] rigorously seek to position musical experience within the densely compacted, concretely situated worlds of those who compose, perform, and listen.... The emergence of postmodernist musicologies will depend on our willingness and ability to read as inscribed within the immediacy effects of music itself the kind of mediating structures usually positioned outside music under the rubric of context. (1995: 18)

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<sup>10</sup> The trope of music as ‘pure presence’, practically bypassing conscious thought altogether, remains pervasive; an example of a veiled version of this mind-set is the practice of giving ‘blind listenings’, where the composer of the music is unknown, as an attempt to suspend any prejudice, thus ‘hearing the music on its own terms’. Whilst this may be a useful ‘tactic’ to overcome a disinclination to listen to a particular repertoire, it ignores the way in which cultural knowledge effects and shapes how the music is perceived, and de-emphasises the importance of thought in musical understanding.



I have already discussed the way in which analytical writing might be understood as itself forming part of the ‘concretely situated worlds of those who compose, perform and listen’, and indeed, Kramer does not *per se* rule out such approaches as a part of his musicological project, so long, it would appear, as they do not treat the music as an autonomous artwork.<sup>11</sup> However, even a very cursory glance at his own musicological writing indicates that his project lies in locating what he calls ‘hermeneutic windows’ as a part of the music and then examining how these relate to ‘similar interplays elsewhere in the cultural field, freely allowing the activity of musical and nonmusical material [here Kramer, no doubt unguardedly, repeats the dualism he is at pains to deconstruct] to comment on, criticize, or reinterpret each other as well as to repeat each other’ (Kramer 1990: 14). The results of this approach indicate a remarkable series of connections between Beethoven’s two-movement piano Sonatas and ‘utopian aesthetics’, a Chopin Prelude and ‘impossible objects’ and a Mozart Divertimento and a perception which Kramer calls ‘corporeal fiction’. This is not to try to belittle Kramer’s rigorous and, speaking personally, often extremely revealing readings of familiar pieces of music. However, what Kramer does *not* do, and indeed, seems almost to rule out as a possibility in his rejection of analysis not tied to any particular cultural trope, is to account for why listeners might prefer, to use his examples, Beethoven Opus 111 to Opus 78, or have a favourite Mozart Divertimento, or find one Chopin Prelude particularly fascinating and so wish to return to listen to it again and again. Kramer would no doubt object that this is self-consciously not his purpose, but it is in fact a role that can be reclaimed for analysis, which thereby adopts a truly critical approach. In examining the music in detail and continually asking how it creates its effect, one can move onto a somewhat wider consideration of how this process differs from that of other, comparable pieces of music, and maybe suggest why one is felt to be more ‘successful’ than another.

Kramer’s historicist project, which he sees as the inevitable outcome of his postmodernist approach to music, also seems limited when applied to the repertoire under consideration here. Current-day listeners listening to contemporary music do not have the same level of cultural estrangement that Kramer seems to indicate is the case with music from earlier periods, for his readings often spend considerable time outlining

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<sup>11</sup> See Kramer’s discussion of (and aversion to) the concept of autonomy in his ‘Epilogue à 4: Autonomy, Elvis, Cinders, Fingering Bach’ (in Kramer 1995: 227-42).

the cultural practice within which their meaning occurs. In fact, if what Kramer suggests about music working within and defining cultural understanding is correct, music written today becomes the *only* music about which our knowledge can be considered truly 'emic', as we are clearly positioned within the same cultural framework.<sup>12</sup> This suggests that the interpretative difficulties, in many cases leading to a resistance to what might be called 'hearing the *music* in this music', are equally dependent upon a failure of mental representation as upon an absence of hermeneutic transfer into a more wide-ranging cultural engagement, and it is this former blockage that critical analytical work can begin to address. In addition, although contemporary music may well relate to, for example, other art-forms or particular representations of cultural tropes, and, indeed, involve such understanding as part of its effect, there is patently a much clearer need actually to be able to hear its mode of operation (in its widest terms) as the foundation of this process. Furthermore, the idea of Structural Listening has become so ingrained in the Twentieth Century that for many composers their expectation is that this music will be heard in such 'absolute' terms; of course, taking this view on board runs the risk of overly prioritising the composer's viewpoint, but also indicates that the music presents a slightly different set of problems than that from earlier periods. To consider this music as 'absolute' in this current context does emphatically not mean that it is uninvolved in a cultural context of creating meaning, particularly in its relationship to other, 'traditional' music, and the analytical orientation adopted here attempts to take account of this process of involvement.

I have discussed Kramer's position at some length, principally because he is the most clearly articulate of the 'New Musicologists' in his espousal of a postmodernist musicology, and because a number of his arguments raise important issues concerning the role and province of analytical writing within this decentred discourse. As has become clear, whilst agreeing with many of his formulations concerning what writing about music seeks to do, I would wish to give a particular type of analysis a more positive role within this musicological project. Analysis within his (and others') writing is most usually synonymous with positivistic, formalist and totalising, all terms inflected pejoratively, and becomes the standard bearer for the modernist musicology which he

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<sup>12</sup> The terms 'emic' and 'etic' are derived from ethnology, where emic refers to an approach which considers the viewpoint of the native informers, and etic to one which takes the methodological orientation of the researcher as the starting point; for discussion in a musicological context see Nattiez 1990: 61.

is at pains to attack.<sup>13</sup> However, as practised in the current study, analysis does not coincide with Kramer's characterisation of such modernist musicology as:

constructing the material and expressive force of music as the other of musical form. It does so whenever it brackets most living experiences of music as subjective, ineffable, or irrational in the name of a normative experience of music *qua* music; whenever it minimizes the formative action of musical expression and the expressive action of musical form; whenever it 'takes account' of musical meaning by granting emotive descriptions, critical judgements, and indications of 'context' a small place on the fringes of discourse about style, form, structure, and technique. (Kramer 1995: 64)

How analysis endeavours to take seriously our 'living experiences' of this music will become clear through the analyses themselves, explicitly in the next chapter, and more implicitly in those that remain. However, in more general terms, the postmodernist nature of this process needs to be considered through a return to an examination of the use of, and attitude to, methodological approaches to analytical writing.

A good place to start is to consider what this anti-theoretical, postmodern type of analysis which I am suggesting is engaged in, for the foregoing discussion has generally been couched in more negative terms, indicating what it does not do in relation to Kramer's conception of the Postmodern musicology. Thomas Docherty, following Lyotard in his mapping of the 'post' of postmodern in terms of the Greek 'ana-', indicates the etymology of the term analysis: 'literally a setting free and into mobility of elements which had seemed to be irreversibly conjoined' (1996: 126), and such a conception is one that I would like to retain in this musicological sense. This process of *setting free* seems increasingly important, particularly when much analysis appears to be more concerned with demonstrating rigidity of structure. This clearly connects with the process of creating, or opening, readings which are an attempt to establish connections with the listener's experience, allowing the music to continue (or begin) its process of 'making sense' through a refinement of the intentional object, opening it out in new directions. The object under examination, the composition, is

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<sup>13</sup> One approach which is remarkable for its illustration of many concerns of this current chapter is Pieter van den Toorn's characterisation of the status and function of analysis. In 'Politics, Feminism and Contemporary Music Theory' (van den Toorn 1991), he indicates the existence of an idealized communion with music, which analysis seeks to maintain, and implicitly puts forward a Schenkerian formalism to achieve this 'unmediated' aesthetic engagement. For van den Toorn, the ideal of 'great' music is found in 'moments of aesthetic rapport, of self-forgetting at-oneness with music', which are immediate (: 276), with Schenkerian analysis able to 'sustain the relationship, maintain contact by drawing the details into sharper focus' (: 277); this he compares with Susan McClary's view of Beethoven, where 'it is no longer a question of allowing the music to speak to some degree for itself... of allowing for an immediate intuitive response. Rather, the verbal, intellectual conjecture... is to precede the music' (: 294). The invocation of the dualism between immediacy and reflection could not be more clear. Van den Toorn's position has been extensively and effectively criticised by Ruth Solie (Solie 1991), including his somewhat objectionable comments on Feminism; the whole interchange well illustrates where some of Kramer's reservations about analysis might derive from.

viewed as always already being in a state of motion (in its journey through perpetual revisions and modifications of understanding), with the analyst's role being that of continuing this flight, indicating new directions and further chains of connections.<sup>14</sup> Such an approach also recognises the difficulty of criticism (within which I would place properly critical analysis), in that it sees the analytical process as always retaining an awareness of the limits of its own project, as well as the fundamental non-identity between the study and its object, and the continual escape of the artwork from complete understanding. As Docherty comments, criticism is often 'too simplistic, too prematurely utopian, in the sense that it fails to acknowledge the difficulty of art and in that it assumes an *availability*, here and now, that is to say, *immediately*, of art.... I hope to restore and rehabilitate an attitude of a specific *humility*. The critic's task is to locate (and, if necessary, to produce) difficulty' (1996: viii). What this means in the current context is that both the complexity of the musical experience and the resistance to any explication is recognised, so that even if how an effect is controlled can be delineated, any exact description or codification remains permanently elusive; this, of course, is a part of any writing about music, but here this disjunction is made explicit and viewed as a defining attribute of the analytical process.

This returns to the concern with methodology. Before discussing in more general terms the current approach, one specific principle needs to be indicated, which is the distrust of approaches that endeavour to illustrate and discuss underlying unity in pieces of music. The continuing importance assigned to the trope of unity in analysis has been subjected to a rigorous critique by Alan Street (Street 1989) and elsewhere, and I do not intend to reproduce these arguments here. Additionally, in terms of the current repertoire, a perception of musical unity is one of its least important features, with, for instance, in *De Stijl*, the multiplicity of the surface stylistic manipulation being of considerable importance in any hearing of the music. Similarly, even though Skempton's *The Durham Strike* and Feldman's *Three Voices* present much less differentiated textures, neither piece is heard in terms of a single unified structure, but rather a much more disparate process of connections and differences. As a result, the analytical approach with all pieces is turned towards these patterns of diversity and difference, and away from totalising methodologies. This does not mean a move away

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<sup>14</sup> Without adopting their approach to philosophy, I have borrowed this idea of lines of flight from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* (1988), and the unrooted, wandering nature of a piece of music within a cultural plane also forms an implicit part of the current orientation.

from analysis as such, for a reinscription of its purpose and function sidesteps a number of the objections that are brought to bear on it. Street himself has expressed a similar position:

While still in sympathy with this view [that allegorical critique dissolves any adherence to a distinct system] against any formalist dogma, I should also like to record a continuing faith in the virtues of close reading. In moving from work through word to world, I sense that there will always be an allegorical sequence of ruptures to traverse. And the rules of passage may never become fully generalised. But this is unquestionably *not* to abandon the tenets of structural analysis. (Street 1994: 291)

In his earlier article, Street wrote of the resistance to 'convenient conceptual props' (1989: 121) and there is similar resistance within the present study.

Street's recognition that the 'rules of passage' are not fully generalisable, and the continual transgression of methodological parameters that results, both form an important part of the current approach. As was indicated earlier, Derrida's discussion of context indicates that the fact of the sign's iterability presupposes that it may be placed in situations which both effect and are effected by this citation; as a result of this understanding, the attempt towards a general theory of the understanding of signs is shown to be overly systemising, without paying attention to what Derrida indicates is the property of every such sign, the possibility of misfire, of being misunderstood. Such an approach toward systemisation also applies to deconstruction itself:

Deconstruction does not exist somewhere, pure, proper, self-identical, outside of its inscriptions in conflictual and differentiated contexts; it 'is' only what it does and what is done with it, there where it takes place.... Deconstruction in the singular cannot be simply 'appropriated' by anyone or by anything. Deconstructions are the movements of what I have called 'exappropriation'. Anyone who believes they have appropriated or seen appropriated something like deconstruction in the singular is a priori mistaken, and something else is going on. (Derrida 1988: 141).

To make a rather simplistic transfer of these ideas, and certainly without the elegance and rigour of Derrida's deconstruction, the current study is an attempt to place 'analysis' within this same context of practice rather than method, with its avoidance of any pre-formed analytical methodology a recognition of the over-run of practice from the theory, and of the provisional nature of the analytical process itself.

In this view, analysis becomes an 'event', rather in the same way as the piece of music with which it is connected. Such a conception grows out of Lyotard's characterisation of the postmodern, and this has further implications, as Docherty indicates:

to respect the heterogeneity of language-games means that one must accept the multiplicity of 'micro'-narratives which are deployed to make sense of the world.... It is the tendency to homogenise the heterogeneity of language-games under the rubric of a totalising system or theory, a '*grand récit*', which Lyotard identified as a major source of totalitarian thought. (Docherty 1990: 254-5)

It should be pointed here that such a conception of the locality and provisional nature of these different language-games raises a particularly complex set of issues which become most contentious with regard to concepts such as 'truth' and 'reality', a discussion of which lies far outside the reaches of the present study. However, in terms of art in general, and music in particular, such a multiplicity of interpretation and understanding is both less exceptional in some of its implications, and also accords with some 'common sense' understandings about the nature of music, where the ability to appeal to a variety of different people in many ways, to be understood in terms of a number of different language-games, is viewed as an accepted part of musical understanding, and indeed, often seen as desirable. Having said that, it is important not to fall into the common misconception that deconstruction, for instance, simply dispenses with concepts such as truth and all criteria for critical evaluation; as Derrida himself puts it, in an oft-quoted passage:

How can [the deconstructionist] demand that his own text be interpreted correctly? How can he accuse anyone else of having misunderstood, simplified, deformed it, etc.? In other words, how can he discuss, and discuss the reading of what he writes? The answer is simple enough: this definition of the deconstructionist is *false* (that's right: false, not true) and feeble; it supposes a bad (that's right: bad, not good) and feeble reading of a number of texts, first of all mine, which therefore must finally be read and reread. Then perhaps it will be understood that the value of truth (and all those values associated with it) is never contested and destroyed in my writings, but only reinscribed in more powerful, larger, more stratified contexts. And that within interpretive contexts... that are relatively stable, sometimes apparently almost unshakeable, it should be possible to invoke rules of competence, criteria of discussion and of consensus, good faith, lucidity, rigor, criticism, and pedagogy. (Derrida 1988: 146)

This is important for the current study, as here too, even if analysis is reinscribed within a somewhat different context from usual, this does not result in a reduction in the rigour of the argumentation, nor of an ability to discuss and evaluate critically other analyses of the same music.

In response to the multiplicity within the postmodern condition, Docherty suggests that this should not involve 'the retreat into pragmatism or into a bland rejection of the successes of "theoretical inquiry" in the past' (1990: 255). Instead, he calls for a particular type of critical irresponsibility, which is an escape from 'acting in accordance with a dominant ideology or dogma... action which responds or answers to

a systematised theory of what is normative, of what is legitimated...' (1990: 259). In a similar way in which postmodern art is continually endeavouring to rethink the questions of what constitutes art itself, never knowing the rules of the creative process in advance, so this type of critical understanding, which Docherty calls postmarxism,

proposes a mode of action which is as irresponsible as magic.... If I think only according to the ideology of a particular language-game, then, postmarxism asserts, I am not thinking at all.... Postmodern philosophy.... begins in an orientation towards alterity and heterogeneity.... [it] asserts that thought is only possible at the very interface between theoretical systems. In other words, it is not so much 'after theory' as 'intertheoretical' or 'ana-theoretical'.... In this postmodern and postmarxist orientation towards alterity and heterogeneity, it is not that one simply substitutes one formulated theory for another. On the contrary, the rules of the theory governing one's own work or thinking are precisely what the work or thinking is looking for. Postmarxism is like postmodernism in this: it makes thought once more possible by working at the interface of ideologies. (Docherty 1990: 259-60)

The mapping of Docherty's discussion onto the music-analytical domain should be fairly obvious by this point. The current study, in its turning away from any pre-formed analytical technique is a similar attempt to work at the 'interface between systems', where various techniques may be borrowed from Set Theory, Schenkerian reduction or other approaches, but are then usually applied only partially, and with concern for adapting the tools for the process in hand, rather than the other way around.<sup>15</sup> Such an approach is not a free-wheeling anti-theoretical irresponsibility, but rather an attempt to take seriously ways of evolving analytical writing which are appropriate to an understanding of the music; the point made earlier about the 'deafness' caused by the application of inappropriate criteria is of more general validity here. To return to Docherty, his position does not:

mark a shift... into pragmatism (which is itself in any case a theoretical position). Rather, it suggests that it is only in refusing the domination by any governing theory that the possibility of thought remains. At the interface between theories, where one works without rules and judges 'without criteria', it becomes possible to effect an "event".... Postmarxism's interest in seduction is an interest in the attractions of alterity and heterogeneity, fundamentally with the goal of getting a critical history - an event - started. (1990: 260)

Such an event is the process of altering the culturally formulated intentional object, and the current study involves a determination to continue, indeed, in some cases to start, the critical history of the music which it addresses.

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<sup>15</sup> Pople makes the point that 'if the analyst uses primarily his or her experience of analysis to organise a reading, rather than his or her experience of the piece at hand, then the period of contemplation will not engage fully with empirical knowledge of the music... but will lead merely to the mundane recognition of categorically different kinds of entity defined by theory' (Pople 1994b: 122).

A number of aspects of this orientation should be considered at this point. Firstly, as has already been indicated, this study does of course make use of certain theoretical constructions, particularly what might be described as the 'base line' of musical theory, for instance the conception of notes, rhythms etc., as well as in more general terms, for, as Nicholas Cook points out, all interpretation 'involves taking up some kind of theoretical position vis-à-vis the work, whether the theory is explicit or merely implied, because it is only by virtue of some kind of theory that a piece of music can be conceived as a discrete entity' (Cook 1989b: 136). Furthermore, the approach that Cook describes as being somewhat ethnocentric is precisely that which is adopted here, the belief that 'it is the perception of musical sound that is generally considered to be paramount in defining the meaning of a piece of music' (: 117), another theoretical assumption. However, I would wish to maintain a distinction (perhaps somewhat arbitrary, but certainly useful) between such generalised 'musical theories' and more specific music-analytical theories, which result in particular methods and approaches. To return to Derrida's formulation, these background theories are established as 'interpretative contexts that are relatively stable', against which a more critical approach to theorisation may take place.<sup>16</sup>

One result of an approach which tends to replace explicit methodologies with what might be termed a more *ad hoc* attitude to the analysis of music is the degree to which these analyses are considered to be determined by the requirements of the music, whether, to appropriate Umberto Eco's term, it indicates a 'model reader', or in this case, listener. In discussing what he sees as the intention of the text, Eco suggests that:

A text is a device conceived in order to produce its model reader. I repeat that this reader is not the one who makes the 'only right' conjecture. A text can foresee a model reader entitled to try infinite conjectures. The empirical reader is only an actor who makes conjectures about the kind of model reader postulated by the text. Since the intention of the text is basically to produce a model reader able to make conjectures about it, the initiative of the model reader consists in figuring out a model author that is not the empirical one and that, in the end, coincides with the intention of the text. (Eco 1992: 64)

Eco is at pains to separate the process of interpretation from what he calls the 'empirical author', in musical terms the composer; the point at which it does become useful to consult the empirical author is to inquire to what extent he or she was aware of the

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<sup>16</sup>This is not to rule out the possibility of critique of these elements as well, but within the current study these are taken as a stable background, without which any analysis would be continually and regressively working backwards to first principles at every step, effectively seizing up the analytical project before it had even started.



range of possible interpretations: 'the response of the author must not be used in order to validate the interpretations of his text, but to show the discrepancies between the author's intention and the intention of the text' (Eco 1992: 73). Such an approach to the creator of the text, in the widest sense, ties in with the position that I have been discussing, where the composer is not consulted to indicate the analytical strategy to be taken towards the music, but rather that the analyst and composer are placed in a similar position, with both contributing to the same process of generating and refining understanding. Eco's conception of the Model Reader and Model Author enables him to differentiate between interpreting and 'using' a text, ignoring the intentions of the model author and coming up with almost any reading without regard for whether it is reasonable or not.

This sense of a difference between what Eco calls 'interpretation and overinterpretation' is implicit in the current analytical approach: the identification of those properties of the music which indicate a particular analytical attitude which itself then feeds back to examine them. Of course, as Eco himself points out, this defines what he considers the 'old and still valid "hermeneutic circle"' (Eco 1992: 64). This approach means that certain aspects are prioritised within the general search for interpretative levers, as one has 'to decide which one of its various aspects is or can become relevant or pertinent for a coherent interpretation of it, and which ones remain marginal' (Eco 1992: 146). In many respects the analyses presented in the following chapters endeavour to be 'reasonable', to suggest readings that are seen as illuminating and increasing understanding of the musical processes at work, and are necessarily selective as to which features they examine in detail; in addition, in so far as each marks a different analytical procedure tailored to the music in hand, they in many ways mark a series of formulations for the model listener suggested by each piece.

This is one side of the interpretative framework. Jonathan Culler, in response to Eco's discussion, presents what is perhaps the opposite of this approach: using the terms understanding and overstanding, he comments that while understanding is something akin to the processes of Eco's model reader, '*overstanding*, by contrast, consists of pursuing questions that the text does not pose to its model reader...[to] ask not what the work has in mind but what it forgets, not what it says but what it takes for granted' (in Eco 1992: 114). Culler argues that this type of approach,

that compels people to puzzle over not just those elements which might seem to resist the totalization of meaning but also those about which there might initially seem to be nothing to say has a better chance of producing discoveries - though like everything else in life there is no guarantee here - than one which seeks only to answer those questions that a text asks its model reader. (In Eco 1992: 122)

Although he does not state it explicitly, Culler suggests that such a method is necessarily theoretical, growing out of a general belief about meaning, for instance, which is then 'thrown' at the work, seeing what 'sticks'. This is in fact a view to which I am sympathetic, for such an approach can produce new and unexpected insight, and avoid the dangers of simply hearing what one wishes to hear. However, in the current study, a less extreme, more 'middleground' approach is taken, which, as indicated above, is mostly concerned with finding 'appropriate analytical approaches'; however, it is also, firstly, critical, in the sense that it endeavours continually to ask if these are really the most appropriate ways of proceeding, and secondly, involves a questioning of the dominant assumptions that the music seems to create. This is clearest in the analysis of *De Stijl*, where the alternation between widely different styles and the creation of different temporalities is examined in some detail, so that, rather than accepting these distinctions at face value, the way in which they are suggested and manipulated becomes an important focus. In its adoption of a deconstructive strategy this chapter also echoes one of Culler's concerns, which is the critical role that he ascribes to this type of reading; to disregard some of the issues that deconstruction raises is to 'risk complacently abandoning the enterprise of critique', and ignore a way of making 'discoveries about the text and about the codes and practices that enable one to play the role of reader' (in Eco 1992: 122), or in this context, of listener. In more general terms, this process of making discoveries about how the music creates its particular effect, and what chains of association and meaning that these set off, remains the principal focus of the analytical activity.

To return now to the outline of the analytical approach that was set out at the beginning of this section, what has become clear in the foregoing discussion is how this overall strategy is situated within current analytical discourse, as well as within a more general approach to the study of texts. The attitude towards particular methodologies has been given some emphasis, principally because it is the most explicit refusal to engage with what has often become a mainstay of analytical procedure, and also because it acts in many ways as the touchstone to much of the rest of the strategy outlined here. Viewing

analysis within cultural terms, as well as placing emphasis on our mental understanding of the music, does not necessarily indicate such an ‘anti-theoretical approach’, but the two processes become interlinked in the shared concern for taking part in a continually-evolving refinement and extension of the ‘already known’, in some cases endeavouring also to start off such an ‘event’. What has not been dealt with in great detail, though it has been addressed in a somewhat less direct manner, is the turn away from structures towards effects that was trailed at the outset. In many respects this is easier to illustrate in practice; in the following chapter this movement will be considered in relation both to a specific piece of music, Ligeti’s *Désordre*, and to the types of analytical writing that this, and a number of the other works under consideration usually attract. This will also illuminate some of the more abstract concerns of the present chapter, and effect an interface between description of the analytical process and the process itself, before moving off into more self-contained analytical writing. Having considered the ‘theory’, it is time to place this in a situation where it can be tested in direct application to pieces of music.

# **Disorderings**

## Chapter 2

### 1. Towards Analysis

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#### The Resistance to Analysis

Of the seven composers represented here, only the music of two of them, György Ligeti and Morton Feldman, has been subjected to what may genuinely be termed a process of analytical investigation; with a few exceptions, most writing on the music of the other five tends to be either concerned with considerations of the composers' aesthetic stance, discussion of relationships with other music, or be couched in more general descriptive rather than analytical terms. This distinction turns upon the difference between a conscious engagement with attempting to account for how the music makes its effect, which is termed 'analytical', and more generalised discussion, either of details of the compositional process, description of musical structures without relation to their effect, or of the overall impression that the music makes. This distinction is therefore one of orientation, as well as simply of detail, for, as was indicated in Chapter 1, in many cases it is not possible to judge analytical efficacy here in the terms which are used for other repertoire; what, for current purposes, is considered 'properly analytical' will become increasingly clear through the following discussion, as various approaches are considered.

Leaving aside for the moment the two composers whose music has received a fair degree of analytical attention and which will be considered separately later on, approaches to the music of the remaining five display a number of general characteristics which may usefully be surveyed. The music of Louis Andriessen has tended to be considered in relationship to, firstly, the political aims and aspirations of the composer, and secondly, American minimalism and music of the past, with little writing being explicitly analytical. A representative sample of these various types includes a discussion of Andriessen's approach to dialectics and minimalism by Keith Potter (Potter 1981) and David Wright's examination of a number of Andriessen's starting-points (Wright 1993); Wright also considers a few illustrative examples in more traditional analytical terms, providing a brief reduction of a section of *De Tijd*, but the

overall approach is towards a more general overview of the composer's output rather than specific discussion (as is clearly Wright's intention). The most detailed examination of Andriessen's music comes either from the composer himself (Andriessen and Harsh 1992) or from writers who have clearly had access to the composer and his sketches (Schönberger 1981, Coenen 1989), including a wider examination of *De Materie*, of which *De Stijl* forms the third part. Andriessen and Harsh consider the ways in which the first part of *De Materie* interacts with the various models which inform its composition, principally Bach's Prelude in E $\flat$ , BWV 852, and *L'Homme Armé*, as well as the simultaneously tonal and atonal nature of much of the harmony. In their discussion, although the effect of a number of these compositional decisions is considered, there is no examination of the section in overall terms, nor a more explicit attempt to deal with the multitude of meaning set up by the various manipulations of themes and harmonies that *are* indicated. This is also very much the case with Alcedo Coenen's discussion of all four parts of *De Materie*, which, by his own account, emphasises 'the manner in which the composer set to work' (1989: 2), and deals predominantly with the various historical models from which decisions about form were derived, as well as indicating a number of interesting details of harmony and thematic process. However, despite also considering aspects of form, Coenen places little emphasis on effect, particularly to what extent the derivations of form from a painting, or the plan of Rheims cathedral, can be perceived in the music. In this respect, it remains typical of much discussion of Andriessen's music, concentrating primarily on compositional patterns.

The critical response to Michael Nyman's music is remarkable, both for the lack of any detailed discussion, and its dismissive tone, which considers the music of insufficient interest to merit more than the usual complaints about the use of repetition and the high volume at which it is often played. In fact, most of this writing is usually of the concert-review type, one exception being a discussion by K. Robert Schwarz which at least attempts to deal with the music on its own terms (in Schwarz 1996: 194-203), with almost no analytical writing about individual pieces. Pwyll ap Siôn has investigated aspects of Nyman's opera, *The Man who Mistook his Wife for his Hat*, particularly the narratology of the embedded quotation of 'Ich Grolle Nicht' and the various distortions of the Schumann song repertoire, illustrating with reference to Lerdahl and Jackendoff's *A Generative Theory of Tonal Music* how these distortions

disrupt the grouping patterns present in the original (ap Siôn 1994). In relation to the current analysis of the somewhat later *MGV*, which, unlike much of Nyman's music, does not make use of any historical models, such an approach seems less useful; in addition, although testing Nyman's grouping structures in terms of 'traditional' tonal music provides confirmation of what his music does *not* do, this is, in fact, one of its less interesting features, in that the subversion of these structures is fairly obvious. More important is to try and say what the music *does* do, which involves directly addressing the processes of expectation that are set up. *MGV* itself is entirely devoid of such analytical attention, and it is in relation to this piece that the current study most clearly inaugurates a critical cultural practice.

In contrast, Steve Reich has been subjected to a far higher degree of attention, though the shortcomings of much of this writing are instructive. As is further indicated in Chapter 6, Reich's identification of process and 'product' as the basis of his aesthetic stance means that most analytically-orientated writing about this music dwells upon a codification or explication of what that process involves. *Four Organs*, the piece considered here, is particularly prone to this type of approach, as it is one of the most 'single minded' of Reich's pieces in its gradual elongation, though, as will be discussed, is by no means as straightforward when considered as a sounding result. In many respects, this distinction is fundamental to the overall approach to analysis in this study, as, particularly with Reich's music, the concentration placed on the process, almost as a guarantee of intelligible structure, ignores the often quite complex effects that arise. A recognition of the discontinuities created by a simple process can be found in Paul Epstein's discussion of *Piano Phase* (Epstein 1986), which also displays a particularly clear recognition of the need to be precise about the material before considering its effect. Epstein, although concentrating only on the first section of the piece (about half its length), presents very clearly the total results of the 12 in-phase alignments of the material, and how these are determined by the construction of the basic pattern; he goes on to discuss the various listening strategies that may usefully be applied, and which move beyond a straightforward linear following of the process:

the events that constitute the real musical material of *Piano Phase* may be divided into those that occur within a stable situation and those that arise in the course of phrasing [sic]. The first include composite subpatterns and reconfigurations; alternative accentual or metric interpretations of the material; and the submerging and reappearance of the original pattern. They may seem to impose themselves on the listener; or the listener may actively cultivate them, deliberately focusing on a particular reading or even going back and forth among several alternatives within a single situation. Events during phasing concern when and how the change from one phase to the next is perceived, as well as with the nature of the change. (Epstein 1986: 497)

The analysis of *Four Organs* in Chapter 6 is similarly concerned with finding ways of discussing the (somewhat different) results of the gradual process used there, as well as emphasising the aspects of discontinuity that arise.

Epstein's concentration on the aural result of Reich's music is unusual, as is his detailed study of the material itself. Claus Raab, although discussing the music in more general terms, places a similar emphasis on the listener's experience in *Music for Eighteen Musicians* (though he also touches upon *Four Organs*), and illustrates the importance of not simply taking Reich's identification of process and product, or sound and structure, at face value. Raab's recognition that in *Four Organs*, 'contrary to Steve Reich's aesthetic position... sound and structure are here poles apart, [paradoxically] due to the extremely gradual process of augmentation'<sup>1</sup> (Raab 1981: 172), is an important touchstone for the current analysis, which similarly recognises the potential for hearing itself to become a gradual process. An instructive comparison between this consideration of effect, grounded in detailed discussion of the music, and a more widespread identification of the process with the composition as a whole, may be made with the type of discussion put forward by K. Robert Schwarz; although typical of a great deal of writing about Reich's music, this has the advantage of being generally positive (Schwarz 1981, 1982, 1990 & 1996). Schwarz mostly remains content to describe the process, though for a number of Reich's later pieces he does discuss overall structure (see his comments on *Music for Eighteen Musicians*, Schwarz 1982: 244-250); such an approach is somewhat comparable to the identification of themes and sections within more traditional music.

As indicated above, Reich's music has spawned a huge amount of literature, which makes a general overview more problematic, but most of it is not analytical in the sense adopted here. This seems partly to derive from the widely held belief that

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from German language sources in this and subsequent chapters are by the present author.



once one has delineated the process, there is little else to say. Richard Cohn has identified the same general trend, but his response is to create a theory of what he calls 'beat-class sets' to enable a suitably formalised analysis of the rhythmic construction and processes of *Phase Patterns* and *Violin Phase* (Cohn 1992). Despite his intention to illustrate the complexity and compositional 'inspiration' in Reich's choice of material, his recognition that the process of composition and audition are not identical, and the examination of various perceptual leaps which take place whilst listening to a gradual process, the complexity of the formalisation (extremely unusual if not unique in relation to Reich's music), seems at odds with the level of analytical insight about the experience of the music. For although Cohn displays a welcome desire to take seriously the levels of complexity that do arise, as well as re-evaluating a number of 'givens' about Reich's music, it is questionable whether his mode of presentation is the most useful for conveying his analytical insight. Cohn's model also seems of little use for *Four Organs*, as this piece does not use the type of phase-shifting process which he discusses, but, more generally, this attempt at an explicitly formalised analysis in fact seems to indicate the more informal approach adopted in Chapter 6, which combines emphasis on perception with a level of analytical detail comparable to Cohn's.

In contrast to Reich, Howard Skempton's music has only attracted a small number of in-depth examinations, most of which are either more general discussion of his output, or consider some of the aesthetic foundations and implications of the music. The most significant of these are two articles by Michael Parsons, which include an informative interview (Parsons 1980 & 1987), Keith Potter's discussion of *Lento* (Potter 1991), a consideration of Skempton's aesthetic by Walter Zimmermann (Zimmermann 1984b), and Peter Hill's performer's perspective on the piano music (Hill 1984), as well as an interview with Kevin Volans (Volans 1985: 31-44). However, none of these involve any detailed analytical examination of the music, though Potter does give some indications of the derivation, ordering and effect on tonality of the material of *Lento*; Hill goes so far as to assert that it is 'futile to expect an answer from analytical dissection' as to why the piano pieces seem so substantial (Hill 1984: 8). This attitude is in some respects an extension of that applied to Reich, in that the music is viewed as being transparently simple, so that analysis has nothing to discover beyond that which is obvious, and, indeed, any such dissection may diminish, rather than increase, our enjoyment of it. As is becoming clear, such a view of analysis as a tool for discovering

the ‘secrets’ of the music is not that which is adopted here; instead, particularly with Skempton’s music, an approach which takes seriously the complexities that this music creates is more likely to add to, rather than detract from that, finally intangible, experience. Skempton’s music does, however, present particular difficulties for analysis, which may also partly explain the lack of such discussion, especially since the line between simply describing events and accounting for their effect is much less clearly defined than with many other, more ‘complex’ pieces. However, the analysis in Chapter 7 captures something of the experience of hearing, and refines understanding of the unique effect of this music.

Finally in this overview of analytical approaches, the music of Meredith Monk, whilst receiving more attention than Skempton’s, is again often described generally and rarely subjected to any detailed examination. Monk’s music suffers from the fact that much of her work falls on the borderlines between traditional artistic disciplines, a fact which is often regarded as being more ‘interesting’ than considerations of what that work involves. As a result, most writing centres on her aesthetic, and, of course, the use of the voice; there are a number of informative interviews with Monk, which again, generally avoid discussing the music in detail, but which give a number of insights into the way in which pieces are evolved and how Monk considers her work (Strickland 1991: 87-104, Duckworth 1995: 345-67) as well as several surveys of her output (particularly useful is Gronemeyer 1992). However, in analytical terms Monk is as badly served as Nyman, though for somewhat different reasons. Although, unlike Reich, her music is not ‘described’ particularly easily, in that there are often a number of interlinked processes happening at one time, its apparent simplicity and intangible quality means that, rather as with Skempton, it is considered of insufficient substance to sustain analytical attention, with the problems of discussing the effect of the voice making this process more difficult. In addition, the sense that this is not ‘simply music’ often seems to disqualify it from the same scrutiny that is accepted without comment for more conventional pieces. In seeking to establish a mode of analytical writing about *Arctic Bar*, Chapter 8 is also an attempt to ‘rescue’ Monk’s music for such critical musicological attention.

This brief discussion indicates some of what makes up ‘analysis’ as understood in the present context, as well as a general lack of analytical attention to this repertoire in commentaries to date. Although the music of Feldman and Ligeti has been subjected

to a greater amount of consciously analytical writing, again, in many ways, much of this falls short of 'analysis' as indicated here, and many of the concerns discussed above recur as part of that literature as well. With Feldman, the various analytical approaches that have been tried will be evaluated and compared with that used in Chapter 5, whereas discussion of Ligeti's *Désordre* leads immediately into an analysis which also clearly indicates the distinction between more or less analytical 'descriptions' of this music, and the process of dealing more closely with its effect. Before either of these composers are discussed, however, some further consideration of background analytical techniques is required.

### **Techniques and Strategies**

As indicated in Chapter 1, this study generally avoids specific methodologies, preferring rather to adopt a more *ad hoc* approach to analysis, and part of this strategy is a general move away from simply examining structures (the basic material, overall form, etc.) towards considering the effect of these structures when heard. The principal shortcoming of the various approaches outlined above is that there is insufficient attention paid to what the structures (which, particularly with Andriessen, are often clearly delineated), mean in terms of how the music is played and listened to; this is often coupled with a rather simplistic assumption that these two aspects are the same, so that everything that is identified is considered to have an aural effect, and *vice versa*. With this in mind, a more generalised critique of analytical writing on much contemporary music may be evolved; although in many cases the current repertoire is ignored, the usefulness of various techniques can be indicated through reference to music to which they *have* been applied. Therefore, rather than endeavouring to consider the scope and application of a totality of analytical methods, or even of a representative sample of those used for contemporary music in particular, it seems most useful here to indicate approaches which inform the current analytical project, as well as giving some impression of their shortcomings.

The overriding concern expressed here with music as heard marks an obvious connection to that branch of music analysis which is usually termed 'phenomenological'; in fact, the definition of a phenomenological perspective given by

Lawrence Ferrara coincides very closely with the theoretical position outlined in Chapter 1 above:

Phenomenologists presume that what one hears is affected by how one hears. The analyst's modes of orientation to a work must be considered and articulated. One can close or open many potential meanings of a work given a particular mode of orientation. A distinctive phenomenological tactic is that, rather than manipulate a work through a formal grid of analytical questions or positions, one responds to questions posed by the work. (Ferrara 1984: 356)

Various attempts to provide a proper phenomenology of music have been attempted, notably by Thomas Clifton, whose major study is itself entitled *Music as Heard* (Clifton 1983), Alfred Pike (Pike 1970), with shorter studies by Philip Batstone (Batstone 1969) and Ferrara (1984) which consider music from the Twentieth Century: Webern's Op.11 and Varèse's *Poème Electronique*, respectively. Clifton and Pike are primarily concerned with identifying the essences of music:<sup>2</sup>

The phenomenological approach to music is an attempt to observe and describe the essential perceptual and experiential characteristics of tonal events. This procedure involves the deliberate suspension of all extramusical assumptions which might interfere with objective observation.... The data of phenomenological description are given in terms of immediate experience and require no additional interpretation of such experience. (Pike 1970: 6)

Clifton in his 1983 study identifies four essences: time, space, play and feeling, which grow out of his earlier concern with what he called musical '*a priori*' (the experience of an ascending musical line, harmony, dissonance and consonance, etc.), which are 'meanings given immediately in a musical context.... regarded as immanent in music and accessible to perception without the mediating operations of logical proofs' (Clifton 1973: 81). As a result of this immediacy, Clifton draws a distinction between 'intuitive' and 'scientific' descriptions of music (see Clifton 1975), and moves away from what he regards as the somewhat specious 'objectivity' of the scientific attitude. Revealingly, he claims that this 'tends to put a certain distance between the music and the self, one extreme result of which is the lack of coordination between the activity of analyzing the score and that of analyzing the experience of the music in the score' (1975: 73), and he turns instead to a more pragmatic approach, divorced from any explicit theory. The emphasis he places on hearing is significant, as is the identification of the relativistic nature of listening to and writing about music, and a codification of how music creates its 'own logic'.

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<sup>2</sup> Pike does also consider some Twentieth-Century repertoire, in a chapter entitled 'Perception and meaning in serial music', Pike 1970: 53-61.

Clifton's intuitive approach as represented in his publications has been subject to critique: firstly, whether his orientation is really derived from Husserl's Phenomenology, and secondly, the level of his musical insight. The differences between Clifton's work and Husserl's phenomenology have been well discussed by Taylor A. Greer (Greer 1984), who also points out two contradictions. Firstly, although Clifton declares that the scientific and intuitive approaches can be equally valid, and indeed welcomes a multiplicity of understandings, he continually stresses the latter at the expense of the former; secondly, 'in order for this intuitive process to be complete, one's intuitions themselves must be analyzed, rationalized and, in short, confirmed. Clifton includes a discursive element in his theory which seems at odds with his desire for immediacy' (Greer 1984: 11-12). Of course, the phenomenological distinction between direct and mediated knowledge has been extensively deconstructed, particularly by Derrida in *Speech and Phenomena* (Derrida 1973); this aspect was further indicated in Chapter 1 with reference to Cook's 'musical and musicological' listening, with the view of analysis presented there an attempt to overcome a number of these philosophical concerns. Greer also recognises the problems of trying to build a generalised theory from intuitive perception, but welcomes Clifton's relativism and his accounts of music's effect.

This, however, raises a second criticism which can be levelled at a large proportion of this kind of writing. As James Tenney puts it, 'no philosophical system has greater potential for solving current problems of music theory [and analysis] than phenomenology - or, at least, what has come to be called the "phenomenological attitude", which begins with experience (no matter how far it might extrapolate beyond that starting point) and continually returns to experience as both the foundation and final arbiter of knowledge' (Tenney 1985: 200); however, as Nicholas Cook points out, 'a common failing of writers on musical phenomenology is to spend so long on theoretical prolegomena that they never address music.... [with a] disparity between the complex theorizing... and its rather obvious analytical consequences' (Cook 1983: 292). There are two aspects to this: firstly, the concern with identifying the musical *essences* of all music obviously does not encourage close analysis of specific pieces, and secondly, there is often a somewhat limited view of musical analysis, with it being identified rather too easily with an unthinking formalism. Indeed, Cook indicates that Clifton's phenomenological method is markedly similar to a 'good' analysis, as it is 'only bad

analysis that is rigidly tied to the musical score' (Cook 1983: 293). Of the analyses that have emerged, a large proportion are of contemporary music. Clifton's comments on Ligeti's *Volumina* are of a descriptive nature, concentrating on the presentation of stasis (Clifton 1975: 100-105), whereas Batstone's analysis of Webern is much more detailed, but again puts forward an 'alternative', based on aural perception, without fully following up the implications of that position. Judy Lochhead restricts her observations to the structuring of time, evolving a type of Gestalt theory which groups elements into basic 'temporal objects', and which allows some indications of processes of anticipation and recollection in works by Shifrin, Carter and Semegen (Lochhead 1989). The recognition that new analytical models are required is important, but Lochhead's analyses tend to remain at the level of what seems more like a pre-analytic description, with little sense of bringing the various processes together into a more cohesive presentation.

Lawrence Ferrara's analysis of Varèse's *Poème Electronique* displays some of the most useful features of the phenomenological approach, as he makes explicit the refinement of perception and understanding through a number of listenings; although there is again no real sense of bringing these insights together, and on some levels the analysis remains a somewhat blow-by-blow account, Ferrara's discussion does capture some of the 'multidimensional thrust of meanings' (Ferrara 1984: 373) of the music. This multiplicity is also emphasised by David Lewin in his key article on the subject, 'Music Theory, Phenomenology, and Modes of Perception' (Lewin 1986), and an important part of the analytical orientation of the present study derives from this approach. Fundamental is the discussion of ambiguity and the recursive nature of listening, which considers a 'musical perception' within a particular context and in relation to other such perceptions, which are themselves further related, and so on. As a result, those events which are understandable in a number of, sometimes contradictory, ways are considered particularly interesting, as Lewin's model escapes 'certain false dichotomies in analytic discourse, dichotomies that arise when we implicitly but erroneously suppose that we are discussing *one* phenomenon at one location in phenomenological space-time, when in fact we are discussing *many* phenomena at many distinct such locations' (Lewin 1986: 357). Lewin also indicates the problems of an uncritical approach to notation, how the analytical process refines understanding over time, and the desirability of the coexistence of different modes of

analytical presentation (: 372-3); the current project itself endeavours to explore a variety of ways of writing about music, with this process viewed as being almost as important as the ‘analytical’ work which precedes it. The drawback, however, is that Lewin’s model, which involves recording contexts, perception-relations and statement-lists for every perception, seems rather unwieldy and labour-intensive if applied to a complete piece.

Before leaving this consideration of overtly phenomenological approaches, those aspects which are adopted into the current palette of analytical strategies should be summarised. First, and most important, is the emphasis placed on the process of listening; second is the sense that a number of different perceptions can be applied to the same event, so that its ambiguity is maintained. Thirdly, each analysis is the result of a series of refinements through an extended listening process, with this forming part of the analytical reflection, a connection made explicit particularly in the analysis of *De Stijl* in Chapter 4. The present study applies the concentration on music as heard to a process of more detailed examination (in contrast to much phenomenological writing), so that how these perceptions are formed becomes the primary focus. In many respects, the ‘phenomenological approach’ within music analysis seems to have been overtaken recently by the adoption of various aspects of post-structuralist thought, particularly in respect of the undecidability of readings and considerations of objectivity in analytical writing, and it is within this framework that a number of its insights are reinterpreted here.

Lochhead’s approach, outlined above, is obviously comparable to the type of taxonomic division into a number of different paradigms, first used within a semiotic framework by Nicolas Ruwet and Jean-Jacques Nattiez, a technique which again has always been considered to have particular relevance to music of the Twentieth Century, and a bridge between these two approaches may be found in the explicitly perceptual theories of James Tenney (Tenney 1986, Tenney and Polansky 1980). Tenney proposes a hierarchical model of perceptual organisation, ‘Temporal Gestalt Perception’, determined by levels of disjunction, which allows a segmentation of music from the smallest to, theoretically, the largest elements of form. The segmentation is based upon primary factors of proximity and similarity, with secondary factors including accent and repetition, as well as two sets: the ‘objective set’, which involves the expectations caused by the piece (its style), and the ‘subjective set’, involving knowledge of other

music (an extra-opus approach to style). Due to its explicit formulation, this model can be transformed into an algorithm, using a system of weightings, which can be used on a computer (see Tenney and Polansky 1980). Developed especially for contemporary music, the model has a number of useful features, particularly its explicit character and foundation in perception. However, the way music is perceived in practice seems rather more complex than the model suggests, particularly the 'weighted', quantified version, and, although Tenney does consider polyphonic structures, his model appears unable to cope adequately with music which presents a large number of simultaneous groupings. The use of 'expectation sets' is an indication of the recognition of more complex systems of stylistic expectation and perception, but Tenney generally sidesteps these issues (possibly because they are difficult to formalise).

In many respects, the results of Tenney's model resembles Nattiez' analyses of the 'neutral level', with a direct comparison being made between segmentations of Varèse's *Density 21.5* (Tenney and Polansky 1980: 221-6); Nattiez' later revision in its turn responds to Tenney's, although it is placed within a completely different analytical and aesthetic context (see Nattiez 1982). Even a partial consideration of Nattiez' particular type of semiotics lies far beyond the scope of this study; instead, a number of aspects that influence some of its analytical work will be identified, as well as those which the current approach disregards. Although to divide the 'analytical technique' which Nattiez uses for the neutral level (paradigmatic division), from the remainder of his semiotic discussion of analysis is rather artificial, this is often how it is considered and is also more relevant for present purposes. The division of the music into a number of distinct paradigms which are then presented vertically for direct comparison, which Nattiez derived from Nicolas Ruwet's 'machine' for discovering basic units of music (see Ruwet 1972), is adopted here as a useful means of comparing a number of related cells in the 'Boogie-Woogie' section of *De Stijl*, but without employing Nattiez' terminology. There, the piano material is segmented to illustrate the processes of expectation that are set up, and the alterations which create a more complex perception of rhythmic instability through varied displacement; apart from a further limited use in consideration of motivic aspects of *MGV* and a fleeting appearance in discussion of *The Durham Strike*, this analytical 'technique', for want of a better term, is not generally employed, primarily because it seems unsuited for the music under examination. Firstly, the level of similarity within this music is generally immediately obvious, so



that a paradigmatic grouping does not display connections that in many cases are not apparent to the ear. Similarly, the processes of variation which do occur are often deliberately made the primary focus of the music, so again such analysis only reveals that which is obvious. Thirdly, and this strays somewhat from Nattiez' approach, such segmentation if used here would, rather like Tenney's, be an attempt at a perceptually-relevant inventory of material, and, for a number of the pieces examined, the processes involved are not identifiable in terms of a paradigmatic - syntagmatic layout. This is clearest with Skempton's *The Durham Strike*, analysed in Chapter 7, which relies upon a complex network of connections, but which involves links which do not seem to be amenable to such a type of approach. Additionally, of course, the general analytical strategy announced in Chapter 1 is prejudicial to the adoption of this technique as a first methodological step.

Clearly, however, there is a much more complex background to Nattiez' analyses, and some of this is also adopted here. Firstly, as has already become clear, the distinction that Nattiez draws between the three levels, poietic, neutral and esthetic (particularly in his earlier analytical study), is not an approach which is adopted here, where the emphasis is much more upon the esthetic level.<sup>3</sup> There is no attempt here to account for the music in terms which are not continually and immediately tested by recourse to the esthetic level, and in this respect it conforms to what Nattiez terms 'inductive esthetics':

[this] constitutes the most common case, primarily because most analysts wish to style themselves perceptively relevant, and most musicologists set themselves up as the collective consciousness of listeners.... This sort of analysis grounds itself in perceptive introspection, or in a certain number of general ideas concerning musical perception.... Here, a musicologist bases his or her statement on an analysis of the work, then describes what he or she thinks is the listener's perception of the passage. (Nattiez 1990: 141-2)

Here Nattiez still draws a distinction between performing the analysis and considering perception of the music, whereas the current approach sees these two processes as being much more firmly embedded within each other, so that our perception directly colours

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<sup>3</sup> Nattiez' concept of the neutral level has drawn the most criticism of any aspect of his work, and, indeed, his later writings attempt to clarify a number of what Nattiez no doubt considered misunderstandings about where this neutral level is actually located. See in particular Bernard 1986 and Osmond-Smith 1989; for more general discussion see Dunsby 1982 and 1983, Monelle 1992: 90-126. For Nattiez' response to criticism of his approach see Nattiez 1989a and 1989b, which, along with Nattiez 1990, marks a movement away from the earlier clear-cut tripartition applied to analytical *method*, towards a meta-analytical approach.

which aspects of the music are considered, which analytical technique is most appropriate, and performs a critical process, in that each step is tested against that perception as the writing proceeds.<sup>4</sup>

At the risk of simplifying still further to the point of parody, the adoption of some aspects of Nattiez' general semiology might most usefully be considered in terms of a check-list. Firstly, Nattiez' semiotic theory, adopted from Molino, moves away from considering music as a process of communication, instead recognising that the listener acts on the 'trace', constructing rather than absorbing meaning (see Nattiez 1990: 16ff); despite a number of problems with the concept of the neutral level, the current study employs a comparable orientation, and similarly recognises the lack of necessarily considering composers' intentions. Similarly, the general definition of meaning: 'An object of any kind takes on meaning for an individual apprehending that object, as soon as that individual places the object in relation to areas of his lived experience - that is, in relation to a collection of other objects that belong to his or her experience of the world' (Nattiez 1990: 9), corresponds to the position outlined in Chapter 1 above, as does the idea of a 'active perceptual process' (: 12) and the 'dynamic and situated aspect' of human activity (: 18). Furthermore, Nattiez' adoption of a Peircian concept of semiosis, whereby every sign becomes amenable to an infinity of interpretation (: 5-8), with music analysis itself taking part in this process and becoming available for further consideration as a symbolic construction (see Nattiez 1990, parts II and III), is adopted here through the insistence on the provisional nature of analytical reflection. Also important is the concept of 'plot', which is an attempt to codify the analyst's assumptions, and, indeed, be as explicit as possible about the orientation which lies behind each analysis, allowing for a higher level of critical engagement in the recognition of divergence in approach and result (see Nattiez 1985, and 1990: 176-8, 201-238). Two other suggestions made by Nattiez are also taken up here, firstly, that there is a place for a rigorous, yet unformalised approach to analysis (1990: 165), and secondly, the absence of a universally applicable system, in Nattiez' case of semiology (: 33-4).

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<sup>4</sup> The one analysis included in the current study which does perhaps display some 'analysis of the neutral level' is that of Skempton's *The Durham Strike*. Here, a number of aspects of construction are delineated without direct reference to their effect; once 'what is there' has been identified, this may be placed within a network of connections which does refer more clearly to perception. However, such 'recording of facts' is still determined here by a sense of perceptual relevance, rather than employing any explicit discovery procedure.

Whilst many of Nattiez' insights are adopted, there is one significant level upon which the current study parts from his orientation, which is the importance ascribed to deconstruction. Nattiez' attitude to deconstruction is most clearly summed up in a paragraph where he contrasts his approach, which he describes as the 'hermeneutics of construction', with the 'hermeneutics of undecidability':

we can either raise our hands in despair in the face of an infinitude of possible contexts and spend the rest of our lives signifying that signification is insignificant, or we can base our interpretations on explicit criteria while acknowledging that the search for truth is always asymptotic and that if Absolute Knowledge is not of this world, an understanding, however fragmentary, that is based on close study and human works is still better than the masturbatory self-satisfaction provoked by the headlong flight of meaning. (Nattiez 1993b: 274)

In fact, Nattiez' understanding of deconstruction seems like a *misunderstanding*, as he accuses Derrida of justifying 'us in saying *what we like* on any given subject' and of employing a 'surreal and often whimsical... mode of discourse that can convince only believers' (: 273). This is not the place, however, to attempt a rebuttal, but it is worth recalling the words of Derrida already cited in Chapter 1 (p.30); what is perhaps at the root of Nattiez' discussion is, paradoxically given his avoidance of clear-cut method, that he views deconstruction as a technique rather than a critical approach, and, in fact, fails to recognise that a number of his own points of reference are themselves comparable to a deconstructive understanding of the functioning of texts.

This is to stray somewhat from the examination of analytical techniques and strategies that are applied to contemporary music in particular, but since three of the seven analyses in this study make clear use of what might best be termed a 'deconstructive understanding', with the other four often echoing a number of related concerns, some characterisations of its application should be given here. Heeding Derrida's warning against deconstruction in the singular, I shall leave the various analyses to speak for themselves, and merely point out some other understandings which form an intertext. The application of deconstruction within musical analysis has been limited, since most approaches have, as indicated in Chapter 1, taken as their starting point the deconstruction of the opposition between inside and outside and moved towards a more 'situated' study of music. However, Susan McClary, particularly in *Feminine Endings*, has emphasised how particular pieces of music can be seen to deconstruct a number of binary oppositions that are either taken as normative, or which are themselves set up by the music and then subverted; in her discussion of Laurie

Anderson's work (McClary 1991: 132-147), she illustrates how the structural and ornamental are actually similarly constituted, and how a number of apparently clear-cut gestures, 'assurances of unitary control... become hopelessly entangled' (: 144). This entangling of the structural and the decorative becomes a focus in the analysis of *Désordre*, which applies some of McClary's general insights within a more overtly analytical framework, recognising that deconstruction has something to say about 'the music itself'. Carolyn Abbate, although wishing to distance herself from deconstruction *per se* (see Abbate 1991: 16-18), in fact applies the deconstructive insight of the different voices that can cohabit within a single work to a number of discussions of opera, and also instrumental music. Her examination of processes of narration within Dukas' *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* and her move away from 'analyses that assume all music in a given work is stylistically or technically identical, originating from a single source in "the Composer" ' (: 12) is an important starting point for the analysis of stylistic multiplicity and the creation of different voices in *De Stijl* (Chapter 4). One further explicit example of deconstruction applied 'intra-musically' may be found in the work of Rose Rosengard Subotnik, with her discussion of Chopin's A Major Prelude, op.28, no.7 (in Subotnik 1996: 39-147); here, Subotnik presents two readings which start by placing different emphasis on one chord, and move from there to a consideration of the rationality of the musical processes. The main problem with Subotnik's deconstruction within the current context is its lack of analytical (or perhaps even musical) insight; in contrast to her approach to structural listening (1996: 148-76), which speaks very eloquently of how music is understood within a network of stylistic expectations, a process which itself informs the analyses presented here, Subotnik's harnessing of deconstruction to Chopin's Prelude seems to lack a sense of necessity, and its results are correspondingly limited.

The above discussion has moved away from dealing with specific analyses to more general considerations of approach, but since these also form part of the analytical background to the current study, as opposed to the more theoretical considerations of Chapter 1, it has seemed most useful here to sketch in this network as well, rather than simply indicating an inventory of techniques which may or may not be applicable. Of course, this results in a lack both of comprehensiveness and of engagement with a number of approaches which do not themselves form a part of this background, but can indicate some aspects of orientation through their absence. Two such approaches should

just be sketched in. First are attempts to formulate 'semantic' approaches for music analysis, such as that put forward by V. Kofi Agawu, where music is classified into 'topics' or expressive types (Agawu 1991). Since these generally depend upon a consistency of style which the repertoire under consideration patently lacks, its usefulness here seems limited. Similarly, attempts to evolve analytical grammars for the listening process of tonal music (the most obvious being that of Fred Lerdahl and Ray Jackendoff in *A Generative Theory of Tonal Music*) founder upon this same lack of consistency of style, for as Lerdahl and Jackendoff point out, contemporary music in general poses an exception to their grammar (1983: 296-301). Although much of the music discussed here does play with processes of expectation which depend to some degree on 'traditional usage', a much more *ad hoc* approach seems better to capture the rather elusive way in which these are manipulated and controlled, and the lack of stylistic consistency within which this repertoire is situated. Some further indication of analytical techniques will emerge in the discussions of approaches to Feldman's *Three Voices* and Ligeti's *Désordre* below, as previous analyses are tested against a generalised strategy which has now started to become clear. With Feldman's music this analytical response has been varied, but where it generally falls short of accounting for the effect of the music clearly illustrates how the current approach marks an extension of these previous engagements.

### **'Long, Slow and Quiet'**

A large proportion of writing about Feldman's music is again not analytical, dealing rather with more general considerations of style, the problems of concert performance, and, of course, its length, but it has also been the subject of a reasonable amount of analytically-orientated discourse, particularly concerning pieces written in the Sixties and Seventies, but also increasingly from the Eighties. Since differences in the music from these two periods, which coincide with Feldman's development of pattern composition, indicate different analytical techniques and approaches, the analyses that have emerged will be considered separately; although *Three Voices* is situated within the latter, discussion of the earlier music raises a number of issues which are also

relevant to that composed some years later, as well as illuminating some general aspects of analytical methodology.

The problems with analysing Feldman's music of the mid-Seventies have been concisely summarised by David Bohn:

They are not tonal in nature, although many of the pitch-structures present in the works possess tonal implications. Neither are they twelve-tone or serial in nature, although in many pieces it is possible to find passages in which all twelve pitch classes are presented without repetition.... In addition, Feldman's works frequently display distinct layers or streams of material developing concurrently. (Bohn 1995: 3)

Bohn thus proposes a form of modified set-theoretic analysis: 'recurring pitch materials are identified in a manner consistent with set theory, but these sets are associated with specific pitches or pitch classes', so that transposed recurrence is considered less significant (1995: 3), and this he uses to present analyses of four pieces written between 1970 and 1976. Although Bohn's approach allows for a detailed examination of how the music manipulates a basic palette of materials, it is less suited for examination of form, in particular how, or to what extent, this pitch manipulation becomes important for the listener. What he does illustrate, however, is a level of consistency behind Feldman's much vaunted use of 'intuition', a critical approach to such 'received wisdom' that also forms part of the analysis in Chapter 5.

This use of consistency is also revealed in two analyses of somewhat earlier works by Thomas DeLio (DeLio 1983 and 1996). DeLio's approach to the third of Feldman's *Durations III* principally considers aspects of pitch construction (primarily because rhythm and dynamic are undifferentiated), illustrating how all the material grows out of a single, static opening sonority. Although DeLio concentrates on construction, he does consider it in explicitly perceptual terms, grouping the piece into four 'gestures' which are differentiated mainly through the use of register, and examines how various pitch elements oscillate between foreground and background. Overall, DeLio sees the music as a 'process wherein order is engendered by the appropriation of raw matter. Over the course of the composition a single sonority is first atomized, then extended and finally given meaning as one element within an organized complex of related sounds' (1983: 479); relationships appear to arise 'not through any act of the composer, but rather through the will of the perceiving consciousness' (: 479). DeLio's later analysis of the third of *Last Pieces* presents a comparable view of how the 'first five sounds of the piece foreshadow, in microcosm, the entire work' (DeLio 1996: 39). His approach here is somewhat more detailed and deals almost entirely with

identification of relationships and classification of the interval content of sonorities. However, there is little questioning of whether these connections can be perceived, and more an assumption that the terms used, such as ‘synthesis’, ‘sonic contrast’ and ‘completion’, are all perceptually relevant, without considering what an overall approach to form as heard might mean. His conclusion, that ‘as relationships proliferate and connections emerge, they never appear to do so through any compositional artifice. Rather, they do so through the act of perception itself’ (1996: 68), is practically identical to that suggested for *Durations III*, and as such risks losing a sense of analytical specificity. The main objection to DeLio’s work is his rather too-ready identification of the analysis of the score with the perception of the listener, and the lack of consideration of overall formal perception, for even if the music is creating form as it progresses, at the end one is nonetheless left with some overview of that experience.

Michael Hamman’s analysis of *Three Clarinets, Cello and Piano* similarly focuses on interrelations between pitch materials, with an implicit expectation that the manipulation of the pitch space he discusses corresponds to the audible level, that is, he seems to identify perception of the *music* with perception of the pitch-features he adduces (Hamman 1996). In contrast, the analysis of *Instruments I* by Peter Böttinger deals much more directly with repetition and variation of material which gradually modifies its identity as the piece progresses, involving a network of similarity and difference; Böttinger concentrates on accounting for how the experience of the music is created through the interaction of different parameters (Böttinger 1986). His identification of the way in which repetition and ‘renewal’ are closely tied is also important in the current analysis of *Three Voices*, although the material and use of pattern is somewhat different; fundamental to this perception is the ‘reaching into each other of the Similar and the New [through] the simultaneous overlaying of the different fields of repetition applied to individual parameters’ (1986: 107), and Böttinger indicates how the music is made up of a number of asynchronous layers, each presenting their own process of progression and regression (: 111). This concentration on *effect*, and the ambiguity of resulting form, illustrates a number of principles which, as should now be clear, are significant for ‘analysis’ as understood here. In this consideration of approaches to Feldman’s ‘pre-pattern’ music a number of fundamental differences in analytical approach and scope can be observed, as can a spectrum from

a type of 'classification', where the make-up of material is primarily simply recorded, to one where its effect, and the creation of that effect, are given much greater attention.

A similar spectrum is observable in the analysis of the more recent music, though here a more general turn towards considerations of Feldman's manipulation of time is also evident. A good example of the 'classificatory' approach may be found with Paula Kopstick Ames' analysis of *Piano*, an extremely detailed examination predominantly of aspects of chordal formation and relationships (Ames 1996). Ames presents what is almost an inventory of Feldman's compositional techniques, particularly features of register, voicing and chordal variation, as well as providing an overview of the piece (as three sections plus coda). With this sectionalisation in place, Ames considers the perception of the types of material that she has discussed; for instance, each section 'concludes with a system which in some way prepares the section which follows. Methods of preparation vary, but in all cases serve to attract and heighten the listener's attention through some audible difference in duration, texture, register, or material' (Ames 1996: 126). Generally in her discussion, however, pitch relationships are assumed to have perceptual relevance, and the process of hearing the type of evolution she proposes is avoided. A somewhat similar investigation of consistency of material is undertaken in Steven Johnson's analysis of *Rothko Chapel*; this is placed more within a conception of the piece of overall terms, a consideration of how the music creates two types of time, vertical and linear, and how Feldman blurs the boundaries between sections (Johnson 1994, for his discussion of time, see pages 33-9). Placing this conception at the centre of the analysis enables Johnson to comment more effectively on the meaning of interrelationships of pitch and material, and to emphasise those aspects which make for a distinct experience of this piece, though he is aided in this by the fact that Feldman 'momentarily exchanged his abstract style for one that, for long stretches, embraced an expressive, linear aesthetic.... [revealing] an unexpectedly accessible, sensuous side of Feldman's musical personality' (Johnson 1994: 45).

The particular way in which Feldman's late works manipulate our perception of time is an important part of Chapter 5, and has been discussed by a number of other analysts. Daniël Franke, in his 'Analytische Contemplation' on *For Bunita Marcus*, endeavours to capture the effect of listening to this music in the construction of his prose, as well as drawing attention to apparently marginal features within a more generalised discussion of Feldman's compositional concerns (Franke 1986); the more



traditionally 'analytical' parts of his discussion, such as the diagram showing length of musical 'groups' in terms of bars (which actually have different durations), seem somewhat tangential to that discussion (: 138), and the overall tone suggests a bewilderment at the difficulties of analysing this music, instead producing a 'meditation' which refuses to deal with a number of important issues. Gisela Gronemeyer, in discussion of *Crippled Symmetry*, again places the music within Feldman's main compositional concerns, and situates the analytical problem close to the perception of time:

the music of Morton Feldman is intentionless, it leaves the listener uninvolved, who regards it like a river on which different types of buds and flowers float by, return, wilt.... It is not easy to describe because there is nothing to grasp hold of, everything melts away under the fingers, and no system hides underneath. (Gronemeyer 1984: 5)

The 'lack of system' is considered in Chapter 5; Gronemeyer goes on to illustrate how the music plays with hearing identity and similarity, pointing out that a number of symmetries visible in the score are not actually perceptible. A more detailed examination of the various versions of material that evolve over the course of a Feldman piece may be found in John McGuire's discussion of *Three Voices* (McGuire 1987), where he considers the perception of time that Feldman creates, particularly the 'flatness' of the music, in terms of the ambiguity between repetition and variation. McGuire's analysis is discussed further in Chapter 5; it is worth pointing out here that he both illustrates that it is possible to discuss this music, and gives a number of indications of the way in which this might be done, but, crucially, tends to regard the examination of perceived form as an irrelevance, or, perhaps, fundamentally misplaced. In this respect McGuire falls into a half-way position between Gronemeyer's and my own discussion, taking seriously the perception of moment-to-moment processes and presenting these in some detail, but without approaching the problems of formal perception. Before going on to consider one approach that has been evolved to take account of these processes, two other commentaries need briefly to be discussed.

The first of these is Herman Sabbe's more generalised view of Feldman's approach to musical time, which is self-avowedly 'deconstructionist' (Sabbe 1996). Sabbe recognises that writing about this music need not be constrained by what Feldman himself had to say; indeed, a number of Feldman's formulations seem, quite simply, to miss the point. Some of Sabbe's remarks about time and its perception are exactly applicable to *Three Voices*; a number of these, or similar, understandings

reappear as part of the orientation of Chapter 5, without adopting exactly the same standpoint. Sabbe's discussion should really be considered as a whole, but at the risk of distortion, a number of particularly relevant observations may be cited here:

similar information is being presented in dissimilar / similar contexts; literal or modified repetitions occur in literally repeated or modified contexts. So, Feldman's music presents constantly differing degrees of difference and of similarity, in other words a continual differentiation of difference....(: 9-10)

Each and every element of Feldman's music is quite definite, whereas the constitution of fixed significations through the establishment of relationships among those elements is being indefinitely deferred ('differ'ed). (:10)

Immediate repetitions... are often a means of establishing uniformity... over longer periods and thus creating the illusion of a permanently accessible, available, continually present, identical ideal object - an illusion, because even when remaining completely unchanged in notation, the sound object changes over time in perception. Mediate repetitions or returns are no re-petitions, but ongoing (re)presentations of the present become past. (: 12)

Sabbe also lays down the challenge to analysis:

So, the problem under consideration is how to describe, to rescribe, to verbally represent this music of no fixed musical-sense content, this music of continual change which is not reducible to any system - which, by the way, is why conventional methods of analysis, the very ones that are governed by principles of reduction, do not seem to be able to come to grips with this music. (: 10)

Whilst accepting that traditional forms of analysis may not be successful with Feldman's late music, this does not mean that it can not be analysed at all (as Chapter 5 illustrates).

The second example forms one of the most detailed analyses of Feldman's late pieces, and although, in emphasising overall form answers a criticism that has been levelled here at much other analytical writing, displays a number of other fundamental problems. Wes York's analysis of *For John Cage* is an attempt to provide a hierarchical model of how the twin concepts of 'crippled symmetry' and 'self-similarity' inform the structure of the music on all temporal levels, and involves the production of a tree-structure, which divides the work into a basic A-B-A structure; this pattern is also found elsewhere, including, according to York, the micro-level of the musical pattern (York 1996). Despite the welcome detail, this approach seems flawed on two accounts, the first of orientation, the second of application. Firstly, York does not seem to relate his segmentation to how a listener might hear the work, so that on the small scale, pattern-changes are sometimes ignored in favour of those which are more pronounced in terms of pitch, yet have less aural effect; on the large scale, it must

seriously be doubted that an overall A-B-A form is perceived, given the other connections across time, the lack of large-scale 'return', and the time-scale involved. This leads into the second problem, which is the level of approximation often involved in the segmentation, which sometimes suggests that the music is being squeezed into a pre-determined analytical mould; when applied to eight hierarchical levels, the undifferentiated grouping of material does call into question the veracity of the structures that York adduces. Although the realisation that form needs discussing is welcome, a much less rigid approach seems indicated.

Such an approach is found in Walter Zimmermann's analysis of *Trio*, where the recognition of the type of analysis required, if not the method, is very close to that used here for *Three Voices* (see Zimmermann 1984a). Zimmermann presents what he calls a 'gedächtnis-Seismogramm' (thought-seismogram) to illustrate how the music creates a complex web of recall and memory, with the 54 groups of material that Zimmermann identifies being continually re-heard in different orders, and simultaneously varied. Zimmermann's mode of presentation involves a bar-by-bar representation of the piece, and indicates recurrent material on the large scale through the numbering of groups of material, and on the small-scale through two types of relationship: 'a) repetition of cells or elements mostly in varying metres... b) permutation, chord-inversion or other changes of registration [voicing]' (1984a: 49). In addition, the way in which Feldman repermutes bars and systems of music also becomes apparent. The principal drawback with Zimmermann's mode of presentation is, firstly, that it is somewhat unwieldy (the 2285 bars of *Trio* requiring twenty-five pages to be represented) and correspondingly difficult to read and imagine in terms of the music, and, secondly, lacks a way of bringing the information together into a more coherent whole, which would also give a greater indication of how the various types of material interact on the larger scale. The mode of presentation chosen in the analysis of *Three Voices* solves both these problems, and further indicates that not only basic orientation but also layout is an important factor in what is viewed here as analytical efficacy. In evolving different means of presentation and a perpetual concentration on aspects of perception, this analysis extends those offered previously, and enables detailed and critical engagement with the complexities of Feldman's music.

## 2. Reasserting the Temporal

### György Ligeti's First Piano Étude (1985)

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#### Analytical Context

Ligeti's music has, in recent years, received a large degree of analytical attention, and, uniquely among the pieces collected here, the First of his Piano Études, *Désordre*, has been the subject of more than one analysis. This relative richness of analytical context means that the current discussion can be compared more directly with other approaches and their relative strengths and weaknesses assessed more easily. By this point, a number of common concerns regarding analytical strategy should have become clear: firstly, where most analyses fail in accounting for effect (the strategy adopted here attempting to place emphasis much more on this aspect), and, secondly, how discussion of this music tends to fall into a number of clear types, which, for the purposes of brevity may be indicated here, allowing for an easier process of classification. The first of these may be termed 'general descriptive', where the music is considered within the context of the composer's output, or aesthetic, so that the level of detail is necessarily limited, but which does not preclude some insight into its effect. The second, 'detailed descriptive', most closely resembles a blow-by-blow account of the music, usually concentrating on compositional method and discussing matters of construction. The third may be termed 'classificatory analytical', which, as the name suggests, involves detailed examination of features of material, such as pitch construction, relationship between sections, etc., and often gives some overview and synthesis of these elements as well, but usually does not place them within a perceptual context. This is left to the fourth kind, here termed 'analytical', which is where all the above discussion has been leading. Of course, there is considerable overlap between these types, and indeed, there are also approaches such as 'phenomenological commentary', which involves a focus on perception but lacks the level of detail to be really considered analytical.

Before discussing the various approaches to *Désordre*, brief comments on some analyses of other pieces by Ligeti seem appropriate, as these also form part of

the background to the following examination; this is not an attempt at either comprehensiveness or even of presenting a representative sample, but rather an identification of influence. The first of these is the approach to the representation of Ligeti's music evolved by Jonathan W. Bernard, which extrapolates Ligeti's self-avowed tendency to conceive music in spatial terms into the production of graphs, showing overall movement within pitch-space (see Bernard 1987). Within the analysis of *Désordre* a spatial approach to form is subjected to a process of critique, but as a starting point for examining 'what is there' it remains useful. Additionally, Bernard recognises that a number of structures within Ligeti's music of the Sixties and Seventies are inaudible, and discusses the disjunction between score and sounding result, a disjunction which Ligeti uses to creative effect. Jane Piper Clendinning's examination of the 'pattern-meccanico' compositions, in particular *Continuum* (Clendinning 1993), involves a similar use of graphic representation as Bernard, with an almost identical pitch / time graph employed in Michael Hicks' more pitch-orientated study (Hicks 1993). However, Clendinning also evolves a method for examining how different patterns interact and create complex resultants, as well as the rate of pattern change (1993: 204 & 207); the desire to examine how the 'audible sectional structure' arises from this small-level interaction, and the concentration on the aural result, both form an important focus in the current analysis.

Stephen Ferguson's attempt at what he calls a 'Gesamtanalyse' (total-analysis) of *Monument, Selbstportrait, Bewegung* (Ferguson 1994) also places emphasis on the music as perceived, and takes as a starting point a number of *aural* structures. In this respect, Ferguson's analysis may be compared to Reinhard Febel's somewhat earlier examination of the same piece (Febel 1978), which remains more clearly focussed on structures such as pitch construction and rhythmic canon, delineating these with a high level of detail. Febel, although making a number of observations about effect, implies that all the structures he adduces remain perceptually relevant, and generally ignores questions such as at which point a six-layer canon becomes so complex as to coalesce into one texture. However, this is not to reduce his level of (structural) insight, and indeed, the way in which Febel illustrates the interplay of different systems and of 'intuition' is also important for this discussion of *Désordre*. Herman Sabbe places more emphasis on what he terms the 'phenomenology' of Ligeti's music, indicating a number of difficulties in its discussion, primarily the disjunction between,

for instance, description of the pitches in a cluster, and perception of that cluster as an object (Sabbe 1987: 5), as well as the complex psycho-acoustic by-products of such pieces as *Continuum*. Sabbe also recognises the ‘polyrhythmic’ nature of Ligeti’s approach to form, and the continual return to the effect of the music remains part of the analytical strategy adopted for *Désordre* below. To use the classifications indicated above, the difference between Febel and Sabbe is between a ‘classificatory analytical’ and an ‘analytical’ approach, with Clendinning’s analysis belonging to the latter and Bernard and Ferguson falling somewhere between the two.

Turning now to the various writings on *Désordre* that have emerged, a number fall easily into the ‘general descriptive’ category. Amongst these are discussions by Ferguson (Ferguson 1993) and Ulrich Dibelius (Dibelius 1994), with Dibelius moving towards the ‘detailed descriptive’ in the outlining of some aspects of the compositional processes involved; also falling into this latter category are the various levels of detail found in discussions by Wolfgang Burde (Burde 1993), Constantin Floros (Floros 1991) and Paul Griffiths (Griffiths 1997). All these writers consider *Désordre* within discussion of Ligeti’s *Études* as a whole, with Dibelius placing greater emphasis on the influence of Nancarrow and the application of Chaos Theory (Dibelius 1994: 214-20), and Burde on the system of organisation and the importance of ‘resulting patterns’ in the traditional music from Central Africa, as well as indicating Ligeti’s relationship to Chopin’s piano music (Burde 1993: 185-90). Within these descriptive accounts a number of details of the processes do emerge, primarily the way in which left and right hands drift out of phase, both on the small and large scale, and the construction of their respective strands; there are also indications of the effect of this piece: Griffiths in particular suggests how a level of ‘tonal ambiguity’ arises (Griffiths 1997: 120), and Burde, drawing on Ligeti’s own comments, indicates how form is perceived, principally in relation to a Beethovenian process of motivic development (Burde 1993: 197). Particularly relevant for the following analysis is Burde’s indication of a sense of reprise and Griffiths’ observation that, towards the ‘climax’, the ‘notes of the melody are almost indistinguishable from those of the scalar infill’ (1997: 119), two points which will be returned to below.

Four authors have approached *Désordre* in what might best be termed a ‘classificatory analytical’ manner, recording similar processes, albeit in somewhat different ways. Presented chronologically these are Denis Bouliane (Bouliane 1989),

Hartmuth Kinzler (Kinzler 1991), Richard Steinitz (Steinitz 1996b) and Hannes Schütz (Schütz 1996); Schütz at least acknowledges the work of Bouliane, whereas Kinzler does not, with Steinitz giving no indication at all of any earlier analytical work on this, or the other *Études*, overall a somewhat curious disregard of previous literature. This may possibly be connected with the fact that all four present their analysis of the process as more or less ‘objective’ knowledge, revealing how ‘the piece works’; with Kinzler, this is a part of a deliberate intertextual link to Ligeti’s own analysis of Boulez’ *Structures Ia*, and his is, in fact, the most detailed examination. In the analysis which follows, some of this information will be presented again, for two reasons. Firstly, it is an important foundation for any discussion of the effect of this music, though here the analysis endeavours to be explicit about which features make a significant impression on perception and which do not, and, secondly, it illustrates a somewhat different mode of presentation from that found elsewhere, particularly in the use of graphics. These seem clearer and more elegant than those used by the four authors cited above, particularly when compared to Steinitz’ representation of phrase structure (1996b: 9) and Kinzler’s indication of the process of compression (1991: 98); within the context of this study as a whole, they illustrate the importance of finding the most appropriate ways of presenting analytical information.

Through this discussion, some indication will be made of how it either recapitulates or departs from previous analytical engagements, so that the point at which it reaches beyond them to become, in the current terminology, ‘properly analytical’, can clearly be identified. This, of course, is the advantage of starting with a piece that is already subject to some analytical commentary, and, as a concrete example of the more theoretical discussion undertaken thus far, the following analysis of *Désordre* indicates the type of strategy which is employed throughout. A number of aspects of this *Étude* are not considered here: the relationship between this music and Chaos Theory has been well documented elsewhere, particularly by Schütz and Steinitz, with Bouliane also indicating a much more far-reaching musical context within which this music can be understood; as a result, the discussion instead moves as rapidly as possible into examination of how this music makes its very remarkable effect, as well as presenting a critical account of how it creates and manipulates our perception of temporality.

## Disordering *Désordre*

Calling a composition *Désordre*, 'Disorder', raises a number of expectations in the listener, the most important of these being the crucial difference made through the use of the negative form. The title necessarily invokes its opposite, *Ordre*, disorder being usually considered as a lack, a deficiency, and understood in terms of its negativity, its difference from order, the privileged term in the hierarchy. Ligeti seems to have had some trouble in the choice of title for this *Étude*; before eventually deciding on *Désordre* he considered at least nine others, (which appear on the first page of the first draft): 'Détraquement', 'Pulsation Irreguliere', 'Mouvement Irreguliere', 'Désordre-Vertige-Joie', 'Décalage', 'Displacement', 'Contraction-Disatition', 'Stroboscope' and, interestingly, 'Ordre-Désordre'. In fact, many of these alternatives are more an accurate description of the piece than that finally selected, for it is through processes of displacement, time-lag and contraction-dilation that the piece operates, with the end result being a complex type of irregular pulsation.<sup>5</sup> However, the decision in favour of *Désordre*, particularly over 'Ordre-Désordre', is quite significant. Firstly, as noted above, disorder immediately invokes its opposite, making any more explicit statement of the duality unnecessary. Secondly, by choosing *Désordre* above a dualistic title, Ligeti emphasises that this piece has as its subject one thing, disorder, rather than simply our perception of both order and disorder (which does, however, play a significant part in the music). This analysis thus considers the way in which the music presents a 'disordering', a deconstruction, of the opposition between elements of order and disorder, and the corresponding concepts of 'structure' and 'decoration'. From a starting point where a hierarchy between them is very clearly defined, the music arrives at a position where the decorative is seen as fulfilling a structural role, and *vice versa*. In analytical terms, it is generally those aspects of music which are considered to be 'structural' which are most conducive to analytical procedures which tend towards spatial, symbolic representation of the music. By placing much greater weight on those which seem initially to be non-structural, non-ordered, and transgressive, the piece may be read as

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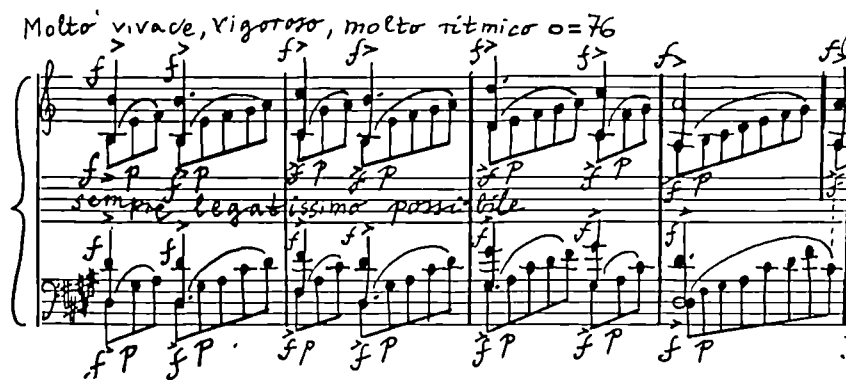
<sup>5</sup> Kinzler similarly draws attention to the rejected alternative titles, which, as he points out, 'as a rule are descriptive of structure or process' (Kinzler 1991: 105), but does not draw any conclusion from Ligeti's final choice.



delineating a single process of what is termed ‘disordering’, which seems to account for its relentless forward momentum particularly well, as the analytical procedure attempts to recapture the essential temporality of that process as it evolves.

In order to understand how *Désordre* performs its operation of deconstruction, the hierarchy which it ‘attacks’ must be made apparent from the very beginning, and the music starts with an impression of order, a dominance of structure, against which the gradual process of disordering may be perceived. The first four bars of the piece, which contain the essence of the overall process (one of the clearest manifestations of Ligeti’s interest in the self-similarity of fractals), are immediately set up as the ‘norm’, against which later developments and modifications can be measured (see Figure 2.1). Left and right hands, separated by their exclusive use of black and white notes respectively, each present similar material: accented octaves, initially in a 3+5, 3+5, 5+3 rhythm, ‘filled in’ by running quaver figures.

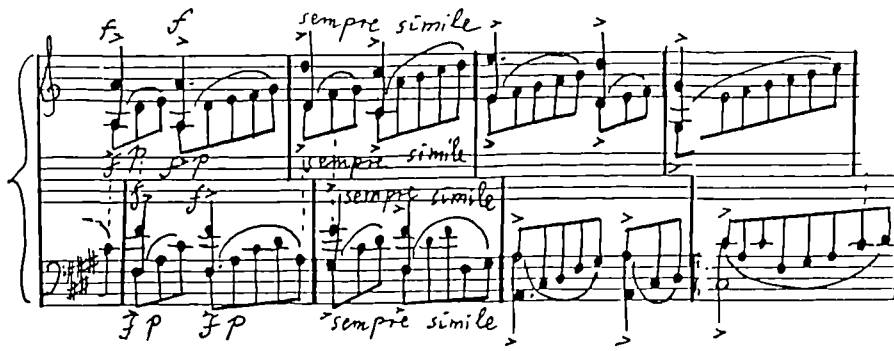
FIGURE 2.1.



The important form-building feature of these four bars is the difference in length between the material given to each hand in bar 4: whereas the right hand has 7 quavers, the left hand has 8, and this ‘shortening’ of the right-hand material means that the two hands are one quaver out of phase by the beginning of RHb.5<sup>6</sup> (see Figure 2.2).

<sup>6</sup> Because of the nature of the piece, the left and right hands have a different number of bars. As a result, bar numbers are given as either ‘left-hand bar’ or ‘right-hand bar’, abbreviated LHb. and RHb. respectively.

FIGURE 2.2.



This process of gradual phase-shifting, to appropriate Steve Reich's term, is the principal means whereby the interplay between order and disorder is achieved in the first section of the piece, RHbs.1-98, and also plays an important role in the rest of the music. Importantly, the process can be perceived only in terms of the accented octave melodic lines, and it is the interaction between the left- and right-hand rhythms that create the initial passage into disorder.

By examining the patterns that arise from this interaction, the gradual shift into a perception of disorder can clearly be identified. Figure 2.3 shows the 'resulting patterns' for the first third of the piece, RHbs.1-56; the reduction ignores pitch and register, recording only rhythm, with the note-heads orientated so as to show which attack derives from the left- or right-hand stream. The music has been divided into thirteen patterns of thirty-one quavers (equivalent to four bars); each pattern thus represents a new alignment after a phase-shift of one quaver. Pattern 1, as already noted, marks the extreme of order in this section, and, after a general increase in rhythmic complexity, pattern 9 returns almost to this starting level; patterns 10-13, however, represent a further increase, making the stability of pattern 9 further stand out. In fact, this clarity is only perceived some way into this pattern: due to the surrounding instability, the restatement is not heard as such until the second group of eight quavers. The increased number of attacks compared to pattern 1 also aids the elision back into the disorder of pattern 10.

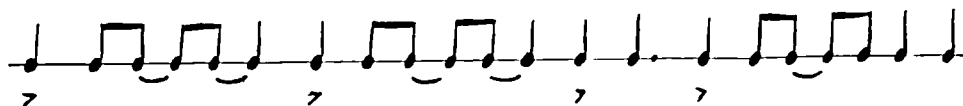
FIGURE 2.3.

Figure 2.3 displays 13 numbered musical staves, each containing a sequence of notes and rests. The notation includes various rhythmic values such as quarter notes, eighth notes, and dotted notes, along with rests. Some notes are marked with an 'M' above them, possibly indicating a specific articulation or emphasis. The staves are arranged vertically and numbered 1 through 13 on the left side.

- ①: A sequence of notes with various rests and ties, including a dotted quarter note, a quarter note, and a half note.
- ②: A sequence of eighth notes and quarter notes, some with 'M' markings.
- ③: A sequence of quarter notes and eighth notes, some with 'M' markings.
- ④: A sequence of quarter notes and eighth notes, some with 'M' markings.
- ⑤: A sequence of quarter notes and eighth notes, some with 'M' markings.
- ⑥: A sequence of quarter notes and eighth notes, some with 'M' markings.
- ⑦: A sequence of quarter notes and eighth notes, some with 'M' markings.
- ⑧: A sequence of quarter notes and eighth notes, some with 'M' markings.
- ⑨: A sequence of quarter notes and eighth notes, some with 'M' markings.
- ⑩: A sequence of quarter notes and eighth notes, some with 'M' markings.
- ⑪: A sequence of quarter notes and eighth notes, some with 'M' markings.
- ⑫: A sequence of quarter notes and eighth notes, some with 'M' markings.
- ⑬: A sequence of quarter notes and eighth notes, some with 'M' markings.

Despite the primacy of the rhythmic interaction of the two hands at this point, of the other analyses cited above, only Kinzler indicates in some detail the patterns that result, and he also discusses some perception of ‘pre-striking’ and ‘after-striking’, a rare consideration of how the processes are perceived. As Figure 2.3 indicates, pattern 1 acts as the ‘norm’, pattern 2 is perceived as two identical patterns staggered by one quaver, whereas the third pattern may similarly be heard as a further shift of phase, or, due to its highly-defined rhythmic profile and the registral proximity of the left and right hands, a slightly different rhythmic sense may emerge (this is shown in Figure 2.4). Patterns 4 to 8 present even greater rhythmic ambiguity and an increasing sense of disorder; this increase comes mainly from the inability to hear the 3+5 pattern through the texture, but also from a decrease in regularity of accented attacks in left- and right-hand streams. The overall effect of both these processes is the gradual effacement of the 31-quaver unit as a recognisable ‘four-bar phrase’.

FIGURE 2.4.



Despite these increasingly complex resulting rhythms, at this point there is still a clear sense of the music growing out of a basic seed. In summary, this seed involves the separation of left- and right-hand streams through mutually exclusive pitch material and thus intervallic structure; each hand presents a melodic line of accented octave notes, articulating an asymmetrical rhythmic pattern, which takes place against a background of even quaver pulsation: scalic figures which seem mainly to serve a synchronising role. These four bars thus present the basic hierarchy of structure and decoration: the accented octaves are understood as being structural, their interaction producing the gradual shift into rhythmic disorder and serving as the primary focus of the listener’s attention, whereas the quaver figuration at this point fulfills a more decorative role. Of course, it does have two functions here: firstly, it allows the asymmetrical rhythms to be heard clearly, as they take place against a stable background; secondly, a uniform pulsation is essential to allow the piece to be played at all, for without it, there is no way in which the complex resulting rhythms would be humanly possible.

The ‘structural’ aspect of the left- and right-hand accented streams is emphasised by their construction, an almost completely rigorous process which effectively controls aspects of form as well as note-to-note detail. Each hand has its own, interrelated melodic line, which is continuous throughout; these are stated in octaves in the first main section of the piece, RHbs.1-98, and become embedded within more complex chordal formations towards the end of the work. The pitch outline of the right-hand melody is shown in Figure 2.5, grouped into its main constituent phrases, although it obviously exhibits other aspects of self-similarity; this is played fourteen times through the course of the piece (the last statement is incomplete, however) and each time the melody is repeated it is transposed upward one *note*, that is, one or two semitones, so that the second statement begins on C, the third on D and so on. The left hand has slightly extended, yet related material (see Figure 2.6) and, being longer, is repeated only eleven times (again, with the last statement incomplete). With each repetition the left hand descends *two* notes, that is, four or five semitones, with the bifurcating structure resulting from this contrary motion being primary in the creation of form.

FIGURE 2.5.



FIGURE 2.6.



These two melodic lines completely determine the pitch material for the accented, ‘structural’ notes; the only exception to the rigour of the process comes at RHb.99, the main division in the music (which Kinzler calls ‘the point of singularity’), where the left hand suddenly shifts octave from the very bottom of the keyboard, where it

has physically run out of notes to play, to a position around middle C, the only sudden change of register.

The second aspect of the 'mechanical process', its rhythmic construction, also needs to be examined. The melodic material of both hands undergoes two rhythmic processes. Firstly, both lines contract, each statement of the melody becoming shorter, with this process reaching its maximum just before the point of singularity (RHb.99), and providing forward momentum towards that climax. Immediately afterwards, there is a sudden rhythmic expansion back to the starting level, and, from here until the end of the piece, the right-hand melody remains fixed in length, whilst the left-hand material slowly lengthens. How these two processes operate over the whole piece is shown for the right hand in Figure 2.7 and the left hand in Figure 2.8: each dark square represents an attack, a note of the melodic line, and each shaded area the prolongation of that attack, with duration of each segment and for the complete statement given in quavers. The right hand consists of four segments, the first three of which are clearly variants of each other, whereas the fourth is half the length. The left hand material is very similar, the main difference being an extra segment, A<sup>'''</sup>, corresponding to the additional seven pitches of this pattern and adding an extra thirty-two quavers. This means that, in a mirroring of the surface level, the left hand progresses at a slower rate. The rhythmic processes are clear from the graphs: each contraction or expansion maintains the number of attacks (necessarily so in order to present the whole melodic line) and also the patterning of each segment as far as possible. Thus segment B always has the form long-short-short-long, until the level of compression reaches the point where such a distinction can no longer be made and the pattern is finally reduced to four even quavers.

FIGURE 2.7.

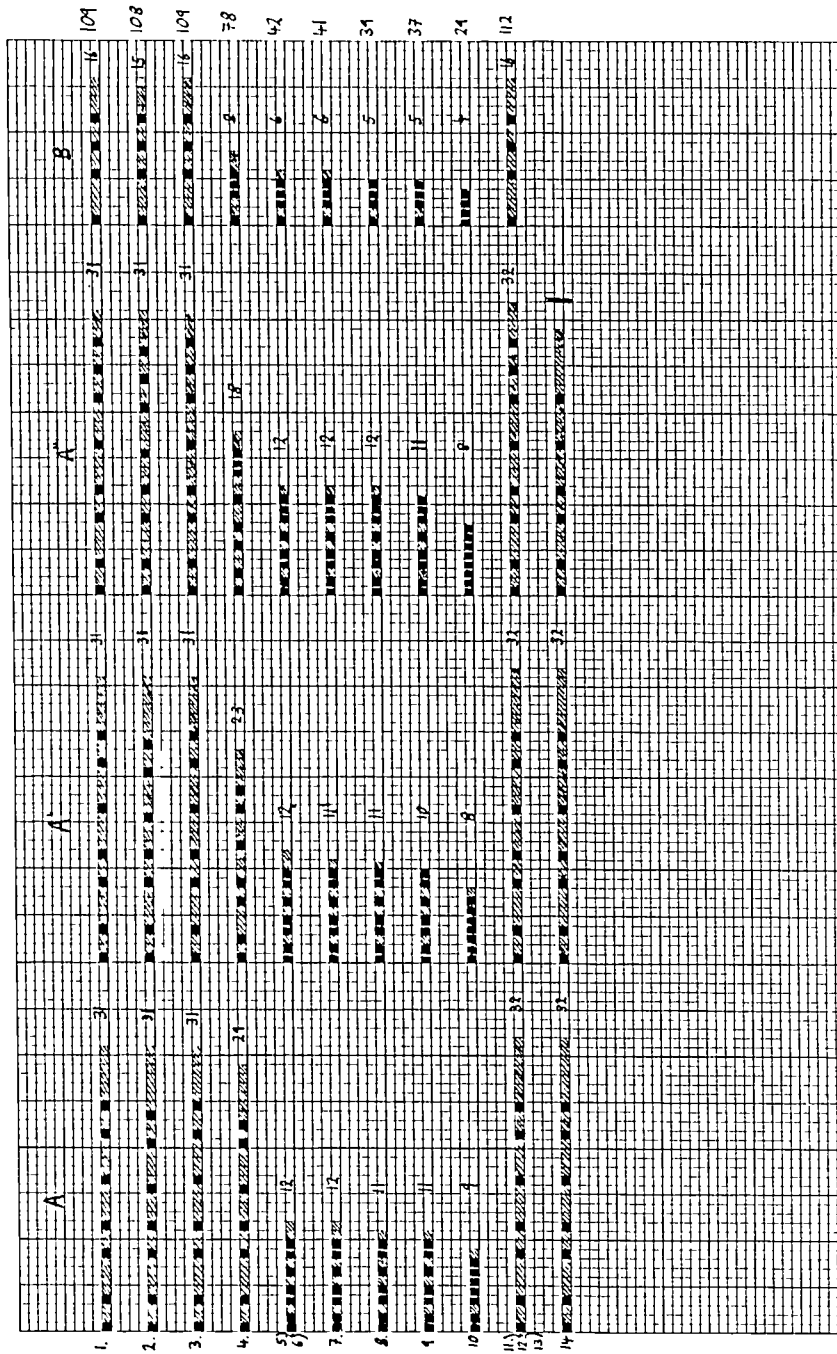
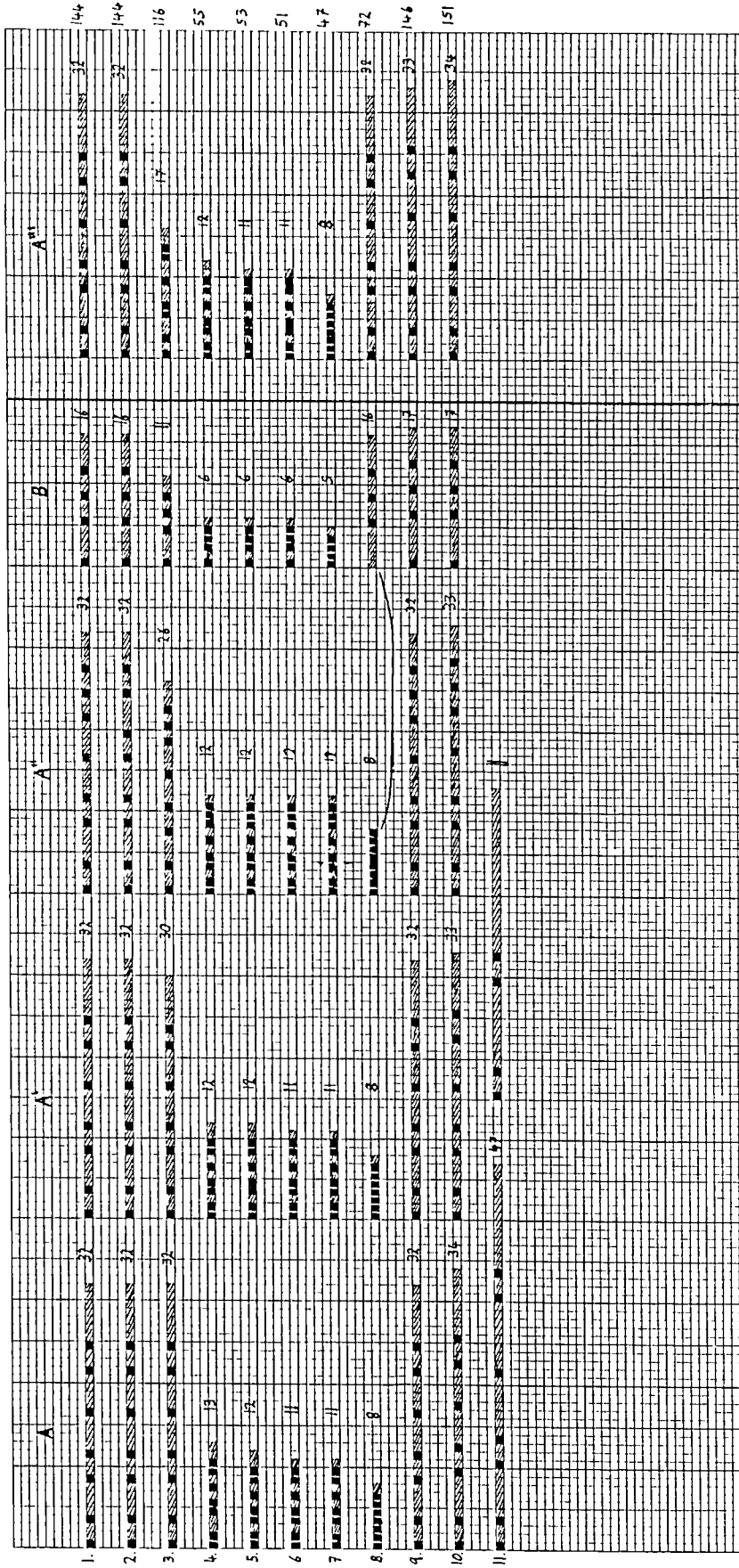


FIGURE 2.8.





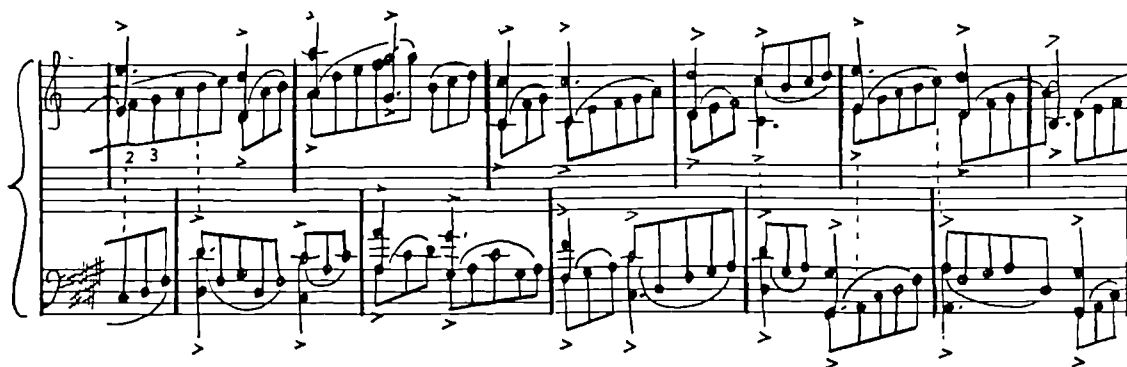
The interaction of these two processes, the localised phase-shifting at the beginning of the music (which recurs with the gradual lengthening of the left hand in the final third of the piece), and the larger scale phase-shifting of the left- and right-hand melodic streams, determines a large number of aspects of this music. As has already been outlined, the first third of the piece (RHbs. 1-56), principally involves a small-scale creation of disorder perceived against a four-bar pattern, and only at the very end of this section does the process of rhythmic contraction begin. This increase in the density of accented attacks creates even greater forward momentum, and, as the melodic streams approach the level of even quavers, the rate of overall pitch-movement also increases as the hands move ever further apart. The sudden change of octave, again determined by the starting conditions of the process, coupled with the rhythmic expansion back to the starting level and the use of chords rather than octaves, creates a quite distinct effect, yet at the same time functions as a kind of restatement, a new beginning, primarily because of the reappearance of the immediately recognisable 3+5 pattern, set up at the very opening as the foundation of 'order'. This final portion of the piece has a somewhat less frantic effect, due to the lengthenings within the melodic / rhythmic process and the register of the left hand in particular, which, as Bouliane comments, tends to overpower the increasingly indistinct right hand (1989: 79); this prioritising of the left hand in perception will be considered further towards the end of this analysis.

It is easy to think of the identification and codification of these two processes as constituting an analysis, and indeed, although Bouliane, Steinitz and Schütz all make a number of further points about the effect of this music in general terms, their detailed level of discussion tends to cease here. Up to this point, the analytical process has involved description and identification of only some features of the music, involving a degree of detail; the aspects discussed so far are fundamentally those of structure, forming the skeleton of the music, and, being formalisable, are relatively easy to itemise. However, it is possible to be much more explicit both about the effect of these structures and how other, non-structural aspects form an important part of the music, and in this way move into a more genuinely analytical approach.

The key to this understanding is how the hierarchy between structure and decoration is deconstructed. At the outset of the piece the perception of order and disorder depends upon the interaction of the two 'structural' melodic strands, and,

returning to the resulting patterns for the first section of the piece (RHbs.1-56), one can see the effect that the melodic outline of each hand has on the interchange between order and disorder. The first effacement of the 31-quaver, four-bar pattern occurs in pattern 4, RHbs.13-16 (Figure 2.9). RHb.15 signals the start of the second statement of the right-hand melody, C-C-D-C etc., and this melodic pattern, standing out of the texture, creates some ambiguity about its position: whether it forms the middle or the beginning of a 31-quaver phrase. Obviously, the temporal structure indicates the former, but the memory of the four-bar 'norm' is so strong that this resemblance brings it immediately to mind, suggesting the commencement of a new phase-alignment and thus four-bar phrase. The next change of phase at RHb. 17 thus causes even more perceptual confusion, and any sense of periodicity is completely lost.

FIGURE 2.9.



Considered in general terms, this first section is thus characterised by:

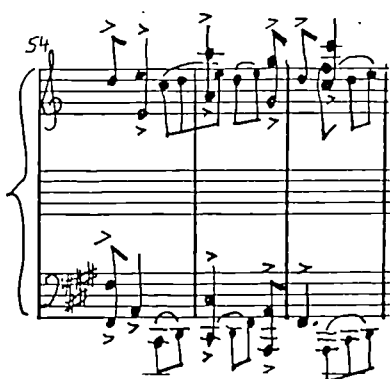
- i) the establishment of a four-bar 'norm' against which the later processes of disorder may be judged
- ii) the establishment of a hierarchy of structure, the accented octaves, and decoration, the constant quaver motion
- iii) a general increase in disorder created through the interlocking of left- and right-hand melodies
- iv) the first realisation, at around RHb.45, of the gradual registral process created by the bifurcating left- and right-hand streams.

All these features privilege the structural: the processes of registral change and manipulation of order and disorder result from structural elements and their interaction. However, such a clear-cut duality is obviously open to deconstruction and this is exactly what emerges as the music progresses.

The clearest indication of the more intertwined status of these two levels can be observed in the second section of the piece, RHbs. 57-98, where the process of rhythmic compression is pushed to its extreme; due to this rhythmic diminution, there is a much higher density of accented, structural attacks. The increase in perceptual disorder that this creates, by effectively obliterating any reference to the opening four bars, means that much greater emphasis is placed on the process of registral transformation: the gradual and inexorable bifurcation of the two hands. Many of the accented structural pitches thus become submerged in a much denser texture; the ear tends to pick out short rhythmic phrases, particularly from the right hand, now much more audible than the left which growls indistinctly in the bottom register of the instrument.

This submerging of many of these accented pitches into the increasingly complex welter of sound is one indication of the gradual movement away from the dominance of the structural, illustrating how, in Griffiths' terms, melody and scalar infill 'become almost indistinguishable' (Griffiths 1997: 119). There is a further, slightly more sophisticated level at which the structural moves towards the decorative, which is through the increased absence of octave-doublings. The beginning of this process can even be observed in RHbs. 54-56 (Figure 2.10), where a number of structural pitches, in the right hand the two D♭, in the left the A♯ and F♯, lose their octave doubling and thereby approach the level of the quaver figuration.

FIGURE 2.10.



This reaches its climax at the end of the section, RHbs.93-8 (Figure 2.11); at this point, because of the process of diminution, the left hand has completely effaced any distinction between structure and decoration, consisting of an even stream of quavers in which it is impossible aurally to distinguish the two types, whereas the right hand

consists of two strands, one of structural pitches, the other a 'decorative' harmony, it again being impossible to tell which is which from the sound alone.

FIGURE 2.11.



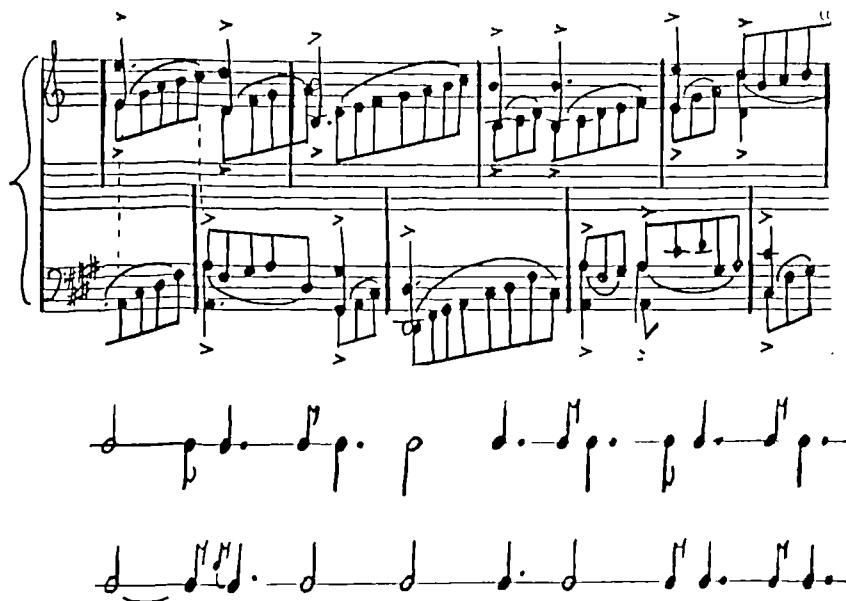
This breaking down of the opposition comes at the climax of the piece, is the result of pushing to an extreme the process of rhythmic compression, and is thus itself an extreme case of the way in which the structural usurps a role previously assigned to the decorative. However, this dominance should not be surprising, and although this passage represents one way in which the hierarchy is thrown into question, to be completely overturned, the decorative must also be shown to be inherently structural.

As a first step, a number of features even in the *first* section of the piece assert their distance from the hierarchy, the most important of these being the role played by the quaver figuration. At the very opening, this simply consists of ascending scales which occupy the time between one structural attack and the next, and it is easy to assume that this continues throughout. Indeed, in other analytical approaches to *Désordre* this level is generally ignored; although Kinzler indicates an awareness of the types of modification that these pitches undergo, he places it outside of his analytical project, 'which is described by the central terms: decision and automatism' (1991: 117). He does, significantly, discuss these changes as part of an additional process of disorder, without placing them within a more generalised conceptual disordering which is emphasised here. Situating these details in this specific context provides an interpretative empowerment, in that it allows one both to account for these small changes, and consider their effect in overall terms. Two modifications actually occur quite quickly. Firstly, the scalic patterns are replaced by figures less conjunct and more melodically defined, especially in the left hand; secondly, the length of pattern becomes increasingly independent of the octave rhythm. A passage

displaying both these features is RHbs. 13-18, (see Figure 2.9 above); here, the left hand greatly modifies the scalic pattern (partly conditioned by considerations of playability), whilst in RHb. 14, for instance, the right-hand quavers suggests a 5+3 grouping which cuts across the 3+5 of the octave pattern. Bar 14 also displays another interesting feature which gives the decorative increased aural importance. Here, the unaccented C $\natural$  in the right hand coincides with a left-hand accent on G $\sharp$ ; however, instead of hearing this accent in the left hand, it seems to move to the right hand, this pitch connecting with the repeated C $\natural$  in the following bar. This, and other instances of decorative pitches jumping into the foreground and being perceived as structural, gives an indication of how the two levels become increasingly interrelated as the music progresses.

Working in the opposite direction, this first section also demonstrates two ways in which the structural acts in a less rigorous manner than was initially suggested. The first of these involves the perception of a number of interactions between left- and right-hand accented patterns. Rather than hearing the pattern that one might expect by examining the score, with each octave-doubled pitch playing a clear role in the production of complex rhythmic patterns, foreground and background become somewhat blurred, the right-hand stream tends to become privileged, and a number of double attacks fuse into one. A clear example comes in RHbs. 17-20: Figure 2.12 shows these bars, the rhythmic profile that results, and, directly underneath, the pattern heard by this listener. Some structural pitches actually disappear, becoming relegated to the background, and although the complex rhythms are still created almost wholly by the accented notes, not all these pitches have equal weight. Elsewhere in this first section, some pitches or rhythms come to the fore, creating an even more complex result than the resulting patterns illustrated in Figure 2.3 above might suggest.

FIGURE 2.12.



The second modification affects the structural in an almost *inaudible* way. As is obvious from Figures 2.7 and 2.8, the first third of the piece, RHbs. 1-56, involves four statements of the right-hand melodic line and three of the left-hand, with the main focus of attention being the process of disorder perceived against a nominal 31/32 beat pattern; this patterning is clear from the respective lengths of the left- and right-hand A, A' and A'' segments. However, there are a number of minor variations to the regularity of the rhythmic process; one might expect that once the structure was decided on, it would be pursued rigorously, but the necessity of maintaining a surface rhythmic pattern results in a number of modifications. If, for instance, the rhythmic material of the right hand is grouped into blocks of thirty-one quavers, the reason for having four rather than five quavers half-way through segment A of statement 2 becomes clear, and the shortenings later in the same statement derive from a similar need to maintain an accented pitch every thirty-one quavers (see Figure 2.13). Similarly, the different grouping within segment A'' of left-hand statement 2 (Figure 2.14) allows for the maintaining of the 3+5 rhythm at the beginning of the next 31/32 pattern. As these modifications show, the structural is 'always already' turned towards a specific aural result.

FIGURE 2.13.

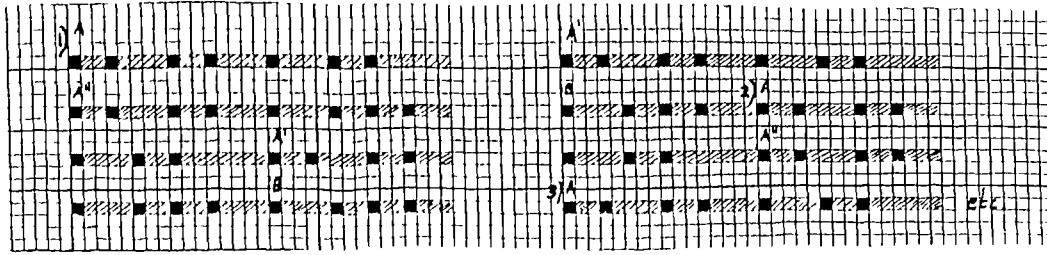
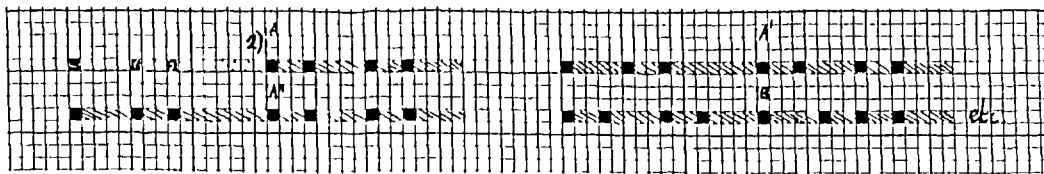


FIGURE 2.14.



Having discussed ways in which the distinction between the structural and the decorative begins to be broken down in the first section of the piece, it should be re-emphasised that on an aural level the hierarchy is still very much in place here: the illusionary rhythms created through the interaction of the left- and right-hand accented streams are still the primary focus of attention. In the second section, the distinction is neutralized through the almost total dominance of the structural, and it is only in the last third of the piece that the 'decorative' figuration attains an equal role. This final section of *Désordre*, from RHb.99 onwards, is, as outlined above, both markedly different from, and yet a continuation of the earlier sections. Although the 'structural' aspects, the left- and right-hand accented streams, come once more to the fore, because the rhythmic process is now one of gradual left-hand expansion, which means that the interlocking occurs much more slowly, it becomes easier to concentrate on the left-hand figuration, now placed in a register to facilitate such attention.

The point at which the decorative finally absorbs and then overturns the dominance of the structural comes at around LHb.115. Here, the right hand has reached such a high register that the accented pitches becomes much less clear, as they sound for a shorter time and are clouded in a high-frequency resonance. This results in an unfocused, uniform quaver movement in which all distinctions of accent and note-density are erased, and which floats almost independently above the left hand. This means that for the first time in the piece the perception of irregular

rhythms does not arise from the interaction of left- and right-hand structural patterns, as at the beginning of the work where this is heard very clearly, or during the central section, which is effectively *all* structure, but rather from the interaction of the decorative *with* the structural and finally by the decorative figuration alone. This comes about through the increasingly disjunct left-hand patterning which acquires a clearer melodic profile and suggests a number of irregular rhythms, a process indicated more informally by Bouliane. One of the clearest instances is shown in Figure 2.15, LHbs. 138-41, where, for this listener, two pitches, C# and D#, jump out of the surrounding texture and create a rhythmically quite complicated melodic line.

FIGURE 2.15.

The image displays a musical score for Figure 2.15, consisting of three staves. The top staff is for the Violin (Vn), the middle two staves are for the Piano (piano), and the bottom staff is a single-line melodic extraction. The piano part features a complex, disjunct left-hand pattern with many beamed notes and slurs. The violin part has a more regular, rhythmic pattern. The bottom staff highlights a specific melodic line, showing a sequence of notes that correspond to the 'structural' and 'decorative' pitches mentioned in the text, specifically C# and D#.

As may be observed, this melody unites 'structural' and 'decorative' pitches and effectively erases the distinction between them. As a result of this equality, the piece can end with a final upward scale; as another instance of the 'non-structural', this scale, disappearing off the very treble of the piano, stops the music in its tracks, overriding any other remaining structural concerns.

The final overturning of the hierarchy thus completes the process of disordering presented through this music, affirming Ligeti's choice of title. In identifying the operation of a single overreaching process, and indicating how the music creates this effect, manipulating perception of order and disorder on a number of different levels, this analysis takes a step beyond simply 'explaining' the



construction of the two main structural processes. It further demonstrates that analysis can address these apparently marginal features by concentrating directly on the effect that these have, rather than simply accepting a hierarchy between the 'structural', which tends towards spatialisation and is therefore most conducive to analytical techniques, and the 'decorative', which requires a somewhat different approach. This recognition of a single process taking place over the course of the piece is again suggested in Griffiths' much less detailed discussion, when he writes that 'order is unsustainable: organization disintegrates, and rules become, through repeated application, weapons with which the structure attacks itself' (1997: 119); here, however, this process is interpreted as a more general deconstruction of a duality set up at the very opening of the music, which finally reveals itself to rely more on mode of presentation than substance, and which is eventually replaced by a new, non-hierarchical disposition of material. This also enables a strong sense of the temporality of the music to be maintained; in contrast to processes such as rhythmic diminution or registral transformation, which are inherently spatial, and reversible, the global process relies on an unfolding in time in one direction and accounts for the remarkable sense of forward motion that the piece projects. The general analytical point regarding the way in which aspects of structure are more easily explained obviously connects with the tendency towards performing only 'classificatory analysis' of this piece, where 'structural' is equated with 'significant'; by reasserting the unidirectionality of this music, its essential temporality, by here affirming the presence of a single, global process, this tendency is avoided, or at least, minimized. Through this process of concentration on effect, 'analysis', as inscribed here, becomes a possibility.

## Chapter 3

### Crossing the Borders

Michael Nyman's *MGV* (1993)

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#### The Infinite Context

Jacques Derrida, in the network of texts which mark his clearest engagement with speech-act theory,<sup>1</sup> deals with the importance and universality of context, where the iterability which is a condition of a speech act, or indeed any sign, presupposes that it is capable of functioning in situations which differ from those of its original production or inscription. This is, of course, considered within Derrida's understanding of the function of signs, which, rather than involving a clear link between signifier and signified, are inscribed within a complicated network of *differance*. Part of every such mark is this 'possibility of disengagement and citational graft':

Every sign... can be *cited*, put between quotation marks; in so doing it can break with every given context, engendering an infinity of new contexts in a manner which is absolutely illimitable.... This citationality, this duplication or duplicity, this iterability of the mark is neither an accident nor an anomaly, it is that (normal / abnormal) without which a mark could not even have a function called 'normal'. (Derrida 1988: 12)

In 'Limited Inc a b c...' Derrida returns to this formulation, stating that:

the word 'engendering' is not sufficiently rigorous.... It would have been better and more precise to have said 'engendering *and* inscribing itself,' or being inscribed *in*, new contexts. For a context never creates itself *ex nihilo*; no mark can create or engender a context on its own, much less dominate it. This limit, this finitude is the condition under which contextual transformation remains an always open possibility. (Derrida 1988: 79)

There are two outcomes to Derrida's discussion here. Firstly, the site within which any mark or sign may operate is finally uncontrollable, continually escaping any straightforward prediction or anticipation, either of the contexts themselves or the effect that these will have. Secondly, these contexts necessarily alter and are themselves altered by this process of 'citation' (it is important to note that this is the defining attribute of any such mark), and result in a new understanding, a new positioning. These conclusions

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<sup>1</sup> These texts are 'Signature event context' (1971), 'Limited Inc abc...' (1977) and 'Toward an Ethic of Discussion' (1988), all reprinted in *Limited Inc*, Derrida 1988.

have enormous implications both for speech-act theory and a wider consideration of meaning, which fall far outside the scope of the present study.<sup>2</sup> However, even the piecemeal citation of Derrida carried out above can indicate some useful directions for the more narrow field of application considered here, and it is such a process of transference into the musical domain which will be attempted in this chapter.

As has already been suggested in Chapter 1, the more usual application of such deconstructive practices is to move away from a consideration of the music 'itself', towards a wider concern with situating the music within a cultural framework which, in Lawrence Kramer's words, 'empower[s] the interpretative process' (Kramer 1990: 9). This can be seen as an illustration of what Derrida acknowledges as one of the definitions of deconstruction: 'the effort to take this limitless context into account, to pay the sharpest and broadest attention possible to context, and thus to an incessant movement of recontextualisation' (1988: 136), with this recontextualisation usually considering a more overtly 'historicist' placement and understanding of pieces of music. Of course, this movement away from simply analysing the intra-musical often takes place through the invocation of the deconstruction of precisely this opposition between the inside and the outside, which itself follows from Derrida's discussion of context:

The [illimited] structure described supposes both that there are only contexts, that nothing *exists* outside context, as I have often said, but that also the limit of the frame or the border of the context always entails a clause of non-closure. The outside penetrates and thus determines the inside. (Derrida 1988: 152-3)

Despite this, as I have already indicated, there does remain value in the study of the intra-musical, and the following analysis, in reading somewhat 'against the grain' in this one respect, is nevertheless an attempt to reinsert some of Derrida's discussion of the nature of context within a more limited frame of reference. Thus this analysis re-reads Derrida's texts within the *context* of a single piece of music, Michael Nyman's *MGV*, transferring some of his observations into a more specific examination of musical function. Such an approach stems from the conviction that this music does not simply illustrate some of Derrida's ideas, in the trivial sense in which it conforms to a model which, he illustrates, is the necessary foundation of *all* signs, but rather seems to be much more closely connected with his discussion; it not only illustrates these ideas in an apparently self-conscious and deliberately 'self-revealing' manner, but also plays with, and relies on, an

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<sup>2</sup> For a broadly contemporary discussion of some of these aspects see Fish 1982.

appreciation of this 'citational graft' for its effect. However, despite the importance that is placed on the operation of context within this piece, it is important that it is not simply seen as an explaining concept; although a deconstructive understanding is used as a tool for this analysis, *MGV* is viewed as being illustrative of some of these more general principles, rather than the idea of 'context' revealing what *MGV* is 'really about'.

The way in which Derrida's discussion is re-read within *MGV* will become clear as the analysis proceeds, but at the outset it is worth giving some indication of the types of mapping that are involved in this translation, and an illustrative example. The most important aspect of Derrida's text for the purposes of this discussion is the proposition that every sign can be cited and thus placed in new contexts. In the current reading, this sign or mark is mapped onto musical material in its broadest sense, as these 'marks' may involve motifs, harmony, figuration or melody. All or any of these may take part in the process of 'engendering and inscribing itself' in a new context, which is taken here as referring to differing alignments of musical material; as an obvious example, a theme or melody may appear accompanied by major or minor harmony (its context), which obviously changes how it is perceived and often involves a corresponding alteration of the theme itself, which clearly has some correspondence with the paragraphs cited above. The second aspect of Derrida's discussion which is emphasised here is the way in which a broadening of context 'always entails a clause of non-closure'. This non-closure is, again, taken as referring to the internal context of *MGV*; in analytical terms, 'closure' refers to a particular property traditionally associated with tonal music, but, as will again become clear, this music, in its manipulation and proliferation of context, is actually potentially infinite in extent. Of course it *does* end, but this ending is again dependent on perception of a further context, within a mode of expectation given by 'ending-music', rather than a sense of overall finality. Some indication of the way in which this piece does also depend upon a number of such 'outside features', thus further illustrating how 'the outside penetrates and thus determines the inside', is given below, but it should again be reinforced that this analysis deliberately restricts context in order to comment upon how the music makes 'its own' effect. A good example of the types of process involved, and of their connection to Derrida's discussion outlined above, can be found in the middle of the piece, at what, as will be discussed below, is the transition between Sections 12 and 13. Before this point, the music involves three main levels heard over the basic figuration: a central, predominantly crotchet melodic thread, a faster-moving

articulation of the same basic line, and a counter-melody, from flutes, oboes, trumpet and cello, which follows the overall contour but simplifies the melody to fit a short-long pattern (see Figure 3.1).

FIGURE 3.1.

The image shows a musical score for Figure 3.1, spanning measures 372 to 377. The score is written in 4/4 time and includes the following parts:

- Flute, Oboe (Flt., Ob.):** Features a melodic line with triplets and a short-long rhythmic pattern. The notation includes a key signature of one flat and a common time signature.
- Trumpet, Violoncello (Tpt., Vcl.):** Provides a counter-melody that follows the contour of the flute part but is simplified to fit a short-long pattern.
- Violin, Viola, Cello, Saxophone (Vln., Vla., Vcl., Saxes):** These parts play a rhythmic accompaniment consisting of eighth notes.
- Piano (PNO):** Plays a simple harmonic accompaniment.
- Bassoon (B. SSR):** Provides a bass line.

At bar 391 there is a change of tempo, a reduction of orchestration and a complete change of texture and material to a homophonic pattern of chords which again displays a short-long rhythm. In fact, not only is the rhythm of the counter-melody retained, but the entire line is transferred almost complete as the bass-line of this new section, where it now determines the harmony (see Figure 3.2). This swapping of a registrally high counter-melody onto the bass foundation of an entire passage demonstrates the importance of context: here is the same material used in two completely different manners, and thus having a completely different effect, with its identity actually very difficult to perceive until the process is realised. Much of the rest of *MGV* depends on a similar process of recontextualisation, with familiar material resited / recited, creating new combinations and effects. In fact, as will be discussed, the emergence of overall form is created directly through this type of manipulation of material, altering its mode of presentation and creating a complex interaction of parameters, so that a play with changes of context emerges as the central device which makes *MGV* ‘work’.

FIGURE 3.2.

The image shows a musical score for a piece titled "NINO MASO" by Nyman, dated Dec. 12. The score is written for five instruments: Saxophone (SAX), Flute (FLT), Horn (HN), Violin/ Viola (VLY VLG (BAND)), and Strings (STR.). The Saxophone part is in the key of B-flat major and 4/4 time, starting with a dynamic marking of *mf*. The Flute part is in the key of B-flat major and 4/4 time, starting with a dynamic marking of *mf* and a *sim* (sustained) marking. The Horn part is in the key of B-flat major and 4/4 time, starting with a dynamic marking of *mf*. The Violin/ Viola part is in the key of B-flat major and 4/4 time, starting with a dynamic marking of *mf*. The Strings part is in the key of B-flat major and 4/4 time, starting with a dynamic marking of *mf*. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, slurs, and dynamic markings.

### Analytical Points of Departure

As pointed out above, discussion of 'context' with relation to music more usually refers to the situating of an artwork within a historical period, or within the composer's output as a whole. It may also refer to the use of intertextuality, the way in which any artwork is situated within a network of other texts which both inform its production and our appreciation of it; Nyman's music represents a particular approach to its situation within this intertextual field, for perhaps the best-known feature of his music, certainly that which has been responsible for much vilification on the part of some music-critics, is his use of pre-existing material from which to build his compositions. This 'borrowing' is usually most controversial when it is applied to music by other composers:

My detractors state that my technique is to take little segments from previous composers' works and repeat them with only the most superficial variation. While I would not deny the accusation of borrowing, only about 20 per cent of my music is based upon reworked material from other composers. I would also strongly contend that I always transform what I take into something totally fresh and musically challenging.... Besides... I always credit my sources. (In Webster 1995: 14)

As Nyman indicates, not only does he reuse the music of composers such as Purcell for *The Draughtsman's Contract*, Mozart in *Drowning by Numbers*, and John Bull and Schoenberg in his First String Quartet, but his own music can also be involved in this process. This means that, in much the same way as J.S.Bach would take movements from his secular cantatas and rework them for inclusion in a piece such as the *B Minor Mass*, Nyman quite happily resites his own material, manipulating and reshaping it to fit the new context; sometimes whole pieces are involved, as in his Harpsichord Concerto, which uses two previous pieces for solo harpsichord, and sometimes shorter fragments are hugely expanded, as with *The Piano Concerto*, a reworking of some of the material from his soundtrack to Jane Campion's film *The Piano*.

This self-conscious manipulation of differing types of pre-existing material means that, in discussing Nyman's work, one is often drawn towards the sources and the way in which these are distorted and reused. In the following analysis of *MGV* this tendency will be resisted as far as possible, for two main reasons. The first is that *MGV*, unlike most of Nyman's recent output, does *not* involve the kind of 'recycling' of material that has been outlined above; it is not principally 'modelled' on any pre-existing music (as far as I can tell, and assuming that Nyman is not, for once, concealing his sources in his own commentary on the piece). Instead, *MGV* deals with its situation within an intertextual field in a much less far-reaching and structurally significant way. There are a few direct quotations in the final section of the piece, with the statement of the melodic 'theme' being played over a chord sequence and rhythmic articulation taken from *And Do They Do*; in a number of the slower sections towards the middle of the piece some of the figuration and melodic ideas sound rather like borrowings from *For John Cage*, although specific references are difficult to identify. Similarly, the passage between bars 391 and 438 conjures up the mood of *Drowning by Numbers*, without actually being a direct quotation. *MGV* thus recalls other music through the evocation of a number of styles which Nyman has used elsewhere, through a process of bringing to mind a general aura rather than specific memories,<sup>3</sup> with the recognition of these veiled references playing nowhere near the same role as in a piece like *Drowning by Numbers*. The second reason for avoiding a close examination of the satellite works that inform aspects of *MGV* derives from the fact that such a process can easily become a kind of 'spot the reference'

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<sup>3</sup>This idea deliberately echoes Nyman's own description of his choice of music for *The Draughtsman's Contract*: 'my aim was to provide a *memory* of Purcell, not specific *memories*' (Nyman 1982).

game. This is not to claim that *MGV* may be considered completely in isolation, for part of its success does depend upon an experience of, and perhaps basic sympathy towards, the determining features of Nyman's compositional style, but rather to assert that *MGV* has a particular effect. In fact, this does involve an awareness of how Nyman manipulates the codes and expectations of traditional tonal music, and how these are continually disrupted through the course of the piece, an awareness which, as pointed out above, moves away from simply considering the music as a self-contained entity, cut off from the rest of 'musical culture'.

Apart from this way in which the piece necessarily invites discussion in relation to traditional models, a further level of connection to the wider context is the representative aspects of the music. *MGV*, standing for *Musique à Grande Vitesse*, was commissioned for the 1993 Festival de Lille, to mark the inauguration of the French high-speed train TGV North European line, and the opening of its associated project, the Channel Tunnel; it is scored for a combination of the Michael Nyman Band, an amplified ensemble comprising piano, bass guitar, saxophones (soprano, alto and baritone), two violins, cello and bass trombone (doubling piccolo), and a large orchestra with quadruple wind and brass (4.4.4.1), a full complement of strings and three pitched drums. Due to the circumstances of its commission, and, of course, its title, *MGV* is associated with trains, being part of a long line of music connected with this subject, including Rossini's *Un Petit Train de Plaisir* and Honegger's *Pacific 231*. While some of these pieces seem intended to be imitations of the sound of trains themselves, and others merely evoke 'a visual impression and physical pleasure in a musical construction', as Honegger is reported as remarking,<sup>4</sup> *MGV* is only problematically understandable as a direct evocation of any specific train or train journey. As Nyman comments, '*MGV* runs continuously but was conceived as an imaginary journey.... the topography of *MGV* should be experienced without reference to planning, description or timetables. Tempo changes, unpredictable slowings down, bear no logical relation to the high speed of the Paris-Lille journey' (Nyman 1994). The relationship of *MGV* to trains or train-journeys is comparable to that which has already been observed with the citation or reworking of other music. At the beginning of the work some representation is suggested: the basic rhythmic material for

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<sup>4</sup> Cited in Kivy 1984: 124; Kivy's discussion involves extensive examination of the representative aspects of *Pacific 231*.



the whole piece is ‘laid down’ by the band at the very start (see Figure 3.3), this undeniably ‘chugging’ figuration, coupled with the knowledge of the title, does suggest train-imagery, with the woodwind chords which suddenly appear at bar 49 evoking train whistles or sirens. However, when these woodwind chords recur they are much less pronounced and make more obvious sense as part of the surrounding texture, whereas the basic rhythmic material loses its evocative function through its extensive use; in addition, this rhythmic figuration is highly typical of Nyman’s style, occurring in pieces which have no connection to train-journeys, so that the representational aspect is relatively insignificant. It is worth pointing out that the title of the piece is *MGV*, not *TGV*, and the piece seems best considered as high-speed-*music* rather than carrying on a dialogue with representations of either the sounds or the motion of trains themselves.

FIGURE 3.3.

The musical score for Figure 3.3 is written for five instruments: Alto & Bari Sax, Bass trb, Bass gr., and Piano. The tempo is marked as  $\text{♩} = 108$ . The Alto & Bari Sax part begins with a trill (tr) over the first few notes. The Piano part has a 'Piano' dynamic marking. The score shows a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in the saxophone and piano parts, and rests in the brass and bass guitar parts.

There is one level on which this type of imagery can inform understanding of the whole piece, and this is a metaphorical connection which Nyman adduces in his programme note, turning on the concept of a journey through a changing landscape: ‘musical ideas... change their identity as they pass through different musical “environments”’. He also comments that *MGV* was conceived not as a single ‘abstract, imaginary journey, but rather as five interconnected journeys’ (Nyman 1994). The large-scale segmentation of the music will be discussed below, but Nyman’s suggestion that the ‘journeys’ involve continually-changing ‘environments’ leads back to the idea of *context*, where the same material sounds different according to how it is manipulated and with what other elements it is combined. Similarly, the idea that there are ‘five interconnected journeys’ indicates that this process informs the entirety of *MGV*, for,

again, if the material is continually revisiting the same ground, the overall form depends upon the context in which this material is placed.

The current analysis considers this music in terms of segmentation, aspects of background and foreground, motivic process, and harmonic articulation, before examining the way in which these various factors interlock to create this overall form. For purposes of discussion these parameters will be dealt with in turn, although obviously the effect of *MGV* depends upon their interaction, and this means that in a number of places some suspension of full examination is necessary until all components have been considered. The general pattern for each section of the analysis is to start with examination of various 'internal aspects' and then to move outwards to consider which processes of expectation these set in motion; this mode of presentation was chosen in preference to that of the opposite direction, principally because in order to account for how the music plays with traditional models, one first needs to understand how it works 'on its own terms'. This 'top down' approach indicates how the recontextualisation which is immediately apparent on the surface also informs other levels, so that a non-hierarchical manipulation of all elements emerges as the predominant feature of the music; thus, the analytical process, in tracing the interlock of parameters which combine to create emerging form to a degree mirrors the process presented through the music.

## Segmentation

*MGV* is made up of a number of clear sections - what, in reference to his First String Quartet, Nyman calls a 'sectional grid-like form' (Nyman 1991: 7) - with the whole piece dividing fairly easily into some twenty-two sections, of between thirty seconds and three minutes in length; Figure 3.4 shows this division, with a brief description of the characteristic material and tonal centre for each section. Two sections have been subdivided, numbers 6 and 14, and Figure 3.4 also groups the sections so as to show the larger-scale division into the 'five interconnected journeys' or 'Regions'.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Although not specifically indicated in the score, these Regions are articulated in the (composer's) recording, both in Nyman's own notes and as separate tracks.

FIGURE 3.4.

Section	Bars	Key Centre	Characterisation
1	1-66	C	Rhythmic material
2	67-91	C	Minim-crotchet melody
3	92-104	e	Scalic pattern
4	108-144	C/e	Main melody
5	145-194	D $\flat$	Scalic pattern
6	195-203	D $\flat$	Turn-figure fast
6a	204-230	D $\flat$ /A	Turn-figure slow
7	231-254	D $\flat$ /A/E	Main melody
8	255-264	E	Scalic pattern
9	265-288	C	Minim-crotchet melody
10	289-334	E	Turn-figure fast
11	335-353	E	Insert
12	354-390	E	Turn-figure fast
13	391-438	g $\sharp$	Insert
14	439-482	D	Turn-figure fast
14a	483-511	D	+ scalic pattern
15	512-549	E	Insert
16	550-573	E	Insert - main melody
17	574-644	C	Scalic pattern
18	645-676	C	Insert
19	677-721	C	Main melody
20	722-772	E	Drums, turn-figure fast
21	773-794	C/e	Main melody
22	795-841	E	Main melody

Most sections are defined by both key and material, but where the key-centre remains the same, changes of material are more important in articulating boundaries. Those two which are subdivided involve less significant changes where other, supporting material plays a sufficiently cohesive role to avoid a feeling of a clear segmentation. In Section 6, for instance, not only is the second subsection perceived very much as an extension and expansion of the first, but that part is extremely short; however, the use of this fast turn-figure, an idea which recurs through the whole of the piece, is significant and seems to imply a distinct division. Section 14a involves the addition of an important thematic idea, but is connected due to the identical key and the continuation of material which underpins this and Section 14 itself. Five sections in Figure 3.4 are characterised as 'Inserts' (11, 13, 15, 16 and 18), and these are marked out from the 'main body' of music by their reduced orchestration and dynamic level, and a generally slower tempo, which contrasts with the  $\text{♩} = \text{c.}108$  which governs most of the rest of the piece. These passages thus act as interruptions to the progress of the music, providing points of relative rest; the extent to which they involve genuinely different material will be discussed fully below, though in Section 16 the use of the main melodic idea is very clear and already indicated in Figure 3.4 above. The grouping into five larger 'Regions' illustrates Nyman's 'five interconnected journeys', but also the way in which musical ideas change 'as they pass through different musical "environments" '; as can clearly be observed, the same motivic material, principally a melody alternating minims and crotchets, passages made up of ascending scalar patterns, a turn-motif and a generally slow-moving stepwise melodic idea, the 'main melody', recurs throughout the piece, reappearing in different Regions in different keys and in different contexts. The overall motivic processes involved will be considered below, as will the larger-scale issues of harmonic articulation which connect with this division.

## Foreground and Background

One of the most important strands of material in *MGV* is heard right at the beginning of the piece: this is primarily rhythmic and is characterised by a predominantly crotchet pulse, often underpinned by a bass, minim pulsation, and usually involves an accented two-quaver ‘snap’ before the pattern repeats, which creates a distinct rhythmic profile as well as providing a level of syncopation (for the very opening see Figure 3.3 above). This rhythmic patterning, however, only makes up one aspect of the rhythmically-animated *context* within which the other motivic material is placed. What this means is that, for instance, in Section 1 the eight-beat pattern is the basis, but is soon overlaid with further figuration, mostly using different phrase-lengths, against which the subsequent ideas are introduced. It thus, apart from the very opening of the piece where it is heard on its own, is used as a background; however, what is interesting about its rhythmic process in particular is that it extends to control some foreground material, and thus the separation between background and foreground is not as clear-cut as might at first be imagined.

To examine all the various uses and manifestations of this ‘background’ would be rather laborious, particularly since a very high level of repetition is involved; instead, a few illustrative sections will be examined in detail. The most self-evident use of this technique and material, is, obviously, right at the beginning of the piece, where it is, necessarily, right in the foreground. As has already been pointed out, the basis of this whole passage is an 8-beat pattern first heard on piano, supported by bass-guitar (even crotchets) and bass trombone (reinforcing every semibreve pulse). However, this is immediately overlaid with a 9-beat pattern from baritone saxophone and in bar 8 with an 11-beat pattern from soprano saxophone and cello. Figure 3.5 shows these and additional repeating patterns for the whole of the first two sections of the piece, bars 1-91. (Although some indication has been given of the pitches that each pattern employs, these often vary from repetition to repetition; Figure 3.5 only records changes in rhythmic length and significant pattern-alignments, so that a number of differing pitch configurations are represented by one bar, with the pitches indicated only intended as a general guide to aid recognition.)

FIGURE 3.5.

This musical score, labeled Figure 3.5, is a multi-staff arrangement for a jazz ensemble. It consists of ten staves, each representing a different instrument or section:

- Staff 1:** Horns (HORV), measures 56-72.
- Staff 2:** Alto Sax (ALTO SAX), measures 56-72.
- Staff 3:** Soprano Sax (SOP SAX), measures 56-72.
- Staff 4:** Clarinet (CLAR), measures 56-72.
- Staff 5:** Alto Sax (ALTO SAX), measures 56-72.
- Staff 6:** Tenor Sax (TEN SAX), measures 56-72.
- Staff 7:** Horns (HORV), measures 56-72.
- Staff 8:** Trombone (TRBN), measures 56-72.
- Staff 9:** Trombone (TRBN), measures 56-72.
- Staff 10:** Trombone (TRBN), measures 56-72.

The score is written in a common time signature and includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. Key markings include:

- Staff 1:** Measure 56,  $b\flat$ .
- Staff 2:** Measure 56,  $b\flat$ .
- Staff 3:** Measure 56,  $b\flat$ .
- Staff 4:** Measure 56,  $b\flat$ .
- Staff 5:** Measure 56,  $b\flat$ .
- Staff 6:** Measure 56,  $b\flat$ .
- Staff 7:** Measure 56,  $b\flat$ .
- Staff 8:** Measure 56,  $b\flat$ .
- Staff 9:** Measure 56,  $b\flat$ .
- Staff 10:** Measure 56,  $b\flat$ .

The score is divided into two systems, with the first system covering measures 56-60 and the second system covering measures 61-72. The notation is dense, with many notes and rests, and includes various musical symbols such as  $b\flat$ ,  $b$ , and  $\sharp$ .

The first part of this passage, up to bar 49, includes the first appearance of the 'turn-figure' (bars 35-48). In its rhythmic uniformity and lack of connection with other layers, this appears as simply 'another layer' in the background polyrhythm, but one which, because of its audibility, its recognisability as a new idea, and also perhaps because of its subsequent use, leaps into the foreground. Interesting in this passage are the two changes of beat-length in the 9- and 11-beat patterns which erode the otherwise obvious system. The elongation of the 11-beat pattern to 12 beats might be explained by a wish to delay a synchronicity with the 8-beat barring-group until the change of texture at bar 49, but the sudden shortening of the 9-beat pattern seems to produce no specific result. In fact, this line is subjected to a number of such shortenings and lengthenings which seem designed to avoid rhythmic coincidence; however, the 11-beat pattern also undergoes a number of unexplained changes so that its final appearance (at the end of Section 2) is restricted to a mere 5 beats. This means that an attractive hypothesis which posits important structural points coinciding with the 'working out' of a number of different-length patterns determined in advance, has to be disregarded; the usage displayed here is typical of that found throughout *MGV*, in that the rhythmic process is unsystematic, with different types of unexplained shortenings, lengthenings and sudden absences, which its apparent regularity does not initially suggest. Section 1 thus demonstrates the way in which background rhythmic processes also control aspects of the foreground as well as a general lack of system within these processes.

Section 2, which begins at bar 67, involves, as Figure 3.5 illustrates, a more straightforward rhythmic process, with three interlocking patterns creating the background over which the octave-based, crotchet / minim melody is stated. This melodic material is, however, also reducible to a repeating rhythmic pattern, this time of seven beats: dotted minim, two minims. This regularity is obscured by the octave leaps in the violins and also by the phase-shifting of this pattern compared to the 8-beat pulse and harmonic rhythm. Of course, what this also means is that, rather like the turn-figure in Section 1, this melodic material is identical in kind to its background, the difference being made through articulation and, in this case, registral placement. This common derivation is made explicit by the horn melody heard earlier at bar 57, which clearly connects to the melodic / rhythmic material at bar 67. This passage illustrates how quite different types of material can be related through a common process of construction, so that considerations of foreground and background do, here at least, rely on differences

in presentation, not substance.

This connection between rhythmic process and thematic ideas is continued in Section 3, where the scalic pattern, the material which maintains its identity most strongly, is introduced; the eleven statements used in this section are shown in Figure 3.6.

FIGURE 3.6.



As can immediately be observed, the usual length of each statement is 11 crotchet beats, in three instances extended to 12 beats and in the penultimate statement to 15 beats, although, as indicated, this also divides into three rhythmically identical patterns of 5 beats each. An important feature here is that no two statements are identical, so that this 'repeating' motivic material in fact does not involve any literal repetitions, although, of course, the overall scalic motion remains obvious; Nyman seems here to be playing with our perception of what constitutes repetition, particularly after two sections which have



involved a high level of exact pattern-restatement. In this third section, this scalic material (principally 11-beat) is presented over an 8-beat harmonic rhythm, whilst saxophones and piano right-hand play the 9-beat pattern from Section 1. This continuation of interlocking patterns of 8-, 9- and 11-beats is exactly comparable to the very opening, so that the scalic material again grows out of the background rhythmic process, with the interplay between these different patterns forming the main focus of the music. Fundamental here is the way in which the 8-beat harmonic rhythm informs and modifies perception of the scalic pattern: Figure 3.7 shows the same material as Figure 3.6, but now with bar-lines added and grouped into longer patterns which emphasises the 8-beat metre, as well as some indication of how they may be understood in terms of a 'question and answer' pattern.

FIGURE 3.7.



This process demonstrates not only a level of connection between foreground and background, but also how the background figuration is fundamental to perception of the main motivic material. This type of interplay returns in Section 8, but elsewhere this 11-beat scalic pattern also determines metre, resulting in a less complicated interaction of two processes and creating a more clear-cut distinction between 'motivic' and 'background'. Such a distinction is clearly illustrated in Section 4, where the first statement of the slow, stepwise 'main melody' is, by virtue of its uniformly slow rhythm

and overall length, effectively 'superimposed' onto a rhythmic context, rather than being an extension of it, as was observed in Sections 1-3.

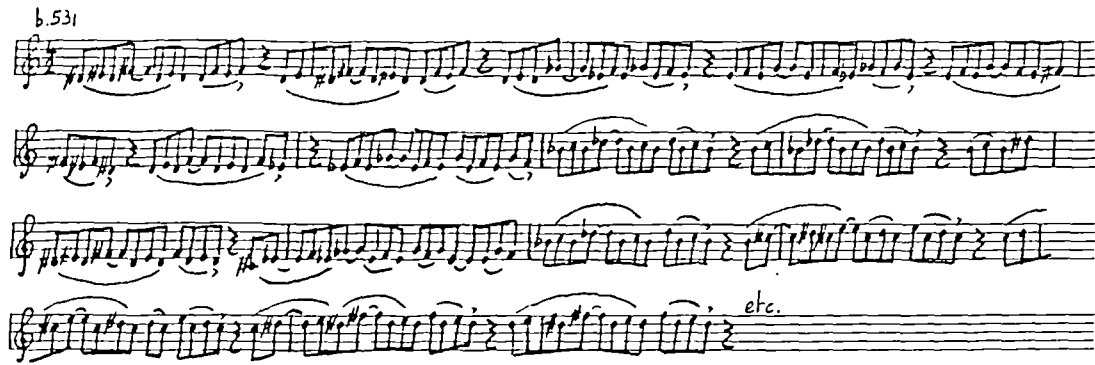
A more complex interplay may be observed in Section 15, the third of the five Inserts, where an 8-beat pattern from piano, reinforced by violin, is superimposed by a 7-beat, 3+2+2 pattern from viola and cello, reinforced by clarinet. Above these two rigorously-applied patterns floats a strange, elliptical melody which winds its way through this section (see Figure 3.8).

FIGURE 3.8.



Although the effect of this melody is very different, it is perhaps not over-interpreting the consistent use of a dotted-minim, 3-beat, pulse to view it as at least connected to the rhythmic process. Similarly, the 7-beat background pattern, in its grouping at least, connects to the crotchet / minim octave melody of Sections 2 and 9. This section also involves use of the turn-figure material, but now as a background, where it takes part in the ongoing rhythmic process; the basic pattern is continually modified so that various *similar* versions are evolved. Figure 3.9 shows this passage; at first, the changes seem designed to produce at least a limited level of coincidence with the barring-pattern (and hence harmonic rhythm), but as the music progresses, this is increasingly less the case, and, as Figure 3.9 shows, the process appears very unsystematic, with some cells being repeated and others appearing only once.

FIGURE 3.9.



This process demonstrates how material heard elsewhere as ‘foreground’ can easily be moved to the background, where it sometimes becomes more individuated than the level it supports, which may itself be seen as taking part in the same overall process. A similar effect occurs in the transition from Section 17 to Section 18, where a form of the motivic material of the final Insert, Section 18, is introduced towards the end of the previous section, from trombone and soprano sax, as a counter melody to the scalic pattern (see Figure 3.10); although not part of the rhythmic process, this movement between levels not only demonstrates the interchangeability of material, but also the way in which relationships between different sections are created, a feature which will be discussed below in a consideration of overall form.

FIGURE 3.10.



The initial use of a system to set in motion an interlocking rhythmic pattern and then a general disregard for its progress, a use of ‘intuitive systems’, is characteristic of the rhythmic process as a whole; as observed earlier, the very beginning of the piece involves sudden and unexplained changes in pattern length, so that what was regular and predictable suddenly acquires new complications. Elsewhere, more complex modification of the apparent system occurs; in Section 5, for instance, which continues the overlaying of three different rhythmic patterns, a whole section is repeated without regard for the process. This repetition interrupts all three cycles, and results in a sudden shortening of the 8-beat, a lengthening of the 9-beat and a ‘restart’ in the 7-beat cycle. The same principle is involved in the sudden change from D $\flat$  to E major in Section 7, bar 237, whereas the transition from Section 8 to 9, bar 265, involves a more complicated process, where the last six beats of an 11-beat cycle become the first six of an 8-beat cycle (Figure 3.11 shows both passages). In both cases the rhythmic material fulfils a more traditional background role, as its main purpose seems to be simply to fill up the appropriate time.

FIGURE 3.11.



The extent to which the motivic turn-figure is involved in this background rhythmic process has already been discussed, but this material also demonstrates a close relationship between background and foreground. In Section 9, bars 265-288, in addition to the rhythmic process just examined, a version of the turn-figure forms a background, played on clarinets, to this restatement of the syncopated crotchet-minim melody first heard in Section 2, making this almost exact repetition feel more like a 'development' as the texture is now thicker and more extended. The basic pattern here is again 9 beats in length, thus performing a phase-shifting process against the 8-beat metre, before being extended into increasingly long strands of 13 beats or more, eventually transforming into a more melodically interesting profile which anticipates the kind of turn pattern which makes up the main material of the next section (see Figure 3.12). In addition, at bar 273 another version of this turn-figure appears, now slowed down to half speed and controlled so as to reinforce the barring (see Figure 3.13). The processes again seem completely unsystematic, particularly since the faster quaver pattern is extended without regard for harmonic division or metrical pattern, and this section illustrates the resiting of foreground material as background and the superimposition of two versions of the same material.

FIGURE 3.12.



FIGURE 3.13.



This easy interchange of material between foreground and background is set against expectation of how such levels ‘traditionally’ behave, in that there is usually a more clear-cut distinction between the material situated on each level, so that it is used consistently as either background or foreground, rather than oscillating between the two, as here. In *MGV* there is no clear distinction along these lines, nor is there any simple relationship which informs how one assists in the articulation of the other. Although, as has been observed, the harmonic-rhythm often operates as a background to apparently ‘motivic’ working, there is a continual interplay between these two levels, so that foreground and background processes appear as continually interlinked and interdependent. As a result, there is an absence of hierarchy, so that although at any one time particular material may be brought to the fore, it may just as easily find itself in a secondary, supporting role, often at the same time; this levelling-out also means that there is no sense of a ‘background’ articulated by or articulating a ‘foreground’, as a clear distinction between levels is lost. In addition, in traditional analytical terms, there is an almost complete lack of a tonal background which the foreground articulates, as well as no sense of a middleground through which this process would be seen as taking place; instead, *MGV* resites material on a number of different levels, eroding any clear distinction and producing continual disruption to attempts to grasp the musical meaning of any particular material or gesture. The lack of system which has already been observed is an important part of this process, contributing to an overall absence of any clear-cut distinction between layers and a more playful manipulation and positioning of material.

## Motivic Process / Development

It is in relation to the group of material termed the 'main melody' that Nyman gives his clearest indication that some form of overall process should be experienced: in his note he states that 'each [Region] end[s] with a slow, mainly stepwise melody which is only heard in its "genuine" form when the piece reaches its destination [Section 22]' (Nyman 1994). What this suggests is that the final statement is the 'true' version of this material, with all previous presentations revealing only partial aspects of it, so that the 'seed' is heard last, paradoxically as the 'result' of the previous thematic working. Section 22 itself demonstrates this kind of process in miniature, Figure 3.14 shows the melodic material in this section, first broken up somewhat by the repetition of small sections before being revealed in what one must assume is the 'genuine form'. This 14-bar statement uniquely brings the melody down to an F#, as part of a B major harmony with which the piece ends (and which, acting as a dominant enables the repeat of the melody on its first presentation). What is interesting, however, is that the melody actually bifurcates into distinct streams, for the rise to the high G# triggers a faster-moving crotchet melody, against which the next five bars are played, so that they symbiotically act as counter melodies to each other; even at this point there is therefore a slight ambiguity as to which is the 'real melody' and which a further elaboration and decoration, an ambiguity which is characteristic of *MGV* as a whole.

FIGURE 3.14.

The musical score consists of five staves of music in G major, 4/4 time. The first staff (measures 1-14) shows a stepwise melody with a high G# (measure 10) and a final F# (measure 14). The second staff (measures 15-20) repeats the initial part of the melody. The third staff (measures 21-26) shows the melody bifurcating into two streams: a slower stepwise melody and a faster-moving crotchet melody. The fourth staff (measures 27-32) continues this bifurcation, with the crotchet melody labeled 'as counter melody'. The fifth staff (measures 33-38) shows the final statement of the main melody, ending on F#.

As might be expected, the four manifestations of this main melodic idea which end each of the previous four Regions are closest to this final form. However, despite a constant minim rhythm and consistent use of scalic patterns, even these four versions display reasonable variety. The simplest 'variation' is found in Section 7, where a six-bar

melody is broken into two halves, each repeated (the first one four times in two different keys), before the full statement is heard (see Figure 3.15).

FIGURE 3.15.



Otherwise, the relationship between the various versions hinges around the constant rhythmic usage, most clearly connecting Sections 16 and 19, which, rather than presenting a number of basic cells, instead offer what almost amounts to a catalogue of scalic patterns that fit the prescribed rhythm; because all of the phrases are similar it actually becomes very difficult to remember the overall melodic line. This is exacerbated by the way in which a number of common patterns are established which link different parts of different phrases, a technique used particularly in Section 4. Figure 3.16 shows the material of this section laid out in three basic cells: the first commences with a rising scale, the second with a downward motion, and the third with a more arpeggiated figure and no tie over the bar-line. A principal feature here is a series of 'misimplications', so that, for instance, the twelfth bar may be interpreted as either answering the first half of cell 2, or forming the first part of cell 3. Elsewhere, patterns are connected to form longer melodic units which cut across the two-bar expectation which has been established. When compared to Section 22, this section breaks down the overall melodic stream heard there and isolates and manipulates a number of shorter motifs; the music effectively investigates the potential of ideas derived (to a greater or lesser degree) from the final melody, a kind of traditional developmental process, but here presented in reverse.



FIGURE 3.16.

b108.

Both the scalic-pattern and turn-figure reappear in a number of different versions throughout the course of *MGV*, though neither undergoes any rigorous thematic process. The basic 11-beat scalic pattern has two processes applied to it. The most obvious is one of compression, used extensively in Section 5, where, although the patterns do not actually become shorter, there is an increasing use of quaver motion, so that the basic crotchet pattern is obliterated, reaching a climax in bars 186-87 (Figure 3.17 shows how this process is achieved, picking out a number of transformations from this section).

FIGURE 3.17.



The second process involves the chaining together of one or more scale-segments; some of the material from Section 17 is shown in Figure 3.18: most patterns consist of one overall motion, which ‘breaks back’ at a point in the middle, sometimes twice.

FIGURE 3.18.



Neither of these two processes obscures the recognisability of this scalic idea, and neither is wholly systematic. In overall terms, this material is heard in a number of different guises: *MGV* starts with the basic pattern (Section 3), compresses it (Section 5), returns to the original (Sections 8 and 14a) and then expands it (Section 17), but there is clearly no one directed process which transforms one type into another over the course of the

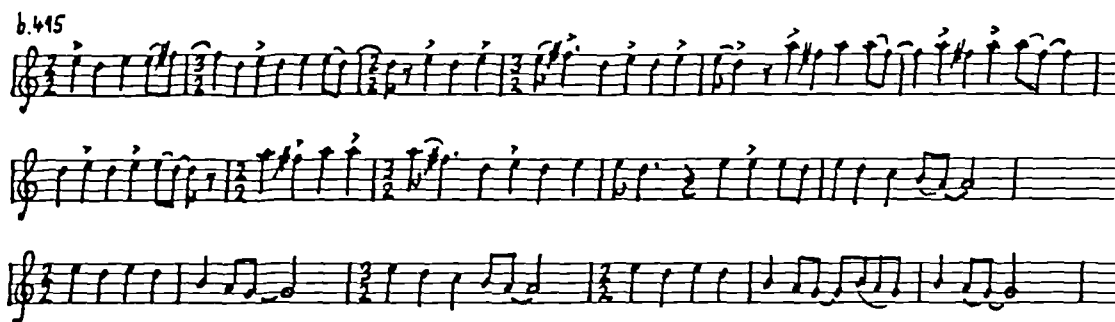
whole piece. Instead, the process used depends very much on the context of the moment, so that the material retains its identity whilst remaining flexible to being presented in various manners.

A number of different versions of the turn-figure have already been discussed in relation to a foreground-background interplay, but the most extensive use of the turn-figure places it clearly in the foreground, and demonstrates a number of important motivic principles. This is particularly clear in Sections 14 and 14a, one of the densest passages of music. Figure 3.19 shows how this section is made up of a number of short repeating cells which are built up to create a larger overall pattern, itself repeated, Figure 3.19 also showing this motion through a reduction of the unison strand. Almost all the other strands of music follow this basic melodic thread, elaborating it heterophonically in a number of different ways; Figure 3.20 shows a slower counter-melody at bar 495 which obviously articulates the same motion. Although this overall sense of direction is important in the extension of simple material into larger structures, the high level of internal repetition involved means that it is not such an audible feature as the reduction suggests; the patterning involves a large degree of ‘doubling back’, so that the overall motion is partially obscured through a process of continual return.

FIGURE 3.19.



FIGURE 3.20.



Sections 10 and 12 involve a similar type of structure, with the basic figure used here a rising and falling scalic cell (shown in Figure 3.21, as well as an example of the elaboration from Section 12). In both sections, the overall 'background' motion is basically similar, and describes a pattern of ascent and descent. However, as in Sections 14 and 14a, this motion is broken up by internal repetition and the general principle of introducing a new pitch in the ascent and then circling around and below it before introducing the next, continually interrupting a sense of straightforward overall motion. This means that there is a lack of linearity in the articulation of foreground versions of the turn-figure, so that a sense of direction is continually interrupted.

FIGURE 3.21.



On a larger scale, any 'developmental' process seems to be disrupted by a similar lack of direction: although a kind of 'gradual revealing', where an increasing amount of material is used in each of Sections 1, 6 and 10, appears initially, a return to simpler material in Sections 14 and 14a, and the reappearance of Section 12 material in Section 20 means that this sense of a larger-scale process is lost. When the various background appearances are considered in addition to these more clearly thematic presentations, the overall effect is further complicated, for, as has been observed, these also operate in an unsystematic manner.

This overall lack of directed thematic process and the more piecemeal presentation of different versions of similar material disrupts traditional expectation on three levels. Firstly, the alternation of the turn-figure and scalic-pattern between background and foreground, motivic idea and repetition-pattern, disrupts any overall sense of development. This means that, even given the existence of a directional process in only a small number of sections, this is continually interrupted by appearances of

material which are ambiguous as to whether they should be considered a part of this progression or not. Secondly, in addition, the doubling back, which operates on two levels, means that there is a continual suggestion of some direction, but it is always being frustrated as the music revisits familiar ground. This informs both small-scale constructions, particularly the scalic-pattern which obviously suggests some overall motion, and the larger-scale progression between sections involving the turn-figure and scalic-pattern, where processes of, for instance, the gradual 'revealing' or lengthening of material, are set in motion but then contradicted, with a return to versions of material heard earlier, or complete changes of direction.

The third level involves the way in which the one indication of some overall progression, the 'development' of the main melodic material, is similarly caught up in this frustration of expectation. Although, in contrast to the evolution of other types of material, this melodic thread does definitely seem to have a goal, revealed in the final section of the piece, the route which is taken towards that is by no means clear. This is partly due to a common compositional paradox which is made explicit here, that the music 'works towards' an end result which seems to have been written first, so that the various transformed versions occur in an overall order which makes very little progressive sense. There is, in fact, a kind of reversal of traditional development, which plays with models of how material is extended, so that various different processes, of variation, repetition and development, are all presented, but in a deliberately contradictory manner, again effacing a sense of direction. An important aspect is the way in which the final section acts as an ending. The lack of direction means that the final section does not 'close off' a transformative process, nor finally reveal the full potential of the material or act as a synthesis of all previous versions; its grandiose manner means that it 'sounds like' the final statement of what is, by now, a familiar catalogue of material, and allows it to act as a clear closing gesture. This stylistic manipulation of similar material in order to suggest different manners and effects is an important part of *MGV*: it illustrates how the music plays with expectations of what an ending 'sounds like', as well as, retrospectively, what type of development this material 'should have' undergone, whilst continually frustrating attempts to grasp any overall direction.

## Harmonic Articulation

Some general characteristics of harmonic and tonal usage may be observed from the listing of tonal-centres given with the segmentation in Figure 3.4 above. The most obvious feature is the fundamental use of third relationships, often involving the relative major or minor, but also using keys which are a major third apart, and those whose triads share one or more pitches. Nyman points out that '*MGV* begins in C and ends in E' (Nyman 1994), but describes this as being 'coincidental' to the other harmonic organisation, and this global movement does seem remarkably insignificant, there being no clear transition from one key-centre to the other. Not only is E major first introduced in Section 8 and forms the basis of an important number of sections in the third Region of the piece, which makes its reappearance at Section 20 much less of an arrival than might at first appear to be the case, but there is also no corresponding move 'away' from the opening key of C major, for this resurfaces in Sections 17-19, and puts in a final, surprising appearance in Section 21, where it is used interchangeably with its partner from the very opening, E minor. Thus there is no real sense of leaving C and arriving in E, the two seeming easily interchangeable in Nyman's harmonic vocabulary. What this means is that *MGV* does not involve any large-scale harmonic or tonal plan which determines the progression of key-centres over the course of the music.

In general terms, *MGV* begins with two Regions which are harmonically relatively static and clearly defined, before a much more harmonically multifarious third Region which travels to areas more distantly related, with the fourth and fifth Regions marking a return to one of the earlier harmonic 'grounds', C major, and being more harmonically coherent. There does, therefore, on some level seem to be a connection with a traditional Sonata Form structure, particularly in the way in which two distinct key-centres are announced at the beginning, before a more varied middle section and a final return to more consistent tonal centres. However, what is lacking is any sense of a structural conflict between these two centres, and a sense of larger-scale progression which involves the feeling of return. In this respect, the Sonata Form model seems to act as a further 'memory' in the music, for *MGV* initially suggests one process and then presents a different, less traditional structure. Changes of key from section to section seem to be used in a very 'moment-to-moment' manner, either to reduce or exacerbate the level of disruption that each new section presents, and any larger-scale process seems lacking; in

this respect the organisation resembles a kind of 'variation' technique applied to key-centres, mirroring a comparable effect on the surface level. Nyman's remark that *MGV* beginning in C and ending in E is 'coincidental' to the local use of key-centres a third apart is somewhat tongue-in-cheek, no doubt, but serves to confirm the sense that there is no particular musical reason for this overall direction.

On a smaller scale, the principal harmonic devices involve the use of doubling back, comparable to that already observed on a motivic level, and the re permutation of repeating harmonic cells. The articulation of key centres tends not to utilize conventional functional harmony, as centres are usually defined by repetition or through the permutation of a network of related chords. In general, tonic-dominant movement is avoided, and the occasional chord-sequence suggesting a particular type of harmonic movement is most often disrupted by internal repetition which diminishes its sense of inevitability, with the small-scale articulation echoing that already observed on the larger scale. Despite this, harmonic centres are generally articulated very clearly, with only a few sections being more ambiguous. In the following discussion the most common modes of articulation will be considered, before an examination of those passages which display a more varied process.

The harmonies employed in each section are shown in Figure 3.22. As may be observed, the most common technique, and one that is announced at the very opening of the music, is to use harmonies related by two triadic pivot notes; the simplest example can be found in the first two sections, both clearly in C, where the only harmonies employed are C, e and a. What is interesting about this technique is that it avoids G major, the dominant, traditionally an important defining harmony, though it is alluded to through the use of its relative minor. This very limited harmonic palette is used to define all sections that are based around C major: as well as Sections 1 and 2, Sections 9, 18 and 21 use these harmonies exclusively, as does the first half of Section 19 and the entirety of Section 17, apart from a 4-bar excursion involving E major and (very fleetingly) G<sup>7</sup>, which itself is an indication of the way in which C and E harmonies become increasingly interchangeable.

FIGURE 3.22.

Section	Harmonies used
1	C a e
2	C a e
3	e G b
4	C a e G b
5	D $\flat$ A <sup>(7)</sup> F $\sharp$ b $\flat$
6	D $\flat$
6a	D $\flat$ A b $\flat$
7	D $\flat$ b $\flat$ A $\flat$ g $\sharp$ E c $\sharp$ A
8	g $\sharp$ E c $\sharp$ A
9	C a e
10	E c $\sharp$ A B
11	E
12	E c $\sharp$ A B
13	g $\sharp$ E A <sup>(6)</sup> B <sup>(6)</sup> f $\sharp$ <sup>(6)</sup>
14	D C G c $\sharp$ A B
14a	D G c $\sharp$ A B
15	b $\flat$ A $\flat$ <sup>7</sup> E A <sup>7</sup> B <sup>7</sup> d $\sharp$ <sup>6</sup>
16	G $\flat$ <sup>7</sup> b $\flat$ A $\flat$ <sup>7</sup> E A <sup>7</sup> B <sup>7</sup> d $\sharp$ <sup>6</sup>
17	C a e G E
18	C a e
19	D C a e G
20	E c $\sharp$ A B
21	C a e
22	E c $\sharp$ A B



Elsewhere, a similar technique of using pivotal diads is employed (usually centred around E major or E minor), and is often combined with other, additional harmonies; the music thus demonstrates Nyman's 'harmonic process' which, he indicates, involves 'chord sequences (mainly over C and E) which have the note E in common' (Nyman 1994). This use of pivot-notes means that the music uses traditional triadic formations, but that they are presented in new orders and different combinations, so that the function of each triad is continually changing, sometimes leading in one direction and sometimes in another.

Sections 15 and 16 are the most ambiguous in their articulation of a harmonic centre, even within the more complex third Region, and most clearly demonstrate the use of a harmonic 'doubling back' process. Their ambiguity means that the third Region, rather than concluding with a clear assertion of E major, ends by almost avoiding it, which makes the transition into C major in Section 17 less of a disruption, as it comes out of a period of relative instability, and acts more like a 'resolution'. Figure 3.23 presents the sequence of chords which is used in Section 15 (the series being repeated in its entirety), and underneath a reduction which removes the internal repetition of harmonies (the by-now familiar process of doubling-back) and shows the linear aspect of the outer parts, as well as a complementary line in the middle of the harmony which occurs only on the repeat. (The harmony at the end of Section 14 is also shown to give an indication of context.)

FIGURE 3.23.

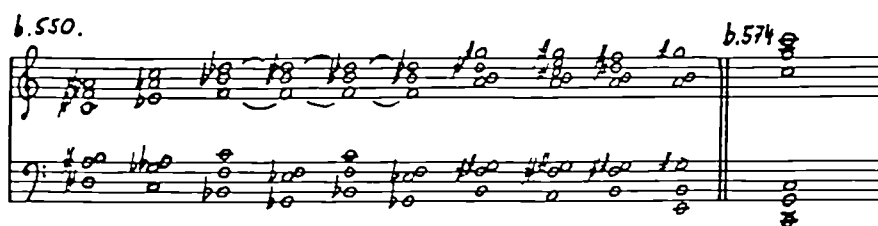
The figure displays a musical score for Section 15. The top system consists of a grand staff with a treble clef and a bass clef. The music begins with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a 3/8 time signature. The notation includes various chords and melodic lines. A bracket labeled 'b512' spans the first few measures. Below the main score is a reduction, which is a simplified version of the harmonic structure. It shows the linear progression of the outer parts and a complementary line in the middle of the harmony that occurs only on the repeat. The reduction uses a different clef and shows the underlying chordal structure without the internal repetitions of the original score.

Immediately apparent is the way in which the first harmony of Section 15 contradicts any expectation that might have been engendered by the D to G motion which precedes it, it being difficult to find two harmonies that are less likely to flow easily from one to the other. Thus the effect is more disruptive than a simple examination of the two key centres would lead one to expect. In fact, there is no sense that this section is in E major

until one arrives at the fourth harmony, an A<sup>7</sup> with an added sixth, which forms the first part of a IV-V-I cadence with which the sequence concludes (this cadence is itself delayed by the immediate repetition of the IV-V motion). Once this point is reached, the final choice of key-centre is clearly anticipated, but before this there is little indication of the overall goal. As Figure 3.23 demonstrates, it is possible to see the whole sequence as ‘leading’ to the final outcome, although there is little actual sense of this as the music unfolds, only in retrospect can one perceive both this direction and the sense of rightness about the whole construction.

Figure 3.24 shows the basically similar sequence used in Section 16, which is complicated somewhat by the addition of a new harmony, G<sup>b7</sup>, and a less straightforward ordering of the remaining chords, which means that the outer voice-leading is much less clearly defined, although the IV-V-I cadence at the end remains. Sections 15 and 16 thus display a rather different kind of harmonic articulation from earlier, in that they deliberately *avoid* any clear sense of tonal centre. In addition, both use a harmonic *sequence*, repeated complete in Section 15 and extended somewhat to form the basis of Section 16, this type of chord pattern being a general exception, as a process of re permutation is more often employed. These two sections illustrate the use of directed harmony hidden through internal repetition, and the general masking of a harmonic centre which is, however, finally revealed; the overall effect here is to suggest one direction and then finally to choose another.

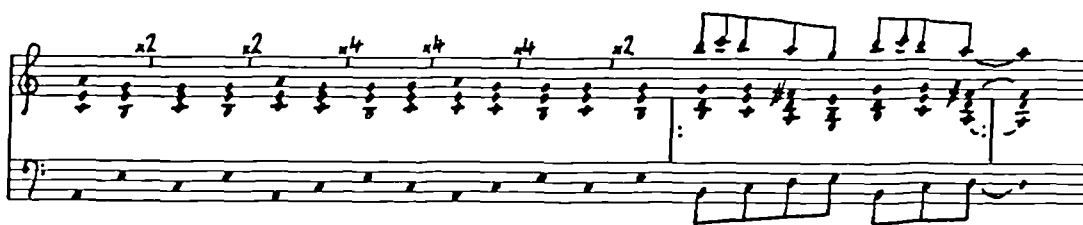
FIGURE 3.24.



A somewhat similar instance can be found towards the end of the piece, in Section 19, which combines this kind of anticipatory effect with a triadic harmonic construction and a further use of what may be termed a ‘chord sequence’. Figure 3.25 shows the harmonies in this section, which falls into two parts. The first part, making use of C, a and e triads, performs the familiar process of recombination and re permutation, and, with a high level of internal repetition of two-chord cells and no overall sense of direction, is perceived as basically static. The arrival of a G major first-inversion chord

heralds a chord sequence which uses a directed scale fragment as a bass line, and a more fluid, continuous melodic idea which falls in contrary motion with that bass line. This motion is broken up by a half-completed statement at the end which allows it to repeat, D acting as dominant to G. At the very end of the section the D harmony is extended one bar 'too many', increasing the sense of anticipation, although what is certainly not expected is the arrival of the drums and the commencement of the next section in E major, a very clear instance of the disruption of traditional patterns. This section demonstrates how harmonic stasis can be created out of elements that elsewhere provide a sense of motion, and how a traditional sense of directed harmony is both used only rarely and is disrupted and manipulated so as to frustrate the expectation that it would typically produce.

FIGURE 3.25.



Such a process informs almost all of the harmony of *MGV*: because this piece uses the building-blocks of tonal harmony both on a small and a large scale, it engenders a whole network of associations and expectations as to how this music will behave. As the above discussion has amply demonstrated, these expectations are continually disrupted by the techniques that Nyman employs; on occasion the music makes some sense if one listens with this type of expectation in mind, as it is literally 'played with', so that the effect involves recognising how the model is disrupted, but more often the harmony either serves to help delineate section divisions (or blur them), or, on a surface level, help to articulate a continually-changing harmonic field with which the motivic working can engage. Thus, although harmony is a fundamental element in the musical fabric (for at times this music is *only* harmonic), it is non-functional, with 'traditional' elements being continually used in new combinations. There is a level of consistency between the harmonic and motivic processes, in that the main organisational principle is of a manipulation of expectation through continual doubling-back, returning to similar versions of the already-heard. What this means is that although in a number of places the harmony defines a *context* for the motivic working, it too takes part in an ongoing

process; the interplay of background and foreground is applicable to this element as well and indicates the interdependence of different parameters.

### **Emergence of Overall Form**

In overall terms, *MGV* does not, as has been shown, depend upon traditional concepts of large-scale form, either tonally nor in terms of a single process of thematic transformation which may be followed easily from beginning to end. In fact, *MGV* seems deliberately to contradict our expectation of such directional processes, for although one can hear the final section as bringing together some of the strands of the main melody which have been heard elsewhere, it does not sound as the inevitable conclusion of the previous 30 minutes; rather, as suggested above, that section is manipulated so as to sound like an ending, and in fact it acts as a wholly satisfactory one. What is important in the overall form is the interaction of the harmonic patterning and the recurrence of recognisable thematic material in different sections, for the two have an almost symbiotic effect in creating the overall segmentation. Hearing *MGV* work means hearing the disruptive effect of changes of harmony or material from section to section, but also in hearing how the material keeps returning in different harmonic contexts and in different combinations with other musical ideas, so that although the music may occasionally present a high level of disruption to the expected continuity, an overall structure which makes sense does emerge. Factors which contribute to this process of 'making sense' are returns of harmony and background figuration which create a context so that new material slots into place; it is rare for a new idea to be heard entirely on its own, without any familiar or 'familiar-sounding' material to support it (the various inserts, particularly Section 18, come closest). In simple terms this means that over the whole piece one hears a number of interlocking processes which result in a continually evolving pattern of sound which is consistently made up of familiar elements heard in new contexts.

The perception of a sectional form is fundamental to the overall shape, and the 22 sections outlined earlier are not equally differentiated from their immediate neighbours, there being rather different degrees of disruption or clarity of segmentation, with *MGV* playing very much with the ways in which changes can be elided or more obviously defined. It is as a result of this process that the music can also be grouped into

obviously defined. It is as a result of this process that the music can also be grouped into larger-scale Regions, as each transition may be classified in terms of how far it interrupts the perceived progress of the music. Figure 3.26 presents this data, with a very brief summary of changes in the music from one section to the next.

FIGURE 3.26.

<b>Transition</b>	<b>Bar</b>	<b>Level of disruption</b>	<b>Significant differences</b>
1-2	67	slight	Addition of motivic idea
2-3	92	slight	Substitution of motivic idea
3-4	108	slight	Substitution of motivic idea
4-5	145	major	Change of key and material
5-6	195	moderate	Change of texture, addition of turn-figure
6-6a	204	slight	Slow-down of material (not tempo)
6a-7	231	slight	Shift of key, change of material
7-8	255	moderate	Change of material
8-9	265	major	Change of key and material
9-10	289	moderate	Change of key, substitution of material
10-11	335	major	Change of tempo and material
11-12	354	major	Change of tempo and material
12-13	391	major	Change of tempo, material and key
13-14	439	major	Change of tempo, material and key
14-14a	483	slight	Addition of material
14a-15	512	major	Change of perceived tempo, change of key
15-16	550	slight	Substitution of material
16-17	574	major	Change of tempo, material and key
17-18	645	major	Change of tempo, material and key
18-19	677	major	Change of tempo and material
19-20	722	major	Change of material, addition of drums
20-21	773	slight	Change of tempo and key
21-22	795	slight	Change of material and key

As can be observed, disruptions classified as ‘major’ are usually the result of changes in both key and material, and sometimes tempo, whereas ‘slight’ disruptions usually only involve modifications of material. There are a couple of anomalies to this general principle, between Sections 6a and 7, and Sections 7 and 8, the first instances in the piece where the sectionalisation is not completely clear-cut. The transition from Section 6a to 7 involves a change of key from A major to D $\flat$ , and a change of material from the slow presentation of the turn-figure to a statement of the main melodic idea, on bassoons and low strings, underpinned by much more rhythmically energetic material than that found in the previous sections (Figure 3.27 shows a reduction of this transition).

FIGURE 3.27.

Despite a change in two parameters, the effect of the resulting transition is very slight, and depends upon the pivotal D $\flat$  / C $\sharp$ , which acts as the point of arrival for the final turn-figure and the starting-note for both the main melody and the ‘counter melody’ from the brass. In addition, the cadential motion of the turn-figure pushes the music towards the first beat of bar 231 and means that the sudden harmonic simplification which occurs there, albeit in the ‘wrong key’, still has the effect of being the ‘right’ outcome of that cadential harmonic rhythm, eliding the seemingly disparate sections into a comparatively seamless continuity.

The data given in Figure 3.26 above gives one way of examining whether Nyman's division of *MGV* into Regions is confirmed by the degrees of disruption involved; to be aurally meaningful, each change of Region should be marked by a larger degree of disruption than its internal divisions, which is exactly the case with Regions 1, 2 and 5. The internal segmentation of the third Region is completely different, involving a large number of 'major' disruptions, which obviously derive from the greater variety of material and its treatment, whereas in the fourth Region all internal divisions involve major levels of disruption, so that both Regions are less well-defined from their neighbours. Instead, a more complex interaction of parameters is involved in this large-scale articulation. Nyman comments that each Region ends with a version of the main melody, and Section 16 presents an obvious presentation of this material, thus 'defining' Section 17 as the beginning of the next Region. However, if this 'rule of material' is followed, then the third Region should start in Section 8 rather than Section 9, which means that the two parameters, level of disruption and recurrence of material, are at odds here. Harmonic considerations present a further complication. If the key-centre with which the third and fourth Regions commence is considered, then a level of consistency is revealed, both marking a return to C major after areas centred on D<sup>b</sup> / A, and E major respectively. However, the rest of *MGV* does not really affirm a connection between start of Region and a specific key-centre, for, clearly, Regions 2 and 5 do not begin with C major. Similarly, there is very little evidence of this type of overall patterning and the linkage of specific material or a specific gesture to key; the return to C major in Section 9 can be seen as determined by material which 'just happens' to be linked with that key (the fact that it is not the *opening* that is restated re-emphasises the relative insignificance of the sense of return). Thus the start of the third Region seems to be determined principally by harmony, and the fourth Region by material, although in fact it is the interaction of the various parameters which control levels of cohesion and differentiation, so that the larger-scale form is determined from section to section rather than in overall terms, thus one can speak of it as 'emerging' rather than depending upon a process of expectation.

An important part of the way in which form does emerge depends upon the manner in which changes in parameter are effected: boundary conditions do not simply depend on *what* is changed, but also on *how* it is changed, and there are a number of techniques where apparently significant changes can be de-emphasised, and *vice versa*.

Section 8, which is very short (only ten bars, which are, however, repeated in their entirety), is characterised by the use of the scalic figure from saxophone over rhythmically-active figuration from the band, where this 11-beat pattern disrupts the 8-beat pattern of the harmonic rhythm. However, this scalic figure, in slightly different form, itself appears some 6 bars earlier in Section 7, where it acts as a counter-melody to the ‘main melody’; although retaining a clear sense of disjunction, the anticipation of this material in the previous section means it may also be heard as an extension, taking up earlier material and examining it more fully, so that a significant change of material is de-emphasised through a stressing of the overall continuity rather than the disruption.

At the end of this section the opposite process is achieved. The transition from Section 8 into Section 9 is already marked by a change of key, from E to C, a change of material from the scalic pattern to the crotchet-minim melody, as well as a thickening of texture, but is further reinforced by the way in which it is approached. As Figure 3.28 shows, the final bar of Section 8 is extended, as is the scalic figure which occupies it. Due to the insistent 4-beat harmonic rhythm and the way in which the syncopation within the scalic figure paradoxically reinforces the beat which it avoids, the first, fifth and ninth beats of the 5/2 bar are felt to be particularly strong, so that the interruption comes in the ‘wrong place’, half-way between an anticipated 4-beat group.

FIGURE 3.28.



This sense of arriving ‘too soon’ on C major is created through the manipulation of apparent regularity which the 5/2 bar frustrates, re-emphasising the disjunction caused by changes of material through a foreground process which again manipulates



expectations of regularity and consistency. What these two transitions illustrate is how the level of disruption depends heavily on parameters such as pacing and the expectation engendered thereby, as well as with the more fundamental changes of material; the overall form of *MGV* involves motivic and harmonic aspects, but also the manipulation of those factors through surface-level considerations.

The way in which this mode of presentation, what may loosely be termed 'style', effects how motivic material is perceived and thus how sectional form emerges, is illustrated through examination of the five Inserts, Sections 11, 13, 15, 16 and 18. These are separated from their surroundings through aspects of orchestration, tempo and sometimes key-centre, but their motivic aspects reveals a level of consistency with that found throughout *MGV*, with a number of these sections making use of derived forms of the main melody. This is clearest in Section 11, which employs the simultaneous presentation of two versions of this idea (one of which is carried on into Section 12), in Section 13, where the derivation of the bass line from Section 12 has already been discussed, and in Section 16, which presents a very clear, slow-moving version of the main-melody, overlaying rhythmic figuration and a version of the turn-figure. Sections 15 and 18 use less clearly-derived material, though the former employs versions of the rhythmic figuration and turn-figure (carried into Section 16), and the latter extends aspects of the main-melody and adopts the counter-melody from Section 17. In general terms, none of these sections mark a complete break either with their immediate neighbours, nor with the kind of distribution and disposition of material found elsewhere in the piece; Section 15, for instance, displays one new melodic thread and maintains two thematic links with the previous section, this combination of the new with a reworking of the already-used appearing throughout *MGV*. These five Inserts thus illustrate how their perceived distinctness from the ongoing process depends more upon techniques of suggestion, rather than on any clear separation in terms of construction; whilst they take part in the motivic and harmonic procedures which inform the rest of *MGV*, they *sound* quite different, presenting highly individual contexts within which familiar material takes on new shapes, and it is these shifting contexts which create sectional form.

The overall shape of *MGV* plays with traditional concepts such as variation, repetition and development, so that the emergent form depends upon a manipulation of all these aspects, but finally escapes any clear sense of a single process. For instance, although a limited amount of material is heard in a number of different versions the music

does not simply present a process of overall variation, relying instead upon a more complex interaction of parameters. Part of that result marks a clear contradiction of large-scale expectation, for instance the ending in E major, and does also involve some manipulation of a 'Sonata Form' model. There is a fairly traditional overall layout, with two well-defined sections at the opening, Regions 1 and 2, a 'development' section which involves the most differentiated music, Regions 3 and 4, before returning to a more straightforward and unified section with which to end. On many other levels any such parallel with Classical Sonata Form falls down, as it does not correspond to any traditional sense of that type of structure and the use of material is a long way from traditional development; instead, Nyman seems simply to be making use of the fact that at the beginning of *MGV* the level of differentiation can be quite low, as the music establishes its sound world and parameters and the listener perceives minor changes as having significance, whereas, as it progresses, a greater level of differentiation is required in order to maintain the sense of forward momentum, with the ending heralded by a sense of solidity and arrival. Of course, in a work which plays upon general memories of previous music, the ghost of Sonata Form becomes a part of that process of evocation. This quite complicated process, whereby any one section may be seen as operating in a number of different ways, suggesting new directions and simultaneously acting as the fulfillment of another ongoing process, means that *MGV* remains in a continual state of flux; although partaking of a number of different formal understandings in its process of implication, it never falls into any clear overall form and thus resists attempts to grasp its sense.

### **Re-Context**

Meirion Bowen, in a review of a concert which included *MGV*, makes the assertion that Nyman's music is 'strong on rhythm, melodically derivative, harmonically clumsy and gauche in its orchestration, this music lacks long-term thinking: for these elements are always pulling in different directions' (Bowen 1995: 8), concluding that the 'vacuity' of 'TGV' [sic] is merely proportionate to the amplification (: 9). Despite Bowen's obviously hostile tone, the charge that the different elements all pull in different directions is one that needs to be answered. As has been discussed, Nyman's music does not

display traditional concepts of 'long-term thinking', with *MGV* manipulating and playing with expectation of such processes. Instead, the large-scale form that does emerge depends upon a complex interaction of different parameters, so that far from the 'elements... pulling in different directions' to the detriment of the overall shape, the fact that the harmonic, rhythmic and thematic processes do not exactly coincide is the main way in which this music articulates time. Although *MGV* does play with memories of large-scale form, in places suggesting one shape and then disrupting that expectation, it is the way in which the different levels interact that creates the continually-shifting contexts, which suggests a somewhat different way of hearing this music than Bowen indicates.

This alternative mode, both of production (i.e. composition) and reception seems to turn upon the importance of context which has been considered throughout this analysis, for all material finally acts as potential context for everything else, so that recontextualisation occurs constantly. For instance, the scalic figure occurs in five clearly-defined areas in the piece, and in each of these is heard in a different key; looking at the process the other way around, when the harmony jolts back from E to C at the beginning of Regions 3 and 4, different material is presented each time, so that a particular harmonic effect is not coupled with a specific motivic area. On a surface level the rhythmic figuration is entirely bound up with this establishment of differing contexts within which similar material may be heard (for instance, the difference in the effect of the turn-figure between Section 1 and Section 9), or the maintaining of a consistent context in which two different motivic ideas may be placed, often simultaneously, such as in Section 14, where the turn-figure and the descending scalic patterns combine over a fixed rhythmic pattern. Furthermore, this continual recontextualisation accounts for the way in which *MGV* plays with the notions of a fixed background and foreground, particularly with respect to the rhythmic process, as material may easily be switched from one level to the next. Thus Derrida's emphasis on context that is always infinite and finally undecidable finds its expression in this reading of *MGV*, where the continually-shifting disposition of material, in its widest sense, is responsible both for small-scale and emerging large-scale patterning.

As a result of this process, *MGV* also produces what is almost a point-by-point contradiction of traditional harmonic, motivic and formal procedures, where the expectation of patterns or structures are engendered by the use of traditional material as

building-blocks (for instance, in the use of triadic patterning on a small-scale harmonic level), and by the suggestion of a directed process which is then disrupted (for instance, the harmonic articulation of Sections 15 and 16, or the initially clear distinction between the first two Regions). The effect of this music depends in part upon the manipulation of this complex network of association, but also upon a recognition that it operates in another, quite distinct manner, otherwise there is a danger of becoming too concerned with the disruption of traditional models. There is, in fact, a great deal of complexity here, in the way in which different parameters interact and create overall form, as well as the manipulation of style so as to create levels of disruption and continuity and to produce the sense of ending which Section 22 so clearly manages. Given that *MGV* depends upon recontextualisation, a process potentially infinite, this ending is, like much earlier, more strictly Minimalist music, effectively arbitrary, as the piece could continue indefinitely (Derrida's 'clause of non-closure'). This not only reinforces the importance of style, but also the skill involved in decisions of length and overall patterning, as well as the creation of a wholly satisfactory end-piece.

This manipulation of content so as to *sound* different is obviously an important part of the process of recontextualisation, for one depends very much upon the other: no material becomes primary, as everything may act as a context for everything else. These two factors, an anti-hierarchical use of material and a reliance upon manipulation of style, mean that *MGV* is finally more concerned with how the material is made to sound than what it actually comprises. Of course, some material remains clearly recognisable, and it is the way in which certain elements recur that makes the music work, but a clear sense of primary and secondary, foreground and background, generally evaporates. *MGV* thus presents a play of patterning, sometimes suggesting one thing or bringing certain elements to the fore, at other times allowing them to recede; it is this play that is responsible for the sense of energy, and almost tangible enjoyment that this music projects.

## Chapter 4

### Past, Presence and Absence

Louis Andriessen's *De Stijl* (1985)

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#### Past and Presence

Perhaps the most disruptive moment in Louis Andriessen's *De Stijl* occurs shortly after the midpoint, when, after a dancer has slowly made her way through the audience space to the front of the stage, an upright piano to the rear of the auditorium suddenly breaks into the music with a pounding Boogie-woogie (Figure 4.1).

FIGURE 4.1.



To this accompaniment, the dancer begins a series of reminiscences about Mondrian, remembering their acquaintance in the early part of the century, and how he used to be an extremely enthusiastic dancer. As she relates their final parting, how she watched Mondrian walking slowly to the exit of the metro, the boogie-woogie stutters to a close, and, after a brief silence, the main, on-stage ensemble reenters, apparently taking up the musical thread at the point at which it was interrupted. This whole episode only occupies about three minutes, yet its impact totally belies its length; on a first hearing of *De Stijl*, this passage is completely unexpected, apparently coming from nowhere to disrupt the unfolding of the 'main piece', yet at the same time, it seems to act as the touchstone to understanding how the work actually relates to the world of the painter. This feeling is enhanced when the text is compared to that which is used for the rest of the music, a somewhat confused (and

confusing) meditation on 'The Perfectly Straight Line' by the theosophical thinker Mathieu Schoenmaekers, apparently a great influence on Mondrian and on the formation of the ideas that would become the artistic movement *De Stijl*. Even if this text is known in advance, its presentation, in slow-moving chordal harmonies sung by four women's voices, does not aid comprehension (presumably even for native Dutch speakers) and its subject and nature mean that it hardly acts as an approachable introduction to Mondrian. In contrast, Van Domselaer-Middelkoop's reminiscences are delivered in a clipped, rhythmicized speech (in Dutch or English, though the composer indicates a preference for Dutch in the score), which both counterpoints the semiquaver boogie-woogie material and makes comprehension easy, as well as being a humorous reflection of the painter's own 'hesitating way of speaking'.

The authenticity of this second text, its contact with Mondrian's world, seems to be echoed in the piano music used to accompany its delivery; as indicated above, this section stands out, firstly because it is scored for an upright, 'honky-tonk' piano, physically separated from the main ensemble, and, secondly, because the material itself sounds like a quotation of actual boogie-woogie, as opposed to what Andriessen calls the 'contemporary interpretation of boogie-woogie' (cited in Schwarz 1994) used in the main body of the piece. One is thus presented by a 'real' boogie-woogie played by a 'real' boogie-woogie pianist, an episode that has invisible quotation marks around it, indicating a throwback to a historical period and manner of expression linked to Mondrian himself, and thus indicating his presence. The text of course clarifies this distinction, for we hear about Mondrian directly, rather than a more obliquely-related 'philosophical' reflection.

This passage thus appears to be distanced from its surroundings through its description of an instance of narrative behaviour. Carolyn Abbate, in *Unsung Voices*, characterises narrative acts as 'moments that can be identified by their bizarre and disruptive effect. Such moments seem like voices from elsewhere, speaking... in a fashion we recognise precisely because it is idiosyncratic' (1991: 29). Narrative, in Abbate's view, occurs only rarely, and requires a distancing, a moment of diegesis, an indication not only of a narrative but also of the 'outside' of the story, the presence of a narrating voice. Interrupting the immediacy of the surrounding music, music viewed in its mimetic mode, narrative acts appear as

moments of transgression; Abbate, considering passages of diegesis in operas by Mozart, Wagner and Strauss, characterises the diegetic as producing a disruptive effect.

Even this extremely cursory summary of Abbate's position gives an indication of a way in which the boogie-woogie section of *De Stijl* might be understood; its sudden disruption of the music that surrounds it and the literal narration that occurs through the delivery of the spoken text (which itself already invokes the past tense) all suggest that this section is itself narrative and thus possesses a narrating voice (unspecific, but nonetheless present). In response to Abbate's theory, Lawrence Kramer rightly points out that although diegesis in opera may well produce disruptive musical effects, in instrumental music disruption does not necessarily indicate diegesis, 'the interpretative sequence is not necessarily reversible' (Kramer 1992e: 237). Although the effects that Abbate uses in her discussion of instrumental music by Mahler and Dukas are disruptive, they do not, Kramer argues, indicate the presence of an outside voice. In applying Abbate's ideas to *De Stijl*, one must remain aware that, despite the presence of a text, this seems to behave primarily as instrumental music rather than as a text-setting and, accordingly, be careful not to overdetermine what is perhaps just a simple device of purely musical dislocation. Having said that, *De Stijl* seems to assert two clearly different voices.

The first of these appears to be what Abbate calls 'a monophonic single voice' (1991: 251). (Only 'appears to be', for much of the following analysis will involve showing that this clear separation into two voices is, at the least, problematical.) This voice occupies almost all of *De Stijl*, exactly how it is constituted will be discussed below, but suffice it to say here that its identity is preserved through the use of the on-stage ensemble. Cutting through this is the boogie-woogie itself, which could be characterised as the narrative device of the 'embodied quotation', effectively saying to the listener: 'here is an authentic boogie-woogie from the period in which Piet Mondrian lived, and at the same time you can hear an authentic account of how he used to love dancing'.

This rather simplistic characterisation already indicates some problems, principally the fact that the 'composer's voice' is not as monophonic as was suggested above. In fact, almost the contrary is the case: the musical surface is

marked by an apparent diversity of means, with several strands of differing material colliding with each other, as well as the use of a number of stylistic borrowings (the boogie-woogie bass-line being the most obvious), which all give the impression of a somewhat chaotic mix of disparate material. However, having said that, all this music is marked by a sense of artifice (in that it is all art, i.e. it is all *made*), and the simple fact that the different elements were put together, created. In contrast, the boogie-woogie simply sounds more like it is dropped into the construction from outside, its apparent monism being a further indication of its status as a 'natural' object, an object from the real world simply resited in a new context. These factors thus make it possible to hear *De Stijl* as two-voiced: the 'presence' of the boogie-woogie surrounded by the 'artificiality' of Andriessen's stylistic borrowings, the 'real memories' of Mondrian opposed to the abstraction of Schoenmaekers' text.

The establishment of such a clear-cut dualistic structure is obviously open to a process of deconstruction, and in fact this analysis demonstrates how *De Stijl* can be seen to deconstruct itself, so that this initial characterisation of a two-voiced structure, although not entirely lost, is understood as the result of a manipulation of *style*, a process which informs the entirety of the music. What this means is that Andriessen does create the impression of a clear distinction between the 'main piece' and the boogie-woogie section, but this is in fact due not to any fundamental difference between the musical material, but rather to the importance of a change of text and mode of delivery, and a corresponding change in musical manner; whilst an examination of the stylistic and rhetorical strategies of the two texts are beyond the scope of the current discussion, the way in which the musical surface plays with notions of presence and absence, and of the authentic and the artificial, forms a major focus of this analysis. The concentration on stylistic manipulation as the main constructional principle of *De Stijl* underlines the multi-faceted nature of the music and escapes the danger of overinterpreting the high level of similarity between much of the *material* to imply one unified structure, an approach which makes very little sense of the music as heard. Thus the current analysis reads *De Stijl* in terms of surface manners rather than underlying similarities (though this level is necessarily also considered); the presentation of various colliding modes of organisation: division into blocks, over-run of material from section to section and a final sense of different 'borrowed' styles being overlaid, is an attempt to avoid any too totalizing



'explanation' and concentrates upon how the music is manipulated rather than how it is constructed.

The deconstruction of the two-voiced structure of *De Stijl* is not the sole focus of this analysis, and, indeed, before it can be delineated a consideration of the 'main piece' needs to be undertaken; only when the constitution of the piece as a whole has been addressed can the apparent dualism be critically examined. As a result, the following analysis suspends such considerations, concentrating initially on the various interlocking modes of organisation which characterise the piece, whereby the music continually over-runs any attempt to fix its structure. This means that in a number of places, although features will be examined and described in terms of one characterisation, it should be borne in mind that this will be later reinscribed within a wider context, so that this writing charts a gradual increase in analytical sophistication and scope. This process endeavours to illustrate how the music escapes any too rigorous formalisation, and to mirror the flexibility that *De Stijl* articulates; such a procedure seems appropriate when dealing with issues of musical style, itself a notoriously difficult concept to examine, and with the complex interplay of past, presence and absence with which this piece confronts the listener.

## Models and Figures

*De Stijl* is the third movement of Andriessen's large-scale music-theatre piece *De Materie*, premièred in 1989 with staging by Robert Wilson, but *De Stijl* was itself actually conceived in 1984-5, before any other part of the larger work, and has its own life as an autonomous piece of music. Each of the four movements of *De Materie* takes as its point of departure a historical figure, in *De Stijl* the Dutch painter Piet Mondrian, and examines the relationship between matter and spirit through that figure and through other, orbital texts;<sup>1</sup> as explained earlier, *De Stijl* uses two complementary texts: the reminiscences of M. van Domselaer-Middelkoop and a chapter from Mathieu Schoenmaekers' *The Basic Principles of Expressive Mathematics*. Like the rest of *De Materie*, *De Stijl* is scored for a large, amplified

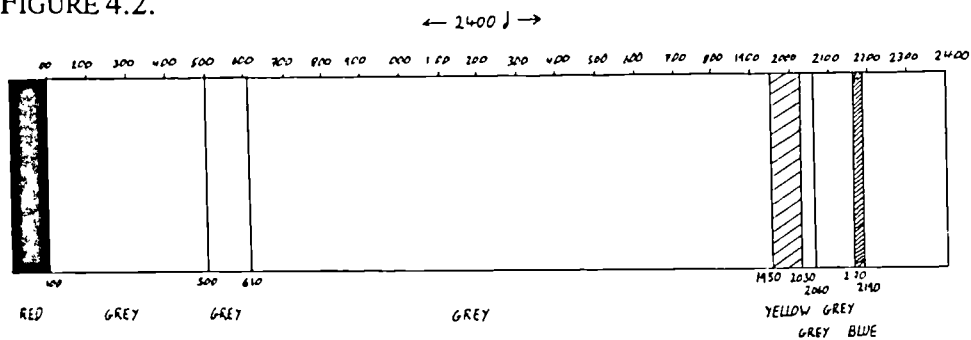
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<sup>1</sup> For fuller discussion of these aspects see Coenen 1989, and Andriessen and Harsh 1992.

ensemble, here without any strings but involving four female voices (which sing the Schoenmaekers text), flutes and saxophones, trumpets and trombones, two pianos, keyboard, two electric guitars, one bass guitar and a large array of percussion (and, of course, the boogie-woogie upright piano and female dancer).

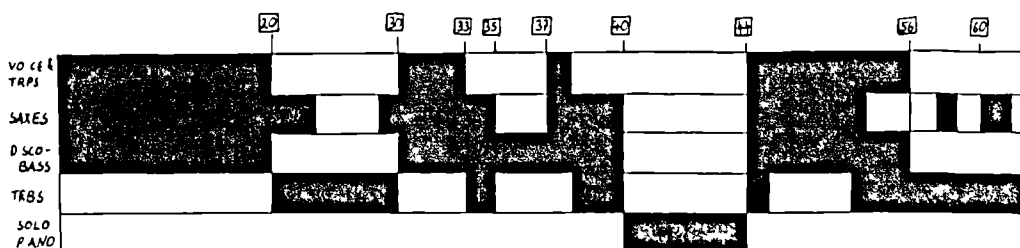
The basic structure of each of the four parts of *De Materie* is derived, as Alcedo Coenen explains (1989: 11), from a pre-existing form: a Bach Prelude, a cathedral, the sonnet, and, for *De Stijl*, Mondrian's *Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue* of 1927. This painting is transformed into a musical form through two processes, the first takes the area of each section of the painting in turn, with each square centimetre being given the duration of one crotchet; the painting is 'read' from left to right and from top to bottom, with the area taken up by the dividing black lines added to the end, giving an overall duration of 2400 crotchets (see Figure 4.2).

FIGURE 4.2.



The second operation is, as Coenen remarks, 'not the product of an entirely rational process'. Using a similar basic design, the instruments are divided into five groups, and, according to David Wright, apportioned to the 'five constituent elements of the painting' (Wright 1993: 13), so that the play of musical events corresponds to the visual model. The resulting diagram is shown in Figure 4.3 (from Coenen 1989: 11, with rehearsal numbers added to facilitate relating it to the music).

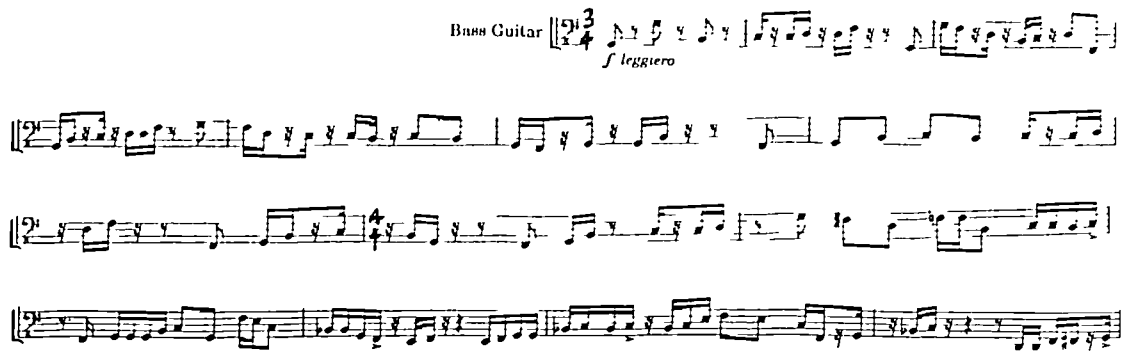
FIGURE 4.3.



Despite all the careful calculation, the experience of the piece does not require an understanding of how the painting is translated into musical form; amongst all of the 'models' used in *De Materie*, it seems the most arcane and least audibly useful, playing an important precompositional role but, unlike some other sections of *De Materie*, not intruding into the musical surface. Not only is it difficult to appreciate how the visualisation of such a painting actually aids or guides the ear, apart from giving one the knowledge that the sometimes capricious-sounding surface is, in fact, strictly structured, but the simple correspondence between five instrumental groups and five colour elements, which both Wright and Coenen believe to be important, does not have a similarly significant effect on the audible music. Although the instrumentation may be perceived as being divided into five groups, the musical material is actually shared around between these groups: the bass and piano material often migrates to the saxophones, that given to the trombone and choir moves increasingly close as the music progresses, and even the piano solo has the odd interjection from other instruments. Similarly, the material sounds much more differentiated than the division into five 'layers' implies, and musical ideas tend to merge into one another, so that the identity of these strands is difficult to perceive; the apparent rationality of Mondrian's painting becomes transformed into something much more disruptive and multifarious.

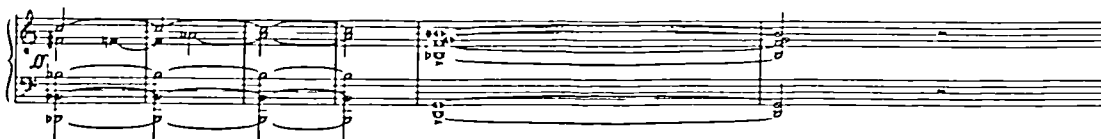
Much more significant on an aural level are the two further historical 'models' that Andriessen draws upon: the passacaglia, and the figure of J.S.Bach. How the first of these is used will become more apparent when the music is dealt with in more detail, but in *De Stijl* this Seventeenth-Century passacaglia form is reinterpreted as an ostinato disco-bass which repeats throughout almost all of the piece (see Coenen 1989: 7). The idea for using a bass line derived from a boogie-woogie ostinato finds its 'justification' through Mondrian and his love of American jazz-forms already remarked upon; Andriessen's 'contemporary reinterpretation' is shown in Figure 4.4.

FIGURE 4.4.



The presence of Bach is indicated in *De Stijl* through the use of the musical figure based on the letters of his name, a motif which has intrigued composers for three centuries; Bach is not only a major protagonist in other parts of *De Materie* (principally Part I), but his presence in *De Stijl* is also connected further to the subject of Schoenmaekers' text, the 'perfect straight line' which Schoenmaekers regarded as the simple right-angle, with B-A-C-H itself being, of course, a famous instance of a musical cross-figure. Andriessen apparently attempted to find a musical equivalent for Schoenmaekers' own T-shape (see Coenen 1989: 7), but in *De Stijl* most instances of this type of cross-figure can be seen as derivations of the B-A-C-H motif, which also occasionally appears in its original form, often at important moments in the music, with, for instance, the boogie-woogie section itself preceded by one such statement (see Figure 4.5). Elsewhere, thematic ideas such as that given to the first entry of the trombones, bar 145, indicate the level at which this musical figure is absorbed into the fabric of the music.

FIGURE 4.5.



These models and figures make up what is a mainly conceptual background to the piece; some aspects have more effect on an aural level, whereas others remain hidden throughout. One aspect which has not been commented on is the ostensible

subject-matter of *De Materie*: the relationship between matter and spirit.<sup>2</sup> In fact, this issue will remain relatively unexplored in the current analysis, for a discussion of how music is actually to project such ideas is beyond its scope, but some indications do emerge. This relationship between matter and spirit maps in some respects onto the distinction between material and style which forms a major part of the consideration of *De Stijl*, but the main focus here is how the music makes its effect, for as Andriessen himself comments, ‘the labyrinth of idea and meaning assembled by the work is first and last a structure of sound. If its audible force is weak, the structure collapses.... A piece must first sound well. This principle comes before philosophy and rhetoric’ (Andriessen & Harsh 1992: 70). In tracing the complex interplay between the distinction of material and style, of authenticity and artifice, this analysis can be seen as contributing to what Andriessen described as the ‘somewhat complicated’ issues with which this music is concerned; only after a close examination of what is actually present, the *matter*, can one start to draw conclusions about meaning.

## Overall Form

What first strikes the listener about *De Stijl*, and which is obvious right from its opening bars, is the layering of instrumental strands which seem to have little relation to each other. After the ‘fanfare-figure’ with which the piece begins (Figure 4.6) and which reappears from time to time as a very strong unison gesture, three strands of material are introduced. The first of these is the ostinato bass already referred to (see Figure 4.4 above), stated in its original form by pianos and bass guitar. Above this, saxophones play their most characteristic material, a semiquaver chordal motif which is based around dominant-seventh chords, with extra notes added: for instance, the first chord is a dominant-seventh on E with its note of resolution, A♯, already present (see Figure 4.7). The third layer introduced at this point is the chorale-style declamation of Schoenmaekers’ text by the four singers,

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<sup>2</sup> Schwarz reports that Andriessen ‘was inspired by Marx, who believed that the spirit of man was determined by social forces. (“It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence that determines their consciousness”, Marx wrote.) Andriessen... states wryly that in *De Materie*, “I try to show that it is somewhat more complicated than Marx had thought. I won’t say that the spirit can change matter, but it can be very influential on the organization of the psyche”’ (Schwarz 1994).

doubled by trumpets and synthesizer and accompanied by flutes, bar 11 (Figure 4.8).

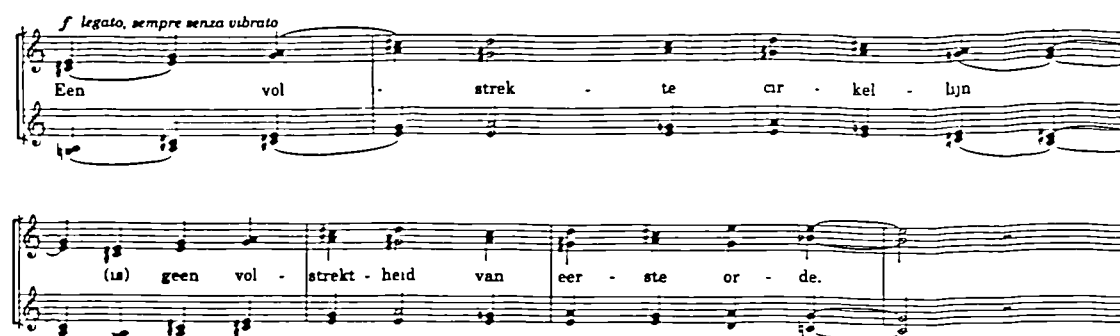
FIGURE 4.6.



FIGURE 4.7.



FIGURE 4.8.



Not only does Andriessen combine apparently disparate material, but he also mixes music which conjures up different associations: the bass line ‘sounds like’ eighties disco meets boogie-woogie, the saxophones initially suggest 1930s big-band music, and the ‘heavenly choir’ also drifts in from time to time.

Despite some of the shortcomings of Coenen’s diagram (Figure 4.3 above), which have already been discussed, it does give some indication as to the distribution of the instruments, and is quite useful as an overall guide to the form of the music. As can be observed, the combination of the three layers described above operates for the first fifth or so of *De Stijl*, although important changes in density go unrecorded by the diagram. Firstly, as the music progresses, the perception of a multitude of lines increases, since new developments of the material appear and complicate the texture, for instance, the saxophone pattern heard at 7,<sup>3</sup> bar 40; in addition, the two drum-kits enter in this section, further thickening the texture. Secondly, between 15

<sup>3</sup> Numbers refer to rehearsal points in the score, numbered consecutively 1-62.

and 17, bars 92-117, the texture thins out and the disco-bass is used in canon, migrating to the saxophones and trumpets. The first major change of material comes with the trombone entry at 20, bar 145. Since this is at first accompanied by saxophones playing variants of their opening material, and then by drum kits playing canonic versions of the disco-bass, it initially sounds like a thickening-out of the earlier texture. A further addition of material comes with the trombone fugato at 23, bar 179 (the complete subject is shown in Figure 4.9), and with the baritone saxophone and percussion interjections which begin at 24, bar 200. The choir re-enters at 30, bar 238, and from here until the sudden interruption of the boogie-woogie at 40, bar 383, the music seems to be made up from different alignments and recombinations of a number of variants of the material which has already been heard.

FIGURE 4.9.



As was described earlier, after the boogie-woogie section the music continues much as before, actually becoming somewhat thicker, the maximum density being reached around 52, bar 533, with a homophonic outburst of a disco-type figure, and the almost chaotic layering of six different strands of material in the passage that follows. Immediately after this climax there is a sudden thinning of the texture as the trombone chords are heard alone in a type of chromatic chorale; although interrupted by what seems like new, homophonic-rhythmic material at 58, bar 611 (Figure 4.10) which becomes increasingly strident, this brass chorale is eventually left on its own to close the music. The final image is of the welter of material coalescing into something much less frenzied and more straightforward.

FIGURE 4.10.



This rather basic summary of events in *De Stijl* gives some overview of the entire form; an important part of that form is a block-like structure, with the music dividing into a number of large-scale areas. These involve the grouping together of types of material and modes of presentation, and are delineated by the varied return of the different strands; there are no literal repetitions of sections, each undergoing its own process of variation or extension, but the music cuts from one section to the other, thus creating a permutational form. In this respect *De Stijl* recalls Stravinsky's *Symphonies of Wind Instruments*, not only because it eschews strings from its ensemble, and sometimes approaches the 'unemotional' world of that earlier work, but because Stravinsky's piece also operates on a similar permutational principle, with different types of material interacting and being rearranged before ending, like *De Stijl*, in a chorale.<sup>4</sup>

The first section involves three primary layers of material, disco-bass, saxophone-pattern and choir (the fourth being a variant of the saxophone pattern), and it divides into three subsections, the outer two being similar in their presentation of these strands, with the middle block using the disco-bass in canon; this central passage makes sense as a subsection in that it sounds like a continuation of the opening, developing a strand of material heard extensively there. The second main section, starting at 20, similarly divides into three subsections; it is unified through the use of trombones playing somewhat more chromatic and sustained harmonies. Although, as pointed out above, this trombone entry is entwined with already-heard material, particularly the saxophone pattern, this addition of a 'new layer' which plays an important role in the next large-scale passage of music does clearly mark out a new section at this point. In addition, a logic does evolve if 20-29 is considered as one section; when the material is examined in much more detail below, the degree to which this is actually achieved will become clear. The third subsection, 24-29, oscillates between the baritone saxophone fugato, based on the disco-bass, and the trombone chords just introduced (Figure 4.11), and it makes sense to include

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<sup>4</sup> Andriessen's debt to Stravinsky's music is one that he readily acknowledges: its most striking manifestation comes in the book which he co-wrote with Elmer Schönberger (Andriessen and Schönberger, 1989). Mention should also be made here of Edward Cone's analysis of *Symphonies of Wind Instruments* (Cone 1968), in which he examines aspects of discontinuity in terms of three phases, 'stratification, interlock, and synthesis'. While the recognition of 'stratification', the process of disjunction, and of 'interlock', where ongoing processes within blocks are intercut, form an important part of this analysis of *De Stijl*, his third stage, 'synthesis', does not. Cone's emphasis on this final stage as the 'necessary goal toward which the entire composition points' (1968: 158), simply reinscribes the valorisation of musical unity in different terms. For *De Stijl*, regarding it as approaching a final synthesis seems to disregard the fundamental multiplicity of its construction; it is to avoid recalling Cone's prioritising of the trope of unity that I have not adopted his terminology here.



it here both because of the presence of the trombones and the obvious feeling of a distinct section at 29 which marks a return to the opening; in addition, this tripartite structure 'balances' the subsections of the opening large-scale passage.

FIGURE 4.11.



These first two sections thus present two clearly-defined and distinct large-scale groupings which are set in opposition to each other, in that they seem to involve distinct material which characterises and distinguishes each from the other. This opposition is thus set up right at the opening of the piece, and having been 'armed', much of rest of the music is heard in relation to these two types of material.

These two sections are labelled in Figure 4.12 as A and B, with the other significant groups labelled C, D and E; these labels indicate sections which are heard as recalling or extending one or the other, though in no cases is there a literal restatement. Those areas which present some ambiguity as to their ascription are marked with a question-mark; these will be discussed in more detail below. The subsequent divisions into either A- or B-sections follow the same principles outlined above: although at 35 the pianos play an obvious derivation of the disco-bass, this seems to belong to a B-section by virtue of its register and more chromatic implications; the relatively quick alternation between A and B, 37 and 37A respectively, reflects the distinction in sound between the presence of choir and saxophones in A and of trombones in B. The criteria for classifying the boogie-woogie into a section of its own are self-explanatory; immediately after this passage the tutti block-chords, labelled here as D, are introduced briefly, as a kind of foretaste of the homophonic chorale which ends the piece, with the main presentation beginning at 56. The dotted-rhythm block-chords, labelled as E, appear only once, and although, as will be discussed later, do connect both to the material which surrounds them and some earlier saxophone material, are perceived as a distinct block, interpolated into the surrounding chorale.

FIGURE 4.12.

<b>Section</b>	<b>Bars</b>	<b>Main Features</b>	
	0 - 15	1-91	[Fanfare], disco-bass, choir, saxes
A	15 - 17	92-116	Disco-bass fugato - saxes
	17 - 20	117-142	Disco-bass, choir, saxes
	20 - 23	143-178	[Fanfare], trombone chords
B	23 - 24	179-199	Trombone fugato with percussion
	24 - 29	200-232	Baritone sax fugato, interspersed with trombone chords
A	29 - 31	233-249	Disco-bass variant, choir, saxes
?	31 - 32	250-259	Trombone chords replace choir
A	32 - 33	260-271	Choir replaces trombones
B	33 - 35	272-309	Trombone chords, disco-bass variant
	35 - 37	310-339	Two-piano solo
A	37 - 37A	340-352	Disco-bass, choir, saxes
B	37A - 38	353-360	Trombone chords replace choir
	38 - 40	361-382	Trombones, piano figuration, saxes
C	40 - 44	383-469	Boogie-woogie section
D	44 - 45	470-482	Tutti block-chords
?	45 - 56	483-570	Disco-bass, [fanfare], choir, pianos and climax
D	56 - 58	571-610	Tutti block-chords
E	58 - 60	611-628	Dotted-rhythm tutti chords
D	60 - end	629-662	Tutti block-chords

This division into sections captures some sense of the episodic nature of *De Stijl*, where the music is perceived, and remembered, as consisting of distinct passages: the 'saxophone canon', the 'trombone fanfare and fugato', the 'closing chorale', and so on. Such a process also enables one to keep track of the music whilst listening: understanding where one is in the piece at any moment must involve a memory of which sections have already happened, and, with increasing familiarity, which sections are still to come. However, as was suggested above, the material of *De Stijl* over-runs such a clear-cut division, for not only is it relatively multifarious, but there is a complex series of relationships between different types and different manifestations of these types, so that the idea of characteristic A- or B-material gradually breaks down, as does the way in which sections are heard as belonging to distinct groups; both processes are suggested in the above segmentation in the lack of a clear ascription to some passages. Thus, although the sense of distinct episodes does remain, the way in which these are articulated, or more correctly, suggested, is reliant upon the different alignments of material found within each. The nature of this thematic material thus needs to be examined in some detail, before considering more fully the way in which section divisions and overall form are perceived and articulated.

### **Make-up of Material**

In the discussion of the five instrumental 'layers' on which Coenen and Wright both place some emphasis, it was pointed out that the material used is actually more diverse than this approach suggests, with musical ideas being transferred from one layer to another and with a general increase of elements as the piece progresses. However, although the concept of there being only five strands breaks down, *De Stijl* does involve a limited amount of material, and its apparent multiplicity is created through a number of derivations of basic musical 'seeds'; these ideas are shown in Figure 4.13, numbered in the order in which they occur in the course of the music (the boogie-woogie section excepted, as this will be considered separately later on).

FIGURE 4.13.

Handwritten musical score for Figure 4.13, consisting of 11 numbered systems of staves. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The systems are numbered 1 through 11 on the left side. The notation is as follows:

- System 1: Treble clef, starting with a  $b^1$  marking. Contains a single staff with a melodic line.
- System 2: Bass clef, containing a single staff with a melodic line.
- System 3: Treble and Bass clefs, containing two staves with a complex texture of notes and rests. Ends with "etc."
- System 4: Treble clef, containing a single staff with a melodic line. Includes a  $b^{11}$  marking and ends with "etc."
- System 5: Treble clef, containing a single staff with a melodic line. Includes a  $b^{117}$  marking and ends with "etc."
- System 6: Treble clef, containing a single staff with a melodic line. Includes a  $b^{140}$  marking and ends with "etc."
- System 7: Bass clef, containing a single staff with a melodic line. Includes a  $b^{114}$  marking and ends with "etc."
- System 8: Bass clef, containing a single staff with a melodic line. Includes a  $b^{261}$  marking and ends with "etc."
- System 9: Bass clef, containing a single staff with a melodic line. Includes a  $b^{34}$  marking and ends with "etc."
- System 10: Treble and Bass clefs, containing two staves with a complex texture of notes and rests. Ends with "etc."
- System 11: Treble and Bass clefs, containing two staves with a complex texture of notes and rests. Ends with "etc."

In most cases, the first appearance of each type is presented, but when this first statement seems to act as an anticipation, or where a more 'characteristic' version occurs further on, this later manifestation is used (as, for instance, with the second of the running-semiquaver figures, No.9, and with the dotted pattern, No.11, where a later part of its single statement appears). A couple of important variants are shown in square brackets; the derivation of this similar material is not always immediately obvious, but indicates a larger cluster of musical ideas. Each grouping also covers a number of different derivations; for instance, Figure 4.13 records only the melody of the disco-bass as No.2, but also included here are the purely rhythmic versions of this phrase played by the percussion, as well as a number of subsequent derivations of this percussion idea, so that a wide variety of interlinked material is implied.

This grouping is sometimes self-evident, as with the importance and significance of the repetition of the disco-bass (No.2), and of the chorus singing characterised by the predominantly dominant-seventh block harmony (No.4). However, in a number of cases some explanation is needed. For instance, the material for the trombone fugato (No.7) occurs only once, and is also related to the disco-bass line, but its effect is so strikingly different from any other type of material that it is considered as separate. A similar case is presented by the 'dotted-figure' (No.11) which occurs only towards the very end of the music and then only in one passage, but which again makes such a striking effect that it gains increased importance and also articulates a distinct section. A slightly different case involves musical ideas which appear to be related, but which are presented here as two separate groups. As will be discussed shortly, the way in which the material is interrelated is very important, but the scheme shown above is concerned with recording significant 'aural' distinctions between material, groupings that are sufficiently differentiated to be perceived as distinct. This explains the presence of three different chordal formations (Nos.4, 6, & 10), two of which are very similar, both involving a harmonisation of B-A-C-H, but which are marked by differences in orchestration (choir versus trombones). Similarly, the two 'running semiquaver' figures (Nos.8 & 9) each acquire an audibly distinct role as the music progresses, and are thus differentiated here, though they at first appear to be very similar.

These groupings allow the relationship between the perceived sectional form of *De Stijl*, as outlined above, and the material which delineates that form to be

examined quite precisely, for one can easily identify which elements occur in each section. The relationship between material and the principal formal sections is shown in Figure 4.14. The segmentation is shown vertically, with the piece divided into its main sections and subsections (using rehearsal numbers): for each section, a tick indicates an element that is used and a line indicates its absence, and for those which occur infrequently, or only once, the tick is included in square brackets to indicate its secondary role. Transformations of, and interrelationships between material are shown using slur-marks, for instance in section 29-31 the disco-bass (No.2) is presented intertwined with the semiquaver figure (No.8); where the derivation is unclear the secondary material is given a tick in parentheses, as in section 38-40, where the 'triplet' saxophone figure (No.5) hints at the final, unison dotted passage without this being yet perceived as a distinct grouping. This network of relationships complicates the diagram somewhat and illustrates how the sectionalisation is generally more subtle than was first suggested. Leaving this aside for the moment, Figure 4.14 gives some important indications of what it is that creates this segmentation.

To take the most straightforward instances first, one can observe how D-sections are very clearly defined by their use of the tutti block-chords (No.10), in two cases solely this idea, whereas the third, the final section of the music, adds additional layers: one statement of the disco-bass derived material (No.2), two of the saxophone pattern (No.3) and somewhat faster-moving chords which begin to approach those of the trombone (No.6). Despite these extra layers, the clarity and distinctness of these three sections is clearly illustrated. Section E is similarly clearly-defined, characterised by the dotted-rhythm tutti chords which only appear here, though foreshadowed by the rhythmic profile of the saxophone figuration in Section 38-40 and 45-46. In this former section, the chordal pattern given to the flutes, in its use of dominant-seventh harmony and crotchet rhythmic pattern, seems to derive from the choral material (No.4); however, its low level of audibility, its accompanying role and its orchestration all mean that it is more of a detail than a structurally-significant return. Section C is not broken down into strands in a similar manner in this diagram, as the degree to which it involves a number of different ideas will be considered after the examination of the surrounding music; for now, the 'two-voiced' structure of *De Stijl* is mirrored in the discussion.

FIGURE 4.14.

Section		Type of Material										
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
A	0 - 15	[✓]	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-
	15 - 17	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	17 - 20	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-
B	20 - 23	[✓]	-	✓	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-
	23 - 24	-	✓	-	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-
	24 - 29	-	✓	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-
A	29 - 31	-	✓	-	✓	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-
?	31 - 32	-	✓	-	-	-	✓	-	✓	-	-	-
A	32 - 33	[✓]	-	-	✓	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-
B	33 - 35	-	✓	-	(✓)	-	✓	-	✓	-	-	-
	35 - 37	-	✓	-	-	-	✓	-	✓	-	-	-
A	37 - 37A	-	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
B	37A - 38	-	✓	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-
	38 - 40	-	-	✓	(✓)	✓	✓	-	-	✓	-	(✓)
C	40 - 44	[Boogie-woogie]										
D	44 - 45	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-
?	45 - 56	[✓]	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	✓	✓	-	-
D	56 - 58	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-
E	58 - 60	-	-	-	[✓]	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓
D	60 - end	-	[✓]	✓	-	-	✓	-	-	-	✓	-

As examined in regard to the segmentation, the primary distinction between the first A- and B-sections is the contrast between material given to the choir (No.4) in A, and to the trombones (No.6) in B; although both sections have some further material which is exclusive, in A the syncopated saxophone pattern, in B the trombone fugato, these can be thought of as extensions of those which do not play such an articulatory role in the rest of the music, but nonetheless increase the sense of separation. Figure 4.14 illustrates how a clear division between these first two sections is articulated initially, despite some overlap, through the removal of the disco-bass (No.2) at 20; when it returns at 23 this is now heard within a context of B-material, changing its effect. This sense of contrast, which effectively 'arms' the opposition between the choir and trombone chords, is significant in the perception of later A- and B-sections as distinct types, although the subsequent definition of sections is not always so clear. As can be observed, this sense of characteristic A- and B-material is generally maintained, so that, for instance, B 35-37 involves trombones, whereas A 37-37A involves the chorus, with all other recurrent basic ideas appearing in both, for instance, the running semiquaver bass (No.8). As the music progresses, however, and as Figure 4.14 illustrates through the use of slurs, there is a gradual establishment of some relationship between these two articulatory types; before going on to consider this and more general connections, the two sections without any ascription, namely 31-2 and 45-56, need some examination.

Section 45-56 involves the greatest variety of material and contains what is actually the climax of *De Stijl*, where a large number of threads are drawn together, before the beginning of the chorale with which the piece ends. Because of its multiplicity, it is possible to subdivide this section, but this results, firstly, in very short 'episodes' and, secondly, ignores the way in which it presents what is really one 'sweep' of music, with the various types of material slotted together to create an overall continuity. This characterisation partly explains why it is not felt (and classified here) as an A-section, despite the absence of trombone chords and extensive use of the choir. In fact, although much of the music does sound reminiscent of an A-section, the resulting combinations of material, particularly the overlaying of the two drum-kits and the semiquaver bass-line (No.9), heard earlier in the context of a B-section, means that it presents a final mixing-up of the oppositional structure set up at the outset, partly achieved through the layering



process but also through the relating of groups of material which by this point has been well advanced. This process having reached a climax at this point, the remainder of the piece is more straightforward in its sectionalisation, but primarily uses different basic elements.

A good example of this type of process may be observed in the other 'questionable' section, 31-32; coming in the middle of two clearly-defined A-sections, it is actually extremely short, lasting only 10 bars, and, in fact, if it were not for the use of trombones, would make most sense grouped together with section 32-33, a bipartite A-section balancing the bipartite B-section immediately following. In fact, the 'confusion' in labelling stems from the fact that it contains derived versions of the disco-bass (No.8) which surround it and also the 'genuine' disco-bass (No.2) which precedes it; it would thus make sense as 'A', were it not for the way in which choir and trombones are taken as defining mutually exclusive sections. In fact, it is at this point that this opposition begins to be broken down, for not only do the trombone chords appear within a context that 'sounds like' an A-section, a manipulation of material to suggest different 'styles' which becomes increasingly important, but the trombone chords themselves (Figure 4.15) start to approach more directly those of the choir, particularly as the dotted-crotchet pulse used here is adopted in section 32-33.

FIGURE 4.15.



This first clear presentation of the overlap between the choral and trombone opposition marks the beginning of a process where, as indicated in Figure 4.14, the relationship between the two types is gradually asserted more strongly, so that the contrast relies only on the change in orchestration, with the sense of distinct *material*, set up at the outset, being eroded. In fact, in the above discussion, all the basic types have generally been regarded as stable, staying identifiable right through the duration of the piece; however, as has already been suggested, as the music progresses these distinctions start to be eroded. A number of correspondences have already been observed between the very limited amount of material presented in

Figure 4.13 above; some of these have already been commented on, for instance, the obvious affinities between the three different types of chordal patterning, and the similarity in overall harmony between the choir material and the semiquaver saxophone figure, both of which rely on the use of dominant-seventh chords. Similarly, the two semiquaver figurations (Nos.8 & 9) are connected by their uniform rhythmic profile and both also clearly relate to the disco-bass as well. The dotted figure used towards the end of the piece (No.11) is related to the chorale that encases it by virtue of a dense, chromatic harmony which is predominantly static, and by its use of the full ensemble, which means that some continuity is maintained.

This network of correspondences involves almost all of the material, even that which seems to maintain its identity most strongly, for instance the fanfare, which acts as a signalling gesture throughout, and the trombone fugato, heard only once. Although the melodic profile of the fanfare stays basically the same, even with its second presentation at 8 it is played against itself, creating a harmony similar to that used by the choir, and this connection is reinforced through having the voices sing the fanfare melody at bars 143 and 489. At bar 546, it is finally subsumed into the surrounding texture, first through being again sung and now harmonized by a more chromatic bass-line, and eventually through a transformation into the four-part harmony of a 'normal' choral statement (see Figure 4.16).

FIGURE 4.16.

The musical score for Figure 4.16 consists of three staves. The top staff is labeled 'choir' and contains the lyrics: "Om dat de hi-gur ge-heel van - zelf ind on-ge-be-grip voor-ste-ling etc.". The middle staff is labeled 'sax bgnkt etc' and shows a saxophone line with eighth notes and rests. The bottom staff is labeled 'choir' and shows a choral line with a chromatic bass line and block chords. The score begins at bar 546.

In bar 370, a variant of this fanfare figure is harmonized more chromatically and given to the trombones to play, thus suggesting a further link, this time to the trombone fugato (No.7). This itself, although it sounds quite unlike the rest of the material, has a clear connection with the disco-bass, as the second part of the subject is self-evidently a slowed-down statement of the first six notes of this bass line. Once this has been observed, the opening of the subject reveals a similar connection

(with the second note chromatically inflected). On a slightly deeper level, this section relates to the earlier fugato, 15-17, itself based on the disco-bass, in that in both cases each entry is raised by one semitone; this connection cannot necessarily be heard very easily, but is a further instance of an interrelationship operating on a number of different levels. A number of these relationships only become apparent as the music progresses, the most significant of these being between the choir and trombone chords, but there are other instances where apparently disparate material eventually becomes linked. An important instance involves the syncopated saxophone figure (No.5), which often suggests a 3/16 rhythm, and seems most connected to the running semiquaver saxophone pattern (No.3). However, towards the end of the music, a new relationship becomes obvious and the influence of the disco-bass leaps once more to the fore (see Figure 4.17), providing a link between two other groups of material, showing their interconnectedness as well as the composite character of this saxophone material.

FIGURE 4.17.



Figure 4.18 shows the same basic ideas as Figure 4.14, but now repositioned so that those most closely related are placed nearest to each other, with the relationship between them indicated: an arrow pointing in one direction indicates a derivation, an arrow pointing in both directions shows a more symbiotic relationship. Most of these connections have already been discussed, but the most important in terms of overall form is between choir and trombone chordal material (to a degree also taking in the tutti chords No.10) and merits some further examination.

FIGURE 4.18.

The image displays a handwritten musical score on ten staves. The notation includes various note values, rests, and accidentals. Key features include:

- Staff 1:** A melodic line starting with a circled '1' and ending with 'etc.'. An annotation 'b174' is written above the first measure.
- Staff 2:** A melodic line starting with a circled '2' and ending with 'etc.'. An annotation 'b140' is written above the first measure.
- Staff 3:** A melodic line starting with a circled '3' and ending with 'etc.'. An annotation 'b111' is written above the first measure.
- Staff 4:** A melodic line starting with a circled '4' and ending with 'etc.'. An annotation 'b145' is written above the first measure.
- Staff 5:** A melodic line starting with a circled '5' and ending with 'etc.'. An annotation 'b134' is written above the first measure.
- Staff 6:** A melodic line starting with a circled '6' and ending with 'etc.'. An annotation 'b131' is written above the first measure.
- Staff 7:** A melodic line starting with a circled '7' and ending with 'etc.'. An annotation 'b111' is written above the first measure.
- Staff 8:** A melodic line starting with a circled '8' and ending with 'etc.'. An annotation 'b145' is written above the first measure.
- Staff 9:** A melodic line starting with a circled '9' and ending with 'etc.'. An annotation 'b134' is written above the first measure.
- Staff 10:** A melodic line starting with a circled '10' and ending with 'etc.'. An annotation 'b131' is written above the first measure.

Arrows indicate relationships between the staves: a large arrow points from the first staff to the second; another points from the second staff to the third; a third points from the third staff to the fourth; a fourth points from the fourth staff to the fifth; a fifth points from the fifth staff to the sixth; a sixth points from the sixth staff to the seventh; a seventh points from the seventh staff to the eighth; an eighth points from the eighth staff to the ninth; and a ninth points from the ninth staff to the tenth. There are also several smaller arrows and annotations throughout the score, including 'etc.' written at the end of several lines.

As was discussed earlier, the way in which the opposition between these two types is set up depends on a contrast not only in orchestration but also between the exclusive use of seventh chords and what Andriessen calls a 2-3-4 chord, a three-note dominant 7th combined with its note of resolution,<sup>5</sup> in the first choir section 93-5, and the denser and more chromatic chords first given to the trombones (the first clear statement of B-A-C-H). As the piece progresses, as has already been noted, the two types often become somewhat blurred, with, for instance, the trombones sounding like A-material in section 31-32. However, despite this blurring, there is still a sense in which certain sections are clearly 'A' or 'B', as indicated in the earlier segmentation. An examination of the chords from two such sections illustrates how this later recognition depends upon a recall of the style of presentation, factors such as voicing, register and orchestration, rather than a significant contrast of material. An instructive comparison may be made between the choir in A 37-37A and the trombones in B 37A-38, as these two sections are still relatively distinct so as to enable one to be classified as 'A' and one as 'B'. Both sequences of chords are shown in Figure 4.19, together with their corresponding prime forms (ignoring the flute and piano chords which colour both sequences but which, due to their high register, are less a factor in perception).

FIGURE 4.19.

CHOIR @ 37

TROMBONES @ 37A

The choir in section A tends to use more seventh chords, in particular the dominant seventh, which is not used at all in the above passage from B, whereas the trombone sections use harmonies which involve a major or minor triad combined with one extra diatonic or chromatic note, and also the slightly more chromatic [0,1,3,6] and [0,1,4,6], neither of which appear in A. However, both types of harmony appear in both sequences and although one can suggest that B is slightly more chromatic in

<sup>5</sup> See Andriessen and Harsh 1992: 62-4 for a discussion of this derivation.

feeling, perhaps due to its greater use of [0,1,6,7] chords, both sections use material that is broadly *similar* in terms of pitch structure. This means that, as has been suggested, the distinction between choir A-material and trombone B-material depends upon register and voicing, where either the tonal or chromatic implications are emphasised by the disposition of the pitches; this, according to Andriessen, ‘takes on an aspect of sleight of hand, in that a given set of pitches may be arranged to evoke its tonal associations, or to alienate itself from them’ (Andriessen & Harsh 1992: 64), in other words, made more or less consonant almost at will.

This is a clear illustration of how Andriessen persuades the listener that a significant change has taken place simply through swapping instrumentation and making a slight adjustment to voicing and harmony. The ability to do this stems from the way in which the trombone / choir opposition has been armed from the very beginning of the piece where the distinction is much more clearly marked, and therefore a simple oscillation between choir and trombones is all that is required to create a sufficient sense of contrast; whether the two types of material are actually that different is not very significant, it being more important whether one can be *persuaded* that they do differ through a process of mental linkage back to the opening.

*De Stijl* thus presents an overall process where the distinctions between material become less important as the music progresses, where the concept of theme or musical idea becomes increasingly subservient to the idea of style, or manner.<sup>6</sup> This means that, as was shown above, although almost all the basic ideas used in the piece can be seen to be more or less interrelated, the perception of form, of recurrence and re permutation of these ideas, relies heavily on suggestions of manner which indicate the presence of one of these strands, with even simple changes of orchestration and weighting having major form-building effect. In addition, this means that the way in which material over-runs a sense of block-structure, which was remarked on earlier, can similarly be understood as turning upon the distinction between this material itself and the way in which it is used; the same basic ideas may occur in many different passages of music, but may be made to sound in many different ways. This means that *De Stijl* presents a process where form and content

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<sup>6</sup> Such a suggestion connects this music once more to Stravinsky, as with, for instance, his comment that ‘“What the Chinese philosopher says cannot be separated from the fact that he says it in Chinese.” (Preoccupation with manner and style.)’, cited in Andriessen and Schönberger 1989: 206.

become gradually misaligned up until the entry of the boogie-woogie; the sectional blocks (leaving out the final chorale passages) become increasingly multifarious, reaching a climax in section 45-56, where what was considered to be 'characteristic' material finds itself re-sited within new contexts.

### **Over-running the Structural**

An analogous process of gradual misalignment may also be observed on a slightly less obvious level, demonstrated by the way in which the disco-bass evolves over the duration of the music, with this also having some implications for the division of the piece into sections. The disco-bass in its original form consists of 14 bars, 8 of  $3/4$  and 6 of  $4/4$ , and it is the alignment of the disco-bass with this 14-bar grid which acts as a major structuring device. Out of 47 statements of the 'metric grid', only ten of these do not follow the  $8 \times 3/4$ ,  $6 \times 4/4$  division, and these invariably have a similar long-short pattern, for example,  $10 \times 3/4$ ,  $6 \times 4/4$  or  $8 \times 3/4$ ,  $5 \times 4/4$ . This metric grid, the division of the piece into repeating units of  $3/4$  and  $4/4$  bars, is the clearest instance of a self-standing, precompositional structure in *De Stijl*; initially it appears inextricably coupled with statements of the bass-line, but very quickly into the piece the two begin to diverge. The first four statements of the disco-bass, bars 4-63, follow the metrical grid and preserve the original melodic line almost completely, albeit transposed to different keys and with the third statement altered to allow a 'modulation' into E. The fifth statement, in F, similarly follows the grid pattern, but here the first instance of a very important transformational procedure can be observed: the 'punching out' of notes from the melody, replacing them with rests (see Figure 4.20). This fragmentation of the original melody occurs frequently throughout the piece, the extreme point being reached in the statement beginning in bar 134, where only a total of twelve out of the original forty-eight crotchet beats of material are actually sounded.

FIGURE 4.20.



The first indication of a second process can be observed with the sixth statement, bar 78, where three crotchet beats of silence are added to the beginning, so that the whole disco-bass is initially displaced from the metrical grid, creating a different barring. Here the effect is short-lived, since the grid structure is itself altered, so that by the fifth bar the original phase-alignment is restored, but this gradual over-run of the material and the barring becomes increasingly pronounced as the music progresses: sometimes the two start out of phase and continue in that out-of-phase alignment (or, more often, realign later in the statement), sometimes they start in phase and, due to a process of lengthening or shortening, drift increasingly apart. To consider all the various transformations which the disco-bass undergoes would be rather laborious in this context, so one particular instance will be taken as an example of the types of process that occur. Figure 4.21 shows the material as it is presented by the two baritone saxophones, bars 200-223.

FIGURE 4.21.





This section of music begins on the eleventh bar of a 8+6 grid statement, and occupies the entirety of the next statement plus five extra bars, the length being determined here by the way in which the baritone saxophone fugato is interspersed by trombone chords (which accounts for the interpolation of three, four, or five bars of rests at fairly regular intervals). Despite these added bars, the melodic statement follows the original fairly closely, with the occasional rhythmic alteration, as for instance, the suppression of a quaver rest in the second bar. Of course, what is most important about this passage is the canonic treatment of the line. The rhythmic changes allow for manipulation of the unit of displacement: the canon starts at the crotchet, after the first interpolation of trombone chords it restarts at the quaver, and finally ends up at the semiquaver; here this occurs in blocks, but in the percussion fugato occurring at the same time (and similarly based on the disco-bass) the lines are altered more subtly within each phrase in order to change from a semiquaver to a quaver displacement and so on. In both cases, however, there seems to be a concern to maintain a resultant pattern which as far as possible produces a stream of even semiquavers, this being a very clear indication of a way in which the disco-bass material (No.2) starts to approach the running semiquaver material (No.8). This process is more fully realised in the next section of baritone saxophone fugato (Figure 4.22 shows the remainder of the statement), the sudden rhythmic compression of the disco-bass material leading the way into more constant semiquaver passage-work; the opening of the passage is obviously derived from the disco-bass line, with the music following this contour for a few more bars before going on its own route. This passage again illustrates how a link between two different types of material (Nos. 2 & 8) is established, with the two types running into each other so that the exact point of transformation remains unclear.

FIGURE 4.22.



This baritone saxophone fugato is the first real instance where the material and the structure of the metrical grid do not coincide; after this point there are only two clear statements that do exactly match up to the grid (at bars 346 and 516). Within the earlier passage of fugato, beginning in bar 94, some patterns do not individually coincide with the grid, but are subsumed within the time-span of one 14-bar statement which does, whereas, although the baritone saxophone fugato is accompanied by a percussion statement which does correspond, here it is the saxophones that are aurally more important, and which trigger the perception of a new subsection of form.

On a larger scale, a number of structural points, changes of section and texture, are also marked by new grid statements, particularly at the beginning of the piece. Excepting the very opening fanfare, which is anyway outside the grid structure, each of the three subdivisions of the first A-section coincide with new disco-bass statements and new grid statements. The trombone entry at bar 143 disrupts this principle, entering five bars 'too early', and each of the three subsections of B also miss their beginnings, and, although the percussion fugato actually marks out these statements, its aural role is weak. For the rest of the piece, the section-divisions tend to miss grid-divisions by varying amounts. The 'A' entry at 29 is one bar 'too late', but the previous bar is actually a pause bar sustaining the previous chord, so that this is sufficiently close to be regarded as an intended point of coincidence, altered for surface effect; elsewhere, changes of section, although not necessarily too far from a point in the grid structure, seem to mark a general disregard for the metrical pattern, rather than simply minor deviations from 'the norm'. Of course, by this point in the music, the disco-bass statements have themselves become divorced from the grid, and other changes that do occur seem designed to effect different rhythmic accents on a surface level, rather than to bring material and structure closer together.

This over-run of material and grid structure obviously mirrors the over-run of material and formal division which was observed earlier, and in fact, this type of patterning, where a fairly clear-cut relationship is first set up and then gradually eroded is typical of *De Stijl* as a whole. As has been illustrated, this music continually resists any too simple codification. Although a number of patterns emerge, for instance, the division into sections and the grouping into blocks of

material, as the piece progresses these categorisations become somewhat blurred; the music comes increasingly to depend on 'sleight of hand', continually suggesting one possibility and then revealing another, and on the perception and manipulation of style, where material is controlled so as to suggest a number of interacting processes, rather than any clear structural understanding.

There is, obviously, one such structure which has not been addressed, which is the way in which *De Stijl* sets up a dualistic 'two-voiced' division between the 'main piece' and the boogie-woogie which is placed within it. Before considering this central section in detail, some of the conclusions of the foregoing analysis may be applied to this dualistic structure as it is initially set up. At the outset, it was suggested that the music of most of *De Stijl*, in contrast to the 'real' boogie-woogie, was marked by artificiality, and the importance of style, or manner, which has been outlined may be considered as contributing to this characterisation. Clearly, such a reliance gives weight to the suggestion that this music has no 'real substance', that it is fundamentally a façade of surface manners, whereas the boogie-woogie section, in citing some 'historical' material does involve something genuine. This obviously reinforces the dualistic structure outlined above, and it is precisely this that the following examination of the boogie-woogie section seeks to overturn. Of course, to concentrate overly on the importance of style over matter in the main body of music runs the risk of replicating in inversion the valorisation of material against which this reading is set; however, as will become clear, *De Stijl* illustrates that these characterisations are illusory, as it manipulates, plays with, our perception of such concepts and the way in which a number of different facets may be suggested. It is the relationship of the boogie-woogie to the rest of the music which most clearly illustrates this play, and this aspect now needs some consideration.

## Past and Absence

The central boogie-woogie section of *De Stijl* is characterised by two main features, the use of spoken text and of an upright piano distinct from the main ensemble; these guarantee a sense of, firstly, general identity within the section, and, secondly, separation from the ‘main piece’ which surrounds it. These two main elements do not actually have many points of contact; the two strands mainly continue on their own paths, this being in no way a ‘setting’ of the text, apart from the way in which the speech is delivered, which does counterpoint the piano patterning. However, a couple of moments stand out as exceptions to this tendency. The first of these is at 41, bar 434, where the description given to Mondrian as the ‘Dancing Madonna’ prompts the first interpolation from the on-stage ensemble (see Figure 4.23).

FIGURE 4.23.

The musical score for Figure 4.23 is set in 4/4 time and features a key signature of one flat. It includes staves for A. Sax. 1 & 2, T. Sax. 1 & 2, Bar. Sax., Voice, English lyrics, and Upright Piano. A box labeled '41' is placed above the first staff. The saxophone parts are marked with 'stacc' and 'mf'. The voice part has lyrics in Dutch and English. The upright piano part provides a rhythmic accompaniment.

41

A. Sax. 1 2

T. Sax. 1

T. Sax. 2

Bar. Sax.

Voice

(English)

upr piano

‘dan sen-de ma-don na ge-doopt!’

‘danc - ing ma don-na !’

A similar moment of more obvious word-painting occurs at bar 448, where the speaker remembers an episode where Mondrian and Madame Hoyack danced together, which in turn signals the percussion to enter with a faintly comical ‘boom tick-a boom chick’ rhythm. Finally, as the final parting is narrated, the music strikes a slightly more lyrical tone, with longer notes being introduced and the piano figuration stuttering to a close. These, however, are rare instances, and the two elements may thus be separated in discussion (though, of course, the total effect does depend upon their combination). The way in which the text presents a contrast with that used in the rest of the music is very clear, but the various textual strategies

involved are beyond the scope of this discussion; without examining this level in detail, the text obviously plays a major role in dividing this section from its surroundings. What remains to be examined is the way in which the solo piano material is constructed and how it is presented; in fact, this section reveals itself less as a clearly-distinct quotation of 'real' boogie-woogie, separated from the material of the rest of *De Stijl*, and more as one further example of a manipulation of similar material so as to sound different, one last adoption of yet another musical style.

The main processes in this section are those of permutation and recombination of a number of short cells; by setting up the expectation of a basic similarity, small changes and manipulations of the repeating units becomes significant and act as the main form-building parameters. The way in which this occurs is clearly demonstrated through an examination of the opening of the section, bars 383-398. Figure 4.24 shows the five different cells involved, with the number of repetitions indicated.<sup>7</sup> Obviously, several of these cells are extremely similar, but against a background of uniformity, very small changes acquire increased significance. The process in this passage is quite straightforward, as Figure 4.24 illustrates: a two-beat repeating pattern is set up as the norm through its four-fold repetition; after being altered very slightly so as to create a new cell, the two are alternated, playing with an expectation of how many times each will occur. The two-beat pattern is then split in two, before a new, scalic idea is introduced which undergoes a similar process of isolation and repetition and creates a shifting rhythmic emphasis. Finally, the fifth cell is introduced; this obviously has some affinity with the third, but indicates a new harmonic orientation, C<sup>7</sup> rather than G<sup>7</sup>. This type of repetition and re-permutation occurs throughout the rest of the section, with new cells continually being introduced; these take the place of those heard earlier and, in fact, although the first two cells are the most frequently revisited, even these tend to become a diminished presence later on. The music moves from manipulating one group of cells to another, with the new group involving some different material, rather than using all of the available cells at any one time.

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<sup>7</sup> Both autograph and printed scores have G<sup>#</sup>-A<sup>♯</sup> on the fourth quaver of bar 386; however, since this pattern occurs nowhere else, and all performances of this piece I have heard realise it as A<sup>#</sup>-B<sup>♯</sup>, it seems reasonable to assume that this is a simple writing error, and the desired effect is that indicated in Figure 4.24.

FIGURE 4.24.

The musical score for Figure 4.24 is written for piano (p) and consists of several systems of staves. The first system has two staves, with the right hand (RH) and left hand (LH) parts. The RH part features a melodic line with a slur over a group of notes, followed by a multi-measure rest of 4 measures (x4) and another multi-measure rest of 3 measures (x3). The LH part has a rhythmic accompaniment with a multi-measure rest of 2 measures (x2) and another of 2 measures (x2). The second system also has two staves, with the RH part having a multi-measure rest of 3 measures (x3) and the LH part having a multi-measure rest of 2 measures (x2). The third system has two staves, with the RH part having a multi-measure rest of 2 measures (x2) and the LH part having a multi-measure rest of 2 measures (x2). The fourth system has two staves, with the RH part having a multi-measure rest of 3 measures (x3) and the LH part having a multi-measure rest of 3 measures (x3). The fifth system has two staves, with the RH part having a multi-measure rest of 3 measures (x3) and the LH part having a multi-measure rest of 8 measures (x8). The sixth system has two staves, with the RH part having a multi-measure rest of 3 measures (x3) and the LH part having a multi-measure rest of 3 measures (x3). The seventh system has two staves, with the RH part having a multi-measure rest of 3 measures (x3) and the LH part having a multi-measure rest of 3 measures (x3). The eighth system has two staves, with the RH part having a multi-measure rest of 3 measures (x3) and the LH part having a multi-measure rest of 3 measures (x3). The ninth system has two staves, with the RH part having a multi-measure rest of 3 measures (x3) and the LH part having a multi-measure rest of 3 measures (x3). The tenth system has two staves, with the RH part having a multi-measure rest of 3 measures (x3) and the LH part having a multi-measure rest of 3 measures (x3). The eleventh system has two staves, with the RH part having a multi-measure rest of 3 measures (x3) and the LH part having a multi-measure rest of 3 measures (x3). The twelfth system has two staves, with the RH part having a multi-measure rest of 3 measures (x3) and the LH part having a multi-measure rest of 3 measures (x3). The thirteenth system has two staves, with the RH part having a multi-measure rest of 3 measures (x3) and the LH part having a multi-measure rest of 3 measures (x3). The fourteenth system has two staves, with the RH part having a multi-measure rest of 3 measures (x3) and the LH part having a multi-measure rest of 3 measures (x3). The fifteenth system has two staves, with the RH part having a multi-measure rest of 3 measures (x3) and the LH part having a multi-measure rest of 3 measures (x3). The sixteenth system has two staves, with the RH part having a multi-measure rest of 3 measures (x3) and the LH part having a multi-measure rest of 3 measures (x3). The seventeenth system has two staves, with the RH part having a multi-measure rest of 3 measures (x3) and the LH part having a multi-measure rest of 3 measures (x3). The eighteenth system has two staves, with the RH part having a multi-measure rest of 3 measures (x3) and the LH part having a multi-measure rest of 3 measures (x3). The nineteenth system has two staves, with the RH part having a multi-measure rest of 3 measures (x3) and the LH part having a multi-measure rest of 3 measures (x3). The twentieth system has two staves, with the RH part having a multi-measure rest of 3 measures (x3) and the LH part having a multi-measure rest of 3 measures (x3).

Of course, much of the material displays a high level of similarity; for instance, the figuration in bar 448 and following is a derived and inverted form of that found at the very opening of the section, and also the extension of an idea found some bars earlier, at bar 422 (see Figure 4.25).

FIGURE 4.25.

The musical score for Figure 4.25 is written for piano (p) and consists of two systems of staves. The first system has two staves, with the right hand (RH) and left hand (LH) parts. The RH part starts at bar 448 (b.448) and features a melodic line with a slur over a group of notes, followed by a multi-measure rest of 3 measures (x3) and another multi-measure rest of 3 measures (x3). The LH part has a rhythmic accompaniment with a multi-measure rest of 2 measures (x2) and another of 2 measures (x2). The second system has two staves, with the RH part starting at bar 422 (b.422) and featuring a melodic line with a slur over a group of notes, followed by a multi-measure rest of 3 measures (x3) and another multi-measure rest of 3 measures (x3). The LH part has a rhythmic accompaniment with a multi-measure rest of 2 measures (x2) and another of 2 measures (x2). The word "etc." is written below the RH part of both systems.

New material is often introduced by first dividing it up and introducing one segment at a time until the whole idea has been presented; a conspicuous instance of this technique is the way in which the saxophone interjection at 41 is prepared for some

bars earlier (see Figure 4.26). In addition, the second half of this interjection is then used separately, as a new cell, in the bars that follow (438-443). This process illustrates the way in which this material interposed from the on-stage ensemble is taken into the ongoing constructional process of the boogie-woogie piano part. Of course, this saxophone entry is instantly recognisable, it being a version of the 'disco-bass' motif, and is perhaps the clearest instance of how the piano-part here takes over and absorbs material which has been used elsewhere.

FIGURE 4.26.

The image shows a musical score for Figure 4.26, consisting of four systems of staves. The first system is marked 'p5.' and shows a piano part with a saxophone entry. The second system continues the piano part with a saxophone entry. The third system shows the piano part with a saxophone entry. The fourth system shows the piano part with a saxophone entry. The score includes various musical notations such as dynamics, articulation, and repeat signs.

Before looking at how specific elements of material are transferred, a number of other similarities between the 'main piece' and the boogie-woogie can be dealt with. The first of these is that, like the very opening of *De Stijl*, this boogie-woogie starts in a modified kind of G major, and, by the end, has progressed to a more complex harmonic usage, here based around flat keys. In addition, it involves a process of permutation and recombination of a limited amount of material and depends upon the manipulation of expectation against a background of similarity, features which characterise much of the rest of *De Stijl* (the level of uniformity is obviously much less marked, however). Although to suggest that this section

somehow presents the whole piece in microcosm is to take these parallels too far, there does seem to be a basic level of similarity in terms of material and process, though not so clearly in sounding result. One further consistency of approach is the way in which the boogie-woogie is constructed around the same 8+6 metrical grid, with the material similarly often seeming to over-run these grid divisions: the section starts on the first 4/4 bar of one statement, continues for a further five complete statements and comes to a close three bars 'too early' in the sixth. However, there are some moments that do seem meaningfully to coincide: for instance, the first passage of silence, when the dancer is left to speak on her own at bar 445, commences at the start of a new grid statement, the 'boom tick-a' passage continuing until the first 4/4 bar, at which point the on-stage instruments enter. The description of Mondrian's departure, 'in the Metro we said goodbye...', also starts at the beginning of a grid statement, though its ending, as commented above, comes rather 'too early'. The effect of the metrical grid, particularly the alternation between 3/4 and 4/4 time-signatures, plays a more important role on the surface level in this section than elsewhere; in the passage already discussed, bars 383-98, the change to a new three-beat figuration unsurprisingly coincides with the change of barring to 3/4, and elsewhere, changes of chord or figuration often occur at the bar-line and thus reinforce the metrical structure. On an aural level, this process is actually somewhat more subversive than might at first appear to be the case, for in many places it forces the boogie-woogie into 3/4, though, of course, Andriessen also plays with a number of different cross-rhythms which complicates such perception. This is one of the earliest indications that this boogie-woogie is not as 'authentic' as it first appeared.

The relationships between the material in this section and that used elsewhere involve different levels of clarity; the use of a derived form of the disco-bass has already been remarked upon, but there are many other, less obvious interrelations. For instance, the running semiquaver figure that appears in bar 391 is obviously connected to the almost identical material found in the main body of the piece (No.8); though here it is itself used as a repeating cell and heard over a short, left-hand ostinato, for instance at bar 428, which absorbs it into the over-riding character of this section. Similarly, the pattern which predominates from bar 42, bar 453, until the end of the section is clearly a derived form of the semiquaver material (No.9); this



link is made explicit at bar 533, just before the climax of the work (Figure 4.27 shows both versions of material). Even the stuttering figuration heard at bar 440 reappears in section 45-56, transplanted to trumpets and trombones and given a new harmonic clothing (see Figure 4.28); on a purely rhythmic level this also connects to the percussion 'boom tick a' pattern discussed earlier.

FIGURE 4.27.

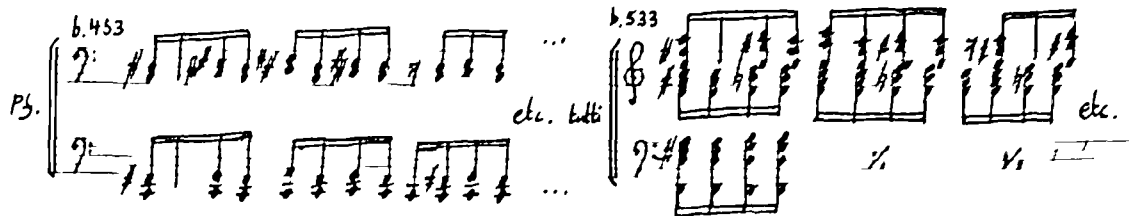


FIGURE 4.28.



Some connections and derivations are quite subtle, for instance, the way in which the fanfare figure is introduced, transformed into the minor mode and used to signal somewhat more 'reflective' moments, for instance, in the lead up to the description of the final parting, 42, bar 453; other connections involve a more direct resiting of material, as, for instance, the final contribution of the solo piano, bar 464 (see Figure 4.29 for both examples).

FIGURE 4.29.



Correspondences of material are thus revealed as being extremely pervasive, and the more one becomes familiar with the music, the easier they become to perceive. Only one type of figuration stands somewhat apart from this network, or at least conceals its derivation, which is the cell heard at the very opening and the various derived versions found throughout this boogie-woogie section; apart from some general similarity to aspects of the passage at 52, bar 533 (see Figure 4.27), it seems to be the most 'characteristic' pattern used here (although its relentless semiquaver pattern obviously connects to the material given to the two drum-kits at, for instance, bar 176, during the trombone fugato). The initial pattern, and particularly the left-hand figuration which continues mostly throughout in one guise or another, seems to set up a stylistic *context* within which other, more interrelated ideas can be heard. This way in which the material of this section involves a varied yet clear relationship to that used in the rest of *De Stijl* illustrates that the sense of the 'authenticity' of this boogie-woogie, of it being dropped into the surrounding music, depends upon a similar process of stylistic manipulation as was observed earlier, rather than a clear-cut difference of substance. Thus its disruptive effect depends upon its positioning within *De Stijl* as a whole, particularly the way it is approached, the use of a different text and manner of vocal delivery, and the off-stage piano and consistency of timbre, not found elsewhere, which characterises this section (ignoring interjections from the main ensemble which only make up a small portion and which anyway do not generally replace the piano sound). This also means that perception of the 'presence' displayed by the boogie-woogie section, conferred upon it by a sense of direct contact with Mondrian's world, compared to the absence, the artificiality of Andriessen's more explicit stylistic borrowings in the 'main piece', depends upon the ability to manipulate the music to suggest different manners, precisely that ability which occurs elsewhere. The insignificance of 'matter' in this music and of the predominance of style thus also becomes clear; although all the music involves fundamentally the same basic threads, these may be manipulated very easily to 'sound like' a boogie-woogie, just as they can be manipulated to suggest different styles in the rest of the piece.

Such an interpretation actually enables a closer parallel to be drawn between the two sections of music, and hinges upon the way in which they operate over time. As the first cell of the boogie-woogie is in fact the most 'characteristic' of this

section and appears least often in the rest of the music, this means that at the outset this passage uses 'its own' material, which, when coupled with other elements, particularly the use of text, give the impression that it is distinct. However, as the section progresses and the links to other material become increasingly obvious, this musical distinction is eroded. This process mirrors that at the beginning of *De Stijl* where the opposition between two blocks, A- and B-sections, is set up initially so that this alternation seems to rest on a difference of substance; again, as the music progresses this is eroded, so that the importance of factors such as orchestration, voicing and other 'sleights of hand' increases, again overturning an impression of a clear dualistic structure. The way in which both sections of the music operate affirms a clear directional process, and may be read as *De Stijl* deconstructing itself as it occupies and structures time; at least, this setting up and then overturning of a number of structures clearly reveals an emphasis on the temporality of the music. What this means for the relation between the boogie-woogie and its surroundings is that, rather than being an exception, this passage is thus seen as being closely related in overall process to the rest of the music.

This is not to diminish its disruptive effect, rather to assert that this effect is not caused through a difference in kind but rather through a difference in style. This marks a deconstruction of the presence-absence duality outlined at the very opening. The perception that the boogie-woogie is somehow privileged because it is a 'real object', a quotation from an earlier historical period, is broken down by the realisation that this passage of music is as 'artificial' in construction as the rest of the piece, and that its privileged status is simply the product of a manipulation of style and context. This means that the two voices which are heard to animate *De Stijl*, the 'monophonic single voice' and the other, disruptive voice which occupies the boogie-woogie section, are constituted more subtly than was initially suggested; the distinction between them is not so much their *possession* of presence and absence, but, being constituted through similar means, the boogie-woogie is made to speak *as though* it displayed presence, and the rest of *De Stijl* *as though* it was marked by artificiality. As Kramer comments, 'the point for poststructuralism is that voice must be understood in relation to text, utterance, or performance not as cause but effect' (Kramer 1992e: 239); the stylistic manipulation that *De Stijl* (aptly) presents, controls which voice is perceived as speaking at any moment.

If *De Stijl* can be said to be 'about' anything specific, then its subject seems to be the way in which the same object can be manipulated to suggest strikingly different manners and effects. The alternative presentations of similar material seem like a number of masks which can be interchanged very easily; although, as has been demonstrated, the basic structure (the material) remains the same, the façade is continually changing. This, however, itself suggests that there may be something 'real' behind these façades, a final gesture which attempts to reinstate those dualistic structures which, as has been shown, *De Stijl* initially sets up and then finally escapes. In this case, the 'escape' comes through the fact that these façades are actually the most important feature of the music, and it is precisely through this adoption of many different surface styles that the music operates, again becoming increasingly clear as it progresses. The subject of this piece is, suitably perhaps, an examination of 'style'; this is a somewhat elusive concept, and does not lend itself to easy classification, but it is precisely the way in which *De Stijl* escapes any classification that it charts the increasing importance of manner over material, of the 'how' over the 'what', and the fundamental importance of 'de stijl'.

# Soundings

## Chapter 5

### Hearing the Wood for the Trees

Morton Feldman's *Three Voices* (1982)

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#### Analytical Issues and Procedures

Morton Feldman's *Three Voices* consists, as the title suggests, of three vocal lines, and although the score does not expressly indicate this, is sung by one singer, a soprano, with two of the three parts pre-recorded on tape and played back over loudspeakers, with the third sung live and presumably amplified so as to present a unified sound-texture. The piece was written for the American soprano Joan La Barbara; of its conception Feldman remarked that:

One of my closest friends, the painter Philip Guston, had just died; Frank O'Hara had died several years before. I saw the piece with Joan in front and these two loudspeakers behind her. There is something kind of tombstone about the look of loudspeakers. I thought of the piece as an exchange of the live voice with the dead ones - a mixture of the living and the dead.<sup>1</sup>

One further level of this connection to past friends is the use of a small section of Frank O'Hara's poem *Wind*, written in 1962, itself dedicated to Feldman, which begins 'Who'd have thought / that snow falls'.<sup>2</sup> However, the use of this text only makes up a small portion of the whole piece, and elsewhere the singer uses vocalise; John McGuire comments that 'it is the economical use of this text, contrasted with its monochrome surroundings that lends the text and thereby also the piece a striking eloquence, presenting both sadness and an affirmation of transience' (1987: 26). This music, as with nearly all of Feldman's output, is to be performed very softly, *ppp* being the only indication throughout, and this quiet dynamic and unified timbral quality give the piece its homogeneous, almost elemental quality, which throws greater attention onto the manipulation of short repeating patterns and static chords which make up most of the musical material. *Three Voices* is also a long piece, coming from the period of Feldman's

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<sup>1</sup> Cited in booklet to CD recording. New Albion NA018 CD, 1989.

<sup>2</sup> This poem is also used in Feldman's *The O'Hara Songs* from 1962, with the first two lines forming the entire text for the second song, a reduction of the poem similar to that found in *Three Voices*.

compositional life where he was exploring increased duration in his music, music that Howard Skempton has described as 'feature-film length' (cited in Bohn 1995: 80). In fact, by Feldman's standards, *Three Voices* is relatively short, particularly when compared to pieces such as the five-hour Second String Quartet, but is still a large unbroken expanse of music which lasts around 50-80 minutes, depending on the basic pulse chosen by the performer.

*Three Voices* raises a number of analytical issues and difficulties, not least because many aspects of the piece question traditional expectations as to how music behaves. The principal effect of this music seems to be to create a temporal mist or fog, where memory and expectation are manipulated and blurred through the large timescale, a slow rate of progress, and an overall form that fails to 'add up' in any traditional way. The music exists very much from moment to moment, but without any real sense of forward momentum, instead articulating a 'flat' surface, with little, if any, differentiation between foreground and background, primary and secondary events. This non-hierarchical approach to form, where attempts to find an overall shape with which to 'make sense' of the piece as a whole are continually undermined, is one of the principal ways in which the 'temporal mist' is created. Fundamental to this perception is the use of repetition, both of large-scale sections and of small-scale patterning, and the ambiguity that is created between 'restatement' and 'variation', again through the use of an extended timescale (it being difficult to remember musical events over such a long span of music), but also through the continual recombination of a restricted and related palette of basic materials. Although both small- and large-scale levels share this principle of presenting similar elements in different order combinations, there is actually very little connection between these levels, as one gains no sense of the localised patterning 'building up' to create an overall form. Of course, the two levels are related in the trivial sense in which one cannot exist without the other, that without a bar-to-bar surface any larger construction would not be possible, but in this piece the clear demarcation between sections (with a few exceptions) compares with a high level of continuity within those sections, and, conversely, there is little sense of large-scale divisions being determined by the material they contain. However, to suggest that the two are in conflict is to indicate an overly dynamic interrelationship; in the same way that the large-scale patterning presents a 'flat' surface, the small-scale material seems simply to occupy the 'space' allotted to it.

The main analytical problem posed by *Three Voices* seems to be to account for the way in which the music creates this flat surface and how it manipulates time so as to make for the blurring of memory and expectation referred to above. This necessarily involves an examination of the large-scale construction of the music, and its relationship to smaller-scale events, so that one can gauge the degree to which the two levels are separated and to what extent they interact. McGuire, in his analysis of *Three Voices*, 'Repetition and Variation', pays greatest attention to the two surface-level processes which he adduces in his title. He ends his discussion by examining the manipulation of time referred to above, and concentrates on what he sees as the freedom granted to the listener to wander the sound-canvas at will by such a non-directed disposition of musical time, a freedom uncompromised by any abstract structure which would stand between listener and music. He goes on:

For this reason it would be futile to extend the above description with a 'map' of the piece. Post-facto constructions of this sort can tell us very little about a piece of music whose reason for being seems to be to question such attempts, either on the part of the listener or the composer. The piece itself is its own shortest description. (McGuire 1987: 29)

McGuire's point here is that it seems unnecessary to discuss the large-scale structure of a piece of music which, because of reasons given earlier, is not perceived in global terms, is not grasped as an overall structure whilst listening, but rather exists from moment to moment; such discussion, he suggests, contradicts the concept of music which, like the 'Big-Pictures' of Rothko, Newman and Pollock which McGuire draws upon, seems designed to avoid a synoptic view, instead placing the viewer / listener in the centre of the experience. While I would agree that *Three Voices* is not perceived as an overall structure, either during the piece or after it has finished, its large-scale form does seem to be more important than McGuire suggests. Firstly, the music falls quite easily into distinct sections of varying length which are characterised by different treatments, 'variations', of the basic material, or indeed by strikingly individual material; only by examining its division can one be more explicit about the way in which the *ordering* plays a part in the overall picture. Secondly, a number of sections occur more than once but maintain sufficient identity for such revisiting to be clearly recognized. McGuire suggests this process in his categorisation of the different types of material which occur, but again, only through a more systematic segmentation can the similarities and differences between sections be examined in detail; many commentators on Feldman's music have taken his profession of his 'intuitive' mode of composition at face value, but through a comparison



of the different versions of the same basic elements, a level of systemisation *can* be observed.

Finally, and most importantly, examination of large-scale form can help to account for the way in which the ‘temporal mist’ is created, how expectation and memory are manipulated over the entire span of music; the various ways in which sections are repeated, reordered and varied give an indication of how and why it is that the overall form becomes ungraspable. This means that although a resulting ‘map’ of that form does not necessarily relate directly to this listening experience, it can account for a number of aspects of our perception. For instance, more ‘traditional’ music commonly involves the recurrence of privileged material, so that the first section is often the most important and returns at significant points, but by examining the way in which sections recur in this piece, and the various recombinations of material that they contain, one can see why this approach soon becomes unsatisfactory and how a different listening orientation is needed. This is, however, to run ahead somewhat; suffice it to say now that in order to grasp the main analytical problem, to account for the overall effect of *Three Voices*, an examination of large-scale form does seem to be indicated. The following analysis will therefore initially place some emphasis on this aspect, and will also necessarily shift between the two levels, large- and small-scale, for only through an examination of both can one begin to delineate the unusual nature of the music in question

### **Large-scale Form**

In a discussion of the large-scale structure of much of Feldman’s music and particularly of *Three Voices*, some attention needs to be given to the notational aspects of the score, as the relationship between notation and sounding result is somewhat more complicated than might at first appear. Despite the apparent simplicity of the musical materials as written on the page, a number of features mean that there is a clear divergence between what is written and what is heard, and these also indicate some design on Feldman’s part to maintain some independence between the *act* of writing (on which he places great

importance in his lectures and writings<sup>3</sup>), and the act of performing. Most celebrated of these is his use of enharmonic respellings, so that the performer is confronted with a differentiation between, for instance, C double-sharp and E double-flat, although Feldman did not seem to intend an exact realisation of such minutiae in performance.<sup>4</sup> Although this kind of extreme case is not represented in *Three Voices*, more traditional respellings *are* used, so that the repeated rising figure E $\flat$ -E $\natural$ -C $\sharp$  on page 2 of the score returns on page 6 as E $\flat$ -F $\flat$ -D $\flat$  (although in a slightly different context). Also on a surface level, the score gives no indication of the vowel sound to be used when no words are given, thus enabling a wide variety of different timbral effects depending on the singer (the expectation would seem to be that one timbre is used throughout), nor is tempo indicated, although 'Feldman performance practice', based on the evidence of his other scores suggests a basic crotchet pulse of MM. $\downarrow$  = c.60. All of the above are localised features which suggest that the score should itself be viewed as the result of a performance, in this case Feldman sitting down to write it. As indicated above, it is on the level of large-scale structure that this independence of score and sound is most clearly evident, and it is this aspect that now needs some consideration.

The score of *Three Voices* provides ample evidence that a number of section-divisions were determined by the physical appearance of the music in manuscript, the most obvious being those delineated by the end of one page of score and the beginning of the next.<sup>5</sup> Of the eighteen pages, twelve are marked by the commencement of significantly different material (ignoring page 1, of course); on a further seven occasions such breaks occur at the end of systems, of which there is a uniform four per page, which

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<sup>3</sup> For example. 'My pieces are to some degree a performance. I'm highly concentrated when I work. In fact I found ways to arrive at concentration. One of the most important ways is that I write in ink.... And if I see that I'm crossing out, I just leave the piece and go to it at another time' (Feldman 1985: 229-30); 'My concern at times is nothing more than establishing a series of practical conditions that will enable me to work. For years I said if I could only find a comfortable chair I would rival Mozart' (: 94); see also his comments on notation in 'Crippled Symmetry' (: 124-37).

<sup>4</sup> In discussion of his use of 'microtonal' spellings, Feldman commented that '...when you've been working with a minor 2nd as long as I've been, it's very wide. I hear a minor 2nd like a minor 3rd almost.... And that's the way I hear that pitch. It's coming to me very slowly, and there's a lot of stuff in there. But I don't use it conceptually. That's why I use the double flats. People think they're leading tones. I don't know. Think what you want. But I use it because I think it's a very practical way of still having the focus of the pitch. And after all, what's sharp? It's directional, right? And a double-sharp is more directional' (Feldman 1985: 192-3). Walter Zimmermann is more certain of their function: '...the double-sharps and double-flats... are not deployed functionally, but are rather to be understood as subtle fluctuations at the notes' margins...; the tendency is to interpret them as a quarter-tone or eighth-tone. This is wrong, [Feldman] has in mind pitches pushed to the edges of their identity, but not removed from the tempered tuning system' (Zimmermann 1985: 19).

<sup>5</sup> This is a common feature of Feldman's music; for an indication of these aspects in other pieces see Ames 1996: 102 and Zimmermann 1984a: 49.

means that only four changes of material fail to coincide with physically significant points: two on page 5 and one each on pages 8 and 11. From this one can conclude that the act of filling a page with music was an important part of Feldman's writing process, and acted as a guide as to when to move on, although not in any hard and fast way, for, as well as the exceptions outlined above, several sections do occupy a number of pages. However, the general principle indicates that Feldman's 'intuitive' way of writing is in fact much more structured and hemmed in by a system, even if only the 'system of the page', than is usually acknowledged; this regularity is further emphasised by Feldman's habit of ruling the bars before writing, so that irrespective of the number of beats they contain, each one appears the same length on the page, in this piece, nine per system, giving a uniform 36 bars per page and an overall total of 648 in the piece.

This regularity on a visual level is, however, firmly disrupted when the music is performed, due to two main factors. The first of these has already been alluded to: the widely differing bar-lengths in terms of actual beats that occur through the course of the piece. For instance, to take the two extremes, on page 13 the average bar-length is around seven or eight quavers, whereas immediately beforehand, on pages 11 and 12, each bar lasts only one quaver; with a uniform basic pulsation this plainly means that some passages last a considerable length of time whereas others, which may *look* equivalent, go by extremely quickly. This is often exacerbated by the second factor which is the use of repetition (through repeat markings), either of a three- or four-bar phrase, in which case this is usually only heard twice, or of single bars, which may be played as many as seven times. Thus the first system of page 10, with no repeat markings, occupies 64 quaver beats, whereas the final system, where each bar is repeated at least once, occupies 213, over three times as many. This then clearly demonstrates the way in which visual equivalence does not relate to aural equivalence, driving a further wedge between the notated score and aural result (though, of course, repetitions *are* marked in the score). This manipulation of the uniformity implied by what Feldman called 'the grid', the ruling of a fixed number of bars per system, by the twin processes of differing bar-length and unpredictable repetitions, allows a control of aspects of scale, which Feldman considered very important.<sup>6</sup> This is most apparent in a comparison of passages which involve repeat bars with those which do not, for here basically the same

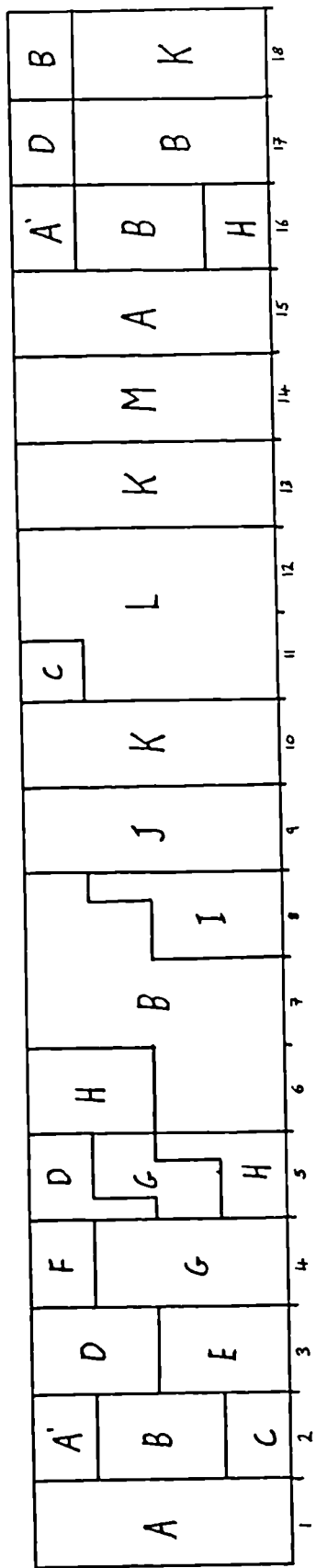
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<sup>6</sup> See his comments in 'Crippled Symmetry', in Feldman 1985: 124-37, particularly pages 124-7.

*amount* of material occurs over a shorter or longer time-span, so that Feldman is not manipulating content but more directly the scale of the music. This means that sections can actually contain exactly the same material and look the same length on the page, but one can last twice as long as the other; as will be discussed, this manipulation of repetition and variation is a very important part of *Three Voices*. However, the distinction between the visual and the aural means that in examining factors such as large-scale proportion, the fact that the two systems necessarily indicate different results means they can be fruitfully compared, for one can test whether, say, an absence of recognisable patterning corresponds on both levels or is simply a factor of one or the other.

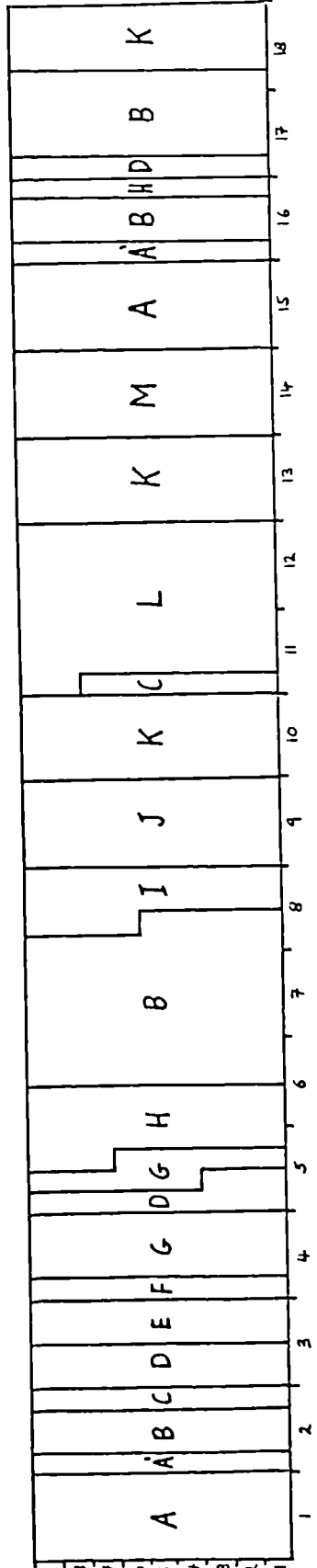
In the discussion that follows, therefore, both levels will be considered, although primacy will be given to the way in which the piece actually sounds when performed, as, of course, this is what confronts the listener and is that which he or she has to make some sense of. In addition, the purpose of this analysis is not principally to examine the process of composition, although, as has already been indicated, a number of conclusions may be reached which go some way to challenging the prevailing attitude towards Feldman's compositional approach. Part of that attitude which does seem to be useful is to consider Feldman's preoccupation with Turkish rugs, and to extend this 'carpet' analogy into an examination of the music. In his discussion of Feldman's Second String Quartet, Walter Zimmermann produces what he calls a 'Muster-Teppich' (Rug-pattern) for the entire piece, showing the basic elements and how they return (Zimmermann 1985: 22-3). Figure 5.1 shows three such plans, with the different types of material labelled A to M.

FIGURE 5.1.



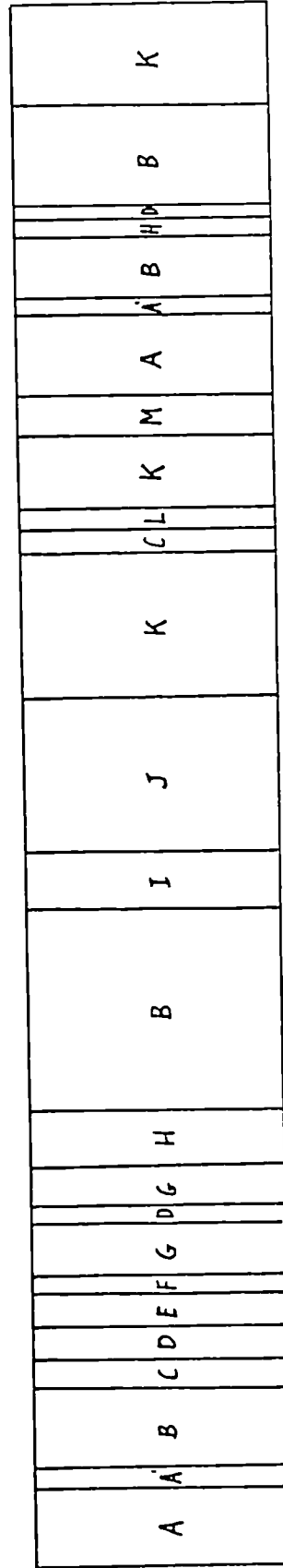
a

PAGE



b

Bar PAGE



c

The topmost plan is modelled on Zimmermann's, with each vertical rectangle representing one page of the written score, so that it is 'read' in an equivalent manner, each page from left to right, top to bottom, the subdivision into four strips similarly representing the four systems on each page. The second plan, Figure 5.1b, also maps the written score on a page-by-page basis, allotting to each an equal amount of space, but is turned 'sideways', with the vertical axis corresponding to the nine-bar grid, and the horizontal to the systems and pages of the composition. The advantage of this mapping is that it, firstly, enables the pre-drawn grid on the page to be more clearly observed, as well as the way in which this is used as a framework through which the music is 'woven',<sup>7</sup> and, secondly, records more easily the proportional relationships between sections as each is now grouped together in one block rather than being spread over two or more pages, as in the earlier mapping; this means that it begins to approach a straightforward 'time' graph (time on the horizontal axis), though, of course, the time that it records is not performed but rather visual, on a line by line basis.

The third mapping, shown in Figure 5.1c, does in fact adopt a time / space notation, as distance along the horizontal axis corresponds exactly to the time that each section occupies, and in this case is the actual performed time of the music, including repetitions, based on the number of quavers that each section occupies with a constant basic pulse. This third mapping thus represents the sounding result, whereas the previous two represent the visual aspect, and some quite considerable distinctions can be observed simply on the level of comparative duration between section, most immediately between this mapping and that given in Figure 5.1b, which most nearly corresponds to a 'time' / space diagram (the two have been scaled so as to assist such comparison). The most obvious feature is the difference in length between section L in the score, and section L in performance; as was indicated earlier, this section involves the shortest bar-length (1/8) and, despite occupying nearly two whole pages of score lasts only 83 crotchet beats. Similarly, though on a less extreme level, section M is appreciably longer on the page than in performance. (In fact, in both these cases, though particularly with section L, in an *actual* performance the section is likely to last slightly longer than indicated, simply because the virtuoso vocal writing here may well force a slight drop in tempo.) The opposite process can be observed with all four occurrences of B material, but particularly

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<sup>7</sup> I am indebted to the composer Clive Wilkinson for this observation.

the first and second, and also with section J, where the performed duration is far greater than the written, due to the high level of repetition involved. The same is also true of K, particularly on its first appearance, partially because of repetition, but also because of a greater average bar-length. Otherwise, there is a general connection between the two systems in terms of approximate proportion, for instance, F is shorter than E on all the mappings given in Figure 5.1, though where there are divergences, as outlined above, these are often quite marked.

Before examining the material which makes up each section and how these are defined, a number of general points may be made regarding the overall segmentation and the disposition of sections involved. Firstly, as can readily be observed from Figure 5.1, the types of material recur a different number of times. B material occurs four times, D and K three times, A, A', C, G and H twice and the other six sections only once; this suggests a particular hierarchy of material, and in fact it is clear that B material occupies the greatest proportion of the piece and also makes up the largest single section. However, whether it can be said to be the most 'important' as a result is an issue that will be examined later on. Feldman's attitude to this type of return was expressed in his 1984 Darmstadt lecture:

The only problem is that one might think that what comes back is hierarchical material. What usually comes back is the material I wasn't sure about and wanted to hear again, because of the taste. (In Feldman 1985: 209)

In this music one needs to be wary of assigning undue importance to music which seems to stand out by virtue of its greater frequency, for, as Figure 5.1c shows, the entire piece is made up of an interweaving of new material with versions of the already-heard. The first five pages introduce eight different sections, each of new material, but from that point on this process is interrupted by returning to earlier sections, with the last quarter or so of the piece using only 'old' material. In fact, one can see what looks like a kind of larger-scale restatement with A, A' and B returning in their original order; however, this is quickly interrupted, with H supplanting C, and although D does follow in the 'right order', this sense of a large-scale return is effaced by the final two sections. Apart from this limited occurrence there does not appear to be any simple pattern to the structure shown in Figure 5.1, either in terms of which blocks are placed next to each other, in an alternation of long or short blocks, or of a general movement from one to the other, on both written and performed levels.

What the above discussion has ignored is, firstly, that some types of material are actually quite closely related, and, secondly, the connected issue of to what degree each section is clearly distinct from those which surround it. These considerations add a level of complication to the segmentation which has been used above, and in fact aspects of that segmentation deserve to be examined more closely, for certainly the criteria for dividing the music into blocks is not wholly straightforward, and although the division that has been given does allow for a clear and consistent classification of the musical materials, how they separate into distinct entities needs to be considered. This necessarily involves an examination of the material itself, alongside the classification that the segmentation implies.

### **Segmentation of Material**

The grouping of the music into blocks, resulting in the segmentation presented above, is an attempt to distinguish significant differences between material. The division into fourteen different 'types' may seem somewhat over-generous, and it would be possible to subsume some of these divisions into larger-scale sections, but in a piece in which the basic material *is* quite limited, and where much of it 'sounds the same', smaller differentiations become more significant. In addition, if a more large-scale approach were taken, then some of the segmentation later in the piece would be difficult to account for. The one subgrouping is already indicated: A' is very much an extension of A, following it on both occasions, yet it is sufficiently well defined, especially as a link to B material, that a subdivision seems justified. Given below is a brief characterisation of each type of material, coupled with an example of a typical passage. The characterisation also gives some indication of the interrelationships between types; this will be considered in much greater detail later on, but does also play a part in determining groupings. For instance, I and J could be coupled together as one larger section, but then the connection between J and F material would be more difficult to articulate; again, this is an aspect which will become increasingly clear.



A: Two-note [0,1] cells, interlocking to create complex resultant rhythm:

FIGURE 5.2.

Figure 5.2 is a musical score for three staves. The top staff is in 3/8 time and contains a sequence of eighth notes with a descending interval of a second, marked *ppp*. The middle staff is in 4/8 time and contains a sequence of eighth notes with a descending interval of a second, also marked *ppp*. The bottom staff is in 4/8 time and contains a sequence of eighth notes with a descending interval of a second, marked *ppp*. The notes in the middle and bottom staves are grouped in pairs, creating a complex interlocking rhythm.

A': Addition of more lyrical rising line to same basic material, results in thinning of texture:

FIGURE 5.3.

Figure 5.3 is a musical score for three staves. The top staff is in 3/8 time and contains a sequence of eighth notes with a descending interval of a second, marked *ppp*. The middle staff is in 4/8 time and contains a sequence of eighth notes with a descending interval of a second, also marked *ppp*. The bottom staff is in 4/8 time and contains a sequence of eighth notes with a descending interval of a second, marked *ppp*. The notes in the middle and bottom staves are grouped in pairs, creating a complex interlocking rhythm. The top staff is marked *(legato)* and contains a more lyrical rising line.

B: E $\flat$ -E-C $\sharp$  [0,1,3] cell (from A') used as an ostinato:

FIGURE 5.4.

Figure 5.4 is a musical score for three staves. The top staff is in 3/8 time and contains a sequence of eighth notes with a descending interval of a second, marked *ppp*. The middle staff is in 4/8 time and contains a sequence of eighth notes with a descending interval of a second, also marked *ppp*. The bottom staff is in 4/8 time and contains a sequence of eighth notes with a descending interval of a second, marked *ppp*. The notes in the middle and bottom staves are grouped in pairs, creating a complex interlocking rhythm. The top staff is marked *(legato)* and contains a more lyrical rising line.

C: Two-note cells hocketed between voices (with some overlap on later recurrence):

FIGURE 5.5.

Figure 5.5 is a musical score for three staves. The top staff is in 3/8 time and contains a sequence of eighth notes with a descending interval of a second, marked *ppp*. The middle staff is in 4/8 time and contains a sequence of eighth notes with a descending interval of a second, also marked *ppp*. The bottom staff is in 4/8 time and contains a sequence of eighth notes with a descending interval of a second, marked *ppp*. The notes in the middle and bottom staves are grouped in pairs, creating a complex interlocking rhythm. The top staff is marked *(legato)* and contains a more lyrical rising line.

D: [0,1,2] cluster:

FIGURE 5.6.

A musical score for three staves (treble, alto, and bass clefs) illustrating a [0,1,2] cluster. The music is written in a single melodic line across the staves, with various rhythmic values and accidentals. A fermata with the number '6' is placed over the final measure of the piece.

E: Chromatic [0,1,2,3] rising semiquaver figures:

FIGURE 5.7.

A musical score for three staves (treble, alto, and bass clefs) illustrating chromatic rising semiquaver figures. The music consists of rapid, ascending eighth-note runs across all three staves, with various accidentals and dynamic markings.

F: Two-note [0,1] rising cells, centred around tritone harmony:

FIGURE 5.8.

A musical score for three staves (treble, alto, and bass clefs) illustrating two-note rising cells centered around tritone harmony. The music features pairs of notes that rise in pitch, with tritone intervals (e.g., F# and C) being prominent. The score includes various time signatures and dynamic markings.

G: Mostly static chords (involving crossing of voices), more open harmony:

FIGURE 5.9.

A musical score for three staves (treble, alto, and bass clefs) illustrating mostly static chords with voice crossing. The music consists of sustained chords in various positions, with notes moving between staves to create a more open and complex harmonic texture.

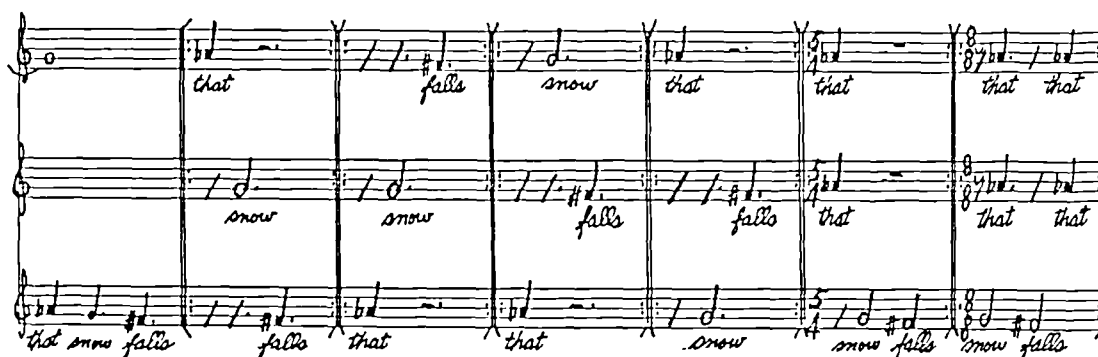
H: Two-note [0,2] rising cells (gesturally similar to F), coupled with longer, more widely-spaced pitches:

FIGURE 5.10.



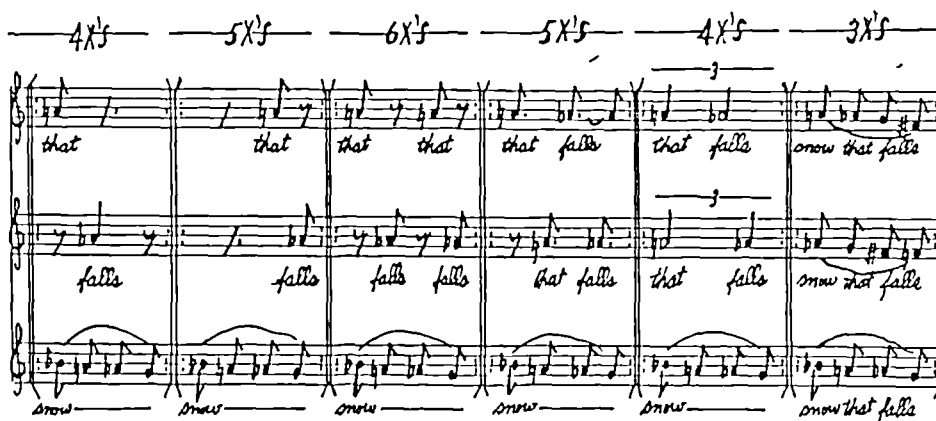
I: Falling three-note [0,1,2] cells, first spread out, then hocketed between voices:

FIGURE 5.11.



J: Develops I, involves four-note cells creating cluster, interlocking creates more complex rhythm (initially somewhat similar to F):

FIGURE 5.12.



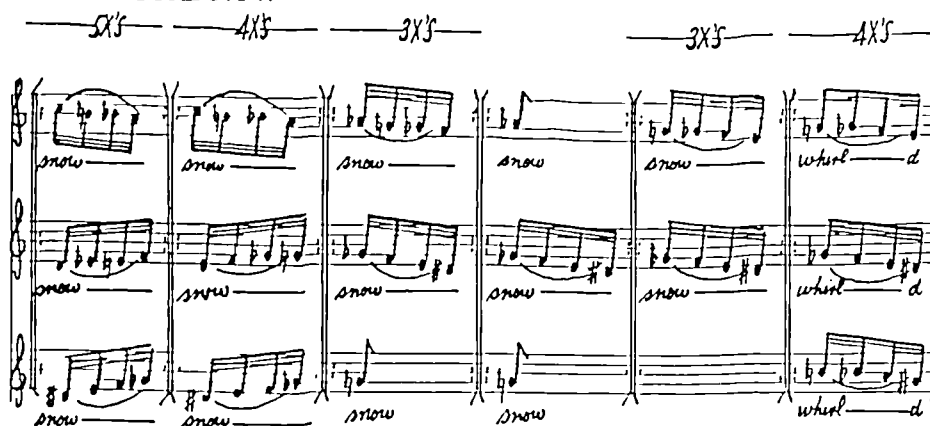
K: Open harmony (similar to G) arranged in sequences, also repeating [0,2,7] cell:

FIGURE 5.13.



L: Very rapid descending figures [0,1,2,3] & [0,1,2,3,4], both in parallel harmony and individually (hocketed):

FIGURE 5.14.



M: Rising and falling chromatic semiquaver 'melisma', in unison and parallel harmony:

FIGURE 5.15.

(a non accented *ligato*)



A number of these groupings perhaps require a little more explanation, for as can readily be observed from only the limited amount of music shown above, the level of correspondence between some types of material is very high. The connection between A and A' has already been discussed, and this process of elision continues into the first

B section on page 2; however, this B material is also heard out of this context, i.e. not following A, and is thus clearly defined as independent. In fact, part of the effect here is that this most memorable and often repeated material is first heard as part of a 'developmental' process of gradual evolution but is later lifted out of that original context. The relationship between C and D sections is first one of continuity, in that D on page 2 can be seen as extending the process of section C; however, again, both types of material recur in different contexts and are thus best considered as distinct. There is a similar overlap between sections F and G, for they both make use of a two-note cell doubled at the tritone. However, in F this motion is upwards, whereas in G it is downwards; more significant is that what seems more characteristic of G, the slow-moving open harmony, is always heard first, thus aurally separating this section from its surroundings. There is a further connection between the G harmonies and the material labelled as K; what marks these later sections is the use of the repeating [0,2,7] cell referred to above, coupled with the words 'who'd have thought', and, although this does not always appear, the harmony which becomes associated with it does, which is sufficient to maintain identity.

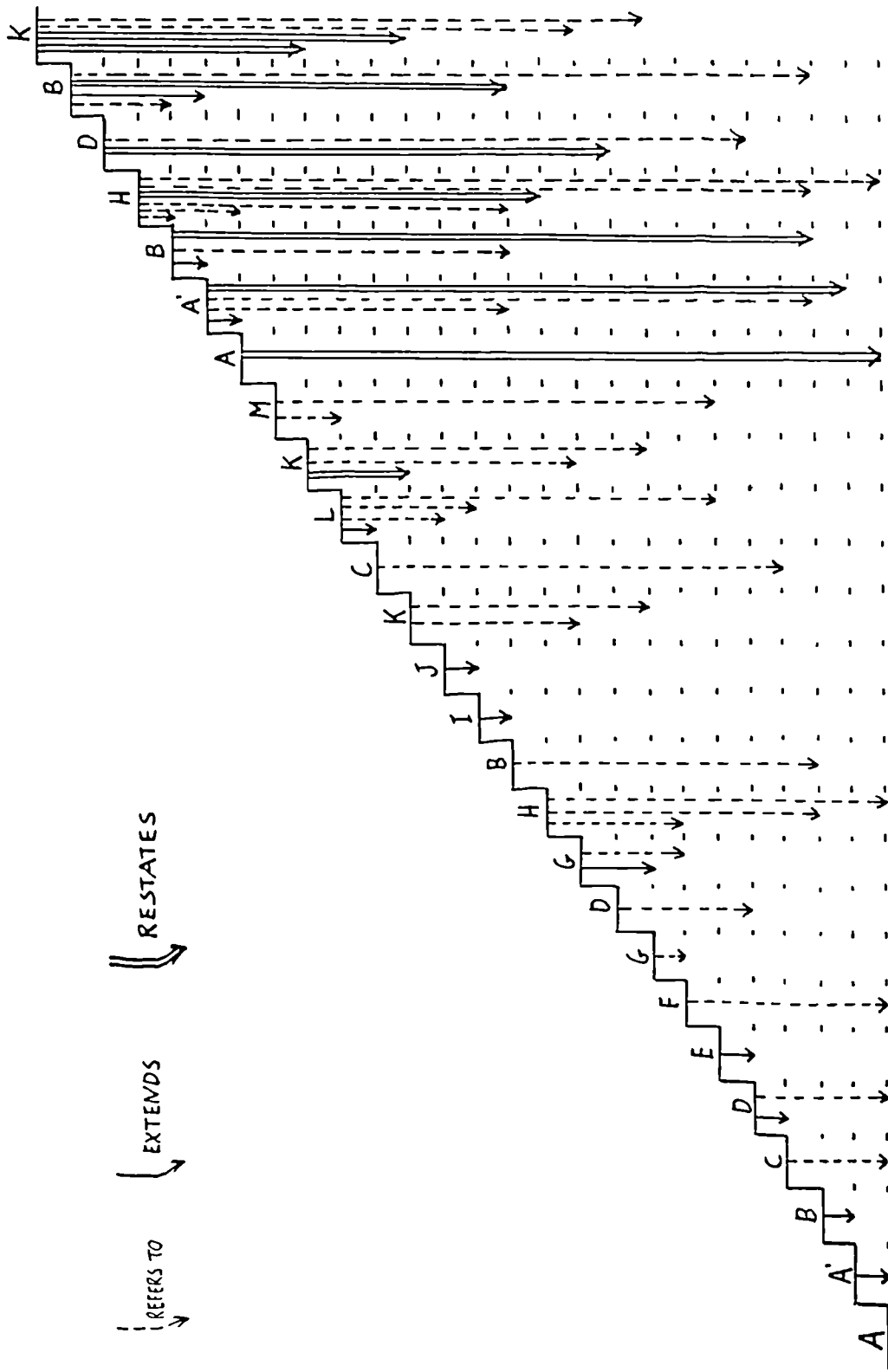
What the above discussion has shown is that, firstly, there is a complex network of references and interrelationship between material in different sections, and secondly, that because of this, not all section-divisions are equally clearly defined, so that the listening experience oscillates between hearing one texture growing out of another and a more stark process of juxtaposition. In addition, because sections recur there is a continual process of recognition, as the already-heard reappears, so that one realises that the same material is returning in different contexts, although sometimes the time-scale is so long that recognition is not as clear-cut as the basic segmentation in Figure 5.1 might suggest. The contrast between a small-scale sense of continuity between sections and a large-scale disjunction as these recur out of their original context tends to increase as the music progresses; when coupled with the network of correspondences which exist between different sections, this means that for much of the piece the listener is presented with material which either directly restates or more indirectly refers to that which was heard earlier, and that although it may stand out from its immediate surroundings, there is some relation to the wider context. This is the most fundamental way in which the temporal mist is created, where a perceptual blurring takes place through a process of alluding to earlier events, either in the immediate or the more distant past, so that it

becomes increasingly difficult to grasp the sense of an overall form.

Figure 5.16 is an attempt to present how this is achieved through the process of referral and restatement. The structure of this diagram is loosely based on one given by Umberto Eco in the second lecture of his *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods*, in an exploration of the creation of another 'mist', in his case the literary one created in Gerard de Nerval's *Sylvie* (Eco 1994: 40). Eco shows how the narrative structure of that work depends on a series of flashbacks and allusions to the past, and, to a degree, this is comparable to the process involved in *Three Voices*. Figure 5.16 allots each section an equal amount of space, and thus ignores relative length; however, it is still 'read' from left to right, with the progression of sections extending up a zig-zag diagonal line, with each section allotted a specific level on the vertical axis. This represents 'the present', with arrows descending backwards into 'the past', in this case to the other sections to which some reference is being made. There are three possible relationships shown here: a section may extend some aspect of an earlier one, this is shown by a solid arrow; it may refer or allude to it through the use of similar material, shown by a broken arrow; or it may be a more literal restatement, shown by a double arrow. The degree to which sections constitute a restatement is an issue which will be given further consideration later on, suffice it to point out here that although a restatement obviously involves sections with the same letter name, not all such sections are necessarily involved in this process; as an example compare the two sections containing G material, or those labelled as C.

A number of observations can be drawn from this diagram. Firstly, the principle of indicating an extension from one section to the next obviously presupposes a level of continuity, whereas the absence of such a link suggests a more abrupt transition. This process of extension usually involves adjacency, although there are a couple of instances where a more long-range connection is suggested. The two sections involving G material seem to present one overall continuity, 'interrupted' by the D material which separates them, although, as the inverted commas imply, this interruption is not really disruptive, but rather presents 'something different'. The second instance involves the final B section, which, because it is placed fairly close in time to the second A' section, seems to continue that process of extension which was begun in the previous B section. These aside, Figure 5.16 gives a fairly clear picture of how the piece presents instances of general continuity, and more disjunct juxtapositions.

FIGURE 5.16.



In fact, processes of juxtaposition are in the preponderance, for as can be observed, only nine sections display a clear extension of their immediate predecessor. As was remarked above, however, absences of direct continuity do not necessarily indicate disruption, as in the relation between the G - D - G passage already discussed and a few more examples, particularly towards the beginning of the piece, but in general terms, discontinuity between sections is the predominant effect, and is, of course, important if an alternation between distinct blocks of material is to be perceived.

Figure 5.16 also allows observation of which sections of music are relatively distinct, and which are more heavily involved in alluding to or restating other material. It will be noted that no section completely lacks any backward connection, for each is involved in some relationship to the past, even if it is itself never referred to again: section M presents the clearest instance, referring to E and L material, but not connected to any of the music which follows it in time. In a slightly different way, sections I and J are also not very heavily involved in this network of correspondences: each extends the section which it follows but does not directly relate to any other previous material, and both are later referred to by L material alone. This compares with the other extreme where passages such as the last section of B and the second occurrence of H present four and six links to 'the past' respectively, or, from the opposite end of the process, the first section A to which seven links are later recorded on the diagram. This comparison between sections right at the beginning and towards the end of the piece partially confirms the expectation that the process of recall, referral and restatement gradually increases as the music progresses, reaching its maximum at the end of the piece where the amount of available 'past' has also reached a peak; the high number of later references to the first A section also suggests that the first material is the most important. However, a degree of caution is necessary, for this material neither occupies the most time or is heard the most often in *Three Voices*, both these functions being assigned to B material. In addition, of course, because it comes first means that, at least initially, all other material is necessarily heard in relation to it, particularly since it features the two-note cell which is a common building-block throughout. It is also worth noting that in the second half or so of the piece the number of references to it drops markedly, as other material becomes increasingly involved in the process, so that to suggest that A is always privileged is somewhat misleading. In fact, as the music progresses and the available 'past' increases, the memory of this first section recedes as it is overtaken by more recent



it is overtaken by more recent events which themselves recur and are referred to, so that a general blurring of memory takes place.

Figure 5.16 allows the way in which the various processes evolve over to time to be observed quite easily, for it is immediately apparent when there is a general lack of long-term reference or when such constructions predominate. These may be summarized in general terms very easily. Initially, extension and referral occur widely, the process of referral most often connecting to A material. After the first appearance of section H, however, it becomes more complicated and the direct relationship with A is lost; instead, as can be observed, the process of recollection 'lifts off' from the beginning material, as this passage concentrates more heavily on recalling the 'immediate past', although a number of long-term connections do remain. The most marked change comes with the return of A and A' material, which, with the exception of the relationship of the previous two K sections, is the first instance of a restatement; from here on each section involves this relationship, so that this passage of music not only evokes but actually exclusively uses 'old' material. This is coupled with the most complicated network of relationships in the piece and an overall process of referral which suggests links which traverse almost the entire length of the music. Both these factors suggest why this final quarter of the piece can only problematically be perceived as a large-scale 'return', for not only do the restatements of sections need to be heard over an extremely large timescale, but the complexity and number of the other allusions and references mean that, at this point in the music, each section (apart from perhaps A) is not simply heard as a return but rather as a continuation of processes found in the rest of *Three Voices*.

How this creates a blurring of perception has hopefully become more clear through the preceding discussion, as the linearity which the basic segmentation into types suggests is shown to be a much more complicated process of interweaving new material with allusions to the past, so that a sense of developing overall form is interrupted by continual referrals elsewhere. For example, listeners might be presented with a section which clearly evokes one heard earlier, but then the immediately following section might connect to a completely different area in the musical 'past', or may vaguely 'sound like' two or more different sections, so that a straightforward continuity is hardly ever established (the passages A-A'-B and I-J being perhaps the only two instances). In addition, although the segmentation used here lists fourteen distinct types of material, these are not as individual as such a labelling might suggest, and their interrelationship

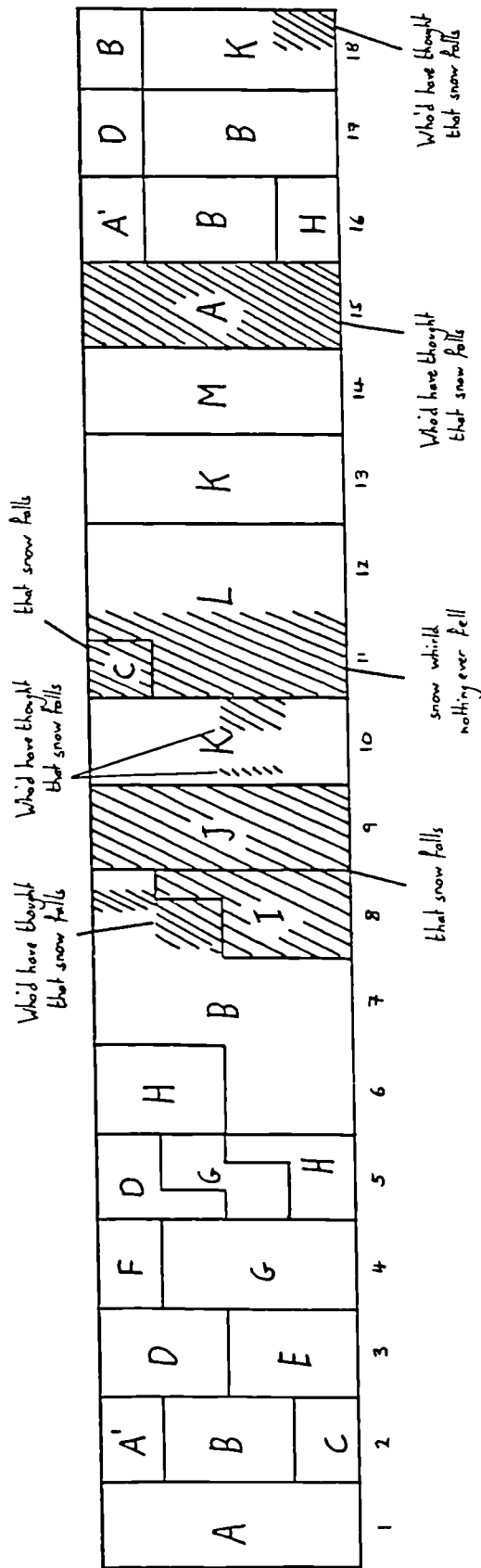
is difficult to isolate the most significant; although certain types of material do stand out slightly, the general effect of the process outlined above is to create a large-scale 'flat' surface. Even those sections which are related through the process of restatement are not necessarily clearly defined on that restatement, for in many instances the material is reordered so that this return is difficult to perceive; in the same way as the large-scale is 'flattened out' through repermuted and reordering, a comparable technique extends this process to the small-scale. How this is achieved will be examined in detail below, after a final feature which might suggest a large-scale order has been discussed.

## Words

The way in which *Three Voices* employs its text is one of the most striking features of the piece; certainly, the sudden arrival of words after some twenty minutes of vocalise is, quite simply, a complete surprise, for, as Steven Swartz points out, 'nothing so far in the piece has prepared the listener for the entrance of this text, one line of which is repeated insistently' (1983: 400). In fact, the piece uses four lines from O'Hara's poem, the first and second: 'Who'd have thought / that snow falls', and the ninth and tenth: 'snow whirled / nothing ever fell', but this piecemeal use of a considerably longer text (twenty-one lines in total) means that the music cannot really be called a 'setting', particularly as the effect of using these particular lines does not capture the overall spirit of the poem. What Feldman seems to be doing here is almost suggesting the rest of the poem through its absence, evoking it through a tiny fragment which avoids the way a large amount of text might otherwise threaten to swamp the more restricted musical materials. This process of suggestion is in some ways comparable to the process of recall already observed, but the two work independently, with no direct contact between the musical and the textual process.

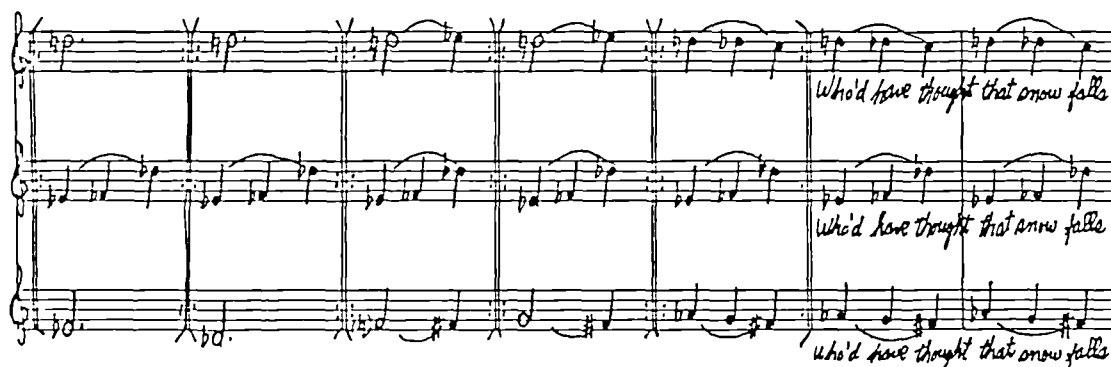
In fact, the proportion of the music which uses words is very small, making up only a fraction of the total duration. This is, of course, most obvious in the considerable 'delay' before the words enter, but after this point they only appear in isolated passages. Figure 5.17 shows these sections in terms of a page-by-page mapping used in Figure 5.1a above; here, shaded areas indicate the presence of a text, and the words that are used appear alongside the relevant sections.

FIGURE 5.17.



After the first appearance at the very end of the second B section there is a reasonably large block, involving sections I and J, where words are used; they then disappear apart from a short passage in section K, reappearing on page 11 with C and L sections, the latter of which marks the only use of lines 9 and 10, with the final two occurrences, section A and the final system of the final page, relatively isolated. The effect of this rather scattered distribution is primarily to de-emphasise the significance that is naturally attributed to the words and the music which presents them. The transition to a texted music on page 8, shown in Figure 5.18, is, as pointed out above, such a remarkable effect that one immediately feels that now the text has 'at last' arrived, the piece is entering its most important phase, that the 'real music' is now beginning. Feldman extends this expectation by continuing to use the text for a considerable period at this point, and in fact sections I and J are the only sections in the piece which appear *exclusively* with words. However, with the return to non-texted music and their rather fragmentary presentation in the rest of the piece, the use of words recedes to form just another layer in the 'flat' musical surface, appearing and disappearing for no apparent reason, with no clear connection to the larger musical process.

FIGURE 5.18.



This lack of connection is part of the way in which the text is de-emphasised and in turn also serves to de-emphasise the process of recurrence in terms of material, contributing to the articulation of this flat surface. As has already been noted, only sections I and J are exclusively texted, on all other occasions the texted passage only makes up a part of a section, or a section will reappear without its text. For instance, the 'setting' of lines 9 and 10 occupies only some of section L, as does the texted passage in sections B and K. In both these latter cases, subsequent returns to that material do not involve a return to the use of words, so that the material which first introduced words, at the end of B, is never heard again, whereas what is the most characteristic material of section K makes

up only a small part of two sections and is wholly absent from a third. (This passage of texted music does gain an increased significance, partly because it sets the first two lines as a clearly recognisable, even memorable, repeating pattern, and partly in retrospect, as it is the very last music of the piece.) Elsewhere, the text seems ‘grafted on’ to sections that have already appeared untexted, as with the second appearances of A and C; the effect here is to change the sound of the section so that their connection with their earlier manifestation is considerably blurred. This is most marked with C material, where the use of a whisper (the only occurrence in the piece) changes the timbre completely (see Figure 5.19), but the return of A is also quite different through the effect that the use of words produces. Here the text de-emphasises the feeling of large-scale return, contributing to the masking of this sense which has already been discussed.

FIGURE 5.19.

The musical score for Figure 5.19 consists of three staves. Above the staves, dynamic markings are indicated: 5X's (Whisper), 4X's, 3X's, 5X's, 4X's, 3X's, and 5X's. The lyrics are written below the notes. The first staff has lyrics: "that snow", "that", "snow snow", "snow falls", "falls", "falls", "that that". The second staff has lyrics: "that snow", "that", "snow snow", "that", "snow", "snow", "that that". The third staff has lyrics: "that snow", "that", "snow snow", "snow that falls", "snow that falls", "snow that falls", "snow that falls". The music is written in a complex, rhythmic style with many notes and rests.

The way in which musical and textual ‘recurrence’ are manipulated thus seems designed to avoid any overall form-building sense, with the two processes acting mostly independently, not reinforcing any larger-scale division that might be suggested by one or the other, with the texted music simply acting as yet another variation within the basic sound-world of the piece. Before leaving this discussion of the use of words, the smaller-scale level of how the pitch material corresponds to the words being used merits some brief consideration. As was suggested above, the fact that the words are used piecemeal makes it difficult to view this music as a conventional setting, but on a surface level, there are a few instances of a more traditional style of word-setting or word-painting. The most obvious of these comes in section L, where the phrase ‘snow whirled’ is given the fastest-moving pattern in the piece and literally does ‘whirl’, both within each repeating pattern and between the three voices. A secondary example is the pattern used in section

K with the words 'who'd have thought / that snow falls', which circles around and around, rather like the snow, perhaps. In both these cases, however, this setting is coupled with a less clear relationship between words and music: in the latter case, more static material is also given the same text, and in the former, words such as 'nothing' and 'ever' use exactly the same material, which suggests a looser connection. Of course, the predominant example of 'word setting' is the use of a *falling*, usually semitonal, figure which characterises a huge amount of the music, not just the sections which use words. However, the connection between the two is established with the first entry of the text: up until this point in the music the predominant motion has been upwards, for instance in sections E and F and the rising E $\flat$ -E $\natural$ -C $\sharp$  of B, but it is in this B section that the outer parts begin to move downwards by step and it is the arrival at this 'motif' which seems to trigger the words. The downwards motion is continued, being the only material featured in sections I and J as well as C and L somewhat later. Too much can be made of the use of falling material: after this point both static and more rising figurations also appear, sometimes even with a text, and this falling figure is used in other pieces by Feldman, for instance in the Second String Quartet, but it does indicate an inherent suitability between the subject of the poem and the music of *Three Voices*. The sense that the music 'rises' up to the point of textual entry and falls down thereafter is also one that is attractive, and indeed does apply in the short term, but as the music progresses, and K and B material reappear, the overall division into two parts this suggests is gradually eroded.

This discussion of the interrelationship between text and material suggests that this is yet another level on which correspondences are suggested but never fully established, or once established are gradually eroded, so that there is a continual uncertainty as to what that relationship is. It is this uncertainty that makes the use of words so effective, for rather than applying a simple rule, such as coupling falling music with the appropriate words, identical material both 'sets' other words and is heard alone, so that the ambiguity between word-setting and pure abstraction is perpetually in flux; rather than establishing a clear hierarchy between texted and untexted music, this interplay between the two enables a more complex relationship to be continually evolving but never fully confirmed. It is how this intangibility also informs return and restatement of material on a surface level that now needs consideration.

## Repetition and Variation / Reiteration and Change

The degree to which sections present literal restatements or more modified versions of the same material has already been alluded to in the consideration of the processes of connection, but it is possible to be quite explicit about which features persist from statement to statement (and which do not), this also involving an examination of recombination and re permutation on a smaller scale. Not only do these processes account for the lack of clarity in the similarities between some sections, but also go some way to showing how the blurring on the large-scale is mirrored by a comparable effect on the small-scale. To avoid an unnecessarily lengthy discussion, only a limited number of sections will be examined, as these may be taken as fairly representative of the general technique: section A, because it is the first section (thus gaining increased importance) and due to its apparent role as a large-scale marker; section B, the largest section both in terms of overall time and number of recurrences; and section K, which contains the most memorable material, the circling 'who'd have thought' cell, and raises a number of issues concerning use of system and general coherence. To facilitate the discussion each occurrence will be labelled using a subscript, so, for example, B<sub>1</sub> refers to the first appearance of this material on page 2, B<sub>2</sub> to the second on page 6, and so on.

The effect of the most obvious distinction between A<sub>1</sub> and A<sub>2</sub>, the use of words, has already been discussed, but the material used, or more precisely, the ordering of that material, also differs. As shown in Figure 5.2 above, it consists of two-note cells which interlock to create a complex resulting rhythm, with the pitch materials contained within the span of a minor third. These sections are the only passages in the piece where two different barrings are used simultaneously, and this is combined with a subdivision of the 3/8 into quartuplets and the 4/8 into triplets, resulting in interlocking patterns which produce a subdivision of the crotchet into 24 parts. More important, however, is that each pattern lasts three (4/8) bars and is repeated; thus, as both sections occupy one page of score, there are 12 three-bar patterns in each. These patterns are distinct, that is, the exact configuration of pitch and rhythm is unique; there are, in fact, only nine different resulting rhythms and four pitches used. When A<sub>1</sub> and A<sub>2</sub> are compared the similarities are obvious. Figure 5.20 shows section A<sub>1</sub> with each different three-bar pattern labelled i-xii, and, beside it, the same labelling applied to A<sub>2</sub>.

FIGURE 5.20.

$A_1$	$A_2$
: i : : ii : : iii :	: viii : : vii : : ix :
: iv : : v : : vi :	: xiii : : iv : : x :
: vii : : viii : : ix :	: v : : i : : iii :
: x : : xi : : xii :	: ii : : vi : : xi :

The thirteenth pattern (the fourth of  $A_2$ ) is of the same rhythmic type as pattern xii (and no other) and involves only one note-change, replacing  $E\flat$  with  $E\flat$ , so that the difference is almost negligible. It is immediately apparent that  $A_2$  uses exactly the same material but repermutes it in an unsystematic way, maintaining none of the original ordering. This technique serves a slightly ambiguous function here, for although it must necessarily reduce the level to which  $A_2$  is perceived as a varied restatement of  $A_1$ , rather than just as a revisiting of similar material, the actual effect seems very limited, for over such a timespan this 'detail' is extremely unlikely to be perceived, with a more general level of similarity providing the sense of return, and the timbral difference producing the effect of a distinct 'version'. The ordering may, however, have some small effect, particularly since the first pattern of  $A_1$  is removed from that privileged position, so that the point of recurrence is itself de-emphasised within a more general process which performs the same function on a larger scale. Thus, a sense of large-scale return which this A section clearly marks is deliberately undermined by control of surface detail, so that one becomes unsure as to whether this is an exact restatement or a further variation, but without losing the sense of basic similarity.

The relationship between the four B sections is somewhat more complicated, but they seem best considered in pairs, with the connections between  $B_1$  and  $B_3$ , and  $B_2$  and  $B_4$  being more straightforward. The simplest is between  $B_1$  and  $B_3$ , which use the same eighteen bars but in a different order, achieved by simply swapping round the two systems on which they appear. Figure 5.21 shows the two arrangements, with each bar numbered (every bar is different) and laid out as they appear on the page; an interesting detail here is the absence of repeat-marks in the first system of  $B_3$ , which shows very clearly Feldman's use of scale referred to earlier, as the same material now occupies half the time. The very simple change of order retains a basic identity, but the overall sense of  $B_3$  is somewhat different: bars 1-6 of  $B_1$  involve the  $E\flat$ - $E$ - $C\sharp$  pattern in a 3+3+2 rhythm, overlaid with falling or rising chromatic figures (see Figure 5.22a), whereas bars



7-18 give the three-note cell a number of different rhythmic profiles, whilst keeping the static D-G# as the overlaid sonority (see Figure 5.22b).

FIGURE 5.21.

B<sub>1</sub>: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |  
 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |

B<sub>3</sub>: | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |  
 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |

FIGURE 5.22.

a.

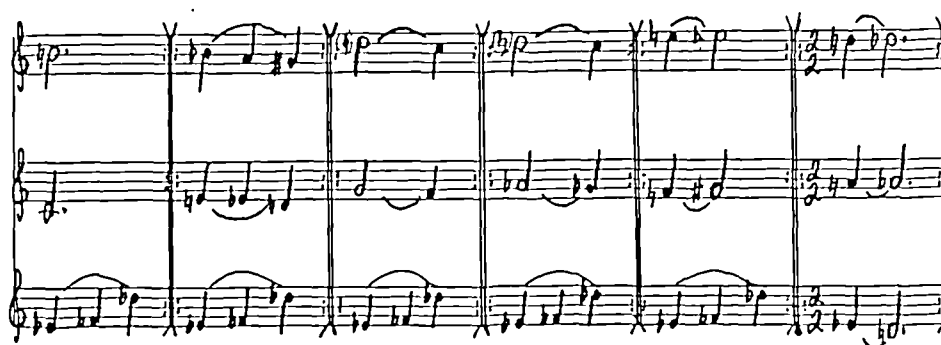
b.

The musical score for Figure 5.22 consists of two parts, 'a.' and 'b.', each with three staves. Part 'a.' shows a sequence of six measures with rhythmic patterns in the upper staves and a consistent D-G# sonority in the lower staff. Part 'b.' shows a sequence of six measures with different rhythmic profiles in the upper staves, while the lower staff maintains the D-G# sonority. The notation includes various note values, rests, and dynamic markings.

If these two types are in turn labelled X and Y, then in  $B_1$  the overall pattern is X-Y, whereas in  $B_3$  it is Y-X-Y, a small yet distinct difference, and indicative of the result that a simple reordering can produce. This type of X material reappears slightly altered in  $B_2$ , as a lead-up to the entry of the words (Figure 5.23a shows a typical passage). In this section, and in  $B_4$ , the rising three-note cell is reduced to three even crotchets, and this more typical material of  $B_2$ , used exclusively in  $B_4$ , overlays dotted minim patterns, often grouped into three-bar 'phrases' which repeat (see Figure 5.23b for the opening of  $B_2$ ).

FIGURE 5.23.

a.



b.



Labelling again on a bar-by-bar level, but now with a high level of recurrence, Figure 5.24 shows the pattern for all of  $B_4$  and for a comparable passage of  $B_2$ , this earlier section being somewhat longer, the extra material principally involving the build-up to, and entry of, the text. There is, obviously, a close similarity between the two versions, and, in contrast to the relationship between  $B_1$  and  $B_3$ , the overall continuity, the movement from *a-h* is maintained. Some of the detail, however, does differ, and a slight re permutation of repeating blocks is once again the principal means whereby this differentiation is achieved.

FIGURE 5.24.

**B<sub>2</sub>**: |ABA|BBA|BAB|CCD|DDC| EEEFFEEFF |GGE|EGE|HHFH|DDG| etc.  
**B<sub>4</sub>**: |BBA|BBA|BAB|DDC|CCD| EGE| EEEFFEEFF |GGE|HHFH|FH|

In general terms, the four B sections display a close correspondence, especially within the two pairings. Somewhat paradoxically perhaps, even without such a level of correspondence the identity of these B sections would never be in doubt, principally because of the strong aural recognisability of the three-note cell which characterises them; what this does show, however, is how Feldman manipulates a limited and undifferentiated collection of materials so as to occupy a very large timescale.

Section K material makes up an interesting network, both within individual sections and between different appearances. All three sections are characterised by static, open-sounding chords which seem to suggest some sense of progression but then continually loop back, and K<sub>1</sub> and K<sub>3</sub> contain the repeating [0,2,7] pattern which sets the first two lines of the poem. K<sub>2</sub> uses the most restricted materials, a set of 14 different chords which also occur in both K<sub>1</sub> and K<sub>3</sub>, though K<sub>1</sub> and, to a lesser degree, K<sub>3</sub> also use other materials (in addition to the [0,2,7] cell). Rather than examining all of these in detail, a number of general remarks concerning the coherence of the material can be made, before examining one instructive passage in greater detail.

The first issue to discuss concerns the degree to which the [0,2,7] cell fits into the rest of the section, for at first it appears rather too consonant - tonally orientated even - for music which deals predominantly with relationships of a semitone. However, on closer examination a consistency with the rest of this section does appear. The great majority of all of the chords in K involve the interval of a perfect fourth or a perfect fifth between the upper two notes (and of those that do not, very few use a chromatic interval) which means that the fourths and fifths of the [0,2,7] and its accompanying sonority do actually fit within the general ambit of the section. This link is made clear by the proximity (to both statements) of four chords; Figure 5.25 shows the last system of K<sub>3</sub> which restates (with only slight re-permutation) the comparable passage in K<sub>2</sub>. (As an aside, the penultimate bar of this passage, and hence the whole piece, is the only bar of complete silence in the entire work).

FIGURE 5.25.

The musical score for Figure 5.25 consists of three systems of staves. The first system has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The second system has a bass clef. The third system has a treble clef. Above the first system, four chord symbols are indicated: 5x5, 4x5, 3x5, and 5x5. The lyrics are: 'snow' (under the first system), 'that snow falls' (under the second system), 'which have thought' (under the third system), and 'snow' (under the fourth system). The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and bar lines.

This sequence of four chords occurs seven times in  $K_1$  and characterises the first part of that section; this means that the apparent incongruity of the [0,2,7] cell as a linear construct, which may well derive from its basic memorability, is reduced when considered in harmonic, vertical terms.

A sense of ambiguity, produced through a high level of similarity, is the principal effect of the most conspicuous process of re permutation used in these three sections, which involves the material of the last system of  $K_1$ , the entirety of  $K_2$  and the first two systems of  $K_3$ , and which makes up the majority of the music here. Figure 5.26 shows this material as it first appears in  $K_1$ .

FIGURE 5.26.

The musical score for Figure 5.26 consists of three systems of staves. Above the first system, six chord symbols are indicated: 3x5, 4x5, 3x5, 3x5, 4x5, and 5x5. The bars are numbered 1 through 8. Below the first system, letter labels are provided for each bar: a b, c d, e f, g a, h i, j d, k l, h m, j d. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and bar lines.

Each chord is labelled,  $a$  to  $m$ , and each bar is also numbered (this numbering referring only to the order of chords within the bar and not to their rhythm), so that each ordered pair is represented by a single number. The purpose of this will be clarified in a moment, but even from this first presentation a number of internal relationships can be added. Chord  $a$  appears twice, as the first element of pair 1,  $a-b$ , and as the second of pair 4,  $g-a$ , and thus performs two different functions (antecedent and consequent). Chord  $i$  is self-evidently a revoicing of  $h$ ;  $k$  is similarly a revoicing of  $e$ , and is also a simple transposition of  $a$ . This sequence thus already displays a process of repetition and

repermutation, for the same chords are heard within different contexts, thus changing their identity.

A more far-reaching process of repermutation can be observed between the three K sections. Figure 5.27 sets out the order of the numbered pairs of chords as they occur in each of K<sub>1</sub>, K<sub>2</sub> and K<sub>3</sub>, again on a system-by-system plan so that the visual aspect is maintained. The most consistent reordering can be observed in K<sub>2</sub>, where the first two systems present the K<sub>1</sub> version in retrograde, and the fourth alternates between pairs 1 and 6, an alternation also found in K<sub>3</sub>. Pair 9, which begins the third system, is, in fact, a coupling of chord *c* with a 'new' sonority, E<sup>b</sup>-F<sup>#</sup>-C; the closeness of this to chord *d* and the fact that it only occurs this once makes it tempting to suggest a mistake on Feldman's part. This is exacerbated by the use of pattern 2 rhythm, for in these first three systems a great majority of paired chords are given the same rhythm as in K<sub>1</sub>, so that pair 9 is obviously almost identical to pair 2, making the logic of this third system, K<sub>1</sub> 'rotated' by one bar, more obvious. The first system of K<sub>3</sub> displays another ordering of the same eight pairs, and the second system is, apart from a few modifications, a retrograde of the comparable passage in K<sub>2</sub>; Figure 5.28 shows how the barring makes this relationship obvious, to the eye at least.

FIGURE 5.27.

<b>K<sub>1</sub>:</b>	:	1	:	2	:	<sup>3<sub>x</sub></sup> 3	:	<sup>4<sub>x</sub></sup> 4	:	5	:	<sup>3<sub>x</sub></sup> 6	:	<sup>4<sub>x</sub></sup> 7	:	8	:	<sup>5<sub>x</sub></sup> 6	:
<b>K<sub>2</sub>:</b>		6		8		7		6		5		4		3		2		1	
		6		8		7		6		5		4		3		2		1	
		9		3		4		5		6		7		8		6		1	
		6		1		6		1		6		1		6		1		6	
<b>K<sub>3</sub>:</b>	:	1	:	4	:	3	:	5	:	7	:	2	:	6	:	8	:	3	:
		1		6		1		6		1		6		1		6		1	

FIGURE 5.28.

The image displays two musical sections, K<sub>2</sub> and K<sub>3</sub>, each consisting of three staves (treble, alto, and bass clefs). Section K<sub>2</sub> is labeled with the chord sequence 'j d a b' above the first staff. Below the first staff, the numbers '6 1 6 1 6 1 6 1' are written, indicating fingerings for the notes. Section K<sub>3</sub> is labeled with the chord sequence 'a b j d' above its first staff. Below its first staff, the numbers '1 6 1 6 1 6 1 6' are written, indicating fingerings. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and dynamic markings.

The way in which these three sections repermute this set of chords indicates that Feldman's compositional technique is not purely intuitive, for although the use of simple systems (retrograde and rotation) evidenced here is an extreme instance in this piece, it does show that such procedures are part of Feldman's method. The effect of these systems is actually quite complex. To take one example, the result of the 'retrograde' relationship between K<sub>1</sub> and K<sub>2</sub> is far from a simple reversal of a chord sequence; because pairs of chords are used, their reversal also alters the continuity from one to the next: K<sub>1</sub> begins *a-b-c-d-e-f* but when these chords return in K<sub>2</sub> the order is now *e-f-c-d-a-b*. The effect of this is to recontextualise the familiar, so that there is a continual interplay between what sounds 'the same' and what sounds 'different' - neither a totally new effect or a simple identity, but rather a blurring between the twin concepts of repetition and variation. These process of recombination and repermutation occur throughout *Three Voices*, and the three section-types, A, B and K, discussed above, represent a cross-section of the different levels of identity between sections, and of the processes that are used to create an ambiguity between a sense of developing new material and restatement of the already-heard.

This discussion of small-scale processes and of the blurring between 'the same' and 'different' patterning obviously connects with the type of organisation observed on a large-scale, sectional level, as both seem primarily concerned with creating a similar

sense of ambiguity. The small-scale modification of sections which reappear - the reordering of chordal progressions, changes of rhythmic patterning and even the grafting of the text onto already-heard material - all contribute to a lack of clarity of identity, so that even when two sections present similar material, their connection is somewhat blurred (this is in addition to the problem involved in recalling material over the very long time-spans that are usually involved). On a more local level, the progression from one sonority to another within sections, or the appearance of similar groups of material, for instance in K sections, relies on a process where variations in material are 'ironed out', so that there is a basic similarity without a clear sense of whether two patterns are exactly the same or not, even when they follow on directly. In addition, the slow unfolding over a long time-scale means that a sense of 'original material', of a seed to which subsequent music may be compared in memory, becomes lost. This perceptual confusion thus corresponds to that found on a large-scale, though the two levels present processes which, although similar, remain mostly distinct; rather than interacting to provide a sense of coherence, the listener is presented with two modes of operation which continually frustrate attempts to grasp their larger sense.

### **Between Categories**

This lack of interaction between the two levels has already been suggested, in that, despite the sharing of a common technique of re permutation and recombination, the listener does not gain a feeling of the smaller-scale events building up to create an overall form, or even determining the articulation of large-scale sections. Having examined the similar ways in which both levels manipulate our sense of memory and expectation through the twin processes of reiteration and change, the reason for this separation becomes clear. Small-scale events rely on the presentation of an unbroken continuity, so that a sense of differentiation on this level is reduced. This has two effects: firstly, very small changes gain greater importance, and, secondly, it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain a sense of separation between 'the same' and 'different', so that, although the concentration required places importance on minutiae of change, these are not sufficient to give an overall sense of pattern. Such patterns as do arise are often themselves repeated with their internal construction altered so that a similar 'flattening

out' extends to almost all aspects of small-scale continuity. There are a couple of exceptions: first, the [0,2,7] cell in K, which is highly memorable and retains a sense of identity, and, secondly, some of the material in B, the 'slow waltz', which is again more memorable, but which also illustrates an ongoing small-scale patterning, with the same cell repeated over and over, with slight modification each time. This overall process means that this small-scale level does not actually 'lead' anywhere; despite presenting a continuity, no musical event serves as the inevitable result of its predecessor, or necessarily implies that which follows it. This removes a sense of linear process and a related forward momentum, with the musical surface generally lacking in events which would serve to articulate a large structure. However, unlike pieces such as *For Samuel Beckett*, which presents a single, slowly evolving sound-mass for the entirety of its length, *Three Voices* does involve some significant contrast between groups of material, and these mark out the various sections. This articulation does not depend on the small-scale patterning but rather simply contains it, so that there is no sense of when section-divisions (and hence new material) will come.

There is thus some distinction between a small-scale continuity and a large-scale sense of contrast, for as the music progresses, sections initially experienced as extensions are lifted out of that continuity and placed in new surroundings; this large-scale contrast does not, however, articulate a clearly-defined form, for by this point in the piece the listener's *memory* process is at its most disorientated, so that these returns paradoxically confuse rather than clarify. These two levels, large- and small-scale, are best thought of as coexisting rather than interacting, for although they involve some similarity in their respective processes, they remain fairly distinct and do not create any coherent unified structure. In fact, the very point of this music seems to be to elude such conception, for the temporal mist that it creates on the large-scale, and the analogous level of ambiguity on the small-scale, conspire to create a complex musical experience, which has very little to do with traditional musical 'qualities' such as tension and release and a sense of forward momentum. Instead the concentration is on memory, with a large-scale process and local detail which defeat traditional musical expectation, giving rise to a more elusive, less linear result.

The way in which this piece manipulates the memory processes of the listener has already been discussed, and seems to be fundamental to an understanding of this music. Such a conception of *Three Voices* ties in with Feldman's own comments, both on his



general attitude and specific details of compositional technique which could apply here as well:

the historical function of music is essentially a *memory* form, to make memory comprehensible, and I decided that if that's what music is, it's too primitive. (Quoted in Dominick 1985: 285)

What Western musical forms have become is a paraphrase of memory. But memory could operate otherwise as well. In *Triadic Memories...* there is a section of different types of chord where each chord is slowly repeated.... Quite soon into a new chord I would forget the reiterated chord before it. I then reconstructed the entire section: rearranging its earlier progression and changing the number of times a particular chord was repeated. This way of working was a conscious attempt at 'formalizing' a disorientation of memory. Chords are heard repeated without any discernible pattern. In this regularity... there is a *suggestion* that what we hear is functional and directional, but we soon realize this is an illusion.... (Feldman 1985: 127)

*Three Voices* thus presents an attempt at a more complex memory form which depends on the perception of reiteration and change over a long timescale, and performs its effect by deliberately confronting and subverting attempts to simplify and grasp hold of both the small- and large-scale. As this analysis has shown, this formalisation of a disorientation of memory makes use of a number of specific processes already observed. On a small scale, these involve a reliance on a continuity which presents no sense of direction, and of the confusion produced by the evolution of a multitude of similar versions of the same material. On a large scale, disorientation is created by an expansive time-scale which reduces the effect of restatement, the occasional and 'illogical' use of words, and the various interlocking patterns of recall, restatement and continuation within which each section is involved. In addition, modification of the material of recurrent sections, for instance, the semi-systematic re permutation of chords in K, increases confusion on both levels. All these factors indicate a specific intention on Feldman's part, and indeed, much of his compositional judgement depends upon a sense of knowing how much identity to maintain to create a balance between perception of repetition and variation, reiteration and change, and to produce the complex manipulation of memory that *Three Voices* articulates.

This deliberate contradiction of a number of traditional expectations as to how music behaves, and the concentration on the immediate sound of the music has led many commentators to conclude that Feldman's music cannot, and indeed should not be analysed. As was outlined at the beginning of this discussion, an examination of large-scale form, which is again often viewed as unnecessary, does account for a number of

aspects of the experience of *Three Voices*, and, as has been shown in the current analysis, this investigation of *how* this music creates a blurring of memory can usefully be carried on into a quite close examination of small-scale aspects. In fact, the analytical approach applied here deliberately does not try to read the music in terms of overall coherence and other 'traditional' features, concentrating instead on the perception of the interplay of pattern and the resulting sense of confusion, or temporal mist. Some may suggest that such an analysis, in endeavouring to demystify how it is achieved, serves only to reduce the effect of music that should not be rationalised. However, even if the way in which *Three Voices* manipulates time is 'explained', when *listening* the music retains its effect; as Umberto Eco comments with reference to his own analysis: '...the grid [which accounts for the process] can be designed from outside the text, but when you read again, you return inside the text... as you slow down, as you accept its pace, then you forget any grid... and you get lost again in the woods' (Eco 1994: 43). As well as illustrating the way in which Feldman creates a piece of music which, in his words, formalises a disorientation of memory, this analysis has also hopefully *increased* rather than diminished the enjoyment of becoming lost in Feldman's particular patch of the woods.

## Chapter 6

### Listening Through a Gradual Process

Steve Reich's *Four Organs* (1970)

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#### Process and Product

As Robert Schwarz has commented, *Four Organs* is 'perhaps Reich's ultimate minimalist work: in the entire twenty-five minute composition there are no changes of pitch, timbre, or dynamics. All alterations consist of gradually increasing the rhythmic durations [of a single chord]' (Schwarz 1982: 230).<sup>1</sup> Although this description is accurate, it is typical of the response that much of Reich's music, and this piece in particular, tends to elicit even from a sympathetic critic such as Schwarz, a response which concentrates on discussing the reductive nature of the process and can often ignore the effect of the music for the listener. Reich's formulation of his ideas in his 1968 essay 'Music as a Gradual Process' (in Reich 1974: 9-11) and his avowed interest in 'a compositional process and a sounding music that are one and the same' (:10), suggests that his music operates on a clear, one-to-one identity between process and aural result. However, concentrating on what is actually heard can uncover the extent to which the single process remains the primary focus of attention, what other elements become important factors in perception of this music, and how Reich's compositional activity involves considerably more than simply starting the process and then letting it run. There is thus a level of separation between the process and its result, so that what seems initially quite straightforward turns out to be more complex, and it is how the complexities arise, and what they involve, which will be the primary focus of this analysis.

*Four Organs* is actually something of an anomalous work in Reich's early output: written during a period where his music was exploring the ramifications of gradual shifts of phase between rapidly repeating patterns, as in the earlier *Piano Phase* and *Violin Phase* and the later *Phase Patterns* and *Drumming*, it involves no phase-shifting of any

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<sup>1</sup> Depending on the number of repetitions of bars 1-30, the duration of *Four Organs* can vary, from as little as sixteen minutes to around half-an-hour.

kind, relying instead on the gradual elongation of a single dominant-eleventh chord. The concept for this work grows out of an earlier tape-piece, *Slow Motion Sound* of 1967, which, for technical reasons, was never realised. *Slow Motion Sound* consists of the instruction: 'Gradually slow down a recorded sound to many times its original length without changing its pitch or timbre at all', and the resulting 'slow motion music' that Reich envisaged is partially achieved in *Four Organs*. Reich has described the piece as being a 'maniacal, single-minded investigation of one technique.... It's a very radical slant on augmentation, and also, perhaps, a humorous comment on the V-I cadence' (in Duckworth 1995: 302); it is also an extended investigation into one chord, and it is a final concentration on aspects of sound that both provides a connection to the earlier *Slow Motion Sound* and draws attention away from a primary focus on process towards the aural result. Before going on to consider the music more closely, Reich's own position needs briefly to be discussed.

Reich's aesthetic, as formulated in 'Music as a Gradual Process', may be summarised into four main points. Firstly, and most importantly, Reich is concerned with the identification of structure (process) and musical content:

What I'm interested in is a compositional process and a sounding result that are one and the same thing.... I don't know of any secrets of structure that you can't hear.... The use of hidden structural devices in music never appealed to me. (Reich 1974: 10)

Reich's music thus deals with events that, in his view, all have some direct effect, seeking to erase any separation between the compositional strategies and the perceptual results; this aim is reinforced by his second main concern, impersonality and objectivity: 'Though I might have the pleasure of discovering musical processes and composing the musical material to run through them, once the process is set up and loaded it runs by itself' (:9). This belief that the composer need only specify starting conditions and how the process will operate is very important for Reich; in order for the listener to 'hear the process happening through the sounding music'(: 9) there must be little, if any, subjective intervention once the piece has been started, for such intervention would introduce unexpected deviations; in *Four Organs*, as has already been suggested, there is a greater degree of compositional choice than in the 'phase-shifting' pieces, with this detail creating a number of important features which will be examined later. Reich's third stipulation is that there should be no element of performer improvisation, for precisely the same reasons. Fourthly, however, Reich does allow that a number of unexpected

features will arise, no matter how rigorous the process:

Even when all the cards are on the table, and everyone hears what is gradually happening in a musical process, there are still enough mysteries to satisfy all. These mysteries are impersonal, unintended, psycho-acoustic by-products of the intended process. (1974: 10)

Reich lists examples of such by-products: 'submelodies... stereophonic effects... harmonies, difference tones, etc.'; these do not, he seems to suggest, mask the perception of the gradual process, but are rather an important additional surface feature. In this reading of *Four Organs* these resulting patterns are considered seriously, turning out not to be simply 'incidental', but rather fundamental to perception of the music. In *Four Organs* one does *not* perceive one gradual process occurring inexorably, instead, one hears a series of sudden and unexpected changes, where processes that have been operating for some time suddenly become apparent. The perception of change thus occurs anachronistically, separated from the moment that the actual alteration takes place; one often forehears an event through a forward projection of the process (particularly when sufficiently familiar with the work), and at the same time is continually being surprised by changes which are only perceived some time after they have occurred. This is not to suggest that the gradual process is not an important factor in perception, but rather that there are a large number of instances where it is obscured, so that the aural result does not mirror the 'structural' process; as Thomas Docherty puts it, in this music, contrary to expectation, 'one tends to hear what is not actually there, as one foretells or forehears the modulations anachronistically, out of their proper timing' (Docherty 1990: 29). In addition, *Four Organs* eventually turns into an investigation of a single sonority, an idea suggested by the connection with *Slow Motion Sound*. In this view it is not so much the *process* of slowing down that is important, but rather the effect of each individual slowed-down sonority. The piece displays a number of features that result in this focus, so that although it is not always primary, does form an important part of what the music is 'about'. The 'mysteries' (to which Reich alludes) that are perceived by the end of the piece are brought to the foreground, with the concentration on a single chord finally obscuring the process almost entirely.

## Systems and Material

Before investigating the music in detail it is worth giving a brief outline of the systems involved; the piece is usually described as the extension of a single chord without considering the types of process that are used, nor how they interact. The following outline ignores whether these are aurally significant, concentrating purely on a description of how one pattern gives way to the next.

*Four Organs* opens with eleven even quavers for solo maracas; once the organs have entered, the maracas continue to play unbroken quavers throughout, acting mainly as a pulse-keeper and enabling the organ-players to count the very long durations that occur towards the end of the work. The maracas also serve another, more perceptually important, role, but this will be dealt with below. Eleven quavers becomes the 'unit length' for the first twenty-two bars of the piece; the level of expansion can be most clearly observed if the length of the opening bars is compared with that of the penultimate bar, bar 42, shown in Figure 6.1 (bar 43, in order to provide an 'ending', is cut short: bar 42 thus represents the greatest expansion). The first process can be observed in bar 2, Organ 1, where the G# in the first chord is extended by one quaver. This 'filling in' of the silence between the two chords continues up until bar 17 and it interlocks with a second process: the establishment, elongation and thickening, through the addition of an increasing number of pitches, of an 'upbeat' to the main chord, the first note of which appears in bar 4, Organ 4. This continues throughout the piece in a number of different forms; the result is to create a staggered entry of the chord so that by bar 42 each note is sounded individually. This is mirrored in the 'decay' of the chord: starting in bar 19 an increasing number of notes is released individually, and by bar 42 the chord is broken down into thirteen distinct release-points. These two processes are coupled with the gradual augmentation that occurs from bar 23 onwards, so that as the chord is extended it also becomes increasingly 'staggered'.

FIGURE 6.1.

0  $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 200$  1

Maracas LH RH maracas continue unbroken eighth notes throughout.\*

Repeat 3-8 times until cue (see notes)

Organ 1  $f$  3 + 8

Organ 2  $f$  3 + 8

Organ 3  $f$  3 + 8

Organ 4  $f$  3 + 8

42 Repeat 2-3 times until cue

1  $24 + 20 + 16 + 14 + 12 + 10 + 9 + 8 + 9 + 10 + 7 + 8 + 9 + 8 + 9 + 9 + 10 + 12 + 15 + 14 + 16 + 16 + 20$

Repeat 2-3 times until cue

2  $24 + 20 + 16 + 14 + 12 + 10 + 9 + 8 + 9 + 10 + 7 + 8 + 9 + 8 + 9 + 9 + 10 + 12 + 15 + 14 + 16 + 16 + 20$

Repeat 2-3 times until cue

3  $24 + 20 + 16 + 14 + 12 + 10 + 9 + 8 + 9 + 10 + 7 + 8 + 9 + 8 + 9 + 9 + 10 + 12 + 15 + 14 + 16 + 16 + 20$

Repeat 2-3 times until cue

4  $24 + 20 + 16 + 14 + 12 + 10 + 9 + 8 + 9 + 10 + 7 + 8 + 9 + 8 + 9 + 9 + 10 + 12 + 15 + 14 + 16 + 16 + 20$

The music thus falls into three areas (demarcated only by the use of different processes and thus not necessarily relevant to perception): firstly, the filling-in of the gap between the initial two-chord, eleven-beat structure and the gradual establishment of an upbeat; second, the elongation of the chord and the upbeat to fill the eleven-quaver unit (bars 17-22); and then, thirdly, the gradual extension and staggering of both chord and upbeat. The three procedural areas give an overall shape to the musical details, as each individual change may be understood in terms of how it reinforces or advances the overall direction of the music.

The title of *Four Organs* indicates two important facts about this piece, which appear so obvious that their full significance might easily be missed: it is scored for (electric) organs and there are four of them. The use of electric organs, as opposed to any other sustaining instrument, will be discussed more fully below, although their suitability for the type of material found here is immediately apparent. More important is the use of *four* organs, or rather, the use of multiple, identically-voiced instruments. Not only does this provide Reich with the ensemble dynamic of which he is a firm advocate,<sup>2</sup> but it allows a greater number of events without an increase in the amount of basic material. Through the varied doubling of selected notes, Reich has at his disposal twenty-four strands; this doubling is a very important form-building aspect of the piece, as elongation is often achieved by stretching a single pitch so as to involve an attack from two or more instruments. In order to provide a mechanism for clearly observing the changes in density necessary for examination of the process, a form of graph notation will be used, an approach almost suggested by Reich in his comment that the tones ‘begin in unison in a pulsing chord, and then gradually extend out like a sort of bar graph in time’ (1974: 25). As an example, Figure 6.2 shows the representation of bar 27 alongside the stave notation. The nine horizontal bars each represent one note of the chord and each horizontal square corresponds to one quaver. The use of colour shows the density of each note, that is, how many organs are holding that pitch at any one time: yellow represents one organ; blue, two organs; red, three; and black, four. Through this notation one can very easily see any changes in density, as well as the proportions between different durations, which are also much harder to appreciate with stave notation (see Appendix 1 for the complete ‘score’).

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<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, his ‘Notes on the Ensemble’ in Reich 1974: 45-8.



FIGURE 6.2. [Original in Colour]

27 Repeat 3-4 times until cue

1  
4 + 3 + 2 + 2 + 3 + 2 + 3 + 4

2  
4 + 3 + 2 + 2 + 3 + 2 + 3 + 4

3  
4 + 3 + 2 + 2 + 3 + 2 + 3 + 4

4  
4 + 3 + 2 + 2 + 3 + 2 + 3 + 4

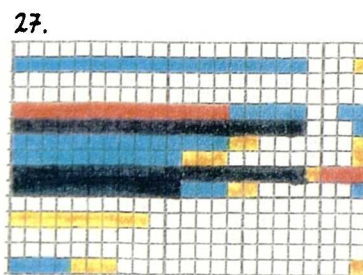
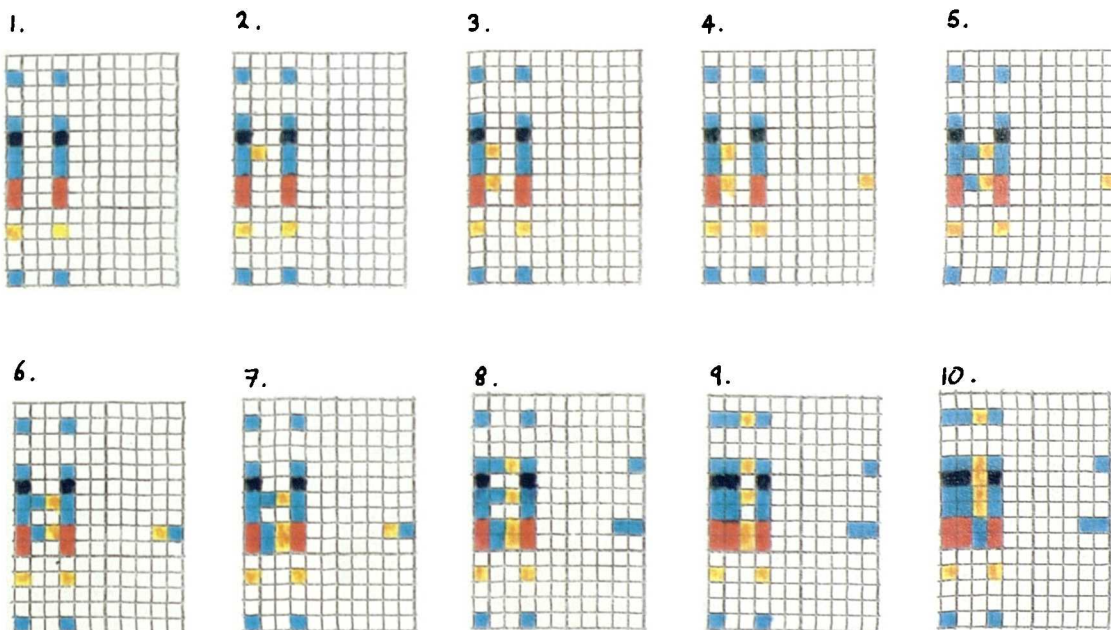


FIGURE 6.3. [Original in Colour]



The changes in note-density, made possible through the use of multiple instruments, have a very important role in the music, and to regard this piece simply as the gradual extension of one chord consisting of nine pitches is to ignore the part these variations play in perception. In addition, the layering of multiple levels of sound represents one of the clearest instances of the separation between process and sounding result: a number of features cannot be heard although they can be observed clearly in the score.

The most obvious role that this layering plays comes at the beginning of the piece, in bar 4 (see Figure 6.3 for the first 10 bars). After the initial extension of the E $\flat$  and G $\sharp$  by one quaver in bars 2 and 3, this diad is extended one quaver further in bar 4; however, instead of a static block of sound, the change from a two-density to a one-density sonority (quaver 3) means that the constant quaver motion is maintained by the change in organ sound. The same is true of the two- and three-quaver upbeats in bars 6 and 11 respectively. While these instances have some aural effect, there are several other examples, even this early in the piece, which totally escape the ear. The clearest can be observed between bars 8 and 9, where the D $\flat$  and E $\flat$  on quaver two change from a density of two to a density of three; this change results from the addition of these two pitches by Organ 4, but is completely masked by the new pitches, A $\flat$  and F $\sharp$ , also added at this point by Organ 2.

A similar oscillation between audible and inaudible changes operates throughout most of the piece. The extension and gradual thickening of the bass E $\flat$  in bars 14-17, although very small in effect, *can* be heard with sufficient familiarity, since the change in density between quavers 2 and 3 in bar 16 once again provides the pulsation within the chord (see Figure 6.4). In contrast, the change of density at quaver 1, bar 18, is completely masked by the surrounding chord. More significantly, the extension of only one strand of the E pedal, bar 19, is not perceived at all, mainly because the duration of one quaver is not a sufficient time to realise the change before the more important perceptual boundary of silence interrupts. The importance of this bar is that it presents the first instance of the organ lines being staggered, where one or more strands are not extended as fully as the others, creating the mirror image of the 'upbeat'. The process started here is thus of major importance, for, without it, the chord would remain static and not develop the type of 'inner life' found from around bar 30 onwards. However, this effect is not really perceived until at least the next bar, or even later, thus creating a clear gap between the written and the heard.

FIGURE 6.4. [Original in Colour]

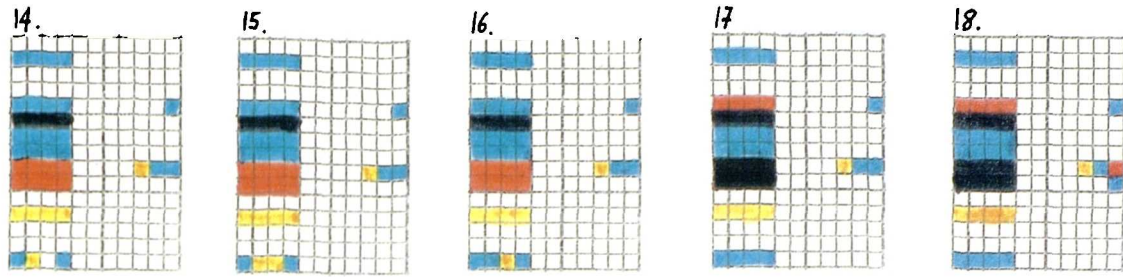


FIGURE 6.5. [Original in Colour]

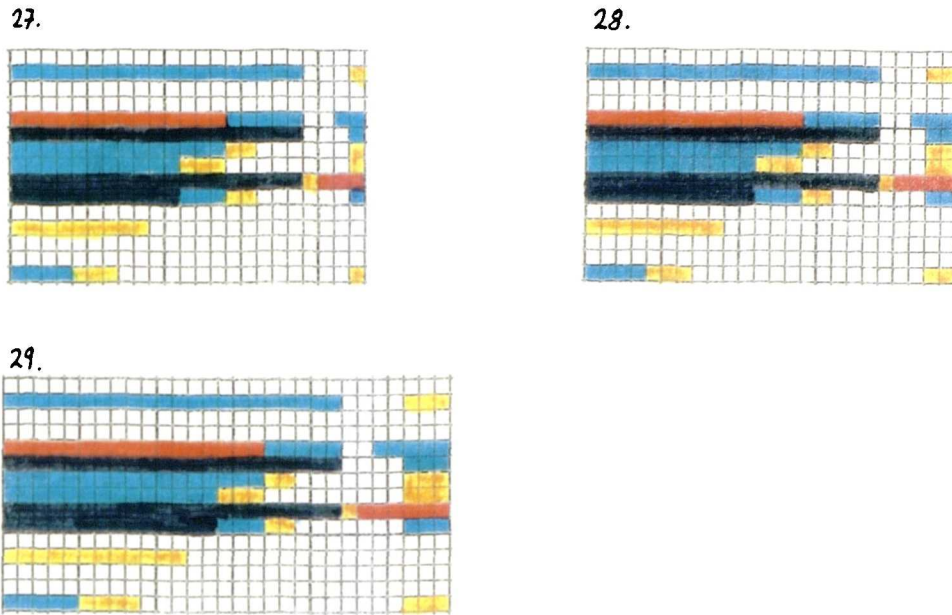
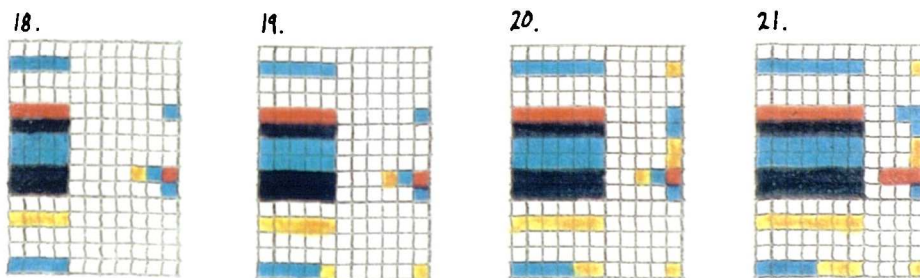


FIGURE 6.6. [Original in Colour]



A more extreme example of this type of inaudible procedure involving changes of density occurs at bar 17. Here, due to a change in the material of Organ 1, three pitches gain increased weight. This change is partly due to the need for a clear lead from player 1 (the only person to play consistently on the downbeat), and partly to provide a greater density within the chord, so that the 'unpacking', the gradual staggering, can be achieved more slowly and to greater effect. However, the change from one sonority to the next is almost impossible to hear: the new chord might strike the listener as somewhat louder, but attention is directed away from this change towards the completion of the process of thickening the bass E $\flat$ . Even if this very slight change in dynamic is perceived, the importance that this moment has in the overall process will not be realised, in that the reason remains unexplained. In effect, this change does not form part of the gradual process, yet this could not be worked out in the same manner without it; the paradox of this 'subjective' intervention into the impersonality of the 'system' is that, rather like the first instance of the stagger in bar 18, it is structural in effect, and therefore, one would assume, should be heard, but if it *is* heard then it has no meaning within the process as perceived up to this point. Even in retrospect its effect is unclear, for one never realises its function, and although it is important for the progress of the music, this is not actually a concern for the listener. Within the context of *Four Organs* this bar presents an anomaly, as it does not form part of the perception of the gradual process, being, rather, an aspect of structure that one *cannot* hear.

Elsewhere in the music there are a number of further instances of this type of change, where Reich *does* exhibit a large amount of moment-to-moment control, rather than simply letting the processes work themselves out completely. The most obvious of these involves the manner in which they interlock. Unlike a piece such as *Piano Phase*, where, once the initial pattern and the process of phasing has been chosen, no other decisions remain to be made, in *Four Organs* each step involves two decisions: which notes to extend and by how much. The music is obviously therefore less predetermined, with choices from bar to bar becoming a matter for the composer. For instance, bars 22-27 represent a gradual extension of the chord (also involving a further staggering of individual lines), but in bars 28 and 29 there is a sudden change of process to the elongation of the upbeat in bar 28, and of both chord and upbeat in bar 29 (see Figure 6.5 above). This change between processes seems designed to allow each one to be heard more clearly, and by deliberately restricting the rate at which the upbeat is allowed

to grow, the effect of each expansion is increased. The doubling in length of the upbeat in bar 28 is perceived as a major change, coming after nine bars of one quaver only, as is the subsequent lengthening in bar 29, which is given extra emphasis by extending the upbeat B ♭ from one to two quavers.

A similar effect occurs in bar 41 (see Appendix 1); here, the B ♭ and G ♯ in the upbeat are finally isolated, so that every pitch now has a clear entry. On its own this has a very strong effect, for these pitches leap into the foreground, both because they are new, and because it has taken so long into the piece for them to become 'unpacked'. The B ♭ receives further emphasis because of its previous absence from the upbeat-chord, and the fact that it is also the pitch held for the shortest time throughout the various extensions of the downbeat-chord. This absence is very clearly a deliberate 'modification' of the process, for, if it were truly impersonal, B ♭ would surely both have been a part of the upbeat-chord and been isolated earlier in the music. In both these instances, Reich manipulates the system for a specific reason: to make the effect of the transition from one bar to the next as large as possible.

Similarly, the rhythmic processes seem tailored to maximise the impact of each change; this is particularly obvious towards the end of the piece where notes are 'unpacked' from the upbeat in pairs: A ♭ and F ♯ in bar 39, and B ♭ and G ♯ in bar 41, already discussed above. The first note of these pairings is always given a much shorter duration; for the A ♭ and F ♯: 2+10 in bar 39, 3+12 in bar 40 and so on. Because of a general expectation of regularity, the length of the second note, when compared to the first, has a particularly strong effect, increasing the sense of anticipation of the upbeat-chord which follows. In complete contrast, the sudden extension of an open fourth, E-A in Organ 1, bar 39, is an unexplained event which has very *little* effect. In fact, its main role seems to be to make the distinction between the 'fade-out' of the chord and the 'fade-in' of the upbeat as small as possible, and to increase the level of continuity, so that, rather than two separate events, one hears a single unified sonority. Despite the difference in effect, this modification also cuts through any procedural 'objectivity'.

## Hearing the Changes

As the piece progresses, the way in which the process is perceived gradually changes; as has already been suggested, certain bars have a greater effect than others, some making the elongation very obvious, others masking it almost entirely. At the opening of *Four Organs* each aspect can be heard very clearly: one is aware of a uniform quaver pulsation against which the gradual addition and extension of notes can be measured. For instance, in moving from bar 5 to bar 6, the change of the upbeat E♯ from one to two quavers is very clearly a doubling of length, a perception aided by the changes of note-density already discussed. Similarly, the change in duration of the upbeat between bars 27 and 28 is also very obvious, as are the further extensions in bar 29 (from 2 to 3 quavers) and bar 32 (3 to 4). At these points one always has a sense of some type of pulse; the changes in note-density within each bar occur frequently enough so that one event is clearly 'longer than' the next, thus enabling the listener to keep track of the process. However, there are a number of places, which gradually increase, where this 'record-keeping' approach no longer functions, so that one does not hear the music as a single linear progression but, rather, several steps become grouped together in memory.

Three types of hearing operate in this music: the first involves perceiving each change at the point at which it happens, that is, one recognises the change from one bar to the next the moment it occurs. The other two involve some type of anachronism, for the changes are heard out of their proper timing: the first of these involves a type of prediction, where the change is anticipated through a projection of the process forward (consistency is obviously important here), the second involves a delayed response, where the change is not perceived until a few bars after the event. In *Four Organs* the first and last of these three are the most common, although 'prediction' occurs in a number of places, particularly given sufficient familiarity with the music. For instance, in listening to the extension of the B♯, bars 11-13, and the extension and thickening of the bass E♯, bars 14-17, once one has grasped or remembered what the process involves, one is almost already aware of the the next steps, with the anticipation of the future colouring how one hears the present. This sense of anticipation is increased by an insecurity as to exactly *when* the change will take place; apart from the fact that every live performance will be slightly different, actually to memorize the number of repeats in, say, a recorded version, is extremely difficult, it being almost impossible to acquire a feeling for the rate

of change (apart from an unmusical process of *counting*). However, this insecurity is an important part of *Four Organs*; even where forward projection takes place - and there are only a few places where the process is truly systematic - one is continually being prevented from gaining any too long-term sense of forward continuity.

This sense of uncertainty is pervasive, for even where the change is perceived very clearly at the exact point where it occurs, again one cannot predict exactly when it will come. This type of perception operates particularly towards the beginning, for instance, in bar 2 there is no way in which one could predict the addition of a G# from bar 1. (Of course, with familiarity the note can be predicted or remembered; however, as the music progresses and the number of strands increases, although one can remember the overall progression of a section, the exact order of events remains elusive and blurred in memory.) The same is true of changes such as from bar 17 to 18, where the D# is a 'subjective' and therefore unpredictable choice of note, and also for the elongation of the upbeat in bar 28, where an important change produces a correspondingly large effect. This type of hearing seems essential to enable the listener to follow a gradual process step by step, yet in *Four Organs* is not the predominant effect, which raises the issue as to what degree this can actually be heard.

The third type of perception involves the clearest distance between process and perceived result. A number of such moments, where the process lacks clarity and the exact nature of the change remains ambiguous, have already been suggested, and such instances can be found throughout the work. One of the clearest and earliest examples occurs in bar 19 (see Figure 6.6 above, p.211). Here the chord is extended from 4 to 5 quavers without altering the eleven-quaver bar-length; however, because the change is very small, this extension is not 'heard' until bar 20 or 21, where a further extension takes place, and only then is the process realised, along with the fact that it actually started some bars earlier. This is also true of the shortening of one of the bass-notes in bar 19: again, the process is not heard until the staggering of entries becomes obvious around bar 20 or 21, and is then realised in retrospect.

A similar effect occurs a few bars later, in bar 23, where the chord, and now also the bar-length, is extended by two quavers, but only in bar 24, with further extension, is this sense of elongation confirmed; in bar 26, the fact that the F# drops out two quavers 'early' is again not perceived until the next bar, where the stagger becomes more pronounced. This principle informs almost all the inaudible density-changes which were

discussed earlier, as the process is only realised some bars later when further changes have produced a clearer effect. What this means is that instead of hearing one gradual process happening through time, a number of 'jumps' ensues, each perceptual leap taking in a number of small changes. Despite the gradual nature of the process, the perception of the *result* of that process is paradoxically uneven and discontinuous. Although the overall combination of these 'jumps' has a cumulative effect, so that one does gain an overall sense of progress, it is not perceived step-by-step as it happens and thus on an aural level does not correspond to its 'gradual' nature.

As the piece continues, these perceptual leaps, the grouping-together of events into one, become larger, as the process of elongation not only happens more slowly (since each bar is now of considerable length) but each change has increasingly less effect. For instance, the elongation of the upbeat in bar 34 from four to five quavers (even coming after two bars of four quavers), has a negligible effect when compared to the shift from one to two quavers (bar 28), two to three quavers (bar 29) or even three to four quavers (bar 32). Not until even bar 36 or 37 is the continued extension perceived, and is only really confirmed in bar 39 with the isolation of two new strands, A ♯ and F ♯, emphasising this lengthening process. Similarly, the extension of the two-density, bass E ♯, from 10 quavers in bar 37, through 12 in bar 38, fourteen in bar 39 and 16 quavers in bar 40, is not perceived as three distinct steps; only when it has doubled, to 20 quavers in bar 41, is the process realised.

From the above discussion a number of general observations can be made. Firstly, the small effect of some of the changes of duration can be explained by reference to the importance of proportion. This means that, in general, a change of length from one to two is perceptually significant, from two to three is less significant (since the proportion decreases) and a change from nine to ten, for instance, extremely difficult to perceive, at this point it also becoming increasingly ambiguous as to what the duration actually is. Secondly, following on from this, one can deduce why what has been termed 'anachronistic perception' operates increasingly as the piece progresses. For although Reich *does* increase the rate of elongation from one bar to the next through the course of the music, the proportional difference still decreases significantly. This is why in the middle section of the piece, from about bar 34 to bar 40, very little change is apparent and the music becomes almost static, with very little sense of where the process is leading or what it actually involves at any point. Here, because the gradual elongation has



practically stopped, attention is no longer turned towards following its progress. Finally, towards the very end of the piece, as the process becomes more and more difficult to perceive, one starts to hear something else, which is itself not strictly a part of the gradual process but is rather where it has been leading, distinct from the moment-to-moment evolution of material.

### **Process and Sonority**

In the last four or five minutes of music, from bar 41 to the end, the staggering of attack and release points has reached a maximum, with each note sounded and released separately, giving a total of twenty-three 'events'. At this point, the only remaining procedural change possible is to increase the duration of one or more of these events, which is exactly what Reich does in bar 42. However, not only are these lengthenings not perceived, for reasons discussed above, but a sense of duration is also lost, so that the actual length of each event becomes unclear; relations of length become effectively neutralised, so that it does not actually matter whether one event is longer than the next, since a variation of a few quavers is inaudible.

At this point it is worth returning to the role of the maracas. Apart from coordinating the players, at the beginning of the piece they serve to articulate the passing of time for the listener, allowing first of all the pulsed chord to be perceived as *measured* pulsation, and secondly, to act as a reference point for the process of elongation, clarifying small increases in duration. As the music continues and the durations start to become much longer, around bar 30, the maracas re-emphasise this pulsed, measured quality, and clarify the relative lengths of events. However, by the end of the piece (from bar 39 onwards), durations become so long that differences cannot be perceived and the maracas simply maintain a sense of pulse and act as a continual reminder that the durations *are* measured, although this cannot be heard from the organ material alone. At the same time, because events become effectively arbitrary in their timing, the maracas tend to become divorced from the organ chord, thus marking a final separation between the quaver pulse and the process of augmentation. As Claus Raab observes:

duration and elongation become absolute musical elements, separated from any relationship with a perceived unit of pulse. The listener thus registers only a gradual increase in length, without being aware of the structural unit of augmentation, the quaver.... (Raab 1981: 172)

This means that the perception of the gradual process, which is reliant on hearing distinctions between precisely measured durations, is completely lost, with the separation of the audible from the structural process being almost total.

It is here that attention switches onto a contemplation of the sound in itself, for, as indicated above, the music has slowed down to such an extent that it becomes almost static. At this point there is a sudden realisation that the slowed-down chord actually contains a great deal of 'inner life', a quite complex level of shifting patterns that arise partly due to aspects of the organ sound and partly because of details of construction. The organ sound is fundamental to this perception. Firstly, it is very rich and can also be very loud, allowing the sound to engulf the listener and thus become a strong physical presence. Secondly, the fact that all pitches are of the same amplitude (objectively, of course, since in perception some differentiation can occur) and are sustained without variation means that the acoustical beating and interference that arises can be heard clearly. Because of the pitches involved in the chord, there is a high level of these beats, particularly between A $\flat$  and G $\sharp$ , but also between A and B, F $\sharp$  and G $\sharp$ , and D and E, and when combined, these produce a complex shimmering pattern. Of course, this requires long durations to be heard, for early on in the piece the patterns are simply not held for enough time for one to focus on them, and this explains why it is only later that these resultants become such an important factor.

This suggests that the chord is not perceived as a static entity, but rather as a continually-shifting sonority, an effect increased, of course, by the fact that there is still an ongoing process of addition and subtraction of pitches. Reich himself alludes to the fact that within a strict process 'there are still enough mysteries to satisfy all. These mysteries are impersonal, unintended psycho-acoustic by-products' (Reich 1974: 10); in fact, throughout *Four Organs* there are a number of features which one would not expect simply through an examination of the notes on the page. A number of what Reich was later to call 'resulting patterns' jump forward out of the texture, arising from sequences of pitches that the ear groups together. For instance, in bar 2, two neighbouring pitches, A $\flat$  and G $\sharp$ , may become joined to form a brief melodic pattern; in bar 3, with the addition of E $\flat$  on quaver 2, a new, lower stream is heard (see Figure 6.7).

FIGURE 6.7.

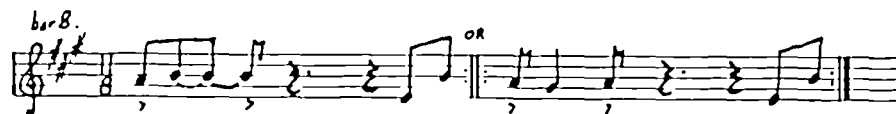


Melodies continually appear out of the texture; in bar 6, for instance, as certain notes become longer, the upper line tends to stand out, producing a more sustained resultant (Figure 6.8). As the texture thickens, a number of these resultants become audible within each bar: with bar 8, for instance, one can switch almost at will between two patterns (see Figure 6.9), and this possibility of selecting one's own route through the sonority becomes increasingly important.<sup>3</sup>

FIGURE 6.8.



FIGURE 6.9.



With the slow-down in rate of change from bar to bar, the rhythmic aspect of the resulting melodies obviously similarly reduces, and these increasingly static melodies thus become less easy to perceive. However, as the chord slowly elongates, and the notes become increasingly staggered, a new type of 'resulting pattern' emerges: as notes are lifted off from the bottom of the chord, the next lowest note stands out as if re-sounded. In effect this means that by bar 27 one hears a slowly ascending B-D-E melody, which gradually becomes more distended as the piece progresses. Coupled with this, one can perceive an ascending F#-G#-A melody within the texture, resulting from exactly the same process. Obviously, as the level of stagger increases and a greater number of

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<sup>3</sup> In Reich's 'phase-shifting' music these 'resulting patterns' tend actually to be played by additional instruments: live violin in *Violin Phase* and drummers, vocalists, piccolo and whistling in *Drumming*, where they become an increasingly important compositional technique. In these pieces Reich chooses a number of patterns for the listener to be made aware of (although he does suggest that others will arise as a result), rather than, in *Four Organs*, simply allowing listeners to undertake their own process of exploration without any form of guidance. For discussion of this aspect of *Drumming* see Schwarz 1982: 233-8, and for Reich's own comments, Duckworth 1995: 306.

events take place, one actually hears a number of such melodies which add up to give the type of 'inner life' which was referred to above. In addition, the use of multiple organs means that each pitch has a number of release or attack points, so that even a single pitch involves a level of variation, which effectively amounts to a small change of timbre, so that the sonority is continually changing. As all other movement decreases, an ambiguity arises as to what is actually happening, for as one's attention wanders within the sound, alighting on different notes here or there or pulling further patterns into the foreground, the overall progression of the process and even of the sense of upbeat and downbeat recede. The freedom for the listener to explore the sonority suggests that at this point in the music the emphasis is on the dominant-eleventh chord itself, rather than the ending of the process through which it is being fed.

*Four Organs* may thus be connected to some of the concerns of Reich's original conception for *Slow Motion Sound*. The slowing-down of a single sound in this piece finally places emphasis on the interest within that slowed-down sonority, in what new effects one can hear, and so on, rather than purely in the process used to reach this point. Towards the end of *Four Organs*, as each note is isolated, the effect is of slowly exploring an increased amount of the potential originally packed up in the two quaver-length chords with which the piece started; in such a short chord, one obviously cannot hear very much detail, so the stretching process allows its full make-up to be examined. The gradual processes of this piece can finally be seen as leading towards this effect, as they unpack the potential of the sound which is fully revealed in the final bars. The way in which these bars represent some form of end goal is indicated by the fact that, after 11 bars which have all been played once, bar 42 is to be played two or three times. This means that any sense of forward progression is now lost, for, unlike the earlier repeated patterns, bar 42 is simply too long to be heard as a stable length against which change can be perceived; instead, repetition reinforces the stasis of the music, making the piece come to a complete standstill. The chord exists now purely as sound, with listeners free to wander within it, continuing their own process of exploration, with *Four Organs* revealing itself as a vehicle for concentrated listening to a single, slowly-evolving sonority.

## Chapter 7

### Variations on a Theme

Howard Skempton's *The Durham Strike* (1985)

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#### Sections and Categories

Howard Skempton is probably best known for his large number of solo piano pieces, which he has called the 'central nervous system' of his output. Their most remarked-upon feature is their very short length, with a majority lasting under two minutes. The resulting reduction of material, with most pieces concentrating on a single musical idea (a melody, static chords, etc.), is one of the principal characteristics of Skempton's music. *The Durham Strike* is something of an exception in that it is considerably longer, lasting around five minutes in performance, and is made up of a number of clear, but linked, sections. This greater length means that it is more likely to be performed and perceived as a separate entity for, as Skempton describes, 'it is unusual for a single short piece to be played on its own. If a group or extended sequence of pieces has to be devised, then the performer's judgement and imagination come into play' (Skempton 1996: 6). This obviously has a number of analytical advantages, for one can be clearer about what the analysis has to focus on, rather than being faced with music which is only heard, and is expected to be heard, in the undecided context of a number of other compositions. In addition, *The Durham Strike* can almost be regarded as a fairly accurate illustration of the types of music that are to be found elsewhere in Skempton's piano works if its six sections are regarded as individual 'pieces' linked into a larger form.<sup>1</sup> This connects with Skempton's comments regarding his orchestral *Chorales* (1980), where the 'linking of sections is related to the way any of the individual piano pieces can be grouped in performance' (in Parsons 1987: 19), and is also comparable to the four short and contrasting movements which make up the more recent Chamber Concerto (1995). Of course, the relationships between the parts of *The Durham Strike* are quite complicated, particularly since it behaves in some respects like a theme and

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<sup>1</sup> In fact, according to Skempton, the material of the fourth section 'existed previously, as an independent series of chords' (in Parsons 1987: 19), and this reinforces this sense of a 'collection' of smaller works.

variations, with a network of correspondences and differences linking the various sections; in fact, this sense of ambiguity between a 'collection' and one larger entity is one of the most important features of this music and of the following analysis.

Before going on to examine this sectional construction in greater detail, it is worth considering some general features of *The Durham Strike* which it does share with the majority of Skempton's piano music. Firstly, it is given one dynamic marking, *pp*, which applies throughout, with no 'expressive' variations indicated in the score, and this quietness of dynamic is coupled with a quietness of movement, the music being generally slow-moving and, at times, almost static. There are no 'irrational' subdivisions of the beat (into 5, 7, or even 3), with a basic quaver pulse maintained almost throughout, the final two sections marked 'extremely slowly' compared with the earlier 'slowly'. This general absence of instructions to performers is wholly typical of Skempton's output (although *The Durham Strike* does, unusually, possess rather precise pedalling instructions), and becomes almost a matter of principle, Skempton remarking that 'there is a point beyond which the composer should not go' (in Parsons 1987: 19). This attitude to notation raises a huge number of issues regarding the ontological status of the musical work, which lie far outside the scope of the present study, but the implications for the current analysis need briefly considering. Skempton considers that this 'clean' score, lacking in specific dynamic and tempo indications, 'is crucial. It clarifies structure and emphasises what is purely musical. As in constructive art, form and content are identified. The score exemplifies the underlying principle on which different performances are based, and provides a model for any and every realisation' (in Parsons 1987: 19). Regarding the construction of melody, but applicable to all aspects of his music, Skempton goes on to say that 'pitch and duration can be precisely measured, and this is what the composer is primarily concerned with' (: 27).

This compositional concentration on those aspects of music which can be accurately notated might suggest that the analyst is, for once perhaps, justified in only considering 'the score', divorced from the sounding result. Of course, it is by no means that simple, for as well as the importance of various 'non-notated' elements such as piano resonance and timbral issues, the effect (and effectiveness) of this music is quite distinct from the expectation that an examination of the score might suggest. The most obvious distinction is the way in which the music looks as if it falls into six clearly-demarcated and in some cases apparently self-contained sections, as will be outlined

below, but in fact our experience of the piece involves *hearing* connections and relationships which are not immediately obvious, resulting in a more complex perception of form. This separation between the notational and the perceptual is an important focus of this analysis, but on a more local level, the use of the piano (much more so than with many other instruments) means that one can actually be very precise about what a given notational sign indicates and so in many ways the sound is very closely represented by, or, to use Skempton's term, closely 'realises' the notation. As a result, attention is thrown onto precise pitches and their rhythmic articulation, and it is the emphasis on these main factors, which Skempton considers as being most under his control, and on the relationships created thereby, which is mirrored in the following analysis.

As indicated above, *The Durham Strike* falls into six sections which are clearly defined on paper, though to a somewhat lesser extent in performance; the degree to which the sections are interrelated will be considered in some detail below, but this basic division into sections is an important part of the perception of form. The sections are usually defined by contrasts of texture and differences in a sense of motion or stasis that each projects, and can easily be grouped according to Skempton's own characterisation of his main compositional 'types', what he calls his 'central concerns': Landscapes, Chorales and Melodies. The first section is indisputably melodic, being, apparently, a traditional folk-tune from North-East England from which the piece gains its title; this sixteen-bar melody establishes a clear 6/8 tempo and a clear sense of modality (though what this mode is remains somewhat confused). The second section is a landscape, 'simply project[ing] the material as sound without momentum' (Skempton, in Parsons 1987: 21), involving a very limited palette of materials and a sense of stasis created by the almost exclusive use of semibreves. The third section returns to the melody and 6/8 rhythm of the first, but reharmonises it, whereas the fourth, which, as has already been noted, existed previously, could be described as an arpeggiated chorale; Skempton describes his chorales as 'a way of presenting this primary harmonic material in its strongest form.... there is a sense of movement arising from harmonic tensions in the material, which is often chromatic' (: 21). This fourth section presents the clearest sense of continuity to that which precedes it, but is articulated by the absence of the melodic thread and, in notation, by a 3/8 time signature. Section 5 is another landscape, again static and involving predominantly

semibreve material, and Section 6 presents a new melodic idea, now in 9/8, yet apparently related to the opening of Section 1.

As this thumb-nail sketch suggests, *The Durham Strike*, in its initial presentation of a basic theme which reappears in a number of new guises, resembles a set of variations, but at the same time the connection between sections is not as obvious as the use of this term might initially suggest. Skempton himself has said that he does consider this piece a 'theme and variations', but goes on:

the variations are obliquely related. I think of the piece as a sequence of linked sections, for which I was able to use the theme as a starting point... the theme appears only in sections 1 and 3. Section 2 is a variation 'once removed', and the material of section 4 existed previously.... I do not like to vary or 'develop' the theme; it has its own integrity which must be preserved... [*The Durham Strike*] could be described as an assemblage of related short pieces, an association of similars; a society of smaller pieces in which each individual retains its own identity. (In Parsons 1987: 19)

This ambiguity between a unified set of variations and a more disparate collection of short pieces has already been alluded to; certainly the ghost of the 'variation-set' remains throughout, and the listener has continually to consider different relationships with the 'theme': in some cases these are clear, in others more difficult to define. An important part of the effect of this music is the way in which relationships between sections are perceived, even when they appear (in notation) quite distinct, and how a sense of consistency and general 'rightness' about the sequence of material is created. At the same time, these relationships remain somewhat mysterious, it being very difficult to pin down exactly what they involve and from where this sense of rightness arises. This ambiguity on a large-scale structural level is carried over into the creation of a number of similar oppositions somewhat nearer the surface; these involve initially setting up two apparently distinct categories, but then the music oscillates between them, at one moment stressing one aspect, and at times the other. A number of these are clearly related to the initial ambiguity regarding the status of sections as 'variations': these involve our sense of 'melody' and 'decoration', and, similarly, 'foreground' and 'background', with some confusion arising as to where these distinctions lie. The contrast between motion and stasis has already been referred to, and overall the piece plays with our sense of direction, producing what Michael Parsons has called 'a hovering between stability and mobility' (1987: 16). This perception is connected to a similar hovering between modality and chromaticism, which in this piece often appear to be remarkably close; the way in which a number of these pairings are related will be considered below. There is also a sense of overall distance which surrounds the music



and which gives it an air of intangibility. The strength and effectiveness of *The Durham Strike* relies upon this interplay between apparently clear-cut distinctions, and in fact the sophistication with which Skempton manipulates and arranges his material to achieve this fine sense of balance is one of its principal attractions; since an important effect of this music is the production of a sense of ambiguity on a number of different levels, one of the primary concerns of this analysis will be to assess this process and to consider how this ambiguity is achieved.

### **Analytical Strategy**

An analytical approach to *The Durham Strike* must therefore recognise the ambiguous nature of each individual section in terms of its place within the overall structure, as well as the way in which Skempton's music disrupts traditional expectations of overall shape and momentum, producing instead the effect of an oscillation between motion and stasis, what Walter Zimmermann has called 'bewegende Nicht-bewegung' - moving non-movement (Zimmermann 1984b: 36). This lack of what could be called long-term direction might initially suggest that the analyst need not be concerned with larger-scale issues; however, as discussed above, *The Durham Strike* is neither simply one large-scale structure nor a collection of unrelated shorter pieces, and the analytical approach undertaken below attempts to mirror this undecideability. The piece will be subjected to a process of 'reading through' from beginning to end, one section at a time, initially isolating each section in turn and exploring its internal construction, before examining connections with what has already been heard and how this may fit into any larger-scale patterns. In this respect it is a fairly traditional process, involving taking the music apart before finally piecing it back together. The 'reading through' process, tracing the music as it unfolds, recognises the way in which the piece is experienced in performance, although it also allows for the interconnections that such an experience produces to be examined both as they arise and in retrospect. In most cases the material of each section can be 'described' fairly easily, but its function and overall meaning, both within the piece as a whole, and in terms of its specific effect, requires greater exploration, and involves not just tracing relationships internally but also considering the way in which listeners try to make sense of their experience of the music.

Section One: FIGURE 7.1.



The simplicity of the melody of this section (four 4-bar segments forming an A-B-B'-A' pattern) is mirrored by the manner of its presentation, with pure monody replaced in the tenth bar by an octave doubling, with the right hand now adding a number of 'decorative' pitches, interspersed into the gaps between the mostly consistent crotchet-quaver rhythm, but still maintaining the primacy of the line. The only exception to this doubling comes in bar 14, where the left hand, in momentarily leaving its primary role to introduce C $\natural$  as a harmony note, effectively defines the mode as a Phrygian scale on B, as up until this point the melodic thread has been purely pentatonic, with the decorative notes adding a sixth pitch, G $\sharp$ ; this moment of modal definition is deliberately introduced by Skempton (it is not part of the melody) and is certainly a very 'affective' moment, serving to dispel the harmonic 'blandness' of the simple tune. In addition, this C $\natural$  serves to contradict an expectation of the use of C $\sharp$ , as this music is, initially at least, heard as being 'in' B minor, which the C $\natural$  clearly disrupts; why a five-note melody should be heard in a diatonic context may well depend upon 'force of habit', but the process increases the importance given to this one note within the first section.

This is the clearest indication of the fact that this section is not simply a bare presentation of an unaltered folk melody, and what is remarkable about it is the way in

which it *sounds* like Skempton's own music. This is partly achieved through the construction of the melody itself, which exactly fits Parsons' characterisation of Skempton's own melodies which 'generally move back and forth over a very limited range of notes' (1987: 27), partly through confining the music to the treble register, A below middle-C being the lowest note, coupled with a lack of harmonic underpinning, and also through the use of the sustaining pedal, which prolongs the resonance of the first 10 bars and lends the music an aura of distance. On a slightly more detailed level, a simple rhythmic modification, the syncopation in bar 9, makes this version a little more complicated than what seems to be the 'original' which appears in Section 3; this process of a (very slight) internal variation has a remarkably pronounced effect given the simplicity of its surroundings. In addition, the use of a decorated version of the melody in the right hand, as well as the delayed entry of this process, means that this section becomes in a sense itself a variation, so that the very strong sense of a theme and variations, already conjured up by the simplicity and 'folkiness' of the tune, is itself somewhat eroded. In the blurring of its function, this initial section anticipates the more complex process of suggestion which is advanced later on in the music.

Section Two: FIGURE 7.2.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for a piano piece. Each system consists of a grand staff with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The first system shows the initial bars of the piece, with a melody in the treble staff and accompaniment in the bass staff. The second system continues the piece, ending with a double bar line and the instruction '(pedalling free to the end)' written below the bass staff. A series of small wavy lines below the staves indicates the placement of the sustaining pedal.

One of Skempton's 'Landscapes', this section involves only seven basic elements. Of these seven, two consist of single pitch-classes sounded as an octave, and four involve an open fifth similarly doubled at the octave, with the pitches of two of these elements being arpeggiated; the one exception is itself made up of two superimposed fifths a minor third apart (G $\sharp$ -D $\sharp$  plus B-F $\sharp$ ). Figure 7.3 shows how relationships between pairs of elements continue the use of the perfect fifth, with the elements numbered in the order in which they are introduced. Their ordering, although possibly chance-determined,<sup>2</sup> stresses the interval of a third: as Figure 7.2 illustrates, elements a minor third apart are often alternated or simply placed side by side. The basic material also involves this interval: the bass notes of the four open fifths make up a B minor seventh chord, with the entirety of the pitch material of this section forming an alternating series of major and minor thirds (see Figure 7.4).

FIGURE 7.3.

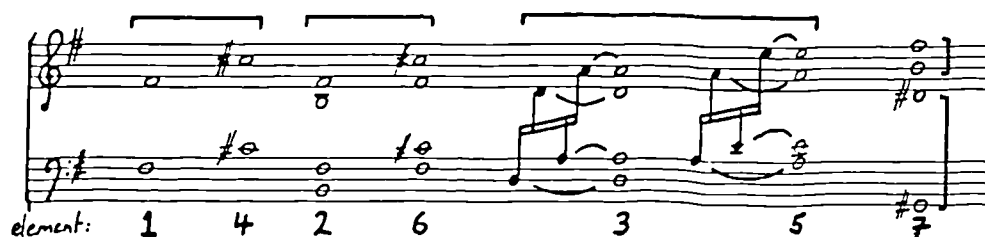


FIGURE 7.4.



In terms of continuity, the two elements involving a single pitch-class appear only once each and, as indicated by the pedalling instructions, element 1 can be thought of as an upbeat to element 2, the F $\sharp$  sounding 'as a dominant' to the B-F $\sharp$  diad, with element 4 forming an extension of its resonance, with this C $\sharp$  also providing a kind of pivot-note to the A-E diad, element 5. This is, in fact, very important, for after the introduction of this diad the section leaves the initial emphasis on the B-F $\sharp$  fifth, circling instead around F $\sharp$ -C $\sharp$ ; in forming a transition from element 2 to element 5, this

<sup>2</sup> A number of Skempton's earlier piano pieces use chance methods to control the ordering of pre-formed events, and this may well be the process that is used here; for a discussion of this technique see Parsons 1980: 12.

single note acts as a pivot for the whole section. The sense of arrival on F♯-C♯ as a 'centre' is achieved partly through its greater frequency as the sections progresses, partly through its position as a literal centre between D-A and A-E diads, and also through the sense of cadence that the final motion from element 7 suggests, giving this final sonority a feeling of 'rightness'.

Some other details are worth noting: firstly, that the two arpeggiated diads, elements 3 and 5, are not arpeggiated in ascending order but, reading upwards, in note-order 1-3-2-4; this ordering emphasises both the intervals of an octave and of a fifth, and thereby absorbs aspects of elements 1 and 2 into what may thus be considered a further variation. Secondly, this arpeggiation is measured, so that, according to the notation at least, these elements are a crotchet beat longer than the others. If this is observed, and the ♪ = ♪ marking at the outset of this section indicates that it should be, the effect is to disrupt the otherwise completely regular rhythmic profile, a further example of a type of variation process in miniature; certainly, this subtle rhythmic process illustrates the creation of a deliberate ambiguity in terms of perception of identity or variance. Thirdly, the 'rogue' element, a 4-26 [0,3,5,8] tetrachord, is saved until almost the very end, increasing its disruptive effect. This element also involves the extremes of register within this section, which both increases the sense of extension which it presents, and means that it also defines the registral limits within which all the other material is heard. The effect of this section in general terms is to present a predominantly static series of related chords, exploring the sonority of an octave-doubled open fifth, sounded in unison and in sequence (arpeggiated). There is a lack of overall motion, notwithstanding the general shift from B-F♯ to F♯-C♯, presenting instead a type of circling movement, which even when apparently opening in a new direction (the [0,3,5,8] element) is swiftly contained within the overriding ambit and the concentration on a single musical idea.<sup>3</sup>

When related to Section 1, the effect becomes somewhat more complicated. In terms of immediate continuity, Section 2 runs on from Section 1 (although this new section is clearly demarcated) by means of the F♯ on which the last bar of Section 1 arrives, with this F♯ now acting as a dominant and leading onto element 2, the B-F♯ diad. When the two sections are heard in sequence, Section 2 seems initially to be a

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<sup>3</sup> This concentration relates to what Peter Hill calls 'the ability to rediscover the magic locked into the most commonplace material' (Hill 1984: 9).

separate 'interlude', though given the fact that Section 1, in sounding like a 'theme', has lead one to expect a variation-set, and given Skempton's own definition of this section as 'a variation "once removed" ', it seems appropriate to ask what this relationship involves. There are a number of possible 'solutions', one of which would be to suggest that the 16 'events' of Section 2 map onto the 16 bars of Section 1, so that this second section is viewed as a harmonisation of the basic melodic line, but here presented in isolation. However, if the two are combined the resulting harmonies are not very satisfactory, certainly in traditional terms, but a more useful comparison may be evolved if the two sections are considered more generally. The predominance of open fifths in Section 2 does suggest a derivation from the drones often found in folk music, thus connecting to the folk-tune of Section 1; though, of course, here they are rather too changeable to be 'authentic', this does suggest at least a common conceptual framework. To extend the idea of accompaniment, it is probably better to think of Section 2 less as a literal harmonisation and more as a distillation of possible harmonies, reordered and controlled so as to create its own logic. Certainly, all the elements of Section 2 are 'possible', for even the rogue element 7, with its D♯, may accompany a melody in 'B minor', as will be demonstrated by the next section (a further relationship between sections). One further useful comparison is to draw upon similarities of pitch structure: the most obvious connection is the use of a mode on B ♭, here principally the Dorian mode (D♯ replacing D ♭ in element 7 forms the Mixolydian mode), coupled with the use of third-relationships, and also a reduction of the opening melodic F♯-E-D-B into the basic open fifth. Another similarity involves the keeping back of a 'rogue' element (in Section 1 the C ♭) until almost the end of the section; the fact that both these elements actually involve an important relationship with their surroundings only serves to provide a further level of similarity. The two sections are therefore connected through a number of common threads and share common features which help to bind them together; their relationship thus turns out to be relatively indirect and actually quite subtle.

Section Three: FIGURE 7.5.



This section may be described very simply: it consists of the melody from Section 1, with the syncopation in bar 9 ironed out, accompanied by a sequence of eight diads; each diad lasts one half-bar of 6/8 and is presented as an alternating semiquaver pattern. The sequence is derived systematically, with each diad sharing one note with its neighbours, the whole sequence forming a palindromic structure and articulating a diminished tetrachord on C $\sharp$  (see Figure 7.6).

FIGURE 7.6.



What is interesting about this choice of diminished chord is that it both does not contain B $\sharp$ , the 'tonic', and does contain D $\sharp$ , with this dissonance between a D $\sharp$  in the accompaniment and the D $\flat$  of the now purely pentatonic melodic line being one of the chief characteristics of this section. It again uses a very limited pitch-range, as Section

1, but now only extending downwards to middle C, and only uses 10 pitches (7 pitch-classes), with the lowest pitch of the melody coinciding with the highest note of the accompaniment, which does provide some sense of connection between the two. The effect of combining the pentatonic melody with a diminished-chord accompaniment is to disrupt any clear sense of pitch-centre; although the left-hand material uses diads D♯-F♯ and D♯-A, which suggest B<sup>7</sup>, these are usually heard against D♭ in the right hand, concealing this effect. At the very end, these two diads are coupled with a melodic B♭, and although this more clearly articulates B<sup>7</sup>, any sense of function, that is, as V of E major, has been eroded by previous usage. Although the interplay of pentatonic with diminished sonorities creates a chromatic resultant, this section does not sound 'dissonant'; instead, the melody sounds 'far away', as if filtered through a strange sound-world, with each layer affecting how the other is heard, so that concepts of 'pentatonic' and 'diminished' become absorbed into an overall sonic landscape.

Within the piece as a whole, this section operates as a 'return', obviously revisiting the material of Section 1, and thus tends to make Section 2 sound retrospectively as an interlude. This sense is exacerbated by the lack of direct continuity from Section 2 to 3 and the absence of any clear relationship between these two sections overall. There are, however, some connections which are less clearly perceived but do indicate aspects of consistency. Firstly, both sections display a similar ambiguity between D♯ and D♭, though in Section 2 this is on a much less audible level and anyway less clearly defined. Secondly, there is a similar emphasis placed on the use of thirds, though this is a more abstract connection, with Section 3 being more single-minded in its systematic use of minor thirds in the left hand. Thirdly, this section can be viewed as combining two harmonic or 'pitch systems', the diatonicism / modality of Section 1 and the third-relationships of Section 2, into a new variation, with each assigned to a separate hand and presented simultaneously. In fact, this combination results on an aural level in a reversal of traditional expectation, for this 'theme with accompaniment' presents a more straightforward melodic version than was heard in Section 1, so that the expectation of increasing complexity that a 'variation set' suggests is eroded. In terms of perception of the folk-melody, this section actually lends it a greater sense of distance, so that it is again 'once removed'; although the melodic seed is heard at its simplest, it is now at its most mysterious, remaining elusive and lacking any sense of clarity.



Section Four: FIGURE 7.7.

This series of descending arpeggiated chords, tracing a path from a diminished chord on C to effectively the same sonority one octave lower (actually a seventh chord on A $\flat$  but underpinned by A $\natural$ ), involves the total chromatic from B down to middle C, with the final addition of a lower A natural, and achieves this process through a fairly systematic manipulation of a limited set of related chord-types. The upper-most note of each bar undergoes a rigorous process in its traversal of the total-chromatic, continually rising a tone and then falling a minor third. For the first 18 bars this involves a 3-bar pattern, A-A-B, A $\flat$ -A $\flat$ -B $\flat$  etc., whereas in the second group of 18 bars, this is reduced to a two-bar pattern, E $\flat$ -F, D-E and so on. These groupings, into three- and then two-bar units, dominate perception of the descending pattern, the top note standing out even when not specifically accented. In the movement from one tetrachord to the next, at least one pitch is kept the same, and more usually two or three, so that the process is very gradual, with each part except the top line moving by

semitonal step; the movement occurs at different times, but in all cases except for the first two and the last four bars, at least one change does occur every bar.

The resulting series of chords is shown in Figure 7.8; these are grouped according to their pitch-order (showing the pitch content of each, reading upwards and with the lowest note of each chord as 0), and, listed above, their prime form. The use of pitch-order enables differentiation between a number of prime-form equivalent chords. Immediately obvious is the fact that every three- and two-chord grouping always ends with a 4-18 (0-3-6-11), as is the initial use of the diminished seventh (4-28) in the three-bar grouping and its absence in the two-bar grouping. A further interesting fact is that the three 4-27 tetrachords to the left of Figure 7.8 are all inversions in the traditional sense of the word, involving a rotation of their interval pattern, i.e. if 0-2-5-8 is 'root position' then 0-3-7-9 is 'second inversion' and 0-4-6-9 'third inversion' ('first inversion' not being used). In contrast, the 4-27 to the right, 0-3-6-8, is a literal inversion, i.e. the interval pattern of 0-2-5-8 turned upside-down. There is, of course, a close relationship between the three different prime-forms: 4-28 consisting of three minor thirds, 4-27 of two minor thirds and a major third, and 4-18 of two minor thirds and a perfect fourth. This section thus displays an apparently conscious use of a very limited number of chord-types and of their manipulation (rotation and inversion). What is remarkable is how this passage articulates such a gradual descent, and the use of basically *similar* chordal sonorities to achieve this means that this process appears almost inexorable; each chord seems naturally to follow on from the next, with no 'jumps' in the level of chromaticism. In fact, although this section involves the total-chromatic, the use of triadic formations means that it still retains a simple, almost modal sound; the most dissonant moment comes in the final three bars with the major-seventh clash between A $\flat$  and A $\natural$ , also, of course, the only notes actually sounded together, though the speed of playing and the presumed use of the sustaining pedal tie these arpeggios into clear chordal formations.

FIGURE 7.8.

Prime Form	4-27 [0,2,5,8]	4-27 [0,2,5,8]	4-27 [0,2,5,8]	4-28 [0,3,6,9]	4-18 [0,1,4,7]	4-27 [0,2,5,8]
Pitch order	0-3-7-9	0-4-6-9	0-2-5-8	0-3-6-9	0-3-6-11	0-3-6-8

The musical notation consists of 12 staves, each corresponding to a column in the table above. The notation is written in treble clef and includes various key signatures and rhythmic patterns. The first staff shows a sequence of notes corresponding to the prime form 4-27 [0,2,5,8] with pitch order 0-3-7-9. The subsequent staves show variations of these forms, with some staves containing accidentals (sharps and flats) and some ending with 'etc'.

When heard in context, this passage most obviously takes up the semiquaver motion of Section 3, as well as its treble register; in fact, the registral connection is very strong, for it articulates exactly the same span of B to C, apart from the final low A ♭ (which itself means that it matches Section 1). In addition, the first sonority here is the same diminished chord which makes up the left-hand material in Section 3, which provides another link between the two. In fact, this connection illustrates how notation and aural result can suggest differing levels of clarity in their relationship, as here the enharmonic change from D♯-F♯ to E♭-G♭ observed in the notation obscures their common formation, whereas on an aural level this is more obvious; contact between passages which *look* distinct is an important part of *The Durham Strike* as a whole. The most important element which preserves a sense of continuity between these two sections is the semiquaver motion and ensures that the overall effect here is of continuation, not disruption. In terms of its further connection, Section 4 obviously continues the concentration on the interval of a minor third, as well as eventually reintroducing a semitonal interplay, here between A ♭ and A ♮, which is comparable to that in Section 3 (and Section 2).

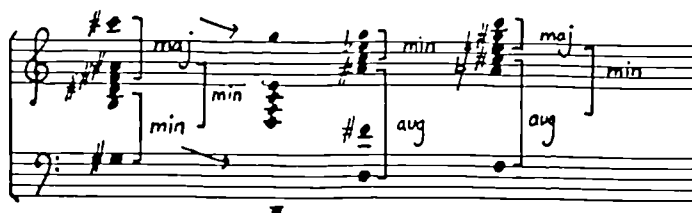
Section Five: FIGURE 7.9.

Extremely slowly

Another 'Landscape', this section presents four six-note chords; the third and fourth initially appear to be an inversion of the first two, both in terms of rhythm (the ordering of their 'arpeggiation': chord - single-note versus single-note - chord) and in registral terms, particularly with the degree of spacing between the single notes and the chords. In fact, the relationship between these four elements is somewhat more complex. Apart from the change of octave of the lowest note, chord 2 is an exact transposition of chord 1 by the interval of a tritone, and the two together form the total-chromatic, both having prime form 6-32 [0,2,4,5,7,9]. Chords 3 and 4 both reduce to

prime form 6-31 [0,1,3,5,8,9] and although chord 4 at first appears to be a straightforward transposition by a minor third of chord 3, it is actually slightly modified, but the two again form the total chromatic. All four elements combine two superposed triads, in two cases separated by a minor 3rd, and the bass notes themselves form a diminished triad D-F-G# (see Figure 7.10).

FIGURE 7.10.



This triadic formation means that although the whole section is chromatic, each chord suggests a more diatonic patterning, 1 and 2 forming 11th chords and 3 and 4, by virtue of the large spacing between the two lowest notes, building a clear major / augmented sonority. However, there is no sense of direction, the chords are just ‘objects’ without apparent implication, although there is a general registral motion upwards at the end. In addition, the alternation between the ‘sharps’ of chord 1 and the white-notes of chord 2 creates a specific effect and emphasises an initial disjunction, whereas the second two chords are less clearly defined; paradoxically, of course, in terms of construction, chords 1 and 2 are (practically) identical, whereas 3 and 4 are more distinct.

This section is again perceived as a static ‘interlude’, principally because it interrupts the semiquaver motion which bound Sections 3 and 4 together, but also because it sounds almost completely unrelated to the theme, or indeed anything that has been heard before. However, there are a number of relationships with previous sections. The most obvious of these is the continual use of minor thirds, not only in terms of the internal construction of the chords, but in their relationships: as pointed out above, chords 1 and 2 are a tritone (i.e. two minor thirds), distant, at least the lower halves of chords 3 and 4 are spaced a minor third apart, and the bass notes form a diminished triad (again, two minor thirds). The use of triadic formations as building blocks obviously connects with the material of Section 4 and, in fact, there is a more precise relationship between these two sections, as two of the three pitch-class sets used in Section 4, 4-28 and 4-18, are subsets of set 6-31 (chords 3 and 4). In fact, only a 0-4-6-9 version of 4-

27 actually ‘appears’ embedded within these chords, as part of chord 3, but this thickening out of earlier material may be considered another type of variation process. Certainly, the similarity in the importance both of major and minor triads further connects this section to the ‘background’ of Section 2; in addition, element 7 of that earlier section, the 4-26 [0,3,5,8] tetrachord, is a subset of both 6-31 and 6-32, with chord 1 of Section 6 involving all four of its pitch-classes: F# G# B D#.

Most of these connections operate on a more ‘theoretically describable’ than clearly audible level, particularly as this fifth section is set off from its surroundings by its almost total stasis (in fact, it involves a new pulse, ‘extremely slowly’, though this is hardly felt). However, there is one level of continuity between Sections 4 and 5, for the first chord of Section 5, particularly the five notes sounded together, connects to the last arpeggio of Section 4 in a similar way as the ongoing process in that earlier section. What this means is that the upper part ascends one tone, the two middle pitches remain the same, whilst the lowest two notes descend by step (see Figure 7.11). The beginning of Section 5 therefore initially ‘makes sense’, rather as Section 2 does after Section 1, but very soon takes a very different direction. The continual significance that this gives to the D#-F# diad as ‘connecting tissue’ provides a further relationship between Sections 3, 4 and 5.<sup>4</sup>

FIGURE 7.11.



<sup>4</sup>This use of common notes in the centre of a chord is a common technique in Skempton’s works, particularly his early music, and ‘apparently is a modal way of working rather than a tonal way of thinking’ (in Volans 1985: 31), an observation that is obviously relevant to a consideration of *The Durham Strike*.

Section Six: FIGURE 7.12.



This section permutes a number of melodic fragments which again involve a very limited amount of pitch material, and their similarity, as well as the circling nature of the melodic line which they create, disrupts attempts to grasp the overall sense. Four left-hand patterns, each lasting one bar, are variously combined with seven different right-hand patterns; Figure 7.13 lays out both sets, grouped according to similarities of rhythm and melodic motion. As can be seen, these display a number of interconnections, some patterns being identical in rhythm, some in pitch, and with very little overall variation; Figure 7.14 shows the combinations of the two sets and the overall ordering.

FIGURE 7.13.



FIGURE 7.14.

	<i>a1</i>		<i>b2</i>		<i>c3</i>		<i>d4</i>	
	<i>a1</i>		<i>a1</i>		<i>e2</i>	:	<i>c3</i>	
	<i>f4</i>		<i>g1</i>		<i>b2</i>		<i>c3</i>	:

A systematic process may be observed in the left hand, where, with one exception, the 1 2 3 4 patterning is always preserved, even across the repeat marks; the exception is the second *a1* in bar 6, which only 'prolongs' and therefore does not actually interrupt the ongoing process. The first four bars clearly present a question-answer pattern, and this operates on two levels, for not only does *b2* answer *a1*, and *d4* answer *c3*, but the two-bar units also create a similar patterning. This is disrupted in bar 6, with the repetition of *a1*, which sets the metrical sense (phrases of four bars, bb. 1-4, 5-8, 9-12) against the pattern of the material (phrases bb. 1-4, 5/6-9, 10-), so that one is never quite sure again whether bar 8 answers bar 7, or bar 9 answers bar 8 and so on, as the sense of regularity is disrupted. This also means that the openness of the ending is more pronounced, for not only does it stop suddenly and without resolution, but it also feels



like the 'fourth bar', suggested by the process, is missing. This effect is an excellent example of how very slight manipulation of material creates very subtle effects which disrupt a sense of predictability. The tonal ambiguity of this section increases this feeling of openendedness, for although the music suggests E major with the left hand using only the first five notes of the scale, the use of C $\flat$  in the right hand and the lack of any cadential motion obscures that sense. The music is again modal, using only seven pitches, but it does not actually fall into any of the traditional modes, being one note-change away from several: for instance, changing G $\sharp$  to G $\flat$  would give the Dorian mode on A, changing C to C $\sharp$  would give the Aeolian on F $\sharp$ , and so on. This slightly strange resultant mode and lack of tonal anchor, coupled with the treble register and circling melody, mean that this section 'floats', constantly changing sense of direction and never actually settling.

This quality obviously connects it to Section 1, with the semiquaver motion (although now somewhat slower) also providing a link to Section 3. This is carried over into a 'thematic' level, in so far as the first bar of the theme reappears in the major mode as the primary building block of this section as well, although its continuation is less obviously derived; there are again, however, 16 bars, though this time in 9/8, and so this may be considered as a variation 'inflected' both chromatically and rhythmically. There is a comparable interplay here between C and B $\flat$  to that between D and D $\sharp$  in Section 3, and the overall register again matches, with the highest note as B, and in fact, the raising of the lowest note from C to E, Section 3 to Section 6, continues the triadic motion of the similar change from Section 1 to 3, A to C. This sixth section, with its semiquaver motion, marks off Section 5 as an interlude, yet the B $\flat$  at the opening actually completes the diminished chord articulated by its bass-notes. This 'completion' is not felt as a form of closure, however, and there is no sense in which Section 6 is a culmination or a 'summing up' of previous material, though it does combine a number of different elements from previous sections. This, however, merely continues the ongoing process of the rest of the piece, and, of course, by this point, there is more available 'past'. As an ending, however, it is very effective, for in its internal ambiguities it does capture something of the overall sense of what *The Durham Strike* is about, and very clearly, and for the first time in this piece, presents a state of moving non-movement, a motion that borders on the static, thus bringing the music to an end.

## Ambiguity and Interplay

Having considered each section in turn, both internally and in terms of the process of interconnection, the way in which some general features are articulated and manipulated through the course of the piece can now be considered, and a number of common threads emerge. The most obvious of these is the interplay between what has been termed modality and chromaticism, although the distinction between them is actually much less clear-cut. Of the six sections, four are clearly modal, using a limited number of pitch-classes and centring around certain pitches (Sections 1, 2, 3 & 6), whereas the remaining two are more chromatic, but, as has been discussed, this chromaticism is most often articulated using more diatonic or modal patterns. The consistent use of modality in four of the six sections forms one common thread which runs through the music, for a central pentatonic kernel remains in all these four sections, with the addition of different 'inflections' giving each a slightly different character (see Figure 7.15), and in this respect there is a continued connection to the initial pentatonic 'theme'.

FIGURE 7.15.

Section	Pitch-classes used								
1:	B	C	D		E	F $\sharp$	G	A	
2:	B		C $\sharp$	D	D $\sharp$	E	F $\sharp$	G $\sharp$	A
3:	B	C	D	D $\sharp$	E	F $\sharp$		A	
6:	B	C	D		E	F $\sharp$	G $\sharp$	A	

However, the effect in all these sections is not a straightforward B 'minor' pentatonicism, for a sense of 'tonic' is avoided through the absence of 'functional' harmonic movement and, in Section 6, through playing with the implications of traditional harmony and the superimposition of contradictory 'signals'. In addition, the two remaining 'chromatic' sections themselves display a type of modality, with both making use of more diatonic sonorities. In Section 4 this involves the use of formations based around third relationships, combined into one long descending chain; at each point the effect is not chromatic, but the overall motion is. Similarly, Section 5 illustrates how the total-chromatic is articulated by more traditional chordal sonorities which are effectively slid around a chromatic background, rather like a cut-out frame which only reveals a part of what lies behind it, a process made particularly explicit by

the first two chords. When coupled with the use of false-relations elsewhere, particularly in Section 3, the listener has a more complex experience of harmony, and even 'tonality', than a simple alternation between areas of modality and chromaticism.<sup>5</sup>

The same is true of the way in which a sense of movement or stasis is created and perceived, for again, although the sections are partially defined in these terms (for example, Section 2 is articulated from Section 1 through its sudden lack of motion), an overall perception does not simply group them into two types. The more melodic sections display a kind of circling motion that borders on the static, but at the same time these obviously possess a level of linear continuity; similarly, even Section 2, the most clearly static, creates a complex set of processes of expectation and anticipation, ultimately involving some sense of linear motion. As discussed above, Section 6 best displays the ambiguity of 'moving non-movement', with each of the earlier sections coming slightly on one side or the other of the division: this final section, with its less logical melodic thread and alternation between two basic sonorities, is situated exactly on the dividing line.

There is a comparable ambiguity between perception of foreground and background relationships. When viewed overall, each section of the piece is equally foregrounded, in that the reduction of musical material and the way in which it is presented acts as the full focus of attention and in fact is 'all there is'; whereas in much other music the material of Section 2 would form a background, here it is brought into sharp focus by the concentration on such simple elements. In this respect the piece is 'flat'; rather than creating depth it creates space.<sup>6</sup> A somewhat more complicated relationship exists within a number of sections, most clearly in the interplay between 'melodic' and 'decorative' elements, for the melodies in Sections 1, 3 and 6 are certainly the principal focus of attention, with the figuration playing a slightly lesser role. In Section 4, the listener is drawn towards the highest note of each chord, as these create a regular and easily graspable 'melodic' motion (and, of course, are later accented). In this respect Section 4 presents an interesting interplay between foreground and background, for although all the notes are notionally equal, the tendency to privilege certain elements means that the apparent uniformity results in a more complex

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<sup>5</sup> For some of Skempton's own comments on a non-structural use of tonality, see Volans 1985: 31-4.

<sup>6</sup> This sense of flatness connects with Feldman's music, an important influence (see Parsons 1980 & 1987, Skempton 1996 and Volans 1985: 40); the idea of music creating space is of 'central importance' to Skempton, see for instance his comments in Parsons 1987: 21 & 27-8.

perceived result; the situation is further complicated by the way that this section takes up the semiquaver motion of the most clearly ‘background’ pattern in the piece, from Section 3, and then brings it into the foreground, so that the music hovers in a rather ambiguous state.

Despite the focus on the melodic lines, only Section 3 seems to present a very clear distinction between melody and accompaniment. In Section 6, for instance, the right-hand material articulates the same melodic thread with only very few ‘harmony notes’, which are, in fact, essential, for without them the sense of an alternation between two chords would be lost (it is entirely typical both that this harmony is presented in the high treble register and that only two notes, D and C $\sharp$  are required); in this section the left hand could be considered as doubling the right, rather than *vice versa*, so that the sense of primacy is further eroded. A similar ambiguity is present in Section 1, for although there are some clearly decorative pitches, the simplicity of the material means that both lines can be given equal attention and weight in perception. The effect, as pointed out earlier, is to make this statement of the theme itself already an elaborated and decorated variation.

This, of course, returns to a central concern: the way in which this piece manipulates ideas of theme and variation and of large-scale unity and difference. As has been explored, each part may both be regarded as self-sufficient yet subscribing to an interconnected, overall patterning, although some, such as Section 3, display their relationships more openly, whereas others, such as Section 5, involve a much less obvious commonality. In overall terms, *The Durham Strike* retains a sense of being a theme with variations but continually plays with the expectation that such a scheme suggests, with each part being understandable in a number of differing ways. As has already been discussed, Section 1, because of its simplicity, sounds like ‘a theme’ but already displays aspects of variation; Section 2 does not initially resemble a traditional variation and suggests that a sectional form, A-B-C-D etc., might be unravelling. The importance of the theme is restated in Section 3, although again this is only problematically a variation as such, and Section 4 preserves a sense of continuity but now loses the theme, thus suggesting a type of ‘development’; Section 5 is another interruption, whereas Section 6 is the most ambiguous, returning to the type of music of Sections 1 and 3, but now in a new guise. In retrospect, there is a feeling that much of the music *was* related but how this was achieved remains unclear.

The examination of the various relationships between sections reveals how this piece involves a number of different levels of connection. There seem to be four main types, though there is, of course, some overlap between them. The first type involves connections that are literally heard, that is, where surface features obviously derive from similar material; one of the most obvious instances is the reappearance of the melody from Section 1 in Section 3, but also, on a more subtle level, the constant semiquaver usage of Sections 3 and 4, and the 'derived' version of the melody in Section 6, seem to fall into this category. The second type involves aspects that may not be immediately obvious, but which make a clear aural effect, particularly with increased familiarity: the category of the 'aurally perceived'. Examples of this type are the use of the diminished chord from Section 3 as the first sonority of Section 4, and the consistency of voice-leading in the transition from Section 4 to 5. The third kind of relationship is less aurally perceptible, operating more on a background level, though one does perhaps perceive some aspects of the consistency that is created. For instance, the use of thirds which connects Sections 2 and 5 relies on a level of abstraction, but once this is realised a sense of consistency does arise. Similarly, the interplay between D $\flat$  and D $\sharp$  in Sections 2 and 3 relies more upon a theoretical demonstration than a clearly-audible link, but again, once observed, does create a level of further connection. The fourth type, to continue the process to its logical end, involves aspects which are only apparent through an examination of the notation and which have very little effect as heard. Examples of this are the subset relationships between 4-27 and 4-18 in Section 4 and set 6-31 in Section 5, and between the 4-26 in Section 2 and both chords in Section 5 (though the first chord does mark an audible connection). In fact, as was suggested at the outset, the notation actually gives a greater impression of discontinuity than seems to be revealed in performance, so this last type of connection seems to be more present in inversion, for instance, in the notational masking of the equivalence of the diminished chord in Sections 3 and 4, and in the level of the apparent opposition between Sections 1 and 2.

This division into four types is obviously a simplification, for most relationships between sections are much less easily classifiable into one or the other. What it does demonstrate, however, is how *The Durham Strike* involves a whole range of levels of interrelation, and how this piece relies upon a complex system of ambiguity and interplay to create its overall effect. In addition, although this discussion has

concentrated on the way in which relationships seem to proliferate, this is distinct from considering the music as a unified entity, which is clearly not the effect of listening to it. Although sections do involve interrelationships, there is no way in which the music is felt as displaying a form of closure or logical working-out of these 'structural' aspects, and the perception of six distinct parts remains. As familiarity with the piece increases, the initial 'surprise' of, for instance, Section 2 is naturally lost, but the music continues to hover between a tightly-bound structure and a collection of different units, for although the variations become more explicable in terms of their relationships, they still do not conform to any straightforward model, so that the totality of the work seems fractured, neither presenting one clear overall form or a simple 'assemblage'.

This structural ambiguity is coupled with an overwhelming sense of distance which has already been remarked upon, and the two seem to be closely related. The lack of precision about overall form, and an absence of direction mean that the music remains somewhat intangible, not immediately present, and this connects with the aura that surrounds so much of the piece. Skempton has commented on what he calls 'the detachment of experimentalists' and stresses that it 'should not be confused with estrangement' coming rather from a concentration on and respect for the sound (Skempton 1991: 4). In this use of very precise, spare and gentle sonorities, Skempton creates a sense of distance and mirrors this in the way in which he manipulates the sectional material of *The Durham Strike*, where each section is also somewhat distant and continually evades straightforward understanding. In writing music that never fully makes clear its function, which sits ambiguously between one structural understanding and another, which often relates only through half-suggestions and hidden correspondences, and which continually frustrates our attempts to place it within clear categories and formal descriptions, Skempton creates a piece which retains a complexity and mystery. There are two dangers in discussing this music: the first is in trying to say too much about something which appears so simple and which makes such a direct effect, though too often the response is to insist that one should say nothing at all. The second is to dismiss it as 'simple' music which is not worth examining. This analysis is an attempt to come to terms with the experience of *The Durham Strike*, to account for the way in which this is produced and manipulated, and to capture some of the complexity and subtlety with which it continues to reward close attention.

## Chapter 8

### Consistency, Contradiction and the uses of Confusion

Meredith Monk's *Arctic Bar* (1990)

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#### Score and Performance

Meredith Monk has been described as a dancer, composer and film-maker, and her work does involve all these aspects. However, she herself has said that her starting point is music, and, more specifically, the human voice:

the vocal work is the real heart of what I do... even if I'm working with very large musical theatre forms, or even in terms of film, I feel that the musicality of the form... is what I'm concerned with. (In Zurbrugg 1992: 4)

This emphasis on the musical is confirmed by the fact that Monk produces recordings of her work which, in a number of cases, are obviously intended to be heard without the visual elements with which they were originally coupled, or conversely, with the recordings fixing the 'musical' content of a piece which then goes on to develop additional layers when actually performed. What this means is that there is some justification in examining her music as one would any other, for it is obviously intended that it may be heard on its own without any other 'accompaniment'. A further complication arises, however, regarding Monk's use of notation and the level of improvisation within her music. In general, Monk's 'scores' exist as an aid to memory, for her music is usually either performed by herself or by a closely-knit group who have extensive rehearsal time, allowing the piece to be evolved gradually and learnt very thoroughly; put very simply, Monk does not give her performers finished works written in conventional notation (if that were possible for some of the vocal effects required). Similarly, because of the rehearsal process, the music is not completely determined, with some freedoms being retained, so that different performances involve some individuality, some features probably remaining identical, others changing. However, from the notation that does exist, for instance for *Dolmen Music*, it is clear that it is generally the

larger-scale features that are decided, with the ‘detail’ more subject to variation.<sup>1</sup>

*Facing North*, of which *Arctic Bar* forms one section, underwent a development process which seems fairly typical. Having decided to write a duet to perform with Robert Een, Monk worked on material which she then took to the rehearsals:

I had written out some of the material, but early on we realized that the process of singing it demanded the concentration and speed which came from getting it into our voices and bodies directly without the intermediary step of looking at it and memorizing it. Some pieces ended up being close to what I had conceived... others formed and transformed during our rehearsal process. (Monk 1992)

She goes on to comment on how *Facing North* was first presented as a ‘music suite’, initially conceived only as music, and only somewhat later transformed into a music-theatre piece. The process of evolution means that there is no score of *Facing North*; what there is, however, is the CD recording, with the music performed by the composer and Robert Een, and it is this recording that is taken as the basis for this analysis.<sup>2</sup> As was pointed out above, these composer-recordings are clearly released with the intention of allowing the music to reach the widest possible audience and one can fairly safely assume that they are an accurate representation of Monk’s wishes, and are how she would like the music to sound. Of course, this means that the music becomes ‘fixed’, that it loses the aspects of improvisation and spontaneity that arise from a live performance; however, the recording is effectively a picture of one performance (even when made up of different takes), and, as will be discussed more fully below, in *Arctic Bar* one still has some sense of those elements which are decided (by necessity) and those where a certain freedom is allowed, and in this respect it becomes almost indistinguishable from a live performance. In addition, Monk’s recordings do operate in some respects as ‘scores’, as they can become a model for future realisations.<sup>3</sup>

In the following analysis then, references to ‘the music’, ‘the piece’ etc., refer to the recording cited above; use is also made of a transcription of this recording which allows some features to be examined more easily (see Appendix 2). The issues involved

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<sup>1</sup> See Smith and Smith 1994: 188-9 for Monk’s discussion of her approach; regarding *Dolmen Music* she comments that: ‘if you heard two performances... the overall structure would be the same, but phrase by phrase there would always be a place for a singer either to compress or expand a little’ (: 188).

<sup>2</sup> ECM New Series 1482, No. 437 439-2, 1992.

<sup>3</sup> Anthony deMare, who has performed Monk’s compositions both as a pianist and vocalist, has relied upon an inside knowledge of her music, having belonged to her ensemble, and on transcriptions of her recordings, thus involving a new type of oral transmission (see Swed 1992).



in the use of transcription for analysis are wide and varied,<sup>4</sup> but here I have attempted to follow the practice of Monk's own existing scores, so that although not one-hundred percent specific, it could be used to enable performance by those familiar with her general output and techniques (and probably the recording). Of course, this transcription is necessarily selective as to which features it records, being dependent upon my own listening priorities and prejudices, but in so far as the following analysis is based on this listener's experience of the music, this type of score seems appropriate. This also means that reference can be made to 'Meredith Monk' and 'Robert Egan' as the featured singers, so that rather than talking of 'soprano' and 'bass' their initials have been substituted, thus 'M.M.'s part', 'R.E.' etc.

As indicated above, *Arctic Bar* is one section, on the recording the seventh of nine, of a larger piece, *Facing North*, which takes its inspiration from the snow-bound northern environment, trying to 'evoke the elemental, bracing clarity of the northern landscape' and eventually becoming a music-theatre piece 'about a barren wilderness and the fortitude and tenderness of two people surviving it' (Monk 1992, see Zurbrugg 1992: 36-7 for further discussion). *Arctic Bar* is typical of much of Monk's vocal music, particularly that written for one or two singers, in that it is based around a repetitive piano part overlaid with her own unique brand of vocal mannerism;<sup>5</sup> this type of structure involves what Monk describes as 'a carpet, instrumentally, for what I'm doing vocally. I always think of the voice flying or jumping over a very stable kind of base' (in Zurbrugg 1992: 5). In addition, *Arctic Bar* uses the setting up and subversion of a number of levels of expectation that such a type of repetitive structure produces as its main formal device, both on a small and a larger scale, and makes much of the effect that very slight change can produce. Like much of Monk's output, the music appears to be very simple, making use of a limited amount of material often used in apparently quite straightforward structures, but this results in a piece which is actually quite complex to understand fully as a listener, and also makes it difficult to account for how this complexity is produced.

Before going on to examine this principle in more detail, some comment on the title is perhaps necessary. One interpretation that will not be pursued here is that which hears this music (ignoring any dance that might be associated with it) as a depiction of

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<sup>4</sup> For a brief discussion, albeit from one perspective, see Nattiez 1990: 71-3 & 80-2.

<sup>5</sup> See Sandow 1984 for a somewhat disparaging discussion of Monk's vocal writing, and the extent to which her music can be described as utilising 'new vocal techniques'.

a northern pub, complete with piano and drunken, out-of-tune singing; this presents a rather too simplistic mapping of the musical material onto specific meanings, a type of 'programme music' which distracts from both the expressive content of the voices and the formal pattern that emerges. It also seems a rather too literal interpretation, particularly for the music of a composer who is self-avowedly interested in 'emotions that we don't have words for' (in Strickland 1991: 98); it is suggested here as one possibility, but, in my view, not a very rewarding one. More useful are the implications of 'Bar' to suggest a sense of boundary, and the connections with the idea of isobar and atmospheric pressure, connotations which conjure up associations of a northern climate, at the boundary of the inhabitable, and which contribute to, rather than distract from, the idea of North with which this music is entangled.

### **Types of Material and Process**

Perhaps the clearest indication of how apparently small alterations in the prevailing pattern-making of this music can have surprisingly large effects comes right at the very end, where the otherwise entirely consistent quaver patterning of the piano part is, in two places only, disturbed by the insertion of an extra semiquaver (see Figure 8.1). This change, coming after some four-and-a-half minutes of an unaltered rhythmic pattern, has a disproportionately large effect, serving to disrupt the expectation that the piano will continue as before, to draw attention back to the piano figuration which had mostly remained in the background thus far, and to create a new level of expectation and anticipation; this new semiquaver pattern itself now forms a part of the piano vocabulary, and although occurring only twice, at least on a first hearing might be expected to reappear. When the music in fact ends some six bars later, the pattern gains increased prominence because of its very late introduction, becoming a final addition to the music which seems neither to relate to the earlier material or to extend it in a new direction (since the music has now stopped). Part of its effect is to exacerbate the sense of an abrupt and unprepared ending, as the expectation of later recurrence is suddenly thwarted, so that it remains a somewhat perplexing element whose effect is undeniable but whose function remains unclear.

FIGURE 8.1.



This disruption of expectation, coupled with a level of perplexity regarding the function of the music, is the principal feature of *Arctic Bar*; in formal terms this piece operates through the setting up of a number of levels of expectation by the use of repetition and then generally subverting them. In this respect it differs from the ‘process’ compositions of Steve Reich, for instance, in that, rather than concentrating on one more-or-less linear process, the piece presents a series of ‘jolts’, and plays more explicitly with concepts of continuity and overall consistency. As outlined above, *Arctic Bar* is written for two singers, one female, one male, with a part for piano which continues throughout and the occasional use of a synthesiser-keyboard producing a reedy, accordion-type sound. It is the piano part which provides continuity, on top of which a number of different layers are presented in different versions and orderings; the piano fulfils the role of a *cantus firmus*, or more accurately perhaps, given its construction, of a *Ground Bass*, above which a number of different elaborations are presented. This ‘*Ground Bass*’ lasts eight bars and is made up of a sequence of thirty-two chords, one per crotchet beat, but actually displays a number of variations in their ordering; the construction of this piano part will be discussed in detail below. The eight-bar pattern is stated fourteen times, and on all but the first two and last statements is overlaid with other material; Figure 8.2 shows the overall layout.

FIGURE 8.2.

	Piano solo		‘Singa-ninga’		Keyboard melody		Hocketed ‘ha-ha’		Kbd + hocket	‘Singa-ninga’		‘Oo-aa’ calls		Piano solo
Statement of <i>Ground Bass</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14

As can clearly be observed, the segmentation of the music according to the different types of overlaid material corresponds to the eight-bar structure; in all cases sections last eight bars (or multiples thereof), thus providing a further link to the traditional *Ground Bass* where new elements are added on each repetition. There are four different types of overlaid material, all of which are heard individually and which are kept separate,

except in statement 9, where two are combined. These four types will be discussed in greater detail below, but they can be characterised quite easily. The first involves a falling and rising pattern from M.M., using the nonsense-words 'Singa-ninga-ninga-longa-ninga-na', a pattern that is broken up and permuted, coupled with a 'ho-wa' from R.E., interspersed with a falsetto glissando (one per eight-bar statement). The second is a simple rising and falling melodic pattern using only four notes, the third a hocket between the two voices using an aspirated 'ha' sound, and the fourth involves much longer 'oo-aa' calls from both voices, now conventionally 'sung', and gradually becoming more distant.

FIGURE 8.3.

The figure consists of three separate musical systems, each with two staves. The first system is labeled 'M.M.' and 'R.E.' and includes lyrics: 'Singa ninga ninga longa ninga na longa ninga na Singa ninga Singa ninga ninga' for the top staff and 'ho-wa ho-wa wa wa-wa etc.' for the bottom staff. The second system is also labeled 'M.M.' and 'R.E.' with lyrics: 'ha ha etc.' for the top staff and 'ha ha' for the bottom staff. The third system is labeled 'M.M.' and 'R.E.' with lyrics: 'oo aa oh' for the top staff and 'oo' for the bottom staff. A 'keyboard' part is shown between the first and second systems, with the word 'carro' written below it.

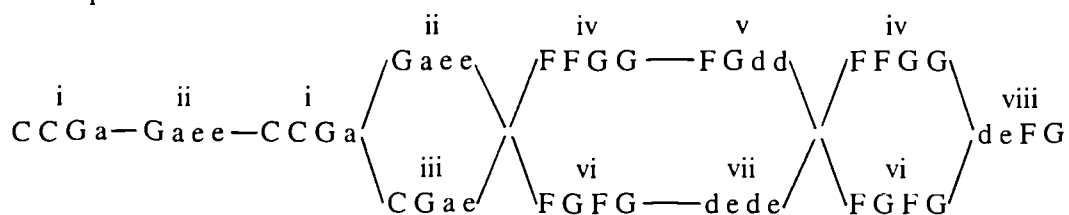
Of these five elements which make up *Arctic Bar* (piano part and four overlaid types), some are more easily described in analytical terms, and these are usually formalisable in some way, making use of a fairly systematic process of construction. *Arctic Bar* is apparently created through a process of gradual evolution, so that some elements are 'composed' whilst others remain semi-improvised, and this seems to correspond to the extent to which they are describable in formal terms, the more clearly composed being the more easily formalised. Although it is a very easy mistake simply to consider these 'composed' elements as the most important, in this piece the hierarchy between the two types seems well established in the music. For instance, those elements which seem to be most clearly composed and which can be discussed in systematic terms are those which depend upon a precise level of recombination or permutation for their effect, in particular the piano part and M.M.'s 'singa-ninga' line. In contrast, R.E.'s part in the same section plays a more textural role, the exact patterning of high and low pitches not being of prime importance, and this material also seems more improvisational, though no less significant as a result. Similarly, the hocketed passage seems to be improvised and again the effect here is more global, with the exact alternation between the voices less important. What this obviously means is that those elements which depend upon precise specification become fixed, whereas Monk is happy to leave the rest to be (partially) improvised, an approach which has the advantage of still allowing a certain flexibility whilst controlling the important aspects, some of shape and gesture and some of 'the notes'. In analytical terms, this means that some elements need to be examined in detail, whereas others can be discussed more globally, with those requiring detailed discussion often displaying compositional processes which are more conducive to such an approach. This might suggest that the analytical process is rather straightforward, but it becomes increasingly complicated when the *effect* of each individual layer is considered, and even more so when these are overlaid; before considering this varied combination, each element needs to be more closely examined.

## Musical Layers and Aspects of Consistency

As has already been outlined, the piano part of *Arctic Bar* consists of fourteen statements of a type of Ground Bass, presented chordally through a quaver patterning. It makes use of six purely diatonic triads: C D e F G a, and although there are a number of variations between different statements these can be easily formalised. The 32-beat statement divides into groups of four chords (which of course coincide with bar-divisions), the first three and last of which always remain the same. Figure 8.4 shows how the variations that occur may be regarded as following a kind of formal process: in bar 4, group ii or iii may be chosen, in bars 5 and 6, either group iv followed by group v, or group vi followed by group vii, and so on. However, not all eight possible combinations are actually used in this piece, and Figure 8.4 also shows the five orderings that *do* occur, labelled A to E in the order in which they appear. This ‘restriction’ to five different orderings results from the fact that group ii replaces group iii in bar 4 only once, an exception which will be discussed fully when the combination of various layers is examined. Rather than marking a reduction, this replacement is perhaps best thought of as an extension of the more systematic generation of A, B, C and E, so that an extra, ‘rogue’ element is added to an otherwise closed process.

FIGURE 8.4.

Available paths:

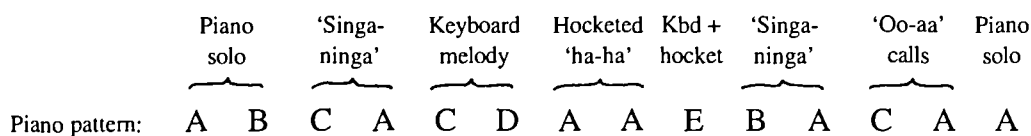


Paths used:

A:	i	ii	i	iii	iv	v	vi	viii
B:	i	ii	i	iii	vi	vii	vi	viii
C:	i	ii	i	iii	iv	v	iv	viii
D:	i	ii	i	ii	iv	v	iv	viii
E:	i	ii	i	iii	vi	vii	iv	viii

The labelling in Figure 8.4 means that Figure 8.2 can be recast so as to show the different piano patterns used in each of the fourteen eight-bar statements (Figure 8.5).

FIGURE 8.5.



From this it is immediately obvious that A is the most-used pattern, occurring seven times in all, and balancing the total occurrences of B (twice), C (three times), D and E (once each). This itself may suggest a type of rondo form, and in fact, as can be observed, the overall patterning does involve recurring A-statements interspersed with other versions of this 8-bar ‘ground’. There is also a type of mirror structure in that the piece starts and ends with A, and the central sections are also both A, but the detail of the patterning seems unsystematic. In fact, the perception of such a type of rondo form or mirror structure is much less significant than might at first be suggested, for the sense of return depends more upon the vocal material and less on the piano part. Without examining the interrelation of the piano part to the various overlaid layers in any great detail, it is clear that each two-statement grouping involves two different eight-bar patterns except for the hocketed section (A twice), and that there is no clear correspondence between the pattern used and the type of material, for instance, the ‘singa-ninga’ material overlays C-A the first time and B-A on its return. This clearly reduces the effect of the piano material, so that the patterning observed here seems to depend less upon the setting-up of any overall structure and, as will be discussed later, more upon smaller-scale considerations.

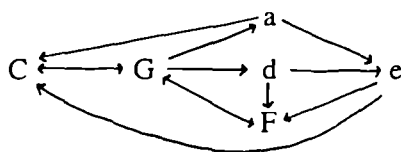
To return to the piano material itself, a number of features can be observed. The first of these is that the eight-bar statement falls into two four-bar halves, the first revolving round C major, the second more around F major, with an invariant d-e-F-G (pattern viii) which leads back to C at the end. However, because of the purely diatonic nature of the material and the use of only major and minor triads, the overall tonality is a very small factor in perception, there being little sense of being in C, of moving to F, or of a return; in fact, the only point at which C is felt as a ‘tonic’ is at the very end, when the music suddenly stops at the conclusion of the fourteenth statement on G major, which now does feel like a dominant requiring resolution and which gives the piece an

'openendedness'. Otherwise, the lack of a sense of tonality may partly be explained through the way in which the chords are ordered; Figure 8.6 shows how this movement is articulated, showing progressions by the interval of a fifth, by step and by relative major / minor, as well as a general layout of all chords (also indicating the one consecutive, e-C, which falls outside this scheme).

FIGURE 8.6.

Possible consecutives	Those used
Movement by step: C ↔ d ↔ e ↔ F ↔ G ↔ a	d → e → F ↔ G → a
Movement by relative maj / min: C ↔ a    G ↔ e    F ↔ d	a → C    d → F
Movement by 5th / 4th: F ↔ C ↔ G ↔ d ↔ a ↔ e	C ↔ G → d    a → e

Overall relationships:



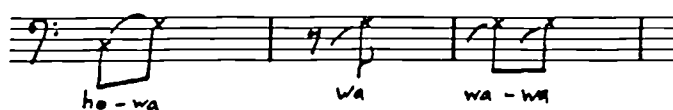
As can be observed, of the available connections, those involving movement by step are the most widely employed, with only two of the six possible relative major / minor consecutives appearing. In terms of frequency, this stepwise motion is also the most common, for instance, in pattern C, eight consecutives involve movement by fourth or fifth, three by major or minor third and thirteen by step, and in pattern B this increases to nineteen. Apart from the end of each statement, V-I motion onto C is avoided, and the predominance of stepwise movement helps to erode further the sense of 'tonic', as the harmonies continually shift sideways, avoiding cadential motion. In addition, G may lead onto four different triads, further reducing any sense of functional tonal harmony. This continually-shifting interchange of function results in a sense of tonality remaining elusive. In addition, the variations in patterning that have already been referred to mean that one is never entirely sure in which direction the piano part is moving; the high level of general similarity means that there is a constant ambiguity as to whether or not this is



the same material, so that there is continual uncertainty as to what the next chord will be and a corresponding reduction in the sense of its function.

A similar mix of system and unpredictability can be found in the vocal material used in statements 3-4 and 10-11, and, more specifically, in M.M.'s material, with R.E.'s part seeming to be mostly improvised, there being no apparent reason why one particular gesture occurs at any one time. R.E.'s material is quite simple: it consists of a semi-voiced 'ho-wa' pattern using a quaver rhythm involving three basic cells, shown in Figure 8.7.

FIGURE 8.7.



These are interspersed with the descending falsetto glissando down from F to A, the timing of which is partially consistent, in that the identity of statements 4 and 11, with the same vocal part, is reinforced by an identical placement of this sliding gesture. In statements 3 and 10, however, they occur at different points and do not connect in any logical way to M.M.'s line. This is also the case with the 'ho-wa' material, as it does not preserve the identity of statements 4 and 11, correspond to M.M.'s part, or use any clear system. However, as was suggested above, its improvisatory quality is consistent with its function, which seems to be textural, reinforcing the quaver motion of the piano and generally adding to the lightness and liveliness of M.M.'s singing. In contrast, her line focuses more clearly on the process of segmentation and permutation which characterises its construction, leaving aside for the moment the effect of its 'out-of-tuneness' and overall impact. The basic material for all four statements is found in the first bar of statement 3 (see Figure 8.8), and this material is variously fragmented and recombined.

FIGURE 8.8.



It may be segmented in a number of ways which emphasise differing features of the material, and two of these are outlined below. Firstly, the material is divided into seven cells, some of which are very obviously closely connected, but which may be regarded as basic units in the way in which they are used; Figure 8.9 shows these cells, their ordering in the three different statements which are heard (as pointed out above, 4 and 11 are identical in terms of pitch) and then groups them in one- or two-bar units, so retaining the sense of downbeat.

FIGURE 8.9.

Basic cells:

a: Singa ringa ringa      longa ringa na

b: Singa ringa ringa      longa ringa na

c: Singa ringa ringa ringa

d: Singa ringa

e: Singa

Order of cells:

Statement 3:      | a f | a g ġ d a | c g ġ d a | c g ġ g b | c f |

Statements 4 & 11: | a g ġ d a | c g ġ d a | c g ġ d a | c g ġ g g |

Statement 10:    | a f | a g ġ d a | c g ġ d a | c g e | a a | c f |

Larger groupings:

A: | a f |      W: | a g ġ d a |

B: | c f |      X: | c g ġ d a |

C: | a a |      Y: | c g ġ g b |

D: | c g e |     Z: | c g ġ g g |

Order of larger groupings:

Statement 3:      A - W - X - Y - B

Statements 4 & 11: W - X - X - Z

Statement 10:    A - W - X - D - C - B

What is apparent is that statements 3 and 10 make use of one-bar units, whereas statement 4 does not; this statement can also be considered a further extension in that it takes elements of statement 3 and presents them in new alignments. The similarity of statements 3 and 10 is also apparent, the difference being the use of cell *e* and the adjustment that results. Figure 8.10 shows a different segmentation, which breaks the material down into four smaller units and which gives greater importance to the quaver rest in articulating the patterning (thus ignoring to a large degree the barring). Again, the basic cells and ordering are shown, with a final grouping which illustrates how each statement is made up of a number of chains of elements, each beginning with a quaver rest; in statements 3 and 4 (and 11) these obviously increase in length over the eight bars, whereas statement 10, as has already been suggested, involves further levels of fragmentation.

FIGURE 8.10.

Basic cells:



Order of cells:

- 3: |1 2 3 4 1|1 2 3 4 4 3 1 2 3|3 3 4 4 3 1 2 3|3 3 4 4 2 3|3 3 4 1 |  
 4 & 11: |1 2 3 4 4 3 1 2 3|3 3 4 4 3 1 2 3|3 3 4 4 3 1 2 3|3 3 4 4 4 4|  
 10: |1 2 3 4 1|1 2 3 4 4 3 1 2 3|3 3 4 4 3 1 2 3|3 3 4 2|1 2 3 1 2 3|3 3 4 1 |

Groupings:

- |    |                         |       |                   |     |                 |
|----|-------------------------|-------|-------------------|-----|-----------------|
| 3: | 1 2 3 4 1               | 4&11: | 1 2 3 4 4 3       | 10: | 1 2 3 4 1       |
|    | 1 2 3 4 4 3             |       | 1 2 3 3 3 4 4 3   |     | 1 2 3 4 4 3     |
|    | 1 2 3 3 3 4 4 3         |       | 1 2 3 3 3 4 4 3   |     | 1 2 3 3 3 4 4 3 |
|    | 1 2 3 3 3 4 4 2 3 3 4 1 |       | 1 2 3 3 3 4 4 4 4 |     | 1 2 3 3 3 4 2   |
|    |                         |       |                   |     | 1 2 3           |
|    |                         |       |                   |     | 1 2 3 3 4 1     |

What these two segmentations show is how this line involves a semi-systematic manipulation of simple cells, and how it both conforms to, and is deliberately set against, a straightforward 4/4 barring, producing a level of metrical insecurity. In addition, because each statement is very similar and the various cells are presented in a variety of different chronologies, it becomes almost impossible to predict (or recall) what is coming next, or grasp the extent to which the statements are the same or not. This exactly replicates, though through a different technique, the effect of the manipulation of the

piano material. How the two interlock and what more general processes are set in motion by this vocal material will be discussed later.

In contrast, the material which makes up the keyboard melody heard in statements 5, 6 and 9 is entirely 'systematic' because it is always the same and extremely simple (see Figure 8.11). It involves only four notes in its four-bar length (always repeated so as to fill one statement), in an *a-a-a-b* structure, its simplicity mirroring what seems like a deliberate banality in melodic shape. Its effect is complicated somewhat when it is combined with other layers, but the melodic line in itself also displays a couple of interesting features. The first is its entire lack of a sense of resting-point, so that no pitch has a sense of finality, and the second is the use of fifths / fourths, both as the overall span of the rising and falling motion and in the intervallic content of segment *b* (both noted in Figure 8.11). This melody is the one element in *Arctic Bar* that remains constant, seeming to draw attention to this invariance through its extreme simplicity.

FIGURE 8.11.



Of the two remaining elements, the hocketed section, using aspirated 'ha' sounds from both M.M. and R.E., is comparable to the 'ho-wa' of the other vocal sections, in that it appears to be mainly improvised with no clear system or obvious reason behind moment-to-moment choices. It again maintains a quaver pattern and again uses three cells, in that, for each part, a given quaver may either be silent, be filled by a single quaver 'ha', or by a semiquaver 'ha-ha'. In most cases the hocket pattern is maintained, but in statements 8 and 9 a number of simultaneities do occur (and in 9 the use of silence), though again with no apparent overall pattern. One specific example seems to be the reinforcing of the eight-bar statement length; statement 8 begins and ends with a silent beat, which articulates the beginning of this pattern and gives an accent to the down-beat with which statement 9 begins (see Figure 8.12). Otherwise, the material creates a continually-shifting texture, again entirely unpredictable, which is given life by the fact that it is hocketed; this depends upon our perception of the 'line' flying back and forth between the performers, and this perception of regularity means that the occasional exceptions (rests and simultaneities) receive greater emphasis.

FIGURE 8.12.

The musical score for Figure 8.12 consists of three staves. The top staff is labeled 'M.M.' and contains two measures of music with a three-note pattern: an octave leap followed by a descent of a fourth. The middle staff is labeled 'R.E.' and contains two measures of music with a two-note octave pattern. The bottom staff is labeled 'P.no' and contains two measures of music with a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes.

The final element involves the only traditional 'singing' of the whole piece, although it mainly uses only two pitch-classes, G and D (with occasional acciaccaturas using A♯ from R.E., which display a level of consistency in that they reinforce the crotchet beat). M.M. sings a three-note pattern of an octave leap and a descent of a fourth, and R.E. a two-note octave pattern G-G, the only exception coming at the end, where both voices effectively drop their first note, this reduction of each pattern contributing to the sense of withdrawal and increasing distance (on the recording a literal distance within the sound-image); the entirety of the two statements using this material is shown in Figure 8.13.

FIGURE 8.13.

The musical score for Figure 8.13 consists of six staves. The top two staves are labeled 'M.M.' and 'R.E.' and show vocal lines with various notes and rests. The bottom four staves show piano accompaniment with various notes and rests. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

The transcription here gives a level of rhythmic exactitude which is probably misleading; as is clear, each gesture appears at more or less the same point in both statements and the slight variations and sometimes deliberate avoidance of the beat appear to be a further type of improvisation, in that where a given gesture will come seems to be decided in advance, but the details of its entry, its overall timing, and, for R.E., degree of 'embellishment', are not fixed. In this respect the simplicity of this material differs from that of the keyboard melody, for there the concentration seems to be on the detail of the specific notes and their rhythm, whereas here the intention seems to be towards a more global effect; the alternation of vocalised cries serves, as has already been suggested, as an ending gesture, giving a sense of the music slowing down and moving off into the distance.

### Combinations and Contradictions

As has been discussed, the overall effect of *Arctic Bar* depends upon the overlaying of the basic elements, resulting in a quite complex pattern of expectation. In addition to a general perception of the interlocking of different layers, examining how these are fitted together allows for a closer understanding of how a number of quite detailed effects are created, and to account for a number of alterations to consistent patterns which initially seem to be 'unexplainable'. Most of these latter instances involve the piano part (since it is obviously the one element against which all the others are heard) and demonstrate a quite complex system of combining identical piano material with different overlays, or *vice versa*.

The clearest example can be observed with the keyboard melody heard in statements 5, 6 and 9 which, as was shown in Figure 8.11 above and in its accompanying discussion, is given a different piano chordal pattern on each occurrence, and is also the only occasion where patterns D or E are heard. What differentiates pattern D from pattern C is the chord-order of bar 4, with C-G-a-e replaced by G-a-e-e, i.e. the pattern of bar two. When combined with the melodic line, this change means that the 'answering phrase' (cell *b*) is heard over a chordal pattern with which it would not otherwise coincide, with the E minor chords in particular affecting how this pattern is perceived (see Figure 8.14).

FIGURE 8.14.



What results is a new harmonisation which interprets the G-D of the first crotchet as G major, and the D of the third crotchet beat as the seventh scale-degree of E minor, rather than the fourth of A minor as previously. Similarly, in statement 9, bars 5 and 6 involve a different chordal patterning than on both previous occurrences (see Figure 8.15), the result again being to give a new harmonisation to familiar material, with the d-e pattern of bar 6 lending a whole new emphasis to the melodic line, interpreting the C-A-G cells as part of a  $d^7$ - $e^7$  alternation rather than of F-G.

FIGURE 8.15.



These instances demonstrate how the same material can be given new and varied emphasis depending on how it is combined with other elements, in this case harmonised by the piano material; here, the unchanging melodic material in fact sounds much less fixed, as this process produces a result which is not as predictable as might at first be supposed, and which also remains somewhat confusing, in that it is difficult to remember (or predict) which particular harmonisation has occurred or will occur the next time, principally as a result of the fundamental similarity of the rest of the piano patterning.

A slightly less clear-cut, though somewhat similar process occurs with the interaction between the vocal lines and piano in statements 3 and 10 (statements 4 and 11 sharing the same vocal and piano material). The difference between piano pattern C

(statement 3) and pattern B (statement 10) occurs in bars 5, 6 and 7, particularly bar 6 (pattern B alternating D minor and E minor chords) and it is at this point in bars 6 and 7 that the changes in the vocal line between the two statements also take place (see Figure 8.16). Despite this correspondence, it is more difficult to see why such an alteration is made, for although in bar 7 of statement 10 the vocal line picks up on the internal repetition from the piano part, resulting in a pattern wholly absent elsewhere, that particular piano pattern also appears in statements 4 and 11 without a similar result. In addition, the change in the timing of R.E.'s glissando seems neither to explain or be explained by a change in the piano part. The effect here is therefore somewhat different to that observed earlier: because the vocal line and piano part change at the same time, it is not simply a case of hearing the same material in a different context. Here, both elements are in a state of continual adjustment, so that the confusion which results as to whether this statement is 'the same' or 'different' is more pronounced.

FIGURE 8.16.

The figure displays two musical statements, labeled 'STATEMENT 3' and 'STATEMENT 10', each consisting of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal lines are written in a single staff with lyrics underneath. The piano accompaniment is written in two staves (treble and bass clef).  
 - **STATEMENT 3:** The vocal line contains the lyrics: "Singa ringa ringa ringa lonja ringa na lonja ringa na lonja ringa na Singa ringa ringa". The piano part features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in the right hand and a similar pattern in the left hand.  
 - **STATEMENT 10:** The vocal line contains the lyrics: "Singa ringa ringa ringa lonja ringa na Singa Singa ringa ringa Singa ringa ringa". The piano accompaniment is identical to that of Statement 3.



The interaction between different layers is not always of this relative complexity, though the type of processes that occur continually escape any too-easy formalisation. With the keyboard melody discussed above, a constant element is combined with one that changes slightly each time, and this overlaying of the constant with the changing also occurs very obviously in statements 7 and 8, where the continually-shifting hoquet pattern is underpinned by the same piano pattern, the only instance of a two-statement 'section' where the piano performs a literal repeat. Similarly, the two-statement piano-solo at the opening may be considered as accompanying a constant element, i.e. silence, and changes accordingly. However, such a simple characterisation breaks down with statements 3 and 10, as has already been discussed, and with the third of the hoquet statements, which again is always changing (and now involves a third layer), but which this time overlays a different accompaniment. In addition, statements 12 and 13 involve differences in both elements, piano and vocal lines (and again there is little coordination between these two processes), whereas statements 4 and 11 maintain both elements unchanged. If, following the chronology, statements 3 and 4 are compared (as well as 10 and 11), both elements change from one statement to the next, which further complicates that particular set of relationships. What all this means is that the music continually evades attempts to grasp the sense of its patterning, relying much more heavily on a continual interplay between different layers (and between consecutive sections), and creating a larger-scale sense of intangibility and perceptual confusion; it is the type of structures that result, and how they are created and manipulated, that now needs to be considered.

### **Expectation and Confusion**

At the risk of giving a rather painstaking blow-by-blow account of *Arctic Bar*, the best way of dealing with issues of expectation and the way in which perception of timescale is manipulated is to trace the overall process from beginning to end, but also drawing together any threads that escape such a chronological approach. The very opening immediately throws open a network of expectation, for it sounds like the opening of a song, summoning up echoes of the *Lieder* repertoire, for instance, and also emphasising the expectation of hearing a voice (obviously, on a second hearing or in live performance

this vocal aspect is not in itself surprising, but the immediate memorability of that vocal entry makes it keenly anticipated). However, this 'introduction' goes on for 'too long': it wanders through a number of chords before suggesting a lead back to C and perhaps now the entry of the voice, only to prolong the delay by 'repeating' all that has been heard so far. As has been discussed, this second statement is in fact slightly different, but not memorably so, so that the listener is not sure whether an exact repetition is happening or not. Obviously, this further delay, which has the effect of making the music seem to go by very slowly, is calculated so as to increase the surprise effect of the voice when it does finally enter. This point of entry therefore fulfils a number of expectations, but also, more significantly, is extremely disruptive.

This disruption works on two levels, both of which seem deliberately designed to *confuse*, which, rather than establishing a new and clear-cut set of expectations, play with those which already exist. The first level concerns the most immediate features of the vocal lines, in particular M.M. being deliberately 'out of tune' and the apparent lack of motivic or melodic connection to what has already been heard. This out-of-tune quality is actually extremely important, as all four pitches do not coincide with an equal-tempered tuning; the highest is somewhere between an E and an F, and all three of the rising cell, E-F-G are rather sharp, with the final pitch often ending up somewhere near a G $\sharp$ .<sup>6</sup> While the exact tuning varies somewhat (with a more in-tune quality appearing as each statement progresses), the effect of deliberately being 'in the cracks between the notes' means that this vocal line seems disconnected from the piano part which it overlays, the two existing together but not interacting (which also means that the correspondences observed earlier are more theoretical than audible). R.E.'s line, in that it is only semi-voiced, continues this sense of a lack of clear connection between the vocal and piano material, although its quaver pattern does provide one level of basic similarity.

The second level of disruption comes from the phrase-length and patterning of

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<sup>6</sup> The notation of these pitches is the most interpretative of the current transcription. Firstly, they do not maintain the identity which the notation gives them, being somewhat different each time, but, as was discussed above, the transcription is also in part a 'score for performance', and thus records what is essential for future realisation, with the expectation that 'performance practice' would play an important role. Secondly, the vocal line is notated in 'standard' tuning, with inflection noted by means of arrows, rather than attempting to capture the exact pitch. This, of course, makes it appear that the singing is more closely connected to the piano tuning than is actually the case, and also simplifies the gesture into a diatonic one, but, as before, this is partly for ease of reading as a performing score. The choice of notated pitch depends partly upon the musical sense, for instance, writing the highest note as flat-F rather than sharp-E avoids the impression that the vocal line merely 'bends' part of a C major triad (the harmony of the first piano entry), for the F $\sharp$  is itself somewhat 'dissonant' to this harmony, with the 'detuning' flatwards exacerbating this effect.

M.M.'s part. As has already been discussed, the starting point is a bar-long phrase which is broken up and recombined into longer gestures which cut across the simple 4/4 of the piano. The effect here is to shorten perception of the eight-bar pattern, so that it goes by very quickly, primarily because of this metrical insecurity (and sudden metrical 'interest' compared with the uniform quavers of the opening) and through a greater density of colliding material. In fact, unless one makes a conscious effort, it is difficult to hear statements 3 and 4 balancing statements 1 and 2 in terms of length, which is an indication of the perceptual confusion that can be achieved on a larger-scale level by a foreground process. A similar sense of shortening occurs with the 'restatement' of this vocal material in statements 10-11, despite being preceded by a much more complex mix of material (which is, however, familiar by this point); this suggests that the disruption which the vocal lines create in combination with the piano is very strong, and survives the 'security' given by a sense of return. In fact, as has been suggested, this sense is very difficult to maintain, given the modifications which do occur and a lack of clarity regarding identity.

To continue the chronology, the appearance of the keyboard melody, with its four-bar structure, simple patterning and use of a 'normal' scale, marks a return to a more easily graspable result and produces a sense of pacing similar to the opening; this 'slowness' is exacerbated by the internal repetition, for by the end of statement 5 one has already grasped the sense of this somewhat banal four-bar tune, having heard it twice, but it is then repeated twice more! In fact, as discussed earlier, the piano part is somewhat altered, which creates a level of insecurity and several new melodic / harmonic combinations, but this does not really provide a sufficient sense of instability to dispel the identity and repetitiousness of the melodic line; the effect here is to throw the listener's attention back onto the piano part and the perception of similarity and difference that it manipulates. In addition, these two statements seem again to be much 'longer', so that the identity of length between the three sections heard thus far is not aurally appreciable, creating a perception of form at variance with that which appears on paper.

The next section, the two statements utilising the hocketed, aspirated 'ha-ha' material, involves, as has been pointed out, a continually-changing vocal part superimposed on two statements of the same piano patterning, though it is doubtful that by this stage in the piece such identity is perceived. Similarly, although the vocal material is always changing, it actually fulfils a more textural role, which again means that the

four-beat, eight-bar patterning of the piano part serves as the main time-marker, articulating the progression through the material and continuing the sense of the 'slow' time-scale of the previous two sections. The addition of the keyboard melody in statement 9 marks the only point in the piece where two types of overlaid material are superimposed (though because the hocketed material can be considered as one line, there are only really two lines here, as in statements 3, 4, 10 and 11); however, this layering actually suggests a sense of return rather than 'climax', principally because it does not actually produce a very complex result when compared to the confusion of pitch, phrase-length and rhythmic accent found in the earlier 'singa-ninga' section. This sense of return is somewhat confused, however, because the hocket material continues and the melody is heard only once, which makes it sound rather as an extension of some form of larger middle section, particularly as it precedes the return of the 'singa-ninga' material.

This return produces a similar effect to that observed earlier, with the complicated rhythmic layering and phraseology producing a sense of shortening when compared to the more foursquare emphasis of the preceding five statements. This reappearance of the most memorable material involves the clearest sense of large-scale return, although, as discussed in detail earlier, the music also plays with perceptions of strict identity and modified restatement, so that one is not actually sure which is which. Despite this, the similarity means that on a larger level this return is obvious and emphasised in terms of overall length (two statements). The final element to be introduced, the 'oo-aa' signals, acts as a gesture of withdrawal, clearly signalling the ending; it also makes the eight-bar statements seem 'very short', principally because the vocal phrases are now longer and because one's perception is turned towards them, particularly as this is a new element. It is this new-found 'lyricism' which makes it act as ending material, marking a sharp contrast to the rather hectic, breathless vocal writing heard earlier, and, as pointed out above, this is also the first appearance of 'proper singing'.

The solo piano statement with which *Arctic Bar* actually concludes has already been discussed, but in this larger context the ambiguity between continuing the sense of ending engendered by the previous two statements and of the 'new developments' of the semiquaver patterning in bars 1 and 3 can be re-emphasised as a final twist in an overall manipulation of anticipation. The return to a solo piano also connects back to the very opening, but is now heard in a very different way (again, it is almost impossible to remember whether the chordal patterning *is* the same); what initially sounded like a

simple piano accompaniment has been transformed over the course of the piece into a more complex pattern.

What emerges is how this piece is subject to a number of formal understandings, in that events may be grouped according to different patternings, none of which, however, is entirely satisfactory. For instance, the five statements between the two appearances of the most memorable material (statements 5-9) might be understood as an 'interlude', except this interlude is then extremely long, a length exacerbated in perception by the various factors outlined above. Alternatively, the 'two-statement section' grouping makes sense of a number of features, though the perception of timescale discussed above complicates this rather too neat proportioning, as does the isolation of statement 9 (hocket and melody combined). What this means is that not only do specific musical gestures convey a certain weight of expectation, often to contradictory effect, but the overall form that results also escapes any easy classification of understanding, balancing instead on a fine line between a number of possibilities and continually calling into question any patterning that does emerge. In this respect the play of the apparently simple and consistent is manipulated into something more complex and confusing.

### **The Voice and the Intangible**

The above discussion has focussed on a consideration of the various structural levels of *Arctic Bar*, and although the effect of the music does partly depend upon the manipulation of the different statements, of the setting up of a Ground Bass and the varied implications of each section in terms of the pattern of expectation that it produces, the feature of this piece which is the most striking and memorable is the vocal material of the two 'sing-a-ninga' sections; part of that effect is the fact that the instrument used here and elsewhere is the human voice, which further changes how the music is heard. In discussing the layers from which *Arctic Bar* is constructed, some consideration was given to the use and textural effect of the various vocal techniques used here, but it is important to concentrate on how the use of voice is central to the music. Put very simply, if the vocal material were to be played on an instrument such as, say, the violin, the music would be very different. Of course, much of the material is actually specific

to the voice, but the difference between this piece and a similar music for 'conventional' instruments does depend on the fact that it is sung. Monk has spoken extensively about the role of the voice in her music, and it is the vocal techniques she uses that usually make up the majority of discussion of her music.<sup>7</sup> A full consideration of both the effect and range of these vocal techniques is obviously beyond the scope of the current discussion, but the features that inform this piece within Monk's output as a whole may be fairly briefly summarised.

Like much of Monk's music, *Arctic Bar* starts with a fairly simple piano accompaniment over which the more complicated vocal parts are laid (but, as has been shown, this piano part is actually more complex than it might first appear). What is important is the way in which the vocal parts deliberately avoid the pitch material of the piano, either deliberately singing 'in the cracks' or using only partly-voiced or unvoiced vocal sounds until the very ending, the most 'instrumental' in the piece. The effect of this, particularly in the 'singa-ninga' section, is actually very funny, for not only are the 'words' themselves amusing,<sup>8</sup> but this bizarrely out-of-tune soprano voice, coupled with a comic 'ho-wa' from the bass and interspersed with the long glissando, create a humorous effect exacerbated by the simplicity of the material. This sense of humour and of play, of not being hugely serious, depends both upon the vocal quality and of course the basic fact that somewhat strange vocal sounds are used; this quality is reinforced by the very different expectation that the 'conventional' piano introduction has set up and which the vocal entry overturns. Part of the effect also stems from the fact that as listeners we are unsure what these sounds mean, and also how we are expected to listen and react, and there seems to be no sense of relating them to the other levels in the music, at least initially.

These two 'singa-ninga' sections represent the most striking use of voice in the piece, but even in the final 'oo-aa' section (statements 12-13) some extra level of meaning is involved, principally because the voice produces such a strong sense of one part literally 'calling' the other. This vocal quality also increases the perception of the

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<sup>7</sup> For some of Monk's own comments see Duckworth 1995: 356-9, Smith & Smith 1994: 189-92 and Strickland 1991: 92-4; for other discussion see Gronemeyer 1992: 7 & 11 and Sandow 1984.

<sup>8</sup> Much of Monk's music does not use traditional words or is often completely wordless; Monk has said that she thinks of the voice 'as a language itself. So if I hear English at the same time as I hear the voice, I think of that as two languages. If I do use language... it's as much a sound texture as it is a text. Usually, if I do use text, it will be very simple, and it will be there as much for the sound of it as for the meaning' (in Duckworth 1995: 359, see also Bowman 1988: 9). This use of text-as-sound is obviously an important part of *Arctic Bar*.

singers 'moving away' as they continue to call, signalling something unknown as they depart. The third vocal element, the hocketed material, involves a similar deepening of the raw material in two respects. Firstly, the simple quaver / semiquaver patterning (and its perception) is made more complex because it is hocketed rather than performed by one voice; a full consideration of the effect of hocketing a single line is beyond the scope of this discussion, but here it involves the realisation that this hocket is technically quite difficult, as well as the liveliness that the sense of alternation between two voices (and two timbrally different voices) lends to this otherwise fairly straightforward material. The second level involves the way in which the breathless, shifting quality of the material literally possesses these qualities when it is 'sung'. All this might suggest that the effect actually involves reflection on the sound rather than direct perception, but quite the reverse is true: what the use of voices really do give this music is a clear immediacy, what Monk describes as 'a very direct connection to emotion - it comes from the centre of the body and it goes out - and by definition the instrument [the voice] has more human warmth' (in Zurbrugg 1992: 5); this direct contact between music and listener is very much a feature of this piece.

Despite the importance of the vocal material, *Arctic Bar*, unlike some of Monk's output, also seems designed to present quite a complex experience of form and of interaction between levels, which has therefore made up a large part of the above analysis. What this means is that the piece does not wholly depend on the vocal writing for its effect, but instead presents a more complex relationship between its elements; the purely vocal effect is very important, but is not solely what makes this music work. As has been shown, this piece displays quite a complex mix of consistent, quasi-systematic procedures and also elements of improvised or less clearly-controlled music, both of which combine to create a sense of formal confusion and unpredictability, an unpredictability that is mirrored on a surface level by the continually-changing patterning and the disruptive and surprising effect of the vocal writing. The music achieves a blurring of perception regarding consistency and inconsistency, similarity and difference, and actually plays quite deliberately with the resulting confusion; the vocal writing continues this sense of play, generating a wide field of references and creating new disruptions and a continual process of change.

At the outset of this analysis the semiquaver patterning in the final statement of the piano part was introduced as an example of the effect that very small changes could

produce, and it seems appropriate to end with a similarly small alteration, which is somewhat more subtle but indicates both the use of the voice and the continually-shifting parameters within the music. It was stated above that statement 11, the second of the two which make up the second 'singa-ninga' section, exactly repeats the piano and M.M.'s material from statement 4, the second statement of the first 'singa-ninga' section. However, one detail was not commented upon, which is that in bars 2 and 6 it is the *words* that change, from 'Singa-ninga-ninga' to 'Singa-singa-ninga' (see Figure 8.17), the only point in the piece where this combination occurs.

FIGURE 8.17.

The figure displays a musical score for a vocal and piano piece. It is divided into two systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is written in a single staff with a treble clef and a 7/8 time signature. The piano accompaniment is written in two staves, with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a 7/8 time signature. The lyrics are written below the vocal line. The first system contains the lyrics: 'Singa ninga ninga longa ninga na longa ninga na Singa ninga Singa Singa ninga'. The second system contains the lyrics: 'ninga na Singa ninga Singa Singa ninga'. The music features a complex, rhythmic pattern with many eighth and sixteenth notes, and the piano accompaniment consists of chords and moving lines in both hands.

This alteration in the vocal line is offered without any commentary on its effect or general importance, but merely as one final example of how, in *Arctic Bar*, Monk gives us a music which refuses to stand still and with which one must continually engage and constantly re-evaluate.



## Chapter 9

### Afterwards

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Each of the seven analyses that make up the central part of this study involves a slightly different approach to the music and, as a result, analytical emphasis; this multiplicity of strategy is adopted here as a response to the variety of style and effect in the pieces which are examined. Furthermore, in its evolution of a non-theoretical analytical outlook, this study marks a deliberate attempt to allow the process of writing to follow the requirements of individual pieces, so that in each case it endeavours to reflect those aspects which are fundamental to the effect of one specific composition. As a result, the application of these strategies to an alternative sample of music would obviously involve somewhat different processes. This means that it becomes extremely difficult to draw anything like a generalised methodology from the analyses presented here, as each represents a distinct response to a particular piece.

In addition, much emphasis is placed here on the *act* of analysis, with the writing process itself viewed as the final step, thus gaining in importance; the analytical practice is thereby prioritised over any later or more general reflection upon that process. Part of this orientation is the recognition that this praxis is defined by activity rather than theorisation; the analytical strategies announced here are not considered to have any distinct existence apart from within the analyses for which they are evolved and which, when viewed together, effectively constitute them. The resulting flexibility of approach thereby exemplifies the multifarious, *ad hoc* strategies for the approach to, and understanding of, the functioning of texts which were indicated at the outset in Chapter 1. This insistence on the importance of a situated activity thus prioritises analytical rather than meta-analytical discourse, and, indeed, might be seen to disqualify any drawing-together of the various strands into a more generalised and over-reaching framework.

However, despite all these factors, a number of common threads *do* emerge from the analytical activity recorded here, and, without attempting to evolve any type of methodology from the varied processes involved, these may most usefully be considered in terms of indications for further, and future, analytical activity. Thus, although the basic strategy conspires against any summary of procedure, some remarks can be offered

about the types of thought process involved, and how these might be applied to further examples of music. This is not an attempt at a guide for musical analysis of this area of repertoire, nor a discounting or shutting-down of alternative modes of proceeding, but more a network of pointers towards features of the seven analyses which intersect; drawing together these various aspects of consistency simply indicates approaches which are considered effective in the examination and discussion of this type of music. As a result, these are laid out below as a kind of 'recipe', which, rather than outlining a precise procedure, gives instead more general suggestions for a number of starting points and concepts which could be employed. In addition, some indication is given of a number of the initial stages which inform nearly all of the analyses presented in this study, but which may not be explicit in their final form; showing how these processes work for the current project may suggest further modifications for the future. Forming a number of ideas for 'afterwards', these give some indications of how analysis may continue to move forwards, passing beyond the stage reached in the current study to focus on new and further repertoire.

### 1. *Identification of processes.*

Although a number of the analyses, particularly that of *Four Organs*, represent a critical approach to the codification and explication of musical processes, it is very important in this music that these aspects are in fact recognised. In the case of *Four Organs*, this enables an explicit turn towards aural effect, as the points at which this result parts from the gradual process can be identified precisely, thus becoming an important analytical lever. In many respects, concentrating on basic processes forms a useful starting point for 'proper' analytical work, as only by being suitably clear about how the music evolves over time can the effect of this evolution be expressed. As well as the obvious application to *Four Organs*, the recognition of the various colliding beat-patterns in *MGV*, the operation of the 14-bar grid in *De Stijl*, and the way in which the piano material in *Arctic Bar* is easily formalised, are all indications of the importance of process. In *MGV* the identification of a lack of system within these processes opens the way into a consideration of background and foreground interaction, in *De Stijl* the gradual over-run of material to barring echoes (and provides a window into) the larger-scale process of deconstruction which the current reading presents, and in *Arctic Bar*, the simplicity and repetitiousness of the piano part may be considered directly in its creation

of a network of expectation, and later, more indirectly, in the way in which it gives different emphasis to features of the melodic patterns which overlay it. The analysis of *Désordre* further indicates the significance of this first step of identification: although attention is finally turned much more towards those features of the music which are not controlled by a gradual process, without first identifying how the structure is created, and indeed, recognising its systematic nature, there is no way in which the reading which follows would be possible.

## 2. *Presentation of analytical 'data'.*

Although this may seem self-evident, it is an extremely important part of this analytical work to evolve modes of presentation that are both clearly understandable, and relevant to the effect of the music. Within the current study, the most explicit of these attempts are the graphic representation of *Four Organs*, without which the examination of detailed changes of 'note-density' would be extremely difficult both to achieve and to communicate, the use of graphs for examination of rhythmic process in *Désordre* (although the graphic approach for Ligeti's music is by now well established, these mark a clarification of representations used previously in discussion of this piece in particular), and the adoption of Zimmermann's 'carpet' diagram and of Eco's representation of memory processes for *Three Voices*. Slightly more conventional are the various tables of material employed for *De Stijl* and those figures in the analysis of *Arctic Bar* which trace the various pathways through the material. Most important is the variety of different modes to be found within the current study, as coupled with a desire to escape the unthinking application of analytical methodology comes a similar attention to the suitability of any particular type of graphic presentation. This can be observed in the use of a paradigmatic - syntagmatic layout of material, which is employed in analysis of *The Durham Strike*, *De Stijl* and *MGV* (its use is only partial in all these cases, however), but is not adopted elsewhere, as it seems less appropriate. Similarly, tables of material, used extensively for *De Stijl* and *MGV*, are less suited for discussion of *Désordre* and *Four Organs*, neither of which divide into such distinct groups, nor for *Three Voices* or *The Durham Strike*. Although both these last two pieces involve clear differences between types of material, for *Three Voices* the disposition of that material seems better illustrated by a graphic mode of presentation (which captures something more of the way in which it evolves); in the case of *The Durham Strike*, form is relatively straightforward, with the

links between sections more effectively indicated through prose rather than in tabular form.

On a somewhat different level, the presentation of analytical information in prose is considered increasingly significant. The emphasis given both to the act of writing as constituting an important aspect of the analysis, and the persuasive, 'rhetorical' aspects of this process, obviously suggests a predominance of verbal description in the final result; additionally, the avoidance of any explicit mode of theorisation means that the analyses move away from a formalised mode of presentation towards a much more discursive style, which again seeks to persuade the reader of the relevance of the understanding that is evolved in each discussion. Such an approach also seems better able to capture some of the multiplicity of understanding that this music presents, as it overcomes the tendency of explicitly graphic approaches to be regarded as 'scientific', and therefore 'objective'; the deliberate emphasising of the partial nature of any analytical understanding undertaken here is clearly rather antipathetic to such formulation. Expressed in more general terms, the various manners of analytical presentation are part of an attempt to remain continually aware of how different approaches indicate different understandings of the music which they illuminate. As an example, a paradigmatic - syntagmatic layout makes a number of assumptions about the importance of recurrence of identifiable fragments, whereas a table showing division into a limited number of types indicates a particular conception of overall form. It is important to be clear about which features of the music require these different approaches, and to avoid simply applying one or the other without considering the implications of that choice.

### 3. *Mutability.*

A very important aspect of all seven discussions is the recognition that the object of analysis is continually changing. This has two aspects: firstly, that perception of the music evolves as it becomes increasingly familiar, and second, that any piece involves multiple levels of meaning, which are not exhausted by one interpretation. For the current project, this second aspect means that, although in most cases the analyses present one particular view of how the music makes its effect, these do not shut down the possibility of further analytical work (this aspect has been extensively discussed in Chapter 1); in terms of a wider application of some of the insights evolved here, it suggests that in preparing an analysis one need not feel constrained by the necessity of

providing a complete overview of all aspects of the piece. In fact, within the current study, there is a general tendency towards emphasising aspects of form, and perception of that form (this is particularly the case with *Three Voices* and *The Durham Strike*), principally because it is on this level that this kind of music is least often considered, but also because it engages directly with the experience of the piece in its totality. However, with *Désordre*, for instance, there is further potential for examination of the harmonic (or even tonal) aspects that are involved, and with *De Stijl*, a consideration both of genre manipulation and how relationships with other movements of *De Materie* effect how it is heard.

The analyses presented here also mark a distinct engagement with the way in which perception evolves with increased familiarity, this engagement recognised predominantly through the more explicit siting of the analyst's viewpoint within the 'report'. This is clearest with the analysis of *De Stijl*, where the gradual revealing of a deconstructive strategy presupposes a number of listenings, so that initial characterisations are modified as an increasing level of detail emerges. However, in the other analyses offered here this process is at least implicit, so that they endeavour both to capture a part of the mutability of a listening-relationship with the music, and to record some of the ways in which the same event may be understood as fulfilling different functions and thereby projecting various effects. This means that the ambiguity of certain perceptions remains throughout, so that at any point a particular feature may be heard in any one of a number of different ways; the emphasis on this multiplicity of understanding remains a continual focus within the current study.

#### 4. Perception.

As should be obvious by this point, a concentration on perception is fundamental to all the analyses gathered here, and indeed, is that aspect which seems most useful for further application. To give a full consideration in this context would obviously involve citing practically the entirety of this study, but a few indications can be given of some common concerns within the different analyses. The range of analytical problems that each piece presents was outlined at the beginning of Chapter 1, but those aspects of perception upon which each response focuses may briefly be summarised. Of the seven analyses, three concentrate on perception of form: *MGV*, *Three Voices*, and *The Durham Strike*. For the first two, this involves suggestions of how the music requires new approaches to

form; in order for it to make sense through the listening process, a non-traditional orientation is needed. The evolution of these different ways of hearing is vital for continued engagement with contemporary music, which perpetually explores new ways of ordering material. *The Durham Strike* appears somewhat more traditional, resembling a set of variations, but again it is how relationships are heard that is fundamental, and this concentration on perception enables degrees of connection to be evaluated; within this context, concepts of how music 'usually' behaves also need to be considered, again a perceptual emphasis. The analysis of *Arctic Bar* illustrates how the interaction of musical parameters is vital, for although each level can be described quite simply, this piece nonetheless remains mysterious when heard; how these perceptual mysteries arise from very basic elements is the main focus of this analysis, as with that of *Four Organs*. As an indication of what can be done through analysis of apparently unpromising materials these two approaches suggest that study may also be made of other music which is also often considered beyond analysis. The examinations of *De Stijl* and *Désordre* present new conceptual frameworks within which to consider this music; both concentrate on how materials are manipulated through time, and both attempt to provide a sufficient level of simplification to enable the music to be grasped, without overly reducing its multiplicity and complexity. In trying to hear through the capricious-sounding surface, these analyses are not attempts to reduce its effect, but rather to enable that effect to be more clearly realised. Rather than simply suggesting how this music should be heard, the perceptual emphasis given to these, and all of the analyses, endeavours to open up a wider range of responses.

##### 5. *Asking questions.*

One final common thread that runs through this study is a general level of scepticism, which involves two aspects. Firstly, there is an attempt to reach beyond those elements of the music which the composer seems to indicate should be the main focus of attention, so that rather than taking for granted that the most obvious aspects are the most important, questions are also asked as to the significance of apparently marginal details. This process is clearest with the analyses of *Three Voices* and *Four Organs*, where the composers' viewpoints are subject to a process of critique based on the analytical process; it reappears in consideration of *De Stijl*, where the apparent structure which the music sets up undergoes a deconstructive reading, with a similar strategy involved for

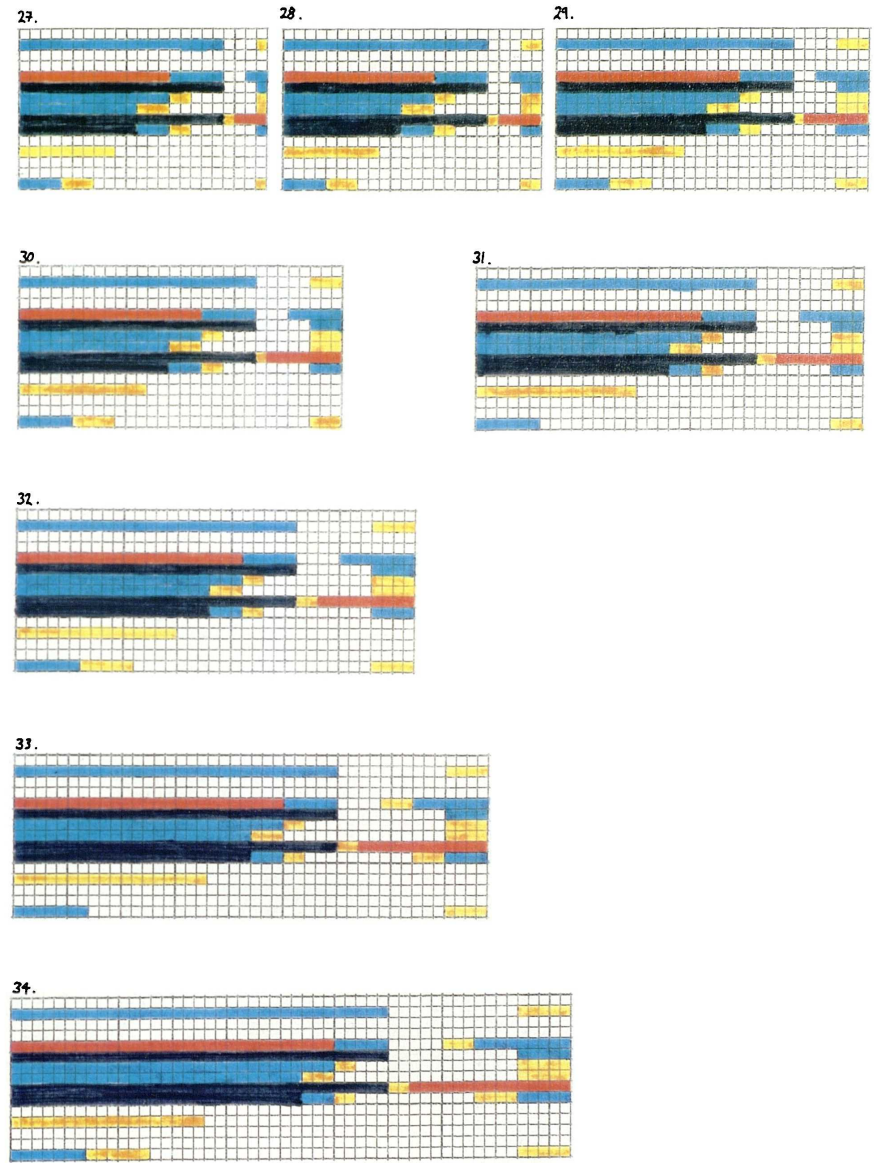
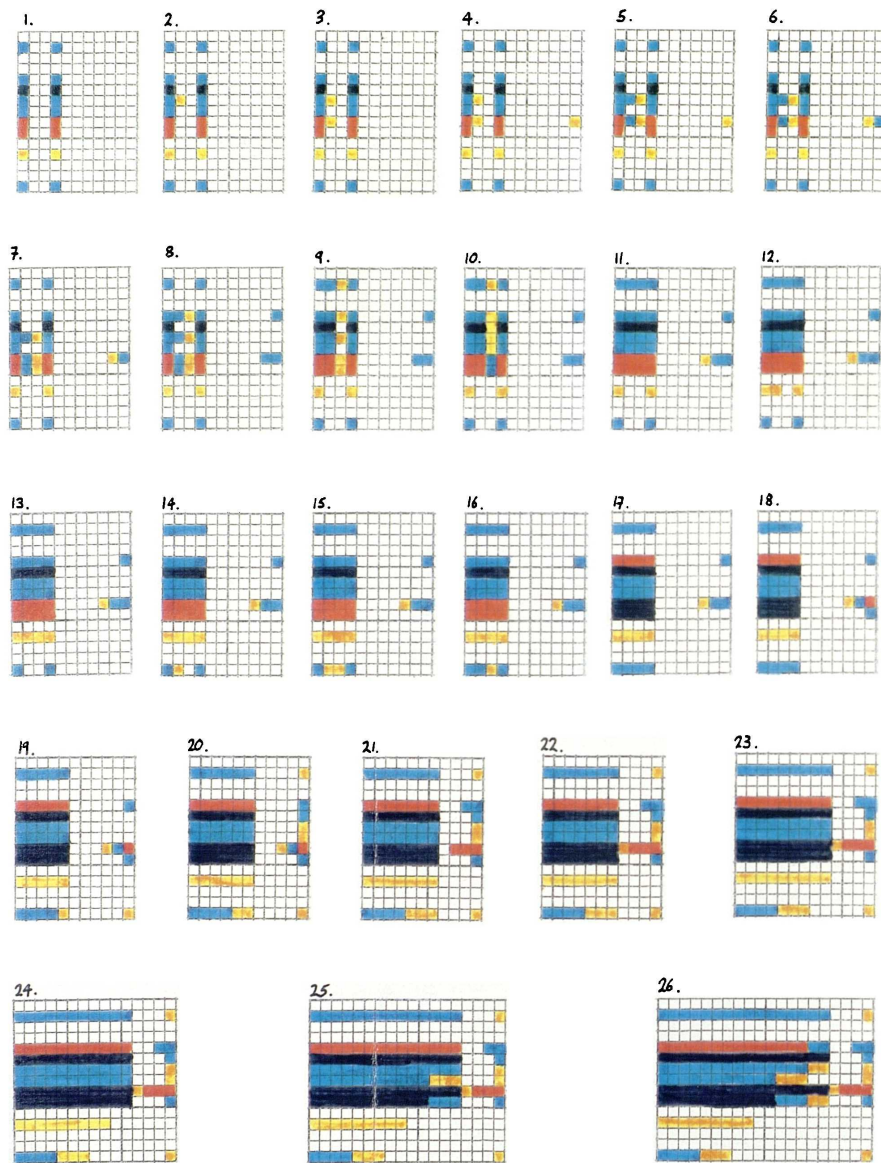
*Désordre*. This process of questioning is the clearest indication of the general analytical strategy adopted here, where the listener (and analyst) creates meaning, acting on the music, rather than the music dictating the direction in which these processes may move. The second level of scepticism is towards those aspects which seem to be revealed rather too easily by conventional understandings of analytical procedure. This is most commonly considered in terms of the trope of 'underlying unity', but on a more general level, if the 'mysteries' and musical interest which have been the main impetus for carrying out this analytical work in the first place disappear into a very simple and straightforward formalism, then there does indeed seem to be something 'extra' that the analytical process is failing to capture. With the discussion of *Arctic Bar* the ease of formalisation and of 'analysing' the basic material obviously suggests that there must be a further level on which this music works, with the main focus thus being an attempt to give some indication of where it may lie. The clearest case can be found with *Désordre*, where the straightforward discussion of the structural aspects can easily cloud the importance of the quaver figuration, which is in fact essential to the understanding of overall momentum presented within the final analysis.

This continual attempt to step beyond those aspects of the music which are either easily understood or easily analysed is the best indication for further analysis that can be drawn out of the current study. In some cases, a number of ways of proceeding may be adopted from the seven analyses presented here, and these might be modified to take account of pieces which involve similar processes; however, in the absence of any such transfer (and, as has been well emphasised, such transfer is always problematic), the most general strategy of all, a suspicion of analytical simplicity, may become the key to unlock readings of a further range of new music. Although not claiming that the processes recorded here may be of general validity, when applied to the type of music with which this study has been concerned they indicate a number of answers to the question, 'what is there to analyse?'. In moving beyond traditional musical and analytical props and continually asking questions of this repertoire, we may perhaps approach the music that has yet to be written with some degree of confidence.

# Appendix 1

## Graphic Representation of *Four Organs*

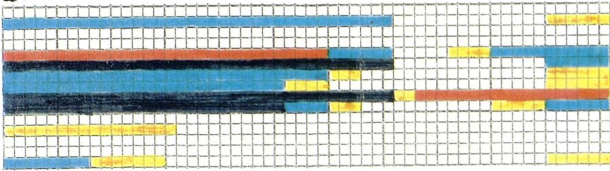
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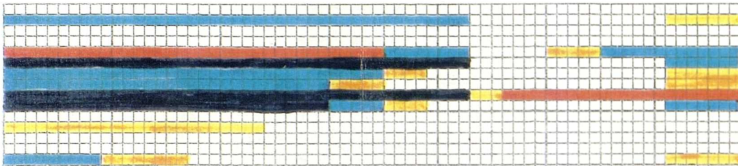


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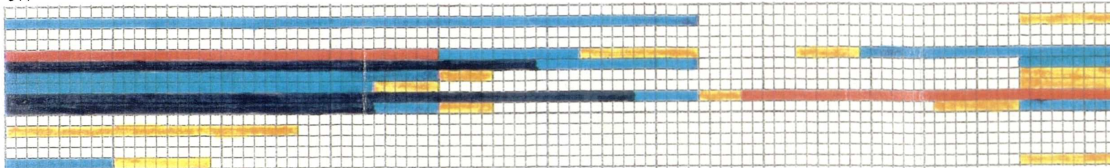
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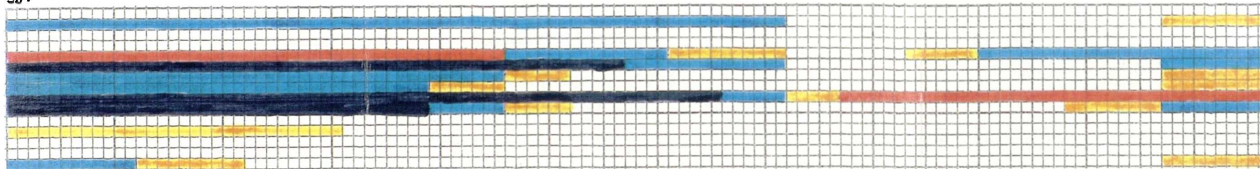
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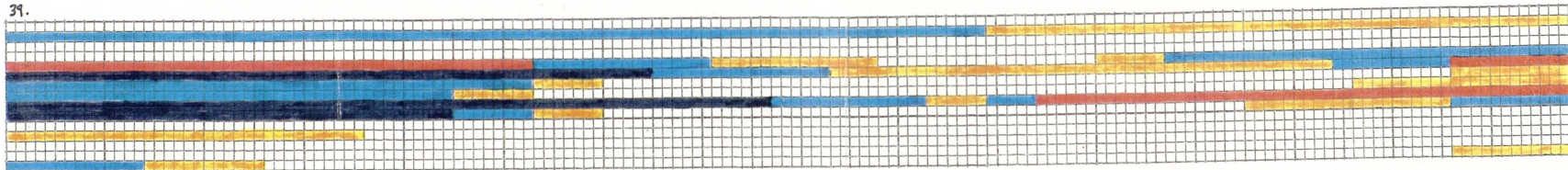
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38.

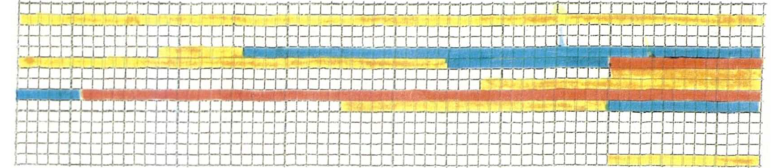
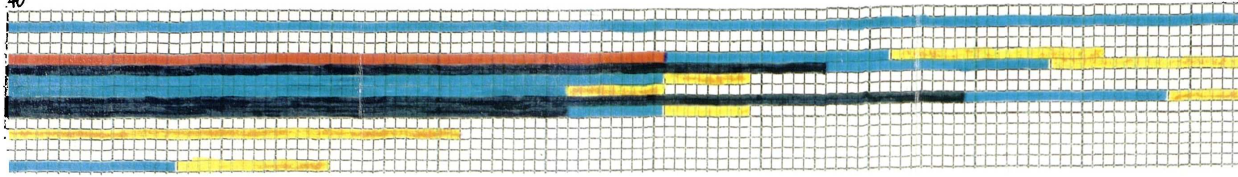


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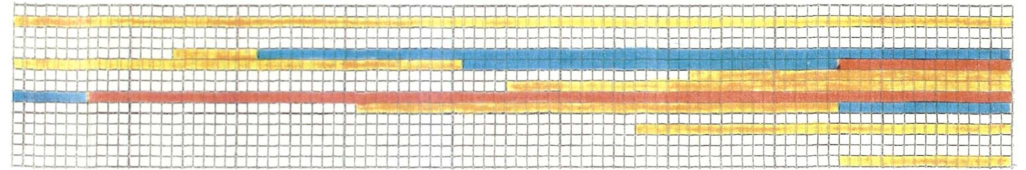
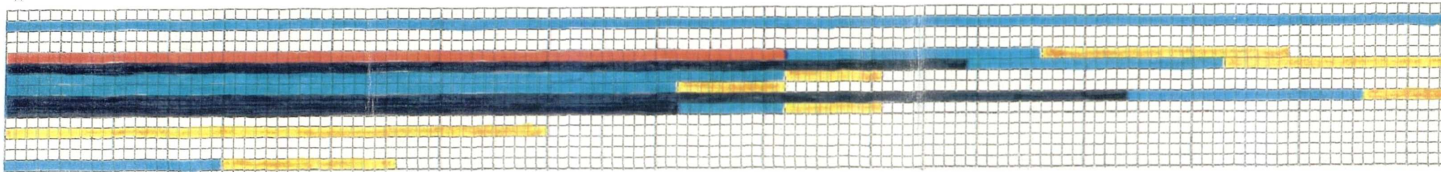


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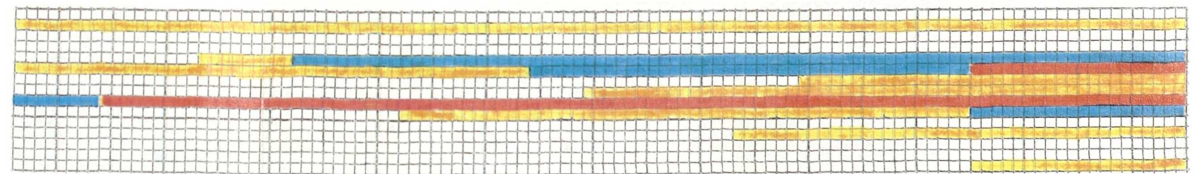
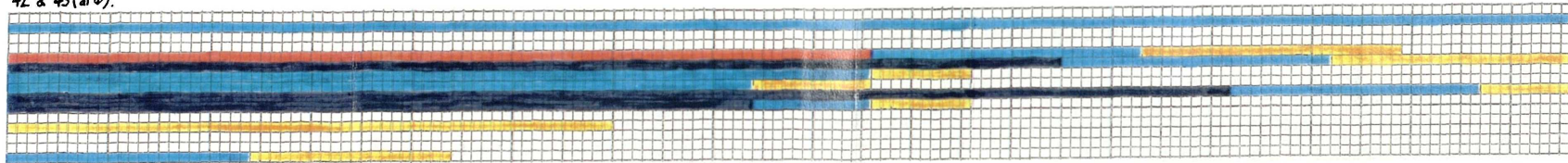
40



41



42 & 43 (al φ)



# Appendix 2

## Transcribed Score of Arctic Bar

MM  $\text{♩} = 93$

The score is arranged in systems. The first system includes two piano parts (Piano and PIANO) and a vocal line (M.M.) with lyrics: "Siya naga naga lanya naga na Siya naga naga lanya naga na lanya naga na Siya naga Siya naga naga Siya naga naga lanya naga na lanya naga na lanya naga na Siya naga Siya naga naga Siya naga naga lanya naga na lanya naga na lanya naga na Siya naga Siya naga naga lanya naga na." Below the vocal line is a R.E. line with notes and the text "ho - na ho - na etc.". The second system continues the piano accompaniment and the vocal line with similar lyrics. The third system introduces a keyboard part (Keyboard) with the instruction "loquato" and continues the piano accompaniment. The score concludes with a final piano part.



91

M.M.

R.E.

P.<sub>no</sub>

91

M.M.

R.E.

P.<sub>no</sub>

92

M.M.

R.E.

P.<sub>no</sub>

93

M.M.

R.E.

P.<sub>no</sub>

94

M.M.

R.E.

P.<sub>no</sub>

95

M.M.

R.E.

P.<sub>no</sub>

rall. ....

Sige niye niye niye niye na laja niye na Sige niye Sige Sige niye Sige niye niye niye niye niye na laja niye na Sige niye Sige niye niye Sige niye niye niye laja niye na laja niye na Sige niye Sige Sige niye Sige niye niye niye niye niye na laja niye na laja niye na laja niye na.

# List of Primary Materials

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## Scores

The date of composition is indicated immediately after the title.

ANDRIESSEN, Louis. *De Stijl* (1985).

London: Boosey and Hawkes, 1996.

FELDMAN, Morton. *Three Voices* (1982).

London: Universal Edition Ltd.

LIGETI, György. *Désordre* (1985).

In *Études pour piano - Premier livre*. Mainz - London: Schott, 1986.

MONK, Meredith. *Arctic Bar* (1990).

From *Facing North*. Unscored / Unpublished.

NYMAN, Michael. *MGV* (1993).

London: Chester Music Ltd.

REICH, Steve. *Four Organs* (1970).

London: Universal Edition Ltd., 1980.

SKEMPTON, Howard. *The Durham Strike* (1985).

In *Collected Piano Pieces*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996.

## Recordings

ANDRIESSEN, Louis.

1994 *De Stijl / M is for Man, Music, Mozart*

Schönberg Ensemble with Asko Ensemble; Gertrude Thoma, voice

Conducted by Reinbert de Leeuw

Electra Nonesuch: 7559-79342-2

Also available on *De Materie* (1996), Electra Nonesuch: 7559-79367-2

FELDMAN, Morton.

1989      *Three Voices*  
Joan La Barbara, voice  
New Albion: NA 018 CD

LIGETI, György.

1986      *Ligeti - Études pour piano / Messiaen - Vingt regards*  
Volker Banfield, Piano  
Wergo: 60134-50

1996      *György Ligeti: Works for Piano*  
Pierre-Laurent Aimard, Piano  
Sony Classical: SK 62308

MONK, Meredith.

1992      *Facing North*  
Meredith Monk / Robert Een  
ECM New Series: ECM 1482, No. 437 439-2

NYMAN, Michael.

1994      *The Piano Concerto / MGV*  
Michael Nyman Band and Orchestra  
Conducted by Michael Nyman  
Argo: 433 093-2

REICH, Steve.

1993      [Volans / Lang / Reich (*Four Organs*) / Moran]  
Piano Circus  
Argo: 440 294-2

SKEMPTON, Howard.

1996      *Well, Well, Cornelius*  
John Tilbury, Piano  
Sony Classical: SK 66482

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