

Darmstadt and the Philosophical Turn

By

Brent Andrew Wetters

B.M. University of Michigan, 1999

Meestergrad, Hogeschool Gent Conservatorium, 2001

M.A. Wesleyan University, 2003

M.A. Brown University, 2005

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Department of Music as satisfying the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor
of Philosophy.

Date _____

Katherine Bergeron, Advisor

Recommended to the Graduate Council

Date _____

Ethan Kleinberg, Reader

Date _____

Joseph Rován, Reader

Date _____

Dana Gooley, Reader

Approved by the Graduate Council

Date _____

Peter M. Weber, Dean of the Graduate School

Curriculum Vitae

Education

	<i>Brown University, Providence, RI</i>
Spring 2012	Ph.D. in Music (expected)
Spring 2008	Oral examination, progression to candidacy Dean Katherine Bergeron (dissertation director, Brown University)
2005-2007	Master of Arts in Music History/Ethnomusicology Master's paper on Bruno Maderna
2001-2003	<i>Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT</i> Master of Arts in Music Composition Thesis on Paul Celan
1999-2000	<i>Royal Conservatory, Ghent, Belgium</i> Meestergrad in Composition Final project was a set of compositions based on poems by Paul Celan.
1994-1999	<i>University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI</i> B.M. in Music Composition

Forthcoming Publications

- “Allegorical Erasmus” (working title), on Bruno Maderna’s *Ritratto di Erasmo* for special volume (summer or fall, 2012) of the *Cambridge Opera Journal* devoted to 20th century Italian Opera.
- “Idea and Actualization in Bruno Maderna’s Hyperion,” based on a paper delivered at a two-day “Counterpoints” conference on 19th century literature and music, at Fordham University; to be published in Fall, 2012 in *19th Century Music*.

Residencies and Affiliations

2011	David Tudor Archive, Getty Center, Los Angeles – Two days in October viewing documents and recordings related to Tudor’s realizations of Cage and Stockhausen works.
2011	Internationale Musikinstitut Darmstadt – One week listening to recordings and viewing letters and documents related to Cage and Tudor’s 1958 visit to the Darmstadt Summer Courses.
2006	Archivio Luigi Nono, Venice, Italy – Two separate visits, one in the summer and again in December, viewing scores and sketches by Luigi Nono, and also interviewing Nuria Schoenberg-Nono.
2006	Fondo Bruno Maderna, Bologna, Italy – Three days viewing documents, scores and sketches by Bruno Maderna, with particular emphasis on his radio drama, <i>Ritratto di Erasmo</i> .

- 2006 Paul Sacher Foundation, Basel, Switzerland – One week viewing documents and records in the archive, primarily related to Bruno Maderna and René Leibowitz.
- 2003 Churchill Northern Studies Centre, Churchill, Manitoba – A week (in January) interviewing researchers at the about the north, and writing about Glenn Gould’s radio work, *The Idea of North*.

Teaching Experience

- Spring 2009 T.A. for Prof. Marc Perlman (Brown University)
Music of Asia
- Fall 2008 T.A. for Prof. Rose Subotnik (Brown University)
Writing about Music
- Spring 2008 T.A. for Prof. Dana Gooley (Brown University)
Jazz and American Culture
- Fall 2007 T.A. for Prof. David Josephson (Brown University)
Music of Beethoven
- Spring 2007 T.A. for Prof. Dana Gooley (Brown University)
Jazz and American Culture
- Fall 2006 T.A. for Prof. David Josephson (Brown University)
Music History II: Monteverdi-Beethoven
- Spring 2003 T.A. for Prof. Jane Alden (Wesleyan University)
History of Western Classical Music (survey)
- Fall 2002 T.A. for Prof. Alvin Lucier (Wesleyan University)
Experimental Music
- Spring 2002 T.A. for Prof. Ron Kuivila (Wesleyan University)
Manager of Electronic Music Studio
- Fall 2001 T.A. for Prof. Ron Kuivila (Wesleyan University)
Electronic Music

Selected Writings

- “Idea and Actualization in Bruno Maderna’s *Hyperion*” (Portions projected for dissertation chapter IV), 2011. Forthcoming in *19th Century Music*, Fall, 2012.
- “Harrison Birtwistle’s *Secret Theatre*,” 2008.
- “Outside Genre: Bruno Maderna’s *Portrait of Erasmus*” (Master’s Paper), 2007.
- “Cage Fighting,” 2008. An examination of criticisms of John Cage by Luigi Nono and George Lewis.
- “The Presence of History in Ethnomusicology,” 2006. Seminar paper for Prof. Jeff Titon’s seminar on the history of ethnomusicological thought. Looks at the role of historical research in ethnomusicology, as well as ethnomusicological studies of Western classical music.
- Fermate: Caesura and Suspension in Music and Poetics* (Wesleyan Masters Thesis), 2003. Examines the musical implications of the poetry of Paul Celan, as well as composers Luigi Nono, Bruno Maderna, Glenn Gould, and Arnold Schoenberg.

Selected Compositions

Tini Variations (in progress) – Piano variations based on Bruno Maderna’s “Ständchen für Tini.”

The Wreck of the Ithaca (2005) – Electroacoustic work using field recordings from a 2005 trip to Churchill, Manitoba.

Nomina Nuda (2002), *Algos* (2004), *Iustitium* (2005) – A trilogy of piano works.

Saturn and Jupiter (2003) – A 32-part radio work using field recording from a 2003 trip to the Churchill Northern Studies Centre in Churchill, Manitoba.

After Paul Celan – a set of works based on the poems of Paul Celan for various instrumentations. Important pieces are *Corona* and *Gegenlicht* (chamber orchestra), *Fadensonnen* (electroacoustic), *Unten* (alto-flute), *Heimkehr* (flute and electronics), *Psalm* (viola), *Chymisch* (trumpet, euphonium, percussion), *Singbarer Rest I and II* (electroacoustic). The largest composite performance of works from this cycle was at the Logos Foundation (Ghent, Belgium), June 12, 2000.

Homage to Elizabeth David – Radio documentary about food and cooking, recorded at “Il mezzogiorno” in Ghent, Belgium.

God Forgotten (1998) – Setting of Thomas Hardy poem for tenor and string trio.

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Preface: Exceptional Darmstadt

Almost sixty years after the Summer Courses of the International Musikinstitut Darmstadt, most commonly referred to as simply “Darmstadt,” brought together many of the most prominent—if persistently controversial—figures from the musical avant-garde, including Pierre Boulez, John Cage, Luigi Nono, Luciano Berio, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Olivier Messiaen, and Mauricio Kagel, scholars are still arguing about its place in the history of modern music. From the evidence of the composers who were present, or who trace their lineage through Darmstadt, it seems absolutely self-evident to assert that Darmstadt represented an epochal change, one that generated a form of composition synonymous with “new music.” These composers tended to believe that the music coming out of Darmstadt represented the modern musical tradition at its most advanced state. But that, of course, was just one perspective. Another view can be seen in the latest edition of the *Norton Anthology of Western Music*, in which Darmstadt, by contrast, is conspicuous by its absence: the courses are not significant enough to even warrant mention. How should we reconcile this divergent reception history? My dissertation offers one attempt to respond. I want to reconsider the significance of Darmstadt in the history of Western music, by looking once again at its formative years and to listening to some of its most significant, if forgotten, composers.

My aim, however, is not so much to argue for Darmstadt’s “place in history” as to advocate, in a sense, for the music that was created there. Previous writings on Darmstadt

seem to fall again and again into a logical trap: they either dismiss the music as excessively academic or hail it as the true continuation of the Western classical tradition. In the first instance, the whole of Darmstadt itself is devalued by regarding it as a transitory aberration. In the second, works are not accorded their potential significance because they are presumed to operate just as music did before. In either case, the compositions themselves receive scant attention, and many important works have been overlooked.

I am interested in exploring these overlooked works. They require unique analytical approaches, as I argue, in part because they are “open,” sharing neither common features nor a common musical language. My approach in this dissertation has been not to look for the common language but rather to use the openness itself as a starting point for learning what these works are trying to tell us—for discovering, in a word, their core idea. If a piece of music encompasses a series of sounds, events, or notes performed over time, its *idea* could be described as something a-temporal that unifies those sounds and events and gives them coherence. Such an idea, which will be different for every piece, tends to reveal itself in unexpected ways, not so much in the unfolding events as in singular revelatory moments—moments in which the music experiences a turn or a rupture that causes it, unwittingly perhaps, to reveal itself. I have found it helpful to think of such moments, following the nineteenth-century poet Friedrich Hölderlin, as *caesurae*. Indeed, the *caesura* itself can become an important term for understanding the true meaning of Darmstadt in the history of twentieth-century music.

What does the *caesura* mean for Hölderlin? As he saw it, poetry—more specifically tragedy—is governed by the alternation [*Wechsel*] of successive

“representations.” Although music cannot be typically thought of as representative, it does present a similar series of temporal events in need of unification. The unifying element suggested by Hölderlin, that which causes tragedy to be more than a mere succession of representations and more than the sum of its parts, is the *caesura*: “there becomes necessary *what in poetic meter is called c[a]esura*, the pure word, the counter-rhythmic rupture; namely, in order to meet the onrushing change of representations at its highest point in such a manner that very soon there does not appear the change of representation but the representation itself.”¹

Perhaps the most concise, though incomplete, definition of Hölderlin’s *caesura* is provided by Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe in *Musica Ficta*, which I quote at length:

...all works are organized as such from the starting point of the *caesura* inasmuch as the *caesura* is the hiatus, the suspension, or the ‘anti-rhythmic’ interruption that is not only a necessity, as in metrics, for the articulation and equilibrium of verse (of the phrase, and by extension, of what one might call the work-phrase), but also more essentially, the place from which what Hölderlin calls ‘pure speech’ emerges. The *caesura*, to put it otherwise, is the liberation by default—but a non-negative default—of meaning itself or of the truth of the work.²

And here is what Benjamin, whom Lacoue-Labarthe names as his (and Adorno’s) source for the term, has to say in his essay on Goethe:

Caesura, along with harmony, [occurs when] every expression simultaneously comes to a standstill, in order to give free reign to an expressionless power inside all artistic media. Such power has rarely become clearer than in Greek tragedy, on the one hand, and in Hölderlin’s hymnic poetry, on the other. [...] Indeed, one

¹ Friedrich Hölderlin, “Remarks on Oedipus” in *Essays and Letters on Theory*, trans. Thomas Pfau, 1988, 102.

² Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Musica Ficta*, trans. Felicia MacCarren (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 141.

could not characterize this rhythm any more aptly than by asserting that something beyond the poet interrupts the language of the poetry.³

Both Lacoue-Labarthe and Benjamin refer almost exclusively to what might be called the ontological paradox of the *caesura*: the empty or null moment—the moment devoid of meaning—which is yet the basis for any possible meaning to arise. In its simplest (though most obscure) formulation, the *caesura* is that which reveals a fundamental conflict or binary opposition within a work of art—this conflict allows the individual elements to be understood as part of a whole, as a single representation rather than a series of unconnected representations.

Both authors ignore the line that follows Hölderlin's original designation of the *caesura*: "Thereby the sequence of the calculation and the rhythm are divided and, as two halves, refer to one another in such a manner that they appear of equal weight."⁴ This line of Hölderlin shows the extent to which, in addition to the onto-philosophical, he conceives of the *caesura* as a practical—that is compositional—tool. He elaborates on the placement of the *caesura*:

Now, if the rhythm of the representation is of such a kind that, in excentric rapidity, the *first ones* are more rended forward by the *following ones*, the *caesura* or counterrhythmic rupture has to lie from *the beginning* so that the first half is as it were protected against the second one; and, precisely because the second one is originally more rapid and seems to weigh more, the equilibrium will incline from the end toward the beginning due to the counteracting *caesura*.

If the rhythm of the representations is of such a kind that that the *following ones* are more pressured by the *beginning ones*, then the *caesura* will lie more toward the end; for it is the beginning which has to be protected as it were against the beginning, and the balance will consequently incline toward the end, because the

³ Walter Benjamin, "Goethe's *Elective Affinities*" in *Selected Writings*, vol. 1, 1913-1926, trans. Stanley Corngold, ed. Marcus Bullock and William W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Havard University Press, 1996), 341.

⁴ Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, 102.

first half extends further and the equilibrium occurs later. So much for the calculable law.⁵

This creates as many questions as it provides answers, in particular related to the idea of “the rhythm of the representation,” and the concept that the “*first ones* [can be] more rendered forward by the *following ones*” and vice versa. How does one actually recognize the weight of the representations? How does one decide where the *caesura* should be when writing or examining a work?

It is clear that Hölderlin finds the concept of the *caesura*, first and foremost, at the level of poetic articulation. In its classical origins, the *caesura* is a physical reality of the basic poetic utterance, a temporal division in a line of poetry that balances it such that two halves join to express a single idea. Musically, this moment could be seen as the cadential moment joining antecedent and consequent phrases into a single melodic statement. For Hölderlin, then, this the line of poetry—which the *caesura* makes possible—is the purest expression of a single poetic idea. The *caesura* that he proposes for his theory of tragedy analogizes that structural unity to larger formal principles.

Some clues as to how Hölderlin extrapolates this rhythmic “articulation” to a broader formal concept can be found in the plays of *Oedipus* and *Antigone*, which he analyzes in this way. In *Oedipus*, the *caesura*, according to Hölderlin, lies “from the beginning,” while in *Antigone* it lies “toward the end.” In both cases, the *caesura* occurs with the speeches of Teiresias, and as Lacoue-Labarthe says, the intrusion of the prophetic word.⁶ In *Oedipus*, this speech marks the spot where Oedipus learns that his hunt for Laius's killer will lead him to despair and that the prophecy from which he had

⁵ Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, 102. Emphasis in original.

⁶ Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Heidegger, Art, and Politics*, trans. Chris Turner (Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 42.

fled will be made true. I would like to suggest that a secondary articulation also occurs toward the end, where prophecy is proved true and the horrible truth of Oedipus's actions is revealed to him. The tension and resolution of what amounts to two complimentary *caesurae*—the prophesy and its fulfillment—are what allow *Oedipus* to stand as a discrete work. The joining of these two moments has the effect of stopping the incessant flow of time. Instead of a mere succession of scenes, the play becomes a graspable object—something as clear as a single poetic line. It is as if, at the moment of *caesura*, the entire work pivots on the axis of time and can be understood (viewed) in its entirety.

§

What does this concept of poetic and dramatic form have to do with Darmstadt? Quite a lot, as I hope to show. The first chapter of this work seeks to reexamine the curious break—itself a kind of *caesura*—from which Darmstadt Summer Courses emerged. The courses are often referred to as an example of the *Stunde Null* phenomenon after World War II, a moment when it seemed that music history had a chance to start over.⁷ And yet, Darmstadt forged important links with the past, not least by reviving Arnold Schoenberg's method of composition with all twelve tones. However, the isolation of musical communities during the two wars, coupled with the mass migration of some of the most important musical figures, allowed many Darmstadt composers to discover the music of the Second Viennese School as something new in the immediate post-war

⁷ Richard Taruskin, for example, frames his entire discussion of the post-War era as a (misguided) attempt to “start over.” Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music*, vol. 5 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1-54.

period. For many of these composers, their first encounters with music from the first part of the century came as a revelation, not as part of a developing tradition.

A key component of the appraisal of this moment involves rethinking Adorno's role at Darmstadt, not to affirm or deny his ideas about music, but to discover how those ideas—and Adorno himself, as an active participant—exercised direct influence over the composers at Darmstadt. And more than Adorno, his book, *The Philosophy of New Music* could be described as the main catalyst for Darmstadt's subsequent developments. That book showed ways in which a compositional philosophy could be extrapolated from musical compositions, but it also had the unintended effect of suggesting the opposite: compositions could be written to conform to a philosophy. This represented a turning point in music composition of the twentieth century—or, to use the term that I have been developing, a kind of *caesura*. In the title of this dissertation, I call this moment, simply, the “philosophical turn.”

With its seminars, workshops, and lecture-concerts, Darmstadt proved an ideal environment for the development of such a philosophical music. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, composers not only wrote music and addressed practical/technical concerns, but also sought to participate in the theorization of their works. In many cases, compositions were written to adhere to philosophical principles. The discussions reached their apex with a series of lectures and discussions in the early 1960s about the idea of “informal music,” an abstract concept of music in which all preexisting forms would be banished from musical works; each work would define its own musical philosophy.

That the philosophical turn continues to affect composers in the present day is evident in an anecdote, not from Darmstadt, but from IRCAM, the center for electronic

music established by Pierre Boulez in the 1980s. In 2002, IRCAM chose Bernard Stiegler, a philosopher with no particular musical credentials, as director. (He would serve until 2006.) This means that the *direction* of musical composition was beholden not to practice, but to philosophy; philosophy, in this case, precedes praxis. I do not, however, mean to suggest that Stiegler's appointment is justification for Darmstadt or even the philosophical turn, but that it could happen at all shows just how routine that turn has become within one corner of new music.

In the second chapter, I consider serialism—which has been given so much emphasis in other accounts that it often becomes synonymous with Darmstadt—for the ways that its methods proved accommodating to a philosophical approach. In the process, I argue that serialism was never the monolithic “school” it has been portrayed, and so-called total serialism was only a short-lived aspiration. Instead, a work like Luigi Nono's *Il canto sospeso* makes use of serial techniques to articulate its philosophical goals. In the end, the analysis of Nono's serial methods will prove useful, but will not be the final objective. The meaning of the work resides—at least metaphorically—in the tension between the work's structure and audible surface. Starting from its philosophical orientation, it will become possible to understand the meaning of Nono's work as something more profound than a simple elaboration of its structure and texts.

In Chapter III, I try to situate John Cage and his chance and indeterminate methods within the philosophical context. But rather than enforcing the philosophical turn, Cage's presence at Darmstadt seems to reveal its limits. Because while his music is often considered the most philosophical—to a degree that has led many to question if it is music at all—it nevertheless relies to a large extent on traditional musical rhetoric. And

indeed, when Luigi Nono launched his rebuke of Cage's ideas in 1959, that polemic against his philosophy failed precisely because Cage's philosophy was found to reside within an artistic, and therefore speculative, framework. Nono could not dismiss Cage's ideas in the manner he attempted, because while those ideas seem philosophical, they nevertheless serve a primarily artistic function.

The final chapters take a more practical approach, trying to find new ways of approaching works implicated by the philosophical turn. My aim is not to make a definitive statement about how music has developed since Darmstadt; rather, with several examples, I try to show some of the ways that music of the late twentieth century could be considered more fruitfully taking account of the philosophical approach to composition. Chapter IV examines Maderna's radically open set of compositions based on the writings of Friedrich Hölderlin, known collectively as his *Hyperion* project. This work serves as a key for understanding the ways in which the self-critical Darmstadt composers unexpectedly resemble the early romantics of Jena. Chapter V takes up four works that can be seen as originating from the new approach to composition that began in Darmstadt. The four composers presented in that chapter (Iannis Xenakis, Helmut Lachenmann, Richard Barrett, and Sir Harrison Birtwistle) each maintain some thread from Darmstadt of the philosophical turn: they are all, in some way, "children of Darmstadt."

§

To conclude this preface, I would like to ask again a question posed in at the outset: What, today, accounts for the dramatic split that has occurred between music that

emerges from the Darmstadt lineage and the rest of contemporary musical culture? What does it mean that Darmstadt can be seen as either the one true continuation of the Western classical tradition or as an anomaly? Or, to put it differently, how is it that Darmstadt can simultaneously represent both the break from and continuation of that tradition?

One way to answer might be to say that Darmstadt opened up a “state of exception,” in the terms of Giorgio Agamben.⁸ In a strict legal sense, a state of exception is declared when an event occurs that is not anticipated by public law. In the same way that a judge must decide a court case even when there is ambiguity in the juridical law, the sovereign power within a political state responds to an unprecedented situation or threat by declaring a state of exception or emergency. However, Agamben contends that, unlike a juridical exception:

The lacuna does not concern a deficiency in the text of the legislation that must be completed by the judge; it concerns, rather, a *suspension* of the order that is in force in order to guarantee its existence. Far from being a response to a normative lacuna, the state of exception appears as the opening of a fictitious lacuna in the order for the purposes of safeguarding the normal situation.⁹

This is to say that unlike the court case where a judge must rule in spite of an ambiguity in law, thus completing that law, in a political system which Darmstadt more closely resembles, the state of exception is declared when there is a perceived gap in the constitution, not to complete the constitution, but to protect its very existence. Because the exceptional situation might have the power to destabilize a government, the state of exception is used, at least nominally, to preserve the status quo and the ruling order. The

⁸ Agamben sets out his definition of the “exception” over the course of several books, but his most explicit definition is to be found in *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

⁹ Agamben, *State of Exception*, 30.

purpose of the tacitly declared “state of exception” at Darmstadt is the same: to safeguard what its participants saw, or intuitively felt, as the rule of the norm, the Western classical tradition.

However, because a declaration of emergency powers within a political state does not necessarily separate anything from that state, a better analogy for Darmstadt might be the figure secession. It would not be secession in its most common formulation, where a national state is forged from within the boundaries of a larger union. Instead, two secessions come immediately to mind as being analogous to Darmstadt: Taiwan and Saló. These are both cases where the secession purports to guard the true identity of the larger state from which it secedes.¹⁰ They are governments in exile. This is, in the end, what the Darmstadt composers represent: they purport to be the guardians—in their own minds, at any rate—of the true Western classical tradition. Only by splitting itself off in a way that isolated it from the larger part of musical production could Darmstadt preserve its peculiar approach to composition.

And so Darmstadt, at the moment of the *Stunde Null*, secedes from the rest of the Western and German classical tradition. In this sense, the empty moment of the *Stunde Null* is not a “starting over,” but a point of articulation—Hölderlin’s *caesura*—revealing hidden meanings in the music that came before and after the rupture. Darmstadt seems to pull away from its own history, because of its exceptionalism. My goal will be to resituate this break into its historical context. It is precisely at this moment the classical

¹⁰ This nevertheless relates to Agamben’s state of exception in the sense that this form of secession arises when there is no sovereign power to declare a state of exception—Carl Schmitt famously defines “the sovereign” as he who can declare the state of exception. For Mussolini, his sovereign power had crumbled, and the only recourse to maintain his exceptional state was to secede and found the exiled state of Saló.

tradition is under mortal threat—from within it seemed implicated by the recent events of World War II, from without serious music had lost much of its former status in the public imagination—at this moment Darmstadt asks another question: *what is music?* The pieces produced there do not exactly answer, but rather, they place the idea of music under permanent question.

Chapter I: The Philosophical Turn

As the Second World War came to an end, Darmstadt seemed an unlikely candidate to become one of the most important centers of new music in the twentieth century. Allied bombing had largely destroyed the city of Darmstadt, once known as a center for Jugendstil architecture.¹ Its prominence was further diminished by its proximity to Frankfurt, a better-known center of industry, commerce, and intellectual production. Darmstadt somehow achieved its unlikely status against these odds and in spite of the fact that the musical activity for which it became famous happened only during the period of roughly one month each summer starting in 1946.

The Darmstadt International Summer Courses for New Music, or Internationale Ferienkurse Darmstadt (INFM), began immediately after World War II with the support of the American reconstruction effort. The courses, which took place every summer in the Schloß Kranichstein, just outside of the city of Darmstadt, were also known as the Kranichstein Summer Courses. Several histories of Darmstadt point to the peculiar musical development that emerged through the courses, a development which was perhaps the most visible musical example of what has been called, in other contexts, the *Stunde Null* (or “zero hour”) phenomenon.² This term refers specifically to the German defeat on May 8, 1945, but has come to stand for a broader desire to overcome history

¹ Fine examples of Jugendstil architecture remain or have been restored in the Mathildenhöhe and Rosenhöhe sections of town.

² See Richard Bessel, *Germany 1945: From War to Peace*, (New York: Harper, 2009).

and start again. The realization that Germans were responsible for the deaths of millions of Jews had obviously left the German musical tradition in a perilous position. The government of the Third Reich, carefully controlling its cultural assets, had held up German music as an emblem of German superiority and, in the process, banned so-called Jewish music together with other forms of modernist composition.³ Musicians and composers who stayed in Germany were thus suspected of collaboration, and traditional music came to be seen as tainted. Claims like those of conductor Wilhelm Furtwängler—who justified his own dealings with Nazi authorities by insisting on a fundamental separation between music and politics—seemed untenable.⁴ Younger musicians had no other choice, it seemed, than to see Germany’s defeat as an opportunity to reinvent the idea of German music.

Within this context, the American occupying government sought to give Germans the opportunity to start over. The war had devastated the country’s musical infrastructure, and the Americans saw an opportunity to promote American music within an occupied

³ Richard Taruskin points out in *The Oxford History of Western Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005) that Nazi policy was never as monolithic as it is often portrayed, that some modernist composition was accepted, and that there were even approved schools of twelve-tone music (to be discussed below). Michael Kater mentions an exchange between two Nazi officials, which on the surface seems to support Taruskin’s contention. A lower-level Nazi official sought to censure a pianist for his “penchant for modern works.” He was rebuked on the grounds that “in principle, the Reich Music Chamber cannot forbid works of an atonal character, for it is up to the audience to judge such compositions.” This exchange, however, also indicates that while modernist music may have been tolerated in some cases, it was far from encouraged. See Michael Kater, *Twisted Muse* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 19.

⁴ Artur Schnabel, *My Life and Music* (New York: Dover Publications, 1988), 110. Several prominent musicians tried unsuccessfully to convince Schnabel to return to Germany from his exile in 1933. Furtwängler insisted that Schnabel was confusing art and politics by refusing to perform in the Third Reich.

Germany.⁵ Many recent publications on Darmstadt are eager to emphasize the role of the American military at this early stage, in spite of the fact that the Americans provided little more than funding and some material support. One such claim is promoted by Frances Stonor Saunders, who, for example, calls the courses a “bold initiative of the American military government.”⁶ And yet the historical evidence shows that the Americans did little more than provide material support—affixing its stamps to concert programs and transporting a recovered Steinway to the site of the courses.⁷ This, in a way, was enough. If the primary goal of fostering cultural activity was propaganda, to show the superiority of democratic societies in contrast to communist East Germany, then the actual content of the activity hardly mattered. What is surprising is that, with this minimal amount of support, the Darmstadt summer courses quickly became the most visible site for the promotion of modern music in the new Germany.

Three recent histories of Darmstadt offer wildly divergent narratives of Darmstadt and its implications. Antonio Trudu’s *La “Scuola” di Darmstadt* affords Darmstadt a central position in the history of twentieth-century music.⁸ The title alone indicates Trudu’s belief that Darmstadt represented a new school of composition. The quotation marks soften the claim somewhat, but the inscription from Luigi Nono perhaps says it

⁵ See Amy Beal, *New Music, New Allies: American Experimental Music in West Germany From the Zero Hour to Reunification* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

⁶ Ibid. 38. This is only part of the story, however, as Stonor Saunders continues to describe the ambivalence felt by some of the military establishment toward the courses. In 1949, a military official reported that, “It was generally conceded that much of this music was worthless and had been better left unplayed.” See Francis Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (New York: The New Press, 2001), 23.

⁷ Beal, *New Music, New Allies*, 38.

⁸ Antonio Trudu, *La “Scuola” di Darmstadt: I Ferienkurse dal 1946 a Oggi* (Milan: Edizioni Unicopli, 1992).

best: “The *Ferienkurse* were a necessity of our times. During these courses, the young [composers] could discuss the problematics of the actual musical situation [...] Above all it was necessary to awaken the force of feeling that, alone, could bring life to new music.”⁹ It was Nono who first proposed that Darmstadt represented a new “school” of composition in conscious allegiance to the earlier “school” of Schoenberg, Berg and Webern.¹⁰ Notably, Nono’s grouping of “young composers” sets up a curious exclusionary category with other schools of composition. There is no sense in which Nono is describing only one small grouping of young composers, but, rather, that Darmstadt represented the core or true course of new music. For Nono, Darmstadt was the site of a new common practice.¹¹

The narrative that Darmstadt was a “school” is built on the idea that the composers present shared a common purpose and belief in creating something “new,” countering the perceived sterility of the musical tradition. Darmstadt afforded the younger generation the space necessary to “bring life to new music,” or at least develop new styles, but it did so only once the younger generation was in a position to dictate the terms of the courses. Richard Taruskin’s history of Darmstadt focuses on the “unexpected resurgence” of Schoenberg’s twelve-tone system, paradoxically, in a climate

⁹ “I Ferienkurse sono una necessità del nostro tempo. In questo incontri di giovani viene discussa la problematica della situazione musicale attuale. [...] Prima di tutto è necessario risvegliare la forza del sentimento che, sola, può far vivere la nuova musica.” Trudu, *La “Scuola” di Darmstadt*, 7.

¹⁰ Christopher Fox, “Luigi Nono and the Darmstadt School: Form and Meaning in the Early Works (1950-1959),” *Contemporary Music Review*, vol. 18, part 2 (Harwood Academic Publishers, 1999), 111.

¹¹ Composer Richard Barrett (see Chapter V) contended that the “modernist project” and the Darmstadt School of which he was a part was “still in its early stages, at the beginning of what Konrad Boehmer (paraphrasing Monteverdi) has referred to as the ‘terza prattica’...” Richard Barrett, “Tracts for Our Times?” *The Musical Times*, vol. 139, no. 1864 (Autumn, 1998), 23.

characterized by a desire to forget the past and start from scratch.¹² He lodges a sustained critique against depictions of Darmstadt, like Trudu's, that rely on mythologies, in particular the suggestion, promoted by many participants at Darmstadt, that serial methods were the only ones available to so-called serious musicians in the post-war era. Instead, Taruskin wants to characterize the return to serial techniques as being contingent and arbitrary, only achieving the sense of inevitability because of the concerted efforts of those seeking to legitimize their decisions. Moreover, in Taruskin's assessment, Darmstadt was a peculiar and transitory development, in stark contrast to the *terza prattica* suggested by Nono and Trudu.

A third history of post-war German music in which Darmstadt plays a central role, Amy Beal's *New Music, New Allies*, seeks to understand the reasons why the so-called American Experimental School of John Cage and David Tudor was able to find financial, critical, and institutional support in Germany in the 1950s, especially when such support was lacking at home. Other American music—especially what might have been seen as the American establishment characterized by Copland, Barber, and Schuman—found limited respect among European composers in spite of, or perhaps because of, the fact that they were heavily promoted by the occupying government.¹³ At Darmstadt and elsewhere in Germany, for a variety of reasons, the music of Cage and his

¹² Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music*, vol. 5 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1-54.

¹³ The choice of those three composers is not entirely at random. In discussing American music at the time and seeking to contrast the experimental music of John Cage with the dominant American style—or at least the dominant American style as viewed from Europe—Nuria Schoenberg Nono chose Copland, Barber and Schuman.

followers was performed frequently. While it was not universally admired, it found an audience and critical interest it lacked on the other side of the Atlantic.¹⁴

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Darmstadt's place in music history is far from clear. The most recent edition of the *Norton Anthology of Western Music* omits Darmstadt composers altogether, overlooking even well-known composers such as Pierre Boulez and Karlheinz Stockhausen. From a completely different perspective at a conference devoted to the music of Luigi Nono, the composer Konrad Boehmer, a composer who attended the courses during the 1950s, took it as a matter of shared assumption that Darmstadt occupies *the* central place in the history of new music in the second half of the twentieth century: "We have had, in our twentieth century, two absolutely fascinating epochs of new music, [of] which the first one is the Schoenberg and Webern and Stravinsky and Bartok epoch. And the second one is [Darmstadt]."¹⁵

Through my own reading of the courses, I will offer an interpretation that will unite these divergent histories, revealing that a common thread accounts for this divergence. It is not my goal to affirm or deny any of these depictions of Darmstadt; they are all perfectly defensible, and each illuminates an intriguing aspect of the courses. Even the fact that the Norton Anthology can *ignore* Darmstadt reveals that a curious break must have occurred with the rest of twentieth-century musical production. The courses

¹⁴ See Chapter III for more on Cage and Tudor's participation in the Darmstadt Summer Courses.

¹⁵ Konrad Boehmer, in conversation with Nuri Schoenberg Nono at the conference, *La Presenza Storica di Luigi Nono* in Padova, December 1, 2006. In this conversation, Boehmer did not specifically say the word "Darmstadt" but instead said "And the second one is this moment we have been discussing around now, since two days," which, in the context of the conference was the period of Nono's participation at the courses in the 1950s, leading up to his 1959 lecture on the "The Historical Presence in Music Today." See Appendix 2.

provided a context for one of the most important developments in twentieth-century music, a development that accounts for this divergence—both the divergence of the histories and Darmstadt’s divergence from the broader musical culture. Something considerably more profound took place at Darmstadt, for which the turn to twelve-tone music and the acceptance of experimental developments are symptoms. At Darmstadt, as I will argue, music became philosophical. From this perspective, we may begin to see not only how Darmstadt seems to turn away from the rest of twentieth century music, but also how certain figures, like composer/conductor Bruno Maderna, play a more defining role than one might ever have suspected.

The Early Years

Wolfgang Steinecke, a musicologist and cultural advisor to the town of Darmstadt as the war came to an end, directed the summer courses from their inception in 1946 until his death in 1961.¹⁶ Born in 1910, he was 36 when he launched the courses. He was trained as a musicologist in Cologne and Kiel, and wrote a dissertation on musical parody, which was accepted in Kiel in 1934.¹⁷ As a recent study by Michael Custodis suggests, any number of similar institutions could have served as a model for the course. These include an International Music Institute that had been founded in Berlin by Paul Höffer and Josef Rufer in 1945, the American Tanglewood Festival that had begun in the 1930s, or the

¹⁶ Beal, *New Music, New Allies*, 37.

¹⁷ Hanspeter Krellmann, “Steinecke, Wolfgang,” *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/26645 (accessed August 12, 2009).

Salzburg Summer Academy.¹⁸ The most likely model, however, according to Custodis, was the Deutschen Musikinstituts für Ausländer, for which Fred Hamel, a former colleague of Steinecke's and participant in the first Summer Course, had written an extensive testimonial in a 1944 publication of the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*.¹⁹

Though Gianmario Borio and Hermann Danuser give little credence his claim,²⁰ composer Wolfgang Fortner would also later claim that Steinecke had approached him in Heidelberg immediately after the war about the possibility of starting "something like the Salzburg Summer Academy" in Darmstadt.²¹ Fortner asserted that the decision to focus the courses on new music composition instead of performance was based on the fact that most of the prominent teachers necessary for the success of a performance academy were blocked from public performance by the Allied occupying government.²² Composers, being less in the public eye than their performing counterparts were given less scrutiny by the allies, who avoided banning public figures unless absolutely necessary. This lack of scrutiny, while likely not a motivating factor for Steinecke, seems to have helped Fortner personally, since the occupying government had officially blacklisted him, and yet he was allowed to teach at Darmstadt.²³

¹⁸ Michael Custodis, *Traditionen – Kalitionen – Visionen: Wolfgang Steinecke und die Internationalen Ferienkurse in Darmstadt* (Saarbrücken: Pfau Verlag, 2010), 36-37.

¹⁹ Custodis notes that the article in question by Fred Hamel, were one to substitute "Kranichstein" for "Deutschen Musikinstituts für Ausländer" would read like a blueprint for the Darmstadt Summer Courses. Ibid. 37-38.

²⁰ In particular, Fortner gave Webern an emphasis that never would have happened until later in the 1950s, when Webern's music rose to prominence. Gianmario Borio and Hermann Danuser, *Im Zenit der Moderne: die Internationalen Ferienkurse für Neue Musik Darmstadt 1946-1966: Geschichte und Dokumentation in vier Bänden*, vol. 1 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach, 1997), 67

²¹ Wolfgang Fortner, "In Memoriam Wolfgang Steinecke," in *Melos*. 29 (1962), 54-57.

²² Ibid. 54.

²³ Toby Thacker, *Music after Hitler* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), 78.

Fortner's tainted wartime affiliations make him a clumsy fit for the usual portrayal of Darmstadt as the rebirth of twelve-tone composition, or as a place where "new" music was created. Prior to and during the war, he composed primarily church music in neo-classical styles.²⁴ In 1940, he joined the Nazi party and his musical output ensured that he was always in good standing with the authorities. During this period, he showed only contempt for Schoenberg and his twelve-tone technique, declaring it—drawing on typical anti-Semitic rhetoric of the period—"evidence of uprootedness."²⁵

The summer courses seem to have offered Fortner an opportunity to reinvent himself, to hide, in effect, behind the idea of a zero-year. In addition to the church music he composed during the war, he also composed a few modernist works, most notably a cycle of four songs on poems by Friedrich Hölderlin (1932).²⁶ I will have much more to say about Hölderlin and his importance to the Darmstadt composers in Chapter IV. Fortner's songs were written in a free atonal style and were performed twice the first year and once again in 1947, as if he were trying to promote his image as a modernist. Works that he wrote during 1947, in particular his set of Shakespeare songs, seem to take the style of the Hölderlin songs as a starting point.²⁷

Hermann Heiß, born and raised in Darmstadt, was the second teacher engaged for the first two years, and was also someone who had stayed in Germany. Unlike Fortner,

²⁴ Kater, *Twisted Muse*, 170.

²⁵ Ibid. 171.

²⁶ Wolfgang Fortner, *Vier Gesänge: für tiefe Stimme mit Klavierbegleitung* (Mainz: Mainz B. Schott's Söhne, 1940).

²⁷ In the field of philosophy, Heidegger's "Letter on Humanism" can be read as a similar sort of re-invention, highlighting aspects of his pre-war thought that were opposed to Nazi racial essentialism. See Anson Rabinbach, "Heidegger's 'Letter on Humanism' as Text and Event," in *In the Shadow of Catastrophe* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1997), 105-106.

Hei composed twelve-tone music before and during the war, but the twelve-tone music he wrote came from the lineage of Josef Matthias Hauer, not Arnold Schoenberg. Hauer is primarily known as the composer who developed his own system of composition with all twelve tones simultaneously with Schoenberg. Hei studied with Hauer during the 1920s, and claimed to have collaborated on the development of Hauer’s system.²⁸

Though Darmstadt would become synonymous with the reemergence of Schoenberg’s method, Hei was the primary disseminator of information on twelve-tone music during the first year, giving a series of three lectures on the subject.

Unsurprisingly, his version of the history of twelve-tone composition begins and ends with Hauer. Where the standard version of this history might (and usually does) mention Hauer as a footnote to Schoenberg and his pupils, Hei’s history makes only passing mention of Schoenberg, stating that, “J. M. Hauer developed the idea of twelve-tone music. He was followed by Arnold Schoenberg.”²⁹ Hauer’s twelve-tone method, in contrast to that of Schoenberg, was more utopian in its outlook. In the 1920s, Hauer had hoped that he could, rather than create a system or technique of composition, find universal laws that would vindicate the atonal music (Hauer’s designation) that he and others had already been writing.³⁰

²⁸ Gregory S. Dubinsky, “Heiss, Hermann,” *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/12717 (accessed November 10, 2009).

²⁹ Borio and Danuser, *Im Zenit der Moderne*, vol. 3, 26. “J. M. Hauer entwickelte den Gedanken der Zwlf-tonmusik. Ihm folgte Arnold Schoenberg, der, wie er selber sagte, den gleichen Edelstein von einer anderen Seite betrachtete.”

³⁰ Bryan Simms, “Who First Composed Twelve-Tone Music, Schoenberg or Hauer?” *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute* 10/2 (1987), 109-33. On at least one point, Hei disagreed with his teacher. Hauer called his twelve-tone music atonal, a designation Hei objected to—as have others, including Schoenberg—on the grounds that his methods rely on the same twelve notes of the tonal system. Instead of defining

The final component of the initial design of the courses, which came to take on even greater significance in the 1950 courses, was the inclusion of the music critic Fred Hamel on the faculty. Hamel gave seven lectures on contemporary orchestral music, one on contemporary church music, and led a workshop on music criticism with collaborations from Karl Holl and Heinrich Strobel. Although Hamel's inclusion may not have been the result of an ideological decision in 1946, it already signals a critical approach to music that is concomitant with its production.

In 1947, Arnold Schoenberg's music arrived at Darmstadt. His song cycle from Stefan George's *Das Buch der hängenden Gärten* (1908-1909) was played at a concert on July 17, and his second string quartet was played on July 21. More importantly, one of the two music critics engaged for that year, Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt, gave a lecture on Schoenberg's music before the performance of *Das Buch der hängenden Gärten*, in a series called "Leading Masters of New Music."³¹ Two other adherents to the Schoenberg School, theorist Josef Rufer and composer René Leibowitz, arrived in 1948.

Leibowitz's *Schoenberg et son école* (1947) and Rufer's *Die Komposition mit zwölf Tönen* (1952) were the first comprehensive studies published on the subject of twelve-tone music. Despite a clear allegiance to Schoenberg's system, the interpretations differ in significant ways. Rufer studied directly under Schoenberg, and his guiding hand is to be felt everywhere in the book. Even the title was suggested by Schoenberg to emphasize that this was a book about "composition" and the use of all twelve tones was

twelve-tone music in opposition to or as a replacement for tonality, Heiß concludes that twelve-tone music emerges from tonality, "albeit a very wide-ranging and comprehensive tonality."

³¹ Ibid. 523. Other composers featured in the series, "Führende Meister der Neuen Musik," were Alban Berg, Igor Stravinsky, Béla Bartók, Alfredo Casella, Manuel de Falla.

more of a practical concern.³² Rufer gives Schoenberg almost exclusive credit for the creation and development of the method, while his students, Webern and Berg, are given only passing attention.

Leibowitz, on the other hand, treats Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern as equal partners in evolving the twelve-tone method. Taruskin credits Leibowitz for Webern's ascendancy at Darmstadt, and for the turn to what would be called "total serialism." Leibowitz ended his book with the contention that Webern, and not Schoenberg, "[represented] the greatest advancement in the evolution of the art of music."³³ Taruskin highlights passages in Leibowitz that are particularly fanatical in favor of Webern's radicalism and purity. Webern's music, for Leibowitz, held the hopes of a "great renewal," and his purified musical language, devoid of the sort of expressionism found in Schoenberg, fitted neatly with what Taruskin describes as the "amnesiac mood of the times."³⁴

Another important figure from pre-War Germany, Hermann Scherchen, began teaching conducting seminars during the 1947 season.³⁵ As a partisan of the Schoenberg school, he would have been an additional factor in the increased awareness of his music that year. Scherchen began conducting at an early age, and sought out the mentorship of Schoenberg. According to a legend promoted by Scherchen himself, he (like Bach)

³² Josef Rufer, *Composition with Twelve Notes*, trans. Humphrey Searle (London: The Cresset Press, 1954), 2. Rufer recounts the following warning from Schoenberg: "Now as regards your plan of writing a book on twelve-tone composition. Do not call it 'Twelve-Tone Theory,' call it 'Composition with Twelve Tones.' Personally it is on the word Composition that I place the emphasis."

³³ René Leibowitz, *Schoenberg and his School*, trans. Dika Newlin (New York: Da Capo Press, 1949,) 251.

³⁴ Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music*, vol. 5, 18.

³⁵ Borio and Danuser, *Im Zenit der Moderne*, vol. 3, 522.

walked miles from Berlin to Schoenberg's residence to seek an audience with the master.³⁶ In 1913, Scherchen—then just 24 years old—helped prepare parts for the first performances of *Pierrot Lunaire*. He was a tireless promoter of new music throughout his career. He spent the war exiled in Switzerland because of his known communist sympathies and his strong affiliation with Schoenberg's circle.³⁷

Scherchen's lasting influence on Darmstadt was in the students he brought to the Ferienkurse, although his relationship with the composers he promoted was remarkably different than from his own relationship with Schoenberg.³⁸ In 1948, Scherchen taught conducting seminars in Venice, where two of his students were Bruno Maderna and Luigi Nono. Raymond Fearn dates the 1948 encounter between Scherchen and Maderna as the moment Maderna was first exposed to the serial techniques of Schoenberg and his pupils.³⁹ Scherchen encouraged both Italian composers to attend the Darmstadt courses, and Maderna made preparations to attend in 1949.

1949 was also the year that the American occupying government began to take a more direct interest in the proceedings at Darmstadt. The American composer, Everett

³⁶ Nuria Schoenberg-Nono, see Appendix 2.

³⁷ Hansjörg Pauli, *Hermann Scherchen, 1881-1966* (Zurich: Kommissionsverlag Hug & Co., 1993), 10-14.

³⁸ The writer Elias Canetti remembers Scherchen in his memoirs, *Das Augenspiel*, as a man perpetually in search of novelty. According to Canetti, upon arriving in a city to conduct, Scherchen would inquire about controversial and important figures in the artistic community. He seemed to revel in confronting an audience that had no experience with new music, and who would find the music "repellent and ugly." What is more, it would seem that he championed individual composers, musicians, and (in the case of Canetti) authors not for any particular love or engagement with their work, but because he could exercise power over them. Canetti remembers, "A teacher-pupil relationship such as he excelled in was out of the question, I played no instrument, I was not a member of any orchestra, and I was not a composer. So he would have to subjugate me in some other way." Elias Canetti, *The Play of the Eyes* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1986), 47.

³⁹ Raymond Fearn, *Bruno Maderna*, (Chur: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1990), 7.

Helm, was appointed to the position of “musical officer” assigned by the American occupying government to Hesse (the region containing Darmstadt). Helm was a composer whose musical education in the 1930s had led him not to Paris and Nadia Boulanger, but to Italy and Gian Francesco Malipiero. His sympathy for the styles of music represented at the early Darmstadt courses was symptomatic of a general orientation away from the American establishment. He did see that more American music was heard in the subsequent years, but the tenor of the courses did not change significantly after his arrival.⁴⁰

In the end, Maderna was unable to attend in 1949, but his *Fantasia per due pianoforti* was performed in his absence. Beginning in 1950, he became a regular participant, first as a student and then as a teacher, until his death in 1973. Nono arrived in the same year, 1950, with his work *Variazioni canoniche sulla serie dell'op. 41 di Arnold Schoenberg*. The arrival of these two Italians along with Pierre Boulez from France effectively turned what had been an almost exclusively German affair into an international—or at least, European—event. It is also clear, given that Nono’s work was written prior to attending the courses, that an awareness of Schoenberg, and more importantly a belief that he represented the most important path for new music, existed among the participants prior to their arrival.

1950 was pivotal for another reason: Theodor W. Adorno was engaged as the instructor of music criticism.⁴¹ He returned to Europe from his exile in America in 1949,

⁴⁰ Beal, *New Music, New Allies*, 32.

⁴¹ Before the war, Adorno had divided his activities between philosophy and music. He studied philosophy at Frankfurt’s Johann Wolfgang Goethe University, completing a dissertation on Husserl in 1924. While in Frankfurt, he forged intellectual affiliations with Walter Benjamin and Max Horkheimer. During this period, he also studied piano

stopping briefly in Paris where he met with Leibowitz, who recommended him to Steinecke. Steinecke seems to have responded enthusiastically and extended Adorno an immediate invitation.⁴² Adorno's *Philosophie der Neuen Musik* had been published in 1949 and was widely read and distributed among the participants. According to the conductor, Michael Gielen, the book was read by all "interested parties."⁴³ Musicologist Gianmario Borio also confirms that Adorno's book had "just been published [in 1950] and had an immediate impact on European musicians."⁴⁴

In the book, Adorno engages the work of Schoenberg and Igor Stravinsky by positing them as dialectical opposites. The work, ambitiously conceived, attempts to make aesthetic judgments by looking "the unique questions and antagonisms of the individual work straight in the eye without having any general theory of music or any music history to instruct him."⁴⁵ This is to say, Adorno extrapolates musical philosophies from the two composers in question, not by examining statements, intents or even historical circumstances, but by interpreting implications given by the works themselves.

with Bernard Sekles, and seriously entertained the idea of becoming a composer and concert pianist. See Theodor Adorno, *Essays on Music*, Richard Leppert, editor (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 4. He was affiliated with the Schoenberg circle and studied composition with Alban Berg in Vienna beginning in 1925. His philosophical and musical interests seem to have been largely separate at this point, and there is no indication of formal musicological study. Berg advised Adorno on several occasions that he would have to choose between composition and philosophy. "For it is clear: one day you will, as you are someone who does nothing by halves (thank God!), have to choose either Kant *or* Beethoven" [emphasis in original]. See Theodor Adorno and Alban Berg, *Correspondence: 1925-1935*, Henri Lonitz, editor, Wieland Hoban, trans. (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2005), 44.

⁴² Gianmario Borio, "Dire cela, sans savoir quoi" in Berthold Hoekner, ed., *Apparitions* (New York : Routledge, 2006), 42.

⁴³ Josef Früchtel and Maria Calloni, editors, *Zeit gegen den Zeitgeist* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1991), 136.

⁴⁴ Borio, "Dire cela," 43.

⁴⁵ Adorno, *Philosophy*, 11.

The approach could be likened to the “new criticism” movement emerging in the United States around the same time, an approach which suggested that an author’s intentions and the historical circumstances surrounding a work of literature’s creation were irrelevant to its interpretation. At the close of a seminal work on the topic, W. K. Wimsatt and M. C. Beardsley suggested that any analysis of a poem, any conjecture, must be found in the work itself, not, as in their hypothesized example, asked of the author. Whether the author could provide an answer is irrelevant, they say, because “critical inquiries, unlike bets, are not settled in this way,” and there is no way of establishing whether the author is or is not the final source on the meaning of the work.⁴⁶ Indeed, Schoenberg *did* respond to Adorno’s book and was none too impressed by his conclusions, stating on multiple occasions that Adorno had not properly understood his work. To that, of course, Adorno could have replied that it was Schoenberg who had failed to understand.

The similarity to literary criticism extends to Adorno’s approach to analyzing individual works. He does not carry out the analysis of the works of Schoenberg and Stravinsky in the manner of a music theorist; that is, he does not elucidate every relation and aspect of the construction. Instead, he treats individual works as objects for close reading. He may ignore the whole in favor of one small moment that appears particularly compelling, a moment that illuminates the meaning of the whole. For example, he explains how different the character of Schoenberg’s Pierrot is from Stravinsky’s *Petroushka*:

⁴⁶ W. K. Wimsatt, Jr. and M. C. Beardsley, “The Intentional Fallacy,” in *The Swanee Review*, vol 54, no. 3 (July-September, 1946), 486-488. In their example, the authors ask whether Eliot’s “Love song of J. Alfred Prufrock” contains a reference to John Donne’s “Teach me to heare Mermaides singing.” At the time of writing, they suggest, it would have been possible simply to write Eliot and ask for a definitive answer. However, even if Eliot were to have responded definitively, this would not have settled the question.

The immortality of the clown does not redound to reconciliation, but becomes a menacing threat for the collective. In Stravinsky, subjectivity takes on the character of a sacrifice, but—and in this he mocks the tradition of humanistic art—the *music* identifies not with the victim, but with the annihilating authority.⁴⁷

Importantly, for Adorno, it is the *music* that gives the impression of an “annihilating authority,” not anything the composer has revealed. In describing Stravinsky’s music as “schizophrenic,” he defends himself from criticism, saying that he “could not say more explicitly that [he] does not consider the empirical Stravinsky psychotic.”⁴⁸ Instead, his characterization of Schoenberg and Stravinsky portrays them as simultaneously both products of and contributors to the conditions that defined their own histories.

Most scholarship on Darmstadt misses the fundamental shockwave caused by Adorno’s *Philosophy of New Music*. Commentators seeking to determine the extent of Adorno’s influence at Darmstadt tend to point to this or that interpretation—whether for example, composers ignore Adorno’s critique of late Webern—or whether the book was read as a vindication of serial techniques.⁴⁹ Gianmario Borio offers a nuanced response, pointing out that commentators often compare Adorno’s philosophy to the work of composers “as if they were entities of the same kind,” disregarding the “difference

⁴⁷ Adorno, *Philosophy*, 109-110. Emphasis added.

⁴⁸ Ibid. 167.

⁴⁹ In trying to connect Adorno’s thought with the music of late twentieth-century composer Wolfgang Rihm, Alastair Williams confuses the reception of Adorno’s ideas by assuming that Adorno could confer legitimacy on Rihm’s music. Before explaining why Adorno’s philosophy is more supportive of a composer like Rihm, he suggests that precisely those passages that criticized the tendency to total organization, primarily in *Philosophie der Neuen Musik*, were misread as vindications of that tendency. He does not establish by whom those passages were misread, so the whole setup has the character of a straw man. Williams’s concern seems to be with discovering what Adorno’s opinion would have or might have been about Rihm’s music, thereby elevating that music above other dominant styles. Such an analysis could only be of use if there were a shared acceptance that Adorno could provide the final aesthetic judgment on these works. See Alastair Williams, “Wolfgang Rihm and the Adorno Legacy,” in *Apparitions*, 85-102.

between philosophical aesthetics and musical poetics.” The focus of attention, he argues, should be on “the philosophical horizon outlined by the technical structures of their works.”⁵⁰ And yet, one could ask, if the impact is to be felt in the “philosophical horizon” of the works, how did this horizon emerge as a component of the music itself? Borio overlooks or deems unremarkable the fundamental shift that had to happen for Adorno’s influence to be felt in those philosophical horizons. The philosophical horizon, after Adorno, is part of the composition; previously it had only been discoverable after the fact.

The reception of the *Philosophy of New Music* at Darmstadt took a predictable turn, then, in the early 1950s. Seeing the potential for broader meanings to be extracted, many composers, particularly the younger generation, sought to participate in the criticism of their own works. This can be seen in the large number of tracts written by composers, tracts that seek to legitimize the works in question by providing their own justification. To put this another way, the music was written to conform to a philosophy, instead of, as in Schoenberg’s and Stravinsky’s cases, philosophy being extrapolated after the fact. Composers such as Boulez, Nono, and Stockhausen began to think about the philosophical implications of their work: they, in effect, conceived their musical works light of their own musical philosophies. A philosophical orientation allowed them to dictate the terms by which their works would be judged, and also allowed them further to turn away from a traditional mode of learning, where musical practice was passed down from master to apprentice. They were no longer merely learning the *craft* of composition,

⁵⁰ Borio, “Dire cela,” 41.

but instead learning to think about music *as* philosophy. This is what I would like to call the “philosophical turn.”

The Maturing of New Music

It is right at the point of this turn in 1951 that the younger generation began to wield a stronger influence. Nono, Maderna, Boulez, Karlheinz Stockhausen and Hans Werner Henze had already established themselves as promising students. These composers, in contrast to the teachers who had generally been born around the turn of the century, were born in the 1920s and would therefore have been around 30 years old (or less) in 1951.

The process of their ascendancy from students to teachers began in 1952 when Pierre Boulez, in his article “Schoenberg is Dead,” made an emphatic statement that the youth were no longer willing to be passive participants.⁵¹ In this article, Boulez reproaches Schoenberg for not drawing out the full consequences of his turn to twelve-tone composition. He chides Schoenberg’s discoveries for having been “morphological,” that is merely developments of older ideas, rather than revolutionary. The choice to attack Schoenberg seems to have been calculated for its shock value rather than for any deep animosity. He confessed in a letter to John Cage that the article was meant to attack those he called “dodecaphonic academicians,” which Jean-Jacques Nattiez believes is a direct reference to his teacher Leibowitz, although it could clearly apply to Rufer as well.⁵²

⁵¹ Pierre Boulez, “Schoenberg is Dead,” in *Composers on Modern Musical Culture*, trans. Stephen Walsh, ed. Bryan Simms (New York: Schirmer Books, 1999), 147-151. Originally published in English in *The Score* (1952). In spite of their greatly divergent approaches, both Leibowitz and Rufer seemed unwilling to accept that it was possible to move beyond Schoenberg (or Webern, in the case of Leibowitz.)

⁵² Jean-Jacques Nattiez, editor, *The Cage-Boulez Correspondence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). Letter from Pierre Boulez to John Cage, December

In 1952, a year when Olivier Messiaen was engaged as the primary composition teacher, the courses featured a series of three concerts of “music of the young generation.”⁵³ This concert series was continued in the following year with an additional discussion component. In 1954, Bruno Maderna joined the faculty leading a subsection of the courses called “Internationale Arbeitsgemeinschaft junger Komposition” [International workshop for young composers],⁵⁴ while Fortner and Heiß returned as the primary composition teachers. In the following year, Maderna, Boulez, and Henze led the workshop for young composers. In 1956, “junger” was dropped from the title, and Maderna, Boulez and David Tudor led the “Arbeitsgemeinschaft Komposition und Interpretation.”⁵⁵ After 1956, while composers of the older generation were still engaged as teachers, there was no longer a hierarchy suggesting that they were afforded a higher stature. They were all listed together as teachers of composition.

Adorno responded to the music of the younger generation in 1955, with his essay “The Aging of New Music.”⁵⁶ He attacked rigid manifestations of serialism, and Boulez’s critique of Schoenberg. He defended Schoenberg, saying that his conservatism in preserving many traditional aspects of composition, while using the twelve-tone system, “is not attributable to a lack of consistency, but to his fear that composition would otherwise be sacrificed to the prefabrication of the material.”⁵⁷ Adorno thought that

1951, 118. In a letter from the previous December (1950), Boulez writes, “I will let you know again that R. Leibowitz’s credit is at low ebb, and nobody, any longer believes in that false prophet. He has had his day, and justice is being done” (89).

⁵³ Borio and Danuser, *Im Zenit der Moderne*, vol. 3, 558-565.

⁵⁴ Ibid. 566.

⁵⁵ Ibid. 577.

⁵⁶ Adorno, “The Aging of New Music” in *Essays on Music*, trans. Susan H. Gillespie, ed. Richard Leppert (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 181-202.

⁵⁷ Ibid. 187.

Boulez and his followers had allowed music to become the mere working out of mathematical formulae by eliminating all vestiges of traditional music.

The critique of serialism forms a part of Adorno's larger sustained defense of autonomy in music. The autonomous work is the one that responds to the requirements of its own materials rather than external demands. It is, in the first instance, *monadic*, meaning that the work must be "an indivisible unit of being; an absolutely simple entity."⁵⁸ It cannot be written according to an external plan or be written to conform to a genre. The composer cannot take a shortcut to escape a struggle with the material.⁵⁹ For Adorno, so-called total serialism is heteronomous because the composer is writing according to an externally imposed system. Namely, all parameters in a totally serialized work are presumed to be mathematically related and operate according to a formula or row. According to Adorno's characterization, this type of serialist cannot develop musical material because each work is merely an instantiation of a directive.

The neoclassicist work—the form of heteronomy that received intense critique in *The Philosophy of New Music*—is heteronomous because it forsakes more advanced techniques through a regressive adoption of older styles. More importantly for the current discussion, neoclassicism involves the imposition of externally determined forms and

⁵⁸ "monad, n.2.a," *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. 1989, *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/00181778 (accessed December 19, 2009).

⁵⁹ For more on Adorno's peculiar theorization of the idea of material, see Max Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Material, in a general sense, refers to all of the musical options available to a composer at the start of a composition, or as Adorno writes in *Aesthetic Theory*, "Material refers to all that is formed" (Paddison, 149). Paddison clarifies, "Adorno insists that 'material' is not simply that which is formed and shaped in the compositional process of any particular musical work, as 'raw material' (*Stoff*); musical material is itself already historically 'pre-formed.'"

styles, and in this sense is similar to serialism's use of mathematics. Neoclassicism, for Adorno, is thus doubly heteronomous. First, neoclassicism is an imposed *mode of composition* that proposes that composers write in older styles and forms. Second, the individual works themselves take a specific style and or form (for example, a suite in the style of Handel) as an external model of composition.

Shortly after Adorno had launched his critique of serialism, the dominant style at Darmstadt (1955), a new form of music arrived in 1958, bringing with it an implicit critique of serialism's hyper-organization: John Cage and American Experimentalism. The works of Cage and his followers introduced noise, chance, and indeterminate elements into the compositions. Adorno was absent from the courses in 1959 and 1960. Of this absence, Borio mentions an "annoyed refusal" to Steinecke's 1960 invitation.⁶⁰ During these two years, Adorno maintained a correspondence with critic Heinz-Klaus Metzger, who was one of the first European proponents of Cage's music. Metzger and Adorno had mutual admiration for each other's works. Metzger, who was present at Darmstadt during his absence, argued for Adorno's return to the 1961 courses, and Adorno reportedly considered Metzger "one of the most genuine interpreters of his own thought."⁶¹ The pretext for Adorno's return in 1961 was to tackle the question of "informal" or "liberated" music that had become a central compositional problem at the courses. The ideal of "informal" music was to produce compositions that would not be beholden to any pre-established forms and traditions—that is, wholly *autonomous*. Metzger clearly felt that liberated music was not simply an ideal, but had been

⁶⁰ Borio, "Dire cela," 47.

⁶¹ Ibid. 48.

accomplished by John Cage, among others, as evidenced by the title of Metzger's 1959 essay, "John Cage oder die freigelassene Musik" ("John Cage, Or Liberated Music").⁶²

In his 1961 lecture on the topic, "Vers une musique informelle" (published in 1962), Adorno seems to traverse the philosophical turn in reverse.⁶³ The title, Adorno said, was to be understood "as a small token of gratitude towards the nation for whom the tradition of the avant-garde is synonymous with the courage to produce manifestos."⁶⁴ However, it was clearly also intended to mock Boulez, and to situate his "Schoenberg is Dead" historically as just one of many such polemics, rather than as something truly novel. Instead of critiquing existent works, Adorno turned to prescription, outlining an idealized working method for new composition. While the essay represents a dramatic shift in approach, Adorno's aesthetic values changed very little between the *Philosophy of New Music* and "Vers une musique informelle." The primary critique in both, sustained through "The Aging of New Music," was against heteronomous music. As the title suggests, Adorno imagined a music free of predefined "forms," a music where the form and content were fused in such a way that the work would be preceded by an *idea* of the work. The turn to prescription, however, placed Adorno and, indeed, all music that has autonomy as its goal, in a delicate position.

In practice Adorno cannot suggest anything as a model. Even Berg's or Schoenberg's early non-tonal works, which Adorno views as *examples* of informal music, were no guide for new works. To use them would be to violate the primary rule, to

⁶² Ibid. 48-49. See Heinz-Klaus Metzger, "John Cage, Or Liberate Music." Trans. Ian Pepper, *October*, vol. 82 (Autumn, 1997), 48-61.

⁶³ Theodor Adorno, "Vers une musique informelle" in *Quasi una fantasia: Essays on Modern Music*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (New York: Verso, 1998) 269-322.

⁶⁴ Ibid. 269.

compose without models. Adorno did not comment directly on Cage's solutions until a few years after "Vers une musique informelle," but he argued that his methods were insufficient to escape the double bind. While acknowledging both Cage's contribution in undermining the European expectations about "musical logic," Adorno believed that his musical achievements did not quite live up to the rhetoric surrounding them.⁶⁵ Clearly, he could not make the step, which Metzger had done, of suggesting that Cage had accomplished "informal music." Both chance and total serialist methods appeal to Adorno's suggestion of a music that provides its own internal coherence, but—in both cases—by an arbitrary external compositional decision to give the internal compositional decisions to an external process. Chance and total serialism represent a *refusal* to compose more than a new mode of composition. The moment when either becomes a *solution* is precisely the moment when that solution fails.

Adorno's suggestions instead advocate a form of nominalism, which Adorno defined in the *Philosophy of New Music* as "the annulment of all recurring formulae."⁶⁶ Nominalism in music means that all works bear such a small resemblance to a common type that a new name would be required for each new composition, each would stand on its own and be intelligible only on its own basis. Generic names like "sonata" or "rondo" would be inappropriate and each new piece would require a new name. Hence the trend in the 50s and 60s to give pieces titles that only give the bare minimum of practical

⁶⁵ "It is Cage's contribution, which cannot be exaggerated, to have sown doubts regarding the extremes of musical logic, the blind ideal of complete domination over nature in music; hardly influenced by 'action painting.' What he himself offers in his most radical works is nevertheless not as different as one might suppose from studying the program, even if his best pieces, like the piano Concerto, still emit an extraordinary shock that stubbornly resists all neutralization." Adorno in "Difficulties," trans. Susan H. Gillespie in Leppert, *Essays on Music*, 658.

⁶⁶ Adorno, *Philosophy*, 61.

information regarding the piece to be performed. An early example of such a title would be Webern's *Drei Kleine Stücke für Violoncello und Klavier*, op. 11 (1914).⁶⁷ The world envisioned by Adorno in "Vers une musique informelle" is one without universal categories.

What makes his proposition impossible is that Adorno must necessarily include his own recipe. That is to say, someone who followed his suggestions to the letter would only be replacing one form of oppression with another, and new works of this type could be named an "Adornian" composition or "informal" would become a formal category. For this reason, he is careful never to offer any practical suggestions. He ends his 1964 essay, "Difficulties," with the speculation, "Perhaps only that music is still possible which measures itself against this greatest extreme, its own falling silent."⁶⁸

It is fitting then, that the closest Adorno came to suggesting a real-life model for "informal music" was not a composer at all. A year after "Vers une musique informelle," he wrote a short essay to commemorate the untimely death in 1962 of Darmstadt's director, Wolfgang Steinecke.⁶⁹ The memorial shares many preoccupations with "Vers une musique informelle": the creation of a music in perpetual search for itself, a music that never allows itself to sediment into new forms of oppression, and a music that always seeks to *think* itself in new ways. Adorno commemorates Steinecke for his role as organizer who did not impose his will, but facilitated precisely this thinking of the project of new music: "The memory of the great organizer is of one who was the equal of the

⁶⁷ Other examples from Darmstadt include Karel Goeyvaerts's "Music for Violin, Alto-voice, and Piano" (1948), Fortner's "Trio for Violin, Viola, and Violoncello" (1952), and Heiß's *Komposition in Drei Teilen* (1954).

⁶⁸ Adorno, "Difficulties," 660.

⁶⁹ Theodor Adorno, "Gedenkrede auf Wolfgang Steinecke" in Borio and Danuser, *Im Zenit der Moderne*, vol. 3, 368-373.

major composers, not only because he encouraged and supported them, but because what he did, in creating a new production process, is just as important as what they wrote.”⁷⁰

The *project* of Darmstadt—the place where music becomes philosophy—is *musique informelle*, even if individual works created at Darmstadt are imperfect realizations of that ideal. The project of Darmstadt envisions music as discourse, as a place where what constitutes music is in perpetual question.

Perhaps nothing is more troubling to that project than the fact that many of the composers at Darmstadt so poorly represented that ideal. At the time of Steinecke’s death, as Konrad Boehmer remembers, the various strands of composition, which had once coexisted productively at Darmstadt, had begun to fragment and retreat into factions. Boehmer identifies one particular date as the moment when everything fell apart for new music. A concert, not at Darmstadt but in Cologne, in 1960, featured premieres by many of the most important composers of the time, including Stockhausen, Kagel, and Ligeti. Stockhausen was reportedly furious that the applause for Kagel’s work was longer than that of his own, and he had used a stopwatch to prove it. “Composers who had been close friends the minute before, became deadly enemies the minute later.”⁷¹ Musical discourse was no longer valued as an end, but as a means to win and to establish one particular approach to composition as uniquely valid—exactly the danger that Adorno had predicted in “Vers une musique informelle.”

In this disintegration of the Darmstadt School, Adorno is hardly consistent himself, in spite of his valorization of Steinecke. The introduction to the *Philosophy of*

⁷⁰ Ibid. 373.

⁷¹ Konrad Boehmer, in conversation with Nuri Schoenberg Nono at the conference, *La Presenza Storica di Luigi Nono* in Padova, December 1, 2006. See Appendix 2.

New Music contains the following quotation from Schoenberg, which Adorno cites as support for his myopic focus on Schoenberg and Stravinsky: “The middle road is the only one that does not lead to Rome.”⁷² To follow a road, however, is to follow something pre-established and hence not autonomous. If we pursue the image further, even a “less traveled” path is nevertheless a pre-given trajectory, and a traveler on either path is no longer free to follow his or her instincts. This is perhaps where Adorno’s influence at Darmstadt may be felt most strongly. Most of the composers operated according to this paradigm. Seeking the glory of Rome, they paradoxically sought unique and radical compositional philosophies—the kind of compositional philosophy that would create the next “Arnold Schoenberg” or “Igor Stravinsky.”

Portrait of Erasmus

Amid the polemics at Darmstadt, one composer sat quietly in the middle: Bruno Maderna. He was, more than anyone except Steinecke, committed to the project of Darmstadt, and to the value of musical discourse in spite of, or perhaps because of the fact that he seemed to abstain from the polemics. He was a constant presence at the courses from his arrival in 1950 until his death in 1973. He permanently relocated to Darmstadt in 1963, and is buried with his wife in the cemetery on the Nieder-Rahmstädter Straße, just a few miles from the Internationale Musikinstitut. At the courses, he was active both as a composer and a conductor, premiering and promoting new works by most of his contemporaries across the spectrum of musical ideologies. Unlike many of his colleagues such as Nono, Stockhausen, and Boulez, Maderna did not

⁷² Adorno, *Philosophy*, 7.

leave many writings or obvious clues to his compositional philosophy. The only supporting documents that remain are a few interviews, lectures, and articles. Moreover, his compositional output—at least on the surface—lacks a coherent style. This, coupled with the shortage of supporting materials, might indicate that Maderna does not have a compositional philosophy, or that it would be irretrievable. However, one work—his 1969 radio documentary, *Ritratto di Erasmo*—supported by a few stray comments in radio interviews, brings the philosophical orientation of Maderna’s entire output into focus.

The *Ritratto di Erasmo* could be seen as a companion piece to his earlier collaboration with Luciano Berio and writer Roberto Leydi, *Ritratto di Città*. That work was completed in a mere two weeks in 1954, using equipment borrowed from a RAI (Radiotelevisione Italiana) studio in Turin, and was intended to show the possibilities of the yet-to-be-founded Milan electronic studio. Berio described it as “a rather ‘Milanese’ work, with some beautiful, rather surreal descriptions of a city which is very present, and active, but also secret and mysterious.”⁷³ The work was sufficient to convince the RAI to establish the studios, which would become one of the primary centers for the production of electronic music.

Unlike the *Ritratto di Città*, however, *Ritratto di Erasmo* was not collaborative, and was conceived on a much grander scale. Maderna wrote the text (or assembled it from a variety of preexisting sources) and music (some arrangements of Renaissance pieces and some newly composed music), directed the actors, and assembled the audio

⁷³ Veniero Rizzardi and Angela Ida De Benedictis, eds., “A conversation with Luciano Berio” (trans. Allesandra Petrina) in *Nuova Musica alla Radio* (Rome: RAI ERI, 2000), 160.

for the *Ritratto di Erasmo*.⁷⁴ The work itself is relatively unknown. It was commissioned by the RAI to be part of the 1969 edition of Premio Italia, devoted to musical works with texts.⁷⁵ However, it was only broadcast once, in 1982, almost ten years after Maderna's death.⁷⁶ After 40 years, it is only now just had its first commercial release.⁷⁷ In addition to a recent dissertation by Adriana Anastasia, I know of only two articles that deal with it in any detail.⁷⁸

Like Glenn Gould's contemporaneous radio documentary from 1967, *The Idea of North*, Maderna's work is difficult to classify as radio drama, radio documentary, or electronic music. Musical effects of repetition and contrapuntal treatment of texts are features of both works and distinguish them from more standard radio fare, but the reliance on texts for dramatic development moves them toward literature. Both works fit under the German genre of *Hörspiel* ("audio play"), which, in Europe, has been the site of crossover endeavors for electronic musicians using a literary approach. Maderna, for his part, called it simply an "opera radiofonica."

⁷⁴ Angela Ida De Benedictis, "Ritratto di Erasmo di Bruno Maderna" in *Musica/Realtà* No 73 (Milan, 2004), 153.

⁷⁵ Adriana Anastasia, *Ritratto di Erasmo: Un'opera radiofonica di Bruno Maderna* (Trento: Editrice Università degli Studi di Trento, 2009), 19.

⁷⁶ Ibid. 8. Adriana Anastasia speculates that *Ritratto di Erasmo* may have been excluded from the 1969 Premio Italia because its valorization of religious freedom was still controversial at the time. De Benedictis remarks in a footnote to an interview with Marino Zuccheri, a sound engineer who worked with Maderna on the *Ritratto*, "For reasons which are still unclear (and thus not worth too much debate), it was the victim of some sort of internal censorship..." Veniero Rizzardi and Angela Ida de Benedictis, eds., "...at the Time of the Tubes...: A Conversation with Marino Zuccheri" (trans. Peter de Laurentiis) in *Nuova Musica alla Radio*, 206.

⁷⁷ Angela Ida De Benedictis and Maria Maddalena Novati, eds., *L'immaginazione in ascolto: Il Premio Italia e la sperimentazione radiofonica*, (Rome: RAI-Trade; Milan: Die Schachtel, 2012).

⁷⁸ Joachim Noller, "Von Marinetti zu Maderna" in *Zibaldone* No. 8 (Munich, 1989), 61-67. See footnotes 23 and 24 for citations of the texts by De Benedictis and Anastasia, respectively.

The narrative and action of the work center on the Protestant Reformation, which the *Ritratto* describes as the most “clear and precise moment in the history of the Christian church.”⁷⁹ Erasmus occupied a pivotal position during the Protestant Reformation in that he refused to subscribe to Luther’s radical stance vis à vis the Catholic church while simultaneously advocating reform.⁸⁰ Hence, he found himself in the middle of attacks from all sides. Moreover, in Maderna’s formulation it is Erasmus the humanist, and humanism more generally, that are caught in the middle of this controversy. Humanists, according to Erasmus, unlike those in either the Reformation or the Counter-Reformation, promote tolerance and freedom.

The *Ritratto* opens with three alternating narrators setting the historical stage, suggesting that the turn of the sixteenth century represented a new epoch. That epoch, like Darmstadt, while it may have appeared to be a radical “starting over” at the time, was prepared by a long historical evolution. The Reformation began in the context of the population’s ever expanding sense of itself as being able to dictate its own terms. It became evident that the Catholic Church was also subject to historical development, and could no longer assert itself as the sole power over people’s lives. Humanism placed man

⁷⁹ De Benedictis, 157. “Non vi è momento più chiaro e preciso, nella Storia della Chiesa Christiana, di quello di Riforma.”

⁸⁰ See Erika Rummel, “Erasmian humanism in the twentieth century” in *Comparative Criticism*, vol. 23, ed. E. S. Schaffer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 57-67. Rummel concludes that Erasmus has become—and she seems to think that this is largely an oversimplification—equated with tolerance and pacifism. She seems to view the real base of what might be called an erasmianism philosophy as skepticism or possibly even equivocation. True erasmianism—what might be called a true following of Erasmus—cannot really be an -ism, because it is not dogmatic. In its original formulation, that is in the centuries immediately following Erasmus, “erasmianism” seems to have been related to his work in “rhetoric, philology, and the study of biblical languages.” Modern erasmianism, therefore, attempts to find philosophy and theology in a body of work that may have been more of a practical enterprise. Rummel, 58.

as “the subject of a freedom in perpetual expansion.”⁸¹ As the concept of humanism is introduced, *Hoc est pulcrum evangelium* is sung by male chorus.⁸²

In the next section (Example 1, IB), Maderna proposes, “The perfect champion of this humanism was Erasmus of Rotterdam,” and the accompaniment changes to an instrumental version of Francesco Landini’s *Gran piant’agli occhi*.⁸³ Maderna adds subtle reverberation to the valorization of Erasmus that follows, setting it apart from the text that preceded it: “In his message there is something that exceeds the classical spirit and the principles of the Bible.”⁸⁴ Erasmus, in Maderna’s estimation, with his insistence on tolerance and the goodness of human nature, “announced a new epoch, an epoch nearer to our own.”⁸⁵ His ideas would remain concealed, like a “subterranean river,” finally reaching the surface in the eighteenth century. The section ends with the assertion that Erasmus was the “first, true, modern man.”⁸⁶ Rendered in Italian, that phrase, “primo, vero, uomo, moderno” transitions perfectly to the rhythm of Giovanni Gabrieli’s *Canzone XVI* that opens and is played in its entirety in the next section, performed by two oboes and two bassoons.⁸⁷

This section (Example 1, II) introduces the second major character in Maderna’s *Hörspiel*, Martin Luther. In contrast to his treatment of Erasmus, Luther is presented in more measured tones. The narrator describes the moment when Luther thrust himself into controversy by submitting a series of critiques to the bishop of Mainz protesting the sale

⁸¹ De Benedictis, “Ritratto di Erasmo di Bruno Maderna,” 157.

⁸² Anastasia, *Ritratto di Erasmo*, 121.

⁸³ Ibid. 121.

⁸⁴ De Benedictis, “Ritratto di Erasmo di Bruno Maderna,” 157.

⁸⁵ Ibid. 158.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Anastasia, *Ritratto di Erasmo*, 121.

Ritratto di Erasmo

I. 00:00 – 4:36 Introduction

- A. Protestant Reformation – choral accompaniment
 - i. The beginning of the Reformation announces a new epoch (Zero Year?)
 - ii. Devoted man desires to be before God, conscious of his own belief
 - iii. Rise of Humanism
- B. Erasmus of Rotterdam - instrumental
 - i. Erasmus is the symbol for the possibility of good in man, in Human Nature
 - ii. “First true modern man.” [“Primo vero uomo moderno”]

II. 4:37 – 7:30 Introduction of Luther as primary character with some historical background

III. 7:31 – 8:45 Interlude: electronic sounds with fragments of *Hoc est pulcrum evangelium*

IV. 8:46 – 11:36 Controversy caused by some of Erasmus’s works, accompanied by modernist instrumental music giving way to electronic sounds.

V. 11:37 – 17:33 Correspondence between Erasmus and Luther (electronic music continues)

- i. Erasmus urges union between Humanists
- ii. Response from Luther via Hutten: “It is not time for discussion, but for action!”

VI. 17:34 – 20:16 Luther’s excommunication and summons to the Diet of Worms

VII. 20:16 – 29:36 Journey to the Diet of Worms

- i. Luther arrives at Worms with a throng of supports including Justus Jonas
- ii. En route, Luther is informed that he will either have to recant or be banned, and his response is unequivocal: “I’ll go against all the demons of hell!”

VIII. 00:00 – 8:34 At the Diet of Worms

- i. Luther is brought before Charles V
- ii. Long dialogue between the Imperial Council and Luther
- iii. Luther refuses to retract and is condemned

IX. 8:35 – 12:32 Luther and Erasmus, after the Diet of Worms

- i. By staying in the Catholic church, Erasmus is now officially opposed to Luther even though he is still clearly sympathetic to his ideas
- ii. The discussion commences over the idea of free will.
- iii. Erasmus concludes with equivocation, says he is prepared to be taught by a younger man like Luther, but clearly has hesitations about his method and his *conviction*.

X. 12:32 – 14:59 Luther’s Response

- i. Says it is not Christian to “not affirm anything for certain.”
- ii. Criticizes Erasmus’s “intermediary” stance.
- iii. As Luther continues, his voice becomes increasingly animated, and, using electronic manipulation, the voices is raised until finally Maderna substitutes the voice of the imperial council.

XI. 15:00 – 31:43 Finale: Luther encounters “all the demons of hell.”

Example 1: Formal scheme of Bruno Maderna’s *Ritratto di Erasmo*. Section VIII begins again at 0:00 in my map, because the *Ritratto* as held in the Fondo Bruno Maderna (Bologna) is divided into two sound files.

of “indulgences.” His submission was made within the confines of the Catholic Church, on what he thought were sound biblical grounds, but would resonate widely and create considerable controversy.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ De Benedictis, “Ritratto di Erasmo di Bruno Maderna,” 158-159.

The first indication that the *Ritratto di Erasmo* will not be a straightforward historical exposition comes in the transition that follows (Example 1, III). After the *Canzone* ends, incongruous low electronic sounds begin, reminiscent of the “subterranean river” mentioned in the first section. These sounds are then coupled and partially obscure a reprise of *Hoc est pulcrum evangelium*, now layered polyphonically.⁸⁹ These sounds partially fade for, but continue during the next presentation of the text. The next section (Example 1, IV) returns to Erasmus and describes the controversy created by some of his publications. Erasmus responded to his critics by modestly suggesting his works were merely practical explorations of the text, and that a true interpretation of the biblical texts could only occur after the technical work like his had been accomplished.

Section V begins with the statement that Erasmus and Luther never met in person, but maintained an epistolary relationship. This begins the process whereby the narrator recedes in favor of the principal characters speaking for themselves, in the form of their letters and writings. In the first letter, from Erasmus to Filippo Melantone, a common friend of the two, Erasmus urges, “All of the dissensions between the humanists are fatal. We must act with skill, and not to get lost in controversies that only cause other controversies, but insist on highlighting the fecundity of the new culture. Luther makes correct observations, but perhaps with too much freedom and without enough discretion.”⁹⁰ A response delivered by Ulrich von Hutten, defined Luther’s position, calling for outright revolt against the Church: “It is not time for discussion, but for

⁸⁹ Anastasia, *Ritratto di Erasmo*, 121.

⁹⁰ De Benedictis, “Ritratto di Erasmo di Bruno Maderna,” 160.

action!”⁹¹ The accompaniment in this section moves between electronic sounds, processed fragments of choral works, and modernist instrumental music.

The next section (Example 1, VI) recounts Luther’s summons and journey to the Diet of Worms in 1521, where emissaries of Emperor Charles V would judge his religious writings. En route, Luther is informed that he will either have to recant or be banned, and his response is unequivocal: “I’ll go against all the demons of hell!”⁹² After a long conversation between the imperial counsel and Luther (Example 1, VIII), he is asked to deliver a retraction of his writings and purported heresy. Luther refused, and is subsequently condemned. During this exchange, the imperial counsel becomes increasingly animated and angry, ending by scolding Luther, “Enough with your conscience! Do you presume, oh Martin, to be the only one who is right? And the sacred and holy council, with so many lords and wise bishops would therefore always be wrong?”⁹³

The two sections that follow (Example 1, IX, X), and relax the tension built at the end of the encounter at Worms, form a transition between the more conventional first ten sections and the final section. Here, Erasmus and Luther continue their discussions in the form of two books published on the topic of free will, even though now Erasmus, by remaining within the Catholic Church, is officially opposed to Luther. The title Erasmus’s book, *De libero arbitrio diatribe sive collatio*, according to Maderna, intended to show “critical research” rather than a “dogmatic affirmation.”⁹⁴ Erasmus concedes, however, that he is willing to be instructed by a younger man, to maintain discussion.

⁹¹ Ibid. 160-161.

⁹² Ibid. 162.

⁹³ Ibid. 165.

⁹⁴ Ibid. 166.

Luther's response (Example 1, X) is uncompromising. Rebuilding the tension, Maderna accompanies this penultimate section with low drones and builds layers of choral fragments. Luther tells Erasmus that "it is not Christian to say: I do not want to affirm anything for certain."⁹⁵ A Christian, Luther says, must be sure of "his doctrine" and "his cause."

Something remarkable happens during the course of this statement by Luther. This section of speech coincides with a deep and ominous organ pedal, which seems to signal the work's climax. As this passage progresses and Luther's argument becomes more animated, Maderna slowly manipulates the speed of the recording, gradually raising tone of the actor's voice. Once Luther's voice is high enough, Luther's voice moves seamlessly to the final section that begins with the words of John Calvin, read by the same actor as the Imperial council who denounced Luther earlier in the radio drama. The original manuscript included a line that was cut from the recording, with the instruction that it be read "brutally...in a metallic, robot-like voice": "LA VOCE DI CALVINO."⁹⁶ In the final version, where the citation is absent, Luther's text simply *becomes* that of Calvin.

What follows, and continues through the final section, is a series of quotations from Calvin, which emphasize the man's lack of free will and bondage to sin. Where Erasmus had embraced a broad humanism, placing man at the center of his destiny, Calvin's doctrine of predestination had effectively ended man's claim to control his own destiny. The implications of Maderna's manipulation of Luther's voice and substitution of Calvin are clear: in opposing free will, Luther becomes Calvin, where Calvin stands

⁹⁵ Ibid. 167.

⁹⁶ Ibid., footnote XXXV, 182.

for a renewed oppression of the human spirit. Thus the *Ritratto di Erasmo* enacts a principle rather like George Orwell's *Animal Farm*: those who attempt to exchange one dogma for another only succeed in changing the actors.

Until this final section, music serves primarily an accompanying role. The final section, however, incorporates the texts into a rich electro-acoustic texture. The texts, which until this point have been presented simply and conventionally, are now layered polyphonically, repeated, and subjected to electronic processing. One group of texts for this section is the aforementioned set of fragments from Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. These are presented at first over the organ pedal—or rather, a low organ sound that moves slowly between a few pitches and serves the *function* of pedal point—and fragments of choral works for the first few minutes of the final section. Shortly thereafter, a second group of texts group enters, composed of descriptions of various demons from *Dictionnaire Infernal*, first published by Jacque Collin de Plancy in 1818.⁹⁷

The nineteen descriptions of the demons all follow a predictable format. The name is read in a voice subjected to extreme processing such that it less sounds human than mechanical or demonic. In most cases the description briefly gives the demon's title, the number of infernal legions it commands, and its general appearance. Some descriptions also tell any special powers possessed by the demon. The tenth demon, Amon, could be seen as a model for the rest: “Amon? – Marquis of hell, commands forty

⁹⁷ Anastasia, *Ritratto di Erasmo*, 109. Most of the entries also occur in the *Lesser Key of Solomon*, which was “a popular handbook of sorcery known from the 17th century” according to the introduction to a critical edition of the a translation edited by Joseph H. Peterson. One demon that does not appear in the *Lesser Key of Solomon* is the last, “Satana.” Joseph H. Peterson, ed., *The Lesser Key of Solomon* (York Beach, ME: Weiser Books, 2001).

infernale legions. He has the head of a wolf that vomits flames and the tail of a serpent. He sometimes appears with the head of an owl and a human body. He knows the past and the future.”⁹⁸ The other descriptions contain more or less information, but follow roughly the same format. In a few cases, Maderna inserts humorous asides, as in the description for Alocer: because that devil rides a horse, the speaker announces, “I would have loved to have a pony, but no one ever gave me one.”⁹⁹ There is no single voice for the demons; a collection of actors—including one voice that sounds rather like Maderna himself—read the text, often repeating the same lines in quick succession, and often overlapping. The accompanying music moves quickly between an eclectic set of fragments: the organ pedal, choral fragments, electronic sounds, and modernist orchestral music.

Because of these features and because of the constant repetition of related phrases like “commanda 40 legioni infernali,” the final section has something of the character of a *Totentanz*. The composition ends with narrator of Calvin reaching a peak, almost screaming the final lines: “Nessun si illuda! Ognuno è un demonio in se stesso e tutto il bene che ha, lo ha da Dio. Che cosa infatti hai in te, e da te stesso se non il peccato?” and “Se voi prendere quel che è tuo, prendi il peccato, poiché la giustizia spetta a Dio...”¹⁰⁰ These final lines are then repeated several times during the final six descriptions of

⁹⁸ “Amon? – Marchese dell’inferno. Commanda 40 legioni infernali. Testa di lupo che vomita fiamme, coda di serpente. Appare tavola con testa di gufo e corpo umano. Conosce il passato e l’avvenire.” De Benedictis, “Ritratto di Erasmo di Bruno Maderna,” 171.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ De Benedictis, “Ritratto di Erasmo di Bruno Maderna,” 173. “‘Let no man,’ he says, ‘flatter himself; of himself he is Satan. His blessing comes from God alone. For what do you have of your own but sin?’” “Remove from yourself sin which is your own; for righteousness is of God.” Translations of both quotations are from John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, ed. John T. McNeill (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 269.

demons. The last of the demons is “Satana.” Over the course of the description, the various voices, which had been dedicated to reading the descriptions, finally come together to read the final line in unison, in the form of an incantation: “I suoi nomi, i suoi attributi, la forma delle sue apparizioni, tutto insomma di lui è infinito, come infinito il non creare che egli rappresenta di contro all’eterno ed infinito continuo della creazione.”¹⁰¹ The *Ritratto*—in which its protagonist, Erasmus, has long since left the scene—ends with a series of bells ringing over an organ feebly rendering what sounds like chant melodies.

Allegorical Erasmus

In his article, “Von Marinetti zu Maderna,” Joachim Noller posed the fair question of what Maderna’s motivation might have been in choosing Erasmus as a subject. His answer, however, is only that interest in music from the 16th century probably led him to be interested in the political and historical environment for that music.¹⁰² While this is undoubtedly true, within the context of Darmstadt, we can now read an allegorical meaning onto Maderna’s understanding of Erasmus. In the final section, Maderna reveals a subtext that links the conflict between Erasmus and Luther to the debates at Darmstadt. Maderna, in his intermediary position at Darmstadt, seems to have identified with Erasmus and his predicament highlighted in Section V, where Erasmus tried to mediate between Luther and the Catholic Church. In a 1972 interview, Leonardo Pinzauti asks Maderna to reflect on some of Luigi Nono’s pronouncements about “music and society,

¹⁰¹ De Benedictis, “Ritratto di Erasmo di Bruno Maderna,” 173. “His name, his attributes, the shape of his appearances, everything about him relates the fact that does not create, as opposed to the eternal and infinite continuity of creation.”

¹⁰² Noller, “Von Marinetti zu Maderna,” 70.

revolution and social necessity.” Maderna’s response is telling, and shows that Erasmus and the Reformation continued to be at the front of his mind three years after completing the *Ritratto*:

You see...Nono’s fanaticism, and that of his followers, seems to hark back to the time of the struggle between the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation. They are ‘committed,’ and I think that Gigi [Nono] is, at heart, really a romantic, and I am convinced that if he had continued on the road of his *Canto Sospeso*, he would have been just as capable of affirming those things he believes in, but as a musician...¹⁰³

These comments betray a deep distrust of dogma. He does not criticize Nono for being on this or that side of the Reformation/Counter-Reformation, but for choosing a side at all. Maderna continues, “In short, I am firmly of the opinion that musicians should do rather than say: Stockhausen should avoid discourses on Aesthetics, and Nono those on Sociology, which is a highly complex subject, and act as a musician...”¹⁰⁴

This quotation is the closest we have to a statement of Maderna’s compositional philosophy. He believes that, as a musician, what he has to say should be conducted within the work itself. If he has a compositional philosophy, it should be found in his works, his practical activity, not in any kind of accompanying text.

In order for Maderna’s ideology of non-ideology to be successful—and non-ideological—the polemic had to be launched exclusively in his compositions. This is precisely the task of the *Ritratto di Erasmo*. Like the poet Paul Celan, Maderna persuasively *exposes*, but does not *impose*, the compositional philosophy present throughout his work. It is eclecticism, not as a genre, but as the necessary requirement for a music that is truly autonomous—perhaps an echo of Adorno’s comment that the

¹⁰³ Fearn, *Bruno Maderna*, 319.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

“universal style, after World War II, is the eclecticism of the shattered.”¹⁰⁵ There is no Madernian school of composition.

Maderna exposes the extent to which Adorno’s “middle road” statement becomes problematic at Darmstadt. In the first half of the century, it might well have been possible to see musical production as being oriented around the two dominant poles of Schoenberg and Stravinsky. After the war it is no longer possible to construct a dichotomy that has anything near the plausibility of the Schoenberg-Stravinsky dichotomy among the composers at Darmstadt. And yet, composers at Darmstadt nevertheless sought the glory of Rome. And it has not stopped composers and critics from proposing just such dichotomies, for example Boulez-Cage, Boulez-Stockhausen, Nono-Cage. Just about every composer at Darmstadt seemed to be vying for the title of “the next Schoenberg” or (to a much lesser extent) “the next Stravinsky.” What happens if a plurality of composers all try to pave the next road to Rome? In the end, Darmstadt appears not as a unified event, but as a site of eclecticism, and in this way, Maderna seems to be the composer sitting happily in the middle, while the more ideologically inclined composers all swarm at the periphery. Maderna strikes a middle path; or more precisely, he does not strike a path at all, but—when presented with a fork in the road—goes, or perhaps wanders, straight. Maderna remained at Darmstadt—both in the practical sense that he made it his home and in the sense the he upheld its philosophical ideals—only by renouncing the glories of Rome.

¹⁰⁵ Adorno, *Philosophy*, 10.

Chapter II: Suspended Serialism

Shortly after Arnold Schoenberg's actual death in 1951, Pierre Boulez published his provocative essay "Schoenberg is Dead."¹ The short essay, which appeared in the British magazine, *The Score*, announced the metaphorical death of Schoenberg and attempted to dissociate serial and twelve-tone techniques from the principle composer associated with the practice. Schoenberg, Boulez said, was the generator of "one of the most important upheavals that the language of music [had] ever been called to undergo": a change from music based around tonal organization—that is, functional harmony—to "serial organization." And yet, according to Boulez, Schoenberg was never the revolutionary figure he is often portrayed to be.

On this point Schoenberg himself might have agreed. He was fond of declaring, "you use the row and compose as you had done it previously."² Emphatic in his belief that composing with all twelve tones was simply a method, Schoenberg affirmed that the mere application of a tone row was never enough.³ True music required the concept of a unifying idea [*Gedanke*] and Schoenberg saw the twelve-tone method as simply another means to that idea. Boulez, not surprisingly, viewed this aspect of Schoenberg's thinking with more than a little suspicion. With its mystical overtones, *Gedanke* was, for him, tainted with the ethos of romanticism and thus too regressive to be taken seriously. In proclaiming the death of Schoenberg, Boulez would liberate the constructive element in Schoenberg's method from all such mystery. He would proclaim a new compositional

¹ "Schönberg is Dead," in *The Score*, vol. 6, 1952, 18-22.

² Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea*, ed. Leonard Stein (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975), 224.

³ *Ibid.* 246.

order. He would, in short, transform what had been a diverse and somewhat scrappy experimental practice into a true system. This system is what composers and theorists of the later twentieth century have called “serialism.”

Indeed, Boulez went on to argue, the post-war generation must look to not to Schoenberg but his student, Anton Webern, as the true way forward. Rather than restricting the serial method to the selection of tones, serialism would extend that principle into every parameter of music. Rhythm, dynamics, articulation, and instrumentation were all aspects of composition that could now be treated serially, that is, as a set of predefined values to be manipulated according to pre-compositional schemes.

This, in any case, is how later generations have come to view what became known as the Darmstadt School. But even at the time of writing, Boulez had cautioned that his polemic was not directed at Schoenberg himself, but at those he called “dodecaphonic academicians,” including his own teacher René Leibowitz—the very man who might have coined the term “serialism” only a few years before.⁴ For all the hyperbole and dogma of his essay, Boulez did not, in fact, call for any specific approach to serialism. The suggestions of expanding the serial method to other parameters were all framed hypothetically.⁵

Boulez simply asks that composers think through the logic of their compositional choices. In a sense, he asks them to approach their composing *philosophically*. And this is precisely what Boulez believed that Schoenberg had neglected. The twelve-tone

⁴ There does not seem to be much consensus on where the term “serial” comes from, but Markus Bandur claims that Leibowitz was the first to use the terms “technique sérielle,” “composition sériel,” and “musique sérielle.” Markus Bandur, *Aesthetics of Total Serialism: Contemporary Research from Music to Architecture* (Berlin: Birkhäuser, 2001), 10.

⁵ Boulez, “Schoenberg is Dead,” 22.

method, Boulez conceded, arose quite naturally from a desire for “ultrathematization”—the desire to unify all moments of a composition in relation to its theme, a goal that Adorno argued had been realized in the late works of Brahms.⁶ Boulez argued that the row was “nothing more than a severe discipline to be enforced on chromatic composition.”⁷ Schoenberg’s essential fault, according to Boulez, was that he had ignored the “true nature” of his discovery, and thereby thwarting his own attempted ultrathematization. Boulez continues, “Schoenberg uses the tone-row simply as a lowest common denominator to ensure the semantic unity of each work; but the elements of the language thus obtained are organized according to an already existing rhetoric, and so there is not intrinsic unity.”⁸ Boulez’s critique is founded on the proposition that Schoenberg failed not on the basis of new principles—those that have been attributed to Boulez—but on his own.

In this chapter, I will turn my attention to an iconic serial work from Darmstadt: Luigi Nono’s *Il canto sospeso*. By attending not only to the work’s serial construction, but to the philosophy which informs it, I hope to offer a model for more nuanced understandings of music of this period. The tendency among theorists to focus their attention on the structures of serial works has done little to persuade others that the *music* created by serial systems is anything other than an unintended consequence of those structures. However, if we recognize the serial methods employed as being the result of an underlying compositional logic, and try to understand the meaning of that logic, then

⁶ Theodor Adorno, “On the Problem of Musical Analysis” in *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert, trans. Max Paddison (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 163.

⁷ Boulez, “Schoenberg is Dead,” 20.

⁸ *Ibid.* 21.

perhaps we can offer interpretations of these works that are musically—as well as structurally—relevant.

The Myth of the Total Serialist

The French composer and another of Boulez's teachers, Olivier Messiaen, is often credited as the first to realize a work that extended serial technique into other musical parameters, *Mode de valeurs et d'intensités* for solo piano, which he composed at the 1949 Darmstadt Summer Courses. The single movement lasted a mere four minutes, but proved immensely influential on the younger generation, when he presented it in 1951, as part of his *Quatre études de rythme*.⁹ The tonal material for the work is derived from three ordered sets of twelve notes. The derivations and usage of the rows do not conform, by any stretch of the imagination, to what one might call Schoenbergian twelve-tone practice. In addition to pitches, however, Messiaen also systematized his use of articulations ("touches"), dynamic levels, and durations. To prepare the piece, he assigned an articulation, a dynamic indication, and a rhythmic duration to each note of the three series, resulting in three melodic chains, which he called "modes."¹⁰

The most striking feature of the work may be that Messiaen himself supplied the work's analysis. Three pages of analysis preface the published version. Additionally, the work's analysis is inscribed into the work itself, in the manner in which it was written. The music is presented on three staves, for reasons that have more to do with articulating the structure (on paper) and the three separate modes, than performance practicalities.

⁹ Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music*, vol. 5 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 27.

¹⁰ Olivier Messiaen, *Mode de Valeurs et d'Intensités* (Paris: Durand, 1949).

This indicates that the work's comprehensibility relied on internal coherence, not on an externally shared musical language, and that the construction of the musical language was part of the composition.

Messiaen's piano piece, so the story goes, was the turning point that inspired Darmstadt composers to adopt the peculiar form of serialism known—in an inevitably derogatory sense—as “total serialism.”¹¹ Boulez even paid homage to his former teacher in his work for two pianos, *Structures*, written at the same time as “Schoenberg is Dead,” by using the pitches from the first “mode” of *Mode de valeurs et d'intensités* as the tone-row for the work. In this narrative, Boulez is usually seen as the first to codify a serial technique into “total serialism.”

The problem with the term “total serialism” is that no one seems to agree as to who or what constitutes a “total serialist.” Messiaen, because the above work is hardly representative of his larger compositional output, does not qualify. Even Boulez, who undeniably called for the extension and development of serial techniques, cannot be properly called a “total serialist,” even if we take into account early experiments like *Structures* and *Polyphonie X*.

More nuanced readings of this period have distanced themselves from the term by dropping it altogether in favor of terms that more accurately describe compositional practice. Musicologist Gianmario Borio uses the phrase “multidimensional serialism” to

¹¹ The *Grove Music Online* refers to the “Darmstadt School” as being primarily concerned with the development of serial techniques. See Christopher Fox, “Darmstadt School, The,” in *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/49725 (accessed February 14, 2012). Taruskin goes further, claiming a direct link between Messiaen's piano piece and the “total serialism” that came in the subsequent years. Messiaen's work, he contended, “promised a new utopia: ‘total’ or ‘integral’ serialism.” Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music*, vol. 5, 27.

describe post-war developments.¹² The phrase is helpful for the current discussion because it marks a clear break from Schoenberg who applied his “serial” technique only to one parameter, tone selection, but also avoids the implication that *all* parameters must be integrated into one unified hierarchy.

However, the idea of “total serialism” is one that is not dispelled so easily, and seems to lie at the heart of twelve-tone practice, and right from the beginning. One of Schoenberg’s first works to use his twelve-tone method, the *Variations for Orchestra*, Op. 31 (1928), prompted one reviewer to dismiss it as “excogitated musical mathematics dictated by intellect alone to one obsessed with a single eccentric idea.”¹³ The term is almost always used negatively to refer to someone who abdicates any attempt at musical expression in favor of mathematical formulae, but the name of an *actual* composer is almost always withheld, unless a critic, as in the case just cited, is seeking an easy way to dismiss a new composition.

This lack of an example is attributable to the fact that total serialism does not describe an actual practice, but a hypothetical end-point. As a result, anyone describing total serialism inevitably invokes a “straw man.” Adorno offered the following description (and dismissal) of a total serialist, which might be seen as prototypical:

This results in the kind of absurdity once reserved for me at Darmstadt, where a composer (who, to his credit, has since given up the vocation) showed me a composition which seemed to me to be the purest of nonsense. When I asked him what this or that meant, what meaning, what kind of musical sense this or that particular phrase or development had, he simply referred me to correspondences

¹² Gianmario Borio, “Dire cela, sans savoir quoi” in Berthold Hoekner, ed., *Apparitions* (New York : Routledge, 2006), 42.

¹³ Fritz Ohrmann, *Signale*, Berlin, December 12, 1928. Reprinted and translated by Nicolas Slonimsky, *Lexicon of Musical Invective*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1965) 161.

between dynamic markings and so on—things which have nothing whatever to do with the musical phenomenon as such.¹⁴

I would like to draw particular attention to Adorno's parenthetical remark that the composer he described had "given up the vocation." None of the famous composers at Darmstadt, apparently, offered Adorno such a clear-cut example or rigorous serial technique, and he was forced to reference someone who was no longer a composer.

Adorno's description also betrays a curious preoccupation with "meaning." The idea that one would look to compositional structure as a source of meaning is somewhat unexpected, on the basis of Adorno's other writings. While *The Philosophy of New Music* suggests that compositional structures are meaningful, those meanings are always contingent on their relationship to a historically mediated reservoir of musical material, a context he would have never expected the composer to provide. Only within the context of music that had become philosophical, would such meaning come to be an expected component of the composition. Adorno's primary complaint about such music seems to be that it displays a disjunction between structure and sound, because it is impossible to *hear* the work's structure. The correspondences between rhythm, dynamics, and pitch, in Adorno's estimation, were unrelated to the sonic object, the "musical phenomenon."

Luigi Nono, himself a composer sometimes accused of total serialism, named the musician Joseph Schillinger in his own polemic against total serialism, "La presenza storica nella musica d'oggi."¹⁵ As a composer, Schillinger was hardly someone Nono

¹⁴ Theodor Adorno, "On the Problem of Musical Analysis" in *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert, trans Max Paddison (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 172-173.

¹⁵ Luigi Nono, *Scritti e colloqui*, Vol. 1, ed. Angela Ida De Benedictis and Veniero Rizzardi (Milan: Ricordi, 2001), 46-56. Originally published "Gitterstäbe am Himmel der Freiheit," *Melos* 27, (1960). Translated "Historical Presence in Music Today" in

needed to take seriously. Schillinger had been dead for over fifteen years by the time Nono wrote his essay, and had been primarily known as a teacher of popular music.¹⁶ Nono gave no examples of Schillinger's actual compositions, but cited his posthumously published book, *The Mathematical Basis of the Arts*, as an example of lifeless mathematical music. While it is possible that Schillinger was intended to stand for Boulez or Milton Babbitt (who was scheduled to attend the Darmstadt courses the very year Nono delivered his lecture, but could not attend because of an accident), it is more likely that Nono had no specific composer in mind. He clearly preferred to attack a generalized idea of total serialism rather than a particular composer.

Nono's wife (and Schoenberg's daughter), Nuria Schoenberg-Nono, who was present at the courses as an observer, recalls that while several of the prominent composers at Darmstadt flirted with total serialism and wrote one or two pieces that attempted to systematize as many musical parameters as possible, they all quickly moved on to other concerns (Nono, Maderna, Boulez, Stockhausen, and Henze among others). She maintains that Nono's essay was not directed at any of these composers, but the many younger students who arrived after Nono's generation had transitioned into the role of teachers. This new group of students pursued the most rigid interpretations of serial technique, and descended on Darmstadt to learn the "formula for new music." At first, this was serialism. When Cage arrived at Darmstadt, many of these same composers, according to Nuria Schoenberg-Nono, quickly adopted Cage's aleatoric method (without

Composers on Modern Musical Culture, trans. and ed. Bryan Simms (New York: Schirmer Books, 1999), 168-174. Half of this essay is devoted to Joseph Schillinger and total serialism (or something that resembles total serialism) and the other half John Cage. The portion dealing with Cage will be addressed in the next chapter.

¹⁶ Simms, *Composers on Modern Musical Culture*, 168.

adopting his rigor, it would seem) because that was an easier formula to follow. (“Writing all those rows was difficult.”)¹⁷ The criticism seems to be that these compositions lacked “inspiration,” and were nothing more than simple mathematical exercises.

Konrad Boehmer, a composer who was present as a student at the time, offered an explanation for the situation described by Schoenberg-Nono. He stated that Darmstadt represented the only place where orthodoxy was imposed not by teachers on their students, but by students on their teachers and themselves.¹⁸ He also told a story, remarkably similar to Adorno’s, in that he refuses to name the composer, about a fellow classmate in one of Stockhausen’s seminars:

And I remember [a composer], I won’t tell his name now, I’ll give you a nice example of how this antagonism came out in Darmstadt. There was a composer...who came to my room and said, “OK, Stockhausen, this morning he has told us something about this permutation of series. Could you please explain me how that works?” So I took a pen, and paper and showed him a row, and to be very complete, I made him 12 permutations of his series so that he had the entire set. This guy should be happy. Two days later, this guy came to the Stockhausen composition class [barely containing his laughter] with a composition that consisted of 144 tones.¹⁹

Boehmer’s anecdote exposes the extent to which the ideal of a strict implementation of mathematical serialism work had gained currency among some participants at Darmstadt. But equally, those who followed real or imagined serial “rules” were seen to be missing the point. The composition of 144 notes lacked something else that would elevate it from an exercise.

¹⁷ See Appendix 1.

¹⁸ These remarks by Konrad Boehmer and Nuria Schoenberg-Nono were made at a conference, *Presenza Storica di Luigi Nono*, on December 1-2, 2006. The full transcript of the conversation is included in Appendix 2 to this text.

¹⁹ See Appendix 2.

That something else, even if many of the composers would have been loath to admit it, was Schoenberg's *Gedanke*. If the aim of serialism was to jettison precisely this spiritual element from music, then total serialism, where structure and meaning are presumed to be identical, may have been the answer. But instead of eliminating *Gedanke* from their works, Darmstadt composers, especially those who pursued the goal of a totally serialized work, elevated *Gedanke* to the central position in the act of composition. Rather than starting to write a work, or creating a work based on practical concerns, a musical work began from its *idea*, from which all other parameters were expected to arise. In this sense, total serialism, only one marginal manifestation of the philosophical turn, can be seen as equating the tone row with the idea—a confusion that persists in many analyses of serial compositions.

In the end, it was entirely predictable that composers would reject Schoenberg's imperative that his twelve-tone method be used practically. Schoenberg's conviction that his twelve-tone method would assure both internal comprehensibility and unified expression was stunning in both its arrogance and its naïveté. It is true that, with this new method, Schoenberg did compose larger works, and that the twelve-tone rows provided an assurance of at least some degree of consistency in the material. However, he gave little attention in his writing to *how* the twelve-tone method could provide the grammatical structure he attributed to tonality. He provided examples of how *he* evolved formal elements, such as “melodies, themes, motives, figures, and chords,” but he never seemed terribly concerned with how or whether these elements achieve that comprehensibility for the listener, when they were no longer based on standardized harmonic conventions like cadence. Instead, he seems to have relied on a hope that if or

when—and for Schoenberg it was inevitably when and not if—his method of twelve-tone composition became a common practice, such elements would acquire a universal comprehensibility.²⁰ And yet, in absence of a common understanding of the putative conventions, Schoenberg's musical language was entirely personal. It should be unsurprising, then, that composers who followed Schoenberg would choose not to simply *use* Schoenberg's language, but would opt to create their own personal dialects. What later generations received from Schoenberg's method was not any one particular compositional technique, but a suggestion that musical logic could be constructed from scratch.

Absent an attempt to uncover this underlying logic of serial works, the analyses of those works will inevitably amount to a “mere recording of facts.”²¹ The purpose of musical analysis, as Adorno and others have stated, is to *interpret* a work. That interpretation, Adorno said, “must be immanent—that, in the first instance, the form has to be followed *a priori*, so that the composition unfolds in its own terms.” That is, an analysis must explain the logic of a work, the “problem” that the composition tries to solve. To apply this principle to serial works, we must move beyond Adorno's preoccupation with “structural listening,” the expectation that all structural elements must be perceptible to the listener. We must not immediately jump to the conclusion that any serial operation that is not recognizable to the listener must be a compositional fault. The serial method employed may be a means to an end, and, even if that end is cacophonous, it may yet be expressive. Equally, if we understand the serial structure of a work as a kind

²⁰ Schoenberg, *Style and Idea*, 226. “The time will come when the ability to draw thematic material from a basic set of twelve tones will be an unconditional prerequisite for obtaining admission into the composition class of a conservatory.”

²¹ Adorno, “The Problem of Musical Analysis,” 172.

of subtext, there is no reason why we should expect a direct correspondence between structure and surface. I offer the following analysis, which attends to both structure and surface, as a model for understanding serial works of the period.

Suspended Song

Luigi Nono's cantata, *Il canto sospeso* (1956), is generally regarded to be one of the most important works to emerge from the extension of serial techniques in the 1950s. It is scored for soloists, choir, and orchestra. Movements one, four, and eight are written for orchestra alone; movements two and nine are written for choir *a capella*. The remaining movements, three, five, six (divided into sections 6a and 6b), and seven are for orchestra and choir and/or soloists combined.

The text is composed of fragments of letters written by victims of fascism during World War II shortly before their executions. The letters had been published in a collection, *Lettere di condannati a morte della resistenza europea*, in 1954, with a forward by Thomas Mann.²² The fragments chosen by Nono tend to be those that express a generalized feeling of defiance in the face of oppression. Nono's choices stand in stark contrast to the overall sense of the letters, which are mostly written to close friends and families, and primarily deal with mundane topics of everyday life.

Il canto sospeso was originally intended for inclusion in the 1956 Darmstadt Summer Courses. Nono completed the score in May of 1956, but that did not leave enough time to prepare the parts for a summer performance. Instead, at the request of Hermann Scherchen, the commission and responsibility for the premiere was taken over

²² *Lettere di condannati a morte della Resistenza europea*, ed. Piero Malvezzi and Giovanni Pirelli (Turin: Einaudi, 1954).

by the Westdeutscher Rundfunk for their Cologne concert series, “Musik der Zeit.” The concert on October 24, 1956, also featured Schoenberg’s *Friede auf Erde* and Webern’s orchestral pieces (Op. 6 and Op. 10), as if to show continuity with previous serial practice.²³

The premiere of *Il canto sospeso* also marked Nono’s arrival at musical maturity. Prior to the premiere, Nono had operated under the domineering influence of his mentor, Hermann Scherchen. Previous works, such as his *Variazione Canoniche* (1950) had undergone extensive editing—*recomposition*, according to some—at the hands of Scherchen.²⁴ Prior to the Cologne performance, Scherchen informed Nono that he would be eliminating two of the nine movements from *Il canto sospeso*. In this instance, however, Nono’s wishes prevailed and the entire work was performed unabridged, but with the ominous warning from Scherchen that if it failed, Nono would be responsible. The work was both a critical and popular success in spite of Scherchen’s misgivings, and Scherchen’s influence, not only over Nono, but all modern music, waned quickly over the subsequent years.

The philosophical intentions as well as the depth of meaning of *Il canto sospeso* (“The Suspended Song”) are already evident in the work’s title. Coupled with its politically charged texts, the title suggests that the work might be a response to Adorno’s

²³ Luigi Nono, *Il canto sospeso* (London: Eulenberg, 1957), VII-VIII.

²⁴ Another early work, *Polifonica-Monadia-Ritmica* (1951), was published by Hermann Scherchen’s Ars Viva Verlag. Scherchen removed a substantial portion of the middle section, which was only discovered by musicologist Veniero Rizzardi, when he found a copy of a score with Scherchen’s edits in the newly opened Nono Archive. See Appendix 1, my interview with Nuria Schoenberg-Nono.

dictum, from 1949, about the barbarism of writing poetry after Auschwitz.²⁵ *Il canto sospeso* confronts the futility of expression and beauty—that is “singing”—in the aftermath of World War II.

The difficulty in translating the title has been frequently noted, particularly in German analyses, where the options for rendering “sospeso” do not maintain the same double meanings of the original as does the English word “suspend.” Peter Owens, in the introduction to the translation of the texts, suggests “unterbrochen” (“interrupted”) and “schweben” (“floating”) as possible translations of “sospeso.”²⁶ Another plausible German translation, however, would have been “Das aufgehobene Lied.” *Aufheben* is well known to students of Hegelian philosophy for its seemingly contradictory meanings. It means simultaneously “to abolish” and “to preserve,” but in philosophical writings is generally translated as “sublate.” Hegel used the term to describe the synthesis of a concept and its opposite. The word “sospeso,” like *Aufhebung*, introduces an intentional and *simultaneous* double meaning. In a musical context, suspend can indicate either stoppage or its opposite, continuation. That is to say, suspend meaning “to halt”, or suspend meaning “to hold.” Music has, therefore, entered a sphere where it has diametrically opposed imperatives to both express and fall silent.²⁷

²⁵ Adorno wrote, in a 1949 Festschrift and published in *Prisms* (1955), “The critique of culture is confronted with the last stage in the dialectic of culture and barbarism: to write a poem after Auschwitz is barbaric, and that corrodes also the knowledge which expresses why it has become impossible to write poetry today.” Theodor Adorno, *Prisms*, trans. Samuel Weber and Shierry Weber (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981), 34.

²⁶ Nono, *Il canto sospeso*, 89.

²⁷ Angela Ida de Benedictis’s research, as mentioned by Carola Nielinger, uncovered another interpretation of the title, being a quotation from the poem “If We Die” by Ethel Rosenberg. Ethel Rosenberg and her husband Julius were convicted by the United States government of spying for the Soviet Union, and were executed on June 19, 1953. Nono owned a copy of the Rosenberg correspondence, published in Italy as *Letter dalla casa*

Suspension in *Il canto sospeso* is not, however, an exclusively philosophical concept. Much of the work is composed of immense chains of suspension, in the musical sense, where a dissonant note is held from one chord to another. In this case, however, the dissonances do not resolve, or simply resolve into more dissonance. The first movement opens with gradually accumulating clusters of held notes. The entrances and exits of each note are staggered, creating moments of heightened dissonance that gradually subside into single held notes, or occasionally silence.

The tonal material for *Il canto sospeso* is primarily taken from the so-called all-interval, or wedge, series. That series is constructed by starting on a central pitch and alternately ascending and descending in incrementally larger intervals: A, A-sharp, G-sharp, B, G, C, F-sharp, C-sharp, F, D, E, D-sharp. A primary feature of this row is its symmetry. If one continues the process of expanding intervals beyond the octave (the next jump in the row listed above would be from the high D-sharp down an octave, and then back up a minor ninth to E-natural), the subsequent notes produced are simply the row in retrograde (D-sharp, E, D, F, C-sharp, etc.), which also happens to be equivalent to the row's transposition to the tritone.

The all-interval row seems to have been attractive to Nono, not primarily because of this symmetry, but because of its malleability. The series is not so much a tone row as

della morte. The correspondence opens with the above-mentioned poem, which includes the line, "You shall know, my sons, shall know/ why we leave the song unsung," translated to Italian as "Voi saprete un giorno, figli miei, saprete/ perchè noi lasciamo il canto sospeso..." I remain unconvinced that this is the primary reference for the title. We can certainly assume that something in that line resonated with Nono, but it would be unjustified to leap to the assumption that Nono was attempting to make a direct connection to the Rosenbergs without further evidence, given that Nono never emphasized them as the source for the title. Carola Nielinger, "'The Song Unsung': Luigi Nono's *Il canto sospeso*" in *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 131, No. 1, 87.

an idea or principle for the generation of that row. In its simplest form, that principle is, starting from a central note, to move up one semi-tone, down two, up three, and so on. Nono does not generally vary the row according to the inversion techniques used by Schoenberg, but instead varies the organizational principle. For example, in the seventh movement, Nono generates a new row by applying the principle of alternating successively larger steps to the movement through the row, taking alternately note 6, 7, 5, 8, 4, 9, 3, 10, 2, 11, 1, 12.²⁸ For this reason, Nono's approach to composing with twelve tones is remarkably different from Schoenberg's. The row, if it can even be called that in this case, is not a reservoir for *thematic material*, but a tool that guides composition.

Il canto sospeso has been carefully, if not exhaustively, analyzed in previous studies. The two most important English studies were written by Kathryn Bailey and Carola Nielinger.²⁹ At the time of its publication in 1992, Bailey's "'Work in Progress': Analyzing Nono's *Il canto sospeso*" filled a sizable gap in English scholarship on the work. The depth and detail of Bailey's analysis is astounding, and where she is unable to penetrate Nono's code, she admits the limitations of her analysis frankly. While she reports that she became interested in the work for "its role in political protest," any accounting for the text and political meanings of the work is conspicuously absent in the analysis. Other than placing the text for each movement in the heading preceding its

²⁸ The actual manipulation used in the seventh movement, as I will show below, is more complicated than what I have just noted, but the approach remains the same.

²⁹ See footnote 24 for Carola Nielinger's "The Song Unsung." Katherine Bailey, "Work in Progress: Analyzing Nono's *Il canto sospeso*" in *Music Analysis*, vol. 11, no. 2/3 (July - October, 1992), 279-334.

analysis, Bailey limited discussion of the text itself to a passing comment in the introduction.³⁰

Bailey's analysis focuses on the work's serial construction, perhaps at the expense of the work's audible surface. Only in the concluding two pages, does Bailey finally turn to what she calls the "musical aspects" of *Il canto sospeso*, declaring that, for her, the work does not "behave in a musical way."³¹ She makes recourse to a quotation regarding integral serialism from Alexander Goehr that opened her essay: "There is no *material* in the traditional sense, but only a pre-compositional abstraction of the intended course of events." Because *Il canto sospeso* lacks traditional musical elements like melody, motives and repetition, she suggests, "decisions concerning the combination of ingredients are made on *non-musical* grounds before the composition begins."³² *Il canto sospeso*, she says, suffers from a "sameness throughout."

The German composer Wolfgang Motz's *Konstruktion und Ausdruck* (1996) is the largest single analysis of *Il canto sospeso*.³³ As the title indicates, Motz attempts to detail not only the work's construction, but also its expressive content. Carola Nielinger's "The Song Unsung" provides a detailed account of the historical circumstances of the work and its wider political meanings. Moreover, she states that her primary concern "is with how [Nono's serial technique]—which to Nono was but a means, not an end—is used to express the work's urgent message." In reexamining the work's construction,

³⁰ "Its text – fragments of letters written by condemned Resistance fighters – has a life of its own: presumably it was this, not the integral serialism, that occasioned a bomb attack at the Munich Oktoberfest in 1980, killing thirteen people and injuring more than 200 others, and preventing a scheduled performance." Bailey, "Work in Progress," 279-280.

³¹ Bailey, "Work in Progress," 328.

³² Bailey, "Work in Progress," 328. Emphasis added.

³³ Wolfgang Motz, *Konstruktion und Ausdruck: analytische Betrachtungen zu Il canto sospeso (1955/56) von Luigi Nono* (Saarbrücken: Pfau: 1996).

Nielinger was able to solve many of the puzzles of construction left by Bailey, thanks to the extensive sketches made available by the Luigi Nono Archive in Venice.

What remains tenuous for both Nielinger and Motz, however, is the relationship between the serial methods employed and the meaning of the work. Both Nielinger's and Motz's analyses seem to maintain a conviction that the work contains something like a decipherable message and that the serial techniques are meaningful in and of themselves—something that Nono, had he had the inclination, could have simply told us. And hence the preoccupation with the sketches, as if a correct answer to the question of what the work *means* were that which Nono had in his mind at the time of writing.

Interpretation works somewhat differently. Like performance, which—hardly an accident—is also called interpretation, theoretical interpretation must allow the work to unfold. A persuasive interpretation should provide the reader not only the facts of its construction, but should also attempt to translate the experience of the work into the medium of writing. This is not simply a question of rich description, but more the revelation of a work's *idea*. Because of the nature of this and other serial works, where the “experience of the work” does not reside solely in its audible surface, my analysis will attempt to mediate these distinct layers. And indeed, because there is no decipherable message, there is no reason why multiple divergent analyses cannot comfortably coexist.

I

Il canto sospeso opens with an instrumental movement, which, however, functions as much more than an orchestral introduction. The construction of the movement is

exceedingly complex, and has eluded analysts until very recently.³⁴ As shown by Nielinger and Motz, this movement, like movements three and four, makes use of the system of tone-distance manipulation. In contrast to movement four, which presents that system clearly with limited intervention, another system of superimposed rests alters the order in which the notes enter. Nono seems to have gone to great lengths to obscure the source of the pitch and rhythmic material for this movement.

Rather than detail every bit of this movement's construction—something which can be found in either Motz or Nielinger in any case—I will limit my discussion of this movement to aspects of its sound. (See below for a detailed analysis of the methods used in movement 4, which uses the “tone-distance row” in its simplest form.) The opening gestures of the movement, while resulting from the superimposition of systems mentioned above (and described below)—and in part because of the preponderance of minor seconds and ninths within the opening and closing sections of the all-interval row—strongly suggest the idea of suspension; Nono clearly managed his system to achieve those results, rather than those results being the unintended consequence of a system.

The movement opens with two wind swells, where staggered entrances build to a cluster of four or five notes, before subsiding with staggered exits of the same notes. Preceding the next such swell is a remarkably tonal sounding series of three tones in the strings, a B-natural followed by a G, followed by a D. As noted by Nielinger, this formulation does arise from the series, but Nono chose to emphasize this moment of tonality by orchestrating it in such an exposed manner. Throughout the movement,

³⁴ Although she notes several correspondences, Bailey concedes defeat when she tries to discover an underlying system. Bailey, “Work in Progress,” 289.

moments of heightened expressivity seem to emerge subtly, before subsiding into what one might characterize as the objective sterility expected from a serial work.

The first half of the first movement maintains a strict separation of the winds and strings. The movement consists of thirteen subsections, each clearly marked in the score by double bar-lines. The first nine sections are alternately scored for winds and strings. While the length of the four string sections become progressively longer with lengths of two, three, six, and eight bars, the lengths of the five wind sections follow a somewhat symmetrical form lasting four, nine, nine, seven, and four bars. The final four sections, where the strings and winds are combined, are considerably longer, with the exception of section eleven, which lasts only one bar; the first nine sections last 52 bars, while the final four last 55 bars, movements ten, twelve, and thirteen lasting 15, 20, and 19 respectively.

The sections scored for strings are notable both for their lyrical quality and tonal-sounding formations. These moments of emotion—sometimes seeming to exhibit a quality of sorrow or longing—are fleeting. The wind sections, similarly, show flashes of anger and defiance. As a whole, however, expressivity is suppressed by the rational serial texture, but these moments seem to erupt from beneath that texture, as if the whole composition threatens, at any moment to give way to unfettered emotional expressivity and pathos. The restraint functions as a commentary on the futility of such expression. The music seems to suggest that the horror of the events to which it is addressed so exceeds musical expression that the only recourse is to silence. But, for Nono, that expression must nevertheless be attempted, and so he balances, or suspends, the music between the opposing poles.

The eighth section, the last for strings alone, is remarkable for its expressive content. Here again, Nono does not shy away from intervallic formations with a tonal character. The notes in the quintuplet layer move at a quicker pace, which sets them apart from the other layers, creating a heightened melodic effect. Moreover, the notes in that layer are mostly in the middle registers and diatonic, so the ear naturally connects them into melodic fragments. Within the overall chromatic fabric, this moment, even if the same fragments would be unremarkable in a tonal context, is striking. The dynamic swells in the other voices add to the lyricism.

After a short section for winds, punctuated by an extended crescendo in the timpani, the winds and strings join forces for the remainder of the movement, although the character of the string and winds parts remains distinct. The shifts between winds and strings are now more fluid, no longer strictly punctuated by double-bar lines, and often running simultaneously. Sections ten and twelve are joined by section eleven, which last only two beats: a single held E-flat in the first violins. The twelfth section is the most strident in the movement, and is dominated by brass and timpani, both playing at the extremes of their dynamic ranges.

The twelfth section ends, however, with a quiet but piercing flute, which holds over into the final section. The violence of the previous section is replaced with an ethereal calm. The movement ends with an ascending series of held notes in the strings, which extend to the highest limits of the violin's range. The final note is an artificial harmonic on the A-natural above treble clef, yielding a pitch two octave above the written pitch. The note is fragile, giving the sense that the movement has not so much ended, but moved beyond the audible spectrum.

II

From this precipice, the second movement, scored for eight-part *a capella* choir, begins with a dramatic downward leap in all voices. The text is adapted from a letter written by Anton Popov to his mother, brother, and sister on July 22, 1942. He was executed in the central square of Sofia, Bulgaria on the following day because of his affiliations with the banned communist party of Bulgaria. Nono altered the text of the letter in subtle but significant ways. The first line, “Muio per un mondo che splenderà con luce tanto forte, con tale bellezza che il mio stesso sacrificio non è nulla”, is exactly what Popov wrote, with the exception of dropping the initial first-person pronoun.³⁵

The following three lines feature more significant editing. The following full quotation of Popov’s text show the sections used by Nono in boldface:

*Confortatevi pensando che **per esso sono morti milioni di uomini** in migliaia di lotte **sulle barricate e in fronti di [in] guerra.***
*Consolatevi pensando che **muio per la giustizia.***
*Consolatevi pensando che **le nostre idee vinceranno.***³⁶

By removing “consolatevi pensando che” (“be comforted [my family] in the thought that”) from each line, Nono deemphasizes the extent to which this letter was addressed to his family, and was intended to provide them a modicum of solace for his death. Nono’s alteration makes the tone of those lines one of defiance rather than consolation.

³⁵ Malvezzi and Pirelli, *Lettere*, 117. “I am dying for a world which will shine with light of such strength and beauty that my own sacrifice is nothing.” Translations mine unless otherwise noted.

³⁶ Ibid. 117. “Be comforted in the thought that **millions of men have died for this in** thousands of battles in the barricades and on the front-lines of **war.** / Be comforted in the thought that **I die for justice.** / Be comforted in the thought that **our ideas will triumph.**” Translation of the parts used by Nono is by Peter Owens (Nono, *Il Canto Sospeso*, 90). The remainder of the translation is my own.

The second movement is one of the simplest in terms of its construction. The tonal material is a straightforward presentation of the all-interval series. The row is repeated nineteen times, always at the same starting pitch of A-natural. The rhythmic grid is simple 2/4 meter, but superimposed on that grid are four simultaneous layers of pulse, corresponding to different divisions of the basic quarter note. Those divisions are two (eighth note), three (eighth note triplet), four (sixteenth note), and five (quintuplet). The four layers begin together on beat one, and there are no rests in the texture until the end of the sixteenth repetition of the all-interval series, although individual voices do have gaps because the rhythmic lines jump between the eight voices.

Corresponding to the all-interval series, Nono uses a second series to determine the durations used for each note of the row. That series is a symmetrical presentation of the first six numbers of the Fibonacci sequence, creating a row of twelve durations: 1 2 3 5 8 13 13 8 5 3 2 1.³⁷ The number in the series determines the length of the note, according to the pulse layer in which it resides. A value of eight in the quintuplet layer would yield a quarter note tied to a dotted eighth-note under a quintuplet bracket, or eight pulses of a sixteenth-note quintuplet. Each time the all-interval series is repeated, Nono rotates the duration series such that the first note of the all-interval series (A-natural) starts on the next number in the duration series. The second rotation would yield 2 3 5 8 13 13 8 5 3 2 1 1. After twelve rotations, the series would return to its initial

³⁷ The Fibonacci series is arrived at by, starting with the number 1, and each subsequent number is the sum of the previous two, giving [0], 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, etc. The Golden Mean, often considered to be the perceptual mid-point in works of music, is achieved by dividing two successive numbers from the series. The larger the numbers selected, the more precise the calculation. For example, $2 / 3 = 0.6667$, $3 / 5 = 0.6$, $11 / 19 = 0.619$. Remote numbers in the series, 1597 and 2584, yield a quotient—closer but an approximation nonetheless—of 0.618034.

configuration, but Nono skips that row and, instead, moves directly to the second.

Additionally, this ensures that each note of the row will be assigned the same total number of beats during those twelve rotations, because each note of the row will be assigned to each of the twelve duration values exactly once.

If the system were adhered to strictly, the entrances of notes would always occur in order and each twelve-tone aggregate would be presented fully before the next begins. The last entrance, especially if it is one of the longer duration values (8 or 13), will often hold well into the next aggregate. However, in two instances, Nono alters his scheme such that the A-natural of the next row enters just before the E-flat of the previous row. In bar 125, at the transition between the eighth and ninth repetitions of the row, the A-natural in the second bass enters a fraction before the E-flat in the second contralto. And again, in bar 135, preceding the thirteenth repetition of the row, the entrances of the first and second contralto parts are reversed such that the thirteenth repetition of the all-interval series begins just before the twelfth ends.³⁸

While this change might seem trivial in terms of its auditory effect—in both cases, the entrances in question are less than a quarter of a beat apart—its effect on the composition is quite profound. Had Nono proceeded as his system dictated, the notes in question would have occurred in different pulse layers. Reverting to the scheme would not be nearly as simple as just swapping the two notes in question. Once one layer had been moved, the changes would affect all other layers in an outward spiraling fashion. In a different pulse layer, the next note would end at a different time than it would have in

³⁸ Motz parenthetically notes the switch in 135, but does not seem to find it an important component in the construction. Motz, 61.

its original position, meaning that all subsequent entries of the row would have to move to different pulse layers to accommodate.

The motivation for the change in bar 123 is unclear, and could even be a simple counting error on Nono's part. The second change in 135, however, seems to be deliberate. In addition to the entrance of the A-natural before the E-flat, the final two durations of the previous row (those assigned to E-natural and E-flat) have been reversed. The expected duration series for the twelfth repetition of the all-interval series is 1 1 2 3 4 8 13 13 8 5 3 2, but in this case the final 3 and 2 have been reversed, so that the E-natural receives two pulses at the quintuplet level, and the final E-flat receives 3. As in the works of Berg, here a small almost unnoticeable change precipitates larger structural development.

After twelve repetitions of the all-interval series, Nono, as mentioned previously, skips the expected return to the duration series in its initial position, going directly to 2 3 5 8 13 13 8 5 3 2 1 1. The transition between the twelfth and thirteenth sections also means that this pivotal moment roughly corresponds to the Golden Mean, signaling a further preoccupation with the Fibonacci series in this movement. The next three repetitions of the row, thirteen through fifteen, feature a general upward motion in all voices, as if the subtle change in bar 135 has thrown a wrench into what had previously been an orderly machine, sending it off-course. After all, a perfectly organized serial system should continue *ad infinitum*, but Nono exerts control by subtly nudging that system.

Nono alters the system completely beginning with the sixteenth repetition, and that change is clearly audible. For the final four repetitions of the row, he used an

inverted form of the duration series: 13 8 5 3 2 1 1 2 3 5 8 13. However, for these repetitions, the duration series is applied not to the repetitions of the row, but to the pulse layers and the same series is used for each layer. This means that each duration series stretches across the final four repetitions of the row. Moreover, the initial entrances of the pulse layers are staggered according to the length of the pulse, from longest to shortest, such that a mirror form is created. Because each layer will contain the same number of pulses, but the pulses in those rows are different sizes, the pulse layer at the eight-note level begins two bars before the pulse layer at the triplet, and ends two bars after. The sixteenth-note and quintuplet layers are likewise staggered such that the middle points of all four layers roughly line up at bars 149 and 150.

The specific inversion used (13 8 5 3 2 1 1 2 3 5 8 13) also means that the shortest values will be clustered together with contraction and expansion occurring at either end. The middle bars, 149 and 150, contain two full twelve-tone aggregates compared to the final aggregate, which lasts seven bars because of the quicker duration factors. Nielinger calls this technique a “prolation canon,” because each layer contains the same rhythms, proceeding at rates related to a common ratio.³⁹ However, the twelve-tone aggregates still appear in block formation, distributed across all three layers; the resulting music cannot be considered a true prolation canon, because each layer does not contain the same pitch content.

This technique allows Nono to control the density of pitches, creating a heightened chromatic and rhythmic saturation around the words “vinceranno” (“will triumph”). By intensifying the density, he both embodies and obscures the text. The

³⁹ Nielinger, “The Song Unsung,” 111.

accumulation of voices and quicker entrances makes the text harder to understand from a listener's perspective, but also captures the feeling of defiance. That the emotional intensity effaces the meaning, suggests a hidden despair in the author's statement of triumph.

III

The third and ninth movements are the only ones to use fragments from multiple authors and texts. The authors of the three fragments for this movement, Andreas Likourinos, Elefthérios Kiossès, and Konstantinos Sirbas, were all members of the Greek resistance to German occupation during World War II. The fragments all share the theme of immanent execution and a preoccupation with the form that their executions will take. Likourinos stated that he would be taken to "Kessariani for execution together with seven others"; Kiossès announced that he would be "shot" ("fucileranno"); Sirbas was to be "hanged" ("impiccherano"). In the second half of each statement, the authors try to justify their deaths as necessary sacrifices for their cause. As in the previous movement, Nono adapts the texts to suit his needs. The fragment from Likourinos, which was written hastily and cast from the truck *en route* to his execution, required the least editing, as it was already fragmentary in nature. As such, his letter seems to be the model to which Nono made the others in this movement conform. The entire letter, addressed to his father, is as follows:

*mi portano a Kessariani per l'esecuzione insieme ad altri sette detenuti...Ti prego molto, avverti le loro case. Non vi addolorate. Muoio per la Libertà e la Patria.*⁴⁰

The remaining two letters share the same form: a statement of fact regarding the impending execution, followed by a statement of defiance and hope that their deaths are not in vain.⁴¹

The letter from Sirbas was also addressed to his father. The line Nono chose, in addition to “m’impiccheranno nella piazza perché sono patriota” previously mentioned, was “tuo figlio se ne va [amareggiato perché] non sentirà le campane della libertà.”⁴² The text between those two statements, however, contains heartbreaking and personal communication for his family. Sirbas asked his father to give his regards to his family, and then asked him to retrieve his clothes and wallet from the police, because “they were new.” Nono’s adaptation of this letter emphasizes grand themes of freedom, rather than personal tragedy.

⁴⁰ Malvezzi and Pirelli, *Lettere*, 414. “**They are taking me to Kessariani for execution together detained with seven others.** [Likourinos transcribed the names of the other seven, which were not published in the anthology.] I ask you please to notify their families. Do not grieve. **I am dying for freedom and for my homeland.**” Boldface sections trans. Owens.

⁴¹ The letter from Kiossès to his parents and sister features a peculiar change, but one whose importance will be impossible to assess without further archival work. The text that accompanies the score includes a final phrase at the end of the fragment, “be worthy of us” (“siate degni di noi,” trans. Owens), which is a dramatic change from the original “we are worthy of our forefathers and of Greece” (“siamo degni dei nostri avi e della Grecia”). However, that particular line is not set to music, and only appears in the accompanying material. It is not clear whether Nono made that change intentionally, or whether he had originally intended to set that (altered) line as well.

⁴² Malvezzi and Pirelli, *Lettere*, 420. Brackets indicate words removed by Nono. The first fragment translates to “I will be executed on the square because I am a patriot.” The second, in the original, translates as “Your son departs in disappointment because he will not hear the bells of freedom.” Nono’s edit changes the meaning slightly to “Your son is departing, he will not hear the bells of freedom.”

Nono does not treat the three texts sequentially, but instead presents them simultaneously. The meaning of the individual texts is obscured, and instead highlights their similarities. The cacophonous aggregate seems to emphasize the extent to which these utterances—statements of the authors’ immanent deaths—are not unique. Indeed, the volume of letters contains hundreds more such letters, and for each letter that was written, many more were sent to their deaths without being able to bear witness.

Formally, the movement is divided into four distinct sections: orchestral introduction, setting of all three texts layered, setting of the final statement from Sirbas, and a short orchestral coda. The orchestra is divided into three streams of tonal material generated, as in the first movement, by use of the so-called tone-distance row. A base pulse of the sixteenth note is used throughout the movement in all layers. Because Nono restricts durations to a more limited set (permutations of the values 1, 3, 5, 7, 9), the movement as a whole is characterized by a high degree of rhythmic homogeneity, and there are many moments of convergence where separate layers simultaneously start new notes. The homogeneity seems to reflect the repetitive nature of the texts, and the sense that their sentiments form an incessant refrain.

The closing statement from Sirbas, “tuo figlio se ne va, non sentirà le campane della libertà,” contrasts with the statements of hope and defiance from the other two authors, and, as such, is treated by itself for the closing section. Although his statement seems to suggest that the “bells of freedom” will be heard, just not by him, the sense of defiance is absent in his declaration, which, as Nielinger points out, seems to speak for the fates of all three.⁴³ The character of the orchestration shifts dramatically for the

⁴³ Nielinger, “The Song Unsung,” 103.

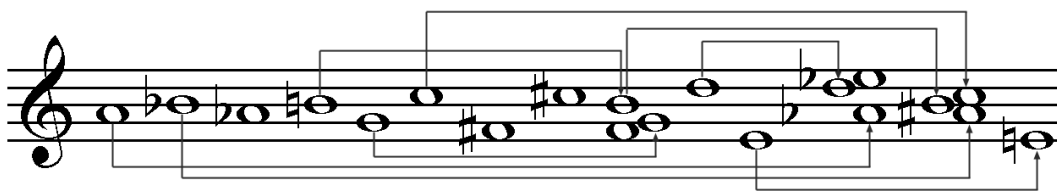
presentation of this line. Trumpets assume the primary role, while strings are absent until the coda. The movement concludes with a harsh *tutti*, with the winds using flutter-tongue as preparation for the next movement.

IV

The fourth movement is scored for orchestra, with emphasis on the brass and wind sections. The most striking feature of this movement is the pervasive use of flutter-tongue in the winds during the first half of the movement. This instrumental effect makes the fourth movement, together with 6a and 8, one of the most strident in the whole work. Pitches in the winds are constrained to a single octave, from e'-e-flat", meaning that two direct presentations of the all-interval series that open and close the movement are in the prime wedge form, centered around A-natural. Additionally, each recurrence of a given pitch will always be at the same octave.

The pitches in the winds are organized into a series of discrete “events.” From beginning to end, the winds play a succession of notes, either single or a few played as chords, without any overlapping. The length of each event is determined by a serial scheme to be discussed below, but, to understand the organization of the pitches, it will be simplest to consider the pitches independently from the rhythm, as a series of unmeasured events (See Example 2).

The fourth movement, like movements one and three, makes use of the so-called tone-distance row, as a means of manipulating the all-interval series. In this movement, however, the tone-distance row is more easily apprehended, because it contains only one



Example 2: First fourteen events. Arrows show variable spacing between repetitions of a given tone.

stream of tonal material. The system results in a distribution of pitches that is unrecognizable, even with extensive study, without the table printed below, which was found in the Luigi Nono Archive.⁴⁴ In this movement the system is implemented much more directly than in the previous two examples. Taking every fifth number from a sequence from 1 to 12, Nono arrives at a row used to permute entries of the all-interval series: 5 10 3 8 1 6 11 4 9 2 7 12. Nono then transforms this row, and then each subsequent variation, a further 11 times by taking every odd element from the row, followed by the even elements. The second variation yields 10 8 6 4 2 12 5 3 1 11 9 7, the next 8 4 12 3 11 7 10 6 2 5 1 9, and so on. This results in a “magic square” where each vertical row and each horizontal row contains all twelve numbers (see Example 3).

⁴⁴ Kathryn Bailey’s essay found several interesting correspondences and recognized that each pitch occurred exactly 13 times, and that the movement opened and closed with statements of the all-interval series, but was unable to recognize the tone-distance row. Nielinger notes that the sketch showing the process was first published by Motz in “Konstruktive Strenge und kompositorische Freiheit im ersten Satz des *Canto Sospeso*” (Olschki Editore, 1999). Nielinger, “The Song *Unsung*,” 99.

9	5	10	3	8	1	6	11	4	9	2	7	12
t	10	8	6	4	2	12	5	3	1	11	9	7
8	8	4	12	3	11	7	10	6	2	5	1	9
e	4	3	7	6	5	9	8	12	11	10	2	1
7	3	6	9	12	10	1	4	7	5	8	11	2
0	6	12	1	7	8	2	3	9	10	4	5	11
6	12	7	2	9	4	11	6	1	8	3	10	5
1	7	9	11	1	3	5	12	2	4	6	8	10
5	9	1	5	2	6	10	7	11	3	12	4	8
2	1	2	10	11	12	8	9	5	6	7	3	4
4	2	11	8	5	7	4	1	10	12	9	6	3
3	11	5	4	10	9	3	2	8	7	1	12	6

Example 3: Tone distance grid for *Il canto sospeso*, movement 4. The column to the left shows the notes of the row to which rows of the grid are applied. I have elected in this and other examples to use pitch-class notation where 0 corresponds to C-natural and 11 (*e*) corresponds to B-natural. (B-flat, 10, is notated as *t*.)

The first twelve events are a predictable presentation of the all-interval series (mm. 240-247). Each horizontal row from the above table is applied to a successive note from the all-interval series. The numbers in the table determine the spacing between a note and its next recurrence in the sequence of events. Because the first horizontal row (5 10 3 8 1 6 11 4 9 2 7 12) is applied to the A-natural from the all-interval series, the first number (5) indicates that there will be five events before another A-natural returns. This means that, on the seventh event, an A-natural is played together with the F-sharp, the seventh note in the all-interval series. There are likewise ten events separating the second and third entrances of an A-natural. Each event, after the first row has run its course, contains anywhere from zero to five simultaneous notes because of the ways that the

different rows line up. The process runs its course after 102 events (see Example 4). The tone-distance scheme dictates that there will also be events where no notes occur. The first such occurrence is in bar 250. Instead of a rest, however, Nono substitutes un-tuned percussion, either suspended cymbal or tambourine.⁴⁵

The tone-distance manipulation is self-limiting. Unlike the second movement, where Nono's intervention was required to stop the system and bring the movement to closure, once the tone-distance matrix has run its course, the movement ends. Following the scheme presented in the table, each note is repeated a total of 13 times, including its first appearance in the all-interval series. Because the sum of each row is necessarily the same, the total spacing between the first and last note occurrences is the same for every note. As a result, the movement ends with each note back in its original placement in the all-interval series (mm. 278-284).

The rhythmic spacing of the events is determined by vertical use of the same magic square. Each event correlates to a duration specified by moving vertically through the square, starting in the lower-left corner and cycling through until the last event is played. This means that Nono uses eight and a half rows, or 102 elements of the matrix. As in previous movements, the duration value is used to determine the length each event is held, according to the prevailing pulse. The pulse, based on subdivisions of the quarter note, changes for each vertical row, except for the last half row. The first four rows use the eighth-note triplet (3), followed by the sixteenth-note (4), then quintuplet (5), then septuplet (7). The last four rows reverse this pattern, starting with the septuplet and returning to the triplet. Nono maintains the triplet pulse level for the last half-row.

⁴⁵ In the third movement, these gaps in the scheme were simply replaced with rests.

Another twelve-by-twelve matrix is used to determine the orchestration for the movement. Nono uses twelve different wind and tuned percussion instruments in a set order. To construct the matrix, that order is rotated, moving the first instrument to the end until the original order is restored for the thirteenth rotation. Nono applied this matrix to the composition by using each vertical row to determine what instrument plays each repetition of a given note. In places, Nono was forced to alter the scheme, because the tone-distance manipulation dictates the two notes would need to be played by the same instrument. For example, in bar 252, the fourth repetition of D-natural occurs simultaneously with the third repetition of E-natural, both of which, according to the instrumentation table, should be played by vibraphone. In this instance, Nono substitutes marimba to play the E-natural.

The strings, in this movement, act as resonators to the notes played by the winds, as shown in Example 4. With the exception of the contrabass, which sounds an octave lower than written, the notes in the strings are constrained to the same octave (E'-E-flat'') as the winds. When each note enters for the first time in the winds, the same tone is played as a harmonic by one of the string parts. That note is then held until the end of the next time that note is repeated in the winds. As an example, the contrabass plays an A-natural together with the first event, and holds until the next A-natural in the seventh event. The following entry then starts another held note, meaning that each note in the winds either starts or stops a held note in the strings. The result is a rich texture of chromatic saturation in the strings, with as many as nine tones sounding at once. If the process were continued to the end of the piece, the thirteenth entry of each note would begin a new held note, with no remaining notes to end the piece. Instead of allowing this

to happen, Nono skips the expected start on the seventh, or middle, repetition of each note, so that the endings of the last notes line up with string releases. This decision also creates an audible thinning in the overall texture between bars 258 and 263, the period where the seventh repetition of each tone occurs, and, therefore, fewer notes are being started in the strings.

The other elements of the serial structure all work to articulate an arch form. Dynamics for the movement are organized such that the loudest sections fall in the middle, creating a contour with a gradual crescendo that reaches its apex in bar 263, roughly the mid-point of the movement. This point coincides both with the aforementioned thinning in the string section, as well as the moment when the winds switch from flutter-tongue to *normale*. The use of flutter-tongue creates an interesting counterpoint to the dynamics. The increasing dynamics and flutter-tongue both contribute to a generalized feeling of unease. Even at the soft dynamics that open the work, the flutter-tongue opens the movement with a deep nervous energy, which intensifies as the dynamics increase. By suddenly removing the flutter-tongue at the height of the crescendo, Nono creates a dramatic sense of release, which prepares the movement, which started with anxiety, to subside into an ethereal calm. In this way, the fourth movement functions as a bridge between the (somewhat deflated) hope of the third movement and the quiet despair of the fifth.

This movement is remarkable for the sheer transparency of its construction and clearly projected arch form, but also, paradoxically, for its inscrutability to analysis without the tone-distance row. Absent the key, that is the tone-distance grid (Example 3), Bailey's analysis was unable to discover the structure, in spite of the fact that virtually

nothing is left to intuition. Indeed, my graphic realization (Example 4) is seductively close to a map for the composition of the entire piece. With the exception of dynamics, orchestration, and durations, the last of which could easily be added to the chart, the reductive chart is equivalent to the score. In a fictional empire imagined by Jorge Luis Borges, the inhabitants, unsatisfied with a reductive mapping of their world, sought to create a one-to-one map. Such a map, of course was necessarily as large as the world itself.⁴⁶ In the fourth movement of *Il canto sospeso*, Nono crafted a score and its analysis that are very nearly equivalent, and yet that analysis does not exhaust the movement's meaning.

The fact that the clearest statement of this system—the tone-distance manipulation—happens in the fourth movement is of no small consequence. Had Nono begun with the straightforward presentation of movement four in movement one or three, where the same principles are at work but further obscured, *Il canto sospeso* would have followed a conventional progression from presentation to elaboration. Instead, there is an inward movement, where the work seems to reveal its hidden principles only at a later stage. The work is not, therefore, founded on a proposition that the system is equivalent to its meaning. That is to say, the system is not meaningful in itself, but in the manner of its presentation.

⁴⁶ Jorge Luis Borges, “On the Exactitude of Science” in *Collected Fictions*, trans. Andrew Hurley (New York: Penguin Books, 1999), 325. Borges’s map was, in turn, based on a map described in Lewis Carroll’s, *Sylvie and Bruno*, 1889 and 1893.

V

The fifth movement, for solo tenor and orchestra, is the most lyrical so far. The text was written by a fourteen-year-old Jewish boy, Chaïm, who died in the concentration camp at Pustkow, Poland. As noted by Nielinger, his text seems to echo the sentiment of Adorno's dictum on poetry after Auschwitz: "Se il cielo fosse carta e tutti I mari del mondo inchiostro non potrei descrivervi le mie sofferenze e tutto ciò che vedo intorno a me. Dico addio a tutti e piango."⁴⁷

As with previous movements, Nono omits a large portion of the text in order to achieve the aphoristic character of the fragment. While Chaïm posits the impossibility of describing the horrors of what he sees, the bulk of the letter attempts to do just that. He describes at length his deteriorating physical state, as well as the appalling conditions of the camp. Before saying goodbye, he ends his letter with the chilling account of an event a few days prior to writing the letter. As retaliation for the escape of two of his fellow inmates, the officers arranged everyone in a line, and shot every fifth prisoner. He reports that he was not the fifth, but has no illusions that he has much longer to live.

⁴⁷ "If the sky were paper, and all the seas of the world were ink, I could not describe my suffering and all that I see around me. I say goodbye forever to life which is so beautiful." Nono, *Il canto sospeso*, 90. To say that Chaïm's letter echo's Adorno's dictum is only partially true. Adorno's statement that writing poetry after Auschwitz is impossible has often—including by Nielinger—been understood to mean that Auschwitz represents a limit-situation that is inexpressible. But a careful reading of the original quotation (see footnote 25) shows that the impossibility of expressing the horror of Auschwitz was hardly what prompted Adorno to make his statement. Instead, the very idea of culture—which inevitably speaks to the aspirations of society—had become hideous, akin to the orchestras that played music to pacify prisoners in their last moments before entering the gas chambers.

Interestingly, the process of selecting every fifth was the same that Nono used to select duration factors in the previous movement.

Structurally, the movement is organized into three layers of pulse and pitch. The base pulses in each layer are subdivisions of the quarter note by four, five, and six respectively. The duration factors for each layer are determined by three sets of matrices, each using the numbers 1, 2, and 7, that all add up to 40. As a result, the length of each layer is related to each other according to the length of its given pulse. The sextuplet layer is shortest, followed by the quintuplet, and then the sixteenth note.

Like the ending section of the second movement, the entrances are staggered such that the movement is symmetrical around the mid-point of each layer. The pitch material is derived from the all-interval series according to similar manipulations used in movement seven (see below). The arrangement of the rows—each layer uses exactly ten—and their inversions follows a symmetrical distribution across the quarter note and quintuplet layers. Layer one opens with the retrograde version of the all-interval series, followed by the series in the primary inversion. The subsequent four rows and their inversions are distributed symmetrically.

The second (quintuplet) layer begins with the last eight rows of the first layer, followed by the retrograde and primary versions of the all-interval series in the same order that they appeared in the first layer. The third (sextuplet) layer begins with the retrograde all-interval series, this time inverted so that the first interval descends a half step instead of ascending. The second row is the primary version of the same inverted row, followed four manipulations of that row, symmetrically paired with their retrogrades.

As shown by Bailey, the last five notes of the seventh row in this layer are transposed up a half step.⁴⁸ The transposition holds for the following two rows, and the first five notes of the last row. The very last seven notes in the sextuplet layer are transposed up another half step. This marks the only place I have found in the entire piece where transposition is used as a manipulation procedure, but its meaning remains obscure, in part because it occurs in the shortest (or fastest pulse-level) layer and therefore does not occur at the end of the movement.

VI

There is some indication that Nono considered dividing the two component parts of the sixth movement into separate movements. As regards their construction, the two sections are completely separate, and the affects contrasting. The first section is marked by a driving intensity, tight, strident sonorities, and extreme dynamic contrasts. The second section is lyrical, sparse and quiet.

By fusing these two stylistically divergent sections, Nono underscored the conflict inherent in the text by Esther Srul. The full text of her letter reads:

Le porte si aprono. Eccoli, I nostri assassini. Vestiti di nero. Sulle loro mani sporche portano guanti bianchi. A due a due ci cacciano dalla sinagoga. Le mani alzate sulle nostre teste. Care sorelle e fratelli come è dure dire addio per sempre alla viat così bella. E quelli che restano in vita non dimenticate mai la nostra innocente piccola via ebraica. Sorelle e fratelli vendicatevi sui nostri assassini.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Bailey, "Work in Progress," 301.

⁴⁹ Malvezzi and Pirelli, *Lettere*, 647. "**The doors open. Here are our murderers. Dressed in black. On their dirty hands they wear white gloves. Two-by-two, they drive us out of the Synagogue. Our hands are raised over our heads. Dear sisters and brothers, how hard it is to say goodbye for ever to life which is so beautiful!** And those who

The first half of the text, used for movement 6a, confronts the violence of the genocide more directly than in any other movement. Here, for the first time, the text depicts the oppressors as something more than an unseen force, and the music is accordingly strident, with the timpani assuming a primary role. The second section, which turns to serenity and calm, posits the beauty of life, even amid these horrors.

The structure of 6a, which pits the orchestra and choir against each other, reflects the conflict between the SS and the Jewish victims.⁵⁰ The choir plays schematically similar music to the orchestra, played in retrograde. Throughout 6a, all parts play notes repetitively, rearticulating the same pitch several times, according to yet another duration scheme, before proceeding to the next pitch. This results in an affect of insistent stagnation, an oppressive refusal of musical expression. The orchestra begins with a chromatic cluster of the first five notes of the all-interval series, while the chorus begins with all parts singing the pitch of E-flat. Subsequently, the number of simultaneous pitches decreases in the orchestra, first to three pitches, then two, ending with only the trombones and low strings playing B-flat; the number of simultaneous pitches in the chorus increases in retrograde fashion, ending with elements three through six of the all interval series (A-flat, B-natural, G, C). The number of simultaneous pitches in both the orchestra and choir, throughout, always adds up to five, except in the very middle, where each layer is playing only two tones.

remain alive will never forget our innocent little Jewish street. Brothers and sisters, have vengeance upon our murderers.” Boldface indicates the sections used by Nono.

Translations of sections used by Nono translated by Peter Owens (*Il canto sospeso*, 90), the rest are my own.

⁵⁰ Nielinger, “The Song Unsung,” 119.

In spite of its formal structure, 6a does not sound symmetrical. The character of the chromatic clusters is markedly different in a vocal context, and hence the ending does not sound like the beginning. Section 6a, as whole, is a progression from a texture dominated by the orchestra, especially the timpani, to a largely choral texture. In addition to preparing for the quiet and lyrical 6b, this progression also reveals the extent to which the orchestra is meant to identify with the oppressors and the choir with the victims. The clusters in the choir, in contrast to those in the orchestra, have a decidedly oppressed character, as if the voices of the chorus had been herded into a confined space.

Amid this feeling of subjugation, the music, following the text, becomes introspective. Section 6b presents the all-interval series in a straightforward fashion a total of eleven times. There are four distinct rhythmic streams, but only two different pulse levels, triplet and quintuplet. The dynamic range is restricted to *ppp* to *mp*, creating an overall feeling of calm. Section 6a presents a frightening vision of impending death, but 6b offers a suspension on that moment. Just as time reportedly slows down at the moment of death, here the victims give a final thought to the life they are about to leave behind.

VII

The seventh movement of *Il canto sospeso* is a key moment in the work as a whole. A short fragment of text forms the basis for the movement: : “...addio mamma, tua figlia

Liubka se ne va nell' umida terra..."⁵¹ As with the other movements, this potentially pathos-laden text is balanced by the stark orchestral accompaniment. Sketches in the Nono Archive indicate that Nono chose the text for the seventh movement first, and it seems to have served as a prototype the way he edited the other texts.⁵² This text was the only one that Nono used in its entirety, as it was already a mere fragment.

The tonal material for this movement is organized into twelve sections where one, two, or three separate tone rows are presented simultaneously. There are a total of 24 rows; the second twelve are the retrograde forms of the first twelve. The relationship between the rows, and their relationship to the all-interval series is somewhat obscure. Many are the result of applying the all-interval permutation scheme to a reordering a given row. The row that opens the movement, for example, applies a wedge-form manipulation to the two hexachords of the all-interval series. Nono creates the new row by selecting the first, then last, tones from the first hexachord and then moving inward, and then applying the same principle to the second hexachord. The note positions of the new row in the original are 1 6 2 5 3 4 / 12 7 11 8 10 9, which yields a new row (from the all interval series) of A C A-sharp G G-sharp B D-sharp F-sharp E C-sharp D F.

The soprano soloist and the soprano and contralto choir sections comprise the vocal parts for this movement. Declamation of the text is reserved for the soprano soloist who nevertheless sings extended sections of untexted melisma, while the chorus sings exclusively tones without text. All vocal parts alternate their singing styles between *boca chiusa* ["mouth closed"], *boca quasi chiusa* ["mouth somewhat closed"], and *normale*.

⁵¹ "...goodbye mother, your daughter, Liubka, is going into the moist earth..." Nono, *Il canto sospeso*, 91.

⁵² Nielinger, "The Song Unsung," 86.

Because there is fluid movement between the singing styles in all voices, and because the soprano soloist also alternates between singing tones and text, the words of the text emerge subtly from the instrumental texture.

With the first utterance of text, when the soprano soloist says “addio,” only the single consonant “d,” articulating a B-flat, gives any hint that this is now a word and not more melisma. The Ah-ee-o sounds merge seamlessly with the rest of the vocal texture. The resulting effect of this technique is to allow the text to emerge from the music, in the same way a body buried in shallow mud might be revealed by rainfall. Following “addio,” the soprano sings “mama,” again with considerable melisma, disguising it somewhat as instrumental texture. The entire phrase, “addio mama,” is then repeated with different pitches and rhythms. The text thus continues its process of emerging, not by increasing its comprehensibility, but by giving the listener another chance to hear, just as an archaeologist might reveal more of the same underlying form with a second brushing.

The text reaches the height of its comprehensibility in the following phrase, “tua figlia Liubka,” which reduces melisma and compresses the utterance to a mere four bars, whereas previously each word had been accorded a minimum of two bars. The declamatory nature of this phrase correlates arrestingly with the text and its moment of recognition. This is the moment when the body in the mud becomes visible, the moment a mother recognizes the form of her deceased daughter. The vision is fleeting and the image—and the *text*—recedes into the music.

VIII

Movements eight and nine share many features with movements one and two, creating a kind of recapitulation to end the work. In movement eight, the companion to the instrumental first movement, the lyrical tones of the strings have been eliminated in favor of harsh brass and timpani. The meaning of the harshness of this movement seems ambiguous. On the one hand, it could represent the violence done to the victims, and, on the other hand, it could encapsulate a generalized feeling of anger that this violence was allowed to happen, and that society was largely complicit.

Unlike the first movement, the pitches do not unfold according to the method of the “tone distance row.” Instead, the notes of the all-interval series are presented, in block form, a total of 36 times. The notes of each row do not always appear in strict adherence to the order of the all-interval series, as in bar 511 where the A-flat and B-natural enter before the A-natural. This should not, however, be considered a re-ordering of the row, but a displacement of the notes, by various techniques.⁵³ To determine the rhythms for this movement, Nono uses full compliment of duration factors, numbers 1 through 12, ordered according to alternating largest and smallest numbers: 1 12 2 11 3 10 4 9 5 8 6 7. This row is then permuted a further 9 times by alternating first and last elements. As Nielinger points out, the ninth permutation would have resulted in a straight series descending from 12 to 1, and hence that step is avoided.⁵⁴ Instead, Nono uses the original and its eight permutations (for a total of nine), running forwards followed by retrograde,

⁵³ Nielinger, “The Song Unsung,” 117.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

four times. This equals the 36 repetitions of the all-interval series, and applies a duration value to each note.

IX

Structurally, the ninth movement appears to be a re-composition of the second. Like the second, there are fifteen repetitions of a tone-row, followed by a rhythmic canon. The row, while a variant of the all-interval series, is read backwards, according to the release of the notes, rather than their attacks. As a result each aggregate of twelve notes ends—often simultaneously with other tones—with the release of the A-natural. The movement is scored for choir *a capella* with the addition of a timpani playing incessant but irregular accents, which has been read in previous analyses as a reminder “not to forget.”⁵⁵

The texts for the movement, in which the authors emphasize the possibility of transcending their deaths, are subjected to the most extreme treatment. Nono selected the fragments from letters by Ukrainian Irna Malozon, Italian Eusebio Giambone, and German Elli Voigt. Malozon writes, “I am not afraid of death”; Giambone writes, “I will be calm and at peace facing the execution squad. Are those who have condemned us equally at peace?”; Voigt writes, “I go in the belief of a better life for you.”⁵⁶ Nono effaces the meaning of the words throughout the movement by separating individual syllables across multiple voices. Again, the manipulation of the text, which obscures meaning, serves an expressive function. In the last movement, the expression of the

⁵⁵ Nielinger, “The Song Unsung,” 112.

⁵⁶ Malozon: “non ho paura della morte.” Giambone: sarò calmo e tranquillo di fronte al plotone di esecuzione. Sono così tranquilli coloro che ci hanno condannato?” Voigt: “vado con la fede in una vita migliore per voi.” Nono, *Il canto sospeso*, 90.

authors is at its most fractured. The hope, of which each of the authors speak, appears tenuous and fragile, in danger, at all moments, of vanishing completely. The text vanishes completely and the choir sings *bocca chiusa* for the final coda.

Only in the final three bars before the coda, does the text emerge in an intelligible way. The words that appear, perhaps more clearly than any statement in the entire composition, are the final two words in the fragment by Elli Voigt: “per voi” (“for you”). Voigt’s text had expressed a hope for a better life for those she had left behind, but Nono’s setting places an imperative on the audience, on all of us. With the emergence of “per voi,” the work and the authors in that work turn toward the audience with a piercing and stern ultimatum: the task of ensuring that their sacrifices are not forgotten has passed to us, to those in the privileged position to be able to hear the message.

Coda

Nono’s treatment of his source texts has been a point of contention since Karlheinz Stockhausen first analyzed the work in 1958.⁵⁷ Stockhausen questioned the advisability of setting the words in a way such that they were only barely intelligible. He clearly had the more extreme manipulations of the final movement in mind when he made this critique. As we have seen, Nono subjects individual words to repetitions in separate voices and often introduces lengthy melismas that run counter to the words’ usual accentuation.

⁵⁷ Karlheinz Stockhausen, “Music and Speech” in *Die Reihe*, vol. 6, (German Edition, Vienna: Universal Edition: 1960; English Edition, Bryn Mawr: Theodore Presser, Co, 1964). The text was first delivered at Darmstadt on July 25, 1957. See Borio and Danuser, *Im Zenit der Moderne*, vol. 3, 587.

Stockhausen believed that Nono intentionally obscured the text to “withdraw it from the public eye where it has no place.”⁵⁸ That the text is “intentionally obscured” is not in question, but the motivation hardly seems to be the private nature of the texts. Nono rejected Stockhausen’s critique on two grounds. First, Nono contended that his use of the text differed little from earlier practice, as in Renaissance Mass settings where the text is manipulated in ways that often undermine its clarity.⁵⁹ Already prepared for that defense, Stockhausen had contended that the familiarity and ubiquity of the religious texts meant that an audience would be prepared to understand the derivations from the original.⁶⁰ Second, Nono argued that *expression* of the letters became the expression of his composition.⁶¹ Whether the text itself can be comprehended at any given point is of less concern, since he is attempting to capture a more generalized feeling of and for the letters.

Stockhausen’s critique can be seen as naïve, because it assumed an audience would be attempting to decipher meaning purely on the basis of what it heard. While it is unclear whether the audience for the premiere would have been provided with the texts and translations, the content of the collection of letters would have been well known.⁶² The fact that *Il canto sospeso* was a response to the concentration camps would not have

⁵⁸ Stockhausen, “Music and Speech,” 48.

⁵⁹ Luigi Nono, “Testo—musica—canto” in *Scritti e colloqui*, vol. 1, 60. This lecture was first given in Darmstadt under the name “Text—Musik—Gesang” on July 7, 1960. See Borio and Danuser, *Im Zenit der Moderne*, vol. 3, 603.

⁶⁰ Ibid. 51.

⁶¹ Nono, *Scritti e Colloqui*, vol. 1, 81.

⁶² Claudia Vincis at the Luigi Nono archive confirmed that texts were not included in the program for the premiere, but could not be certain that a supplemental text might have been given that night. (Personal communication, August 31, 2010.) The Berlin performances with Claudio Abbado (December 9-11, 1992) took the additional step of reading the entire letters, not just the fragments used by Nono, in German.

been lost on anyone, making Stockhausen's suggestion that Nono should not have "chosen texts so rich in meaning in the first place, but rather sounds" somewhat ludicrous. Even the most casual listener would not suggest that the piece would be *the same* with another text.

The moment when the consonant "d" first emerges from the instrumental texture of the seventh movement could be understood as the key to understanding the whole of *Il canto sospeso*: the moment that reveals its *idea*. The text of the work, like its authors, is buried and barely audible. The very fragility of this moment of transition from *melos* to *lexis* allows something else to escape the tension between speech and music. The moment is one of *recognition* in the Aristotelian sense, except that what is revealed is a word of disappearance ("addio"). The moment illuminates the fundamental tension of the work, the suspension between the need for expression and the compulsion to fall silent in the face of the unspeakable.

By underscoring the insufficiency of the testimonies, *Il canto sospeso* anticipated much recent scholarship on the role of the witness at Auschwitz, particularly that of Primo Levi and Giorgio Agamben. Survivors, like Levi, inevitably point to a certain degree of privilege or luck that allowed them to survive. Those that endured the worst horrors of the camps either perished or were rendered mute by the experience.⁶³ Nono directs our attention to those that did not survive, because each of the texts was written shortly before its author's execution. And yet, Nono's setting in no way suggests that these texts bear witness to the totality of what occurred. The content of the texts offers

⁶³ Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen, (New York: Zone Books, 1999), 33.

only a fleeting glimpse of the experience. Only by emphasizing the inadequacy of representation, can Nono give any hint of the magnitude of what happened.

The music does not serve the function of *evoking* the text. There is nothing left to evoke in the traditional sense, and no amount of word-painting or musical symbolism would provide a deeper understanding of the text. Instead, Nono seems to submerge the texts into the pre-compositional act, to treat them philosophically. Rather than material to be presented and expressed to an audience, the texts are treated as another element of the composition itself. Although the specific meanings of the texts may be lost at any given point, the meaning of the work as a whole does not depend on the continuity of those texts. Just as the hyper-organized music, stripped of its expressive content, becomes meaningful, the text is rendered musical by effacing its meaning. The resulting work should be understood as a response to, and an encounter with, those texts, and as a memorial to the victims.

§

With *Il canto sospeso* as a referent, we may now be in a better position to understand what serialism meant to the post-war generation. It should be clear that very few serial works operate exactly like Nono's work, but this is precisely the point. If *Il canto sospeso* is emblematic of anything, it shows that there was no serial orthodoxy at Darmstadt. The serialism used in the work is entirely put to the service of expressing the work's idea. The possibility of meaning in not only serial works is to be found in the tension between deep structure and the work's audible surface. Musical meaning, as Nono's work so poignantly expresses, emerges as if suspended between those two poles.

Post-war serialism has been largely portrayed through the lens of Boulez's statement that opened this chapter, but even Boulez, as we have seen, cannot be held to represent the serial orthodoxy ascribed to him. If we regard serialism for what it offered composers as a resource, then perhaps Darmstadt will appear as a site of eclecticism rather than rigid academicism. Serialism provided a pre-compositional framework for *Il canto sospeso*, which is saved from being an utterance of an entirely personal language by the fact that Nono provided the key to the work's understanding within the work itself. The specific key that unlocked *Il canto sospeso* would not grant entry into another work, which might rely on an entirely different set of principles. The task of the musicologist is to uncover those principles, even if they are submerged deep in the compositional structure.

Chapter III: Cage Fighting

Of course he's not a composer, but he's an inventor—of genius.

Arnold Schoenberg

Nowhere are music and philosophy more strongly associated than in the figure of John Cage, and it is hardly surprising that he found a receptive audience at the Darmstadt Summer Courses.¹ While John Cage did not personally attend the courses until 1958, his music had been performed and discussed as early as 1954. Amy Beal's *New Music, New Allies* has shown how Cage was able to find a European audience and institutional support at a time when such support was conspicuously absent in the United States.² His anti-establishment stance had done little to endear him to American academics and the concert-going public. He became known for a few provocative works, and had become notorious for one of them, *4'33"* (1952), a work that featured a pianist sitting silently in front of a piano for four minutes and 33 seconds.

¹ The introduction to James Pritchett's study of John Cage contains no less than five quotations from composers and critics that all make some variation on the claim that Cage wrote philosophy, and not music. Pritchett was compelled to "defend the obvious," that what Cage did was, in fact, *music*. James Pritchett, *The Music of John Cage* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 1-2.

² "In West German venues John Cage, David Tudor, Morton Feldman, Earle Brown, Christian Wolff, La Monte Young, Terry Riley, Frederic Rzewski, Alvin Curran, Steve Reich, Pauline Oliveros, Alvin Lucier, and many others found unparalleled opportunities—in the concert hall, on the radio, at contemporary music festivals, in private venues, in the print media, and through exchange programs. The support and publicity they received, underwritten by a lavish policy of Cold War funding for culture, allowed such uncompromising innovators to survive professionally abroad during decades of financial struggle and limited recognition at home." Amy Beal, *New Music, New Allies: American Experimental Music in West Germany From the Zero Hour to Reunification* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 1.

This is not to say that Cage was embraced with open arms when he arrived in Europe. His methods were often fiercely contested there, too, but even so, these methods found an audience at Darmstadt.³ The philosophical environment that had been fostered there created a context for his music that was missing in America. Cage, in some ways, represented the logical endpoint to the philosophical music that had begun to take shape in Darmstadt, but the responses to his music were far from unanimously favorable. In part, this can be attributed to the fact that Cage's "philosophy," with its reliance on non-Western sources, was not particularly compatible with the continental philosophy of writers like Adorno and Heidegger, whose texts informed the thinking of many European composers. While Cage's interest in Eastern philosophy and mysticism was hardly unique among European philosophers, Cage seemed to view the East as an escape from tradition.⁴ As a result, he was often viewed as naïve and unserious. This is particularly evident in the critiques of Cage by Luigi Nono, Konrad Boehmer, and Cornelius Cardew, which attack him on *philosophical* grounds. The American critiques of Cage accused him of writing bad (or non-) music, while his critics in Europe accused him of writing bad philosophy. In both cases, Cage's actual music became almost irrelevant. Cage, for his part, did not seem to mind.

³ Beal, 113.

⁴ "Buckminster Fuller, the dymaxion architect, in his three-hour lecture on the history of civilization, explains that men leaving Asia to go to Europe went against the wind and developed machines, ideas, and Occidental philosophies in accord with a struggle against nature; that, on the other hand, men leaving Asia to go to America went with the wind, put up sail, and developed ideas and Oriental philosophies in accord with the acceptance of nature. These two tendencies met in America, producing a movement into the air, not bound to the past, traditions, or whatever." John Cage, *Silence* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1939), 73.

Cage's Music Arrives at Darmstadt

These critiques, however, did not stop Cage and his ideas from wielding a broad influence on the music at Darmstadt. Serialism had barely become the dominant style at the summer courses, when his “chance” music seemed ready to supplant it. The American experimental composer and erstwhile pupil of Arnold Schoenberg had cultivated contacts within the European avant-garde as early as 1949 when a Guggenheim fellowship brought him to France. That trip sparked a lively correspondence with Pierre Boulez. On the face of things, Cage’s so-called chance music seemed diametrically opposed to the total control promised by serialism. By the mid-50s, many composers who had been at the forefront of the serial revolution, like Karlheinz Stockhausen, began experimenting with chance procedures.

When Cage’s music finally arrived in 1958, it had already made considerable impact during the previous three years, beginning with a 1954 lecture on “American Experimental Music” by Wolfgang Rebner. Rebner’s history of experimental music traced a lineage through Charles Ives, Henry Cowell, and Edgard Varèse, culminating in the music of Cage. As Beal notes, Rebner wrote this history well before American composers like Cage, Wolff, and Feldman had begun constructing their own histories of experimental music.⁵

Much of the credit for Cage’s later ascendancy at Darmstadt can be attributed to the American pianist David Tudor. In a letter written in December of 1950, Cage had informed Boulez that the young pianist Tudor had been selected to replace William

⁵ Beal, *New Music, New Allies*, 63.

Masselos to play his Second Piano Sonata at a New York performance promoted by Cage.⁶ Because his talent in playing music of various styles was immediately recognized by Boulez and others, Tudor's services became a commodity for many European composers. From this position, Tudor was able to play and advocate for Cage's music, as well as the music of the American composers Morton Feldman and Christian Wolff. Tudor and Cage had travelled to Germany in 1954 to perform in Donaueschingen and Cologne. In Cologne, they would meet the German composer (and frequent participant at the Darmstadt Summer Course) Karlheinz Stockhausen. Stockhausen, in turn, recommended Tudor to Wolfgang Steinecke, who then invited him to Darmstadt.

Tudor attended the Darmstadt Summer Courses in 1956 where he performed works by Stockhausen, Boulez, Olivier Messiaen, Stefan Wolpe, Richard Maxfield, and Gladys Nordenstrom.⁷ He was scheduled to return the following year, but had to cancel because of a kidney infection. He was engaged again for 1958 and Cage planned to attend as well, though in an informal capacity, since Steinecke could not provide Cage with any kind of stipend. In the late summer of that year, Boulez cancelled his planned appearance at the courses, where he had been scheduled to teach ten seminars. Five of those ten seminars were then given to Cage; the other five were given to Maderna.⁸ In the end,

⁶ Jean-Jacques Nattiez, ed., *The Cage-Boulez Correspondence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 77.

⁷ Gianmario Borio and Hermann Danuser, *Im Zenit Der Moderne*, vol. 3 (Freiburg: Rombach Verlag, 1997), 577-582.

⁸ Beal, *New Music, New Allies*, 92. See also in Beal, footnote 59, p. 275. As Beal reports, there is some controversy about who suggested Cage as Boulez's replacement. In an undated letter written between July 18, 1958 and August 10, 1958, Maderna responded to a frantic phone call from Steinecke with suggestions as to how they might recover from what Maderna refers to as "Boulez's betrayal." Maderna's first suggestion was for Stockhausen to simply take over the classes, teaching the same topics that had already been planned by Boulez. His second suggestion was for himself and Nono to take the ten

Cage's participation at the 1958 course proved to be the defining element that year.

Reactions to Cage's performances, both positive and negative, dominated the local press.

In addition to the five composition seminars, from which little documentation remains,

Cage and Tudor presented three lecture-concerts: one on *Music of Changes* (read simultaneously with a performance by Tudor); one on indeterminacy; and one on

"communication."⁹ Cage and Tudor also presented a concert of new American works for two pianos, featuring works by Cage, Earle Brown, Morton Feldman, and Christian Wolff.

Chance or Indeterminacy?

The idea of "chance" has emerged as something of a blanket term to describe a number of new compositional approaches introduced by Cage. The related concept of indeterminacy, although often conflated with chance, proved to be the more influential to Darmstadt and the European avant-garde. Cage scholar James Pritchett offers a distinction between the two concepts, saying that chance music uses "some sort of random procedure in the act of composition," while indeterminate works are those that can be "performed in substantially different ways."¹⁰ An indeterminate work does not

courses, and provided prospective topics for those classes (Letter from Steinecke to Maderna from August 10, 1958). Steinecke's reply on August 8 indicates that Cage was likely not his first choice of a replacement. He first told Maderna that giving him all ten lectures would be too many, given his other commitments that year, including taking over some of Boulez's conducting engagements. Steinecke offered the lectures to Stockhausen, who declined saying he had "keine Zeit," an excuse to which Steinecke clearly gave little credence. He settled on Cage because he would "be there anyway, and doesn't have much to do" (Letter from Steinecke to Maderna, August 10, 1958).

⁹ Borio and Danuser, *Im Zenit der Moderne*, vol. 3, 589-595.

¹⁰ Pritchett, *The Music of John Cage*, 108. Pritchett's statement, while helpful, adds another confusion by equating randomness and chance operations. While it is true that

necessarily leave anything to chance, nor does a work composed using chance operations, like *Music of Changes* (1951), which I will discuss below, necessarily vary from performance to performance. This is a distinction Cage made explicit in his 1958 Darmstadt lecture on indeterminacy. Chance is a method of imposing control on the composer, whereas indeterminacy controls the idea of the work.

True chance-based music presents many of the same difficulties for analysis that we found in describing serialism in the previous chapter. Because there is no direct correlation between the means of composition and the sounding object, analyses of such works are always in danger of becoming, as Adorno warned, a “mere recording of facts.”¹¹ Without being able to state *why* a given event occurs at a given time, the temptation for theorists is simply to document that it happened. Like serialism, understanding the role of chance operations in works that employ them can only be achieved as a tension between the material of composition and its sounding finished product.

This has prompted some to suggest that serialism and chance-based methods, because they produce similar results, are equivalent.¹² Indeed, if a serial system is too complex to be apprehended without the aid of accompanying graphs and charts, the results could *sound* as if they were arrived at by chance methods. But to suggest that

chance operations produce results that are statistically random, they do so only within the constraints of set of options imposed by the composer. Because of its association with computer science and algorithmic composition, I will avoid use of the term “random” in this discussion.

¹¹ “It is precisely here, when faced with aleatory and serial music, that analysis is frequently confused with the mere recording of facts.” Theodor Adorno, “The Problem of Musical Analysis” in *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert, trans. Max Paddison (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 172.

¹² Both Richard Taruskin and Pierre Boulez, as we will see, make this claim, but for very different reasons.

serial works and chance-based works are equivalent relies on an unsupportable conception of music as wholly autonomous. Even if, hypothetically, two works were written independently and were absolutely identical down to the smallest detail, one written according to a rigorous serial system and the other derived by chance, these two works would only “sound the same” if the listener was unaware of which piece was being played; that is, if the “music” could exist separately from its context.¹³

And yet, music composed entirely by chance is as unachievable as the totally serialized composition discussed in the previous chapter. Just as the primary act of composition will always be an arbitrary act, and hence inadmissible into a serial system, that act can equally never be a chance occurrence. To compose is, in any case, the result of a conscious decision. For this reason, chance music, as a genre, inevitably proved to be a dead-end. Chance may be used to achieve certain desired results, and will inevitably be seen by some as an unacceptable short-cut to those results—but the entirety of a work can will inevitably be the result of at least some intervention on the part of the composer or performer.

Indeterminate works, of the type to be discussed below, present an entirely different challenge to analysis. A year prior to his lectures at Darmstadt, Cage described an indeterminate work as follows: allowing sounds to combine in “unthought” ways, he

¹³ The effect of a composition, as has been demonstrated by composer Mark Applebaum, is entirely dependent on what the listener knows or assumes about the manner in which it was composed. In what amounts to a musical experiment—experimental music in the truest sense—Applebaum would begin a piano piece performing from what appeared to be a highly complex score, complete with exaggerated page turns. As the piece progressed, it would gradually become apparent that he was improvising the whole time. After concluding the piece, he would admit to the audience that the whole exercise had been a hoax, and the score just instructed him to “improvise.” It is somewhat unclear what Applebaum hoped to accomplish with this admission, but it exposed the extent to which listener expectations play a vital role in how a work is understood.

said, “means that each *performance* of such a *piece of music* is unique, as interesting to its composer as to others listening. It is easy to see again the parallel with nature, for even with leaves of the same tree, no two are exactly alike. The parallel in art is the sculpture with moving parts, the mobile.”¹⁴ If each “performance” of a “piece of music” is unique, what *is* the piece of music? It cannot be the notes. It can only be the idea behind the music. This then would seem to be an extreme formulation of philosophical music. The risk for music that becomes philosophical—or the product of calculation on the part of the composer—is that resulting sounds become epiphenomena. In this case, Cage seems to affirm and embrace this by writing music where the sound produced (and heard) *is* a mere bi-product of the work’s *idea*.

Although some at Darmstadt, notably Heinz-Klaus Metzger, hailed Cage as the embodiment of everything Darmstadt stood for, his presence did nothing to solidify a common approach, or even to establish “philosophical music” as the goal. Instead, he seems to have deepened divides and created new ones. In the year following Cage’s first appearance at Darmstadt (1958), Luigi Nono delivered a stunning rebuttal of Cage’s ideas, and the sense of Darmstadt as a “school” of shared ideas collapsed. But for Nono’s rebuttal to be meaningful, and to understand the effect it had on Darmstadt as an institution, it will be necessary to first clarify Cage’s presence and impact during the years leading up to 1959.

¹⁴ Cage, *Silence*, 11, emphasis added. This statement, from 1957, was made in an address to convention of the Music Teachers National Association in Chicago.

Cage v. Boulez (Round 1)

Cage's entry into Europe might not have been possible without the support and friendship of Pierre Boulez. From the beginning of their correspondence, in 1949, Cage and Boulez held divergent views of modern music, especially that of Webern and Satie, who were significant influences on both. In spite of, or perhaps because of their differences, the discussions proved productive. Referring to Cage's then recently published article, "The Forerunners of Modern Music," Boulez responded in 1950 that, although the article was of great interest, "I obviously don't agree with you about Satie: but if we spent a whole century together, I don't suppose we would ever resolve this disagreement."¹⁵ Boulez also suggested that Cage might look to Webern as an answer to an assertion, made in a footnote of the same article, that "the twelve tone row offers brick-layers, but no plan." Boulez thought that tone rows could suggest overall form as they had in the late works of Webern, while Cage viewed them as undifferentiated source material. In Cage's interpretation, each note of Webern was a discrete event, to be appreciated on its own, not as part of an intricate structure. All of the subsequent disagreements between Cage and Boulez stemmed from this very basic conflict over how to hear Webern's music.

The two came closest to an artistic consensus in 1951. In a previous letter, Cage had explained his processes for using chance operations and *I Ching* to construct his *Music of Changes* and his *Concerto for Prepared Piano and Orchestra*. Cage outlined compositional operations, which involved tossing a coin three times to arrive at one of four possible outcomes: three heads, three tails, two heads and a tail, two tails and a head.

¹⁵ Nattiez, *Cage-Boulez Correspondence*, 45. Cage's article only makes a passing parenthetical reference to Satie and Webern, so this statement clearly references an ongoing disagreement between the two.

In the third movement of the concerto, these outcomes were mapped onto specific actions taken by either the orchestra or pianist, and additional coins were tossed to determine what sounds were produced, again taken from a pre-established matrix of possibilities. In this instance, chance operates not as a permission to “do anything,” but as a controlled and controlling system. The severe constraints Cage placed on the act of flipping coins, as well as statistical probabilities, produced outcomes that could only have fallen within certain ranges: the resulting composition was as systematized as most serial compositions.

Boulez responded to that explanation with a declaration that they were “at the same stage of [musical] research.” More often than not, this statement has been read—primarily by composers and critics predisposed to find both serialism and chance music objectionable—as an admission, on Boulez’s part, that serialism “sounds random.” What provoked Boulez to make that statement, however, had nothing to do with the final product, but the rigor with which Cage had implemented his chance operations.

Other commentators on this moment argue that the true affinity between Cage and Boulez was a desire to confer all compositional decisions to an external system—a utopian vision of art uncorrupted by ego.¹⁶ By allowing chance to make the final decisions, Cage hoped to transcend his own personal habits and tastes. Whereas serialism gave surface-level decisions to mathematical or relational algorithms, chance gave those same decisions to the toss of a coin, but both selected from a predetermined matrix of possibilities. Boulez, as his writings make clear, never saw serialism as a utopian escape,

¹⁶ Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music*, vol. 5 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 51. “What [the schools of John Cage and the Europeans] shared, however, went much deeper than their differences, for both groups sought “automatism,” the resolute elimination of the artist’s ego or personality from the artistic product.”

and viewed the goal of “total serialism” as chimerical.¹⁷ As we will see, the same cannot necessarily be said for Cage’s use of chance and indeterminacy.

In December of 1951, Boulez finally responded in greater detail to the letter that had caused him to say that they were “at the same stage of research.” Boulez clarified, “Everything [you say] about the tables of sounds, durations, amplitudes, used in your *Music of Changes* is, as you will see, along exactly the same lines as I am working on at the moment.” With at least five extra months to reflect on Cage’s methods, Boulez now had serious doubts about his use of chance. He contended that “pure chance” was an unacceptable escape for a composer who should exercise his will on the compositional material. Boulez had been willing to accept Cage’s use of chance in *Music of Changes*, in part because the real composition seemed to be in the construction of those matrixes. Cage, however, never saw the use of chance as incidental to those works, and would seek to relinquish ever more control from his composition, which precipitated his eventual break with Boulez.

Cage responded to this letter with an admission that, in subsequent compositions, he had “increased rather than decreased the element of chance.”¹⁸ The work Cage discussed in this letter, for magnetic tape, specified broad types of sounds (city sounds, country sounds, electric sounds, and music), but did not tell the exact sounds that were to be used. That decision was left up to the recording engineers who prepared the piece. While this may have had more to do with the practical constraints of the particular commission—it needed to be completed in 18 hours for a dance performance—the idea

¹⁷ See “Alea,” in Pierre Boulez, *Stocktakings from an Apprenticeship*, ed. Paul Thénevin, trans. Stephen Walsh (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

¹⁸ Letter dated Summer, 1952. Nattiez, *Cage-Boulez Correspondence*, 132.

of leaving certain decisions to the performer seems to have been attractive. Strictly speaking, however, this does not represent “chance,” but Cage’s first foray into indeterminacy. Just because Cage himself did not make the final decisions does not necessarily mean those decisions were left to chance; they were simply left to another person.

At about the time his correspondence with Cage was fading, Boulez began work on an essay, “Alea,” as a direct and public response to the idea of chance music. Heinz-Klaus Metzger read a translated version of the essay at the 1957 summer courses. As with “Schoenberg is Dead,” which, as we saw, was directed primarily at his unnamed former teacher René Leibowitz, John Cage was never mentioned in this article. That Cage was the intended object of critique was never in doubt. More than Cage himself, however, Boulez took issue with “the obsession with chance” and those who had become followers of Cage’s method. The names of those composers are less clear, but could refer to anyone from the Americans Christian Wolff and Morton Feldman to Karlheinz Stockhausen, who had begun incorporating chance elements into his compositions at about that time. From the start, however, Boulez clarified that chance was “too important a parting of ways in the idea of composition to be underestimated or rejected out of hand.”¹⁹

The source of the obsession with chance, according to Boulez, was a “refusal to choose,” to find a compositional method whereby the composers would absolve themselves from any responsibility for the final product. “Alea” begins by tracing the source of composers’ obsessions with chance. In the first instance, Boulez blames the turn to chance procedures on a “fundamental weakness in technique.” When he suggests

¹⁹ Boulez, “Alea,” 27.

that these composers make up for weakness by make recourse to a “quasi-oriental philosophy,” there can be little doubt as to the target of his critique.

“The more insidious source of chance,” according to Boulez, was, however, the search for totalizing objectivity characterized by total serialism, though he does not use the term. The impulse toward total schematization seeks a complete objectivity through “number fetishism.” This creates only a “statistical stream which has no more (and no less) value than any other” and thus represents merely a “fragment of chance.”²⁰ For even though every note in the hypothetical totally serialized work would be the result of extreme calculation based on a pre-established principle, the selection of that principle, as opposed to any number of other similar principles, takes on the character of an arbitrary decision. And hence, all decisions stemming from that principle, even if completely consistent, themselves become arbitrary. Because the results of that initial decision would not be calculable on the part of the composer, the arrangement of the notes according to that principle would not *sound* organized. As Nuria Schoenberg-Nono recollected, the young students who came to Darmstadt in the 50s and who had become disillusioned with serialism, turned to John Cage’s chance methods.²¹ Boulez wrote, “Such frank objectivity having failed, its practitioners threw themselves like madmen into the search for the arbitrary.”²² Thus total serialism leads *back* to true chance, because complete objectivity is a doomed pursuit. Because subjectivity always reemerges, Boulez argued that turning to chance was an attempt to embrace that subjectivity and thereby tame it.

²⁰ Boulez, “Alea,” 27. Therefore Boulez *did* agree that “total serialism” was equivalent to composing with chance, but would never have admitted that his works aspired to such mathematical rigidity.

²¹ See previous chapter. Schoenberg-Nono seemed to indicate that many of these composers adopted chance methods because they were “easier.”

²² Boulez, “Alea,” 27.

For Boulez, a composer should never wholly relinquish that subjective agency, but always seek to understand and calculate its meaning.

Boulez's argument continues to conflate, as Cage had done, the idea of chance and indeterminacy. Comparing chance to something like total serialism, Boulez declared that chance composition was "still fetishistic, but [the composer] escapes choice, not by numbers, but through the performer."²³ In this statement, Boulez equates the use of chance operations (such as coin-tossing) with compositions that leave certain elements of the performance to the discretion of the performer. However, the latter represents chance only if the performer is directed to use chance in the decision-making process. Those two strains in Cage's thought, although related and often confused in Cage's own writings, need to remain separate, as they exerted different influences on the other composers at Darmstadt.²⁴

In the remainder of "Alea," Boulez attempts to find ways of integrating "chance" into his own compositions. This conclusion suffers because the initial dismissal of Cage had confused chance and indeterminacy. The key to understanding the contradiction in "Alea" lies in Boulez's conception of the compositional act. For Boulez, composing is ultimately a series of decisions about how to manipulate the musical sounds: "The composer's will intervenes to activate certain structural possibilities, which remain

²³ Boulez, "Alea," 28.

²⁴ Indeterminate works, especially those with more than one performer, could be said to conform to an Aristotelian definition of chance as the intersection of two or more determined actions by performers could be considered to be a chance occurrence. See Aristotle, *Physics*, trans. Robin Waterfield (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 42. However, the definition of chance outlined by Boulez in the opening section of "Alea" is consistent with a more standard definition of chance as fortuitous or accidental. See "chance," *Oxford Dictionaries*, (Oxford University Press, April, 2010), oxforddictionaries.com/view/entry/m_en_us1232025 (accessed January 14, 2011).

amorphous until, by virtue of their elaboration, they take on the character of an experienced necessity.”²⁵ Boulez equates those choices with chance. A composition could always have proceeded in different ways at the time of composing, and it is only in the work’s completion that it takes on a character of determination. Those choices represent not chance *per se*, but the *arbitrary*. If three compositional choices all seem equally plausible to a composer, then, from the composer’s perspective, leaving those choices as options for the performer may result in a performance where the answer to that choice could seem a chance occurrence to the composer. Any one of those three options *could* happen, but only one *does*.

However, in factual terms, the decision between the three is not left to chance, but to the will of another person. But nonetheless, Boulez stated that the “ultimate dodge” to avoid the feeling that a decision was arbitrary would be to “*absorb* this chance,” and integrate it into the composition. When Boulez looked for ways of incorporating “chance” into his own compositions, his solutions unfailingly gave certain amounts of freedom to the performer, and were, indeed, ideologically opposed to the idea that something happens “for no reason.”²⁶ For his own works, Boulez was never interested in tossing a coin, but was willing to leave certain elements of the composition to interpretation.

Still, Boulez groups both activities under the label “chance.” The fault is not merely one of nomenclature. Boulez’s critique of Cage is lodged explicitly against the

²⁵ Boulez, “Alea,” 29.

²⁶ For example, Boulez wrote hypothetically, if “I ask the player to adapt his tempo to the difficulty of execution, it is clear that this sequence will not have a regular rhythmic pulse, but that the rhythm will be physically linked to the mechanical differentiation I demand of him. Or I can ask the player not to slow down or speed up, but to oscillate around a given tempo, with more or less strict limits.” Boulez, “Alea,” 31.

idea of music that uses chance procedures to construct a work, but his attempt to reconcile “chance” is based on an almost completely separate strain of Cage’s thought. Indeterminacy proved to be a subtle irritant in European music, while the idea of random music was an easy target. Dismissing the primary thrust of Cage’s thought as “chance” allowed composers at Darmstadt to assimilate indeterminacy without necessarily acknowledging Cage as the ultimate source.

Cage v. Stockhausen (Round 2)

The afternoon lecture-concert on September 8, 1958 was perhaps the flashpoint in Darmstadt’s encounter with Cage’s idea of indeterminacy. The concert, preceded by Cage’s lecture on the topic (the second of Cage’s three such seminars that year), featured two versions each of Cage’s *Variations I* and Stockhausen’s *Klavierstück XI*, the latter played by Tudor, the former played by Tudor and Cage.²⁷ Both works were written in such a way that each performance would proceed differently based on the decisions of the performer(s). The multiple performances were intended to highlight the flexibility inherent in the scores, as examples of the ideas presented in the lecture. Both pieces also incorporate true chance into the composition at different stages of the performance.

²⁷ Most historical documents, including *Im Zenit Der Moderne* (Borio and Danuser) as well as the publicity materials for the summer course, report that each work was played three times. However, only two recordings of each work are now present in the archive of the Internationales Musikinstitut Darmstadt. Further, a review, “Catch as Cage Can,” appearing in the *Darmstädter Echo* (September 12, 1958) also stated that each work was performed twice: “Als aufschlußreiche Beispiele dafür spielten Cage und Tudor je zweimal Karlheinz Stockhausens *Klavierstück XI* und John Cages *Variations*.” Either the concert was changed at the last minute because of time constraints, or the third performances of each work were not recorded or the recordings were lost, and the reviewer for the *Darmstädter Echo* was careless. I view the former explanation as the most plausible.

Because, in both cases, there is a complicated relationship between the score and the sounding performance, my interpretations of the works will begin with an explanation of how such a performance might be constructed, then progressing to the sounds produced through a careful discussion of the Darmstadt performances from 1958.

To open the concert on September 8, Cage read his now famous essay “Indeterminacy.”²⁸ In the lecture, Cage finally made a clear delineation between indeterminacy and chance. He defines the indeterminate work by proceeding through several examples, usually in pairs, of works that can and cannot be considered indeterminate, judging the extent to which indeterminacy is employed in each composition. The trajectory of the lecture is from works where only a few elements are left to the discretion of the performer, to a final section where he poses indeterminacy as a hypothetical endpoint, where nothing is specified prior to the performance. The idea of the indeterminate work, as presented here, was a goal in and of itself, and not merely a tool for the composer.

The first two works addressed by Cage were Stockhausen’s *Klavierstück XI*, which would be performed a few minutes later, and Bach’s *The Art of the Fugue*. The work by Bach was clearly included to establish a historical precedence for the idea of indeterminacy, in spite of the fact that Cage has always displayed ambivalence toward the historical canon. The gesture was almost certainly intended to poke fun at the self-constructed histories by composers like Schoenberg and Stravinsky that began their own

²⁸ Cage, *Silence*, 35-40. This lecture, together with two others, were collected in *Silence* in 1961 with the following heading: “The following three lectures were given at Darmstadt (Germany) in September 1958. The third one [“Communication”], with certain revisions, is a lecture given earlier that year at Rutgers University in New Jersey, an excerpt from which was published in the Village Voice, New York City, in April 1958.” (Cage, *Silence*, 18.)

lineages with Bach. Cage was able to contend that Bach's work was indeterminate, because Bach did not specify the instrumentation or supply dynamic markings, allowing the performer to decide the "timbre and amplitude characteristics." Additionally, by pairing *Klavierstück XI* with *The Art of the Fugue*, Cage subtly implied that the innovations present in Stockhausen's work differed merely in kind, not in extent.

Each work considered was compared on the basis of how the performer interacts with the indeterminate parts of each score. Cage offers bewildering series of options, which is repeated sometimes verbatim and sometimes varied for each work discussed, creating something of a musical refrain. The following were given with reference to Bach, and in turn became the template for each subsequent work to be discussed:

[The performer] may do this [decide on the indeterminate aspects of the score, in this case orchestration] in an organized way which may be subjected successfully to analysis. (Transcriptions by Arnold Schoenberg and Anton Webern give examples pertinent to this century.) Or he may perform his function of colorist in a way which is not consciously organized (and therefore not subject to analysis)—either arbitrarily, feeling his way, following the dictates of his ego; or more or less unknowingly, by going inwards with reference to the structure of his mind to a point in dreams, following the dictates of his mind to a point in dreams, following, as in automatic writing, the dictates of his subconscious mind; or to a point in the collective unconscious of Jungian psychoanalysis, following the inclinations of the species and doing something of more or less universal interest to human beings; or to the "deep sleep" of Indian mental practice—the Ground of Meister Eckhart—identifying there with no matter what eventuality. Or he may perform his function of colorist arbitrarily, by going outwards with reference to the structure of his mind to the point of sense perception, following his taste; or more or less unknowingly by employing some operation exterior to his mind: tables of random numbers, following the scientific interest in probability; or chance operations, identifying there with no matter what eventuality.²⁹

The primary distinction in the above is between works that allow performers to make decisions in an organized way and those that allow the decisions to be made arbitrarily.

²⁹ Cage, *Silence*, 35.

For Bach, because no specific instructions are provided, Cage presumed either approach to be equally valid. This conveniently ignores performance practices and traditions that may have prohibited certain approaches. The further distinctions are between types of arbitrary approaches and possible mental states of the performer.

In contrast to Cage's description of *The Art of the Fugue*, where the performer fulfills a primarily coloristic function, he contends that in *Klavierstück XI* the performer gives form to the work, providing "the morphology of the continuity, the expressive content." The performer, so Cage continues, must give form to the content in a more or less arbitrary way, following some form of subconscious decision-making process, repeating verbatim the various mental states mentioned above.³⁰ In addition, Cage allows the final option of using random number tables or chance operations, which is not specifically sanctioned by the Stockhausen score. In the English translation of the instructions, Stockhausen tells the performer to choose segments "at random," but the original German word, *absichtlos* ("unintentionally") does not suggest randomization. Moreover, Stockhausen is clear that the performer should make the choice in the process of performance (after completing the previous fragment), not according to a pre-determined plan like random number tables.

Cage's final assessment of Stockhausen's *Klavierstück XI* in this lecture was not particularly favorable, which may seem odd given that Stockhausen was present at the lecture and *Klavierstück XI* was played twice as one of two primary examples of indeterminacy. It could be that Cage omitted some of his critique from the lecture (an

³⁰ Cage states that the work's "form unvitalized by spontaneity brings about the death of all the other elements of the work," but the instructions for performance provided by Stockhausen also specifically prohibit such organization. Cage, *Silence*, 35-36. Stockhausen, *Klavierstück XI*, i.

audio recording is nonexistent). But there is no real evidence to suggest that the manuscript text of “Indeterminacy” underwent anything but minor revisions prior to its publication in *Silence*, nor was he known for shying away from such controversy.³¹ In the same way that Boulez had criticized Schoenberg for failing to follow the true implications of his twelve-tone method, Cage believed that Stockhausen failed to go far enough in his pursuit of indeterminacy. The work remained, Cage said, an example of “conventional European music” by virtue of the fact that it still used only the twelve notes of the octave, and was composed in a regular rhythmic grid.

Cage, asserting that the rationale for using indeterminate methods in *Klavierstück XI* was to “bring about an unforeseen situation,” went on to say that those methods were “unnecessary because [they were] ineffective,” and that the piece might just as well have been written in a “determinate” way. Making one final jab at Stockhausen, Cage then contended that doing so would remove the justification for the work’s only unconventional aspect: its unusually large size.³²

Reading *Klavierstück XI*

Stockhausen completed *Klavierstück XI* in early 1957 and sent it to Tudor in New York.

By this time, Tudor had received an invitation from Steinecke to attend the 1957 Summer Courses, and they subsequently agreed that he would perform the *Klavierstück*. Because

³¹ The manuscript held at the Wesleyan University Special Archives shows what appears to be a facsimile of a document that would have been used for speaking, with a few corrections to prepare it for publication in *Silence*. The archivist at Wesleyan also noted that Cage was never particularly reserved about offending his hosts, citing an incident where Cage spent the bulk of a talk to dedicate the new Center for Fine Arts at Wesleyan by critiquing its air conditioning system, to the annoyance of many of the center’s designers.

³² Cage, *Silence*, 36.

of a misunderstanding, Tudor performed the piece in New York, while Steinecke had already announced it for Darmstadt as a world premiere. As correspondence between Tudor and Stockhausen indicates, Steinecke was angry with Tudor and did not believe Stockhausen's assurances that Tudor had not known that the Darmstadt performance was to be a premiere. The relationship seems to have been patched by June, when Tudor wrote to Stockhausen with news that threatened to derail the arrangement once again. Organizers of a concert in France scheduled for July 9 had requested that he play the *Klavierstück*, which Tudor felt he was not in a position to decline. This would have prevented Steinecke from even having claim to the "European premiere." In the end, Tudor was unable to travel to Europe at all, and the premiere went ahead performed in his absence by Paul Jacobs.³³

A recent analysis of the *Klavierstück XI*, by theorist Stephen Truelove, highlights a schism in the ways it is commonly discussed. After beginning his study of the work with the lament that *Klavierstück XI* is "one of the most often discussed yet least-well-understood compositions of the twentieth century," Truelove proceeds by virtually ignoring the indeterminate aspects of the piece, and instead focuses on its tonal and rhythmic construction.³⁴ He seems to be offering a corrective to numerous discussions of the work that only address the indeterminate aspects of the piece—precisely those aspects

³³ The four-disc box set of compact discs released by Col Legno under the title *50 Jahre Neue Musik Darmstadt* contains a recording labeled *Klavierstück XI* performed by Paul Jacobs in 1957. In fact, the recording is not of either of the two versions performed by Paul Jacobs in 1957, but the first of the two performances by Tudor in 1958. The Jacobs recordings are only available in the archive at the Internationales Musikinstitut Darmstadt.

³⁴ Stephen Truelove, "The Translation of Rhythm into Pitch in Stockhausen's *Klavierstück XI*" in *Perspectives of New Music*, vol. 36, no. 1 (Winter, 1998), 189

that had incited controversy when the piece was written, and for which the piece became known.

His analysis, however, further sharpens the divide between sound and structure. Divorced from the manner in which the piece unfolds in performance, the analysis of the work's structures becomes a mechanical exercise. Trying to imagine the sound of *Klavierstück XI* on the basis of its analysis is even more difficult than it had been with the analysis of a work like *Il canto sospeso*, because the context and manner in which the fragments are performed are contingent on individual performances. The piece is thus reduced to *Augenmusik*, as if its sound is irrelevant.

An analysis that focuses on the indeterminate aspects, however, would be no more successful in approaching the music's sound. If one begins from the premise that the piece is completed only in performance, thereby absolving the analyst from discussing its unfolding, it then becomes merely an abstract idea. But that idea is at odds with the way the piece is determined in each performance. The piece is never heard as an abstract idea, but only as an instantiation of that idea. Those instantiations are shaped by the intersection of the determined structures and the rules of performance.

A performance of *Klavierstück XI* is indeterminate because it is composed of 19 musical fragments, but the order in which those are performed is left to the performer. The fragments are arranged on a single 2-foot by 3-foot sheet of paper, so that the performer can see the entire score without turning the page. In spite of Cage's quip about the large format, the size of the score does play an important theatrical role in signaling the processes used by the performer to the audience.

Each of the 19 fragments ends with instructions on how the next chosen fragment is to be played, in terms of dynamics and tempo, so that the specific character of a fragment will always be contingent on its context within a performance. Each fragment ends with an indication **T° 1** to **T° 6**, for which the performer is instructed to “select six tempi” from “very fast” to “very slow.” Those tempi are meant to be exactly the same each time that number recurs, and not simply approximations. The next fragment chosen will be performed at that tempo. Some fragments end with a pause or fermata, while others direct the performer to move immediately to the next.

Stockhausen intended a degree of chance in each performance by instructing the performer to choose each fragment by looking at the score “*absichtlos*,” that is, without intention.³⁵ While this instruction does not so much rely on pure chance as the performer’s intuition, the performer may not be able to calculate all of the ramifications of the indicated tempo changes (and attempting to make such calculations would clearly violate the instruction to choose without thinking), meaning that the intersection of fragments with specific performance indications will appear by chance—that is, the intersection of two independent but intentional actions. *Klavierstück XI* ends when the performer chooses a given fragment for the third time. That is to say, the fragment is not played; the piece ends when the performer makes the choice and discovers that it would be the second repetition. And here, Stockhausen seems to be adhering to a universal

³⁵ The Tudor Archive at the Getty Research Center contains several small sheets of paper showing various ordering of the fragments for potential performances of *Klavierstück XI*. It is unclear whether these may have been used to construct arrangements prior to the performance (which would seem to be at odds with Stockhausen’s wishes) or whether these were used for practice. In any case, none of the sheets in question contain a precise arrangement of the fragments used in any of the Darmstadt performances.

truism of traditional compositional practice: an idea or motif can be heard once, twice, but on the third time it must be varied or the composition will stagnate.

The pitches and rhythms of *Klavierstück XI* are organized according to an intricate plan and extensive manipulation of a small amount of source material, as is shown in the detailed sketches analyzed by Truelove. Because my intention is to approach the composition from its performances, I will spend only a moment on the construction, following Truelove's argument.³⁶ The preparation of the composition, as he describes, began with eleven separate but related matrices of rhythmic derivations. The number of columns in each matrix is successively smaller, but the number of derivations (rows) is constant at six. The first row of Matrix 1 is a series of seven durations, beginning with an eighth note, and each column is successively longer by one eighth note. Stockhausen then creates five derivations of each cell to create grids ranging from 7x6 to 1x6. Each successive cell becomes increasingly complex, but the duration of the entire figure matches the duration in the first cell of the corresponding column.

Having amassed a sufficient rhythmic material, Stockhausen then uses a set of eight number matrices of various sizes to reorder the rhythmic material in each of the rhythmic matrices, arriving at composite rhythms of various lengths and complexities. What Truelove calls the "Final Rhythm Matrix," is a 6x6 grid of 36 longer rhythmic figures. Of those 36, Stockhausen chose 19, each of which corresponds to one of the 19 fragments in the final score. Truelove numbers the chosen fragments from 1 to 19, and

³⁶ The fact that the music is the result of such rigorous construction is certainly important to the composition. However, the actual form that that construction takes is of significantly less import, because, as my analysis will show, the specific relationships in the compositional material are obscured to an extent that the construction is no longer the salient feature of the music.

gives a scheme of the placement of those fragments on the original manuscript. To further obscure the original source, many of the final figures are altered with the addition of pauses and grace note flourishes chosen from a separate matrix of alterations.³⁷ In those grace-note sections, the performer is instructed to play as fast as possible, ignoring the prevailing tempo.

With a rhythmic framework in place, Stockhausen then applies pitches to those rhythms. The pitches were not serially generated, but chosen to correspond to the rhythms via the ratios of the harmonic series. For example, a quarter note followed by an eighth note would represent a durational ratio of 2:1. In the harmonic series, this would correspond to the interval of an octave. However, to avoid a tonal sound and a predominance of consonant intervals, Stockhausen allowed himself to alter pitches by a semitone. As a result, while the pitches are related to the rhythms and the harmonic series, that relationship is not audible—and only discoverable in the score with the help of sketches.

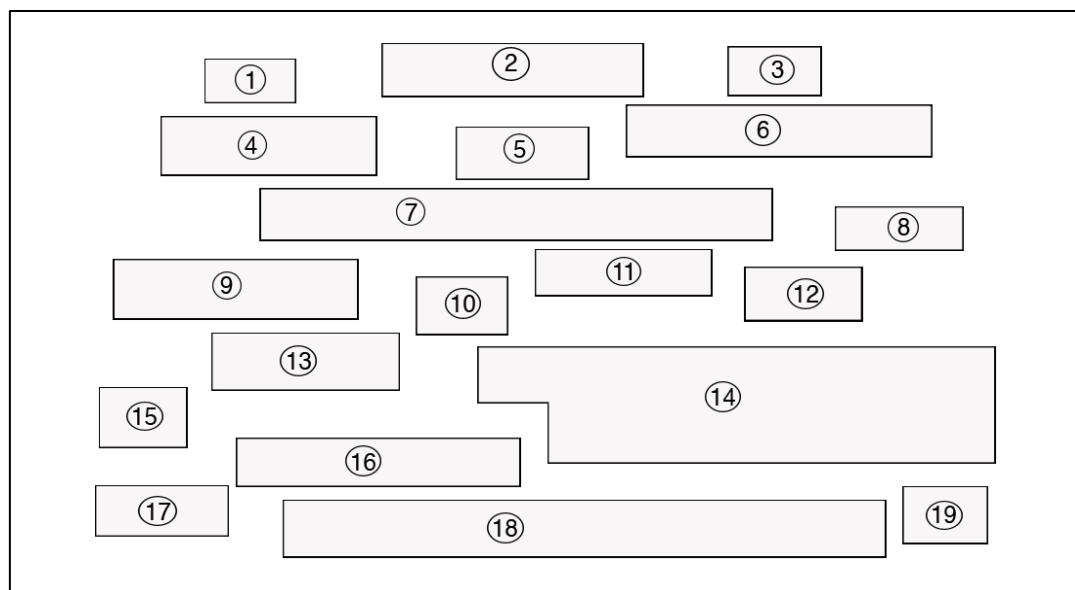
Of greater importance than the specifics of the construction is the fact that Stockhausen was able to achieve fragments with a variety of characters from that limited source material. Truelove's analysis numbers the fragments according to their source material in the Final Rhythm Matrix. He shows a figure with the placement of those fragments in the original manuscript, but the placement was changed considerably for publication. The original publication date for *Klavierstück XI* was 1957, but it is nevertheless unclear whether the Jacobs and Tudor performances from 1957 and 1958

³⁷ Truelove mentions the existence of this matrix, but does not go into much detail for the article in question. His D.M.A. Document (Truelove, University of Michigan, 1984) went into more detail about this "Composite Element Matrix." Truelove, "Translation of Rhythm into Pitch," 206.

respectively would have been played from Stockhausen's manuscript or the published score. My discussion of the fragments will reference their placement in the published score, numbered intuitively from left to right, and top to bottom (see Example 5).

The fragments range in length from four or five seconds to the longest, which is almost two minutes, depending on the tempo. The shorter fragments, especially those that do not end with a pause, are often difficult to distinguish as separate entities during performance. As a general rule, the longer fragments are also the most active, with Fragment 14 being decidedly the longest and most complicated. Some of the fragments, like 6, are sparse and delicate, or lyrical as with Fragment 11. Others, like 14 and 18 are chaotic and strident. There are enough different types of fragments to maintain a constantly shifting affect regardless of the order chosen in a specific performance.

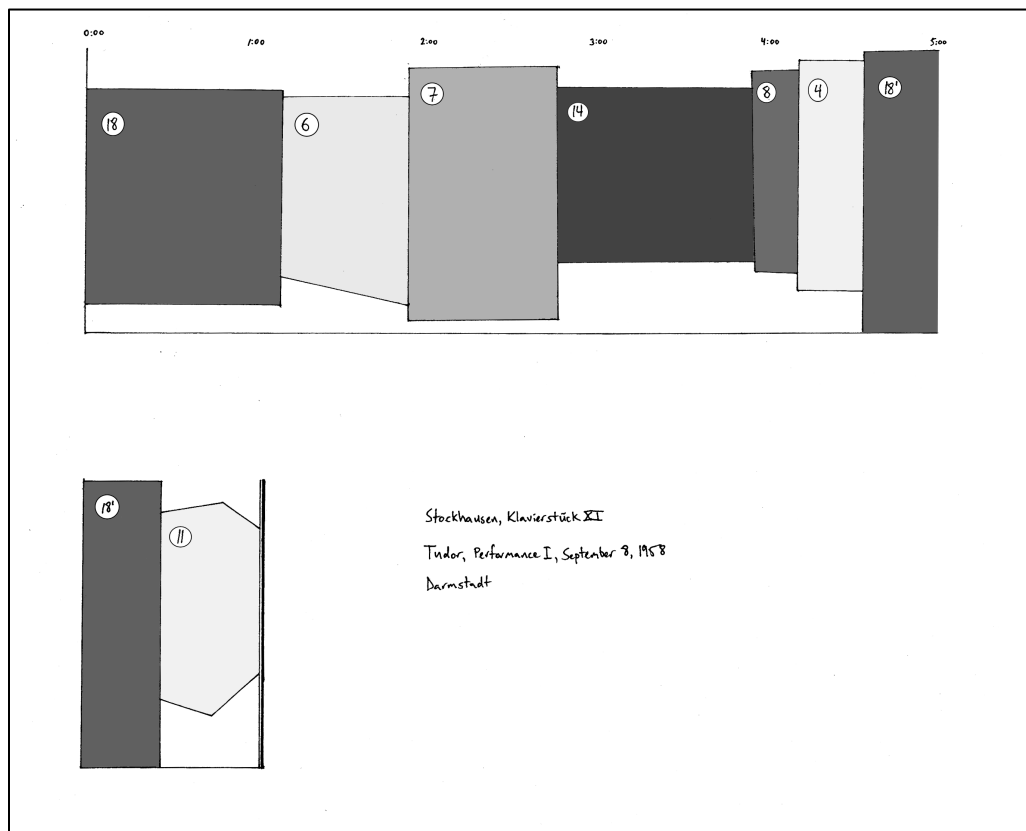
Because *Klavierstück XI* was to be performed in a way “not consciously organized,” Cage remarked parenthetically that the performance could not be subjected to analysis. In spite of this comment (and who would seriously suggest that the subconscious is not an appropriate subject for analysis?), I will examine Tudor's Darmstadt performances of this work, to discover the ways in which the meaning of the work emerges as actual sound, and not as an abstract idea. Moreover, there is a discernable logic to the ways that Tudor moves through the fragments, whether intentional or not.



Example 5: Score map for *Klavierstück XI* showing placement of fragments on the page.

Performing *Klavierstück XI*

Stylistically Tudor performs in an objective and deliberate style. This is in contrast to the performances by Paul Jacobs from the previous year. In his first version (See Example 6), Tudor begins by playing Fragment 18 at a high volume and a moderately slow tempo (ca. 60 quarter note beats per second). However, because Fragment 18 contains so much music written in small (grace-note) notation—to be played “in as quick succession as possible”—the overall feeling is still frenetic. At a slower tempo, Fragment 18 is perceived as a succession of three gestures of chaotic action followed by stasis. At higher tempos the distinction between the small notes and the rhythmically notated sections would be less obvious. At the end of the third grace-note gesture, the rhythmically notated music dominates for the remainder of the fragment, with only brief outbursts of



Example 6: Tudor's first realization of Stockhausen's *Klavierstück XI* (Darmstadt, 1958). Shading indicates relative density of musical fragments, and vertical size indicates relative registral activation.

the faster material. Frequent pauses within the later grace-note sections and a *ritardando* on the last three chords make the distinction between the two types of material even less audible. The final three chords, given that they are no longer played as fast as possible, now sound more like the rhythmic material. Between the last two of those three chords, the performer silently depresses as much of the lower register as is possible with the left arm, thus allowing the resonance of the final chord to ring until the next fragment.

The instructions at the end of Fragment 18 direct the performer to play the next fragment at **T° 2** and dynamic level *ppp*. The right-hand notes are modified to be played

staccato, but with the sustaining pedal depressed slightly dependent on the volume. The effect of this modification was minimal, because Tudor next chose Fragment 6, which already featured mostly short durations in the right hand. Even at the relatively fast tempo, Fragment 6 is sparse and clearly differentiated from the previous fragment. The fragment is grouped into three gestures, the first of which has a strikingly lyrical character. In this gesture, the hands, which begin together in the middle register, move haltingly in opposing directions.³⁸ The second gesture is composed of three subsections, which have an overall character of stasis, as if attempting to form a longer phrase, and remain in the middle registers. The fragment ends with a series of dissonant chords and clusters, breaking from the stasis of the second gesture, the resonance being held with a fermata until the next fragment.

The indications for proceeding from Fragment 6 are to play at **T° 3** (one notch slower than the previous fragment), *mf*, and *portato* throughout. Tudor selected Fragment 7, which alternates between rhythmically notated material and grace note (as fast as possible) notation. In this fragment, the grace note sections are monophonic, but leap dramatically across both hands. While these passages are notated with a constant duration for each note, the difficulty of reaching each successive note “as fast as possible” means that the sounding rhythm is erratic. The fragment opens with a stream of twenty-one grace notes, followed by a thirteen-beat section of contrasting rhythmically notated material. This section features two distinct streams of material, mostly diads or single pitches, moving at different pulse levels. The first, which enters in the right hand and

³⁸ The separation of the hands would be even more striking if this fragment were repeated, as the right and left hands are instructed to transpose their material up and down an octave, respectively.

moves into the lower register before being passed to the left, is subdivided at the eighth note. The second begins in the bass clef, moves upward briefly, before returning to the bass clef; it begins notated at a triplet subdivision for three notes, followed by three at the quintuplet level.³⁹ The register changes in this section are mostly gradual, in contrast to the rapidly shifting registers of the previous grace note section.

The next grace note section in this fragment is the shortest, being a mere four notes long. It is composed of two opposing leaps of a minor ninth in each hand, beginning with the right hand leaping up from an A-sharp to a B-natural, followed by and overlapping on with the B, a downward leap from F-natural to E-natural. Following the ninths, there are three more rhythmically notated sections and three more grace note sections. The next rhythmic section is also the shortest, and each subsequent (rhythmic) section becomes longer and more registerally diverse. Likewise, the grace note sections become longer until the final grace note section, which is 15 notes long. In this way, the material in the rhythmic and grace note sections, while contrasting, develops in analogous ways. The directions for the following Fragment 7, with only a short pause specified before the next fragment, are **T^o 4** (again one notch slower), *p*, and *normale*.

Tudor's next choice was Fragment 14. This fragment is by far the longest and most complicated of the piece, and is the only one that required a second system to fit it into the score. A performance of *Klavierstück XI* does not seem to be complete without inclusion of this fragment, even though there is no actual requirement that it be included in the performance directions. Both performances of the piece by Tudor in 1958, as well as the two by Paul Jacobs the previous year, included this fragment. Of the 19 fragments,

³⁹ The first three attacks in this stream are single notes, the fourth and sixth are diads and the fifth is a triad.

only numbers 4, 7, 11, and 14 occurred in each of the four performances. With 14, however, the inclusion seems somewhat deliberate, either because the performer might fear being accused of intentionally skipping the most difficult section, or because its sheer size on the page means that the odds that the performer's eye would not be drawn to it naturally are very low. In any case, this point represents a moment when the performer's will is suspected to be—if not actually—present.

Fragment 14, more than any other, blurs the line between the grace note and rhythmically notated material. The complexity and density of the material reaches a chaotic mass of sound. All registers are activated uniformly and there is no perceivable upward or downward motion. The complexity and speed of the rhythms, even at the relatively slow tempo (**T° 4**) also hides the fragment's base pulse. The only breaks to the texture in this fragment come in the form of irregularly placed *fermate*, frequently on dense clusters of notes. When this fragment is repeated, as Tudor did in his second performance, the right and left hands play up and down an octave, respectively. Additionally, the left hand plays several deep drone-like notes in the low register that add a sense of drama to the fragment's return.

The following fragment, number 8, was played at **T° 6, *f***, with the right hand playing *staccato* and the left playing *legato*. This fragment is a short single gesture composed of an antecedent and a consequent phrase. The first phrase begins with a downward motion landing on a triad composed of a perfect fourth stacked on an augmented fifth in the bass clef. This is immediately followed by the right hand playing a *tremolo* on a tritone. The consequent phrase then moves upward landing on a *tremolo* on

a minor ninth (G-sharp to A-natural), which is then held to the beginning of the next fragment.

Tudor next chose Fragment 4 (to be played to be played at **T° 2**, *f*, and *portato*), which happens to be another of only three, including number 8, which contains a *tremolo*. It would seem that affinities between the fragments manifest themselves in the order in which performers play the fragments, whether conscious or not. Furthering the sense that Fragment 4 is a continuation of Fragment 8, Fragment 4 opens with a G-sharp in the middle register, followed immediately by a tremolo from the G-natural (G_2) to the E-natural (E_1) minor tenth below. The G-sharp ($G\#_4$) that opens Fragment 4 becomes a pivot between *tremoli* in the upper and lower registers when played after Fragment 8, with a distinct symmetry. Moreover, the minor ninth that concluded the previous fragment was maintained in the right hand, while the tremolo sustains in the left, with a leap up from the G-sharp to an A-natural, followed by another leap up to the A-sharp, before returning to B-natural (B_5). This connection between these two fragments only becomes apparent because of the order in which Tudor chose to play them.⁴⁰

After Fragment 4, Tudor chose Fragment 18, which had opened the performance, for the second time. Although we do not know what tempo Tudor chose the first time he played it, this time the direction at the end of Fragment 4 specified **T° 2**, *p*, and *portato*. With that said, however, the repeat of Fragment 18 is noticeably both faster and quieter.

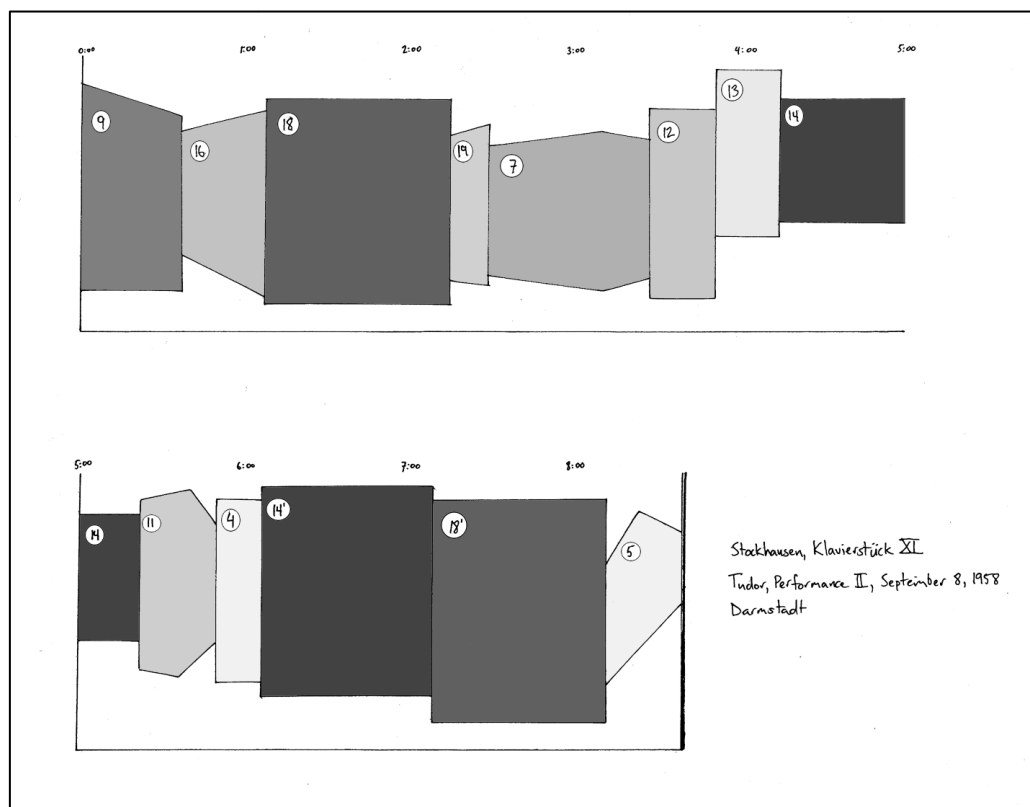
⁴⁰ There are three possibilities for how fragments 8 and 4 came to be linked in Tudor's performance. Either, after playing fragment 8, Tudor chose fragment 4 "at random," or he noticed the connections himself and chose to perform them in that order, thus disregarding Stockhausen's commend to "never link up expressly-chosen groups." The third option is that having discovered the connections between the two fragments, the subconscious suggestion of an affinity between the two meant that Tudor's eye was drawn, more or less involuntarily, to fragment 4.

Even at the faster tempo, the distinctions between the grace-note material and the rhythmically notated material is more obvious, because on repeat the performer is instructed to transpose all of the grace-note sections up an octave for the right hand and down an octave for the left.

The effect of the repeat and its alterations would have been markedly different for listeners who knew the score and listened to the work actively than it was for listeners who did not know the score, even if they did know the basic rules. Even the most attentive listener who was unfamiliar with the score would have had difficulty recognizing that a repetition had occurred, in part because of the octave transpositions, but also because of the density and complexity of the writing. Other fragments, which have fewer alterations and more striking melodic features, might have been easier to recognize, but only for someone listening attentively for transitions between fragments.

For the listener with a score, there is an undeniable drama to the moment when Fragment 18 returns in Tudor's performance, bearing in mind that the audience in 1958 would not have been able to follow a score, if only because of its unwieldy size. Recognizing this moment as a repeat and not just another fragment calls the listener's attention to the octave transpositions. The pianist's hands are moved outward, pushed to the extreme registers of the piano, thereby creating a sense of outward expansion and progression towards chaos. In Tudor's second performance (See Example 7), this moment was made more dramatic because the first repetition is on Fragment 14, which features more drastic alterations.

Arriving at the same fragment for a third time would signal the end of the performance to the performer. An attentive listener would also know that, once the first



Example 7: Performance scheme for Tudor's second realization of Stockhausen's *Klavierstück XI* (Darmstadt, 1958). Shading indicates relative density of musical fragments, and vertical size indicates relative registral activation.

repeat has occurred, the piece could end, at earliest, at the end of the next fragment. (For this to happen, the performer would have to choose another fragment, and then immediately choose the same fragment that had already been repeated once.) After the repeat of Fragment 18, Tudor chose Fragment 11. As with first time number 18 was played, Tudor was instructed to play the following fragment at **T° 2**, *ppp*, right hand *staccato* with sustaining pedal, and left hand *legato*. Fragment 11 is sparse, delicate, and at times even melodic. It begins with a grace note flourish with three *fermate* placed so that groups into three short gestures: a large upward leap, followed by a five-note phrase

in a generally downward direction, followed by a three-note ascending arpeggio in the middle register holding the last note (F₄) into the beginning of the rhythmic material.

The rhythmic gesture features a dramatic diatonic figuration of a downward step, starting from a high D-sharp (D#₇), down to a C-sharp (C#₇), followed by a downward leap of a minor tenth to A-sharp (A#₆). The gesture is written, not as described, but as a leap from D#₇ down two octaves to a D₅ and back up to C#₇—a downward chromatic scale, with the middle D-natural displaced by two octaves. However, because the D# and the C# are short and accented while the D is sustained, they do not, especially in Tudor's rendition, sound like they are part of a single melodic idea. Instead the D blends into the sustained texture of the left hand, allowing the upper notes to ever so briefly outline a tonality that sounds like A-sharp minor.

This moment is followed by a two furtive grace note gestures using the same pitch material from previous section, each interrupted by a *fermata*. Next is a simple rhythmic gesture in the middle register of two downward leaps followed by an upward leap, followed, after short pause, by a quick six-note grace note pattern, starting in the extreme registers in both hands, alternating, moving towards the center of the piano, and landing without pause on a quarter note G₄. A dotted quarter/eighth note pattern moving from C#₄ to F#₅ completes the fragment.

At this point, quite abruptly, Tudor's performance also came to an end. The last phrase in no way feels like a satisfying ending to the performance, even though the unexpected end is a calculated feature in the composition. The performer does not select another fragment until *after* completing the current fragment, which means that, in a strict reading, the performer cannot reveal the ending until it occurs. Upon completion of

Fragment 11, Tudor must have chosen to return to Fragment 18, because no other had yet been repeated, and the piece can only end with the intention of a second repetition of a given fragment. Among commercially recorded versions of *Klavierstück XI*, this is somewhat unique; most commercially available performances repeat several fragments before the piece ends, and so there is no way of knowing which fragment was chosen for a third time. Additionally, most performances are fairly evenly balanced such that the first repeated fragment occurs somewhere around the halfway point. At Darmstadt, however, of the four performances from 1957 and 1958, only Tudor's second performance repeated more than one fragment before completion.

This first performance is remarkable because it ends at the earliest possible point from the moment that Fragment 18 is repeated. If that repeat had signaled that the process of ending had begun, that process hardly had been established when it ended. The sense of the work's balance—of having a proportional beginning, middle and end—changes drastically with each performance, depending on the placement of the first repeat and eventual arrival at a second. The uncertainty as to the work's overall proportions greatly alters the perception of the piece for each performance. The understanding of the composition is constantly mediated by following the decisions of the performer, which would seem to undermine Cage's assertion that *Klavierstück XI* "could have been written in all of its aspects determinately."

But this may only be true, as I said, for the listener who comes armed with the score and a fairly rigorous understanding of the rules. Even my first attempts to listen to *Klavierstück XI* with a score were not terribly successful until I was familiar enough with each fragment to recognize it after hearing only a few seconds. For a listener trying to

make sense of the work without a score, the experience would be quite different, and Cage's criticism might be sustainable. Rather than having a variable arc, where the proportions are subject to change, the work would have no arc at all. Heard this way, the performance simply moves through a predetermined set of material, but does not provide any logic by which the material can be thought to progress, and there is no differentiation between concepts of beginning, middle, and end. One could imagine the work as if it continued *ad infinitum* at either end, with the parameters of a performance being determined by simply entering the room to start and leaving to end—a slice of otherwise endless and undifferentiated material.

And herein lies a true innovation of *Klavierstück XI*: it creates a completely different listening experience for listeners with a score, even though these listeners may not be the intended audience, because the score's size virtually precludes its use by an audience member. There are, in fact, three distinct levels of listening possible with *Klavierstück XI*. In addition to listening with or without a score, the difference between live and recorded versions of the piece adds a third way to listen. In a live performance, the audience will at the very least be alerted to the beginnings and endings of fragments by watching the performer choose each subsequent fragment. At the end of each fragment, the Tudor's hands would have frozen, and the audience would have seen his head move as his eyes scanned the large page to select another fragment. Critical listening does not simply enrich the listening experience, it changes it altogether, though it is difficult to privilege one form of listening over the other.

Stockhausen's motivation, if we are to believe his explanations, for allowing the performer to select the order in which the fragments are played seems to be the same

reason cited by Boulez in “Alea.” Stockhausen wrote that *Klavierstück XI* “is nothing but a sound in which certain partials, components, are behaving statistically...If I make a whole piece similar to the ways in which this sound is organized, then naturally the individual components of this piece could also be exchanged, permuted, without changing its basic quality.”⁴¹ The manner in which Stockhausen prepared his material dictated that, had he chosen the order of the fragments himself rather than leaving it to the performer, that order would have been the result of an arbitrary decision. Therefore, rather than make that arbitrary decision, he chose to, as Boulez said, “absorb that chance” into the fabric of the composition. Because, in Stockhausen’s estimation, the order of the fragments is unimportant to expressing the *idea* of the piece, he writes the composition such that the order is left open.

The irony is that, in so doing, Stockhausen may have elevated the *ordering* of those fragments to be the defining idea of the piece. In spite of his claims to the contrary that the decision to leave ordering to the performer stemmed from the material, documentary evidence suggests that flexible form was the primary impulse in conceiving of the work. Tudor remembered a discussion with Stockhausen, which preceded the composition: “‘What if I wrote a piece where you could decide where you wanted to go on the page?’ I said I knew someone who was already doing one, and he said, ‘In that case I shall not compose it.’ So I retracted, and said it was just an idea my friend was thinking about, and told him he mustn’t consider any other composer but should go ahead and do it anyway, and that led to *Klavierstück XI*.”⁴² Additionally, claiming that the

⁴¹ Truelove, “Translation of Rhythm into Pitch,” 189-190.

⁴² David Tudor, interviewed by Victor Schonfield, “From Piano to Electronics,” *Music and Musicians* (August, 1972), 24-26.

statistical character of the musical material dictated the indeterminate ordering of the fragments seems to be a rationalization of the aleatoric methods, to avoid a charge that they were employed as a gimmick—something to achieve novelty at the lowest possible cost. That is to say, Stockhausen wanted to claim, above all, that the aleatoric methods were dictated by the material, which, as we saw in Chapter I, is perhaps the principle defining feature of what I have been calling “philosophical” music.

Cage v. Cage (Round 3) – *Variations I*

For Cage, the idea of a work that could change dramatically depending on the circumstance of the performance was not good enough. He conceived of the *indeterminate* as an end in itself, and the rhetoric of his lecture was aimed at suggesting that his *Variations I*, the other work to be performed that afternoon, was just such an end. Indeterminacy was deployed not as a way to allow flexibility or to allow a performance to operate within a set of possibilities, but instead to create a performance that would be completely “unforeseen.”⁴³

This form of indeterminacy sought a utopia in non-repeatability: “Being unforeseen, this action is not concerned with its excuse. Like the land, like the air, it needs none. A performance of a composition which is indeterminate of its performance is necessarily unique. It cannot be repeated. [...] A recording of such a work has no more value than a postcard...”⁴⁴ Cage gave no justification for why non-repeatability is seen as a positive attribute, except by asserting an analogy with nature. Indeed, Darmstadt and its

⁴³ Cage, *Silence*, 39

⁴⁴ Ibid. 39.

Stunde Null ethos was perfectly suited to this sort of ideology, founded, as it was, on the proposition that it would not repeat the past.

To this end, very little is specified in *Variations I* prior to its performance. Cage composed the work in 1958 as a belated birthday present for Tudor. The score, such as it is, consists of a paragraph of instructions and six sheets of transparent paper. One piece of transparent paper contains 27 dots of four different sizes. The other five sheets each contain five horizontal lines arranged haphazardly. The written instructions are as follows:

Six squares of transparent material, one having points of 4 sizes: the 13 very small ones are single sounds; the 7 small but larger ones are 2 sounds; the 3 of greater size are 3 sounds; the 4 largest [are] 4 or more sounds. Pluralities are played together or as “constellations.” In using pluralities, an equal number of the five other squares (having 5 lines each) are to be used for determinations, or equal number of positions—each square having 4. The 5 lines are: lowest frequency, simplest overtone structure, greatest amplitude, least duration, and earliest occurrence within a decided upon time. Perpendiculars from points to lines give distances to be measured or simply observed. Any number of performers; any kind and number of instruments.⁴⁵

The interpretation of this piece begins with an interpretation of the text, which, though concise, is anything but clear. One ambiguity is that Cage gives no indication of whether the complicated calculations involved in selecting notes and sounds are to be accomplished during a performance, or whether a score should be constructed prior to the performance. The performances of *Variations I* at Darmstadt in 1958 were clearly worked out well in advance, and in constructing—or even imagining—a performance it quickly becomes apparent that the correspondences between lines and dots cannot be calculated in real time.

⁴⁵ John Cage, *Variations I*, (New York: Edition Peters, 1960), i.

To construct a performance, the performer must first decide on a length of time for a given performance.⁴⁶ This creates something like an empty container in which musical events dictated by the score will be placed. Cagean aesthetics might dictate that sound events would be organized and coordinated according to a stopwatch, but there is nothing in the instructions that would preclude the use of standard musical notation. Each individual performance, therefore amounts to a new *determined* composition based on a framework provided by Cage.

The placement of content and sound events is then established by placing one of the transparencies with lines on top of the dotted sheet. The placement of the sheet is left to the performer, but, as David P. Millar notes, the correspondences are too complicated for the performer to calculate the consequences of that placement.⁴⁷ Each line, again at the discretion of the performer, corresponds to a parameter affecting each dot (sound event). Those parameters are, as stated above, “lowest frequency, simplest overtone structure, greatest amplitude, least duration, and earliest occurrence.” Pritchett interprets “earliest occurrence” to mean a sound’s “beginning point” or placement within the decided time-span. The length of an event then freely floats, as its “ending point” is not specified. This is less ambiguous than “earliest occurrence,” which seems to indicate events could repeat an unspecified number of times after its first appearance; the events

⁴⁶ Again, this requirement is not stated explicitly, but can be inferred from the phrase “within the decided upon time.”

⁴⁷ David P. Millar, “The Shapes of Indeterminacy: John Cage’s *Variations I* and *Variations II*,” FZMw, v. 6 (2003) S. 18-45, 22.

(dots) closest to the line assigned to placement would occur first, with the most distant events being played at the end.⁴⁸

Already it should be obvious that this score cannot be followed in a linear fashion, as the events move spatially from the center. The score does not present the material as sequence. For each point, then, the performer must measure its perpendicular distance from the five lines, arriving at its placement, length, volume, complexity, and frequency. Having accumulated these data, the sound event would then be placed in a performance score. To maintain Cage's ideals of indeterminacy, each constructed score should only be performed once, but again, there is nothing in the score that prohibits the same realization from being performed multiple times.

For the 1958 summer courses, Cage and Tudor prepared at least three performances. Two were performed on the same concert on September 8, and a third was performed at a concert of new music for two pianos on September 3.⁴⁹ The September 3 performance used a performance score, which is still held at the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles. The archive, in fact, holds three carefully notated and bound scores, each

⁴⁸ Another ambiguity presents itself here, which is not mentioned by Millar. The score indicates that a point that is bisected by a line will exhibit the "maximum value" for that parameter. In the case of "earliest occurrence," that would mean the beginning of the performance, which seems intuitive. However, points close to, but not touching would be a low value of "earliest occurrence," which would mean, in fact, that the event would happen close to the end.

⁴⁹ Only the final two minutes from the first performance on September 8 remains in the archive, because of a recording error, but it is enough to verify that it was not the same preparation that was used on September 3. Additionally, in a letter dated August 18, 1958, Tudor requested the use of two portable radios for both the September 3 concert and the September 8 studio. The radios were used on September 3, but are not heard in either the last two minutes of the first performance or the second performance from September 8. Either Cage and Tudor planned a fourth version, or a fourth version was played but not recorded (see footnote 27), or—and this seems to be the least likely scenario—the preparation from September 3 was played or planned to be played for a second time.

labeled according to the length of the performance: two, five, and nine minutes respectively. While the lengths of the other two performances correspond to the other performances at Darmstadt from September 8, along with certain elements of the performance itself, the scores do not match the performance with the same precision that is evident in the recording from September 3.

Based on the sketches in the Getty Research Center—which show the various stages of performance preparation—Tudor’s method of constructing his score seems to be as follows:

- ⇒ Assigns an orientation to the sheet of paper, by adding an arrow pointing towards the top of the sheet in the lower left corner.
- ⇒ Clarifies the four sizes of point sizes so that they are easier to distinguish.
- ⇒ Numbers the points from top to bottom by size (i.e. 1^1 = first point of size 1 (smallest), 2^1 = second point of size 1, 1^2 = second point of size 2, etc.).
- ⇒ Assigns orientations to the lined papers and numbers to the lines.
- ⇒ Assigns distances to parameter values.
- ⇒ Compiles measurements from each point relative to each line, for example arriving a large table: 4^1 - .0 1.3 3.4 .11 2.15
- ⇒ These are then transcribed into event times with characteristics. There are three sheets (double-sided), each corresponding to a different realization: 9-minutes (highest start value for timing is 8:49), 5-minute (4:51), and 2-minute (1:52).
- ⇒ These events are then ordered linearly by transcribing to music notation.

⇒ Finally, Tudor made clean copies on short pieces of paper with one line of music staff per page, which he then bound and labeled according to timing (2-minute, 5-minute, and 9-minute).

A fourth recording of *Variations I* is present in the Darmstadt archive from the September 8 lecture-concert. As noted in the database of archive at the Internationales Musikinstitut Darmstadt, this recording is a *second performance*, recorded after the concert, of the second realization just performed minutes before. According to the database, the reason for this second recording was that Tudor had been unhappy with the previous performance. There are a few differences between the two performances, but they are about as similar to each other as any two performances of a traditionally notated work. That is to say, any reasonably attentive listener would identify the two performances as the same piece, whereas the same cannot be said for a comparison of either of those two performances to the performance from September 3.

It is unclear what prompted Tudor to find the first objectionable. One plausible explanation would be that either Tudor or Cage was unhappy with the frequent laughter heard in the audience. Nonetheless, the fact that the performance was re-recorded at all is surprising if not shocking, when Cage had dismissed the value of recordings in the preceding lecture. My analysis of these performances of the work will make the most of this unexpected moment. *Variations I* is founded on the proposition that its performances are unrepeatable, and that, therefore, any attempt to understand the rhetoric of an actual performance will be doomed to failure. But by comparing the two, we will not only be able to ascertain the level of detail present in the realizations, we will find that a basic

musical logic—a performance logic, if you will—is to be found in recordings of *Variations I*.

The fact that Cage and Tudor repeated an individual realization of *Variations I* (for a recording, no less) seems to indicate that Cage's aesthetic sensibilities were more conventional than he portrayed them. After constructing their own performance of the pieces, composers Cornelius Cardew and Kurt Schwertsik came to the same conclusion. They were attracted to the philosophical idea of sounds being allowed to exist independently, freed from interdependence and a controlling logic. However, they found their results disappointing—"a desert," Cardew quipped in his later reassessment of their performances. Cage and Tudor, he contended, "never let the sounds be just sounds. Their performances were full of crashes, bangs, juicy chords, radio music, and speech. No opportunity for including emotive material was lost."⁵⁰

The *idea* that *Variations I* is the result of a randomizing and uncontrollable system, and that "anything could happen," is nonetheless of paramount importance to how the work will be heard and understood. The laughter that could be heard during the performances is entirely the result of the proposition—understood by the audience—that the events were not planned by Cage and Tudor. Moments that sounded expressive were humorous precisely because they were believed to be unintentional. And, moreover, the *idea* of non-intentionality was made more forcefully because of the disjuncture between that idea and the sound. Cardew's performance—the "desert"—only expressed the sound, sounds that refused to express meaning and refused to articulate the means by which

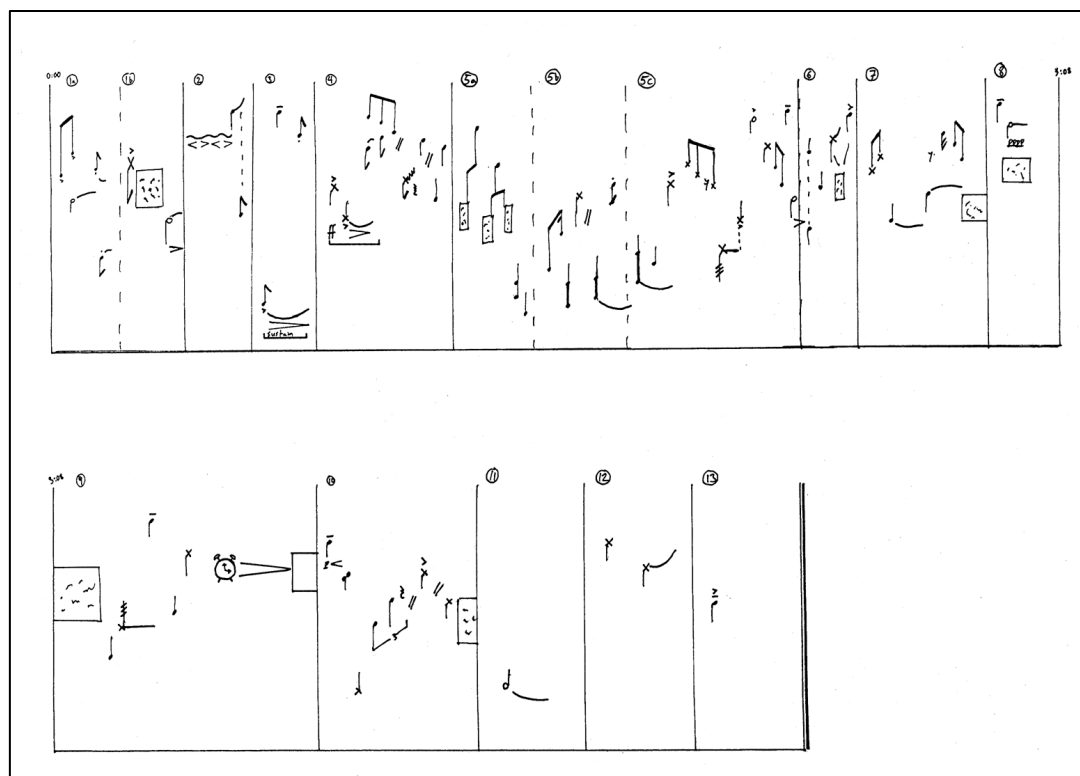
⁵⁰ Cornelius Cardew, "John Cage—Ghost or Monster?", *Leonardo Music Journal*, vol. 8, "Ghosts and Monsters: Technology and Personality in Contemporary Music" (1998), 4.

those sounds were created. Cage and Tudor's performance turned those moments that sounded like musical expression into a running joke.

The content of the performances from 1958 support Cardew's claim that Tudor and Cage intentionally (or perhaps unwittingly) embraced sounds that were unexpectedly emotive. It is remarkable how readily the sounds in those performances aggregate into expressive gestures. In the first performance of the second realization, I identified—largely through personal intuition—thirteen sections (See Example 8); in the second performance, sections 8 through 10 seem to group somewhat differently and sound like only two gestures, but contain largely the same content. In each of the performances, there is a clear progression from sparseness to complexity and back, with gestures becoming increasingly complex until roughly the golden mean (about two-thirds of the total length) before thinning out again.

The performance opens with two accented notes on the piano, leaping up a minor ninth. The second note is played together with a lower sustained and unaccented note that holds through the two plucked notes that follow. For the opening interval, the exact pitches were clearly specified in the performance preparation, because both pitch and rhythm are identical in the second recording. The registers of the plucked notes—first high, then low—were reversed in the second performance (Example 8, 1a). This gesture is followed by a consequent gesture of a loud snapping percussion sound, a few small clicks, which may have been extraneous to the performance, and another held tone.⁵¹ In the second performance, that note was plucked with a quick decay profile, whereas it was played *normale* with a long sustain in the first (Example 8, 1b).

⁵¹ I should add that by calling these two gestures antecedent and consequent, I have already ascribed a musical logic that Cage would explicitly deny.



Example 8: Transcription of first five-minute realization of *Variations I* by Cage and Tudor, Darmstadt, September 8, 1958.

Section 2 begins with an undulating whistle, lasting for almost the entire section; the whistle was replaced with a scraping sound for the second performance, but the shape and rhythm of the undulation was similar. Coordinated with the end of the whistle (or scrape), a short note is played on the slide whistle, followed by a low piano tone. The short whistle, which elicited chuckling in the audience the first time, was subtler the second time around. Section 3, like section 1b, could also be heard as a complementary phrase to section 2. It begins with a low plucked piano note—balancing the high *tessitura* of the previous section—with the sustaining pedal depressed, followed by a whistle and a high piano tone. The order of those events is shuffled for the second performance: the

whistle begins, followed by the low note, played *normale* this time, but at the same pitch, followed by a high piano tone. The section ends with some soft scratching noises, fading to silence.

Section 4 begins the process of lengthening gestural ideas. The content of the gesture becomes more regular and melodic. That is to say, the events of section 4, in part by virtue of the fact that they are spaced at somewhat regular rhythmic intervals, aggregate more readily as horizontal ideas, rather than discrete moments. The section opens with a dramatic downward leap of two accented notes, establishing a rough tempo of about 60 beats per minute. The three events that follow, which start in coordination with the decay of the second note, would be eighth-note triplets in the previously established tempo. This figure is then followed by four alternating sound events with a generally descending trajectory.

The fifth section is the longest and most complicated of the performance, being subdivided into three complimentary phrases. The first phrase descends from a high register, while the second begins in the lower register and ascends to the middle. The third begins in the middle and expands outward in both directions in a wedge formation. The sounds of this section are diverse, ranging from clicks and scratches to *normale* piano tones.

Section 6, one of the shortest, is composed of five evenly spaced events outlining a rough melodic fragment. The first is a diad of two piano tones, one high, one low, followed by another piano tone, a slide whistle sweep, a short collection of scratchy sounds, and an accented high piano note. Section 7, starting roughly halfway through the performance, is dominated by a gesture of two forceful piano tones, played directly on

the strings with a hard mallet and the sustaining pedal depressed. On the other side of these two tones are two smaller flourishes, the first made of two clicks, the second made of three *normale* piano tones. The fragment ends with some quiet scratching sounds. Section 8 is an even smaller gesture plated on the whistle, and is comprised of a short *tenuto* whistle, followed by a sustained and extremely quiet held tone. While the tone is held, there are also some subtle scratching noises.

Section 9, another of the longest, begins with another extended section of scratchy sounds, followed by five sound events: a piano tone, a scrape, a whistle, another piano tone, and a percussive sound. This prepares what seems to be a defining moment in the performance when an alarm clock goes off, followed by a rather extended silence leading into section 10. In the second performance, sections 7, 8, and the beginning of 9 are compressed in such a way that, while they contain much the same material, they sound like a single extended gesture. The alarm clock, in that version, is isolated and does not appear to be connected to any other gesture, even though the ringing sustains into the beginning of the next section.

The performance's texture thins dramatically following the alarm clock. Section 10 contains another melodic series of seven sound events, spaced regularly, but with gradually increasing space between those events. It ends with another section of scratchy sounds. Section 11 just contains a single held low tone on the piano.⁵² Section 12 contains a clock and an upward glissando on the slide whistle with ample silence on all sides. The slide whistle was replaced with some scratching sounds for the second performance. The performance ends with an isolated *normale* piano tone in the middle register.

⁵² There are a few other audible sounds in this section that sound more like audience noise than intentional sounds.

The performance, therefore, while holding out the possibility that something unexpected could happen, follows an entirely conventional trajectory: isolated sounds and furtive gestures slowly aggregate and develop, before retreating back into fragmentation. As music, the performance succeeds because the formula is familiar, even if the inclusion of outlandish sounds (inside the piano, toy whistles, and other props) would have been strange to the audience in 1958. And so it would seem that Cage and Tudor's performances of *Variations I* were entirely unremarkable from the perspective of their supposed novelty, even if musically compelling; but that fact does not seem to reconcile with the controversy that his presence at Darmstadt elicited. Critics and audience alike responded (both negatively and positively) as if Cage's works were as innovative as Cage said they were.

What does this mean then that Cage's works do not seem to adhere to the ideals set up in his philosophy? Sounds may simply exist as sounds, as Cage contends, but listeners are always ready to allow them to aggregate into gestures, forms, and structures. The surface conventionality of the Cage/Tudor performances of *Variations I* does not merely confirm the suspicions of commentators like John Rockwell, who argued that the "philosophical underpinnings [were] clearly more significant than any mere sound."⁵³ Instead the work's conventionality *and* asserted unconventionality work together to express its idea. The performances operated as a synthesis of the unexpected sounds, familiar framework, and shared understanding of the means of composition—that is the understanding that the sounds were not dictated by Cage himself, but by consultation with what amounts to an oracle. The philosophy that informed his works was not

⁵³ John Rockwell, *All-American Music: Composition in the Late Twentieth Century* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983), 52.

incidental to how those works were understood, but neither could the philosophy be meaningful without its manifestation in specific musical works.

Whether or not this was the intention of Cage and Tudor, the audience at the Darmstadt performances clearly understood the extent to which those performances functioned as a parody of modernist compositions. In its original (Aristotelian) form, parody works by treating an unserious subject with the same form and gravitas that would normally have been reserved for epic theater. The same principle is at work in the Cage/Tudor performances. Their actions were humorous because they were *believed* to be random and trivial, even if Cage and Tudor played no small part in the selection of those actions. They operated parodistically because they were performed with the same seriousness accorded to compositions that were thought to be profound artistic statements. This marks something of a reversal of the so-called intentional fallacy. Because the authorial intent was an open secret between the performers and the audience, that intent cannot be disregarded, but palpably colored by the way the composition would be heard.

Cage and Tudor performed *Variations I* one other time during the 1958 summer courses, at an evening concert of new music for two pianos on September 3.⁵⁴ This performance is substantially longer than the September 8 realization, but the events nevertheless aggregate into discernable gestures (See Example 9). It does not have quite the same feeling of an arch-form, but certain themes and motives recur and transform in ways that make it comprehensible within a traditional musical logic. The most significant

⁵⁴ The recording of this concert is included in the box set *50 Jahre Neue Musik Darmstadt*.

The image displays a handwritten musical score for John Cage's *Variations I*, organized into three systems of staves. The notation is minimalist, featuring vertical lines, horizontal strokes, and various symbols (dots, crosses, wavy lines) to represent sound events. Key annotations include 'Mozart K 449' at the start of the first system, 'Delibes, La Kne', 'Mozart', and 'Radio tuning' in the second system, and 'Mozart' and 'Radio tuning' in the third system. The score is numbered 1 through 24 across the staves.

Example 9: Transcription of realization of *Variations I* by Cage and Tudor from concert performance at Darmstadt, September 3, 1958.

of these motives is a recurring low accented piano tone, with a long decay profile. The tone occurs three times, sounding each time like a repetition—not an isolated sound unrelated to a larger musical rhetoric, as Cage would have us believe. The first occurs in section 4, the second in section 20 at the Golden Mean, and finally again as the very last sound event of the performance.

A notable addition in this performance is the inclusion of two radios. At various points in the performance, the radios play fragments of classical repertoire, to the audible amusement of the audience. Here again, the appearance of recognizable works and styles are comical because of their incongruity within the performance context. The recording

opens with an extended portion of Mozart's *Piano Concerto*, K. 449. Later in the performance, the radios play an excerpt from the beginning of the "Bell Song" from Delibes' *Lakmé*.

When the second accented piano tone occurs in section 20, this also signals a return of the radio playing Mozart, sounding like parody of classical recapitulation. Immediately after the return of the Mozart, the second radio begins playing a program with English speaking, and the phrase "And as a strategist!" is clearly audible. At this point, the Cage and Tudor begin scanning radio stations erratically, eventually landing on harsh radio interference, which holds as a drone through section 23. This is a telling transformation, where the radio, which had previously been a vehicle for presenting other music that could never quite be stripped of its content and previous associations, becomes instrumental.

The alarm that rang in section 9 of the September 8 performance was also a poignant illustration of this principle. The alarm occurs at just after the two-thirds point of the performance, or Golden Mean, the moment when a musical work often reaches its climax. This moment, while it was discernible in older music, had become a self-conscious preoccupation—as we saw in Nono's *Il canto sospeso* in the previous chapter—for many composers in the twentieth century. The alarm is not simply heard as an incongruous sound from everyday life, but also as an actual alarm. It signals a call to attention, and triggers an involuntary response in the listener. It functions both musically as the climax, and as a parody of the necessity of that climax—simultaneously both signifier and referent. The moment relies on both the musical context and the work's philosophical intent.

Cage v. Nono (Round 4)

The relationship between music and philosophy in the music of John Cage, therefore, cannot be formulated as an either/or proposition. He was only able to assert the novelty and radicalism of his music—a radicalism that was unsupportable in strictly musical terms—by adding a philosophical layer and at the same time denying the importance of that philosophy. That is to say, he declares the meaningless of both the music *and* the philosophy: sounds are just sounds, without musical context and without philosophical meaning. But that lack of meaning was enforced precisely by the philosophy, and hence the necessity of an accompanying lecture with its incumbent explanations and justifications. By fiat, Cage offered a utopia in the eternal present tense, a complete “freedom” to do anything. Nothing stands for anything else, and nothing is accorded more value; everything is deemed to be ontologically natural and pure. The music achieves this, however, only in so much as it is permanently inaccessible and unrepeatable.

This eternal present tense—and not any of the elements of Cage’s performances that had been shocking to the local press, and were typically shocking to American critics—became the basis of Luigi Nono’s critique, which he delivered the following year, in 1959. That essay, mentioned in the previous chapter, was his *Presenza storica nella musica d’oggi* (“Historical Presence in Music Today”).⁵⁵ The Italian title was used

⁵⁵ Luigi Nono, “Historical Presence in Music Today” in *Composers on Modern Musical Culture*, ed. and trans. Bryan Simms (New York: Schirmer Books, 1999), 168-174. 1959 was not, however, the last time Nono would go to Darmstadt; he went one more time in 1960 when he delivered “Testo—musica—canto,” but he was never again engaged as a

for its presentation at the Darmstadt lecture, and was first published in *Melos*, translated into German by his student Helmut Lachenmann, as “Gitterstäbe am Himmel der Freiheit” (“Prison Bars in the Heaven of Freedom”).⁵⁶ To say that it was not well received at the time would be an understatement. According to the reminiscences of his wife, Nuria Schoenberg-Nono, he had hoped to provoke discussion about the issues he raised. Instead, the discussion ended with the lecture, and colleagues and students with whom Nono had had cordial relationships the day prior refused to speak to him. This essay would precipitate the end of his association with the Darmstadt Summer Courses.⁵⁷

Notably, Nono’s critique of Cage was explicitly directed at his compositional philosophy, and not the music itself. The essay contained no discussion of actual works by Cage. And Nono required no interpretive lens to claim that Cage had denied the presence of history in his works, because Cage had repeatedly made precisely that claim in his lectures and writings. In his third lecture from 1958, for example, Cage had stated that “contemporary music is not the music of the future, nor the music of the past, but simply music present with us: this moment, now, this now moment.”⁵⁸ In this formulation, new music is new only so long as it is being performed. As the lecture proceeds to suggest, describing the concept of new music, so conceived, is impossible, because speaking of new music precludes performing it, and any music not being performed is no longer “new.” Therefore, new music owes nothing to what came before, and offers nothing in the form of dialogue with what comes after. It simply is.

teacher, and all indications suggest that Nono was deeply troubled by the way his essay was received. See Appendix 1.

⁵⁶ Simms, *Composers on Modern Musical Culture*, 174.

⁵⁷ Nuria Schoenberg-Nono in Conversation with Konrad Boehmer, Appendix 2.

⁵⁸ Cage, *Silence*, 43.

My intention is not to add yet another critique of Cage, nor is it to vindicate him, but to note the form that the critiques of Cage have taken, to gauge what this says about “philosophical” music. Nono could have chosen to critique the extent to which the statements of Cage, for reasons shown in the previous sections, amounted to artistic posturing. His music and philosophy were, on a tangible level, a justifiable reaction to the present historical situation, in as much as musical tradition was deemed to be complicit with the recent events of World War II.⁵⁹ As a commentary on the present historical situation, the idea of ahistorical music could have formed a legitimate social critique, even if the music itself did in fact owe much to tradition. Instead, Nono took Cage’s philosophy at face value, as if his music were equivalent to its philosophical ideals, and formed his critique on the basis of those ideals.

Nono described the impulse of those who desire to make everything new and start over—perhaps a manifestation of the *Stunde Null* phenomenon—as “an easy way to establish themselves as beginning and end, as gospel.”⁶⁰ But, Nono contends, this agenda is a false ideology and “entirely lacks the constructive impetus characteristic of the true revolutionary, who—clearly conscious of where things stand—brings about the collapse of existing structures to create room for new and emerging ones.”⁶¹ Nono thus tries to strike a balance in trying to critique Cage’s opposition to tradition while at the same time claiming his own status as a revolutionary. This strain of Nono’s thought owes much to Martin Heidegger in a work like “Overcoming Metaphysics.” In that essay, Heidegger argues that overcoming metaphysics cannot be accomplished simply by looking

⁵⁹ See Chapter I.

⁶⁰ Simms, *Composers on Modern Musical Culture*, 170.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* 170.

elsewhere—the critique of the metaphysical tradition must be conducted from within metaphysics.⁶²

Nono likened the claim to “freedom” from history and tradition to the Holy Roman Empire, which could not tolerate historical development, because that development suggested fallibility in the word of God and challenged the very seat of its power, its “fixed hierarchic order.”⁶³ Cage, Nono contended, sought to abdicate a responsibility to the present historical situation: “It is a yearning for a naïve and everlasting innocence by those who feel guilty but will not consciously own up to it.”⁶⁴ The “freedom” that comes from such abdication, according to Nono, is equivalent to the freedom from sexual instincts that comes with castration.

Nono viewed Cage’s suggestion that sounds could “just be sounds” with even more suspicion. Rather than liberating the sounds (or “material”), Nono argued that the composer becomes a slave to that material. Stripped of their capacity for meaning, to be the product of an intellectual effort, sounds become “mere decoration and ornament.”⁶⁵ Ornament and decoration, for Nono, were the trappings of Western imperialism and orientalist thinking, and the use of products of foreign cultures by Cage and others was on a level of “pillaging,” not true engagement. Voicing a suspicion that Cage’s

⁶² A quick look through the catalog of the Luigi Nono archive in Venice reveals that Heidegger was of particular interest to Nono. While Nono owned an extensive catalog of philosophical works, the books by Heidegger, in contrast to, for example, those of Adorno, were heavily annotated.

⁶³ Simms, *Composers on Modern Musical Culture*, 170.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 172.

understanding of Eastern philosophy was not rigorous, he chided, “And then we try to justify this [pillaging] by muttering philosophical thoughts from bygone cultures.”⁶⁶

All of Cage’s methods, Nono concludes, are proffered with the idea that they achieve liberation.⁶⁷ Echoing a pronouncement by Goethe that “No one is more enslaved than the man who believes himself to be free and is not,”⁶⁸ Nono declares that freedom false: “Their idea of freedom is intellectual suicide, analogous to the medieval inquisition, which contended that a person who was trapped in the bondage of the devil could be freed by being burnt at the stake.”⁶⁹

Given the context that had been created at the Darmstadt Summer Courses—a context where polemical artistic positions had become the rule—the harsh reaction to Nono’s lecture is somewhat surprising, and we would do well to consider the reasons behind that response. Why, as Schoenberg-Nono reported, did colleagues refuse to acknowledge Nono’s presence the day following the lecture, and why did Stockhausen, in particular, seem to have taken special offense? The substance of Nono’s critique was absolutely defensible, but something in the manner of its presentation seems to have upset the community and the project of Darmstadt.

⁶⁶ Ibid. 173.

⁶⁷ Included in those methods is the idea of “improvisation,” a concept specifically avoided by Cage. A 2004 essay by composer and musicologist George Lewis accuses Cage of avoiding the term either consciously or subconsciously to deny the influence of African American jazz on his music and thinking. George Lewis, “Improvised Music after 1950: Afrological and Eurological Perspectives,” in *The Other Side of Nowhere: Jazz, Improvisation, and Communities in Dialogue*, eds. Daniel Fischlin and Ajay Heble (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2004), 131-162.

⁶⁸ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Elective Affinities*, trans. David Constantine (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 151.

⁶⁹ Simms, *Composers on Modern Musical Culture*, 173.

Schoenberg-Nono states emphatically that the lecture was not “against Cage,”⁷⁰ and while this may be the case, her statement is not supportable strictly on the content of the lecture, given that he directly addresses both Cage and his ideas. However, in as much as the lecture was a response to Cage’s performances from the previous year, it is fair to assume that Nono did not so much oppose Cage himself as the influence he exerted. The response has a defensive quality, because to the extent that those performances operated as farce, works like *Il canto sospeso*—serious to a fault—would have been a primary target of that parody. The harshness of Nono’s rebuttal shows that Cage’s caricature may have struck a nerve. Nono could not, or would not, take the joke. However, it is equally plausible that Nono did not object to the performances themselves, but to the significance accorded them by the other participants.

And here, Stockhausen’s response to the lecture is telling. Remembering the lecture in 1987, Nono said that Stockhausen had “responded violently because he sensed that he had been attacked personally *and he was right*.”⁷¹ In some sense, Stockhausen probably was the intended target of the lecture, because he was a composer who had used freely from both serial and chance techniques—and Nono would have equated that freedom with a lack of seriousness.⁷² However, because Stockhausen was never named in

⁷⁰ See Appendix 2.

⁷¹ “Un’autobiografie dell’autore racconta da Enzo Restagno” in *Scritti e Colloqui*, vol. 2, eds. Angela Ida De Benedictis and Veniero Rizzardi (Milan: Ricordi, 2001), 492. Emphasis Added.

⁷² Nono returned to Darmstadt only one more time the following year to deliver a single lecture, his “Text—Musik—Gesang,” as a direct refutation of Stockhausen’s critique of *Il canto sospeso*. See Chapter 2. Also Borio and Danuser, *Im Zenit der Moderne*, vol. 3, 603.

the lecture, the terms of engagement with the polemic of “Presenza Storica” have been largely read in terms of its conflict with Cage and his philosophy.⁷³

The argument with Cage was one that Nono nevertheless stood very little chance of winning. Because Cage also undermines himself with a certain playfulness with regard to his philosophy – for example the overstating of his philosophy and the understating of the role of his personal taste, as seen in the previous section – comments like those where he makes an analogy between his music and nature are offered with tongue firmly in cheek. This effectively sets a trap for anyone seeking to critique him on those grounds, an invitation to step on a rug, which will be summarily pulled. Maderna commented in an interview that Cage’s role was “precisely to make fun of chaps like Nono!”⁷⁴

More importantly, however, Nono’s attacks, being philosophical in nature, and being lodged at Cage’s philosophy rather than the music, crossed a line that previous arguments at Darmstadt had not. The reaction to those attacks revealed the limits of the Darmstadt project, a limit which Nono seems to have miscalculated. Simply put, the artistic statements of composers and artists more generally may resemble philosophy, but are not philosophy. Darmstadt composers, in allowing themselves to believe that their music was equivalent with the philosophies that created it, had violated Paul Celan’s dictum that poetry exposes, but does not impose.⁷⁵ Regardless of how much *thinking* is involved in a composition, the inevitable irrationality of the compositional act will

⁷³ And indeed, the lecture is not very interesting if Cage is only meant to stand as a proxy for other trends and composers at Darmstadt. In that case, the content of the lecture would be meaningless, because the polemic of the essay was aimed at making the somewhat banal point that composers need to be true to their heritages.

⁷⁴ Raymond Fearn, *Bruno Maderna* (Chur, Switzerland; New York: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1990), 320.

⁷⁵ “La poésie ne s’impose plus, elle s’expose.” Paul Celan, *Collected Prose*, trans. Rosmarie Waldrop (Riverdale-on-Hudson, NY: The Sheep Meadow Press, 1986), 29.

always make its philosophical insights speculative at best. Prior to Nono's lecture, composers seemed happy to have it both ways. As philosophy, their works were accorded (or could claim) greater intellectual significance, but their artistic statements were also opened to a scrutiny many were not ready to accept.

While many composers, especially at Darmstadt, seem to attach an ethical standard to their music, the ethical component of artistic creation is part of an artistic practice. When, for example, Pierre Boulez describes improvisation as "onanistic," there is an ethical imperative, but only for Boulez himself and for others partaking in a particular formation of a metaphor that views improvisation as self-indulgence.⁷⁶ The situation is rather like the old debate about whether it is more vain for an artist to sign a work, or more vain to leave it unsigned. Signing a work is seen as arrogant if the artist is making a statement that the painting is of value because he or she signed it, but leaving it unsigned could be a signal that the artist believes that he or she is of such importance that there is no need to tell the audience who the creator is. In the end the generally accepted answer to the conundrum is that if the artist is arrogant, then it is arrogant to either sign or not sign the painting, while if the artist is not arrogant, neither signing nor leaving the painting unsigned will be arrogant. The choice itself has no ethical imperative; rather, it is the motivation that matters.

The responses to Cage by Stockhausen, in the form of *Klavierstück XI*, and Pierre Boulez in "Alea" as well as musical works like his third piano sonata, were *artistic* responses. While making recourse to philosophical language, they stake out their author's own artistic positions, rather than forming a direct critique of Cage. The same could also

⁷⁶ Quoted by Jacques Attali in *Noise: the Political Economy of Music*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 146.

be said of Boulez's "Schoenberg is Dead." Just as Adorno had had to defend himself from the charge that his *Philosophy of New Music* had diagnosed the "empirical Stravinsky" with psychological neuroses, Boulez's critiques of Cage and Schoenberg were firmly lodged in an interpretation of their music. The same cannot be said for Nono, who definitively did label the *empirical* John Cage as oppressive and imperialist.

In an interview between Bruno Maderna and Leonardo Pinzauti first published in 1972, Bruno Maderna remembered the end of the 1950s and early 1960s as the moment when the "power struggle began."⁷⁷ Prior to the 1960s, Maderna called Darmstadt "an ideal meeting point for the most diverse musicians."⁷⁸ And then, the philosophical turn seems to have turned against itself. Where the use of philosophy, and philosophizing about music, had been productive in the formative years at Darmstadt, Nono's lecture signaled ways that philosophy could be used to impose aesthetic and even ethical judgments. Here Maderna makes a clear distinction between statements that are "aesthetic declarations" and "manifestations of power." As an example of the latter, he cites Stockhausen's later claim that music is not expressive, but should be considered a "new science."

We thus arrive back at the moment described in the first chapter, where the Darmstadt project seems to disintegrate.⁷⁹ Cage seems to be partially, if unwittingly, to blame. The implications of his utopian claims about indeterminacy and chance—that there was something inherently better or *more natural* about his music—invited precisely

⁷⁷ Fearn, *Bruno Maderna*, 318.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ In Konrad Boehmer's analysis, everything fell apart at a 1960 concert in Cologne, where the participants descended into petty name-calling and questions of stature. See Appendix 2.

the kind of response that Nono delivered. Starting with Cage, musical ideas, and their complimentary philosophies, were no longer presented as hypothetical propositions, but as objective facts. Indeterminacy, as a suggestion, was influential and stimulating to composers throughout the 1960s and beyond, as we will see in chapters IV and V, but as a panacea it proved oppressive.

Only by positing a claim to objective truth—a truth that can never be verified—could one musical philosophy rise above the others. As soon as one philosophy, in this case that of Cage, made an appeal to that objective truth (or *nature*), the philosophical project was unable to sustain itself unless the other composers simply accepted the proposition. The philosophies that enabled the artistic utopia (or the fantasy of an artistic utopia) at Darmstadt in the 1950s were therefore also responsible for its ultimate demise. Maderna, by not only renouncing that objective truth, but also any hope for his own ascendancy, managed to preserve a philosophical approach. In his capacity as a conductor who regularly performed works by composers across the entire spectrum of (admittedly European) modern music, he sought to preserve the dialogue and eclecticism of Darmstadt in the 1950s, while the composers themselves had each gone their separate ways.

Caging Philosophical Music

A little over 20 years later, Nono would reengage with the music of Cage in a way that would reclaim some of the original promise of philosophical music in the 1950s. Nono and Cage had also maintained something of a musical debate over the idea of silence. While interpreting the meaning behind Cage's silent composition, *4'33"*, is notoriously

difficult, Cage offered many philosophical meditations on silence that generally regard it as the absence of intended sounds. He was fond of recounting a story that scientifically proved the impossibility of achieving silence.⁸⁰ For this reason, he contended, “Those [sounds] that are not notated appear in the written music as silences, opening the doors of music to the sounds that happened to be in the environment.” A silence, in Cage’s estimation, is merely an opportunity to listen more attentively.

But is this, in fact, how silences operate in other music? When a piece falls silent, does the listener keep listening? Or, conversely, when music falls silent, does it allow the listener to hear (or imagine) a true silence, like the one Cage claimed was impossible, because the listener is temporarily exempted from hearing “other sounds”? This is the form that silence takes in Nono’s late string quartet, *Fragmente-stille*. Here the musical statements appear stretched to a breaking point, and the silences appear truly empty and stripped of sounds, both intended and unintended. It is as if the music creates something like its own aural canvas, and the mind separates the music from the background in such a way that the “music” really can be silent in a way that nature cannot. Cage seems to think that something is gained by allowing the unintended sounds to assume equal importance with the music. But is it not equally the case that something is lost? Perhaps what is lost is an experience that is the closest one can come to actual silence.

Musical philosophy in the wake of the 1959 Cage-Nono impasse was maintained, but became largely directed inwardly, as praxis. It was also, to a large extent,

⁸⁰ “For certain engineering purposes, it is desirable to have as silent a situation as possible. Such a room is called an anechoic chamber, its six walls made of a special material, a room without echoes. I entered one at Harvard University several years ago and heard two sounds, one high and one low. When I described them to the engineer in charge, he informed me that the high one was my nervous system in operation, the low one my blood in circulation. Until I die there will be sounds.” Cage, *Silence*, 8.

domesticated. It was no longer the contested space it had been during the 50s, and, instead, something much more tame. However, the types of music that were offered in the years that followed would have been unthinkable without the struggle of the 50s, and a proper understanding of this moment will deepen our appreciation of later compositions. In the following chapters, I will chart the ways in which certain ethos of Darmstadt—the Darmstadt of the philosophical turn—was maintained by the composers that came after this moment. While their solutions are widely divergent and personal, they share a particular approach to the act of composition, an approach that does indeed point to Darmstadt as the source for an exceptional development in the course of music in the second half of the century.

Chapter IV: Idea and Actualization

In previous chapters we have seen that the various characterizations of Darmstadt—as the birthplace of “total serialism,” or the rise of aleatoric methods—have been largely overwrought and can all be seen instead as symptoms of a “philosophical” approach to composition. To be clear, I am not arguing that composers at Darmstadt all became or were philosophers, or that their works should be understood *as* philosophy, but that the philosophical orientation of the composers had profound implications on both the compositional choices they made, and for how we need to understand their works. In contrast to the previous chapters, where I used particular musical examples used to explain the peculiar musical developments that took place at Darmstadt, my hope is to now use our nuanced understanding of the context to explore the music more deeply. In the process, I hope that music will provide further insight into the situation at Darmstadt.

Among all the various preoccupations at the Darmstadt Summer Courses, perhaps none was more surprising than the resurgence of the nineteenth century poet, Friedrich Hölderlin (1770-1843). Hölderlin’s reappearance at Darmstadt was all the more surprising, because he had been a favored poet of the Third Reich. Although Nietzsche had admired his works and Brahms had set his “Hyperions Schicksalslied,” he was mostly consigned to obscurity until Stefan George and his circle championed him as the “poet of poets.” Prior to George, he had been mostly viewed, for reasons of his

biography, as a tragic romantic figure.¹ Precisely halfway through his life, madness confined him to live in isolation, where he composed ever more difficult and hermetic poetry. Because of persistent questions of Germany and Hellenic rebirth, and because he would be taken up by Heidegger in his pivotal 1930s lectures, he became a significant figure in the imagination of the German state. Toward the end of the war, beginning with the centenary celebrations of his death in 1943, his poems were collected in so-called *Feldausgaben* and distributed to soldiers on the front lines.² Robert Ian Savage notes that while other writers, notably Schelling and Kleist, were put to similar uses to justify the rise of Germany, Hölderlin became the poet of Germany's fall.³

However, even throughout the war, there had never been a single uncontested understanding of Hölderlin's place in the German imagination. While Heidegger's lectures on poetry upheld him as the "poet of poets" and the "poet of the Germans," Walter Benjamin and Adorno, among others, suggested competing interpretations of Hölderlin that considered his textual implications more narrowly. Additionally, Victor Ullmann set Hölderlin's poems while imprisoned in the concentration camp at Terezin, hardly a place where one would expect to find German nationalism. The stage had long since been set for Hölderlin to be recast as a modernist.

The first settings of Hölderlin's poems to appear at Darmstadt were by Wolfgang Fortner during the very first instance of the courses in 1946. Fortner, as a compromised member of the music establishment under the Third Reich, and given that his settings

¹ Aris Fioretos, "Introduction," *The Solid Letter: Readings of Friedrich Hölderlin*, ed. Aris Fioretos (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 3.

² Fioretos, 2.

³ Robert Ian Savage, *Hölderlin after the Catastrophe* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2008), 7.

were composed during the 1930s, can be presumed to have had an understanding of Hölderlin more in line with the Nazi appropriation of his works.⁴ The fact that those same compositions were played several times in the first few years at Darmstadt, however, indicates the extent to which the re-appropriation of Hölderlin had already begun. Rather than the patriotic hymns they would have seemed in 1933, the 1946 and 1947 performances of his Hölderlin settings now laid claim to an alternate interpretation, allowing Fortner to reinvent himself in the process.

Hölderlin's ascendancy at Darmstadt was far from immediate. In addition to the *Vier Lieder* of Fortner, the first fifteen years of the courses only saw settings by Hermann Reutter and Josef Matthias Hauer, although Darmstadt participants René Leibowitz and Hans Werner Henze both wrote Hölderlin settings during the same period. More recently, Henri Pousseur, Györgi Ligeti, Heinz Holliger, Luigi Nono, Wolfgang Rihm, Aribert Reimann, Hans Zender, and Kaija Saariaho have all composed works based on his writings. The pivotal moment in Hölderlin's reception at Darmstadt seems to have occurred when Bruno Maderna undertook perhaps the most ambitious use of Hölderlin's works during the period from 1960-1969.

Maderna's *Hyperion* is not a single piece, but a collection of works written over the course of a decade and loosely based on Hölderlin's epistolary novel, *Hyperion oder der Eremit in Griechenland* (published in two volumes in 1797 and 1799). Those works seem to have precipitated something of an explosion in Hölderlin settings. How is it, then, that a somewhat obscure nineteenth century poet—one who at the time would have been known primarily for his peripheral associations with the foundations of romanticism

⁴ See Chapter I.

and then German nationalism — could take on such significance at Darmstadt, the reputed home of “high modernism”? In answering this question, we may find that in spite of the rupture from which it was born, Darmstadt will show a profound continuity with the tradition from which it rebels.

Hölderlin was closely associated Schelling, who, along with the Novalis and the Schlegel brothers, theorized the romantic genre. They are known alternatively by Jena, the city where they gathered, and by their literary journal, the *Athenaeum*. The primary achievement of the Jena romantics was to propose that the theorization of literature was the goal of literature itself. As a result, the idea of literature was both “absolute” and unattainable. As Richard Taruskin has noted, Darmstadt, with its insistence on “absolute music” and autonomy, is strikingly similar to early romanticism.⁵ Moreover, Jena was also the site where literature and philosophy were united to an unprecedented degree. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy cite “Critical Fragment 115,” written a year before its founding, as a locus classicus for the relationship between romantic literature and poetry: “The whole history of modernity,” they admit, “is a running commentary on the following brief philosophical text: all art should become science, and all science art; poetry and philosophy should be made one.”⁶ In this sense, the

⁵ Taruskin contends that John Cage, above all others reveals the “latent continuity between the Romantic impulse and the impulses that drove modernism.” In his analysis, the perceived differences between Cage and the serialists replayed Friedrich Schiller’s famous distinction between naïve and sentimental poets. Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). 66.

⁶ Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Literary Absolute*, trans. Philip Barnard and Cheryl Lester (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 13.

“philosophical turn” at Darmstadt was merely the musical equivalent of literature’s own turn to philosophy 150 years earlier.

What is critical is that both at Darmstadt and in the divergent receptions of Hölderlin, there are two romanticisms at play, which continually collide in the works of the romantic tradition. First, there is the romanticism against which Darmstadt rebels, the nostalgic romanticism in search of absolutes and the sublime. This romanticism proved accommodating to the particularly barbaric nationalism of the Third Reich.⁷ The second romanticism is characterized by the self-critical approach to the production of literature, and the fusion of literature (or poetry) and philosophy. This is why it is possible to view music of the modernist tradition simultaneously both as a rebellion against and as a culmination of romanticism.

Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy emphasize this point as the primary reason for undertaking a study of romanticism: to understand the ways in which the romantic impulse still dictates modern thought. We belong, they say, “to the era [that romanticism] opened up.” Indeed, modernism’s putative opposition to romanticism can only be thought in relationship to romanticism: “Not the least result of romanticism’s indefinable character is the way it has allowed this so-called modernity to use romanticism as a foil, without ever recognizing—or in order not to recognize—that it has done little more than rehash romanticism’s discoveries.”⁸

The clearest sign of continuity between early romanticism and the composers at Darmstadt can be found in their shared preoccupation with fragmentary writing. The

⁷ See Hannah Arendt, “What is Existenz Philosophy” in *The Partisan Review* 13(1), 1946 and Thomas Mann, *Addresses Delivered at the Library of Congress, 1942-1949* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1963), 51.

⁸ Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *The Literary Absolute*, 15.

fragment, because it embodied its own inability to constitute itself, became the romantic literary genre *par excellence*. Although Hölderlin is thought to have had a direct influence on the composition of the founding text at Jena, “The Earliest System-Program,” his own work would diverge from Jena in significant ways.⁹ In particular, while the Jena romantics and Hölderlin are both concerned with fragmentary writing, in Hölderlin the fragment never holds the possibility of representing the infinite, but rather focuses on the rupture inherent in the attempt.

Maderna’s *Hyperion* not only makes use of Hölderlin’s texts, but also engages with the philosophical ideals of romanticism, and with fragmentary writing. Because the texts for Maderna’s *Hyperion* actually come from more than one source, the work Maderna called *Hyperion* is difficult to describe as a discrete or unified entity. The component compositions do not so much form a large structure as share a common set of affiliations with external ideas. And this sense of diffusion with regard to its status as a work is shared with Hölderlin’s *Hyperion*. In addition to the published novel, Hölderlin also wrote two other fragmentary versions and several independent poems that touch on themes and characters from *Hyperion*, indicating that the *idea* of *Hyperion* was one that could not be constrained to a single work. This is to say that while both Maderna and Hölderlin’s works are fragmentary, they exhibit fragmentation not primarily as an expressive tool, but because they were both perpetually “in progress.”

⁹ The manuscript for “The Earliest System Program” was written in Hegel’s hand, but is widely assumed to be a copy of an unattributed text by Schelling, written with direct influence from Hölderlin. Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *The Literary Absolute*, 27.

Work or Framework?

Maderna's *Hyperion* is composed of at least three works for magnetic tape, five orchestral works, three choral works, and two works for orchestra and voice. Several flute

Performances of Maderna's *Hyperion*

1. *Diminioni V* (Darmstadt, 1964)
2. *Hyperion, Lirica in forma di spettacolo* (Venice, 1964)
3. *Dimensioni III* (Cologne, 1964)
4. *Hyperion II* (Darmstadt, 1965)
5. *Hyperion* (Rome, 1966)
6. *Hyperion III* (Baden-Baden, 1966)
7. *Hyperion en het Geweld* (Brussels, 1968)
8. *Hyperion-Orfeo dolente* (Bologna, 1968)
9. *Hyperion IV* (realization for magnetic tape, 1969)
10. *Suite aus der Oper Hyperion* (Berlin, 1969)
11. *Hyperion* (Vienna, 1970)
12. *Hyperion* (Paris, 1993)

Partial List of Components of Maderna's *Hyperion*

The following list of compositions omits a few compositions that were only used for one performance and seem to have been specially written for that performance. Unattributed music was often played during performances, and some pieces appeared under different titles. Numbers to the right refer to the performance(s) above in which the given piece appeared. In some cases only portions of a given piece were used in the specified performance, or they were broken up into sections and played in an altered order. See Nicola Verzina, *Bruno Maderna: Étude historique et critique* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003), 157-185.

Dimensioni II/Invenzione su una voce (magnetic tape), 1960 – 1, 2, 10, 12

Le Rire (magnetic tape), 1962 – 1, 2, 7, 8

Aria (soprano, flute, orchestra), 1964 – 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12

Dimensioni III (orchestra with flute cadenza), 1963-1965 – 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 12

Three sections used in various formations in each performance.

Entropia I (orchestra), 1963 – 7, 12

Entropia II (orchestra), 1964 – 4, 7, 12

Entropia III (orchestra), 1964 – 12

Stele per Diotima (orchestra), 1965 – 6, 7, 10, 12

Psalm (choir, text by W. H. Auden), 1968 – 7, 10, 11

Zombiechorus, 1968 – 7

Battaglia I & II (magnetic tape), 1968 – 7

Messagio (orchestra, speaker, flute), 1968 – 7, 10, 11

Hyperions Schicksalslied (choir), 1969 – 10, 11, 12

Example 10: Performances and components of Maderna's *Hyperion*

cadenzas, often left untitled, were also included in many performances. A performance of *Hyperion* can be realized by combining these works, but the scores for the individual pieces give no indication of how such a performance should be constructed. Each score presents its work as an independent entity. (See Example 10, above, which shows a list of compositions, together with the performances in which they appeared.)

It might be more appropriate, in fact, to view *Hyperion* as an incomplete “project” with undefined beginnings and endings. Maderna gave performances of different parts of the piece during the entire decade of the 1960s, always calling the work *Hyperion*.

Gathering together a few constituent parts, Maderna told Virginio Peucher, the producer of *Hyperion* for its first performance at La Fenice in Venice in 1964, “This could be the material for an opera, but you are the one who will have to give it a form.”¹⁰

That Venice performance consisted of the *Aria* (soprano and orchestra), *Dimensioni III/Invenzione su una voce* (tape, 1960), *Dimensioni IV* (orchestra), and *Le Rire* (tape). A smaller version—possibly a trial run—had been performed earlier the same year in Darmstadt under the title *Dimensioni V*, with the soprano part for the *Aria* played by a solo flute. Subsequent performances included new material and radically different stagings (see Example 10).¹¹

¹⁰ Raymond Fearn, *Bruno Maderna*, (Chur: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1990), 129.

¹¹ For a 1968 performance in Brussels the texts were translated into Flemish and titled *Hyperion en het Geweld* [“Hyperion and Violence”] using sets reminiscent of the Vietnam War. Maderna had evidently been commissioned to write a new stage work based on the *Morituri* by the Belgian author Hugo Claus, but rather than compose an entirely new work, he combined it with elements from *Hyperion*. This performance contained many compositions that are not found in any other staging (Fearn, *Bruno Maderna*, 134). A Bologna performance from the same year interspersed scenes from *Hyperion* with scenes from Domenico Belli’s *Orfeo Dolente* (Fearn, *Bruno Maderna*, 134-135). All of these performances and versions present seductive prospects for further investigation, but for the purposes of an investigation of the *Hyperion* “project,”

One possible inspiration for the amorphous form of *Hyperion* might be found in the symphonies of Gustav Mahler. Maderna professed a profound interest in the music of Mahler, and conducted his symphonies on several occasions.¹² Symphonies like the second and eighth, in particular, incorporate an eclectic mix of styles and component parts, even though they do arrive at a definitive final form. The “Urlicht” for soprano and orchestra in the second symphony exists outside of the symphony as a song in his collection *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*. Like the first components of Maderna’s *Hyperion*, it was originally composed for use in a completely different context; and similarly like Mahler’s symphonies, Maderna’s *Hyperion* seems to create its own world, one in which the performer is invited to inhabit and explore.

Hölderlin himself provides another source for the structure of Maderna’s *Hyperion*. Its overall form is rather like the epistolary form of the original, which was written as a series of fictional letters from Hyperion to his German friend Bellarmin (and some to his beloved Diotima) chronicling his return to his homeland of Greece. The epistolary literary form has a peculiar effect on the reader’s relationship to the text, one that Maderna tried to translate into his musical framework. Rather than being presented with a straightforward sequence of events, the reader is given, in effect, the *archive*—a series of letters—with which to construct the historical narrative. The final version of Hölderlin’s *Hyperion* makes no claim to completeness. Indeed, quite the opposite,

excessive focus on one version would undermine the sense in which the idea of the work is amorphous.

¹² In a late interview, Maderna said that Mahler’s music was “illuminated by an inner tension which is always of the greatest, like a bow stretched toward the Whole and towards the absolute. I now feel Mahler as though he is present, I feel that he is just the poet, the ideal as I imagine it.” Maderna in conversation with George Stone and Allan Stout, January 23, 1970, WEFM, Chicago. Fearn, *Bruno Maderna*, 311.

Hyperion's last letter to Bellarmin famously concludes with the assurance, "Nächstens mehr" ["more to follow"].¹³

The constituent parts of Maderna's *Hyperion* operate in much the same way. Rather than cohesive musical structure, Maderna constructed an archive of related musical material with the intention that it could be used to generate larger structures, but each section is *composed* as a so-called autonomous work. Like Hyperion's letters, the components of Maderna's *Hyperion* are not fragmentary—each is a composed whole—but the larger narrative (or musical structure) to which they pertain is only implied, with the suggestion that more letters could further illuminate the work's core idea.

In spite of the freedom granted to the performers, it is probably not appropriate to call this an "open work." *Hyperion*, in fact, seems to resist any attempt to grasp it as a discrete entity. With its changing components and undefined structure it undermines any possibility of autonomy. But unlike my analysis of Cage's *Variations*, where the instantiations were the key to understanding the work, in *Hyperion*, certain key components seem to crystallize and reveal something of the whole. If those components were a part of a fluid solution poured through a sieve, they would seem to congeal and clog in the mesh. My approach will be to analyze the residue.

Music in Two Dimensions

A final source for Maderna's innovative form may stem from his experiences working in the electronic music studios in Cologne and Milan. The abundance of works within Maderna's *Hyperion* with some variant of the title "Dimensioni" (one composite

¹³ Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Friedrich Beißner (Leipzig: Insel-Verlag, 1965), 642.

Hyperion performance was even called “Dimensioni V”) signals that the project is also a continuation of a preoccupation that started almost a decade earlier in 1952. At the summer courses that year, he premiered a work for flute, percussion, and magnetic tape called *Musica su due dimensioni*. Five years later, in 1959, Maderna would give a short lecture at Darmstadt titled “Music in Two Dimensions” outlining two distinct “dimensions” of musical communication: the first, “performers who play instruments or sing in front of an audience,” and second, “electro-acoustical recording and reproduction.”¹⁴ The lecture was followed by works that combined instrumental performances with electronic sounds, including a revised version of his composition from 1952.¹⁵

The connection between this lecture and his *Hyperion* project goes deeper than simply noting that *Hyperion*, like the earlier piece for flute and tape, also combines both tape and live components. While ostensibly about the difficulties in combining music for tape with live performance, Maderna’s lecture explored the ways in which his experiences working in electronic music studios had altered his approach to traditional composition. The lecture continues themes from a 1957 lecture, “Compositional Experiences in Electronic Music,” which preceded a concert of electro-acoustic works by Maderna, Pousseur, and Berio.¹⁶ Both lectures, taken together, suggest that Maderna’s compositional approach underwent a dramatic change resulting from his introduction to electronic music, the results of which are to be felt everywhere in his *Hyperion* cycle.

¹⁴ Maderna seems to have been introduced to the possibilities of electronic music by Edgard Varèse at Darmstadt in 1950. (Fearn, *Bruno Maderna*, 70.)

¹⁵ Gianmario Borio and Hermann Danuser, *Im Zenit der Moderne: die Internationalen Ferienkurse für Neue Musik Darmstadt 1946-1966: Geschichte und Dokumentation in vier Bänden*, vol. 3 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach, 1997), 600.

¹⁶ Fearn, *Bruno Maderna*, 294-296.

In spite of the fact that music for magnetic tape is absolutely fixed in time in a way that traditionally notated music can never be, Maderna's sense of the process of such composition is marked by a profound freedom. Whereas in traditionally notated music the composer works in a more or less linear fashion from beginning to end, the act of composing for tape gives the composers a physically tangible object to manipulate and alter every aspect of the work right up to the moment of its completion. Composing for tape is thus akin to the plastic arts, because portions of the work can be altered more or less simultaneously. In other words, the time frame of the work then becomes its canvas, and the materials are arranged as "concrete" objects. Echoing—or rather, anticipating—John Cage, Maderna argued that the approaches necessary to compose in the electronic medium had profound impacts on his conception of traditional composition.¹⁷ Instead of viewing music as a linear progression, electronic music suggested a model where time was "a field full of an enormous number of possibilities for the ordering and permutation of the material just produced."¹⁸

Maderna also notes that this process results in a "heap of partial materials"—sections of unused music and sound related to the completed project. Unlike the sketches of Beethoven, for example, these "partial materials" have more performance potential. To the extent that a completed work for tape is the result of arranging massive amounts of manipulated sound, the sounds themselves are not necessarily transitory in the way that

¹⁷ In the winter of 1957—that is, several months after Maderna's Darmstadt lecture on electronic music—Cage delivered a lecture where he contended, "Whether one uses tape or writes for conventional instruments, the present musical situation has changed from what it was before tape came into being. [...] Since so many inches of tape equal so many seconds of time, it has become more and more usual that notation is in space rather than symbols of quarter, half, and sixteenth notes and so on." "Experimental Music" in John Cage, *Silence* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1939), 11.

¹⁸ Fearn, *Bruno Maderna*, 295.

sketches are. It is entirely plausible to conclude that the same material could be arranged in such a way as to create numerous related works. So while *musique concrète* is often presumed to be the most defined of genres, because the finished composition can be repeated exactly *ad infinitum*, it is also possible to imagine that other instantiations of the same physically tangible material could be made, thereby undercutting the perceived stability of such a work.

In combining tape music with live music, Maderna sought to reconcile the differences in approach between music which was completely fixed—in which he fulfilled the role of composer—and music that would only be realized the moment of performance. The goal of this combination was to bring composition and “performance as close together as possible,” without allowing either to be subservient to the other. As is typical for Maderna, he is evasive as to how such a synthesis is to be achieved, preferring to allow his practical intuition to guide his composition.

The *Hyperion* project, then, is the result of these explorations into new possibilities afforded by electronic music during the 1950s. While some individual works combine tape and instrumental performance, perhaps the most intriguing result is the way in which Maderna is able to replicate—both with tape and traditional works—the sense of a “heap of partial materials” with which to construct related works. The assembly of a performance of *Hyperion* echoes the procedure for assembling compositions for magnetic tape; a large collection of music is prepared (or “processed” to use the terminology of the electronic music studio) in advance and only structured into its final form for an individual performance. But in contrast to a typical tape piece, in *Hyperion* those discarded materials remain available for future performances.

This “heap of materials” also marks another way in which Maderna’s *Hyperion* resembles Mahler’s symphonies. If one views each of Mahler’s symphonies not as a discrete entity, but as a re-composition of the previous, then the process of composition becomes remarkably similar to the process of preparing a performance of *Hyperion*. In composing a symphony, Mahler seems to draw on a large reservoir of material, but that reservoir, while expanding with each subsequent composition, is nonetheless the same for each. This is why key themes and motives from one symphony can come back in another, such as the opening trumpet theme of the fifth symphony, which had occurred previously in the fourth.

Dimensioni II/Invenzione su una voce

In 1960, soprano Annemarie Jung performed *Dimensioni II/Invenzione su una voce* for tape and soprano to close that year’s summer courses.¹⁹ The work was performed several times during the 1960s appearing alternately under the title *Dimensioni II* and *Invenzione su una voce*.²⁰ Mario Baroni and Rosanna Dalmonte indicate that while *Invenzione su una voce* was generally used in later performances, the titles seem somewhat interchangeable.

¹⁹ Of the many sources that reference *Dimensioni II*, the only one to mention that the 1960 Darmstadt performance included a live soprano part sung is the chronology included in *Im Zenit der Moderne* (Borio and Danuser, *Im Zenit der Moderne*, vol. 3, 606). It would be tempting to ignore that piece of information, except that the alternate title *Dimensioni II* also seems to indicate that the composition grew out of Maderna’s interest in combining tape and live performance in the earlier lecture and composition both named “Musica su due dimensioni.” So while the soprano part would be dropped in future performances, and certainly by the time it was included in *Hyperion*, the composition seems to be an important intermediate step toward the creation of a larger scale work and a more deeper philosophical exploration of those “dimensions.” “Invenzione su una voce” in *Berio/Maderna* (Acousmatrix 7), ed. Konrad Boehmer (Amsterdam: BV Haast Records, 1990).

²⁰ Mario Baroni, Rossana Dalmonte, and Francesca Magnani, *Bruno Maderna, Documenti* (Milano: Suvini Zerboni, 1985), 229.

(For conciseness, I will refer to it as *Dimensioni II*.) It should be mentioned, as well, that *Dimensioni II* was typically not played in its entirety for any performance of *Hyperion*, but used like source material in the final construction, broken up and spread across the performance. In the Venice performance (1964), *Dimensioni II* was used “as a soundtrack to the appearance of technological devices” within the staging.²¹ Even though in what follows I analyze the entirety of *Dimensioni II*—a form in which it never appears in a performance of *Hyperion*—it is nevertheless my belief that Maderna’s use of these fragments represents a form of synecdoche, where the parts allude to the whole.²²

Like *Le Rire*, another *Hyperion* component for tape composed two years later (also composed well before Maderna seems to have had any conception of incorporating the pieces into a staged work), *Dimensioni II* does not contain any overt reference to Hölderlin. Instead, the text for *Dimensioni II* was provided by composer/writer Hans G. Helms in the form of a set of phonemes.

Helms was an important figure at Darmstadt in his own right. As Amy Beal has noted, he was instrumental in promoting Cage’s music in the 1960s, and worked, along with Heinz-Klaus Metzger, toward a more politicized reading of Cage’s music.²³

Artistically and intellectually, Helms was something of a polyglot. He was known as a

²¹ Baroni and Dalmonte, *Bruno Maderna, Documenti*, 230.

²² The incorporation of existing works also marks another way in which *Hyperion* differs from other “open” works. The fact that entire pieces are recycled and incorporated into new compositions undercuts the autonomy of both the original and the new work. In the case of *Dimensioni II*, Maderna used it not only in *Hyperion*, but also in his 1972 radio work *Ages*, using text by Shakespeare. This approach self-borrowing results in an intertextual relationship between Maderna’s compositions, reminiscent of the way in which themes and words in certain poetry (notably Hölderlin and Celan) recur and accrue meaning through their associations with other contexts.

²³ Amy Beal, *New Music, New Allies: American Experimental Music in West Germany From the Zero Hour to Reunification* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 98.

writer, critic, and composer, and spent considerable time in the late 1950s at the Cologne electronic music studios with Gottfried Michael Koenig. He also studied philosophical and sociological topics with Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, among others, and comparative linguistics with Roman Jakobson.²⁴ As the text he wrote for Maderna attests, Helms applied serial ordering techniques he learned from his colleagues at Darmstadt to the writing of literature.

A program note written by Helms for the Venice performance of *Hyperion* explained, “This text was written with the intention to exclude any explicit sense of the word (sema); Only the vocal sounds (phonemes) would constitute the material of the text, as well as the entirety of the musical work.”²⁵ It is likely that the preoccupation with the phonetic construction of language came at least in part from the tactile experiences both Maderna and Helms had working in electronic music studios. The act of splicing magnetic tape inevitably resulted in fragmentation of sounds into its component parts, whether intentional or not. Placing a cut in the middle of a word, for example, would separate a consonant from its vowel sound, revealing its inner components.

Only the pre-compositional stage of *Dimensioni II* can be considered collaborative in the sense that Helms constructed a series of phonemes with no notion of how Maderna would employ them. Put another way, Helms had exclusive control over the generation of the text, but no input on the final product. Likewise, those same phonemes were then recorded by soprano Cathy Berberian who was free to interpret them, but again had no sense of the overall form the composition would take. Only when

²⁴ Stefan Fricke, “Helms, Hans G,” *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/12753 (accessed November 29, 2011).

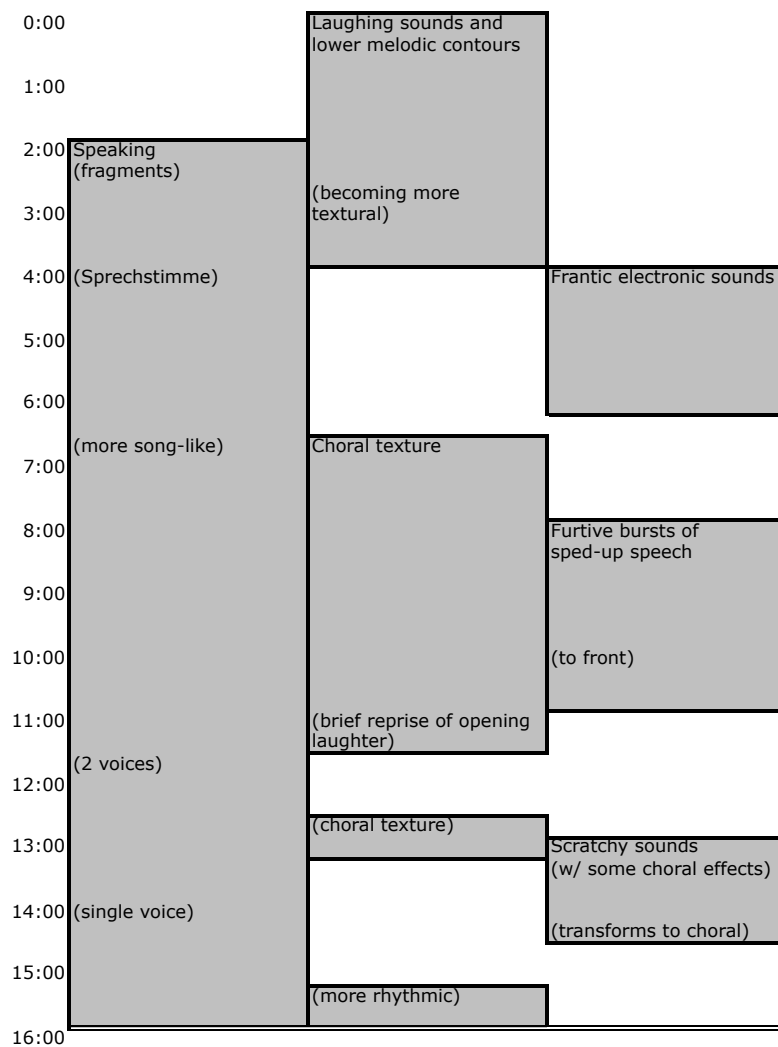
²⁵ Baroni and Dalmonte, *Bruno Maderna, Documenti*, 229.

the tangible sound material had been amassed did Maderna begin the work of arranging it into a composed whole.²⁶ This means that the composition was collaborative only in the sense that Helms and Berberian pre-formed much of the compositional material; Maderna, however, shaped the final composition.

Reflecting an economy of means that, like serial methods, tries to make elements of the composition relate to a single basic idea, the sounds in *Dimensioni II* all came from the source material recorded by Berberian. So while there are many electronic sounds that bear no resemblance to Berberian's voice, these are achieved through various processing techniques like ring modulation, acceleration, filtering, and layering. It is difficult to assess how consistent Maderna may have been in this endeavor and whether other sounds not derived from the phonemes may have found their way into the composition. Many of the sounds were processed in such a way that almost no trace of the original voice remains and they sound almost fully electronic or percussive.

Dimensioni II can only be reduced into sections or large phrases with considerable difficulty. While there are clear differences in content and sound between various portions, there are rarely any markers that point to a clear section break. In most cases, processes slowly develop and a new section is only retroactively revealed to have begun. The whole work can be heard as containing three large streams of material, each following its own development (See Example 11). Those streams combine to reveal moments with a definable character, but provide few sectional divisions; instead, the result is a constantly evolving texture. The streams roughly correspond to the types of

²⁶ Fearn, *Bruno Maderna*, 89.



Example 11: Formal map of streams in *Dimensioni II*

sounds and processing they contain. In the first stream, there are the recorded phonemes, without electronic manipulation. The second contains phonemes that have been manipulated, most often by means of adjusting the pitch and speed, but whose source is still recognizable. This stream also features added reverberation, creating frequent choral

effects. The final stream is comprised of sounds that have been manipulated to an extent that obscures their source, and are deployed in a primarily textural manner.

Dimensioni II opens with sounds from the second of the three categories. The phonemes are sped up dramatically, and presented in such a way that the resulting sound mimics laughter. The cheerful nature of this laughter is belied by a more melancholy quasi-melodic contour in a lower register, which crescendos from a quiet beginning, and seems to have been achieved by slowing much same material and applying reverberation. After about two minutes, the laughing is developed in such a way that its relation to an external referent is diminished and sounds more like texture than actual laughter. Into this texture, Maderna subtly begins to insert short whispered unprocessed phonemes that slowly aggregate into utterances that sound like speech, but without any defined meaning. The laughing texture meanwhile recedes to the background. The effect of these speech-like statements is one of hearing words in a completely foreign text, where the listener can nevertheless understand something of the emotional intent, because of inflection. Some have evocative and distinctive formations, like the exclamation “Tessa, Pish!” that ends the first section. But here, there is no original meaning, nothing to decode; all that remains is empty inflection. And yet, the inflection keeps these statements from becoming just sounds, or purely musical; they seem balanced in a space between music and speech.

In the section that follows, punctuated by flourishes where the laughing sounds finally become fully abstract and almost bird-like, the vocals now move towards song and *Sprechstimme*. The next several minutes seem to play in this nebulous area that both is and is not speech. The vocalizations are at times delicate and flirtatious, and at times

recede into electronic textures. Beginning at about 8:00, Maderna layers phonemes to achieve a choral texture. More voices continue to enter such that the phonemes no longer seem to derive from a single speaking subject, but sound as if in conversation, although I should stress that all these “voices” are still spoken by Berberian.

After a sudden spike and furtive gesture occurring near the 10-minute mark, a new section begins and presents an extended “oration.” This “oration,” of course, does not contain any overt meanings, but seems to mimic the declamatory style of a political address. The speech ends with a very brief reprise of the laughter that opened the piece, followed by a section featuring counterpoint and more melodic vocal expressions. Throughout this section, the background electronic sounds compete with and ultimately dominate the phonemes. Between 14:30 and 14:55 the chaos finally takes over and then ends abruptly in silence. Simple speech then emerges hesitatingly from that silence.

In the final section, lasting just over 30 seconds, Maderna layers processed phonemes arranged rhythmically to create an almost ritualistic feeling, promoting a sense that the work is arriving at its end. The ritual, however, quickly subsides for one final speech-like utterance. The work ends, somewhat surprisingly, in the middle of a thought: “ax, ni-naʒaroʊ, ni-naʒaroʊ, tʃa-a, a.”²⁷ The final “a” drops off without reaching a satisfying punctuation point, leaving the listener with the impression that the recording was simply turned off.²⁸

²⁷ Phonetic transcription of the final line in consultation with *The Handbook of the International Phonetic Association* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 18-26. A rendering in English syllables might be: “Ach, nee-nazsharo, nee-nazsharo, tcha-a, ah.”

²⁸ In the context of philosophical music, however, defying expectation cannot be assumed to be any kind of compositional error.

Although *Dimensioni II*, as I have noted, only seems to have been retroactively related to *Hyperion*—there were no references to Hölderlin at the time of its composition, and nothing in the composition hints that it was destined to become part of a larger project—I would like to consider the reasons why it may have proved amenable to such an incorporation. One clue as to the way that both Helms’s and Hölderlin’s works were understood at Darmstadt can be seen in the correspondences between Adorno’s essays on the two figures. Coincidentally, his “Presuppositions” (1960) on the work of Helms and his “Parataxis” (1964) on the late works of Hölderlin are collected consecutively in *Notes to Literature*. It should be remarked that this connection is not explicit in either essay—neither essay references the primary figure of the other. Each essay in turn connects the author in question to other literary figures: for Helms it is Joyce and Proust, while for Hölderlin it is Beckett. And indeed, many of Adorno’s writings return to common themes and preoccupations regardless of the topic at hand.

In “Parataxis,” as the title indicates, Adorno emphasizes the moments in Hölderlin’s poems that escape subordination into meaning, the discontinuities. Much of the essay is devoted to contesting what Adorno saw as Heidegger’s misuse of Hölderlin to justify his own philosophical ideas.²⁹ Instead, as Peter Fenves reports, Adorno attempts “to escape the threat of philosophical—and in particular, Heideggerian—dogma, on the one hand, and the skepticism of mere philological exegesis, on the other.”³⁰ To this end Adorno claims that, to the extent that Hölderlin’s works contain a philosophical message at all, that message is one that elides the very possibility of a message. The most

²⁹ Peter Fenves, “Measure for Measure” in *The Solid Letter*, 28.

³⁰ *Ibid.* 28.

important moments in Hölderlin, therefore, are not those that contain a decipherable meaning, but those where meaning is obscure.

Adorno's definition of "parataxis" does not arrive until halfway through the essay, when he clarifies that parataxes are "artificial disturbances that evade the logical hierarchy of a subordinating syntax."³¹ This has the effect of forcing the text to lose its capacity for discursive meaning, but perhaps elevate its aesthetic potential. Adorno compares this method to musical composition, which he calls "aconceptual synthesis." If Hölderlin's poetry aims at "aconceptual synthesis," however, in poetry—as opposed to music—that synthesis "turns against its medium," because words by their nature seem to impart meaning. The "artificial disturbances" and juxtapositions in Hölderlin's poetry are used precisely to emphasize discontinuity and the gaps between words over the words themselves.

In "Presuppositions," Adorno situates the work of Helms as a development of the same tendencies that were at work in Hölderlin. "Presuppositions" was delivered in Cologne on October 27, 1960 for a reading by Helms.³² It opens with the assertion that "Essential to such a text is the shock with which it forcibly interrupts communication." The text in question, *Fa:m' Ahniesgwow*, is not wholly composed of phonemes like the one written for Maderna, but shares many of the same constructive procedures to manipulate phonemes, as well as material collected from various languages and sources. Adorno, in fact, deemphasizes those portions of Helms's work that contain intelligible

³¹ Adorno, "Parataxis," 131.

³² In 1960, the summer courses were from July 6 to July 17, and Adorno was not present at the Summer Courses that year (See Chapter I).

text in favor of the phonetic and wholly artificial sections, to the point that he could almost be talking about the text for *Dimensioni II* and not *Fa:m' Ahniesgwow*.

A notable parallel between Adorno's readings of Hölderlin and Helms can be seen in the fact that Adorno describes the composition of texts by both writers in terms of "serialism"; and while the connection to actual serial practice was explicit in Helms, the same cannot be said of Hölderlin.³³ In both cases, Adorno understands adherence to a serial method as a kind of deference to the material of language itself. In "Parataxis," he writes:

In poetry, unlike music, a conceptual synthesis turns against its medium; it becomes a cognitive dissociation. Hence Hölderlin merely suspends the traditional logic of synthesis. Benjamin captured this state of affairs descriptively in the concept of the series: "So that here, at the center of the poem, human beings, divinities, and princes are arranged serially, catapulted, as it were, out of their old orderings."³⁴

Regarding Helms:

The whole [of *Fa:m' Ahniesgwow*] is composed in structures, put together in each case from a series of dimensions, or, in the terminology of serial music, parameters that appear autonomously, or combined, or ordered hierarchically. A model may help to clarify the affinity of this procedure with the serial technique in music. The crisis of meaning as a phenomenal whole in the texture of its parts did not lead serial composers to simply liquidate meaning. Stockhausen retains meaning, that is, the immediately apperceptible context, as a limit value.³⁵

³³ See Kirk Wetters, "Serialism Before the Letter: Adorno's 'Parataxis'", unpublished manuscript, December 1999. Adorno's use of "serialism" ["Reihen"] to describe Hölderlin's method explicitly references Benjamin, and not Schoenberg, as the source of the term. In my brother's reading, it is possible to read Adorno's understanding of Schoenberg's method as being derived from Hölderlin via Benjamin, and not the other way around.

³⁴ Adorno, "Parataxis," 130.

³⁵ Adorno, "Presuppositions," 104.

Both Helms and Hölderlin, then, are understood to have placed the medium of language itself as the subject of their works. And only a forced unintelligibility—a moment when language breaks—is able to make language appear, if only fleetingly, as its own subject. Adorno ends his essay on Helms, “The rupture, which the work does not bridge but rather, lovingly and hopefully, makes the agent of its form, remains, the figure of a substance that transcends it. It expresses meaning through its ascetic stance toward meaning.”³⁶

Hölderlin’s work made its own progression towards unintelligibility. Late in his life, when he lived in isolation, he would allegedly repeat the meaningless word “pallaksch.”³⁷ It is in this “pallaksh” that Maderna’s *Dimensioni II* and the work of Hans G. Helms resonates most strongly with Adorno’s *Parataxis*. The whole phonetic work of *Dimensioni II* seems to stand at the end of Hölderlin’s trajectory toward unintelligibility, as an entire work composed of nothing but his “mad words.” This is in spite of the fact that Hölderlin’s *Hyperion oder der Eremit in Griechenland* would have to be called an early work.

Aria

The next component of *Hyperion*, to which I will devote the remainder of my analysis, is the *Aria* for soprano, flute, and orchestra. There is ample support to assert that it is the centerpiece for any performance of *Hyperion*—the composition that most strongly embodies the goals of the whole—as it appears to be the minimum requirement that

³⁶ Ibid. 108.

³⁷ This “mad word” would receive particular attention in Paul Celan’s poem, *Tübingen, Jänner*, which also explored Hölderlin’s trajectory toward madness.

Section I					
	Time	Bars	Text	Instrumentation	Character
1	0:00-0:15	1		orch.	<i>Rallentando</i> coupled with scored disintegration. Begins with chaotic texture and thins to almost nothing.
2 a	0:15-0:37	2-7	Wie eine lange entsetzliche Wüste lag die Vergangenheit...	sop., orch.	Wedge-like soprano line, spiralling out from E-flat, scored accel; Orchestra also uses wedge formations w/ step motion passing between voices.
b	0:37-0:45	8-9	...da vor mir...	sop., orch.	declamatory punctuated style on three words.
c	0:45-1:22	10-19	..und mit höllischem Grimme vertilgt ich jeden Rest von dem, was einst mein Herz geliebt hatte und erhoben.	sop., orch.	becoming agitated to coincide with "höllischem Grimme" ["furious anger"], then lyrical/melodic through the remainder of the segment
d	1:22-1:42	20-23		orch.	Tail for section II. Trombones enter with dramatic drop in overall tessitura.
3	1:42-2:15	24-37	Dann fuhr ich wieder auf mit wütendem Hohngelächter über mich und alles, lausche mit Lust dem gräßlichen Widerhall, und das Geheul der Tschakale, das durch die Nacht her von allen Seiten gegen mich drang, tat meiner zerrütteten Seele wirklich wohl.	sop. (Sprechstimme), orch.	sparse orchestral interruptions in a fairly straightforward presentation of the text in <i>Sprechstimme</i> .
4 a	2:15-3:10	38-53		orch. (primarily strings)	high piercing tremel/sustained notes gradually thinning to string harmonics, then <i>normale</i> with less dissonance and a generally lowering register.
b	3:10-3:18	54		orch. (tutti)	abbreviated reprise of <i>Rallentando</i> section (Bar 1)
5	3:18-3:49	55-60	Eine dumpfe, fürchterliche Stille folgte diesen zernichtenden Stunden, eine eigentliche Totenstille! Ich suchte nun keine Rettung mehr. Ich achtete nichts. Ich war, wie ein Tier unter der Hand des Schlächters.	sop. (speaking), b. fl., orch.	Soprano speaks text, while bass flute seems to take on role of 'vocal expression.'
6	3:49-5:35	61-88	Noch ahnd ich, ohne zu finden. // Ich frage die Sterne, und sie antworten nicht. Aus mir selbst, wenn ich mich frage, tönen mystische Sprüche, Träume ohne Deutung.	sop. (singing), flutes, ob., orch.	Soprano, flute, alto flute join bass flute in playing melodic counterpoint. Long melismas in the soprano further the feeling that the soprano is often just another instrument. Text becomes melos.
7	5:35-6:45	89 BIS		b. fl. (cadenza)	
8	6:45-7:8	90-97	Ich weiß nicht, wie mir geschieht, wenn ich sie ansehe, diese unergündliche Natur.	sop., b. fl.	

Example 12: Formal map of *Aria* showing structural divisions, text, and orchestration. Timings refer to the recording by Peter Eötvös.

	Time	Bars	Text	Instrumentation	Character
9 a	7:18-7:39	97-105		orch. (intro)	high sustained woodwinds with dense pitched mallet percussion and piano.
b	7:39-8:58	106-140	Und diesen himmlischen Geschöpfe [Maderna changes this to ihr? Weil sie nicht verarrnt war, wie ich, weil sie den Himmel noch im Herzen trug, und nicht sich selbst verloren hatte, wie ich, nicht eines andern Wesens, nicht fremden Reichturns bedurfte, um die verödete Stelle auszufüllen, weil sie nicht unterzugehen fürchten konnte, wie ich, und sich mit dieser Todesangst an ein anderes zu hängen...]	sop., orch. (full)	Dense orchestral texture beginning with an emphasis on pitched percussion, gradually adding sustained winds and strings, becoming more frantic, and building to a climax at bar 140.
10	8:58-9:10	140BIS	...wie ich. // Das alles ging mir, wie ein Schwert, durch die Seele.	sop. (spoken)	"wie ich" is carried over from the previous fragment. After a pause the soprano speaks the next sentence unaccompanied.

Section II

11	0:00-1:37	140-164		b. fl., orch	slow-moving counterpoint in strings and winds, with the solo bass flute subtly playing a few notes in preparation for more developed solo in following section.
12	1:37-2:20	165-173	Mein ganzes Wesen verstummt und lauscht, wenn der leise geheimnisvolle Hauch des Abends mich anweht.	sop., b. fl., a. fl., marimba	soprano and flutes play melodic lines in counterpoint, while the marimbas add some texture.
13 a	2:20-2:45	174-176		sop. (humming)	Soprano mimics flute cadenza, further blurring lines between voice and instrument.
b	2:45-3:12	177-182	Meinem Herzen ist wohl in dieser Dämmerung.	sop., 3 a. fl.	soprano and three alto flutes play melodic lines in counterpoint
c	3:12-3:41	182BIS		a. fl. (cadenza)	more virtuosic flute solo
d	3:41-4:45	183-191	Ist sie unser Element, diese Dämmerung? Warum kann ich nicht ruhen darinnen?	sop., 3 a. fl.	soprano and three alto flutes play melodic lines in counterpoint

Example 12 (cont.)

separates a performance of *Hyperion* from a performance of one or two component parts. The first performance to be called *Hyperion* was also the first to contain the *Aria*, and all but one of the subsequent realizations included it. But there are also musical and poetic reasons why the *Aria* is the key to understanding the *Hyperion* project as a whole.

Maderna selected seven text fragments from the third and fifth letters of the so-called *Thalia-Fragment* to arrive at a 274-word block of text for the *Aria*. By removing the fragments from their context within the letters, Maderna further disrupts any sense that the composite text is presenting a narrative. Instead, the fragments seem to express a more generalized meditation on the ineffable and man's relationship to nature. Here again, Maderna, in his selection, emphasizes Hölderlin's tendency towards unintelligibility. By subverting narrative continuity, he thus extracts something that resembles late Hölderlin from this early work.

The *Aria* is divided into two large sections that vary widely in orchestration and size (see Example 12). The first is roughly ten minutes using the full orchestra, while the second is only five and, with the exception of a small orchestral introduction, scored for only soprano and three alto-flutes. These two sections are joined by a peculiar *caesura*. At the end of the first, the soprano finishes her penultimate line with an abrupt transition to *Sprechstimme*. This is followed by a fermata marked "lunga" ("long") and the soprano speaks, "Everything penetrated my soul like a sword."³⁸ Maderna then writes, "dopo breve sospensione, ATTACCA" ("after a long suspension, *attacca*"). The performance indication *attacca* is well known to English-speaking musicians, and is used to instruct the performer to immediately "attack" (i.e. begin) a following movement without

³⁸ Fearn, *Bruno Maderna*, 132. "Das alles ging mir, wie ein Schwert, durch die Seele."

temporal break. What, then, does it mean for Maderna to write, essentially, “after a long suspension [that is, a break], begin playing the following section without a break”?

Peter Eötvös’s recorded performance from 1994 provides one plausible answer.³⁹ In his recording, the *Aria*’s two sections are divided not just by a “long suspension,” but by an entire piece. At the break, Eötvös then performs another component of *Hyperion*, *Hyperions Schicksalslied* (“Hyperion’s Song of Fate”), for choir. The *Aria*, in this case, should not be thought of as being broken by the *Schicksalslied*, but rather the *Aria* is suspended (in the sense of being held “in suspension”) while the *Schicksalslied* emerges from that *caesura*—as if the perceptual time of the *Aria* stops even though clock time, and the perceptual time of the rest of the work, continues.⁴⁰

The *Aria* begins already in middle of a deceleration (Example 12, 1a), marked with a pulse of sixty eighth-note beats per second and immediately beginning a *rallentando* to forty beats per second. The harp, lower strings, and timpani begin by playing ostinato tuplet figures—groupings of three, four, five, and seven—played simultaneously. Each instrument plays a small set of two or three pitches, filling an eight-note chromatic texture from B-flat to F-sharp, missing the E-natural. As the tempo slows, the distribution of the tuplets favors longer durations and rests are inserted into the ostinato figures. At the end of the deceleration the texture is almost empty, creating a feeling of diffusion. Just as this deceleration is in full effect, a gong is played on an E-

³⁹ Bruno Maderna, *Hyperion*, cond. Peter Eötvös, Asko Ensemble (France: Disques Montaigne, 1994).

⁴⁰ It is unclear whether the *Aria* was separated in this manner in previous performances. However, even if this is an interpretive decision by Eötvös, it nevertheless expresses the meaning implicit in Maderna’s performance indication.

flat.⁴¹ The result of this passage where a texture is simultaneously both created and erased is to paradoxically thematize the disintegration for the rest of the work. That is to say, thematization implies the integration of the musical utterances across the work, and here Maderna makes their non-integration into something of a structural and therefore unifying principle. Given that this process of disintegration would typically appear in the middle of a realization of *Hyperion*, the opening of the Aria may represent a defining moment for *Hyperion* as a whole. By opening with a disintegration, Maderna opens up a musical space where stylistic disjunctions can become coherent.

The section that follows, and also sounds introductory, emphasizes this theme by starting again, this time with the soprano (Example 12, 1b). Maderna's sketches, some of which are included in Raymond Fearn's book, show little of the kind of rigorous serial method found in works like *Il canto sospeso*.⁴² Instead, he appears to have constructed streams of pitch material in the form of scales, at first based on the initial chord outlined in the first bar. From those streams, he seems to pull pitches intuitively to construct the melodies and textures of the *Aria*. The sketches show scales above and below which he wrote the text, selecting the notes connected by arrows to construct the melody. Beginning on a low E-flat, the soprano's melodic line gradually spirals out in a wedge-like fashion, incorporating successively larger intervals, but always returning to E-flat.

The two introductory sections in quick succession create a disjunction that undercuts the typical sense of musical progression. The opening line of text reads, in English, "The past lay all before me, like a long and frightful waste-land..." The

⁴¹ This gong note also seems to serve the practical function of giving the soprano her starting pitch for the next section.

⁴² Fearn, *Bruno Maderna*, Example 3.10, 147-152.

grammatical construction in German is important, however, because it places “da vor mir” (“there before me”) at the end of this fragment: “Wie eine lange entsetzliche Wüste lag die Vergangenheit da vor mir...” The rhythmic distribution of the melodic line places a clear stylistic break between “die Vergangenheit” (“the past”) and “da vor mir.” The soprano changes from a legato and melodic style of delivery to punctuated staccato notes (marked “non [vibrato]”). The orchestral accompaniment also shifts from playing interlocking counterpoint to a held chord in the violins and cellos. At first glance, it would seem an odd choice to sever the melodic line mid-thought; “da vor mir” clearly belongs with the text that preceded it. The effect of this break, however, is to create a spatialization of the text, and the work seems to turn upon itself and look backward at what is to come. Hölderlin’s text already expresses this paradox: “the past lay *before* me.”

As the *Aria* progresses, it becomes evident that it revolves around a distinction between a primarily textural orchestra and a broadly conceived vocal line.⁴³ (See Example 12 where the orchestration of the “vocal line” is emphasized with boldface.) As the *Aria* progresses, it is in fact the flute, rather than the soprano, that asserts itself as the core of this lyricism. As Virginio Peucher remembered, Maderna “imagined the protagonist in *Hyperion* as an instrument and that the instrument would be a flute, with its player [Severino] Gazzelloni.” Peucher continued, “I understood that he aimed high and that, without giving it a name, it brought Poetry directly into action.”⁴⁴ Maderna’s choice of the flute for this pivotal role was no accident. Hölderlin’s caretaker Zimmer provided

⁴³ A similar division of the orchestra occurs in Sir Harrison Birtwistle’s *Secret Theatre* to be discussed in Chapter V.

⁴⁴ Fearn, *Bruno Maderna*, 129.

him with both a flute and piano, which were some of main activities during his years of isolation from 1807 until his death in 1843. The flute also resonates with the ancient Greek *aulos*, a single or double reed instrument most similar to a modern oboe, but which has frequently been mistranslated as “flute.”⁴⁵

In many respects, there is little reason to see the flute and soprano as two separate entities, but, rather, as a split subjectivity—perhaps a further reference to the *aulos*, which was typically played two at a time. In the first Darmstadt performance of the *Aria*, then still incomplete, the soprano part was played entirely by the flute. Maderna further emphasizes the continuity between the two parts by using an alto-flute, rather than the standard C-flute, so that the flute occupies same timbral space as the soprano. Moreover, there is a profound affinity between the type of music played by the flute and sung by the soprano. Both parts are lyrical and grouped into discrete, expressive phrases, and are melodically little different; the flute part could be seen as a wordless version of the soprano. In a staged version of *Hyperion* where the flute is developed as a dramatic character, the entrance of the soprano in the *Aria* almost seems to represent the moment when the flute—that is the “character” of the flute—is finally able to speak.

In the third section, the soprano uses *Sprechstimme* to present the text, removing to a small extent its melodic character. After the orchestral interlude, the soprano returns in section five, this time speaking the text, while the bass flute enters to take over the soprano’s melodic function. Here the vocal line is conceived as an abstract lyricism, rather than a vehicle for expressing Hölderlin’s texts, and the vocal line also exists

⁴⁵ Annie Bélis, “Aulos,” *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/01532 (accessed April 22, 2012).

independent of an instrumental formation. When the flute enters as the soprano speaks the text in section five, it is as if it has assumed the soprano's expressive function. And in a similar, but reversed, gesture near the end, the soprano transitions to humming her melodies, as if trying to access the flute's side of her subjectivity.

The *Aria*'s final section further emphasizes the splitting of the soprano's subjectivity across the vocal/melodic line (Example 12, Section 13). The soprano's final words are: "My heart is well in this twilight. Is it our element, this twilight? Why can I not rest in it?" Here the flute accompaniment has undergone another doubling (or, in fact, tripling). Two more alto-flutes now accompany the solo alto-flute (who in some stagings was still on stage while the other two were seated with the orchestra), at first playing in strict canon. If the flute and soprano are to be understood as a single but split subject, the inclusion of two additional flute parts serves to further destabilize that subject, even as the soprano's text laments its failure to find that stability.

In a staged version of *Hyperion*, the soprano and the flutist are not protagonists in the traditional sense: she is not equivalent to the Hyperion of Hölderlin's novel, rather she gives voice to the idea behind the texts. Further, as Raymond Fearn notes, Maderna conceived the "drama" on stage as a representation not of physical reality but of interior reality. This distinction has profound implications for the structure of the work, and the relationship of its performance to its idea. In a work that imitates (in the sense of *mimesis*) interiority instead of exteriority, the drama becomes allegorical. The requirement that sequences, settings, and even component parts remain constant is unnecessary, because the drama becomes an imitation not of a physical reality, but of an idea, which can have any number of actualizations. Any given performance of *Hyperion*

is akin to a translation where the goal is to translate the idea of a text, not individual words. Each performance of *Hyperion* aims to render a basic idea that is not fully captured by any of the scores or components into a single physical manifestation, while the “work” of *Hyperion* stubbornly resists codification into either its visual representation (the score) or its realization (performance); it exists in the echo between the two. The idea of *Hyperion* is not so much a decipherable message, as the work is founded on the very possibility or impossibility of that idea.

§

If Darmstadt is assumed to show a break with the past and the romantic tradition, Maderna and his *Hyperion* suggest something different. Maderna stands as a pivot between the romantic tradition and post-war modernism, and manages to offer a critique of the latent continuities between the two. And yet, Maderna does not express the kind of self-fulfilling program of romanticism suggested by Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy. Instead, he attempts to salvage something of German *Kultur* while nevertheless maintaining a critique of the ways it was deployed under National Socialism. Like Erasmus in Chapter I, Maderna refuses to break from tradition but attempts to conduct his critique from within. In so doing, he declares himself ideologically opposed to the aesthetic extremisms and dogmatism found on either side of the fissure. As if in echo of Erasmus’s equivocation, Hölderlin lends him support:

Being at one is god-like and good, but human, too human, the mania
Which insists there is only the One, one country, one truth, and one way.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ “Wurzel Alles Übels” from “Epigrams” (1799): “Einig zu seyn, ist göttlich und gut; woher ist die Sucht denn/ Unter den Menschen, daß nur Einer und Einest nur sei?” Friedrich Hölderlin, *Selected Poems and Fragments*, trans. Michael Hamburger (New

Hyperion, even more than his *Ritratto di Erasmo*, takes equivocation as its structural principle. *Ritratto di Erasmo* made equivocation its topic, but here, the entire fabric of the composition seems to equivocate; that is to say, it embodies its equivocation. The *Hyperion* project, by virtue of its unwillingness to be any “one thing” ends in diffusion. All that remains are the residual traces of the compositional impulse and musical language: the abstract lyricism hovering tenuously between the soprano and her counterpart in the flute.

York: Penguin Books, 1998), 18-19. It should go without saying that the author of those lines should never have served as a representative for any political agenda, let alone Nazism.

Chapter V: Children of Darmstadt

The Darmstadt Summer Courses continue to this day on a semi-annual basis, but something of its aura has palpably changed since those first two decades. Richard Barrett, a composer to be discussed below, reports that before he attended in 1984 he knew that it would not “have much in common with the ‘Darmstadt’ of the 1950s and 1960s which [he had] read so much about.”¹ And yet, the *idea* of Darmstadt, an idea that had little to do with the actual event, would continue to loom over the entire twentieth century.

In a recent talk about his music,² Sir Harrison Birtwistle, a composer who attended the Darmstadt Summer Courses three times in the capacity of a clarinetist,³ and the final composer to be considered in this chapter, discussed the importance of pre-compositional plans to his working method. For his own works, he reported having felt a certain obligation as a young composer to make such plans, but also anxiety about his inability to adhere to them. He attributed this concern for pre-composition to being, in his words, a “child of Darmstadt.” This from a composer who did not study composition, at least not directly, at the courses. An entire generation of composers, therefore, some who have never even been to Darmstadt, nevertheless seem to trace their lineages to an almost intangible approach to composition embodied in the idea of Darmstadt.

¹ See Appendix 3.

² The talk was on March 1, 2011 at the Music Library of Harvard University, to discuss a new work that was to be premiered by the Boston Symphony Orchestra later the same week.

³ Sir Harrison Birtwistle in conversation with John Tusa, *BBC Radio 3*, www.bbc.co.uk/radio3/johntusainterview/birtwistle_transcript.shtml (accessed January 7, 2012).

The act of composition, at Darmstadt, started from the idea of the idea. To compose in the wake of Darmstadt is to ask, each time, *what is music?* Here my project also takes a personal turn, because my interest in Darmstadt comes directly from my own experiences as a composer. While I never attended the courses, I was always fascinated by its music. The name “Darmstadt” always seemed to stand for an intangible approach to composition. In the end, what brought me to this topic were my experiences as a composer, and my heartfelt sense that I myself am a “child of Darmstadt.”

In this final chapter, I aim to assess the ways that this *idea* of Darmstadt proliferated in the second half of the twentieth century by examining four works that would be unthinkable without the context provided by Darmstadt and the philosophical turn. As with the previous chapter, the focus will be on the music, and finding new ways of understanding music implicated by this turn. Each work to be discussed can be considered in at least one way—most in several ways—to be a development of themes introduced in the first four chapters. It is not my aim to provide a definitive sense of Darmstadt’s impact, but rather, with four emblematic case studies, to show how an interpretive method that accounts for the “philosophical turn” can provide insights hidden from more traditional analytical approaches. Because the works themselves diverge from each other in significant ways, no single analytical approach will result in a satisfactory interpretation. The sections, “Concrete,” “Instrumental Concrete,” “Choreography,” and “...like a secret theatre...” each take up important works by Iannis Xenakis, Helmut Lachenmann, Richard Barrett, and Harrison Birtwistle respectively.

Concrete

I begin with a work, and a genre, which though not properly a “child” of Darmstadt, can perhaps be called a sibling. As we have seen in the previous chapter, there was considerable overlap between the work done in Darmstadt and at the electronic music studios in Paris, Cologne, and Milan. Although Darmstadt built its own studio in the mid-1950s under the direction of Hermann Hei, it was not a primary site for the production of electronic music and *musique concrète*; nonetheless, many electronic pieces made at other sites were premiered at Darmstadt, and the topic of electronic music was a perennial favorite.⁴ As we saw in Chapter IV, electronic music was widely seen to be a source for many of the new compositional methods pursued at Darmstadt.

The term *musique concrète*, as it was originally proposed by Pierre Schaeffer at his *Groupe de Recherches Musicales*, was intended to emphasize the ways that it isolated individual elements of sound material such that they could be treated as tangible objects.⁵ The “electronic music” from Milan and Cologne featured considerably less emphasis on the natural sources of sounds, incorporating electronically generated and processed sound to a much greater degree. Nevertheless, *musique concrète* and “electronic music” became

⁴ Gianmario Borio and Hermann Danuser, *Im Zenit der Moderne: die Internationalen Ferienkurse für Neue Musik Darmstadt 1946-1966: Geschichte und Dokumentation in vier Bänden*, vol. 2 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach, 1997), 63-64. The reason why Darmstadt itself would not be a primary site for production is fairly obvious. First and foremost, the amount of time required to bring a work to completion means that it would not have been feasible to schedule enough studio time for all the students who would have want to compose electronic music.

⁵ Ibid. 82.

largely synonymous during the years that followed,⁶ promoting the idea that all electronic music represented something akin to sculpture and architecture—that is, the manipulation of “concrete” building blocks into a stable finished form. And indeed, as we will see in the next section, the idea of *musique concrète* would have profound influence on at least one German composer who was not directly affiliated with Schaeffer’s group.

No work more succinctly captures the essence of *musique concrète* than the miniature *Concret PH* (1958) by Iannis Xenakis, even if, as Agostino Di Scipio remarks, Xenakis’s treatment of the sound material places the work “at the margins of *musique concrète*.”⁷ The entire piece lasts a mere two minutes and 45 seconds, and was composed as an introduction for Edgard Varèse’s *Poème électronique* at the Philips Pavilion at the Brussels World’s Fair, 1958.⁸

Concret PH is an exemplary work within the genre of *musique concrète*, because it represents a philosophical exegesis of the genre. It seems to reduce the idea of manipulating “isolated individual elements” to its logical and most basic state in two simultaneously contradictory ways: first, the entire composition seems, at least on first listening, to be a single sound event. The whole work sounds like a small splice of some natural event or sound state; as Di Scipio notes, that sound is most often heard as the breaking of glass.⁹ This, however, is completely at odds with the way Xenakis constructed the piece. It is, rather, made from an enormous set of tiny splices taken from

⁶ Borio and Danuser cite a 1952 article in the *Darmstädter Echo* where future Darmstadt director Ernst Thomas wrote, “...die heutige Situation der Musique concrète (in Deutschland ekelektronische Musik genannt).” Borio and Danuser, *Im Zenit der Moderne*, vol. 1, 84.

⁷ Agostino Di Scipio, “Compositional Models in Xenakis’s Electroacoustic Music,” *Perspectives of New Music*, vol. 36, no. 2 (Summer, 1998), 203

⁸ James Harley, *Xenakis: His Life in Music* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 18.

⁹ Di Scipio, “Compositional Models,” 213.

a recording of the hissing and crackling of embers. Each segment of tape lasted roughly one second, likely enough to hold only one or two sound impulses.¹⁰ After collecting the material, Xenakis then combined those tiny fragments into longer textures, which he layered until he had reconstituted a constantly transforming texture. The actual manipulated material is therefore reduced to its smallest possible form, that of a single impulse, while the work as a whole presents itself—even if, in factual terms, this is not how it was made—as a single static sound event.

But to accept the proposition that *Concret PH* is a single static sound is to ignore the ways in which Xenakis actively sculpts its shape and morphology, creating what might be called micro gestures within an extremely compacted musical context. A musical gesture, just like a physical gesture, is entirely dependent on its context, such that a continuous hand motion may be perceived as a single gesture, even if it occurs over a very long time-span. *Concret PH*, however, becomes texture at the opposite end of the spectrum. Its gestures are so compact and saturated with individual impulses, that it approaches white noise. But importantly, it only approaches and does not attain a constant texture. In fact, the composition is comprised of four clear sections, roughly equal in length. The first, from 0:00 to 0:43, contains the most consistent texture of the four. Most of the impulses are of the same type: a high, short unpitched burst. There are

¹⁰ Di Scipio claims that each pop and hiss, each auditory impulse resulting from “a tiny explosion which transforms a bit of matter into energy” is treated separately in the composition.” Ibid. 213. This, however, is not technically possible given the constraints of the tape medium, because tape could not be reliably cut to such small sizes. At a tape speed of fifteen inches per second, a splice of the size suggested by Di Scipio (about 200 ms) would be about 1/8 inch (Butch Rovin, personal communication). Curtis Rhoads, instead, writes, “To create the granular texture for [Concret PH], he mixed recordings of burning wood-embers, cut into one-second fragments.” See Curtis Rhoads, *Microsound* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 64.

two distinct streams of sound material that use the same basic material. The first stream forms a background and is sufficiently saturated so that it sounds like white noise. Above this, there are louder and sharper attacks of the same material, which are layered in such a way that they cluster around frequent moments of climax that have a definite rhythmic and gestural character, before subsiding back into background texture. Near the end of the section, Xenakis introduces several lower percussion sounds (the first occurring at 0:28) that outline something of a longer gesture leading into the second section, but only barely succeed in differentiating themselves from the larger texture. If described in terms of foreground and background, the first layer would be background, while the sharper clustered impulses are in the foreground; these percussive events seem to function like a bass line, as if submerged into the texture.

The beginning of the second section at 0:43 marks a dramatic shift in the overall sound, with the entrance of a new layer of sound material above the other two. When this layer begins, it sounds almost melodic, because while the material is still in some sense “unpitched,” it contains noticeably more pitch differentiation than the previous streams. This stream is also more rhythmic than anything that occurred in the first section. None of the streams, the third included, contain anything that could be called a regular pulse, but the impulses in this stream are sparse enough that they do not cluster into static-like clouds. Instead this stream produces long chains of erratic but definable audible rhythms. These rhythms, subjected to further processing and spatialization within the auditory field, are repeated, moving from foreground into the background. As it continues, though, this stream begins to sound less “melodic” and more textural. This is not so much because of further development, compression, or layering of the material, but because the

stream, which was highly compressed from its entrance, begins to challenge the ear's ability to follow its events as separate entities. This is to say that it only seemed melodic in contrast to what had preceded it.

The third section does not enter with anything like the punctuation that started the second, but emerges through a transition from roughly 1:25 to 1:35. During those ten seconds, the background sounds move to the foreground—or perhaps, the foreground seems to be engulfed by the background. The third section, then, is an inversion of the second: the actual sounds are the same, only their placement within the audible field is swapped, so that the more rhythmic sounds of the second section become barely audible.

The final section, like the second, begins with a dramatic introduction of a new third sound stream, sounding something like a can of glass shards being shaken violently several times. After this new sound is introduced, it does not recede into the texture, as in section two, but the other textures seem to be brought forward. What might be called a climax of the entire piece seems to be the result of an oversaturation of the foreground. The work ends with its streams seeming to then differentiate themselves and separate across the stereophonic field, before exiting one at a time in the reverse order of their entrances, ending with the most simple and static.

If, as I said in the preface, musical compositions are in need of a unifying element or *caesura* to allow them to be heard as a single utterance or object, *Concret PH* seems to suggest the opposite: it seems to present itself first and foremost as a concrete thing, and only on closer inspection is it possible to discern the traces of its temporal morphology. Its musical essence seems to be etched just below its audible surface, as if chiseled out of stone. And so the conflict that charges *Concret PH* is precisely between its material and

its construction. Whereas Schaeffer envisioned *musique concrète* as allowing concrete musical material to form the building blocks of a musical work, Xenakis inverted the idea of *musique concrète* in such a way that he both builds and then sculpts the “concrete.”

Instrumental Concrete

In a 1969 publication, the Canadian composer R. Murray Schafer coined the term “schizophonia” to describe the phenomenon, created with the advent of recorded technology, of sounds being divorced from their physical sources.¹¹ The sound of a bottle breaking could then be apprehended independently from its physical reality, and in a generation raised on orchestral recordings it is entirely plausible that someone might be able to identify the sound of an oboe without being able to distinguish the physical instrument from a bassoon. As Schafer would later suggest in *The Tuning of the World*, the development of recording technology and this “schizophonia” in turn had profound implications on how music of all types would be composed. For example, he attributed Schoenberg’s search for an athenatic form of composition to the fact that, once music could be recorded and replayed over and over, it became unnecessary to aid the listener by presenting the same material multiple times. Once music could be recorded, he said, “the recapitulation was on the disc.”¹² This is to say that technical developments lead to musical developments following what might be described analogously as a “feedback loop.” New technologies allow for new modes of musical communication, which in turn suggest new possibilities for technical development.

¹¹ R. Murray Schafer, *The New Soundscape: A Handbook for the Modern Music Teacher* (New York: Associated Music Publishers, 1969), 47.

¹² R. Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (Rochester, VT: Destiny Books, 1993), 113-114. Originally published as *The Tuning of the World* (New York: Random House, 1977).

Nowhere is this “feedback loop” more pronounced than in the instrumental music of the German composer, and pupil of Luigi Nono, Helmut Lachenmann, who famously described some of his own oeuvre as *musique concrète instrumentale*. This paradoxical moniker was meant to declare allegiance to Pierre Schaeffer’s approach, which viewed composition as the organization of tangible sound objects, but apply it back to instrumental music. He suggests the concrete—or isolated—nature of the sounds produced in his works through the use of so-called extended techniques. Rather than “extended,” it would perhaps be more accurate to view them, especially in works like his string quartet, *Gran Torso*, to be discussed below, as “reinvented” techniques, because they do not so much build on existing techniques as start “from nothing.”¹³ The irony of Lachenmann’s allusion to *musique concrète* is that it results in a music that can be rendered on recording only with significant difficulty.

The performative aspect of Lachenmann’s work—and which seems central—only became clear to me when I attended a concert of his music for string quartet. Therefore, in what follows, I will not so much offer an analysis of a work as a recollection of that particularly affecting performance. The concert, on March 30, 2000, was part of that year’s *Ars Musica* festival in Brussels. The program for the night consisted of four string quartets played by the Amati Quartet and the Quatuor Diotima. The Amati Quartet paired *Gran Torso* (1971) with the Third String Quartet of Bartok; Quatuor Diotima played *Reigen Seliger Geiste* (1989) and the first of Hadyn’s Op. 76 “Erdödy” quartets.¹⁴

¹³ “From nothing” is a conscious reference to the title of another Lachenmann composition, *Dal Niente*, for solo clarinet, which also reimagines the possibilities of its instrument from the ground up.

¹⁴ Maarten Beirens, “Ars Musica: aparte klankwereld van Helmut Lachenmann,” *De Standaard*, April 1, 2000,

Lachenmann's quartets—which in the context of a festival for new music were clearly the main attraction—seem to have been paired with works from the standard repertoire with the intention to show the extent to which Lachenmann inverts the traditional interactive procedures of the ensemble.

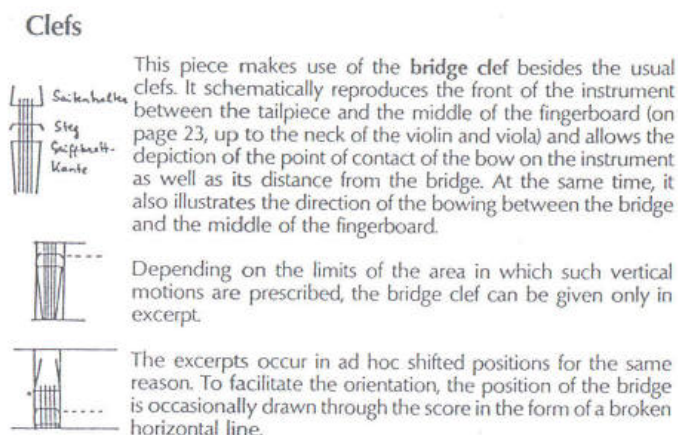
Composer Hans Werner Henze had referred to Lachenmann's music as *musica negativa*, a term that Lachenmann objected to on the basis of its implication that the subversive aspects of his compositions were employed purely for shock value or as an attack on tradition. Instead, while he shared “a weariness with the petrified forms of the bourgeois reception of music” with those he considered to actually be guilty of *musica negativa*, he viewed his own music as a proposition of a new form of the beautiful, rather than an embrace of ugliness.¹⁵ By recasting all elements of the musical logic and the performance situation, he hoped not so much to reveal that the old bourgeois systems of beauty were false as to find that what made them beautiful was different than previously assumed. This amounts to a nuanced version of the *Stunde Null*: Lachenmann does not disavow tradition, but rather opens all aspects of that tradition for re-evaluation. The concert emphasized this point in that the Haydn and Bartok works in no way sounded antiquated or kitsch, nor did the Lachenmann quartets sound like parodies of the earlier works, in spite of the fact that many of the performance techniques, like bowing the backs of the instruments, could have easily sounded like farce.

The score for *Gran Torso* features many technical innovations intended to accurately describe actions to be performed, which have no referent in common practice

www.standaard.be/artikel/detail.aspx?artikelid=DST01042000_052 (accessed February 10, 2012).

¹⁵ David Ryan, “Composer in Interview: Helmut Lachenmann” in *Tempo*, New Series, No. 210 (October, 1999), 20.

notation, or where the actions would diverge so drastically that use of more traditional notation would seem anachronistic. As a result, the score is often not legible as an expression of the sound, because it describes actions that do not immediately suggest a corresponding auditory result. One such notation is the use of what he calls “bridge clef” that shows a scaled model of the instrument’s bridge and strings, so that bowings can be mapped onto a specific physical location on the instrument, rather than a pitch location (See Example 13).



Example 13: A few of the different clefs described on the first page of the score of *Gran Torso*. © 1972 by Musikverlage Hans Gerig, Köln. 1980 assigned to Breitkopf & Härtel, Wiesbaden.

Other elements of its notational style suggest that *Gran Torso* found its source in *musique concrète*. While *Gran Torso* is written in standard meters, each measure is displayed typographically in a way that suggests a series of containers more than a demarcation of linear time (See Example 14). Each container may contain music written

[illegible]

Example 14: First four bars of *Gran Torso*. Note the combination of bridge clef and treble clef in the second bar of the violin II. © 1972 by Musikverlage Hans Gerig, Köln. 1980 assigned to Breitkopf & Härtel, Wiesbaden.

on a staff, but the additional space is used to provide supplementary information and to allow room for alternate notations. The two elements can therefore be combined to show both a traditionally notated note coupled with additional modifications to the performance procedure. For example, the first bar of the second violin shows a held B-flat, above which another line shows the placement of the bow according to the bridge clef.

Structurally, as Ian Pace notes, *Gran Torso* can be described as sectional, because it moves through several textures that distinguish themselves in sound and density.¹⁶ Only rarely, however, are those sections articulated by any clear punctuation; rather, new

¹⁶ Ian Pace, "Negative 1" in *The Musical Times*, vol. 139, no. 1859 (January, 1998), 15.

textures emerge by a process of negotiation between the parts until it becomes clear that something “new” has been established.¹⁷ Even extended silences do not succeed in articulating a new section on their own, primarily because the first section introduces extended silence as a textural rather than structural feature. In measures fifteen and nineteen, Lachenmann composed empty measures of ten and five seconds, respectively. Because these moments occur so early in the work and do not succeed in articulating a new section, silence becomes something that tears into the fabric of the piece rather than something that acts as a moment of pause or repose.

Throughout the piece, but revealed only at the end, there is a constant tension caused by the lack of coordination between the parts. It would be incorrect to assert that there is no coordination, or that the parts run completely independently; there is always a sense of consequentiality to the gestures in each part. The upward, unpitched slide in the cello’s first bar anticipates a similar slide in the viola, creating a sense that all parts are in constant dialogue with each other. Only rarely does that dialogue result in two instruments coordinating their gestures to begin simultaneously.¹⁸

The first coordination of two or more instruments does not occur until almost halfway through the performance, during the extended viola “solo.” While the viola holds a hollow unpitched breath-like sound, the other performers enter with short sounds by

¹⁷ Maderna’s *Dimensioni II* in Chapter IV exhibited a similar mode of transition between its sections.

¹⁸ The capacity for consequentiality of the sounds in Lachenmann’s music, in spite of an affinity with the types sound material, is the primary point where it diverges from the music of John Cage. Although, as we saw in Chapter III, Cage is not as ideologically pure in this regard as he would have us believe, his music avoids the suggestion that individual sounds bear a relational meaning to each other. In an interview, Lachenmann reflected on the relationship between his music and that of Cage and his followers: “With my ‘noises’ I could and cannot forget the ‘fear,’ that is the tension between the taboos of the concert hall and extraterritorial excursions.” David Ryan, 21.

bowing vigorously on the side of their instruments (“arco *Corpos-Rand*,” or “bowed at the edge of the body,” m. 107). After alternating attacks for five bars, all three finally play their sounds simultaneously in m. 112, and again in m. 115. A similar coordination does not occur again until m. 176, when the two violins play a short, extremely high pitch to begin a new, and penultimate, section.

The final section, beginning in m. 273, reveals the extent to which the sort of coordination described above had been conspicuously absent throughout the piece. Here the instruments, finally, could not be more coordinated. Each of the last eight bars contains loud pizzicati played on the first beat by some combination of the ensemble (See Example 15). Elke Hockings describes this moment as a “tango gesture,” although I must admit I do not hear tango in this section. The moment is arresting, however, because, as Hockings articulates, it is so dissimilar from what preceded it. She writes, “Taken out of context, the sounds that supposedly articulate gestures of tango rhythms here can only be taken as such if one has been left craving by the suspense-inducing harshness and suppressed motion of the previous 15 minutes. What follows overwhelms with the same intensity by which a piece of dry bread will appear a culinary feast for the starving.”¹⁹ The impact of this final section provides supports Lachenmann’s search for a new conception of beauty. Only within a completely reimagined sound world could such a simple gesture offer an almost transcendent experience.

¹⁹ Elke Hockings, “Helmut Lachenmann’s Concept of Rejection” in *Tempo*, New Series, No. 193, German Issue (July, 1995), 13.

The image shows a handwritten musical score for the final page of *Gran Torso*. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system has four staves labeled I, II, B., and C. Staff I and II have a 4/2 time signature. Staff B. and C. have a 2/4 time signature. The second system has six staves, each with a different time signature: 3/4 + 2/2, 5/2, 4/4, 3/4 + 5/2, 5/4, and 8/4. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like *fff* and *ppp*. Performance instructions are written in German, including "Bogen weg" (bow away), "Sacke hinten, Sie gedämpft" (back of the bow, muted), and "Linke Hand: Daumen fährt durchs Bogenhörnchen von Spitze zum Fench" (left hand: thumb moves through the bow eye from tip to fench). The page is numbered 25 in the center.

Example 15: Final page of *Gran Torso*. © 1972 by Musikverlage Hans Gerig, Köln. 1980 assigned to Breitkopf & Härtel, Wiesbaden.

But none of this is precisely what makes a live performance of *Gran Torso* so effective, at least not directly. The concert at the Théâtre Marni opened with the Bartok, before tackling *Gran Torso*. Several elements of the performance were striking, but none more than the pervasive quiet, verging on silence of most of its gestures. In part because the seating at the concert was creaky so that the slightest movement by an audience member would produce a disruptive sound, the entire audience sat in a manifest tension, trying to avoid any movement that would cause a disturbance. Equally, many of the sounds produced by the Amati Quartet were so quiet that hearing them required the audience to strain, as if bent towards the ensemble with acute attention. This sort of

attention, as if the experience of the music was both fragile and always in danger of being lost entirely, is absent in recorded versions of the work.

The meaning of a second, composed, feature of *Gran Torso*, also only becomes clear in live performance. Many of the sound described above, while extremely quiet, are at odds with the extreme violence required to produce them. For example, the “arco Corpus-Rand” gestures require the performers to bow violently on the sides of their instruments, but the sound produced is only barely audible. The score marks these passages with dynamic markings like “*fff*”, where the quotation marks are intended to show that the dynamics “are to be understood in a relative sense...they refer to the intensity of a performance technique which does not actually allow a true *forte*, let alone a *fortissimo*.”²⁰

In performance, this creates a dramatic meaning that is lost on an audio recording: the performer seems to be desperately trying to articulate something that only succeeds in articulating silence. That the action is not actually silent, only very quiet, does not matter. This silence, therefore, could not be further from the kind of silence envisioned by Cage. *Gran Torso* can be seen as a musical expression of the *idea* of silence, rather than silence itself. That is to say, where Cage’s *4’33”* posited the impossibility of silence, Lachenmann deploys silence to forge new expressive possibilities that seem to emerge from that silence, real or imagined. Rather than silence, Lachenmann seems to express a kind of frenzied and anxious muteness, expressed more fully by the German word *Schweigen*. A line in Paul Celan’s “Zähle die Mandeln” (“Count the Almonds”) could describe the actions of the performers of *Gran Torso*: “schwangen die Hämmer frei, im

²⁰ *Gran Torso*, “Notation and Performing Techniques,” ii.

Glockenstuhl deines Schweigens” [“freely the hammers swung in the bell frame of your silence”].²¹

The whole of the performance of *Gran Torso*, because of the kinds of dramatic tension created through the contrast between the actions on stage and the sounds produced, is—in my memory—much of a static event than an evolution over time. Because of the ways in which the performance created an environment where audience and performer were engaged in a kind of mutual execution of the work, the development of musical material receded in favor of a kind of suspension. Time did not so much appear to pass as the work appeared like a statue—a “great torso” of “musical concrete”?—to be viewed in its entirety.

²¹ Michael Hamburger translates this line, Michael Hamburger, *Poems of Paul Celan*, trans. Michael Hamburger (New York: Persea Books, 1995), 76-77.

Choreography

In 1996, almost by chance, I studied composition with the British composer Richard Barrett, while I was spending a year in The Netherlands. During our lessons, I gained an intimate knowledge of his compositional philosophy, but it was not until later that I developed an appreciation for his music, because he only rarely used his own music as examples. Barrett can be considered, by almost any metric, a child of Darmstadt. He attended the courses in 1984 and returned as an instructor in 1986 when he was awarded the Kranichsteiner Musikpreis.²²

Moreover, Barrett's *Ne songe plus à fuir* (*Ne songe*), a work for solo cello to be discussed below, engages so many trends that have been outlined in the course of this writing that one could be forgiven for calling it, and Barrett's work more generally, a culmination of the "philosophical turn."²³ Many of these features in *Ne songe* will become apparent through the process of my analysis. However, it is not my aim to make this work, or any other work, serve as an exponent for any particular musical trend. To call it a culmination already misreads the importance of the philosophical turn. It is not fatalism to suggest that Barrett's music is unthinkable without the developments at Darmstadt, and yet Darmstadt did not create Barrett, nor was his or other so-called neo-complex music inevitable. Rather, this music, like any number of other possible solutions, was one logical consequence of the self-critical context.

²² Unless otherwise noted, factual information and quotations for this section have been taken from an email interview with Richard Barrett, which is included in this text as Appendix IV.

²³ Richard Barrett, *Ne songe plus à fuir* for amplified solo 'cello (London: United Music Publishers, 1988); Richard Barrett, *Chamber Works*, Elision Ensemble (Amsterdam: Etcetera, 1993).

Though incredibly detailed, the level of pre-compositional planning in *Ne songe* is not unprecedented. What is notable is how much of that pre-composition remains tangible in the final score. I do not mean to suggest that the work is unintelligible without understanding its pre-compositional phase; even to an unprepared listener, *Ne songe* is a stunningly evocative piece. However, to conduct an analysis or interpretation, it is necessary to first establish the terms with which it can be discussed. As Adorno had claimed in his first essay on the twelve-tone method, the pre-compositional aspect can be likened to a painter's palette.²⁴ Barrett constructs his palette as a series of decisions about the way the composition will operate, and the intersection of those decisions then shapes the work's sound and morphology. There is not, however, a clear delineation between pre-composition and the final product, because the ramifications of certain decisions only become evident in their transformation over time. Additionally, some decisions are morphological in nature, and can only be discussed as they relate to their temporal elaboration. As a result, I will conduct my analysis as a series of perspectives of the whole, moving from those perspectives that seem, from a distance, to be contextual to those that are morphological. And while this richly constructed texture means that a successful analysis could likely be founded on any of these perspectives, the final phase and key to my own interpretation will be at the level of the physical gestures of *Ne Songe*—its choreography.

²⁴ Theodor Adorno, "Why Twelve-Note Music?" in *Night Music*, trans. Wieland Hoban, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (New York: Seagull Books, 2009), 367-373.

After Matta

Ne songe plus à fuir (“think no more of fleeing”) is part of a set of compositions known collectively as *After Matta*, all based on paintings by the Chilean artist Roberto Matta (1911-2003). Barrett first composed *Coïgitum* for chamber ensemble, and after its completion he felt that it had “opened up a world of possibilities which [he] felt compelled to explore further.” The score for *Ne songe* mentions that it is part of a six-part series, but Barrett abandoned the project after the fourth. That final component, *Illuminer le temps*, was not completed until 2005, almost 20 years after the project began, at which point he had moved on to “other ideas.”

Barrett became interested in surrealist painting during his late teenage years. Soon after he arrived in London in 1977 for college, he visited an exhibition of Matta’s paintings at the Hayward Gallery. Each of the subjects for Barrett’s cycle was part of that exhibition. He remembers being struck by what he called the “multi-layeredness” of Matta’s paintings. In particular, the paintings impressed him with the way they did not privilege any one perspective or distance from which to view them: “you could stand right next to them or twenty meters away, or at any distance in between, and the experience of those same marks on the canvas would be different, without one experience or another presenting itself as definitive.”

The painting itself is concerned, in Barrett’s words, with “torture and imprisonment.”²⁵ In it, Matta depicts various amorphous figures enduring forms of

²⁵ “The Resonant Box with Four Strings,” Richard Barrett in conversation with Arne Deforce, www.arnedeforce.be/composerfiles_toelichtingen/BarrettResBox.htm (accessed January 28, 2012).

oppression amid a swirling fog-like texture.²⁶ The painting is open and sparse at the top, with the figures crowded into the bottom half, furthering the feeling of oppression. The whole space is ambiguous, divided into smaller confined areas separated by glass-like barriers. In the lower right foreground, we see three figures, each isolated and separated by the glass walls. Each covers their face, while another figure, seated to their right with a gaping mouth, extends an arm stretching unnaturally towards them. His fingers are extended in a star-like fashion, appearing to inflict some sort of torture. Above the oppressor, we see four statuesque figures that seem to be sitting in judgment over the prisoners. Behind those prisoners, there are more prisoners who might be waiting for their own judgment. The two groups of two figures are each engaged in a tight embrace, as if resigned to their fates, but consoling each other. When viewed from a distance, the front-most of the two embracing figures is the most striking feature of the whole painting. In this sense, the embracing pair seems to be the focal point of the painting—the two who “think no more of fleeing.”

It will be difficult, if not impossible, to point to any direct way that the ideas of the painting manifest themselves in Barrett’s composition, largely because he explicitly avoids such direct connections. He described the process by which he composes based on an external source like a painting or poem: “There is no single way in which this takes place. I think of it in what might be called *synesthetic* terms: the painting, or poem, or whatever else it is, calls up a proto-sound-form seemingly without any conscious intervention, although, crucially, one needs to be in a particularly receptive frame of mind

²⁶ Roberto Sebastián Matta Echarren, *Matta*, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid (Barcelona: Fundació Caixa de Catalunya), 110.

for this to happen.” His elaboration exposes an educational background in genetics: “The source is more like a seed from which something grows which takes its shape from its environment and circumstances as much as from its DNA. In other words it becomes part of a complex interdependent ‘ecosystem.’”

Almost as important as the painting for the genesis of the piece, are two quotations from Samuel Beckett that inscribe the score at the beginning and end. The first, from *Molloy*, reads, “Stories...I have not been able to tell them. I shall not be able to tell this one.”²⁷ The other, from *As the story was told*, says, “No, was the answer, after some hesitation no, I did not know what the poor man was required to say, in order to be pardoned, but would have recognized it at once, yes, at a glance, if I had seen it.”²⁸ Taken together, these two quotations situate the entire work as a failing proposition. With the first quotation, Barrett begins by suggesting that what follows cannot possibly succeed in expressing its idea. The second, expressed at the work’s conclusion, resigns itself to that failure, but also expresses a hope that, in its failure, the work may have at least revealed its idea as a negative proposition—something known to be there and yet remaining unnamable.

Resonant Box

Like Lachenmann’s *Gran Torso*, Barrett imagines the cello not as an instrument with its own history and set of conventions but as “a resonant box with four strings.” As a result, *Ne Songe* uses many of the same “extended” techniques found in *Gran Torso*. But unlike *Gran Torso*, the use of amplification in *Ne Songe* means that the same sounds that were

²⁷ Barrett, *Ne songe*, 2.

²⁸ Ibid. 11.

fragile and barely audible in Lachenmann's work are afforded the same physical presence in the auditory space as more traditional sounds. Barrett describes amplification as being analogous to a microscope: "A microscope not only makes things look larger than they are, but also makes objects visible which are not detectable at all with the naked eye."²⁹

In 2000, Barrett recalled his motivations for starting from a "zero point": "it seemed most important not to merely to ignore, but consciously to reject the history and associations of the instrument, and at the same time the history and associations of the relationship between musical material and composition."³⁰ In this sense, Barrett's denial of history cannot be considered equivalent to that of Cage, who denied history by rejecting its importance. Instead, Barrett rejects history's control over his compositional choices, by examining those choices philosophically. And in this regard, he aligns himself with a long history of ontological philosophical enterprises that seek to understand existence by starting from scratch.

***Scordatura* and Pitches**

Like many works for cello written in the late-twentieth century, *Ne songe* is written for a cello using so-called *scordatura* tuning, where the strings of the instrument are tuned to different notes than the standard C, G, D, and A. The specific tuning used in *Ne songe*, which was first used by Zoltán Kodály in his Cello Sonata in B-minor, lowers the bottom two strings, C and G, by a half-step each, resulting in a set of strings tuned to B, F-sharp, D, and A. This tuning has several consequences for the overall sound of the work. Barrett remarked, "Indeed any kind of *scordatura* will, to a greater or lesser extent, alter the

²⁹ Barrett and Deforce, "Resonant Box with Four Strings".

³⁰ Ibid.

characteristics of the instrument so that its tuning is more strongly connected with the identity of the composition than with the ‘standard’ cello, so that one could speak of creating a new instrument for a specific purpose.” Thus Barrett believes that use of an alternate tuning helps to enforce the idea that he is not writing music for a “cello,” but for a “resonant box.”

The tuning allows Barrett to take advantage of open strings—which can allow polyphonic writing because they can be played simultaneously with another string without much effort—in a way that would not be possible with traditional tuning, where over-use of open strings immediately enforces a kind of empty tonality dominated by open fifths. In contrast, the *scordatura* tuning outlines a specific tonality of B-minor; the first three strings (B, F-sharp, and D) outline a minor triad. While *Ne songe* largely works against any notion of tonality, Barrett’s frequent use of open strings nevertheless gives the whole work something of a feeling of B-minor. The alternate tuning also creates new opportunities to take advantage of the different overtone profiles on the two de-tuned strings.

Based on Barrett’s recollections, the pitch selection was largely intuitive within a pre-constructed source. Pitch material was made, he says, by consulting a “network of glissandi, which scan different overlapping registers and gradually increase in speed.” He lost an earlier draft of the composition, which adhered much more strictly to a systematic implementation of those networks, but which he had also begun to find overly constrictive. As a result, when he started over, he used the same pitch networks much more freely.

Notation

All of Barrett's scores share a meticulous—some might say obsessive—style of notation. One “obsessive” feature is the absolute precision with which Barrett spaces notes on the staff. The spacing is not exactly proportional (a given length of staff does not correspond to a given amount of time), but notes of the same duration are always followed with an identical gap. Because a sixteenth note will always take up the same space on the page, the lengths of each staff system vary widely, in contrast to more typical musical typography that adjusts internal spacing such that the systems are justified to the right.

Very little is left to chance and interpretation. Where other composers—even Lachenmann—might notate unconventional sounds and techniques in a way that shows an approximation of a desired effect, Barrett will try, within a more or less traditional notation system, to show the exact physical action required. Glissandi, for example, always give exact pitches for all nodes of the pitch fluctuation, as well as the precise timing, when the same effect might be achieved by a less precise rendering (See Example 16).

The tempo given for *Ne songe* (eighth note equals 96 bpm.), which applies to the entire piece, takes on a greater significance when it is realized that if one adds up the total number of eighth notes in the piece, the total is precisely the “7 ½” minute duration listed at the beginning of the score. Barrett adds “approximately (i.e. ideally!)” to indicate that he does not expect anyone to actually achieve such precision. Indeed, the commercial recording by Frederick Gauwerky is eleven minutes, while a live performance by Arne Deforce lasted fourteen. Barrett even acknowledges that the tempo cannot always be



Example 16: Barrett's notation of an undulating glissando (left) contrasted with my simplified version of the same basic shape (right). © 1988 by United Music Publishers, London.

achieved in the instructions, when he says that “if any adjustments to the tempo, eg. for extremes of speed, is required, it should extend only to the (whole) bar(s) in question.”³¹

All of this begs the question of why such a level of precision necessary when the performer cannot possibly attain it? The answer is certainly related to the idea of “failing” mentioned above (Brian Ferneyhough, another in the so-called new complexity school, famously instructed a performer to play “faster than possible”), but more than that, it seems, for Barrett, to be a matter of discipline. If precise notation and imprecise notation generate the same results, Barrett will always side in favor of precision when composing a score, even if that precision actually makes the music's realization more difficult.³²

Also, the typography serves the practical function of making the score and its incredibly complicated rhythms easier to perform, because the proportional spacing allows the performer to approximate those rhythms based on the notes' distances from each other.

In the end, as Barrett concedes, “a score is principally a means of communication between composer and performer(s).” In this sense, the precision of Barrett's scores

³¹ Barrett, *Ne songe*, 1.

³² Although here again, there is no consensus among performers on what style of notation is “easiest.” Many performers find the level of detail in Barrett's scores helpful, because it removes many of the ambiguities that plague other notations of extended techniques.

forms part of his idiosyncratic way of communicating with a performer. He does not privilege one form of communication over another, as is also suggested by his extensive work as an improviser, but suggests that his mode of writing best articulates his ideas for a given work: “a conscious creative decision, on the same kind of level as any other, than an expression of dogma.”

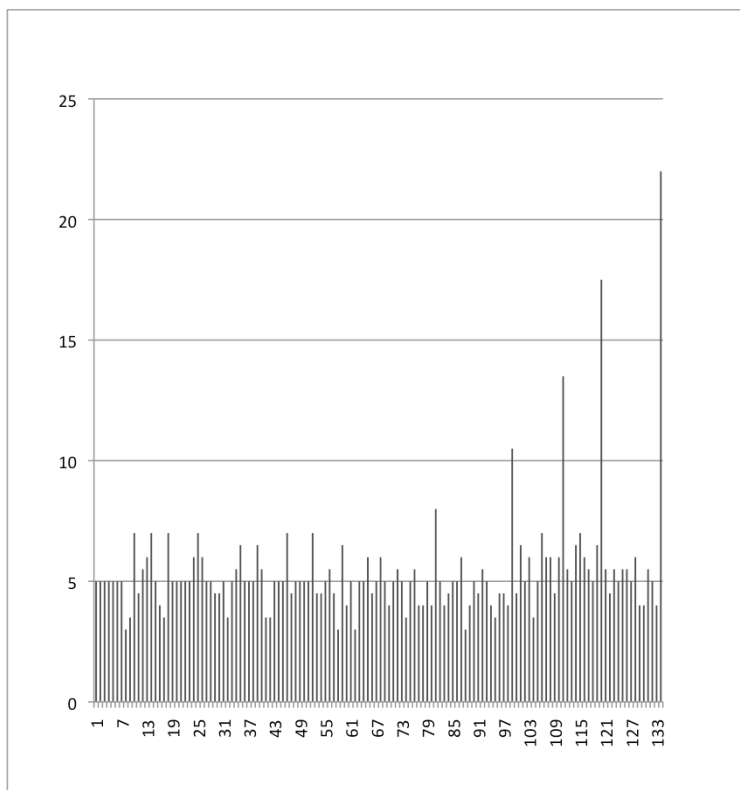
In spite of Barrett’s mild protestations, I believe that the score for *Ne songe* also serves an expressive function that does not completely synchronize with its sound.³³ Like Stockhausen’s *Klavierstück XI*, but in a completely different way, the difference in listening to *Ne songe* with a score is palpable. The dissimilarity of Barrett’s and Lachenmann’s notational systems is instructive in this regard. In some sense, they represent alternate solutions to the eternal conversation about prescriptive and descriptive notation. *Gran Torso* falls much more strongly on the prescriptive side, because it shows much less of its expressive content. The score is more practical in showing the actions to produce the music, rather than a representation of the music itself. By contrast, the score of *Ne songe*, largely because of the long and dramatic beaming of notes, evokes its gestures much more viscerally. And yet, in following the score, there is never a one-to-one correspondence between the score and its realization. Instead, there is a sense of tension between the visual and audible, and that both take on a different expressive character in opposition to each other.

³³ Barrett emphatically denied that it was his intention to privilege one form of listening over another. So while I take to heart his suggestion that he is “suspicious of musical discourses which put too much emphasis on the experience of the notation relative to the auditory experience,” I am equally unable to ignore the ways in which my experience of the work is mediated by the printed score.

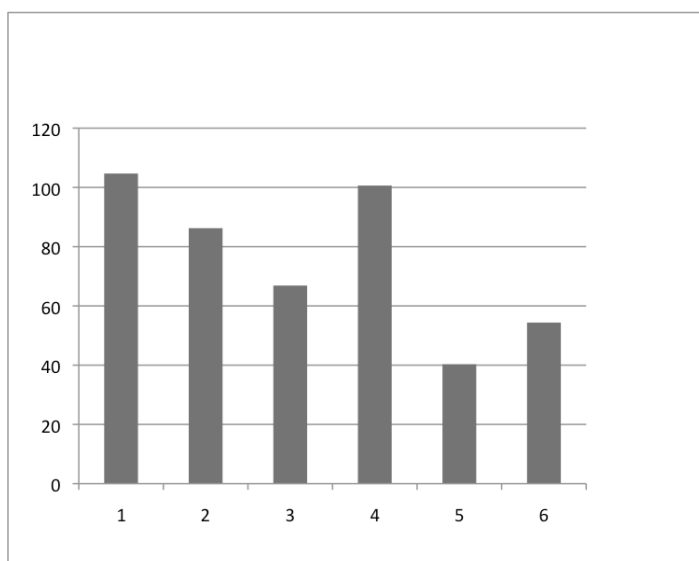
Time Structure

Ne songe is composed of several overlapping layers of structural and temporal distribution. At the lowest level, that of the bar, Barrett describes the meter of *Ne songe* as being a “Gaussian distribution around $5/8$.” This means that while the bar length changes constantly, it does so only in a small range surrounding a length of five eighth note beats. The median length of all bars in the piece is $5/8$, while the mean is $5.37/8$ (Example 17 shows the distribution of bar lengths around the average of 5). The larger number for the mean length is accounted for by the presence of 8 “outliers”—bars that are significantly longer than the rest—to be discussed below. Without those outliers, the mean length is $5.01/8$, with the longest and shortest bar length being $7/8$ and $3/8$ respectively.

The bars are then grouped into six larger sections, each exploring a particular sound world and different area of the instrument. The length of each section becomes progressively (though not consistently) shorter as the piece progresses (See Example 18). Meanwhile, the length of the outliers, as can be seen in Example 17, increases throughout the piece. The first such bar (m. 33) which ends Section I, disguises itself as another bar by virtue of its time signature of $5/8$. The second (m. 59) is longer at $13/16$ (or $6.5/8$), but still not above the maximum normal bar length. At the end of Section III, the outlier bar length finally exceeds the distribution scale for the normal bars, with a length of $8/8$. The last four outliers stretch dramatically with values of $21/16$ ($10.5/8$), $27/16$ ($13.5/8$), and finally $22/8$ ($44/16$). Whereas the first three outliers increased in length by only three sixteenth notes each, the last three increase by first five, then six, then seventeen sixteenth notes.



Example 17: Distribution of bar lengths around a median length of $5/8$.



Example 18: Lengths of the six sections of *Ne songe*.

Gestural Morphology

With this temporal scheme in mind, we can at last move into a discussion of the gestural morphology—and the sound—of *Ne songe*. The work achieves its unity not so much through thematic consistency as it does through a logic dictated by its gestural choreography. The opening gesture begins with a fragile held C-sharp harmonic in the middle of the treble clef. The note, though it can hardly be considered a “high note” within the context of *Ne songe*’s extended techniques, sounds strained and nervous, in part because it is played on the lowest string, tuned to B-natural. To perform this note on the first string, the cellist’s finger touches the string near the bottom of the fingerboard. The performance indication, which may or may not be intended to apply to the whole piece, is “with barely articulate anger.” The note begins with an accent followed by a long decrescendo to *pp*, and is held almost to the end of the 5/8 bar, before sliding down a whole step and a quartertone to B-quarter-flat, gradually increasing its volume back to *p*. The sound of this phrase, though distilled, is reminiscent of the opening bassoon solo in Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring*, which begins a half step lower on C-natural.

This phrase is then exactly repeated five more times, giving the impressions that the whole piece begins in a tense stasis, but on the verge of explosion. On the sixth repeat, the same C-sharp is held for a marginally shorter duration (one sixteenth note), which then seems to precipitate a dramatic reaction in the glissando. Instead of the subtle slide of just over a whole step, this time the cellist slides his left hand back up the entire length of the finger board, landing on the open string (low B-natural) with a crescendo to *fff*. The next bars continue the “exponential” change by first adding a second unison C-sharp to the held note and dramatically shortening its length, until, by m. 11, the

glissando begins directly at the beginning of the bar. All of these bars outline a clear physical motion to be performed by the cellist: a down-bow with the right hand together with a slide up the finger board (at first subtle and then dramatic) by the left.

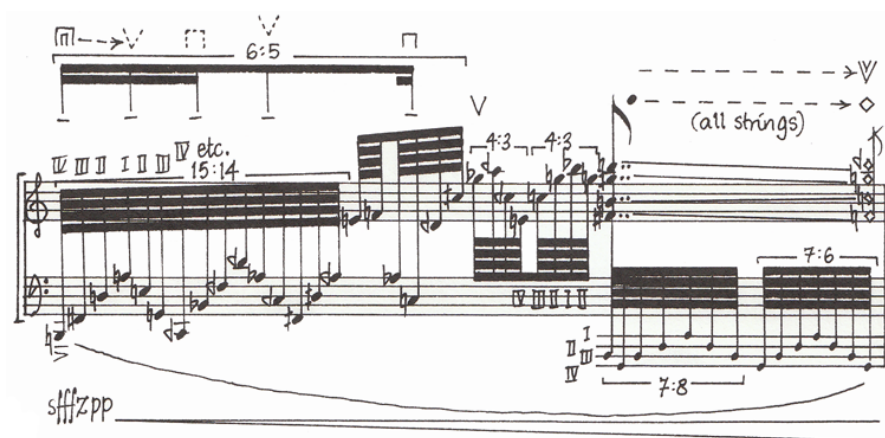
In m. 10, Barrett introduces a secondary gesture, which does not seem to fit with the gestural character of the rest of the first section, and which runs through m. 32: violent pizzicato notes, marked “brutal and confused.” These pizzicato notes that occur after an initial glissando in mm. 10-12 are the only ones of their kind in the first section. These three outbursts seem to function as a provocation, causing the glissando material to move out of its repetitive stasis, allowing the glissandi to explore new shapes. The previous nine bars each contain only one downward glissando, on either one or two strings simultaneously. After the pizzicati in m. 10, the same basic gesture is repeated again, but the pizzicati are followed by a fluttering harmonic grace note figure in the upper register that leads back into another downward glissando in m. 12. This figure also marks the first time that the cellist is instructed to use an upward bow-stroke.

In m. 12 Barrett introduces two subtle changes to the glissando. First, string IV starts on a higher pitch than string III, so that in performing the glissando the cellist must cross fingers in the course of the slide. Second, the gesture does not end at the bottom of the glissando, but slides back up by about 4 semitones on each string. This figure is again followed by one more pizzicato gesture and another high harmonic figure, in turn leading into one last downward glissando in m. 13.

From m. 14 onward, the downward glissando as well as the pizzicati are abandoned in favor of a more fluid and complicated exploration of the material introduced so far. What remains constant is a careful attention to the movement of the

bow. The up-bow motion introduced in bar 11 now takes on greater significance in each bar, beginning by continuing the pattern of concluding mm. 13-16 with an up-bow high harmonic figure. As the pitched and rhythmic material becomes increasingly erratic and complicated, Barrett exposes the physical gesture of the bow stroke, both up and down, as the unifying element of the section. Above the dense material, Barrett notates the bow-strokes as a separate contrapuntal line, moving in an asynchronous but more regular rhythm from the faster material below (See the first half of m. 23, Example 19 below).

As the section moves toward its completion and the notes increasingly spiral out of control, a transformed version of the opening glissandi asserts itself at the end of the bars. Beginning with the final group of notes in m. 22, each bar falls apart in frenzy. The arpeggio of m. 22 becomes a held chord in m. 23, with its arpeggiation shown on a



Example 19: *Ne Songe*, measure 23. © 1988 by United Music Publishers, London.

separate staff, while the chord is subjected to a glissando (See Example 19). A similar figure occurs again in the two subsequent bars. In spite of their frantic character, these

gestures are expressively similar to the opening glissandi, because of the way that the gesture trails off at the end of the measure in a kind of sigh.

Section I enters its final process of disintegration in m. 26, which begins a series of seven dramatic phrases, marked “increasingly incoherent” and “becoming wild spasms.” The phrases, which are all marked to be played in a single down-bow, are composed of dramatic slides up and down an increasingly wide register while becoming quicker, reaching a point where—at least rhetorically—the material can no longer be developed further and must fall silent.

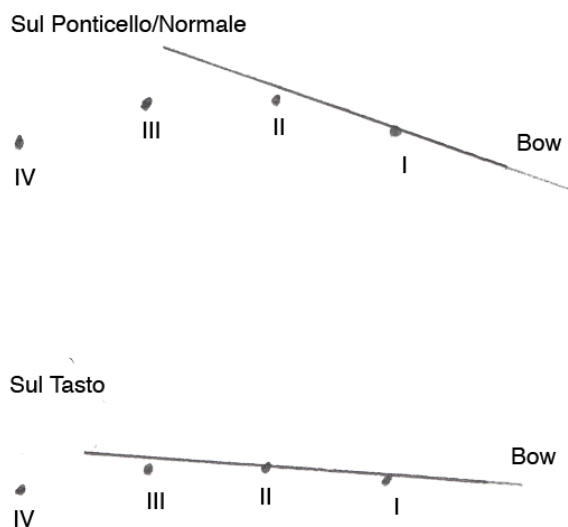
As if to emphasize that limit, the cellist moves the bow below the bridge to play the following transitional bar (m. 33). This is the first of the “outliers”—transitional bars that first gradually, then dramatically increase in length throughout the piece—mentioned in the previous section. It is neither directly related to what came before, nor to what comes after. This outlier is composed of four loud “Bartok” pizzicato notes (the strings are plucked so hard that the string makes an audible snap on the fingerboard) on the low B-natural played by the left hand; simultaneously, the right hand bows shifting double-stops, rocking back and forth across the strings below the bridge, creating an ethereal effect.

When Section II begins, it immediately defines a new character, while still making use of the glissandi from Section I. It begins with an almost melodic character, with alternating bars that sound like antecedents and consequents. The physical choreography for this section outlines a more traditional interaction with the instrument, with the bow rocking back and forth, while the left hand slides around the fingerboard to articulate the pitches. The bowing motion, however, is erratic (or as Barrett terms it,

“convulsive”), with a highly inconsistent length to the bow strokes. In the beginning of m. 34, for example, a long down-bow is followed by a quick up-bow and then another longer down-bow. As in the previous section, this action is pushed towards chaos, with the “melodic” lines quickly becoming hysterical. Eventually, the back-and-forth bowing reaches an apex in bar 49, when it becomes a tremolo with extreme bow pressure. The cellist is instructed to hold three pitches on strings II, III and IV, while another staff indicates which strings are to be engaged by the bow. The pitches, in turn, are subjected to a downward glissando. Reaching the limit of the physical interaction, the cello tries twice to start again, but ends with a similar tremolo figure each time. Separating Sections II and III is a 13/16 transitional bar of silence, marked “absolutely in tempo!”

In Section III, the cellist uses only the first three strings, often played simultaneously. To make all strings sound together, the cellist is instructed to bow the strings *sul tasto* (or over the fingerboard) where the angles separating the strings are less severe. At the top of the fingerboard, all strings cross in a straight line, so achieving a triple stop is contingent on finding a position where, with a little pressure on the middle string, the bow can engage all three strings at once (See Example 20). Each bar is played in a single down-bow. To achieve Barrett’s stylistic designation of “veiled, melancholic, distant,” the cellist also uses a mute for the entire section, in which the dynamic range is greatly subdued. Until the last five bars of the section, each bar begins with an accent that becomes progressively louder, with each new bar followed by a long decrescendo lasting the entire bar.

The most salient feature of this section is that the various ways that the cellist is instructed to interact with the instrument, and the overall dynamics, undermine the



Example 20: Comparison of bow placement relative to the strings for *sul ponticello/normale* and *sul tasto*. A small amount of pressure on string II will engage all three strings in the *sul tasto* second, but not the first.

possibility of reproducing the notes of the score, creating a fragile, “unstable” effect. The start of this section, with a triple-stop that quietly struggles to engage, makes a clear distinction with the frantic and oppressive music that preceded it. The cellist holds the bottom two notes of the first chord (low open F-sharp of string III and a high E-natural in the treble clef) while the top note rocks gently back and forth with microtonal variation around a high A-flat. The overall character of this bar, however, is that of a held chord, albeit a fragile and faltering one. Gradually, each string, which is treated contrapuntally as a separate line, begin to feature similar movement that becomes increasingly complex, moving away from the sense that they are held chords. As the material on each string becomes increasingly active, Barrett subtly introduces a new idea, which will eventually drive the section to its breaking point. In m. 67, after the long decrescendo, the cellist briefly lands on another chord of harmonics. This chord is performed with a tremolo and a slight crescendo, the first break from the pattern of long crescendos that had previously

characterized this section. A similar tremolo chord occurs in each of the next four bars, and is held slightly longer each time.

After four more bars without a concluding chord and crescendo, m. 76 introduces a new variant on the concluding gesture. Rather than a chord, this bar ends with the line on string II holding, while the other strings fall silent. Increasing in volume, the cellist moves the left hand up and down to perform a dramatic harmonic glissando. In the two bars that follow, the opening triple-stop gesture becomes progressively shorter, while the glissando gesture becomes longer. In the final two bars of the section, mm. 79 and 80, the triple-stop gesture is abandoned completely in favor of the glissandi, which now move wildly up and down the entire fingerboard.

A quirk of the notation in these bars reveals that Barrett's notation is aimed at a representation of a physical action rather than a resulting sound. The first glissando in m. 77 is notated from a high E-flat above treble clef all the way down to a low D-natural below treble clef, to be fingered with harmonic pressure. On the second string II, this D-natural is, in fact, the open string, meaning that technically speaking it is not possible to "finger" this note. What this figure shows, instead, is an action that the cellist should touch the string at the E-flat, and slide up to the upper-limit of the fingerboard before then sliding back to the A-quarter-flat.

The final bar ends with the glissando reaching the top of the register for string II, and sustains into the next transitional bar (m. 81). Measure 81 reengages the triple stop on the other two strings, and the bow direction finally turns to an up-bow, giving an impression that the entire third section, which had seemed to be trapped in a repetitive down-bow gesture, was struggling to find a way of changing bow direction.

And this exposes something important about Barrett's manner of composition, his view of musical material, and the way that physical gestures take on a rhetorical significance. For Barrett, musical material is not something to be used as a reservoir or even something to be developed and sculpted, but the product of an active struggle for its liberation. He could have simply asserted his right to use the up-bow throughout this section, but within the rhetorical framework set up within the material, and within what we might call an ethical stance towards that material, such a move would have seemed capricious. Each new gesture or change within the gestural framework needs to be hard-won, and, moreover, Barrett constructs his musical rhetoric in such a way that the simple changing of bow direction can represent a radical transformation.³⁴

In the overall scheme, Section IV is one of the longest, but also exhibits one of the clearest gestural profiles. The entire section is scored on two staves, each showing two strings played in a perpetual double-stop. Each bar begins with two adjacent strings fingering notes anywhere from unison to a half step to apart, though most frequently they are separated by a quartertone. The fingers then slide in similar motion at different rates of speed. However, because the fingers on each string are extended almost to their limits to perform the near unison double-stops, they are locked into pitches that never move too far from each other in either direction. Above this staff notation that shows finger placement, Barrett once again notates the bow-strokes as a separate contrapuntal entity.

³⁴ Nothing made this aspect of Barrett's thinking more clear to me than when, as his composition student, I brought some new pages of music for a piece I had been working on. In part because Barrett had exposed me to various extended techniques that I was eager to implement, the pages in question contained an oboe multi-phonics. When he saw it, his immediate response was "what have you done to earn that?"

The bow strokes show a rhythmic regularity found nowhere else in the piece; each bar, with a few key exceptions, is divided into an even pulse (See Example 21).

The image shows a musical score for two staves, labeled II and III. The score covers measures 88 and 89. Above the staves, there are various rhythmic markings and dynamic indications. In measure 88, there are markings for '4:3' and '8:7' ratios, and dynamics of 'sfz', 'mp', and 'ff'. In measure 89, there are markings for '9:10' and '5:6' ratios, and dynamics of 'sfz', 'mp', and 'ff'. The notation includes complex rhythmic patterns with many beamed notes and rests, suggesting a highly irregular or complex pulse.

Example 21: *Ne Songe*, measures 88 and 89. © 1988 by United Music Publishers, London.

The first time that the regular bow strokes are abandoned is in m. 96, three bars before the process collapses for the first time. Here, a 9/16 bar is divided into three strokes of an eighth-note strokes followed by two of a dotted-sixteenth. A subtle change, to be sure, but it seems to precipitate the collapse that comes in m. 99. This bar, another of the transitional “outliers” starts in the same manner as the previous bars, but “seizes up” and breaks into progressively shorter outbursts ending in a single down-bow.

Unlike all previous “outliers,” however, this time the music simply returns to the previous idea as if nothing had happened. This creates some ambiguity as to whether this next section should be viewed as a new section or whether that “outlier” should be thought of as an interruption. In their conversation, cellist Arne Deforce referred to the “seven parts of *Ne songe*,” which would indicate that they are two separate sections.³⁵ Because of the consistency of the thematic material and choreography, I tend to view this

³⁵ Barrett and Deforce, “Resonant Box with Four Strings.”

particular moment as an interruption. In the end, however, the designation matters little except in so much as it is recognized that this moment marks a departure from the structural procedure that has previously characterized the piece: either the “outlier” is a transitional bar that fails to make a transition, or what follows fails to differentiate itself from the previous section.

Somewhat supporting my view that m. 99 was a “failed transition,” after continuing “exactly as previously,” the next transitional bar breaks the pattern in exactly the opposite fashion. Instead of “seizing up,” the bow strokes now accelerate “out of control.” This happens first with a notated *accelerando*, finally breaking into a tremolo before stopping abruptly.

Each bar in Section V contains two gestural components that remain constant, while most other variables fluctuate wildly. The two constants are a dynamic profile that crescendos from *pp* to *ff* or *fff* and a bow placement that moves from *sul ponticello* to *naturale*. Frequent changes to articulation, harmonics, and bowing method (*col legno*, *normale*, *pizzicato*) all make this section the most virtuosic in the whole composition. Where previous sections seemed to work with one or two methods of interaction with the instrument, here the cellist seems to be forced to attempt everything at once. To the extent that this section outlines a choreography, it is one that keeps the cellist in a state of frenetic activity, rather than one clearly defined gesture.

As in Section IV, the transitional bar that follows Section V (m. 120) begins with the same material. But instead of getting louder, the dynamics stay at *pp*, while the gestures become increasingly shorter and fragmented. The bar ends with an isolated glissando up string IV, followed by a staccato A-natural and an isolated C-half-sharp,

played *col legno battuto*. This in turn is followed by a lengthy pause in preparation for the final section.

Section VI takes the dramatic step of placing the bow underneath the strings to facilitate playing double stops between strings I and IV, the highest and the lowest string. This move promotes a sense that the cello has been pushed to the final extremes of its expressive and technical possibilities. The cellist again plays with only down-bows, each bar beginning with extreme pressure and ending with almost none, creating a dynamic profile that goes from *sfffz* to *ppp*. In the last four bars of the section, the cello is again bowed on top of the strings, with double-stops on strings III and IV. The bow pressure used in each bar becomes increasingly harsh, creating multiphonics where each string vibrates at two pitches simultaneously. By the last bar (m. 133, marked “unbearably hard!”) the strings are no longer able to even sound.

The final bar, and last of the “outliers,” is marked “fleeting and delirious.” The entire bar, now stretching to be longer than four average-length bars, contains nothing except extraneous sounds of clicking and finger movement on the strings. The notation divides the cellist’s actions into left and right hands. After the first gesture in the right hand, where the performer plays a series of notes bouncing (*col legno battuto*) below the bridge, the score instructs the performer to put down the bow. In what follows, the cellists hands move up and down the finger board, like two frantic spiders, making only the traces of their movements audible. The effect, confirmed by the quotation from Beckett, is one of resignation. The scratching, barely audible sounds seem to suggest a final remnant of the work’s expressive content.

Transitions and Development

Each bar in *Ne songe* presents itself as an absolute discrete entity. Each bar, moreover, appears as its own distinct gesture, with bar lines being deployed, in a sense, like phrase markers. And yet, within the large sections, every bar develops the material presented to it by the previous bar. That material is both physical and musical; it has a distinctive gestural profile dictated both by the sound and the performer's manner of interaction with the instrument. The material is not always developed in a linear fashion, and indeed, as we have seen, it often develops in a parabolic shape such that by the time a process of development can be recognized, its results have already transformed so much that its relationship to its model becomes obscure. It is nevertheless clear that each bar begins from the previous, and tries to push it toward a logical consequent.

In this sense, *Ne songe* could be seen as a logical implementation of Adorno's concept of historically mediated musical material. In Adorno's view, music—or perhaps historically valid music—always begins from material at its most advanced state. Adorno did not value twelve-tone music because of its inherent qualities—he would have vigorously denied that it was objectively more expressive or beautiful—but because it was the result of a dialectical development of the available means of composition.³⁶

Ne songe enacts this relationship to musical material at the level of the individual bar. Each bar tries to enforce its own development, taking the previous bar—necessarily at the most advanced state within the context of the work—and tries to develop it further. This rapid and constant development, however, reveals the limits of such an approach. Each section of *Ne songe* manifests itself as this sort of perpetual development, but does

³⁶ Max Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 83.

not succeed in achieving anything like an ideal state; each section ends in failure. Like Sisyphus, musical development is condemned to push its rock to the top of a precipice, only to watch it plummet and start again.

In contrast to the development that occurs in the large sections, the transitional bars appear to be absolutely isolated events. The bars that conclude the first three sections do not begin from the material of the previous bar and section. One could call them a “pure statement”: an *autonomous* utterance. *Ne songe*, however, also reveals this suggested autonomy to be unattainable. Beginning with the fourth transitional bar that tries but fails to end the fourth section, the transitions, like the other bars, take the material of the previous bars as its basic material. But unlike regular bars, the transitional bars still attempt to “complete” the development of the sections, but always end in failure or dissolution.

As we saw in the temporal scheme, the length of the transitional bars or “outliers” increased throughout the piece, while the length of the structural sections decreased. The increasing length and complexity of the transitional sections means that they too have been contaminated by the compulsion to develop. Because they cannot develop in the same fashion by passing the material to a subsequent bar, each bar extends in length as if trying in vain to constitute its ideal form.

And so it is fitting, perhaps, that *Ne songe* ends “in transition.” The final bar seems to extend out even beyond its actual completion. The sparseness of that last bar emphasizes its silence, and its trajectory towards silence, more than would a simple rest, making the silence that follows the piece seem like a *consequence* of the piece. While the

work falls silent, the final physical gesture is of the cellist *embracing* the instrument, perhaps a depiction of the doomed figures in Matta's painting?

...like a secret theatre...

In what can only be considered a gesture of extreme generosity to music analysts, Sir Harrison Birtwistle offered a glimpse into his compositional procedure in *Secret Theatre* by printing excerpts from his sixty-six pages of sketches in the program at the premiere.³⁷ Michael Hall notes that the remainder of the sixty-six pages that were not published for the concert has been lost. While those notes would surely be of value to deciphering the work, I do not consider the loss as tragically as does Hall. After all, Birtwistle surely did not choose the excerpts at random, and an interpretation of the work should not be contingent on knowing exactly what the composer's motivation was at any given moment.

Birtwistle's works, in general, provide many obstacles to traditional analysis. Not least is his penchant for applying disordering techniques to highly systematic material. Michael Hall recalls the following anecdote:

That he was deliberately holding something back became clear one evening at dinner when Sheila, his wife, asked him if he had shown me the sheaves of numbers he was always consulting and he abruptly changed the subject, I later discovered when he dipped into one of his drawers and gave me a handful of sketches that these were random numbers. They constituted his prime method of messing things up. A logical sequence of pitches or durations, for example, would be arranged in an order that he either selected from his list or hit upon willy-nilly.³⁸

Hall's proposed explanation for why Birtwistle had withheld the information, that he might have worried that he would be accused of lacking compositional control, strikes me

³⁷ Michael Hall, *Harrison Birtwistle in Recent Years*, London: Robson Books, 1998, 26.

³⁸ Ibid. x.

as unsatisfactory.³⁹ For one thing, Birtwistle has never been known for caring about the opinions of his critics. Instead, I would hazard that Birtwistle used the chance operations for the same reason he hesitated to reveal their use: to confound analysts' propensity to find the meaning of a work solely in its mechanical construction—to conflate a work's meaning and its construction.

For this reason, Birtwistle's decision to release information about *Secret Theatre* should be read as important not for what it lacks, but for what was selected. It is particularly important that this was released at the time of performance as an aid to the listener (and not given to a researcher or an archive for posterity). The remainder of the 66 pages would doubtless be of considerable interest—especially since it might confirm that there were types of information that he found important for the audience and, conversely, others that he viewed as unimportant—but the fragments given are more than enough to construct a clear interpretation of the work. Moreover, the fact that pitch selection is completely absent from the fragments indicates that pitch was a secondary concern in the composition of *Secret Theatre*, or that Birtwistle viewed it as less important to an understanding of the work.⁴⁰ The key to my interpretation of the work will be, instead, understanding the practical elaboration of his compositional philosophy.

First things – instrumentation...

³⁹ Ibid. xi.

⁴⁰ Partially for reasons of space, and partially as a corrective for analyses that tend to fetishize pitch to the detriment of other parameters, this analysis will have relatively little analysis of the pitch content in *Secret Theatre*.

In the notes, the first parameter Birtwistle considers in *Secret Theatre* is its instrumentation. He writes: “First things – instrumentation – instrumentation of the London Sinfonietta...”⁴¹ This is not a trivial point. This statement says clearly that the starting point, the “first thing” he thinks about, for the work is instrumentation. The clear bracketing of “instrumentation” further calls attention to its status as the center of focus, as if all other considerations will be subordinated to this decision.

In this opening section of the fragment, Birtwistle first addresses compositional problems of his chosen ensemble. The chamber orchestra features thirteen instruments, each with one player per part (flute/piccolo, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, trumpet/piccolo trumpet, horn, trombone, percussion, piano, violin I, violin II, viola, cello, and double bass). He notes, for example that this scoring will create an “imbalance between single strings and brass,” and that the ensemble includes “no real bass.”⁴²

These “problems” could surely have been corrected, of course. The fact that Birtwistle does not, indicates a peculiar method of composition, one that does not proceed from an idealized conception of the work to a realization, but explores compositional possibilities (and difficulties) inherent in a given orchestration. He views the imbalance of the ensemble not as something to be overcome (by mechanical means such as electronic amplification, or doubling parts) but as a constraint, which will determine, in a large part, the type of music he will write. While it could be countered that many (even most) works begin by deciding what instruments will be performing them and then considering their potentials and pitfalls, for Birtwistle this procedure is elevated to a compositional principle. It offers certain inherent properties which function

⁴¹ Ibid. 26.

⁴² Ibid.

both as constraints and potentialities to the composer. This still represents music of the “philosophical turn,” but it is a compositional philosophy that is only constituted practically in the process of composing.

...not good analogy...

After addressing the inherent problems of his ensemble, Birtwistle then reveals his “basic idea”: “Basic idea (not back of head) – music which is divided into two of its most basic elements vertical/horizontal, or melody/accompaniment...”⁴³ He immediately counters the suggestion of “melody/accompaniment,” saying that it is a bad analogy, because it suggests that one element is of greater importance than the other. The division of the composition is quickly assigned to a physical separation of the ensemble. He then suggests changing the composition of the ensemble during the performance, though with “not too much coming and going.”⁴⁴ He eventually settles on “Cantus” and “Continuum” as designations for the two parts of the ensemble.

It is important that Birtwistle’s first impulse, in describing the division of the ensemble, was to call it melody and accompaniment. Perhaps the division should still be read as melody and accompaniment in an allegorical sense, where what roles fulfill melody and accompaniment shift over time. More importantly, melody and accompaniment imply a stasis of roles that he clearly wants to avoid. For this reason, Birtwistle is drawn to designations that imply more of a sense of “foreground” and “background,” precisely because those terms also suggest “middleground.” If we take his first impulse seriously, then, *Secret Theatre* attempts to explore the border between

⁴³ Ibid. 26.

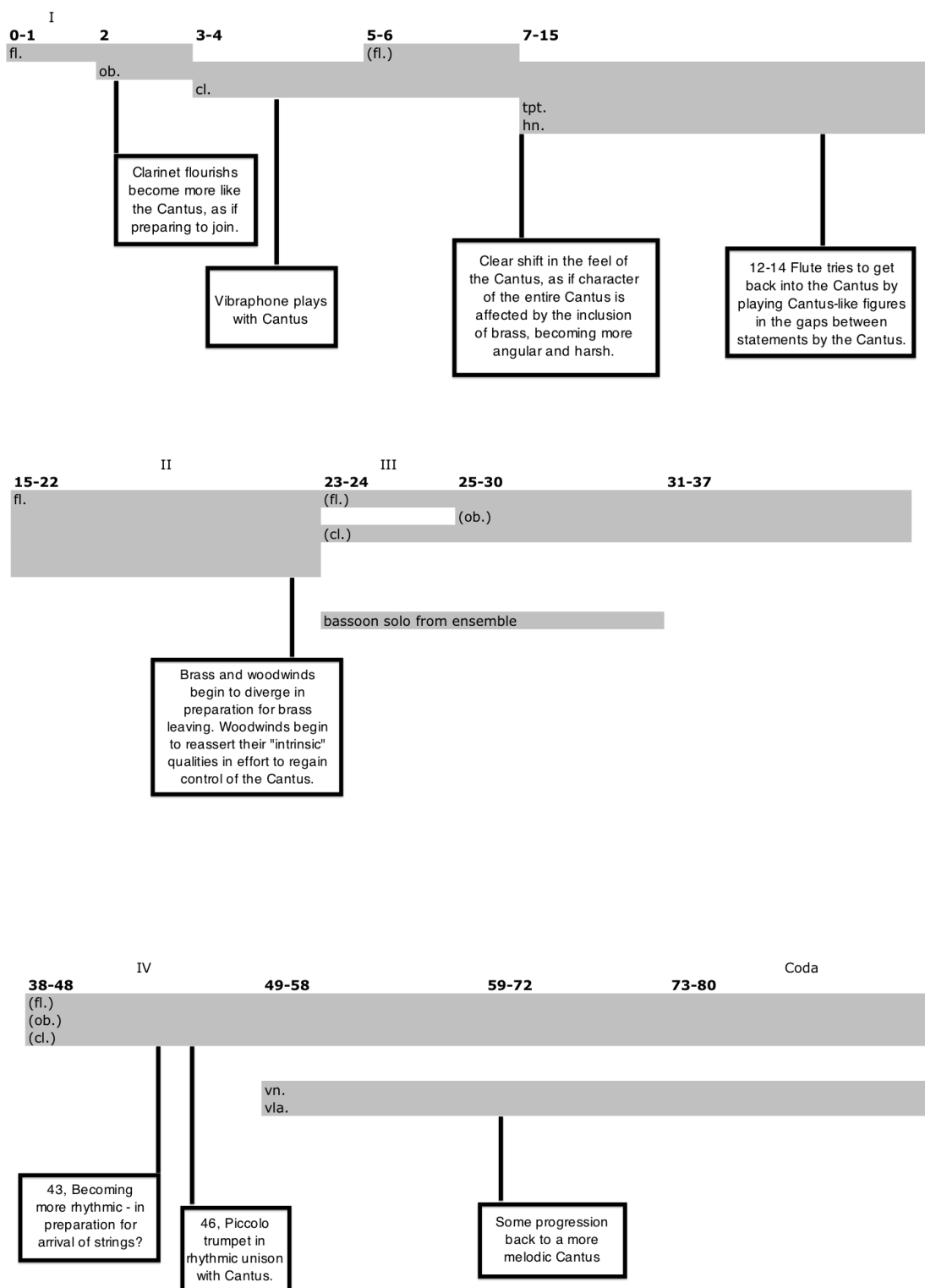
⁴⁴ Ibid. 27.

melody and accompaniment, to find where melody can no longer function as such and becomes accompaniment.

The Cantus is conceived as a “unison” part, though it is not always unison in the strict definition of the word (all players playing the exact same notes and rhythms). Instead, they are unison in the sense that the parts of the Cantus are not heard as individual lines. When the parts move in counterpoint, the result is a single texture. The weaving of multiple lines are not distinguished enough to be heard as separated, much like a river whose currents and ripples do not move in strict unison, but are nonetheless understood as single flowing entity.

The Cantus

That there is a specific “character” to the Cantus is clear from the way instruments enter and leave. (See Example 22 showing the shifting makeup of the Cantus.) When *Secret Theatre* begins, the flute immediately moves to the solo position. (Note that the flute player does not begin at the Cantus position, but moves from its position in the ensemble when the piece starts.) At this point, the flute plays its melodies that define, in some sense, the default character of the Cantus. The initial flute melody uses only a fairly limited tessitura: from the beginning until the flute drops out at rehearsal number 3 (RN3), all the notes fall in a range from the A-flat in the treble clef to the F above treble clef. The lines are circular in the sense that the melodies continually move from the top to the bottom of that range, never emphasizing one part of the range over the others. Similarly, the lengths of the notes all fall within a certain range, and Birtwistle rarely



Example 22: Shifting composition of the cantus throughout *Secret Theatre*.

emphasizes one note by holding it more than a few beats. When a note is held longer, it usually indicates a change in the composition or character of the Cantus, a moment of conflict (or coordination) with the Continuum (as in the horn fermatas that interrupt throughout the opening section), or both.

The oboe is the next instrument to move to the Cantus. It enters by matching the flute's A-natural, held on a horn-fermata in the bar before RN2. The same bar features a quick flourish by the clarinet, the meaning of which is ambiguous, but will soon be revealed as a preparation for its own entrance into the Cantus. The oboe and flute play in strict unison for only the first two bars before the two begin diverging. The divergence is subtle at first, with the flute adding an E-flat between the movement from B-flat to D in the third bar of RN2. The two continue to diverge until the proposition that they are playing in "unison" (by the less strict definition) is no longer tenable, and the flute drops out just before RN3.

Just after the flute stops playing (but does not physically leave the Cantus), the clarinet begins playing in strict unison with the oboe, but from the Continuum. After a short stint with the oboe, it plays another one of its flourishes to announce RN3, at which point the clarinetist moves to the Continuum. The flourishes and the fragment where the clarinet played with the oboe (from the Continuum position) create a dramatic effect, in that the clarinet appears to be taking on characteristics of the Cantus in apparent effort to join. The clarinet almost appears to be proving its allegiance to the Cantus before it is granted admittance. The instrumental parts are thereby anthropomorphized, and are imbued with human (and not strictly musical) motivations.

When the trumpet and horn arrive in the Cantus at RN7 there is no preparation analogous to that of the clarinet. Instead, their arrival signals a dramatic shift in the feel of the entire Cantus, and signals the flute's return to the Continuum. The Cantus takes on a decidedly regal air, becoming more angular and harsh. If we read this dramatically, it seems as if the flute, which had previously set the tone for the Cantus has been forced to leave, allowing the brass to set the tone.

The drama continues to unfold at RN12, when the flute begins playing small Cantus-like gestures in the fissures that begin to appear in the Cantus. The repeated gesture consists of three eighth notes descending by leaps. After RN14 the flute is instructed to return to the Cantus. When the flute enters in the bar before RN15, it does so with the same descending pattern, this time appending another leap back up to a C-sharp, which is held over to the new section (See Example 23). This new section signals another shift in the character of the Cantus. It begins what Michael Hall refers to as the "Scherzo," and features much more rhythmic, dance-like material.⁴⁵ As this section draws to a close, the woodwinds and the brass gradually pull apart. This appears first with the woodwinds adding grace-notes to their figures at RN21, which are otherwise in rhythmic unison, and then by adding short accented notes in between the unison gestures. Just before RN23, the short staccato notes become an extended downward scalar pattern of thirty-second notes. The horn and trumpet hold their notes for a few more measures before deciding that reconciliation with the woodwinds is futile, and return to the Continuum, signaling the end of the "Scherzo" section.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 30.

fl

ob

cl

trpt

trbn

4/8

15

92.80

3/2

Example 23: The Cantus, at the transition to RN15. © Copyright 1991 by Universal Edition (London), Ltd., London/UE 17917

...hide it or lose it...

The Continuum works primarily, but not exclusively, with ideas of pulse and rhythm. In his fragment, Birtwistle describes the Continuum as being comprised of “invented ostinato forms, plus solos.”⁴⁶ The Continuum is intended to be primarily concerned with rhythmic development, the Cantus with melodic development. It is in the Continuum where the boundaries between the two (rhythmic and melodic) are most clearly explored.

It is possible to view the previously mentioned preparations by the flute to enter the Cantus at RN12 in reverse, from the perspective of the Continuum. In that case, the flute begins by playing an ostinato pattern—the downward descending leaps—that is ambiguous as to whether it is melodic or rhythmic. When it adds a small melodic flourish two bars before RN14, the flute then crosses a threshold and can no longer be considered

⁴⁶ Ibid. 28.

a rhythmic part and must leave the Continuum (See Example 24). This is what Birtwistle describes as “Ostinato into melody perhaps.”⁴⁷ Interestingly, he suggests that he must, “having done this [worked out ways in which ostinato becomes melody], hide it or lose it so it won’t become precompositional.”⁴⁸ He seems to want to guard, at all costs, against the sketches becoming the work itself—which seems to have been, to a large extent, the goal of Michael Hall’s analyses.

In some sense, the Cantus and Continuum should not be seen as the separate entities they appear to be. In their ideal states, they are diametrically opposed, but throughout the piece they are continually negotiating ideas of melody and accompaniment, foreground and background. In the end, both parts end up contesting the middle-ground as much as they articulate the poles.

The Bassoon Caesura

The third section of *Secret Theatre* features an extended bassoon solo in the Continuum section. The bassoon solo begins at RN23, when the trumpet and horn have retreated to the Continuum and the Cantus is once again comprised of flute, oboe and clarinet. The bassoon plays Cantus-like material, and appears to be in dialogue with the Cantus, but remains seated with the Continuum. The practical reason for this may well be that a standing bassoon player would be awkward at best. In fact, the decision for which instruments to include in the Cantus seems to have been based, to some extent at least, on which instruments could practically move to the Cantus and play standing. (This

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

13 14

ob. *legato* *pppp* *pp*

cl. *legato* *pppp* *pp*

tpt. *con sord. (cup)* *legato* *pppp* *pp*

hn. *legato* *pppp* *pp*

fl. *tr.* *p* *tr.* *pp* *fff* *to solo position*

cbn. *to bn*

trbn. *pp* *ff* *pp* *mf-pp* *mf-pp* *mf-pp* *mf-pp*

vib. 13 14

pno. *f* *ff* *f cresc.*

vn1. *f* *ff* *plaz. sec.* *f cresc.*

vn2. *f* *ff* *plaz. sec.* *f cresc.*

va. *f* *ff* *plaz. sec.* *f cresc.*

vc. *f* *ff* *plaz. sec.* *f cresc.*

db. *pp* *mf-pp* *mf-pp* *mf-pp* *mf-pp*

4/8 ♩ = 92 3/8 ♩ = c.50 5/8 4/8 5/8 3/8

Example 24: Cantus and Continuum at RN13. © Copyright 1991 by Universal Edition (London), Ltd., London/UE 17917

immediately eliminates bassoon, percussion, piano, cello and double bass.) It should also be noted that the vibraphone intermittently plays in unison with the Cantus, as at RN4 through RN7.

The bassoon part at RN23 is of considerably more structural importance than the above mentioned vibraphone part. The bassoon plays like a Cantus instrument, but never approaches unison (even by the un-strict definition) with the Cantus players. It does, however, seem to converse with the Cantus. At RN26, the bassoon grace-note flourish seems to prefigure an extended passage of faster material in the Cantus. This happens again three measures later, and again two measures before RN27. In general, however, though the bassoon is playing material similar to the Cantus, it is doing so at a speed about two or three times slower (See Example 25).

What then, is the purpose of the divided ensemble, if the bassoon so clearly (at this point in the composition) belongs to the Cantus and not the Continuum with which it is seated? Perhaps Birtwistle is taking the practical limitations of the instruments and his initial decision to have the Cantus stand as constraints on the composition. This would make the bassoon the most visible sign of the tension between compositional impetus/intuition and compositional constraints. That is to say, Birtwistle's intuition tells him that a bassoon solo is appropriate or necessary at this particular point, but his decision to have the Cantus stand makes it impossible for the bassoon to physically join the Cantus. It is important to emphasize, as well, that this conflict is visual, not (or at least not primarily) aural. These constraints should be read as analogs to tonality, twelve-tone rows, or any other system—that is something that removes some degree of agency from the composer.

The image shows a musical score for three woodwinds (flute, oboe, clarinet) and a bassoon. The flute, oboe, and clarinet parts are grouped together, with the flute part starting at measure 27. The bassoon part is below them. The score includes dynamic markings (p, mf, ff) and articulation marks (accents, slurs). The time signature changes from 2/8 to 3/8.

Example 25: Cantus and bassoon at RN27. © Copyright 1991 by Universal Edition (London), Ltd., London/UE 17917

...like a secret theatre...

The primary conflict in *Secret Theatre* is between the Cantus and Continuum. Like many of Birtwistle's works, *Secret Theatre* is highly sectional—each rehearsal number marks a clear shift in some key idea. For example, at RN1, the piano enters with alternating staccato notes in the bass clef and chords in the treble with the vibraphone articulating 2-note diads taken from the piano's chords. This ends abruptly at RN2 when the oboe enters the Cantus. Like theater, the work seems to be arranged into successive scenes, each articulating some aspect of the relationship between Cantus and Continuum.

The bassoon solo, therefore is the defining moment which succeeds in articulating this tension between the two ensembles. In Hölderlin's sense, this is the *caesura* that allows a succession of scenes to become more than mere alternation. By stubbornly occupying the gap between the two ensembles, the bassoon reveals both their inability to

meet and their inability to differentiate themselves. Moreover, in this moment of (dis)unification, the work as a whole reveals the limits of the concepts of melody and accompaniment.

Postscript: In Memoriam Bruno Maderna

L'alternance se perpétue:

Sorte de versets et répons pour une
cérémonie imaginaire.

Cérémonie du souvenir – d'où ces
nombreux retours sur les mêmes
formules, tout en changeant profils
et perspectives.

Cérémonie de l'extinction, rituel
de la disparition et de la survivance:
ainsi s'impriment les images dans
la mémoire musicale –
présentes/absentes, dans le doute.¹

Maderna knew that he would not long outlive his fiftieth birthday. In one of his final interviews, Leonardo Pinzauti describes a man uncomfortable in his body, restless and exhausted by the difficulty of trying to negotiate his form, and frequently laboring to breathe.² In conversation with his sound engineer, Marino Zuccheri, about the production

¹ Pierre Boulez, *Rituel in Memoriam Bruno Maderna* (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1975), ii. Perpetual alternation:/ Litany for an/ imaginary ceremonial./ Ceremonial of remembrance – whence these/ recurrent patterns, changing in profile/ and perspective./ Ceremonial of death, ritual/ of the ephemeral and the eternal: /thus the images engraved/ on the musical memory –/ present/absent, in uncertainty. (Translation from Boulez, *Rituel*, vi.)

² Raymond Fearn, *Bruno Maderna* (Chur, Switzerland: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1990), 315-320. In a characteristic remark, Pinzauti writes, "Maderna began to laugh, and seemed to have to take account of the cigarette-smoke, which was not helping his breathing; he coughed, lit up again, moved back and forth in his armchair, adjusted his sweater over his stomach" (Fearn, *Bruno Maderna*, 317).

of his final opera, *Satyricon*, Maderna would say, “You know, Marino, I won’t be there.”³ Zuccheri pretended not to understand.

On April 2, 1975, Pierre Boulez premiered a musical tribute, *Rituel in Memoriam Bruno Maderna*, which explored themes he had presented earlier in a short “salut” written just days after his death on November 13, 1973.⁴ In that essay, Boulez tries to come to terms with a man and a musician who clearly confounded him on many levels. Boulez was known for nothing if not the consistency and rigor with which he applied himself to his craft, whereas Maderna, as we saw chapters I and IV, eschewed such consistency—or at the very least, dogmatism. And yet, Boulez found himself unable to dismiss Maderna as unserious. Maderna was, he said, “someone who knew what it meant to be rigorous but had never decided to apply it to himself, simply because it did not appeal to him.”⁵ Put another way, Maderna was rigorously unserious. Boulez continued, “his kind of rigorousness had nothing to do with numbers, it was simply the knowledge that he could express his personality only by disregarding punctilio of any kind.”⁶

Boulez then writes something I cannot but agree with, based on my own experiences of Maderna’s music: “The best things in his own music, the prize moments, sprang from this immediate, irrational musical sense, and for this reason his most

³ Veniero Rizzardi and Angela Ida de Benedictis, eds., “...at the Time of the Tubes...: A Conversation with Marino Zuccheri” (trans. Peter de Laurentiis) in *Nuova Musica alla Radio*, 206.

⁴ The *Rituel* was commissioned and performed in London by the BBC Symphony Orchestra, a group with which Maderna had been affiliated during his last years. Boulez’s “Salut à Bruno Maderna” was published in the *Nouvel Observateur* on November 26, 1973, and later collected in *Orientations* as “Esquisse d’un portrait” (“Bruno Maderna: A Portrait Sketch”). Pierre Boulez, *Orientations*, ed. Jean-Jacques Nattiez, trans. Martin Cooper (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 523-524.

⁵ Boulez, *Orientations*, 524.

⁶ Ibid.

successful works are those that leave the most initiative to the players.”⁷ Maderna cultivated the irrationality that both gave life to his works and which accounts for their elusiveness.

This aspect of Maderna’s music, however, presented a problem for Boulez. While he withheld judgment as to whether the disorganization and informal nature of Maderna’s works were an essential component or merely a compositional deficiency, he admitted that he was hesitant to perform his works because of persistent performance ambiguities.⁸ He called his compositions “fragile, like an object handmade very quickly and under pressure all the time.”⁹ However, he does not attribute these difficulties to a lack of skill, but to a strenuous conducting schedule that left little time for composition. Boulez seems to view Maderna’s compositions as exceptional—but thoroughly neglected—children.

Instead of his compositions, Boulez valued Maderna’s conducting as his most important contribution to music of the post-war generation. For this reason, his *Rituel* was modeled on Maderna’s particular strengths for interacting with an orchestra: “Berio had asked me for a piece to mark the occasion of [his] death, and I remembered that he was an excellent and very able conductor, especially of all kinds of groups within the orchestra.”¹⁰ *Rituel* is scored for a small orchestra, but conceived as a chamber work with the orchestra divided into eight groups that each function like an individual “instrument” (See Example 26).¹¹ The size of each group varies from the smallest, a single oboe—a

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Rocco Di Pietro and Pierre Boulez, *Dialogues with Boulez* (Laynam, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 2001), 15-16.

⁹ Ibid. 15.

¹⁰ Ibid. 50-51.

¹¹ “[*Rituel*] isn’t an orchestral work at all, it’s a piece of large-scale chamber music, in which the groups are entirely individualized.” “Interview with Pierre Boulez and David

clear reference to Maderna's trio of oboe concertos—to the largest, a full fourteen-piece brass section. Group III, three flutes (doubling on alto-flute), is notable because it also seems to be an overt reference to the three alto-flutes that concludes the *Aria* from Maderna's *Hyperion* (see Chapter IV). Each of the eight groups is assigned its own percussionist, with two percussionists playing a compliment of seven gongs and seven tam-tams being allotted to the brass section. The score indicates that groups are to be separated spatially on stage in a formation resembling the form of a (headless) conductor (See Example 27).

- I. Oboe 1, Perc. 1
- II. 2 Clarinets in B-flat (1 and 2), Perc. 2
- III. 3 Flutes, Perc. 3
- IV. 4 Violins (1-4), Perc. 4
- V. Wind quintet (Oboe 2, Clarinet 3 in B-flat, Saxophone, 2 Bassoons – 1 and 3), Perc 5
- VI. String sextet (2 Violins – 5 and 6, 2 Violas, 2 Cellos), Perc. 6
- VII. Wind Septet (Alto flute, Oboe 3, English horn, Clarinet in E-flat, Bass clarinet, 2 Bassoons – 2 and 4), Perc, 7
- VIII. Brass, Perc. 8 and 9

Example 26: Orchestral divisions in *Rituel*

As is customary for memorial works, the *Rituel* is structured more simply than most of Boulez's compositions.¹² Constant overlapping pulses help to give the work its

Robertson" (trans. Charles Johnston) in *Boulez: Notations, Figures-Doubles-Prisms, Rituel* (Lyon: Naïve, 2002), 17.

¹² Jonathan Goldman, *The Musical Language of Pierre Boulez* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 102. Goldman notes that "even Beethoven and Chopin, when paying tribute to the dead in their respective funeral marches, opted for simpler forms than those for which their stylistic idioms normally called."

2

III

A Très lent

B Très lent

Rapide

Culvr. ① Htb. ②

3 32

V 2 ① Htb. Culvr. ②

1 32

Tp. 1 2 3 4

sourd. harmon.

VIII

Cors en fa bouchés 1 2 3 4 5 6

Tbn. 1 2 3 4

sourd. harmon.

Perc. 9 2 4

Perc. 8 1 4

Example 28: Section III from Boulez's *Rituel*. Pierre Boulez, *Rituel in Memoriam Bruno Maderna: für Orchester in 8 Gruppen*. © Copyright 1991 by Universal Edition (London), Ltd., London/UE 15941.

held together by a kind of tension; it is as if the chords fall apart into dissolution when the conductor releases the chord. Where more than one held chord occurs in the same section, they are separated by *caesurae* of varying lengths. Although not completely synchronized, these response sections are largely controlled by the intuition of the conductor, who spaces the chords over the pulse dictated by the percussionists. Until the final section, fifteen, percussionists eight and nine provide the pulse for the entire group, while the other percussionists are reserved for use in the verse sections.

In those even-numbered sections, or “verses,” by contrast, “the instrumental groups should not attempt to synchronize with each other. (See Example 29, showing the

IV **Modéré** $\text{♩} = 66 \text{ } \swarrow 72 \text{ } \nearrow 76$

III Fl. $\text{♩} = 1/2$ Cl. $\text{♩} = 4/4$ Hrb.

Si possible, sans respirer jusqu'à la fin de la phrase. Si nécessaire, respirer avant f

I Hrb. 1 $\text{♩} = 3/2$ 9 3 4 1 6 3 5 1 8 1 7

Perc. 1 Cloche japonaise 32 4 32 4 32 4 32 4 32 4 32 4

II Cl. en sib 1 $\text{♩} = 3/2$ 3 4 1 6 1 2 3 2 1 5 1 1 3 2 2 1 3 3 1 3 3 2

Perc. 2 Wood block 32 4 32 4 32 4 32 4 32 4 32 4 32 4 32 4 32 4 32 4

III Fl. 2 $\text{♩} = 3/2$ 6 4 1 3 3 2 2 4 1 2 3 2 4 3 2 4 1 5 3 3 1 2 3 5 4

Perc. 3 Bongo 32 4 32 4 32 4 32 4 32 4 32 4 32 4 32 4 32 4 32 4

Example 29: The first system of Section IV from Boulez's *Rituel*, the second "verse." Pierre Boulez, *Rituel in Memoriam Bruno Maderna: für Orchester in 8 Gruppen*. © Copyright 1991 by Universal Edition (London), Ltd., London/UE 15941.

first system of the second "verse" section.) The conductor gives each group the cue to start and thereafter each continues to play, unconducted, independently of the other groups."¹⁴ In these sections, the percussionist assigned to each group acts as the conductor for that group.¹⁵ The material in these groups is characterized by held notes, followed by melodic and rhythmic flourishes that return to another held note. In each group, the flourishes and held notes are in exact rhythmic unison and similar motion.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ This could be seen as an implementation of an anecdote Boulez gave in his "Salut": "The first time I saw [Maderna], at Darmstadt, he was rehearsing a work with one percussion-player short, so he sat by the tam-tams and bongos playing and conducting at the same time, and each with equal facility. It was rather like a monkey agile enough to jump from one musical tree to another with incredible ease." Boulez, *Orientations*, 523.

Here again, the flourishes give the impression that the chords are held together with a pressure that only in brief moments of release allow the instruments to reveal bursts of melodic action. The role of the conductor in these sections is to bring the ensemble together into moments of coordination, before the various groups gradually diverge from each other.

Rituel does not exactly develop: “The ideas don’t change at all; they just get larger and larger. The principle remains always the same: an additive process.”¹⁶ The sections lengthen, become denser, and feature more simultaneous parts, but there is no thematic development in the traditional sense. The first section is comprised of a single chord performed by the brass group (VIII), together with three gong-strikes. In the second, the solo oboe performs a plaintive melody over the almost-steady pulse of a tabla. (The tabla plays even pulses for the entire duration of the oboe’s held notes, but each held note and its accompanying pulse is interrupted by a thirty-second note.) Section III is an approximate doubling of Section I; it contains two chords, with separate entrances for the solo oboe and the brass, and ten gong-strikes performed on two different gongs. Section IV then introduces the principle idea for the “verse” sections, which was hidden in Section II by virtue of the fact that the oboe played alone: three groups, each with its own pulse, play similar material—held chords interrupted by short appoggiaturas and flourishes—together but do not synchronize.

Each successive section, always alternating verse and response, grows in both length and size of the orchestration. That is to say, each response contains more held chords performed by more instrumental groups than the previous, and each verse contains

¹⁶ Di Pietro and Boulez, *Dialogues with Boulez*, 15.

more instrumental groups playing simultaneously. This creates a gradual sense of increasing chaos and cacophony. At the start of each section, however, the conductor seems to draw all of the groups back together for a moment of repose and synchronization. Section XII, the penultimate verse, uses all instrumental groups except the brass, and section XIII, the penultimate response, is *tutti*. Section XIV, the last verse, drops back to five instrumental groups, but is the longest thus far.

Section XV, the final response, breaks all previously established norms. This section lasts nearly as long as the entire first fourteen. As Goldman notes, the form of this extended coda mirrors the first seven response sections, with seven subsections of held chords marked A through G, gradually decreasing in length and orchestration. Subsection A begins *tutti* and each following subsection removes an instrumental group until Subsection G is left with only groups seven and eight.¹⁷ In addition to the chords, all of the percussionists now contribute to the overlapping pulses, though not all at once. Dominique Jameux, Boulez's biographer, compared this diminishing texture to Haydn's *Farewell Symphony*.¹⁸

As a tribute to Maderna, Boulez's *Rituel* makes a poignant statement about Maderna's place in the history of post-war music and at Darmstadt. *Rituel* is written for a particular manner of interaction between conductor and orchestra, based on Maderna's own works; that is to say, it is written *for* Maderna to conduct. It is, therefore, a work where its central performer will always be found to be absent. Moreover, as the work progresses, especially in the verse sections, the role of that conductor continually diminishes, while the performing groups each wander off in its own direction, following

¹⁷ Goldman, *The Musical Language of Pierre Boulez*, 111.

¹⁸ Ibid. 103.

its own pulse. It is as if, at the end, the performers—and perhaps Darmstadt as a whole—have lost their conductor, the one who could bring the divergent strands of musical thought into harmonious coexistence.

Appendix 1: Conversation with Nuria Schoenberg Nono

Conducted on December 4, 2006

At the Archivio Luigi Nono, Giudecca, Venice, Italy

I'm interviewing Nuria Schoenberg-Nono on December 4th, at the Nono Archive in Venice. Along the lines of what we were talking about today (the question of whether a composer is composing to a formula or shall we say their experiences and historical perspective) I was wondering what, if you know, influence Adorno may have had on that sentiment?

Actually, my husband was not very enthusiastic about Adorno...

That's the sense I had...

...definitely. And argued with him in Darmstadt even when he was very young. No, I think that that was not an influence.

Adorno also comes to similar conclusions at certain points, but I definitely sensed that there was a different sort of thing going on. Can you talk maybe a little more about the conflict, if there was...

I don't think I know enough about just precisely what it was all about, but I know that he did not consider Adorno...my father also was not exactly...

I've read some of the letters and noticed some hesitation.

Even before the Thomas Mann affair. And he always felt that, he certainly felt that Adorno had not really understood very much about what he was doing with 12-tone music.

And the other thing that I noticed for Adorno in the Presenza Storica: there's a line in there where Nono says that those who would compare integral serialism with a totalitarian regime are, I don't remember exactly what he said, performing some sort of ridiculous...

Yeah...

...and do you know if that would have been directed at Adorno? I'm not sure based on the dates...

I don't know either. I don't know if it was humor...there were enough people there who were against it. And he actually dropped that after a while, too, it was an exercise and it was something that they all had to go through. And then each one of the composers went his own way. I think that that's one thing that people (if I can give you a different answer to your question than you asked) something people don't consider when they talk about these things is that they usually just take one point in time and consider what everyone thought about something at a certain moment, and then they don't take the trouble to see what happened afterwards. And so a lot of times you get these things like: "Oh, they were all friends and they were all going the same way," if you speak of 1956 maybe, or even earlier. And then people who knew him then would say oh yes he was great friends with Stockhausen, great friends with Boulez, which is all true. Great friends with Henze, and so on. And then there's this Presenza Storica in '59 where he actually meant to discuss

this, to talk about it, to persuade people of his own idea, and certainly was not speaking against the American composers. He was friends with Cage and he respected him and Cage respected Gigi right till the very end. As a matter of fact, really in the last, in the 80s they met in Russia and they were both very enthusiastic about each other's works. It had nothing to do with that, it had to do with people wanting to find the formula and copy. It was just easy. Just as they had done before with 12-tone composition...just make up a row and, turn it around a little, and there's your music. What always surprises me is that they never, when they analyzed my father's works, there in Darmstadt, and the fault is also that some of the great pupils of Schoenberg, and the ones who knew him and wanted to fight for his music, which he was not doing. He was writing music.

Right. Would that be someone like...

Rufer.

...Leibowitz.

Leibowitz or Rufer. They really didn't know what was behind. They left out all the emotion and the meaning, the significance of these works. That's the really sad thing. It all came over as a very mechanical or mathematical method, which is not at all what my father said. There are so many quotes about my father where someone comes to him and says "Oh, but you know, you must have made a mistake. The row doesn't work out here." And he says "Yeah, but it sounds better." Because he wasn't like that, he wasn't dogmatic. But anyway, that's not any answer to your question...

So this now onto a different topic. 'm working on a small project about Hermann Scherchen. I assume you knew him personally, if you can tell me anything about your recollections of him.

(Laughs)

From what I've read he was a very difficult person at times.

He was a weird person. I know that he was only about 17 or something when he met my father and conducted the *Pierrot Lunaire*. And he really had this great awe of my father. He told a story about how he wrote a quartet and walked all the way out to, I don't know, to miles outside of Berlin to show it to my father.

Just like Bach.

And when he got to the door, he didn't have the courage to show it. He didn't and so all this sort of thing...But then he got a lot of courage as he went along, I guess (laughs)...and he certainly was a person who did a great deal for modern music. It's unbelievable because, he was not a star, in a way. But he was very influential in a lot of different places. From Prague to Zurich to different cities in Germany, and so on. And England, I guess. He was famous for his rehearsals, but I'm sure you know that. Everyone says his rehearsals were fabulous and then sometimes the performances were not that great.

I knew about his rehearsals, but I guess...

Of course he also used this method that also Svarovsky and people from my father's acquaintances, or people who had not exactly studied with him, but who had worked with

him. And maybe this was just something that they did in those days. They had lots of rehearsals. And they did lots of separate rehearsals, instruments—separate groups, and very, very detailed sort of work, and it was wonderful to listen to. But as a person...oh, its really hard to...you have to turn the thing off...

I have some...there's a recording—or actually its left out of the recording but it's on the transcript, which I wanted to get your opinion on, of Maderna talking about Scherchen, where he says, among other things, he says that while he was ideologically opposed to Nazism, he was deep down a Nazi himself, is what Maderna said.

He was sadistic.

Right, I've heard that as well.

Maybe he thought this was good for his pupils, or something, but he would just. For instance, he would send...which was in a way good—I mean, when Gigi would tell me these things he was not really complaining, but he would say “you know I would be in Venice and Scherchen would send me tickets to Hamburg and say ‘you must come immediately because you must come and listen to my rehearsals.’” And he really helped Gigi a lot. You know, paid for his trips and taught him enormously, I—really just listening to all his rehearsals and talking to him. His teachings on boats in Venice when they had this class, this famous...1958, I think it is. 1948, excuse me.

1948, right.

1948, here in Venice. It was in the summer so they had their lessons on the beach and they would be immersed in the water at the Lido and singing Bach chorales, and you

know, it was all very fascinating and attractive, and they had to learn a lot by heart. It was fantastic. But then he would do things like he would call and you know “You have to be here tomorrow, right away, leave, come.” And then maybe not even talk to you when you got there. Or, I don’t know, he could be very cruel. But, in way, I guess it was all for the good of the composer. I guess. I rather disliked him because when I first met him, and again this is such a subjective reaction, but he had tried to get my father to finish *Moses und Aron*, and he’d be writing him letters for years, and he wanted to perform this, and he tried to perform the first two acts in Italy in several places. In Florence, in Perugia, and it never worked out. So when he, my father, died, by chance we met Scherchen in Rome, my mother and I, in 1954 and he came into this hotel and sat down with Mother. And he said, just to give you an idea of the kind of thing he was capable of. And he said, “We must force this performance, now, as long as the wound of Schoenberg’s death is still bleeding.” And he was saying this to the widow, just a couple years after my father died. I was just shocked, I almost fainted, I just ran away and everything...But that was...he was dedicated, and everything he did went toward that. And then on the other hand, he had all these children and was wonderful with them, and I think very, very good to his wife, and that was one side. The other side was this, I guess he was driven. And then the other thing about him which is sad, because you’d always like someone like this who had so many good sides and did so many good things. This was his weakness, because he never became a composer, that he tried to compose other people’s works.

Right.

His famous cuts. He would take a work, and he was always afraid that the audience would get bored, or that there wouldn't be a big enough success. And so you know "Well cut this out, and cut that out." And actually, for the first performance of *Il canto Sospeso*, which was the first work where I was there the whole time when Gigi was composing it. And I knew a lot about it, because Gigi would tell me what he had done, and what it was supposed to be, and everything. And then we went to Cologne and he met Scherchen at the first rehearsal, and he came back from the rehearsal to the hotel and he said, you know, Scherchen wants to cut out two pieces.

Did he end up doing that for the performance?

No, that's what I'm telling you. And so, I said, what do you mean two pieces. I thought this goes 3, 3, and 3. I thought this had a certain structure, how could he do that? Oh well he thinks this is too long and the audience will get bored. And what do you think? No, I wrote it like this and I believe in this. Well you go and tell him! Tell him this is my work and this is how I wrote it, and if you want to perform it this way, okay, and if not, then forget it. And he went back, and Scherchen said OK, but "At your own risk!" And then of course it was a huge success. But this is unmusical, and that's the crazy thing. And he did the same thing, the weirdest thing in *Von Heute auf Morgen*, which is this opera of my father's, it's about this husband and wife, and people, and they...well anyway, at one point the Gas Man comes to the door to ask for the bill to read the, whatever, anyway. And the husband, the doorbell rings and the husband goes there and says "Der Gas Man" and Scherchen cut out two measure, I think its like, well at least two measures. CUT OUT two measures where it said "Gas Man" because he said "oh, but we're doing this in Naples, and if people hear 'Gas Man' people will think it's Victorio Gasman, the actor,

and so they'll laugh." I mean, it didn't occur to him to say the milk man, which would have made no difference at all. But this is a 12-tone work and here he's cutting out 2 measures. It's weird, weird things that he would do that were just unmusical. And of course, at that time I didn't know that he had taken *Polifonica-Monodica-Ritmica* of Gigi's and had just cut out just, I think it's like two thirds of the middle part. And Gigi had accepted that and it was published that way because it was Scherchen who published with Ars Viva. And for years and years, I mean forever, that's how it was, and even when he reconstructed the score, because they lost the original score, and he reconstructed it from the parts, he did it the same way. And then later when we opened the archive, Viniero Rizardi found the score and it had all these things that Scherchen had cut, and so we tried, we had a private sort of performance with our scientific committee, scholarly committee from the archive, and they played it the way it was supposed to be. And it was great. It has the right proportions. And then I've found out that he had done the same thing with Maderna and others. And there are letters, also. And there are letters from Gigi and he writes to Scherchen and says I don't really—you may have seen this—I don't agree to this.

Well, there's also this one, it looks like written shortly after the premiere of Il canto sospeso where it looks like Scherchen is still trying to get him to rewrite the work.

Ah, I didn't see that one. It's really weird and there's a letter also, that Scherchen's daughter published, which are letters from her father to her mother, in which he says, this was one of the first performances of Gigi's, and he writes, "you know the work of Gigi's was a big success, but I hope he doesn't think it is because of his work, it's because of me, how I presented it." It's so strange.

That's sort of the sense I had been getting about Scherchen, that it's all about him. That he was only interested in new composers in as much as he could control them in a certain sense.

It's scary. He had these ice-blue eyes, that were just, to me, really frightening. And he would look at you smilingly and it was just...sort of Peter Lorre sort of look. With me, you know, he was very nice, you know it was Arnold Schoenberg's daughter and all this, but it was always sort of (facial expression) "ha-ha, die liebe Nuria". And then he called me "Nur Ja" (Just yes), I mean, it's sort of stupid, but anyway...

Oh, right, he actually...I saw that spelled in there...

He always writes...It's so stupid. But anyway, I think that's sort of a German thing too, because all these people with "no, no" and "si, si" and "yes, yes" and all that stuff.

Right...And the other thing that Maderna mentions in the interview where he talks about Scherchen. And it's something that I wanted to figure out, because I couldn't interpret what Maderna meant, but he said that in his last years he became convinced or obsessed with the idea that music had died with Wagner. I didn't know whether to take that to mean that Wagner was the last great composer or if he meant that Wagner was the first bad composer.

No, I think he meant the last great...I mean, I think that's probably true. He didn't really...I know Gigi didn't have very many contacts with him at all. Just that last concert where he died and everything, but it stops at a certain point.

I noticed that the stack, sort of from here to here is to 1960, and then...

...and then its not so...I mean certainly. He did, you know, when he started that studio. That was kind of naive on the part of Scherchen, because he would get the old machines that the radio was replacing—at least that's what I heard—and so, actually the research they were doing on that, I don't know how valuable that really is. But we do have the recording from the Gravesano Blätter here in the Archive, and it would be interesting for someone to do a really serious study on that from the viewpoint of today...

That would be very interesting...

...from what we know now. He did, for instance...He did things that are really...There's a video of Erwartung that he did in Gravesano with a very good singer, whose name I don't remember, and I mean it is, its like the most amateurish thing you can imagine with this woman running around their yard practically, and singing Erwartung. so there was this other side of him too, that was a very...unprofessional. It is very strange for someone who is so, so...

His recording of the Haydn Farewell Symphony he has each performer...it's a recording for a record, and since you can't see them getting off stage...

...Getting off and going away...

...he has each one of them say "Auf Wiedersehen!" as they leave.

Oh my God! That's incredible! Well that's the funny thing about Germans, you know, they'll be like that. There all, you know, 100% everything has to be like this, and then they'll do some totally crazy thing like that, that's very strange. But what Gigi really

loved of his for instance was the recording of the Art of the Fugue which he listened to like a million times. And that record must have...

I don't think I've actually...I've seen a video of the rehearsal of that, with, in Canada, but I don't know if that's probably a different recording.

This was a really old one I think. And that to him was really just—But I think also because it's what they studied with him when they were here. And he was like a father to Gigi, because Gigi's family, his mother was wonderful, but his father was very upset that he left the conservatory. And Malipiero was offended because Gigi went to study, you know, modern music, and quit the conservatory. And so he went to Gigi's father whom he knew well and he told him that Gigi would never be anything and that he was just a charlatan and my father-in-law believed this because, you know Malipiero is...

...famous.

Yeah. And so it made it very difficult for Gigi, and then when he found Scherchen, Scherchen was a big father figure in his life for all those years. So he was extremely important for him, but he was also like...

...a father figure in the bad sense.

Yeah, in the bad sense too. I think that's one thing that maybe it helped as he got more sure of himself, that he didn't need that anymore.

I think that's really all...

Not too nice of me to say...

(Laugh) I guess the...do you have any more thoughts on the Canto Sospeso premiere.

Did you get the sense that had any effect on Nono's and Scherchen's relationship?

No, No...because it continued for a while. I think he just felt that...I don't know, it just sort of. I don't know why. I guess he just didn't understand his later works, or wasn't interested. I really can hardly remember how they sort of...floated apart, but...no. And of course, I think Scherchen didn't come to Darmstadt any more...

He stopped after...

He stopped after quite a while.

I don't think he came there in the 60s for sure.

No. I don't think so. And...Maybe because Gigi was working in Milano also at Fonologia.

That...actually there was a letter in there that looked as if Scherchen was upset that Nono was working in Milan and not coming to Gravesano.

Yeah, because he was inviting him—"can you give a lecture." There's one in there where he's telling him he should come and give a lecture on something at their Gravesano...whatever it was. You know, working in Milano and realized that that was not so...not as good, technically as what he had in Milano. That's probably one of the things that...(trails off)

Appendix 2: Nuria Schoenberg-Nono in Conversation with Konrad Boehmer

December 1, 2006

At the conference “Prezenza Storica di Luigi Nono” in Padova, Italy

Dedication of new concert hall in Padova

Konrad Boehmer: Only one building which is dedicated to and is baptized on the name of a composer of the second half of the twentieth century. Where, in which country, and in which city does this building, this concert hall, stand? I’m very curious.

Audience: [someone responds saying that they don’t know where it is]

KB: It is a concert hall in the empire of Kim Jong-il in North Korea in the city of Pyongyang which is baptized the Issan Yun concert hall. And why have I put you this little question, this little joke...because it’s true, because we Europeans should really be ashamed. We have had, in our twentieth century, two absolutely fascinating epochs of new music, which the first one is the Schoenberg and Webern and Stravinsky and Bartok epoch. And the second one is the one we are discussing around now, since two days. And these people of politics, the city governments and so on, never ever have considered it to crystallize some emblems, to crystallize some moments of this great history into buildings, into concert halls or whatever. So it would be wonderful if Padova would be the first step, and that already one hundred years after [obscured by laughter]

Conversation between Nuria Schoenberg Nono and Konrad Boehmer

Nuria Schoenberg-Nono: Ok, we're going to do this in English. We talked about this, this morning...I often speak about the times when we went—and I always say “we” and of course I was just an appendage, but it just comes out that way—when we went to Darmstadt, and I often use the word temperature. Temperature in the sense of intensity. I think today things are very different. People listen to each other, and if they don't agree they maybe make some mild comment. They don't get up and scream, “No, this is not right! You're wrong!” and storm out of the building or during a concert even whistle or scream at the end against a work, which they didn't enjoy or which they didn't think was proper for the situation in which they were...These things happened in Darmstadt but we must go way back, and I'm going to start with something, probably, very few of you have heard of, an organization called USIS, or U-S-I-S, which was the United States Information Service.

I'm going to go back to my father [Arnold Schoenberg], who after the war when the Americans had won the war against Nazi fascism, was so very happy and also imagined that now as an American composer—he became an American citizen in 1941—as an American composer his music would now be propagated, or at least sent—the scores which were published by American publishers—would be sent to Europe and be made available to people who during the period of the Nazi regime were not able to see. Especially all the works he had completed during the American period. What happened

was, that through this United States Information Service, they did send music to Europe, to Germany, but it was the music of Copland, Barber and Schuman...

Someone in the audience: not Robert?

NSN: not Robert. This was very, very painful for my father, who was terribly upset about this. He had written very many works in the years in which he lived in America. (He lived for about 17 years in the United States.) And although he didn't consider himself an American composer, he was a composer who had become an American citizen, would publish in America, and it seemed natural that they should do something for his music. This did not happen from the State Department, because this USIS of course depended on the State Department. And it's rather interesting because there was this denazification period, which was very important and the orchestras of the radio stations were all organized by these American...I think they...I don't know if they were from the Army, or if they were directly from the State Department...But I know that even the orchestras were chosen—each player in the orchestra was investigated to find out if he had been a Nazi. Of course the Vienna Philharmonic would never have existed again, because they were all Nazis except for...But they did have...There was a person there that interviewed and investigated every single person. So there was a huge influence of...and the Americans also put money into things like Darmstadt, because they thought that they would be able to propagate the so-called American music. What happened was that Wolfgang Steinecke was friends with Scherchen—this is going to be long, it's not going to be five minutes, but I think it's important because I don't know how much of this

people actually know. I mean if I'm just saying things you all know then you get up and say "this is ridiculous! You're saying things that we already know. You know, react! Because in those days, people reacted.

And Scherchen was a person who spoke very softly, but very, very incisively. And these people could get very angry. They were very emotional, and what happened in the Darmstadt beginning was that people came there because there they could hear all the music that had been forbidden during the Nazi period. This was the main really important thing that was done in Darmstadt in the very first years, and the people who taught there were mostly people who had had to emigrate to different countries and who came back to teach and to talk about these works which were unknown in Nazi Germany.

So that was the first thing, and what happened was that people came from all over and they were not just Boulez, Stockhausen and Nono. There were a lot of other people too, who came, and there were people who were, who later became composers who are known to us still. And there were...But very many people who we've never heard of any more, who came to learn the *formula for writing modern music*. For writing music that was not accepted in the Nazi period, or for writing music which now, opportunistically, would be played if you use the right system, method, formula.

And this brings us to, at first, serial...well, at first, 12-tone music, which was taught there by people who had been pupils of my father, who had performed his music, Rudolph Kolish and Scherchen and Peter Stadlen. There were, and people who had written about

this, like Adorno, who also reputed himself as a composer, [audible chuckle among the audience] and many others. So the first thing was: learn about this music which had been forbidden. And then in the later years it spread out also to the United States...not so much, it wasn't Copland and Barber and Schuman, not even Menotti who came later, but John Cage, and John Cage...pardon?

Audience Member: And Varese!

NSN: Oh, yes, Varese of course. But Varese, yeah. No, I just wanted to get to this now, because I'm still longer than I wanted to be, and I want to give Konrad a chance to talk too. And what it could be was that there were people from all countries, like there were like maybe ten or twelve Poles from Poland who were allowed to come to the West, who all wanted the formula to write modern music. And so they came there and at first it was serialism and so they copied that. And then came John Cage with his fantastic new outlook on music and performance, which was *easy*. Because to write a work completely organized in all of its different parameters was a lot of work. And then maybe it didn't even sound so modern. But now here comes this man from America—America is rich, America is the winner of the war, America has all the money, and blue jeans and Coca-Cola and all kinds of wonderful things—and here comes this man and he shows us that we can do things, you can do anything you want and it doesn't matter. So what happens is that a lot of these people and it's not so much Boulez or Stockhausen or any of these people who were the composers who we later know as valid composers. It was lots of other people who were there, lots of young people who came there to find the formula, to

find the model, to write music, which would be modern, acceptable, fun also. There was this element also of entertainment, of fun. And there was...yeah.

So anyway, what happens is that Gigi becomes friends with Cage and they remained friends till the death of...one of them...They remained friends their whole lives. And Gigi had absolutely nothing against Cage, and so often people say, "This was a lecture against Cage." It was absolutely not against Cage. If one reads it and sees that it is against people who were taking a model, which has nothing to do with them. It's like people who put on Saris, women who wear Indian clothes. And it doesn't belong to them and they can't walk like an Indian lady. They have a different way of acting, of walking and so that dress is from far away, it looks Indian but from close up you can tell it has nothing to do with tradition. And he's talking not about politics. He's not talking about politics. He's talking about music, he's talking about studying all the tradition of one's own country or Europe, is all he's saying, that one must develop from the traditions of one's own forefathers. And I think that is very important. It's very easy to understand that he would think that way because of the people he studied with. He studied with Malipiero and he studied with Maderna and he studied with Scherchen, and certainly Scherchen also would have had the school of Schoenberg which was not to teach 12-tone music. My father he never taught it...he taught *tradition*. You had to know everything before you could move on and develop the tradition. And so it's very obvious that that is what Gigi meant.

And he expected people to discuss this and to talk about it. And what happened was he gave this lecture, and on the next day almost all of the composers there, the participants in the course, refused even to greet him. *Ne hanno tolto di saluto*. And it was unbelievable and he was so hurt, he couldn't believe it. Because as an Italian he believed in discussion, and he believed in the fact that you could say something and then talk about it. And what happened was this ice cold refusal to even accept him. I remember because he was so upset. And he was like I don't understand, you know, he said "Hello" and the person turned away, physically. But this also shows what kind of a—again we come back to—temperature. What kind of intensity there was, the feelings in those days. I mean this would not happen today. I hope it'll happen tomorrow. OK...and now...

KB: It's something that—there are incredible mythologies around Darmstadt. And once a mythology has arrived in the footnotes of musicological texts, it seems to become reality, but believe me, that is not the case. Darmstadt was a strange thing. I just get the image now, because you told about it. In general, orthodoxy and all the –isms are imposed by mostly elder gentleman and ladies on the younger generation. In Darmstadt, it was exactly the contrary. When I came to Darmstadt, and that was this famous summer when Gigi had his lecture there. I was still a schoolboy. And I'm invited by Stockhausen to join his composition class. I never had the slightest impression of a serialism or whatever being imposed on us. That was not true. And when I joined the classes by Karlheinz, in the morning, and then I went to the quite funny composition classes by Henri Pousseur, and in the afternoon we did something with Maderna, and then later on that day, every composer had a completely own characteristic way to approach serialism. Serialism was

really at that time the 100 flowers which you all know from the wise Chairman Mao. And there was not the slightest feeling that something would be imposed on us. And then, most of the composers in this composition course had this idea. “Oh, Konrad Boehmer, he is coming from Cologne, he has already worked with Stockhausen, he has worked with Gottfried-Michael Koenig” and so on, so Konrad Boehmer should know *everything* about serial music.

And I remember, I won’t tell his name now, I’ll give you a nice example of how this antagonism came out in Darmstadt. There was a composer from a country...who came to my room and said, “OK, Stockhausen, this morning he has told us something about this permutation of series. Could you please explain me how that works?” So I took a pen, and paper and showed him a row, and to be very complete, I made him twelve permutations of his series so that he had the entire set. This guy should be happy. Two days later, this guy came to the Stockhausen composition class with a composition that consisted of 144 tones.

Audience: [laughter]

KB: And that was for me—you know, I was 17 years old then—that was for me the first moment when I understood exactly what Nuria tried to describe, that you have to compose from your own necessities, effective necessities, social necessities. And then trying to develop a structure which can be called serial or which can be called whatever it is. Or, the other thing will happen and that has been the legacy of Darmstadt. That you

take it over as a guarantee for composing modern music. And there is no greater horror in this drama *dell'ascolto* than this kind of imitating other people's music, which has come out of a completely devastating academism.

Do you know this famous phrase by Raymond Radiguet: "The avant-garde starts upright but it ends on its knees"? That is exactly the story of Darmstadt.

And I remember to make a last little remark: I remember from that time that the composers—and who was there, that was the group Luigi Nono, Stockhausen, Boulez, Henri Pousseur, and so on—that they had quite heavy discussions and they really to their point and raised their voices and made gestures like [makes communist fist.] And even those who were not communists. And that from this glass-house temperature, from this *heat* of discussion itself you could learn something about the ways of reflecting and the ways of thinking of these composers. They were not recipes, but there was a kind of permanent discussion. And I remember that this has faded away from the beginning, a little bit, the beginning of the 60s, when Darmstadt became, as I once called it in a text of mine, a boy scout camp for contemporary music. And then I ended the phrase and said "Contemporary music is the deathly enemy of modern music." Think about that.

And I remember, to give just a little last remark, when this turning point in the modern evolution came. That was beginning of June 1960, and that was not in Darmstadt, but in Cologne where you have the festival of the International Society of Contemporary Music. There were quite a lot of important world premiers by Ligeti, *Kontakte* by Stockhausen,

Anagrama by Kagel, and so on...Alexander and so on and so on...And from that moment—[some piece] by Pierre Boulez.

And from that moment on, because this was a world premiere, that composers who had been close friends the minute before, became deadly enemies the minute later.

Stockhausen even measured with his stopwatch, that the applause for a piece by Mauricio Kagel had been a little bit longer the applause for *Kontakte*. That is the reason why he writes in one of his texts that the temperature in the hall was too hot and the people became a little bit tired and that for this reason the applause did not work so much. There is a lot behind it because really, from that day on, they would not talk to each other any more. And Kagel would call Stockhausen, as he did in the studio to me, the Richard Strauss of serial music. All these sort of taunts came...That was for me the historical moment, and you as historians should look at that. I can't do that because I'm composing these notes. But that was the moment when it fell apart. As soon as the end of...as the end of influence.

Appendix 3: Email Interview with Richard Barrett

November 28, 2011

I see in your biography that you attended Darmstadt in 1984. What did you know about Darmstadt before you attended, and what was your impression of it?

All I knew in advance was that it probably didn't have much in common with the "Darmstadt" of the 1950s and 1960s which I'd read so much about, and I was right: in the 1980s there was much less focus on a small number of dominant individuals and their ideas, and it would be hard to think of a stylistic tendency of the time which wasn't represented to some extent. Some might say that the influence of Brian Ferneyhough during that period was decisive, but in the light of subsequent developments I would say that the impact of Feldman and Lachenmann was at least as great. Friedrich Hommel, the director during that period, seemed to have the attitude that all he needed to do was throw together for two and a half weeks as many composers and performers as possible, and leave space between the scheduled events for anything to happen. It could be frustratingly chaotic, but for me that aspect was outweighed by its fruitfulness in terms of encounters and exchanges.

Sir Harrison Birtwistle, who to my knowledge never had any affiliation with Darmstadt, described himself as a "child of Darmstadt." What would that phrase mean to you?

Would you consider yourself a "child of Darmstadt"?

I expect what he means is that the musical results of the intensity and single-mindedness we associate (perhaps mistakenly) with Darmstadt in the 1950s had a strong influence on his work, which is clearly the case. To that extent I could say the same thing, although the Darmstädter Ferienkurse have always been principally concerned with notated composition, which is only one of the ways I'm interested in pursuing my musical ideas.

What I guess I'm driving at with those two questions, is it seems that there is an "ethos of Darmstadt" that is as important as the actual courses. Did you also have this sense? Can you pinpoint what that "ethos" is?

As I say, I think this changes with the times, with the approach the IMD director wishes to take, and with the people who go there. Beyond this the "ethos" of providing a forum where musical ideas can be exchanged, discussed and disseminated is maybe not so unique.

How often have you returned there? Do you still have an affiliation with the summer courses?

My association with Darmstadt is approximately coextensive with the directorship of Friedrich Hommel. I first attended in 1984 as a student, returning as a member of staff for every summer course between 1986 and 1994 (Hommel's last year as director); I haven't been invited back since then.

Was Darmstadt where you were first introduced to the music of Ferneyhough? How important was his music to you at that stage?

I first encountered Ferneyhough's music in the late 1970s, that is to say before I decided to devote myself to composition, so by 1984 it was quite familiar to me, and, maybe I should add, has never had the kind of importance in the evolution of my work that I'd ascribe especially to Stockhausen and Xenakis. My most important new encounter in 1984 was with the music of Hans-Joachim Hespos, and the impact of his work on mine is still quite clear I think.

How did you first encounter the paintings of Matta? Were the paintings in the series part of a single exhibition, or did you just run across them all here and there?

I'd seen reproductions of some of the paintings, having been interested in surrealist art from an early age (between the ages of probably 16 to 19 I thought I was much more likely to become a visual artist than a composer), but soon after I arrived in London to study in late 1977 there was an exhibition in the Hayward Gallery of Matta's work where the space of this large museum was dominated by a small number of enormous paintings. It was at that point that my interest turned into a deeper fascination, especially with the idea that the complexity and multilayeredness of these works meant that there was no privileged distance from which to view them: you could stand right next to them or twenty meters away, or at any distance in between, and the experience of those same marks on the canvas would be different, without one experience or another presenting itself as definitive. All of this connected clearly with some of the ways I thought about listening to music, and, subsequently, about creating it - since to a great extent the evolution of a musical "style" is a question of developing ways to externalize the way one hears things (and not only music of course!), while at the same time sharpening and individuating one's "art of hearing."

Are the individual paintings connected to each other in some way?

Only in so far as all of Matta's paintings have mutual connections I think. But they did all feature in that same exhibition.

How did the "After Matta" series develop? (Did you write a few and eventually realize you had a set that could be put together in interesting ways? Or did you have the idea to write a "cycle" from the beginning?)

Coïgitum was the first, after which it seemed to me that I had opened up a world of possibilities which I felt compelled to explore further. Actually I then planned a series of six compositions, but by the time four of them were provisionally completed (*Illuminer le temps* went through a complex process of revision and reinvention, and didn't reach its final form until 2005) I had moved on to other ideas.

How does the fact that individual works can function either separately or as part of a larger context affect the way you hear those individual works? I.e. do you have the feeling that even with a performance of just "Ne songe plus a fuir" that it resonates as part (or fragment) of a larger form?

I don't think so in the case of the "After Matta" pieces. They don't have much in common apart from what I think of as their relationship to Matta's paintings, and in fact there's never been a concert in which more than one of them has been performed! The "resonance" you mention is something which has gradually came into focus for me, and it arises to a great extent from the idea that if the form of the music is going to embody the form of the imaginative process in some way, which is a central idea in the way I

think about music, then it ought to embody the unbrokenness of that process, the fact that every stage in it, every step, is multiply connected to every other.

Is there anything about the construction that you'd like to tell me? Something that I probably couldn't discover without sketches, but that you think is important, for example? (My general theoretical/analytical approach is somewhat hybrid. In general I ascribe to the principle that a work should be interpretable without excessive use of sketches, but in certain cases, sketches can be very helpful in revealing other ways to understand a work.)

It's divided on the largest scale into sections, which are separated by transitions in which the music of the section just ended is pushed to a point of "crisis" after which the music has to find a new way to continue (although in one case it initially continues as if beginning the previous section again). The music of each section is clearly differentiated from the others in terms of exploring particular areas of the instrument and its sound, and in its rate of change, all the sections (but not the transitions) being chains of metrical units whose durations are based on a Gaussian distribution around 5/8 which therefore occurs much more often than other values. In some sections there are unmeasured commas between these units, in others not. The substrate for all the pitch-material you hear (the "priming of the canvas" as one might say) is a network of glissandi, eight for each string, which scan different overlapping registers and gradually increase in speed (i.e. their turning points become closer together) through the course of the piece. In retrospect this was far more "raw material" than was needed, and the way it was realised into the score means that whatever inherent characteristics it might have are very much in the background if they're perceptible at all. There was a previous incomplete version of the piece which stayed much closer to that material but I accidentally left it on the seat of

an Underground train in London one day and decided this was a sign that I should take a different approach. In the end, the realisation of “Ne songe...” seems more like a more systematic expansion of a short freely-written one-page study which Alan Brett had requested beforehand.

In basing a composition on a painting (or poem) do you (or did you) have a method by which you translated visual/poetic ideas into musical ideas, or is it more or less intuitive? Is the process (if there is one) the same for all/most pieces, or does the painting/poem suggest the process itself?

There is no single way in which this takes place. I think of it in what might be called synaesthetic terms: the painting, or poem, or whatever else it is, calls up a proto-sound-form seemingly without any conscious intervention, although, crucially, one needs to be in a particularly receptive frame of mind for this to happen. When I was working on “Opening of the Mouth” I was constantly reading and re-reading Celan’s poetry, and I worked myself up into such a state of sensitivity that eventually a single word might seem to have a whole composition implicit within it. (If all of these compositions had been realised, “Opening...” could have ended up several times as long as it is.) I relate it to what Cage says about when you ask the right questions you get the right answers. I don’t like the term “based on” in this connection, it seems to emphasise a dependency which actually isn’t there, as if the music were somehow “deduced” from its supposed source and could be traced simply back to it. The source is more like a seed from which something grows which takes its shape from its environment and circumstances as much as from its DNA. In other words it becomes part of a complex interdependent “ecosystem.” This is much more apparent in the more recent conglomerate works

“DARK MATTER” and “CONSTRUCTION” where there isn’t a single source like the paintings of one artist or the poems of one author but where instead a constellation of ideas of widely differing origin and nature are drawn together and caused to reflect or resonate each other (cf. Stockhausen on his concept of serialism: not the same object in different lights but different objects in the same light).

How important is the visual aspect of the score? I get a completely different sense of your works when I listen to them with a score. And the effect is more palpable in the sense that while the scores are incredibly detailed, they often seem detailed to an extent that there is more notated in the score than becomes audible in performance. (This would be the opposite of earlier compositions where the score generally fails to capture all the minutiae of performance.) And there are obviously things that occur in performance that aren't notated in the score, but I guess what I'm getting at is that I feel a certain sense of tension between what you hear and what you see, and that both the visual score and the performance become more meaningful in opposition to each other. Is that a fair assessment?

It isn’t my intention that everyone should listen with a score, since that would divide the potential audience into those with access to scores and the ability to read them, and those without. I feel that whatever personality there is in my work had already to some extent taken shape before I could read music in more than a rudimentary way, and as a teenager I used to imagine music before I had any way of writing it down. Therefore I’m always a bit suspicious of musical discourses that put too much emphasis on the experience of the notation relative to the auditory experience, especially as such discourses also usually have an implicit tendency to privilege notated over non-notated musics. So my answer is

quite simple: a score is principally a means of communication between composer and performer(s), although, like any means of human communication it creates a situation which is much more complex than a simple transfer of information, and this complexity, the “poetry” of notation as it could be called, is something worth taking seriously and composing with, instead of ignoring it from what I think is the mistaken starting point that a score is basically no different from an instruction manual. From one point of view it could be said that there’s “more notated in the score than becomes audible in performance,” but that raises the question of what it actually means for an element of notation to “become audible,” since there are many different ways in which this can happen (and indeed the non-notated “minutiae” you mention are always there as well). Without a “common practice” of stylistic cues to work from, every aspect of a score can be said to play a part in suggesting a possible performative approach. The notational “complexity” of what I write actually varies enormously even within a single score, and of course a significant proportion of what I do doesn’t involve notation at all. This might suggest that the “complexity” is more a conscious creative decision, on the same kind of level as any other, than an expression of dogma.

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