AMBITOPIA/AMBLYOPIA: COMPOSITIONS AND WRITINGS 2012 – 2014

By
Nathan H. C. Friedman
Faculty Advisors: Dr. Paula Matthusen and Prof. Anthony Braxton

A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Wesleyan University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Middletown, Connecticut May 2014
Acknowledgements

Thank you first to my advisors over the past two years, Paula Matthusen and Anthony Braxton, for all of your patience, advice and support. You have inspired me to look within myself and discover what I hold most dear about music and life. Thanks also to the other professors I’ve had inside and outside the music department; your courses have stimulated many of the ideas that I present in this thesis. Thank you to my friends and colleagues who have made the past two years some of the best of my life. Finally, thank you to my family for believing in me.
# Table of Contents

Introduction ........................................................................................................ 1

Chapter 1: Dichotomies in Twentieth Century Western Art Music ......................... 11

Chapter 2: Decentered Fragmentation ..................................................................... 28

Chapter 3: Some Background .................................................................................. 39

Chapter 4: Compositions 2012 – 2014 .................................................................... 42

Bibliography ........................................................................................................ 59

Appendix A: Scores

- *La synagogue fertile* .......................................................................................... 68
- *«Feu froid»* ........................................................................................................ 77
- *Four Domestics* .................................................................................................. 86
- *Glaucous* ............................................................................................................ 92
- *Music for Strings, Percussion and Electric Guitar* ................................................ 101
- *Incarnadine* ...................................................................................................... 138
- *Internecine* ....................................................................................................... 144
Introduction

I

‘Ambitopia’ is a word I thought of some time ago, only to discover that other people have had the same idea (right down to that very discovery)\(^1\). It is essentially the notion that utopia vs. dystopia is a false dichotomy and that every society is somehow ambiguous or ambivalent. Every conception of utopia is dystopian for someone (often because they are simply too restrictive, e.g. *The Glass Bead Game*), and every plausible dystopia is utopic for someone, or else it would never come about.

Amblyopia is a relatively rare eye condition. Specifically, I suffer from strabismus amblyopia, where, because my eyes are not perfectly aligned, my brain shuts off the input from one of them in order to avoid seeing double. I can also ‘choose’ which eye I am looking out of, though without glasses I usually favour the left, whose vision is considerably less impaired. It is extremely difficult for me to see out of both eyes simultaneously, and I can only do so while letting both go entirely out of focus. As a result, I am stereoblind, and do not have standard depth perception. Though I can judge distance by perspective, parallax and size, these require somewhat more active engagement and concentration to be effective and I live in an ultimately flat world most of the time. An interesting result of this condition is that I constantly have a choice of two literal perspectives on everything. Separately, both are ‘correct’, since in each instance one of my eyes is pointing at whatever it is that I am looking at. However, they cannot both be correct.

simultaneously. As I am unable to control the movement of my eyes individually (to be able to do so would essentially eliminate the misalignment), when I switch from, say, my left eye to my right eye while looking at the same point in space, my left eye will move further to the left and its perspective will change. And in the rare moments when I can see out of both eyes simultaneously, I am confronted with a double image, the truth value of which is simultaneously true and false.

What do these have to do with music? As a composer who has parallel serious interests in philosophy, science and literature, these concepts provide some vital underpinning to the way I think about music. I have always had a desire to actively engage with the fundamental dichotomies I encounter in every subject; my interests have always straddled the art/science divide. Music is certainly no exception to this rule, and I believe that I chose to pursue an academic career in music because, in my opinion, it is located at the nexus of the arts and sciences, and can be produced and interpreted using a plethora of different fields and techniques. Just over two years ago, I wrote the following:

A great deal of my output is based on the juxtaposition of disparate elements, and the morphological results of this process, I hope eventually to be able to develop a meaningful synthesis of the seemingly contradictory issues in music of the last hundred years: simplicity and complexity, structure and intuition, tradition and radicalism, ontology and phenomenology, etc.

The dichotomies that I mentioned have remained very important to me, but my approach to their use in my music has changed considerably since then.

I had been composing in a fairly polystylistic, idiomatic manner since I was 15 years old, when I wrote a 35-minute sonata for clarinet and piano, but there manifested a subtle but constant shift in the music up until I arrived at Wesleyan. On November 20, 2012, I had a meeting with Anthony Braxton, which was the first time I was able to show him my music. The common thread
the he immediately identified in my work was a “trans-idiomatic obliqueness.” Essentially, my music sounded to him both familiar and unfamiliar simultaneously. It takes familiar material and “obliquenizes” it by means of fragmentation and unusual structural devices, continually denying any sense of recognition, while also leaving just enough of a familiar presence to give the listener something to grasp at. After the meeting, I realized that my perspective on dichotomies had changed, and that I was now subverting rather than embracing them. Below, I have been able to trace the thought processes that led to my initially unconscious philosophical and aesthetic transformation.

II

The first element of this transformation was via engagement with the notion of an autonomous musical work, which is an idea that is rejected by most contemporary musicologists. I do not necessarily believe that a musical work can be truly autonomous either, especially after having read scholars such as Lydia Goehr, but I still believe that it can at least appear to be autonomous to the listener. Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf writes that in new modernist music (modernism being a pre-condition to belief in the autonomy of the musical work), “the progress of material, material innovation, personal style-defining fixation on—and also reduction to—characteristic material aspects no longer stand in the foreground” and that the material used may vary “according to the work’s Gehalt.” Harry Lehmann explains the term:

---

2 Anthony Braxton, Meeting, Personal communication, November 20, 2012.
5 Ibid.
The German concept of "Gehalt" cannot be precisely translated into English. The Gehalt of an artwork is not the traditional, pre-existent "content," but rather must be experienced and developed by the recipient through the process of interpretation. … The Gehalt of the artwork is, so to speak, that "content" (Inhalt) which can first be experienced through the formal combinatoriality of the artwork and then must be interpreted to the world through words.6

This means that though the culturally contingent origins of the material used in a piece cannot be undone, they can at the very least be hidden by the piece’s construction and listener’s experience.

My concern about a work’s possible autonomy came to a head in January 2013, while reading the collection Polyphony and Complexity, when I came across the following quote by composer Walter Feldman:

Can one find at this time—faced with increasingly widespread “joy” in improvising or with cheap multi-media conceptions—a serious form of musical composition which can, without currying favor with other arts, make the process of its own creation tangible? A form of composing whose fundamental principles, whose “attentiveness” becomes musically perceptible without drowning in its own idiom?7

I was initially angered by the polemical tone of the essay, along with many of the others in the book, but later I began to realize that contained within his questions was the germ of what had been my musical concerns all along. Ignoring the galling aside in the first sentence, these questions have merit: is it possible to create a seemingly autonomous form of music? If so, is it possible to do so without creating either a mannered or slavishly idiomatic style?

First of all, I must clarify what it is I mean by ‘idiom’. The most crucial aspect of ‘idiom’, as I use it, is the notion that it causes the listener’s expectations to be drawn to and from something that exists outside the work in question, some familiar feature that is beyond the work, that it is something that ties across multiple pieces and composers. Of course it is impossible to avoid outside reference entirely, but I am striving to minimize that aspect of what I write: I want the

---

listener to focus first on what is actually at hand within the piece, and I want their expectations to be drawn from a logic that is established internally. My music necessarily shares a great deal of material with pre-existing works, but the mere use of material that can be traced elsewhere is insufficient to produce idiom. In order for that to be accomplished, the material must be used in a systematic way that reinforces its familiarity. The chief way to accomplish a sensation of idiom is by repetition, something that Schoenberg discusses frequently in *Style and Idea*. Discussing his early style and the works of his contemporaries, he emphasizes that it used “numerous little-varied or even unvaried repetitions of short phrases,” and that “sequences made up a considerable contribution toward achieving the necessary expanse of the presentation, such as is required for easier understanding.” However, he later asserts the “aesthetic inferiority of this technique.” Indeed, music that contains either a great deal of repetition is more comprehensible, since it is able to clearly generate a framework of expectation, and thus repetition, particularly in a rhythmic sense, is one of the most important aspects of idiom. Unlike Schoenberg, I do not reject repetition wholesale, only the repetition that is regular and systematic enough to generate an idiomatic experience.

Two other words that confuse this discussion are ‘genre’ and ‘style’. ‘Genre’ is either a marketing term for what I would call idiom or, when used classically, refers to the category of piece, either by form or instrumentation (symphony, quartet, march, minuet, etc.). ‘Style’ is somewhat more complex. Many scholars use ‘style’ when I would use ‘idiom’, but in my opinion style is something more personal, while idiom is collective. A personal style is unavoidable, even

---

9 Ibid, 78.
10 Ibid.
when attempting to emulate the style of others. John Croft writes that “stylistic eclecticism quickly becomes an eclectic style. The frisson of colliding codes soon solidifies into a stylistic orthodoxy.”\textsuperscript{11} Mahnkopf also emphasizes that when ‘style’ is used in discourse, it usually refers to something more material in nature:

> What is commonly referred to as “poly-stylistic” composition, i.e., working with styles of different historical provenance (e.g., Schnittke), has not expanded the typology of the dissociation of musical discursivity; this form of pluralism does not quite fit into the theory set out here. First, the term itself is misleading, as a work such as Monteverdi’s Vespro della Beata Vergine, where the stylistic worlds of prima and seconda prattica coincide, should really be termed poly-stylistic. Works such as those of Schnittke should rather be labeled with the neologism “poly-materiality,” as the (historically identified) material—“conditions” used are dissociated (with the issue of style merely implied by them).\textsuperscript{12}

Materials from a certain period of music history only become truly idiomatic when they are used in a consistent manner, i.e. in a pastiche. When Schnittke uses material from multiple historical eras, what is produced is a Schnittkean style that contains within itself a multiplicity of material. Though I am trying to avoid idiom, I embrace my personal style whole heartedly.

\section*{III}

My engagement with these questions stems from my background in improvisation. Having grown up listening to a great deal of free jazz and improvisation, I was somewhat at an advantage when it came to expanding my repertoire of sounds and ideas when improvising. However, I often played with people with unsupplemented backgrounds in either popular or conservatory-oriented classical music who were unable, at least at first, to break free from their training. When asked to

play whatever came to mind, or what they wished to express, they played either scales and
arpeggios (the only material classical musicians normally play off-score) or clichéd blues licks. Even
though I knew that it was a conceptually impossible ideal, and though I poked fun at Derek Bailey’s
notion of ‘non-idiomatic improvisation’ \(^{13}\) (since, of course, it is also a kind of idiom), I embraced it
whole-heartedly in my playing. To me, if my music were mediated by some pre-existing idiom, it
would not be the truest possible expression of what I was attempting to communicate. The
apparent impossibility of this ideal was always lost in the moment of the improvisatory act.

The obsession with individuality and self-containedness in my improvisation was not
initially present in my composed music. In fact, nearly all of my compositions up until my arrival at
Wesleyan had something to do with the notion of idiom. In an attempt to embrace the wide variety
of music I enjoy listening to, I had adopted an eclectic style, both between and within
compositions. Most representative of this trend in my music was \(\varphi \downarrow \psi\) or Joint Denial or Neither/Nor
(2011). \(\varphi \downarrow \psi\) combined free jazz and funk textures with pitch material gleaned from Claude
Debussy and Morton Feldman. As I reflect on this piece, however, I realize that the stylistic
transition in my works over the next year or so was not as drastic as it seemed. \(\varphi \downarrow \psi\)’s title refers to
the world of formal logic, specifically the logical connective ‘joint denial’, also known as NOR,
which asserts that the logical expressions on either side of it are both false. However, by embracing
an extreme diversity of material, the work seems to assert the construction of opposing materials
where both sides are “true”. There was clearly something deeper at work here.

I began thinking about music dialectically when I attended a lecture Louis Andriessen gave
in Victoria, British Columbia, in the spring of 2009. In the lecture, Andriessen compared himself to

Brian Ferneyhough, saying something to the effect that he could not think of any composer more
different from himself. This struck me as odd, seeing as I liked (and disliked) both of their musics in
roughly equal measure, and it seemed strange to put them on opposite sides of an imaginary divide.
What is it about Andriessen’s music that makes it somehow the ‘opposite’ of Ferneyhough’s?
However, the more I read and began to think about this notion, the more this imaginary divide
seemed real to me, since it permeated the entire discourse around their music, though I
disapproved of it. \( \phi \downarrow \psi \) was an attempt to bridge that divide inclusively. It was a failure in that
regard, but I now think that its failure was inevitable, as is any attempt in a similar vein, since I am
convinced that any attempt at synthesis of areas so hostile to one another is doomed.

This statement requires some explanation. Say one wishes to compose a piece synthesizing
two concepts. For now, let us replace the concepts with a notion of ‘materials’ and state that the
goal of the synthesis is to create a third material from the other two. If the materials are allowed to
exist in their original forms in the piece, then the created result is a conceptual sensation of the
difference between them (where the experience of the listener ‘goes up a level’ from the material),
since the opposition between the two is constantly reinforced by their mutual presence. As

Mahnkopf writes:

In works containing fragments or layers of divergent materials, the semantic ear no longer finds its bearings
within a symbolic system—however it may be polyphonically dissociated—(we shall define a symbolic
system here as a “relative” discursive coherence), but instead, in the absence of a compositionally-inherent
symbolic super-system, [it finds its bearings] between those (plurally existent) symbolic systems (or indeed
above them) that re-evoke the various material regions.\(^{14}\)

On the other hand, if the materials are transformed so as to be more similar to each other, they
may be more readily mixed, but then they have lost their original characters; they are no longer

what we set out to combine. In short, when there is a diversity of material, there can be no combination, and when there is unity, there is no way to trace it back to a foundational diversity. I believe that this holds for when concepts are being combined, rather than just material. An attempt at raw juxtaposition creates a concept of difference, and a transformation loses touch with the original components, having moved on from them. If one were to attempt to create a piece that begins with a juxtaposition and gradually transforms and combines its components, one would think that it would be a way around the problems discussed above, but in fact it falls into the same trap as the first method: it creates a higher concept of a narrative of synthesis or a process of synthesis, rather than a synthesis itself. For me at least, synthesis is not possible in the way that we talk about it.

I realized this impossibility during the process of writing $\phi \downarrow \psi$, thus the title, so that even if the piece seems to celebrate plurality within itself, its title revealed the impossibility of that ideal. Though the piece seems much more effective in conveying its message when examined with this background in mind, the result was too bleakly ironic for me. I wanted the earnestness and transparency of my improvisation to come through in my composed work as well, so I realized that my only option was to write with the title rather than the content of $\phi \downarrow \psi$ in mind, and begin to deny both sides of the divide in my work.

Perhaps a return to a personal metaphor will help clarify this very abstract argument: a homomorphism of sorts can be created when we compare my eyes’ inputs to my notion of synthesis. A simple combination of the elements to be combined maps onto my attempts to see out of both eyes at once, which are met by a contradictory double image. An attempt to change the elements in order to combine them corresponds to when I switch eyes looking at the same point,
where any attempt to change one’s perspective changes the other’s as well. The music I write seeks to project this worldview and force the listener to confront the impossibility of various musical dichotomies.
Chapter 1

Divisions in Twentieth Century Western Art Music

Actually, I’m really addressing myself to the younger, less experienced composers, and I’m trying to convey that those who are using models—and how can you not use models—you have to understand that since two Greek characters many, many years ago would have an argument together about those two points of view—it was the conceptual and the perceptual—and the whole history of our thinking and our understanding has to do with either a fight against the both, or the amalgamation of the both, and is both, or some standoff, whatever.15

Morton Feldman

I

Almost all attempts to describe the history of Western music, including accounts of the twentieth century, have hinged on a fundamentally dialectical view of historiography. Björn Heile summarizes this phenomenon:

The operative conceptual model is the hierarchical tree structure, with traditions forming branches which divide into smaller twigs. Underpinning the tree structure are simple binarisms, and, despite the fundamental critique of binary logic throughout the humanities, such binarisms seem alive and well in music historiography—if perhaps more implicitly than explicitly. According to the binary logic, composers are either Western or non-Western, conservative or progressive, avant-gardist or experimental, modernist or postmodernist, and so on.16

As a matter of fact, these ‘binarisms’ infect nearly all discourse on music, not merely history. The discourse has been divided into “semantic-syntactic; subjective-objective; extra-musical-musical; … and hermeneutics-analysis”17 to name just a few divisions. Luciano Berio traces these dichotomies back to a fundamental split between two conceptions of what it means to be a composer:

The urge to split and divide, which has pervaded the musical world for the last few decades, has also postulated an opposition between the empirical musician (who has no need for “synthesis,” and is subject to circumstances) and the systematic musician (who starts with a preconceived idea, and follows an all-embracing strategy)—in other words, an opposition between the composer as *bricoleur* and the composer as scientist.\(^{18}\)

Whatever the cause, it is clear that it is impossible to discuss a great deal of music without having to either lean on or address these dichotomies in some way.

This tendency became particularly marked in the late twentieth century, with the advent of notions of musical modernism and postmodernism, which for many have served as vessels for other musical dichotomies, particularly complexity vs. simplicity and autonomy vs. cultural relativity, among innumerable others. However, the lumping of many of these issues into a clash between the modern and the postmodern is problematic. The loose way in which these terms are applied implies that many composers’ works have attributes that fall into the ‘wrong’ category, which is especially true of European composers often regarded as postmodernist by Americans. As Jonathan Kramer writes, in his seminal essay “The Nature and Origins of Musical Postmodernism”: “some composers—probably more Europeans, steeped as they tend to be in dialectical thinking, than laid-back, naively utopian Americans—enter into a struggle with postmodern cultural forces … rather than simply accepting or rejecting them.”\(^{19}\) He specifically mentions Louis Andriessen and Bernd Alois Zimmermann, but the same could be said of György Ligeti or Luciano Berio, both of whose outputs contain many staunchly ‘modernist’ pieces. Additionally, and much more importantly, the definition of what actually constitutes musical postmodernism itself is very unclear. This lack of clarity would seem to originate from the various attempts to define postmodernism and the theorists on which these attempts draw.

---

The most commonly cited article attempting to define musical postmodern is the one by Kramer referenced above, in which he defines postmodern as an attitude, rather than a historical period or style, after Umberto Eco and Jean-François Lyotard. This leads to some interesting, somewhat anachronistic issues:

Lyotard seems to believe that before a work can be understood as truly modern, it must challenge a previous modernism. Thus, to take Lyotard’s example, Picasso and Braque are postmodern in that their art goes beyond the modernism of Cézanne. Once their art has achieved this postmodern break with the past, it becomes modernist. Similarly, certain music of Mahler, Ives, and Nielsen, for example, becomes postmodern by going beyond the modernist practices of such composers as Berlioz, Liszt, and Wagner. 20

Kramer’s theory effectively positions at least two types of composers—those who work within moulds, and those who break them—but this does not help explain the emergence of postmodernism as a powerful musical force specifically in the second half of the twentieth century.

Kramer attempts to explain this phenomenon by stating that “music has become postmodern as we, its late twentieth-century listeners, have become postmodern,”21 without adequately explaining this statement. He is not helped by a fundamental contradiction in his historical reasoning: he touches on the recurring trope of postmodernism as an inevitable successor to modernism, comparing modernists to children and postmodernists to adolescents, who “have passed beyond their oedipal conflicts with their modernist parents.”22 The notion that postmodernism, which has rejected a teleological view of history, inevitably follows from modernism, is a paradox that a great deal of musicological writing stumbles into, especially in Richard Taruskin’s The Oxford History of Western Music23, which is addressed at exceptional length by Franklin Cox in his two-volume review.24

20 Ibid., 14.
21 Ibid., 17.
22 Ibid., 18.
Kramer attempts to sidestep this issue by claiming that postmodernist composers “may still have an uneasy relationship with [their modernist parents] (thus postmodernists may accept historical succession even while rejecting the idea of progress).”25 However, the entire language of the article reinforces this succession as one of a sort of birthing or parentage, thus it is difficult to avoid the implication that it is one that is viewed as progress by its practitioners. Additionally, though Kramer gives a list of sixteen characteristics that may be present in postmodern music, he also notes that “not all pieces exhibit all these traits, and thus it is futile to label a work as exclusively postmodern. Also, I would find it difficult to locate a work that exhibits none of these traits.”26 He also states that “postmodern music is not a neat category with rigid boundaries.”27 Thus it would appear that Kramer’s approach is both potentially unsound in its grounding historical philosophy and not particularly useful in identifying what pieces are actually postmodern in nature.

While Kramer borrows heavily from Lyotard in his work, Robin Hartwell draws upon many ideas from the work of Fredric Jameson in his article “Postmodernism and Art Music.”28 Hartwell writes that “at its crudest, works identified as postmodern hold in common the utilisation of a number of musical styles within the same piece, or of a musical language that refers to pre-modern music.”29 This fits remarkably well with Jameson’s assertion that “with the collapse of the high-modernist ideology of style … the producers of culture have nowhere to turn but to the past:

26 Ibid., 17.
27 Ibid.
29 Ibid., 44.
the imitation of dead styles, speech through all the masks and voices stored up in the imaginary
museum of a now global culture.” However, Hartwell notes that

This interpretation is a cause for worry, as it creates a postmodernist line running alongside modernism, and
not following it in historical succession. Appealing though it is have to have one’s system of categories
presented in the same ahistorical manner as its subject, it hardly seems worth the resultant confusion, given
that all that is then meant is non-modernism, or perhaps anti-modernism.

Thus, Hartwell appears to disagree with Kramer and believe that postmodernism is, in fact, a
historical period. Specifically, he states that quotation only becomes postmodern when it becomes
ironic, which places it well after the iconic modernist quotation of Bach by Berg in his Violin
Concerto. He also traces a great deal of postmodernism’s developments to modernist precursors,
but stripped of its original sense of meaning: “the postmodern work accepts the modernist position
of the arbitrary connection between the sign and the signifier, but does not offer the consolation
that we at least are coherent within ourselves, seeking the sign which we lack in order to explain
ourselves to ourselves.”

So, on the one hand, Kramer believes that postmodernism is not an historical period and
does not necessarily follow from modernism (though hinting that it does), while Hartwell believes
that it is and does. This confusion is certainly in keeping with the nature of the subject (Kramer:
“many postmodern composers have accordingly embraced conflict and contradiction and have at
times eschewed consistency and unity;” Hartwell: “we are an inconsistent, incoherent mixture of
external forces, absorbed to varying degrees”), but it does not help an analysis of the situation.

Hartwell, “Postmodernism and Art Music,” 44.
Ibid.
Ibid., 50.
There is also some confusion in the work of those scholars who disagree with postmodernism. Martin Iddon, in “The Dissolution of the Avant-garde,” draws on the theories of sociologist Zygmunt Bauman in defining postmodernism as a historical period. He writes that “between the late 1950s and the present day a key shift has occurred in the cultural significance of musical endeavour. At some point in this period the primacy of the avant-garde was ended and supplanted by a culture of postmodernity.” From Bauman, Iddon uses ‘avant-garde’ as a proxy for modernism, using the teleological notion of history, which assumes that eventually “what is being done at present by a small advance unit will be repeated later by all.” When the teleological notion of history becomes undone, the “regular army” of modernism is replaced by the “guerilla units” of postmodernism. Iddon’s assessment of Kramer and Hartwell is in concordance with my analysis above, and he states that:

Quite clearly, then, the two positions of postmodernism as style and postmodernity as moment are fundamentally incompatible with one another. To be able to say that this or that piece is an example of a “postmodern style” denotes by obvious implication that certain other pieces are not examples of such a style. To be able to make such a statement would force one to be unable to accept the idea of a historical category, as there would still be a functional dialectic opposition between modern and postmodern musics. Given the impossibility, however, of finding sufficient stylistic markers to make any accurate judgements about genre, it seems much more coherent and useful as an argument to enter into Bauman’s currency, and view the apparent clash between modern and postmodern as an example of the guerilla warfare he predicts.

Therefore, Iddon believes that postmodernism is an historical period which is defined by its lack of historical directionality and by its polarization into many warring guerilla clans.

37 Ibid., 115.
38 Ibid., 119.
39 Ibid., 125.
40 Ibid., 119.
On the other hand, Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf, in “From Classical Modernity to the Second Modernity: Provisional Considerations,” draws on the theories of philosopher Harry Lehmann (who also refers to most modernism as the ‘avant-garde’). In this highly polemical essay, Mahnkopf writes that “while classical modernity negated the medium (‘atonality’) and the avant-garde negated the work, postmodernity negates the truth. … One can describe this non-truth in different ways: irony, lie trickery, falseness, hypocrisy, mockery.” On the subject of music, however, Mahnkopf mostly limits his critique to the ‘antimodernists’ who were eschewed by Kramer and Hartwell. He states that “the negation of truth is, dialectically viewed, the precondition for the positing (as negation of the negation) of material,” i.e. a return to tonality, only stripped of its original truth value, and extended to material from which modernists were previously ‘forbidden’ from using: music of the past, popular music, music of non-Western cultures. He goes on to explain that Postmodernity owes this inclusion of expanded, in fact, completely unrestricted musical materials to the negation of artistic and expressive truth. While visual artists (Jeff Koons) or writers (Umberto Eco) have no difficulty in at least admitting this, composers with postmodern ideas and sentiments tend to deny that very fact—perhaps out of a guilty conscience, because the principle of non-truth is irreconcilable with the legacy of the great composers, which they so vehemently claim to be continuing.

This is where Mahnkopf goes wrong: the vast majority of composers who are seen to be postmodern do not espouse the beliefs that he claims, so he limits himself to the most ardent neo-romanticists and anti-modernists. It is unclear exactly who Mahnkopf is attempting to address. While he does go on to list five criteria of postmodernism and generalize six types of musical postmodernity, his previous statement severely limits the scope of his inquiry to a straw man interpretation of postmodernism.

41 Mahnkopf, “From Classical Modernity to the Second Modernity: Provisional Considerations.”
42 Ibid., 132.
43 Ibid., 133.
44 Ibid.
Thus, because of problems even defining postmodernism, it is too problematic to use the modern/postmodern divide to explain all of the dichotomies of music in the twentieth century. Even so, I have managed to touch on many of the most important ones already: teleological vs. non-teleological philosophies of history; tonality vs. atonality; sincerity vs. irony; unity vs. disunity. Several others can be observed by comparing one of the most persistent opposing pairs of composers, as related by Jameson: “Schoenberg’s innovative planification and Stravinsky’s irrational eclecticism.” He cites Thomas Mann’s *Doktor Faustus* as his source, acknowledging that Mann in turn was influenced by Theodor Adorno, who sets Arnold Schoenberg and Igor Stravinsky as aesthetic rivals to one another in his *Philosophy of New Music*, originally published in 1949. Jameson implies that this rivalry morphs into the dichotomy between modernism and postmodernism in music: “It would therefore begin to seem that Adorno’s prophetic diagnosis [from *Philosophy of New Music*] has been realized, albeit in a negative way: not Schönberg [sic] (the sterility of whose achieved system he already glimpsed) but Stravinsky is the true precursor of postmodern cultural production.”

This implication is a powerful one, but assigning postmodernism to Stravinsky is difficult. Interestingly, Kramer could potentially identify Stravinsky as postmodernist, according to his non-historical definition, but he specifically identifies him as an “early modernist.” It is unclear why he does not think to identify Stravinsky with his notion of a postmodern attitude, since Hartwell does so immediately. Hartwell is disturbed by the possibility of parallel streams of modernism and postmodernism, as explained above, which would cause “the distinction between Schoenberg and

---

45 Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 16.
46 Ibid., 17.
Stravinsky, which seems to central to our understanding of the first half of the twentieth century, [to be] made even more blurred than before." Hartwell adds irony to his definition to avoid this problem, and point out that "for Stravinsky, the past is seen as a repository of styles, but each still carries a residue of meaning into the present." Since Stravinsky’s use of quotation (e.g. in *Pulcinella*) is earnest and not ironic, he is allowed to remain a modernist, or at the very least a classicist. However scholars categorize Stravinsky, there are still a number of clear contrasts between Stravinsky and Schoenberg.

The largest area of contrast between Schoenberg and Stravinsky was in terms of the progression of their creative careers. Schoenberg’s career can actually be seen to be an example of a classical Hegelian dialectic, as Glenn Gould writes:

> Within the fifty years of his creative life he produced a remarkable series of works which, initially, accepted and fed upon the traditional musical premise of his time, then challenged it and came perilously close to anarchical reaction, and then, confronted by the terror of anarchy, became almost over-organized, over-legislated by super-imposed rules, and finally ended by attempting to co-ordinate the systems of legislation which he had developed with aspects of in the tradition which he had, many years before, abandoned. And so, in this cycle of acceptance, rejection, and reconciliation, we have not only a spectacular chronological development, but we have also the basic pattern for much of what has taken place in the first half of the 20th century.

The hyper-organization of Schoenberg’s serial work is concordant with the progression of his life which represents his attempt to follow the inevitable musical *zeitgeist*. On the other hand, Stravinsky’s three periods are highly disjointed. The contrast between his ‘Russian’ and Neoclassical styles was already quite drastic, but after more than fifty years writing in styles inflected by the past, he did the unthinkable and adopted serialism in the 1950s, albeit using it in a highly idiosyncratic, not always dodecaphonic way (e.g. in *Agon*). Nearly all of Stravinsky’s output

---

48 Hartwell, “Postmodernism and Art Music,” 44.
49 Ibid., 45.
uses material that is either drawn from or seeks to represent a different historical period. Since history moved quickly in the twentieth century, even serialism can be seen to have become historical material by the time Stravinsky begins using it. Schoenberg and Stravinsky’s very different careers can possibly be explained by the life circumstances of the two in the United States: Schoenberg as expatriate, who ultimately remains within the culture of his native land, and Stravinsky as émigré, for whom his native land ceased to exist after the Russian Revolution.

As a matter of fact, they represent a division between two different interpretations of the notion of dichotomy itself. As Julian Johnson writes:

“The distinction between Beethoven and Mahler is that between dialectics and dualities (although the latter are a necessary condition of the former). The essence of dialectic lies in its ability to transform duality into a process, one achieved by seeing the poles of a duality subsumed as aspects of a larger unity. … For Hegel, this process is of the whole of nature, and the human dialectic of working through difference to higher unity is a manifestation of this universal process. Mahler does not abandon this deeply embedded cultural tradition of dialectics, but he massively emphasizes the unmediated poles of his musical dualities. By intensifying the oppositions, he strains the possibility of finding a discursive connection between them-a fact first and foremost of musical form.”

As above, it would appear that the dialectic is a modernist dichotomy while a pure duality is more postmodern (at least in Kramer’s sense). Iannis Xenakis emphasizes dialectics’ tendency towards modernism, stating that in his music “there are elements that struggle against each other. This struggle has to lead to a new ‘place’, a new musical situation.”

Even within modernism alone, there are countless more dichotomies, but I will only dwell with one more for now. Israeli composer Chaya Czernowin gave a lecture that I attended on February 29, 2012, part of which dealt with her notion of modernist music (which she terms Experimentation) being divisible into Innovation and Discovery. For her, Innovation is an

“extended area of action, an expansion into different areas” that attempts to “plant a new flag in the Arctic of the mind,” while Discovery involves “listening to what the new material wants to do, discovering what is immanent in the material.” After outlining this dichotomy, and the risks inherent with each side, she notes that the ideal compositional process is a mixture of both.

This is a commonality I have discovered in my research: nearly all of the cogent explanations of musical dichotomies that I have been able to find are written by commentators who ultimately reject their use (as I do), either by asserting that they are both true, both false, or are somehow subsumed within one another. Many of those who have a clear bias towards one side give an inaccurately weak representation of the other or ignore it altogether, as has come up in my discussion of postmodernity. In “Form - Figure - Style: An Intermediate Assessment”, Brian Ferneyhough writes that in this kind of discourse, what begins as “a clear-headed re-examination of the implications inherent in particular stylistic norms is conveniently diverted into satisfyingly primitive expressions of clan spirit.” Iddon identifies these clans as chiefly, “the New Complexity, the New Simplicity, the spectralists, and on a less significant footing, minimalists and adherents of Lachenmann,” and also points out the ultimate failure of the modes of thinking that led to their inception: “despite the end of an avant-gardist way of thinking about music, it becomes contingent that the trappings of argument and debate are retained, in a simulated repetitive re-run of the factionalism which was originally expected dialectically to form a trajectory towards the future.”

---

56 Ibid.
will spend the next section drawing from theorists who seek to invalidate the divisions that have sprung up in the past hundred or so years.

II

Immediately after presenting the dichotomy of composer as *bricoleur* and composers as scientist, Berio notes that

…the scientific or systematic musician and the empirical musician have always coexisted, they must coexist, complementing each other in the same person. A deductive vision has to be able to interact with an inductive vision. Likewise, an additive “philosophy” of musical creation has to interrelate with a subtractive “philosophy.” Or again, the structural elements of a musical process have to enter into relation with the concrete, acoustical dimensions of its articulation: with the voices that sing it, and the instruments that play it.\(^57\)

After presenting his account of the binarisms used in musical historiography, Björn Heile writes: “I am unsure as to whether this arborescent, binary model ever was adequate for musical historiography, but it certainly fails dismally in the present climate in which composers draw from a bewildering variety of sources close and distant in terms of history, geography and social identification.”\(^58\) He also notes that my generation of composers (and the one that came before me) is one “for whom the binary oppositions that have dogged twentieth-century music studies in the past—such as those between modernism and postmodernism, between concepts of musical autonomy and of cultural contingency and between formalist-analytical and cultural-historical approaches—have become meaningless.”\(^59\) Clearly, if the twentieth century was a time of clear-cut

\(^{57}\) Berio, *Remembering the Future*, 22.

\(^{58}\) Heile, “Weltmusik and the Globalization of New Music,” 117.

musical dichotomies, the twenty-first is not. This holds particularly well for composers of my age who grew up without the vitriolic atmosphere of the discourse that held sway several decades ago.⁶⁰ That being said, there are several composers who also sought ways of effacing various musical dichotomies beginning quite some time ago.

Berio addresses many of these issues in his Charles Eliot Norton Lectures at Harvard from 1992-1993, collected as Remembering the Future. He identifies a fundamental problem with the oft-cited mid-century dichotomy of absolute determinacy (“a systematic and fanatically numerical procedure”) and indeterminacy (“a random procedure”), stating that their sounding results are often analogous.⁶¹ He then points to a larger and more problematic dichotomy that is created:

…the awareness of this relative similarity of results is at the root of many significant achievements of the last decades. On the other hand, this coincidentia oppositorum, this perceptive coincidence of opposites, has been responsible for a number of disasters in both camps; it has become something of an alibi, both conceptually and behaviorally. It led composers … not to assume all of their perceptive responsibilities: the combinatory processes of the former and the chance operations of the latter generated, each in its own way, a similar statistical distribution of intervals, durations, register, and so forth. This is how, in some cases, any sense of form or structure … seemed to have vanished, and in order to bring the collapsed structure back to life some brutal formal interventions were needed, leading, more often than not, to incoherence and to the renouncing of something vague that is not really there.⁶²

Berio also attacks the simplicity/complexity dichotomy: He states that “a musical event may present us with extremely complex, chaotic, and diversified sound situations (the musical equivalent of a video-clip commanded by a random program). This will lead us to look for and single out their common aspects, and we will certainly find some,” since “everything can be related by analogy, continuity, and similarity to everything else.”⁶³ In regards to simplicity, he states that “a homogenous and immobile musical event (the equivalent of a face that never changes its

---

⁶¹ Berio, Remembering the Future, 84.
⁶² Ibid., 84–85.
⁶³ Ibid., 95.
expression) will stimulate us to pick out the slightest differences and variations." Berio points out that this analysis also applies to the unity/disunity dichotomy:

> It is obvious that the greater the number and diversity of the elements at play, the greater will be the need (and also the difficulty) to identify the reason for their coexistence—even despite the author’s intentions. It is equally obvious that the fewer the number and diversity of the elements, the more specific and discrete will be the details useful for a possible interpretation.

Thus, similar to Lehmann’s notion of Gehalt described in the Introduction, specific modes of listening can undermine the ideal construction of a piece.

Ferneyhough refutes the romanticist holdover dichotomy of inspiration (which he refers to as “a music distinguished and authenticated by either the rapidity and spontaneity of the associated creative act, or else by reason of some supposedly natural qualities innate to the gesturally discursive vocables employed” versus construction (“one dimensional distillations of abstract, material-bound strategies of generation such as are often purported to characterize that all-purpose scapegoat, Serialism”), stating that “all structuring systems are, to some extent, arbitrary and spontaneous, just as most spontaneity is nothing but the final stage of a frequently lengthy and intense ritual of self-programming on the part of the composer.” In other words, no musical system is more natural than any other, we are merely separated historically from them by differing degrees, so some appear to be more so than others.

Morton Feldman specifically attacks the supposed Schoenberg/Stravinsky dichotomy, in his Darmstadt-Lecture from 1984, saying that

> An interesting friend of mine defines tragedy as when two people are right. … When I was a kid, there was a big controversy in America between Nicolas Nabokov and Stravinsky, René Leibowitz and Schönberg, and

---

64 Ibid.
65 Ibid., 96.
66 Ferneyhough, Collected Writings, 22.
67 Ibid.
68 Ibid.
it was an awful situation. I was like an orphan child with divorced and separated parents. I loved both of them. I didn’t take Schönberg’s position that both of us can’t be right; one of us has to be right. They were both right.69

As a matter of fact, Feldman actually espouses a general philosophy of ‘neither/nor’, first stated in his essay of the same name from 1969, where he claims that all Western Civilization “has given us—including Kierkegaard—is an Either/Or situation, both in politics and in art. But suppose what we want is Neither/Nor70 He wishes to both repudiate the dichotomies forced on us, as well as avoiding any labelling of the alternative, asking “why must we give it a name? What’s wrong with leaving it nameless?”71 Labelling one’s school only allows the dichotomous process to continue.

Somewhat contradictorily, there are several named compositional schools that have posited similar ideas. In “Complex Music: An Attempt at a Definition”, Mahnkopf writes that “Complex music … is a form of criticism of identity-thinking, which lies in the center of the ‘old’ dialectics. It searches for musical sense and expressive forms which have emancipated themselves from the obsolete ideal of presence of the great music of the 19th century, without needing to repeat the iconoclastic solutions of the 20th century avant-garde.”72 The spectralists relied on a similar notion originating from contemporary French philosophy, as Eric Drott writes: “the ‘neither/nor/but’ structure occupies a privileged place in post-war French political thought, as a means of conceiving a way past some perceived social antimony.”73 He then quotes Peter Starr in explaining that it operated by “uncovering … a pseudo-opposition between the principles or structures of the

69 Feldman, Essays, 181.
70 Morton Feldman, Give My Regards to Eighth Street (Exact Change, 2000), 80.
71 Ibid., 81.
established order and an oppositional force … The back-to-back dismissal of the parties to this pseudo-opposition then serves as a pretext for articulating a ‘third way’ or ‘third term’. 74 Drott goes on to explain that Gérard Grisey believed in the “irreducible specificity of timbre, its resistance to simple quantitative measurement,” and “what is significant is the consequence he draws from the idea of timbre’s constitutive difference. He contends that by taking account of this difference, a pair of pitfalls, ‘hierarchy and levelling’, are avoided, 75 specifically “between tonal or neo-tonal hierarchy and serial or neo-serial egalitarianism there exists a third way: to recognize and accept difference.” 76

Architect Robert Venturi writes: “I like complexity and contradiction … I like elements which are ‘hybrid’ rather than ‘pure,’ distorted rather than ‘straightforward,’ ambiguous rather than ‘articulated,’ … accommodating rather than excluding, redundant rather than simple, vestigial as well as innovating, inconsistent and equivocal rather than direct and clear. I am for messy vitality over obvious unity. I am for richness of meaning rather than the clarity of meaning; for the implicit function as well as the explicit function. I prefer ‘both-and’ to ‘either-or.’” 77 If ‘either-or’ is the modern and ‘both-and’ is the postmodern, then what we have here is, as Feldman puts it, ‘neither-nor.’

There are also a growing number of scholars who argue that even the division between modernism and postmodernism is somewhat artificial and the two may be combined. Mahnkopf posits a ‘Second Modernity’ of chiefly complexist composers, which is “neither a denial of postmodernity … nor a neurotic defense reaction or willful ignorance,” but is “a reaction to,

75 Drott, “Spectralism, Politics and the Post-Industrial Imagination,” 57.
76 Ibid.
response to, or result of the postmodern situation,”78 much the same relationship postmodernism ideally has to modernism. He states that “second modernity in music is the attempt to approach the unsolved problems of postmodernity,”79 not an attempt to refute it. Jürgen Habermas claims that postmodernism can actually be viewed as a movement within modernism: “in the course of the 19th century, there emerged … that radicalized consciousness of modernity which freed itself from all specific historical ties … we are, in a way, still the contemporaries of that kind of aesthetic modernity which first appeared in the midst of the 19th century.”80 This idea has gained some traction. For instance, Max Paddison writes that “aesthetic modernism is one aspect of the larger culture of modernity and the historical process of modernization of which postmodernism also needs to be seen as part.”81 In short, the dichotomies discussed in the first section of this chapter are considerably weaker than they appeared to be only a few decades ago.

78 Mahnkopf, “From Classical Modernity to the Second Modernity: Provisional Considerations,” 141.
79 Ibid.
Chapter 2

Decentered Fragmentation

...each shot is like a word, which means nothing by itself, or rather means so many things that in effect it is meaningless. But a word in a poem is transformed, its meaning made precise and unique, by its placing in relation to the words around it: in the same way a shot in a film is given its meaning by its context, and each shot modifies the meaning of the previous one until with the last shot a total, unparaphrasable meaning has been arrived at.82

Robert Bresson

I

In “From Classical Modernity to the Second Modernity: Provisional Considerations,” Mahnkopf identifies five schools of modernist composers working as of the 1990s: “Musical negativism,” which he associates with Lachenmann; “musical complexism,” from Ferneyhough; “statistical-stochastic composition,” from Xenakis; “spectralism” from Grisey; and music that is “carried by a ‘nostalgic’ poetics,” by which he refers to György Kurtág’s output.83 Most importantly, however, he states that “some [schools] have remained unnamed because they had already lost their leading exponents by that point; I am thinking especially of Feldman and Nono.”84 Feldman and Nono, particularly in their late works, do not fit well into most scholars’ musical typologies. They are either not discussed or else they are lumped in with the composers with whom they were associated in their youths: Feldman with the New York School and American Experimentalism, and Nono with the Darmstadt School and integral serialism. By the 1970s these

82 Susan Sontag, Against Interpretation (Dell Laurel, 1969), 188–89.
84 Ibid., 131ff.
labels were no longer accurate, and their works from this period until their deaths in 1987 and 1990, respectively, were marked by an increasing sparseness and, most importantly for my purposes, fragmentation. To Feldman and Nono’s names, I would add an unlikely third member: Alfred Schnittke. Between 1985 and his death in 1998, Schnittke suffered a series of strokes, which triggered a series of radical transformations in his music. His work gradually became bleaker, then much simpler, starker and more fragmented. Though Schnittke is usually regarded as a staunch postmodernist, many of his attitudes were more nuanced, and his late style has much the same unplaceable character as the late work of Feldman and Nono.

The fact that these three composers’ styles changed so much late their lives is significant. Edward Said’s book, On Late Style\textsuperscript{85} traces the notion of late style musically back to Beethoven. Drawing from Adorno’s analysis of Beethoven’s late work\textsuperscript{86}, Said notes its “episodic character, its apparent disregard for its own continuity.”\textsuperscript{87} He then quotes Rose Subotnik’s commentary on Adorno’s article\textsuperscript{88}, saying that for Beethoven, "no synthesis is conceivable [but is in effect] the remains of a synthesis, the vestige of an individual subject sorely aware of the wholeness, and consequently the survival, that has eluded it forever.”\textsuperscript{89} The notions of fragmentation, discontinuity and a lack of synthesis are also hallmarks of the late styles of the Feldman, Nono and Schnittke. For the purposes of this chapter, I will focus on conceptions of fragmentation as a decentering device in their late music, first generally and then specifically for each of the three composers.

\textsuperscript{87} Said, On Late Style, 10.
\textsuperscript{89} Said, On Late Style, 11.
As discussed in Charles Rosen’s *The Romantic Generation*\(^{90}\), the fragment has been an important element of Western music since the nineteenth century. Scott Burnham actually argues that music’s ease of fragmentation, when compared to language, is what drew the focus of the Romantic movement so strongly to the art form: “given the Romantic predilection for the suggestive fragment, the ‘sentimental’ approximation, and the intimation, music became the premier modality of Romanticism, for its referential moorings remain invisible, and, like the stars, leave only points of light, which listeners are free to construe into meaningful constellations.”[^91]

Roland Barthes writes that, though Robert Schumann’s compositions often refer to aspects of reality,

> …this reality is threatened with disarticulation, dissociation, with movements not violent (nothing harsh) but brief and, one might say, ceaselessly “mutant”: nothing lasts long, each movement interrupts the next: this is the realm of the *intermezzo*, a rather dizzying notion when it extends to all of music, and when the matrix is experienced only as an exhausting (if graceful) sequence of interstices. Marcel Beaufils is right to set at the source of all Schumann’s piano music the literary theme of the Carnival; for the Carnival is truly the theater of this decentering of the subject (a very modern temptation) which Schumann expresses in his fashion by the carousel of his brief forms.\(^{92}\)

The fragmentary decentering effect is one of the continuities from the Romantic era to modernism, but also from modernism to postmodernism.

Fragmented music of today is partially so difficult to place because, as David Metzer writes, “one of the continuities between modernism and postmodernism is the shattered fragment.”[^93] In both arch-modern works, such as T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, where “the protagonist ‘shores’ up ‘fragments,’ all part of the ‘heap of broken images’ compiling early 20th-century Western music,”[^93]...
culture,”94 and in conceptions of postmodernism, the fragment is a key rhetorical and aesthetic device. Iddon writes that in postmodernity, “modernity's intimate involvement with the fleeting has been retained; its meaning, or the apparatus through which it acquires its meaning, however, has been excised.”95 The construction of meaning is, of course, somewhat subjective, but the fleeting nature of much of both modernism and postmodernism is not. However, the ultimate reason for fragmentation’s unplaceability is its fundamentally contradictory nature: “the rhetoric of the fragment … sustains layers of paradox. For instance, fragments lie impoverished. Bereft of context, they possess little or no specific meaning. At the same time, both the vague material within the fragment and the vast space around it hold an excess of possible meanings. A fragment is both closed and open.”96 Through this sense of contradiction, fragmentation sidesteps many of the dichotomies discussed in Chapter 1.

Since the fragment draws attention both to itself and to the negative space around it, it drastically alters the conception of musical space, creating a sense of a ‘field’ on which it is placed. This analogy is used by several scholars. David Metzer writes:

A different approach to issues of form and continuity can be gained by drawing inspiration from the individual fragment. It, to recall, embodies opposing tendencies, being at once momentary and infinite. In this sense, the single fragment serves as a microcosm of the larger field, which too contains contradictions. The field responds to the tensions between the fragmentary and the whole, that is, the energy of discontinuity, disruption, and separation whipped up by the former and the push toward continuity and connection sustained by the latter.97

On the other hand, Berio uses the metaphor when discussing Stravinsky’s structuring of The Rite of Spring:

94 Ibid.
95 Iddon, “The Dissolution of the Avant-Garde,” 125.
96 Metzer, Musical Modernism at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century, 107.
97 Ibid., 114–5.
...the form is substantially episodic and entirely invented—an accumulation of powerfully and autonomously characterized non-recurring events. The ordering, the “assembling,” the editing of part of the episodes was done, so to speak, “on the field,” in keeping with a strategy of maximum articulatory contrast and virtual openness made up of closed forms. ... the material put to work by him is, for all its diversity and complexity, miraculously homogeneous. ... he intervenes, connecting a posteriori episodes very different among themselves through alliterative procedures that are extremely simple but at the same time display great penetration and great formal astuteness. ... These alliterations confer added vastness upon the outlines of the Sacrè, which, as well know, contains within itself an enormous number of organically interwoven factors, but also levels that are quite indifferent to each other—all of which places the relative autonomy of the individual episodes in a wide-range perspective, dialectical and deterministic at the same time. 98

In other words, though a piece made up of fragments is constructed of a finite number of closed forms, the ear is drawn to the infinity of the empty space surrounding them, and it seems to the listener as though the piece could plausibly contain any number of fragments going on forever. Such is the world of Feldman’s late pieces.

II

Ever since his student days, Feldman’s sense of musical construction was somewhat unusual. He writes: “in my early training as a composer with Stefan Wolpe, the one theme persistent in all our lessons was why I did not develop my ideas but went from one thing to another. ‘Negation’ was how Wolpe characterized this.”99 This was true through his indeterminate early pieces, and remained so for his rather different late pieces. Catherine Laws emphasizes the contradictory nature of his late work: “the music is neither part of nor fully rejects its own heritage.”100 Feldman’s late work remains in many ways in the soundworld of his earlier pieces: the late pieces are still mostly very slow and very quiet. However, the key component of much of his

98 Berio, Remembering the Future, 94–95.
99 Feldman, Give My Regards to Eighth Street, 146.
earlier work, indeterminacy, is gone, with the non-metrical notation of such pieces as *Piece for Four Pianos* or *Last Pieces* replaced by relatively traditional notation. Additionally, the scale of his late pieces increases tremendously. Laws continues: “as such [the music] demands extremely concentrated listening, as one is drawn into the continuity of events but struggles to orientate oneself. The music operates on the boundaries of our expectations and our memories, performing its own ungraspability as a musical object.” The great length of his last pieces, such as the four-hour (or longer) *String Quartet II* (1983) and *For Philip Guston* (1984), combined with a complete lack of development or even return of material, transports the listener to a strange liminal state unique to Feldman.

When the pieces’ structures and scales are combined with fragmentation, the effect is particularly potent on the listener’s ability to remember and interpret what is going on in the music:

Structurally, the use of relatively fragmented modules of material, with distant relationships (whether harmonic, metric, rhythmic or textural) but outside of any kind of antecedent-consequent or other discursive structure, and within a relatively uniform, very low dynamic range, both demands and refuses the classical tendency to attempt to understand relationships across time. …the more systemic elements, the fragility of the soundworld, traces of past musics, and, in particular, the structural and material uncertainties, all expose the contingency of musical meaning and implicate performers and listeners as active in constructing their own sense of meaning in each new context.¹⁰¹

Though the music itself is almost entirely determinate, every experience listening to Feldman’s late work is unique because of the way in which his raw materials and structuring strategies play with memory. Laws concludes by writing that “these modules act almost as images—their focus and brevity makes them discrete and potentially memorable in themselves—but the endless, subtle reconfigurations cause the memory to start to slip.”¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 54.
¹⁰² Ibid., 58.
An interesting side-effect of this phenomenon is that the listener is forced into only a moment-by-moment surface-level perception of the music’s content, with dim memories possibly connecting each instant with what came before. This fits in well with Feldman’s analysis of the notion of a musical surface. Drawing from the subject/surface dichotomy in painting, he believes that “the subject of music, from Machaut to Boulez, has always been its construction. Melodies or twelve-tone rows don’t just happen. They must be constructed. Rhythms do not appear from nowhere. They must be constructed.”

However, he notes that “if we want to describe the surface of a musical composition we run into some difficulty.” He first proposes that music may actually have no surface at all, since, in painting, the surface is effaced by the illusion of perspective, but he eventually comes to the conclusion that it has one after all. He explains this conclusion by way of a transcription of a conversation he had with a friend:

“The composer’s surface is an illusion into which he puts something real—sound. The painter’s surface is something real from which he creates an illusion.” … “Brian—would you now please differentiate,” I said, “between a music that has a surface and a music that doesn’t.” “A music that has a surface constructs with time. A music that doesn’t have a surface submits to time and becomes a rhythmic progression.” “Brian,” I continued, “does Beethoven have a surface?” “No,” he answered emphatically. “Does any music you know of in Western civilization have a surface?” “Except for your music, I can’t think of any.”

Thus Feldman attributes his music’s surface mostly to its lack of clear rhythmic content, but this sensation is definitely aided by its sense of scale and its fragmentation.

103 Feldman, *Give My Regards to Eighth Street*, 83.
104 Ibid.
105 Ibid., 84.
106 Ibid., 85.
Nono’s clearest use of fragmentation is in his string quartet *Fragmente—Stille, an Diotima* (1979-80), which is constructed entirely of a series of approximately 50 musical fragments that are each accompanied by a fragment from the poetry of Hölderlin. In his sketches for the work, he noted that the work should contain “no development, but succession and proliferation.” Metzer writes that “the phrase could serve as a modus operandi for the fragmentary. In lieu of the deliberate, incremental progress characteristic of development, fragments multiply. ‘Prolification’ captures the sense of spontaneous, abundant growth spawned by the ‘succession’ of fragments.” At its premiere in Bonn in 1980, Nono presented a general theory of fragmentation as way of introduction to the work:

In talking to the audience in Bonn, Nono grew rapturous about contradictions. He quickly pushed past any musical and textual details and entertained larger questions of human existence. Fragments, according to him, reveal moments of “potential” in life. Such moments naturally assume countless forms, many of them contradictory. So strong and unique are the tensions between them that they can never be resolved, especially through, as he mentions, dialectical synthesis. For Nono, the challenge of life, and of works like the String Quartet, is to “develop” “different possibilities, potentials, strengths, or weak moments,” which together “offer a multiplicity of thoughts, of life, of existence.” Contradictions, in other words, are part of our lives.

Though this section on Nono itself is very brief and fleeting, I feel as though ending it after the preceding quotation is appropriate because it is one of the clearest possible statements of the central aim of this thesis: namely to propose a music that avoids dialectical synthesis by producing a contradiction between accepting and rejecting both sides.

108 Ibid.
109 Ibid., 115.
IV

In *On Late Style*, Said points out a connection between late Beethoven and Thomas Mann, namely “that as Krestchmar says in Mann’s *Doktor Faustus*, Beethoven’s late works often communicate an impression of being unfinished—something that the energetic teacher of Adrian Leverkühn discusses at great and ingenious length in his disquisition about the two movements of opus 111.” In an extremely rare interview from 1994, Schnittke admits to the influence of the same book: “Yes, [Doktor Faustus] had an incredible influence on me … I read it in the 50s when I was still a young man. I thought about it my whole life.” Yet another coincidental connection lies in Berio’s description of the laconic nature of an ‘unfinished’ work:

> The notion of the unfinished can be taken even further, … because the map itself (the musical score) may become more and more essential and laconic; it may confine itself to suggesting the envelope of a virtual and vaguely descriptive form, inhabited by long or short presences, long or short silences, rapid interjections or slow afterthoughts, very high or very low notes, *pianissimi* and scarce *fortissimi*. The text thus becomes a renunciation, it becomes impoverished, even spiritualized—it becomes, in other words, the wistful parody of a voyage toward silence.

This quotation could very easily be used to describe Schnittke’s *Symphony No. 6* (1992), the piece whose American premiere he attended days before the interview quoted above, in which he also said that the symphony “seemed incomplete, in a sense.”

Schnittke suffered his first major stroke in 1985, after which his music became considerably darker and more despairing than it was previously, but it was after his second major stroke in 1991 that his late style emerged most clearly, and *Symphony No. 6* is one of its best examples. Its surface is extremely discontinuous, both through the extensive use of silences separating figures and highly

---

12 Ibid.
fragmented orchestration. As Alexander Ivashkin writes, it “contains almost no passages for full orchestra; the orchestra plays in groups only, and the actual texture of the music seems to be ascetically dry and abstract.”\textsuperscript{113} Ivashkin also notes that Schnittke’s fragmentation creates a similar decentering effect that those discussed above, that “the listener unwittingly senses, though cannot always understand, the latent symbolism of the music,”\textsuperscript{114} and that “Schnittke’s musical vocabulary reveals the difference between ‘the conceivable and the audible’ (Schnittke’s own expression), which is embodied not in the text itself, but which somehow lies between the notes, filling the music with its tension.”\textsuperscript{115} However, unlike the dream-like state induced by Feldman or the contradictions embraced by Nono, Schnittke’s late soundworld produces a state of unsettled fear. As Alex Ross writes “The Sixth Symphony … is an altogether frightening vision of music stripped to the bone; at one performance in Washington, several distressed young children were led out after the first movement.”\textsuperscript{116} Ivashkin relates that another American critic wrote that “when the last notes evaporated I had the queasy feeling of having heard a Mahler symphony with most of its musical flesh torn away, leaving a gruesome skeleton dangling forlornly in a black space.”\textsuperscript{117}

Despite its surface-level fragmentation, the sensation of the “latent symbolism” mentioned above is perceptible in Schnittke’s late works as a feeling that they are much more unified than would seem possible. This can be attributed to Schnittke’s use of a small number of intervals to generate his fragments. For instance, in the first movement of Symphony No. 6, nearly every figure is derived from combinations of semitones, perfect fourths and tritones. His late style also manages

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., 215.  
\textsuperscript{116} Ross, “A Shy, Frail Creator Of the Wildest Music.”  
\textsuperscript{117} Ivashkin, \textit{Alfred Schnittke}, 203.
to contradictorily maintain a connection with his earlier polystylistic music, since, through simplification, he creates a sort of ‘fundamental’ music, whereby the various historical styles of the Western canon are subsumed into a skeletal, abstract form. As Ting-Lan Chen writes, “the stylistic components are dismantled into constructional microforms.” The notion that Schnittke’s view of the skeleton of the Western tradition as so depressing and potentially terrifying fits well with Edison Denisov’s opinion: “what I don’t like about Schnittke’s music is that there is no light, there are only shades of grey, and a deformed and uncomfortable view of the world.”

This chapter has shown that though they have much philosophically in common, Feldman, Nono and Schnittke’s use of fragmentation produced very different music from similar structural devices. It is no coincidence that these are not only three of my favourite composers, but also three of those who have been the most influential on my compositions and ideas over the past few years. The third and fourth chapters of this thesis discusses how my work, first generally in the context of Canadian music and then individually, connects with the dissolution of dichotomies and fragmentation discussed in this first part.

---

119 Edison Denisov interviewed in Beyer, The Voice of Music: Conversations with Composers of Our Time, 197.
Chapter 3

Some Background

The conductor of the TSO at the time was doing my harp concerto and planned to take it to Europe on tour with the orchestra. He called me up to have a chat about the work and I went down to his office at Massey Hall—he asked me some questions and I knew that he knew my piece, he’d done his homework. We had a very interesting conversation, and in the course of it he said, “I don’t understand Canadian music.” That was the message that I got—that we have a Canadian music. he didn’t understand it because it was different from what he usually did.120

John Weinzweig

Before I connect the ideas discussed in the previous chapters to my individual compositions, I feel as though I must provide a small amount of personal background information, particularly to give some context for my place in Canadian music. As the quote above suggests, Canadian music is often defined negatively. As a matter of fact, Canadian culture as a whole is frequently merely defined as ‘neither American nor European’ and sometimes as completely non-existent. However, the situation is obviously much more complex than these clichéd statements.

I trace back the particular brand of Canadian Experimentalism in which I fall to three sources: to Udo Kasemets’ discovery of the ideas of the John Cage in the 1960s;121 to Claude Vivier’s time studying with Stockhausen and his discovery of Balinese music in the mid-1970s; and, most importantly to Rudolf Komorous’ arrival in Canada from Czechoslovakia in 1968. Komorous was most important to my own development because he founded a major branch of composition in British Columbia, both taught one of my composition teachers (Christopher Butterfield) and was a

120 Interviewed in Paul Steenhuisen, Sonic Mosaics: Conversations with Composers (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 2009), 52.
colleague of another for more than a decade (John Celona), and also because his aesthetic matches my current musical ideas very closely.

Komorous was a member of the Czech artists’ collective Smidra, which espoused a set of beliefs known as *estetiku divnosti*, which can be translated as the ‘aesthetic of the wonderful’ or ‘aesthetic of the strange.’ Composer Martin Arnold, one of Komorous’ former students, writes that “Komorous’ wonderful destabilizes value judgements, fractures hierarchies, and breaks down dualities,” and that “one of the most crucial aspects of the wonderful is that it renders irrelevant the cultural construct of high versus low art, or elite versus popular art. That is the kind of duality that cannot be established when the ‘serious and the trivial cannot be distinguished.’” As for how his music specifically manifests, Arnold writes that

Komorous’s music has evolved through a number of phases, and many different stylistic strategies have been deployed throughout this history: true minimalism (spare sounds utterly exposed, as opposed to its current usage as denoting extreme repetition); poised, elegant textures worthy of Franz Joseph Haydn or Franz Schubert yet insidiously skewed; evocative melodies, redolent with Czechness, which inscrutably dissolve into prosaic, generic ascending scale passages and then suddenly evaporate; deliriously dreamlike waltzes and boogie-woogies; nightingale bird calls and grinding ratchets effortlessly intermingling with virtuoso lyricism or lush, hanging harmonies rolled on a vibrato-drenched electric piano. That Komorous manages to have at once an eclectic and unified style that is marked by numerous different approaches which are governed by a single aesthetic shows the roots of his unplaceability.

However, reminiscent of the *Gehalt* concept from earlier in this thesis, Martin claims that one of the greatest aspects of studying with Komorous was the particular mode of listening he espoused:


124 Ibid., 307.

125 Ibid., 317.
There's a whole way that you can enter listening to music that is freed of certain conventions. ... artists can be aware of these conventions. ... they can compose and offer sounding creations that are more conducive to facilitating breaking through listening conventions. I think a lot about what those conventions might be and how those might be entering what I'm doing. It's not about repudiating them. It's not about polemics, it's about recognizing those conventions as obligatory and trying to find loose ends that they might have, to alter how comfortable they might be in terms of the person's experience of what you're offering (and actually, "conventions" seems like far too limited a word to embrace the cultural phenomena we're talking about...).126

It is precisely those “loose ends” of the listening experience that I seek to use to my own advantage in the pieces that I have written over the past several years, and that is my strongest connection to Komorous’ music.

126 Interviewed in Steenhuisen, Sonic Mosaics: Conversations with Composer, 156.
Chapter 4

Compositions 2012 – 2014

I

Vocal Works

My compositions for voice have always followed a separate but parallel stream to my purely instrumental works. The most important reason for this is, whatever the compositional developments and techniques I intend to use in a vocal work, the text is the ultimate arbiter of the work’s final form, so I often end up using more specifically idiomatic material than I would most likely use in an instrumental work. This tendency is clearest in my cycle *Six Popular Songs After Lawrence Durrell* (2009-10)\(^{127}\), which, much as \(φψ\) represented the high point of my idiom as instrumental style prior to coming to Wesleyan, marked the most prominent use of idiom in my vocal music. *Six Popular Songs*, which set poetry that I interpret as expressing a sort of anti-nostalgia towards Durrell’s youth in England, combines popular forms from the early twentieth century (blues, waltz, tango, etc.) with elaborate pseudo-serial constructions. Over the course of my time at Wesleyan, I have sought out texts that specifically enable me to bring about a *rapprochement* of my vocal and instrumental styles, though they still remain somewhat separate.

La synagogue stérile (2012)

Soprano voice and mixed ensemble

La synagogue stérile (La synagogue stérile in modern text) was written in the fall of 2012 for an ensemble consisting of Anne Rhodes, voice; Ben Klein, tuba; Bill Solomon, percussion; Maura Valenti, harp; Adam Matlock, accordion; John Biatowas, viola; and Carl Testa, bass. Its text is from Nostradamus’ Prophéties, quatrain VII.XCVI (1568):

La synagogue stérile sans nul fruit
Sera recu entre les infideles
De Babylon la fille du poursuit
Misere & triste luy tranchera les ailes.

This is my own translation:

The sterile synagogue, without any fruit
Will be received by the infidels
The daughter of the persecuted one of Babylon
Miserable and sad, will clip her wings.

La synagogue stérile was originally intended to be a part of a larger piece called La féele d’aerain, which would set two more Nostradamus quatrains, but for now it stands alone.

When I learned of the ensemble for which the composition seminar was to write in the fall of 2012 (particularly the tuba, accordion and bass), I immediately thought of Klezmer music, since I have been active as a Klezmer clarinettist for nearly ten years, and then this text. Before this piece, I had never written any substantial piece that explored my own Jewish background, but I thought that this text was sufficiently veiled in nature to enable me to express the complex relationship I have with my heritage. The quatrain does not mention Judaism by name at all; the only Jewish content is the mention of the synagogue and an implicit connection to persecution.

See Appendix A for the scores to all of the pieces mentioned in this chapter.
Similarly, my own relationship to Judaism is largely implicit: I never had a bar mitzvah, I grew up about as far from Israel was one can get in the Northern Hemisphere, I am not a Zionist, and I am actually only half Jewish on the wrong side. Sometimes I feel as though I am part of the furthest flung branch of the diaspora, both literally (geographically) and metaphorically. That being said, I feel a strong connection with my heritage through secular Yiddish culture, especially Klezmer.

The Jewish connection in the piece derives principally from a doina which is interspersed between the lines of the quatrain. A doina is a Romanian lament, traditionally sung unaccompanied by a shepherd in the fields, with verses often alternating with passages played on a carved flute or pipe. Approximately one hundred years ago, the doina was appropriated into klezmer music, where it became a non-metrical form in which a free, semi-improvised solo melody is accompanied by sustained chords. The doina in this piece stems from sketches I wrote for tubist Celina Barry in 2011, which I called Der Levoner Doina (The Lunar Doina). The harmonization of the doina sections begins relatively traditionally, but over the course of its three strains, it gradually diverges from the chords that one would normally expect in this idiom.

The remainder of the piece is written in a free, semi-serial language that is very common in my work. However, much of the row material is derived from Klezmer modality (see especially bar 7 in the viola part). After an introduction establishing the serial material (the row is stated in its entirety in the opening vibraphone dyads), the piece produces a separation between settings of individual lines of the quatrain and strains of the doina as well as two sub-ensembles: voice, percussion, harp and viola for the verses; tuba, accordion and bass for the doina. These are then combined in the third strain of the doina at bar 18. After the final line is sung, there is a brief coda, in which the opening material returns.
Since *La synagogue stérile* is one of the first pieces I wrote at Wesleyan, and some of it derives from material I wrote considerably prior to my arrival. The piece represents one of the last examples of my previous, more eclectic style. Besides the Jewish elements, there are also many other references to tonality, such as the V – I cadence in B-flat minor from bar 17 into the third strain of the doina, as well as the truncated V – I cadence in G minor at bar 23. Though these tonal references are not entirely in keeping with my more recent style, I still believe they are appropriate for this piece, because they reinforce my interpretation of the text for the listener: they provide a connection to the historicism of the text and its subject. The unusual instrumentation and techniques employed also contribute to a veiling of the piece’s source material, which connects it more clearly to my more recent works.

«**Feu froid**» (2013)

**Baritone voice, contrabass clarinet, flugelhorn and trombone**

«**Feu froid**» (“Cold Fire”) was written for the ensemble loadbang in the fall of 2013. It is a setting of a portion of Iannis Xenakis’ *Arts-Sciences: Alliages* (*Arts-Sciences: Alloys*), which is the transcript of his five-hour defense for the French *Doctorat d’État*, with his entire life’s output as his thesis. The title refers to Xenakis’ conception of the human mind, which is both biological and living (“hot”) as well as calculating and machine-like (“cold”) in nature. I took excerpts from the prose and turned them into verse form:
L’artifex…

Je ne suis pas un gaz
Et je possède en même temps
Le démon de Maxwell en moi.

Les univers des musiques
Forment des unités en soi,
Parfois fermées, parfois s’interpenetrant.
Diversités incroyables,
Riches de créations nouvelles
De fossilisations, de ruines, de déchets,
En formations et transformations continues,
Tels les nuages, si différenciés et si éphémères.

Matériaux qui se meuvent dans l’espace,
Créés, lancés, entraînés,
Par les courants des idées,
Se heurtant les uns aux autres,
S’influencant, s’annihilant
Se fécondant mutuellement.

L’intelligence qui quête, questionne,
Infère, révèle, échafaudé à tous niveaux.

Le style veut dire quelque chose
Qui est en dehors des calculs,
Qui est métacalcul.129

The artifex…

I am not a gas
And at the same time I posses
Maxwell’s demon in me.

The universes of musics
Form unities in themselves,
Sometimes closed, sometimes interpenetrating.
Unbelievable diversities,
Riches of new creations
Of fossilizations, of ruins, of detritus
In continuous formations and transformations,
Like the clouds, so differentiated and so ephemeral.

Materials that move in space,
Created, launched, dragged,
By the currents of ideas,
Colliding with each other,
Influencing, annihilating,
And fertilizing each other mutually.

The intelligence that quests, questions,
Infers, reveals, elevates at all levels.

Style means something
Which is outside of calculation,
Which is meta-calculation.

I chose these passages both for their poetic content and for their connection to my own musical philosophy. Xenakis’ metaphor of both musics and their internal components being somehow projected as objects in space is particularly potent. Also, the stanza referring to style debunks Xenakis’ image as a composer unconcerned with anything beyond the outputs of his algorithms: there are additional steps in his process that add to the musical character of his works.130 Reclaiming Xenakis as poet from Xenakis as calculator has been one of the main areas of my research for the past few years.131

The actual construction of the piece uses a combination of techniques developed by Xenakis with more explicitly spectral material. The opening and closing sections consist of fragments juxtaposing equal-tempered passages in the voice with spectral material in the brass. In bars 3 and 9, the trombone plays a *bisbigliando* which exploits the many slide positions for microtonally differing instances of roughly the notes D and A-flat. The tritone between them is significant, but the tritone between the pedal tones B-flat and E in the flugelhorn is more so, since the pitches for the brass in the remainder of the work are all derived from the harmonic series on those two notes (albeit with much lower fundamentals).

The piece’s middle sections consists of free material in the baritone voice, which begins in equal temperament, but has the option of gradually shifting in intonation to accommodate the brass, accompanied by static repetition of B-flat and E in the contrabass clarinet, as well as octave-displaced pitches from their harmonic series in the brass, up to the 32nd partial. Both the durations and pitches in the brass parts were algorithmically generated using Max/MSP, but over the course

---

131 See particularly my paper Nathan Friedman, “‘Modifying the Demeanor of the Galaxies’: Spectacle and Utopia in the Music of Iannis Xenakis,” in *Sonic Spaces* (presented at the Stony Brook Graduate Music Symposium, Stony Brook, NY, 2013).
of the middle of the piece the attacks become gradually denser and the instruments gradually move into a higher register.

The result is something that sounds vaguely like Xenakis circa EONTA (1964), but ‘obliquenized’\textsuperscript{132}. I approximate several of the techniques he used, but the resulting pitches and rhythms are considerably murkier than in his work, because of the quantization of rhythms to the 32\textsuperscript{nd} note and finer gradations in microtonal tuning than he used. Once again, the materials used in this piece are not necessarily those I would choose for an instrumental work, since I normally avoid imitating the style of a particular composer, even obliquely, but I feel as though the text and the philosophy behind this homage to Xenakis demanded this particular implementation.

\textit{Four Domestics (2013-14)}

Medium voice and piano

\textit{Four Domestics} were written for mezzo-soprano Stephanie Lavon Trotter over a period from March 2013 until April 2014. They are a setting of “Four Moments” by Canadian socialist poet, lawyer and activist F. R. Scott (1899-1985).

\textsuperscript{132} From Anthony Braxton, see Introduction above.
I.
Stand by the window, Tyltyl,
Stand still by the old chintz curtains.

Tell the littlest diamond
It has wonder in its eyes.

But leave me to blow smoke rings
In a dusty corner.

II.
Lay your hand, lay it gently on my arm,
For there is no stillness lovelier
Than the deliberate, fond
Reticence of soft fingers on an arm.

III.
The little hump of her body
Untidied the bed.

She heard a chair creak
And a shoe drop.

And after
The wind cooled her.

IV.
Close,
So close your breath is warm.

While slowly the
Clock
Ticks

Little one,
Little lovely one.133

I changed the title from “moments” to “domestics” because these poems seem to me to portray a love that has aged and become somewhat mundane. They are still full of passion, but it is a quiet, restrained passion. These settings represent my attempt to

return to the aesthetic of *Six Popular Songs*, especially the disconnection between the complexity of construction and the sounding result, but without the idiomatic elements that were so strong in that earlier cycle. These idiomatic elements, particularly rhythm, are gradually reduced over the cycle’s four songs, as is the role of the piano.

In the first movement, the ghost of a waltz metre remains, but it is subverted first by the use of tuplets and then by the combinatorial use of nearly all possible divisions of the 3/4 bar into two notes in the left hand. The result is the sensation that the subject that is being represented in the music can no longer walk, and can barely remember what dancing feels like. The pitches in the piano part are loosely derived from harmonic series on C and E, and the pitches in the voice consist of two alternating hexachords, the first at the beginning and end, and the second from bars 12-16.

The second movement replaces the first’s complex rhythmic construction with a complex harmonic construction. The piano part consists of six single notes, five dyads, four triads, three four-note chords, two five-note chords and one six-note chord, followed by the same progression in reverse, with the mirror point between bars 8 and 9. The chords themselves are drawn from two alternating hexachords, with every group of notes adding up to a multiple of twelve except for the groups of five, which only add to twenty, so the final four notes that were not used are found in the left hand of the piano in the final bar of the song. The pitches in the voice part consist of a specially-constructed mode that ascends to the mirror point then descends, and is related to the
two hexachords of the piano part. This song seeks to emphasize the poem’s depiction of stasis by means of the very slow tempo and rests between phrases.

The third movement is built on a simple expansion of the inner tremolo and contraction of the outer pitches in the piano part, with a free vocal line. The slight restlessness of the text is reflected by the constant tremolo texture.

The fourth movement, for solo voice, represents a near-total sense of stasis. The singer has absolute freedom over the tempo and rhythm of the line. The opening bar is a veiled reference to Feldman’s *Only*, while the second is a reference to Berg’s *Lulu*. The pitches are simply one statement of a twelve-tone row.

### II

**Instrumental Works**

In this chapter, I am writing about my larger instrumental works separately from my works for clarinets, since they represent distinct streams of my composition. Having played clarinet for thirteen years, I understand the instrument well enough to be able to write for it in a much more technically specific manner. While I hope to attain a similar fluency writing for other instruments, I feel as though I will never be physically as connected to them as I am to the clarinet.
Glaucous (2014)

Strings

Glaucous is loosely based on a sketch I made for Neely Bruce’s advanced orchestration seminar in the spring of 2013. The main holdover is the central canon that extends from bars 69-106, which is based on subsidiary parts from Liszt’s piano piece Nuages Gris (1881). The title, which refers to a bluish-grey colour, usually found on birds or the bloom on leaves and grapes, is a veiled reference to that piece. The remainder of Glaucous consists of a quasi-symmetrical expansion and contraction starting and ending from unison at the beginning and end, on G and B-flat, respectively, and a series of chromatic scales from bars 36-58, drawn from the Liszt piece, whose durations have been algorithmically determined by the same Max patch I used to produce much of «Feu froid».

This piece is somewhat contradictory in nature because the most traditional-sounding sections, the very beginning and the opening of the final section, are almost the only ones not based on pre-existing material. It is in G minor, which stems from the source material, but there are no statements of any pure triad in the entire piece. The final chord is the closest, but it is actually a cluster from G to B-natural, with pitches doubled and spaced in order to emphasize the G minor sonority. The piece’s use of silence is its strongest connection to the ideas discussed in this thesis. Every figure in the
opening and closing sections is separated from its neighbour by silences of varying
lengths, producing at least a feeling of fragmentation, even if the material is relatively
unified.

*Music for Strings, Percussion and Electric Guitar (2014)*

This piece began its life as a transcription of the first movement of φ↓ψ, but for
a very different ensemble. I reduced many of the original textures from tenor
saxophone and four trombones to string quintet, and freely adapted many of the other
pitches from the movement onto the rest of the instruments. For instance, the Violin I
solo at bar 102 had its origin in a saxophone solo, while the string arpeggios in bars
113-116 were originally for piano, with an assistant producing harmonics by touching
the strings. As a result of its more homogenous instrumentation, the piece is more
unified than it was in its original form, while still maintaining a diversity of timbre
from its varied percussion instruments, guitar effects and string techniques. The piece
seeks to use timbral idiomatic references to jazz and rock via guitar effects without
using any actual idiomatic material.

This is the most explicitly fragmented work encountered so far in this thesis: it
is built on a series of large sections (bars 23-46, 86-101 and 133-145) which are
separated by a host of smaller fragments and interstitial silences. The ordering is
purely intuitive, as is the construction of many of the fragments, besides the fact that
the pitches are mostly taken from φ↓ψ.
III

Works for Clarinets

Over the past two years, I have been very lucky to have continued to be able to play clarinet on a somewhat regular basis: in Anthony Braxton’s ensemble, in the university orchestra, in the klezmer band, and in a standing duo with Sean Sonderegger, Menschenduett. Through my continued connection with the instrument, I have been building a fragmentary vocabulary of sounds and techniques on the clarinet which improvising plucked string player Joe Morris would describe as ultra-idiomatic, which is defined as “the playing methodology of an instrument that maximizes upon its physical characteristics and exploits the way it was built, for purposes beyond traditional music practice.” On the clarinet, this ultra-idiomatic vocabulary consists of several different types of multiphonics, flutter-tongue, vocalizing while playing, unusual articulations and related techniques. Many such techniques crop up in multiple places within the pieces I have written for clarinets as well as in the sketches for pieces I have not yet finished.

Incarnadine (2012)\textsuperscript{135}

Three clarinets

Incarnadine was commissioned in the summer of 2012 by the Vancouver Clarinet Trio (Shawn Earle, Kate Frobeen and Liam Hockley) and was premiered at the British Columbia Chapter of the Canadian Music Centre in Vancouver on October 19 of that year. The piece originated from Chaya Czernowin’s 2012 visit to Victoria that I mentioned in Chapter 1, specifically from my lesson with her on February 28. She recommended that I try to write a long piece using only two ideas, exploring them fully in the manner of Scelsi or Feldman, as well as exploring all their possible interrelationships. Several months later, I stumbled onto this passage:

According to Rzewski (in personal conversation), these six “textures” grew out of a scheme which he had developed as a plan for improvisation while working with Musica Elettronica Viva. In essence, the scheme is based upon six relationships which two musical events may assume in time: in the first, the two events are completely separated and distant from one another (no relationship); in the second, they begin to move closer and to influence one another; in the third, they are contiguous (Rzewski draws an analogy to the traditional texture of “melody”); in the fourth, they overlap (Rzewski’s idea here is “counterpoint”); in the fifth they are coincident, or nearly so (here Rzewski’s thinks of “harmony”), while in the sixth, they pass one another in time, and bring the whole nature of temporal succession into question.\textsuperscript{136}

This scheme gave me the structure I needed to finish writing the piece.

Incarnadine is based on two pieces of pre-existing material: a quiet, high, clear, smooth idea that originally came from an exercise I wrote for viola and trombone, and a

\textsuperscript{135} Several passages from this section originated in my blog post on the same subject Nathan Friedman, “Incarnadine for Clarinet Trio, Or, My Week With Chaya,” Die Kunst Der Funk, accessed April 28, 2014, http://nathanfriedmannusic.wordpress.com/2012/11/01/incarnadine-for-clarinet-trio-or-my-week-with-chaya/.

loud, low, obscure, rough one that came from a sketch called *Fun Fat Meat Bullet* for trumpet and tuba. The first piece of material consists of a high C# repeated in clarinet 2 while clarinet 1 alternates between repeating a smooth cell of pitch material (Eb – D – B – G – F#) and a repeated high E. The second piece of material is mostly fluttetongued clusters at the bottom of the clarinet’s range separated by rests, but also has some multiphonics, of the harmonic, artificial and vocal varieties and timbral trills. *Incarnadine* is basically in sonata form with two thematic groups, but they are not used as such, the development is much more abstract and the recapitulation is highly irregular.

Most of the piece’s pitches are either clusters or iterations of the cell from the first section of material and any rhythmic and textural ideas are essentially juxtaposition of extremes. Structurally, the piece is divided into 120 four-second segments, which are grouped into eighteen irregular sections. These sections employ the six relationships codified by Rzewski, with each type occurring three times. For the “exposition” (three sections), the two “themes” are stated in Rzewski Type I, separated by a transition of Type II. There then follows a “development” (fourteen sections) that gradually fragments the material and brings the two ideas closer together, cycling through all of the Rzewski types. Most of the material in this section consists of long notes separated by rests, but the techniques involved make the texture continuously variable, giving a sound much more complex than the notation would suggest. Finally, in the “recapitulation” (one section of Type VI) the two ideas are combined: the
harmonics of the notes in the second theme in effect become the high notes from the first theme. The very ending is this transformation in miniature, all three performers play fast figures at the bottom of their ranges while changing their embouchures/throat positions to gradually move up through Xenakis’ régions (different levels of overtone production on clarinet) to IV (teeth on the reed), where the notes being fingered become only slightly differentiated squeaks. After this climax, clarinet 1 plays a very long tone with copious amounts of saliva in the reed, creating a sort of “radio static” effect that contains snippets of harmonics, low fuzz, pops, whistles, etc., in effect containing the entire seed of the piece in one gesture.

**Internecine (2013)**

Two clarinets

*Internecine* was written for Menschenduett, my clarinet duo with Sean Sonderegger. It was originally part of a programme that consisted of Stockhausen’s *Knabenduett* from *Donnerstag aus Licht*, which is originally for two soprano saxophones but may be performed on any pair of like instruments. The many tritones in the high register of the clarinets produced some very interesting difference tones, so we decided to each write a piece that explored the phenomenon. *Internecine* was my contribution.

It consists of only 15 pairs of simultaneous pitches in the two clarinets, sustained with fermatas of varying length. A few of the dyads are clouded by timbral trilling, some by vibrato, but most are simply held. The two clarinets begin in unison then
gradually diverge as the first clarinet ascends and the second descends. Once the second clarinet reaches the bottom of the instrument’s range, it also ascends, catching up with the first clarinet at the very top of the altissimo.

I have saved this piece for last because it is the most perfect expression of the themes of this thesis. It consists entirely of fragments in their simplest form—individual sustained tones, some with slightly more varied timbre than others, but all ultimately similar. Most importantly, however, over the course of the piece, the two individual pitches on the clarinets produce and are gradually overwhelmed by their difference tones. The final notes are very unstable, and their extreme length means they will necessarily waver in performance, producing difference tones that swoop dramatically and quickly cover the original sonorities. I consider this to be a physical and perceptual proof of the effacement of compositional dichotomies that I posit in this thesis.
Bibliography


http://nathanfriedmanmusic.wordpress.com/2012/11/01/incarnadine-for-
clarinet-trio-or-my-week-with-chaya/.

———. “‘Modifying the Demeanor of the Galaxies’: Spectacle and Utopia in the

———. Six Popular Songs After Lawrence Durrell. Middletown, CT: Stethoscope
Press, 2014.

Goehr, Lydia. The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy

Gould, Glenn. Arnold Schoenberg: A Perspective. Cincinnati: University of

Habermas, Jürgen. “Modernity: An Incomplete Project.” In The Anti-Aesthetic:
Essays on Postmodern Culture, edited by Hal Foster, translated by Seyla Ben-

Hanninen, Dora A. A Theory of Music Analysis: On Segmentation and Associative

Hartwell, Robin. “Postmodernism and Art Music.” In The Last Post: Music After
Modernism, edited by Simon Miller, 27–51. Manchester: University of

Heile, Björn. “Introduction: New Music and the Modernist Legacy.” In The
Modernist Legacy: Essays on New Music, edited by Björn Heile, 1–12.


Transposing Score

«Feu froid»
Hommage à Iannis Xenakis

Nathan Friedman

Senza tempo, molto caesure

Baritone

Contrabass

Clarinet in B♭

Flugelhorn

Tenor Trombone

L’arthrex...

Je ne suis pas un gaz Mais je possède en même temps Le démon de Maxwell en moi.

A 4 molto rubato

Bar.

Cb. Cl.

Flug.

Tbn.

Bar. cue

Le démon de Maxwell en moi.
if nothing comes out, play the same as the previous note, even if only air.

mf relatively flat voice

Les univers des musiques forment des
u - ni tés en soi, Par-fois fer-mées, par-fois s'in-ter pé-na-trant.

D i - ver - si-tés in-croy-a-bles, Rî-ches de cré-a-tions nou-vel-les De
fossili-sations, de ruines, de déchets,
En formations et transformations continues,

Tels les nuages,
Si différenciés et si éphémères.
Ma-té-ri-aux qui se meuvent dans l'éspa-ce,

Cré-ès, lancés, en-trai nés,
Par les courants des idées,

Se heurtent les uns aux autres,

S'influencant, S'anihilant,
Se fé-con-dant mu-tu-el-le ment.

mf begin adding small irregularly placed half-valve glissandi between adjacent notes

mf beginning adding small irregularly placed glissandi between adjacent notes

L'in-tel-li-gence qui quê- te ques-tion-ne
p molto rubato

Le style veut dire quelque chose qui est en dehors du calcul.
Qui est métacalcul.
Stand by the window - Tyl

Rubato $j = 50$

Stand still by the old chintz curtains - Tyl.

Tell the lit-tl-est dia-
mond - est - dia-
mond - It has won-
ders - in its eyes.

F. R. Scott

Nathan Friedman
But leave me to blow smoke rings

In a dusty corner.

March 27, 2013
Middletown
Lay your hand, lay it gently on my arm
For
there is no stillness love-li-er
Than the de-li-b’rate fond Re-ti-cence_
A tempo $\frac{3}{4}$
of soft fin-gers on an arm.

October 9, 2013
New Smyrna Beach - Middletown
III.

Molto rubato, senza tempo
Bar = at least 3"

The little hump of her body -

7

bo-dy

Un - tidied

the bed.
She heard a chair creak.

And a shoe drop.

And after...

The wind cooled her.
IV.

Extremely slowly, quasi senza tempo

Close, So close your breath is warm. While slowly the

Clock Ticks Lit-tle one, Lit-tle love-ly one.

March 18, 2013
Middletown
Glau cous

Nathan Friedman

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

Double Bass

\( \frac{7}{8} \)

A

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)

\( \frac{2}{4} \)
Music for Strings, Percussion and Electric Guitar

Nathan Friedman

\[ \frac{\text{\textdegree}}{\text{\textcent}} \]

\text{Tubular Bells}

\[ \frac{\text{\textdegree}}{\text{\textcent}} \]

\text{Vibraphone}

\[ \frac{\text{\textdegree}}{\text{\textcent}} \]

\text{Distortion}

\[ \frac{\text{\textdegree}}{\text{\textcent}} \]

\text{Electric Guitar}

\[ \frac{\text{\textdegree}}{\text{\textcent}} \]

\text{Piano}

\[ \frac{\text{\textdegree}}{\text{\textcent}} \]

\text{sos. ped.}

\[ \frac{\text{\textdegree}}{\text{\textcent}} \]

\text{Violin I}

\[ \frac{\text{\textdegree}}{\text{\textcent}} \]

\text{Violin II}

\[ \frac{\text{\textdegree}}{\text{\textcent}} \]

\text{Viola}

\[ \frac{\text{\textdegree}}{\text{\textcent}} \]

\text{Violoncello}

\[ \frac{\text{\textdegree}}{\text{\textcent}} \]

\text{Double Bass}
Tam-tam (timpani mallets)
45

D

Perc. I

Vib.

E. Gtr.

Pno.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

Harmonic gliss on E string

ff overpressed sul pont.
J \( \frac{1}{2} = 60 \)

Free order and duration

Free arpeggiate pitches in any octave

Clean

Freely arpeggiate pitches in any octave
quasi-union heterophony until (i.e. don't follow each other too closely)

alternate freely

(trill side keys mutually + simultaneously)

p alternate quasi indeterminately between these notes in any order

heterophony until [ ]
Internecine

Nathan Friedman

Clarinet 1

\( \text{senza vib.} \rightarrow \text{molto vib.} \)

\( \text{ppp} \rightarrow \text{p} \)

\( \text{pochiss. cresc.} \)

Clarinett 2

\( \text{senza vib.} \rightarrow \text{molto vib.} \)

\( \text{timbral} \)

\( \text{ppp} \rightarrow \text{p} \)

\( \text{pochiss. cresc.} \)

\( \text{sim.} \)

Cl. 1

\( \text{più cresc.} \)

\( \text{mf} \)

\( f \)

Cl. 2

\( \text{più cresc.} \)

\( \text{mf} \)

\( f \)