

high SCORE
PROCEEDINGS

2012/2013

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ISBN 978-88-905747-2-6

highSCORE Proceedings 2012 / 2013 / Editor Ingrid Pustijanac

Translated by Laurie Schwartz and Valentina Bertolani

Revised by Jeremy Vaughan

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www.highscorenewmusic.com

Printed in Pavia, Italy

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INDEX

<i>Preface</i>	7
<i>Editor's Note</i>	9
THE POETICS OF COMPOSITION	
<i>"A Geometry of Music."</i> <i>Dmitri Tymoczko and Giovanni Albinoni in Conversation</i>	13
<i>Al setto nasale / Nasal septum</i> Mario Garuti	18
<i>Composing Today — A Portrait of the highSCORE 2012 Participants</i> Ingrid Pustijanac	21
<i>Composing Today — A Portrait of the highSCORE 2013 Participants</i> Giovanni Cestino	55
THEORETICAL ASPECTS OF WRITING MUSIC	
<i>The Valorization of Sonority in Brazilian Music</i> Valéria Bonafé	87
<i>Music as Sonic Art? A reflection</i> Nicola Bizzaro	97
<i>Sound Design: Emergence and Fortune of a Technically Ordinary Term</i> Maurizio Corbella	107
<i>'Cerebral' Virtuosity in two Examples of Contemporary Music for Classical Guitar</i> Alberto Barberis	121
highSCORE Festival 2012, 23 JULY-04 AUGUST — People	131
highSCORE Festival 2013, 15-27 JULY — People	132

PREFACE

At present, the highSCORE Festival has established itself as today's leading Italian Contemporary Music Festival. Offering masterclasses during two intense weeks of lessons, lectures, workshops, and concerts, which are organized by the highSCORE New Music Center under the executive production of Paolo Fosso, the festival serves as an important venue for emerging and talented composers to meet and put themselves on the music scene. Every year I am proud that we can collect their compositional output along with their thoughts on and visions of today's music. This, along with the interviews with the participants and several articles, offers a window overlooking what contemporary music is and what where it is heading.

Gratitude is owed to all those who made these pages possible. First and foremost to our musicologists-in-residence, Ingrid Pustijanac and Giovanni Cestino, who helped to shape this book and to our participant composers and the authors of the papers included here. A special thank you goes to the faculty and production assistants of the festival whose work and dedication has been invaluable. Last, but not least, I want express my appreciation for the commitment of our guest performers as well as the contributions of our journalist in residence Simeone Pozzini. She not only shared in our successes, but also participated in the 2013 edition as a lecturer. My heartfelt thanks to all of you.

Giovanni Albini
Director — highSCORE New Music Center

EDITOR'S NOTE

The combined highSCORE Proceedings for 2012/2013 brings together reflections on the last two editions of Pavia's highSCORE Festival. The first part focuses on several theoretical topics related to the poetics of composition that the participants had the opportunity to discuss with the faculty members. Thanks to the presence of American composer and theoretician Dimitri Tymoczko, great importance was given to the various possibilities of harmonic writing and its relationship with a more horizontal and polyphonic way of thinking, a concept which was emphasized in the interview with Giovanni Albinoni (published in this volume). In the paper *Al setto nasale* by Italian composer Mario Garuti, the question of compositional poetics inspired by movement and energy—two important aspects of his music—is approached. Because of its terminological nuances, the text is published both in its original Italian with a parallel text in English.

The 2012 Edition Faculty Guest-of-Honor was the world-famous violinist Irvine Arditti. His concert-lecture was an occasion to once again rethink the composer/performer relationship and the relationship between written and imagined sound. This topic was particularly relevant when several scores by the participants were discussed and played by Arditti himself. Some works for solo violin (*Notturmi* by Salvatore Sciarrino, *Freeman Etudes* by John Cage, *Intermedio alla ciaccona* by Brian Ferneyhough, and *Mikka* by Iannis Xenakis) were introduced as well in order to display recent tendencies and techniques in contemporary repertoire, a project that Arditti was involved in and that is now available as a book (Arditti, I./Platz, R. HP, *The Techniques of Violin Playing*, Kassel: Bärenreiter 2013).

A similar starting point—the composer/performer relationship—was discussed by the 2013 Faculty Guest-of-Honor, composer Louis Andriessen, in his lecture and realized with the presence of special guest performer violinist Monica Germino. After introducing his *La girò*, for violin and large ensemble (2011), a kind of «surreal monodrama for playing-chanting-acting fiddler» inspired by young baroque singer Anna Girò and written for Germino, some other works for violin solo were remarked upon and performed by Germino herself.

Professor of Composition and Coordinator of the Composition Department at the Yale School of Music, Martin Bresnick, presented his works (including three movements of *Everything Must Go* (2007) for

saxophone quartet) illustrating his relationship with the music by György Ligeti, among others. An inspired intersection of musical cultures in his work was introduced by *Ishi's Song* (2012) for piano solo, based on the suggestive story of Ishi, the last of the Yahi Indians.

The lectures of the faculty members resonated during the Composition Colloquium and are continued in *Composing Today* (2012 by I. Pustijanac and 2013 by G. Cestino). This seismograph of additional urgent questions shared by the participants is a testament to the richness of perspectives. It also reveals the convergence of some common theoretical tasks such as aspects of harmony, questions of instrumental techniques, the definition of style or genre, and the relationship between the Western art music tradition and the traditions of other music cultures.

The second part of this volume is dedicated to theoretical writings. Two of them are focused on sound. The text by Valéria Bonafé (composer and doctoral candidate at the University of São Paulo, Brazil) is a panoramic of contemporary Brazilian music, with particular attention to composers who are inspired by European composers interested in sound and who find a possible common horizon in their poetics. The text by Nicola Bizzaro (musicologist and sound designer (University of Pavia)) represents an updated reflection about the very concept of sound, in its theoretical as well in its technological aspects. A further development of this field and more specifically the question of sound design can be found in the text by Maurizio Corbella (University of Milan).

Finally, the text by composer and guitarist Alberto Barberis (Conservatorio della Svizzera Italiana, Lugano) focuses on the concept of cerebral virtuosity, a concept that allows the author to explore the question of the relationship that in some scores (in the case of this paper those by G. Albinoni and B. Ferneyhough) connects—in a continuous tension of expressivity—compositional and idiomatic aspects.

Ingrid Pustijanac
Musicologist

THE POETICS OF COMPOSITION

“A GEOMETRY OF MUSIC”

DMITRI TYMOCZKO AND GIOVANNI ALBINI IN CONVERSATION

G.A.: Your work is split in two aspects: the one of the music theorist and the one of the composer. How do they get together and relate?

D.T.: I always say that there are two kinds of musicians, those that are secretly athletes and those that are secretly mathematicians. The short answer to your question is that I fall into the second category!

The longer answer is that I personally am attracted to music that has an intellectual rigor to it. I love Bach, Chopin and Debussy (whose rigor is perhaps not immediately obvious), Bill Evans and McCoy Tyner, Messiaen, Ligeti and Reich, King Crimson and the Beatles. This music is beautiful, expressive, emotional, and mathematical—an incredible combination. As a kid, feeling torn between music and science, and naturally being inclined to thinking too much, this kind of music had a special attraction for me. So that’s the sort of music I ended up wanting to write myself.

I guess I first fell into theory because I wanted to answer a simple question: what notes should I use? It seemed very inefficient sitting there at the piano hunting around intuitively for the very next note (with 88 choices at each stage, that is a lot of trial and error). And when I was in college, I learned about Schenker, and I learned about set theory, but neither of those seemed very helpful when I was composing. I could never get away from the fact that I liked some sets more than others. So this led me to start thinking about applying ideas from jazz theory—and specifically ideas about scales—to classical music.

I suppose this brings up a paradox, which is that theory is absolutely crucial for improvisation. If you want to compose in real time, or at least with any sort of fluency, you need to have a very good grasp of your underlying vocabulary. And so in a way the most spontaneous music—like that of Chopin or Debussy or Messiaen—often ends up guided by theoretical principles.

Another place where theory and composing interacted is in the realm of electronic music. I like using electronics when I work, and sometimes I use programs like Max as part of my compositional process, even when working

on purely instrumental pieces. But, if you want a computer to create anything even remotely musical you need to have a pretty good theoretical sense of what works and why.

Anyway, I originally got into theory purely in an instrumental sense, because I wanted to understand the principles of sophisticated 20th-century tonal composition. Eventually I bumped into some ideas that I felt were beautiful on their own terms, and so theory became an end in itself rather than just a means.

G.A.: In your book *A Geometry of Music* you identify five basic musical features that can jointly contribute to the sense of tonality which I personally consider very clever. How the definition of these features and tonality itself relate with your experience as a composer?

D.T.: The five properties I talk about are very simple—probably they've occurred to almost every composer at some point or another. They are, very simply:

- 1) Melodies often move by short distances;
- 2) The harmonies in a piece often resemble each other;
- 3) Over moderate stretches of time, pieces of music often limit themselves to a small number of notes, say 5-8;
- 4) One of these notes often serves as a tonal center;
- 5) The difference between consonant and dissonant harmonies plays some kind of musically significant role (so that, for example, consonance is used at moments of musical rest).

By themselves, these five properties are just common sense. What's interesting is that they actually constrain each other in very fundamental ways. For instance, if you want to combine the first two properties—so that you have similar-sounding harmonies connected by small melodic motions, as in traditional counterpoint—there really are only a few possibilities.

So what this means is that the space of (broadly) tonal composition is really tightly constrained in some surprising ways. If you want to write anything even remotely resembling traditional counterpoint, for example, you have to be very careful about your choice of chords.

Of course, none of this is meant to be too constraining. I'm all for composers writing whatever they want to write! (My own music is often difficult, and can be chromatic or atonal). What I do think, though, is that composers should understand the consequences of their choices, and if you abandon all five of my basic properties then this is going to have certain repercussions in terms of how people respond to your music. You need to own these consequences.

G.A.: Some of your scores show a lot of influences from jazz, and you are going to offer to the highSCORE Festival 2013 participants a workshop on improvisation. How do jazz and improvisation take a place in your work as a theorist and a composer? Do they combine with geometry and maths in some way?

D.T.: I touched on this idea earlier. In general, improvisers tend to be pretty theoretical, because of practical need to create music in real time. More specifically, I believe that jazz continues and systematizes a lot of the specific musical inventions of early 20th-century music. If you listen to Art Tatum or Bill Evans or McCoy Tyner it is pretty obvious that they are extending and systematizing the revolutionary harmonic ideas of Debussy, Ravel, and Stravinsky. I've always been more struck by the similarities among these languages rather than the differences, and I think jazz theory provides an important key for understanding that music.

In my workshop, though, I'm not going to focus on jazz specifically. I'm more interested in improvisation as a compositional tool, and in thinking about new ways in which we can harness this force. So, for instance, I want to explore how computers can help extend the range of what is possible improvisationally.

G.A.: What would you suggest and recommend to the youngest generation of composers and music theorists of today at the beginning of their careers?

D.T.: Gosh, that's a big question. I suppose I'll be answering it all throughout the festival!

I think the first piece of advice is just not to give up or get discouraged. Contemporary composition is a lonely business, and it is easy to feel like nobody is listening, or that your music will never be worthy of comparison to all the other great music that's out there. It's important to realize just how much effort and practice it takes to become a good composer, and to have the

strength to put in all that time. Forming a support group of sympathetic friends can be really important here.

The second piece of advice is to love music. The first question I always ask young composers is “What music do you really love?” Sometimes I find that they can’t answer that question, and don’t really love anything. This is a disaster and it means they’ll probably never produce anything they really care about. Another thing that often happens is that they lie. They tell me they love one composer when secretly they love something that they’re ashamed of (Billy Joel, or Mozart, or whatever). This is another disaster. To survive in the contemporary music world you really, really have to be writing music that you love — because nobody else is going to like your music more than you do yourself. I really believe that composition needs to begin in a deep and consuming — maybe even envious — love of other people’s music.

The third piece of advice is to invest in yourself. Figure out what you want to do, put your head down, and start working on that. If you want to be in a band, form a band; if you want to be a film composer, go to Hollywood and try to get work doing that; if you want to write string quartets, do that. At various points you may have attractive opportunities to do something other than what you want. You want to be very careful about these. It’s easy to tell yourself that you’ll do one thing for 5 or 10 years and then suddenly start doing what you really want to do. But it just gets harder and harder to change your career path. So by “invest in yourself” I mean something like: “put yourself on a trajectory where, 10 or 20 years down the road, you’ll be doing what you really want to be doing.”

The last piece of advice is to adopt a “DiY” or “indie” perspective. No matter what music you want to write, you are going to have to make it happen yourself. You can’t sit around waiting for the Berlin Philharmonic to call. So that means you have to find performers and make recordings yourself. In the modern world this is relatively easy to do — you can make really good sounding recordings relatively cheap. And then there’s the whole aspect of websites and marketing and so forth. In a way, we’re all indie artists now, even if we’re writing traditional or classical music.

AL SETTO NASALE

Mario Garuti

Non so da che parte cominciare.

Voglio arrivare a scrivere tre cartelle con un senso, meglio ancora con dei sensi.

Lontano, una rete di argomenti, concetti, nodi nel buio che vorrei liberare sotto le dita e, più vicino, sento persone, memorie, colori, suoni, parole e frasi sconnesse o meno, che vorrei accogliere e svolgere.

Parole come reticente, sibilla, desiderio, coerenza, astigmatismo, amnesia, estasi.

Esiste la vita prima della morte?

Dammi la mano, vieni con me. In silenzio. Non parlare. 1913.

La contraddizione è la mia cifra. Sospeso. Atletico. Fragile è l'evento. Setto nasale.

Al setto nasale.

Bello! Potrebbe essere il titolo. Al setto nasale! Titolo reticente, che presuppone un gesto violento. Un colpo netto, risolutivo, senza bisogno di spiegazioni, pulito, veloce, imprevedibile. Un colpo di arte marziale che qualcuno fa scattare come una molla e qualcun altro subisce prima ancora di rendersene conto.

Ecco, vorrei dare questo colpo con il pensiero, un colpo virtuale a tutto quello che annulla le singolarità, annichilisce le anime, in nome del conformismo. A tutto quello che, invece di ribadire, ripetere la propria identità, persegue la somiglianza.

Omologazione, sistema, riconoscimento, perdita della propria identità.

Seguendo le indicazioni in economia di Serge Latouche, è necessario decolonizzare l'immaginario.

AT THE NASAL SEPTUM

Mario Garuti

I don't know where to start.

I want to try to write a few pages with a sense, even better, with senses.

In the distance, a network of topics, concepts, points in the dark that I would like to release beneath my fingertips. Nearer, I feel people, memories, colors, sounds, words, and phrases more and less connected that I would like to gather and develop.

Words such as reticent, sibyl, desire, coherence, astigmatism, amnesia, ecstasy.

Does life exist before death?

Give me your hand, come with me. In silence. Don't speak.

1913.

Contradiction is my thing. Suspended. Athletic. Fragile is the event. Nasal septum.

At the nasal septum.

Great! That could be the title. At the nasal septum! A discreet title that presupposes a violent gesture. A tidy blow, decisive, not needing explanation, clean, fast, unpredictable. A martial art strike that someone releases like a spring and someone else sustains even before realizing it. That's what I'd like to do, to deliver this blow with a thought, a virtual blow to everything that erases uniqueness, that annihilates the spirit in the name of conformity. To everything that, instead of confirming, reiterates its own identity, seeks similarity.

Uniformity, system, recognition, loss of one's own identity.

According to Serge Latouche's instruction regarding economics, it is necessary to decolonize the imagination.

1913, ecco due colpi ben assestati al conformismo artistico tra i tanti avvenuti cento anni fa, tralasciando per il momento la storica prima parigina di *Le Sacre* di Stravinsky.

Nel 1913 Anton Webern con le *Sechs Bagatellen*, op. 9 (pubblicate nel 1924), mette a fuoco una scrittura che, al di là di tutta una serie di evidenti modalità radicali rispetto alla tradizione, compie l'inevitabile parricidio attraverso una tecnica subliminale ma radicalmente nuova: la tecnica della sospensione (*Schwebend*). L'essere sospeso, al massimo *oscillante*, comporta l'integrazione potenziale di più centri tonali e di più direzioni agogiche. Evitando il predominio di una scelta univoca. Si tratta di una s-focalizzazione nella sospensione, una sorta di *astigmatismo* sia *inquieto* con lo spostamento continuo dell'attenzione da un polo all'altro, sia *quieto* con l'incantamento che ne deriva.

Due modalità che, insieme al silenzio, frantumano e/o sospendono il classico decorso formale narrativo. Ogni istante è sempre differente, unico, irripetibile.

Marcel Duchamp sempre nel 1913 osserva, nella sua nuova dimora parigina, il movimento di una ruota di bicicletta che aveva montato al contrario su uno sgabello.

Ecco il *readymade*, il "bell'e pronto", di cui si dirà che come l'elettricità

"...se ne può fare l'esperienza ma non si può definire."

A dire il vero Duchamp nomina come *readymade* la ruota di bicicletta solo un paio di anni più tardi. All'inizio l'intenzione è quella di sostituire l'incantamento piacevole che gli procura il fuoco nel caminetto nella casa di famiglia in campagna. A rilevare ancora di più il carattere ludico, sospeso e distaccato di questo evento l'autore dice anche che i *readymade* non si scelgono ma, al contrario, è da loro che si viene scelti.

Al fare si unisce la contemplazione!

Ci sono eventi che hanno un senso e altri che "fanno senso", ovvero producono senso.

Alla differenza si accosta la ripetizione, alla f-attualità la fatalità.

1913, here you have two well-delivered blows to artistic conformity from among the many that took place a hundred years ago, leaving out, for the moment, the historic Parisian premiere of Stravinsky's *Le Sacre*.

In 1913, with the *Sechs Bagatellen*, op. 9 (published in 1924), Anton Webern brings a writing into focus that—beyond all else, a series of undeniably radical procedures with respect to tradition—carries out the inevitable patricide with a technique that is subliminal but radically new: the technique of suspension (*Schwebend*). The act of being suspended, at most oscillating, involves the potential integration of more tonal centers and of more agogic directions. Avoiding the dominance of a univocal choice.

It has to do with an (un)focusing within the suspension, a kind of *astigmatism* that is both *unquiet* with a continuous shifting from one pole to the other and *quiet* with the enchantment that derives from it. Two processes that, together with silence, shatter and/or suspend the classic formal narrative development. Every moment remains different, unique, unrepeatable.

Marcel Duchamp, also in 1913, observes, in his new Parisian domicile, the movement of a bicycle wheel that he mounted upside-down on a wooden stool.

Here is the *readymade*, of which it will be said that like electricity "...you can experience it but not define it."

To tell the truth, Duchamp didn't call the bicycle wheel a *readymade* until a couple of years later. At first, the intention was to substitute the pleasing enchantment he felt sitting in front of the fireplace at the family house in the country. To further emphasise the playful. Suspended and detached nature of this event, the author also says that *readymades* are not chosen, on the contrary, they choose us.

Doing is united with contemplation!

There are events that have a sense and others that "make sense", or produce sense.

Repetition approaches difference, fatality approaches f-actuality.

Nel mio pezzo *Ambiance, consequentia mirabilis n° 1* (1989), una conseguenza accordale progredisce, ripetendosi uguale a se stessa, per toni discendenti. Ogni istante è insostituibile. L'impressione è di un percorso sospeso, processo ludico che produce senso.

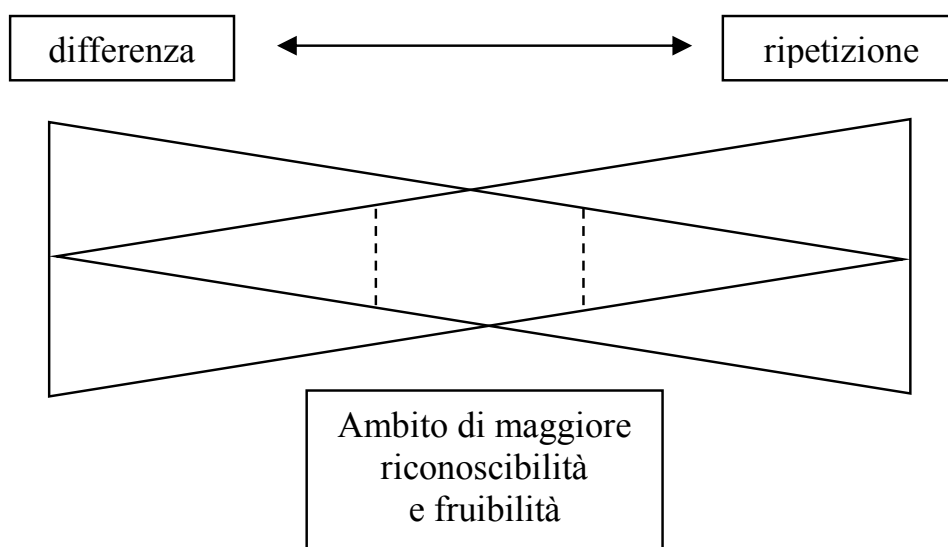
Gli accordi non hanno un senso nella costruzione di una narrazione ma “fanno senso” in sé... e mi hanno scelto! In questo c'è anche un aspetto ironico, infantile.

Deleuze scrive: “*la differenza, tra ripetizione e somiglianza, è anche estrema.*”

“La ripetizione concerne una singolarità impermutabile, insostituibile. I riflessi, gli echi, i doppi, le anime, non appartengono al regno della somiglianza o dell'equivalenza... non è possibile scambiare la propria anima. Se lo scambio è il criterio della generalità, il furto e il dono sono quelli della ripetizione.”

Se nella differenza, il modello “tematico” è frantumato dalla speculazione, o si presenta già privo di una connotazione *formale*, con la ripetizione diventa estremamente presente nella sua singolarità.

Da una parte una visione *narrativa* della musica, dall'altra una visione *contemplativa*, rituale.



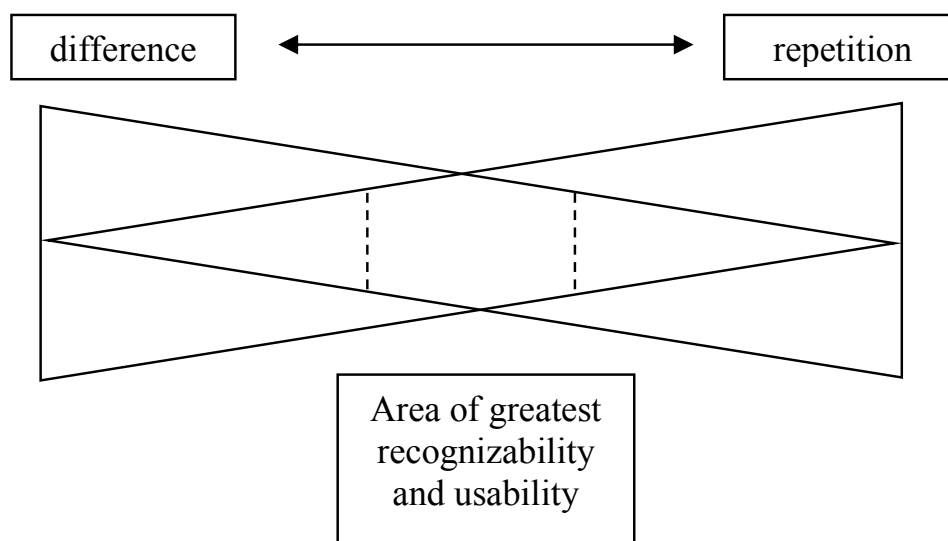
In my piece *Ambiance, consequentia mirabilis n° 1* (1989), a chordal sequence proceeds, repeating itself identically in descending tones. Each moment is unique. The impression is one of a suspended direction, a playful process that produces sense. The chords have no sense in the construction of a narrative but they “make sense” in themselves...and they chose me! There is also an ironic, infantile aspect in this.

Deleuze writes that “*the difference between repetition and similarity is also extreme.*”

“*Repetition involves a singularity that is impermutable, unique. The reflections, the echoes, the doubles, the spirit, do not form part of the realm of similarity or equivalence... it is not possible to exchange one’s own spirit. The exchange is the criterion of generality, then the theft and the gift are those of repetition.*”

If, in difference, the “thematic” model is shattered by speculation, or if it already presents itself without a *formal* connotation, through repetition its singularity becomes present to an extreme.

On the one hand, a *narrative* vision of music, on the other, a vision that is *contemplative*, ritual.



“Sono in opposizione, dunque, la generalità, come generalità del particolare, e la ripetizione come universalità del singolare.”

La contraddizione è la mia cifra.

Ma ciò che altri vedono come contraddittorio per me è solo nomadismo, oscillazione tra due poli. Oscillazione naturale per chi desidera. Articolazione del piacere.

Desidero, e quindi sto bene dove sono ma non così bene per non desiderare di essere altrove.

La dicotomia coerenza/contraddizione non ha alcun senso.

Un fatto è contraddittorio solo per chi non ne conosce le cause.

Si è coerenti sempre, anche se non lo si comprende.

La mia musica è superficiale e desiderante.

Non ama stazionare in un posto. È nomade.

Oscilla tra gli estremi della differenza e della ripetizione, tra la *phantasia* e la *consequentia mirabilis*.

Le note di programma di *Geometriche amnesie* chiariscono le modalità compositive alla base delle mie *fantasie*: *Il giardino delle Esperidi*, per violino (1983-4); *Il vuoto e la vergine*, per arpa (1984); *l'inquieto metallo*, per contrabbasso (1991) e appunto *Geometriche amnesie*, per pianoforte (1992).

1. Le fantasie che ho scritto sono formate da una consequenzialità di eventi necessari:
 - 1.1 Il necessario segue da ogni cosa;
 - 1.2 Al necessario segue qualsiasi cosa;
 - 1.3 Necessario è dunque ciò che accade;
 - 1.4 Da parte mia, Il necessario è ciò che “sento” istante per istante;
 - 1.5 Da qualsiasi proposizione implicante una formale contraddizione (leggi equilibrio dinamico) si può dedurre logicamente e *sentire* qualsiasi altra proposizione;

“They are in opposition, that is, the generality, as the generality of the particular, and the repetition as the universality of the singular.”

Contradiction is my thing.

But what others see as contradictory is for me just nomadism, an oscillation between two poles. Natural oscillation for whomever desires. Articulation of pleasure.

I desire, and therefore I’m fine where I am but not so fine not to desire to be somewhere else.

The coherence/contradiction dichotomy makes no sense.

A fact is contradictory only for those who doesn’t know its causes.

Where are always coherent, even if we aren’t aware of it.

My music is superficial and desiring.

It doesn’t like to stay in one place. It is nomadic.

It oscillates between the extremes of difference and repetition, between the *phantasia* and the *consequentia mirabilis*.

The program notes for *Geometriche amnesie* clarify the compositional techniques behind my fantasies: *Il giardino delle Esperidi*, for violin (1983-4); *Il vuoto e la vergine*, for harp (1984); *l’inquieto metallo*, for doublebass (1991) and, of course *Geometriche amnesie*, for piano (1992).

1. The fantasies that I’ve written are formed by a consequentiality of necessary events:
 - 1.1. The necessary follows from each thing;
 - 1.2. Everything follows from the necessary;
 - 1.3. Necessary therefore is that which happens;
 - 1.4. For my part, the necessary is what I “feel” from moment to moment;
 - 1.5. From any proposition implying a formal contradiction (laws of dynamic equilibrium), one can logically deduce and *hear* any other proposition;

2. L' amnesia rompe l' abitudine e lascia fluire l' energia in tutte le direzioni;

2.1. La geometria imbriglia l' energia e la direziona (la figura);

2.2. La fantasia è una “geometrica amnesia”.

In ogni caso, che si tratti di *phantasiae* o *mirabilia*, l' aspetto principale, il nucleo operativo dell' immaginario è dato dall' inferenza.

Antica modalità logica, approfondita soprattutto nella tarda scolastica da Burleigh e Occam, che si manifesta con la proposizione condizionale:

se... allora

Mirabilia

consequentia: naturalis, formalis
(implicazione formale)

inferenza: intellectio

topos: l' antecedente è valido solo se è necessario con il conseguente.

Phantasiae

consequentia: accidentalis, materialis
(implicazione materiale)

inferenza: illatio

topos: il necessario segue da ogni cosa al necessario può seguire ogni cosa.

Il necessario è l' irreparabile.

Nella *consequentia mirabilis* la relazione tra antecedente e conseguente comporta una implicazione formale (*intellectio*), ovvero una connessione anche di senso. Così, come spiegano i coniugi Kneale nella *Storia della logica*, la proposizione “se qualcuno comprende che tu sei un uomo, comprende che tu sei un animale” ha il conseguente che segue direttamente dall' intellesione formale. Diversamente nella *phantasia*, il rapporto antecedente-consequente è regolato solo da una implicazione materiale (*illatio*), accidentale: “un uomo è un asino, dunque, la bacchetta sta nell' angolo.”

2. Amnesia destroys habit and allows energy to flow in all directions;
 - 2.1. Geometry curbs the energy and the direction (the figure);
 - 2.2. Fantasy is a “geometrical amnesia”.

In any case, whether it’s about *phantasiae* or *mirabilia*, the principal aspect, the operative nucleus of the imagination is created by inference.

Ancient logical method, examined in depth particularly in the late Scholasticism of Burleigh and Occam, that manifests as the conditional hypothesis: *if...then*

Mirabilia

consequentia: naturalis, formalis
(formal implication)

inferenza: intellectio

topos: The antecedent is valid only if it is necessary with the consequent.

Phantasiae

consequentia: accidentalis, materialis
(material implication)

inferenza: illatio

topos: The necessary follows from each thing; everything can follow from the necessary.
The necessary is the irreparable.

In the *consequentia mirabilis*, the relationship between antecedent and consequent carries a formal implication (*intellectio*) that is also a connection of sense. Thus, as the Kneales explain in *The Development of Logic*, the proposition “if someone understands that you are a man, he understands that you are an animal” has a consequence that follows directly from the formal intellection. In contrast to the *phantasia*, the antecedent-consequent relationship is regulated only by a material, accidental implication (*illatio*): “a man is an ass, therefore, the stick is in the corner.”

L'atto creativo è un atto rituale. E nel rito ci si perde.
Ci si deve perdere per ritrovarsi. L'amnesia è una buona tecnica per meglio predisporre al possibile.

Si diventa *l'altro*. Si aderisce agli eventi, uno dopo l'altro, istante per istante, sentendo che la divisione potenza e atto viene a mancare; tutto è in atto, tutto è evento.

Amare con precisione.

L'evento è ciò che accade, e si oppone al possibile, ovvero ciò che potrebbe accadere.

L'atto creativo nella mia esperienza può essere riassunto in tre fasi rituali.

1. Desiderio: predisposizione alla molteplicità degli eventi.
Legame affettivo con il caso/caos/cosa.
Non si sceglie ma si accoglie. La non-scelta diventa importante in questa fase iniziale per *sentire* il tutto.
2. Esitazione: sospensione per meglio recepire e comprendere il rapporto simpatetico, intensionale ed estensionale, fra gli eventi.
3. Azione: gli eventi sono registrati come parti di questo percorso irreversibile. Il necessario/irreparabile è legato all'istante/memoria.

Dovremmo essere creativi e rituali in ogni istante della nostra vita.

The creative act is a ritual act. And in ritual one loses oneself. One must lose oneself to find oneself again. Amnesia is a good technique to better predispose oneself for the possible.

One becomes *the other*. One participates in events, one after the other, moment to moment, feeling that division grows more powerful and action is missing, everything is in action, everything is event.

To love with precision.

The event that which happens, and it opposes the possible, or rather, what could happen.

The creative act, in my experience, can be summarized in three ritual phases.

1. Desire: predisposition to the multiplicity of events. Fond connection with chance/chaos/thing (*caso/caos/cosa*). One doesn't choose, but accepts. The non-choice becomes important in this initial phase for *feeling* everything.
2. Hesitation: suspense in order to better recognise and understand the sympathetic, intensional and extensional relationship between the events.
3. Action: the events are recorded as parts of this irreversible path. The necessary/irreparable is connected to the moment/memory.

We ought to be creative and ritual every moment of our lives.

English Translation: Laurie Schwartz

COMPOSING TODAY—A PORTRAIT OF THE
2012 HIGHSCORE PARTICIPANTS¹

Ingrid Pustijanac

In the summer of 2012, forty composers from various countries and nationalities (Australia, Brazil, Canada, Czech Republic, Finland, Italy, and the United States, among others) joined together in an extraordinary experience. They spent two weeks together discussing, presenting, and playing their music with the faculty members of the highSCORE Festival and the various ensembles-in-residence that performed their works during the evening concerts. The diversity of poetics served as a starting point to focus on some general problems that these young composers shared regarding aspects of harmony, questions about instrumental techniques, the definition of style or genre, and the relationship between Western art music and the traditions of other cultures.

In 2012, the special faculty guest was American composer and music theorist from Princeton University, DIMITRI TYMOCZKO. He is now a regular member of the faculty. His presence during the Composer's Colloquiums, along with faculty members CHRISTOPHER THEOFANIDIS and AMY KIRSTEN, presented a great opportunity for the participants to have a direct conversation about their works and poetics. In his lecture, Tymoczko introduced some of the main topics from his book "*A Geometry of Music: Harmony and Counterpoint in the Extended Common Practice*" published in 2011 by Oxford University Press. Conjunct melodic motion, acoustic consonance, harmonic consistency, limited macro-harmony, and centricity were just some of the basic musical topics mentioned (they also appear in the interview with Giovanni Albinetti published in this volume). These served as the starting points from which to introduce some fundamental topics in defining the main characteristics in creating the sense of tonality and for showing how these features recur throughout the history of Western music. Moreover, Tymoczko also introduced questions regarding new ways of making music, including a certain way of improvising, computer programs, as well as the problem of

¹ The present text has been realized using statements from the composers during the introductory meetings and analyses of the individual works that took place during the Composers Colloquiums. More specific information on each composer and analytical details of their music come from individual interviews. I would like to thank all of the composers for providing me with the material necessary for the realization of this collective text.

music that is responsive to our time—topics that were important to many composers. The presentation of some of his more recently recorded works (*Beat Therapy* for jazz/funk ensemble (2011), *The Eggman Variations* (2005), *Another Fantastic Voyage* (2012), and *Crackpot Hymnal* (2013)) introduced the question of managing a wide range of musical styles where classical music lives together with rock-inspired pieces that mix electronics and acoustic instruments.

CROSSROADS

A central question for many young composers at the 2012 Festival was Tymoczko's way of creating new frameworks for thinking about music emphasizes the commonalities among styles from Medieval polyphony to contemporary jazz, or unifying the rigorous harmony, counterpoint, or other formal techniques with jazz and rock traditions.

Singer/Songwriter KARL GROHMANN (Longy School of Music), for instance, approaches this question in his recent works. He is active as a drum set artist with various national acts (Beantown Swing Orchestra, Brad Byrd, etc.) and as an innovative educator (music theory and ensembles). The starting point of his Colloquium presentation was his orchestral work *Levis Gravis*, a work that is «on the middle way from young music (*Maine Winding Trio*, 2008; *Pieces*, 2009) and the more recent (*Port of Return*, 2010; *Percussion Quartet*, 2010)» which was selected as the Longy Chamber Orchestra Composition Competition winner and performed in May 2011. Grohmann's roots in jazz, rock, and, more recently, folk music, along with influences from the minimalism of John Adams are all present in *Levis Gravis*. The formal structure is divided into three parts, differentiated through texture and harmonic content.

The strong imaginative nature of Grohmann's music, which in some ways has the evocative power of film music, is present also in his more programmatic *String Quartet No. 1* (2010), which was performed during a highSCORE concert. The work was inspired by the «desire to compose a socially-conscious piece, depicting the journey of a young female who is being sold into child slavery. Parts 1-3 each reflect upon this scenario, from the initial capture/initiation, to being fully controlled, then to the uncertainty of freedom...». (K. Grohmann) The score is built around the opposition of different rhythmic structures. In the first part, *Stolen: Tiriba*, there are six counter-rhythmic parts that make up the whole percussive ensemble based on the Guinean rhythm "tiriba"; the second part *Drugs Infused* is the exact opposite of part one by allowing the tempo to remain free; the final movement

tries to emphasize the unpredictability of freedom and employs the instruments as percussion instruments as well.

Percussion is the starting point in the music of BENJAMIN DANIEL (Duke University) as well. From the early *Hot Metal* (2009) for marimba quartet to *Epitaph for an Artisan* (2010) for two vibraphones, percussion has provided a way into Daniel's magic, introspective, and developing musical world. The work that Daniel introduced during the Colloquium, *Concussion* (2012) for percussion trio, is strongly visual and formally articulated. Strictly programmatic, the three movements explore the idea of concussion. It was described in the program note as «a stunning, damaging, or shattering effect from a hard blow; *especially*: a jarring injury of the brain resulting in disturbance of cerebral function / a hard blow or collision». (B. Daniel) The two models present in Daniel's works are melded together in his highSCORE-premiered *First String Quartet* (2012). The first movement (*I. Sinking and Throbbing*) grooves in strong rhythmic patterns in which harmony and repetition are parts of the same formal process. The second movement (*II. Sliding and Smacking*) is built from the opposite kind of material. It is built entirely from small glissandi gestures that were announced into the texture in the final part of the first movement. The polyrhythm of the finale is a kind of synthesis of the two archetypes which show how Daniel «strives to create music with a sense of immediacy, where striking ideas are presented clearly and explored to their full dramatic and emotional potential».

AMIR MORTEZAI (Rutgers University) has extensive experience in classical music as a pianist, which he combines with new and radical ways of microstructural overlapping and subversion in his compositions. From his first experiences with the Piano Trio *Study in the Classical Style* (2009) to the more personal vision of the baroque heritage in *Frenzied Landscape* for piano quintet (premiered in Paris in 2011), Mortezaei unifies elements of classic and (ba)rock music with old fashion sounds like the harpsichord. *The Harvest* for solo guitar, premiered at the highSCORE Festival, represents a balanced formal structure built on the opposition of the cantabile opening gesture in 3/8 rhythm, which returns in the central section with new thematic material, and a repetitive pattern (which is a rhythmic diminution of the opening cell). The same pattern that generates the melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic gestures (an approach similar to minimalist music) is the basis of another presented work: *Dancing in Chains* (2012) for solo piano.

Composer and percussionist KEVIN JOEST (Boston Conservatory) has been writing music since high school. He composes for chamber groups and solo instruments with a particular attention to marimba. With his interest in the questions of timbre, the *Vestiges of Oblivion* (2010) for marimba and percussion ensemble explores the idea of concerto with a solo instrument and an ensemble among rich sound mixtures. His *Infinity minus (One)*³ (2012) for cello solo was presented during the Colloquium and explores the use of extended techniques. In the highSCORE-premiered work *Before/Behind* for solo violin, the focus is on the slow transformation of an “object” presented at the outset which is «then placed in a variety of different contexts [indicated in the score as *I. Spirited, II. Breathless, III. Yearning, IV. Anger, V. Ecstasy, VI. Tranquility*], each of which shifts the perception we have of the object, recalling in musical terms the experience of circling a Chamberlain sculpture and watching it morph like the designs of a kaleidoscope. The object itself does not change, but, like in a Cubist painting, seeing it from multiple viewpoints allows multiple unique perspectives and opinions of it». (K. Joest) The score is written without bar lines in order to not constrain the energy of the instrumental gesture. The work develops as an exploration of context and perception and the manipulation of the two in a process of the rarefaction of time structure until a contemplative slow, peaceful finale.

An innovative way to cross the boundaries between different music heritages is realized by Australian composer WILLIAM GARDINER (Yale School of Music), who currently studies with David Lang. In his words, he is «the product of a diverse musical pedigree». His influences include early music (most notably that of Bach as performed by the likes of Ton Koopman, the Kuijken brothers, or the Savall family); rock music; contemporary music (such as Astor Piazzolla, Pēteris Vasks, George Crumb, and Alfred Schnittke); more recent inventive contemporary rock groups (such as Animal Collective and Do Make Say Think); the seething, virtuosic compositions of Italy’s Fausto Romitelli; and the meticulous electronic soundscapes of Ben Frost. The synthesis of these diverse music worlds is present in all of Gardiner’s works. From the early pastiches in Bach- and Piazzola-style to the more recent *Onliving* (2009), a 20-minute piece in four continuous movements for small ensemble, Gardiner’s music evolves in the direction of a more and more sophisticated fusion of reduced harmonic material and prolongation of sound using various techniques such as chromatic glissandos, colour-pattern repetition, and rarefied harmonic atmospheres. In *Wish* (2012) for string quartet, premiered in Pavia, as well as in *Hedgehog* (2012) for ensemble—a work that was presented during the Composers colloquium—

Gardiner's more recent interest in processing sound rather than creating new sounds is present. *Hedgehog*, for instance, «[is] written for a large amplified chamber ensemble with a prominent electric guitar part, and inhabits a rich, full-spectrum sound-world in which mind-melting guitar licks live alongside heart-breakingly beautiful harmonies, with earth-shattering results». (W. Gardiner)

RYAN SULEIMAN (California State University Sacramento) is active as a composer of solo and chamber works and a performer of new music (pianist, guitarist and conductor). Suleiman developed his compositional technique through works for piano solo (*Five Poems from Bodega Bay*, 2008; *Moods of the Sea*, 2006; *An Awakening*, 2006), Guitar Solo (*Etude for a Dark Night*, 2007) or guitar with instruments (*Summer Music — 3 Pieces for Flute and Guitar*, 2006). In *Acqua e Luce* (2012), his «first serious experience with a string quartet», he had the opportunity to experiment with the vast coloristic, textural, and expressive possibilities this historic instrumentation has to offer. It is a piece composed for and premiered at the highSCORE Festival and later performed by the Calder Quartet in Davis, California. As a structural framework for this goal, Suleiman decided to use «the emerging and passing of a storm. For example, many of the sustained and glissandi (a technique of “sliding” from one note to the other) passages represent sunlight and the *col legno* (the strings are hit with the wood of the bow) and *pizzicati* textures in the middle section often represent rain and water». (R. Suleiman) The interest in exploring sounds, contrast (evident in the formal shaping of first movement String Quartet), and particularly the emotional journey of an audience (stimulated by rich textural writing) is present also in *Fantasy for Two Pianos* (2011), a work that was introduced during the Colloquium. Here the idea is to play with «a slightly “bipolar” and unstable quality at times, moving between violence, longing, and ultimately joy. The melody introduced in the very first bars appears transformed in various guises and moods throughout». (R. Suleiman) The presence of two pianos reveals a certain preference for an orchestral sound based on harmonic structures and block sounds that Suleiman recognizes as being inspired by the scores of Olivier Messiaen.

COMPOSING MINIATURES

In the vast range of compositional poetics that were deliberated during the Colloquium, the question of composing miniatures often dominated the discussion. A complex and well-articulated answer to this challenge was offered by Brazilian composer and musicologist VALERIA BONAFÈ (University of Sao Paulo). The work he presented was his *O livro dos Seres Imaginários—Kami, Odradék, Shang Yang, Haokah* (2010), a cycle of four pieces for piano solo (released in CD, 2011). It was inspired by Jorge Borges' *Manual de zoología fantástica* (1957) which was published in an expanded version as *El libro de los seres imaginarios* (1969) [*Book of Imaginary Beings*]. From the kaleidoscopic bestiary that describes one hundred and twenty mythical beasts from folklore and literature, Bonafé choose four of them and used their fictional characteristics as well as the timelessness of the book as an inspiration. The piece stays away from any narrative inflections and is rather a musical interpretation of these beings. Indeed, the music of this piece is atmospheric, built without development using elements that are static: «more like a paintings than like a story». The work is founded on the use of some unusual piano techniques similar to those used by John Cage, but developed through personal research, practical experience at the piano, and the study of scores. This is evident in the application of rubber and coins to transform the sound of the piano. A profound knowledge of the development of sound in Brazil and Europe in the 20th century (for instance, through theoretical studies on Luciano Berio's compositional strategies; see the article in this volume) is evident in *Gioco. Piccoli studi per quartetto d'archi* (2012), three short movements for string quartet (*S., L., B.*). Each movement is based on characteristic textural and emotional content and it introduced Bonafés colourful sound world to audiences in Pavia.

A strong aural experience, even if built from fragile and transparent sounds, was heard in the *premiere* performance of *Per Suonare in un Teatro Vuoto* for string quartet by another Brazilian composer, GUSTAVO PENHA (Unicamp, State University of Campinas). A rarefied, high-register texture of harmonic sounds in this one movement work develops ideas about the “Scelsian” *unisono* technique already present in two earlier works presented by Penha: *Estudo sobre gravitação* (2011) for string quartet and *Caminhos, passagens e saídas* (2008) for clarinet or sax, violin, cello and piano. In all of Penha's work (released on two CD's, *Ressonâncias* and *Imaginário*) the balancing of modern playing techniques on one side—particularly for strings (something that was improved during a masterclass with the Arditti Quartet)—and the material on the other, is a part of the compositional process

that has both the characteristics of a miniature but also of development. Penha's participation in masterclasses with Emmanuel Nuñez, Stefano Gervasoni, and Claude Ledoux encouraged his research into the creative processes in music in order to investigate the relationship between improvising and overwriting an existent piece. In two sections articulated *Caminhos, passagens e saídas*, an interesting use of microtones and quotations from Stravinsky can be found. The technique of quotation as developed in Berio's *Sinfonia* is the focus of one of the chapters of Penha's Ph.D. dissertation "The Musical Rewriting in Different Historical Periods".

The cello part of *String Quartet No. 2* (2012) by ALEXANDRA RINN (Boston University) has a musing character in the Spartan, evocative, and abstract sonic world of this one movement miniature. A painting by Sir Frederic Leighton inspired *Flaming June* (2012) for violin and piano. Though inspired by a painting, it is not programmatic. This short and enigmatic *cadeau* develops from harmonic fields, structured by the accurate use of register opposition in the piano and violin parts. For the second time in Pavia, Rinn introduced a more extensive work for chamber orchestra *Sirenes* (2012), which prompted questions about orchestration. Some excerpts from Ravel and Stravinsky were discussed as good examples for approaching the various possibilities when composing from a piano reduction.

WORKING WITH LIMITS

The topics discussed during the Composition Colloquium and those introduced by faculty members or guest professors in their conferences were often complementary or even a development and further transformation of each other. The discussion about specific aspects of writing music was stimulated several times by pieces of very different natures. Such was the case with the concept of "limitation" and "conceptual background" in music that originated from GIOVANNI ALBINI'S lecture. In order to introduce his work *Una teoria della prossimità—I. Densità, II. Continuità* [A Proximity Theory—I. Density, II. Continuity] (2006) for string orchestra, Albinì spoke about the background (or the origin) of every work and about the rules that the composer establishes to permit the music grows and develops. Even more explicitly, the question was present in Albinì's *String quartet n. 6—“Solo per grado congiunto” (only by a diatonic)* (2010), where the rules and the breaking of those rules is fundamental in making sense of this music, as it is based on a conceptual background. Because this work uses traditional elements (diatonic scales, cadences, harmony) it allows the composer to play

with common practice expectation and to make sense without straying into narrative and paralinguistic gestures. In Albini's words «it depends on the expressive purposes: high technical or high emotive».

Very close to this poetic perspective is *Vuoto che l'eco non colma* [Void who's echo does not fill] (2012) by Italian composer and guitarist ALBERTO BARBERIS (Darfo Conservatory, Brescia). In this score, which was first written for a guitar solo and then for the string quartet (the version premiered during the 2012 Festival), the presence of highly limited material is used as a starting point for idiomatic writing. In the guitar piece the basic elements of the form are the vibrato technique and its various transformations (such as controlled vibrato in Helmut Lachenmann's or Brian Ferneyhough's works for guitar), the echo, and the C minor chord. The string quartet version, an expansion of the guitar piece, has its origin in sonic and visual spheres. The rhythmic vibrato is transformed into quartertone glissato gestures and silence takes on structural and dramatic functions in the second section.

PAUL HWANG (Cornell University) is a violin and viola player. He composed his first works for string quartet in two parts: *String Quartet Sketches* (2010) and *Reminiscing on Swings* (2011). In the first, Hwang starts with highly limited material (unisons and minor seconds) from which the pitches are chosen by chance techniques. The more intuitive and melodic second part allowed Hwang to explore questions of formal and phrasal shaping. In his Pavia-premiered *Short and Bittersweet* (2012) for solo guitar, idiomatic gestures of repetitive patterns develop the reduced harmonic contents in a net of superimposed poly-metric ostinatos that are reminiscent of music by Serbian-born American composer and classical guitarist Dušan Bogdanović (Bogdanovic 1991).

American composer and pianist and winner of the 2012 highSCORE Edition MICHAEL LAURELLO (Tufts University) introduced his music with *Dear Master / I am ill* (2012) for voice (soprano) and piano. It is a setting of the text from a mysterious correspondence between Emily Dickinson and an unnamed lover. The second work that he presented was *Response: Valse de Chopin* (2012) for flute, clarinet, violin, cello, and amplified prepared piano was written as a response to Arnold Schoenberg's "Valse de Chopin" from *Pierrot lunaire*. The former work was commissioned by the Tufts University Music Department for the centennial celebration of Schoenberg's seminal work. With several years of experience in writing for ensembles and soloists, Laurello used a system of «controlled improvisational elements» in his work in order to «recontextualize pitch and rhythmic content from the original

piece. The primary focus of the piece is ensemble texture». (M. Laurello) Due to the aleatoric nature of the piece, the score uses boxed passages that contain suggestions for the duration and/or number of repeats and sometimes articulation. A detailed table with instructions for preparing the piano lists the articulations as follows: affected pitch(es), material(s), positioning, distance from hammer(s), resulting sonority.

Laurello's experience in music synthesis (Electronic Production and Design, Berklee College of Music) is evident in his *Beautiful Water in a High Place* (2007) for 2-channel playback and *Tell Hope Everything you Hear* (2012) for one or two acoustic guitars and fixed electronics, which was written for the highSCORE Festival. In approaching guitar writing, Laurello composes a dialog between a steel/bronze-string acoustic guitar and pre-recorded guitar/fixed electronics. The muted guitar strings (using small strips of felt fabric) guarantees a delicate balance between the two parts (fairly homogeneous and complementary in content and their ostinato rhythmic shape). «The felt is intended to subtly remove some of the higher harmonics of each string, rather than deaden the strings entirely. The mutes may slightly affect the overall intonation of the guitar; this is understood, and is a characteristic of this piece». (M. Laurello) The guitar technique is enriched by extensive use of hammer-ons and pull-offs.

For experimental American composer and percussionist DEVIN MAXWELL (University of Utah), the means of approaching classical composition came through his experience as a performer of John Cage, Sylvano Bussotti, and Morton Feldman. Whether composing music for video projects, films, dance, or other commercial demands, or composing classical music, Maxwell's approach is dominated by an interest in «creating intense musical noise using acoustic instruments and minimal electronics». His chamber music that was introduced during the Colloquium—as, for example, *Party Music* (2009) for bass clarinet and pre-recorded audio; *Bentonia* (2011) for two percussionists, each playing one glockenspiel, one kick drum with pedal, one resonant metal instrument with pedal, and one snare drum; *Bonneville Park* (2011) for clarinet and percussion; *Bunt Do Gone* (2012) for alto saxophone, piano, and electronics—tends towards a reduction of materials, a process built from minimal elements reduced to their essence. Since 2005, Maxwell has been composing a series called PH for various ensembles—such as PH 1 (2007) for orchestra²—that explore the chamber/orchestral development of minimal

² D. Maxwell's *PHI* was released by ERM Media on the CD “Masterworks of the New Era”, Volume 14, © ERM Media 2009.

materials and a restricted number of instrumental gestures and all of the possible relationships between them. This kind of reduction to the essence of the material is present in *Flatbush, NY* (2012) for string quartet. The initial reduced pitch collection is transformed through the four movements (*I. 1947, II. 1949, III. 1955, IV. 1959*) by incremental timbre and register variations according to the process of density compression and rarefaction.

An opposite approach is present in the music by LENKA STURALOVA (Janáček Academy of Music) from the Czech Republic. The richness of material is evident, for instance, in *Scream* (2010), a work for string quartet inspired by Edvard Munch paintings, where the whole form starts in the first two bars and develops in small blocks of contrasting textures. In the one-movement *Chaos theory* (2010) for saxophone quartet, a sustained single-note pedal is the basis of the pointilistic transformation of the idea of butterfly wink, while in *Drifting* (2012) for clarinet, and guitar even less material appears, in an incessant and restless process of variation. Still blockish and rich in instrumental gesture and density is the structure of the one-movement *Warming* (2011) for string quartet.

Repetition is one of the most powerful tools to create understanding in music, as Nicholas Ruwet stated in a famous article about Debussy (Ruwet 1962). When just one E-flat is to be repeated, then questions about new levels of expression arise, as in *Prelude Nr. 1* for solo piano written by JUSTIN WEBER (Stetson University). The first of the *Six Preludes for Jeremy Vigil* (2012) is a journey into the balance between two different states of material: rich and dense harmonic agglomerates on the one side and single, isolated notes on the other. The repeated E-flat creates a tiny but very insistent background, a kind of fixed resonance field where the harmonic and melodic discourse evolves. The construction of harmonies could have some roots in the interval superposition technique of Olivier Messiaen (Messiaen 1956), but Weber assessed that the origin is more intuitive, with some direct relationship with jazz.

Repetition of a reduced melodic gesture is at the core of the formal process in *Clair de Lune* (2012) for string quartet. A solemn and monodic introduction played by solo viola evolves in various sections in this one-movement work in which the independency of melodic lines generates harmonic fields in slow transformation or in fast scalar superposition.

WORKING WITH A TEXT

The Composition Colloquiums of the 2012 Edition started with the highSCORE 2011 Prize Winner RIHO ESKO MAIMETS (University of Toronto) who presented his *Media vita* for six singers. The piece was composed in February 2012 and performed on March 24 by the vocal ensemble Heinavanker during the Estonian Music Days Festival in Tallinn. The suggestive sonic world that it creates represents Maimets' personal synthesis of various elements from the early music tradition, with composers such as Johannes Ockeghem, and the Estonian tradition of choral singing. The static atmosphere of the work is based on the unification of Gregorian chant-like melodies and a harmonic structure based on a relationship with the consonance and early cadential system such as the one by Italian Trecento composer Francesco Landini. The text of the Latin antiphon «*Media vita in morte sumus*» (Anonymous, France ca. 750) is what determines the structure of the piece, which alternates various compositional techniques like organum, cluster fields, Quattrocento polyphonic writing, and so on.

During the highSCORE Concerts, two of Maimets' works were performed: *Canticle* (2012), a work in which delicate instrumental textures next to silence give the audience a chance to live their humanity, and the more static *Ecstasis* (2012) for clarinet and guitar. Here, in a «trance-like meditation», a tender melody explores a progressive diminution (in the sense of Renaissance *diminutio*) of its rhythmic shape moving towards an energetic climax. The return of the high-register ostinato in the guitar and the limited circular-interval melodic movement in the clarinet lead to the recovery of the initial contemplative stillness.

Writer, composer, violinist, and vocalist JULIEN A. TOUAFEK (Stony Brook University) encompasses every step of the creative process. His experience in musical theatre (as a soloist or part of the chorus) influences his own musical theatre works—for instance *Land of the Setting Sun* (2010), a one-act chamber musical scored for string quartet and five singers—and works for voice and instruments (*Steven and I*, a song cycle for baritone, 2011) with a specific humour and sometimes a strongly dramatic and dynamic flavour. This theatrical and *giocoso* (quasi *parodia*) character is even more accentuated in Touafek's *Drinking Alone Under the Moon* (2012) for wind quintet inspired a poem credited to the 8th century Chinese poet Li Bai. *String Quartet No.1 - The Nightingale*, composed for the highSCORE Festival, quotes a famous phrase from the essay *A defence of Poetry* (1821) by the English romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley: «A poet is a nightingale who sits in darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds». The

one-movement work is articulated in various contrasting sections (*With Urgency, Ominously, Shimmering, At first passionately, then subdued*) based on reduced but constant harmonic and melodic material.

Active as composer of incidental and film music, JOSHUA FORGÉT (Nazareth College of Rochester) has written songs for voice and piano on texts by different poets. His *Three Sketches* (2010) for orchestra reveals some influence of Debussy's orchestral sound, even if the harmonic and melodic structure is independent from it. In each of the three sketches (*I. Burn Red; II. Cornered Tornadoes; III. First Snow*) the form and material depict a single image that deals with the programmatic context. In Forgét's words, the *String Quartet No. 1* «is an elegy for my composition teacher Dr. Carl Wiens who committed suicide in March of 2012. It is an impassioned cry; an expression of sadness, rage, isolation, and the eventual acceptance of the unknown». The two sections (*I. There is something fierce in you eligible to burst forth...* and *II. I tell it gay to those who suffer now... There is a sun*) grove from a common harmonic collection and a reduced amount of motivic material (four descending chromatic notes) that gives unity to the formal process and a certain recognizably to the melodic expressiveness.

From his rich and diverse work list, composer, performer, and sound designer DREW SCHNURR (UCLA) introduced his poetics through two very different works. At the beginning Schnurr presented *Chanson D'Amour* (2010) for voice, violin, cello, and alto saxophone. The work was composed after the melody from *Madrigal* by Vincent D'Indy with lyrics by Robert de Bonnières. It was used as a *cantus firmus* for the new composition. In Schnurr's words: «My utilization of cantus firmus recontextualizes D'Indy's melody within new musical structures with a postmodern sensibility. [...] Its musical construction is rooted in a static, even procession of time and harmonic rhythm. The introduction to my piece musically signifies this linear choral like construction. It then transitions to a repeated minimalist framework in the strings accompanying interludes between the voice and saxophone». (D. Schnurr) The strongly evocative instrumental gestures, active role of silence, and the “mechanique” inserts characterize *Lune* (2011) for clarinet, violin, cello, and piano as well as the *Four String Gambits* (2012) for string quartet. Inspired by the unique agility and expressive potentials of the ensemble and its instrumentation, each gambit reveals Schnurr's interest in some archetypal structure, as for instance the Waltz, which are often presented in distorted shapes as a movement (*Moonless Waltz*, the 2nd of *Four String Gambits*) or as a section (in *Lune*). At the opposite side we find works

that engage «multiple levels of visual, music, and social culture, seeking to inspire and stimulate, while encouraging critical awareness, and motivating creative thought» as for instance *Symphony Of Lies* (2007), for nine-piece chamber ensemble. Here the music is derived from recorded statements of deceit by past American Presidents. Melodies and rhythms are extracted from the speech inflections of each lie. The technique of word repetition, which causes the listener to lose the sense of the words, is reminiscent of Steve Reich's *Different trains*.

During the Colloquiums, US-based composer CHARLES HALKA (Rice University) introduced a powerful story that was the basis for his two act opera *Julius* (2009) for soloists, SATB chorus, auxiliary trumpet, percussion, piano, and strings. In Halk's words, the opera, written in collaboration with director and librettist Marija Simona Šimulynaitė, is based «on the true story of my late grandfather and his experience as a Lithuanian displaced person in Germany from 1944-51, the opera takes musical inspiration from various styles of Lithuanian song, including the songs Julius sang for over fifty years after he left Lithuania». Some of the stylistic and harmonic skills that characterise this large work are present in *Dipukų Rauda (DPs' Lament)* (2009) for a *cappella* chorus, a 16-song choral excerpt from the first scene of Act I. The declamatory style and cluster harmonies that evoke the «sutartinė, a unique and ancient type of Lithuanian polyphonic song yielding harmony dominated by seconds rather than thirds or triads», overlap the rhythmic pattern, giving the illusion of a speeding train.

Another side of Halka's poetics was presented through *Live Bass Improv* (2010) for fixed media. The work consists entirely of acoustic bass sounds arranged to give the impression of «a bassist performing a live and virtuosic improvisation». The process of transformation has to do with ideas of continuity and direction in music and is present in later works, such as *Ruptures* (2012) for string quartet. Here a small number of dense harmonies and extended periods of silence are in a process of alternation with passages of scalar or more "choral" material.

SOUNDS, SPECTRA, TEXTURES...

The world of ANNIE HUI-HSIN HSIEH (University of Melbourne) is sound. Sound that is instrumental, vocal, dense, multi-layered, complex, tin, transparent; sound that sprouts up from process, accumulation, condensation, or rarefaction and disintegration. Hsieh's *Icy Disintegration* (2009/2010), commissioned by the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, is a powerful example

of the contrast between the static, icy timbre of silence and the destroying energy of natural processes. Some models can be found in John Adam's *Chamber Symphony* (1992) or György Ligeti's *Chamber concerto* (1969). Process is the focus of the *Quartet: towards the beginning* (2010) for clarinet, violin, cello, and piano. It is «A process of searching for an equilibrium, [...] an anchor in the midst of chaos; of learning to balance in between moving forward, relapsing backward, and standing undecidedly still; [...] of a cyclic repetition, finding ways and reaching towards that innocent and unadulterated beginning». (A. Hsieh)

The richness of silence as the natural environment for sound is the background for *Shades of Silence* (2012) for soprano voice, cello, and horn. It was inspired by American poet Billy Collins' *Silence*. The string quartet *Rules of Attraction* (2012) confirms Hsieh's interest in that quality of sound as a dimension for exploring the procedures that govern every connection. «This is much more of a query into the 'attractions' between physical (or sometimes metaphysical) things, and how this particular 'force' gradually connects, transfers, and transforms between each item [single pizzicato, glissando, arco single note, bichord, jeté, etc.] as they collate and forming amongst themselves new patterns, structures and new beginnings». (A. Hsieh)

TREVOR BUMGARNER (University of North Carolina, Greensboro) introduced his *LED* (2011) for saxophone quartet, which was inspired by questions about the efficiency of using LED lights instead of radio waves to transfer information and data. In Bumgarner's words «this piece is musical data transferred by illumination» and develops from reduced harmonic and registral content. It is homogeneous in timbre (due to writing for four saxophones) with variable densities and staccato/legato techniques according to the formal sections (aggressive, gaining intensity, satisfied, dainty, etc.). Among the works for winds—such as *A Walk* (2009) for wind quintet, *Sonata* (2010) for bassoon and piano and *Event Horizon* (2012) for wind ensemble—Bumgarner composed his second string quartet (the first was *Memory Defragment*, 2010) for Pavia with the curious title *Front Porch Prelude* (2012). The work was inspired by Bumgarner's neighbours «all sitting on their porch jamming, testing out their amateur guitar skills. [The] conglomeration of random solos, unrelated harmonies, and fast changing irregular accompaniment rhythms». These were transformed into a kaleidoscopic one-movement process that develops a few strongly recognizable harmonic and melodic structures. The work is rich in rhythmic patterns and the 'spiritoso' character dominates this piece that has to «be

performed with a quasi-folk style. *Portamento* is encouraged». (T. Bumgarner)

Composer and guitarist JASON MITCHELL'S (University of Illinois) interest in instrumental music as well as fixed-media was evident in both of the compositions he presented in Pavia. *Mazed Bedlam* (2012) for string quartet and fixed-media explores intricate and «sometimes convoluted paths that each instrument takes». This refers to Mitchell's use of the Ptolemaic square with regard to pitch and rhythm and the different situations of soloist and ensemble balance between the instruments as the title—inspired by the works of the British writer of science fiction and fantasy Charles Stross—suggests. The relationship between the fixed-media and the Pierrot setting (flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano) in *Cascarones* (2010) is more complex. In his program notes, Mitchell explains that the idea for this work was inspired by the «score of *Ave Maris Stella* (1975) by Peter Maxwell Davies [...], which was composed using a plainchant melody and the 9x9 magic square of the moon». Using the same 9x9 magic square of the moon and the popular Mexican folk tune *De Coloresas*, Mitchell developed his own system that generates musical material (form, pitch, rhythm, and harmonies). The fixed-media part provides the score with low frequency resonance and percussive material.

In *Two Pieces for String Quartet* (2012) by composer and pianist JONATHAN KOLM (Northern Virginia Community College), an intimate and evocative first movement is followed by a second more energetic and rhythmic one. This archetypal opposition, along with an interest in history, energy, and politics as programmatic background can be found in most of Kolm's works, as for instance *Terra Secundum* (2009) for flute, violin, cello, piano, and percussion and *Prophecies* (2007) for orchestra. In the former work, conceived as «a musical reflection on one possible fate of industrial society», the musical material (register, harmony, ostinato pattern, etc.) of each movement (*I. Portal, II. Fossils, III. Blackout, IV. Wasteland, V. Equilibrium*) is linked to different levels of behaviour of humanity. This idea is developed through various styles of writing. Even more pronounced is the contrast in character of the musical material and the role of quotations of *topos* like a march, choral, or pre-existing tune. In *Prophecies*, Kolm uses the tune “Ey Iran”, an Iranian melody written in 1946. This work—inspired by Kolm's interest in history, particularly American foreign policy of the twentieth-century—was in the focus of a larger discussion during the Colloquium around questions of creating an atmosphere of intimacy or heroism with

orchestral sound, timing and silence in orchestral writing, and, more generally speaking, multi-layered orchestral writing. These discussions referred to works such as Norman Del Mar's *Anatomy of the Orchestra* (Del Mar 1981) and certain works by Tristan Murail.

The relationship between instrumental sound and the voice was a topic of discussion after listening to *Plainer Sailing* (2012) by AARON HOLLOWAY-NAHUM (Guildhall School of Music and Drama). According to the composer, the work (based on the poem by Sasha Dugdale, a kind of collection of images and 'signs') was conceived as a sister-work to Jonathan Harvey's *Sound Offerings* (1985) for voice and small orchestra. The delicate instrumental textures that surround the vocal part are dominated by a unified harmonic field and explore the effect of shadowing the gestures with harmonics. An interest in the fragile sound of harmonics in a multi-layered instrumental texture is evident in the first version of *The Faultlines of Prayer* (2011) for alto flute, clarinet, guitar, violoncello, and double bass and particularly in the festival-premiered *Le campane che svaniscono* (2012) for violin solo.

Electronic environments offer multiple possibilities to research a wide range of sonic worlds. Composer and multi-instrumentalist COREY CUNNINGHAM (University of Michigan) talked about his experiences with fixed media starting with *Take a place in the Light* (2011). This work is linked to the material developed for *All the Rage* (2012) for electric guitar, which he wrote for the highSCORE Festival. Both of the pieces are a kind of answer to the question that was discussed in his electronic music class: "What is electronic music?" They are also a response to listening to *Foxy Lady* by Jimi Hendrix. The first piece develops and electronically elaborates various electric guitar clips with attention to the sound quality (defined as "reflexive" and "dark") and its larger formal shape, which is structured very carefully. The variety of timbre and idiomatic gestures are two central elements for the internal organisation of *All the Rage* and for *Tell You What* (2012) for solo bass trombone. The later work is representative of Cunningham's involvement with wind instruments, in particular with the saxophone.

THE VISUAL AND GESTURAL DIMENSION IN MUSIC

REAGAN MULLIN-MARTIN (Peabody Conservatory) began his Colloquium presentation with a variety of literal, visual, and musical inputs. The stimulating theoretical background for a strong connection between musical and visual dimensions in his works is represented by Michael Fried's essay

Art and Objecthood (Fried 1967). In it the idea of presence and conviction as the basis of art is explored deeply. One example of this approach is *Nimbus (Intruding ambiance)* (2011) for clarinet trio, written after Andres Serrano's *Piss Christ* (1987). In the composer's words, the work «intends the listener to confront the musical object as a literal embodiment or extrapolation of a sonic submersion of a mystical and deified intellectual entity. It acts through stasis to mask and overwhelm the listener, asking for the listener to become the object and therefore become submerged and entangled with the metaphors inherent in *Piss Christ*. Complex interwoven metaphor and literal object hood of musical symbology anchor the work's formal values». (R. Mullin-Martin)

The object employed here is one of the most famous *topoi* in the classical tradition, the *passus duriusculus* or the chromatic descending motive (F-E-E@-D-D@-C). It is used in a number of works, including Bach's Cantata *Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen Zagen* [Weeping, lamenting, worrying, fearing] BWV 12. In Mullin-Martin's fifteen-minute, single-movement work, this archetypal gesture is submerged in all kinds of tremolos throughout the three sections. The delicate character of the texture is heightened by use of harmonics, one of the many string techniques used also in *Abbelli-ouster* (2012) for string quartet. *Stasis one – Compound movement* in three parts explores the balance of continuous, often glissando and *grattato* [scraped] sounds on the one side and pointilistic, *pizzicato* or *gettato* [bounced] sound on the other. The parsimony of the harmonic and instrumental gestures is supported by a repetitive process, which gives the rich sonic world a sense of deeper formal intelligibility.

For composer and violinist ELLIOT T. CLESS (Northwestern University), experiences with the collaborative new music group Axis Ensemble are strongly reflected in his compositional skills. The group seeks to «blur boundaries between written and improvised, performer and audience, concert and event». The works by composers such as John Cage and Earle Brown, among others, stimulate the examination of the rich possibilities in the relationship between the written and the unwritten, the composed and the improvised. For instance in his *Song cycle* (2011-12) for saxophone, this approach is realized as an open form composition (there are also versions for alto or baritone saxophone) that explores the «ecology of the saxophone, including the player's relationship to the instrument and the breathing process. Breaths are the piece's meter and the songs are "sung" by the human/saxophone meta-instrument». Saxophone player Marcus Weiss was influential in interpreting some of these expanded techniques (like microtonal inflections, singing into the instrument, etc.). His input was

particularly useful due to his previous experience with Georg Friedrich Haas' *Concerto* (2008) for baritone saxophone and orchestra in which many of these elements were developed. So the interpreter's freedom results in different versions of the work each time.

An interesting approach to text and to the relationship between the voice and piano can be found in *Riprap* (2011) for soprano and piano with a text by Gary Snyder, where the piano interprets the words not entirely pronounced by voice. The exploration of a «space where complete focus and total absence meet» is the basis for *Stay* (2012) for string quartet. In contrast to the previous dissonant and aggressive *String Quartet N. 1* (2010), this work is more contemplative, the sounds are fragile. The texture is based on harmonic sounds and even the measured bars sound like those indicated as “out of tempo”. In the *String Quartet N. 1* the more static sections with the indication *Tempo evaporates, Senza misura, senza espressione: catatonic* were present, but with the result of a smoothing out over time (in a larger scale described as *Devastation — Despair — Recurrence — Transcendence* trajectory). In *Stay*, «the music is trying to be a meditation, but there's something missing... there's an urge that refuses to be repressed». The music stops before we find the answer.

JONATHAN KEITH (Brigham Young University) has been presented with awards for best improvisation, best arrangement of a pop song, and most versatile pianist. He introduced himself as a composer through his piano work *The Veil* (2008) for the left hand alone, which was written after a car accident in which his right hand was severely injured. The work is deeply rooted in the tradition of piano writing by Brahms, Debussy, and Ravel. The three-movements (*I. Andante, II. Lentamente, III. Vivace*) of his string quartet, *Post Haven* (2012), develops as an alternation of different character sections (expressive, dramatic, cantabile, etc.).

...HOW THE TIME PASSES...

The string quartet *Horat* (2011), introduced by Russian composer DIANNA DMITRIJEVA (Bolzano Conservatory), represents an interesting point to return once again to the question of the musical time. The work, performed at highSCORE Festival 2011, was conceived as an emotive response to the image of «sounds melt[ing] into the blue of the sky». It was inspired by one of Beethoven's slow movements for string quartet and shows many characteristics that are linked to the concept of static music: simple and repetitive rhythmic patterns (i.e. *breve/longa*) with long durations, slow harmonic progressions, homogeneous timbres and registers, etc. The primary

level of music perception arises from the micro-changes of harmony and timbre techniques that make the time stop and ease the expectations of any kind of development.³ A new approach to string quartet writing is revealed in Dimitrijeva's *Seven Hop* (2012). It is strongly rhythmic with short formal sections that contrast in atmosphere, melodic cells, and folk-like rhythmic patterns. This work explores the relationship between the four instruments in a dynamic and sometimes playful way.

«At the beginning, the pure material is contemplated and inspected. Hardness, colour, feel, and texture. Strands and knots bear evidence of the passing of time. [...] Finally, the craftsman has finished his piece. The wood, while retaining its essence, takes on a new form». With these words, composer and guitarist from Mexico City CRAIG DAVIS PINSON (The Boston Conservatory) introduced his *A meditation on woodwork* (2011) for string quartet. The image described in the program note is a perfect metaphor for Pinson's idea of writing music that seems to be a kind of contemplative observation of the material whatever its origin is: classic, rock, punk, tango, etc. The material could really be chosen from any in the disparate array of musical contexts. For instance, in *Nyanyanyanyanyanyanya! Variations on a Popular Theme* (2012) for Pierrot ensemble (without voice), the model came from the melody of the popular YouTube video Nyan Cat, «a voice-like synthesizer endlessly intoning a frenetically paced 16 bar melody on the syllable Nya». Through a set of variations the theme is progressively dissolved and «exploits a long-scale narrative arc, playing on the contrast between the theme's duration—which remains essentially consistent at each iteration—and the durations of the variation episodes, which seem to grow out of control as their proportions become subverted».

Originally a rock musician, Pinson extracts innovative ways to combine the verse/chorus form of most rock songs with the classical technique of a two-part fugue in *Blue Sky Refraction* (2012) for string quartet. The lyric subtitle "Air full of feathers, fluttering distant laughter..." is taken from the British rock band Marillion's song *The One Half*, while the piece's name takes from these opposing ways to perceive it: «as a string quartet fugue refracted through a drumset pattern, or vice-versa». (C.D. Pinson)

Pulse is one of the most powerful elements in creating a sense of musical time, whether regular, contracted, expanded or, in the words of JOSEPH SOWA (Brigham Young University), fluid. Various models of

³ For more details see Pustijanac 2011: 30.

superimposition of temporal strata with rhythmic patterns are in the focus of many of Sowa's works. From the rich list of his chamber music, *Fangled Contraption* (2011) for flute and alto saxophone and *Myths and Legends* (2011) for solo violin and chamber orchestra were discussed during the Colloquium. Surprisingly, the most powerful element that people recognised and understood in Sowa's music was timbre. A work such as *A Field Guide to Natural History* (2010-2011) for saxophone, bass, piano, and percussion, with its rich palette of instrumental techniques, underlines the deep relationship between the concept of time and its more perceivable timbral dimension in Sowa's music. Even in the Festival-premiered *Pocket Rocket* (2012) for string quartet, the time/timbre link appeared as one of the strongest tools for articulation in the multi-layered structures and the formal shape as a whole.

FILM MUSIC

When working with music for motion pictures, video games, or other multimedia, conceiving of music in a relationship with an external source is often the greatest challenge in sound design. The richness of possibilities and models (from Tōru Takemitsu to James N. Howard, from Hans Zimmer to Nobuo Uematsu) reveals that the place of the composer in the process of making the final product (film, installation, performance, etc.) and the relationships with other involved artists requires many skills and experience. Among the 2012 highSCORE participants, many composers have had some experience in film music or in music for multimedia. But, for MEGAN CARNES (Loyola University Chicago) this is the main field of her production. Some of the various short films she has been involved in include *Funny Business*, *Quack*, *Tumip Head*, *Jelly Babis*, etc. The music can be conceived as an extension of the atmosphere ("wondrous, magical", "sad, pensive", "eerie, dark") and can reflect or contrast the action. In *The Shapeshifter* (2012) for clarinet quintet, the music is linked to the character Lord Petyr "Littlefinger" Baelish from the fantasy drama *Game of Thrones*. The low register and dense, colourful timbre of two bass clarinets and basset horn creates the harmonic background for the B \flat clarinet's calm, repetitive melodic line. Even more suggestive is *Airborne* (2012) for solo cello, which is based on one unique gesture. Its rhythmic shape is irregular with the 7/4 time being divided throughout the first section as a dotted half note/whole. Its melodic contour is a jump from low, single notes to the double stops. The work grows through a rhythmic diminution of the initial gesture until it arrives at consistent sixteenth notes.

Writing for film, video, animation, and multimedia is not the primary activity of KEVORK ANDONIAN (UCLA), but it is an important part of his production. The narrative character of his music consists of melodic phrasing complex harmonic content enriched by chromaticism (without destroying the sense of tonal direction). The classical tradition with worldwide influences are present in many works (*Bluesy Tune* for piano, 2001; *Klezmer Danse* for violin/clarinet and piano, 2001; *Tango Nr. 2: A Night in Buenos Aires* for violin and piano, 2010), after listening of *A Longing for Joy* (2008) for flute and marimba⁴, the focus of his Colloquium presentation was his interest in the Armenian music tradition. *Armenian Vignettes* (2012) for mezzo-soprano, duduk, strings, and piano is in a large ternary form and features folk reminiscences, particularly in the expressive and ornamental melodic voicing of the flute.

In the single-movement *Lament* for string quartet, which was premiered during the Festival, Andonian plays with a chromatically descending motive (derived from a tetrachord) from which the melodic and harmonic relationships originate. Here modal writing and chromaticism meld together creating a contemporary harmonic discourse.

During the second concert of the festival *Quartetto N.2* by Italian composer ANDREA BEGGIO (Bolzano Conservatory) was performed. It is a work where musical time is built through the repetition of a gesture (vertical harmonic structure) that dissolves into horizontal rarefied fragments. From the initial unison to the more articulated rhythmic-melodic patterns, the formal trajectory includes a general *rallentando* and return to the verticality and consonance.

THE SYMBOL OF LIFE IS GESTURE?⁵

The relationship between musical material through its intervallic and rhythmic specificity, gestural outlines, or single lines and transformational tensions was examined from various points of view in Mario Garuti's Lecture. In his *...con lume arsa* (1994) for bass flute and piano, Garuti explores all of the possibilities of a flexural gesture. It is a gesture that is conceived as "action writing", redefining the concept of musical material from its internal perspective. An articulated opinion about the musical material and its

⁴ The work is released on CD (2010), *Music For Flute And Percussion: II*, Naxos 8.572521.

⁵ Quotation of a definition made by Mario Garuti during his Lecture (July 30, 2012).

relationship with nature is also explored by flutist and composer ZACHARY SHEETS (Harvard University). He states: «The points of departure for my works are metaphors from the realm of nature, and my relationship to musical materials is as to living things: fantastical creatures that travel in packs in the dreamlike terrains of the mind. The pulsation of heartbeat and the ebb and flow of breath, foundational to my understanding of rhythm, the flow of time, and musical line, heavily shape my musical language. Unsatisfied with our world of mass-produced sounds and prefabricated images, I seek to encourage mindfulness and imagination in my music-making».

In his single-movement string quartet titled *What Is on the End of a Feather* (2012), the concept of musical line is used as a primary device in the articulation of form. The cello part leads a musical discourse with the other instruments whose role is the development of an increasingly dense background of sound. After the explosion of the noisy background atmosphere, the viola part re-exposes the intervallic tension. The final section, marked *Cathartic, Very expressive*, develops from a semitone to larger intervals of a ninth or seventh. Sheets' interest in highly developed formal processes and abstract, chromatic gestures was illustrated during the Colloquium with his *gathers no moss* (2011), a work for flute, clarinet, violin, viola, cello, and percussion that was premiered by Talea Ensemble and his *Song and Dance, I. Cantus* (2012) for bassoon and piano. The two works were a starting point for a general discussion about «layering different colors, [and] how to maintain intrigue and beauty in a simpler, sparser texture».

Visions of an Empty City (2012) for string quartet by KEITH ALLEGRETTI (Rice University) consists of a rarefied atmosphere and isolated gestures that evoke very slow and dreamy visions of emptiness. Different colours, the richness of the bass clarinet's low register, slightly more pulsated textures, and expressive silence characterise *Jeux d'Anches* (2012) for six clarinets. *Suite* (2012) for clarinet and acoustic guitar arises from short cells of dialogue between the clarinet and guitar. It is cast in the classic fast-slow-fast division of movements (*I. Holler and Prowel, II. Cradle Song, III. Stir Crazy Rondo*) and utilizes classic constructs such as sonata and rondo forms. The formal sections are articulated through the use different characters and a balance of idiomatic instrumental gestures. In the *Lament and Caprice* (2010) for viola and piano, the classical roots are developed through modern harmonic elements.

Although he is one of the founding members of *Remhead*, a band that «gets its sound by mixing the hard licks of rock, the smooth lines of jazz, the

composition of classical and the complexity of progressive», composer and guitarist PADEN SCHMIDT (San Jose State University) asserts that there are no rock influences in his music. Indeed, his *Piano Trio* (2011) is deeply inspired by a Brahms/Ravel tradition and is in the typical classical sonata form. An interest in textural contrasts is more evident in *The Importance of Play* (2012), for guitar and electronics, performed during the Festival and released on *Aftermath, Contemporary works for classical guitar* (CD 2012).⁶ Here, electronics provide a spatial perspective with children's voices in the background. In the first part, a succession of idiomatic guitar gestures evolves towards a rhythmic intensification, eventually giving way to the contrasting final part.

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COMPOSING TODAY: A PORTRAIT OF highSCORE 2013 PARTICIPANTS*
Giovanni Cestino

The 2013 edition of the highSCORE Festival saw the participation of forty-one composers from different countries (mostly from the USA, but also Australia, China, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, and the UK). During the Composition Colloquiums from July 16th to July 22nd, they presented their compositions; discussed their own compositional poetics; and presented themselves, their aspirations, their demands, and their artistic goals.

The concept of plurality emerged as a dominating topic during those two intense weeks of study. It was a concept that was also represented in the participation of the two guests-of-honour, American composer MARTIN BRESNICK (1946) and the Dutch composer LOUIS ANDRIESSEN (1939). The 2012 highSCORE prize winner remarked about his second experience in Pavia:

The best thing about this Festival is the openness to any musical style. There doesn't seem to be a prevailing aesthetic and everybody is [...] very accepting [of] what every one of us is doing. [...] That's certain[ly] the best way to learn that I found.¹

The pluralistic and multi-faced aspect of that experience will be reflected in the following pages. The purpose of this writing is to collect the profiles of the participants into a single portrait while respecting the distinctiveness of each individual. The strategy adopted to create this “group picture” has been to join some of those personalities and their works around a few shared elements, methods, or predispositions that arose, sometimes unpredictably, among these forty-one artists. Despite their individualities, they appeared to create different nets of ideas that revealed several reference lines crossing in a complex and rich landscape. What the following paragraphs will certainly betray is the unique sensation that those links created as imprints, without provoking the definition (even if accidental) of sides or groups among the participants; all were mixed together in a fruitful debate and exchange of

* If not otherwise stated, the quotations between traditional marks («/») are elicited from personal interviews realized during highSCORE Festival, from the public Colloquiums held by the composers themselves, or derived from program notes in the scores that the authors kindly provided to me. I would like to thank them all for the kind cooperation and willingness in providing me the materials for this collective text.

¹ Michael Laurello, interviewed in *highSCORE 2013 - Memories* (video available on YouTube, <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J2YLvGh1L1w>>).

ideas. I hope that revealing some kind of organisation, it will provide new areas for reflection on these webs of thoughts and ideas.

SET THEORY: ANALYTICAL AND/OR COMPOSITIONAL TOOL

Although set theory's principles were established in a compositional context by Milton Babbitt, it was created from the necessity to reveal new musical possibilities for analytical purposes by others (Lewin, Martino, Perle). Their intent was a deeper investigation into dodecaphonic masterpieces and the so called "atonal" works written at the beginning of the 20th century. Lately, set theory has asserted itself as a useful analytical tool thanks to the studies of Allen Forte starting in the 70s. Because of its application in musical instruction, in America it remains an important method as both the basis of musical theory and training (Friedmann 1990). Consequently, its influence is evident in the compositional activity of composers. So, together with its uninterrupted use in analytical contexts, it is still an interesting resource in the compositional process where it helps in the control and organisation of pitches. Some participants in this edition of the highSCORE Festival clearly make use of it, no matter their level of training. It was used by composers who have taken only their first steps into the world of composition and it was not infrequently employed by more mature composers as well, who extend its possibilities to the control of other musical parameters and compositional processes.

For instance, set theory drove the earliest experiences of JOHN HORGESHIMER (Ball State University), who came to composition from his practical experiences as a violist and then as a saxophonist. He considers this tool «a starting point linked with my love for the works by [Anton] Webern and [Alban] Berg», the two leading pupils of Arnold Schönberg. In his quartet that was presented during the festival, *Playing the Numbers Game* (2013), the choice to use this method is related not only to technical concerns, but it embraces a more poetical need as well, providing the correct 'harmonic ambience' to express the author's personal suffering. This work is densely weaved together with personal stories and serves as a kind of catharsis. Writing music coincides again with the searching for relief. It would be wrong, however, to define this experience as an act of communication. «This music can be only a solipsistical epuration». But, it would also be wrong to take it as a model for a static or distinct poetic. What John is trying to do now is to soften his palette of intense colours, even if it is limited. In order to
56 extend his harmonic possibilities he makes use of other theoretical

principles such as Neo-Riemannian² theory, using its basic concepts to work with four-note-chords that have added 7^{ths}, 9^{ths}, 11^{ths}, and 13^{ths}. Even when combining different theories, methods, and tools, the goal remains the capability to express feelings and to be able «to match every emotion with one harmonic colour».

NAHYUN KIM'S (University of Missouri) relationship with Forte's theory, on the other hand, is shaped by musicological studies (she was previously a musicological student). The correspondence created by set theory between absolute pitches and numbers is central to her activity as a composer. It helps to manage a very cerebral and calculated way of writing, as for instance in works like *Hypochondriasis* (2011) for solo piano or *Insomnia* (2009) for wind quintet. Due to the influence of her sister who is a doctor, there is an attention to psychophysical diseases that is translated in a real «musical diagnosis of the pathology» that does not present an “*a programma*” representation of it, but rather expresses a meticulous and detailed analysis of their symptoms. The extreme strictness of her compositions reflects her interest in serial music of the 20TH century. It involves not only the writing process, but it is also used for self-analysis. The dangers of such an approach to her work as a composer are confronted plainly and boldly. In *Iracundia* (2013) for string quartet (presented during the festival's concerts), this stiffness and inflexibility in predetermining every parameter of the composition is partially abandoned «in order to care much more of the sound». Here Nahyum indulges in a new, programmatic freedom. But her deeper attention to timbral qualities and consideration of greater intuition lends to a focus on non-harmonic or indeterminate sounds which resist the temptation of a rigid organization of pitches. It is in her upcoming work for the musical theatre that she promises a necessary balance between these two differing approaches will be reached.

Because of its “numeric essence”, set theory also allows the control of other parameters of a composition by simply establishing a correspondence between pitch, number, and duration. It is a technique that MAXWELL PHILIPS (Harvard) exploits in his quartet *Tessellation*, written for the 2013 edition of highSCORE. This work, divided into two movements, firmly shows his mathematical inspiration as well as the predicament of its basic principles.

² The thoughts of theorists like Richard Cohn, Brian Hyer, David Lewin, and Henry Klumpenhouwer can be collected under this name. It spread during the 80s, but was named after Hugo Riemann (1849-1919) who set the fundamentals for its further development. An introduction in Cohn 1998.

Maxwell employs some *sets* of sounds that would create regular polygons crossed by a symmetrical axis if they were represented as a chromatic dodecagon. Each of them, being expressible through numbers, also defines a set of durations, creating a fixed unity. Set theory «is perfect to reach this sense of unnaturalness that I wanted». However, it avoids the problems of similar methods, like the «squares employed by some composers like [Luigi] Nono, that often provoked too much natural results because they generated too long durations». All of the “structuralistic” pre-requirements are destroyed after the writing phase. However, after the organization of materials, freedom is granted to the performers. In fact, the pitches are not ordered or written; the pitch-sets are indicated above the durations and the choice of which pitch is to be matched with them is given to performers, creating an extemporaneous performance. «A polyphony of interpretations» is crucial to the score and is what Maxwell wants as a result of his «open formalism». It tries to be, in music, «the artistic abstraction of the literary idea of the discourse». The last word will be up to the impact of the performative event.

If for Horgeshimer the use of “colour” was a musical meaning unrelated to the common sense of the word, for PETER DAYTON (Vanderbilt University) the connection is essential. Deeply inspired by the visual and figurative arts, particularly by painting, he establishes a strong relationship between visual colours and musical colours. In works like *Mar de Lurín* for oboe and guitar, winner of the 2012 Blair School of Music Composition Competition, after the paintings by the Peruvian artist Fernando de Szyszlo (born 1925), there is no representative intention, but rather an expressive one. The piece seeks «to give a subjective perspective of the picture». So the basic perspective stressed in Peter’s poetic is the central assumption of the visual work as a source for an emotional experience that music will be able to present. «It’s not important what the picture *is*, but what the picture *does* for me». In this context, set theory plays a very useful role. Due to its principles, it allows «control [of] the colour palette» in order to «create opportunities to move through a harmonic landscape» that brings itself back to a “tonal ambient” made of a «mixture of different tonalities». All of these elements suit a personal synesthetic sensibility in *Red Bird Etudes* (2013) for solo clarinet in B-flat, which was presented during the highSCORE Festival. A series of four small sketches inspired by the works of the American Modernist Charley Harper (1922-2007), the *Etudes* speak to Peters’ predilection for cyclical structures with «cross-movement references» which is influenced by his deep studies of Ravel’s piano music.

BRUSH STROKES AND SHOTS OF NOTES

Dayton's profile anticipates another topic: the possible interconnections between arts which are historically common in every culture in the world. The question becomes more delicate and subtle when one art derives some sort of constitutive or methodological element from another and applies it in its own vocabulary. A common example would be the relationship between the first polyphonic forms and the contemporary rhetorical figures of medieval poetry in Latin. There are many examples of this kind throughout history. But, if the connections between music and poetry are evident in the history of culture(s), it is a peculiar aspect of the 20th century. The alternative "relatives" to music, among others, are the figurative arts, particularly painting, architecture, and, later on, cinema. A number of highSCORE Festival participants revealed a close relationship between their works and these other art forms.

The importance of other artistic vocabularies, particularly their processes, is evident in KIM RIVERA's poetic (University of Washington). She considers «the idea of composition process like a picture». Inspired by authors like Crumb, Harvey, and Sciarrino, her idea of composition is fed by the idea of the *kairòs* (καῖρός), the sense that the 'right moment' can sustain the whole composition. «All my attempts are directed to create a stimulating listening. I get easily bored, so I don't want so for my listeners». Through a varied and diverse field of sound and materials—like in *The Flock Becomes Empty* (2012) for soprano, mezzosoprano, flute, clarinet, 2 pianos, and cello—she provides a vivid intertwining of speaking and singing with a rich dialogue of timbres. That aspect recalls her love for the music of Tristan Murail, «that represent for me a continuous invite to a physical experience of the sound, and not only an emotional one». Her work presented during highSCORE Concerts, the string quartet *The Bourne Approximation* (2013), makes use of Scattering Theory as «framework for studying and understanding the scattering of waves and particles. [...] This idea of scattering and coming together drives the structure and movement of each instrumental line. The melodic idea focuses on the first three measures, and develops themes and gestures based on those measures. The pitches used form a palindromic scale».

JEONG HYUN CHUN (Peabody Conservatory of Music), on the other hand, shows a lighter approach to the aspect of interacting arts. Painting in its essence, however, remains a focal point. It is colour that inspired her quartet

presented during highSCORE Festival, *BlueGreenRed* (2013). Every movement of the piece is dedicated to the exploration of one of the three colours, accompanied by further specifications regarding tone. The first is related to blue, specifically «*Dunkelblau*, deep blue». It is, in turn, linked to the expressive mark «sensible, unemotional». The second is dominated by green, «*Olivengrün*, greenish-gold», and musically translated to «misterioso, con brio». It is linked to the image of «leaves sparkle in the sunshine». The colour of the last movement is «*Feuerrot*, bright red» and the character is marked as «tempestoso, brillante». On the musical level, the tripartite structure of the piece is formally unified by the presence of a small “prelude” that introduces the first movement and separates the other two from one another. It is an *a solo* played first by the first violin, second by the cello, and the third by the viola on a single note (an H, but in different octaves), repeated on different rhythms and dynamics. Every movement contrasts with the others in certain elements. To the mostly contrapuntal writing of the first, the second appears based on an accompanied melody, and the last heavily on an insistent rhythm that never relents in its intensity from a *mp*. A final *coda* is on the same pitch, but this time polyphonically echoed by the whole quartet in a tangled texture of different rhythms. It ends in a barely audible *pppp*.

The music of DREW DOLAND (University of Cincinnati) is strongly inspired by the world of cinema, not only by a fascination with some films, but in a deeper technical sense. For instance, his work presented during the festival, *A Short Film About Pain* (2013) for solo bass clarinet, is, in fact, based on the main themes of Polish director Krzysztof Kieslowski, but its vocabulary reveals an attention for performance that goes beyond the mere inspiration of a picture show. «The concept of breathing is central to this piece, because not only is it a necessary musical gesture, especially for woodwinds, but also because it keeps us alive». In Drew’s work, breath becomes a symbol that links the piece with the film. It is last thing that keeps the hopeless and desperate characters of Kieslowski’s movies about the late-Soviet era in Poland alive. It becomes a musical and performative element that charges the musician with an almost theatrical role. But Drew leads the connection between his music and cinema a little bit further by trying to employ the very syntax of the film in the music and assuming the elements of the editing process as valid for the compositional structure too. Together with this kind of transfer, seen in works like *It’s Not About the Money* (2012-2013) for viola and piano, another kind of borrowing appears: the borrowing of musical elements itself (from film music as well as popular music or classical piano repertoire). Quotation and borrowing are considered by him «sometimes as

distractions», but in other cases they are perceived «as a post-modern chance of reflections».

Among highSCORE 2013 participants, LEO HURLEY (UNC School of the Arts) shows an affection «for the possible cooperation among different arts with music, as drama or theatre» not only in a ‘collaborative’ sense—the employment of both in the same performative event—but also from technical point of view: music can ‘learn’ from other arts how to build (or, maybe reject) its own language. The idea of the composer «as a story-teller» becomes central in Leo’s poetic. He takes Šostakovič as his leading example for his variety of approaches to musical activity and the ‘narrative approach’ of his music in the most different artistic contexts. Another important referent appears during our interview: Gustav Mahler. For Leo he «is a pioneer of the film without writing film music, able to develop a simple idea until mastodontic dimensions». These aspects to which is to be added the Mahlerian «sense of space» are central in his poetic. One other, common to both of his favourite composers, is the capability to speak to the public effectively. «We don’t live in a world of composers. So we have to create music for both the public and the composers». The idea of communication and simplicity of resources is clearly evident in his string quartet, *Division*, a small and intense composition that gravitates completely around a single musical idea. The whole ‘chorus’ of strings plays together from the first bar until the end of the piece in *pianissimo*. They move, one by one or in different combinations, by gradual *crescendos* ending in rough and imperative gestures. This main element is repeated in various sections, alternated with other short and autonomous interventions dominated by *glissandi*, *tremolos*, or aleatory figurations that indicate a repetition of the same note in an *accelerando as possibile*.

After earning a Bachelor of Philosophy, DYLAN ARTHUR BAKER (University of Michigan) devoted his studies to composition at the Cornish College of the Arts. He is a violinist as well. In his numbered catalogue (all of his titles are followed by an “A.” accompanied by a progressive number), his violin duet *Voices From the Clouds A. 48*, made for an installation in an art museum, occupies a very interesting position. The strict economy of this piece was inspired by the concept of *line* and the two instruments working in different manners. While one firmly keeps its ‘line’ (a sustained pitch), the second moves around it or against it. The composition is conducted this way with attention to how to transmit energy in a proper way from one line to the

other. If a figurative concept is the starting point for this work, a more caricatural sensibility sustains his Neoclassical-inspired *Overture for Orchestra "Circus Carnival Scenes"* A. 46. It is based on a three-section form which clearly recalls a classic structure with defined themes and common phraseology. A humoresque sense of irony pervades the piece, a characteristic also found in Šostakovič's music. His quartet performed during highSCORE Festival, the third movement of his *String Quartet* A. 49 (the second in his production), shows a balanced meeting point between polyphonic and melodic writing. Organized in three sections presented seamlessly, it shows an evident ABA' structure based on clear and effective materials.

THE COMPOSER AND HIS AUDIENCE

The relationship between an author and the addressees of his message is regarded as an important point in the poetic of a composer, liable to different variations depending on the century, the repertoire, and the musical genre. Such a consideration introduces other, even more delicate aspects. First, the *function* of the music, its precise capability to effect something and to provoke reactions in the listeners and the devices that the composer has to activate to establish communication. But it also involves a more complicated discourse about his position in society and the ways and methods that he has to face in order to catch who will listen to his voice. In addition, the performance as an event becomes a relevant part in this game. Which type of performance will be suited, desired, or perhaps suffered by a particular piece? And what is the composer's opinion about it? Among the highSCORE participants, some of them stressed, in various degrees, the importance of these issues.

The conception of the performance as a ritualistic event that «create[s] a memorable experience» for the public, is one of the strongest elements characterizing STEVEN CRANE's poetic (University of Minnesota). For him, writing music means always confronting the need to involve the audience in a complex event, not only musical, but also visual or dramatic. A reflection on the features and meanings of musical time is among his interests. Since studying Beethoven's late quartets, Steven has concentrated on this aspect of the musical experience and the possibilities the composer has to work with it through the compositional process. One other distinguishing aspect about his work is the continual attention paid to timbre as a central parameter of sound and the whole structure. This reveals the deep influence that the work of Helmut Lachenmann has had on him. In the quartet performed during the highSCORE Concerts, all of those elements were well balanced in the same

work. The title, *once white in shadow* (2013) refers to the presence of a mute character «clothed in a white gown». This mysterious character, «barely visible» at the centre of the stage, remains suspended in complete darkness which is broken only by the light of the quartet's music stands which are «positioned at the back of the stage, towards stage right». Like a priest motionlessly officiating this polyphonic rite, the white figure monitors the whole piece, with non-harmonic elements obtained through a thorough examination of the timbral resources of the four instruments. Indebted to the New Complexity movement, he is now working on his interest in timing, using it as research into a very famous dichotomy: sound vs silence. «Up to now I used the silence as an interjection in my musical speech. Now I'm trying to absorb the silence among my compositional materials, making of it a new grammatical element».

Attention to the public and to its response is one of the central elements of BENJAMIN BUCHANAN's (Peabody Conservatory of Music) work as well. He considers himself «one of the public, as Gershwin said». Being a performer of various instruments, an improviser, and a composer, as well as a poet, actor, and activist, it is difficult to reduce him to a single, dominant profile. Appreciated by artists as Yevgeny Yevtushenko, Benjamin's works are always suspended between different genres and artistic contexts, but unified by a conception of a total performance that seeks to present «eye-opening musical creations for the audiences of tomorrow». Unlike his explorations into toy instruments, his piece *...thinking about little researches into form and color while so many suffer and die* (2013) for six clarinetists (premiered at the highSCORE Festival) presents a seriously engaged artist reflecting on the historical sense of musical research. The answer chosen by the young composer is found in the words by John Luther Adams, who quotes, as Benjamin does in his title, one of Monet's letters. The letter was written during the time he was painting water lilies and the world was facing the horrors of the First World War. Adams has stated: «Monet painted water lilies. And the world is richer for his doing so. Those expansive panels of water, flowers, and mirrored sky were probably his greatest and most enduring gift to humanity. Politics is fast. By definition it is public. Art is slow. And it often begins in solitude. In order to give our best gifts to the world artists must sometimes leave the world behind, at least for a little while».³ Together with his writings for winds—which includes multiphonic

³ ADAMS 2004, quoted in the author's program notes.

sounds and sung notes—this work reveals an awareness of the role a composer plays to his public and, by extension, to all of society.

The coexistence of different musical genres allows MATTHEW SIFFERT (Carnegie Mellon) to reach many kinds of audiences and to move easily between different musical styles and listening contexts. A bass player with a background in psychology, Siffert draws inspiration from bands like Metallica or songwriters like Cohen. But, a trip to *L'Havana* changed his musical predilections and led him to re-write several of his pieces. The favoured form in his works is the song form with narrative texts. Working as both lyricist and composer, the creation of the two components of his works can occur in different orders: sometimes the text comes first, sometimes the music, sometimes both at the same time. His studies in harmony and orchestration did not change his orientation towards popular music, but he started to arrange his pieces for voice and classical instruments, like in *Figures from your Past* (2012) where a string quartet is used. In order to reach different sections of the public, he provides various instrumentations of the same work. The use of arrangement reveals a personal juxtaposition of his art, set at the boundaries of western art music and popular music.

JASON TAYLOR's (Peabody Conservatory of Music) music focuses on a pleasant and moving listening. In his work he seeks to overcome «what it is something like a *taboo* in today's western music: the emotive power that music can have, and how it can move and captivate the listener». This aim is clearly shown in works like *Aubade* (2006) for string quartet which was performed in Japan where Jason travelled after his studies with Christopher Theophanidis. It engages the public in a strong lyric scene depicting the separation of two lovers compelled to leave at sunrise. It's not difficult to see echoes from classical music mixed with Romantic accents and an influence of Minimalism. But, the aim remains the same. He wants «to lure the public to get him somewhere». The debt to the American aesthetic, however, is clearly seen in his clarinet sextet, *Sextet Pistols* (2013), premiered during highSCORE Festival, which was created as an «exorcism of *New York Counterpoint*'s⁴ wonderful hold on me». Here the influence of Minimalism is confirmed by the appearance of more or less rhythmic elements that create various block structures next to lyrical ones creating a diffraction of the melodic material which is presented as a chorale.

⁴ By Steve Reich (1985).

ON MINIMALISM DANCE STEPS

The previous profile introduced into this account of highSCORE participants one of the most influential currents: Minimalism. For young American composers it can be considered a “native” artistic current and one of the most significant in music. Some of them have shown in several works and in different ways their debt to this style and its drive on their research into the investigation of these same elements.

PHILIP SMITH (University of Nebraska at Omaha) addresses his own research on that path, but focuses on «slow moving change over a long time and [on] simply mathematical things». He works with improvisation groups and his music is open to the use of electric and popular instruments. For instance, in his last piece for 4 electric guitars we can see a fluctuation of temporal mobility and a lack of rigid rhythmic articulation, particularly in the use of *tremolos* and *glissandi*. The partial freedom that he allows the performers is his way of reaching what he calls «the sense of space». That is, the gradual modifications of materials and timbres in which controlled *alea* are sometimes used, like in his piece for electric violin and electric guitar. His quartet presented at highSCORE, *skirr* (2013), presents all of these aspects of Philip’s poetics in strict and accurate writing. The rhythm firmly remains the leading element. Sudden and unexpected changes of tempo are employed to modify contrasting cells and motives throughout the composition which appear in integration, opposition, and dialogue with two main opposing textures or ‘characters’.

ANDREW NORMANN (West Chester University) reflects the deep influence the Minimalist music of La Monte Young, Terry Riley, and Steve Reich, among others, is still having on younger generations. In his recently composed *Have We Vision?* (2013) for string quartet and electronics (presented at highSCORE), the presence of a continuous rhythmic *ostinato* sustains the structure, together with recorded sounds of a voice that continuously repeats the same text, parcelling it out in various fragments that sometimes gather themselves into clear sentences. This work is a ‘*manifesto*’ against capitalistic systems and a society that blindly follows the rules of «big money» and is urged by the domineering voice of an auctioneer inciting the «crowd» to the best offer. In this apocalyptic scene, the four instruments draw an intricate net made from strict rhythmic polyphony and constantly react to the spoken sounds, sometimes against its gestures, sometimes amplifying them. The complete subjection to the recorded track completes the portrait of

a suffering society compelled to follow a dehumanized voice. The attention towards similar aspects—even if more concentrated on human feelings and on reflections about them—is shown in another of Andrew’s quartets, *Step across this Line* (2011, rev. 2012). In it he wanted to express the multiplicity of people’s point of view and his reaction to this problem. Here the *ostinato* finds a new role. No longer is it a frenetic metaphor of the ‘world’s machine’, but the symptoms of his «reaction» to this polycentric view of humanity. His research leads towards the specific point of discovering and showing how much instrumental polyphony can effectively express and communicate such human and verbal concepts. It is an effort to determine how much music can ‘say’ or express.

Rhythm takes a strong role in the compositions of DILLON HENRY (University of Michigan) as well. Experiences in rock and work as a song writer set the foundation of his music. In it he creates an astute economy of materials and motives—at all times clearly recognizable—which are focused around defined tonal areas and a development of the musical discourse «that has always to keep an exact level of energy», assured by an intelligent employment of patterns. This aim is reached through a strategy of formal construction that creates a mosaic of different sections that fluctuate and appear time after time, assuring a complete form. This can be seen in works like *A Plea and a Prayer* (2013) for cello octet. Here different techniques are used in order to lend an impressive richness of surfaces, but the leading aspect remains the omnipresent rhythmic element. The same technique also dominates his *Halcyon* (2013) for clarinet sextet, which was presented at highSCORE Concerts. The opening quotation describes the whole tone of the piece: «... The carefree days of teenage summer... Open roads and pop-punk radio... A new life and a falling-out with a friend... Emerging contented but forever changed, listening to the same music from a different perspective, incapable of removing the rose-colored glasses of nostalgia...». For all of those elements, it is understandable why he lists Louis Andriessen and John Adams as being among his most inspiring composers. Perhaps unexpectedly, he also mentions the influence of the French *ars nova* music by Guillaume de Machaut which, for him, «sounds all except for medieval».

The wide influence of Minimalism is also stressed in the works of VLADIMIR SMIRNOV (Duke University), particularly in *Triangle* (2013) for flute, violin, tenor sax, piano, and percussion in which the sound of the triangle sets the “behaviour” of the whole ensemble. During the formal development, the silvery sound of the triangle is progressively abandoned and

in emerging tonal mixtures the composition leads to an improvised lyric passage before the reappearance of the percussive elements. Prudence in lines and an interesting investigation of openness is shown in *Cluad* (2013) for six clarinets, which was premiered during highSCORE Concerts. Apart from its clear formal structure, every “cloud” that he defines is fulfilled, with different degrees of density, by melodic or rhythmic lines (and in one case an unpitched breath) which merge with one another in a free and unpredictable way, «left partially to chance». Based on the progressive mutations of a starting set of pitches, it ranges very effectively between different acoustic groups that engage the player in a delicate game of balance and cohesiveness during the performance. The same idea of cohesiveness drives much of Vladimir’s work. For him «in order to write a good piece each part has to grow together progressively, but has also to be structured since the starting point».

The handling of rhythm in the works of MICHAEL (Tufts University, winner of the 2012 highSCORE edition⁵) is not affected by any of Minimalism’s *nostalgia*. His research on rhythm comes from a personal and independent part of his music, «the continue[d] attention to physicality and viscerality». As is clearly revealed in his clarinet quartet for two basset horns and two bass clarinets, *Movement* (2013), the attention to motion and a rhythmic energy is set from the beginning. The work can be divided into an ABa structure, yet without any clear reference to classical forms. The work can be divided as follows: (1) an exposition in which two different and contraposed blocks (rhythmic against «gentle») are presented; (2) a two-part section in which the previous elements are varied and then built to a *climax* in the second part; and (3) a ‘shortened *ripresa*’ in which only the first, strong sub-section is repeated with different results. Right to the end the sounds are progressively substituted with unpitched values, changing the sound production from normal to tongue clicks or suspending it and emphasizing keys clicks. The same attention and a more evident care for textures and structures is presented in his *Cope* (2012-2013) for flute, clarinet, horn, violin, viola, cello, percussion (both pitched and unpitched), fixed electronics (pre-registered loops), and piano/electric piano. This interesting piece is divided in two movements (*I* and *II*). The first alternates two percussive sections based on the same material, two contrasting and more rarefied parts (an *a solo* viola and then a final one). The second again employs an ABA structure. The A-section here seems to be based on a modern interpretation of *prolatio* which in the *ars nova* theory is the possibility of dividing a *semibrevis* into two or

⁵ For more, see in this volume Pustijanac, I., *Composing Today*, pp. 38-39.

three *minimae*). The constant tempo changes conflict, for instance, $\frac{3}{4}$ and $\frac{6}{16}$ (with semiquaver = semiquaver) in a percussive dialogue. The B-section, divided into two sub-sections as in *Movement*, presents a more reflective atmosphere followed by a similar section in which ‘glitches’ of the electric sounds are employed. The finale comes with a new presentation of A which is partially varied in its ‘*coda*’.

‘MAXIMALISM’ AND ATTEMPTS: IN SEARCH OF THEIR OWN VOICE(S)

The composer’s work can be a never-ending journey, a continuous quest of both external solicitation and a personal mode of expression. Today’s musical world sometimes seems to be a Babel of languages, styles, and genres where dialogue can at times be difficult. Some of them in their learning and growth are in search of a “position”, a personal aesthetic and poetic that reasonably is built through different experimentations. If some are on the way towards the acquisition of technical strength and through investigations obtain a strong didactic significance, others set their vocabularies at the meeting point of different influences. The highSCORE Festival provided them all with an interesting experience for comparison and, in some cases, it brought some of them to a fascinating turning point in their compositional activities.

For instance, STELLA FIOREZZOLI (Harvard University) started very early on her journey into composition, when she was only 10 years old. Among the pieces presented during her Colloquium presentation was *A Collection of Objects* (2012) for clarinet, viola, and cello which deals with images, but the titles of the five short movements avoid the risk of literal illustrations on the part of the listeners. *Thing, Matter, Stuff, Item, and Element* are the ‘objects’ which this composition deals with. This work represented a turning point for Stella, «an occasion to go out of my comfort zone» and a new interaction with dissonances, lines, counterpoint, and formal organization. If her writing for instruments edges more on discovering new language elements, her choral style reflects a more traditional approach. Based on the last lines of Walt Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass, As Adam, Early in the Morning* (2012) for mixed choir, shows a very proper understanding of choral writing, but also a deep sense of textual resources. A concise structure is the leading aspect of her quartet presented during highSCORE Festival, *Dubbio* (2013). It reveals a strong and incisive use of rhythmic figures that sustain more melodic and soloistic interventions in the first part. At the end, a slower section introduces a resumption of a more polyphonic attitude. Both rhythmic and contrapuntal

elements are merged in the penultimate part that clearly summarizes the end, which, like in a cycle, re-presents to the listener the first musical ideas.

Works by NATALIE DIETTERICH (West Chester University) show the results of research into a personal style. For instance in *A Hand-Mirror*, the first song in her song cycle *Reflections* (2013) for female voice and piano, the voice is employed both in a *recitative* style and a more *arioso* style. The dialogue between these two ways of singing mirrors the demands of the text. Accordingly, the piano writing reflects both gestures and pop-like accompaniment. All of this suspends Natalie's writing between late-Romantic style and a more modern conception of the song genre. Another experimental step on her path is *once bitten, twice shy* (2013) for piano and two percussionist, which can be read like a study on pitched and unpitched sounds in a «conversation that wants to commit the public in a more uncomfortable listening». This 'exception' in her production, very distant from the pleasant and rich landscape of her lyrics, seems to leave its mark in her string quartet premiered during highSCORE Concerts by Quartetto Euridice, *Pivot* (2013). Basically divided into three sections (ABA), it deals with the contrast created between a syncopated and rhythmic *bourdon* surrounded by a vivid and energetic dialogue among the strings which is followed by a quieter and reflective four-part choral 'intermezzo' and the final 'ripresa'.

The eclecticism shown by HANGRUI ZHANG (University of Cincinnati) reflects the need to explore different styles and techniques in order to build his very own personal language. Among the pieces presented during the highSCORE Colloquiums, the freedom in selecting and treating different materials from different contexts and periods was evident. There were no differences and no boundaries of musical genres, even if he clearly recognizes the influence in his works by Dutilleux, Glass, and Adès. Similarly, every kind of system or theory is an efficient tool open to his experimentation. Only from a pluralistic experience with the past and the richness of contemporary works will it be possible for Hangrui to enlarge his knowledge and his ability to choose and define his personal style. His string quartet, *Wayward Study* (2013), presented at the Festival, perfectly reflects this moment of his development. Divided into five sections and structured in a circular form (ABCBA), it shows the use of various different bowing techniques. Every section is characterized by some gestural element that occurs repeatedly or by one type of writing that fills it entirely. In A it is dominated by the first

solution; B it is an imitative and contrapuntal moment that, through thickening the acoustic density, flows into an aggressive homorhythmic end; and C seems to be a synthesis of the two, made up of little embellishments to semiquavers, sustained in the bass by quarter quintuplets in the cello.

FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS

Music and emotion are related to each other in several ways. The ability of the sonic arts to elicit the most intimate reactions in listeners or maybe to express what words cannot say are among the most common ideas about music's influence throughout the centuries. In reaction to the many kinds of pure intellectualization of the essence of music, several highSCORE composers felt it necessary to stress the deep relationship that music and feelings and music and emotions have in their own poetics.

The activity of JULIA ADOLPHE (USC Thornton School of Music) is not only devoted to so called 'art music', but she also works as a songwriter and voice and keyboard player in her band "Lilystone". Inspired by the work of Britten, Berg, and Crumb (namely in her musical theatre works), her music is often «emotional and narrative». Certainly one of the main highlights in her work is the chamber opera *Sylvia* (2013), scored for four singers (several play multiple roles) and small ensemble, with a libretto by Julia herself. Based on a true story, the opera «links two distinct, traumatic events: the sexual assault of a young girl at the hands of a family friend and the tragedy of the Holocaust. The opera delves into the memories of its title character, a young Jewish woman in psychodrama therapy [a branch of psychoanalysis where patients and doctors work together to explore past traumas through role-playing and re-enactment]. *Sylvia* recalls for her doctors, fellow patients, and the audience, how, as a teenager, she engaged in a sexual relationship with Nathan, a much older man who was a friend of her father». Over the course of 50 minutes, the importance of melodic material instead of gestures clearly appears and very sensible intervallic relationships that, with the use of a leading voice, drives the «musical journey». In her quartet that was premiered during highSCORE by Quartetto Euridice, *Paper Vines* (2013), the presence of distinct lines with effective timbral ideas, is evident. As Julia reveals, it «depicts the weaving of musical voices, strands that move in and out of focus. A high, ethereal motif is swept away by a climbing, twisting swell in the lower strings. The quartet's sounds link and dissolve, like the fragile pieces of a paper chain».

EMILY ENG's poetic (Brandeis University) is deeply inspired by Copland (particularly his early period), Beethoven, and Bernstein. The last one is relevant not only to her compositional activities, but also to her *persona* as a conductor. Conducting is one of the many roles Emily is following that plays an important role in her musical personality. «To conduct my music is the best way to create 'versions' of my works the most faithful as possible to my idea». Her music deals with a strong «emotional output» reached mainly through traditional elements and the search for «a lush sound» (often in saturated textures rather than in delicate ones), and with «the deep evocation of feelings». All of those elements are related to her love for Romantic repertoire, as well as film music and musical theatre. It is not difficult to recognize all of those elements in her string quartet presented during the highSCORE Concerts, *(Re)union* (2013). Among the pieces examined during her Colloquium presentation, her song for female voice and piano, "*Take this kiss upon the brow....*" (2013), clearly states «the aim of a cathartic expression». The text is explored in multiple ways creating more than one layer of comprehension thanks to an effective conveyance of the musical discourse.

The same attention towards keeping an expressive and emotional aim evident is emphasized by the choice of particular harmonic and "linguistic" models, as is seen in "*Pain Has an Element of Blank*" *Emily Dickinson Song Cycle* (2013) for mezzosoprano and piano by NICK BENAVIDES (San Francisco Conservatory of Music). Here the reference is to late 20th century repertoire that has strongly affected his poetic. He has stated that through a study of the works of Aaron Copland he is very careful about some issues of the musical setting of the text. He is careful about the role music plays in the exploration and presentation of the sense of the text as interpreted by the composer, as well as the correct singing style in order to preserve the intelligibility of the words. It is not by chance that he used a non-operatic singer for his cycle. His current project is the orchestration of this group of songs for a small chamber ensemble. Through the process he wants to emphasize the poetry and its meanings with a careful choice of the timbres. His love for late Romantic harmonies is evident in the first movement ("*since feeling is first*") of his *String Quartet #1* (2013), which was performed during the festival concerts. Grounded in traditional string writing, it builds a complex harmonic architecture whose formal structure reconceives the sonata form in a personal way, in which some intervals acquire a dominant role in the building of a coherent structure.

ALEX COOKE (Cleveland Institute of Music) defines his music as «textural, intricate, multi-faced, and deeply emotional». An undergraduate degree in Mathematics complements his activity as a composer and his works span from solo music to orchestral pieces, like *Apricity* (2013) for chamber ensemble with piano. It is quite common that a work of his appears related to a carefully chosen title. For instance, “apricity” means «the warmth of the sun in winter». The piece itself translates the sensation of the physical phenomenon through an accurate and effective orchestration. In his works the traditional concepts of melody and harmony are completely substituted «by those of figure and background, but continuously diffracted in a play of reflections and shades among different surfaces». If a piece like this reveals a long study of Ravel’s music, his *Petrichor* (2013) for clarinet sextet which was presented during highSCORE Festival (the title means «a pleasant smell that accompanies rain on dry earth»), shows a more intense study of Stravinsky and Reich. Here, distinct rhythmic elements dominate throughout the composition in a pleasant and elegant counterpoint. At the end, it is interrupted by a chorale that at times is ornamented by rapid embellishments and trills that evoke the previous imitative and rhythmic section.

HEART AND BRAIN

Various artistic movements and different musical tendencies during the 20th century revealed contrasting opinions on expression and construction, formalism and subjectivity. Many times they are dogmatized as irreconcilable contraries with no possibility of coexistence in the same work. Among the highSCORE participants it was a topic that was emphasized by several composers and some of them proposed a cohabitation of these elements in their works: a reconciliation that was clearly perceived as fundamental in the conception of their work. In other cases, some of them showed in their activity the necessity for both, but contained to local moments or to different works. At other times, this affection for opposites was translated into the use of contrasting musical languages—again in the same or separate compositions—which symbolizes the need for an eclecticism that removes any kind of obligatory restrictions.

For instance, composer and clarinetist BRENDAN MCMULLEN (Rice University) points out the challenge of his music is «to reveal the meaning of his music beyond the intellectual», to temper his necessity for theoretical organization with the revelation of the emotional and expressive necessities.

For this he «listen[s] what music is saying me during the process of composition». The richness of this approach is clearly evident in *Movement* (2012) for string quartet where a preordained structure, as the composer says, is called into question step by step and then ‘revised’ subjectively. The piece is dominated by the contrasts created by a vibrating struggle between opposing rhythms. Over it appears lyrical divagations, mostly chromatic, with an interesting sensibility for textural densities and weights. Mainly inspired by Ligeti’s *String Quartet no. 1*, it combines autonomous and very characteristic lines with micro-polyphonic textures. The music of both Ligeti and Stravinsky is reflected in his *Two Miniatures* (2013) for clarinet quartet, presented in highSCORE Concerts. The piece, divided into two opposed movements (*Cantabile* and *Energico*), shows a traditional style of writing for the instruments. The first part employs a line, mostly given to the first clarinet with the accompaniment of the three other reeds, as the symbol of the ‘singing’ referred to in the title. The second seems to fragment and spatialize it through the different instruments achieving the appearance of a strong gesture, giving incisiveness to the rhythmic discourse.

The same kinds of oppositions are also evident in the works of J. ANDRÉS BALLESTEROS (Harvard). *Postlude* (2013) for clarinet, cello, and piano, one of his more interesting pieces, effectively shows the binary tendency of his writing. Formally structured as ABCBCB, it features the sharp opposition of the two monodic instruments against the piano. After a chromatic introduction by the solo clarinet (A), the cello enters (B) adding a second chromatic line that reveals late-Romantic influences: lyrical gestures with warm *vibrato* and darker behaviours (*glissandi*). Under this strong and uninterrupted layer, the piano enters in the C-sections, with completely different content, creating a strange collage. It is a *romanza*, or maybe a *berceuse*, clearly tonal and belonging to a Romantic style that what echoes came before. This “foreign body” builds a surface that coincides at harmonic contact points that shine unexpectedly, alternating with the other violent and chromatic *bicinium* in which *Flatterzungen* and unpitched breaths are added step by step. The establishment of the “heterophony” of different styles is interrupted in the following B-section, but eventually taken back up. The piece ends with a final, intense dialogue. The long, strained sound of the clarinet and lyrical gestures of the cello, conclude with a final, long *glissando*. In *The City & The City* (2012) for double string quartet, Andres deals with another type of contraposition between two “ambients”. The first section begins with a strong gesture from the full ensemble and features a percussive,

pizzicato dialogue. Attention is devoted to creating a bubbling surface of contrasting rhythms enriched by non-harmonic sounds that reveal a deep understanding of the different timbral possibilities of the instruments. At the end, a progressive introduction of the *arco* drives to another rough gesture that opens a more meditative and rarefied section during which improvised rips become more peremptory and isolated. A new section grows in increasing density and leads to the final section which is dominated by the transitional use of the bow. Employing a small melodic motive, the entire ensemble is more and more obsessively involved until the end. At the end, an “*all’unisono*” repetition explodes into a conclusive and brutal tear of non-harmonic sounds.

Construction and emotion are the grounding elements of NICK DI BERARDINO’s poetic as well (University of Oxford). In his music, attention is paid to refined writing in which an exploration of modest instrumental resources is combined with more traditional behaviour that favours a natural, lyric voice. Most of his works deal with metric elements (rhythmic patterns and percussive gestures) and melodic lines. The correct balance of them is explored, sustained by an omnipresent reference to tonal harmony (or, at least, to a leading pitch that grounds the formal structure). An effective example of that continuous dichotomy is shown, for instance, in *Home Suite* (2010-2011) for violin, cello, and piano. The trio, divided into three movements (*27 Morningside*, *Compo Moonrise*, and *Sasco Creek*), deals with personal feelings and follows the personal life of its author like the pages of a diary. The first part deals with the «gradual evolution of a rhythm of African derivation» and with the exploration of other techniques and purely musical aims. Lately he has recognized he has «been expressing more emotion with this music than I’d first intended [...] [W]hile my family was separating and the last wisps of childhood were fluttering through my fingers, *27 Morningside* became for me a sort of ode to home, a testament to wonderful moments passed». The other two movements became an exploration and interpretation of «soundscapes» linked with Nick’s personal stories. Every part of the trio evokes precise natural sounds through an astute use of the instruments, but he clearly manages their insertion into a meaningful musical discourse without any programmatic intentions. Every panel of the “album” is both a moving exploration of a sonic landscape from his memory and the intimate explanation of the feelings related to it. Even if it seems more “impersonal”, his *a breath of air from other planets* (2013) for string quartet, presented during highSCORE Concerts, deals with an exploration of another

kind. This time it is related to Arnold Schönberg's *String Quartet* nr. 2, particularly to its unusual fourth movement. In it a human voice is introduced to sing the lines of Stefan George's *Entrückung* [Rapture]. The first line, «Ich fühle Luft von anderem Planeten», was translated by Nick for the title for his work, with great attention to the words. He has stated, «I have translated *luft* not as 'wind' but as 'breath' is that in the context of my quartet, I am interested in appropriating George's image to imagine not a psychological state, nor the sterile flow of gas across barren worlds, but instead the breath of life elsewhere in the cosmos. This movement whimsically imagines the sounds of a strange, alien "folk music" of sorts, attempting to fashion textures that are simultaneously appealing and undeniably odd, a curious sort of music, as if for dancers with an exotic set of limbs».

ANDREW MATHIESON-SANDARS (Queensland Conservatorium) also seeks to «explore the possibility of a music which allows for an expressive subject without reducing the complexity, nuance, and contradictions of subjectivity». It is a statement that clearly reveals the influence of Alain Badiou's philosophy. Andrew encompasses the concepts of that philosophy about the pure multiplicity of being, in which everything is always reconfigured and restructured at the very moment in which an event takes place (see Badiou 1988, engl. transl. 2005). Musical influences include composers like Brahms (quoted in works like *Brahms Sketch I* (2012) for flute, clarinet, violin, and piano), Carter, and Schönberg. His works deal with complex and contrapuntal surfaces which are evidence of his research with Liam Flenady, another composer-in-residence of Kupka's Piano, an ensemble co-founded by Michael. In his music, polyphonic discourse plays a leading role, as in *Echolalia, A Duet and A Chord* (2013) for flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano, and percussion in which, apart from the separate "chord" (composed not only of pitches, but of specific timbral components), the discourse is articulated through a strict net of lines that are well balanced in their formal articulation.

Very clear attention to structure and organisation that is merged with a sensibility for expression is one of the most relevant aspects of Canadian composer (University of Ottawa) DANIEL MEHDIZADEH's poetic. He focuses his research on counterpoint and modality, as is clearly shown in his *Danza Macabra* for string quartet (premiered by Quartetto Euridice during highSCORE 2013). Its rigid polyphonic discourse is divided into three sections. The first opens with a rude canon *all'unisono* that becomes an accompanied melody of the first violin sustained by the cello and later

developed by all the strings. The next section is a dissonant chorale on a slower tempo during which the second violin gains an independent and more melodic role. At the end a new imitative section, driven by two violins and the viola while the cello works as an accompaniment, closes the dance with a last torrent of homo-rhythmic *pizzicati*. Certainly one of the most interesting works by Daniel is *Lilith* (2012), «a stage performance» for two solo voices, choir, and ensemble with piano, harp, trombone, and percussion. This larger composition, similar to an oratorio, was inspired by a dream and develops the myth of Adam's first wife, Lilith. Organized in seven parts and based on the principle of *Ringkomposition*, it betrays a harmonic system that is basically modal (a double octatonic scale) and presents a very effective use of the text, which is spoken or sung (entirely or in discrete phonic components) by the choral mass to create dramatic effects that amplify its meanings.

Similar attention is present in the work of MATTHEW TOZER (University of Western Ontario), a composer and music teacher with a PhD focused on the hybridization between traditional suite dances and the classic *concerto*. His works range a wide variety of styles, from electroacoustic (*Clarinecho*, 2006) to chamber music (*Contemplations on Dawn*, 2013), from choral works (with *De Profundis*, 2010) to chamber opera (*Dippe: A Chamber Opera*, staged 2007). In his string quartet *Affinity* (2013), premiered during the highSCORE Festival by Quartetto Euridice, the cyclical structure opens with a lyric section based of a descending phrygian tetrachord and then the contraposition of a second rhythmic section. After this 'exposition', the two A-B elements are merged with each other showing their 'affinities' and contact points before an elegiac conclusion. The central *topos* of Matthew's poetic is the research of «a simple and elegant staticity», where this last word is, for him, realized differently each time. It sometimes indicates the slow motion of musical elements, a construction made by lines as in his quartet; sometimes it is employed for dramatic action (referred to as non-moving actions led by the simple description of them, as in *Dippe*); or elsewhere the static of a chosen situation (even if non-static in itself).

BRIDGES AND EDGES: EAST-WEST FASCINATIONS

The musical meeting points of Eastern and Western culture have been an important topic in recent centuries. It would take many pages to discuss the various approaches, different borrowings, and relationships explored. Every edition of the Festival has seen the participation of several composers from

Eastern countries,⁶ although some of them based in USA and separated themselves from their origins. The link with their musical origins is still evident in their works, but conveyed in different ways in connection with their own inclinations and poetics. The research or the employment of any element taken from another culture needs a peculiar evaluation in order to clarify its implications and meaning.

For instance, the work of RUO XIAN GAN (Yong Siew Toh Music Conservatory) reveals an interesting position in the discourse about cultural and musical identities, but one that is skewed in his personal works. In Singapore he learned *gamelan* music at school, even though it does not belong to Singapore's cultural identity. Establishing a dialogue between that instrument and his music is the central topic of *Within avatars* (2012) for flute, clarinet, gamelan, violin, viola, cello, double bass, piano, and percussion. The gamelan part, written traditionally in the score, is the starting point of the composition. It was the first part to have been written and the one to which all of the others are related in an exploration of the 'connections' between different parameters (timbre, rhythm, pitch). Its use is not separated from the cultural identity. «I didn't ask the gamelan players to play it as it was a vibraphone or a marimba, but I didn't ask as well at the violinist to play his instrument as it was a gamelan». The aim of the piece is to construct cultural bridges among different traditions (and here Ruo Xian shows all the richness and openness that is Singapore's melting pot), but without assimilating one with the other, and confusing their real profiles. «I want to retain the cultural identity of the players». Together with those aspects, the piece reveals the dominant aspects of Ruo Xian's music that he defines as «scientific, architectural, and abstract». His 'abstractism' is based on a conception of the musical work defined as «a musical object on itself» that does not have any imitative issue, but which emerges by itself as self-evident. The reference here is clearly to Adorno's critics of the platonic conception of art as *mimesis miméseos* [μίμησις μιμήσεως]. A scientific sense of the architecture is an intellectual and rational conception of the piece «in which I adopt different systems of organization that I experimented thanks to a long study and several tries». That last element is evident in his string quartet, *Paradoxical* (2013), which was presented during highSCORE Concerts. It deals with the construction and dialogue between opposed textures and behaviours:

⁶ Other examples in this volume: see Pustijanac, I., *Composing Today*, pp. 32-35.

rhythmic vs static, harmonic vs non-harmonic, each time strictly and sharply controlled.

At the beginning of her activities, QIN DING (Manhattan School of Music) wanted to incorporate various elements taken from her Eastern origins (China) into her compositions. Now, instead of continuing on this path, she prefers to create her personal language without any cultural borrowing from traditional materials. Inspired by the late works of Stravinsky as well as by Debussy, Cage, and Ligeti, Qin's music presented during the highSCORE Colloquiums summarizes the recent goals in her composition. A piece for percussion trio, *Goldbach Conjecture* (2013), is based on a mathematical structure suggested by the very famous letter by Christian Goldbach to Leonhard Euler (dated June, 7th, 1742) which suggested that every integer greater than 5 could be written as the sum of three primes. Built using tempo markings and durations based on prime numbers, the piece is divided in two parts. The first is for unpitched instruments, the second for pitched ones. In this work, the composer presents the performer with a series of ways to continue, having them choose between different crossroads and paths that they can take or leave during the performance. This kind of freedom is also found in *Immersion* (2012) for string quartet and piano in which Din prescribes the use of a smartphone for every player in order to control autonomous temporal levels. This piece represents a personal challenge in discovering «which degree of freedom I can give to a musician». The last piece, *Four Pieces* for orchestra (organized on the large scale as ABAC), is her first mature composition that summarizes all of the experiences of her apprenticeship with accurate and fascinating care in the orchestral writing.

A strong sense of cultural identity is expressed through the music of SHUYING LI (The Hartt School). At times she uses Chinese instruments in her works. In her opera *I Hate This Siege!* (2012), written on a Chinese *libretto*, the connection with traditional music is even more evident, as for instance in the relationship between the intonation of the text and *intonia* of the Chinese language. Apart from the clear evocations of Eastern material, what she wants to reach is a very personal language. For the most part, this is focused on timbres and in order to do so all her attention is directed to the maximum enrichment of her timbral palette. The various polyphonies of the heterogeneous elements is made cohesive thanks to the definition of a pitch set that gathers all the instruments in a clear 'harmonic' ambient and with the use of 'central timbres' that ensure, locally, the achievement of a well-

grounded unity. Her activity as a conductor of her own music is an important step in her writing process as well. The rehearsal dimension, lived in the most direct way as possible, makes it easy to intervene with the required modifications to the score due to the direct contact with performers. Her clarinet sextet performed at the highSCORE Concerts, *Farewell, Connecticut!* (2013), is a construction based on different kinds of timing. Sections dominated by controlled *alea* are juxtaposed with rhythmic parts dominated by sharp gestures. It is rounded out with the lyrical intervention of the E-flat clarinet, like a tender closing salutation linked with her personal life experiences.

Japanese-born composer KAITO NAKAHORI (San Francisco Conservatory of Music) is now based in the US. His works deal with eastern elements in all of his music. With a great affection for the winds, his writing reflects a deep study of timbre, a parameter that is considered as a leading structural element in every composition. Complex textures and diffuse alternative techniques become his favourite, as in *Bridge 2 - Yamato Nadeshiko* (2013), which premiered during highSCORE Concerts under the composer's baton. The name means «pure, graceful, traditional, shy, and young woman», but the two names indicate an alternative name for Japan and a traditional flower symbol of Japanese girls, respectively. In it, the composer uses various iterations of different breaths (differentiated by intensity), attacks, and alternative solutions that make this effective composition an essay on the unpitched resources of those instruments. This piece includes a theatrical device as well. It is performed in the darkest atmosphere as possible in order to provide a purely acoustic experience instead of a visual one. The titles of Kaito's works involve the word "bridge", which is more than just a peculiar signature. It is, rather, the subtle declaration of a purpose dealt in his music: the creation of cultural interconnections that merge together Eastern and Western cultures, techniques, and sensibilities, all of them summarized and expressed in a continuous traveling from one side to the other. But, Eastern culture is certainly the most evident. It is hard to find a composition that eludes any reference of Kaito's original traditions. Sometimes the references go beyond mere allusion to the literary or folkloric. In *Hibi - crack 2 - at northeast* (2011) for wind orchestra, it is possible to «see reality of the earthquake in Japan» in a more psychological than descriptive writing in which the most terrific timbral solutions are employed to give voice to an unreal quiet (sometimes broken by a violent *climax*) in which everything seems to be suspended and is soon to be irreversibly destroyed.

Kaito recently began a collaboration with the Taiwanese composer SHIUAN CHANG (New England Conservatory), giving birth to the “Hai-Dao” ensemble. Shiuan’s music deals with the ability of music to disclose emotions and feelings, but he elevates the aims of his activity to a higher «meditation to life» inspired by Eastern philosophies. As he has stated, «composers possess the key to open human’s soul» and so their works have to be committed to this role. The reference to a “physio-philosophic” output is present in his *Sanyata* (2013) for string quartet presented during highSCORE Concerts. The title refers to a Buddhist notion (in Sanskrit *sūnyatā*, and with the diffusion of Buddhism in Chinese culture represented by the ideogram 空, the Chinese title of the quartet) that from the beginning of its diffusion in China was intended to mean transcendental reality, but more precisely regards the emptiness or void as a state of mind, opened to creativity and meditation. Formally divided into nine different blocks, the quartet explores in a concentrated duration a wide range of timbres and textures in which some extended techniques are used. Even if it is generally implied by the continuous transformation of its materials, sometimes it appears unified by the employment of a recurring element (*i. e.* the rhythmic *pizzicato* on a single note made by one of the four instruments).

What the Chinese born composer TIANGE ZHOU (Manhattan School of Music) shows is different attitude in that East-West relationship. When she was 16 and at the beginning of her work as a composer she discovered Wagner’s tetralogy, *Das Ring des Nibelungen*, and has remained fascinated by Western culture since. She studied the music and thinking of the German master for a year and in order to deepen her understanding of Western culture she read, in a Chinese translation, the Homeric poems, *The Ilyad* and *The Odyssey*. It is not difficult to see his ideas of *Gesamtkunstwerk* [total work of art] in Tiange’s poetic. In it, different artistic expressions are continuously merged together and created by the artist herself. For instance, she accompanied the live performance of *Their Voice* (2013) for solo clarinet with dance during the highSCORE Concerts. The piece, composed of 17 small sections to be played without break, shows a large vocabulary of extended techniques (including humming, unpitched, and multiphonic sounds) and musical materials assembled together to provoke a gestural reaction. The same attention is also evident in another solo composition, *My Solitude was a Garden* (2012) for violin. It is a ‘suite’ of 4 sketches based on the continuous variation of motivic cells made of simple intervals. They are involved in a rhetorical dialogue. The development of the work reveals an indebtedness to

Eastern philosophy, the Mantra. She also reflects upon her study of Ligeti's *First Quartet* and American Minimalism in *Puzzle* (2012) for vibraphone quartet. After a complete serialization of the parameters, she chose what she liked from the resulting materials and recomposed them into an organic composition.

ATMOSPHERES AND AMBIENT

Among the traditional 'elements', air certainly seems to be the closest to music. The very acoustic nature of that art, its ephemeral essence due to the fragility of sounds, its inconsistency and immateriality are likely to recall the concept of atmosphere, a gas layer with precise physical characteristics in which listening bodies are submerged. Also, the concept of ambience is linked both to the property of music to create while listening and a proper organization of its content made of discrete 'objects', accurately defined in their characteristics. In that kind of interest, the investigation of timbre, one of the most practical during the 20th century, becomes of primary importance. Nowadays it has a great prevalence in the younger generations and among the highSCORE participants several of them expressed the importance of an investigation into that element in regards to the exploration of musical atmospheres and different musical ambients.

BRIAN HEIM (University of Texas at Austin) is one of them. He drives all of his research from the investigation of timbre and acoustic dimensions. «It is from an atmosphere that my work starts».⁷ That is what his quartet *Sterile* (2013), premiered during highSCORE Concerts by Quartetto Bruson, clearly shows. Largely inspired by the works of composers like Filidei, Sciarrino, and, in particular, Lachenmann, it requires a double commitment of the four players, both as instrumentalists that as vocalists. The performers are involved in an 'eight-part counterpoint' based on different timbral behaviours that sometimes collapse on one another when the production of a vocal gesture

⁷ It is not difficult to track the influence of Sciarrino's poetic (one of Brian's favourite composers), that defines the starting point of his work as caused by «a vague desire of hazard myself through the forms of sound [...] For me [...] there is the imagination of an acoustic world [...], as an ambient [...] which I enter and live in». («Una vaga voglia di avventurarsi attraverso le forme del suono. [...] Per me molto più spesso c'è l'immaginazione di un mondo sonoro [...], come un ambiente [...] dentro [il] quale io entro e abito».): SALVATORE SCIARRINO, *Della composizione: 1) l'invenzione di un mondo sonoro*, video interview available at <<http://www.salvatoresciarrino.eu/Data/Video.html>> (accessed: July, 2013).

coincides with the corresponding instrumental line, even if it continues to force a ‘double-minded’ player in the management of two different lines. The domain of the unpitched, non-harmonic sounds is what Brian experiments with and discovers, in an exploration of the whole body of the instrument. He conceives of them as total sounding objects. The realm of the voice and its possibilities were explored in *winter Fragments* (2012) for soprano and piano, composed for the 60th anniversary of Dylan Thomas’ death. ‘Fragment logic’ involves not only the formal aspect, but also the use of the text, reduced progressively to local phonemes and, in the end, to only breath. «Words are at first declaimed with great clarity, then with more and more blurring from one sound to the next, more lingering on each bit of every word, as if it were the sound of the speech and not the poetry itself that remained. In the piano part, sweeping gestures and powerful resonances give way to sharp interjections and shadows of sound».

The opportunity to create an imaginary ambient is explored by REBECCA SIMMS. The musical exploration in *Murmuring Bones* (2013), presented during highSCORE Concerts, takes its title from a text by William Faulkner in the novel *The Sound and the Fury*. It starts from the simple but intense line «And I will look down and see my murmuring bones and the deep water like wind, like a roof of wind, and after a long time they cannot distinguish even bones upon the lonely and inviolate sand». The first kind of “living in” of those words is the vocal presentation of them which reveals the phonetic richness of it. One-by-one, from the cello to the first violin, the four players start to murmur the text in a free rhythm, respecting both dynamics and pauses indicated with blank spaces between groups of words, without any strict kind of alignments among the parts. After that, one-by-one again, but in the opposite direction (from the first violin to cello), an intricate rhythmic texture takes shape based on contrasting patterns unified by the same pitch set which is progressively modified with the introduction of other elements: a melodic line, and then a more contrapuntal section. Later it is transformed into a percussive section in which the textual elements reappear, this time shouted in precise rhythms. From that point, the composition turns towards the starting point and resumes the starting texture, this time one-by-one, starting with the first violin. While the cello repeats the complete text rhythmically again, they whisper the ending alone in a silent *diminuendo*.

«Utopia and dystopia» are the basic concepts of ANDREW MCMANUS’s poetics (University of Chicago). Based on the strong contrast that characterizes all of his works, in which the «*coincidentia oppositorum*» is the

incentive to start a «navigation into certain musical spaces» that for him «coincides with the idea of composition». In *The Sacred and the Profane* (2013), which received the premiere of its reduced version during highSCORE Festival, these two ‘elements’ are continuously combined and opposed in 6 minutes of intense writing. His language clearly shows a debt to electronic music, which he has explored since his undergraduate studies. The starting point was the aesthetic of Schaeffer’s *musique concrète*, which, in compositions like *Mesosphere* for electronics, appears to be the main reference. The concept of «assemblage» of different elements with close attention to timbre draws lines to a deep research that was also influenced by the works of Ligeti and Nancarrow. It spread following instrumental pieces like *Finnegan’s Logic* (2008-2009) for 18 players and 4-channel electronic playback. His relationship with Avant-guard music could be summarized as an ‘inspiration’. The force of new ideas is like a guiding tool to create the «real music» in which a discrete level of freedom is left to the instinct of the composer. This finds its application in works like *The Rarer Action* (2012) for mezzo-soprano and ensemble. Inspired by *The Tempest* by Shakespeare, it gives a musical dimension to Prospero’s final monologue, surrounded by a quivering aura of sounds that reveal a lyrical inclination despite any rationalization and rigid computation.

Winner of the highSCORE prize was the British composer DESMOND CLARKE (University of York), whose music ignores any boundaries of genre. He moves freely between acoustic, electroacoustic, and a mix of others. He recognizes in his music the deep interaction that acoustic and electronic languages have with each other and he identifies with composers of the 20th century that, like him, walked without limits from one type to the other. At the same time, he generally wants to avoid some of the results of the great pioneers of the past century, especially a propensity for prolonged sounds achieved in the electronic studios, even if reflections upon this kind of material remains in his works (such as *Untitled (2012b)* for fixed media). More often, his music tends towards brevity of sound and acoustic materials, as in *Linear A* (2013) for harpsichord and fixed media. Apart from his participation in *Cybernetic Forest* (2012), a «24-hour improvised operatic megastructure» which he collaborated on with four other artists, all of his works are dominated by a formal concision that concentrates like a beautiful crystal in all of its acoustic resources and musical meanings. His winning string quartet, *Insect-Wood-Growth* (2013), premiered at highSCORE Festival by Quartetto Euridice, lasts only 6 minutes, but it is a deep, intense,

and tangled texture, at times broken by strong lyrical cuts. Set at the edge between harmonic and non-harmonic, and between audible and barely audible, this work seems to be a temporary observation of a phenomenon of transformation and growth made from fascinating gestures and a complex path in order to prepare, reach, and leave them.⁸

In addition to the mentioned works above, the highSCORE Concerts also saw the performance of two other compositions: *A fire, under way* (2013) for string quartet by SEBASTIAN VALENZUELA ROJAS (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee) and the *première* of *Il dardo* (2013) for string trio by MARIA LUGHEZZANI (Conservatorio “C. Monteverdi”, Bolzano).

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⁸ See also his interview on highSCORE website:
<<http://www.highscorenewmusic.com/index.php/interview-highscore-prize-winner-desmond-clarke>>.

THE POETICS OF COMPOSITION

THE VALORIZATION OF *SONORITY* IN BRAZILIAN MUSIC
Valéria Bonafé

INTRODUCTION

My doctoral research deals with quite a slippery subject—the valorization of *sonority* in the music of the 20th- and 21st-centuries. I study the repertoire of Brazilian instrumental concert music written during this period, addressing a body of works by Brazilian authors to discover how music produced in my country reacted to new propositions coming from the old world, all of which are connected to the subject of *sonority*. More than simply mapping out the influence of European music on Brazilian music, an influence that has been rather evident since colonial times, I am more interested in observing the contributions of Brazilian music, those which were cultivated in their own cultural universe, to the topic.

Even though my doctoral research has a strong emphasis on musicology, my focus is not on the theoretical field, but rather on musical composition, which is an activity that I keep at the forefront of my studies. In this way, I also carry out such experiments with my own compositions, in a systematic manner, and in dialogue with musicological research.

In this essay, I present to readers interested in the subject of *sonority*, or in Brazilian instrumental concert music, a brief panorama of the subjects which I have been working with. I also intend to offer bibliographic and musical references that can serve as a guide for more detailed research.

THE PRIMACY OF SONORITY

In the past, music was principally based on the abstract elevation (without timbre) of sound. In the present, music is based on the concrete elevation (with timbre) of sound (Andrade, 2003: 219).

In his book, *Compêndio de história da música* [Compendium of Music History], first published in 1929, Mário de Andrade's insightful commentary reminds us that it is not exclusively in the 20th century that the perception of *sound*—in its most elementary meaning—achieved the status of *prima donna* of compositional and theoretical discourse that circulates throughout instrumental concert music halls around the world.

It is quite an old subject that has begun to be addressed in a systematic way within Brazilian academic musical research in recent years, especially with

the recent publication of *Estética da sonoridade* [Aesthetics of Sonority] (2011), by the Franco-Brazilian musicologist Didier Guigue [Didier 2011]. In agreement with international studies, Guigue attaches the notion of *sonority* to Claude Debussy's music, and from there carries out a musical analysis of works by several composers, creating a group that is quite heterogeneous, yet allied around the idea of sonority.

Estética da sonoridade confronts the methodological problem that has been revealed in writings on the subject; namely, how to address the “*I-don't-know-what*” that intuitively arises in such an easy way in the collective image of instrumental concert music. Far from having its borders completely drawn and formally clarified, this *I-don't-know-what* has been given many pseudonyms. Some authors opt to expand the conception of *timbre*, distancing themselves from its purely acoustic meaning by broadening its cognitive dimension. Others refer to Pierre Schaeffer, making an effort to adapt the concept of *sonorous object* to the field of musical analysis, giving it much more elasticity. There are also other attempts that, instead of starting from already solidified terminologies, propose new nomenclatures, such as the category of *sound-based music* or even the notion of *sonority*.

It is not a mere theoretical whim to put up for discussion the very designation of the phenomenon in question. It exposes, in fact, a broader methodological problem, which encompasses issues such as how the phenomenon is understood and the development of tools that can capture and make it available for segmentation, quantification, and comparison. In its complexity, this *I-don't-know-what* seems to withstand the scientific-analytic method. However, it is there that Guigue's writing acquires even more distinction within the recent international studies regarding the subject. Besides the musicological advancement, Guigue's book offers a rich contribution to the field of theory. It proposes an analytical methodology specifically focusing on *sonority*. Guigue's method does not rely on the tools of acoustic analysis, such as the use of spectrograms, rather his approach is centered on the notion of writing, and therefore is entirely structured by codified data from the score.¹ This analytical methodology allows for describing and interpreting the way in which *sonority* operates in the articulation of musical structures.

¹ Guigue's methodology requires calculations that can become quite complex. Therefore, within the *Open Music* environment Guigue created a library called *SOAL* (Sonic Object Analysis Library), capable of aiding the analyst in gathering and processing data. Besides being an open library, the tool permits works from MIDI files.

In the preface to *Estética da Sonoridade*, French musicologist Makis Solomos gives his analysis of five possible *parallel histories* that would have contributed to the process of centering on sound that began at the outset of the 20th century, which have unfolded up until now. They are the *emancipatory adventure of timbre* that gradually separated from the idea of *orchestration* and was able to arrive at the *status* of compositional element (*Klangfarbenmelodie*, for example); the *abandonment of the musical sound/noise opposition* (here Solomos recalls not only Russolo but also Free Jazz and Rap); the *passage from the organicist model to the constructivist model* where the challenge becomes “composing the sound” and not just “composing with sounds” (electronic music); the *evolution of the relationships between music and other arts*, which brings the arts to the condition of media support, where music, for example, comes to be referred to as *sound*; and, finally, the *mutations of listening and of the birth of new strategies developed for listeners*, meaning the changes to the current conditions of listening.

Rereading the history of music from the last century means, in part, reading history moved by the emergence of sound, a plural history, because it is composed of several parallel evolutions, which, all of them, go from a civilization of tone to a civilization of sound (Solomos 2011).

Though unlikely, this supposed opposition between the universe of the *note* and the universe of *sound* is a common recourse for argument presented in writings on the subject. If understood contextually, such opposition may indeed aid in the understanding of the phenomenon. After all, it does not concern centering the debate solely on artistic manifestations from the electro-acoustic field, for example, or on further repertoires that concretely draw away from the notion of *note*. In this case, the debate would become very simple. Unrest emerges precisely when the focus is directed at music which does not let go of the idea of *note*, but simply makes from this idea a support for an essentially *sonorous* discourse. Thus, it concerns a music in which *sonority* steals the show and becomes the protagonist.

However, it is important to clarify that, despite Debussy being taken as a mark, the valorization of *sonority* is a process with strong historical roots. Looking at the history of music already contaminated by the current discussion regarding *sonority* allows one to read the aesthetic aim of certain precursors to Debussy in a different perspective. Didier Guigue does this in the introduction to his book where he traces a possible genealogy of this gradual process of the valorization of *sonority*. Thus, referring to the previous

centuries, Guigue discusses exceptional cases of composers who would have endowed *sonority* with a more important role in their works, such as Jean-Philippe Rameau, Ludwig van Beethoven, and Hector Berlioz. However, for Guigue, besides them having not been systematized, they only deepened the sonorous dimension of the pieces, but did not make it a structural element. For him, it was with Debussy that *sonority* was first treated as a compositional tool, used as a dynamic component capable of constructing the musical form.

This trend that is historically anchored in Debussy's music would have subsequent developments, appearing with more clarity in composers such as Edgard Varèse, Olivier Messiaen, György Ligeti, and Giacinto Scelsi, and in *musique concrète* and in *Elektronische Musik* (to limit the commentary up to the emergence of the so-called *avant-garde* of the post-war era). It is evident that, though aligned to a single trend, each one of these composers distinctively integrates the idea of *sonority* into their personal aesthetic.

Some elementary impressions from listening help in distinguishing them. In Debussy, the valorization of *sonority* is associated with the use of formal resources that are not limited to the notions of development and organicism, which leads to situations of musical repetition or stasis. In Varèse, the valorization of *sonority* is more connected to the work, with sonorous masses and the incorporation of noise, be it through the use of enharmonic chords, the preference for percussion, or unique orchestrations that make use of instruments in their extreme registers with extreme intensity. In Messiaen the substitution of the *time of the successions* for *time of eternity* contributes to a listening centered on *sonority*, as well as a harmonic and orchestral conception focused on the effervescence of colorful sounds. In Ligeti, the relocation of perception to the field of *sonority* is intimately associated with an approach centered on the elaboration and gradual modulation of the texture. In Scelsi, a “*journey to the center of sound*” is driven by compositional technique that counterbalances apparently static music with a rich universe of parametric micro-variations, like oscillations of articulation and dynamics, rhythmic contractions and expansions, microtonal fluctuations, and timbral variations (due to the use of extended techniques). Therefore, even though these composers built extremely personal compositional aesthetics, it is possible to categorize them—though not exclusively—as composers sensitive to the theme of *sonority*.

BRAZILIAN MUSIC

Within the context of Brazilian music, Heitor Villa-Lobos² can be considered the first composer to work with *sonority* structurally, especially during his second creative period (1918-1929), which includes such pieces as *Noneto* (1923), *Quatour* (1928) and *Rudepoema* (1926), and cycles such as *Choros* (1920-1929) and *Prole do Bebê* (1918-1926). During the 1920s he spent time in Paris twice (1923, 1927-1930), where he had his closest contact with work from the avant-garde of the time and acquired a certain amount of international prestige. Villa-Lobos' work from this period focuses less on the melodic-harmonic development and elaborates more on texture and timbre (including the exploration of noise as an expressive element), as can be clearly seen in the acclaimed *Choros n° 6* (1926), for orchestra, or in the nine pieces that make up the second volume of *Prole do bebê* (1921), for solo piano.³

Invitation to listen—*Prole do bebê n° 2* has as an explanatory title: “Os Bichinhos” (The Little Animals). The title for each one of the nine pieces that make up the work is the name of a little animal and the material of which it is made: *The Little Paper Bug*, *The Little Rubber Dog*, *The Little Wooden Horse*, *The Little Tin Ox*, *The Little Cloth Bird*, etc. The pieces evoke sonorous images of the little animals, like the horse's gallop or the bird's singing; however, the material that makes up these little animals invites one to listen to the concreteness of the sound, to the perception of different textures, densities, flexibilities, thicknesses, weights, resistances. In *The Little Toy Mouse*, the rapid and continual dislocation of the small animal is represented by a figure with frenetic rhythm that goes through a process of gradual widening of the range, exploring the extreme registers of the piano. In *The Little Glass Wolf*, the wolf's abrupt and unexpected movements are evoked through a process of continual density variation, guiding the note to the cluster. In *The Little Cloth Bird*, the little bird's frantic wing flapping, nimble flight, and circular singing create a scene composed of simultaneities assembled through an essentially textural process, with overlapping layers of ebbing thicknesses and temporalities.

² Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959) was a native of Rio de Janeiro. He is part of the roster of artists connected to the construction of artistic modernity in Brazil. He lived in Paris in 1923, and between 1927 and 1930, where he had contact with the European avant-garde of the time. His works were (and are) played, published, and recorded throughout the world. Famous for his eccentricity, today he is the Brazilian composer with the most international work.

³ *Prole do bebê n° 2* (1921), for solo piano, Editions Max Eschig, Paris 1927. Recommended recording: *Villa-Lobos piano music*, by Marc-André Hamelin, Hyperion Records, UK 2000.

Villa-Lobos was an isolated case of a Brazilian composer from the first half of the 20th-century to have worked with the idea of *sonority* in a consistent manner. It is curious that his sonorous experiments did not reverberate in Brazil in the production of his contemporaries, or in subsequent generations (on the contrary, such experiments were historically associated with a supposed lack of academic training). At the beginning of the 1930s, Villa-Lobos would abandon his sonorous experiments in favor of a music that was supposedly more accessible to Brazilian ears. Such an attitude in the aesthetics field has a clear connection to his personal involvement in the Brazilian political scene of the Getúlio Vargas era (1930-1945), when he became part of a political project of a populist and nationalist character, though more for personal interests than political convictions.

In general, the following two decades were marked by the strengthening of nationalist aesthetics in Brazil, accompanied by the rise of some contrary forces, such as the *Música Nova* movement. Aesthetic debates in the country continued to be permeated by political questions and were centered on the opposition of National Identity and Internationalization which, musically, was translated into issues like Formalism vs. Experimentalism, Modalism vs. Serialism, the use or non-use of folkloric melodies and rhythms, and instruments characteristic of Brazilian culture, among others. In the 1960s, debates regarding nationalism began to lose strength and notions such as timbre and texture returned to acquire space in Brazilian production, especially with the arrival of *Musique concrète* and *Elektronische Musik*. At this moment instrumental music returned to converse with something coming from the latent sonorous experimentalism in Villa-Lobos' music from the 1920s and the idea of *sonority* returned to the scene.

In 1974, Almeida Prado released *Cartas celestes n° 1* for solo piano,⁴ marking a new trend in his career. The piece was written shortly after his return from Paris, where he studied with Olivier Messiaen and Nadia Boulanger. Commissioned by the City of São Paulo, the piece was to serve as the background music for spectacles at the Ibirapuera Park Municipal Planetarium. Motivated by the extra-musical content implied in this occasion,

⁴ Almeida Prado (1943-2010): composer and pianist, he was a student of Camargo Guarnieri. His disgust for nationalist aesthetics and his interest in more experimental music drew him away from Guarnieri and put him in contact with Gilberto Mendes. He lived in Paris between 1969 and 1973 where he studied with Olivier Messiaen and Nadia Boulanger.

Almeida Prado sought inspiration from *Atlas Celeste*, by Brazilian Astronomer Ronaldo Rogério de Freitas Mourão.

The first volume of *Cartas celestes*, composed for the depiction of the sky seen from Brazil during August and September (end of Winter/beginning of Spring), began a greater compositional project, referred by Almeida Prado as the “music of the stars, the sonorous discourse of the constellations”. Hence, outside of producing music for the São Paulo Planetarium, Almeida Prado continued his project of *Cartas celestes* and, over the next eight years, composed a total of fourteen volumes, nine for solo piano and three for larger instrumental ensembles.

Almeida Prado’s musical contribution to the use of *sonority* appears not only in the production of noteworthy pieces, such as the cycle of the *Cartas celestes*,⁵ but also in the theoretical formalization of some compositional ideas, especially his notion of *sonorous space* and his *organized system of resonances*.

Invitation to listen—*Cartas celestes n° 1* assembles several segments that should be played in sequence. Each one of these segments presents a celestial body that would be observed from dusk till dawn: the Milky Way and Galaxy NGC 224 = M 31; the constellations of Hercules, Lyra and Scorpio; the planet Venus and the Alpha Piscium star; the nebulae of Andromeda, NGC 696095, and NGC 696096; the Globular Cluster Messier 13; and meteors. The piece proposes to take certain qualities of each one of these celestial bodies (colors, brightness, luminosity, scintillation) and transform them into sounds. *Twilight* and *Dawn*—both represented sonorously—appear as introduction and coda for the piece, respectively, and insert the celestial bodies into a narrative arc. In the segment entitled *Twilight* is a fluttering movement that increasingly runs through the piano’s range (from the mid-high to the extreme-low), with a linear directioning of the dynamic levels (from *fff* to *pppp*). The eighteen harmonic aggregates presented in sequence in this segment are continually shortened in duration (the first lasts 17 seconds and the final one only 3), generating a subtle harmonic densification. This first segment presents a characteristic that will run through the entire work: the sustain pedal is used abundantly, making the piano seem like a large box of resonances.

⁵ Almeida Prado, *Cartas celestes n° 1* (1974), for solo piano, Darmstadt: Tonos Music, 1974. Recommended recording: *Piano Music of Brazil*, by Eduardo Monteiro. Meridian Records, UK 2007.

Composer Silvio Ferraz⁶ dedicated a string quartet entitled *Litania* to the memory of Almeida Prado. Trained in the musical tradition of the *avant-garde* (in Brazil and Europe), Silvio Ferraz worked with technical and aesthetic aspects typical of contemporary Western composition, both in the field of instrumental music and mixed electro-acoustic music. The freshness of his work is associated with his ability to establish expressive relationships with other sonorous universes through extremely permeable writing. Characteristic of Silvio Ferraz's work, for example, is the dialogue with elements of non-urban popular Brazilian culture, such as the singing of Brazilian cowboys called *aboio*, or the creaking of oxcart wheels. Another recurring aspect in his compositions is the construction of a *mythic space*, identified with the state of Minas Gerais, and with the sonorities that emanate from strongly religious small town culture (the resonance of a chapel, the imprecise intonations of a procession, the overlapping rhythms of popular prayers.) Adding to this sonorous universe, through allusions to Baroque music, especially Bach and Vivaldi, but also to some composers from the so-called *Barroco Mineiro*,⁷ such as Manoel Dias de Oliveira, he evokes a *mythical time*. From the assemblage of these three elements emerges a poetic and sonorous ambiance similar to Silvio Ferraz's work, present in such pieces as: *No encaço do boi* (2000), *dona letícia [ritornelo II]* (2007), *Litania* (2010), and *Toada II* (2011).⁸

Invitation to listen—*Litania* evokes the atmosphere of a prayer. In the beginning of the piece, the sonority of the *glissandi* plays an expressive role, creating a mournful ambiance, characteristic of a litany. The piece is composed of a total of eleven textures. These textures are apparently stable yet undergo frequent destabilization caused by abrupt gestures responsible for keeping the piece going. Although stable from a global point of view, these textures present large internal richness with micro-modulations of different elements, such as timbral modifications relative to the position of the bow, natural or harmonic sound, oscillating intensities, and gradual thickening of the *glissandi*. The piece is structured around the harmonic trajectory of “*Erbarne dich, mein Gott*”, from *The Passion According to St. Matthew*, by Bach.

⁶ Silvio Ferraz (1959) is a native of São Paulo, where he currently resides. He studied with Willy Corrêa de Oliveira and Gilberto Mendes. He has participated in courses and festivals in Europe, taking classes with Ferneyhough, Grisey, and Harvey. Besides his intense artistic activity, he is devoted to research and teaching about composition. He has published three books.

⁷ A peculiar version of the Baroque style that developed late in the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais.

⁸ Silvio Ferraz, *Litania* (2010), for string quartet, self-published (available at: <http://www.sferraz.mus.br>). Recommended recording: non-commercial recording performed by the Arditti Quartet (available at: <http://www.sferraz.mus.br>).

However, what is heard is not the linear harmonic progression that is implicated. Concentrating on apparently frozen elements, and in a certain manner stagnating the notion of discursive time in exchange for a greater verticalization of listening, results in a piece in which sonority comes to the surface. The skeleton of Bach's piece merely operates as a shadow.

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MUSIC AS SONIC ART? A REFLECTION

Nicola Bizzaro

In the second half of the 20th century, a new and, in many respects, singular phenomenon surfaced in the tumultuous landscape of the so-called “contemporary arts”: a growing number of artists from the figurative, plastic and performing domains began to introduce sound elements in their creations. For centuries the musical universe had been the sole depositary of the task of organizing sound, and here, for the first time, it had to deal with an interlocutor, or a rival, consistently operating in its sphere of competence; a new player to share the acoustic space with. Notwithstanding some occasional attempts of dialogue and convergence, for decades music and sonic art have developed parallel and relatively impermeable paths. Even where it is reasonable to assume that there has been a transfer of concepts and practices from one domain to the other, the two traditions seem to show few signs of mutual knowledge. In fact, given the large number of possible points of contact, it is striking how little the experts active in each field have been seeking forms of cultural mediation, opting instead for an apparently radical division of both territories. While in the last century sonic arts, poorly defined and generally regarded as a minor branch of Fine Arts, did not seem able to compete with a well-defined musical system, nowadays we are witnessing a new balance which demands a general reassessment of the issue; a new survey of borders and points of contact. On the basis of these considerations, this article has a twofold aim: on the one hand I will identify some of the problems that make this enquiry so difficult; on the other hand I will try to provide some working hypotheses to encourage greater exchange between these two disciplines.

POINTS OF VIEW

An observation of the critical literature of the late 20th-century that investigates the phenomenon of sonic arts can serve as a starting point to address this issue. Two aspects are particularly striking: first, the rather clear-cut separation between the studies with an artistic background and the musicological ones; secondly, the confusion and the difficulty in identifying the fundamental features of these arts. Curiously, most of the authors that deal with the issue from the historiographical angle agree to attribute the paternity of the earliest forms of sonic art to important exponents of the musical avant-

garde, from Russolo to Varèse, from Stockhausen to Schaeffer, obviously including Cage and his New York circle. On the contrary, the analysis-oriented contributions—generally more inclined to recognize the historical continuity between different forms of musical experimentation and, thus, less likely to link the concept of musical composition to the idea of sonic artwork—show a greater tendency to seek the roots of the new sound currents in the creations of artists belonging to different branches of surrealism, Dadaism and experimental film of the first half of the century.¹ From a bird's eye view, so to say, all of these studies circumscribe a field of possibilities in which the early sound artworks, while dealing with acoustic materials, represent a sort of deviation, distortion or surpassing of the traditional concept of music. The problem of the origins of the sonic arts is therefore inseparable from that of their definition, which could be as narrow as to include only works created within an exhibition or installation space, or be pushed so far as to include all the artifacts that can not be incontrovertibly labeled as “music.”

Rather than try to provide yet another, inevitably partial, answer to the problem, I will confine myself to stress that within the investigation of the music/sonic arts relationship we find two different attitudes, the opposition of which is meaningful for my survey. On the one hand there is a taxonomic approach that defines a work of art on the basis of its technical and compositional features, while on the other hand there is a more phenomenological reflection, which endeavors to draw the borders of its object of study according to the modes of its consumption and to the discourse it prompts. Thus, for example, a work such as *Water Walk* (1959/60) by John Cage can be considered as a musical composition, because it is notated in the score, partially performed on conventional acoustic instruments, or simply because it is produced by a composer. Otherwise, it can be considered as an instance of sonic art since it eludes the categories of conventional listening and involves actions not usually perceived as music. Of course, the basis of the distinction between these views does not lie in the artistic object itself, but in the categories adopted to interpret it. Therefore, even when the differences between technical and aesthetic features within different works tend to be nullified, there is still a system of more or less explicit and recognized conventions and expectations, defining limits, prerogatives, perceptive values and outcomes.

¹ An incomplete, yet representative list of contributions mentioned: De la Motte-Haber 1999, Norman 2004, LaBelle 2006, Gibbs 2007, Licht 2007, Voegelin 2010.

SUPPORTS AND MATERIALS

Among the historical events that have contributed to the stabilization of the different experiences of sound manipulation as an art form, the most important is undoubtedly the birth of electronic audio technology. The newly available techniques of synthesis, sampling and editing of acoustic objects provided composers with tools that allowed them to expand the traditional forms of music production, most notably, to surpass the refined symbolic system underlying notation and the ability to interpret it, performing its content. Suddenly, the closed circuit that used to connect composer, performer and sound event broke, giving anyone with access to a microphone and a tape recorder the possibility of fixing a composition, regardless of his or her level of musical literacy. Yet, it is precisely in the context of electroacoustic experimentation that the borders between music and sonic art seem to be more clearly defined. Considering the growing accessibility of technological devices, it seems increasingly clear that the *modi operandi* of the composer and the artist are engaging the electronic medium in different ways. Composers tend to emphasize the “horizontal” dimension, (*i.e.* the filling in of the flow of time with sound objects, layers or sequences). Sonic artists favor the experiential aspects, the non-linearity of the consumption, the materiality and synesthetic features of the artwork. Are these necessary and intrinsic characteristics of the two forms of expression? Probably not. Even though one can legitimately claim that the domain of sonic arts privileges the spatial dimension while music chiefly addresses the temporal one, it cannot be disregarded that the research on the three-dimensional arrangement of sound sources and listening points has been, and continues to be, a particularly important strand of musical research. On the other hand, nothing prevents an artist from conceiving the acoustic component of his or her works anticipating a temporality in their consumption, so that a sound *form* may emerge and be appreciated, and possibly integrated to the overall meanings of the work.² The fact that, all in all, instances of *immersive* music and of *discursive* sonic art are still exceptional, although not rare, suggests that the reasons for such a clear-cut separation between art and music do not reside in the technical dimension, and even less in the technological one. Rather, these reasons can be found in the persistence of methodological habits and traditions and the unwillingness to embrace stylistic elements developed in

² On this topic, Andreas Engström and Åsa Stjerna achieve very interesting results, highlighting how different tendencies (both spatial and temporal) for the interpretation of the work of sonic art can be found in different geographically determined currents of thinking; see Engström and Stjerna 2009.

extraneous contexts. Furthermore, these habits are usually confirmed by the critical literature, which often focuses on describing the production of sound under a technical/technological profile, rather than the sound itself. Many are the cases of works, mentioned in treatises and manuals, in which we have detailed knowledge of the technical specifications and no information about the nature of the sonic objects that animate them. The well-known series of sound installations *Water Whistle* (1976-1978) by Max Neuhaus, in which the sound is produced and made audible inside a swimming pool, is often cited for the environmental characteristics of acoustic production and underwater listening. Far rarer are the opportunities to understand the type of sounds produced and the resulting sonic landscape (see Licht 2007, 89 and 268).

Nonetheless, it is true that the apparent material contiguity between electroacoustic composition of sound and the sonic arts has led many authors and commenters to overlap, often surreptitiously, the very concept of sonic art with the electronic (now digital) processing of sounds. This is particularly true for those segments of contemporary musicology engaged in the aesthetic investigation of the so-called *sound based musics*, which, different in principle from *note based musics*, would generally show more shared elements with other sonic arts. Reflecting on these issues, Jøran Rudi recalls and develops an idea by Leigh Landy: «sound art can be considered as a subset of music, and [...] a more important difference in the sound domain lies in whether the artist focuses on work with concrete material, or pitch-based and notated structures». (Rudi 2009, 1 “Editorial”)³ One can wonder, however, on what bases a music composed of notes played on traditional instruments is less akin to the construction of the sonic arts, especially because of several examples of sound sculptures such as those built in the early fifties by the Baschet brothers, in which the acoustic production is limited to a predetermined, and sometimes ordered, number of musical notes produced by strings in tension and air columns, as in any instrument of the orchestra (Baschet and Baschet 1987). Historically, these and other similar sculptures have rarely been recognized as musical texts, yet neither the authors nor the audience perceive them as such. An opposite example, also from the domain of acoustic sounds, are the Aeolian harps and other creations of the composer Mario Bertoncini, objects apparently belonging to the field of sculpture that are actual compositions to their author, since they define a field of musical possibilities—notated or that could be notated—that the

³ The idea expressed by the author is borrowed from Landy 2007.

player is asked to realize and respect during the performance (Bertoncini 2007).

As a consequence, music and sonic arts can turn to acoustic or electronic media without distinction, and the presence or absence of pitch structures is not enough to define a field of choice.

THE (COMMON) PLACES OF SOUND

Once it is understood that what distinguishes *avant-garde* music from the various forms of performance, sculptural and installation arts involving acoustic objects does not reside in the mode of sound production, in the ability to occupy space and time, or in the presence/absence of determined pitches, durations and intensities, it is tempting to think that this divide is nothing more than a social construction; a habit, so to say, bound solely to the organization and historical evolution of production and consumption systems. In fact, it is unquestionable that the institutions entrusted with the education of musicians and artists (conservatories, universities, art schools, and academies), as well as exhibition and performance venues traditionally associated to music or sonic arts (theaters and concert halls, museums, galleries, and public spaces) in most cases show an organization in which each sector is self-sufficient and defines its own references independently of the other. Thus we find, especially in Europe, musical circuits and artistic circuits completely separated from each other, which are patronized by different audiences, often having an all but impermeable cultural background. In Italy, for instance, the last few years have seen the rise of electronic music courses in conservatories and of “sound design” schools in art academies. The subjects taught are largely overlapping (especially those of a technical nature), yet the occasions for exchange and crosspollination are fundamentally marginal. As a result, the occasions for exhibiting and listening to the creations of the artists educated at these schools trace mutually indifferent paths. This leads to almost paradoxical situations in which music and sonic arts coexist in the same space without ever touching. Such is the case of the great annual contemporary art exhibitions (e.g. the Venice Biennale), which, despite displaying a large share (often a majority) of sound works, present musical experimental works in a separate season, in practice validating a conceptual distinction between art exhibition and concert.

It is, by all means, within this context of mutual indifference that critical and hermeneutical discourse thrives, produced by specialists of one sector or the other and directed to one audience or the other, laying the bases for the

formation of new experts, or *connoisseurs*, active in one field or the other. An incentive to disclose new horizons of dialogue, which has been looming in very recent times, in the various contexts of electronic popular music, is highly desirable in order to renew habits and vocabularies, develop new interpretive methodologies, and give birth to new integrated forms of art. Nonetheless, in the perspective of a rapprochement between art and music, it is necessary to address an issue which, despite lying at a deep level and often not being directly appreciable in the listening, still defines very different aesthetic perspectives. It is an issue which demands a preliminary reflection: the question of different textual dimensions.

WRITING VERSUS PLANNING

Even after a superficial comparison of the historical and cultural background to music and sonic arts, it is possible to discern a fundamental difference, emphasized on countless occasions by eminent historians and philosophers: while the compositional process through which the author gives life to his or her musical work consists essentially in a structuring of time through an organized succession of sounds and silences, the realization of an art work generally tends to grow out of a well-defined image or situation, and establishes its different components consequently. Writing strategies in experimental music often define only the broader lines of the overall arch of the work. Through the application of a given method of composition, this will appear in its entirety only when set to paper, whereas the project of an installation or a sound sculpture seems to establish since the beginning all the relevant features of its organization, consequently solving all issues related to practical realization.

This difference is exemplified by a comparison between two almost contemporary compositions which, because of their insistence on the performing and experiential aspects, could be considered as works of sonic art: *Pendulum Music* (1968) by Steve Reich and *Pression* (1969/70) by Helmut Lachenmann. In the first case, the intermittent Larsen effect produced by the oscillation of a microphone over an amplified speaker focuses the attention of the listener on the event as a whole, on its total duration and on the overall size of a process which takes place in front of his or her eyes. On the contrary, Lachenmann's composition, pursuing the goal of an almost taxonomic research on the acoustic cello's possibilities of sound production, defines the sequence of each event as syntactic articulation of a form that is constructed by strictly fixed juxtaposition of elements, freezing in the score

the development of a logical and consequential thought.

Without delving too much in an area that calls for an infinite number of aspects of interpretation, far too numerous and complex to be even summarized here, it is still worth pointing out that it is probably on this ground that the only appreciable difference between music and sonic arts can be found—perhaps the only trait that can draw a historically and pragmatically effective boundary for interpreting the separation of these cognate arts. Certainly, this aspect is also a privileged field for a debate that could overcome some of the obstacles that have so far prevented an exhaustive comparison or at the least supersedes some uncritically inherited categories in both contexts.

Linked to the (apparent) opposition between writing and planning is the issue of consequentiality or simultaneity of events. Even when a strict sequence is denied (as in several cases of aleatory music, especially of European origin), the logic of writing preserves the idea of a possible chain of events, while the logic of design prefers in principle to focus more on the overall duration of the experience. Even when a logical pre-determined succession of sound events is present, in most cases the audience of a work of sonic art can adopt an intermittent listening. On the contrary, the notion of musical time, even in the works that challenge the most the notion itself, involves a sort of “aural reading” of acoustic phenomena, as if these were set up to form a discourse (even a completely abstract one) within the flow of time.

Here lies an essential difference between musical and artistic conceptions about the role of form and materials prominent in the case of electroacoustic manipulation. Thanks to a direct approach to sound material, it is no coincidence that very few of the authors involved in the production of electronic music has deemed it necessary or appropriate to abandon the notational dimension altogether. Even within Pierre Schaeffer’s Paris studio, where *musique concrète*—historically more averse to “abstract” design than other forms of electroacoustic experimentation—was born, the recourse to staves and more or less familiar sign systems was by no means sporadic.⁴ This does not mean that sound composition is an exclusive prerogative of art music. Nevertheless, it is quite evident that in the context of the art of sound this aspect tends to be somewhat concealed, or otherwise hierarchically subordinated to others, and considered more crucial. It is not a coincidence that in handbooks, as well as in the critical literature, one rarely finds in-depth

⁴ Many examples of aural scores and compositional schemes are listed in GRM (1980).

descriptions of sound objects given forth by, or within, a sound installation. Instead, production and listening modes, the arrangement of sound sources, and forms of interaction with the user are usually discussed at length.

Music and sonic arts stem from different traditions, speak different languages, and live in the world in different forms and places. Both carry a wealth of peculiar poetics and techniques, which sometimes appear to be very similar to each other, while concealing diametrically opposite attitudes, goals and idiosyncrasies. Therefore, it does not matter whether sonic arts are a by-product of music or the latter is contained in the former. What matters most is the possibility of cross-fertilization and renewal held by confrontation and dialogue, which is, now more than ever, crucial for the circulation of new blood and new (sonic) ideas.

English Translation: Valentina Bertolani

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SOUND DESIGN:
EMERGENCE AND RISE OF A ‘TECHNICALLY ORDINARY’ TERM¹
Maurizio Corbella

It is quite likely that the occasional cinemagoer would not know how to begin defining the job of a sound supervisor, a boom operator, a Foley artist, or a rerecording mixer. At the same time, it is all the more probable that he or she would have at least a vague idea of what a sound designer is or should be. Guided either by the resonance the term ‘design’ has come to exert in different domains of ordinary life—with its diffusion in the realms of fashion, graphics, and architecture—or because of a familiarity with newly introduced ‘do it yourself’ sound apps, our hypothetical cinemagoer would not miss to sanction the aura that the notion of ‘sound design’ has come to acquire in the past decades.

Today, sound design is unmistakably a practice that is commonly addressed by people who come from a broad range of contemporary media backgrounds (cinema, television, radio, theatre, videogames, and so forth), advertised as a job, discussed on websites (such as *filmsound.org* and *designingsound.org*, to cite Google’s top-listed results), and taught at professional and academic levels. The statement that follows, taken from the Sound Design programme of the Yale School of Drama, gives us a taste of this last aspect:

Students applying to the program should be innately musical, even if they do not play a musical instrument. They should have a love for the spoken word, an appreciation of all music and sound, and be on their way to developing good critical listening skills. A sound designer must have a natural sensitivity to the entire aural environment. A familiarity with contemporary design tools is also valuable. This program is populated with a variety of individuals who are willing and able to share their perspectives and who can listen to and respect other opinions.²

¹ This article expands and re-elaborates a working paper published on the WAV research group’s website (www.worldsofaudiovision.org), see Corbella 2010. Although this version is considerably different from the original, I would like to express my gratitude to the colleagues of the group that back then reviewed my paper multiple times and helped me improve it with their valuable suggestions. I wish to dedicate this article to the memory of Mark Weir.

² Excerpt of the description of the “Sound Design” programme of the Yale School of Drama, < <http://drama.yale.edu/program/sound-design> > (accessed: July 2014).

From the profile sketched in this passage, it emerges that sound design carries with it a certain ‘elective’ aura (e.g. «innate musicality», «natural sensitivity to the entire aural environment») which is, however, blended with connotations of open-mindedness and a ‘democratic’ attitude. It is not so much necessary to be musically trained as it is to demonstrate the «will and ability to share perspectives», while «listening and respecting other opinions». This passage deserves closer attention. The purpose of this article is to argue that, among the reasons for the term’s success as an ‘umbrella concept’, is precisely the stress of particular connotations of the notion of ‘sound’, which, somehow opposed to traditional concepts of ‘music’, appeals to social horizons that are particularly popular in contemporary (western) cultural discourse. The fact that ‘sound design’ has come to fill-in a social need to re-appropriate sonic dimensions of living by ‘ordinary’ people, whom Philip Tagg would call ‘non-musos’ (Tagg 2012), and that such an appropriation is complementary and partially antagonistic to ‘academic’ musical practice, constitutes the basis of my brief survey.

In our age of ubiquitous listening (Kassabian 2013), a qualification like sound designer attains appeal and ‘respectability’ on a sociocultural hierarchy in that the skill of ‘designing sound’ (with all its entailed side-meanings: projecting, manufacturing, embodying, manipulating, controlling, disposing of, etc.) is perceived as a valuable handhold for the subject’s creativity to resist against the spectrum of anonymity and standardisation. To take on Anahid Kassabian’s inspirational terminology, sound design is a powerful means for «distributing subjectivity» (*ibid.*, “Introduction”) in the domain of medial experience. Film semiotician Ruggero Eugeni has explained that medial experience (*esperienza mediale*) differs from ordinary experience in that it is «suprapersonal and [to a certain extent] serial», «is activated and regulated by technological devices [and] has its trends and articulations preconstituted from outside» (Eugeni 2010, 43; translation is mine). For Eugeni, medial experience is subjected to operations of ‘projectual designing’ (*design progettuale*), «an activity of pre-planned regulation of some areas of ordinary experience» (*ibid.*) in which media are involved as ‘generators’ and ‘catalysts’ of experience. If we confront the idea of sound design to Eugeni’s category of projectual design, we can infer how sound design becomes a means of projecting (sound) experience and a channel through which listeners and producers connect as subjects belonging to the same media environment.

To put it bluntly, it is safe for the ‘ubiquitous listener’ to know that someone out there can imprint some ‘meaningful direction’ in the dispersion of everyday soundscape, as if they stood for something like a modern shaman

and a storyteller:

Storytelling has used sound to invoke myth, suspend reality, and create emotion since the times of fire circles in protective caves. Sound designers in the 21st century have the same job—to combine sight and sound for enrapturing their audiences. Both the shaman of old and the sound designer of today must develop their perceptive ability, meaning the two sides of creative intelligence: impression and expression (Sonnenschein 2001, xvii).

But, it is even more reassuring to be told that *anyone*, provided a dose of «natural sensitivity» and some «technological familiarity», can potentially access this qualification, as foreshadowed by the Yale statement above and more colourfully maintained by sound designer David Sonnenschein:

Yes, learn the basics, then you know when to break the rules. Mistakes can also become the genius of error, so have no hesitation about trying things out. If it works, use it! [...] It may seem like an exalted goal, but the path from sound “janitor” to sound designer can evolve from being a “techie”, to an “artiste”, and finally a storyteller (*ibid.*).

Seen in this light, ‘composing music’ stood for the Romantic and Modernist ideology of aesthetic authorship as ‘designing sound’ might stand for a postmodern ideology of subjective agency. As we shall see, the passage from authorship to agency is central in the evolution of the notion of ‘sound design’ within the fields of cinema and popular culture. It is in this sense that I will review the historical emergence of the term and its original semantic ambivalences in order to frame my final discussion of some of the latest configurations of sound design in the contemporary digital era.

THE HISTORICAL ORIGINS OF CINEMATIC SOUND DESIGN

In the cinematographic sound production chain, sound designer is probably the vaguest and most controversial of all titles, working as «a loose but overarching label for the artistic components of the audio post-production process, including (among other tasks) developing the soundtrack’s arc across an entire film, creating unique sounds and effects, and deciding which sounds will go where in the multi-channel soundscape» (Kerins 2011, 11; see also Weis 1995 and Whittington 2007, 20-27). Just like the term ‘director’, the

title ‘sound designer’ does not denote specific, well defined competences but rather a broad and negotiable area (and aura) of agency.³

This designation was originally created to describe a single person who would oversee the creative aspects of a film’s sound from start to finish. Today, though, the ‘sound designer’ credit may mean a number of things, which is why some within the film industry dislike it. Sometimes it labels the person with ultimate creative control over the soundtrack, but it may instead be used for the person who created a film’s signature sound effects, or for something else entirely (Kerins 2011, 12).

Yet, unlike the film director, the sound designer has not always existed, at least not in terms of a recognised profession. The emergence of this label went hand in hand with the New Hollywood phenomenon of the 1970s, and, as we will see, even in its early uses it exhibited the ambiguities enlisted above by Mark Kerins.

In strictly historical terms, the expression ‘sound design’ was, if not spoken, at least first written in 1979 in the credits of Francis Ford Coppola’s *Apocalypse Now* where the film editor Walter Murch appears responsible also for «sound montage and design». This first occurrence of sound design appears in conjunction with ‘montage’, another term begging a number of questions. Murch had taken on the credit ‘sound montage’ since *The Rain People* (F. F. Coppola, 1969), and later in some films recognised as establishing the *movie brats* movement (Pye and Myles 1979), namely George Lucas’s *THX 1138* (1971) and *American Graffiti* (1973), and Coppola’s *The Conversation* (1974) and *The Godfather, Part II* (1974).⁴ For Murch, the formula ‘sound montage’ worked as a marker for identifying and acknowledging creative operations covering recording, manipulating, layering, and editing hours and hours of audio material he had accumulated, drawing on procedures he had become familiar with in the 1950s and 1960s as a listener of *musique concrète* and as an experimenter with magnetic tape (LoBrutto 1994, 84; Ondaatje 2002, 6-10). In other words, his idea of sound montage posited a musico-compositional aura around the film’s sound

³ It does not sound surprising that the Wikipedia entry on “sound design” demands «help to improve this article». Even more interesting are the criticisms attached to the entry: «This article relies on references to primary sources; a major contributor to this article appears to have a close connection with its subject; this article possibly contains original research [and] may be unbalanced towards certain viewpoints», <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sound_design> (accessed on July 2014).

⁴ In each of these films Murch is credited with various other roles referring both to aspects of sound and visual editing (Ondaatje 2002, 314-315).

content by specifically suggesting that the sound construction of each film was musically tailored to the requisites of its dramaturgical conception. As Whittington noted with regard to *THX 1138*, «[Murch's] approach to sound revealed a constant tension between musicality and functionality within the genre of science fiction and underscored a shift in sound style» (*Ibid.*, 20). A number of anecdotes, such as the helicopter sound in *Apocalypse Now* being obtained by means of (what I understand to be) a synthesizer's voltage control, confirm this emphasis on musicality:

It was musical rather than technical. Richard Beggs loaded the real helicopter sound in a synthesizer, and his task was to synthesize the *thwarp* and all the other elements. He just started playing with wave forms until it evolved into something convincing and emotional (Murch in LoBrutto 1994, 91).

While sound montage aimed at differentiating a series of procedures from the traditional operations of sound editing which were familiar in Hollywood since the 1930s, the term 'design' is closely connected to the quadrasonic format of *Apocalypse Now*. Moving from monophony directly to quadrasonic,⁵ Murch had to partially revolutionise his approach to sound: «This early multichannel format gave Murch the means to deploy the film's sound effects with an attention to frequency, sound separation, and placement within the spatial quadrants of the theater» (Whittington 2007, 22). He exploited the spatial implications of the new format and realised, through a complex 'preparatory score', an audio and 'musical' configuration that evoked the idea of architectonic design (*i.e.* shaping sound objects and placing them in space), leading him to adopt the label 'sound design' (LoBrutto 1994, 91-92).

Parallel to Murch's meaning, another equally relevant meaning started making its way in the late 1970s, namely the idea of sound design as «creating unique sounds and effects» (Kerins 2011, "Introduction"). Again one key name, that of Ben Burtt who created an array of legendary sound effects for the *Star Wars* cult trilogy,⁶ can be symbolically associated with the rise of this second meaning: «These sounds rapidly formed the lexicon of sound designs used in a host of Lucasfilm ancillary products from audiobooks to computer games, reaching far beyond the borders of cinema» (Whittington

⁵ «For me, *Apocalypse Now* was not only the first quadrasonic film, it was the first stereo film I ever worked on» (Murch in LoBrutto 1994, 91).

⁶ *Star Wars: A New Hope* (George Lucas, 1977); *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back* (Irvin Kershner, 1980); *Star Wars: Return of the Jedi* (Richard Marquand, 1983).

2007, 24). This second meaning of sound design is much less effective than the first in marking a difference from the traditional praxis of sound effects construction, which had been in use since the classic days of sound cinema (Hanson 2007). No inherent distinction can in fact be posited, between the special effects used in *Star Wars* and those used in any sci-fi movie of the 1950s. What was instead considerably novel, besides the time, budget, and technology invested by Lucasfilm in the personalisation of sound effects, was the fact that sound effects were extremely enhanced by the new Dolby Stereo format, making them stand out in all their hyper-realistic nuance and unprecedented emotional impact (Sergi 2004, 26). This resulted in elevating carefully crafted sound effects to trademarks of a new era of filmmaking and making them noticeable for the mainstream, «as if the Hollywood “star system” had finally discovered the sound world» (Whittington 2007, 24).

From this overview stems that sound design can be considered a historically contingent response that Hollywood offered to a generally mutated sensibility towards sound, matured on a large scale throughout the 1960s. Such a response also had structural origins in the financial crisis that affected Hollywood’s major studios during the 1960s, which led to a reconfiguration of sound and music departments (Whittington 2007, 27-28). In the wake of European new waves and American underground cinema of the 1960s, the new Hollywood directors (Coppola, Lucas, Martin Scorsese, Brian De Palma, and Steven Spielberg, among others) called for a new role of authorship and encouraged the creation of the sound designer as «analogous to the cinematographer and production designer controlling the look of the film» (Beck 2008, 73). This suggests caution when extending sound design as a historical [retroactive] category to non-American contexts. In Italy, for instance, authorship of postproduction sound was, for a certain period, claimed and theorized by directors in cooperation or competition with music composers while at the same time companies of sound professionals [*rumoristi*] were establishing cartels and sound libraries.⁷

Yet, as recent scholarship has not missed to remark, this authorial conception was hardly realised in the 1980s and 1990s due also to the scepticism of the Hollywood unions against «privileg[ing] individual sound specialists over the entire sound team» (Whittington 2007, 26). In Jay Beck’s words, «unlike Murch’s conception of a sound designer as an individual who can control and shape the sound strategies in both production and

⁷ The period I am referring to ranges from the mid-1960s to the early 1970s. Expanding on this subject would exceed the purposes of this article, so I refer to Corbella and Meandri 2014-15.

postproduction, major resistance on the part of the sound union IATSE⁸ Local 695 prevented this idea from becoming a widespread reality» (Beck 2008, 73-74). This does not mean that sound design was abandoned as a catchy label. On the contrary, the resistance exhibited by Hollywood sound departments against revolutionising their structure entailed two kinds of subtler consequences in the cultural discourse: (1) the retroactive recuperation of sound supervisors, the traditional heads of the sound departments, as if they were *ante-litteram* sound designers, an operation that, by constructing «an artificial teleology between past practices and present definitions» obscured «the shift from a rigid hierarchical division of labor in the late classical Hollywood period to the central organizational role assigned to the sound designer in the 1970s» (*ibid.*, 74); (2) the germination of figures dedicated to the creation of special sound effects fashionably called ‘sound designers’. If the first position led to reify authorship without actually realising it (with significant exceptions), the second dispersed the disrupting import that the original conception of sound designing could have had.

SOUND DESIGN AND THE CULTURAL DISCOURSE

«[The] term sound design swiftly entered the mainstream discourse dealing with cinema and sound, but [...] even Murch, who coined the term, could not contain its meaning—on or off the screen» (Whittington 2007, 23)

My goal is not to suggest that we should take a position in favour of or against one definition of sound design or that we should abandon it. I aim instead to read through the cultural values attached to this handy notion and interrogate their sense in contemporary experience. Some help comes from Beck who suggests that «a different way of looking at the question of ‘sound design’ is to recognize that the true designers of sound are either those who are able to dictate what technology will be used or those who adapt the existing technology to suit their particular aesthetic needs» (*ibid.*, 75). This definition bridges us back to Eugeni’s idea of projectual design discussed in this article’s introduction. Perhaps in its broader sense, sound design has become a way of setting technologies in such a way as to enable particular

⁸ The International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, Moving Picture Technicians, Artists and Allied Crafts

kinds of experience and thus it does not have to be necessarily tied to a single individual (an author) nor to a single medium (film), but rather to a set of functions (an agency) that can take on different media at the same time. This is what current investigations about the permeability of sonic formats and configurations occurring among film and videogame industries seem to suggest.

If sound design can be understood as the tip of the iceberg in a sea-change in the way western society at large conceives, produces, and exploits sound, and if cinema can be retained as one of its most powerful catalysts, origins of such a shift cannot be sought in cinema alone, but in the broader context of popular culture. Although conflating the histories of cinema, popular music, and the musical avant-garde might appear a risky operation, it can have positive effects insofar as producing the impression that sometime between the 1960s and 1970s technologically reproduced sound started to matter in the public sphere insofar that its aesthetic, economical, and emic implications started to be openly challenged in the cultural discourse. One need just think of the influence of audiovisual expressions of late-1960s popular music, such as psychedelic rock (Whittington 2007, 6-7; see also Auslander 2013), as well as a new sensibility grown around issues of acoustic environment and ecology in the same period.⁹ Undoubtedly, the musical avant-garde played a great role in the research threads of the electroacoustic and computer music milieu. A thorough historiographic survey of those years, especially if directed to unearth the liaisons between the mentioned disciplinary fields, may certainly contribute to nuance this otherwise all too general assumption. This is what scholars coming from different backgrounds have started to do more and more frequently.

On the other hand one should resist the perspective fallacy which consists of putting sound design at the top of a teleological vision of cultural history, as if it had represented the natural way out for a series of tensions to solve. We have already addressed the contingency of this phenomenon as a problematic geo-cultural specificity of Hollywood. We should also keep in mind the recurrence of narratives and mythologies about sound (especially reproduced sound), which have accompanied the history of performance arts since the beginning of 20th century and even before that with mechanical sound.

⁹ The World Soundscape Project was founded by R. Murray Schafer in the late 1960s at Simon Fraser University (British Columbia).

Since the early days of sound cinema, sound film has been strongly imbricated with issues that are both technical and ordinary, whose elaboration and articulation resulted in the creation of an audiovisual vocabulary (with its standards and deviances) shared and challenged at a time by filmmakers and audiences, and, of course, produced a professional organization of sound departments that reflected industrial specificities on a local scale (Lastra 2000). As an ontological property of sound film, Buhler and Neumeyer pinpoint the uncertainty of placing music and sound in the imaginary audiovisual space of sound film.

As Paolo Cherchi Usai reminds us, the aesthetic of silent cinema was based on maintaining “a clear distinction between an apparatus producing images and a sound source in front of or behind the screen” ([Cherchi] Usai 1994, 52). [...] This sort of fantasy space was also open to the silent film with its live music in a way that would be denied the sound film. Indeed, the synchronized film *eroded this distinction*—music, dialogue, and effects were all emitted from the loudspeaker—making the placement of music and sound uncertain (Buhler and Neumeyer 2014, “The concept of synchronization in sound cinema”; emphasis added).

With the displacement of the main sound source in the imaginary middle-ground between the audience’s real world and the film’s fictional world, we are approximating the notion of ubiquity discussed above, especially if we consider to what extent such uncertainty between audiovisual and auditory space increased with the developments of cinematic sound design. Ubiquity demands assessment and thus an agency to rely on: in the field of ‘classical’ sound film such agency was constituted by synchronization, «the structure of sound film is governed fundamentally by a relation of image to sound based on the expectation of sync points» (*Ibid.*, “Synchronization and an ontology of sound film”). This explains why, especially those sounds capable of destabilizing synchronization through the means of their uncanniness in terms of source localization and of emotional affordance, stimulated, since the earliest days of cinema, the production of narratives and mythologies that found place in genres such as horror and science fiction (Corbella and Windisch 2013).¹⁰ It was the case of the proto-synthetic sonorities of the Theremin, the Ondes Martenot, the Trautonium and drawn sound in the late 1920s; of tape manipulation and electronically generated “tonalities”¹¹ in the

¹⁰ For an extensive investigation of structural links between sound design and science fiction refer to Whittington 2007.

¹¹ «Electronic tonalities» is the credit accorded to composers Louis and Bebe Barron for their electronic soundtrack of *Forbidden Planet* (Fred M. Wilcox, 1956).

1950s and 1960s; and eventually of those practices that were first addressed as sound design in the 1970s.

In post-sound design cinema, synchronization might not be the only key factor at play; at least this is what recent studies on digital contemporary cinema suggest. Even if synchronization retains its original drive, empowered by the sophistications that sound design affords,¹² contemporary audiovisual aesthetics seem to put a new emphasis on sensory appeal, at least in those films that exploit multi-channel environments such as digital surround.¹³ To hypothesize a shift from narration and content to sensory appeal does not mean that the former are insignificant today or that the latter was absent in earlier cinema, but that it «has become much more pronounced» in digital cinema (Chion 2013).

Already in a seminal non-digital example like the opening sequence of *Apocalypse Now*, this aspect can be detected. A musical piece (*The End*, The Doors, 1967) was literally sectioned and its spatial potentials were reassessed within the 70mm format, not only in terms of mere dislocation of the sound elements (the original mix was re-opened, the spatial positioning of the original instruments changed, Jim Morrison's voice enhanced, sound effects added), but rather in terms of the entailing of new 'affects', that is «the circuit of bodily responses to stimuli that take place before conscious apprehension» (Kassabian 2013, "Introduction"). In short, Murch's sound design, in concurrence with the visual vocabulary employed by Coppola (e.g. circular and lateral pattern movements of the shots, colour temperature of the photography, cross-fade editing techniques, etc.) transformed the space of the audio-spectator into a «pathemic space», as Giacomo Albert has acutely illustrated with reference to more recent films like *Inception* (Christopher Nolan, 2010), *The Hurt Locker* (Kathryn Bigelow, 2008), *The Dark Knight* (Christopher Nolan, 2008) (Albert 2011) and *The Ring* (Gore Verbinski, 2002) (Albert 2012):

A function of sound design is [...] the direct manipulation of the audiospectator's subconscious, not mediated by conscious cognitive processes based on representation. [Sound design] does not exert only a mimetic function, but also a function of psychological pressure. [...] It is then possible to maintain that the space in which the

¹² A landmark of sound design such as the Club Silencio scene in *Mulholland Dr* (David Lynch, 2001) can be understood in many respects as a treatise on synchronization's effects (Corbella 2007).

¹³ For the most complete examination of digital surround sound in contemporary cinema, see Kerins 2011.

audience sits has a pathemic nature, emotional rather than descriptive or representational (Albert 2011, 220-221; translation is mine).

In this immersive setup conjured up by sound design techniques in conjunction with contemporary multi-channel surround formats, music gets, so to say, ‘swallowed’. It participates as an essential ingredient of the multimedia environment, but it disperses its specificities as an autonomous medium, from which follows a certain impression of predictability of contemporary Hollywood mainstream action and horror film scores.¹⁴ In this statement I am not implying that other ways of making music or of conceiving film that are less related to the issues conveyed by sound design no longer bare a vital role in contemporary society;¹⁵ nor am I neglecting the importance of contemporary music research in driving issues of immersion, multimediality, or interactivity towards directions that are not contemplated by sound design.¹⁶ I am instead registering that a large part of the multimedia production that pervades our everyday is indebted to the pathemic schemata set forward by cinematic sound design and that perhaps what we keep on calling ‘music’ in universities and conservatories has already mutated into something different outside those classrooms, something more similar to a multimedia compound (Cook 2013, Tagg 2011) that we as cinemagoers and ubiquitous listeners experience and sense *before* or *despite* focusing on it as scholars.

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¹⁴ Even when Hollywood mainstream adopts music which is not traditionally linked to or explicitly scored for cinema, the described effect does not seem to diminish; I am thinking of Scorsese’s use of 20th century avant-garde music by Ligeti, Scelsi, Cage, Marshall, Penderecki, Paik, Feldman and several other composers in *Shutter Island* (2010).

¹⁵ See on this topic the paragraph “DSS and specific cinematic forms” in Kerins 2011, “Conclusions”.

¹⁶ Albert’s comparisons of sound in video-art and installations to contemporary mainstream cinema are in this sense illuminating (Albert 2011 and 2012).

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‘CEREBRAL’ VIRTUOSITY IN TWO EXAMPLES
OF CONTEMPORARY MUSIC FOR CLASSICAL GUITAR

Alberto Barberis

Though often confined to a secondary role in the world of solo instruments, the guitar has been at the forefront for virtuosity and *bravura* since its origins. In fact, as early as the Renaissance it was appreciated not only for its function of chordal support to the melody, but also for its polyphonic agility, similar to that of the lute. However, the conditions for the virtuosity that pervade the genres in which instruments are used today were established at the beginning of the 19th-century. Such a virtuosity could be called ‘technical’; an exuberant push to the limits of technical and idiomatic possibilities.

In fact, the scores for guitar of the greatest composers of the first half of the 19th-century—among them Mauro Giuliani, Luigi Legnani, Fernando Sor and Niccolò Paganini—make liberal use of fast scales, rapid successions of chords, wide leaps, abrupt changes in texture, and free *cadenza* passages; the same virtuosity in which most guitarists are trained still today. Even though the focus was shifted to harmonic, timbral, and expressive experimentation during the Romantic period, this idiomatic virtuosity, inextricably linked to the potential of the instrument, persists. In the works of composers such as Napoléon Coste, Johann Kaspar Mertz, Giulio Regondi, the hands of the guitarist are engaged in the search for new sounds and harmonic solutions. Even non-guitarist composers of the early 20th-century—the so-called ‘Segovia composers’ such as Heitor Villa-Lobos, Manuel María Ponce, Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco (Gilardino 1988: 37-38), among others—are close to a ‘technical’ approach to virtuosity, as some of their works were written in direct relationship with important performers.

In the guitar music of the end of the last century and of today, a different kind of virtuosity has been developed. It is sometimes juxtaposed to the more traditional one described above, sometimes posed in sharp contrast with it. This different approach to virtuosity overcomes the limitation of an exclusively idiomatic and technical difficulty; instead, it calls for focus and mental commitment that is not necessarily in a direct relationship with performative skills. For this reason, I will refer to this type of virtuosity as ‘cerebral’.

In order to highlight its features and implications, I will propose some passages of two representative pieces: *Kurze Schatten II* (1990) by the

English composer Brian Ferneyhough and *Estatica* (2011) by the Italian Giovanni Albini.

Kurze Schatten II for solo guitar consists of seven movements, recalling as a whole the structure of the baroque suite. Each movement, in the words of Ferneyhough himself, is «extremely short, compact and formally focused», as if to represent the moment when «everything just becomes itself, a quintessential monad» (Ferneyhough 1998a: 139). This way, the composer creates strongly characterized identities in which different criteria and compositional processes are condensed to a narrow musical space, and several musical and performing parameters are carefully investigated in order to seize the moment when «all shadows disappear» (Ferneyhough 1998: 139). The result of this procedure is reflected in an extremely detailed notation; a hyperbolic microcosm of information where nothing is left implicit. Here, all compositional (pitch, meter, tempo, rhythm), performance (dynamics, timbre, agogics), and technical aspects (semitonal scordaturas, timbral effects, fingerings, percussive style, position on the fret board, strings) are meticulously investigated and combined in a highly distilled and complex creative process, sometimes unusual and anti-idiomatic, and extremely conceptual.

In order to best exemplify the approach that characterizes the whole piece, I carried out a detailed analysis of all the symbols that the composer uses to investigate different parameters in the third movement of *Kurze Schatten II*.¹ To do this, I created Table 1, in which I identified by Roman numerals in the first column on the left, the sixteen ‘musical events’ in which I divided the movement for analytical purposes. By ‘event’ (E) I refer to a set of notes and percussive effects separated from the other ‘events’ by silences of different durations.² The number of notes played (*not*) and the number of percussive sounds (*per*) in each event are shown in the second and in the third column. At this point I identified all the different ‘classes’ of parameters (listed in Table 2) that the composer has taken into consideration along the whole

¹ A different but equally detailed analysis of the third movement of *Kurze Schatten II*, mainly discussing the formal features and complex architecture of the piece, can be found in Merker Castellani 2009, also on line at: http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?pid=S1517-75992009000100004&script=sci_arttext&tlng=en (Accessed July 15, 2013).

² The reference score for my analysis is Brian Ferneyhough, *Kurze Schatten II, for Solo Guitar*, (London/New York: Edition Peters, 1989). The third movement presents itself as a two-staff system, one of the staves marking the notes in traditional notation, the other indicating the rhythm of the percussive sounds to be played on the instrument.

movement. For each event, I then calculated the number of symbols belonging to a given class (for example, *p*, *ff*, *sfz* for ‘class’ *din*), shown in the fourth to twenty-first columns. The last two columns on the right show the total number (*tot*) of symbols used in each event and the ratio $rap=tot/(not+per)^3$ representing the average quantity of symbols associated to a single sound in a given event. This ratio is an average index of the information associated to a single note—information that is in addition to the traditional specifications, *i.e.* the pitch or the kind of percussion, its position within the bar, and its duration. As you can see, this index ranges from a minimum of 0.8 to a maximum of 4.8. To understand the importance of these values, it is necessary to compare them with those that would be obtained by performing the same type of analysis in a piece of ‘technical’ virtuosity such as the *Rossiniana n. 1 op. 119* by Mauro Giuliani. The ratio calculated in the *Introduzione* of this work is 0.08.⁴ Comparing this figure to those in Table 1 we note how in each event of *Kurze Schatten II* the index is significantly higher compared to that of an event in a more traditional piece (as the *Introduzione* of the *Rossiniana* might be defined), even if it covers a wide range (0.8 to 4.8).

³ Values for *rap* have been rounded.

⁴ I used as a reference score *Le Rossiniane, per chitarra* by Mauro Giuliani, Vienna Artaria & Co. I carried out the analysis by calculating the number of symbols exploring different musical parameters in the whole *Introduzione* movement (114 symbols), then the total number of notes (1484 notes), from which I derived the *rap* index (114/1484).

TABLE 1

Table of number of symbols exploring different musical parameters into each 'event'.

E	not	per	met	din	vib	str	ope	rit	c-d	bar	bre	tim	arp	tr	ben	acc	p/s/t/l	arm	fing	gli	tot	rap
I	1	2	1	3	2	1		3									2				12	4
II	5	8	1	7		1		6	3	1	1			1			9				30	2,3
III	6	3	1	6	1	5		6	1	1		6				4	7				38	4,2
IV	6	9	1	7		4		4	1			4					11	1			33	2,2
V	15	2	1	8	1	7		5	1		1	1				4	5				34	2
VI	12	3		7	3	3		4	1		1					6	1		1		27	1,8
VII	30	9	1	10		1		10	4		3	6	1			5	14	1	1	4	61	1,6
VIII	27	7	1	2		14		17				1				3	24	10			72	2,1
IX	9	15	1	16		7	1	10	1	1	3	5				7	12	2		1	67	2,8
X	10	10	1	6		3	3	5	3			1	1			2	8			2	35	1,7
XI	19	5	1	5	1	4	4	4	3							1					23	0,9
XII	6	17	1	2	1		3	3				2				6					18	0,8
XIII	4	6	1	5		3		2		3	1	1					8	1			25	2,5
XIV	2	3	1	5	1	1		3				2			1	5	3				24	4,8
XV	10	2	1	3		5		2			1	2					2				17	1,4
XVI	12	6	1	4		2		5	1			3				2	4	7			34	1,9

<i>not</i>	number of notes within the sound event
<i>per</i>	number of percussive gestures on the instrument
<i>met</i>	number of metronomic indications
<i>din</i>	number of dynamic symbols
<i>vib</i>	number of symbols for vibration or lack thereof (M.V; N.V.; etc.)
<i>cor</i>	number of string markings
<i>vuo</i>	number of zeros marking an open string
<i>rit</i>	number of indications of irregular rhythms with respect to the meter
<i>for</i>	number of hairpins
<i>bar</i>	number of Bartók pizzicatos
<i>res</i>	number of breath marks
<i>tim</i>	number of timbral indications (pizzicato, nail sound, ponticello, appoggiato, étouffé, etc..)
<i>arp:</i>	number of arrows marking arpeggios
<i>tri</i>	number of trills
<i>ben</i>	number of bending marks
<i>acc</i>	number of accents
<i>p/s/t/l</i>	number of <i>p</i> untato, <i>s</i> taccato, <i>t</i> enuto, <i>l</i> egato marks
<i>arm</i>	number of harmonics
<i>dit</i>	number of right-hand fingering marks
<i>gli</i>	number of glissandos

TABLE 2
‘Classes’ of parameters

Hence, the index *rap* can be interpreted as an indicator of ‘cerebral’ virtuosity: the higher it is, the larger the amount of information the performer has to keep in mind, with the consequence that the focus and mental commitment required from the performer will be greater, too. In *Kurze Schatten II* we reach a maximum of nearly 5 symbols associated to a single note, while in the *Rossiniana* 5 symbols are on average associated with about 60 notes. In the piece by the English composer, ‘cerebral’ virtuosity is determined not only by the purely technical demands (which are pushed to the extreme limits), but especially by an accumulation of information leading to saturation in a narrow sound space, where the highly changing and non-traditional context perpetually raises psychological barriers ‘encasing’ the performer. This approach, characterized by a performative complexity that verges on the unplayable and a deluge of extra-musical implications, is typical not only of all seven the movements of *Kurze Schatten II*, but also in the rest of the composer’s output, resulting in a fundamental feature of his style.⁵ Such an approach, however, is not the ultimate goal, and through to

⁵ For the concept of complexity, *Cassandra's dream song* (1970) for solo flute and *Time and Motion Study* (1971-1977) can be mentioned among the composer’s works. Many of his compositions also take their cue from philosophical writings or paintings, such as *La terre est un homme* (1976-1979) for orchestra, inspired by a painting by Roberto Matta, or *Lemma-Icon-Epigram* (1981), for solo piano, occasioned by a poem by Andrea

itself. In fact, in a condition in which the interpreter is forced to maximize his attention and focus in a continuous challenge on his or her physical and intellectual potential, the composer is able to keep the tension high, so that the energy transmitted from the performer to the audience is kept high, too. Using Ferneyhough's very words to describe his music, «the end is the 'opus' which emerges from the person losing himself in the forest of his own imperfections» (Ferneyhough 1998b, 213).⁶

With *Estatica* (2009), Giovanni Albini aims to «raise isolated technical gestures to ecstatic experiences through specific uses of organizational processes of mathematical nature», as he himself says.⁷ Therefore, 'cerebral' virtuosity is no longer determined by the superabundance of information regarding musical parameters, but by the use of extra-musical processes that inform the composition and its idiomatic situations. An explanatory example of this type of approach is the treatment of the repeated E, which begins the first of the three movements (Ex.1).

Prestissimo ad libitum (non meno di ♩=240)
 sulla buca, muovendo gradualmente al ---
 p p i p i p i m i m a m i *sim.* (stesso gruppo, stesse corde e diteggiatura, sempre)

-- tasto, muovendo gradualmente al ---
 -- ponticello
 appena **p subito** poco **p subito** molto **p subito** possibile
f
p subito possibile

Example 1.
 Giovanni Albini, *Estatica*, for guitar (© G. Albini 2009)

Alciato. Ferneyhough's source for *Kurze Schatten II*, however, is an essay by Walter Benjamin (Benjamin 1977), in which the author «talks about the essentiality of the *Augenblick*, of the experimental moment». See Ferneyhough 1998a, 139.

⁶ *Interview with Andrew Clements*, in Ferneyhough 1998b, 213.

⁷ Present information about *Estatica* are from two interviews conducted by myself, to the composer Giovanni Albini and to guitarist Giorgio Mirto, who first recorded the piece (GIOVANNI ALBINI, *Musica Ciclica*, © 2013 Brilliant Classics). I thank both of them for kind permission to use its contents.

The mathematical process that ‘cerebrally’ governs the repeated notes consists of the use of all of the possible permutations of a collection of four objects.⁸ Analyzing this particular example, we can see that the composer has divided the repeated-note passage into groups of 2, 3, 4, or 6 note, each group being associated to a different right-hand fingering (p-i; p-i-m; p-i-m-i; p-i-m-a-m-i).⁹ Taking advantage of the guitar’s ability to play the same note on different strings (also marked in the score), the composer is then able to precisely control the subliminal accentuation of the repeated notes—which will always coincide with the 16th-note played with the thumb—as well as the ever-changing timbral-sound effect. Numbering each group from 1 to 4 (Ex. 2) we can observe that the composer has not only repeated the collection exhausting all possible permutations of the four objects,¹⁰ but also organized the repeated-note passage so that the permutations are presented in an ascending order (Table 3).



Example 2.
Different number of 16th-note groups

perm	groups				perm	groups				perm	groups				perm	groups			
I	1	2	3	4	VII	2	1	3	4	XIII	3	1	2	4	IX	4	1	2	3
II	1	2	4	3	VIII	2	1	4	3	XIV	3	1	4	2	XX	4	1	3	2
III	1	3	2	4	IX	2	3	1	4	XV	3	2	1	4	XXI	4	2	1	3
IV	1	3	4	2	X	2	3	4	1	XVI	3	2	4	1	XXII	4	2	3	1
V	1	4	2	3	XI	2	4	1	3	XVII	3	4	1	2	XXIII	4	3	1	2
VI	1	4	3	2	XII	2	4	3	1	XVIII	3	4	2	1	XXIV	4	3	2	1

TABLE 3
Permutational system of XXIV sections

⁸ By *permutation* I mean the way of arranging in succession n distinct objects.

⁹ Letters identify the following right-hand fingers: p: thumb; i: index finger; m: middle finger; a: ring finger.

¹⁰ The number of possible permutations of a collection of n objects is calculated by the mathematical operator *factorial* of n : $n! = n(n-1)(n-2) \dots 1$. In the case in point the possible permutations are $4! = 24$.

The number of repeated notes and their accentuation, defined precisely through the ascending order of each permutation, are thus determined since the beginning. The effect is that of a single and strongly characterized sound entity evolving along a predetermined process of constant metamorphosis. Therefore, when performing this passage, the difficulty and the virtuosic feature do not reside in the speed of the arpeggio,¹¹ but in the constant alternation of the four types of right-hand fingerings. Moreover, because the second group in Ex. 2 is ternary, it disrupts any possibility of mental binary subdivision and thus the quest for an order based on usual structures. Therefore, the use of permutations allows Albinì to expand the possibilities of a traditional technical gesture—the repeated note—allowing it to evolve into an unusual and destabilizing one.

This approach also characterizes other musical parameters of the idiosyncratic language of the composer, which is made of «ossified musical objects, reduced to their essential traits, abstract and de-characterized, so as to highlight their most obvious structural and transformational properties», as he himself says. In his output no type of material is rejected a priori: diatonic scales, simple triads, elementary part-writing, clear chord progressions. Though, exposed in its childish simplicity, it is coated, disguised, twisted, sometimes veiled, through structures, self-similarities, palindromes, symmetries, cycles, canons, hidden combinatorial mechanisms, mosaics and geometrized harmonic paths in a continuous game of mirrors, quotations and references. Similar architectures characterize other movements of *Estatica* as well, making the performance a transcending moment, so to say. For example, a Hamiltonian cycle constitutes the base for the 2nd movement (CORALE #7), while movement III.b employs a procedure similar to that of the 1st movement, where the permuted objects are 4 collections of 1, 2, 3, or 4 elements.¹² Here, an unchanging rhythmic figure (three 16th-notes to be performed with fixed fingering) characterizes each element, while the pitch changes with each subsequent collection. However, in this case, only some of the possible orderings of the collections are presented, always following an ascending order.

¹¹ The only link to traditional virtuosity is the *Prestissimo ad libitum (non meno di e=240)*.

¹² Hamiltonian cycles are all the possible cyclic successions of major and minor triads touching all twenty-four triads only once, so that every triad shares two pitches out of three with the following one. For further reading on the technique employed by the composer, see Albinì, G. and Antonini, S. (2009).

According to Giorgio Mirto,

the performance of *Estatica* is a real mental problem, where the main difficulty is to find the right focus to think to the link between numbers and fingerings rather than to all other musical and technical parameters that a performer is normally concerned with.

Therefore, this kind of virtuosity also requires a «careful analysis of the underlying compositional processes, a kind of reverse process in the mind of the composer», in search of a regularity in the initially presumed irregularity.¹³ This fact is also confirmed by the experience of another interpreter of *Estatica*, James Robert Lowe, who says

I knew that in order to understand this piece I would need to analyze the subtle math behind it [...]. Without the mathematical code behind the organized chaos of the work, there is almost no way of memorizing line after line of constantly changing material. (Lowe 2013)

With the brief analysis of some passages of these two compositions, sharply different from each other both in compositional approach and in sound outcome, I wanted to show an interest shared by some contemporary composers in a virtuosity removed from the traditional one. Both *Kurze Schatten II* and *Estatica*, in fact, are far from the technical and idiomatic show-off tendency present in many compositions of the previous periods, in which the poetic moment is often subordinated to the idiomatic features of the instrument. Here, favoring a virtuosity that engages the interpreter in a new way, which I denoted as ‘cerebral’, the composer is able not only to develop the technique of the instrument indirectly through an unusual but parallel path, but also to challenge his and the performer’s mastery, in the search for an ultimate balance between the abstract compositional idea and its actual sonic realization.

English Translation: Valentina Bertolani

¹³ Interview with Giorgio Mirto.

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