



MICHAEL FINNISSY'S  
*The History of Photography  
in Sound*

A Study of Sources, Techniques and  
Interpretation

To accompany the release of the CD recording of the  
work, Métier MSV 77501 (5 CDs)

Ian Pace  
Pianist, Lecturer in Music, City University  
London

November 2013

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	
1. Origins and design	1
2. Material as Archetype in Michael Finnissy's <i>The History of Photography in Sound</i>	8
3. No. 1: <i>Le démon de l'analogie</i>	44
4. No. 2: <i>Le réveil de l'intraitable réalité</i>	54
5. No. 3: <i>North American Spirituals</i>	73
6. No. 4: <i>My parents' generation thought War meant something</i>	96
7. No. 5: <i>Alkan-Paganini</i>	126
8. No. 6: <i>Seventeen Immortal Homosexual Poets</i>	140
9. No. 7: <i>Eadweard Muybridge – Edvard Munch</i>	176
10. No. 8: <i>Kapitalistisch Realisme (met Sizilianische Männerakte en Bachsche Nachdichtungen)</i>	196
11. No. 9: <i>Wachtend op de volgende uitsbaring van repressive en censuur</i>	238
12. No. 10: <i>Unsere Afrikareise</i>	241
13. No. 11: <i>Etched Bright with Sunlight</i>	268
14. Performing <i>The History of Photography in Sound</i>	280
Composer and author/pianist biographies	283

## Introduction

For a period of over 20 years prior to writing both the programme notes for my CD of *The History of Photography in Sound* and this extended version of those in the form of a monograph, Michael Finnissy's music has played a prominent role in my own life; its presence has sometimes been dangerously close to overwhelming, and my attempts to maintain my own distinct identity and priorities both when playing and writing about it have often been fraught, sometimes to the point of exasperation. But it is music whose importance I have never seriously doubted, nor has my continuing fascination with each new work (and not just those for solo piano) dimmed.

I came across Finnissy's work at a relatively advanced point in my own early musical development. Whilst in the sixth form at Chetham's School of Music, I recall my then piano teacher, Peter Lawson, mentioning the names of both Finnissy and Brian Ferneyhough as two composers whose work operated on the boundaries of pianistic possibility, this very fact being tied into the nature of the musical experience. Soon afterwards, my then composition teacher Colin Touchin lent me a tape of Ferneyhough's Second String Quartet; but it would not be until a year or two later I would first see or hear any music of Finnissy. This would be at Oxford, where I spent many a happy hour investigating what were then extremely rare scores of works 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century composers for piano (Liszt, Tausig, Rubinstein, Thalberg, Busoni, Godowsky and others) simultaneously with those of the post-1945 avant-garde, all facilitated by Peter McMullin, flautist, pianist and all-purpose encyclopedia of information, who worked at Blackwell's Music Shop. At this time, I was equally enthusiastically sharing information and perspectives (and rare scores) of such earlier piano repertoire with friends such as pianist and musicologist Kenneth Hamilton (now one of the world's leading authorities on Liszt) and composer Francis Pott (now Chair of Composition at the University of West London), and on avant-garde music with fellow students such as conductor Mikel Toms and composers and musicologists Pwyll Ap Sïon and David Maw.

McMullin, familiar with my interests, lent me copies of scores of Finnissy's *Jazz* (1976) and *all.fall.down* (1977), which I found quite incredible from the outset, and seemed to bring together both my pianistic and avant-garde interests. Soon afterwards, I purchased the score of *English Country-Tunes* (1977, rev. 1982-85), which more than any music I had previously encountered seemed to epitomise an 'England' which I could recognise – a ravaged post-industrial landscape and a modern culture still predicated upon visions of some idealised Arcadian past, a long way from conventional English pastoralism. I dreamed of playing this some day (this would not occur until some eight years later, since when it has become a staple of my repertoire). Playing any of Finnissy's work (and that of other composers who have been associated with the so-called 'New

Complexity') remained a daunting prospect at this stage; it was not until several years later, when studying in New York at the Juilliard School, that I finally decided to find the resolve to do so. The first work I played was the first volume of the *Verdi Transcriptions*, of which I gave the US premiere. I led from this to shorter pieces, each one continuously fascinating, and after settling in London in 1993 played several recitals featuring a range of Finnissey's music. Eventually I felt an urge to tackle the totality of Finnissey's pianistic output, and presented a series of six long recitals in London in 1996 featuring Finnissey's then complete piano works to celebrate his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday year (at the time of writing, in 2013, I know that an equivalent series today would be between two and three times the length of this) and soon afterwards co-wrote and co-edited the first monograph on Finnissey's work, *Uncommon Ground*<sup>1</sup>. Since then Finnissey's work has played a central role in my own work as a performer, though my approaches to it have hopefully developed and matured in the intervening period.

To this day *The History of Photography in Sound* remains the most important pianist project which I have undertaken, and it is a great joy to me that this recording, supported first through an AHRC research fellowship at Southampton University from 2003 to 2006, and with editing and pressing supported by City University London, where I now lecture, is being finally released. I would like to thank various people in particular for making this possible: Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist for first encouraging and supporting me with the AHRC fellowship application, David Lefeber, producer for all of my Finnissey recordings, whose patience in the recording studio is second to none, Stephen Sutton of Divine Art Records for giving such support to this project, Adam Binks for editing, Gail Marsom at City for supporting the project from the institution's end, and to Oxford University Press for granting permission to reproduce the musical examples from the *History* in this document.

This monograph does not constitute my final word on the *History*, by any means, and is not intended as a comprehensive study of all dimensions of the work; it is a guide to the music, focusing in particular upon sources and compositional techniques and their implications, which will be followed by a full published monograph (to be completed in 2014), not so much examining the work from beginning to end as considering more of the wider issues raised, its relationship to ideas from photography, film, politics, other art forms, and various else, Finnissey's use of harmony, more extended discussion of issues for performers, and the relationship of the work not only to the rest of Finnissey's output, but a wider context of contemporary composition from Britain and elsewhere.

Without the conversations and exchanges I have had with many people over a long period I do not believe I would have arrived at the same understanding of Finnissey, contemporary performance, and many wider musical and other issues, all of which inform this production: these include Jim Aitchison, Pavlos

---

<sup>1</sup> Henrietta Brougham, Christopher Fox and Ian Pace (eds), *Uncommon Ground: The Music of Michael Finnissey* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998).

Antoniadis, Pwyll Ap Sion, Richard Barrett, Philipp Blume, Philip Clark, Mark Delaere, James Dillon, Richard Emsley, John Fallas, Christopher Fox, Roddy Hawkins, Björn Heile, Wieland Hoban, Martin Iddon, Mark Knoop, David Maw, Nigel McBride, Paul Obermayer, David Prior, Mark R. Taylor, Philip Thomas, Mikel Toms, John Wall, Arnold Whittall, Trevor Wiggins, and many others too numerous to mention.

And above all I wish to give the warmest of thanks to Michael Finnissy for everything, and to my wife Lindsay Edkins, the most important person in my life, who will know what I mean when I say I appreciate her patience when I 'bury' myself in this type of work!

Ian Pace

London, November 2013.

# Chapter 1

## Origins and Design

Some early ideas for the *History of Photography in Sound* were first conceived in 1995, the year before my concert series of Finnissey's then complete piano works, but composition of the work began properly in 1997, perhaps in part motivated by the sort of self-awareness that could be engendered through hearing the totality of his output for piano up until that time, perceiving its boundaries, and thus being able to apprehend clearly areas for future development. First conceived as a somewhat smaller work than eventually resulted, the *History* was originally to be in nine chapters and appears in projected form in this manner in the work list of *Uncommon Ground*<sup>1</sup>. These were structured in five books:

Book 1: *Le démon de l'analogie*

Book 2: *Landscapes*

2.1 *The wakening of intractable reality*

2.2 *North American Spirituals*

Book 3: *Portraiture*

3.1 *Alkan-Paganini*

3.2 *Seventeen Immortal Homosexual Poets*

3.3 *Eadweard Muybridge – Edvard Munch*

Book 4: *Documentation*

4.1 *Unsere Afrikareise*

4.2 *Click!*

Book 5: *Etched bright with sunlight*

2.1 was also at one point to be entitled *Canada: From its origins to the present day*, but this title was soon dropped. It was to be a Canadian counterpart to *North American Spirituals*, featuring a wide range of materials collected by the Canadian pianist Marc Couroux. In the end few of these were used, only appearing in the final section of *Le réveil*, and buried within *North American Spirituals*.

The piece *Click!* only ever existed as an idea, which probably did not really correspond to either *Kapitalistisch Realisme* or *Wachtend*. Finnissey first composed the pieces in Book 3, all in 1997 (in order *Poets*, *Alkan-Paganini*, *Muybridge-Munch*), followed by the *Spirituals* in the same year. I premiered in the British Music Information Centre on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1997 (the same day as the General Election which ushered in a landslide Labour victory after 18 years of Conservative rule),

---

<sup>1</sup> See *Uncommon Ground*, p. 397.

having earlier in the year performed sections of the work. *Unsere Afrikareise*, which I also premiered in a concert in Cheltenham, followed in 1998. It was at this point that Finnissy decided to add an extra two chapters, stemming from the motivation to compose *My parents' generation* in 1999, which necessitated a long counterpart later on in the cycle. This was to be, of course *Kapitalistisch Realisme*. From here onwards, the remaining chapters were worked on simultaneously (some had been part sketched already). *Le réveil* was completed in 1999, *Bachsche Nachdichtungen* and *Etched bright with sunlight* were both completed early in 2000, and the remainder of *Kapitalistisch Realisme*, then *Wachtend* and finally *Le demon*, all followed in a flood of productivity from that year. The cycle was finished in Autumn 2000, before my first complete performance at the Royal Academy of Music, London on January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2001, and have subsequently performed the cycle complete in Leuven, Glasgow, Montréal and Southampton, as well as continuing often to play individual chapters.

In the version presented in the world premiere, the cycle had a different order to the final version, and was still structured into 'books'. The last four pieces then were, in order: *Wachtend*; *Unsere Afrikareise*; *Kapitalistisch Realisme*; *Etched*. *Le demon* and *Etched* both formed self-contained books (under the titles above), whilst the other pieces were formed into books with the titles from above, each book with three pieces in. However, this order proved unsatisfactory, mostly because of the relative position of the last two pieces. After the scale of *Kapitalistisch Realisme*, *Etched* came to feel like an incidental epilogue, even a bagatelle, thus diminishing its impact. Finnissy decided upon a new order of performance, and also removed the 'books', describing it simply as in eleven chapters, before the second complete performance, which I gave in Leuven, Belgium. In 2002, Finnissy made some further modifications to *Wachtend*, which was given a new beginning and a comprehensive re-composition of the last section. The version then resulting is final and definitive.

The title remains enigmatic and polysemic: 'History' can be understood as referring both musical history, wider social and political history, and Finnissy's own personal 'history' (especially in *My parents' generation*), as well as a particular mode of historical consciousness which acts upon the present; 'Photography' refers obviously to the medium, and in particular the thought of three intellectuals whose ideas informed the composition of the work – Walter Benjamin, Susan Sontag and Roland Barthes<sup>2</sup>. Benjamin's famed essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility' is concerned with how the principal of reproducibility, fundamental to both photography and film, removes the 'aura' of the unique artwork, noting:

---

<sup>2</sup> Specifically Walter Benjamin's essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility', which exists in three versions, the last (and most commonly known) of which can be found in English in Benjamin, *Selected Writings : Volume 4, 1938-1940* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 250-283 – I refer subsequently to this version; Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (London: Allen Lane, 1978); and Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, translated by Richard Howard (New York: The Noonday Press, 1981).

In even the most perfect reproduction, *one* thing is lacking: the here and now of the work of art – its unique existence in a particular place. It is this unique existence – and nothing else – that bears the mark of the history to which the work has been subject. This history includes changes to the physical structure of the work over time, together with any changes in ownership.<sup>3</sup>

Finnissy's work investigates quite exhaustively the possibility of removing something from a unique existence in a particular context; his musical materials become flexible 'texts' which assume different meanings depending on the circumstances in which they are presented.

Sontag argues that photography's effect is almost always corrosive, writing that:

To photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed. It means putting oneself into a certain relation to the world that feels like knowledge -- and, therefore, like power. A now notorious first fall into alienation, habituating people to abstract the world into printed words, is supposed to have engendered that surplus of Faustian energy and psychic damage needed to build modern, inorganic societies. But print seems a less treacherous form of leaching out the world, of turning it into a mental object, than photographic images, which now provide most of the knowledge people have about the look of the past and the reach of the present. What is written about a person or an event is frankly an interpretation, as are handmade visual statements, like paintings and drawings. Photographed images do not seem to be statements about the world so much as pieces of it, miniatures of reality that anyone can make or acquire.<sup>4</sup>

Finnissy's work continuously tries to navigate this aspect of his musical 'photographs', especially when employing materials so politically loaded as African-American spirituals or folk music from both North and sub-Saharan Africa. Sontag also includes in her book 'A Brief Anthology of Quotations' in homage to Benjamin, who imagined a form of criticism entirely made up of quotations<sup>5</sup>, which is paralleled in the many passages of the *History* featuring strings of clearly referential material.

Barthes takes a more positive view of still photography, which maybe comes closest to encapsulating Finnissy's attitude towards the many musics he encounters and 'photographs':

I decided then to take as a guide for my new analysis the attraction I felt for certain photographs. For of this attraction, at least, I was certain. What to call it? Fascination? No, this photograph which I pick out and which I love has nothing in common with the shiny point which sways before your eyes and makes your head swim; what it produces in me is the very opposite of hebetude; something more like an internal agitation, an excitement, a certain labor too, the pressure of the unspeakable which wants to be spoken. Well, then? Interest? Of brief duration; I have no need to question my feelings in order to list the various reasons to be interested in a photograph; one can either desire the object, the landscape, the body it represents; or love or have loved the being it permits us to recognize; or be astonished by what one sees; or else admire or

---

<sup>3</sup> Benjamin, 'The Work of Art', third version, p. 253.

<sup>4</sup> Sontag, *On Photography*, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Benjamin, 'Program for Literary Criticism', in *Selected Writings: Volume 2, Part 1, 1927-1930* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), p. 294.



dispute the photographer's performance, etc.; but these interests are slight, heterogeneous; a certain photograph can satisfy one of them and interest me slightly; and if another photograph interests me powerfully, I should like to know what there is in it that sets me off.<sup>6</sup>

For the writings contained in this work and my forthcoming monograph, I have been privileged to have access to all of Finnissy's sketches for the work, enabling me to reconstruct a good deal of the compositional processes involved. In most pieces he will generate the basic categories of material first of all, then cut them up into sections and work on the montage that is thus created, very much like a film editor. Longer expanses of material usually contain 'inserts' of other material (by no means obviously so from the final score – some such inserts are connected seamlessly to the surrounding music). Often there will be left-over material, like cinematic 'rushes' which is either discarded, used elsewhere in the cycle, or even used in a later piece (and similarly some rushes from earlier pieces find their way into the *History*).

In the case of the various chapters that are made up in large part from references to other chapters (in particular *Le démon*, *Le réveil*, *Wachtend* and *Etched*) one will sometimes (but again, by no means always) find collections of pages that are divided up with a red pen into numbered fragments, from which Finnissy selects. Other times one will find simply the name of the chapter, section, or reference that Finnissy uses, and some time has to be spent searching through the source for the particular short excerpt used (a good example of this would be the passages from Grieg's *Slätter* used in *Muybridge-Munch*). In either case, one will encounter lists of numbers at the tops of pages, some of them crossed through with lines. These usually indicate random selections, crossed through when they have been used. Sometimes these numbers are crossed out to the point of near-illegibility; other times it is by no means clear what source they refer to (for example the tiny selections from Alkan's *Études* Op. 39 in *Alkan-Paganini*, towards which educated guesswork led me).

Finnissy's approach to composition in successive stages also becomes instantly apparent from these or other sketches. Rarely is a piece worked on from where it will eventually begin onwards in linear succession. Rather, it seems more usual for him to work first on the most important types of material, then on other longer passages which frequently cross reference other places, then on a selection of 'inserts' which are interspersed within the longer passages. One will find lots of workings, re-workings, deletions of material, sometimes in separate smaller oblong sheets of manuscript paper, then various manuscript books which have some of the large scale sections of the work more or less in order (though sometimes he omits this stage before copying out the score neatly), and lots of sheets with numbered or lettered pages of the inserts. The manuscript books contain indicators for where the inserts will be included (frequently some of them are omitted from the final version). Reading through the sketches illuminates very

---

<sup>6</sup> Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, pp. 18-19.

clearly how much the act of composition is, for Finnissy, akin to shooting and then editing a film.

From Finnissy's ad hoc modifications of his basic material (which are numerous and constitute a key stage of mediation), one realises certain consistencies of preference, such as for wide contours and spread chords, for constantly mutating pulses and tonalities, and for a general ostentatiousness and extravagance of result. When dealing with references, he will tend to extract fragments in ways that blur the sense of key or metre, for example taking out a group of five quavers that cross the barline in a pair of 4/4 bars. One way of describing his compositional work would be as a combination of two metaphors: *discovery* on one hand and *appropriation* on the other. The techniques and references provide the discovery, they throw up all sorts of material, ideas, possibilities; the editing and fine-tuning provide the appropriation, in the sense of Finnissy's 'making the music his own'. This is a simplification, of course; the former processes constitute appropriation as well in other senses. Nonetheless, it does provide a reasonably vivid picture of how such composition is enacted.

Studying the sketches also opens one's eyes to the other types of techniques Finnissy uses for manipulating pitches and rhythms, frequently using the classic techniques of inversion, retrograde and retrograde inversion. These will often take the form of charts of unstemmed pitches, sometimes written down very loosely or scattered amongst different pages. But they can often be deciphered with some work.

### **Some Aspects of the Structure of the *History* as a Whole**

The relative weighting of material types through the broad structure of the *History* will be outlined in Chapter 2. The cycle is structured in a quasi-palindromic fashion around the central piece, the *Poets*, which was the first to be completed (followed by those immediately surrounding it). This piece contains the greatest proliferation of material, whilst the two surrounding it, *Alkan-Paganini* and *Muybridge-Munch*, develop a vastly smaller amount extensively. Then the other pieces can generally be organised into pairs which share common material and concerns, but from different perspectives. Thus one can pair *My parents' generation* with *Kapitalistisch Realisme* (the two being the longest pieces in the cycle as well as sharing material), *North American Spirituals* with *Unsere Afrikareise* (both dealing with appropriations of non-Western or non-white musics), and *Le demon* with *Etched* (the first a sort of overall survey of the material from a distance, the last a frenetic recapitulation of much of it, each with prominent Berlioz quotations). The link between *Le réveil* and *Wachtend* is more tenuous; simply both exist as perspectives upon other material, but in quite different ways. The group of pieces coming after the *Poets* obviously constitute a much longer duration than those before it, mostly on account of *Kapitalistisch Realisme*, which is itself almost as long as Finnissy's previous longest work prior to the *History*, *Folklore*. So the symmetry is far from exact.

Register is also an important structural determinant: the vast majority of the piece takes place in the central registers of the instrument (as with the earlier work *Folklore*), with ventures into the extremes, including those moments that seem to encompass the whole keyboard simultaneously, very much the exception rather than the rule. The following gives a breakdown of the predominance of registers in each piece.

1. *Le démon* : central registers, but ending in the bass.
2. *Le réveil*: central registers, expanding to whole compass of keyboard in the centre.
3. *North American Spirituals*: central registers, occasional sorties elsewhere.
4. *My parents' generation*: central registers, long treble episode early on, two major expansions to whole compass
5. *Alkan-Paganini*: bass – treble – whole keyboard – treble
6. *Seventeen Immortal Poets* – alternating whole keyboard and central registers continuously.
7. *Muybridge-Munch* – low treble – whole treble register – central registers – whole keyboard
8. *Kapitalistisch Realisme* – central registers for most of the piece, except for brief section connecting *Bachsche Nachdichtungen* and *Sizilianische Männerakte*
9. *Wachtend* – central registers, with some variety
10. *Unsere Afrikareise* – central registers. Wider in pointillistic section, but still relatively central.
11. *Etched* – high treble – treble – low bass – central registers – whole keyboard.

Only the three central movements (*Muybridge-Munch* least so) and *Etched* really extensively alternate different registers of the keyboard, one reason why these tend to sound the most brilliant and variegated of all.

Dynamics are also less extreme than in many earlier Finnissy works, though there are major exceptions. Both *My parents' generation* and *Unsere Afrikareise* have extended periods at extremely quiet dynamics, and there is a comparable moment in *Etched* as the music prepares for the appearance of the Berlioz theme. The *Muybridge* section of *Muybridge-Munch* also remains at a relatively quite dynamic throughout, though less extreme. The final section of the *Poets* is also hushed throughout. The 'Compression' passages are usually (but not always) at a high dynamic and quite violent in nature. Otherwise, moments at extremely loud dynamics are exception and usually quite brief. Amongst the most prominent would be those in the second 'pop song' passage of *My parents' generation* and the entry of the two hands in *Alkan-Paganini*. These begin to mirror the 'Compression' material in their violence and density.

Textures vary throughout, but there is less use of extremes in this respect than in Finnissy's earlier works, as well. His characteristic monophonic writing

makes a few brief appearances in *Le réveil*, the *Poets*, *Kapitalistisch Realisme*, and *Etched*, but the only truly extended passage occurs at the beginning of *Muybridge-Munch*. Extremes of density tend to occur either in the 'Compression' material or at other moments of extremely loud dynamics. The major exception to this is the last section in the *Poets*.

It is a fruitless question to ask whether the *History* should be considered a 'tonal' or 'atonal' work. Throughout the cycle, one can find localised tonal centres. However, there are marked differences of degree in this respect. The majority of the piece inhabits a fluid, somewhat unstable form of tonality, always in a state of relative flux. So the few moments that present relatively stable tonal centres become foregrounded. The most prominent of all of these are the Massé and David sections in *Unsere Afrikareise*, followed by the spirituals passages at the beginning of *Muybridge-Munch* (more stable than those in the *Spirituals* itself, where they are combined with bass parts which unsettle their implied harmonies). *Sizilianische Männerakte* has a larger degree of tonal stability than most emerging from the retrograded Busoni material, leading this extended passage to have a comparatively radiant quality, as does the beginning of *Kapitalistisch Realisme* to a slightly lesser extent. The Billings/spirituals passages in the *Spirituals* present tonal centres of gravity to varying degrees. In both full Berlioz quotations (in *Le démon* and *Etched*) the tonality is still fluid, but strongly implied by the melody.

Overall, other than in terms of scale, the *History* is not to be characterised primarily as a work of extremes, at least not by Finnissy's standards. The balanced and relatively moderate nature of much of the writing causes those more extreme moments to have a huge impact.

## Chapter 2

### Material as Archetype in *The History of Photography in Sound*.

Almost every commentary on Michael Finnissy will draw attention to the range of sources upon which he draws for his composition; nowhere is this truer than in the five-and-a-half hour piano work *The History of Photography in Sound*. Through the course of its eleven chapters, the work employs (often hidden) sources from across the Western classical tradition (in particular music of Bach, Beethoven, Paganini, Berlioz, Alkan, Meyerbeer, Félicien David, Bruckner, Wagner, Busoni and Debussy), through 1940s popular song, music hall songs, hymns from Britain and America, war songs from several countries, African-American spirituals, to folk music from England, Ireland, Norway, Spain, Sardinia, Sicily, Crete, Tunisia, Ethiopia, the Transvaal, Native Americans and the Inuit<sup>1</sup>. Some of these materials recur in various guises throughout the cycle, some have a brief localised development, some appear fleetingly then disappear.

A common response to this phenomenon is provided in the following words from the critic Paul Driver, writing about the première of the cycle *Folklore*, but with words that might equally have been applied to the *History*:

Finnissy creates grippingly surreal landscapes in which one can imagine Percy Grainger – his folklorist hero – cheerfully cycling down an English country lane straight into the mountains of north India and on, by way of a Chinese pagoda and a Scottish glen, into an exploding Chernobyl.<sup>2</sup>

In a review of the premiere of the *History*, Driver similarly described the work as ‘The History of Music in Snapshots’<sup>3</sup>. But it is this somewhat touristic view of Finnissy’s music that I wish to challenge. and also to give a glimpse of how Finnissy’s engagement with musical ‘found objects’ works on many levels of the composition, both in terms of music-immanent structural working as well as conceptually.

A major turning point in Finnissy’s output, to my mind the most important, occurred around 1979-80, after the watershed provided by his ensemble composition *alongside*, a highly abstract work taking Finnissy’s achievements in this direction further than at any previous point in his output<sup>4</sup>. Feeling that he

---

<sup>1</sup> This section was originally given as a paper at the conference on ‘What does ‘musical material’ mean today?’, Royal Musical Association, London, July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2008, and subsequently at Huddersfield University, Universität der Künste, Berlin, Surrey University and City University, London.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Driver, ‘The monody lingers on’, review of world première of Finnissy *Folklore*, in *The Sunday Times*, 11th December 1994.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Driver, ‘Performance Test’, review of world première of Finnissy *History of Photography in Sound*, in *The Sunday Times*, February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2001.

<sup>4</sup> For a quite general exegesis of the basic structural properties of this work, see Roger Redgate, ‘The Chamber Music’, in Henrietta Brougham, Christopher Fox and Ian Pace (eds), *Uncommon Ground: The Music of Michael Finnissy* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), pp. 141-148, also see Julian Anderson,

wished to change direction, Finnissey then embarked upon several cycles of works alluding to folk music from various regions, as well as bringing to fruition what were then partially-complete projects such as his *Verdi Transcriptions* and *Gershwin Arrangements*<sup>5</sup>. Almost all of his works from this point onwards make reference to some other music. This was by no means a wholly new development in 1980; Finnissey's employment of musical reference can be dated back at least as early as 1967, from which time date his *Romeo and Juliet are Drowning* for piano and first versions of the *Strauss-Walzer*, followed in 1969 by his *Folk Song Set*<sup>6</sup>, not to mention in various juvenilia. Furthermore, whilst not necessarily explicitly referential, the influence of older contemporary composers is palpable in other of his earlier 'abstract' works – for example Pierre Boulez in *Le Dormeur du Val* (1963-64, revised 1966)<sup>7</sup>, Karlheinz Stockhausen in *Song 8* (1967), or Sylvano Bussotti in *Babylon* (1971). However, in many earlier works references or influences generally play a small part within a more abstract framework (this is equally true of his notorious *English Country-Tunes* (1977, rev. 1982))<sup>8</sup>, and as such act essentially as islands of local colour, whereas in the post-1979-80 works the sources inform the music on a multiplicity of levels.

In several of Finnissey's earlier works, he employs broad categories of musical material to delineate structural boundaries or characterise long stretches of music. Most obvious amongst such strategies are his use of register, especially in piano works which contain extended passages at the upper or lower extremes (or both simultaneously), or conversely through the near-simultaneous use of the whole compass of the instrument. But in some orchestral and ensemble works (including *Offshore* (1975-76), *alongside* and *Sea and Sky* (1979-80))<sup>9</sup> he sets up clear oppositions between material which seems implicitly defined in categories of line, chords or punctuation.

Finnissey himself has alluded to a similar strategy at work in the *History*<sup>10</sup>. Whilst not wishing simply to reiterate his own paradigms for cognition, I do find this model compelling in terms of what I experience as both performer and listener. So, first of all, I wish to elaborate upon these categories; whilst accepting

---

'The Orchestral Music', *ibid.* p. 180; for a more informal consideration of the work, Paul Driver, 'Michal Finnissey's 'alongside'', in *Tempo*, No. 132 (March 1980), pp. 42-45.

<sup>5</sup> On these two cycles, see Ian Pace, 'The Piano Music', in Brougham et al, *Uncommon Ground*, pp. 86-97. Since the appearance of this book, the *Verdi Transcriptions* have been significantly revised and expanded to become a cycle of about twice the original length in four books

<sup>6</sup> It is likely that this work was influenced by the appearance of Luciano Berio's *Folk Songs* (1964), which Finnissey has cited as an important revelation for him (unpublished draft of Interview for *Uncommon Ground*).

<sup>7</sup> This work, a setting of Rimbaud, is generally acknowledged as the first within Finnissey's mature output. On its construction and use of quasi-cinematic techniques, see Christopher Fox, 'The Vocal Music', in Brougham et al, *Uncommon Ground*, pp. 218-222.

<sup>8</sup> On *English Country-Tunes*, see Pace, 'The Piano Music', pp. 66-71.

<sup>9</sup> On *offshore* and *Sea and Sky*, see Anderson, 'The Orchestral Music', pp. 173-187; for an early response to the premiere of *Sea and Sky*, Paul Driver, 'Michael Finnissey's 'Sea and Sky'', *Tempo* No. 133/134 (September 1980), pp. 82-83. Anderson's taxonomy of material categories in these works, in terms of points, line and punctuation, bears some resemblance to the taxonomies I set out here.

<sup>10</sup> Private conversations with the author.

Finnissy's own three macro-categories, the conclusions concerning assignation of material to categories, and further sub-divisions therein, are my own. To my mind these are more illuminating than might be provided by a more obvious categorisation in terms of the genres of the source materials (though some of the sub-divisions do relate to this latter).

The three macro-categories are simply Chords, Gestures and Lines. The first of these, Chords, takes its cue from what Finnissy calls the *motive fondamentale* of the work<sup>11</sup>, the plainchant *Te Deum Laudamus* (Fig. 1). This motive, almost always harmonised in some way derived from Bach's setting of a later version in his chorale prelude *Herr Gott, dich loben wir*, BWV 328 (Fig. 2), appears through the cycle.



Fig. 1. *Te Deum Laudamus*, as it appears in the sketches for the work.

The characteristics of both this material and that associated with it are above all chordal homophony and harmonic directionality. Variations and exploratory developments of this type are usually 'canonic', in both current senses of the term. The allusions to these tonal sources are often somewhat askew, with deliberately awkward voice leading, interrupted cadences, use of diminished sevenths out of context, etc.

Fig. 3 gives a sample of the chordal material in several sub-categories. In some cases I have given the original material, in some cases its mediated form (and sometimes both), depending on the extent to which the former is recognisable as such – or in terms of some of its essential attributes - in the final work. The first of these, Fig. 3 (a), would include both the fundamental Bach chorale prelude and various others employed within the cycle, also material deriving from the St

<sup>11</sup> Finnissy describes this as 'the Aristotelian unifying factor, subsuming the following 'variations'' (Finnissy, 'Notes on the Work', to accompany 2002 performance of the *History* by Mark Knopfler). The nature of Finnissy's employment of this and other related motifs from Bach is too elaborate to detail adequately here; for more on this, see in particular the section on 'Bachsche Nachdichtungen', in Pace, Chapter 13, 'Kapitalistisch Realisme', in Pace, *The History of Photography in Sound* (forthcoming).

Matthew Passion and also the *Livre d'Orgue de Montréal*, a seventeenth century, 540 page, collection of organ music from France which was brought to Canada in 1724, generally regarded as very representative of French organ music at the end of the period<sup>12</sup>. To Finnissy, both this source and indeed some of the Bach material represented a slightly academic form of contrapuntal writing<sup>13</sup>.

The second sub-category, as shown in Fig. 3 (b), contains much of the hymn material, whether from the eighteenth century American choral composer William Billings (1746-1800)<sup>14</sup>, from traditional English Passiontide hymns<sup>15</sup>, or Arthur Sullivan's renowned 'Onward Christian Soldiers' (1871)<sup>16</sup>, as well as the Soviet War Song 'Sacred War'<sup>17</sup>, which appears in *My parents' generation thought*

---

<sup>12</sup> *Livre d'Orgue de Montréal*, Édition Critique par Élisabeth Gallat-Morin et Kenneth Gilbert, two volumes (St-Hyacinthe, Québec: Les Éditions Jacques Ostiguy Inc., 1985), two volumes. See also <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=U1ARTU0002092> (accessed 21/8/13). This was one of a range of sources compiled by French-Canadian pianist Marc Couroux, for whom the second chapter of the *History*, 'Le Réveil de Intraitable Réalité', was written.

<sup>13</sup> Private conversations with the author.

<sup>14</sup> Finnissy employs four hymns by Billings in the chapter *North American Spirituals* – 'Bedford', 'Sing Praises to the Lord', 'Dudley' and 'Essex', taken from Billings, *The Psalm-Singer's Amusement* (1781) (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1987); *The Continental Harmony* (1794) (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1990) (in which it is called 'An Anthem for Thanksgiving Day', pp. 70-75); *The Singing Master's Assistant: Music in Miniature* (1778-1779) (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1984) and *The New England Psalm-Singer* (1770) (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1981), respectively. I examine Finnissy's relationship to Billings in detail in Chapter 8, 'North American Spirituals', in Pace, *The History of Photography in Sound*, forthcoming. For the best overall studies of and sources on Billings' work, see J. Murray Barbour, *The Church Music of William Billings* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1960), and Hans Nathan, *William Billings: Data and Documents* (Detroit: College Music Society by Information Coordinators, 1975); on the early context and composition of and responses to his work, see David P. McKay and Richard Crawford, *William Billings of Boston: Eighteenth-Century Composer* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), pp. 190-218; Richard Crawford, *America's Musical Life: A History* (New York and London: Norton, 2001), pp. 38-39; Wilfred Mellers, *Music in a New Found Land: Themes and Developments in the History of American Music*, revised and expanded edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 12-17 and Charles Hamm, *Music in the New World* (New York and London: Norton, 1983), pp. 41-42, 142-146. Billings was of course the subject of an earlier piano piece of Finnissy simply entitled *William Billings* (1990) (discussed in Pace, 'The Piano Music', pp. 84-85), itself inspired by John Cage's *Apartment House 1776* (1976), which also draws upon numerous hymns from Billings.

<sup>15</sup> Finnissy's use of these Passiontide hymns originate in the section of *Seventeen Immortal Homosexual Poets* devoted to James Kirkup, to signify a form of religious 'deviance' in line with Kirkup's poem 'The Love That Dares to Speak Its Name', which was the subject of a now-infamous blasphemy trial in the UK in 1977 after its publication in the British magazine *Gay News*. The hymns he uses are *Rockingham* ('When I survey the wondrous cross') by Edward Miller (1731-1807), adapted S. Webbe (1820), *Stabat Mater* from the *Maintzich Gesangbuch* of 1661, adapted Webbe (1782), and *Salve Festa Dies*, written by Vaughan Williams (1905).

<sup>16</sup> This hymn appears most clearly in *My parents' generation thought War meant something*. Sullivan's was the second setting of words by the Rev. Sabine Baring-Gould, following an 1868 adaptation of the slow movement of Haydn's Symphony No. 53 by J.B. Dykes, which was published together with a hymn entitled 'Bright gleams our banner' by Henry Smart (1813-1879), with which Sullivan's setting shares an initial four-note repetition, and may thus have been an influence upon the later song. See Arthur Jacobs, *Arthur Sullivan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 71-72, for comparisons between the two hymns.

<sup>17</sup> This was a song with Russian text by Vasily Lebedev-Kumach, a then well-known song lyric writer who has been described as one of 'Stalin's favourite hacks' (Catherine Merridale, *Ivan's War: The Red Army 1939-45* (London: Faber & Faber, 2005), p. 169), and music by Matvey Blanter, once well-known as a composer of popular and film music in the Soviet Union. The song is collected in Boris



*War meant something*, the fourth chapter of the *History*. This material exhibits much simpler harmonic progressions, with little counterpoint, for singing by amateurs.

The third sub-category (Fig. 3 (c)) contains a variety of material derived (with considerable mediation) from music of Beethoven<sup>18</sup> and Bruckner<sup>19</sup>. Most of this employs relatively basic chords but in imaginative or visionary progressions. Fig. 3 (c') shows the appropriate passage in Liszt's transcription of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, from which the first part of Fig. 3 (c) is derived.

The fourth sub-category (Fig. 3 (d)) derives from material of Wagner (generally from a concatenation of short fragments selected randomly from the sources – *Götterdämmerung* and *Tannhäuser*; the process is shown in Fig. 3 (d')). This is an extension of (c) with more extravagant chromatic harmonies. Finnissy's allusion to Liszt's *La lugubre gondola* (which appears most explicitly in *My parents' generation*<sup>20</sup>) straddles the divide between this and category (c).

The fifth sub-category (Fig. 3 (e)) comes from the *Pezzo serioso* from Busoni's Piano Concerto<sup>21</sup>, which runs throughout the long *Sizilianische Männerakte*, the third section of the longest chapter of the *History*, *Kapitalistisch*

---

Kotlyarov (ed), *Six Soviet War Songs for voice and piano* (London: Novello & Co., for the Soviet State Music Publishing House, 1943), published in Britain at a time when the wartime alliance with the Soviet Union was at its height. For more on this genre of Soviet war song, see Boris Schwarz, *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia 1917-1970* (London: Barrie & Jenkins Ltd, 1972), pp. 180-181 (though the song 'Sacred War' that he discusses there is apparently in 'stately three-four time', and so is different); for further detail on this in the context of Soviet music and society, see Pace, Chapter 9, 'My Parent's Generation thought War meant something', in *The History of Photography in Sound*.

<sup>18</sup> Finnissy's specific sources for Beethoven were the String Quartet in A major op. 18 no. 5, the fifth piano sonata in C minor op. 10, no. 1, and the Fifth Symphony in C minor op. 67, derived in the latter case from Liszt's version of the work for solo piano. For an extensive consideration of various interpretive paradigms for Beethoven and how one might view parts of the *History* in light of these, see Pace, 'Kapitalistisch Realisme'.

<sup>19</sup> Here the material comes mostly from the Third and Fifth Symphonies of Bruckner.

<sup>20</sup> This work also informed Finnissy's earlier arrangements of Gershwin, 'They're writing songs of love, but not for me', through the employment of a basic gesture consisting of a medium-size descending interval followed by a descending semitone, or its inversion.

<sup>21</sup> An engagement with Busoni's work has been a recurrent concern for Finnissy, especially in the *Verdi Transcriptions*, several of which allude directly to Busoni piano works, and also in various parts of *Kapitalistisch Realisme*, which operates similarly. Busoni's historical importance remains contested, and my own view on this is ambivalent; for some of the most thoughtful perspectives on this, see Jim Samson, 'The significance of Busoni' in *Music in Transition: A Study of Tonal Expansion and Atonality 1900-1920* (London: Dent, 1977), pp. 19-31, and Arnold Whittall, *Musical Composition in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 49-51. On the other hand, the writings of Ronald Stevenson, *Western Music: An Introduction* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1971), pp. 169-170, like the fanatical work of Kaikshoru Shapurji Sorabji before him (in 'Busoni', in *Around Music* (London: Unicorn Press, 1932), and 'Metaphysic Motivation in Music', in *Mi Contra Fa: The Immortalisings of a Machiavellian Musician* (London: Porcupine Press, 1947)) hold up Busoni as an antidote to modernism, especially that of Stravinsky, whilst E.J. Dent, in his *Ferruccio Busoni* (London: Eulenburg, 1974), uses Busoni essentially for the purposes of anti-German prejudices. For Busoni's own views on the Piano Concerto, see Busoni, 'Self-Criticism', in *The Essence of Music and other papers*, translated Rosamund Ley (New York: Dover, 1962), p. 50. For more detailed examination of the *Pezzo serioso*, see Anthony Beaumont, *Busoni the Composer* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985), pp. 61-65, and Larry Sitsky, *Busoni and the Piano: The Works, the Writings and the Recordings* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986), pp. 103-107. For a critical reading of these and other interpretations of the work, see Pace, 'Kapitalistisch Realisme'.

*Realisme*. This is as chromatic as (d), but demonstrates a greater sense of aloofness, discontinuity and objectivisation of its harmonic elements<sup>22</sup>. Fig. 3 (e') shows the section from the *Pezzo serioso* from which this example is derived in reverse.

The image shows the musical score for Bach's Chorale prelude 'Herr Gott, dich loben wir' BWV 328. The score is written for voice and piano. It consists of eight systems of music. The first system is labeled 'Herr Gott, dich loben wir' and is repeated three times. The second system is labeled 'Heilig ist Gott' and is repeated two times. The third system is labeled 'Heilig' and is repeated six times. The fourth system is labeled 'Du König' and is repeated six times. The fifth system is labeled 'Laß uns im Himmel haben Teil'. The sixth system is labeled 'Auf dich hoffen wir' and is repeated three times. The score is in G major and 3/4 time. The piano accompaniment is highly chromatic and complex, with many accidentals and a dense texture. The vocal line is more melodic and follows the lyrics.

Fig. 2. Bach, Chorale prelude *Herr Gott, dich loben wir* BWV 328.

<sup>22</sup> Here parallels might be drawn with the interpretation of Mahler provided by Adorno, who argues that whilst Mahler's harmonic vocabulary is less extravagant than that of Wagner and others before him, the particular form of contextualisation and defamiliarisation employed entails a step beyond anything hitherto achieved in music ('Mahler's atmosphere is the illusion of familiarity in which the Other is cloaked', Adorno, *Mahler: A Musical Physiognomy*, translated Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992), p. 20).

Bach BWV 328                      From Bach BWV 677

From *Livre d'orgue de Montréal*

Fig. 3 (a). Chordal category (a).

*Poco Allegretto*.  $\text{♩} = 72$ .

MANUAL. *mp* *Gts & ar!* *L.H.*

Fig. 3 (a'). Bach, *Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Ehr'* BWV 677

Billings - *Sing Praises to the Lord*      *Passiontide hymn - Rockingham*

Sullivan - *'Onward Christian Soldiers'*

'Sacred War', Soviet war song from Second World War

The image shows a musical score for the Soviet war song 'Sacred War'. It consists of two systems. The first system shows the piano accompaniment in 4/4 time, with a treble and bass clef. The second system adds a vocal line in the treble clef. The lyrics are: "Tho' the fight is hard, we a - rise to guard Our sa - cred mo - ther - land! Re -".

Fig. 3 (b). Chordal category (b).

This figure contains two musical excerpts. The top excerpt is from Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, showing a melodic line with a trill and a fermata. The bottom excerpt is from Bruckner's Fifth Symphony, showing a complex rhythmic passage with a triplet of eighth notes and two 6:5 intervals marked with brackets.

Fig. 3 (c) Chordal category (c).

The image shows a musical score for the coda of the first movement of Beethoven-Liszt's Symphony No. 5. It features a piano accompaniment and a vocal line. The piano part includes markings for "Red. ✱", "Instr. à vent *sempre fortissimo*", "Instr. à cordes", "Violons", "Hautb.", "Basses", "Bassons", and "Red. ✱". The vocal line includes markings for "Violons", "Hautb.", "Basses", "Bassons", and "Red. ✱".

Fig. 3 (c'). Beethoven-Liszt, Symphony No. 5, from coda of first movement.

From Wagner - *Götterdämmerung*

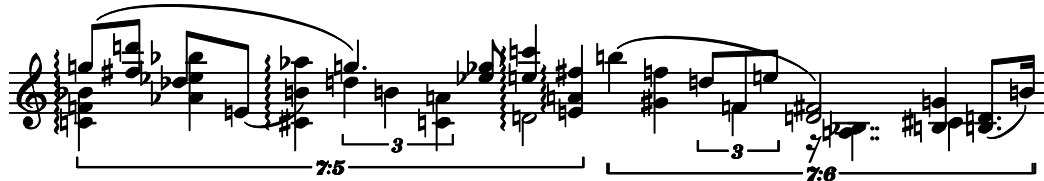


Fig. 3 (d) Chordal category (d).

From Act 1, Scene 2

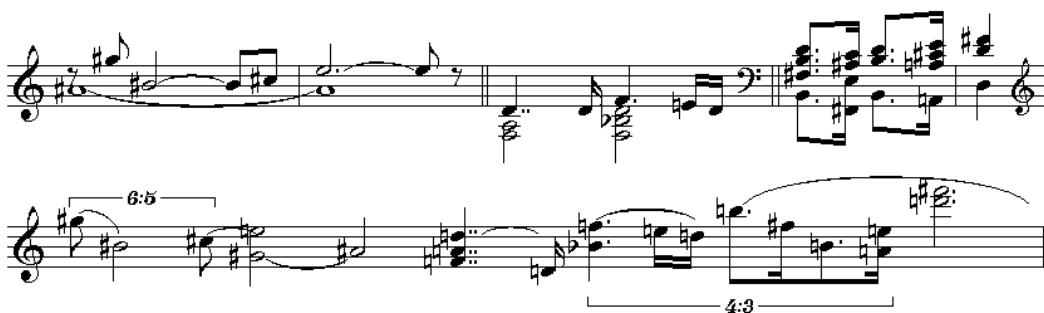


Fig. 3 (d'). Process of derivation from Wagner *Götterdämmerung*.

Retrograde of Busoni - *Pezzo Serioso*

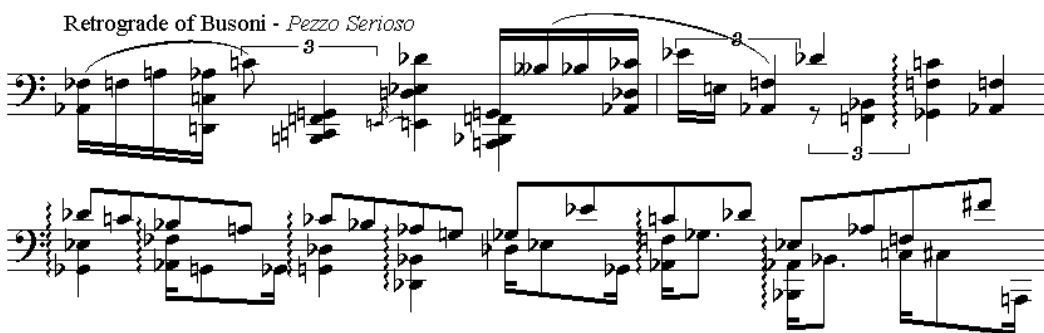


Fig. 3 (e). Chordal category (e).

Fig. 3 (e). From Busoni, *Pezzo serioso*.

The sixth sub-category (Fig. 3 (f)) consists of abstract chordal progressions derived randomly, in which one finds maximum objectivisation and defamiliarisation of tonal harmony; Fig. 3 (f) shows an example in which ‘Rockingham’ is given a series of harmonies and durations selected from gamuts of material derived from elsewhere, in order to produce this effect<sup>23</sup>.

Fig. 3 (f). Chordal category (f). ‘Rockingham’ with random chords.

<sup>23</sup> On the precise techniques Finnissy uses here, see Pace, ‘Seventeen Immortal Homosexual Poets’.

The final sub-category (Fig. 3 (g)) I call ‘Compression’. Here all semblance of harmonic progression disappears and the music is rapid and often incoherent<sup>24</sup>. This type of material appears in most extended form near the end of *Seventeen Immortal Homosexual Poets*, in slightly briefer form near the end of *Etched Bright with Sunlight*, in either registrally limited or fragmented forms in *Eadweard Muybridge/Edvard Munch*, and more briefly in various other chapters.

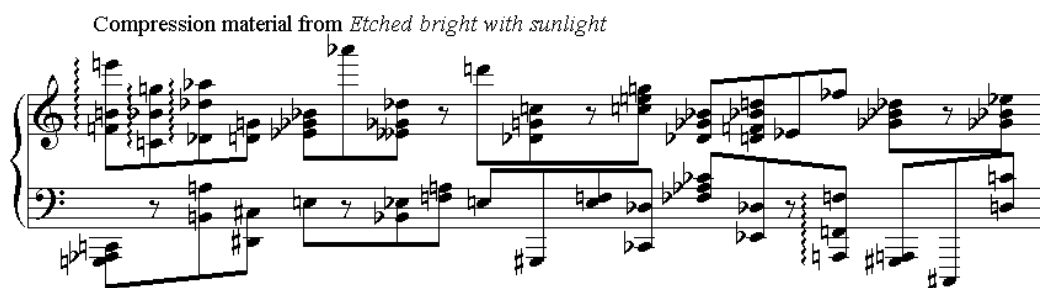


Fig. 3 (g) Chordal category (g).

These categories are approximations and some material could arguably belong in more than one. For example, the *Matthäus-Passion* material, at its first full appearance (in the *Poets*) is more chromatically coloured than on other occurrences; also categories (c) and (d) overlap to a degree. Nonetheless, in terms of the medium-range divisions of the whole work, I believe these categories are meaningful in terms of the aural experience.

The gestural category is much the smallest, and is headed by a key motif taken from the second act of Wagner’s *Götterdämmerung*, specifically Hagen’s utterance ‘Der Ewigen Macht. – wer erbt sie?’ (‘Who will inherit the might of the immortals?’) delivered to Alberich from his sleep in Act 2, Scene 1 of the opera (Fig. 4). This appears only a few times within the *History*, but at moments of huge structural and dramatic importance.

Related gestures include the opening motive from Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony (a clear allusion to Charles Ives, who famously cited the ‘fate motive’ at various points throughout his *Concord Sonata*, and also discovered and developed links between this motive and hymns by Charles Zeuner and Simeon B. Marsh<sup>25</sup>), a rhetorical gesture taken from Berlioz’s *Roméo et Juliette*<sup>26</sup>, recurrent rhythmic

<sup>24</sup> The inspiration for this technique came both from Iannis Xenakis’s piano work *Evyryali* (1973), much of which is in the form of rapid-fire repeated chords, and Richard Barrett’s *Tract* (1989-96), the last section of which employs a similar ‘compression’ strategy (itself inspired by a comparable passage in Karlheinz Stockhausen’s *Mantra* (1970)). *Tract* was given its first complete London performance in a concert on May 1, 1997, by the author, at the British Music Information Centre, Stratford Place, London, in the same concert as the first complete performance of *Seventeen Immortal Homosexual Poets*.

<sup>25</sup> See J. Peter Burkholder, *All Made of Tunes: Charles Ives and the Uses of Musical Borrowing* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 195-200, 351-355, and Geoffrey Block, *Ives: Concord Sonata* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 36-38.

<sup>26</sup> This motif can be heard in the violas and cellos in bars 144-145 of the ‘Scène d’amour’ of the work.

patterns in major or minor sixths, some of the Alkan material<sup>27</sup>, certain abstract 'modernist' gestures (especially in the earlier part of the *Poets*), and a category I call 'pointillism', actually consisting not merely of single disembodied attacks – though there are many of them – but also of enmeshed, fragmented gestures reminiscent of certain serial music of the 1950s and 1960s, in particular that of Jean Barraqué<sup>28</sup>.

The image shows a musical score for Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*, Act 2, Scene 1. It consists of two systems of music. The first system includes a vocal line for Hagen with the lyrics: "Sohn? son? (Hagen bleibt unverändert wie zuvor.) (Hagen remains motionless as before.)" and "Der E-wi-gen Macht, The might of the gods,". The tempo is marked "Langsam. (♩=♩)" and the dynamics are "pp". The piano accompaniment features complex textures, including triplets. The second system includes a vocal line with the lyrics: "Ich\_ und du! I\_ and thou! Wir er-ben die Welt, trüg ich mich nicht in dei-ner Treu', The world will be ours, for in thy truth my faith is firm;" and "Wer erb-te sie? who then shall win?". The tempo is marked "Lebhaft. (♩=♩)" and the dynamics range from "sf" to "f". The piano accompaniment continues with complex textures and dynamic markings like "dim.", "p", "cresc.", and "f".

Fig. 4. Wagner, *Götterdämmerung*, from Act 2, Scene 1.

The gestural material almost always takes the form of short phrases (see Fig. 5), often in the bass register. The source is nearly always alluded to with its text printed in the score, and - in the contexts in which it appears - it was intended to sound 'dramatic' in a quasi-literary manner (as the result of a

<sup>27</sup> I have not dealt with this material in detail in this chapter as its appearances are mostly concentrated in a few places, principally in *Alkan-Paganini* and at a few strategic moments in *Le réveil* and *Kapitalisch Realisme*. See Pace, Chapter 10 'Alkan-Paganini', in *The History of Photography in Sound*, for detailed consideration of how Finnissy derives this material from a variety of Alkan works.

<sup>28</sup> The music of Barraqué represents to Finnissy a movement within French music used to contrast as strongly as possible with the mid- to late-19<sup>th</sup> century French orientalism upon which he also draws in *Unsere Afrikareise*. See Pace, Chapter 15, 'Unsere Afrikareise', in *The History of Photography in Sound*, for much more on this. The contrast is all the stronger because of the fact that this chapter includes some of the most unbroken linear material in the whole cycle.



controlling sensibility ‘from outside’ rather than in any sense emerging organically from preceding material).

The figure displays four musical excerpts, each with a title and a description of its gestural material type. The first excerpt, 'Wagner allusion from *Etched bright with sunlight*', shows a piano accompaniment with a triplet of eighth notes and intervals of 7:5 and 8:5. The second excerpt, 'Beethoven 5th allusion in *Kapitalistische Realisme*', features a piano accompaniment with a triplet of eighth notes and an interval of 7:5. The third excerpt, 'Berlioz rhetorical gesture in *My parents' generation*' and 'Repeated sixths in *Le démon de l'analogie*', shows a piano accompaniment with intervals of 7:5 and 9:7. The fourth excerpt, 'From Gregory Woods section in *Seventeen Immortal Homosexual Poets*', shows a piano accompaniment with intervals of 6:5 and 3. The fifth excerpt, 'Abstract pointillism from *My parents' generation* thought *War meant something*', shows a piano accompaniment with a complex, abstract structure.

Wagner allusion from *Etched bright with sunlight*      Beethoven 5th allusion in *Kapitalistische Realisme*

(Der E - wi gen Macht)      (wer erb - te sie?)

Berlioz rhetorical gesture in *My parents' generation*      Repeated sixths in *Le démon de l'analogie*

From Gregory Woods section in *Seventeen Immortal Homosexual Poets*

Abstract pointillism from *My parents' generation* thought *War meant something*

Fig. 5. Gestural material types.

The category of line is the largest, and is headed by another fundamental motive, derived from the ‘Scène d’amour’ from Berlioz’s *Roméo et Juliette* (Fig. 6), which appears very prominently in both the first and last chapters of the work (*Le démon de l’analogie* and *Etched Bright with Sunlight*, respectively).

248

Fl. I solo *p* *espressivo*

Hb. *solo* *p* *pp*

C.a. *solo* *p* *espressivo*

Cl. (La) *i* *p* *pp*

Vns *con sord.* *p* *pp* *ppp*

Altos *sf* *pp* *ppp*

Viles *sf* *pp* *ppp*

Cb. *sf* *pp* *ppp*

252

Fl. I *i*

C.a. *i*

Cl. (La) *i solo* *p*

Vns *pp*

Altos

Viles

Cb.

Fig. 6. Berlioz, *Roméo et Juliette*, from 'Scène d'amour', 'Juliette' theme.

The diverse range of material in Fig. 7 (a) is diatonic, employing an extensive degree of stepwise motion, and with only moderate or no ornamentation. Several examples all employ a figure of a rising then falling step or half-step, or its inversion, a certain melodic archetype that can be found throughout the *History*, often in radically different contexts.

The second sub-category (Fig. 7 (b)) consists of material that is pentatonic or near-pentatonic. This links as disparate sources as folk music from Venda Africa, North Greenland, the Tutelo Native American tribes and Lincolnshire, all of the African-American spirituals that feature so prominently in *North American Spirituals* and elsewhere, a chant-like melody derived from Bach's chorale *Nun bitten wir den heiligen Geist* BWV 385, and even arguably the British First World War Song 'Pack up your troubles in your Old Kit Bag' (though this straddles sub-categories (a) and (b)). Amongst recurrent features in this category of material is the use of two or three repeated notes.

The third sub-category I call 'folkish European' (Fig. 7 (c)). Most of the material here demonstrates a degree of extravagant ornamentation or figuration that sets it somewhat apart from the preceding categories, though it is still mostly diatonic, albeit with a greater variety of modalities. This includes Norwegian hardanger fiddle music (as well as some of Grieg's works based upon it), various music originally played on or with the Sardinian triple clarinet called *launeddas*, consisting of three pipes, two of which are played with the right and left hands and the other of which acts as a drone, traditional Irish folk melodies, as well as some Basque folk melodies that are employed in the section representing Federico García Lorca in the *Poets*. Note here that the original Basque melody on its own would not really belong in this category, but Finnissy's mediated version is quite different; the same is true to a lesser extent of some of the *launeddas* music.

The fourth sub-category, which I call 'folkish extra-European' (Fig. 7 (d)), is the most complex. Here are to be found various non-diatonic modes, featuring in particular augmented intervals, that staple of nineteenth century composers wishing to represent the 'exotic'<sup>29</sup>, as well as even more extensive ornamentation, sometimes quite angular in nature. Yet these properties often result as much from Finnissy's modifications of his sources as from the original sources themselves<sup>30</sup>. Cretan melodies<sup>31</sup>, quite apart from being fragmented and reassembled (a process which Finnissy applies to much of the other material as well) are subject to

---

<sup>29</sup> For the best overall study of this phenomenon in general, see the various essays in Jonathan Bellman (ed), *The Exotic in Western Music* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998) and Ralph P. Locke, *Musial Exoticism: Images and Reflections* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); see also Carl Dahlhaus, 'Exoticism, Folklorism, Archaism', in *Nineteenth Century Music*, translated J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 302-311; Peter W. Schatt, *Exotik in der Musik des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Katzschler, 1986); Derek B. Scott, 'Orientalism and Musical Style' in *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 82 No. 2 (Summer 1998), pp. 309-335; Ralph P. Locke, 'Exoticism and Orientalism in Music: Problems for the Worldly Critic', in Paul A. Bové (ed), *Edward Said and the Work of the Critic: Speaking Truth to Power* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), pp. 257-81, 306-12; and Ralph P. Locke, *Music, Musicians and the Saint-Simonians* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

<sup>30</sup> The very term 'original' is of course problematic in this course, in light of the various forms of mediation involved through collecting, notating and distributing folk music. For the purposes of this article, 'original' simply means in the printed or recorded form from which Finnissy first encountered them.

<sup>31</sup> These are associated with the section representing Konstantin Kavafis in *Seventeen Immortal Homosexual Poets*, and come from Samuel Baud-Bovy, *Chansons Populaires de Crète Occidentale* (Geneva: Edition Minkoff, 1972), pp. 99, 133.

significant pitch modifications, as are some Ethiopian chants<sup>32</sup>, which are presented in a variety of modalities, sometimes those of particular forms of Arab and Berber music<sup>33</sup> (as well as being presented in configurations derived from the latter musics). Finnissy also employs some Tunisian melodies<sup>34</sup>, most prominently in *Etched Bright with Sunlight*, which feature quartertones, which obviously cannot be replicated on the piano; rather surprisingly, Finnissy simply rounds these off into diatonic patterns (though not necessarily the same modes as would result from simply making the quarter-flats into simple flats), rather than finding some other means of paralleling this aspect of the music on the piano<sup>35</sup>. This sub-category of material (here once again I should stress that these sub-categories are my own rather than Finnissy's) also includes various material derived from Western composers of exoticist/orientalist works (including Rameau, Victor Massé, Félicien David, Gounod, Saint-Saëns, Alan Bush, and others), employed in such a way (especially in *Unsere Afrikareise*) that the distinctions between the 'original' material (or rather, as filtered through both the (usually Western) ethnomusicologists who collected it, as well as through Finnissy himself) and that coming from Western appropriations/representations become blurred.

There are a few types of linear material which do not fit easily into any of these categories: these would include wild, leaping (but still diatonic) Paganini-derived material (which possibly could go into category (c), though it is very different from anything else to be found there), extremely quiet lines associated with Frank O'Hara and derived obliquely from the music of Morton Feldman, ragtime melodies, and an important motif derived from a sketch for a Second Piano Concerto by Grieg, which is present in various guises throughout the second section of *Muybridge-Munch*. In terms of the macro-categories, material derived from Debussy's *Berceuse héroïque*, used on various levels in *My parents' generation*, arguably straddles the lines and chords categories.

But notwithstanding these exceptions, the categories I provide encompass the majority of the material to be found in the cycle, and the sub-categories delineate what I believe to be audible medium-range connections between types of material often derived from many different sources. In the absence of long-range structural harmony in the *History* (which is not to say that small-scale harmony is not crucial to the work), I would suggest that the listener is most likely to perceive, at least on first hearings, the ways in which certain passages and expanses of material are characterised by chordal/gestural/linear bias, types of

---

<sup>32</sup> These come from Michael Powne, *Ethiopian Music: An Introduction* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 131, 136, 138.

<sup>33</sup> The ways in which Finnissy does this are beyond the scope of this article, but are detailed in Pace, Chapter 15, 'Unsere Afrikareise', in *The History of Photography in Sound*. The basic sources on Arab and Berber music that Finnissy employs are to be found in Alexis Chottin (ed), *Corpus de Musique Marocaine* (Casablanca: Librairie Livre Service, 1987), two volumes.

<sup>34</sup> From Baron Rodolphe d'Erlanger, *Mélodies Tunisiennes: hispano-arabes, arabo-berbères, juive, nègre* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1937).

<sup>35</sup> As for example in the para-microtonal writing in some of the *Verdi Transcriptions*, in which close-spaced trichords have varying inner intervallic relationships to parallel microtonal shifts. See Pace, 'The Piano Music', for more on this.

Berlioz, 'Scène d'amour' from *Roméo et Juliette*

Imaginary Sicilian folk-melody, in *Sizilianische Männerakte*

'L'Aria della Madonna della Carmino', traditional Sicilian folksong collected by Meyerbeer

Stephen Foster, 'Beautiful Dreamer'

Arthur Sullivan, 'Whatever you are', from *Utopia Limited*

'Young Men Taken In and Done For', music-hall song, words and music by Henry King

'Ungersvenden', Norwegian mountain melody, as collected in the 19th century by L.M. Lindeman

*La brabançonne*, Belgian national anthem, by Alexander Dechet and François Van Campenhout, also used by Debuss  
*Berceuse héroïque*

Beethoven, String Quartet Op. 18 No. 5. Third Movement, theme.

Fragments of imaginary popular music of the 1940s

Fig. 7 (a). Lines - category (a) – diatonic/stepwise<sup>36</sup>.

<sup>36</sup> The sources for the lesser-known folk and popular materials in this list are as follows: 'L' Aria della Madonna dello Carmino', from Giacomo Meyerbeer, *Sizilianische Volkslieder*, edited Fritz Bose

'Pack up your troubles in your Old Kit Bag', British First World War Song

Melody derived from Bach *Nun bitten wir den heiligen Geist* BWV 385

'Betsy Walton', Lincolnshire folksong

'Potilo', Vandan African song

Inuit song from Thule region, North Greenland, recorded by Christian Lune in 1909

Fragments from music for two 'Spirit Adoption' ceremonies of the Tutelo Native American tribe

'Steal Away', African-American spiritual

Fig. 7 (b). Lines – category (b) - pentatonic/near pentatonic<sup>37</sup>.

(Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co, 1970), No. 14; 'Young Men Taken In and Done For', by Harry King, in Peter Davison, *Songs of the British Music Hall* (New York: Oak Publications, 1971); 'Ungensvenden' from Ludwig Mathias Lindeman, *Ældre og nyere norske fjeldmelodier*, reprint (Oslo: Norsk Musikforlag, 1983), No. 470.

<sup>37</sup> The sources for the lesser-known materials here are: 'Betsy Walton' from Percy Grainger and Patrick O'Shaughnessy (eds), *21 Lincolnshire Folk Songs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); 'Potilo', from John Blacking, *Venda Children's Songs: A study in ethnomusicological analysis* (1967), reprinted (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 59; Inuit Song from Michael Hauser, *Traditional Greenlandic Music* (Copenhagen: Kragen/Acta Ethnomusicologica Danica 7, 1991), pp. 218-219;

Fragments from transcriptions of Norwegian Hardanger fiddle playing

3

'Dionigi Burranca', professional dance as played on the Sardinian *launeddas*

As modified by Finnissy

6:5 5:3 7:5

'Pass 'e tresi', from Giovanni Lai, 'Mediana a pipia'. *Launeddas* melody.

'Ispinellu a pipia Dionigi Burranca', Sardinian song accompanied by *launeddas*

'Zortziko Ezpatadantazaris Zumarraga', Basque song

Finnissy's version of part of the above

3 7:6 3

---

Tutelo music from Gertrude Prokosch Kurath, *Tutelo Rituals on Six Nations Reserve, Ontario* (Ann Arbor: Society for Ethnomusicology, 1981), pp.25-35.

'Paidin Mhac Ruairidhe', traditional Irish folk melody

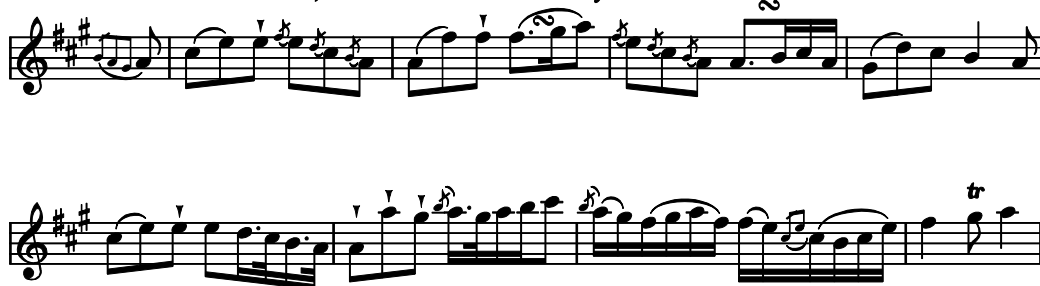


Fig. 7 (c). Lines – category (c) – folkish European<sup>38</sup>.

Cretan melody, 'ΕΜΗΝΥΣΕ Μ' Ο ΣΥΝΤΕΚΝΟΣ'

Andante (♩. = 58)



Cretan melody, 'ΚΟΣΜΕ ΧΡΥΣΕ, ΚΟΣΜ' ΑΡΓΥΡΕ'



<sup>38</sup> Here the sources are: Hardanger fiddle music from Morten Levy, *The World of the Gorrlaus Slåtts*, three volumes (Copenhagen: Acta Musicologica Danica No. 6, 1989), Vol. 3, p. 22; 'Dionigi Burranca' from Andreas Fridolin Weis Bentzon, *The Launeddas: A Sardinian Folk Music Instrument* (Copenhagen, Acta Ethnomusicologica Danica, 1969), pp. 37-38; 'Pass' e tresi' *ibid.* p. 21; 'Ispinellu a pipia Dionigi Burranca' *ibid.* p. 108; 'Zortziko Ezpatadantazaris Zumarraga' from J.A. Donostia, *Cancionero vasco* (Madrid: Unión Música Española, 1944), p. 1797; 'Paidin Mhac Ruairidhe' from Edward Bunting, *The Ancient Music of Ireland: Arranged for the Pianoforte* (1840) (Dublin: Walton's, 1969), Vol. 3, p. 46.



Finnissy – derivations from Cretan melodies in *Seventeen Immortal Homosexual Poets*

Largo malinconico

pp quasi flauto

5:3g

10:9g

pp

Konstantinos Kavafis (1863-)

'Villoteau', Ethiopian ecclesiastical chant, music for Good Friday

Ethiopian chant from Holy Trinity Cathedral, Addis Ababa

Finnissy's free retrograde of middle sections

7:5

3

Further Ethiopian ecclesiastical chant phrases

5

Finnissy – configuration of Ethiopian melodies in the style of North African music

The image shows two systems of musical notation. The first system is marked 'ritmico' and the second 'cantabile'. Both systems show a treble and bass clef with complex rhythmic patterns and melodic lines. The notation includes various note values, rests, and dynamic markings.

'Chanson de la Tribu des Jlass', Arab-Berber song from Tunisia, Kairouan region

A single line of musical notation in treble clef, featuring a series of eighth and sixteenth notes with accents (^) above several notes.

'Chanson du Saint Sidi Abdul-Qader Al-Jilali', Arab-Berber song from Tunisia, in troubadour tradi

A single line of musical notation in treble clef, consisting of a continuous sequence of eighth and sixteenth notes.

Alan Bush, *African Sketches* for flute and piano, fragments

A single line of musical notation in treble clef, featuring a series of eighth and sixteenth notes with various articulations.

A single line of musical notation in treble clef, featuring a series of eighth and sixteenth notes with various articulations and a dynamic marking of *mf*.

Félicien David, 'Chant du muezzin' from *Le Désert*

A single line of musical notation in treble clef, marked 'très mesuré', featuring a series of eighth and sixteenth notes with various articulations and a dynamic marking of *f*.

A single line of musical notation in treble clef, marked 'très mesuré', featuring a series of eighth and sixteenth notes with various articulations and a dynamic marking of *f*.

Fig. 7 (d). Lines - category (d) – folkish extra-European.

figuration (in terms of degree of ornamentation, angularity or otherwise of contour, and so on), overall harmonic ‘colour’ (as provided by different modalities), use of the instrument (variously hushed and still, wild and flamboyant, or various things in between), register (less of a factor in the *History* than in other Finnissey works) and so on. My categories do not provide an exhaustive list – indeed, they do not incorporate all of the attributes I have just mentioned – but go some way towards providing a means of understanding how the structural delineations of material operate on a perceptual level

The eleven chapters of the *History* each exhibit particular emphases in terms of the three major macro-categories, whilst the individual sections of the central piece, *Seventeen Immortal Homosexual Poets*, also contains its own inner structure in this sense<sup>39</sup>. These are shown in Fig. 8.

In terms of the sub-categories, one can find a plethora of all types in *Le réveil*, the *Poets*, and *Etched*. In the first of these, the music shifts continually between short fragments delineated by crescendos from and diminuendos into *niente*, to produce a ‘zoom in/zoom out’ effect<sup>40</sup>; in the second each of the relatively short sections exhibits a clear predominance of one or other sub-category (or pairs of them combined simultaneously); in the third the same process applies across sections of medium length. Some of *Le démon* lies somewhere between *Le réveil* and *Etched* in terms of diversity of categories, but with longer expansions of ‘walking lines’ in regular crotchets, and some more extended use of chordal categories (c) and (d) towards the conclusion; an interaction between these two categories informs most of the first section of *Kapitalistisch Realisme*, *Bachsche Nachdichtungen* is dominated by chordal category (a), whilst *Sizilianische Männerakte* consists totally of an interplay between chordal category (e) and linear categories (a) and (c). *Unsere Afrikareise*, on the other hand, is in very large measure about a dialogue between linear categories (b) and (d), with the boundaries between the two occasionally becoming confused.

Indeed much of the expressive power of the *History* derives from Finnissey’s exploiting the tension between two distinct categories presented either in alternation or simultaneously. The latter option is perhaps the most striking element of the whole work, occasionally even to the point of caricature. An obvious example of this is in the various sections of *North American Spirituals* in which Finnissey combines hymn material from William Billings (chordal category (b)) with one of the four African-American spirituals.

---

<sup>39</sup> The delineation of sections in this chapter is drawn from my analysis in Pace, ‘Seventeen Immortal Homosexual Poets’.

<sup>40</sup> This is an effect also employed by the composer Salvatore Sciarrino (especially in his First Sonata for piano (1976)), whose work Finnissey was probably re-studying (having known it for many years) at the time of writing this chapter.

1. *Le demon de l'analogie*- lines
2. *Le réveil de intraitable réalité* – gestures
3. *North American Spirituals* – chords/lines
4. *My parents' generation thought War meant something* - chords/lines
5. *Alkan-Paganini* – lines
6. *Seventeen Immortal Homosexual Poets* – everything (but see inner structure below)
7. *Eadweard Muybridge - Edvard Munch* – Muybridge – gestures, Munch – line. Chords at end
8. *Kapitalistisch Realisme (mit Sizilianische Männerakte und Bachsche Nachdichtungen)* – KR chords, BN chords, SM chords/lines
9. *Wachtend op de volgende uitsbarting van repressie en censuur* – gestures
10. *Unsere Afrikareise* – lines
11. *Etched Bright with Sunlight* – everything.

*Seventeen Immortal Homosexual Poets*

1. Gregory Woods: Gesture
2. Mutsuo Takahashi: Gesture → Line
3. Thom Gunn: Line
4. Allen Ginsberg: Gesture
5. Frank O'Hara: Line/Chords
6. Harold Norse: Line/Chords
7. Pier Paolo Pasolini: Line
8. James Kirkup: Chords
9. Jean Genet: Line
10. Stephen Spender: Gesture → Line
- Melange 1: All three types
- Melange 2: Beginning with all types, leading to Lines/Chords
11. Federico García Lorca: Line
12. Ralph Chubb: Line
13. Jean Cocteau: Line (with hints of Gesture)
- Transition: Chords
14. Konstantin Kavafis: Line
15. Oscar Wilde: Line/Chords
16. Edward Carpenter: Line/Chords
17. John Addington Symonds: Line/Chords
- Compression: Chords
- Coda: Line/Chords

Fig. 8. Predominance of macro-categories in the different chapters of the *History*.

Soprano

Contralto

Tenor

Bass

Sing praises, sing praises, sing praises

5

S.

C.

T.

B.

to the Lord O ye fai - nts of his

10

S.

C.

T.

B.

for his wrath end - ures but a mom - ent

for his wrath end - ures but a mom - ent

Fig. 9 (a). William Billings, 'An Anthem for Thanksgiving Day Morning'<sup>41</sup>.

<sup>41</sup> This can be found in Billings, *The Continental Harmony*, pp. 70-75.

## NOBODY KNOWS THE TROUBLE I SEE

No - bo - dy knows the trou - ble I see, No - bo - dy knows my sor - row  
 5  
 No - bo - dy knows the trou - ble I see, Glo - ry hal - le - lu - ia! Some times I'm up, some  
 10  
 times I'm down, Oh, yes, Lord! Some -  
 13  
 times I'm al - most to the groun', Oh, yes, Lord.

Fig. 9 (b). African-American Spiritual, 'Nobody knows the trouble I see'

Finnissy removes the original tenor part (in which Billings would usually keep the tune<sup>42</sup>), and substitutes the pitches of one of the spirituals (maintaining Billings' rhythms). The chorale itself is modified, so that the other parts are 'forced to comply', modifying each of them by the interval by which the spiritual melody differs from the original (sometimes shifting octaves), mirroring some of Billings' own rather idiosyncratic techniques as laid out in his books<sup>43</sup>. Also the spiritual part shifts at one point into the alto register. The effect is strange and disorienting, literally as if one part is threatening to disrupt the others (which, according to Billings' own definition, should be 'forced to comply and conform to that'<sup>44</sup>). Finnissy intended this as a musical representation of a white church service in which a black man is forced to attend, but subverts the proceedings by singing a quite different tune of his own<sup>45</sup> (and it is for this reason that I believe a performance which seeks to play down the dissonances and somehow 'contain' the discontinuous progressions violates something of the essence of the music). The resulting chord progression, sometimes clumsy, involving undefinable chords and

<sup>42</sup> See Mellers, *Music in a New Found Land*, p. 15.

<sup>43</sup> Especially in *The Continental Harmony*, his last collection (see pp. i-xxxiv). See also Mellers, *Music in a New Found Land*, pp. 12-17, for more on Billings' techniques.

<sup>44</sup> Billings, *The Continental Harmony*, p. xxxi.

<sup>45</sup> As related to me in private conversations with the composer. It is fair to call the implied singer a 'he' since the part is always in the tenor. The issue of appropriation of African-American music such as the spiritual, and its political implications, is again beyond the scope of this article; on this, see Pace, 'North American Spirituals', in *The History of Photography in Sound*, in which I draw in particular upon the work of Eileen Southern (*The Music of Black Americans: A History*, third edition (New York and London: Norton, 1997)), Arthur C. Jones (*Wade in the Water: The Wisdom of the Spirituals* (New York: Orbis Books, 1993)) and Jon Cruz (*Culture on the Margins: The Black Spiritual and Rise of American Cultural Interpretation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999)).

strange enharmonic relations, is a long way from anything that would have been sung by an eighteenth century New England congregation.



Fig. 9 (c). *North American Spirituals*, P7 L4-5. Combinations of Billings and spiritual.

In this context one should also bear in mind the letter ‘To the Goddess of Discord’, written by Billings as part of the introduction to *The Singing Master’s Assistant* of 1778. He says here of one piece in the cycle, ‘Jargon’, which frequently employs conglomeration of seconds, fourths and sevenths, as well as more consonant intervals:

Let an Ass bray the bass, let the filing of a saw carry the Tenor, let a hog who is extream hungry squeel the counter, and let a cart-wheel, which is heavy loaded, and that had been long without grease, squeek the treble; and if the concert should appear to be too feeble you may add the cracking of a crow, the howling of a dog, the squalling of a cat; and what would grace the concert yet more, would be the rubbing of a wet finger upon a window glass<sup>46</sup>.

Fig. 10 shows the process by which Finnissy arrived at a passage that appears on the final page of the same chapter. He takes as his basis a well-known piece of ragtime by Homer Denney called *Chimes*. This is first combined with a Metis song *Mon cher amant* as transcribed from the singing of near-forgotten

<sup>46</sup> Cited in Hamm, *Music in the New World*, pp. 150-151.

Metis-Canadian singer Joseph Gaspard Jeannotte (1889-?)<sup>47</sup>, the pitches of which are used in retrograde form (with a few modifications) to replace the melody of the Denney, producing a bitonal combination that is further complicated by first a thinning-out of the bass, then the introduction of somewhat cheesy chromatic passing notes. The leaps of a fifth in the Jeannotte (a characteristic found in a wide range of French-Canadian folk songs) are quite at odds with the mostly stepwise melody of the Denney original, as are the implied drone harmonies around which the melodic elaborations are organised. Then Finnissy transposes the right hand down to A-flat minor and applies a series of random transpositions (and some other modifications, including registral displacement) to fragments of the bass, as well as changing its basic pulse so as to create a Nancarrow-esque 6:5 relationship with the treble, then extracts a partial fragment from this total result. Finally, he adds some material in the middle parts and at the conclusion, drawn from another derivation from ragtime which appears elsewhere in the cycle.

Fig. 10 (a). Homer Denney, *Chimes: A Novelty Rag*.

<sup>47</sup> See Nancy Hockley, 'Transcription and vocal character: The songs of Joseph Gaspard Jeannotte', in Witmer (ed.), *Ethnomusicology in Canada*, pp. 145-151. The Metis are a native people of the Canadian and American Northwestern regions. The particular use of French in this song is described by the author as a 'Metis patois', which Finnissy notes besides the example in the sketches.



1. Mon cher a - mant, ma bien a - mie 2. C'est vos doux yeux cou - leurs des fleurs  
 3. C'est pour vous j'ai lan - gui la nuit et la jour 4. L'a mour c'est un pe - tit lan - gage  
 là haut 5. Qui voit son a - mant cha - grin 6. Que je meurs  
 de re - grèt, mais de l'en - nui sec - ret.

Fig. 10 (b). Metis song *Mon cher a-mant*, as sung by Joseph Gaspard Jeannotte.

Fig. 10 (c). Combination of Denney *Chimes* with transposed and retrograded *Mon cher a-mant*.

Fig. 10 (d). *North American Spirituals*, P26.

This may seem rather wilfully bizarre, but it does demonstrate various possibilities. I believe that the passage in question still recognisably inhabits the genre of ragtime (albeit in a highly defamiliarised form), as Finnissy maintains the rhythmic profile of the melody and the stride-like quality of the bass<sup>48</sup>. The melody, with its obstinate repeated notes, also now forms aural connections with various of the spiritual-derived material experienced earlier in the piece, as this exhibits similar characteristics, whilst the polyrhythmic relationship between bass and treble links with various canons also heard earlier, and a passage on the previous page alluding to the music of Conlon Nancarrow. Thus Finnissy is able not only to combine multiple materials into one but also create structural correspondences as a result of so doing.

Wilfred Mellers offers a subtle insight (if a little dated in terms of contemporary political sensibilities) into the genre of the ragtime, saying that:

<sup>48</sup> Eileen Southern gives as key attributes of piano-rag music the left hand 'stomping and patting' (taking over the 'the foot stomping of the musicians and the "juba patting" of the bystanders' in earlier dance-music of slaves with music from fiddles and banjos) whilst the right hand provides 'syncopated melodies, using motives reminiscent of fiddle and banjo tunes'. See Southern, *The Music of Black Americans*, p. 315.

The essence of the rag is in its unremitting rhythmic *pattern* which, though habitually syncopated, is never violent. The melancholy, the frenzy, the ecstasy of the blues are all banished. Instead of lament or orgy, we have a dead-pan manner that shuts out personal sensation. The music is hard, bright, obstinately eupeptic and incorrigibly cheerful; in its machine-made way it is even elegant, like the Negro dandy wearing his straw boater at a raffish angle. In so far as the inane grin and the prancing vivacity attempt to shut out the painful actuality of the Negro's experience, there is an affinity between piano rag and the positively ebulliently entertainment music we referred to in the previous chapter: rag is the Negro's attempt at the buoyant optimism of the Sousa march and the brilliant elegance of the Gottschalk dance, and the mass feeling is depersonalised because personal feeling may be too much to bear.<sup>49</sup>

Finnissy's allusion to ragtime here exhibits many of the qualities described perceptively by Mellers. After pathos, pained lyricism and visionary exploration such as are found earlier on in *North American Spirituals*, this heavily modified (and brief!) piece of ragtime summons up a sense of dandyism and Mellers' 'inane grin' and 'prancing vivacity', not least through its combination of machine-like rhythms in conjunction with a tonal melody (a combination which has not been encountered in such a manner previously in the piece). After so many moments of thwarted hope and aspiration as expressed by the hemmed-in spirituals, with the threat of violence lurking continuously beneath the surface, Finnissy's abstracted ragtime becomes not simply the stylised artifice of Stravinsky's excursions into the genre, but a combination of sardonic irony and a window onto a form of experience and expression lying beyond the rest of the world circumscribed by this piece, not least because of the very possibility of rejuvenation of an archaic form in this Ivesian manner. At the same time, its inner tension between parts provides for one more level of integration with the rest of this harrowing chapter, rather than being a disconnected fragment.

Ragtime was not included in my broad categories and sub-categories; in its original form it constitutes a combination of line lying between categories (a) and (c), and chords between (a) and (b)), in this mediated form we have something akin to a combination of linear category (c) (or possibly on the fringes of (d)) and a chordal figuration which does not really fit any category. There are very short ragtime-derived passages in other chapters (most notably in the Jean Genet section of the *Poets*), but no others of this type; this is one reason that this fragment sounds so remarkable in the context of the whole cycle.

The most striking of all Finnissy's combinations of material is to be found in *Sizilianische Männerakte*. This sub-chapter was inspired by a collection of photographs by the German photographer Wilhelm von Gloeden, some of whose

---

<sup>49</sup> Mellers, *Music in a New Found Land*, pp. 277-278. Mellers' interpretation I find more subtle than that in Christopher Small, *Music of the Common Tongue: Survival and Celebration in Afro-American Music* (London: John Calder, 1987), pp. 272-273, which is also dismissive of practically any use of the genre by classical composers. On the wider history of ragtime such as is particularly relevant to this context, see Edward Berlin, *Ragtime: A Musical and Cultural History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980), pp. 5ff., and Southern, *The Music of Black Americans*, pp. 315-319.

work is shown in Fig. 11. Gloeden's work features young male nudes, from the Sicilian town of Taormina, where he made his home, captured in highly formalised and quasi-mystical homoerotic poses that evoke an idealised classical world<sup>50</sup>. If von Gloeden's vision today seems utterly characteristic of romantic pre-industrial nostalgia, and has sinister overtones (to do with its ideals of bodily perfection, association of sexuality with pre-adulthood, and cultivation of arrogant and brutal primitivism), Finnissy is not the type of composer who would engage with such work undialectically.

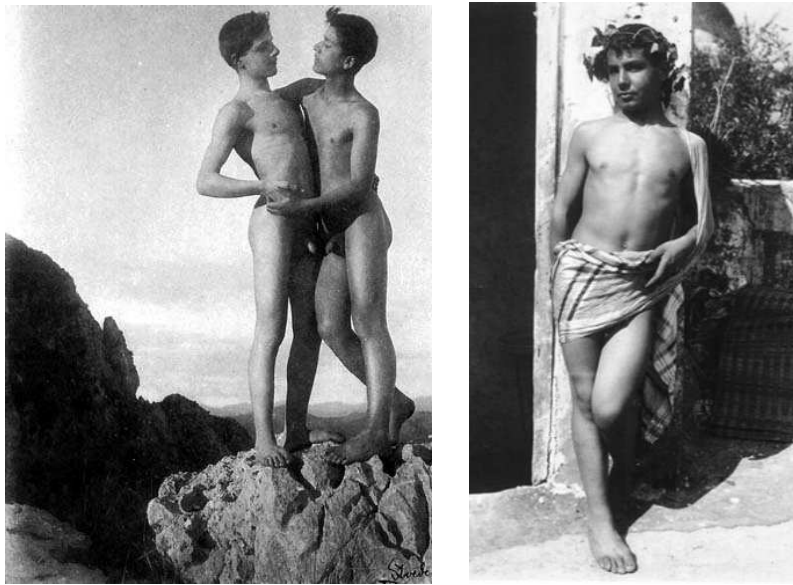


Fig. 11. Wilhelm von Gloeden, photographs.

For this long section, he employs two categories of material, specifically chordal category (e), in the form of selected lines extracted from a retrograde of the whole of Busoni's *Pezzo serioso* from the Piano Concerto, as mentioned earlier; and also a combination of a vastly slowed-down melody derived from the *Sicilienne* aria 'O fortune, à ton caprice', from Meyerbeer's *Robert le diable*<sup>51</sup>, a

<sup>50</sup> See Peter Weiermair, *Wilhelm von Gloeden* (Köln: Benedikt Taschen, 1994), pp. 7-8; Weiermair, 'Et in Arcadia Ego', in Tobias G. Natter and Peter Weiermair (eds), *Et in Arcadia Ego: Turn-Of-The-Century Photography* (Zurich: Edition Oehrl, 2000); and Giuseppe Vanzella, 'The Fires of Taormina', in Vincenzo Mirisola & Giuseppe Vanzella, *Sicilia Mitica Arcadia: Von Gloeden e la "Scuola" di Taormina* (Palermo: Edizioni Gente di Fotografia, 1981), and Roland Barthes, 'Wilhelm von Gloeden', in *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation*, translated Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1985), pp. 195-197, for more on von Gloeden.

<sup>51</sup> For a brief examination of this aria in the context of the opera, see Robert Ignatius Letellier, *Meyerbeer's Robert le Diable: The Premiere Opéra Romantique* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), pp. 77-78. For an earlier sketch for this aria, see Mark Everist, 'The Name of the Rose: Robert le Diable' in *Giacomo Meyerbeer and Music Drama in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2005), pp. 178-179. On the wider significance of this opera, arguably the most important in generating the tradition of French grand opera, see Heinz and Gudrun Becker, *Giacomo Meyerbeer: A Life in Letters* (London: Timber Press, 1989), pp. 45, 54, and Jane F. Fulcher,

collection of Sicilian folksongs collected by Meyerbeer<sup>52</sup>, some of the Sardinian *launeddas* music, and a type of imaginary Sicilian folksong (the second example in linear category (a)), which is much more rhythmically regular than the rest of the material, and derived from reiteration of a small number of cells. This linear material clearly alternates between categories (a) and (c), but in totality presents a long expanse of keening melody without any real sense of development or change (indeed one long melodic passage is repeated almost verbatim). For the most part the ‘Sicilian’ material is in the right hand, the Busoni material in the left, with a few reversals earlier on (mostly when alluding to the actual Sicilian folksongs). Fig. 12 gives two characteristic passages.

The combination of the relatively narrow tessitura and lack of development in the Sicilian material would create a sense of timelessness, akin to von Gloeden’s vision, were it not always tempered by the ongoing progression of the Busoni material. This latter material does not simply provide a dramatic underpinning for the melody, but is carefully designed by Finnissy so as to maintain a bitonal tension almost throughout (when the two hands seem to be arriving at some type of reconciliation, at a very advanced stage in the movement, Finnissy uses this as a cue for introducing the key gestural motif from Wagner). As mentioned before, the Busoni material is far from harmonically smooth (especially in its retrograded form), and when it is, at least in Finnissy’s mediated representations, it is also frequently dark, brooding and chromatic, as well as somewhat insistent. There is not space here to describe in detail the intricacies of the combination; suffice to say that the result is of an illusory vision of some lost world which is forever tempered by a sense of urgency, drama, and motion. It would be simplistic to say that Finnissy is expressing some wholesale rejection of this Arcadian vision – on the contrary, the loving care with which he shapes and presents the melodic lines demonstrate his awareness of the power of such visions – rather he plays off an ideal of a lost world against a continual recognition of its impossibility. This is reminiscent of the concerns of *English Country-Tunes*, but with a much higher level of intricacy in terms of the detailed interactions between the materials.

---

*The Nation's Image: French Grand Opera as Politics and Politicized Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 64-78.

<sup>52</sup> Meyerbeer, *Sizilianische Volkslieder*, as mentioned earlier. Fritz Bose, in his introduction to this volume, draws attention to the fact that whilst ‘O fortune’ corresponds to the genre of the Siciliana in terms of rhythm and periodicity, the text and melody have no relation to any of the notated Sicilian songs and dances in this volume (p. 10).

Fig. 12 (a) *Sizilianische Männerakte*, p. 55.

Fig. 12 (b). *Sizilianische Männerakte*, p. 60.

Knowledge of the sources derived from study of the sketch materials would make perhaps too easy the reading of 'latent narratives' into the music. For example, the last section of *Le démon* could then be read as a reflection on Beethovenian heroic ideals transformed into the somewhat empty grandiosity of Bruckner and esotericism of Wagner, both of which culminate in the destruction commemorated by Debussy. This could then be taken to imply a particular type of political interpretation of the implications of bourgeois ideals. Such an interpretation arrived at in such a manner remains, however, essentially predicated upon an exegesis of iconic qualities of sources which are not necessarily apparent within the aural reality; what is more important, in my opinion, is to consider how after extensive mediation some of the fundamental properties of the sources inform the aural surface of the music. Instead of asking 'can one hear Bruckner 5, or the Busoni *Pezzo serioso* at this point?' one would do better to ask 'How is Finnissy's piece affected by the sonic attributes which it shares with the works of Bruckner, Busoni, etc., upon which he draws?' That is of course a very complex question, as different aspects of the sources are made manifest at various distinct levels of the music. The way in which, for example, Finnissy's concatenations of fragments from *Götterdämmerung* are formed into soaring, esoteric long lines is perhaps more significant than the precise nature of the fragments from which such lines are formed, in terms of lending the resultant music something of a 'Wagnerian' quality. Similarly, the use of very simple chords and progressions, even when in retrograde form, is vital to the characterisation of the material deriving from 'Onward Christian Soldiers', distinguishing it, for example, from other material with similar metrical qualities (of which there is much in this piece). And those properties come fundamentally from the source itself.

Whilst Finnissy's sources are invariably mediated, sometimes to the point of near unrecognisability, this is not really the same thing as their being *developed* in the manner that Adorno would have recognised. Finnissy's form of mediation often takes the form of 'testing' the material, pushing it 'as far as it will go' whilst still exhibiting some of its fundamental attributes. This has some similarities with Stravinskian neo-classicism, yet it is rare to find Stravinsky's degree of objective detachment in Finnissy's music. Finnissy extends and re-perspectivises his material in place of developing it 'from within'. In this sense his approach also relates to surrealism, but with little of the musical equivalent of 'photographic realism' that Adorno deplored in surrealist painting<sup>53</sup>. Everything is distorted, smudged, modified, in a word individuated, an individuation that links disparate materials by making them sound 'Finnissy-esque' (not least through the eschewal of a stable pulse), a quality also achieved through his Ivesian simultaneities. Finnissy's materials are historically and culturally loaded; he does not shy away

---

<sup>53</sup> Theodor Adorno, 'Looking Back on Surrealism', in *Notes on Literature*, translated Shierry Weber Nicholson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), Volume 1, pp. 86-90.

from this very fact by any means, but over and above the fact of 'modernising' them he engages with their historical and cultural properties by bringing them into a dialogue with other materials whose properties are dissimilar. And this is ultimately an optimistic strategy, by showing their continuing potential without the need to resort to idle archaism.

But it is perhaps most important to stress the difference between the *History* and a postmodernist kaleidoscope, such as one might find in the music of some others who I would characterise as musical tourists or consumers. Finnissy is not happy with simple pluralism, diversity and exoticism for their own sake, but in Joycean fashion searches for axes of similarity as a means of making sense of the otherwise bewildering diversity of the world around him. In the end, whilst the range of material and the means used to transform it are of huge interest in terms of the study of compositional technique, the meanings engendered by the piece are more a result of the broad categories of material he thus obtains. This provides a framework within which to explore his subjective preoccupations, a form of subjectivity which is neither oblivious of history nor wholly subservient towards it.



## Chapter 3

### No. 1, *Le démon de l'analogie*

The title of *Le démon de l'analogie* is taken from a passage in Roland Barthes' 1975 book *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes*:

Saussure's *bête noire* was the arbitrary (nature of the sign). His is analogy. The 'analogical' arts (cinema, photography), the 'analogical' methods (academic criticism) are discredited. Why? Because analogy implies an effect of Nature: it constitutes the 'natural' as a source of truth; and what adds to the curse of analogy is the fact that it is irrepressible: no sooner is a form seen than it must resemble something: humanity seems doomed to Analogy, i.e. in the long run, to Nature. Whence the effort of painters, of writers, to escape it. How? By two contrary excesses, or call them two ironies which flout Analogy, either by feigning a spectacularly flat respect (this is the Copy, which is rescued), or by regularly - according to the regulations - distorting the imitated object (this is Anamorphosis).

Aside from these transgressions, what stands in beneficent opposition to perfidious Analogy is simple structural correspondence: Homology, which reduces the recall of the first object to a proportional allusion (etymologically, i.e., in the Edenic state of language, analogy used to mean proportion).<sup>1</sup>

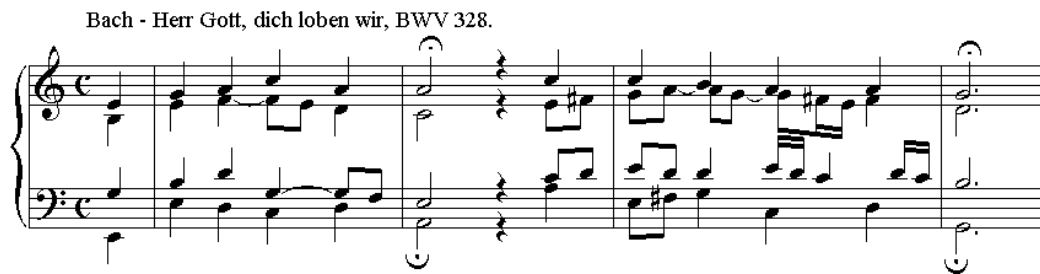
In this chapter, Finnissy almost parodistically enacts Barthes' 'spectacularly flat respect' *as well as* 'distorting the imitated object', this being each fragment of the musical material that is 'photographed' in the piece. The distortion *is* the flattening of the materials of this piece, a distanced survey of the 'terrain' to come, like an extended cinematic tracking shot (as found, for example, at the opening of Orson Welles' film *Touch of Evil* (1958) or Sidney Lumet's *The Hill* (1965)).

For a 29-minute opening to a five-and-a-half hour piano work, Finnissy's first chapter is surprisingly short on spectacular (in the more usual sense of the word) moments, as might produce an arresting effect; such moments, where they do occur, are brief and fragmentary, small windows onto what may come later. Rather, after a misleading opening (almost a 'false start'), the piece traverses slowly through its material, most of the time with a steady plodding beat, sustaining attention by means of the intensity that is produced by the concentrated sense of distance and reserve. However, at the same time Finnissy introduces many of the most important categories of material to be developed further later in the cycle.

---

<sup>1</sup> Roland Barthes, part of 'Le démon de l'analogie' from *Barthes on Barthes*, translated by Richard Howard (New York: Noonday Press, 1989), p. 44. Barthes' ideas here were prefigured in his writings on criticism in his earlier *Critique et vérité* (1966), in which he wrote that 'The critic separates meanings, he causes a second language - that is to say, a coherence of signs - to float above the first language of the work. In brief, we are concerned with a kind of anamorphosis, give of course that on the one hand the work never lends itself to a pure reflection (it is not a specular object like an apple or a box), and on the other hand that the anamorphosis itself is a *guided* transformation, subject to optical constraints: out of what it reflects, it must transform *everything*; transform only according to certain laws; transform always in the same direction'. See Roland Barthes, *Criticism and Truth*, translated and edited by Katrine Pilcher Keuneneman, with foreword by Philip Thody (New York and London: Continuum, 2007), p. 32.

Primary amongst these is the *motivo fondamentale*, both as the plainchant *Te Deum Laudamus* and in Bach's *Herr Gott, dich loben wir* BWV 328, to which Finnissy applies various techniques (as he will in myriad different ways later in the cycle). This is used to generate a range of what I will call 'walking' material, mostly in regular crotchets, which is used to connect different passages, in the manner of a 'Promenade' (as in Mussorgsky's *Tableaux d'une exposition*). Fig. 13 demonstrates the process by which such material is derived. The harmonic processes thus generated appear to be relatively arbitrary, meandering around various tonalities without really fixing anywhere, as is common of various treatments of material that Finnissy will use in the cycle. But the stepwise aspects of the melodic material, notwithstanding the octave displacements, remain a common and distinguishing feature of all such passages.





Throughout this chapter, Finnis forms continuities between the ‘Walking material’ and other categories with similar properties, in particular those derived from ‘Onward Christian Soldiers’, Bruckner’s Fifth Symphony and Debussy’s *Berceuse Héroïque* (see Fig. 15), all of which ‘march’ in various ways, as well as other chordal material derived from askew progressions (as found in the *Poets*) and snippets of hymns from William Billings.

Debussy - *Berceuse Héroïque*

Inversion with octave displacement and doublings

From Sullivan - 'Onward Christian Soldiers'

Retrograde with shift up a half-step mid-way

Debussy - central section (La Brabançonne) from *Berceuse Héroïque*

Derivations - various pitch and octave modifications

Fig. 14. Derivations from Debussy *Berceuse Héroïque* and Sullivan ‘Onward Christian Soldiers’.

Otherwise, the structure of the chapter can be perceived in terms of five sections, as follows:

A: *Flatness*. Following a few short fragments and anticipation of the 'compression' material, this section is centered around four passages of canonic writing drawing upon the *motivo fondamentale*, interspersed by the rhythmic motive in sixths (the fourth type of gestural material presented in Fig. 5), a combination of the Bach material with some of that later to be found in *Alkan-Paganini* within a wider segment of the 'compression' material, as an anticipation of later virtuosity, and the rhythmic material again. Via flash-forwards to a rhapsody around the spiritual 'Steal Away' and Arthur Sullivan's 'Whatever you are', Finnissy is able to ease into the walking material as a transition into the next section.

B: *Walking/Motion*. Here Finnissy morphs from the walking material into two other derivations (both used later more extensively in *My parents' generation*) exhibiting 'marching' qualities, specifically inverted or retrograded passages from Debussy's *Berceuses héroïque* and Sullivan's 'Onward Christian Soldiers'. He fragments and thins out a derivative walking material (in a triadic form – see Fig. 15) to bring about the transition into the next section.

The image shows a musical score for piano, divided into two systems. The first system has two parts: 'From Poets' (measures 1-4) and 'From motivo fondamentale' (measures 5-8). The second system has two parts: 'Combination with chords' (measures 1-4) and 'Cut-up of material derived in this fashion' (measures 5-8). The score features complex chordal textures and rhythmic patterns, with annotations such as '0:7' and '6:5' indicating specific intervals or chord qualities.

Fig. 15. Combination of *motivo fondamentale* with a gamut of mostly triadic chords employed in the *Poets*.

C: *Central Section*. This contains five sub-sections:

C (i): The *motivo fondamentale* in a clear form for the first time, but in a manner which parodies another highly extended piano work, Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji's *Opus Clavicembalisticum* (1929-30), specifically imitating the writing of the 'Fuga I' in the latter work (Fig. 16). But Finnissy cuts this material short in order to return to the 'walking/triadic' material, emphasising his distance from Sorabji's sprawling creations.

C (ii): short passages deriving from *Alkan-Paganini* (here Finnissy comes closest in the cycle to a clear allusion to Mozart's 'Fin ch'han dal vino', as set in Alkan's *Jean qui rit*), *Bachsche Nachdichtungen*, leading back into the walking material, with a short flash-forward towards a Billings hymn, which includes the first proper cadence of the piece, after which the music dissolves into a short montage of fragments.



Fig. 16 (a). Kaikshoru Shapurji Sorabji – 'Fuga I' from *Opus Clavicembalisticum*, opening.

Sommessamente moderato

motivo fondamentale: Te Deum laudamus

*p*

*(f)*

*leggero*

*pppp*

*mf*

Alkan Paganini

Fig. 16 (b). *Le démon de l'analogie*, configuration of the *Te Deum Laudamus* in the manner of Sorabji.

C (iii): The first 'Sicilian/Sardinian' passage, in which energetic *launeddas* music is combined with hymn-derived material, then an semi-'compression' interlude from *Kapitalistische Realisme*.

C (iv): A longer passage of washed-out derivatives from imaginary 1940s popular music, looking forward to *My parents' generation*.

C (v): A longer 'Sicilian/Sardinian' section, incorporating both imaginary folk music from these regions with derivatives from Busoni and Beethoven, as in *Kapitalistisch Realisme/Sizilianische Männerakte*. Once again dissolving into a short montage of fragments.

D: *Melodies*. Two clear melodies, first the iconic and clearly-stated melody from Berlioz's 'Scène d'amour' from *Roméo et Juliette* (harmonised in an extremely fluid and slippery manner, in contrast to Berlioz. See Fig. 17), then from the slow movement of Beethoven's Piano Sonata op. 10 no. 1, using the *motivo*

*fondamentale* in place of the original melody; both accompanied by Bach derivations or block chords. Then a forlorn, desolate derivation from a combination of Beethoven, Wagner and Bruckner, as to be found in *Kapitalistisch Realisme*, leading ultimately back to the walking material.

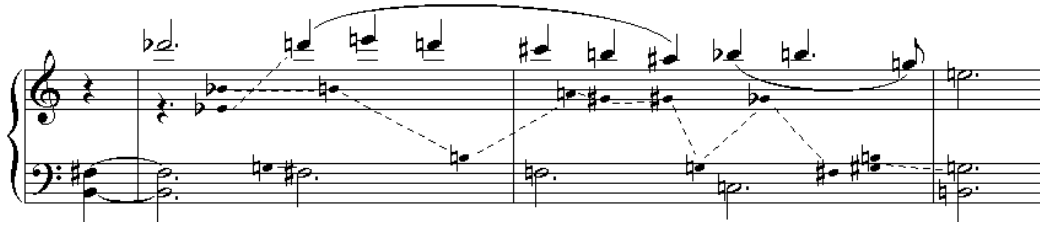
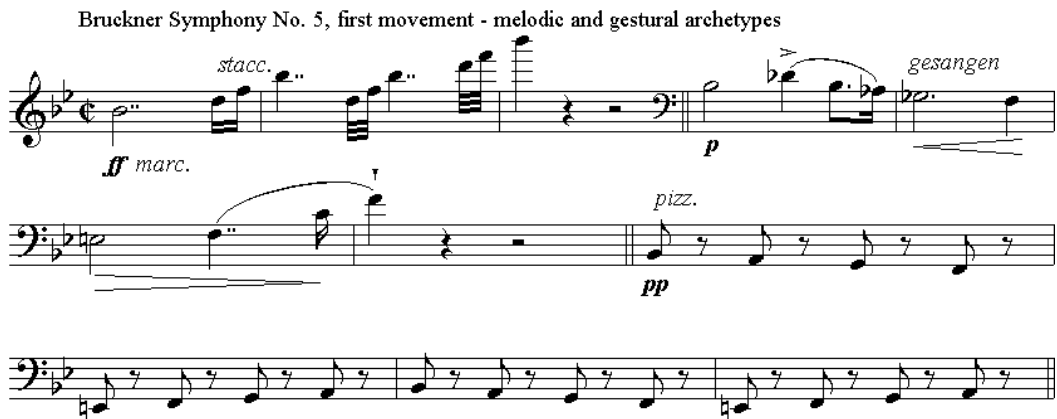


Fig. 17. Harmonic progression at initial appearance of Berlioz melody.

E: *Coda – Walking/March*. Further dialogues between the walking material and the Beethoven/Bruckner material (see Fig. 18), intercut with flash-forwards to impassioned renditions of spirituals and hymns. All ultimately descending into a combination of the *motivo fondamentale* with more of the walking/march material from the *Berceuse héroïque*, before disappearing into nothingness.

The foundational material for this chapter, that derived from canons around the *motivo fondamentale*, is somewhat varied in terms of contour and has an small amount of inner 'shape' by virtue of the held notes in the bass, but lacks harmonic focus, definition or direction almost entirely, seeming for the most part arbitrary. This is what gives the chapter as a whole such a 'spectacularly flat respect', but also heightens the contrast with other materials to which it might be seen to be related, for example the rendition of 'Whatever you are' in Section A. Using the same central register, a corresponding level of density in each part (the melodic line taking the place of the *motivo fondamentale* in the earlier material),





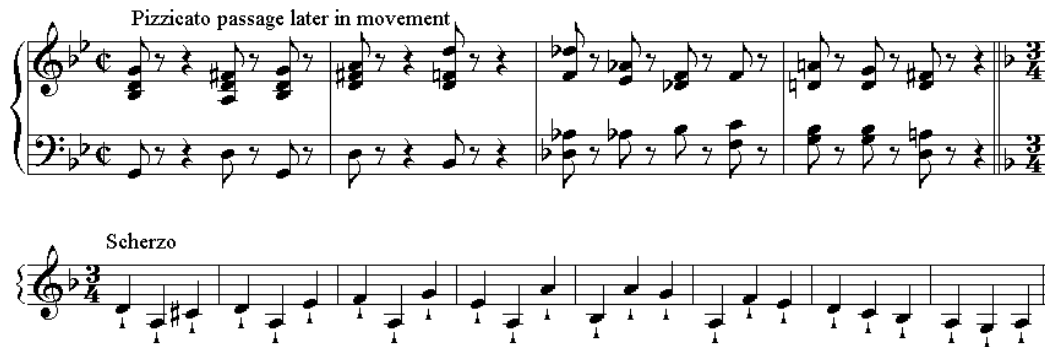


Fig. 18 (a). Some archetypes in Bruckner Symphony No. 5.



Fig. 18 (b). *Le démon de l'analogie*, P25.

and similarly harmonic meandering quality in the lower parts, the continuity with the previous canonic material is clear. What is most markedly different here, however, is the sense of forlorn yearning provided by the clear tonality of the melody (much more so than with the *motivo fondamentale*) attempting to break out from the thickets that pull it down (see Fig. 19). Also, large amounts of the piece are concentrated within the central registers of the instrument, meaning that those occasional passages which move into the treble or bass (such as C (iv), or the closing pages of the work), or the few interspersed rapid grace note groups ranging over a wide tessitura, stand out more as a result.

One of the most difficult chapters to interpret coherently if played in isolation from the rest of the cycle, *Le démon* is nonetheless structurally essential

both in terms of laying the ‘seeds’ for various materials which flower gradually through the course of the longer work (here in palpably incomplete forms, this pointing towards some later form of closure), and also as a counterpart to the final chapter, *Etched bright with sunlight*, in which similar strategies are employed in a drastically accelerated context. Like all the chapters of the *History*, *Le démon* makes use of an extraordinarily subtle and intricate dialogue between differently characterised types of music. And the properties it exploits are themselves the product of history (musical and otherwise), but history as seen to be meaningful from the vantage point of the present, not just a collection of relics, or ‘Copies’ in Barthes’ sense of the term. The high degree of individuation of each category of material in the piece inevitably suggests an allusion or analogy to a listener with any degree of musical literacy, but rarely in a ‘natural’ sense (even with the Berlioz quotation, because of its harmonic configuration). On the contrary, *Le démon* is most markedly ‘unnatural’ in many respects, forever withstanding comfort for the listener such as can be provided by recourse to the familiar. Much of the material is ‘colour-drained’ either through sparseness, repetitiveness, or simple harmonic saturation, or mediated to such a degree that it takes on a radically different form. These forms of treatment do roughly correspond to Barthes’ ‘ironies which flout Analogy’, in ways that create an impression of rarefication or developmental potential respectively. The former quality is much more in abundance than the latter, which is why the piece as a whole seems distant and possibly uninviting (a very brave strategy for beginning a cycle of this length). The musical ‘monuments’ presented are ultimately as monolithically forbidding as they are enticing. But the extensive and intricate use of correspondences between materials (akin to Barthes’s ‘Homology’) makes the piece very much more than a simple array of objects.



Fig. 19. *Le démon de l'analogie*, allusion to final section of *My parents' generation* thought *War meant something*.

## Chapter 4

### No. 2: *Le réveil de l'intraitable réalité*

Like *Le démon*, *Le réveil de l'intraitable réalité* also takes its title from Barthes, this time from his reflection on photography, *Camera Lucida*:

What characterizes the so-called advanced societies is that they today consume images and no longer, like those of the past, beliefs; they are therefore more liberal, less fanatical, but also more 'false' (less 'authentic') - something we translate, in ordinary consciousness, by the avowal of an impression of nauseated boredom, as if the universalized image were producing a world that is without difference (indifferent), from which can rise, here and there, only the cry of anarchisms, marginalisms, and individualisms: let us abolish the images, let us save immediate Desire (desire without mediation).

Mad or tame? Photography can be one or the other: tame if its realism remains relative, tempered by aesthetic or empirical habits (to leaf through a magazine at the hairdresser's, the dentist's); mad if this realism is absolute and, so to speak, original, obliging the loving and terrified consciousness to return to the very letter of Time: a strictly repulsive movement which reverses the course of the thing, and which I shall call, in conclusion, the photographic ecstasy.

Such are the two ways of the Photography. The choice is mine: to subject its spectacle to the civilized code of perfect illusions, or to confront in it the wakening of intractable reality.<sup>1</sup>

The dissolution of the music into a montage of short fragments in sections C (ii) and (v) of *Le démon* provided an anticipation of the first half of *Le réveil*. This latter chapter, also surveys a wide cross-section of musical materials, but where the musical 'photographs' in *Le démon* were relatively clear if somewhat 'colour-drained', in this piece they are very far from being subjected to the 'civilised code of perfect illusions' in the manner that Barthes describes above. Rather, Finnissy places his fragments almost always somewhat out of focus, half-formed, 'latent' rather than 'present', the music hinting at something to come without ever fully revealing what that thing is to be. As such, it is charged with a sense of potency and imminence which stands in great contrast to the static and aloof world of *Le démon*.

As originally planned, *Le réveil* was to be called *Canada: From its origins to the present day*<sup>2</sup>. It was to entail a large-scale engagement with a variety of music associated with the history of Canada, including a range of French-Canadian folksongs<sup>3</sup>, Jongleur melodies<sup>4</sup>, Metis folksongs, both Inuit and other Native

---

<sup>1</sup> Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, translated by Richard Howard (New York: The Noonday Press, 1981), pp. 118-119.

<sup>2</sup> At the time of going to press with *Uncommon Ground*, the title and conception of the work was already in a state of flux, so that it is listed as *Canada: From its origins to the present day* in the index of titles (p. 407), but as *The wakening of intractable reality* in the catalogue of works (p. 397)! In the end, Finnissy decided upon the French title.

<sup>3</sup> These included 'Le Raftsmen', 'Un Canadien Errant', 'Boum Badiboum', 'Bonhomme! bonhomme!', 'Blanche comme la neige', 'Youpe! Youpe! Sur la rivière', 'Il était un petit navire' and 'Le long de la mer jolie', most of which can be found in collections such as Marius Barbeau, *Folk Songs of Old Quebec* (Ottawa: National Museum of Canada, 1936), *Romancero du Canada* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1937), and *Come A Singing! Canadian Folk Songs* (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier, 1947), Edith Fowke

American melodies from the area that is now Canada, as well as the collection called *Livre d'Orgue de Montréal*, mostly at the suggestion of French-Canadian pianist Marc Couroux, who compiled some of the sources. In the end, much of this material was discarded<sup>5</sup>, perhaps because the resulting work may have sounded too similar to *North American Spirituals*. A Metis and Native American melody appear in heavily mediated form at the end of the *Spirituals*; otherwise Finnissy used only the *Livre* and the Inuit melodies, both of which are sufficiently distinctive, even in their mediated form, as to be able to be considered some of the defining attributes of this chapter.

The structure of *Le réveil* is more straightforward than that of *Le démon*, essentially falling into two large sections:

A: A cut-up of a diverse range of fragments from throughout the cycle, all 'zooming' in and out from *niente*, with gradually increasing dynamic peaks. Within this, a fragmentary thread provided by the combination of Bach and Billings material. All culminating in explosive combination of 'Compression' material and similar (but more irregular) writing associated with Mutsuo Takahashi in the *Poets*.

B: In four sub-sections:

B1: Dialogue between various material drawn from the *Poets* (O'Hara, Cocteau, Genet), *Muybridge-Munch* and *Unsere Afrikareise*.

B2: 'Fragments pulverisées' from *Livre d'Orgue de Montréal*.

B3: Retrograded bass line from *Livre d'Orgue de Montréal*, combined with Cocteau material from *Poets*.

B4: Inuit folk songs from Greenland combined with bass-line derived from Schoenberg 'Menuett' from *Suite für Klavier*. Interspersed with further fragments from *Unsere Afrikareise*, culminating in brief allusion to hardanger fiddle music from *Muybridge-Munch*.

Section A draws upon a gamut of 100 fragments of varying length taken mostly from passages elsewhere in the cycle also frequently presented in inverted, retrograded or retrograde inverted forms. Also included within the gamut are a

---

(ed), *The Penguin Book of Canadian Folk Songs* (London: Penguin, 1974) and Margaret Gascoigne, *Chansons of Old French Canada* (Quebec: Chateau Frontenac, 1920). Some of the material Finnissy started to develop in this respect (combined with the *Livre d'Orgue de Montréal*) can be found in the sketchbook for *North American Spirituals*.

<sup>4</sup> Specifically 'Pas trop content', 'Haute Normandie' and 'Je voudrais m'y marier', to be found in Barbeau, *Jongleur Songs of Old Quebec*. These were to be contrasted with the Inuit folksongs. The sketches for Finnissy's treatment of these melodies can be found in amongst those for *Le réveil*.

<sup>5</sup> This material may possibly surface in future Finnissy works, though has not yet done so at the time of writing (2013).

few fragments specific to this chapter, taken from the *Livre d'Orgue de Montréal*<sup>6</sup> (Fig. 20) and a selection of Inuit<sup>7</sup> folksongs from the Thule region of North Greenland (Fig. 21). In both cases, many of the essential attributes of the originals are maintained: slightly pedantic stepwise contrapuntal motion in the *Livre d'Orgue*, three or four pitch restriction with numerous repeated notes in the Inuit melodies.

Fig. 20. Fragments from *Livre d'Orgue de Montréal*<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> *Livre d'Orgue de Montréal*, Édition Critique par Élisabeth Gallat-Morin et Kenneth Gilbert, two volumes (St-Hyacinthe, Québec: Les Éditions Jacques Ostiguy Inc., 1985), two volumes. See also <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=U1ARTU0002092> (accessed 21/8/13). The *Livre* was a seventeenth-century manuscript which was rediscovered by Élisabeth Gallat-Morin in 1978. Brought to Montréal from France in 1724 (see Volume 1, p. xi), it contains 540 pages of liturgical organ music, with no page numbers or table of contents, nor any composer's name. Two former owners can be identified – Jean-Joseph Girouard, notary and political figure (who signed it in 1847); Jean Girard, young Sulpician cleric, organist and school master, signed it in 1724 (the year he arrived) – over an inscription which has been scraped off, possibly that of a former owner (ibid). 16 pieces have been identified as being by Nicolas Lebégue (1630-1792), the King's organist, but the rest remains anonymous (ibid. See the introduction to volume 1 for more on the history and attributes of the work). The work is regarded as very representative of French organ music at the end of the seventeenth-century and beginning of the eighteenth. At this time, the previously dominant contrapuntal style from the tradition of Jehan Titelouze was gradually abandoned and plainchant became used only in certain liturgical verses.

<sup>7</sup> There remains debate on the appropriateness of the terms 'Eskimo' and 'Inuit' for the people of this region (to do with differentiation of people from other regions also called Inuit). For the purposes of this chapter, I will use 'Inuit', in light of the fact that 'Eskimo' is a colonial word.

<sup>8</sup> *Livre d'Orgue* Volume 1, pp. 78-79 for the 'Fuge [en Dialogue]', pp. 50-51 for the 'Duo' and pp. 2-3 for the 'Prélude'.

Part of Song No. 46 from  
Michael Hauser - *Traditional Greenlandic Music* (c' = ca. B)

Modified version

Further rhythmic modification  
and transposition

Part of Song No. 55 (c' = ca. d'-d#)

Modified version

Retrograde inversion of 35

Retrograde inversion of 34 (first modification)

Fig. 21. Fragments derived from Inuit folksongs, Thule region, North Greenland<sup>9</sup>.

Finnissy also creates some new material through a combination of derivations from Tunisian folk songs (material which he calls 'L'Orientalisme' and will appear in full in *Etched*) and from a heavily elaborated form of the *Te Deum* (often in three parts) (Fig. 22).

RH - 'L'orientalisme', LH - obliquely derived from *Te Deum*

48.

RH - from *Te Deum*, LH - 'L'orientalisme'. transposed RI of earlier fragment (44 - unused)

50.

Fig. 22. Fragments derived from combinations of Tunisian melodies ('L'Orientalisme') and *Te Deum*.

<sup>9</sup> See Michael Hauser, *Traditional Greenlandic Music* (Copenhagen: Kragen/Acta Ethnomusicologica Danica 7, 1991), pp. 234-235 and 248-249. The text for Song 46 would translate as 'I cannot bear these stupid Danes, Who are so stupid that they are not able to speak!', in reference to 'collectors who do not master the Polar Eskimo dialect'.

Furthermore, he derives new material from the setting of the *Te Deum* in Bach's organ chorale BWV 725, creating a counterpoint between a derivation from the top two parts of the opening and an inversion of the same, the latter presented in a varying pulse that creates various polyrhythmic relationships with the former, and then extended more freely (Fig. 23).

Fig. 23 (a). Bach organ chorale *Herr Gott, dich loben wir*, BWV 725.

Fig. 23 (b). Inversion of extrication from Bach BWV 328

Herr Gott, dich loben wir BWV. 725 : J.S.Bach

niente mp

cresc.

dimin.

niente

Fig. 23 (c). *Le réveil de l'intraitable réalité*, P29.

The gamut can fairly be organised into a smaller number of large-scale categories of material:

- A: Chordal progressions (from Bach, Billings and elsewhere)
- B: Orderly contrapuntal lines, keyboard idioms (Tutelo/'Hindoostanie' derivations (see below), *Livre d'Orgue*)
- C: Monophonic folk music (Inuit).
- D: 1940s popular music.
- E: Unmeasured music: Grace note interjections, pointillistic gestures.
- F: Combinations of chordal and linear/gestural writing (L'Orientalisme/Te Deum, Alkan-Paganini, 'Anger' from the *Spirituals*, final section of *Bachsche Nachdichtungen*, material from *Etched*).



It is essentially the interplay between such material types that creates the sense of an overall structure, rather than any long-range harmonic plan.

Finnissy assembles these fragments into a series of thirty-six phrases of varying lengths, all presented in a 'zoom in/zoom out' fashion by hairpin dynamics to and from *niente*. The dynamic highpoint of each phrase begins consistently at *mp*, rises to *mf* at one point, then later to *f*, before sinking back downwards again. This device has obvious cinematic connotations, whereby the material, like a filmed image, comes only into momentary and partial focus, but can also be found in some of the piano and other music of Salvatore Sciarrino, for example the Piano Sonata No. 1 (1976) (a work with which Finnissy is well-familiar). Above all, it serves to counteract other rhetorical connotations within the phrases, dynamics thus being imposed externally upon the material to create a type of objectifying effect. At the outset there are silences between phrases, then in the central section they run continuously, with the reintroduction of silences towards the end through the increasing use of pointillistic material. Finnissy seems to have chosen the order of fragments consciously rather than randomly, and they form themselves into larger-scale regions of activity<sup>10</sup>. I delineate six regions, the first a highly fragmentary introduction, then a 'Bach region', a central section dominated by dense writing combing chords and lines/gestures, intercut with other chordal/contrapuntal progressions, a section in which the material becomes more fragmentary, a section in which some degree of continuity is reconsolidated, and a final section where the material falls away into pointillism.

There are also various distinctive interrelationships to be found through the interplay of localised details, as from the very beginning of the work (Fig. 24). In the first phrase, the initial focus of attention is upon the treble part, the bass providing a type of growling accompaniment. Finnissy's configuration to some extent causes the Billings 'Sing Praises to the Lord' fragment to act as an answering phrase to the melodic component of the Berlioz (after the opening archetypal gesture, which recurs later in this section). However, the dynamic envelope peaks *before* the change of material, which occurs when the diminuendo is underway (a detail very important for performers to observe). This has a defamiliarising effect upon the whole gesture, as the material would seem to imply an 'organic' crescendo up to the first high E. This phrase ends on a near resolution (mitigated by the held over A); the following following four phrases all end on either near-resolutions or implied resolutions (the second phrase can be seen in to imply a resolution of the tenor part upwards to a D so as to land on D major, though still mitigated by the low C and A-flat). Thus Finnissy maintains the sense of overall phrases 'cut short' somewhat, or made blurred before reaching their destination, heightening the sense of imminency. This process becomes more diffuse in succeeding phrases, though remains a factor throughout, Finnissy taking care not to let the dynamic low points coincide with resolutions when the phrases cease to

---

<sup>10</sup> The delineation of regions here is my own interpretation of the work, rather than anything discerned from the sketches.

be separated. Sometimes the ends of phrases links to the beginnings of the next ones in terms of register or levels of density and overlap between parts, whilst Finnissy also exploits the similarities between fragments which feature regular semiquavers in *moto perpetuo* like figurations (thus joining a passage from the *Spirituals* with another from *Bachsche Nachdichtungen*).

Fig. 24. *Le réveil de l'intraitable réalité*, P28.

Section B1 is likely to be one of the most enigmatic and disorienting to a listener hearing the cycle for the first time, consisting as it does of highly distinctive and contrasting material types which all appear only briefly, yet without the type of configuration that is itself foregrounded, and provides dramatic momentum, in Section A. So as to create a hushed contrast with the violence of the end of the preceding section, a clear choice is the mysterious and very quiet music that appears in full in the Frank O'Hara section of the *Poets*, which Finnissy allows to morph into the repeated sixths and archetypal rhythm from *Muybridge-Munch*. But he cuts into this with a flurry of activity from the Cocteau material (the right hand derived from music of Satie, Milhaud and others associated with Cocteau, the left hand from Alkan), also in the *Poets*, which sets it up for its further appearance in Section B3.

But what follows is stranger still, pointing forward a long way in the cycle towards *Unsere Afrikareise*. Here we have the first appearance of ragtime (very clearly so), but combined with a plodding bass-line derived from Schubert

Ecossaises (these will be combined with Venda African melodies in *Unserer Afrikareise*). The contrast between this and the expected quaver bass line of genuine ragtime serves to defamiliarise the ragtime from the very outset. When the bass turns to become quavers at the end of this material, despite coming from an Ecossaise rather than ragtime itself, it has the effect of ‘bringing the material into line’ more (though still in an atonal context). After the interruption of the *Muybridge-Munch* rhythms again, Finnissy brings an actual passage from *Unserer Afrikareise*, which then sounds like a type of large-scale ‘answering phrase’ to the ragtime passage, through the continuity of the bass line. As in Section A, Finnissy creates new interrelationships between material sourced from distinct places. The remainder of the section runs through the process again in compressed form.

For section B2, Finnissy employs the most extensive use of material derived from the *Livre d’Orgue de Montréal*<sup>11</sup>, albeit in thoroughly unrecognisable form, though sounding unlike anything else in the cycle. The pieces he selects are all from volume 1: the ‘Duo’<sup>12</sup>, which is the second piece from a *Magnificat en C*, the ‘Prélude’<sup>13</sup> (vol. 1 pp. 2-3), which is the first piece from the *Magnificat en D*, and the ‘Fuge [en Dialogue]’<sup>14</sup> which is from a further *Magnificat en C*. The second and third of these featured in short fragments in Section A, for this section Finnissy uses solely material from the ‘Duo’ (Fig. 25).

---

<sup>11</sup> The *Livre* was a seventeenth century manuscript which was rediscovered by Élisabeth Gallat-Morin in 1978. Brought to Montréal from France in 1724 (see Volume 1, p. xi), it contains 540 pages of liturgical organ music, with no page numbers or table of contents, nor any composer’s name. Two former owners can be identified – Jean-Joseph Girouard, notary and political figures (signed it in 1847); Jean Girard, young Sulpician cleric, organist and school master, signed it in 1724 (the year he arrived) – over an inscription which has been scraped off, possibly that of a former owner (ibid). 16 pieces have been identified as being by Nicolas Lebègue (1630-1702), the King’s organist, but the rest remains anonymous (ibid. See this introduction to volume 1 for more on the history and attributes of the work). The work is regarded as very representative of French organ music at the end of seventeenth century and beginning of the eighteenth. At this time, the previously dominant contrapuntal style from the tradition of Jehan Titelouze was gradually abandoned and plainchant became used only in certain liturgical verses. The *Livre* contains six Masses and eleven *Magnificat* settings, as well as nine other suites of pieces suitable for the *Magnificat*. There are also three sets of verses for the *Te Deum*, as well as a *Pange lingua*, three series of the same type of piece in succession; sixteen *Tierces* or *Cromhornes en Taille*, six *Dialogues de Récits* with a *Trio* section, a series of *Fugues* and various other suites and miscellaneous pieces.

<sup>12</sup> *Livre*, vol. 1, pp. 50-51.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. pp. 2-3.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. pp. 78-79.

# Duo

6

11

15

20

24

Fig. 25 (a). *Livre d'Orgue de Montréal*, No. 31, 'Duo'.

Bar 40 (a) Retrograde inversion (RI) Bar 40 (b) RI Bar 40 (c) - 41 (a) RI Bar 41 (b)

RI etc.

etc.

Fig. 25 (b). Fragments from 'Duo', *Livre d'Orgue de Montréal*, with compressed retrograde inversions.

(irregular bar)

Fig. 25 (c). Retrograde of 'Duo', *Livre d'Orgue de Montréal*, bars 64-75, with 3:4 rhythmic ratio between left hand and right hand, and other pitch/rhythmic modifications.

Finnissy makes further modifications in order to individuate his material. First, he transposes the left hand of the fragments in Fig. 25 (b) down variously by a minor or major third, whichever creates the greater sense of bitonality in each case. Then, with the material of Fig. 25 (c), he transposes the right hand down a major sixth for similar reasons, and adds a third part above this, derived in a similar fashion. The fragments (with a few other modifications) from both groups are then randomly permuted to create the passage, the beginning of which is shown in Fig. 26.

The image shows a handwritten musical score for piano. It consists of four systems of music, each with a treble and bass clef staff. The first system includes a tempo marking  $[\text{♩} = 104]$  and a dynamic marking  $(p)$  più legato, ma senza espressione (dry). Above the first system, there are markings for  $14:11$ ,  $4'$ , and  $7'$ . The second system has markings for  $7:5$ ,  $6:5$ , and  $7:6$ . The third system has markings for  $8:5$  and  $7:5$ . The fourth system has markings for  $5:3$ ,  $7:5$ , and  $6:5$ . The music is characterized by complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and various time signatures, and a high density of accidentals.

Fig. 26. *Le réveil de l'intraitable réalité* – ‘Fragments pulverisées’ from *Livre d’Orgue de Montréal*.

So what of the original source remains in this massively modified version? Certainly not the gently walking rhythms, imitative counterpoint or neat (or possibly pedantic) harmonic progressions. The harmony of the material that Finnissy produces is continuously in flux, lacking any sense of direction when taken in combination. However, there remains a sense of disembodied voice

leading and stepwise counterpoint, and a relative degree of tonal stability if the parts are perceived separately. These musical aspects and the fluidity they cause serve to sharply distinguish the passage from the angular Cocteau and ragtime material in Section B2. The shifts between two and three-part writing are obvious in an aural sense; also the introduction of extravagant spread chords in the latter makes for a further distinction. Finnissy's indication of *senza espressione* reinscribes a certain pedantic or academic quality to the music, perhaps as an attempt to make these 'pulverised fragments' sound once again like he perceives the source.

For section B3, Finnissy combines aspects of B1 and B2, drawing further upon other material in the *Livre*; the bass line from the 'Prélude', from which he takes retrogrades of different fragments as well as a freer traversal of the same material and some of the alto line, in order to create a *cantus firmus*, which he combines with angular staccato material associated with Cocteau. Then in the final section, B4, Finnissy now brings in the clearest use of folk song yet in this piece, specifically Inuit melodies. Four of the five melodies he uses come from the Thule region of North Greenland<sup>15</sup>, and are collected in Michael Hauser's book on Greenlandic music mentioned earlier in the chapter<sup>16</sup>. Almost all Inuit music from Greenland uses a pentatonic scale<sup>17</sup>, including all of the examples here. The first to appear (No. 40 in Hauser's collection<sup>18</sup> – Finnissy's selection was chosen randomly, but then the order was chosen on an intuitive basis, almost certainly so as to begin with that melody which opens with the same intervals as the *Te Deum*) is one in what Hauser calls the 'Complex Balanced Tripartite Form Type' (Fig. 27). Like all the songs in the book, it is notated relative to a tonal centre of C, though the pitch at which it was recorded may be different. In this case  $c' = ca. f$ . The song was recorded in 1909 by Christian Leden, who heard it sung by a hunter called Ihré (or Eri). Finnissy takes the opening phrase at the pitch at which it would sound, whilst introducing tuplet patterns to make the pulse more fluid than in the original. Then he uses a composite pattern derived from the 'Group' and the 'Terminal musical phrase' to form an answering phrase, then returning to the 'Group' again but modifying the ending to preclude a resolution onto C (Fig. 27 (b)).

---

<sup>15</sup> In this region and also East Greenland, according to Poul Rovsing Olsen, traditional music still survives. See Olsen, 'Intervals and Rhythm in the Music of the Eskimos of East Greenland' in Peter Crossley-Holland, *Proceedings of the Centennial Workshop on Ethnomusicology* (Vancouver: Center for Continuing Education, 1970), p. 54.

<sup>16</sup> In the order of appearance in Finnissy's work, the songs used are Nos. 40 (Hauser pp. 218-219), 50 (pp. 241-242), 19 (pp. 95-97, from South Greenland), 43 (pp. 223-224) and 45 (pp. 232-233).

<sup>17</sup> Hauser *Traditional Greenlandic Music*, p. 35. In an earlier collection of Inuit melodies, William Thalbitzer points out that most of the older songs use just four notes. See William Thalbitzer, *Inuit Sange og Danse fra Grønland/Inuit Songs and Dances from Greenland* (Copenhagen: Einar Munksgaard, 1939). Olsen divides the songs up into four categories, with two, three and four tones, and songs with recitation, but these refer specifically to East Greenland songs, not heard by Europeans until 1884, so are a somewhat different category to the North and South Greenland songs being dealt with here. See Olsen, 'Intervals and Rhythm', pp. 54-55.

<sup>18</sup> Hauser, *Traditional Greenlandic Music*, pp. 218-219.

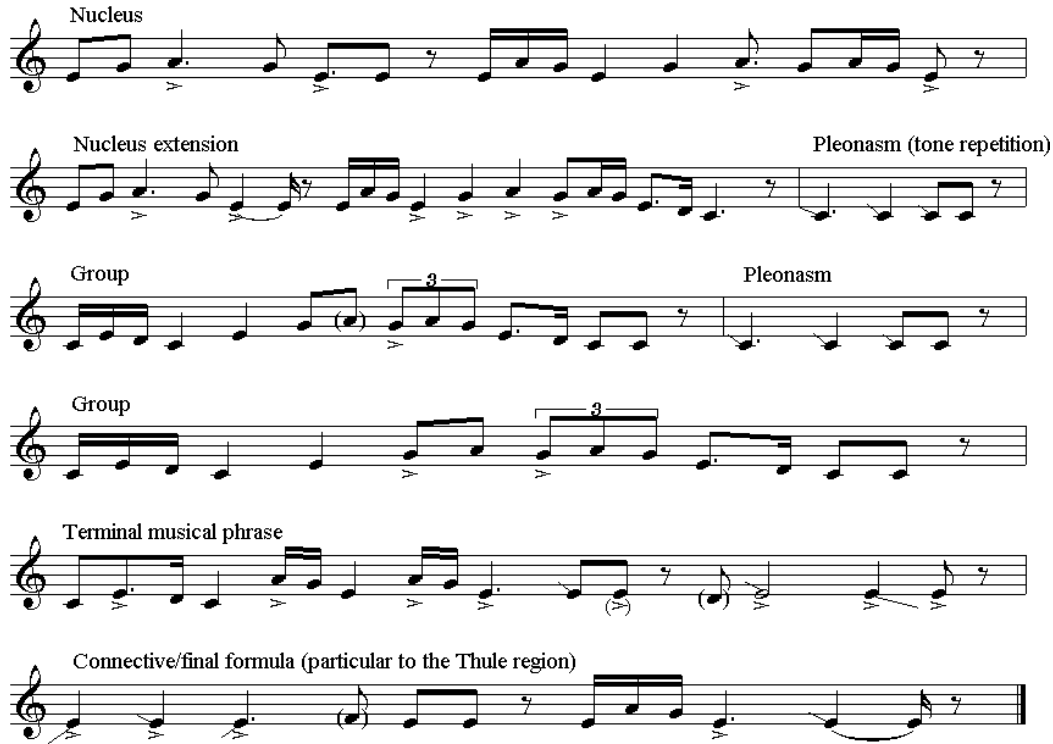


Fig. 27 (a). Inuit song No. 40 from Hauser's collection, recorded by Christian Lune in 1909.

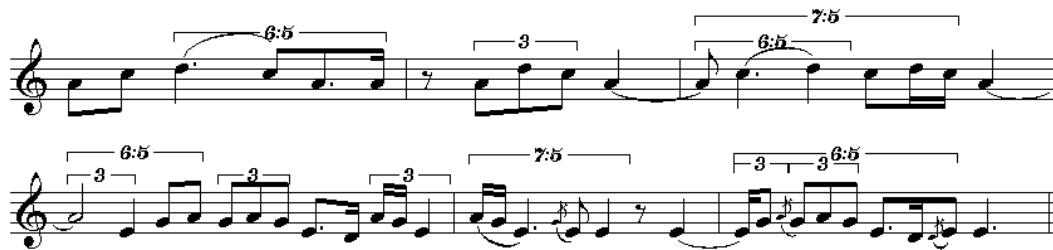


Fig. 27 (b). Finnissy's compressed and modified version of Inuit song No. 40 in Hauser.

Continuing the process encountered in Sections B1 and B3, of askew combinations of bass lines with right hand melodies, Finnissy here draws upon the 'Menuett' from Schoenberg's *Suite für Klavier Op. 25*, his first full-length work using twelve-tone techniques throughout<sup>19</sup>. In place of the pitches in Schoenberg's

<sup>19</sup> H.H. Stuckenschmidt argues that this must be regarded as the earliest of Schoenberg's works with twelve-tone rows and their mirror forms, as the Waltz Op. 23 No. 5 cannot be dated. See H.H. Stuckenschmidt, *Schoenberg: His Life, World and Work*, translated Humphrey Searle (London: John Calder, 1977), p. 286. Malcolm MacDonald memorably refers to this movement as 'the periwigged Minuet with its sternly professorial canonic Trio', also suggesting a certain humour and pastiche on Schoenberg's part. Whether or not Finnissy views Schoenberg's work as humorous or ironic, certainly the 'periwigged' and 'professorial' aspects of the piece seem to be at the heart of his allusion. See



original work, Finnissy generates a thirteen note row, the first nine pitches from which are derived from those letters in Schoenberg's name (Arnold Schoenberg)<sup>20</sup> which can be linked to a pitch (as did Berg in his *Kammerkonzert*<sup>21</sup>), followed by the other four pitches of the chromatic scale, then generates inversions, retrogrades and retrograde inversions from this row in the normal manner (Fig. 28).

The figure displays four musical staves, each representing a different transformation of a thirteen-note row. The first staff is labeled 'Original' and has the letters 'Arnol D S C Ho En B Er G' written below it. The second staff is labeled 'Inversion'. The third staff is labeled 'Retrograde - up a semitone'. The fourth staff is labeled 'Retrograde inversion - up a semitone'. The fifth staff is labeled 'Transposition up whole tone' and ends with 'etc.'.

Fig. 28. Note rows after Arnold SCHoEnBErG.

The row is not dodecaphonic, on account of its containing thirteen pitches. The repeated pitch can be seen to produce a fall then rise of the same tritone interval which becomes a recurrent feature of the bass. Finnissy simply selects rows from the gamut thus created (of 24 thirteen-note rows) and substitutes these for the pitches in the Schoenberg 'Menuett', with octave displacements to maintain a characteristic angularity of contour. This is initially maintained within steady 3/4 measures, above which is placed the Inuit melody.

---

MacDonald, *Schoenberg* (London: Dent, 1987), pp. 162-163. René Leibowitz amongst others points out how this Minuet 'proves to be a strict two-voice canon in contrary motion'. See Leibowitz, *Schoenberg and his School: The Contemporary Stage of the Language of Music*, translated Dika Newlin (New York: Da Capo, 1975), pp. 101-102.

<sup>20</sup> As Schoenberg's row contained the B-A-C-H motive in retrograde form. See Charles Rosen, *Schoenberg* (London: Fontana, 1975), p. 89.

<sup>21</sup> This is shown in various commentaries on Berg or the Second Viennese School. See, for example, Leibowitz, *Schoenberg and his School*, p. 154. Berg made the allusion explicit in a letter to Schoenberg of February 9<sup>th</sup> 1925. See Juliane Brand, Christopher Hailey and Donald Harris (eds), *The Berg-Schoenberg Correspondence: Selected Letters* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987), p. 337.

Moderato (♩ = ca. 88)

4 imig

p mf f fp

rit. tempo

5 10

Fig. 29 (a). Schoenberg, 'Menuett' from *Suite für Klavier Op. 25*.

Menuetto (♩ = 88)

9:8 6:5 5:3 7:5

Fig. 29 (b). *Le réveil de l'intraitable réalité*, combination of Inuit songs with Schoenbergian bass.

J. Peter Burkholder maintains that consistently Schoenberg's atonal and twelve-tone music continue to 'extend the traditional idea of a harmonic accompaniment that relates closely to and supports the melody above it'<sup>22</sup> and argues that Schoenberg extends principles first developed in the *Harmonielehre* towards 'a concept of complete equivalence between melody and harmony'<sup>23</sup>. Finnissy's writing here can be seen to be enacting the very reverse of this phenomenon, in which melody and harmony are stratified to the maximum, using rhythmic techniques as well as those of pitch. Only very occasionally does the pulse of the melody concur with that of the accompaniment<sup>24</sup>, and the contrast between the near-dodecaphonic pitches of the bass and the pentatonic treble is very stark, so that for the most part they practically sound like two independent parts. Yet it is impossible to escape some sense of a quasi-tonal accompaniment progression, as has also been remarked about Schoenberg's music<sup>25</sup>. The opening interval of a perfect fourth/fifth accords with the D resolution mentioned at the end of section B3, which could then be seen to shift to a VI of D in the third bar. The reiterated tritone that follows, however (this reiteration being the result of a thirteen-tone row), causes a pivotal diminished harmony from which the bass could move in most directions. As it is, the music progresses up a G-A-flat-A progression in the following bars, before becoming more diffuse. However, Schoenberg himself spoke of how the 'possibility of such canons and imitations, and even fugues and fugatos, has been overestimated by analysts of this [twelve-tone] style' and that 'the meaning of composing in imitative style' was 'only one of the ways of adding a coherent accompaniment, or subordinate voices, to the main theme, whose character it thus helps to express more intensively'<sup>26</sup> with reference specifically to the *Suite*. To take this section of Finnissy's as a comment on a supposed Schoenbergian orthodoxy and ideology would be to misconstrue the particularity of the latter's intentions and methods in that piece.

Finnissy switches hands periodically, so the Inuit material is in the bass and the Schoenberg in the treble, but always here using the Inuit melodies in retrograde inverted form, thus applying a Schoenbergian technique to them (the resulting material sounds relatively continuous with the 'straight' forms, however). All the four North Greenland melodies are relatively similar in nature<sup>27</sup>, though the one from the South, a *qivittoq* (elegy or song of regret<sup>28</sup>) stands out due

<sup>22</sup> J. Peter Burkholder, 'Schoenberg the Reactionary' in Walter Frisch (ed), *Schoenberg and his World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), pp. 170-171.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* p. 171.

<sup>24</sup> In this sense the music does relate to Schoenberg's own description of the Trio, as 'a canon in which the difference between the long and short notes helps to avoid octaves'. See Schoenberg, 'Composition with Twelve Tones (I)' in *Style and Idea: Selected Writings*, edited Leonard Stein, translated Leo Black (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), p. 235.

<sup>25</sup> See, for example, Bryan R. Simms, 'Arnold Schoenberg' in Simms (ed), *Schoenberg, Berg and Webern: A Companion to the Second Viennese School* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), p. 177.

<sup>26</sup> Schoenberg, 'Composition with Twelve Tones (I)', p. 235.

<sup>27</sup> Finnissy does note in the sketches that Song No. 50 was the father of the shaman to whom the song was attributed was the leader of the last Canadian immigration to Greenland (see Hauser, *Traditional Greenlandic Music*, p. 241), but it is difficult to see how this in any way affects the composition.

<sup>28</sup> Hauser, *Traditional Greenlandic Music*, p. 78.



clear that this work is part of a much bigger tapestry, but it is quite different to, say, the *Poets*, which exhibits a similar range of material. This is because of the emphasis Finnissy places upon half-presences, blurred allusions rather than statements, either through the use of zooming in and out phrases in the first section, or the alienating combinations of materials in the second. The dramatic structure that he creates around these foreground interrelationships rather than individuated entities, a type of para-structuralist composition of which Barthes might have approved. Few of the materials used sound particularly similar in their subsequent appearances; closer correspondences exist between the very forms of material combination and relationship used in *Kapitalistisch Realisme* and *Unsere Afrikareise* (for which some of Section B acts as form of prototype, despite its having been composed later). Sections B1-B3 are repeated almost verbatim in *Kapitalistisch Realisme*, but there they serve as momentary light relief within an otherwise extremely intense work, rather than as a development towards the Inuit/Schoenberg music as happens here.

It was a daring strategy of Finnissy to open the cycle with two pieces that can both be considered 'Preludes'. But this second of these has much more of the quality of an extended 'upbeat' to something which is to come (as with much of Sciarrino's music), so that in retrospect *Le démon* sounds relatively monolithic in comparison. Fleeting and relatively light-toned, always expressing anticipation and potency, *Le réveil* can be heard as a way of aurally conveying Barthes' 'Desire without mediation', even desire as an abstraction that exists prior to its fixation on a particular object or person (to add a Deleuzian twist). That object of desire has to wait a long time, right until *Sizilianische Männerakte*. But this desire has a photographic quality as well – the presentation of the musical 'objects' says as much about the way they are musically 'photographed' as *what* is being photographed. Mediation superseding its particular applications itself becomes unmediated desire, a statement which is less self-contradictory than it might initially appear. In a world dominated by the language of 'image', in the form of reified categories into which human beings, culture and much else are forced – as is common in Hollywood cinema, for example – this piece instead deals with image as an abstraction, a far remove from an objectified vocabulary of 'images'.

## Chapter 5

### No. 3: *North American Spirituals*

Finnissy's relationship with the United States and with American music in general is deep-rooted and also highly individual. He has cited the music of Charles Ives as one of his primary formative influences, saying of Ives's music that 'its inclusiveness and the way it reflects man's thoughts and ideas, remain a kind of totem for me'<sup>1</sup>. The music of Ives, with its combination of surrealism and primitivism, clearly stands behind a piece like *English Country-Tunes* (1977, revised 1982-85); Finnissy also wrote a piano piece entitled *Ives* (1974), and other works alluding to specific American music, including *Nancarrow* (1979-80), *William Billings* (1990), *John Cage* (1992), the fourth book of *Folklore* (1993-94)<sup>2</sup>, a setting of Jerome Kern's *Can't Help But Lovin' Dat Man* (1990), and of course the two books of *Gershwin Arrangements* (1975-90). Also works like *Jazz* (1976), *Boogie-Woogie* (1980, final revision 1996) and *That Ain't Shit* (2004) allude obliquely to early jazz (especially that of Jelly Roll Morton). His interest in the American 'experimental' tradition (including such figures as Henry Cowell, Conlon Nancarrow, John Cage, Morton Feldman or Christian Wolff) is large, equalling if not at times exceeding his corresponding interest in continental European contemporary musical traditions. However, it is hard to think of almost any engagements with more recent American popular culture in Finnissy's work; such music plays little part in his cultural world, it would seem. The 'America', at least in terms of popular culture, that Finnissy engages with intellectually and musically is for the most part one of six or seven decades ago at the latest<sup>3</sup>.

In his two 'Australian' cycles<sup>4</sup>, Finnissy entered into an engagement with the 'native' Australian music and culture of the Aboriginal people in one, then with the 'colonial' music of the white settlers in the other. Finnissy alluded to Native American folk music from the United States in a cycle from the early 1980s using sources from the Hopi people of Northern Arizona<sup>5</sup>; in *North American Spirituals*, a certain representation of the music of African-Americans, borne out of the experience of slavery, is central to the work, in conjunction with representations of the music of white settlers as well. The African-American music that Finnissy alludes to here and elsewhere is, however, that first created in earlier

---

<sup>1</sup> 'Conversations with Michael Finnissy' in *Uncommon Ground*, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> See Ian Pace, 'The Piano Music' in *Uncommon Ground*, pp. 127-132 for a discussion of this 'American' part of *Folklore*. Also pp. 111-127 for other allusions to American music throughout the work.

<sup>3</sup> However, one should not neglect to bear in mind the potential copyright issues involved were Finnissy to directly allude to music not yet in the public domain.

<sup>4</sup> The first of these, the 'Aboriginal' cycle, consists of the works *Teangi*, *Warara*, *Aijal*, *Banumbirr*, *Marrngu*, *Ulpirra*, *Hikkai*, *Ouraa* and *Quabara* (the latter piece written some five years after the others); the second of *Botany Bay*, *Australian Sea Shanties Sets 1, 2, 3* and *The Eureka Flag*.

<sup>5</sup> The pieces in question are *Sikangnuqa*, *Pavasiya* and *Talawva*.

eras – Finnissey has not sought to engage with soul, funk or hip-hop, for example<sup>6</sup> – whereas the ‘white’ music extends into the present day (I will explain more about this shortly).

The following is Finnissey’s note for the *Spirituals* as part of his programme note for the whole *History*:

Billings – Ives – Cowell – Nancarrow. Confronting Afro-American spiritual responses to slavery: Nobody knows the trouble I see; By and by; Go down, Moses; Steal away. Appropriated by Michael Tippett in *A Child of our Time* to signify the voices of defiance and hope everywhere and at any period of history.<sup>7</sup>

The African-American spiritual<sup>8</sup> seems to have emerged in the nineteenth century from a combination of African music and European hymns (as transplanted to America)<sup>9</sup>. The texts clearly emerge from Old Testament parables, but as the writer Arthur C. Jones points out, one should reject the misconception that that ‘enslaved Africans, once acculturated in the new land abandoned their own traditions (usually thought of, by those ignorant of the backgrounds, as heathen) and became “civilized” via the adoption of the Christian religion of their slave masters’<sup>10</sup>. A large-scale conversion to Christianity did not occur until near the end of slavery, with enslaved people holding onto traditional religious beliefs and practices, something which was strengthened with the arrival of new captives<sup>11</sup>.

Originally monophonic, spirituals combined hymn-like tunes with hand-clapping, foot-tapping, and moaning-style inflections that were characteristic of African-American religious music of the time, and have origins in the ‘ring shout’, a ceremony in which verbal utterances were expressed collectively<sup>12</sup>. Written

---

<sup>6</sup> That said, connections between some of Finnissey’s piano writing and the free jazz of Cecil Taylor have been commented upon by himself and others. See Richard Barrett, ‘Michael Finnissey – An Overview’, in *Contemporary Music Review* Vol. 13 Part 1 (1995), ‘Aspects of Complexity in Recent British Music’, edited Tom Morgan, p. 42.

<sup>7</sup> Finnissey, note on *History*.

<sup>8</sup> There are a variety of terms that are and have been used for the spirituals (including ‘negro spirituals’ or ‘black spirituals’). I will call them either ‘African-American spirituals’ or simply ‘spirituals’. Eileen Southern cites the root of the term ‘spiritual’ in ‘the three species of sacred song early set up in the history of Protestantism – psalms, hymns, and spirituals – which, in turn, points to Scriptures, Col. 3:16’. When the term ‘spiritual’ (or ‘sperichel’) was used in the introduction to *Slave Songs of the United States* in 1867, it was not defined, from which she concludes ‘the term must have been in common usage by the 1860s’. See Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans: A History*, third edition (New York and London: Norton, 1997), pp. 180-181.

<sup>9</sup> The history I present here derives from a reading of a wide range of sources that are listed in subsequent footnotes.

<sup>10</sup> Arthur C. Jones, *Wade in the Water: The Wisdom of the Spirituals* (New York: Orbis Books, 1993), pp. 6-7.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* p. 7.

<sup>12</sup> Eileen Southern points out that ‘For the participants the shout was not under any circumstances to be construed as a dance, and strictly observed rules insured that the line between “shouting” and dancing was firmly drawn. Only songs of a religious nature were sung, and the feet must never be crossed (as would happen in the dance). Among strict devotees, the feet must not even be lifted from the ground. Presumably, any song could function as a shout song or “running spiritual.” In practice, however, the slaves preferred some songs to the exclusion of others, and a special body of these songs was

documents from the times of slavery show that most of the songs are seen to use major or pentatonic scales<sup>13</sup>, which as Eileen Southern points out, generally produce 'bright, cheerful melodies', though 'the slaves' singing rarely was bright and cheerful; it was generally described as plaintive, mournful, or wild'<sup>14</sup>. She concludes that whilst such scales formed the basis of the music, some of the tones were probably 'flatted or "bent" to a lower pitch'; also on the basis of some hints in the 1867 volume of *Slave Songs* that probably it was the seventh tone of the scale that was flattened<sup>15</sup>. On the basis of the descriptions contained in *Slave Songs of the United States* (see below), it seems that singers would begin a refrain before a leader finished their solo, and a new solo might begin before the refrain was over, thus producing a homophonic effect, which is commonly known as *overlapping call-and-response patterns*<sup>16</sup>.

African-American slaves were severely circumscribed in terms of the songs they were allowed to sing, mostly restricted to 'work songs', but also incorporating 'quiet songs', so long as these did not explicitly contain messages directed against slaveowners. It was through this medium that it became possible to introduce coded meanings; for example, the song 'Gospel Train' included the words 'She is coming...get aboard...There's room for many more', which may have been in reality a reference to escape, and similarly with 'Steal away', said to have been used by Nat Turner in his insurrection in Southampton Country, Virginia, in 1831 as a signal to his co-conspirators to gather together<sup>17</sup>. A general paucity of sources

---

developed among them.' (Southern, *The Music of Black America*, p. 182). For an early description of the 'shout' from the N.Y. Nation of May 30 1867, see William Francis Allen, 'From *Slave Songs of the United States*' (1867), in Eileen Southern (ed), *Readings in Black American Music* (New York and London: Norton, 1983), pp. 156-158.

<sup>13</sup> Tilford Brooks lists typical scales as 'the major, natural minor, mixed major and minor, pentatonic, hexatonic (lacking either the fourth or the seventh tone), major with both raised and lowered seventh tone, major with lowered seventh tone, minor with lowered seventh tone, and minor with raised seventh tone' (see Tilford Brooks, *America's Black Musical Heritage* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1984), p. 36), whilst pointing out that the most striking departures are to be found in spirituals in the minor mode, many raising the sixth tone or omitting it altogether (ibid. p. 37).

<sup>14</sup> Southern, *The Music of Black America*, p. 192. Henry Krehbiel takes a different view, arguing that the 'popular conception' of 'the minor mode as a symbol of suffering, is at fault in respect of the folksongs of the American negroes, or that these songs are not so poignant an expression of the life of the black slaves as has been widely assumed'. Whilst he reasonably points out that there are also funeral marches written in the major mode, he then asks 'whether or not, as a matter of fact (the physiological and psychological explanation of which is not within the scope of this study), the life of the black slaves was, on the whole, so weighted with physical and spiritual suffering as necessarily to make its musical expression one of hopeless grief', then speaks of utterances of 'resilient hopefulness and cheerful endurance of present pain in contemplation of the rewards of rest and happiness hereafter', giving 'Nobody Knows' as an example of a song that touches upon 'The two emotional poles in question' (Henry Edward Krehbiel, *Afro-American Folksongs: A Study in Racial and National Music* (New York and London: Schirmer, 1914), pp. 44-45. It may seem crass even to ask this question, but it could be argued that Krehbiel is identifying the possibility that the spirituals could have served in part as a means of reconciling slaves to their situation, which would be a disturbing and radical conclusion indeed which would force a rethinking of many basic assumptions.

<sup>15</sup> Southern, *The Music of Black America*, p. 192. Southern cites 'Roll, Jordan, Roll' as one of numerous songs that uses both flattened and 'normal' seventh tones, as well as another, 'Sabbath Has No End', in which both sixth and seventh tones are ambiguous (ibid.).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. p. 197.

<sup>17</sup> Jones, *Wade in the Water*, p. 45. Some believe Nat Turner to have been the composer of that song.



confirming that the spirituals were intended or heard in such a manner leads some to be sceptical on this issue<sup>18</sup>, but some major writers on the subject maintain that one cannot deny that to some extent they were used for secret communications, though this was not necessarily their primary purpose<sup>19</sup>.

Following the end of the American Civil War and the abolition of formal slavery, spirituals began to be written down, published, and disseminated to wider audiences, with the Fisk Jubilee Singers playing a pioneering role in this process. Key published texts were *Slave Songs of the United States* (1867), edited by William Francis Allen, Lucy McKim Garrison, and Charles Pickard Ware<sup>20</sup>, followed by *Jubilee Songs: As Sung by the Jubilee Singers, of Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee* (1872), under the auspices of the American Missionary Association<sup>21</sup>, the latter of which added harmonisations to the melodies.

Michael Tippett, in what is perhaps his best-known work, *A Child of our Time* (1939-41), written as part of a personal response to the shooting of a German diplomat in Paris by the Polish Jew Herschel Grynszpan which led to the pogrom *Reichskristallnacht* of November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1938<sup>22</sup>, employed five African-American spirituals at pivotal moments during the work, intended to function in a manner akin to the Lutheran chorales in Bach's Passions<sup>23</sup>. These were (in the order in which they occur) 'Steal away', 'Nobody knows the trouble I see', 'Go down, Moses' (described in the score by Tippett as 'A Spiritual of Anger'), 'By and by' and

---

<sup>18</sup> Harold Courlander argues that 'if songs of the type of "Steal Away to Jesus" and "Go Down Moses" are to be considered conscious disguises for political temporal meanings, a large part of the religious repertoire must be placed in the same category. Every reference to crossing the Jordan could be interpreted to mean escape to the North; every battle of the Israelites might be read to mean the battle for Negro freedom; every reference to Elijah's chariot or the gospel train could be seen as allusion to the Underground Railroad; and every trumpet blast interpreted as Emancipation Day. But such a notion would be difficult to accept.' See Harold Courlander, *Negro Folk Music, U.S.A.* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1963), p. 43. Jon Cruz argues that 'What seems incontrovertible is that black religious song-making, along with other forms of music-making, served multiple functions under slavery', pointing out amongst other things the role such music played in attaining cohesiveness and solidarity in a community. See Jon Cruz, *Culture on the Margins: The Black Spiritual and Rise of American Cultural Interpretation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 20. For a selection of memories of singing by former slaves, see 'From the Slave Narrative Collection' (compiled 1941), in Southern (ed), *Readings in Black American Music*, pp. 116-121. For a comparative examination of claims concerning coded messages in the spirituals, see Jones, *Wade in the Water*, pp. 45, 74-75, 154 n. 14

<sup>19</sup> See Jones, *Wade in the Water*, pp. 46-47; also Christopher Small, *Music of the Common Tongue: Survival and Celebration in Afro-American Music* (London: John Calder, 1987), pp. 96-97. Jones also suggests that the use of Christian words had meaning in terms of stressing the obvious discrepancy between the doctrines espoused by Christian slave owners and their actual actions, exemplified in particular by 'I got a robe' (*Wade in the Water*, p. 8).

<sup>20</sup> A modern edition is William Francis Allen, Charles Pickard Ware, and Lucy McKim Garrison (eds), *Slave Songs of the United States* (Bedford, MA: Applewood Books, 1996). See Dena J. Epstein, *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1978), pp. 303-341 for more information on this publication.

<sup>21</sup> *Jubilee Songs; As Sung by the Jubilee Singers, of Fisk University, Nashville, Tenn.*, under the Auspices of the American Missionary Association, with afterword by Erastus M. Cravath (New York: Biglow & Main, [1872])

<sup>22</sup> See Merion Bowen, *Michael Tippett*, revised second edition (London: Robson Books, 1997), p. 17.

<sup>23</sup> Michael Tippett, *Those Twentieth-Century Blues: An Autobiography* (London: Hutchinson, 1991), p. 50.

'Deep River', drawing upon the now-classic collection of spirituals edited by James Weldon Johnson<sup>24</sup>.

Tippett himself made some quite exalted claims for their significance and universality, saying that 'we *all* are moved by them beyond the power of the tunes as mere music, yet the spirituals themselves have turned and twisted Bible language into a modern dialect; the stories they tell of the Bible Jews are used to comfort Negroes in the bitterness of oppression, and I use these Negro spirituals to symbolize the agony of modern Jews in Hitler's Europe. It makes a powerful, condensed poetic image. Not only did the spirituals give me a kind of spirit-level folk-poetry to which the rest of the text had to conform, but so also did the music'<sup>25</sup>. Responses of early critics were somewhat more mixed<sup>26</sup>, with one critic pointing out how 'Bach's use of the chorale was contained within his own musical and cultural horizons whereas Tippett is attempting to transfer, perhaps translate, a musical idiom which lies outside his own context, producing a certain degree of dislocation between the two.'<sup>27</sup> This is certainly true, but the problems inherent in appropriating the spirituals run deeper, in a way that some of Tippett's more hagiographic commentators have tended to evade; Ian Kemp asserts that 'The spiritual epitomized a fundamental emotional experience, not limited to oppressed blacks in nineteenth-century America but understood everywhere'<sup>28</sup>, presupposing in a romanticised fashion some degree of mutual emotional empathy between all oppressed people (if not all people) which, at the very least, recent events in former Yugoslavia and Israel/Palestine certainly contradict. Kenneth Gloag, however, much more perceptively suggests that Tippett's claiming 'a universal significance for the spiritual' is a view that 'now may seem somewhat optimistic but one which accentuates Tippett's concern for the generalisation of human experience'<sup>29</sup>.

These issues are equally pertinent to *North American Spirituals*, especially in light of Finnissy's comment cited earlier about the spirituals representing 'the voices of hope and defiance everywhere', thus making comparable universalist claims for music from a particular time and place. As an admirer of Tippett's music, Finnissy had earlier paid indirect homage to the older composer's work by

---

<sup>24</sup> A recent edition of which is James Weldon Johnson and J. Rosamond Johnson, *The Book of American Negro Spirituals*, two volumes (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2003). All of the spirituals which Tippett and Finnissy set are included in here. They are all fitted out with quite elaborate and more-than-a-little kitschy piano accompaniments, the preface however saying that in these 'the arrangers have sincerely striven to give the characteristic harmonies that would be used in spontaneous group singing'. (Vol. 1, p. 37). Kenneth Gloag shows in detail how Tippett alters the harmonies in Johnson's book, sometimes simplifying them. See Gloag, *Tippett: A Child of our Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 71-84.

<sup>25</sup> Michael Tippett, 'The Nameless Hero: Reflections on *A Child of our Time*', in *Tippett on Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 182-183.

<sup>26</sup> See William McNaught, review of *A Child of our Time*, in *The Musical Times* No. 85 (May 1944), p. 144, cited in Gloag, *A Child of our Time*, p. 91; and Eric Blom, review of *A Child of our Time*, in *Music and Letters* No. 25 (1944), p. 124, cited in Gloag, *A Child of our Time*, p. 91.

<sup>27</sup> Gloag, *A Child of our Time*, p. 92.

<sup>28</sup> Ian Kemp, *Tippett: The Composer and his Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 158.

<sup>29</sup> Gloag, *A Child of our Time*, p. 28.

the prominent use of 'Deep River' in the second and fourth parts of *Folklore*<sup>30</sup>. In *North American Spirituals* he alludes, on a variety of levels, to all of the remaining four spirituals used by Tippett, in the same order. But in both works, Finnissy's appropriation of this music is quite unlike the lush use of the same melodies by Tippett; also, in *North American Spirituals* their relationship with the surrounding material is somewhat more intricate and involved<sup>31</sup>. In *Folklore*, 'Deep River' served primarily as a moment of repose, even pathos, after frenetic writing leading up to it in the second part, and as a hazy, somewhat dark coda in the last. Here Finnissy seems to have wished to explore the possibilities of a deeper level of integration subsequent to the earlier work.

Finnissy structures *North American Spirituals* around four nodal points, weaving the spirituals into hymn tunes from the eighteenth century Boston choral composer William Billings (1746-1800), already discussed in the section on 'Material as Archetype'. The publication of Billings' *The New-England Psalm-Singer* in 1770 was a major event in terms of the publication of sacred compositions in America, its 127 works increasing the number of such by a factor of ten<sup>32</sup>. The hymns alluded explicitly to Boston and Massachusetts locations and churches, using religious texts to comment on contemporary events<sup>33</sup>, in a manner that may bear comparison with the uses of texts in African-American spirituals. Billings' career was launched just a few years before American independence, which when coupled with the nationalistic nature of some of his words and sentiments (the piece 'Chester', from *The New-England Psalm-Singer*, became amongst the most popular of patriotic songs in the 1770s<sup>34</sup>), led to his being assigned a symbolical role as a type of father of American composition by some historians and hymnodists<sup>35</sup>.

The work can thus be demarcated into four sections, each beginning with the Billings/spiritual material. Of these, the second section is by far the longest and most intricate (the final section, on the other hand, is extremely brief). The overall layout is as follows.

---

<sup>30</sup> See Pace, 'The Piano Music', in *Uncommon Ground* for more on this. For another perspective on this work, see Maarten Beirens, 'Archaeology of the Self: Michael Finnissy's 'Folklore'', in *Tempo*, Vol. 57 No. 223 (January 2003), pp. 46-56. The use of 'Deep River' in the earlier work is also discussed in Jonathan Cross, 'Vive la différence' in *The Musical Times*, Vol. 137, No. 1837 (March 1996), pp. 7-13.

<sup>31</sup> Which is not to say that Tippett's use of them is not. See Kemp, *Tippett*, pp. 164-66 and 172 for more on this.

<sup>32</sup> See Richard Crawford, *America's Musical Life: A History* (New York and London: Norton, 2001), pp. 38-39.

<sup>33</sup> For more on Billings' texts, see J. Murray Barbour, *The Church Music of William Billings* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1960), pp. 1-13. For all its biographical inaccuracies, Barbour's book presents the most comprehensive survey of Billings' music of all the sources I cite here. Hans Nathan, *William Billings: Data and Documents* (Detroit: College Music Society by Information Coordinators, 1975), contains a comprehensive bibliography of literature on Billings up to the time it was written.

<sup>34</sup> See Charles Hamm, *Music in the New World* (New York and London: Norton, 1983), p. 142.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 41-42.

A: *Steal Away*

Opening with Billings, 'Bedford'<sup>36</sup> combined with 'Steal away', in F. An alternation of a free rhapsody around an inversion of 'Steal away' with material I call 'Anger/Ivesian' (see below), culminating in a coda which combines 'Steal away' with 'Nobody know the trouble I see'.

B: *Nobody knows the trouble I see*

Opening with Billings, 'Sing Praises to the Lord'<sup>37</sup>, combined with 'Nobody knows the trouble I see', in G. An abstract canon around 'Nobody knows', dry, hard, acerbic, though also somewhat in the style of a duet for two African marimbas, a free rhapsody around 'Nobody knows', intercut with a dialogue between 'By and by' and a further two-part abstracted canon from 'Steal Away' leading to introduction of more intensely abstract material in parody of 'East Coast serialism'. Then into this already complex dialogue, introduction of further material combining renditions of songs of Stephen Foster with transcribed microtonal material (with intervals doubled) from elsewhere in Finnissy's sketch material, leading to silences, fragmentation, then some prefiguration of material in *Alkan-Paganini* and a two-part abstracted canon from 'Nobody knows' and 'Go down, Moses', leading to a clearer and hushed combination of these two in the coda.

C: *Go down, Moses*

Opening with Billings, 'Dudley'<sup>38</sup>, combined with 'Go down, Moses', in B-flat. Extension of this material in dialogue with a free rhapsody around inverted 'Go down, Moses'. A 'false coda' combining 'Go down, Moses' and 'By and by' (seeming like a coda on the basis of the previous sections), then the section is brought to an end with a passage permeated by weighty clusters, as a homage to Henry Cowell.

D: *By and by*

Opening with Billings, 'Essex'<sup>39</sup> combined with 'By and by', in B-flat. Free rhapsody around 'By and by' interspersed with material relating to Conlon Nancarrow (polyrhythmic, staccato, close tessitura) and ragtime (as analysed in the 'Material as Archetype' section above), ending with the Billings/spiritual material again.

---

<sup>36</sup> From William Billings, *The Psalm-Singer's Amusement* (1781) (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1987).

<sup>37</sup> From William Billings, *The Continental Harmony* (1794) (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1990), pp. 70-75. In this volume this chorale is called 'An Anthem for Thanksgiving Day', but Finnissy refers to it in the sketches as 'Sing Praises to the Lord'.

<sup>38</sup> From William Billings, *The Singing Master's Assistant: Music in Miniature* (1778-1779) (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1984)

<sup>39</sup> From William Billings, *The New England Psalm-Singer* (1770) (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1981)

As well as the employment of the melodies of the spirituals as one voice in the hymns, and the composition of relatively free rhapsodies around each of them, Finnissy finds other ways of mediating this material whilst still preserving some of its properties, such as by inverting the intervals, or having the rhythms shifted 'out of step' by one unit (so that a melody begins on the second rhythmic unit of the original, and proceeds from there), both of which maintain the essential pentatonic quality of the music, or even dividing the melodies into pitch cells which can then be permuted (see Fig. 31). And as well as combining this music with the Billings hymns, Finnissy also chooses to surround it with material from later periods in American musical history, such as a range of passages derived from (mostly retrogrades) of nineteenth-century white American composers such as Horatio Parker, Louis Moreau Gottschalk, Edward Macdowell, and others (see Fig. 32)<sup>40</sup>.

### STEAL AWAY

**Slowly**

Steal a-way, steal a-way, steal a-way to Je-sus! Steal a-way,  
 steal a-way home, I ain't got long to stay here. My Lord - calls me, He  
 calls me by the thun-der; The trum-pet sounds with -  
 in a my soul: I ain't got long to stay here

Fig. 31 (a). 'Steal Away'.

Fig. 31 (b). 'Steal Away' inverted, with rhythm out of step and other minor modifications.

<sup>40</sup> Many of the nineteenth-century white American sources used in this chapter can be found in John Gillespie (ed), *Nineteenth-Century American Piano Music* (New York: Dover, 1978).

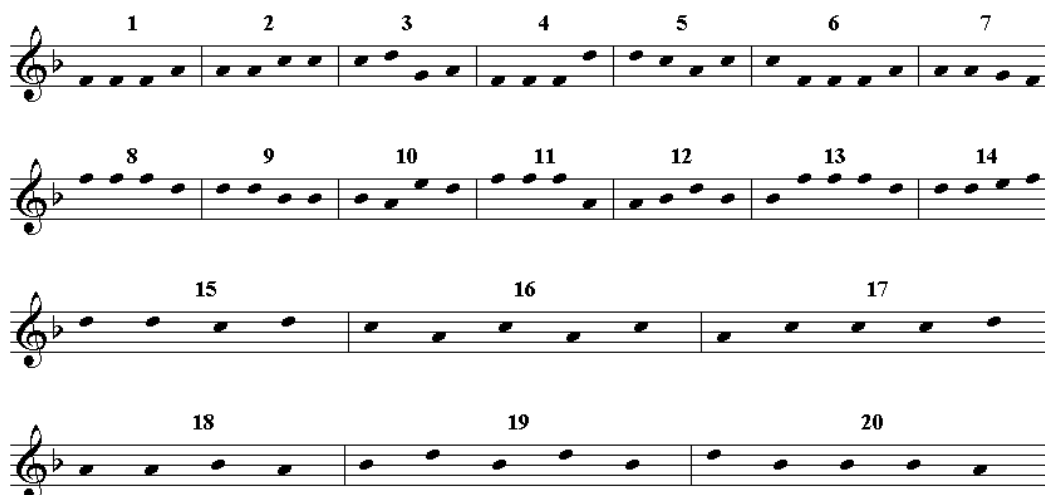


Fig. 31 (c). Chart of pitch cells derived from 'Steal Away'.



Fig. 32 (a). Horatio Parker – *La Suterelle Op. 49 No. 2*, excerpt (a).



Fig. 32 (b). Horatio Parker, *La Suterelle* Op. 49 No. 2, excerpt (b).



Fig. 32 (c). Opening page of *North American Spirituals*

But the nature and range of the allusions suggest the music of Charles Ives as much as anything else in the cycle, and this comes to the fore in some quite violent (or at least boisterous) passages in Section A (referred to above as 'Anger/Ivesian')<sup>41</sup>, which serve the role of temporary 'explosions' of material akin to those elsewhere in the cycle, though continuous melodies, almost always in the tenor line, remain intact in the midst of other tempestuous writing around them. The passages in general serve a function akin to that in the wilder moments of Ives's 'Hawthorne' from the *Concord Sonata*, or perhaps even more specifically, his 'Rough and Ready et al. (and/or The Jumping Frog)' from the *Five Take-Offs* (1906-1907). Overall, here he combines a multiplicity of Ivesian characteristics: a mostly step-wise melody (as in parts of 'Rough and Ready'), this melody having diatonic characteristics in a dissonant environment (as in 'Hawthorne'), a line of strongly accentuated groups of four semiquavers (as in the *Study No. 22*) in a polyrhythmic relationship with the other parts (something that can be found widely throughout Ives's output, especially that for piano), and in time some music reminiscent of a march tune also in the manner of 'Hawthorne' (see Fig. 33).



Fig. 33 (a). *North American Spirituals*, P4.

<sup>41</sup> These sections are amongst the most difficult of which to establish the provenance and nature of the compositional techniques employed in their creation, even with the full sketches to hand (and Finnissy himself has been unable to recall some of their sources). They appear to derive from a splitting of 'Steal away' into small cells of pitches which are combined with their inversions to provide a gamut of pitch cells which are then employed in varying metres and transpositions, configured in such a way as to recall some of Ives's piano works, such as his *Study No. 22*.





Fig. 33 (b). Ives, Three fragments from 'Hawthorne' from Piano Sonata No. 2 "Concord, Mass 1840-1860".

Finnissy, whilst not directly alluding to these passages of Ives (though the opening of the march is like a modified version of the third passage above), creates a line using archetypal march figurations similar to the Ives, inverting, expanding intervals, rotating the order of pitches of the basic cell, and occasionally shifting the pulse into a triplet metre, before fragmenting and dissolving the line.

A series of inserts, derived from two sources, provide almost comical breaks from the Ivesian material. One of these consists of music associated with a 'Bead Giving Ritual' and 'Cloth Giving Dance' of the Tutelo Native American tribe (once resident in Virginia and North Carolina, now intermingled amongst the Iroquois, who took up their rituals on Six Nations Reserve, Ontario)<sup>42</sup>, which Finnissy configures in two parts almost like a minuet (Fig. 34).

<sup>42</sup> See Gertrude Prokosch Kurath, *Tutelo Rituals on Six Nations Reserve, Ontario* (Ann Arbor: Society for Ethnomusicology, 1981), pp.25-35 for more information on the sources in question.



Fig. 34 (a). Fragments from music for two Tutelo 'Spirit Adoption' ceremonies: 'Bead-Giving Ritual' and 'Cloth Giving Dance'<sup>43</sup>.

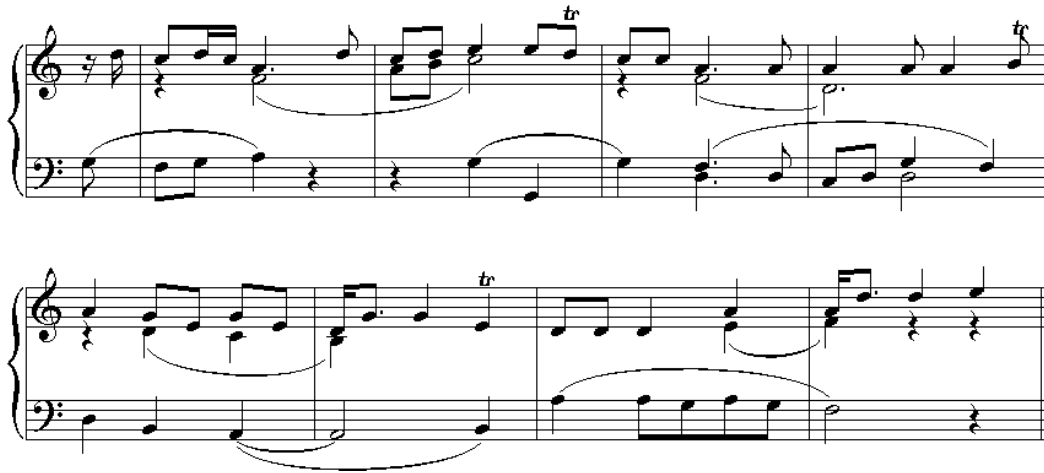


Fig. 34 (b). Version for two hands derived from Tutelo music.

The other source comes from an eighteenth century book of music from the Indian subcontinent primarily for young European ladies (living in colonial India) to play at the harpsichord, which has received some attention from various scholars in recent times perhaps on account of its sheer novelty. The piece in question which Finnissy cites is taken from the collection 'Hindoostannie Airs' by William Crotch<sup>44</sup> (Fig. 35), and is generally used in the form of retrograded fragments.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. Figs. 3.5 and 3.7.

<sup>44</sup> William Crotch published a volume entitled *Specimens of Several Styles of Music* (1808), itself drawing in part upon an earlier collection (from sometime in the 1780s) called *Indoostani Airs*, compiled by Margaret Fowkes. The material that Finnissy uses comes from Ian Woodfield, 'Collecting Indian Songs in Late 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Lucknow: Problems of Transcription', in *British Journal of Ethnomusicology*, Vol. 3 (1994), pp. 73-88. See Raymond Head, 'Corelli in Calcutta: Colonial Music-Making in India in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries', in *Early Music* Vol. 13 No. 4 (Nov. 1985), pp. 548-553 for more on the subject. Another important precedent for Crotch's work was William Hamilton Bird, *The Oriental Miscellany: being a collection of the most favourite Airs of Hindoostan, compiled and adapted for the harpsichord* (Calcutta: Unknown binding, 1789). Bird complained that 'The Raagnies [*raginis*] are so void of meaning, and any degree of regularity, that it is impossible to bring them into a form for performance' so he changed their metres and added 3rds and 5ths. See Joep Bor, 'The Rise of Ethnomusicology: Sources on Indian Music c.1780 – c.1890' in *Yearbook for Traditional Music* Vol. 20 (1988), p. 56. For a wider overview of this subject, see Ian Woodfield, 'The 'Hindoostannie Air': English Attempts to Understand Indian Music in the Late Eighteenth Century', in *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, Vol. 119 No. 2 (1994), pp. 189-211, Nicholas Cook, 'Encountering the Other, Redefining the Self: Hindoostanie Airs, Haydn's folksong settings, and the 'common practice' style',



Fig. 35. From 'Hindoostanie Air', 'Rektah', from William Crotch – *Specimens of Various Styles of Music*<sup>45</sup>.

Finnissy configures the Tutelo material in such a way as to form a continuity with that of the 'Hindoostanie Air', so that the composite material provides a momentary tonal (and static) reprieve from the raging material that surrounds them.

On a symbolical level, one might conceivably read this as a musical drama akin to the interpretation by Edward Said of Jane Austen's novel *Mansfield Park*, in which the various goings-on of the privileged characters at the English estate are only made possible by overseas sustenance, in this case a plantation in Antigua (mentioned only in passing in the novel, but fundamental to the family income) which would have been run by slave labour at the time Austen wrote her novel<sup>46</sup>. Similarly Finnissy presents a quasi-cinematic montage of the savagery of slave labour and the rage of the dispossessed on one hand, and the genteel world of young ladies appropriating the music of the slaves or colonial subjects for their own private drawing-room consumption. At least one might hear that if one knows the sources in question. In a purely aural sense the contrast between tempestuousness and relentlessness, and a rather off-the-wall gentility, made manifest through the gentler density of notes, constrained central registers, and cadential implications of the Tutelo/Hindoostanie material, makes at least something akin to such an experience likely, albeit in a more abstracted sense.

---

available at <http://cf.hum.uva.nl/mmm/new-directions/Cook-Encountering.pdf> (accessed 21/8/13) (Cook's article takes a somewhat more benevolent view) and Richard Leppert, 'Music, domestic life and cultural chauvinism: images of British subjects at home in India', in Richard Leppert and Susan McClary (eds), *Music and Society: The politics of composition, performance and reception* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 63-104.

<sup>45</sup> In Woodfield, 'Collecting Indian Songs', p. 82.

<sup>46</sup> Said argues that 'Austen affirms and repeats the geographical process of expansion involving trade, production, and consumption that predates, underlies, and guarantees the morality' (Edward Said, 'Consolidated Vision: Jane Austen and Empire', in *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1993), p. 111).

The second section of the work is the most extended and constitutes the heart of the whole piece. Above all it attempts a near-impossible reconciliation between the semantically and emotionally charged music of the spirituals with the highly abstract techniques associated with the pseudo-scientific world of American serial music in the twentieth century. In this context Finnissy ventures into a type of interplay between materials whose compositional nature is as veiled as anything up until *Unsere Afrikareise*: highly abstracted derivations from spirituals, presented in a highly dry and anti-'expressive', mechanistic, fashion, but which still preserve some of the spirituals qualities, in terms of pitch contour, use of repeated notes, and some other factors; and genuinely abstract material, whether coming out of microtonal material<sup>47</sup> with intervals doubled (as he had in other works halved intervals of chromatic writing in order to generate microtonal lines<sup>48</sup>). On a symbolical level it could be read as a further type of 'assimilation' of black music into the language of East Coast serialism, continuing such a process of varying appropriation as is enacted through the course of this work. In aural terms one can hear the melodic qualities of the spirituals ultimately dissolve completely.

Finnissy's use of the songs of Stephen Foster (1826-1864)<sup>49</sup> (see Fig. 36) adds to the complicated dialogue with issues of appropriation and cross-cultural tension, especially if we are to imagine that Finnissy shares something like the following view of Foster:

Stephen Foster's further claim to the affection of Americans is that he sings primarily of the Negro and that his songs were born at the very time when the Negro was a paramount subject in the United States. Stephen Foster revolutionized the art of Negro minstrelsy, a strictly American form of entertainment, raising it from the level of coarseness and buffoonery to one of humor and pathos.<sup>50</sup>

If so, then the relationship between the black music he combines with Foster's songs is more complicated than in other parts of the piece (not that it is simple

---

<sup>47</sup> Almost certainly this derives from unused material for the quarter-tone keyboard part in Finnissy's orchestral work *Speak its Name* (1996). See Julian Anderson, 'The Orchestral Works', pp. 206-208, for more on this work.

<sup>48</sup> This was, for example, a technique he used in the series of *Obrecht Motetten* (1989-1993) for ensemble, when transforming material from Obrecht.

<sup>49</sup> The songs cited by Finnissy are, in order, 'Come where my love lies dreaming' (1855), 'Don't bet your money on ole Shanghai' (1861), 'Down among the Cane-brakes' (1860), 'Gentle Annie' (1856), 'Ah may the red rose live always' (1850), 'Beautiful Dreamer' (1862), 'Better Times are Coming' (1862), and 'Camptown Races' (1850).

<sup>50</sup> See <http://www.bobjanuary.com/foster/sf1.htm> (accessed 21/8/13). Alain Locke (who associates one of the periods of African-American music he delineates, 'The First Age of Minstrelsy' (1850-1875) with 'Stephen Foster and the Sentimental Ballad') argues that whilst Foster did have some first-hand experience of plantation singing he, like children's story writer Joel Chandler Harris, 'watered the original down just enough to give it the touch of universality, and yet not enough to destroy entirely its unique folk flavor. But neither service ... was an unmixed blessing' (Locke. *The Negro and his Music and Negro Art: Past and Present* (1939), reprint (New York: Arno Press, 1969), p. 47). Locke goes further to suggest that 'With the vogue of these songs the sentimental side of the plantation legend wormed its way into the heart of America for better or worse, mostly worse. For with its shallow sentiment and crocodile tears went an unfortunate and undeserved glorification of the slave regime' (ibid. pp. 47-48).

there), at least in terms of intention. The Foster melodies are made to grow relatively seamlessly out of the inverted spiritual melody, though a shift is palpable through the initial harmonisation and creation of firmer tonal harmony (as there is no other part at a lower register than the melodies) and clear melodic profile.

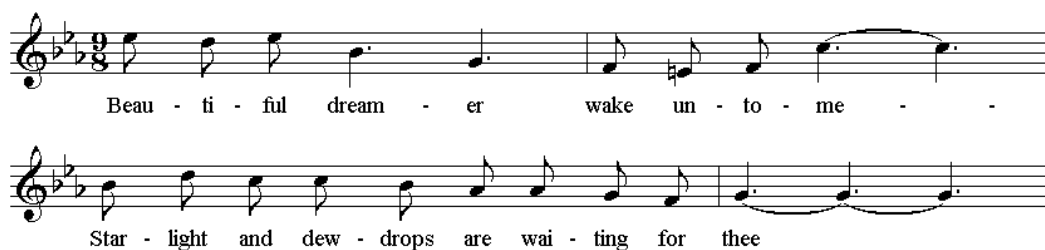


Fig. 36 (a). Stephen Foster, 'Beautiful Dreamer' (1862)

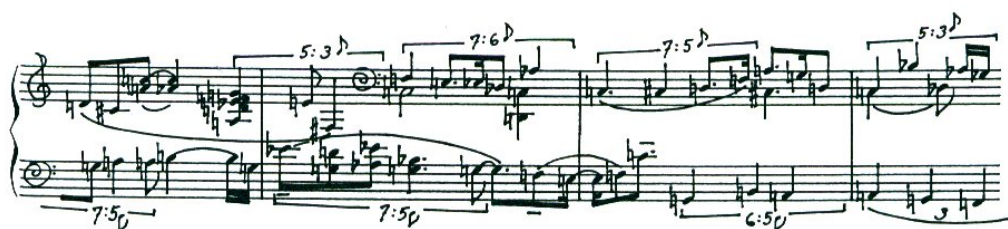


Fig. 36 (b). *North American Spirituals*, reference to 'Beautiful Dreamer'..

Alain Locke speaks of how one can 'Over-emphasize the melodic elements of a spiritual, and you get a sentimental ballad à la Stephen Foster'<sup>51</sup>. Whether or not expressing something of this situation was Finnissy's intention, the replacement of the spirituals with such sentimental melodies in light of the previous partial denouement of processes of abstraction has the quality of a hopeless and futile gesture in such a context, and it is at these moments that Finnissy employs carefully quasi-cadential (but incomplete) long-range harmonies from which the music tapers into silence. This is a powerful and disorienting moment in the piece, at which point almost anything would seem to be able to happen. Finnissy has often used long silences in his work, not least in his early piano piece *Song 9*. He compared his silences there to those to be found in Stockhausen's *Klavierstück X*, saying that the 'many (so-called) silences interspersed amongst the material' constitute 'a way of trying to incorporate *non*-action, or things going out of sight which you assume are nonetheless continuing into the formal structure'<sup>52</sup>. Small developments do appear to occur during the three silences in question, especially in terms of gradual shifts upwards in register, and the introduction of added embellishment. But from this and the succeeding

<sup>51</sup> Locke, *The Negro and his Music*, p. 21.

<sup>52</sup> Finnissy in interview with Richard Toop, in Toop, 'Four Facets of the New Complexity', p. 9.

bleak section, it is not easy for Finnissy to steer the music back on track to a context where the Billings/spiritual music can appear again with a degree of confidence.

Ultimately Finnissy pushes his materials as far as possible only to find that non-reconciliation and mutual incomprehensibility represent a void, after which the music needs must be artificially pushed back on track. Such a scenario could be argued to be contrived as much as being inevitable, of course, and the very politics of writing this type of work almost precludes by default the possibility of some optimistic reconciliation. But about the success of sections C and in particular D as a result I have my doubts, as the music loses some of its urgency and the later passages can almost seem like a tacked-on conclusion. The most remarkable events in these sections come from some of the 'Canadian' material envisaged for the earlier version of *Le réveil*, simply in the form of three excerpts whose symbolic titles would spell 'CANADA' (eventually simply 'C-N-D'). These were based on music by Henry Cowell ('C'), Conlon Nancarrow ('N') and ragtime by Homer Denney ('D'); into each is incorporated either a Canadian melody or one collected by a Canadian<sup>53</sup>. The combination of a Metis song with a rag from Denney has already been explored in detail; the other Canadian materials bear little obvious trace of their origins (no aspect of context sets the melodies used in the Cowell or Nancarrow settings especially apart; the latter in particular could have come from any music of close tessitura).

Otherwise problematic in this chapter is the fact that whilst the music of 'white America', as represented in the work, traverses a wide history and develops significantly, from Billings, through Foster, Macdowell and Parker, through to Cowell and Nancarrow, the 'black' music consists almost entirely of the spirituals (unless one counts the ragtime, which makes only the briefest appearance at the very end<sup>54</sup>) merely in different modifications. If one is to read it as a picture of people of African origin, as represented through their music, being forced to

---

<sup>53</sup> The melodies in question are a Haitian melody collected in a Canadian ethnomusicological journal: Claude Dauphin, 'Genèse et éclosion du métalangage musical dans le conte-chanté haïtien', in Robert Witmer (ed) *CanMus Documents, 5: Ethnomusicology in Canada* (Toronto: Institute of Canadian Music, 1990), p. 272 (this article details the ways in which musical ciphers are used to preserve texts in the memory); and 'Klawulacha' from the Kawkiutl people of Northwestern Canada, about the Chief Wakiash and the building of the first totem pole, as collected in Natalie Curtis, *The Indians' Book: Songs and Legends of the American Indians*, reprint of second edition (New York: Dover, 1968), pp. 299-303, and the Metis song 'Mon cher amant' described in the 'Material as Archetype' section. Curtis's book was once immensely popular and the source for Busoni's 'Red Indian' settings (see Anthony Beaumont, *Busoni* (London: Faber and Faber, 1985), pp. 190-203). See also Michael V. Pisani, "I'm an Indian Too", in Jonathan Bellman (ed), *The Exotic in Western Music* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998), pp. 250-256. Finnissy had composed an earlier piece simply entitled *Nancarrow* (1978-80), and here uses Nancarrow's *Study #31* (according to Kyle Gann, the 'only canon whose convergence point lies outside its time frame' – see Gann, *The Music of Conlon Nancarrow* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 25. Gann defines the 'convergence point' as the place within a canon where all parts reach the same place in their lines (ibid. p. 21)), though with somewhat less complex polyrhythms and in four parts rather than Nancarrow's three; the use of the Native American melody modifies Nancarrow's jazz-inflected tonality to become something much harsher.

<sup>54</sup> One could conceivably count the Foster tunes as part of the history, despite Foster's being a white man, in line with Locke's delineation of periods. But this would be pushing a point to an extreme.

assimilate into varying surroundings with varying degrees of success or failure, one has to ask if such a portrayal is idealised, reified and thus dehumanising? There are of course, as I implied earlier, a wide variety of later traditions of African-American music; as Finnissy engages with different historical states of white American music, is it not equally important to do the same with the various musics of black Americans? Could this piece not be seen to accord with some primitivist stereotypes of African-Americans, perceived as incapable of developing (whether such development is for better or worse) as is portrayed possible for whites? Alternatively, does it cast African-Americans as eternal victims, whose culture is to be appropriated primarily for the purposes of constructing narratives of oppression, rather than when they have developed a more autonomous existence and culture of their own? Of course such potential objections are much easier to raise on a symbolical than a purely aural level<sup>55</sup>. The piece is already dense with information, starkly different types of musical material and processes; with the introduction of a wide range of different styles of black music it would surely collapse under the weight of its own variegation.

The sociologist Jon Cruz, in his book on the changing cultural meanings of the African-American spiritual, warns against a romanticisation of this and other forms of black music as betokening some sort of 'authentic' identity and is scathing on certain certain types of mainstream Americans who devoured novels like Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* during periods when slavery or segregation were still in place, arguing that 'Sentimentalism allowed social crises to metamorphose through a series of symbolic substitutions that would allow one, with ease of conscience, to vehemently oppose slavery yet have no concrete sense of a slave as a human being with a face, a name, a voice'<sup>56</sup>, and elsewhere suggesting that:

Though rooted in a profound social critique, the cultural discovery of black music and the search for cultural authenticity soon began to pivot upon a particular cultural aestheticization of black practices that, in turn, highlighted black religious music over black political and literary voicings.

---

<sup>55</sup> Christopher Fox, in his article on the *History*, describes playing the *Spirituals* to a group of his MA students, giving them no prior knowledge other than the title of the piece and the composer's name, to see what allusions they discerned in it. He tells us that whilst most of the references were lost on them, they did pick up on the presence of hymns and spirituals (which is hardly surprising in the latter case as they knew the name of the piece) and that 'they were able to talk about very distinct changes of density, harmony and idiom within the music from which they were able to derive ideas about cultural plurality and conflict', as well as being aware that there were 'many different voices speaking' in the music, often at cross purposes'. Thus 'with the title as an anchor they were able to attach these musical voices to ideas about America'. See Christopher Fox, 'Michael Finnissy's History of Photography in Sound: Under the Lens', in *The Musical Times*, Vol. 143, No. 1879 (Summer 2002), p. 31. But it is not clear what exactly these 'ideas about America' were, nor are any opinions offered on the matter elsewhere in the article other than to say that the spirituals themselves come 'from a vocal, oral tradition which has connotations not only of racist oppression and exploitation but also of other music – Black American music in general and, specifically, Michael Tippett's *A child of our time*' (ibid), without considering the specific way in which the spirituals are presented, modified and contextualised by Finnissy. The comments about students' reactions are highly generalised, in such a way that it is difficult to draw firm conclusions.

<sup>56</sup> Cruz, *Culture on the Margins*, pp. 30-31.

As black culture became aestheticized, a separation emerged between black political claims for a greater social and political inclusion within American civil society and a more acceptable spiritual (and eventually cultural) place for blacks in the hearts and minds of northerners who were championing the new mode of benevolent cultural reception. In essence, a peculiar kind of culturalism triumphed through a cultural eclipse of politics.<sup>57</sup>

Christopher Small raises similar concerns purely within the framework of culture, arguing that ‘The inability to see the power of black creativity, and the insistence on perceiving blacks simply as entertainers but nothing more is deeply ingrained in European and Euro-American society’, and how ‘attitudes which seem to have developed out of the continuing need to justify slavery’ have led to a situation in which white people as a whole ‘perceive blacks even in the most favourable light as emotionally and spiritually underdeveloped – in a word, as childlike – and not to be taken seriously either as people or as artists’<sup>58</sup>.

In considering perceptions of blacks and other marginalized groups, Cruz suggests that a certain white sensibility ‘embraces the subject (by which I mean the “topic”) of black music but not the black subjects from which the music comes’, thus producing ‘an aestheticism that effectively disengages from any reflection on the social’<sup>59</sup>. This is a powerful indictment, though it is not necessarily so easy to ascertain whether the sensibilities of white listeners to black music necessarily fit such a model. Such white listeners’ perspective on such music have no necessary relationship with their involvement or otherwise with progressive political activity, including that to do with fighting racism, at the same time, or even simply their attitudes in such a respect.

Spirituals became commodities for sale on the open market very soon after the end of the Civil War, both through publications and especially the work of the Fisk Jubilee Singers, established in 1865<sup>60</sup>. Notwithstanding some waspish disdain, this group achieved huge success in tours of the United States and then to Europe, performing before Presidents and monarchs, and audiences in the tens of thousands<sup>61</sup>. Dena J. Epstein, argues that in this reception, ‘Instead of the grotesque stereotypes of the minstrel theater, audiences perceived a new image of black dignity, faith, and simple beauty’<sup>62</sup>. But not only was this to replace one patronising stereotype with another, also the credit was frequently given not the musicians but to those who had nurtured them<sup>63</sup>.

---

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. p. 6

<sup>58</sup> Small, *Music of the Common Tongue*, p. 418.

<sup>59</sup> Cruz, *Culture on the Margins*, p. 31.

<sup>60</sup> J.B.T. Marsh, *The Story of the Jubilee Singers, with their Songs* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1902), pp. 8-9.

<sup>61</sup> See *ibid* pp. 12-40.

<sup>62</sup> Dena J. Epstein, ‘The Story of the Jubilee Singers: An Introduction to its Bibliographic History’, in Josephine Wright (ed), *New Perspectives on Music: Essays in Honor of Eileen Southern* (Michigan: Harmonie Park Press, 1992), p. 151.

<sup>63</sup> As Epstein points out, in the first publication the songs were cited as examples of what enlightened education could achieve for former slaves (*ibid*. p. 152). This source also said that ‘It is true. . . both of the words and music, that whatever modification they have undergone, has been wholly in the minds of



Over a century later, on March 18 1990, top-earning classical divas Jessye Norman and Kathleen Battle presented a concert of spirituals to a packed Carnegie Hall<sup>64</sup>. Arthur C. Jones writes that after hearing Kathleen Battle singing ‘Over my head I hear music in the air’, ‘we understand immediately that with such incredibly beautiful music present, there must indeed be a God, *somewhere*’<sup>65</sup>. I would ask instead whether the audience (and those who buy the recording and video afterwards) are really contemplating the only possible political significance of the music, specifically what it might mean in terms of racism and responses to it today? Or does such an event place such issues at a safe distance, becoming of ‘then’ rather than ‘now’? If those listeners simply like the sound of the music, that is fine; if claims are to be made in terms of the humane message of this music, then the question is whether it can be seen to have had any palpable effect in this sense.

Such questions have to be asked about the appropriation of the spiritual in the hands of both Tippett and Finnissey as well, in light of the explicit political allusions made by either composer. It is hard not to come away from Tippett’s *A Child of our Time* without a feeling that the spirituals themselves (notwithstanding their mediated presentation) are used to represent some sort of ‘authentic’ or ‘universal’ music in contrast to the more ephemeral movements that surround them. The same could be said of Finnissey’s *Folklore 2*, though this situation is mitigated both by the violence of the opening of part 3 (if the cycle is played as a whole) and the much more ambivalent and pessimistic portrayal of ‘Deep River’ at the end of the whole cycle<sup>66</sup>. In the *Spirituals*, however, the situation is rather more complicated. Even where clearly recognisable, the spirituals are generally portrayed in such a highly mediated form (usually with extensive harmonisation that can be quite dissonant – the moments of greater monodic lyricism are relatively short-lived, or followed by explosive moments) that it is difficult to hear them in an unequivocally affirmative manner. I suspect this was intentional on Finnissey’s part, and also feel that it is important in performance not to smooth over the dissonances and disjunctures contained within for this very reason. Finnissey *does* play off the music of the spirituals against a type of modernism that developed primarily at the hands of white composers (in an interesting fashion due to the fact that he does not simply stratify the categories), but to read this piece as a celebration of authentic, warm, spiritual (in the wider sense of the term), communal black music against nasty white

---

the Singers under the influence of the training and culture they have received in the University of which they are members’ (ibid.).

<sup>64</sup> See Jones, *Wade in the Water*, p. 17. The concert featured these singers together with the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra and Chorus under James Levine, and was later released on CD and video.

<sup>65</sup> Jones, *Wade in the Water*, p. 18.

<sup>66</sup> Of course, in performances of the second part alone, including Finnissey’s own recording of just that part (Metier MSV CD 92010), this will not be the case.

modernist individualism – the types of paradigms one often finds emanating from some of the New Musicologists<sup>67</sup> – would be woefully simplistic.

Cruz traces a process by which a song is sung first by a solitary slave, heard by an overseer or white abolitionist, remembered then transcribed, then becomes a literary text which is disseminated in new environments in which it acquires new cultural meanings. Following the various harmonisations and performances after 1865, later classical composers would take up aspects of the song, refining and taming it in the process, then it would be rediscovered by African American intellectuals of the Harlem Renaissance, as well as by white cultural bohemians of the 1920s. Following further rediscovery by a liberal welfare state, then a National Recovery Act dedicated to transcribing the memories of those few former slaves still alive, it finds its way through black churches, streets and jails in the post-1945 era, becoming a social spectacle captured on the mass media. Eventually it becomes played dutifully on Public Broadcasting System during Black History Month<sup>68</sup>.

Finnissy's *Folklore and North American Spirituals* come after the Norman/Battle Carnegie Hall concert, which coincides with the dutiful presentation on television during Black History Month (though with a touch of Carnegie Hall glitz added for good measure), so one might continue Cruz's (somewhat speculative) narrative from here. 'Deep River' assumes a possibly nostalgic, cathartic and dutiful role in *Folklore*, then 'Steal Away', 'Nobody knows', 'Go down, Moses' and 'By and by' are given askew presentations in *North American Spirituals*, each combined with various forms of music relating to that of white America. Finnissy tells us that he is presenting 'the voices of defiance and hope everywhere' and is 'confronting Afro-American spiritual responses to slavery' (as made explicit in the programme note cited earlier). The piece is performed both individually and as part of the whole cycle, in particular in the country to which it itself alludes, United States, generating responses which emphasise 'a neglected churchyard, with tombs (hymns and spirituals) garlanded by ivy, their inscriptions partly effaced by lichens'<sup>69</sup>, or as a work which 'speaks

---

<sup>67</sup> See for example Susan McClary's 'Terminal Prestige: The Case of Avant-Garde Music Composition' in *Cultural Critique* 12 (1989), pp. 57-81, or her crazily romanticised view of gospel music in *Conventional Wisdom: The Content of Musical Form* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), pp. 21-29. In fairness to McClary, it should be pointed out that she does elsewhere criticise the perception of African-Americans as having 'access to real (i.e. preindustrialized) feelings and community' (p. 55), but mostly as a rhetorical strategy for a xenophobic attack upon British rock musicians in contrast to their American counterparts.

<sup>68</sup> Cruz, *Culture in the Margins*, pp. 35-38. See also Andrew Ward, *Dark Midnight When I Rise*, pp. 404-407. For a comprehensive examination of the reception and subsequent history of the African-American spiritual worldwide, see John Lovell Jr., *Black Song: The Forge and the Flame* (New York and London: Macmillan, 1972), pp. 402-585.

<sup>69</sup> Paul Griffiths, 'Greeting Ives as an Old, Familiar Friend', *New York Times*, October 17 2000. It is worth noting that on the same day as this review appeared, the American Civil Liberties Union had to file a complaint about a black American student being 'shackled, detained and repeatedly strip-searched by Immigration and Naturalization Service officials over the course of almost two days' (see <https://www.aclu.org/immigrants-rights/aclu-charges-abuse-case-black-us-student-shackled-and-strip-searched-immigration-o> (accessed 1/11/13)).

many languages, communicating in several distinct dialects almost simultaneously' whilst contrasting hallowed figures such as Billings and Ives with 'the black American tradition'<sup>70</sup> (whose creators no more have 'a face, a name, a voice' in this formulation than they did amongst the audiences for *Uncle Tom's Cabin* alluded to by Cruz). These responses do lay bare the potential for appropriation of such a work by certain interests. Racism, slavery, and African-American responses to it, are surely about something more than 'lyricism' (in the sense that I imagine the reviewer to intend the term, appertaining to some reified notion of the 'song-like' – a quality that is certainly part of the *Spirituals* but is forever engaged in a dialogue with the other forms of alienating objectivisation of the spirituals themselves, whose very contentious nature surely calls out for aural expression) or something 'distant and rarefied'. None of the above texts engage with, or seem concerned about, the rather blatant political issues to which the piece alludes; questions of sensibilities, history, culture, appropriation, race, the primitive and the rationalistic, are reduced to idle musings based upon ossified conceptions of aestheticism and taste.

It would be grossly unfair to hold Finnissy (or those who play his work) to account in terms of whether his music could be said to do justice to the enormity of the history of slavery; rather it needs to be considered (in light of the title) in terms of its engagements with musical representations therein. Tippett's *A Child of our Time* leaves itself acutely vulnerable to the charges of idle emotional catharsis for conscience-alleviating purposes; *North American Spirituals* is not really like this, due to the lack of obviously cathartic moments. Rather, it is ultimately a deeply ambivalent piece that cannot be reduced to a simple symbolic 'message'. Much is left open, much depends on the subjective interaction of the listener in how they choose to interpret the juxtapositions and combinations of very different musics.

In its resistance of the sort of easy functionality that 'message music' provides, *North American Spirituals* could be said to fulfil absolutely what can be argued to be both romantic<sup>71</sup> and modernistic criteria of autonomy and individualism. It is a piece that demands of the listener that they engage *for themselves* with the music it presents, as well as seeming to do so with its symbolic meanings as well. However, in societies in which relatively passive and disengaged listening are at least normalised are tacitly accepted on a wide scale, many listeners may stay away from this type of music (unless performance strategies conspire to turn it into some self-contained, closed form which can be consumed more easily, so as to fulfil the criteria of aestheticism and entertainment). This is the paradoxical situation that Adorno identified in one of his most brilliant dialectical formulations (here relating to Expressionism, but applicable to other aesthetic approaches as well):

---

<sup>70</sup> Marilyn Nonken, programme note for CD 'American Spirituals', CD CRI CR877.

<sup>71</sup> In the sense of early romantic aesthetics of musical autonomy, rather than with reference to romanticisation in the manner I used the term above.

As long as art holds its distance from immediate life, it is unable to spring beyond the shadow of its own autonomy and immanence of form. Expressionism, hostile to the “work” as such, is, in spite of this hostility, able to spring beyond itself even less, exactly because in its rejection of communication it insists upon an autonomy that can only be made good by the consistency of “works of art.” It is this ineluctable contradiction that prohibits persevering at the expressionist summit.<sup>72</sup>

Thus Finnissy has perhaps embarked upon an impossible task in trying to communicate a progressive political message through *North American Spirituals*. It would be rash to suggest that music could play a major role in effecting societal transformation – no-one would surely ever suggest that performances of *North American Spirituals* would diminish racism or poverty as affect African-Americans – but it is not out of the question that it can be appropriated in such a manner as to play a part in making it worse. As a confrontational piece that just might shake up an audience (especially an American audience) from complacent certainties concerning peoples, their musics, and their representations and traces in ‘classical’ idioms, it could be powerful; as an espousal of the supposed ability of art and aestheticism to transcend such things, in the manner described in some of the above reception, its function would be considerably more dubious. Even as the former type of piece, though, the ‘message’ is somewhat compromised by the unequal treatment it itself accords black and white musics, as mentioned earlier.

If the spirituals to which Finnissy alludes were relatively obscure and as such unlikely to be recognised by typical audiences for his music, then it would be possible to view the work as ‘absolute music’ (though even then I am doubtful). But they are not and it is not. Finnissy makes a valiant attempt at a near-impossible task (in what I believe to be the most contentious chapter of the whole *History*), avoiding the easy pitfalls of romanticisation and fetishisation of the spiritual to an admirable degree. Whilst the piece could not really be said to engage critically with the recent reduction of the spiritual to a commodity form (that would require a quite different type of approach such as that attempted in some of the *Re-Visionen* cycle of Dieter Schnebel or Helmut Lachenmann’s Mozart-derived clarinet concerto *Accanto*), nonetheless it manages to navigate itself away from simply using such a form in a naïve manner. Thus he is able to produce a genuinely searching aural exploration of the varying cultural meanings of such iconic music by virtue of different appropriations (never simply reiterating the iconic form in a passive manner), on a formal level as well as that of particular musical materials. This is no small achievement despite all the possible objections I have raised above.

---

<sup>72</sup> Theodor Adorno, *Philosophy of New Music*, translated, edited, and with an introduction by Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), p. 42.

## Chapter 6

### No. 4: *My parents' generation thought War meant something*

Whilst the fourth chapter of the *History* is not strictly autobiographical, and alludes to the *generation* of people to which his parents belonged rather than so much his parents themselves<sup>1</sup>, it is certainly informed by his memories of and perspectives on that decade, including the music that his parents would have encountered during their early years of adulthood. Its initial inspiration came from photographs that Finnissy was shown by his parent, of their wartime experiences during the London Blitz, in which German bombers caused the deaths of over 30 000 people in the city and flattened large swathes of houses. Both of Finnissy's parents served in the British Army during the war, though neither were actually involved in combat. His father was involved in radar work, in the process developing a range of skills that enabled him to build radios after the war was over (Finnissy recalls that the family never once had to buy a radio<sup>2</sup>). His mother was a member of the Auxiliary Territorial Services (ATS), a women's branch of the army attached to the Territorial Army. They were married in 1945 and Finnissy was conceived soon afterwards.

Post-war Britain was characterised by a simultaneous combination of optimism and austerity<sup>3</sup>. Despite victory in the war, the British people voted not for wartime Prime Minister Winston Churchill (perhaps because of recent memories of the dreadful poverty which had been exacerbated by the policies of Conservative-dominated governments in the 1930s) but for his Labour rival Clement Attlee, whose government is widely regarded on the left to have enacted some of the most progressive policies in the history of the country<sup>4</sup>. That country of which Attlee and his party took control was in a dire financial situation in the aftermath of the war. National debt had tripled whilst Britain had lost its previously dominant international trading position. Britain's involvement in the

---

<sup>1</sup> In private conversations with the author.

<sup>2</sup> Private conversations with the author.

<sup>3</sup> The outline of post-war Britain presented here is indebted to several sources in particular: Alan Sked and Chris Cook, *Post-War Britain: A Political History*, fourth edition (London: Penguin, 1995), especially pp. 23-87; Arthur Marwick, *British Society since 1945*, fourth edition (London: Penguin, 2003), especially the chapter 'The Culture of Austerity', pp. 52-72; Arthur Marwick, *Culture in Britain since 1945* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991); Paul Addison, *Now the War is Over: A Social History of Britain 1945-51* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1985); Peter Hennessy, *Never Again: Britain 1945-1951* (London: Vintage, 1993); Kenneth O. Morgan, *Britain since 1945: The People's Peace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); David Childs, *Britain since 1939: Progress and Decline*, second edition (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2002); Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Austerity in Britain: Rationing, Controls and Consumption 1939-1955* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) and Tony Cliff and Donny Gluckstein, *The Labour Party: A Marxist History* (London: Bookmarks, 1988), as well as the books on London cited separately.

<sup>4</sup> Of course this is a moderate rather than far left view. For a different perspective, see 'The Attlee Government: Zenith of Reformism' in Cliff and Gluckstein, *The Labour Party: A Marxist History*, pp. 218-255. Their concluding view is that 'Attlee's government had not ushered in socialism. Its real triumph lay in its steering of British capitalism through a period of stress in the aftermath of the Second World War and in assisting the USA to stabilise capitalism the world over.' (p. 255).

post-war occupation of Germany was a further drain upon resources. At first the Americans were reluctant to help, still seeing Britain as a rival trading power, but a meagre loan was negotiated by none other than the economist John Maynard Keynes, not long before his death in 1946. Combined with a further loan from Canada, the government believed they could achieve economic recovery by 1951. However, this was not to be.

Nonetheless, the new government was able to implement a startling range of socialistic policies, including multiple nationalisations, the creation of the welfare state through the National Insurance Act of 1946, and the National Health Service in the same year, as well as free education for all until age 15, and the beginning of the dismantling of the British Empire. In London, the aftermath of the wartime Blitz necessitated major repair and rebuilding work<sup>5</sup>, and a group of young architects inspired by the ideas of Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe, and sympathetic to the Labour government, were able to gain positions of influence, and make grand plans for the rebuilding of the city, though many of these foundered because of the expenditure involved<sup>6</sup>. Nonetheless, some modernist projects well-regarded by architectural critics such as the borough of Harlow in Essex, planned by the then-young British modernist Frederick Gibberd, were able to go ahead<sup>7</sup>, leading to the growth in prominence of a school which became known as the 'New Brutalism' style, which would later become the target of ferocious attacks<sup>8</sup>.

Most of the repair work upon houses in the capital was completed between 1944 and 1947, with local newspapers publishing lists of numbers of repairs completed each week<sup>9</sup>. The government kept strict control over supplies of building materials, restricting in large measure the construction of new offices. Thus emerged a black market in building licenses<sup>10</sup>. It was the job of George Finnissy, Michael's father, to photograph the processes of redevelopment and repair for the archives of the then London County Council (LCC)<sup>11</sup>. He rapidly became aware of the cheapness and corruption that was entailed in the whole venture and ultimately quit the job in disgust. His photographs, which would be unattributed, may languish somewhere in LCC archives.

---

<sup>5</sup> See Jerry White, *London in the Twentieth Century: A City and its People* (London: Viking, 2001), p. 42.

<sup>6</sup> Maureen Waller, *London 1945: Life in the Debris of War* (London: Murray, 2004), p. 443-451; Marwick, 'Rebuilding and Redesigning Britain' in *Culture in Britain since 1945*, pp. 50-55.

<sup>7</sup> See Marwick, 'Rebuilding and Redesigning Britain', p. 51.

<sup>8</sup> See Anthony Jackson, *The Politics of Architecture: A History of Modern Architecture in Britain* (London: The Architectural Press, 1970), p. 183, cited in Marwick, 'Rebuilding and Redesigning Britain', pp. 54-55.

<sup>9</sup> See Waller, *London 1945*, p. 130.

<sup>10</sup> White, *London*, pp. 42-43.

<sup>11</sup> This body ran from 1889 to 1965, when it was replaced by the Greater London Council, itself abolished in 1986 by the Thatcher government as part of an attack upon local government, often run by left-wing councils. In 2000, a new body, the Greater London Authority, was set up. See Andrew Saint (ed), *Politics and the People of London: The London County Council 1889-1965* (London and Ronceverte: The Hambledon Press, 1989), for more details on the history of the organisation.

Various forms of culture flourished in the immediate post-war years, with booms in cinema attendance, important literature by Evelyn Waugh, Henry Green, Graham Greene, George Orwell and Patrick Hamilton, though which mostly adhered to essentially realist techniques and styles, to a greater extent than contemporary literature of Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre and Heinrich Böll; a similar situation applied to the theatre of T.S. Eliot, Christopher Fry and Terrence Rattigan, compared to contemporary work of Eugene Ionesco, Jean Genet, Arthur Adamov and the later work of Bertolt Brecht, though there was a greater inclination towards modernism in the visual arts, through the work of Francis Bacon, Ben Nicholson, Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth. Music also flourished with the reopening of the Royal Opera House at Covent Garden (which had acted as a music hall during the war) and the re-establishment of London's four major orchestras (the Royal Philharmonic, London Symphony, London Philharmonic and Philharmonia) as self-governing institutions, as well as the building of the Royal Festival Hall between 1949 and 1951. Primary new works by younger composers included the premiere of Benjamin Britten's *Peter Grimes* in 1945 and Tippett's first opera, *A Midsummer Marriage*, composed between 1946 and 1952, though these works (and the compositions from this period by older figures such as Ralph Vaughan Williams and William Walton) stood at some distance from the avant-garde which was soon to emerge at the hands of such radicals as Pierre Boulez or John Cage.

The optimism generated by the Labour government, even during a time of austerity, did not last, however, and was damaged above all by a fuel crisis during a freak winter in early 1947. With financial resources at a low, Britain needed to rely upon the Marshal Plan to save the country from bankruptcy, necessitating commitments to free trade, European economic integration and generally to a capitalist economy based upon private ownership. Further international pressures forced devaluation of the pound and severe cuts in public spending, with the military being brought in to break strikes. In this context, the besieged government won the 1950 general election by a majority of only five seats and had to call a further election the next year, which they lost to the Conservatives, who would remain in power for the next thirteen years.

These were the years in which Finnis would have been first conscious of the world, this was the environment that would have coloured his first memories, and these events created the foundations for the later post-war society in which he came of age. In such a context, it would be natural to ask 'what the war was fought for?' Britain and the world seemed on the verge of further conflict, with the new spectre of the atom bomb and prospect of mass annihilation (the Berlin blockade of 1948 did indeed bring the world to the brink of a third world war<sup>12</sup>, and this possibility was even greater during the later Cuban Missile Crisis). The austerity, wage restraint and rationing of the post-war world were obvious to all, Britain remained a deeply class-bound society with limited opportunities for upward

---

<sup>12</sup> See Sked and Cook, *Post-War Britain*, p. 75.

mobility, homosexuality remained illegal, the nation remained provincial in outlook, defensive as ever against European cultural influences, and more widely the whole country was forced to pander to the wishes and interests of the new superpower of the United States.

To read *My parents' generation* simply as a parable of the horror of war is only to scratch the surface of the work; whilst the musical symbols are relatively clear in this respect, it stands equally as a reflection on popular culture, its role as 'distraction', and even upon the continuing fate of a world built upon the ashes of the Second World War. It is in some ways the bleakest of all the pieces in the *History*, yet has a charge and passion of its own.

Two principal categories of material are used in the chapter: songs associated with war of various periods (from the nineteenth century through to the Soviet era), and imaginary popular songs relating to those from the 1930s and 1940s. The materials belonging to the latter category (sometimes overlapping with the former) do not as a whole constitute direct references or allusions, but rather abstractions prominently featuring generalised characteristics of the music of the period – syncopations, obsessively reiterated rhythms (especially dotted rhythms), stepwise melodies which are easy to sing, booming and incessant bass lines, sometimes extravagant but rather cheesy harmonies (with ample use of dominant ninths), and so on. Finnissy has suggested that some of the figures he had in mind when writing this sort of music included Jerome Kern (whose 'Can't Help But Lovin' Dat Man' he had earlier set in a piano piece of 1990), George Gershwin, Cole Porter and Harold Arlen (famous for 'Stormy Weather'), all of whose songs dominated the Swing Era, and the British bandleader and violinist Bert Ambrose (known at the time simply as 'Ambrose'), who 'discovered' and frequently performed with the infamous singer Vera Lynn<sup>13</sup>.

Many popular songs were associated with different periods of the war, an early hit being 'The Beer Barrel Polka/Roll Out the Barrel', followed in the first winter of the war by 'Wish Me Luck as You Wave Me Goodbye' and the notorious 'We'll Meet Again', September 1940, the time of the Blitz, bringing 'A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square' and 'The Last Time I Saw Paris', then in 1941 'Bless 'Em All' and 'The White Cliffs of Dover'<sup>14</sup>. Later years saw, quite amazingly, a great popularity for the song 'Lili Marlene'<sup>15</sup>, which British soldiers had first heard broadcast on Belgrade Radio in Nazi-occupied Yugoslavia<sup>16</sup>. There were even occasions on which allied airmen sung some English-language versions of Soviet war songs, as collected in a volume entitled *Songs of the People* (which included

---

<sup>13</sup> Private conversations with the author.

<sup>14</sup> Norman Longmate, *How We Lived Then: A history of everyday life during the Second World War* (London: Arrow Books, 1971), pp. 415-416.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* p. 417.

<sup>16</sup> On the history and appropriations of this song, see Liel Leibovitz and Matthew Miller, *Lili Marlene: The Soldiers' Song of World War II* (New York: Norton, 2009).



'The Red Airmen's Song', 'The Red Flag' and the French revolutionary song 'Carmagnole'<sup>17</sup>).

Dancing was hugely popular in Britain during the war years. Ballrooms were opened all over the country, the most celebrated in London being the Hammersmith Palais, which was regularly full<sup>18</sup>. The whole phenomenon of 'mass entertainment' grew to new dimensions as a distraction from fear and hardship, the ballrooms remembered as 'fun palaces for the people where the soft lights and the sweet music could banish reality for a few brief hours and allow dreams and fantasies to flourish'<sup>19</sup>. Classical venues were taken over and used as dance halls, including the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden, of which Frank E. Huggett has argued:

The transformation of opera house into dance hall was symbolic of the wartime change of values. Even if it had been possible to mount lavish and expensive spectacles for a cultural minority, it would have been politically unacceptable in wartime Britain. Although there were many exceptions and anomalies, the British fought a public war in which all people were expected to share, and to show, their sufferings.<sup>20</sup>

It may be the case that the widening of the high/low culture divide in Britain, and the consequent distrust towards many forms of culture perceived as 'elitist', may have its roots in the values of this era.

Finnissy has engaged with popular and commercial musical genres in a number of works (including elsewhere in the *History* as well, as for example with the music hall songs that appear in the *Poets*), whilst at the same time employing compositional techniques which would be impossible without the lessons of high modern abstraction. To find some unity between these distinct necessities is by no means easy; a simple desire to demonstrate empathy with the cultural desires of others does not sit easily with suspicions and reservations about the sentimentality or anonymity of some popular culture, the very things in reaction to which it has been argued that modernism developed<sup>21</sup>.

Behind the conception of *My parents' generation* surely stands another artistic figure for whom Finnissy has great admiration, the writer and television

---

<sup>17</sup> See Brian Murdoch, *Fighting Songs and Warring Words* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), p. 207.

<sup>18</sup> Longmate, *How We Lived Then*, p. 418 and Huggett, *Goodnight Sweetheart*, pp. 26-28.

<sup>19</sup> Frank E. Huggett, *Goodnight Sweetheart: Songs and Memories of the Second World War* (London: W.H. Allen, 1979), p. 26.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* p. 85.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, Andreas Huyssen, 'Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism's Other', in *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 44-62, for one elaboration of such an argument and John Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice among the Literary Intelligentsia 1880-1939* (London: Faber and Faber, 1992) for a much more populist rendition of similar arguments. Carl Dahlhaus, however, argues that the opposite of the category he defines as 'trivial music' 'is not "modern" but "classical" music' (Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, translated J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), p. 314).

dramatist Dennis Potter<sup>22</sup>. Potter's two extended masterpieces, *Pennies from Heaven* (1978) and *The Singing Detective* (1986) became notorious for their use of characters lip-synching popular songs from the 1930s and 1940s respectively (in the former case, the drama was set entirely during this period). In distinction to the more conventional device of a character 'breaking out into song' to express a particular emotion in musicals and operas, Potter's use of song was often ironic or sardonic, a way of situating the drama within the archetypes of a period (and sometimes entering into a dialectical engagement with such archetypes). Often songs such by men would be lip-synched by woman and vice versa, all to emphasise the artificial nature of the device, whilst the context of the drama could be used to radically change other assumed meanings of the songs. John R. Cook describes, in the context of *Pennies from Heaven*, the use of the popular music of the thirties so as to encapsulate 'the reality of Depression-hit Britain, in relation to which the romantic hopes and dreams expressed in the songs seemed to function as some kind of necessary antidote' and the 'gulf between the poverty of most working lives and the richness of the aspirations expressed through the music'<sup>23</sup>.

The use of cultural artefacts from a particular period, presented with a degree of critical detachment, of course informs a significant amount of Finnissey's work, and Potter may be one of the most significant influences on him in this respect. Whilst Potter will cite a whole song unmodified (in an aural sense; the context is of course radically his own), Finnissey's allusions are rarely in the form of direct quotation<sup>24</sup> and are often oblique, 'feeding' the music in terms of lending it certain attributes rather than presenting something directly identifiable. Potter uses, for example, Ray Noble's 'Love is the Sweetest Thing' in *Pennies from Heaven*, to accompany the adulterous anti-hero Arthur Parker's sordid sexual encounter on the floor with his lover Ellen; the camera moves to make the couple appear as if on the cover of the sheet music of the song, which is then opened to focus on the pages themselves. A hand returns back to the cover page and we see Arthur's abandoned wife Joan in the same picture slot. In Finnissey's 'A foggy day in London town', from his *Gershwin Arrangements*, the composer incorporates a tension between the Gershwin melody and the other parts continuously within the piece (the accompaniment frequently presenting antagonistic harmonies to those implied by the melody, and developing contrapuntal lines which enmesh with the latter), which parallels Potter's process and reflects Finnissey's knowledge that for many listeners to Gershwin's 1937 song, written at the tail end of the Great Depression, London was a city to which many people trekked in the hope of finding work and escaping unspeakable poverty (hopes which were frequently thwarted).

---

<sup>22</sup> Finnissey mentions Potter in 'Conversations with Michael Finnissey', p. 6, and refers to his work often in private conversations.

<sup>23</sup> John R. Cook, *Dennis Potter: A Life on Screen* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), p. 163.

<sup>24</sup> The major exception to this is found in the later books of the revised *Verdi Transcriptions* (completed 2005); the last piece in particular, a transcription from Verdi's Requiem, constitutes one of the most 'literal' transcriptions Finnissey has composed (albeit still with some small distortions).

The six sections of *My parents' generation* are each announced by a short B-flat minor incipit deriving from Debussy's *Berceuse héroïque*. This work was written in 1914 and published in the volume *King Albert's Book*<sup>25</sup>, intended to offer 'a tribute of admiration to Belgium, on the heroic and ever-memorable share she has taken in the war'<sup>26</sup>. Debussy should not be viewed as a liberal pacifist; he had very early on in the war expressed typical nationalistic sentiments which also drew upon musical rivalries<sup>27</sup>, writing in a letter to his piano pupil Nicolas Coronio in September 1914 of 'German barbarity' which had 'exceeded all expectations', that the Germans 'even found it convenient not to distinguish between brutishness and intellectualism', as well as that 'we are going to pay dearly for the right to dislike the music of Richard Strauss and Schoenberg' and that 'French art needs to take revenge quite as seriously as the French army does!', and even drawing upon metaphors involving Joan of Arc to symbolise French music being overrun by that from Germany<sup>28</sup>. But he soon found himself disturbed by the course the war was taking, and mostly unable to compose or concentrate on music<sup>29</sup>. Of the *Berceuse*, he wrote 'it's the best I could do, feeling the continued

---

<sup>25</sup> *King Albert's Book: A Tribute to the Belgian King and People from Representative Men and Women throughout the World* (London: Daily Telegraph, 1914). See Glenn Watkins, *Proof Through The Night: Music and the Great War* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), pp. 38-40, for more details.

<sup>26</sup> François Lesure and Roger Nichols (ed), *Debussy Letters*, translated Roger Nichols (London: Faber and Faber, 1987), p. 295 n2.

<sup>27</sup> Debussy wrote in a letter to his piano pupil Nicolas Coronio in September 1914 of 'German barbarity' which had 'exceeded all expectations', that the Germans 'even found it convenient not to distinguish between brutishness and intellectualism', as well as that 'we are going to pay dearly for the right to dislike the music of Richard Strauss and Schoenberg' and that 'French art needs to take revenge quite as seriously as the French army does!', and even drawing upon metaphors involving Joan of Arc to symbolise French music being overrun by that from Germany. See Lesure and Nichols (eds), *Debussy Letters*, pp. 292-293. Original in François Lesure (ed), *Claude Debussy: Correspondance 1884-1918* (Paris, Hermann, 1993). See also Roger Nicholls, *The Life of Debussy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 152

<sup>28</sup> Edward Lockspeiser argues that in general, in France 'the outbreak of hostilities...was thought of in terms of the Franco-Prussian War; this at last was the war of revenge, a short sharp conflict redressing the humiliations of the earlier French defeat' but that 'Debussy's enquiring turn of mind' and 'the fact that he may have been instinctively aware of the underlying causes of the war, at least on the artistic plane – did not allow him to be carried away by the popular enthusiasm'. (Lockspeiser, *Debussy: His Life and Mind* (London: Cassell, 1962/1965), volume two, pp. 205-206. Déirdre Donnelon takes a different view of Debussy's artistic nationalism, however, arguing that Debussy's 'pleas for the renewal of French music' did not exclude 'the beneficial lessons of foreign composers', citing Debussy's comment in a preface to the volume *Pour la musique française*, written by Paul Huvelin in 1916, where he said that 'one hears in certain circles strange comments about Beethoven, who – Flemish or German – is a great musician, and Wagner, more great artist than musician. That has been understood for many years'. See Déirdre Donnelon, 'Debussy as musician and critic', in Simon Trezise (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 55-56.

<sup>29</sup> See Lesure (ed), *Correspondance*, p. 346-348. Debussy also said that the very 'familiar sound' of the piano had become 'odious' to him. See Lesure, *Claude Debussy: Biographe critique* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1994), p. 389. Arthur B. Wenk sees Debussy having to 'beg Durand for work as a means to justify his inability to serve in the war effort' and cites a letter to Robert Godet in which he also wrote 'For a long time – I must confess it! – I have felt lost, and horribly diminished! Ah! Where is the 'magician' that you used to love in me? He has become no more than a turner of gloomy tricks, who will soon break his back in a final pirouette, without grace'. See Wenk, *Claude Debussy and Twentieth-Century Music* (Boston: Twayne, 1983), p. 18.

proximity of hostilities as a physical restraint. Added to which there's my military inferiority – I wouldn't know how to use a gun<sup>30</sup>. The work is a hushed, melancholy march at a moderate tempo that precludes its being heard either as obviously triumphal or funereal (a march forever haunted by the spectre of death rather than a funeral march), with what Charles-Henry Combe identifies as an obstinate repetition between tonic and dominant<sup>31</sup>. Debussy counters a yearning, *expressif* melody in chords with the sound of distant bugles in the remote key of F (set against E-flat minor in the bass)<sup>32</sup>, a type of mimetic allusion Debussy had previously employed when quoting *La marseillaise* in 'Feux d'artifice', from the second book of *Preludes* (1910-1913)<sup>33</sup>. The central section contains a deceptively comforting allusion to the Belgian national anthem, *La brabaçonne*.

Finnissy derives each of his incipits from a straight quotation from the first eight bars of the Debussy piece, but in such a way that the ending of one overlaps with the beginning of the next (as he also does, more obviously, at the beginning of *Muybridge-Munch*), also reducing the length by one crochet each time. His tempo has the same metronome mark as Debussy's, though the transplantation of the expressive indication *grave et soutenu* to the position of the tempo marking suggests a more funereal interpretation of the material than might be provided by the original *Modéré (sans lenteur)* (Fig. 37). The introduction of triplet modifications in the later incipits slightly alleviates the march-like quality.

Then the work is divided into a six-part structure, the beginning of each section signalled by the Debussy-based incipit, just as the Billings/spirituals material served a similar role in the *Spirituals*:

A: Reminiscences, in modified form, of passages from the *Spirituals* – Billings/spirituals combinations, Nancarrow. Glimpses of combined popular songs. Fragmented material. 'Onward Christian Soldiers'.

B: After short continuation of A, long *pppppp* passage combining pop songs material with Mozart minuets and material from the later *Sizilianische Männerakte*.

---

<sup>30</sup> Letter of January 1 1915, in Lesure and Nichols (eds), *Debussy Letters*, pp. 294-295.

<sup>31</sup> See Charles-Henry Combe, 'Les citations d'hymnes nationaux chez Debussy', in *Revue Musicale de Suisse Romande* No. 1 (March 1986), p. 22.

<sup>32</sup> Jane F. Fulcher claims that at this point there are three simultaneous tonalities, of E-flat, D and F (see Fulcher, 'Speaking the Truth to Power: The Dialogic Element in Debussy's Wartime Compositions', in Fulcher (ed), *Debussy and his World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 230 n. 43). I would argue that the chord which enharmonically becomes D major (tellingly spelt D, G-flat, A, D, and approached from a chord of A-flat minor preceding it, a tritone apart) constitutes an appoggiatura onto the D-flat chord of two bars later, so the real three keys are E-flat minor, D-flat and F.

<sup>33</sup> Debussy was to employ such devices with even more intricacy the following year in *En blanc et noir* (1915). See Frank Dawes, *Debussy Piano Music* (London, Reading and Fakenham: Cox and Wyman, 1969), pp. 55-56 for a perceptive if brief description of this; also see Combe, 'Les citations', pp. 23-27.

C: Meandering fragments, eventually coalescing into the first proper mock pop song. Sudden explosion into ‘compression’ material. More fragmentation, blank. First glimpses of ‘Whatever You Are’ – Sullivan.

D: Soviet war song ‘Sacred War’ combined with Liszt’s *La lugubre gondola I*, the latter giving way to ‘Onward Christian Soldiers’, this time more aggressively. Uncertain combination of various materials – anticipations of the *Poets*, pop songs, more sustained passages from *Sizilianische Männerakte*. Sudden shift to extended passage of pointillistic material.

E: Second mock pop song, with obsessive dotted rhythms. Expanding into manic, violent extension, then continuation with hands reversed. Second passage of pointillistic material. Further anticipation of the *Poets*, intermingled with ‘Onward Christian Soldiers’ again.

F: Extremely depressive opening section, built upon Arthur Sullivan – ‘Whatever you are’. Interjections with material from *Poets*. Third pointillistic section, then long passage from *Sizilianische Männerakte*.

The image shows the opening of Debussy's *Berceuse héroïque*. The first system is marked **Modéré (sans lenteur)** with a tempo of 72. The music is in 3/2 time and begins with a piano introduction marked *pp grave et soutenu*. The second system is marked **Retenu -** and *pp*. The score is written for piano and features complex rhythmic patterns and dynamics.

Fig. 37. Debussy, *Berceuse héroïque*, opening.

From the first section onwards, Finnissy eases his material in gradually, in a fragmented manner, not really achieving any degree of continuity right up until

the end of the section. The effect is one of distant, fragmentary, hazy memories. Much of the material can be characterised as a type of 'abstract war song' derived in part from Arthur Sullivan's 1871 hymn 'Onward Christian Soldiers' (well-known to most of those raised in the Church of England), into which mould Finnissy is able to adopt various of the Billings/spirituals material from earlier (with a different arrangement of voices, equal dynamics, and a modified tempo), whilst adding some jarring dissonant pitches. He also repeats variations on other archetypal figures through the section, but which rarely move in any particular direction (Fig. 37 - note the three note stepwise descending pattern which first occurs within the sentimental fragment)<sup>34</sup>.



Fig. 37 (a). *My parents' generation thought War meant something*, some examples of development and interrelation of archetypes.

<sup>34</sup> In rehearsal, Finnissy encouraged me not to introduce any sort of artificial continuity at this point, thus producing the impression of disembodied fragments.



Fig. 37 (b). *My parents' generation thought War meant something*, P3.

Above all, the presence of dotted rhythms identifies a category of material drawn from various sources, just as the introduction of syncopation and certain harmonies (especially those featuring dominant ninths) signal a move towards the other primary category of (popular) musical material, especially in the form of inserts of pairs of material in similar treble registers (see Fig. 38).

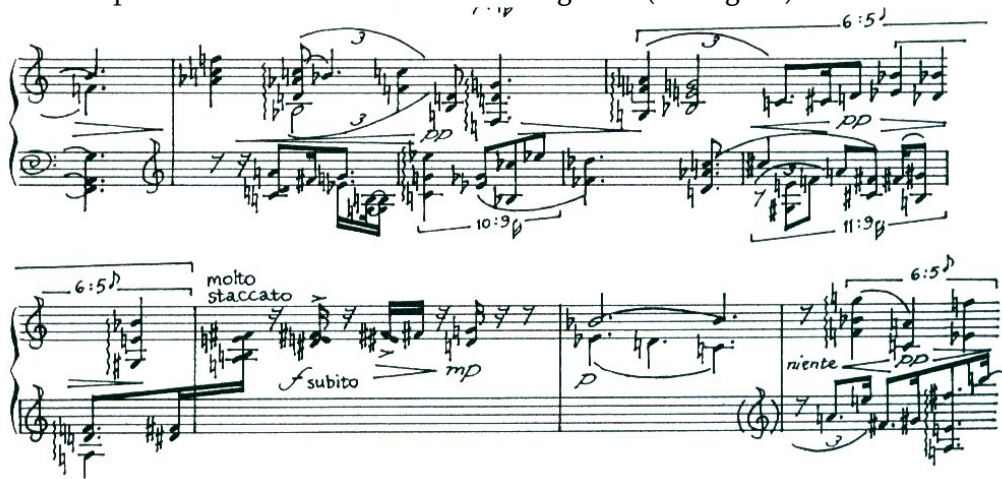


Fig. 38. *My parents' generation thought War meant something*, p. 2.

Finnissy creates a whole gamut of melodic archetypes for 1940s music of such a fashion (all themselves derived out of just three figures, featuring ascending stepwise motion, dominant ninth harmonies, and triplets to add freedom to a pulse), which supply much of the upper part of the extremely hushed Section B (Fig. 39).

A musical score for guitar, consisting of ten staves of music. The notation includes various chords, arpeggios, and melodic lines. Measure numbers 1 through 40 are indicated at the beginning of each measure. The score features several complex chords, including triads and dyads, and includes various fingerings and techniques such as triplets and slurs. The notation is written in a standard musical staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#).



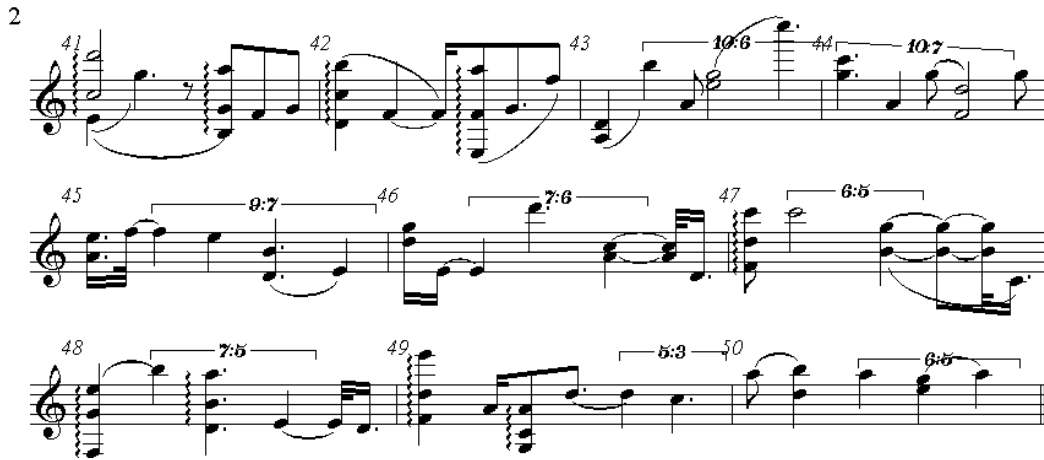


Fig. 39. Gamut of cells from imaginary 1940s popular music material.

Later on in the piece, Finnissy finds ways to drastically change the character of another passage of Billings/spiritual material, specifically that from the end of the *Spirituals*. The F major initial tonality of the earlier passage is here modified through the flattening of the third and sixth degrees (A and D), so as to imply an oscillation between D-flat major and B-flat minor. Fig. 40 shows the modifications involved. The change of voicing, modality and also phrasing create a very different type of harmonic progression, for which a pivotal harmony is that at provided at the beginning of the fourth bar. This is as desolate as can be by virtue of the inclusion of the augmented third degree and leading note, for the latter of which a clear resolution is not implied, on account both of its having been approached by an augmented tonic, and the phrasing in the previous bar, which serves to make the F more 'decisive'. Whilst approached somewhat indirectly in a cadence based around an elaborated IV-V-#IV<sup>11</sup>-VI-#IV<sup>7</sup>-IV-I, this bar establishes G-flat as the tonality, though Finnissy manages to navigate towards the distant key of E (by the rather novel parallel sixths shift, with an overlapping pitch, from D-flat/B-flat to E/D-flat).

The only direct allusion to the Debussy other than the incipits comes through Debussy's own allusion to the Belgian national anthem, *La brabançonne* (Fig. 41), written at the time of the Belgian Revolution in 1830<sup>35</sup>. Debussy's initially calm (though also 'proud') arrangement, which supplants the reiterated tonic of the original with a richer progression in the first phrase, then adds a descending and darkening chromatic progression in the second, provides a startling recontextualisation of this incessant and militaristic song, perhaps with a degree of bitter irony in light of the events in Belgium at the time the piece was written<sup>36</sup>. Finnissy sets the theme as *marcato* rather than *Plus calme*, restoring

<sup>35</sup> The text of this was written by Alexandre Dechet and the music by François van Campenhout. See <http://www.arquebusiers.be/brabanconne.htm> (accessed 2/11/13).

<sup>36</sup> Though of course it could also be interpreted as an understated musical representation of the descent of a beloved country into the site of killing fields. Debussy wrote to Robert Godet that 'the 'Brabançonne' stirs no heroic thoughts in the breasts of those who weren't brought up with it' (Letter

some of its militarism, and supplants Debussy's harmonies with his own doublings of the melodic line, as well as some rhythmic modifications, all of this serves to subvert the sense of growth and harmonic progression (thus lending the music both a more fatalistic and abstracted quality).

Billings/'By and by' as at end of *North American Spirituals*

Voices shifted and rebarred

Modally altered with other modifications - version in *My parents' generation thought War meant something*

Fig. 40. Transformation of Billings/'By and by' material.

---

of January 1 1915, in Lesure and Nicholls (ed), *Debussy Letters*, p. 295). Dawes argues similarly that the melody 'apparently and understandably aroused in him less intensely patriotic emotions than it would in a Belgian. Out-of-tune, distant bugle-calls create a bitonal element' (Dawes, *Debussy Piano Music*, p. 55). Combe speaks of 'a great hope, a deep breath of fresh air...but which only lasts for an instant'. Whatever, the iconic nature of the theme makes interpretation in terms of wider 'meanings' more palpable than would be the case with original material.

O dier-baar Bel-gië O heilig land der vaa-d'ren on-ze ziel en ons hart zijn u ge-  
wijd. Aan-vaard ons hart en het bloed van on-ze ad-ren wees ons doel in ar-beid en in  
strijd. Bloei, o land in een-dracht niet te bre-ken wees im-mer u-zelf en on-ge-

Fig. 41 (a). *La brabançonne*, by Alexandre Dechet and François Van Campenhout<sup>37</sup>.

Plus calme  
*p fièrement*

Revenir progressivement au Mouvt  
*expressif* *p* *p* *m.g.*

Fig. 41 (b). Debussy, *Berceuse Héroïque*, middle section.

<sup>37</sup> This version is taken from <http://david.national-anthems.net/be.htm> (accessed 2/11/13).



Fig. 41 (c). *My parents' generation thought War meant something*, pp. 3-4.

Another key motive in this chapter is taken from the quartet 'Whatever you are' from Act 2 of Gilbert and Sullivan's opera *Utopia Limited* (1892-93), a little-performed satire on companies, the Royal Navy and colonial deference. The characters sing in praise of unmediated human nature as against art, learning and civilisation. Finnissy uses this song in its extended form in Section F (very much slowed down and surrounded by other material), but for earlier occurrences (and also for use elsewhere in the cycle) he transforms the chorus into a 4/4 metre, somewhat more akin to a 30s popular song, with syncopations and transformations of the triplet quavers of the Sullivan into recurring pairs of notes (Fig. 42).

Both of the more extended 'popular songs' (in Sections C and E) emerge not so much out of the preceding material (which in both cases is relatively aimless), but as an alternative to it – a means to alleviate boredom and depression in the manner of mass culture. The songs themselves once more derive from abstracted archetypes (syncopated ascending figures in the first, dotted rhythms around accented notes in the second – see Fig. 43), configured in certain manners (for example with a Cole Porter-like booming bass in the first case). Neither have much possibility of direction (despite some by-now relatively routine processes of fragmentation), so Finnissy can only effect the first of several major 'compressions' in the cycle (allusions to such material in the first two chapters had more of a referential character than appearing to be any consequence of the surrounding material). Here the process is facilitated by the very use of archetypes, creating virtuosic but also rather coruscating musical explosions, shaking up the listener's attention with unpredicted violence.

G NEEK.  
*p* Oh, sweet sur - prise—oh, dear de-light, To find it  
 KAL.  
*p* Oh, sweet sur - prise—oh, dear de-light, To find it  
 cap - i - tal Eng - lish girl!  
*p* Oh, sweet sur - prise—oh, dear de-light, To find it  
 MR. GOLD.  
*p* Oh, sweet sur - prise—oh, dear de-light, To find it

un - dis - pu - ted quite, All mus - ty, fus - ty rules des - pite, That Art is wrong and Na - ture  
 un - dis - pu - ted quite, All mus - ty, fus - ty rules des - pite, That Art is wrong and Na - ture  
 un - dis - pu - ted quite, All mus - ty, fus - ty rules des - pite, That Art is wrong and Na - ture  
 un - dis - pu - ted quite, All mus - ty, fus - ty rules des - pite, That Art is wrong and Na - ture

Fig. 42 (a), Arthur Sullivan, from 'Whatever you are', from *Utopia Limited*.

This figure shows three staves of musical notation. The top staff is in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time, featuring a melody with a prominent eighth-note pattern. The middle staff is in B-flat major (two flats) and 4/4 time, showing a different melodic line. The bottom staff is in B-flat major and 4/4 time, providing a third melodic variation. The notation includes various note values, rests, and dynamic markings.

Fig. 42 (b) Melody derived from Sullivan, 'Whatever you are'.

A A1 - end of A with rhythms shifted

A2 - part of A looped back round to opening A3 - from transposed A with top interval omitted

A4 - inversion of parts of A and A2, with rhythmic modifications

A5-a - initial extension of beginning of A with octave displacement

A5-b - modified version of A5-a

A6 - transposed and rhythmically distorted A. Final five pitches repeated down minor third

A7 - transposed A in triplets with stressed syncopations

A8 - A1 looped back round, then joined to part of A

Fig. 43 (a). Development of material in second pop song.



Fig. 43 (b). *My parents' generation thought War meant something*, p. 24.

Equally violent in a different way are the extended sections in which Finnissy dissolves the material into abstracted gestures and pointillism (referred to simply as 'pointillism' in the outline of the structure above), which will also occur in *Unsere Afrikareise* and briefly in *Wachtend*.

Elsewhere, Finnissy is able to temper the banal major melody, pedestrian harmonies and bloated and pompous march rhythms<sup>38</sup> of the Soviet Second World War song 'Sacred War'<sup>39</sup> by the use of an accompaniment prominently featuring flattened thirds and sixths, as a signifier of death such as can be found in Liszt's *La lugubre gondola* (a technique he had used in the earlier 'They're writing songs of love, but not for me' in the *Gershwin Arrangements*). He brings this war song together with both 'Onward Christian Soldiers' and the American First World War song 'Pack up your troubles in your Old Kit Bag', all in different keys, to

<sup>38</sup> A whole genre of Soviet war songs were of this nature, described in Boris Schwarz, *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia 1917-1970* (London: Barrie & Jenkins Ltd, 1972), p. 180. Schwarz writes of a song called *Sacred War*, again with text by Lebedev-Kumach, which he describes as an 'emblem of the Great War', but this apparently was in 'stately three-four time' (p. 181) and the music was written by Alexander Alexandrov, so almost certainly is a different song. See also Catherine Merridale, *Ivan's War: The Red Army 1939-45* (London: Faber & Faber, 2005), pp. 169-170.

<sup>39</sup> The song can be found in Boris Kotlyarov (ed), *Six Soviet War Songs for voice and piano* (London: Novello & Co., for the Soviet State Music Publishing House, 1943). It has a text by Vasily Lebedev-Kumach, a then well-known song lyric-writer who has been described as one of 'Stalin's favourite hacks' (See Merridale, *Ivan's War*, p. 169) and music by Matvey Blanter, also once well-known as a composer of popular and film music in the Soviet Union, now best known for the song 'Katyusha' (see *ibid.* p. 170 for more on this song) familiar to some Westerners owing to its use in Michael Cimino's film *The Deer Hunter* (1978).

create an illusion of chaos and carnage, with 'Onward Christian Soldiers' set at a markedly louder dynamic than the other songs. When asked about his own use of religiously derived musical material, Finnissy drew attention to how 'In Lindsay Anderson's film *If...* hymn singing has definite connotations, which he exploits quite wonderfully – it's criticism and not nostalgia'<sup>40</sup>. This film, in which the link between religion and militarism is made explicit (the Chaplain also commands the school army cadets and in one sequence we see him first in the pulpit, speaking of the arch-sin of 'Desertion' in the sense of deserting God, then on horseback in full military uniform – desertion is of course an arch-crime in the army as well), was surely in Finnissy's mind when writing this part of the piece, in which a Christian hymn nearly drowns other songs explicitly relating to war.

Brought about first through an especially sickly-sweet rendering of the popular song material, filled out with spread chords with added 6ths, and dominant 7ths, 9ths and 11ths, a *ne plus ultra* of such excess, Finnissy drastically shifts the music towards a type of quasi-pointillistic writing (such as has already been experienced briefly in *Le réveil*). The means for producing which from other material will be examined in the context of *Unsere Afrikareise*, where this strategy receives its most extensive employment. Here, as in the later chapter, it serves the function of setting into relief the earlier material, as if enacting a sudden shift forward in time to a post-war era in which (at least to those of a certain aesthetic disposition) none of the older principles of tonal harmony or melodic and other continuity remain tenable, and the only alternative is to create a new musical language from the most basic elements.

There are also various new processes and correspondences introduced in Section F, in the form of fragments which take over from the Sullivan-derived material. The first of these is a flash forward to the '*l'orientalisme*' material that appears in full in *Etched*, derived from two of the 'Mélodies Tunisiennes'. Finnissy presents the upper fragment in B minor and the lower in A major, configured in a manner (mostly in rhythmic unison) which anticipates the treatment of various African and 'oriental' material in *Unsere Afrikareise*. This short fragment creates a sudden harmonic clarity and marked change of texture and mood; the predominant key of A prepares the ground for the important fragment which follows (an a form of self-quotation on Finnissy's part to his own (now withdrawn) first version of the piano piece *Romeo and Juliet are Drowning*, as encountered previously in *Le réveil*). Soon afterwards, Finnissy is able to form a link between a further appearance of the Sullivan in which the addition of the augmented fourth and the use of a close tessitura, relatively quick descending contour, enables a shift of harmonic colour and gesture so as to prepare the ground for a quote from the Kavafis material (derived from Cretan folk music) that will appear in the *Poets* (Fig. 44).

---

<sup>40</sup> 'Conversations with Michael Finnissy', pp. 22-23.





Fig. 44. *My parents' generation thought War meant something.* allusion to Kavafis.

This passage does link with the 'orientalisme' material that appeared briefly before, even though its modal/harmonic properties are different (Finissy will exploit these connections more extensively in *Etched*). This is mostly a result of its contrast with what surrounds it, mostly in slow-moving chords, against which a relatively florid melodic line, in a similar register to the treble part from the passage before, will stand out; also the clearer sense of gravitational centres for the melodies. In Fig. 45, the pivotal notes are indicated with an asterisk. In the Tunisian melody these are given emphasis by their length relative to those which precede them, or in the third case through the fact of enharmonic repetition with the accent provided by a slur. In the Cretan material the hemidemisemiquaver or grace notes serve to emphasise them. But it is this sense of a strongly delineated melodic line containing some degree of decoration around central pitches that maybe this 'exotic' music (and other similar passages elsewhere in the cycle) out from other types of material.

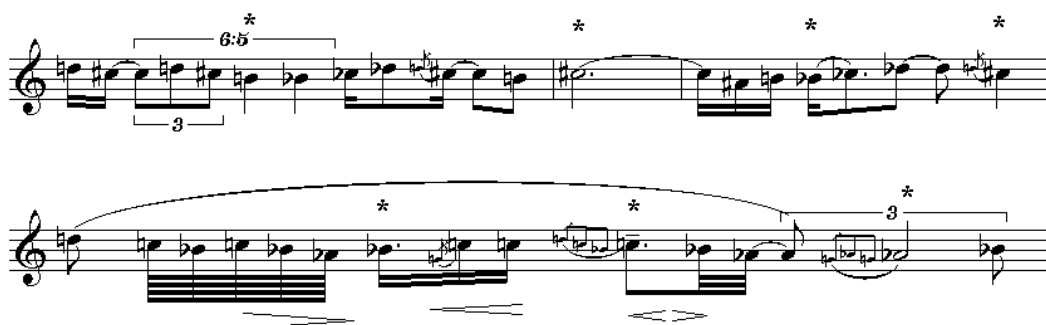


Fig. 45. Comparison of Tunisian- and Cretan-derived melodies.

Finissy is also able to create a new form of material from Bach BWV 328. He extracts just six beats from the Bach, and swaps voices at the beginning of the second full bar, so the G becomes the upper voice (by octave transposition) and the B the lower one (and does the same two beats later). The processes of intervallic modification (especially with the alto part for the first two beats, becoming first a tritone, then a perfect fourth) and rhythmic distortion (in particular, note the introduction of dotted rhythms (as in Section E) as well as the more usual topological distortion) are shown in Fig. 46. Only with the last gesture

does Finnissy finally give the phrase a resolution; otherwise the material derives solely from repeated distortions of the first three beats. The lower part is derived by a similar process from a sequence of four chords derived (probably randomly) from two sections earlier in the piece (which seem to be P4 L3 B1 in retrograde, three chords at the end of the bar, then P13 L4 B4, first four chords; the former transposed up a whole tone, the latter down a semitone)<sup>41</sup>.

Extraction from Bach                      Transposition

Development                      6:5                      3                      6:5

3                      3                      3

Fig. 46 (a). Derivation from Bach extraction.

Divided into tuplet groups of varying pulses  
Ties to 'smudge' chords together                      A omitted

5:3                      6:5                      9:5

Chord modified                      G# omitted                      Chord sequence altered/shortened                      Various procedures as before

7:5                      3                      7:5                      9:5                      3

Fig. 46 (b). Derivation from two sets of chords from earlier in piece.

The sketches demonstrate how hard Finnissy worked on the ending of this chapter. Drawing heavily upon *Sizilianische Männerakte*, specifically the passage which leads towards the crucial allusion to 'Der ewige Macht' in the later chapter, Finnissy creates a correspondence between material derived from the Busoni

<sup>41</sup> Some annotated notes in the sketches suggest that Finnissy may have used the composition of these inserts for private pedagogical purposes.

*Pezzo serioso* and further reminiscences of the 1940s popular music, allowing the descending contours of the former to serve as answering phrases to the latter (Fig. 47).

Fig. 47. Correspondences between distinct material towards conclusion of *My parents' generation*.

Each answering phrase ends with the stepwise ascending contour and thus forms a continuity with the next phrase (there is other material in between, clear statements of the retrograded 'Church' theme from the Busoni). Then it is possible for Finnissy to transform this contour in its most basic form into a retrograded fragment from BWV 328. Few of these allusions would be meaningful to the listener unless they know the work extremely intimately, but the passage as a whole demonstrates Finnissy's ability to find correspondences between disparate sources. Fig. 48 shows the passage from the Bach allusion to the ending, preceded by the passage from *SM* that provides the final phrase.

The retrograde Busoni treble melody clearly leads to a resolution (with the removal of an unresolved added sixth (G)) onto a 6/4 chord of B-flat major, anticipated by the two previous B-flat harmonies previously in the bar. After the pause, despite a haziness at the outset provided by the clash between the major and minor thirds of the chord, the 6/4 harmony remains (possibly flattened 6/4). Here, however, Finnissy crucially modifies the equivalent passage in *SM* (which was written first), by shifting it up a major third in mid-phrase. Thus what would have been a melodic high-point of F (if simply transposed in the manner of the first two beats), idly doubling the bass note and thus precluding a proper cadence, instead provides the crucial major third that established the harmony of V of B-flat. This then allows for proper cadence, thus overall the most standard cadence of I<sup>c</sup>-V-I. Yet this cadence is still 'tainted' by the presence of the other pitches. The G/E and E are extremely foreign to the V of B-flat harmony, yet the insistence of the low F prevents them from acting other than as local dissonances. However, with the last two crotchet beats matters are complicated further by the pre-emption of the mediant of B-flat itself prior to the resolution. This would create a I<sup>c</sup>-V-III-I-VI cadence (thus resolving ultimately into the relative minor) instead were it not for the C# in the treble (as becomes clear if one plays it with this pitch omitted), augmented fifth of F, which then serves as an octave-displaced passing

note to 'resolve' onto the final D, thus making the pre-emptive Ds themselves dissonant harmonies. The final resolution is thus 'revealed' rather than asserted; yet in light of the long F pedal point it is unequivocal, enabling the final G to serve as a local dissonance rather than effecting a modulation into the relative minor. Furthermore, the previous E can be heard as having 'resolved' onto the pedal F so as to confirm its localised dissonant rather than structural function, and the last G becomes a final remnant of this concomitant harmonic strain. The total effect of this complex colouration of a straightforward cadential progression lends the music a sense of decay; otherwise it would be a rather banal conclusion. But conclusive it certainly is (as opposed to the equivalent passage in *SM*, which lacks a proper cadence, thus allowing the music to continue), final, fateful, depressive, even funereal. All traces of momentary fantasy provided by the popular music have been subsumed, only the trudge of the weary march remains.



Fig. 48 (a) Passage from *Siziliänische Männerakte*.



Fig. 48 (b). *My parents' generation thought War meant something, conclusion*.

*My parents' generation* was also written in the wake of the death of Finnissy's mother and is dedicated to her memory; in this context he was sure to have been aware of the following passage from Barthes' *Camera Lucida*:

In the Mother, there was a radiant, irreducible core: my mother. It is always maintained that I should suffer more because I have spent my whole life with her; but my suffering proceeds from who she was; and it is because she was who she was that I lived with her. To the Mother-as-Good, she had added that grace of being an individual soul. I might say, like the Proustian Narrator at his grandmother's death: "I did not insist only upon suffering, but upon respecting the originality of my suffering"; for this originality was the reflection of what was absolutely irreducible in her, and thereby lost forever. It is said that mourning, by its gradual labor, slowly erases pain; I could not, I cannot believe this, because for me, Time eliminates the emotion of loss (I do not weep), that is all. For the rest, everything has remained motionless. For what I have lost is not a Figure (the Mother), but a being; and not a being, but a quality (a soul): not the indispensable, but the irreplaceable. I could live without the Mother (as we all do, sooner or later); but what life remained would be absolutely and entirely unqualifiable (without quality).<sup>42</sup>

What is lost is not just a Figure, nor even just a being, but also a link to an earlier world, a time of hope and possibility in the aftermath of calamitous world events. Finnissy was born into that aftermath, but was too young to know from first-hand experience the context from which they emerged – his parents provided that link. Barthes was haunted by a photograph he found of his mother as a child, standing with her brother in the Winter Garden (the house where she was born in Chennevières-sur-Marne), the two united by their parents' imminent divorce<sup>43</sup>. He described how:

[T]his Winter Garden Photograph was for me like the last music Schumann wrote before collapsing, that first *Gesang der Frühe* which accords with both my mother's being and my grief at her death; I could not express this accord except by an infinite series of adjectives, which I omit, convinced however that this photograph collected all the possible predicates from which my mother's being was constituted and whose suppression or partial alteration, conversely, had sent me back to these photographs of her which had left me so unsatisfied. These same photographs, which phenomenology would call "ordinary" objects, were merely analogical, provoking only her identity, not her truth; but the Winter Garden Photograph was indeed essential, it achieved for me, utopically, *the impossible science of the unique being*.<sup>44</sup>

And so Finnissy expresses his own grief from 'all the possible predicates' from which his own mother's 'being was constituted', those things themselves suppressed or partially altered which send him back to these other musical photographs that are ultimately unsatisfying. Perhaps Finnissy searches for the musical equivalent of the photograph in the Winter Garden, but does not seem to find it; therein lies the tragedy of the piece.

---

<sup>42</sup> Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 75.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. pp. 67-69.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. pp. 70-71.

Yet the search is nonetheless a telling experience. From the outset of the work we are plunged into a somewhat seedy world of half-remembered war songs and popular music (performing a similar function to Debussy's bugle calls) within an overall framework provided by the melancholy ongoing march of the Debussy and the Billings/spirituals. These latter provide a semblance of continuity despite the excursions into worlds of sentimentality, fantasy and violence, creating a structure strongly reminiscent of Potter's dramas, as with the protagonist's being brought back to the reality of his hospital bed in *The Singing Detective* after his *noir*-ish constructions in his mind of worlds of intrigue and espionage, or the drab routine of day-to-day work in the British Government Intelligence Office in the later *Lipstick on Your Collar* (1993), alleviated by sexualised fantasies by most of those who work there, in order to pass the time. This type of device conveys the sense of hopelessness and futility that pervades the music. Yet a certain sense of distance is created by the fact that the 'host' material (Debussy/Billings/spirituals) impresses itself upon the listener as archaic, notwithstanding its mediated form (in this sense the work is closer to *Lipstick* or *Pennies* than *The Singing Detective*, as the 'host' settings of the former two are themselves archaic). If it were a more obviously 'contemporary' sounding material used here, the arching nature of the contrasts might be utterly unbearable. In this way Finnissey sets the work at a certain distance from more directly autobiographical concerns.

If Finnissey does not find the Winter Garden photograph, nor the experiences suddenly made crystal clear to Proust when bending over to undo his boots<sup>45</sup> or tasting the madeleine cake, what exactly does he discover? I would suggest that he comes closer to illuminating something of the conflicting but intertwined forces of militarism and populism that characterised the pre-war era and whose continuation into the post-war period were one of the factors that mitigated against the dreams of 1945 ultimately being realised in full. And perhaps the most significant element is the interaction with mass-produced popular culture.

A range of writers and thinkers have traced transformations in popular music since the nineteenth century, especially in terms of its relationship to industrialisation and mass production; Carl Dahlhaus distinguished what he calls 'trivial music' from 'functional music' and 'entertainment music', so that the trivial 'remains within the narrowest confines of convention at the same time that it tries to appear as a spontaneous outpouring of feeling'<sup>46</sup>. Theodor Adorno diagnosed 'pseudo-individualisation', which he defined as the endowment of cultural mass production 'with the halo of free choice or open market on the basis of standardization itself', a standardization that 'is so rigid that the freedom it allows for any sort of improvisation is severely delimited'. The 'necessity of merely melodically circumscribing the same underlying harmonic functions' meant that

---

<sup>45</sup> See Patrizia Lombardo, *The Three Paradoxes of Roland Barthes* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1989), pp. 131-132 for more on this parallel between Proust and Barthes.

<sup>46</sup> Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, translated J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 311-320.

‘stereotyping of improvisatory details speedily occurred’<sup>47</sup>, whilst Adorno here and elsewhere describes similar processes with respect to rhythm. In particular he argued scathingly that such music served fundamentally to distract listeners from the demands of reality and reinforces a condition of inattention<sup>48</sup>. Richard Hoggart, writing in 1957, contrasted new trends in popular songs coming from America with older forms of working class song; whilst recognising the potential for nostalgic idealisation of the latter, he still saw in the former a high degree of standardisation, sentimentality, and appeal to a restricted and familiar range of emotions<sup>49</sup>. All three writers to differing degrees identify a marked change in the cultural artefact due to the relatively anonymous nature of mass production and the division of labour, a paradigm commonly inherited from Marxist thinking on the nature of industrial capitalism.

But in recent decades, in English-speaking cultural studies there has been a marked shift away from the above paradigms towards a full-on celebration of the most mass-produced and commercialised popular culture, with often extravagant claims made for its supposedly emancipatory, egalitarian and ‘subversive’ potential<sup>50</sup>. Many of these they argue specifically for the superior virtue of the mass-produced as against that often valued in terms of individual distinctiveness and sophistication<sup>51</sup>, though some other writers, such as Jon Savage or Ben

---

<sup>47</sup> Theodor Adorno, ‘On Popular Music’, in Adorno, *Essays on Music*, edited Richard Leppert (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), p. 445. Adorno’s views on jazz and popular music are one of the most contentious areas of his output. For a defence of this work, pointing out in particular the huge difference between what Adorno would have heard in Weimar Germany and what we now understand by the term, see J. Bradford Robinson, ‘The Jazz Essays of Theodor Adorno: Some Thoughts on Jazz Reception in Weimar Germany’, in *Popular Music*, Vol. 13 No. 1 (Jan 1994), pp. 1-25.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. p. 458. For a more recent view on adverts and consumer society employing similar paradigms, see Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, pp. 129-154.

<sup>49</sup> Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy* (London: Pelican, 1958), pp. 151-163.

<sup>50</sup> Examples of this are too numerous to detail in full. In music this can be found in the work of Susan McClary, Philip Brett, Georgina Born (see various essays in Born and David Hesmondhalgh (eds), *Western Music and Its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000)), or in the rather macho tone of Dai Griffiths’ ‘On Grammar Schoolboy Music’ (in Derek B. Scott, *Music, Culture and Society: A Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 143-145). McClary’s enchantment with the culture industry is encapsulated in passages such as where she says that the Silvertones ‘gladly make use of’ various musical and technical devices, but also ‘the commercial networks afforded by radio, commercial promoters, and the recording industry’, and that ‘they see commercial distribution as a way of getting the word out to an even larger community – and a way out of the crushing conditions of coal mining’ (McClary, *Conventional Wisdom* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), p. 28). McClary paints a picture by which the commercial networks serve merely to deliver the music to a wider audience, rather than being actively involved in conditioning, constraining or neutering its very nature. In an age where groups are put together in the offices of the industry, and where ‘styles’ are created as a marketing tool, sometimes hardly requiring any actual musicians in the process, this paradigm of liberation through capitalism presented by McClary needs proper critique. She goes on to argue that ‘it has not been despite but rather *by means of* the power of mass mediation [as provided by the culture industry – a term she herself uses two sentences previously] that the explosive energies of the blues managed to spread and develop in as many directions as it did’ (ibid. p. 38).

<sup>51</sup> Compare in contrast to this the comments on jazz in a Workers’ Music Association pamphlet from 1945, citing the popularity of this work whilst arguing that ‘It would be a failure in their social duty, if musicians were to leave this natural instinct of the people to be exploited for commercial purposes, instead of making it a starting point for developing a wider appreciation of the whole range of music’

Watson<sup>52</sup>, have concentrated on the sometimes complex relationship between popular musicians and the industry that underwrites and constrains their activities.

Potter presented a somewhat more ambivalent view, describing how in *Pennies from Heaven*, he ‘wanted to write something about the resilience of human dreams’ wanting the plays ultimately to communicate ‘that the songs are only diminished version of the oldest myth of all in the Garden of Eden’<sup>53</sup>, going on to say in a later interview with the *Observer* that:

There is some sense in which you can actually assume the ultimate optimism, no matter the degradation, the miseries that the world inflicts on you. The final claim is that it doesn’t matter – it matters in your ligaments, your emotions, your betrayals – but that there is some sense of order, a rationality that is sheer optimism.<sup>54</sup>

Whether this optimism might be misplaced, or have a certain value in and of itself despite its context<sup>55</sup>, remains a little ambiguous; the same could be said of Finnissy's *Gershwin Arrangements*. In *My parents’ generation*, Finnissy comes close to deliberately enacting what Adorno diagnosed, through his deliberate employment of a few stereotyped gestures to generate an ongoing stream of popular music throughout the work as well as the two obvious ‘popular songs’. Whilst this process may constitute something of a caricature of popular music, nonetheless Finnissy sustains interest and variety not so much through the basic *material* as via its *configuration* and *context*. The same stock formulae are used variously to conjure up saccharine rhapsodic interruptions, a phantasmagoric halo around other more directional material, two barnstorming dance numbers that explode into violence, quasi-expressionist outbursts, whilst ultimately forlorn retreadings of dingy, well-worn paths are what is left over. To make a clear distinction between ‘pure’ material and its configured and contextual renditions is not always easy in Finnissy’s work – indeed one of the limitations of some traditional music criticism of jazz (and that of Adorno) is its overriding tendency

---

(Workers’ Musical Association, *Policy for Music in Post War Britain* (London: Workers’ Musical Association, 1945), p. 4).

<sup>52</sup> See Jon Savage, *England’s Dreaming: The Sex Pistols and Punk Rock* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991) and Ben Watson, *Frank Zappa: The Negative Dialectics of Poodle Play* (London: Quartet, 1995).

<sup>53</sup> Quoted in Humphrey Carpenter, *Dennis Potter* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), pp. 349-350.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* p. 350

<sup>55</sup> Glen Creeber argues that ‘Popular culture, it [Potter’s drama] suggests, could be liberating and inspirational as well as standardised, repetitive and ideological. Such a view can help explain Potter’s own ambiguous relationship with pop culture which held both a fear of and fascination for the power of its commercialised and sentimentalised mythologies. Above all, his work gradually came to celebrate its power and, in particular, its ability to offer a form of resistance against dominant ideological practice by conjuring up memories of an older and more organic world – a world before the ideological dictatorship of the mass media had entered and overtaken the homes and minds of its consumers.’ (Glen Creeber, *Dennis Potter Between Two Worlds: A Critical Reassessment* (London; Macmillan, 1998), p. 145). Elsewhere he links Potter to Hoggart, suggesting that ‘Like Hoggart, Potter portrays the popular culture of the 1930s (personified by Bowlly’s sentimental tunes) as providing the antithesis to the cultural disintegration of the present day.’ (*ibid.* p. 128, see also p. 129).



to assign the latter attributes a role of secondary importance in a manner that can be most reductive – nonetheless the connections between these distinct passages are audible to the extent that it is meaningful to speak of some kernel of basic attributes. For the reasons of lack of developmental potential mentioned earlier, this music has a seductive surface appeal, but as presented in this piece it does not offer a coherent alternative to the possibilities inherent in more ‘classical’ forms.

The sexiness and ‘shock of the new’ represented by American popular culture and the concomitant conception of ‘America’, as its presence became more and more prominent in Britain from the 1930s onwards and especially during the war years, may have seemed such a breath of fresh air in the context of the drab world of imperial Britain. But with hindsight, with local businesses driven out of existence by American chains, the total domination by Hollywood of the film industry, the curtailing of basic provisions of housing, education, the welfare state and job security in favour of a more ruthless form of American free-market capitalism in which fear of exclusion, ostracisation and deprivation are never far away for many, and British troops marching into Afghanistan and Iraq to help fight butcherous neo-conservative imperial wars, does this ‘America’ look so glamorous any longer? And might there have been more potential in native traditions in Britain and Europe – not least those to do with culture – than was earlier realised, for all their undoubted faults? Enough to warrant not so much their ‘preservation’ as a continuation of their development, rather than ditching what relatively little still remains in favour of the total domination of commercial society? If one could extrapolate something of this out of the implications if not necessarily the self-enclosed world of *My parents’ generation*, might such a conviction represent the photograph in the Winter Garden, the realisation of the nature of Finnissy’s mother’s world and the importance of not burying it wholesale?

The relationship between popular culture and militarism was not lost on Adorno, who regularly spoke of the relationship of the pulse of jazz to that of the military march, and furthermore argued that ‘the entire arrangement of the jazz orchestra, in terms of the melody, bass, *obbligati*, and mere filler instruments, is identical to a military band’. He thus argued that ‘jazz can be easily adapted for use to fascism’, and pointed out that in Italy (which was under fascist rule at the time Adorno wrote the essay in question) ‘it is especially well liked’<sup>56</sup>. Like many of Adorno’s pronouncements, this is extremely hyperbolic, but nonetheless contains more than a few seeds of truth as far as the more ‘average’ works of jazz, or more generally mass-produced popular music, is concerned. And this comparison has especial relevance in the context of a work that combines militaristic and popular musical materials as does *My parents’ generation*. That militaristic music is anti-subjective almost goes without saying – its very purpose is to inspire unified collective feelings rather than incite unique and individualised responses. To a

---

<sup>56</sup> Adorno, ‘On Jazz’ (1936), in *Essays on Music*, p. 485. Adorno furthermore argued that ‘The ban against it in [Nazi] Germany has to do with the surface tendency to reach back to pre-capitalist, feudal forms of immediacy and to call these socialism’ (ibid.).

large extent the same is true of popular music produced so as to become a mass commodity (the equivocality and diversity of reactions to music which demands a subjective engagement are hardly the most efficient way to fulfil such a condition), as befits the interests of capital in terms of maximising profits. Many of the means of so doing – repetition, metrical regularity, standardisation, and crude glamour – are also similar. It is for this reason that Finnissy is able to create continuities between the two genres - compare the ambience of the first full popular song with that of ‘Onward Christian Soldiers’, for example, or look at the way he can smoothly integrate the popular archetypes into the initial abstracted militaristic music (not least because of the commonality of the dotted rhythms, also shared by the Debussy). However, what stands out as unsubsumated by the context and pointing outwards beyond the work’s confines is the lyricism and emotional complexity in Finnissy’s mediated renditions of the Busoni *Pezzo Serioso* and of South Italian folk music, right up to the work’s conclusion (despite the final harmonic twists). *My parents’ generation* may be a dispiriting work in many senses, presenting a musical analogue of shattered dreams, but some embers of hope remain unextinguished by its conclusion.

## Chapter 7

### No. 5: *Alkan-Paganini*

*Alkan-Paganini* is an exploration both of various types of nineteenth-century pianistic idioms and of forms of diablerie, as exemplified by the two composers of the title, also filtered through the music of Schumann, Liszt, Berlioz and others. It is a work about explores the nature of virtuosity as a musical effect or form of expression, rather than virtuosity in a merely pianist sense (though it is extremely demanding to play!). The tripartite structure is taken directly from Alkan's *Trois Grandes Études Op. 76*, the first of which is for left hand alone, the second for right hand alone, and the third for the hands re-united. As the shortest and in some ways most quicksilver chapter of the *History*, it performs a scherzo-like function within the whole<sup>1</sup>.

Structurally and conceptually *Alkan-Paganini* is not difficult to comprehend and as such is one of the most easily immediate pieces in the cycle, as well as being one of the most self-standing and thus individually performable chapters. In essence the first section involves a free fantasy around various material in mediated form, the second is a high-octane quasi-cadenza around a basic species of Paganini-esque material, leading to its eventual statement in a clearer form. The third section begins with an explosive combination of the two hands playing material from the previous two sections, then settles into the clearest exposition of both Alkan and Paganini material yet (though still mediated), eventually dissolving (via a reiteration of the *motivo fondamentale*) into a melancholy coda.

The French-Jewish composer Charles-Valentin Alkan (1813-1888) continues barely to register in wider histories of nineteenth-century music<sup>2</sup> and is a difficult figure to gauge satisfactorily: a radically innovative writer for the keyboard, creating a unique idiom quite different to (but no less challenging than) those of Liszt or Thalberg, and given to startlingly visionary and modern uses of harmony, texture and rhythm, whilst at the same time a composer of melodies of sometimes embarrassing banality, over-extended passages that milk certain types of ornamental figuration in an all-too-transparent attempt to cover up the dearth of substantial material they surround, and of strikingly unusual structural

---

<sup>1</sup> A similar process is enacted on two levels within the revised four-book version of Finnissey *Verdi Transcriptions* (1972-2005), in which the fourth piece in each book forms a quirky scherzo-like movement, whilst also the generally lighter character of Book 3 of this cycle creates a larger-scale 'scherzo' if one views the piece as a four-movement work.

<sup>2</sup> For example in standard English-language texts on the period: Alkan is not mentioned in Leon Plantinga, *Romantic Music: A History of Musical Style in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (New York: Norton, 1984), Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (London: Fontana, 1999) or either original or translation of Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, translated J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), and only extremely briefly in passing in Rey M. Longyear, *Nineteenth-Century Romanticism in Music* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973) and Arnold Whittall, *Romantic Music: A Concise History from Schubert to Sibelius* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987).

conceptions. Amongst the characteristics of his piano writing are a crispness of rhythm and articulation - far removed from the lush sonorities of Liszt or the morbid sensuousness of Chopin - which is often associated with the *style severe* school of French pianism – dry, neo-classical, rhythmically regular and tight, emphasising clarity above all and centered upon the use of the fingers and wrist rather than so much the rest of the arm – which had many notable adherents in the nineteenth-century in France, as distinct to an opposing school descending from Chopin and Thalberg<sup>3</sup>. Alkan's music often presents unequalled rapidity of passage work, perhaps never exceeded (for example in the fourth of the Op. 35 *Études* or the first of the Op. 39 set, *Comme la vent*), fearsome leaps to be executed without hesitation, again at relentlessly quick tempos, and bravura configurations (always pianistic) to be tossed off as if they were simple. His rhythms are repetitive and obsessive in the use of certain patterns; his use of melodies of a few notes may have orientalist roots; his own brand of heroism and gallantry is generally presented with a degree of ironic detachment (more so than in Berlioz), almost satirically.

The first section of *Alkan-Paganini* plays upon material derived from Alkan's two fugues entitled *Jean qui pleure, Jean qui rit* of 1840 (Fig. 49), the latter based on a theme from Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. *Jean qui pleure* uses what appears to be an original and quite chromatic theme in quavers and semiquavers, with oscillating 'zig-zag' patterns in the second bar. Alkan milks the chromaticism amply whilst also later rendering the theme in thirds and sixths. *Jean qui rit* is based upon the famous 'champagne' aria for Don Giovanni in Act 1, "Fin ch'han dal vino", itself used for the final section of Liszt's *Reminiscences de Don Juan*. But while Mozart's aria is notable for its static harmonies, leading Benjamin Perl to suggest that Mozart may have been alluding to the *alla turca* style<sup>4</sup>, Alkan's fugue is harmonically dynamic with ample use of chromatic pitch modification to produce unexpected harmonic twists. Varying between two and four voices, Alkan sometimes fixes upon subsections of the main theme, in particular the trill in the seventh bar.

Finnissy's allusions to this Mozart aria in this chapter do not ever present the theme in an obviously recognisable form, but the resultant material shares numerous attributes (it is presented at 'least remove' during the two handed section, though still unrecognisably). These include a preponderance of repeated pitches and in particular the use of single or multiple trills in the two parts given to one hand, which is one of the most conspicuously 'Alkan-esque' features of the arrangement. Most of the material is derived from a set of 64 cells that are taken from the left hand of the Cocteau section of the *Poets* (themselves derived from the Alkan), then subject to random permutations (Fig. 50). This material was itself

---

<sup>3</sup> For more on the *style severe* and schools of French piano playing, see Charles Timbrell, *French Pianism: A Historical Perspective*, second edition (Portland, Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1999), especially pp. 46-52.

<sup>4</sup> See Benjamin Perl, 'Mozart in Turkey', in *Cambridge Opera Journal*, Vol. 12 No. 3 (Nov. 2000), pp. 219-235.

derived from the Alkan/Mozart originals; for a description of this process, see the section underneath on the *Poets*. Thus this material exists at a level of second derivation from the Alkan, third derivation from the Mozart (a 'copy of a copy')<sup>5</sup>.

### JEAN QUI PLEURE

The musical score for 'JEAN QUI PLEURE' (N° 1) is presented in two systems. The first system shows the beginning of the piece in 3/4 time, with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The second system continues the piece, showing more complex rhythmic patterns and chordal textures in both hands.

Fig. 49 (a). Alkan, *Jean qui pleure*.

### JEAN QUI RIT

The musical score for 'JEAN QUI RIT' (N° 2) is presented in two systems. The first system shows the beginning of the piece in 2/4 time, with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The second system continues the piece, featuring a prominent melodic line in the right hand and a rhythmic accompaniment in the left hand.

Fig. 49 (b). Alkan, *Jean qui rit*.

<sup>5</sup> See Ian Pace, 'The Piano Music', pp. 78-83 for an elucidation of this process with Finnis's earlier piece *G.F.H.* (1985).

This musical score consists of 45 numbered measures, organized into six horizontal lines. The notation is written on a single treble clef staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/4. The score includes various musical techniques:

- Measures 1-9:** Features several triplet patterns. Measure 4 includes a trill indicated by a wavy line and the word "trill".
- Measures 10-16:** Continues with triplet patterns and includes another trill in measure 10.
- Measures 17-23:** Shows more complex rhythmic patterns, including a triplet in measure 22.
- Measures 24-30:** Includes a 6:5 interval in measure 24 and a triplet in measure 30.
- Measures 31-37:** Features a triplet in measure 36 and other rhythmic variations.
- Measures 38-45:** The final section includes a 5:3 interval in measure 40 and concludes with a series of eighth notes.

Fig. 50. 64 cells of Alkan material, derived from 'Cocteau' passage in *Seventeen Immortal Homosexual Poets*.

The Alkan section takes the form of a set of quasi-variations, and a wide range of pianistic figurations are used, some representing modernist reworkings of some of the techniques used in Alkan's *Douze Études dans les tons majeurs Op. 35*<sup>6</sup>. It can be clearly divided into four parts.

1. *Alla barbaresca (assez vite). Diabolicamente – En animant un peu*
2. Episode. Crotchet = circa 129
3. Crotchet = 87 *come prima* – crotchet = 103 – crotchet = 87 – crotchet = 103 – crotchet = 87
4. Same tempo, much more rapt and hushed writing.

Finnissy derives the recurrent chord heard at the very outset from pitches representing Alkan's name. A combination of the ciphers of both Alkan and Paganini is used to generate a fundamental nine-note scale – A-A-B-flat-B-flat-C-E-flat-F-G-A-flat – which is repeated at the octave, used occasionally in the final two-hand section of this piece. All of these are shown in Fig. 51.

<sup>6</sup> See Ronald Smith, *Alkan: The Man/The Music* (two volumes in one) (London: Kahn & Averill, 2000), Vol. 2, pp. 98-109 for an extensive discussion of this cycle.





■

a Tempo 4<sup>o</sup>  
legato.

rall: \*

*p*

Fig. 52 (a). Alkan *Douze Études dans les tons majeurs* Op. 35 No. 12.

♩ = circa 129]

accel.

dimin. molto

*mp* legato

Fig. 52 (b). Alkan-Paganini, P2 L2-3.

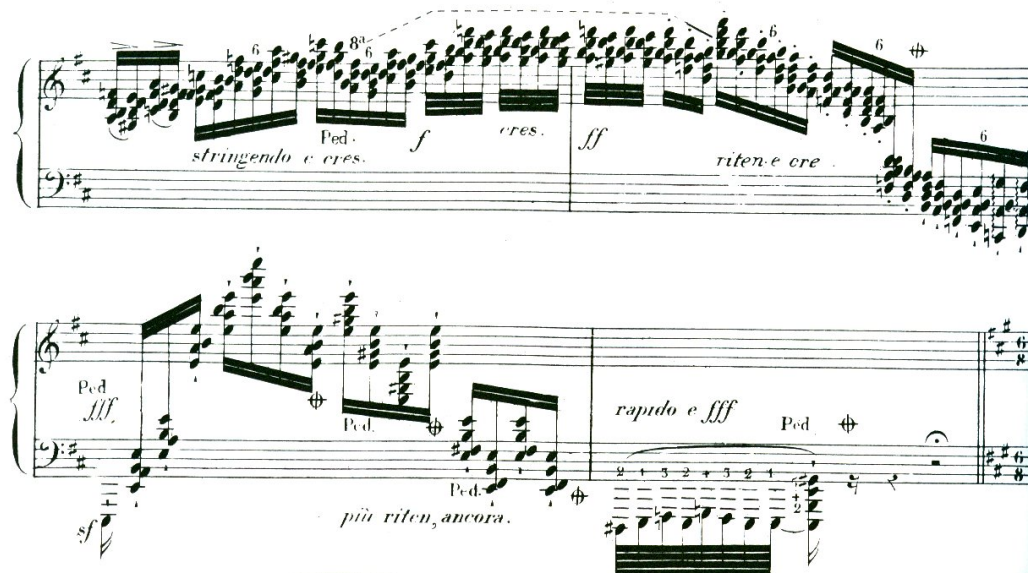


Fig. 53. Alkan *Trois Grandes Études* Op. 76 No. 2.



Fig. 54. 'Laß uns im Hemmel haben Teil', first derivative.

In order to dissolve the music into a series of episodes or fragments from which context can emerge the Paganini material, Finnissy employs random procedures applied to the whole of the second volume of Alkan's Op. 39 *Douze Études dans les tons mineurs*, which are then incorporated into a rhythmic line derived from earlier material.

The right-hand section is naturally inspired by the playing of Genoa-born violinist Niccòlo Paganini (1782-1840), a seminal early figure in the nineteenth-century virtuoso tradition (of an older generation than Liszt, Thalberg, Alkan, Bülow, David, Vieuxtemps, Joachim and others). Paganini was hugely influential as both violinist and composer, creating new models for the solo instrumentalist that continue to gain adherents today. He dazzled audiences during tours of

various parts of Europe, provoking near-incomprehension at the miracles of his playing. Many believed him to be literally possessed by the devil, a belief fed by his eccentric and eerie stage manner, as well as his thinness and aloof and ghostly appearance (actually the result of long-term illness produced by erroneous prescriptions by a quack doctor<sup>8</sup>). A whole mythology grew up around Paganini, including such sensationalist ideas as that he was in touch with supernatural forces, and that the fourth string of his violin was constructed out of his mistress's intestines, Paganini having murdered her and spent twenty years in jail for the crime<sup>9</sup>. He developed a style of playing that restricted the violin at first to only two strings and eventually to just one, the G string. Through the use of harmonics he could extend the compass of this last string to more than three octaves<sup>10</sup>. An 1829 treatise on Paganini's playing by Carl Guhr wrote of his 'powerful, all-conquering mechanism of execution with the godlike breathings of human tone, thus affording endless space for the workings of imagination, and touching the deepest feelings of the heart'<sup>11</sup>. Guhr listed Paganini's innovations as being *scordatura*, bowing, left-hand pizzicato, harmonics, performing on the G-string alone or two strings (he also often played on just two strings), fingering and 'extraordinary *tours de force*'<sup>12</sup>. Many of these qualities are reproduced in the right-hand section of *Alkan-Paganini*.

Both Robert Schumann and Franz Liszt were mesmerised by the playing of Paganini. Liszt, whose own brand of virtuosity was heavily inspired by Paganini, wrote:

"I, too, am a painter,' cried Michelangelo, when he first beheld a masterpiece. humble and poor though I am, since I heard Paganini play I keep repeating Michelangelo's words to myself. René,

---

<sup>8</sup> See Alan Kendall, *Paganini: A Biography* (London: Chappell & Co., 1982), pp. 27.

<sup>9</sup> See Kendall, *Paganini*, p. 27, and Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt: The Virtuoso Years 1811-1847* (London: Faber and Faber, 1983), p. 168.

<sup>10</sup> See Kendall, *Paganini*, p. 25. Apparently Princess Elise, Napoleon's sister, asked Paganini whether, 'Now that you have already played something so beautiful on two strings, couldn't you let us hear something on one string?' (see John Sugden, *Niccolò Paganini: Supreme Violinist or Devil's Fiddler?* (Tunbridge Wells: Midas Books, 1980), p. 27)

<sup>11</sup> Carl Guhr, *Ueber Paganini's Kunst. Die Violine zu spielen ein Anhang zu jeder bis jetzt erschienenen Violinschule* (Mainz: Schott, 1829); English version *Paganini's Art of Playing the Violin, With a Treatise on Single and Double Harmonic Notes*, translated Sabilla Novello, revised C. Egerton Lowe (London: Novello, 1915), p. vi.

<sup>12</sup> Guhr, *Paganini's Art*, p. ix. See Schwarz, *Great Masters*, pp. 196-199 for a wider exploration of each of these. According to Guhr, the idea of playing whole pieces on the G-string alone originated in a piece written for Princess Elise, duchess of Tuscany and the sister of Napoleon. This was in the form of a 'conversation' between the G and E strings, the former representing the lover, the latter the loved one. Both the Princess and the whole Court favoured the dialogue, and the Princess challenged Paganini to speak only as a Man, using strong tones. Hence he saw the use of the G-string alone as a way of demonstrating this (Guhr, *Paganini's Art*, p. vii). See also Robin Stowell, *Violin Technique and Performance in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 101-102 and Kendall, *Paganini*, pp. 25-27. Kendall is somewhat sceptical about the claims that Paganini deliberately tuned his strings so that they would break during the concert.

what a man! What a violin! What an artist!! What suffering, what anguish, what torture those four strings can express! Look, here are some of his phrases . . .<sup>13</sup>

Schumann's sentiments were equally characterised by awe and amazement, and he wrote two sets of *Études* based upon Paganini's work<sup>14</sup>; the first of his *Sechs Concert-Etuden componirt nach Capricen von Paganini* Op. 10 (Fig. 55 (a)), itself derived from Paganini's Caprice Op. 1 No. 12 in A-flat major (Fig. 55 (b)), provides the basis for the right-hand section of *Alkan-Paganini*. Unlike Liszt, Schumann does not really make a concerted effort to recreate the *physical* aspect of Paganini's playing at the piano. Finnissey, on the other hand, does indeed do so, in a uniquely modern manner. The Schumann piece is almost entirely in rotary patterns and arpeggios. Paganini's name as a musical cipher (see Fig. 39) happens also to follow the same sort of rotary motion; such zig-zag figurations dominate the Paganini material in *Alkan-Paganini*.

**Sechs Concert-Etuden**  
componirt nach Capricen von Paganini  
für das Pianoforte  
von  
**ROBERT SCHUMANN.**  
Op. 10.

Serie 7. N<sup>o</sup> 10.  
Componirt 1833.

Schumann's Werke.

N<sup>o</sup> 1.

Allegro molto.

Fig. 55 (a). Schumann, *Sechs Concert-Etuden componirt nach Capricen von Paganini* Op. 10 No. 1

<sup>13</sup> From a letter to La Mara (Marie Lipsius) of 2nd May 1832, cited in Renée de Saussine, *Paganini*, translated Marjorie Laurie with preface by Jacques Thibaud (London: Hutchinson, 1953), p. 124.

<sup>14</sup> See Robert Schumann, *Tagebuch*, Vol. 1 (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1971), p. 404, cited in John Daverio, *Robert Schumann: Herald of a "New Poetic Age"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 94 and Eric Frederick Jensen, *Schumann* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 95-97.

## Caprice No. 12 in A-flat Major

Fig. 55 (b). Paganini, *Caprice No. 12 in A-flat Major*

Finnissy creates a 11 x 16 matrix of pitch cells from the fragment composed to appear in the *Poets*, which was written first (see Fig. 56 (a)). The process by which the cells are developed downwards in each column is similar to Messiaen's technique of *agrandissement asymétrique*.<sup>15</sup> Finnissy will keep some pitches static (e.g. the second note, D, in cell 1, for the first six permutations), allow others to shift upwards each time (e.g. the first note, C), and others to similarly move downwards. Finnissy is less dogmatic than Messiaen, however, freely skipping pitches that might produce undesired intervals (such as an octave or a tenth between the first note and the D in the first column), and choosing for himself how long to continue the permutational process. There is a second chart as well, this time derived directly from the Paganini original. Finnissy simply selects pitches from the violin part on what seems to be a relatively *ad hoc* basis, and arranges these into a 41 x 11 matrix. (see Fig. 56 (b)).

<sup>15</sup> For a description of this technique in the work of Messiaen, see Robert Sherlaw Johnson, *Messiaen*, reprint edition (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), p. 73 or Peter Hill, 'Piano Music I' in Hill (ed). *The Messiaen Companion* (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), pp. 90-92.

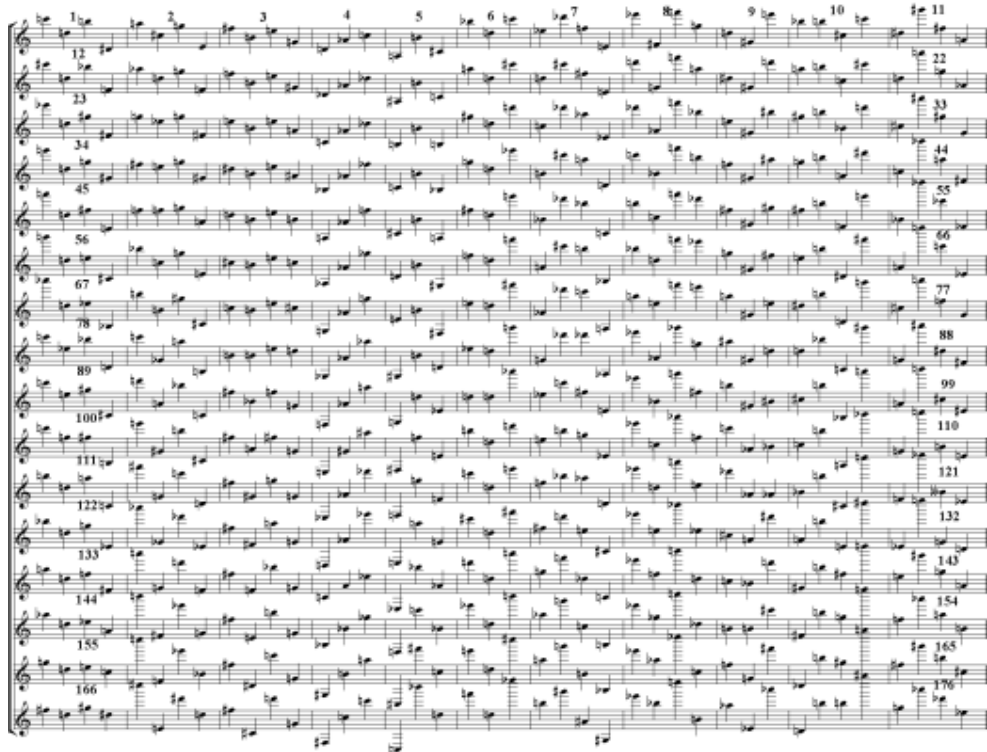


Fig. 56 (a). Chart A - Pitch matrix derived from Paganini section in *Seventeen Immortal Homosexual Poets*.

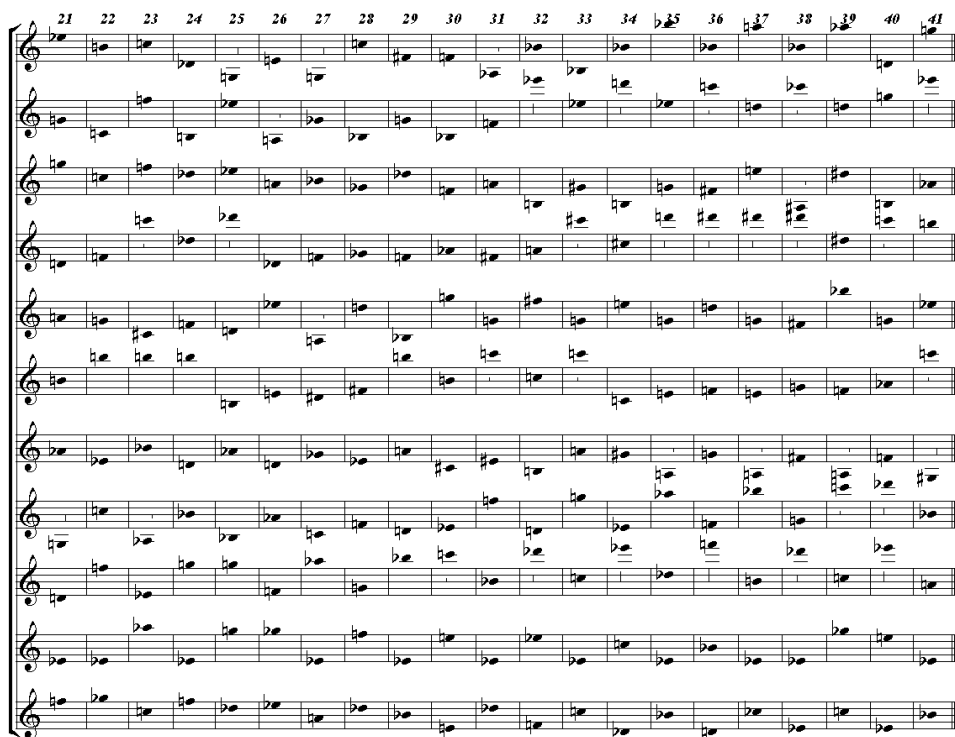


Fig. 56 (b). Chart B – Pitches selected from Paganini Caprice Op. 1 No. 12.

The piano writing is designed for the most part to imitate the sound of the violin (with numerous rhetorical grace-note flourishes mimicking open strings), though it occasionally moves into the bass clef, which Finnissy has described as being intended to signify those ‘sounds never before heard’ that Spohr and others described in Paganini’s playing<sup>16</sup>. It is in two parts throughout, perhaps a reflection upon the following comment in *Le Revue Musicale* in 1829:

Monsieur Pacini [a music publisher] possesses the original manuscript of a duet which Paganini executes solo with amazing skill. It has a left hand *pizzicato* accompaniment, while the intricate melody which contains a great many quick passages, is played with the bow. The effect produced is that of two distinct instruments.<sup>17</sup>

Finnissy begins with varying metres, accelerandos and various wide spread chords, until a continuous 4 against 3 pattern emerges. In general, there is little of a sense of harmonic progression throughout the section, contoural differentiation being a more prominent feature. The expansions of register give a clear sense of development, and eventually this knife-edge music explodes into wild runs, derived from the same material - a different form of ‘compression’ – in between continuing in an almost impossibly dense and overloaded manner. Finally the music regains composure in a *Vivace* section, in which the Schumann/Paganini reference seems more explicit.

For the two-handed section, Finnissy begins by giving a version of the left hand material to the right hand, and vice versa, though the hands soon begin to alternate. In both cases the basic line is derived from a cut-up and transposition of the earlier sections. The dynamics are clearly terraced, a layer in *ffff* at the outset, sustained right through to the *meno mosso*, then down to *ff* soon afterwards, followed by an *mf* passage. Within these are inserted several passages of material with more of an A-flat centered tonality, freely employing the 'Alkan-Paganini' scale, to lead towards the somewhat calmer final section, in which the left hand in particular is much closer to the Schumann/Paganini original than hitherto. The Paganini material remains in or around A-flat major (whilst the Alkan material is in F, thus reproducing the fundamental major sixth interval between the keys of the two hands), and features repeated notes regularly – the beginning derives very clearly from the opening of the Paganini Caprice with octave modifications, then rhythmic changes and addition of an extra line. The combination of a repeated note followed by a falling sequence, as at the beginning of the Schumann/Paganini, recurs several times, whilst Finnissy works in passages from the Pasolini material of the *Poets* and also Norwegian folk tunes as used in *Muybridge-Munch*. Finally he interrupts the material to reintroduce the *motivo fondamentale*, before a shimmering conclusion looking forward to music in *Unsere Afrikareise*, specifically that relating to Félicien David's *Le desert*, a key

---

<sup>16</sup> Private conversation with the author.

<sup>17</sup> Cited in Saussine, *Paganini*, p. 129.

work for the Saint-Simonian movement which interested many artists (including Liszt) contemporary with Alkan and Paganini.

*Alkan-Paganini* takes to the furthest extent the idea of a ‘copy of a copy’ or *simulacrum*<sup>18</sup>. There is nowhere in the piece where the Mozart original is recognisable; yet Alkan’s *Jean qui rit* would be impossible without it. Furthermore, this piece is one of the least harmonically directed in the cycle (which is one reason why I have not discussed harmony other than in very broad terms). Not that the use of pitch is unrefined, by any means; rather it is concentrated in such a way as to focus attention on gestural rather than harmonic features, from which unwanted consonances and progressions might distract. Finnissy manages to extract from Alkan’s piece the attributes of Alkan’s mediating techniques independently of their object. Alkan’s transcription seems to be rendered in terms of ‘pure difference’; transcription as an abstract form of mediation that could be said to *precede* its application to objects<sup>19</sup> (rather than being abstracted from such a thing, as discussed in the context of *Le réveil*). In that way it demonstrates how abstraction and uncanny virtuosity are by no means necessarily mutually exclusive categories.

---

<sup>18</sup> This issue will be discussed more in the context of *Unsere Afrikareise*.

<sup>19</sup> The concept I am presenting here owes something to Gilles Deleuze’s ideas of ‘Difference in itself’. For more on this subject, see Deleuze, ‘Difference in Itself’, in *Difference and Repetition*, translated Paul Patton (London: Continuum, 2004), pp. 36-89.



## Chapter 8

### No. 6: *Seventeen Immortal Homosexual Poets*

*Seventeen Immortal Homosexual Poets* was the first section of the *History of Photography* to be completed, and as such was Finnissy's first large scale piano work since the completion of *Folklore* in 1994. After such a high degree of musical referentiality in *Folklore* and his subsequent shorter piano works, Finnissy made use of this opportunity to exploit a more 'abstracted' type of material at the very outset of the work, hearkening back a little to some of his piano works of the 1960s and 1970s.

The meaning of the title is obvious; the 'immortality' of the poets is indicated by Finnissy's indication only of their birthdates in the score, although many are now dead). As presented by Finnissy in the score, they are as follows:

- (1) Gregory Woods (1953-);
- (2) Mutsuo Takahashi (1937-);
- (3) Thom Gunn (1929-);
- (4) Allen Ginsberg (1926-);
- (5) Frank O'Hara (1926-);
- (6) Harold Norse (1926-);
- (7) Pier Paolo Pasolini (1922-);
- (8) James Kirkup (1918-);
- (9) Jean Genet (1910-);
- (10) Stephen Spender (1909-);
- (11) Federico García Lorca (1898-);
- (12) Ralph Chubb (1892-);
- (13) Jean Cocteau (1889-);
- (14) Konstantinos Kavafis (1863-);
- (15) Oscar Wilde (1854-);
- (16) Edward Carpenter (1844-);
- (17) John Addington Symonds (1840-).

Some sections of the piece were clearly composed or drafted a while before Finnissy began serious work on it – the sketches date the Pasolini, Chubb and Kavafis material as having been written in January 1995.

For the basic conceptual strategy, Finnissy drew inspiration from the film *Galaxie* (1966) by the homosexual director Gregory Markopoulos (1928-1992). Markopoulos filmed thirty-three personalities from the artistic world, poets, painters, film directors and others, including W.H. Auden, Allen Ginsberg (who also appears as a personage in the *Poets*), Jasper Johns and Susan Sontag, each in their apartments. He would point the camera at the subjects for a while, then move away to pan around the room, inspecting their books and other paraphernalia for clues to personalities based upon their possessions. Markopoulos

drew upon techniques used when in filming his own New York apartment earlier the same year in the short film *Ming Green* (1966), focusing on his possessions such as a photographic nude by Edmund Teske, a rose as a gift from students, and several record albums, as well as a dress shirt<sup>1</sup>.

Finnissy parallels Markopoulos's basic strategy by the characteristic use of musical materials that can be associated with each of the poets in question. The piece is structured as a series of episodes on each poet in turn (presented in reverse chronological order of birth date), connected by other sections or 'melanges', which offer space for reflection.

Finnissy has described his particular choice of poets as being designed as much to do with their iconic status (from which in part springs their perceived immortality) as their actual work<sup>2</sup>. Poems by many of them are included in *The Penguin Book of Homosexual Verse*, which Finnissy had to hand when writing the piece<sup>3</sup>. Finnissy himself compared the work to a Japanese *wakashu*<sup>4</sup> collection of poetry, the most famous of which is the *Kokin wakashu*, a collection of poems from ancient and modern times compiled in the year 905<sup>5</sup>.

The musical material presented for each poet is sharply characterised and highly distinguished from the others (though there are some linking attributes between a few poets, as I will explain). Each such 'episode' is relatively short, producing the highest density of stylistic variegation in the whole cycle, found in this central chapter. Thus the overall structure of the work, which resembles a rapid cinematic montage, is relatively clear to the listener (allowing for possible and understandable confusion about where one poet begins and another ends, and the distinction between the episodes and the melanges).

A: (1) Gregory Woods; (2) Mutsuo Takahashi; (3) Thom Gunn; (4) Allen Ginsberg; Transition 1

B: (5) Frank O'Hara

C: (6) Harold Norse; (7) Pier Paolo Pasolini; (8) James Kirkup; (9) Jean Genet; (10) Stephen Spender

D: Mélange I – a cut-up of short fragments of material placed upon rhythmic and other matrices based on (i) Genet, (ii) Kirkup, (iii) Gunn, (iv) Pasolini, (v) O'Hara, but always with a thread derived from the fundamental Bach chorale BWV 328 running through.

---

<sup>1</sup> See Kristin Jones, 'Ming Green: The Colour of Memory', in *Millenium Film Journal* No. 32/33 (Fall 1998), available online at <http://www.mfj-online.org/journalPages/MFJ32%2C33/jones.html> (accessed 10/7/2006).

<sup>2</sup> Private conversations with the author.

<sup>3</sup> Stephen Coote (ed), *The Penguin Book of Homosexual Verse*, second edition (London: Penguin, 1986). This includes poems by all of the authors cited in the *Poets* except for Woods, Takahashi, Wilde (!) and Symonds.

<sup>4</sup> Finnissy, programme note for the *History*. The term *wakashu* also refers to a boy under the age of nineteen.

<sup>5</sup> See Helen Craig McCullough, *Kokin Wakashu: The First Imperial Anthology of Japanese Poetry* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985).

E: *Mélange II*. Similar to *Mélange I*, but without the presence of the Bach. (i) Genet again, incorporating a reference to *Alkan-Paganini* and a vague allusion to Ginsburg, (ii) a longer passage using categories of material that will emerge later in *UA*, (iii) Kirkup (very short), (iv) O'Hara (likewise), (v) a more extended section combining the Pasolini material in the right hand and the Kirkup material in the left.

F: (11) Federico Garçia Lorça; (12) Ralph Chubb; (13) Jean Cocteau; Transition 2 (returning to Lorca)

G: (14) Konstantinos Kavafis; (15) Oscar Wilde; Transition 3 (returning to Wilde); Insert (a) of rapid chordal material; (16) Edward Carpenter; (17) John Addington Symonds, interrupted successively by Inserts (b), (c) and (d) of rapid chordal material.

H: Compression: Extended virtuoso cataclysm of very rapid periodic chords and notes

I: *Mélange III*: Coda returning to the hushed world of O'Hara, denser and ornate, once again organised around the Bach chorale.

The relative prominence of gestures, lines or chords has already been outlined in the 'Material as Archetype' section. The following is an outline of the musical characterisation of each poet:

Gregory Woods' poetry is terse, concentrated, often transforming prose-like sentences into groups of four three-line stanzas, each with two metrical feet, and abounds with blatant homoerotic allusions. As with many of the succeeding episodes, Finnissy derives a musical cipher from the letters of the poet's name. The basic technique from this involves assigning letters to each note of the ascending chromatic scale shown in Fig. 57. Finnissy rearranges the pitches of these ciphers in ascending order, then reiterates them at the octave to generate a musical 'alphabet' for each poet, which often inform the musical material at various levels. However, the relationship between them and the final result is often obscure, not least because the first results went through numerous modifications and eventually bear little resemblance to the material generated by the ciphers. He configures the section as a series of dramatic, separated, rapid gestures interspersed with quite ruminations in the low registers (Fig. 58).



etc.

Fig. 57. 'Musical alphabet' and ciphers derived from poets' names.

Rhythms in these latter passages derive from the speech rhythms of Wood's poem 'Fall'<sup>6</sup> using tenutos to accentuate the words that are repeated with distinct meanings as nouns and adjectives ('stale', 'lean', 'fall') (see Fig. 59).

Mutsuo Takahashi's work, if translations of it are to be trusted as being faithful to their source, evokes images and sensations of extreme desire using archetypal allusions and terms. There is an underlying tone of violence in his work and frequent sadomasochistic allusions, reflected in the tempestuous music (developing further some of the gestural world of the material for Woods). For pitch material, Finnissy uses scales based on Takahashi's name in contrary motion as shown in Fig. 60.

The earlier poetry of Thom Gunn, one of the five poets referenced by Finnissy who was educated at the British public schools (the others being Spender, Chubb, Carpenter and Symonds), combined a type of formalism akin to the late work of W.H. Auden with contemporary subject matter (motorcycle gangs, revolutionaries, Claus von Staffenburg (who attempted to assassinate Hitler), Elvis Presley, etc.). Later poems explore the use of free verse and speak more explicitly of drugs and homosexuality. Finnissy here develops the Woods and Takahashi material in another direction, sparser, restricted to the treble register, alternating legato and staccato and in the first section permeated by low E-flats and B-flats that imply an E-flat tonality (as both the first letters in 'Thom' spell D# = E-flat in the musical cipher).

<sup>6</sup> Gregory Woods – 'Fall', in *We Have the Melon* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1992), p. 65.

6.  
Seventeen Immortal Homosexual Poets

[♩] = 168  
(Ab)

(Bb)

[♩] = 116  
pppppp!  
poco 3rd.

Gregory Woods (1953)

(D)

[♩] = 184

(E) [♩] = 116

pppppp

(pppppp)

Fig. 58. *Seventeen Immortal Homosexual Poets*, opening.

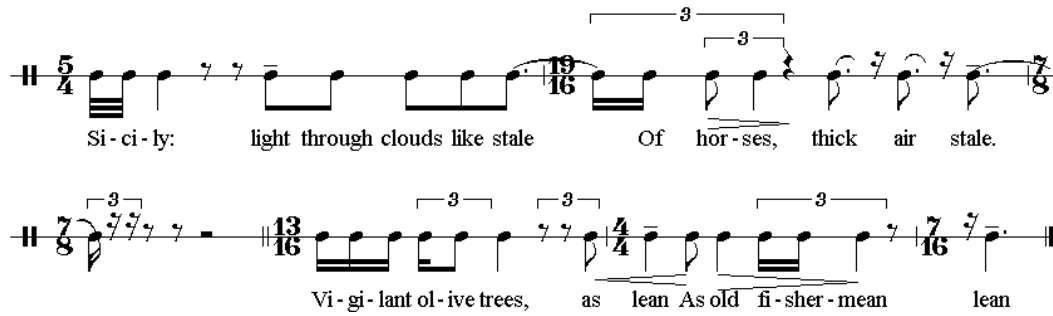


Fig. 59. Rhythms derived from Gregory Woods – ‘Fall’

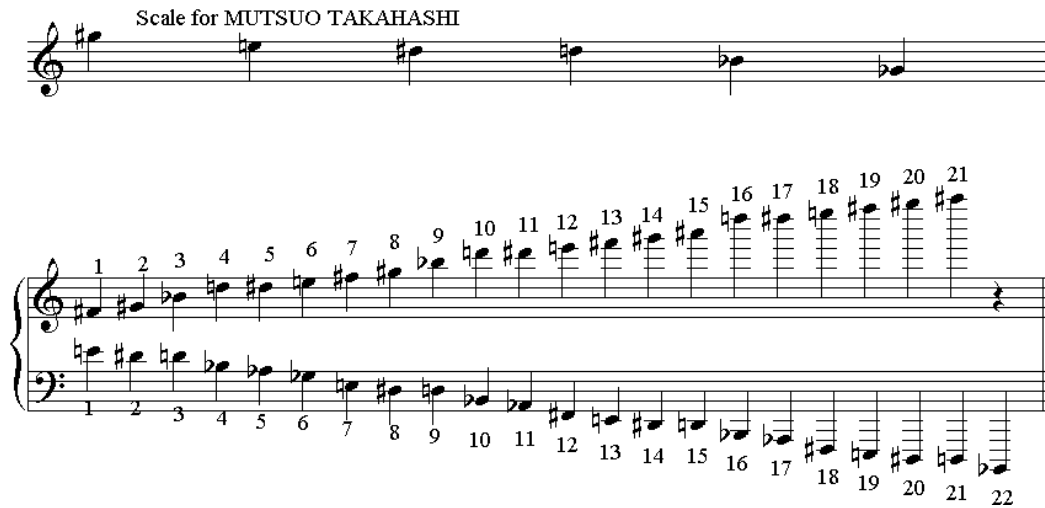


Fig. 60. Scales for Mutsuo Takahashi

The work of the fourth poet, Allen Ginsberg, uses discontinuous montage-like techniques with unity provided by theme rather than narrative, a stress upon varied use of pulse rather than fixed metre, and a small amount of typographical experimentation, all in the service of an ultimately romantic, even primitivist world-view. A political activist who fiercely attacked the values of American consumer society, he found solace in idealised views of pre-industrial society, reflecting his love for Blake and Whitman and linking him to a long tradition of the American ‘outsider’ that has adherents on both the right and the left. Finnissy brings the type of material of the Woods and Takahashi sections here to a head, infested with crazed gracenote groups encompassing a wide tessitura and potent trills, in a way he has described as like a ‘parody of 1960s high modernism’<sup>7</sup> (Fig. 61).

<sup>7</sup> Private conversation with the author

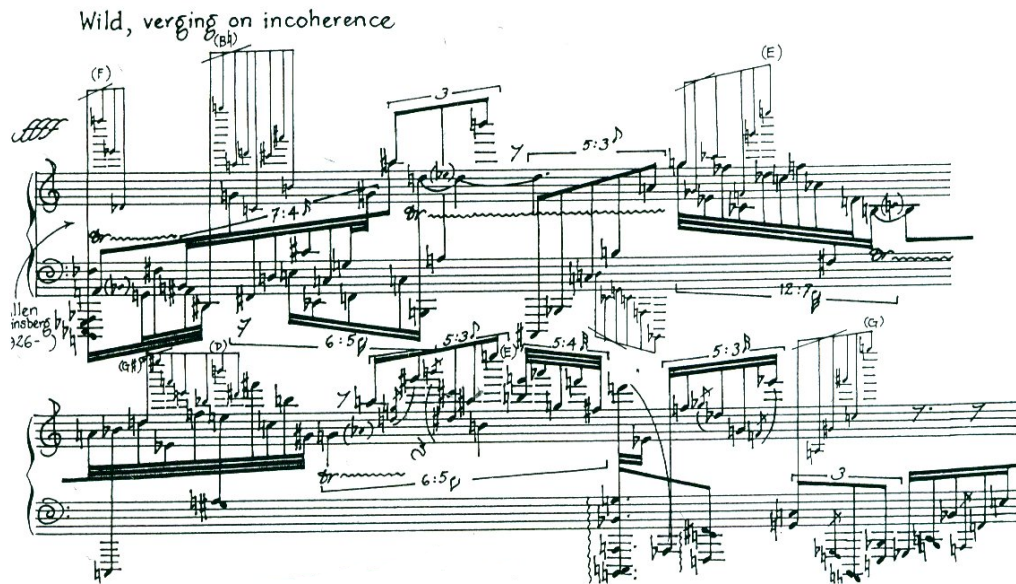


Fig. 61. *Seventeen Immortal Homosexual Poets*, beginning of Ginsberg section.

The second section is a 'Reckless Blues', as a reference to the fact that Ginsberg himself composed some blues (from which some of Finnissey's material is very obliquely derived). It takes the form of a dissonant counterpoint between the hands, beginning with a regular pulse but which becomes fractured after a few beats (as with some of Ginsberg's poetry) as the hands fight one another.

Frank O'Hara's work is diverse in terms of both its subject matter and its technical and stylistic devices (he would often experiment with radical forms and techniques), but always with a level of high discipline and refinement to the use of language (whilst maintaining a frequently hazy and melancholy tone) that produces a captivating effect. A student of piano at the New England Conservatory, then a music major at Harvard, O'Hara was interested in contemporary music throughout his short life (he died in an accident at age 40). He was closely associated with both the musical and artistic worlds of New York City, about which he wrote a large amount, and evoked the city itself frequently, in a manner that suggests bewilderment and alienation<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> In private correspondence, the poet Harry Gilonis suggested a quite different interpretation of the poem as 'vibrantly alive, happy in a slightly *faux-naïf* way (he admits to the existence of ugliness only in book design, and it is quietly subsumed into a satisfactory transaction with the world – he buys the book after all). The mode/mood is Apollinaire, giddy with excitement at the shire *quiddity* of Paris. His (rare) miseries are socio-sexual, not civic'. Nonetheless, I maintain the interpretation I give here, in light of the very routine implied by the precise times of the trains and the normative nature of his dealings with the cashier, the juxtaposition of 'muggy street' with 'hamburger', and the vaguely Beckettian listing of books without further comment. The accumulative metrical feet, which themselves suggest enthusiasm, are given an ironic twist by the mundanity of the way the subject matter is detailed.

This section also exists as a separate piece *Portrait of Frank O'Hara as Orpheus in Hell*, the first part of the cycle to be performed<sup>9</sup>. Finnissy hit upon a notion of the poet as an Orpheus-like figure in the modern 'hell' of New York City<sup>10</sup>, and so chose to use for his source materials music of O'Hara's collaborator Morton Feldman (specifically *The O'Hara Songs* (1962) and *For Frank O'Hara* (1973), the former a setting of the O'Hara poem 'Wind' (1962), itself dedicated to Feldman<sup>11</sup>). The most banally obvious characteristic of the Feldman allusion is the fact that the section is extremely quiet throughout, as was most of Feldman's music. The other source was Offenbach's opera *Orphée aux Enfers*<sup>12</sup>, to add a symbolical allusion to Orpheus. Once again, Finnissy uses a musical cipher for O'Hara's name, providing the initial pitch for each bar, which are applied to fragments selected randomly from the alto line of the Offenbach, then concatenated into a line. To this he adds a bass line derived from the setting of 'Who'd have thought that snow falls' in *The O'Hara Songs*, again using pitches from the full note cipher of O'Hara's name to supply the beginning point of fragments, together with chords all derived from Feldman's *For Frank O'Hara*<sup>13</sup> (see Fig. 62).

Harold Norse was influenced by both the Objectivists and the Beat Generation (amongst whom he was welcomed as a fellow traveller<sup>14</sup>). His poems are in free verse, often employing a wide variety of experimental typographical devices. Norse's frequent homoerotic evocations have something of a macho quality, suggesting hard-nosed sexual determination rather than submissive rapture. Finnissy again uses a cipher for Norse's name, and uses random techniques to apply this to passages from the O'Hara section to provide continuity, then introduces a version of an Ethiopian folk tune from Addis Ababa (transcribed by Emile Bloch from an 1897 phonograph), a love song, intended to portray 'the stylized Algiers<sup>15</sup> of Norse's poetry and the boy prostitutes that he used'<sup>16</sup> (Fig. 63).

<sup>9</sup> This work was also separately commissioned by the Monnaie Opera House, Brussels, for a concert given there by the author on March 7<sup>th</sup> 1997.

<sup>10</sup> Private comments to the author.

<sup>11</sup> Frank O'Hara, *The Collected Poems of Frank O'Hara*, edited Donald Allen (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), p. 269.

<sup>12</sup> The score Finnissy used was Offenbach, *Orphée aux Enfers*, Heugel & Cie (Production 'Théâtre de la Gaité', 7th Février 1874, Opéra-Féerie en 4 actes et 12 tableaux), 'Nouvelle Partition Réduite pour piano et chant'

<sup>13</sup> Feldman himself said of this piece that 'My primary concern (as in all my music) is to sustain a "flat surface" with a minimum of contrast' ('For Frank O'Hara', in *Give My Regards to Eighth Street: Collected Writings of Morton Feldman*, edited B.H. Friedman (Cambridge, MA: Exact Change, 2000), p. 127). This seems also to be Finnissy's intention in this section.

<sup>14</sup> See the introduction to Harold Norse, *In the Hub of the Fiery Force: Collected Poems 1934-2003* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2003), p. xviii.

<sup>15</sup> The use of an Ethiopian folk tune to signify somewhere as remote as Algiers is in keeping with the very loose, even arbitrary, nature of geographical identifications throughout this piece. However, some have discerned or suggested Arabic influences upon Ethiopian folk music. See Michael Powne, *Ethiopian Music: An Introduction* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 42-57 for some information on links between Ethiopian and Arab musical instruments, also pp. 86-87 on religious influences from the Middle East.

<sup>16</sup> From private conversations with Finnissy. Note that my mention of paedophilic sex tourism here in no sense implies an advocacy or endorsement of it. Norse's feelings are made quite clear in the poem





Fig. 62 (a). Musical cipher for O'Hara's name.



Fig. 62 (b). Passages from Offenbach *Orfée aux Enfers*.



Fig. 62 (c). Derivation of bass line in O'Hara section.

'Behind the Glass Wall', which includes the lines 'genitals thick swollen out / of big tear in pants / derelict 14 yr old street arab / cameras snapping / like teeth/great souk / swarms for dirhams / and who / are you liittle arab / I shared my visions / and ate / black hasheesh candy with / the door of yr body flung /open we twitched in spasms / muscular convulsions / heavenly epilepsy on the bed ' (*Penguin Book of Homosexual Verse*, pp. 340-341).

Extremely Quiet [ $\text{♩} = 66-84$  molto flessibile]

ppp

Frank O'Hara (1926-)

6:5

8:5

7:5

6:5

6:5

6:5

Fig. 62 (d). *Seventeen Immortal Homosexual Poets*, beginning of Frank O'Hara section

3

3

5

Fig. 63. Ethiopian love song, transcribed by Emile Bloch from a phonograph roll made in Addis Ababa by Prince Henri d'Orléans in 1897<sup>17</sup>.

Finnissy regularly compresses and modifies the melodic material, shifting the initial mode to become an Arabic *maqam* (in this case first constructed from two tetrachords, with ascending intervals of semitone-whole tone-whole tone,

<sup>17</sup> Printed in Powne, *Ethiopian Music*, p. 132.

which are generally associated with the Kurds<sup>18</sup>, then into another mode unidentifiable in one of its constituent tetrachords with any Arabic source; nor are either of the three basic Ethiopian modes (*Ezel*, *Ge'ez*, and *Araray*<sup>19</sup>) identifiable). Otherwise, it is a very free setting, mixing up phrases from the original and shifting accentuation and beaming to add a higher level of rhythmic variegation. He harmonises with a recurrent F#/B, then d'/g' fourth, creating a correspondence with the recurrent minor/major sixths throughout the cycle as well as other ostinato-like figures to be found with *Unsere Afrikareise* and in the prototype for that work slightly later in this piece.

Pier Paolo Pasolini is clearly an important figure for Finnissy (as he was also for the film-maker Derek Jarman); the music he here associates with him recurs regularly throughout the *History*. Pasolini's love for peasant and folk civilisation (from a highly romanticised perspective<sup>20</sup>), his disdain for and rage at many aspects of contemporary bourgeois civilisation, not least in terms of sexual hypocrisy and repression, interest in uncovering mythical archetypes within his subject matter, and deep awareness of fascist undercurrents in behaviour and society (not to mention the reality of actual fascism, as captured in his notorious final film *Saló o le 120 giornate di Sodoma* (1976)), and interest in Antonio Gramsci<sup>21</sup>, all resonate strongly with many of Finnissy's own concerns<sup>22</sup>. The following words of Pasolini could equally have been spoken by Finnissy himself:

---

<sup>18</sup> Though Finnissy says this is purely coincidental – private conversations with the author.

<sup>19</sup> See Powne, *Ethiopian Music*, pp. 96-97.

<sup>20</sup> Oswald Stack speaks of how, throughout Pasolini's career, his work in general stresses 'the need to restore an epic and mythological dimension to life, a sense of awe and reverence to the world: a sense which, he believes, the peasantry still sustain, though the bourgeoisie has done all in its power to destroy it', involving an 'emphasis on the spirituality of the peasantry, their semi-pagan consciousness of super-natural meanings and forces', which Stack realises 'is obviously difficult to reconcile with a marxist political analysis' (Oswald Stack (ed), *Pasolini on Pasolini* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1969), p. 9). These leads Pasolini to such amazing conclusions as that the 'peasant communists' were 'the ones who make revolutions' in Russia (as well as other countries where this claim is more truth to it) (ibid. p. 22).

<sup>21</sup> Pasolini spoke of how when 'reading marxist texts, the most important, even more important than Marx himself, was Gramsci. . . Whereas Gramsci's ideas coincided with mine; they on me over immediately, and he had a fundamental role in my formation' (Stack (ed), *Pasolini on Pasolini*, p. 23. Finnissy cites Gramsci in his programme note for *Folklore*, specifically the reference to 'Gramsci's imperative to compile an inventory of the 'infinity of traces' that historical processes leave on 'the self'' (Finnissy, programme note for *Folklore*, included in edition of the score (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1996)). The precise quote from Gramsci, perhaps one of the most fundamental conceptions informing Finnissy's engagements with other musics and allusions is 'The starting-point of critical elaboration in the consciousness of what one really is, and is "knowing thyself" as a product of the historical process to date which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory.' (Antonio Gramsci, 'The Study of Philosophy', from *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, edited and translated Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), p. 324).

<sup>22</sup> Interestingly, Pasolini would not side with the demonstrating students of 1968 (at which time Finnissy was studying in Italy - he alludes to these events in the context of *Folklore* - see Pace, 'The Piano Music', p. 122). For Pasolini, the police deserved more support than the students, for 'Those cops were the sons of a poor subproletariat, disinherited by bourgeois society *within* the police force'. Pasolini issued a tract called *Il PCI ai giovani!!!* expressing his sentiments. See Enzo Siciliano, *Pasolini*, translated John Shepley with introduction by Paul Bailey (London: Bloomsbury, 1987), pp. 325-328

And stylistically I am a *pasticheur*. I use the most disparate stylistic material – dialect, poetry, decadent poetry, certain attempts at socialist poetry; there is always a stylistic contamination in my writings, I don't have a completely invented personal style of my own, though my style is recognizable. If you read a page of mine you can recognize it's mine fairly easily. I am not recognizable as an inventor of a stylistic formula, but for the degree of intensity to which I bring the contamination and mixture of the various styles. Neither is right, because what counts is the degree of violence and intensity – and this involves both the form and the styles, as well as the ideology. What counts is the depth of feeling, the passion I put into things; it isn't so much the novelty of the content, nor the novelty of form.<sup>23</sup>

Pasolini's poetry (which he began to write from the age of seven) is as vivid, charged, incendiary and tender as are his films, but carefully controlled through the appropriation of techniques from classical verse. He captures sordid realism, the decadence of contemporary civilisation (without ever romanticising such a fact), his hatred for consumerism, as well as homoerotic longing, in an inflamed but carefully paced verse<sup>24</sup>.

The folk-like quality of the Norse section provides a clear link with the material for Pasolini, for which Finnissey makes use of a Sardinian folk tune, originally played on a *launeddas*, a Sardinian triple clarinet, which consists of a pipe played with the left hand and attached to a drone pipe, with yet another pipe for their right hand. It is one of many reed instruments that are traceable back to ancient Egypt and were disseminated throughout the Mediterranean area<sup>25</sup>. Finnissey draws upon the pioneering 1969 study of the instrument and its music by Danish musicologist Weis Bentzon<sup>26</sup>, featuring transcriptions of music writing for line dancing in northern Sardinia, as well as for song marches and religious ceremonies<sup>27</sup>. Fig. 64 shows three examples of the *launeddas* music included in Bentzon's volume as selected (randomly) by Finnissey<sup>28</sup>, and the ways in which he modifies it to produce his own material.

---

<sup>23</sup> Stack (ed), *Pasolini on Pasolini*, p. 28.

<sup>24</sup> For an insightful investigation of Pasolini's *The Ashes of Gramsci* in particular, see Siciliano, *Pasolini*, pp. 205-222. Siciliano argues that 'Just as Baudelaire, in his polemics against the formlessness of the Romantics, re-evaluated the alexandrine and the closed form of the sonnet, so Pasolini, against the formlessness of neo-experimentalism, re-evaluated the hendecasyllable and the tercet, utilizing within them all the breaks and irregularities of classical composition'; from this he argues that 'in Pasolini, the poetics of "stylistic regression" were to assure compensations in the literary marketplace, a wider popularity' (ibid. p. 206).

<sup>25</sup> Jan Ling, *A History of European Folk Music*, translated Linda and Robert Schenck (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1997), p. 129.

<sup>26</sup> Andreas Fridolin Weis Bentzon, *The Launeddas: A Sardinian Folk Music Instrument*. Thesis. (Copenhagen, Act Ethnomusicologica Danica, 1969).

<sup>27</sup> Ling, *A History of European Folk Music*, p. 129.

<sup>28</sup> These examples are taken from Bentzon, *The Launeddas*, pp. 108, 37-38, 21.

Po vve\_ ra dis - gra - tsi - a se - u go - i - a - da  
 No ndi se - u mme - ri de mni - šu - na go - sa

Fig. 64 (a). *Launeddas* melody, 4 x 4/4 formula. Singer Angelo Pili. *Ispinellu a pipia* Dionigi Burranca. With Finnissy's transcription.

Fig. 64 (b). *Launeddas* melody, Professional dance. Fiorassiu. *Dionigi Burranca*. With Finnissy's transcription.

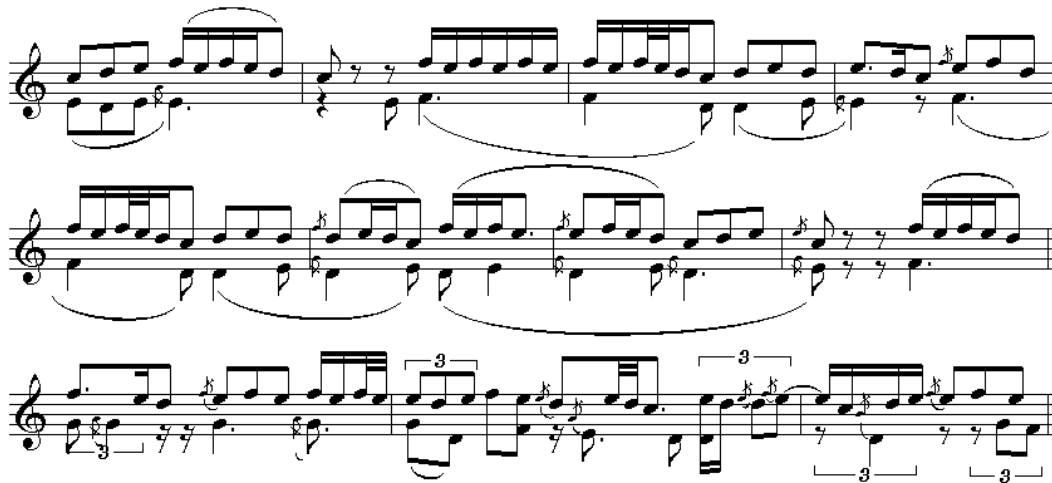


Fig. 64 (c). *Launeddas* melody, *Pass'e tresi*. Giovanni Lai. *Mediana a pipia*. With Finnissy's transcription.

In Fig. 64 (a), the source is one of numerous melodies in four groups of 4/4 beats, a common formula in music from Southern Sardinia (where the *launeddas* is used as an accompanying instrument). Common characteristics of this family of melodies also include a higher pitch in measures three and four than in one and two<sup>29</sup>. Finnissy first selects a segment from the end of the first bar up to the beginning of the fourth, and applies techniques of rhythmic topological distortion to remove any sense of a regular metre. Then he returns to the beginning of the *launeddas* melody and raises some pitches (Bs to Cs), runs the As into a single note, and turns some grace notes into full durations, as well as using the same techniques of rhythmic modification. In both bars, he preserves that aspect of the pitch relationships that occur in groups of four bars in the originals. In Fig. 64 (b) (for solo *launeddas*) he raises some of the lower notes which significantly affects the sense of modality (the first bar sounds like a V of C in the original; in the modified version the tonality becomes the relative minor of A); otherwise he preserves the pitch structure (except for a few extra notes at the end) whilst modifying the rhythms in the usual manner. In Fig. 64 (c) he adapts freely, again compressing parts of the line to avoid metrically regularity whilst also desynchronising the two parts.

Finnissy generates a series of segments in this manner to create a line of material, which he divides into fragments for later use; the material thus generated is used so often in the cycle that it is worth reproducing in full here (Fig. 65).

<sup>29</sup> See Bentzon, *The Launeddas*, pp. 95-96.



Fig. 65. Cells derived from *launeddas* music for Pasolini section.

There is a particular iconic significance to this type of material for Finissy himself: Sardinian folk-music had provided the source material for one of his first major essays in folk-inspired music, his work for mezzo-soprano, flute, percussion and piano *Duru-Duru* (1981). Pasolini had paid tribute to the Sardinian Gramsci in his collection of poems, *The Ashes of Gramsci* (1957), and described the ‘Sardinian muse’ as having until now retained a ‘sensual, religious nature, in the pagan or mystical sense’<sup>30</sup>. The Pasolini folk material will recur later in extended form in *Kapitalistisch Realisme*, and play a major role in the final third of this piece, *Sizilianische Männerakte*.

At the end of this section, the folk music is joined (in Ives-like manner) by material in the bass register derived from the soprano and alto parts of the Bach chorale ‘O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden’ (Fig. 66), which is No. 54 from the *Matthäus Passion*, as a reference to Pasolini’s film *Il vangelo secondo Matteo* (*The Gospel according to St Matthew*) (1964)<sup>31</sup>.

<sup>30</sup> Pasolini, *Passione e ideologia* (Milan: Garzanti, 1973), cited in Angelo Mundula, ‘Sardinia’ at <http://home.att.net/~l.bonaffini/sardegna.htm> (accessed 11/10/2006).

<sup>31</sup> Pasolini also used music of Bach in his first film *Accattone* (1961), saying about this ‘I think what scandalized them in *Accattone* was the mixture of the violent Roman subproletariat with the music of Bach, whereas in *Mamma Roma* there is a different kind of combination which was less shocking – ordinary people who are trying to be petit bourgeois with the music of Vivaldi, which is much more Italian and is based on popular music, so the contamination is much less violent and shocking.’ (Stack (ed), *Pasolini on Pasolini*, pp. 52-53).



Fig. 66. Bach, Chorale 'O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden'.

James Kirkup is perhaps most notorious for his poem *The Love that Dares to Speak its Name* (after the poem by Lord Alfred Douglas 'Two Loves' (1894), which ends '*Unmasked by night; I am true Love, I fill / The hearts of boy and girl with mutual flame.*' / *Then sighing, said the other, 'Have thy will, / I am the love that dare not speak its name.*'<sup>32</sup>), in which he fantasised about a sexual encounter between Jesus of Nazareth and a Roman Centurion. This poem was the subject of a now-infamous blasphemy trial in 1977 after its publication in the British magazine *Gay News*<sup>33</sup>. Finnissy chose to represent his perception of this type of religious 'deviance' by taking a selection of traditional Passiontide hymns, and inverting them. The hymns in question are 'Rockingham' ('When I survey the wondrous cross') by Edward Miller (1731-1807) (see Fig. 67 for Finnissy's transformation), adapted S. Webbe (1820), 'Stabat Mater' from the *Maintzich Gesangbuch* of 1661, adapted Webbe (1782), and 'Salve Festa Dies', written by Vaughan Williams (1905). The first two of these sources are in two parts, the third a single line. Despite the use of inversion and combination, the material retains many of the qualities of the traditional English hymn – earnest, warm, plodding, and the like.

It is with the Pasolini and Kirkup sections that the most characteristic Finnissy voice comes through in this piece. The quasi-cinematic overlaying of transformed versions of Sardinian folk-music and Passiontide hymns/Bach chorales creates a powerful impact; both types of material bringing with them such a wealth of implications, as much as a result of their sonic characteristics as anything else – specifically the combination of florid line in one hand and chordal

<sup>32</sup> See Alfred Douglas, *Collected Poems* (New York: AMS Press, 1994), and *The Penguin Book of Homosexual Verse*, pp. 262-264.. Finnissy also named his orchestral work *Speak its Name!* (1996) after this poem.

<sup>33</sup> For more on the trial, see 'The gay poem that broke blasphemy laws', *Pink News*, January 10<sup>th</sup> 2008, at <http://www.pinknews.co.uk/2008/01/10/the-gay-poem-that-broke-blasphemy-laws/> (accessed 21/8/13).



progression in the other, but without an attempt to integrate the two. Coming from Finnissy, who has throughout his career used music to engage with the conflicting emotions of nostalgia for a traditional England and antipathy towards all that such an England encompasses (provincialism, narrowness, conformity, disdain towards modernity, militarism, jingoism, racism, homophobia, the British class system), this is an archetypal moment within the cycle.



Fig. 67 (a). Edward Miller, *Rockingham* ('When I survey the wondrous cross')

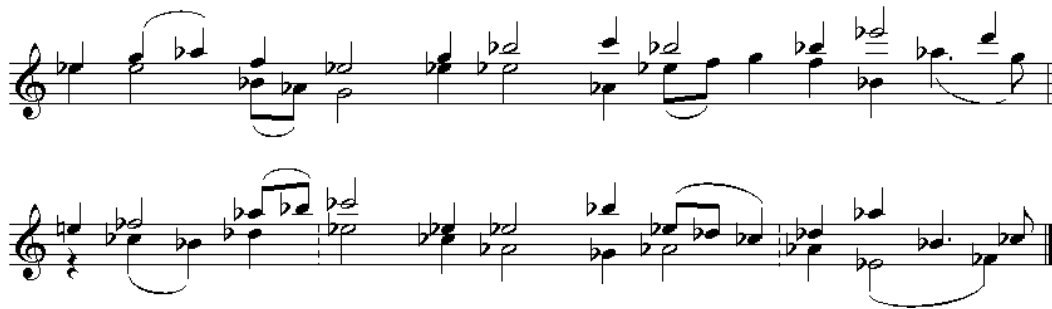


Fig. 67 (b). Inversions of parts of *Rockingham*, with modifications.

To represent the work of poet, novelist, playwright, petty thief and prostitute Jean Genet, whose aestheticism is always tempered by the sordid nature of his subject matter, and whose moral subversion matched by the reinscription of other forms of morality, Finnissy uses ragtime, as might have been heard in brothels (to reference Genet's play *Le Balcon*, in which men in a brothel act out fantasies in which they become figures of authority, then realise the emptiness of

such positions, whilst a revolution proceeds outside)<sup>34</sup>. Compared to the short ragtime passage at the end of the *Spirituals*, Finnissy here constructs a more abstract rag out of fragments and melodic archetypes, but which nonetheless also relates in some ways to the genre on a structural level<sup>35</sup>. Fig. 68 demonstrates some of the ways he derives such fragments.

James Scott - *Ragtime Oriole* Finnissy

Harry L. Cook - *The Shovel Fish* Finnissy

Scott Joplin - *The Favorite* Finnissy

Scott Joplin - *Cleopha* Finnissy

Scott Joplin and Louis Chauvin - *Heliotrope Bouquet*

Finnissy Scott Joplin - *Paragon Rag*

Finnissy

<sup>34</sup> Finnissy was soon afterwards to write another Genet-inspired work, his piano trio *Un chant d'amour* (1999, rev. 2003) to accompany Genet's erotic film of the same name.

<sup>35</sup> David Jasen and Trebor Tichenor open their book on ragtime with the basic definition 'Ragtime is a musical composition for the piano comprising three or four sections containing sixteen measures each which combines a syncopated melody accompanied by an even, steady duple rhythm' (their italics). See David A. Jasen & Trebor Jay Tichenor, *Rags and Ragtime: A Musical History* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1978), p. 1.

Scott Hayden and Scott Joplin - *Felicity Rag*

Finnissy

Scott Joplin - *The Cascades*

Finnissy

Fig. 68. Ragtime fragments and Finnissy's derivations<sup>36</sup>.

Edward Berlin, in his monograph on ragtime, delineates three categories of syncopation: untied, tied, and augmented, which are shown in Fig. 69<sup>37</sup>. Most early rags used untied syncopations exclusively, whereas the other types became

<sup>36</sup> Almost certainly most of the material will have been derived from specific sources (though Finnissy said in private correspondence that it was 'freely composed'). The derivation with the Joplin fragments above are clear, the other similarities seem more on the level of generic archetypes. The sketches contain a series of individually crossed-out numbers (226-11-50-187-240-8-265-61-265-81-88-284-148-48-73 (?)-145-164-102, then a further line of nine numbers which are completely illegible). The top left-hand corner of the page has something written and comprehensively scribbled over, impossible to read (next to this is the name of James Kirkup crossed out as well). This first crossed-out item may be the name of a source of ragtime. I have checked in the following collections - Rudi Belsh (ed), *Classic Piano Rags: Complete Original Music for 81 Rags* (New York: Dover, 1973), David A. Jasen (ed), *Ragtime Gems: Original Sheet Music for 25 Ragtime Classics* (New York: Dover, 1986), David A. Jasen (ed), *Scott Joplin: Complete Piano Rags* (New York: Dover, 1988), Trebor Jay Tichenor (ed), *Ragtime Rediscoveries: 64 Works from the Golden Age of Rag* (New York: Dover, 1979), Trebor Jay Tichenor (ed), *Ragtime Rarities: Complete Original Music for 63 Piano Rags* (New York: Dover, 1975), *The Essential Piano Library: Ragtime* (London: Music Sales Ltd., 1985), Alexander Shealy (ed), *World's Favorite Music and Songs; Ragtime Piano* (Carlstadt, NJ: Ashley Publications, 1973), (also other sources without anything like the sufficient number of pages), and have not found a correspondence.

<sup>37</sup> Edward A. Berlin, *Ragtime: A Musical and Cultural History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980), pp. 83-84.

more frequent after around 1900<sup>38</sup>. Out of the 32 bar-length fragments used (counting one bar as consisting two fragments, though omitting two bars in the middle which are more sustained and also the Kirkup material at the beginning), there are only four tied syncopations (two of these joining bars/fragments), as well as two short augmented syncopations where the hands equalise in density. Thus for the most part Finnissy maintains the earlier ragtime convention.

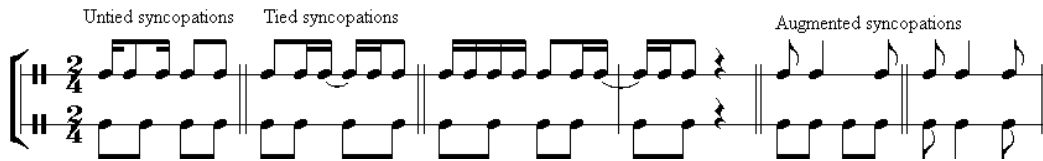


Fig. 69. Forms of ragtime syncopation.

The whole passage is 19 bars long; these can be considered as a 2 bar introduction, a main 15 bar strain (so one bar less than the 16 that were conventional), containing within it a 2 bar break (in which the texture thins to just crotchet beats, and contains a momentary shift to the flattened submediant of the overall tonality of C)<sup>39</sup>. Breaks would conventionally occur in between distinct strains; Finnissy's compressed form incorporates it within a strain. Crucial within a strain was the pivotal measure 13, the first bar of the final phrase, which would usually contain augmented sixths of flat-VI chords, or replace the harmonies with bare octaves<sup>40</sup> in early ragtime; in later ragtime the bare octaves were discarded, and this measure would be distinguished by richer harmonies, diminished sevenths, or a form of what Berlin calls secondary ragtime rhythm (from accumulative groups of three metrical units – Finnissy does not use these so they are not relevant here). Measure 12 of the strain (these numbers omit the break) takes the place of measure 13 here, coming after a mini-climax in measure 11 which resolves onto C<sup>6/9</sup>. Finnissy does not use any of the common ragtime harmonic conventions but instead diverts to the similarly exotic harmony of A-flat<sup>7</sup> (echoing the A-flat harmony of the break), before resolving back to C. Thus, whilst constructed from fragments selected seemingly randomly, the ordering and modifications that Finnissy enacts give this vignette something of the structure of classic ragtime. The one element in particular that is notably absent is the use of octaves for accentuation within a monodic line; instead Finnissy mostly uses minor and major sixths, the fundamental intervals of the piece.

Various questions have been asked about the sexuality of Stephen Spender, but because of doubts as to whether homo/hetero/bisexuality should be considered as an identity, rather than simply a set of practices, I do not wish to dwell upon

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. pp. 84, 128.

<sup>39</sup> See Berlin, *Ragtime*, pp. 89-95, for details of the conventions of ragtime for introductions, strains and breaks.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. p. 95.

these here<sup>41</sup>. Spender was the most passionately committed to left-wing causes of all the 'thirties generation' (a category usually taken to include Spender, W.H. Auden, Christopher Isherwood, Louis MacNeice and Dylan Thomas), but would later turn away from his earlier politics and contribute something of a *mea culpa* in the anti-communist volume *The God That Failed*<sup>42</sup>. His poetry deals with vivid subject-matter (especially in his poems dealing with war and fascism), but is somewhat lacking in terms of linguistic and metrical subtlety.

Finnissy once again generates abstract music using a cipher from Spender's name, whilst carrying over some rhythms from the Frank O'Hara section. He combines these with two British music hall songs from the early twentieth century: 'Young Men Taken In and Done For' (by Harry King<sup>43</sup> – Fig. 70), and 'Be a Man' (by Henry E. Pether and Leonard Cooke<sup>44</sup>), the latter inserted into the line, retrograded, in *quasi recitativo* fragments from the end of the second verse. The former was transformed into double notes by using a random selection from 42 intervals derived from material in the Kirkup, Cocteau, Chubb, Pasolini and Carpenter sections. The second section combines the two music hall songs in a violent and dissonant manner, hammered out in a way that recalls Finnissy's arrangement of Gershwin's 'Nashville Nightingale' (1990). 'Young Men Taken In and Done For' continues into its refrain in the bass, whilst 'Be a Man', still retrograded form, is in the treble, both harmonised in jarring chords, and with stabbing accentuated *ffff* dynamics. The 'meaning' of this surprising (but short) passage is open to various speculation, perhaps resentment at Spender's having turned his back on the communism and homosexual encounters of his early life, or

---

<sup>41</sup> It should be noted, though, that neither of the two poems included in the *Penguin Book of Homosexual Verse*, '18' and 'To T.A.R.H.', are included in the 1985 edition of Spender's *Collected Poems 1928-1985* (London: Faber and Faber, 1985), whilst they had been included in the 1953 edition of Spender's poems (see *Penguin Book of Homosexual Verse*, 'Acknowledgements', p. 27). According to David Leeming, after the appearance of this later edition, and also the *Journals 1939-1983* (London: Faber and Faber, 1985), John Lehmann asked why Spender had 'censored' some poems from the 1930s. Spender 'replied by assuring Lehmann that the revisions did not represent censorship but were determined by aesthetic concerns. He wished to avoid "gushing" and things "poetically bad." Several of the poems were about love and could be taken to be love between men or between men and women. His job as a poet was not to write specifically heterosexual or homosexual poems' (David Leeming, *Stephen Spender: A Life in Modernism* (London: Duckworth, 1999), pp. 238-239).

<sup>42</sup> See Richard Crossman (ed), *The God That Failed*, revised edition with introduction by David C. Engerman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), pp. 229-273. Spender said amongst other things that 'I was driven on by a sense of social and personal guilt that made me feel firstly that I should take sides, secondly that I could purge myself or an abnormal individuality by cooperating with the Workers' Movement' (p. 272). Spender was also deeply involved with the CIA-funded periodical *Encounter*, though he quit when he discovered the CIA involvement; for more of this, see Leeming, *Stephen Spender*, pp. 170-171, 206-207, John Sutherland, *Stephen Spender: The Authorised Biography* (London: Penguin, 2004), pp. 438-439, 453, and Frances Stonor Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper? The CIA and the Cultural Cold War* (London: Granta, 1999), pp. 170-178, 388-391.

<sup>43</sup> In Peter Davison, *Songs of the British Music Hall* (New York: Oak Publications, 1971)

<sup>44</sup> In *Masterpieces of Variety Theatre* Part 15 (London: Amalgamated Press, 1935). Pether is better known for the songs 'Waiting at the Church' and 'Poor John', both from 1906. He was also a founder of the Performing Rights Society. See Richard Anthony Baker, *British Music Hall: An Illustrated History* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2005), pp. 100, 169. This book gives a good overview of the history of the music-hall and its songs, of which the two used by Finnissy are very representative if little-known today.

alternatively a perception of his character in some sense? Whichever, the passage makes for an interesting counterpart with the more flamboyant violence of the first four poets' sections.

As smart a man as ev - er lived was I when in my prime, Un - til I met Miss Lu - cy Jaggs, she  
knocked me out of time. I called there for a - part - ments for I'd no - ticed once or twice, A  
card stuck in the win - dow, and - on it this de - vice: "Young men tak - en in and done for,"  
Oh! I nev - er thought that she, The girl I left my hap - py  
home for, Would have tak - en in and done for me.

Fig. 70. 'Young Men Taken In And Done For', words and music by Harry King.

Yet there appears to be no evidence of a particular interest in music hall songs on Spender's part, nor of appropriation of the texts in his poetry. I put this question to Finnissy; he replied by suggesting that he was more interested in capturing the spirit of a certain period with which he associated Spender. The same question can be asked about Pasolini – he was after all from Bologna, not from anywhere in Sardinia (the connection with Sardinia via Gramsci and the 'Sardinian muse' mentioned earlier is quite tenuous in terms of the folk culture of the island), and was not a *launeddas* player (nor do either Sardinia or the *launeddas* feature in any of his films<sup>45</sup>). But in the end, perhaps the individual sections are less about the actual poets themselves (in-depth psychological characterisation of others is not generally something with which Finnissy engages

<sup>45</sup> However, Pasolini does make use of a pipe in his film *Edipo Re (Oedipus Rex)* (1967), played by Oedipus himself after blinding himself. Pasolini described this as follows: 'He plays the pipe, which means, metaphorically, he is a poet. First he plays for the bourgeoisie, and he plays the old Japanese music connected with the Oracle – ancestral, private, confessional music, music that could be defined in one word as decadent; this is a kind of evocation of the primitive, of his origins; then, disgusted by the bourgeoisie, he goes off and plays his pipe (i.e. goes off and acts as a poet) to the workers, and there he plays a tune which was one of the songs of the resistance: it was a Russian folk-tune which some Italian soldiers learnt in Russia and was sung during the Resistance as a revolutionary song' (Stack (ed), *Pasolini on Pasolini*, p. 129).

in any of his numerous ‘portrait’ pieces) than about the various associations that come to Finnissy’s mind when he imagines these poets and their work (Spender with music-hall songs of the 1930s, Pasolini with an environment in which one may hear Italian folk music), which may or may not relate to the individuals in question in a way that would be meaningful to others familiar with their work (or lives).

The poetry of Federico Garcia Lorca often has an ecstatic and fantastical quality, combining his fascination with the world of the Roma with his wild surrealist associations, as amply shown in his most famous collection *Romancero gitano* (*Gypsy Ballads*) (1928). Lorca worked closely with Manuel de Falla, who took a deep interest in composers’ use of folkloristic material (such as Debussy’s works with Spanish allusions); together the two collaborated on a thesis on the *cante jondo*. Lorca through his short life sought to create an idiom that was both avant-garde but also rooted in traditional Spanish poetry<sup>46</sup>; he also tried to raise money to publish an album of traditional songs from Granada.

Finnissy creates his own surrealistic tapestry using mostly folk sources. The strongly melodic and tonal nature (mostly in E-flat major) of this section, much of it in monophonic form, highlights the route beyond the somewhat confused nature of the previous melange. The material comes from both Spanish and Basque folk music; the Spanish source is obscure, but the material resembles the Arabic-influenced folk song from Santander, ‘Viva la Montaña’<sup>47</sup> (Fig. 71). The Basque source material is a selection of fragments from the ‘Danzas’ (Nos. 1300-1318, sampled randomly) in *Cancionero vasco* by J.A. Donostia<sup>48</sup>. These are combined with more fervent passages relating obliquely to (though not directly quoting) Giacinto Scelsi’s piano cycle *Hispania*, configured with much overlapping of hands in such a manner as to recall the keyboard idioms of Isaac Albeniz (e.g. in ‘Triana’ and ‘Lavapies’ from the *Iberia* cycle). It is followed by a transitional section that effects a quite violent disjuncture with the appearance of an A major triad. This ushers in a series of colonnade-like block chords, many of them triadic (almost certainly selected randomly from a gamut, though this is not shown in the sketches), using these to colour another folksong associated with Lorca (Fig. 72).

---

<sup>46</sup> See Christopher Maurer, ‘Introduction’, in Federico García Lorca, *Collected Poems*, edited and with an introduction and notes by Christopher Maurer (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1991), pp. xlv-xlvi, l-liv.

<sup>47</sup> From Kurt Schindler, *Folk Music and Poetry of Spain and Portugal* (New York: Hispanic Institute in the United States, 1941), song no. 530, cited in Bruno Nettl, *Folk and Traditional Music of the Western Continents*, with chapter on Latin America by Gerard Béhague, third edition (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1990), p. 123. Nettl cites the use of a wide degree of ornamentation combined with the lack of a metrical structure as betokening Arabic influences (*ibid.* p. 122); these attributes can be found in numerous of the Santander songs in Schindler’s book. Other songs with which Finnissy’s material exhibits similarities include the set ‘Cantos de danzantes’ from Ávila, no. 101 in Schindler. Federico de Onís points out in his introduction to Schindler’s book how the latter found that ‘the same songs are to be found in the most widely separated regions, which proves that the folk music and poetry of Spain and Portugal have a common background’ (this includes the Basque regions of Spain as well) (p. xxiv). This type of Iberian commonality seems to be exploited, or at least portrayed, in this passage of Finnissy’s.

<sup>48</sup> J.A. Donostia, *Cancionero vasco* (Madrid: Unión Música Española, 1944).

Even in earlier relatively ‘tonal’ pieces such as the *Gershwin Arrangements*, it is rare to find block chords in Finnissy’s music; thus this passage seemed quite a bold and surprising gesture upon first hearing to many otherwise familiar with Finnissy’s work and idioms. Yet the passage does not create very much of a sense of functional progression between the triads; rather the triad itself becomes objectified and thus serves more of a colouristic rather than harmonic effect, as one finds in the use of parallel triads in the some of the piano music of Busoni.



Fig. 71. Spanish folk song from Santander<sup>49</sup>

<sup>49</sup> From Kurt Schindler, *Folk Music and Poetry of Spain and Portugal* (New York: Hispanic Institute in the United States, 1941), song no. 530, cited in Bruno Nettl, *Folk and Traditional Music of the Western Continents*, with chapter on Latin America by Gerard Béhague, third edition (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1990), p. 123. Nettl cites the use of a wide degree of ornamentation combined with the lack of a metrical structure as betokening Arabic influences (ibid. p. 122); these attributes can be found in numerous of the Santander songs in Schindler’s book. Other songs with which Finnissy’s material exhibits similarities include the set ‘Cantos de danzantes’ from Ávila, no. 101 in Schindler. Federico de Onís points out in his introduction to Schindler’s book how the latter found that ‘the same songs are to be found in the most widely separated regions, which proves that the folk music and poetry of Spain and Portugal have a common background’ (this includes the Basque regions of Spain as well) (p. xxiv). This type of Iberian commonality seems to be exploited, or at least portrayed, in this passage of Finnissy’s.





Fig. 72 (a). Original melody derived by Finnissy from Lorça material.



Fig. 72 (b). *Seventeen Immortal Homosexual Poets*, triadic section connecting Cocteau and Kavafis sections, derived from melody of Fig. 35 (a) with octave displacements, triadic harmonisations and new rhythms.

Ralph Chubb was a mystical romantic, a nostalgic who hated science and the contemporary material world, who constructed in his work an immensely elaborate private mythology. Chubb appealed to some form of earlier Arcadia (idealised, as so often<sup>50</sup>) which was constructed in terms of his own pederastic world-view, speaking of ‘The form of youth without blemish, is not such the form divine? / Children of love, today I will sing my song to you!’<sup>51</sup> He sought to legitimise his own desires by evoking images of the Holy Ghost appearing in the form of a naked boy. His work is little known and was issued mostly in limited editions, highly elaborate and beautifully produced books with filled with his own drawings as well as his mythical tales involving himself as some type of spiritual guru. Finnissy finds a musical means to allude to Chubb’s sexual behaviour, by the use of multiple English folk songs in high registers<sup>52</sup>, to suggest the voice of treble voices, the upper voice mostly monophonic, the lower one harmonised. Overall the whole section has a pronounced eerie quality which one could read as an expression of a certain disdain and unease on Finnissy’s part towards this particular predilection of Chubb.

For the quasi-surrealist polymath Jean Cocteau, Finnissy once more uses two types of material for each hand. For the right hand, this is a plethora of random fragments alluding to music of Satie (including *Parade*), Milhaud and other composers who had collaborated with Cocteau. This hand is all written *piano* and as such is very much overshadowed by the *fortissimo* left, where there is the first composed reference to Alkan’s *Jean qui pleure, Jean qui rit*, as used more extensively in *Alkan-Paganini*. Finnissy generates a sequence of eighteen cells, (mostly in two parts), from *Jean qui rit*, constructed in quavers and triplets except for one cell (18), and a further twelve from *Jean qui pleure*, all constructed from semiquavers and triplets. The full array of cells, all of which are in the treble register, is given in Fig. 73.

---

<sup>50</sup> Though the first appearances of Arcadia in pastoral poetry associate it with poverty and social realism (Theocritus) and then with poverty and open critique (Virgil, whose first Eclogue opens with a discussion of land seizures in order to profit the army). Even traditional English pastoral “afforded a way of attacking contemporary political abuses obliquely” (John Barrell and John Bull (eds), *The Penguin Book of English Pastoral Verse* (London: Penguin, 1974), p. 6). My thanks to Harry Gilonis for drawing this to my attention.

<sup>51</sup> Ralph Chubb, ‘Song of My Soul, 3’ in *The Penguin Book of Homosexual Verse*, p. 301.

<sup>52</sup> The source of these is obscure – possibly they derive obliquely from the same Lincolnshire collections used later in the Symonds section.





Fig. 73 (b). Gestural vocabulary derived from Alkan, *Jean qui pleure*

The most striking feature of each group of cells is the use of trills in the *Jean qui rit* and double notes in the *Jean qui pleure*. Undoubtedly Finnissy's means of selection, configuration and consequent encapsulation of some particular attributes of the Alkan material impresses itself upon the final result as much as the literal material sampled. The left hand part is then a simple random sampling of these cells, transposed by various intervals (which seems to reflect a preservation of some sense of stepwise melodic continuity in the top part, albeit with octave skips) and set in the bass register

Konstantinos Kavafis was born to Greek parents, growing up for a while in Liverpool, England, but later settling in the Greek community in Alexandria, Egypt (which itself has a long mixed heritage – Cleopatra's family were Macedonian Greek<sup>53</sup>), where he lived for most of his life. His verse is highly refined (he was a perfectionist) whilst mixing rhymed, regular forms with unrhymed free verse and also *Katharevousa* (an old-fashioned form of 'high' Greek diction) as well as *demotika*, a street language. His poems range from bookish treatments of historical subjects to highly personal pictures of individuals he

<sup>53</sup> Thanks to Harry Gilonis for pointing this out.

know, with the type of gentle homoerotic tone that can also be found in Ancient Greek poetry<sup>54</sup>.

Like the Frank O'Hara section, this section has its origins in an earlier piece, in this case an unpublished solo oboe work written in 1995 for Helen Thomas, then promotions manager at Oxford University Press. Monophonic throughout, it derives from a book of Cretan folk songs<sup>55</sup> (see Fig. 7 (d)), which are generally in a declamatory style with heavy, elaborate ornamentation. It is a relatively straightforward section in two parts, the first of which is a rather superficially 'exotic' series of undulations, shifting around various tonal centres, but most prominently around G. The second is more of a dance, with similarly shifting tonalities, fusing the two types of writings towards the conclusion.

Oscar Wilde's life, prose and plays are well-known and need no introduction here. Other than the famous *Ballad of Reading Gaol*, however, his poetry is little-known. Of mixed quality (Wilde himself believed that 'all bad poetry springs from genuine feeling'), his poetry often deals with classical or mythical subject matter intermingled with more rapt and personal lyrics, but generally unimaginative use of tetrametric forms. Wilde is an iconic figure in mainstream British gay culture, his combination of dandyish aestheticism and decadence, combined with his quasi-martyrdom through being imprisoned in Reading Gaol for homosexual activity, make him almost a saint to many.

Finnissy here uses a simple superimposition of two materials once more, the right hand being derived from several Irish folksongs collected in Edward Bunting's *The Ancient Music of Ireland* (1840)<sup>56</sup>, specifically 'Paidin Mhac Ruairidhe' (Paddy MacRory) (see Fig. 7 (c)) and 'Conchobhar Macareibhe' (Connor Macareavy) for the first and second sections respectively. The left hand is derived from Wagner's *Tannhäuser* (a favourite opera of Wilde's), in particular from the sextet in Act 1 Scene 4 ('Sei unser, Heinrich!'), using the melodic part in the strings and woodwind, and the bass line in the cellos and basses, in the *molto tenuto* section. For the second section the assignment of material to hand is reversed.

Edward Carpenter was an eccentric English socialist who dabbled in various forms of Eastern mysticism as well as advocating vegetarianism and sandal-wearing. He was an active campaigner for homosexual rights, believing that homosexuals constituted a third sex or 'intermediate sex', which became the

---

<sup>54</sup> See Daniel Mendelsohn, 'Introduction: *The Poet-Historian*', in C.P. Cavafy, *Collected Poems*, translated, with introduction and commentary by Daniel Mendelsohn (New York: Random House, 2009), pp. xlii-xlix; also George Kalogeris, 'The Sensuous Archaism of C.P. Cavafy', *The Critical Flame*, September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009, at <http://criticalflame.org/the-sensuous-archaism-of-c-p-cavafy/> (accessed 21/8/13).

<sup>55</sup> Samuel Baud-Bovy, *Chansons Populaires de Crète Occidentale* (Geneva: Edition Minkoff, 1972). Baud-Bovy was a Swiss musicologist and conductor who lived from 1840-1910. This source was also used for Finnissy's later chamber work *Ceci n'est pas d'un forme* (2003).

<sup>56</sup> Edward Bunting, *The Ancient Music of Ireland: Arranged for the Pianoforte* (1840) (Dublin, Walton's, 1969), four volumes. The sketches mistakenly lead one to believe that these songs are included in George Petrie, *The Petrie Collection of the Ancient Music of Ireland* (1855), edited David Cooper (Cork: Cork University Press, 2005).

title of a book he published on the subject<sup>57</sup>. A minor poet, Carpenter's overloaded and somewhat over-earnest verse does not generally succeed in masking a relative dearth of substance and kitsch-like superficiality.

This driving and intense passage is of more interest in terms of the drama of the whole work; with it we are clearly well on the way towards the destructive conclusion. Finissy once again uses the Music Hall songs that previously feature in the Spender section ('Young men taken in and done for' in the top part, 'Be a Man!' in the bottom, in both cases with significant pitch modification), together with a left hand derived from Tchaikovsky's song 'Do Not Leave Me' Op. 27 No. 3 (see Fig. 74). The titles alone suggest a combination of dominant impulsiveness combined with self-pity. Yet the former quality is made manifest through the relentless of the left hand, whilst the right hand, in a polyrhythmic relationship to the left (but the former maintaining more of a sense of a regular pulse), has an impassioned expansiveness.

**Andante amoroso**  
*p molto espressivo*

Oh, nev - er leave me, sweet friend,  
what were this life with - out thee! lock'd in thine etc.

Fig. 74 (a). Tchaikovsky, 'Do Not Leave Me', Op. 27 No. 3, text translated by Lady McFarren.

<sup>57</sup> Edward Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex: A Study of Some Transitional Types of Men and Women* (Kila, MT: Kessinger Publishing Company, 2005).



Fig. 74 (b). *Seventeen Immortal Homosexual Poets*, Edward Carpenter section.

The work of John Addington Symonds is enormously important in the history of aesthetic writing explicitly dealing with same-sex relationships. Whilst unable to be wholly open about his preferences, on account of the censorious Victorian England in which he lived, Symonds was nonetheless able to drop stronger hints than had previously been possible, in his work on Michelangelo, Benvenuto Cellini (whose *Autobiography* Symonds translated<sup>58</sup>) and Walt Whitman, as well as writing an important essay in defence of homosexuality, *A Problem in Greek Ethics* (1873)<sup>59</sup>. He also wrote a major seven-volume work on the Italian Renaissance.

The right hand of this section is derived (extremely obliquely) from Berlioz's *Les Troyens*, mostly from the Septet with Chorus, 'Tout n'est que paix' from Act 2, Scene 6 (Symonds was an avid Berlioz-lover) and the left hand from Lincolnshire folk-songs, some of which are included in the collection made by Percy Grainger<sup>60</sup>, specifically 'I'm seventeen come Sunday', 'The American Stranger', 'Betsy Walton' (see Fig. 7 (b)), 'Riding down to Portsmouth' and 'The ship that lies in harbour'. Once again, Finissy included these folksongs simply as they for him evoke a certain archetype of 'Englishness', rather than having any specific relation to Symonds.

The 'mélange' sections also feature some material for the first time (in terms of the compositional chronology) which is developed further elsewhere in the cycle. Two passages from *Mélange II* served at the time of writing as 'prototypes' for material to appear later in *Alkan-Paganini* (P18 L4-5, the series of demisemiquavers) and *Unserer Afrikareise* (the 'Decreasingly turbulent' material P19 L2 – P20 L4). The *Alkan-Paganini* passage here seems to have been generated from Chart B, given in the previous chapter (Fig. 56 (b)). The exact process of selection is not clear from the sketches, but it almost certainly took the form of some random sampling together with transpositions. The sketches contain a longer

<sup>58</sup> Benvenuto Cellini, *The Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini*, translated John Addington Symonds (1887) (New York: The Modern Library, 1985).

<sup>59</sup> John Addington Symonds, *A Problem in Greek Ethics: Studies in Sexual Inversion* (Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2002).

<sup>60</sup> Percy Grainger, Patrick O'Shaughnessy (eds), *21 Lincolnshire Folk Songs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988). Grainger was particularly drawn to these songs after hearing them performed in the Lincolnshire town of Brigg by the elderly singer Joseph Taylor. See John Bird, *Percy Grainger* (London: Faber and Faber, 1976), pp. 103-104, 110-112.

section of material which was discarded from the final piece, all in a single right hand part and ranging widely around the keyboard, but without the continual two-part writing within one hand that was to ultimately form the basis of the right-hand section of *Alkan-Paganini*.

The following section was intended as a prototype for *Unsere Afrikareise* (which had not yet been composed when Finnissy was writing the *Poets*). Whilst quite different to the eventual piece (not least through the much less metrically regular use of rhythms here), we can see elements that appear in the later chapter – an alternation between melodies on a few notes which probably derive from the Vendan song ‘Tambani Zwa ɲu’<sup>61</sup> (Fig. 75), and undulating melodies in higher tessitura, with many dissonant minor seconds and elaborate ornamentation, which anticipate the North African material used later, as well as the use of the combination of ostinato-style repeated notes and other figurations that seem to be derived from the Ethiopian melody used in the Norse section, though harmonised with mini-cadences so as to sound like a rendition of such music in a ‘classical’ manner, in the bass (Fig. 29), in the form of an Ecosaise<sup>62</sup>.

Vendan song - 'Tambani Zwanu'

Tsha - ma - a - no ku ri Ta - mba - ni zwa - nu;

Retrograde of Bars 1-2, then 3-4

Transposed and modified version

Fig. 75 (a). Derivation from Vendan song ‘Tambani Zwa ɲu’.

<sup>61</sup> In John Blacking, *Venda Children's Songs: A study in ethnomusicological analysis* (1967), second edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 77. See Chapter 16 for more on the use of Venda songs.

<sup>62</sup> I have looked through all of Schubert's numerous Ecosaises (which are referenced in *Unsere Afrikareise*), and those that seem closest to the patterns included here are D529 No. 4 and D735 Nos. 2 and 4. Though Finnissy's rendition is sufficiently abstract as to qualify as more of an 'archetype' of an Ecosaise pattern.





Fig. 75 (b). *Seventeen Immortal Homosexual Poets*, part of prototype section for *Unsere Afrikareise*.

The 'compression' material which features near the end of the *Poets* – the longest exposition of such material – recalls (as mentioned in the 'Material as Archetype' section) two earlier works for piano(s): Stockhausen's *Mantra* (1970) and Xenakis's *Evryali* (1973), and also the final section of Richard Barrett's *Tract* (1989-1996), which employs a similar technique to the Stockhausen, and was completed and premiered by the author at the time when the *Poets* was being written<sup>63</sup>. This passage, in certain ways the most taxing of the whole cycle and stretching the boundaries of technical possibility, comes closest to the type of transcendental piano writing to be found in Finnis's *Piano Concerto No. 4* (1978, revised 1996) (Fig. 76).

<sup>63</sup> *Tract* was premiered on October 10 1996 at the University of Wales, Bangor. This piece was also performed in the same concert as the first complete performance of *Seventeen Immortal Homosexual Poets* on May 1 1997 at the British Music Information Centre in London.



Fig. 76. *Seventeen Immortal Homosexual Poets*, from 'Compression' section.

The final *mélange* was generated from a particular digest of the earlier material, with Bach BWV 328 as a thread running through. This was generated in a specific manner throughout. Three crotchet beat groups were selected (with exceptions when a minim, dotted minim or fermata is encountered – the whole of the former two are included together with two other crotchet beats, whereas in the case of the latter the beat is extended by half). These are alternately selected from the tenor and bass parts or soprano and alto ones (with the occasional exception). Between each selection, three beats are 'skipped', then the next selection made. The first selections are all made in retrograde form, proceeding backwards through the chorale. When the beginning is reached, the direction is reversed and the fragments are used in their original forms, proceeding forward through the piece (again alternating and skipping groups of three beats, until the end of the second full bar of the third system). The transpositions were chosen

according to a more arcane procedure. Finnissey took the names of the last five of the poets, extracting the ‘musical’ letters from their names (A-G, S = E-flat, H = B natural, Fis = F#):

JEANCOCTEAU KONSTANTINOS KAVAFIS OSCAR WILDE EDWARD CARPENTER

EA C C EA E A E<sup>b</sup> A A F# E<sup>b</sup>CA DEED A DCA E E

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS

B ADD E<sup>b</sup> DE<sup>b</sup>

Then he associates each of these with their interval from A-flat, the lowest note in the chromatic alphabet. Using the nearest interval in each case, this produces E = major 3<sup>rd</sup> down; E-flat = perfect 4<sup>th</sup> down; F# = whole tone down; B = minor 3<sup>rd</sup> up; C = major 3<sup>rd</sup> up; A = semitone up; D = tritone up or down. So, the sequence above is used to provide the transpositions (and the number of units – thirty-two). Fig. 77 demonstrates the process.

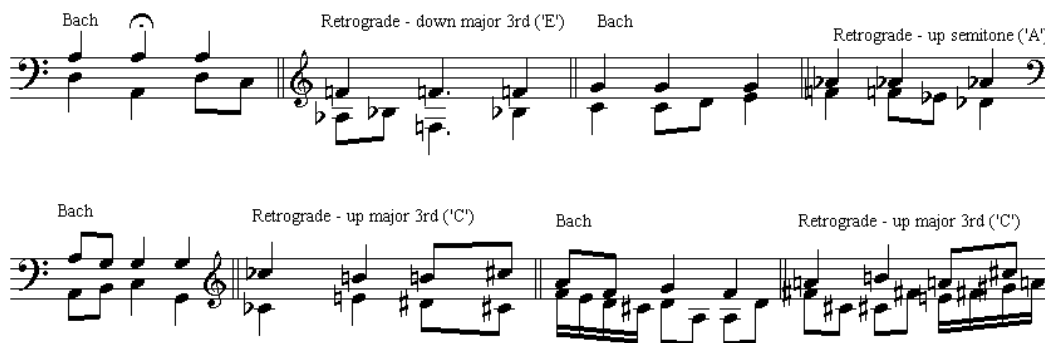


Fig. 77. Transformations of Bach ‘Herr Gott, dich loben wir’ BWV 328 for final section of *Seventeen Immortal Homosexual Poets*

Arbitrary though this procedure might be in terms of transpositions (and I have no wish to assign it any symbolical meaning – uncovering this cipher reveals a compositional technique, nothing else), it does produce a result which is fluid and unpredictable harmonically. The material certainly retains a ‘Bachian’ quality, even in the retrograde forms (the fact that the unretrograded forms come towards the end produce a type of ‘focusing in’ on the Bach, especially at the moments where the other parts go silent). And the continuity of material type as the fragments spin their line lends a thread to hold this section together without becoming so diffuse as to be incoherent.

The rest of the parts are derived from 189 fragments: Kavafis (1-18), Wilde P 32 L5 (19-22) *Jean qui rit* (as used in Cocteau) (23-40), Wilde P33 (41-55) *Jean qui pleure* (as used in Cocteau) (56-67), Cocteau RH (Satie/Milhaud/etc) (68-97),

Carpenter (98-154), Symonds (with some unused folk material) (155-189). This material is used to generate the outer parts, with using the familiar techniques of random selection, transposition, retrograde and modification. For example, at the outset the first right-hand gesture comes from a retrograde of the right hand of the Wilde section, P 33 L3 (from the low grace-note D), followed by the final right hand bar of P34 L3, from the Carpenter section, then a retrograde of the right hand of the first bar of P36, from the Symonds section. The texture varies, with the various outer parts sometimes disappearing (thus focusing in upon (or rather, 'unveiling') the Bach material) then reappearing (Fig. 78).

Extremely Quiet [♩ = 54-66 molto flessibile]

(ppp)

6:5

3

3

3

6:5

5:3

8:5

3

3

6:5

8:5

5:3

6:5

5:3

5:3

(E♭)

3

(ppp)

ppp

6:5

5:3

6:5

7:5

3

3

3

3

Fig. 78. *Seventeen Immortal Homosexual Poets*, Mélange III, P40 L5 – P41 L3

## Chapter 9

### No. 7: *Eadweard Muybridge-Edvard Munch*

After the rapid cross-cutting of materials and high density of musical information in the *Poets*, the next chapter in the *History, Eadweard Muybridge – Edvard Munch*, acts as a huge contrast. Continuing the exploration of ‘portraiture’ in the two previous chapters, the reasons for combining these two artistic figures are not obvious; whilst their dates overlap to a certain extent (1830-1904 for Muybridge, 1863-1944 for Munch), they remain of different generations, active in very different parts of the Western world, and with very different aesthetic and technical approaches. However, both were in different ways concerned to capture the dynamism of the external world – the former through combination of multiple images, the latter through attempting to capture in still pictures the phenomenon of ongoing motion surrounding the figures portrayed. Finnissy used this piece to attempt to find musical analogues of both of these approaches, and to, in his words ‘play out the conflict between the High Victorian rationality of Muybridge and the expressionistic world of Munch.’<sup>1</sup>

Muybridge, who lived an eventful life involving a serious stagecoach crash which may have left him with a degree of brain damage, and the shooting dead of his young wife’s lover (yet receiving a not-guilty verdict)<sup>2</sup>, became in his mid-20s interested in the new medium of photography<sup>3</sup>. spectacular early photographs of natural sites such as those in Yosemite National Park (after returning to America in 1867) and of clouds and of Native American people (including in the context of the Modoc War between the United States Army and the Native America Modoc tribe, of 1873), as well as of railroads and buildings during various stages of construction. He simultaneously captures inhumane and awe-inspiring nature and the efforts of humankind to develop and build upon the natural world, to ‘dominate’ nature, as Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer might have put it<sup>4</sup>. The impulses to idolise and revere on one hand, and attempt to control and possess on the other, are fundamental to an understanding of Muybridge’s work.

---

<sup>1</sup> Private conversations with the author. Finnissy’s programme note for the *History* describes the two figures as representing ‘Abstract structuralism (scientific rationality)’ and ‘Metaphysical expressionism (emotive irrationality)’ respectively.

<sup>2</sup> For more on Muybridge’s life, see Rebecca Solnit, *Motion Studies: Time, Space & Eadweard Muybridge* (London: Bloomsbury, 2003), and Philip Prodger, *Time Stands Still: Muybridge and the Instantaneous Photography Moment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>3</sup> The first photograph (involving a negative, as opposed to a daguerreotype), is generally taken to be William Henry Fox Talbot’s *Latticed Window* of 1835. Talbot went on to produce a book, *The Pencil of Nature*, in 1844, with photographic illustrations. The *collodion* process, in which wet glass plates were used to produce photographs, was developed by Frederick Scott Archer by 1851, superseded by the dry gelatin plate in the 1870s. See Graham Clarke, *The Photograph: A Visual and Cultural History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 15-17 and Ian Jeffrey, *Photography: A Concise History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 10-18.

<sup>4</sup> See Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, ‘The Concept of Enlightenment’, in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, translated John Cumming (London: Verso, 1997), pp. 3-42.

Muybridge also became concerned with the exploration of human and animal motion in photography. The Governor of California, Leland Stanford (after whom Stanford University was later named), a lover and owner of horses, had expressed his belief to Muybridge there was a time when a horse had all four hooves off the ground. Wanting to prove this, he hired Muybridge to take pictures of his own champion racehorse 'Occident'<sup>5</sup>. By 1877, with the use of drop-shutters, flash, multiple cameras and high-speed shutters, he had succeeded in capturing a horse in motion through a series of still photographs taken at very short intervals. He was soon afterwards to create a whole series entitled *The Attitudes of Animals in Motion*<sup>6</sup>, from which 'Occident Trotting' is shown in Fig. 79.

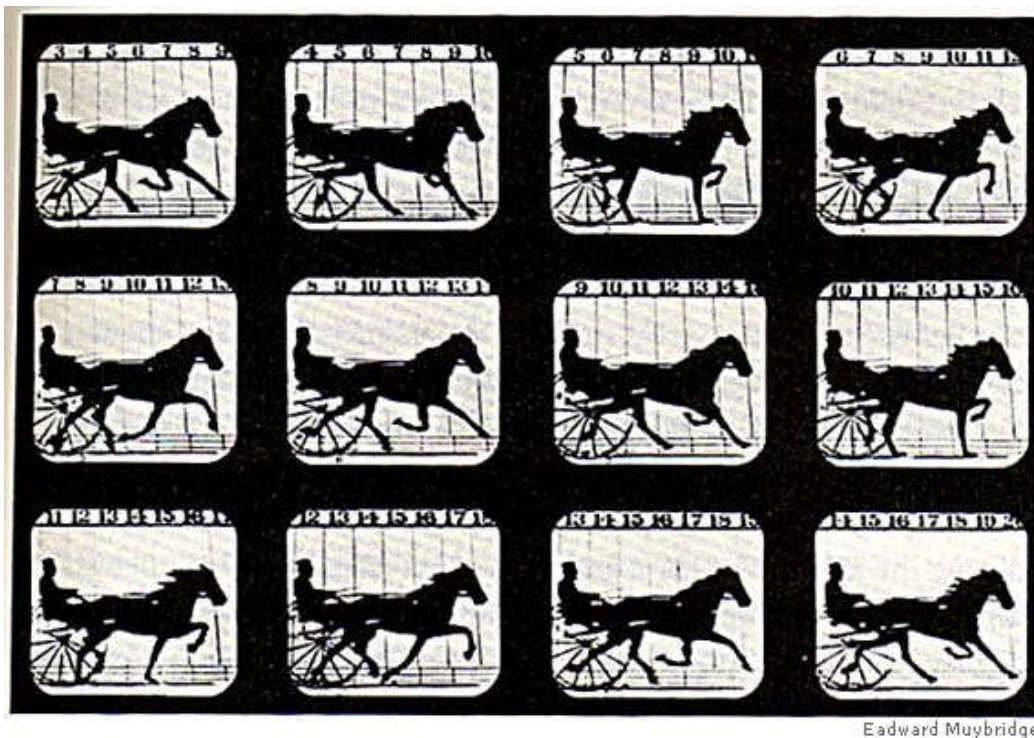


Fig. 79. Eadward Muybridge, 'Occident Trotting' from *The Attitudes of Animals in Motion* (1881)

A few years later, Muybridge developed a device called the *zoopraxiscope* for projecting multiple images in quick succession, so as to be able to show the horse in motion. This was an early prototype for the cinema projector<sup>7</sup>. He

<sup>5</sup> For more details on the interactions between Muybridge and Stanford, see Prodger, *Time Stands Still* pp. 9-23. This book also contains an invaluable earlier history of the Instantaneous Photography Movement (pp. 24-111).

<sup>6</sup> See Eadward Muybridge, *Complete Human and Animal Locomotion*, three volumes (New York: Dover, 1979).

<sup>7</sup> See Mitchell Stephens, *The Rise of the Image, The Fall of the Word* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 87-88 and for more detail and diagrams, Prodger, *Time Stands Still*, pp. 154-161.

continued to develop his innovations and began to photograph nude humans in motion as well<sup>8</sup>, including himself as shown in Fig. 80. It is this aspect of his work that is of most interest to Finnissy, to whom such sequences have a curiously lifeless quality of which he sought to obtain a musical analogue.

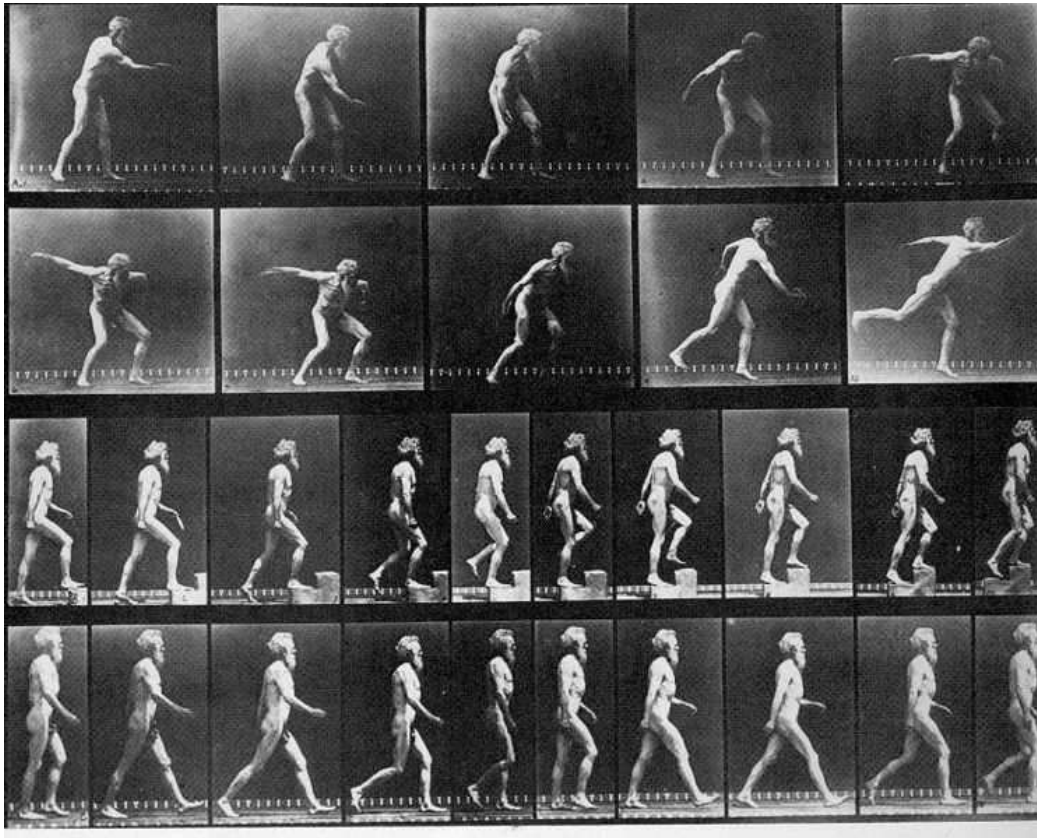


Fig. 80. Eadweard Muybridge – A. *Throwing a Disk*, B: *Ascending a Step*, C: *Walking from Animal Locomotion* (1885-1887)

In the first section of *Muybridge-Munch*, Finnissy makes use of musical techniques for capturing other ‘images’ that directly parallel those of Muybridge. The first passage is in four sections. The first, third and fourth of these all directly allude to material from the *Spirituals*, but with an important modification. He divides the material into staggered fragments, so that the ending of one overlaps with the beginning of the next.

The overall structure of the Muybridge section is as follows:

- (i) ‘Steal Away’.
- (ii) Bruckner 3<sup>rd</sup> Symphony/Chabrier *L’Étoile*, ‘without any sense of phrasing or continuity’. Austere derivation from this material and the *Poets*.

<sup>8</sup> See Solnit, *Muybridge*, pp. 220-227.

(iii) 'Nobody knows the trouble I see'

Transition – *Meno mosso*

(iv) 'Go Down, Moses'

(v) *Presto fuocoso*, 'like shattering glass'. Explosive 'Compression' material entirely in the treble at first.

(vi) Transition into Munch section.

The versions of the spirituals used are those freely modified in the sketches, followed in each case by a passage from the free improvisatory passages from the *Spirituals*. Finnissy draws upon the works of Bruckner and Chabrier (see Fig. 81) because both were written in 1877, the year when Muybridge first succeeded in capturing 'Occident' in motion. If played according to the composer's expressive (or rather, anti-expressive) indications, this passage truly can create the aural equivalent of Muybridge's lifeless sequences of photographs, as Finnissy casts his sonic 'camera' upon a musical subject.



Fig. 81 (a). Passages from Bruckner Symphony No. 3 alluded to by Finnissy.

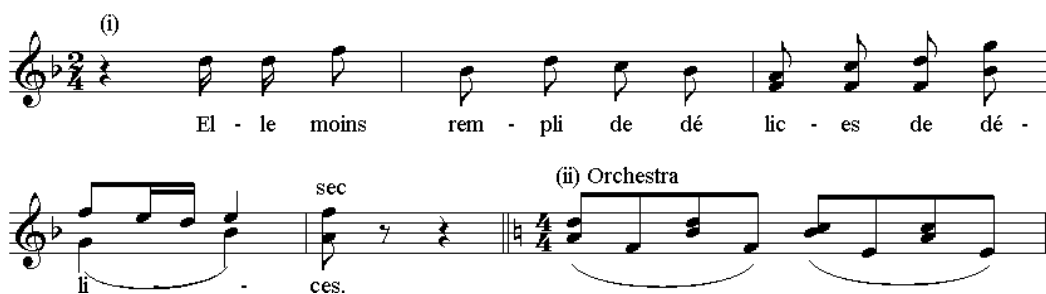


Fig. 81 (b). Passages from Chabrier *L'Étoile* alluded to by Finnissy.



Fig. 81 (c). Combination of retrograded Bruckner and Chabrier in sketches.



Finnissy sprinkles the 'compression' section (which consists first of three outbursts each starting quickly and gradually decreasing in volume and tempo) with a few gestures of repeated major or minor sixths (fundamental intervals in the cycle), which then take over to become an ominous knell leading towards the Munch section, leading via a hushed echo of the 'compression' material and a series of diminished chords towards a resolution on C#/A. At this point he derives a rhythm from the surname of Edvard Grieg by the following process: he assigns each of the first six letters in the alphabet a duration increasing by one quaver each time (so that A = quaver, B = crotchet, C = dotted crotchet, etc.), then loops back to the beginning again so as to go through the whole alphabet. Thus we have the following:

A G M S Y	quaver
B H N T Z	crotchet
C I O U	dotted crotchet
D J P V	minim
E K Q W	minim + quaver
F L R X	dotted minim

This then produces the rhythmic cipher for Grieg's name as shown in Fig. 82.

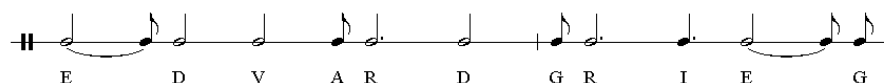


Fig. 82. Rhythm on the name 'Edvard Grieg'

Like Muybridge, Edvard Munch also attempted to capture dynamism in still images. He did not simply place his human figures against backgrounds but rather he attempted to represent the energy or force fields surrounding such figures. Munch was obsessed by sickness and death, after an awful series of childhood experiences, including the death of grandmother, mother, aunt and sister all from tuberculosis, and great sickness on Munch's own part<sup>9</sup>. Furthermore, Munch's younger sister was diagnosed as mentally ill, and Munch himself may have suffered from bipolar disorder<sup>10</sup>. He portrayed nature and the environment as violent and hostile, mankind as lonely and alienated, upon whom psychological

<sup>9</sup> See Poul Erik Tøjner, *Munch: In His Own Words* (Munich, London and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 2001), p. 136, for Munch's own account of his childhood.

<sup>10</sup> See Albert Rothenberg, 'Bipolar Illness, Creativity and Treatment', in *Psychiatric Quarterly* Vol. 72 No. 2 (June 2001), pp. 131-147, for an exploration of possible relationships between this aspect of Munch's personality and his work.

violence is enacted by their environment in an often terrifying manner. He was to be highly influential upon the German expressionists of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. He described his art as ‘a self-confession. Through it, I seek to clarify my relationship with the world. This could also be called egotism. However, I have always thought and felt that my art might be able to help others to clarify their own search for truth’<sup>11</sup>.

Whilst highly successful in his artistic career, Munch’s life was profoundly unhappy, succumbing as he did to depression, paranoia and alcoholism<sup>12</sup>. In 1897, he met Tulla Larsen, the wealthy daughter of a wine merchant, with whom he had an affair, spending plenty of her money in the process. She influenced some of his paintings from around this period, including the renowned *The Dance of Life*, in which she appears in a white dress in the left hand-corner<sup>13</sup>. She became eager for her and Munch to marry. Munch, on the other hand, was afraid of marriage, not least as a result of his observations of married experiences of friends and contemporaries (including August Strindberg). He attempted to flee her, though she continued to pursue and attempt to manipulate him in the manner of a stalker<sup>14</sup>, threatening suicide at some points, attempting to blacken his reputation at other times. In 1902, during a meeting between them at her house, in circumstances whose exact nature remain obscure<sup>15</sup>, Munch ended up shooting himself in his left hand, ruining his middle finger, an event alluded to in his painting *Death of Marat II* of 1907<sup>16</sup>. Where the rationalist Muybridge had pointed his gun outwards at another, the expressionist Munch turned it upon himself.

Munch came to own a small Kodak camera, which he acquired in 1902. He started to take a variety of photographs straight away (despite declaring that ‘The camera cannot compete with painting as long as it cannot be used in heaven or hell’<sup>17</sup>), in particular a collection which he called *Fatal Destiny*<sup>18</sup> compiled from 1902-1908, during the last year of which period he was being treated at a clinic in Copenhagen for *dementia paralytica* induced by alcohol poisoning<sup>19</sup> (see Fig. 83).

These works were the primary inspiration for Finnissy. Many of them are self-portraits, employing deliberate (though elementary) techniques for blurring, my moving either himself or the camera, passing a white sheet of paper across the lens during the exposure, or uniting two images by the use of double exposures. The works are as lonely, alienated and intense as his paintings, his human figures (because of the double exposure) having a ghost-like quality.

---

<sup>11</sup> Cited in Tøjner, *Munch*, p. 135.

<sup>12</sup> See Sue Prideaux, *Edvard Munch: Behind the Scream* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), especially pp. 207-264.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 192.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 193-200.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 221-225.

<sup>16</sup> See Tøjner, *Munch*, pp. 27-29.

<sup>17</sup> Cited in Tøjner, *Munch*, p. 72.

<sup>18</sup> Prideaux, *Munch*, pp. 254-257.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 248-249.



Fig. 83. Edvard Munch, *Edvard Munch à la Marat at Dr. Jacobson's clinic in Copenhagen*, 1908-09

For this part of the piece, Finnissy uses three Norwegian sources: (a) Grieg's Second Piano Concerto (which only exists in sketch form) (b) the same composer's late folk-music settings *Slåtter* Op. 72, which had also been used in the first part of Finnissy's longest piano work prior to the *History*, the epic *Folklore*, and (c) a collection of Norwegian folk-songs collected in the nineteenth-century by Ludwig Mathias Lindeman (see below). Beyond, there are various references to passages from the *Poets*.

Grieg's *Slåtter* of 1902-1903 was his last major work for piano. The work's genesis dates from a decade-and-a-half before its composition, when Grieg received an unsolicited letter from the fiddler Knut Johannessen Dahle, who had studied the Hardanger fiddle with the renowned player Myllarguten. Dahle wanted to get the dances he had learned written down, and contacted Grieg as he was 'our country's finest musician'<sup>20</sup>. Interested in the proposal, Grieg arranged a visit to meet Dahle, but he was forced to cancel. It was a whole eleven years before the two finally met; during which period Dahle had spent 4 years in the United States. After Grieg's friend, violinist Johan Halvorsen, set to work on transcribing Myllarguten's playing (as Dahle was now old), Grieg worked on the pieces from August 1902, for six months. They demonstrate a pronounced

---

<sup>20</sup> Finn Benestad and Dag Schjelderup-Ebbe, *Edvard Grieg; The Man and the Artist*, translated William H. Halverson and Leland B. Sateren, (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1988), p. 363. See p. 363ff for more details on the events leading up to the composition of *Slåtter*. On issues of nationalism in the context of this cycle, see Ståle Klielberg, 'Grieg's *Slåtter* Op. 72: Change of Musical Style or New Concept of Nationality?', in *Journal of the Royal Music Association* 121 (1996), pp. 46-57.

harmonic, rhythmic and ornamental individuality more acutely than any other of Grieg's piano works, though the extent to which they accurately represent their sources has been questioned<sup>21</sup>. Many of them are constructed out of small motives, melodic and ornamental archetypes, with recurrent drone pitches in the treble register to mimic the sympathetic strings on the Hardanger fiddle. The first seven pieces are all in D major, as are a further five out of a total of sixteen.

Grieg had engaged much earlier on with Norwegian folk-music in his compositions, aided by the publication of a vitally important collection, that of composer and organist Ludwig Mathias Lindeman (1812-1887). Lindeman, who had begun to collect folk-tunes from about 1840 onwards<sup>22</sup>, compiled *Ældre og nyere norske fjeldmelodier* ('Older and newer Norwegian mountain melodies')<sup>23</sup>, published in two volumes in 1853 and 1867, which was widely circulated to the great benefit of the prestige of the music in question. Grieg spoke glowingly of Lindeman's work, and wrote a song dedicated to him on the occasion of his silver wedding<sup>24</sup>.

In contradistinction to the Muiybridge section, the Munch material is characterised by organic growth and continuity right up until the conclusion. This is achieved through a highly extensive development of a small fragment, thus bringing a highly Germanic Brahmsian technique of 'developing variation' to play upon material that some might superficially characterise as belong to a category of 'nationalist' music. This fragment comes directly from the sketches for Grieg's *Second Piano Concerto* in B major, which Grieg worked on in 1882-1883. Only a few measures of the first and third movements are known to exist in sketch form<sup>25</sup>, together with a longer tarantella-like passage using a theme not unlike 'In the Hall of the Mountain King' from *Peer Gynt*<sup>26</sup>. The planned opening theme for the first movement is as follows<sup>27</sup> (Fig. 84).

---

<sup>21</sup> Benestad and Schjelderup-Ebbe point out that 'The special *springar* rhythm of the Telemark *slaatter* is not captured in Halvorsen's notation – or, for that matter, in any other similar transcriptions either. The problem is that the beat lengths are supposed to be of varying duration – with the third beat always the shortest – and there is no way to accommodate this peculiarity in the standard system of music notation. Somewhat more problematic are the misplaced bar lines in some of the *springars* – in Nos. 2 and 13, for example. The result is that in Halvorsen's and thereby also in Grieg's – transcriptions, what should have been the third beat of the measure becomes the first beat instead. This is no problem for one who already "has the Telemark rhythm in his blood"; such a one can easily play the dances from Halvorsen's transcriptions. But in the piano arrangements it becomes more evident that the rhythm is distorted, because here the downbeat is normally stressed much more than the other beats.' (p. 367) (Telemark was the town from which Dahle came).

<sup>22</sup> See Benestad and Schjelderup-Ebbe, *Grieg*, pp. 4ff.

<sup>23</sup> Ludwig Mathias Lindeman, *Ældre og nyere norske fjeldmelodier*, reprint (Oslo: Norsk Musikforlag, 1983).

<sup>24</sup> An unpublished work, listed at [http://www.edvardgrieg.no/engelsk/grieg\\_compositions\\_eng.html](http://www.edvardgrieg.no/engelsk/grieg_compositions_eng.html) (accessed 13/7/06).

<sup>25</sup> These are reproduced in Benestad and Schjelderup-Ebbe, *Grieg*, p. 251.

<sup>26</sup> For the full sketches, see <http://www.grieg.be/articles/griegbminor.htm> (accessed 20/7/06).

<sup>27</sup> Reproduced in Benestad and Schjelderup-Ebbe, *Grieg*, p. 251.



Fig. 84. Grieg Second Piano Concerto, first movement, opening theme, from sketches.

Finnissy manages a remarkable degree of development out of this short fragment, whilst integrating it with material from *Slåtter*. The sketches demonstrate how much he worked on this in myriad different states of developing variation. By looking at different states of transformation of his initial material, it is possible to glimpse the immense subtlety, refinement and virtuosity of Finnissy's compositional technique. He began by configuring it with rhythmic modifications and a drone bass, as shown in Fig. 85.



Fig. 85. First sketch from Grieg Second Piano Concerto

This basic melodic shape he was to develop in various ways, to appear once the general character of the Munch section has been established. He took a series of short fragments from pieces VI and XVI from *Slåtter*, ('Myllarguten's Gangar' and 'Kivlemøyane. Springdans'), as shown in Fig. 86.

Then Finnissy combined his first development of the Piano Concerto theme together with these fragments (specifically those from XVI in the order they come (the bass line from (f) being used in bar 4, then the bass lines from (b), (c) and (e) in bars 7-10). The first phrase is modified slightly so as to be able to join the *Slåtter* material seamlessly. Also, in both the Concerto and XVI material, the modality is changed to fit with the basic D major/B minor tonality. See Fig. 87. After this, Finnissy inserted extra material after the opening rising octave, this time composed out of smaller Grieg fragments. Fig. 88 shows the progress of this insert; note how in the first modification Finnissy introduces a figuration from Fig. 87. The fragment in Fig. 89 derived more directly from a passage in the Grieg.

Finnissy then transposes and further modifies these fragments, with a reiteration of the rising octave from the Grieg after the second fragment, and separates them with multiple bars rest. Thus both the fragments have time to 'resonate' (both acoustically and psychologically) and also the material emerges gradually. The result is both awe-inspiring and ominous as the fragments creep in

against a larger-than-life background (Fig. 90). The major modality of the right hand is kept in check at the outset by the reiterated minor thirds in the left.

XVI. Kivlemøyane. Springdans - fragments.

(a) bars 27-28

(b) bars 13-14

(c) bar 11

(d) bar 39

(e) bar 12

(f) bars 23-26

VI. Myllarguten's Gangar - bars 6-9.

The image displays two musical excerpts. The first, XVI. Kivlemøyane, is in 3/4 time and B-flat major. It consists of six fragments: (a) bars 27-28, (b) bars 13-14, (c) bar 11, (d) bar 39, (e) bar 12, and (f) bars 23-26. The second excerpt, VI. Myllarguten's Gangar, is in 6/8 time and D major, showing bars 6-9. Both pieces feature a complex interplay between the right and left hands, with the right hand often playing melodic lines and the left hand providing harmonic support through chords and bass lines.

Fig. 86. Fragments from *Slåtter* XVI and VI

Fig. 87. Early sketch for beginning of Munch section

Fig. 88. Development of figuration that becomes bar 4 of Munch.

XI. Knut Luråsen's Halling II - bars 10-13

The image displays two musical staves. The upper staff is a piano accompaniment in 6/8 time, featuring a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). It contains four measures of music with a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. The lower staff is a single melodic line, also in 6/8 time with a treble clef and one sharp. It consists of two lines of music. Brackets and the number '3' are placed above and below the notes to indicate triplet groupings. The interval '7:6' is marked above and below the notes to indicate a specific intervallic relationship between notes.

Fig. 89. Development of fragment that becomes bar 19 of Munch section.

Through the course of the section, Finnissy introduces the Grieg Second Concerto theme more clearly, and finds myriad ways of generating new material from it without the results sounding over-contrived or mechanistic, also intercutting with (relatively speaking) simpler material derived from the Lindeman collection, almost invariably two simultaneous fragments presented in non-retrograded form in the treble register. Towards the conclusion he even divides the Grieg Second Concerto theme up into four- and three-note pitch cells in order to create new lines from permutations of these, to which are added chords selected randomly from the 'triadic' sections of the *Poets*.

To see the process at work with the Lindeman materials, see Fig. 91, which gives two of the Lindeman folk melodies that appear at the top of P17, in the right hand No. 470, *Ungersvenden*, in the left No. 238, *Springbands*. Finnissy takes from the upbeat to bar 5 until mid-way through bar 7 of *Ungersvenden*, and bars 16-19 of *Springdands*, incorporating accompaniment as well as melody as far as possible. The pulse is shifted so as to avoid metrical evenness, in both parts. There are also other modifications (the accompaniment in *Ungersvenden* moving up a semitone, for example) to incorporate the combination of the two together. The first left-hand figure becomes a recurrent motive which appears at various points in the cycle (and has been already encountered in the final section of *Alkan-Paganini*). Fig. 92 shows the passage as it appears in *Muybridge-Munch*.



Larghetto [ $\text{♩} = 54$ ]

The musical score consists of six systems of piano and bass staves. The tempo is marked 'Larghetto' with a quarter note equal to 54 beats per minute. The score begins with a piano (*pp*) dynamic. The first system shows a piano staff with a long note and a bass staff with a 6:5 time signature. The second system features a 7:5 time signature in the piano staff and a 13:8 time signature in the bass staff. The third system has a 7:5 time signature in the bass staff. The fourth system includes a piano (*pp*) dynamic marking, a 6:5 time signature in the piano staff, an 11:9 time signature in the bass staff, and an 8:5 time signature at the end of the system. The fifth system continues the melodic and harmonic development. The sixth system concludes with a 7:6 time signature in the piano staff and a 7:5 time signature in the bass staff.

Fig. 90. *Muybridge-Munch*. Opening of Munch section.

# Ungersvenden

**Con moto** **Vaage**

Un-ger sven-den han bad sin\_ Pi\_ ge sin al-ler-kjæ-re-ste Ven om haa

saa skui aa Lov\_ til at rei-se bort og komme\_saa snar- ligt i- gjen om hand

saa skul faa Lov til at rei-se bort og komme\_saa snar- ligt i- gjen.

Fig. 91 (a). Lindeman No. 470, *Ungersvenden*.

# Springbands

Aamot.

Allegretto

The musical score for 'Springbands' is presented in a grand staff format, consisting of seven systems of two staves each (treble and bass clef). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The piece is marked 'Allegretto'. Dynamics include *f* (forte), *cresc.* (crescendo), *p* (piano), and *D.C.* (Da Capo). The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and fingerings.

Fig. 91 (b) Lindeman No. 238 - *Springdands*

This figure shows a handwritten musical score for Lindeman No. 238 - 'Springdands'. It features a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. The notation is highly rhythmic and includes several numerical annotations above and below the notes, such as '6:5', '7:5', '6:5', '4:3', and '5:3', which likely represent specific rhythmic intervals or fingerings. The handwriting is in black ink on a white background.

Fig. 92. *Muybridge-Munch*, P17 L1.

At the end of this section, the material shifts markedly, alluding to the triadic section in the *Poets* (P28-29), the first in a series of references to this piece. Finnissy then divided the Grieg Second Concerto theme up into four- and three-note pitch cells, and created three new lines from this, as shown in Fig. 93. To each of these lines he adds a chord selected randomly from the *Poets* passage.

The figure consists of three musical staves labeled A, B, and C. Staff A is titled 'Original line with retrogrades of (2) & (4) and octave displacements' and shows a sequence of notes with some marked as retrogrades and an octave displacement indicated by a dashed line. Staff B is titled 'Inversion of (3) Retrograde of (1) (4) Inversion of (5) (2)' and shows a sequence of notes with various transformations. Staff C is titled 'Inversion of (1) Retrograde-inversion of (5)' and shows a sequence of notes with transformations, including a final measure with a double bar line and a circled note.

Fig. 93. Pitch cells derived from Grieg Second Piano Concerto Theme.

For the penultimate section, Finnissy returns to *Slåtter*, here in the clearest and most over-elaborated form yet. Finnissy generated 16 fragments, the first eight of these taken directly from pieces in the cycle, the second eight taken directly from a source book of literal transcriptions of Hardanger fiddle playing<sup>28</sup>, some of which are shown in Fig. 94. These are even more extremely ornamented than the transcriptions Grieg used, but still use the basic figurations of the trill and acciaccatura in various ways<sup>29</sup>.

<sup>28</sup> Morten Levy, *The World of the Gorrlaus Slåtts*, three volumes (Copenhagen: Acta Musicologica Danica No. 6, 1989).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* vol. 3, p. 22. As Levy says, 'Nearly every step in the gorrlaus scale may be embellished with a trill', giving details of how this is applied to each individual step (pp. 23-28). The 'typical gorrlaus scale' that he describes runs from f to b'' on white notes, with only c'', f'' and g'' raised (p. 11).



Fig. 94. Hardanger fiddle transcription fragments<sup>30</sup>.

All the sixteen fragments are in two parts, the bottom part frequently providing a drone. These are then permuted and feature in A-flat, a whole tritone apart from the D major/B minor tonality of earlier. The contrast between the two types of material is readily apparent in terms of density of ornamentation. Underneath this he creates a further 'processional' bass line from earlier material, which continues to push the music onwards (Fig. 95 – note how the figuration just before the double bar line derives from bars 12-13 of No. XVI, as shown in Fig. 86; also the bass line just after the double bar derives from alternate chords sampled in reverse from P21 L4).

But this rowdy folk-like Arcadia is not to last. Finnisss cuts into it violently with the 'Compression' material, now using the whole register of the instrument, all derived from the corresponding section near the end of the *Poets*. The difference here is the fragmentation of the material, which is presented in irregular groups separated by varying silences, coming full-circle back to the opening Muybridge passages in this respect. With some small variation of dynamics, the piece ends with a character of extreme violence and destructiveness, utterly obliterating the momentary ecstasy attained previously.

The value or otherwise of Expressionism (in which category for the purposes of these particular arguments it is fit to include Munch) was hotly debated amongst Marxist aestheticians in the twentieth-century. Indeed the parameters of the debates set the tone for many other disputes on the left on artistic matters. The Hungarian Marxist and proponent of artistic realism György Lukács argued that that 'Expressionism is grounded in an irrationalist mythology. Its creative style tends towards that of an emotive, rhetorical, vacuous manifesto, a declamatory pseudo-activism...their [the Expressionists'] creative method could without distortion be pressed into the service of that synthesis of decadence and

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. vol. 3, pp. 172, 162.

atism which is the demagogy of Fascism<sup>31</sup>. The German Marxist Ernst Bloch countered by arguing that Expressionism ‘undermined the schematic routines and academicism to which the ‘values of art’ had been reduced. Instead of eternal ‘formal analyses’ of the work of art, it directed attention to human beings and their substance, in their quest for the most authentic expression possible<sup>32</sup>. Yet from the vantage point of today, when plumbing the depths of human misery has become an affected posture in various strands of popular culture, do many of the calims for Expressionism still hold up, or has such a style and attitude become manneristic (or perhaps has always been thus)? More importantly, does Munch’s work instil a sense of the inevitability and immutability of the bleak world he portrays, thus rendering futile any attempts to change it?



Fig. 95. *Muybridge-Munch*, P22 L2-4.

Others, not least Theodor Adorno, have pointed to the potential of dehumanisation in extremely rationalised modes of artistic and other production, by their very neglect of the human factor, or attempts to dominate this. But this need not necessarily be used as an indictment of all forms of rationality and

<sup>31</sup> Cited in Ernst Bloch, ‘Discussing Expressionism’ in *Aesthetics and Politics: Debates between Bloch, Lukács, Brecht, Benjamin, Adorno*, with afterword by Frederic Jameson (London: Verso, 1980), pp. 17-18.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* p. 23.

scientific processes unless one is an obsessive technophobe<sup>33</sup>. If Muybridge's photographic sequences seem lifeless and dehumanising, this need not be endemic to the technical processes he employed, just the rather elementary nature of his technique, quite understandable when such things were very new. And the individual materials as presented in the Muybridge section of this piece may sound bereft, disembodied, withered, void of qualities of warmth or hope (or anger) that they possessed upon their earlier appearance (at least in the case of the spirituals), but the total experience of the section is most certainly 'expressive' in a broader sense (and, for that matter, the aforementioned qualities might also be considered 'expressive'). Finnissy creates a tremendous sense of tension and anticipation through his use of pared-down and fragmented materials, an almost frightening imminence and menace through apprehension of exclusion. Indeed it is one of the most dramatic passages in the whole cycle, so that the appearance of the 'Compression' material is indeed in every sense 'shattering'. The very control, discipline and refinement exercised in the composition of this passage, all products of a rational sensibility, are utterly essential in bringing such an effect about.

In comparison to the work of Muybridge, that of Munch, on the other hand, lacks much in the way of self-reflexivity. His paintings are not realist in the sense of strict representation (which is ultimately an impossibility) but strive to be so in a psychological manner. He captures the effects of external nature upon man's inner nature, in a sometimes terrifying manner, but communicates little sense of man as a social animal. Rather, his individuals are the aloof, alienated beings of romantic mythology, between whom and the rest of society disdain is exchanged in a reciprocal manner. The artistic individual is left to brood, to fear, to wallow in the depths of their solipsistic imagination, cut off from the rest of society's goings-on. His painting of 'Workers Returning Home' (1913-15) certainly captures the sense of defeat, drudgery and dehumanisation etched in the faces of the workers in question, as well as the regimentation of their situation, but it is difficult to credit Munch with a perception of these workers as human beings with the potential, when acting collectively, to change their situation. Indeed to portray historical contingency in such a manner would undoubtedly detract from the pathos which Munch seems to relish.

Finnissy is far too savvy a composer to be content simply with the presentation of neo-Expressionist doom and gloom in the Munch section of this work. From its dark beginnings, the work grows, even flowers, right up to its ecstatic near-conclusion. The sense of atmosphere and colour in the Munch section is captivating, the Hardanger fiddle-like ornamental figurations fully integrated into the whole rather than standing out as exotic curiosities. The inner

---

<sup>33</sup> Terry Eagleton (in 'Art after Auschwitz', in *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), pp. 358-359) cites one of Adorno's most ridiculous comments, in which he claims that the introduction of automated window opening mechanisms and other domestic developments are symptomatic of 'the violent, hard-hitting, unrelenting jerkiness of Fascist maltreatment' (Adorno – *Minima Moralia*, p. 40). Eagleton quite reasonably characterises this as 'one of his tiresome bouts of *haut-bourgeois* anti-technological nostalgia'.

sense of foreboding, every bit as palpable as that of the *Muybridge* section (though achieved through radically different means) can genuinely bear comparison with that of a Munch painting. It is as if the themes develop against an ominous backdrop that initially dwarfs them and against which they are played off from beginning to end. But this is not simply some contest between unequals; it is precisely when the diatonic Griegian material at the end seems to have relegated the lower part merely to the status of an accompaniment that Finnissy, in a wholly calculated manner, steps in to effect a violent change of texture. Finnissy's musical *materials* in this section may have the ambience of Norwegian neo-Expressionism, but his structural grammar is borne out of a refined rational and modernist sensibility. And the passage can also be appreciated in terms of the technical virtuosity of its composition, somewhat offsetting its initially ominous mood.

To set the work up as presenting the ultimate supremacy of the 'emotive' over the 'rational' would be an extremely simplistic interpretation; whilst the two sections are wholly different on the surface, some attributes of each one infiltrate the other. Finnissy combines a type of musical naturalism with thoroughly artificial structural and dramatic devices. But each of these aspects of the music feeds off the other. The 'Compression' material at the end of the *Poets* makes an impact, but nothing like as powerful as that in *Muybridge-Munch*. This is because rapid shifts of highly diverse material occur throughout the *Poets*, so the shift to the 'Compression' is not such a big surprise. The corresponding moments in *Muybridge-Munch*, however, come at the end of long continuous expanses of material (notwithstanding the fragmentation in the *Muybridge* section), so the impact is all the more startling. Yet there is a sense in which the final 'Compression' passage could also be heard as 'growing out of' the overloaded textures of the passage that precedes it, so the relationship between structure and organic growth of material may not be wholly estranged.



## Chapter 10

### No. 8: *Kapitalistisch Realisme (met Sizilianische Männerakte en Bachsche Nachdichtungen)*

*Kapitalistisch Realisme*<sup>1</sup> is by far the longest chapter of the *History*, but nonetheless relatively straightforward to apprehend and follow, at least on some levels. In essence it consists of three large sections connected by two interludes. The first and last of these sections are unified by long threads of material that run throughout – in the case of the first music derived from three works of Beethoven, for the last the *Pezzo Serioso* from Busoni's Piano Concerto, in retrograde form. The middle section consists of a series of Bachian canonic and other elaborations, mostly upon the *motivo fondamentale*. Thus we have a new set of 'the three B's' – Beethoven, Bach and Busoni, each informing a large-scale section.

No composer occupies a more iconic status within the history of classical music than Ludwig van Beethoven. The opening motive of the Fifth Symphony in particular has a strong claim to being the most infamous gesture of the whole repertoire. Beethoven lies at the centre of most canonical education about music; arguably the ideals supposedly made manifest in his work continue to serve as a model for music right up to the present day.

But it has not always been thus, and such an interpretation would likely have surprised many of his contemporaries. Inspired and influenced by the revolutionary and democratic ideals of his time, especially the overthrow of feudalism in the French Revolution, Beethoven is frequently seen as emblematic of the musical embodiment of wider social processes of his time. Such a conception has traditionally been viewed in terms of various paradigms, involving notions of individualism, nationalism, heroism and humanism, upon which are mapped the Enlightenment/Romanticism or Classicism/Romanticism dichotomies. In many ways the issues that have been most hotly debated in recent times were set down in a seminal important 1813 essay on the Fifth Symphony by E.T.A. Hoffmann. Hoffmann traced the development from Haydn and Mozart to Beethoven, but found in the latter 'the realm of the monstrous and the immeasurable' and 'the lever of fear, of awe, of horror, of suffering', thus calling Beethoven 'a completely romantic composer'<sup>2</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> The title of this work, and of *Wachtend*, are in Flemish, reflecting the fact that Finnissy was teaching the *Katholieke Universiteit Leuven* when writing both pieces. Whilst the term 'Capitalist Realism' was not new, having been used at least as early as 1963, for an exhibition in Düsseldorf featuring the work of Gerhard Richter, Sigmar Polke and others, and more recently in Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2009), Finnissy claims that he arrived at it independently ("capitalism" seen as a political system which manipulates and distorts perception, particularly through advertising and the media, so only a variant, and in my view an aberrant and dangerous variant, version of "reality" – e-mail to the author, 22/8/13).

<sup>2</sup> E.T.A. Hoffmann, 'Beethoven's Instrumental Music' (1813), in Oliver Strunk (ed), *Source Readings in Music History*, revised edition by Leo Treitler (New York: Norton, 1998), p. 1195.

While this view was by no means generally accepted during much of the nineteenth century, standing at some distance from other Germanic views including the important writings of Adolf Bernhard Marx<sup>3</sup>, it has become prevalent in the twentieth. Amongst standard texts in English of the post-war era that link this sort of radical and intransigent individualism to the wider political events of Beethoven's era is that of Reinhard G. Pauly, who writes that in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries 'Political leaders...were well aware that music could become a powerful tool of the new state' and that:

Music no longer existed for the entertainment of a privileged class of society but was to have higher purposes: to arouse patriotism, to serve the state and, ultimately, humanity.<sup>4</sup>

In the specific case of Beethoven, Pauly asserts that while he 'embraced the ideas of the Enlightenment wholeheartedly, he was not an outspoken opponent of the monarchy and he abhorred the extremes of the French Revolution', though:

*Liberté, égalité, fraternité* – Beethoven welcomed the tenets of the French Revolution. For him, as for the nineteenth century in general, they led to a changed view of the artist as one who, by virtue of ability and genius, belonged to the highest order of society, equal if not superior to kings and princes. That Beethoven had strong feelings on this subject is evident from his relations to his noble patrons. Much of the help he received from them, financial and otherwise, he seems to have accepted as something that society owed to him as an artist. Certainly he did not show himself overly thankful.<sup>5</sup>

Later commentators, such as William Kinderman<sup>6</sup>, have echoed this type of view. Barry Cooper argues that while Beethoven believed in 'a kind of meritocracy, in which those who were noble in spirit', including himself, 'belonged to an élite class', that 'his disdain of the working classes was frequently evident' and of French Revolutionary ideals, he supported 'Equality not at all, and Fraternity only in a limited way'<sup>7</sup>. Various others have expressed similar views, including Maynard Solomon<sup>8</sup> and Sanna Pederson<sup>9</sup>.

---

<sup>3</sup> For a good view of critical opinion on Beethoven, including Hoffmann and Marx, see Robin Wallace, *Beethoven's Critics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). Wallace points out from the outset that Hoffmann 'is in many ways the least representative of all the authors we shall examine' (p. 1). Carl Dahlhaus points out that 'the categorical model which underlies that essay is by no means confined to Beethoven in other writings by Hoffmann', citing other comparable writing by Hoffmann on Spontini, for example. See Carl Dahlhaus, *Ludwig van Beethoven: Approaches to his Music*, translated Mary Whittall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 70.

<sup>4</sup> Reinhard G. Pauly, *Music in the Classic Period*, second edition (Englewood Cliffs, NK: Prentice-Hall, 1973), p. 187 (originally published in 1965).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 194-195.

<sup>6</sup> William Kinderman, *Beethoven* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> Barry Cooper, 'Politics', in Cooper (ed), *The Beethoven Compendium* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), p. 145.

<sup>8</sup> See Maynard Solomon, 'Beethoven's *Magazin der Kunst*' in *Beethoven Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 203.

<sup>9</sup> Sanna Pederson, 'Beethoven and Masculinity' in Scott Burnham and Michael P. Steinberg (eds), *Beethoven and his World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 322.

Nicholas Marston, in examining the place of Beethoven within constructions of a nineteenth-century 'age of Romanticism' or an eighteenth-century 'age of reason', warns against 'the temptation to give too much credence to such broad generalizations when dealing with the history of ideas'<sup>10</sup>. Nonetheless, Marston articulates a common view when arguing that 'there is one broad shift in musical aesthetics' which is 'crucial to contemporary and later responses to Beethoven's music'. This shift is away from an eighteenth century view of music as 'well suited to expressing the passions or emotions', which 'likewise could arouse similar emotions in the hearer'. Also, because of 'the low specificity of musical representation of musical representation, and more particularly the inability of music to express moral concepts', music 'needed to be allied to words'. By contrast, in the nineteenth century:

Ideals of universality, rationality and clarity yielded to a way of thinking that placed the highest value on individuality, irrationality and obscurity. In place of the belief that absolute truth and knowledge were attainable came the opposite belief, that these concepts could never be attained. The Romantic artist strove towards the infinite, which he would never reach; and the struggle gradually became more important than the goal itself.<sup>11</sup>

But these various conceptions remain individualistic and biographically-focused, concentrating as they do on Beethoven's own intentions, wishes and self-conception, rather than possible meanings of the work itself in terms of its social context, which may or may not correspond to such intentions (if the latter are really of such great consequence). Solomon certainly takes into account economic factors, as impact upon Beethoven's wishes and career<sup>12</sup>, but not specifically the work. Theodor Adorno, on the other hand, recognises the combination of emancipation and new forms of bondage that were brought about by the new economic position of the composer who must ply their wares in the open market<sup>13</sup>. He argues that:

If he [Beethoven] is the musical prototype of the revolutionary bourgeoisie, he is at the same time the prototype of a music that has escaped from its social tutelage and is esthetically fully autonomous, a servant no longer. His work explodes the schema of a complaisant adequacy of music and society. In it, for all its idealism in tone and posture, the essence of society, for which he speaks as the vicar of the total subject, becomes the essence of music itself. Both are comprehensible in the interior of the works only, not in mere imagery. The central categories of artistic construction can be translated into social ones. The kinship with that bourgeois libertarianism which rings all through Beethoven's music is a kinship of the dynamically unfolding totality. It is in fitting together under their own law, as becoming, negating, confirming themselves

---

<sup>10</sup> Nicholas Marston, 'Intellectual currents: philosophy and aesthetics', in Barry Cooper (ed), *The Beethoven Compendium* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), p. 62.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* p. 63.

<sup>12</sup> See Solomon, 'Beethoven's *Magazin der Kunst*', p. 200-201. Similar problems are inherent in Tia DeNora, *Beethoven and the Construction of Genius: Musical Politics in Vienna 1792-1803* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996).

<sup>13</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, "Soziologische Anmerkungen zum deutschen Musikleben", in *Deutscher Musikrat, Referate Informationen 5* (February 1967), pp. 2 ff. cited in *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, translated E.B. Ashton (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), p. 208.

and the whole without looking outward, that his movements come to resemble the world whose forces move them; they do not do it by imitating that world.<sup>14</sup>

The consolidation of power on the part of the bourgeoisie requires ultimately a renunciation of the egalitarian ideals upon which their revolution was built, ideals which are incompatible with the exploitation of labour in the interests of capital. As Adorno puts it, the revolutionary bourgeoisie 'cannot yield, unfettered, to its own dynamics without voiding itself', and thus that 'bourgeois society is exploded by its own immanent dynamics – this is imprinted in Beethoven's music, the sublime music, as a trait of esthetic untruth: by its power, his successful work of art posits the real success of what was in reality a failure, and that in turn affects the declamatory moments of the work of art'<sup>15</sup>.

This powerful analysis of processes at play in terms of the changing nature of bourgeois subjectivity as manifested through art, resounds strongly with the sentiments expressed by Marx and Engels in *The German Ideology*:

In modern times the philosophy of enjoyment arose with the decline of feudalism and with the transformation of the feudal landed nobility into the pleasure-loving and extravagant nobles of the court under the absolute monarchy. Among these nobles this philosophy still has largely the form of a direct, naive outlook on life which finds expression in memoirs, poems, novels, etc. It only becomes a real philosophy in the hands of a few writers of the revolutionary bourgeoisie, who, on the one hand, participated in the culture and mode of life of the court nobility and, on the other hand, shared the more general outlook of the bourgeoisie, based on the more general conditions of existence of this class. This philosophy was, therefore, accepted by both classes, although from totally different points of view. Whereas among the nobility this language was restricted exclusively to its estate and to the conditions of life of this estate, it was given a generalised character by the bourgeoisie and addressed to every individual without distinction. The conditions of life of these individuals were thus disregarded and the theory of enjoyment thereby transformed into an insipid and hypocritical moral doctrine. When, in the course of further development, the nobility was overthrown and the bourgeoisie brought into conflict with its opposite, the proletariat, the nobility became devoutly religious, and the bourgeoisie solemnly moral and strict in its theories, or else succumbed to the above-mentioned hypocrisy, although the nobility in practice by no means renounced enjoyment, while among the bourgeoisie enjoyment even assumed an official, economic form — that of *luxury*.<sup>16</sup>

What both Marx and Engels and later Adorno identified were ways in which certain processes and aesthetics as embodied in cultural production come to assume quite different meanings in light of changing historical circumstances), and how this reflects back on the aesthetic consciousness of the artist.

In recent times, a fair amount of Anglo-American musicology has concentrated on attacking notions such as heroism, subjectivity, individualism and autonomy such are associated frequently with Beethoven's music. The most

---

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. p. 209, also printed in Adorno, *Beethoven: The Philosophy of Music*, edited Rolf Tiedemann, translated Edmund Jephcott (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), p. 43..

<sup>15</sup> Adorno, *Beethoven*, p. 46/*Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, p. 214.

<sup>16</sup> Karl Marx and Frederich Engels, 'St Max' from *The German Ideology*, available at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/ch03n.htm> (accessed 3/11/13).

intelligent of these, such as Scott Burnham's *Beethoven Hero*<sup>17</sup>, trace the persistent trope of the 'heroic' in terms of Beethoven's mid-period work, combining detailed analysis of a few pieces, in particular the *Eroica* and Fifth Symphonies with a study of reception history (in particular how 'Beethoven reception treats Beethoven himself as the subject of his heroic-style works'<sup>18</sup>), to examine why this trope has proved so durable, concluding that:

The components of the value system that Beethoven's music has come to represent include the central position of man as an individual and the corresponding emphasis on selfhood and self-consciousness, as well as the epistemological change from fixed truth to dynamic truth, as witnessed by the burgeoning influence of Christian eschatology (linear history with a telos), the importance of individual freedom (the ability to create one's own future), the romantic emphasis on becoming, and the change in philosophical method from syllogism to dialectic.<sup>19</sup>

But such conceptions are viewed disdainfully by various figures associated with the 'New Musicology', who have sought to describe these paradigms primarily in terms of reified conceptions of gender and sexuality<sup>20</sup>. Many of these writers fixate in particular on the use of gendered terms to assign musical value, but usually simply reverse their valorisation, rather than attempting to sublimate such hackneyed and simplistic categories themselves. In such a context, it is not surprising that anything that has ever been called 'heroic' would be viewed negatively.

The meanings of heroic and individualistic conceptions in Beethoven's own time remain important in terms of viewing his later relevance. Indeed I would go further in asserting the primary significance of such an approach, for the reasons articulated by Walter Benjamin in the sixth of his 'Theses on the Philosophy of History':

Historical materialism wishes to retain that image of the past which unexpectedly appears to man singled out by history at a moment of danger. The danger affects both the content of the tradition and its receivers. The same threat hangs over both: that of becoming a tool of the ruling classes. In every era the attempt must be made anew to wrest tradition away from a conformism that is about to overpower it.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> Scott Burnham, *Beethoven Hero* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* p. 157. Lewis Lockwood, however, points out the problems in defining Beethoven's mid-period as characterised by the 'heroic style', as in the work of Burnham and others, showing how it necessitates an exclusive focus on just a few works, discounting others that are 'primarily lyrical, intimate, and expansive', such as the Violin Concerto, Fourth Piano Concerto or "Archduke" Trio. See Lockwood, 'Beethoven, Florestan, and the Varieties of Heroism', in Burnham and Steinberg (eds), *Beethoven and his World*, especially pp. 36-41, also Lockwood, *Beethoven: The Music and the Life* (New York: Norton, 2003), pp. 209-214.

<sup>19</sup> Burnham, *Beethoven Hero*, p. 157.

<sup>20</sup> See for example Lawrence Kramer, *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), p. 22; Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), p. 69; Marcia Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 138-139; Pederson, 'Beethoven and Masculinity', p. 326

<sup>21</sup> Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', in *Illuminations*, edited with an introduction by Hannah Arendt, translated Harry Zohn (London: Fontana, 1973), p. 257.

The individualistic and the heroic were indeed deeply radical principles in Beethoven's time, signifying the ideals of historical change and emancipation from feudalism. Marx used a good deal of ink praising the achievements of the bourgeoisie in this respect<sup>22</sup>, whilst at the same time decrying the reaction that set in as they consolidated their position and refused to extend their own achievements to the proletariat (or, by and large, to women and other oppressed groups), arguing that the bourgeoisie has 'forged the weapons that bring death to itself' and well as calling into existence 'the men who are to wield those weapons – the modern working class – the proletarians'<sup>23</sup>. To view Beethovenian heroism and individualism relative to the feudal role for artistic production is to see them as part and parcel of historical *process*, rather than in their later reified form. As the former, they are surely positive aspects to these, unless one adheres to a neo-feudalist position.

I cannot speak for sure about the extent to which Finnissy consciously intended *Kapitalistisch Realisme* to engage with these issues in the manner I have described them, but can consider the extent to which it embodies them. To do so, we must of course first consider the details of the music. Finnissy takes three works of Beethoven as his thread, all associated with the number five, specifically the String Quartet in A major Op. 18 No. 5, the Fifth Piano Sonata in C minor Op. 10 No. 1, and the Fifth Symphony Op. 67 (derived in this case from Liszt's version of the work for solo piano).

At the very outset (Fig. 96), Finnissy presents the opening motive from the Fifth Symphony in no uncertain terms, for the first time since *Le demon*. Whilst maintaining the repeated Gs in the treble, the fall of a major third occurs low on the bass, between relatively dissonant chords, the top note of the concluding chord forming a major seventh relationship with the sustained G. A second partial iteration resolves onto a perfect fourth, then the third, with a drastic *rallentando*, shifts to a what enharmonically is a major sixth between A# in the bass and G in the treble, the former then able to resolve onto the A major of the music that follows, but through an extremely weak cadence. It is as if it is dragged towards this next passage as the assertiveness of the opening cadences is dissipated.

---

<sup>22</sup> Most obviously in the 'Manifesto of the Communist Party'. See Robert C. Tucker (ed), *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York: Norton, 1972), pp. 335-362.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* p. 340. Note that while Marx uses the term 'men' here, he argues soon afterwards that 'the more modern industry becomes developed, the more is the labour of men superseded by that of women. Differences of age and sex have no longer any distinctive social validity for the working class. All are instruments of labour, more or less expensive to use, according to their age and sex' (p. 352). Whilst there is obviously a good deal of scope for disagreement as to whether this is really valid in light of the strategies the bourgeoisie have employed to divide the proletariat, it does suggest that 'the men who are to wield those weapons' might not be seen in a strictly gendered sense.

Kapitalistisch Realisme (met Sizilianische Männerakte en Bachsche Nachdichtungen)

The image displays four systems of handwritten musical notation for piano and bass. The first system is marked 'Con brio' with a tempo of quarter note = 216 and a half note = 108. It includes markings for 'Long', 'poco rall.', and 'Long' again, with dynamics ranging from *ff* to *pp subito*. The second system is marked 'Maestoso' with a tempo of quarter note = 80 and includes markings for '4:3', '6:5', and 'molto Sed.'. The third system includes markings for '4:3', '6:5', and 'simile'. The fourth system is marked 'Distantly reflecting' with a tempo of quarter note = 80 and includes markings for '6:5', '7:6', and 'molto pppp'. The notation includes complex rhythmic patterns, accidentals, and dynamic markings throughout.

Fig. 96. *Kapitalistisch Realisme*, opening.

The whole first section is structured into seven pairs of material, the first also marked *Maestoso*, the second *Distantly reflecting*, a short rapid interlude (with further rapid gestures referring to the Fifth Symphony), then a further four such pairs of material. A steady pulse of crotchet = 80 is maintained throughout, except for during the interlude and during the last of the first seven *Maestoso* sections, lending the whole long section a strong sense of an unstoppable march.

The first material in the bass comes directly from the Finale of Beethoven's Op. 18 No. 5. Taking the material at the *Maestoso* tempo, crotchet = 80, rather than Beethoven's tempo of *Alllegro* within *alla breve* (Finissy maintains the *alla breve* time signature in the bass, but it is hard to see how this would be perceivable at that tempo), Finissy extracts from the lower parts a type of march-like pattern at the outset, with strong *sforzandi*. The first passage used comes from near the end of the Beethoven (Fig. 97).

Fig. 97. Beethoven String Quartet Op. 18 No. 5, Finale.

Finnissy uses some octave transpositions at various places, and adds harmonisation, most obviously the glaring C natural/G natural in the third bar of the second line, deflecting what would otherwise be a tonic resolution, and the modification of Beethoven's F# to an F natural just after the beginning of the first *Distantly reflecting* passage, which suggests a temporary modulation. But for the most part, the overall harmonic progression is maintained quite emphatically, with multiple strong cadences.

The right hand, however, is derived from a different source: a series of fragments selected randomly from Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*, organised into ten sections, which coincide with the double bar lines. Finnissy uses his usual methods of rhythmic distortion, pitch modification and octave transposition to abstract this material from its more obvious tonal properties, giving it a hyper-chromatic and somewhat flamboyant quality. This contrasts very strongly with the more restricted tessitura of the bass line, as an accompaniment figure. For the derivation from three fragments found in Act 1, Scene 2 of *Götterdämmerung* (leitmotifs associated with Guttrune, Siegfried and Gunther respectively), see Fig. 3 (d).

The incessant nature of the Beethovenian left hand, emphasising the regular pulse, even martial, it provides a foundation or *cantus firmus* upon which the passionate and highly chromatic Wagner material can be seen to have 'grown' (though the two types of material are not directly related, nor sound as such). The right hand is certainly quite overwhelming and dominant (and gives a somewhat top-heavy feel to the passage), yet is given shape, or 'grounding', by virtue of its contrast with the bass, which provides tonal centres and a pulse against which it can be measured. Finnissy manipulates the top line (and occasionally the bottom



one) to create the strongest dissonances, rhythmic disjunction and sometimes composite partial harmonic progressions.

Finnissy maintains a sense of a tonic key of A major through a variety of cadences, until just before the third *Distantly reflecting* section, in which the music seems to be veering towards the dominant minor, whilst extending the repeated figuration (which echoes the theme from Beethoven's Fifth Symphony) in the process of so doing (Fig. 98 (a)). This new section opens with the evocation of a characteristic motive (in distorted form) from the jubilant scenes between Siegfried and Brunnhilde from the Prelude of *Götterdämmerung*, the key of B-flat set into relief by virtue of the B naturals in the bass. But how exactly do we hear a passage like this – also how should one play it? Fig. 98 (b) gives a suggestion for the resultant harmony of the two lines combined. There are two options offered for the first chords, depending upon the use of the pedal (whether the B/F/A-flat chord is held by the pedal when moving onto the E-flat).

The image displays three systems of musical notation for a piano piece. Each system consists of a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The notation is highly complex, featuring numerous accidentals, triplets, and dynamic markings. The first system includes interval markings such as 7:5 and 6:5. The second system has a section labeled 'Distantly reflecting' with a 'ppp subito' marking. The third system continues the musical development with similar intervallic patterns.

Fig. 98 (a). *Kapitalistisch Realisme*, P3.

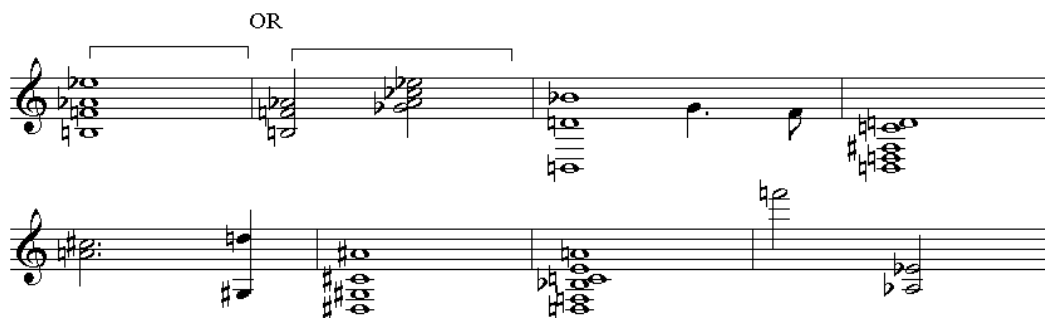


Fig. 98 (b). Harmonic progression for *Distantly reflecting* P3 L2-3.

If one accepts that harmonic progression is more significant (and audible) than contrapuntal fluidity, then the above model should give some idea of the progression that emerges from the combination of the two lines. The top line in particular is already very harmonically unstable on its own; the stability of the Beethoven material pulls against the instability of the Wagner, and vice versa. The first four bars of Fig. 7 imply some sort of part resolution onto B, but the part-quartal chord in bar 6 could lead in many directions. If there is some sort of further resolution onto D in the last bars, this is mitigated by the A-flat/E-flat which effects a tritone shift.

Or at least it does if one plays it with the voices carefully balanced (taking into account the greater sustaining power in the bass register, necessitating an inequality of literal dynamics between the hands to produce a perceived equality). If the right hand is played even simply *ppp+* compared to the left, let alone *pp*, or vice versa, I find the harmony singularly in whichever hand is the louder becomes much more immutable from interference by the other hand. Approaches to performance practice in this respect can quite profoundly affect the perception of tonality in the music, and the degree of tonal stability. Is the music to be well 'grounded' in the relatively conventional tonal harmonies (albeit somewhat fragmented and distorted) or cast adrift through the composite effect of the two hands in combination, to the extent to which the original harmonic context of the sources ceases to be particularly significant? The pianist playing *Kapitalistisch Realisme* at this and other points, with overlapping registers in the two hands and much less possibility for timbral distinction than exists between different instruments, is faced with the possibility of subtle adjustments of voicing which affect how the piece is perceived (and, perhaps, how one might analyse it). Can one hear the end of the second system of Fig. 98 (a) in a genuinely 'bitonal' manner, B minor in one hand and B-flat major in the other with neither key overwhelming the other, or does one always hear a composite tonality?

If the *Maestoso* material is affirmative and relentless, the *Distantly reflecting* passages, always at a very quiet dynamic, are hushed and visionary, and generally use the less dense Wagner-derived material. Subsequent sections see the carrying over of Beethovenian offbeat *sforzandi* into the quieter material, the evocation of a characteristic motive (in distorted form) from the jubilant scenes

between Siegfried and Brunnhilde from the Prelude of *Götterdämmerung*, and shifting foregrounding between the hands, especially when one or the other goes silent, in a manner reminiscent of Ives's overlaying of materials. When drawing upon the Beethoven Sonata in C minor op. 10, no. 1, Finnissy presents little more than a bare harmonic outline, in itself hardly very noteworthy until the transitional section begins, at which point Finnissy combines with more of the ostentatious Wagner material (coming after an extremely sparse preceding section, then new material (in the form of triplet crotchets) mined from Bruckner's Fifth Symphony (some of which appeared earlier in *Le démon*). From Beethoven's own Fifth Symphony (for which Finnissy uses as a source the piano transcription of Liszt), the selection of material is as arcane as possible, so as to obfuscate easy recognition of the source, though a window is opened up in the texture by Finnissy's allusion to the passage in the development section of this symphony in minims, bars 196-227 (see Fig. 99 for this section in context in the Liszt arrangement).

Fig. 99. Beethoven-Liszt, Symphony No. 5, from development section, bars 191-214.

These minims' larger-than-life character (as if imposed from without rather than springing organically from the demands of the material – even though they develop earlier short sequences of minims, the scale on which they are elaborated here has a markedly inorganic quality), or what Adorno called 'a holding of the breath'<sup>24</sup>, are foregrounded as a result of the fragmentary nature of the bass. (Fig. 100).

<sup>24</sup> Adorno, *Beethoven*, p. 107. Others interpreted this section differently; A.B. Marx saw it in terms of formal necessity so that, as paraphrased by Robin Wallace, 'tension, of a dramatic if not a tonal variety, must increase constantly as the movement goes on; and given that it is a piece in sonata form, both types of tension must reach a momentary climax just before the return of the principal theme. Thus, somewhat irrationally, music which is clearly anticipatory in nature is made to bear the burden of carrying the struggle forward.' (*Beethoven's Critics*, p. 133). Berlioz used a poetic metaphor closer to that of Adorno, by comparing the passage to 'the painful breathing of a dying man' (*ibid.* p. 134).

Fig. 100. *Kapitalistisch Realisme*, P8.

A full-on Beethoven melody (from the slow movement of op. 10 no. 1) drives the music forward, into other regions, but almost immediately afterwards, Finnissy starts to reference elsewhere in the cycle, including material from the *Spirituals* (including the clusters associated with Cowell in that chapter) and *Alkan-Paganini*. All the time the Beethoven line forces its way onwards despite its continual recontextualisation by the material around it. In the process it becomes distorted in various ways, but never really losing the sense of rootedness in A-flat. After a shift back to the first movement of the Beethoven, this material becomes almost submerged by the confusion, but Finnissy simply opens a new window by moving to a new line in the treble, derived from the second violin part of the *Menuetto* of op. 18 no. 5 (Fig. 101). Ultimately the section comes to a hold on a sustained d'' a little in the manner of a resolution.

---

E.T.A. Hoffmann would surely have had this passage in mind when he talked about how ‘the constant repetition of single phrases and chords, which intensifies to the highest possible degree the feeling of ineffable yearning’ (Hoffmann, ‘Beethoven’s Instrumental Music’, in *E.T.A. Hoffmann’s Musical Writings: Kreisleriana, The Poet and the Composer, Music Criticism*, edited David Charlton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 99 and described the latter part of the section as having an ‘ominous, eerie effect’ (Hoffmann, ‘Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony’, *ibid.* p. 243).



Fig. 101. Beethoven String Quartet in A Op. 18 No. 1, *Menuetto*.

If one considers the work as taking as its starting point Beethoven simply as representative of the archetype of the composer under capitalism, then works around the intrinsic properties of the music itself, the character is one of profound optimism and confidence that somehow seem much more than simply idle affectations. For the first time in the whole cycle, Finnissy has a long passage with stable tonal centres over extended periods, despite all the efforts to disrupt them through other parts. There is also to a very large degree a consistent pulse (notwithstanding the few areas of modification, which only ultimately serve to heighten the sense of reaffirmation afterwards) and an emphatic assertion of that very pulse. The contrasts between dynamics are stark and equally emphatic, simply embodied through the alternating sections. The rawness of the music, in such a way as seems to exclude the purely decorative or any connotations of aestheticism, is quite uncharacteristic for Finnissy. Even the Wagnerian flamboyance seems quite unaffected in its nature. Heroism in the face of adversity (a metaphor I do not ultimately accept to be innately gendered, despite the fact that it has been appropriated in such a manner) seems an appropriate description of this epic music. Another quote from Dahlhaus, about Beethoven, seems to encapsulate some of the factors at play in this work:

The formal principle that laid the foundations for the 'heroic style' was the idea of drawing the 'revolutionary tone' into a complicated formal dialectics, despite the fact that, in the tradition going back to Gluck, the revolutionary ideal had previously been characterized by emphatic simplicity, and by a vigorous cultivation of simplicity and the elemental. As he entered on the 'new path', Beethoven found the way to mediate between concrete and abstract thematic procedure: that is, between apparently simple and latently complex structures. But with that the connection between the growing sophistication of the form and the 'heroic style' becomes apparent: for, in so far as the style is symphonic and not merely martial, it needed the inner complement of a tendency towards the esoteric as part of its means of expression.<sup>25</sup>

Profoundly Beethovenian in its unfatalistic nature and its mediation between the 'apparently simple' and the 'latently complex' in its structure, and the offsetting of what might have been 'martial' with a 'tendency towards the esoteric', this section is nonetheless to be followed by something extremely different.

<sup>25</sup> Dahlhaus, *Ludwig van Beethoven*, p. 19.

Finnissy then employs a rearrangement of the Sardinian Pasolini music, which will also feature prominently in the *Sizilianische Männerakte* section later (intermingled with selections from the collection entitled *Sizilianische Volkslieder*, compiled by Giacomo Meyerbeer<sup>26</sup>), to effect a transition to a near verbatim repetition of the *Poets* et al derived section in *Le réveil* (sections B1-B3). Whilst the correspondence between the two passages is by far the strongest such in the whole cycle, their effect in their respective contexts are very different. In *Le réveil*, the rapid cross-cutting between materials grows naturally out of parallel processes that occur throughout the work up to that point and as such form a continuity. Here such processes are in stark contrast to the long expanses of material throughout *Kapitalistisch Realisme*, so seem like a shift into a very different world. Finnissy cuts into the end of the final Cocteau section with a short premonition of a passage in *Bachsche Nachdichtungen* (arcane-sounding there, but somehow less out of place here) which combines a Bach chorale prelude, the folk songs ‘Lu Ruggeri’ and ‘Canzona Palermitana’ (which have both already been heard at the beginning of the transition) and the ‘Choeur Infernale’ from Offenbach’s *Orphée aux Enfers*. From this he shifts to an inverted version of the O’Hara material heard within the previous section and then into full rendition of most of the first half of the Kirkup material from the *Poets*.

*Bachsche Nachdichtungen* (which Finnissy translates as ‘Bach-ian post-poiesis’<sup>27</sup>) also exists as an independent piece which was completed in 2000, the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Bach’s death. Finnissy’s area of focus here is not simply Bach’s own music, but also the work of those who transcribed him for piano, in particular Ferruccio Busoni and Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji. Most clearly, this section of the work stands as a homage both to Bach’s *Die Kunst der Fuge* and Busoni’s *Fantasia Contrappuntistica*, itself in part a completion and elaboration around the ‘Contrapunctus XIV’ from the Bach work. The importance of Busoni as an influence on Finnissy should not be underestimated. As well as being a passionate lover of many aspects of Busoni’s work since young days, he has repeatedly cited Busoni’s thoughts on transcription and notation in the context of his own work (specifically that ‘notation is itself the transcription of an abstract idea. The moment that the pen takes possession of it the thought loses its original form’<sup>28</sup>). Busoni is a recurring presence in Finnissy’s revised set of the *Verdi Transcriptions*, with pieces in each of the four books referring to the *Indianisches Tagebuch*, First Sonata, the *An die Jugend*, and the *Fantasia Contrappuntistica*, whilst at one

<sup>26</sup> Giacomo Meyerbeer, *Sizilianische Volkslieder*, edited Fritz Bose (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co, 1970).

<sup>27</sup> Finnissy, programme note for *Bachsche Nachdichtungen*. It is most likely that Finnissy got the idea for this title from the passage in Anthony Beaumont’s book on Busoni, where he describes the *Fantasia after J.S. Bach* as ‘a new genre of composition, the *Nachdichtung*. This almost untranslatable term, meaning neither paraphrase nor transcription, implies a reconstruction of an original text in another language or style.’ See Beaumont, *Busoni*, p. 137.

<sup>28</sup> Ferruccio Busoni, ‘Value of the Transcription’ in *The Essence of Music and other papers*, translated Rosamond Ley (New York: Dover, 1965), p. 87. For Finnissy’s thoughts on this, see Toop, ‘Four Facets of the New Complexity’, p. 9.

point Finnissy planned a set of piano studies alluding on various levels to Busoni's *Klavierübung*. Busoni's sense of free fantasy, exploration of highly individualised keyboard virtuosity, experimental late-tonal or post-tonal harmony and combining of distinct stylistic worlds (specifically the German and the Italian) all find parallels throughout Finnissy's output. And Bach of course looms large in Busoni's life and work, composing a range of transcriptions of Bach organ chorale preludes, preludes and fugues and other works, the famous D-minor Chaconne, as well as a series of freer works relating to Bach. On top of this, Busoni edited a massive eight-volume edition of both his own transcriptions and Bach's original works for keyboard – the latter with elaborate editorial suggestions that practically amount to a rewriting themselves<sup>29</sup>. The 'Bach' that inhabits *Bachsche Nachdichtungen* is heavily filtered through his successive reworkings and reinterpretations in the hands of later composers, above all Busoni.

At the heart of the work are four of Bach's organ chorale preludes, BWV 717, 716, 662 and 677, all based upon the chorale *Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Ehr'*. These are interwoven with a range of different types of canons and free fantasies, generally based upon the *motivo fondamentale*, alluding to a range of different styles. Equally important is the Lutheran chorale *Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Ehr'*, which was also used by Busoni for the third of his *Elegies* – which itself formed the opening section of the *Fantasia Contrappuntistica*<sup>30</sup>. This is the German version of the Gregorian chant *Gloria in excelsis* from the Latin Late Medieval Liturgy, which was probably adapted to the new text by the 15<sup>th</sup> century monk, hymn-writer and composer Nikolaus Decius. Fig. 102 gives two versions of this that Bach might have known, and one compiled by the *Neue Bach-Ausgabe* from its use in various of Bach's works<sup>31</sup>. Bach harmonised this chorale for four voices in BWV 260, and it is used in the cantata 'Ich bin ein guter Hirt', BWV 85, in 'Du Hirte Israel, höre', BWV 104, in two movements of 'Der Herr is mein getreuer Herr', BWV 112, and in 'Auf Christi Himmelfahrt', BWV 128. The organ chorale preludes that Finnissy alludes to constitute just four out of a total of ten which use this melody (the others being BWV 663, 664, 675, 676 (all Leipzig chorales, like

---

<sup>29</sup> For an overview of Busoni's works relating to Bach, see Beaumont, *Busoni*, pp. 269-273, and H.H. Stuckenschmidt, *Ferruccio Busoni*, translated Sandra Morris (London: Calder and Boyars, 1970), pp. 105-108. Also see Kenneth Hamilton, 'The virtuoso tradition' in David Rowland (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to the Piano* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 66-67 for a look at Busoni's rewritings of Bach in his editions. A selection of Busoni's thoughts on Bach can be found in *The Essence of Music*, pp. 96-103.

<sup>30</sup> See Beaumont, *Busoni*, pp. 107-108, and Larry Sitsky, *Busoni and the Piano: The Works, the Writings and the Recordings* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986), p. 151.

<sup>31</sup> All taken from <http://www.bach-cantatas.com/CM/Allein-Gott-in-der-Hoh.htm#Composition> (accessed 3/11/13). More information about the various stages by which the original Gregorian melody became transformed into the Lutheran chorale can be found here. See also Robin Leaver, 'The Chorale: Transcending Time and Culture' in *Concordia Theological Quarterly* Vol. 56 Nos. 2-3 (April-July 1992), pp. 123-144.

BWV 662 and 667), 711 and 715). There was no other chorale melody that Bach set so often<sup>32</sup>.

**Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr**  
From an early 17th century hymnal

Al - lein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr und Dank für sei - ne Gna - de,  
dar - um, daß nun und nim - mer - mehr uns rüh - ren kann kein Scha - de.  
Ein Wohl - ge - falln Gott an uns hat; nun ist groß Fried ohn Un - ter - laß,  
all Fehd hat nun ein En - de.

Fig. 102 (a). *Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr*, from early 17<sup>th</sup> century hymnal

**Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr**  
Vopelius 1682

Al - lein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr  
dar - um, daß nun und nim - mer - mehr  
und Dank für sei - ne Gna - de,  
uns rüh - ren kann kein Scha - de.  
Ein Wohl - ge - falln Gott an uns hat; nun ist groß Fried ohn Un - ter - laß,  
all Fehd hat nun ein En - de.

Fig. 102 (b). *Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr*, in the Vopelius hymnal of 1682.

**Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr**  
(a simplified version distilled from various compositions by Bach)  
NBA IV/3

Al - lein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr und Dank für sei - ne Gna - de, Ein Wohl - ge - falln Gott  
dar - um, daß nun und nim - mer - mehr uns rüh - ren kann kein Scha - de.  
an uns hat; nun ist groß Fried ohn Un - ter - laß, all Fehd hat nun ein En - de.

Fig. 102 (c). *Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr*, from early 17<sup>th</sup> century hymnal

<sup>32</sup> Peter Williams argues that this was simply because it was sung frequently, rather than an earlier suggestion that the reason was to do with its having two-bar phrases. See Williams, *The Organ Music of J.S. Bach*, revised edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 370.



This chorale thus alternates with the *motivo fondamentale* through *Bachsche Nachdichtungen*. The overall structure of *Bachsche Nachdichtungen* is as follows:

A. *Moderato, un poco essitando*. Introduction

B. *Allegretto con spirito*. Choral-Vorspiel 1. On Bach BWV 717 (Fig. 103). Two sections. Second in B-flat.

C. *Andante – Poco più*. Choral-Vorspiel 2. On Bach BWV 716. A major, combined with chorale melody *Nun bitten wir den heiligen Geist* (Fig. 104). Shifting to *Poco affrettando – presto, mormorando – Sostenuto, dolce sempre*. Free fantasy, obliquely derived from Busoni *Choral-Vorspiel* (Fig. 105), leading to *In Canone all'Ottava*, based on inversion of the *motivo fondamentale*.

D. *Sommessamente moderato*. Presentation of the *motivo fondamentale* in the manner of the Fuga 1 from Sorabji's *Opus Clavicembalisticum*, as in *Le démon*.

E. *Allegretto – un poco vivace, e più sotto voce – a tempo (più sostenuto)*. Using model from Bach BWV 769 and also Busoni *Sonatina in diem nativitatis Christi 1917* (Fig. 106). *Alio modo in Canone alla Quinta*, upon *motivo fondamentale*. Alluding to Busoni *Etüde* Op. 18 No.4, then again to Busoni *Choral-Vorspiel* at the end. Short *Calmo* transition to

F. *Allegro appassionato, energico – declamato* (Fig. 107)

G. *Allegretto con spirito*. Short recapitulation of Choral-Vorspiel 1.

H. Combination of Choral-Vorspiel 3, on Bach BWV 662, with *In Canone all'Ottava per augmentationem* (Fig. 108). The former is in D-flat major.

I. Inserted passage, combining various Sicilian folk melodies (to be used more extensively in *Sizilianische Männerakte*) with the 'Choeur Infernal' from Offenbach's *Orphée aus Enfers* (Fig. 109) and Bach's organ chorale *Herr Gott, dich loben wir*, BWV 725.

J. Continuation of Choral-Vorspiel 3, with *L'altra sorte del Canone al rovescio, alla Terza*, derived from material from the beginning of *My parents' generation*.

K. *Allegro*. Free fantasia on the *motivo fondamentale*, based on second section of Busoni *Choral-Vorspiel* and Bach BWV 711. (Fig. 110)

L. *In Canone al rovescio (i) alla Seconda; (ii) alla Nona*. Leading to short allusions back to first section of Busoni *Choral-Vorspiel*, to Beethoven Fifth Symphony, then to Busoni *Etüde* Op. 18 No. 3 (Fig. 111). Transition to:

M. Choral-Vorspiel 4, on Bach BWV 677, A major, in the bass. combined with an abandoned organ piece derived from (and named after) the seventeenth-century Lutheran Chorale *Morgenglanz der Ewigkeit* (not used by Bach).

Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Ehr'  
BWV 717

The image displays a musical score for the chorale 'Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Ehr' BWV 717 by Johann Sebastian Bach. The score is written for a four-part vocal choir (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and a keyboard instrument (likely organ or harpsichord). The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4. The score is organized into six systems, each with a vocal line and a keyboard accompaniment line. The first system shows the beginning of the piece. The second system is labeled 'Choral' and features a more active vocal line. The third and fourth systems continue the vocal and keyboard parts. The fifth system includes first and second endings, indicated by '1.' and '2.' above the vocal line. The sixth system concludes the piece with a final cadence. The keyboard accompaniment consists of a steady bass line and a more melodic upper line.

Fig. 103 (a). Bach, *Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Ehr'* BWV 717.



Fig. 103 (b). *Bachsche Nachdichtungen*.



Fig. 104 (a). Bach, *Nun bitten wir den heiligen Geist* BWV 385.



Fig. 104 (b). Melody derived from *Nun bitten wir den heiligen Geist*.



Fig. 105 (a). Busoni, *Choral-Vorspiel und Fuge über ein Bachsches Fragment*, opening.



Fig. 105 (b). Transformation of the *motivo fondamentale* in the manner of Busoni *Choral-Vorspiel*.

VAR. II. a 2 Clav. e Ped.  
 Altro modo in Canone alla Quinta

Fig. 106 (a). Bach, *Canonic Variations on Von Himmel hoch, da komm' ich her* BWV 769, Variation 2.

*Allegretto*

*dolce*

*più p.*

*delicato*

*un poco vivace*

*mf*

*cresc.*

Fig. 106 (b). Busoni, *Sonatina in diem nativatis Christi* 1917, two passages from opening section.

Alto modo in Canone alla Quinta  
 Allegretto

Sonata in G major

6:5

4:3

4:3

rall. espressivo

a tempo

4:3

4:3

accel.

Fig. 106 (c). *Bachsche Nachdichtungen*.

Wart' und pfleg'

Fig. 107 (a). Bach, *Herr Gott, dich loben wir*, BWV 725



Fig. 107 (b). Bach, *O Lamm Gottes unschuldig*, BWV 656



Fig. 107 (c). *Declamato* theme.



Fig. 107 (d). *Bachsche Nachdichtungen*.



Fig. 108 (a). Bach, *Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Ehr'* BWV 662.



Fig. 108 (b). *Bachsche Nachdichtungen*.



Fig. 109. Offenbach, 'Choeur infernal' from *Orphée aux Enfers*. (tenor part of refrain).



Fig. 110 (a). Bach, *Allein Gott in der Hoh'sei Ehr'*, BWV 711.





Fig. 110 (b). Busoni, *Choral-Vorspiel und Fuge über ein Bachsches Fragment*, from second section.



Fig. 110 (c). *Bachsche Nachdichtungen*.



Fig. 111. Busoni, *Etüde Op. 16 No. 3*.

Structurally, the work is somewhat less block-like than the Busoni *Fantasia Contrappuntistica*; the latter has a clear episodic structure consisting of an introductory choral prelude, three fugues, an intermezzo, three variations and a cadenza, then the fourth fugue, chorale and stretta. Finnissy integrates the chorale preludes and the canons in various ways into the overall structure. Nonetheless, the intense characterisation of the choral preludes causes them to act as centres of gravity or nodal points, in a similar manner to the Massé and David sections in *Unsere Afrikareise*.

The choice of types of canons is also a direct allusion to Bach's monumental set of Canon Variations for organ on the Lutheran hymn *Von Himmel hoch, da komm' ich her* (BWV 769), a work about which, together with *Das Musikalische Opfer* and *Die Kunst der Fuge*, Malcolm Boyd writes that 'canon at its most intricate achieves a new autonomy, serving not as an esoteric greeting or a dry scholastic exercise, but in the creation of some of the most visionary and profound music ever composed'<sup>33</sup>. In this Bach work, the variations are as follows:

Var. 1: *In Canone all'Ottava*.

Var. 2: *Alio modo in Canone alla Quinta*.

Var. 3: *Canone alla Settima*.

Var. 4: *In Canone all'Ottava per augmentationem*.

Var. 5: *L'altra sorte del Canone al rovescio: (1) alla Sesta, (2) alla Terza, (3) alla Seconda, (4) alla Nona*.<sup>34</sup>

Finnissy uses all except for No. 3 and part (1) of No. 5 (both sketched but abandoned). So the order of Finnissy's canons corresponds to that of the Bach in the order 1, 2, 4, 5 (2), 5 (3-4). For Finnissy, on a symbolical level, the allusion to this Bach work incorporated the knowledge that this was orchestrated by Stravinsky, thus tying in with another form of 'neo-classicism', and the circumstances of the work's production. Specifically, it was Bach's submission to

---

<sup>33</sup> Malcolm Boyd, *Bach* (London: Dent, 1983), p. 194. This work has been much praised from Bach's last years until the present day. In 1754, Johann Michael Schmidt wrote that 'If he [a composer] wishes to become great and famous, he must possess, in addition to knowledge of rules already discussed, all the powers of understanding in considerable degree; he must be able to think deeply and in intricate combinations. To be convinced of this, just look at the chorale, published in copper engraving by Bach, who has now been received into the choir of angels: *Von Himmel hoch da komm ich her*. I cannot persuade myself that the most difficult demonstration in geometry requires much deeper and more extensive reflection than this labor must have demanded.' (Schmidt, 'On the depth of Bach's compositional art', quoted in Hans T. David and Arthur Mendel (eds), *The New Bach Reader: A Life of Johann Sebastian Bach in Letters and Documents*, revised and enlarged by Christoph Wolff (New York: Norton, 1998), p. 361. The work probably dates from 1747-8 – see Yoshitake Kobayashi, 'Zur Chronologie der Spätwerke Johann Sebastians Bachs. Kompositions- und Aufführungstätigkeit von 1736 bis 1750', in *Bach-Jahrbuch* 74 (1988) (Leipzig: Neue Bachgesellschaft, 1988), cited in John Butt (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to Bach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 281, n. 86.

<sup>34</sup> The autograph manuscript has a different order for the Bach variations: 1, 2, 5, 3, 4. See Boyd, *Bach*, p. 196.

the *Correspondirende Soceität der Musicalischen Wissenschaft*, founded by his student Lorenz Mizler, which he joined in June 1747. This was a highly exclusive society for connoisseurs to exchange information and make contacts<sup>35</sup>; thus Finnissy would seem to be alluding here to the very elite circumstances under which the work was received<sup>36</sup>.

Finnissy carefully preserves salient features of some of the Bach material upon which he draws, such as a three note ascending or descending scalar figure, or the fall of a major or minor sixth followed by a semitone upwards from BWV 717, which most extensively permeates Section B, whilst carefully avoiding certain cadential harmonies which occur in the original, and introducing greater degrees of chromaticism, angular contours and harmonic instability. 'Busoni moments' are found through, for example, fantastical chromatic arpeggios sweeping quietly upwards through the keyboard in a context of near stasis (see Fig. 112) - as Busoni does in the *Fantasia Contrappuntistica* - short allusions to some of Busoni's *Etüden* and *Sonatinen* and even a direct reference to a short section from Busoni's elaboration of the first section of Bach's Contrapunctus XIV in the same work. Most unusual are perhaps Sections H and J (I is an interruption within otherwise continuous material), a hectic passage combining a canon at the octave, with the durations of the lower part augmented by a factor of two (*In Canone all'Ottava per augmentationem*, as in Bach BWV 769), together with a selection from the upper parts of the third Bach organ choral prelude, *Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Ehr'* BWV 662, one of the 'Leipzig' chorales. This work itself combines a walking bass line with a semiquaver-heavy alto and tenor parts, and an extremely ostentatious top line, though still fundamentally based upon the chorale melody. Finnissy transposes the Bach from A into D-flat, whilst the two outer parts are presented in A, and later works in material from the *Spirituals* and *My parents' generation*, to create a hallucinatory experience which is also something of a pianistic *tour de force*.

---

<sup>35</sup> See Christoph Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach: The Learned Musician* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 422-424.

<sup>36</sup> From private comments to the author.

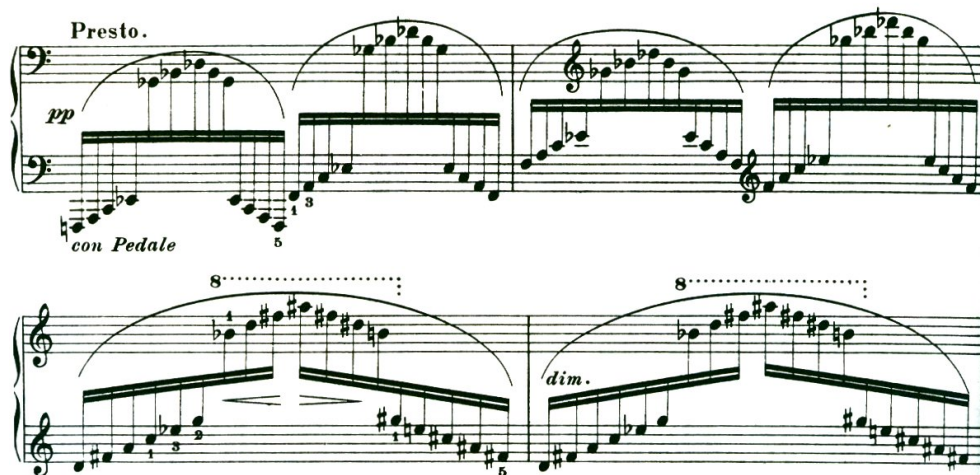


Fig. 112 (a). Busoni, from *Fantasia Contrappuntistica*.



Fig. 112 (b). Busoni, *Etude. Tema e Variazioni* Op. 17



Fig. 112 (c). *Bachsche Nachdichtungen*.

Finally, in the last section, Finnissey follows a similar strategy to that in *Kapitalistisch Realisme* (and to some extent that in the earlier section on BWV 716) for this section, using an extended line in the bass derived directly from the Bach (the right hand part), in linear order, and whilst chromatically inflected in plenty of places, essentially preserving the overall tonality. However, here the original is significantly distorted in a rhythmic sense, both stretched and compressed so that no sense of a regular pulse lasts for more than a small gesture's worth. Above this is placed a free atonal right hand, which derives from an abandoned organ piece entitled *Morgenglanz der Ewigkeit*, taking its own title from a 1662 hymn with music by Johann Rudolph Ahle and text by Christian Knorr von Rosenroth. The earlier work placed the hymn tune in the pedal bass as a *cantus firmus* and then Finnissey created two elaborate atonal lines above it. These simply impress one as a type of 'generalised Finnissey writing', moving between closer and wider tessitura, with plenty of spread chords, rhythmically fluctuating, and so on. On a compositional level, Finnissey's way of using an existing work to generate a new one, simply with a change of *cantus*, could be seen as an equivalent of Bach's 'parody' compositions, adopting an old piece to serve a new text (for example, fitting a secular cantata with a sacred text<sup>37</sup>).

*Bachsche Nachdichtungen* is a strange section in many ways. There are various strands that lend it unity over and above the persistence of the *motivo fondamentale*. One of these is the recurrence of the Busoni *Choral-Vorspiel* version of the motif, whose very figuration appears at various junctures. The overall key scheme is too diffuse, and the individual sections too chromatic, for any more long-range harmonic structure to be perceived. The *Allegro fantasia* (Section K) grows out of the preceding chorale prelude, but it would be difficult to

<sup>37</sup> See Boyd, 'Parodies and publications' in *Bach*, pp. 162-183, for more on this.

define why this section could not equally be described as a choral prelude (though it has little of the contrapuntal complexity of the other such sections). To me the whole section is full of fantastical and beguiling moments, but at times seems a little over-disjointed and occasionally rambling. But such moments are certainly the exception rather than the rule (and might perhaps be necessary to achieving the totality of the work as it exists). Sections H and J in combination serve as a nodal point for the whole of *Bachsche Nachdichtungen*. Lending a retrospective sense of structural function to everything else which has led up to this point, from here the dramatic pacing shifts up several gears in all the passages leading from it up to the final choral prelude.

In a now infamous essay on Bach, Adorno asked 'If Bach was indeed modern, then why was he archaic?'<sup>38</sup> and, after exploring specific processes at work in various pieces, argued that:

Among his archaic traits is the attempt to parry the impoverishment and petrification of musical language, the shadow-side of its decisive progress. Such traits represent Bach's effort to resist the inexorable growth of the commodity-character of music, a process which was linked to its subjectivization. Yet such features are also identical with Bach's modernity inasmuch as they always serve to defend the right of inherent musical logic against the demands of taste. Bach as archaist distinguishes himself from all subsequent classicists, up to and including Stravinsky, by his refusal to confront the historical level of the material with an abstract stylistic ideal. Rather what was becomes a means of forcing what is toward a future of its own making....Bach, as the most advanced master of *basso continuo*, at the same time renounced his obedience, as antiquated polyphonist, to the trend of the times, a trend he himself had shaped, in order to help it reach its innermost truth, the emancipation of the subject to objectivity in a coherent whole of which subjectivity itself was the origin. Down to the subtlest structural details it is always a question of the undiminished coincidence of the harmonic-functional and of the contrapuntal dimension. The distant past is entrusted with the utopia of the musical subject-object; anachronism becomes a harbinger of things to come.<sup>39</sup>

It would be both pointless, premature and perhaps ultimately meaningless to ask whether Finnissy's piece can match the actual work of Bach, or the exalted claims made in Adorno's extraordinarily perceptive exegesis of it. Nonetheless, these issues are extremely relevant to any discussion of Finnissy's own music vis-à-vis questions of modernity and archaism. Whilst Finnissy's *objets trouvés* (such as the Bach choral preludes used in *Bachsche Nachdichtungen*) do appear in a quasi-iconic role from time to time, Finnissy is canny enough to be aware of the need to approach Bach in terms of his own output as a continually developing and fluctuating quantity, both during and after his lifetime, rather than as a set of precious gems to be revered from a distance. Such an approach is both most Bachian and most modern simultaneously, provided one realises that modernity is itself a form of historical process rather than a stylistic commodity.

---

<sup>38</sup> Adorno, 'Bach Defended Against his Devotees', in *Prisms*, translated Samuel and Shierry Webber (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1983), p. 139.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. p. 142. For an extremely interesting and essentially sympathetic exploration of this perspective, see Lawrence Dreyfus, 'Bach as Critic of Enlightenment', in *Bach and the Patterns of Invention* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 219-244.

For the transition to *Sizilianische Männerakte*, Finnissy launches into a version of the 'compression' material, beginning with very wide-spaced spread chords (in contrast to the focus on central registers in *Bachsche Nachdichtungen*) at extremely quiet dynamics, and with a continuously fluctuating pulse. Into this he works in some of the Beethoven Fifth sections of *Kapitalistisch Realisme* and Cowell-derived cluster material from later in that section (seeming to signify, as in the long 'compression' section of the *Poets*, that the material has been pushed as far as it can go without either changing significantly or falling apart).

The inspiration behind *Sizilianische Männerakte* and some exegesis of how Finnissy combines materials in this context have already been covered in the 'Material as Archetype' section. The 'homage to Busoni' is brought to a climax here through the use of the *Pezzo serioso* from the relatively early Piano Concerto as a thread throughout the whole work. In this context, it is worth bearing in mind what Busoni called the 'Church' theme (Fig. 113 (a)), presented as a contrast to the 'Hymn to Allah' in the final movement. In a letter to Hugo Leichtentritt in 1920, Busoni described the two parts of this theme as deriving from an experience when he entered Strasbourg Cathedral, in which 'Invisible men's voices rang out' and 'Boys answered from the opposite direction'<sup>40</sup>. Fig. 113 (b) shows both of the snippets of music that Busoni wrote down in this letter.



Fig. 113 (a). Busoni, 'Church' theme from Piano Concerto.



Fig. 113 (b). Busoni, origins of 'Church' theme.

This theme is accompanied by the rhythm shown in Fig. 114<sup>41</sup>.

<sup>40</sup> Busoni, *Selected Letters*, p. 328 and Beaumont, *Busoni*, p. 63.

<sup>41</sup> Busoni generally writes the triplets without a '3' sign within 6/4, and this notation is reiterated by Beaumont. Here I notate them differently to clarify the 18/8 metre.



Fig. 114. Busoni – rhythm to accompany ‘Church’ theme.

The theme and rhythm appear prominently in the long central *Pezzo serioso*, which Busoni completed in a matter of days<sup>42</sup>. It consists of four sections of differing lengths: *Introductio* - *Prima Pars* – *Alter Pars* – *Ultra Pars*. At the heart is a theme that Busoni wrote for his first opera *Sigune* (also appearing in an unpublished *Étude en forme d’Adagio d’une Sonate* from the 1890s, which was written for Busoni’s American student Augusta Cottlow<sup>43</sup>, and a further *Etüde* in B flat minor<sup>44</sup>), used to depict a majestic cathedral, and thus which Beaumont calls the ‘Cathedral’ theme (Fig. 115)



Fig. 115 (a). Busoni – ‘Cathedral’ theme from *Pezzo serioso*.

<sup>42</sup> Larry Sitsky, *Busoni and the Piano: The Works, the Writings and the Recordings* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986), p. 103. A discussion of the movement can be found in Sitsky, pp. 103-107.

<sup>43</sup> Busoni, *Selected Letters*, p. 188 n. 5.

<sup>44</sup> See Beaumont, *Busoni*, p. 69.





Fig. 115 (b). *Siziliänische Männerakte*, Retrograde of 'Cathedral' theme.

Guido Guerrini describes this movement as 'the only example of an almost Wagnerian Busoni, or more correctly, a Busoni derived from that Liszt which Wagner plagiarized'<sup>45</sup>. However, Busoni's grandeur is not at all like that of Wagnerian heroism or Liszt's often banal attempts at the same; rather Busoni achieves a sense of unforced warmth tinged with melancholy and darkness that are closer to Mussorgsky (Liszt could certainly create these qualities as well, but not generally in a spirit of grandiosity, something he was for the most part unable to invest with substance). The dramatic themes have all the self-advertising iconic qualities of Wagnerian leitmotifs, to be sure, and their extension (rather than development) seems rather forced and even a little trite. But Busoni, in truly Lisztian fashion, structures the movement as much according to colour and texture as to thematic or harmonic development. Harmonies are relatively static, often simply consisting of undulations around a few chords for long stretches, whereas the use in particular of register within Busoni's imaginative figurations is extremely dynamic and varied.

A 'host melody' for the movement comes from Giacomo Meyerbeer's opera *Robert le diable*, a work which became iconic of French grand opera during the period of the July Monarchy, and remained wildly popular through the nineteenth century before falling into relative neglect in the twentieth<sup>46</sup>. Finissy had already

<sup>45</sup> Guido Guerrini, *Ferruccio Busoni: La Vita, La Figura, L'Opera* (Firenze, Montsalvato, 1944), p. 250, cited in Sitsky, *Busoni*, p. 104.

<sup>46</sup> For the most detailed consideration of this opera, see Robert Ignatius Letellier, *Meyerbeer's Robert le Diable: The Premier Opéra Romantique* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012). See also

made use of an allusion to the Cavatinetta 'Oh! come è bella' from Act IV of *Robert le diable* in his chamber opera about the life of Tchaikovsky, *Shameful Vice* (1994-95)<sup>47</sup>, as well as to music from Meyerbeer's *L'Africaine* in his opera *Therese Raquin*<sup>48</sup>. For *Sizilianische Männerakte*, Finnissy uses the famous *Siciliano* aria 'O fortune, à ton caprice' from the first act<sup>49</sup>. He transposes the aria, shifting back into the original key for the second beat of the fourth bar (and incorporating part of the accompaniment), then skips two bars to give the closing phrase of the first strain, but rhythmically distorted. Then he adds material from the second to fourth bars of the 'Slower' section. For the second derivative, close to the final version, he omits the fourth and eleventh bars and creates further transpositions and rhythmic modifications (Fig. 116).

Fig. 116 (a). Meyerbeer, *Siciliano* 'O fortune, à ton caprice' from *Robert le Diable*.

---

in particular Mark Everist, 'The Name of the Rose: Robert le Diable' in *Giacomo Meyerbeer and Music Drama in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2005), pp. 177-214 and Jane F. Fulcher, *The Nation's Image: French grand opera as Politics and Politicized Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

<sup>47</sup> See Ian Pace, 'The Theatrical Works' in *Uncommon Ground*, pp. 341-342, for details of this allusion.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 317-340. This analysis was based upon a version of the work that has since been significantly revised.

<sup>49</sup> The original version of this aria was extremely different, and is described in Everist, 'The Name of the Rose', pp. 187-188. James Parakilas points out how the final aria may have been a model for Verdi when writing some of the 6/8 passages for Iago in *Otello*, in particular those where the former is attempting to draw others into his evil plans, thus defining the topos as what he calls a 'sicilienne of diabolical temptation'. See Parakilas, 'Religion and Difference in Verdi's *Otello*' in *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 81 No. 3 (Autumn 1997), pp. 377-378.



Fig. 116 (b). Derivations from Meyerbeer



Fig. 116 (c). *Sizilianische Männerakte*, quotation from Meyerbeer *Robert le diable*.

Ultimately, what was comical and tipsy in Meyerbeer becomes lyrical, sunny and expansive in Finnissy (who sets it at a hugely slowed down tempo).

Meyerbeer had spent the summer of 1816 in Sicily, during which period he notated a wide range of Sicilian folk songs and dances, much later published in a volume entitled *Sizilianische Volkslieder*<sup>50</sup>. However, as Fritz Bose points out in

<sup>50</sup> Giacomo Meyerbeer, *Sizilianische Volkslieder*, edited Fritz Bose (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co, 1970).

his introduction to the volume, whilst Meyerbeer would have had various opportunities to use some of these materials for the Sicilian folk scenes in the opera, all the material is freely composed, even if it shares something of the same character<sup>51</sup>. Nonetheless, Finnissy decides to combine his derivation from the *Siciliano* with a selection of the Sicilian folk songs collected by Meyerbeer in his volume. He selects passages from seven songs (all chosen randomly) to create a gamut of material (Fig. 117), which serve a similar function to the Stephen Foster melodies in the *Spirituals*. For the most part the intervallic qualities of the folk tunes are preserved, without transpositions, sometimes incorporating accompanying figures or adding chords. However, the rhythms are significantly distorted to create a fluctuating pulse. All of this, combined with the *launeddas* music associated with Pasolini, and a few moments derived from the Cretan folk music associated with Kavafis, serve to create a type of 'pan-Mediterranean' music which runs throughout.

Finnissy essentially structures the whole of *Sizilianische Männerakte* around a long line derived from running each of the four sections through the *Pezzo serioso* in reverse. This occurs for the most part (though not always) in the bass register, and is relatively faithful to the material it selects (without as many chromatic modifications as are to be found in the Beethoven, or certainly the Bach, sections). Thus are maintained long sections of relatively static, often idyllic calm and grandeur, together with a few dramatic passages. The emotional and psychological trajectory of the whole movement, is of course, significantly altered through the fact of each section running in reverse. In particular, the third and largest section, the *Altera Pars*, grows to a peak over a long period of time then falls, rather than peaking early then darkening over an extended period as in the Busoni. Furthermore, during this section a long section of the Sicilian material is repeated almost verbatim (sections transposed), though combined with different left hand material, and during one section overlaid by a series of unmetred grace notes together with other material (derived from both the 'Compression' passage of the *Poets* and also a passage just four pages earlier in this chapter), a technique Finnissy had previously used in *Folklore*<sup>52</sup>.

---

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. p. 10 (my translation).

<sup>52</sup> This device was itself inspired by a similar device in Cornelius Cardew's *Two Books of Study for Pianists* (1958). See Pace, 'The Piano Music', pp. 117-119.

*Li mariti riversi*

*Canzonetta Palermitana*

*L'Aria della Madonna dello Carmino*

*La Madonna della Pietati*

The image displays a musical score for four pieces of Sicilian folk material, all written in bass clef. The pieces are:

- Li mariti riversi*: Features interval markings of 6:5 and 8:5, and triplet markings of 3.
- Canzonetta Palermitana*: Features interval markings of 11:8, 7:5, and 7:6, and triplet markings of 3.
- L'Aria della Madonna dello Carmino*: Features interval markings of 9:8, 9:7, 10:7, 6:5, and 9:8, and triplet markings of 3.
- La Madonna della Pietati*: Features interval markings of 9:8, 6:5, 7:5, and 7:5, and triplet markings of 3.

Fig. 117 (a). Gamut of Sicilian folk material.

*La Madonna della Pietati*  
(Die Mutter der Barmherzigkeit)

Moderato

Ascol - ta - te, bona gente, di Ma - ri - a gran por - tan - ti  
di stu gran fat - to pi - u ch'inta Roma succe - di - o. Quantu  
sono le sue grazie chè Ma - ria fa (a)tutti sazzi Cu di -  
manda Maria ce le duna sta gran ver - gi - ne sig - nora.

Fig. 117 (b). Meyerbeer No. 17, *La Madonna della Pietati*.

So the structure is as follows:

**A. *Introductio.*** *Adagio serioso – Sostenuto – Molto tranquillo, ma un pò liberamente – Andante sostenuto, pensoso.*

**B. *Prima Pars.*** *Andante, quasi Adagio*

**C. *Alter Pars.*** *Più con affetto, irrequieto – Ancora più tranquillo – Come da principio – Più lento e improvvisando – Un poco allargando – Andante maestosamente – Sommessamente – scorrevole il tempo.* Then appearance of Wagner motive.

**D. *Ultima Pars.*** *Andante idillico.*

Whilst the Busoni runs throughout, section A is dominated by the Meyerbeer *Siciliano*, section B by the various Sicilian folk tunes, section C by the Pasolini material and section D by the *Siciliano* again. In Section C, at the *Come da principio*, Finissy also introduces an imaginary Sicilian theme, centered upon only three melodic notes, A-flat-B-flat-C, harmonised with G to serve as a leading note, and with two high B-flat/D-flat acciacciaturs upon a G-C dyad in preparation for resolution to A-flat. The rhythms are very regular, using mostly just three cells of either three crotchet triplets, a sustained minim, or two crotchet triplets followed by two quavers (with one added triplet minim with two quavers). Fig. 118 shows the seven cells that make up the upper line of the melody, the latter only used once, then the melody constructed from such basic elements, with lower harmonisation and grace notes. Note that the A-flat-B-flat figure is always





Fig. 119 (a). Busoni, from *Pezzo Serioso*.



Fig. 119 (b). *Siziliänische Männerakte*.

Finnissy had previously established a tonality of G minor/B-flat major. The F# added to the first left hand chord in Fig. 119 (b) desires resolution onto a G. From the outset we have a clash between G minor in the left hand and D-flat, a tritone apart, in the right. In the second bar, however, the right, being in A-flat as the dominant of D-flat, pushes the left hand A-flat/C dyad into being heard as a resolution. And with the next bar the tonality is on the move again. The music continues in this manner as the right hand plows through the Busoni and the left hand through the assortment of Sicilian folk tunes.

Perhaps the most significant moment of all, or the point to which all else leads, is that which sees the appearance of the 'Der ewigen Macht' theme from *Götterdämmerung*, at the end of section C. In the passage leading up to this, Finnissy carefully configures the 'Church' theme in retrograde (for the first time in the piece) together with a filtered version of the accompanying rhythm, in order to end with a rather tainted cadence into C (this is the passage which was used with a different tonal relationship between the hands in *My parents'*



*generation*). The cadence takes the form of V-III<sup>b</sup>-I<sup>1</sup>, with the third in the bass register. The chord that follows is hard to define satisfactorily using conventional harmonic symbols; suffice to say that the B-flat/G-flat minor sixth in the treble does not detract from the D-flat tonality. For the low F to resolve upwards to G-flat seems a very remote possibility; a more strongly implied resolution would for the high G-flat to resolve onto an F, this producing the relative minor of B-flat. But the second bass chord establishes D-flat more firmly. Thus there is another extremely palpable thorough shift of texture and harmony, and the stillest music that has yet been encountered in *Siziliänische Männerakte*. When the bewildering density of the earlier *Andante maestosamente* (in which section Finnissy combined material with overlaid grace notes) is a recent memory, it is as if the music has wound down to near total stasis. The Wagner theme itself creates a dominant seventh on A-flat with the high G-flat; Finnissy characteristically eschews cadential resolution, though, to a shift to a low D natural, a tritone away from A-flat, then the addition of a lower E. It is this harmonisation of the reiterated B-flat/G-flat minor sixth, with no real implied resolution at all (as constructed entirely from whole tones), combined with the lowering of the dynamics to near-inaudibility, that produces a sensation of extreme darkness intruding upon the sunny textures of earlier, rather than the Wagner motive itself. Fig. 120 shows the whole process.

At around twice the duration of any other piece in the cycle, it is almost a banality to say that the full *Kapitalistisch Realisme* has an epic quality. In a sense it is really three individual pieces with connecting sections, played continuously (as *Muybridge-Munch* was really two individual pieces). Thematic or motivic overlap between the three main sections does not occur on any deep level; at least the relationship between the sections is not really any stronger than that any of them have with other parts of the cycle, in this respect. But there are other unifying factors between *Kapitalistisch Realisme* and *Siziliänisches Männerakte* in particular, most obviously the continuous presence of clearly tonally-derived material for long stretches in either, mostly in the bass register. There is of course a link between this sort of writing and the use of Mozart minuets and Schubert ecossaises in *Unsere Afrikareise*, or even the Schoenberg minuet in *Le réveil*; but here such a technique is vastly more extended. In this sense at least the outer two sections of the work connect to one another very strongly. The work can be seen as a type of inner three-movement 'symphony' within the whole cycle, on a Brucknerian or Mahlerian scale.

What to make of it on a symbolical or conceptual level? The character of the three main sections are extremely distinct: heroic intransigence in the first, abstracted constructivism with touches of the macabre in the second and epic warmth and lyricism leading to darkness and tragedy in the third. As the titles of the second and third are incorporated within the first, what do *they* have to do with 'capitalist realism'? That is a question to which I have no answer, and wonder if it could be answered in a meaningful sense at all. But the fact that the piece has such an overall title surely has some sort of effect upon how it is perceived. Could

Finnissy be attempting to say something about how *all* of the affective categories presented in the music have come to assume the status of a commodity in this day and age?

The image displays a handwritten musical score for the piano accompaniment of Wagner's 'Siziliänisches Männerakte'. The score is written on four systems of staves, each with a treble and bass clef. The music is in a minor key, indicated by the key signature. The first system shows a melodic line in the treble clef with a slur and an accent (^) over a note. The second system continues the melodic line with slurs and accents. The third system features a piano (p) dynamic marking and a 'Long' annotation above a note. The fourth system includes a 'cresc.' marking and the lyrics 'Wer erbte sie?' and 'Der Ewigen Macht,'. The score is annotated with various musical notations, including slurs, accents, and dynamic markings like 'pppppp' and 'pppp'.

Fig. 120. *Siziliänisches Männerakte*, appearance of Wagner theme.

# Chapter 11

## No. 9: *Wachtend op de volgende uitbarsting van repressie en censuur*

After the symphonic dimensions and grandiosity of conception of *Kapitalistisch Realisme*, *Wachtend op de volgende uitbarsting van repressie en censuur* (whose Flemish title – reflecting the fact that Finnissy was teaching at the *Katholieke Universiteit Leuven* when writing it – translates as 'Before the next wave of repression and censorship) is a much more withdrawn, delicate and introverted piece. It can be loosely conceived as in two long sections with an introduction: the second section consists of a 'cut-up' of modified fragments from the first, usually presented in retrograde-inverted form, and with a greater frequency of translation into abstract pointillistic form – a type of musical 'censorship'. Two fundamental sources inform the movement, from Busoni and Beethoven.

Busoni's *Symphonisches Intermezzo (Sarabande)* (1918) (Fig. 121) comes from his opera *Doktor Faustus*, but also exists as a separate work, usually coupled with the *Cortége* from the same opera. In a letter to Volkmar Andreae on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1919, Busoni (who had earlier talked about the habit of 'rounding off the year with a small composition so as to put my signature to it as it were'<sup>1</sup>) described the two works as 'both entirely *un*-brilliant and contemplative', saying that they 'represent my most individual style'<sup>2</sup>. Anthony Beaumont points out how the work was composed with the closing scene, during which Faust effects the migration of his soul into another body, in mind, and that the use of the sarabande genre related to its association with hell in Cervantes's 'The Caves of Salamanca'<sup>3</sup>.

The first, second and fourth movements of Beethoven's String Quartet Op. 18 No. 5 were alluded to in *Kapitalistisch Realisme*, as we saw in Chapter 14. The third movement (Fig. 122) underlies the first section of *Wachtend* both as a source of material (this chapter features passages in ascending or descending sixths, linking with the fundamental intervals of the cycle) and to provide the variation structure for the first main section.

The structure is then as follows:

Introduction: Presentation of abstracted Sarabande, then three very brief episodes alluding to Berlioz *Roméo et Juliette*, Alkan material, Wagner 'Der Ewige Macht'.

---

<sup>1</sup> Cited in Beaumont, *Busoni*, p. 259.

<sup>2</sup> Busoni, *Selected Letters*, p. 280.

<sup>3</sup> See Beaumont, *Busoni*, p. 259.



A: In three sub-sections:

A (i): Emerging sarabande, with allusions to themes from *Muybridge-Munch*,

A (ii): Fragmentation and transition using Paganini material, and 'looping' Bach-derived material from *My parents' generation*.

A (iii): Three 'variations' (relating to Beethoven variations) followed by near-tonal 'Theme'.

B: Cut up of retrograde inversions of material from Section A

The introduction references the very opening of the 'Scène d'amour' from Berlioz's *Roméo et Juliette*, which was used in Finnissy's first mature 'transcription', *Romeo and Juliet are Drowning*<sup>4</sup>, and as such has a somewhat iconic meaning for the composer. This is itself re-configured in the manner of Busoni's Sarabande, with an accompaniment drawn directly from the Busoni work. In the A section, the Busoni provides the fundamental thread around which other material is woven and combined. Finnissy's variations allude obliquely to those in the Beethoven quartet, culminating in a more direct quotation of the theme, first in a retrograde-inverted form, then with the theme quoted outright (with a few distortions, but recognisable for what it is). But this very quotation itself is a sign of closure for this section, thus signalling the beginning of the B section, an array of disembodied fragments of what has come before, many of them in pointillistic form, and with several violent interjections, ultimately concluding with material from the beginning of *Bachsche Nachdichtungen*. The possibilities of more fluent and uninhibited expression have become censored, repressed.

---

<sup>4</sup> See Pace, 'The Piano Music', pp. 75-76, for more discussion of this work.

## Chapter 12

### No. 10: *Unsere Afrikareise*

*Unsere Afrikareise* ('Our African Journey') takes its title from the 1966 film of the same name by Peter Kubelka. Kubelka's film manipulates images of the safari, used as a metaphor for colonial exploitation, described in Finnissy's words as:

[A]ppropriation (the 'benign' conversion and 'civilisation' of 'barbaric' traditions and religions, the outright theft and exploitation of mineral wealth) and exploration of a preconstructed otherness (the freshness and magic innocence of a Garden of Eden, a holistic spirituality now lost to European materialism and pseudo-scientific 'wisdom')<sup>1</sup>

Enacting a compositional strategy which parallels that of Kubelka, Finnissy draws primarily upon musical materials from different parts of Africa, which in his view represent 'trophies' which are displayed ('a jumble of tourist-snapshots'<sup>2</sup>) as well as being partially subsumed within the 'civilizing' influence of European traditions.

Kubelka, a film-maker whose abstract structural cinematic strategies owed something to his interest in contemporary music<sup>3</sup>, constructs a film out of starkly juxtaposed shots that are never more than four seconds long (giving it something of the structure of a tourist film, though the content is as different as could be imagined). The cuts are in no sense smoothed over (either visually or aurally – the latter mirroring the former<sup>4</sup>), continually alternating between bloated-looking, contemptuous Austrian tourists (together with African servants or helpers – in one memorable shot an Austrian rests their gun on the shoulder of an African) taking in pleasure in shooting wild animals, and the natives, filmed so as to look utterly helpless and innocent. The Europeans are captured savagely, as is Kubelka's prerogative as a European himself; however, his portrayal of the African natives accords somewhat too readily with primitivist stereotypes, casting Africans as eternal victims with little power of free will of their own.

Finnissy's *Unsere Afrikareise* acts as a direct counterpart to *North American Spirituals*, with a good deal of cross-referencing of material between the two pieces. In the *Spirituals* Finnissy was concerned to demonstrate in a quite perverse manner the nature of musical 'assimilation' through the device of

---

<sup>1</sup> Finnissy, programme note for *Unsere Afrikareise*, 1988.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> As well as an interest in early music and period instruments, which Kubelka mentions in an interview with *Hors Champ* – see [http://www.offscreen.com/biblio/essays/interview\\_kubelka/](http://www.offscreen.com/biblio/essays/interview_kubelka/) (accessed 13/7/06).

<sup>4</sup> Kubelka speaks about his approach to sound in the interview with *Hors Champ*, saying 'In the visual, I have a shooting. Now I can use this visual to speak with sound. I thus put one of the voices of the man who is writing his journal. It says: "So!" meaning "Then!" in German. The voice of the accountant goes on: "We did that and that, etc." I used this sound as the exact portrait of the speaker. I combined or juxtaposed, or synchronized, the deadly shooting of the rifle with this "So!" of a typical "petit-bourgeois" indifference making him write: "Dear Journal, we are now in Africa and bla, bla, bla..."

incorporating African-American spirituals within hymn tunes of William Billings, in *Unsere Afrikareise* he not only does something similar (see below) within a 'European' context, but also mediates between forms of *representation* of African music in the context of several centuries of European music. In this sense the 'European' world of *Unsere Afrikareise* differs significantly from the 'American' one of the *Spirituals*.

The work interacts on many levels with wider issues and debates about musical orientalism and exoticism, which have been explored in some detail by musicologists in recent decades<sup>5</sup>. Much of the work in question has concentrated upon questions of *representation*, and all the ideologies of imperialism, domination, gender, etc., entailed therein, rather than whether depictions of non-European worlds (or, occasionally, 'exotic' worlds existing within the West, such as those on the fringes of Europe, the culture of the Romani, and so on) can be considered to have any relationship to any external reality. Few of the writers concerned can or would claim any degree of expertise on the actual musical cultures depicted, and as such are not really in a position to judge any questions of verisimilitude<sup>6</sup>. This is quite typical of a post-modern attitude in general,

---

<sup>5</sup> Amongst the most important writings on the subject are also Carl Dahlhaus, 'Exoticism, Folklorism, Archaism', in *Nineteenth Century Music*, translated J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 302-311; Peter W. Schatt, *Exotik in der Musik des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Katzschler, 1986); Jonathan Bellman (ed), *The Exotic in Western Music* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998); Derek B. Scott, 'Orientalism and Musical Style' in *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 82 No. 2 (Summer 1998), pp. 309-335; Ralph P. Locke, 'Exoticism and Orientalism in Music: Problems for the Worldly Critic', in Paul A. Bové (ed), *Edward Said and the Work of the Critic: Speaking Truth to Power* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), pp. 257-81, 306-12; Ralph P. Locke, *Music, Musicians and the Saint-Simonians* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); Matthew Head, *Orientalism, Masquerade and Mozart's Turkish Music* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000); Matthew Head, 'Musicology on Safari: Orientalism and the Spectre of Postcolonial Theory', in *Music Analysis* 22 (1-2) (2003), pp. 211-230; and Ralph P. Locke, *Musical Exoticism: Images and Reflections* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). The study of musical 'exoticism' has particularly focused upon opera, as in Ralph P. Locke, 'Constructing the Oriental 'Other': Saint-Saens' *Samson et Dalila*', in *Cambridge Opera Journal* Vol. 3 No. 3 (November 1991), pp. 261-302, Thomas Bauman, *W.A. Mozart: Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) and Susan McClary, *George Bizet: Carmen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

<sup>6</sup> For example, Mary Hunter writes that the *alla turca* style 'represents only one of several possible versions of Turkishness, and I take for granted that the version chosen has more to do with European interests than with anything intrinsic to the Turks or Turkish music' (Hunter, 'The *Alla Turca* style in the Late Eighteenth Century: Race and Gender in the Symphony and the Seraglio', in Bellman (ed), *The Exotic in Western Music*, pp. 43-44). This is an easy way for a writer such as Hunter to absolve herself of any need to engage in a serious study of *actual* Turkish music of the time (which would likely require a study of and absorption of Turkish-language sources amongst other things) and the precise nature of its relationship to Mozart's allusions to it. For a critique of even more cavalier assumptions in the work of Matthew Head, see Benjamin Perl, review of Head, in *Music and Letters*, Vol. 83 No. 3 (2002), pp. 455-458. Derek B. Scott, for his part, writes 'One might ask if it is necessary to know *anything* about Eastern musical practices; for the most part, it seems that only a knowledge of Orientalist signifiers is required. In the case of Orientalist operas, I had at first thought it might be important to understand where they were set geographically. Then, I began to realise that, for the most part, all I needed to know was the simple fact that they were set in exotic, foreign places' ('Orientalism and Musical Style', p. 309).

concerned only with representation, not with reality, epitomised in Jean Baudrillard's theories about *simulacra*<sup>7</sup>.

Naturally, such work is above all informed by the writings of the late Arab-American Edward Said<sup>8</sup>, known primarily for his important activities as an activist in support of the Palestinian cause, and as writer of the book *Orientalism*<sup>9</sup>. Declaring that 'the Orient is not an inert fact of nature' (though qualifying this by saying 'it would be wrong to conclude that the Orient was *essentially* an idea, or a creation with no corresponding reality'<sup>10</sup>, thus distancing himself somewhat from later post-modern interpretations), Said asserts that:

Under the general heading of knowledge of the Orient, and within the umbrella of Western hegemony over the Orient during the period from the end of the eighteenth century, there emerged a complex Orient suitable for study in the academy, for display in the museum, for reconstruction in the colonial office, for theoretical illustration in anthropological, biological, linguistic, racial, and historical theses about mankind and the universe, for instances of economic and sociological theories of development, revolution, cultural personality, national or religious character. Additionally, the imaginative examination of things Oriental was based more or less exclusively upon a sovereign Western consciousness out of whose unchallenged centrality an Oriental world emerged, first according to general ideas about who or what was an Oriental, then according to a detailed logic governed not simply by empirical reality but by a battery of desires, repressions, investments, and projections.<sup>11</sup>

Said does not himself offer any detailed portrayal, based on 'empirical reality', of the actual Eastern world that was being represented<sup>12</sup>, such as would make more palpable his claims that such representations are based primarily upon 'a sovereign Western consciousness' rather than perceptions based on experience (for such a

---

<sup>7</sup> See Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, translated Sheila Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994). The 'simulacra' according to Baudrillard, is a 'copy of a copy', at such a distance from its original that it can no longer be said to be 'copying' anything. For a scathing critique from the left of Baudrillard's theories (which led him eventually to claim that the 1991 Gulf War did not happen), see Christopher Norris, *Uncritical Theory: Postmodernism, Intellectuals and the Gulf War* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1992), especially Chapter 3, 'How the Real World Became a Fable', pp. 52-69. It can be argued, however, that Baudrillard is presenting a critique of a simulacra-dominated society, rather than revelling in it like more shallow post-modernists.

<sup>8</sup> Said was born in Jerusalem, but moved with his family to America in his teenage years, and remained resident there for the rest of his life. There have been controversies over the precise details of Said's early life which are beyond the scope of this book to investigate.

<sup>9</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, fourth edition, with new preface and afterword (London: Penguin, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 4-5

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>12</sup> Said himself says that 'I have no interest in, much less capacity for, showing what the true Orient or Islam really are. Actually I go a great deal further when, very early in the book, I say that words such as "Orient" and "Occident" correspond to no stable reality that exists as a natural fact. Moreover, all such geographical designations are an odd combination of the empirical and imaginative. In the case of the Orient as a notion in currency in Britain, France and America, the idea derives to a great extent from the impulse not simply to describe, but also to dominate and somehow defend against it.' (Afterword to *Orientalism*, p. 331). Said's sentiments here would be more convincing if he himself did not indulge in such sweepingly generalised constructions of the West. Furthermore, the geographical area defined as the 'Orient' does not have to be a 'stable reality that exists as a natural fact' for one to be able to identify particular attributes of the society and culture within particular subsections therein, and compare these against their representations by those from without.



portrayal would provide something against which to measure those representations). His claims, throughout the book, tend instead to be based as much upon rhetorical assertion as upon scholarly investigation and comparison. From what has been claimed to be a highly selective reading of a very partial selection of those historical writers in question<sup>13</sup>, Said draws some very broad conclusions about the nature of and motivations for such representations, asserting that 'every European, in what he could say about the Orient, was consequently a racist, an imperialist, and almost totally ethnocentric'<sup>14</sup>; making such blanket assertions about a whole continent is rather ironic in the context of a book precisely claiming to critique representations of other peoples<sup>15</sup>. But well-established criticisms of Said are rarely engaged by musicologists looking at the subject of exoticism, and his writings are often taken by some such figures as axiomatically true<sup>16</sup>.

---

<sup>13</sup> See Malcolm Kerr, review of *Orientalism*, *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 12 (December 1980), pp. 544-547. Similar objections, albeit more mildly, are voiced by historian of the Arab world Albert Hourani in his review 'The Road to Morocco', *New York Review of Books*, Vol. 26 (March 8<sup>th</sup>, 1979), pp. 27-30.

<sup>14</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 203-204.

<sup>15</sup> Peter T. Daniels draws attention to how Said ends up embracing some of the most discredited aspects of eighteenth-century racial theories in order to prove his points. He also questions whether Said really had any 'discernable qualifications to speak on the topic'. See Daniels, 'The Decipherment of the Near East' in Daniel C. Snell (ed), *A Companion to the Ancient Near East (Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World)* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), p. 427. Similar criticisms are made by veteran French scholar Maxime Rodinson in Nancy Elizabeth Gallagher (ed), *Approaches to the History of the Middle East: Interviews with leading Middle East Historians* (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1994), p. 124, whilst Charles Issawi says that Said 'should have known that everybody is imperfect, everybody is biased, everybody sees only part of the truth, everybody is a child of his age and culture. Why should the orientalist be an exception?' and that "You are either centric (Euro, Sino, Muslim, etc.) or you are eccentric, in the strict sense of the word. To expect the nineteenth-century English and French to look at the Orient as we look at it today is absurd and unrealistic' (ibid. p. 62). A more balanced approach to the whole subject than that of Said can be found in Rodinson, *Europe and the Mystique of Islam*, translated Roger Veinus (London: I.B. Tauris & Co, 1988). Rodinson is highly critical of European attitudes to the Islamic world through history, which he charts in great detail along with their political and imperial manifestations (he is also particularly illuminating on the relationship between Marxism and Islam, the subject of his earlier book *Marxism and the Muslim World*, translated Jean Matthews (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1981)), but recognises nuances and the continuing value of Western rational and scientific methods. He argues that 'The growth of Orientalism was linked to the colonial expansion of Europe in a much more subtle and intricate way than he [Said] imagines' (*Europe and the Mystique of Islam*, p. 131). Gallagher compares Said and Rodinson in the introduction to her book, pp. 12-14. A discussion of some critiques of Said can be found in Bill Ashcroft and Pal Ahluwalia, *Edward Said: The paradox of identity* (London: Routledge, 1999), in particular pp. 76-77, but their approach is over-defensive and somewhat precious about Said's work. The Indian Marxist critic Aijaz Ahmad points out devastatingly how Said's narrative finds its most passionate adherents amongst members of a university intelligentsia who originate in the ethnic minorities and come from the upper classes in their home countries, by providing a narrative which conveniently bypasses class. See Aijaz Ahmad, "Orientalism and After: Ambivalence and Metropolitan Location in the Work of Edward Said", in Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London: Verso, 1992), pp. 195-196. My thanks to Peter T. Daniels for some interesting information and discussion on critics of Said.

<sup>16</sup> See for example Hunter, 'The *Alla Turca* style', p. 317 n. 6; McClary, *Bizet: Carmen*, p. 29; or Philip Brett, 'Britten's Dream', in Ruth Solie (ed), *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), p. 278. However, the work of Bellmann, Locke and to some extent Scott is considerably more nuanced, subtle and critical than that of Hunter, McClary, Brett and Head.

A lot of Finnissy's music might be found wanting by these terms, for he has engaged with, alluded to, and even represented a very wide range of 'exotic' music and peoples in his work from the early 1980s onwards. These include the music and peoples of Aboriginal Australia, Sardinia (an 'exotic' location on the very fringes of Europe), Azerbaijan, Kurdistan, the Venda Africans of the Transvaal, India, Korea, to name just a few places<sup>17</sup>. In most cases Finnissy foregrounds the most obviously 'exotic' extra-European musical attributes of this work: elaborate ornamentation, unusual rhythms, wide tessitura, the use of microtones, sensuous harmonies (though not generally static harmonies, nor repetitive rhythms) and in general that which seems to connote the primal and the sexual. However, to judge the value in symbolic terms of, for example, Finnissy's allusions to Moroccan and Berber music in *Unsere Afrikareise* would, by the standards I suggested above, require an intimate knowledge of the music in question, from which vantage point to gauge the nature and veracity of the representation and thus what the piece is 'saying' about the music and peoples in question. I am not a specialist ethnomusicologist or anthropologist of that region (nor is Finnissy) and so would not feel qualified to undertake such a thing (it might of course be interesting to read what such a specialist would have to say on the subject).

It is not easy in particular to disentangle, say, the Vendan African-inspired *ngano* for choir, flute and percussion (1984) from a good deal of primitivist cultural stereotypes about sub-Saharan African people, and perhaps *Unsere Afrikareise* might be seen as an attempt to respond musically to the issues thus thrown up. To this end, Finnissy employs varying types of representation and implied distance from a source, drawing in a whole vocabulary of orientalist representation drawn from nineteenth-century composers (mostly French) in dialogue with other material derived from collections from the areas in question, and explicit and obvious forms of musical 'assimilation'. Specifically, he uses the following categories of material:

1. Folk music from Africa. This includes Vendan African songs (taken from the ethnomusicological work of John Blacking<sup>18</sup>, which was earlier sourced in *ngano*), Ethiopian chant, as well as Moroccan and Berber folk music<sup>19</sup>. These are simply called 'Folksongs' in the sketches.
2. 'Assimilated' African folk music. This is music from category 1, but combined with other European material, specifically Mozart Minuets and Schubert Ecossaises, designed so as to demonstrate the incongruity of the combinations as in

---

<sup>17</sup> Aboriginal music features in a cycle of works from 1982-83 (*Teangi, Warara, Aijal, Banumbirr, Marrngu, Ulpirra, Hikkai* and *Ouraa*), Sardinian in *Duru-Duru*, Finnissy's first major 'folk music' work, Azerbaijan in *Keroiyulu, Terekkeme, Uzundara and Sepevi*, Kurdistan in *Yalli, Nasiye, Dilok, Cirit, Delal* and *Kulamén Dilan*, Vendan Africa in *ngano*, music of India and Korea in *Folklore 4*.

<sup>18</sup> John Blacking, *Venda Children's Songs: A study in ethnomusicological analysis* (1967), reprinted (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

<sup>19</sup> The basic source here is Alexis Chottin (ed), *Corpus de Musique Marocaine* (Casablanca: Librairie Livre Service, 1987).

the *Spirituals*. This generally takes the form of the folk music as a right hand melody together with a bass line from Mozart or Schubert.

3. European representations of Africa and African music. Here Finnissy draws upon mediated allusions to music of Rameau, Gounod, Saint-Saëns, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Debussy, Alan Bush, and more prominently, passages from Victor Massé's opera *Paul et Virginie* and Félicien David's 'symphonic ode' *Le Désert*. In the sketches, these are divided up into one group called 'European response' – twelve moderately extended fragments which seem to all be derived from Bush, a corresponding set of 'Accompaniments' (very freely derived from the same source and some others, including the Rameau), not all of which were used, and another category called 'Quotations', including the Rameau, Debussy, Coleridge-Taylor, Denny and Gounod.

4. African-American music and its representations. This takes the form mostly of the more mediated passages from the *Spirituals* (usually further mediated simply through techniques of retrograde and the like) as well as additional material from Homer Denny's collections of ragtime.

5. 'Pointillistic discourse'. This type of material encountered earlier in *Le réveil* and *MPG*. Deriving from the other material in the piece, the passage of this type in *UA* is the most extended of its type in the whole cycle. In its nature and configuration it suggests the Piano Sonata of Jean Barraqué<sup>20</sup> or the passages of unstemmed pitches in Iannis Xenakis's piano piece *Mists*.

Fig. 123 shows a selection from the collection of Moroccan/Berber music from which Finnissy drew inspiration, whilst Fig. 124 shows some of the specific Ethiopian sources which he uses (others were shown in Fig. 7 (d)). Some of the attributes of both colour more widely the configurations of various types of material presented in the piece.

Fig. 125 shows the basic gamut of 'folksong' material used in the piece. The first three lines derive from Moroccan/Berber sources (the generalised relationship of these to some of the sources in Fig. 1 should be clear), the next four from Ethiopian sources, the last four from Vandan sources (the derivations of some of which will be shown later). Whilst this is not the place to embark upon an extended discussion of Moroccan, Berber, Ethiopian or Venda music<sup>21</sup>, some basic attributes as filtered through into Finnissy's material are relatively clear: pentatonic or other limited groups of pitches for the Venda melodies and the first Moroccan/Berber melodies, more florid, extensively ornamented for the Ethiopian. However, the origins of much of the material ceases to be of much consequence when it becomes transformed, as Finnissy uses configurations associated with one of the material types in order to transform another. Recurrent

---

<sup>20</sup> An allusion that the composer himself suggested to me and which seems appropriate.

<sup>21</sup> Powne and Blacking provide excellent introductions to Ethiopian and Vandan music respectively; on Arabic music in general, a concise but highly informative text in English is Habib Hassan Touma, *The Music of the Arabs* (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1996).

oscillating adjacent pitches (an extremely common figuration in much Arabic music) form a further link with 'By and by' and the ecstatic Chabrier music experienced briefly in *Muybridge-Munch* and *Wachtend*.



Fig. 123 (a). Selection of Moroccan melodies as collected in Chottin, *Corpus de Musique Marocaine*<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> Chottin, *Corpus*, Vol. 1, pp. 6-7, 14-15, 39, 46-47.

The musical score consists of ten staves of music in a single system. The first staff is in 2/4 time, marked *mf*, with dynamics *f* and *mf* indicated. The second staff is in 2/4 time, marked *f*, with *sfz* markings. The third staff is in 2/4 time, marked *mf*. The fourth staff is in 3/8 time, marked *mf*, with a '2' marking. The fifth staff is in 2/4 time, marked *mf*. The sixth staff is in 2/4 time, marked *mf*, with the text 'Adaption of Andalusian air' above it. The seventh staff is in 2/4 time, marked *mf*. The eighth staff is in 2/4 time, marked *mf*, with a '3' marking and the word 'pressez' above it. The ninth staff is in 2/4 time, marked *mf*, with a '3' marking. The tenth staff is in 2/4 time, marked *mf*, with a '3' marking.

Fig. 123 (b). Selection of Berber melodies as collected in Chottin, *Corpus de Musique Marocaine*<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. Vol. 2, pp. 57-58, 61-62, 66, 68.

a solo voice then takes up the same melody

Fig. 124 (a). Ethiopian flute melody (source unknown)<sup>24</sup>

**Briskly** solo man, with drum accompaniment

massengo and washint play embellished version of tune

**Quicker**

Drum

Fig. 124 (b). Ethiopian Galla song of joy, about love, for orchestra, from Arussi province.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> From Powne, *Ethiopian Music*, p. 35. Powne points out that on this deep-sounding flute, the tone is almost like that of a saxophone.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* p. 127.

Fig. 125. Gamut of folksong material for *Unsere Afrikareise*.

Structurally, the work falls into clear sections demarcated by pronounced shifts in dynamics, texture, or tonality/atonality, as follows:

A. An extended passage all marked *pppppp!*. Alternating four combinations of African folk songs together with Mozart minuets as bass lines with mélanges of most types of material to be found in clearer form in section C.

B. Tonal Music 1. A relatively literal transcription of part of the Air ‘Ah! Pauvre nègre...’ from Act 1 of Victor Massé’s opera *Paul et Virginie*. The predominant modality at the outset is Aeolian on D. A freer short fantasy upon this material acts as a transition to the following section.

C. The central section of the work. An elaborate montage of material from categories 1-4, including some silences alluding to their equivalents in the *Spirituals*. Tempo continually shifting up and down a spectrum from crotchet 116 to crotchet 192. A short transition, *pp* then *pppppp*, first introduces material from David, which becomes clearer in D.

D. Tonal Music 2. More extended than B, this consists of three sections quoting clearly passages from Félicien David’s *Le Désert*. The first uses a Phrygian mode on F#, the second approximates to G major, the third B minor. An explosive fourth section loses a clear sense of a key centre.

E. Pointillistic discourse. In violent contrast to what has come before, an extremely extended discourse consisting mostly of unstemmed pitches or fragmentary gestures. In the final moment, passages from the *Spirituals* (including the ‘cluster’ material) are interspersed within this.

F. Coda. A melancholy and mysterious selection of materials, very slow, settling down to the spirituals after a short violent interruption. This section appears to be resolving into D-flat major at the end, but the final gesture contradicts this.

The opening section begins with the first of the four minuets<sup>26</sup>. The bass lines for each of these are taken from Mozart’s Eight Minuets for piano K315a (1773), specifically Nos. IV, V and the Trio of No. VIII (which may have been composed later than the rest, around 1779-80<sup>27</sup>), as well as the Minuet in D K94. In Minuet 1 he uses Mozart’s No. V, and combines it with the Vendan song ‘Potilo’ (Fig. 127):

---

<sup>26</sup> In the first version of this piece, Finnissy had a fifth Minuet of a quite different nature (marked ‘expressionless and dry’ in the score), which appeared in the transition between sections E and F. However, this was removed from the final version.

<sup>27</sup> See Patrick Gale, ‘Piano: sonatas and other works’ in H.C. Robbins Landon (ed). *The Mozart Compendium: A Guide to Mozart’s Life and Music* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989), p. 307. Whether this trio really does belong with the other pieces is sometimes questioned. See Emily Anderson (ed), *The Letters of Mozart and his Family* (London: Macmillan, 1989), p. 682 n.4. Finnissy’s view of Mozart has always been ambivalent; when he has alluded to his music, it has tended to be earlier works, generally those less well-known, as for example in the trio *WAM*.





Fig. 127 (a). Mozart Minuet K315a No. V (Minuet only)



Fig. 127 (b). Vandan song 'Potilo'<sup>28</sup>.



Fig. 127 (c). Original draft of opening

<sup>28</sup> Taken from Blacking, *Venda Children's Songs*, p. 59.

Originally, Finnissy combined part of this four note Vendan song in retrograde (expanded at the end), tonally centered around C and rhythmically modified, with the C major Mozart bassline (Fig. 127 (c)), but in this form the Vendan song was perhaps too well-‘assimilated’? Both pitch and relative tonality of treble and bass were changed, the bass moved up a diminished fourth and the treble up a semitone. The melody was also modified rhythmically, to create an inner pulse of four against the right hand’s three. Finnissy also inserted a written-out fermata in the fourth bar, then afterwards repeats the final phrase of the previous section in a marginally modified form (a similar technique to that used at the beginning of *Muybridge-Munch*). The final configuration creates a highly fluid sense of tonality, in which the gravitational role of certain pitches do not last for more than a few beats (Fig. 128).

10.  
 Unsere Afrikareise

Menuetto [♩ = 88]

*pppppp!* / senza espressione

8ed.  
 + una corda.  
 Pedal-changes are specific (for harmonic reasons).

4:3 4:3

8ed.)

*l'istesso tempo*

8ed.)

*agitato (sempre pppppp!)*

3 6:5

8ed.)

Fig. 128. *Unsere Afrikareise*, P1, L1-4.

The express intent of the composer in this piece in general<sup>29</sup> was to demonstrate the absurdity of such musical ‘assimilation’ (a subject I will return to in the conclusion to this section). Yet the actual result exhibits such qualities in a much less clear-cut manner than was the case in the *Spirituals*. Considering that it was quite possible (as demonstrated in the first draft) to make these two parts fit together reasonably harmoniously (albeit a little quirkily), how much of their dissonance is the result of the composer’s mediation rather than implied by the specific musical materials in question? Also, to what extent would the two parts be perceived by an uninitiated listener as belonging to highly distinct musical worlds? I believe the clear distinction between the four-pitch melody, with its more intricate rhythms (which together perhaps signify a ‘non-Western’ quality), and the relatively steady pulse and wider pitch range of the accompaniment, are readily audible, though the pitch modifications in the accompaniment give reason to question as to whether it can be considered (or, more importantly, perceived) as ‘Mozart’ any longer? That said, the modifications are less significant in the other three minuets in this section, so the Mozartian qualities could be said to emerge gradually after being somewhat blurred at the outset.

Otherwise, the other initial types of allusions used in the first section (to material deriving from Rameau, Gounod<sup>30</sup>, Alan Bush, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, and ragtime from Debussy and Homer Denney – see Fig. 129 and also Fig. 7 (d) for some of these) are distinguished by being presented in a form relatively close to that of the original (especially in terms of register, tessitura and density), though with random procedures employed for transposition. Finnis juxtaposes these with a selection of material from category 1, distinguished by rhythmic unison between hands in the case of Vendan music (also shifting continuously between central and more extreme registers), and alternating chords on the offbeat for the Moroccan/Berber/Ethiopian music, in the typical *dum-tak* (representing the centre and the edge of a drum respectively) manner common to much North African music<sup>31</sup> (as shown in Fig. 7(d)). Crudely put, the Northern African material is presented as monody with rhythmic accompaniment, whilst the sub-Saharan African material is presented in a polyphonic style; in both cases representative of highly generalised characteristics of the music of the different regions. Other material types are quite clearly distinguished by their specific attributes - treble register for the Bush material, syncopated rhythms for the Debussy/Denny material, etc. - yet long-range lines indicated by dotted phrases often cross over the ‘cuts’ between material.

---

<sup>29</sup> As communicated to me at various stages during the work’s composition.

<sup>30</sup> From Gounod’s opera *La Reine du Saba*.

<sup>31</sup> For an extremely brief description of the basics of Arabic rhythm, see Otto Karolyi, *Traditional African and Oriental Music* (London: Penguin, 1998), pp. 64-66; for more detail, see Touma, *The Music of the Arabs*, pp. 46-54.



Fig. 129 (a) Jean-Philippe Rameau, from 'Air pour les Esclaves Africains'.

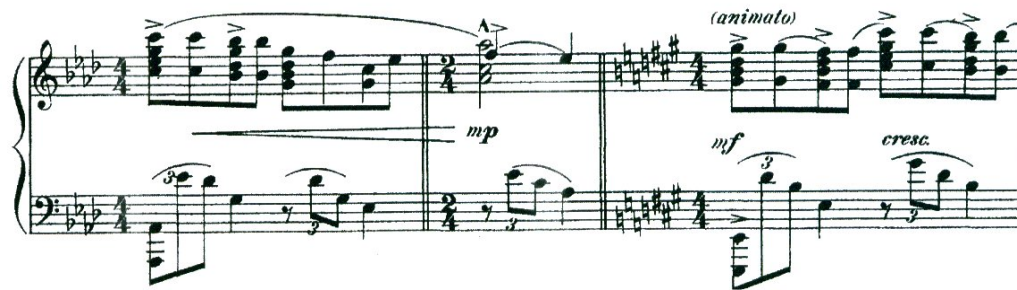


Fig. 129 (b). From Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, *Six Negro Melodies* Op. 59 No. 4, 'They Will Not Lend Me A Child'.



Fig. 129 (c). Debussy, *Le petit nègre*<sup>32</sup>.



Fig. 129 (d). *Unsere Afrikareise* P1 L5. Bar 2 derives from Rameau, bar 3 from Gounod, bar 4 from Bush.

<sup>32</sup> This was Debussy's second excursion into ragtime, following on from the 'Golliwog's Cakewalk' (1907) from *Children's Corner*. Debussy himself conflated the genres of ragtime and the cakewalk, both brought to Europe by John Philip Sousa in several tours beginning in 1900, in both pieces. See Gunther Schuller, 'Jazz and Musical Exoticism' in Bellman (ed), *The Exotic in Western Music*, p. 283. One of Sousa's concerts was reviewed favourably by Debussy in the newspaper *Gil Blas*. See François Lesure (ed), *Debussy on Music*, translated Richard Langham Smith (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), pp. 180-181 for the passage in question. The work was written for a child's piano method (Paul Roberts, *Images: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1996), p. 216).

The tonality for the first section is generally very fluid. If we think of Minuet 1 as being as close to C-flat major as any other 'home key', then similarly (and more strongly), Minuet 2 is in A major, Minuet 3 in G major, Minuet 4 in B major. The Moroccan/Berber/Ethiopian music (first appearing just before half-way through this section, generally suggests a tonal centre of D (primarily as a result of the accompaniments, the melodies inhabiting various modalities). The final appearance of this type of material does not actually come from a folk melody, but instead one of those derived from Alan Bush (from what was then Southern Rhodesia), with a clearer D major diatonicism in contrast to the Moroccan/Berber music, that aids the transition into the following section.

The two sections I call 'Tonal Music'<sup>33</sup> on one level mirror the popular songs which appear in *My parents' generation*, though their structural function in the whole work differs somewhat. The first is a transcription of the aria 'Ah! Pauvre nègre...' from *Paul et Virginie* by the now largely forgotten, but once prominent French composer Victor Massé (1882-1884). This 2/4 aria consists mostly of a staccato quaver accompaniment in chords, above which the tenor part for 'A Negro' (an onlooker) sings about the awful plight of the black slave Meala, kicked, whipped and cuffed by the tyrannical plantation owner St. Croix. The repeated dotted rhythms in the orchestra might be interpreted as representing the crack of a whip in a manner akin to the 'scourging' music in the *St Matthew Passion* (Fig. 130). Finnissy transposes the aria down a perfect fifth into a Phrygian mode on D, but otherwise maintains its somewhat stereotypically non-Western qualities – static harmonies, ornamental figurations on the melody and (in line with many representations of black music) incessant rhythm. The melody is placed in the left hand, a quasi-melodic extrapolation of the orchestral music in the right (also with some rhythmic irregularities). The 'whipping music' contrasts measured rhythms with grace notes upon the same type of material, a variation upon the Massé original.

Finnissy leads into a passage featuring the type of frenetic montage to be found in Kubelka's film. The rate of change of material is rapid, whilst overlaid by a tempo structure (oscillating up and down between metronome marks of 116 and 192, but with gradual accelerandos and sudden rallentandos at the ends of sections) that seems to operate independently in some respects, in accordance with the particularities of the material in others. The peak tempos are always associated with the four Ecossaises, which parallel the Minuets in the A section, here using bass lines derived from Schubert Ecossaises (Fig. 131).

---

<sup>33</sup> Both of these are taken almost verbatim from a slightly earlier Finnissy work, the cycle of miniatures for piano *Violet, Slingsby, Guy and Lionel* (1994-96, currently withdrawn, awaiting revision). The first of these was originally called 'A subdued simultaneous snuffle', the second 'On the Brink of the Western Sky' (each of the movement titles in the earlier work come from the story of the same name by Edward Lear).

Un Négrillon (couché à l'ombre d'un cactus) (à pleine voix)

Ah! pau-vre nègre il ta faut souf - fir!

A fouet du

maître il faut o - bé - - ir

Fig. 130. Victor Massé – Air: ‘Ah! pauvre nègre...’ from *Paul et Virginie* Act 1.

Fig. 131 (a). Schubert *Sechs Ecossaisen* D421 No. 1.

A. Ma - fha - la - to - mbo, mu - lo - vha dzo ṭwa nga - fhi?

B. Tsi - mu - ni ya ma - fha - la - to - mbo a dzi tsha ka - nda

Retrograde of verse A with rhythmic modifications      Verse B with rhythmic modifications

In 'Ecoisaise' form

Detailed description: This figure shows two lines of musical notation in a single staff. The first line is labeled 'A.' and the second 'B.'. Below each line are the lyrics. Above the notes, there are plus signs (+) indicating accents. Below the first line, there are annotations: 'Retrograde of verse A with rhythmic modifications' and 'Verse B with rhythmic modifications'. The second line of notation includes triplets (marked '3') and a 7:5 ratio. Below the second line, it says 'In 'Ecoisaise' form'.

Fig. 131 (b). Vandan song, 'Mafhala-Tombo'<sup>34</sup> with derivations.

6:5 *accel.* ----- Ecoisaise [ $\text{♩} = 192$ ]

*(p)* *subito* *senza 8ed.*

*l'istesso tempo rall.* ----- [ $\text{♩} = 116$ ]

*subito* *poco 8ed.*

Detailed description: This figure shows a handwritten musical score for piano. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system starts with a 6:5 time signature and includes performance instructions like 'accel.', 'Ecoisaise [♩ = 192]', '(p)', 'subito', and 'senza 8ed.'. The second system includes 'l'istesso tempo rall.', '[♩ = 116]', 'subito', and 'poco 8ed.'. There are also some handwritten annotations like '7:5' and '3'.

Fig. 131 (c). *Unsere Afrikareise* P 13 L5, 14 L1.

Then the material comes from the gamut shown in Fig. 125, together with some longer fragments, including further derivations from Alan Bush and several from Saint-Saëns, specifically from the *Suite Algérienne* (1880) (Fig. 132), and also material from the *Spirituals* (including the longer silences found in that earlier chapter).

<sup>34</sup> In Blacking, *Venda Children's Songs*, p. 47.

The image displays two musical excerpts from Camille Saint-Saëns' *Suite Algerienne*. The top excerpt, from 'Prelude', is in 9/8 time and features a piano part with a *pp* dynamic. It consists of two staves: the upper staff has a melodic line with a trill (*tr*) and a wavy line above it, while the lower staff has a bass line with a *mf* dynamic and a wavy line above it. The bottom excerpt, from 'Reverie du soir', is in 6/8 time and features a piano part with a *f* dynamic. It consists of two staves: the upper staff has a complex rhythmic pattern with a wavy line above it, and the lower staff has a bass line with a wavy line above it. Both excerpts show intricate rhythmic patterns and dynamics.

Fig. 132. Camille Saint-Saëns, *Suite Algerienne*, passages quoted in *Unsere Afrikareise* from 'Prelude' and 'Reverie du soir'.

Whilst Finnissy derives left and right hands from separate parts of the Saint-Saëns in a bitonal manner, these fragments nonetheless come to assume of the function of relative tonal oases (in each part) within the context of the more modal folk-music material. The music is suffused with familiar tropes of musical orientalism, for example the use of a turn like figuration, often in thirds (Fig. 133) (a common trope that can also be found in the music of Meyerbeer and Massenet). Very crudely, one could say the music shifts rapidly between different types of musical 'images': non-European/modal (folk music), nineteenth-century European/tonal/bitonal (from the European representations of African music), modernist/chromatic (from the *Spirituals* material) and non-European/European clashing (the *Eco-saisies*). The harmonic structure centres upon the *Eco-saisies* if anything more pronouncedly than was the case with the Minuets in Section A. The pitch centres for each of these derives clearly from the bass, thus the progression is A-flat-B-flat-E-flat-A-flat.



Massé - 'Chanson'  
*Paul et Virginie*, Act 3, Scene 1

Saint-Saëns - 'La Brise'  
 from *Melodies Persanes*

Delibes - 'Chant de l'aimée'

Bizet - 'Adieux de L'Hôtesse Arabe'

*Unsere Afrikareise*

The image displays five systems of musical notation. The first system shows two staves (treble and bass clef) for Massé's 'Chanson' and Saint-Saëns' 'La Brise'. The second system shows two staves for Delibes' 'Chant de l'aimée' and Bizet's 'Adieux de L'Hôtesse Arabe', with dynamic markings *sf* and *p*. The third system is a single staff with a complex rhythmic pattern. The fourth system is a single staff with complex rhythmic patterns and triplets, labeled 'Unsere Afrikareise'. The fifth system is a single staff with complex rhythmic patterns and triplets.

Fig. 133. Orientalist trope – turn and thirds – as used in *Unsere Afrikareise*.

The second 'Tonal Material' is taken from Félicien David's 'symphonic ode' *Le Désert* (1844), a vital work relating to the ideas of French socialist group (at least usually described as such) who were followers of the ideas of Claude Henri de Rouvroy, comte de Saint-Simon (1760-1825). Saint-Simon and his small cult of followers analysed the forms of wage slavery that befall the proletariat working for

their industrial chief in a way that clearly anticipates Marx's later and more systematic analysis of such a situation. His ideas were tied in with a very particular brand of Christianity to the extent that he can be considered a highly significant figure within the history of 'Christian socialism'<sup>35</sup> (he is also believed to have been the first figure to have applied the term 'avant-garde' to culture<sup>36</sup>). The Saint-Simonian movement was suppressed in 1832, at an early time during the July Monarchy, but many of the other disciples travelled to the Middle East, apparently in search of the 'Female Messiah' or 'woman-mother'<sup>37</sup> (the Saint-Simonians adhered to a strange mixture of matriarchal ideas and sexual mysticism). David, who had first become involved with the Saint-Simonians during his time as a student at the Paris Conservatoire, travelled with them to Turkey, Egypt and Palestine, and during his trip collected various music which he later transcribed for piano as a volume called *Mémoires orientales* (1836) upon his return to France<sup>38</sup>. Eight years later he composed *Le Désert*, equivalent to a scenic cantata in three parts, portraying a scene in the Middle Eastern desert to a text by the poet August Colin<sup>39</sup>. Each of the three movements is subdivided into several scenes, portraying life in the desert (the story is ultimately reasonably inconsequential; the atmosphere portrayed is of much greater importance to this music<sup>40</sup>). The work was a huge success, attracting the advocacy not least of Berlioz, who cited it as part of a polemic against classical forms in a major review, and noted its enthusiastic responses from audiences<sup>41</sup>. It was played all over Europe and

---

<sup>35</sup> See <http://sadenaco.ipower.com/Archive/New-Christianity/> (accessed 10/11/13) for Saint-Simon's important essay on this subject.

<sup>36</sup> In the volume *Opinions littéraires, philosophiques et industrielles* (Paris: Galerie de Bossange Père, 1825), pp. 210-211, cited in. Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1987), p. 101. Calinescu argues that whilst attributed to Saint-Simon, this volume was actually a collaborative enterprise between Saint-Simon and some of his students and disciples (pp. 101-102).. Saint Simon argued in 1820 that 'New mediations have proved to me that things should move ahead with artists in the lead, followed by the scientists, and that the industrialists should come after these two classes.' (*Oeuvres de Claude-Henri de Saint-Simon* (Paris: Editions Anthropos, 1966), Vol. 6, p. 422, cited in Calinescu, p. 102).

<sup>37</sup> See 'Saint-Simon and Saint-Simonism', *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, at <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13377a.htm> (accessed 21/12/2005)

<sup>38</sup> See Locke, 'Cutthroats and Casbah Dancers', p. 113.

<sup>39</sup> Locke discusses the creation of the work in some detail in *Music, Musicians and the Saint Simonians*, pp. 208-212. He expresses the view that 'Colin's text for *Le Désert* the "social milieu" was clearly defined by the almost unremitting focus on the Arab people (represented by male chorus) rather than on individuals. (Of the three solo numbers, all for tenor, only one deals primarily with love; it is sung by a character never named or encountered again, and his beloved is apparently not with him.) . . . Colin's text 'explicitly contrasted the freedom and vigor of life in the desert with the paleness of urban society. David must have found all of this uncommonly appealing. It permitted him to exploit the Oriental vein, transmit a social message, and, in the descriptive passages, fulfil his longstanding desire to sing of "the beautiful and the good."' (p. 208). See also Dorothy Veinus Hagen, *Félicien David 1810-1876: A Composer and a Cause* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1985), pp. 67-90.

<sup>40</sup> Though Locke believes that 'As for the central image of a desert caravan, the audience cannot have missed in it an allusion to the Saint-Simonian mission to Egypt.' (*Music, Musicians and the Saint Simonians*, p. 209).

<sup>41</sup> See Hagen, *Félicien David*, pp. 81-85. Berlioz conducted *Le Désert*; David Cairns suggests that it and other pieces in such a vein were a huge success in light of 'the vogue for things Middle Eastern which had hit Paris with the arrival of six Algerian chiefs and their picturesque retinues on an official

America<sup>42</sup> to packed houses, and became a major influence upon a wide range of later 'orientalist' works in the century, including those of Bizet, Saint-Saëns, Délibes, Massenet and Gounod, as well as possible Berlioz and Verdi, becoming recognised as, as Peter Gradenwitz puts it, 'the first authentically exotic musical work whose author had experienced the Orient at first hand'<sup>43</sup>.

Finnissy sets David's 'Dance des almées' (Egyptian belly dancers<sup>44</sup>), transposed up a whole tone then shifted down two octaves into the bass registers, whilst Finnissy's accompaniment is if anything at first more repetitive than that of David (see Fig. 134). He then goes on to set the tenor solo, 'Rêverie du soir' at the beginning of Part 2 of *Le Désert* (in that case in the key of E-flat), the relatively static harmonies (as with the previous section) in accordance with other 'non-European' evocations (especially alluding to the music of the Arab world), though also establishing this passage as an oasis of calm in the context of the whole work. The final section transcribes, in relatively literal form, the 'Chant du muezzin' from the beginning of Part 3 of *Le Désert* (Fig. 135). The muezzin is a servant of the mosque who gives the summons to the five daily prayers and the Friday service from on a platform, and it is this that David portrays here<sup>45</sup>. But where David harmonised the muezzin's calls in the orchestra, Finnissy leaves it mostly as a monophonic line which thus becomes reminiscent of his numerous other similar passages in his piano writing.

---

visit' (Cairns, *Berlioz: Volume 2, Servitude and Greatness 1832-1869* (London: Penguin, 1999)).

Berlioz also conducted the work in a concert in honour of the governor of Syria (ibid. p. 353).

<sup>42</sup> According to one short pamphlet on the work, it was performed fourteen times in New York in 1846, to audiences averaging 2000. See *The Desert, Ode Symphony, composed by Felicien David* (New York: J.L. Koethen, 1848), p. 8.

<sup>43</sup> Peter Gradenwitz, 'Félicien David (1810-1876) and French Romantic Orientalism', in *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. LXII No.4 (October 1976), pp. 502-503. Elsewhere in this article, Gradenwitz compares the 'Chant du muezzin' with a transcription of a comparable actual chant recorded in Jerusalem in 1968 (pp. 491-492). He also points out how Berlioz grew to tire of the work, calling it 'silly music' in 1857 (p. 494).

<sup>44</sup> Richard Taruskin says that these were 'regarded by Europeans as prostitutes', and that this dance 'supplies what would prove to be the most durable, indeed indispensable, ingredient in European musical orientalism. See Taruskin, 'Self and Other', in *The Oxford History of Western Music* Vol. 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 387-389. Locke ('Cutthroats and Casbah Dancers', p. 115) says this dance is 'quite pathbreaking in that it vividly evokes images of curvaceous women dancing with supple arm and torso movements; the beckoning quality is intensified by the curly melody's being given to a solo oboe, perhaps understood as the equivalent of the Arab *mujwiz*'. Both of course are highly subjective interpretations of this dance.

<sup>45</sup> Taruskin (*Oxford History*, Volume 4, pp. 388-389) suggests that this apparently authentic music involves an attempt at invoking microtones through the close tessitura of one of the melismas. This was obvious not an option to Finnissy when writing for the piano, so he omits this. However, one can be reasonably sure that were he writing for another instrument, he would have included elaborate microtones of his own. According to Locke, the tenor in the first performance sang with microtones, coached by David, though he did not know how to notate them in the score. See Bellman (ed), *The Exotic in Western Music*, p. 329 n. 30.

Moderato

Fig. 134. Félicien David, 'Danse des almées' from *Le Désert*.

Adagio *très mesuré*

El - Sa - la - ma - lek a - lei - koum - el sa - lam

Al - lah ou - kbar ia les Sa - lar

Fig. 135 (a). Félicien David, 'Chant du muezzin' from *Le Désert*.



Fig. 135 (b). *Unsere Afrikareise*, P24 L4 – P25 L1.

A moment of calm tends to anticipate a violent explosion in Finnissy's music, and the end of Section D is no exception. However, the violence of Section E, in terms of its musical nature, positioning within the piece and sheer length, exceeds this by some measure. As if in response to the extended passages of relative tonal stability encountered just previously, Finnissy seems to have felt the need to create a musical gesture that enacts the aural equivalent of slashing a canvas (as with some of the paintings of Francis Bacon upon which he committed such violent acts; the lines running across some of Barnett Newman's paintings might also be said metaphorically to fulfil a similar function). Within the course of the cycle's composition, *Unsere Afrikareise* was the first piece in which he did such a thing (as we know from earlier, similar if less extended passages occur in *Le Réveil* and *My parents' generation*). As he did with the 'compression' material in earlier pieces, Finnissy derives his pointillistic material from that to be found earlier in the work. Specifically, he derives it from cutting up the first four-and-a-bit pages of the work into 100 short fragments, then using a random procedure to select these and combine them to form gestures. Fig. 136 shows the ways in which three fragments are transformed and combined to produce the first gesture of this section.

36 - from P2 L3                      36\* - transposed down major third                      36\*\* - final version

89 - from P4 L4                      89\* - transposed down minor third                      89\*\* - final version

6 - from P1 L2                      6\* - transposed down a minor third                      6\*\* - final version

Unyielding. Hard-edged (dry) sonority.  
Analytically discursive.

subito

Each line : approx. 10 seconds.

The image shows three sets of musical notation, each consisting of a treble and bass clef staff. The first set shows measures 36, 36\* (transposed down a major third), and 36\*\* (final version). The second set shows measures 89, 89\* (transposed down a minor third), and 89\*\* (final version). The third set shows measures 6, 6\* (transposed down a minor third), and 6\*\* (final version). Below these is a handwritten musical score with annotations: 'Unyielding. Hard-edged (dry) sonority. Analytically discursive.', 'subito', and 'Each line : approx. 10 seconds.' The handwritten score features complex, dense musical notation with many accidentals and ties.

Fig. 136 Transformations of material in Section A to form pointillistic material in Section E (first gestures).

After a long expanse of such material which almost obliterates memories of that which came previously, Finnissy heralds a transition back to more 'regular' piano writing with a sudden change of dynamics, but then leads into some left-

over material from the 'Cowell' section of the *Spirituals*, bringing clusters into this piece for the first time. Then he incorporates a snippet of some completely new material, from the traditional Christian hymn 'Washed in the Blood of the Lamb' (Fig. 137), the words and music for which were written by Tullius C. O'Kane and published in 1872. The title of this hymn derives from Revelations 7: 9-17 – 'These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb' (King James version)<sup>46</sup>.

The musical score is presented in four systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked 'Joyfully'. The lyrics are as follows:

Who, who are these be - side the chil - ly wave, Just on the bor - ders of the si - lent grave,  
 Shout - ing Je - su's power to save, "Washed in the blood of the Lamb"?  
 Sweep - ing through the gates" of the New Je - ru - sa - lem, "Washed in the blood of the Lamb,"  
 blood of the Lamb. "Washed in the blood of the Lamb."

Fig. 137. Traditional Christian hymn, 'Washed in the Blood of the Lamb'

<sup>46</sup> 'Sweeping through the gates of the New Jerusalem, washed in the blood of the Lamb' were supposed to be the dying words of the Rev. Alfred Cookman, a clergyman who preached against slavery and died in 1871. However this has been questioned – see Duane V. Maxey, 'Sweeping Through the Gates: A compilation of Material about the Life, Christian Experience, and Dying Testimony of Alfred Cookman', at <http://wesley.nnu.edu/wesleyctr/books/0201-0300/HDM0269.PDF> (accessed 10/11/13).

The final section presents a hushed but harmonically murky piece of Ivesian phantasmagoria based on short fragments in each hand of modified material from the Bach *Te Deum*, which parallels the earlier lead into the David section, then Finnissy works back to a slow and yearning last page once more featuring music from the *Spirituals*, here marked *molto allargando* and *marcato espressivo*, implying but ultimately withholding a tonal resolution.

In an analysis of Kubelka's film, Catherine Russell describes aptly how:

The film was commissioned to be a mirror of sorts, by the Austrian hunters who Kubelka accompanied to Africa, but it becomes a fun-house mirror, horrifically distorting their image. The montage is accompanied by rifle shots on the soundtrack, extending the cause and effect of killing to other rhetorical transitions. The horror of the film is not only the merciless killing of wild game but the intercutting of this imagery with supplemental footage of Africans, many of them bare-breasted women. Match cuts equate, through substitution and metaphor, African bodies with the animal targets. Shots of the hunters looking through binoculars and telescopic rifle sights inscribe a voyeuristic *dispositif* within the film, and a voyeuristic gaze is equally implied in the footage itself, which is consistently marked by a depth of field and frames within frames.<sup>47</sup>

Few works of instrumental music can work with materials as concrete as those in Kubelka's *Unsere Afrikareise*; here the resemblance with Finnissy's piece becomes less clear-cut. There is violence in Finnissy's *Unsere Afrikareise*, for sure, shockingly so on a structural level but also manifest in certain types of material (for example in the combination of Venda songs with Schubert bass lines), but not in a way that generates meaning as does the sequence of a dead animal next to a helpless African woman. Rather, Finnissy juxtaposes his musical 'images' (which inevitably would be heard more in terms of their musical properties rather than in a clear semiotic manner, so hazy can be the relationship with the originals (which themselves are surely relatively obscure to those Western audiences as are most likely to hear Finnissy's piece)) in ways that draw attention mostly to the strangeness of the combinations and joins.

---

<sup>47</sup> Catherine Russell, *Experimental Ethnography: The Work of Film in the Age of Video* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), p. 128.



## Chapter 13

### No. 11: *Etched bright with sunlight*

In the last chapter of the *History*, Finnissy opts for a reasonably conventional type ‘finale’ to the work as whole, one which brings various musical strands together in a relatively logical, even inevitable manner. It is a more continuous and ‘driving’ piece than most of the others, with an inexorable sense of momentum that drives it from beginning to end. The title is taken from a closing line in an unfilmed screenplay by the late director Derek Jarman, entitled *Sod ‘Em’*<sup>1</sup> - Jarman’s combination of apocalyptic vision and tender lyricism provides an obvious affinity for Finnissy. *Sod ‘Em’* was written whilst Jarman was directing a film of Sylvano Bussotti’s opera *L’Ispirazione* at the Teatro Comunale in Firenze in 1988<sup>2</sup> (two years after Jarman had been diagnosed as HIV-positive). It is an extremely angry and somewhat crudely didactic work that served as a prototype for his later film *Edward II* (1991). It portrays a ravaged England in the not-too-distant future, characterised by brutality, extreme homophobia and racism, and genocide at the hands of a Tory government together with the willing participation of the security services and armed forces. Gay people are quarantined on account of public hysteria about AIDS, books by gay authors are publicly burned, the Royal Family are relegated to appearing on a television sitcom, the welfare state has been completely dismantled; in general this England resembles Nazi Germany. Within this decimated landscape wander historical gay figures (or at least assumed to be so) such as Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, Lord Byron and Oscar Wilde. A young actor Edward is the central protagonist, dreaming of being Edward II in Marlowe’s play, and dying for his love for Piers Gaveston (taken up in more detail in the later film). Contemporary dialogue is intermingled with allusions to Marlowe’s Elizabethan verse. It is a screenplay that communicates extreme bitterness, anger and impotence. In the final scene, Edward, having woken up in bed with his lover Johnny (with whom he finds his own oasis of tenderness in a deeply hostile world), utters the following biblically-tinged lines:

This morning, etched bright with sunlight, precise as the shadows cast by my life, I emptied my pockets of time, the eternal that neither endures or passes, lay in my hand, world without beginning or end, always and now.<sup>3</sup>

From the very outset of the piece Finnissy mirrors something of Jarman’s apocalypse. The first section begins with an explosive outburst in the upper registers reminiscent of some of Finnissy’s earlier virtuoso piano works. Despite a

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in Derek Jarman , *Up In The Air: Collected Film Scripts* (London: Vintage, 1996), pp. 183-225.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 183.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 225.

continuous sense of forward momentum, the structure of the work is quite detailed, in six large sections:

A: 1. Brilliant *ffff* explosion at top of keyboard, based on 'digest' of Bach material, freely transposed and rhythmically distorted.

2. Polyrhythmic quasi-ostinato in regular metrical units in either hands, hands swapping half-way. Based upon continuous variation of Bach-derived notes/chords and short allusions to other parts of the cycle. Gradually falling in dynamic.

3. More irregular rhythms in the hands, continuing same material. Appearance of Wagner 'Der Ewigen Macht' clearly in the left hand. Material using longer and longer note-values.

4. Sudden shift into bass region. Development of Wagner, with interruptions. First allusions to *Unsere Afrikareise*.

5. Long canons in chords in treble register, based on penultimate phrase of Bach chorale.

6. Ornate and mysterious passage, *pppppp!*, preparing the ground with first hints of Berlioz.

7. Appearance of distant vision of theme from Berlioz 'Scène d'amour' from *Roméo et Juliette*.

B. Marked in the sketches as 'L'orientalisme'. 1. Monophonic passage based on Moroccan/Berber music from *Unsere Afrikareise* and Kavafis material from *Poets*. Combined with drone then extra part.

2. Rowdy, overloaded four part writing, three parts all from fragments of *Unsere Afrikareise*, bottom line based on Bach and *Te Deum*. Introduction of melodies from the *Spirituals* towards end.

C. Catalogue 1. Increasing diversity – material from *UA*, *My parents' generation* (Sullivan, 'Whatever you are') and *Poets*, as well as further allusion to the Berlioz. First anticipations of 'Compression' material.

D. Bach. Selections from various of the canons in *Bachsche Nachdichtungen*. Then combination of Bach with Billings in the manner of the *Spirituals*. This is ultimately transformed into:

E. Compression. Wild, like that near the end of the *Poets*, but shorter.

F. Catalogue 2. Rapid montage of fragments from all around the cycle, leading to final outburst then dissolve into nothingness.

Section A2, employing ostinato based polyrhythmic patterns between the hands, is quite unusual for Finnissy; here he comes as close as he ever has to the type of writing to be found in György Ligeti's *Etudes pour piano*<sup>4</sup>. Each hand is sampled from various points within the cycle, seemingly to merely generate sufficiently variegated material. For example, at the outset, Finnissy generates the right hand from a retrograde of a bass line from *My parents' generation*, with frequent shifts of interval up and down semitones. After running its course back to the beginning of the line (by the end of the fourth right hand group here), it is looped round again with modifications and variants each time. This process is run through eight-and-a-half times, each time producing groups of 4-3-4-3 semiquavers. The techniques of variation include modulation, octave shifts, and by the fifth sequence retrogrades and other reorganisation of each of the four cells (Fig. 138).. The left hand, for its part, was derived from the manifestation of the 'Alkan' material in the *Spirituals* (from the right hand of P18 L3) creating sequences of five triplet groups (omitting the first note in the first group in the original, and stopping half way through the second 6:4 group). The same types of variation techniques as for the right hand are used (though with a greater degree of variation) as this material is looped round.

The figure displays five staves of musical notation, each illustrating a different variation technique applied to the original pitch material. The techniques are labeled as follows:

- Staff 1:** Down one semitone; reduced
- Staff 2:** Note shifted along one place
- Staff 3:** Octave shifts; pitch modification
- Staff 4:** 2nd, 3rd, 4th notes semitone up
- Staff 5:** Octave shift from original
- Staff 6:** Octave shifts
- Staff 7:** Inversion
- Staff 8:** Interval contraction
- Staff 9:** Retrograde

Fig. 138 (a). Variation techniques on pitch material taken from *My parents' generation*.

<sup>4</sup> A set of pieces about which Finnissy has expressed considerable disdain, saying that they are 'very nihilistic' and 'It's as if something is being erased in front of you, and the composer isn't rushing to save it, or has not realised the poignancy of the moment or even what indeed is there. It becomes a mechanistic thing. Uninterestingly deviant'. See *Uncommon Ground*, p. 21

[♩] = 132 ] molto ritmico

The musical score is written for piano and consists of four systems. The tempo is marked as [♩] = 132 and the character as 'molto ritmico'. The score includes several 'rinforz.' (ritornello) markings and 'simile' markings. The piece ends with a 'diminuendo' marking.

Fig. 138 (b). *Etched Bright with Sunlight*, P2.

Finnissy also derives some basic and rather 'blank' material (also featuring in *Le démon*, bringing the piece full circle) from the Bach *Te Deum*, as shown in Fig. 139.

The musical score is written for piano and consists of two systems. It features a simple, rhythmic melody in the upper voice and a more complex, rhythmic accompaniment in the lower voice. The score includes several triplet markings.

Fig. 139 (a). Derivations from Bach material.



Fig. 139 (b). *Etched Bright with Sunlight*, P4, L3-4.

Other fundamental themes from the work appear soon afterwards – a reference to the Wagner 'Der ewigen Macht' motive (here in its fullest form yet, incorporating parts of the orchestral accompaniment as well as Hagen's line), during a paring down of the type of material in Fig. 139 towards a sense of nothingness, from which context the Berlioz motive can grow. In preparation for this, Finnissy creates a canon between the two hands, generated in a very straightforward manner taking the basic line from the penultimate phrase of the chorale as before, then using an inversion, then marking (seemingly randomly) some notes/chords to eliminate from both passages so far (roughly one third of them) to generate a new line, then performing a retrograde inversion on all material so far (see Fig. 140 (a) for the beginnings of each component of this passage). Each of the various versions of the material is marked by a tenuto at the beginning and end of the group, in the right hand. As well as the four variants shown above, Finnissy also uses retrograde forms of (1) and (2) (forming numbers (5) and (6)). The canon begins with the right hand having the basic form (1), and the left having the inverted form (2), a major seventh lower. Then the left plays the basic form, again at the same intervallic relationship, though Finnissy shifts down a semitone to the original pitch (though an octave part to avoid a level of consonance that would make such a passage stand out – see Fig. 140 (b)). The left hand sequence in full is (2) – (1) – Inversion of (3) – Inversion of (4) – (6) – (5). Rhythmic modifications (seemingly enacted on an *ad hoc* basis so as to ensure maximum lack of synchronisation of the hands) mean that the left hand's material to spread out a few beats beyond that of the right (despite Finnissy speeding it up at the very end).

Long (over two minutes if played at the metronome mark) and uneventful though this passage might be, it forms a vital dramatic role. The thread drawing together most of the previous material was formed from a basic category of material (mostly Bach with a few other bits) and has been gradually pared down further and further (notwithstanding the Wagner passage which acts as something

of a discontinuity but is ultimately absorbed within the thread) to leave a sense of nothingness. It is from this barrenness that the approaching Berlioz quotation can grow. The sameness of this passage that precedes it heightens its impact when it comes.

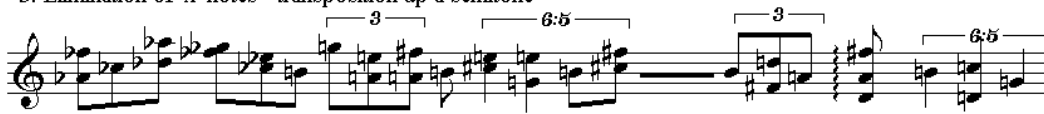
1. From penultimate phrase of Bach BWV 328. Notes marked 'x' to be eliminated later



2. Inversion around B-flat



3. Elimination of 'x' notes - transposition up a semitone



4. Retrograde inversion around B



Fig. 140 (a). Bach based canon material used in *Etched Bright with Sunlight*



Fig. 140 (b). Canon, result on P9 L2-3 were left hand not shifted down. Note in particular the harmonic relationship between the E-flat-C-flat/B in the right hand, second system, and the E-C#-G#/A-F# in the left.

In order to prepare the ground for the Berlioz motive, Finnissy uses a final passage (A6) at an extremely quiet dynamic, mixing harmonically diffuse material with short inserts which suggest a clearer tonal centre. This time the material presented in such a manner is highly ostentatious and florid, involving undulating triplet semiquaver notes/chords in the bass and lines in the treble in groups of three quavers duration, mostly consisting of one quaver followed by four semiquavers, at least at the outset. These alternate with short inserts where the material in either hand is swapped, and the tonality focuses in on D-flat (the other material is tonally diffuse). The left hand is derived freely from transposed retrogrades of the material in A2. For example, the opening two groups start from the end of the first complete group on P2 L3 (shown in Fig. 138 (b) – for the derivation see Fig. 141 below). Similar processes are used to derive the right hand material from A2, into which material is inserted from a direct inversion of a later passage of Berlioz material cut up into fragments.

The figure displays three musical staves illustrating the derivation of left-hand material. The top staff, labeled "Retrograde", shows a complex, multi-measure rest with intricate rhythmic markings. The middle staff, labeled "Modified version", shows a simplified, more rhythmic version of the material. The bottom staff, labeled "Up minor third, with octave transpositions", shows the material transposed and with octave shifts.

Fig. 141. Derivation of left-hand material on P11.

After about a minute of this meandering, distant, blurred music, the 'Scène d'amour' theme appears in its fullest form since *Le démon*. Unlike then, when it was accompanied by Bach organ chorale prelude material, here the accompaniment is derived directly from the Berlioz itself. Finnissy skilfully leads into this by continuing some of the figuration from the previous passage, though thinned out, and gradually configuring it until it is transformed into downward arpeggios. The melody begins with a fragmented form of the Berlioz made into a seamless line, before the theme proper (the 'Juliette' theme) appears (on the third system of Fig. 142).

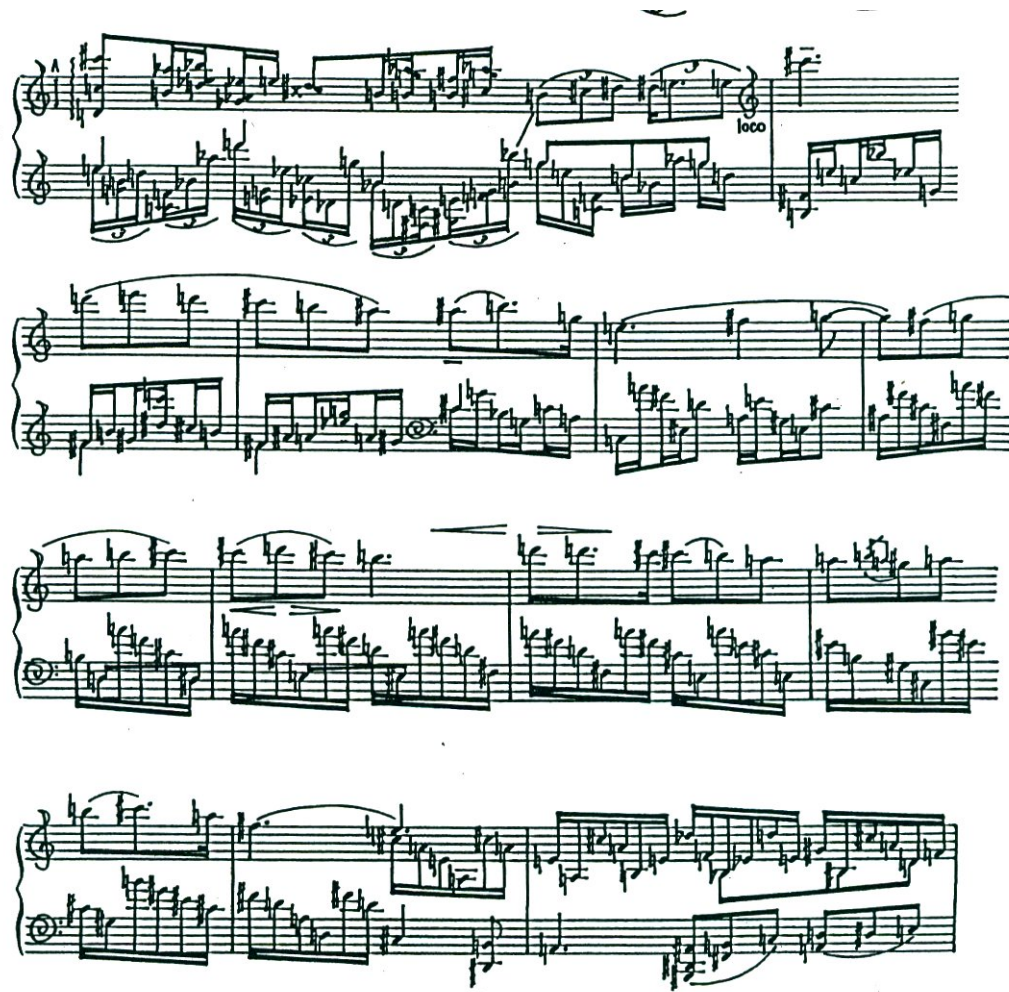


Fig. 142. *Etched Bright with Sunlight*, Berlioz quotation.

Finnissy at this point sticks to the viola part from the Berlioz (though not the second violin part, thus thinning the texture and harmonic richness), except for modifying it with the indicated rising chromatic scale, towards a 6/4 harmony on the subdominant of A major. Julian Rushton points out how Berlioz here ‘restores the tonic A major but repeatedly postpones a secure cadence’<sup>5</sup>. Likewise for Finnissy, until he shifts the hands, in which a bare fifth harmony comes closest to a root position triadic resolution (on the following system he briefly has the tonic root with the third included). But both of these function within the context of a distorted form of the Berlioz melody in the bass (through the addition of an extra beat in the final bar of Fig. above, and the pitch modifications in the rising scale that starts there), so fall somewhat sort of a definitive closure. Then Finnissy places the latter part of the melody in retrograde inversion to the bass, followed by

<sup>5</sup> Julian Rushton, *Berlioz: Roméo et Juliette* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 40. Also, as Charles Rosen points out, Berlioz’s harmonies contradict the implied harmony of the melody, to which Finnissy also adheres, even in the most ‘straight’ few bars at the centre of this excerpt. See Rosen, *The Romantic Generation*, pp. 559-560.



a return to the treble with increasing pitch distortion so as to place the passage out of focus, whilst enacting a rather awkward cadence into C-flat major. He then leads back from this into the 'Juliet' theme, which seeks to re-establish A major but is overruled by the chromatic bass that gradually veers towards a cadence onto D, the key centre for the next section.

Despite the intense mediation on Finnissy's part, not to mention the fact that this section remains at a very quiet dynamic<sup>6</sup>, still this passage draws attention to itself in a way that bears upon the way the whole cycle is perceived. Nostalgia is a feature of this passage, undoubtedly, but tempered by a degree of critical sensibility. The Berlioz theme appears, but somewhere on the distant horizon, a reminder of what was rather than an implication that it is recoverable in the same form. A parallel can be found in the passages of Elizabethan poetry in the Jarman screenplay, acting as small oases of tenderness within the otherwise savage scenes.

Sections B and C are more straightforward, ranging through fragments of past material, with something of the tight montage to be found in *Unsere Afrikareise* in particular. For Section B, marked in the sketches as 'l'orientalisme'<sup>7</sup>, Finnissy employs some of the most 'exotic' musical material, specifically combinations of very short cut-up fragments from the Moroccan/Berber music encountered in *Unsere Afrikareise*, alternated with three other passages alluding directly to the Kavafis section from the *Poets* (Cretan music), each marked *malinconico (quasi Flauto)* (Fig. 143), centered around C, E-flat and E-flat again, respectively. The Moroccan/Berber material is centered mostly around D, and features prominent flattened second and fourth degrees of the scale, whilst the Kavafis material is altered in pitch each time, especially the third passage which is presented with flattened second and third degrees of the scale.

During the third passage of Moroccan/Berber material, Finnissy introduces a drone E which alters the perceived tonality. A c'' in the melody becomes sustained so as to form a drone above a quick melody now on a five note scale, specifically the first five notes of the minor scale with a flattened fifth. This flattened c-flat'' causes regular dissonances with the recurrent c', which nonetheless serves to establish the tonality as F, until joined by an a' below, so that the c' becomes the minor third of a root, and thus the music shifts to the tonal centre A, as the mediant of F (here the top line shifts to Kavafis material, though in the same mode as the Moroccan material, thus confusing the distinctions). A further line below, with a recurrent high c#'', is nonetheless centred around d'. At this point both main melodic lines are derived from Kavafis (the left hand using retrogrades). The passionate dissonances this creates are relieved by a shift of the

---

<sup>6</sup> Though Finnissy does not indicate a dynamic all the way from page 12 to page 16 (other than a few small localised hairpins), when the 'orientalism' material is marked *f*. If one is to assume that this dynamic is to be approached in stages rather than being a sudden shift, then there might be reason for singing out more when the Berlioz theme comes. This is, I suspect a question on which Finnissy's thoughts are ambivalent, and so he prefers to leave the decision to the performer.

<sup>7</sup> Finnissy's original plan for this chapter was quite different structurally, involving multiple occurrences of the monophonic 'oriental' material, and the Berlioz quote appearing later. However, he changed his mind during the course of the composition.

top line to a tonality of D, and the bottom to that of A, causing considerably less tension. Fig. 144 shows the harmonic progression.

Fig. 143. *Etched Bright with Sunlight*, Moroccan/Berber and Kavafis material

Fig. 144. Harmonic progression in *Etched Bright with Sunlight*, P16.

Then, at a relatively quick speed, a denser texture employs a three-part ‘orientalist’ derivative. Here the top part continues to develop the Moroccan/Berber material (sometimes with increasing flamboyance), the middle part comes directly from the Massé section of *Unsere Afrikareise*, whilst the bottom part continues to develop the Kavafis material, this time harmonised underneath (using fragments from the Bach chorale).

Further permutations from *Unsere Afrikareise* enable a transition to Section C, in which Finnissy can now bring in rapid changes of tempo, and incorporate allusions to the bleak Section F from *My parents’ generation*, and other material, at one point featuring a further fragment derived from Berlioz, now more clearly tonally centered and at a medium dynamic. Eventually it proves possible to move seamlessly into a near exact recapitulation of the Symonds material from the end of the *Poets* which is used extensively here as a route

towards the ultimate return of the 'Compression' (though a very indirect route, as we will see). The tonal relationship between the hands is maintained, both of them transposed up a minor third from the original, though the order of the sections is changed.

A detour en route to the final 'Compression' is provided via several sections from *Bachsche Nachdichtungen*, specifically the 'In Canone all'Ottava', then a combination of Billings' hymn 'Bedford' with the first phrase of the Bach chorale, using a configuration taken directly from the opening section Busoni's *Choral-Vorspiel und Fuge über ein Bachsches Fragment* (Fig. 105). This sets into motion the build-up proper towards the work's climax, in which Finnissy employs further combinations of Billings with the *motivo fondamentale*, then *Canone al rovescio (i) alla Seconda*, and the *calmando e semplice* of the *alla Nona*. The use of continuous 3/4 rhythms generates a sense of onwardness towards the 'compression' material, though towards the climax Finnissy introduces 6:5 and 7:5 ratios to finally destabilise and fracture the beat.

Unlike in the *Poets*, Finnissy postpones the climax by at first lowering the dynamic to a (possibly unrealistic!) *pppppp!*. The effect of this passage is absolutely electric, providing as it does a counterpart to the wildest reaches of the opening, but here spread over the whole keyboard. The very calmness of the Bach section leading up to it has created a sense of imminence by its placing (coming after various somewhat more animated sections). The final Section F naturally attempts some type of summation of the cycle, using a randomly chosen selection from most of the pieces in rapid succession, like a flash-by of the cycle as a whole. Quite naturally, the final phrase comes from the Bach the Bach chorale BWV 328, specifically from the inner parts. The grace note E-flat (itself preceded by a D serving as a leading note) that precedes the climactic G in the left hand of Fig. 145 (this preceded by a B-flat-A-flat progression), combined with the B-flat in the treble, all preceded by various progressions and harmonies which imply a type of cadence, provide a strong sense of a triadic resolution towards E-flat major. But just as instantly the parts blur this harmony, the dynamic falls, and the piece disappears into thin air, the last harmony heard being a D-G perfect fourth which implies a sharp move away from E-flat. The ending in the treble register also suggests a belated resolution of the material in Section A, whilst the register itself aids the sense of the music 'disappearing', as if into the ether.

In comparison to the involved musical arguments to be found in, for example, *My parents' generation* or *Kapitalistisch Realisme, Etched Bright with Sunlight* is a relatively straightforward piece to listen to, a fiercely immediate and surface-dominated finale that I have elsewhere described as a 'devastating vortex of a piece that pulls in most of what has come before'. Yet there is an optimism about the conclusion. It is violent, certainly, but it also achieves a type of partial resolution; more importantly, it implies the music could go on longer, and there continues to be scope for creation and innovation.

The image displays a handwritten musical score for the ending of a piece titled "Etched Bright with Sunlight". The score is arranged in three systems, each consisting of a treble and bass staff. The notation is dense and includes various musical elements such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The first system features a 7:5 ratio above the treble staff and a 9:5 ratio below the bass staff. The second system includes a 5:3 ratio above the treble staff and a 5:3 ratio below the bass staff, with a *mp* marking. The third system shows a 7:5 ratio above the treble staff and a 5:3 ratio below the bass staff. The score concludes with a double bar line and a final chord.

Fig. 145. *Etched Bright with Sunlight*, ending.

## Chapter 14

### Performing *The History of Photography in Sound*

That *The History of Photography in Sound* presents formidable pianistic challenges is almost so obvious as not to require mentioning. However, on balance the sort of transcendental virtuosity associated with earlier Finnissy piano works (such as *Song 9*, *English Country-Tunes*, the Third and Fourth Piano Concertos or *all.fall.down*) frequently involving rapid traversal of the whole compass of the instrument or obsessively detailed and frenetic activity in the extreme registers, occurs only in relatively select moments, most notably in the 'Compression' passages, the longest of which occurs in the *Poets*, with a shorter version in *Etched bright with sunlight* and more fragmentary allusions in *Le démon*, *Le réveil*, *My parents' generation*, *Muybridge-Munch* and *Kapitalistisch Realisme*. Otherwise, Finnissy's most original contributions to pianistic possibility contained within the cycle can be found in the manic gnarled dotted rhythms (a little reminiscent of some of Schumann's finales) growing out of the imaginary 1940s popular music in *My parents' generation*, and the particular take on writing for a single hand in *Alkan-Paganini* (especially in the ferociously difficult and physically tortuous section for the right hand alone, which transforms the piano into a type of megaviolin, sometimes overstepping the boundaries of the register of such an instrument).

But most of these challenges are not insurmountable to those who have managed to navigate a range of Finnissy's other output; nor the employment of the widest dynamic and textural range, detailed and imaginative phrasing and articulation, and use of a wide variety of pianistic touch. What to my own mind is more daunting is to find successful solutions to particular aesthetic and interpretive issues which are at play almost throughout the whole cycle, anticipated in earlier works such as the *Verdi Transcriptions*, *Gershwin Arrangements* and *Yvaroperas*, above all how to make musical sense of that writing which combines two or more types of disparate musical materials, especially when one or other of these is more obviously 'accessible': clearly allusive, with strong tonal implications, melodically expansive, or simply evocative of known genres and idioms. Obvious examples of this would include the Berlioz quotations in the first and last chapters, the free arrangements of the chosen African-American spirituals in the third, or the imaginary Sicilian folk tunes in *Sizilianische Männerakte*.

In works such as the *Gershwin Arrangements*, the extent to which one foregrounds other parts as well as the melodic line obviously taken from Gershwin, especially with respect to some of the more angular lines, unsettled harmonic progressions, or unstable rhythms, can profoundly affect the whole manner in which the music is perceived. This is not just a matter of relative dynamics; the extent to which one lends shape or rhythmic freedom to any one part can lead to its becoming foregrounded, especially when it exhibits clear tonal

properties. Related issues occur in some of the *Verdi Transcriptions* featuring recognisably tonal material in the lower parts with disconnected atonal lines in the treble register, depending upon how the pianist negotiates the relationship between the two. The latter may assume an essentially decorative role, featuring local dissonances leading ultimately to resolution, or conversely serve to defamiliarise, perhaps even undermine, the tonal material, producing in the process types of interference patterns in an accumulative manner. There are of course a wide range of musical strategies which can be employed when approaching these issues. If my own attitudes towards them are today perhaps a little less didactic than when earlier performing (and recording) these works, the issues remain alive and problematic with every performance of these, and as much if not more so when playing the *History*. Here one frequently encounters materials in different tonalities in either hand, in such a way that one could be played as a *Hauptstimme*, thus establishing a particular tonality, whereas quite different harmonic progressions can result from interactions between tonally distinct materials in either hand.

It would be disingenuous to suggest that Finnissy's music does not indulge some elements which might be politically or ideologically questionable or at least antiquated, including nostalgia for an idealised past, evoked through the use of auratic devices, exoticism and orientalism sometimes involving stock musical attributes which could be seen as stereotypical, or the use of programmatic or narrative structures in the ultimately abstract medium of music. Yet the problems entailed in these approaches are certainly not lost on Finnissy, and he finds ways of embodying in the fabric of the music both the seductive appeal of such things and also the type of alienation which can result from a more dispassionate examination of what they might entail. This is most palpable at such moments as the Berlioz quotations in both *Le démon* and *Etched bright with sunlight*, which if strongly 'played out' can utterly dominate the rest of their respective chapters through their relative tonal and melodic familiarity (a common problem with any music featuring isolated prominent 'quotations').

Elsewhere, Finnissy presents extremely fragmented material, especially in the earlier sections of *My parents' generation* and *Muybridge-Munch*. In isolation, these might seem unduly cold and aloof if played without some injection of continuity and expressiveness, but I believe that maintaining expressive detachment here is structurally and dramatically important, not least to heighten the contrast with music elsewhere in these chapters. Other material, above all in the first and last chapters, can be quite 'flat', without much of a sense of harmonic profile or direction, whilst there are also long passages generally fixed within the central registers of the instrument (especially notable in the context of this composer's output, though an increasing feature of his piano writing from the mid-1980s onwards, perhaps as a way to avoid the possibility that use of extremes turns into mannerism). Once again, I feel these qualities should not be minimised, in order to maintain sufficient contrast as is required over a five-and-a-half hour

work, though the situation might be different when playing individual chapters separately.

Naturally, my own pianistic and interpretive choices reflect consultation with the composer, but many decisions represent essentially my own personal responses to the work, rather than slavishly attempting to re-create how Finnissy himself would play the work (which in the case of various chapters can be very different). For the recording, I have chosen to use a moderate *non legato* as the basic touch where no phrasing is indicated, coupled sometimes to a relatively sparing use of the pedal (whilst employing it amply in other places, and obviously where indicated as such), whilst aiming for a high degree of brittle detachment in some of the material (throughout the cycle) associated with Alkan and Cocteau, and some *legatissimo* in the second half of *Muybridge-Munch* and some of *Sizilianische Männerakte*. And in general, I have chosen an approach by which the music is motored by the dynamic harmony (most often in the bass register), rather than so much some of the sometimes circular and repetitive melodic parts. Above all I have tried to stress the interactions between different materials which occur simultaneously instead of creating clear hierarchies between them so that one dominates the other, whilst rarely flinching from discontinuities between successive materials. I hope very much that not only the expressivity but also the angularity, structural inventiveness and dramatic energy of the piece will come through as a result.

## Ian Pace

Ian Pace is a pianist of long-established reputation, specialising in the farthest reaches of musical modernism and transcendental virtuosity, as well as a writer and musicologist focusing on issues of performance, music and society and the avant-garde. He was born in Hartlepool, England in 1968, and studied at Chetham's School of Music, The Queen's College, Oxford and, as a Fulbright Scholar, at the Juilliard School in New York. His main teacher, and a major influence upon his work, was the Hungarian pianist György Sándor, a student of Bartók.

Based in London since 1993, he has pursued an active international career, performing in 24 countries and at most major European venues and festivals. His absolutely vast repertoire of all periods focuses particularly upon music of the 20th and 21st Century. He has given world premieres of over 150 pieces for solo piano, including works by Julian Anderson, Richard Barrett, James Clarke, James Dillon, Pascal Dusapin, Brian Ferneyhough, Michael Finnissy (whose complete piano works he performed in a landmark 6-concert series in 1996), Christopher Fox, Volker Heyn, Hilda Paredes, Horatiu Radulescu, Frederic Rzewski, Howard Skempton, Gerhard Stäbler and Walter Zimmermann. He has presented cycles of works including Stockhausen's *Klavierstücke I-X*, and the piano works of Ferneyhough, Fox, Kagel, Ligeti, Lachenmann, Messiaen, Radulescu, Rihm, Rzewski and Skempton. He has played with orchestras including the Orchestre de Paris under Christoph Eschenbach (with whom he premiered and recorded Dusapin's piano concerto *À Quia*), the SWF Orchestra in Stuttgart under Rupert Huber, and the Dortmund Philharmonic under Bernhard Kontarsky.

He is Lecturer in Music and Head of Performance at City University, London, having previously held positions at the University of Southampton and Dartington College of Arts. His areas of academic expertise include 19<sup>th</sup> century performance practice (especially the work of Liszt and Brahms), issues of music and society (with particular reference to the work of Theodor Adorno, the Frankfurt School, and their followers), contemporary performance practice and issues, music and culture under fascism, and the post-1945 avant-garde, in particular in West Germany, upon which he is currently completing a large-scale research project.



## Michael Finnissy

Michael Finnissy was born on 17th March 1946, at roughly 2 a.m., at 77 Claverdale Road, Tulse Hill, London SW2. His parents were Rita Isolene (nee Parsonson) and George Norman Finnissy. At that time his father worked for the London County Council, assisting through his photographic documentation the assessment of damage to and re-building of London after the war.

Michael started to write music almost as soon as he could play the piano, aged about four and a half, and was tutored in both by his great aunt: Rose Louise Hopwood (Rosie). He attended Hawes Down Infant and Junior schools, Bromley Technical High, and Beckenham and Penge Grammar schools. Music was not taught in any formal or examinable way, though not discouraged either – his best subjects were graphic art, mathematics and English literature.

Michael received the William Yeats Hurlstone composition-prize at the Croydon Music Festival, a factor which assisted his parents' decision to let him apply to music college. He was awarded a Foundation Scholarship to study at the Royal College of Music, where his composition teachers were Bernard Stevens and Humphrey Searle, and was subsequently awarded an Octavia travelling scholarship to study in Italy with Roman Vlad.

He earned money for his studies by playing the piano for dance-classes: Russian-style classical ballet with Maria Zybina, John O'Brien and Kathleen Crofton and jazz with Matt Mattox. After his studies in Italy, and with no formal qualifications, he continued to work in dance, both freelancing, and at the London School of Contemporary Dance – where, with the encouragement of its course-director Pat Hutchinson, Michael founded a music department.

During these years he worked with the choreographers Jane Dudley and Anna Sokolow from the pioneering era of modern dance, and in more experimental work by Richard Alston, Siobhan Davies, Jackie Lansley and Fergus Early.

Michael's concert debut as a solo pianist was at the Galerie Schwartzes Kloster in Freiburg, playing a concert mostly of first performances – works by, Howard Skempton and Oliver Knussen as well as his own. In the meantime he had started to perform in Europe, firstly at the Gaudeamus Music Week in 1969 and thereafter until 1973, at Royan Festival (1974-6) and Donaueschingen.

In many of these events he was twinned with Brian Ferneyhough, a friend since student days. His initial attempts at serious composition teaching, at Dartington Summer School in the mid-1970s, were also partnered by Ferneyhough.

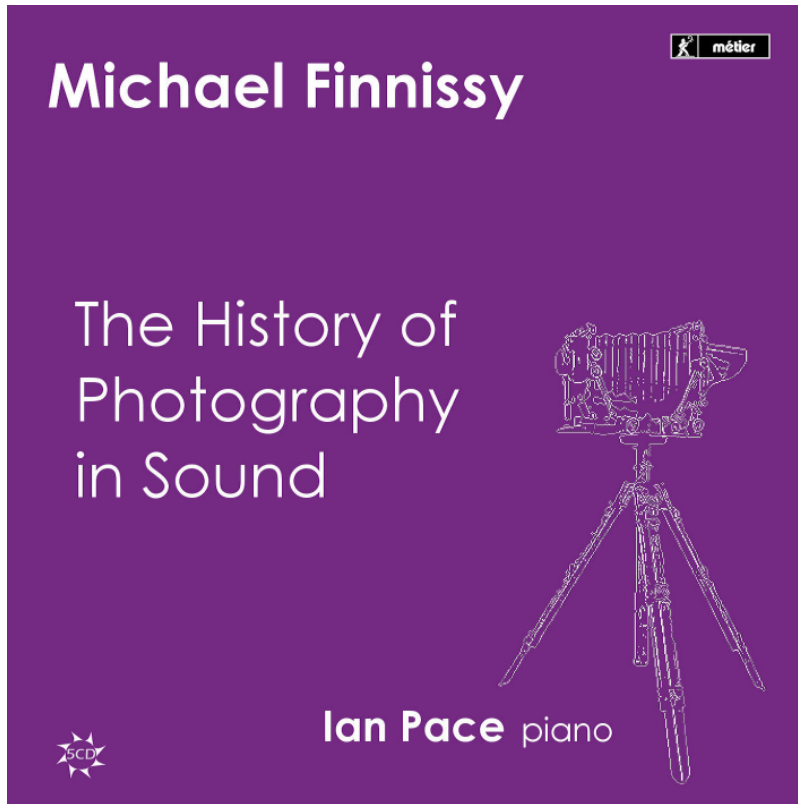
In England his early work had received encouragement from Ian Lake, Colin Mason and Martin Dalby. Two pieces had been published by International Music Publishers (Ascherberg), some others by edition modern in Munich and two by

Suvini Zerboni in Milan. With the support of Bill Colleran he signed a contract with Universal Edition (London) in 1978, and subsequently with United Music Publishers and (in 1988) with his now principal publisher Oxford University Press. Other works are available from Tre Media Verlag (Friederike Zimmermann) in Karlsruhe.

Michael had been a member of the ensemble Suoraan (founded by James Clarke and Richard Emsley) and then its artistic director since the early 1970s. He joined Ixion (founded and still directed by Andrew Toovey) in 1987 – in both of these groups he not only played the piano but also conducted concerts.

In the late 1980s Michael was invited by Justin Connolly to join the British section of the ISCM, and from 1990 until 1996 served as its President, travelling widely to Europe, Asia and Latin America. He had since been elected to Honorary Membership of the society.

# The Recording



**METIER RECORDS MSV 77501 (5CDs)**

Produced by Metier Records – a division of Divine Art Recordings Group

This 5-CD set in a luxury box includes an abbreviated version of this essay and is available from all good record stores and on-line retailers in most countries and in digital download from iTunes, Classics Online and Amazon mp3. This is the 10<sup>th</sup> release in the Metier Finnissy series.

Buy direct from Divine Art secure online store at:

[www.divineartrecords.com/CD/77501info.htm](http://www.divineartrecords.com/CD/77501info.htm) (priced in US\$, shipping from USA)

[www.divine-art.co.uk/CD/77501info.htm](http://www.divine-art.co.uk/CD/77501info.htm) (priced in UK£, shipping from England)

All direct customers receive a customer loyalty discount against future orders.