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P.A.S.
PERCUSSIVE ARTS
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PERCUSSIONIST

Vol. XVII No. 1
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an official publication of the Percussive Arts Society

IN THIS ISSUE

PURPOSES OF THE PERCUSSIVE ARTS SOCIETY — To elevate the level of percussion performance and teaching; to expand understanding of the needs and responsibilities of the percussion student, teacher, and performer; and to promote a greater communication among all areas of the percussive arts.

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Resolved: That a copy of each issue of the PERCUSSIONIST shall be sent to each member of the Percussive Arts Society, Inc., and that of each member's dues or enrollment fees shall be paid for a year's subscription to the publication.

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A LOOK AT FUTURE ISSUES OF THE PERCUSSIONIST

The Winter issue of the PERCUSSIONIST will be devoted to timpani featuring articles by Harrison Powley, Saul Goodman, Richard Hochrainer, and others. The Spring/Summer issue will contain a number of indepth articles on marching percussion. The PAS marching percussion committee, chaired by Jay Wanamaker, is assisting the editorial board with gathering and editing materials.

Anyone who has written or plans to write a research-oriented article on percussion and would like it to be considered for publication should send the article, typed and double-spaced, to the Editor of the PERCUSSIONIST. All articles will be given full consideration by the editorial board.

PAS HALL OF FAME

1979 Avedias Zildjian, Richard Hochrainer
1978 Louie Bellson, Alfred Friese, William "Billy" Gladstone
1977 Cloyd Duff
1976 William Street
1975 Frank Arsenault, Clair Musser, James Blades, Paul Price
1974 Harry Partch, James Salmon, Gene Krupa, Morris Goldenberg
1973 William Ludwig, Haskell Harr, Roy Knapp, Saul Goodman, John Noonan

The P. A. S. Hall of Fame Award is given to a person who has influenced the percussion world as evidenced by his contribution in any of these categories:

Performance excellence
Writing and composing
Teaching excellence
Inventions and/or discoveries

Nominations are made from the membership at large. No stipulation is made as to whether the person nominated is living or deceased. Nominations are open to all members of PAS through its publications. All nominations are to be received by the secretary of PAS no later than March 1 of each year.

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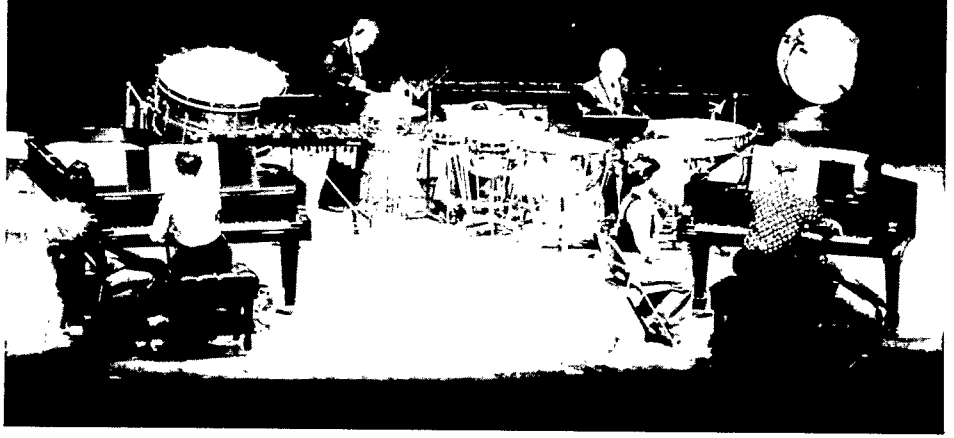
The PASIC'80 will be held in San Jose, California (near San Francisco) on the campus of San Jose State College. Tony Cirone, the percussion instructor at San Jose State College and percussionist with the San Francisco Symphony, will be the host. The dates for the convention are November 14-16, 1980. Watch for the fall issue of PERCUSSIVE NOTES for detailed information.

THE PERCUSSIVE ARTS SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION 1979 was a big success. There were 825 registered for the event in New York City, but counting guests, clinicians, and exhibitors, the total was over 1,050. Arnie Lang and his committee are to be congratulated for organizing a very successful program.

A SURVEY OF WRITINGS ON BARTÓK'S SONATA FOR TWO PIANOS AND PERCUSSION

By J. Kent Williams



THE HISTORY OF THE WORK

The Commission and Composition

It was through the influence of Paul Sacher that Bartók wrote his *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta, Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion,* and *Divertimento for String Orchestra.* These are Bartók's "Basel" works and they are ranked among his best. Sacher, the Swiss conductor of Basel Chamber Orchestra was instrumental in getting the Basel section of the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM) to commission a work from Bartók in celebration of the tenth anniversary of its founding. Bartók had been a frequent contributor to the ISCM festivals since the founding of the society in 1923.[1]

Although the fact that the *Sonata* was commissioned implies that it was written specifically for the Swiss audience, William Austin contends that Bartók actually had a larger audience in mind.

> His specialties were addressed to the international, self-selecting elite that deserved them. After 1935 he wrote no more music especially for Hungarians. What he wrote was of course not merely for his Swiss or American patrons. . . but rather for all the unknown friends so well represented by Sacher and the ISCM.[2]

When Bartók first began to contemplate the composition of the *Sonata,* he was not sure the percussion part could be performed by only two players. Thinking that a third player might be needed, he was not inclined to call the work a quartet. However, the reason for his final decision is made clear in a letter to the Basel section of the ISCM dated November 11, 1937. "Not long ago, I had the chance to thoroughly observe a percussion ensemble. I realize that the work can be performed quite adequately by two percussion players, just as I had originally intended."[3]

Because of the rhythmic complexities of the *Sonata,* Bartók asked Paul Sacher to conduct the rehearsals and performance. Sacher's comments on these rehearsals are recorded by Halsey Stevens[4] and Everett Helm.[5]

> [Bartók's] impassioned objectivity penetrated everything. He was himself clear to the smallest detail and demanded from everyone the utmost in differentiated precision. Therefore in rehearsals he showed great patience and was never annoyed when the realization of his intentions did not take place without trouble. . . . Bartók had summoned me to conduct during rehearsals and eventually at the concert as well. This proved superfluous, however, when the time came, since Bartók and his wife had mastered the two piano parts irreproachably, while the percussionists solved their problems skillfully and to the complete satisfaction of the composer. In these rehearsals Bartók gave proof of his genuine modesty. He undertook with the greatest matter-of-factness all the irksome requirements of the work, and treated both the assisting musicians like colleagues despite his characteristic proud reserve.
>
> Bartók's exactness was amazing. He always had a metronome with him to check tempos, even when he played. He knew precisely what he wanted and demanded the ultimate in differentiated precision from everyone. Yet he was very patient, never offended. . . and truly modest.

The Premier Performance

The premier performance was given in Basel on January 16, 1938 with Bartók and his wife Ditta at the pianos and Fritz Schiesser and Phillip Ruhlig as percussionists. The work was very well received as Bartók described in a letter written on January 31, 1938 to his pupil, Wilhelmine Creel. "As for the 2 piano and percussion sonata, its world-premier has been given in Basel 2 weeks ago. My wife and myself played the 2 pianos—it had a 'tremendous' success."[6]

Additional comments on the works reception can be found in a letter to Sandor Albrecht on the same date.

> The whole thing sounds quite unusual—but the Basel people liked it, anyway. What a pity we can't give it in Pozsony! Perhaps there isn't even a *Maschinenpauke* in Pozsony, which you simply must have for the performance. The timpanist in Basel was a real virtuoso.[7]

Subsequent European Performances

In June of 1938 the Bartóks traveled to London to play the new work at the ISCM festival and to work out the final details of a publishing arrangement with Boosey and Hawkes. Bartók's remarks on this performance of June 20, 1938, are recorded in his letter to Mrs. Muller-Widmann dated London, June, 22, 1938.

> The performance finally went very well; we both played perhaps better and more freely than in Basel; the drummer was about as good as the one there, but the other (percussionist) was more uncertain than your Ruhlig. In any case

we could squeeze out only 6 1/2 hours for rehearsals here![8]

The *Sonata* was very well received by the London audience. The music critic of the *Times of London* wrote of the "brilliant performance" of the Bartóks and the percussionists and praised the new work's originality.

> Easily the most exciting work in last night's programme was Bartók's Sonata For Two Pianos And Percussion, for the new sonorities disclosed by the unsuspected tonal affinities between pianos and tympani and xylophone (representing the treble and bass of, a composite percussion instrument) stimulated a first class mind into thinking in a new way—the novel medium, that is, actually provoked originality of thought. Stylistically the seven percussion instruments and the pianos hung together because they were all stuck, and not stroked or blown; emotionally the music was mysterious in keeping with the evocative, non-thematic character of drums and such.[9]

On their way to England the Bartóks had played the work in Luxembourg where the performance has been "somewhat worse. . . in spite of. . . or more likely because of the fact that four percussionists were used along with a conductor for them."[10]

The *Sonata* was performed several other times during Bartók's last two years in Europe. The dates and places are listed below.[11]

1938	
January 16	Basel
June 11	Luxembourg
June 20	London
October 31	Budapest
November 15	Amsterdam
November 20	Brussels
1939	
February 17	Zurich
February 27	Paris
March 6	Paris
April 8	Venice

The New York Performances

The political climate of Europe during the late 1930's became increasingly intolerable to Bartók. His letters to friends contain many references to the Nazi oppression, to the impending *Anschluss* of Austria, and to his own indecision as to when to leave Hungary and where to go. The death of his mother just before Christmas, 1939, left him free to leave.

Bartók had scheduled an American tour during the first few months of 1940 and was hopeful of arranging some kind of position in America so that he might move there and wait out the conflict in Europe. Columbia University offered him a fellowship and an opportunity to continue his folksong research. The position paid him only 3,000 dollars a year, but this was enough to influence his decision. After returning to Hungary to settle his affairs and play a farewell concert in Budapest, he and his wife set out on what was to be a long, obstacle-ridden trip to America.

The Bartóks disembarked at New York on October 30, 1941, and within a few days performed the *Sonata* in Town Hall on concert given by the New Friends of Music. The performance was reviewed by Noel Straus who was very impressed by the new composition and its performance.

> Percussionists Assist
>
> Superbly performed by both of the pianists with the expert assistance of Saul

Goodman and Henry Denecke Jr., percussionists, the novelty completely dispelled any notion that Mr. Bartók's powers as musical creator had waned in the slightest during late years. In fact, the surprisingly fresh and vivid quality of the entire work with its striking originality and its primitive, quasi-folk spirit, awake memories of the composer's pantomimic music for his ballet, "The Wooden Prince," of 1915.

Perhaps the most amazing thing about this extraordinary two-piano composition was its wealth of new and extremely effective sonorities. From the beginning to end, it teemed with novel and unsuspected possibilities of timbre and color. This was as true of the writing for the pianos as it was of the scoring for the keyboards in combination with the pulsatile instruments.

Had the work possessed no other merit, it would have been an outstanding achievement viewed simply from the standpoint of its discovery of so many hitherto unexploited tonal effects. As Mr. Bartók employed them, the percussion instruments and the pianos did not sound unrelated in character but became highly unified in their ministrations.

"Enormous Vitality" Seen

But the composition was far more than a complex of fascinating sounds. It was unusually exciting in its dynamism, its enormous vitality, its unrelenting rhythmic urge and its perfection of form. Although Mr. Bartók has remarked that he prefers to use short themes rather than sustained melodies in his piano compositions, there were certain passages of rather protracted melodic outline in this novelty, such as the tuneful chief subject of the finale, first stated on the xylophone. But most of the time shorter thematic elements were developed with the composer's accustomed virtuosity as contrapuntist.

The brief introduction to the opening movement, from the pianissimo roll on the tympani and the brooding initial statement of first piano to the more and more agitated crescendo leading to the barbaric outcries at the start of the allegro proper, formed a fitting beginning to a work that must have strengthened the conviction of those believing that Mr. Bartók who was one of the first to resort to modernism in music with compelling success, still remains unsurpassed in individual and important contributions to contemporary music.[12]

On January 21, 1943, the Bartóks played a reworked version of the *Sonata* at Carnegie Hall with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. The new version, entitled *Concerto for Two Pianos* had been arranged in hopes of securing concert engagements with other symphony orchestras. Bartók admitted that the new version "gives only color to certain portions of the work."[13] The performance was conducted by Fritz Reiner, Bartók's friend and fellow Hungarian. Despite a generally receptive audience, Olin Downes and other New York critics were antagonistic to the new version. Downes began his review by stating that he wished the concert had stopped at the end of the first half of the program thus omitting the Bartók work. After praising Reiner's interpretation of a Haydn symphony he turned to the Concerto for further comment.

> We would like to remember this and forget most of what followed. We do not mean to say that the concerto for two pianos and orchestra, composed and played by Béla Bartók and his wife, Ditta Pastorzy-Bartók, is anything less than the completely sincere expression of a distinguished contemporary composer. It bears his stamp in every measure.
>
> The addition of the orchestra furnishes more instrumental color than the first scoring. Yet is questionable if this was what the composer most desired, since the tendency in his last period is all toward a beauty which is not sensuous, a treatment of line and rhythm that is severe and often barbaric in atmosphere—a modern Hungarian primitive might be the word for it.
>
> Back of the music are Mr. Bartók's profound knowledge of ancient Hungarian folklore and his isolation with

a very high and pure constructive ideal. It remains that the prevailing effect, to the best of our knowledge and belief, is arid and doctrinaire. There is a hiatus here between that which is profoundly primitive and a modern intellectuality which does not merge with the older idea or convincingly produce new beauty.

The concerto, then, was, for us, a disappointment, though it should be recorded that by a large section of the audience it was cordially received.[14]

Bartók's financial situation was growing increasingly destitute since the appointment at Columbia had been terminated at the end of 1942 and the leading orchestras were continuing what he called a "quasi boycott"[15] of his works. A glimmer of hope appeared when he and his wife were invited to perform the *Sonata* over the CBS radio network. However, the glimmer soon faded when the network announced a few days before the broadcast that another work would have to be substituted since the percussionists who had played the *Sonata* in Town Hall were demanding an "exorbitant" fee. Bartók's reaction was described by Tibor Serly. "I shall never forget the dejection written on Bartók's face as he told me the news. He spoke of returning to Europe—the war, Hitler, Mussolini, et al., not withstanding."[16]

Serly prevailed on the CBS producer to let him train two other percussionists without fee and then sat beside Ditta Bartók and conducted the broadcast performance so the percussionists would not get lost. The percussion parts, which today are considered demanding, but playable, were thought to be nearly impossible then. The Carnegie Hall performance of the Concerto version was Bartók's last public appearance as a pianist and the broadcast was his only network radio appearance.

During the last two years of his life Bartók was offered commissions by Serge Koussevitzky, Yehudi Menuhin and William Primrose. He fulfilled these by writting the *Concerto for Orchestra,* the *Sonata for Solo Violin,* and nearly all of the *Viola Concerto.* In addition he had completed all but the last seventeen measures of the *Concerto No. 3 for Piano and Orchestra* before his death from leukemia on September 26, 1945.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Halsey Stevens, *The Life and Music of Bartók* (New York, 1953), p. 64.

[2]William Austin, *Music in the 20th Century* (New York, 1966), p. 324.

[3]Jozsef Ujfallusy, *Béla Bartók* (Boston, 1971), p. 308.

[4]Paul Sacher, *Béla Bartók zum Gedachtnis,* cited in Stevens, *op. cit.,* p. 84-85.

[5]as quoted in Helm, *Bartók* (London, 1971), p. 62.

[6]Béla Bartók, *Letters,* edited by Janos Demeny (New York, 1971), p. 265.

[7]*Ibid.,* p. 264.

[8]Béla Bartók, *Letters Collected in the Last Two Years,* edited by Janos Demeny (Budapest, 1948), cited in Stevens, op.*cit.,* p. 86.

[9]*The Times of London,* June 21, 1938, p. 14.

[10]Bartók, *Letters Collected in the Last Two Years,* cited in Stevens, *op. cit.,* p. 86.

[11]Bartók, *Letters,* edited by Janos Demeny, p. 428.

[12]*The New York Times,* November 4, 1940, p. 23.

[13]as quoted in Hans Moldenhauer, *Duo-Pianism* (Chicago, 1950), p. 337.

[14]*The New York Times,* January 22, 1943, p. 24.

[15]Bartók, *Letters,* cited in Stevens, *op. cit.,* p. 97.

[16]as quoted in Ray Ellsworth, "The Shadow of Genius," *American Record Guide,* XXXII (September, 1964), 30.

GENERAL OUTLINE AND ANALYSIS

The score of the *Sonata* calls for two pianos, three timpani, xylophone, two snare drums, cymbals, suspended cymbal, bass drum, triangle and tam-tam. A plan shows the desired locations of the instruments and players.

Notes to the percussion players instruct them in the desired manner of playing the various instruments. For example, Bartók specifies three different beaters for the triangle: the usual metal beater, a thin wooden stick, and a heavy metal beater. The suspended cymbal is to be played with an ordinary timpani stick, with the heavy end of a snare stick on the dome or at the edge, with a thin wooden stick, and with the blade of a pocket knife or a similar implement. The notes end with the statement that "experience has proven that two skilled players are sufficient for the whole percussion part." However, if difficulties are encountered, "a third player may be employed for the xylophone part."[1]

The three movements of the work are unequal in length, the first being as long as the last two combined. In spite of this inequality Halsey Stevens comments that

> "Yet in performance no formal disparity is apparent. The reason may perhaps be sought in the thematic wealth of the first movement and its continual regeneration, so that it conveys less the impression of a highly organized closed form than of an uninterrupted outpouring.[2]"

The first movement is cast in a large scale sonatafform with a slow introduction. The winding, chromatic theme of this introduction (Ex. 1) is imitated canonically by the second piano while the texture thickens and the dynamic level increases to the climatic snare drum roll and timpani entrance at ms. 18. At ms. 21 the pianos begin a long *accelerando* to the allegro. After a *Luftpause* the allegro molto opens with a first theme (Ex. 2) which "shares the barbaric abandon of certain earlier works."[3]

The second theme has an irregular rhythm characteristic of Bulgarian folk music (Ex. 3) and the closing theme is built around a repeated ascending major sixth (Ex. 4). The development section begins very subtly and is primarily cnncerned with the first two themes of the Allegro. The retransition to the recapitulation resembles the *accelerando* upbeat to the exposition and the themes are recapitualted in the same order, but in varied forms. A fugato section follows which is based on the closing theme and a coda based on the first theme brings the movement to a close.

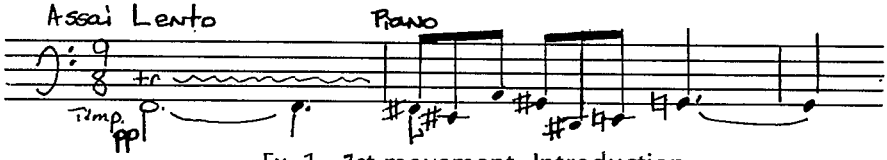
The second movement is marked *Lento, ma non troppo* and is a small ternary form with coda. The first section features a song-like chromatic melody (Ex. 5) in one piano against a delicate background in the other piano and percussion parts. The second section is built around a chattering quintuplet figure (Ex. 6) and abounds in colorful "night music" sounds. The return of the first theme is accompanied by colorful cluster effects and glissandi in the first piano. The movement ends with the return of the quintuplet figure.

Stevens calls the third movement

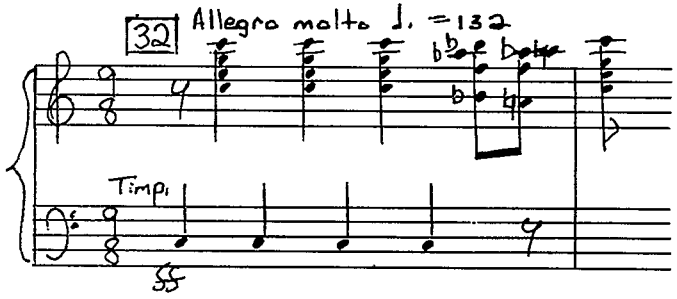
"a sonata-allegro in the character of a rondo."[4] The compositional process is primarily the fragmentation and development of the three parts of the main thematic idea (Ex. 7). The diatonic aspect of the third movement in contrast to the first two movements will be discussed in the next chapter. Percussion instruments participate more extensively in the thematic processes of this movement and the movement ends with a coda based on the first theme and a repeated snare drum rhythm which gradually fades away after the final quasi V-I candence by the pianos.

BÉLA BARTÓK

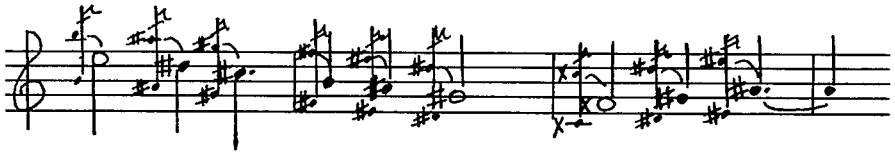
THEMES OF THE *SONATA FOR TWO PIANOS AND PERCUSSION*



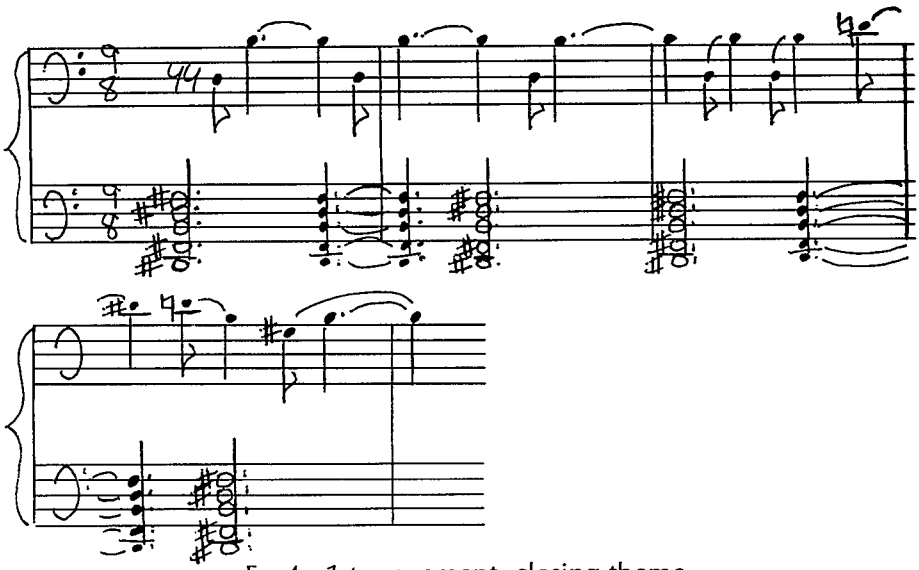
Ex. 1—1st movement, Introduction



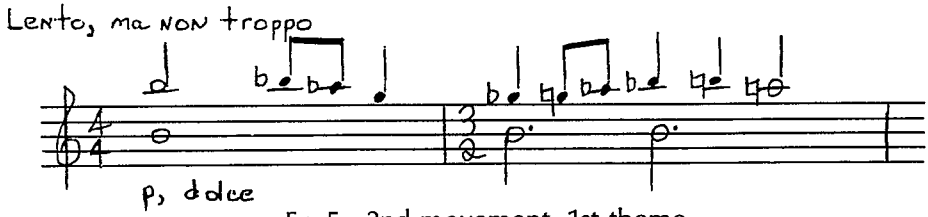
Ex. 2—1st movement, 1st theme



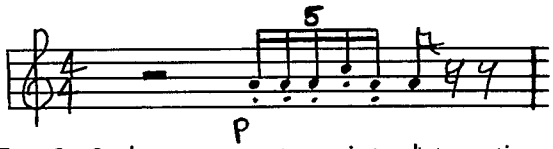
Ex. 3—1st movement, 2nd theme



Ex. 4—1st movement, closing theme



Ex. 5—2nd movement, 1st theme

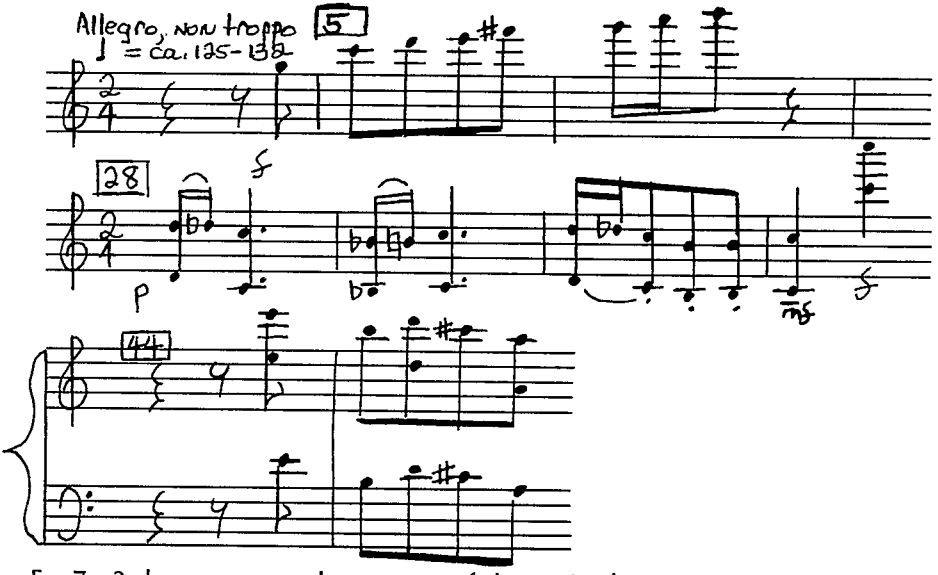


Ex. 6—2nd movement, quintuplet motive

Numerous writers have commented on aspects of this work, several of them comparing it to the *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta* which was written the year before the Sonata. Ujfallusy has called the two works "incomparable masterpieces of the twentieth century."[5] Robert Jones compares the two on the basis of their similar sound-space qualities.

> Like the *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta,* the *Sonata* has conceived with an awareness of spatial and acoustical qualities that foreshadowed to an incredible extent the preoccupation with stereophonic sound that was to come many years after its composition.[6]

Stevens describes the style of piano writing as "the culmination, along with the Piano Sonata and Concertos, of Bartók's recognition that the piano



Ex. 7—3rd movement, three parts of the main theme, ms. 4, 28, 44.

is a percussion instrument."[7] However, he seems to modify this statement somewhat later when he observes that the style period of the *Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion* is a change from the percussive violence of the twenties to

> . . . a highly organized polyphony for which the keyboard is ill suited. That Bartók could adapt his piano writing to fit this riper viewpoint is amply demonstrated by the *Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion;* but the writing of music for piano alone apparently ceased because of the limitations of the instrument with regard to the modifications of his style.[8]

Essentially the same viewpoint is shared by John Weissman.

> *Sonata for two pianos and Percussion* is a rather extensive work. A considerable fluency characterizes it. Compared with compositions of his previous phase, here the occurrence of harshly percussive discords is reduced, except in the slow movement where, contrarily, their function is to envelop the melodic line in a polychromatic haze. Paramount importance is attached to linear values: for special accentuation of their contours octaves, thirds, and chords of fifths and octaves are successively added to thicken the texture. The comparative economy of material is compensated by rich contrapuntal inventiveness; the themes themselves are concise and of sharp, rhythmic profile.[9]

Grout mentions briefly the virtuosity in the treatment of percussion,[10] but Andre Moreux describes this aspect more vividly and extensively.

> This work must be ranked along with the Andante of the First Concerto and the lively movements of the Second, for the symphonic role of the percussion, sketched in the former, and made more precise in the latter, reaches here a degree of perfection of which I can find no other example. [The percussion instruments] are not gathered together by Bartók to oppose piano material as some have written, but to form an integral part; in fact, it is not a question of a percussion concerto against a harmonious background of chords and counterpoint, but of an orchestral "Tutti" in which each plays it part, even thematic for certain ones. One has to have heard the sound of a bass drum prolong a low piano note or a keyboard trill picked up as an echo by the xylophone in order to understand the extraordinary novelty of the procedure, not by chance as in other

works, but pursued in a logical and inventive spirit which expresses the degree of curricular and astonishing imagination of our musician.[11]

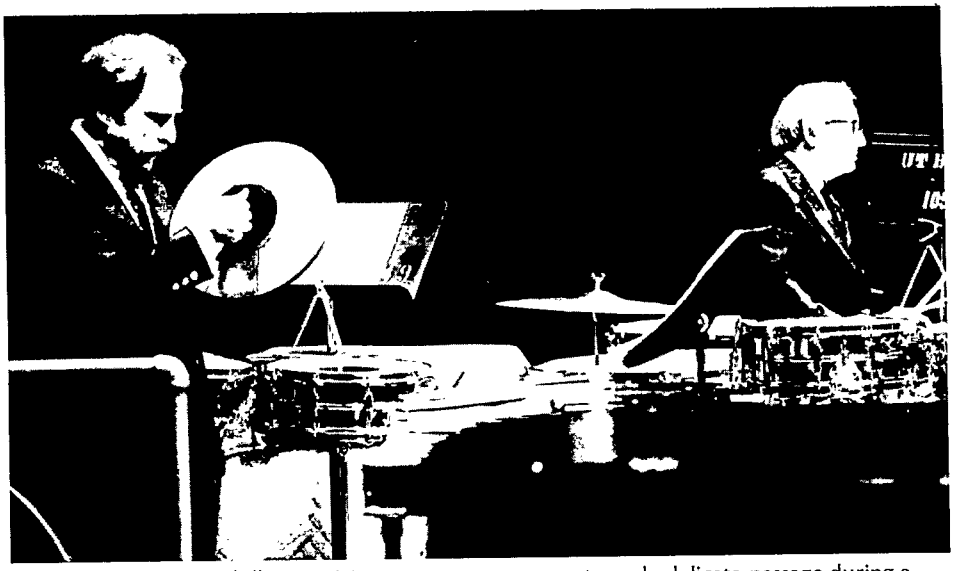
William Austin offers another interesting comment on the percussion writing, but mistakes the triangle for bells.

To use percussion instruments in a small ensemble is typical of the 20th century. To omit winds from the ensemble that includes percussion is Bartok's peculiar inspiration. Thus his melody and harmony can develop as they might in a quartet with a uniform color, yet this uniformity can be relieved with the bright accents of the drums and xylophone and sweetened by the gong and delicate bells.[12]

seventeenth and eighteenth century Italian keyboard music.[14]

Helm and Austin also compare the *Sonata* with the *Music for Strings.* Helm observes that "both are intensely emotional in a restrained, almost impersonal way, . . . only occasionally does Bartók release elemental driving rhythms" and also notes the "air of mystery which pervades many sections of the two pieces."[15]

Austin uses similes in comparing the works. "The *Music for Strings* is like a search, poignant and thorough, the *Sonata for Two Pianos* is like a celebration, festive, mysterious at times, playful often, and gloriously affirmative."[16]



Morris Lang (NY Philharmonic) concentrates on an extremely delicate passage during a performance of the Bartók *Sonata* at the PASIC '78 in Knoxville. Saul Goodman is poised for his next entrance.

More general descriptions of style include references by Otto Gombosi to the "laconic formal construction and utter simplicity" of the late works[13] and a comparison with Stravinskian neo-classicism possibly due to Bartók's interest in

The most profound extra-musical meaning is voiced by Josef Ujfallusy who hears in the slow movement of this and several other Bartók works "the unyielding cries of men who are prepared to die for the cause of freedom."[17]

FOOTNOTES

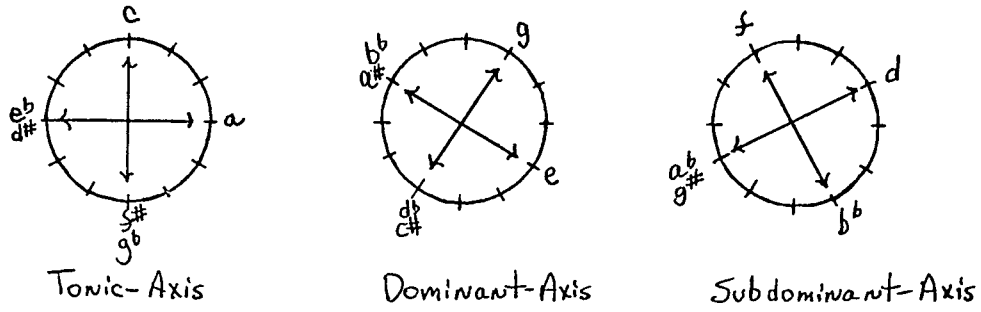
[1]Béla Bartók, *Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion* (New York, 1942), p. 4.
[2]Halsey Stevens, *The Life and Music of Bartok* (New York, 1953), p. 213.
[3]*Ibid.*, p. 214.
[4]*Ibid.*, p. 217.
[5]Josef Ujfallusy, *Béla Bartók* (Boston, 1971), p. 318.
[6]Robert Jones, "A Feast of Piano Music by Bartók," *American Record Guide*, XXXII (September, 1965), 24.
[7]Stevens, *op. cit.*, pp. 120-121.
[8]*Ibid.*, p. 140.
[9]John Weissman, "Bartók's Piano Music," *Béla Bartók: a Memorial Review* (New York, 1950), p. 62.
[10]Donald Jay Grout, *A History of Western Music* (New York, 1961), p. 617.
[11]Andre Moreux, *Béla Bartók* (Paris, 1955), pp. 242-244.
[12]William Austin, *Music in the 20th Century* (New York, 1953), p. 64.
[13]Otto Gombosi, "Bela Bartok, 1881-1945," *Musical Quarterly*, XXXII No. 1 (January, 1946), 8.
[14]*Ibid.*, 4.
[15]Everett Helm, *Bartók* (London, 1971), p. 62
[16]Austin, *op. cit.*, p. 323.
[17]Ujfallusy, *op. cit.*, p. 318.

ANALYSIS BY ERNO LENDVAI

The most extensive published analysis of Bartók's music has been done by Erno Lendvai, a professor at the Hochschule für Musik in Budapest.[1] The following is a summary of salient features of Lendvai's work as it applies to the *Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion*. The reader may encounter ideas which are difficult to grasp or accept, but nevertheless, should find them thought provoking. This summary is intended as a presentation of the essence of Lendvai's work on the *Sonata* to a readership whose primary interest in that work is in the performance of the percussion parts. Further clarification and detail can be had by consulting Lendvai's book Béla Bartók: *An Analysis of His Music.*[2]

The Axis System

Lendvai begins with the statement that he intends to examine Bartók's tonal system from the viewpoints of

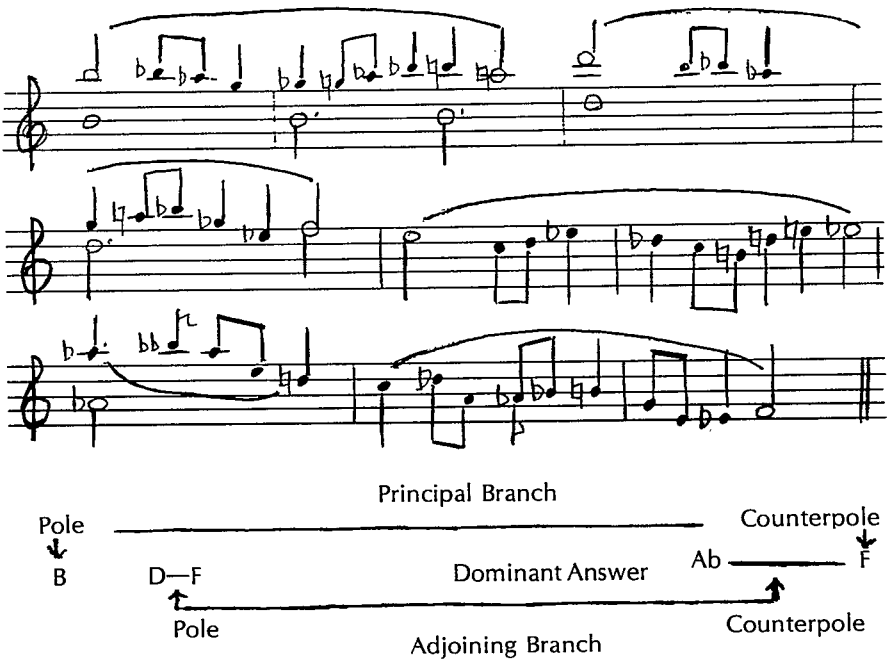


Ex. 8—Tonic, dominant and subdominant axes

classical harmonic theory, twelve-tone theory, acoustics historical development and proportion. But above all, he hopes to determine whether or not Bartók's total system is based on the circle of fifths. He reminds us that the dominant and subdominant keys of a given tonic key are located on either side of the tonic in the circle of fifths. By isolating the three functions temporarily, one can construct an axis system for each function (Ex. 8). Each axis system can be considered a functional relationship of four seemingly unrelated tonalities comparable to the major-minor system of classical harmonic theory. Thus C and F-sharp are related and can be interchanged without altering the basic tonic function.[3]

The pole-counterpole principle is, to Lendvai, the fundamental structural and formal principle of Bartók's music at all architectonic levels. To illustrate this theory, he points out pole-counterpole relationships in the introduction to the first movement of the *Sonata*—the tonic F-sharp and a C in ms. 2-5, the dominant G and D-flat in ms. 809, and the subdominant A-flat and D in ms. 12.[4]

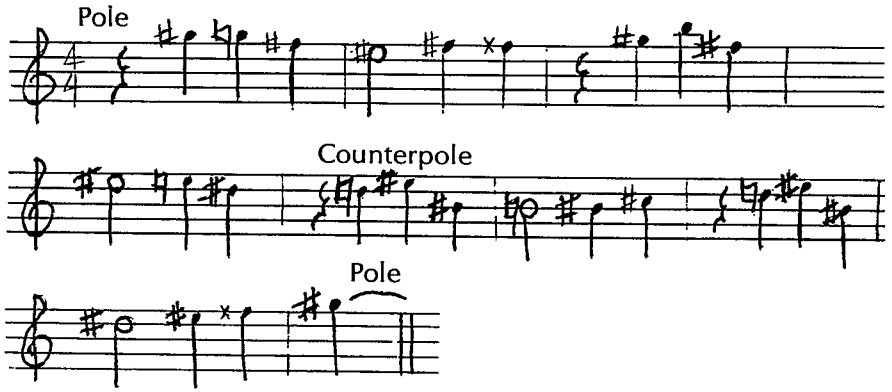
In addition to the pole-counterpole arrangement on each branch of an axis system, Lendvai claims that the two *branches* are related in a similar manner as principal and secondary branch. Therefore, all four keys are related to each other. To illustrate Bartók's use of this procedure, he quotes the first nine measures of the slow movement of the *Sonata* and diagrams the symmetrical pattern of keys implied by the melody (Ex. 9).[2] This same relationship is found in the theme of the middle section where each metric



Ex. 9—Axis Structure of the 1st theme of the 2nd movement

and motivic strong point of the melody revolves around the subdominant axis and the beginning and ending G-sharp is separated by the polar D. The two melodies in opposition constitute the tonal framework of the movement with the former being linked by the B-F branch of the subdominant axis and the latter by the G#-D branch (Ex. 10).[3]

branches of the subdominant and dominant axes—A-flat for the subdominant and E for the dominant (Ex. 8). Thus, when the system is transposed to other keys the subdominant and dominant are not a perfect fifth, but a major third below and above the tonic. Lendvai remarks that this tonal arrangement is not unusual in music of the nineteenth



Ex.10—Pole-counterpole relationships in the middle section of the 2nd movement

Lendvai also points out a similar relationship between the first and second movements. Finally he observes that the four phrases of the recapitulation of the second theme of the first movement can be represented by the four poles of the tonic axis, especially in view of the inside-outside pole-counterpole arrangement A-F#-C-Eflat.[7]

Thus, tonal relationships within sections are governed by the axis structure principle and the four keys on a given axis represent a tonal function e.g., tonic, subdominant or dominant. With Bartók, however, the subdominant and dominant functions are not represented by scale degrees IV and V, but by other

century and cites Beethoven's "dominant" E major second theme of the *C Major "Waldstein" Sonata,* his subdominant A-flat slow movement of the *C Minor Pathetique Sonata* and the four movement key scheme C-E-Aflat-C ("tonic-dominant-subdominant-tonic") of Brahms' *First Symphony* as examples. However, he admits that so far his theory has not demonstrated why Bartók perferred this tonal arrangement and that a new proof is required for that question.[8]

For the required proof he postulates a three-part division of the chromatic scale into major thirds. The "dominant" E with it "positive" tension is located above the tonic; the subdominant A-flat with its

"negative" tension is below. By applying the axis principle each of the twelve degrees of the chromatic scale is assigned a function. This arrangement can be found in the first movement of the *Sonata:* C tonic (exposition), E dominant (first half of the development), A-flat subdominant (second half of the development), C tonic (recapitulation). Bartók prefers a three part division of the octave as a system of tonal organization rather than the twelve-part division of Schoenberg *et al.*

Lendvai also attempts to justify the axis system on an acoustical basis. He contends that since a V-I progression can be viewed as movement from the first overtone to the fundamental of the overtone series, the relationship could be extended to include higher overtones. This would make E and its counterpole B-flat dominants along with G.

The theory is also justified on grounds of historical evolution and necessity. Lendvai traces the expansion of functional tonal relationships from the I-IV-V-I progressions of early tonal music.

Subdominant	Tonic	Dominant
F	C	G

through the primary and secondary triadic relationships and relative keys of the classical period,

Subdominant	Tonic	Dominant
F	C	G
d	a	e

on to the Romantic practice of employing more distant relationships.

Subdominant			Tonic			Dominant		
F			C			G		
D	B	A-flat	A	F#	E-flat	E	C#	B-flat

The functional principle is retained while the system is expanded to include all twelve keys.[9]

Thus, Lendvai asserts that Bartók's harmonic system is not a departure from previous practice, but a summary and fulfillment of it. He draws a sharp line of distinction between Bartók's system and Schoenberg's. "Schoenberg broke up tonality and destroyed it, but Bartók applied the principles of harmonic thought with heroic tensional strength on what has been the highest technical level and most perfect synthesis."[10]

The Golden Section

According to Lendvai, the formal proportions of Bartók's music are in close agreement with the principle of the Golden Section. In fact this principle is just as important to Bartok's music as four-measure phrases and eight-measure periods were to Viennese classicism.

The Golden Section is defined as:

> . . . the division of a distance in such a way that the proportion of the whole length to the larger part corresponds geometrically to the proportion of the larger part to the smaller part, i.e. the larger part is the **geometric mean** of the whole length and the smaller part.[11]

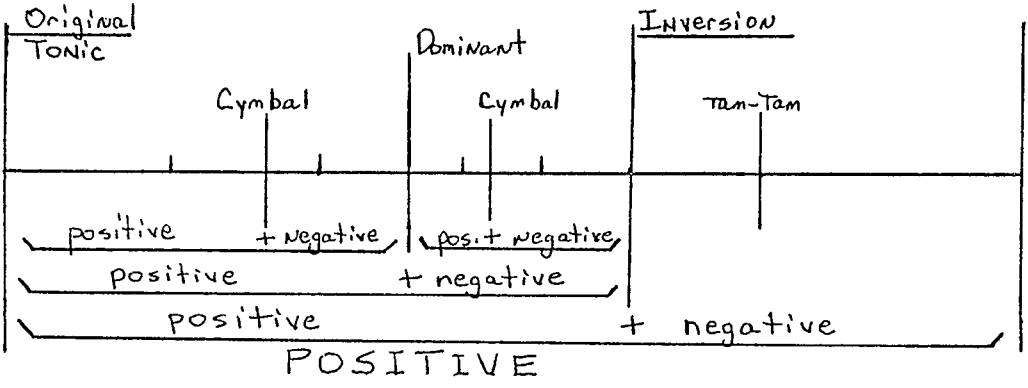
The proportions are expressed numerically as follows. If the entire distance is represented as a unit, then

the size of the larger section equals 0.618 and the size of the smaller section is 0.382. Thus, the larger or smaller (positive or negative) section of a given distance can be determined by multiplying the distance by the appropriate decimal co-efficient.

Lendvai observes that the first movement of the *Sonata* consists of 443 measures and therefore the Golden Section of the movement is 433 X 0.618 = 274. Measure 274 is the exact point of entry of the recapitulation and the gravitational center of the movement.[12]

Formal proportions within a section of a movement are also analyzed. Lendvai cites a particularly remarkable example of Golden Section proportions in ms. 2-17 of the introduction to the first movement. (Ex. 11). The section consists of three phrases; the first centers around the tonic and its counterpole F#-C (ms. 2-5), the second around the dominant and its counterpole Db-G (ms. 8-9) and the third around the subdominant pole-counterpole Ab-D (from ms. 12 on). The third phrase is the thematic inversion of the first two. If the measures are broken down into units of three eighth notes, the entire section is forty-six units long. The Golden Section is therefore 46 X 0.618 = 28 and this product coincides with the return of the theme in its inverted form at unit number 28. Lendvai pauses to observe that "the Golden Section always coincides with the most significant turning point of the form."[13]

He goes on to isolate the two sections obtained by the first calculation and to derive the positive and negative sections of each in the same manner. By doing so, he is able to account for such factors as phrase length, the exact location of cymbal, snare drum and tam-tam notes, and the thickening and thinning of musical texture through Golden Section proportions. Several instances of reflection between positive and negative sections are pointed out. He then summarizes the discussion:



Ex. 11—Golden Section proportions in introduction to first movement.

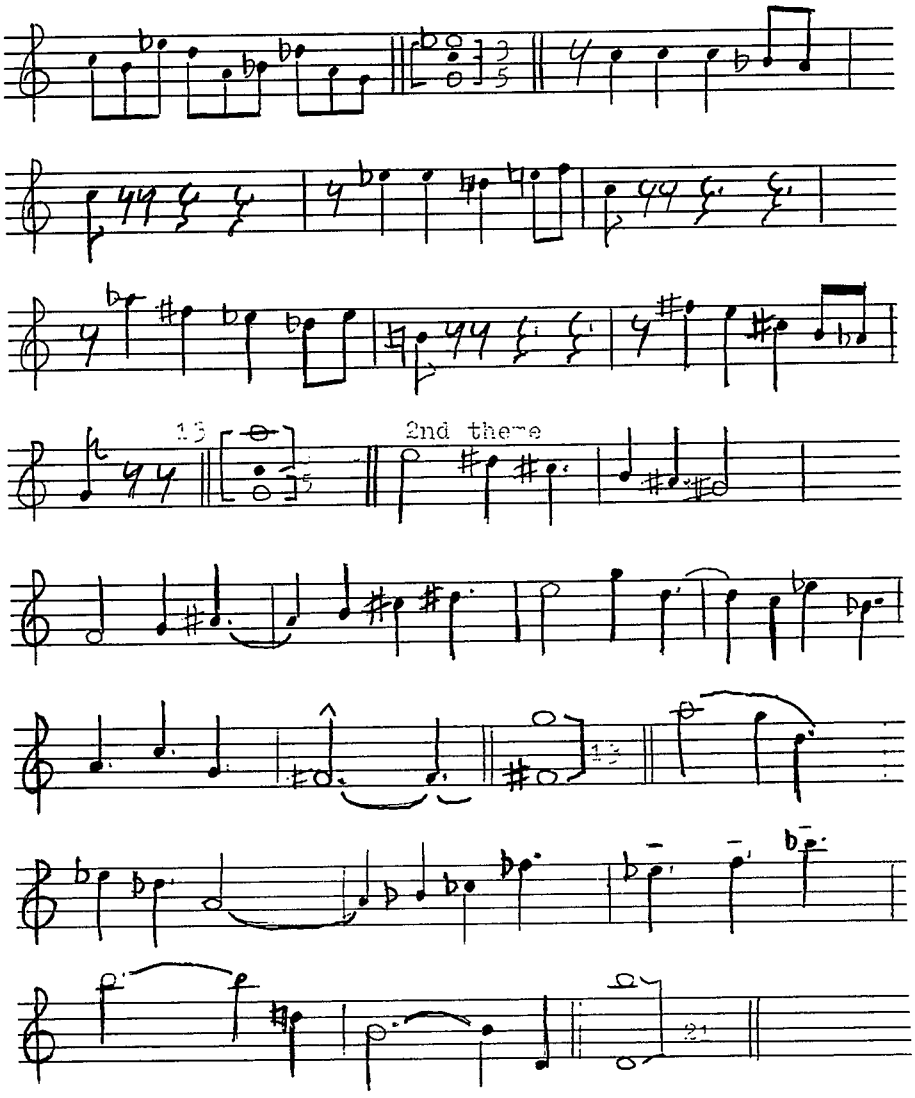
> . . . both in the smaller and the larger form details, there is a symmetric joining of the **positive** and **negative** sections. From these concatenations a single great "potential" form arises, wherein the smaller parts are finally summarised in a **positive** main section. The process is

therefore coupled with a powerful dynamic increase from pianissimo to forte-fortissimo.[14]

In conclusion, Lendvai asserts that all parts of the *Sonata* exhibit an unusually thorough organization. The dimensions of the entire work are described as "frankly uncanny" since, if the metrical time value of the entire work is taken as 6,432 eighth notes, the Golden Section of 3,975 eighths falls on the boundary line between the first and second movements.[15]

Chord and Interval Usage

Lendvai divides his discussion of



Ex. 12—Golden Section structures in themes of the first movement

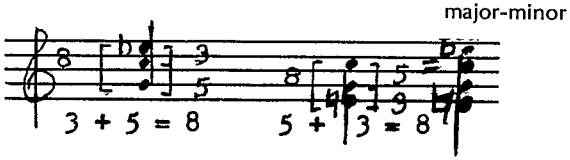
Bartók's chords and intervals into two parts—chromatic and diatonic. He begins the discussion of chromatic usage by observing that, if the size of harmonic and melodic intervals is expressed in semi-tones, then Bartók's intervals and chords are expressions of the numerical equivalent of the Golden Section, the Fibonacci number series. The series begins with the numbers two and three and the next number is determined by adding the two preceding numbers in the series. Thus the following series results: 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, etc.

where

2 represents a major second
3 represents a minor third
5 represents a perfect fourth
8 represents a minor sixth
13 represents an augmented octave.[16]

Themes of the first movement are analyzed and the conculsion is drawn that, when measured in semitones, the ranges of the themes correspond to the Fibonacci number series (Ex. 12).[17]

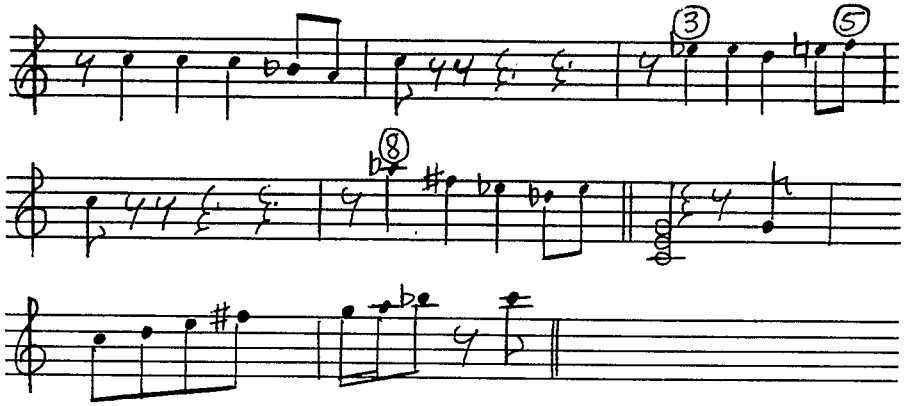
Bartók's tendency to use a chord with a minor third above the root and and a major third below is noted and this chord is found to exemplify Fibonacci proportions (Ex. 13). Several other examples of this chord are cited from Bartók's works.[18]



Ex. 13—Golden Section structures in major and minor triads

Bartók's diatonic style is found in the third movement of the *Sonata*. Lendvai submits that "the characteristic form of the *acoustic* chord (major triad with minor seventh and augmented fourth e.g. C major with Bb and F#)." This scale is the "exact and systematic inversion of the laws of his (Bartók's) chromatic technique i.e. the Golden Section rules."[19]

The complementary nature of the two systems is illustrated by comparing the first theme of the

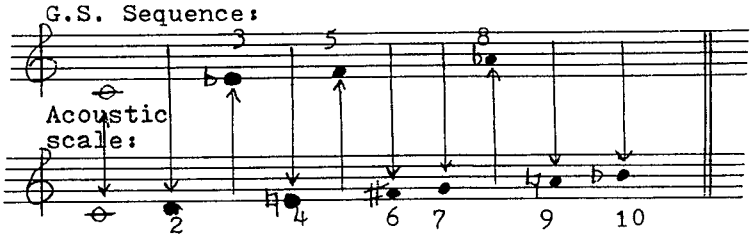


Ex. 14—Systematic association of chromatic and diatonic styles

chromatic first movement to the first theme of the diatonic third movement (Ex. 14). The former "is formed out of Golden Section cells since its winds around the intervals of a minor third, a perfect fourth and a minor sixth (3-5-8, C-Eflat-F-Aflat)."[20] The latter is "an acoustical tone row." When juxtaposed (Ex. 15) the two systems seem to complement one another leaving the C-sharp and B-natural to function chromatically.

observing that in chromatic movements, the intervals seem to expand gradually until the geometric midpoint of the movement is reached and from that point they seem to contract. However, such processes are insignificant in Bartok's diatonic settings where the harmonies have more stability and permanence.[22]

In closing, Lendvai notes that since the chromatic style is based on an entire system of tones, it is a **"closed**

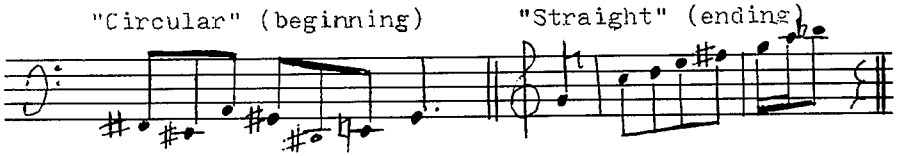


Ex. 15—Comparison of Golden Section and Acoustical scales

Another type of complementary relationship between harmonies of the first and third movements is discussed. In the first movement major triads and dominant seventh chords were always heard in the Golden Section context in first inversion. However, in the third movement they are heard in an acoustical, diatonic context in root position. Thus, in the first movement the major third of the chord is always **under** the root and in the third movement it is **above.**[21]

Lendvai continues to contrast the chromatic and diatonic styles by

system" and can be represented by a circle (see Ex. 8). In contrast, the diatonic style is based on a single tone and is therefore and **"open** system" which can be represented by the straight line of the overtone series. The extent to which these closed or open qualities pervade Bartok's music is demonstrated by comparing the winding contour of the chromatic themes to the circular representation of the chromatic system and the straightforward character of the diatonic themes with the linear representation of the diatonic system. (Ex. 16).[23]



Ex. 16—Comparison of thematic contours with theoretical symbols of the chromatic and diatonic styles

FOOTNOTES

[1]Peter Paul Hoffer, "Erno Lendvai," *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart,* edited by Frederick Blume, VIII, col. 612.

[2]London: Kahn and Averill, 1971, (distributed in USA by Humanities Press, Atlantic Highlands, N.J.)

[3]Lendvai, *op. cit.,* p. 1-3.

[4]*Ibid.*

[5]*Ibid.,* p. 5-6.

[6]*Ibid.,* p. 7.

[7]*Ibid.,* p. 100.

[8]*Ibid.*

[9]*Ibid.,* p. 8-9.

[10]Erno Lendvai, "Einfuhrung in die Fromen- und Harmoniewelt Bartóks," *Béla Bartók: Weg und Werk, Schriften und Briefe,* edited by Bence Szabolcsi (Leipzig, 1957), p. 103 (my translation)

[11]Lendvai, *Bela Bartók,* p. 17.

[12]*Ibid.,* p. 18.

[13]*Ibid.,* p. 18-20.

[14]*Ibid.,* p. 22.

[15]*Ibid.,* p. 26.

[16]*Ibid.,* p. 35.

[17]*Ibid.,* p. 36-37.

[18]*Ibid.,* p. 40.

[19]*Ibid.,* p. 67.

[20]*Ibid.,* p. 69.

[21]*Ibid.,* pp. 72-73.

[22]*Ibid.,* pp. 75-76.

[23]*Ibid.,* p. 76.

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J. Kent Williams is an assistant professor of music at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro where he teaches courses in music theory and jazz as well as applied percussion. He holds the B.M.E. and M.M. degrees in percussion from Indiana University and is presently a candidate for the Ph.D. in Music Theory. He has studied percussion with George Gaber, Elden Bailey, and Ed Shaughnessy and has performed with the U.S. Military Academy Band at West Point, the Hudson Valley Philharmonic, the Indianapolis Symphony, and the Eastern Music Festival. At the present he is timpanist with the Greensboro Symphony Orchestra and jazz drummer with the Ray Gariglio Quartet.

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ROBERT KURKA'S CONCERTO FOR MARIMBA AND ORCHESTRA

by David Eyler

Robert Kurka was born in Cicero, Illinois on December 22, 1921, and died in New York City on December 12, 1957. He was an American composer of Czechoslovakian descent. Kurka's studies included violin with Kathleen Parlow and Hans Letz, and composition with Otto Luening and Darius Milhaud. He received a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1851 and 1952. His opera *The Good Soldier Schweik,* completed just before his untimely death of leukemia, was produced with much sucess at the New York City Center on April 23, 1958, and has since been widely performed in America and in Europe. Kurka's othe works include two symphonies; serenade for chamber orchestra; violin concerto; concerto for two pianos, string orchestra, and trumpet; *Ballad for French Horn and Strings;* 5 string quartets; piano trio; 4 violin sonatas; piano pieces; and choruses. (Slonimsky, 1971)

Kurka went to work on his 22 minute marimba concerto in 1956 at the suggestion of marimbist Vida Chenoweth. He completed the piece a year before his death in 1957 at the age of 35. The work was dedicated to Vida Chenoweth who premiered it on November 11, 1959, at Carnegie Hall in New York. The Concerto was published one year after its premiere performance. Weintraub Music Company in New York printed the work in hand manuscript form. Both bass and treble clefs are used in the marimba notation rather than the extensive use of ledger lines.

These different critics had this to say about the premiere performance of the Concerto:

"Kurka's concerto is tuneful and attractive - a bit haphazard in style perhaps, what with jazz elements, diatonic harmony, a first movement featured by wide-ranging skips that had nothing in common with the other movements."

-Harold C. Schonberg
New York Times
November 12, 1959

"An undeniably gay and infectious work"

-The New Yorker
November 21, 1959

"Three of the six native works in the Orchestra of America's second concert made going to Carnegie Hall quite worth while last night. They happened to come in the second half of the program where the first performance of the late Robert Kurka's concerto for marimba and orchestra saved the evening.

Robert Kurka

Mr. Kurka contributed one of the salient aspects of American music; synocopated rhythm in light-hearted melodic writing. This work is a native as the barn dance, full of spirit and genuinely attractive."

-Miles Kastendieck
New York Journal-American
November 12, 1959

"Mr. Kurka certainly was a creative craftsman. The music is alive, colorful, even poetic, and at all times the works of a knowing technican."

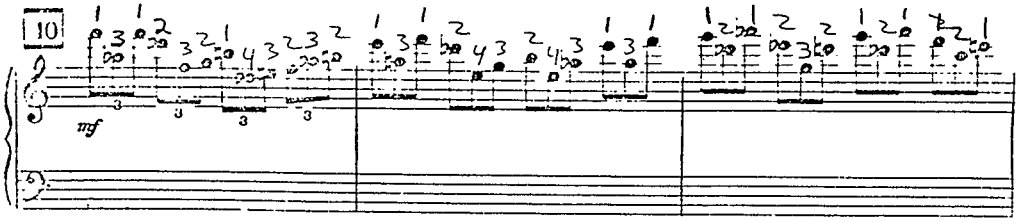
-Louis Biancolli
World Telegram
November 12, 1959

"Concertos for Marimba are no more often encountered than pterodactls in Times Square, but one of them turned up last night at a Carnegie Hall concert presented by the Orchestra of America under the direction of Richard Korn. The work, composed by the late Robert Kurka, was given its world premiere with Vida Chenoweth as soloist, and the piece, quite frankly, provided the only breeze in an evening that was otherwise mighty stuffy.

To his credit, Mr. Kurka located innumerable means of displaying the marimba at its best, and his concerto is everywhere lively and zestful. It is mostly diatonic, filled with smart and leaping tunes, and it exploits the agility of its soloists to the utmost."

-Jay Harrison
New York Herald Tribune
November 12, 1959

The first movement of Kurka's *Concerto for Marimba* is a great display of the marimbist's four mallet technique. The entire movement need not be played holding four mallets as seen in Ex. 1.

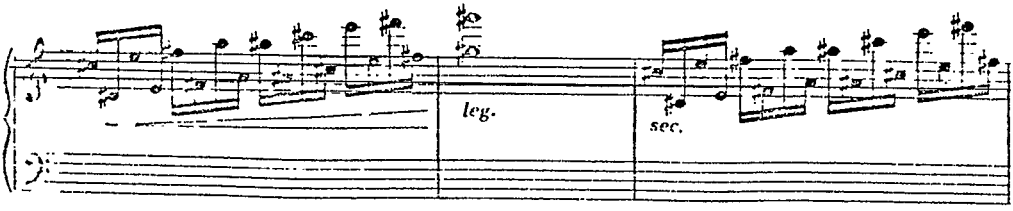


Ex. 1

It is this writer's opinion, however, that these passages are made less difficult by incorporating four mallets rather than two as indicated by the arabic numerals in the example. The four mallets are numbered from R to L with #1 being the soprano voice.

including employing four mallets throughout the complete movement. I varied my decision from day to day when performing the work." (Pimentel, 1978)

Throughout the entire work, Kurka uses the terms "secco" and "legato" abbreviated "sec." and "leg." to denote rolls and single strokes. Legato markings should all be rolled (fast alternating strokes) and secco markings will all be single strokes. Ex. 2.



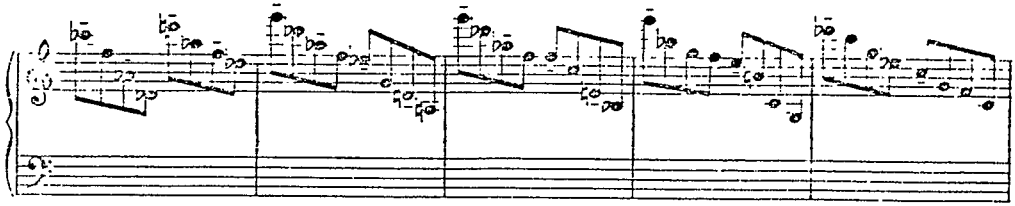
Ex. 2

In a question addressed to artist marimbist Linda Pimentel in *Percussive Notes* magazine, she makes this statement regarding the 2 versus 4 mallet technique in this movement:

"I polled some of my students who have performed the work and received a wide array of answers

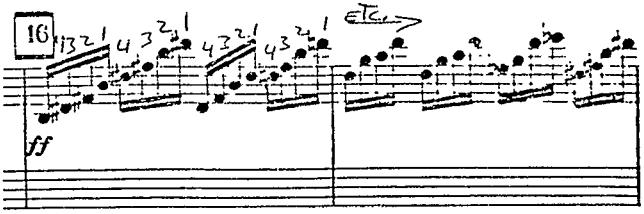
Long or stressed notes are indicated with a legato slash mark (-). Ex. 3. These notes must be slightly accented by the marimbist to achieve a longer sound.

One area of confusion in this movement is the glissando one measure before number 14. In this measure two glissandi are written;



Ex. 3

one going down followed by one going up. The way it is indicated in the score, it looks as though the left hand ends just as the right hand begins.



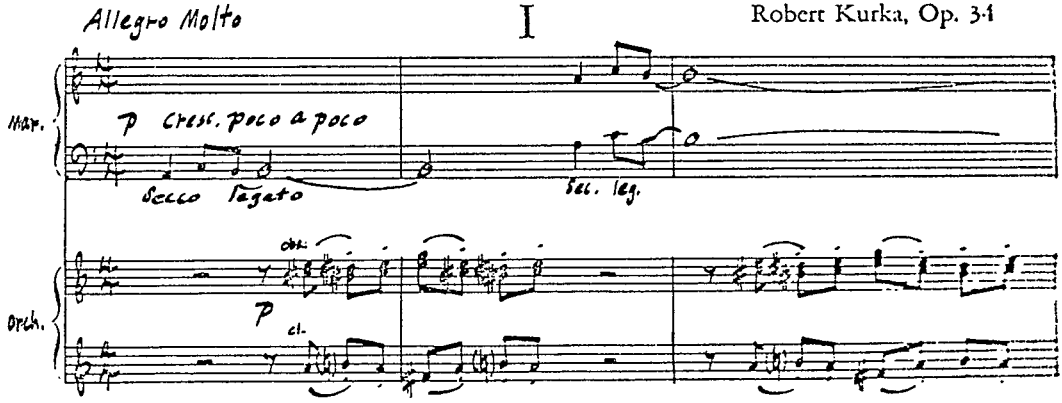
Ex. 4

This would make it very difficult to end with both hands playing the octave B flats simultaneously. In my performance, I began the glissandos with both hands going in the correct direction and ending on the first count of the next measure. It should also begin on the second sixteenth note of the third count of the measure. This measure in particular was a little ambiguous to this performer.

The "rocking" technique, discussed earlier in the Musser *Prelude,* can be applied to many parts of this movement. This example in particular shows how the pattern of 4, 3, 2, 1 (bottom to top) in the mallets will make it easier to perform. Less motion of the arms and body will be needed using this technique. Ex. 4.

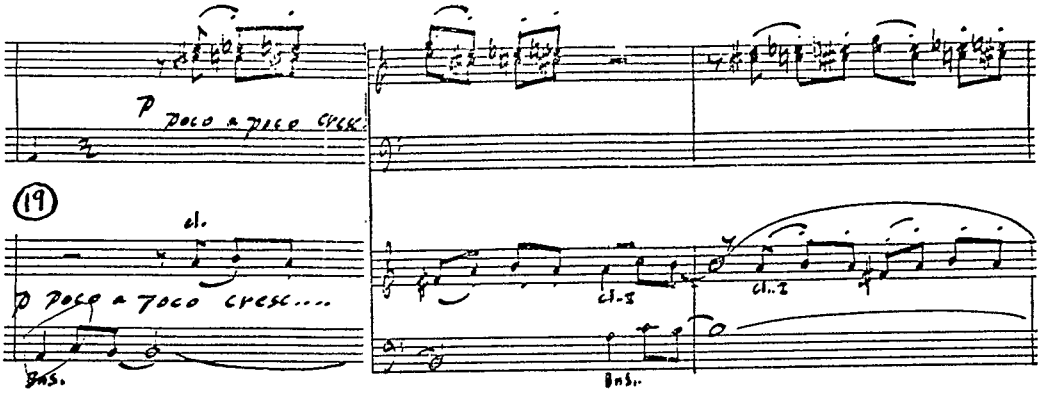
A perfect form can not be assigned to this movement. There are some aspects that relate it to a Sonata Allegro structure which is a common first movement form. There are three basic sections. The first section, or exposition, starts at the very beginning.

There is no introduction to this movement. The recapitulation begins with the return of this opening theme at rehearsal number 19. In this return the parts are reversed between the marimba and accompaniment from that of the exposition. Ex. 6.

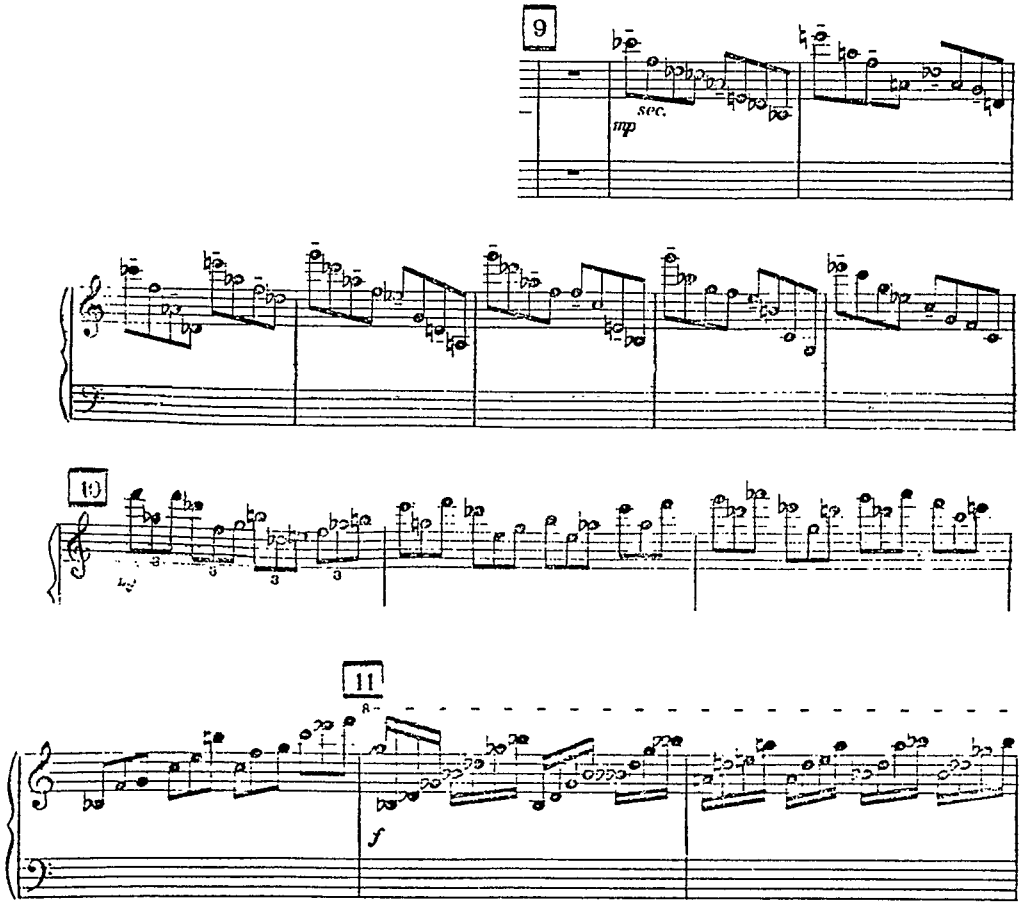


Ex. 5

The first exposition extends from the beginning to number 8. At this point the tonal center appears to be D flat, but for a short time only. The entire section from #8 to four measures after #11 is reversed at #16 and extends to the cadenza. All motivic figures are like the first, except now in a different key. Ex. 7.

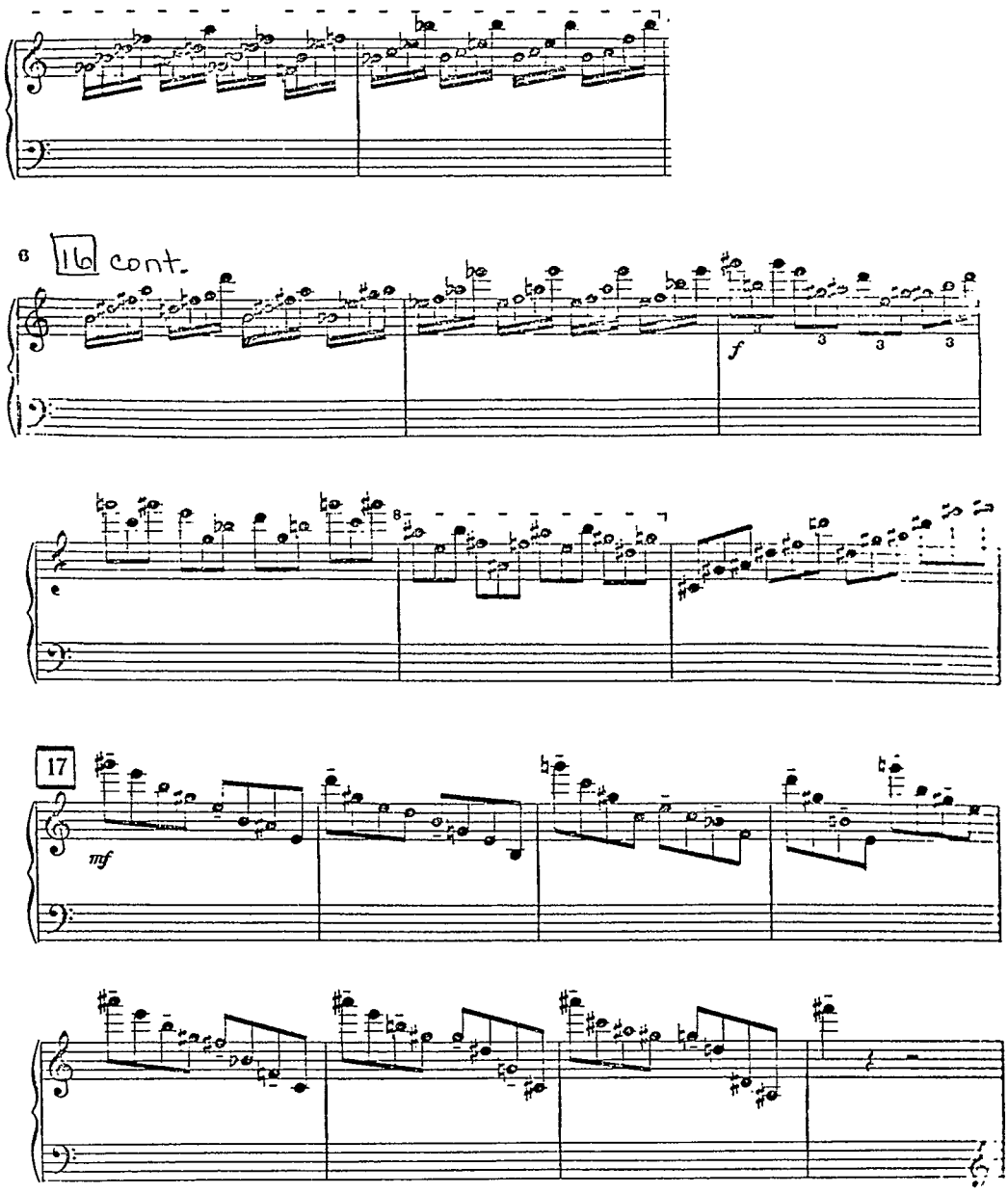

p poco a poco cresc.
19
cl.
p poco a poco cresc....
Bns.
cl.-s
cl.-t
Bns.

Ex. 6


9
sec.
mp
10
11
f

Ex. 7

Ex. 7 (continued)



Ex. 7

The first example is the motive in its first form, while the second example shows its inverse.

The "cadenza, ad. lib." uses motivic material from all parts of the movement while also incorporating

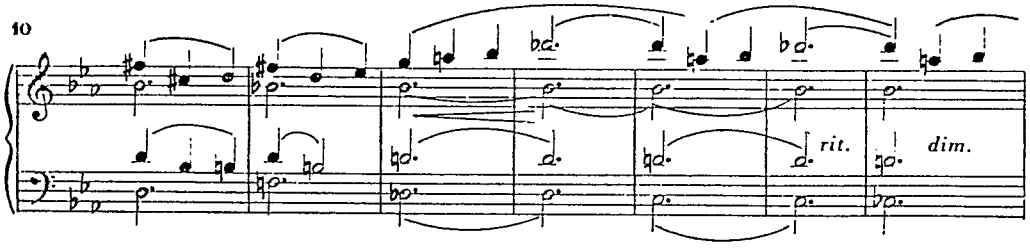
some new material. This section encompasses a wide dynamic range, from ppp to fff. Tempo and meter changes also exist quite prevalently in the cadenza. The entire range of the marimba keyboard (4 1/3 octave) is utilized here. Legato chords, double stops, fast arpeggiated passages, and single note melodic lines are all included.

A very short coda begins at #21 and lasts for only eight measures. This material has the exact harmonic progression as the introduction and ends on an A minor chord in the accompaniment with octaves in the marimba. It should be noted that the edition by Weintraub Music Company has an error in the solo marimba part on the last chord. The note in the upper voice should read A, not C. There are also other mistakes in each movement. The marimbist should check his part thoroughly with the accompaniment to correct these errors. Most of these errors are in the latest "engraved" solo part, and not in the original hand manuscript part. The piano reduction still remains in the original hand manuscript which is difficult for the pianist to read.

The level of difficulty of this first movement exceeds that of the other two in this writer's opinion. The wide skips and leaps in the marimba with both two and four mallets make it extremely difficult. This movement is also the longest of the three, lasting about ten minutes. It takes much concentration on the part of the performer.

Finding the best mallets to use on the piece is perhaps the most difficult task of all. The performer must use a mallet that can play each range of the marimba equally well. In much experimenting, this performer was unable to come up with a commercially manufactured which met this task. In an act of desperation, I got in touch with Warren Hyer, noted marimba mallet producer, who made a special set of four mallets that would play the entire range of the keyboard. Through further study, it was learned that the "ball" of the mallet (unwrapped portion) was taken from the Musser "blue" hard rubber mallets. This in turn was covered with yarn and put on the Hyer long shaft, which also enables the performer to reach greater intervals with one hand. These mallets were not employed on the second movement, even though it also incorporates the entire range of the marimba, because they were not soft enough to produce the mellow contrasting sonority to the first movement.

The second movement, marked "Adagio Espressivo," begins with unaccompanied marimba for the first 22 measures. This opening theme is made difficult because of many wide intervals in both hands. Ex. 8.

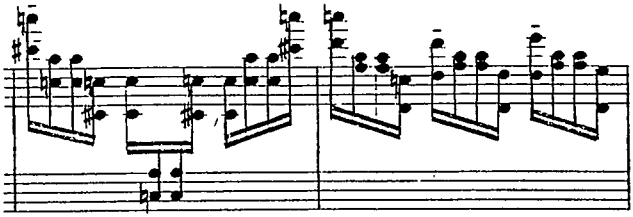


Ex. 8

Four mallets are held throughout the entire movement. Again, as in the first movement, a mallet which sounds good in any range of the marimba must be employed.

The opening section is slow and sustained with all notes rolled. in the upper register. The appropriate amount of force in the stroke must be applied to achieve these tone qualities. The following is an example of where the different types of strokes are applied. Ex. 9.

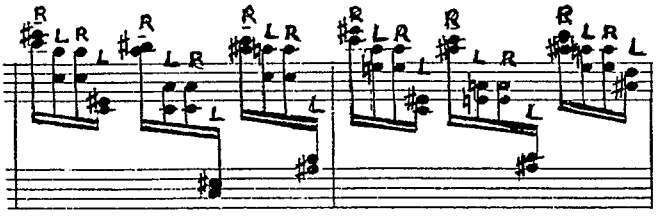
The legato mark on the first beat of



Ex. 9

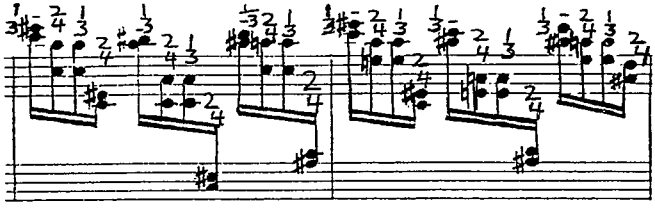
Throughout this section the top mallet or soprano voice must be stressed (brought out). Phrasing is also very important here. During my performance of this movement, I used a softer set of mallets for the opening section and the rest of the movement was performed with the the measure implies a stress or accent on that note as discussed earlier. A full four octave range is used within just the first two beats of this measure.

The entire section from #5 to #6 is perhaps the most difficult in this movement. Two different types of sticking were suggested to me for this



Ex. 10

Warren Hyer "Rueban" mallets. These particular mallets give a warm resonant quality to the low register of the marimba and a sharp biting sound section of the movement. The first, as shown in the next example, is a straight hand to hand alternation of strokes with double stops (two notes Ex. 10.



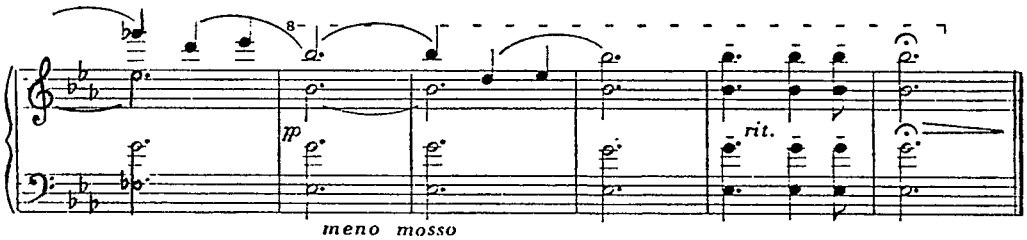
Ex. 11

played simultaneously) in each hand. This technique tended to be cumbersome while trying to get around the instrument.

The sticking technique was suggested to me by artist marimbist Linda Pimentel. Ex. 11.

In this technique both hands are involved with each double stop. The mallets will feel as though they glide over the marimba. Octaves can be locked into position in one hand while using a juxtapositioning technique. This occurs when the mallets in one hand are crossed over those in the other hand.

the accompaniment after being idle. This section is still in the key of E flat major, but a gradual change to D major occurs and is established at #5. Finally the "A" section returns in the key of E flat major at #8. The voicing is now different in the marimba. Whereas the first "A" section used a fairly close voicing, the return is spread so that both hands are playing wide intervals. Ex. 12. Another problem through this section is the range in which the marimba must sound. The very high notes may not be heard as well as the others. During my performance, I switched to a



Ex. 12

During this entire "middle section" of the second movement I employed the cross grip (two mallets crossed in one hand). This enabled me to lock many of these positions in the hand and better execute each passage. The "Musser grip" was used in the beginning and closing sections of the movement because of the wide intervals. In this grip, with the mallets uncrossed, it enables the performer to have a greater interval reach. This writer believes that a working knowledge of both grips is essential.

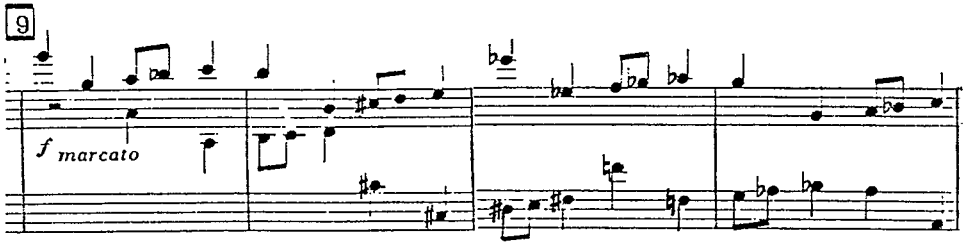
The form of this movement is a simple three-part or ternary form. The solo marimba introduces the first "A" section in the key of E flat major. The accompaniment enters at rehearsal number 2 in the same key.

The second or "B" section begins at #4 where the marimba re-enters with harder mallet (same mallet used in movement #8. This enabled me to bring out the soprano voice even with the "pp" marking at the end.

To be thoroughly effective, the very end of the movement should fade away to nothing. In achieving this effect, I rolled (or sustained) from the center of the Marimba bars to the nodal point (where the string runs through the bar). This being the point of no vibration of the bar, I was actually playing the note but receiving no sound. I found it a very effective way to end the movement. If desired, the introduction to the movement could begin the same way.

The movement which follows, "Allegro Con Spirito," is a complete contrast to the other two movements. It is written in a "jazz-like" style. The meter is "cut time" throughout.

The marimba part here is characterized mainly by single note melodic lines, except in a few instances. There are no three or four note chords in the marimba part, therefore, I suggest that the entire movement be performed with two mallets (one in each hand). However, there are some places where four mallets could be incorporated, as in the next example, but I feel that they would be cumbersome and get in the way. Ex. 13.



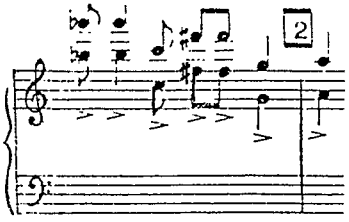
Ex. 13

This opinion, of course, comes after only performing the work once. A second performance in the future could result in a different perspective from this performer.

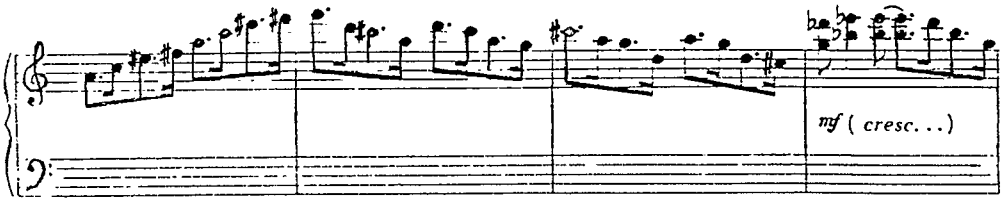
Again, the entire range of the marimba keyboard is used to its fullest potential in this movement. During my performance, I used the Good Vibes "Gary Burton" model. This pair of mallets had the original shafts replaced with the Warren Hyer extra long handles. This enabled me to make the long reaches and jumps with more ease than before. An example would be this measure: Ex. 14.

Moving the octaves around was made easier because the hands had less distance to travel. The longer handles on the mallets gives the performer a few more inches distance at the end with which to work. This is especially true when working with four mallets.

The third movement can be basically divided into two sections. The first section, from the beginning



Ex. 14



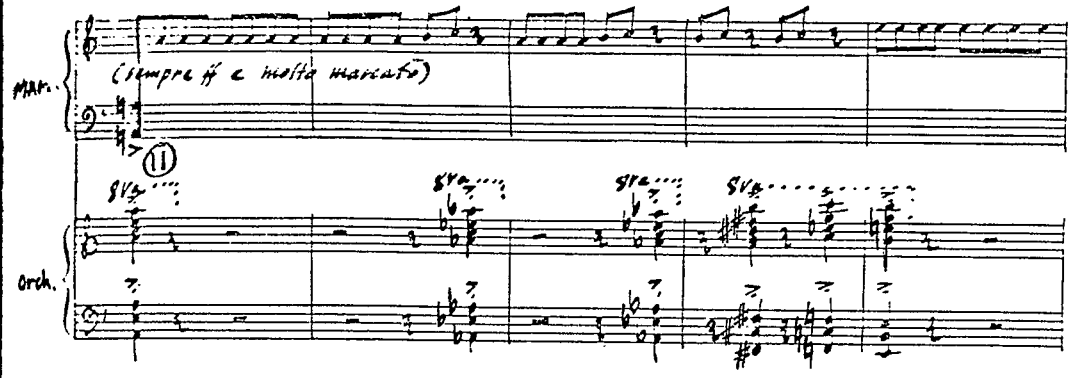
Ex. 15

to #10, is in a dotted eighth - sixteenth note pattern. All of these rhythms are to be played in a jazz style, not as strict sixteenth notes. Ex. 15.

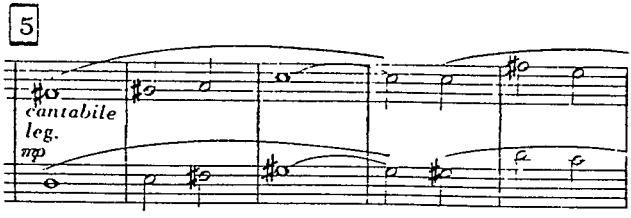
The second section begins at #10 and continues to the end of the movement. This section is a hard driving eighth note feel. It is characterized by straight running eighth notes in the marimba part, and chords by the accompaniment, especially when the marimba is resting. Ex. 16.

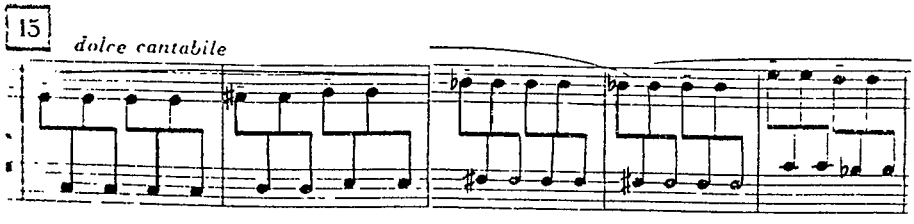
There is, however, a part of this second section that is directly related to the first. This example from #15 shows the same melody as that of #5, except now it is in a broken chord style of single alternating strokes in the marimba and is also written one step lower. Ex. 17.

In comparing these two examples, one can see that the "legato" (rolled) section at #5 has the same, but now "transposed," melody as #15. The broken chord style at #15 creates a



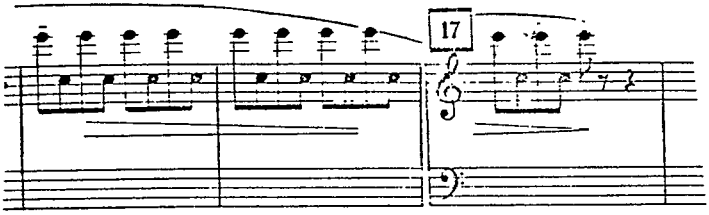
Ex. 16





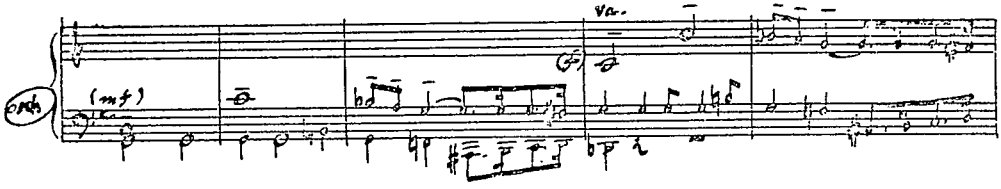
Ex. 17

lighter sounding effect which leads well to the marimba fading out at #17. Ex. 18.



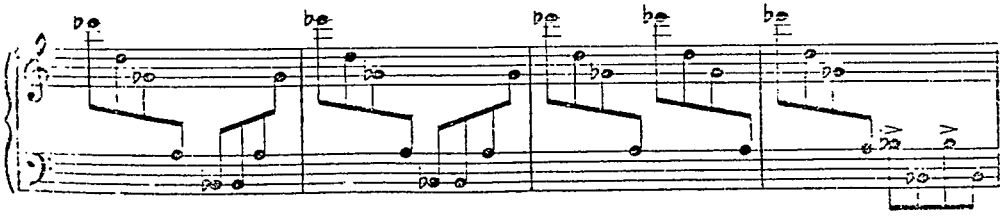
Ex. 18

From here the accompaniment gradually increases dynamics and tempo by means of augmentation. Kurka takes a two measure phrase and puts it all into one measure. Ex. 19.



Ex. 19

The marimba soon joins the accompaniment and then races to a very climactic ending. This part is perhaps the most difficult in the movement because of the range the performer must reach. Ex. 20.



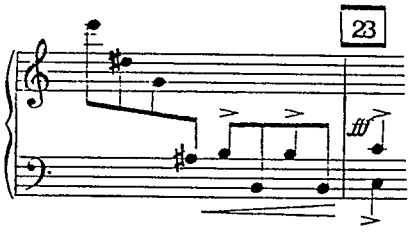
Ex. 20

Body motion is the all important factor here. The performer connot be leaning in a different direction from which he is intending to play. He must "hover" over the instrument so as to play all of the bars in exactly the same place. Standing straight up will not permit him to reach the accidentals in the correct area. During my performance of this section, I struck each bar in the very center so as to produce the fullest possible sound along with a sharp biting quality. This section is marked "ff molto marcato" which implies to me an almost "barbaric" approach to its performance. There is not the slightest let-up in dynamics from here to the end of the piece. An unrealistic "fff" dynamic level is even indicated at #23. Ex. 21.

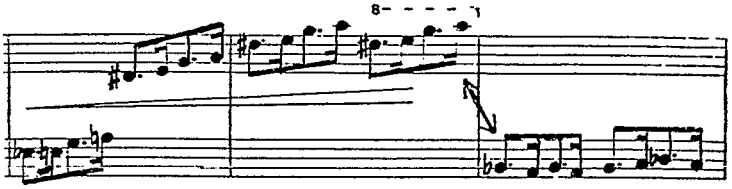
If a performer were to attempt this dynamic it would be almost impossible to expect him to maintain accuracy. Only the loudest dynamic that the player can "control" should be attempted. A harder mallet will

accentuate the melody even more.

Another very difficult passage in this movement is from #19 to #21. The flow of the melodic line is broken up with tremendous leaps from one end of the marimba to the other. This particular example requires almost a four octave jump from the top to bottom of the instrument in a dotted Ex. 22.



Ex. 21



Ex. 22

Examples such as this seen throughout the Concerto would lead one to the assumption that Mr. Kurka was not a marimbist, but simply a prolific composer writing for the instrument. As examined earlier, one can see that this is the only work which he composed for a solo percussion instrument; and that being at the request of marimbist Vida Chenoweth.

Difficulties in the entire work stem mainly from the passages which are unmarimbistic in nature. A series of notes that do not fit into the common sticking procedures of the marimba player, as shown in the examples, will take much more time, concentration, and possible examination of various eighth - sixteenth note pattern. alternatives to be able to perform. The marimbist could possibly leave out or drop a few notes within a section to achieve a rhythmic flow or balance. Pianists must do this continually when performing orchestral transcriptions such as this Concerto. Not discussed in detail in this paper was the piano reduction in relation to the marimba score. As could be assumed, only a very fine accompanist should even attempt to perform this reduction. Aside from the apparent problem of reading from a hand manuscript score is the inclusion of all orchestral parts to be performed by one person. Obviously a few parts will have to be omitted; These will usually be decided by soloist and accompanist.

Orchestral parts to this Concerto are available on a rental basis only from the publisher, Weintraub Music in New York City. A work of such length is rarely performed in its entirety with an orchestra. At the time of the writing of this paper a professional recording of this work has not even been attempted. This

should give the reader some idea of the difficulty of the Concerto.

It is the hope of this writer that some value has been awarded the reader of this paper. Discussed were my views on the Concerto which may aid anyone who wishes to perform this most excellent work. It is my opinion that only a performer with advanced musical and technical training should attempt this work. A thorough understanding of all aspects of mallet keyboard technique should be a prerequisite before attempting this work.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

The photograph of the late Robert Kurka was provided by his widow, May S. Kurka, Director of the Preparatory and Extension Divisions of The San Francisco Conservatory of Music. In her correspondence with the PERCUSSIONIST, she mentioned that the motive in the third movement of the CONCERTO (included in the third and fourth measures of the solo part) is the original "5 Notes for 5 Silver Dollars" written for the late Constance Herreshoff, music critic of the San Diego Union, summer of 1956. In Mrs. Kurka's words "During one of our many visits with her, we were idly dreaming of the day when a serious composer could earn a living by writing. Jokingly, Mrs. Herreshoff said she wished she could offer a silver dollar for each note Robert wrote. In response, he came up with her name - and she came through with the 5 Silver Dollars."

About the author

David Eyle is Principal Percussionist with the Baton Rouge Symphony and is completing his DMA at Louisiana State University. He has a Master's degree from Ohio State University and a Bachelor's degree from Frostburg State in Maryland. David has compositions published by Music for Percussion and has contributed works to the new Ludwig-Musser mallet series.

THE PERCUSSIONIST'S GUIDE TO DARIUS MILHAUD'S LA CRÉATION DU MONDE

by Warren Howe

Introduction

Darius Milhaud's ballet, *La Création Du Monde,* was composed in 1923. The music, scored for an orchestra of seventeen pieces, includes a challenging multiple percussion part written for one player. To prepare for a performance of *La création,* the percussionist must (1) translate the French terms Milhaud used to designate eight percussion instruments for the piece, (2) arrange the instruments in a manner that will permit execution of each multiple percussion pattern, and (3) understand the theme of the ballet so the percussion score can be interpreted in a manner which accurately complements the choreography. The latter is a particular problem since many performances of *Le Création* are done as concerts without a stage production, leaving musicians unaware of what the music represents.

In the discussion which follows I have summarized the historical background of *La Création,* translated the percussion instrumentation and suggested an instrument arrangement. In addition I have tried to relate the ballet theme and choreography to the percussion score.

DARIUS MILHAUD

Historical Background

The music and orchestration of *La Création* was influenced by jazz which Milhaud had heard in Harlem while visiting the United States. Milhaud toured Harlem theaters and dance halls and on several occasions was impressed by show orchestras which included "a complicated percussion section played by one man."[1] He later wrote that for *La*

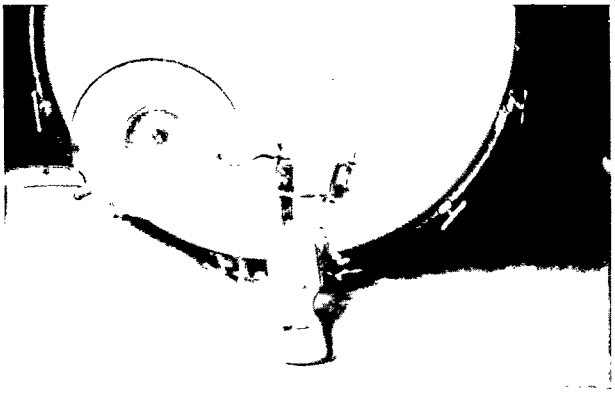
Création he "adopted the same orchestra used in Harlem, seventeen solo instruments."[2]

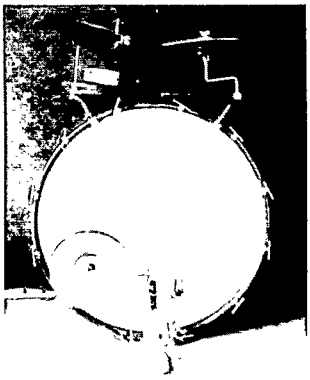
Milhaud set to work on *La Création* upon his return to France from the United States. He had been commissioned to do a ballet in conjunction with Fernand Léger and Blaise Cendrars. Milhaud's Harlem experience provided the musical inspiration. Cendrars chose the creation of the world as a subject. He had recently published an anthology of Black folklore.[3] The anthology contained a section of "Cosmic Legends" that opens with "The Story of Creation" and "The Story of the Beginning of Things." The subject theme was drawn from this legend and combined with a musical score that uses a jazz style to convey a classical feeling. The result is *La Création Du Monde.*

Instrumentation

La Création is scored for two flutes, oboe, two Bb clarinets, basson (small bassoon), French horn in F, two trumpets, trombone, piano, two violins (soli) saxophone in Eb, cello, double bass, tympani (five drums) and percussion. Milhaud called for the following percussion instruments: *Tambour de basque* (tambourine), *Bloc de metal* (non-pitched percussion instrument such as a cow bell, anvil etc.), *Bloc de bois* (wood block), *Cymbales* (cymbals), *Caisse claire* (snare drum), *Caisse roulante* (tenor drum), *Grosse caisse á pied avec cymbals* (bass drum with cymbal at the foot pedal), and *Tambourin* (medival French drum). The latter two instruments require some discussion.

Grosse caisse á pied avec cymbals: During the 1920's a small cymbal was often attached to the bass drum adjacent to the foot beater. A small metal beater was attached to the shaft of the bass drum beater in a vertical angle which extended to the cymbal. As the foot pedal was pressed down, the bass drum beater would strike the drum and simultaneously cause the small vertical metal beater attached to its shaft to strike the cymbal. At the players discretion the metal beater could be moved so it would not strike the cymbal. The following pictures show this arrangement.





Tambourin: This term is sometimes interpreted to mean tambourine. But the tambourin is a long cylindrical drum (14" X 30") with origins in medieval France. It has two heads and sometimes a single snare. An authentic tambourin is difficult to obtain. A cocktail drum or tenor drum is often substituted. Further information on the tambourin can be found in *The Harvard Dictionary of Music; Percussion Symposium* by Vic Firth, and *The Snare Drum In The Concert Hall* by Alan Payson.

Instrument Arrangement

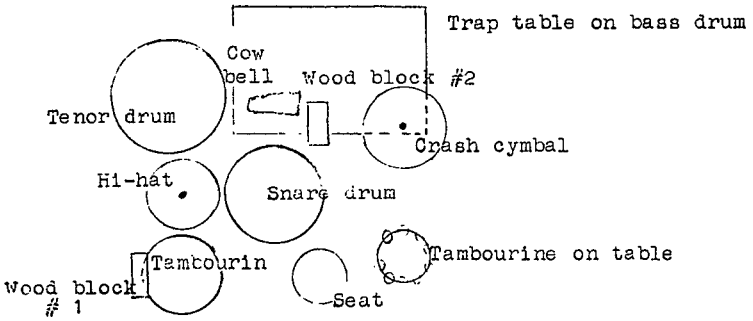
The diagrams and picture below show a functional instrument arrangement which will enable "a complicated percussion section" to be played by one man."[4]

The diagrams and picture are self-explanatory but a few comments should be made concerning the bass drum and wood blocks.

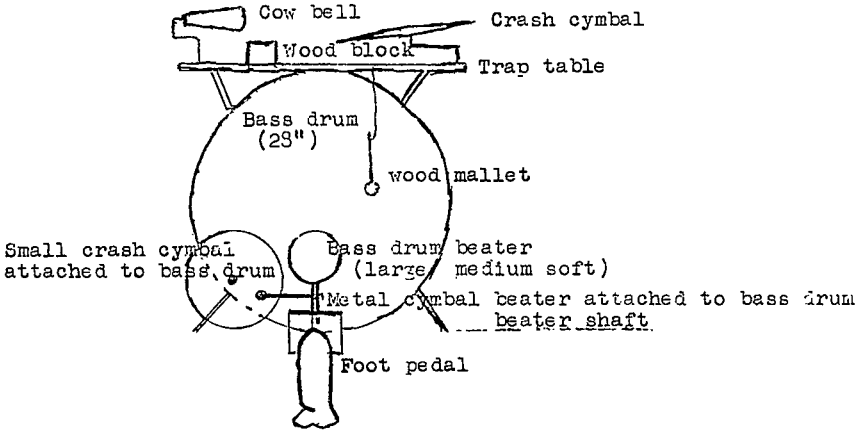
A 28" *bass drum* is used in order to approximate closely the tone of a concert style drum and complement the classical nature of the music. Drums of this size were, in addition, often used with drum sets of the 1920's. The beater is comparable in size and texture to a general purpose concert style beater.

Two *wood blocks* are needed. In one section the wood block must be played as part of a rapid sixteenth not

Percussion Set-up (Top View)



Percussion Set-up (Front View)



pattern with the tambourin. The wood block must be placed in close proximity to the tambourin. A few measures of this section are shown below.

Later in the music there are three sections that contain rapid sequences of wood block, cymbal, snare drum, bass drum and metal block multi-percussion patterns. I have used a

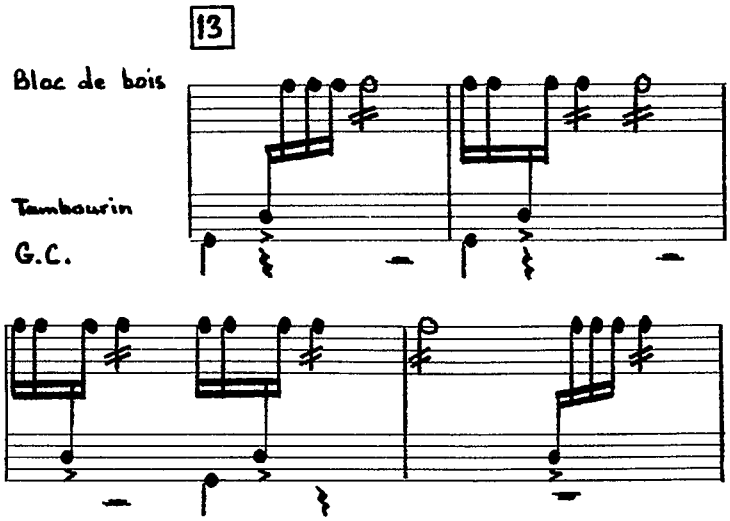


fig.1

second wood block placed in close proximity to these instruments. The first wood block, near the tambourin, is not positioned conveniently for these latter sections. These sections are shown in Fig. 4.

The cymbal notes in Figure Three should be choked off at the half note rests which follow. For this reason a hi-hat has been included in the instrument arrangement. If the hi-hat cymbal is struck, it can be choked by

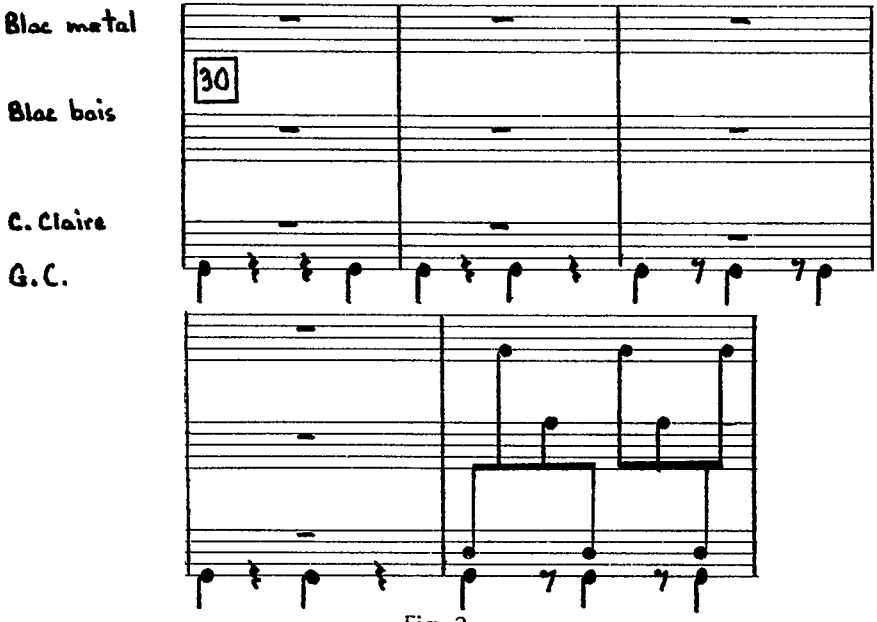


Fig. 2

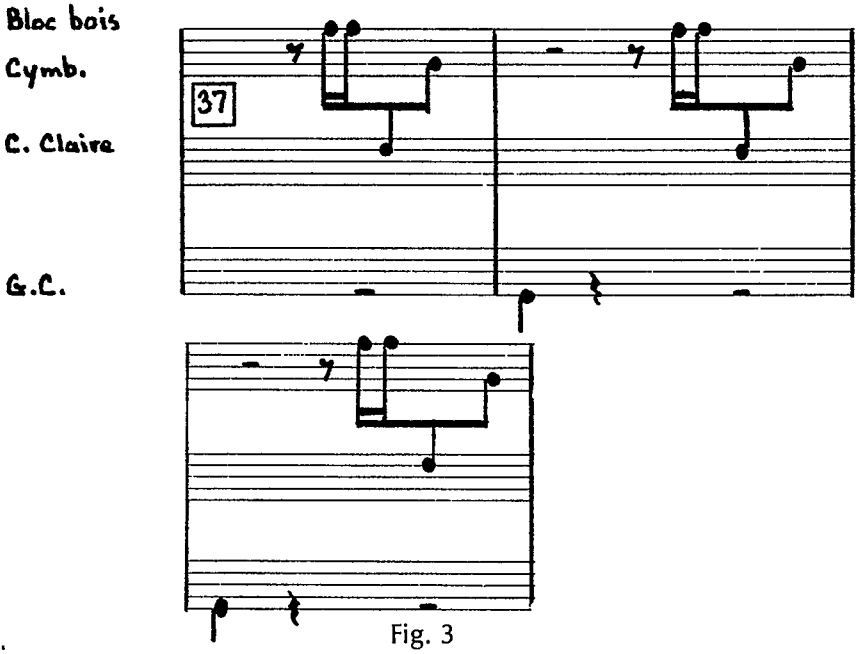


Fig. 3

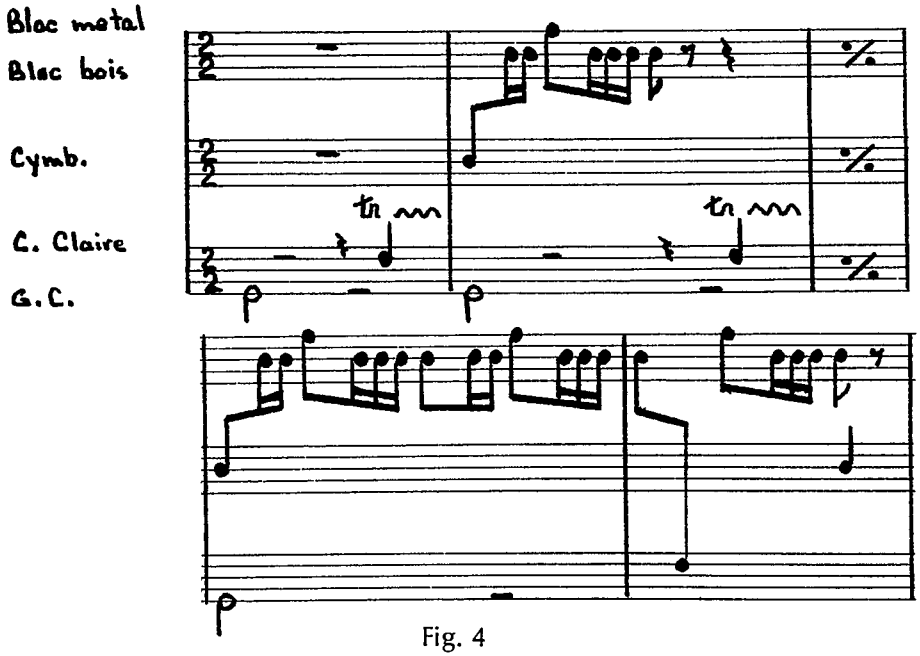


Fig. 4

action of the left foot, freeing the hands for more important activity.

One measure after rehearsal number 24 a bass drum pattern is notated: *avec bag. de bois a la main* meaning with wooden mallet in hand. This section immediately follows a tenor drum/tambourin and very little time (one beat) is allowed to prepare for the bass drum section. A wood mallet hung conveniently from the bass drum counter hoop simplifies this preparation. An alternative method would be to play the tenor drum|tambourin section with wood mallets (or at least one wood mallet) which could then be used to play the bass drum section which follows. This section is shown below in Fig. 5.

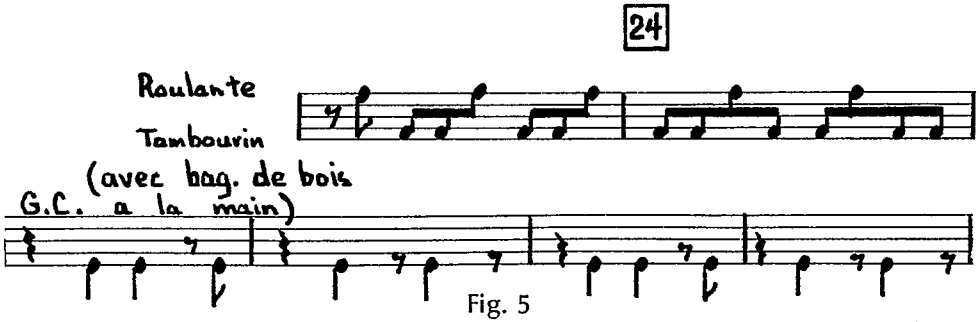


Fig. 5

The Ballet Theme, The Choreography And The Percussion Score

If *La Création* is to be performed as a concert without a stage production, the orchestra may not understand the ballet theme and may consequently have difficulty creating music which accurately conveys the mood intended by the composer. This understanding can best be acquired by learning something of the choreography and how it relates to the music.

La Création Du Monde has been staged on a number of occasions by different choreographers. It was first presented by the Ballets Siedois in 1923 and was in fact written for this Ballet. But I have been unable to discover a published notation for any of these productions. The "Cosmic Legends," discussed under Historical Background will, provide some meaning to the music. These are published in *The African Saga* by Blaise Cendrars (N.Y.: Negro Universities Press, 1969). There are published commentaries that describe the ballet with musical and choreographic references. One of these, *Darius Milhaud,* a biography by Paul Collaer (Antwerpen: N.V. Nederlandsche Boekhandel, 1947), is published in French and requires translation but it does give a brief outline of the Ballet. Two recordings of *La Création,* one by the Orchestre Du Theatre Des Champs-Elysees with Milhaud himself conducting & distributed by Nonesuch Records (H-1122 mono; H-71122 stereo), and the other by the Orchestre de la Societe des Concerts du Conservatoire with Georges Pretre conducting and distributed by Angel Records (S-35932 stereo) provide helpful comments on their record jackets. An orchestra score (minature) is published by Editions Max Eschig, 48, rue de Rome - Paris 8 and is available through American stores for approximately $15.

The Overture: La Création begins with an Overture which continues for some 106 measures. The Overture sets the mood for what is to come and contains a dominant theme that recurs throughout the Ballet, melodically and rhythmically. For percussion the rhythmic theme first appears in a section for tambourin and bass drum shown in Fig. 6.

In other sections of the Overture this rhythm or variations of it are played by the trumpets, clarinets, flutes, violins, bass and piano as well as by the tympani and snare drum. A multiple percussion variation of this rhythm, shown in Fig. 7, opens the First Movement which immediately follows the Overture and signals the beginning of the Ballet.

First Movement - The Creation Begins: The First Movement is a fugue. In addition to the rhythmic pattern shown above, the percussion part contains the wood block,

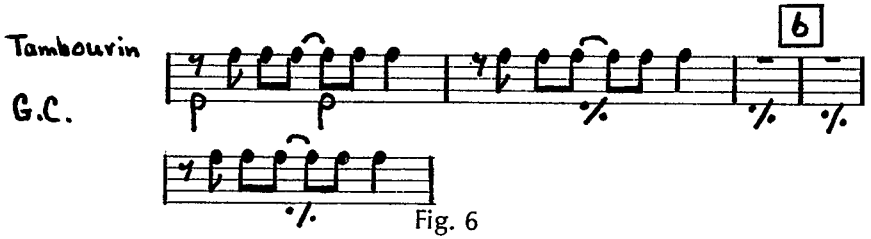


Fig. 6

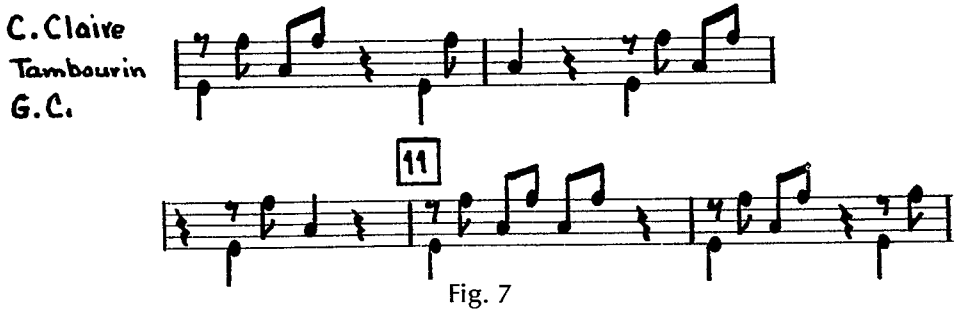


Fig. 7

tambourin, bass drum pattern previously shown in Figure 2; a series of short tambourine rolls marked *le trille indique le pouce, l'accent le coup frappé avec le poing* which translates as - a thumb roll ending with a fist blow accent - shown below,

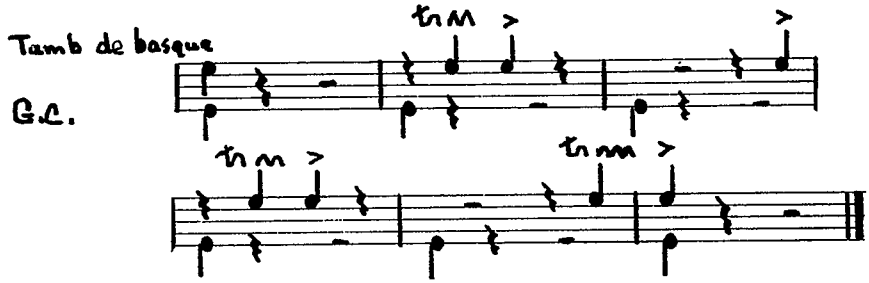


Fig. 8

a cymbal, snare drum, bass drum pattern shown below,

and a return to the Overture theme introduced by a section of soft open five stroke rolls on the tambourin seen in Fig. 10.

From the beginning of the First Movement to this point, the creation of sky and earth with land and water has begun through the action of the supreme being, Nzame and his three

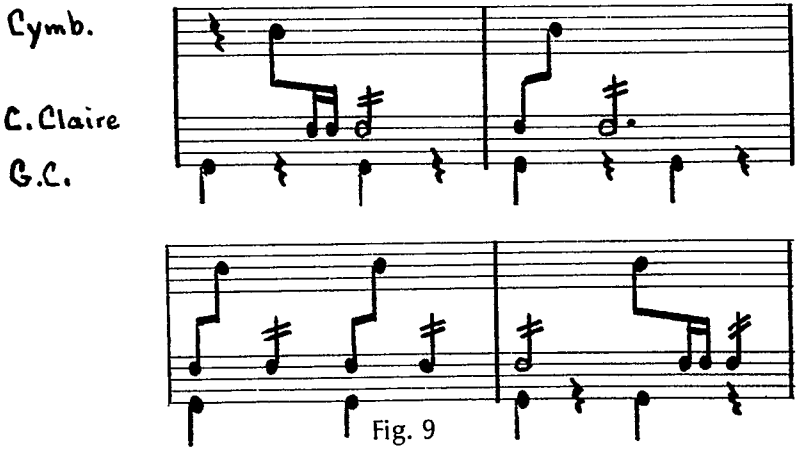


Fig. 9

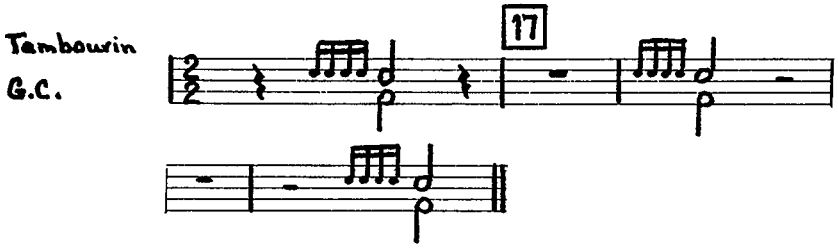


Fig. 10

persons: Nzame, Mbere and Nkwa. The fugue ends with a repetition of the Overture theme that leads shortly to a blues. The blues, characterized by a saxophone lead, makes the listener think of plants and animals.

The blues concludes with a slight variation of the rhythmic theme of the Overture previously seen in Figure 6. This variation is played with mixed tambourin/tenor drum pattern shown below in Fig. 11.

appearance of projections, trees and dropping leaves which sprout into weird animals.

The dance includes a snare drum section opening with a syncopated rim shot pattern. The rim shot is labeled *apouyer une bag. sur la peau et frapper sur elle avec l'autre* which translated means - play the rim shot by striking a stick touching the drum head with the other stick. Following the rim shot pattern Milhaud writes

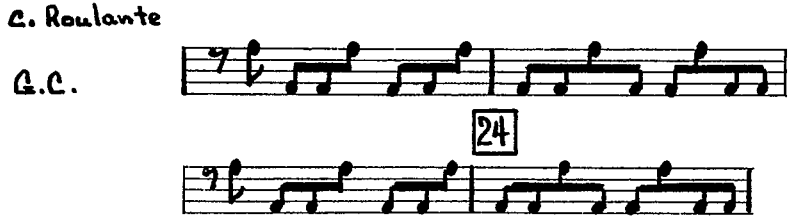


Fig. 11

This pattern is followed by a similar bass drum rhythm played with a wood stick or mallet described earlier in Figure 5 under "Instrument Arrangement."

Dance of Created Beings: The blues introduces a rhythmical dance. Edward Tatnall Canby writing for the Nonesuch recording of *La Creation* describes the dance as a "seething mass of dancers in weird 'op' style costumes. . . ." Life begins to erupt out of the mass of bodies with the

avec les 2 bag. meaning - play with two sticks. This refers to three four stroke ruffs. I would suggest playing them in a closed fashion as it sounds on the recordings, perhaps with a RLLR sticking. This snare drum section is shown in Fig. 12 on next page.

The dance builds in intensity. At rehearsal number 29 the bass drum part, which is part of a bass drum, tambourin, tenor drum, snare drum pattern, is marked *accrochez la cymb.*

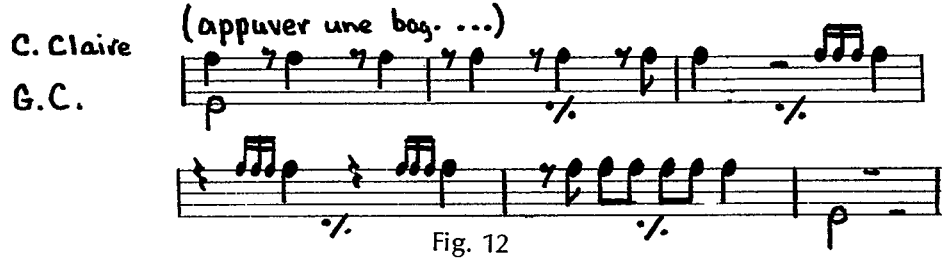


Fig. 12

á la pedale. This means to adjust the metal beater on the foot pedal so it strikes the cymbal when the bass drum is played. This arrangement has already been described in the previous section on *Instrumentation* (page 1). A few bars later the notation *decrochez la cymb.* appears. This means to disengage the cymbal beater from its striking position. This section is shown in Figs. 13 & 14.

The Creation of Man and Woman and the Dance of Desire: From the climax of the Dance of Created Beings just discussed, a soft melody unfolds, announcing the creation of Man and Woman. This occurs at rehearsal number 33. Twenty measures later at rehearsal number 35 Man and Woman begin a Dance of Desire. The Dance opens with a soft cymbal, snare drum, tambourin, bass

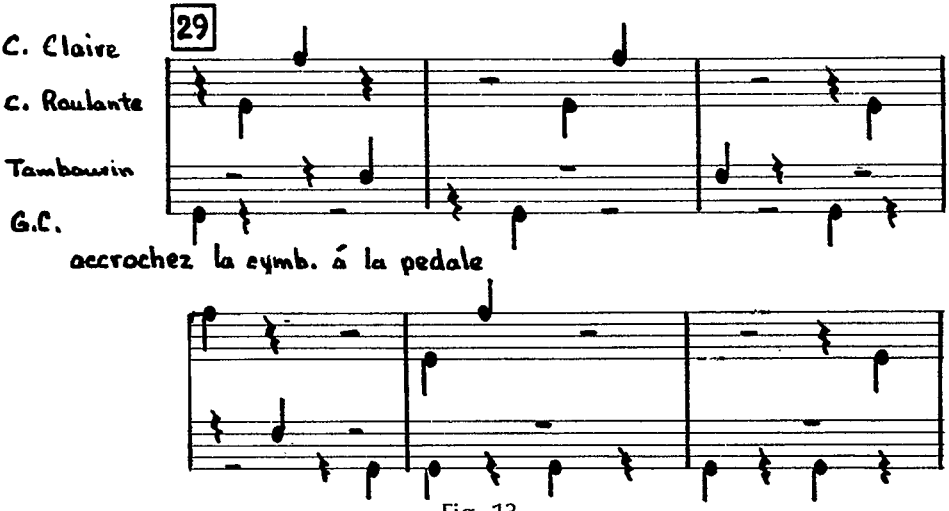
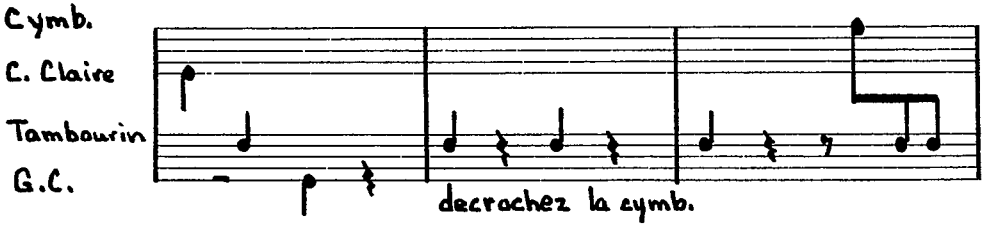


Fig. 13



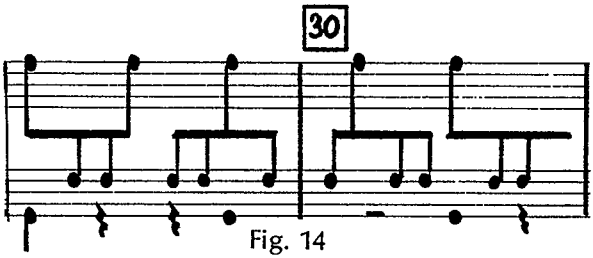


Fig. 14

drum pattern similar to the rhythm at the opening of the First Movement (see Figure 7). The same instrumentation is used in each case except that a cymbal has been added in the Dance of Desire. The tempo in the latter is also considerably faster. The Dance of Desire rhythm is shown below in Fig. 15.

for some sixty measures. This section is accented intermittantly by a cymbal, snare drum, tambourin, bass drum pattern that recalls the characteristic rhythmic theme of earlier sections. The melodic theme of the Overture is also subtly evident. Part of this section is shown in Fig. 16 on following page.

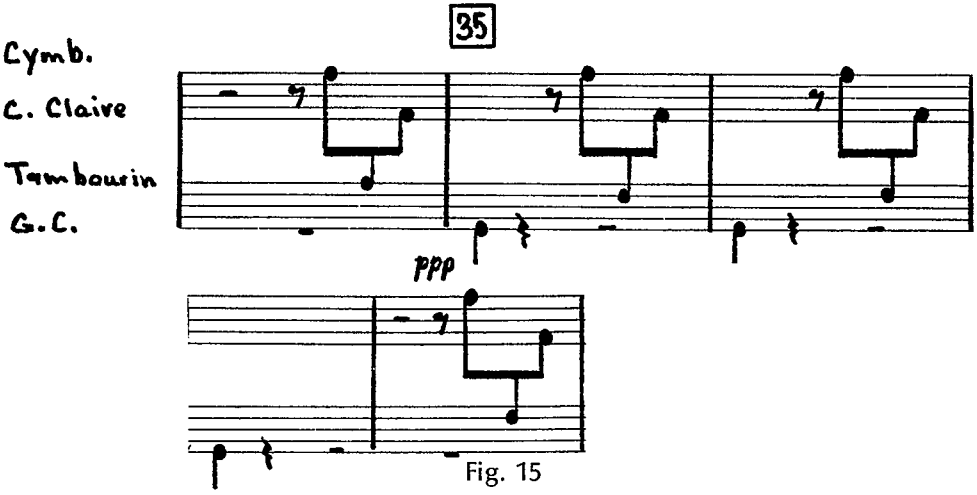


Fig. 15

The Dance of Desire contains a short section with a wood block, cymbal, snare drum pattern which is described in Collaer's book as the sound of clocks. This section was shown earlier in Figure 3.

Accouplement: The Dance of Desire evolves to the moment of l'accouplement (intercourse) between Man and Woman at rehearsal number 40 and continues

Conclusion: The moment of *l'accouplement* between Man and Woman continues to rehearsal number 46 when the dynamic level reaches mezzo forte. Collaer writes that at this point music seems to come from everywhere at the same time. The percussionist plays a bass drum, snare drum, cymbal, tambourin, wood block, metal block pattern previously shown in Figure 4 in the

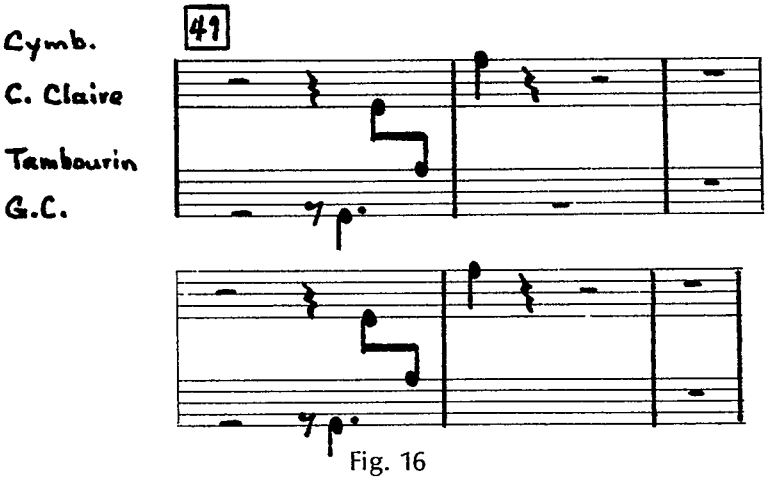


Fig. 16

discussion of Instrument Arrangement. You hear an impression of Easter bells, a fitting sound for the Creation. This is a difficult section for percussion and I have suggested a sticking pattern in Figure 4.

Gradually the music quiets and the couple embrace. For percussion the Ballet is over at this point. Man and Woman are isolated from the other dancers by a kiss. The music fades with a recurrance of past themes, dancers disappear from the stage and a saxophone plays the closing notes in much the same mood as in the opening of the Overture.

I hope this information will be of assistance in preparing for a performance of "The Creation." It is a challenging piece and the multiple percussion and drum set skills it requires make it comparable to many contemporary works in jazz as well as in more symphonic styles.

About the author

Warren Howe teaches percussion at Duke Ellington School for the Arts in Washington, D.C. and plays free lance percussion in the D.C. area. His Bachelor's degree is from Holy Cross College in Massachusetts and he has studied at Peabody Conservatory and Catholic University.

Assisting in the preparation of the article include: Ms. Nina Shafer of the Duke Ellington School English Department, Walter Howe, John Soroka, and Albert Merz.

CROTALES

CROTALES (from the Greek, meaning vinegar cups) were one of the earliest musical instruments ever made. They descended from finger cymbals which, in actual fact, were the original type of crotale.

In the Bronze Age, vinegar - a highly prized spice - had to be kept in, at the least, bronze containers. These containers were shaped like large thimbles. When pre-historic man found that the bronze vinegar cups sounded exotic when played together, they attached handles, as in the finger cymbals. More exotic ones were then made down through early Egyptian and Sumerian history until the present shape of a crotale evolved.

It is assumed that the only instrument older than crotales are two sticks or two bones hit together, still extant in minstrel and country music.

The chronological order evolved as follows:

1) Finger cymbals (descended from vinegar cups).
2) Crotales - a more sophisticated finger cymbal with a definite pitch.
3) Cymbals - as evolved in ultimate use today.
4) Gongs - the most recent of this category of percussion instruments.

Antique cymbals, which are also called CROTALES, produce a tone which is unique. Although they are made of the same basic alloy that is used in conventional cymbals, they produce a sound of definite pitch which would be totally unacceptable in those instruments, and yet beautiful in these.

Crotales—a sophisticated finger cymbal with definite pitch.

Antique cymbals may be played in a variety of ways. The most common method is to play a single antique cymbal with a mallet.

This is accomplished by grasping the leather thong between the thumb and the middle portion of the index finger so that the flat under side of the Crotale is facing up. The cup should be resting on the tip of the thumb and side of the index finger. It is struck

close to the edge by the mallet held in the other hand. If the note to be played is soft, it will be found helpful to shorten or choke the grip on the mallet.

The antique cymbals may also be played in pairs using the same or different pitches. In this case, both instruments are held as explained previously, one in each hand. The edge of one cymbal is struck against the flat side of the other to produce its tones. Or, the edge of one may be rubbed or scraped across the flat side of the other for a softer effect.

The antique cymbals are muffled by placing the free fingers of the hand holding the instrument on its edge.

A little experimenting, particularly with different mallet heads, will provide the dividends of being able to produce some of the most beautiful sounds known to man.

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