



CONTEMPORARY MUSIC FORUM

PROCEEDINGS OF THE
BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY
NEW MUSIC & ART FESTIVAL 13
PAPER SESSIONS

VOLUME 4

1992



CONTEMPORARY MUSIC FORUM

PROCEEDINGS OF THE
BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY
NEW MUSIC & ART FESTIVAL 13
PAPER SESSIONS

VOLUME 4

1992

MidAmerican Center for Contemporary Music • College of Musical Arts
Bowling Green State University • Bowling Green, Ohio 43403

Editor

William E. Lake

Contemporary Music Forum is a publication of the

MidAmerican Center for Contemporary Music
Marilyn Shrude, director
Suzanne Thierry, administrative assistant
College of Musical Arts
Bowling Green State University
Bowling Green, Ohio 43403-0290
phone: (419) 372-2685
fax: (419) 372-2938
e-mail: wlake@bgnet.bgsu.edu
www: <http://www.bgsu/colleges/music/MACCM/>

The MidAmerican Center for Contemporary Music of the College of Musical Arts at Bowling Green State University is devoted to the study and promotion of contemporary music and technology. The Center is responsible for presenting concerts and symposia, disseminating information, sponsoring research, and collecting archival materials. At the heart of activities is the New Music & Art Festival, an annual three-day event celebrating the contemporary arts through concerts, panels, art exhibitions, seminars, and papers.

The College of Musical Arts at Bowling Green State University is nationally known for professional degrees in music performance, education, composition, ethnomusicology, history, and theory. An accredited institutional member of the National Association of Schools of Music, the College is dedicated to the education of talented musicians for professional careers.

Contemporary Music Forum is distributed free upon request. Address requests to the MidAmerican Center for Contemporary Music.

Copyright 1997, MidAmerican Center for Contemporary Music, Bowling Green State University

ISSN #1065-4712

CONTENTS

Native-American Resonances in Contemporary Concert Music
Curt Cacioppo1

The Eclectic Piano Music of Manuel M. Ponce
David Witten5

In Quest of “Silver Ladders” in the Americas
Charles Hoag.....9

Dealing with Rock: How the Contemporary Composer Deals with Cultural Background
Keith Kothman17

Contributors28

NATIVE-AMERICAN RESONANCES IN CONTEMPORARY CONCERT MUSIC

Curt Cacioppo

Five hundred years ago, first contact between Europeans and Native Americans occurred. One hundred years have elapsed since Dvořák visited this continent and issued his declaration that composers on these shores should abandon European convention and assimilate the rhythm and melos of the new world's ethnic plurality. Among the musics he was promoting were those of peoples indigenous to the western hemisphere. White man, despite his determined attempts, was not able to extinguish the cultures, the musics, or the ways of life of Native America. American-Indian music perseveres in its vitality. In the southwest, Navajo and Pueblo forms hundreds of years old have in many cases withstood the impositions of invasion. The Zuñi produce some three thousand new songs each year for their ceremonies and festivals. In the plains, the songs and singing styles of tribes like the Sioux can still be heard much the same as they were before Custer's time. In the east, the Indians whose ancestors met the English settlers and suffered the virtual smothering of their cultural identity are vigorously resurrecting their language and rebuilding music and ceremony.

Over the last century, concert-music composers have been touched progressively more by an undercurrent of native music. The novelty pieces by Edward MacDowell, Charles Cadman, Harvey Loomis, Victor Herbert, and others led to the serious work of Indian sympathizer Arthur Farwell and the ethnologically informed attempts of Ferruccio Busoni. The *Sinfonia india* of Carlos Chavez, written in 1935, did with Mexican Indian sources what the *Rite of Spring* accomplished using Russian folk materials. Henry Cowell played an important role in bringing attention to Native-American music and other ethnic musics as well. Earnest efforts of Charles Griffes and Colin McPhee may also be noted, along with the poignant song by Charles Ives entitled *The Indians*. In 1945, Olivier Messiaen responded to composer-ethnographer Marguerite Beclard d'Harcourt, who produced the first systematic study of Incan music, by composing a song cycle entitled *Harawi*—Quechua for "love song." For this piece Messiaen evolved his own text and language, based partially on the Quechua indigenous to Peru.

Since Messiaen, composers here and abroad have produced music that shows Amerindian affinity. The Russian avant-gardist Edison Denisov; Costa Rican Alejandro Cardona; and, besides John Cage (who did *Renga* in 1976 collaborating with Native-American Chief Swift Eagle), Americans David Bernstein, Greg Steinke, Judy Zaimont, Pauline Oliveros, Judith

Contemporary Music Forum 4

St. Croix, Ruth Lomon, Paul Humphreys, Douglas Hill, John Alston Clingan, Harrison Roper, and Stuart Diamond can all be included among the recent exemplars in this category. Diamond, in particular, is devoted to the dissemination of Native-American *inspired music through the German company Pool Records. Concert music by Native Americans continues beyond the unique contributions of half-Cherokee Carl Fischer (pop star Frankie Laine's accompanist back in the late 1940s) and full-blood Quawpaw Louis Ballard. Among the younger generation are composers Brent Davids, Anthony Joseph Rice, and Kyle Gann, who also writes criticism for the *Village Voice*. Native Americans active in the performance of concert music can be traced from Cherokee virtuoso Samuel Mays (principal cellist of the Boston Symphony under Munch and Leinsdorf and later principal cellist of the Philadelphia Orchestra under Ormandy) to pianist David Yeagley and Tsalagi Ray Harrel, artistic director of the Magic Circle Opera repertory ensemble in New York.

In 1976 composer David Cope issued an LP on the Folkways label called *Navajo Dedications*, in which he presented a number of acoustic and electronic works rooted deeply in Navajo ceremonial imagery and practice. Cope, who is one-eighth Cherokee, studied the literature surrounding Navajo music and belief (Mary Wheelwright, Bernard Haile, David McAllester) and had personal experience in Navajo country. His work *Vortex* for large chamber ensemble derives its form from sandpaintings used in the Blessingway ceremony. In *Rituals*, Cope incorporates passages from a Navajo creation chant, "The Heroes Greet the Dawn." References to "children of the blue twilight" and the Navajo deity "changing woman" characterize the text. The piece is scored for one performer only on wind chimes, cello, bass drum, and voice.

In 1978 Laura Clayton composed *Cree Songs to the Newborn*. These songs, for soprano and chamber ensemble, set poems by Howard Norman, who based them on traditional stories that Cree fathers sing to their infants. Norman says songs are part of the animate world, as are our stories and dreams. They live out in the world, and occasionally they choose to Eve inside us, giving us the vital luxury of singing them back out into the world again. In touch with these aspects, Clayton asks the singer to use Cree vocabulary in addition to English.

An example by James de Mars dates from 1987. *Premonitions of Christopher Columbus* was written for and in collaboration with Native-American flutist Carlos Nakai. De Mars quotes the well-known Zúñi *Sunrise Song* at the beginning, but develops the piece multiculturally. It is written in a crescendo form, based on the Nubian/Egyptian tradition in which a pulse gradually unfolds to support melodic material. The flute is joined by alto saxophone, African hand-drumming, cello, and piano. Talking drum is also employed, and towards the end a Catholic chant is stated. *Premonitions* is not programmatic but is intended as a statement of an ultimate hope for the fate of the peoples of the new world.

Native American Resonances

I conclude by citing one of my own Native-American-based works. In 1985 I composed a trio for flute, cello, and piano called *Snake Dance*, referring to the Hopi ceremony. The Hopi Snake Ceremony is one of the most sacred of the southwestern tribe. In the underground kiva, snake priests bond with venomous snakes they have collected by singing incantations over them. Later they dance with the snakes before the people out in the plaza. Then the snakes are released, carrying the prayers they have received for rain, food, and well-being to the deities. This ceremony, which dramatizes human connection with nature, prompted my own *Snake Dance* trio. One song in particular, a *coyóhim katchina* song documented by Benjamin Ives Gilman, became the material for its genesis. The opening segment depicts seeking the snakes, following their traces in the sand. The main portion of the work presents a succession of elaborate contrapuntal developments within which any number of intertribal themes come into play. Some of these I recorded at powwows, and later transcribed. The piece ends with the cello softly beating the rhythm of the ceremonial drum, and the flute melody fading into the arid landscape.

My prediction is that, as we cross the millennium, Native-American “resonances” in concert music will become amplified. More composers will open themselves to these indigenous influences, and more Amerindian musical talent will enter the field. Budding Navajo composer Paul Keene testifies to this, and, within the greater community of the arts, the recent national recognition of dancer Maria Tallchief (prima ballerina of Balanchine’s New York City Ballet), signals as much.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

RECORDINGS

- Cacioppo, Curt. 1996. *Wolf* for soprano, cello, and piano, on a poem by Peter Blue Cloud. On *Intimate Thoughts*. Society of Composers CD no. 8. Capstone CPS 8632.
- Chavez, Carlos. 1959. *Sinfonia india* (Symphony no. 2). Everest SDBR 3029.
- Clayton, Laura. 1983. *Cree Songs to the Newborn*. Composers Recordings CRI SD 498.
- Cope, David. 1976. *Navajo Dedications*. Folkways FTS 33869.
- Lomon, Ruth. *Five Ceremonial Masks*. On *Music by Women Composers, vol. 2*. Coronet LPS 3121.
- Müller, Dario, pianist. 1993. *The American Indianists*, music by Cadman, Skilton, Orem, MacDowell, Gilbert, Loomis, Strong, Farwell, and Fairchild. Marco Polo DDD 8.223715.
- Nakai, R. Carlos, and James de Mars. 1991. *Spirit Horses*. Canyon CR 7014.

Contemporary Music Forum 4

SCORES

- Ballard, Louis. 1974. *Incident at Wounded Knee* for chamber orchestra. Rockville Center, N.Y.: Belwin-Mills.
- Cacioppo, Curt. 1994. *Invocation and Dance of the Mountain Gods* for orchestra. St. Louis, Mo.: MMB/Norruth Music.
- Lomon, Ruth. 1982. *Five Ceremonial Masks* for solo piano. Wash., D.C.: Arsis.
- McPhee, Colin. 1945. *Four Iroquois Dances* for orchestra. New York: New Music Society.
- Messiaen, Olivier. 1948. *Harawi, chant d'amour et de mort* for voice and piano. Paris: A Leduc.

READINGS

- Culbertson, Evelyn D. 1992. *He Heard America Singing: Arthur Farwell, Composer*, Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow.
- Curtis, Natalie. 1968. *The Indians Book*. New York: Dover.
- Densmore, Frances. [1926] 1970. *The American Indians and Their Music*. New York: Woman's. Reprint, New York: Johnson.
- Orgel, Paul. 1996. Curt Cacioppo's *Pawnee Preludes* for Piano. D.M.A. diss., Temple Univ.
- Tibbetts, John C., ed. 1993. *Dvořák in America*. Portland, Oreg.: Amadeus.

THE ECLECTIC PIANO MUSIC OF MANUEL M. PONCE

David Witten

To hear the notes of the guitar played by Andrés Segovia is to experience a feeling of intimacy...it is to open the spirit to dreams, and to live some delicious moments in the surroundings of pure art that the great Spanish artist knows how to create.

Andrés Segovia is an intelligent and intrepid collaborator with the young Spanish musicians who write for the guitar. His musical culture allows him to transmit faithfully through his instrument the composer's thought and to enrich daily the guitar's not very extensive repertoire.

—Manuel M. Ponce, music critic
El Universal (Mexico City), 6 May 1923

To sum up, your work is what has the most value for me and for all the musicians who hear it.

—Andrés Segovia, letter to Ponce, December 1929

Moonlighting as a music reviewer in Mexico City, composer Manuel M. Ponce wrote the words above in a gushingly enthusiastic rave, after hearing the thirty-year-old Andrés Segovia for the first time. In the ensuing twenty-five years, Ponce himself became one of the twentieth-century composers to enrich the guitar repertoire. During their friendship and life-long collaboration, Segovia coaxed from Ponce numerous preludes, sonatas, suites, and a concerto. This is all the more surprising when one considers that Ponce never played the guitar. He was, first and foremost, a pianist.

Every generation has composers who wish to surround themselves with inspiring teachers, wise mentors, and challenging colleagues. This was especially true for young composers of North and South America in the early years of this century. Striving to find their own voice, yet hungry for an international, cosmopolitan style, composers such as Aaron Copland, George Gershwin, and Heitor Villa-Lobos found their way to Paris, the magnetic city that was attracting some of the most creative minds from around the world.

One of the lesser-known stories from those years is that of Manuel M. Ponce (1882-1948), a composer, pianist, and educator, who put Mexico on the musical map. He is remem-

Contemporary Music Forum 4

bered today mainly for his contribution to the classical-guitar repertoire, but his instrument was the piano. By the time Ponce returned to Mexico for good, after spending a total of nine years in Europe, his music had matured from the style of 1830s piano parlorpieces to 1930s French-impressionist/neoclassic works. In addition, nationalistic tendencies, as well as his natural gift for melody, leave their mark on every page of his music.

Ponce's works for piano span his entire career. As a teenager, he produced numerous mazurkas, dances, and character pieces. Influenced by the older generation of Mexican composers such as Ricardo Castro (1864-1907) and Felipe Villanueva (1862-93), Ponce wrote salon pieces that often have a Latin feeling, using a habanera rhythm or alternating 3/4 and 2/4 meters.

Malgré tout (1900) is a beautiful example of his use of habanera rhythm. The story behind its creation is as touching as the music itself. Ponce wrote this dance for the left hand alone to honor his friend and compatriot, the sculptor Jesus Contreras. Contreras lost his right arm in an accident but continued to sculpt. He produced a beautiful sculpture, titled *Malgré tout*, which stands today in the Alameda Central in Mexico City. The title translates "in spite of everything."

While his youthful piano works reflect his easy mastery of nineteenth-century salon style, Ponce's studies in Italy and Germany (1905-6) pointed him in a new direction. He traveled to Berlin to join the master class of the famed pedagogue Martin Krause, a former pupil of Liszt and also the piano teacher of Edwin Fischer and Claudio Arrau. After hearing Krause perform a few of Handel's little-known keyboard suites, Ponce returned to class the next morning, where, to the astonishment of his classmates, he presented his own *Prelude and Fugue on a Theme of Handel*, based on the fugal theme of the E-minor Suite. The gentle 12/8 meter of the Prelude, with occasional pauses, creates a leisurely, relaxed mood. Only the closest scrutiny of its melody reveals Ponce's prodigious craftsmanship. Though the pitches have been pried loose from their rhythmic moorings, the melodic contour is quite literally the fugal theme-to-be. The Fugue owes much to the motoric drive of the Baroque and to the rhetorical style of Liszt and Busoni. However, Ponce's musical thumbprint appears on every page.

On his departure from Berlin, Ponce was encouraged by his German classmates, who were devoted to German folksong, to use the rich resources of his native country in his compositions. Although Ponce's Piano Concerto (1910) and his *Trio romantico* (1912) are examples of large works still rooted in nineteenth-century harmony, several subsequent piano works feature Mexican folksongs as their foundation. His *Scherzino mexicano* (1909), the two *Rapsodias mexicanas* (1911, 1914), and the *Balada mexicana* (1915) are highly successful piano showpieces. He takes well-known tunes of Mexico and extends them to their virtuosic limits, not unlike Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, which use folk material in dazzling piano settings.

During Ponce's voluntary years in exile in Havana (1915-17), he produced several piano works that feature Cuban rhythms and music. The country's name appears as an adjective

Piano Music of Manuel M. Ponce

in many pieces from those two years—*Rapsodia cubana*, *Preludio cubano*, *Suite cubana* are typical names. It was during this period that his enthusiasm to express himself in writing emerged: he wrote articles and music reviews for the newspapers in Havana.

Ponce's growing interest in Mexican folklore continued to manifest itself in his piano works. Titles such as *Scherzino maya*, *Preludio mexicana*, and a third *Rapsodia mexicana* all date from the years 1919-25. One piano etude in particular, a concert etude titled *Jarabe* (1925), expertly places pianistic challenges of rapid successions of sixths, like the Chopin etude in sixths, in a wild dance setting familiar to Mexicans. He was active not only composing and teaching, but he also founded a journal, *Revista musical de Mexico*, and continued to write about music.

In 1925, eager to immerse himself in French compositional styles, Ponce arrived in Paris to study with Paul Dukas. During this same time period, another influential Latin-American composer, Heitor Villa-Lobos, had left his native Brazil for Paris. Just five years younger than Ponce, Villa-Lobos was also struggling to absorb the local folkmusic tradition of his country but at the same time eager to learn the contemporary and sophisticated musical idioms of the day in Paris, a mecca for artists and thinkers in the 1920s. The intense circle of talent in Paris during those years reads like a who's-who of musicians: Milhaud, Varèse, Alfred Cortot, Joaquin Rodrigo, and, most importantly for Ponce, Andrés Segovia.

During those years, Ponce deepened his friendship with Segovia, whom he had met after a concert in Mexico City in 1923. Segovia coaxed numerous guitar works out of Ponce but not at the expense of his piano compositions. His *Prelude and Fugue for the Left Hand Alone* was completed in 1931. Although composed in steady eighth-notes, the Prelude subtly projects the 3+3+2 rhythm so characteristic of Spanish dances. Against this rhythmic backdrop, Ponce creates a gentle, mournful lament. The French harmonic influence in this work is even more prominent in the three-voiced Fugue, reminiscent of the richly chromatic style of César Franck's *Prélude, choral, et fugue*. Here, Ponce is intense, somber, and compelling.

Returning to Mexico in 1932, the now worldly and respected Ponce was quickly appointed Director of the National Conservatory of Music. His remaining piano works continued to reflect his mastery of twentieth-century techniques. His *Quatro piezas para piano* (1941) are completely bitonal, each hand written in a different key signature. Writing two etudes dedicated to Artur Schnabel in 1933, Ponce included a daringly inventive study in major and minor seconds. Still later, his 1941 *Quatro danzas mexicanas* go far beyond the nineteenth-century style of folkloric piano settings: Ponce employs sudden modulations, quartal harmony, and polytonal moments.

Ponce's open-mindedness and curiosity about the styles of his mentors and colleagues make his own compositions a delight to learn and perform. While most of Ponce's ninety-plus piano pieces remain unknown outside of Mexico, it is fair to say that this significant corner of the piano repertoire deserves a closer look.

Contemporary Music Forum 4

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

READINGS

- Alcázar, Miguel, ed. 1989. *The Segovia-Ponce Letters*. Translated by P. Segal. Columbus, Ohio: Editions Orphée.
- Otero, Corazon. 1983. *Manuel M. Ponce and the Guitar*. Translated by J. D. Roberts. Dorset, England: Musical New Services. First published in 1981, Mexico City: Ediciones Fonapas.
- Castellanos, Pablo. 1982. *Manuel M. Ponce (Ensayo)*. Mexico City: Difusión Cultural Unidad Editorial.
- Vázquez, Carlos. 1982. Manuel M. Ponce y el piano. *Heterofonia*: 14-21.

RECORDINGS

of solo piano works by Manuel M. Ponce

- Balada mexicana: Piano Music of Manuel Ponce*. Jorge Federico Osorio. ASV CD DCA 874.
- Dos estudios. Raquel Boldorini. Organization of American States OAS--004.
- Dos estudios. *Homage to Arthur Rubinstein*. Gregory Allen. Musical Heritage Society MHS-512076L.
- Five piano pieces. Carlos Vázquez. Zambrano. Centro de Grabacion SACMEX. (Issued by the Mexican government.)
- Manuel M. Ponce: 30 Aniversario 1948-1978*. Carlos Vázquez. 2 LPs. Angel (Mexico).
- Piano Music of Manuel M. Ponce*. David Witten. Marco Polo 8.223609.
- Piano pieces. Pablo Castellanos. Columbia HC-131 10.
- Preludio y fuga para la mano izquierda sola; Preludio y fuga sobre un tema de Handel. *Flute and Piano Music of Latin America*. David Witten. Musical Heritage Society MHS-512502H.
- Quatro danças mexicanas. *Compositores latino-americanos*. Beatriz Balzi. Série Música Nova da Amdrica Latina (Brazil). TACAPE-T014.
- Seven piano pieces. *México romántico, vol. 1*. José Sandoval. Musical Heritage Society MHS-513091K.
- Seven piano pieces. *Música mexicana para piano*. Gustavo Rivero Weber. Raduga CD GRW 001.

IN QUEST OF “SILVER LADDERS” IN THE AMERICAS

Charles Hoag

Until 1970, the octatonic scale was one of the best-kept secrets in music theory. Now, of course, that has all changed due in large part to Pieter van den Toorn's monumental work on the music of Stravinsky (1983) and Elliot Antokoletz's important work on Bartók (1984). Forte's theory of genera (1988) puts octatonicism into perspective as one modality among many. He provides a balance between those theorists who would not acknowledge the most blatant octatonicism and those who find it almost everywhere.

This article points out octatonicism in a selected group of western-hemisphere composers, choosing examples that yield maximum stylistic contrast from the many works that have made significant use of this genus. Its title borrows from Joan Tower, who identified the octatonic collection as a large part of the generating material and the inspiration for her orchestral work *Silver Ladders* (1986). So, for the next several pages, let us add the term “silver ladder” to those already in common use, such as Forte's 8-28, Messiaen's second mode of limited transposition, and the diminished scale.

Before proceeding to the music, it may be well to review some of the basic properties of the octatonic collection. In order to distinguish between the three transpositions of this collection, let us adopt the practice used by Parks (1989), referring to them as Types A, B, and C; with Type A starting C, D \flat , E \flat ; Type B a semitone higher, C \sharp , D, E; and Type C starting D, E \flat . Recall that each type may be partitioned into two diminished-seventh chords and that the complement of each is the remaining diminished-seventh chord. By extending this tertian view of the collection, van den Toorn (1983) offers a Model A, which partitions the collection into major and minor triads, each root of which is built on a member of the diminished seventh chord. His Model B partitions the collection into two descending linear [0,2,3,5] tetrachords.

The first example demonstrates Model-B partitioning. As in so many of his melodies, the Mexican composer Silvestre Revueltas prominently features the trichord [0,2,5] in the opening tuba melody of his most celebrated orchestral work, *Sensemaya* (ex. 1). The result is a melody that is octatonic save for one pitch. This work is driven by a similarly almost-octatonic, 7/8 basso ostinato with an accented last beat. As the work unfolds a second ostinato joins the first. This combination is also octatonic (ex. 2). Later, when the basso ostinato is harmonized, Revueltas changes the transposition of the octatonic collection on the last beat to reinforce its accentuation (ex. 3). *Sensemaya*'s only other lengthy melody, which is a freely inversive counterpart to the opening tuba melody, occurs much later in the work.

Contemporary Music Forum 4

Example 1. Beams indicate [0,2,5]s in the tuba melody of *Sensemayà*, mm. 9-20

(0,2,5)
oct. type B

Example 2. Octatonic ostinati from *Sensemayà*, mm. 46-52

— octatonic sub set 5-19 —

Copyright 1949. G. Schirmer, Inc. Used by permission.

Example 3. Octatonic harmonization of basso ostinato from *Sensemayà*, m. 34

set 7-31 type C
set 4-z15
type B

Copyright 1949. G. Schirmer, Inc. Used by permission.

“Silver Ladders” in the Americas

Example 4. Counterpoint forms octatonic superset in *Sensemayà*, rehearsal nos. 37-39

Copyright 1949. G. Schirmer, Inc. Used by permission.

These two melodies are finally heard together at rehearsal nos. 37-39, yielding set 9-10 [0,1,2,3,4,6,7,9,10], the only cardinal-nine octatonic superset; still part of the genus (ex. 4).

The opening of William Schuman’s Symphony no. 6 provides an example of Model-A partitioning. The case for octatonicism here is purely harmonic. While the melody of the opening chorale is not octatonic, six of the nine harmonies under it lie within the octatonic genus. Of these, four are the set [0,3,4,7], fitting variously into Types A, B, and C (ex. 5). An additional two harmonies amount to its subset [0,1,4]. Since Schuman treats [0,3,4,7] as a triad with both major and minor thirds, [0,1,4] may be understood as the same harmony with missing root or fifth. While [0,3,4,7] calls to mind the world-renowned, blue-note dominant chord of jazz fame, Schuman here scores one or the other of the thirds of the chord in the bass, yielding a totally different effect from the typical jazz usage. The symphony is a chaconne in one movement, and the return of [0,3,4,7] often signals the beginning of a new variation.

Example 5. Octatonic harmony in Schuman, Symphony no. 6, rum. 1-8

Copyright 1952. G. Schirmer, Inc. Used by permission.

Contemporary Music Forum 4

In the music of George Crumb, octatonic sections may be found in *Voice of the Whale*, *Echoes of Time and the River*, *Gnomic-Variations*, *Celestial Mechanics*, and elsewhere. Probably the most well-known example—perhaps too well-known to discuss here—is the octatonic parody of the opening theme of Strauss’s *Also Sprach Zarathustra* found in *Voice of the Whale*. For those wishing to review it, it cannot be missed on the second page of the Crumb score.

The opening nine measures of *Echoes of Time and the River* contain octatonic genus Type A in Model-A partitioning. Pairs of antique cymbals, plus glockenspiel and vibraphone play perfect fifths or twelfths, each built on a member of the diminished seventh chord C#, E, G, Bb (ex. 6). In the ninth measure the entire collection is sounded simultaneously.

Crumb’s *Gnomic-Variations* employs a partitioning other than Models A or B. The first eight notes of the Tema are octatonic, partitioned into two transpositions of [0,1,6,7] (ex. 7). Variation 2 deals with a motive made of this tetrachord. Pairs of this motive usually, but not always, yield the complete octatonic collection. In Variation 17, a series of nine harmonies made of [0,1,4] descend octatonically, that is, in alternating whole and half steps (ex. 8).

Example 6. Pitch material of *Echoes of Time and the River*, mm. 1-9

Type B; Model A partitioning

Example 7. Partitioning of pitches in the Tema of *Gnomic-Variations*

0,1,6,7 0,1,6,7

Example 8. Octatonic: passage in *Gnomic-Variations*, Var. 17, mm. 3-5

Gnomic-Variations, Var. 17, mm. 3-5
top voice = oct. type B

← type B
← type A
← type C
← type A (with vertical)

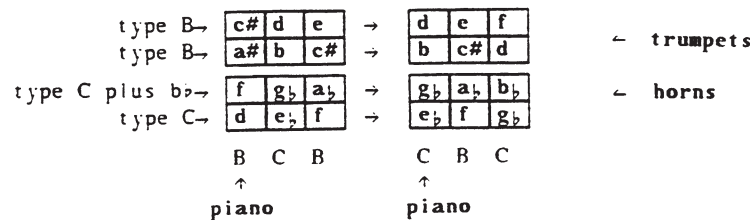
all verticals = oct. 0,1,4

“Silver Ladders” in the Americas

Set 9-10, the only cardinal-nine octatonic superset, appears in many of Crumb’s pieces. The soprano in *Apparition* seems to float effortlessly between octatonic and chromatic genera. The clearest use of the octatonic: collection occurs in Song IV entitled “Approach, strong deliveress!” Here, single noncollection. tones repeatedly appear as upper neighbors to octatonic-collection tones. Similarly, the beginning of the primo part of *Celestial Mechanics* is octatonic through the second *ffz*, likewise with one nonoctatonic pitch. The first page of *An Idyll for the Misbegotten* is octatonic save for the grace notes.

As noted above, Joan Tower’s *Silver Ladders* inspired the title of this essay. In the words of the composer’s program notes, “The images and feelings of this composition are reflected in the title. Its many upward-moving lines suggest nothing so much as a giant ladder. . . . The first section is based on upward-moving scales (the ladder) formed largely of whole and half steps.” In fact, the opening forty measures consist of an unalloyed silver ladder of Type C followed by Type A and then Type B. The use of pure octatonicism then recedes in favor of other ladder-like collections. At m. 80, the collection ladder becomes chromatic, reminding us that Tower’s title speaks of ladders in the plural. As the work enters its final minutes, it employs other symmetrical formulations involving larger intervals-intervals not commonly thought of as being adjacent in a scale-such as alternating major and minor thirds or alternating tritones and perfect fourths. Still, throughout the work, the octatonic collection is very much in evidence. Sometimes, in passages where two transpositions are heard simultaneously, the composer takes advantage of the four notes the two have in common (ex. 9). While Types B and C run simultaneously in the brass, piano punctuations employing the same notes yield two vertical sonorities, the first Type B and the second Type C. In this example certain pitches function in different octatonic transpositions depending upon whether they are read vertically or horizontally.

Example 9. Chart of octatonic interaction in *Silver Ladders*, mm. 251-52



An earlier work of Tower’s, *Music for Cello and Orchestra*, begins with extended use of purely octatonic pitch materials juxtaposing the three transpositions. Example 10 (p. 14) is a reduction of all the pitch material of the first sixty measures. (In reading this example, assume that the pitches may recur once sounded until the collection changes.) At m. 32, ob-

Example 10. Pitch content of *Music for Cello and Orchestra*, mm. 1-60

Musical notation for Example 10, showing the pitch content of the cello line from measures 14 to 55. The notation is written on a single staff in treble clef. Measure numbers 14, 17, 23, 32, 37, 40, 43, and 55 are indicated with downward arrows. The notation is divided into sections labeled 'type B' (measures 14-17), 'etc.' (measures 17-23), 'type A' (measures 32-37), and 'type C' (measures 40-55). The notes are mostly quarter and eighth notes, with some rests and accidentals.

Example 11. Pitch content of cello line from *Music for Cello and Orchestra*, mm. 68-80

Musical notation for Example 11, showing the pitch content of the cello line from measures 68 to 79. The notation is written on a single staff in bass clef. Measure numbers 68, 71, 73, 76, and 79 are indicated with downward arrows. The notation is divided into sections labeled 'type C' (measures 68-71), 'type A' (measures 71-73), 'type B' (measures 73-76), and 'type C' (measures 76-79). The notes are mostly quarter and eighth notes, with some rests and accidentals.

“Silver Ladders” in the Americas

serve that the pitches E4, G4, and B \flat 4 serve as a pivot for the collection change from Type B -to Type A. In m. 55, a pitch-class pivot (C-D \sharp -F \sharp -A) connects between octatonic Types A and C. The next example shows the pitch content of the opening cello passages (ex. 11). Different octatonic types occur simultaneously between the solo cello and orchestra (not shown).

A final example is a work for unaccompanied chorus, *Voyage Through Death to Life Upon These Shores* (1991), by the American composer Anthony Davis. The work is a chilling setting of a poem by Robert Hayden describing life aboard the slave ships that plied between Africa and the Americas. This work is strictly octatonic in the Type-A transposition with only a few excursions into the diatonic genus. The composer’s single-mindedness about the collection adds austerity to the grim message of the text.

Within this small sampling of works by American composers, there is a wide variety of different techniques for using octatonicism. In *Sensemaya* the primary melody and the various ostinati are derived from that collection. In the Schuman symphony the opening chorale prominently features the triad with both major and minor thirds, a harmony that may be derived from the Model A partitioning of the octatonic collection. The several works by Crumb show Model A, Model B, and [0,1,6,7] partitioning. Both the Tower and Davis works employ vast areas that are exclusively octatonic. It is clear that this genus holds rich sonic and technical resources.

Contemporary Music Forum 4

REFERENCES

READINGS

- Antokoletz, Elliott. 1984. *The Music of Bela Bartók*. Berkeley & Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press.
- Forte, Allen. 1988. Pitch-class set genera and the origin of modern harmonic species. *Journal of Music Theory* 32:187-270.
- Parks, Richard S. 1989. *The Music of Claude Debussy*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press.
- van den Toorn, Pieter C. 1983. *The Music of Igor Stravinsky*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press.

SCORES

- Crumb, George. 1988. *Voice of the Whale*. New York: C. F. Peters.
- _____.1986. *An Idyll for the Misbegotten*. New York: C. F. Peters.
- _____.1982. *Gnomic-Variations*. New York: C. F. Peters.
- _____.1980. *Apparition*. New York: C. F. Peters.
- _____.1979. *Celestial Mechanics*. New York: C. F. Peters.
- _____.1967. *Echoes of Time and the River*. Miami: CPP/ Belwin Music.
- Davis, Anthony. 1991. *Voyage Through Darkness to Life Upon These Shores*. [photocopy]
- Revueltas, Silvestre. 1949. *Sensemaya* New York: G. Schirmer.
- Schuman, William. 1952. *Symphony no. 6*. New York: G. Schirmer.
- Tower, Joan. 1986. *Silver Ladders*. New York: Associated Music.
- _____. 1984. *Music for Cello and Orchestra*. New York: Associated Music.

DEALING WITH ROCK: HOW THE CONTEMPORARY COMPOSER DEALS WITH CULTURAL BACKGROUND

Keith Kothman

Rock music as an influence on contemporary composers has become what jazz was and still is to many. That is, it has become a legitimate influence on a large number of younger composers, many of whom began their musical careers as rock musicians, as well as a stylish form of professed individualism for composers wishing to somehow set themselves apart from the crowd, all the while seeking approval and recognition from the very same crowd. Electro-acoustic music best illustrates this phenomenon, since the electronic studio utilizes one of the main instruments of rock music, the synthesizer. That some of the older, mainstream university composers understood so little about producing electronic music and, hence, by and large kept electronic music out of the core university music curriculum was also a factor. Directors of electronic-music studios usually had a different background (which often included rock music) from other university composers, and the lack of curricular restraints provided an environment in which to experiment with a variety of musical elements.¹ As a result, younger electro-acoustic composers today are just as likely to have been influenced by rock music as by the music of Boulez or Stockhausen. With electronic music paradoxically becoming a greater part of the university mainstream, as well as a more defined challenge to the mainstream, the number of electro-acoustic composers citing their rock backgrounds has risen sharply.

This raises certain aesthetic or critical questions. Fredric Jameson cites as a prominent feature of postmodernism. “the erosion of the older distinction between high culture and so called mass, or popular culture” (1983, 112). He also notes how disturbing this is to the academic community, which traditionally has had “a vested interest in preserving a realm of high or elite culture against the surrounding environment of philistinism” (1983, 112). Mass culture also views the incorporation of popular culture into high art as problematic. A large segment of the population still subscribes to the notions of the starving artist and that going

1. If one is skeptical about the lack of importance of electronic music in the university curriculum, given that in the early 1990s electronic studios popped up like mushrooms after a rain at universities across the country, one merely needs to look back as recently as 1987 and see how few offered a major (or even a minor) in electronic music.

Contemporary Music Forum 4

commercial equates with a loss of artistic integrity. Interestingly, this idea permeates both high and pop culture independently of each other.

In addition to the vested interest in preserving the distinctions between high and mass culture, many artists in the academic community also share a modernist belief in the universality and objectivity of Western European art. Reinforced by curriculums that mostly focus on the time period from the late Renaissance through the romantic, the influence of past masters (who are part of the grand tradition of Western European art) outweighs any societal or local cultural influence. The Dutch composer Louis Andriessen scolds those who hold such beliefs:

Many composers feel that the act of composing is “suprasocial.” I don’t agree. How you arrange your musical material, what you do with it, the techniques you use, the instruments you score for, all of this is determined to a large extent by your own social circumstances, your education, environment and listening experience, and the availability—or non-availability—of symphony orchestras and government grants. The only point on which I agree with the liberal idealists is that abstract musical material—pitch, duration and rhythm—is suprasocial: it is part of nature. There is no such thing as a fascist dominant seventh. The moment the musical material is ordered, however, it becomes culture and, as such, a given social fact. (1978)

Although Andriessen addresses “liberal idealists,” the traits to which he refers are shared by most modernists. What is most interesting about his assertion is the implication that even though some composers profess isolation from their surrounding culture, they cannot escape its influence. If they reject the physical culture that surrounds them they only affirm their position in some other cultural group. To Andriessen, the idea of universality is a myth. With that in mind, it is useful to look at how the cultural division between high and mass cultures came about, particularly in the United States, and how critical thought has assessed the artistic merit of rock music.

Lawrence Levine (1988) traces the emergence of cultural hierarchies in America back to the turn of the twentieth-century. In the late nineteenth century the dominant type of theatrical and musical performance was what we would now consider a “pops” concert—a blend of serious art with folk and other popular art forms. Levine cites a colonial attitude regarding culture and intellect, despite our professed political independence, as one of the reasons for the emergence of cultural hierarchies. At the turn of the century, when popular aspects were being rooted out of serious concerts, those people in control of performing organizations felt that an enlightened audience should be listening to the masterworks of European art, whether the audiences really wanted to or not. That a few high-brow critics were successful in imposing their views on the general concert-going audience is indicative of how the arts were, and still are to a large degree, controlled by an educated and powerful class of people. Both the Boston Symphony and the New York Philharmonic were founded by such people. The music that these groups performed reflected the culture to which their founders wished to be perceived as belonging.

Dealing with Rock

Another aspect leading to the hierarchical separation of high and mass culture was the desire of the upper class to separate itself from the masses through the uniqueness of art objects. Popular art by definition is shared by a mass culture, a large number of people. High art on the other hand is thought to be special, one-of-a-kind, unique.² By seeking to elevate art they also sought to elevate themselves above the middle and lower class. Art became a status symbol. The allure was in the uniqueness of the object.

Paul DiMaggio (1988), a sociologist specializing in research on nonprofit enterprises, examines the same time period as Levine, but puts forth a slightly different reasoning for the separation of high culture from low culture, specifically in late nineteenth-century Boston. He asserts that the reason for cultural separation was the desire of an elite class of people, the Brahmins, to maintain some control over the community, having lost political control due to the ever-increasing immigrant population. Owing to their greater wealth, they were able to sign the best musicians to exclusive contracts, thereby dictating the musical programming in the city.

On the other side of the cultural divider, those who appreciate popular art have mounted increasing attempts to defend it as worthy of serious study. They have faced constant censure from critics raised in a modernist tradition of stratification of the arts. Theodore Adorno, the German critic belonging to the Frankfurt school, was quite harsh in his assessment of popular music's merits (Adorno 1976), even though he understood little about it.³ He viewed popular music as a commodity that had to be consumable by the masses. This mass consumability determined that the quality of the music would be low. But most important to Adorno was that mass art undermined the aesthetic basis of high art, which he viewed as a protest against the status quo of reality. Art should give inspiration to struggle for social change, but he saw mass culture settling for reality and therefore having its imaginative base dulled by popular music. Jameson also put forth art as an oppositional force, questioning the critical value of postmodernism: "There is some agreement that the older modernism functioned against its society in ways which are variously described as critical, negative, contestatory, subversive, oppositional and the like. Can anything of the sort be affirmed about postmodernism and its social moment? We have seen that there is a way in which postmodernism replicates or reproduces-reinforces-the logic of consumer capitalism; the more significant question is whether there is also a way in which it resists logic" (1983, 125).

Critics supporting rock music are a new addition to the academic or serious literary field. To a large extent, they represent the younger scholars who grew up with rock music as a major part of their life. Having now become part of the academic community, they wish to reconcile their popular past with the more traditional scholarly interests of their new environment. Fully aware of the modernist critiques of popular art and culture, they struggle

2. The nomenclature is an integral part of the stratification. The connotation that high art is better than low art cannot be missed.

3. He referred to all popular music as jazz, showing his misunderstanding of both.

Contemporary Music Forum 4

to answer the objections raised to rock music. Simon Frith is one such critic. A graduate of Oxford University, Frith is well-schooled in the proper academic critiques of aesthetics and philosophy. His book (1981) provides a meaningful look into the actual production of popular music, as well as providing ample discussion of the various viewpoints on popular music's merits. Despite his desire to elevate rock music to the level of serious discussion, Frith ends up minimizing the artistic basis of the music in favor of the capitalistic, mass-production mechanism that allows for its widespread dissemination. He reaffirms Adorno's belief that the mass-production mechanism determines the music's value. Frith repeatedly stresses the nullification of artistic intent by the production channel, due to artists' lack of control over the final result.

Frith also perceives a cultural division between artist and audience. Popular artists are not part of the popular culture that receives them because of their financial status. He agrees with Jameson that the consumer society lacks a sense of history, as a conservative attempt to enhance the music's value as a commodity. His assessment of rock music is so severe that he feels the need to include two closing paragraphs to state that he really does enjoy rock music and that it does indeed have power. That he felt the need to defend his enjoyment of the music itself against his own justification of rock music as a field of serious study led him, I believe, to look at other means of addressing the issue and in turn to write another book.

Art into Pop (Frith and Horne 1987) raises the conflict of modernism versus postmodernism in the context of Jameson's observation about the breakdown of cultural barriers. Frith and Home engage in labeling, categorizing some kinds of rock as modernist and others as postmodernist. The use of high-art labels to distinguish between various styles of popular art is ironic, given Frith's position in *Sound Effects*. Frith and Home attempt to justify rock music in modernist terms (as oppositional) and see postmodernism as the way to do so. Specifically, they examine the phenomenon of the British art school as the training ground for many of today's British pop artists. According to the authors, the British art school provides the means for an artist to embrace both artistic thought and commercial ends. It also allows for oppositional forms of popular music such as punk. In *Art into Pop*, so-called art-rock groups like Emerson, Lake, and Palmer and The Who are classed as modernists, seeking to elevate their music to the standards of high art by creating complex music that demands attention and knowledge from the listener. But in light of the means of production described by Frith in *Sound Effects*, rock music cannot be treated as artistic expression due to the lack of a single artist (or group of artists) creating it. Instead of those who seek to imitate art, Frith and Home celebrate those who recognize that art is commercial. The views of Andy Warhol lay the foundation for such beliefs. He asserts that art is commercial because to be successful, one must exhibit one's works in good galleries, the same way that Dior does not sell his originals at a discount store (Warhol and Hackett 1980, 20-21). Groups such as Roxy Music and David Bowie are concerned with pop as commercial art. Those pop artists who look outside of popular music for inspiration, such as Brian Eno, turn to

postmodernists such as La Monte Young. Pop music that is concerned with art as commerce embraces commerce to create an art oppositional to it.

The main problem with Frith's and Home's commentaries is that they appear to lack objectivity, leaning unswervingly towards Great Britain, their home, as the center of all good popular-music developments. Pop music grows out of the British's special handling of the blues, according to them, and all the important developments in pop music have been made by the British.⁴ Also, in order to justify popular music that he finds worthy, Frith is willing to assign artistic intent to the performing groups, contradicting the claims he made in *Sound Effects*. The overall intent appears to be one of positioning one proper form of popular music above all others and to show why the others cannot live up to such a position. Both books seem to recognize only one form of cultural distinction—that between high and mass culture in a Western European society.

However, Western European culture is becoming less dominant even in Western European countries as the cultural mix becomes increasingly diverse. Since today's mass culture is made up of so many smaller cultures, it is useful to consider how popular music may appeal to different cultures within the overall group. Such is the approach that George Lipsitz takes in his book, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture* (1990). As the title implies, Lipsitz's book is a contradiction of Jameson's belief that our society is losing its ability to retain its history. Contrary to Frith, he believes music that contains elements of the past is not necessarily conservative, nor does it make the music about itself. Rather, Lipsitz believes that an emphasis on roots, history, and community is an assertion of entitlement. In a society that is increasingly fragmented, a focus on community would be a refusal of one's lot and hence oppositional. But most important to understanding rock music is his view that rock is an ongoing "dialogic" process—that is, to understand the music one must understand the culture and history on which it draws and the culture in which it is delivered. Rather than seeking meaning in the form itself, he looks for "how forms are put into play at any given moment to re-articulate or dis-articulate dominant ideology" (1990, 102). He examines cultural practice not by some arbitrary set of goals, but by viewing it as a response to the continuing demands of both past and present. As Lipsitz states, the question for such an approach "is not whether rock music is oppositional or co-optive, but rather how it arbitrates tensions between opposition and co-option at any given historical moment" (1990, 102). In addition, as stated above, his book examines the music in its cultural context—how it arbitrates tension among the members of the audience for which it was intended.

Several dominant features of these criticisms should be kept in mind while examining specific examples of electronic music that utilize rock-music influences. First is Andriessen's belief that composition reflects the culture and society to which the composer

4. Such a belief ignores the fundamental contributions to rock music's creation made by African-Americans. This opens up the authors to charges of Euro-centrism.

belongs. Second is Lipsitz's view that the cultures and histories drawn upon for the creation of a music are important features of that music's meaning. The third issue is whether or not the inclusion of rock music automatically makes something postmodern by breaking down the barrier between high and mass culture. Last is the idea of cultural constraints on the composer-in effect, peer pressure. How so-called serious composers choose to verbally elaborate about their music can provide clues as to what they perceive as their cultural constraints. The remainder of this article discusses examples of Swedish and American electro-acoustic music. It examines the cultural constraints of American university composers, who must resolve their various influences with maintaining acceptance from the academic community, as well as those of Swedish composers whose peer group resides outside of the university.

Swedish composer Åke Parmerud (b. 1953) appears to be moving towards a goal of electronic-music superstardom, in the same manner as Stockhausen. Often dressed in black leather pants, his introduction at concerts is often answered by young women screaming with adoration.⁵ His compositions have won several Bourges Festival Prizes, including a Grand Prize for *Repulse* (1986). Since many concert organizations and radio stations throughout the world sponsor the prize winners with performances, dissemination to a large spectrum of listeners goes with a winning prize, which, in turn, leads to a great deal of recognition for the composer. His biography states that "Parmerud is heavily influenced by rock music and has from time to time been active in this field" (Johnson 1988). "Heavily influenced," in the case of *Repulse*, takes the form of a short rock opening using sample sounds arranged in a rock rhythm. It functions like the popular-music hook, drawing you into the piece with its attractive rhythmic patterns. But alas, the introduction appears to be nothing more than a throw-away. Nowhere else in the piece does this type of material appear. In fact, Parmerud's compositional procedures draw heavily from the ideas of Brian Ferneyhough, a composer of extreme complexity, who is staunchly modem in regards to popular culture. Without the first twenty seconds, this piece would not betray any popular-culture influences. In this case, rock music appears to be employed by Parmerud to separate himself from older composers by means of material used. He is trying to rise through the ranks of the elite by defining himself as different from the elite. Rock music is used only as an exotic element-neither developed nor resolved in relation to the piece as a whole. It retains its identity separate from the other music in the work. This example shows that the mere inclusion of rock music does not make for a postmodern piece. From an overall standpoint, Parmerud is packaging his modernist tradition with seductive popular-culture wrappings.

Anders Blomqvist (b. 1956) is another Swedish composer with rock-music roots. His musical career started as a pianist in a rock band, and through the use of synthesizers

5. In Sweden, concerts are often recorded for later radio broadcast. Such concerts always have a presenter, or master of ceremonies, who introduces each work, gives additional program notes, talks about the composer, and sometimes even interviews the composer before the piece is played.

he found his way into the electronic-music studio. In addition to his studio compositions, Blomqvist teams with Parmerud in a live, electronic-music performance duo. Utilizing a full complement of synthesizers and drum machines, rock riffs appear frequently in the texture of their music. But Blomqvist places little importance on the music created by this group, cautioning that “it’s fun, but it’s not real music, you know” (personal interview, 1989). One of his “real” pieces, *Lag* (1986), illustrates Blomqvist’s varied influences. The *concrète* material of this piece is taken from different musical compositions,⁶ and, as the liner notes point out, include “not [in the] least, pop music.” At the beginning of the work, rock quotations are short and infrequent. As the piece progresses, so does the prominence of the rock-music quotations. By the end of *Lag*, long rock quotations dominate the complex texture, with the quotes containing recognizable formal devices that signal the ends of rock songs, which call attention to the actual formal situation at that point in his composition. As opposed to Parmerud, Blomqvist incorporates both rock music and formal conventions drawn from rock into his art. Although unstated, he expects that at least some of his audience will have a knowledge of rock music to understand the process taking place. Although he dismisses the rock-laden music of the performance duo as not “real,” his background as a rock musician is clearly a meaningful part of his overall art, and it is evident that he believes it is a meaningful part of the culture of the audience receiving his work.

From a social standpoint, both composers currently work in a state-supported (subsidized) occupation. Not only do many Swedish composers receive commissions from the government, they may also receive them from numerous concert organizations, performing groups, and various branches of the national radio company as well. Enough income is received from these sources that most composers do not have careers in the university like their American counterparts. In fact, there are only three full professors of composition in the whole country. Also unlike America, high-quality facilities for the creation of electronic music exist outside of the university. Swedish composers can create their works in a twenty-four-track recording facility wholly funded by the government, at no charge to the composer. They can go about a large part of their business independent of commercial concerns.

Similar to the United States, however, the purse strings are still largely controlled by a group of older, more established composers who administer the government grants and commissions. In Sweden, even serious artistic disagreements remain relatively private, due perhaps to the possibly large financial consequences of a public rift. In general, there is still an overwhelming tendency towards composing highly intellectual music owing to a modernist aesthetic. In the case of Parmerud, this shows up in his music. For Blomqvist this appears to be a more complex issue. Although he positions himself among the artistic elite, rock music (and therefore mass culture) adds meaning to his work.

6. “Concrète” refers to sounds either recorded on tape or sampled digitally.

Contemporary Music Forum 4

On the American side of the issue, Russell Pinkston (b. 1949) deals directly with the issue of tension between his background as a rock guitarist and his position as a composer and teacher of electronic music in an American university. Pinkston left college to pursue a recording and touring career as a rock musician. After deciding that that lifestyle was not for him, he returned to school and eventually received both master's and doctoral degrees in composition from Columbia University. In addition to his music career, he is a systems-level programmer, capable of programming his own sound-synthesis language. The cultural constraints of being a student composer in a university setting at that time precluded the inclusion of overt rock material in his electronic music. Abandoning rock proved problematic for Pinkston though, as he found composing became progressively more difficult the longer he stayed away from his rock background. At one point, he even went back to composing rock songs to alleviate a writer's block that dogged him. He is now trying to come to terms with his dual background.

The first work that illustrates this is *Synthony* (1986). The title is a pun, with the piece being arranged into four movements that draw their function from the characteristic formal plan of the classical symphony. The first and fourth movements are serious in nature, belying no hint of popular-music roots. The second and, especially, third movements are much lighter in character, drawing on, in the composer's words, "elements of his misspent youth." The third movement, which functions like a scherzo, has a recurring rock piano-riff as an easily discernible aspect of the A sections. In this example, Pinkston has infused his own cultural background into the recognizable structure of the classical symphony. High art and rock music exist side-by-side and are used to illustrate the composer's reconciliation of the two—rock music is lighter, less serious than high art. Although Pinkston integrates rock material into his electronic-music compositions in a manner that appears to satisfy his own perceived constraints, his use of the material is still problematic in terms of his own rock-music background, in that he reaffirms the modernist belief in stratification of the arts. In addition to his use of rock material as a diversionary element from the surrounding "serious" music, it is hard to imagine that the rock material used in *Synthony* bears much resemblance to the music he played as a rock guitarist whose band shared concert dates with a pre-superstardom version of the rock group Aerosmith. It appears that Pinkston's time spent in the academic community has dulled the memory of his earlier influence.

Paul Lansky (b. 1944) shares Pinkston's advanced technological abilities. A teacher of electronic music at Princeton University and currently a leader in the area of computer sound-synthesis, Lansky was the horn player in the Dorian Wind Quintet before leaving to pursue a career in electronic music. His interest lies in creating elaborately processed, musically interesting sounds. To balance this complex method of synthesis and signal processing, Lansky simplifies the harmonic structure of his music, often borrowing from rock. Although such music does not appear to be part of his performing background, it is obviously part of his overall cultural background. In *Idle Chatter* (1985), a complex texture of nonsense vocal sounds is organized against a background of sustained sounds that repeat

Dealing with Rock

a simple, rock harmonic progression to create structural delineation. In *Smalltalk* (1988), vocal synthesis is once again presented in a harmonic and rhythmic manner drawn from popular music. In neither case is the influence overt, nor does it alone make his music post-modern. The narrative he creates from the arrangement of his sonic material has far more significance. Lansky's discussions of the above works do not focus on the harmonic material; emphasis is usually placed on the synthesis technique, the texture of his music, and the narrative aspect of the work. His omission constitutes a tacit acknowledgment of the value of such material in the academic community (constraint) and illustrates that the other areas of his art are of significant intellectual magnitude to ensure his continued good standing within the same group.

Tod Machover not only embraces live performance using both electronic and acoustic instruments, he appears to have thoroughly embraced rock music's harmonic and rhythmic structures in the production of his music. Director of the Experimental Music Studios at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Machover has spent a great deal of time developing new methods and instruments for electronic-music performance. As an American composer employed in an academic setting, Machover's biography stresses his serious educational background, including studies with Elliot Carter and Roger Sessions, and his work at IRCAM and the MIT Media Lab. His music has received numerous prizes from organizations that typically reward elite music, such as the Koussevitzky Foundation, the Fromm Foundation, the American Institute of Arts and Letters, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Kennedy Center. But his music, at least on the surface, appears to draw much more from the rock idiom than from the modernist tradition.

His composition *Bug-Mudra* (1989-90) best illustrates this concept, through choice of instrumentation, rhythmic structure, and harmonic progression. Scored for two guitars, percussion, and synthesizers, Machover feels the work is about "diversity and unification of musical materials," and that it combines many "distinct elements...folk-like...rock rhythms and melodies, improvisatory jazz-like riffs, classical cantabile, 'new music' figurations, etc." (1990). The overwhelming majority of the program notes refers to technical and structural aspects of the work. Despite all of this, the driving rock rhythms and harmonies dominate the musical texture; rock elements overshadow all others in the guitar parts; and the choice of instrumentation, both acoustic and electronic, strongly evokes a rock-music background. *Bug-Mudra* is reminiscent of Emerson, Lake, and Palmer, who comprised one of the rock supergroups in the 1970s. Definitely in the category of art rock, or modernist rock, according to Frith and Horne, their music often contained extended instrumental passages involving complex counterpoint between instruments and *moto-perpetuo* rhythm. (Machover calls *Bug-Mudra* an unfolding *moto perpetuo*.)

Machover is immersed in instruments from the commercial domain, which he has integrated into a vast, electronic-music, performance set-up utilizing interfaces developed by the Media Lab at MIT. His compositions arise as much from his access to the latest technology as they do from particular musical influences. Neither does his music directly reflect

Contemporary Music Forum 4

his educational background with Carter and Sessions. The citation of these two composers validates Machover as a composer of importance, rather than illuminating his musical influences. Technology is both a tool and a concept in Machover's music. Classifying Machover as postmodern or modern is problematic, for there are conflicting messages present. From a cultural standpoint, he always tilts his discussion towards the analytic, structural understanding of his music in an academic manner, never focusing too much on the popular-culture aspects of what is present. While prudent from a career standpoint—Machover, like the Swedish composers Parmerud and Blomqvist, avoids offending older and more powerful members of the establishment who have fought the cultural battles before him and who can bestow further largess on his career—it seems to deny the importance of rock music's influence on him. Rock is continually mentioned as part of a multitude of styles from which he seeks to find a common ground, which is the modernist goal of universality. His constant use of rock subverts the modernist stratification of the arts, as well as the cultural supremacy of Western European art music, making the resulting music more postmodern. Obviously, there is a conflict between intention and action. Levin comments on such conflicts, writing that the "Modernist era may be over, but Modernist art is still being made, sometimes by self-proclaimed Postmodernists, just as postmodern work is being done by artists who still think of themselves as Modernists. Almost everybody during the '70s has been transitional and hybrid" (1988, 9).

Indeed, the transition has continued to the present. Most notable is that among the five composers mentioned, none use rock material in the same way. Some use rock to draw listeners into their music, either as a disposable hook like Parmerud or, like Lansky, as a means of simplifying one aspect of the music to allow for listener concentration on other complexities. Pinkston and Machover seek to incorporate popular music into the universal thread of Western art. Pinkston, however, maintains a level of arts stratification while Machover attempts to meld divergent materials into a composite whole. Blomqvist uses rock for its cultural meaning, to connect with a shared memory in his audience. Additionally, each composer's mention or omission of rock influence bears little relationship to their actual use of such material in a composition, signaling that other factors, such as career concerns, cultural constraint, and education can mitigate proclamations of rock influence. What is clear is that, despite worries of critics like Jameson, the integration of rock music-consumer capitalism-into so-called high-art music does not necessarily blunt any oppositional nature of the music, nor does it even act as a distinguishing factor in classifying music as postmodern or modern.

REFERENCES

- Adorno, Theodor. 1976. *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*. Translated by E. B. Ashton. New York: Continuum.
- Andriessen, Louis. 1978. Liner notes to *De Staat*. Amsterdam: Composers' Voice CV 7702/C.
- DiMaggio, Paul. 1988. Cultural entrepreneurship in nineteenth-century Boston. In *Non-profit Enterprise in the Arts: Studies in Mission and Constraint*, edited by P. DiMaggio, pp. 41-61. New York: Oxford Univ. Press.
- Frith, Simon. 1981. *Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure, and the Politics of Rock 'n' Roll*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Frith, Simon, and Howard Home. 1987. *Art into Pop*. London: Methuen.
- Jameson, Fredric. 1983. Postmodernism and consumer society. In *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, edited by H. Foster, pp. 111-25. Seattle: Bay Press.
- Johnson, Bengt Emil. 1988. Liner notes to *Electro-Acoustic Music from Sweden*. 2 vols. Stockholm: Phono Suecia PS CD 41.
- Levine, Lawrence. 1988. *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press.
- Levin, Kim. 1988. *Beyond Modernism: Essays on Art from the '70s and '80s*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Lipsitz, George. 1990. *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture*. Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press.
- Machover, Tod. 1990. Liner notes to *Flora*. New York: Bridge Records BCD 9020.
- Warhol, Andy, and Pat Hackett. 1980. *POPism: The Warhol '60s*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

CONTRIBUTORS

CURT CACIOPPO is a professor of music at Haverford College in Pennsylvania. He has earned degrees from Kent State Univ., New York Univ., and Harvard Univ., where he also taught from 1979 to 1983. His work *Wolf*, based on a Mohawk poem, is available on Capstone CD 8632, and his quartet *Nayenezgani* (“Monsterslayer,” based on a Navajo legend), commissioned by the Emerson String Quartet, is soon to be released. A pianist as well as a composer, he has premiered works by George Rochberg, Ulysses Kay, Robert Ward, William Bolcom, and by emerging composers. His critical articles on Beethoven have appeared in *Piano Quarterly* and *Journal of Musicological Research*, and his writings on Schumann and Stravinsky have been published in *College Music Symposium*.

CHARLES HOAG is a professor of music theory and composition at the Univ. of Kansas. His music has been performed throughout the world in such locations as Australia, Canada, Europe, India, Japan, Portugal, Sri Lanka, Turkey, and the United States. His *Inventions on the Summer Solstice*, performed by the Verdehr Trio, is available on the Leonarda label. Recent premieres include *Cloud Tango* by the Kansas City Symphony and *The Ogallala Aquifer* by the Dale Warland Singers. His music is published by Schirmer, Theodore Presser, and Kjos. A grant recipient from the National Endowment for the Humanities, Hoag received his Ph.D. from the Univ. of Iowa.

KEITH KOTHMAN is an assistant professor of music theory and composition at the Univ. of Miami and a faculty member of the Interlochen Arts Camp. Previously, he served as a visiting professor and director of the computer music studio at California State Univ., Los Angeles. Kothman holds degrees from the Univ. of Texas at Austin and is a Ph.D. candidate at the Univ. of California at San Diego. In addition, he received a Fulbright grant to study composition and electronic music at the Institute for Electro-Acoustic Music in Sweden. Kothman has compositions available on the Cambria and New Albany labels. He has undertaken scholarly research into the sociology of music, institutional patronage and new music, and the aesthetics of music. Current research involves issues relating to the pedagogy of music technology.

DAVID WITTEN’S international career as a pianist includes concert tours in over a dozen countries and five months in Brazil as a Fulbright scholar. In 1995, Marco Polo Records released his recording *Piano Music of Manuel M. Ponce*. With flutist Sue-Ellen Hershman, he formed Dúo Clásico; to date they have completed six international concert tours and recorded music by Latin-American composers for the Musical Heritage Society. Witten is also the editor of, as well as a contributor to *Nineteenth-Century Piano Music: Essays in Performance and Analysis* (1996). He has studied at Peabody Conservatory, Rubin Academy of Music in Jerusalem, Johns Hopkins Univ., and Boston Univ., where he earned a D.M.A. in piano performance. Witten was recently appointed assistant professor of music at Montclair State Univ. in New Jersey.