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АННОТАЦИЯ<https://doi.org/10.26176/MSC.2019.36.1.003>**Короткое путешествие в Дармштадт: влияние авангарда и использование сериализма в ранних сочинениях Харрисона Бёртуисла**

Статья посвящена ранним, написанным до 1965 года сочинениям Бёртуисла; отмеченные влиянием таких фигур, как Пьер Булез, Луиджи Нono и Карлхайнц Штокхаузен, они в известной мере являются образцом эстетики Дармштадта. На материале музыкальных произведений, а также собственных высказываний композитора в статьях и в интервью исследуются эстетические и практические аспекты использования сериализма Бёртуислом — как часть его ранних творческих экспериментов и настойчивых попыток обрести собственный, неповторимый голос внутри авангарда, не порывая с традициями музыкального прошлого.

Ключевые слова: Харрисон Бёртуисл, сериализм, Дармштадт, формализм, «Рефрены и хоры», «Монодия на праздник Тела Христова», *Précis*

ABSTRACT<https://doi.org/10.26176/MSC.2019.36.1.003>**A Brief Trip to Darmstadt: Avant-Garde Influences and the Use of Serialism within the Early Works of Harrison Birtwistle**

This paper is devoted to Birtwistle's early music written before 1965: dodecaphonic works that demonstrate, in part, a Darmstadt aesthetic, and which are marked by the influence of figures such as Pierre Boulez, Luigi Nono and Karlheinz Stockhausen. Using score examples, the composer's own writings and interview material, it examines Birtwistle's use of serialism, both in aesthetic and practice, discussing this within the context of his early experimentation and struggle to find a unique voice among the Avant-garde but without rejecting past musical traditions.

Keywords: Harrison Birtwistle, serialism, Darmstadt, formalism, *Refrains and Choruses*, *Monody for Corpus Christi*, *Précis*

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A BRIEF TRIP TO DARMSTADT: AVANT-GARDE INFLUENCES AND THE USE OF SERIALISM WITHIN THE EARLY WORKS OF HARRISON BIRTWISTLE

Sir Harrison Birtwistle is generally regarded as Britain's foremost contemporary composer and is arguably one of the most original and uncompromising musical visionaries of our time. Born in Accrington in 1934, and gaining prominence as a member of the contemporary music group New Music Manchester in the 1950s, alongside composers Peter Maxwell Davies (1934 – 2016) and Alexander Goehr (b. 1932), pianist John Ogdon (1937 – 1989) and trumpeter/conductor Elgar Howarth (b. 1935), Birtwistle has often been labeled New Music's "Enfant Terrible" on account of his work's apparent inaccessibility, with his musical language being modernist, complex, and often highly challenging. In response, Birtwistle states: "I don't write for audiences. I would have to simplify everything and make compromises. And how far do you go in becoming accessible? Should I write for people who understand music? Or for the person who knows nothing about music? No, I write for myself".¹ Prolific in output, having currently in his oeuvre over one hundred compositions, Birtwistle's works range from chamber to orchestral music with many of the latter being unusually large in both scope and scale. He has written to date, twelve dramatic works, eleven of which are either chamber or full-scale operas. His most notable orchestral works include: *Tragoedia* (1965), *Silbury Air* (1977, rev. 2003), *Earth Dances* (1986) and *Panic* (1995), with his operas including *Punch and Judy* (1967), *The Mask of Orpheus* (1973 – 1984), *Gawain* (1990) and *The Minotaur* (2008).

For those unfamiliar with Birtwistle's music, his mature compositional language can be characterized by several key traits. First, on a structural level, there is the juxtaposition of large blocks of sound: his works often comprising dissonant sound strata that move almost imperceptibly from point to point. His music is horizontal – linear and polyphonic – rather than harmonic. Second, also in relation to the

¹ Interview with Harrison Birtwistle and Peter Maxwell Davies: Music Matters; BBC Radio 3: Broadcast on 12.06.2011.

macro-level is his use of logic and symmetry: Birtwistle often employing systematic models including repetition, retrograde, variation, or a verse-refrain structure as a way of generating the outer form. Underpinning this is the notion of time. Birtwistle's structures are not goal-orientated as we find in Classical or Romantic traditions. He regards musical time as circular, stating that: "It is not linear time. But unfortunately music can only do one thing. It can only begin and end. So the logic of the [musical] journey is like going around a town; going via certain squares and streets, then coming back into the square again but by a different route. It is temporal time wrapped in a ball".² As regards the inner content, this too is dominated to an extent by logic with Birtwistle often juxtaposing intuitive and non-intuitive methods of composition. His micro-structures are systematic to a greater or lesser degree, and even in some instances, process-led; the composer commonly employing the use of shape, pattern or quasi-serialist tone rows. In addition, his methods also extend to the non-musical as he utilises, for example, the use of random numbers, or even in some cases, devices that are aleatoric. In his *Clarinet Quintet* (1980) each compositional phrase is of the same physical length; Birtwistle having employed as his organizing principle the real-life dimensions of a sheet of paper. He states that: "It wasn't a question of writing until I came to the end of the sheet then stopping; each [compositional phrase] had to fit the page exactly. Each had to be musically complete" [6, 147]. Similarly, with *Verses for Ensembles* (1968 – 1969), he discusses how he composed a section of music before physically cutting the score arbitrarily into a number of shorter sections, which he then rearranged randomly. Adding introductions, epilogues and bridging sections to link these shorter sections together, this method was intended to give the work unity by having musical material with its own inner coherence scattered across the structure; material that relates organically to the original idea. Added to this, *Verses for Ensembles* also comprises alternative routes through the sound strata that the performer can either select or ignore. Likewise, *Pulse Shadows* (1989 – 1996) gives the performer choice concerning the number of sections played and the order in which these sections occur.

What is significant, however, is that Birtwistle also employs paradox throughout almost every dimension of his music: on a macro- as well as a micro-level. He also incorporates, in the inner detail, minor structural "errors" to create a sense of ambiguity as well as to displace the sense of equilibrium otherwise created by the systems employed. Ever-present in his work, there is, as a result, the idea of narrative – not in a programmatic sense – but in the idea of constant movement; of change and contrast. His forms comprise structures that constantly metamorphose with there being a sense of unity followed by discontinuity. His works deal with plurality and fragmentation. One can nevertheless sense, however, an unquestionable coherence despite the heterogeneity involved; a convincing and ever-present essence that unifies any inner opposition or contradiction.

² Harrison Birtwistle in Conversation (4): Promotional CD distributed by The Philharmonia Orchestra/South Bank Centre, London: "A Celebration of Harrison Birtwistle (20 October – 11 November 2004)".

While indisputably modernist, Birtwistle's music cannot, however, be considered abstract. True, notwithstanding his operas and the occasional quintet or concerto, he rejects conventional musical genres, creating as an alternative, vast musical landscapes that defy definition. But he does not employ abstract or process titles: e.g. *Piece No. 4* or *Music in Three Parts*. Rather, the titles of his works suggest, in most cases, a programmatic dimension: this being present despite the modernist aesthetic. In many cases, they also suggest an historical dimension, as in works such as *Tragoedia* (1965) or *Monody for Corpus Christi* (1961). Employing in many cases, medieval techniques such as cantus firmus and organum, he draws time and again upon past traditions, including those going back as far as the eleventh century, even utilizing the technique of hocketing in a number of works, most noticeably, *Hoquetus Petrus* (1995). Furthermore, many of his compositions explore an even earlier historicism: i.e. the primeval, a key example being *Silbury Air* (1977, rev. 2003), of which Birtwistle states: "I am interested in pre-history. There is something fundamental — elemental — about that part of the world [Silbury Hill, a prehistoric mound in Wiltshire, England] where you have the natural landscape, and you have something imposed on it which is sort of artificial <...> It has a sort of inner logic, a logic that has been lost <...> It gives the whole place a certain sort of mystery".³ Other concepts and narrative stimuli in Birtwistle's oeuvre include Art — the work of Paul Klee in particular — landscape, geology and time, as well as myth and Greek Theatre. In this, he places enormous importance upon ritual as well as in relation, pulse and rhythm: these aspects being at the core of a number of these topics and therefore at the heart of his music-making. Underlining many of his structures and forms is the use of ostinato or varied ostinato, with his works often having a primordial essence, of which he states that: "The metaphor for a clock is a lot of wheels within wheels which are going round at different speeds in order to make the one big wheel go round exactly. This is a direct parallel with my thinking about rhythm".⁴

It is important to note that the compositional language outlined above was established fairly early on Birtwistle's career, notably in 1965, exemplified by works such as *Tragoedia* and *Verses for Clarinet and Piano* (1965). Significantly, many of the aspects discussed, particularly those in relation to form, structure and procedure, have remained more or less constant and indeed, can still be found within his most recent compositions. Birtwistle jokes that he has spent his mature career composing the same work over and over again, and it is certainly the case that his compositional language has shown far less modification than that of many of his contemporaries. Examining the period before 1965, however — that from 1952 to 1965 — we can note that two distinct phases of activity emerge. First, the years 1952 to 1957 mark Birtwistle's search for a compositional direction: a period dominated by

³ Harrison Birtwistle in Conversation (2): Promotional CD distributed by The Philharmonia Orchestra/South Bank Centre, London: "A Celebration of Harrison Birtwistle (20 October — 11 November 2004)".

⁴ Ibid.

hesitancy and exploration, with the period from 1958 to 1965 witnessing his early experimentation with structure and process.

Perhaps surprisingly, Birtwistle dates his first professional work as 1957; that is, at the very end of this first five-year phase. In producing no music to speak of during the years in question, he discusses how he struggled for the duration, seeking a style that would be personalized and original — even iconoclastic — a style that would reject past associations — but yet would not entirely abandon past musical traditions. He speaks of his desire to move away from tonality; to move away from goal-orientated structures, while still maintaining a sense of continuity; a link to past musics and to the sociological function of music per se. Ironically, while serialism had been readily adopted by the two other New Music Manchester composers, Maxwell Davies and Goehr, Birtwistle spent these initial years rejecting it on the basis that it was too rigorous and impersonal as well as too far removed from the legacy of Western Art music. Feeling that pointillism and the total rejection of the past as employed by the Darmstadt group was too narrow a direction, both compositionally and aesthetically, Birtwistle states that: “Boulez and Nono appealed to the radical in me. However, I was not sure that I wanted to emulate their kind of extremism. I needed a personal idiom set against a systematic background; an organizing principle that would allow for both logic and choice in equal measure” [6, 22].

Birtwistle's first professional work *Refrains and Choruses* was completed on the 31st of December 1957; a work subsequently selected for performance by the Society for the Promotion of New Music (SPNM) at the Cheltenham Festival in 1959. Scored for wind quintet (flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon and horn) and approximately eight minutes in duration, it initiates a number of key ideas in relation to structure and process: ideas which, despite the composer's aforementioned doubts and reservations, do at least have some association with serialism and the Darmstadt aesthetic. Attending a concert of Messiaen's *Turangalila Symphony* in 1954, and discovering the music of Satie and Varèse soon after, Birtwistle was influenced initially by what he refers to as “circling immobility”: the idea of going through the same music again and again but from a different perspective. Birtwistle states that: “[Messiaen, Satie and Varèse] move from static block to static block but with an element of freedom as regards the inner detail and this was the kind of structural idea that I was looking for” [ibid., 24]. In conjunction, David Beard discusses how the young Birtwistle was also influenced at this point by the pre-war modernists, including, as a key figure, Stravinsky, with Birtwistle undertaking a highly detailed analysis of *Agon* (1957) during the late Fifties. Of this, Jonathan Cross comments that: “Structures built both from the opposition of blocks and of the simultaneous layering of opposed materials <...>, repetition and variation, verse-refrain structures <...> all these key and influential facets of Stravinsky's modernism are central to an understanding of Birtwistle's modernism too” [5, 36]. In May 1957, however, Birtwistle encountered two Darmstadt works that would consolidate his thinking about “circling immobility” and develop this further: Boulez's *Le marteau sans maître* (1954) and Stockhausen's *Zeitmaße* (1955 — 1956). Hearing these, Birtwistle states, was a formative experience: “Both of these works were presented with

such boldness and clarity that they were unmistakable in their intent”.⁵ Birtwistle discusses the structural considerations in *Le marteau sans maître*; of the way in which the settings and the instrumental sections differ and yet are cyclically distributed, with this being key in his search for a form that is based upon multiple and contrasting views of the same object. While not underestimating the influence that the pre-war modernists had upon Birtwistle’s structural thinking, Beard also emphasizes the connections between this and the process-led forms being propagated by the European Avant-garde at that time, stating that: “Birtwistle [attended] Darmstadt briefly in 1956, and his close contemporaries Peter Maxwell Davies, Alexander Goehr and John Ogdon kept him informed of developments there in the mid to late 1950s, when abstract, autonomous compositional systems were encouraged” [2, 6]. While Birtwistle’s relationship with the twelve-tone system and the Darmstadt aesthetic was and always has been undoubtedly complex, it is clear that many of the ideas associated with this approach were at least of some influence at that time. To be clear, although Birtwistle has never employed integral serialism per se, and indeed, has never been part of any Darmstadt collective, the ideas generated between 1957 and 1965 in relation to line, process, equilibrium and paradox have been generated, at least partly, as a result of his exposure to it, with these providing the basis for his mature compositional language and the identity that has prevailed since.

While *Refrains and Choruses* clearly exemplifies Birtwistle’s emergent thinking on structure and process, it is also unique in that it is the only work in his catalogue which is “through-composed”. There are no large-scale structural repetitions within its form. That said, its macro-structure clearly operates on the basis of a strict logic: its overall form is not only systematic but also process-led. Structured in five sections, each section has an identical organizing principle in that it comprises two distinct elements: i) a constant element, which Birtwistle refers to as the “chorus”; and: ii) a recurring element, which he calls the “refrain”. The composer states that: “The refrains enter at certain measured intervals which are shortened by each entry. The material, however, is lengthened, becoming by degree the predominant entity, and in turn, the chorus of the following section”.⁶ In this, the macro-structure is also explicitly cyclic, not only in the recurrence of the verse-refrain pattern, but also in that the refrain itself is repeated and becomes the chorus material for the next section. Furthermore, the fact that the refrain enters at measured intervals is also in itself a key cyclic idea. In addition, the work has a single overarching structure in that the first and last sections are linked by inter-related motifs. As can be seen in Figure 1, below, the horn solo that begins the work has as its initial note, the pitch C. The work ends with a B flat and D stated in horn and clarinet, respectively: the two pitches that symmetrically surround the initial C, with this thereby

⁵ Interview with Harrison Birtwistle and Peter Maxwell Davies: Music Matters; BBC Radio 3: Broadcast on 12.06.2011.

⁶ Typed unsigned program note for a concert (undated: most likely for the 1960 London performance): SPNM archive.

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As to the work's inner content, further examples of Birtwistle's systematic approach can be noted. First, there is the notion of symmetry which can be found in every aspect of the work's micro-structure: in its pitch configurations, in its use of register, as well as in its linear development. Within the fifth and final section of the work (bars 131 – 154), the chorus material is derived from dodecaphonic principles in the form of a twelve-tone row – this being a direct indication of Birtwistle's increasing interest in a serialist aesthetic. Beginning with a major seventh between the flute and horn, a two-part line is presented which encompasses all twelve notes of the chromatic scale, with each of the two lines being a mirror image of the other and creating a wedge-shaped pattern, as shown in Figure 2, below. A further and more striking example of this also exists within this final section (bar 131), when the refrain is presented as a recurring five-part chord with all parts moving systematically inwards from the widest possible array to a closed cluster. This highly logical and expanding chromatic wedge pattern can also be found within many of Birtwistle's subsequent compositions, with the composer stating that he took this particular device from Nono's *Canti per Tredici* (1955), premiered at Darmstadt during his visit in 1956.

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⁷ Of further interest is the fact that almost all of Birtwistle's subsequent works start with a melodic motif that falls by a semitone and then rises by a tone: this being the seed from which the process or procedure develops in each case.

uses wind instruments, the refrain is scored for solo horn, and is therefore, instrumentally, the “odd one out”. In this, Birtwistle’s scoring is purposefully divisive, with the horn also being presented as a separate entity for two-thirds of the work, with the other four instruments having a close inter-relationship. Of this Michael Hall states that: “[the works is a] conflict between capricious individuality and the solidarity of the group” [6, 28]. Again, in the fifth and final section however, the roles of both chorus and refrain are reversed. Here, the refrain becomes simplified and significantly reduced as it moves towards being a closed cluster. It is absorbed into the chorus, thus losing its significance as the work concludes. Importantly, this leaves the chorus: i. e. the serialist-generated material again as the dominant musical force, thus emphasizing the importance of a non-intuitive aesthetic and indeed, highlighting the distinction between intuitive and non-intuitive methods of composition.

Second, we see another key trait of Birtwistle being initiated within this initial work: that of ambiguity brought about by so-called rogue “errors”. Although the pitches of the serialist tone-row have been clearly arranged in a logical and systematic manner as would be expected, the row itself has been modified to include repetitions of certain pitches, thereby giving it a quasi-diatonic appearance. Added to this, the row has also been transferred down an octave and re-scored for clarinet and bassoon at the halfway point, thereby distorting the sense of symmetry that previously existed (see Figure 3), although we can note that Birtwistle’s systematic approach is still obvious, given the transparency of the material.

3

Re-scoring and transference of material:



As mentioned, the years 1958 to 1965 mark the beginning of Birtwistle’s professional career and his development towards an established compositional language. That said, the work that follows *Refrains and Choruses — Three Sonatas for Nine Instruments* — originally entitled *Sonata Cantus Choralis* and completed on the 30th of November 1958 — was in fact withdrawn by the composer, prior to its world premiere at the Aldeburgh Festival in June 1960, allegedly due to it “not being any good”. Hearing it at its first rehearsal, and referring to it as “fake Darmstadt”, Birtwistle was dissatisfied with the work, possibly, given his comments, on the grounds that it was too formalist, too restrictive, thus feeling that he had compromised himself in using too systematic an approach. A fair copy, now housed at the Paul Sacher Stiftung Archive in Basel⁸ and revealing a strict application of serialism, suggests this to be the case. According to Beard, the manuscript also reveals

⁸ Sammlung Harrison Birtwistle: Musikmanuskripte [Harrison Birtwistle Collection: Music Manuscripts], Inventories of the Paul Sacher Foundation. Vol. 20. Mainz: Schott, 2000.

a use of cantus that “recalls Nono’s *Canti per 13* (1955)” [1, 140]. Beard additionally comments upon how the work, with its “brittle and fragmented textures” is almost identical in both instrumentation and title to another highly serialist work, Webern’s *Concerto for Nine Instruments*, op. 24 (1934), which Birtwistle first heard in 1957: the latter being scored for flute, clarinet, oboe, trumpet, horn, trombone, violin, viola and piano, with Birtwistle in his own *Nine Instruments*, exchanging only the oboe for cor anglais and the piano for cello.

Monody for Corpus Christi, composed a year later in 1959 and noticeably less formalist than *Three Sonatas*, would see the consolidation of the structural ideas outlined above in *Refrains and Choruses*. However, whereas *Refrains and Choruses* focuses largely upon the outer structure, *Monody* deals more with the inner structure, including the development of individual lines and their inter-relationships. Scored for soprano, flute, horn and violin and set to a series of Medieval English Christmas carols, the work, twelve minutes in duration, focuses upon strata and the development of line through shape, pattern, and symmetry. It also includes a new structural device for Birtwistle at this time: that of larger-scale repetition. In connection with the Medieval texts, Birtwistle employs a type of melismatic organum with the horn again functioning as the principal voice (*vox principalis*), although in this case, it is not used instrumentally as the “odd one out”. With the soprano as the secondary voice (*vox organalis*), Birtwistle again uses the idea of contrast and opposition; again, the monody employed in horn is distinct from the other three voices that accompany it. In terms of the accompaniment, Birtwistle employs a form of heterophony, using a series of lines that relate to the secondary voice, each appearing in parallel motion at the octave, fifth and fourth. All lines, regardless of role, are directly linked in compositional terms in that all are generated initially from a chromatic motif that opens the work (in soprano): a five-note set (F sharp, G, G sharp, A and B flat). Crucially, all the work’s subsequent micro-structures are constructed from this set according to three quasi-serialist principles:

Bilateral Symmetry: In all cases, the second half of each monody is the retrograde of the first, with the influence of serialism here clearly being evident. In this, concentric layers are grouped outward from a central point.

Wedge-shaped Patterns: Again, similarly as with the final section of *Refrains and Choruses*, there is a gradual expansion of the monodic line in terms of register, with the instrumental lines proliferating outwards from a single point. In this, Birtwistle employs a quasi-logical principle involving, on this occasion, the addition of alternating major seconds, perfect fourths and minor sevenths as opposed to a chromatic process. As such, he is again utilizing not only a systematic method of generating material but also one that extends the use of the wedge-pattern over a longer period of time and is more complex in its construction.

Repetition: This, as mentioned, indicates a previously unused compositional strategy for Birtwistle and one that he would continue to employ and develop in subsequent works. Here, the use of repetition involves two distinct principles. First, there is the addition of a motif or short phrase taken from a different monody, with this elongating the first monody and functioning as a way of generating material.

Second, is the repetition of larger blocks of material at regular intervals: i.e. partial or more than partial monodies being re-employed within the same or a different monody. Crucially, the spacing of the repeated material can also be seen as systematic.

Again, as with *Refrains and Choruses*, Birtwistle employs several rogue “errors”. While the pitches in each monody have a clear sense of logic, these have again been altered in places to include repetitions of certain pitches, thereby giving the work less of a serialist appearance. Significantly, however, this is utilized to a far lesser degree than in *Refrains and Choruses*, and although the material employed here is more complex with the process itself being less transparent, the actual system that remains after the “errors” have been added is still more rigorous than that employed previously.

Only a few months later, Birtwistle composed *Précis*, a twelve-tone miniature written for solo piano that lasts approximately three minutes in duration. *Précis* is Birtwistle’s most direct example of serialism, notwithstanding the still unpublished *Three Sonatas for Nine Instruments*. In this, it serves as the end-point of this early period; a bridge between the quasi-serialist principles employed in the previous two works and the freely treated dodecaphony that would follow in 1965 and beyond, with the work also functioning as regards its use of structural inversion as a prototype for *Tragoedia*. Initially entitled *Précis I*, the work is dedicated to fellow New Music Manchester colleague John Ogdon, known internationally as the joint gold medalist in the 1962 Tchaikovsky Piano Competition, alongside Vladimir Ashkenazy. *Précis* received its world premiere under Ogdon on 2nd June 1959 in the Wigmore Hall, London, with Ogdon giving a second performance of the work at Darlington Summer School in August 1960.

In terms of its overarching structure, *Précis* comprises five short, unequal movements (marked 1 to 5 in the score), each of these being separated physically by a clear division. Birtwistle includes a performance instruction as a preface to the score that reads: “The rests between the separate pieces last approximately 3 seconds. Long notes should be left sounding between 3 to 5 seconds”. In this, aleatoricism is introduced into the Birtwistle catalogue as a previously unseen compositional device. *Précis*, as its title suggests, is a work that is characterized at least to a degree by accuracy and control, with the composer stating that he wanted to construct a form that was at its core, symmetrical; a work that would “turn back on itself yet have a sense of forward motion” [6, 22]. While certainly dealing with the notion of symmetry, it is also, much more significantly, a work in which Birtwistle experiments with the inter-relationship between process, memory and perceptibility; a work in which he directly attempts to manipulate and disarm the listener by way of structural contrasts, irregularities and ambiguities. Within the work, we can find several examples whereby rapid activity is suddenly followed by either silence and/or the use of sustained pitches, with this distorting the temporality and sense of process involved, and creating in its place, a form of displacement. Birtwistle states that the work was written in this regard as a direct response to Webern’s *Piano Variations*, op. 27, with its alternation of rapid and still gestures also being influenced by *Quantitäten*, written by the Swedish Avant-garde composer Bo Nilsson.

One could further suggest that its sparseness and symmetry has much in common with Boulez's *Third Piano Sonata* (1957 – 1958), although its five-part structure with inversion and the use of a *peripeteia* (turning point) bears a clear parallel with the Greek form; this not only being central to his subsequent work *Tragoedia*, as mentioned (Birtwistle actively naming the five movements of *Tragoedia*: “Parados – Episodion – Stasimon – Episodion – Exodos”), but to many of his works that deal semantically with the notion of Greek Theatre.

Examining the work in detail, *Précis* again deals with the non-intuitive generation of material through the use of rational and systematic processes. It is important to note that in this case all of the melodic material employed is serialist – although much of this has again been modified in order to appear ambiguous and to distort the listeners' structural perception. In this, a clear development can be noted in Birtwistle's thinking: in this work, there is no contrast or opposition between material that has been systematically generated and that which is freely composed. All the material used has been generated according to formalist principles before being manipulated. That said, while the work clearly adopts more of a serialist aesthetic than any of its predecessors (with the exception of *Three Sonatas*), much of its logic is also, paradoxically, hidden, with many of the processes lying under the surface of what initially appears to be a less-than-rigorous outer form. This, arguably, places the work within a quasi-Darmstadt aesthetic with its emphasis upon experimenting with perceptibility.

Comprising a clearly symmetrical A–B–C–B–A macro-structure, first, we can note that this structure is not immediately obvious. The reason for this is that the A–B–C–B–A structure does not actually align with the overarching form created by the five movements, as would be expected. Indeed, four out of the five A–B–C–B–A sections (named forthwith A1, B1, C1, B2 and A2) do not equate structurally with their corresponding movement, as shown in Table 1 and Figure 4 below. As can be seen, the first movement comprises both sections A1 and section B1. The second, the third and the first half of the fourth movement all equate to the central and by far the largest section of the work, C1. The second half of movement 4 equates to section B2. Section A3 is the only section that aligns exactly with a single movement, this being movement 5.

Movement	A-B-C-B-A Structure
1	A1, B1 – gesture positioned at the end of movement 1
2	C1 (Central Section), B2 – gesture positioned at the end of movement 4
3	
4	
5	A2

Tab. 1. Alignment of sections to movements

A second issue occurs in that while the A–B–C–B–A structure is in itself symmetrical, the “return journey”: i.e. the retrograde of A1 – B1 – C1 – that is

Alignment of sections to movements

[illegible]

C1 — B2 — A2 — is somewhat altered in parts, with the symmetry that would otherwise occur now being displaced to a degree. Typical of later Birtwistle, here we have a dichotomy between the work's macro- and micro-structures, with the notion of symmetry existing far more readily within its outer construction than in terms of its actual pitch content. Tim Benjamin, in his 2004 analysis of the work states that: "It appears, on first glance, at the beginning and ending of the piece, that the music does literally enter a retrograde on reaching the middle, but <...> the impression of a (structural) symmetry is confined only to the overall shaping" [3, 1].

In this, several key aspects can be noted. First, Benjamin suggests that the opening section (A1) comprises itself an A–B–A form, thereby mirroring the sense of symmetry that prevails throughout the work as a whole. What can be seen however, is that this A–B–A structure has slight "anomalies" in pitch: again, the "return journey" from the centre/turning point is not a precise retrograde of the original motif, with this also mirroring the "anomalies" that exist across the work's macro-structure. In this, tone-row A1 (and likewise, A2) both contain bilateral symmetry, with their second halves each having been modified to include deliberate "errors". Similarly, B1 — appearing, as shown in Figure 5, as a one-bar gesture at the end of movement 1 — is also aimed at disguising the work's A–B–C–B–A form in that its contrast from A1 is not immediately obvious; indeed, it contains rhythmic motifs found in A1, thereby ostensibly linking it to the same movement. Third, section C1 — the work's central overarching section, with its three inner micro-structures (movements) — is again structurally ambiguous. While A1 and B1 each employ very different pitch material to each other — section C1 comprises the juxtaposition of both types of material, thus generating a third line or tone-row, with this again adding to the sense of discontinuity that prevails across the work as a whole. Again, before the centre/turning point of C1 (movement 2), we find examples of pitch substitution in what would otherwise again be a A–B–A structure, with Benjamin stating that: "The second movement, which functions in the overall structure as an episode between the beginning and centre, follows the practice from the first movement of establishing symmetrical associations, then playing upon them by substituting an equivalent set of symmetries. This leads to a sense of ambiguity, rather similar in effect to the sense of 'keylessness' often found in the development sections of tonal sonatas" [ibid., 4]. Again, this is echoed in the fourth movement (the latter part of C1), thus leading to further structural ambiguities. Fourth, B2 is not a retrograde of B1 as might be expected, but in this case, a direct repetition. Finally, we can see that the last section of the work, A2, is again a quasi-retrograde of the work's beginning section, A1, albeit with octave and pitch displacements. Again, it's A–B–A structure is distorted as a result.

What is also significant in relation to Birtwistle's desire to create structural ambiguity is his use of temporal displacement; the composer starting at this point in 1959 to be preoccupied with time and the distorted temporality that we see in subsequent works: e.g. *The Triumph of Time* (1971 — 1972), *The Mask of Orpheus* as well as *Harrison's Clocks* (1998). Birtwistle's use of symmetry throughout the work in the form of an A–B–C–B–A structure is clearly designed to actively reject

a goal-orientated structure, although at the same time, the work's inner structure has paradoxically been constructed to generate a sense of momentum and to drive the music forward towards the close and climax of the piece. Of this, Hall states that: "Symmetry may be seen retrospectively as a static phenomenon, but incomplete symmetry <...> is dynamic because it creates a structural need that eventually must be satisfied" [6, 22]. What is crucial is that following each example where bilateral symmetry is (seemingly) employed, Birtwistle indicates a separation or rest, with this serving to re-emphasize the structure and the logical relationships involved, but at the same time to create a sense of temporal ambiguity. Due to the complexity of the work, we cannot hear the processes and symmetries involved, with the composer actively playing with structure, pitch and time in an attempt to disguise these processes further. Arguably, it is this very aspect — Birtwistle's preoccupation with the manipulation of both outer and inner structural perception — that links him to the Darmstadt aesthetic: an aspect that has continued to be at the core of his compositional identity, despite his subsequent move away from serialism, causing consternation for audience and analyst alike.

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