

Bruno Ruviaro Special Area Exam Questions

24 Hour Exam

The following questions may be rearranged, within reason, to facilitate your preferred ordering of the implied topics.

1. Provide a basic survey or taxonomy of the principal types of musical borrowing; where appropriate cite genres, movements, composers, pieces, etc.
2. Discuss the mechanics of musical borrowing. What is the function of a borrowed material? How is the meaning of a borrowed material transformed by its context? Does a meaningful relationship emerge between the new piece and its source? Etc.
3. Focusing on examples of music by Donatoni and Pousseur--but expanding your response to include other composers as relevant--respond to the following:
 - A. What motivates musical borrowing?
 - B. What musical parameters are especially attended to or ignored in acts of musical borrowing?
 - C. What are the issues surrounding the ultimate recognizability of the source material?
 - D. What are the "compositional combination principles"--of borrowed music to original music, and of borrowed music to other borrowed music?
 - E. How is optimism or pessimism modeled in various composers' approaches to musical borrowing?
 - F. How do approaches that embody 'the assertion of compositional authority' or 'the suppression of the composer's ego' manifest themselves?
 - G. Was there something particular about the two decades following World War II that made musical borrowing especially vibrant or necessary?
4. Has the advent of audio recording--whether the earliest analog forms or the most recent digital technologies--changed the concept, philosophy, or meaning of musical borrowing?

QUESTION #1. Provide a basic survey or taxonomy of the principal types of musical borrowing; where appropriate cite genres, movements, composers, pieces, etc.

To borrow. To quote. To parody. To paraphrase. To model. To make a collage or a mash-up. To allude or refer to. To steal. To arrange. To remix. To transcribe. Most of the terms in this list have their own entry in the Grove Dictionary of Music; they are seen as a codified musical practice, or at least as after-the-fact classifications of what musicians have done in the past and are doing today. The multiplicity of meanings that is evident from the list above reflects the variety of musical facts that these same words are trying to represent. Some of them, when in context, may have a quite specific identification with a certain genre and a certain time: for example, a “parody mass” is a 16th-century “musical setting of the five movements of the Ordinary of the Roman Catholic Mass that is unified by the presence of the entire texture of a pre-existing polyphonic work, represented by borrowed motifs and points of imitation”¹, whereas a “mash-up” is a late 20th-, early 21st-century musical practice that consists of the combination of the instrumental tracks from one or more popular songs with the vocal tracks from another song, usually belonging to different genres (“Mash-up” hasn't made it into the Grove Dictionary, however).

Among this self-service buffet of definitions, however, it seems that the expression “musical borrowing”, possibly due to its relative generality, has achieved some prominence as an umbrella term for all the others. The word “borrowing” does have some interesting properties, and at least one advantage. The advantage is that, as a concept, it in fact seems to include, accommodate, or at least make room for all of the other meanings mentioned above, with perhaps the exception of “to steal”. To borrow, in principle, has nothing to do with stealing (more on that later). But let us go back to the other interesting properties of the word “borrowing”. What is implied in its definition, even before any

1 From Grove Online Dictionary, entry “Parody Mass”; accessed November 2007. <<http://www.grovemusic.com/>>

connection with music? It is important to clarify this before we discuss a possible taxonomy of musical borrowing, and finally move on to study borrowing procedures and their significance in specific pieces of music. Bear with me, then, as I digress for the next two or three pages.

The typical dictionary definition would say: “Borrow = take and use (something that belongs to someone else) with the intention of returning it.”² In its most common sense, borrowing thus implies a temporary change of ownership. I *own* it, so you *borrow* it. There is clearly a hierarchy of power in this relationship, which becomes more evident if the phrase is changed to the following: I *own* it, so I am *entitled to decide* whether or not you may borrow it. It seems to logically follow from “I own it” that one has full power of decision over the something owned.

Things said to “logically follow” something else, however, are not exempt from ideological colors. Those stressing their power of decision over the owned thing rarely pose the question “Do I own it?”, or even “What does *own* mean?”; the ownership is usually taken for granted. On the other hand, those more concerned with the act of lending/borrowing may prefer to emphasize the gesture of mutual support, of sharing and collaboration, perhaps even of solidarity, thus downplaying the ownership component. But it is important to note that, in both interpretations sketched above, the ownership factor remains unquestioned, being simply marked in the former case and unmarked in the latter.

This is already complex enough even in the simplest of the scenarios. Suppose the “lender” and “borrower” are two living human beings, in front of each other, interacting in a real life situation, and the owned thing is a concrete object that the lender holds in his hands. The borrower, for whatever

2 Here is an actual dictionary definition (Merriam-Webster, www.m-w.com): *Borrow*. *Etymology*: Middle English *borwen*, from Old English *borgian*; akin to Old English *beorgan* to preserve — more at *bury*. *Date*: before 12th century. *Transitive verb*. 1a: to receive with the implied or expressed intention of returning the same or an equivalent <borrow a book> <borrowed a dollar> b: to borrow (money) with the intention of returning the same plus interest. 2a: to appropriate for one's own use <borrow a metaphor> b: derive, adopt. 3: to take (one) from a digit of the minuend in arithmetical subtraction in order to add as 10 to the digit holding the next lower place. 4: to adopt into one language from another. 5 *dialect*: lend. The suggested connection, in the English language, of “borrow” with “bury” is something I will probably investigate more in the future.

reason, seeks to have that very same object in his hands for some time, with consent of the lender. Even with such a straightforward scenario, the questions raised in the previous paragraph are not so simple to answer: not only one should ask “what does own mean?”, but also “how did the object first get into the borrower's hands?”, and even “why do they need that object anyway?”. As the scenario gets more complex, so do the questions. For our purposes, for example, the “object” may be a piece of music, in fragments or in its entirety; the “borrower” may be a musician who wishes to use that piece of music (in whatever way) to create a new one; and the “lender” is... who is the lender? The composer of the original piece of music? The record label with which the composer has a contract? What if the composer is dead? And what exactly is “the object”? A digital audio file? A score printed on paper? The sounds? Or the way they sound?

I am not hoping to provide, here, answers to these questions. However, the previous discussion reveals some different aspects of the term “borrowing”. As suggested above, “to borrow” may signify an explicit advocacy, or an implicit acceptance, of the concept of ownership, with practical consequences ranging from normative/restrictive to supportive/cooperative behaviors.³ Now, I would like to suggest a possible expansion, or even distortion, of the concept of borrowing; one based, in fact, in the elimination (or minimization) of the idea of individual ownership as it was discussed above. Instead, if a notion of collective ownership is put at work, the very meaning of borrowing undergoes a significant transformation. Suppose cultural realizations produced within a given society are primarily perceived as belonging to the society as a whole, and only secondarily to the individuals who “created” them. Paradoxically, any “borrower” becomes also the one of the “lenders”, since s/he is part of the collectivity that “owns” that something being borrowed. The image of lender would not anymore be

3 The few questions posed in the last paragraphs are only an incomplete sketch of a critique of the concept of ownership and its hidden assumption in the expression “musical borrowing”; no specific arguments are presented as to why this concept may be damaging to music. This connects directly to the debate on intellectual property, to which the advent of digital music has contributed enormously in the recent decade. Time permitting, I will try to go back to this topic in Question #4.

exclusively associated to a single individual — rather, it would be intrinsically associated to the society that made possible the existence of such individual (and, therefore, made possible the appearance of the “objects” *brought to light* by the individual).⁴

As a result, the potential centralization of power by individuals or small groups would be minimized, if not eliminated. The borrower has as much right to borrow than any other member of the collective. The restrictive or normative attitudes (which bar someone from doing something) are replaced by an ongoing collective evaluation of the results of various borrowings made by different individuals, as they circulate back into the collective. This *feedback effect* of consecutive borrowings on society recuperates, in a way, the “intention of returning” that was an integral part of the very definition of the word. Seen in terms of a human collective within history, all borrowings that are of any consequence beyond the individual sphere are naturally going to return to such collective, in the best cases as a new and useful, or meaningful, work (the word “useful”, here, is used in a very broad sense, not necessarily a utilitarian one). Results of borrowings freely feeding new borrowings, in what would truly constitute a free, and moneyless, market of ideas.⁵ This also leads to the correlate topic of censorship; not only borrowings are commonly barred due to profit interests, but often due to “moral” concerns, or the defense of the “integrity” of the original work or author. One could argue that there is no reason to reject *a priori* those borrowings that might lead to uninteresting, decrepit, obsolete, useless —here in the utilitarian sense—, meaningless, or even “offensive” work.⁶ To generate trash can be at

4 “Individual”, here, can mean not only a single person, but any cultural sub-group of society. Similarly, “object” can be any product, material or immaterial, fruit of human work (thoughts and ideas included). All this is certainly downplaying the role of the individual subject in the process; however, given that our current society has steered so sharply into a rather individualistic mode of perceiving and acting in the world, it seems necessary to me to steer sharply in the opposite direction for a moment in order to achieve a balance. I should make it clear that I do not believe that individuals are mere receptacles or transmitters of the wisdom of an impalpable “collective mind”; this would simply be switching from one authoritarian “invisible hand” to another.

5 It seems I have just *borrowed*, or almost *stolen*, the term “free market”, of clear neoliberal origins, and recycled it for quite different purposes.

6 Censorship is sometimes defended on the grounds of protecting the author, the work, or their image, from being distorted, twisted, destroyed. The point is that such safeguarding mechanisms may be simply aborting opportunities for an otherwise fruitful public debate about some meaningful idea or issue. One may or may not like, or agree with, new creations based on the reutilization of existing material, and that is fine. But it is probably unfavorable to a collective, more often than not, to have individuals with the right of prohibiting reutilization of material because of moral or

least as necessary and important as any other human activity (think of defecating!); accordingly, to learn how to properly live with trash in a sustainable way is just as important.⁷

Back to our main topic, and to sum up, this renewed definition of borrowing would be based on the premises that the concept of ownership, if it is to be kept at all, is primarily public/collective, and secondarily private/individual. The act of temporary transfer of ownership, which is how we defined borrowing earlier, achieves a specific new meaning that is less centered on the proprietary, restrictive owning, and more focused on sharing: who is using the object now, who else wishes or needs it next, and how these individuals negotiate a fair sharing among them. To borrow, then, can mean to take and use some pre-existing thing that came from another individual or group, even another time or place, with the intention to return this something to the collective pool. Ideally, no one has unquestioned powers to prohibit or restrict future uses of the “objects”.⁸

Finally, borrowing implies a type of motion, or at least, as suggested above, a transfer. Something gets transferred from A to B. Things or ideas go from one place and time to another, often taking a new shape in the process. It is easy to generalize and to say that everything is borrowing, since everyone grows up withing a given culture, thus everything that is made today has a precedent. I have written all the above digression having in mind music as a model, although I did try not to limit the discussion to music at this point, leaving things open in a way that they could extended to a more generalized model of circulation of ideas based on the the concept of borrowing. Now, to prevent the definition from becoming so generalized as to be rendered useless, it may be interesting to specify that,

proprietary interests, often of an individualistic nature.

- 7 I had initially written “how to *dispose of* trash properly”; after some thought, in order to avoid any possible misunderstanding, I changed it to “how to *live with* trash properly”. We all like to recycle our milk cartons; but when talking of culture, the “trash” analogy has to be taken with caution, even if I’m clearly trying to use it in a sympathetic manner. There is always people out there ready to take literally the “*dispose of*” metaphor and go on to organizing mildly modernized degenerate art exhibitions and book-burning protests. This type of cultural intolerance is at the opposite side of what I am trying to describe.
- 8 Naturally, conflicts will arise when different interests are in play, and these will have to be solved in a case by case basis. The point is that the power of decision has to be, in practice, decentralized enough to avoid dictatorial spins or unjust favoring of one segment of people over others.

for our musical purposes here, borrowing also requires a degree of consciousness of the borrower about the transfer itself. In other words, musical borrowing exists to the extent that one is able to identify, in any given stage of the musical act under investigation, one or more circumscribed musical sources being consciously used as a model, a point of departure, a framework to imitate or to react against, to pay homage or to satirize, etc.⁹

* * *

In terms of a taxonomy of musical borrowing, it is worth discussing a few of the other related categories listed in the first paragraph of this essay. I will provide excerpts of standard definitions as found in the Online Grove Dictionary¹⁰, and make comments after each of them.

QUOTATION: The incorporation of a relatively brief segment of existing music in another work, in a manner akin to quotation in speech or literature, or a segment of existing music so incorporated in a later work. (...) Quotation is distinct from other forms of Borrowing in that the borrowed material is presented exactly or nearly so, unlike an Allusion or Paraphrase, but is not part of the main substance of the work. (...) A Quotation in speech or literature may be attributed or unattributed, familiar or unfamiliar to the listener/reader, set off from the surrounding context by punctuation or tone of voice or so integrated with its context that only the most observant notice that it is a quotation.

Quotations of melodies, associated or not with lyrics, seem to be the most common case of quotation throughout western music history. Mahler quotes his own songs in some symphonies; Ives quoted hymns and civil war battle songs; some improvisers (not only of jazz) quote all sorts of pieces

9 This is not necessarily something that will translate directly into recognition of the original material from a listener's perspective. The consciousness of the borrowing could happen in an initial stage of a compositional process, but the final composition may very well be very distant in audible terms from the original borrowed material. Or, to suggest another extreme case, the borrowing may go unnoticed by performers and listeners, and even the composer be unconscious about it; perhaps it is accessible only from the analytical point of view of a musicologist.

10 All indented passages in *italics* within this next section are from Grove Music Online, <www.grovemusic.com>, accessed November 2007.

in their performances. Other aspects besides melody could arguably be quoted as well, such as harmony, texture or timbre; however, it seems they are less amenable to being defined as “quotations”; I would rather think of “allusion” or “reference” as a better descriptor. There is something linear about the definition of quotation, probably due to our very use of quotation in written language: we usually expected to start and end them with double quotes; we can clearly identify their boundaries, in a temporal, left-to-right manner. And usually they are short — although this doesn't make for a hard rule, there is definitely some sense of ephemerality in a quotation. In academic texts, there are explicit rules as to how much quotation is acceptable (a paper consisting of a five-page literal quotation from a book, with credits correctly given, double quotes clearly used and everything, is still not “OK”). In music, pitch contours seem to be very good at providing a sharpness of profile with strong identity; very suitable for being “quoted” in the sense being discussed. Of course, entire passages of a piece can be quoted within another piece; according to the size of the quotation, the degree of “integration” of the quoted piece in the new context, and the existence (or not) of other quoted fragments nearby, one might find the term “collage” more useful.

COLLAGE: A term borrowed from the visual arts, where it refers to the act of pasting diverse objects, fragments or clippings on to a background, or to the work of art that results. Musical collage is the juxtaposition of multiple quotations, styles or textures so that each element maintains its individuality and the elements are perceived as excerpted from many sources and arranged together, rather than sharing common origins.

Bernd Alois Zimmerman's *Monologe*, for two pianos, comes to my mind as an interesting example of the space between the terms “quotation” and “collage”. There I find both the ephemeral isolation of what I would call a quotation, and the consistent juxtaposition and superimposition of different quotations, usually standing out on their own, less integrated with a background, which brings to me the flavor of collage. We can see already that the main point of using these words is perhaps to

help us to find the nuances between various musical patterns of construction — so that, hopefully, we are not just creating categories for the pleasure (?) of labeling things. Ives, again, is another composer often associated with collage. Retrospectively, one might use the term also for passages of Mahler and even Mozart. John Zorn's *Carny*, for piano solo, also carries, to me, an energetic and rhythmic flavor of collage, but it also opens up doors for some other terms, such as parody and allusion.

PARODY: (i) A term used to denote a technique of composition, primarily associated with the 16th century, involving the use of pre-existing material (“parody mass”); (ii) A composition generally of humorous or satirical intent in which turns of phrase or other features characteristic of another composer or type of composition are employed and made to appear ridiculous, especially through their application to ludicrously inappropriate subjects.

Apart from the 16th century sense, the mimicking of features or typical characteristics of another piece is a very peculiar type of borrowing, in that it has a more or less direct stance toward the borrowed material: humor. Opera, in its golden years as entertainment music, was probably one of the most fertile grounds for parody. Of course, the original source, and possibly its historical context, must be known for the parody to make any sense at all. Parodies, thus, tend to fade away in meaning with the passage of time, and after a few centuries may end up being comprehensible only to specialized scholars.

ALLUSION: A reference in a musical work to another work or style or convention, in a manner akin to an allusion in speech or literature, or the act of making such a reference. Allusion to a particular work is generally distinguished from Quotation in that material is not quoted directly, but a reference is made through some other similarity between the two works, such as gesture, melodic or rhythmic contour, timbre, texture or form. (...) Generally an allusion is made in order to evoke associations with the work, style or convention alluded to and thus to convey meaning; to invoke a work or style as a model for the new work or in homage to another composer; or in some other way to suggest a link with the music alluded to that calls for interpretation. This purpose sets allusion apart from other forms of Borrowing, such as Paraphrase, Variations or Cantus firmus, which elaborate borrowed musical material without necessarily demanding interpretation or conveying meaning.

This definition of allusion brings more evidently into play the degree of recognizability of the source; more specifically the meaning of this very *degree* of recognizability. It seems obvious that clear recognizability is a premise for the perception of a quotation, a collage, and, of course, a humorous parody. An allusion, however, has an intrinsic component of *indirectness*, of non-assertiveness. It is almost a “hidden quotation”, something that is disguised, thus requiring from the listener a bit more of active participation in the process of decoding it. Allusions can be slightly out-of-focus images in a way that quotations cannot. As I mentioned before, perhaps “allusion” is a better way of describing musical references related to timbre, texture, style, harmonies. The more “in-focus” an allusion gets, the closer it is to a real quotation. Pousseur's *Vue sur les jardins interdits* is an interesting example of — precisely — this space between quotation and allusion, as he tries to gradually build his way to the literal quotation of an early Baroque song).

PARAPHRASE: (i) A compositional technique, popular particularly in the 15th and 16th centuries, whereby a pre-existing melody (usually chant) is used in a polyphonic work; it may be subjected to rhythmic and melodic ornamentation but it is not obscured. (...) It has been suggested that composers (...) consciously included in their works short citations or paraphrases of sections of well-known chants or even of works by other composers for interpretative or symbolic purposes. Paraphrases of popular tunes are also found in the music of Charles Ives, notably in his Second Symphony (1902). (ii) In the 19th century the 'Paraphrase de Concert', sometimes called 'Reminiscences' or 'Fantaisie', was a virtuoso work based on well-known tunes, usually taken from popular operas. Liszt in particular wrote such paraphrases for piano, including “Grande paraphrase de la marche de Donizetti” (1847) and “Totentanz: Paraphrase über das Dies irae” (1849).

Paraphrase, today, seems to be a slightly less useful term for me, apart from its historical uses described above. It appears to lie between direct quotation and indirect allusion, without adding any peculiar characteristic to either side. If I were to use the term loosely, I could perhaps describe one of

my own pieces as paraphrase: I composer *In Other Words*, (for saxophone, prepared piano and live-electronics) as a sort of paraphrase of a recorded improvisation of two years earlier. That is why I gave it that title: an attempt to “explain”, or elaborate on, that earlier improvisation; say the same thing again using different words, maybe trying to “achieve greater clarity”.

MODELLING: The use of an existing piece of music as a model or pattern for a new work, in whole or in part. Modelling may involve assuming the existing work's structure, incorporating part of its melodic or rhythmic material, imitating its form or procedures, or following its example in some other way. Other types of Borrowing in music, such as Quotation, Paraphrase, Parody or Allusion, are often evident in instances of modelling, but modelling implies a deeper relationship of imitation or emulation. (...) In the Western tradition, composers have used modelling in four main ways: 1) To learn how to compose in a certain style or genre, by imitating a work in that style or genre [Example: Monteverdi based early madrigals on madrigals by Luzzaschi, Marenzio, and Wert]; 2) To imitate a particularly successful or exemplary work [Examples: reworking of popular chansons in the Renaissance; Beethoven's Ninth Symphony served as model for many successors]; 3) to emulate, compete with, pay homage to or comment on the work of another composer [Machaut using isorhythmic motets by Vitry; Debussy's Pelléas et Mélisande modelled on Wagner's Tristan und Isolde, and as a critique of it; Bartók's modelling of the second movement of his Piano Concerto No. 3 on the third movement of Beethoven's Quartet in A minor op. 132]; or 4) To allude to a well-known work and thus convey meaning [Examples: same Bartók example cited above: Beethoven wrote 'Heiliger Dankgesang...' after recovering from serious illness, and so did Bartók].

Modelling, then, refers primarily to the process of composition itself; and, secondarily, to the perceptual attributes that the new work may share with its model. If I may refer to another piece of mine, *Anomia*, for chamber ensemble, was composed with some sort of micro- and macro-modelling in mind. The *In Nomine* chant was used as macro-architecture of the whole piece. The “bricks” of such building were more or less literal excerpts from several existing pieces by other composers (usually less than a measure long), assembled together in its microscopical existence. It is probably a stretch to call this “micro-modelling”, but somehow this extension of the modelling idea to the cellular dimension seems to make sense in the case of my piece *Anomia*. (this should be discussed in more detail later)

QUESTION #2. Discuss the mechanics of musical borrowing. What is the function of a borrowed material? How is the meaning of a borrowed material transformed by its context? Does a meaningful relationship emerge between the new piece and its source? Etc.

Borrowing in music is historically extremely common, more than one might believe at first. Using pre-existing musical material in order to create more music seems to have been, if not the rule, certainly not the exception for several centuries of Western music. The very concept of a musical piece as a closed entity is not something that always existed: early polyphonic music such as the organum, for example, was based on existing chants belonging to a “common fund”, and perhaps the polyphonic renderings of such melodies were more a type of performance practice than a conscious act of borrowing to create something “new”.¹¹ In a way, it is because our musical culture has developed a more or less consistent and widespread notion of what a piece of music is, how to recognize one, where to expect to find its boundaries, and which distinctive characteristics it may have, it is thus because of this configuration of our musical thinking that we can state that certain sounds have been “transferred” from one place to another. The boundaries between such places (pieces, genres) have to be well

¹¹ This idea from Burkholder, P. Grove Online, “musical borrowing” entry, accessed November 2007 <www.grovemusic.com>. Today, what we call an *arrangement* is understood as another version of one same original piece; we may even know versions of a song that are extremely different from each other, but we think of them as the *same* piece; we don't see borrowing there.

defined, and historically understood. For example, patterns of tonal cadences in classical music are not seen as borrowings of one composer from another; they are part of the current style, and they are not seen as “belonging” to anyone. Now, Mozart's use of multiple *topics* in his pieces can be seen as borrowings from identified styles or manners of his own time. Two hundred years later, when Donatoni finishes his orchestral piece *Souvenir* with a major triad, it is hard not to grasp that moment as a symbol, an allusion to an earlier time, even if the listener is not aware of the hidden reference to the ending of Schoenberg's Chamber Symphony (that's where Donatoni took the major triad from).

Borrowed musical material can have a structural function in the composition of new music. Machaut would borrow from Vitry not only distinctive melodies, but also *talea* and color patterns to compose his own isorhythmic motets. In Charles Ives' “cumulative form”, a piece can be structured around the idea of gradually revealing a certain borrowed material, in a trajectory moving from obscurity to clarity in the presentation of the source. The tradition of the Catholic Masses from 15th and 16th centuries was based on the use of pre-existing material: a single well-known melody could be used by various composers in their own masses.¹² The old Theme and Variations idea is another example of a pre-existing material lending its structure to the creation of new music. These are just a few of numerous possible examples.

Not all borrowed materials have a “structural function” in the new work, however. The use of pre-existing material sometimes can happen more casually, in a way that is not directly related to the body of the new work. It may be an ephemeral reference or quotation with a symbolic meaning attached to it; something of a local importance, adding an extra layer of reference to the piece, but not

¹² Incidentally, the “nature” of musical inventiveness in the Renaissance seems to be that of “what you can do with given material” (from tradition), as opposed to “what new material you can create”, which is a historically more recent trend. The interesting aspect here is that the “ownership of the music lay with the user as much or more than with the originator” (Burkholder, Grove Online, Borrowing, §7: Renaissance secular music. <www.groveonline.com>), which is closer to the alternative concept of borrowing proposed earlier in this paper. However, originality in the sense of “creating a new thing” also had its place in the Renaissance; the madrigals seem to have been a field for the exploration of the new. Even in this case, however, we sometimes find modelling, such as in some madrigals by Monteverdi that are based on previous madrigals by Marenzio.

essentially related to music around it. It may be a detour from the ongoing discourse of a given piece, perhaps elicited by an unsuspected similarity between materials, recognized and taken up by the composer during the compositional process.

The perceived and intended *meanings* of borrowed materials within a piece of music is an immense topic in itself. First we have to differentiate whether we are talking about musical meaning or extra-musical, associative meaning. A given material may be borrowed precisely because of its extra-musical connotations, which may be related to a programme, a text, a description of a mood or situation, a reference (respectful, satirical, critical) to a person or event, and so on. If we are to enter into the tricky topic of musical meaning or musical semantics, then we have to discuss what happens to a given excerpt of music—which musically *meant* something in its original context—when it is presented within a different context. Some composers, in fact, see musical borrowing with extreme suspicion. The reasoning for this rejection is often the claim that not only the original musical meaning of a fragment is totally lost when “pasted” onto a new context, but, even worse, the musical meaning of the new work is also compromised by the existence of this alien body. The borrowed passage would be continuously calling the attention to itself, crying out for its amputated meaning, whereas the remaining bits of original music around it would be simply left in the limbo, orbiting around that unwanted leading actor on stage, the alien body, to which everything else would serve as mere scenery. This tragic scenario may well be true for some least successful examples of musical borrowing in the 20th century, but it certainly cannot be generalized. There are several pieces in which meaningful relationships with borrowed material were created and explored. Again, we can turn to Mahler and Ives, but also Berg, Berio and Stockhausen, just to name a few. In a way, to neglect the possibilities, or the validity, of musical borrowing amounts to neglect one of the most extraordinary attributes of the musical *matter* in general: its flexibility, elasticity, adaptability, malleability³.

13 Malleable: “able to be hammered or pressed permanently out of shape *without breaking or cracking*”. The Latin verb *malleare* means to hammer, and that reminds me of the word “mallet”; and then comes the figure of the composer as a

QUESTION #3. Focusing on examples of music by Donatoni and Pousseur—but expanding your response to include other composers as relevant—respond to the following:

A. What motivates musical borrowing?

B. What musical parameters are especially attended to or ignored in acts of musical borrowing?

C. What are the issues surrounding the ultimate recognizability of the source material?

D. What are the "compositional combination principles"—of borrowed music to original music, and of borrowed music to other borrowed music?

E. How is optimism or pessimism modeled in various composers' approaches to musical borrowing?

F. How do approaches that embody 'the assertion of compositional authority' or 'the suppression of the composer's ego' manifest themselves?

G. Was there something particular about the two decades following World War II that made musical borrowing especially vibrant or necessary?

percussionist, working in a forge, hammering old sounds at high temperatures, beating them subtly into new shapes, and sweating. Music, in the end, is all... forgery? (Stravinsky didn't borrow; he stole.)

I will start with question G: what happened to musical borrowing after World War II? We have seen that musical borrowing has been a constant presence in Western music tradition. The use of pre-existing material to create new works became a somewhat marginalized practice over the past two centuries, as our musical culture gave prominence to the ideals of individuality, originality and uniqueness, along with an increased sense of ownership of music as intellectual property. However, the second half of the 20th century (particularly after the 1960s) has witnessed a burst of renewed interest in musical borrowing. Here is just a short list of pieces from that decade to demonstrate this tendency:

Peter Maxwell-Davies: *Seven In Nomine* (1963-5), *Antechrist* (1967)

Bernd Alois Zimmermann: *Monologe* (1964), *Musique pour les souper du roi Ubu* (1966)

George Rochberg: *Nach Bach* (1966)

Karlheinz Stockhausen: *Hymnen* (1966-7)

Franco Donatoni: *Souvenir* (1967) & *Etwas ruhiger im Ausdruck* (1967)

Lukas Foss: *Baroque Variations* (1967)

Henri Pousseur: *Votre Faust* (1961-1968), *Couleurs Croisées* (1967)

Luciano Berio: *Sinfonia* (1968)

John Cage: *Cheap Imitation* (1969)

Mauricio Kagel: *Ludwig Van* (1969)

To recycle musical material from the distant or immediate past, and thus to re-establish some connection with it, be it an amicable, confrontational, critical and/or a complimentary one: this seems to have been one of the core concerns of composers working in the 1960s, and, to some extent, of several composers today as well. The historical position of those working in the 1960s makes their case particularly worth looking at, since many of them were coming, directly or indirectly, from the total serialism of the 1950s. Integral serialism was marked by the efforts to develop a new musical language from scratch, moving into the unexplored territories left open by Anton Webern (as he was elected the

mentor of this new European generation, self-named “post-Webernian”). The incorporation of pre-existing material, then, was seen as something completely extraneous and even inadmissible, considering the goals of serialist composers during the 1950s. Why did composers return to musical borrowing (in its various facets)? Were there precedents? How did this change occur? What are the questions and problems posed by this “new” practice?

In order to provide some insight into these questions and to assess their pertinence in what concerns my current compositional practice, I will focus on two different composers from that generation that are dealt with musical borrowing extensively not only in their musical practice but also in their theoretical writings: Henri Pousseur and Franco Donatoni. Each one having pursued a different path, I believe that a close examination of some of their ideas and pieces can be an interesting and helpful enterprise in the process of discussing the issues of contemporary musical borrowing.

Turning to question A: what motivates musical borrowing? I will spend a few pages now on answering this question as it relates to Henri Pousseur and Franco Donatoni.

Composers coming from total serialism had opened up a number of doors in terms of musical speculation, as well as expanded horizons of listening and perception. However, this happened at the cost of an idealized suspension or rejection of most, or all links with the past. Coming from the heart of the serial thinking, Henri Pousseur began, interestingly enough, to question some of the more dogmatic assumptions of their own serial practice. Specifically, he was particularly concerned with the development of harmony. In his essay “L'Apothéose de Rameau”¹⁴, Pousseur sets off in a journey of redefining all the basic principles for a viable path of harmonic investigation, as he saw fit. His first criticism is pointed towards the harmonic deficiencies of serial music.

Pousseur identifies, in the 1950s, a deliberate “freezing” of harmonic properties related to the tonal grammar (there included recent enlargements of tonality, like Bartók and Stravinsky, and ancient

¹⁴ Pousseur, Henri. “L'apothéose de Rameau: essai sur la question harmonique”, in *Revue d'esthétique*, xxi/2-4 (1968), pp. 105-172.

modal practices that are not reducible to tonality, although they may share some surface sonorities with it):

The freezing of the almost totality of harmonic functions known and maybe even possible (...) had evidently produced a particularly homogeneous state of the frequency material, an arrangement of the auditory “space” which seemed to justify a very linear conception of things, a unidimensional representation. However, such homogeneity (...) is the result of a whole series of precautionary measures with the goal of blocking the appearance of certain harmonic properties. This practice obliges one to recognize , more or less consciously, more or less explicitly, the virtual existence of such properties (...). (Pousseur, 1968, pp. 105-6)¹⁵

The most striking consequence of such paralysis, partially voluntary, is the extraordinary gap, the exceptionally frail degree of communication that one can then detect, regarding the musically vital variation of the frequencies, between the level of constructive intentions and that of the perceptive results. The structural[ist] work, of which the traditional serial techniques (permutations, etc...) give the most notorious example, takes place on an extremely abstract plan, on a plan of relationships of a very high coefficient of intellectuality, whereas the perceptive result is located on the contrary on a plan as concrete as possible, on a plan in which the pitches are only one aspect, among others, of the timbre, the most immediate materiality of sound. The link from one of these plans to the other is deliberately deprived of solid intermediary states, which a realistic as well as logic reflection would nevertheless provide. (Pousseur, 1968, p. 106)

Pousseur is basically trying to define a new phenomenological approach to composition as it concerns harmony and pitch perception in general. The way humans perceive events in the frequency domain can originate different levels of pre-musical functionalities, based on which musical structures can be developed. These functions are in practice often intertwined, and it may be almost impossible to isolate just one of them in practice. Pousseur distinguishes four levels of this pre-musical “processing” of the frequency domain. From the more concrete to the more abstract, they are:

- a) coloristic function
- b) melodic function
- c) harmonic function
- d) combinatorial function

¹⁵ Unless otherwise noted, all quotes on this and the following pages are from Pousseur's essay cited in footnote 14 (my translation).

The coloristic function is related to timbre. It is, according to Pousseur, one of the most immediate and concrete ways of perceptual apprehension of the frequency domain. The degree of perceived luminosity in sound is the main variable in this category. High frequencies are usually related to the notions and experiences of clarity, luminosity, energy, speed, lightness, vivacity, scintillation, sharpness, whereas lower frequencies tend to be associated with darkness, inertia, slowness, weight, opaqueness, gravity. Due to the complex nature of our perception, these notions are not necessarily always in opposition: a powerful bassoon note in the lower register may be perceived at the same time as somber and bright. A fuller description of the universe of sound colors will also have to include both periodic and aperiodic vibration phenomena. Those in a more harmonic relationship will be perceived as pitched sounds. More irregular events will constitute the category of noise. Finally, sounds of bell-like inharmonic spectral content will fill an intermediary space between basic pitched sounds and noise.¹⁶ Pousseur defines this as the most concrete of the four categories due to its impossibility of transposition, that is, the fact that timbre does not easily lend itself to a systematized organization into a valid perceptual scale. There is no straightforward principle under which timbre is organized in a sequence of phenomenologically equal values. It is more qualitative than quantitative, and usually highly context-dependent, subject to a more localized scale of correspondence between different terms. The melodic function, on the other hand, focuses on the perception of relationships rather than the local perception of absolute values typical of the coloristic function. Still recurring to basic (physical and psychological) modes of apprehension of the sound world, Pousseur brings in the notions of weight and height that constitute “the fictional space in which the musical scales allow us to move, in which we can ascend, descend, take steps of various sizes, measure the distances (of sizable variation) between points.” (Pousseur, p. 109). Here, the movement between one point to another is of significance, with the correlate impression of energy dissipation suggested by it. Because of this measurable perceptual

¹⁶ These concepts are clearly influenced by the practice and theory of electroacoustic music at the time. Pierre Schaffer discussed similar categories in his *Traité des Objets Musicaux*.

grid, the melodic function has “an actual transposability, and, in consequence, a greater generality: we are able to find (...) the same melodic value (...) at different registers, at different pitch zones, for the good reason that we are capable of identifying such a distance in each of the different registers.” (p. 110). Pousseur also calls for a more subtle understanding of the harmonic properties of the melodic function and vice-versa: that is, not to simply attach melody to “successive” and harmony to “simultaneous”. The melodic function, far from being a purely horizontal phenomenon, is always charged with a series of potential harmonic values. The evaluation of the constituents of a chord, on the other hand, has to take in account the melodic values built into it. In any case, the distance between points is the driving factor of the melodic function: a minor ninth and an octave, for example, are very close to each other, whereas a minor ninth and a minor second are very different events.

Pousseur begins his explanation of the harmonic function with a digression on, or a quest for, a “certain unanimity of elementary perception” across different musical cultures. He deems as arbitrary the self-imposed ban on octaves and other consonances¹⁷ typical of serial and atonal theories, and defends an exploration of the harmonic space that takes into account not only potentially unexplored territories, but also the already existing historical spaces such as tonality in all its manifestations. Beyond a simple, direct reuse of tonal functions from the past, his goal is an integration of “older” harmonic functions into an expanded map of possible functions ranging from what is usually called “tonal” and “atonal”. It is here that we will see Pousseur's most intimate connection with musical borrowing — this nascent harmonic theory will basically frame the birth of his need and his motivation for reusing and re-integrating existing material into new works. Pousseur feels the need of integrating not only the past of the western music with contemporary western music, but also the need of explaining other musical realities from outside the western world. This is why he takes a considerable time to discuss the possibility that underlying perceptual features of the human ear could be partially

¹⁷ “Intervals of strong inclination”, as he puts it (“intervalles à forte pente”) (Pousseur, p. 111).

responsible for the historical development of tonal music in the Western world (as well as other musical systems of different cultures). Tonality would be but one specific example, or a demonstration, of a culture dealing with (or reacting to) natural phenomena. In other words, he is talking about the nature of human perception and the nature of sound, and how these things might have contributed to the appearance of different musical systems throughout human history. Although such systems may be very different, Pousseur believes that there must be some common denominator to them. “Of course”, he writes, “the shape this culture will take is not simply dictated by its initial conditions of birth, but the randomness of such birth acts within a certain field of possibilities, within a defined combinatorial space, delimited by those same conditions (which, moreover, will be themselves modified by such birth).” (p. 112)¹⁸

The perception of the octave (and perhaps the fifths, thirds), the way it, in some essential form, seems to be an unanimous fact among different cultures, is one of the pillars of this argument. The value assigned to it and its role within a given musical code may vary, however. After this digression, Pousseur sets out to define more clearly the category of harmonic function: it is not anymore the criteria of distance in a fictional pitch space that plays the leading role. Primordial elements are now “the notions of kinship, subordination, polarity, attraction and repulsion, and all other sorts of relationship between sound phenomena (...) based essentially on the proportional properties of intervals and groups of intervals.” (p. 113). The harmonic function is then more abstract and generalizable than

18 Could we draw a parallel with language? I'm thinking of the book “The Atoms of Language” by Mark Baker. Are there basic, innate human constraints that guide what “kinds” of music that may exist? Are there “parameters” that serve as basic ‘recipe lines’ determining which paths musical languages can possibly follow? Or is music something essentially different from language in that sense? Would the “common denominators” for music be much more general and open-ended than those for language? Is it possible to sketch a “periodic table of musics”, in which musics that share similar assumptions (have similar “properties”) would be located next to each other in a two- or three-dimensional space? (or do we need more dimensions)? Could this “periodic table” not only accommodate existing musics from all civilizations, but also be potentially “speculative”, or “prospective”? (this table would probably leave blank spaces for those specific combinations of parameters that do not find a past or present musical practice correlated to it; such blank spaces would then be potentially worth investigating...?) How would this periodic table change over time? It would HAVE to change over time, since we are talking about cultural facts, not chemical elements. The “language” periodic table (as proposed by Baker) does change over time. Or is this all nonsense?

the previous categories. Interestingly, Pousseur leaves open the space for other types of harmonic classification not based on octave relationship: “Finally, it must be recognized that the employ of the octave as agent of identification and grouping criterion, in spite of its high rate of cultural occurrence, in spite of its elevated natural probability, is, perhaps, probably, not the only possible one; it must be recognized that other types, just as effective, of organization, certainly of pre-organization, of the harmonic domain are perhaps possible, are perhaps potentially contained in the structure of the acoustic material.” (p. 115)

He finishes this introduction by exposing the fourth and last perceptual category of the frequency domain: the combinatorial function. By combinatorial he means “a collection of operations, often of serial type, in which the ear seems to play a subordinate role, in which intellectual relations, logic articulations, mostly discernible through reading and analysis, are the ones taking up the importance (...)”. (p. 116). This fourth category is not entirely explainable with criteria taken from the previous three functions. A typical example of this category is the usual manipulation of a twelve-tone row through procedures such as inversion, retrogradation, and different types of permutations. These are not melodic manipulations, since they occur in a higher level of abstraction; nor they are necessarily harmonic, in the sense explained earlier.

In his large operatic enterprise “Votre Faust”, a close collaboration with writer Michel Butor, Pousseur's explicit goal was to devise a method to integrate musical quotations from the most distant styles and historical periods of Western music, mainly based on his harmonic research, his more salient vector of interest. Having extensively analyzed the music of Webern, he hypothesized that the essentially multi-polar nature of Webernian harmony is grounded in the same basic principles of attraction and repulsion of intervals that are at work in tonal music. In Webern, these forces would be used not with the goal of confirming the dominance of a tonal center, but, on the contrary, with the goal of neutralizing such attractions and finding a field of equilibrium, in which “each sound point would

have the same importance.” (p. 123). The question, then, would be to find intermediary regions between those two uses of the material, between single-centered tonal harmonies and multi-polar “atonal” ones. Pousseur saw polytonality, pre-Webernian “atonal” music, and Debussyian or Stravinskyian harmonies as practical examples of such possible regions, although not fully understood or theorized.

There was no point for Pousseur to introduce musical quotations as “strange bodies”. The idea was to develop a harmonic language within which such quotations “could somehow find their place naturally.” (p. 122). This idea can be best explained by Pousseur's own words:

I could for example begin by formulating [the problem] in the following way: how to arrive at “rhyming”, within one same composition, a quotation by Gluck or Monteverdi, and another by Webern (two grammatical domains which until then have appeared to me to be exactly opposites and practically incompatible), how to arrive at “conjugating” them, at finding their common functions, and, to begin with, how to establish between them a series of intermediary types susceptible of convincing the musical ear of their belonging to one same and more general domain? (p. 122)

One of his first approaches was to turn to history itself. The evolution from early tonal music to atonality would provide one possible connecting path, “the first elements of a 'grammatical scale', of a comprehensive harmonic space.” (p. 122). Pousseur soon recognized that such a linear view of history would leave several things outside of such scale (for example, Gesualdo, Debussy, Moussorgsky, Messiaen). To take all possible harmonic vocabularies into account is obviously a much more complex task. In a virtual table of all possible harmonic fields there would exist a significant number of empty spaces, representing those combinations, derivations and developments of existing harmonic vocabularies that, however, have not been actually utilized in history.¹⁹

The examination of such unexplored territories of possible harmonic functions and the techniques he developed in order to do that are the remainder of Pousseur's essay. What I am trying to

¹⁹ Again, this is what I would call a “periodic table of harmonic elements”; see footnote number 18.

provide with all this commentary on the initial steps of Pousseur's harmonic explorations is an understanding of the inner motivations that led him to a consistent research on musical borrowing throughout all the rest of his career. Basically, in an almost utopian sense, he was attempting to bring together different musical ages, different musical styles, harmonic vocabularies, different cultures into an organic coexistence, within the framework of a maximally expanded serialism. In fact, he was not rejecting the most basic principles of serial thought, but rather trying to expand them to include everything that could possibly be “serialized”.

It is time now to turn to Franco Donatoni, who arrived at the use of pre-existing musical material by a path totally different from Pousseur.

Having arrived “late” at the Darmstad Summer Courses (via Bruno Maderna), and possibly impressed by the work of Boulez and Stockhausen, Donatoni's first steps in this new territory consisted of “emulations” of his more famous colleagues, from whom he absorbed and learned techniques of the avant-garde of the time. Beyond simple imitation, this early relationship to his “models” already points to some degree of *indifference of material*. According to François Nicolas,

Donatoni follows that line of Western music for which the musical material is made of writing [*écriture*] more than sounds, signs more than audible material. But this material (...) is conceived by him, since its origins, as a sort of inert matter, indifferenced. There one can find a constant in his compositional manners of all periods. It's not that the material is neutral: it's in fact the very conception of composition based on writing, not on transcription of sonic moods.²⁰

It was in 1959 that Donatoni met Cage, to whom he strongly reacted at first: “I felt I had to refute in block all his politics, in which I saw an enormous danger for Music.”²¹ Donatoni's bitterness against Cage appears here and there in interviews. However, he seems to have developed, at the same time, some peculiar attraction by Cage's ideas: “His Zen thing and his behavior irritated me; I detested

20 Nicolas, F. & Bonnet, A. “Franco Donatoni: Une Figure”, in *Entretiens*, No. 2, 1986, p. 64.

21 Donatoni, F. & Restagno, Enzo. “Un'autobiografia dell'autore raccontata da Enzo Restagno”. In: Restagno, E. (Ed.), Donatoni. Torino: EDT, 1990, p. 6. My translation.

him because I felt he had destroyed music, but to me it always happens that when I hate something, I end up falling for it sooner or later.”²² Donatoni became more and more concerned with the subjective self, in a quest for eliminating certain modes of expression through a increasing specification and precision of his procedures of manipulation of the material, not without an interlude, in the mid-1960s, of exploration of indeterminate notation and reliance on detailed verbal instructions to guide the performers. By the late 1960s, Donatoni proceeds to operate on material extracted from works by other composers of his time, in an attempt to distance himself from the material; to work on something that is not “his own”. Consequently, a second characteristic develops in the same period, connected to his detachment from the material: his own distancing of the notion of work. That is Donatoni's ultimate connection with Cage: his internal refusal of the material and of the work of art — not a joyful refusal, but a painful one.²³ His use of hundreds of fragments extracted from Stockhausen's *Gruppen* in his piece *Souvenir* (1967), for example, is not without some strange irony, which he made clear once by referring the his piece as having as much value as souvenirs for tourists sold in Italy. Donatoni is the composer refusing the work, but not refusing the writing.

Here is then explained the ambivalence of Donatoni in face of Cage's provocation: Donatoni is willing to recognize that at this historical juncture there is no more room for the Author, for the Work, for Art: action has become impossible, but then he [Donatoni] does not succeed to accept all the consequences such those inferred by Cage. Donatoni does not feel to the point of resigning to the inventive paralysis which seem to be the required consequence of such considerations. (...) In such psychological and existential context, to create becomes “secretions of a functional need”, but also *guilt*.²⁴

Thus the use of borrowed material by Donatoni, in that specific period of his life which led to a personal crisis around 1975 (when he decided to quit composing), represents some sort of dead-end of a composer; but, paradoxically, an extremely fruitful dead-end, one driven by the built-in friction of a

22 Idem, p. 19.

23 Nicolas, F. & Bonnet, A. “Franco Donatoni: Une Figure”, in *Entretemps*, No. 2, 1986, p. 65.

24 Collazzo, Salvatore. “Dal nulla il molteplice. I lavori solistici con le loro proliferazioni”. In: Restagno, E. (Ed.), Donatoni. Torino: EDT, 1990, p. 117. My translation.

necessity of expression conditioned by the exclusion of expression. The motivation for borrowing fragments from others is part of the manifestation of this very suffocation: the effacing of his own subjectivity through the use of initial materials that are not his own, and their subjection to quasi-algorithmic procedures that are as impersonal (or “automatic”) as he could devise. Of course, his creativity and personal voice continued to creep in through any interstices of his self-effacing mechanisms.

* * *

I would like to turn now to a discussion of specific musical examples, which hopefully will help in collectively answering parts B, C, and D of Question #3: What musical parameters are especially attended to or ignored in acts of musical borrowing? What are the issues surrounding the ultimate recognizability of the source material? What are the “compositional combination principles”—of borrowed music to original music, and of borrowed music to other borrowed music?

I will start with the piece *Etwas ruhiger im Ausdruck* (1967), by Donatoni. The entire piece is based on a fragment of Schoenberg: more precisely, measure 8 of the piano piece Op. 23 No. 2. The expression indication of the bar gives the title of the piece (“A little quieter in expression”). The quotation appears dispersed in Donatoni's piece (bars 1, 7 and 14). The fragment is treated as a repository of structural elements, or triggers, from which the piece will be built. The seven bass notes played by the left hand in the original become the seed of a serial matrix of transpositions.²⁵ The matrix is further sectioned in blocks of size ranging from 1 to 4 notes. This matrix will provide the pitch material for the first part of the piece. The rhythm, on the other hand, is organized in cyclic “fields” of tuplets of an eighth note (the order is 3, 2, 5, 7, 5, 2, 3; that is, a triplet [3] will be followed by a regular binary division [2], then a quintuplet [5], then a septuplet [7], then back to the quintuplet [5], and so forth). Each sequence of approximately seven bars goes through the entire cycle of rhythmic fields.

²⁵ Most of the following analytical notes were taken from Piencikowski's article “Sauf-conduit: Analyse d'Etwas ruhiger im Ausdruck”, in *Entretemps*, No. 2, 1986. I verified every bit of the analysis directly on the score.

Every three sequences of seven bars forms a period (ca. 20 bars). A total of 5 periods forms the first one hundred bars of the piece, which can easily be called something like “Section A” of the piece. These divisions may sound schematic — and, in fact, they are, and that is the point: the process is very transparent on the page. And each one of these periods of 20 bars are actually some type of re-reading of one of the others. For example, in Period II (mm. 21-40) the piano retains the rhythm from Period I (mm. 1-20), but its pitches are taken from other instruments from corresponding places in Period I. In Period III (mm. 41-60) it, the piano begins a linear process of interval reduction based on its pitches from Period I. In Period IV (mm. 60-80), the piano continues the interval reduction process, now based on pitches from Period II. In Period V (mm. 80-100), the piano converts all its notes from Period IV into arpeggiated grace notes. Other instruments can be seen doing similar processes of interval and rhythmic reduction and densification throughout the same section. There is a feeling that once a process is triggered, it moves in a straight line until “the end”, almost gaining a life of its own, albeit a very systematic and rule-bound one.

Once all instruments arrived at a reasonably dense texture at m. 100, the whole process is cut off in an apparently arbitrary point (Could it have continued for n bars more? Or could it have been cut a few bars earlier?), and the granular staccato texture is changed to an all-legato flux of notes occasionally interrupted by rests (m. 101). Such abrupt change, however, keeps a clear connection with the immediately previous bar: it is the triggering of another process of transformation that will be taken to its exhaustion. This process couples pitch transformation with rhythmic change in the following way. Let us take the flute part as an example. In the staccato texture of m. 100, the flute has a tuplet of 39 eight-note values fitting into the bar, of which 22 are actual notes and 17 are rests. Donatoni's “algorithm” says: *the number of notes (not rests) in measure x will become the tuplet value in measure $x + 1$.*²⁶ This is how m. 101 gets a tuplet value of 22. Similarly, of these 22 values of m. 101, 21 are

²⁶ This is not actually verbalized as such by Donatoni; I made that extra step, after reading the explanation of this “rule” in the already cited article by R. Piencikowski.

actual notes and 1 is a rest. The tuplet value for m. 102 is, then, 21. Now, how do the pitches get transformed? Donatoni's algorithm of "interval reduction" in this piece basically works as follows: *take a first pair of notes of a sequence. The note that is higher goes down one semitone. The note that is lower goes up a semitone. Repeat the process for all subsequent pairs of notes. If the resulting sequence happens to have two notes of the same pitch one after the other, the second one becomes a rest.* Two interesting properties of this process are: first, it is very likely that rests will appear from one iteration to another. This is how, in fact, Donatoni makes the tuplets gradually, but irregularly, decrease bar by bar (remember he defined the value of the new tuplet of measure as the previous value minus rests). The second interesting consequence is that the profiles, or pitch contours, are roughly kept throughout successive iterations; or, more precisely, the rate of change of pitch contour is gradual enough to allow the listener to keep track of a certain *entity* throughout its slow change of *identity*.

A peculiar occurrence related to the implementation of this process in this specific piece can be seen from m. 111 on, still in the flute part. All other instruments (from m. 101 on) follow a straight line of the same "rarefaction" process, with a different tuplet value for each measure (for example, 22:16, 21:16, 17:16, 16:16, 15:16, etc; thus the notes become longer each time, at different rates of change for each instrument). The flute, however, gets stuck in m. 111 — not because of any extra rule or artifact, but precisely because it encounters a "dead-end" in its pitch sequence: it is a specific cyclic sequence of pitches that does not yield any repeated notes after the application of the 'algorithm'; thus, no new rests appear, and, as a result, the tuplet value will no longer decrease (it "stops" at 14:16). The interesting result is that the flute begins to stand out of the ensemble, being the only one to "refuse" the rarefaction process; as each one of the others eventually drops out after maximum rarefaction, the flute continues impassibly.

After the last drop-out (the piano at m. 145), it is the moment of another sudden cut-off and start of another process. These large chunks of clear processual directionality, and relative textural

homogeneity, were often called “panels” by Donatoni. One panel follows another, and a piece is organized as a collection of panels being presented to the listener.

Donatoni basically takes the pitch content of the original fragment as seed for pitch material for the piece. The original dynamics of Schoenberg's original are also kept: Donatoni uses a limited range of pp to pppp throughout the entire piece. There is not much question of recognizability of the original in this case: the original fragment is clearly ripped apart, and only an oblique reconstruction of it takes place at the end of the piece. In any case, audible recognition of the source, although partially possible to a specialized listener, is not the main point in this case. The composition principles or rules depart from the original fragment and treat it almost as indifferent matter, and trigger new processes that we might call, today, as “algorithmic” procedures.

An example of Pousseur's use of borrowed fragments will reveal a completely different working method and set of principles. In his saxophone quartet *Vue sur les jardins interdits* (1973), a direct quotation of an early Baroque song from Samuel Scheidt provides the point of reference of the entire piece. Pousseur writes about it:

Vue sur les jardins interdits was composed in the Fall 1973 and it is dedicated to the memory of Bruno Maderna, who passed away during its composition. A chanson by Samuel Scheidt (17th century), mid-way between choral and dance, and essentially composed of various chains of perfect triads, is heard at the center of the form, in a version already slightly amplified (from the point of view of tonal extension). It serves as generative cell to all other sections, which constitute variants, deformations, anamorphoses of such cell — all the more [transformed?] as they are distant of such node, towards the end and the beginning. (...) One perceives essentially a modern texture (beginning and ending by a sonic modulation similar to electroacoustic phenomena) at the heart of which one crosses little by little the space necessary for the quotation, very natural, veritably organic, of the ancestral polyphony.²⁷

The key to understand this piece is in his expression “to cross the space necessary for the quotation”. The driving aspect concerning the integration of the borrowed material with its new context is, for Pousseur, harmony. One can trace, in this piece, actual harmonic fields of various degrees of

27 In “Henri Pousseur: Visages”, *Circuit*, Vol. 12 No. 1, 2001, p. 53.

proximity or distance from the specifically triadic constitution of the source. This is organized rather consciously by Pousseur in his compositional process. Michell Goneville, in analyzing this piece²⁸, identified 41 chord-types that can be organized in degrees of “diatonicity”, thus serving adequately to establish a harmonic (and, in some renewed sense, functional) path to and from the Scheidt quotation. His system of “harmonic nets”, being developed at least since *Votre Faust* (1960-1968), is an attempt to organize pitch classes in a spiral-like manner where all attraction and repulsion forces between pitches could be represented and mapped in hierarchical “trees”, or three dimensional spaces to be navigated, containing regions of a more consonant nature (fifths, octaves, thirds) and regions of a less consonant nature, and the possible hybrids between those.

One interesting aspect of *Vue sur les jardins interdits* is that it does open some curious harmonic territories that somehow seem to effectively transit between allegedly disparate areas. Before the clear quotation arrives, these different harmonic spaces create all sorts of allusions and hints to something else, often helped by textural and rhythmic means. However, one shortcoming of this piece, in my point of view, is the fact that harmony is too much the single driving force of the work. Specifically, the piece sounds very uninteresting in terms of rhythm; it is as if the rhythm (as well as other aspects) were being dragged along the need of the harmony to be “explained”. It feels as if tables of chords had to be spelled out, so the music seems to be a bit carried away by that first requisite, in detriment of other parameters.

Another piece by Pousseur, “l’Apothéose de Rameau II” (1981), was written precisely as a practical complement to the theoretical essay of same name from 1968. In this piece, Pousseur attempts to do a quasi-programmatic piece with excerpts from his colleagues Berio, Stockhausen, Boulez, Bartholomé, in addition to Schoenberg, Webern, Stravinsky, Debussy, and, of course, Rameau. The piece contains everything from use of borrowed tone rows as structural elements to direct quotes of

28 Idem, pp. 53-57.

piece by the composers above, sometimes with serious or ironic reverence, in a climate of “debate among friends”. The piece does feel a bit closed in itself, or rather, centered around a narrow range of polemic issues already passed (the piece is from 1981, so it does feel awkward to musically restate questions that were in their apex in 1968, without renewing their formulation; Berio's *Sinfonia*, in that sense, is of a much larger scope and breadth in its questions, and it came at “the right time”, so to speak). In any case, the architecture of “l'Apotheose de Rameau II” is quite interesting. Basically, Pousseur recycles two of his own pieces as the main background of the new piece (more or less like the function that Mahler had in Berio's *Sinfonia*). One of these pieces is, precisely, the above discussed *Vue sur les jardins interdits*. The other, interestingly enough, is *Prologue dans le ciel*, which is part of *Votre Faust*. So, in fact, by choosing these pieces to be “quoted”, Pousseur is already bringing in extra levels of borrowing that were “built into” those pieces — for example, the Baroque song by Scheidt in *Vue sur les jardins interdits*, and the tone rows borrowed from Stockhausen, Boulez, Webern and others, all present already in *Prologue*. It is on top of these two self-quotations that Pousseur will weave a series of new quotations by the composers mentioned.

Recognizing quotations here is an integral part of the work. Much is lost if a listener is not able to grasp any of the references. Or, to put it differently, the piece can arguably be enjoyed by its direct listening without knowledge of quoted material and its implications; but many other layers of meaning of the piece require this knowledge. Again, harmonic transformation is the driving force of the connections between all types of borrowed material. *Timbre* gains extra importance here, as different quotations can be successfully set apart by instrumentation, and other subtle links between fragments can be established through orchestration.

* * *

Parts E and F of Question #3. How is optimism or pessimism modeled in various composers' approaches to musical borrowing? How do approaches that embody 'the assertion of compositional authority' or 'the suppression of the composer's ego' manifest themselves?

I would like to avoid the risk of falling into compartmentalized dualisms (such as creating a simplistic scenario of the type “Pousseur the optimist & Donatoni the pessimist”), although it is true that there are compelling enough elements there that make it for an attractive narrative framework.

Throughout Pousseur's essay *l'Apotheose de Rameau*, the tone of the writing is of enthusiastic optimism, of a belief in an almost scientific mode of musical investigation; or, at least, of a happy encounter of music with other disciplines such as perception, cognition, anthropology. Pousseur seems to have clear what are the specific things that are musical, and he often comments on (or open doors to) several important vectors of exploration in the field, even those outside the scope of his project at the time. One of his underlying assumptions, or beliefs, that becomes clear along the way, is that there must be some set of music universals, common to all human beings, not unlike the research for language universals. As I mentioned earlier, this would provide him with the grounds to investigate the hypothesis of a commonality of modes of pitch perception (harmony being his main interest); some sort of psycho-physiological background of human perception, over which cultures would build their set of musical values and choices, with which different cultures would interact and create their own version of a possible musical system, within all that is possibly *musical* for human beings.

And anything like that exists, then a composer who gained insight into those “secret” mechanism would be able to make bridges between otherwise disparate musical worlds; he would be able to find lost links between apparently irreconcilable harmonic worlds. Not only would he be building connections between the and present and the past of western music, but possibly finding paths to connect western music to music of other cultures.

In ways that make transparent the honesty with which he devotes himself to this research, Pousseur is not ashamed of revealing even certain dead ends he found on his way, and trying to point out certain shortcomings of his general approach. His all-inclusive research report can at times spend a good number of pages to describe in detail a process of analyzing pitch polarizations which, in the end, he found impractical and eventually had to drop. At the end of the article, he recognizes that he left out all considerations concerning rhythm and duration; and leaves open the door to a possible extension, or improvement, of his ideas with the inclusion of microtonal possibilities. There is something about the pleasure of writing in Pousseur; and I say “writing” both in the sense of actual theoretical writing (his musical and philosophical speculations), and the musical writing (in the sense of *écriture*), that is, the techniques he invents, the way he manipulates and combines them, the way this writing really provides a fertile ground for a specifically musical imagination.

Both of his modes of writing, theoretical musical, seem to complement each other, and are clearly connected to what I see as the utopian dimension of Pousseur. His search for a pacific co-existence, healthy integration, always maintaining a fruitful diversity, of human beings, races, nations, cultures, is in a direct relationship to the corresponding ideas of bridging harmonic vocabularies, rhyming Monteverdi with Webern, trying to find unity within diversity. Sometimes this translated into explicit instances of engaged music (for example, his pieces *Couleur Croisées* (1967) and *Crosses of Crossed Colors* (1970), both of which addressing racism in the USA). More recently, one can find one of his ultimate attempts at this quasi-socialist global harmonization of people and cultures: his electroacoustic collection called “Sixteen Planetary Landscapes” is made of pieces with names such as “Alasakamazonie” and “Vietnamibie”, pieces in which actual sounds from these disparate regions of the globe are almost desperately put together in a dream of co-existence that definitely is far away from reality today.²⁹

²⁹ In my opinion, these electroacoustic pieces do not fare better than reality in their attempted integration of disparate materials, in what some people might call a collage of world-music recordings.

The assertion of compositional authority is present in pretty much all of Pousseur's works, even in those which utilize of indeterminate notation or open interpretation, audience choice (like *Votre Faust*), or recombination of sections (like *Scambi*, the tape piece). As we saw, the composer is always there to provide the frame of possibilities, the boundaries of the stage over which things come into play.

At this point we can orient the discussion of similar issues in the case of Donatoni, which is the other side of the coin that we are trying to mint. The assertion of compositional authority is precisely what Donatoni was going against at, most crucially in his critical decade between, say, 1965-1975. As we discussed above, partly influenced by Cage, but also through his contact with the work of writers such as Kafka and Beckett, Donatoni made decisive moves toward the negation of his own self, manifested in his increasing indifference for the material, and eventually his indifference for the final Work of Art. Interestingly enough, we could perhaps also talk of a pleasure of writing in the case of Donatoni, but a much suffered pleasure, in contrast to Pousseur. Donatoni's dilemmas are often pointing to psychological crisis, to some search for a provisional resolution or alleviation, or to searching for the exit of the labyrinth. Writing (and, again, both types of writing, musical and theoretical) works for him as escape valves — he needs to write to express his need of negating self-expression. Donatoni: “(...) to arrive at the negation of willpower, arrive at the suspension of the faculties of the soul, of the intellect, of memory.”³⁰ I was initially surprised when, after having read all about the negativity that surrounds pieces like *Souvenir* and *Etwas ruhiger im Ausdruck*, I was surprised when I realized I could not *hear* the manifestation of this negativity in the actual music. It is true, people often point out the degree of automatism and mechanicism of that period as signifiers of such detachment of the material and the self; but I guess I had in mind something like the somewhat clearer translation of bitterness or heaviness in carrying the weight of history such as I hear in Bernd A. Zimmerman's work with quotation and borrowing. There is nothing like that in Donatoni — rather, I realize that something like

30 Donatoni, F. & Restagno, Enzo. “Un'autobiografia dell'autore raccontata da Enzo Restagno”. In: Restagno, E. (Ed.), Donatoni. Torino: EDT, 1990, p. 23. My translation.

that “pleasure of writing” (to make a strange connection with Pousseur) comes more to the foreground, to me, at least. Then it became clear that, if such aura of negativity does not come across in those pieces, this can only mean that Donatoni in fact *succeeded* in his attempt of removing his self-expression from the equation. Had I been able to associate any of those critical elements directly to the music, I would have found that his attempt to self-effacing did not work.³¹ In a way, those pieces found a way out of the divan and his surrounding psychological crisis: to me, they somehow have a surprisingly vivid color, with a life of their own, even if frantic (*Souvenir*) or subdued (*Etwas...*).

With this, I hope that the label of “pessimism” does not get stuck so hard onto Donatoni; especially when one considers that, after deciding to quit composition in 1975, he barely remained one year (or even a few months) faithful to that decision. Soon after, having found somehow more placid psychological grounds to settle, Donatoni resumes composing with a rare prolificacy. The number of pieces in his catalogue from the last 25 years of his career (1975-2000) is astonishing. According to Salvatore Collazzo,

[Donatoni] is attracted by the Cagean silence, but he is not successful in making it his own. (...) For him, Cage is the invitation to project and accept the “definitive and irreversible loss of self-consciousness”. But Donatoni is convinced that the only acceptable “loss of self-consciousness” has to be accomplished *within consciousness*, that is, by mediation, thinking, composition. To say “no” to Cage means, for Donatoni, to reject the “alluring sirens of self-extinction”.³²

And also, “There is only one way through which Cage is not lethal: it is through the ascent of an indiscriminate acceptance. (...) But for someone who lives within a culture that does not know such ascent, the total renouncement of the self in acting and communicating can only mean death. For Donatoni, the loss of the organizational operations (operations which became impossible) ends up requiring the definitive and irreversible loss of the material, of the self.”³³ For Donatoni, the act of

31 Thanks to Erik Ulman for this insight.

32 Collazzo, Salvatore. “Dal nulla il molteplice. I lavori solistici con le loro proliferazioni”. In: Restagno, E. (Ed.), Donatoni. Torino: EDT, 1990, p. 116. My translation.

33 Idem, p. 116-7. Collazzo is commenting on excerpts of Donatoni's book “Questo” in this section. However, my understanding of the original passage is not in the sense of “loss of the material”, but more textually a “revenge of the material” — the self has no solution other than *surrendering* to it; the consciousness is lost, not the material. Or, the

working (*lavoro*) is concomitant, or overlapping, with the act of thinking.³⁴ He thinks only when he writes [music]; for him, the exercise of willpower is tied to, or conditioned by, the codified aspects of writing, and there is a ludic aspect to it.

To sum up, the “suppression of the composer's ego” is a determinant aspect of Donatoni's work, for which he found his personal solution with the design of several methods of “automatic writing”. Such procedures created several steps of mediation between his “ego” and the actual processing of the material and its final manifestation as a piece. Of course, the definition of this set of procedures, or “algorithms”, was made by him, and therefore his personal voice is present in one way or another; or, in other words, he found a way of redefining his personal voice through a progressive distancing of his “surface” voice through the self-imposition of procedures that would force him to take decisions at *different levels* of the compositional process. Also, his works from his last 25 years often deal with a perpetual re-reading of his own previous works, in a way that — I'd like to point out — is related to my idea of the malleability of the musical material. The fact that he is able to compose *Algo* (1977, for guitar), *Ali* (1977, for viola), and *Argot* (1979, for violin), and then eventually investigate their affinities, superimpose them and generate a new piece for trio (*About...*, from 1979); and then repeat the same process of recombination with three other solo pieces (*Marches*, 1977, for harp; *Nidi*, 1977, for piccolo; and *Clair*, 1980, for clarinet), arriving at another independent trio (*Small*, 1981); AND then to eventually find a way to combine those two trios, *About...* and *Small*, making the two pieces co-exist with each other (plus female voices) in *She* (1982). This, to me, is the image of the composer forging, or forcing his own structures upon each other, finding their similarities, smoothing out their differences; one could perhaps say that Donatoni not always needed high temperatures in his forge, since many of

material is lost only to the extent that it is it doesn't come from the composer's hands, such as when Donatoni borrows fragments from others.

34 One of Donatoni's catchy phrases: “Pensare facendo e fare pensando”, or “To think by doing it, and to do it by thinking”. Donatoni, F. & Restagno, Enzo. “Un'autobiografia dell'autore raccontata da Enzo Restagno”. In: Restagno, E. (Ed.), Donatoni. Torino: EDT, 1990, p. 40. My translation.

his pieces look extremely alike and share some of the same processes (“codes” of transformation, as he called them)³⁵.

QUESTION #4. Has the advent of audio recording — whether the earliest analog forms or the most recent digital technologies — changed the concept, philosophy, or meaning of musical borrowing?

Yes. Generations of musicians of the 20th century had, all of a sudden (“sudden” meaning a span of 50 years or so), virtually a complete library of audio at their disposal; pretty much all corners of Western music history, and of music by other cultures, could be potentially explored and “contacted” directly through aural means, often in one's own living room. No more need to travel to Siberia to understand throat-singing; no more need to dig into a French Cathedral Library to get in touch with medieval organum. The consequences are multi-faceted.

First, one may feel oppressed by the sheer number of things available to know and to learn. Everything seems to be available. One has to think more consciously about his/her own filters, in order to navigate through the forest of options. In the past, these filters were pretty much determined by the *milieu* in which a musician grew up; only someone with considerable self-motivation would dedicate time and effort to break out its natural cultural circle and search for other music. It is not that now these cultural, social filters do not exist; they are always there. But the *option* to navigate to unknown territories is much more readily available, and the meaning of choosing to drop an anchor in one side or another of the ocean requires serious consideration.

Second, the availability of so much recorded material (and the popularization of the means to work of it) may lead to some degree of cheapening of musical borrowing. By “cheapening” I mean

³⁵ Differently from Pousseur, then, Donatoni would be working, most of the time, with less diverse, more “malleable” material.

some explosion in the number of people working with borrowed fragments (“samples” is the word), sometimes without a clear reason of why doing so. The increasing of the number of pieces dealing with musical borrowing is not necessarily a bad thing; it just means that one will need more time, and tuning, to sort through all newly created pieces and find the ones that may be really more meaningful for certain musical interests.

Third, although in the above paragraphs I mainly implied *electroacoustic* musical borrowing, which is a more direct creative consequence of electronic technologies from the past hundred years (Cage using radios and Schaeffer using *concrete* sounds), the existence of music on technological support contributed to a huge relativization of the meaning of music on paper — which was, until very recently, the only means to “record”, or to fix, music into some state of permanence. There came an increasing awareness of the peculiarities of our music thinking as it relates to the codes on the paper, our musical-linguistic games with historical means of visual representation of sound and interaction with performers etc.; along the same lines, the ways of working borrowing musical material has acquired more facets and meanings. The way we look at a certain measure by Debussy on the score, today, may be cross-referenced with ten other aural rendering of that same measure by ten different pianists. This is something that was only latent in past centuries — the score had a more centralized and unique position in this hierarchy, being the only palpable source of information, since every performance evanesced right after the last sound; with luck, impressions of it would remain in one's memory. Now, ten CDs on the table with the Debussy piece recorded by ten different pianists can be (they don't have to be, they can be) much heavier than the one piece of paper on which the piece is notated. Which one is “the piece”? Musical borrowing, within this new context, can happen not only at the level of paper, but equally at the level of an analysis of every single sonic rendition of a single piece of music; analyses that could be as intuitive as doing a transcription “by ear”, or as detailed as extracting timing and spectral information from the audio sample — things, of course, inaccessible

from a score. In short, more ways of approaching a fragment are available.

Lastly (and this is only because I am running out of time), there is the political and socio-economic dimension that musical borrowing has acquired today. Music, as well as open source computer software, both have had a leading role in the process of questioning the concept of intellectual property as it is presented in theory and practice today. In a neighboring line of thought to my introduction to this paper, where I discussed the problematic of ownership, I think that musical borrowing has the extra-musical potential, as an idea and a concept, of proposing different modes of circulation of music within society, and even extrapolating to a discussion of the very propriety of keeping or not the concept of ownership of ideas. That obviously goes directly against the mainstream of the moral, political and economic debate about copyright, patents, trademarks; usually people keep the debate within the confines of an accepted validity, and unquestionability, of property. In fact, I hope to be able to elaborate more on this topic in some future essay, for which I have been collecting material for a few years now; its title will probably be, very much *à propos*, something like “Intellectual Impropriety”.

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