Contemporary Rock Formations:
Rock Elements in Classical Music

Marek Krowicki
Schulich School of Music
McGill University, Montreal
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Acknowledgements

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary classical pieces that bridge the divide between classical and rock can do so with the inclusion of various rock elements. Inclusion of these elements has been generally frowned upon, as modern classical composers are encouraged to write music that is abstract, bizarre, and different from anything heard before. When composers do include rock elements in their music, it is important to be able to recognize and categorize these elements for an informed interpretation. This study examines the inclusion of selected rock elements in two contemporary classical keyboard pieces: Steven Gellman's "Keyboard Triptych" for synthesizer and piano, 1 player, and Kris Becker's "Piano Sonata No. 1". The study serves as a guide for other performers exploring other rock-influenced works for a more complete picture of the music, discouraging blind focus solely on classical elements.

Les œuvres classiques contemporaines qui comblent le fossé entre la musique classique et rock peuvent le faire en incluant des éléments rock. Ceci est généralement vu d'un mauvais œil, car les compositeurs de musique classique contemporaine sont encouragés à écrire des œuvres abstraites, sortant de la norme et opposée à tout ce qu'ils avaient entendu auparavant. Mais si les compositeurs incluent des éléments rock dans leurs œuvres, il devient important de pouvoir reconnaitre et catégoriser ceux-ci afin que l'interprétation puisse être juste et éclairée. Cette thèse propose d'étudier l'intégration de quelques éléments rock choisis dans deux œuvres contemporaines classiques pour clavier: « Keyboard Triptych » par Steven Gellman pour synthétiseur et piano, 1 joueur, et « Piano Sonata No. 1 » par Kris Becker. Les artistes désirant explorer ce sujet pourront utiliser cette thèse comme guide, qui les dissuadera de suivre, aveuglément, seulement la route des éléments classiques pour obtenir un portrait complet de la musique.

<u>INTRODUCTION</u>

There is a divide between classical and rock music. This divide manifests itself not only in the genres' characteristics but in the ways they are perceived by audiences, and each other.

Instrumentation is one of the more apparent differences, classical music being based on orchestral instruments, and rock music using mainly electric ones. Classical music is based on forms such as the sonata, whereas rock music features a verse-chorus arrangement.

The classical concert is treated in a very serious manner with the audience typically listening in rapt silence. Rock concerts are a stark contrast: informal gatherings featuring food and drink with the audience at times being louder than the musicians. There is a tendency for supporters of each genre to be in direct conflict, creating an air of elitism in both.

However, this elitist attitude seems to be much less prevalent in the rock world. The inclusion of classical elements in rock contexts is not seen in such a negative light as it is the other way around. One of the inevitable gravitations of this mixture is towards progressive rock, with a blend of rock/metal, classical, and rag-time elements combined with virtuosic solos from the guitar, bass, and the keyboard. These styles are united in a music that can be as complex and difficult to play as classical repertoire.

Steve Gellman's "Keyboard Triptych" for piano and synthesizer, one player, is a case in point. I first heard it in a Canadian music course as a sample of my composition professor's own works. Where we had expected to hear a piece written in a contemporary classical style, we heard instead a reversal of the classical influence in progressive rock, that is, Gellman had composed a contemporary classical piece of music with rock influence.

When choosing topics for my Doctoral research, I again came across Gellman's "Keyboard Triptych", and for the first time I clearly asked myself a question that had been

floating around in ethereal form in my mind for a very long time: why is it that there is so much classical influence in non-classical music, but the reverse is much more rare?

In various performance situations and through my own teaching, I on occasion would witness classical musicians tackle pieces containing what I perceived to be rock elements. It occurred to me that without recognizing these rock elements as such, it would be impossible for the performer to understand their origins and to therefore create an informed interpretation.

My research has aimed to explore rock influences in contemporary classical music through an examination of the relevant musical history and existing research, and to demonstrate an approach to performing rock-inspired pieces through comparison between the genres. A number of issues presented themselves in this research, some of them performance-related, others more philosophical, and I have summarized some of the more salient ones in the later sections of this paper.

PART 1

THE DIVIDE

The classical influence on heavy metal marks a merger
of what are generally regarded as the most and least
prestigious musical discourses of our time.

Robert Walser wrote this statement as part of his introduction to his article "Eruptions"[1]. Although he was writing about heavy metal, I feel that this statement is applicable to rock music in general. There are certain associations to both rock music and classical music: the classical musician is pictured as being high-class, well educated, creating art music, while the rock

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[1] Robert Walser, "Eruptions," *Popular Music*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (1992): 264.

musician is usually portrayed as having long unruly hair, and not knowing very much about music, even their own.

This divide of the "high" versus the "low" is an analogy I find applicable to the divide between the classical and the rock musician, and John J. Sheinbaum summarizes it quite thoroughly in the following table (Table 1).[2]

Table 1: "High" versus "Low" (Sheinbaum)

	"High"	**"Low"**
Label:	"Classical"	"Pop," "Rock," etc.
Forces:	Orchestra	Electric/electronic instruments
Coherence:	"Unified," with "development" — material repeated, but with important differences	"Repetitive"
Historical force:	Traditional	Trendy, momentary in importance
Site:	Mind (intellectual)	Body (sexual)
Difficulty:	Complicated	Simple, common
Response:	Moving	Uninteresting
Background:	Professional training	Rough, casual, natural
Audience:	Fancy dress; silent attention	Comfortable; talking and applause
Class and Education:	Upper class, elite, well educated	Middle and low social strata, not highly educated
Purpose:	Abstract contemplation	Entertainment, background
"Author":	Composer	Performer
Originality:	Innovative	Derivative
Skill:	Genius	Craftsperson

Looking at this chart, the divide is clear. Classical music is considered intellectual, complex, abstract, innovative, performed by a well-dressed elite, moving their audience who listen on in silent adulation. Rock music is considered rough, repetitive, simple entertainment, the uneducated performer talking back and forth with their audience, with neither seeming to

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[2] John J. Sheinbaum, "Progressive Rock and the Inversion of Musical Values," In *Progressive Rock Reconsidered,* Edited by Kevin Holm-Hudson (Routledge, 2002), 24.

take the matter seriously.

These extreme stereotypes are reinforced by both the rock and classical sides of the divide, and lead to a kind of elitism and snobbery best described by Joe Stuessy and Scott Lipscomb: "When we speak of so-called musical snobs, many people immediately think of the stereotyped classical musician or classical music lover. In fact, musical snobs come in many forms." These "so-called musical snobs" exist in every style of music, each claiming that their preferred style of music is the best and all others fall short. However, Stuessy and Lipscomb make an important distinction that such "snobbery" gives insight into the person making the "snobbish" comments rather than the music: "This is, to say the least, a very narrow-minded and egocentric view of musical style."[3]

This narrow-minded view of music leads to a condemnation of the mixing of rock and classical styles. Given the perceived view of classical music as "high" music, the progressive rock style aimed to elevate rock to these heights. Sheinbaum writes the following concerning the result:

> Critics decried the genre's virtuosity, complexity, and indebtedness to "classical", or "art" music as a betrayal of rock's origins...rock is supposed to be a rebellious music, a music that shocks the "establishment" and challenges its conventions. A style of rock so influenced by the music of the establishment—which seemed to aspire to the privileged status held by that music—could only be met with derision; indeed, progressive rock musicians were seen as no less than "war criminals"...The inversion of musical values is perfectly captured: rock, while a "gutter" music, is still best when it is "pure," and to add influences of and references to the establishment's "high" music is to "befoul" it in an "insidious" manner. Those classical and rock musics are supposed to be pure; to mix the two results in something "funny," in a mongrel "pastiche" of styles.[4]

It is particularly telling that the critics of progressive rock laud rock stereotypes, seeing aspirations to "high art" in a negative view. Similarly, the classical side of the divide mocks

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[3] Joe Stuessy and Scott Lipscomb, *Rock and Roll: Its History and Stylistic Development*, Seventh Edition (Pearson Education, 2013), 3–4.
[4] Sheinbaum, 21, 29.

progressive rock for its attempts to mix their "high" art into the gutter.

Alex Ross considers classical music to be part of a "cult of mediocre elitism". This cult validates itself by what Ross describes as "clutching at empty formulas of intellectual superiority." He mentions that music can be serious and great, but does not have to be defined solely by those characteristics: "It can also be stupid, vulgar, and insane." The cult considers their music to be the high art; the music you listen to is garbage.[5] He then makes a powerful statement: "What I refuse to accept is that one kind of music soothes the mind and another kind soothes the soul. It depends on whose mind, whose soul...Music is too personal a medium to support an absolute hierarchy of values."[6]

Assigning a value system to music usually does not take into account its diversity, but instead focuses on its perceived deficiencies.[7] Contrary to this narrow-mindedness, I feel that the focus should be on a certain genre's appeal to diverse audiences. This view is shared by American composer Kris Becker, who writes contemporary classical music in a fusion of various styles. He was kind enough to answer a few questions in a written interview, in which he writes: "My goal is to create music that can be appreciated by both the casual listener and the thoroughly trained ear, viscerally enjoyable and appealing to a wide range of listener and crafted to stimulate and challenge the mind at the same time."[8] This, to me, is the goal of merging the worlds of rock and classical music: the combination of compatible attributes to form a fulfilling musical experience for both camps, such as using power chords and modal riffs in a classical form.

This brings up an interesting issue in the amalgamation of genres: fusion of classical and rock seems to be predominantly one-directional, meaning classical elements are most often used

[5] Alex Ross, *Listen to This* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2010), 3.
[6] Ibid., 3, 10.
[7] Sheinbaum, 39–40.
[8] Email interview with Kris Becker by Marek Krowicki, April 2014.

in rock music; the reverse is much rarer. Walser observes that the usage of classical materials in

rock challenges the divide between the genres, giving the example of Yngwie Malmsteen:

> In the liner notes for his 1988 album, *Odyssey*, heavy metal guitarist Yngwie J.
> Malmsteen claimed a musical genealogy that confounds the stability of conventional
> categorisations of music into classical and popular spheres. In his list of
> acknowledgments, along with the usual cast of agents and producers, suppliers of musical
> equipment, and relatives and friends, Malmsteen expressed gratitude to J. S. Bach, Nicolo
> Paganini, Antonio Vivaldi, Ludwig van Beethoven, Jimi Hendrix and Ritchie Blackmore.[9]

Heavy metal musicians often portray themselves as the "classical virtuoso" in the style of Liszt

and Paganini, in striving to please audiences, being flashy, mysterious, and attractive to

females.[10] Walser notes that one of the main reasons classical music was used by rock groups is

that of prestige. Artists composing their own music (unlike a lot of pop, motown, etc.) were

critically acclaimed as they, "better fit the model of the auteur, the solitary composing genius."[11]

Musicians such as Keith Emerson considered ordinary popular music to be degraded, wanting to

raise the artistic level of rock. The function of including classical elements was quite literally

"…to invoke classical music, and to confer some of its prestigious status, its seriousness."[12]

Becker gives a similar reason for the predominance of classical elements being used in

rock:

> Rock music did not have as lofty a genesis as a genre as did classical, and it has been
> associated widely with rebelliousness and lack of civility. Classical has been the stuff of
> high church, the aristocrats, and the grand concert halls. In light of this, it is not
> impossible to see why some people distrust rock as a legitimate music as compared to
> classical and further would not wish for it to be infiltrating their concert experience...
> As for the preponderance of rock/metal/prog composers and bands finding influence,
> inspiration, and direction from classical, I would describe it in these terms: Classical
> music is the origin for so much of what music *is* and the mastery of the art and craft of
> music is exhibited at its highest level in classical concert composition. It's the source. Not
> satisfied with verses, choruses, and solos only, many rock artists have desired more
> development, depth, and breadth in their own creating and find classical music to be a

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[9] Walser, 263.
[10] Ibid., 279.
[11] Ibid., 266.
[12] Ibid.

guide and model for complexity and virtuosity.[13]

In this way, rock musicians look to the age-old canon of classical music, ironically, for new inspiration. However, many classical musicians seem to be obsessed with the concept of writing completely "new" music, a trap that I refer to as "progressive classical music". The term "progressive" in this case has a literal meaning; musicians feel that they *need* to write music that has not been heard before.

Georgina Born describes a division between post-serialist contemporary classical composers who I equate to the notion of "progressive classical music", and experimentalists who use "primitive musics" such as rock in their works:

> But for divisions within modernism, it is instructive to look at controversies surrounding the commitment to new technologies, and the major split within the musical avant-garde between the 'serious' post-serialists and 'unserious' experimentalists, who congregated around the leading figure of John Cage. Both factions were attracted by the new electronic and recording media, but they used them differently. The post-serialists combined the use of electronics with their commitment to scientific rationalities, hoping in this way to 'solve' the problem of the future direction of composition. Stockhausen sought to achieve the total serial control of musical timbre by combining electronic means with acoustic analysis. Conflicts within this group, for example between Babbitt (the leading figure on the American east coast) and the Europeans, took the form of accusations of insufficient mathematical rigour.
> By contrast, the experimentalists and their French counterpart in *musique concrete* used the new machines artisanally. *Musique concrete*, which Boulez deplored and considered empiricist, involved the recording of everyday sounds as sources and then manual editing: in other words, music collage. In reaction to the post-serialists' scientism and rationalism, Cage's followers turned to mysticism (Zen), chance, indeterminacy, or the alternative political determinism of Marxism-Leninism, to theorize their music. In reaction to post-serialism's hyper-complexity, they used ethnic and 'primitive' musics as sources, stripping their soundworlds bare in the genres called minimalism and systems music.[14]

Her use of the words "serious" and "unserious" is particularly telling of the general attitude in the contemporary classical music world, namely that those experimenting with elements falling

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[13] Becker interview.

[14] Georgina Born, "Modern Music Culture: On Shock, Pop and Synthesis," *New Formations*, Issue 2 (Summer 1987): 53.

outside of what is accepted in the classical avant-garde are not taken seriously.

Many consider that in order for music to be "new" and "progressive" it has to be dissonant, angular, and sound different than what has already been written.[15] Ross also finds that contemporary classical composers fall into the trap of progressivism; they doubt their ability to please an audience, and instead they write for one another. He notes that the "alienated anti-social 20th century avant-garde" suffers especially from this thought process.[16]

Even after writing extensively concerning his fusion of styles, Becker adds a "disclaimer" at the end of many of my questions. For example:

> All that said, I want to make it clear that there is no direct intentional emulation of someone else's idea in my composing. My composing process is dependent on pure experimentation and doing things my own way, of course with all the training and knowledge underpinning it. Influenced by things? We all are. Simply copying them, I am not. That would be of no value and nothing new for the world to experience.[17]

I find this statement to be contradictory in its effort to legitimize the influences on his composition as not being "someone else's idea", thereby reinforcing the authenticity of his writing. The notion that an audience or critics would even consider original music to be "copying" something brings up the expectation that new music should be completely "new". This is a complete impossibility, which Becker admits in the same paragraph, as music *has* to be influenced by something, somehow, somewhere. Music is an organic construct; it is created through evolution and cannot spontaneously exist as a completely new entity.

When contemporary classical composers are willing to stray from pure progressivism and include rock influences their music, this raises an interesting question: would knowledge of rock elements be necessary for an effective performance of their music? I have discovered the answer

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[15] Jerry Lucky, *The Progressive Rock Files*, Second Edition (Burlington, Ontario: Collector's Guide Publishing, 2000), 123.
[16] Ross, 13.
[17] Becker interview.

to be an unequivocal "yes", through my practice, analysis, and performance of the rock-inspired

pieces in this study. My hope is to demonstrate this through a direct examination of some of the

rock elements used in the works.

METHODOLOGY

       The effective performance of a work containing rock elements requires their

identification and the understanding of their origins. I opted to find solo keyboard-based works

to take advantage of my performance skills, and have used a number of steps to aid in my

analysis, practice, and performance of the selected works. Although I have listed them in a

numbered order for the purposes of clear presentation, in reality the process can become a

mixture of these and other steps depending on the demands of the piece.

1. **Identifying rock elements that occur in the selected works**

       The rock elements prevalent in Becker and Gellman's pieces tend to fall into the

categories of pitch (that is, harmonic and melodic), rhythm, and instrumentation. Harmonic

elements include the usage of power chords, best described by Nicole Biamonte as:

> …normative vertical structures in hard rock and heavy metal: open fifths or, less commonly, fourths, often with octave doubling. These chords are a consequence of the heavy use of distortion, an overloading of the signal through an amplifier, which increases the overall complexity of the sound wave and in particular the audibility of the upper partials. Distortion renders chord thirds dissonant because the overtones intermodulate to create sum and difference tones unrelated to the original fundamental; also, a major third is often audibly present as the fifth overtone, but at a frequency dissonant with a sounded major third.[18]

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[18] Nicole Biamonte, "Triadic Modal and Pentatonic Patterns in Rock Music," *Music Theory Spectrum*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (2010): 97

Other harmonic elements include linear parallel progressions such as the "Aeolian Pendulum"[19],

that is, the usage of the Aeolian VI-VII-i progression in place of the more traditional IV-V-I.

Biamonte describes one of the functions of this progression as containing "…linear motions to or

from the tonic, with perfect-fifth or triad doublings that express no additional harmonic

functionality. Such parallel-chord patterns are highly idiomatic to the guitar, because of the ease

of sliding barre chords up and down the fretboard."[20] This sliding motion translates to parallel-

chord motions on the piano. Similarly to a guitar, hand positioning remains the same in A-

Aeolian as only white keys are used (Example 6, Linear Progressions section), and in other

transpositions the hands easily slide up and down any black keys that are present.

Melodic elements include melodic movement paralleling a succession of power chords,

as well as the usage of modes.[21] Edward Macan notes that progressive rock is reminiscent of

Bach's toccata style in terms of runs, development of a rhythmic motif, and arpeggiation of

chord progressions.[22]

Sheinbaum describes progressive rock as containing syncopations, tricky rhythms, and

relying less on 4/4 time signatures typical of pop.[23] These syncopations contribute to the feeling

of forward momentum.[24] Biamonte notes that rock syncopations are most often consistent

displacements forward or backward by an eighth note, or triple groupings of eighth notes in a 4/4

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[19] Term first used by Alf Björnberg, "There's Something Going On—om eolisk harmonik i nutida rockmusic," in *Tvärspel: trettioen artiklar om musik : festskrift till Jan Ling* (Göteborg: Musikvetenskapliga institutionen, 1984): 371–86.
[20] Biamonte, 101.
[21] Walter Everett, "Making Sense of Rock's Tonal Systems," *Music Theory Online*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (2004), http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.04.10.4/mto.04.10.4.w_everett.html.
[22] Edward Macan, *Rocking the Classics: English Progressive Rock and the Counterculture* (Oxford University Press: 1997), 36.
[23] Sheinbaum, 26.
[24] Macan, 49.

context.[25] Classical pieces can utilize this kind of syncopation in combination with modal toccata passagework to create a forward-leaning tension.

Perhaps the most obvious rock element is that of instrumentation. Rock instruments such as electric guitars, synthesizers, electric bass, and drum kits are not typical to classical music and indicate a rock influence, especially when combined with the other elements listed above.

2. **Finding representative examples from rock literature**

Given the above rock elements used in classical music, it is important to identify their occurrences in rock for the purposes of comparison. I have used the following excerpts in this study, each of them being representative examples that are used in similar ways in the Gellman and Becker pieces.

- AC/DC, "Back in Black" (1980 – Hard Rock), chorus, guitar and vocals: power chords

- Black Sabbath, "Iron Man" (1970 – Heavy Metal), vocal entry, guitar and vocals: parallel melodic movement

- Kansas, "Carry On Wayward Son" (1976 – Progressive/Hard Rock), verse, piano: linear progressions

- John Petrucci, "Glasgow Kiss" (2005 – Progressive Metal), main riff, lead and rhythm guitars: modal riffs

- Dream Theater, "6:00" (1994 – Progressive Metal/Rock), introduction, keyboard and drums: syncopations

3. **Transcribing the rock excerpts**

Transcription was used to facilitate the visualization of the rock excerpts in the comparative section. This was done due to the fact that published transcriptions will very often

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[25] Nicole Biamonte, "Rhythmic Patterns in Rock Music," paper presented at the International Conference on Analysing Popular Music, University of Liverpool (July 2013).

ignore displaced rhythms, beaming them over the displacements to adhere to a 4/4 beaming. In these cases clarity suffers, and the rhythm can become confusing such as in the Dream Theater "6:00" example, if it were beamed in regular groups of four sixteenth-notes (Example 18).

The process of transcription brought to light differences in the learning process and notation between rock and classical genres, namely that rock music is predominantly learned aurally through a recording, whereas classical music is predominantly learned from a printed score. This involves learning the music from the bottom up, that is, writing it out from a recording *first* and then attempting to perform it. Memorization becomes much easier as there is a much deeper initial learning process, leading to a much more solid and confident performance.

In the transcribed examples themselves, slides in the guitars are indicated with lines between notes. Vocals, when approximated, are done so to the closest sixteenth-note and semi-tone.

4. Deciding on classical pieces with rock influences to perform and analyze

Personally, I wanted to find pieces that not only include rock elements extensively, but also feature the piano or synthesizer, catering to my strengths as a performer. That being said, I did come across several other works containing rock elements, but written for larger ensembles (Table 2):

Table 2: Larger Ensemble Rock-Inspired Works

Composer	Name of the Work and Instrumentation	Sample of Elements Used
Steven Gellman	"Odyssey" for rock group, piano, and orchestra (1968)	Rock Group "Tranquility Base" part of the orchestra
	"Universe Symphony" for synthesizers and orchestra (1986)	Synthesizers of the Canadian Electronic Ensemble featured as soloists with the orchestra
Scott Johnson	"Convertible Debts" for violin, cello, electric guitar, piano, MIDI percussion, sampled speech (1996)	Pentatonic harmonies and electric guitar idioms

	"The Illusion of Guidance" for clarinet, cello, double bass, electric guitar, piano, marimba/percussion (2002)	Pentatonic harmonies and electric guitar idioms
D.J. Sparr	"The Glam Seduction" for flute/piccolo, bass clarinet, piano, percussion, violin, cello (2014)	Rewritten version of Eddie Van Halen's "Eruption"

Janell R. Duxbury also lists some rock-influenced works in her selectively annotated discography, "Rockin' the Classics and Classicizin' the Rock", and I have reproduced her list along with her annotations in the following table[26]:

Table 3: Rock-Influenced Works with Annotations (Duxbury)

Composer	Name of Work	Annotation
Glenn Branca	Symphony no. 2 (the peak of the sacred) (1992)	This "rock symphony" for multiple guitars, keyboards, brass and percussion includes guitarists Lee Ranaldo and Thurston Moore (both of the rock group Sonic Youth).
	Symphony no. 5 (describing planes of an expanding hypersphere) (1996)	Instrumentation consists of a twelve-piece electronic guitar ensemble and rock drumming.
Michael Daugherty	Elvis Everywhere (1995)	This piece for string quartet and taped Elvis impersonators was recorded for the above listed Kronos Quartet album. Samples are drawn from the melodies, rhythms and spoken quotes of Elvis Presley.
Philip Glass	"Heroes" symphony: from the music of David Bowie and Brian Eno (1997)	This symphony composed by Philip Glass was inspired by David Bowie/Brian Eno's album of the same title.
	"Lodges" symphony: from the music of David Bowie and Brian Eno	In progress/release pending.
	"Low" symphony: from the music of David Bowie and Brian Eno (1993)	This symphony composed by Philip Glass was inspired by David Bowie/Brian Eno's album of the same title.

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[26] Janell R. Duxbury, *Rockin' the Classics and Classicizin' the Rock: A Selective Annotated Discography*, Second Supplement (Xlibris, 2000), 352–354.

Scott Johnson	Rock/paper/scissors (1996)	This album incorporates violoncello, violin, piano, synthesizer and an electric guitar solo performed by Scott Johnson. The album shows influences of King Crimson's *Larks' tongues in aspic*.
Gustavo Matamoros	In memory of Gentle Giant: part 1 and part 2 (1997)	This original 20th-century classical work is based on bits and pieces of themes composed by the rock group Gentle Giant.
Christopher Rouse	Bonham (1991)	Rouse's composition for eight percussionists (Robert Hohner Percussion Ensemble) is a tribute to the late Led Zeppelin drummer John Bonham.

Steven Gellman's "Keyboard Triptych" for Synthesizer and Piano, 1 player (1986), was a piece I had previously explored. It consists of three movements: Invocation, Toccata, and Aria. Gellman fuses together two instruments idiomatic of two genres: the synthesizer and the piano, combining rock with the classical. Although the instrumentation combines the piano with the synthesizer throughout the piece, the compositional styles of the movements differ. The Invocation is heavily influenced by Messiaen (Gellman's teacher), and features chords derived from his modes of limited transposition as well as Messiaen-ic usage of Greek and Hindu rhythms. The Toccata is made up of a developing ornamented riff heavily influenced by progressive rock. The Aria is again Messiaen-inspired. Gellman has given the "Keyboard Triptych" a Messiaen - Progressive Rock - Messiaen framework.

As for the second work, I came across an online review of a composer/pianist from Texas by the name of Kris Becker. It was of his album "Expansions", and the headline read "Classical and Prog-rock collide…"[27] I chose to analyze Becker's "Piano Sonata No. 1" (2012), which closes the album. In the score's introduction, Becker writes, "Within a classical structure, the sonata combines attitudes and concepts of classical, rock, and jazz. In the creation process, the

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[27] Sequenza 21, "Expansions" review, http://www.sequenza21.com/2013/01/classical-and-prog-rock-collide-on-pianist-and-composer-kris-beckers-new-album-expansions/

inclusion of non-classical impulses was often subconscious and the end result varies between more or less explicit in those regards."[28] Although rock characteristics such as power chords, parallel linear progressions, and syncopated riffs appear sporadically throughout the sonata, the second movement contains a much higher concentration.

5. Location of rock influences and comparison to representative rock examples

Given the various identified rock elements and their occurrences in rock, I have chosen similar instances in Gellman and Becker's pieces. Through a process of trial and error I selected sections that best demonstrate the incorporation of these rock elements. My practice and analysis allowed me to experiment with ways of performing these sections, having the rock elements directly influence my interpretation.

6. Identification of performance challenges

In the case of the "Keyboard Triptych", Gellman writes at the beginning of the score that "This work could also be performed using other synthesizers and voicings".[29] I chose to use my own synthesizer sound libraries; building each sound anew provides a direct connection to expressive and performance possibilities. One is no longer using presets made by somebody else, and this gives a much more intrinsic knowledge of the instrument(s). The challenge comes in creating these sounds without straying from the original intent.

A challenge that is common to both the Becker and the Gellman pieces is that of adapting elements that are used in a rock context with electronic instruments to a classical acoustic context. An example of this adaptation would be the performance of a power chord on the piano,

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[28] Kris Becker,"Piano Sonata No. 1," Score, Edited by Kris Becker (Frozen Heat Music, 2012)
[29] Steven Gellman, "Keyboard Triptych," Score, 1986, Canadian Music Centre, Catalog number MI 9101G319ke.

having recognized that these chords are most often played by an electric guitar. I have included performance notes and a demonstrative audio recording with each comparison of elements between rock and classical works in the comparative section.

Given the incorporation of classical virtuosity in rock music, there is an effect of "coming full circle", a kind of reinforcing of the virtuosity already existing in classical music. This can be particularly trying on stamina given the length of rock-inspired continuous toccata-style passages, or even longer sequences of power chords.

7. Discussion of other issues that arise

The piano and synthesizer in Gellman's "Keyboard Triptych" combines acoustic and electric instruments. This can prove to be a balance challenge, applicable to any other piece with such a mixture such as those listed in Table 2 and Table 3. Different amplification options may be present depending on the venue, and the venue itself can be designed for a specific context (a concert hall versus a club). Consequently, performances of works that blend acoustic and electric instruments will change based on the sonic possibilities of the venue.

The issue of authenticity can come into play when performing rock elements in a classical context. I am a believer in translating these elements as closely as possible to their rock counterparts, but there do exist cases where this can be blurred for interesting effects, one of which I detail in the very final section of this study.

In conclusion, this methodology is by no means an exhaustive list, but an example of the steps other performers could take when presented with similar research and performance requirements.

PART 2

EXAMPLES OF ROCK ELEMENTS IN THE SELECTED CLASSICAL PIECES

POWER CHORDS

Power chords are an important and prominent feature of rock music. Among the famous rock works in which they are employed is "Back in Black" by AC/DC (Example 1).

Example 1: AC/DC – "Back in Black" chorus

The entire chord progression is played in parallel 5th+8ve power chords on the guitar, the G chord containing an extra fifth and octave. Although the passage is heavily syncopated, it is done so in a repeating pattern. This pattern consists of an initial displacement by an eighth rest followed by four groups of three sixteenth notes, with the final chord being tied over to the next measure and repetition of the pattern. In this case, the power chords are used as an accompaniment to the vocal chorus, which at first interjects on the first and fourth beats of each measure before reinforcing the syncopated guitar rhythm.

This kind of parallel power chord progression appears many times in Kris Becker's Piano Sonata #1, especially in the second movement, called "Not to keep you waiting". The harmonic progression at measure 49 consists entirely of parallel power chords, notably in the left hand (Example 2). Becker has included a kind of "bent" note in each chord, simulating the bending of the string on a guitar, as well as staccato markings, simulating a guitar's palm-muting (that is, the dampening of the strings with the picking hand):

Example 2: Kris Becker – Piano Sonata No. 1, 2ⁿᵈ movement, measures 48-57

The power chords here are also used accompanimentally, as in the AC/DC chorus (Example 1). However, this passage serves as a transition between the fast "Flying" A section and the following grandiose "Heavy groove" B section. The rhythm is very regular, and the melody follows this rhythm exactly throughout.

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[30] Becker, "Piano Sonata No. 1", 20.

Performance Notes

When presented with power chords on the piano, the best way to achieve a "rock" sound is to play them with a full, resonant tone. Whereas a classical pianist would be tempted to voice these chords usually focusing on the bass note, this does not really provide a very good imitation of a distorted guitar (Audio Track 1). I have found that treating the three notes of the chord as a single unit and voicing them equally achieves the power associated with the name, and parallel progressions of these chords will stand out much more clearly than an unequal voicing.

The Becker example above (Example 2) requires the imitation of guitar idioms, which can be confusing when translated to the piano. A short "plucking" motion comes about naturally when playing this passage, but there is a significant amount of resonance associated with palm-muted power chords. Despite the staccato markings, the best way to imitate the palm-muting is with an almost *portato*-like approach while utilizing the equal power chord voicing. This gives the impression of a guitar "chugging along". Measure 56's *sforzando* power chord allows for full resonant power, the palm-muting imitation no longer being present.

The bent notes are best achieved by a slight over-sustaining of the first note into the second. Although a piano cannot slide between notes, this gives the impression of one note blending into the next, and such a slide can be imitated rather convincingly (Audio Track 2).

MELODIC MOTION PARALLELLING POWER CHORDS

In rock, oftentimes the sung melody follows a progression of power chords in parallel. This happens in "Iron Man" by Black Sabbath. After the main riff of "Iron Man" is repeated a few times, the vocals enter (Example 3), and they parallel the riff at the octave exactly.

Example 3: Black Sabbath – "Iron Man" vocal entry

It is interesting to note that the guitar stops playing power chords when it is being paralleled by the vocals, playing only the bottom of the two notes (Example 3). This serves as a reinforcement of the preceding power chord riff with the high vocal line but without too much of an increase in texture due to the missing fifth in the guitar.

Measure 103 of the second movement of Becker's Sonata contains similar melodic paralleling (Example 4). Becker has arpeggiated the power chords in the bass, separating the fifth from the octave. The bottom layer of the right hand contains the melodic line, paralleling the octave component of the power chords first in fourths (measures 103-104), and then in octaves (105-106). Becker includes an appoggiatura figure of fourths above the melody, adding a dissonant top layer to the passage. Unlike the Black Sabbath example (Example 3), there is a deliberate thickening of texture here, along with the grouping of three eighth notes in a 4/4 context—a typical rock syncopation. Along with the *crescendo* and all of the dissonant fourths, this serves as an escalation to the *fortissimo* climax at measure 105 with the melodic turn figure jumping an octave to an even higher register.

Example 4: Kris Becker – Piano Sonata No. 1, 2nd movement, measures 103-106

Performance Notes

When presented with a melodic line over a succession of these power chords (Example 4), the tendency is to treat this melody in a harmonic sense, that is, as an extension of these chords (Audio Track 3). It is important to shape and voice this line as a vocal melody instead, while maintaining the solid power-chord accompaniment voiced equally (Audio Track 4).

This is also the case in the earlier section of Becker's Sonata with the bent guitar notes and the palm-muted bass (Example 2). The equal voicing of the bass power chords should not extend all the way upwards in order to differentiate the layers (Audio Track 2).

LINEAR PROGRESSIONS

Linear progressions such as the "Aeolian Pendulum" are usually a sign of rock influence. This progression can consist of many variations of the Aeolian VI-VII-i motion (Example 6), the Aeolian mode being the same as a natural minor scale (Example 5).

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[31] Ibid., 23.
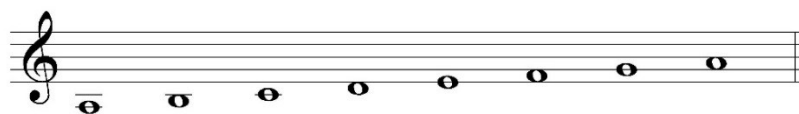
Example 5: A-Aeolian Scale

VI   VII   i
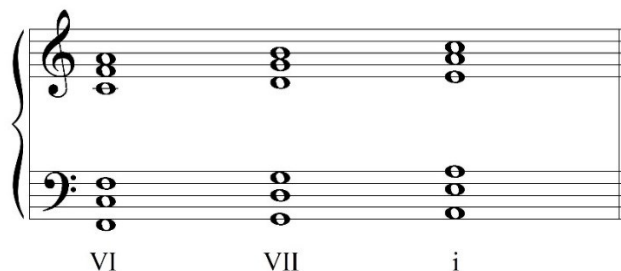
Example 6: Basic Aeolian Progression

The verse of Kansas' "Carry on Wayward Son" is a prime example of a linear progression, in this case an Aeolian Pendulum (Example 7). Here, the piano part wavers back and forth between i and VI, passing through the VII all under an E pedal note. This happens for the first two bars, with a i-VII-VI-VII-i pendulum motion used prolongationally. The next measure transposes this motion, however its repeat in the fourth measure instead comes to rest on a root position VII chord for two beats, and can be considered as the goal of the phrase, creating a kind of half-cadence if the III is reimagined as a cadential VII_4^6 resolving to VII_3^5.

(Example on next page)

Example 7: Kansas – Verse from "Carry on Wayward Son"

Becker uses a similar linear progression at the end of the third movement of his Piano Sonata, entitled "Against all better judgment" (Example 10). Becker has opted for a Phrygian mode on C-sharp (Example 8). He has the right hand waver between a D-natural and a D-sharp, hinting at the Aeolian mode (Example 9), while the left hand consists of a series of broken rising parallel fifths, repeating the linear progression of i-flatII-III. This progression is used to prolong the tonic harmony, but the movement ends on the III, avoiding a sense of finality. The movement segues without pause into the final fourth movement, called "Reconciliator" (Example 12), slowly rising out of the hypnotic atmosphere. The prolonged C-sharp becomes the top note of a pentatonic scale repeated over B pedal notes before launching into the main fourth-movement

theme based on E-flat (Example 12). The C-sharp prolongation can be imagined as a quasi-bvii to the fourth-movement's i of E-flat. An interesting interpretation of this progression can be seen as C#-phrygian > Pentatonic (D-E-G-A-C#) > E-flat, the latter being the culmination of the repeated pentatonic scale (Example 11).

Example 8: C-sharp Phrygian Scale

Example 9: C-sharp Aeolian Scale

Example 10: Kris Becker – Piano Sonata No. 1, end of 3rd movement

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[32] Ibid., 34.
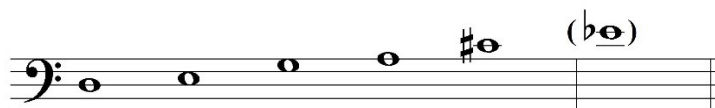
Example 11: Pentatonic scale with implied resolution

Example 12: Kris Becker – Piano Sonata No. 1, beginning of 4ᵗʰ movement

Performance Notes

A linear parallel progression can tempt a performer to emphasize the "arrival" on what they perceive to be the goal. In Becker's ending to the third movement of his sonata (Example

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[33] Ibid., 35.

10), this can be construed as being the tonic at the beginning of each measure (Audio Track 5). However, this tonic is prolonged throughout the passage, and although an emphasis can be placed on the D-sharp and D-natural vacillation, it would be a mistake to over exaggerate this, creating an arrival. If anything, every odd bar (beginning at bar 69) elongates the III harmony, and this can be used to anticipate the very last iteration for a smooth transition in the fourth movement (Audio Track 6).

MODAL RIFFS

The usage of modes is an important aspect of rock from the late 1960s onward. Most modes contain a lowered 7th scale degree. This lack of a leading tone allows for v and VII to be used prolongationally. These chords are weaker than traditional dominants, but there are cases where they can be functional as well as in the previous Kansas example (Example 7). Prolongational use of these chords aids in the repetitive nature of riffs and motifs, allowing for continuation without finality. Recurring modal toccata-like fragments, or riffs, are used by almost all progressive-rock-genre artists. These usually appear as continuous, fast passages that recur throughout a work.

Take, for example, the main riff from John Petrucci's "Glasgow Kiss" (Example 14). Petrucci has written this passage in E-mixolydian mode, that is, a major scale with a lowered 7th scale degree (Example 13). This allows for the usage of the flat VII as a neighbour-chord, avoiding the sense of conclusion associated with the leading note resolving. The passagework can then continue indefinitely, giving a toccata-like feel to the arpeggiations and ornaments present in the passage.

Example 13: E-Mixolydian Scale

Example 14: John Petrucci – Intro to "Glasgow Kiss"

Petrucci alternates the ending of each four-bar unit with a bVII chord and a IV chord, usually preceded by a bIII. The "resolutions" to the following I chords are weak due to the absence of the raised D# leading note in the bVII chords and the usage of a IV after the bIII. Closure in each of these cases is denied as a cadence is usually expected, especially in the case of the IV being used instead of the expected V following the bIII. These chords are extending and ornamenting the I harmony throughout, rather than being functional.

Steven Gellman has fittingly named the second movement of his "Keyboard Triptych" *Toccata*, and it features this kind of repetitive passagework (Example 17). Gellman uses the Dorian mode for the Toccata's main riff, modulating between C-Dorian (Example 15) and D-Dorian (Example 16), the Dorian being a natural minor scale with a raised 6th scale degree. The indefinite continuation of the passagework without the pull of the leading note allows for a more effective intensification through the rising of tonality from C-Dorian to D-Dorian. This is particularly apparent in the measure preceding the key change, where Gellman does include a C# in the passagework and instead lowers it to a C-natural on the very last beat of the measure, denying closure and extending the steady stream of sixteenth-notes into the new D-Dorian section.
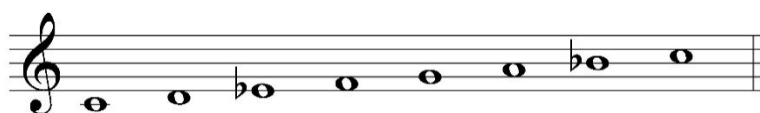
Example 15: C-Dorian Scale

Example 16: D-Dorian Scale

Example 17: Steven Gellman – Excerpt from "Keyboard Triptych", 2nd movement

Performance Notes

These kind of rapid toccata-like passages are clearly articulated and brittle-sounding in a rock setting due to the way a synthesizer and electric guitar produce sound. An electric guitar is usually played with a pick, and even with the usage of hammer-on and pull-off techniques (hammering or pulling off of a string with the finger to articulate a note without using the picking hand) the attack of any single note is very prominent, and there is extensive sustain. Synthesizers typically use a lead sound (a sound used for melodies, often with a *portamento*

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[34] Gellman, 4.

effect between notes) for these passages with a similarly prominent attack and long sustain, matching the guitar.

There is the temptation to create a lovely singing phrase with many fluctuating dynamics out of these kinds of extended passages on the piano, perhaps bringing out a perceived melody based on the contour, as classical musicians are often taught to treat each note with care and meaning (Audio Track 7). This, admirable as it is, completely misses the point. Although the natural decay of the piano cannot really be altered, a wide variety of attacks and articulations is possible. Due to the speed of these kinds of passages, one can compensate for the shorter decay of the piano with a more articulated and brittle attack.

The best way to achieve this is with a literal "plucking" motion with the fingers. This motion can vary from subtle to exaggerated in scope for the purposes of dynamics and accents (Audio Track 8). This does however take a considerable amount of stamina; by nature, these passages continue for extended periods.

SYNCOPATIONS

Sheinbaum comments that progressive rock contains many syncopations, tricky rhythms[35], and Macan notes that these syncopations contribute to the feeling of forward momentum.[36] Rock syncopations are most often consistent displacements forward or backward by an eighth note, or triple groupings in a 4/4 context.[37]

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[35] Sheinbaum, 26.
[36] Macan, 49.
[37] Biamonte, "Rhythmic Patterns in Rock Music".

An excellent example of these kind of rock syncopations is the keyboard introduction to Dream Theater's "6:00" (Example 18).

Example 18: Dream Theater – Keyboard intro to "6:00"

The syncopations in "6:00" are accented by the bass-drum and snare-drum hits. The rhythm in the first two measures is analogous to the third and fourth measures. The first measure begins with a 7/8 pattern, displacing the expected third beat of the 4/4 backward by a sixteenth note. Rather than repeat the 7/8 pattern, there is an insertion of an eighth-note beat, creating a displacement that allows the pattern to fall back onto the first beat of the second measure. The second measure repeats the initial 7/8 pattern, but prolongs its tail of three sixteenth notes by repeating it three more times, creating a triple grouping in a 4/4 pattern. These syncopations and

displacements create a feeling of excitement and unease, setting up this atmosphere for the rest of the song.

Becker does something similar in the second movement of his sonata (Example 19). The time signature is a regular 4/4, which Becker initially displaces by an eighth note. Three quarter-note beats follow, before a single eighth-note beat displaces the pattern back onto the first beat of the next measure. Becker changes the placement of this final eighth-note beat in measures 34, 38, and then twice in a row in measures 40-41, displacing the pattern to fall regularly on the fourth beat of these measures. In this way there is a sense of mounting hurriedness and tension, and this passage ends the A section of the movement. Becker "does not keep us waiting".

(Example on next page)

Example 19: Kris Becker – Piano Sonata No. 1, 2ⁿᵈ movement, measures 32-41

Performance Notes

      Performance of these irregular passages is rather straightforward, as a lot of the time the

composer will mark in the accents, as is the case in the above Becker example (Example 19). In

the cases where accent or tenuto markings are absent, the beaming is usually an excellent

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[38] Becker, 19-20.

indicator of the intended patterns, and said patterns are to be emphasized using a harder "plucking" technique as discussed in the Modal Riffs section (Audio Track 9). The tension and forward momentum are lost without this emphasis.

The alternative approach, that is, not accenting the groupings where there are no accents marked and using a smooth touch, creates a feeling of a longer line, sometimes over an entire measure. The intricacies of the beamed groups are lost, and the excitement inherent in the passage dissipates and fizzles, rather than "not keeping us waiting" (Audio Track 10).

PART 3

ISSUES

A number of issues came to light while researching, practicing, analyzing, and performing Gellman's and Becker's pieces, the details of which are included in the following section. Gellman's piece brought about questions concerning the merging of rock and classical instruments in a concert hall, and how this merging is affected by different venues. Also relevant are my choices in selecting my sounds for the synthesizer, and how my performance preparation differed from the first time I performed the piece several years ago. The issue of authenticity came into play with the inclusion of rock elements in a classical framework.

The Concert Hall

The majority of concert halls built for the presentation of classical music are constructed with acoustic instruments in mind. In the case of the synthesizer and piano setup in Gellman's

piece, I performed it in two similarly set-up halls most recently. These were Tanna Schulich Hall at McGill University, and the Chapelle du Bon Pasteur, both in Montreal. The PA systems in these halls were set up with two speakers on each side of the stage, significantly closer to the audience than the piano. I relied on a sound technician to provide an adequate balance of sound in the hall between the piano and the synthesizer, and added a lot of artificial reverb to the synthesizer sounds to compensate for the differing placement of acoustic versus electric sound sources.

The topic of venue brought about much discussion after my performances, with mention of groups such as "Bang on a Can" performing classical concerts in rock settings.[39] In these cases, the role of the audience changes, as the typical classical concert audience is expected to sit in silent adulation at the musical wonders in front of them. Instead the audience is encouraged to mill about. Beer is served. If members of the audience do not find a certain piece appealing, they can chat with their colleagues, or go get a drink, until some of the music again catches their ear. They can show their enjoyment or displeasure without causing a scene.

It is interesting to note that non-classical venues are usually not built to acoustically support an instrument such as a piano, and this problem is almost always solved by microphones. In this way the balance can be individually tweaked, rather than having one instrument be acoustically trapped. This does allow for greater freedom in the mix but brings into question a similar setup in a classical concert hall: should an instrument such as a piano be miked and be part of the electronic mix when it can stand on its own?

This depends entirely on the intention of the composer or performer. If the intent is for a juxtaposition of the acoustic and the electric, then the acoustic instrument is best left alone. If,

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[39] www.bangonacan.org

however, said instrument is to be a part of a larger electric band, say a saxophone solo in a certain Pink Floyd song, miking it will be much more effective.

Changes in Performances of the "Keyboard Triptych"

I performed Gellman's "Keyboard Triptych" many years ago as part of my final Bachelor's recital at the University of Ottawa. For this performance I used a sequencer: Ableton Live. This hosted all the sounds I wanted to use for the piece. However, switching between them was problematic. I had to assign the sound changes to the drum pads on my MIDI keyboard, as I could not use a pedal to cycle through them. This created a somewhat panicked atmosphere, as I had to quickly lunge with a finger to these drum pads ensuring that I press them hard enough to activate the sound and deactivate the previous sound.

I was unaware of how to connect my gear to the sound system in the hall at the time, and as such I used an amplifier that I placed in the crook of the piano. This created a blend between acoustic and electric sound sources, and only required someone to alert me of balance issues while standing in the hall.

My recent performances of the "Keyboard Triptych" made use of software created by a company called "Brainspawn". They developed a very powerful host software called "Forte". It allows scrolling through sounds in a specific order with the use of a simple switch pedal, allowing one's hands to focus on playing continuously.

I built most of the sounds on my own, instead of using mostly software presets as I had done in my Ottawa performance. I found that this gave the advantage of being fully aware of sonic and expressive possibilities. For example, the "Venus Voice" in the final *Aria* movement requires much use of the expression pedal, but I chose to use a sound with a wide range of

velocity response. In this way I could use the MIDI keyboard's actual keys for expression, eliminating the constant use of a pedal, which can at times become awkward and unwieldy.

The contrast between the acoustic and electric was much more apparent in my latest performances due to using the halls' PA systems. A sound technician was present to take care of balance issues, and this juxtaposition is, to me, one of the more important aspects of the piece.

Authenticity

Performance practice in classical music has interested scholars as early as 1915, but the late 1980s showed a much wider interest in the topic and there has been much published about proper "period performance" since then.[40] A lot of this centres around how much room there is for interpretation by the performer. Peter le Huray, in his book *Authenticity in Performance*, mentions that "Performance, after all, is a recreative act in which the imagination of the performer plays a vital role." This is definitely the case, and le Huray suggests it is important to define the questions that a performer should be asking based on the research that is available.[41] He goes on, saying:

> Not long ago, many eminent musicians simply assumed with breathtaking self-assurance that composers of earlier times would have preferred to hear their music played by modern ensembles, on modern instruments, and in the modern manner, rather than on the 'imperfect' instruments of their own times.[42]

Given the rapid developments in synthesizer technology, and it being a relatively new instrument, how appropriate would the application of performance practice be? More specifically: why not use the original DX-7 synthesizer programmed with the original sounds of Gellman's "Keyboard Triptich"?

[40] Peter le Huray, *Authenticity in Performance* (England: Cambridge University Press, 1990), preface xv.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid., 1.

This ties into what Stan Godlovitch describes as a purist versus a progressivist interpretation: "The Purist will recommend only those means which were available in the relevant period. Progressives are not so constrained. For the Progressive, whatever best achieves the desired end deserves consideration."[43] I do consider myself to be a progressivist, but I also believe that Godlovitch's "desired end" needs to be rooted in research and the relevant performance practice idioms, whatever they may be. The organ and the harpsichord, for example, should have a significant influence on how one interprets and performs Bach on the modern piano.

My approach to Gellman's "Keyboard Triptych" was similar: the DX-7 sounds significantly influenced my newly-created ones, but I also took advantage of familiar modern technology for ease of preparation and performance. Godlovitch calls this approach "progressive conservatism", that is, finding ways of mixing tradition with the modern.[44] He describes a "pragmatic attitude" that I have taken to heart, and I believe that what he writes concerning acoustic instruments is very applicable to electronic ones as well:

> How can we even assume that modern acoustic instruments are functionally superior to their ancestors in the case of performances of music predating the modern instruments? I do not think such an assumption is reasonable. For now, I appeal to doctrinaire pragmatic attitudes of many modern musicians. Knowing their instruments well, they are better able to achieve technical and expressive results than would be possible were they now to adopt early instruments. Whether such results legitimately fit the music is highly debatable, but this is a problem of interpretation.[45]

Performing the "Keyboard Triptych" with my own setup allowed me to create an interpretation based on authenticity, but with an instrument and technology that I have used

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[43] Stan Godlovitch, "Innovation and Conservatism in Performance Practice," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 55 no. 2 (Spring 1997): 151.

[44] Ibid., 152.
[45] Ibid., 155.

extensively and of which I have gained intrinsic knowledge. I have no doubt that using a DX-7 would technically be considered more "authentic", but my relationship with the instrument would be superficial at best. The genesis of the sounds or the characteristics of the instrument would be foreign to me, similar to a pianist sitting down at an organ for the very first time. With my MIDI keyboard and soft synths, I have "built the pipes" myself.

As for the inclusion of rock elements, I find a progressive conservative approach to be applicable as well. In the previous analytical section I have listed a number of rock elements and performance notes, but these are by no means to be considered as the ultimate way of performing these elements in all of their occurrences. Le Huray sums up this view admirably, saying that "The search for an 'authentic' interpretation, therefore, is not the search for a single hard and fast answer, but for a range of possibilities from which to make performing decisions. Authenticity is no dogma. There has never been, nor can there ever be, one way of interpreting a composition."[46]

This is especially true in a piece that combines classical elements with rock. The challenge comes in deciding when to blur the lines between the two and when to use their differing elements for stark contrast. The transition between the first and second movements of the "Keyboard Triptych" goes between the Messiaen-inspired and a progressive rock riff (Example 20). Here I chose to "classicize" the initial few iterations of the riff, using a more singing and phrased approach, while slowly changing the touch to a more brittle and even attack, going to a full rock style by the fifth repetition:

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[46] Le Huray, 4.

Example 20: Steven Gellman – "Keyboard Triptych", Beginning of 2nd movement

As I hope to have demonstrated, the performer's task is therefore to decide on an interpretation based on a number of possibilities, be they classical or rock, having an informed background of them all.

CONCLUSION

Contemporary classical music produces many performance challenges, even more so when a contemporary classical work is influenced by rock music. The performer must understand and negotiate compositional conventions as well as performance traditions from two very different genres. Knowing how to address these challenges is essential to a convincing performance of the piece.

I have written this study as a guide; my approach can be extended to other instruments,

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[47] Gellman, 3.

and be used to inspire and inform other performances of rock-influenced classical music. Given recent trends toward the inclusion of non-classical impulses in classical music, my hope is that more musicians will be inspired to explore the rich history of rock and other non-classical genres. With groups such as "Bang on a Can" and others bringing the rock world to classical venues, audiences, and vice versa, more composers will do away with "progressive classical music" and be unafraid of their peers deeming their music not "new" or "serious" enough. Who, after all, do composers write music for: each other, or a diverse audience?

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