CONFLUENCE

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for piano and orchestra

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ABSTRACT

This thesis consists of two main parts. The first part is the musical score of an original composition for piano and full orchestra entitled "Confluence". This is a single movement work of approximately thirteen minutes duration.

The second part is an essay containing a detailed aesthetic, conceptual and technical analysis of the musical work.

RÉSUMÉ

La présente thèse comporte deux grandes sections. "Confluence" constitue la première section, composition originale pour piano et grand orchestre; il s'agit d'une oeuvre en un mouvement d'une durée approximative de treize minutes.

La seconde section, sous forme d'essai, présente une analyse détaillée de cette oeuvre musicale, des points de vue esthétique, conceptuel et technique.

CONFLUENCE FOR PIANO AND ORCHESTRA

INTRODUCTION

"Confluence" is a bilingual French and English word (the French pronunciation is preferred) which means "flowing together". It was chosen to suggest a fluid amorphous entity, like a river, held together by some organizing principles or some common direction. The "river of sound" created by an orchestra, like a river of water, is not uniform but contains diverse and conflicting forces and materials; this piece focuses on the interplay of these diverse elements "flowing together". Accordingly, this composition contains much local detail and variety, as well as a core process which evolves organically from beginning to end.

One could say that music explores the nature of sensory perception; the ways in which sonic material and process form <u>perceived</u> structure. This composition, rather than expressing extra-musical ideas through music, uses extra-musical concepts visual, dramatic and mathematical - to facilitate the organization of sound materials.

"Confluence" is the third of a series of musical essays considering the nature of the relationship between the "soloist" and "accompanying" ensemble from varying perspectives. The central relationship of this piece is that of the piano to the orchestra - not so much of the soloist to the ensemble as of the piano as a smaller "unified orchestra" (with a wide range of registral, textural and dynamic variety) to the ensemble as a larger diverse orchestra (expanding and extending all aspects of the piano sonority).

The following chart delineates the grouping of the orchestral instruments in this piece and outlines the timbral relationships between the piano and each of the instrumental groups.

Instrumental Group

Timbral Comparison to Piano

1. mallet percussion

a)	glock, vibes, marimba	similar attack and generally
		decay.
b)	xylophone	similar attack and similar
		timbre in upper register;
		differs because of
		extremely fast decay.

2. clarinets

similar large dynamic range and "moderate" timbre - neither very bright nor very mellow but colored by a few prominent harmonics - expecially in the "rich" mid-low register. The clarinet

sonority is sometimes used to dovetail with decaying piano tones and gradually mask them, seeming to reverse the natural decay of the individual piano sonority.

similar attack, decay, large range, and ability to play large numbers of notes at one time, including clusters and glissandi.

share sound of vibrating strings, large pitch range as a group, and large dynamic range. Non vibrato and thick textural effects emphasize similarity to piano.

> similar incisiveness of attack and brightness and fullness of chords in

3. harp

4. strings

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5. brass

mid-low register at loud
dynamics.

6. other percussion and not closely related; used woodwinds (excluding for contrast and support malletophones and in heavily scored clarinets) textures.

These timbral relationships determine the relative importance of the various instrumental groups and the ways in which they are used. Accordingly, there are two expansions of the standard medium-size orchestra: the percussion section is expanded to five players due to the frequent and complex use of malletophones, and the clarinets are treated as an individual section with four players - three playing standard B-flat clarinets, one playing the bass clarinet.

Timbre is used to mold and clarify texture and context by giving individual sound-characters to the various materials and relating these materials by timbral contrast, similarity and change. The use of timbre for intrinsic interest is secondary to this.

The degree of overtone richness of each timbre is considered in terms of its potential to add complexity and fullness to the texture by adding to such accoustic phenomena as sympathetic vibration and harmcnic beating. These aspects of sound, along

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with the variety of attack characteristics among the various instrumental timbres, are used to create and manipulate a wide variety of subtle and transient effects within the total musical texture, giving it timbral "depth".

PRIMARY TIMBRAL RELATIONSHIPS



GENERAL TIMBRAL PRINCIPLES AND PROCESSES

(a continuum from simplest to most complex)

- Uniform, non-changing timbres use of a single instrument or instrumental choir;
- 2. closely related timbres (such as oboe and harmon-muted trumpet);
- 3. contrast of two or more different timbres simultaneously or sequentially;
- 4. change of timbre gradually, quickly or instantaneously;
- 5. pointalistic timbres very frequent and var d changes;
- 6. many different timbres simultanously within a complex texture.

LOCAL TIMBRAL EFFECTS

(adding local interest and textural depth)

- 1. Non-standard instruments: thundersheet, revolving plastic hose (which "whistles" a random harmonic series), metal wind chimes;
- 2. A few non-standard uses of standard instruments: timpani played with hard mallets; harp played <u>exclusively</u> "près de la table" with fingernails (the absence of a comparison with standard harp timbre suggests the use of a new, different instrument);
- 3. the unique (or extremely rare) <u>very sudden and brief</u> use of a <u>single</u> timbre;
- 4. "implosion": many different instrumental colors on one or a few pitches, usually in an extreme register; adds depth and intensity of sound due to the many conflicting and interacting tunings, overtones and vibrati;
- 5. "cushion": almost imperceptible doubling by a second timbre to <u>slightly</u> color predominant timbre; adds "warmth" and "body" to the sound;
- 6. "echo": a) notated "phasing", one instrument tracks another at a short time interval; b) the piano is used as a reverberation chamber, doubling other instruments very softly with the damper pedal down;
- 7. overtone interaction and reinforcement: wide spacing, use of several different pitches, timbres and registers, prominence of "open" intervals such as perfect fifths and fourths, and

moderately slow tempi contribute to this effect;8. ambiguity of exact pitch and/or octave:

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- a) melodic scalar passages with octave expansion played extremely fast so that the ear has insufficient time to perceive how the melodic line jumps several octaves so quickly (see score pages 17 to 30);
- b) harmonic extreme registers with very wide spacing, combined with a variety of highly colored timbres (high partial content), obscure exact perception of register, of "separate notes" (upper notes tend to be perceived as partials of lower notes) and of "separate parts" (examples: pages 7 to 9, high percussion, piano and woodwinds).

TIMBRAL TREATMENT OF THE "SOLO" PIANO

- Restriction of register to the very low ("rich, full") and/or the very high ("bright, percussive");
- 2. "transparency": spreading pitches sparsely throughout the entire range for greater resonance (without "thickness");
- 3. "thick" texture: clusters and large chords; close spacing and "dissonant" intervals; many conflicting harmonic partials; "harshness" of sound when combined

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with percussive attacks and loud dynamics;

- 4. varied, changing, amorphous texture; a variety of articulation and dynamics (attacks and decays) over a short period of time, sometimes in conjunction with
- 5. continuous use of damper pedal to mix these materials fluidly.

CONTINUUM OF SIMPLICITY/COMPLEXITY

The "Primary Timbral Relationships" chart and the "General Timbral Principles and Processes" chart on page 5 above are examples of the organization of musical elements according to the general conceptual model. This organization has facilitated the integration of eclectic, diverse and sometimes conflicting ideas (technical, conceptual, dramatic, mathematical and philosophical) into a whole. Sound information varies along a continuum between two opposite poles, as delineated by the following:

SIMPLICITY/COMPLEXITY SCALE

Level 1 — Level 2 — Level 3 — Level 4 \longrightarrow Level 5extremesimplemoderateextremesimplicityordercomplexityambiguitycomplexity

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This conceptual model also functions to describe activity or energy levels. It can be applied to more specific concepts, such as mathematical organization, predictability and focus:

MATHEMATICAL ORGANIZATION SCALE

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 -----> 5
uniformity simple logical irregularity; randomness
regularity; change; distortion;
symmetry evolution fragmentation

Mathematical organization is manifested primarily in two musical parameters: rhythm and pitch.

PREDICTABILITY SCALE

1 −−−−− 2 −−−− 3 −−−−− 4 −−−−→5 total much moderate slight total predictability p p p unpredictability

(p)



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The various complexity scales work in tandem - so they can be combined thus:

COMBINED CONTINUUM OF SIMPLICITY/COMPLEXITY

1	2	3	4	→ 5
extreme	simple	moderate		extreme
simplicity	order	complexity	ambiguity	complexity
uniformity	simple regularity;	logical change;	<pre>fragmentation; irregularity;</pre>	randomness
	symmetry	evolution	distortion	
total predict-	much p	moderate p	slight p	total un-
ability (p)				predict-
				ability
obsessed	sharp-	clear but	blurred;	unfocussed
	focused	changing	ambiguous	

Musical material which lies near the middle point of this continuum is the most immediately perceivable and understandable sonic information as it avoids the monotony and boredom of under-stimulation at one extreme (Level 1) and the confusion and disorder of over-stimulation at the other extreme (Level 5).

The Simplicity/Complexity Continuum model, then, is useful in the following way:

Most of the music most of the time is kept primarily within the middle level, and secondarily weaving in and out of the 2nd and 4th levels. The two extremes, levels 1 & 5, are used only occasionally and briefly for "relief" (resting the "mental-ear", allowing time for reflection and conjecture) for "surprise" or "shock" effect and for "contrast" to the predominant or current level. There may be variations in complexity levels between two (or more) layers of the total musical texture at any one given time. There may also be simultaneous differences of level and/or direction along the Simplicity/Complexity Continuum among the various musical elements; for example: rhythm may become simpler while timbres become more complex.

Since this music is primarily textural in concept notwithstanding important structural, rhythmic and harmonic elements - the application of the Simplicity/Complexity Continuum model to the textural design of the piece, as graphically outlined below, is of primary importance to understanding the work. The overall texture varies along the following:

CONTINUUM OF TEXTURAL DENSITY



ANALYTICAL OUTLINE

The introductory section sets in motion a basic set of tensions - between order and disorder; between stasis and movement - that motivates and energizes the piece. At the outset, a brief period of increasing static tension (m. 1-7) leads to a tremendous explosion (m. 7) briefly followed by slowly rising "shock waves", falling chunks of sonic "debris" and swirling clouds of settling "dust". This great outburst of energy rapidly dissipates, leaving the piano (m. 14) to gradually reconstruct the piece from the diverse compositional "rubble". This "reconstruction" begins at letter "A" (m. 14) with a simple repeated-note figure which grows gradually in rhythmic, then melodic. then harmonic interest. This process continues with ever-increasing timbral and textural variety and complexity, until it is interrupted by a new type of material: a "fast section" beginning at rehearsal letter "F" (m. 80).

This new section may be considered a diversion: a very high-energy musical interlude dropped into the flowing stream of sound. It is a lighthearted interjection into a process that may otherwise have become too unidirectional and predictable. It is also a playful and whimsical response to the inevitable expectation of virtuosity which a piece for piano and orchestra even if not specifically titled a "concerto" - evokes. This format allows virtuosic passages and loud rambunctiousness while (hopefully) avoiding bombast and pretention. Gradually, (from m. 198) the music resumes a process of evolution similar to that of the first large ("slow") section with a gradual decrease in rhythmic intensity and definition and a general slowing of tempo. The distinctions among the various instrumental timbres are gradually blurred, then eradicated, leading to unity of piano and orchestra. This process constitutes the third, and final, large section. The short coda consists of a brief restatement of the explosion motif (m. 298) by certain orchestral factions - as if to say "Let's do it again". This is answered very quietly by the piano: "No, it's finished", and the music drifts out of hearing range...

Since the materials of this piece progress from the simple to the complex and because these materials are often juxtaposed, combined and continuously varied (not to mention brief foreshadowings and interjections), it has been necessary at times to consider clarity and convenience, and to use personal judgement in distinguishing and labeling the "separate" materials and sections in the following "Graph of Formal Sections":

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GRAPH OF FORMAL SECTIONS





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SELECTIVE, DETAILED ANALYSIS OF INDIVIDUAL SECTIONS

The introduction (m. 1-13) consists of two sound-mass gestures. It is quite different in style from most of the rest of the piece, although it provides dramatic (energizing) motivation and contains implicitly many of the basic gestures and the rhythmic and melodic motives to be delineated and developed later.

The first gesture is a build-up of static tension, as evolving clusters push and pull away from the constant repeated note: A = 440 (the "tuning" note, of course) first stated by the "solo" piano. The stream of sound pulls away from this note both downward and upward, then is pulled back to the centre at the end of m. 6, and after a final, desperate, unsuccessful stretching of the texture (m. 7), the tension is broken by the explosion initiated by the piano. Thus the soloist exerts a primary dramatic and structural influence on the course of the piece.



PROPORTIONAL DIAGRAM OF THE INITIAL "IMPLOSION"

The orchestration brightens and thickens up to the explosive climax, m. 7, after which the musical texture divides into three layers:

- 1) an harmonically static but multi-rhythmic "screen" of four minor ninths (semitone cluster expansion) in the middle-to-high registers, played by the piano, harp, and malletophones; (a "screen" is a static sound-mass which is <u>transparent</u> due to its relatively few pitches separated by wide pitch intervals).
- 2) two streams of string glissandi undulating downward from the very high to the mid-low registers, thickening, then fading

(additional textural interest is added to this material by the unpitched jeté "sound-mass" material in the low strings, and the windy, whistling effect of the rotated plastic hose in Perc. III;)

3) chordal material in the brass and piano in two gestures - the first emerges from the "explosion" in m. 7, falling in pitch and dynamic level, then rising to a secondary climax on the fourth sixteenth-note of m. 9 - the second continues from the first as a slowly rising "tidal wave" which expands and contracts, becoming a loud, thick cluster in m. 12 before slowly fading out.

This "tidal wave" of chords in a clear and concise example of the harmonic materials and methods used throughout much of this piece:



This total gesture consists of four modified and transposed statements of a simple chordal material first manifested in chords 1 to 6. They are linked together by a "top-line" spiralling upward chromatically, with the occasional downward semitone movement in the first half of the gesture (at chords 3 and 9).

The basic harmonic materials are stated in chords 1 and 2 above: Chord 1 is a quartal chord - major second plus perfect fourth - and chord 2 is a major $\frac{6}{3}$ chord. The interest of this material is the close relationship between two materials from "different" pitch systems; this relationship is manifested in the sharing of pitches and intervals, in close voice-leading, and by the simple alternation of two chords back and forth.

The basic principle of chord movement, <u>alternation with</u> <u>expansion</u>, is illustrated by chords 7 to 10 thus:



Chord 8 (as well as 4, 6 and 12) are formed by interlocking the two basic chords thus:

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basic chord 2 + added tone = chord 8, etc.

Chord 8 (etc.), which is also a major $\frac{6}{3}$ chord with an added perfect fourth, becomes an important "signature-chord" towards the end of the piece.

In chord 9 (as well as 5 and 13) the particular added-tone is chosen because it adds the characteristic intervals of a major third, a tritone, and a major seventh to the harmonic texture. It is also part of the fanning-out process between chords 7 to 10. Chords 10 and 14 are constructed by stacking two transpositions of chord 1 at the interval of a minor sixth so as to include chords 2 and 4. The preceding and following examples illustrate the constantly applied principle of this work: <u>analysis and</u> <u>exploration of very simple materials and concentration on the</u> <u>basic relationships between them</u>. The use of these materials is both systematic and intuitive, as will be explained in greater detail on page 28 below.

At m. 14 the after-effects of the "explosion" are dying away, leaving the piano to "reconstruct" the music starting from the simpest of musical ideas: one pitch (B natural) and one rhythmic unit (the reiterated quarter-note) gradually emerging from the fading tone-cluster. This single tone is joined by a repeated B flat, which by its third reiteration has become another unitary metric layer with a ratio of 2:3 to the original B natural:



The new "beat", however, is displaced one sixteenth-note thus:

(i) etc.

This pattern continues with irregularities and distortions including a notated tempo change and brief impressionistic "dabs" of material suggestive of the previous "explosion" motif. Added

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to this are brief melodic lines of sevenths and ninths and scalar material of the simplest kind - the first five degrees of the major scale - presented as "out-of-tune" lines of parallel minor ninths (some with octave displacement at m. 20). This material is presented in a repetitive, gradually accelerating melodic line (almost as if the pianist were learning how to play!)

From m. 23 there is the suggestion that the pianist is attempting to fashion a "traditional melody" from the simple scalar line by adding an "alto voice" in parallel thirds and some variations in pitches, dynamics and rhythm. Since the material is so minimal, tentative and "non-functional" (but containing "diatonic" references), the listener cannot quite distinguish any major or minor "key" (nor any modal nor whole-tone "scale") despite the brief allusions to these structures and a tenuous perception of two layers of "tonality".

At m. 30 the previous material is expanded into two layers using the registral extremes. The upper layer continues the scalar theme in parallel minor tenths with rhythmic heterophony. The lower level is simple, mostly sustained, material moving in parallel perfect fifths. Mm. 34-40 consist of two "cartwheeling" interlocking lines of minor sixths, major thirds and major tenths, suggesting interlocking (different) major chords in rhythmically displaced parallel movement.

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At m. 40 the upper layer expands into three parallel lines. The rhythmic heterophony between them becomes more pronounced and varied, sometimes with repeated-notes forming complex arpeggiations. The notes always outline the first three degrees of the minor mode with octave expansion:



Percussive timbres were used for their bell-like quality: hard attacks, richness of overtones (which help unify the layer in spite of the distance between the voices) and natural decay (which adds clarity and variety to the textures). The lower layer is principally two interlocking sets of parallel perfect fifths (twelfths) which are a tritone apart. The chords are exchanged by dynamic modulation: as one set fades-in, the other fades-out. The fifths are interspersed with minor sixths (inverted major thirds) to continue the continual contrast of "major" and "open" sounding vertical sonorities. The loud, accented open twelfths moving in parallel at the beginning of each evolving harmonic unit add structural clarity and textural richness to this passage. The interchange of instrumental timbres coordinated with the exchange of dynamics is an integral element of the total effect.

At m. 49 the previous material expands into a harmonically static, multi-rhythmic "screen" (defined on page 17, above). The

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total texture of this example consists mainly of two complex elements:

I. three two-part proportionally related layers:

- 1) flute and trumpet,
- 2) glock and marimba, and
- 3) piano (one part per hand);
- II. fast arpeggios, irregular but gradually getting slower, softer and melodically thinner due to the (more or less) methodical replacement of some notes by rests (filtering):
 - 1) xylophone and temple blocks,
 - 2) harp, and
 - 3) chimes.

Supporting these rhythmic elements are the following sustained elements:

- I. a continuous rhythmic unison pedal in three alternating horn timbres, open, muted and stopped (on G, middle register);
- II. a three-note "open fifth" chord, in the strings, trombone, piano, bassoon and timpanum, which is obscured at first by an underlying open fifth diad (at the relation of a tritone) in the extreme low register of the piano;

III. an evolving, whistling sound produced by swinging a plastic hose around in circles.

Here is a graphic outline of this multi-rhythmic texture:



The three two-part proportionally related layers are enclosed in rectangles in the graph above. The rhythmic ratios (of upper part to lower) are shown in braces above the "blocks".

Each "line" is restricted to two widely spaced, alternating pitches (at the interval of a ninth). This promotes some clarity of individual line despite shared pitches and overall rhythmic complexity. Also, a melodic unit of two notes, "up-down", (melodic rhythm) overlaid upon metric units of three and two adds another aspect of rhythmic interest.

The alternating tones of the flute and trumpet form the first metric layer. Its simple by-metric pattern is readily perceived from the above graph.

The second (glock and marimba) and third (piano) layers are more intricately structured, and are identical except for the abbreviation of the third layer. Thus, the third layer imitates the second, one "beat" later. Of course, the "beat" is merely a notational convenience; it cannot be aurally perceived in such a complex context. The structural features of each layer include:

- ratios of 4:3 consistently alternating with ratios of 3:2 (upper part to lower);
- gradual deceleration occurs as the slower rhythmic unit (lower line) becomes the faster rhythmic unit (upper line) in each succeeding metric group.

In these ways, the concepts of consistent bi-metric layering and gradual written rallentando are integrated. The total effect of this passage, when the other, rhythmically irregular ("intuitive"), layers are added, is that of a (written-out) rallentando within a rhythmically complex texture.

The preceding and following analyzed passages are good examples of the general compositional method used in this piece: <u>the intuitive use of systematized materials</u>. These materials are usually quite simple in essence: the simple directional form described above; the harmonic materials - the open chord, the minor chord, the "major chord with added fourth"; the methods of harmonic movement - parallelism (exact or altered), "traditional voice-leading" (keeping common tone, moving to nearest tone of new chord, passing tones, etc.), overlapping or "pyramiding" chords, reverberation (tracking a passage very softly with the piano with damper pedal down); and the rhythmic concepts - simple regular movement, delay, anticipation, written-out accelerandi and ralentandi.

The intuitive use of these materials includes: deciding when and how to change from one type of material to another; analyzing and utilizing the subtle relationships between the material to intertwine them into a unified fabric; sensing when an idea going in one direction (such as the 9/8 passage, mm. 63 to 65) becomes predictable and judging the appropriate kind and amount of change. Most importantly, this thought process is <u>improvizational</u>, whether

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at the keyboard or away from it: the constant mental switching and balancing from system to sound gives the music a kind of organic logic and consistency that encompasses freedom and spontaneity.

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Here are four detailed examples of this process, from the passage between m. 55 and m. 78:

- 1) in m. 55 the parallel open ⁹/₅ chords played in the low register in unison by the piano, harp, and strings give to the listener a sense of inexact (yet, somehow, "definite") pitch due to the extremely rich and thick harmonic interaction of the various instrumental timbres. This intriguing timbral effect is suggestive of tuned membranophones or of "electronic" sounds;
- 2) from the last beat of m. 55 to the first beat of m. 56 there is a curious ambiguity of perceived octave - the ear follows the semitone movement from D up to E flat and thus hears the harmonic movement as primarily a semitone upward. But it is also apparent that the second chord is much clearer and (thus) "higher" than the first. So there is a perceived sense of octave shift which conflicts with the sense of semitone movement;
- 3) particularly from m. 58 to m. 64, the parallel chords intersect the pedal-note G to create a constant variety

of chords sounding variously modal, quartal, tritonal, etc.;

4) with the oboe entry at m. 64, the very gradual process of rhythmic and timbral displacement and evolution of the pedal-note G begins. This continues to the end of the section (m. 78).

The music of the second (middle) main section, from m. 79, is a continuous series of variations of the following theme:





This is a freely atonal pitch series. Its modified serialism is incidental, not structural. The pitches were chosen to outline

a simple directional motif with a very recognizable shape and very restricted interval pattern. The important intervals are: three perfect fifths, three tritones, and five minor seconds. Two augmented fifths, one minor third and one major second add variety. The upward perfect fifths at the beginning of each phrase and near the end of the first phrase, and the augmented fourths, upward and downward in the second phrase, are contrasted with each other and with the short chromatic motives - three notes descending at first, then several two-note rising figures. This simple and repetitive material retains its recognizability in spite of continuous distortion: octave expansion of pitches without changing direction of interval (continuously used); octave displacement of pitches changing melodic direction (rarely used); and rhythmic alteration. There is a basic rhythmic dichotomy between regular, metric material and irregular patterns based primarily on written-out accellerandi and ritardandi. The following alteration techniques are continuously applied to the motif: transposition (usually a whole-tone downward), shortening, extension, filtering of pitches and frequent changes of timbre and dynamics. In fact, the "original theme" as notated above is never stated in its entirety.

The main gestural features of this section are:

- frantic, acrobatic activity manifesting great energy, whimsicality and virtuosity;
- brief, static, uni-chordal interruptions (just as this whole section is an extended interruption of the previous

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and following "flow" of sound);

3) spontaneous "cutting and splicing" of the material in the manner of tape editing, causing (a) expansion, contraction and "arranging" of the theme and (b) gradual removal (filtering-out) of the static-chord material.

(Here, arranging means a brief-resetting of the material in a contrasting style or from a different perspective, as if it were "contributed" by a different composer. See examples at mm. 146 and 166).

Mm. 110 to 112, and 176 to 184, are examples (among others) of "super-human", "quasi-electronic" virtuosity. It does not seem possible that one pianist can play so many notes, so fast, in so many different registers, and with such wide intervallic leaps in both hands simultaneously. This effect is calculated to suggest, in breadth and complexity of sound, the "orchestral" capacity of the piano.

From mm. 146 to 148, a simple homophonic setting (arrangement) in parallel minor triads is subjected to registral distortion by interval contraction and expansion, and by (multi-) octave displacement among the chordal units. Note that the motif is stated in its "original" form (in terms of pitch) by the english horn and in an octave-expanded form by the piano, outlining alternately the lowest and highest tones of the string chords.

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Chordal melody at m. 146



This is directly followed by an "implosion" in which the theme is stated in its most intervalically contracted form, and the pitches are allowed to "bleed together" to form an evolving "cluster" or "sound-mass" (mm. 149-152). This passage of melodic overlapping (creating a "reverberation effect") then evolves timbrally as the piano color is gradually exchanged for the sound of the bright brass: trumpets, trombones and oboes "acting as trumpets".

Underlying the material from m. 201 to m. 228 is the progression of chords notated on page 35 below. The general pitch

direction of this progression is gradually and consistently downward, after an initial slightly ascending passage to chord 6 (see "Original Progression" notated below). This progression consists of two basic kinds of "bi-chords", that is, chords made up of two vertical layers of three notes each. The first kind consists of a simple diatonic triad in the upper layer and different diatonic triad in the lower layer. Note the frequent use of first inversion and traditional voice-leading (even traditional progressions such as I to IV!) and open spacing within each layer. The second type of chord has two forms; one has an open-spaced first inversion major triad in the lower layer, and three notes which are analogous to "non-harmonic" overtones of the lower layer thus:



upper layer: "non-harmonic overtones"

lower layer: first inversion major triad

the other type simply reverses the layers:



upper layer: first inversion major triad

"non-harmonic subtones".
These two chords are sometimes used in sequence, the total effect being:



An example of this is chords 11 and 12 in the chordal reduction below. I call this ambiguous movement a "progression/inversion"; there is a sense of chord change, but it is harmonically static, because both chords use the same six pitches (though in different octaves).

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Here is the chord progression notated as originally conceived, followed by the octave-displace chords used in the score (m. 201 to 228):

ORIGINAL PROGRESSION







REGISTRALLY DISPLACED CHORDS





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The rhythmic processes used in activating this material include: simultaneous layering of repeated-note lines related by simple ratios; irregular arpeggiation; overlapping chords; and traditional chord progression. These follow each other in the order listed, with some exceptions, and by the "two-steps-forward, one-step-back" method.

Dynamic interchange is an important feature of this material, both horizontally (one vertical sonority fades-out while the next fades-in, etc.) and vertically, as in mm. 215-216, where the high layer is loud and the lower layer is soft. Mm. 222 to 224 feature gradual interchange of loud and soft between the upper and lower layers.

Mm. 242-257 consist of freely tonal material, mainly of two kinds:

1) the main theme from the "fast section" altered, then harmonized with parallel overlapping major ⁶/₃ triads with open spacing. Some of the "melody-chords" are octavedisplaced, and there are also interjections (still the same kind of chord) in the high and low registers. This material has a bright, spacious, reverberant sound created by the overlapping of clarinet, harp, piano, glock and vibrapione timbres; 2) two brief contrasting interjections of sombre, dense, dryer and lower material from the strings (later joined by the brass). This material is in a "quasi-minor mode" contrasting to the previous and following "quasi-major" material. The "soprano" line starts as an inversion of the previous theme, and the chords start to move as a functional progression in G dorian, but almost immediately start to "modulate" and "drift away". But the main contrast of this material is the fact that <u>it is "de-tuned" to one quarter-tone below the</u> <u>prevailing pitch level</u>, while the chords and "progressions" themselves remain internally "in tune".

The simplicity of the two materials emphasizes the "change-of-tuning" effect. (Since this piece <u>seems</u> to be a piano concerto, the use of this "de-tuned" material is ironic: the piano cannot play it - it is "between the keys".)

The piano material at m. 257 is interesting for its orchestral effect (partly supported, or "cushioned", very softly by orchestral instruments). The pan-registral fullness and richness, the variety of articulations, note-lengths and (particularly) dynamics gives great variety and depth to the texture.

The unusual spacing and dynamics of the E Major chord (m. 257), with the isolated, loudly accented B natural in the middle

register, and the other two-chord factors played very softly in the very low register with the third of the chord in the bass, adds a unique dramatic effect; as does the sudden clearing of texture to a <u>single</u>, <u>accented</u> B natural in m. 259.

All vertical sonorities from mm. 265 to 269 are inversions of the "major chord plus perfect fourth", as are almost all the chords from mm. 284 to 291 (with a little "wandering" and a few accented interjections). This is an interesting chord because each different inversion or spacing emphasizes a different intervalic and/or spacing effect with a corresponding difference in the perception of the degree of consonance/dissonance. Here is an outline of the inversion and spacing possibilities of this type of chord, as used in m. 265 to m. 291:



* (5th changed to flat 7th)

The use of traditional voice-leading with passing tones, etc., gives a smoothe-flowing quality and directionality that divert attention from the similarity of the vertical sonorities. From m. 291 to m. 296, there is a return to chords in two three-note layers, as at mm. 201 to 228. This time there is more use of the vertical interchange of "triad" and "non-harmonic partial" layers in consecutive chords as described above, but now they are in the low register. They are now used to rework the alternating-chord motif from m. 263. These "dissonant" pitches in the lower register, closed position, played on the piano produce a powerful, hard-edged, pungent sonority which is emulated by the orchestral choirs as the material is passed around from group to group.

Mm. 298 to 301 consist of two dramatic gestures: a flashback to the initial "explosion" abbreviated in the manner of film editing (minimal gestures with no preparation and no repetition) then a brief fade-out consisting of two simple lines of alternating whole-steps followed by the ultimately simple musical gesture: ...which fades in the distance...

CONCLUSION

In a sense, this piece is a perceptual game for the listener - to find the direction of the piece as a whole, and in local areas, amid the maze of material which is sometimes disguised, sometimes clear, sometimes contradictory, sometimes logical.

Two conceptual chains were particularly important in the formation and manipulation of the musical material:

- 1) STRUCTURE: simple → regular → symmetrical → changing + evolving → distorting → disintegrating;
- 2) FOCUS: obsessive → clear → shifting → blurring → ambiguous → obscured.

These two chains of concepts are really two different viewpoints of the same thing: the composer is concerned with organizing the <u>structure</u> of the sonic experience in such a way that the listener can make meaningful patterns from it; the listener must actively participate by deciding where to <u>focus</u> his attention, by continually relating one aspect of the music to another and re-evaluating these decisions in the light of the changing, evolving, distorting - that is, RESTRUCTURING - sound continuum. The form and materials of this piece are molded by these concepts so that the listener's attention is guided or manipulated in various ways - shifted gradually, changed suddenly, even "tricked" by unpredictable musical events so that he must continually choose where to focus his attention and decide the relative importance of the various sonic events. Thus the listener's perception of the piece evolves with repeated listening as these perceptual choices are re-examined and altered. Hopefully, this music will seem to become more intricate and interesting as the listener becomes more and more familiar with it.

The increased recognition, patterning and interrelating of local sonic events increases the awareness of the logic, directionality and unity of the musical structure, but also increases awareness of the complexities, ambiguities and subtleties inherent in the musical texture.

Through the process of the piece the "solo" piano and the orchestra meld into one "super-instrument". This becomes particularly apparent in the final gestures of the work. The return to extremely simple material reveals the essential unity of all the disparate musical forces and materials used. Finally, everything is "flowing together", fulfilling the promise of the title of the work: "Confluence".

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