

Analyzing Contemporary Music Inspired by Folk Songs and Culture

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A Thesis Submitted to Department of Music Theory

McGill University

In Fulfilment of The Requirements

For the degree of Master of Arts in Music Theory

July 2024

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English Abstract

In the dynamically evolving landscape of 21st-century music, composers with diverse backgrounds draw inspiration from a multitude of sources to create innovative compositions. Despite the rich tapestry of influences shaping contemporary musical expressions, there is a noticeable gap in scholarly literature dedicated to exploring the intricate connections between composers' diverse inspirations and the utilization of specific compositional techniques. This research focuses on three contemporary compositions—*Lies You Can Believe In* by Missy Mazzoli, *Danses et Interludes* by Ana Sokolovic, and *Strum* by Jessie Montgomery. Each composition engages with traditional songs and folk culture, manifesting in unique ways through various musical elements such as pitch, rhythms, and instrumentation. Through an in-depth analysis, this study aims to illuminate the ways in which composers intertwine personal or fictional narratives with their distinct inspirations and compositional techniques.

The analysis will be conducted through a meticulous examination of each piece, employing detailed scrutiny of the composers' modern approaches to folk musical elements. This approach involves a comprehensive exploration of how these composers intricately weave traditional folk elements into their compositions and the nuanced alterations they make. Through a systematic breakdown, the study aims to unravel the subtleties of each composer's creative process, elucidating the specific ways in which they reinterpret, transform, or innovate upon traditional folk elements. By employing this detailed analytical framework, the research seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of the modern treatment of folk elements in contemporary musical expressions, contributing to the broader discourse on the intersectionality of creative inspiration and cultural influences in musical compositions.

French Abstract

Dans le paysage musical dynamiquement évolutif du 21^e siècle, les compositeurs aux origines diverses trouvent inspiration dans une multitude de sources pour créer des compositions innovantes. Malgré la riche palette d'influences façonnant les expressions musicales contemporaines, on constate un manque notable dans la littérature savante dédiée à explorer les connexions complexes entre les inspirations diverses des compositeurs et l'utilisation de techniques compositionnelles spécifiques. Cette recherche se concentre sur trois compositions contemporaines : *Lies You Can Believe In* de Missy Mazzoli, *Danses et Interludes* d'Ana Sokolovic et *Strum* de Jessie Montgomery. Chaque composition s'engage avec des chansons traditionnelles et la culture populaire, se manifestant de manière unique à travers divers éléments musicaux tels que le ton, les rythmes et l'instrumentation. À travers une analyse approfondie, cette étude vise à éclairer les façons dont les compositeurs entrelacent des récits personnels ou fictifs avec leurs inspirations distinctes et leurs techniques compositionnelles.

L'analyse sera menée à travers un examen méticuleux de chaque pièce, en utilisant un examen détaillé des approches modernes des compositeurs aux éléments musicaux folkloriques. Cette approche implique une exploration approfondie de la manière dont ces compositeurs entrelacent de manière complexe les éléments folkloriques traditionnels dans leurs compositions et les altérations nuancées qu'ils apportent. À travers une décomposition systématique, l'étude vise à dévoiler les subtilités du processus créatif de chaque compositeur, élucidant les manières spécifiques dont ils réinterprètent, transforment ou innovent avec les éléments folkloriques traditionnels. En utilisant ce cadre analytique détaillé, la recherche cherche à fournir une compréhension nuancée du traitement moderne des éléments folkloriques dans les expressions

musicales contemporaines, contribuant au discours plus large sur l'intersectionnalité de l'inspiration créative et des influences culturelles dans les compositions musicales.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to everyone who has contributed to the completion of this thesis.

First and foremost, I am deeply grateful to my supervisor, Robert Hasegawa, for his invaluable guidance, support, and encouragement throughout the entire process. Their expertise and insightful feedback have been instrumental in shaping this work.

Special thanks go to Ana Sokolović, for providing resources and facilities essential for conducting my research and analyze her composition.

I am grateful to my family and my partner for their unwavering love, encouragement, and understanding, especially during the challenging moments of this journey. Their support has been my source of strength and motivation.

I would like to extend my appreciation to my friends for their support, encouragement, and valuable discussions throughout this endeavor. Their insights and camaraderie have made this journey more enjoyable and fulfilling.

Thank you to everyone who has been a part of this journey. Your support and encouragement have been invaluable.

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Introduction

Folk culture has played an instrumental role in shaping the creative endeavors of numerous composers across history, establishing itself as a profound source of inspiration for musical innovation. Historical luminaries such as Franz Liszt (Dalmonte 1993), Igor Stravinsky (Taruskin 1980), and Béla Bartók (Fisher 2009) have extensively explored the intricate relationship between folk influences and musical elements such as melodies, rhythms, and modes. This rich heritage of timeless inspiration continues to exert its influence on the contemporary musical landscape, providing a multifaceted resource for composers in the twenty-first century.

In the tradition of their predecessors, modern-day composers draw deeply from their cultural backgrounds and the diverse tapestry of global folk traditions to craft compositions that resonate with evocative significance. This thesis, poised at the intersection of cultural exploration and musical expression, focuses on the works of three noteworthy contemporary women composers—Ana Sokolović, Missy Mazzoli, and Jessie Montgomery. Each of these composers, in their unique artistic endeavors, intricately weaves the threads of folk music influences into the fabric of their compositions. This study will concentrate on a single composition by each of these remarkable composers. The selected pieces are *Danses et interludes* (2003) by Ana Sokolović, *Lies You Can Believe In* (2006) by Missy Mazzoli, and *Strum* (2006, rev. 2012) by Jessie Montgomery. This focused approach enables a detailed examination of the unique musical expressions encapsulated in these compositions, providing a comprehensive understanding within the constraints of the research scope.

The selection of Ana Sokolović, Missy Mazzoli, and Jessie Montgomery is not arbitrary but a deliberate choice based on multiple considerations. In my journey as an Iranian woman immersed

in the pursuit of music, I have encountered various challenges, including bans on singing, collaboration restrictions, and limitations on public performances. This personal background has fueled my commitment to shed light on the significant contributions of women composers, particularly those who face hurdles like Iranian women composers, whose work often goes unrecognized in their homeland.

Upon my arrival in Canada, I experienced a liberating environment that allowed me to express my musical passion freely. However, as I ventured into the field of research, I discerned a profound disparity. The acknowledgment of the substantial contributions of women composers has only recently become a focal point for theorists. While the circumstances are less severe than those in Iran, there remains a considerable journey ahead in the global acknowledgment of women composers.

First, the lack of historical recognition of women composers, compared to their male counterparts, has been a pervasive issue. Only in recent years have theorists begun to delve into the contributions of women composers, shedding light on their unique perspectives and artistic endeavors. Throughout music history, women have navigated numerous obstacles in composing and publishing their works, exemplified by figures like Fanny Mendelssohn, who faced various difficulties to publish her work (Kimber 2002).

Furthermore, a noticeable imbalance persists in scholarly attention towards contemporary women composers. This research seeks to address this gap by focusing on prominent figures of our time who have made substantial contributions to the field. Despite their current success, the works of these composers remain relatively understudied, presenting a prime opportunity for in-depth analysis and scholarship. By immersing ourselves in the compositions of contemporary women like Ana Sokolović, Missy Mazzoli, and Jessie Montgomery, this research aims to contribute to a

more comprehensive understanding of their artistic achievements and the broader landscape of contemporary music.

This realization has driven my dedication to this thesis, viewing it as a small but meaningful step towards rectifying the historical imbalance. By concentrating on the works of contemporary women composers, this research strives to contribute meaningfully to the broader conversation surrounding women in music. I envision this effort fostering a greater understanding of their artistic contributions and, in doing so, collectively paving the way for a more inclusive and appreciative acknowledgment of women composers in the field.

As we explore the compositions of Sokolović, Mazzoli, and Montgomery, our aim is to uncover how folk elements contribute to contemporary compositions and resonate with broader artistic trends. This study seeks to understand how these three composers navigate the intersection of tradition and innovation, contributing to or challenging prevailing trends. By examining their works, we aspire to shed light on how folk influences foster musical innovation and contribute to the ongoing dialogue in the world of music.

Our exploration extends beyond the compositions themselves, recognizing their potential impact on the broader musical community. As we embark on this journey, our goal is not only to analyze the compositions but also to establish connections with existing literature on folk music and contemporary compositions, positioning our study within the broader academic discourse and contributing to the ongoing conversation on the dynamic relationship between folk influences and contemporary musical expression.

The methodology for each chapter will be tailored to the specific characteristics of the analyzed piece. Ana Sokolović and Missy Mazzoli's compositions both draw inspiration from Balkan folk

culture, while Jessie Montgomery's piece is influenced by American folk music. Despite these diverse cultural origins, the overarching methodology hinges on a thorough analysis of each composition.

In conducting these analyses, I will meticulously scrutinize these compositions, emphasizing both shared characteristics and distinctive nuances derived from the influence of Balkan and American folk traditions. To unravel the essence of the folk cultures underpinning these compositions, a historical overview of Balkan and American folk cultures will be provided, fostering a deeper understanding of the intricate interplay between music and cultural history.

Moreover, I will discern the specific musical elements most profoundly influenced by folk cultures, aiming to identify commonalities among the composers and their influences. This investigation will involve a nuanced exploration of whether shared modes, melodies, or rhythms form the thematic core of inspiration. Additionally, I will delve into understanding the distinctive contributions that each composer brings to the music, seeking to uncover the individual novelties characterizing their creative expressions within the realm of folk-inspired compositions.

While conducting this analysis, it is essential to acknowledge certain limitations inherent to the research. Notably, there is a scarcity of existing scholarship on the selected compositions by Ana Sokolović, Missy Mazzoli, and Jessie Montgomery. Consequently, to support my observations and enrich the analytical framework, alternative resources will be sought, including interviews with Ana Sokolović and consultation of existing research on Balkan and American folk music. This approach broadens the scope of available resources, and despite these limitations, every effort will be made to ensure a comprehensive and informed exploration of the folk influences on the chosen musical works.

As we embark on the exploration of Sokolović, Mazzoli, and Montgomery's compositions, our study is driven by the recognition of the significance of both single-case and comparative analysis in understanding the diversity of folk influences in contemporary music. As noted above, each of these composers draws inspiration from unique folk traditions—Mazzoli from Balkan folk culture, Sokolović from her personal experiences and musical heritage, and Montgomery from American folk music. By comparing and contrasting their works, we can discern how different cultural influences manifest in their compositions, providing a nuanced understanding of the varied ways in which folk elements are integrated into contemporary music.

For instance, while Mazzoli's cultural roots do not directly trace back to Balkan folk culture, her choice to create Balkan-inspired music suggests a comparison of her approach with that of Sokolović. Sokolović, born and raised within the Balkan culture, may approach her compositions with a deeper cultural immersion and personal connection. This contrast highlights the complexity of artistic interpretation and the interplay between cultural heritage and creative expression, which I will elaborate more in the conclusion chapter.

The comparative approach allows us to uncover both shared themes and divergent approaches among the composers. By examining the works side by side, we can identify commonalities in their use of folk elements, such as rhythmic patterns or melodic motifs, while also recognizing the individual innovations and artistic voices that distinguish each composer. This comparative analysis not only enriches our understanding of the compositions themselves but also contributes to broader discussions within music scholarship about the role of folk influences in shaping contemporary musical expression.

Chapter 1: *Danses et interludes* by Ana Sokolović

Introduction

Danses et interludes is a collection of six dances and three interludes composed by Ana Sokolović in 2003 for solo piano. According to her program notes, these movements were inspired by Balkan dances as well as imaginary dances. These movements pulsate with rhythmic vitality and a sense of unpredictability. This element of unpredictability can be heard in the pitch variations, rhythmic complexity, and dynamic timbre shifts, making this piece interesting to study.

Ana Sokolović, originally from Belgrade, Serbia, has been a Montreal-based composer since 1992. She serves as a composition professor at the University of Montreal and held the role of artistic director at Société de Musique Contemporaine du Québec. Her compositions echo her Balkan roots, primarily evident through rhythmic elements (Sokolović 2021).

In this chapter, I will analyze the relevant folk inspirations and Sokolović's modern approach to using folk music. I will provide a detailed analysis of the rhythmic variation in the piece as it is the main musical element, she uses to express her Balkan roots (Sokolović 2021). In an interview I conducted with Sokolović about this piece, she explained that metric dissonances are common in Balkan music, which will be a central focus in this chapter. However, I will also discuss the pitch collections, formal structure, and other musical elements to better understand her modern additions to the Balkan music inspirations. I will establish connections between Sokolović's compositional approach and the dances. In our interview, Sokolović clarified that while the interludes were not directly inspired by Balkan dances, there are nonetheless shared musical elements. Therefore, my primary focus will be on the six dances, briefly touching on the interludes.

Literature Review

Unfortunately, there is limited published research on Sokolović's music. Thus, this paper will be one of the first to discuss her musical work and offer a musical analysis of this piece. I will refer to Sokolović's words from my interview to support my observations with her consent. To back up my argument, I will refer to other articles including John Roeder's introduction to "pulse streams."

John Roeder coins the term "pulse stream" to elucidate a sequence of repeated durations, incorporating notions of continuity and duration (Roeder 2000). While Roeder primarily investigates symmetrical and isochronous pulses, given the absence of isochrony within the piece, I suggest referring to it as "non-isochronous pulse streams" an extension/adaptation of Roeder's conceptualization. These non-isochronous pulse streams create a sense of pulse in the music even though they are not evenly distributed as it is required according to Roeder's definition similar to a "fuzzy" (a term previously used by Ian Quinn (1996) and Joseph Straus (2005) to describe a roughly similar transposition of set classes) isochrony and pulse sensation.

This non-isochronous pulse stream aligns with the piece's bass section mostly in the first and second dance in which is clear in **Figure 3 and 7**, where there is both continuity and a palpable sense of pulse, as per Roeder's definition. Interestingly, the composer notes that non-isochronous pulses find resonance in Balkan dancing as well.

In his article, Roeder explains use of the term "polyphonic rhythm" which can also be applied to this piece. The non-isochronous pulse streams result in polyphonic rhythm between the hands which create a metric dissonance.

To explain the metric dissonance, I will refer to Krebs (1999). Krebs introduces two categories of metric dissonances: grouping and displacement. He explains that when each hand follows a

different grouping (e.g. right hand in groups of two and left hand in groups of three), grouping dissonances are created. On the other hand, if both hands follow the same grouping but one hand is placed a beat (or fraction of a beat) earlier or later, displacement dissonances occur. However, all of Krebs's analyzed repertoire contains isochronous meter, unlike this piece by Sokolović. Therefore, I had to adjust Krebs's theory to support my analysis. In other words, I will not analyze using the dissonance types of grouping or displacement, but rather I will use his method to calculate inter-onset intervals and explain the metric dissonances that result.

In some movements, the metric dissonances create embodied gestures which are like dancing. I will reference Rolf Godoy and Marc Leman (2010) as they studied gestures in performance in their Chapter 8. They explain how different gestures produce different sounds. They study Chopin's Etude in A \flat major Op. 25 No. 1 to show the circular movements and how professional pianists produce vibratos, which is not written in the score as it is commonly known to not be possible to create vibratos on piano. Eugene Montague (2012) explores how performers express music through gestures and mimic vibrato sounds in this Chopin etude. Although these two research studies don't directly pertain to this piece, I will incorporate their findings to demonstrate how embodied rhythm and gestures share similarities with dancing.

In addition, I will utilize Dora Hanninen's segmentation preferences (2012) to identify motivic and rhythmic groupings. Hanninen proposes various segmentation methods based on context, structure, and sound. She studies a wide range of repertoire from Beethoven to Robert Morris. I have adopted Hanninen's approach to fit my research. In some cases, the primary pitches in the initial motive are replaced by others in repeated sections, and new pitches may be added at the start and finish. However, other musical elements such as rhythms or contours can still evoke

similarities to the initial segments. In such cases, I still consider these segments a varied version of the initial motive.

To analyze the accented beats and the metric structure, I will use Lerdahl and Jackendoff's dot model (1983). Although Lerdahl and Jackendoff primarily studied classical music, their dot notation can also be applied to analyze rhythmic structure in different genres, like this piece.

Motivic Variations and Metric Dissonance

In this section, I will look at metric dissonances and closely related motivic variations in several of the dances (focusing mainly on 1 and 2) and the first interlude. I will analyze the metric dissonances in the composition using contemporary theories and models, specifically referring to Krebs's model (1999). As noted above, since Krebs's model is structured for regular Inter-Onset Intervals (IOIs), adjustments were required to adapt it to this specific composition and the objectives of my research. The categorization of metric dissonances as grouping or displacement dissonance and the utilization of ratio analysis will not be pursued. Instead, I will apply Krebs's calculation method for IOIs to identify and substantiate the metric dissonances. In other words, I will be looking at two streams of IOIs that contrast, which requires Krebs's model to identify and explain the dissonances.

Insights from my interview with the composer will also be incorporated. In our conversation, Sokolović communicated the intrinsic nature of metric dissonances and non-isochronous meter in Balkan music culture, underscoring that the metric dissonances in these dances are not systematically calculated but rather derive inspiration from her roots and oral traditions.

A recurring structural feature in these dances involves the systematic variation of repetitions of a motive, with rhythm being the central element subject to modification. Sokolović introduces an

initial rhythmic motive and varies it in each subsequent repetition, employing alterations in rhythm, duration, pitch registers, and pitch collections. These adjustments make the Inter-Onset Intervals (IOIs) distinct and occasionally create conflicting rhythms. While the repetitions maintain a recognizable core, they deviate significantly from the initial motive as the piece advances. In my interview with the composer, she expounded on the rhythmic variation of a motive in each repetition as a common practice in Balkan music. Drawing inspiration from traditional Balkan folk music, where an initial motive is introduced and rhythmically varied in subsequent repetitions, Sokolović's approach aligns with this established tradition. This rhythmic variation bears resemblance to the Aksak patterns rooted in Balkan folk music, characterized by sequences of long and short durations, often notated as combinations of 3 and 2 units (Goldberg 2020). Despite the absence of traditional Aksak patterns in the piece, the multiplicity of patterns and variations of Aksak rhythms underscores the significance of rhythmic variations and continuity in Balkan music. Sokolović introduces a distinctive approach to varying motive repetitions, describing it as "cubism" in music, providing listeners with a distinct perspective on the motive in each repetition. In the following paragraphs, I will present some examples from the dances and interludes with detailed analysis.

The first dance initiates with the introduction of a 3+2+1 pattern featuring various pitches, where "1" signifies a single triplet sixteenth note. Against this, the left hand introduces a 3+2+1 ostinato with a consistent pitch collection (E–G–D), and "1" represents as a thirty-second note (**Figure 1a**). Rhythmic variations persist throughout the entire piece. Employing Lerdahl and Jackendoff's dot model (1983), it becomes evident that a 3+2+1 rhythmic pattern is initially introduced in both the left-hand ostinato and the right hand's first motive (measure 2). It is important to mention that by using the dot model I am not advocating for the six sixteenth notes but am arguing instead that this

is a non-isochronous meter. In other words, the accents are not only on the first and fourth sixteenth notes, but on the first, fourth, and sixth sixteenth notes as if the notes are expressing the meter. Alternatively, a second method for analyzing this section (which, as previously mentioned, I did not employ) involves following Lerdahl and Jackendoff's dot model to establish equal pulses and then subdividing them into three thirty-second notes. However, this approach fails to capture the non-isochronous meter of the piece. The adoption of the dot model underscores a departure from metric regularity in the second level, deviating from the guidelines established in MWFR 4 of Lerdahl and Jackendoff's notation. Adhering to Lerdahl and Jackendoff's rules for metrical accents results in the representation depicted in **Figure 1b**. However, this representation overlooks the third accented note, disrupting the intended 3+2+1 rhythmic pattern. Additionally, the listener does not perceive this motif as rhythmically metric, prompting my alteration of Lerdahl and Jackendoff's model to accurately convey the listener's experience of this non-isochronous ostinato as 3+2+1 rather than 3+3.

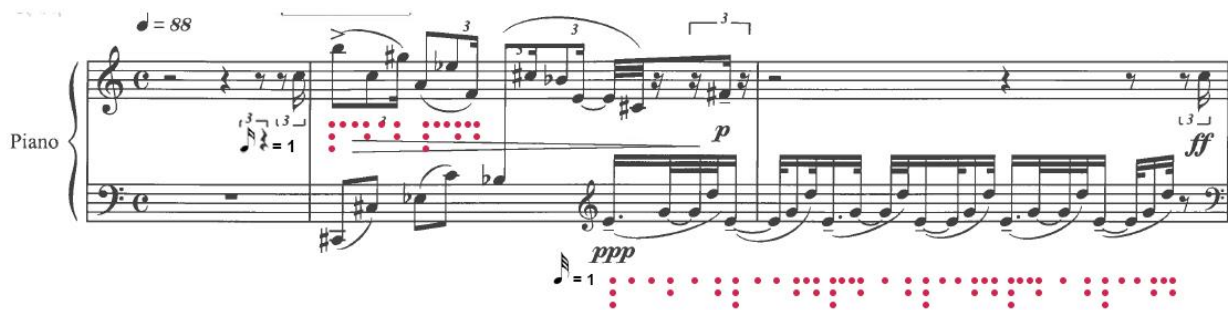



Figure 1a: Dance 1, mm. 1–3. Dot patterns (after Lerdahl and Jackendoff) indicate the metric accentuation of the 3+2+1 pattern, presented with two different temporal units: triplet sixteenth (RH) and thirty-second note LH).



Figure 1b: Dance 1, mm. 1–3. Dot patterns following Lerdahl and Jackendoff’s metric preference rules.

Shifting focus, the left-hand ostinato can also be interpreted as a displacement dissonance (Krebs 1999) with respect to the notated 4/4 meter, given that the strongly accented beats fall on different beats within the measure.

One might observe that the composer employs the same rhythmic pattern while altering the unit length, representing a form of rhythmic variation but with a modern approach, distinct from conventional practices in Balkan music as highlighted by Sokolović. A more pronounced rhythmic variation, leading to metric dissonance between voices, is apparent in measures 20–23. In this passage, the right hand introduces the initial motive (**Figure 2**), lasting for two beats and progressing from C to D \flat , then to A, and concluding with D \flat . I bracketed the initial motive and its repetitions in accordance with Hanninen’s segmentation preferences (2012). Hanninen’s segmentation rules offer a versatile framework applicable to various repertoires. For this analysis, I primarily adhered to the guideline that the pitches of the primary motive persist in subsequent segments, maintaining a consistent rhythm with minor variations.

1 = 

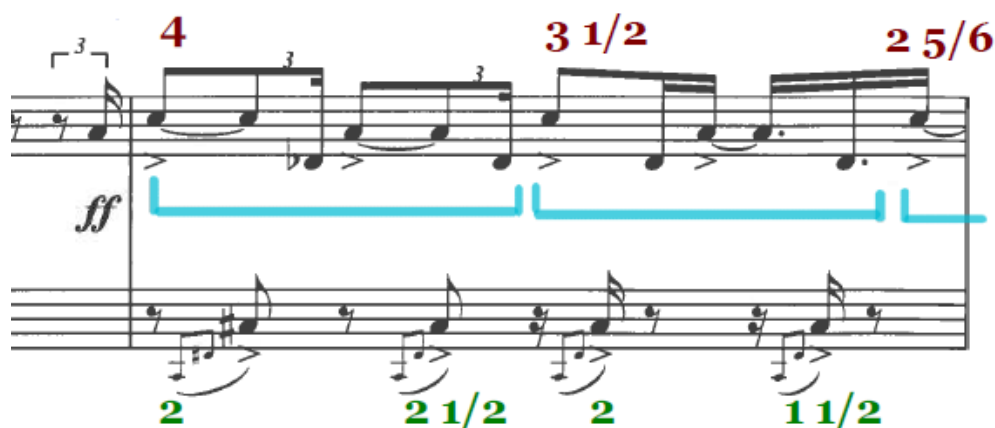


Figure 2: Dance 1. Introducing the initial motive and its repetition in m. 20.

Each repetition introduces distinct rhythmic changes, with the variation progressing gradually. For example, the second segment, constituting the first repetition of the initial motive, retains the first eighth-note C without a tied note, proceeding directly to the subsequent pitch, D \flat . The D \flat features a slightly elongated rhythm compared to the initial motive's D \flat s as triplet sixteenth notes. This rhythmic pattern is consistent through subsequent pitches with minimal variations initially. However, as the music unfolds, the differences become more pronounced, affecting not only the rhythms but also the order of pitch collections (including repetitions and ornaments), resulting in more intricate variations. Furthermore, the metric position of the starting pitch of each segment quickly deviates from the initial version, no longer aligning with the beginning of the beat, except for the last segment where the starting C aligns with the left-hand pulses on the third beat of the measure (**Figure 3**).

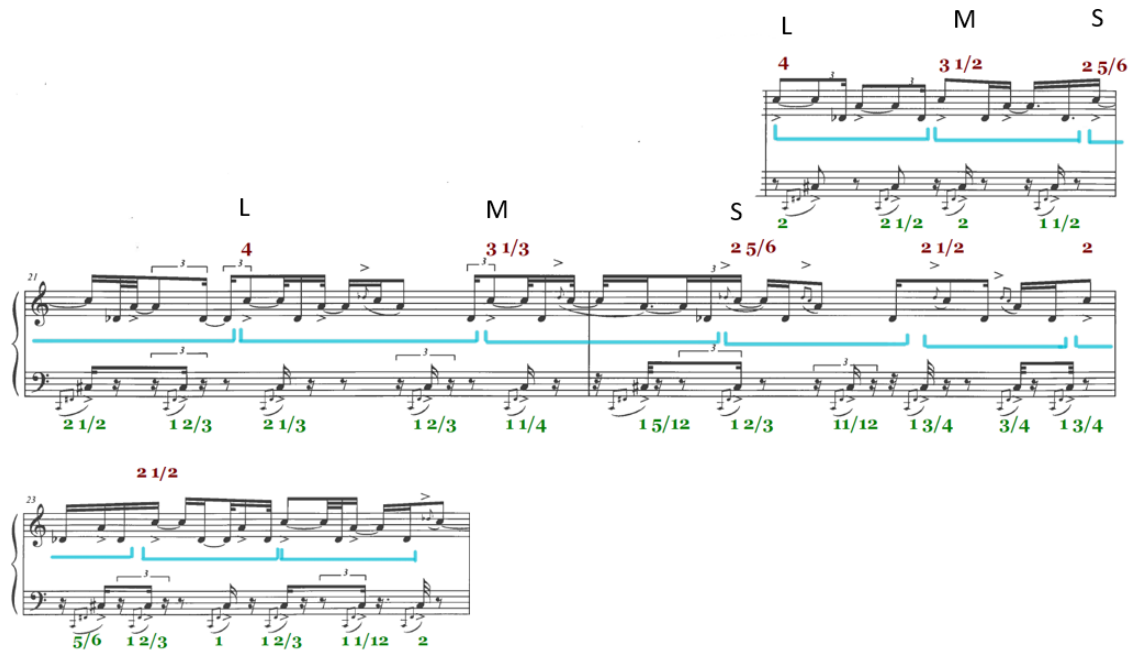


Figure 3: Dance 1, mm. 20–23. The initial motive’s repetitions and its variations.

Upon calculating the inter-onset intervals (IOI) between the beginning of each segment, a discernible repeating long–medium–short pattern emerges for the first six repetitions, starting with the initial motive (mm. 20–23, **Figure 3**): with $1 = \text{♪}$, $4-3 \frac{1}{2}-2 \frac{5}{6}$ and $4-3 \frac{1}{3}-2 \frac{5}{6}$, which could also be calculated as $1 = \text{triplet 16th note}$, $24-21-17$ and $24-20-17$). Remarkably, the first (initial motive) and the fourth segments share the same IOI of 4, yet their internal rhythms and metric positions within the measure diverge significantly. While the initial motive commences on the notated downbeat, segmented into two smaller sections with a similar rhythm, the fourth segment initiates off the downbeat, devoid of clear smaller segment divisions. Additionally, the fourth segment incorporates two extra pitches (C and A) after the A, necessitating shorter rhythms to make up a total duration of 4 eighth notes. Consequently, although the two segments may have identical durations and IOIs, their rhythms and pitch collections deviate, this also applies to the third and sixth segment. It is worth noting that this long–medium–short pattern could represent an

alternative larger-scale interpretation of the 3+2+1 pattern introduced at the composition's outset. In other words, Sokolović reintroduces a familiar pattern, altering the units and rendering them more fluid, exemplifying yet another form of variation.

Analyzing the left-hand's Inter-Onset Intervals (IOIs) reveals a consistent long-short pattern (**Figure 4**), briefly shifting to short-long for the last pulse in bar 21 ($1\frac{1}{4}$) and first pulse of bar 22 ($1\frac{5}{12}$), before reverting to long-short. This pattern change facilitates a momentary alignment between the left-hand pulses and the right-hand segment on the last triplet sixteenth note of the first beat of measure 22 (highlighted with an arrow in **Figure 4**). However, this alignment is not solely due to the pulse stream pattern shift; various factors contribute, including additional repetitions of certain notes, irregular IOIs in the right-hand segments, and rhythmic variations that alter the durations of the right-hand motive. It is noteworthy that this alignment is short-lived, as the irregular IOIs in the right hand persist, and the left-hand's irregular IOIs switch patterns. Another alignment occurs in the final recurrence of the right-hand segment, which can be attributed to similar factors. In summary, the section initiates with non-aligned right-hand segments and left-hand pulses but concludes with an alignment between the segment and pulse, influenced by various factors.

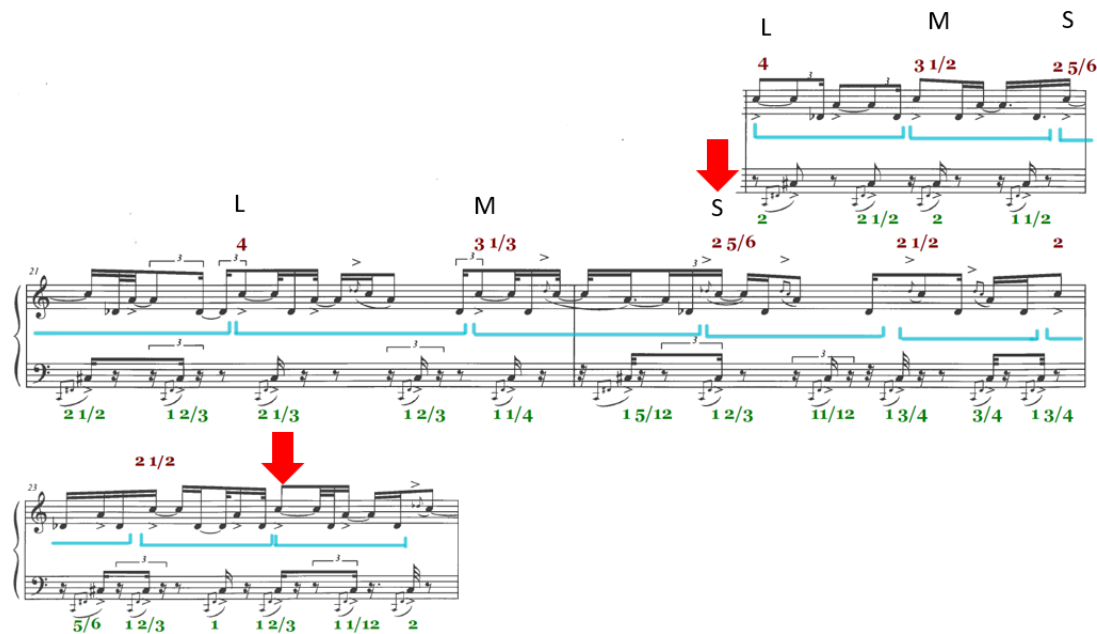


Figure 4: Dance 1, mm. 20–23. 1 = ♩, metric dissonance between right-hand segments and left-hand pulse streams.

In the final beat of bar 25 (**Figure 5**), a notable instance of gradual rhythmic variation unfolds, introducing two simultaneous and new initial motives—one in each hand. In more details, the right hand unfolds the initial motive from E to a tremolo A–C♯, while the left hand introduces another initial motive from F♯ to the A♯–C♯ dyad. Both initial motives are similar in a way that start with a rising thirty-second notes. The progression of rhythmic variation in these initial motives is depicted in **Figure 5**. Notably, the internal rhythms of the right-hand motive undergoes frequent slight changes, with added note repetitions and generally shorter durations. Conversely, the left-hand motive exhibits minimal rhythmic changes, maintaining a consistent pitch collection order and similar rhythms throughout the progression. While the right hand showcases more rhythmic and pitch variations inside each motive, the left hand moves more within the measure, resulting in irregular Inter-Onset Intervals (IOIs) between the start of its motives. Despite the right-hand motive's variations, its IOIs remain constant (1 = ♩ | 6–6–6), and the tremolos consistently fall on

metrically strong positions (quarter note beats) throughout the section. In contrast, the left-hand IOIs transition from 7 to 6, 5, and 4, showcasing a dynamic and directional shift. Noteworthy is the stability retained by both motives, with the right-hand anchoring tremolos on metrically strong beats, providing familiarity amidst variations, while the left hand maintains the same ordered pitches but alters the IOI after each repetition (**Figure 5**).

In the context of rhythmic variation, the right and left hands collaborate to create metric dissonance. Both motives initiate in alignment on the same beat (the last eighth note of m. 25), yet due to differing durations, irregular IOIs, and rhythmic variations in repetitions, they progressively deviate from alignment after the initial recurrence. This divergence establishes metric dissonance (refer to **Figure 5**). The right-hand IOIs exhibit regularity ($1 = \text{♩} \mid 6-6-6$), while the left-hand's IOIs consistently shorten with each repetition ($1 = \text{♩} \mid 7-6-5$). This disparity arises not only from irregular spacing but also from differing durations of the motives due to rhythmic variations. Analogous to previously discussed segments, the metric dissonance resolves by the section's conclusion, aligning when the IOIs in both hands to sum up to 18, at the second eighth note of measure 28. As shown in **Figure 5**, the last orange bracket is expected but it is not counted since there is no following motive which is also true for the right-hand motive (final blue bracket).

dances et interludes

Figure 5: Dance 1, mm. 25–28. The brackets represent the motives, and the IOIs are measured in units of $1 = \text{♩}$.

A parallel scenario of metric dissonance occurs in the second dance, manifesting between the right-hand motive and the left-hand chords. The left-hand chords, serving as irregular pulses or "pulse chords," span the entire dance (mm. 46–60) but do not use identical pitch collections. Furthermore, as in Dance 1, the right-hand motives/segments and the left-hand pulses commence and conclude in phase but undergo a phase shift in the middle, creating metric dissonances—an aspect warranting further exploration.

In the second dance, rhythmic variations unfold in the right hand from the outset. Unlike the first dance, this piece introduces a singular initial motive in the first measure (m. 46, **Figure 6**).



Figure 6: Dance 2, m. 46. Initial motive.

The motive is first introduced alone, with no other melody line following. However, for the next repetitions, the motive overlaps with the melody lines and becomes part of a larger segment, sometimes with the pitch collections distributed between both hands instead of just the right hand (Figure 7.a, 7.b 7.c).

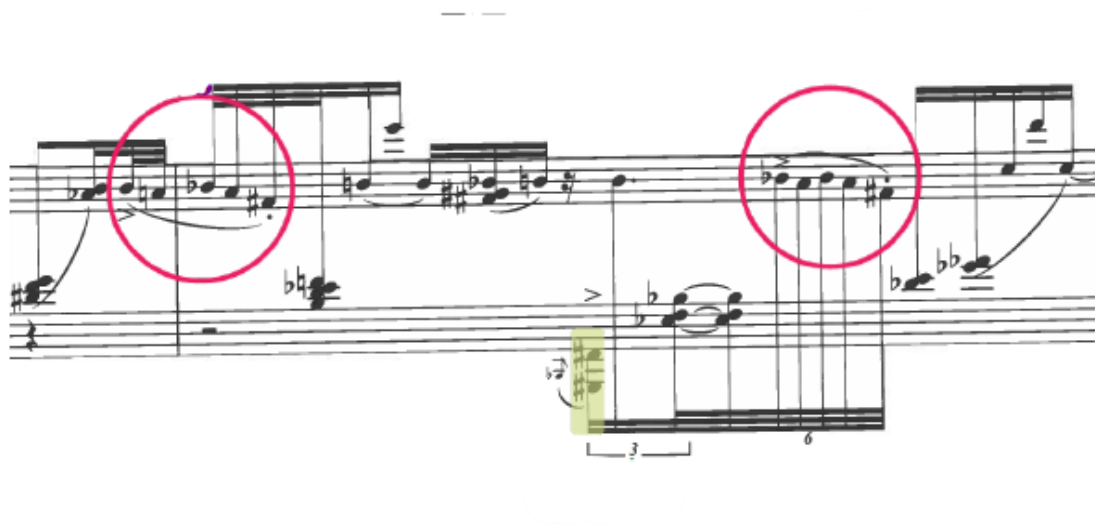


Figure 7.a: Dance 2 (m. 48) distribution of segment's pitch collections in the melody in the right hand (the clefs are treble clefs above and bass clefs below).

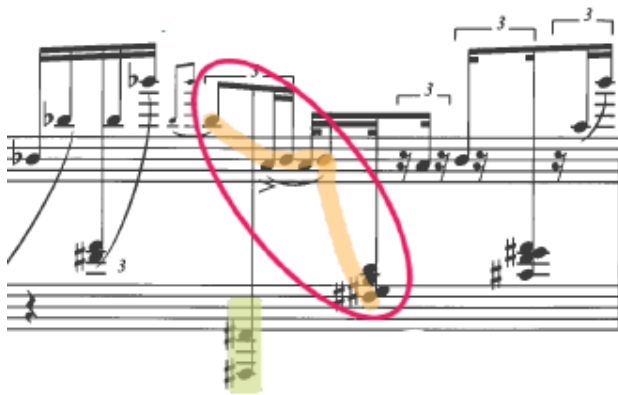


Figure 7.b: Dance 2 (m. 54) distribution of segment's pitch collections in the melody and between both hands.



Figure 7.c: Dance 2 (mm. 54, and 56) distribution of segment's pitch collections in the melody and between both hands.

The pitch collection of B \flat -A-B \flat -A-F \sharp persists throughout the section, with some register changes, except for the final repetition that repeats the B \flat and A. Despite rhythmic variations affecting duration and Inter-Onset Intervals (IOIs), there are instances, such as in bars 48 and 49, where segments lasting an eighth note raise questions about rhythmic variations whether these two segments are constructed similarly or differently (**Figure 8**). Further analysis reveals subtle but

audible rhythmic differences, with bar 48 featuring a segment of five notes in a 32nd note sextuplet, and bar 49 repeating it with five pitches in a 32nd note quintuplet.



Figure 8: Dance 2 (mm. 48 and 49) both segments' duration = approximately an ♪

Beyond IOIs, the duration differences of the segments exhibit a discernible pattern. Initially following a long-short pattern, the segments shift to long (eighth note)-long (eighth note)-short ($\frac{1}{3}$ of an eighth note) in bar 49, maintaining this progression until bar 53 (the long motives last a sixteenth note rather than an eighth note after in bars 52 and 53), and reverting to the initial long-short pattern for the conclusion (**Figure 9**). This pattern, incorporating long and short rhythms, reflects a contemporary approach to Balkan music traditions, where such combination patterns are prevalent (Goldberg 2015).

Applying Hanninen's (2012) segmentation rules, the right-hand motives are grouped based on their pitches. Despite potential changes in pitches or altered order, the primary motives consistently include the main pitches (B \flat –A–B \flat –A–F \sharp). The primary motive, introduced initially in the right hand, aligns with the first accented pulse chord (D \flat –E \flat –C) in the left hand (**Figure 9**, m. 46). While alignment persists for the first repetition, subsequent repetitions witness a shift, with the pulse chord occurring unexpectedly on beat 3 of measure 47. This non-alignment continues, and after the third repetition, the pulse chord's relative position switches, now heard as coming after the melodic segment (beat 3, m. 48). Overlapping pulse chords (meaning the pulses that are heard simultaneously with the right-hand segments and not after or before the segments) persist until bar 56, accompanied by irregular IOIs that give rise to metric dissonances between the two hands and their irregular and shifting patterns. In bar 57, alignment is restored when the start of the right-hand segment (with the ending F \sharp omitted and extended into a long trill that will end the dance) aligns with the left-hand pulse chord. Under this final trill, the pulse chords maintain irregular IOIs, they align with the beginning of the segment. In summary, alignment between the right-hand motives and left-hand pulse chords characterizes the start and end, with a phase shift in the middle, gradually culminating in total re-alignment. Non-alignment, driven by rhythmic variations, varying durations of right-hand motives, and irregular IOIs, engenders metric dissonances. When I inquired about the existence of pulse in Balkan dances, Sokolović affirmed its presence, albeit not strictly regular, elucidating that Balkan music embodies a dynamic interplay resembling a question-and-response between diverse musical segments.

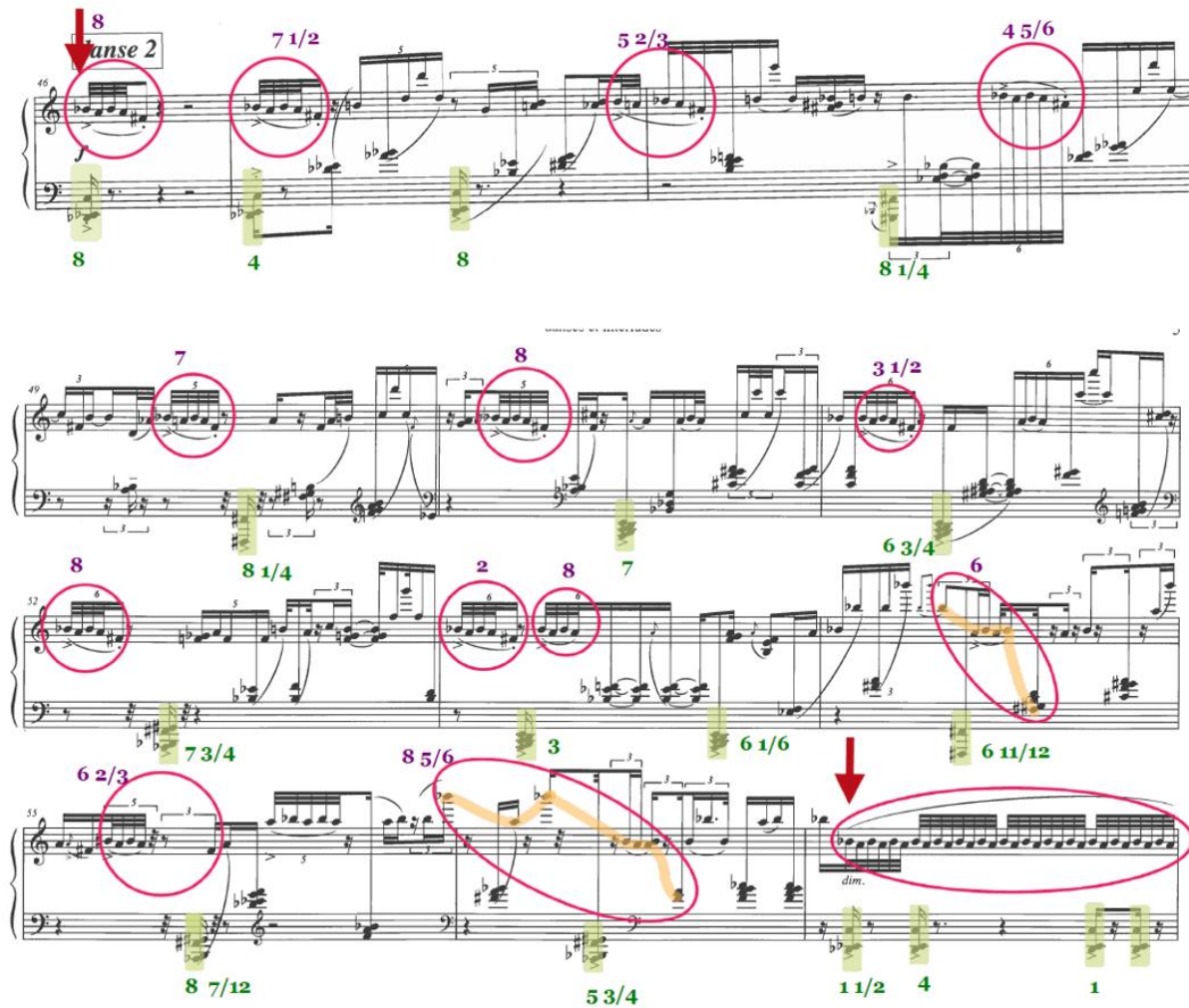


Figure 9: Dance 2 (mm. 46–57) IOI: $1 = \text{♩}$

I will be moving directly to the fourth dance but I will return to third dance in the upcoming sections. The fourth dance includes a two-measure motive (not reproduced here), which is varied in each repetition through pitch collections and rhythm. The duration of the motive remains the same (2 bars) for most of the dance, which creates regular IOIs. The motive extends to three measures for two segments near the end of the dance in bars 108–110 and 111–113 and then returns to the original two-measure structure. Unlike the previous dances, Sokolović does not create

irregular IOIs but instead changes the pitch collections and variations drastically but gradually. The segments are clearly separated with rests and start with an F \sharp –A interval—which in segments 4 and 6 (counting the initial motive as 1) changes to F \sharp –B—and end with a B \flat . In this dance, the initial motive’s pitch collections change throughout the section; for instance, the ending pitch of the first segment is a C \sharp , but it switches to B \flat for the first repetitions and remains the final pitch for the rest of the segments.

The first interlude indicates rhythmic variations as well as the previous dances. Similar to the fourth dance, the segments are large and now include two smaller segments, which I will refer to as sub-segments. The initial motive is introduced at the beginning of the interlude and lasts for four bars and one beat (nine quarter notes). Each sub-segment is created with successive repetitions of the same unit. The first sub-segment introduces an F \sharp –D dyad followed by a D–B \flat dyad as the repeating unit, while the second sub-segment changes the unit to a single line, B–A \sharp –G \sharp (**Figure 10**). The right-hand segments are superimposed against a regular pulse which is the reason why one hears metrical dissonances.

The image displays a musical score for Interlude 1, spanning measures 121 to 130. The score is written for piano (pp) and includes a 'rubato' marking with a tempo of 50. The music is organized into two systems. The first system (measures 121-130) features a large pink segment (IOI: interlude) and a sub-segment (green) with a duration of 9 1/2. The second system (measures 126-130) features a large pink segment (IOI: interlude) and a sub-segment (blue) with a duration of 7 1/2. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The IOI (Interlude of Interest) is marked as 'interlude' in a box. The duration of the IOI is 16 1/2. The sub-segments are marked with green and blue boxes. The large segments are marked with pink boxes. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The IOI (Interlude of Interest) is marked as 'interlude' in a box. The duration of the IOI is 16 1/2. The sub-segments are marked with green and blue boxes. The large segments are marked with pink boxes.

Figure 10: Interlude 1 (mm. 121–130) large segments: pink, sub-segments: green and blue. 1 = ♩ for Duration and IOI

By calculating the IOIs, I realized there is not much irregularity, and the second two larger segments remain almost the same length since the repetitions occur immediately after the last one ends. However, the sub-segments include durational modifications while creating almost the same duration of large segments. In other words, while the first sub-segment shortens in each repetition, the second sub-segment is lengthened (**Figure 10**). The later versions of the first sub-segment remains stable in terms of its rhythm and pitch collections but repeats the dyad unit fewer times than in the first version of the sub-segment. On the other hand, the second sub-segment adds new pitches to the collection (circled in orange in **Figure 10**) but still repeats the initial unit of the initial motive, which is considered a variation of the initial motive as there are still recognizable elements such as the repeated units. The number of B–A \sharp –G \sharp units varies in each repetition, and more new pitches are added at the end of the sub-segment. In the first repetition (m. 128), the new pitches indicate an ascending and descending chromatic trichord from C \sharp to E \flat . For the next repetition, Sokolović varies the previous new pitches and includes a sequence of ascending chromatic and non-chromatic scale fragments (**Figure 11**).



Figure 11: Interlude 1 (mm. 129 – 131) series of ascending chromatic and non-chromatic pitches.

The fifth dance includes some initial motives in both hands, created mainly by continuous repetition of a unit similar to the sub-segments in the first interludes. Unlike the previous dances, the initial motive's repetitions are not in order, and they occur in random measures following other

segments' repetitions. Also, the rhythmic variations of the segments are not drastic, especially in the right hand. For instance, in bar 141, the right hand introduces a new initial motive which is consisted of the repetition of D–G# or D–F# tremolos. In bar 143, the same motive returns but is prolonged this time, and the tremolos are now in the form of 32nd note sextuplets (**Figure 12**). The other initial motives' repetitions are still different from one another in terms of duration and also some pitch order modifications.

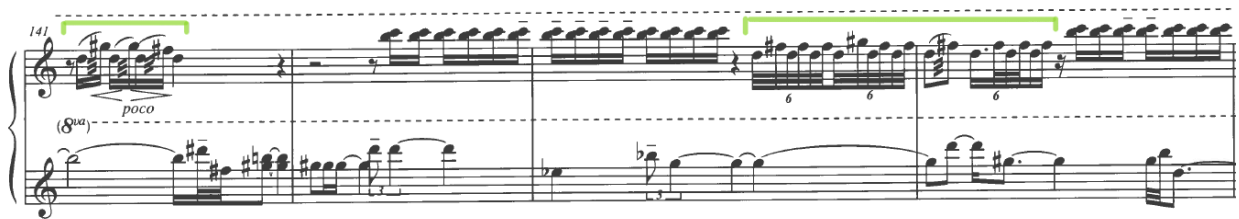


Figure 12: Dance 5 (mm. 141–144) tremolos prolonged to 32nd note sextuplets.

In summary, Sokolović varies the repetitions of the segments by modifying the order of the pitch collections, introducing new pitches, and altering rhythms, which often results in creating repetitions with different lengths (shorter or longer than the initial motives). Even when the repetitions and the initial motives have the same length, their internal rhythms and pitch order are different (e.g., **Figure 3**, Segments 1 and 4). In other words, Sokolović manages to create both feelings of surprise and expectancy in all the dances by keeping at least one common element stable (motive duration or the IOI) and changing other elements such as pitch and rhythm, or the opposite. . The variations are gradual but consistent throughout the sections. The most varied musical element in the repetitions is rhythm. As mentioned in the introduction, varying the segments at each repetition is part of Balkan's musical culture, but Sokolović is mostly fascinated by the rhythmic variations, which can be seen throughout this composition. The rhythmic variation of her motives and segments creates metric dissonances and non-isochronous meter.

Structure and Form

In my interview, I asked Sokolović to elaborate more on the Balkan region, which is a massive region including several countries. I was curious to know whether she was inspired by a specific place such as her native Serbia. She explained that in her view, most Balkan countries have a similar culture, but the intensity changes as one moves around. As one moves more towards the south (which has more mountains), the food is spicier, and the accents in people's languages are more emphasized and sharp, whereas in the more northern countries (mostly plains with fewer mountains), people elongate their words, and the syllable accents are looser. Her fascination has always been the use of language accents in music, which I realized are highly relevant to her *Danses et interludes*. The Balkan languages also inspired many of her other compositions, such as *Pesma* (1996/2000).

Sokolović explained that in conversation Balkan people never wait until the end of the phrase to speak their mind, and they constantly interrupt you while speaking as a form of engagement. This behavior may be considered impolite in North America or Westernized countries, but in the Balkans and more Eastern countries, if one does not engage in a conversation, it is considered rude. Therefore, all the interruptions between the pulse chords and motives, as discussed above in **Figures 3, 5, and 9**, can be interpreted as a conversation between the two hands. Some of these conversations are more intense than others, depending on the placement of the interrupting pulses or segments. For instance, in Dance 1, mm. 20–23 (**Figure 4**), the left-hand pulses interrupt the right-hand segments more often than in Dance 2 (**Figure 9**). In the first dance, each right-hand melodic segment is accompanied by two irregular pulse pitches, while in the second dance, the pulses are out of phase with the segments and tend to be heard before or after the segment rather than interrupting the segment. In other words, the conversation in the first dance is more regular

but more intense, while the pulse chords in the second dance are more irregular but also more rare, resulting in a less intense conversation. I should mention that the intensity of the conversation does not only depend on the recurrence rate of the pulse chords or segments but also on the regularity of the IOI. In the first interlude (**Figure 10**), the left hand includes a steadier ostinato which might be thought of as more interruptive of the right hand, but since it is regular, it is not considered an intense conversation. The spontaneity and unpredictability of the pulses is what resembles Balkan conversation and culture. In the fourth dance, the low F \sharp can be interpreted as a pulse that interrupts the conversation, which is the ongoing melody and presented in an ascending motion to A at the beginning of the measure (**Figure 13**).

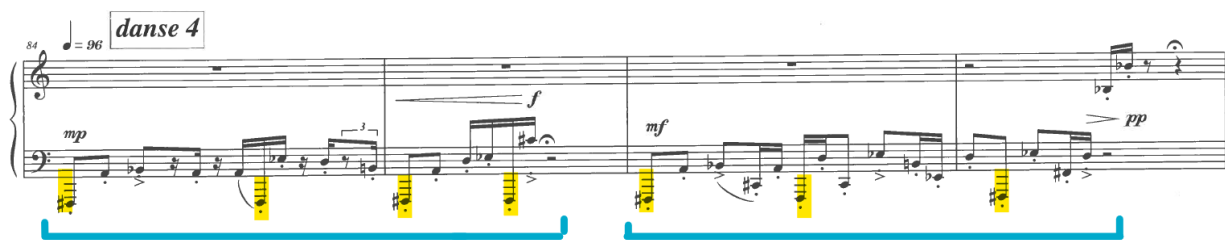


Figure 13: Dance 4 (mm. 84–87)

As mentioned in the Motivic Variations and Metric Dissonance section, this part of the dance includes a recurring low F \sharp , which gives a sense of pulse. The frequency of repetition of the low F \sharp changes throughout the movement but it remains the initial pitch of the melodic line like an interrupter of a conversation.

Sokolović takes a different approach to depicting Balkan culture in her fifth dance. Considering Sokolović's description of the Balkan region, I imagine it as a region with different and similar colors, yet their connection creates a whole similar to this movement. As mentioned, this dance includes various motives introduced throughout the movement. These motives are varied in their later recurrences while still referencing the initial motives, similar to the processes described above

in previous movements. Some of the motives include more fluid rhythms than others. For instance, in measures 148–149, the left hand segment (a variation of the first motive) indicates an eighth-note triplet of a quarter and eighth notes (however it is important to note that not all the triplets translate into the same note value as some of them are tied over), while the right hand indicates a stream of sixteenth-note B-C dyads (**Figure 14**). Due to the ties the left-hand segments are more fluid compared to the right-hand dyads that follow stricter rhythms.

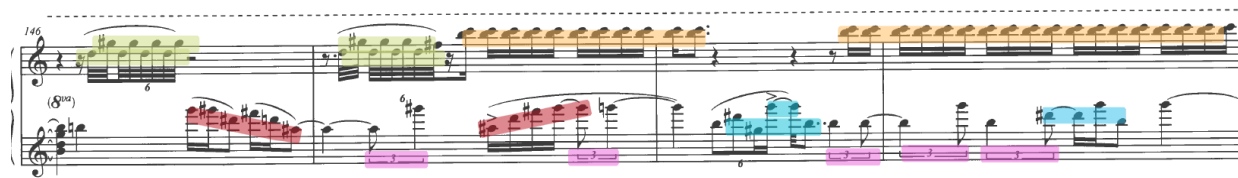


Figure 14: Dance 5 (mm. 148–149): each color represents a motive that recurs throughout the movement.

The combination of strict and fluid rhythms, in addition to the various motives and repetitions, reminded me of the Balkan region's own diversity. In other words, each initial motive might be taken to represent the different primary cultures, while their repetitions could be interpreted as related yet different cultures in the Balkans. Also, the strict and fluid rhythms are similar to the more or less accented dialects and languages in the Balkan regions as described by Sokolović.

I also asked the composer about the choice of meter and whether Balkan music includes a regular meter. Sokolović explains that most Balkan music is not transcribed, and the culture is orally transferred across generations, similar to blues music and its African-American roots (Kubik 1999). Summarizing Sokolović's explanation, the 4/4 meter used in pieces like *Danses et interludes* is for western trained musicians to count the rhythms, not a representation of the innate rhythms of Balkan music. In other words, she takes a modern and pragmatic approach to transcribing.

Silent Dance (Dance 3)

Sokolović mentioned that the third dance is based on an authentic dance in the Balkans called the *Silent Dance*, also known as *Nijemo Kolo*. The dancers are not accompanied by music; rather they dance to the rhythm of their foot stomps. The dancers are in a group, and they usually follow a leader who speaks out the name of the rhythms and gestures. Sokolović explained that the silence was because they did not want to awaken the spirits or the Ottomans (Turks). She also used this dance in her other compositions, such as the third movement of the *Five Dances for Violin* (Sokolović 1998) and the second movement of *Oro* for string quartet or orchestra (Sokolović 2001).

In Sokolović's third movement inspired by this dance, the foot stomps are replaced by pitches, but these pitches do not shape a melody. As mentioned previously, Sokolović aims to create colors rather than melodies, and she tries to imitate the soft clash of women's metal accessories during these dances. Fortunately, there are many video examples of the silent dances that demonstrate exactly the process and the noises created during the gestures (Serbian Cultural Association "Dimitrije Tucovic" Belgrade 2023). The high register chromatic dyads (B–C) in the right hand create the metal plate clashes while the left hand plays soft single pitches (**Figure 15**). In addition to the sounds, the gestures of the pianist's hands also give the impression of the dance.



Figure 15: Dance 3 (mm. 61–65) showing dyads in the right hand.

As one can see in **Figure 15**, both hands are in the same very high register, and the pitches are close to one another (left hand: F \sharp 7 and G \sharp 7, right hand: A7 and B7–C7) as if both hands were united like the dancers' bodies. In other words, both hands are equally present to create the instrumental gesture (Cadoz 1999). However, each hand creates different colors because of the contrasting pitch classes, and the gestures are different due to the repetitions of the right-hand dyads as opposed to the notes in the left hand. In addition to the rhythm in the music, the gestures create an embodied rhythm (Godøy and Leman 2010) similar to the foot stomps in the original silent dance.

The constant use of clusters and chromatics brought me to the following question. Is Sokolović creating colours or mimicking a percussion instrument through these pitch collections? In my interview, she agreed with my conjecture and explained that she loves the sound of soft small metallic tambourines or the clinking metal-plated accessories that Balkan women wear while dancing. She elaborated more on the texture and emphasized that the sound is soft but also dissonant, like hitting two metal plates of a tambourine with your fingers. She aimed to create “colours” rather than pitches in her composition, which I think was successfully achieved. The third dance is an example of hearing these colours imitated through chromatic dyads in the high register (**Figure 15**).

As expected, the segments in this dance are also varied and modified in each repetition with additional pitches in the left hand, eighth-note or sixteenth-note replacements, and extra right-hand dyad repetitions. The variations are minimal in the first three measures, where the two hands are more united. This unity dissolves when the repeated B-C dyad interrupts the pattern in bar 64. The foregrounded instrumental gesture is now the crescendo in the repeated dyad, making this different from the previous measures. In bar 66 (**Figure 16**), the left hand begins to include other pitches,

making the motive and pattern hardly recognizable, and complicating the pattern of gestures between the right and left hand. The right-hand B–C dyad could be interpreted as a non-isochronous pulse stream (which is again an irregularly distributed dyad that gives a fuzzy sensation of pulse) since it is repeating while the left hand carries the melody line through new pitches. The repeated B–C dyads recur unexpectedly throughout measures 66–70.

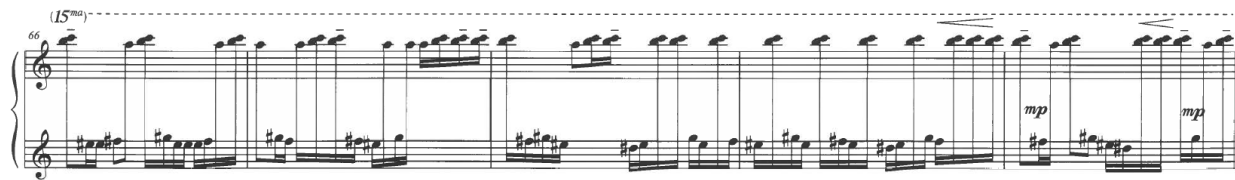


Figure 16: Dance 3 (mm. 66–70)

Skipping ahead, the segments in bars 75 and 76 are closer to the textures at the beginning of the movement but still include additional pitches in the left hand (**Figure 17**). In bars 77 and 78, one experiences a greater sense of unity and stability since the right-hand pitches are now part of one three-note cluster, and the left hand only includes G# with no rhythmic variation (struck regularly every three sixteenth notes). The pattern (G#–A–B–C–A–B–C) stays the same until bar 79, where the last two clusters are played as a single eighth note rather than two sixteenths. This passage is followed by a kind of coda in the last four bars (mm. 80–83) which repeat the lowest F# on the piano, which is Sokolović’s way of referring back to the high left-hand F# from the primary segment and also not ending in absolute unity.

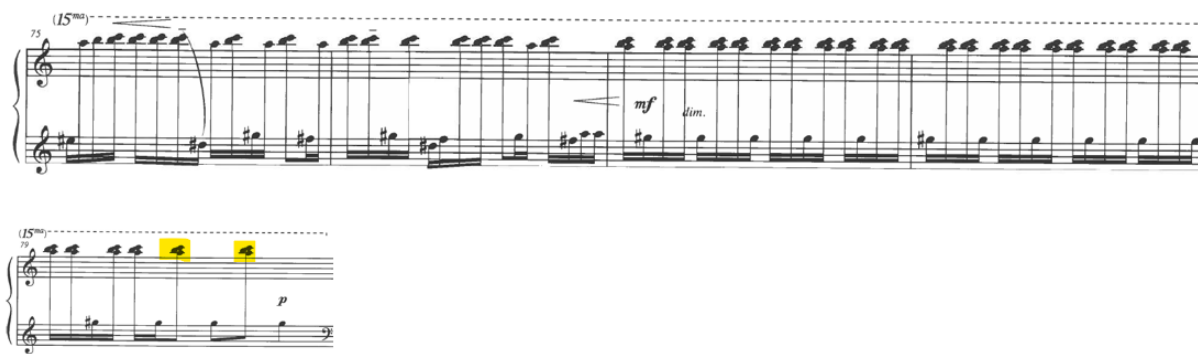


Figure 17: Dance 3 (mm. 75–79)

The process of unity and separation of the hands creates complexity in the rhythm of the *Silent Dance*. Sokolović mentioned that the rhythms gradually become complex and then less complex towards the end to give a grounding feeling to the performer, which is also what we experience as listeners in this dance. The dance ends calmly and with a *pp* dynamic while also bringing back the familiar rhythm from the beginning and more regularity.

The influence of the *Silent Dance* can be seen in the other movements as well. She references the dance in the first interlude and the fifth dance by indicating a finger tapping without pitch on the body of the piano (**Figure 18**).

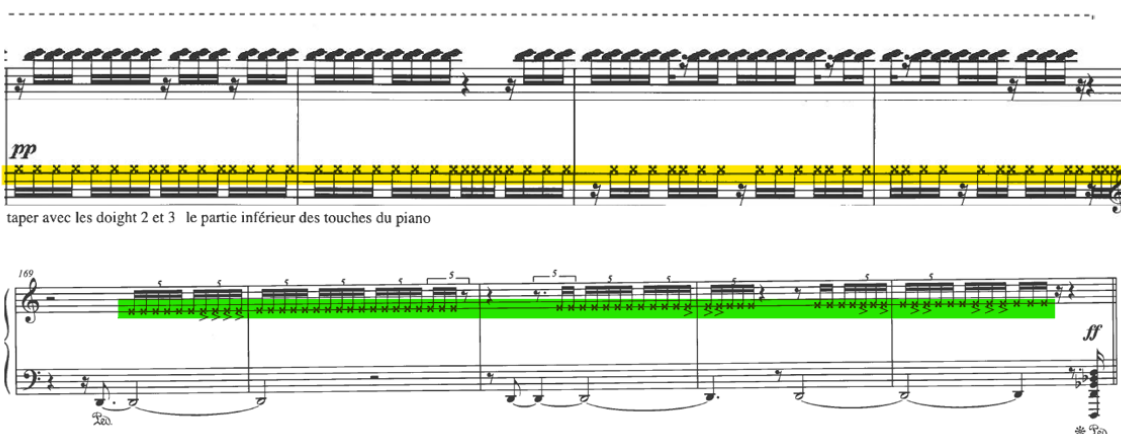


Figure 18: Top line: Interlude 1 (mm. 132–135) Lower Line: Dance 5 (mm. 169–173)

The third movement's rhythmic structure, which follows the Silent Dance's gestures, can be also be heard in the first dance, mm. 16–19, and the sixth dance (**Figure 19**).



Figure 19: Top line Dance 1 (mm. 16–19) Lower line: Dance 6 (mm. 222–227)

In summary, in addition to the previous Balkan music elements such as rhythmic variations, Sokolović transforms the *Silent Dance* gestures, foot stomps, and other noises into music. She creates similar colors to the metal plate clashes and the foot stomps. Also, the pianist's hand gestures and the increase and decrease of the rhythm's complexity follow the dance's progression.

Conclusion

The Balkan music references in *Danses et interludes* are not direct, but Sokolović has adapted many folk musical elements into a modern approach. The primary musical concept explored in this piece is the continuity of the rhythmic variations of motivic segments. The variations are mainly but not only limited to rhythmic modifications; the segments are also varied through changing pitch collections and registers. Even though segment variations exist in Balkan folk music, Sokolović uses a modern approach to the repetition of the segments, which she describes as repetitions in a cubist style. She elaborated more on this term in my interview and explained that it is as if we are looking at the same motive from different angles, similar to cubism in the

visual arts. By varying the rhythms, Sokolović creates different kinds of non-isochronous meter, common in Balkan music, within an overarching metric structure, a novel approach to using Balkan musical elements. In other words, the piece is composed almost entirely in 4/4 meter, but the perceived strong beats are not always one and three, depending instead on the articulations and the placement of the beginning of the segments. As mentioned in the previous section, the segments include different durations, which creates irregular IOIs resulting in different placements in the measure, which is the reason that the articulations and the beginning of the segments in my analyses indicate the accented beats, not the standard metrical strong positions (first and third beat).

Furthermore, *Danses et interludes* is a contemporary composition, and the pitches chosen do not create a sense of tonality. Sokolović was inspired by the sound colors of Balkan dance music, specifically the percussive accessories that women wear. Therefore, by using chromatic dyads and clusters, she mimics the soft metal clash of women's jewelry instead of tonal or traditional modes or scales.

According to her program notes, she has been inspired by both Balkan and imaginary dances, which means that through her use of Balkan musical elements in her pieces, she created imaginary dances similar to Balkan traditional dances (though often with complexities characteristic of contemporary music). The third dance is more directly inspired by the Silent Dance (*Nijemo Kolo*), and its influence can also be seen in the other movements through the technique of finger tapping on the piano (first interlude and the fifth dance). Also, she references the silent dance gestures through rhythm in the first and the sixth dance by including a rhythmic structure similar to that of the third movement.

Throughout the movements, there are instances where the segments and the pulse chords move out of phase but end back in phase, which can again be seen as a modern approach to the Silent Dance and the non-isochronous rhythms in Balkan music. As mentioned previously, the Silent Dance begins with simple rhythms and then gradually becomes more complex, ending with more simple rhythms to ground the performers, similar to the out-of-phase and in-phase progression of the segments and pulse chords. Overall, the out-of-phase sections also reference Balkan rhythms with their irregular meters and frequent metric dissonances.

In addition to these musical elements, Sokolović has been inspired by the culture of the Balkan region. She uses the Balkan communication culture and language as inspiration to create interrupting pulse chords. In other words, both hands communicate by interrupting or completing one another, such as the pulse chords/pitches and the melodic segments in the first, second, and fourth dances. The conversation between hands can be interpreted as calm or intense depending on the irregularity and duration of the IOIs. Furthermore, the fifth dance is created with various motives and their variations, recalling the numerous different yet similar cultures in the Balkan region. The similarities existed in their music as well as their languages and communication styles (Buchanan 2007) unite this region; however, according to Sokolović, depending on the geographical place of the countries, their traditions and culture can differ significantly, including their language, accent, and food.

In summary, *Danses et interludes* represents a captivating fusion of Balkan musical heritage and contemporary compositional techniques. Through rhythmic exploration, tonal coloration, and cultural inspiration, Sokolović creates a rich tapestry of sound that pays homage to the diverse traditions of the Balkan region while pushing the boundaries of modern composition.

Chapter Two: *Lies You Can Believe in* by Missy Mazzoli

Introduction

Grammy-nominated composer Missy Mazzoli, celebrated as one of New York's most inventive musical voices, boasts a rich body of work spanning classical music, opera, and film. Influenced by her diverse heritage—half-Polish and half-Italian—Mazzoli's music, acclaimed globally, weaves together traditional folk, modern “gypsy,” (I will be using the term Romani instead of Gypsy, except when it is quoted) punk, and electronica elements. Her groundbreaking operas, like *The Listeners* and *Proving Up*, delve into themes of community and the American dream. As the Musical America 2022 Composer of the Year, her compositions include the Grammy-nominated *Vespers for Violin*, showcase her ability to seamlessly blend familiar and unfamiliar sounds, transitioning between tonal and atonal realms. Her role as the Mead Composer-in-Residence at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and the co-founder of Luna Composition Lab underscores her commitment to mentorship and pushing artistic boundaries. Beyond classical composition, Mazzoli's influence extends to TV and film, contributing to projects like *Mozart in the Jungle*, *Detropia*, and *Book of Conrad*. Her impact on contemporary classical music is marked by a fusion of genres, making her a trailblazer in shaping the musical landscape (Mazzoli 2021, 2019).

Missy Mazzoli's *Lies You Can Believe In* (2006), commissioned by the Milwaukee-based ensemble Present Music, delves into the concept of “lies” in its title. As described in Mazzoli's program notes: “The ‘lies’ in the title are not untruths, and instead refer to the old-fashioned word for an improvised and embellished story. This type of lie is not malicious; the process of invention and the telling of the tale are ultimately more important than the truth behind the account. In this piece I created my own ‘lie,’ an invented and embellished urban folk music.” In this piece, Missy Mazzoli weaves her own narrative—an invented urban folk music brought to life by the expressive

voices of the strings. According to her: “The strings tell an improvisatory tale, touching upon the violence, energy, mania and rare moments of calm one finds in a city. This piece is inspired as much by modern gypsy music, punk, and electronica as it is by traditional Bulgarian and Romanian folk music” (Mazzoli 2006).

The composition features a vibrant yet complex rhythmic texture, adding an engaging element for study. Mazzoli composes melodies in diverse modes influenced by the musical traditions of Romania, Hungary, and the Romani culture. In this chapter, my emphasis will be on pitch collections, rhythmic patterns, and the overall narrative, in an interpretation based on my analysis. Mazzoli's cultural inspirations raise the question of why she incorporates elements from cultures to which she does not belong. Although she does not explicitly address this in her program notes or interviews, it can be assumed that her motivation stems at least in part from the diverse pitch collections of Eastern European music, resulting in unique modes not found in Western classical music, and a fascination with asymmetrical rhythmic patterns.

Literature review

Limited scholarly attention has been dedicated to the composer and her specific composition, positioning my paper as an initial foray into the exploration of her musical contributions. To underpin my analysis, I draw on pertinent literature focusing on Hungarian and Romani musical modes within the context of a comprehensive literature review. In a noteworthy article, Sándor Szabó (2015) delves into various modes within Romani and Hungarian music, providing insights into their historical roots and trajectories. Szabó's work meticulously delineates the distinctions and resemblances among scales and their intervals, forming a foundational framework for scrutinizing and contemplating diverse modal possibilities within a composition.

Given that these melodic structures may deviate from the conventional European scale order, I reference the insights of Kinko Tsuji and Stefan C. Müller (2021) to expound on augmented or diminished intervals. In a manner similar to Szabó, these authors explore the origins of such intervals and draw connections to other Balkan cultures.

To contextualize the aksak pattern (non-isochronous combinations of durations of two and three units), I will consult various publications elucidating the foundations of these rhythms and exploring the potential for creating new patterns. Simha Arom (2004) delves into the basis of aksak combinations, unraveling the structure of common patterns prevalent in folk music. Arom categorizes these patterns based on the sum of units and the structural composition of the units, providing a framework for the generation of new patterns.

In a study published by *Empirical Musicology Review*, Bonini-Baraldi, Bigand, and Pozzo (2015) focus on measuring aksak rhythms in the Romani and folk music of Transylvanian villages. This research investigates how local Romani musicians adapt or express irregular aksak patterns in live performances. I reference this article to comprehend the modifications of aksak rhythms in the specific piece under examination, seeking to determine whether they constitute a novel pattern or a variation of existing rhythmic patterns. This study also explores the dynamics among performers and their communication during performances, presenting unique yet familiar variations, a concept that can be extrapolated to the context of the string ensemble.

In alignment with Arom's work, Nice Fracile (2003) also delves into different aksak patterns in Balkan folk music. Fracile presents various figures and analyzes the patterns within Balkan folk music. The author additionally references composers like Bartók and local artists who drew inspiration from these patterns or composed works based on folk music. These insights contribute

to a comprehensive understanding of the aksak patterns, their variations, and their influence on both traditional and contemporary compositions.

In recent scholarly investigations, Daniel Goldberg (2020) has conducted a thorough analysis of asymmetrical rhythms in Balkan folk music, employing the frameworks proposed by Lerdahl and Jackendoff (1983) and Justin London (2012). Focusing on dance movements, the study explores the application of these asymmetrical rhythms to performers and how they articulate asymmetry through embodied gestures. This perspective provides valuable insights into the expressive elements of asymmetrical patterns, offering potential implications for the performers in the context of this study.

Moreover, Goldberg delves into timing variations among aksak patterns and the diverse possibilities for variation in Balkan percussion performers in another article (2015). This specific investigation sheds light on how long and short units coexist between two performers, a dynamic that resonates with the interplay among performers in the examined piece. The exploration of these timing variations contributes to a nuanced understanding of the intricate rhythmic relationships present in the composition, offering a valuable perspective on the interlocking patterns within the ensemble.

Pitch Collections

In this section, the focus turns to a comprehensive analysis of the pitch collections of *Lies You Can Believe In*, aimed at discerning the presence of specific scales or modes within the melodies. This intricate task is compounded by the rich tapestry of cross-cultural musical elements pervasive in the Balkan regions. Historically united as part of a larger entity, these areas later evolved into the distinct countries we recognize today (Ristelhueber and Spector 1971). This historical complexity

poses a challenge in attributing particular modes to specific Balkan regions. Nevertheless, this analysis strives to navigate this complexity by narrowing down my observations to the regions explicitly mentioned by the composer in her program notes.

As for many twentieth-century and contemporary works, the neutral key signature (no sharps or flats) does not mean that this piece can be perceived in C major or A minor. It's essential to recognize that Balkan music often diverges from Western modal conventions, frequently incorporating augmented seconds into its scales (Szabó 2015). Significantly, the inclusion of a D \flat accidental in the initial measure immediately dismisses the options of C major and A minor. In the first measure, all three instruments align in unison, and subsequently, the cello introduces additional pitches, initiating the introduction of new notes for other instruments (**Figure 1**).

Figure 1: *Lies You Can Believe In*, mm. 1–4.

Notably, no other accidentals are introduced until measure 16 when a G \sharp , enharmonically equivalent to A \flat , surfaces in the violin. This occurrence, encompassing all pitches until then, establishes the presence of the C Phrygian dominant scale or the C double harmonic (Szabó 2015). This ambiguity of tonality is due to the lack B or B \flat . The double harmonic scale includes C–D \flat –E–F–G–A \flat –B–C, while the Phrygian dominant scale has the same notes but with a B \flat instead of

a B \sharp . I chose to regard C as the central point due to the G to C leaps which outline the C centricity and the appearance of C triads embellished with D \flat as a chromatic upper neighbour. The introductory melodies—specifically mm. 6–8 (**Figure 2**), as well as rehearsals A in mm. 10–12 and 14–15 and B in bars 18–20 (**Figure 3**)—deliberately steer clear of utilizing B or B \flat , a pivotal pitch distinguishing between the double harmonic and Phrygian dominant scales. While pinpointing the origin of each mode to a specific region remains challenging, sources suggest that both the Phrygian dominant and double harmonic scales find their roots in Hungarian Romani Music (Tsuji and Müller 2021; Loya 2011). It could be inferred that Mazzoli intentionally omitted the distinguishing pitch, introducing an element of ambiguity to the composition.

Directing our focus to Rehearsal A's conclusion (mm. 1617), one can observe the dissonance between E \sharp and E \flat in addition to G and G \sharp , alleviated by the tremolos. As depicted in **Figure 3**, the highlighted dissonances deviate from the reiterated melody in the introductory section. I interpret these two measures as concluding measures, introducing new elements in pitch classes and intervals just before the reintroduction of the melody from the introductory section in the subsequent rehearsal. The foundation for these contrasting measures is established in bars 5, 9, and 13, depicted within green brackets in **Figures 2** and **3**. After the initial bar which introduces the theme for the contrasting bar a beat or a pitch is added which creates the concluding measure at the end of rehearsal A.

5

Vln. *p* *f* *fp*

Vla. *p* *f* *fp*

Vc. *p* *f* *fp*

---> ord.

sul pont. gradually to legato ord.

Figure 2: contrasting measures in the introductory melody mm. 5–9.

A

10

Vln. *f* *fp* *f*

Vla. *f* *fp* *f*

Vc. *f* *fp* *legato* *f*

B

2

15

Vln. *p* *f*

Vla. *p* *f*

Vc. *p* *legato* *f*

20

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

Figure 3: Rehearsals A and B resembling the introductory melody, three repetitions.

Starting from rehearsal C and D, the initially monotonal texture evolves into a polymodal one as the violin and viola parts diverge from the cello line in terms of mode. The texture created by the instruments differs from the previous rehearsal as well. Specifically, the cello takes on the main melody with a dense melodic line, while the viola and violin feature tied notes and fewer pitches. Interestingly, the pitches played by the cello are a transposition of the melody heard in bar 15 on the violin. The violin introduces the sequence C–D \flat –F–G (0157), while the cello plays A \flat –G–D–C (0157). It is crucial to note that, despite the mode originating from C, it does not establish C as the melodic center in this piece but there are other pitches that are being emphasized. Furthermore, Mazzoli uses pitch collection freely and makes different pitches of the mode sound like the centre. By taking a modal approach to analyze the melody rather than a diatonic tonal approach one can consider different pitches as tonal centre of the mode. This might be interpreted as Mazzoli's innovative approach to employing modes, introducing a sense of modality without one pitch being the centrality. The violin line introduces three accidentals, including B \flat and either E \flat or D \sharp , aligning with the Hungarian major scale (C–D \sharp –E–F \sharp –G–A–B \flat –C). In contrast, the cello section introduces E \flat , A \flat , and F \sharp , forming the Hungarian minor scale (C–D–E \flat –F \sharp –G–A \flat –B–C). The viola line, while not strictly adhering to a specific mode, suggests accidentals that are part of both modes. For instance, the viola includes B \flat which is part of the Hungarian major scale and also A \flat , part of the Hungarian minor scale (**Figure 4**).

The image displays two staves of musical notation for a string ensemble, specifically focusing on the Violin (Vln.), Viola (Vla.), and Cello (Vc.) parts. The first system, labeled '24', corresponds to Rehearsal C. It shows the Vln. part with dynamics *mf* and *p*, the Vla. part with a *mf* dynamic and a yellow highlight on a B-flat note, and the Vc. part with a 'violent gliss.' marking and a 'sim' (sustained) marking. The second system, labeled '29' and marked with a 'D' in a box, corresponds to Rehearsal D. It shows the Vln. part with a *f* dynamic, the Vla. part with a *p* dynamic and a yellow highlight on a B-flat note, and the Vc. part with a *f* dynamic. The notation includes various accidentals and articulations, such as glissandos and sustained notes.

Figure 4: Rehearsal C, mm. 24–28, Ab. Rehearsal D, mm.31 Bb. The viola includes Bb which is part of the Hungarian major scale and also Ab, part of the Hungarian minor scale.

While it may be tempting to consider a unified tonality across all parts, given the presence of accidentals from the Hungarian Romani (gypsy) scale (C–D–Eb–F#–G–Ab–Bb–C), I have chosen not to analyze this passage in different modes for several reasons. First, the cello establishes a rhythmic ostinato line, contrasting with the violin's slower, melodically driven rhythm. Second, the violin omits Ab, a crucial accidental for the Hungarian Romani scale. Third, the cello predominantly indicates Bb while occasionally employing Bb and Eb as passing tones. Finally, the viola section underscores shared tones between the Hungarian major and minor scales, such as F# and Eb/D#. Consequently, I refrain from assigning a specific mode to the viola line, acknowledging

its unique contribution to the polytonal complexity of rehearsal C. Transitioning to rehearsal D, particularly in bar 31, the cello and viola parts introduce G \sharp and A \sharp , a motif that recurs in the subsequent measure (interpreted enharmonically as A \flat and B \flat). By centering the cello around D \sharp , the scale used is D \sharp Phrygian, comprising D \sharp –E–F \sharp –G \sharp –A \sharp –B–C \sharp . However, G \natural and B \flat are also emphasized in certain sections, derived from previous scales such as C Hungarian minor. The accidentals that create both the sharpened/flattened and natural form of a single pitch foster fluidity between modes, preventing us from categorizing the piece within a singular mode.

In the subsequent rehearsal, the violin now aligns with the Hungarian Romani scale (C–D–E \flat –F \sharp –G–A \flat –B \flat –C), while the cello articulates the tones of a Hungarian minor scale (C–D–E \flat –F \sharp –G–A \flat –B–C). A departure from earlier rehearsals is observed as the polytonal texture gradually diminishes, commencing from bar 53 in rehearsal F (**Figure 5**). This transformation is marked by the emergence of B \natural and B \flat tones in both cello and violin melodies—crucial accidentals that distinguish between the Hungarian minor and Hungarian Romani scales.

Mazzoli employs enharmonicism in her score, and starting from rehearsal D, there is an increased use of sharp accidentals, which should be interpreted as flats to show their position in the scales identified here. The prevalence of sharps becomes more evident in the subsequent rehearsals suggesting D \sharp Phrygian, while the occurrence of flats becomes minimal. However, flat accidentals make a return near the end, as the prominence of sharps gradually fades out.



Figure 5: Rehearsal F mm. 53–57 The emergence of B natural in violin and cello melodies.

Consequently in rehearsal G, the polymodal texture transitions toward a monotonal character, introducing an intriguing ambiguity in mode between the Hungarian Romani and Hungarian minor. This nuanced shift may be interpreted as Mazzoli's inventive approach in integrating folk modes, underscoring the complexity and innovation within the composition. On another note, the viola part indicates faster rhythms aligning with the violin line. Additionally, the violin introduces a swifter rhythm, featuring more accented notes, resulting in an overall more rhythmically intricate section. Crucially, it is worth noting that this rehearsal deliberately avoids employing $F\sharp$, even within the viola part. While this omission may initially perplex the listener, it is essential to clarify that $F\sharp$ is a shared pitch between both modes and, therefore, not considered the distinguishing pitch between the two scales.

Polymodality gives way to a unified tonality in rehearsals G and H, where all melodies now adhere to the C Hungarian minor scale (C–D– $E\flat$ – $F\sharp$ –G– $A\flat$ –B–C). As observed in the preceding section, the introduction of accidentals is gradual, and the mode may not be immediately apparent until midway through this segment. Commencing with an $E\flat$ accidental, the section initially suggests potential connections to both the Hungarian Romani and Hungarian minor scales. However, the

absence of B \flat in this section aligns with my analysis, confirming the prevailing tonality as C Hungarian minor.

The introduction of B \flat becomes evident in the subsequent rehearsal (rehearsal I), accompanied by the inclusion of F \sharp —an element previously avoided in preceding rehearsals. Together with E \flat and A \flat , these accidentals contribute to the establishment of the C Hungarian Romani scale (C–D–E \flat –F \sharp –G–A \flat –B \flat –C). In essence, rehearsal I undergoes a gradual modulation from Hungarian minor to Hungarian Romani (**Figure 6**) through the replacement of B by B \flat .

6

I Exuberant

70

Vln. *f* *p* sul pont. ord. *f*

Vla. *f* *p* sul pont. ord. *f*

Vc. *f* *p* sul pont. ord. *f*

74

Vln. *f* *p* *mf* *f*

Vla. *f* *p* *mf* *f*

Vc. *f* *p* *mf* *f*

Figure 6: Rehearsal I mm. 73–80, Hungarian Romani scale. The accidentals establish C Hungarian minor.

Mazzoli adeptly employs accidentals interchangeably with their enharmonics, and in my analytical approach, I interpret accidentals as their enharmonic counterparts when they align with the scale under consideration. This becomes particularly pronounced in the subsequent rehearsal, K, where numerous accidentals, including B \flat , E \flat , A \flat , D \flat , and G \flat , are introduced, hinting at the possibility of five flat collection scales. However, instances of the natural version of the flattened pitches surface in the melody. Notably, within the cello section, augmented seconds emerge between B \sharp and A \flat , suggesting a new mode distinct from the written five flat collection scales (**Figure 7**).

K

The figure shows a musical score for three staves: Violin I (Vln.), Viola (Vla.), and Cello (Vc.). The score is for Rehearsal K, measures 85-94. The Vln. staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The Vla. and Vc. staves have a bass clef and a key signature of one flat (Bb). The Vln. staff has a 'dolce, more relaxed non-vib.' instruction above measures 85-89. The Vln. staff has yellow highlights on measures 85, 86, 87, 88, and 89, indicating accidentals (B# and A#) that are part of the five flat collection scales. The Vc. staff has green highlights on measures 85, 86, 87, 88, and 89, indicating augmented seconds (B# and A#) that deviate from the five flat collection scales. The dynamic 'mf' is marked in measures 85, 89, and 90.

Figure 7: Rehearsal K, mm. 85–94. The yellow highlights show the accidentals that are part of the five flat collection scales, green highlights indicate the augmented seconds that deviates the melody from five flat collection scales.

Additionally, upon examining the previously mentioned folk modes, a distinctive feature emerges—the prevalence of augmented seconds that characterizes folk-influenced scales. This sets them apart from Western classical scales and modes, where augmented intervals, particularly fourths and seconds, are conventionally avoided (with the exception of the harmonic minor scale). Consequently, I contemplated this section (rehearsal K) as a fusion of five flat collection scales and a folk mode. With both the flattened and natural versions of a pitch present, the potential for multiple modes emerges. The polymodality observed here encompasses both B \flat Phrygian by considering the C \flat written as E \natural (presented in the viola's ostinato) and C \flat minor with E \natural and B \natural variability which is heard in the violin. In essence, Mazzoli has skillfully blended Western and non-Western scales, wherein the folk elements, such as augmented seconds, remain perceptible but are presented with a subtlety not as overt as in the preceding section. This refined incorporation can be interpreted as the artist's innovative approach to utilizing folk modes. In the following rehearsal (L) the same structure in terms, the cello and viola follow C \flat Aeolian and B \flat Phrygian.

In rehearsal M, the diminished third interval shifts from B \natural –A \flat to E \flat /D \sharp –F, indicating a potential modulation to the C Hungarian Romani scale and a shift in the tonic from B \flat to C. However, neither section places the tonic at the center of the melody; instead, the melodies revolve around the augmented intervals and accidentals. To discern the tonic note, I found it necessary to compare the intervals between consecutive pitches and cross-reference them with the modes described in Szabó's article. Moreover, Mazzoli adopts a distinctive approach to the augmented seconds by transforming them into minor thirds, creating a perception of a softer tonal quality compared to the augmented seconds. As one can see in **Figure 8** the D \sharp to F \sharp which in theory, D \sharp to F \sharp is a minor third but while listening to the piece the interval is more heard as an augmented second.

This strategy of employing enharmonic accidentals and embracing interchangeable accidentals, as observed in the preceding section, enables diverse interpretations of intervals and pitches. On the other hand, if one considers this section in B Phrygian with a sharp three, the D \sharp can be analyzed as the sharp third as part of the mode.

9

Figure 8: Rehearsal M, mm. 109–13, augmented seconds between D \sharp enharmonically read as E \flat and F \sharp .

The ensuing rehearsal, labeled N, introduces a distinctive texture and melody, diverging from the preceding sections. In this segment, the instruments converge to create harmonies rather than a polyphonic texture with multiple melody lines. The vertical intervals formed predominantly consist of perfect fourths and their inversions, perfect fifths, along with some major thirds and minor sixths. These intervals may initially suggest an analysis rooted in Western scales like major or minor, as folk scales often incorporate augmented seconds and fourths. However, despite the absence of numerous accidentals in this section, except for A \flat and D \flat (which contribute to the formation of perfect fifths and fourths, depending on their voicing), and a few occurrences of E \flat and B \flat , the harmonic complexity surpasses a simple interpretation. The pitch collections in this section suggests starting in C major and moving to C harmonic minor and then C natural minor.

Examining the accidentals, one might consider an A \flat major chord due to their presence, but the harmonic structure is more intricate. To discern a potential tonic chord, I identified the harmonies employed. Section N begins with a second inversion C major chord, an unconventional choice in Western traditions, given the inherent instability of second inversion chords, especially at the commencement of a section. Subsequently, in measure 120, the instruments transition to a second inversion G major chord. Notably, between the C major and G major chords, a perfect fourth between A \flat and D \flat and the harmonics sounding E \flat and A \flat emerges beneath the E – C pedal in the violin. Although these pitches do not distinctly form a specific harmony, I posit that they introduce a level of dissonance to the section while remaining within the framework of Western harmonies, manifesting as perfect fourths instead of the augmented fourths which appear more frequently in folk modes.

The subsequent measures in section N follow a similar trajectory, yet the absence of a clear, unambiguous chord continues as sustained notes in the melodies resolve at different moments. Meanwhile, the other parts have deviated from the previous harmonic pitch, contributing to the intricate and nuanced harmonic landscape within this segment. In summary, this section diverges from adherence to a specific scale or a clear harmonic progression. The presence of sustained notes, coupled with the absence of a consistent harmonic trajectory, precludes labeling the section within a definite key, whether C major or D \flat major. It appears as though Mazzoli intentionally diverges from folk scales and adopts a novel approach, deviating from traditional rules of harmonic progression, thereby suggesting disjunct Western harmonies in a distinctive manner.

Rehearsal O functions as a recapitulation, reintroducing elements such as the rhythmic motifs from the piece's outset and re-establishing a consistent polyphonic texture between A major and A minor.

At the beginning of the section the fluctuation between A major and A minor is vivid due to the alternation of C \sharp and C \flat in addition to the G \sharp . After the introductory first three measures of O (suggesting E Phrygian), the melody starts in bar 136, where the lines are, contrary to the beginning, not in unison. Comparing this section's violin part to the first section, one can notice that it starts with the same pitch, C \sharp which is enharmonic to D \flat (**Figure 9**). Notably, in contrast to the earlier use of interchangeably employed enharmonic accidentals, this section adopts a more uniform approach, relying solely on sharps. These sharps are introduced gradually, encompassing F \sharp , C \sharp , G \sharp , and D \sharp , collectively implying the key of A Lydian. The harmonic structure further supports this interpretation, with a root position A major chord distinctly audible in bar 136, resonating consistently throughout this rehearsal. The semitone in this section between the C \sharp and C \flat adds to the fluidity of the modes.

Pesante, Separate

The musical score for rehearsal O, measures 135-139, is presented for Violin (Vln.), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vc.). The tempo is marked 'Pesante, Separate'. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The violin part begins in measure 135 with a C# note, which is highlighted in yellow. The viola and cello parts enter in measure 136. The score includes dynamic markings of *fff* and *f*, and a 'sim.' (simile) marking above the violin part in measure 138.

Figure 9: Rehearsal O, mm. 135 – 139 | Similar rhythm as the introductory melody in figure 1 and the C \sharp is enharmonic to D \flat

In rehearsal P, the harmonic progression shifts to F major; however, in the ensuing measure, A \flat and D \flat emerge, creating a second inversion D \flat major chord from measure 148 to 151. Subsequently, the harmony transitions back to A major, prominently featuring C \sharp in the violin part. Bar 154 introduces G \sharp , forming an E major triad that persists until measure 154, where the

harmonic focus reverts to F major. The section concludes with a shift to D \flat major, definitively ending this diverse harmonic sequence. On the other hand, the accidentals are not stable at this point, but some accidentals remain through most of the section, such as C \sharp /D \flat and G \sharp /A \flat suggesting the double harmonic mode starting from C. In summary, this section embodies a fusion of disparate harmonies, ranging from A major with two sharps to D \flat major with five flats. This divergence underscores Mazzoli's departure from folk scales, opting instead for a more pronounced integration of Western harmonies within the composition.

In rehearsal Q, spanning from measure 159 to the end of rehearsal S at measure 188, the accidentals remain constant while the tonal center undergoes shifts. Commencing with A and C \sharp in the viola and violin sections, additional accidentals, including G \sharp in the viola and D \sharp in the violin, emerge in rehearsal Q. While the accidental collection lacks F \sharp , which would be expected in Western scale conventions, it is noteworthy that the melody avoids the use of both F and F \sharp until later in the subsequent two rehearsals (specifically in section S, measure 182). The focal point in rehearsal Q is C \sharp , leading me to label this section as C \sharp minor. However, the concluding harmony suggests a resolution to E major, forming an E major triad.

Rehearsal R follows a similar pattern, with the cello introducing an A in the bass, thereby shifting the tonal center to A and altering the mode from C \sharp minor to A Lydian. In Rehearsal S, the harmony briefly returns to E major, initiated by a root position E major triad. However, this tonal center is transient, as it promptly moves to G \sharp , indicating the potential identification of the mode as G \sharp Phrygian. The establishment of modality becomes apparent as the section concludes with a G \sharp first inversion major triad.

In rehearsals T and U, the pitches diverge from adherence to a specific scale, whether folk or Western (the accidentals include D \sharp G \sharp , and A \sharp). The presence of A \sharp as an accidental disrupts the typical pitch intervals associated with scales like the double harmonic, originating from E. Even if one were to consider A \sharp as a passing tone, the absence of E \flat as the tonic precludes the interpretation of the E double harmonic scale. Conversely, the omission of F \sharp rules out the consideration of Western classical scales in this section. Furthermore, Mazzoli introduces a novel scale, previously unheard, comprising G \sharp – A \sharp – B– C $\sharp\sharp$ /D– D \sharp – E \sharp /F– F \sharp . This scale bears resemblance to the Dorian sharp 4 scale, known variably as Ukrainian Dorian or Romanian Dorian. Notably, it features an augmented second between B and C $\sharp\sharp$ (written as D in the score), reminiscent of folk scales, while concluding with a whole step (F \sharp –G \sharp), deviating from the typical half-step characteristic of major and harmonic/melodic minor scales. A close examination of the intervals within this scale reveals similarities to the Hungarian minor scale, which lowers the sixth degree and raises the seventh creating another augmented second. This scale is prominently featured in bars 192–196, particularly as the melody ascends the pentachord.

G \sharp – A \sharp – B– C $\sharp\sharp$ – D \sharp – E– F $\sharp\sharp$ (G \sharp Hungarian Minor)

G \sharp – A \sharp – B– C $\sharp\sharp$ – D \sharp – E \sharp – F \sharp (Dorian sharp 4)

In conclusion, the mode and pitch collections in *Lies You Can Believe In* present a departure from conventional key signatures, eliminating the options of A minor or C major due to the distinctive accidentals in the melody. Despite this, the central tonality consistently revolves around C as the tonic, aligning with various folk modes, particularly those found in Bulgarian, Romanian, and Romani scales starting from C. The dynamic nature of the accidentals introduces instability,

leading to melodic modulations into diverse scales such as Hungarian major, Hungarian minor, and Phrygian dominant, among others.

As the piece progresses, the prominence of folk scales diminishes, incorporating the characteristic augmented seconds within the context of Western scales or transitioning entirely to Western scales like C# minor or Eb major. During the modulation to Western scales and modes, Mazzoli introduces the concept of harmony, incorporating chords including consonant triads into the composition. However, she deviates from traditional harmonic progressions, opting for a distinctive approach. In this context, the establishment of modes and scales doesn't rely on cadential progressions but rather on the presentation of tonic triads and central pitches, serving as tonal anchors.

Notably, Mazzoli ventures into crafting melodies within **new scales** such as Dorian sharp 4, resonating with the essence of folk scales through its augmented second. In essence, Mazzoli skillfully establishes her musical "lie" by briefly grounding the composition in folk modes, subsequently modulating into Western scales, seamlessly blending elements of both traditions.

The following table offers a summary of mode modulations in different rehearsals:

Rehearsals	Measures	Mode Possibilities
Introduction, A, B	1 – 22	C Phrygian dominant or C double harmonic
C and D	23 – 42	Polymodal: C Hungarian minor and major, moving at rehearsal D to D# Phrygian with some fluidity

E	43 – 50	Polymodal: simultaneous C Hungarian major and minor transitioning to monomodal: C Hungarian Romani while avoiding F#
F	51 – 59	C Hungarian Romani
G, H, I, and J	60 – 86	C Hungarian minor and C harmonic minor
K and L	87 – 105	C \flat Aeolian and B \flat Phrygian
M	106 – 114	B Phrygian #3 (Phrygian dominant)
N	115 – 132	No stable tonality but transitioning thorough different scales such as C major and then moving to C harmonic minor and natural minor.
O	133 – 146	A major and A minor alternating and then moving to E Phrygian.
P	147 – 158	Starting in F major and then modulating to A major, and finally ending with D \flat major.

Q	159 – 163	C# minor or E major
R	164 – 176	A Lydian
S	177 – 188	G# Phrygian
T and U	189 – the end	G# Dorian sharp 4.

Rhythm and Patterns

In this section, the primary focus will be on the "aksak" pattern, a significant rhythmic feature in Bulgarian folk music. Aksak patterns are not exclusive to Bulgaria but are also prevalent in the folk music of other Balkan regions (Fracile 2003), as observed in Transylvanian Romani music (Bonini-Baraldi, Bigand, and Pozzo 2015). In Turkish, "aksak" translates to limping, and in the realm of music, it denotes a collection of binary and ternary rhythmic modules, such as 2+3 or 2+2+3 (Arom 2004). Notably, aksak rhythms are characterized by their inherent irregularity, never conforming to balanced binary or ternary groupings. These rhythms find application in Bulgarian, Romanian, and Romani music, as echoed in the piece under examination.

The primary objective here is to ascertain whether Mazzoli utilized established aksak patterns or experimented with irregular patterns to create unique combinations. The analysis considers the shortest rhythm as the unit, with 1 representing a sixteenth note. Calculations are rooted in accentuated beats and rhythmic divisions as delineated in the musical score.

All instruments initially adhere to a 3+3+2+2+2 pattern, which spans a mere two measures. However, aksak patterns undergo alterations in bars 3 and 4, with the viola deviating from an aksak pattern to a more symmetrical rhythm. In these bars, the aksak pattern interchanges between instruments, exemplified by the rotation of the 2+2+3+3+2 pattern in the violin and cello lines,

Figure 10: *Mm.* 1 – 4 | 3+3+2+2+2 appearing in all parts for two bars, the aksak pattern changes in the third bar, the highlighted section show the inversion and the 2+2+3+3+2 pattern.



Figure 11: the balanced aksak patterns.

Moving to the subsequent measure (m. 6), a new pattern emerges, divided into two figures: 3+2+2 and 3+2 (**Figure 12**). While the 3+2 pattern is considered a fundamental aksak pattern, the 3+2+2 pattern holds significance in Balkan dances like *Lesnoto* (Goldberg 2020), with its roots tracing back to Bulgaria.

Rehearsal A revisits a three-measure segment from the introduction, specifically bars 6–8. It initiates with this segment but deviates in measure 13 with a variation of bar 9. Essentially, bar 13 mirrors bar 9, except for the absence of syncopation in the violin section. It showcases distinctive elements in the viola and a modified cello part with an additional tremolo. The most significant alteration is the shift from a $\frac{3}{4}$ time signature (present in the introduction) to a $\frac{2}{4}$ time signature (**Figure 13**). The cello may seem to have a different aksak pattern, but in fact the 3+2+2+3+2 is hidden inside the larger note values. In other words even though the rhythms are divided as 7+5 due to the time signature, ties and notational limitations on writing rhythms, the cello is still following the same aksak pattern as the other parts.

The musical score shows three staves: Violin (Vln.), Viola (Vla.), and Cello (Vc.). The first section (measures 5-9) is marked with a pink box and rehearsal mark 'A'. The second section (measures 10-17) is marked with a red box. The score includes dynamic markings (p, f, fp), articulation (ord., legato), and fingerings (3, 2, 2, 3, 2, 3, 2, 2, 3, 2, 3, 2, 2, 3, 2, 3, 2, 4, 3, 2, 3, 4). The time signature changes from 3/4 to 2/4 at measure 10.

Figure 13: the introduction and rehearsal A share the same aksak patterns for three measures, bars 9 and 13 are variations of one another including a time signature change.

The subsequent two measures (bars 14 and 15) mirror the initial two measures of the three-measure segment. However, on the expected third measure where the last pattern of the three-measure segment typically occurs, there is a deviation. Bars 16 and 17 constitute a distinct segment in 2/4 meter similar to m. 13, showcasing a different pattern with tremolos, including 3+2+3+2+2 (2+2 is a tremolo) in the viola and 3+2+3+3+2 (the last 3+2 is ambiguous due to the held notes but assumed since it is in the viola) in the cello, while the violin's rhythm does not adhere to an aksak pattern. It is essential to note that the 3+2, 3+2+2 pattern can manifest in various forms, such as

3+2–3+2+2 and 3+2+3+2+2. In the former, the motives may be perceived separately, a distinction reflected in their notation. Conversely, the latter suggests the presence of a single motive. The B section reverts to a 3/4 time signature and reiterates the three-measure segment. It is succeeded by a repetition of the content from bars 16 and 17, with the modification that the final bar, mirroring measure 17, is in 3/4. Consequently, the rhythms are prolonged, and the cello line introduces an additional 3+2 rhythm. Rehearsal C adopts a different approach, initiating an ostinato in the cello line featuring a 3+2+2–3+2 pattern, which persists until rehearsal G (**Figure 14**).

The musical score shows three staves: Violin (Vln.), Viola (Vla.), and Cello (Vc.). The Cello line is the focus, featuring a rhythmic ostinato pattern. The pattern is represented by a sequence of numbers at the bottom: 3 2 2 3 2 3 2 2 3 2 3 2 2 3 2 3 2 2 3 2. The Cello line includes dynamic markings *mf* and *p*, and performance instructions "violent gliss." and "sim".

Figure 14: The cello establishes an ostinato bass.

Throughout sections C and D, the pitch collections of the ostinato remain consistent, undergoing a change starting from rehearsal E. Rehearsal E deviates briefly from the aksak pattern, introducing a half-note tremolo in 2/4 in the viola and cello lines. The subsequent rehearsal (F) opens with an ostinato line mirroring the pitch collection and pattern of the first two measures of rehearsal E, prompting a return to the 3/4 time signature. However, the 3/4 meter is short-lived as the subsequent two bars (mm. 53–54) shift the meter to 2/4. In summary, these four bars consist of two measures repeating material from the previous rehearsal and two measures introducing new material in 2/4. This sequence is immediately repeated but interrupted in the middle (bar 57) with

an additional measure featuring a 3+2+2–3+2 pattern in the bass line, consistent with the expected pattern. Additionally, the concluding bar of the rehearsal, anticipated to be in 2/4, is structured in 3/4. The rhythms are extended and subject to variation. The aksak pattern undergoes alterations during the 2/4 measures but remains consistent for the 3/4 bars, which dominate these rehearsals.

In Rehearsal G, the melody departs from any discernible aksak pattern, and the once-ostinato cello line has evolved into a sustained melodic line, while the right hand engages in staccato 16th notes. Despite initial impressions that Mazzoli might not draw rhythmic inspiration from folk idioms in this passage, the juxtaposition of staccato 16th notes and interrupted legato 16th notes introduces syncopation and irregular rhythms within a regular rhythm. Mazzoli cleverly manipulates articulations and short rhythms, creating a deceptive auditory experience. Syncopation in the cello, though present, doesn't yield aksak patterns but instead contributes to a Westernized regular rhythm moving in units of three sixteenth notes (dotted eighth notes) creating a polyrhythm between the 3s and the 4s against the violin. The polyrhythm could also be seen as a grouping metric dissonance (Krebs 1999). In essence, she uses regular rhythms to convey irregularity and employs syncopation for a more Westernized rhythmic effect (**Figure 15**).

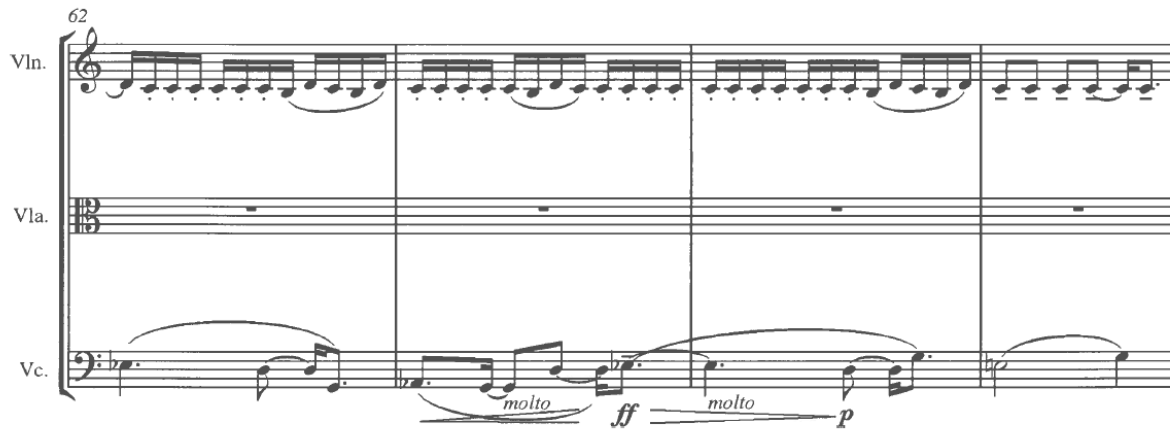


Figure 15: Rehearsal G mm. 62 – 65| violin and and cello creating poly rhythms or grouping dissonances of 3s and 4s.

In Rehearsal I, the persistence of irregularity is evident between the viola and violin sections, albeit without overt aksak patterns resembling earlier sections. A closer examination of segments and repeated notes reveals a 2+2+2+3+3 pattern in the violin and a 3+2+2+3+2 pattern in the viola, creating metrical dissonance. Although these two patterns commence on the same beat, the accents diverge after the initial beat. This is a phenomenon resonant with Goldberg's 2015 exploration of Balkan percussionists. Goldberg's research posits that percussionists, in their rendition of aksak patterns, exhibit variations in timing, responding to the nuances of the melody. Applying this perspective to the ongoing analysis, I closely examined these two aksak patterns as intricate variations of each other. It appears as though the performers mirror the flexibility observed in percussionists, adjusting the timing of accented beats based on their individual interpretations of the melody. Moreover, the diverse placement of accented beats in each line influences the perception of the opposing line, introducing multiple potential interpretations of the accented beats within the aksak patterns. On the other hand, cello is marking the pulse streams in the original sense of Roeder's (2000) definition with equal distribution. (**Figure 16**).

discernible nuances in movement, particularly noticeable in the first two beats, analogous to the initial measure illustrated in **Figure 16**.

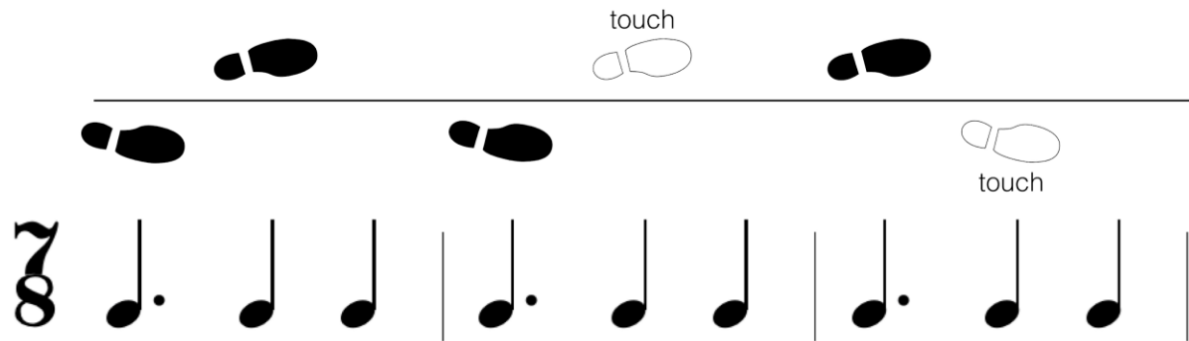


Figure 17: traditional folk-dance steps from Bulgaria that accompany the 3+2+2 aksak pattern (Goldberg 2020)

Contrasting the intricate rhythms of the violin and viola, the cello embraces a melodic role with extended note values. This departure from the aksak pattern aligns the cello with Western musical conventions, serving an accompaniment function. While these roles and rhythms endure in the ensuing rehearsal, a notable change unfolds in Rehearsal K, as the viola embraces a rhythm akin to that previously employed by the violin. In this section, the aksak pattern becomes less prominent, yet irregular rhythms and metric dissonances persist, particularly between the viola and the other two instrumental lines. Echoing the preceding section, the accented beats of the violin differ in their placement compared to those of the viola, generating metrical dissonance. Consequently, the aksak pattern in the viola line takes on a varied form, contingent upon the accented beats of both the viola and the violin. The established pattern persists until the midpoint of measure 99, marking four measures into rehearsal L, where a notable shift occurs in the viola's rhythm. Similar to the configuration in rehearsal H, the viola adopts staccato 16th notes. In tandem, the cello reintroduces the 2+2+2+3+3 rhythmic pattern in bar 98, a measure preceding the rhythmic transition in the viola (**Figure 18**).

8

L

95

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

f

spiccato

pizz.

2 2 2 3 3 2 2 2 3 3

2 2 2 3 3

2 2 2 3 3

100

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

2 2 2 3 3

2 2 2 3 3

Figure 18: Rehearsal L mm. 96 – 100 | Illustrating the aksak rhythms and the shift to staccato in the violin part.

Upon examining the spiccato viola segments, it becomes evident that the repeated notes align with the 2+2+2+3+3 pattern. In essence, the accented downbeats of the aksak patterns in the viola overlap with the cello line, mitigating the metrical dissonance compared to preceding sections. Nevertheless, the violin section maintains its role, carrying a legato melody with longer note values, contributing to a more melodic line. The cello's rhythmic pattern persists into the subsequent rehearsal, with the violin melody temporarily absent until three measures before the upcoming section, N. Meanwhile, the viola melody transitions into a legato melodic line, departing from the previous aksak rhythmic pattern. In Rehearsal N, there is a complete departure from aksak

patterns, as all lines feature sustained long notes. As discussed in the pitch collection section, this shift signifies a more Westernized approach. The Western style is short-lived, as the aksak pattern resurfaces in Section O more prominently than before, resembling the initial rehearsals, akin to a recapitulation. The aksak rhythm is initially introduced in the viola part, featuring a 3+2+2 – 3+2 pattern reminiscent of bar 6 in the introduction. Subsequently, in measure 135, the other two lines converge with the viola, collectively playing the aksak pattern 3+3+2+2+2, a reversal of the preceding aksak pattern observed in the previous sections (2+2+2+3+3). The aksak patterns undergo changes every measure, with all lines adhering to the same pattern throughout these variations. Each pattern consists of three 2s and two 3s. Mazzoli systematically explores all rhythmic possibilities within this framework, progressively increasing complexity and introducing syncopation. The possibilities are relatively limited, primarily falling into two main categories: 3+3+2+2+2 and 3+2+3+2+2, along with their rotations, resulting in a total of 12 potential arrangements. Initially, the pattern begins with a simpler version, 3+3+2+2+2, involving one unit switching. Subsequently, it evolves into 3+2+2+2+3, requiring two switches, and reaches the pinnacle of complexity with 2+3+2+3+2, necessitating switching between every unit. Mazzoli solidifies a five-measure segment with various aksak patterns, repeated across all lines until rehearsal Q. This segment includes 2+2+2+3+3, 3+3+2+2+2 (its retrograde), 3+2+2+2+3 (more complex), 2+2+3+3+2, and 2+3+2+3+2 (most complex). In summary, the patterns exhibit a gradual increase in complexity (defined by the number of switches from 2 to 3 or vice versa per bar), followed by a sudden return to simpler versions, all following a systematic progression.

In rehearsal Q, the aksak patterns gradually fade away. The cello is eliminated, and the viola reintroduces 16th-note staccato motives without adhering to a consistent aksak pattern. Meanwhile, the violin section incorporates a blend of legato, staccato, and tenuto notes. This

variety in articulation is echoed in the viola's section in the subsequent rehearsal (R), introducing rhythmic motion and complexity among the lines. However, there is no discernible aksak pattern, signaling Mazzoli's deliberate departure from traditional elements found in Balkan folk music to create her own “lie” (**Figure 19**). In other words, this absence could be seen as Mazzoli's creative divergence, creating an illusion of syncopated rhythms reminiscent of Balkan folk music while deviating from established musical conventions.

The image shows a musical score for three instruments: Violin (Vln.), Viola (Vla.), and Cello (Vc.). The score is for Rehearsal R, measures 164 to 166. The Violin part is in treble clef, the Viola in alto clef, and the Cello in bass clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The tempo/mood is marked 'molto espressivo'. Dynamic markings 'f' (forte) and 'p' (piano) are present in the Viola and Cello parts. The Violin part features a complex, syncopated melody. The Viola and Cello parts provide a rhythmic foundation with sustained notes and some melodic movement.

Figure 19: Rehearsal R, mm. 164 – 166 | the melody is not following a specific aksak rhythm.

Rehearsal S oscillates between aksak rhythms and melodic Westernized segments. The 3+3+2+2+2 pattern is evident in bar 179 within the viola section. In the subsequent bar, the violin introduces the same pattern, creating an overlap with the repetition of the viola's aksak pattern. This two-measure segment is reiterated in bars 183 and 184. However, the predominant character of the section revolves around sustained notes and a more regular Westernized rhythm.

Section T reintroduces the familiar 3+2+2–3+2 pattern, a recurrent motif employed across various sections in the composition. Although this repetition might initially seem monotonous, Mazzoli injects creativity by assigning different notes to each line. The viola and cello maintain the repetition of specific notes, while the violin contributes to the richness of the melody through

varied pitch collections. This dynamic interplay persists until measure 193, where the viola transitions to single dotted half notes, and the cello undergoes more frequent note changes. As observed in the initial rehearsals, the time signature switches between 2/4 and 3/4, intermittently disrupting the established aksak pattern. Despite these shifts, the aksak pattern consistently reasserts itself, notably in the violin and cello sections, leading into the concluding rehearsal, U.

In the final rehearsal, the cello aligns with the viola in producing sustained, lingering notes, while the responsibility of upholding the melodic aksak pattern falls solely on the violin. This arrangement persists until the final sounding measure, where a shift occurs. Both the cello and viola join forces, contributing tremolos that accompany the violin. The conclusion takes an unexpected turn with the emergence of accented 16th notes, culminating in a whole note rest in the final measure, bringing the piece to an abrupt and unforeseen conclusion (**Figure 20**).

The musical score for Rehearsal U, measures 216-219, is presented for Violin (Vln.), Viola (Vla.), and Cello (Vc.). The Violin part begins at measure 216 with a melodic line marked *(non-cresc.)* and fingerings 3, 2, 2, 3, 2, 3, 2, 2, 3, 2. The Viola and Cello parts provide sustained notes, with the Cello showing a tremolo in the final measure. The score includes dynamics *mf* and *ff*, and a tempo marking *molto*. The piece concludes abruptly with a whole note rest in the final measure.

Figure 20: Rehearsal U, mm. 216 – 219 | the aksak patterns is only carried by the violin in mm. 216–217, switching to regular groups of four in m. 218 followed by the unexpected measure of rest.

In summary, this section of my analysis delves into Mazzoli's strategic introduction of aksak patterns right from the outset, skillfully employing diverse combinations of 2s and 3s. The utilization of renowned Balkan aksak patterns, coupled with Mazzoli's inventive variations, creates

a captivating rhythmic landscape. The composer skillfully guides the listener's perception, crafting syncopated, metrically dissonant patterns through nuanced articulations and strategic displacements, even in the absence of clear aksak patterns. As the composition progresses, Mazzoli departs from aksak rhythms, embracing a more Westernized style characterized by extended note values and less pronounced syncopation in the middle parts of the piece such as rehearsal N. In rehearsal O, Mazzoli reintroduces the aksak pattern observed at the outset, creating a sense of recapitulation. However, this anticipated return is met with a departure from the exact replication of the initial pattern. The divergence from the aksak pattern becomes more pronounced starting in rehearsal Q, with sustained melodic notes gaining prominence. While the aksak pattern intermittently reappears in subsequent sections, it persists until the conclusion of the piece, solely carried by the violin. This final nod to Balkan folk music subtly weaves its way into the composition, ending the musical journey.

Conclusion

As outlined in her program notes, Mazzoli draws inspiration from Romani, Romanian, and Bulgarian folk music. Evident traces of folk musical elements resonate in both the rhythm and pitch collection of her composition. The journey of crafting her own artistic narrative unfolds with direct references to folk elements, encompassing rhythm and pitch. Gradually, Mazzoli introduces the Dorian sharp 4 scale incorporating various aksak patterns, rhythmic syncopation, and modes inspired by folk traditions into melodies. The newly devised aksak patterns exhibit a certain regularity distinct from the traditional Bulgarian rhythms, yet they still incorporate combinations of 2s and 3s. Initially, Mazzoli introduces distinct rhythms for each instrument, creating a polyrhythmic texture as they follow the same pattern. However, this polyrhythmic complexity evolves over the course of the piece, with all parts eventually converging on the same rhythm,

albeit with subtle variations. Notably, aksak patterns, typical in Bulgarian and Romani music, are not consistently present in all sections and are notably absent in those where the composition shifts to Western scales. The rhythmic foundations of 3+2+2, as detailed by Goldberg in the context of Bulgarian and Balkan dances (2020), are prominent in Mazzoli's work. Beyond this, Mazzoli introduces variations by combining and repeating these foundational patterns, as evident in measures 140–144 in rehearsal O. The recurrence of this pattern order across subsequent lines may be seen as Mazzoli's intentional "lie," deviating from the structure of a specific Bulgarian dance. This lie serves as a marker for Mazzoli's creative additions, encompassing folk-inspired elements like aksak patterns and modes, alongside nuanced references to Western musical conventions within the pitch collections and modes.

Furthermore, Mazzoli's use of Dorian sharp 4 modes incorporates folk-inspired elements like augmented seconds while also being a rotation of harmonic minor on its fourth scale degree, and thus also related to the Phrygian dominant scale which I analyzed early in the piece. Each section undergoes modulations into various folk modes, such as Phrygian dominant and Hungarian minor. As the piece unfolds, these folk influences gradually give way to Western modes, although remnants of folk scales, notably augmented seconds, persist. The interplay of folk elements and Western modes diminishes progressively until the melody defies analysis within known scales, exemplified in rehearsals T and U. These sections may be viewed as Mazzoli's intentional "lie," diverging from conventional folk scale structures. While it distances itself from established folk scales, it retains an essence reminiscent of folk melodies. Mazzoli, in a gradual narrative, introduces her embellished story, initiating with recognizable folk scales, modulating them extensively, incorporating folk elements in alternative contexts, and ultimately revealing her unique "lie" in the culmination of the composition.

Alongside the incorporation of folk elements, the composition gradually embraces a shift towards more pronounced Western musical characteristics. This transition is marked by the introduction of sustained long notes, a reduction in syncopated rhythms, the integration of Western scales, and the utilization of interchangeable accidentals—attributes indicative of contemporary music practices. These characteristics manifest individually in each instrument throughout the piece but are particularly vividly heard in rehearsal N.

In essence, Mazzoli's deception is rooted in elements of truth, extracted from folk music's musical components. However, she takes these elements and embellishes them with her unique creations, skillfully manipulating the listener's perception. The result is a carefully crafted illusion where the lie seamlessly intertwines with reality, blurring the lines between the traditional and the invented in a captivating musical narrative.

Chapter Three: *Strum* by Jessie Montgomery

Introduction

Jessie Montgomery, an acclaimed composer, violinist, and educator, has received prestigious awards such as the Leonard Bernstein Award and the Sphinx Medal of Excellence. Her works, known for their fusion of classical and vernacular elements, improvisation, poetry, and social consciousness, are performed globally. Born and raised in Manhattan, Jessie's upbringing infused her life with artistic experiences and activism. She earned degrees from the Juilliard School and New York University and currently serves as a Graduate Fellow in Music Composition at Princeton University. Additionally, she holds the position of Professor of Violin and Composition at The New School. Starting in May 2021, she assumed the role of Mead Composer-in-Residence with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Her diverse body of work spans solo, chamber, vocal, and orchestral compositions, including notable pieces commissioned by renowned ensembles. As composer-in-residence for The Sphinx Organization, she supports young musicians and has received numerous grants and awards. Jessie's association with the New York Philharmonic's Project 19 and upcoming projects, such as a nonet inspired by the Great Migration, reflect her commitment to addressing societal themes through music (Montgomery 2021).

According to Montgomery's program notes, *Strum* is the culmination of a series of transformations from a 2006 string quintet with first and second violin, viola, and two cellos to 2012 rendition for string orchestra, incorporating first and second violin, viola, cello, and double bass. Initially composed for the Providence String Quartet and guests of Community MusicWorks Players, it underwent arrangements for a string quartet in 2008, with final revisions in 2012 for the Catalyst Quartet's performance at the 15th annual Sphinx Competition celebration. Montgomery states in

her program notes: “Within *Strum* I utilized texture motives, layers of rhythmic or harmonic ostinati that string together to form a bed of sound for melodies to weave in and out. The strumming pizzicato serves as a texture motive and the primary driving rhythmic underpinning of the piece.” Drawing inspiration from American folk idioms, the piece unfolds as a compelling narrative that begins with a sense of nostalgia and evolves into a triumphant celebration (Montgomery 2012).

In this chapter, I will initiate my analysis by delving into these texture motives, which I interpret as the motives that appear in all the lines and create a contrast in the texture, and ostinatos, aiming to discern any incorporation of musical elements from American traditional folk music.

As the piece is mainly modal, the examination will begin with a scrutiny of the pitch collection within each individual line, followed by an exploration of the collective pitch relationships among the lines. Moreover, I aim to interpret the narrative inherent in the piece. As elucidated in the program notes, the composition establishes a narrative line, a theme rooted in many aspects of American folk music, as elaborated in the subsequent sections. The interpretation of the narrative line varies among individuals. Nonetheless, I will draw upon the musical elements to substantiate my argument. Through an examination of folk idioms, I aim to comprehend Jessie Montgomery's innovative approaches to these elements. Specifically, I seek to identify Montgomery's innovations and retentions of folk elements, discerning what new aspects she has introduced and what remains unchanged.

Shifting focus, Montgomery does not explicitly designate in her program note the specific region from which the American folk idioms originate, suggesting potential roots in Afro-American, Anglo-American, Latino-American, Indigenous, and various other genres. After thorough exploration and analysis of the piece, I have identified that the folk idioms predominantly align

with Anglo-American folk music rather than indigenous music or other traditions. Consequently, my emphasis will be on drawing parallels between the piece and Anglo-American folk traditions.

Literature review

Regrettably, no specific articles dedicated to the composer or this particular piece are available. Nonetheless, extensive research exists on American folk music, particularly within the Anglo-American tradition. I will draw upon this body of literature to substantiate and contextualize my arguments and observations. Numerous articles, both older and more recent, delve into Anglo-American folk music. Pioneering researchers like Norman Cazden, Samuel Bayard, and Annabel Buchanan have focused on comprehending the folk revival and the nuances of Anglo-American folk music. In recent years, scholars such as Nicholas Stoia and Kip Lornell have contributed to the field with research on modes, dissonances, and regional folk melodies in American traditional songs. I will incorporate both historical and contemporary scholarly works to fortify my argument with a multifaceted approach. This will not only bolster the depth of my analysis through varied sources but also enable the identification of potential disparities or contradictions between recent and earlier research.

Norman Cazden's 1971 analysis of Anglo-American folk music offers a simplified mode classification that aids in assessing Montgomery's mode usage. Similarly, Buchanan's detailed exploration of modes in Anglo-American folk music (1939) serves as a valuable reference for comparing Montgomery's approach. Additionally, Nicolas Stoia's research on modes, harmony, and dissonance (2010) aligns with this direction, providing valuable insights to enhance my mode analysis and comprehend the indicated harmonies in the piece. While instances of dissonance within the composition are limited, I will refer to Stoia's work to ascertain whether Montgomery introduces novel elements or adheres to established folk traditions. Additionally, Samuel Bayard's

extensive research on the melodies employed in British-American folk music (1950) will serve as a valuable resource for analyzing the individual lines' melodies. In a subsequent publication, Bayard (1955) explores the revival of Anglo-American folk music, elucidating novel approaches to folk elements and detailing the changes over time. This parallels Montgomery's approach in the composition, where she draws inspiration from folk musical elements but integrates them into a contemporary musical style.

In his 2012 work, Lornell delves into the ethnic roots of traditional American folk music across regions, providing an extensive exploration of Anglo-American folk music with a specific emphasis on ballads and instrumentation. I will cite this source to highlight how the instrumentation, performance techniques, form, and narrative in the analyzed piece draw inspiration from folk music while incorporating novel elements.

Analysis

My analysis follows the structuring of the piece into four sections, categorized by style, dynamics, tempo, and texture. Each section will undergo individual examination. In contrast to previous chapters, where titles were determined by specific musical elements analyzed throughout the entire piece, these titles now represent sections in which the analysis will concurrently consider all musical elements—pitch collections, texture, and form. Following the detailed examination of the four sections, the narrative of the entire piece will be discussed.

Section One (*Andante*)

The Anglo-American folk influence is immediately discernible at the commencement of the piece. It initiates with a pizzicato/guitar-style pentatonic ostinato, establishing the first texture motive. While this texture motive is rooted in the A minor pentatonic scale and E minor scale, its

intricacy stands out as it simultaneously incorporates two additional scales. The accented notes adhere to the A minor pentatonic scale, while the tenuto notes derive from the E minor triad (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Mm. 1 – 4 | Yellow: A C D E (G) → A Minor pentatonic; Blue: E G B → E Minor triad

Pivotal to many folk music traditions, pentatonic scales hold significance, with an increasing number of performers experimenting with this scale as part of a folk music revival (Buchanan 1939).

In addition to the mode reference, the composer has specified that the pizzicato should be executed in a guitar style. Initially, many Anglo-American fiddlers did not have access to guitars and often utilized banjos. However, as the years progressed, the guitar became more prevalent and found its way into numerous folk performances. (Lornell 2012, 101-102). The violins enter in measure 3, introducing another texture motive. This motive follows the E minor pentatonic scale, playing E–G–A–B–D. In contrast, the cello establishes the melodic line in bar 5 using the A Aeolian scale, featuring a few appoggiaturas (F and B). I interpret the cello line as the narrative element, portraying the dance movements within the composition.

The first violins later join the ensemble by mirroring the cello's pitch contour in a different mode. The modality of the first violin frequently shifts between A pentatonic and G Dorian, among

various other modes. Simultaneously, the second violins introduce a syncopated rhythmic motive in bar 11 (**Figure 2**).

The image shows a musical score for five instruments: Vn. 1, Vn. 2, Va., Vc., and Cb. The score covers measures 9 through 12. Vn. 1 starts with a *p sotto voce* marking. Vn. 2 has a *violin up* marking and a syncopated rhythmic motive highlighted in yellow in bar 11, with a *cresc.* marking. Va. and Vc. also have *cresc.* markings. All instruments end in bar 12 with a *mf* marking. The Cb. part is mostly silent.

Figure 2: Mm. 9 – 12 | New syncopated rhythmic motive introduced in second violins (highlighted in yellow). The cellos join the other instruments following violin’s contour. The modes alternate between A Aeolian and G Dorian across the section.

The tonality undergoes a shift with the introduction of accidentals. The presence of B \flat and the emphasis on G suggest a move to G Dorian, deviating from the initial pentatonic scale. The departure of melodies from the pentatonic scale to heptatonic modes mirrors the historical evolution of tonalities in folk tunes over time (Buchanan 1939). Moreover, in bar 11, the second violins introduce a syncopated rhythmic motive that recurs throughout the piece. These rhythmic motives are executed in a pizzicato style, evoking associations with the playing techniques of guitar and banjo.

The composition gradually incorporates more accidentals, including B \flat , E \flat , and A \flat , suggesting possible modulations to G Phrygian, among other modes (**Figure 3a**). This modulation becomes apparent in bar 16, where the A \flat accidental emerges, and the melody centers on G. Towards the

end of the section, the accidentals revert to their natural versions, coinciding with the melody's shift to A, suggesting A Aeolian (Figure 3b).

Figure 3a: Mm. 13 – 16 | emergence of B \flat , E \flat and A \flat accidentals suggesting modulation.

Figure 3b: Mm. 22–23 (end of the section) | disappearance of flat accidentals and return to A Aeolian.

Cazden (1971) notes that Anglo-American folk music has historically been ornamented with chromatics and accidentals, resisting a strict triadic harmony. Consistent with this observation, the gradual introduction of accidentals in the piece aligns with the evolving modes characteristic of Anglo-American musical styles. These modulations hint at subdominant, dominant, and tonic progressions, foundational in much American folk music (Stoia 2010). Examining these modes clarifies the progression from tonic to subdominant and dominant. The first section commences with A Aeolian (tonic), transitions to G Dorian (subtonic), E minor chords in bar 22(dominant), before returning to A minor pentatonic (tonic) at the beginning of the next section. Even though, the section does not indicate a subdominant as one expects but it is replaced with a subtonic which could be counted as a modern approach to this foundational progression in Anglo-American folk music.

In my interpretation, the opening section evokes a sense of nostalgia and suggests free contemporary-style dance movements in a 7/8 meter. The numerous slurs and legato melodies in both the cello and first violin parts, along with the recurring pentatonic reference, collectively contribute to the establishment of a nostalgic ambiance, as explicitly mentioned in Montgomery's program notes. Moreover, the dance movements harmonize with the melody line, suggesting a liberated dance style characterized by a non-syncopated rhythm and performed legato.

Section Two (*Con moto*)

This section beginning at m. 24 initiates with a heightened energy level compared to the preceding one. The new texture motive, now features an eighth note followed by two sixteenth notes and a final eighth note (**Figure 4**).



Figure 4: Mm. 22 – 25 | New texture motive starting mm. 24.

This alteration is introduced by the first violin, emerging as a solo after the first tutti chord of the section. The A Aeolian is sustained in the initial tutti chord and persists in the texture motive, resonating through subsequent measures, including bar 26 where all instruments join in. The texture motive undergoes a transition to the second violins, while the first violins follow the violas, taking charge of the melody. In the cello section, each succeeding measure features a varied rendition of the previous motive (**Figure 5**).

Figure 5: Mm. 26 – 29 | The cello features a varied rendition of the previous motive.

To delve into specifics, bars 26 and 27 has two descending triplets and two ascending eighth notes that are part of the A minor tonality. On the downbeats the descending triad is Dmin7 chord

followed by the minor ascending motive illustrating A minor triad. Furthermore, the bars are in 9/8 meter which brings our attention to the bass melody that holds different rhythms and subdivisions that are not common in 9/8 bars. As one can see in **Figure 5** the cello plays quarter notes in bars 26 and 28 and the common rhythms of compound metered measures in the other bars. These different divisions create some subtle metric dissonances (Krebs 1999).

These variations of the cello motive persist throughout the section until bar 38, where the pattern undergoes a change. Much of Anglo-American music is orally communicated and often varied, as not many pieces were transcribed, and there was no strict adherence to a fixed melody (Bayard 1950). The cello motive undergoes variations to the extent that the pitch classes distinctly differ from the initial motive introduced in bar 26. This can be interpreted as Montgomery's innovative approach to employing variation as a folk element. Bar 34 deviates from a stable A Aeolian tonality with the appearance of first inversion F chords and the presence of both G# and A natural in the bass and violin 1 which are both the major and minor version of the third of the F scale (**Figure 6**).



Figure 6: Mm. 33 – 34 | Creating Sharp 9 chord with the presence of G# and A natural.

In Anglo-American folk music, neutral notes, a pitch residing between the major and minor versions of a note, were common (Buchanan 1939). This phenomenon is also prevalent in blues music, another folk genre derived from African culture, identified as the blue or neutral note (Baily and Driver 1992). In the modern approach to generating neutral tones, instrumentalists, particularly those using equally tempered instruments, play two notes a half step away from each other in the bass and soprano, creating a sonic space between the minor and major versions of the note (Kubic 1999). In this case, combination of pitches create a sharp 9 chord from F (with both G# /A \flat and A), a sonority commonly used in jazz harmony rooting back to African-American culture (Kubic 1999).

Furthermore, in bar 30, the first violins introduce a rhythmic motive that recurs throughout the sections with variations. The motive encompasses all the pitches for A minor pentatonic, with an additional B acting as a passing tone. For instance, the motive's opening appears two bars after (mm. 32) with less pitches and longer note values (**Figure 7**).



Figure 7: Mm. 30 – 32 | violin part, motive varied and repeated in the following bars.

Moving forward, in bar 35, the persistence of the F# accidental in the melody suggests a modulation to A Dorian. I have designated bar 35 as the initiation of a new subsection, formatted similarly to the first subsection with some minor alterations. For instance, the texture motive from measure 24 is reintroduced at the beginning, now in the second violins (as opposed to the first violins) and is accompanied by the cello and it features more ascending patterns rather than descending. In bar 37, a version of the motives from bar 30 is heard, first played by the first violins and then continued by the violas with some changes (**Figure 8**).

Figure 8: Mm. 37 | a variation of motive heard in bar 30 is introduced in the first violins and violas.

A similarly nuanced rendition of this melodic sixteenth note motive emerges two bars later in the second violins, while violas in bar 39 unveil a rhythmic motive retaining the overarching contour, yet introducing a divergent tonal palette with the inclusion of F#. Subsequently, the motive

undergoes further variation, exemplified in its presentation by the cellos spanning bars 41 to 43. These instances of variation and repetition may be construed akin to the aforementioned thematic discourse: a prevalent musical characteristic of Anglo-American secular folk music involves incorporating minor variations of the same melody (Lornell 2012). I posit that Montgomery's artistic approach encompasses the incorporation of elements, such as variations and repetitions, mirroring their cultural utilization in the oral transmission of folk songs.

Bar 44 marks the inception of the third subsection, reintroducing the texture motive from m. 24 with some pitch modifications by the first violins. Notably, the initial version of this texture motive emphasized perfect fifth intervals, while in this third subsection, the motive accentuates perfect fourth intervals (Figure 9). The three eighth note melody (initiated by the cello in m. 26) is articulated by the violas starting at m. 44, while the cello and double bass incorporate the same melody with rhythmic alterations, employing two eighth-note duplets instead of pairs of three eighth notes.



Figure 9: Mm. 30 | initial texture motive.

Mm. 45 | variation of the texture motive

In bar 45, the second violins join the ensemble with variations of the sixteenth-note melodic motive initially introduced in bar 30. This variation persists continuously from bar 47 and is subsequently passed to the violas starting in bar 47, culminating in the first violin section at bar 51. Instances arise where two sections play the motive an octave apart, evident in bars 52, 54, and 57.

Bar 59 marks the commencement of the fourth and final subsection of the *Con moto*, distinguishing itself from its predecessors. In this segment, the texture motive undergoes omission, supplanted by

novel rhythmic motives in each instrumental line. The first violins execute a rhythmic pattern of 16th + 8th + 8th + 16th, tied to the same motive, whereas the second violins perform 8th + 16th + 16th + 8th, repeated twice which is similar to an arco version of the pizzicato motive from bar 24. The violas contribute a sequence of 16th + 16th + 8th + 16th + 16th played twice, while the cellos incorporate a pair of three eighth notes (**Figure 10**). These rhythmic patterns persist until bar 75, marking the transition to the concluding phrase of the second section. Upon closer examination of the rhythms, one will discern that each rhythm is a variation of its top-line counterpart. In a cascading manner, commencing with the top-line instrument, the rhythm of the first violin undergoes variation, giving rise to the second violin's rhythm, characterized by a simple repositioning of sixteenth and eighth notes. Similarly, the viola's rhythms are variations of the second violins', involving the repositioning of sixteenth notes and the subdivision of the last eighth note into two sixteenth notes. The cellos undergo a parallel process, with the distinction that the two sixteenth notes are articulated as eighth notes in their rendition, resulting in eighth notes out of phase by one sixteenth note with the first violins.

The image shows a musical score for five instruments: Vn. 1, Vn. 2, Va., Vc., and Cb. The score is for measures 60 through 63. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The time signature is not explicitly shown but is implied to be 4/4 based on the note values. The Vn. 1 staff shows a rhythmic pattern of 16th, 8th, 8th, and 16th notes. The Vn. 2 staff shows a pattern of 8th, 16th, 16th, and 8th notes. The Va. staff shows a pattern of 16th, 16th, 8th, 16th, and 16th notes. The Vc. staff shows a pattern of three eighth notes. The Cb. staff shows a pattern of two eighth notes. The score illustrates the cascading rhythmic variations described in the text.

Figure 10: Mm. 60 – 63 | New rhythmic motive in each line replacing the texture motive.

In summary, Bayard (1950) elucidates that folk composers employed a technique involving the variation of the same melody throughout the music, specifically emphasizing stanza variation in Anglo-American folk music. While the second section does not adhere strictly to the literary definition of stanzas, it encompasses varied and repeated subsections, which are considered as stanzas in this context. Lornell (2012) underscores that Anglo-American folk music was predominantly strophic, laying the foundation for the subsequent analysis.

Montgomery innovatively approaches the strophic form by presenting each musical stanza with subtle variations. The initial stanza, analyzed in bars 24–34, commences by establishing the texture motive and the ostinato line, introducing the melody along with its variation, and concluding with an ambiguous measure. The second subsection/stanza, spanning bars 35–43, mirrors the same structural form, albeit excluding the ambiguous measures. The third stanza follows the established pattern, extending until measure 59, maintaining the ostinato texture motive and incorporating minor variations in the melody.

Moreover, the narrative line gradually evolves toward celebration in this section, introducing a syncopated rhythm and a pizzicato melody. The legato melody, reminiscent of the free dance in the preceding section, persists. The use of pentatonic scales and the presence of ambiguous tonalities suggest a nostalgic atmosphere rather than a celebration. However, the syncopated and upbeat texture motive introduces celebratory elements reminiscent of traditional Celtic dances. The syncopated rhythm could symbolize dance foot stomps, closely tied to Anglo-American roots. Consequently, the second section embodies a blend of celebration and nostalgia, featuring both free contemporary dance and traditional, strict dance. As the music progresses, the free contemporary dance diminishes in prominence in the third section, a topic I will elaborate on in the subsequent paragraph.

Section Three (*Tranquillo*)

This short section serves as an intermission, separating the melody from its previous fast rhythm and syncopation. The melody prominently incorporates F \sharp and C \sharp , implying a D major scale; however, with the centrality of G, the mode leans towards G Lydian. Despite occasional appearances of B \flat , G \flat , and G \sharp , creating enharmonic accidentals incorporated into a B major key signature, the absence of D \sharp prevents a clear establishment of a B major tonality. The melody's lack of emphasis on B further complicates tonal identification, especially with the introduction of additional accidentals beyond F \sharp and C \sharp , fostering inherent ambiguity. Towards the section's conclusion, the sharp accidentals transition to flats, suggesting a shift in tonality (such as F minor/A \flat major based on the accidentals), and introducing a different pitch color to the melody, all while maintaining a deliberate sense of ambiguity. In summary, the section does not introduce and establish one tonality but creates an ambiguity through presenting different accidentals that could be applied to a key signature lacking of a central note.

Shifting focus, the rhythms in this section exhibit less syncopation, and the overall texture is lighter compared to the preceding sections. There is a discernible movement towards classical Western music, characterized by simpler rhythms and a reduction in accented weak beats, an attribute more frequently associated with folk music. However, the alteration in time signature towards the middle section introduces syncopated eighth-note duplets in bar 88 (**Figure 11**), transitioning to melodies that reintroduce rhythms reminiscent of the previous section, as observed in bar 91, resembling the rhythmic patterns heard in the second section from bar 68 onwards.

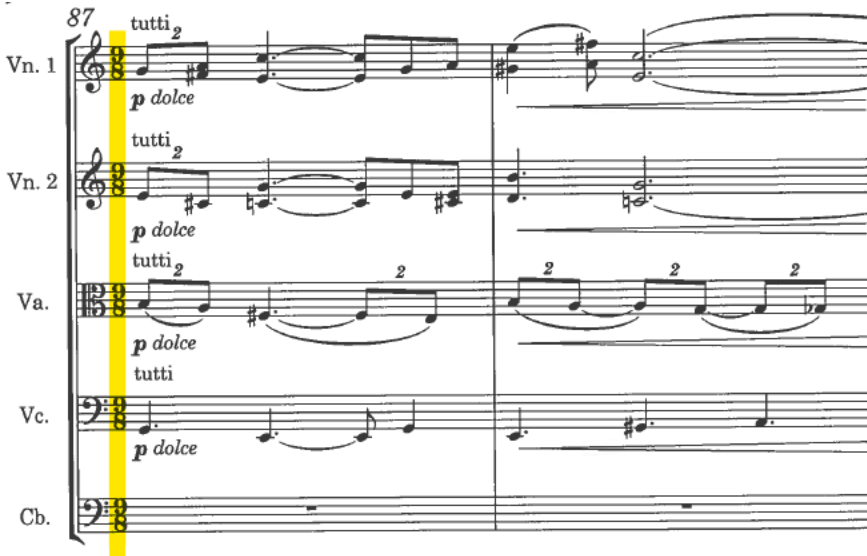


Figure 11: Mm. 87 – 88 | The time signature creates syncopated rhythm of eight note duplets.

I interpreted the narrative of this section as akin to a monologue, directing the listener's attention to a singular character rather than the events transpiring around them. Monologues often serve as a means for characters to introspect, discover their true selves, or grapple with internal queries. This narrative style is mirrored in the designated melody lines assigned to each instrument. As mentioned earlier, this section cultivates a lighter texture, creating moments where instruments play individually, redirecting the listener's focus on a single instrument rather than the entire orchestra. For instance, in bar 92, the first violin takes a solo, followed by the cello assuming the spotlight, then shifting the focus to the viola in bar 91, culminating in a final solo cello line that concludes the section. The instruments' monologue, in this context, involves a journey of self-discovery, as they narrate a story and craft a melody with distinct folk influences. This characteristic becomes more pronounced in the subsequent section and continues unabated until the end of the piece. Furthermore, the slower tempo further facilitates the listener's ability to transition their focus from one instrument to another.

Section Four (*Grazioso*)

The section commences with a tempo more than twice as fast as the preceding one and incorporates a 3/4 time signature, commonly associated with dance music like the waltz. The time signature alternates consistently between 3/8 and 3/4, maintaining the consistent pattern of strong and weak beats characteristic of each meter. Even though the total number of eighth notes is the same as in the previous meter (9/8), due to the different accents it has a different effect on the listener and how they perceive the strong beats in each bar. In other words, the 3/4 meter (2+2+2) establishes the first eighth-note as the strong beat followed by a weak eighth-note, while the 3/8 measure indicates the first eighth-note as the strong beat and the following two eighth-notes as the weak beats (^3) resulting into 2+2+2+3. This choice in time signature immediately establishes the character of this section as dance-oriented.

The section initiates by introducing a new texture motive as an ostinato in the top voice, a dyad employing a call-and-response style between the two sets of first violins in *divisi*. The call-and-response pattern unfolds in a structured manner, occurring every eighth, except for the second set of violin one *divisi* which indicates two attacks in a row at the end of the 3/8 bar and the beginning of the 3/4 bar. The initial eighth-note segment is executed by the second set of first violins, followed by the subsequent eighth-note segment played by the first set of first violins. This organized alternation in the conversation between the two violin sections avoids overlap. Additionally, the ostinato emphasizes D, suggesting an establishment of the D Dorian mode. Despite this, the second set of first violins introduces dyads featuring A \flat and D, forming an augmented fourth. The repetition of the D–A dyad by the first set of first violin, sometimes following the A \flat –D dyad, suggests an interval that is neither perfect fifth nor augmented fourth, reminiscent of the use of blue notes. While the exact intonation and intervals of American folk

fiddlers remain unclear, Montgomery's approach could be interpreted as a novel attempt to replicate the pitches of imperfectly tuned instruments accompanying each other. On another note, the top first violins play fifths (D and A), omitting the third of the chord, a feature not echoed in the other parts. The absence of the third chord tone may be interpreted as a contemporary technique aimed at introducing ambiguity, akin to the concept of a neutral note found in numerous instances of Anglo-American folk music (Buchanan 1939). Additionally, the dyads in the second set of first violin alternate between A \flat –D and B–D, creating another augmented interval (augmented second) between the lower notes of the dyads. These augmented intervals bear resemblance to characteristics found in Spanish-American folk music (Manuel 1986), providing an additional layer of inspiration for Montgomery in crafting this composition (**Figure 12**).

95 **Grazioso** ♩ = 138
(pizz.)

Vn. 1
divisi by stand
(pizz.)
p

Vn. 2
divisi by stand
p
solo *mf*
tutti *p*
mf

Va.
p

Vc.
divisi by stand
solo *mf*
tutti *p*
mf

Cb.
div., arco
sul E
p

Figure 12: Mm. 95 – 101 | Yellow: Time signature changes referencing dance-oriented style. Blue: the descending motives; Orange: Ascending motives forming a response to the descending motives. Green: Augmented fourth interval. Purple circle: Augmented second between, B and A \flat . The two sets of first Violin are forming a call and response ostinato.

The second set of second violins enters after two beats, presenting a melodic motive, a descending minor pentatonic trichord comprising E–D–B. The response to the melodic motive, heard in bar 99 (three bars after the call), is performed by the first set of second violins. It features an ascending

motive with the same pitch classes as the descending motive but arranged in a different order, D–E–B. A comparable motive is echoed in the viola and cello, adhering to the same structural framework. However, the cello introduces a distinct registral contour, forming a novel motive with the pitches D–E–B. The call-and-response interplay of the melodic motive persists, but the intervals between the call and the response are irregular and lack a discernible pattern; there are places where the two motives overlap or the call is repeated twice before the response is heard and vice versa, suggesting a natural and unrestrained conversation between the two motives. The motive undergoes further expansion in this section, resulting in increased overlaps among the various parts that carry this motive.

Upon comparing the two conversational styles—structured dialogue among the first violins and the unstructured interaction among the remaining instruments—one may observe a parallel to adult conversations versus the more spontaneous, less patient nature of conversations among children. The structured conversation resembles the adult dialogue where individuals patiently wait for their turn to speak, while the unstructured conversation mirrors the energetic exchanges of children who may interrupt each other in their enthusiasm.

In bar 117, a new subsection commences after a *ff* climax with a sudden *piano*, mirroring the initial approach by first reintroducing the ostinato in the top line and subsequently introducing new material. The call-and-response structure undergoes a transformation in bar 121, as all instruments, except for the first violin responsible for carrying the ostinatos, engage in playing stepwise ascending and descending scales in quarter notes. These stepwise motions establish A Aeolian scales with different chords in that scale, notably E minor and A minor chords (**Figure 13**).

It is important to mention that new meters can be seen in the score including 7/4, 6/4, 9/4 and 5/4 creating different divisions of the quarter notes, which makes the listener experience the melody

and the motives differently in each meter. Also, the different meters open the floor to different interpretations of the subdivisions, giving the performers the opportunity to create accents on different beats each time.

The image shows a musical score for measures 121-124. The staves are labeled Vn. 1, Vn. 2, Va., Vc., and Cb. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature changes from 4/4 to 3/4 in measure 122. A yellow highlight covers measures 121-122 in the Vn. 2 and Va. staves. A blue vertical bar is placed between measures 122 and 123. The score includes dynamics like *p* and *legato*, and performance instructions like *arco* and *tutti, arco*.

Figure 13: Mm. 121 – 124 | Yellow: Stepwise ascending and descending triad and establishing A Aeolian, Blue: Moment of dissonance which is similar to blue thirds in reference to E minor triad.

Nevertheless, a notable dissonance emerges in bar 122, possibly introduced to generate a neutral tone (**Figure 13**). This technique involves simultaneously playing both G and A \flat , producing a pitch commonly recognized as a neutral pitch in Afro-American and Anglo-American folk music (Buchanan 1939; Kubik 1999). Kubik elucidates that this method has been employed by various composers since the advent of equal temperament to achieve microtonal nuances. Additionally, Buchanan elucidates how Anglo-American musicians achieved ambiguity through the use of neutral thirds, a concept that can also be applied in this context. The occurrence of A \flat and G sounding simultaneously in bar 122 raises the possibility of being interpreted as the neutral third

of the E minor triad heard in the preceding measure. However, Montgomery seizes this moment to introduce dissonance, ultimately resolving it to consonance (A Aeolian). In essence, while this moment of dissonance may evoke associations with African-American folk music, characterized by blue notes and neutral pitches (Kubik 1999), Montgomery resolves this dissonance to the primary tonality of A Aeolian.

The third subsection begins at bar 125 with another textural reduction, restarting with the ostinatos in the top line followed by the scales and arpeggiations (as in the previous subsection) at bar 129, with the second violins now forming an E minor pentatonic scale and the violas introducing an incomplete A octatonic scale. The avoidance of extreme dissonance, achieved through the same technique employed before, persists, leading to the reintroduction of the neutral third measure in bar 130. The same structure is reiterated in bar 131, but instead of resolving directly to the neutral third measure, it is succeeded by a more rhythmic melody (m. 132), reminiscent of an arpeggiation, played by the violas and cellos. This section establishes the A octatonic scale before eventually resolving to the neutral third measure.

In bar 134, the fourth subsection unfolds with a parallel structure. The descending motive (E–D–B), initially presented in the cello, is then passed on to the second set of first violin. Simultaneously, the ostinatos undergo a transformation, transitioning to pizzicato eighth notes in the viola section, resulting in the establishment of perfect fifth and major sixth intervals. Additionally, the cello, introducing an element that deviates from diatonic scales. The introduction of accidentals, including C# and F#, unfolds gradually. In bar 142, the cello initiates the incorporation of the A major pentatonic, followed by the first violin.

The subsequent subsection commences in bar 150 with a new eighth-note ostinato in the cello featuring G – G – C# – C# – B, accompanied by a shift in texture and timbre in the melody. Beyond

the G-centricity, the inclusion of C# accidentals suggests a G Lydian mode. The increased utilization of major modes in this section signifies a shift from the traditional Anglo-American minor melody style toward a more contemporary approach to folk music. In essence, the transition from nostalgia to celebration becomes more pronounced in this section, with celebration requiring a greater emphasis on major melodies—a departure from typical Anglo-American melodic minor variations. However, certain stylistic elements of Anglo-American folk tunes, such as tonal ambiguity through the absence of the third scale degree or the incorporation of neutral notes, persist. The introduction of harmonics and soft dynamics creates a gentle, ethereal sound. This delicate ambiance undergoes a transformation in bar 164, transitioning to louder dynamics and pizzicato eighth notes. The pizzicato and texture motive in the violas (bar 136), the ostinato bass line, and the syncopated rhythm allude to traditional dance music rather than the free, contemporary style. The compound duple and triple meter echoes characteristics of Anglo-American folk dance music (McCarthy 1996). Moreover, the syncopation and pizzicato articulations in bar 163 draw parallels with Stravinsky's “les augures printaniers” in *Rite of Spring*. While Montgomery doesn't explicitly reference *Rite of Spring* in her program notes, this section resonates with a similar spirit of dance and raw energy. The shift from the preceding section to the “primitive dance” section is unexpected. The prior melody, situated in the higher register, soft, legato, and slightly syncopated (in comparison to the ensuing section), conjures images of innocent children dancing to folk music. The “les augures printaniers” section, on the other hand, discards the former melody, lowers the register, and introduces a few legato melodies.

The musical intensity diminishes as a brief motive in rising eighth notes, reminiscent of the one introduced at the beginning of the section, emerges in bar 188. In contrast to its initial presentation, these motives ascend while preserving a call-and-response structure between the two sets of violas.

These motives continue until bar 195, where the section concludes with an E minor seventh chord followed by a G major seventh chord with an added sixth, introducing tonal ambiguity. This ambiguity may be clarified by considering the subsequent bars, as both chords share the seventh (G) and other pitches such as E, B, and D of the A Aeolian scale. In essence, the final chords, although not tonic or dominant of the previously established keys, are connected to the forthcoming tonality through the shared seventh note, G, of the A Aeolian scale. I should also note that each of these subsections bears a resemblance to a stanza, displaying variations in numerous ways while retaining similarities to their preceding stanzas in terms of structure, ostinatos, and variations of the motives. As discussed earlier in this chapter, Lornell (2012) elucidates how stanzas were frequently employed and varied in Anglo-American folk music, potentially serving as a source of inspiration for Montgomery. For instance, the first three subsections share similarities, and the subtle variations in the melody for each stanza propose an innovative interpretation of strophic form, representing a distinct approach to this traditional musical structure.

Section Five (*Meno mosso*)

This section serves as a recapitulation of the *Con moto* Section Two, reintroducing the same texture motive and adhering to a comparable overall structure. Nevertheless, variations are present in both texture and melodic motives. The texture is notably denser than in the *Con moto* section, with the texture motives now coinciding with the A minor triad and the melodic motives. In contrast, the *Con moto* section featured the texture motive in isolation for two measures. Additionally, the melodic motive initially heard in the cello part at bar 26 is now presented as dyads, arranged in a different order (**Figure 14**).

The image displays two pages of a musical score, comparing measures 26 and 200. The left page (measures 26-27) features five staves: Vn. 1, Vn. 2, Va., Vc., and Cb. Vn. 1 is marked 'arco' and 'mf'. Vn. 2 is marked 'pizz.' and 'f'. Va. is marked 'arco' and 'mf'. Vc. is marked 'pizz.' and 'f', with a yellow highlight on a sixteenth-note pattern. Cb. is marked 'pizz.' and 'f', also with a yellow highlight on a similar pattern. The right page (measures 200-201) shows the same instruments. Vn. 1 and Vn. 2 have different rhythmic patterns. Va. and Cb. have simpler patterns. Vc. has a yellow highlight on a pattern that mirrors the one in measure 26. The time signature changes from 9/8 to 6/8 and 2/4.

Figure 14: The same structure as the Con moto section (mm. 26) is seen in bar 200 in the Meno mosso section.

The time signature alternates between 6/8 and 2/4, a departure from the Con moto section where the 9/8 time signature remained constant, on the other hand it is a reminiscent of the 3/8 and 3/4 bars in the *Grazioso* section which were also an alteration of compound and simple meter. Also, the 6/8 measures could be analyzed as an adaptation of the rhythm in mm.26 in the cellos. The 2/4 measures introduce new material to the recapitulation, creating interruptions in the texture motives (**Figure 15**).

The image shows a musical score for measures 206-209. The staves are labeled Vn. 1, Vn. 2, Va., Vc., and Cb. The key signature is A minor (one flat). The time signature is 8/8, with 2/4 measures indicated by a bracket over the first two measures of each staff. The Vn. 1 staff has a 'sul A arco' marking. The Vn. 2 staff has a legato line. The Va. staff has a rhythmic pattern. The Vc. staff has a rhythmic pattern. The Cb. staff has a rhythmic pattern. The score is written in a complex, multi-measure format with various time signatures and markings.

Figure 15: Mm. 206 – 209 | the 2/4 measures interrupt the recapitulation material and introduce new material.

Similar to the *Con moto* section, the texture motive is transferred to the second violins but experiences interruptions from the 2/4 measures. Moreover, the legato melody introduced by the violas at bar 26 in the *Con moto* section is omitted until bar 216 in this recapitulation section, approximately halfway through the section. This recapitulation, in essence, exudes a heightened sense of celebration characterized by the limited inclusion of legato melodies (which evoked free contemporary dance in the *Con moto* section) and the prevalence of more rhythmic lines. The overall departure from sustained legato notes and the increased rhythmic emphasis contribute to the festive ambiance of this section.

In bar 214, the texture motive undergoes a transformation in pitch collections, shifting to B \flat -F and D-E while maintaining the same rhythmic pattern. The emergence of B \flat becomes more pronounced from measure 214 onward, leading to a modulation from A minor to B \flat Lydian. Moreover, a recurring motive appears in the viola line starting from bar 218 and undergoes

variations in the final measure of the section (bar 224). This recurrence and variation of motives mirror the structural approach observed in the *Con moto* section. In the *Con moto* section, a motive introduced in the viola (mm. 37) underwent rhythmic and pitch variations, resonating in other sections, including the viola (e.g., bar 49 and 51). In summary, while the recapitulation exhibits distinct differences, it generally adheres to a structure akin to the *Con moto* section.

Coda (*Poco più mosso*)

The coda unfolds in bar 225 with an accelerated tempo and syncopated rhythm. Its foundation comprises a sequence of reiterated motives, alternating between G major and E \flat Lydian, both derived from major modes. The violins play a melody with larger leaps, introducing more intensity and excitement to the celebratory mood. The articulations within the coda are a diverse mix of legato, pizzicato, staccato, and accents. The legatos, in particular, represent a fleeting glimpse of nostalgia, gradually fading as the section progresses. The nostalgic touch is further overshadowed by the prominence of other articulations, contributing to the dynamic and varied texture of the coda.

Briefly, the melody modulates to G Dorian at bar 239 before returning to major modes, including E \flat major, G Mixolydian, and concluding with G major. The narrative line culminates in sheer celebration as the legato melodies gradually fade, replaced by more pronounced syncopation and staccato articulations. Despite this shift, Montgomery retains elements of Anglo-American folk idioms in the coda, employing strict rhythms and less legato, akin to many compositions in the Anglo-American string folk repertoire (Bayard 1955). The lingering touch of "nostalgia" is perceptible in the G Dorian melody, acting as a nostalgic callback to preceding sections. The use of the Dorian mode serves as another means to evoke nostalgia, given its frequent utilization in

various Anglo-American folk tunes (Bayard 1950). The piece ends with a G major 7 chord, which, in its unresolved nature, does not fully establish the mode according to Western classical music; however, it is a common final chord in standard jazz repertoire.

Conclusion

In summary, Montgomery's composition is not a direct adaptation of a particular folk tune but rather an amalgamation of many characteristics emblematic of Anglo-American folk music. Through her use of modes/scales, rhythm, and articulation, she captures the essence of Anglo-American folk music, enriching it with contemporary nuances. Tonal ambiguity and the use of neutral notes, inherent in Anglo-American folk music (Buchanan 1939), are approached innovatively by either avoiding the third chord tone/scale degree or incorporating both the minor and major versions of the note to generate a modern interpretation of neutral tones and tonalities.

The development from pentatonic scales to heptatonic scales, such as Aeolian, Dorian and Phrygian modes, mirrors the evolutionary trajectory of tonality in Anglo-American folk music, where the gaps in pentatonic scales led to the emergence of hexatonic scales (Cazden 1971). Montgomery, while not adopting hexatonic scales, employs heptatonic scales in a contemporary manner, contributing her unique touch to this trajectory. The creation of a strophic form within each section, characterized by distinct stanzas featuring consistent melodies, motives, and rhythms, aligns with the strophic form observed in many Anglo-American folk ballads (Lornell 2012).

Montgomery also integrates elements of triple and compound duple meter, syncopated rhythms, and ostinato lines—traits synonymous with Anglo-American folk and dance music (McCarthy 1996; Bayard 1955). However, her incorporation of a freer (legato) melody alongside the syncopated ostinato line represents a contemporary addition to these folk characteristics. The

juxtaposition of the freer legato melody with the rhythmic ostinato evokes a modern, free dance aesthetic, reminiscent of Celtic traditional dance music.

Aligning with her program notes, Montgomery's composition follows a narrative structure, which I analyzed as a characteristic drawn from Anglo-American folk music influenced by British ballads (Lornell 2012). The illusion of a narrative unfolds through the transformation of nostalgia into celebration, marked by shifts in melody, rhythm, and dynamics. The initial nostalgic feeling, conveyed through legato melodies and pentatonic scales, gradually gives way to celebratory modal melodies, intensifying in rhythm and dynamics until the celebration narrative supersedes the nostalgia, creating a compelling musical journey.

Conclusion

As I draw to a close on our exploration of contemporary compositions influenced by folk traditions, it is fitting to reflect on the journey I have undertaken and the insights gleaned along the way. Throughout this thesis, I have delved into the intricate interplay between traditional folk influences and modern artistic expression, examining the works of Ana Sokolović, Missy Mazzoli, and Jessie Montgomery with a keen eye for detail. Now, as I stand at the culmination of our research, it is time to synthesize our findings, reflect on their significance, and consider the broader implications for the field of contemporary music composition. In this concluding chapter, I revisit the core themes and discoveries unearthed throughout our study, offering a comprehensive summary of our research journey and shedding light on the enduring relevance of folk influences in shaping contemporary musical landscapes.

It is essential to compare certain findings to understand whether there is a shared approach in using folk culture as a source of inspiration. Specifically, I will explore the differences between Mazzoli and Sokolović's approaches in drawing from Balkan music for inspiration. Given Sokolović's upbringing in the Balkans, I aim to discern whether her compositional methodology differs significantly from that of Mazzoli. Additionally, I will examine Montgomery's approach to determine how engaging with a different folk culture (Anglo-American folk music instead of Balkan music) offers different influences on the compositional process and the specific musical elements derived from the folk culture.

The influence of Balkan folk music resonates prominently throughout the rhythms in Sokolović's composition. Sokolović's utilization of Balkan folk influences extends beyond the conventional incorporation of the aksak pattern, a hallmark rhythm in Balkan music. Instead, she explores other characteristic elements such as metric dissonances and asymmetry, which are integral to Balkan

musical traditions. While the aksak pattern may not be overtly featured as the primary source of Balkan rhythm in her compositions, subtle hints of its presence can be discerned within the intricate layers of rhythm. These hints serve to evoke the essence of Balkan musical heritage while allowing Sokolović to experiment with rhythmic complexities and nuances, contributing to the contemporary reinterpretation of folk influences in her music. Sokolović's manipulation of rhythms and melodies renders them unrecognizable, as she herself acknowledged in our interview, stating, "If I were to play this piece to Balkan people, they wouldn't recognize it as Balkan folk music." Her intention is not to recreate traditional folk music but rather to extract certain musical elements to craft contemporary compositions. In essence, her folk-inspired approach remains veiled within the fabric of the music, subtly woven into its essence.

In addition to exploring characteristic rhythmic elements of Balkan music, Sokolović draws inspiration from a diverse array of sound colors and cultural motifs to compose her Balkan-inspired music. For instance, she incorporates the sounds of metal on metal jewelry and traditional dances, such as Silent Dance, into her compositions. These auditory and visual stimuli serve as sources of inspiration, enriching the sonic tapestry of her music and imbuing it with authentic cultural resonances. By integrating these evocative elements, Sokolović further enriches her compositions, offering a multi-dimensional exploration of Balkan folk influences that transcends mere rhythmic patterns.

While Sokolović's compositions subtly weave Balkan folk influences into intricate rhythmic structures, Mazzoli takes a different approach in her exploration of folk elements. In her composition, "Lies You Can Believe In," she embraces the aksak rhythm as the primary element of Balkan (Romanian and Bulgarian) inspired rhythm. Employing a diverse array of patterns, Mazzoli even creates some original aksak patterns, showcasing her innovative approach to

rhythmic composition. Additionally, she incorporates folk-inspired modes such as the Hungarian minor and major scales. Despite drawing from similar Balkan folk sources as Sokolović's *Danses et Intérludes*, Mazzoli's piece offers a contrasting experience. It exudes a more tonal quality, with the aksak rhythms readily identifiable and prominently featured.

Comparing Mazzoli and Sokolović's approaches reveals significant differences, despite some shared musical elements such as rhythm. In Mazzoli's piece, there is a noticeable emphasis on tonality and modality, drawing inspiration from both Western and Balkan folk culture. Conversely, Sokolović's composition prioritizes pitch selection based on timbral considerations rather than adherence to a specific mode. Additionally, Mazzoli's rhythms exhibit a more overt presence, readily recognizable and accessible, whereas Sokolović's rhythms are characterized by complexity, often layered and less immediately discernible.

In conclusion, Sokolović and Mazzoli exhibit contrasting approaches to incorporating folk elements into their compositions. Despite Sokolović's intimate connection to Balkan culture, she intricately integrates folk elements within layers of rhythm and tones, transforming them into a contemporary style that subtly alludes to its folk roots without overt recognition. In contrast, Mazzoli takes a more direct approach, employing recognizable folk elements to create what she terms her 'lie,' effectively turning contemporary music into a new form of folk music. Here, the folk elements are conspicuous and prominently displayed on the surface of the composition. This difference in approach may be influenced by various factors, including Mazzoli's upbringing outside the Balkan culture, leading her to draw upon more readily identifiable folk elements such as aksak patterns and traditional modes.

Transitioning to an exploration of Jessie Montgomery's composition, *Strum*, we venture into a musical landscape where American folk motifs are reimagined through a contemporary lens.

Unlike Mazzoli and Sokolović who explicitly reference specific folk traditions, Montgomery's composition remains open to interpretation, leaving the exact cultural origins of her influences somewhat ambiguous as she only mentions American folk music. Given the vast variety of cultures encompassed within the category of American folk music—including Anglo-American, Afro-American, Latino-American, indigenous folk music, and more—I found myself discerning similarities and drawing connections to various traditions as I explored the piece.

The piece is notably influenced by Anglo-American folk culture, evident in various musical elements throughout. The articulations and performance techniques evoke the sounds of guitar and mandolin folk performances, adding a distinct folkloric flavor. Moreover, the composition's strophic and stanza-like form, coupled with its narrative structure, mirrors that of Anglo-American ballads, underscoring the folkloric storytelling tradition. Neutral tones, at times creating ambiguity, can be attributed to the influence of Anglo-American and Afro-American folk traditions. Additionally, the rhythmic patterns conjure imagery of traditional Anglo-American and Celtic dances, further solidifying the connection to this rich musical heritage. Despite the predominantly tonal nature of the piece and the discernible pitch center, the tonalities and modulations diverge from those typically found in Western classical music, aligning instead with common folk music progressions as well as more daring modernist progressions as explored in the preceding chapters.

In many respects, *Strum* shares similarities with *Lies You Can Believe In*. For example, the piece maintains a predominantly tonal character while incorporating numerous pitches and modes derived from the folk cultures that inspired the composer. Conversely, *Strum* also bears resemblances to *Danses et Intérludes* in that the folk elements are not immediately recognizable, with some elements such as the narrative, form, and the neutral tones concealed beneath the surface of the composition.

In conclusion, composers often draw upon various cultures, whether it is an integral part of their identity or not, as a source of inspiration for their compositions. These cultural influences open up numerous possibilities for composition, ranging from the incorporation of specific folk elements to the utilization of unique melodies not present in the previously analyzed pieces. While the resulting compositions may share similarities, they also exhibit distinct characteristics shaped by the depth and manner in which the folk culture is integrated. The composers may leverage these elements to create contemporary music, adopting styles ranging from Western atonal and post-tonal pieces akin to Sokolović's composition, to more tonal approaches akin to those of Mazzoli and Montgomery. Ultimately, the specific details of each composition reflect the composer's individual preferences. However, what unites these three composers is their shared commitment to innovative approaches to folk tunes, as discussed in the preceding chapters.

Moreover, the innovative approaches taken by Sokolović, Mazzoli, and Montgomery in reimagining folk tunes within contemporary compositions contribute to the ongoing evolution of musical expression. By blending traditional folk elements with modern compositional techniques, these composers push the boundaries of genre and style, creating dynamic and engaging works that resonate with audiences across cultural boundaries. Their compositions not only showcase the richness and diversity of folk traditions but also reflect the interconnectedness of global musical influences in today's interconnected world.

Furthermore, the reception and interpretation of these compositions within contemporary music culture offer valuable insights into the evolving tastes and preferences of audiences. As listeners engage with these works, they are invited to explore new sonic landscapes and perspectives, fostering a deeper appreciation for the cultural tapestry from which they emerge. The success and acclaim garnered by Sokolović, Mazzoli, and Montgomery's compositions underscore the

importance of embracing diverse perspectives within artistic creation. Their work serves as a testament to the power of inclusivity and cultural exchange in enriching the artistic landscape and fostering greater understanding and appreciation among audiences worldwide.

Looking ahead, there is vast potential for further exploration and experimentation in this field. Future research could delve into the intersection of folk music and contemporary composition from different cultural perspectives, examining how composers from various backgrounds draw upon their heritage to create innovative and compelling works. Additionally, continued collaboration and dialogue among composers, scholars, and performers can further advance our understanding of the role of folk influences in shaping contemporary music and inspire new avenues of creative exploration. By embracing the richness of folk traditions while embracing the spirit of innovation, composers can continue to push the boundaries of musical expression and pave the way for a more vibrant and inclusive musical landscape.

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