

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

Nigel Morgan
18 Park Avenue
Denby Dale Road
Wakefield
West Yorkshire
WF2 8DS, UK
tel 0924 383 017
fax 0924 29 1008
email: 100024.1636@compuserve.com

STUDIES FOR COMPOSERS

These 'projects and ideas' I'd like you to see as flexible composition studies. Consider them just as you would technical studies for an instrument. They are not to be worked through once and put away. They are designed to be at the heart of one's compositional thinking, as a reminder of the constant need to assess and reassess our position on the fundamentals of musical composition. Consider this material the musician's equivalent of an artist making quick sketches - short, sharp, to the point (even if you miss the point). It is the 'action and activity' of composing music that is important here, a kind of 'composing practice'. The result of this approach should be 'a faster response and a keener imagination'. You should end up more closely in touch with your musical intuition. The 'projects and ideas' I present are not complete by any means. They are very much 'first thoughts'.

COMPOSITION WITH A SINGLE PITCH / OCTAVES ALLOWED

Test the memory within your imagination

Investigate - rhythm, density, activity, tempo, pace, dynamics

- * Can you make clear phrase structures from passages containing single pitch music ?
- * Over time play one note - add another note. Is the basis of rhythm?
- * Consider using first a solo instrument then a pair of similar instruments.
- * Consider graphic representations: for speed of execution, or?

Dispensing with the need to think beyond a single pitch (class) should speed up your ability to imagine a large-scale (or larger than usual) complete musical statement. But, how much can you recall? Practice imagining for n seconds and going into instant recall mode for (n x 2) seconds.

INTERVAL INVESTIGATION

Do chords as intervals carry strong associations and 'colours'?

Make a table of intervals you commonly use and describe how each interval might function within your music.

My table starts like this:

Min2	'a blues slide'	unstable with strong colour	high register
Maj2	'as a grace note'	softer and more stable	high register
Min3	'as accompaniment'	pulsating and rhythmic	medium register
and so on			

Create a study for two instruments that treat intervals like tuned sets of drums; there is no harmony, only what each interval brings to the moment.

CHORDAL CHORAL

! a steady (very) slow pulse or random distances between chords

Is this Voice-Leading versus the Consequence of Sound Complexes?

- i. How are chords or pitch aggregates conceived?
- ii. Can you hear movement from one chord to the next?
- iii. If so, describe how this happens using a music example rather than words.

Create a chord or pitch aggregate: how will you 'make' the next chord or sonic consequence?

Create a sequence of chords or pitch aggregates. Consider a graphic scheme that dispenses with identifying individual pitches and concentrates on pitch zones or regions.

iv. How crucial is the attack and/or sustain element? Consider what you are thinking about:
- for piano, for string quartet, for electronic sounds?

v. What minimum dimensions horizontally and vertically can produce an effective choral?
Attempt to express your conclusion.

EVOLVING CHANGE IN CHORDAL CHORAL

Part1

- * Find, create, develop a single chord;
- * Make the second chord you create different by only one pitch;
- * How radical can you make this evolutionary process over a series of chords?
- * Try to imagine the sound of the next chord before identifying a pitch to change.

Part2

- * Find, create, develop a single chord;
- * Make a second chord that retains one pitch as a pedal from the previous chord;
- * How radical can you make this evolutionary process over a series of chords?
- * Try to imagine the sound of the next chord before identify a pitch to change.

CHANGE IN HARMONIC RHYTHM

Consider the conflict and interaction between two different parameters of change:

Rhythmic Movement and Harmonic Movement.

- i. How separate can rhythmic movement be from harmonic change?
- ii. Can a balance or equilibrium be achieved? If so, experiment and demonstrate.
- iii. Is there any way you might link rhythmic and harmonic movement?

Tend towards melodic and scalar passages introducing harmonic and rhythmic change rather than chordal writing.

Consider the concept of the arpeggio.

TRANSFORMATION

- i. Is the idea of transformation stronger than its effect in actuality?
- ii. To make a successful transformation must the source and target have special qualities?
What differences should / might they exhibit to make the most effective transformation?
 - * Try chord to chord, rhythm to rhythm, tonality to tonality, dynamic to dynamic, timbre to timbre.
 - * Try chord to rhythm, rhythm to tonality, dynamic to timbre . . .
 - * Try multiple parameters in transformation.
- iii. How will the 'in-betweens' operate in your transformations.
- iv. Have you a clear scheme for in-betweening?

FORMEL

The term in a musical context is Stockhausen's. Its concept is at the heart of scores like *Inori* (2 mime and large orchestra) and most of *Licht*. (opera sequence) It's not to be confused with his use of the term Form-Scheme found in the majority of his compositions.

Formel is the formula - the essence of what the music contains. It is a kind of linear algorithmic description of the music.

Stockhausen defines low-level material inside his formel - pitches, rhythms, tempi. Having defined his formula, musical material can sometimes be released like a kite on a string . . . flying free but never released from the grip of the formel.

* Can you devise low-level material in all parameters that has the potential to operate as a formula?

Don't be too careful, be brave in your attempts and concepts.

Once you have some 'imaginary' formels consider the next stage, and the next . . .

*How do you express the formel?

Examine methods to progress to realising a fragment that holds within it the 'formel'.

PERFORMANCE DETAIL / IMPROVISATION

Create a short study for solo instrument.

- * Now, manipulate it as though you were a performer.
- * Test your ability to memorize, recall and notate the 'interpretation' you develop
- * Question dynamics, articulation - in fact gradually question everything!
- * Monitor all changes - do these changes feedback onto the composition?

Work as quickly as you can!

MEDIATION WITH TRADITION

Take a musical technique, form, device, instrumentation, theme, chordal sequence or progression.

Focus on this as a universal truth: a musical archetype perhaps.

For example a Chaconne could be examined for its content, repertoire associations, social and musical history and role. Make and examine associations between this device and any resonance this device has in your own language.

Achieve within a piece of music some kind of mediation - even if this mediation is in fact a cogent argument for dispensing with the said device in your own music.

THE PLAY'S THE THING . . .

When we sit in a theatre as audience for a play we enter, usually most willingly, into historical or imaginary time. Plays are written skilfully to allow actors to maintain and develop this illusion through effective communication. If this mode of communication were to break, the illusion and narrative would be no more.

- i. Can you imagine your music holding your listener with the same force as a good playwright, director and actor manages usually to maintain?
- ii. Can your music be 'interpreted (does this mean 'understood' ?) by your performer, just as an actor might interpret a text?
- iii. Is this a necessary ingredient in communicating (your) music to an audience?

Or, does your music, clear of performance intervention, carry its message anyway?

Create a dramatic scena as though it was a piece of dramaturgy:

- * make direct statements
- * make reflective statements and asides
- * make informative statements
- * devise a narrative
- * initiate dialogue
- * make interventions

Make sure your musical 'actors' don't mask one another.
Concentrate on communication!

THINKING OUT LOUD - THE BEGINNER'S MIND?

Can you textualize your creative thoughts?

How do you gather ideas?

Do constraints force you to become inventive? Try this experiment:

If I say 'Now, plan for me a composition for 2 pianos' in n minutes . .

- > use a tape recorder or simply talk to yourself, a partner or friend for 1 minute. Extend this only after you have practised 1 minute's thinking out loud several times.
- > don't worry about the redundancies, stupidities and irrelevant thoughts;
- > most decision-making comes out of highly arbitrary processes of thought;
- > listen to yourself: recall, edit and transcribe all that seems useful.

> were you able to adopt a Beginners Mind? If you don't know this approach research it in the writings of D.J. Suzuki, John Cage, Walter Zimmermann.

* What we want to consider is a possible hierarchy for planning; possible routes to be taken before contact with low-level musical details undertaken.

These routes might include:

Performers	Performance	Instruments
Duration	Style	Character
Association	References	Form
Materials and Ingredients	Pace	Activity
Type of Gestures	Timbral Design	

* Consider the next stage, and the next . . .

* Are you able to postulate a timetable to develop a composition?

A Working Example:

Here, for your guidance is my first response to the Single Pitch study.

A transcription from my note book:

> a moment of imagination - focus the Single Pitch (with octaves)

bell-tolling
roll
accelerando
ritardando
octave chord
tremelo
ornament
rapid octaves and grace notes

moving in and out of tempo

imagining rhythmic pulses - random aggregates of patterns with random rest length in between.

now an S-COM score took over

```
; projects 1

(create-tonality octaves '(1 13 25 37))
(activate-tonality (octaves e& 5))

(symbol-divide (gen-random 0.13 12 '(1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8)) nil nil
              (gen-random 0.12 128 '(a =)))

(setq as '(a a)
      bs '(= =)
      cs '(a a a)
      ds '(= = =)
      es '(a a a a)
      fs '(= = = =)
      gs '(a a a a a)
      hs '(= = = = =)
)

(eval-section (gen-random seed 32 '(a b c d e f g h)) 's 'list)

(setq seed 0.12)

(setq as1 (pick-random '((a a) (b b) (-b -b)))
      bs1 (pick-random '((= =) (= -b) (= b)))
      cs1 (pick-random '((a a a) (b -b b) (-b b -b)))
      ds1 (pick-random '((= = =) (= -b -b) (= b b)))
      es1 (pick-random '((a a a a) (a b c b) (-b a b -b)))
      fs1 (pick-random '((= = = =) (= = -b b) (= b a -b)))
      gs1 (pick-random '((a a a a a) (a -c -b b -b) (a c b -b b)))
      hs1 (pick-random '((= = = = =) (= = = -c -b) (= = = c b)))
)

(eval-section (gen-random seed 32 '(a b c d e f g h)) 's1 'list)
```

You won't have eval-section, so here it is:

```
(defun eval-section (section-list symbol-affix how)
  (diagnostic (list "eval-section" $cr$))
  (prog (out)
    loop
    (cond ((null section-list)
          (return (cond ((equal how 'append) (eval-list out))
                        ((equal how 'list) (mapcar 'eval out))))))
    (setq out (append out
                      (list (merge-symbols
                             (car section-list) symbol-affix))))
    (setq section-list (cdr section-list))
  (go loop)))
```

eval-section

- <section-list> <symbol-affix> <how> <structure-pattern>

With eval-selection it's possible to go some way towards simulating the Class System structuring protocol introduced on the Mac S-COM 3.1.

With this function you may associate symbol, length, tonality and velocity with the same symbol structure. This means that you could use the output of a generator to devise a composition's structure:

```
(setq form (vector-to-symbol a e (gen-noise-white 20)))

(setq am '(a = g = d f)
      ab '(b c d = f g)
      ac '(c d = e f =)
      ad '(f f g g = a)
      ae '(b a f = g b)
)

(setq melody
  (eval-section form 'm 'append))

(setq ar '(1/4 1/8 1/8 1/8 1/16 1/16)
      br '(1/8 1/8 1/8 1/16 1/16 1/8)
      cr '(1/8 1/4 1/8 1/8 1/4 1/8)
      dr '(1/8 1/8 1/8 1/8 1/4 1/8)
      er '(1/16 1/16 1/8 1/8 1/8 1/4)
)

(setq rhythm
  (eval-section form 'r 'append))
```

. . and so on

Here it is being used in a variant of a Bach Prelude

```

; prelude 1b

(setq a (activate-tonality (c maj 1 1 4))
      b (activate-tonality (d min 1 1 4))
      c (activate-tonality (a min 1 1 3))
      d (activate-tonality (a maj 1 1 3))
      e (activate-tonality (b& maj 5 1 3))
      f (activate-tonality (f maj 1 1 3))
      g (activate-tonality (g min 5 1 3))
      h (activate-tonality (c maj 7 1 4))
      i (activate-tonality (e maj 7 3 4))
      j (activate-tonality (g maj 1 5 3))
      k (activate-tonality (g maj 7 1 4))
)

(setq ax '(= = c d f c d f)
      bx (append '(= =) (symbol-shuffle '(c d f c d f)))
      cx (append '(= =) (symbol-shuffle '(c d f c d f)))
      dx (append '(= =) (symbol-shuffle '(c d f c d f)))
      ex ax
      fx (reverse bx)
      gx (symbol-scale '(-b e) cx)
      hx (symbol-mix dx gx)
      ix ax
      jx (find-change bx)
      kx (find-change cx)
)

(def-symbol
  pn1 (eval-section '(a b c d e f g h f g i d b j k a) 'x 'append)
  pn2 '(= b)
  pn3 '(e)
)

(def-length
  pn1 '1/16
  pn2 '(1/16 7/16)
  pn3 '8/16
)

(def-velocity
  default '(96 86 76 64 84 64 72 54)
)

(def-zone
  default (symbol-repeat 16 '(2/4))
)

(def-tonality
  default (eval-list '(a b c d e f g h f g i d b j k a))
)

(compile-instrument "ccl;output:" "bach1b"
  pn1 pn2 pn3
)

```