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A Bridge to the Past: Linear Temporal Processes in a Minimalist Work

My title for this paper is, in part, "A Bridge to the Past." A bridge is a different kind of passageway than some because it is designed specifically to transcend some barrier. In this case, the barrier is time; and the type of barrier that time is is of great interest here.

Certainly time can be conceived very simply as a line going in one direction; a bridge on this line would cross some number of adjacent points on the line – named as seconds or years or some other unit of measure – to carry something associated with one of those points, or a cluster of them, an era, to some non-adjacent point or cluster; and that is, to an extent, the service this bridge performs. But in most human dealings time is not a neutral substance, nor are the points that mark it. Instead time is history, in part, history whose path is marked by changes in ways of thinking and ways of expressing those thoughts and ways of receiving those thoughts – changes, in other words, of style, of aesthetics, of technique, of values. If some messenger, for instance, a compositional technique, is sent across a time-spanning bridge, this messenger is not neutral either, but rather is an alias for its time and place of origin, functioning as an encapsulated manifestation of the needs and meanings and values of its own time. When such a messenger arrives at a different historical moment, its reception there cannot be neutral, either, for it brings about the intersection, the intermingling, of things that have not mingled of their own accord on either side of the bridge. To make a bridge across time, then, has profound implications.

Time is not only history, an ether to be gotten through. It is also – especially but not only in music – substance. We could say that in music time is one of music's two essential materials, the other being sound. Sound sculpts time, shapes it; and the resultant shape is itself a significant part of music's expression. Though in its details that shape is unique to each piece, general manners of using musical sounds to carve time are shared across many pieces; they become part of a guiding style, and thus one of the markers of places in music's history. These stylistic guidelines about how time manifests itself in pieces of an era are also reflective of a larger aesthetic, a philosophy about what time is understood to be that encompasses all the contemporary arts and then extends beyond, into all of the circumstances of a society, even its politics. The way a piece uses time as a substance, then, is a powerful indicator of its time in history; more, a work's stance regarding the use of time helps decide its placement, whether near the leading or the trailing edge, among the diverse cultural artifacts that together represent an era. It is in that sense of a general aesthetic regarding the use and properties of time that time, too, can travel across this bridge; and when the use of time, as an agent of its time, makes this kind of journey, it is aesthetics, deeply held philosophical beliefs, that intermingle on the other side of the bridge. Such a mingling is not always peaceful; in any event, it is not neutral, but rather loaded with implications regarding both the musical past and the musical future.

In this paper we will consider a slight little piece, a five-minute etude called "Balafon," in which takes place a rather extraordinary interplay of bridged historical times that involves two radically different approaches to the treatment of musical time. Issues that arise about the use of time in this piece may ultimately lead us to ask whether the aesthetics of an entire style is perhaps being challenged, and what it may mean if this is the case.

"Balafon" was written in 1996. It is one of a set of four etudes for alto sax, part of a four-volume set of etudes for the several saxophones (*Neuf Études pour saxophones*) by the Tunisian composer Christian Lauba. Lauba was born in 1952 and has won a number of prizes, including, in 1984, the Medal of Honour from the city of Bordeaux, and first prize at the Berlin Composition Competition in 1994. He has taught and given masterclasses in the US and Europe, and until recently was teaching analysis at the Conservatory of Bordeaux.

As we can hear, "Balafon" is clearly minimalist in most regards. This is important, for to call the work minimalist brings with it many implications regarding time as a compositional medium. Perhaps the foremost aesthetic premise of minimalism is that it explicitly denies a linear temporal orientation, thereby putting it at odds with most of Western aesthetics since the Greeks, and certainly with much of the music from the late Middle Ages on. In some sense, most of the history of Western music can be told from the standpoint of the various, evolving means of controlling and manipulating time, from the interaction of the components of an isorhythmic motet to the sophisticated control of cadence made possible by systematic tonality, and to the intricate workings-out of the potential of a motive that reached a high point in the music of Brahms. All of

these means helped create a linear temporality from purely musical substance, their processes providing as well a context where listeners were able to participate in the argument of a piece, their awareness of the possibilities of the material in its context an essential part of the experience of a work's temporality, its shape.

Nor did these compositional goals change altogether with the move away from systematic tonality in the early 20th century; Webern tended to withhold a member of the aggregate, for example, making the aggregate's completion a compositional goal, where Schoenberg and, later, Milton Babbitt and others, used techniques based on the complete exhaustion of the potential of other of the piece's compositional resources, whether sets or rows. Whatever the particulars of these various processes, they have in common an interestedness in the material itself, a delight in discovering its potential and in designing situations where it can be richly explored. It is possible to argue that, as the twentieth century went on, listeners' participation in the development of the material in a piece declined (in fact, Brahms was greatly concerned about that decline in his own day); that where earlier composers used techniques they expected listeners to appreciate both for their craft and for their affect, for later composers the means of creating coherence and temporal design became more and more private, facets of the compositional underpinning that could be revealed only by intensive analytical scrutiny. Schoenberg, though, among others, would have denied that this was the case. For him, Brahms's technique of developing variation provided a means of creating compositional coherence for himself as well as logic for the listener; and it is not unreasonable to suggest that much of the linearity in later music is based on later generations of this same Brahmsian technique. We will return to the idea of developing variation presently.

Against this prevailing concern with time as linear, minimalism presents an enormous and deliberate contradiction. Minimalism conceives of time as unmarked duration, as volume in the spacial sense, rather than as successive, segmented, progressive. This spacial orientation is conveyed by surfaces that are uncharacterized and transparent; in most minimal works, the surface is the piece, concealing no underlying process, no compositional agenda to be discovered, and thus no complexity, no layering, no explanatory relationships. What is often described as process in minimalism is not then a mechanism or a procedure; instead, minimalism treats all material in a disinterested way. Material that is treated as if it is without intrinsic meaning is thus subject to the arbitrary whims of the composer, or the performer, as puppeteer; that the material changes gradually over its course is of less significance than that it is made to do so, and in inconsequential ways and at unpredictable times, rather than being allowed to do so by virtue of its own unfolding potential. Placing control over materials in the hands of an agent whose behaviour is arbitrary automatically makes the product not only analytically unavailable, but unavailable to the listener's participation as well. It is thus the lack of process in the true sense of the word, the unavailability, at any level of investigation, of an algorithm for musical change and evolution within a given piece or even moment, that characterizes minimalist music and its aesthetic of timelessness. The guileless, simple materials and the "shiny," eventless musical surfaces are, after all, honest to their source; that nothing is marked for consciousness is truly because nothing "happens" in a piece; that no memory attaches to any particular timepoint is because there is nothing to remember.

As we heard, the surface of "Balafon" clearly exhibits many of these minimalist characteristics. Fully two-thirds of it proceeds in eighth-note values at a consistent tempo and a very soft dynamic that changes only slightly. Timbre supports dynamics; for nearly a third of the etude's duration, Lauba calls for subtone, a timbral quality that has the effect of masking such small dynamic changes as there are. Long stretches of the piece are contrapuntal, with the voices being defined by register; each voice's tessitura is another constant in the piece, and together the several voices yield a nearly constant composite register throughout. Pitch content changes at an almost geologic pace; the body of the piece dwells upon the same five pitches for a quarter of the work's length, usually specific to register. Finally, even the performance instructions conspire in keeping the surface unmarked, for the etude is meant to be performed using circular breathing. While this technique is clearly one of the pedagogical focuses of the etude, it is also clear that pedagogical and compositional goals coincide here. In these and other respects, then, "Balafon" holds true to the minimalist aesthetic in its apparent denial of linear temporal processes.

Only two features of its surface seem to contradict this assessment. The first is the introductory and concluding segments that give the work a loose sense of form, thus articulating what is in most minimalist works an unbroken volume. Second, there are elements of progression in the body of the piece, a sense of growth or development signaled by several factors. The dynamic range, for instance, increases considerably over the piece's duration, from pianississimo, at the outset, to a full fortissimo at the enormous final flourish prior to the ending summary. Rhythmic values also quicken; eighth notes prevail for much of the piece, but the body finishes with cascades of descending 32nd notes. Both of these factors suggest some underlying narrative

culminating in a climax, a concept entirely antithetical to the minimalist aesthetic. Yet at almost no point is any change marked for consciousness; instead, the surface sounds much the same between any two adjacent passages. What this would seem to indicate is a disconnect, a structural inconsistency, between the minimalist disavowal of process that the surface seems to represent, and a true linear evolution underneath that belies that shiny surface and its aesthetic premise. We look for clarification, then, to those elements, especially the introduction, that seem to violate minimalist norms.

The introductory passage of the piece is given in Figure 1. The opening gesture seems at first to posit a kind of simplicity, even neutrality, inviting the kind of disinterested treatment that is the stylistic ideal. Two things contribute to its stability: it lacks half-steps, tritones, and other “hard” dissonances, and so as a sonority has no overt tension of any kind, a factor supported by other parameters such as dynamics and timbre. Bounded by a minor seventh, it is also entirely symmetrical around the pitch E, in pitch space, being framed on either side by the interval of a fourth. Such a symmetry is a musical advantage in creating the kind of stasis that is celebrated in minimalist music. But it is F# that is the temporal centre of the gesture as written, and it is F# that draws notice because of the way it returns almost immediately, and in such a way as to momentarily make E its neighbor. E and F# seem to function then as a pitch pair, emphasized by the fact that both occur twice in the gesture. But F# is also problematic, for it disturbs the perfect symmetry of fourths on either side of E. Right here, then, it seems that Lauba will have to choose: either he treats this gesture as a static sonority, or he explores the possibilities created by this flaw in its symmetry. Lauba chooses the latter course.

Let us, for a moment, consider what might happen if Lauba uses the pitch pair E/F# as what Hans Keller might have called the work’s suppressed background, so that the pitch pair is used as source material from which new motive-forms are actively generated. Using what we have already observed of the symmetry of fourths around E as a clue, let us treat both pitches to an M5 operation, which transforms each pitch into two new pitches by the addition of a fourth both above and below. This process results in the opening gesture, shown in Figure 2. Not only does this confirm that the E/F# pair is the original generative element in the piece, but it implies that in a sense, time has already been set in motion even before the piece begins. The literal opening gesture is not the piece’s originating material, but is itself the product of first action by the transform, the perfect fourth, upon the background pair E and F#; this transform is the agent through which two pitches become the five of the opening gesture.

But why five, and not six? Notice now that the F#’s upper fourth, B2, is missing from the gesture; while the pitch class B is present already, projected down from E, it is not pitch-class but pitch that Lauba focuses on, for the most part. Thus the lack of the upper B raises a question about its omission, a question quickly answered: if and when that upper B is reached, the “system” as generated from the original pitch pair will be closed, having exhausted the possibility of producing new pitches from the original material and its transformations. Compositionally speaking, What then?

Figure 3a illustrates a different way of parsing this opening gesture, showing a series of imbricated three-note groups. Each consists in a framing interval of this same perfect fourth, with a major second inside, attached to one of the outer pitches. We will see this interval-class set, Forte’s set-class 3-7 or 0,2,5, everywhere in this piece. But since analytical language should try to reflect analytical purpose, I will largely avoid using set-theoretic language here; what I am interested in accounting for is less how the piece is made coherent through the almost constant use of this set, and more how it is made logical, how the piece “becomes,” as it were, through an apparently internally-motivated evolution of this three-note bit, a contemporary manifestation of what Schenker described as “the will of the tones.” The behaviour I am describing is often almost molecular, so that two pitches, like atoms, attract a third that completes the molecule. I will call the set the “fourth-molecule,” then, after its framing interval. This molecule has several interesting features. For one, its framing fourth cannot be equally subdivided, so it always contains a major second and a minor third, or what we might call a first-order subdivision. Of the two intervals of the first-order subdivision, the major second obviously can be equally subdivided, and doing so exhausts its potential; the other interval, the minor third, cannot be. Its subdivision into the minor plus the major second creates a second-order subdivision; its unequal subdivisions are proportionately related to the subdivisions of the original fourth. It yields no third-order subdivision. This curiously Schoenbergian liquidation process is summarized in Figure 3b.

The opening gesture consists in three of these overlapped molecules, which together completely exhaust the available pitch resources; E, F#, and C# each belong to two of these collections, and the two extremity pitches to one each. No other fourth-molecules are possible using only these pitches; but if we speculate as to how the original gesture might perpetuate itself along these lines, we arrive at the projection shown in

Figure 4. This figure shows as primary the pitches of the original gesture; the secondary molecules that could be projected from each of the primary pitches; and the tertiary pitches that, added to each of the secondary extrapolations, would create altogether new molecules, without any pitches from the original gesture. Clearly, the model can continue generating these projections indefinitely.

For the moment, let us focus on the secondary fourth-molecules that include A. Where A is the only pitch from the primary molecule, it will project two new pitches, C and D in one case, B and D in the other. In the other two projections, A is already paired with another pitch from the original gesture, so the projected new molecules will each introduce only one new pitch, in one case G, in the other, B. In any event it is clear that Lauba can use the attractions of individual atoms within the molecule to continue to build new molecules, and thus creatively use the system's asymmetries to avoid the constraints of the initial limitations on pitch content. But if the piece proceeds along the lines of our speculation here, it will be of compositional interest whether Lauba chooses to proceed by step, via the addition of one pitch, or by leap. The trade-offs are evident: in the one case, greater pitch continuity, with the danger of slower progression and potential stasis; in the other, a quicker expansion of pitch and molecular resources, a lessened constraint that brings with it its own dangers. The problem of the first solution, addition of one new pitch, is especially pronounced if that new pitch is B, for, as discussed above, B exhausts the potential of the M5 operation to transform the original pitch-pair. Further, in creating a B octave it would destroy the established symmetry of the opening gesture around E; but we may speculate that destruction of one symmetry may call forth another, perhaps the equal subdivision of the octave. While this move, if taken, would bring a new pitch, F natural, into the mix, it would potentially also cause a system-stopping stasis from which recovery, while systematically possible, would deeply disrupt any sense of overall coherence.

Whether or not Lauba finds himself confronting this type of situation, we have uncovered what may be the underlying dialectic of this work, that of a careful balance between Deadly Symmetries and the productive asymmetries. The Deadly Symmetries, such as we speculate could be created by a B octave and its tritone subdivision, are in a sense goals achieved by a complete systemic saturation. But in completing a temporal strand they also stop the flow of motion; for this not to happen, they must also, somehow, simultaneously create new imbalances. While it is beyond our purpose here to investigate this dialectical possibility to the fullest extent, we can at least do so in the context of the introduction; turn again to Figure 1.

The introduction unfolds very much in the ways suggested speculatively above. In the first line, motion travels through the first fermata because the molecule that begins with sustained pitches B and C# is incomplete; they seek their E, which arrives after the fermata, prefaced by the grace A, which simultaneously renews the symmetry of fourths around E and reopens an upper-voice register, which has been briefly abandoned. A, now isolated, seeks its own molecular completion in register, which here comes again as we speculated, with the arrival of the two new pitches C and D. At the same time, certain secondary aspects are coming into prominence; these are intervals that reside in the opening gesture, as revealed by its interval vector, but that do not exist on the surface as adjacencies; secondary intervals can also arise via incidental juxtaposition of elements from different molecules. The interval vector for the opening gesture, [032140], is noted in Fig. 2; it shows that neither half-steps nor tritones are available in the set, and that interval-class 4 is sparsely represented. Indeed, in the opening gesture it is revealed only by the slur that connects the top and bottom pitches, A and C#. But here the A grace forms an adjacency with the sustained C#, making interval-class 4 overt; and ic 4 is expressed as an adjacency again with the direct leap from E to the new pitch C, even though we understand E as belonging to one molecule and C to another. Likewise, a return to the original fourth-molecule A, F#, E in the next line makes an adjacency between the new C and the returning F#, creating a new interval not previously even possible: the tritone. This secondary feature is a mere shadow at first. But then F# in the second line finally projects its system-completing upper fourth, fulfilling and also exhausting the original potential of the Ur-motive. Had this happened before any new pitches were generated, there would have been no inherently logical continuation for Lauba to explore, except, perhaps, the pitch F, which would simply introduce another self-limiting term into the set. But because B2 arrives after secondary features, in particular the tritone, have already begun to be explored, the F that follows B functions to amplify an understated latent possibility, thus foiling a Deadly Symmetry by attaching it to something new, already in progress. The placement of B2 is strategic, then; it could not have come before it does, and in a sense must come when it does.

What seems clear even this early in the piece is that Lauba is working with a sort of developing variation, a rigorous, derivative treatment of motivic material not unlike the technique that Brahms brought to perfection and that so influenced Schoenberg and others. Developing variation is absolutely time-dependent; in order for

it to be coherent as process, it must engage in a careful balance between change and continuity. Figure 5 shows an example from Schoenberg's *Fundamentals of Musical Composition*, from Chapter 2 on motive. In the example, the motive, here a descending second, is treated to minor formal alterations in line a, and much of line b preserves this basic motive as the beginning and ending points of new melodic gestures. But the last idea of line b is considerably different, chiefly because it does not appear to elaborate the same boundary interval, but rather uses it in an additive way, as Schoenberg's brackets show. Line c shows Beethoven engaging in a similar process in the second movement of the piano sonata, op. 2 no. 3. Each stage in the process adds something important to the logic and coherence of the passage as a whole; the linear continuity created by the process is a significant factor in our perception, both as listeners and as analysts, of the temporal sense of the piece. Figure 6 shows several stages of such a process in the last movement of Brahms's Fourth Symphony, in which developing variation is used to create a large-scale metamorphosis in his thematic material over the course of the first group. It is possible that, without Brahms's careful shaping here, we would lose the sense of connection between the opening gesture and the later manifestation shown in Figure 6c; it is the balance between change and continuity that allows the process to remain both aurally and analytically available.

Lauba generates virtually every note of "Balafon" using similar techniques of developing variation to explore the increasingly complex possibilities of the motivic strategy he has devised. One brief passage will have to suffice to illustrate this point. The passage I have chosen, shown in Figure 7, shows the intense saturation that precedes the introduction of the first new pitches in the body of the work, which, as we might expect, are C and D. Shortly before this, Lauba has introduced the first of several multiphonics, a simultaneous E/C# which is itself a compression or saturation of sorts. Not only is every single pitch in this line part of a fourth-molecule, but often two adjacent pitches belong to two different molecules, creating an almost-maximal super-saturation. The top voice consists here in B and A; sometimes those pitches are part of lower-line molecules involving E or F#, and sometimes not. In any event, they do occupy their own discrete register, and their insistence seems to call for completion by a third pitch, necessitating the D. Notice how the new pitches are prepared, near the end of the line in the figure. B and A are presented as an adjacency for the first time, followed by a seemingly anomalous E, the only pitch in the line that does not fit into a fourth-molecule with adjacent pitches. It does, however, establish the bottom pitch of a minor seventh, symmetrical around the A, whose top note is the new pitch D. Further, A is featured in such a way as to make it the central pitch of two new fourth-molecules, A, B, D, and A, C, D. What we see here is a systemic saturation that comes close to creating stasis, while at the same time opening new possibilities using old systemic elements. It is, to say the least, an elegant strategy; and one entirely dependent upon time for its realization.

What I have tried to do with these brief comments is, first, to show that minimalism, among other recent compositional trends, is at odds, deliberately so, with the larger history of the development of Western music in regards to its use of time. Second, I have tried to demonstrate the power of a particular compositional technique, that of developing variation, in creating a process that is profoundly conscious of time as a compositional factor, using processive motivic change as a force to sculpt the flow of time. I am not suggesting that linearity is the only viable way to musically interact with time; rather, the self-conscious suspension of time, as in some of Morton Feldman's work, for instance, and also in Rytas Mažulis' complex, meditative creations, can be a powerful way of causing a listener to be acutely aware of time as a musical element. Nor am I suggesting that linearity has become altogether unimportant in music since the last third of the 20th century, for that is far from the case. But given minimalism's pronounced stance against overt linear treatments of time, the almost algorithmic approach Lauba takes in an apparently minimalist work leads one to question this juxtaposition of strongly opposed aesthetics. We can speculate that perhaps Lauba means for his process to remain undiscovered. If the minimalist mask is convincing enough that the seeming contradiction we have been discussing between surface and structure remains hidden, "Balafon" escapes any implications of compositional subterfuge and remains, simply, an etude for the practice of multiphonics and circular breathing. It is possible, too, that Lauba is using this piece to play more directly with the implied aesthetic rift, seeing, in a sense, how much linear process the minimalist surface tension can contain before it crumbles. But it is also possible that Lauba's motivic messenger is in fact a Trojan horse, that this piece is a critique, writ small, perhaps, of the aesthetics of disinvolvement that guide minimalism. It is not important now that we know the answer to these speculations from Lauba's perspective. It is obligatory, I think, that we ask such questions; in doing so, we ensure that time is, in fact, not a neutral substance.

Bibliographical note

For a general introduction to the philosophy and history of human thinking about time, see J. T. Fraser, *afTime, Passion, and Knowledge: Reflections on the Strategy of Existence*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990). Jonathan Kramer's book *The Time of Music: New Meanings, New Temporalities, New Listening Strategies* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1988) incorporates many of Fraser's ideas into analytical discussions of music. Both books provide extensive bibliographies; see also the bibliography that appeared in *Music Theory Spectrum* 7 (1985): 72-106.

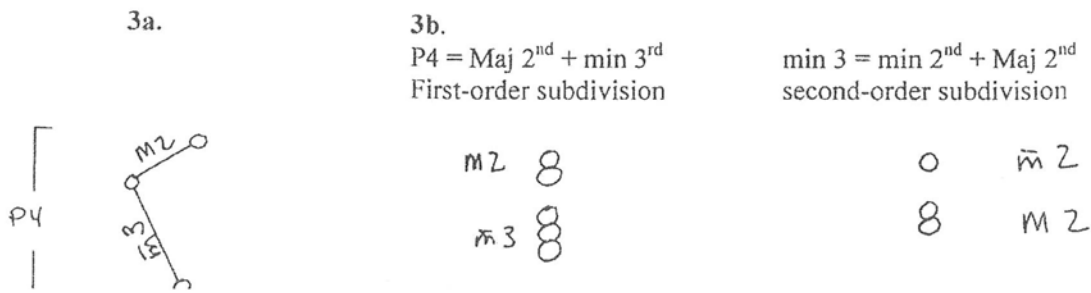
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Figure 1: "Balafon," Introduction

Figure 2: The Ur-motive and its transform

Set-class 5-35 (0, 2, 4, 7, 9)
Interval vector [0 3 2 1 4 0]

Figure 3: The "fourth-molecule"



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Figures for "A Bridge to the Past: Linear Temporal Processes in a Minimalist Work"
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Figure 1: "Balafon," Introduction

$\text{♩} = 52 \text{ subtone}$

Saxophone
alto

ppp opening gesture

ppp *pp* *ppp sub.*

p sub. *p* *ppp*

rall. - - - - -

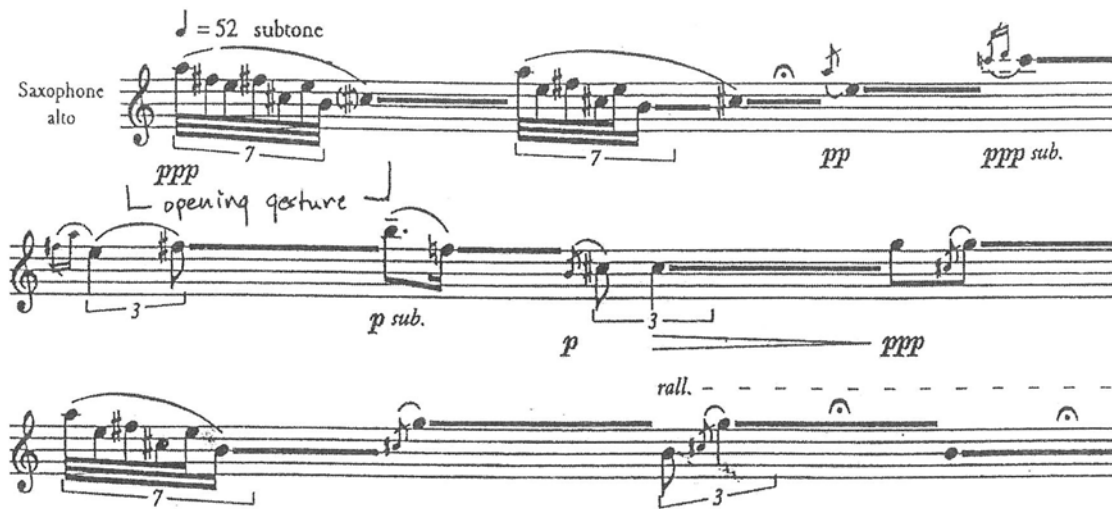
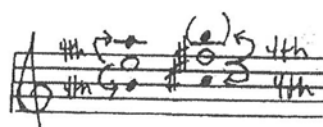


Figure 2: The Ur-motive and its transform



Set-class 5-35 (0, 2, 4, 7, 9)
Interval vector [0 3 2 1 4 0]

Figure 5: Schoenberg, *Fundamentals of Musical Composition*: "The Motive," Ex. 15

Ex. 15
 a) Motive. Combined with transpositions and change of direction

b)

c) Beethoven, Op. 2/3-II

Figure 6: Brahms, Symphony no. IV, 1, showing stages of development of neighbor motive

Fig. 6a (mm. 1-2, vln. 1)

1. Violine

Fig. 6b (mm. 9-10, vln. 1)

Fig. 6c (mm. 45-48, vln. 1)

1. Viol.

Figure 7: Lauba, Balafon, line 12: Pre-change saturation

timbrer
 full, clear tone

12

imbricated fourth. molecules (etc.) pp sub. ppp

subtone

Hali A. Fieldman

Tiltas į praeitį: linijiniai laiko procesai minimalistiniame kūrinyje

Mirštant tonalumui XX a. pradžioje kompozitoriai buvo įpareigoti atrasti naujus principus, kuriais remiantis būtų organizuojama muzika. Didžiausias iššūkis, su kuriuo susidūrė netonali muzika, buvo įvairūs muzikinio laiko dalykai, kadangi laiko linijškumas, kuris yra toks nepaprastai svarbus didžiajai Vakarų tonaliosios muzikos daliai, buvo pagrįstas disonansų, kaip pavaldžių konsonansams, samprata, disonansų, kurie su savo tikroju ar numatomu išrišimu suteikia muzikai aiškia kryptį ir taip suteikia pavidalą ir laikui.

Vienas XX a. laiko problemos sprendimas buvo tariamai atsisakyti laiko apskritai ar bent jau kontroliuoti laikinę muzikos patirtį ne taip griežtai, pašalinant laukimo/tikėjimosi aspektą. Įvairius tyrinėjimus, kurie kilo kompozicijos sferoje, galėtume pavadinti „belaikiškumu“, pavyzdžiui, atmosferinė, „vertikali“ G. Ligeti muzika bei „momentinės“ formos, siejamos su M. Feldmanu ir kitais. Tačiau greičiausiai joks kitas stilius taip sąmoningai netyrinėjo kompozicinių belaikiškumo formų kaip minimalizmas.

Viena svarbiausių estetinių minimalizmo prielaidų yra ta, kad jis atvirai neigia linijinę laikinę orientaciją. Ne tik paviršius, bet ir giluminiai daugumos minimalistinių kūrinių procesai yra faktiškai nelaikiški savo prigimtimi, taip vengiantys visų tų dalykų, kuriuos kūrinyje vadintume „įvykiais“, kad niekas nepažymėta sąmoningumo ženklų ir jokia atmintis nėra pririšta prie kokio nors konkretaus laiko taško. Taip nėra ir funkcinės segmentų diferenciacijos; kadangi nėra nieko, kas atskirtų pabaigas nuo pradžių, idėjų išdėstymas minimalistiniame kūrinyje visiškai nesvarbus. Taigi, atrodytų, kad kiek tai susiję su laiko traktuote, minimalizmas yra toliausiai pažengęs nuo linijškumo, siejamo su bendroju tonalumu, ir taip žymi visišką atitrūkumą nuo jo estetikos.

Christiano Laubos etiudas „Balafon“ – vienas iš devynių etiudų saksofonui ciklo – tyliai permeta tiltą per šį konceptualų atotrūkį, efektyviai sujungdamas, atrodytų, viena kitą paneigiančias estetines premisas. Etiude rasime daug minimalistiniam kūriniai būdingų savybių: pjesė yra netaktuota, du jos trečdaliai sudaryti iš aštuntinių, grojamų pastoviu tempu ir išlaikant labai švelnią dinamiką, kuri keičiasi tik nežymiai. Tembras papildo dinamiką; trečdaliui etiudo trukmės Ch. Lauba pasitelkia „subtoną“ – tembrinę savybę, sugėbančią užmaskuoti tokius mažus dinaminis pokyčius, kokie čia yra panaudoti. Nemažos pjesės atkarpos yra kontrapunktinės – balsai čia apibrėžiami kone registruotai; kiekvieno balso tesitūra yra dar viena kūrinio konstanta, o kartu keli balsai sudaro visais atžvilgiais beveik pastovų sudėtinį registrą. Ši kontrapunktinė faktūra reiškia, kad tono rūšis dažnai aktyviai veikia daugiau negu viename registre; tačiau tono turinys keičiasi beveik geologiniu tempu; kūrinio kūnas (griaučiai) beveik visą pjesės ketvirtį laikosi ant tų pačių penkių tono rūšių. Tad šiuo ir kitais atžvilgiais etiude „Balafon“ ištikimai laikomasi minimalistinės estetikos ir jos akivaizdaus atsiribojimo nuo linijinių laiko procesų.

Vis dėlto kai kurios detalės leidžia išvystyti ir linijinės laikiškumo traktuotės bruožų. Bet kuriuo atveju tai galime išvystyti pjesės formoje; etiudas „Balafon“ pradedamas įžanginiu pasažu, kurį aiškiai galima identifikuoti, ir baigiamas savotiška reziūmė, kuriame ankstesnė medžiaga naudojama taip, kad veikiau tai suprantama kaip transformacija, nei sugrįžimas. Kūrinio pabaiga aiškiai diferencijuojama nuo jo pradžios, pasitelkiant bendrą dinaminį *crescendo* ir analogiškai smulkinant natų vertes; šie ir kiti faktoriai rodo pjesėje esant tam tikrą laipsnišką laiko tėkmę, nors jokiam taške sąmonė neįžvelgia jokio aiškaus pokyčio. Vadinas, tenka tyrinėti giluminius pjesės linijinius aspektus, nors Lauba iš tiesų siekia paslėpti jų akivaizdų buvimą kūrinio paviršiniame sluoksnyje.

Šiame pranešime apžvelgiami subtilūs linijiniai procesai, apipavidalinantys minėtą pjesę. Ch. Lauba ją pradeda paprastu ir visiškai simetrišku motyvu. Panašus į J. Brahmsio manierą motyvas pats nužymi savo tolimesnius vingius kūrinyje; jis aiškiai apima tiek struktūrinę kūrinio šerdį, postuluodamas pirminį kūrinio konfliktą, tiek ir paviršines detales, pavyzdžiui, naujų tonų įvedimą. Tuo pačiu metu, nors tas pradinis motyve glūdinti impulsas tiesiogine prasme yra pirmasis pjesės garsas, aš pademonstruosiu, kad tas pats impulsas yra procesų, jau veikiančių „užkulisiuose“ (t. y. vykstančių dar iki pradedant skambėti pjesei), pasekmė. Atsekant šiuos procesus atgaline laiko seka, atskleidžiamas ir ur-motyvas (pirminis motyvas). Analitiniame darbe apie W. A. Mozartą, H. Kelleris tokio tipo latentinį motyvą vadina „paslėptu bendroju planu“. Taigi, šiame pranešime bus aptarta, kaip analitinės praeities traktuotes prasmingai galima panaudoti ir šiuolaikiniams kūriniams, o pati moderni pjesė, kuriai jos taikomos, atskleis galingus ryšius su praeities kompozicijos vertybėmis.