

HANDBOOK OF PHRASING IN MUSIC

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1. Introduction

I have been a professional working musician since 1977. When I began my formal study in a higher-education format, in 1974 (after eleven years spasmodically conducted with my father as a classical violinist, and as a keyboardist with peers in the domain of rock music), I was as yet unaware that applied music (that portion of music pertaining to the actual craft of performance or composition, using theoretical principles in some capacity) was in a fragmented state. Practical experience lasting some thirty-five years, encompassing orchestral experience as a violinist and violist, several commissions as a composer, and conducting experience, has made this clear to me. Alongside my music experience, I have done religious scholarship which leads me to the same conclusion in that field as well. I conclude in the latter that with a critical approach toward the truths evident in life one may unite religious disciplines holistically. The same critical integration of disciplines should be possible in music as well--in this case, in the phrasing of music. It would be a *holistic* approach--that is, it would associate each fragmented discipline by a general similarity, pattern, or analogy of procedure, avoiding opposition of ideas (dualism) as much as possible. Hence my term *holistic* acquires another sense as well, the opposite of dualism. There is conflict between many recognized authorities, and need not be; likewise there are many indefinite parameters in teaching phrasing. All can be resolved by such a holistic application.

Phrasing is ordinarily not difficult to execute, provided one is aware of it. But this awareness is the most difficult thing to teach in music. Some of this insensitivity, surprisingly, lies with the teachers themselves. Not uncommonly, a teacher finds he must surmount his own prejudices on phrasing. The teacher who tells his student, "Phrase like me!" has as often as not been taught in the same way, with no allowance for his own imagination.

Sometimes these hidebound doctrines span generations in the form of traditions. One such, happening in my own my own career as a student, occurs in the main theme which opens the

second movement of the Brahms sonata op. 120 no. 2. I had of course heard the sonata in recital by my father. More to the point, I'd heard this passage in his individual practice and was intrigued by the rhythm, which was obviously not the movement's prevailing 3/4 time. Later in my study, I learned that this was called a *hemiola* or *cross-rhythm*, and from then on took hemiolas to heart, both in performance and in my own writing. But when it came time for me to refine my own interpretation of the piece at the University of Michigan, my teacher, pointing to the barlinish piano part, told me gruffly, "That's not a cross-rhythm!" My protests were useless.

Another example of a hidebound doctrine was impressed on me early in my professional career--again in a piece by Brahms, the Clarinet Quintet op. 115. The conductor of my orchestra was coaching it and at one point in the first movement I had a clumsy and time-consuming string crossing with shift included to make, in the middle of a phrase. But when I asked the other players for the time to execute the move, the conductor interposed hurtfully, "We don't have time to accommodate your technical deficiencies!" It was at this point that the idea first occurred to me that phrasing could be a technical problem.

It must be admitted that these are fairly advanced problems. Much more commonly, other matters--chiefly intonation--are paramount at the expense of phrasing. This is not to denigrate the importance of good tuning, but nothing should slight the rightful due of phrasing. One needs, in the art of interpretation, to strike a balance between other things and phrasing, for it is always possible that a synergy may be discovered between them--for instance, to solve an intonation problem by that simplest expedient, allowing time in that part of the phrase where the problem occurs. This was in fact a teaching of one of my conductors, David Loebel, for which I am eternally grateful.

It will probably surprise the reader that very little literature treats phrasing at all, and then *not* when the phrase begins and ends, or how it is arched, or in what way it is periodic, only events

within the phrase, and superficially if at all what happens overall. This happens with Siegmeyer's well-known two-volume treatise on melody and harmony--admittedly a high-quality general treatise from the composer's point of view--and Robert Erickson's *Structure of Music*. Siegmeyer devotes a section of one chapter to what forms the inner structure of the phrase--any phrase--and a short section of another, three pages, to its outer structure giving three types, free-form, symmetrical, and repeating--but identifies periodicity no further. Erickson discusses in almost niggling detail the melodic and harmonic ideas that contribute to the structure of a phrase, but is non-specific about what form phrases take. Schoenberg's *Fundamentals* likewise treats phrasing in two short chapters, 2 and 14; he conceives a "phrase" as a single component, which may have elaboration into double periodicity (and only double). In itself this is a liberal reinterpretation of Hugo Riemann, who confirmed (or re-ossified) the "normal" periodic phrase as an eight-bar double period (*Achttätigkeit*) as had been devised in 1747 by J. F. Riepel. Thurmond's *Note Grouping*, whose theory of arsis and thesis is influenced by Riemann's work, is from a teacher's point of view. It rightly teaches to allow time in phrasing for the requisite notes to sound, with interesting and provocative treatments of pickups and other phrase grammars according to principles of arsis and thesis, but likewise limits the subject to execution and interpretation.

What is even worse, I find that almost no manual to teach rock music discusses the outer structures of its phrasing, except perhaps for ostinatos ("riffs"). The inner structures or note groupings, moreover, are mostly discussed with respect to the styles of celebrated performers, and very often their trick fingerings. This too has the effect of teaching traditions without system. It cannot address the notorious arching problems presented by electrified music. Nor can it integrate blues phrasing, an integral part of this style, into a viable whole with the rest of music.

Does the typical conservatory curriculum make up for this lack, and the consequent necessity to teach phrasing on the fly in the applied music studio or the rehearsal hall? I have heard that

the Curtis Institute once had such a curriculum under the oboist Marcel Tabuteau, in which the intensity of the phrase arch was actually measured; but I am not certain that the outer structure was covered, or that the concept was applied to anyone besides wind instruments.

It is this very gap in applied music pedagogy that this book is intended to fill.

The question may fairly be asked: for exactly whom is this small treatise? Certainly for the student, who will be presented with representative examples of phrasing in music and a certain number of suggestions as to their execution--for I recognize that the student must be empowered to actually decide for himself, with a fully informed consent, how to interpret what he discovers. But I intend this book also for the teacher, or even the conductor, who as a result of consulting with these balanced principles might become something more than a restricting taskmaster--might fulfill his role as a conduit for the student's discoveries and decisions.

What you have before you, then, is a small, practical handbook intended to stimulate ideas on phrasing. Its approach is not cyclopedic--that would defeat its purpose by burdening the reader with innumerable confusing examples. Instead it is very general, devoid of all provincial dogma, and primarily informative. A few basic examples are sufficient, and they can be applied elsewhere in music with the aid of what is truly new in this essay: a comprehensive if necessarily skeletal structure of music history as context for performance execution.

Will it be accurate? Probably not. I expect nothing resembling one hundred percent accuracy. Of a guide, however, one may reasonably expect a certain measure of reliability. With this I will be satisfied, if it improves knowledge of this branch of music for the time being.

2. The basic theory of phrasing

The first step in this scheme of phrasing is to organize its theory--that is, a system with rules that apply with regularity. Without this theory, it is impossible to organize phrasing and it will not make sense, especially when it is taught as today, on the fly along with the basic repertoire.

The phrase is hereby defined, at the outset, as that quantity of speech or sound (in this case, organized sound or music) which can be taken in a single breath. Alternatively, for instruments requiring no breath (strings, piano, and percussion), it is that quantity which, if sung, will take the same single breath.

To make a whole, coherent musical thought, the phrase can and must be organized in relationship with its companion phrases. It may be organized in the following fashions:

- 1) by itself or singly.
- 2) followed by a single repetition, or near-repetition, of itself (dual phrasing).
- 3) followed by infinitely many repetitions of itself (ostinato).

4) followed by a complementary phrase which treats the previous phrase as a question and serves as its answer (double periodicity). The two phrases so treated are called *antecedent* and *consequent* phrases. Sharing of note groups or particles may take it near the realm of dual phrasing. Great care (and perhaps subjective judgment) is necessary to decide between the two.

5) followed by two more related phrases, of which all are termed *components* (triple periodicity). Greater multiples of periodicity are at least theoretically possible, provided the human ear hears this periodicity as a single musical thought.

6) existing alongside other permutations of itself. This is the peculiar phrase structure of twelve-tone music, in which the phrase occurs as strictly constructed *row-forms*.

Any phrase so organized, moreover, may be further inflected by the following compositional devices, which generally lengthen the phrase although a few can shorten it:

- 1) Partial repetition (of one or more particles, or *note groups*, contained in the phrase).
- 2) Sequencing or *Fortspinnung* (repetition of phrase particles at a different key level).
- 3) Imitative counterpoint.
- 4) A change in time-value resulting in the speeding-up or slowing-down of the phrase (diminution or augmentation). This device may be either complete or partial.
- 5) The addition of dissonant notes to the phrase (passing, neighboring, appoggiatura, suspension, or escape tones), with the intent of resolving them to consonance--or contrariwise, intending a deceptive resolution or a deliberate non-resolution.
- 6) The development of a particle by changing a fundamental structural point, such as its rhythm or intervallic relationship with its neighbor notes.

7) Melodic sprouting. This device is similar to partial repetition but far more sophisticated. It involves both the incessant repetition of a particle and its development as in no. 6.

The aggregation of phrases in a structure elaborate music in specific forms. There is no form (except possibly the non-forms of aleatory avant-gardism and minimalism) which does not derive from an aggregation of phrases.

- 1) Stichic form (the incessant repetition of a single phrase);
- 2) Strophic form (the elaboration of two or more single phrases into a repetitive scheme);
- 3) Through-composed motet, madrigal, or *ricercar* (single phrases strung together);
- 4) Ritornello or rondo form (use of a theme that returns after other phrases strung as in no. 3);
- 5) Sonata form (use of two main themes and their respective, polarized, harmonically related keys, with double--or even greater--periodicity playing a role to complement the form).

It is the intent of this schematic of phrasing to encompass in one united, *holistic* entity the whole sense and structure of music. In the next chapter this will be complemented by a similar holistic structure in music history.

3. Overview of phrasing in a cyclic music history

No assay of phrasing is possible without a sense of music history. Lacking this sense, phrasing is thereby left out of context. And it may fairly be said that a true knowledge of phrasing in a historical context is sadly lacking. Few people, for instance, can convincingly phrase the unaccompanied Bach works for violin or cello--let alone the French and English Suites, the organ toccatas with fugues, and the *Well-tempered Klavier* for keyboard--because most cannot relate the exquisite and often violently irregular single phrasing of the High Baroque (as well as the exquisitely arcane creations sometimes present in dance suite movements) to the basic and utterly regular eight-bar double period of the Classical Era that was to follow.

Nor can they easily assay the place of blues phrasing, the twelve-bar triple period 4+4+4, in the apparent breakaway multiplicity of styles that marks the twentieth century. How can they assay this, the first truly systematic use of triple periods, when they cannot understand that they had existed before, ferally?

These are but two examples of the failure to explain the place of each style, hence the failure to truly understand it. And this is only for a solo instrument. Add more instruments and very soon they will be fighting over how to phrase in an ensemble, without full knowledge of it--truly a garish example of not only the blind leading the blind, but the deaf leading the deaf.

I propose, as a solution to this vexing problem, to organize music history in the same way as the theory of phrasing: as an organic, cyclic entity, whose most basic principle is that *except where artificially legislated, music gains in complexity over time*. By "artificial legislation" I mean the formation of a music by means not originating in music (such as the doctrine of the Catholic Trinity underlying Gregorian chant, the musical dislocations associated with the Reformation, the papal bull *Motu proprio* regulating modern Catholic music, or the Zhdanov decree of 1948 underlying orthodox socialist-realist music). Thereby it will be possible to see developments in length

and notation as steadily advancing (more or less) in support of a performer's turns of phrase. Developments in musical form and texture, in turn, can be seen as a most basic support for the foregoing two, which further elucidate the ways in which they bear on phrasing.

The question may justly be asked: how can music gain in complexity over time, and what are its mechanics? The answer lies in the relationships of both form and contemplation to function. As Siegmeister notes, form follows function. Nothing is ever created in a vacuum; technological levels (e. g. the composition of material objects) and cultural customs (e. g. works of literature or dances) establish the functions of all things in the world, and also their implied esthetics which then govern the form. But form not only follows function, it is also *limited* by function and must obey its limits. Complementarily opposed to material function is the non-material or spiritual aspect of *contemplation*, which tends to destroy function, burst its limits, develop its forms even into asymmetry, and thereby call forth invention and establish new technologies, new customs, new functions, new limits. It can be easily shown that this growth cycle fits into a pattern, presenting in a particular order in the world: first science, then the esthetic forms of literature, art, and finally music and dance--all, in this order, are grown by contemplation which gives them new forms and functions. What applies to music, of course, will also apply to phrasing in music.

The forms of ancient music were stichic, strophic and variation forms based on one theme. In stichic form--from which passacaglia or continuous-variation form is the chief descendant--each poetic line, in whatever chosen meter, is a single phrase, which is simply repeated *ad nauseam*. This is the form of such disparate phenomena as the Homeric epic and the traditional recitation of the Finnish *Kalevala*. No one should be surprised to find this form also in the African jungle or bush, amplified into duality by repetition (e. g. the traditional "call and response").

In strophic form, several of these phrases are uttered before repetition; sometimes two motives are identifiable (e. g. the *Stollen* and *Abgesang* of German Mastersong). In most ancient vo-

cal music, phrasing depended on the length of one breath (single period, stichic form). In instrumental music, phrasing depended on exploiting a scale by improvisation--perhaps the music might even be athematic or relatively so--and it could be very long if desired (e. g. the use of the Indian raga). Modulation of scales was done simply by changing one or more tones--but never in the middle of a stichic phrase, always at the end. And this was even true of the Greater Perfect System of ancient Greece--the most complex manipulation of scales or modes known in ancient music, where *genera*, sometimes using quarter-tones, were produced by systematically lowering the pitches in a given *tonos*. It can reasonably be said that the radical modulations sometimes produced by this means mark the beginnings of new phrases.

The Middle Ages amplified these parameters by a consistent notation--the staff--where for the first time each pitch had its own place and name (neumatic notation). This notation is said to have been originally attributed to St. Gregory VI (hence its name, Gregorian), in the seventh century A. D. Before its invention there were only the systematic but quite inconsistent notations in keeping with the Greek system, which had been retained virtually unchanged by Roman culture. To be sure, Gregory's system is a hybrid; pitch expression by this notation appears with some reliability to have been taken from traditional signs of Jewish cantillation--which however were not originally pitches but specific ornaments of an understood tune. The staff on which these were notated began with a single line, gradually expanding over the next few centuries to a standard four lines which remained consistent until about 1450. The existence of the one staff begot the possibility of using more than one, to organize more than one voice. It made possible for the first time a true imitative polyphony and an identifiable rhythm, the ostinato-like repetition of which is called *isorhythm*. (It should be borne in mind that this term is a word compounded out of Greek roots by the early German musicologists, at the turn of the century.) All this, in a still monothematic form in which stiches and strophes still reigned supreme.

The Renaissance further elaborated the polyphonic concept, at the expense of isorhythm, into equality of texture with more voices. To accommodate them, the staff acquired an extra line, the fifth of our familiar five lines. However, the forms remained monothematic, or even athematic, and articulated by single phrases, even when they were amplified and extended by canonic imitation (the through-composed motet). They also remained primarily vocal; instruments remained in a doubling function for voices although they could play otherwise vocal music.

It was in the Baroque era, when instruments were for the first time given their own independent lines, that monothematic form was supplemented by episodes and reprises (as in ritornello form and fugue). Though single phrases strung together remained the norm, the Baroque also witnessed the beginning of phrasing in which some form of primitive periodicity can first be perceived: 1) binary dance-forms; 2) “dual” phrasing, the simple repetition of a short phrase (usually as an echo), particularly in the music of Domenico Scarlatti. Lutheran hymns (as harmonized by Bach) frequently display triple periodicity, always following the poetic meters.

The single phrase could also be lengthened by sequencing, sometimes to great length (*Fortspinnung*). Particularly in Bach and Vivaldi, it was parlayed into unique and arcane combinations and could even contain rhythmic wrinkles that are difficult to spot and for this reason often go unacknowledged and untaught. Vivaldi is well-known to end phrases in the middle of a bar; it is dangerous to play his music in a barlinish fashion because as often as not the climax of a phrase may thereby be obscured. And Bach--particularly in his dance suites--never takes his single phrases for granted. It is possible to find large phrase structures of some number other than 8 or 16, compounded of phrases strung together.

The evolving Classical Period forms--sonata and rondo forms, and in general music based on two themes and/or keys--can perhaps be linked to the fledgling doctrine of double periodicity, the evolution of two phrases at a time, a questioning antecedent and answering consequent, each nor-

mally four bars long--which in contrast to the northern conservatism evolved in Mannheim and Vienna. The doctrine, originating with the theorist J. F. Riepel, could indeed have been taken from the clear periodicity of most Baroque dance movements and applied elsewhere. The result is patently clear. It is also more dramatic, for it abandons the two most familiar Baroque practices, affects (description by a musical figure) and sequential repetition, for a new one: the dramatic pause. In this context, two things become evident:

1) Not every musician in the eighteenth century subscribed to this radical change. The sons of Bach and their followers in north Germany and France, as well as Domenico Scarlatti, retained as much of the old practices as they could, producing the *galant* and *Empfindsam* styles. Moreover, C. P. E. Bach codified most of these in his *Versuch*. One should expect, therefore, to find in these styles--and especially in the important offshoot *Sturm und Drang*, which is a precursor of Romanticism--a mixed phrasing, mainly single periods extended by sequencing and dual phrases.

2) Haydn and Mozart, the most highly expressive Classical composers, needed to deviate from the utter regularity of the Mannheim style to obtain emotional expression. Haydn--whose myriad examples of devastating humor depend on extension (or occasionally abbreviation) of a "normal" phrase--is well known to have had his original grounding as a composer from the *Versuch*. And Mozart--having been influenced by Bach in the early 1780's--obtained his high expression by applying Bachian counterpoint, a limited and disciplined use of sequencing, and dramatic pauses to extend or elide phrases.

It can be seen that the mature Viennese Classical style is a reconciliation of these two opposed movements, in which the old applications within the phrase adjusted their function to serve and ennoble the new double period. In the Romantic Era--beginning with Beethoven's extended and sonically stunning creations--this ennobled double periodicity further evolved into music based on more than two themes and/ or keys, to accommodate the full impact of emotionalism. Double

periods continued as the norm but became irregular, full of echoes and sequences, and could even use *Fortspinnung*. Unfortunately, it was ossified in 1903 by Hugo Riemann's doctrine of *Achttätigkeit* (eight-barred-ness), which re-established eight bars as the norm from which to deviate. The doctrine of the double period, even an irregular one, as the norm, influenced every pedagogy of phrasing, which thereby developed blind spots to any expansion of the concept. The classic example is Percy Goetschius, who among other things considered the repetition of the second phrase (e. g. in the slow movement of the Beethoven Symphony no. 7) of no effect, resulting in a double instead of a triple period. Both Riemann and Goetschius would have been wholly baffled by such hymn-tunes as *Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern* or *Wachet auf*, both of which, as just mentioned, use triple periods. Likewise they would have been at a loss to explain the phrasing of Gregorian chant which (for the entirely superstitious reason of allusion to the Holy Trinity) is often triple, generally two repetitions of the first fragment followed by a single presentation of the second. More to the point, he would not have understood this form of periodicity as it occurred ferally in his own time.

It is the 20th and 21st centuries that are the most problematical. The retrenchment in use of multiple themes corresponding with increased reliance on leitmotifs, the breakdown of tonality, meter, and rhythm in several apparently contradictory parameters, and the use of tone-rows or aleatory principles as the whole premise for a piece, are matched with the evolution of triple or greater periodicity (e. g. blues, lapidary construction) after 1912 or so. Resistance by traditionalist dogmas has obscured any connections and fractured the whole scheme of music history into an apparently violent divergence. This is, at least to surface appearances, a paradox which can only be resolved into sense by a cyclic music history.

It will be essential, in devising this cyclic view, to re-examine the traditional theories of music. That based exclusively on mathematical powers of two, evolved by Rameau from Renaissance

sources with the traditional Roman numeral analysis, is perhaps outmoded. (Or perhaps not: it may be applicable in ways not yet conceived in the early eighteenth century.) Modern mathematical views such as Schillinger's or Slonimsky's are still held to be renegade. Views of theory that account for all these legitimate and essential elements in a historical context, and alternate theories such as the reliance on powers of three by the computer-music theoreticians Bohlen and Pierce, do exist, but cannot yet be elaborated with any degree of system. And all these are limited by one constant: they are mere theories of music, not full explanations, and certainly not the full execution of music. Whereas it is axiomatic that music transcends its notation.

It is likely that such a systematic vision, if evolved in the same way as a cyclic music history, will bear on phrasing and make it comprehensible to all. But the reader is warned: for the same reason, that the music will transcend any such notation or scheme, it will not be perfect.

The following exposition, with which I intend to elucidate phrasing, is not going to be perfect. Very likely it will elicit sharp disagreement, from every quarter. Many exceptions or deviations are likely to be noted. But the reader is free to disagree, for this will mean I will have evoked in him more attention to phrasing by type. In this respect the book will have done its job.

4. Phrasing as a technical problem.

The current pedagogy of phrasing suffers from the provinciality that it is exclusively a musical problem--that it is unrelated to the pure physical techniques such as hand or breath support, bow or breath speed, or sounding point or embouchure focus. The perception of music as a pure science as well as an art, obeying such fundamental principles as Newton's laws of inertia and gravity, should elucidate that phrasing is before anything else a technical problem.

The phrase must in the first place be arched. There is nothing so uninteresting to hear as a flat phrase--one which merely begins and ends, heedless of the decisions each player must make for himself as to the high point of the phrase (sometimes called the "phrase accent") and the paths to and from this point. At least one volume change is required, and very often many more. One has only to recall Pablo Casals' famous article on the phrasing of the slow movement main theme in Mozart's Symphony no. 39, or the minutely crafted dynamic changes in the slow introduction to the Tchaikovsky Fifth Symphony, to realize this. It goes without saying that many, perhaps most of these volume changes will be unwritten, leaving it up to the player himself to determine his own personal arch to the phrase.

Second, the arch of the phrase must take into account the acoustic limitations of the instrument that plays it. It depends to a large extent on just how much variety and flexibility the instrument will provide. The acoustic guitar, for instance, has notorious acoustical limits. Nothing projects but a strum--while its rock cousin the electric guitar has the opposite problem because the electrical pickups vitiate the softer dynamics which must be obtained by turning a volume knob down or by artificially damping the strings in some way. In both--and for entirely opposite reasons--the phrase tends to sound flat. The same is true of the harp, whose limit of loudness is reached when the string buzzes. And the problem of negotiating an electrical volume control--or even an electrical timbre control--will be just as true of the synthesizer. Indeed, for this reason, it

may be observed that the MIDI wind controller, a recently developed instrument, is probably the most abominably difficult instrument on which to *control* a phrase.

The piano, on the other hand, is one of the most flexible instruments, notwithstanding the decaying sound produced by the action hitting the string. Yet the string sounds must incessantly be balanced by carefully modulating the attack on the keys (“voicing”) due to the disparities in string length and thickness. In addition, the whole range of pedal shadings from damper, sostenuto pedal and soft pedal must be mastered. Failure to master these techniques will certainly impair piano phrasing which is certainly dependent on more than just the finger legato.

The same characteristics apply to percussion instruments. It is well-known that a harder percussion stroke does not necessarily increase the sound. More often it impairs the sound. An effective phrase on a percussion instrument requires the right stick, careful modulation in intensity, and finding and exploiting the node or other sounding point that applies to each instrument.

The problem with wind and brass instruments is not, surprisingly, the limit of loudness. Instead it is the limit of *softness*, the point at which the air cannot move enough in the tube to make a sound. And of course string instruments by themselves are notoriously soft instruments. In jazz or rock music, depending on the type, they must be amplified to some degree; in classical music they require multiplication into orchestra sections of 8-16 or even more--or else the rest of the orchestra must play softer to balance with a soloist. The typical “big sound” of a string instrument solo is produced not by brute force of bow pressure or speed, but by adroit manipulation of the sounding point near the bridge with even bow speed. The most notorious acoustic problems of all are folk instruments. Their acoustic imperfections make them either too soft (or too quickly decaying) or else loud, harsh, and inflexible.

It is probably from this problem, how to handle acoustic limits, that the two basic schools of thought in string playing, power playing (with a tight sounding point and a relentlessly slow,

weighty, even bow) and finesse playing (with moderation and variation in sounding point location, bow pressure and speed), must have developed. Obviously power playing takes more risk, while finesse playing is safer. Naturally it is possible to apply this philosophy to other instruments.

Even composition can be included in this discussion. Obviously the composer who makes an instrument try to do what it cannot has failed in his approach due to insensitivity. The same can be said of not extracting the most out of an instrument (or more than one instrument), a failure in the opposite extreme which tends to result in flat phrases that cannot be adequately arched to carry the right sound or emotion. The truly successful composer or arranger knows his instruments, their respective ranges and sound limits, and works easily with them. A notable and advanced example of this is the so-called “failing phrases” in Mahler, which are his most distinguishing characteristic. They do not actually *fail*. Instead they are ingenious gestures to intensify his phrases by adding orchestrations and taking them away when no longer needed, or when a different sonority is indicated. This must in the end be accounted a respect of acoustic limits, compensated for by adding sound from elsewhere, and carrying an added bonus of varying orchestral color.

Next we observe that each phrase has a structure--as was observed in the previous chapter, as an element that grew in complexity over music history. A musical phrase has its analog in the structure of a sentence, any sentence, in any language. That is, it can be simple (one statement), compound (the familiar Classical Era double period, or the triple period of traditional 12-bar blues), complex (e. g. a single period with sequencing or *Fortspinnung*), or compound-complex (e. g. a double period with additions as above, or lapidary construction). On top of that, particularly in the piano and orchestral literature, infinitely many possibilities exist for phrases to be elided or otherwise overlapped--the clear articulation of which is harder than any virtuoso athleticism.

Consideration of the phrase arch and language structure naturally lead to the question of how long a phrase should be. The length, in bars, varies immensely--as will be discussed later--and it is probably true that no consensus can be reached on this basis. What I would like to propose in this treatise is that the ideal phrase length be measured in *real time*, what the average human attention span can bear. In most cases, this will be about 10-20 seconds, though it is always possible to hold a listener's attention for far longer. The shortest of these examples is Ex. 3 of Chapter 7, which is less than seven seconds long and definitely benefits from repetition. The longest of these examples is Ex. 16 of the same chapter which cannot be less than 45 seconds, and is probably longer because the odd ending in the composer's signature rhythm (a duplet plus a triplet) needs drastic expansion to be effective.

But in all fairness we must include two other examples which are far too long to quote: the opening of the Beethoven Fifth Finale and the opening of Wagner's Siegfried Idyll. The former is a violently disproportionate double period of 26 bars (6+19), which lasts about 35-40 seconds; the latter is a more proportional, but all the same vastly extended, structure of 28 bars (14+14), which plays out to about 1 1/2 minutes, certainly one of the longest double periods in music. In both the extreme length is achieved by repetition of motives. But in neither case is the phrase identifiable as a period to the ear unaided by a score. The human ear tends to break the phrase up into its components beyond 25 seconds or so--which means that Wagner's mighty structure must resolve willy-nilly into four single phrases whose periodicity is not immediately apparent. The conductor who can make the Beethoven into a single period, including that 19-bar consequent, should be accounted a hero. With the Siegfried Idyll this may not be possible.

Finally we consider the technical problems stemming from the mere physics of playing. These generally consist of the following:

- 1) Abrupt register changes (whether deriving from a radical embouchure change on a wind or

brass instrument, a string jump or large shift on a string instrument, a *passaggio* change in a voice, a clumsy hand motion on the piano, or a clumsy contact between stick and instrument body of a percussion instrument).

2) Chords or multiple stops on a string instrument, cross-fingerings on a wind instrument, or large intervals on a piano requiring rolled chords, and any other articulation that requires clumsy motion of the hand *in the same place on the instrument*.

It should make sense that these, and in general all other unidiomatic elements written into the music--which all require time to execute--will bear heavily on the way a phrase is divided, arched, or stretched. It might be made into an axiom: *The more unidiomatic the music, the more time is required to phrase it.*

On this basis it will naturally be seen that acoustical limitations of a performer's instrument, slow tempos, technical problems, and additional or irregularly conceived phrase length all make phrasing harder. If they conspire by being in the same phrase--that is the performer's challenge!

On the other hand, improved technology over history has made most phrasing easier. The improved bass-bar construction of string instruments, the improved fingering systems and valve technology in wind and brass instruments, and the addition of pedals to timpani to increase their range, all have brought with them bonuses in the ability of these instruments to phrase.

It becomes evident, in examining these technical parameters, that phrasing is done with the full force of technique. Be it on whatever instrument, sufficient or wanting, phrasing is effective provided it meets the above parameters. But if it does not, no amount of sheer physical technique or technological progress will compensate for it. It shall be the task of Chapter 9 to discuss these deficiencies in phrasing, and Chapter 10 to discuss a related and neglected corollary topic, the exigency of bad phrasing in otherwise good music.

5. Note grouping within the phrase.

So far I have presented overviews of phrasing in its history and its technical theory, as prelude to discussing phrase structures in detail. But it will first be necessary to explain what happens within a phrase, of any type. Thurmond's term for this, *note grouping*, is a truly appropriate term; for groups of notes (most basically two or three-note cells according to William Newman), forming motives, variations on motives, or longer free-flowing melodies, are certainly the building blocks of phrases. But they are not the whole be-all and end-all of phrasing, nor even the means to that end, merely the microlevel to the macrostructure of periodicity. From the listening point of view, the latter is concerned with carrying the ear's attention span as long as it will bear, aided by such indefinite alchemies as are built into the melody and harmony. It is the function of note grouping to focus the attention span so that it *can* be carried to that extent.

To begin with, there are two conflicting impulses in all music: the barline, which measures and organizes our music but expresses nothing else, as opposed to the gesture which does nothing to organize, but everything to express. The former is well-known to be a product of medieval Christian knowledge, whereas the latter is much older even than these roots. There is enough evidence, in the notation of cantillation signs, to suggest a possible etymology in ancient Jewish music--by tradition possibly originating with Moses.

Assuming the expressive power of the gesture--the more alchemically endowed, the more expressive--the barline should be regarded as a *conventional* sign, that organizes music but contributes nothing to its expression. Its character is *neutral*, its effect on interpretation *nil*. The expression of music may indeed coincide with the barline, but often it is better that it should not.

This important point leads directly to Thurmond's chief concept: that of arsis (upbeat or pickup) and thesis (downbeat) as the basic building-block of all phrasing. A phrase will either begin on the downbeat (the plainest and most obvious type of beginning), before the downbeat in

some degree (that is, on a pickup or gesture), or after the downbeat following a short rest (a longer rest must necessarily make the beginning a pickup). Often it is possible to distinguish music of different cultures by the vagaries of its phrasing; for instance, Central and Eastern European musics, particularly in Dvorak and Janacek, commonly begin phrases on the downbeat, while a long pickup that takes most of a bar appears characteristic of Hispanic music.

It is important to treat the arsis aggressively or at least proactively, simply because it is first and comes before the thesis. If there is no arsis--that is, if the phrase begins on a downbeat--it should be preceded by a rest, or if no rest be notated a microscopic amount of space should be made (the so-called *Luftpause*). Or if space is not made, one should expand the previous end.

Along with this comes the esthetic that the more variety in the treatment of the thesis, the better. In this light, a *subito piano* on the downbeat, wherever it is written, is not only a way of making a soft thesis strong, but also a valuable corollary to a strong arsis. Similarly with hemiola or cross-rhythm: it is simply the absence of a thesis due to a tie over the barline, or a rest on the downbeat, while shifting the actual stress somewhere else.

There can be no doubt that motion within a phrase is based on arsis and thesis. It is certainly *not* the same as rhythm; but rhythm may imply motion. So can melody and harmony. Rhythm creates motion by its changes (accelerating or decelerating) in articulated patterns, repetitions, tempos, meters, or concurrent multiple versions of any of these (polyrhythms). Melody creates motion, in conjunction with rhythm, through its range, phrase accent(s), developments of intervals and motives, and very often (as in Mahler) the variety in its dynamics--that is, its loudness or softness. Harmony does its bit as well, through its root or bass movements outlining cadences (that is by fourth, fifth, or even a greater interval), and very often through stepwise or even chromatic bass movement as well. Harmony and rhythm are seen to conspire in deciding exactly when a dissonance resolves. Many such delays in resolution have both regulating them, or even

all three including melody--e. g. when a melody delays for a suspension dissonance. In short, we might even venture to say that all three of these aspects, harmony, melody, and rhythm, constitute the *territory* in which phrasing occurs.

That harmony is a territory for phrasing is shown best by music, any music, for an unaccompanied instrument. This was first demonstrated early in the Baroque era, matured by Bach, and has continued with unabated fervor to the present day. Very often the solo player is presented with multiple lines to play and must account for every note, and moreover do so *interestingly*. He may do this by varying either the length or the intensity of notes, or even both. Which parameter he uses is up to him--but he may not ignore the necessity of distinguishing the lines from each other. Naturally this challenge is not confined to unaccompanied music. It is standard in piano concerto writing, for instance, to require this in one hand; the same in sonata, song, or chamber music writing with piano.

As each component of a phrase is a thought, it must be separated from other thoughts, other components, by some kind of punctuation: the *end* of the phrase. As important as proactivity is for the arsis, it is most important to treat the end of the phrase before it with deference, regardless of its position in the bar. As said before, it will be necessary to expand in some degree--how much can be determined only by knowledge of the style and experimental practice. Any phrase expansion must involve some degree of slowing down or space-making or both--what is generally called *nuance*--and this is generally accompanied by a discreet change in volume sufficient to create an *illusion*, that the line is in motion from one place to another. Some punctuations may be related to technical problems (particularly in the above-mentioned articulations of multiple lines by the same instrument); others may be related to harmony, melody, or rhythm with no reference to technique. It is the latter that are the more subtle or difficult to spot. Quite frequently punctuation is related both to physical technique and the other intellectual considerations; it is this

which constitutes the most besetting and daunting challenge in music, by which one may define interpretive depth in music.

Though thoughts are indeed separate (as any good sentence in speech), they must certainly be related. Repetition is certainly one way, the plainest, of relating them. But more often, indeed very commonly, it occurs with variation, in which case it is no longer mere repetition but crosses the boundary into *development*. The variation inherent in development is the heart and soul of good note grouping, and relates each thought to its neighbors. This is true whether it be within the phrase (as it must be in single phrasing) or over multiple periods.

It is exceedingly important that even in a phrase (or group within the phrase), any repetition or sequencing that occurs, as with dual phrasing, *should not be exact*. Undoubtedly the hardest task in such attention to the phrase lies in the highly ornamented music of the French Baroque and *galant* styles, which contain by far the most variety in manners and notations. The player may and should look for any difference, even a slight one such as a fingering or sounding point change or a more throaty tone. In any case, his interpretation is likely to be cherished for any *unexpected* or *un-obvious* qualities.

We can easily summarize note grouping within a phrase. There, even more than over the whole course of a period, we get a microscopic view of music, as transcending its notation. I regret that beyond this very general description I cannot be more definite at this time. There is a certain method to this: I wish to give no more than a few ideas, and so leave the interpreter's imagination free to create. Whoever wishes more specific direction should consult a detailed source such as Erickson's *Structure of Music*, and also my list of what *not* to do in phrasing, the common errors, contained in Chapter 9.

6. Single phrasing.

As explained in Chapter 3, single periodicity is the normal phrasing of music from the most ancient times through the first half of the eighteenth century. Generally the only exceptions are the more complicated secular fixed forms of the Middle Ages, Lutheran hymnody, many of the shorter preclassical dance forms, and surprisingly Gregorian chant. It can be said with certainty that these exceptions all derive from complex poetic or hymnic meters, or else amusical doctrine.

The single phrase is historically treated with infinite variety. It may be an improvisation on a mode or scale (e. g. the Indian raga or ancient Greek *tonos*); it may be elaborated with imitative counterpoint (e. g. the motet or madrigal), or with scalar sequencing of individual motives (Baroque *Fortspinnung*), or with “stereotyped patterns” (as in Chinese or Japanese music). In this way is obtained the sometimes extreme length that makes it so difficult to articulate.

This variety of phrase structure can be had even with the most foursquare of phrases. Indeed, they can be built up into arcane and complicated edifices. The Allemande with Double from the B minor Violin Partita, in fact, is an advanced example, each movement consisting of two such 12-bar structures (3 times 4 bars) separated by the double bar--one hesitates to call them periods at this point. Herein lies the chief and vexing difficulty of single phrasing: that it is *not* periodic and that ignorance of a single phrase in such an arcane structure could cause the collapse of the whole entity.

Within each phrase there are myriad possibilities for rhythmic nuance. The best examples of these are the Courantes, which often contain cross-rhythms. The “French” Courante from the Cello Suite #5 contains two such bars of 6/4 (in a prevailing meter of 3/2), each occurring in the last bar of a section, at the final cadence. That of the Cello Suite #1 contains an even fancier one: the final cadence of the first half is three bars, but organized into eight beats of 2/4 with one beat left over. (In the second half this hemiola is not recapitulated exactly, but further developed into

a more conventional additional phrase in 3/4 meter.) And not only at the end of a section; such a rhythmic departure could occur anywhere in the movement, as for instance Bars 42-44 from the middle of the Courante of the Flute Partita. This gambit of Bach is generally so successful whenever it appears that it is possible to reproduce it later on in music history. (E. g. the closing section in the first movement of Beethoven's Eighth Symphony, where hemiolas compress a four-bar phrase of 2/4 into three bars of 3/4, with one beat left over, as antecedent--that one beat *then* used as pickup to the consequent, a disproportionately extended one. See Ex. 10 in Chapter 7.)

It is even possible to notate single phrasing with special signs. This is the specific practice of the French Baroque masters, notably Couperin and Rameau, by which the beginnings and ends of phrases can the more easily be seen. Perhaps their specific and various ornaments may even mark the climaxes.

However, single phrasing has a limit, an obvious and severe one. It is best suited to music that either remains within one key or mode (as in all pre-Baroque music), or gives the chosen key equal ascendancy over any others related to it (including the dominant). Set up a rival key that has a more or less coequal pre-eminence with the main key (such as by immediate modulation to it), and you will unavoidably set in motion the mechanics of double periodicity.

Some examples of single phrasing throughout early music history follow.

Triplum

Motetus

Tenor

Li en - - - sei - gne - ment de cha -

De touz les biens qu'amours ha a don -

Ecce tu pulchra es amica mea

10

ton Le sens, qui fut en Sa-le-mon, La lar-ges-se, la courtoy-si-e

ner Ma dame en est

19

Qu'A-li-xan-dre hot en sa vi-e

tou-te la miex par-ti-e

(Ex. 1. Machaut, *Des Touz les Biens*, Bars 2-9.) Single talea of tenor, in isorhythmic motet. The accompanying motetus and triplum are three times as fast, in three times as many bars (modern notation). It happens in this motet that their taleae also recur, and at the same time as the tenor (panisorhythm). The whole is to be considered a single phrase, whether panisorhythmic or not.

Cantus 2. Et ex sul-ta-uit, et ex...

Altus 2. Et ex sul-ta-uit, et ex... sul-ta-

Tenor 2. Et ex sul-ta-

Bassus Et ex



(Ex. 2. Palestrina, *Magnificat*, Bars 1-9.) Representative of the Counterreformation's *prima prattica*, a single phrase augmented by fugal or imitative procedure in equally participating voices--in this case a very sophisticated procedure, mirror canon.

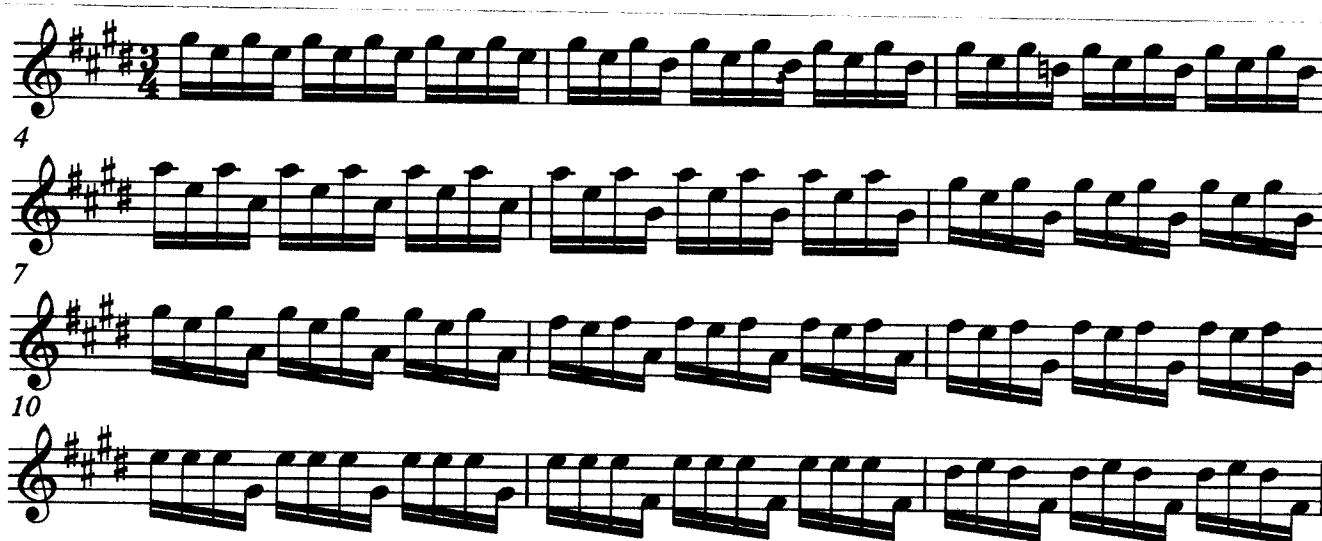


(Ex. 3. Bach, *Chaconne*, Bars 1-8.) Mature development of stichic form. In general chaconnes or passacaglias are 8 bars long--or even twice 4 bars with a slight variation the second time (dual phrasing), as in this case. Nor is this the final development of this form. Modern developments produce longer passacaglia themes (e. g. 17 bars in the Shostakovich Violin Concerto #1.)

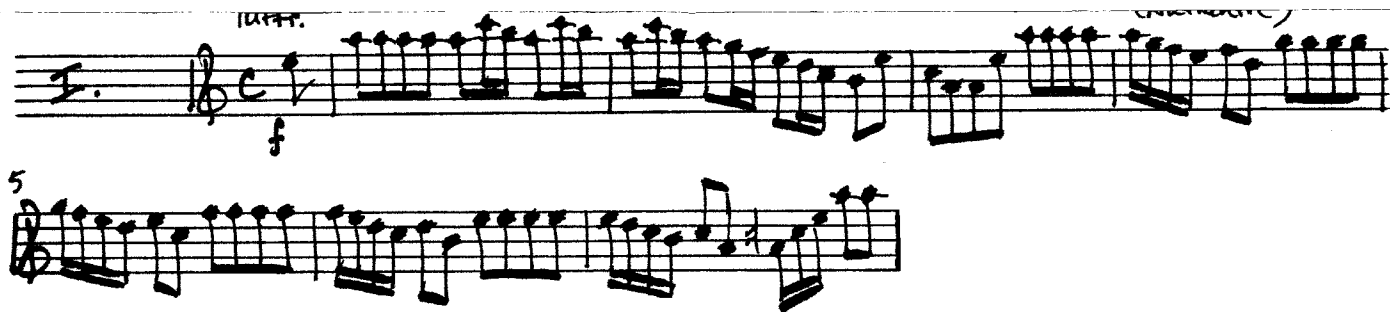


(Ex. 4. Bach, *Cello Suite #2*, Minuet, Bars 1-8.) Foursquare Baroque dance, double period. If

Riepel's double periodicity has any musical roots, it would be in High Baroque dances such as this; but as often as not, neither Bach, Handel, nor Telemann is foursquare.



(Ex. 5. Bach, Partita #3, I, Bars 17-28.) Single 12-bar phrase with *Fortspinnung*. The entire premise of this phrase, which marks it off strikingly from the rest of the music around it, is the virtuosic bariolage alternating the pedalpoint open E with high position chording on the D and A strings. The extraordinarily long working out, which makes it one of the longest phrases in Baroque music, is made possible by exploiting the chain 7-6 suspensions from Bar 21 all the way to their resolution which begins the next phrase. Not until then does this phrase end! By virtue of its recapitulation later on, and one string lower, the whole phrase becomes the basis of an advanced form that can be considered a close precursor of sonata form. For these reasons, it is sheer artistic suicide to play this phrase at the same dynamic level or tempo throughout, as it seems on the surface. The whole must have a single direction, or else a single, monolithically articulated arch, that includes a rather substantial and carefully graded expansion at its end.



(Ex. 6. Vivaldi, Violin Concerto op. 3 #6, I, Bars 1-middle of Bar 7). Two single phrases, with an echo in the first and *Fortspinnung* in the second. It is tempting to reckon the second phrase a consequent, because it begins in the middle of Bar 3; but the V/I cadences at the end of both phrases seem to militate against this analysis.

(Ex. 7. Bach, Overture #3, Air, Bars 1-6). This is an arcane structure composed of three two-bar phrases strung together, the second of which is a one-bar motive sequenced once a tone lower. As it is constituted, it strikes remarkably close to a triple period as we will define it later.



(Ex. 8. Bach, Brandenburg Concerto #5, I, Bars 1-13) This ritornello is also composed of three phrases strung together. If Ex. 7 is close to a triple period, is this? Debatable, but worth considering inasmuch as the movement worked out from this, together with a great many subsidiary themes, is probably as long as can be constructed and very likely bursts the bonds of ritornello form in favor of the later sonata form.

The fugue, as the highest form of counterpoint and the summation of every contrapuntal procedure that has gone before, must also be treated. Generally the fugue subject is short, and therefore must be a single phrase. The exception appears to be keyboard fugues, whose subjects are generally longer, have more bravura, and occasionally show fledgling multiple periodicity. Any rests that may periodically occur in the subject must therefore be carefully examined, because even in a longer subject they will not necessarily mark period constructions. More often they will have to be played through. The countersubject must be single under any circumstances (even with a long multiply periodic subject), and so must the episodes whether they are developments of the subject or independent thematic material. It is quite significant that the fugue being retained in the later Classical and Romantic styles also retained its single periodicity.

It need hardly be pointed out that while single phrasing eventually declined in importance in favor of double periodicity, it did not die out. It merely adapted. Its function in the later style adjusted to coexist with the ubiquitous double period, generally as fugato developments or invertible counterpoints, but also as non-periodic bridge passages such as Ex. 8.

(Ex. 8. Bruckner, Symphony #4, II, Bars 187-192.) This is the bridge from the second statement of the second theme back to the extended coda on the main theme, in the Bruckner adagio form. It replaces an earlier full double period of ten bars (83-92) which led to a further development section of 37 bars and thence to the recapitulation.

Stichic forms (such as the passacaglia) and other singly phrased forms were held over as well.

(Ex. 9a. Tchaikovsky, Symphony #2, IV, Bars 25-40). Stichic form, probably passed on in the Byzantine era (or even earlier) to Russia, could likely form the basis for the Russian penchant for more or less exact repetition of materials, with little and obvious variation. In this way evolved folk tunes like this one, “The Crane”, which Tchaikovsky uses as a *trepak*, a Russian stichic form consisting of variations on an extremely short theme. In addition to the main premise of the *trepak*, Tchaikovsky can resort to one other device to extract his second theme from the first and thus achieve an extended, effectively monothematic sonata-form movement: he uses the inverted augmentation (Ex. 9b), which is further embellished with discreet dissonances so that it becomes a melody in its own right. Likewise in the development section, Tchaikovsky obtains the needed effect simply by changing one interval (Ex. 9c) and letting the result cycle through modulations.

In fact, it may be said that a development section--especially in far more complicated forms than this--does not merely break *themes* down into their basic motivic components; it breaks *phrases* down as well. The double period of the Classic and Romantic styles, which we will next treat, and even the triple period, all tend to break down in development sections into dual and eventually single periodicity. This is also why the fugue proved so adaptable to the later style, either as fully worked-out metamorphoses of earlier themes, or more commonly as fugato passages. The same can be said of transitions within the exposition and "secondary developments" in the recapitulation, smaller sections that have the same function, developing materials, as the larger central development section.

In this way, single phrasing persisted into the twentieth century and enjoyed a resurgence in the hands of antiromantics, impressionists, and neoromantics alike.

(Ex. 10a. Debussy, Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun, Bars 51-54.)



(Ex. 10b. Debussy, Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun, Bars 75-78.) Both these examples are four-bar non-periodic bridges for the sole purpose of carrying out a modulation.



In general bridging and development have become the principal modern uses of single phrasing, all the way up to the present. Single phrases may also be injected (perhaps as stereotyped patterns of sorts) into an athematic or chaotic texture, but in general this is a less effective usage.

The one notable modern development in single phrasing is palindroming, the construction of a phrase to read the same forward and backward--truly a device of our time. It probably evolved from retrograde row use in twelve-tone style, and before that the art of cancrizans in developing fugues. Before this it was always imperfect due to the stereotyped and inflexible nature of rhythms, which tended to lose effect in retrograde. The closest anyone came to a true palindrome was Handel's symbolic affect describing God Omnipotent in the *Hallelujah* chorus:



(Ex. 11. Handel, *Hallelujah* Chorus, Bars 12-14)

Neither Classical nor Romantic double periodicity lent itself well to this writing, for much the same reasons. Undoubtedly the first clear user was Webern; earlier twelve-tone use was theoretically possible, but never noticed because the aim of this music was to develop the row into complicated and athematic music. In Webern's bare and delicate textures the device can be heard because it has thematic character much of the time. Olivier Messiaen's "non-retrogradable" rhythms and motives, simply another name for palindromic structure, are his inveterate practice. There is a clear use of it in the finale of Easley Blackwood's Viola Sonata op. 1 (Bars 49-66, a single, extended 18-bar phrase). It has become one of my favorite devices. Generally it takes the form of a single phrase (though I have very occasionally achieved multiple periodicity), probably best executed with a single phrase accent in the middle, where the retrograde begins.

It should be mentioned that single periodicity is generally the first thing a composer learns to do; also the easiest thing to conduct, or note in rehearsal. This is perfectly natural before going on to more complicated things. What is difficult, in our culture and at our current level, is to distinguish it from what was to come later.

7. Double periodicity.

Though double periodicity was codified by the Mannheim theorist J. F. Riepel, its roots are mysterious. It is not enough to say that it evolved out of the social and political, not to mention musical, tensions inherent in the Age of Enlightenment. Hymnody from the Reformation on, which is mostly in the poetic meters 8-8-8-8, relies on eight-bar phrases divided 4+4 (arbitrarily defined as *regular*). The same phrasing is present in the courtly dance of the Baroque. It was inevitable that at this time phrases should become thematically related and architecturally balanced with one another on the basis of proximity--the first intimations of the antecedent/consequent structure. All this music is monotonal, or else relates every other key to one principal one. Only in Riepel's time came the idea of systematically relating them to *two* principal keys, the tonic and the dominant (or relative major of a minor key). Its application turns out to be extraordinarily advanced and flexible, even shortening or lengthening the two phrases to be balanced as happens frequently in the Mannheim school. With double periodicity it is possible to write or interpret music at greater length than at any time before, inasmuch as it is now possible to develop *two* themes, in what is now known as sonata-form, instead of a single theme (the ritornello) that returns after an intervening episode. In this form double periodicity came to dominate the Classical and Romantic eras--though in the 20th and 21st centuries it has definitely deferred, at least in serious music, to more complicated phrase structures.

The double period had an important precursor: the dual phrasing of the isolated Italian/Spanish phenomenon, Domenico Scarlatti. As Scarlatti was a member of a musical family in the important musical center of Naples, perhaps the entire Neapolitan Baroque school deserves re-examination for the use of dual periodicity. Baroque echo effects, persisting into the *galant* and *Empfindsam* styles, are undoubtedly similar.



(Ex. 1. Scarlatti, D., Sonata L. 104, Bars 1-4.) Dual phrases with echo effects. The entire movement is based on this type of phrasing. The only three mechanisms to lend variety are the implied echo effect on the second manual of the harpsichord, the piquant Spanish harmonies, and the occasional variation in the phrase lengths (notably in the closing section).

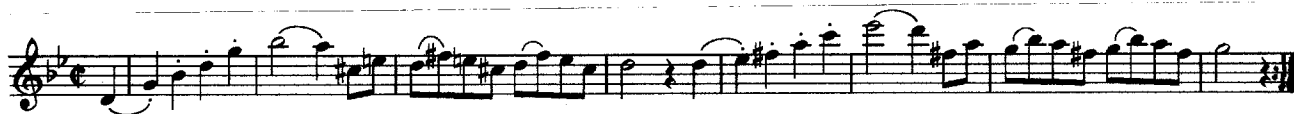


(Ex. 2. Bach, Cello Suite #6, Prelude, Bars 1-4.) The same. The movement from which this comes, however, makes this phrasing a special effect, after which the more normal single phrasing with *Fortspinnung* prevails.

Dual phrasing could have been the basis of indigenous dance forms as well. The traditional call and response is one of its most basic and ancient forms. Antiphonal choirs in the Renaissance used it extensively, for echo effects. The French form *tambourin*, exploited by Bizet in *L'Arlesienne*, is traditionally based on dual periods. As we will see later, it eventually percolated into Russia--Ivan Khandoshkin, who was taught by Tito Porta and other Italians of the preclassical era, was evidently influenced by *Empfindsam* duality. Far from dying out, it forms the basis for much of jazz and rock music--through both the importation of call and response to America, and its reliance on simple harmonies in chord-pairs which can easily decay into ostinato, quite dramatically, when required to support improvisation.

The double period is always composed of an antecedent and a consequent phrase. Its grammatical form is typically that of a question and answer. Hence the end of the antecedent should be conceived as to flow smoothly into the head of the consequent. Otherwise the two phrases

will sound as though they were separate--and they might as well have been so conceived.



(Ex. 3. Mozart, Symphony #40, IV, Bars 1-8.) Double period with repeats--about the shortest a double period can be--the more easily perceived because of the half-cadence in Bars 3-4. Its clarity derives from the ensuing rest, before the next pickup. Its shortness may be the very reason it can mutate later into a fugue subject. Its melodic character as a "rocket" (a theme that rapidly ascends along a triad) certainly aids its radical modulations in the development.



(Ex. 4. Mozart, Symphony #39, II, Bars 1-8.) Double period with repeats. This is the example given by Casals in his famous essay. Unlike the previous example, it is long enough (20") that despite the lack of printed dynamic changes it must be arched somehow or else it will be utterly flat and uninteresting. Haydn and Mozart slow movements are replete with such phrases.

Violino I
Violino II
Viola
Violoncello & Contrabasso

[illegible]

(Ex. 5. Beethoven, Symphony #1, II, Bars 1-26.) Double period greatly expanded by echoes at the end (as in the Finale of the Fifth), but also by fugal procedure. The fugue subject itself is a short double period, with the consequent obscured after two bars by the answer. This--in a symphony regarded as avant-garde in its time--should be seen as an early presage of Romantic phrasing. The next few examples by Beethoven, although not as extreme as this, contain trifling but surprising additions to the traditional double period: echoes that properly make a third component, and extra tags, not part of the phrase, but not long enough to be considered a component.

Oboi

Violino I

Violino II

Viola

Violoncello

Contrabasso

Allegro vivace (♩ = 116)

pp sempre pianissimo e slacc.

5

Ob.

Vl. I

Vl. II

Vla.

Vlc.

Cb.

10

p

p s

(Ex. 6. Beethoven Symphony #3, III, 1-14.) Double period with antecedent shortened! (6+8

bars, in extremely fast tempo--the unbalance maybe deriving from the minuet of the Mozart Symphony #40 which is very similar.) In the recapitulation (Bars 77-92) the two missing bars are reinstated; the resulting return to normal periods seems nearly as unbalanced as the original.



(Ex. 7. Beethoven, Symphony #5, II, Bars 1-10.) The two-bar echo in the consequent cannot possibly be considered a third component. Something else in the treatment of a periodic phrase appears for virtually the first time in music history: a “leading” approach to the consequent. The long note in Bar 4, the last of the antecedent, must be given direction *toward the 32nd that begins the consequent*, instead of away from the rest of the antecedent.



(Ex. 8. Beethoven, Violin Concerto, III, Bars 1-10.) A foursquare double period of 4+4 bars, with a tag after the consequent which is not long enough be regarded as a third component.



(Ex. 9. Beethoven, Symphony #7, II, Bars 3-26.) This is the phrase that baffled Goetschius, who

regarded the written-out pianissimo repeat of the consequent as having no effect on its periodicity. Surely its presence can be accounted a third component. The same thing happens in the Eighth Symphony (first movement, bars 1-12), except that the final cadence is varied as well; it is weak at first, strong the second time.



(Ex. 10. Beethoven, Symphony #8, I, Bars 70-79) The patent irregularity of this double period (3+7 bars) is further compounded by the cross-rhythm in the antecedent--four bars of 2/4 with one beat left over which serves as pickup to the consequent. Many conductors would never believe that this humorous Haydnesque gesture exists.



(Ex. 11. Schubert, Octet, VI, Bars 18-25) This is an early example of an ambiguous period. It is certainly eight bars. But how is it divided--doubly, or triply? If double, is it 3+5 bars, or 5+3 with two bars of sequence included in the antecedent? If triple (3+2+3) the periods are too short. Or do the whole eight bars serve as a deliciously irregular antecedent to the more orthodox consequent which is to follow? We may interpret here. Most people opt for the longer phrases.



(Ex. 12. Brahms, Sextet #1, I, Bars 1-10.) An irregular double period (5+4 bars) with an echo in

the antecedent and an extra bar at the end of the consequent, which could be interpreted as a whole-bar pickup to the next phrase. Significantly, the next phrase is the same music reorchestrated for the entire sextet: periodicity lying within duality, instead of the other way around.

The image displays a musical score for Brahms' Symphony #2, I, Bars 14-31. The score is divided into two systems. The first system (bars 14-27) features woodwinds (Flute, Oboe, Clarinet in A, Bassoon) and strings (Violins 1 & 2, Brass, Viola, Violoncello, Double Bass). The second system (bars 28-31) features woodwinds (Flute, Oboe, Clarinet in A, Bassoon, Horn in D, Horn in E), Percussion (Piano, Bass Drum), and strings (Violins 1 & 2, Brass, Viola, Violoncello, Double Bass). The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'p', 'dim.', and 'p dolce'.

(Ex. 13. Brahms, Symphony #2, I, Bars 14-31.) This is the consequent *alone* of the second peri-

od. (It is preceded by an eight-bar double period with a full bar pickup, and an antecedent of four bars whose full-bar pickup is elided back into the first phrase.) Its single musical thought, a half-cadence over an A pedal, is elaborated and extended from 4 bars into 18 first by repetition, then augmentation, then athematic extension of the countermelody down the A major arpeggio.

Allegro con spirito. (♩ = 144.)
 senza sordini.
 p
 senza sordini.
 p
 senza sordini.
 p
 senza sordini.
 p
 senza sordini.
 p

(Ex. 14. Tchaikovsky, Serenade op. 48, IV, Bars 44-51.) Double periodicity based on dual phrasing, a type found commonly in Russian music. As it may sometimes be difficult to distinguish between dual phrasing and double periodicity, simply because the two phrases are so exactly alike with minimal variation, I would suggest that such periodicity in melodies be considered dual if accompanied by the same harmonies (even if the second repetition be only slightly modified at the end, as in the first four bars of this example), and orthodox if the harmonies are varied.

Near-dual, repetitive periodicity also appears in Schumann (whether dictated by his times or his mental illness is still a controversy), in Mendelssohn, and in general in the music associated with their conservatory at Leipzig--which exported this style to Scandinavia simply by training so many of their composers. Often it is varied by reorchestration or invertible counterpoint. The tireless repetition of note groups, or other small motives contained within the phrases, no doubt contributes to its lasting appeal--but for this reason the repeated motives must never be interpreted the same and the onus is on the performer to search for further variety.

Andante (♩ = 60) incalzando

90 1. 2.

Cl. *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mf*

Fg. *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mf*

Cor. (F) *mp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mf*

VI. *p* *con sord. (teneramente, molto cantabile, con espansione)* *f con sord.*

Vle. *p* *con sord. (teneramente, molto cantabile, con espansione)* *mf*

Vc. *p* *con sord.* *f*

Cb. *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mf*

ritenuto come prima ritenuto 100

Cl. *p* *mf* *p* *mf* *p* *mf* *p*

Fg. *p* *mf* *p* *mf* *p* *mf* *p*

Cor. (F) *p* *mf* *p* *mf* *p* *mf* *p*

VI. *mf* *f* *con sord.* *f* *mf* *f*

Vle. *mf* *p* *mf* *p* *mf* *p* *mf*

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

Cb. *p* *mf* *p* *mf* *p* *mf* *p*

B. E. 3-02

(Ex. 15. Tchaikovsky, Symphony #6, I, Bars 90 with pickup-100). Double period with repeats written out. Again the influence of duality, lying within Tchaikovsky's double period, is patent. The sole difference, as rationale for writing out the repeats, is the added or intensified dynamics.

(Allegro moderato)

Violine 1
Violine 2
Viola
Violoncell
Kontrabaß

(Allegro moderato)

Db. Cl.

Viol. 1
Viol. 2
Vla.
Vc.
Kb.

10

$I/V/2$

Viol. 1
Viol. 2
Vla.
Vc.
Kb.

20

(Ex. 16. Bruckner, Symphony #8, I, Bars 3-22.) Long double period--perhaps multiple period as elucidated in the next chapter--with antecedent greatly extended by sequencing. In general, the postromantic reliance on Baroque sequencing caused confusion in audiences as to periodicity such as Bruckner's. Knowledge of what is and is not doubly periodic in the Romantic style can elucidate all such ambiguities.

49 **4** in tempo

pp
pp dolce
mf
mf espressivo
f
fp
fp
f
fp
dim.
fp dim.
fp dim.
dim.
p
fp dim.
fp dim.
dim.
p
pp
pp
pp

5

(Ex. 17. Dvorak, String Quartet #12, III, Bars 49-72; talea and color repeated with variation at 73-96, 149-172, 173-196). This passage should be an object lesson that old forms and concepts

never die, but are integrated into a total music and can sometimes reappear ferally. To analyze two dual phrases and one double period in this passage is superficial. They are further united by the ancient concept of isorhythm--in this case a 24-bar *color* with the ostinato repetition (*talea*) of the four-bar rhythm given at the opening (without regard to pitches) which is itself extraordinary and interestingly derived, an irregular augmentation of the original bird-call motive that began the scherzo. Did Dvorak know he was reviving isorhythm? No one knows; but that is irrelevant. The point is, the phrase must be arched over all the dual or double periods to get the full effect of isorhythm in its passages; moreover, the whole phrase at about 20'' is short enough to hear out. Fail to do this, and the whole trio collapses in fragments. So does its later reprise with more fanciful variation. So does its relationship to the main scherzo.

It should not be surprising to find the old embedded in the new--not only in the Dvorak example just cited, but also in many less radical ways. It is a common misconception that the classical style is based exclusively (or at least mostly) on doubly periodic construction, and that all else is passé. The truth demonstrated by these examples is that music, growing in complexity over time, gradually absorbs new techniques and adjusts its logic around them.

This is why double periodicity, being conceived around a tonic-dominant polarity, could not easily bear the weight of additional harmonies and therefore declined perforce as harmony decayed into atonality. As said before, this was already happening in the development section. Even Mahler, a Riemann-influenced, inveterate soldier of the double period, was often pressed to either elaborate it with tags, or break it down into single periods with sequence or *Fortspinnung*--a burden eventually passed to the Soviets and their chief socialist-realist architects Shostakovich and Prokofiev. The antiromanticism of Hindemith and his followers completely gave up double periodicity in favor of the old single period, with a tonally freer concept of both the phrase itself and its elaboration into *Fortspinnung* and other methods of sequencing. Indeed this may be why

Hindemith, so difficult to phrase and abstruse to hear, succeeds best at passacaglia-style variation; a double or triple period in Hindemith probably derives from something he either humorously parodied or honorably imitated, and so is crystal-clear (as in the *Symphonic Metamorphoses*).

A word should therefore be put in on its so-called revival, neoclassicism: it may indeed have paid homage to the double period, but except for Prokofiev's Classical Symphony, which does indeed rely heavily on double periodicity, it was more in the breach than the observance. Sooner or later it was compelled to develop the double period into more complex phrasing, as with Poulenc. More often, neoclassic music derived from preclassical duality instead of Viennese double periodicity; this was indeed the case with Stravinsky's *Pulcinella*, which derives largely from sonatas by the Neapolitan Pergolesi, the originals being rewritten with phrases extended by discreet lapidary construction, canonic imitation, or pedalpoint formation. The Debussy Trio for Flute, Viola, and Harp, known as a touchstone of impressionism influenced by the French preclassical style, is even more extraordinary. The first movement's already unusual sonata-form is produced merely by juggling the order of five phrases, which are most commonly single, or less often dual. The first obvious double period is a long one that concludes the first movement, and in the rest of the sonata they are just as infrequent. Almost the same obtains for the entire canon of the Czech composer Leos Janacek, for one compelling reason: the unusual and obsessive derivation of his motives from Czech speech. The periodic writing of Janacek is wildly irregular, and laced with partial echoes and melodic sprouting of various kinds, not deriving from Stravinsky's practice. His phrases are apt to be heard as single or dual, rarely double periods.

But as with single phrasing, double periodicity found its own niches in the twentieth century: the lighter theatrical styles of operetta, musical, popular song, folk music, and cinema. It is also the prevailing style of the country and Western idioms. The closest it comes to rock music is that it is sometimes used in the ballad, or else the top-40 idiom.

8. Triple or greater periodicity.

It has been observed that triple periodicity is not a modern phenomenon. Having covered both single and double periodicity, examining the relations if any that exist between these and triple periodicity, I can now say definitively that triple periodicity *has always existed in theory*, and has only been approached systematically in the 20th and 21st centuries. Before then, it has occurred only ferally, though it became progressively more common as time went on.

Double periodicity depends on the more or less coequal ascendancy of two keys, the tonic and the dominant (or dominant-substitute), which are established as quickly as possible--e. g. by immediate modulation to it--and to which all the others relate. With triple periodicity the complementarity of antecedent plus consequent is destroyed, or at least fatally weakened. Assuming the total time of the periodic phrase is what the human ear can bear, the three *components* of the triple period--it is unwise to any longer call them antecedent or consequent--must as a result be shorter to make an effective phrase, or else something must usually be repeated. More likely triple periods are apt to become unbearably long. Modulation is also weakened. It becomes harder to exploit a traditional harmonic idiom--that is, underpin a melody with appropriate modulation that highlights the line's natural progression across the period construction.

Triple periodicity is actually as ancient as the earliest medieval music.

(a) (a-2)

Ky - - ri - e, e - - - le-i-son Ky - ri - e, e - - - le-i-son.

(a)

Ky - - - ri- e, e - - - le-i-son.

(Ex. 1. Gregorian chant, *Kyrie Alma Pater*, first phrase) The first phrase of this chant is a triple period in which the third component is an exact recapitulation of the first. The rest of the chant cited by Siegmeister entire is analyzed as a three-part form. There can be no doubt that this com-

plex form appears too abruptly to have evolved naturally from anything else. Accordingly I account the traditional reliance on the dogma of the Catholic Trinity to be an artificial legislation of music, as defined in Chapter 3, in support of triple periodicity.



(Ex. 2. Bach, *Wie Schön Leuchtet die Morgenstern*, Bars 1-16.) Early triple periodicity in a Lutheran hymn, reflecting the complexity of hymn meters. Very likely this structure derived from the two *Stollen* and *Abgesang* of German Mastersong, itself a large triple structure with clear roots in the earlier troubador songs and eventually Gregorian chant.

In both these examples, it is necessary to remain in the tonic key; the modulation to the dominant (or, in the chant, the progression to the co-finalis) is necessarily transient. The same is true of the Christmas carol *Patapan*, whose third component is definitely related to the second and differs only in the completion of the final cadence. This is the most common state of affairs before the twentieth century; even the most fanciful modulation in the second component, as in Ex. 3, is transient and must return to the tonic in the third.



(Ex. 3. Dvorak, *Symphony no. 8*, mvt. 1, Bars 1-17.) Begins in the tonic minor, in a major-key

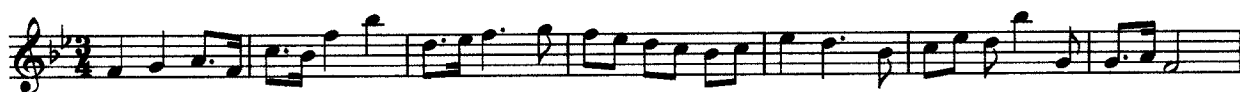
symphony. There is no modulation in the first component, an unusual modulation to the Neapolitan key in the second, and a resolution with the Picardy third--signaling final placement of the symphony in G major--in the third. These bold strokes are necessary to avoid banality of keys in the phrase. The result of this chiaroscuro effect is a tension between G major and G minor felt throughout the whole symphony, even to the coda of the variation finale.

The image displays three systems of musical notation, likely for a symphony. Each system consists of a piano (p) staff and a violin (v) staff. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, beams, and dynamic markings like *f* (forte) and *sf* (sforzando). The first system shows a complex arrangement of notes and rests, with a *f* marking. The second system features a *sf* marking and a triplet of eighth notes. The third system also includes a triplet of eighth notes. The notation is dense and detailed, typical of a musical score.

(Ex. 4. Schumann, *Märchenbilder*, II, Bars 3-14.) This example, structurally quite similar to Ex. 9 of the previous chapter, succeeds as a triple period rather than a double period because the cadence is weak at the end of the second component, strong in its repeat as the third.



(Ex. 5. Brahms, *Symphony #3*, I, Bars 3-14.) The first eight bars of this phrase are traditionally analyzed as a double period--but then what is the rest, which is definitely related, through the half-cadence on the subdominant at Bar 10 that ends the “consequent”? It is better to make this a triple period (a comparative rarity in Brahms) based wholly on the familiar F-A-F motive--in which each component is built out of the sequencing of its first two bars of countermelody. The triple period succeeds because of its harmonic richness, invoking the “upper Neapolitan” relationship in the first component and the orthodox Neapolitan in the third. Clearly the half-cadence in B-flat is an effective bridge from the second to the third component.



(Ex. 6. Prokofiev, *Symphony #5*, I, Bars 1-8.) On the surface a double period violently unbalanced toward the antecedent, this is actually a rare example of a triple period that can modulate to the dominant in the same way as a double period. The phrase is certainly ambiguous. Siegmeister perhaps misdescribes it as a free-flowing phrase (implying a single periodicity it simply doesn't

have). There are two telling observations here. First, the tonic must be held firm in the second component, binding it closely to the first component. Second, the very beginning, coming from the dominant, gives the impression of a pickup of one full bar.

The musical score is for Bruckner's Symphony #2, II, Bars 34-47. It is written in 3/4 time and features a key signature of three flats (B-flat major/C minor). The score is divided into two systems. The first system includes a Horn 1 (Hr. 1) staff and a string section (Str. pizz.) staff. The second system includes a Horn 1 (Hr. 1) staff, a Violin 1-2 arco (Va. 1-2 arco) staff, a Violoncello and Viola unison arco (Va. Vc. unis. arco) staff, and a Horn 3 (Hr. 3) staff. The music is characterized by a slow, steady pace with a mix of sustained notes and pizzicato strings.

(Ex. 6. Bruckner, Symphony #2, II, Bars 34-47.) This is the entire, and triply periodic, second theme of the slow movement (a similar 11-bar triple period opens the movement). This periodicity probably evolved out of the traditional Catholic psalm-tone--with which Bruckner was highly familiar--though the chant line is broken up between the pizzicato strings and the solo horn. The difference here is that the second component modulates from the psalm-tone, a step higher, with the intent of reaching a half cadence. From this the third, 6-bar component can easily proceed, reaching the goal of C major in the fifth bar and extending this chord one more bar into the first reprise of the main theme.



(Ex. 7. Sibelius, Symphony #3, I, Bars 29-39.) This triple period (3+2+6) succeeds through two devices: its modified sequencing of the first component and its linear motion through the entire phrase, encompassing the whole pentatonic scale in C plus the note F# enroute to B minor.

The first ten bars of Debussy's *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*, one of the best-known phrases in modern music, has still not been satisfactorily analyzed for phrase structure. It is a triple period of $3 \frac{1}{3} + 2 \frac{2}{3} + 4$ bars, in which Debussy solves the problem of tonal modulation in three ways, one in each component: 1) his tonally ambiguous beginning in the solo flute; 2) the consequent onset of a scintillating dissonance which is deceptively resolved; 3) most importantly, the modified repeat of the second component with one bar further development. At 40" it is one of the longest phrases extant in music, but does not strain the ear or attention span because of its bold tonal and textural premises and the cavernous silence of approximately four seconds between the second and third components.

All the above examples are ingenious but temporary solutions to the intractable problems of handling tonality in triple periodicity. An alternative way of organizing harmony must be invoked. It is tempting to invoke a third key with importance equivalent to the first or second one; but unfortunately such a key will weaken the tonic-dominant polarity and tax the ear with too much time and harmonic variety to hear the phrase resolve its harmony. The only other solution would be to return to the pre-eminence of one key, which is either returned to after modulation, or retained with no modulation at all. By far the most successful has been the *additive* harmonic scheme--that is, retaining one key as pre-eminent, with no modulation, and adding harmonies utterly subservient to it to each component in the period.

The best-known genre to exploit this scheme is the blues. Its most basic and familiar version is the 12-bar scheme. Its very foursquareness is the heart and soul of both its listenability and its adaptability to jazz, rhythm-and-blues, and rock music.

be my man_ (gal)_ you got to give me for-ty dol-lars down.

you want to be my man_ you'll give me for-ty dol - lars

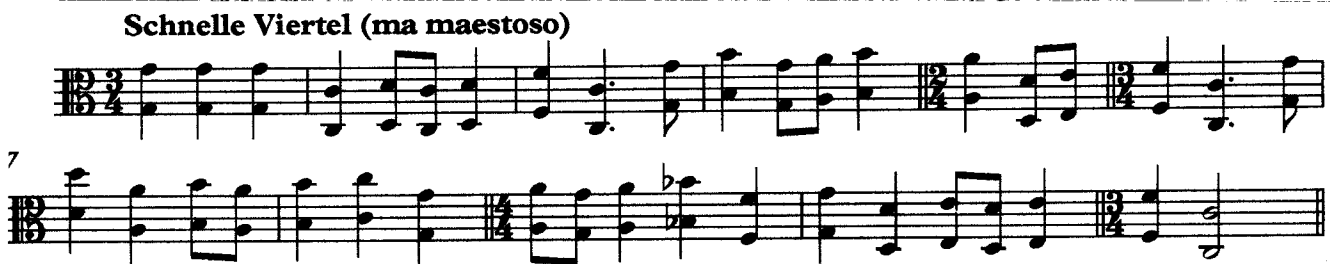
down If you don't be my man_ (gal)_ your

ba - bysgon-na shake this town Mis-ter

(Ex. 8. Handy, *Memphis Blues*, Bars 5-16.) 12-bar triple period with traditional blues harmony--

in fact, the very first piece to be designated a blues. Handy himself is known to have said that he *shortened* the 12-bar phrase from 16 to avoid redundancy. It is so listenable because it is four-square yet flexible. The traditional harmonies--IV/I in the second component, V/IV/I in the third--should be seen as having an *additive* construction, actually the first such application of what is considered today a modern, avant-garde concept. The performer should be aware that the alternate harmonies possible in the the third period, such as the II/V/I cadence, will not be additive in this sense. Perhaps this is what is currently obscuring the perception of blues as a triple period.

Understanding the blues as a triple period with an additive harmonic scheme not only remedies its misperception as a ferally occurring musical idiom; it unlocks the door to further exploitation of triple periodicity elsewhere, with development of its attendant harmonies and even phrase irregularity. Any harmonies should be usable, and the phrases should be extendable to any length, provided the human ear can properly hear them without losing attention.



(Ex. 9. Hindemith, Sonata op. 31 #4, III, Bars 1-11.) This theme, on which 22 variations are constructed, has an additive melodic structure instead of a harmonic one because it is exclusively in octaves. Its clear triple periodicity (3+3+5 bars in changing meter), in an antiromantic noted for his use of Baroque phrasing, has not heretofore been noted. It thereby satisfies this definition of blues; evidently Hindemith has transfigured it for his own use, for each variation, though of different character and occasionally variable number of bars, keeps the same periodicity.



(Ex. 10. From Allman Bros. Band, *Hot 'Lanta*.) This is the third component alone, the traditional V/IV/I progression of an A minor blues. Highly expressive chromatic motion is injected into it--a disarmingly simple device that heightens its drama.

Moderate (♩ = 144) *in tempo* *Marshall Fins, op. 119 in tempo*

VIOLIN

p *hesitating* *hesitating*

PIANO

p

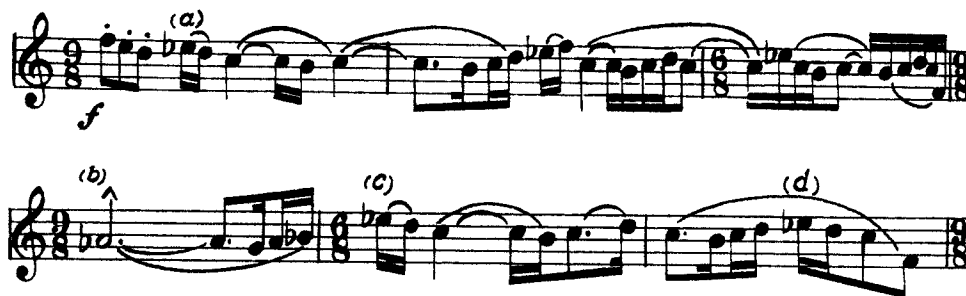
8 *slower - accelerating to --- tempo*

mf *mf* *up* *up*



(Ex. 11. M. Fine, *Spider-Silk*, Bars 1-16.) Triple period of 4+5+7 bars, odd 5/8 meter, nontraditional blues harmony with linear motion. I have chosen this lone example of my own for a good reason: most laymen would never regard this phrase as blues. Why can't it be? A different meter--so what? A different number of bars in each component--again so what? Perhaps they may try making a case against the harmonies? There is an alternative tonal scheme here, based on the augmented triad Ab-C-E (in a piece clearly in A-flat major); but the triad is exploited in the same additive fashion as the circle of fifths is in Ex. 9. This, even though the harmonies are linear instead of vertical.

Triple periodicity in its main forms has been accounted for; could there be periodicity based on a greater number of components? Quadruple periodicity is rare, because of the danger that the four components might more easily divide into two double periods. But it may reasonably be represented by the opening phrase of the Bartok Divertimento for Strings (Ex. 12),





which is a quadruple period of 3+3+3+3 bars, because its additive, blues-like harmonic structure incorporates the third component as a modified repeat of the second.



(Ex. 13. Sibelius, Symphony #3, I, Bars 18-28.) A similar reason underlies this virtuously short and audible quadruple period, which occurs immediately before Ex. 7: the second component undergoes intensive development producing a total length of 2+2+3+4 bars (rather than a violently irregular double period of 2+9 bars).

34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41

Ob 1. *p*

E H *p*

Kl 2. *p*

Fg 3. *p*

Hr 2. o Dpf *p*

Hrf *p*

p-10

Molto moderato (♩ = 88)

34 H *p* *part*

Vcl *p*

Kbs *p*

Molto moderato (♩ = 88)

34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41

34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41

(R-10)

poco rit

42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49

Ob 1. *pp*

E H *pp*

Kl 2. *pp*

Bs Kl *p* eventuell KFG

Fg 3. *pp*

Hr 1.2. *pp*

Hrf *pp*

poco rit

42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49

Vcl *pp*

Kbs *pp*

poco rit

42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49

(R-1)

60

Musical score for measures 50-57. The score includes parts for:

- Ob 1.
- E H
- Kl 2.
- Bs Kl
- Fg 3.
- Hr 1. 2.
- Hrf
- I. Gg m Dpf
- Vcl
- Kbs

 The score is marked with dynamics such as *p*, *pp*, *sehr ruhig*, and *dolce*. The tempo is marked *poco rit* at the beginning and end of the section.

(Ex. 14. Schoenberg, *Orchestral Variations* op. 31, Theme.) 24-bar entity of uncertain periodicity (most likely 4 separate periods), with 5 complete statements of the row--the last two occurring at the same time as *Hauptstimme* and *Nebenstimme*. The danger of division into two double periods by the ear is evident here.

For much the same reasons I anticipate that quintuple periodicity will be even rarer. The only practical hope of seeing it is in music that uses melodic sprouting or lapidary construction; and even here the ear may still break the phrasing down into dualities. Stravinsky's music is the arch-

etypal expression of this sort of phrasing; in fact the above terms, “melodic sprouting” and “lapidary themes”, are Stravinsky’s own, evolved early in his career. The phrases will be short due to the use of ostinato, and the sprouted forms provide the needed variation. Alternatively, sequencing, *Fortspinnung*, or echoes may be used. Ex. 16 from the previous chapter could be considered a quintuple period, if the fourfold sequencing of its opening motive were interpreted as four separate components.

My own experience with triple periodicity began, though I was at first unaware of it, at an extremely early age. As I learned music, I gradually observed that my experiments with alternate key levels and hierarchies, as basis for my own handling of tonalities and even tone-rows, lent themselves better to triple periods than double. It appears that I may have discovered a basic new truth, which all these examples demonstrate: that just as double periodicity was necessary to accommodate music based on an ascendant tonic and dominant (or dominant-substitute), triple or greater periodicity is the new wineskin for the fresh wine, music of expanded tonality and rhythmic scope. The chances are excellent that a phrase of modern music, that on the surface appears to lead nowhere due to a “free-flowing” character, or otherwise lies uncertainly or ambiguously, will come clean when considered a multiple period.

The conclusion of this and the preceding two chapters is that the periodicity of music, and the various alterations and additions to it that crop up, should be considered a language structure, just as words have syntax. It is certainly necessary to understand this language structure, if one is to avoid errors in phrasing; and it shall be the purpose of the next chapter to elucidate these.

9. Common errors in phrasing

The object of good phrasing is to make music sound interesting. To this end, almost anything, any device or trick, will be effective--even if it is controversial. The public, in the end, is the final arbiter of what is tasteful, what excessive; and it is generally accommodating and tolerant, except for the odd *succès de scandale*. Very little is actually wrong--yet how common are the phrasing sins of immature musicians, which make music ordinary at best and run the risk of boring the audience to deadly slumber within a few minutes!

The chief and greatest such sin is ignoring the musical grammar. Music is analogous to speech in that it has a sentence structure (that is, its peculiar periodicity), a syntax, and a punctuation. It is paramount 1) that it be enunciated, with the emphasis on the correct "syllable" or beat; 2) that these intonations follow the exploitable harmonic structure inherent in the phrase; 3) that in the course of following the harmonies they obey the principles of arsis and thesis within the phrase; and 4) that they take account of every type of periodic structure.

The commonest sin against musical grammar is the "tyranny of the barline", the tendency to accent on the barline--or even worse the beginner's tendency to hesitate before the barline, as if it were itself a note. The barline is after all a fairly reliable guide to the shape of the phrase it encompasses, but it is neutral (as was said in Chapter 5) and its relationship to the phrase--or even against it--must be approached with respect. The tyranny of the barline is seen most in failure to enunciate pick-ups, as for instance (and most flagrantly, in a passage that makes pickups a technical problem as well) in the scherzo of the Schumann Symphony #2. (Ex. 1)



This notorious violin audition excerpt makes the incessantly repeated three-note pickup a monster that must as much as possible be taken in tempo, *and* articulated. Barline tyranny is also seen in the failure to acknowledge any cross-rhythms that can crop up (as for instance in the Courante movements of Bach).

But perhaps no sin of musical grammar is as serious as failure to finish the phrase--of any type--before going on to the next one. Ignorance of the musical grammar is the probable cause; but rote education as to the end of the phrase is not enough to dissipate this habit. The student must be educated into all types of phrasing, using this systematic scheme, so that he knows just what type of phrase he is playing and how it is modified; and he must be encouraged to study and mark brackets on the phrase structures. As most sudden tempo changes come between phrases--less commonly in the middle--one may judge the student's improvement in the art of finishing phrases by his ability to suddenly switch tempos.

A related problem in finishing the phrase is lack of care on the last note. Tempering the phrase by having the phrase accent somewhere else than the end is often called the "feminine" cadence--though exactly what is feminine about it is unclear. Gender-related or not, the incessant imposition of a strong accent on the last note of a phrase is the one thing that most easily reduces music to boredom. In some degree, the phrase end must be so tempered--although, to be perfectly fair, this ethic does have its limits and I will later treat excessive "femininity" under the heading of rulebound dogmatism.

Also related to ignorance of the musical grammar is excessive elision of phrases, or layering so obsessively complex as to obscure their beginnings and endings. This is a peculiar temptation not of performers and conductors, who interpret already existing phrases, but of composers; and it does not help that such overwhelming complexity was the norm in the sixties and seventies under such avant-garde luminaries as Cage (in aleatory music), Xenakis (in the opposite extreme, sto-

chastic music), and Elliott Carter in his fully mature period. They all had early examples in Ives (in the Fourth Symphony, the late tone-poems, and all four violin sonatas) and the fully mature twelve-tone music of Berg and Schoenberg (Webern's gossamer textures and extreme brevity became a notable exception). The *Hauptstimmen* and *Nebenstimmen* of the twelve-tonists and post-serialists, the turgid layerings and dissolve-montages of Ives and Carter, and minimalist and aleatory musics remain stiff propositions that can only be managed the best one can--yet a spare and select few such articulations may make a difference in appreciating such uncompromising music!

The next most serious sin in phrasing is failing to expand at the end of a phrase. This violates the natural punctuation of music, analogous to the comma or semicolon in wordcraft, and may be the most proximate cause of failure to finish. It is axiomatic to phrasing that every phrase, of whatever type, has a natural resolution at the end (or sometimes even considerably beforehand) that must be exploited by at least a slight amount of expansion. As this will necessarily involve a gradation of tempo, the expansion must be carefully practiced so that the tempo change or wrinkle is exactly what is desired. The extreme of this principle, of course, is the operatic fermata whose exploitation by singers remains the sensuously pleasurable mystique of opera.

The third great sin of phrasing is failing to breathe between phrases, if able. The archetypal expression of this necessity is Anton Bruckner's, on the many such general pauses in his Second Symphony: "But look, if I have something important to say I must first take a deep breath!" It is of course unthinkable not to breathe in song or on a wind instrument; but the body of a violin or viola does indeed tend to cut off a careless or tense player's wind. Between these extremes--for conductors and such instruments as piano, harp, percussion, or low strings--it is tempting to ignore the necessity to breathe as a physical recourse before attacking the next phrase. It happens most often under the gun of the beat or the prevailing tempo which is usually being regarded as sacrosanct and inviolate--there is no counting the sheer number of my taskmasters who have

been beset by this ill--and it should surprise no one that whoever ignores the necessity to breathe will also probably ignore or have difficulty with the expansion of the phrase just now discussed, or for that matter controlling the tempo to *his own* specifications in the first place.

The fourth sin is lack of variety or imagination in phrase arch (or "flat" phrasing in general). The phrase in music is never flat, any more than normal speech occurs in a monotone. Most cultures, in speech and song alike--particularly African, Caribbean, and Asian cultures--articulate phrases with stress accents and tonal variation--by which is meant the rise and fall of the speaker's intonation. However, it is a distinct cultural norm in conversation--at least in modern Western civilization--that the voice must not be raised, not even to make a high point of emotion or drama. To rise above an absolutely conversational tone is regarded as bad manners, or unwarranted or "disturbed" emotions. This pernicious tendency is gradually invading music as well. It manifests principally as the rock musician's habit, learned on inflexible electrified instruments, of repeating the same accents in his phrasing along with the same ostinato or melody; also as the doctrine so frequently seen in the symphony orchestra profession: "If it isn't printed, don't play it!" Such overweening literalism is a potent source of confusion; conductors or performers who so ruthlessly sculpt a phrase into a single phrase accent at the top, simply because nothing is printed to give them any ideas about how to arch, are generally risking the reduction of music into flat phrasing. The only solution to this problem is for the student to learn his own arching habits, and to form suitable arguments in their favor--*and then for the teacher to at least acknowledge that it is possible, even if he must muster his own argument against them.* To this end every teacher may give his own example, but should never make it incontrovertible dogma, rather exercise the imagination for possibilities. In this way it might be shown that jagged archings, with more than one phrase accent included, could be made viable and appealing according to the sense of the music or the personality of the performer. For me this already has a basis in the salutary

ethic I already perceive, that an asymmetrical phrasing should be used as much as possible for the level of interest, but needs to be applied further for the sake of even greater creativity.

Related to flat phrasing is the tendency to play repeated figures the same. Repeated figures or ostinati are the bugbears of phrasing. This is obvious even in Stravinsky, where melodic sprouting or lapidary construction provides the needed variation in the ostinato--often not even this construction can adequately ameliorate the inevitable attention problems. Even in minimalist music, which makes ostinati all-encompassing by definition of the idiom, they create problems. The only proven solutions to repeated figures is to either give them direction (toward the climax or away from it), or to vary the repetition in some way, for instance by a timbre or fingering change.

Related to the third sin is the fifth, failing to allow notes time to sound within the phrase. Very few phrases are entirely perfect. Most of the time they will contain notes that are some sort of problem to bring out, and certainly will not respond if the tempo is prohibitively strict, or if the phrase is not expanded at the appropriate point, or if it is flat, or if the place has a technical problem as was delineated in Chapter 3. Careful practice to ascertain problem places is absolutely required for every phrase.

The sixth major sin is ignoring the acoustical limits of the performer's instrument. A related and opposite sin is the so fanatic submission to the instrument's limits as to take no risks in either performance or (for a composer) orchestration. As mentioned before, phrasing is partially a technical problem. It depends to a large extent on just how much variety and flexibility the *instrument*, even more than its player, will provide. The musician who is able to *respect* the limits, but *not* ignore them--and who can balance the awareness of acoustic limit with the willingness to take risks--will have the best *control* of his phrase, therefore the most successful phrasing.

The final two sins against good phrasing are sins that so far no one in my experience has covered, and it apparently falls to me to discuss: overphrasing and rulebound dogmatism.

It appears to be entrenched dogma that there can never be too much phrasing. That is, there can never be too much expansion of the phrase, nor too much arch, nor too much emotional expression. In the treatment of the so-called “feminine” cadence, too, there can apparently never be too much “femininity”, the tendency to phrase the end away from the top, in the treatment of the phrase accent. It is incessantly said, for example, of the first component opening the Beethoven Eighth Symphony:



(Ex. 2. Beethoven Symphony #8, I, Bars 1-4)

not only that the *forte* dynamic must be less than the later fortissimo, but also that the last seven notes be *feminine*, so feminine that the dynamic must drop from the top at Bar 3 to piano at the end! The balance between the energy and “femininity” of a phrase is often extremely delicate, and wrong to ignore, and finding it in these instances is extremely difficult.

A closely related entrenched dogma is that small motives be exhibited as note-groups within a phrase. True, on paper the sky should be the limit in phrasing in all these parameters. However, ideals almost never work out in practice. Each instrument has its own acoustic limit; and it turns out that *the phrase itself* has its own limit of tolerance, beyond which it breaks in pieces. Sometimes that limit is obvious; sometimes it is not and has to be found by careful practice.

Take for instance the sequence:



(Ex. 3. Haydn, Sinfonia Concertante, III, Bars 5-8)

It needs no great reflection to see that breaking up this line into its component four-note scales will make the phrasing labored. The reason is obvious: there is too little time between sixteenth

But now slow it down by half:



This is the only operation we have brought to bear on this scale motive. But what a difference! In this example there is enough time to both emphasize the direction of the line and expose the phrase structure--for the basic motive is the inversion of the descending four notes that opened the movement, subjected to such intensive development that not only the line but its basic building-block, the four-note scale, can show its forward direction as well!

In sum, sooner or later the performer is going to be thrown on his own judgment as to what is or is not overphrasing. He cannot afford to be hidebound.

The dogma that there can never be too much phrasing is not the only such hidebound attitude. It is, of course, the opposite extreme from a too-literal or otherwise rulebound approach. In general, attitudes destructive to phrasing can be found in extremes. For every teacher who advocates wild, even tasteless freedom in phrasing, there is one who for instance denigrates noise or unwritten accents in a phrase, saying they “are not beautiful” or even more dismissively, “do not belong” simply because they are not indicated in print. To my mind this is a too-restrictive definition of beauty. The interpreter should always be free to dissent, to abide by Shostakovich’s well-known teaching dictum, “If you don’t like it, do it better.” Everything in the universe, music included, is double-edged, with the potential for beauty or ugliness, creation or destruction. Nothing in the universe may be dismissed from consideration. The truth, it appears, can be found somewhere in the middle, such that it balances out all these extremes and promotes a provocative interest in all such interpretations.

10. The exigency of bad phrasing in good music

This chapter may, on the surface, sound like an oxymoron. It is certainly not.

How often in music do we run across a piece of repertoire that has survived the ages on the reputation of its composer--and yet its interpreters have to scratch their heads over the *je ne sais quoi* of its phrasing? There are such things, the Bay Psalm Book for instance, which is filled with misplaced stress accents because new words that do not scan are set to traditional melodies.

Or how many composers have historically complained of unsatisfactory performances of pieces that they declare to be their most sensitive and profound, by even the greatest virtuosi--when the complaint is just because the composer doesn't have full command of his phrasing? Or worse, because he abandons the onus of phrasing to his interpreter?

Or how many composers are lucky to succeed because of their novel sonorities, textures, and technical devices--while their conductor champions are baffled as to how to phrase them because their phrasing is so abstruse or difficult? Or rockers with abstruse cults--the very same.

Unfortunately, the concept that a phrase has a language structure and a time-frame has its corollary, that it can be *badly* conceived--and not just by players, but *composers* as well. Even musicologists are potentially vulnerable. I once heard a Baroque music specialist, who swore by the theory of the ascendancy of beats in the style--that the downbeat was the strongest, the beat just before the next-strongest, and so on down to the offbeats--and also insisted on the *messa di voce* instead of pressure accents. In that lecture a student beside me, an advanced violin student I think, asked, "What's the chance that this teaching is actually *bad* Baroque playing?" The professor could not answer. The question unsettled me also, and continues to do so to the present.

Just as in any grammar, the musical sentence may be fragmented, run-on, redundant, or even confusingly punctuated. It should surprise no one that such badly written phrases are naturally harder to properly interpret. But--and I believe no one else has made this point--the onus is on

the player to make his best go at not only well-phrased music, but badly phrased music as well. Of course he is within his rights not to play the latter at all; that is his judgment. But in that event he risks missing out on the natural sonic beauty that can inhabit even badly phrased music.

One such example for solo viola, which is replete with such badly conceived, hard-to-play periods, is the G minor Reger Suite, op. 131d no. 1. I make this judgment with much trepidation because Reger's melody and sense of counterpoint are so strong. But these very criteria I have so far outlined should show the structural weakness of these phrases. The first movement tempo is so slow and the bars so long (4/4 meter subdivided into extremely slow eighth notes) that the phrase, whatever it be, will likely be hard to arch; it will be a horrific temptation to compensate by rushing across the phrases throughout. The structural problems in Reger's phrases are evident from the very first one, apparently a double period of 2+3 bars (Ex. 1):



In the first place the whole thing is extremely long, about 35-40 seconds, a ferocious demand on the listener. If we make two double periods out of it, just where does the second antecedent begin? It might begin in the middle of Bar 3, in which case the whole second period will be only 1 1/2 bars (or about 13 seconds), considerably shorter than the initial one. Moreover, this leaves an abnormally short consequent in the first phrase. The alternative analysis, the whole as a triple period, makes the harmony stutter on the diminished seventh between the tonic and the half-cadence at the end of Bar 5. The point is, no interpretation is wholly satisfactory; some solution is obviously better than no phrasing at all, but it is not saying much. The same problem persists throughout the movement, obliging the performer to interpret either in oppressively long double

periods or short irregular and apparently unconnected phrases with odd angles that might stick out into the middle of the long 4/4 bar. This will make the end--the final 1 1/2 bars!--the most jarring phrase of all, either way. No matter how slowly it is played, however much it is expanded, it will always sound like an abrupt cutoff instead of a quietly resolving coda.

Quite the opposite problems bedevil the finale of the same suite. Here the tempo is a problem. The indication *molto vivace* must be taken with a box of salt--probably about quarter=100-104--or else this brutally short movement will be over too soon to make any impression of resolving the magnificent but oppressively phrased adagio that began the suite. Perhaps longer phrases and even triple periods (such as making the whole development section a triple period of 6+6+4 bars) could help. Again, and for the opposite reasons, some attempt at phrasing will be better--but only a little!--than none at all.

The opening of the scherzo in Beethoven's Seventh Symphony is another example, a double period which very few conductors, let alone musicians of any kind, have been able to analyze properly. By my definition, it is a badly written phrase.



(Ex. 2.)

In retrospect, it should be no surprise that such a radical experimenter in periodicity as Beethoven inevitably misfires. The proper length is 2 (with quarter-note pickup) +8 bars. It is hard to hear precisely because the basic motive is so short it barely registers to the ear. Even by repeating it, the complete antecedent is far too short. Most immediately this impairs the conse-

quent, which gets undue emphasis on the last note (in both Bars 6 and 10). The whole phrase registers as a single phrase, and is patently hard to finish; then the subsequent phrases, which begin on the downbeat and change harmonies each bar, are heard as one-bar pickups. The whole scherzo is thereby knocked off kilter, and is notoriously hard to bring off in concert.

Richard Wagner is another example of a composer who suffers from bad phrasing in otherwise good music--the more intensely as his career advanced. There can be no doubt that he was never easy with double periodicity; but whether he regarded it as a hackneyed idiom, or his original melodic gift was so poor that he could not exploit it, has never been clarified. The aforementioned opening of the Siegfried Idyll, so long that the ear cannot hear the full period through, tends to militate in favor of Wagner's compositional skill. But more often than not the player is presented with problems such as this:

The image displays a musical score for Wagner's *Das Rheingold*, specifically the Giant-motive. The score is written for piano and consists of three systems of staves. The first system begins at measure 268, marked with a forte (*ff*) dynamic. The second system continues the melody and accompaniment. The third system concludes the excerpt, marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings, illustrating the phrasing challenges mentioned in the text.

(Ex. 3. Wagner, *Das Rheingold*, Giant-motive)

Is Wagner's picture of the giants Fafnir and Fasold lunacy or genius? Its seven bars are based on two motives, seemingly popping up without rhyme or reason. It is so long it would be utterly folly to consider it a single phrase. But it is also not a double period, for it has no natural question and answer mechanism. Nor is it a dual phrase, for after the modified repeat there are still two bars left over. Is it then a triple period? If so, it remains in the same place until the A just before the end, a last-minute modulation if ever there was one. Whatever the attempt at analysis, the two motives do nothing but fall all over each other (perhaps in parody of the lumpish giants) and the phrase remains static with no possibility of motion or resolution.

Even if this is a feral instance, Wagner's technique of metamorphosing *Leitmotivs* often has a profound effect on interpretation of his phrases. It may even radically change the phrase structure. Consider the Masters' theme from the *Meistersinger* overture, which in the very opening is conceived in two mighty and irregular 13-bar double periods, divided 4+9 and 5+8. But its programmatic diminution to represent the Apprentices, which also functions as a development section, inserts some material from the *Probelied* after each of these periods. These interludes are far too short to be heard as single phrases. What is the result? The motives actually combine to form triple periods (of 2+1 1/2+2 and 2 1/2+4+4 bars), the more readily because the Apprentice motive is also too long to be a single phrase.

In any event, Wagner's "endless melody", intended as a pitched battle with the traditional periodicity of his day, could do only two things, both deleterious to his style: 1) return to the old concepts of either dual phrasing or the singly periodic *leitmotiv*, or 2) plunge on into the murky territory of a fledgling and feral triple periodicity. The alternative, of course, was to persist in inordinately extended antecedents and consequents. Perhaps the *Probelied* from Act I of *Die Meistersinger*--indeed the whole opera, which illustrates the conflict between Walther's (or Wagner's) phrasing and Beckmesser's (Hanslick's) judgment--shows Wagner aware of his dilemma.

Accordingly, the player faced with Wagner must be prepared to phrase with his full intensity and craft, and more or less alone. He must be aware that as often as not someone else will be playing another phrase against him, most likely a counterpointing *leitmotiv*. More to the point, he must accept that a lot of the time it may not be heard without help from a sensitive conductor. The conductor has the even greater onus of balancing all these odd phrasings, all these combinations of leitmotifs and their developments.

What applies to Wagner will apply with even greater urgency to the works of the twelve-tone masters, in which row-forms are often so jumbled together that the human ear cannot possibly hear them as phrases even if the performers must so treat them. In these, the player's greatest aid will no doubt be the composer's designations of *Hauptstimmen* and *Nebenstimmen*. Given that the twelve-tonists deliberately intended abstruse music that destroyed any tonal center as well as undermining traditional periodicity, a judicious emphasis of these voices which are sure to contain recurring thematic material will bring rewards.

Finally we come to music that is an interpretive problem because its phrasing has been abolished in one way or other creating chaos: aleatory music on the one avant-garde extreme, and minimalist music on the other, ultra-conservative extreme. And yet, to carry interest and survive, both musics must be phrased! How to solve this paradox?

I suggest that minimalist music be interpreted by making the best compromise--by giving the least discernible, most carefully graded, most finesse-filled gestures of direction. Certainly every such phrasing, involving as it does a volume or tempo change, is going to take a risk against the basic premise of the style, but it must be remembered that music transcends its notation.

Whereas aleatory or other avant-garde music, having made a practice of ceding control of the notes from the composer to the performer, might best lend itself to over-interpretation, including the most violent and seemingly absurd overphrasing. Why not? It's a show, that must go on.

10. Conclusion: final advice.

Just what have I done, in this small volume?

Very little, actually--and paradoxically a great deal.

I have taken unchanged almost every feral teaching I have had, from one source or another--books, teachers, and conductors alike--and have found their place in one holistic concept, actually not new but previously unorganized--an organic, cyclic view of music history that shows the true growth of music. That is, I have combined provincial or isolated teachings in my own fashion, extending reasons and associations already existing in partial forms to their logical consequences.

The result is a whole greater than the sum of its parts, whose principles and examples can be applied elsewhere. The student who has come through to this final chapter may find he knows more than his teachers, or his other taskmasters. He will certainly have a ready and adaptable reference which will serve him lifelong. The teacher should find himself enriched, enlightened from any of his own perplexities--I pray *not* alienated--and with a new power of dialogue with students and respect for their choices.

Finally, all the musical community will be found to benefit in their relationships with the lay public, which we should never for an instant forget. The average listener can hear diatonic or modal melody and harmony, relatively short and foursquare phrasings, and one returning theme in either stichic, strophic, or ritornello form. His style preferences are based on this level of awareness. With anything more sophisticated--e. g. profuse chromaticism, two or more themes, or variations in phrase length--he is sure to be swept away. This newfound awareness of phrasing will more easily communicate the more sophisticated musical thoughts of our time to them.

I want to emphasize that this book is not intended as a challenge to authority, and should never be used as such. Instead, I intend to give the reader the power to be his own musician, using every resource available to him.

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