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MUSICAL IMAGINATIONS OF DIFFERENCE: A DIALECTIC RE-EVALUATION OF MY COMPOSING *OEUVRE*, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THREE KEY WORKS

By Johan Cloete

A dissertation submitted in the Music Division of the Wits School of Arts in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF MUSIC

(D.MUS IN COMPOSITION)

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I hereby declare that this is my own research.

Johan Cloete
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ABSTRACT

This study attempts to locate and elucidate the subjective roots of my creative output during the twenty-one-year period, 1985 to 2006. In 1994, a potential socio-political disaster, prompted by the apartheid state, was converted into the model for an almost utopian condition thus enabling the gnawing anguish of the collective to morph into a cautious sense of hope. At the time, as always, my music reflected this sea-change instinctively. I never consciously force my concerns into my work and can only now, with hindsight, trace an unspoken mid-eighties' hope for the dissolution of individual and collective anguish. What would follow in the wake of such deliverance could not be guessed at the time. The labyrinthine workings of the creative mind are prompted by concerns on a deeply subconscious level and, in this context, they are only decipherable afterwards, either as frustrated hopes or as fulfilled ones. In anticipating, (however unconsciously), the dissolution of institutionalised fascism, my work mapped out the next step via a personalised ideal anticipating a new social order and individual rights as realised in the 1994 constitution. Furthermore, attitude towards my own culture changed, as demonstrated by the use of Afrikaans texts, and heralded a third stage in my projected evolution: the continued discourse between individual and collective identity was now brought into the conscious mind in order to illuminate creativity and infuse future work. It anticipates a reconciliation between the artist and his own personal and collective demons. With the resultant externalisation of such capricious archetypes one accepts an erratic evolution.

Key Words

Past; future; socio-political transformation; self; other; reciprocity of individual; collective conciliation; *ubuntu*; new order

PREFACE

Journey towards Self-Realisation as a Composer

The purpose of this paper is to explore the compositional *oeuvre* of a white Afrikaner composer during the years 1985 to 2006 – I am that composer. Drawing on post-modern critical thought, the aim of this study is to clarify more than purely musicological considerations as defined in modernist philosophy. Post-modern musicology encompasses aspects not previously investigated in terms of music and musical expression, and this has encouraged and empowered me to search for the origin and effect of my work from within a broader field of reference. Having found that, in the creative sphere, one relies on shared expression whereby what is perceived individually echoes in the collective, the imperative now is to engage with unexpected and challenging issues.

The work under scrutiny will be placed in a context in which the influence of two seminal events, one international and the other local, is identified and illuminated. These events are the Challenger disaster in January 1986 (seen as 'forecasting' my own serious bicycle accident nine months later) and the un-banning of Nelson Mandela and the ANC[1] in 1990. Whilst at first glance there appears to be nothing linking these events, one occurrence is perceived to have inexorably led to the other, suggesting a collective paradigm shift.

Bearing the above in mind, the events are brought to life by subjecting some of the music written during that period to aspects of postmodernist musicological scrutiny. Musical expression transcends and universalises its original template, and it seems essential to regress to those moments of insight to find meaning in the trauma and growth subsequently experienced.

Within this theorisation, my projected position as an 'outsider' within Afrikaner society and as a homosexual male has to be considered, a dubious status exasperated by physical disability following the 1986 accident. Undeniably, a large number of gay Afrikaner artists "coming out of the closet" lead perfectly normal creative lives, even more so since the new

[1] African Nationalist Congress

constitution of 1994 protects their unassailable rights. However, during the sixties and seventies, this composer was deeply affected by society's parochial and far more conservative attitude, which resulted in his fearing, and finally despising, a predominantly heterosexual social and cultural expression.

At the same time, however, my need had always existed to recognize the bonds that unite all people irrespective of race, political affiliation, artistic expression or sexual orientation. In many ways, an incarcerated Nelson Mandela symbolically represented this late 20th century imperative. Yet, while his subsequent release addressed the need for a redemptive gesture on a national and global scale, I still needed to strive towards reaching such a utopian equilibrium within my own life and work.

From 1986, my compositional style was to undergo a transformation, and with the benefit of hindsight, prior indications or several uncannily accurate predictions (or 'fore-soundings') of changes and traumas that would later affect me and my country are now found embedded in the music itself. While some of those repercussions were to be international in scope, the South African dispensation changed almost automatically (1990-94 and beyond), as if prompted by unseen forces.

Aware of the irreconcilability of dialectic opposites like 'normal' and 'abnormal', I commenced an internalised reconciliation between the perceived limitations of self on one hand and social opinion on the other. This has contributed towards a growing awareness of myself as a fellow-outcast who finds a home for the first time, a liberating experience resulting in, if not a social, then at least a personal form of reconciliation and repose. Likewise, my compositional style evolved and changed perceptibly, mirroring a new self-awareness: not as the perpetual outsider unable to conform to social expectations, but rather as the same outsider now finding a new, but sympathetic environment where I can finally be creative, no longer hindered by prejudice, real or imagined.

In the period from 1978 to 1985, however, manacled by the culture I despised, I remained stubbornly geared towards keeping my own world separate from that of the black majority,

the faceless 'other', a mindset characterised by Edward Said as "polemical, thought-stopping fury that imprisons us in labels and antagonistic debate whose goal is a belligerent collective identity rather than understanding and intellectual exchange" (1975, xvii). Remaining in such a stylistic straitjacket of avant-garde mannerisms, this artist steered clear, for the time being, of pop, rock, jazz and African music.

Fortunately, following political change in the country, it was recognised that Occidental and African philosophies were not mutually exclusive; in fact, that it was impossible for one to exist without the other. The energy generated by such an apparently irreconcilable, yet interdependent dialectic, became externalised politically and artistically and emerged as the key to a non-violent future. Like Adorno's utopian ideal, a synthesis may appear futile in theory and impossible in practice; yet, "art's *promesse de bonheur* and its riddle character" (from Adorno's *Aesthetische Theorie*), consistently energises us even in its darkest manifestations:

> This relation between the existent and the non-existent is the Utopian figure of art. While art is driven into a position of absolute negativity, it is never absolutely negative precisely because of that negativity. It always has an affirmative residue (Paddison 1993, 77).

Adorno is of the opinion that art, even as the transliteration of filth, conflict and death, contains equally strong traces of life, peace and beauty; and it is sensible to anticipate the same affirmative residue in the wake of an apparently irreconcilable conflict. In this way, I could accept the emotive state whereby, for example, an apparently futile energy in *moto perpetuo* (like the vilified gay Self) is driven upwards to contain, circumscribe, transcend and eventually sublimate, in Jungian terms, a force as real, yet also as ephemeral, as fire. Sexuality and creativity are, in the end, two sides of the same coin:

> I do not doubt that the natural instincts or drives are forces of propulsion in human life, whether we call them sexuality or the will to power; but also I do not doubt that these instincts come into collision with the spirit, for they are constantly colliding with something, and why should not this something be called spirit? I am far from knowing what spirit is in itself, and equally far from knowing what instincts are. The one is as mysterious to me as the other, yet I am unable to dismiss the one by explaining it in terms of the other (Jung 1933, 136-7).

Dr. Stephen A. Diamond (www.talentevelop.com/interviews/psychcreat.html) similarly explains in *Anger, Madness, and the Daimonic: The Psychological Genesis of Violence, Evil, and Creativity* (1999) that "one's impulse to be creative can be understood to some degree as the subjective struggle to give form, structure and constructive expression to inner and outer chaos and conflict. It can also be one of the most dynamic methods of meeting and redeeming one's devils and demons". Linking (sexually-directed) violence and creativity, he continues:

> The difference between violent offenders like Abbott, Ted Bundy or Charles Manson and the artist … is that 'the artist endeavors to express his or her antisocial and aggressive impulses (i.e. the daimonic) via acting, painting, music, etc., whereas the murderer is driven to act out these destructive impulses in reality, imposing them unconsciously on to the canvas of real life with little or no concern as to the devastatingly negative effects on the victims, their families, and society in general.

The need arose for me not only to completely understand and harness this creative kiln, but also to consciously extend its energising impact into everyday life, into areas of communication, and in particular into intellectual and emotional interaction. In turn, like the mythic *ouroburos*,[2] I would then be able to envisage the cycle of action-reaction extending across the whole spectrum of intellectual and emotional endeavour, potentially involving a no-holds barred existence of almost Foucauldian splendour[3] in which communication with all people of all races - on all levels - could be the norm.

From my earliest recollections, fundamentalist, sometimes fanatical, Afrikaner Christian-Nationalist censure seemed to relegate homosexual virility, creative energy and power (even in the most positive way) to a cupboard of suppressed taboos; particularly so since the fecundity of those energies appeared to echo the fainter tug of black culture and its imperatives to submit to them. Therefore this composer believed it essential to confront, and

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[2] The snake has played a major role in the magic and mythology of almost every culture, as few animals are regarded with more awe. Because the snake sheds its skin each year and appears renewed, it is a symbol of life, death and rebirth. The act of shedding skin, of sliding out of the old and being reborn, gives the snake a transformative symbology. The Greeks customarily used the snake as an emblem of healing through wisdom. It also has symbolism with the Great Mother, intuitive wisdom, and feminine mysteries. *Ouroboros* is depicted as a dragon, snake or serpent biting its own tail. In the broadest sense, the *ouroburos* is symbolic of time and the continuity of life. (www.aztriad.com/ouroburo.html)

[3] In San Francisco of the 1970s and early 1980s, Foucault participated in the subcultures of anonymous gay sex and sadomasochism — it is suspected that it was there that he contracted HIV, in the days before the disease was described as such. (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_Foucault)

participate in, the power of the 'other' (read especially 'black' *other*, or unknown *other*) in spite of the fact that this mysterious 'other' as the individualised representative of a vast collective, remained stranded in an irresolvable dichotomy. Fearing expulsion by some of my Afrikaner peers, I could only escape from this straitjacket *after* moving to UCT[4] in 1977 where I could cross the racial divide and communicate with all people and races.

Although I had, along with many of my fellow-Afrikaner artists, perceived our affliction as extraordinary in both social and cultural terms, and as atypical of my roots, I had, until 1976, the year of the June 16 Soweto uprising,[5] happily existed in a delusory state of self-approbation matched only by the tacit belief in the validity of the *status quo*. Towards the end of that year, though still largely unaffected by something as ignominious as the Soweto massacre, I felt a compulsion to interrupt my undergraduate music studies at the University of the Orange Free State in Bloemfontein and move to the University of Cape Town in 1977. It was a resolute attempt to erode an individualised perception of the *apartheid* façade, and, although this was not realised at the time, a post-apartheid freedom from dogma would, in time, increasingly affect my work.

An original stance of self-loathing stemmed from a schizoid inversion of identity upon getting to know, at the age of thirteen, Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique*, a symphony giving voice to the same demons. Engaging with the sensibilities of the music and navigating its contours not only sound allusions to Tchaikovsky's own tragic destiny, but also provide an apocalyptic glimpse into death as a universally unavoidable fate.[6] Happily, my years at UCT presented, through knowledge, a liberating respite from this self-destructive pattern. I would reverse the transference of repellent (namely gay) traits from the Cloete Self to Other, so that the gay Self would be an unwanted stranger no longer.

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[4] University of Cape Town.

[5] When high school students in Soweto started protesting for better education on 16 June 1976, police responded with teargas and live bullets. It is commemorated today by a South African national holiday, Youth day, which honours all the young people who lost their lives in the struggle against Apartheid and Bantu Education. (africanhistory.about.com/library/weekly/aa060801a.htm)

[6] "(The) 'insinuations' and 'nasty innuendos' have survived, satisfying an ever-present need for myth-making and sensationalism. (…) Myth, in the end, became the mediator introduced to relieve an emotional tension perceived to be inherent in Tchaikovsky's personality and behaviour" (Poznansky 1993, 607-608).

CHAPTER 1

Beginnings (1978-1985): Shifting Paradigms

> John Cage: "I had spent my life denying the importance of [musical] relationships, and introducing situations where I could not have foreseen a relationship" (Kostelanetz 1989, 210).

To bring perspective to an almost 30-year-long composing career, it is informative to determine the impact of a paradigmatic gear change in the composer's life. This change took place about 20 years ago, and for the purpose of this paper the years 1985-2006 have been earmarked as a focal phase. However, the preceding seven years (1978-1985) of "treading water", stylistically and philosophically, warrants a cursory glance to explain and justify what followed.

In my first work, *Nightfall over the Martian Canals* (1978-9), a poem by Peter Wilhelm was set to music for mezzo-soprano and piano. Whilst, in its quasi-theatrical bent, it recalls pieces by Luciano Berio and Karlheinz Stockhausen, the philosophy informing the whole work owes more to Cage's "New York School". The intention was to further deconstruct already deconstructed models from Western Europe by imploding their antithetical stance. Consulting the work of Julia Kristeva in this regard, it seems now that the enraged, fractured nature of the music as well as the virtual assassination of the text itself had to have stemmed from something particularly insidious, from an emotional "black hole" belying a form of suppressed rancor that could only be exorcised artistically. In fact, the music displays an echo of what Kristeva labels "an emotional force" originating in an "infantile (pre-mirror) state" (http://www.blueberry-brain.org/chaosophy/kristeva.html).

At first glance, the text depicts a Martian spider waiting patiently to devour her offspring and/or her mate. This (on a level originally more unconscious than intentional) activated an unresolved *oedipal* conflict within the composer himself. It would not be fanciful to read the work as an angry tirade against womankind in general and Mother in particular, as if the opportunity to confront and possibly exorcise *oedipal* childhood phobias had finally been

granted. Still in keeping with Kristevan thinking, the erosion of language (in this case, the Peter Wilhelm poem) signifies an attempt to penetrate what is perceived as meaning hidden within the text: "It is an emotional force, tied to our instincts, which exists in the fissures and prosody of language rather than in the denotative meanings of words" (http://www.blueberry-brain.org/chaosophy/kristeva.html).

Such a confrontation between mother and child, however coaxed in metaphor and artifice, could, according to Lévinas, only be resolved in "the irreducible relation, the epiphany, of the face-to-face, the encounter with another, (being) a privileged phenomenon in which the other person's proximity and distance are both strongly felt" (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/emmanuel.levinas/). In the two subsequent pieces, the piano solo *He who shall raise up his soul shall see its colours*[7] and *Aura* for percussion and tape, an unconsciously probing Self appeared to heed equally hidden imperatives to acknowledge an idealised, even redeeming Other, identified by Lévinas, who "derives the primacy of his ethics from the experience of the encounter with the Other" (ibid).

Like Lévinas, I feel that this unknown, romanticized "Other precisely (reveals) himself in his alterity not in a shock to the 'I', but rather as the primordial phenomenon of gentleness. … One instantly recognizes the transcendence and heteronomy of the Other. Even murder would fail in any attempt to take hold of this otherness" (ibid). As if to reflect this new awareness, the above piano work withdraws into Lévinas's "primordial gentleness" where it seems to augur a transformed Self which would, like the peacock (see footnote 6), have to do nothing but wait for a receptive audience.

Aura for 5 percussionists and tape followed soon afterwards, inspired by Jung's *Mysterium Coniunctionis*[8] and my resulting series of dreams. It presented a colourfully riotous route to

[7] The male peacock, to which the title of the work refers, habitually reveals its tail feathers. A fitting metaphor for Jungian integration (in which the beauty of the parts adds up to a splendid whole) is quoted from *Mysterium Coniunctionis* and used as the title of a piano piece in order to mark what was felt to be a major psychic breakthrough.

[8] In the *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, or Mystery of the Conjunction, Jung reviews the vast literature of Medieval, Renaissance, and post-Renaissance alchemy from a psychological perspective. Jung contends, and convincingly demonstrates, that alchemy at this time was not, as many mistakenly believe, mainly concerned with the transmutation of lead into gold. Rather, the aim was more spiritual and mental transformation of the alchemist him/her-self. In this sense, alchemy was a kind of precursor to modern depth psychology. The "conjunction" referred to in the title refers to an alignment, joining, or resolution of conflict between polar dualities that define human beings. The poles of one duality of special importance can be variously interpreted as Solar/Lunar, Male/Female, Spirit/Matter, Yang/Yin

the "not yet recognized" (African) 'other'. The piece participates in colours and rhythms of Africa as an inevitable mirror, and in doing so, identifies with those colours and rhythms as if they had stemmed from my own experience. While Africa, for the time being, remained an exoticism removed from rural Afrikaner living, and I continued working with European models, the cursory contact with African music had already affected my stylistic approach. In Kristevan terms, I was in the process of "(reconstituting a) narcissistic identity to be able to extend a hand to the other. Thus what was needed, was a reassurance or reconstruction of both narcissism, personality and, of course, the subject for there to be a relation to the other" (www.cddc.vt.edu/feminism/Oliver.html).

During 1977-1980, my undergraduate years at UCT, I experienced a reconstructive shift in my creative work. Tracing this back to its extra-musical origins, I found that it could be explained, to use Derrida's words, as a new-found "wish to live *authentically"*, to reject earlier means of dealing with and acting within the environment (130.179.92.25/Arnason_DE/Derrida.html).

It is also worth noting that, although my perceptions during the seventies resembled Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialist views as expressed in *Nausea* (1938), Roquentin's (the main character's) evaluation of that apparently senseless world only differed from mine in the way I rated, and still rate today, the void-ness or meaninglessness of it. By familiarising myself with John Cage in particular and Zen Buddhism[9] in general, the wonderfully refreshing void-ness of the world expressed in the nihilism of Zen became contrary, yet similar, to the blinding (Sartrean) revelation ... "I exist - the world exists - and I know that the world exists" (Sartre 1938, 176).

It was found that *Nihilism* was nothing to fear. Aware only of the need to un-learn earlier behaviour, both musically and culturally, the deconstruction of the two most abiding templates shaping my life and work up to that point was attempted: an exclusively

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or various other antinomies. (www.gnosis.org/jung_alchemy.htm)

[9] Zen might be called the inner art and design of the Orient. It was rooted in China by Boddhidharma, who came from India in the sixth century, and was carried eastward into Japan by the twelfth century. It has been described as: 'A special teaching without scriptures, beyond words and letters, pointing to the mind-essence of man, seeing directly into one's nature, attaining enlightenment" (Reps 1959, 15).

Afrikaner-oriented political view informing a tendency toward the safety of cultural Euro-centricity, and in musical terms, my vacillation between a late-sixties, early-seventies Stockhausen model and the philosophy of the American, John Cage. In Stockhausen's intuitive pieces (like *Aus den Sieben Tagen*, *Ensemble* and *Beethausen-Stockhoven (Opus 1970)*), the end result was accomplished through a deconstruction of all possible content - the musical substance - while, formally, a spectral residue of traditional templates remained. Karl Wörner (1973, 118) identifies "a preconceived complex of ideas worked out with the aid of purely empirical experiments". On the other side of the Atlantic, John Cage, in conversation, recalls proceeding from the opposite direction, from silence and a pre-formative, pre-structural continuum, namely "music that one makes oneself without constraining others" (Kostelanetz 1989, 111). The challenge, perhaps, was to synthesise these opposing modes of expression.

For Sartre, too, there always remained light at the end of the tunnel:

> Art, perhaps, is the way to transcend the nauseating predicament of human nothingness in the face of pure existence. As Sartre emphasizes time and again, the human condition is that of complete freedom: we are our own maker.
> (www.sparknotes.com/philosophy/sartre/section1.html)

For the time being, though, I remained suspended in a dialectic of either fake superiority (Stockhausen's old Teutonic order masquerading in 'new' shapes) or, at its antipode, a Zen-inspired consolidation of trivialities. Studies of Nietzsche (which I'd started consuming in 1978) blinded me, at least for the time being, to obvious traces of dialectic exigency hidden in Stockhausen's philosophy. Applying Derridean eloquence to the ensuing U-turn, I managed to turn my back on the "average ordinariness of life" whereby the Self could possibly "step outside itself and see itself outside of history and language". In *Derrida and Deconstruction*, it is noted that "(anyone) who wishes to live authentically must escape from the average everyday ordinariness of life and contemplate his/her own death (non-being), or nothingness" (130.179.92.25/Arnason_DE/Derrida.html).

What was needed was the impossible articulation of being and meaning, in this case the understanding of Self in relation to a possibly redeeming Other (justifying one's work, existence or both) and, if necessary, synthesising the two. "But", says Derrida, "being and meaning can never coincide except at infinity, so meaning is always deferred. The *de jure* situation (what is right) and the *de facto* situation (what is fact) can also never coincide":

> To his critics, Mr. Derrida appeared to be a pernicious nihilist who threatened the very foundation of Western society and culture. By insisting that truth and absolute value cannot be known with certainty, his detractors argue, he undercut the very possibility of moral judgment. To follow Mr. Derrida, they maintain, is to start down the slippery slope of skepticism and relativism that inevitably leaves us powerless to act responsibly (Mark C. Taylor) (www.press.uchicago.edu/books/derrida/taylorderrida.html).

While I embraced a clear Sartrean nihilism, however, I also insisted upon the formative constraint of Cage's chance procedures. In this way, the lure of the asymptote was musically incorporated, something which, like Derrida's *being* and *meaning*, predicts a possible junction hidden beyond perception. It was assumed that the impossible junction between being and meaning also precludes the actualisation of potentials regarding Self and Other, namely the realisation of broadly social, interpersonal and interracial interaction. But such constraints were my own. I would only have to change my mind, literally, from exclusive Afrikaner isolationism to the more overarching and inclusive *Ubuntu* philosophy of my neighbours and fellow-South Africans. I was becoming aware of differences between Self and Other as something not leading to division and enmity, but rather as of a vital, life-affirming and life-preserving, constructive importance. That was due to these differences actually obscuring essentially ontological, but also potentially redeeming similarities between us, between the qualities of the known (European, Western or Afrikaner) and the hitherto alien philosophy of *Ubuntu.*[10]

I recognised the need to flirt, for want of a better term, during the late-seventies and the eighties, with the dour void of Sartrean and Kafkaesque nihilism/existentialism versus Zen

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[10] ***Ubuntu***, pronounced /ùbúntù/, is an ethic or humanist ideology, literally meaning 'humanness'. '*Ubuntu*' is a social and spiritual philosophy serving as a framework for African society. Its essential meaning can be conveyed using the Zulu maxim '*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu'* – meaning, in essence, 'a person is a person through other persons'. The practice of *ubuntu* is fundamentally inclusive, involving respect and concern for one's family and one's neighbours. It also implies respect for one's ancestors, in a deeper spiritual sense" (www.allaboutjazz.com/php/article.php).

Buddhism, the one being merely a culturally varied version of the other. It was one step towards adopting a more balanced view after the 1986 accident. The hitherto unthinkable absence of the "imaginary object", that is, finding no-thing upon arriving at the projected destination, became an enforced confrontation with Self. The outcome was either capitulation and death or liberation through sheer determination to find a way out, even without the hope of meaning in the normal sense of the word. I was bent upon finding meaning even in meaninglessness.

In the following quote from Cynthia Baron's analysis of Nicolas Roeg's film, *Eureka*, using Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* as a point of departure, she notes how "Sartre's view that the self is informed by the primary connection between being and nothingness emerges in his representation of the notion that existence precedes essence" (www.hanover.edu/philos/film/vol_02/baron.htm).

According to Zen Buddhism and Cage's philosophy regarding sound as something and silence as nothingness, it was clear even then that the notion of "existence preceding essence" could allude to this idea of tension between existence and meaning. And, given especially Karlheinz Stockhausen's initial influence on my work, this was something that the German's Eurocentric philosophy, incorporating materialism and the ego-driven cult of the performer/composer as hero, could never hope to engage meaningfully. Linking art and existentialism, this excerpt from the *Reading Guide for Sartre's* Nausea (1990)) attempts to clarify the notion of art as redemptory psychotherapy:

> (The) notion of 'freedom' within the intoxicating sphere of creativity was identified by Sartre as 'perhaps the most important thing about being human... But freedom is frightening, and it is easier to run from it into the safety of roles and realities that are defined by society, or even by your own past. To be free is to be thrown into existence with no "human nature" as an essence to define you, and no definition of the reality into which you are thrown, either. To accept this freedom is to live 'authentically'; but most of us run from authenticity. In the most ordinary affairs of daily life, we face the challenge of authentic choice, and the temptation of comfortable inauthenticity. (www.rowan.edu/philosop/clowney/Introphl/SARTRE.htm)

After an initial phase of music-making leading up to 1980 and 1981, influences from the European *avant garde* were replaced by Cage's philosophy and music as possible template.

Pre-‘chance’ works like the *String Quartet in Four Parts* (1947) and more austere pieces for prepared piano informed a new phase in which a Cagean restraint dominated. “I don't wish to impose my feelings on other people”, said Cage, “therefore the use of chance operations, indeterminacy, etc., the non-erection of patterns, of either ideas or feelings on my part, in order to leave those other centers free to be the centers” (Cage 1989, 211). Feeling able to echo those sentiments in longer pieces of my own, works like the *String Quartet* and *Second Piano Sonata* followed, both in 1981.

The spectre of Africa, however, persisted within this, the Zen Buddhist leanings of Cage’s thinking, as they neatly dove-tailed into the African *Ubuntu* philosophy. At the University of Cape Town, this composer’s increasing acquaintance with ethnomusicology as a discipline (with a focus on African music) culminated in exposure to the vibrant music of the Langa-based percussion group, *Amampondo*. By then, also in view of the Sharpeville and Soweto massacres of a few years before, as well as the official attitude of a (self-) destructive Afrikaner minority government, my sympathies had clearly shifted. In the end, there was more to my change of heart than mere musical curiosity or “cultural banditry”.

As Mbembe admits, “the limited range of practical possibilities that social theories can effect in Africa” also acknowledges that Africa and Africans, like other colonised places and peoples, have lost their “distinctive historicity” since the contact with Europe, and they now seem inextricably “embedded in times and rhythms heavily conditioned by European domination” (2001) (www.utexas.edu/conferences/africa/ads/1528.html).

For this artist, a deeper, unspoken voice, an *Ur*-identity, would have to surface, whereby what was idealistically felt to be my own proto-African Self would yield more than what I had perceived (in moments of self-deprecation) as a tacked-on Eurocentricity.

Twenty Years’ Slow Transformation

Albert Einstein, in *A Life in Science*, maintains that "(the) most beautiful and deepest experience a man can have is the sense of the mysterious. To sense that behind everything that can be experienced there is a something that our mind cannot grasp and whose beauty

and sublimity reaches us only indirectly and as a feeble reflection, this is religiousness" (White & Gribbin 1993, 263). During the course of 1986, momentous events followed each other and, like Einstein, I could do nothing but wait and listen.

A clutch of pieces conceived or realised during 1986 appeared to tell the story. *Four Accidents* tackled the then thorny political situation as its subject matter, in that way combining a personal angle with a broadly-perceived socio-political one: tape-recorded bicycle rides from Woodstock to Rondebosch at night with forlorn sounds of passersby and students shouting, a heated volley-ball match near *Kopano* residence, U.C.T., and crazed, possibly glue-sniffing newspaper vendors reflecting a pre-democratic society at odds with itself. At the climax, a female voice (a soothsayer or *sangoma*) ululates, powerfully offsetting the looming confrontation between two anthems, *Die Stem* and *Nkosi sikelel'i Afrika;* yet eventually, only peace remains. "What else is there?" the music seems to ask. Only later did I realize that a misplaced fear of change was obscuring my own anticipation of a society in which, for example, "sexuality is something to be celebrated for its subtleties; and not something to be feared or ridiculed" (Fausto-Sterling 1992, 20-24).

After years of self-searching and torturous self-reference, and as if to confirm Fausto-Sterling's view, I opted for an entirely unprecedented foray into joy and celebration in the shape of a festive piece for the 1986 Centenary of Johannesburg. The previous year saw the completion of a work for solo harpsichord called *Township I* featuring actual "township" tunes from Hugh Tracey's famous recorded anthology. Reworking it as *Celebration*, the piece was performed by the National Symphony Orchestra of the SABC conducted by Richard Cock. *Objets trouvés* ("found objects") from the townships were treated in a way obscuring their origins as they were rendered faceless in an opaque texture. Influences absorbed from Glass, Reich and Riley[11] seemed to deflect the identity of the located material: from original African sources, they mutated into products of the minimalist and post-minimalist order where the role of Africa, having first given rise to this compositional trend, has now been usurped.

[11] "(Americans) Philip Glass and Steve Reich have both sought to bring strict system to a Riley-like music of repetition, and have both formed their own ensembles to play music which demands a streamlined precision. Both have also, like (La Monte) Young, been

A major consequence of my accident in September 1986 was a temporary phase of social re-orientation, a time of healing from which emerged a new regard for those that listened to and enjoyed music as opposed to musical invention for its own sake. Griffiths (1981, 294) highlights this regard as "one respect in which the music of the 1970s has an identity that sets it apart from the music of the 1950s", recognising "the concern not so much with musical composition in the abstract as with the effect of music on the listener".

As if to re-direct me, a life-changing Sign[12] appeared the day I had started composing the 90-minute meditation piece, *nevasaññañña-sañña-ayatana* I-IV. The title is Sanskrit for "the realm of neither perception nor imperception", referring to a heightened, ego-less state of consciousness. Reading about the Challenger disaster at Cape Canaveral the next morning, I saw that it had taken place (in real time) about 2 or 3 minutes before I'd stopped working. The actual "composition" process of the 30-minute-long first part had involved no intellectual or analytical activity whatsoever. I simply started recording, became and remained physically and intellectually inactive, only moving single fingers glued to the keyboard every now and then. There was, apart from the next morning's news and the otherworldly, if serenely funereal, nature of the music no indication that it could be a harbinger of some disastrous event that would occur nine months into the future. I now feel that this precognitive experience hinged on an uneasy balance between low self-esteem and a need to draw attention to my apparent plight as the socially-dysfunctional member of a pariah culture.

Referring to views expressed earlier, Derrida's concepts of "history and language" preceding the self, and that it "(helps) construct the self", means that "the self can never step outside itself and see itself outside of history and language" (130.179.92.25/Arnason_DE/Derrida.html). On September 20, 1986, less than 24 hours after the first performance of the complete *nevasaññañña-sañña-ayatana I-IV*[13] at the SA College

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influenced by extra-European musical traditions" (Griffiths 1981, 177).

[12] Subjectively read and understood, the impact of the scorpion-like formation of the Challenger explosion existed not only in the larger-than-life representation of the composer's birth sign, but also in the synchronous enactment of this unforeseen violence with an intensely-experienced creative act.

[13] Yogic term: "the realm of neither perception nor imperception" (Sanskrit)

of Music, U.C.T., I was involved in a serious bicycle accident which left me in a coma (the state "of neither perception nor im-perception") for about two and a half months. During my coma, consciousness, in the normal sense of the word, ceased. My own history and language, as Afrikaner, became irrelevant and, more in keeping with African tradition and custom, with *Ubuntu* and a sense of communal or collective consciousness, I quietly began a protracted psycho- and physiotherapeutic rebirth, in keeping with what Sartre had experienced as "contingency", as "that huge absurd being" (1938, 188, 192).

The (*Ur*-socialist) African philosophy of *Ubuntu* offered a lifeline when I was susceptible to exploring the dissolution of a purpose-driven existence. I embraced its possible antithesis as something pure in the world, completely in the world, yet also totally separate from it. As gleaned from Sartre's Roquentin, having momentarily overcome his nausea, I was also moved to say, "I exist. It's sweet, so sweet, so slow. And light: you'd swear that it floats in the air all by itself. It moves. Little brushing movements everywhere which melt and disappear. Gently, gently" (1938, 143).

A year before, in 1985, I had embarked on the path of "cultural banditry", a term coined by another local composer initially not convinced of the edifying results such a cross-fertilisation may bring. I had my own doubts, and stayed in relative safety, only occasionally dabbling in cross-cultural marauding. After *Township I*, *Township II* for guitar and harpsichord became *Festival* in its orchestral guise, but this time around using original material contrived in a manner commonly used by Rimsky-Korsakov, Ravel and Debussy. Instead of "physically" or "psychically" travelling into the "heart of (Joseph Conrad's) country", I merely exchanged African originals for a musical *patois* closer to home, going back to the years of my youth in Moorreesburg and Vredendal where I was conditioned by music from the descendents of the Khoi and the San. In turn, these were being gleefully "assaulted" (still in a musical context) by voices from South America, the Orient, China and Japan, India and Malaya.

Subsequent musical "excursions" into Africa find me consulting theorists like Mbembe to

clarify problems experienced in the past. Africa and Africans, having "lost their 'distinctive historicity' since the contact with Europe… now seem inextricably 'embedded in times and rhythms heavily conditioned by European domination'"
(http://www.utexas.edu/conferences/africa/ads/1528.html).

My problem seemed to be a no-win situation: loving Africa, I appeared to also weaken her power; yet, in withdrawing my interest, I, with many others, may leave it to disintegrate on the scrapheap of history. Therefore, after *Celebration, Festival* and *Mayibuye Afrika,* I had to circumvent problems not so much of a *transplanted* identity, but of a denuded, emasculated one, apparently impoverished by virtue of Eurocentric structures. The African element floated about in my work as a 'lost' *objet trouvé.*

The solution would appear in pieces like *Thanatos-on-Ice* (1985) and *Pink Narcissus* (1985-2005), where in my perception, the African element had become completely integrated, resulting in something entirely new. Simultaneously, the prevailing paradigm informing my work has, since the accident and coma, moved me gradually closer to an African-embracing way of resolving musical problems.

Between 1993 and 2001, after the initial effects of the 1986 accident had worn off, five pieces were written in commemoration of three of my favourite composers: Tchaikovsky (1993), Schubert (1997) and Bartók (2001). Was this an attempt to re-invent myself in Eurocentric terms? In one work, melodies from three of Tchaikovsky's pieces, namely *None but the lonely heart*, *Serenade for Strings* and *Symphonie Pathétique* Finale were used as found objects. The title of this piece, *Let them guess it who can,* is derived from Tchaikovsky's own comment when asked about the programme or story driving the Sixth Symphony. A hidden programmatic content was and still is for most listeners "clear as mud": they know it is there, it must have something to do with the composer's feelings for his favorite nephew Bob Davidov, to whom the symphony is dedicated, but what about the incestuous demons that such a story could unleash? Apparently the identity of a 'resurrected' Self – or a Self released from the closet - was still locked in an outdated paradigm.

Each of the three movements bears a title: *Spera*, ('Father'), *Mata*, ('Mother') and *Zoon* ('Child'), partially influenced by the Oedipal triangle haunting man since time immemorial. The three titles also represent the Greek roots from which is formed a word synonymous with procreativity: '*spermatozoa'*.

In the last section, the opening phrases of the *Pathétique* Finale become gradually obscured, almost asphyxiated, by a quote from the familiar *Tristan* motif from Wagner's opera, and this is ostensibly meant as a commentary culled from one 19th century musical work to cast light on another with an equally torrid *raison d'être.* In a manner of speaking, the Wagner motif aids Tchaikovsky's mythopoeia on one hand while, on the other, Wagner as judge, jury and executioner exposes an ethical double standard in operation. To explain, although Anthony Storr maintains that "(great) music transcends the individual who created it" (1993, 121), quotes from Tchaikovsky and Wagner were used specifically to encode specific aspects of their lives, letting these, in turn, comment on aspects of my own. Storr continues: "Stravinsky was surely right when he referred to a composition as being beyond the composer's feelings" (ibid). While my intentions may have been honorable, or unnecessarily self-deprecating, the fact remains that, beyond inference, music seems to operate on a totally untouchable level of meaning, the nature of it being totally beyond conscious, creative or intellectual control. Meaning remains coincidental.

Similar to the Schubert pieces (3 piano sonatas and a String Quartet in 1997) and the Bartók-inspired quartet of 2001, a Kristevan element of *revolt* was subliminally present in choosing the potentially kitsch, emotionally-unstable Tchaikovsky as a candidate for homage. Of course, these would not have surfaced had I not experienced the fires of an almost debilitating thrust across paradigmatic boundaries in 1986. The same happened four years later, with the ANC unbanned and Nelson Mandela released, when I composed an apparently harmless, cold, but hard-edged orchestral work entitled *Vigil: Eniwetok*. It was premièred in 1990 by the University of Stellenbosch Symphony Orchestra conducted by Eric Rycroft. Unlike all the works discussed above and below, *Vigil: Eniwetok* represents a different, strangely-distant response to pure energy beyond emotive considerations. It was as if now, after the accident, a new voice had surfaced denoting aspects of rebirth, reintegration and the

acceptance of a new identity; this was in keeping with a Mandela 'blueprint' for the resolution of differences beyond issues of race, gender issues or culture.

On a cautionary note, the music hovers and warns, reminding us of the horrors of *différance* and the misuse of power: Hiroshima and Nagasaki, exploding nuclear plants on Long Island and at Chernobyl, the peaceful application of power, but still Power we can barely control. Nevertheless, *Vigil: Eniwetok* does not flaunt its vision. In fact, it is one of this composer's only pieces (up to that time) that could have been written as a result of the following Kristevan sentiment:

> There looms, within abjection, one of those violent, dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable. It lies there, quite close, but it cannot be assimilated. It beseeches, worries, and fascinates desire, which, nevertheless, does not let itself be seduced. (www.guardian.co.uk/ideas/story/0,,1730437,00.html)

Dealing, as it does, with nuclear power and the threat of global annihilation, *Vigil: Eniwetok* offers its "revolt" as something constructive akin to how Kristeva views the term, "because of its etymological association with return, patience, distance, repetition, elaboration - unlike the hell-and-brimstone of *A being refracted, retracted, spied on by its conscience* for organ and tape written 10 years before. Revolt is not simply about rejection and destruction; it is also about starting over. Unlike the word 'violence', 'revolt' foregrounds an element of renewal and regeneration" (zeitkunst.org/blog/2006/07/03/reading- revolt-she-said /). In Kristeva's view, by "being subsumed into political revolutions, the appropriation of 'revolt' masks the almost-beauty of the word; continual rebirth, the possibility of 'renewal and regeneration' that is the quality of freedom. Revolt requires an authority to be against and thus encourages regular questioning of the basis of that authority's power" (ibid).

In the same way as the music tacitly does, Jacob Bronowski warns in *The Ascent of Man* (www.wsu.edu/~brians/hum_303/bronowski.html) against confusing hard-edged, lifeless dogma with the infinite malleability of pure knowledge.[14] In my music, and in keeping with

[14] It is crucial to understand that Bronowski is not saying that there is no such thing as knowledge, or that all approaches to knowledge are equal. He emphasizes that we can be very precise about what we can and cannot know through scientific means. That in itself is important

this important philosophy, an attempt was made, but maybe not always successfully so, to transcend the crippling effects of (paternalistic) Afrikaner dogma and settle for the nurturing effects of Bronowski's "pure knowledge".

In my creative thinking of years 1978 up to 1986 and beyond, the role of the Mother, Woman and "being born" over and over again clearly plays an important part. For Kristeva, "birth itself is a separation **within** the body, a violent separation from the body of the mother. In the maternal body, excess gives rise to a separation that is material and maintained by a regulation (regarding availability of the breast) that is prior to the mirror stage. The maternal regulation operates as a law, prefiguring and providing the grounds of paternal Law as the entry of the child into language and society. (Kristeva) develops a new science, "semanalysis," that connects the body, complete with its drives, back into language from where she believes the logic of signification is already present." (www.egs.edu/resources/kristeva.html).

I trace a movement from the separation anxiety of the birth process, a "lack", as Kristeva puts it, forming signification as a movement from need to desire, and this is an ongoing process. Beginning with *Nightfall over the Martina Canals* (1978) and concluding, just prior to the accident, with *nevasañña*ñasañña-ayatana *I-IV* (1986), my development was characterised by a search, "(standing) on the fragile threshold as if stranded on account of an impossible demarcation" (Kristeva, ibid).

The latter piece, besides properties alluding to the inversion of a particular paradigm, addresses a formless, pre-conscious, pre-natal state where it invites the listener to capitulate, that is, to abandon a 'solid ego' identification and to surrender to an Other which could be a

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knowledge. But all knowledge is limited, never absolute. Philosophers and other humanists have often seized on uncertainty theory and quantum physics to argue for skepticism, and tried to use it to deny all validity to science. Why this is unjustified in most scientists' opinion is beyond the scope of these modest notes, but it is important to keep in mind that Bronowski does believe in scientific knowledge: he simply denies that it is complete or perfect.
His references to "the knowledge of gods" may mislead some into thinking that he is claiming that such knowledge exists. Not at all. Later in the film he specifically asserts that there is no such knowledge. Lurking in the background of his argument is the same anti-religious message that Voltaire is advancing in *The Philosophical Dictionary*. When he says "dogma," think "religious belief" as well as "racist theories." In order not to offend and distract his audience, Bronowski downplays this aspect of his argument. According to this view, the limitations of science provide no justification for religion to claim superior "knowledge," for religion is much more subjective and inexact than science (www.wsu.edu/~brians/hum_303/bronowski.html).

hypothetical space or place which is that of the pure. It could even be a submission to what is identified as the *chora*, a Platonic term for a matrix-like space that is nourishing, unnamable, and prior to the individual. In Kristevan thinking, *chora* becomes the focus of the semiotic as the "pre-symbolic" (www.niu.edu/acad/english/wac/kristeva.htmls).

CHAPTER 2

The South African Composer in Transformation: The Contextualisation of Self

From an early age, feeling myself relegated to a space beyond safe societal barriers, I have automatically been drawn to other outsiders. These included those rejected by fellow-Afrikaners as second-class citizens, from other races or those adhering to other belief systems. They, like myself, were perceived to be outside the Afrikaner law of conformity, and this paper addresses the tension between the 'outsider' on the one hand, projected by an exclusive Afrikaner 'pathology' regarding a stereotypical identity, and the spirit of *Ubuntu* on the other. In the latter, the group functions as the protector, not the judge of the individual, so that the tension between the community and Self generates a perpetual process of seeking an equilibrium.

During my childhood, I had perceived myself as 'homeless' or 'stateless', stranded without a regenerative identity or group imperative. In this cultural context, I candidly considered myself as less than a man, fatally 'castrated' for not being able to fit into a "braaivleis, sunny skies, rugby and Chevrolet"[1] paradigm. Therefore, in a renewed post-1994 intercultural environment with minority rights enshrined in the new constitution, I opted to bridge the to divide created by the injustice of apartheid, using my music to aid reparations and cultural reconciliations between these former 'opponents', White and Black.

In 1652, Dutch settlers arrived at the Cape to exploit the strategic position of the tip of Africa in an expanding world market. This 'exploitation' appears to have extended to the local population, the attitude of the European versus the African having largely remained one of conqueror versus the conquered, user versus the used. Traces have remained of this colonialist consumerism in, for example, our reception of ersatz African art. However much the art and its creators are applauded and apparently comprehended, there remains for me an underlying problem in the sentiments expressed. It is my personal opinion that the Western mind may yet have some difficulty penetrating the bedrock of African culture or harnessing

[1] This was the punch line of a popular Chevrolet radio commercial during the eighties and nineties, its target audience being wealthy Afrikaners.

the source of its power. To ironically reverse a quote from Marshall McLuhan, "the story of modern (South Africa) begins with the discovery of the white man by the (indigenous races)" (McLuhan 1986: www.marshallmcluhan.com/poster.html).

After about twenty years, painful self-examination also brought me to recognise traces of African art in my work. I was not alone in this awareness. Some of my most abiding *avant garde* Afrikaner influences owe a debt of gratitude to this spirit. Most of them date from the seventies and eighties: literary figures like Breyten Breytenbach, Antjie Krog and Phil du Plessis, and visual artists Louis Janse van Vuuren and Gavin du Plessis. In my own field, the work of South African composers Peter Klatzow, Jeanne Zaidel -Rudolph and Afrikaners Roelof Temmingh, Arnold van Wyk and Hubert du Plessis[2] hastened my eventual break with accepted cultural opinion.

Within an Afrikaner context, I have for many years felt like a stranger. According to some of my peers, I was the composer of 'awful' music, and in social and cultural terms, I felt alien to my roots. I felt stranded beyond what seemed to be a restrictive and narrow-minded world view. In the meantime, without fanfare, the 'old' Afrikaner spirit has become an anachronism due to a postmodernist abandonment of nationalist hegemony and templates.

It was believed that, without purpose in a shrinking world, there could be no continuation of such an outmoded identity. Giliomee maintains that "with the demise of both apartheid and Afrikaner nationalism, Afrikaners had to discard much of their historic thinking about survival as obsolete" (2003, 663).

To consolidate my own views at present, I philosophically locate my argument in terms of comments by H.Kohn from *The Idea of Nationalism*, 1958:

> "At present, nationalism - at its beginning a great inspiration, widening and deepening the understanding of man, the feeling of solidarity, the autonomous dignity of the masses - seems unable to cope, politically and emotionally, with the new situation. Once it increased individual liberty and happiness; now it undermines them and subjects them to the exigencies of its continued existence, which seems no longer justified. Once it was a great force of life,

[2] Political awareness and the use of art as a socio-political tool have been contributing factors in the dismantling of apartheid since 1994.

> spurring on the evolution of mankind; now it may become a dead weight upon the march of humanity." (cited by Degenaar 1969, 144).

Along the way, redemptive influences from musical, literary and artistic figures within my own culture indicated that a productive and meaningful pursuit of my creativity would be possible after all. These expectant, optimistic rumblings included my first reading of poet Phil du Plessis' volume *Die Diep Soet Afgeronde Stem Van My Dooies*, Parow artist Gavin du Plessis' series of Giger ('*Alien*')-inspired paintings and composer Arnold van Wyk's *Missa in illo tempore,* to name but a few. What had previously been perceived as a curse now emerged as a blessing. The increasing sense of a new maturity within the Afrikaner persona made me aware of the exact nature of my roots and what was still wrong with them.

Democratisation of South Africa offered me a more conspicuous role in society, and I could theorise my work from a position in which I felt no longer alienated. In a post-apartheid context, those restrictions have all but disappeared. I now distinguish between two important and formative aspects of my career as composer: a process of ideological change and the musical transliteration of that change by means of a technically- and stylistically refined language. This would interrogate the look, the feel, the over-arching identity of a future and multi-pronged post-apartheid art. In recognising the switch from Afrikaner isolationism to a peaceful surrender of minority control, Giliomee indicates that 1994 brought with it a sense of relief: "Many of the younger generation were delighted to be rid of the stifling cultural conformity of Afrikaner society and the security anxieties of the final decades of apartheid" (Giliomee 2003, 664).

Echoing this collective renaissance, my somewhat schizophrenic self-image changed, eliminating illusory barriers between Self and Other. It reduced a culture of fear, inferiority (masquerading as superiority) and a fractured perception of Self. In its place, a Kristevan clarity regarding the constructive role of Self in terms of Other re-awakened a hitherto-atrophied perspective. It placed the Afrikaner collective into an illuminated space and focused on the difference between its former status as international pariah and one purportedly closer to the tenets of Christian morality it so vociferously claimed to espouse – a notable dialectic.

In this composer's opinion, the Afrikaner's somewhat incestuous brand of narcissism has been part of an underlying, misguided sense of self-worth, a form of self-approbation not as an ontological reflection of value, but one giving rise to a false sense of superiority borne out by the erroneous application of Christian dogma. On this subject, Kristeva writes that, while the need for such self-worth exists, there has to be a critical self-reflection to avoid the effects of a fascist pathology:

> We must reconstitute narcissistic identity to be able to extend a hand to the other. Thus what is needed is a reassurance or reconstruction of both narcissism, personality and, of course, the subject for there to be a relation to the other. This seems to be the primary message of Thomas Aquinas: love the other as oneself, but by being settled within oneself, by delight in oneself. Thus: heal your inner wounds which, as a result will render you then capable of effective social action, or intervention in the social plane with the other. Therefore, I would argue that we must heal our shattered narcissism before formulating higher objectives. (www.cddc.vt.edu/feminism/AboutCont.html)

The Effect of Society on the Artist and Vice Versa

In order to determine the effect of society on the artist and vice versa, I have traced my journey within the changing paradigm, initially as an independent onlooker and then as the involuntary participant in an as yet un-determined scheme. I am a cog in the larger wheel of a changing society, one not only changing as a social order per se, but also as the very definition of the term 'society' mutates. It grows in our perception from "a group made up of clearly-defined individuals" to "a living, continuously-evolving organism directed by meta-narrative". According to a website devoted to Lyotard, however, these meta-narratives are "no longer credible in light of a growing incredulity towards legitimizing (them)" (www.iep.utm.edu/l/Lyotard.htm). One perceives stimuli, absorbs and reproduces them, not as overarching meta-narrative tenets, but rather clarifying them as clearly-indivisible ciphers:

> The very notion of society as a form of 'unicity' (as in national identity) is judged to be losing credibility. Society as unicity whether conceived as an organic whole (Durkheim), or as a functional system (Parsons), or again, as a fundamentally divided whole composed of two opposing classes (Marx) - is no longer credible in light of a growing `incredulity towards' legitimating 'metanarratives'. Such metanarratives (for example: every society exists for the good of its members) provide a teleology legitimating both the social bond and the role of science and knowledge in relation to it. A metanarrative, then, provides a 'credible` purpose for action, science, or society at large (www.iep.utm.edu/l/Lyotard.htm).

Writers like Durkheim, Breyten Breytenbach and J.M.Coetzee have identified such inter-cultural elements and the way in which they affect each other through a process of cross-pollination as well as the notion of intertextuality[3]. Breytenbach, in Mark Sanders' *Complicities, the Intellectual and Apartheid* (2002, 132), is placed in an evolutionary tract of (self-) discovery from "competing metaphysics of force and of human nature, to an account of human relationality" while Coetzee in his reading of Geoffrey Cronje, discovers that, "apartheid may be understood as the legislation (as an economic and political system) of an aversion mediated by the black body apprehended metonymically as a sign of filth and contagion, and invested with intense but disavowed desire" (ibid, 133-4). With such interaction in mind, I assume that music, as all the arts, is a constantly growing, evolving and perpetually changing externalisation of hidden, potentially expressible thought and that the degree to which this change affects a meaningful evolutionary imperative remains crucial, especially in view of the personal paradigm shift I have experienced since the beginning of 1986.

Although I can relate stylistic changes since then to those events, the shift in my thinking was not as instantaneous, but has evolved over a period of months, even years. The fateful accident on 20th September 1986 only tied this evolutionary progression off in an unforgettable, earth-shattering event, thus recalling Lyotard's identification (1992) of a perpetual process of *becoming* taking preference over just *being*. In *The Postmodern Condition* (1979) Lyotard asserts that "(in) an amazing acceleration, the generations precipitate themselves. A work (of art) can become modern only if it is first postmodern. Postmodernism thus understood is not modernism at its end but *in the nascent state, and this state is constant*" (own emphasis) (Lyotard cited by Appignanesi and Garratt, 1995**,** 20).

[3] The fundamental concept of intertextuality is that no text, much as it might like to appear so, is original and unique-in-itself; rather it is a tissue of inevitable, and to an extent unwitting, references to and quotations from other texts. These in turn condition its meaning; the text is an intervention in a cultural system [Graham Allen, University College Cork *Literary Encyclopedia:* Intertextuality (1960)].
(http://www.litencyc.com/php/stopics.php?rec=true&UID=1229)

Africanisation of my *Oeuvre*

The stylistic evolution of my music over the past 20 years has focused primarily on the Africanisation of my *oeuvre*. As this process has largely coincided with the democratisation of South Africa (the late-eighties leading up to 1994 and beyond), I differentiate between my style the way it was *before* I became politically-conscious (ca.1979 to 1985-6) and what I produced after the accident and subsequent socio-political awakening. The way Africa, as a consciousness and not as a voice per se, entered my work reveals influences by Kevin Volans, Hans Roosenschoon and Jeanne Zaidel-Rudolph[4] to begin with, the imperative at that time being more of a curiosity than a need.

Realising that the means of social reconciliation could well be the universal language of music, the rebellious and insecure composer of earlier years had found the means not only to use the music which he had so privately and jealously kept hidden before, but also to assimilate a foreign cultural identity and to transform his earlier style into something that would, without projecting a specific outcome, hopefully transcend both.

The main differences between the two cultures appear to be the unfolding of the musical argument. In the broadest terms, Classical and especially Romantic Western art music has, in my opinion, appealed to subjective emotions aiming for a visceral impact; although, in the end, they were rendered an objective cipher. The emotions themselves became no more than a physiologically-engendered representation of emotion. Comments by Joseph LeDoux in *The Emotional Brain: The Mysterious Underpinnings of Emotional Life*, apply:

> Emotions evolved not as conscious feelings, linguistically differentiated or otherwise, but as brain states and bodily responses. The brain states and bodily responses are the fundamental facts of an emotion, and the conscious feelings are the frills that have added icing to the emotional cake (LeDoux 1996, 302).
> www.music-cog.ohio-state.edu/Music829D/Notes/LeDoux.html

For music to be 'understood' in the Western sense, an intellectual process is suggested whereby an encoded signal is expected to reproduce the emotion originally intended by the

[4] Three composers have been influential in affecting a change within my work whereby Eurocentric influences were eventually replaced by Afro-centric ones.

individual (composer). In Africa, however, the immediate impression seems to involve movement for its own sake, not the impression of or representation of movement: African music also infers the social participation in a mental state engendered by the collective, not the individual.

Its primary aim is to lock the hearer in a (higher) state "of intoxication" (Degenaar 1990, 3) from which there appears to be no need for escape. In an African context, the term 'listener' is an alien one. If we would apply implications of Derrida's *différance*[5] to this argument, it might be suggested that the chicken comes before the egg or vice versa: does the need to affect a change determine the nature of the music, or does the music arise instinctively, without forethought, the effect occurring naturally?

In the end, there would be no such conscious distinction between cause and effect; the music, the participation in it and its effect on the listener forming part of one indivisibly organic whole. African tribal rituals tap into this oceanic *Ur-Gefühl*[6] and suggest a collective desire to participate in music as a stepping-stone to the gods. Such higher states of consciousness provide a way to commune with the ancestors as a means to achieve a heightened perception of living in this world. Given the visceral drive of the music, however, the aim is still to keep music completely subservient to the needs and will of the collective. Music acts as the reflection and transformer of an inner state.

In Western music, on the other hand, music is used as a tool to achieve a temporary state of well-being and then to return to daily existence, spiritually uplifted or at least emotionally changed or charged. Jamie James (1993, 16) feels that "modern concertgoers have been conditioned to expect a thrilling emotional impact, what might be called the Romantic buzz, from music", but merely as an abstract cosmological reflection of musical principles. He quotes Leibniz, a contemporary of J.S. Bach, who wrote that "music is the hidden arithmetic

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[5] Difference (*Différance)* A pun on difference and deference (as in 'put off to a later time, postpone': ***The Concise Oxford Dictionary*** 1991). Any signifier (or chain of signification, namely. text) must infinitely defer its meaning because of the nature of the sign (the signified is composed of signifiers). At the same time, meaning must be kept under erasure because any text is always out of phase with itself, doubled, in an argument with itself that can be glimpsed through the *aporias* it generates. Derrida's concept *la différance* contains two notions: difference and deference, a separation of identity and a separation in time (www.iep.utm.edu/d/derrida.htm).

[6] An inchoate yet pleasurable state of being (literally "primordial feeling") akin to what Kramer (1995, 73) calls "an incipient cosmos".

exercise of a soul unconscious that it is calculating" (ibid, 180). Athenaeus similarly summarises an ancient, but still prevailing Western attitude to music:

> It is plain to me that music should also be the subject of philosophic reflection. Pythagoras of Samos, with all his great fame as a philosopher, is one of many conspicuous for having taken up music as no mere hobby; on the contrary, he explains the very being of the universe as bound together by musical principles. (ibid, 69)

Derridean *Différance*

By 1985-6, my *modus operandi* was more flexible as I became susceptible to African sensibility and indigenous knowledge. However, a redefinition of temporal and melodic perceptions in my music did not mean that I had suddenly broken through to where no other European had been before. In fact, the experience only made me more aware of how much I still had to do to assimilate this new way of hearing and sounding the world. In no way suggesting that the projected schism "Europe versus Africa" is not hugely multi-facetted or simplistic, I propose that an historical misconception of one culture having to exist separately from all others in a hermetically-sealed cocoon finally had to be recognised as deceptive, mythical, and downright wrong. My own 'tribe' (the Afrikaner 'volk') has, in a collective mindset, persisted in this fallacy as recognised and documented by fellow-Afrikaners like Beyers Naudé, Antjie Krog, Breyten Breytenbach, André Brink, Johan Degenaar[7] and others. In this regard, I wished to bridge a misconceived gap, created by the apparent inability to find a junction between cultures. At the same time, however, Derrida's identification of a *différance* in perception among all has to be kept in mind.

Jack Reynolds from the School of Philosophy, University of Tasmania, explains:

> Utilizing the same structure of repetition, nothing guarantees that another person will endow the words I use with the particular meaning that I attribute to them. Even the conception of an internal monologue and the idea that we can intimately 'hear' our own thoughts in a non-contingent way is misguided, as it ignores the way that arche-writing privileges difference and a non-coincidence with oneself. (www.iep.utm.edu/d/derrida.htm)

In this way, African sources are integrated into Western art music as *'objets trouvés'*. While the degree of integration differs from one composer to the next, I eschewed a head-on confrontation between cultural identities in my own work. I favoured the transcendence of

[7] Some Afrikaner intellectuals, whose erosion of an apartheid paradigm could eventually not be ignored.

dualistic opposition and thought it sensible to retain the identity of the borrowed material as a spectre only, that is, without being chained to any given identity.

With hindsight, I recognise a distinct difference between a pre- and post-apartheid musical template in my work. A Eurocentric focus (up to a shift in the local dispensation) changed into an Africanist one bearing witness to events affecting the country and affecting me.

Three Stages of Transformation 1985-1994 and Beyond:

Derrida's deconstructionist war on the Western tradition of rationalist thought presupposes that "the certainty of reason is a tyranny which can only be sustained by the evil of repressing or excluding what is *uncertain,* what does not fit in, what is *different"*. This Derrida text first appeared in *Spectres of Marx* (1994), and the author's reason for choosing this quote is that, at the heart of his music, uncertainty justifies its very existence, in the same way that, incidentally, Heisenberg's *Uncertainty Principle*[8] operates. Without the possibility of chaos lurking around the corner, none of my chosen forms would be possible, and the music would hopefully offer a personal expression of such social, racial and psycho-sexual directives against a variegated social background.

My *oeuvre* falls loosely into three periods:

1) The apartheid phase**:** true to the inclusive sweep of *Ubuntu*, seeds were sown for a looser, more cyclic approach, neither tonal nor modal nor atonal nor serial; at best, a combination of all, perhaps a post-modern eclecticism.

2) The transition phase places the formerly-displaced composer within a clearer context. The character of the music appears lighter, or as if "light" has appeared. A collective tenet is filtered down into the individual to begin a new cycle of integration and reciprocal

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[8] 'The more precisely the position (of a sub-atomic particle) is determined, the less precisely the momentum is known in this instant, and vice versa'. (Heisenberg, uncertainty paper, 1927) This is a succinct statement of the "uncertainty relation" between the position and the momentum (mass times velocity) of a subatomic particle, such as an electron. This relation has profound implications for such fundamental notions as causality and the determination of the future behavior of an atomic particle (www.aip.org/history/heisenberg/p08.htm).

dissemination of ideas across cultural boundaries.

3) The new post-democracy: the initial euphoria of the New South Africa is felt, the absorption of African influences not so much being a "giving in" to external pressure than a recognition of the African voice within the (Western) composer; individually, removed from any kind of group consciousness or imperative. Or perhaps it was a logical return to basics (in this case, an *Über*-tonality, this time without a compromise for the sake of accessibility).

It follows that art reflects the time in which it is being created, but, at the same time, I agree with Lyotard who identifies the future parameters of a particular paradigm being formulated now, in the present, without the artist possessing any prophetic power. The artistic utterance brings with itself a suspension of linear time, and the ability to, without the awareness of the creative artist, trace the outlines of a future state or condition:

> *The artist and the writer are working without rules in order to formulate the rules of what will have been done* (own emphasis). Hence the fact that work and text have the character of an event; hence also, they always come too late for their author, or, what amounts to the same thing, their being put into work, their realization always begins too soon. Post modern would have to be understood according to the paradox of the future (post) anterior (modo). (www.iep.utm.edu/l/Lyotard.html)

In redefining my thinking, the African philosophical avant-garde had to become part of a more inclusive view, with Africa recognised as an entity being able to reflect and decide on its own destiny. In an interview with Christian Hoeller, editor of Springerin Magazine (http://www.utexas.edu/conferences/africa/ads/1528.html), Achille Mbembe expresses his opinion concerning Africans being "the free masters of their own destiny", and how, now, they have to embark upon "the difficult work of freedom" (Hoeller, 2001). In the post-apartheid context of the music under discussion, a careful balancing act is called for. A European voice has to find its place within an African milieu, neither dominating nor attempting to simply melt into the woodwork. In a postmodernist sense, it may be time for an organic *participation mystique*, a "living together" not only expressed artistically, but extended into the very fabric of our daily lives. In this way, it is still necessary for me to extend my mainly Eurocentric sensibilities into a fully-conscious, organically-vibrant African/European symbiotic relationship.

Africa and Adorno's Aesthetic Theory:

J.P. Malan, in the *South African Music Encyclopaedia* , describes the differentiation between art and folk music as misleading, because, as he says, "all human beings are bound in culture by different systems of relationships to their cultural environment, and so then the term 'ethnic' is also unsatisfactory, because it lays more emphasis on the kind of men who create the music than on the systems of relationships between man and fellowman, and man and his natural environment, which are the real sources of musical creativity" (1982, 265). Regarding the social origin of all musical experience, he debunks the distinction between 'art' and 'folk' music as a common fallacy:

> All music is folk music, in the sense that music cannot be transmitted or have meaning without associations between people. And all music is art music, in the sense that it is humanly organised sound, and that its structures are not arbitrary but reflect the organisation of the societies, cultures and minds of its creators (ibid).

Redirecting my creative focus did not so much involve turning my back on European roots as opening up to influences from African music in particular. That is my most immediate field of musical reference, a vibrant source of Kristevan narcissism by means of which 'my inner wounds' can be 'healed'. In future I envisage active engagement in "effective social action, or intervention in the social plane with the other". Kristeva's call to "heal our shattered narcissism before formulating higher objectives" now appears to re-awaken cross-cultural imperatives haunting me since the seventies, the time when I commenced studies at UCT. Initial forays were made into cultures as remote as possible: Asian, American Indian, Inuit and South American.

In a post-1994 South Africa, feeling drawn towards the African philosophy of *Ubuntu* in particular, a change in personal perception became necessary. It involved an entirely new understanding of time, process, advancement, progress and space wherein one can experience an expansion of Western modes of thought. In terms of this new understanding, I came to recognise my existence as a part of a larger totality, within its universalistic functions.

Recognising a link not only between music and other sounds, but among everybody and

everything, one identifies a universal totality in a constant, organic state of interactive movement. Yet, from another perspective, of course, there is no movement at all: the effect of perpetual motion entails the cancellation of all movement. Ceaseless activity implies ceaseless rest, and this paradox recalls Lyotard (1992) identifying a perpetual process of *becoming* taking preference over just *being* (refer to page 5). In other words, the final state never arrives, and change is constant, as there is no destination; destination, once again, being a Western premise that is steered by a materialistic philosophy.

In my view, the doctrine of *apartheid* relied on a misguided superiority complex in which *différance* promotes distance among people on the basis of language, habits, etc. Apropos *Ubuntu*, the Afrikaner, after a period of insular safety, increasingly opened himself to the mutability of groups, customs, relationships, cultural paradigms. After all, Africa is like a sponge, absorbing without prejudice. In musical terms, the apparent incompatibility between African and Afrikaner views of culture has initially objectified the schism between the two cultures. On a parametric level, for example, Nettl explains that African "tone systems are (in comparison) sometimes very restricted" (1973, 144), and while there are a very wide variety of scale types and a rather complex tone system in other African cultures, "black African singing is relaxed, open-throated and full-bodied" (ibid, 145), in contrast with an often unnaturally-forced or –intoned manner found in some Western vocal music from the 17th century up to the present.

The expression of the artistic source in its cross-cultural product confirms Adorno's view of art in which, according to Jennefer Callaghan, "the art object and the aesthetic experience of the art object contain a truth-content", truth-content being a cognitive content "which is not exhausted either by the subjective intentions of its producers or by the subjective responses of its consumers"
(www.english.emory.edu/Bahri/Adorno.html).

Of course, African and Eurocentric music, in different ways, both contain this "truth content" but, in synthesis, has to be reinvented and subjected to the demand for truth. Does the "new synthetic" form appeal to a "synthetically-unified" mind? Does the new form

adhere to its ultimate *raison d'être*, namely, that of transcending its two constituent identities? Callaghan, discussing Adorno's Aesthetic Theory, maintains that "all beauty reveals itself to persistent analysis"; however, works of art "are not inert objects, valued or known by the subject" (ibid).

Art demands a conversation, a give-and-take reciprocity whereby the meaning of the art work as a tool for evolutionary progress is upheld. The purpose of my music is to create or synthesise an intelligent reflection of reality by creating the opportunity "for a shared experience of object and subject, the joint analysis, where beauty is revealed" (ibid).

CHAPTER 3

Eurocentric Models Yielding to African Ones, 1985-2006

Influences

In the nineteen fifties, John Cage was "delighted by the possibility of removing personal creative wishes. 'My music had been based on the traditional idea that you had to say something. The number charts gave me my first indication of the possibility of saying nothing'" (Griffiths 1981, 67). Using Cage as a model, I discovered around 1981 that the apparent chaos of chance procedures stimulated organic processes within a musical structure and that it was no formal *cul-de-sac*. In a Derridean sense, it offered the opportunity for stylistic deconstruction and changes whereby I hoped to express the erosion of an apartheid paradigm; I opted for open-ended, organically-interlinked African models to do so. It was the realisation of the landmark meditation piece *nevasañña-ayatana I-IV* (1986) in particular that demonstrated how a simple organically-integral musical topography could suggest clear, unhurried navigation within and around a structurally-lucid design. This was the direction in which Cage's Zen philosophy ("the possibility of saying nothing") steered me: not towards chaos for want of structural transparency, but rather full-circle back to Africa and its cultures. It was achieved by denying any conscious recourse to familiar paradigms. If Africa were going to be heard, it would be doing so without my sanction.

African cultural systems have the same disregard as Oriental ones for linear temporality, space and the way these interact; that is, for laws of cause and effect governing Occidental thought. However, George Steffen places the definition of modernist and postmodernist ideas in a context where comparison between African and Eurocentric culture is implied insofar Africa exists *only* relative to Europe and America, or Africa *only* as the ready receptacle of social European experiment, e.g. as regards socialism or capitalism.

To quote:

> If 'modern' = decolonization, how can we call the conditions in at least West Africa 'postmodern?' From my humble perspective, the 'de'- in decolonization seems to stretch on as the colonial structures and boundaries and ideas crumble but do not die. Reading the current events magazines on West Africa, leaves me with the feeling of colonialism's legacy

> of borderline psychopathy, i.e., many seem to have no clear sense of social boundaries, of 'right behavior', of social identity (George Steffen, Tacoma School System).

In spite of political independence, a lingering desire for pre-colonial autonomy relegates the African collective to a space where the past obscures notions of a liberating future.

> Tribal or language identities may end up being the only possible cure for this legacy. Certainly, there seems to be less and less rightness in left-over European categories and structures. Perhaps I am stating the obvious, but I do so only because I don't see anything 'post-'in what is going there (ibid).
> (http://www.h-net.org/~africa/threads/pomothread.html)

However, reverting to localised identities does not suggest a need to live in the past. In a postmodern globalised totality, Africa becomes an equal partner affecting the whole.

In the creative process, music has, in the European mind, always been recognised as creative *becoming* resulting in a creative *entity*, the art work, by means of which the composer discovers his/her own *identity* and cathartic role as artist. In an African context, however, it has been found that such a clear differentiation between process and result does not exist.

In spite of this, African thought is recognised as resonating naturally in terms of recent global developments in philosophy. African views of space[1], time[2] and progress, unlike analytical, potentially divisive and aim-directed modernism, form part of what I consider an organic, all-inclusive, socially - conscious drive. These opinions have, in a postmodernist context, been operating ahead of modernist Eurocentric philosophy. Indeed, it is as if the organically fluid, malleable and communally accessible African paradigm has been biding its

[1] Space, or spaces as "ordering and representing human practice" (Erlmann 1996, 98) are "embodiments of an imagined order, located in an heroic past, beyond the here and now and constructed through multi-sensory communicative means such as sound texture, and dance" (ibid).
[2] "African performance, in particular, constructs 'another world of virtual time' by virtue of overlapping, repetitive cycles that have no common pitch or metrical reference points." (Blacking and Drewal cited by Erlmann 1996, 134).

time, patiently waiting for the Eurocentric mindset to catch up with it. In the following evaluation by Jung one can easily replace Eastern references with African ones:

> Western consciousness is by no means consciousness in general; it is a historically conditioned and geographically limited factor, representative of only one part of mankind. The widening of our consciousness ought not to proceed at the expense of other kinds of consciousness, but ought to take place through the development of those elements of our psyche which are analogous to those of the alien psyche, just as the East cannot do without our technology, science and industry. The European invasion of the East was a deed of violence on a grand scale, and it has left us the duty - *noblesse oblige* - of understanding the man of the East. This is perhaps more necessary than we realise at present (Wilhelm, Richard: *The Secret of the Golden Flower*; Commentary by Jung, C.G. 136-149).

My three decade-long obsession with modernist and postmodernist philosophy necessitates consolidation of a varied number of conflicting factors, and although such a panacea may still seem a long distance away, the integration of these factors would more readily bring my philosophical odyssey to a new level of clarity. This happens without losing sight of a Lyotardian process of perennial 'becoming' and its implication for an outdated Cartesian world view.

In 1985-6, the apparent destabilisation of doctrinaire Afrikaner perceptions changed my understanding of my place in society. The ensuing epistemological shift might have been due to abandoning my dependence on Cartesian logic, thereupon opening up towards Oriental and African modes of thought. Derridean *différance* regarding Self and Other in a local, racially-sensitive milieu brought me to enthusiastically reconsider the Kristevan mandate for narcissism, too, thereupon mobilising a positive pursuit of the sign in the field of semiotics:

> Structuralists seek to describe the overall organization of sign systems as 'languages' - as with Lévi-Strauss and myth, kinship rules and totemism, Lacan and the unconscious and Barthes and Greimas and the 'grammar' of narrative. They engage in a search for 'deep structures' underlying the 'surface features' of phenomena. However, contemporary social semiotics has moved beyond the structuralist concern with the internal relations of parts within a self-contained system, seeking to explore the use of signs in specific social situations. (http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/S4B/sem01.html)

Upon scrutinising cultural models, I registered tension between what had been perceived as a normative, unitary Afrikaner Self and a phalanx of imperfect others: that is, what the Self is not. Widening cracks in the façade of Christian-Nationalist rectitude presented a need for the creative fulfillment of redemptory wishes.

At the time, I was working in a self-imposed cocoon conditioned by a solipsistic view regarding identity and my function in the world. I relegated the substance of early pieces (1980-4) to the level of Cage's indeterminate "play", where "the state of zero thought is his ideal, though that also meant denying all ideals" (Griffiths 1981, 67). It was not chaos per se, but an instinctively, or unconsciously composed attempt to bring the creative mind to a level of systematic clarity without having to face the archetypal demons of a collective past. Everything had to be instinctively arrived at and chaos, organic growth and intuitive processes formed an integral part of the tools available to me. Conscious, logically-conceived choices were sanctioned lest a threatening, however constructive cultural contradiction would shape my music. That challenge would have to wait until 1985-6.

Depending on the contradiction in the identities of African and Eurocentric art music, the years 1978 to 1985 offered an opportunity to adjust a perception of this "notorious subject of musical representation" (Kramer 1995, 67). By means of my creative work, I aimed "to show 'internal' and 'external' meanings intertwining closely and widely in the very kind of music commonly held to make their separation most obvious" (ibid). I would have to re-define and broaden my scope of musical aesthetics, to absorb the relevant literature – musically as well as philosophically – in order to eventually arrive at a reflexive vantage-point from which to infuse my own work with a new conciliatory force. This would have to affect an internal truce between me and an inescapable socio-political slipstream.

To clarify the crux of an ongoing trans-cultural migration, a statement by Leo Treitler cited by Kramer will suffice:

> If there is a single word that can express what is for the modern period the essential attribute of 'Western music'... that word is 'form', flanked by all its qualifiers (rational, logical, unified, concise, symmetrical, organic, etc.)". Form is associated with closure, unity, and - perhaps

> above all - structure, "the idea that every note is necessary to the whole and no note is superfluous to it (Kramer 1995, 35).

"By this account," Kramer continues, "form is a dynamic principle of containment or regulation, a continual foreclosure of contingent or excessive sonority. And as such it is opposable both to 'oriental' luxuriance and to Western 'decadence' and 'effeminacy'" (ibid). Africa, on the other hand, delights in open forms, cyclical patterns, sonority as subtle echoes of contingent logic, and these without inferring decadence or effeminacy as suggested above. It goes without saying that, for Europeans, perception of their own artistic heritage does include 'decadent' traits, traces of effeminacy the same way that cultural inbreeding or exclusivity could raise 'monstrous phantoms'.

Vis a vis the comparative candor and propinquity of African cultural expression, Bruno Nettl maintains that "we must keep in mind the limitations that are imposed by the lack of a musical technology (i.e. notation and music theory) and the absence of intensive training of the musician by professionals" (Nettl 1973, 22). Not to be viewed as a limitation *per se*, it is a veritable boon inferring drives comfortably and inextricably part of the evolutionary ache by means of which African music lives and breathes. Jacques P. Malan is of a similar opinion when he writes that

> (Black African music) epitomizes the principles of individuality in community: in order that the total pattern may be correctly performed, each individual must hold his part and at the same time keep in perfect time with his neighbours. Each individual conducts himself for the good of the community; and without adherence to this principle, vocal and instrumental polyphony (or polyrhythm, or hocketing) could not be achieved (Malan 1982, 300).

Under the growing influence of such a socially nurturing world view, this composer evolved from self-effacing, instinctive expression (curtailed by an atrophied, underdeveloped technique) to the integration of those very limitations into his work. Therefore, the formally-amorphous music of my first phase (1978-80) developed in a haphazard fashion, yet not without pre-cursive echoes of future structural developments.

Adhering to prevailing trends in *avant garde* music during the seventies and eighties, a route was traced from energetic but undifferentiated imperative through *Lied* as cinema in the spirit of Luciano Berio, the Italian composer, and music as theatrical discourse. This is represented by *Aura*, *Nostalgia for Space* and *A being retracted, refracted, spied on by its conscience* into deconstruction of all that has come before: the problematic *Piano Sonata no.1* (‘*Ars Moriendi*’) features the use of *objets trouvés*, recorded commentary, re- and decomposing structures, replete with toilet chain and flush concluding the first movement per se - as well as a short-lived flirtation with generating aimless, undifferentiated forms. The impact of pop art and its implied *critique* of the society from which it came was, in the one work, weighed in the balance and found wanting.

By virtue of this *impasse*, enthusiasm for the European *avant garde* was dampened, paving the way, at the beginning of 1981, for the transpersonal, classically-minded archetypes favoured by the American, Cage, who, echoing philosophies contained in the *Ubuntu* ethos, said:

> We need first of all a music in which not only are sounds just sounds but in which people are just people, not subject, that is, to laws established by any one of them, even if he is ‘the composer’ or ‘the conductor.’ The situation relates to individuals differently, because attention isn’t focused in one direction. Freedom of movement is basic to both this art and this society. With all those parts and no conductor, you can see that even this populous a society can function without a conductor (Kostelanetz 1989, 257).

Music of 1978-80 Conforms to this Blueprint

As a modernist overture, the first three years of my musical creativity unfolded in the way composers of the past have brought objectivity to subjective life. The external world remained fixed as the evocation of an internal, yet rationally-reproduced reality. The nature of this reality was generalised to a large degree by overriding cultural concerns, models within which to re-invent an external reality. In the first piece, *Nightfall over the Martian Canals* of 1978-9, the alien world of Mars, the Oedipal struggle and the alienating doctrine of apartheid are metaphorically combined. In the musical imagination, this combination is

transposed to Dali's surreal landscape, *Impressions of Africa,* as if to ask myself, "What are *your* 'impressions of Africa'"?

The text was the only formative aspect. Yet, right from the start, the music itself seems bent on de-stabilising and destroying all semblance of what, in Western terms, could be regarded as form in the normal (modernist) sense of the word. In the first instance, relying on models from Berio (*Sequenza III* for solo female voice), Boulez (*Le Marteau sans Maitre*) and Stockhausen (*Momente* and *Stimmung*), the text was deliberately obscured, even partly deleted. Moreover, using metaphors from cinema, one deduces something in the nature of a film script with the operation of all five senses taken into account with vocal and instrumental noises implying another reality. The music is, different from music for theatre, presented as theatre itself, in the same way Berio did.

It uses metaphors from cinema to define alterity in relation to the existing local art scene of the time. The piece proclaims its subject matter as an alien exoticism and replaces the actual text with noise or silence. As such, it re-defines the un-representable as silence while the absence of text is a palimpsest substituting representation. Beyond the text itself, the livid ghosts of homosexuality, apartheid (a collective millstone) and their resulting pathologies remained unsaid – but that was the point. Taking a cue from Lyotard, one could define this quandary as follows:

> The special feature of avant-garde art is to disrupt expectations, conventions, and established orders of reception. In *Discours***,** figure, visual arts are associated with the figural and the process of seeing. However, poetry is also privileged as a manifestation of the figural in the way it upsets established orders of meaning, following Lyotard's move from the figural as simply sensuous to the figural as disruptive force in any system. The libidinal philosophy engages with art on the level of its affective force: shapes and colours act as tensors within the system of signification that the artwork forms, and unlike more rigidly structured systems, artworks more readily release their affective energy into different systems of interpretation, reception, and influence (http://www.iep.utm.edu/l/Lyotard.htm).

Field Code Changed

Joern Peter Hiekel's observations about Bernd Alois Zimmermann's *Requiem für einen jungen Dichter* similarly apply to the textual assassination of *Nightfall over the Martian*

Canals: "The juxtaposition of different degrees of textual intelligibility" are "structured along a Joycean stream of consciousness, with its characteristic tendency to juxtapose associated ideas without any logic sequence or syntax". Also in this regard, Wittgenstein noted that

> only through use do words acquire meaning, a meaning, moreover, that can never be absolute. As a result, everything presented … is immediately called into question (Hiekel 1995, 6-13).

Lyotard, in his "state of eternally becoming", redefines the un-representable, not accepting that music is the acoustic image of pure interiority. A conundrum exists in the irreconcilability of pure interiority with the artist's inability to accept it. Art itself attempts to tease a resolution here, to expose something indefinable which, per definition, has to be a case of 'catch-twenty-two': impossible to manifest, stranded as template in pure interiority, art remains, per definition, beyond representation. It has to remain hidden. Yet if we do not try to represent it, there would be no art.

The forms and shapes were placed as if by a blind person, and gave rise to a Foucauldian mythology (see footnote 2, page 4) in which hedonistic indulgence was sublimated in vague shapes, in reticent states of transformation depending upon whether shards, fragments of sound (*A being refracted, retracted, spied on by its conscience*)[3] or quasi-impressionist allusions (*In the clear blue land of the heart-one*)[4] were used. An objective, pre-dualist condition, which may or may not have been the ideal 'proto-existential state' defined by Barthes (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roland_Barthes) infused the music of the early-eighties, Cage-inspired or not. I attempted to 'demystify' this music 'for the masses', but from early on, my insistent predilection for obscure areas of interest have kept my output out in the cold. As much as I had initially resisted it, my opposition to what had been derisively

Field Code Changed

3 A 1980 work for organ and tape named after the eponymous Surrealist painting by Victor Brauner.
4 A solo piano piece inspired by the New Simplicity, written in 1985.

labelled *Gebrauchsmusik*[5] (after Paul Hindemith) had to crumble. And eventually I felt compelled to submit to the lure of African music as a proto-musical template closest to folk art, where one encounters expression without the burden of cultural conformity.

An instinctive, organic form-building mechanism was taking over in which form arose directly, without Western 'contamination', from an African model. Shying away from the logical or the intellectual, the African collective was incorporated, Derridean *différance* notwithstanding.

Africa and the Perception of a New Order

The suspension of natural order by juxtaposing incongruous aspects of everyday reality originated in a desire to remove Self from an everyday reality of Self and Other, by *inventing* an other 'Other' (an ideal 'Other'?) of which Lyotard writes:

> Modern art presents the fact that there is an unpresentable, while postmodern art attempts to present the unpresentable (http://www.iep.utm.edu/l/Lyotard.htm).

Field Code Changed

To understand the apartheid conundrum, I had to yield to an artistic redefinition of abilities and function, namely that art diagnoses ailments and offers a way to address imbalances. If the musical work (for example, *Nightfall*…) presented, in the fractured parody of a Schubert *Lied*, a distorted picture of society, the same music, by implication, offered a representation of the unrepresentable. In this way, it recalls Lyotard identifying a perpetual process of *becoming* taking preference over just *being*, "the nascent state being constant" (Appignanesi and Garrett, 20). Similarly, apparent antipodes like Afrikaner and Africa could be seen as obligatory parts of the same paradigm rendering the dichotomy of Afrikaner versus African redundant. The proto-Afrikaner, untainted by racist or other discriminatory tenets, would welcome integration into a collective cultural identity. Would that mean a betrayal of his/her own cultural mindset? Or, in accepting his/her own narcissistic drive as a healthy mode of

5 User-friendly music

survival: would it simply entail a robust interaction with culturally different, yet pliable, elements that could lead to possible synthesis?

In the mid-eighties, I had no real voice. I was still operating like a ventriloquist's doll, using another voice as my own. What was needed would amount to the enlivening of an anthropomorphic intimation, breathing a new spirit into my work.

The question that now begs to be asked is: why did it have to be Africa? Why could it not have been a total absorption of Eurocentric, or popular, or purely religious, or an esoterically-postmodernist, even computer-generated music of intellectual complexity? Why did it have to be Africa within a synthesis of African art music with what I knew? The answer is as straightforward, as it is prone to being misunderstood or misleading: living in Africa, the adoption of African music as model is a logical choice, but, at the same time, the simple reproduction of existing musics would serve no purpose. The response of the European artist impelled towards creative utterance in Africa necessitates a fusion of two sometimes mutually-exclusive art forms; and it does suggest a stylistic clash of parameters resulting in a synthesis, the nature of which not even the creative mind itself can anticipate.

Almost 30 years after first venturing into this artistic minefield, chaos theory posits the clearest model to be used in elucidating underlying processes directing my early stylistic evolution. James Gleick notes that "in terms of aesthetic values, the new mathematics of fractal geometry brought hard science in tune with the peculiarly modern feeling for untamed, uncivilized, undomesticated nature" (Gleick 1987, 117).

Writers have identified inter-cultural elements and the way in which they affect each other through such a process of cross-pollination as well as the notion of intertextuality. With interaction in mind, it is accepted that music, like all the arts, is a constantly-growing, evolving and perpetually-changing externalisation of hidden, potentially expressible thoughts. The degree to which this change affects a meaningful evolutionary imperative remains fascinating, especially in view of the personal paradigm shift I experienced since the

beginning of 1986. Although the changes affecting my views since then can be related directly to the accident, the shift in my thinking was not instantaneous, but rather evolved over a period of months, even years.

I found that my switch from a "static state to process" (Appignanesi and Garrett 1995, 20) has been characterised by a move from an imposed, stagnant *status quo* to a place of actively participating in the renaissance of a culture I had hitherto avoided. This shift requires, from the artist's point of view, the art work and the external world to become reciprocally referential in the way socio-political trends impact on contemporary art. In the context in which they are investigated, their self-generating properties are recognised and a final theoretical aim is established.

This is why, finding myself unable to ignore racially-motivated clashes in townships during the seventies and eighties, I embraced aspects of Foucauldian hedonism[6] initially aimed at a form of Jungian transcendence. However, I now recognize my view of African races during the apartheid years as somewhat patronizing. I was sponging on what J.M.Coetzee identifies as the fate of "'any poor man", a man "totally undone ... if he has the misfortune to have an honest heart...'" (*In the Heart of the Country* 1976, 36). In a parasitic way, I considered the physical prowess of African races as a latter-day transference of ancient Greek ideals regarding classical beauty. I located archetypal models for sensual integration and physical beauty 'hidden' – in broad daylight - within a culture hitherto vilified by my own people. Susan Sontag identifies such a pathology in terms of "recent discourse about the body, reimagined as the instrument with which to enact, increasingly, various programs of self-improvement, of the heightening of powers" (1977, 88). In this way, as one backtracks the roots of Jungian theories, one locates them in Freudian revelations dealing with survival, creativity, violence and sexuality (see chapter 1, 3-4).

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[6] "Foucault argues that madness (a *potent source of Dionysian energy –J.C.*) lost its power to signify the limits of social order and to point to the truth and was silenced by Reason." (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_Foucault: accessed 12 December 2006)

A formerly undetected and possibly redeeming source of great power (as Lévinas found) was also implicit within my own paradigm. What was needed to locate this source of creativity was to consciously shift my focus towards reason and good sense. According to a postmodernist observation, it was "the irreducible relation, the epiphany, of the encounter with another"
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emmanuel_Lévinas).

Lyotard's perennial process of *becoming* has been fuelled here by an unending search for the Other, remaining an *idée fixe* and eventually leading to some containment of Foucauldian *Ur*-energy. In the end, such energies had to be suspended and re-directed towards Jungian integration, which is why Lévinas' positive view of the "encounter with the Other" suggests a confluence of primordial gentleness. It changes the vilification of that same Other as destructive intruder, racially-alien or, in keeping with antiquated Afrikaner sentiments, as "socially inferior, morally inadequate, intellectually underdeveloped and sexually unfit for intimate relationships" (Giliomee 2003, 470).

> For Levinas, the irreducible relation, the epiphany, of the encounter with another, is a privileged phenomenon in which the other person's proximity and distance are both strongly felt. "The Other precisely **reveals** himself in his alterity not in a shock negating the I, but as the primordial phenomenon of gentleness." At the same time, the revelation of the face makes a demand, this demand is before one can express, or know one's freedom, to accede or deny. One instantly recognizes the transcendence and heteronomy of the Other. Even murder would fail in any attempt to take hold of this otherness.
> (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emmanuel_Lévinas)

By the turn of the 1980s, in an attempt to differentiate between African and Eurocentric cultures, I was being directed surreptitiously by, to quote Lawrence Kramer *(Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge*), "the heavy stress on the discursive logic through which

dominant ideologies commonly route their power. We can call this the logic of alterity" (Kramer 1995, 34).

Starting with the result of a minor epiphany from the latter half of 1985, the piece for flute and piano, *Poussin in Africa*, dedicated to Alain Barker,[7] marks my first venture into African music as a possible formative element. The ciphers and themes, however, do not derive from existing models. They are neither African nor Afrikaans, neither Khoi nor San yet operate in an effortless confluence.

Remaining wary of intercultural cross-fertilisation, however, I agree with Morton Feldman that "art is a crucial, dangerous operation we perform on ourselves. Unless we take a chance, we die in art" (Programme note for *Why Patterns?* hat ART CD 2-60801-2).

It follows that, by virtue of the logic of alterity, the Self confronts Other as a means to artistic expression. The danger is when it remains locked in such an insurmountable dialectic as alterity represents not only what the Self is *not* but also what it may wish to be. Leonard Kramer explains:

> The logic of alterity is hard to resist, partly because its field of operation is very wide and partly because its capacity for mystification is endless. Its historical force has been (and remains) to privilege masculinity over femininity, hetero- over homosexuality, whiteness over non-whiteness, the West over the East, civilization over the 'primitive,' high over low culture, and higher over lower social classes (Kramer 1995, 34-5).

Alterity suggests conflict between Self and Other and extols virtue in perceived differences, the degree of difference and the manner in which differences are allowed to be discharged in creative utterance.

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[7] Nicolas Poussin (15 June 1594–November 19, 1665) was a French painter in the French Baroque style. His work predominantly features clarity, logic, and order, and favors line over color. Until the 20th century he remained the dominant inspiration for such classically oriented artists as Jacques-Louis David and Paul Cézanne. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicolas_Poussin: accessed 13 August 2007)

For that reason one of the most important elements in facilitating the switch between a Eurocentric and African template was the deconstruction of the extra-musical. Abandoning the derivation of ‘stories’ from or the projection of the same onto a musical text represented my most decisive break with Eurocentric music. Allowing the music to display an identity on its own terms, I embarked on this Adornian process of understanding with the knowledge that a future state of total clarity will always be impossible and out of reach.

I stay mindful of the fact that such a field of reference remains on the edge of clear signification, the signifier (myself) being trapped in a perennially-elastic cocoon of fragmented signals as opposed to whole, fully-signified ones.

CHAPTER 4

Local Investigations: An understanding of indigenous music; *Ubuntu* and power in relation to analytical ideas by theorists from Adorno up to the present.

> The musicologist in South Africa is in an exceptionally fortunate position, for he is in an area in which the musics of different stages of man's development may still be studied. It is particularly important to realise that the influence of European civilisations have only been brought to bear upon the inhabitants of the South African hinterland in relatively recent times (Malan 1982, 267).

As my perception of local indigenous music grew, its impact on my work became more pronounced. What Malan calls "musics of different stages of man's development" (ibid) was identified as a cross-section through our geo-cultural heritage. I wanted to illuminate what the West, for lack of understanding, could only describe as 'nothingness':

> "Regardless of vociferous nationalist assertions to the contrary, Africa, as a discursive realm and as an episteme, still functions under the sign of nothingness" (Adeeko, 2002). (http://www.africaresource.com/war/vol3.2/adeeko.html).

A Philosophical Triumvirate: Adorno, Said and Mbembe

The music under discussion observes a future imperative towards nothingness. However, its destination is not necessarily utopian, but asymptotically always on the other side of actuality. It is pre-conditioned by the eventual dissolution of identity but, in view of Mbembe's use of the term 'nothingness' (see above), I locate my definition of it at the opposite end. In a subjective, individualised context 'emptiness' is defined as 'potential' and loss of identity occurs in favour of spontaneity and the "passive resistance" of Mahatma Gandhi's *Satyagraha* philosophy (http://www.writespirit.net/sri_chinmoy/books-by-sri-chinmoy/mahatma-gandhi-the-heart-of-life/satyagraha-and-gandhi).

The artist, the central ego, vanishes and the collective, in the Jungian sense, dominates. Within a social organism, the individual artist – the African artist in particular - traditionally functions solely as an agent for the collective: "in the traditional African context, the reason

for composing is not merely a quest for individual *aggrandisement* or self-recognition, but to build on to and contribute to the rich body of music that exists with a social, artistic, cultural and philosophical reference. The African composer is seen as the vanguard of the cultural endowment and is obligated to share it" (Herbst 2003, 143).

This was also how I wanted to contextually redefine myself: I was not a ready-made African without colonialist or Orientalist baggage, but one of Kipling's White Men, "an idea, a persona, a style of being" (Said 1978, 226). At least, that was until I was brought to recognise the "truth about the distinctive differences between races, civilisations, and languages", that it "*was (or pretended to be) radical and ineradicable*" (ibid, 233, my italics). It "forced (my) vision away from common, as well as plural, human realities like joy, suffering, political organisation, forcing attention instead in the downward and backward direction of immutable origins" (ibid).

Mbembe's collectivist 'emptiness', perpetrated by insecure Eurocentricity, still reverberates within the other 'emptiness' I have evoked as individualist imperative. This is not the portentous consequence of ethnic power games, one collective against the other, but my singular withdrawal from dogmatisms. It evokes rebellion against Occidental materialist philosophy in which the individual heart of the group has been lost and now has to be found again. At the same time, I felt myself drawn to the anti-materialist emancipation of Oriental, specifically Zen Buddhist thought. In turn, *Ubuntu* with its *Weltanschauung* of *one-in-many* and *many-in-one,* was implied, being reminiscent of Chaos Theory in general. Finally, this facilitated my insight into Black Consciousness, into what Fanon identifies as being "immanent in its own eyes. I am not a potentiality of something, I am wholly what I am" (Fanon *Black Skin, White Masks* 1952, 134-5, cited by Sanders 2002, 185).

Steve Biko defined Black Consciousness in 1970 as an "inward-looking process" designed to infuse the black man with pride and dignity. Although proceeding from the opposite side of the ethnic spectrum, a similar quest for self-awareness and fulfilment supports my research of indigenous music and its empowering effect on those who play and hear it.

During 1985 and the beginning of 1986, an Adornian quest for the mediation of such beauty between subject and object impelled me when, in the latter days of apartheid rule, I saw the white minority withdraw to an ivory tower of cultural-moral rectitude. In Adornian terms, truth was relegated to a mummified regime of dogma. I believe, also in a global context of strife, that the Western world sanctioned the rise of a post-war artistic *avant garde* (1945 up to about 1970) as a *de facto* exercise in rebellion, distortion and the study of meaninglessness.

In 1986, seven years after my first musical compositions (*Nightfall over the Martian Canals* and *He who shall raise up his soul shall see its colours,* etc.), I wanted to address this social imbalance. It found a voice in my music for the first time in *Poussin in Africa* for flute and piano. The 17th-century artist (Nicolas Poussin, ethnographically displaced and inexperienced, a babe in arms) is confronted, like a cipher in virtual reality, with vivid yet alien sensory experiences characterising a unique new world. Following the composition of *Township I* for solo harpsichord and *Heat Wave* (ensemble) with its Africanist version of Celtic myth, *Poussin in Africa* took up the gauntlet projected in Mbembe's post-colonialist philosophy and Edward Said's *Orientalism*: The work projected the Orient, or Africa, for that matter, as a utilitarian *objet d'art* to 'plunder' for exoticisms otherwise denied Eurocentric susceptibility:

> For colonialism to subsist, the conquerors have to invent something called "the native," a creation from whom "no rational act with any degree of lawfulness proceeds", and who must be considered incapable of acting *intentionally* within a "unity of meaning". This creature, that does not "aspire to transcendence," *is* but does not *exist*: "*thing that is, but only insofar as it is nothing"* (Adeeko, 2002).
> (http://www.africaresource.com/war/vol3.2/adeeko.html).

Said quotes Flaubert who found, in keeping with notions still current today, that "the oriental woman is no more than a machine: she makes no distinction between one man and another man" (1978, 187). Locating this crude stereotype close to home, it appeared typical of distortions fuelled by apartheid lore. Obfuscating an exotic culture in so haphazard, yet in so wilful a fashion, I rendered it simultaneously attractive and repellent to the Orientalist within myself. It presented the ideal fantasy where males are no less 'luxuriant' or 'unbounded' in a

prototypically poetic free-for-all. Following my 1986 accident, this had to be re-directed, not towards cold chastity, but, in Jungian terms, towards psychic integration. Focus would still be on form, style, colour and sheer physical allure without the luxury of necessarily submitting to it.

The 'Lure' of Nothingness

It was suggested by Hegel (Scruton 1994, 289) that "(master) and slave each possess a half of freedom". This mutual dependence of 'master' and 'slave' also applies to the apartheid paradigm. Derrida's analogy of the ghost explains the interdependence of perpetrator and victim: "Like all those who are occupied by spectres, he welcomes them only in order to chase them. As soon as there is some spectre, hospitality and exclusion go together" (1994, 176). In Mbembe's opinion, European influx was driven by greed; that is, in Derridean parlance, "welcoming the spectre only in order to chase him" (ibid).

The problem facing the artist in Africa is a global view of the continent as, to use Mbembe's image, "the supreme receptacle of the West's obsession with, and circular discourse about, the facts of 'absence'" (Adeeko) (http://www.africaresource.com/war/vol3.2/adeeko.html).

The prevailing negativity of associated traits like 'animality', 'bestiality', 'arbitrariness' and 'tyranny' have shaped a perception of the African collective as profoundly nihilistic. It is read as either imitative or damningly primitive expression which can neither compare with nor aspire to what is perceived as the more profound subtleties of Eurocentric art. Now, the absorption of all South African artists into the burgeoning melting pot of 21st-century post-apartheid culture necessitates a revision of such misconception. Derrida's denunciation of such trends (see below) is now, thirty years later, reflected in a global trend away from philosophical orthodoxy.

> In the name of Enlightenment and Reason, you then rise up to condemn any obscurity in the presentation of the general concept: 'Negroid form' equals obscurantism plus occultism, mystery plus mysticism and mystification (Derrida 1978**,** 172).

Zen Buddhism, which I have practised since 1977-8[1], is defined in Chapter 1. Focus on "European culture ... as a sort of surrogate and even underground self" (Said 1978, 3) was replaced by the welcome allure of Other, thus presenting a comforting lens through which to reconsider terms like 'nothingness', 'absence' and 'lack'. Applying these in terms of the audible (a method similar to that used in an as yet-unrealised 1988 piece entitled *Supernova*), the antithesis of what I wanted to impart is signified; in this way also suggesting a wholly self-sufficient and autonomous Other. Brent Dean Robbins, from Duquesne University, mentions in a paper entitled '*Putting Ourselves Out of Business: Implications of Lévinas for Psychology'*, that "Lévinas shows us that all learning comes from the Other" (http://mythosandlogos.com/Levinaspaper.html).

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In an African milieu I, as a white male Afrikaner, focused the tension of *différance* between the African diaspora and myself, the European projector of that *difference.* Now I place myself at the mercy of this collective. My submission has been of such a nature that absorption into that collective and the consequent loss of identity has been awaited as a conscious, joyous immersion in an *Ur-Gestalt.* It encourages an archetypal participation in the "discursive realm" that is only possible in what could be termed a pre- or post-dialectic continuum.

> We should not leave a discussion on African music without mentioning its enormous impact on much of the world's music in the last hundred years. It is less well known that Africans who were brought to various parts of the Old World over the past several hundred years also brought with them much musical material. Most importantly, the main distinguishing features of the popular musics of the Western world, and of jazz, are ultimately of African origin (Nettl 1973, 154-5).

These 'origins', identified by Said (1978, 233), establish Africa as the simple, and magnificently complex, receptacle of our deepest dreams and desires. It is understood that African music informs most, if not all, of the music still produced in the world today. Due to its plasticity and malleability, embodied in the *Ubuntu* ethic, African music displays transforming and transformative qualities of a uniquely mobile evolutionary nature. Other

[1] Paul Reps defines its central nihilism and aimlessness as "a special teaching without scriptures, beyond words and letters, pointing to the mind-essence of man, seeing directly into one's nature" (1959, 15).

musics appear fixed, set in stone, not given to an entropic or evolutionary flow while African music always changes, yet also *affects* change. Still it remains constant in that flexibility, an evolutionary paradox. African music, by and large, obeys a progressive imperative *towards* the dissolution of structure, of all structure and, by proxy, of Self. In tribal context, this happens as a parallel to physical death or as 'death' of the individual as he/she is absorbed into the collective.

A crucial distance exists between plunderer and source, or between Orientalist and Orient. As identified by Said (1978, 222) this is "standing before a distant, barely intelligible civilisation or cultural monument, the Orientalist scholar reduced the obscurity by translating, sympathetically portraying, inwardly grasping the hard-to-reach object". The scholar is stranded "outside the Orient, which, however much it was made to appear intelligible, remained beyond the Occident. This cultural, temporal, and geographical distance was expressed in metaphors of depth, secrecy, and sexual promise" (ibid, 222).

The improvisatory spirit of black music now forming an important part of my musical style (see chapter 1, page 15, footnote 9), hinges on such an alluring "potentiality hidden in the heart of creation" (Degenaar 1990, 3). It is due to the impotence of reason "in the presence of this powerful force" (ibid). For that purpose, a gradual Africanisation of my *oeuvre* has taken place while, surreptitiously, there might have been another reason, too: a knee-jerk response against colonialist British influence on African culture. Two hundred years of discriminatory rule have shaped a collective bias "between elites and the masses" (Said 1978, 245).

Three key works, produced during 1986, proceeded from pure intuition to form, and two others from tactile vocal textures instantaneously modified using a digital delay unit. The purpose was the arousal of, in the words of Lyotard, a "mixture of pleasure and pain" pointing beyond representation, something that cannot be grasped by the human intellect or spirit (www.iep.utm.edu/l/Lyotard.htm).

These pieces are entitled *Antichrist, Abraxas* and *nevasaññañ ñasañña-ayatana* I-IV (the latter with a duration of about 90 minutes). They drew attention to what Lyotard calls

'*differends*' [2] through the feeling of the sublime, demonstrating, in some ineffable manner, that a wrong had to be addressed. Those were my first conscious musical comments on apartheid.

My relation to nothingness, the void experienced by Sartre and the nothingness of pure potential, were 'sounded' in these works. Nevertheless, this occurred neither as a diagnosis of Derrida's' "time out of joint" nor as a call to arms. Instead, Mbembe's 'slave-as-artefact' was tied to the masthead in a declaration of intent although, until the beginning of 1986, it remained mere window-dressing.

The 90-minute meditation piece sounded the same inversion of established paradigms as Derrida's post-Lyotardian take on general artistic evaluation. Derrida's writing contributed to the crystallisation of *différance* on the one hand and, on the other, to the deconstruction of accepted viewpoints: "no differance without alterity, no alterity without singularity, no singularity without here-now" (Derrida 1994, 37). In turn, Mbembe locates Derrida and Lyotard within an African context, bringing the postmodernist philosophical argument into focus:

> Since its colonial conquest Africa has served as "the supreme receptacle of the West's obsession with, and circular discourse about, the facts of 'absence,' 'lack,' and 'non-being,' of identity and difference, of negativeness [ ]–[ ]in short, of nothingness". (Adeeko, 2002) (http://www.africaresource.com/war/vol3.2/adeeko.html).

This is how the West's obsession with 'absence' and its ramifications projected a virtual Other of 'presence', 'wealth' and "unparalleled potential", an issue also addressed by Edward Said. Yet, this dialectic is not the only source of what Mark Sanders describes in *Complicities* as "the lasting insight of Black Consciousness". The insidious apartheid dogma enfolded all postcolonial rhetoric, even unto engendering its own opposite and the means to realise it. Sanders maintains that "apartheid was not, in any essential sense, an achievement of separateness at all, but *a system of enforced separation that, paradoxically, generated an*

[2] The differend is the name Lyotard gives to the silencing of a player in a language game. It exists when there are no agreed procedures for what is different (be it an idea, an aesthetic principle, or a grievance) to be presented in the current domain of discourse. The differend marks the silence of an impossibility of phrasing an injustice (www.egs.edu/faculty/lyotard.html).

unwanted intimacy with an oppressive other" [own emphasis] (http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.cgi?path=134461117650500).

This "unwanted intimacy" transformed revulsion into reconciliation with, and an acceptance of, the power and *différance* of Other. Giliomee quotes Antjie Krog as follows: "How can I live with the fact that all the words used to humiliate, all the orders to kill, belong to the language of my heart?" (Giliomee 2003, 664) From the spectre of self-hatred, the conscientious Afrikaner only needed a gentle nudge in the right direction.

Jung's call for fusion, for integration, lies at the heart of the matter. The separate halves of a whole being exist for that reason: not only as female and male, but also as black and white or Self and Other. The dialectic set up in this way engenders an unspoken desire to fuse with Other and heal a psychic rift. Between my Africanist awakening experienced in writing *Poussin in Africa* at the beginning of 1986 and my accident in September that year, I felt increasingly trapped between the existential lure of the familiar and stronger imperatives from African culture. Unable to make a clear choice, I opted for the easy way out: temporary cop-out in unconsciousness. The reason was that a new imperative demanded the integration of an insipid gay Afrikaner Self with a far stronger sense of being in and of Africa, and to answer the Derridean call: "is not learning to live experience itself?" (Derrida 1978, xvi-xvii). I had to wait more than twenty years to arrive at the same point again.

A New Reading of the *Ubuntu* Philosophy

From the beginning of my composing career up to 1985-6, referential anchoring formed part of my quest for identity. Since 1986-90, I have progressed towards pure sonority, an evolutionary change foreshadowed in 'white' (as in primarily featureless) pieces like *nevasannannasanna-ayatana I-IV* (1986) and, before that, the *2nd Piano Sonata* and *String Quartet* of 1981.[3]

[3] With these pieces, the Oriental concept of void as life-giver, and of purposeful purposelessness, were introduced into my work. *Ubuntu* (see chapter 2, p.22), the most succinct of Africanist ethic principles, echoes this philosophy, and is subliminally tied with Rupert Sheldrake's post-paradigmatic hypothesis of morphic resonance, "suggesting that self-organizing systems at all levels of complexity, including molecules, crystals, cells, tissues, organisms and societies of organisms are organized by fields called morphic fields' (Sheldrake 1990, 88).

Intelligence is suggested within all existing structures, and the interconnectedness of a trans-cultural musical template is beyond doubt. Jim Chapman found that "Western music has been profoundly affected by African music", while, in an attempt to secure "valid references between the creative works and the musical repertoires to which the creative work refers, one finds that European musical ideas are thoroughly embedded in the 'new traditions' of Africa" (www.speculation2005.qut.edu.au/papers/ChapmanJ.pdf).

In this search for new myths,[4] he evokes Lyotard, Derrida and Baudrillard's view of life as an ongoing, ever-changing process. At the same time, context remains important and, like Albert Einstein's theories of relativity, the *Ubuntu*-like interrelatedness of all things. Einstein's influence is also apparent in an important tenet of Derridean philosophy as the French philosopher "contends that meaning is always dependent on context. 'There is nothing outside the text' means there is nothing outside context. And since the context in which words might be read or heard can always shift, meanings are impossible to completely pin down -- and the distinctions we base on them ultimately rest on sand" (*Deconstructing Jacques Derrida* by Mitchell Stephens *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, July 21, 1991) (http://www.nyu.edu/classes/stephens/Jacques_Derrida_-_NYT_-_page.htm).

Lyotard, the Unrepresentable and the Sublime

In this chapter, a dialectic is traced between aspects of indigenous African music and the art music it has inspired locally, specifically my music. In Lyotardian terms, both European and African art "are concerned with the unrepresentable: that which cannot be presented (or represented) in art. This is a paradoxical task and arouses in the viewer the mixture of pleasure and pain that is the sublime" (http://www.iep.utm.edu/l/Lyotard.htm).

> Embedded in the psyche of the human race is an everlasting quest for self-expression through a continuum of creations and innovations. Why compose music? Who can and should compose music? Why write it down? The human spirit has many forms of expression, music being one of the most dynamic and integrated. Composing music in Western societies is

[4] Danny Yee, discussing Claude Levi-Strauss' *The Raw and the Cooked*, similarly notes that "myths cannot be understood in isolation, but only as parts of an entire myth system. A structural analysis of a myth system involves elucidating the shared features of different myths and the transformations which link them. It is these relationships and transformations between myths that are important". (http://dannyreviews.com/h/The_Raw_and_the_Cooked.html)

> often related to concepts of intellect, ability, aptitude and individual accomplishment. In the African context, in addition to these concepts, music making is a powerful life force generated within the community and embodies a sense of social responsibility: religious rituals, ceremonies, social events and entertainment. It is well documented that each occasion demands its own musical structuring and gestalt (Herbst & Zaidel-Rudolph 2003, 142).

In 1985-6, opting to confront and integrate this "life force" (ibid, 2003) into my work, an attempt was made to arrive at a clear evocation of Other. I tried to avoid what Edward Said identifies as "dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, ... dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient" (1978, 3). Its integration into my work had to be instinctive instead. It had to avoid being what Said, in defining Orientalism, called "a yardstick to measure degrees of superiority." Defining "the Orient, and by implication Africa", as existing "for the West", he saw it as having been "constructed by and in relation to the West ... It is a mirror image of what is inferior and alien ('Other') to the West" (http://www.english.emory.edu/Bahri/Orientalism.html).

In *Township I* and *II, Mayibuye Afrika, Thanatos-on-Ice, Pink Narcissus*, and *Poussin in Africa* an intolerable degree of superiority is recognised, a trait otherwise identified by Said as a "system of representations framed by political forces" (ibid). At the same time and in spite of such misgivings, a deep-lying respect and love for Africa was also expressed, a sentiment often misinterpreted. After all, Said himself "highlights the inaccuracies of a wide variety of assumptions as it questions various paradigms of thought which are accepted on individual, academic, and political levels" (ibid).

From an opposite, Occidentally framed viewpoint, Paul Griffiths' comments regarding the fusion of cultures also refer:

> Much music has been stimulated by the possibility of fusing a Western conception of time with an Eastern notion of cyclical phrases, of combining dynamic, goal-directed movement with circular return or stasis.
>
> The capacity of music to exert specific effects on the human subject is also accepted, at least by implication, by those composers who would the art serve more mundane functions in the furthering of political change (Griffiths 1981, 296**).**

For the first time alerted to the dangers of cultural plunder, opposing viewpoints were perceived, and these are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Mbembe's and my own beliefs, or Edward Said's opinions compared to those of Paul Griffiths may tacitly also support each other. Energised by many years of study and meditation on this subject, I aimed at achieving an expression of a 'truth' in my work. I wanted to necessitate an Adornian 'reading' of the text while also suggesting Derridean spectres. "For Derrida, the paradox of responsible behaviour means that there is always a question of being responsible before a singular other (eg. a loved one, God, etc.), and yet we are also always referred to our responsibility towards others generally and to what we share with them" (The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: (http://www.iep.utm.edu/d/derrida.htm).

Prompted by Adeeko's diagnosis of an over-arching African syndrome (see page 51), I accept that the debt I owe to Africa, its music and the tenets of *Ubuntu* has to be recognised and consolidated. Jamie James's reflections are similar to my own:

> I have asserted that the musical scene of the present day is a pluralistic tent that can accommodate any musical style or conception. Yet if we look beneath the surface, we shall find that most of these diverse strains are vestigial remains of musical schools and ideas from the past" (James 1993, 238).

Retracing my steps via Edward Said, I came to trust the exorcising process implied in confronting an unwanted, limiting stereotype with its opposite. Instead of resorting to safe, over-arching generalisations after *Poussin in Africa*, I reverted to the specific *objets trouvés* used in *Township I (*1985) for solo harpsichord. By intentionally limiting myself to a specific fragment of African music I (in the worst possible colonialist manner) 'used' it like a bull in a china shop and came to 'own' it then. In 'possessing' it, though, it was not part of me, and I, in turn, was not part of it either. Nevertheless, recognising this paradoxical outcome did more to facilitate my integration of an African *Gestalt* than the careful manipulation of indigenous fragments would have done. Trapped in my music as *objets trouvés* was still "a prototypical Oriental ... biological inferior that is culturally backward, peculiar, and unchanging" (http://www.english.emory.edu/Bahri/Orientalism.html). In time, its integration would occur on its own terms, quietly and without premeditation.

Township I and the subsequent orchestral version, *Celebration*, were saturated with Derridean spectres of power and superiority, formulated as a cultural fusion, and is an example of accelerated development in Western culture:

> In the world of modern 'classical' music there is more evidence of the forced and accelerated growth to which Western culture has been treated, having to do with the realisation of musical potentials hitherto unknown. … The acceptance of every possibility of tone as musically viable leads logically to the inclusion of noise within the musical domain. … Or one can build bridges to other musics, especially the popular and Oriental ones (Godwin 1987, 115-6).

The possibility of a non-discriminatory cross-cultural fertilisation opened up a veritable Pandora's Box of irrepressible mutational force. Once again, composers had an opportunity to get their hands dirty:

> "Even by the end of the 1950s, most of these things had already been tried and taken to their logical conclusions, and there was little left to be done in the way of innovation. But now a vast mass of musical possibility – a veritable *Prima Materia* – lay ready to hand, with none of the restrictions that had limited composers in the past. This is the raw musical matter of the new age that has been laboriously gathered and poured out, to be used by each composer according to his own lights. It is like the spiritual heritage of the whole world that is now offered, for the first time, to anyone who can read (ibid, 116).

My 'conversion' to the *Ubuntu* ethic occurred thanks to a cosmopolitan expansion of possibilities. The most exotic references were located, due to my opposition to Afrikaner isolationism, in Zen Buddhism, Indian mysticism and occult studies, in everything that was anathema to an Afrikaner ethos. Such reaction resulted in the initial excursions, not into African culture, but those of Asia, Latin America and Oceania.

I register similar sub-texts determining the structural argument and emotional mechanism of works like *Thanatos-on-Ice* and *Pink Narcissus* where the earlier use of African *objets trouvés* became the integrated style of the nineties. When Scruton (1994, 289), via Hegel, establishes the West and Africa as equal partners in a (projected) game of freedom versus slavery, the game itself seems like a façade. The restless power toing and froing between master and slave is, alternately, the will to implement, i.e. "the will to subjectively exercise

it" and the other "the now objectified self-image to see its value". As individual and as an artist, I recognised reconciliation as my singular responsibility – as it is the responsibility of all others.

By the time *Poussin in Africa* (1986) for flute and piano, had been composed for the then Durban-based flautist, Alain Barker, I had come to experience artistic representation of the essentially unrepresentable in a colonial context. It involved an interchange between the diametrically-opposed viewpoints of the coloniser and the colonised. This once-vituperative tension was beginning to show wear and tear. A prototypical synthesis had made itself felt in my work during the seventies, eighties and nineties. The principle was perceived to function the way an elastic band, stretched beyond its limit, has to break or snap back to a position of less or no tension. Apartheid, in view of its unnatural manifestation of such tension, carried the seeds of its own destruction. Mbembe (reflecting on "the West's obsession with 'absence'") and Sanders (2002, ibid) define apartheid in a way that clearly points at a solution to the conundrum and in 1980, without being fully aware of it, I translated it into music.

Nostalgia for Space was inspired by Oscar Dominguez's *decalcomania*, and is an ensemble piece for flute, clarinet, horn, 2 pianos, percussion, violin, viola and cello. Indulging in the use of palimpsest[5], I did not only respond to Cage pieces like *Variations III* or Terry Riley's *In C*, but also to the principle of *collectivity* and mutual interaction. The use of social interdependence as model had members of the ensemble relying on choices they had to make within a pre-determined framework while the same choices affected, to some degree, the future evolution of the piece. This recalls the *Ubuntu* ethic where choices made by the individual affect the whole community (see chapter 3): African ideas concerning society and the individual evidently, in conjunction with postmodernist philosophy regarding *différance*, brought me to a space where I would recognise "justice as incalculability of the gift and singularity of the an-economic ex-position to others' (Derrida 1994, 26). Quoting Lévinas, Derrida adds: "'The relation to others – that is to say, justice'".

[5] It describes a document that has been overwritten.

In the mirror Mbembe holds up to assess development in Africanist perception, both from within and without, I precariously attempt to locate my stylistic evolution. It took place within the same formless matrix whereby "nationalism often fails at achieving liberation across class boundaries because its aspirations are primarily those of the colonised bourgeoisie – a privileged middle class who perhaps seeks to defeat the prevailing colonial rule only to usurp its place of dominance and surveillance over the working-class 'lumpen-proletariat'" (http://www.africaresource.com/war/vol3.2/adeeko.html).

In my work this was initially due to the insipid lack of collective will to finally address the social imbalance evident around me. My earliest pieces, *Nightfall over the Martian Canals, He who shall raise up his soul shall see its colours, Aura* and *A being refracted, retracted, spied on by its conscience*, bore witness to the desire to describe, in lurid terms, elements of, as Mbembe has it, "this monstrous reality" and leave it at that. In accordance with Eurocentric models, the cult of performer or composer as hero informed my output, side-lining a more pressing need to "create internal coherence and rationality" (ibid).

Regarding activation of my social conscience, 1985 saw the first signs of a shift in the perception of Other, and this time it occurred in a more inclusive way than before. The re-alignment of my moral compass led me to ascribe newly-formulated, post-dogmatic insights to the Adornian subject-object dichotomy. Accordingly, the "aesthetic experience contains a truth-content", truth-content being a "cognitive content which is not exhausted either by the subjective intentions of its producers or by the subjective responses of its consumers and that may be revealed through analysis". Whereas "Kant conceives of beauty as a subjective experience, Adorno suggests that beauty mediates between subject and object" (Jennefer Callaghan)[6] (http://www.english.emory.edu/Bahri/Adorno.html).

[6] This truth content was recognised, with great joy, in works like *Poussin in Africa* and later the meditation piece, *nevasañña-ayatana* I-IV (both 1986), and although there are no direct quotes from African music present, Africa surfaced, not as an *ersatz* reproduction of simple forms and shapes, but as a fully-formed post-colonialist 'light sculpture', the directed clarity of motivic design. (http://www.thecore.nus.edu.sg/post/poldiscourse/fanon/fanonov.html)

African music could be interpreted as an 'empty' receptacle for Western 'riffs'.[7] Our collective heartbeat, its rhythmic drive, derives from Africa. Incorrectly applied in a Western military context, the same propelling energy engenders heightened awareness, as in trance states. The West has misconstrued this as a means to impose order on a changeable, changing and evolving physical world. Occidental mistrust in the ability of humans to discipline and control themselves prevails. Africa spawned the origins of jazz, pop and all its configurations. Blues, jazz, in short, the collective African means of contacting higher levels of consciousness "spins, swirls and turns (in) wind-like movements that depict spirituality, immateriality, allocationality and omnipresence" (Herbst 2003**,** 224). For that reason alone, Africa remains the prevailing, ever-changing, constant palimpsest.

[7] A short, often repeated series of notes in pop music or jazz that forms a distinctive part of the accompaniment.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSES:

Thanatos-on-Ice, Pink Narcissus and *De Vos* - music compositions as the embodiment of psycho-social elements

> "(What) we call musical experience needs to be systematically rethought … the horizons of our musical pleasure need to be redrawn more broadly, and … the embeddedness of music in networks of nonmusical forces is something to be welcomed rather than regretted" (Kramer 1995, 17).

Kramer's viewpoint provides impetus for a review of my music in a postmodern and specifically post-apartheid context. The violence contained in *Thanatos-on-Ice*, the first work to be analysed, is aptly engaged with in terms of Derridean philosophy as illustrated in the following quote:

> "One name for another, a part for the whole: the historic violence of apartheid can always be treated as a metonymy. In its past as well as in its present. By diverse paths, one can always decipher through its singularity so many other kinds of violence going on in the world. ... Infinite responsibility, therefore, no rest allowed for any form of good conscience" (Derrida 1994, xiv).

Prior to 1994, with reference to *Thanatos*, there is already empathy by this author with the Antillean[1] ethos below. Through *Pink Narcissus* ran the process of change and metamorphosis both societal as well as personal and in *De Vos* the re-integration of my Afrikaans identity is reflected upon.

> "For the Antillean, who internalises the other as 'whiteness,' it is more accurate to speak of 'epidermalization,' since the formation of his raced being takes place not only at the level of psychic structures, but also socially, when he encounters Whites or a 'white' gaze, and is, in so doing, deprived of access to whiteness – and thus to humanity, since his is a humanity that has been defined in relation to phantasmatic whiteness" (Sanders 2002, 183).

[1] A term that philosophy brings to debates about contemporary race theory and the investigation of racism.

Preamble:

In assessing my music, I locate myself artistically not only in terms of whence I have come, but more urgently now in terms of a need to crystallise future directives. Obeying a conscience-driven imperative, Nadine Gordimer's "universalising ... the plight of the Jew by identifying with, or at least putting her life at the disposal of, African liberation" (Sanders 2002, 172) resonates in an Afrikaner context. Thus I infer that, in identifying with African liberation, the plight of the Afrikaner would also be 'universalised'.

In this way, Sanders's disturbing representation "(of) dominion over the body ... in the dominant imaginary of Black Consciousness" (ibid, 192) is relegated to the past. In rising above his role as persecutor *par excellence*, and in aiding the liberation of his former victims, the Afrikaner could collectively transcend his former Self.

However, for a composer to musically render "the corporealization of intellectual alienation and the interpenetration of its 'mental' and 'corporeal' effects" (ibid) appears to be a losing battle in view of "music's invisibility, temporal transience, and arguable immediacy" (Cook and Everist 1999, 192). It follows that, "in construing music, it is often fruitful to avoid mere labeling or recognition, resisting classification of the sounds as instances of familiar kinds" (ibid, 191). Lawrence Kramer (1995, xii) maintains that

> (the) force of the necessity (to rethink music from every possible perspective) stems from the perception that the resistance to signification once embodied by music now seems to be an inextricable part of signification itself. Nothing can signify without resisting, and nothing can resist without signifying.

All music is determined by the signs and symbols of its composer's experiences and feelings – in short, an encoding of his/her musical intention. As regards the double-headed hydra of racism and homophobia, this author feels that at no point could he pretend to be able to alter the effects of past evils. In contrast, applying John Cage's Zen-inspired thinking, "(one) could actually see that everything was happening without anything's *(sic)* being done" (1961, 107) so that, with "no rest allowed for any form of good conscience" (Derrida 1994,

xiv), I could not afford to be complacent. Even so, I had to wait for the socio-political wheels to turn - as is their wont.

Like Cage, I wanted my compositions to be "musical analogies to anarchy in one form or another" (Whittall 2003, 109). They had to approach a synthesis of intentions, such as when James Pritchett finds, in *Etcetera* (1973) how "both freedom and control, anarchy and government" (ibid) are combined. For the purpose of this analysis, the music has been rendered what Derrida terms "that which is offered in supplement, over and above the market, off trade, without exchange" (1994, 31).

Regarding Analysis:

A wide field of reference is explored, always with the understanding that the *raison d'être* of the musical work exists in the perception that references emerge from their metaphoric encounter with the sound itself. Kramer (1995, 70), citing Mary Ann Caws, writes that

> art ... deforms in order to be, for it begins where deformation begins and ceases where deformation ceases.

One sees the structure and its deforming (also read 'transformative') effect on human consciousness in the context of what Roger Scruton (1994, 379) refers to as "any attempt to represent (the will, as thing-in-itself) in space and time", that it "will belie its inner nature, and only in our own case do we have direct acquaintance with this ultimate reality which can never be captured in words". Citing Schopenhauer about the externalisation of "human passions", Scruton locates them musically "'only in the abstract and without any particularization'. Grief, but not the object of grief; yearning, but not the thing yearned for; desire, without the thing desired". Scruton feels that music "echoes an ancient Pythagorean belief, that (it) contains the secret of eternity: that we encounter in music 'the point of intersection of the timeless with time'" (ibid). It is in this nexus that music undergoes its most lasting modification, and the main focus here is to trace the degree to which my work has been able to evoke the abstract or the indefinable.

ANALYSIS A

Postcolonial Spectres: *Thanatos-on-Ice* (1985)

> From one inheritance to the other. The living appropriation of the spirit, the assimilation of a new language is already an inheritance. And the appropriation of another language here figures the revolution (Derrida 1994, 137).

Derrida's appeal coalesces as he continues that "one must not forget (the spectre and the parody), one must remember it but while forgetting it enough, in this very memory, in order to 'find again the spirit of the revolution without making its spectre return'" (ibid).

Thanatos-on-Ice, a musical statement of both historiography and future intent, is situated in such a paradoxical and self-referential field. Transference from a repressive regime to democracy is aurally represented by gradually refining a rhythmic-melodic identity and by a fauvist intensification of timbre associated with African music. Griffiths (1981, 177-8), however, writes that Steve "Reich (having studied African drumming in Accra)

> has criticized those who imitate the sound of some non-Western music ... For him, as also for Glass, the concern is rather with models of structure: 'One can study the rhythmic structure of non-Western music, and let that study lead one where it will while continuing to use the instruments, scales, and any other sound one has grown up with'".

Cage, of course, looks at it from another angle, and drawn to the clarity of classical models, I agree when he writes (apropos a painting by Rauschenberg) that

> "the structure was not the point. But it was practical: you could actually see that everything was happening without anything's *(sic)* being done. Before such emptiness, you just wait to see what you will see" (Cage 1961, 107).

Peter Klatzow (cited Floyd 1998, 266) thinks that an 'exotic', as opposed to 'nationalist' composer, "reaches outside (his or her) particular area for new materials and methods. This ... indicates a restlessness amongst creative people and the need to stretch their imaginations towards entirely new challenges". Applying it to *Thanatos-on-Ice*, this 'restlessness' is to be found where Derrida sees us "(passing) through the pre-inheritance ...in order to appropriate

the life of a new language or make the revolution" (1994, 137), thus endowing the music with shamanistic prescience in fore-sounding the end of a censorial regime.

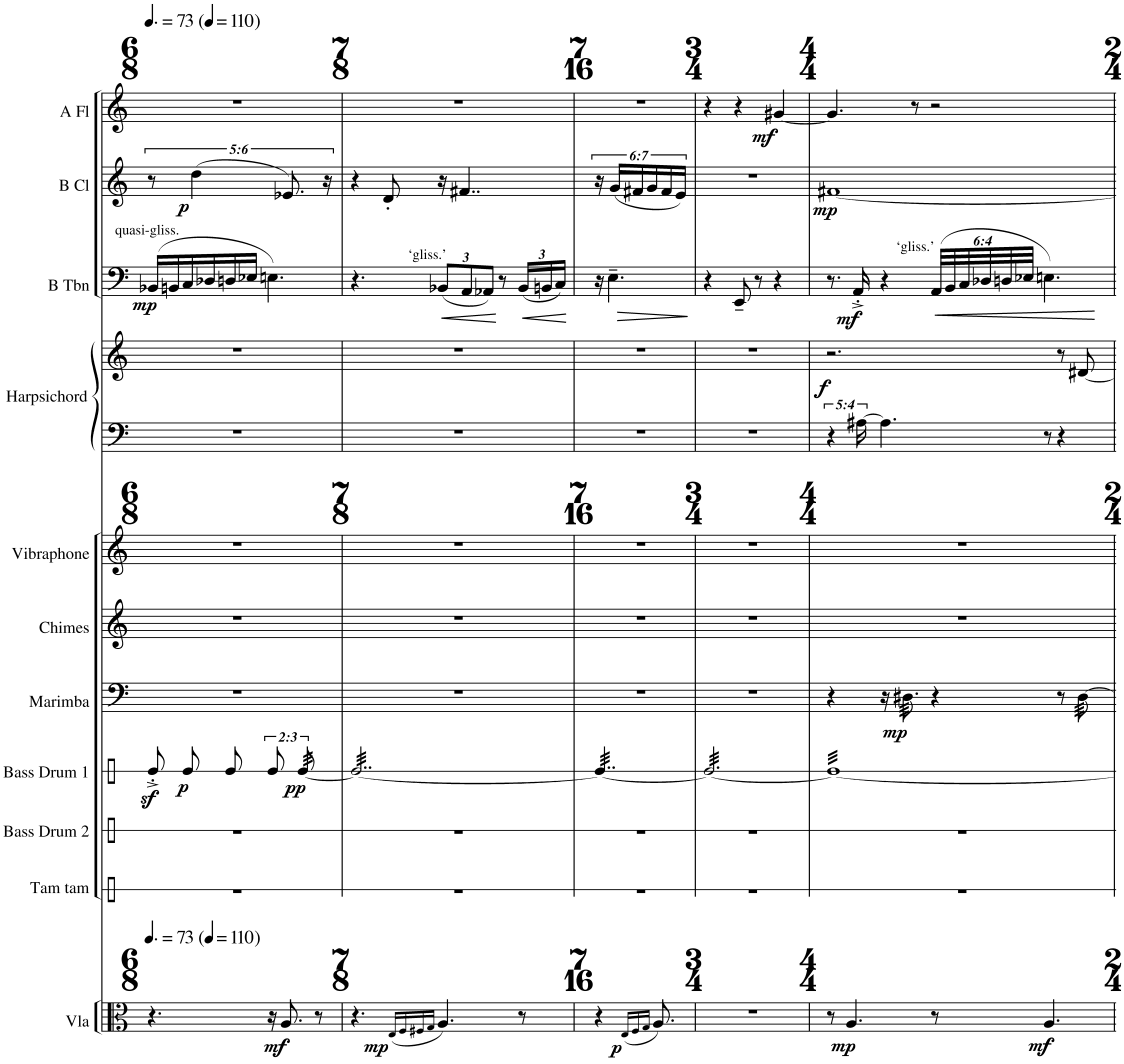
As if soliloquising at the crossroads between past and future, *Thanatos-on-Ice* (composed in 1985, yet still awaiting its first performance) metaphorically sounds the long-awaited *denouement* of racial injustice. In Derridean terms, it charts a musical mobilisation "from one inheritance to the other" (ibid). In sanctioning a synthesis between racism and homophobia, *Thanatos-on-Ice* summarises my oeuvre up to 1985, the year in which African music began to influence my work. However, my temporary anti-Afrikaner state of mind fuelled the artistic, moral and social independence expressed in *Pink Narcissus* a year later.

The aim was never to deliberately incorporate African music into my work nor to explicitly express compassion towards Africa and its culture, but rather, in Cagean terms (1995, 12), to achieve

> a purposeful purposelessness or a purposeless play. This play is an affirmation of life - not an attempt to bring order out of chaos nor to suggest improvements in creation, but simply a way of *waking up to the very life we're living, which is so excellent once one gets one's mind and one's desires out of its way and lets it act of its own accord* (my italics).

Opposing Identities and Metaphor in my Music (Apartheid versus Democracy):

The sense of alienation and disconnection felt by this author as a result of the apartheid years is reflected in, for example, the fragmented rhythmic usage and austere melodic lines in *Thanatos-on-Ice*:



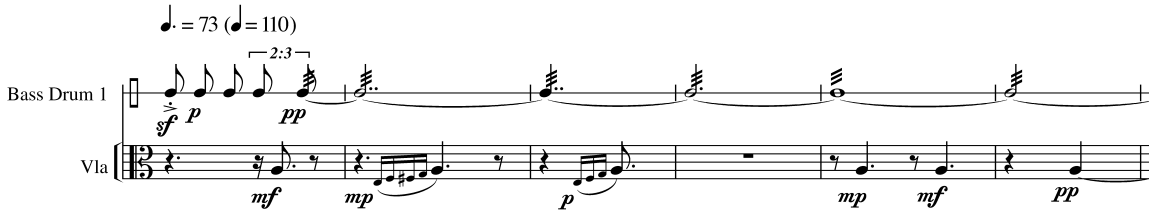
Example 1.1: Opening bars

In pursuing this goal, *Thanatos-on-Ice* places modality and diatonicism in opposition to atonality and serialism. This happens semantically and tonally in terms of eschewing a Western evolutionary imperative and tracing the musico-semantic directive to a global, multi-cultural context. The disconnectedness of rhythm and melody reflected in its syntax echo the fragmentary effect of apartheid in a re-appraisal of diatonicism and modality.

Emulating Cage, the resulting proliferation of ideas led me to address my "deep-seated dissatisfaction with current artistic and political norms, and the two dissatisfactions" were likewise combined to "transform life into work" (Whittall 2003, 109). At first glance,

Thanatos-on-Ice is a metaphor for the confluence of racial intolerance and death, but it also has positive implications. In three guises, death, prefigured by the Greek god, Thanatos, resonates as racial injustice obstructing social interaction. This is where Derrida's "system of partition, barbed wire, crowds of mapped out solitudes" (cited in Sanders 2002, 213) ebb in distance, chasm and loss of contact (see Example 1.1). On a primal level, *apartheid-as-death* is translated, not in a neatly-defined cipher, but as a diffuse, unfocused spectre operating from a position of oily dread and slippery ambiguity.

Reflexively, the work also foresaw the metaphoric death of an institutionalised death-force and attempts the evocation of an affirmative, if ambiguous, return to life. Musically, this is implied by an indefinite 'home' pitch revolving around A. It signifies a need for consensus (tune-up before the performance of a musical work) or "the dawn of a new social order" in the phraseology of early socialism.



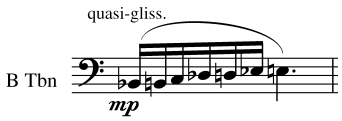
Example 1.2: Bars 1 – 6, bass drum roll & viola repeating A

Such an evocation does not seem to require a separate musical or motivic identity as much as a catalyst, a "strange attractor" as in Chaos Theory (Gleick 1987, 133 *et seq*.) affecting changes in the two ciphers marking the conflict of apartheid. Here the *strange attractor* is the stabilising force of a repeated note or pattern within the surrounding chaos.

Thirdly, as a result of the death of 'lack', or the removal of the effects of the death-force, one finds in *that* death a life-affirming representation for those having confronted a "profoundly antagonistic and oppressive social and political order" (Erlmann 1996, 241). Asserting that "opposition and dissent are not some better, purer form of social practice but frequently a variant of the prevailing mode of social interaction", Erlmann proposes a symbiotic interrelationship even among foes in a replication of the victim-persecutor dialectic. Going

beyond that, in observing the same "competitive logic" (ibid, 242), *Thanatos-on-Ice* heeds the *Ubuntu* philosophy of an all-inclusive "one for all and all for one". This suggests a symbiosis which, in Erlmann's terminology, surfaces as a form-giving socio-cultural impetus in expressively emulating an "aggressively competitive world" (ibid). At the same time, though, the 'ice' of the title anticipates a sluggish limbo wherein the final departure from an oppressed state is delayed, either as a delay of death or as the death of death (implying a return-to-life).

The beginning of the work embodies a muted, apparently aimless struggle to shrug off layers of excess weight. It hints at both a lack of identity and the soulless machinations of state-sanctioned vampirism. Conflict arises from this ambiguity with instability implied by the interval of a tritone. In this case, I recall its destabilising role in a medieval context when it was defined as the *diabolus in musicae*,

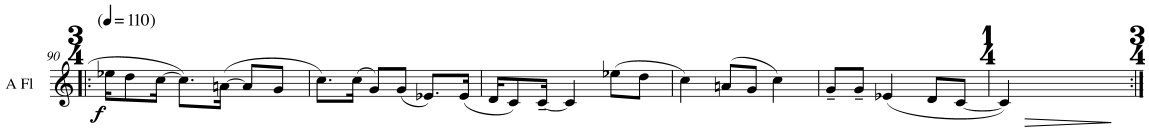


Example 1.3: Bass trombone *glissando*, bar 1

unattached as it was then to any modally grounded identity. Such a perceptibly aimless, anchorless cipher suggests that an insular identity characterised the Afrikaner's attitude regarding Other. At the start, *Thanatos-on-Ice* represents this mindset as musical fragmentation. Eventually, a possible deliverance is sounded by the reintegration of what makes simple musical sense (see Ex.1.4: bar 90, quoting the Venda bow song).

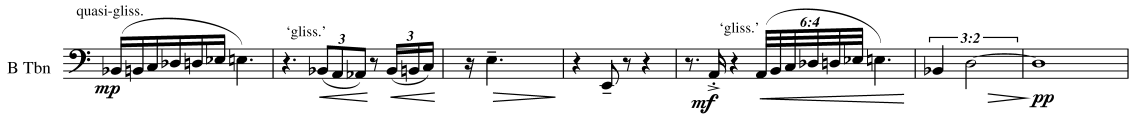
Chaos Theory brings a new perspective

Gradually streamlining the texture seems to have the desired effect when, in bar 64, three percussionists add breathing sounds, and a mobilisation of the whole ensemble leads to the first of two anacruses (bar 75). As it turns out, though, this is a 'false' start. Biding its time, the rhythmically and melodically-suspended texture (bars 76-88) foreshadows the second anacrusis (bar 89) which leads into the Venda tune proper.

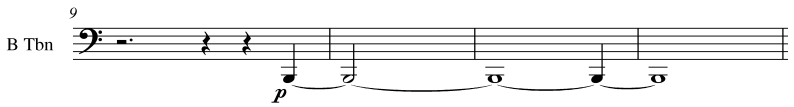


Example 1.4: Alto flute, bars 90-95

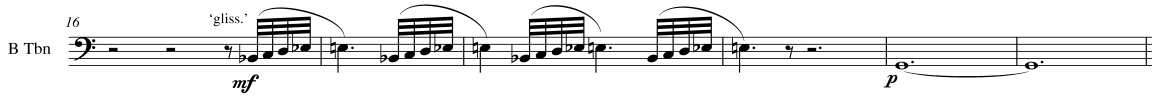
The outcome of the social struggle, musically implied, is subject to factors in the changing continuum of cause and effect. The behavior of elements within the system is determined by features like the "strange attractor" of Chaos Theory. This is a formative dynamic, the nature of which remains unpredictable. In the words of Slavoj Zizek (1992) (cited Kramer 1995, 66), "(it) is possible for a system to behave in a 'chaotic', irregular way, and still be capable of formalization by means of an 'attractor' that regulates it - an attractor that is 'strange,' i.e. that requires the form not of a point or a symmetrical figure, but of endlessly intertwined serpentines within the contours of a definite figure, an 'anamorphically' disfigured circle, a 'butterfly,' etc". Referring to the bass trombone in bar 1-7,



Example 1.5a
9-12,



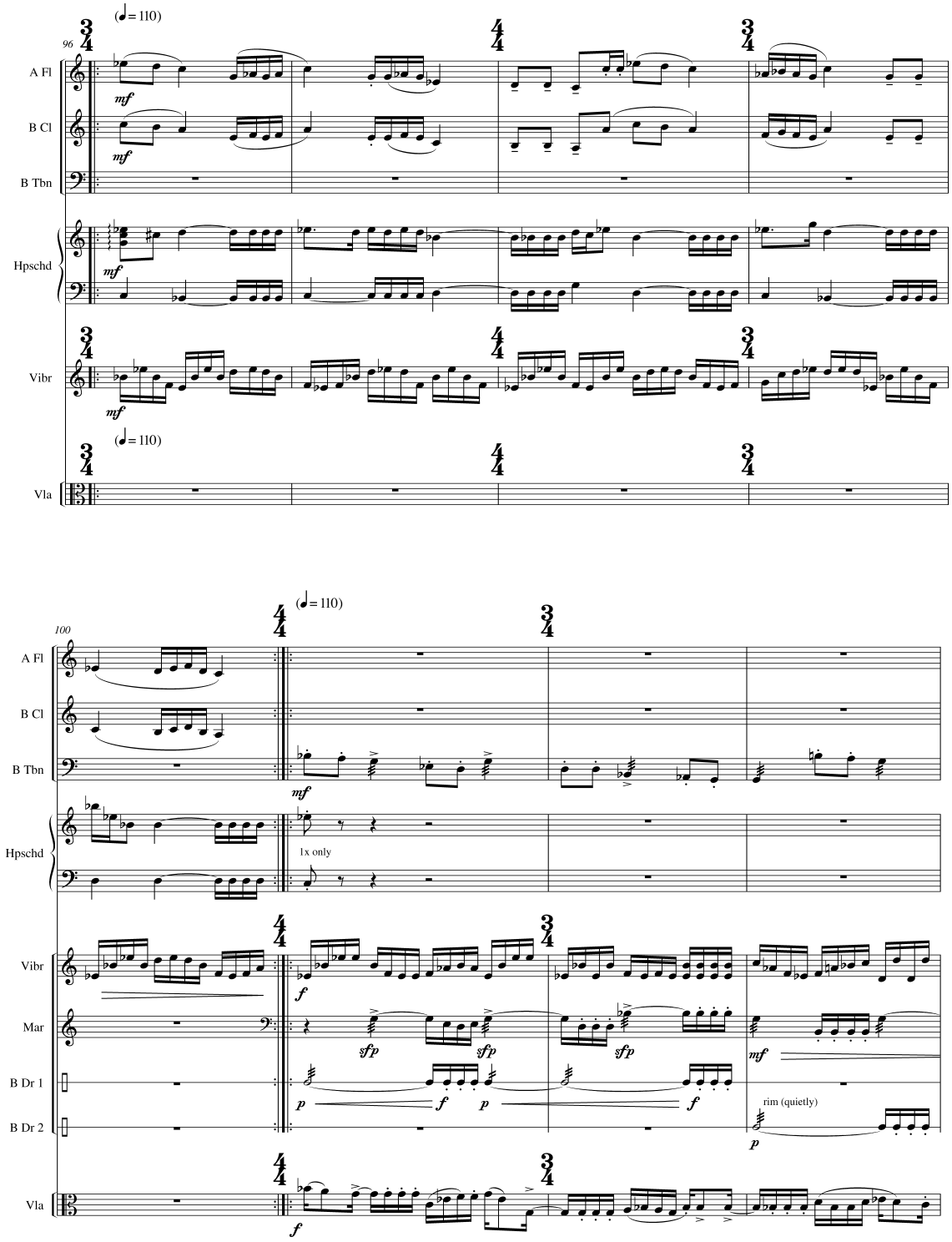
Example 1.5b
and 16-21

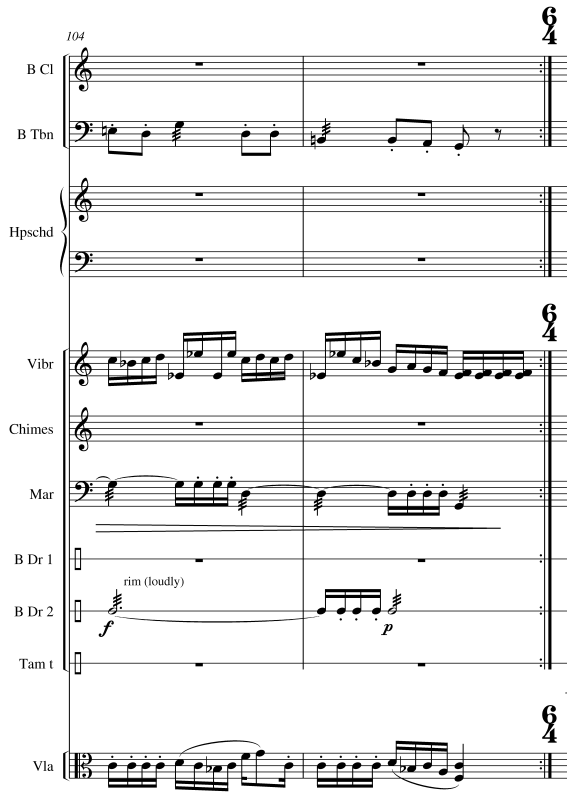


Example 1.5c

the slithering, yawning shapes, metaphoric anacondas attempt to monopolise and control the timbral identity. This is the way a cancer cell initially affects only certain other cells but, in the long run, corrupts the entire biosphere thus also hastening its own death.

In bars 90-95 and then bars 96-105, on the other hand, the Venda tune is identified, repeated and varied, emerging as the single, life-affirming aim of the piece:

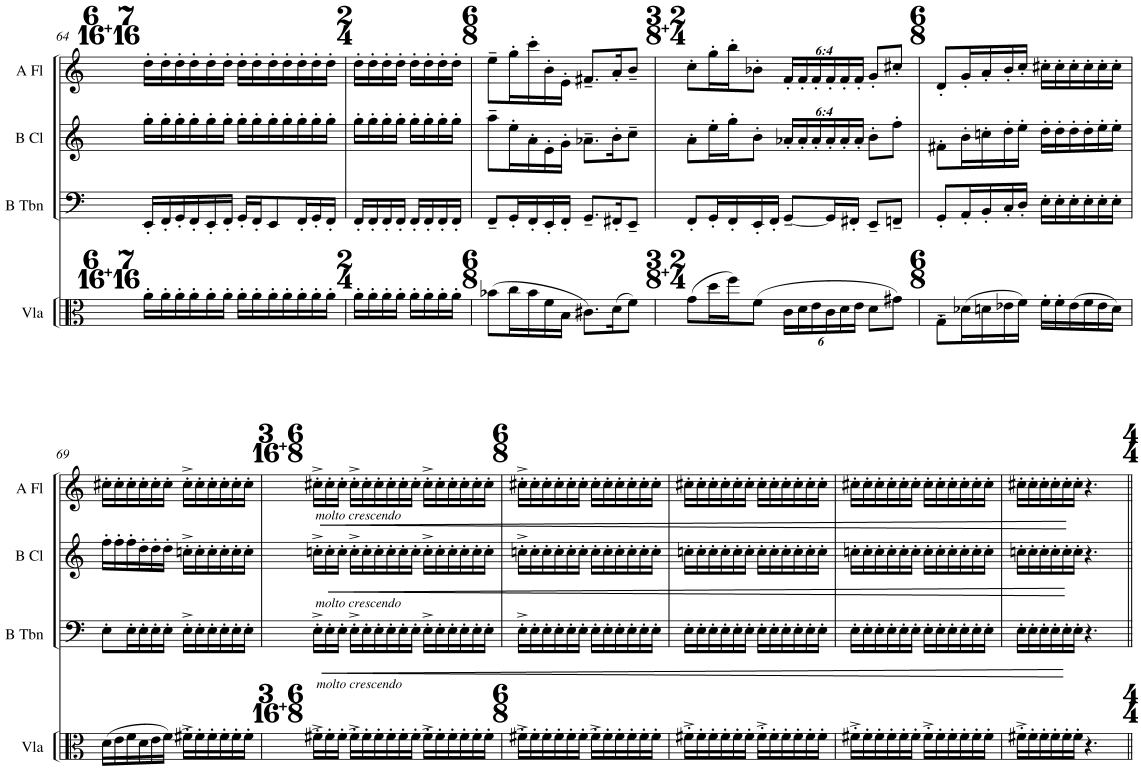




Example 1.6: Bars 96 - 105

We are to follow its way from inception to fruition and arrive at where its sober classicism contextually betrays a world implicitly gone mad. The tune playfully, joyfully and somewhat recklessly, plunges through the interval of a major tenth, and delivers, to use Erlmann's words (1995, 233), "important components in encoding assertions of power". In this case the 'power' is equal to that of uninhibited play and is justified by clear melodic identity the same way Erlmann (50-1) also locates the "form of a song" in "the traces of collective interaction, of a group of people leaving their imprint on the normative conventions set by a community". In a socially-transformative sense, it stands as the sober epithet for contrasting the simple and the clear (the new) with the old, the organically-obtuse, or expressed in another way, the naturally-humanistic with the artificial. The interaction of the two states represents a fractured, *dis*-unified point of view, the result of a persistent, insidious *dis*unity perpetrated by the Eurocentric mentality against itself. Said (1978, 227) calls this "the rigidly binomial opposition of 'ours' and 'theirs', with the former always encroaching upon the latter (even to the point of making 'theirs' exclusively a function of 'ours')".

Aggressively recurring patterns (as found in bars 64-74, see example 1.7 below), suggest staid immobility and ossification on the one hand, constancy and permanence on the other. In 1985, with the future uncertain, this ambiguity had to be left unresolved. In terms used by Kramer, the music as it is mobilised "through the opposition of stable to unstable or recurrent to non-recurrent features" (1995, 35) could not be fused into a unified shape.



Example 1.7

"Form," Kramer continues, citing Leo Treitler,

> is associated with closure, unity, and - perhaps above all - structure, 'the idea that every note is necessary to the whole and no note is superfluous to it (ibid).

The opposing identities shaping *Thanatos-on-Ice* are not given the luxury of integration or resolve, closure or unity. Energised by contingent imperatives locked in the musical texture,

"from one inheritance to the other" (Derrida 1994, 137), they act as catalysts in defining the dialectic without achieving a satisfactory unanimity.

The interplay only acquires meaning, in hindsight, once an evolutionary interaction between Self and Other has been identified, once the "assimilation of a new language" (ibid) has been located as the goal of the dispute (bar 90). At the same time, a gradual lightening of texture becomes obvious. Through 89 bars the tonally-unfocused (i.e. metaphorically 'repressive') texture is infused with intimations of humanist clarity. Thereby, echoing Derrida, racial intolerance is "(remembered) while forgetting it enough" (1994, 137) which, in 1985, seemed desirable while still remaining out of reach.

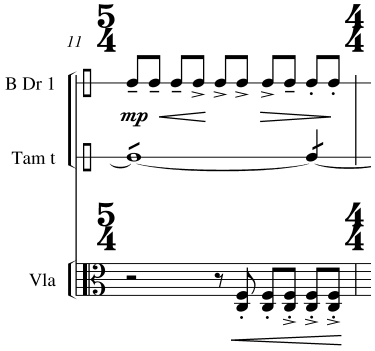
Given the horrors of the past though, despair is never far away,. However, the music simultaneously expresses hope for the future and this dynamic (not resolved for another 9 years or so) propels *Thanatos-on-Ice* structurally. In 1985, the focus expressed in my music is on Self in a field of principles determined by Chaos Theory in which a faceless *apartheid-as-death* blossoms into a projected liberation via the engineering of a personalised "strange attractor". This could either be a human or a humanising agent whereby metaphorically deconstructed harmonic relationships are restored to a new level of constructive interaction. First of all, music as "a mode of experience in which pre-symbolic involvement, symbolic understanding, and keenness of pleasure or distress can all coexist" (Kramer 1995, 65) demands a catalyst "precisely because there is no imperative to reconcile them or order them hierarchically" (ibid).

The *tritone* does not naturally relax into the perfect fifth or fourth. The 'push' comes from pedal points, repeated notes and (percussive, i.e. non-pitched) drones as the "strange attractor" in what Schenker terms "coincidences of structural motions in the fundamental line" (Cook 1987, 52). The work operates according to what can best be described as a layered harmonic schema, a tectonic array providing a platform upon which a changeable "figure/ground schema of Gestalt psychology" (Cook and Everist 1999, 66) affects the perceived narrative. The goal of this underlying narratology is the transformation of a cipher as mental construct from an unwanted glyph into its desired opposite. To do this, the will to

change has to be present, implied contextually from the start. Within a virtual world of pre-1994 make believe, the febrile nature of the music can be ascribed to “a mode of experience that cannot be regulated by unitary ideals or norms” (Kramer 1995, 65). It awaited the realisation of its prophecies whence to “emerge, disseminate itself, from any situation in which the involvement, understanding, and keenness, in whatever combination and whatever medium, engage us in the communicative economy” (ibid).

Already in bar 1 the repeated A on the viola and un-pitched roll on the bass drum anticipate an eventually-active interloper, the *strange attractor* hiding ‘in plain sight’. This briefly insistent sound promises rest, peace, impassivity and entropic dissolution. Its catalytic function applies to the treatment of timbre and movement (bars 1 and 11 to begin with). The introduction of recurring sounds on viola, bass trombone and bass drum is an attempt to anchor loosely connected motifs: meandering ciphers orbiting recurring tones (A flat and E on bass trombone, D on marimba, and A on viola) underpinned by the non-pitched bass drum roll. The *strange attractor* operates as a stabilising group of repeated sounds, evoking a contextually ghost-like palette by insisting on identity without idiosyncrasy. It is as if this ‘identity’ (focused on the *tritone* in bass trombone) had been stripped of all character and left for dead.

In bar 11, again, the verticalisation of a contrapuntally insidious texture



Example 1.8

introduces resistance and the possibility of inverting its placement against the odds. The same dull, thudding motif surfaces in bar 23-4. It galvanises supporters pulling themselves

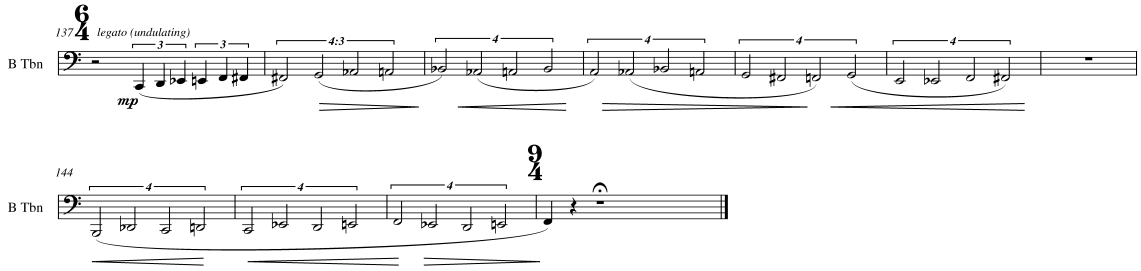
up by their own boot-straps. Translated musically, the Struggle to reach a "steady state" (Gleick 1987, 134) of freedom would involve a process of levelling out, of relaxing metaphoric tension, as found in the music.

Transmogrifying texture in this way conforms to the belief, expressed by Gleick (1987, 186) that "art is a theory about the way the world looks [or sounds] to human beings". As metonymic representations of apartheid and its effect (the observed system and its transformation into the Venda tune), it does not depict a victory of good over evil. It rather heeds Adorno's elusive utopian ideal in 'fixing' the newly-won victory as a changeable thing perennially shy of idealised perfection. Veit Erlmann (1995, 287) remembers Joseph Shabalala saying that "'music is something like peace.' This was a powerful, compelling idea in a genre so deeply concerned with the ritualistic enactment of opposition and dissent. The mediation of conflict through music, how to bring about mutual comprehension between two separate and antagonistic domains, was a radically novel concept". Gleick (1987, 5) writes in a similar vein about "believers in chaos", that "they are always looking for the whole", something that echoes *Ubuntu* and its dictum of transpersonal vigilance within the human collective.

Towards a new identity

There is no dramatic crux, no *denouement*, the music being anti-dramatic. The desired outcome is, even in 1985, a *fait accompli*, albeit a spectral one. In not building curves of tension and release, opposing forces are positioned one against the other in a form of musically-semantic tectonics where one stratum of musical expression, ostensibly representing the West, is confronted by another signifying Africa. The result is an Apollonian-Dionysian play-off that acknowledges the underlying synthesis: "in spite of the Apollonian drive towards individuality and the transformation of appearances into beautiful images, the Dionysian impulse is so powerful that the creativity of man is subordinated to a primordial artistic creation" (Degenaar 1990, 8). The 'play-off' is one only inasmuch as the Apollonian is an extension of the Dionysian. One layer is contrasted with the other while, in the process of confrontation, it displays and also adopts traits of the other (bar 54 – 74). Confrontation brings assimilation and, eventually, an uneasy form of synthesis (bar 75-90). This is still anti-dialectic, however, as the sameness, and the difference, exist amorphously,

the one feeding off the other. The imperatives sounded here stem both from a pre-dialectic desire for peace and the attempt to invest it, as a warning, with socio-political revulsion.



Example 1.9 (bass trombone, bars 137-147)

Conclusion

Taking into account "a specifically modernist sense of tolerance" (Whittall 2003, 191), *Thanatos-on-Ice* combines the contextualisation of art with the asymptotic hypothesis that no (artistic) battlefield can ever witness the cessation of disagreement. Whittall cites David Schroeder who wrote that "the highest form of unity is not one which eliminates conflict. On the contrary, it is one in which opposing forces can coexist" (ibid). Similarly, in *Thanatos-on-Ice***,** the resolution of tension between "the sensuous and schematic" (ibid) is never achieved. Most importantly, the work is an attempt to render apartheid demons impotent. Taking a cue from Kramer (1995, 34), "(it) functions both as the paradigmatic means by which the aesthetic elevates and universalizes the subject" (in this case, social intolerance); "also as the paradigmatic means by which the subject is humbled and destabilized, even debased and annihilated".

ANALYSIS B

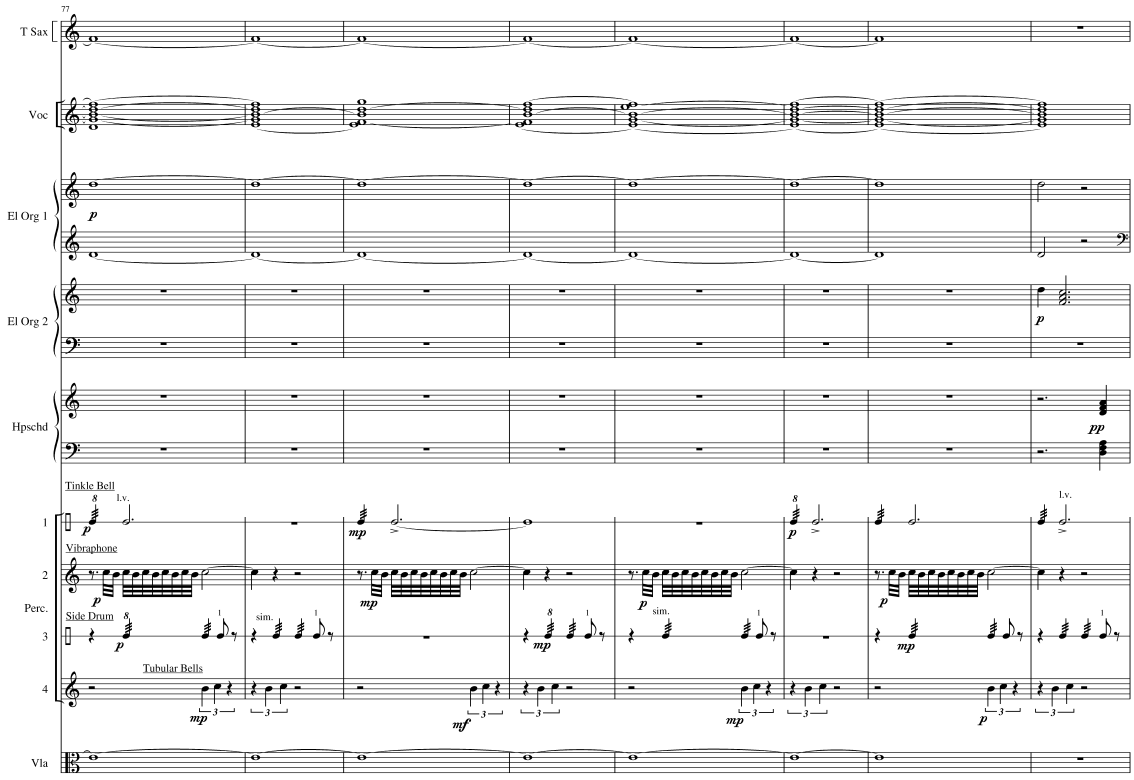
Dionysus in Chains: *Pink Narcissus* (1985-2005)

In 1985, *Pink Narcissus* was drafted in short score as a single line of music. With the accident it was forgotten in a drawer for 18 years only to be completed between 2003 and 2005. A texturally-transparent piece indebted to minimalist practices, it functions on different structural and philosophical levels and echoes Cage's "unambiguous cultural idealism, fuelled by skepticism" (Whittall 2003, 108). It combines an eclectic interest in world (not just African) music and thereby "resists confinement within a single aesthetic category" (ibid).

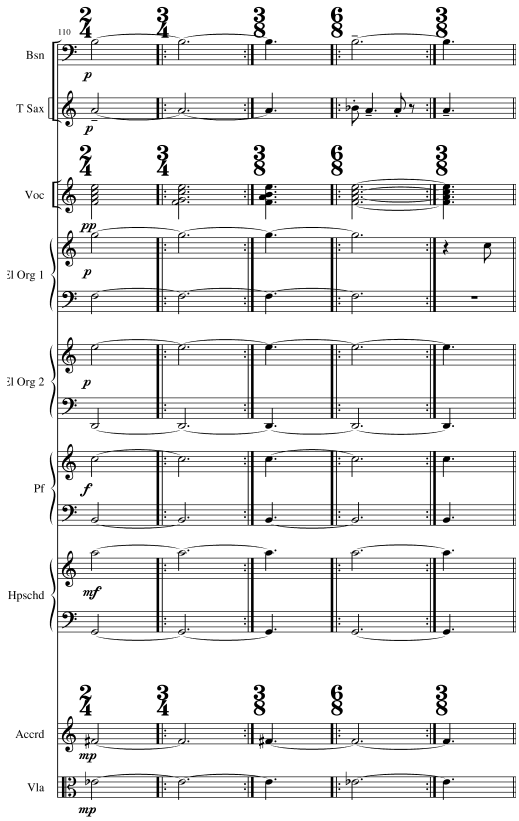
American composer, musicologist, writer and educator Kyle Gann, writes in an e-mail communiqué that "authorial consistency is much more difficult to pinpoint in music than it is in literature or painting". He maintains that postmodern compositions (of which *Pink Narcissus* seems to be one) "consist of an abandonment of the fiction of authorial consistency" and that "(these works) represent a fractured, dis-unified point of view" (kgann@earthlink.net). However, he also thinks that "post-minimalism integrates inspirations (such as African music, Japanese koto, Balinese gamelan, medieval European motets, and even bluegrass) into a self-contained musical language in an organic, seamless way that rarely suggests pastiche or even eclecticism" (ibid).

Contradictory trends (like using a consistent texture to suggest dis-unity) generate tension not immediately perceptible. Tom Johnson (Potter, 2) feels that "one of the most important new trends in music is the area (he likes) to refer to as 'hypnotic music'." Although *Pink Narcissus* starts off that way, the structural crevices, stalling and rapid changes in timbre imply an inconsistent narrative more "fractured and dis-unified" and thereby prone to destabilisation. This ambivalence is its most disquieting characteristic. Different from *bona fide* minimalist pieces, it yields to tampering by the composer and acquires a more humanistic, less machine-like quality.

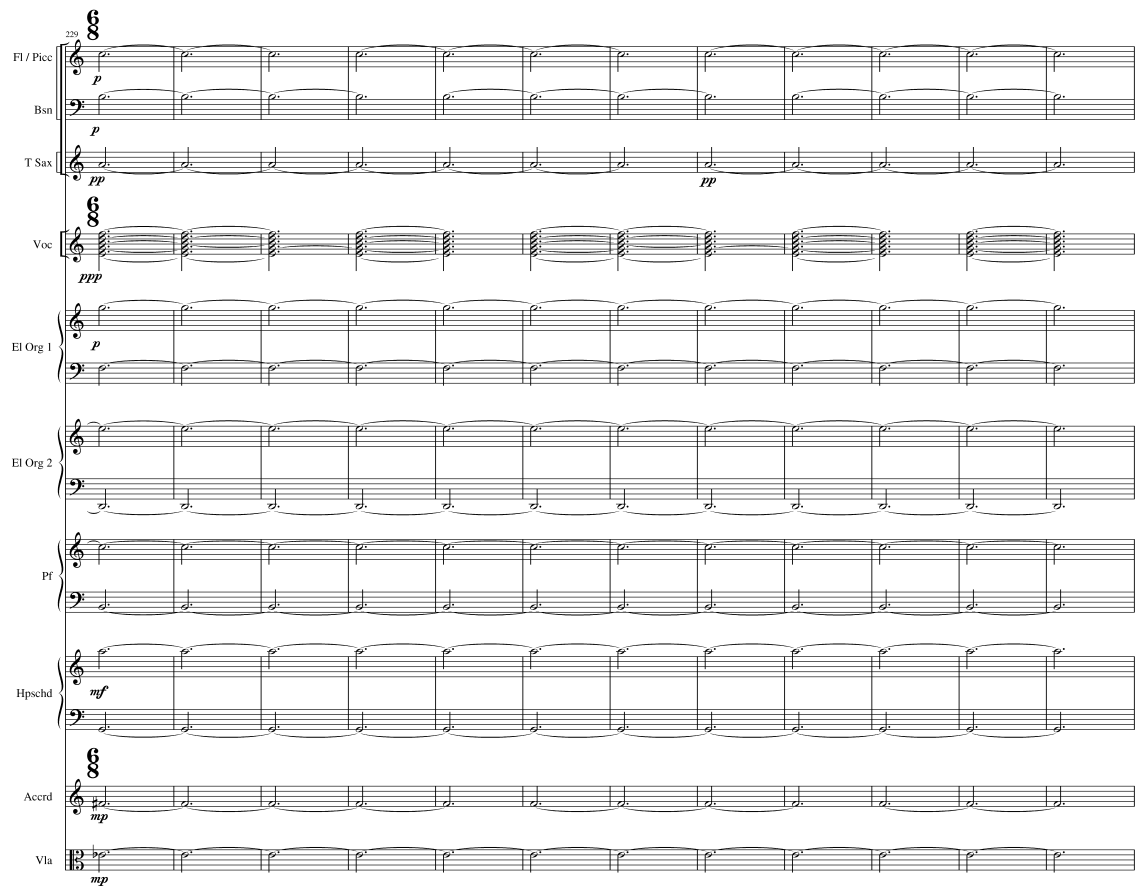
Structural anomalies, sounding like ‘freezing’ pedal points, interrupt the music four times with stylistically incongruous styles ranging from German electronic rock to Venda folk music and a cartoon-like quote from Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* also destabilising the texture. Delaying devices congeal from the flippant, ‘oh-so-optimistic’ toyshop antics of the pornographic hero as if to dislocate and deconstruct the very foundation supporting it - note four examples that follow:



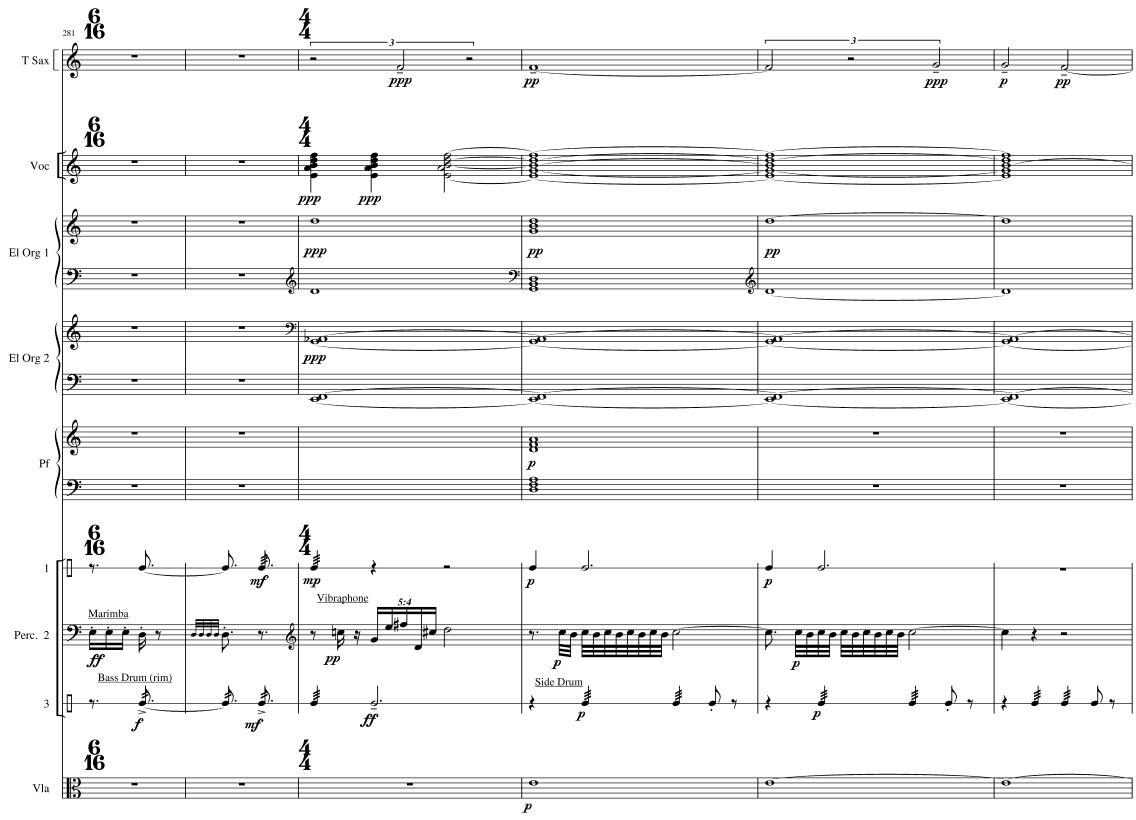
Example 2.1a: bar 77 – 84

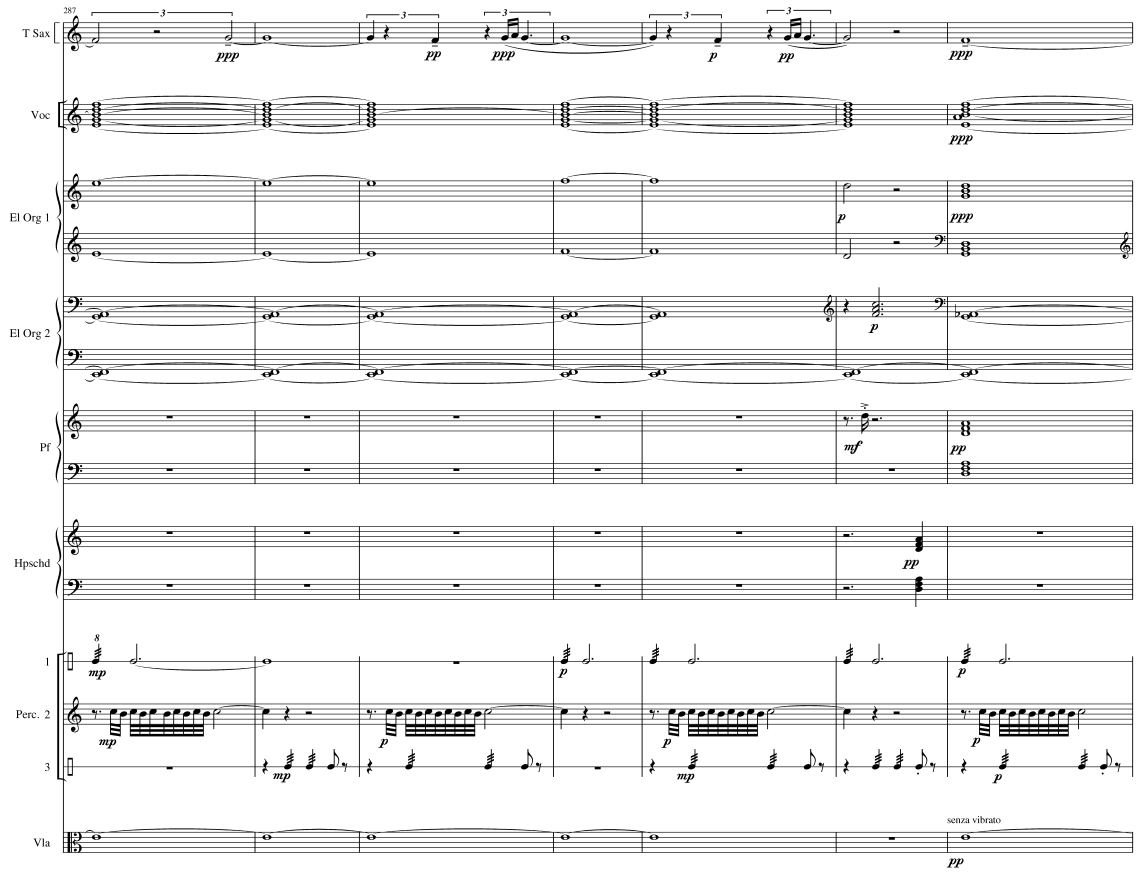


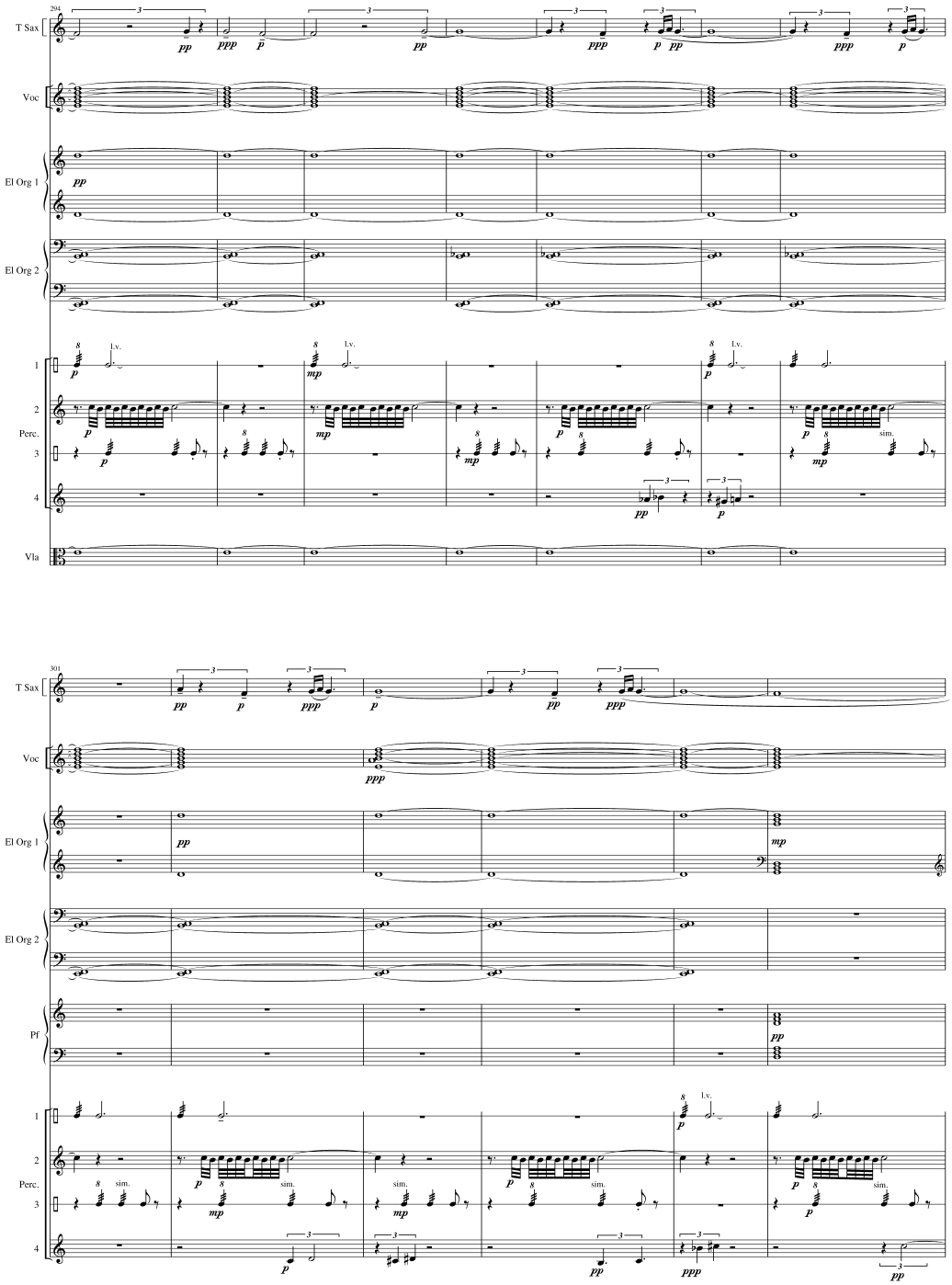
Example 2.1b: bar 110 - 114

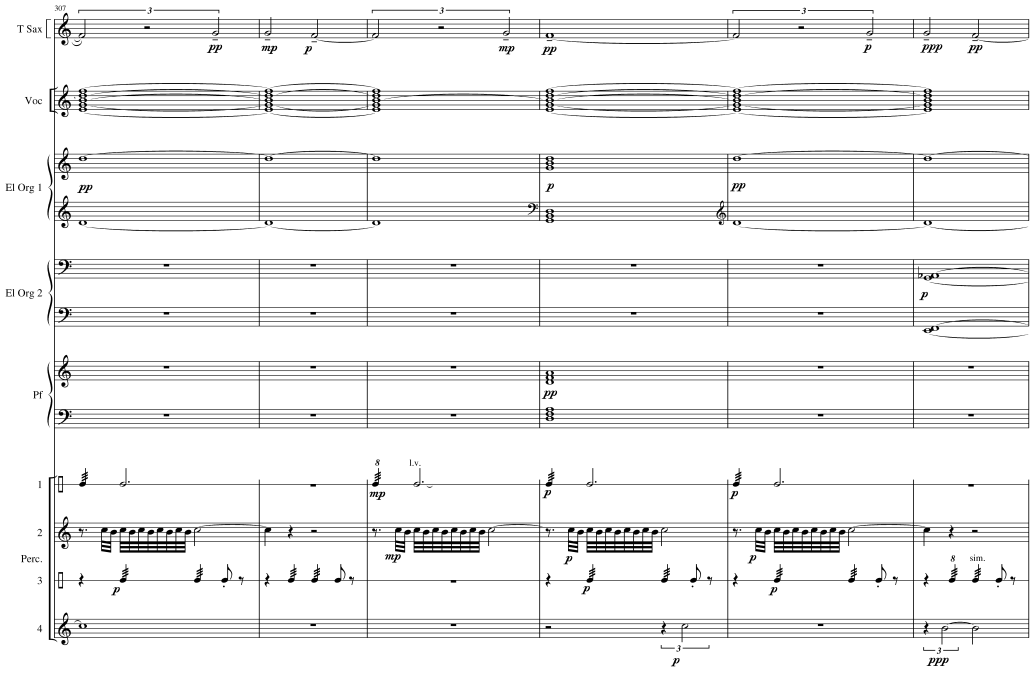


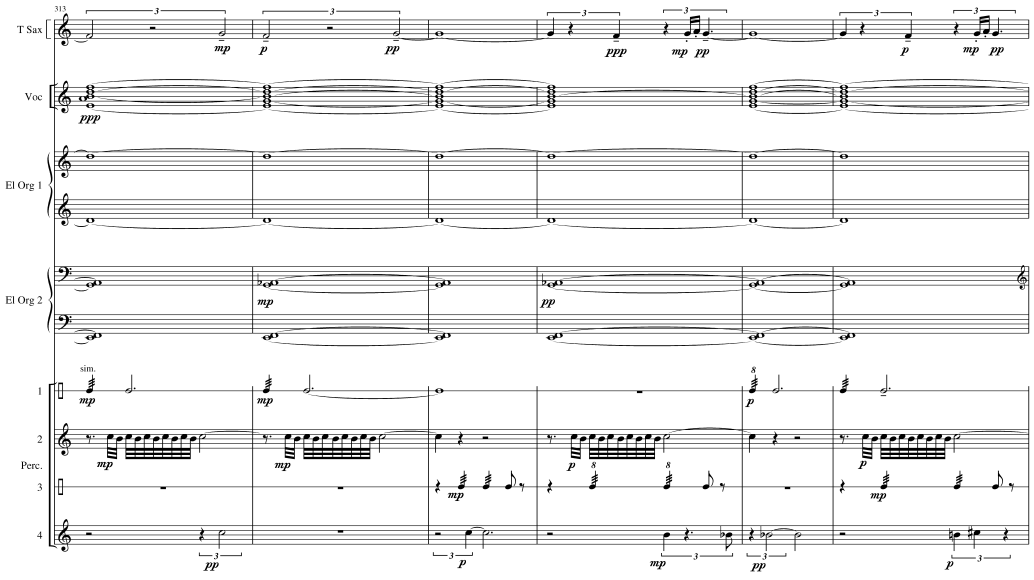
Example 2.1c: bar 229 - 240

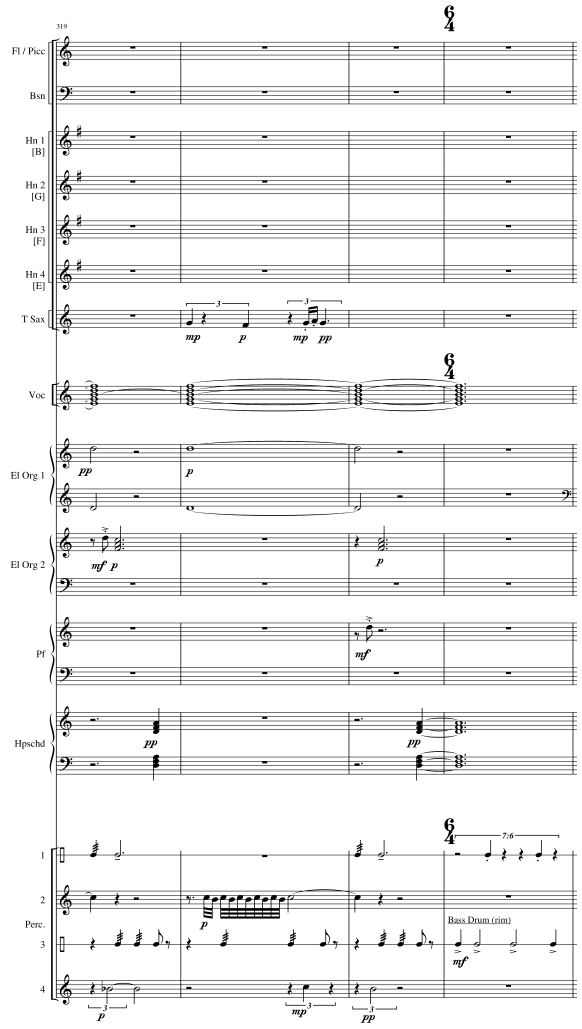

281
T Sax
Voc
El Org 1
El Org 2
Pf
1
Perc. 2
3
Vla
Marimba
Vibraphone
Bass Drum (rim)
Side Drum


287
T Sax
Voc
El Org 1
El Org 2
Pf
Hpschd
1
Perc. 2
3
Vla
senza vibrato


294
T Sax
Voc
El Org 1
El Org 2
1
2
Perc.
3
4
Vla
l.v.
sim.
301
Pf


307
T Sax
Voc
El Org 1
El Org 2
Pf
1
2
Perc.
3
4
sim.


313
T Sax
Voc
El Org 1
El Org 2
1
2
Perc.
3
4
sim.



Example 2.1d: Bars 281 – 322.

With its obsessively grid-like, motoric drive, it appears urgent, the claustrophobic subtext rendering its sociopathic anti-hero cut off, as if trapped in a bubble. Yet it grants a degree of relaxation during the *Buffalo Bill* section (Example 2.1d) with gently-recurring pulses belying the urgency elsewhere. Other timbral allusions include Javanese *gamelan*, *Kabuki* from Japan and African drumming though, in the hands of the European (read 'white') novice it signals a severely curtailed power. The music sounds an imperfect tribute to perfection, to African craft, the form, the lattice-work and the filigree texture. Echoing Boulez's high regard for Varèse or Webern vis-à-vis local (African) art and music, one recognises "forms arising from a process that is primarily spatial and rhythmic, linking a succession of alternative, contrasting or correlated states" (Whittall 2003, 21).

Metaphorically poised on a knife-edge just shy of cross-cultural integration, *Pink Narcissus* flippantly combines the dehumanisation of machine-like dogma with interiorised allusions to a democratic 'utopia'. Musically speaking, my intended plunge into Afro-centric waters needed an imperative jolt. In Jim Chapman's words:

> (composing music) that refers to Western and African musical cultures brings with it many challenges. It throws to the foreground a need for a creative practice methodology that is suitable to the task. The methodology must identify valid references between the creative works and the musical repertoires to which the creative work refers. It must also encourage rather than dampen my creative and technical development.
> (http://www.speculation2005.qut.edu.au/papers/ChapmanJ.pdf)

In bridging the divide between oppression and a once utopian emancipation, the work gleans its post-apartheid euphoria, though not as overtly as *Thanatos-on-Ice*, from the detritus of the apartheid machine itself: a toy soldier *a la* Shostakovich Symphony no.15 (U.S.S.R.) and the parodic *Grand Macabre* from Ligeti's eponymous opera embody musical ciphers expressing a disparate amalgam rooted in political hostility from the last half of the 20th century.

About the title:

Sublimating the erotic, the Dionysian as an amorphous anti-intellectual force, is the subtext of the 1993 orchestral piece commemorating the Tchaikovsky centenary. Entitled *Let them guess it who can*, it evokes Tchaikovsky's comment on the (homo-erotic) programme of his *Pathétique Symphony* and quotes from, among others, the *Pathétique* itself, the *Serenade for Strings* and from the song *None but the lonely heart.* Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, the Romantic paragon of unfulfilled sexual longing, features as a spectral infusion alternately evoking, or being evoked by, music from the *Pathétique* finale, thereby extending the purported fallaciousness of homo-erotic love back to its Freudian source, namely the Oedipus complex.

An exorcism is affected by means of the sublimation, or the absorption of, existing ciphers of intellectual individuation. Such sublimation occurs by means of "dialogue between lyric and dramatic qualities as they promote 'a spiritual conflict between vulnerability (seeking serenity) and assertiveness (a tendency to violence)'" (Whittall 2003, 11). Having

encountered Sibelius's *Tapiola* opus 112, at the age of about 11 or 12, I ecstatically retained "the associations ... with the placing of (the) pastoral, as 'the pantheistic sense of God in Nature', in a tragic perspective" (ibid). Fifteen years later I attempted to exorcise a 'flaw' in my makeup, coercing its integration by such creative means. I concentrated on awe-inspiring Nature being more than trees or mountains, sunsets or lakes, but rather people and behaviours and customs, odours, sounds and vivid colours collectively forming an insulating bulwark against what is now perceived as Afro-cynicism.

Pink Narcissus, as a dance of exorcism, has been long in reaching fruition, and not only due to the circa 18 year-period of its gestation. The roots of the piece go far further back than 1985. In the late-seventies, I started probing the ambiguity of narcissism in art as an embodiment of the Dionysian-Apollonian dialectic identified by Kramer in *Daphnis et Chloé*: "(sensuous) without apology, it arises at the intersection of the phantasmatic and the bodily, offering itself as a souvenir of distant shores and remote, unheard-of pleasures" (1995, 208). Then, during the eighties, in fusing the African and his mythographic location, the resulting epiphany denotes an attempt at reconciling "the utterly accessible and the utterly remote" (ibid, 223).

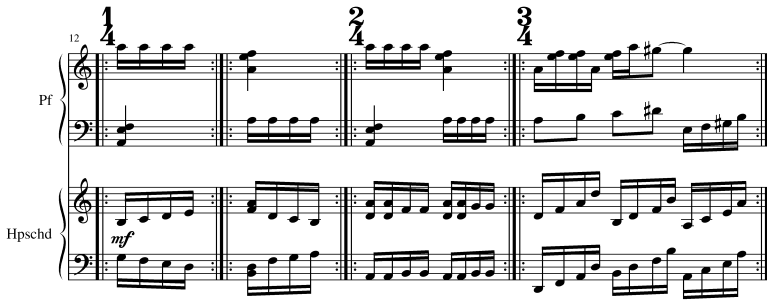
Pink Narcissus is the title of James Bidgood's gay porn film dating from 1971. In choosing this as the name for a new musical work, I did not want to comment on the movie (*at that time - 1985 - I had not even seen it*), but rather to create an alternative to what was implied by the title, synopsis and some stills reprinted in a magazine belonging to a friend. In retrospect, I can identify with Kramer's views on Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloe* and understand my music now as a variation of that *modus operandi* in which Ravel's 'sublimation' points to an object of Dionysian *prima materia.* In my case, however, the object of passion was not *faux*-Greek but African: whole, organic, natural, pure.

However structurally- or semantically-satisfying such an evocation might be, Hegel locates this "pure subject" (Scruton 1994, 287) in a void only rendered meaningful once the "striving through which we seek to possess our world" has sundered the "'absolute simplicity' of the self". The *raison d'être* of the music can be summarised as an attempt to

locate the "Aristotelian *orexis*, or appetite". Scruton feels that this appetite "has reached the stage only of animal mentality, which explores the world as an object of appetite, and which, being nothing for itself, is without genuine will. At this stage the object of desire is experienced only as a lack (*Mangel)*[2], and desire itself destroys the thing desired" (ibid, 287-8).

Thus, whereas *Thanatos-on-Ice* summarises a grand social response to capitulation in the face of a possible collective death, *Pink Narcissus* retreats to an intimate space confronting not death *per se* but the musical transfiguration of what cannot be attained physically. Although its deepest essence is physical, sexual *and* ultimately procreative, this energy operates between members of the same sex as the exact antithesis. Like the unattainable Tadzio, Bob Davidov, Billy Budd or Ravel's vision externalised in *Daphnis et Chloe*, the story (revisited via *Pink Narcissus*) tried to preserve the dream of perfect happiness as if in amber. Hence I wrote the piece to "increase the territory of art, and ... celebrate the richness of life" (Cage, *Silence* 1961: jacket note).

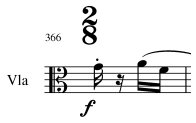
Constructed less opulently than *Thanatos-on-Ice,* the same tempo is maintained throughout, avoiding monotony only by varying dominating pulses. It departs from a series of almost interchangeable modules as in early Glass, Reich or Riley, and borrows substantially from Asiatic, African and European 'found' objects.



Example 2.2: Bar 12-15

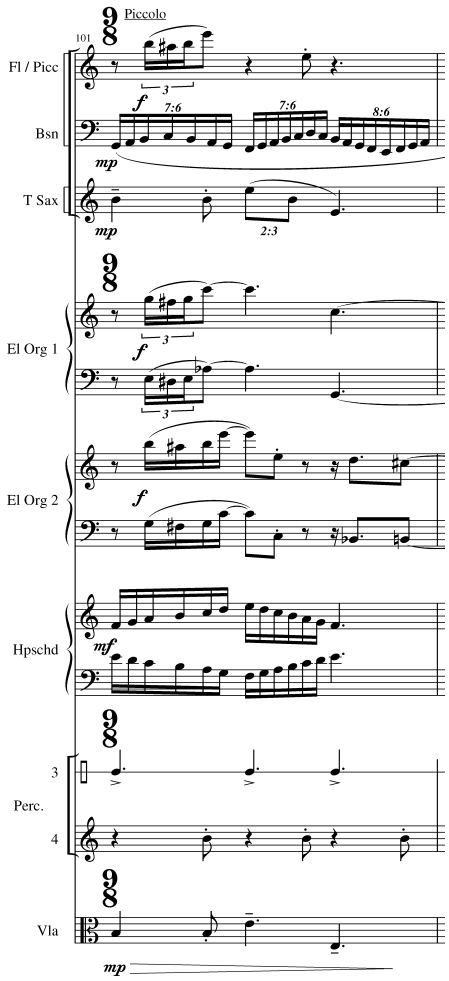
These range from a German electronic 'punk' pulse,

[2] *Der Mangel*: a need (German noun) – my footnote



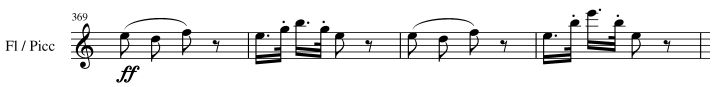
Example 2.3: Bar 366

quoted from *Cabaret Voltaire*, to Indian raga (informing the weightless buoyancy of *Buffalo Bill*), Mozart's *Don Giovanni*,



Example 2.4

and a Venda bow song.



Example 2.5

Apartheid was essentially the suppression of individual freedoms, and the essence of *Pink Narcissus*, more so than *Thanatos-on-Ice*, hinges on this schizophrenic doctrine of separateness. The piece brings "the deconstructive motif of complicity into proximity with an ethico-political discourse on complicity" (Sanders 2002, 9). It identifies the composer's conscience as a passive one awaiting its active arousal as s/he changes a negative experience into a positive one by virtue of encoding it into something audible. Being objectified, it loses its status as being impregnable or indomitable the way "Nietzsche suggests one has to lose oneself in ecstasy to find oneself, not as isolated individual but Self deeply rooted in the ground of existence" (Degenaar 1990, 4-5).

The title could appear intentionally self-deprecating. Pink, as the symptom of a negative trait, has always denoted a form of emotional immaturity, feminine, innocent, childlike, as it was "associated with womanhood" and also "with homosexuals, often in the form of a pink triangle" (http://www.crystal-cure.com/pink.html). However, my objective was a liberating one: the objectification of a perceived 'malaise' towards Jungian integration.

Structure:

Immaturity and betrayal, conflict between Self and Other, are issues central to the story of Narcissus.[3] In this way, it becomes the template for a self-sacrificing spectre, the urgent integration of the Apollonian and the Dionysian. Derrida notes that this spectre "is also the impatient and nostalgic waiting for redemption ... for a spirit ... the promise or calculation of an expiation" (1994, 171-2). Transferring this musically, *Pink Narcissus* becomes the locale for a reconciliation of Self and Other in an African context and simultaneously integrates the Other-ness of homosexuality by objectifying its demons.

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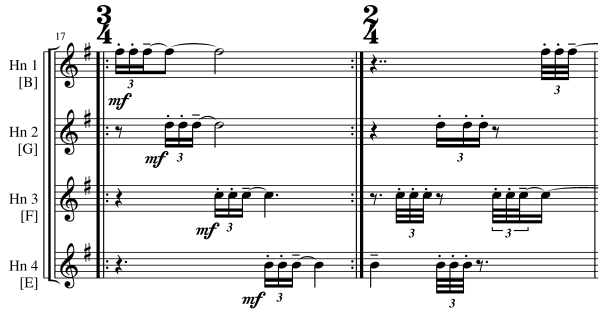
3 Story of Narcissus:
Among the nymphs who followed Hera there was an Oread named Echo who, every time that Zeus paid court to some nymph, would distract Hera's attention with some chattering and singing. When Hera discovered this she deprived Echo of the gift of speech, condemning her to repeat only the last syllable of words spoken in her presence. Now shortly afterwards Echo fell in love with a young Thespian named Narcissus. Unable to declare her love she was spurned by him and went to hide her grief in solitary caverns. She died of a broken heart, her bones turned into stone, and all that was left of her was the echo of her voice....

As for Narcissus, the gods punished him for having spurned Echo by making him fall in love with his own image. The soothsayer Teiresias had predicted that Narcissus would live only until the moment he saw himself. One day when he was leaning over the limpid waters of a fountain Narcissus caught sight of his own reflection in the water. He conceived so lively a passion for this phantom that nothing could tear him away from it, and he died there of languor. He was changed into the flower which bears his name and which grows at the edge of springs.[New Larousse Encyclopaedia of Mythology 1973 (ed.Robert Graves) p.162-3]

Discussing Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloe* in a context of physical beauty and desire, Kramer (1995, 218-9) writes that "the melodic idea thus becomes an object, a dazzling and precious object, put on offer to the ear ... the objectification of melody merges with the representation of both natural splendour and sexual love".

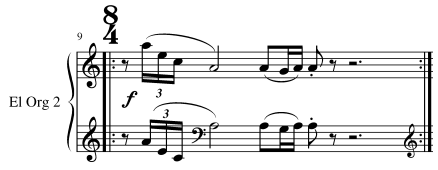
Referring to the "terms of a representation", he describes their effect as "typically metaphorical" (ibid, 70). In this way *Pink Narcissus* also reflects on time and our perception of it, exposing another dimension of subterfuge and deceit: while tempo *appears* to change, stretch and shrink, it actually remains tenaciously the same throughout (MM: crotchet = 108). Conforming to what Said (1978, 55) calls our 'imaginative', and by inference, restrictive knowledge of time, the music, apparently free-flowing and spontaneous, is caught in the tunnel-like implacability of time passing from one moment to the next. Naturally, this could turn out to be symptomatic of an Occidental-African dichotomy isolating a frail cross-cultural amalgam and not the symptom of an inflexible necrosis.

As in much African music, *Pink Narcissus* also tries to be *of* the moment, delivering its encoded message *for* the moment, never to be repeated. Malcolm Floyd (1998, 156-7) notes that "a Masai model ... of musical composition ... shows minimal beginnings, expanding into individual motif banks ... and (full) confidence in the use of solo melodies." Likewise, *Pink Narcissus* evolves from almost nothing, absorbing European motifs into an African fabric. It engages *time* by imposing a Western tonal focus on African rhythmic differentiation. Implicitly reproducing 'history', though, the overriding narrative changes when *makondere* horns challenge the "phantasmatic whiteness" of my story. This demonstrates that reality cannot be reproduced accurately except through exaggeration and deliberate distortion.



Example 2.6: Bars 17 - 18

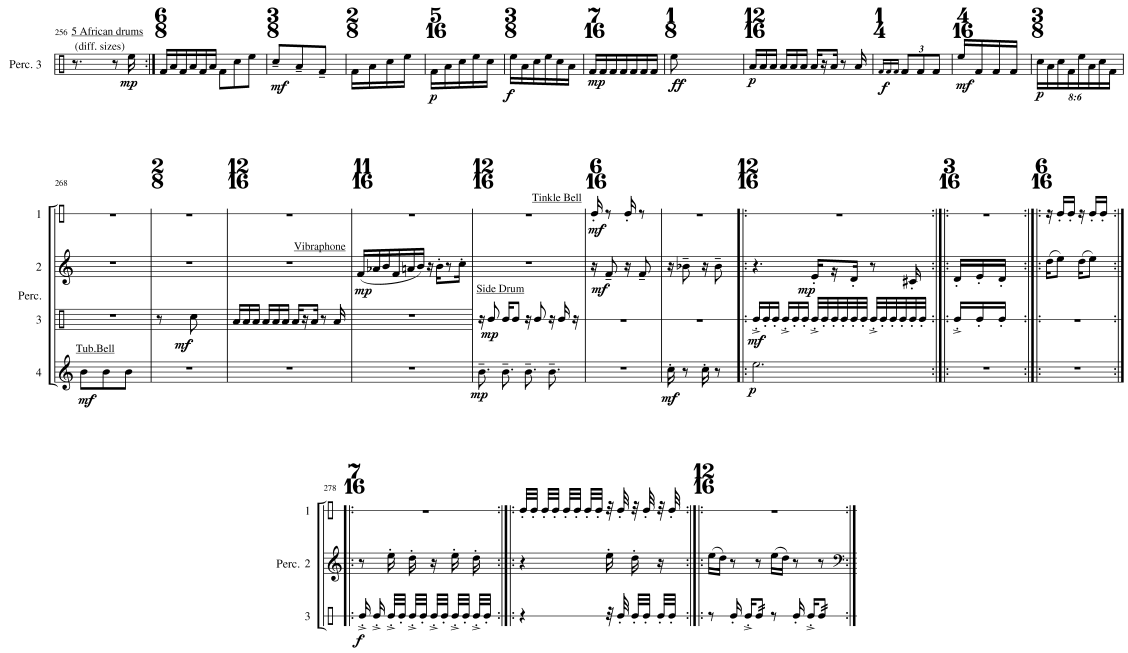
The piece, in spite of its prolonged genesis, is, like Ravel's ballet, "an exercise in sublimation". It is also a distorted cardboard cut-out driven head-first along a predetermined track and suggests what Jonathan Kramer (1988, 388-94) calls "a 'vertical music' free of hierarchies as well as teleology" (Potter 2000, 17). With its repetitive drive,[4] it is a *faux*-gamelan call-to-arms: [1] a dervish-like dance made up of cells continuously turning back on themselves, repeating, circling round each other (see Ex. 2.2), [2] a 'devil-may-care' strut introduced in bar 9 by keyboards



Example 2.7

and [3] a segment of tremulous repose ["*Buffalo Bill*"] after an introduction on African drums and percussion (bars 256- 280).

[4] "By selecting some of the oldest and most familiar building blocks of music, and subjecting them to the radical scrutiny afforded by (remorseless) repetition, it takes on the challenge of revitalizing the most hackneyed and debased musical currency available. Minimalism forces its listeners to reinterpret the familiar not only through the microscope of their own perceptions and sensations, but also via the energies generated by processes driven by the same forces - regular pulse and apparent forward motion - which had underpinned the goal-directed approaches of Western tonal musics of the previous two centuries" (Potter 2000, 13-14).



Example 2.8

The effect is dangerously mobile, like walking on ice with filigree *tremoli* kept afloat only by timbral effusions. Finally, [4] African-inspired cells and rhythms bring the work to a not unambiguous Bacchanalian conclusion.

By abandoning rhythmic intricacy, *Pink Narcissus* bypasses wilfully complex Eurocentric models and returns to what Lawrence Kramer, in *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge*, calls a temporal inflexibility shaping not just minimalist music, but all music. He finds that "(musical) time has come to be figured as numinous". What Edward Said calls "the tyranny of its forward logic or impulse" and Carolyn Abbate its "fundamental and terrible" inescapability is said to have, a wholly involving effect. The listener is endowed with a submissiveness that, as Said acknowledges, borders (Proust-like) on the masochistic, the reward for which is a certain deliverance from worldliness" (1995, 64-65). In addition, Said defines his position within a collective milieu when he suggests that "(what) makes all these fluid and extraordinarily rich actualities [*of which music is one*] difficult to accept is that most people resist the underlying notion: that human identity is not only not natural and stable, but constructed, and occasionally even invented outright" (1978, 332).

The significance of non-Western traditions (in this case African music traditions) to which Tom Johnson refers (Potter 2000, 17) is similarly reflected in the cross-cultural parallel as "a dialogue between the 'cultivated' and the 'vernacular'". As with Coetzee, Breytenbach and others, this dialogue evolved beyond social concerns to repeal an instinctively-racist inscription of the black body as "negative sociological schema" (Noel Chabani Manganyi *Being-Black-in-the-World* cited by Sanders 2002, 191). Awareness of apartheid injustice grew until "practical intervention (could) alter the sociological schema or one's relation to it", and in the process "bodies (became) a site of struggle" (ibid). *Pink Narcissus* reflects the identification of an amorphous African collective pared down to a vivid individual personification.

This work represents, as does most art, an attempt to (re-)create in the physical world a perceived 'perfection' which is, by its very nature, impossible to replicate. Mr. Bidgood could not accomplish it in his movie, and nor would this music. At the same time, composing this piece was geared towards resolving a specific dilemma. Kramer (1995, 18) writes that "music 'itself', whether studied at the level of work, style, or genre, would be decentered in that (heteroglot weaving of musicological) discourse - sometimes more so, sometimes less - but not thereby relinquished as an occasion of pleasure, understanding, or valuation."

The work, played without a break, consists of three interlinked sections entitled *Don Giovanni*, *Buffalo Bill* and *Jesus Christ*. Of the three this first segment is the longest, taking up 280 of the 432 bars. A few motifs are repeated, only twice, as if reflected upon and then discarded. The articulation of an A minor arpeggio sweeping upwards to its sharpened leading note (G sharp) establishes a textural foundation before introducing the comically-derisive 'James Bond' motif in bar 9 (see Ex. 2.9). This locates the Dionysian directive falling again through a minor arpeggio, and establishes contrast with the foregone gamelan-derived 'purity'. The sleazy organ figure spells 007, espionage, intrigue, obfuscation, troubled waters or that "we (as in Jack the Ripper-type prostitutes) are open for business". Its 'exoticism' is playful, dance-like, narcissistic and commercialised. Such self-absorption, to the detriment of everything else, induces 'new' cultural elements into the constructive fabric. When absorbed, though, these are immediately robbed of their original character the way

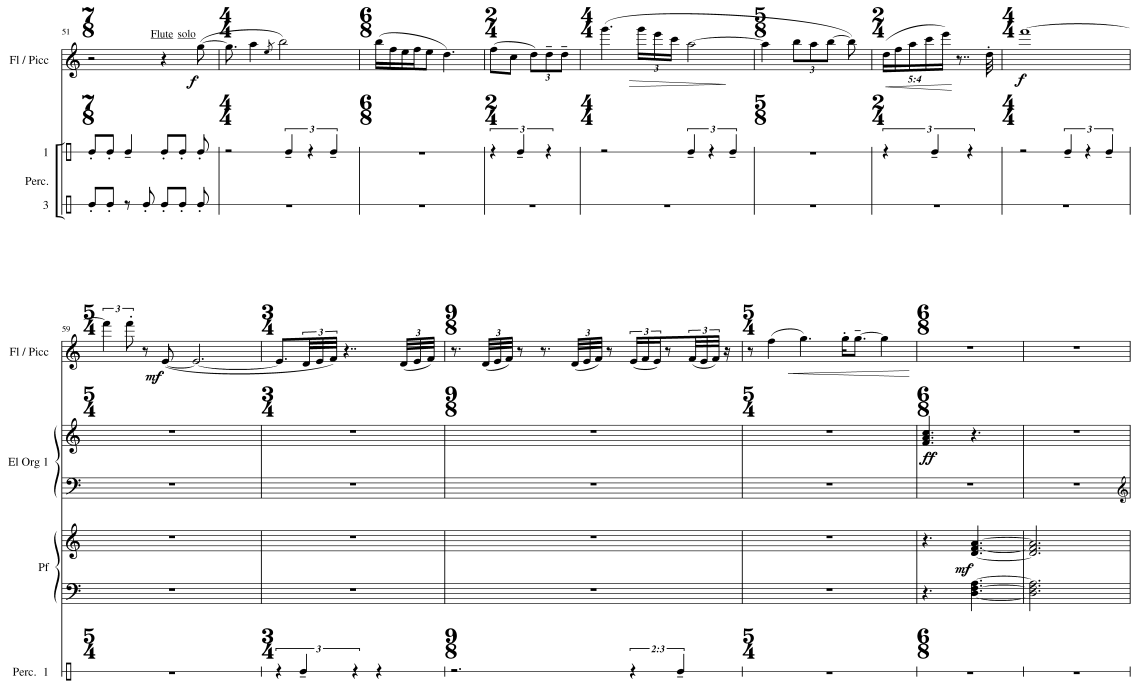
Kerman (1985, 160) finds that “a degree of integration virtually obliterates all distinction of nationality”.

To justify the last part (*Jesus Christ*) is the most problematic in that its dervish-like relentlessness seems to comment, almost demonically, on the foregoing evocation (sections 1 and 2, pp.3 and 30) of a juvenile obsession (1970-1980) with 2 white boys, DG and BB respectively. *Jesus Christ* is integrated, not as redemptive force, but as a vanishing point sounding in a Bacchanalian rite of initiation (Bar 368). Feeling that these unfulfilled and therefore perennially-idealised encounters (university and high school respectively) had to be hidden, I opted for music as “a means of both containing and consuming the exotic” (Kramer 1995, 220): both *Don Giovanni* and *Buffalo Bill* were ‘written’ into music for the express purpose of exorcism and transcendence.

The music hones in on the deconstruction of signs, the most important being my view of Christian *dogma* as an eventually ruinous faith. I transposed this to a Hellenised equivalent of ritual, a living interpretation of the Apollonian-Dionysian dialectic with the concluding Bacchanal (*Jesus Christ*) emerging as a veiled - and somewhat mocking - self-reference. A Derridean sign projects the third side of a triangle, *now* to be unknowable like Jesus Christ, and *then* Other. As an extension of Self it had to be simultaneously near and unimaginably far, suggesting the African ‘spectre’, the maligned “Biko of the flesh” as the ultimately-unattainable Other. However, its aural evocation still eludes us.

In spite of being ‘tonal’ and rhythmically-steady like Baroque music, it is appropriate that *Pink Narcissus* has no unifying tonality. Similarly, while written according to conventional contrapuntal and rhythmic procedures, it occupies a “no man’s land” between static repetition and volatility. Conventional rules of harmony do not apply. Cook and Everist (1999, 131), citing Rochberg, define this kind of ambivalence as a way to “‘allow the old space of tonality to rule, but only at the surface.’ Underneath, the old hierarchy of tonal voice-leading is dead. It *feels* dead, abdicated, since it no longer has the unique ability to guarantee order at the surface for us. Each new surface event is fraught with tension.” What might, at first hand, appear to be a toyshop fairytale, like from bar 51 to 64, alludes

circuitously to a decadent comic strip (the porn movie the music shares its name with) in which Warhol collides with Liechtenstein, or Moebius with Rothko.



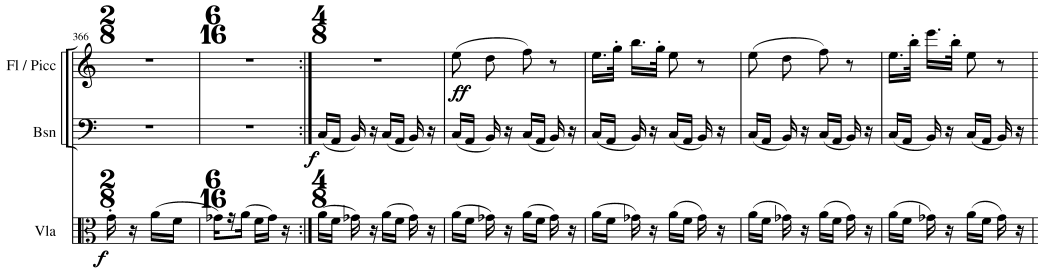
Example 2.9

Here a delicate flute arabesque hovers above an irregularly-repeated single bell tone, musically subsuming the pornographic element in playful tinkering and veiled references to a secret other (implicitly African) scenario. With stationary electric organ triads, the *Buffalo Bill* repose (bar 281-367) is anticipated. Setting out to deconstruct a porno dream, I allow myself a degree of objective self-mockery and reflexive hiding from (self) judgment. A boisterous deconstruction of the Commendatore's visit to Don Giovanni (p.16, bar 101 - see Ex. 2.4**)** evokes Dionysus as a poor substitute for Apollo (Degenaar 1990, 30), the "power of articulation. The dancing star of art is the result of the creative structuring of chaos." *Buffalo Bill*, in turn, represents the disenfranchised Native American and reflects the apartheid spectre continuously confronted with Orientalist remembrance. *Objets trouvés* suggest the cross-cultural and a-temporal fluidity of a universal musical template aimed at the celebration of *différence* à la Derrida. In this way, *Pink Narcissus* is an audible puzzle, a Rubik cube to be resolved though its parts are, in the end, not interchangeable. In the spirit of *Ubuntu* it behaves like a stone with many facets, transforming anonymous trauma into

something organic and knowable. The aim of this piece was “the elevation of style ... as a poetic conceit for a spiritual state of innocence (or serenity)” (Whittall 2003, 12).

It also demarcates an abstract representation of the everyday, even the banal. A problem arises - and the music, in a codified fashion, attempts a possible solution. In particular, given the identity and *raison d'être* of the piece, the following applies: regarding the subject matter of the original gay porn movie entitled *Pink Narcissus***,** the musical work presents, not as a physical reality, but as a virtual one, “the Lacanian imaginary, ‘the illusory, if inescapable, immediacy of the ego’” as an imaginary springboard, “a seamless band of pleasure and presence” (Kramer 1995, 19). Though obliquely turned away from pornographic encoding, *Pink Narcissus* locates Kristeva’s ‘semiotic’ in the incessant momentum of the music, in what Kramer terms the “multiplicity of drives in collision and interchange; it is impulsive, rhythmic, dynamic, plural, untotalised, supercharged” (ibid).

The “register of signification”, a la Kristeva, requires the synthesis of mainly 3 sets of material: African, Western and pop, which is already a fusion of the previous two. The integration of African and Eurocentric music is echoed in a fusion of art and popular music, the *Cabaret Voltaire* pulse pattern (viola, aided by bassoon, bars 366 to 399) in particular - as a ‘bio-mechanical’ building-block more than something eternally distant and strange.



Example 2.10 - bars 366 – 372

The American minimalist music tradition, to which *Pink Narcissus* implicitly owes a debt, is characterised by what Potter (2000, 17) refers to as the “concept of a ‘vertical music free of hierarchies as well as teleology”. At the same time, it is also “synonymous with audible

structure; it wears its structure on the outside, like an exoskeleton, and a listener can tell from simply listening how a minimalist piece is put together" (kgann@earthlink.net).

In this regard, the music hides nothing. All its cards are on the table. As I allow the art work to be what it wants to be, I submit to what Degenaar (1990, 47), referring to Jung, identifies as "two ways of looking at the creative process: the introverted attitude emphasizes the intentionality of the artist, whereas according to the extraverted attitude the artist is subordinated to the demands of the work of art. The work of art is endowed with a power which uses the artist as a medium".

Simultaneously, the art work responds to Mbembe's call when he appeals to Africans "to widen the scope of cultural and political critique and renew the archives of our past and of our present" (http://www.thecore.nus.edu.sg/post/poldiscourse/fanon/fanonov.html). For this reason there is a belief that music can aid, however unknowingly, without clear identity or consciousness, in the furthering of the cause of mental, psychological and political liberation in South Africa and elsewhere.

ANALYSIS C

Consolidation of a Style: *De Vos* (2004-2005)

> "There [in the religious world] the products of the human brain [of the head, once again, of men: *des menschlischen Kopfes*, analogous to the wooden head of the table capable of engendering chimera...] appear as autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own, which enter into relations both with each other and with the human race... I call this the fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour as soon as they are produced as commodities, and is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities" (Karl Marx *Capital*, cited by Derrida, *Spectres of Marx* 1994, 208-9).

On the subject of the foregoing analyses (*Thanatos-on-Ice* and *Pink Narcissus*), it would be wise to perceive, and receive, their characterisation not so much as a 'commodity' where "the use-value is always at risk of losing its soul" (Derrida 1995, 203). On the contrary, it functions as a tool preparing for the consolidation of a post-apartheid style in which a 'death- and sex-centered' pathology is transformed. In this way the fetishistic distortion of art is, if not avoided, at least usefully directed towards its own eventual transcendence. To begin with, the two earlier pieces might have been de-valued, turned into commodities exactly "by putting to work, in one way or another, the *principle* of an art" (ibid, 204; author's italics). However, by then honing in on an ineffable expressive quotient, the music had to become a device (perhaps still a commodity?) for navigating Self *beyond* sexual and political hang-ups, possibly as a means to regain one's soul, not to lose it. Locating myself contextually, I refer to Hans Roosenschoon (ed. Floyd 1999, 265) citing Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau (*Wagner and Nietzsche*) on "art constituting the essence of a nation", that it "is born of the needs of that nation, and is of the very substance of all who experience the collective crisis".

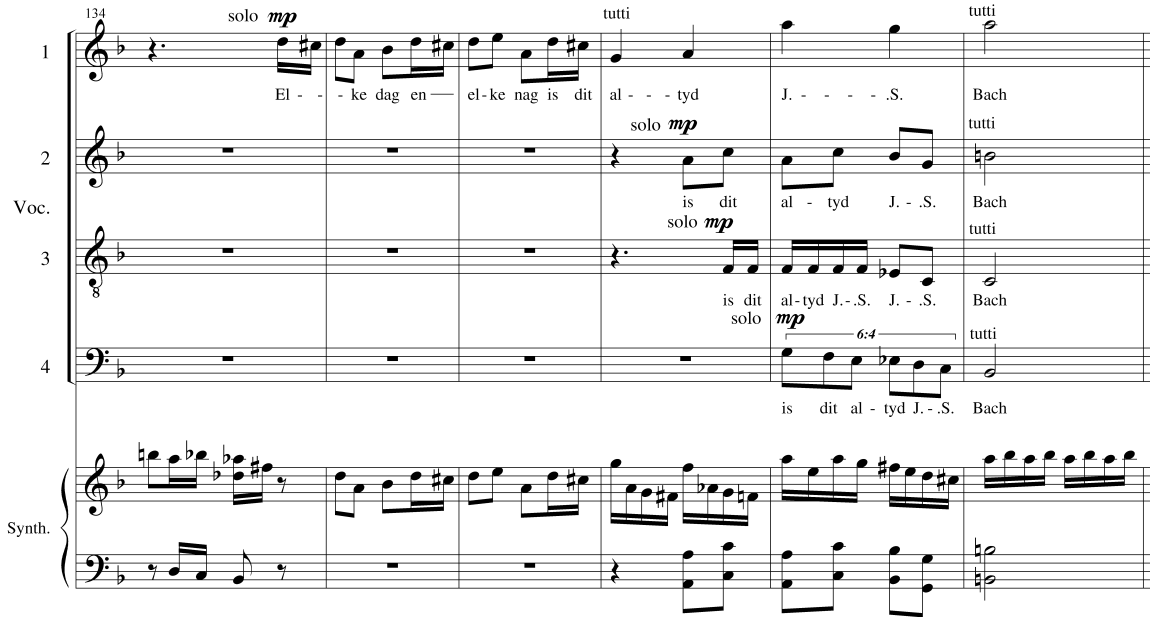
In *De Vos,* I began to "see the wood for the trees", namely that it was important as to how my 'commodity' was positioned to address the resolution of a "collective crisis". The music reflects the liberated and joyful celebration of post-apartheid diversity from the viewpoint of a 'liberated' Afrikaner. As a metaphor for this, there are counterpoints that intersect, as opposed to linear lines isolating themselves from one another. In this case, it encapsulates the double irony of, firstly, responding to the "essence of a nation", and thereby reviving my originally pro-Afrikaner sentiment by means of the very object of my subsequent hatred: the

means to evoke a new milieu with “the language of my heart” (Antjie Krog cited by Giliomee 2003, 664).

Tonality re-evolved via atonality and serialism (1910 to 1970 and beyond) to find the gravity of ‘home’ again in the latently-humanistic tonic. Thus drawn to a once scorned tonal focus, *De Vos* also indulges in this new bounty by re-remembering “a more profoundly classical generic heritage” rather than simply “the continuities and composed-out unities of traditional tonal structures” (Whittall 2003, 203). Now anchored in a postmodern field of reference, tonality could be reapplied, not within a utopian realm of Eurocentric-paternalistic ethos but, vis-à-vis *Ubuntu*, embodying the accessibility of art. All art being universally interlinked, Barbara Masekela (Floyd 1999, 269) ambiguously states that “we need to rethink our definitions, particularly the line that apartheid has drawn between art and craft ... for us, culture is not a separate category of life from politics”. As the distinction between art and craft is as old as the categorisation of the fine arts in Western culture, the power of culture as a social tool is suggested here from an African perspective. Conversely, Masekela’s remark may help to clarify the return of melody in avant-garde music during the seventies. The extension of cross-cultural influence probably enabled overtly-cerebral Western composers to tap into African music as a humanising creative source.

A reawakening to social responsibility came about as a music-linguistic return-to-basics, the re-invention of a spectral musical identity whereby I could assess my music, past *and* future, in a new political light. Melody, now inspired by Africa, emerged as a characteristic identity, a civilising factor passing from the African collective to an individualistic Eurocentric mindset, rather than just a brief, cellular coincidence. Using music as a means to exemplify the intangible instead of turning music itself into the inexplicable, this stylistic *volte-face* is traced back not only to influences from Africa, but also to Stockhausen’s post-*Mantra* pieces and Ligeti’s music from *Melodien* onwards (both 1971). All these influences were consolidated in Boulez’s proto-cultural *Rituel* (1974-5) in which Paul Griffiths perceives an ‘awesome grandeur … a curious throwback to the world of Messiaen (particularly the latter’s *Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum*)’ (1981, 282). In the same way, *De Vos* came to epitomise what Michael Cherlin defined in Schönberg’s String Trio, op.45 (1946) as music

which “seems alternately to remember and then abandon the musical languages of its antecedents” (Whittall 2003, 123).



Example 3.1 from ***De Vos*** - *Engeltjie* bars 134-139, in which a partly-remembered Bach quote subsumes the traditional under its own transformation, thereby depriving it of its identity and possibly engendering a new one.

About the title

In the context of a previously marginalised culture and language, the persevering nature of a fox has been used as metaphor, either via the happy coincidence of the poet’s name (Philip de Vos) or as the evocation of a sly, but ultimately harmless rascal, bent not so much on destruction, but primarily, in view of prevailing attitudes, on its own survival. This explains the eclectic bent of the music, reflexive as it is suggesting the openness and receptivity transforming the ‘new’ Afrikaner.

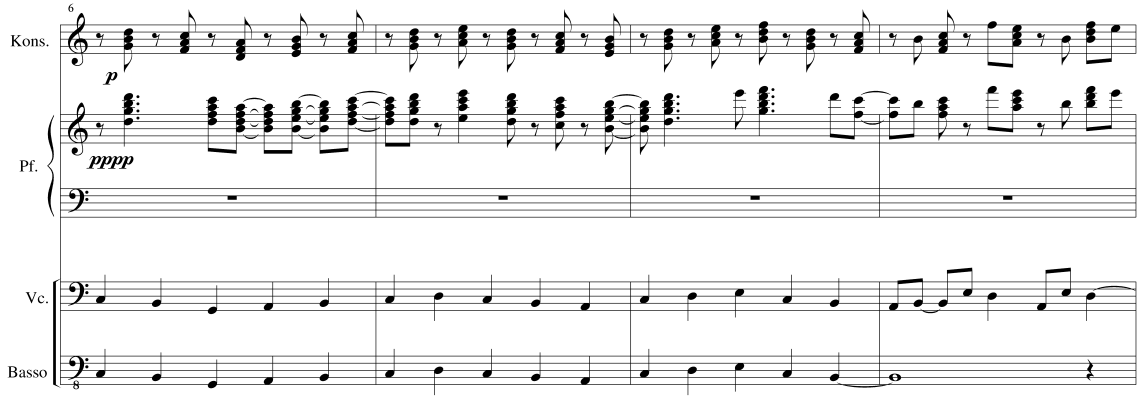
Analysis:

The five songs are *Duifie* (‘Little Pigeon’), *Gogga-Slang* (‘Creepy-Crawly’), *Vissie* (‘Fish’), *Engeltjie* (‘Angel Choir’) and *Donker Nag* (‘Dark Night’).

De Vos signals the integration and transcendence of issues regarding death and sexuality. The consolidation of pathologies addressed and overturned by *Thanatos-on-Ice* and *Pink*

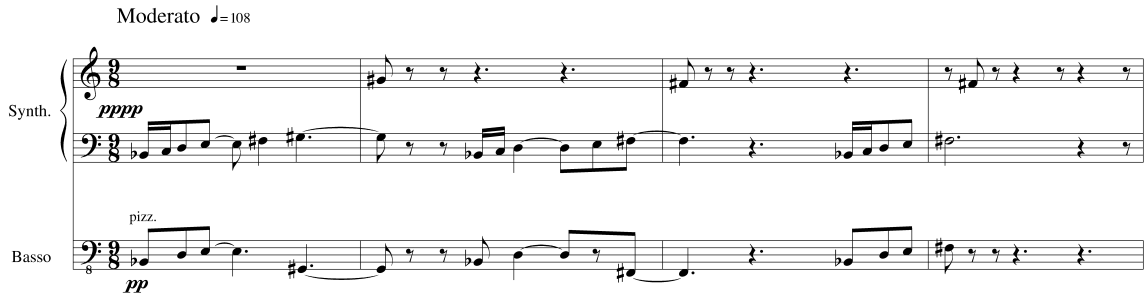
Narcissus led to their textural integration. Functioning on a less obvious level, they are embedded into the psyche of the artist and his work, into what Cook (1987, 221) refers to as 'the underlying structures which listeners don't consciously perceive'. Having started a healing process, I felt ready to return to my mother tongue, Afrikaans, and use it to tell stories, to bring sleep, to warn, to laugh and to cry. That it would still have to bridge a linguistic and racial divide was less important. My good intention would have to suffice for the moment.

The songs filmically suggest a flippant, multi-layered pastiche, meaning that the text and the setting comment upon each other from opposing frames of reference. The supposedly serious evocation of angels and heaven is, in a mocking fashion, offset by distorted references to Bach as the archetypal proto-religious *Gestalt*. As in *Roma* (1972), a Fellini-esque "episcopal cabaret" draws on diverse influences, here ranging from Kurt Weill (*Mahagonny* in particular), Bernd Alois Zimmermann's predilection for musical quotation (especially *Musique pour les soupers du Roi Ubu* (1966), entirely made up of quotes from existing music), and Leos Janacek's propensity for speech patterns (*Diary of One Who Disappeared*). The anaconda in *Gogga-Slang* (no.2) establishes an incongruent though apposite cipher for the corruption of everything it comes in contact with. It surreptitiously communicates as if



Example 3.2: *Gogga-Slang* bar 6-9 dislodges the typical rhythmic regularity of a *Boeremusiek* 'riff': syncopation effects an audible change whereby the Boere (Afrikaner) commodity becomes an externalised musical object presenting the "verbally absent imagery of a whole fictional world" (Kramer 1995, 143).

through normal speech patterns so that the familiar and the traditional function as the "symbol of ... a liberated academy controlled by usurpers" (Programme note *Rueckblick Moderne*, ed. Brigitte Weinmann 1999, 98). Slithering and squeezing its restrictive tonal way to satiety, the subversive rhythmic and tonal allusions suggest Amazonian South America, although it more likely pre-empts the 4th song, *Engeltjie*, and its naïve Christian view of heaven. The latter spills over into *Donker Nag* (no.5), where the insistently slippery distortion of a recurring passacaglia motif recalls the serpent and integrates echoes from the rustling, furtive dove (no.1), the screaming fish (no.3) and the frolicking Botticelli angels (no.4) into a *less-than-clear* identity.



Example 3.3: *Donker Nag: De Vos*, as with its African models, addresses its listeners only in terms of what leaves an indelible print long after. The repetitive, passacaglia-like figure in the bass suggests durability of intent, yet also the surreptitiously-transformative nature of that intent.

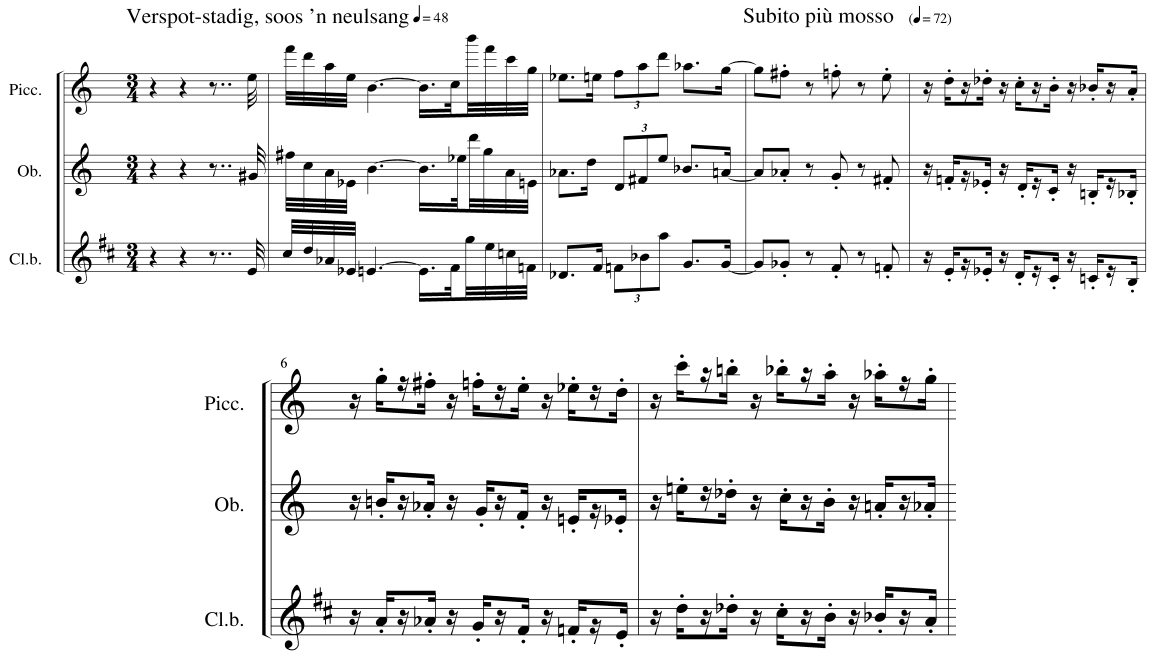
But then, it has to remain unclear, furtive, like mobilising an indeterminate mass (the Afrikaner collective) on a layer of oil.[5]

Re-assessing the Afrikaans language

The song, the Lied, not only as an eighteenth and nineteenth-century innovation, but also as a reinvented genre via 20th-century concerns, reflects an "imaginary voice" back to us. As a soundboard, this voice "can make good all lack" (Kramer 1995, 147). It brings the listener insight via the same tension the text underwent by being squeezed into an audible evocation of that emotion. Here the text is in Afrikaans, the language once associated with oppression; yet, as if to counteract such a potential tension, it indulges in folksy colloquialism which,

[5] "Leading Afrikaans commentators like radio journalist Chris Louw called for resistance to 'the inevitability of an Anglicized monocultural future'" although "(with) the demise of both apartheid and Afrikaner nationalism, Afrikaners had to discard much of their historic thinking about survival as obsolete" (Giliomee 2002, 662-3).

while placing the speaker in a specific space and time, also permeates the music with a mythic resonance.



Example 3.4: ***Engeltjie***, in which an expansive, ebullient, typically-Western figure is superimposed on distorted versions of itself, in the process coming apart in a self-deprecating syncopation.

This resonance remains once the real voice has been lost. It is a time capsule, not of the apartheid host, but of the microcosmic interactions beyond grand political and social concerns. Christopher James writes that "(African song) ... may bubble up at any time, beginning as 'singing to oneself' but also immediately solidifying into a social tie" (Floyd 1999, 295-6). In a word, *De Vos*, as with its African models, addresses its listeners in terms of what may not amount to anything memorable in the short term but does leave an indelible print long after.

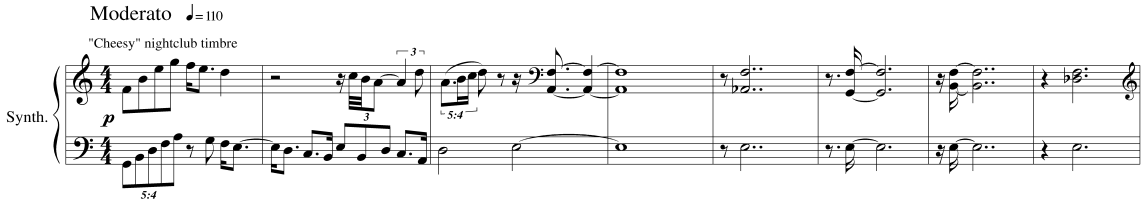
Five songs signify a re-awakening of Afrikaner identity reconciled with the diversity of its roots. The work sounds an externalisation of internal change wherein Marx's spectres initially become commodities and then externalised musical objects presenting the "verbally absent imagery of a whole fictional world" (Kramer 1995, 143). This is musically signified by means of implying the opposition of two exclusive realms, that of the Afrikaner and the African, in particular by means of suspending the one within the slipstream of the other (see

Examples 3.2 and 3.6 in which the regular Boeremusiek figure is dislodged, yet allowed to persist in the syncopation of a typically-African *hoquetus*).

The Afrikaans language was scorned locally and abroad, in particular since the 1976 riots when its enforcement by the Nationalist regime led to the Soweto uprising and massacre. The language started losing part of that stigma after 1994 by virtue of its now functioning in a liberated field of reference, and it became more than a mere reflection of its users. It could move towards integration on a global scale as the Afrikaner is slowly being absorbed into the single purpose of the collective, affecting its over-arching evolutionary imperative.[6] I could reclaim the language as my own in view of the collective Afrikaner being humbled, and revivified in an international context.

The narrative arch:

From the start, *Duifie* reveals a sleazy, 'cheesy' nightclub act suggested by the use of the chamber (Hammond) organ.



Example 3.5: *Duifie*, wherein the timbre of the synthesizer (or chamber organ) suggests an inappropriately sleazy atmosphere, given the suggested (Christian) purity of the subject.

This timbre, frequently used by composers like Bernd Alois Zimmermann and Hans Werner Henze to suggest de-stabilisation, is the purveyor of fragility, unease, dis-ease, disease. In fact, it is persistently located (*Duifie, Gogga/Spinnekop* and *Donker Nag*) at the origin of the three respective narratives. It tells a story, and five times (also in *Vissie* - bar 43 and *Engeltjie* - bar 47) it is positioned at the start of a diffuse tonal narrative, able to disintegrate into atonality at a moment's notice.

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[6] "The Group of 63, a post-1994 Afrikaans organisation, encouraged a search for new myths in the campaign to secure the future of Afrikaans as a public tongue. Its emphasis was not only on the unity of Afrikaans-speakers, but on their diversity. For the Group of 63, Afrikaans was not simply a standardised, white middle-class language, but a language with many accents, myths and idioms" (Giliomee 2002, 664)

In the first song, with its propensity for syncopation, the aim appears to be the diffuseness of irregular 'markers', or quietly-unfocussed pillars of pitch, sharpening or flattening the tonal landscape (see Ex. 3.4) before dropping back into modal anonymity. The effect is like slurred speech, while the *tendresse* of the setting is intentionally awkward and its execution gauche, sarcastically implying an ambivalent global attitude to redemption and to the spectre of high art as 'redeemer'.

The narrative focuses on the inflexibility of dogma, mimicked by an indecipherable 'spectre', an unidentified shadow moving around in the dark. The angels of *Engeltjie* (no.4), perceived as agents of goodwill towards men, morph here into something so heinous it cannot even be identified. The 'story' distils a struggle delineated thus by Victor Hugo: "(There) were no longer giants against colossi. It resembled Milton and Dante rather than Homer. *Demons attacked, spectres resisted* ..." (my italics) (*Les Miserables* cited by Derrida 1994, 119). Concurrently, it recalls what Stefans Grové calls "blending First-World cosmopolitanism with the vibrancy of Africa" (Floyd 1999, 280). A phalanx of nameless uncertainties is confronted, integrated and exorcised. Dialectic tension remains, though as Grové incisively points out "only a few blocks away from the glistening, high-tech skyscrapers, pulse the sights and sounds of the Third World ..." He considers the cultural clash as "an articulation of (his) profound hope for a future in which all the peoples (of South Africa) may share equally and harmoniously of her bounty" (ibid).

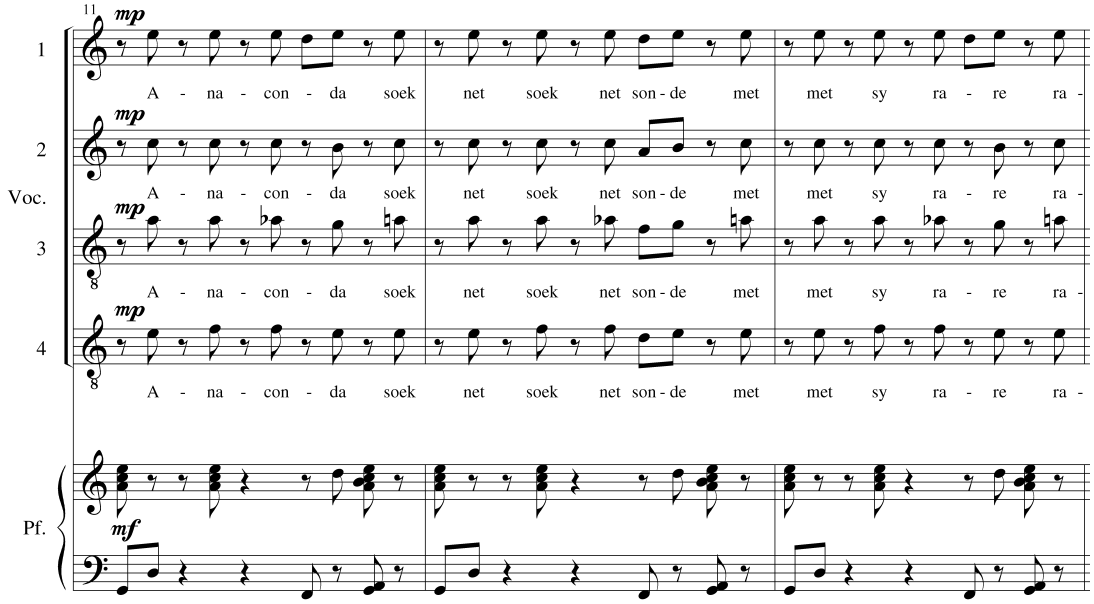
The morbidly-fantastical *Donker Nag* is a fractured lens through which perception of the rest of the work is distorted. Depending on the character of each of the four songs preceding it, this influence eventually facilitates a less ambiguous view of past spectres. In this way, it encapsulates the Oedipal horror of the Kristevan semiotic, finally consolidating the harmonic, melodic and timbral inflections of the piece.

De Vos may be an exercise in cognisance, its design revealed by the text. More than *Pink Narcissus* or *Thanatos-on-Ice*, the design *is* the story. It centres on an obsession with architecture suggested by the text. The aural evocation of space is pregnant with meaning, as in a De Chirico painting, whereas *Thanatos-on-Ice* and *Pink Narcissus* are of *design* in

space. Here the hermeneutic space, reflecting *and* driving the music, is inhabited by ghosts and myths. These "appear as autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own, which enter into relations both with each other and with the human race" (Derrida 1994, 208-9).

Why the postmodern *Lied*?

The *raison d'être* of *De Vos* would be the articulation of a "new" or resurrected mindset by means of a text close to my roots. But why the Lied, the artwork energized by an existing text? Kramer (1995, 144) writes that "the *Lied* is a convivial means of positioning listeners as subjects within a certain social order, a certain symbolic economy". In *Gogga-Slang* in particular, with its Freudian dance of the anaconda, human nature provokes the phantom of a self-deprecating Afrikaner lost in Dionysian abandon. To integrate the sexist-racist spectres typifying *Thanatos-on-Ice* and *Pink Narcissus*, this song in particular addresses, uplifts and purges by objectifying what Sanders terms "a site of struggle" (2002, 191). His observation (ibid, 190) that "to-be-black-in-the-world is to be alienated" is turned on its head by locating, in the traditional lore of the Boer, in his music and culture, a shadowed, but secret, reflection of its opposite. The black man dances to *his* music like the Boer to *his*, in this way sounding a feverish cross-cultural hocket by imposing the timbre of *boeremusiek* on the rhythm of Africa, and vice versa.



Example 3.6: *Gogga-Slang*.

Simultaneously, it is evoked by means of the same tongue as Antjie Krog's,[7] a metonymic representation of which replaces the evil of apartheid's architects and perpetrators with the sound of their language.[8]

Exorcism of said evil occurs now using the same language to reinvent mythic, pre-cultural templates and recreate a paradisiacal condition, a going-back, a return to innocence by readdressing signifiers and removing them from a negativising (corrupting) context. In relation to postmodernist integration, Whittall (2003, 168) cites John Richardson's study of Glass's *Akhnaten* (1983) in which he claims that "the music is 'archaeological... not because it deals with real archaeological artefacts from ancient Egypt but because it treats the entire history of Western classical music as an archaeological site, digging up signifiers from the musical past and, by the very act of representation, uprooting them from the semantic field that formerly nourished them'". Viewing *De Vos* in the same light, the Afrikaans language emerges not only as communicating device, but also as signifier dancing in the dark, addressing the mythic spectres of its own darkest hour.

By virtue of this mechanism, metaphoric representations serve to foreground a means to escape the acerbic drudgery of racist conflict: the bird (no.1) denotes a Christ- or Gandhi-like *Satyagraha* of passive resistance; the anaconda (no.2) offers an exotic means of escape, provided the reptile does not choke to death in the process, the fish (no.3) is an imprisoned cipher captured behind glass, i.e. almost in amber, and, in *Engeltjie* (no.4), Bach is not quoted so much as re-remembered (ref. Ex.3.1). As in *Donker Nag* (no.5), this representation of contrapuntal models recalls Whittall's "more profoundly classical generic heritage" (2003, 203) in which the old can also appear as a "vindication of the rewards of confronting precedents and traditions in ways which reinterpret rather than reject them" (ibid, 144).

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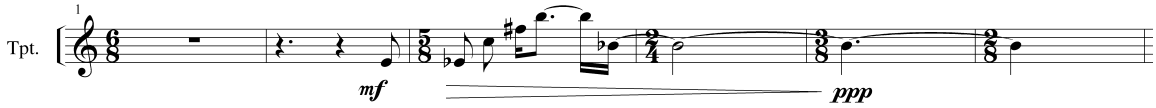
7 "The close identification that had grown up between the Afrikaans language and white domination, male chauvinism and Afrikaner nationalism, cast a shadow beyond 1994. In reporting on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Antjie Krog, a leading poet, asked: 'How can I live with the fact that all the words used to humiliate, all the orders to kill belonged to the language of my heart?'" (Giliomee 2002, 664).

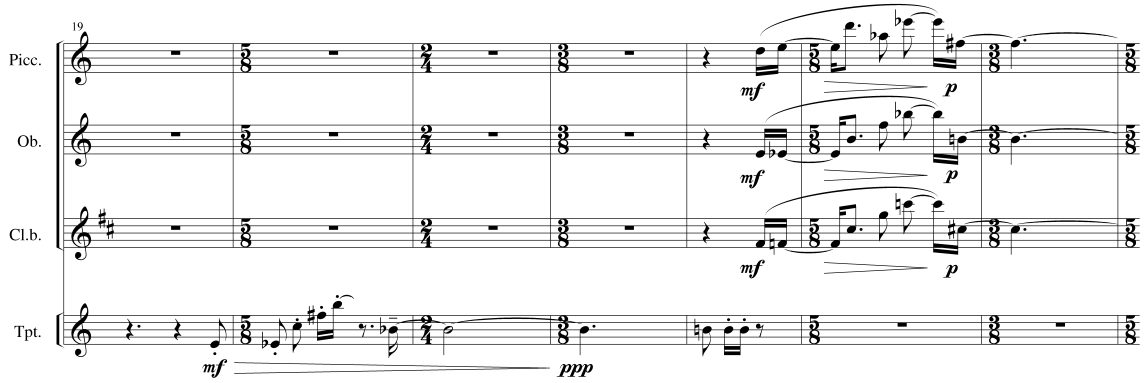
8 I subsumed a hitherto externally-projected hatred of my own people under a synthesized stylistic amalgam reflecting both African and Eurocentric models. In tacit accord with Alfred Schnittke (as a less-than-ideal paradigm), I was, now in stylistic limbo, "left with the remnants of (my) own earlier, abundant skepticism about musical traditions, technical and generic" (Whittall 122). De Vos was the result of "serious dialogue with those traditions rather than blithely asserting an absolute alienation from them" (ibid).

I had embarked on *De Vos* riding the crest of a doctrinaire wave that had only brought war, exclusion, animosity and pain in its wake. Now, the effects of this "war" had to be reversed. Being limited "to the private, domestic domain" (Whittall 2003, 97), the purpose of writing the piece was to reclaim personal security, a delicate enclave, within a vilified socio-political context. Setting the third song, *Vissie*, the 'disappearing' fish both unmasks the Christian marker as unreal, a mere 2-dimensional spatial simulacrum, the way Rene Magritte's gravestone in *L'Alphabet des révélations* is, in the words of Jean Baudrillard, the "final resting place of the Real" (Cook & Everist 1999, 121). The Real as exemplified tonally alternately approaches and abandons its grounding tonic. The overbearing effect of the opening 5-note rocking motif locks the momentum in a vaguely-disquieting hush so that embellishments by the trumpet,



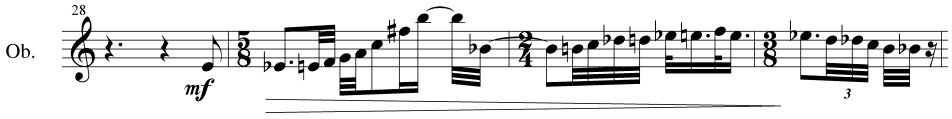
Example 3.7a: bar 2-6, moving away from and then returning to its grounding E flat - B flat focus.

echoed on woodwind,



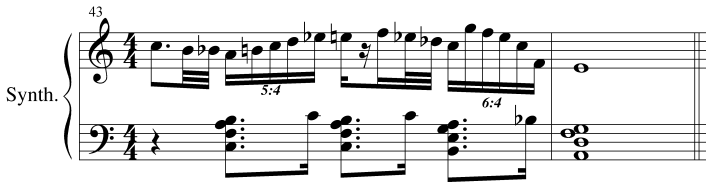
Example 3.7b: bar 19-25, where the foregoing trumpet motif is repeated in a staggered screech-like distortion.

then oboe,



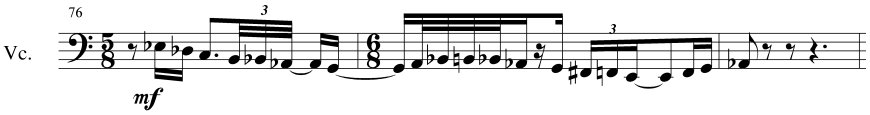
Example 3.7c: bar 28-31 with the oboe elaborating on the same motive

on synthesizer



Example 3.7d: bar 43-4, with the motif, in spite of now being altered beyond recognition, retaining its identity

and cello



Example 3.7e bar 76-8: banished to the bass register, the 'spectre' of the motif remains, now without its ability to change things with sheer timbral brilliance. However, it surreptitiously affects the music from the inside out.

portend an urgent reawakening**.** Its sonic and rhythmic entrapment in a recurring cycle (the fishbowl) similarly robs the hapless creature of a linear temporal representation. In three-dimensional space, the fish, distorted, vanishes without a trace. This suggests my own state of limbo when, on the one hand, I was aware of my own complicity while, on the other, commiserating with the victims of collectively-enforced evils. The only escape from that state was action: realising that being an Afrikaans-speaking white male does not automatically turn me into a monster, I address these ambiguities and, making peace with my conscience, remain alert to potential deviations from a chosen path.

Exorcising chimerae

On the subject of the identities expounded in the five songs, the texts disclose a furtive complex of interrelated ciphers. These are in complete agreement with 19th century models where, between "modernism and postmodernism ... we should look for the epistemological underpinnings of this still-controversial musical style" (Cook & Everist 1999, 128-9). In a no man's land, the myths, child-like longings, nights of Gothic horror, fragility of life imprisoned, naïve views of death and the afterlife, come together in a landscape "rooted in

the Cape Afrikaner experience of slavery, with its ideology of paternalism, and British colonialism, with its stress on indirect rule and trusteeship" (Giliomee 2002, 475).

From the evocation of a frail bird in the first piece (*Duifie*) to the suggestion of something nasty in the woodshed (*'Donker Nag'*), the music projects a stepwise tour of Afrikaner obsessions and 'spectres', the latter in particular alluding to a perpetual, ritualistic cycle of crime and retribution lasting many centuries. In fact, making its influence felt throughout the other four songs, *Donker Nag* summarises both the shadow of (self-) destructive exclusivity in a world now defined as organically-interrelated as well as the mystical luminosity of future potential. A densely-recurring pattern (see Ex. 3. 2) denotes both the inevitable end of dogma and the peaceful reassurance of entropic heat death, a dream-like end of the universe.

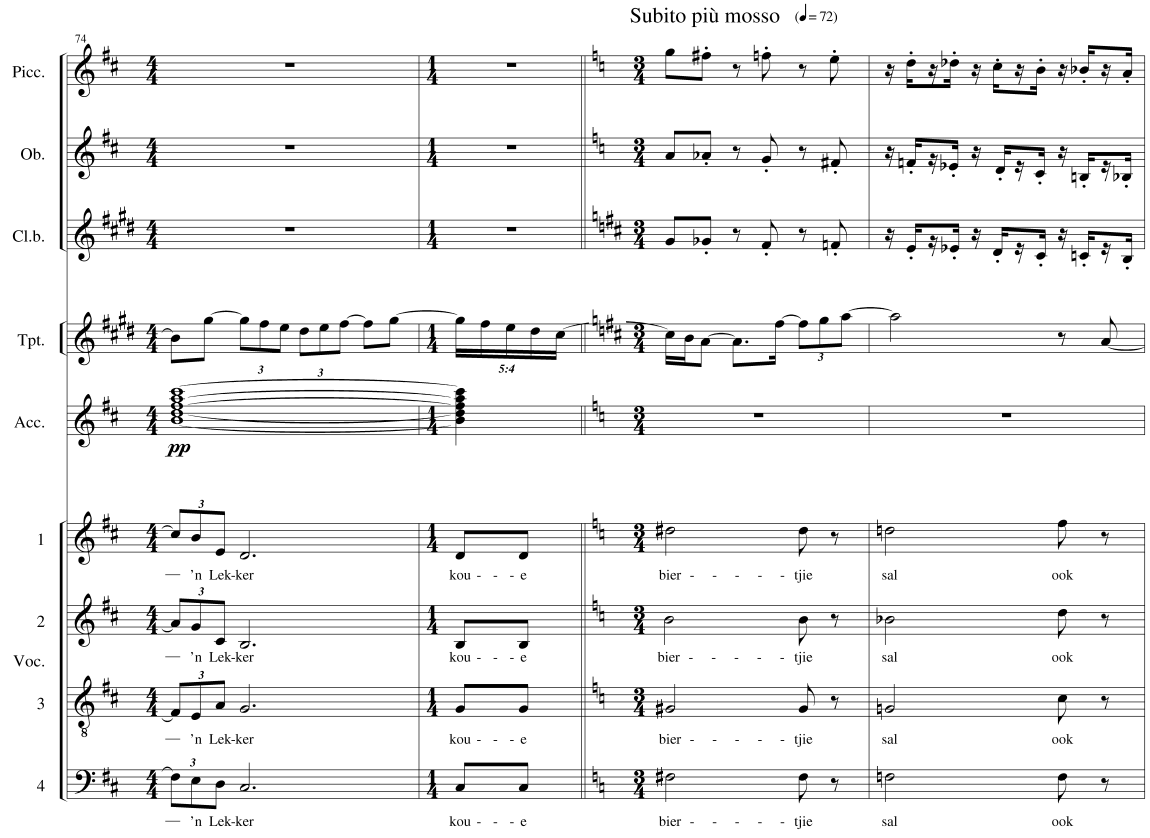
Going with the latter, an Afrikaner milieu now ready for salvation rather than eternal damnation is intoned. Setting up images of fragility and (our collective) reaction to them, the work cinematically presents "positions of identification in and around the coupling of image and music" (Kramer 1995, 146). In this way, the 'subjectivities' thus construed aid in hastening the process of psycho-creative synthesis. Such subjectivities encompass the peaceful moon with its mysterious dark side, and the quiet night harboring the terrifying unknown.

As dialectic contradictions they not only activate the musical structure, but also determine the nature and speed of this mobilisation. Above all, the character, that is, the identity of the music is left entirely to chance, to the subjectivities of which, as Stanley Boorman maintains, "there is no reason to assume that any listener will hear the piece as the composer heard it" (Cook & Everist 1999, 406). That being the case, my method, more often than not, involves an attitude towards new material of 'first come, first served' where the conscious intellect as filter is denied a foothold. Referring to John Cage, the longest-lasting influence on my work, I identify with how Whittall (2003, 108) assesses Cage as "alienated but engaged, (offering) an unambiguous cultural idealism, fuelled by skepticism, with respect to what 'musical situations' and 'social circumstances' had so far been able to achieve." Placing myself in Cage's shoes, my aim in *De Vos* was also to "(retreat) to such a distance that his role as

organizer and designer (of music), *while crucial*, was practically invisible" (James Pritchett, cited Whittall 2003, 109). Additionally though, contrasting Cage's nihilistic view with my own less-than-anarchic sound world, I found that 'individualist anarchy' as a *methodology*, and not as an end result, matched my instinctive, feeling-in-the-dark, way of writing music. Kramer's 'interplay' of subject, reflective and counter-reflective agent (1995, 146-7) regulates my own "belief 'in individualist anarchy as the 'best form of government"'. In addition, I am confident that "the best arrangement of people and sounds (is) to have them free to be themselves, 'unimpeded and interpenetrating'" (Whittall 2003, 108). In this case, of course, that freedom is determined by acquired tastes, an outlook ostensibly conflicting with Cage's ego-less Zen philosophy.

This is where I diverge from emulating Cage whole-heartedly. My contribution to music would not be an ego-less state, but a reinvention of hitherto suppressed obsessions, in particular those involving my own society refracted through the lens of 20th century Russian music. Alfred Schnittke, although not the most inspirational Russian model, seems, more than Shostakovich, Shchedrin or Prokofiev, to embody the "expressionist all-inclusiveness" (Whittall 2003, 121) of a composer "concerned .... to depict the moral and spiritual struggles of contemporary man" (ibid).

However, not seeing much possible development beyond this point, i.e. beyond eclectic pointers gleaned from a polyglot, I embarked on *De Vos* as a stepping-stone towards something the nature of which I could not, and still cannot, predict. Although hierarchies set up by the presence of a text gave me an unfair advantage, and though (as in Stravinsky's Concerto for Piano and Winds) the language "mimics tonal procedures, it fails to create any kind of organic tonal hierarchy" (Cook and Everist 1999, 114). This instability may be ascribed to the semantic tug and flow of the text itself, in the manner Kramer believes that "(in) song as in film, the identification positions do not form a stable order; they can shift over time, vary in hierarchical value, displace or subsume one another, and be occupied simultaneously" (1995, 147).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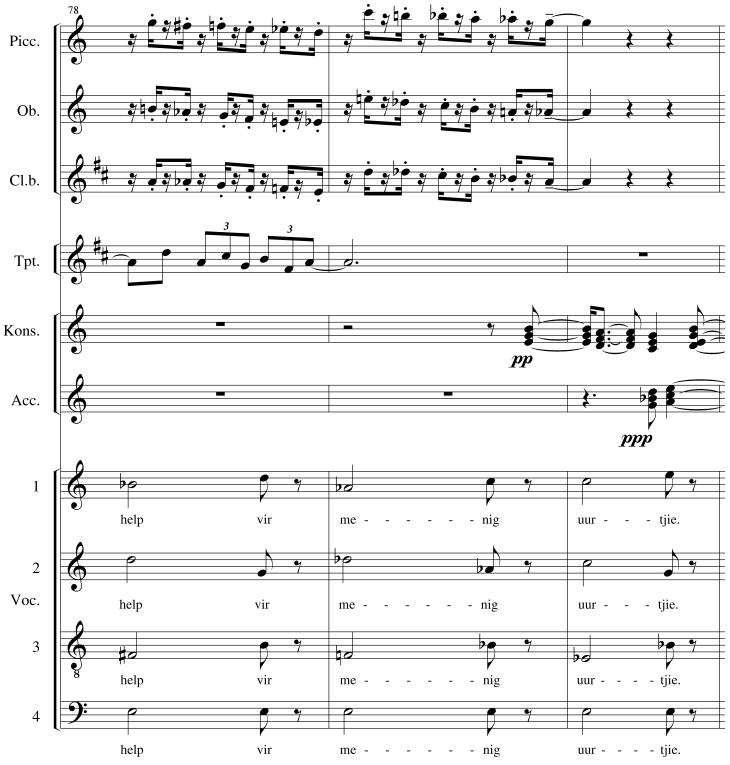

Example 3.8: *Engeltjie*, in which the flippant nature of the text itself accounts for the harmonic, timbral and rhythmic opacity of the music, focused as it is just above and below the general melodic line. The aim is to express an inability to focus, i.e. to give the sonic impression of intoxication, i.e. of being unable to focus:

The most conventional-looking and -sounding of the three pieces under discussion, *De Vos* 'sounds' an integration of the African where, culturally and existentially, the Afrikaner has metaphorically been 'folded' in as an audible construct. This projects the music beyond the established boundaries of *Afrikanerdom*. Influences from other ethnicities, societies and musical genres are integrated, sometimes seamlessly, sometimes intentionally retaining the identity of an opposing Other. They include quotes from Bach and unconsciously recall snippets of jazz, pop, rock and African township music. Upon full integration, they possess the least vestige of their former selves, broadly-speaking as "a result of the process of acculturation provoked by colonialism" (Herbst 2003, 146). An indefinable sense of depth or profundity is accomplished by the least obvious means possible, a quality which, since my earliest pieces, was left to instinctive, pre-conscious sensibilities. Briefly considering the materialisation of such a construct, I draw first on what Robert Fink (Cook & Everist 1999, 102) considers the question of

> "abstract musical structure: the idea that a composition models in some purely formal way a bounded, multi-level, often hierarchical space which provides a sense of depth and complexity independent of any hermeneutic goal."

Moreover, one determines how these models, "like film, (construct) subjectivities by setting up positions of identification in and around the coupling of image and music" (Kramer 1995, 146).

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION:

How much does (my) music matter?

> (By) observing a foreign culture in which tradition is all-important but under threat, I came to appreciate the strengths, and indeed the fragility, of our own ways, and the constant need to renew the lifeblood of our own culture (Floyd 1999, 314).

In scrutinising the evolution of my *oeuvre* since 1986, this author has attempted its validation as a response to postmodernist imperatives going beyond an earlier nihilistic subtext. That year marks my introduction to the work of Yukio Mishima who felt that "art kept snugly within the bounds of art alone shrivels and dies, and in this sense (he was) not a believer in what is commonly called art for art's sake" (1977, 19). My own objective was to find a creative purpose as "the eternal supplying source of ... vitality - by its relentless whip, by its command, by its fierce criticism, because of its beauty, which is the beauty of ice" (ibid).

Being exposed to Mishima's ambiguous views vis-à-vis the hidden source of creativity was a turning-point, underscored by what Erlmann (1996, 297) finds "in the portraits of writers, composers, and painters", namely that "life and art are constructed as two fundamentally cross-referential domains: the meaning of a life is seen as being contained in the core of the work of art, while, conversely, every work of art has traces of its creator's life written into it, … but as Judith Okely points out, these ... rest on deeply entrenched Western ethnocentric traditions".

Turning from an inchoate Dionysian response to life, I changed the thrust of my work from *mythos* to *logos*: not a revolt per se against the Dionysian in favour of the Apollonian and the formally lucid, but an attempt to achieve balance between the two. As demonstrated in the pieces analysed, a resolution of the apparent opposition and tension between life and art was needed by taking both to a level where their characteristics are transmuted into something transcendent, namely beyond classification.

Upon abandoning the ambiguity of self-conscious art, an integrated musical utterance walks the tightrope between clear meaning and indecipherable codes. Joseph Shabalala (Erlmann 1996, 3) defined such fluid equilibrium when he conveyed the diverse effects of music as follows:

> To some of you today it is going to be a complete culture shock, to some it's going to be a sociological study, to some it is going to be a revelation, but to all of you it's going to be home. …. something I have always considered to be one of the greatest unifying forces in the world, music. Music transcends all divides.

Acknowledging the inexhaustible sources of musico-semantic reference, Jameson (1991, 299) maintains that "music ought to lead us into something more interesting and complicated than mere opinion. ... (music) also includes history in a more thoroughgoing and irrevocable fashion, since, as background and mood stimulus, it mediates our historical past along with our private or existential one and can scarcely be woven out of the memory any longer."

Such a realisation underscored and propelled *Thanatos-on-Ice* and *Pink Narcissus*. Writing these pieces located their chief concerns formally while preserving at that moment, as in a time capsule, a lasting testament of their composer's thoughts and ambitions, however unrealised even at this moment. Poised on the brink of a brave new world, this sensibility reverberates in the words of Derrida where he summarises the 1900s as "(the) century of 'Marxism' (which) will have been that of the techno-scientific and effective decentering of the earth, of geopolitics, of the anthropos in its onto-theological identity or its genetic properties, of the *ego cognito*" (1995, 122). On this topic, Jameson also predicts that "a new international proletariat (taking forms we cannot even imagine) will re-emerge from this convulsive upheaval..." **(**1991, 417).

Apropos the historical tension between Europe and the East (and Africa), I have followed a trend of unforced, sometimes unconscious, synthesis and concur with Edward Said (1978, 354) that "there is now at least a general acceptance that these (animosities and inequities *between Europe and the Orient*) represent not an eternal order but a historical experience whose end, or at least partial abatement, may be at hand." With *Thanatos-on-Ice* and *Pink Narcissus*, such tension came to a head in the province of my own private concerns while, in

effect, my central Self, the composer's ego, came unstuck.

De Vos, the third piece analysed, addresses Derrida's "de-focussed ego" whereby I could place the 'old' effigy of Afrikanerdom - with the Afrikaans language as a sign - back into a much looser context wherein my own views of the new and the emergent (could) "be grasped as part and parcel of a reaffirmation of the authentic older high modernisms very much in Adorno's spirit" (Jameson 1991, 60).

Thereby this music now places me, its composer in an all-inclusive continuum. Instead of specifically wrestling with old forms, a newly-found respect for the (African) Other reflects my Afrikaner Self back to me, mending fractures in my psyche as I heed the slow release of Self into Other, into a broader society:

> … the need to integrate whatever warmth and vigour one may have acquired within the collective, socially meaningful forms and mediums of one's own tradition. So long as the African input is perceived as 'other', then one is in a sense relying on exoticism (like French chinoiserie or the Mozartian flirtation with things Turkish), and to that extent failing to draw the fullest conclusions from one's model" (Floyd 1999, 314).

Scruton (1994, 379-380) writes that "(precisely) because it lies beyond the 'veil of appearance', the will (*to express*), as thing-in-itself, is unknowable to the understanding". It means that a consolidation of the ambiguity of musically externalising these socio-political concerns had to be attempted. However, realising that it will never be possible, or necessary, to reproduce the nuts-and-bolts of such issues, I had to "reclaim (music) by being open about the ways one connects with it, by embracing the ways of the poet and those of the musician. And ... we let music say as much as it can, ... we acknowledge that it finds, among other things, the level of our deepest selves... For ... we too have never left off discovering how music matters" (Cook & Everist 1999, 216).

SCORES

Compositions by Johan Cloete:-

Pre-Democracy:

Thanatos-on-Ice for ensemble (1985) [ms]

Transition:

Pink Narcissus for keyboards, winds and strings (1985-2004) [ms]

Post-Apartheid:

De Vos for barbershop quartet and ensemble on texts by Philip de Vos (2005) [ms]

Celebration (1986) for orchestra [Amanuensis Quality Editions]

He who shall raise up his soul shall see its colours (1980) for piano solo [Musications]

Poussin in Africa (1986 rev. 1996) for flute and piano [ms]

Vigil: Eniwetok (1991) for orchestra (1991) [Amanuensis Quality Editions]

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