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Composition in crisis: case studies in South African art music, 1980 - 2006

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Chapter 4: Adjusting to the field: Organic unity in Hendrik Hofmeyr's solo piano music

This chapter considers the crisis in South African art music as it relates to a composer (and theorist)[1] whose primary aesthetic reference point is the 'Western canon of masterworks'.[2] Through a discussion of Hendrik Hofmeyr's solo piano music I show how a particular notion of 'organic unity' is the primary organizational feature in this music. I argue that this notion remains central to both the early works (from the 1980s) – especially those that display modernist techniques and procedures – as well as those more recent works (from the 1990s and after) that draw productively on compositional procedures from the 'common practice' period (roughly 1600-1900 CE). I argue that Hofmeyr's move away from modernist techniques towards a more 'accessible' (tonal) world that has increasingly included African elements can in part be interpreted as an adjustment to a more heteronomous field in the post-apartheid era (as can Klatzow's 'reversion' to tonality discussed in chapter three).

In this chapter I critique the various formal and procedural elements that contribute to a sense of organic unity in Hofmeyr's solo piano music. This manifests itself in the manner in which he takes structural unity – long a feature of works bound to tonality – as an unquestioned value, and I show how this is borne out by the complex and totalizing organizational procedures he uses to construct his solo piano music. I argue that this approach to unity is mechanistic, rather than organic in the romantic sense, and that it is related to a structuralist approach to composition. My discussion is informed by a post-structuralist view that critiques the *idea* of unity as a criterion of value for works of contemporary art music. I ask the question: what are the problems and issues inherent in approaching music like this, particularly when, as in later works, this music incorporates African elements?

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[1] Hendrik Hofmeyr is associate professor in musicology at the South African College of Music (University of Cape Town) although his interests are more towards music theory and analysis: "I am interested in the kind of systematic side of musicology not so much the historical" (author's interview, 25 January 2007).
[2] "The common practice period is what interests me, including those who have stuck to the common practice in the twentieth century such as Shostakovich and Prokofiev" (Ibid).

Richard Cohn and Douglas Dempster (among many others) have shown how much the notion of organic unity has dominated Western thinking: "[t]he principal and most persistent canon governing our Western aesthetic is that successful works of art, including the 'masterpieces' of Western art music, exhibit unity, coherence, or 'organic' integrity" (1992:156). Music analysis as a disciplinary tool has reinforced this notion, not only through the repertoire it considers – the 'masterpieces' of Western art music – but through a predominantly structuralist approach in which unity is often seen as the most important principle governing works. However, in recent decades some musicologists and music analists influenced by the post-structuralist thought of Jean Francois Lyotard (1984) and Frederic Jameson (1991) have questioned unity as a criterion of value, seeing music as a cultural product of particular socio-historic circumstances rather than as autonomous from cultural context.

This has paralleled developments in composition. Much contemporary music embraces 'surface' rather than 'depth', and patterning and texture are far more important than melodic development (as in the later works of Kevin Volans). Thus, organic unity is increasingly rare, almost an anachronistic index of musical value. Unity is "no longer a master narrative of musical structure", as Lawrence Kramer puts it. "Many postmodern composers have accordingly embraced conflict and contradiction and have at times eschewed consistency and unity" (Kramer 2002:15). Others take a very different approach where "unity is [still] a prerequisite for musical sense" (Ibid:14).

The notion of organic unity as a structuring principle still holds partly because of its long and influential history in the reception of Western art music. Before discussing the solo piano works of Hendrik Hofmeyr I therefore interrogate the history of this notion in Western art music. Later I consider how this notion of organic unity has remained a central organizing principle even in those works by Hofmeyr that have drawn on African elements, and return to my theme of the cross-cultural paradigm elaborated in chapter 1. In Hofmeyr's case I critique the manner in which he has adopted titles and musical elements perceived as African, referring to recent debates on the construction of Africa as essentially 'different' from the West (Agawu 2003, Scherzinger 2004). I contest this

binary in a Western discourse that seeks to emphasize certain rhythmic complexities and melodic elements as essentially African (as discussed in chapter two).

Career and formative influences

Born in Cape Town in 1957, Hendrik Hofmeyr is a member of the younger generation of composers who have emerged in the post-apartheid era. After completing a Bachelor of Music in musicology at the University of Cape Town's (UCT) South African College of Music in 1979, he went on to complete a Masters degree in piano performance at the same institution. Hofmeyr left South Africa on an overseas scholarship in 1981 to pursue studies in Italy. During what he terms "ten years in self-imposed exile as a conscientious objector" (Hofmeyr 2007:1) he obtained Italian State Diplomas in composition, piano, and conducting. He won the 1987 South African Opera Competition with *The Fall of the House of Usher* and "when the opera was produced at the State Theatre in Pretoria the following year, he was awarded the annual Nederburg Prize for Opera" (Ibid). He was also awarded the first prize in the Trento Cinema La Colonna Sonora International Competition with a work for chamber orchestra composed for a short film by Wim Wenders. Hofmeyr also won the Queen Elizabeth of Belgium Competition (1997) with *Raptus* for violin and orchestra, and second prize (no first prize was awarded that year) also in 1997 in the inaugural Dmitris Mitropolous Competition with *Byzantium* for soprano and orchestra (www.sacomposers.up.ac.za, accessed 23 January 2007).

Hofmeyr returned to South Africa in 1992, first to a lecturing post at the University of Stellenbosch and then to the position of Associate Professor in musicology at the University of Cape Town where he received a Doctorate in Music in 1999. Hofmeyr has composed works for stage, orchestra, chamber ensemble, solo instruments, and choir and is frequently commissioned by patrons in South Africa. The forthcoming edition of the journal *Musicus* (volume 35, no. 2) celebrates his 50th birthday.

Organic unity and the canon

The idea of organic unity became influential in the aesthetics of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century German romantic and idealist philosophers. August Schlegel, a leading philosopher of early romanticism, conceived of organicism as an "innate" quality of great works of art. "Form is mechanical", he argued, "If it is imposed from without as a fortuitous addition unrelated to the object's essence; as a soft mass, for instance, is pressed into some shape which it retains on hardening."

> Organic form, on the other hand, is innate; it evolves from the inner being and attains its final pre-destined shape with the seed's maturity. Such forms may be seen throughout nature, wherever living forces are active, from the crystallization of salts and minerals, through plants and flowers right up to the formation of the human face. In the fine arts too, every genuine form is organic, i.e. determined by the work's content (A.W. Schlegel, *Über dramatische Kunst und Literatur*, III 8-9, quoted in Furst 1979:334).

For Schlegel an art work's overall form is organic in the sense that it is "determined by the work's content", an ideal exemplified in Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 where a germinal motif is the core material for the entire work. Jim Samson articulates the historical underpinnings of this idea and its subsequent evolution.

> Through organicism, rather than mimesis, the aesthetic was presumed to establish a purpose in Nature, healing the division of subject and object by uniting both in the Self…[T]he organicist metaphor took its starting-point in a kind of idealized mimesis, where the unities of art would mirror other unities. Only with the development of an inherent (energetic) organicism, purged of context, is art transformed from an idealized image of what the world is to one of what the world might become (Samson 1999:39).

What this meant for analysis, and correspondingly the symbolic value assigned to works, was that "[u]nity and wholeness, whatever these may mean in a temporal art, were assumed a priori, and the analytical act was their demonstration. The work became a structure, and in that lay its value" (Samson 1999:41). This approach to unity as a structural consideration, indeed value, was highly influential on twentieth-century composers, especially serialists and their theorists. As Jonathan Cross has pointed out, the

analytical work of Schenker and Schoenberg alike was committed to the demonstration of the "utmost relatedness between all component parts", and this "dominated analytical production and pedagogy for many years" (Cross 2004:1).

The integral serialism of Stockhausen and especially of Boulez and Babbitt took this notion to its logical conclusion in "attempting to generate every dimension of a work from one initial 'idea'" (Ibid). Unity became entrenched as a criterion of value once again, although now of a more structural, mechanically planned kind, and with a language of atonality. This was perhaps necessary as a conceptual framework for the exceptionally complex music of high serialism. It is significant, too, that many composers writing in the 1960s to 80s were also theorists, often of their own music (Babbitt, Boulez, for example) – as indeed is Hofmeyr himself.

Since the 1970s, however, both post-serial composers and post-structuralist analysts have challenged the assumption that unity is an underlying principle that governs music, just as the idea of 'grand narrative' has been rejected by postmodern theorists such as Lyotard and Jameson. This has made music analysis a key issue in musicology in recent decades, as Joseph Kerman's article 'How We Got Into Analysis, and How To Get Out' famously shows, with its call for "analysis to examine, discuss, and indicate what it never [before] thought of examining, discussing or indicating" (1980:331). Many subsequent analysts are now more critical of analytical approaches that seek only to show inner coherence. Robert Fink, for example, questions the relevance of "inner coherence" in postmodern music that is all surface:

> [T]he surface-depth metaphor, since it leads to the assumption of musical hierarchy and a theory of structural levels, underpins the most influential claims – Schenkerian analysis and set theory – that all great music has hidden organic unity, no matter how complex, chaotic, or incomplete the listener's experience of its 'surface' may be. In the face of much recent music, which, in a peculiarly postmodern way, exalts surface and flouts depth, one might begin to question whether hierarchy is the best index of value in contemporary music – or even in the canonic master-works that submit so satisfyingly to hierarchical music theories (Fink 1999:103).

What is therefore interesting about the music under consideration in this chapter is that it retains hierarchical organization of pitch structures as a major goal and structural procedure.

In many of Hofmeyr's solo piano works he leaves us in no doubt about such procedures, because of the short analytical prefaces he has written to the works. The notion that "all great music has hidden organic unity" is what is relied on here, rather than the notion that music "exalts surface and flouts depth". This poses an interesting question for music written at a time when unity as a concept is no longer a stable index of value for works of art music. How do we think about works by a South African composer that consistently continue to assume that it is? In what follows I explore Hofmeyr's piano music through various examples and at the same time attempt to interrogate the notion of organic unity as a given.

Constructing unity: Hofmeyr's solo piano music

The piano plays an important part in Hofmeyr's output. This is no surprise, given that he took postgraduate study in piano at the University of Cape Town (MMus 1980), an Italian State diploma in piano whilst studying abroad in the 1980s, and is a performer. There is a total of ten solo piano works (including the four works from *Partita Africana*), three two-piano works (including arrangements), various chamber and vocal works (in which the piano plays an integral part), the *Concerto per pianoforte e orchestra* (1998), the *Concerto per due pianoforti e orchestra* (2004), and a number of piano reductions of orchestral works such as his *Raptus* (1996) and *Concerto per flauto e orchestra* (1998-99). In what follows I discuss characteristic devices and procedures of Hofmeyr's oeuvre in selected solo works. First I discuss the structuralist procedures characteristic of the early piano works *Nag* (1983) and *Die Dans van die Reën* (1986); then I consider *Notturno* (2003) as an example of his appropriation of nineteenth-century forms and procedures. Hofmeyr's use of counterpoint in the *Variazioni sopra una mazurka di Chopin* (2002) is the third aspect I draw attention to. The fourth aspect is his inclusion of

African elements in the *Partita Africana* (completed 2006). In conclusion, I draw on all four aspects to critique the notion of organic unity as an organizational imperative in his music.

Structuralism: *Nag* and *Die Dans van die Reën*

Hofmeyr's early piano works *Nag* and *Die Dans van die Reën* are contrapuntally and rhythmically complex, and may be characterized as 'structuralist' in a the sense that they are indebted to serial techniques and preoccupied with structure. Complex pitch and rhythmic relationships are developed, mostly using devices such as canon and fugue. In *Nag* almost all thematic material derives from the six-note motif with which the work begins (see Figures 21a, b, and c). It also ends with this motif, reinforcing its unifying significance. These figures also show the motif and two derivations from it as a fugue theme in which the motif is extended into three phrases and developed by a combination of inversion, retrograde, and expansion and contraction of intervals thus retaining its influence on the subject), and as the phrase that ends the work.

Figure 21a *Nag* bar 1 opening motif



Figure 21b *Nag* bar 20 fugue theme



Figure 21c *Nag* bar 91 closing motif



The high degree of pitch unity that goes along with this generative approach speaks to a strong sense of control. Yet *Nag* is described by the composer as a "tone-poem on the phantasmagorical aspects of night";[3] and somehow he does achieve a romantic effect by incorporating the (predominantly) contrapuntal texture (two fugues and a canon) within colourful, impressionistic writing that obscures the 'strictness' of the counterpoint, and the dependence on a single motif.

Die Dans van die Reën is similar to *Nag* in that all sections are derived from pitch material in the first section of the work (one extended bar). The piece takes its title from Eugene Marais's poem of the same name, itself based on a 'Bushman song' describing the coming of rain (Hofmeyr 2003). The seven sections correspond to sections in the poem, and the poem is provided in its entirety (with English translation) in the score, each section (as shown below) beginning with a line of verse.

I. *The Great Desert*
A melody (A) based on contracting and expanding rhythmic series in a sonically inert environment.

II. *"First over the hilltops she shyly* peeks…"
A fairly free section based on 4 interrelated motifs (B1-4) derived from A.

III. *"She tells the winds about the dance"*
Development of A against a free canonic augmentation.

IV. *"…her beads shake, and her copper bracelets gleam..."*
Development of B motifs with interlocking rhythmic series.

V. *"…with arms flung wide she spreads her grey kaross…"*
Perpetuum mobile and mirror canon based on B2.

VI. *The Marriage*
Double mirror canon on A with 4 superimposed rhythmic series.

VII. *The Dance*
Coda based on B1-4 (Hofmeyr 2003:[1]).

The contrapuntal element is stricter and more concise than in *Nag*, taking "the form of superimposed rhythmic series and pitch canons", as Hofmeyr puts it (Ibid). Formal

[3] From Hofmeyr's programme note to his piano works CD [n.d.].

procedures and programmatic elements work to create a colourful and evocative piece. The dissonance and controlling structuralism are essentially modernist, especially in the way they are integrated into pitch and rhythm.

These two early piano works may be seen as foundational in Hofmeyr's oeuvre for ways in which they construct an organic unity from limited material through complex organizational procedures. Both are created, however, without reference to the nineteenth-century styles on which many of Hofmeyr's later works are based. The structure of later works attempts to retain the same sense of control over material by drawing on complex contrapuntal procedures in developing it, but does so within the context of expanded tonality and more traditional keyboard forms. In the next two case studies, *Notturno* (2003) and *Variazioni sopra una mazurka di Chopin* (2002), I show how Hofmeyr engaged with tradition in a different and potentially more 'accessible' idiom than the one he uses in earlier works; an accessibility arguably in response the crisis of acceptability in the field. In this way his work reflects the 'reversion to tonality' and accessibility in Klatzow's music (see chapter three).

Nineteenth-century forms and procedures: *Notturno*

Notturno pays unashamed homage to the piano nocturnes of Chopin and Fauré. The formal structure and long melody-with-accompaniment passages reveal this lineage, although in general the writing is more contrapuntally complex than the romantic nocturne. It is characterized by linear, contrapuntal motion rather than by the kind of ornamental melodic passages over harmonic accompaniment that are a feature of Chopin and Fauré, and dense textures and dissonant chordal writing (in places) are reminiscent of Messiaen. *Notturno* is chromatic, making uses of extended tonality (but taking it further than Fauré) rather than triadic harmony, and seldom features 'conventional' consonances. The work is however in traditional rondo form and can be summarized thematically as A-B-A^1-B^1-A^2-coda. The main melodic material stated in the A and B sections with a brief bridge motif (x) are shown in Figures 22, 23, and 24.

Figure 22 *Notturno* bars 3-6 opening motif from A



Figure 23 *Notturno* bars 41-43 bridge material (motif) x



Figure 24 *Notturno* bars 14-17 opening motif from B



Sections A and B contrast in a number of ways. The melodic material in A is in the upper voice or 'soprano' with the accompaniment below, whereas in B it is in the middle register with the accompaniment in the upper register. The A section (bars 1-8) has the melody-accompaniment texture of a nocturne but is in an irregular 7/8 meter, while the B section (bars 14-32) is more linear, and in the course of the short bridge passage (x) that links the two sections, the meter changes to 3/8. This coincides with a modification of the accompaniment figure which links A to B. The meter soon changes to 2/8, however, and this lasts until A1 at bar 33, this time in a different tonal area. A1 is in 7/8 meter but now in a two-part contrapuntal texture with a great deal of ornamentation of the melody.

Elements of A, B, and x are integrated into accompaniment figurations as the piece evolves, and a three-part contrapuntal texture is established at B^1 (bar 42), necessitating the use of three staves (see Figure 25). Here a short chromatic motif derived from A is added in between B material in octaves. This builds up to a climax in bars 59-60 after which the final reprise of A^2 begins *fortissimo marcato*, this time with an ornamented canonic echo in the upper voice. The accompaniment derives from a motif in the melody and becomes a third voice in the texture. A short variant of x leads to the coda, which embraces elements of all three ideas in a unifying synthesis (see Figure 26).

Figure 25 *Notturno* bars 42-45 B^1 with appoggiatura motif derived from A in middle voice



Figure 26 *Notturno* bars 72-85 Coda – thematic material from B in upper register over accompaniment figures (x) derived from A



Remarkable in this and all of the post-1980s piano works by Hofmeyr is his attention to melody as a generator of musical material. The core material (A and B) is the basis for everything in the work. Although the treatment is different to that in Hofmeyr's early works, the later works retain the contrapuntal textures while motivic relations are now confined to pitch material (for the most part). The concern with 'unity' is most noticeable in the attempt to incorporate motifs into the accompaniment as a third voice. This third voice, as well as the abundance of ornamentation, tends to obscure the main melodic material and, perhaps with it, this material's interest for the listener. This approach to contrapuntal elaboration is an end in itself, I suggest, and is also characteristic of Hofmeyr's largest solo piano work to date, *Variazoni sopra una mazurka di Chopin*, which I discuss next.

The function of counterpoint: *Variazioni sopra una mazurka di Chopin*

In *Variazoni sopra una mazurka di Chopin* Hofmeyr appropriates Chopin's *Mazurka in F minor*, Op. 68 No. 4 as its main theme, stated at the beginning (bars 1-5; see Figure 27, of which the opening bars of the Chopin/Hofmeyr are given).

Figure 27 Theme from *Variazioni sopra una mazurka di Chopin*, bars 1-5 (*Chopin's Mazurka in F minor*, Op. 68 No. 4, bars 1-5)



Hofmeyr describes the impetus behind the work as follows: "The forward-looking nature of the [Chopin] suggested the possibility of a [new] work that would gradually evolve towards a contemporary interpretation of Chopin's idiom" (Hofmeyr 2002:[1]). Once again it is the organization of pitch motifs in a contrapuntal fabric that characterizes the music, and it is these features to which Hofmeyr draws our attention in his concise formal outline in the score. It is typical of the kind of description – mapping the structure of the piece for the listener/performer and therefore attempting to determine (insofar as the composer has any control) how it should be heard/played – that Hofmeyr provides for all his works:

> The Mazurka is in the traditional ABA form, and the variations are inserted as AB segments before the return of the original A section. The first three variations take the form of palimpsests, "overwriting" the original with melodic material derived from it, or, in the case of the third with a canonic countermelody. The fourth variation is derived more freely from the original, and forms the first part of a ternary structure, the fifth (which harks back to the first) acting as a middle section, and the sixth as varied reprise. The climactic seventh variation contains references to

> several of the earlier variations. It breaks off on a pungent dissonance before the return of the first section of the Mazurka (Hofmeyr 2002:[1]).

What is interesting, and particularly relevant to the present essay, is the way in which this kind of 'composer's note' preconditions the performer and/or listener to approach the work in a particular way: as a structure with organically unifying elements.

Within the confines of the stylized mazurka, the original Chopin Mazurka achieves significant harmonic and especially chromatic innovation in its own terms and indeed the short, simple, even restricted structure is an appropriate vehicle. Hofmeyr's variations are based on what is already a complete work. The difficulties this presents him in projecting it into a 15-minute variation set are thus considerable. Given that it is pitch material and contrapuntal procedures that provide the main interest in the variations (unlike the original), and given Hofmeyr's intention to give a 'contemporary interpretation' of the Chopin, one must ask how successful the *Variazioni* are in realizing that intention. The harmonic aspect of the "forward-looking nature" of a work composed in 1849 has already been substantially realized in the harmonic extensions of Chopin's immediate successors, for example Liszt, Wagner, and Scriabin. Hofmeyr's understanding of 'contemporary' seems, from the variations, to embrace only early 20th-century idioms, for his material in this case seems to ignore post-1945 developments and thus not effectively contemporary with Hofmeyr. Some of the devices, such as the use of palimpsest, are inventive – see Figures 28 and 29, but the idiom as a whole begs the question of what 'contemporary' means; or at the very least, leaves the issue open to interpretation.

What I suggest Hofmeyr is doing here is working out new theoretical terrain on the original Mazurka in the manner of a theorist: trying to see how Chopin's melodic lines and harmonic implications can be turned to use as a contrapuntal *exercise*. Or perhaps the 'overwriting' (as he calls it) is inspired by the overwriting or quotation techniques of composers such as Berio and Schnittke in the 1970s and '80s, and this is what makes it contemporary, for Hofmeyr.

Figure 28 *Variazioni sopra una mazurka di Chopin* bars 79-83 palimpsest from Var. 2



Figure 29 *Variazioni sopra una mazurka di Chopin*, bars 118-122 palimpsest from Var. 3



Hofmeyr's oeuvre as a whole is characterized by such use of contrapuntal devices as I have demonstrated above, that at times makes the texture become overburdened. This leads to what one can see as an imbalance, between the structurally organicist aesthetic to which Hofmeyr aspires, and the texture: the latter seems to undermine the former. This is odd in a predominantly contrapuntal language, where texture is traditionally generated *by* the 'voices' and lines, not in competition with them. Traditionally, even in a modernist sense, as Theodor Adorno has noted when he criticizes composers for using counterpoint as a "prudent addition" or "recipe" rather than an integral part of a work's texture, the

> aim of counterpoint [is] not the felicitous and complementary addition of voices but rather the organization of music in such a fashion that it has by necessity need for each voice contained in it and that each voice, each note, precisely fulfils its function in the texture. This texture must be so conceived that the relationship among the voices dictates the course of the entire piece, and ultimately the form (2006:74).

The Chopin variations have numerous instances of textural density, most obviously in the palimpsest variations, where counterpoint may almost be seen as unnecessary – many notes having no real "function in the texture". Adorno was of course also invested in the modernist conception of organicism as an essential feature of composition, different to the concept of organic unity employed by Hofmeyr. The Chopin Mazurka is in any case quite decontextualized, appropriated as a musical object, and placed in a musical context that seeks to engage with it on its own terms. The *Variazioni* is something of an academic engagement ultimately, on the level of a tribute to music of an earlier era; there is no parody, or sense of distanciation or even quotation in it (to render it 'postmodern'), and it is even idiosyncratic in Hofmeyr's oeuvre.

The reconciliation of past and present has been one aspect of Hofmeyr's ongoing engagement with music. It has taken a different form in post-apartheid South Africa, leading increasingly to Hofmeyr's appropriation of certain perceived African elements in his work since his return from 'exile'. Again, the increase in African elements mirrors the same direction taken by Klatzow in the 1990s. How Hofmeyr reconciles these elements with the notion of organic integrity discussed above is the subject of the next section.

African elements: *Partita Africana*

The composition of suites, or works in some way commenting on the suite as genre, has some precedent amongst South African composers. One thinks of Arnold van Wyk's *Four Piano Pieces*, Stefans Grové's *Songs and Dances from Africa*, or Peter Klatzow's *From the Poets*; the latter two also drawing their inspiration from African elements. Klatzow and Hofmeyr draw on the visual arts and poetry for inspiration, and represent poetry in music descriptively (*Die Dans van die Reën*, for example). Many of Hofmeyr's works have descriptive titles, and the more recent ones such as *Luamerava* (2000) and *Luanaledi* (2001) reveal a new interest in African folktales.

There are a number of instrumental works with African titles or described in Hofmeyr's programme notes as having African elements. These include *Marimba* for flute (2000), *Luamerava* for violin, *Luanaledi* for recorder, the four work suite *Partita Africana* for piano (2006) and the recent *Variazioni sopra una ninnananna Africana* for violin (2007).[4] In the orchestral genre there is also *Iingoma* (1998) and *Sinfonia Africana* (2004), a large-scale orchestral work based on Afrikaans poetry. *Sinfonia Africana* ignited a heated debate in the Western Cape, not around its African elements interestingly enough, but with regard to Hofmeyr's use of romantic music and 1930s Afrikaans poetry to represent post-apartheid Afrikaner national identity.[5]

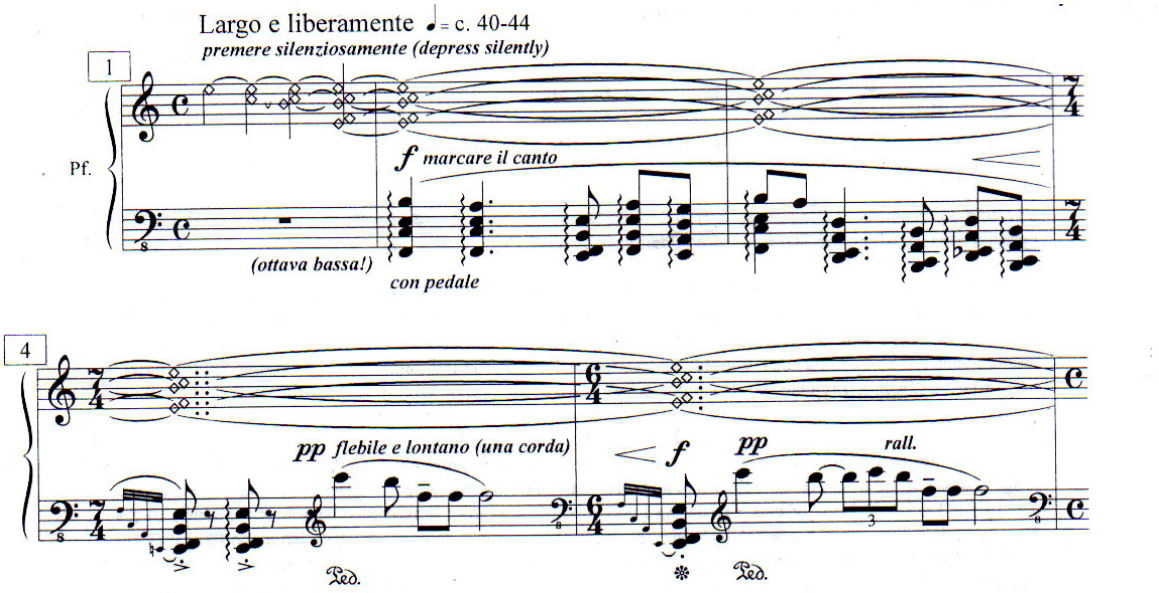
The use of African elements in South African art music has nonetheless become a standard response to the post-apartheid social milieu; indeed it characterised it even in the transition period of the late 1980s to '90s as I have remarked in the earlier chapters of this dissertation (see *SAMUS* 1983-2005, SAMRO's catalogues, and Lucia 2005b:94-95). Whereas during the apartheid era such cross-cultural fusions were regarded as subversive, or 'cultural banditry', today they are the norm, seen in the 1990s as affirmations of the ideology of 'the rainbow nation' or in the 2000s of 'the African renaissance'. As I argued in chapters one and three particularly, this has been due to a shift in the field from a predominantly autonomous mode of production to a heteronomous one.

Partita Africana for solo piano consists of four quite separable pieces: *Preludio*, *Umsindo*, *Hartbreekrivier*, and *Kalunga*. The work was completed in 2006, its constituent pieces written in reverse order, because the last piece, *Kalunga*, originated as a commission from the South African Music Rights Organization for the Unisa-Transnet International Piano Competition of 2000. The 'Baroque'-inspired first movement, *Preludio*, is not used in the fairly traditional manner Hofmeyr employed in two previous partitas, for clarinet and viola respectively. Here, he offers an 'African' interpretation of the suite. In the *Preludio*, a prelude and fugue (rarely of course found *in* a Baroque prelude) makes use of "elements that are commonly found in African music, such as the

[4] The titles reflect both Hofmeyr's Italian sojourn (1981-1992) and his South African homeland.
[5] A long public debate raged in the Cape press following Stephanus Muller's review of *Sinfonia Africana* in *Die Burger*, culminating in an open debate between the two at the University of Stellenbosch.

pentatonic scale and modal inflections" (Hofmeyr 2006 [1]) (see Figure 30, from the beginning of the piece). Once again Hofmeyr turns to contrapuntal forms, even when the material is derived from an (apparently) African notion of scale or mode. The result is a modal counterpoint, but one that can only arbitrarily be attached to Africa. The pentatonicism avoided by Volans (in his *She Who Sleeps with a Small Blanket* – see chapter 2), is here reinforced and underscores the West/Africa binary or reduction of African music to a 'set of characteristics', as Agawu puts it.

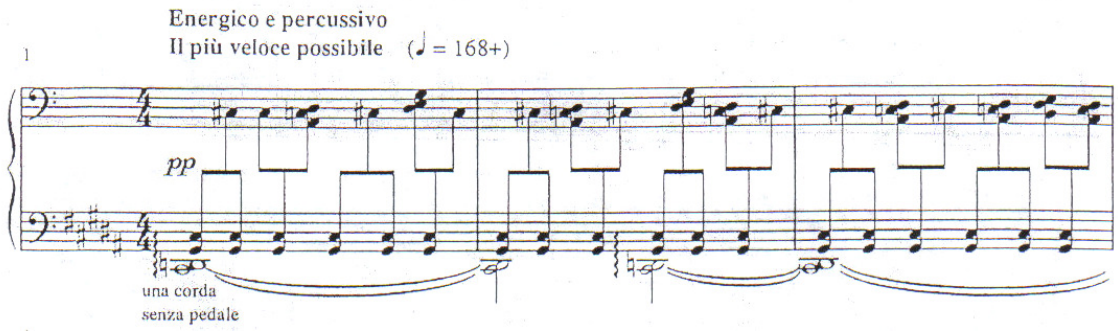
Figure 30 *Preludio* from *Partita Africana* bars 1-6



Kalunga was written partly to satisfy the SAMRO 'African element' component of their commissions, the controversial element required by this powerful player in the '2nd field of power' in Bourdieu's terms, that both Volans and Klatzow have criticized (see chapter 2). It was the 'South African' work at the international competition (see above) and Hofmeyr may therefore in any case have felt the African 'imperative' quite strongly. It is not so much *motive*, here, then, but how he handles that imperative, that is important. The music evokes a rather sinister picture of the underworld (according to the programme note) in its incessant *moto-perpetuo* in the lower register. This is complimented by virtuosic toccata passages which, whilst seemingly rhapsodic in effect, are still

nevertheless unified by melodic cells. Sectional divisions are distinct and contrasting and an accent on the interval of a semitone is pervasive (see Figure 31). The African element here according to Hofmeyr is the fact that "alternating hands are employed in much the same way as African drumming" (Ibid). The generalization 'African drumming' is again a questionable description of the diversity of musical practices in Africa (many of whose cultures do not have drums – drumming is certainly not one of the most characteristic aspects of 'traditional' music in South Africa for example), and is similar to the simplistic notions of Africa present in the early ethnomusicological accounts critiqued by Agawu (see his chapters on *The Invention of African Rhythm* and *Contesting Difference* (2003). The example below shows the kind of alternating that Hofmeyr employs. In *Kalunga* this is toccata-like and related to earlier Western twentieth-century music rather than related to the kinds of interlocking (accompanied by asymmetrical patterning) employed by Volans in *Cicada* (see chapter two).

Figure 31 *Kalunga*, bars 1-3 Beginning of the first section (in which Hofmeyr simulates African drumming techniques)



The use of alternating hands to evoke drumming is just one of a number of African elements Hofmeyr notes in the introduction to the *Partita Africana* score. He describes what he means by "elements commonly founding African music" as follows: "pentatonic scale and modal inflections"; "repetitive melodic figures"; "irregular meter, built from groups of two and three quavers", "the use as harmonic basis of two alternating notes a wholetone apart [as] is typical of much of the music of the Xhosas and the Zulus"; "African folksong"; "the rapid use of compound meter, punctuated by irregular cross-

rhythms [like] many African dances"; "alternating hands in much the same way that they would be in drumming" (Hofmeyr 2006:[1]).

The danger with such a list is that it falls into the same bracket as the orientalist idiomatic devices, procedures, or gestures listed by Derek Scott (see chapter three); devices that have little or no relation to the culture they claim to be used to represent. In chapter three I described how Klatzow used them (in his *Arab Priest*) to invoke a Western discourse of representation in which it was impossible to discern the practices of any one particular musical culture. Despite the similarly generalized African elements that Hofmeyr employs, he claims that these are specific to the "Zulus" or the "Xhosas". These essentializing statements stake a claim to knowledge about a particular group and in so doing engage in a discourse of control and domination. In the South African context they are part of the new paradigm for cross-cultural composition: Hofmeyr is claiming these elements as 'authentic', and his music as 'authentically African'.

He thus goes even further than Klatzow in self-consciously attributing these 'characteristics' to particular cultures so as to gain the 'credibility' – as Stephanus Muller puts it (see chapter three) – needed to succeed in the post-apartheid field. These kinds of representations accrue the most symbolic capital in the 'Africanist' economy. This decontextualization of African elements is not mediated by an aesthetic appreciation (as it was in Volans's 'African Paraphrases'). Instead these 'elements' are subsumed into a Western frame.

Kalunga (and works of its kind) continue to be popular in the South African art music community, partly because of these very African elements. Given the problems associated with these kinds of representations, one must ask the question: what is it that makes these elements *sound* African? Is it the prefatory programme notes, or perhaps the denotative quality of the titles? In this respect, Stephanus Muller has made an interesting observation in his consideration of Stefans Grové's 'Africa' series:

> Grové knows, and here I am following [Roland] Barthes closely, that the Name has an absolute and sufficient power of evocation; that if a work is called *Afrika Hymnus*, for example, we need

> not look for 'Africa' anywhere except, precisely, in the Name. To write Boesmanliedere is to hear Bushmen. Ignore the title (language) and the composition, it would seem, escapes (Muller 2001:143).

It is also a good way of escaping the issue. Perhaps here, too, by simply naming this an 'African partita' and giving some of the movements African titles, the evocation itself is enough? The African elements described above are largely imperceptible in the music without the assistance of the titles and programme notes. And by the same token many of the musical gestures occur in twentieth century Hungarian, Russian, or South American music. Yet Hofmeyr is very clear about his incorporation of African elements. In an interview with me in 2005 he put it like this:

> I see myself simply as a composer who writes in the tradition that has been the tradition of Western Classical music for a very long time, which is also the tradition of appropriating, as in all the Nationalist movements of the nineteenth century for example, and I suppose I have done plenty of that kind of appropriation – also of African elements – but as in that tradition I tried to integrate them as fully as I can into my own language and into my own way of making music. I don't try to produce a pseudo-African piece. I don't try to produce a piece which people could mistake for African music. I incorporate it because, either it's something that I like to incorporate, or because I feel it adds something to the symbolic values in the piece. (Author's interview, 26 August 2005)

This explanation is quite confused: the African elements are appropriated and then integrated so as not to be mistaken for African elements, simply because he 'likes to' do this as a symbolic gesture. But symbolic of what, and for whom? On neither level is this explanation entirely consistent with other kinds of stylistic integration central to his style, where appropriation (of the fugue, or Chopin for example) are also not 'pseudo' but absorbed into Hofmeyr's 'own way of making music'. It does seem however a perhaps too-convenient way of side-stepping the issue: not so much of cultural appropriation as representation. How does Hofmeyr *represent* African music? In my view Hofmeyr homogenizes the diversity of 'African music' by simplifying it to pentatonic elements and "modal inflections" much as in the *Preludio* (see Figure 30), with the only real

guarantee that either movement sounds African (rather than central European, for example), is that 'to write *Partita Africana* is to hear Africa'.

What are the consequences of representing African music in this way – naively, as if in a vacuum? As is the case with all three composers discussed in this dissertation (although perhaps less so for Volans given his more abstract use of Africa in recent works), surely in South Africa in the early 2000s, it is no longer possible to argue that *any* elements may be appropriated by composers and used *however they like*, and without ramifications or the possibility of consequences, including critical consequences? The representation of others in a reductionary way has already been noted as part of a discourse that seeks to control and have power over 'others'. Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh develop this idea when they note how modernist and postmodernist composers draw upon or make reference to other musics, not in a sense producing that music but drawing upon it in order to enrich their own compositional frame.

> These composers are transforming that music through incorporation into their own aesthetic: appropriating and re-presenting it. Crucially, in doing so, they intend not only to evoke that other music, but to create a distance from it and transcend it. This raises an issue …whether the structure of representation of the other constructs an unequal relation between aesthetic subject and object; that is, the question of the extent to which this relation of musical representation must inevitably involve the attempt aesthetically and discursively to subsume and control the other (Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000:16).

Hofmeyr is doing much in the same thing. The manner in which he assimilates African elements into his compositional aesthetic involves the extraction of formalized 'traditional' procedures or generic familiar-sounding elements, either from secondary texts which seek to theorize African music in the same way as Western music, or, perhaps, from his own experience of mbira and other ensembles. This is done seamlessly to achieve the same kind of formal integration discussed in works such as *Notturno*. Organic unity is retained whatever the material or formal procedures may be, and in the case of *Partitia Africana*, as discussed above, this raises a series of issues around the ethics of representation.

Conclusion

I began this chapter by pointing out that for most postmodern music and thought, organic unity is no longer assumed *a priori* as an index of value – as it is for both modernists and antimodernists. In relation to contemporary music that "exalts surface and flouts depth" (Fink 1999) Hofmeyr's music can be seen, therefore, as somewhat conservative – indebted to the practice of composers whose interests and values remain those of the common practice period. Grant Olwage has even gone so far as to put Hofmeyr's work "within the broad category of what is called neo-romanticism" and calling the Concertos for flute and piano "reactionary works" (2002/3:26). Although there were features of modernist practices in his early work (structuralism, dissonance, and serial procedures, for example) it is his engagement with the more distant past that characterizes his post-1990 music as being within a tradition of thought indebted to pre-1945 developments. This is reflected in his own statement that "[a]s a musician the artifacts that have impressed me most have been the ones that make their own arguments in a very coherent and thought out way and where there's a kind of *organic unity* between what the composer is trying to say and how he is saying it" (2005; my emphasis).

Hofmeyr also says that "the allegiance to modernism is in itself a problem, anywhere in the world, and always has been. I suppose in a sense music is in a phase of recovery. We are trying to pick up the threads that were lopped off rather savagely by modernism" (author's interview 25 January 2007). These comments reflect a certain resistance to music and critique that challenges this notion of organic unity, and also convey his intention to construct organic unity in a conscious, deliberate way regardless of the material.

The construction of organic unity through this organizational complexity almost constitutes a fetish, I suggest. The rigorous methods of achieving it are apparent in all of his solo piano works and in his programme notes too. There is an element of predictability in this method of composition, and it results in a sense of 'sameness' (Olwage alludes to this when he notes the "absence of any personal voice", the absence

of something that says, "*Hendrik Hofmeyr*, the South African composer of contemporary music" (2002/3:26). The solo piano works yield willingly to certain kinds of structuralist analyses, but this does not necessarily ensure their artistic value, nor does it protect them from the kinds of critique levelled either by a musicologist such as Carl Dahlhaus, when he says that "for greatness to be achieved it is not enough that a work combines a wealth of musical forms and characters with density of manifest or latent motivic relationships" (1984:89); or, by a contemporary analyst such as Arnold Whittall when he says that "the act, and art, of composition is not synonymous with the selection and activation of formal templates" (2001:92)**.**