

## IN SEARCH FOR AN ANSWER

During the early 1970s I was a student of musicology at the Stockholm University, Sweden, and at the same time I studied the piano. One of the courses given was an analytical seminar about the works from the 60s by György Ligeti. The course took place shortly after the flourishing avant garde period of the sixties, when Ligeti and Lutoslawsky were invited by the Academy of Music in Stockholm to teach composition there. The Swedish musical climate at this time was characterised by an extreme richness of ideas and possibilities for modern music on one hand, and on the other by the total rejection of anything that seemed traditional. The term tonality was almost a swear word to the composers.

Being a piano student and an admirer of Mozart from my early childhood, I was not ready to cut off my roots in the Bach fugues, the classical sonatas etc., in order to write only cluster music. I wanted to find a synthesis between two musical worlds that seemed impossible to unify at the time. It seemed to me, that I needed systematic studies of harmony and counterpoint, beginning with basics and up to modern times, in order to find a common denominator between, for instance, the B minor Mass by J.S. Bach and the Requiem by Ligeti. I could not find this kind of instruction in Stockholm (neither at the university nor at the academy) and I therefore decided to continue my studies elsewhere. The choice fell upon Israel (despite its relative remoteness from Western music centres) since I realised that I could live here not only as a musician but also as a Jewish individual. At the Rubin Academy of Music in Tel Aviv I received, at last, the musical skeleton and "legs" that I had missed so much in Sweden. After some time I began to feel that I was able to follow my own, independent ways of composing, rather than accepting the ready-made solutions and using the sometimes superficial imitations of other composers.

My first orchestral score, *PIECE FOR ORCHESTRA* 1983, still relied heavily on my memories from Sweden and studies of the Ligeti scores, but with the passage of years my music became more transparent and less static. In *CONCERTO* for chamber orchestra (1984) I juxtaposed relatively simple textures with other, clusterlike "fields", still using all twelve tones as equals, divided into two groups (the work was recorded by the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra in 1986). I now began to look for answers to questions that I had been asking myself for years about the common denominator between the micropolyphony used by Ligeti in his cluster works and the actual "macro"-counterpoint in older music, or even in 20th century compositions by Bartok, Stravinsky and others. The result of my searchings turned out to be two relatively simple principles — they were simple once I found them, but I had to go a long way in order to reach these ideas.

The first of them concerns density and can be illustrated by the following theoretical experiment: Imagine a fugue exposition from "The Well Tempered Clavier" by Bach, (let us say No. 12 in F minor from the first book, where the dux and comes together include all twelve tones). Now add not only four entrances of the subject, but extend it to twelve independent contrapuntal parts, all entering with the dux or comes and moving in the total ambitus of three octaves. (In order to perform this experiment three keyboard instruments would be needed.) Even if all rules of correct Bach-style voice leading would be observed, the impression for the listener would approach a cluster — since the individual parts would be less and less distinguishable as their number increases. If the number of parts is gradually reduced until, in the end, we remain with four parts, the listener will perceive a Bach-style texture gradually emerging out of the contrapuntal chaos. This experiment shows us, that it is possible to move between vastly different styles (from Baroque to modern times) keeping the unity of the material, simply by adding more of it. The increased quantity led to a change of quality, only by adding more parts. Or in the opposite direction: It is possible to retain structural unity between very simple musical textures and very complex orchestral clouds, by building both textures out of the same material and making the transitions gradual by adding more and more of the same. One oboe solo in pianissimo can include all the musical information needed for a furious tutti "storm" where the dynamics, orchestration and other parameters are immensely expanded.

My second principle concerns pitch organisation. I asked myself if a common unifying rule was to be found for all musical styles, that I know. The answer to this question was that in all styles except serialism and chromatic clusters, some pitches are more important than others; i.e. there is always a hierarchic structure present (with the exceptions mentioned) in folk music as well as art music, in modal as well as tonal styles. The choice of mode, scale or intervallic structures is usually the most important indicator of style. I can build a simple "folk-like" melody on a pentatonic scale or mode, then expanding the same intervallic structure to the whole orchestra receive the same harmonic and melodic "colour" as in the initial pentatonic motif. Or, if I want a style close to contemporary free atonality, I can choose some pitches consisting of seconds, sevenths and tritones which will give my work a dissonant, "modernistic" quality. The choice of pitches regards, of course, not only melody but all other

aspects as well (harmony, polyphony) and I therefore refer to this idea of mine as a modal technique, where the pitches or the intervallic structures chosen are decisive for the whole composition.

The two principles of density and modality have governed my composition of CYCLES (1986) and my CONCERTO for two pianos and orchestra (1988). With these two works I felt that I had closed a circle, by answering questions that arose in my mind some fifteen years earlier in Sweden. The CONCERTO consists of a synthesis between classicism and modernism, using dense orchestral textures interchanging with transparent sections and applying the material to three movement forms, reminiscent of the classical concerto.

Since 1988 I have been concentrating on music for chamber ensembles and solo performers. The work with small ensembles has enabled me to pay attention to problems of orchestration and instrumentation in detail and to work in close contact with performing musicians.

Time has passed, and in the pluralistic musical scene of today, neoromantic trends exist side by side with sophisticated continuations of Boulez achievements and various other styles. Tonality has returned to the musical vocabulary, and the composer has all existing styles available, as well as the option to build his own language. It now appears to be more important than ever to have an open mind and independent views, instead of merely imitating this or that group. My years of study and my search for a synthesis have borne fruit in the end. Even if the path was long and difficult it proved relevant for evolving a rich contemporary musical language.

56  
260

Adagio (♩=60)  
subito pp dolcissimo

Timp.  
Vln. I  
Vln. II  
Vla.  
Vcl.  
D.B.