Ralph Shapey and the Search for a New Concept of Musical Continuity, 1939-66

Barry Wiener

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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
ABSTRACT

RALPH SHAPEY AND THE SEARCH FOR A NEW CONCEPT OF MUSICAL CONTINUITY, 1939-66

by

Barry Wiener

Adviser: Sylvia R. Kahan

This dissertation creates a narrative for the stylistic development of the American composer, Ralph Shapey (1921-2002), during the first half of his career. Shapey’s music represents a fusion of Schoenbergian metamorphic process and Varésian stasis, methods for the creation of musical continuity that are usually considered incompatible. I show how Shapey formulated his compositional techniques, influenced by his teacher, Stefan Wolpe (1902-72), and his friend, Edgard Varèse (1883-1965).

Shapey’s interest in the music of Schoenberg was mediated through the prism of Wolpe’s musical ideas. Wolpe used unordered pitch-class sets to present the aggregate in his music, and avoided Schoenberg’s neo-classic and neo-baroque forms in favor of more fluid continuity procedures. Shapey developed an interest in the use of block forms through his study of the music of Béla Bartók, Olivier Messiaen and Edgard Varèse. He began to employ techniques derived from Varèse’s music during the mid-1950s, including the use of static constructions and the exploitation of a wide musical space. At the same time, he continued to use the procedures of pitch organization that he had learned from Wolpe. During the early 1960s, Shapey synthesized the opposing musical tendencies represented by Wolpe’s dynamic narrative processes and Varèse’s use of stasis, developing continuity strategies similar to Stravinsky’s use of varied repetition, as discussed by Gretchen Horlacher in Building Blocks: Repetition and Continuity in
the Music of Stravinsky (2011). The study of Shapey’s music demonstrates that the music of the Second Viennese School was only one of several major influences on young composers in Europe and America in the years after World War II. It also serves an illustration of Joseph N. Straus’s thesis that “serialism” is a term that has been construed in widely different ways by American composers.

Chapter 1 outlines Wolpe’s compositional pedagogy, and shows how Shapey applied his teacher’s concepts in his student works. Chapter 2 explores Shapey’s vacillation during the early 1950s between traditional methods of motivic development and the creation of sound blocks. Chapter 3 addresses Shapey’s abandonment of the concept of metamorphic process in favor of stasis during the years 1954-58. Chapter 4 covers Shapey’s systematization of his new compositional techniques in the years 1959-61, and his discussion of his ideas in interviews and program notes. Chapters 5 and 6 examine Shapey’s synthesis of metamorphic process and stasis during the early 1960s. Chapter 7 presents a detailed analysis of movement IV of Shapey’s Incantations for Soprano and Ten Instruments (1961), illustrating Shapey’s use of the technique of varied repetition as a continuity device. The dissertation concludes with a comparison of Shapey’s compositional pedagogy and that of Stefan Wolpe, showing similarities in their discussion of pitch, rhythm, musical space and counterpoint.
PREFACE

I began my research into the music and career of Ralph Shapey in 2005, at the suggestion of his pupil, Ursula Mamlok. After I had studied Mamlok's music for several years, I realized that my lack of detailed knowledge of the New York musical avant-garde of the early 1960s made it difficult for me to trace the origins of her style and compositional techniques. In the summer of 2005, I made the first of several trips to Chicago to examine the Shapey Papers, held by the Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library. The one hundred and eighty-four boxes of the Shapey Papers encompass materials from his entire career, including all of his sketches and manuscripts, his collection of scores (including annotated conducting scores) and recordings, his correspondence, and documents related to his teaching career and his personal life. The Shapey materials at the Special Collections Research Center also include a second, separate collection, the records of the Contemporary Chamber Players of the University of Chicago (known as the CCP). The forty-seven boxes of the records of the CCP include correspondence between Shapey and many other composers, as well as recordings of most of the concerts presented by the ensemble at the University between December 1966 and 1996. My research on Shapey’s music and career led both to my co-editorship of the Ralph Shapey special issue of Contemporary Music Review, Contemporary Music Review 27, nos. 4/5 (August/October 2008), and to the present, extended study of Shapey’s development as a composer.

A project of this scope could not have been undertaken without the extensive assistance of many people. I first wish to thank my dissertation adviser, Sylvia Kahan, and the members of my dissertation committee for shepherding me through the final stages of the dissertation process. I also wish to acknowledge Joseph N. Straus, who worked with me at the
I would like to thank Theodore Presser Co., particularly Judith Ilika, Director of Performance Promotion, for the loan of scores and recordings. Thanks also to the staff of the library of The Graduate Center of the City University of New York for obtaining many scores by both Ralph Shapey and Stefan Wolpe through Interlibrary Loan. I am grateful to the Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library, for permission to reproduce documents and score excerpts from the Shapey Papers and from the records of the University of Chicago Contemporary Chamber Players.

I wish to thank those musicians who graciously agreed to be interviewed in conjunction with this project: Henry Weinberg, William Allaudin Mathieu, Susan Kagan, Chou Wen-chung and Peter Westergaard. Thanks also to Stanley Drucker for speaking to me about *Challenge: The Family of Man*. I am grateful to Austin Clarkson for his detailed responses to my wide-ranging queries, and for providing me with several important recent publications about Stefan Wolpe. In October 2007, Austin accompanied me on a trip to Stony Brook University to examine the Dr. Isaac Nemiroff Collection, held by the University Archives, Stony Brook University Libraries, which includes many important documents about Wolpe’s pedagogy. Austin kindly explicated Wolpe’s terminology and his graphic symbolism about musical time and space, permitting me to create a portrait of Wolpe as an influential teacher. Many thanks to Kristen J. Nyitray and F. Jason Torre of the University Archives, Stony Brook University Libraries, for providing me with copies of the Nemiroff documents. Andrew Rudin gave me information about Shapey’s work at the University of Pennsylvania in a Facebook exchange. Similarly, Vera Klement graciously answered my questions in an email exchange. I owe special thanks to Carol K. Baron, who provided me with a copy of the marathon interview that she conducted with Shapey in July 1975.
about his relationship with Wolpe, and permitted me to edit the text of the almost two-hundred-page transcription of the interview. In addition, Carol’s donation of the Wolpe/Baron Archive to the Performing Arts Research Collections, New York Public Library, in December 2008, made available additional documents related to Wolpe’s pedagogy. Thanks to the New York Public Library for permission to reproduce those documents.

Thanks to Olivia Mattis for providing me with information concerning the relationship of Shapey with Edgard Varèse, and for giving permission to Oral History American Music, Yale University, to make her interview of Shapey available to me. Thanks to OHAM for providing me with the Mattis interview and an additional interview of Shapey by Deborah Strauss.

Thanks also to Arlene Yu, Specialist, Archive of the Recorded Moving Image, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, who helped me to identify the recording of music by Shapey employed by choreographer Pearl Lang for her dance piece, *Dichotomy (Broken Dialogues)* (1962).

I am very grateful to the staff of the Special Collections Research Center of the University of Chicago Library for their extensive assistance at all stages of this project. I would like to acknowledge the assistance of the following members of the staff of the Special Collections Research Center: Daniel Meyer, Associate Director and University Archivist; Eileen Ielmini, Head Processing Archivist; Julia Gardner, Reference/Instruction Librarian; David Pavelich, Reference/Instruction Librarian; Christine Colburn, Reader Services Manager; Barbara Gilbert, Reading Room Coordinator; Allyson Stark, Administrative & Reader Services Assistant; and Judith Dartt, Digital Specialist.

4/5 (August-October 2008): 451-76. I am grateful to Taylor & Francis for permission to reprint this material.

In addition, I would like to thank the following individuals, institutions and publishers for permission to reproduce music and documents in this study: Elsa Charlston Shapey, for excerpts from Ralph Shapey’s *A Dream Within a Dream* for Soprano and Piano, Piano Sonata No. 1, *Fantasy* for Orchestra, Symphony No. 1 and *Five* for Violin and Piano; Catherine Nemiroff, for excerpts from the Isaac Nemiroff Papers, housed at Stony Brook University Library; Ursula Mamlok, for excerpts from the Ursula Mamlok Papers; The New York Public Library, for excerpts from lesson notes of Milton M. Kraus and the transcript of Carol K. Baron’s interview with Ralph Shapey, both part of the Wolpe/Baron Archive, Performing Arts Research Collections, New York Public Library; Oral History American Music, Yale University, for excerpts from the transcript of Vivian Perlis’s interview with Ralph Shapey; Taylor & Francis, for Fig. 3 in Andrew Mead’s article, “How to Be, What to Do: Character and Action in Ralph Shapey’s String Quartet No. 6,” *Contemporary Music Review* 27, nos. 4/5 (2008): 489-509; *Perspectives of New Music*, for “G’s Antecedents (and Some Consequences),” Ex. 4 in Christopher Hasty, “Broken Sequences: Fragmentation, Abundance, Beauty,” *Perspectives of New Music* 40, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 155-73; the New York Philharmonic, for a 1956 publicity photo of Dimitri Mitropoulos and Ralph Shapey; Carl Fischer, LLC on behalf of Theodore Presser Company and/or Merion Music Inc., for excerpts from Stefan Wolpe’s *Four Studies on Basic Rows*, from thirty-eight works by Ralph Shapey, and from Shapey’s pamphlet, *A Basic Course in Music Composition*; Peermusic Classical, for excerpts from Stefan Wolpe’s *Battle Piece* for Piano, Quartet for Trumpet, Tenor Saxophone, Percussion and Piano, and *Enactments* for Three Pianos; PFAU-Verlag, for music examples from Stefan Wolpe, *Das Ganze*
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Finally, I would like to thank Elsa Charlston Shapey for her advice and her interest in this project. I dedicate this study to her, to Ursula Mamlok, and to the memory of Ralph Shapey, a great musician.
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INTRODUCTION

At present a new situation seems to be taking shape in the field of musical composition. Many young and a few older composers are being driven by what appears to be an imperious need to find a new principle of musical structure. . . . Today—as befits an art whose formative dimension is time—the technique of continuity and contrast, of qualities and types of motion, of the formation and development of a musical idea or event, and in general the various kinds of cause and effect patterns that can be suggested in musical flow, occupy the attention of composers more than harmony or other matters, all of which now become simply details in a larger kind of concern.

Elliott Carter (1958)\(^1\)

Ralph Shapey (1921-2002) was one of the leading figures in American music for almost half a century, as a composer, as a conductor of contemporary music, and as a teacher. Shapey was a prolific composer, with a catalogue of over 170 works. He was considered one of the finest American conductors of new music in the 1950s and 1960s.\(^2\) Shapey’s music represents a synthesis of two seemingly incompatible schools of compositional thought: the music of the Second Viennese School, characterized by systematic pitch manipulation and by neoclassical and neo-baroque forms, and the music of Edgard Varèse, who emphasized the parameters of timbre and musical space (both pitch space and physical space) within structures noticeable for their use of a “minimum of ordinary dialectic.”\(^3\) Shapey’s deep interest in the music of Schoenberg was mediated through the prism of the musical ideas of his teacher, Stefan Wolpe, who rejected serialism and employed unordered pitch-class sets to present the aggregate in his music.\(^4\)

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4 Austin Clarkson, “‘The Fantasy Can Be Critically Examined’: Composition and Theory in the Thought of Stefan Wolpe,” in Music Theory and the Exploration of the Past, ed. David Bernstein
Wolpe’s compositional ideas evolved noticeably under the impact of the music of his friend Varèse during the 1940s and early 1950s. Wolpe never embraced Varèse’s strategy of building musical structures by contrasting pitch stasis and activity, however. His encounter with the music of Varèse led to a more dramatic use of musical space and to the use of more fragmented textures in works like *Enactments* (1953) and Symphony No. 1 (1956). The introduction of new musical concepts into his compositional vocabulary reinforced the central tenet of his musical thinking: the dramatic and dynamic unfolding of directed motion.

Shapey responded quite differently to the stimulus of Varèse’s music. In the late 1950s, he was deeply influenced by Varèse’s abandonment of traditional narrative strategies of compositional development, and wrote a series of works in which he tried to assimilate Varèse’s ideas. He was fascinated by Varèse’s use of stasis and of extreme registral and timbral contrasts. In his own works of this period, Shapey employed registral and timbral contrasts more dramatic than those used by Varèse, and tried to recreate some of the effects produced by Varese’s use of electronic sound in *Déserts* (1954). At the same time, he continued to utilize the procedures of pitch organization that he had learned from Wolpe. In the music that he wrote in the early 1960s, Shapey attempted to synthesize the opposing musical tendencies represented by Wolpe’s dynamic narrative processes and Varèse’s use of stasis. Shapey’s interest in Varèse’s music was not confined to the study of his scores. During this period, he frequently conducted Varèse’s

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music, repeatedly performing *Octandre, Intégrales* and *Déserts.*

Shapey’s music of the 1950s and 1960s illustrates the impact of Varèse on the post-World War II generation of composers. Many American and European composers of Shapey’s generation attempted a comparable synthesis of ideas derived from Schoenberg and Varèse. The study of Shapey’s music, as well as that of his like-minded contemporaries, demonstrates that the music of the Second Viennese School was only one of several major influences on young composers in Europe and America in the years after World War II.

This dissertation is the first to discuss Shapey’s compositional development during the first quarter-century of his career. In six chapters and an epilogue, I survey Shapey’s early studies with Wolpe, the evolution of his musical ideas, and his efforts to establish his professional reputation, which culminated in his appointment to the faculty of the University of Chicago in 1964. The first chapter deals with Shapey’s two periods of study with Wolpe, which were separated by a three-year interruption for military service during World War II. It outlines Wolpe’s compositional pedagogy, and explains how Shapey applied his teacher’s concepts in his student pieces. Chapter 2 explores Shapey’s vacillation during the early 1950s between traditional methods of motivic development and the creation of sound blocks, as well as his attempts to assimilate the influence of Bartók’s music. Shapey also worked assiduously to advance his career. His efforts culminated in his 1953-54 trip to Great Britain, France, Germany and Italy, sponsored by the Frank Huntington Beebe Fund.

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6 “My own opinion – which you already know – that your performance of my music has never even been approached before. Even non-musicians felt the difference. Thank you again for your intimate understanding of the heart of my music and for your precise, detailed, and exuberant execution.” Edgard Varèse, letter to Shapey, 4 April 1965. Shapey Papers, Box 4.

Chapter 3 addresses a major turning point in Shapey’s career, his decision, inspired by the music of Varèse, to abandon metamorphic processes of development in favor of static constructions. Shapey realized his new ideas about musical structure in works for large orchestra, emulating Varèse’s *Déserts* (1954). He also began to express his new philosophy of composition in private notes.

Chapter 4 examines the ramifications of Shapey’s change of musical direction. During the years, 1959-61, Shapey’s music became a didactic exposition of his compositional ideas, which he began to discuss in interviews and program notes. Shapey developed the concept of “graven images” that shift in space to create changing relationships. He employed this concept in a series of pieces, most notably, *Evocation I* for Violin, with Percussion and Piano (1959), the first of his works to be recorded.

Chapters 5 and 6 discuss Shapey’s synthesis of Wolpe’s dynamic narrative processes and Varèse’s use of stasis during the early 1960s. Chapter 5 also examines Shapey’s notes and handouts for his early 1960s Yale lecture on rhythm, which summarize Messiaen’s rhythmic concepts and document Shapey’s interest in Messiaen’s ideas. The final section of the chapter compares several of Shapey’s works from the 1950s and 1960s, showing gestural continuities as Shapey’s rhythms became progressively more fluid over the period of a decade. Chapter 6 covers the founding of the Contemporary Chamber Players of the University of Chicago and Shapey’s rise to national fame. It also describes how Shapey revisited some of his most characteristic compositional ideas, reframing them in works of larger scope than the pieces he had composed in the previous half-decade. With the Partita for Violin Solo (1965), Shapey, in a sense, came full circle, completing a musical journey that had begun with *Etchings* for Solo Violin (1945).
Chapter 7 presents a detailed analysis of movement IV of Shapey’s *Incantations* for Soprano and Ten Instruments (1961), illustrating Shapey’s use of varied repetition as a continuity device. The dissertation concludes with a comparison of Shapey’s compositional pedagogy and that of Stefan Wolpe, showing similarities in their discussion of pitch, rhythm, musical space and counterpoint.

**Shapey and the Busoni Legacy**

Stefan Wolpe, his friend, Edgard Varèse, and the conductor, Dimitri Mitropoulos, were the three musicians most important to Shapey at the outset of his career. All three men had been members of the circle of the eminent pianist and composer, Ferruccio Busoni (1866-1924), during the early 1920s, either as students or protégés.

Busoni was a revered figure among avant-gardists for his pamphlet, *Sketch of a New Aesthetic of Music*, in which he discussed electronic music and microtones. He also created a catalogue of 113 modal scales, later expanded to 145. Wolpe, Varèse and Mitropoulos were not the only members of the post-World War I Busoni circle who lived in New York during the 1940s and 50s. Several other associates of the master lived in New York, including composer Kurt Weill (1900-50), composer-pianist Eduard Steuermann (1892-1964), composer and

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Columbia professor Otto Luening (1900-96) and violinist Joseph Szigeti (1892-1973). There were many professional interrelationships among these artists. To name just a few: Edgard Varèse lectured at Columbia University in 1948. Mitropoulos performed Busoni’s Violin Concerto with Szigeti and the New York Philharmonic in 1941. He also gave a concert performance of Busoni’s opera, *Arlecchino* (1914-16), with the Philharmonic in 1951, the same year in which he conducted the world premiere of Suite No. 1 from Wolpe’s ballet score, *The Man from Midian* (1942), with the Philharmonic. Steuermann and Mitropoulos participated together in several concerts of the New York section of the International Society of Contemporary Music (hereafter, ISCM) during the 1940s.

Wolpe taught his students to admire Schoenberg’s music, but to preserve a critical distance with regard to Schoenberg’s compositional techniques, as Busoni had urged. Wolpe abandoned the major-minor dichotomy and employed a variety of scale constructions, recalling Busoni’s catalogue of 113 scales. Both Wolpe and Varèse emulated Busoni’s artistic independence from dominant compositional trends, and were treated as outliers in the musical world.

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12 New York Philharmonic, Dimitri Mitropoulos, cond., 11, 12 and 14 October 1951.
14 Mitropoulos conducted works by Krenek and Piston, together with Stravinsky’s *L’Histoire du soldat*, on 18 and 19 May 1946, at concerts presented by the International Society of Contemporary Music (hereafter, ISCM) in New York. He conducted Berg’s Chamber Concerto and repeated Stravinsky’s *L’Histoire du soldat* at an ISCM concert on 21 May 1948. On 23 November 1949, he conducted Schoenberg’s *Serenade*, op. 24, and *Ode to Napoleon*, op. 41, at an ISCM concert.
community until the conclusion of their careers. Shapey similarly considered himself to be an artistically isolated figure, uncomfortable with academic serialists like Milton Babbitt, neoclassicists like Aaron Copland and composers of aleatory music like John Cage.

**Shapey as Man and Artist**

For the biographer, there do not seem to be any strong correlations between major events in Shapey’s private life and his stylistic evolution. Shapey’s vivid artistic inner life took place in a sphere isolated from his personal relationships. According to his second wife, abstract expressionist artist Vera Klement, “Shapey was an artist who neither asked for nor accepted advice, input, suggestions, critiques or any other discussion of his work. He worked alone.”

Shapey’s music was unaffected by the disintegration of his first marriage during the mid-1950s. Similarly, he wrote the Partita for Violin Solo (1965) immediately after the death of both his mother and his friend, Edgard Varèse, within a two-week period in the autumn of 1965. His mention of his mother’s death in a letter to his former pupil, Ursula Mamlok, is almost flippant. Conversely, Shapey was deeply affected by professional setbacks in 1954 and 1956. His development as a composer can be perceived as a progression from “crisis” to “crisis,” sparked by his emotional responses to his professional struggles. All of these crises produced shifts of artistic direction. Consequently, I have focused on Shapey’s inner world and his public career in this study. I have deliberately limited my discussion of Shapey’s private life, except in instances

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17 Vera Klement, email to Barry Wiener, 19 July 2006.
18 “What more can I say, other than I’ve [been] so very busy that I refused to write to anyone, even my mother, who I buried last Sunday.” Ralph Shapey, letter to Ursula Mamlok, 25 October 1965, Ursula Mamlok Papers. By permission of Ursula Mamlok.
for which this information can clarify the chronology of Shapey’s career and/or illuminate understanding of his music.

**Theoretical Models/Concepts**

Shapey’s development as a composer can be viewed as a series of conflicts between the concept of an “emancipated” discourse that combines and/or contrasts thematic and textural continuities and discontinuities and conventional academic solutions to the problem of the logical development of musical ideas. Shapey tried to symbolize the contrast between academic concepts of musical structure and freer, more intuitive approaches to the organization of musical ideas in the two movements of *Rituals for Orchestra* (1959). Shapey employed his own version of serialism in the first movement. In the second movement, the saxophone and piano soloists participate in a controlled improvisation. Shapey articulated his ideas in a commentary on the work, relating its musical structures to the religious and social structures of society. While the serial procedures of the first movement represent society’s pressure on the individual to conform to social norms, the controlled improvisation of the second movement symbolizes the individual’s desire to express his/her personality without restrictions. Shapey’s piece thus links his musical choices to protests against the social conformism of American life during the 1950s.

The question of continuity in twentieth-century music has received sustained attention from music theorists in recent years. Jonathan Bernard has discussed Varèse’s use of stasis within ordered progressions. He has also outlined the intellectual background of Elliott Carter’s

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Many scholars have studied Stravinsky’s continuity strategies, most recently Gretchen Horlacher, who has shown how Stravinsky subtly intertwines stasis and development. Christopher Hasty, Martin Brody and Dora Hanninen have examined Stefan Wolpe’s “special continuity;” a subject that Austin Clarkson has explicated in many essays. Jonathan Kramer and Jonathan Cross have both surveyed approaches to continuity by twentieth-century composers, with an emphasis on the music of Stravinsky.

Ralph Shapey’s use of stasis has aspects in common with techniques employed by both Varèse and Stravinsky. He gradually formulated his ideas about musical time and motion over the decade between 1950 and 1960. He articulated these concepts most eloquently during the early 1960s, as he was developing his mature style. In his descriptions of his music, Shapey repeatedly spoke of “images existing as a totality from their inception,” “permutations occurring only within each self-contained unit,” and “imposed discipline by ritualistic reiteration.”

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Shapey employs a variety of musical constructions that writers on other twentieth century composers have identified as examples of stasis. In his early works, Shapey sometimes interpolates repetitive figures within an otherwise traditional musical narrative. In his later works, he often repeats brief, clearly characterized ideas within changing configurations, analogous to celestial bodies orbiting within a solar system. Some of these ideas are fixed and unvarying, while others mutate continuously, reflecting conventional developmental procedures.

Since the term, “stasis,” has been used to describe a wide variety of musical phenomena by music theorists, I would like to survey some definitions of the term by scholars who have tried to elucidate its meaning.

In his study of the music of Varèse, Jonathan Bernard tries to differentiate different degrees of the suspension of temporal motion in music. At one extreme is simple repetition, which Bernard labels “frozen music.”27 He points out, however, that “[i]n practice, pitch stasis is hardly ever 100 percent pure.”28 Bernard also discusses “partial stasis”29 and “developing stasis”30 in the music of Varèse. He gives, as examples of “partial stasis,” passages “in which some but not all pitch elements are held in stasis; they demonstrate, however, that stasis under such conditions is subject to essentially the same constraints and is controlled by the same sort of rhythmic/durational principles that we have seen in more purely static situations.”31 In contrast, “developing stasis” lies at the opposite end of the spectrum from “frozen music.” It “would seem at first glance to be a contradiction in terms. But the classification is useful, for it includes situations in which elements introduced initially give rise to others . . . while at least part of the

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28 Ibid., 140.
29 Ibid., 152.
30 Ibid., 154.
31 Ibid., 152.
Jonathan Cross has critiqued Adorno’s discussion of Stravinsky’s use of repetition within a similar context: “There is a problem . . . with Adorno’s (and [Ernst] Bloch’s) understanding of repetition in Stravinsky. Adorno seems to suggest that Stravinsky’s repetitions are absolutely ‘primitive’ and unchanging, whereas there is nearly always a subtle change of context (which amounts to more than the mere ‘impression of progress’).”

Jonathan Kramer couches the question of stasis and musical motion in more global terms: “Can stasis in music really be perceived? . . . I am really concerned not with absolute stasis but with stasis relative to context, with sections that appear static because their degree of internal activity is considerably less than the degree of contrast between them.”

In section III of Shapey’s Ontogeny for Orchestra (mm. 52-93, not shown), music that develops through an ordered process can be perceived as “static” relative to the preceding and succeeding episodes, furnishing an illustration for Jonathan Kramer’s suggestion that stasis and motion are often matters determined by the listener’s perception. The conclusion of movement II of Shapey’s Oboe Quartet (1952) can also be perceived as “static” in this sense, due to the use of ostinati in three of the four voices. The pervasiveness of ostinati within the texture sets the passage apart from the preceding measures (see Ex. I.1).

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32 Ibid., 154.
33 Cross, 232.
Shapey occasionally creates what Bernard would describe as a state of “frozen music” in his compositions. In his works of the early 1950s, Shapey often uses this technique for brief passages that are designed to interrupt the musical narrative, such as mm. 22-5 of the *Sonate* for Cello and Piano (1953-54) (see Ex. I.2).
In his works of the 1960s, Shapey subtly alters the ordering of repetitive patterns in a manner related to the technique of varied repetition employed by Stravinsky in such compositions as *The Rite of Spring* (1913), *Symphony of Psalms* (1930) and *Symphony in Three Movements* (1945). At the same time, he also employs metamorphic processes in his manipulation of motives. Shapey’s combination of repetition and development is central to his mature musical language. Ramon Satyendra has pointed to Shapey’s music as notable for its reconciliation of “block form, as found in the music of Stravinsky, with moment-to-moment coherence, as found in the music of Schoenberg.”

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36 Ramon Satyendra, “Montage and Block Form in Ralph Shapey’s *Seven* for Two Pianos,”
his practice in terms related to his earlier music when he began to employ techniques closer to those of Stravinsky. For the purpose of this study, I define “stasis” in terms of the manner in which Shapey first used it: as insistent repetition that precludes narrative motion.

CHAPTER 1: BEGINNINGS, 1939-49

Studies with Wolpe (I): Apprenticeship, 1939-42

Ralph Shapey: [Wolpe] had a lot of students . . . But the fact is, he really was not a good teacher. In the early days, when he first came to America, he tried. When I first knew him. Because he had to make a new life for himself, so he sort of tried.¹

Elliott Carter: For when he [Wolpe] came here, he was put in the position of having to rationalize his method in order to teach to a certain extent. The same with Schoenberg. They both became rather systematic, partially perhaps to protect themselves from students.²

Ralph Shapey: I’ve always said Wolpe's my father in music and Schoenberg’s my grandfather . . . I say Schoenberg’s my grandfather, because many times I will use a row but not in a pedantic way.

Carol K. Baron: And that was true of Wolpe, too.

Shapey: And true of Wolpe . . . it’s a free kind of twelve-tone music, if you will.³

Stefan Wolpe and his wife, the Romanian pianist Irma Schoenberg Wolpe, left Jerusalem in November 1938 and arrived in America in December 1938. In the fall of 1939, the Wolpes began to teach part-time at the Queen Street Settlement Music School in Philadelphia. Among his first students was the 18-year-old Ralph Shapey. Shapey was a promising young violinist, a student of Emanuel Zetlin,⁴ and an aspiring conductor. As a teenager, Shapey played the violin in

³ Carol K. Baron, interview with Ralph Shapey, transcript, 147-8. Wolpe/Baron Archive.
⁴ A student of Carl Flesch, Zetlin taught at the Queen Street Settlement Music School from 1928-47. He was associate concertmaster of the Metropolitan Opera from 1944-47, when he became Professor of Violin at the University of Washington, Seattle. See Albert Mell, “Emanuel Zetlin, a Profile,” Journal of the Violin Society of America 3, no. 3 (Summer 1977): 96-99. One of Shapey’s earliest violin teachers was Boris Schwarz, later a distinguished musicologist. See The Ophicleide 1, no. 2, (January 1950), 1. The Ophicleide was the newsletter of the Contemporary Music School that Wolpe directed in New York from 1948-52. Thanks to Austin Clarkson for providing me with excerpts from this issue of The Ophicleide.
the National Youth Administration Symphony Orchestra of Philadelphia, otherwise known as the Philadelphia Youth Orchestra. In addition, he first became “youth conductor,” and later, assistant conductor, of the orchestra.\(^5\) Shapey conducted Beethoven’s Eighth Symphony and Tchaikovsky’s Fifth Symphony with the NYA Orchestra.\(^6\)

**Table 1.1 Ralph Shapey: Chronology, 1939-49**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Composition studies with Stefan Wolpe in Philadelphia</td>
<td>Fall 1939–Spring 1942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant conductor, Philadelphia N.Y.A. Orchestra</td>
<td>1940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonata in One Movement, violin and piano</td>
<td>Spring 1940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>A Dream within a Dream</em>, soprano and piano</td>
<td>1941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conducts Robin Hood Dell Orchestra</td>
<td>5 August 1942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military service</td>
<td>July 1942–May 1945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duo, Op. 20, violin and viola</td>
<td>May 1945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studies at Juilliard</td>
<td>Summer 1945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Etchings</em>, violin solo</td>
<td>July 1945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member, Busch Little Symphony</td>
<td>Fall 1945–Winter 1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composition studies with Wolpe in New York</td>
<td>Spring 1946–1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piano Sonata No. 1; String Quartet No. 1</td>
<td>1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prelude, piano (“for Schlo”)</td>
<td>December 1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piano Quintet; Violin Concerto fragment</td>
<td>1947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Fog I-III</em>, soprano and piano; String Quartet No. 2</td>
<td>1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Three Essays on Thomas Wolfe</em>, piano solo</td>
<td>1948–49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty, Contemporary Music School, New York</td>
<td>1948–50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^5\) Shapey was “appointed assistant conductor to Louis Vyner of [the] Philadelphia N.Y.A. Orchestra” in 1940. Ralph Shapey, Guggenheim Fellowship application for 1951, acknowledged 14 October 1950. Accomplishments No. 4, 1. By permission of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation.

\(^6\) When Shapey recounted these events many years later, he could not remember which Tchaikovsky symphony he had conducted, but suggested that it was the Fourth. The generally laudatory concert review in *The Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* (Tuesday, 9 April 1940) specifies that Shapey conducted Tchaikovsky’s *Fifth Symphony* along with Borodin’s *Polovetsian Dances*, Mussorgsky’s *A Night on Bare Mountain* and Rimsky-Korsakov’s *Dance of the Buffoons* from the opera, *The Snow Maiden*. See Ralph Shapey, “Remembrances of My Life in Music,” 5-7, 9. Ralph Shapey Papers, Box 136; J. L. B., “NYA Orchestra,” *The Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, 9 April 1940: 23; W. S., “NYA Orchestra,” *Philadelphia Evening Public Ledger*, 9 April 1940. Both reviews described Shapey as “talented” and “energetic.”
Shapey’s primary focus in his early studies was the violin. Many years later, he described his studies with Emanuel Zetlin:

A lesson with Zetlin was, well, like a recital. You came in, you had to perform a recital, practically. You started off with a Bach solo sonata. I’ll just give you an example of what I had to do for Zetlin. Alright. You came in, and you started off with a Bach solo sonata. That’s the first thing. Then you probably rip off a concerto. The Sibelius or the Brahms, or something of that sort. . . . Then, after that, you do one of the Wienawski etudes, or something. All from memory, by the way. . . . Finally, you’re exhausted; and then he would say, “Would you mind playing the . . . G minor scale in tenths?”

When he met Wolpe, Shapey had little experience as a composer. His earliest preserved composition is a short, tonal work, entitled *Inspiration*, written in 1939, presumably before he began his studies with Wolpe.

When Stefan Wolpe began to teach in America, he was writing in an eclectic style that included tonal, modal and atonal elements. His most important work of this period is the Sonata for Oboe and Piano (1937-38, 1941), which reflects his musical experiences during his stay in Palestine from 1934-38. In the Sonata, Wolpe elegantly integrated techniques derived from Schoenberg and Bartók with ideas derived from his exploration of the sounds and structures of

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7 Carol K. Baron, interview with Ralph Shapey, transcript, 90. Wolpe/Baron Archive.
Arabic music. While writing the piece, Wolpe specifically invoked Bartók’s use of techniques derived from folk music as his compositional model.⁹

As a student of Webern, Wolpe educated his students about atonal and serial music.¹⁰ His teaching made it possible for the young Shapey to grasp the significance of Schoenberg’s Violin Concerto, which received its premiere in 1940 by violinist Louis Krasner and the Philadelphia Orchestra, conducted by Leopold Stokowski. The performance of Schoenberg’s Concerto was a formative event in Shapey’s life. In a 1965 interview with Easley Blackwood, Shapey tried to convey the impact of this occasion on his development as a musician:

Blackwood: Were you familiar with other music of this sort at that time?

Shapey: I did not know too much about it. My first experience with Schoenberg, or all I can remember, is that my hair stood on end . . . I was enthralled, and I was completely taken by the magnificence of it— that music for the first time could speak on the level that I heard in my mind. That secret mind of a composer . . . I did not at that time know the whole organization behind it . . . I personally feel they [the intellectualisms] are irrelevant. I was attracted immediately on an emotional level.¹¹

When Shapey recalled his early studies with Wolpe in later years, he emphasized that he thought of himself at the time as a violinist and conductor. He considered his composition studies to be a useful exercise that would make him a better all-around musician.¹² This attitude may account for the paucity of sources in the Shapey Papers concerning Shapey’s early studies with

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¹⁰ “However, I guess in essence, with Wolpe, I became more knowledgeable of 12-tone music; although I refused to be bound by pedantic usage.” Ralph Shapey, letter to David Ewen, 27 May 1980. Shapey Papers, Box 2.


¹² “My composition studies with Wolpe were up to that moment for me, to be a ‘better conductor, I must know something about composing.’ In other words, it was more or less a side issue.” Shapey, “Remembrances of My Life in Music,” 8.
Wolpe. Several of Wolpe’s lectures from the early 1940s have been preserved, however. Wolpe concludes his 1940 lecture, “Die Modulation als Prozess” [hereafter “Modulation as Process”], with a discussion of non-tertian chordal structures. He provides examples of the systematic use of intervals to build chords, beginning with seconds and concluding with sevenths (see Ex. 1.1).

**Example 1.1** Chords based on the systematic use of intervals, in Stefan Wolpe, “Modulation as Process,” Ex. 17. Note that Wolpe limits the example to the white keys of the piano, without distinguishing between major, minor, diminished and augmented intervals. I have corrected pitches in mm. 4, 5 and 6 of the example that I believe to be misprints. In m. 4, D6 has been changed to F6, and A6 has been changed to C7. In m. 5, G6 has been changed to E6. In m. 6, A7 has been changed to F7. Stefan Wolpe, *Das Ganze überdenken*, ed. Thomas Phleps (Saarbrücken: PFAU-Verlag, 2002), 56. © 2002 by Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel, und PFAU-Verlag, Saarbrücken. Alle Rechte vorbehalten. By permission of the Stefan Wolpe Society, Inc.

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14 Wolpe, “Modulation as Process,” 55-7. Although the lecture was presented in English at the Settlement Music School in Philadelphia on 4 April 1940, only the original German text is extant.
Wolpe had written several works in the 1930s in which he used intervals systematically, most notably the *Passacaglia*, fourth of the *Four Studies on Basic Rows*, op. 23 (1935-36) (see Ex. 1.2).⁴⁵

**Example 1.2** Series of expanding pitch intervals from 1-11, in Stefan Wolpe, *Four Studies on Basic Rows* for Piano, op. 23 (1935-36), IV: Passacaglia, mm. 1-8. © 1974 Merion Music. Used by permission.

In “Modulation as Process,” Wolpe also provides an example of the spatial rearrangement of a chord to create a new chord with the same pc content (see Ex. 1.3).

In addition, Wolpe demonstrates how to move fluidly between diatonicism and chromaticism. The first musical example of the lecture presents a nine-measure harmonic progression, beginning with diatonic tonality and progressing through diatonic modulation. In the concluding measures, tonally unstable chromaticism leads to atonality (see Ex. 1.4). Wolpe’s example illustrates his dictum that “tonality and atonality . . . belong to a continuous spectrum of resources.”

Thus the note is qualified by the interval, the interval by the chord, the chord by the key [tonality], the key by the modulation, the modulation by the continuous circulation of the keys [chromatic tonalities], — the chromatic tonality by the change

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16 Wolpe, “Modulation as Process,” Ex. 1, 43.
17 Clarkson, “Ralph Shapey’s Apprenticeship,” 391.
of chord structure, and the changed chord structure is qualified by atonality.\textsuperscript{19}

[My translation]


\textsuperscript{19} “Also der Ton qualifiziert sich im Intervall, das Intervall im Akkord, der Akkord in der Tonalität, die Tonalität in der Modulation, die Modulation in der permanenten Zirkulation der chromatischen Tonalitäten, – die chromatischen Tonalität in der Veränderung der akkordischen Struktur, und die veränderte akkordische Struktur qualifiziert sich in der Atonalität.” Wolpe, “Modulation as Process,” 42.
The Pre-War Student Works

Shapey’s first significant compositional project for Wolpe, Sonata in One Movement: *Sonate de l’amour [sic]*\(^{20}\) for Violin and Piano, is a stylistically heterogeneous, monothematic work. Its harmonic organization echoes Wolpe’s first example in “Modulation as Process” (see Ex. 1.4). Shapey premiered the Sonata, accompanied by Irma Wolpe, at a May 1940 concert of music by Wolpe’s composition students.\(^{21}\) Shapey used French in the title and at the head of the score\(^{22}\) despite a poor command of the language. This choice may reflect his orientation, as an active violinist, towards the virtuoso violin literature.\(^{23}\)

On the title page, Shapey noted, “Stefan made some changes (inserted sheets his handwriting).” Shapey reinforced the concept that the Sonata was in some sense a collaborative project by writing beneath the title, “1st work, written under/with teacher, Stefan Wolpe.” There is no evidence that Wolpe altered Shapey’s music, but he carefully annotated the structure of the Sonata, inserting German terms into the score to elucidate its form, including “Einleitung [introduction]/Thema I” at the beginning, “Durchführung Teil” [development], “Hauptteil”

\(^{20}\) The Sonata in One Movement is unpublished. The score is included in the Shapey Papers, Box 22. The additional title, *Sonate de l’amour*, seems to have been an afterthought on Shapey’s part. He added it below the original title, *Sonate in One Movement*, on the title page, and also inserted a second title page with the new title, but without the original title. At the top of the first page of the score, Shapey wrote, “Sonata in one movement.”

\(^{21}\) Concert program of “Class Demonstration of Original Work by Pupils of Stefan Wolpe and Piano Pupils of Irma Wolpe,” Settlement Music School, Philadelphia, 28 May 1940. Information provided by Austin Clarkson in an email to the author, 30 July 2007. The program states that the first movement of Shapey’s Violin Sonata was performed. Since the Sonata has only one movement, I suggest that the entire work was played. The program also included Shapey’s two-piano arrangement of a Prelude by Scriabin as well as a Prelude for Piano by Shapey. Neither work has been preserved. On the concert, see Clarkson, “Ralph Shapey’s Apprenticeship,” 392.

\(^{22}\) Shapey mixes French and Italian terms. At the head of the score, he gives the tempo indication, “Moderato con moto agitato—très rythmic” [sic].

\(^{23}\) Austin Clarkson suggests that Shapey’s use of French for the title of the Sonata reflects the influence of Scriabin, whose unnamed piano prelude Shapey had arranged for two pianos. See Clarkson, “Ralph Shapey’s Apprenticeship,” 392.
While Wolpe attempted to outline the thematic structure of the Sonata (introduction, first theme, etc.), the most important structural element of the music is its “modulation” between different harmonic “fields,” modal, tonal and chromatic. Austin Clarkson describes the first section as contrasting between the opening whole-tone theme (mm. 5-17) (see Ex. 1.5) and a subsidiary theme in “F# minor” (mm. 10-12), but the F natural in m. 11 seems to define the subsidiary theme as octatonic rather than diatonic. True diatonicism is not introduced until the passage that Wolpe labels as a “Nebengedanke” (Parenthesis) [Subsidiary Idea/Parenthesis] (mm. 30-4) that leads to Wolpe’s “Hauptteil” (mm. 35-48). Measures 30-48 are highly dramatic music, set firmly in B major and written in a full-blooded, Germanic late Romantic style. Indeed, the transition between different harmonic “modes” is handled more smoothly in the Sonata than the transition between the multiple historic styles within the work (German Romanticism, Scriabin), each of which is associated with one of those harmonic modes.

24 For a discussion of Wolpe’s annotation of the manuscript of Shapey’s piece, see Clarkson, “Ralph Shapey’s Apprenticeship,” 392.
25 Ibid.
The formal organization of the Sonata in One Movement is based on a procedure employed by Bartók: the presentation of diatonic and chromatic forms of a theme within the same work.\textsuperscript{26} Shapey presents a single theme in multiple guises. The Sonata begins with a whole-tone “introduction” (mm. 1-16) that presents the principal theme. This leads to a chromatic transition (mm. 17-28). After a brief, preparatory passage in B major (mm. 29-34), Shapey presents the originally modal principal theme in a tonal guise that is similar in contour to its original shape (mm. 35-48). This episode presents an expansion of the opening ideas of the work.

Measures 49-98 serve as the development section of the Sonata. In the manuscript, Wolpe copied out mm. 50-94, apparently editing the music as well, as Shapey noted on the title page. In his annotations to the score, Wolpe mislabeled the beginning of the section as the

\begin{example}

Example 1.5 Opening whole-tone theme, in Ralph Shapey, Sonata in One Movement for Violin and Piano (1940), mm. 8-9. Shapey Papers, Box 22. By permission of the Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

\end{example}

\begin{figure}

\centering

\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{opening-theme.png}

\caption{Opening whole-tone theme, in Ralph Shapey, Sonata in One Movement for Violin and Piano (1940), mm. 8-9. Shapey Papers, Box 22. By permission of the Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.}

\end{figure}

\begin{footnote}
\end{footnote}
introduction of the second theme of the sonata form (mm. 49, 57). Shapey does not introduce a new theme, but transforms the original themes, presenting them in chromatic versions (see Ex. 1.6). The key signature of the preceding tonal passage is abandoned in m. 49. The development section is tonally unstable, but includes some modal and tonal references. In the brief recapitulation (mm. 103-14), the music returns to the original version of the main theme and the whole-tone field of the beginning of the Sonata. The piece ends with a recall of the opening chords (mm. 113-4). The Sonata can thus be perceived to “modulate” from whole-tone to major to chromatic back to whole-tone harmony.

Examples 1.6a-g Chromatic versions of whole-tone and tonal themes, in Ralph Shapey, Sonata in One Movement for Violin and Piano (1940). Shapey Papers, Box 22. By permission of the Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

1.6a Opening whole-tone theme, m. 13.

1.6b Chromatic version of Ex. 1.6a in the development, m. 50.

1.6c Transitional tonal theme in the exposition, m. 30.
A Dream Within a Dream for Soprano and Piano (1941) represents the culmination of Shapey’s prewar studies with Wolpe. The song is based on Edgar Allan Poe’s eponymous poem (1849). As in the Sonata, Shapey moves fluidly between modality and chromaticism. He systematically presents the aggregate in Dream, generating structural motion within a piece by controlling the speed of circulation of the chromatic collection.

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27 A Dream Within A Dream is unpublished. The score is included in the Shapey Papers, Box 169.

28 Clarkson, “Ralph Shapey’s Apprenticeship,” 395.
Wolpe did not discuss manipulation of the speed of aggregate presentation in his extant pre-War lectures. He later labeled this concept, the “tempo of chromatic circulation.” In his Darmstadt lecture, “On New (And Not-so-New) Music in America” (1956), Wolpe wrote,

Those who work with tone rows within the total chromatic are becoming impatient with the limitations of such restrictions and are discovering innumerable procedures for delaying and altering the tempo of circulation.

In “Thinking Twice” (1960), Wolpe discussed the concept of “tempo of circulation” in greater detail. He employed the phrase, “modulatory circulation,” using analogy to relate the “tempo of chromatic circulation” to modulation:

The tempo of structural transformation should be of influence on the tempo of chromatic circulation.

Every pitch constellation smaller than the all-chromatic circuit is either a delay in completing the whole, or is an autonomous fragment which can exist outside of the total circuit. It may be first unhinged as a part of the total circuit. . . . The modified speed of the all-chromatic circuit points to a concept of modulatory circulation, to an increase or decrease of pitch quantities.

In his 1940 lecture, “What is Jewish Music,” Wolpe had used the term, “modulation,” in a similar sense when he described the modification of a pentatonic collection by adding chromatic pcs.

Wolpe’s use of the term, “modulatory circulation,” to describe the process of chromatic circulation in “Thinking Twice” can be related to his discussion of modulation in “Modulation as

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The concept of “chromatic circulation” served as an extension of Wolpe’s description of motion between the tonal and chromatic realms in “Modulation as Process,” which Shapey applied in composing his Sonata in One Movement for Violin and Piano (1940).

Austin Clarkson has evaluated the pitch-set patterns of A Dream within a Dream, taking special note of Shapey’s use of sets with and without thirds to organize the music. Clarkson also points out Shapey’s use of the whole-tone, octatonic and chromatic collections.34 Shapey’s discourse is based on the pervasive use of chains of tritones (ic6), both within a single line, and linked between treble and bass. Shapey presents five tritone pairs in the first two measures: D4–Ab4, Db4–G4, Eb5–A4, F4–B3 and E5–Bb4. The two pcs of the aggregate omitted in mm. 1-3 are the final tritone pair, C–Gb. The chords of measure 4 are a verticalization of the pcs presented melodically in mm. 1-2, with the addition of C4. The final pc of the aggregate, Gb4, is introduced separately on the fourth sixteenth note of the final beat of m. 4 (see Ex. 1.7). In addition to the pervasive tritone relationships within the music, the E in m. 1 creates third relationships with G and Db that are exploited by Shapey as A Dream Within a Dream unfolds.

34 Ibid., 395.
Example 1.7  Chains of tritones (ic6) (in brackets), in Ralph Shapey, *A Dream Within a Dream* for Soprano and Piano (1941), mm. 1-7. © 1945 Ralph Shapey. By permission of Elsa Charlston Shapey.

*Andante espressivo*
Shapey’s use of chains of tritones to present the aggregate is reminiscent of Wolpe’s *Study on Tritones* (1936), the first of the *Four Studies on Basic Rows* (see Ex. 1.8).

**Example 1.8** Chains of tritones (ic6), in Stefan Wolpe, *Four Studies on Basic Rows* for Piano, op. 23 (1935-36), I: *Study on Tritones*, mm. 1-4 (cf. Ex. 1.7). © 1974 Merion Music. Used by permission.

In Shapey’s piece, the pcs of the tritone pair, C–Gb, are linked, first vertically, then horizontally, in mm. 5-7 (see Ex. 1.7). The opening D–Ab tritone has a central position within the arpeggios of mm. 4 and 7, and is stated melodically in m. 9 near the very bottom of Shapey’s registral compass (D2–Ab1) (see Ex. 1.9).

**Example 1.9** Chains of tritones (ic6), in Ralph Shapey, *A Dream Within a Dream* for Soprano and Piano (1941), mm. 8-11. © 1945 Ralph Shapey. By permission of Elsa Charlston Shapey.
The opening section of the piece comes to a close with the presentation of five consecutive tritone pairs in the vocal part: Ab4–D4, Db4–G4, Gb4–C5, B4–F5 and E5–Bb4 (see Ex. 1.10).

**Example 1.10**  Chains of tritones (ic6), in Ralph Shapey, *A Dream Within a Dream* for Soprano and Piano (1941), mm. 12-5. © 1945 Ralph Shapey. By permission of Elsa Charlston Shapey.

In accordance with Wolpe’s technique of “chromatic circulation,” the omitted tritone, Eb–A, is given a prominent role in the following phrase (mm. 18-20) (not shown).

Shapey gives other ics prominence in *Dream* as well. He employs the ic2 dyad, Ab–Bb, as a recurring figure throughout the work, within melodic contexts (mm. 3 and 7, piano; m. 33, soprano), as a drum-roll flourish (mm. 16-8) and as a turn figure (m. 29). In addition to his use of
ic2, Shapey frequently makes use of melodic fourths (ic5) as the piece progresses, often in conjunction with harsh chordal dissonances.

In mm. 40-1, Shapey creates a harmonic configuration in which elements of the whole-tone and octatonic scales intersect (see Ex. 1.11). The vocal line embodies the octatonic segment, E5–F#5–G5–A5–Bb5–C6. Shapey’s inclusion of the pc, Ab, in m. 41 suggests that the soprano and piano parts combine to present the whole-tone segment, E5–F#5–Ab3–Bb2/Bb5–C6.

**Example 1.11** Intersection of whole-tone and octatonic segments, in Ralph Shapey, *A Dream Within a Dream* for Soprano and Piano (1941), mm. 40-1. © 1945 Ralph Shapey. By permission of Elsa Charlston Shapey.

Shapey uses the text of the song as a structural tool. The sustained octatonic chord first presented by the piano in m. 8 is repeated in mm. 27 and 45, both times in conjunction with the same vocal line, set to the text, “a dream within a dream.” This parallelism is extended at the conclusion of the piece by the repetition of the music of mm. 9-11 in mm. 46-8 (see Ex. 1.9). *A Dream Within a Dream* is a significant landmark in Shapey’s development as a composer, the first piece in which he controls the speed of circulation of the aggregate and systematically uses specific intervals as structural elements.
Interlude: Military Service and the Return to Civilian Life, 1942-46

In mid-1942, Shapey was drafted into the United States Army. Shortly before his induction, he won a contest for young performers, the “Philadelphia Finds” Competition, and, as part of the prize, was invited to conduct the Robin Hood Dell Orchestra at one of its open-air summer park concerts. Although Shapey was unable to obtain a delay of his induction notice, he obtained a special furlough to fulfill his engagement through the intercession of Fredric Mann, chairman of the “Philadelphia Finds” committee. His performance on 5 August 1942 of Debussy’s Fêtes was the climax of his pre-War studies, a triumph that garnered national attention. It was reviewed by all of the Philadelphia newspapers and covered by major news services, which disseminated the story around the country. The New York Times printed a short Associated Press article, while The New York Daily News reproduced a photo of the event, accompanied by a caption that described Shapey as “giv[ing] with plenty of the Toscanini technique” as he conducted the orchestra at Robin Hood Dell (see Fig. 1.1).  

35 The “Philadelphia Finds” Competition was a yearly contest for young conductors and instrumentalists. The winners were invited to perform with the Robin Hood Dell Orchestra.  
36 The Robin Hood Dell Orchestra was established in 1930 to provide summer employment for the musicians of the Philadelphia Orchestra. Most, but not all, of its members were also regular members of the Philadelphia Orchestra. On the history of the Robin Hood Dell concerts, see Richard E. Rodda, “Celebrating 75 Years of Music in the Park: 75th Anniversary of the Incorporation of the Robin Hood Dell Concerts, Predecessor of The Mann Center for the Performing Arts,” accessed 24 November 2013, http://manncenter.org/about/75-year-of-music-in-the-park/rodda.  
37 “Army Relaxes Rules to Let Soldier Conduct Concert at Dell Friday,” Philadelphia Record, 29 July 1942: 7. The concert was originally scheduled for Friday, 31 July, but it was postponed due to rain. Shapey was granted an extension of his furlough, so that he could perform at the rescheduled concert on 5 August 1942. See “Szell Conducts Czech Concert,” The Philadelphia Evening Bulletin, 5 August 1942: 12.  
Shapey was unable to devote serious attention to composition during his three years of stateside military service, from 1942-45. During his years in the military, he wrote many brief tonal pieces\textsuperscript{39} that did not fully reflect the knowledge that he had acquired as a student of

\textsuperscript{39} Shapey wrote pieces for solo piano, solo violin, violin and piano, clarinet and piano, and saxophone and piano. Copies of these pieces are included in the Shapey Papers, Boxes 20 and 22.
Wolpe. He seems to have written these pieces, variously entitled, “Intermezzi,” “Burlesque,” “Melodie,” “Recitative,” “Waltz in Common Time,” “Improvisation,” etc., for his own amusement. In the spring of 1945, he recopied and copyrighted *Dream* along with at least a dozen other early compositions, including some of the pieces that he had written during his military service. Shapey was discharged from the Army in mid-May 1945. He quickly completed a work far more substantial than anything that he had written while in the military: the Duo for Violin and Viola, op. 20, dated 28 May 1945. The three-movement Duo served as an exercise for the out-of-practice composer (see Ex. 1.12). On the title page of the manuscript, the unknown Shapey optimistically dedicated the work to two eminent virtuosi, violinist Jascha Heifetz and violist William Primrose.

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40 For example, the Preludes, op. 5, for piano (1943) variously emulate Debussy, Scriabin and Chopin.

41 Deborah Strauss: “So when you were in the Army, you did compose a little bit.” Ralph Shapey: “Yes, whenever I could, when I could sneak away from the rest of them. Of course I did. I had to. Otherwise, I would have gone insane. My sanity would have gone.” Deborah Strauss, interview with Ralph Shapey, Chicago, 29 April 1997, transcript, 56. Oral History American Music, Yale University. Deborah Strauss holds B.A. and M.A. degrees from the University of Chicago. She works in Chicago in the field of nonprofit management.

42 He also copyrighted *Andante sostenuto* for Piano, op. 4; *Appassionata* for Piano, op. 13; *Burlesque* for Violin and Piano, op. 7; Intermezzi for Piano, op. 6; *Melodie* for Violin and Piano, op. 8; *Meditation* for Violin and Piano, op. 9; *Petite romance* for Piano, op. 18; *Prayer* for Violin and Piano, op. 15; Preludes for Piano, Book I, op. 5; Preludes for Piano, Book II, op. 19; *Recitative* for Violin, op. 10 and Waltz in C for Piano, op. 11. See Copyright Office, The Library of Congress, *Catalog of Copyright Entries, Part 3: Musical Compositions, 1945*, New Series, vol. 40, no. 10 (Washington, D.C.: Copyright Office, The Library of Congress, 1945).

43 Military discharge document. Shapey Papers, Box 143.

44 The Duo for Violin and Viola, op. 20, is unpublished. A copy of the score is included in the Shapey Papers, Box 22.
Shapey did not immediately resume his studies in composition with Wolpe after his discharge from the army. During the summer of 1945, he studied violin with Louis Persinger and conducting with Fritz Mahler at Juilliard. At the conclusion of the summer session, Mahler wrote Shapey a letter of recommendation to Dmitri Mitropoulos that shows an appreciation of the younger man’s talents: “Mr. Shapey has a fine feeling for music and a genuine talent for conducting. He is very alert and a quick student. His knowledge of scores while not exhaustive is considerable and he is able to absorb a score in short time.”

Shapey wrote *Etchings* for Solo Violin, op. 21, in July 1945 while studying at Juilliard with Persinger, and dedicated the piece to his teacher. *Etchings* is a monothematic work, divided into five sections. Sections I, II and V are dramatic and virtuosic, while section IV provides lyrical contrast. Section III, a march, has emphatic dotted rhythms, which Shapey also employs in sections I and V. Shapey’s use of dotted rhythms later became a trademark compositional device, which he employed again and again over a period of many decades.

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45 Fritz Mahler, letter to Dimitri Mitropoulos, 26 July 1945. Shapey Papers, Box 93. There is no evidence that Shapey met Mitropoulos at this time.
46 *Etchings* is unpublished. A copy of the score is included in the Shapey Papers, Box 22.
47 Shapey inserts measures in 2/4 and 3/4 in sections III and V to vary the rhythm.
While *Etchings* can be considered a set of variations, the sections are arranged so as to echo the movements of a multi-movement sonata as well. Section II has a scherzo-like quality, section IV that of a lyrical slow movement. The grand gestures of the concluding section evoke a late nineteenth-century sonata finale. The music is developed by repetition and elaboration of the melody, which is periodically repeated in its original form.

Shapey employs tonally referential materials in a non-functional manner in *Etchings*. He repeatedly emphasizes the pc, D, but does not use a key signature. Shapey’s use of the aggregate in *Etchings* is related to his use of intervallic symmetry around an axis, a central tenet of Wolpe’s pedagogy. In “Modulation as Process,” Wolpe presents a chord with multiple intervallic symmetries, describing it as a “new alloy.”48 The chord includes both i9 symmetry around the axial pitch, F#3 (A2–F#3–Eb4), and i11 symmetry around the axial pitch, A4 (Bb3–A4–G#5) (see Ex. 1.13).


48 See Wolpe, *Das Ganze überdenken*, 55.
In *Etchings*, Shapey creates a network of intervallic symmetries analogous to those in Ex. 1.13. Shapey employs intervallic symmetry both within a diatonic framework, and to mediate between diatonicism and chromaticism. In the opening measures, Shapey generates i11 symmetry around the axial pitch, D5. The piece opens with an ip +11, D5–C#6, which is repeated in m. 2. In m. 3, Shapey introduces the pc, Eb, creating a registrally reversed form of the inversion of the ip +11 interval beginning on D, the ip –13, Eb5–D4. In m. 4, Shapey restates the original thematic gesture, beginning not on D, but on Eb: Eb4–D5. The motivic parallelism between the repeated D5–C#6 gestures in mm. 1-2 and the Eb4–D5 figure in m. 4 suggests that they can be grouped together within the symmetrical configuration, Eb4—D5–C#6. Shapey’s use of the sequence, Eb4–D5–C#5, in m. 4 represents the first consecutive presentation—and overt linkage—of the three pcs, C#, D, and Eb, in *Etchings* (see Ex. 1.14).

In m. 3, Shapey creates an additional symmetrical relationship. The Eb5–D4 interval on the third beat is preceded by A4, which implicitly bisects the following dyad, dividing it into a tritone (i6: A4–Eb5) and a fifth (i7: D4–A4) (see Ex. 1.14).

**Example 1.14** Intervallic symmetry around the axial pcs, D and A, in Ralph Shapey, *Etchings* for Solo Violin, op. 21 (1945), mm. 1-4. In “A” and “C,” Shapey creates motivic parallelisms that suggest axial symmetry around D5, within the configuration, Eb4—D5–C#6. In “B,” Shapey creates inexact symmetry around A5, within the configuration, D4–A4–Eb5. Shapey Papers, Box 22. By permission of the Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.
In mm. 5-6, Shapey adds an additional pc, Ab, to this web of symmetrical relationships. Measure 5 begins with Ab3 and concludes with the dyad F4–A4. A4 is repeated at the beginning of m. 6, coupled with Eb, an important element in the web of symmetries of mm. 1-4. The A4–G#5 dyad on the second half of beat 1 of m. 6 recapitulates the ascending motion of m. 5 from Ab3 to A4 (see Ex. 1.15).

Example 1.15  Intervalllic symmetry, in Ralph Shapey, *Etchings* for Solo Violin, op. 21 (1945), mm. 5-6 (cf. Ex. 1.14). Shapey Papers, Box 22. By permission of the Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

The many tritone dyads in mm. 5-6 are symptomatic of a shift in the primary interval of symmetry from i11 to i5/6. If the symmetries of mm. 1-4 and mm. 5-6 are coupled, they produce the intervalllic pattern Eb–A–D–G#–C#, which alternates ic6 and ic5. Shapey creates an elegant and systematic harmonic arrangement that permits him to circulate the aggregate, yet generates a strong sense of tonal centricity due to the presence of the dyad, D–A, within the symmetrical pattern of alternating ics (see Ex. 1.16).

Example 1.16  Intervalllic symmetry around the axial pc, D, in Ralph Shapey, *Etchings* for Solo Violin, op. 21 (1945), mm. 1-6.
Shapey presents two other intervallic symmetries in mm. 5-6 that reinforce the axial status of the pc, D. The dyad, D–B, is presented in its complementary i₃ and i₉ forms, B₃–D₄ and D₅–B₅. In addition, two i₄ dyads with axial symmetry around D are stated successively on the second beat of m. 6: D₅–F#₅ and Bb₃–D₄.

Shapey discarded *Etchings* when he started his career as a composer in earnest. Violinist Miranda Cuckson premiered this unjustly forgotten work at the Bodensee Festival in Switzerland on 14 May 2006.⁴⁹ Cuckson also recorded *Etchings* on Centaur CRC 2900 (2007).

**Studies with Wolpe (II): Student and Artist, 1946-48**

At the conclusion of the 1945 Juilliard summer session, Shapey auditioned for the violinist and composer, Adolf Busch (1891-1952). He subsequently joined the Busch Chamber Players, touring with the group during the autumn of 1945 (see Fig. 1.2). The violinist Edith Eisler later recalled:

One of the violinists was Ralph Shapey, who later achieved considerable fame as a composer and had already embarked on writing the kind of music that made him so controversial. I remember hearing him try to explain and defend his musical language with passionate ardour to an uncomprehending, disapproving Karl Doktor, who later commented to me: “You could accomplish the same with logarithms.”⁵⁰

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⁴⁹ Email from Miranda Cuckson, 10 December 2012.
In January-February 1946, the Busch Chamber Players spent a month recording the

*Concerti grossi*, op. 6, of Handel.\(^5\) After the completion of the recording sessions, Shapey resumed his violin studies with Emanuel Zetlin in New York. He also returned to his

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composition studies with Stefan Wolpe, who was teaching at the Brooklyn Free Musical Society School of Music (which, despite its name, was located in Manhattan). From 1946-48, Shapey was a member of the staff of the Brooklyn Free Musical Society School of Music, and played the violin as a freelancer in several orchestras.

Shapey’s second period of study with Wolpe extended from 1946 to 1948. During these years, Shapey reestablished his relationship with his teacher on a new basis. While his earlier studies with Wolpe had been overshadowed by his ambitions for a career as a violinist, Shapey now focused almost exclusively on his work as a composer. Shapey had matured as an artist and a person during his three years of military service. He was capable of grasping Wolpe’s most sophisticated concepts in a way that would have been impossible before the war, when he had a limited knowledge of twentieth-century music. During the intervening years, Wolpe had changed as well. He had continued to refine his pedagogical concepts about composition, particularly his ideas about the systematic use of intervals, which he presented both in his teaching and in the dozens of short exercises later collected as *Music for Any Instruments* (1944-49). In addition, Wolpe had discarded the Middle Eastern modality of the Sonata for Oboe and Piano (1937-38, 1941) for a more complex, abstract musical language, embodied in *Battle Piece* for Piano (1943-44, 1947).

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52 Shapey’s studies were funded by the G. I. Bill. Clarkson, “Ralph Shapey’s Apprenticeship,” 396. Ralph Shapey, Guggenheim Fellowship application for 1951, *Accomplishments No. 4*, 1. By permission of the J. S. Guggenheim Memorial Foundation.
53 Shapey, Guggenheim Fellowship application for 1951. By permission of the J. S. Guggenheim Memorial Foundation.
54 Shapey played in the City Center Orchestra in New York, and later, in the Earle Theatre Orchestra in Philadelphia. He played in Broadway shows during this period as well. Shapey was the assistant conductor and concertmaster for the Broadway show, *Small Wonder*, in 1948-49. See *The Ophicleide* 1, no. 2 (January 1950): 1.
Wolpe was a systematic teacher who presented a series of concepts about pitch and rhythm, and about musical space and time. Although some of his musical ideas paralleled those of the serialists, he was vocal in his opposition to what he characterized as the “tyranny” of serialism. Wolpe preferred less systematic pitch ordering procedures that he considered to be more flexible, and thus more subtle. Shapey’s papers do not preserve any of Wolpe’s lecture notes about his compositional procedures. Information about these procedures can be found, however, in a notebook kept by Wolpe’s student and friend, Isaac Nemiroff, which includes careful transcriptions of Wolpe's lectures during the late 1940s. In a second, undated notebook, devoted to Nemiroff’s private lessons with Wolpe and sketches for Nemiroff’s own music, Wolpe wrote out many musical examples that illuminate some of his central concepts of the period. Another student, Milton M. Kraus, also took detailed notes of his lessons with Wolpe in 1948. This documentation of Wolpe’s teaching during the 1940s is critical for an understanding

57 Dr. Isaac Nemiroff Collection, Stony Brook University Special Collections & University Archives, Box 20, F3, Spiral Music Notebook #3 (small).
58 Dr. Isaac Nemiroff Collection, Stony Brook University Special Collections & University Archives, Box 20, F10, Manuscript Music Notebook #9 (large, no cover). I would suggest that this notebook stems from the period 1949-50, since it includes a brief discussion of Schoenberg’s *The Survivor From Warsaw*, op. 46 (1947), which was published in 1949. The Finding Aid for the Nemiroff Collection provides a dating of 1949ff. for Manuscript Music Notebook #7 (small), which, like Notebook #9, includes material for Nemiroff’s Piano Sonata. Nemiroff’s handwriting for his transcription of Wolpe’s lectures in Notebook #3 is more fluid than in Notebook #9. Both the difference in handwriting between the two notebooks, and the systematic presentation of basic concepts in Notebook #3, argue for an earlier dating for the latter.
59 Milton M. Kraus, “Composition Studies with Stefan Wolpe.” Wolpe/Baron Archive. Milton Max Kraus (1906-95) was a pianist and arranger. For a biographical note, see “Guide to the Milton M. Kraus Papers on Louis Moreau Gottschalk, 1956-1980 and undated,” accessed 18
of Shapey’s compositional procedures throughout his career. Shapey was vocal in his conviction that he was Wolpe’s truest disciple. He propagated Wolpe’s ideas both by his performances of Wolpe’s music and by his teaching, and employed them as the basis of his own compositional technique.  

It is impossible to discuss Shapey’s music without employing Wolpe’s conceptual vocabulary. The compositional ideas that Wolpe presented to his students during the postwar years can be summarized as follows:

1. Continuum of tonal and twelve-tone procedures.

2. Use of unordered pc sets rather than strict serial procedures to circulate the aggregate.

3. Building pieces upon the systematic use of intervals.

4. Control of the rate at which the pcs of the aggregate are introduced within a piece of music (the “tempo of chromatic circulation”), as well as variation of the speed of change within other musical parameters. See this chapter, notes 29-32.

5. Use of all registers of the pitch continuum.


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60 The quarrel between Wolpe’s two most famous students, Shapey and Morton Feldman, over the master’s legacy generated a fascinating dialectic, with the two men explicating the same concepts in radically different ways.

61 Wolpe’s procedures provide an interesting parallel to Schoenberg’s practice during the 1930s and 1940s. See Silvina Milstein, *Arnold Schoenberg: Notes, Sets, Forms* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press: 1992), 4: “Schoenberg . . . was unwilling to relinquish completely the functional relations of tonality and often concentrated implications formerly pertaining to a tonal region or key on single pitch-classes or pitch-levels.” See the review of Milstein’s book by Bryan R. Simms in *Music Analysis* 12, no. 3 (Oct. 1993): 406-12.


6. Importance of the concept of pitch as opposed to the concept of pitch class. For Wolpe, the spatial disposition of a pitch set was as important as its pc content. Wolpe taught his students to arrange chords in different superpositions, and thus with different overtone content.

7. Use of both symmetrical and asymmetrical proportions, including the spatial disposition of the notes of a chord around an axis point.

8. Use of rhythmic complexity and rhythmic contrast.


Wolpe’s theories about pitch organization reflect his own harmonic practice during the late 1930s and 1940s. His music of this period has been conceptualized as a “third way.” Larson Powell has compared Wolpe’s synthesis of a diverse group of harmonic procedures in the late 1930s and 1940s to the heterogeneity of harmonic practice during the early twentieth century.

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64 Insofar as Wolpe delivered his lectures long before the development of pitch class theory, it would be more accurate to say that he tried to define the boundaries of the applicability of the principle of octave equivalence.

65 See Paul Lansky, “Pitch-Class Consciousness,” Perspectives of New Music 13, no. 2 (Spring-Summer 1975): 30-56. In handwritten lecture notes, probably from the early 1960s, Shapey wrote, “Today as in the past we have 12 notes & only 12 tones (barring ¼ tones etc.) with which to work; the 13th tone known as the 8ve becomes the prime but a prime interrelated on a new spatial plane. . . . A series of vibrations become[s] a known pitch to the defining ear. Since no two pitches can vibrate at the same rate of speed (unless played by various instruments) then each individual pitch has its own sound-weight. Thus the sound-weight of an “A large” is far greater than an “A4.” But due to the lessening of the “A4”’s sound-weight it has gained in flexibility & intensity.” Shapey Papers, Box 93.


Wolpe employed his ideas about the concept of interval in the *Four Studies on Basic Rows* (1935-36). He developed them further in the series of short pieces published as *Music for Any Instruments: Interval Studies* (1944-49).  

According to Nemiroff’s lecture notes, Wolpe begins with a mapping of the diatonic and chromatic scales. He divides the diatonic scale into two tetrachords, C–F and G–C. He divides the chromatic scale into two tetrachords, C–F and F♯–B. Wolpe explains:

In the 12-tone row the 12th tone is to the first as in the seven tones [the diatonic scale] the completing 8th is to the first. In the real sense of tonality it is necessary to consider a scale of 8 tones even though the 8th is the octave of the 1st.

Therefore in [the diatonic major scale beginning on C] C is to C as in [the chromatic scale beginning on C] B is to C.

And it is this fact; that in 12 tones the balance is accomplished by a note of different pitch from the first, that prevents the use of the octave as an interval. This would destroy the balance in the same way that its avoidance (the 8va) destroys the balance in classical harmony. However such treatment of the so-called tonal system is a logical step in the development towards 12-tone harmony.

Wolpe diagrams inversional symmetries within the 12-tone collection (see Ex. 1.17):

In the exact non-varied intervallic material of the 12-tone row the balance achieved by inversion is as exact as the material itself. This differs from the result achieved in tonal harmony because that is based on a series of tonal centers.

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Austin Clarkson points out Wolpe’s care in addressing “the problem of incorporating the third into the atonal environment.” In the lectures that Nemiroff recorded, Wolpe presents many possible ways to divide the aggregate, using different combinations of major and minor thirds (see Ex. 1.18).

Example 1.17  Inversional symmetries within the twelve-tone collection, in Isaac Nemiroff, notebook for classes with Stefan Wolpe. Dr. Isaac Nemiroff Collection, Stony Brook University Special Collections & University Archives, Box 20, F3, Spiral Music Notebook #3 (small). By permission of Catherine Nemiroff.

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\footnote{Stefan Wolpe, \textit{Music for Any Instruments: Interval Studies (1944-49)}, preface by Austin Clarkson, unpaginated.}
Example 1.18 Division of the aggregate into patterns of thirds (+ = major, – = minor), in Isaac Nemiroff, notebook for classes with Stefan Wolpe. I have tried to reproduce the rather casual orthography of these lecture notes as carefully as possible, so as not to misrepresent Wolpe’s ideas. Dr. Isaac Nemiroff Collection, Stony Brook University Special Collections & University Archives, Box 20, F3, Spiral Music Notebook #3 (small). By permission of Catherine Nemiroff.

Progressing by minor thirds and changing to major only when necessary to avoid repetition

Starting by minor

B

Progressing by major thirds etc.

Start with minor and progress by major thirds

Start with major and progress by minor

Inversion

Wolpe concludes his discussion of the division of the aggregate into a series of thirds by commenting,

My next problem is to discover a principle for constructing progressions of other intervals and to find the parallel in the advanced classical harmony which made use of chords constructed on other intervals as a result of the same piling up of thirds.

While Nemiroff recorded Wolpe’s ideas about the systematic use of thirds within the twelve-tone collection, Wolpe’s ideas about the systematic use of fourths were documented by
Milton Kraus. Wolpe first arranged the intervals vertically, creating a chord consisting of piled fourths, as well as one that includes both fourths and tritones. He also placed the intervals in close superposition. Finally, he horizontalized the intervals, creating two-part counterpoint. His use of alternating fourths and tritones creates several sc(016) trichords, and recalls some of the intervallic symmetries employed by Shapey in *Etchings* (see Ex. 1.19).


Wolpe employed chords that include pc sets comparable to those circled in Ex. 1.19 when he discussed the principle of axial symmetry. In the example that he provided for Kraus, a series of pc pairs surrounds an unstated D5. Wolpe presents pc pairs an ip2 (C5, E5), an ip7 (G4, A5), an ip10 (E4, C6) and an ip13 (C#4, D#6) above and below D5 (see Ex. 1.20).

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In a lecture documented by Nemiroff, Wolpe uses his intervallic concepts to segment a twelve-pitch collection into three tetrachords. The collection includes eleven pcs and one pc duplication, C (see Ex. 1.21).

Example 1.21  Segmentation of a pitch collection into tetrachords, in Isaac Nemiroff, notebook for classes with Stefan Wolpe. Dr. Isaac Nemiroff Collection, Stony Brook University Special Collections & University Archives, Box 20, F3, Spiral Music Notebook #3 (small). By permission of Catherine Nemiroff.

Wolpe demonstrates how to create interesting motivic figures, using these tetrachords (see Ex. 1.22).  

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73 Note that the final pc of Ex. 1.22 is A, which replaces the C in the third tetrachord of Ex. 1.21.
Wolpe also lectured about musical space. Nemiroff’s notes on this subject are headed by Wolpe’s play on words, “Home on the Ranges (Gas).” Wolpe offers a critique of the principle of octave equivalence in comments that accompany Ex. 1.23 (I): 74

The development of a tone through the octave closes the possibility of change of identity. (Either above or below.)
The tone returns in a unit of a new identity as opposed to the primo.
And as a unit of new quality.
Conclusion: octaves are either a new unit or a new dimension of a tone, or an octave as two completely independent tones. 75

Wolpe connects these comments to his introduction of the concept of axial centricity within the pitch continuum (see Ex. 1.23).

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75 Isaac Nemiroff, notebook for classes with Stefan Wolpe: “Home on the Ranges (Gas)” [heading and commentary in Nemiroff’s handwriting]. Dr. Isaac Nemiroff Collection, Stony Brook University Special Collections & University Archives, Box 20, F3, Spiral Music Notebook #3 (small).
Example 1.23  Axial centricity within the pitch continuum, in Isaac Nemiroff, notebook for classes with Stefan Wolpe: “Home on the Ranges (Gas)” [heading and commentary in Nemiroff’s handwriting], excerpts. Dr. Isaac Nemiroff Collection, Stony Brook University Special Collections & University Archives, Box 20, F3, Spiral Music Notebook #3 (small). By permission of Catherine Nemiroff.

Example 1.23 (cont.)

I
Reinforcement of tones

II
In this case the tone is related to its higher and lower octave. This gives a symmetrical extension at which middle point is the tone itself.

III
In this case the middle octave becomes the constant or entity.

This relation of distanced tones to an inner group.
Example 1.23 continued

Wolpe voices a chord in multiple ways, showing how to create different intervallic and registral relationships within a gradually expanding pitch space (see Ex. 1.24).

Example 1.24 Multiple voicings of a chord, in Isaac Nemiroff, notebook for classes with Stefan Wolpe. Dr. Isaac Nemiroff Collection, Stony Brook University Special Collections & University Archives, Box 20, F3, Spiral Music Notebook #3 (small). By permission of Catherine Nemiroff.
He elaborates on his spatial concepts, presenting an illustration of axial symmetry that he labels, “Direct balance through immediate acceptance of space centers.” In the treble, D6 bisects the interval, G#5–A6, while C#2 bisects the space between E1 and A2 in the bass (see Ex. 1.25).

Example 1.25  Axial symmetry, in Isaac Nemiroff, notebook for lessons with Stefan Wolpe: “Direct balance through immediate acceptance of space centers” (title in Nemiroff’s handwriting). Dr. Isaac Nemiroff Collection, Stony Brook University Special Collections & University Archives, Box 20, F10, Manuscript Music Notebook #9 (large, no cover). By permission of Catherine Nemiroff.

Wolpe then illustrates a shift of pitch center, indicated by arrows in the example below (see Ex. 1.26). He immediately transfers G#, the goal of the ascending motion in the treble line, to other registers. Wolpe describes the example as an illustration of “accumulated balance through displacements, calling for proportionate sound-nature displacements (or variation).”

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76 The musical examples reproduced in Exx. 1.24 and 1.25 are in Wolpe’s handwriting, while the explanations are in Nemiroff’s handwriting.
In his 1952 lecture, “Thoughts on Pitch and Some Considerations Connected with It,” Wolpe expresses similar ideas. He writes, “This might be stated:/the release of distances, of segmenting, dividing, proportioning the/(whole pitch orbit/(call it a span of regions, or call it space)/is a primary activity of any pitch./Not only space is open, to be entered at any point and to be related to any other one./but the concept of moving distances, of spacing, of actuating them,/is a dominant factor in carrying tones from one spot to another.”

Example 1.26  Shift of pitch center, in Isaac Nemiroff, notebook for lessons with Stefan Wolpe: “Accumulated balance through displacements, calling for proportionate sound-nature displacements (or variation)” [text by Wolpe]. Dr. Isaac Nemiroff Collection, Stony Brook University Special Collections & University Archives, Box 20, F10, Manuscript Music Notebook #9 (large, no cover). By permission of Catherine Nemiroff.
Just as Wolpe analyzed the structural properties of intervals, he taught his students to create intricate rhythmic configurations. Wolpe discussed rhythm as an independent element of composition when he worked with Milton Kraus. Kraus’s lecture notes include a sheet entitled, *Design of Rhythm(s).* Wolpe first wrote out a continuously varied rhythmic pattern (see Ex. 1.27a). He then combined three voices with different rhythms. Wolpe defined this as “diversity of direction/variety of the motivic phases” (see Ex. 1.27b).  


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During the same lesson with Kraus, Wolpe illustrated his dicta about motivic development with examples of the “multiplication of motivic elements,” including “intrusions” and “enlarged endings.” He used these terms in reference to the interpolation of new motivic fragments within a theme. Wolpe wanted his students to employ a variety of musical shapes in the development of an idea, creating balance between ascending and descending motion and between long and short phrase segments. He criticized figures that moved predictably in the same direction (“too many downward patterns”) and suggested that an idea be developed through the “Disintegration of More Than One Element/Countertrends being achieved by new upbeats (Intrusions).” Wolpe’s ideas about thematic construction are illustrated by the following example in his handwriting from the notes of Isaac Nemiroff. The opening idea has an arch shape. The contrasting figures that follow move upward in three waves. The concluding idea has an inverted arch shape, balancing the beginning of the example (see Ex. 1.28).
The Apprentice Works of 1946-47

Shapey assimilated Wolpe’s ideas only gradually over a period of two decades. During the first year of his post-war studies with Wolpe, he wrote three large works in which he demonstrated his mastery of harmony and form: Piano Sonata No. 1, String Quartet No. 1 and the Piano Quintet. Shapey later described these works as having being composed in a “free 12-tone idiom/also, highly chromatic, bordering on serial technique.” Theodore Presser later published all three pieces. Shapey withdrew the score of the Piano Sonata from the Presser catalogue in 1980, however.

Piano Sonata No. 1 (1946), the first to be composed, has three movements. The first movement can be described as a sonata allegro, and is roughly divided into an exposition, development and recapitulation. It has a vigorous opening theme (see Ex. 1.29) and a lyrical second theme. Shapey uses the techniques of near repetition and elaboration to develop his

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80 Theodore Presser Co. publishes scores and parts for String Quartet No. 1 and the Piano Quintet. String Quartet No. 1: 11441134S (score) and 11441134P (parts); Piano Quintet: 11440565S (score) and 11440565P (parts).
81 The manuscript and the autograph score of Shapey’s Piano Sonata No. 1 are included in the Shapey Papers, Boxes 19, 22, and 33. The University of Chicago Library also owns a circulating copy of the score.
themes, and gradually merges the two sets of musical ideas. He creates tonal contrast within the movement by the transposition of themes by ics 1 and 2 in the exposition and development and ic2 in the recapitulation.

Example 1.29  Opening theme, in Ralph Shapey, Piano Sonata No. 1 (1946), I, mm. 1-2. © 1958 Ralph Shapey. By permission of Elsa Charlston Shapey.

The lyrical second theme is introduced in mm. 15-9. It contrasts awkwardly with the first theme, due to the abruptness of its introduction without any preparation for its slower pulse and harmonic rhythm. In mm. 16-7, the pulse doubles as Shapey interpolates music reminiscent of the first theme in order to link the two themes together. In particular, the bass line in m. 17, beat 4, alludes to one of the rhythmic fingerprints of the first theme, a succession of three sixteenth notes that begins on the second sixteenth of a beat (see Ex. 1.30).
The extended statement of the second theme that begins in m. 45 can be considered the beginning of a clearly demarcated new section, the development. Shapey incorporates subtle references to the first theme into his presentation of the second theme, rather than juxtaposing the two disparate themes, as he does in mm. 15-9 (see Ex. 1.31).

**Example 1.31**  Presentation of the second theme in the development, in Ralph Shapey, Piano Sonata No. 1 (1946), I, m. 50 (cf. Ex. 1.30). © 1958 Ralph Shapey. By permission of Elsa Charlston Shapey.

The interpenetration of the themes continues with the reentrance of the first theme in m. 61. The long-short rhythm of the second theme is clearly delineated within the busy textures and driving rhythms of the music (see Ex. 1.32).
The development concludes with the fusion of the two themes (mm. 104-6) (see Ex. 1.33).

Example 1.33  Fusion of themes, in Ralph Shapey, Piano Sonata No. 1 (1946), I, m. 104. © 1958 Ralph Shapey. By permission of Elsa Charlston Shapey.

The recapitulation begins in m. 120 with the return of the opening theme in its original form, but transposed upwards by ic2. The movement concludes with a dramatic coda.

The musical idiom of Shapey’s Sonata is heavily influenced by Wolpe’s contemporaneous Battle Piece for Piano.\textsuperscript{82} In particular, the opening theme of Shapey’s first

\textsuperscript{82} Clarkson, “Ralph Shapey’s Apprenticeship,” 396-7; see also the unpublished essay by Gordon E. Marsh, “Shapey at the Piano: Evolution of a Style.”
movement strongly resembles the opening theme of movement III of Wolpe’s work (see Ex. 1.34). The thick, busy textures of Shapey’s Sonata are comparable to those of movement IV of *Battle Piece* (see Ex. 1.35).


Example 1.34


Shapey’s harmonic language is also indebted to Wolpe’s example. Shapey integrates diatonicism, chromaticism and modality in both the vertical (harmonic) and horizontal (thematic)

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83 See Clarkson, “Ralph Shapey’s Apprenticeship,” 396-7, Exx. 4a and 4b.
84 Martin Zenck describes the harmony of *Battle Piece* as both “freely atonal” and “virtually tonal.” See Martin Zenck, “Beyond Neoclassicism and Dodecaphony,” 180-2.
dimensions. Dissonant chordal configurations (Wolpe’s “new alloys”) and whole-tone constructions are prominent within a texture that features harmonies rich in thirds (see Ex. 1.36).

**Example 1.36** Harmonic configurations in Ralph Shapey, Piano Sonata No. 1 (1946), I. The second chord is an example of Shapey’s use of the whole-tone collection.

![Example 1.36](image)

m. 2, beat 1  m. 2, beat 3

The form of the first movement adheres in part to the theme-based theory of sonata structure developed in the nineteenth century. Like many late nineteenth-century works, the first movement of Shapey’s Sonata is notable for its lengthy development section. The alternating statements of the two themes are presented in progressively larger episodes and in increasingly dramatic fashion as they gradually adopt more of each other’s characteristics. While Shapey’s use of climaxes to articulate form is one of the most conventional aspects of his early work, his use of near repetition and elaboration to build his structures is the most original aspect of the first movement of the Sonata. Shapey’s use of transposition by ics 1 and 2 for thematic restatements in the first movement is also a central part of his formal strategy.

The second movement is a scherzo, with the usual three-part division into scherzo, trio and repeat of the scherzo. Like the beginning of the first movement of the Sonata, the scherzo is indebted to the initial rising thematic gesture of movement III of *Battle Piece* (see Ex. 1.37).
The characteristic long–short rhythm of the second theme of the first movement returns in the trio (mm. 14ff.), which presents a lively counterpoint between treble and bass. In the repeat of the scherzo, Shapey again uses the techniques of near repetition and elaboration.

The last movement is a broadly conceived Adagio appassionato, full of thick, widely spaced counterpoint and sonorous chords. After a dramatic peroration in m. 24, Shapey introduces a contrasting episode with a thinner and lighter texture (mm. 29-40). A short passage that melds the opening theme with the ideas of the contrasting episode (mm. 40-4) serves as the bridge to a brief coda that recalls the beginning of the movement.

The Sonata is an imaginative and accomplished student work, in which the young Shapey is neither willing nor able to abandon his dependence on Wolpe’s music as a compositional model. Nevertheless, like Shapey’s other early works, it points the way to salient elements of his later style, particularly in the realms of harmony and texture.

Shapey ably handled large-scale thematic and tonal structures in the four-movement String Quartet No. 1 (1946). The young Shapey employed Schoenberg’s String Quartet No. 4 (1936) as one of his most important models. The first movement (291 mm.) is cast in sonata

form. It begins with weaving triplet figures reminiscent of the transition to the second theme in the first movement of Schoenberg’s quartet (see Exx. 1.38 and 1.39).

**Example 1.38**  Triplet figures, in Ralph Shapey, String Quartet No. 1 (1946), I, m. 1. © 1958 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

![Example 1.38](image)

**Example 1.39**  Triplet figures, in Arnold Schoenberg, String Quartet No. 4, op. 37 (1936), I, m. 21 (cf. Ex. 1.38). Copyright © 1939 (Renewed) by G. Schirmer, Inc. (ASCAP). International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Reprinted by Permission.
The triplets serve as a backdrop to the wide-ranging first theme, which is introduced by violin I in m. 3 (see Ex. 1.40).

**Example 1.40** Opening theme, in Ralph Shapey, String Quartet No. 1 (1946), I, mm. 3-5. © 1958 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

Pizzicato repeated chords and shifting meters serve as a framework for the second theme group (see Ex. 1.41).
The development is based on the weaving figures of the accompaniment to the first theme, which Shapey subjects to permutation and extended contrapuntal treatment. In the recapitulation, Shapey rearranges the elements of traditional sonata form. He begins the recapitulation with the second theme (mm. 187-224), creating a variant of palindromic form, a procedure employed by twentieth-century masters such as Bartók and Berg.

Shapey’s repetition of ideas at the same pitch levels throughout most of the first movement inevitably generates a sense of the presence of referential centers within the music. In the concluding coda, however, Shapey employs the technique of tonal change that he had used in

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the Piano Sonata. The opening accompanimental triplets of the movement are transposed by i10 at the beginning of the coda (m. 255) as part of a scheme in which the triplet figure repeatedly ascends the circle of fifths from G to E, only to sink back to G (see Ex. 1.42).

**Example 1.42**  Movement through the circle of fifths, in Ralph Shapey, String Quartet No. 1 (1946), I, mm. 257-60. © 1958 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

Similarly, the accompanimental figure for the second theme is transposed by i4, from C to E (mm. 272-4). These pitch shifts produce an effect akin to modulation, and the music gradually
subsides into a resolution on a major seventh chord based on C, the most consonant simultaneity of the entire movement.

In the second and third movements, Shapey employs traditional forms. The second movement is a theme and variations. While variations I and II display similarities in their contrapuntal textures, variation III is marked by Shapey’s use of dotted rhythms, and by the primarily chordal character of the inner voices. Melodic flourishes alternate between the voices in variation IV. The third movement is a brief scherzo with trio.

The fourth movement is a long fugue with three subjects. The movement opens with a theme in octaves, played by the entire ensemble (mm. 1-11). The passage recalls the unison statement of the theme that begins the third movement of Schoenberg’s String Quartet No. 4 (1936) (see Exx. 1.43 and 1.44).
Example 1.43  Theme in octaves, in Ralph Shapey, String Quartet No. 1 (1946), IV, mm. 1-4. © 1958 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.
At the end of the fourth movement of Shapey’s quartet, the theme is again stated in octaves by the viola and cello (mm. 141-54), but with transposition, alteration and expansion of the original musical ideas. Whereas Schoenberg reintroduces the instrumental unison at the midpoint of his movement (mm. 664-8), Shapey prefers to use a dramatic gesture of this kind as
a framing device at the beginning and end of a movement. He would use this formal procedure many times during the following years.

After the ensemble presents the initial theme in mm. 1-11, violin II introduces a countersubject (m. 12), distinguished by its busy, irregular rhythms. The viola and cello then present a second countersubject in long note values (mm. 22-8). The three subjects are characterized by noticeably different rates of motion. Eighth-note triplets and dotted rhythms predominate within the main subject. The first countersubject includes successions of sixteenth notes and syncopation, while the second countersubject proceeds in quarter-note and half-note motion. The superimposition of the contrasting rhythms of the three subjects calls to mind an ambitious exercise in species counterpoint, which was undoubtedly one of the concepts underlying this compositional project (see Ex. 1.45).

**Example 1.45**  Theme with two countersubjects, in Ralph Shapey, String Quartet No. 1 (1946), IV, mm. 58-9. The viola and cello play the second countersubject in canon at the unison. © 1958 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.
During the first half of the movement, Shapey presents the three subjects in constantly shifting contrapuntal combinations. There is a clear point of structural articulation in m. 70 as the music momentarily comes to a halt, followed by the reintroduction of the first countersubject by the two violins in m. 71, echoing its first entrance in m. 12. This structural parallelism effectively divides the movement into two halves. In the second half of the movement, all three subjects are developed more freely than in the first half, with greater attention to variety of texture and to the creation of large dramatic gestures. For example, the main subject is altered and divided between the voices in mm. 86-93 (see Ex. 1.46). Similarly, the second countersubject is presented both by the cello and violin I in mm. 110-7, with the violin playing sixteenth-note triplets and thirty-second-note quadruplets, jeté (not shown).

Example 1.46  Division of the main subject between the voices, in Ralph Shapey, String Quartet No. 1 (1946), IV, mm. 86-7. © 1958 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.
Shapey generates a sense of pitch centricity in the fourth movement by resolving the closing presentation of the main subject (mm. 141-54) on C, the same pc that he uses at the end of the opening statement (not shown).

The broadly conceived String Quartet No. 1 was an impressive accomplishment for the twenty-five-year-old Shapey. He employed compositional devices that he would use again in the future, such as dramatic framing gestures at the beginning and end of sections and movements. Shapey would use species counterpoint as a source for musical ideas in his Sonata for Violin and Piano, written in 1949-50 (see chapter 2).

In December 1946, Shapey composed a short Prelude for piano (see Ex. 1.47) to honor Wolpe’s long-time patron, Else Schlomann, on her birthday.\(^{86}\) It is possible that several of Wolpe’s students composed works for this occasion. A substantial piece for piano by Isaac Nemiroff bears the inscription, “To dear Schlo on her birthday, with appreciation and love, Isaac.” Shapey’s work is entitled, “Prelude for Piano, To Schlo,” and is inscribed with the date “1946.”\(^{87}\)

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\(^{87}\) Shapey’s unpublished Prelude is included in the Shapey Papers, Box 22. Nemiroff’s piece, copied neatly on seven sheets of twelve-line Passentino paper, is dated 12 December 1946 at the end of the score. It is listed as “Schlo’s Piano Piece” in the Finding Aid for the Nemiroff Collection at Stony Brook University Library. Dr. Isaac Nemiroff Collection, Stony Brook University Special Collections & University Archives, Box 7, F27.
Example 1.47  Ralph Shapey, Prelude for Piano (1946). Shapey Papers, Box 22. By permission of the Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

Moderato rubato ($\nu = 72$)
Both Shapey’s one-page Prelude and Nemiroff’s longer work are written in similar Schoenbergian idioms. Shapey uses unordered pitch sets in both their vertical and horizontal forms. The Prelude is built around a measure-long rhythmic and motivic configuration that is constantly varied. Austin Clarkson has pointed out Shapey’s rearrangement of basic shapes throughout the Prelude. Shapey makes clear use of small pitch sets, following Wolpe’s practice. The dyad, G#(Ab)–A, is employed prominently (mm. 1, 3, 5, 8, 9) in both horizontal and vertical forms, as is the trichord, G#(Ab)–D–Eb (mm. 1-2, 4, 5, 6-7, 8). Although the two pc sets do not interact, they can be perceived as part of a larger collection centered around the pc, Ab. Tritones are the dominant interval in the Prelude, as they are in A Dream Within a Dream, but they are not used within simultaneities in the surprising final measure.

The Prelude is subdivided into three segments, each of which concludes with a sustained chord. The chord at the end of m. 4, marked by a ritenuto, demarcates segment 1. The second segment (mm. 5-7) serves as an elaboration of the gestures of mm. 1-2. This segment concludes with the chord at the end of m. 7, marked by a Luftpause. The tetrachord, Ab3–E4–B#4–C#5, precedes the end of both segments 1 and 2, perhaps as a formal “signal” (mm. 3, 7). Measures 8-9 function as a kind of “recapitulation.” The treble line of m. 8 reproduces the pc sequence of the melodic line of m. 1-2, up to the end of beat 1 of m. 2, with rhythmic and registral alterations. The six pcs of the final measure (m. 9) are divided into three dyads, A–Ab, D–C# and F#–C. These dyads are rearranged so as to create the first consonant triad of the entire piece, F#1–D3–A3, and a fifth plus major seventh, Db4–Ab4–C7, the dissonant quality of which is mitigated by the registral arrangement of the chord. C7, the highest note of the Prelude, functions not only as a component of the trichord, but also as an overtone of Ab4.

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88 Clarkson, “Ralph Shapey’s Apprenticeship,” 397-8.
Shapey’s next completed composition was the Piano Quintet (1947), which represented the culmination of his work in the twelve months following his return to studies with Wolpe. The score is dated April 1947, and is dedicated to Joy Tudor, sister of pianist David Tudor. David Tudor was both a composition student of Stefan Wolpe and a piano student of Irma Wolpe at the time.\(^8\)

The musical language of the Quintet is assertively atonal. Shapey employs what he was soon to describe as “the free 12-tone technic of sound”\(^9\) that reflected Wolpe’s teaching about the music of the Second Viennese School. The angular instrumental writing is coupled with frequent metric changes (see Ex. 1.48).

\(^9\) Ralph Shapey, Guggenheim Fellowship application for 1951. By permission of the J. S. Guggenheim Memorial Foundation.
Example 1.48  Atonal counterpoint, in Ralph Shapey, Piano Quintet (1947), I, mm. 249-52. © 1958 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.
The first movement has a large-scale but conventional formal design. The second movement is a passacaglia that incorporates a scherzo (m. 192) and a fugue (m. 286). Shapey clearly conceived the quintet as an academic exercise. He carefully annotated the score of the work in red pencil, noting all of the musical devices that he employed, such as “counterpoint,” “sequence,” “canon,” “fugue” and “cantus firmus.” He marked the formal divisions of the work as well. Measure 21 of the first movement is labeled, “2nd announcement.” After a fermata, a new episode beginning in m. 46 is designated, “second section.” Shapey duly arrives at the “Development” (m. 77), “Recapitulation” (m. 211) and “Coda” (m. 234).\textsuperscript{91}

**Free Composition: 1947-49**

After Shapey completed three large works between March 1946 and April 1947, Wolpe permitted him to write more freely. Shapey’s works of 1947-49 show him attempting to respond to the evolution of Wolpe’s style during the 1940s. Shapey began to assert his artistic independence while still in thrall to his teacher’s fascinating ideas. Soon after the completion of the Piano Quintet, he began to compose a violin concerto. A fragment of a first movement that breaks off with the inscription, “To be continued,” is included in the Shapey Papers at the University of Chicago Library.\textsuperscript{92} Shapey employs the gestural and harmonic language of the recently completed Piano Quintet in the Violin Concerto fragment. The incomplete concerto is marked by Shapey’s use of orchestrally impractical variable meters (see Ex. 1.49). Shapey

\textsuperscript{91} The Shapey Papers include two annotated copies of the score of Shapey’s Piano Quintet. Shapey Papers, Boxes 23, 46. The Juilliard School Library also owns an annotated copy of the Quintet.

\textsuperscript{92} The fragment consists of 29 large sheets and is dated 6 April 1947. Since Shapey habitually dated his manuscripts both when he started a piece and when he completed it, “6 April” evidently indicates the beginning of his work on the Violin Concerto fragment. Shapey Papers, Box 24.
included the fragmentary concerto draft in his list of works when he submitted the first of several unsuccessful Guggenheim applications in October 1950.\(^{93}\)

\(^{93}\) “First Movement of Violin Concerto (incomplete).” Ralph Shapey, Guggenheim Fellowship application for 1951. List of Musical Compositions, Accomplishments No. 4, 1. By permission of the J. S. Guggenheim Memorial Foundation.
Example 1.49  Variable meters, in Ralph Shapey, Violin Concerto draft (1947), mm. 55-9. The score is notated in C. Shapey Papers, Box 24. By permission of the Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.
Shapey may have abandoned this homage to Schoenberg’s iconic Violin Concerto (1936) due to the impracticality of its harmonically and rhythmically complex language for orchestral performance in the concert world of 1947. What may have been possible but extremely difficult for a chamber ensemble would not have been performable by an American orchestra in the years immediately following World War II. Only a few years later, Dimitri Mitropoulos, at the time co-principal conductor of the New York Philharmonic, wrote to Shapey, warning him about rhythmic complexity in orchestral music:

If you ever write an orchestra piece, be a little more practical in your annotation, because I know the troubles I experienced in making the orchestra understand in works of Mr. Schnabel, who, in a way, wrote the same asymmetrical and complicated bar division. . . . [T]he tragic result of so much complication is that people like you and Mr. Schnabel or Mr. Wolpe will have very few chances to bring their message to bigger audiences.

New York Philharmonic programs of the period illustrate the acceptable parameters of style for orchestral works during the late 1940s. During the 1946-47 subscription season, the Philharmonic performed new or recent American works by William Schuman, David Diamond, Samuel Barber, Norman Dello Joio, Paul Creston, Elie Siegmeister, Peter Mennin and William Grant Still, all tonal composers. Shostakovich was the most popular contemporary European composer. Not until Mitropoulos took charge of the Philharmonic in 1949 did it regularly perform works by the members of the Second Viennese School.

In 1948, Shapey took on new responsibilities when Wolpe founded the short-lived Contemporary Music School in New York. From 1948-50, Shapey was a member of the faculty.

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94 Artur Schnabel (1882-1951), pianist and composer.
95 Dimitri Mitropoulos, letter to Shapey, 25 September 1950. Shapey Papers, Box 3.
97 On the founding of the Contemporary Music School, see Clarkson, “Ralph Shapey’s Apprenticeship,” 396.
of the Contemporary Music School, teaching violin, theory and composition. He also served as the vice-president of the board of directors of the school in 1948-49, and president of the board of directors in 1949-50.

After Shapey set aside the ambitious Violin Concerto project, he wrote a set of three contrasting settings of Carl Sandburg’s poem, “Fog,” for soprano and piano, dated 6 July 1948. In his three settings of Sandburg’s poem, Shapey employs the Schoenbergian harmonic idiom that he had adopted in the Piano Quintet and the Violin Concerto fragment. Shapey uses ics in a stratified manner. He presents ics 1 and 2 repeatedly as simultaneities in the piano accompaniment of “Fog I” (not shown). Shapey also pairs ics 5 and 6 in the piano accompaniment (see Ex. 1.50).

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98 Ibid., 402.
99 Ralph Shapey, Guggenheim Fellowship application for 1951, acknowledged 14 October 1950. By permission of the J. S. Guggenheim Memorial Foundation.
100 The “Fog” songs are unpublished. A copy of the songs is included in the Shapey Papers, Box 20.
Example 1.50 Systematic use of ics 5 and 6, in Ralph Shapey, “Fog I” (1948), mm. 14-5. Shapey Papers, Box 20. By permission of the Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

By way of contrast, Shapey uses clusters in the piano accompaniment of “Fog II.” Both the vocal line and the piano accompaniment incorporate many fourths and fifths (i5 and i7) (see Ex. 1.51).
In mm 13-5, Shapey employs Lisztian rapid sixteenth-note alternating fifths between the hands, separated by ip11. They are transformed into alternating fourths and fifths, separated by ip6, in mm. 17-8 (not shown).

In “Fog III,” Shapey uses glissandi that cover the entire keyboard as well as a diatonic cluster (m. 3) reminiscent of “Fog II.” The thematic ideas in the piano accompaniment recall A Dream Within a Dream, written seven years before (see Ex. 1.52).
The soprano alternates between slow glissandi (see Ex. 1.53) and recitation of the text over the piano accompaniment in “Fog I.”
While the voice primarily imitates the piano in “Fog II,” it gradually moves downward through the circle of fifths during “Fog III” (see Ex. 1.52), contrasting with Shapey’s dramatic piano writing.

Shapey’s next project was the first movement of Three Essays on Thomas Wolfe, which he completed in September 1948. He set aside this work, however, to write his String Quartet No. 2. The completion of String Quartet No. 2 in January 1949 marked the conclusion of Shapey’s formal studies.

Example 1.53  Vocal glissandi, in Ralph Shapey, “Fog I” (1948), m. 8. Shapey Papers, Box 20. By permission of the Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

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101 Theodore Presser Co. publishes both score and parts of Shapey’s String Quartet No. 2: 11440571S (score); 11440571P (parts).

102 Shapey later commented: “After I had written my Second Quartet, which was finished, as I said, either ’48 or ’49 . . . I would say that, from that point on, I was not formally studying music with him [Wolpe] any longer. Even that, I didn’t study with him. I wrote the quartet as a so-called friend and colleague. I let him see it . . . There were no longer formal week by week--or any such thing--studies.” Carol K. Baron, interview with Ralph Shapey, transcript, 76. Wolpe/Baron Archive.
String Quartet No. 2 was the first of several works in which Shapey attempted to assimilate the influence of Bartók. Shapey was one of many composers in both Europe and America who attempted to integrate the Hungarian composer’s harmonic and coloristic techniques into their music during the years immediately after the end of World War II. They inevitably adopted some of his stylistic fingerprints as well. Shapey’s String Quartets No. 2 (1948-49), No. 3 (1950-51) and No. 5 (1957-58) draw on the timbres and textures of Bartók’s quartets. Shapey uses Bartókian gestures both to dramatize and simplify his fundamentally Schoenbergian language.

Shapey does not individuate the members of the ensemble in String Quartet No. 2, nor does he use dramatic contrasts of register and density as an organizational strategy. The techniques of academic counterpoint, so important in the second movement of the Piano Quintet, play a dominant role in the quartet. Shapey also employs Wolpe’s ideas about the systematic use of intervals.

The themes of String Quartet No. 2 undergo elaboration rather than transformation. Consequently, Shapey’s musical discourse has a circular quality. Movement I has a two-part structure. Violin I introduces the main theme in m. 3 (see Ex. 1.54). Both the main theme and violin II’s accompanimental countertheme are distinguished by their repeated use of ics 5 and 6. The countertheme is continuously repeated with slight variations, while the main theme is alternately presented in its original form and in chromatically inflected variants (mm. 6-8, 10-11) until Shapey deconstructs its intervallic content (mm. 30-7). Shapey uses double- and triple-stop chords in m. 38 to create a structural boundary (see Ex. 1.55).
Example 1.54  Main theme, in Ralph Shapey, String Quartet No. 2 (1948-49), I, mm. 3-5. © 1958 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

Example 1.55  Use of chords to create a structural boundary, in Ralph Shapey, String Quartet No. 2 (1948-49), I, mm. 37-8. © 1958 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

In measures 39-61, Shapey recapitulates the first section with a busier and thicker
polyphony. The hitherto silent cello enters the polyphonic texture in m. 42, presenting the main theme in canon with the viola at i11 while the violins play the countertheme in canon at i1. At the end of the movement, Shapey repeats the slashing chordal gesture of m. 38, but in expanded form (mm. 58-60, not shown).

Movement II is monothematic. The theme is a rearrangement of the intervalllic components of the first movement theme (m. 62, not shown). It is first stated by the viola, and then elaborated by all of the members of the ensemble (mm. 63-8). At the end of the movement, Shapey presents a truncated, intervalllically compressed version of the theme in which adjacencies are limited to iics 1, 2 and 3 (see Ex. 1.56).

**Example 1.56** Truncated theme, in Ralph Shapey, String Quartet No. 2 (1948-49), II, mm. 75-6. © 1958 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

The final reiteration of this truncated theme leads directly to the third movement
passacaglia. The cello introduces the passacaglia theme (see Ex. 1.57), which begins with the concluding thematic variant of the second movement and its inversion. The final segment of the passacaglia theme includes cols 5 and 6, echoing the theme and countertheme of movement I. During the first two statements of the passacaglia theme (mm. 77-88), violin II and the viola alternately present its opening motive (the truncated second movement theme) in augmentation. Both instruments employ inversion as well. During the second statement of the passacaglia theme, violin I presents the entire theme, segmented, and in diminution and inversion (see Ex. 1.57).

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103 Movement II of the Piano Quintet is also a passacaglia.

104 Shapey reverses the directionality of the concluding dyad of the motive. He later labeled this procedure a “perversion.” He defined a “perversion” as follows: it “[employs] the same intervallic structure as the motif but not the same directionality.” See Shapey, A Basic Course, 13.
The theme is later presented in diminution and inversion by the entire ensemble (mm. 96ff.), permitting Shapey to intensify the pace of his polyphony. Bartókian glissandi (mm. 112-25) dominate the second half of the movement. Both the first and second halves of the movement end with a development of the final segment of the passacaglia theme, noticeable by its use of large intervals.

Shapey combines the themes of the first and third movements of the quartet in movement
IV. The cello presents the beginning of the passacaglia theme, while the theme and countertheme of movement I are restated by violins I and II. The first half of the movement concludes with glissandi and Bartókian “slashing” chords (mm. 174-82). The second half opens with a canonic presentation of the passacaglia theme (mm. 185-93) (see Ex. 1.58).


The quartet ends with a passage of repeated ff chords, again reminiscent of Bartók’s
quartets. Shapey’s intermittent reliance on Bartókian gestures in String Quartet No. 2 spoils what
is otherwise an accomplished and individual work.105

The Juilliard Quartet premiered String Quartet No. 2 on 27 March 1950 at Times Hall in
New York.106 The concert consisted entirely of works by members of the faculty of Wolpe’s
Contemporary Music School, and concluded with the second performance of Wolpe’s Quartet
for Trumpet, Tenor Saxophone, Percussion and Piano, conducted by Shapey. Shapey later
claimed that “everybody” hailed his String Quartet No. 2 as the next great string quartet after
Schoenberg and Bartók.107 In fact, New York Times reviewer Carter Harman was not
enthusiastic. He wrote,

The Juilliard Quartet’s rendition of Ralph Shapey’s String Quartet [No. 2] also
approached the musical tradition of melody and rhythm, but became preoccupied with
cuteness in the form of glissandi. . . . It is to be hoped that the composers will soon
develop musical personalities of their own.108

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105 Shapey taught Bartók’s quartets when he was an instructor at Wolpe’s Contemporary Music
School in New York. Years later, he told Carol K. Baron, “I think he had to go away, Stefan
[Wolpe], or something; and he turned everything over to me. There was an analysis class that he
was doing, I think on the Bartók Fifth Quartet, and I had to take it over.” Carol K. Baron,
interview with Ralph Shapey, transcript, 69 [editorial additions by Carol K. Baron and Barry
Wiener]. Wolpe/Baron Archive. When Baron interviewed the composer Edward Levy, he
recounted, “I began to study with Ralph [at the Contemporary Music School] in 1948 . . . Ralph
started me with Bartók and Beethoven . . . Bartók’s String Quartets from 1 through 6 and
Beethoven’s String Quartets from 18 backwards, or 16 backwards, this way. Ralph didn’t kid
around. . . . We [Wolpe and his students] spent a lot of time on the Bartók quartets. Remember,
this is just after Bartók died, and there was a tremendous influence by Bartók around the late
forties.” Carol K. Baron, interview with Edward Levy, New York, 28 October [1975?],
transcript, 7-8 [editorial additions by Barry Wiener]. Wolpe/Baron Archive.

106 When he was interviewed by Carol K. Baron, Shapey explained: “Yeah, this is when the
Juilliard Quartet’s] arm was twisted, and they did my Second String Quartet, which raised a
hackle from everybody. That’s, I mean, basically, all I remember about that particular concert,
you know. The critic, I’m sure, panned it.” Carol K. Baron, interview with Ralph Shapey,
transcript, 186. Wolpe/Baron Archive. The Juilliard Quartet recorded Shapey’s quartet a week
after the premiere. See Ralph Shapey, Guggenheim Fellowship application for 1951,
Accomplishments No. 4, 2. By permission of the J. S. Guggenheim Memorial Foundation.

107 Carol K. Baron, interview with Ralph Shapey, transcript, 77. Wolpe/Baron Archive.

March 1950: 27.
Shapey was only one of many composers who attempted to assimilate the influence of both Bartók and Schoenberg in the late 1940s. While his use of timbre and texture in the quartet betrays his indebtedness to his models, his use of repetition and elaboration to create a circular narrative allied him with radical trends.

Mastery and Discipleship

In 1949, Shapey composed music for the puppet ballet in act II of Federico García Lorca’s play, *The Shoemaker’s Prodigious Wife* [*La zapatera prodigiosa* (1926-30, rev. 1933)].¹⁰⁹ There is no documentary evidence to explain Shapey’s involvement with García Lorca’s play.¹¹⁰ It was, however, staged in New York shortly after Shapey completed the ballet music, suggesting that he may have been asked to contribute to the production, but that the director rejected his work.¹¹¹ After Shapey finished working on the theater project, he resumed work on *Three Essays on Thomas Wolfe*, adding two additional movements to the first ‘Essay’ between July and September 1949.¹¹²

*Three Essays* is undoubtedly the most significant of all of Shapey’s early works. Together with its purely musical importance, it has a special position in Shapey’s career as the first of his

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¹¹⁰ Shapey’s unpublished score is dated 2 June 1949. Shapey Papers, Box 24.
works to be broadcast or recorded. Pianist David Tudor performed the third movement of *Three Essays on Thomas Wolfe* on WNYC’s “Chamber Music Time” on 26 November 1949.\(^{113}\)

*Three Essays* represents a radical departure from the works of 1946-47. Shapey employs the gestural and harmonic language of Piano Sonata No. 1 (1946) within a rhythmically free, ametrical context. The work is entirely unbarred. The clearly defined phrases and firmly articulated rhythms of Shapey’s earlier music have been discarded.\(^ {114}\) The first and third movements are multisectional, cyclic structures. Shapey unifies the *Essays* by using similar thematic material, and similar kinds of sectional contrasts, in all three movements.

Shapey’s reference to the novelist Thomas Wolfe (1900-38) in the title of the *Essays* is directly related to its musical syntax and structure. Shapey discerned resemblances to his own evolving ideas about musical time and space in Wolfe’s prose, and inserted passages from Wolfe’s writings into the score in order to articulate his musical concepts. On the first page of the manuscript of “Essay I,” Shapey wrote out several possible subtitles above the title, including “Of Time and Space,” “Essay on Time,” “Essay on Time and Space,” and “Of Time – an Essay.” He crossed them all out, however. Rather than employing subtitles, he inserted an epigraph, chosen from Wolfe’s novel, *Look Homeward, Angel* (1929), before each movement. These epigraphs convey images of the suspension of time and space: “[T]he eternal movement had stopped, suspended in the Timeless architecture of the Absolute.”\(^ {115}\)

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\(^{113}\) Ralph Shapey, Guggenheim Fellowship application for 1951. *Accomplishments No. 4*, 2. By permission of the J. S. Guggenheim Memorial Foundation. There is an air check copy of this broadcast in the Shapey Papers, Box 155.

\(^{114}\) See the unpublished essay by Gordon E. Marsh, “Shapey at the Piano: Evolution of a Style.”

\(^{115}\) Epigraph to “Essay I.”
Shapey did not intend to present an interpretation of Wolfe’s novel by selecting brief excerpts from the work. Rather, he chose the texts from an anthology of Wolfe’s writings.\footnote{The Face of a Nation: Poetical Passages from the Writings of Thomas Wolfe, ed. John Hall Wheelock (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939). The epigraph for “Essay I” is presented under the heading, “Fixity and Change,” and is printed on p. 18.} In a 1983 interview with Vivian Perlis, Shapey discussed his use of Wolfe’s prose:

> Perlis: And what was the connection to Thomas Wolfe? Only that it was—your admiration for his writing at that period of time?

> Shapey: Yes, early admiration for his writings, and those particular passages, you know, meant something special, and on the score, you know, I quote the passages and that’s all, as the inspirational idea.\footnote{Vivan Perlis, interview with Ralph Shapey, Chicago, 16-17 April 1983, transcript, 76. Oral History of American Music, Yale University.}

Shapey employs organizational techniques in the Essays that are clearly related to those of Wolfe’s Battle Piece.\footnote{Shapey heard Battle Piece repeatedly before its premiere, listening to David Tudor as he practiced the work. Email from Austin Clarkson to the author, 29 January 2010.} While Battle Piece is a palindromic work in seven sections,\footnote{See Austin Clarkson, preface to the score of Wolpe, Battle Piece, p. II.} Three Essays on Thomas Wolfe contains multiple structural symmetries. The first movement has an episodic form. The stately opening idea (see Ex. 1.59) and its permutations return periodically throughout the movement, somewhat in the manner of a rondo. The opening music alternates with faster, scherzo-like passages (see Ex. 1.60). Shapey melds the two kinds of thematic gestures together (pp. 16-7, not shown) before the movement concludes with a grand peroration in octaves, using a new slow, proclamatory theme. This theme is decorated by elements of the opening idea (see Ex. 1.61).

Adagio maestoso ($\frac{\dot{}}{\text{48}}$)


*poco a poco accel.*
As in previous compositions, Shapey uses intervals as thematic and structural elements in the *Essays*. His coupling of repeated thirds and fifths (i3 and i7 dyads) as thematic elements in the first movement (see Ex. 1.62) gives the music tonal resonances.
In the slow, quiet second movement, Shapey decorates atmospheric cluster chords with delicate filigree patterns (see Ex. 1.63). He intermittently introduces thematic figures similar to those in the first movement, unifying the Essays as a cycle (not shown).
The third movement presents contrasting ideas that are rotated in a kaleidoscopic arrangement. The opening theme recalls the passacaglia theme in String Quartet No. 2 (see Ex. 1.64). Presented together, this theme and its countertheme evoke fugal procedures (see Ex. 1.65).

Shapey introduces an additional theme (see Ex. 1.66) that clearly alludes to the opening theme of part III of Wolpe’s *Battle Piece* (see Ex. 1.34), which he had previously used as a model for themes in his Piano Sonata. He combines all three themes in counterpoint twice in the course of the movement (not shown).

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![Example 1.65](image)


![Example 1.66](image)

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120 In addition to his November 1949 premiere of the third movement of Shapey’s *Essays*, David Tudor gave the first performance of Wolpe’s *Battle Piece* on 11 March 1950, at McMillin Academic Theater, Columbia University, New York.

121 “Essay III,” p. 35, system 1; p. 43, system 1.
Shapey elaborates his ideas rather than developing them in the traditional sense. An augmented version of the first theme (see Ex. 1.67) and a version of the first theme in close position (see Ex. 1.68) (later presented in diminution, using thirty-second notes [not shown]) play a major part in the development of the movement. Shapey’s use of these techniques in the *Essays* recalls the Piano Quintet (1947), in which he extensively employs the devices of academic counterpoint.


There is an essential unity of language and type of discourse throughout the *Essays*. Shapey maintains a careful balance between his use of traditional and progressive procedures.

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123 For a contrary view, see Clarkson, “Ralph Shapey’s Apprenticeship with Stefan Wolpe,” 399.
The relatively conventional “framing” material that appears periodically throughout the first movement sets the stage for the freer discourse of the rest of the movement and the following movements. In the third movement, supposedly the most freely ordered of the *Essays*, Shapey employs procedures borrowed from fugue to organize his ideas.

Despite their resemblances to Wolpe’s *Battle Piece*, the *Essays* display an originality of conception. Shapey’s formulation of an essentially circular musical discourse differs radically from Wolpe’s dialectic of the continuous permutation of ideas, although the harmonic and gestural languages of the two pieces are similar. Much later in life, Shapey reconsidered this forgotten piece. It was published by Theodore Presser in 1980, and was given its first complete performance by pianist Lisa Moore on 27 September 1981 at Carnegie Hall, during the finals of the 1981 Carnegie Hall International American Music Competition, sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation.124

Shapey completed *Three Essays on Thomas Wolfe* ten years after his first meeting with Stefan Wolpe in 1939. The *Essays* symbolize his aspiration, as an ambitious young composer, to master the most sophisticated elements of his teacher’s musical language. They reflect the fact that he was still strongly influenced by Wolpe’s music and ideas. Shapey was not yet capable of assimilating the techniques and characteristic gestures that he had derived from his models into an individual compositional style.

Shapey’s search for his own compositional voice was his central concern in the following decade. He also needed to gain recognition for his music, and to establish himself in the musical world. Shapey’s dual struggle to attain artistic self-realization and to gain professional success determined the arc of his career during the early 1950s.

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124 Thanks to Sylvia Kahan for this information.
CHAPTER TWO: CHOICES, 1949-54

Absorbing the Lessons of the Masters

Last Sunday night a group of fifty persons heard the preview-premier of Sonata 1949 by Stefan Wolpe. . . . In my [view] Mr. Wolpe in this sonata finally reached his peak as a mature composer. His flux of melodic invention, harmonic circulation and rhythmic drive was evident in a masterful composition. . . . I congratulate Mr. Wolpe on his new found expression, since this work presents a large gap from his earlier works, and to the performers for a job exceptionally well done.

Ralph Shapey

During the years 1949-54, Ralph Shapey followed a zigzag path between a new type of musical discourse and conventional ideas about the continuity of a musical narrative as he searched for a language of his own (see Table 2.1 and Fig. 2.1). Although Shapey had begun to discard traditional concepts of continuity in the works of 1948-49, his admiration for Wolpe’s stylistically eclectic Sonata for Violin and Piano (1949) seems to have prompted second thoughts about his compositional path. Shapey responded to Wolpe’s Sonata with his own Sonata for Violin and Piano (1949-50), a much more conservative work than *Three Essays on Thomas Wolfe*, the piece that immediately preceded it.

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2 A copy of the pencil manuscript of the Sonata for Violin and Piano is included in the Shapey Papers, Box 24. The Juilliard Library owns a copy of the holograph score.
Table 2.1 Ralph Shapey: Chronology, 1949-53

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sonata for Violin and Piano</td>
<td>26 October 1949–8 January 1950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cond., prem. of Wolpe, Sax Qt.</td>
<td>11 March 1950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>String Quartet No. 3</td>
<td>31 January 1950–20 January 1951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Guggenheim Fellowship application</td>
<td>1951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Seven Little Pieces</em> for Piano</td>
<td>22 February–10 March 1951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cantata, narr., vocal soloists, small orchestra</td>
<td>22 January–17 June 1951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edgard Varèse, letter of recomm. for Shapey</td>
<td>26 November 1951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fantasy for Orchestra</td>
<td>9 July–28 August 1951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hon. mention, Gershwin Memorial Contest</td>
<td>1951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sonate</em> for Oboe and Piano</td>
<td>11 November 1951–26 February 1952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Suite of Four Pieces</em>, piano</td>
<td>5 March–20 April 1952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symphony No. 1, orchestra</td>
<td>19 May–26 August 1952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oboe Quartet, oboe and string trio</td>
<td>2 November–18 December 1952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>String Quartet No. 4</td>
<td>4 June–9 September 1953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank Huntington Beebe Fellowship Award</td>
<td>1953</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beebe Fellowship trip to Europe</td>
<td>September 1953–July 1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Qt. No. 4, prem., New Music Quartet</td>
<td>26 May 1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sonate</em> for Cello and Piano</td>
<td>15 October 1953–1 January 1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Burnt Norton</em> [sketch], narr. and piano</td>
<td>December 1953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Piece in the Form of Sonate-Variations</em></td>
<td>2 January–15 February 1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>For 11 Instruments</em> [sketch]</td>
<td>January–March 1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerto for Clarinet and Chamber Group</td>
<td>24 March–7 June 1954</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The initial notes of the violin part in the *Largo maestoso* first movement allude to the beginning of Wolpe’s recently completed Violin Sonata (see Exx. 2.1a and 2.1b).\(^3\) Despite this superficial resemblance, the two works begin quite differently. Shapey presents a slowly developing narrative that contrasts with Wolpe’s quickly evolving dialectic. Wolpe’s music embodies a complex web of ic relationships, while Shapey employs the interval of the tritone (ic6) as the primary element of his discourse. The violin similarly plays an accompaniment consisting almost exclusively of tritone figures when the piano presents the second theme of the first movement of Shapey’s Sonata (see Ex. 2.2). Shapey had not yet overcome his obsession with the tritone, demonstrated years before in *A Dream Within a Dream* (1941).


Example 2.1b  Commencement of the violin line with the progression, Db–G–D, in Ralph Shapey, Sonata for Violin and Piano (1949-50), I, p. 1, system 1 (cf. Ex. 2.1a). Shapey Papers, Box 24. By permission of the Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.
Shapey builds intensity by the gradual diminution of rhythmic values to thirty-second notes (see Ex. 2.3). He then changes both rhythm and texture, introducing a dramatic “March,” in which the violin develops the opening theme above a piano accompaniment of alternating dyads (not shown). Shapey rounds off the first movement with a return to the opening thematic material. This concluding episode parallels the interlude between the two presentations of the second theme. Both episodes begin with ascending thirty-second-note figures in the piano and are marked sixteenth note = 126 (not shown).
Example 2.3  Diminution of rhythmic values, in Ralph Shapey, Sonata for Violin and Piano (1949-50), I, p. 9, system 1 (cf. Ex. 2.2). Shapey Papers, Box 24. By permission of the Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

![Example 2.3](image)

The second movement is a vigorous scherzo in variable meters. The rapid repeated dyads, primarily octaves and fifths, in both the violin and piano parts recall Bartók’s music (see Exx. 2.4a and b). Major and minor seconds and sevenths (ics 1 and 2) are also prominent in the abrasive harmonic language of the movement. Shapey sometimes presents ic1 systematically in the melodic line (mm. 29-34, 59-63). In one passage, he presents ic1 in both the melodic line and the piano accompaniment (see Ex. 2.5).
Example 2.4a  Dyads in fifths, in Ralph Shapey, Sonata for Violin and Piano (1949-50), II, mm. 1-4. Shapey Papers, Box 24. By permission of the Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

\[ \text{\(\mathbf{\text{\textit{\textdollar}}}\text{\textbf{184}}} \text{ Allegro vivace} \]

\text{Violin}

\text{Piano}

Example 2.4b  Dyads in fifths and ninths, in Béla Bartók, String Quartet No. 3 (1927), SZ85, Seconda parte, conclusion. Note that there is an engraving mistake in the final measure; the cello chord should be marked ff. © Copyright 1929 Boosey & Hawkes, Inc. Copyright renewed. Reprinted by permission.
The third movement, for violin solo, serves as an interlude within the formal plan of the sonata. Like the first movement, the third movement is unbarred and rhythmically free. The opening figures are separated by a tritone, and are succeeded by a series of tritone dyads that echo the main theme of the first movement (see Ex. 2.6).

Example 2.6  Tritone dyads in the melodic line, in Ralph Shapey, Sonata for Violin and Piano (1949-50), III, beginning (cf. Exx. 2.1b and 2.2). Shapey Papers, Box 24. By permission of the Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.
The monothematic fourth movement is a set of variations. In contrast to his emphasis on the tritone in movement I, Shapey employs fourths and fifths, particularly paired dyads, a half-step apart, as central thematic elements (see Ex. 2.7).

**Example 2.7** Fourth and fifths (ic5) used as thematic elements, in Ralph Shapey, Sonata for Violin and Piano (1949-50), IV, mm. 99-102. Shapey Papers, Box 24. By permission of the Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

The music evolves through an oscillation between processes of rhythmic diminution and augmentation. Shapey’s use of rhythmic diminution and augmentation in the fourth movement is comparable to his use of rhythmic diminution in the first movement (see Ex. 2.3). Together with his use of rhythmic contraction and expansion to construct the musical narrative, Shapey employs layered textures in movement IV that evoke fifth (mixed) species counterpoint.

The opening section illustrates Shapey’s method. The violin and piano together state the first two bars of the theme, which has a quarter-note pulse (mm. 1-2). The piano then completes the theme and adds an accompaniment with an eighth-note pulse (mm. 3-11). In m. 12, Shapey introduces a third layer. The violin takes over the presentation of the theme, while the bass line
of the piano continues the original accompanimental pattern. The piano’s treble line now adds an additional voice with more complex rhythmic motion and a sixteenth-note pulse (see Ex. 2.8).

Example 2.8  Rhythmic layering, in Ralph Shapey, Sonata for Violin and Piano (1949-50), IV, mm. 12-3. Shapey Papers, Box 24. By permission of the Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

Extending his deliberate analogy to species counterpoint, Shapey employs the theme as a cantus firmus (mm. 48-65), presenting it in a mixture of whole and half notes in the bass line of the piano (see Ex. 2.9). Similarly, later in the movement, the violin presents the theme of the first movement in long note values (mm. 136-49, not shown). All in all, the finale of the Violin Sonata is a clever adaptation of contrapuntal procedures that displays both Shapey’s solid technical grounding and his compositional ingenuity.
The only evidence for a performance of the Violin Sonata during Shapey’s lifetime is a letter from Wolpe to his student, Nettie Simons. Wolpe commented on the work and noted the influence of his own music on Shapey.\(^4\) Miranda Cuckson, violin, and Blair McMillen, piano, gave the concert premiere of the Violin Sonata on 8 September 2009 at the Mannes School of Music. They also recorded the work on Centaur CRC 3103.

Unlike the concise String Quartet No. 2, Shapey’s String Quartet No. 3 (1950-51)\(^5\) is a large five-movement work. The first movement is an allegro that begins with a slow introduction. The second movement is an adagio, the third a scherzo. The fourth movement is a second slow movement, while the finale is an energetic Bartókian folk dance. String Quartet No.


\(^5\) Theodore Presser Co. publishes score and parts for String Quartet No. 3. Score: 11441135S; parts: 11441135P. I have no information about performances of the work.
3 represents Shapey’s most ambitious attempt to assimilate Bartók’s style and compositional techniques. Shapey copied both the formal plan of Bartók’s String Quartet No. 5 (a five-movement arch-form scheme with movements II and IV as slow movements) and the themes and textures of Bartók’s music. The opening of the fifth movement of Shapey’s piece is modeled on the opening theme of the first movement of Bartók’s Fifth Quartet (see Exx. 2.10a and b).

Example 2.10a  Béla Bartók, String Quartet No. 5 (1934), SZ102, I, mm. 1-2. © Copyright 1936 Boosey & Hawkes, Inc. Copyright renewed. Reprinted by permission.
Shapey also imitates other surface features of Bartók’s style. He employs a type of pizzicato that he describes in the score of String Quartet No. 3 as a “guitar-like strumming,” reminiscent of the final bars of Bartók’s String Quartet No. 6 (1939) (see Exx. 2.11a and b).

Example 2.10b  Ralph Shapey, String Quartet No. 3 (1950-51), V, mm. 1-3 (cf. Ex. 2.10a). © 1959 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

\[ \frac{d}{4} = 216 \ (\boldsymbol{\Phi} = 72) \]

Example 2.11a  Strummed pizzicato, in Béla Bartók, String Quartet No. 6 (1939), SZ114, IV, conclusion. © Copyright 1941 by Hawkes & Son (London), Ltd. Reprinted by permission.
Shapey imitates Bartók’s use of glissandi within a string quartet texture, and his characteristic dramatic manner of concluding a fast movement (see Exx. 2.12a, b and c). The influence of Schoenberg’s music is also evident in the quartet, particularly in the widely spaced atonal lines of the second slow movement (see Ex. 2.13).
Example 2.12a  Glissandi, in Béla Bartók, String Quartet No. 3 (1927), SZ85, Seconda parte, Coda. © Copyright 1929 Boosey & Hawkes, Inc. Copyright renewed. Reprinted by permission.

Example 2.12b  Conclusion of Béla Bartók, String Quartet No. 5 (1934), SZ102. © Copyright 1936 Boosey & Hawkes, Inc. Copyright renewed. Reprinted by permission.
Shortly after Shapey completed String Quartet No. 3, he wrote another work influenced by Bartók, the *Seven Little Pieces* for Piano (1951),\(^6\) miniatures that resemble Bartók’s *Mikrokosmos* (1926-39).\(^7\) The *Seven Little Pieces* are harmonically and rhythmically sophisticated pieces of modest scope, conceived as teaching material. They were recorded by Jacob Maxin, one of Irma Wolpe Rademacher’s most important piano students.\(^8\) Maxin evidently performed the *Seven Little Pieces* as well.\(^9\)

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\(^{6}\) Theodore Presser Co. publishes *Seven Little Pieces* for Piano: #410-41222.


\(^{8}\) Pianist Jacob Maxin (1929-2012) was a student of Eduard Steuermann and Irma Wolpe. He taught at the New England Conservatory from 1968-2002. A copy of Maxin’s recording of the *Seven Little Pieces* for Piano is included in the Shapey Papers, Box 154, and in the Joseph Regenstein Recordings Collection of the University of Chicago Library (CD transfer shapey048). The recording was apparently made between February 1951 and February 1952, insofar as Shapey provided the Guggenheim Foundation with a copy in 1952, but did not list the recording in a February 1951 letter to the Foundation. See Ralph Shapey, letter to Henry Allen Moe,
Movement II is entitled, “Staccato and Legato” (see Ex. 2.14). Shapey’s title and his use of mixed articulations recalls Bartók’s own “Staccato and Legato,” no. 123 of Mikrokosmos (see Ex. 2.15a). Shapey builds musical ideas from the systematic use of ics, a practice similar to Bartók’s method in “Fourths” (see Ex. 2.15b) and “Alternating Thirds,” nos. 131 and 129 of of the Mikrokosmos, respectively.


Secretary General of the J. S. Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, 22 February 1952. By permission of the J. S. Guggenheim Memorial Foundation.

Ralph Shapey, letter to Johanna Schmidt-Grohe of the Bayerischer Rundfunk, 17 December 1956. Shapey Papers, Box 93.
Shapey employs fourths and fifths (ic5) in the treble and thirds and sixths (ics 3 and 4) in the bass. The bass twice states a progression that can be segmented into a series of ic3 and ic4.
dyads: C–A, B–G#–F, G–Eb. The treble presents a progression of ic5 dyads: A/E–F#/C#–A#/D#–F/C–G/D–E/A (see Ex. 2.14). The disposition of intervals is treated in a more complex manner as the movement proceeds. Shapey interchanges ic patterns between treble and bass, as well as occasionally presenting the same ics in both voices.

Movement III is entitled, “Repetitive Finger Staccato” (see Ex. 2.16a). Shapey’s use of rapid staccato figures recalls Bartók’s “Staccato,” no. 124 of Mikrokosmos (see Ex. 2.16b). Shapey employs bitonality in movement III. In mm. 7-9, the bass outlines a dominant seventh chord on E, while the treble presents a segment of the Bb minor scale (see Ex. 2.16a).

Example 2.16a  Bitonality in Ralph Shapey, “Repetitive Finger Staccato,” Seven Little Pieces for Piano (1951), III, mm. 7-9. © 1979 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.
Shapey wrote *Seven Little Pieces* while he was at work on the Cantata for Small Orchestra with Piano, Percussion, Narrator and Three Vocal Soloists (1951).  

The text of the Cantata is by Shapey’s first wife, Sylvia Goldberg Shapey. They married in 1951, the year of its composition. The Cantata is the first piece for which Shapey devised a spatial diagram depicting the positioning of the performers on stage. The number of string, wind and brass players called for by the score is relatively small, but the instrumentation includes the impractical number of twelve percussionists (2-2-1-1/2-1-1/piano/12 perc/6-5-4-3-2). Shapey creates complex, interlocking rhythms and differentiates between layers of contrasting timbres in his writing for

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10 The score of the Cantata is available from the Theodore Presser Co. Rental Library. I have no information about a performance of this work.

11 The spatial diagram for the positioning of the performers depicts a relatively conventional arrangement. The singers and speaker are positioned to the right of the conductor, with the piano on the left. The strings are divided between the right and left sides of the front of the stage, with the winds and brass in the center, facing the conductor. The twelve percussionists are arrayed at the back of the stage. Ralph Shapey, Cantata for Small Orchestra with Piano, Percussion, Narrator and Three Vocal Soloists (1951). Shapey Papers, Box 26.
percussion and piano (see Ex. 2.17). The diatonic bass clusters in the piano (mm. 2ff.) recall the *Fog Songs* (1948).

**Example 2.17** Interlocking rhythms and layered timbres, in Ralph Shapey, Cantata for Small Orchestra with Piano, Percussion, Narrator and Three Vocal Soloists (1951), mm. 1-3. © 1958 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.
The Cantata includes many passages in which the sonorous qualities of the music are of central importance. The percussionists carry the bulk of the musical argument, while the
woodwinds, brass and strings play brief, repetitive figures. Shapey periodically interpolates passages of atonal counterpoint for string ensemble (see Ex. 2.18).

Example 2.18  Atonal counterpoint, in Ralph Shapey, Cantata for Small Orchestra with Piano, Percussion, Narrator and Three Vocal Soloists (1951), mm. 115-8. © 1958 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.
Towards the end of the work, Shapey creates a dense canonic texture of strings, winds and brass (see Ex. 2.19) before reintroducing the percussion instruments. Shapey supplements bass drum trills and timpani riffs with percussive piano clusters and ff string chords as the work concludes (see Ex. 2.20).
Example 2.20  Ralph Shapey, Cantata for Small Orchestra with Piano, Percussion, Narrator and Three Vocal Soloists (1951), conclusion, mm. 270-1. © 1958 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.
Searching for Recognition

After he left his position at Wolpe’s Contemporary Music School, Shapey taught at the Third Street Music School Settlement in New York throughout the 1950s. He also taught composition, orchestration and conducting at his private studio in New York. Shapey began to concentrate on building his career as a composer and conductor during the early 1950s, gradually phasing out his activities as a professional violinist. 1950 was a pivotal year in this respect. Shapey conducted the first and second performances of Wolpe’s Quartet for Trumpet, Saxophone, Piano and Percussion. The second performance concluded the 27 March 1950 concert at which the Juilliard Quartet premiered Shapey’s String Quartet No. 2. Shapey also participated in a concert presented by the Third Street Music School Settlement at Town Hall in 1951, conducting the school’s Junior Orchestra in a performance of Haydn’s *Toy Symphony*. (12)

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12 On Shapey’s departure from the Contemporary Music School, see Austin Clarkson, “Ralph Shapey’s Apprenticeship,” 403.
14 Ralph Shapey, letter to Johanna Schmidt-Grohe, 17 December 1956. Shapey Papers, Box 93.
15 Carol K. Baron, interview with Ralph Shapey, transcript, 75, 91. Wolpe/Baron Archive. See also Shapey, “Remembrances of My Life in Music,” 15-6. Shapey Papers, Box 136. Shapey’s last commercial job as a violinist was the recording of the Chamber Concerto of Ellis Kohs [Columbia ML 4492 (1953)], in which he assisted members of the Juilliard String Quartet. See Patrick Finley, *A Catalogue of the Works of Ralph Shapey* (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1997), 10.
That same year, Shapey began to apply for the awards that helped ambitious young composers to become established. He filed a Guggenheim Fellowship application at the end of 1950. After it was rejected, he reapplied for a Guggenheim Fellowship in late 1951, adding a letter from Edgard Varèse, whom he had recently met for the first time. At this stage, Shapey merely saw Varèse as an eminent artist and friend of Wolpe who might help him at the outset of his career. He was not acquainted with any of Varèse’s works, other than Density 21.5 for Flute (1936). Shapey purchased the Elaine Music Shop LP of Varèse’s music only after Varèse provided him with the letter of recommendation.

Although Shapey’s application for a Guggenheim Fellowship was rejected for the second time in 1952, he continued to file applications for another decade without success. After 1963, he finally abandoned his quest to receive recognition from the Guggenheim Foundation for his accomplishments.

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18 Edgard Varèse, letter of recommendation for Ralph Shapey’s 1952 Guggenheim Fellowship application, 26 November 1951. By permission of the J. S. Guggenheim Memorial Foundation.
19 The Elaine Music Shop LP (1950) was the first devoted to the music of Varèse. It included recordings of Intégrales, Octandre and Ionisation, conducted by Frederic Waldman, as well as a recording of Density 21.5 by flutist René Le Roy. It has been reissued on él Records ACMEM125CD (2007).
21 Milton Babbitt did not receive a Guggenheim Fellowship until 1960, while Stefan Wolpe received one in 1962, at age 59. George Perle received a fellowship in 1966. See http://www.gf.org/fellows.
Shapey wrote the *Fantasy* for Orchestra\(^{23}\) during the summer of 1951. A work of approximately ten minutes in length, it was his first piece for large orchestra, not counting the Violin Concerto fragment of 1947. Immediately after its completion, Shapey entered the *Fantasy* in the seventh annual George Gershwin Memorial Contest. Although Shapey had hoped that this work would help to advance his compositional career, he was cited only with an honorable mention.\(^{24}\) The first prize was awarded to Roy Elihu Travis\(^{25}\) for his *Symphonic Allegro* (1951), ostensibly (in Shapey’s retelling of the story) because of the difficulty of Shapey’s score.\(^{26}\) Dimitri Mitropoulos and the New York Philharmonic performed the prize-winning composition on 1 December 1951.\(^{27}\) At the award ceremony that preceded the performance of the Travis work by the Philharmonic, Shapey received a special prize of $100 in recognition of his honorable mention.\(^{28}\)

Shapey’s *Fantasy* is a synthesis of different strains of modernism by a young composer searching for his own distinctive manner. The music alternates between sound blocks of different textures and styles. The piece opens with a pulsating, bass-heavy chordal mass, presented by the piano. Shapey adds a widely spaced solo flute melody to the texture in m. 2, doubled at first by the piano at the unison (see Ex. 2.21).

\(^{23}\) The *Fantasy* for Orchestra has never been performed. It was published by Theodore Presser Co. in 1979, but Shapey withdrew the score shortly afterwards. A copy of the *Fantasy* is included in the circulating collection of the University of Chicago Library.


\(^{25}\) Roy Elihu Travis (b. 1922), emeritus professor of music, UCLA.


\(^{27}\) As part of the prize, Mitropoulos and the Philharmonic recorded the Travis work on Columbia AAL 16 (1952).

Example 2.21  Clusters in pc space, in Ralph Shapey, *Fantasy* for Orchestra (1951), mm. 1-3. © 1954 Ralph Shapey. By permission of Elsa Charlston Shapey.

Shapey unfolds the aggregate in the course of the first three measures. The piano’s repeated chordal figure comprises three i1 dyads, while the flute melody introduces the
remaining six pcs. Chromatic completion occurs with the statement of C#6 in the treble in m. 3. The harmonic structure is determined as much by the registral arrangement of pitches as by pc relationships. The piano’s D1 pedal point serves as a tonal anchor for its upper partials, most notably A3 and F#4. The C#6 that completes the aggregate in m. 3 resolves to its upper neighbor, D6, reinforcing D’s status as a “tonic” within the music of the opening sound block, which recurs periodically throughout the *Fantasy*.

A new sound block, which begins in m. 11 (not shown), features a drier orchestral texture and more emphatic rhythms. Shapey develops the ideas of the second sound block in an atonal passage for piano solo (see Ex. 2.22) that provides textural and harmonic contrast with the preceding episodes.
Example 2.22  Widely spaced atonal lines, in Ralph Shapey, *Fantasy* for Orchestra (1951), mm. 36-8, piano solo. © 1954 Ralph Shapey. By permission of Elsa Charlston Shapey.

Stylistic Consolidation, 1952-53

Many of the works that Shapey composed between late 1951 and early 1953 share an astringent modality and irregular rhythms, along with some use of stasis and repetition. One of the most significant of Shapey’s works of this period is the four-movement *Sonate* for Oboe and Piano (1952), commissioned by oboist Josef Marx, a close friend of Wolpe and a pioneer in the creation of a repertoire of avant-garde works for his instrument. Marx premiered Shapey’s Oboe *Sonate*, accompanied by pianist Russell Sherman, at the Third Street Music School Settlement on 21 February 1953 in the “WNYC 14th Annual American Music Festival Concert and

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29 Theodore Presser Co. publishes the score and parts of the *Sonate* for Oboe and Piano. Parts: 11440570P; score; 11440570S.
Broadcast.”\textsuperscript{30} Marx and Sherman also performed and broadcast the \textit{Sonate} in Germany in 1956.\textsuperscript{31} Oboist James Ostryniec and pianist Wanda Maximilien recorded the work on CRI SD 501 in 1984.

In the monothematic first movement of the Oboe Sonata, Shapey presents an essentially circular narrative. He continually returns to the central motive, a rising tritone. Shapey often employs sound blocks in the piano accompaniment, reinforcing the perception of an absence of forward progression (see Ex. 2.23).


\textsuperscript{31} Ralph Shapey, letter to Johanna Schmidt-Grohe, 17 December 1956. Shapey Papers, Box 93. In a later, undated worklist, Shapey identified the German performance of the \textit{Sonate} for Oboe and Piano as having taken place in Munich, with a broadcast on Westfunk Radio, but did not supply a date. Shapey Papers, Box 93.
Movement II, a bumptious scherzo with trio, is marked by irregular rhythms and asymmetrical phrase structures (not shown). The brief third movement functions as a slow
introduction leading to the spirited finale. In the last movement, Shapey alternately presents two themes, the first of which is related motivically to movement III. The buoyant, galloping second theme evokes the nineteenth-century sonata-finale tradition. As the movement progresses, Shapey presents the two themes simultaneously (mm. 95-116). The oboe employs the first theme’s conjunct descending motion, while the piano’s bass line incorporates the dotted triplets of the second theme (see Ex. 2.24). In the concluding measures, Shapey melds the two themes together, alternating between conjunct melodic motion and repeated chords with dotted rhythms (mm. 117-34) (see Ex. 2.25).

Shapey employs Wolpe’s ideas about the systematic use of intervals to create structural contrast. He transforms the theme of movement I by substituting fourths and fifths (ic5) for tritones (ic6) in mm. 19-26 (see Ex. 2.26).
Shapey’s use of narrative circularity and pitch stasis in the Oboe Sonata is reflected in his contemporary description of the work. He evoked the discourse about time and space that he had appropriated from the writings of Thomas Wolfe in 1949:

It opens with the slow, long singing oboe passage of eons ago. It has been said, “It is heaven and earth, space upon space upon outer space, sad and lonely with the deepest intensity of quietude.” . . . The third [movement] returns to a quietude of a different kind, of the infinity of remembered sounds. . . . This is followed by the fourth, vigorous, dynamic, rhythmic intensities driving forward to ever reaffirmation of the joy and lust for life; interrupted for a moment by the opening theme of the 1st move.[ment]; but then once again going forward to its climactic joy and then remembering in its finality, in a return to the spatial mystery of its own self and its own roots.32

When the *Sonate* for Oboe and Piano was premiered in 1953, the neoclassical composer Tadeusz Kassern33 commented that Shapey was destined to follow a difficult path as a composer due to the radical nature of his music.34 What is noteworthy about Kassern’s remark is that it was
made in response to one of Shapey’s more conventionally conceived works, a composition in traditional four-movement form that did not employ twelve-tone procedures and did not include texturally fragmented ideas.

After 1951, Shapey’s infatuation with the surface aspects of Bartók’s style gradually lessened. In several works written in 1952-53, he attempted to integrate elements of Schoenberg’s style and technique into his own evolving language. The Suite of Four Pieces for Piano (1952)\(^\text{35}\) illustrates this facet of Shapey’s compositional development. It is dedicated to pianist Jacob Maxin, who had recently recorded the Seven Little Pieces for Piano.\(^\text{36}\)

The insistent repeated ic3 dyads\(^\text{37}\) that comprise the primary motive of the first movement (see Ex. 2.27) recall Schoenberg’s epigrammatic piano piece, op. 19, no. 2 (see Ex. 2.28).

\(^{35}\) Theodore Presser Co. publishes the Suite of Four Pieces: #110-40694. Jacob Maxin premiered the Suite on an undetermined date. See the worklist included in Shapey’s letter of 17 December 1956 to Johanna Schmidt-Grohe. I have no other information about performances of this work. \(^{36}\) Maxin seems to have recorded both “Essay I” of the Three Essays on Thomas Wolfe and the Seven Little Pieces between February 1951 and February 1952. The recordings are mentioned in Shapey’s letter of 22 February 1952 to Henry Allen Moe, Secretary General of the J. S. Guggenheim Memorial Foundation. The corresponding undated 1951 letter from Shapey to Moe does not list the two recordings by Maxin. By permission of the J. S. Guggenheim Memorial Foundation. \(^{37}\) In movement I, the ic3 dyad is usually presented as a minor third, but is occasionally stated as a major sixth.
Example 2.27  Repeated ic3 dyads, in Ralph Shapey, *Suite of Four Pieces* for Piano (1952), I, mm. 1-10. © 1954 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

\[ \text{Example 2.28  Repeated ic4 dyads, in Arnold Schoenberg, *Sechs kleine Klavierstücke*, op. 19, no. 2 (1911), mm. 1-4 (cf. Ex. 2.28). © 1913 Universal Edition. Used by permission of Belmont Music Publishers.} \]
The Schoenberg allusion merely serves as Shapey’s starting point. He develops his ideas by repetition and elaboration, transposing the motives and shifting them to different registers. The movement has an arch form. While each restatement of the motives follows the same fundamental pattern, they are given their most extended treatment at the center of the movement (not shown).

Shapey’s use of Wolpe’s technique of “chromatic circulation” generates structural dynamism in the music. In mm. 1-10, Shapey sets up an opposition between two ic3 dyads, F#–A and F–Ab, that underlies the entire movement. The juxtaposition of the two adjacent dyads underlines the chromatic character of Shapey’s harmonic language. Shapey does not complete the presentation of the aggregate in mm. 1-5, omitting two pcs, B and C, which are finally introduced in the descending treble figure on the second beat of m. 6. In contrast, m. 6 omits F and F#, focal pcs in mm. 1-5, which again take on dramatic significance in the musical argument of mm. 7-10, along with B and C. B and C are both paired with other pcs to state permutations of the opening motive in the middle of the movement (mm. 16-8, 23-4, 26-7, not shown). The music reaches a climax with the reintroduction of the juxtaposed F#–A and F–Ab dyads (mm. 28-9, not shown). Shapey then presents a modified reprise of the opening measures, in which he creates formal symmetry by resolving the opposition between the two adjacent dyads in favor of the F#–A dyad which opens the movement.

The theme of movement II alludes to the “Musette” from Schoenberg’s Suite für Klavier, op. 25 (1921/23) (see Exx. 2.29a and b). Unlike Schoenberg’s piece, with its strict neo-Baroque rhythms, Shapey’s movement uses variable meters. At the beginning of the movement, Shapey wrote the opening words of the ditty, “Come & pitch a pennie pennie pennie, pitch pennie will
you pitch.” ³³⁸ Shapey repeatedly expressed his hostility to the music of John Cage, referring to him as a “nihilist.” ³³⁹ He considered Cage’s use of the *I Ching* to generate musical content to be an abdication of the composer’s task. ³⁴⁰ Shapey’s allusion to Cage’s use of chance operations in a piece that evokes the music of Schoenberg was a clearly polemical gesture. ³⁴¹

³³⁸ “Pitch penny” is a game played with coins of small denominations that are tossed across a room into a hole. See Alice Bertha Gomme, *The Traditional Games of England, Scotland and Ireland*, vol. II (London: David Nutt, 1898), 43. Shapey’s reference to the ditty is a veiled allusion to John Cage, who tossed coins to consult the *I Ching*, the Chinese *Book of Changes*, when he composed. On Cage’s use of the *I Ching*, see James Pritchett, *The Music of John Cage* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 70ff.

³³⁹ In a 1963 interview, Shapey said: “I consider the avant-garde to be a bunch of nihilists, and I think you all know who I mean, John Cage and company. This is the avant-garde of the day. I do not consider them composers, I do not consider what they write as music.” Eugene Bruck, interview with Ralph Shapey, “Conversations with Contemporary Composers,” New York University, 1963. Partial transcript prepared by Barry Wiener. “Shapey lectures at NYU,” Shapey Papers, Box 17 (tape); CD 43b (reel tape transfer).

³⁴⁰ When he was interviewed by John Holzaepfel, Shapey recounted, “The first time [I saw] an embarrassment with John [Cage] was in his apartment on Houston Street. . . . They had the charts out, and they were pitching pennies. I said, ‘John, who made the charts?’ ‘I did.’ I said, ‘And you’re going to tell me that in each chart, you wiped out everything you knew about music, completely?’ He said, ‘Oh, sure.’ . . . I went over to the window. There were some kids out in the street, playing hopscotch. I said, ‘Come on, John. Let’s call the kids and let them make the charts, and let’s see what happens then.’” John Holzaepfel, interview with Ralph Shapey about David Tudor, Chicago, 29 November 1999, transcript, 20-1. Shapey Papers, Box 138.

³⁴¹ John Holzaepfel: “In your early *Suite of Four Pieces* for Piano, the second piece is a satire on Cage.” Shapey: “Right [laughing].” Holzaepfel: “I guess that relates to the story you were telling earlier.” Shapey: “About pitching the pennies.” John Holzaepfel, interview with Ralph Shapey about David Tudor, transcript, 30. Shapey Papers, Box 138.
Movement III represents an early landmark in Shapey’s development as a composer. Here Shapey wrote static music, abandoning conventional techniques for the creation of a musical narrative (see Ex. 2.30). In the opening measures, a short rising motive, Eb/G–A–Bb, is


Rascher ($\dot{=} 88$)

![Example 2.29a](https://example.com)


$\dot{=} 72$

![Example 2.29b](https://example.com)
presented in varied rhythmic guises. It is accompanied by a four-note motive consisting of a series of i7s, beginning on E4 and concluding on Db4. These two ideas are repeated without transposition throughout the movement. In mm. 5-8, Shapey interweaves an additional four-note motive, F–Ab–D–Db, into the texture. He transposes this motive in mm. 9-12, while he inserts a brief window of development of his initial ideas. The movement concludes with a restatement of the three motives that underpin the musical structure. It ends on Db, the final pc of both four-note motives. Paradoxically, movement III is closer in style to the Sonatas and Interludes for Prepared Piano of Cage (1946-48), music that Shapey disliked, than to the music by Schoenberg that he so admired.
The virtuosic movement IV ends the *Suite* with a flourish. The two central ideas are intertwined on the first beat, which is followed by a rest that isolates the initial gesture and underlines its significance. The right hand plays repeated C4s, while the left hand surrounds them with a triplet figure on the pitches B3, Db4 and Bb3 (not shown). The two figures are linked together throughout the entire movement, with Shapey alternately juxtaposing brief passages of stasis and development. The *Suite* ends with a flurry of repeated notes, followed by a final restatement of the paired opening figures, transposed to the bass register.

Shapey’s next work, the three-movement Symphony No. 1 (1952), is a piece that he had planned for some time as a major statement of his compositional accomplishments and intentions. In his first application for a Guggenheim Fellowship, he wrote:

> I plan for this coming year to work on my Symphony No. 1 for Orchestra. It will be a three-movement symphony, large in scope, making use of the free 12-tone technic of sound in its most contemporary idiom and in conjunction with the technics of the past masters. The present state of the Symphony is one of sketches clearly conceived, and should, with a Fellowship, take approximately one year for completion. Upon completion, I intend to submit the score to Mr. Mitropoulos for possible performance.  

In Symphony No. 1, Shapey presents his musical ideas in alternation and combination. The first movement begins with a *Maestoso* introduction that concludes with a proclamatory, motto-like motive (see Ex. 2.31). Shapey often uses such mottos or fanfares to signal the end of a section in his compositions. In this study, I consequently refer to these ideas as “boundary figures.” A repeated-note motive, reintroduced periodically throughout the movement, serves as a second “boundary figure” (see Ex. 2.32).

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42 Symphony No. 1 has never been performed. It was published by Theodore Presser in 1979, but withdrawn by Shapey shortly afterwards. A copy of the score is in the circulating collection of the University of Chicago Library. The Shapey Papers, Box 20, include both the full score and a two-piano reduction of the Symphony, prepared by Shapey.

The main theme of the *Maestoso* (see Ex. 2.33) begins with a segment of the pentatonic scale, Eb–Db–Ab, and continues with a second (hemitonic) pentatonic segment, A–F–E. The final four pcs of the theme, E–C–Bb–Gb, constitute a segment of the whole-tone scale. The nine pcs of the theme constitute a collection that can be conceptualized as a series of alternating whole and half steps, the first two segments of which are symmetrical to each other, employing the ic succession, 1-2-1. Each of the segments is separated from the others by a half step (ic1): C–Db–Eb–E, F–Gb–Ab–A, Bb–C. The missing three pcs of the aggregate are simultaneously presented by the accompanimental figure, D–G–B/C. Shapey’s use of modality may suggest an interest in Messiaen’s modes of limited transposition, although his mode does not precisely fit Messiaen’s model. It corresponds most closely to Messiaen’s mode 2, the segments of which are, however, separated by a whole step rather than a half step. Shapey’s creation of a new “mode”

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44 The term, hemitonic, refers to the inclusion of half steps within a scale.
may have been founded on Wolpe’s suggestion that his students create their own “synthetic modes.”

**Example 2.33**  Theme including pentatonic and whole-tone segments, in Ralph Shapey, two-piano arr. (by the composer) of Symphony No. 1 (1952), I, mm. 12-4. Symphony No. 1 © 1958 Ralph Shapey. Two-piano arrangement, unpublished. Shapey Papers, Box 20. By permission of Elsa Charlston Shapey.

The *Maestoso* introduction is followed by an Allegro (m. 30) that opens with a fugato (see Ex. 2.34). The *Maestoso* theme is combined with motivic figures derived from the head of the fugato subject in mm. 86ff. (see Ex. 2.35).

**Example 2.34**  Fugato subject, in Ralph Shapey, two-piano arr. (by the composer) of Symphony No. 1 (1952), I, mm. 30-3. Symphony No. 1 © 1958 Ralph Shapey. Two-piano arrangement, unpublished. Shapey Papers, Box 20. By permission of Elsa Charlston Shapey.

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46 Clarkson, “Ralph Shapey’s Apprenticeship,” 391.
Shapey presents a sound block in the concluding measures of the movement. Both the rocking accompaniment of the *Maestoso* and an additional figure derived from the head of the fugato subject are continuously reiterated with little variation. Shapey creates a sense of pitch centricity by the use of pedal points on A and D (see Ex. 2.36).
The second movement scherzo begins with a fugato akin to that of the first movement *Allegro*. Shapey continuously varies the playful, widely spaced fugato subject during the course of the movement (see Ex. 2.37). In m. 31, he introduces a theme that comprises a series of ic1

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**Example 2.36**  Sound block, in Ralph Shapey, two-piano arr. (by the composer) of Symphony No. 1 (1952), I, mm. 116-9. Symphony No. 1 © 1958 Ralph Shapey. Two-piano arrangement, unpublished. Shapey Papers, Box 20. By permission of Elsa Charlston Shapey.
dyads that contrast with the succession of ic5 and ic6 dyads within the fugato subject. The dotted rhythms of the new theme contrast with the eighth-note triplets of the fugato subject as well. Shapey quickly combines the new theme with the fugato subject, subsuming it within the dominant texture of the movement (mm. 37ff., not shown). Similarly, he later introduces a theme combining dotted rhythms with the ic5 and ic6 relationships of the fugato subject. He presents this theme together with a version of the fugato subject in close position (m. 93ff, not shown).


In the *Andantino espressivo* finale, Shapey employs the concept of stasis as an important structural tool. Shapey contrasts two sets of ideas: brief motivic figures that are employed within an essentially static discourse, and long-breathed themes that are coupled with intricate accompaniments. In the opening section, he creates a mosaic of brief motivic figures. Irregular meters highlight the repetitive nature of the music (see Ex. 2.38).
In mm. 43ff., Shapey introduces a theme with multiple symmetries (see Ex. 2.39). The theme begins with a three-note figure, D–C♯–C, and ends with its retrograde, C–Db–D. In m. 45,
Shapey presents the symmetrical figure, Ab5–B4–B4–Ab5. Measures 46-7 include the palindrome, D#5–E4–F4–E4–D#5.

**Example 2.39** Theme with multiple symmetries, in Ralph Shapey, two-piano arr. (by the composer) of Symphony No. 1 (1952), III, mm. 43-8. “A” and “A₁” are a three-note figure and its retrograde. “B” is a symmetrical figure, and “C” is a palindrome. Symphony No. 1 © 1958 Ralph Shapey. Two-piano arrangement, unpublished. Shapey Papers, Box 20. By permission of Elsa Charlston Shapey.

Shapey gradually thickens the texture, juxtaposing sixteenth notes against sixteenth-note triplets (mm. 76-80, not shown), before presenting an interlude in which a variant of the theme is coupled with a flowing and texturally transparent ostinato accompaniment (see Ex. 2.40).
He then resumes the process of rhythmic diminution that he had initiated earlier in the movement, passing the melodic line back and forth between the treble and bass of the orchestra with an accompaniment in thirty-second notes (see Ex. 2.41). Shapey’s use of rhythmic diminution as a formal strategy recalls his procedure in the Sonata for Violin and Piano (1950). In the final pages of the Symphony, Shapey creates a sound block, in which he repeats both the melodic line and three layers of accompanimental figures (see Ex. 2.42).
After Shapey completed Symphony No. 1 (1952), he drafted a long letter to Wolpe in which he tried to describe his evolution as a composer. He suggested that his development was entering a new phase, reasserting both his essential allegiance to Wolpe’s compositional principles and his insistence that his music was original, not merely dependent upon Wolpe’s compositional solutions. Shapey was attempting to differentiate different planes of sound. The following comments are derived from two fragmentary drafts that seem to be complementary versions of the same letter. The final sentence of the second draft has been italicized for emphasis:

I have reread the Sym. quite a few times, in an effort to see where I am & where I’m going. Min & max I find the need for greater free flowingness. The last mov[ement] of the Sym. is to my mind the beg. of a new phase. But contrary to your new directions I’m
trying to find a different way of solving the same problems, both contrapuntally & harmonically.\textsuperscript{47}

I find the last mov[ement] of the sym. a new and important change. Harmonically, I find a greater need for the non-segregation of intervals. Contrary, the dissolution of sound should come about through the interreactions of their own forces, thus arriving at a new time element through the controlling of the [combustible forces], so that \textit{slow and fast & all their variants can coexist at the same time, without the normal sublimating of one to another.}\textsuperscript{48}

Shapey’s next piece was a work of equal importance but of more modest dimensions, the three-movement Oboe Quartet for oboe and string trio (1952),\textsuperscript{49} composed for oboist Josef Marx. The first movement is monothematic. The sinuous theme is often transposed, altered rhythmically, inverted, and otherwise modified, but rarely abandons its basic shape. It is repeatedly presented in its original pitch and registral configuration by the oboe soloist. Shapey frequently introduces repetitive accompanimental figures (not shown) and brief interpolated sound blocks that interrupt and impede the progress of the musical narrative (see Ex. 2.43).

\textsuperscript{47} Ralph Shapey to Stefan Wolpe, draft of a letter, undated (ca. 1952). Shapey Papers, Box 11.
\textsuperscript{48} Ralph Shapey to Stefan Wolpe, draft of a letter, undated (ca. 1952). Shapey Papers, Box 147, Wolpe Material (Restricted). According to Austin Clarkson, “The ‘segregation of intervals’ refers to working with specific pitch-class sets, and ‘dissolution of sound,’ to the deconstruction of shapes and gestures. ‘The interreactions of their own forces’ refers to the mutual engagement of characteristic actions that Wolpe referred to as ‘organic modes.’” See Austin Clarkson, “Ralph Shapey’s Apprenticeship,” 403.
\textsuperscript{49} Theodore Presser Co. publishes the score and parts of the Oboe Quartet. Score: 11440564S; parts: 11440564P.
Example 2.43  Interpolated sound block, in Ralph Shapey, Oboe Quartet (1952), I, mm. 21-3. © 1954 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.
In contrast to the intricate rhythms of the first movement, the second movement scherzo is built on an obsessive 5/16 rhythm. As the movement concludes, the violin plays a rising line that culminates in a series of large leaps, accompanied by ostinati in the oboe, viola and cello. Shapey uses the ostinati to create a sound block similar to the conclusion of Symphony No. 1, written only a few months earlier (see Ex. 2.44).

Example 2.44  Sound block, in Ralph Shapey, Oboe Quartet (1952), II, mm. 91-6 (cf. Ex. 2.42). © 1954 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.
The third movement is a rondo with two contrasting episodes (see Table 2.2).

Table 2.2 Ralph Shapey, Oboe Quartet (1952), III: Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Measure Nos.</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>25-44</td>
<td>Episode: Use of ostinati.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A&lt;sub&gt;1&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>45-60</td>
<td>Return of ideas of section A and their further development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>61-66</td>
<td>Episode: Rhythmically regular four-part counterpoint.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A&lt;sub&gt;2&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>67-95</td>
<td>Return of ideas of section A and their further development.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It begins with a group of linked motives, including repeated chord gestures in the strings that act as accompanimental flourishes for the thematic discourse (see Ex. 2.45).

Example 2.45 Linked motives, in Ralph Shapey, Oboe Quartet (1952), III, mm. 1-3. © 1954 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

In the first section, the primary thematic figures are continuously rearranged in different configurations. Shapey employs the repeated chord gestures as “boundary figures” at dramatic moments that signal a point of transition in the musical narrative, such as m. 12 (see Ex. 2.46).
As the movement proceeds, Shapey extends the length of the repeated chord gestures, which become progressively more important to the musical narrative. The repeated chord gestures morph into forceful Bartókian multiple-stop chords (see Ex. 2.47), while the widely spaced thematic figures are transformed into surging Varèse-like patterns, played by the violin (see Exx. 2.48a and b).

Example 2.48a  Edgard Varèse, *Density 21.5* for Flute (1936), mm. 12-4. Copyright ©1946 by Casa Ricordi – Reproduced by kind permission of Hal Leonard MGB, Italy.
After the narrative breaks down into cadential flourishes (mm. 76-80, not shown), the music reaches a point of complete stasis. Shapey presents a sound block, with repetition of widely spaced figures in all of the parts (see Ex. 2.49). The final measures of the Oboe Quartet juxtapose volleys of ff repeated chords with the opening thematic gesture of the movement (not shown).

Example 2.48b  Leaping, ascending thematic line, played by the violin, in Ralph Shapey, Oboe Quartet (1952), III, mm. 74-5 (cf. Ex. 2.48a). © 1954 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.
In the two episodes (see Table 2.2), Shapey presents a more conventional type of musical discourse. Ostinati derived from the motives of the opening section accompany lyrical melodic lines, presented in counterpoint, in the first episode (mm. 25-44). In the second contrasting episode, Shapey introduces a more conventional type of discourse: music in even rhythms and traditional four-part counterpoint (mm. 61-7).

The Oboe Quartet is a precursor of Shapey’s later style in its use of pitch-specific motives together with repetition and stasis. While Shapey’s string writing in the Oboe Quartet is reminiscent of Bartók’s practice, the originality of his overall conception demonstrates that he had begun to assimilate the Hungarian composer’s instrumental techniques and gestural language into his own style. The Oboe Quartet was not premiered during the 1950s, and was seemingly forgotten when Shapey developed his new style a few years after its composition. In the early
1980s, however, Shapey reevaluated his early works and arranged for a performance. Oboist James Ostryniec and the Alard Quartet played the Oboe Quartet at Merkin Hall in New York on 31 October 1983. In *The New York Times*, Edward Rothstein wrote,

Ralph Shapey’s Quartet for oboe, violin, viola and cello was given its first performance Monday night in Merkin Hall, though the work is more than 30 years old. The reason for the delay in its appearance was ascribed in the program to the difficulty of the composition, and with its cross rhythms and hemiolas it can certainly not be called easy.

But far more difficult pieces have come and gone since 1952, so there may be other reasons for its hibernation. Mr. Shapey himself, for example, put a seven-year moratorium on performances of his compositions beginning in 1969, in protest against what he called the deteriorating ethical standards of the world.

The work is far from a period piece. Its tough-skinned intellectual severity is mixed with a piquant wit and slightly cynical glimpses of sentiment. At times the composition was overly deliberate, with repeated blocks of musical material confronting one another with sharp gestures and brusque interruptions, but the result was also unpredictable, disorienting and slyly captivating, both in its fury and in its wry irony.\(^{50}\)

**Stylistic Retrenchment and Career Advancement**

String Quartet No. 4 (1953)\(^{51}\) was commissioned by Alma Morgenthau (1887-1953), one of the great patrons of new music in America during the twentieth century.\(^ {52}\) Morgenthau became a supporter of Shapey at the behest of Dimitri Mitropoulos after attending a performance of String Quartet No. 2 in 1952,\(^ {53}\) and provided him with a stipend until her death the following year.


\(^{51}\) Theodore Presser Co. publishes both score and parts for String Quartet No. 4. Score: 11440572S; parts: 11440572P.


\(^{53}\) On 2 May 1952, Alma Morgenthau attended a concert at the home of Rosalyn Tureck, at which the Juilliard String Quartet performed Shapey’s String Quartet No. 2. In a letter, dated “Wednesday” (presumably 7 May 1952), Morgenthau wrote to Shapey, “Your quartet [String Quartet No. 2] still rings in my ears and I would be glad to relieve your life somewhat by helping
In String Quartet No. 4, Shapey composed highly chromatic music dense in texture and incident. The aggregate is circulated in a systematic manner. The first movement begins with a leaping three-note motive, played in unison by violin I and viola. This three-note motive is repeated periodically throughout the movement as a framing device that serves the dramatic function of articulating its formal organization. In the opening measures, the three-note motive and its accompaniment present the six pcs of a chromatic hexachord, B–E, arrayed as a cluster in pc space, while spread apart registrally in pitch space. In m. 2, the ensemble extends its initial statement, employing the complementary chromatic hexachord, F–Bb, which completes the aggregate (see Ex. 2.50).

Example 2.50 Aggregate completion, in Ralph Shapey, String Quartet No. 4, I, mm. 1-2. © 1954 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

financially... Mr. Mitropoulos values your work, also commented it was terribly difficult to be played & is very glad that I can help you. Feels you are valuable.” Alma Morgenthau, letter to Ralph Shapey, May 1952. Shapey Papers, Box 93.
Similarly, at the beginning of the *Delicatissimo* episode, the fugato subject begins with two three-note figures that comprise the chromatic hexachord, Bb–Eb (m. 37). They are followed by two longer figures that include the complementary hexachord, E–A (mm. 38-9) (see Ex. 2.51). The close motivic relationship between the fugato subject and the thematic ideas of mm. 1-2 is masked by its presentation within a single register.

**Example 2.51** Complementary hexachords, in Ralph Shapey, String Quartet No. 4, I, mm. 37-9 (cf. Ex. 2.50). The hexachords are labeled “A” and “B” in the example. © 1954 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.
Movement I is characterized by intricate and angular rhythms. Shapey structures the first section of the movement around the concept of rhythmic diminution, a technique that he had previously employed in the Violin Sonata (1949-50) and Symphony No. 1 (1952). While the emphatic opening gestures embody an eighth-note pulse (see Ex. 2.50), the busy interlocking figures of the following measures have an underlying sixteenth-note pulse (mm. 8ff., not shown). Shapey introduces sixteenth-note triplets (mm. 19-23) and thirty-second-note figures (see Ex. 2.52) while retaining the underlying sixteenth-note pulse. The process of rhythmic diminution can be observed by examining Shapey’s use of repeated B/E dyads. In mm. 3 and 5, he employs eighth notes, in m. 23, sixteenth-note triplets, and in m. 34, thirty-second notes (not shown).

Example 2.52  Rhythmic diminution, in Ralph Shapey, String Quartet No. 4, I, m. 31. © 1954 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

Shapey employs rhythmic layering in the fugato, presenting similar motivic figures in different tempi (mm. 48-50, not shown). He later varies the texture by other means, introducing
multiple stops in all instruments except the cello (mm. 64-5) and using quarter-tones (mm. 71-6) (see Ex. 2.53). In the latter episode, both the viola and cello play at the top of their ranges. The last section of the movement presents what might be considered a “recapitulation” in retrograde. Shapey reverses the rhythmic procedures of the first section, gradually augmenting the pulse. He begins with music that includes many thirty-second-note figures and that has an underlying sixteenth-note pulse (mm. 69-78). He then segues into imitative counterpoint with an eighth-note triplet pulse (mm. 79-89). The movement ends with the dramatic restatement of the opening gesture, which is presented in imitation in the final measures (mm. 95-8).

Example 2.53  Quarter-tones played by the cello, in Ralph Shapey, String Quartet No. 4, I, m. 76. © 1954 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

After the interlude of the brief scherzo, Shapey presents another large form in the third and final movement that can be perceived as a kind of sonata-allegro. Shapey again employs irregular rhythms and includes long passages of thick-textured counterpoint. The opening theme
has three motivic components, the first and last of which mirror each other (see Ex. 2.54).

Shapey divides the three motives between the parts within the polyphonic and often imitative texture of the first section.

**Example 2.54** Theme with three motivic components, in Ralph Shapey, String Quartet No. 4, III, mm.1-2. The main voice is marked by Shapey with brackets. © 1954 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

The “development” consists of three episodes, in the first of which the cello introduces a widely spaced, lyrical atonal theme (mm. 24-7) (see Ex. 2.55).
The following two episodes are closely related. They both begin with an elaborated version of the central motive of the opening theme. Although this idea has the character of a fugato subject, it is used instead to introduce a polyphonic synthesis of all of the movement’s themes. Shapey commences the “recapitulation” by presenting the opening theme with its original accompaniment (mm. 73-4, not shown). This concluding section is twice as long as the “exposition.” Shapey first creates a Bartókian climax, using forceful double-stopped chords (mm. 92-5, not shown). He does not end the quartet here, however, but introduces rapid galloping dotted rhythms that dominate the concluding measures (not shown).

Shapey’s use of motives derived from the opening theme throughout the last movement ultimately creates an effect of bland repetition. In addition, the music displays a rhythmic squareness that is not eliminated by Shapey’s use of added values. In the last movement of String Quartet No. 4, Shapey’s compositional solutions were circumscribed by his reliance on

Example 2.55  Contrasting lyrical theme, in Ralph Shapey, String Quartet No. 4, III, mm. 24-5. © 1954 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.
conventional academic techniques and his eschewal of the new syntax that he had begun to employ in works like the last movement of Symphony No. 1.

Sadly, Alma Morgenthau did not live to hear the work that she had commissioned; she died on 25 December 1953. String Quartet No. 4 was premiered at a concert by the New Music Quartet,\(^{54}\) dedicated to the memory of Morgenthau. The concert also included the world premiere of another Morgenthau commission, Milton Babbitt’s String Quartet No. 2, as well as performances of Schoenberg’s String Trio and Alexander Zemlinsky’s String Quartet No. 3. Shapey could not attend because he was in Europe on a Frank Huntington Beebe Fellowship. On 30 May 1954, Edward “Ed” Levy\(^{55}\) wrote Shapey a letter that carefully documents the event:

> The hall was about a little more than half-filled. . . . Your quartet was first on the program followed by Schoenberg. Then, intermission[,] Babbitt, with the more easily-accessible-to-my-ears Zemlinsky as finale.

> The group was called out to two curtain calls after yours; I asked [Fritz] Jahoda,\(^{56}\) who was sitting just across the aisle – he liked the first two [movements], not the third – same for cellist from my school, Dori, same for Bob\(^{57}\) & Roslyn Koff, same, incidentally, for me and Mary [Ed Levy's wife]. Jack Maxin didn’t subdivide, said he liked the work very much. . . . After the concert, I spoke to Claus [Adam] who told me that the people he had spoken to liked the 2\(^{nd}\) and 3\(^{rd}\) mvts. Also saw [Abraham] Skulsky\(^{58}\) who had reservations, but I can’t remember them.\(^{59}\)

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\(^{54}\) The members of the New Music Quartet were Broadus Earle and Matthew Raimondi, violins, Walter Trampler, viola, and Claus Adam, cello. Claus Adam had been one of Stefan Wolpe’s composition students during the 1940s.

\(^{55}\) Edward Irving Levy (1929-2002) was a composer who studied both with Shapey and Wolpe. He was a professor of music at Yeshiva University from 1967 to his death.

\(^{56}\) Fritz Jahoda (1909-2008), pianist and conductor; professor of music at City College of New York, City University of New York.

\(^{57}\) Robert Koff (1919-2005), original first violinist of the Juilliard String Quartet.


\(^{59}\) Edward Levy, letter to Ralph Shapey (in Florence, Italy), 30 May 1954. Shapey Papers, Box 145. On 27 May 1954, the critic of \textit{The New York Times}, John Briggs, complained that both the Babbitt and Shapey works were composed in a “dessicated and highly cerebral idiom,” while Francis D. Perkins in \textit{The New York Herald Tribune} provided a more informed point of view: “In their twelve-tone idiom both new quartets seemed related to the Schoenberg trio. . . . Mr. Shapey’s music, while still episodic, had more continuity, along with some fanciful relief in the
The Beebe Award and Shapey’s Trip to Europe (1953-54)

In 1953, Shapey was awarded a Frank Huntington Beebe Scholarship grant for the year 1953-54, which permitted him to travel to Great Britain, France, Germany and Italy from September 1953 to July 1954. The only stipulation included in the award was that Shapey present the music that he had composed during his trip to the representatives of the Beebe Fund when he returned home. Shapey’s letters to Ed Levy and Wolpe chart his travels. The dates on his manuscripts and scores provide additional information about his itinerary (see Table 2.3).

Shapey’s first destination was England. At the beginning of December, he made a brief stopover in Paris and then moved on to Germany, where he stayed from mid-December 1953 to February 1954. Shapey was in Italy by late February, and remained there until mid-summer before he returned home. The experience of traveling to the main centers of musical activity in postwar Europe was a transformative experience. Shapey met many distinguished musicians, including Walter Goehr, René Leibowitz, Hermann Scherchen, Karl Amadeus Hartmann and Luigi Dallapiccola. Guiding him from afar was his teacher, Wolpe:

Did you meet Boulez or Messiaen? Why did you bother [---] with Leibowitz? He counts at first 12, in order to start with one. He is dogmatic not knowing that in Art are no Dogmas, because Art is Dogma itself. What do you look for in Munich? To get something played? Is this what you spend your time with to want? Don’t stay too long there. And get to know Rosbaud the conductor (who is a 100 times more worth than Hartmann) Stuckenschmidt (write to him, he is an old friend of mine and one of the top critics in Germany. Ask him for advice whom to see, where to go to, what to hear. . . .[)] Scherchen is the man you (of all people) have to meet. . . . Get to know Eimert, Rufer,
Henze; see the people in the Stuttgart Radio. What is Hartmann writing?62

You must try to get to see Scherchen or my old friend Vladimir Vogel who is a first rate composer. Did you get to see a young fellow – Stockhausen? I read the other day a score of his and liked the thing.63

It is too bad that you dislike so much Dallapiccola. I found him very charming when I saw him here. He could be of value to you. He is helpful. (At least he did try his best to bring me to Venice) . . . Try to meet Nono (and my old friend Sanzogno the conductor). I hear that Nono is a very gifted composer who is writing less traditional music.64

62 Stefan Wolpe, letter to Shapey (in Munich), postmarked 4 February 1954. Shapey Papers, Box 147, Wolpe Material (Restricted).
63 Stefan Wolpe, letter to Shapey (in Florence, Italy), postmarked 24 February 1954. Shapey Papers, Box 147, Wolpe Material (Restricted).
64 Stefan Wolpe, letter to Shapey (in Florence, Italy), postmarked 7 April 1954. Shapey Papers, Box 147, Wolpe Material (Restricted).
Table 2.3  Ralph Shapey’s Trip to Europe, September 1953 to July 1954
Shapey-Levy correspondence, Shapey Papers, Box 145; Shapey-Wolpe correspondence, Shapey Papers, Box 147, Wolpe Material (Restricted). By permission of the Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

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<thead>
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<th>Document</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Paris</td>
<td>6 Dec. 1953</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Burnt Norton</em> (sketch)</td>
<td>Munich</td>
<td>18 Dec. 1953</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Sonate</em> for Cello and Piano, mvt. III</td>
<td>Munich</td>
<td>19 Dec. 1953–1 Jan. 1954</td>
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<tr>
<td>Letter from Shapey to Ed Levy</td>
<td>Munich</td>
<td>25 Jan. 1954</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>For 11 Instruments</em> (sketch, first version)</td>
<td>Munich</td>
<td>30 Jan. 1954</td>
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<tr>
<td>Letter from Wolpe to Shapey</td>
<td>Munich</td>
<td>Postmarked 4 Feb. 1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter from Shapey to Ed Levy</td>
<td>en route to Cologne</td>
<td>4 Feb. 1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter from Shapey to Ed Levy</td>
<td>Munich</td>
<td>14 Feb. 1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter from Ed Levy to Shapey</td>
<td>Munich</td>
<td>Postmarked 16 Feb. 1954</td>
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<td>Letter from Wolpe to Shapey</td>
<td>Florence</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>For 11 Instruments</em> (sketch, second version)</td>
<td>Florence</td>
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<td>Concerto for Clarinet and Chamber Group</td>
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<td>Letter from Wolpe to Shapey</td>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>7 April 1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter from Ed Levy to Shapey</td>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>18 April 1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter from Shapey to Ed Levy</td>
<td>Florence</td>
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<td>Florence</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter from Ed Levy to Shapey</td>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>15 June 1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter from Wolpe to Shapey</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>16 Aug. 1954</td>
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</table>
The three-movement Sonate for Cello and Piano (1953-54)\(^{65}\) was the first piece that Shapey composed during his Beebe Scholarship tour of Europe. The first two movements were written in London, the third in Munich. The Sonate is stylistically eclectic. Shapey alternates between different approaches to harmony and musical continuity. The music wavers between modality, both whole-tone and octatonic, and chromaticism. The cello moves smoothly between chromaticism and the two whole-tone collections in the opening measures of movement I (see Ex. 2.56). Beginning in beat 5 of m. 3, the cello presents segments of both whole-tone collections, \{Bb, C, D, E\} and \{F, G, A, B\}. The piano chord on the fifth beat of m. 3, B1/Db4/G4, combines with the cello line to present subsets of both whole-tone collections. The final notes of the cello in m. 4, C#2–D#2, can be perceived either as completing the second whole-tone collection, or as part of a chromatic figure, D–C#–D#, related to the chromaticism of the cello line in m. 3.

\(^{65}\) The Sonate for Cello and Piano is published by Theodore Presser Co.: 11440569S. Cellist Joel Krosnick and pianist Gilbert Kalish recorded the work on Arabesque Z6728.
In movement II, the piano first presents a chromatic theme that is varied in a succession of short, rhythmically irregular phrases, with frequent clashes of sevenths and ninths between treble and bass. The cello enters in m. 4 with a contrasting theme that blends chromatic (B–C#–C) and octatonic (G–Ab–F–E) gestures. In addition, it employs additive and subtractive

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\(^{66}\) B and C# can be considered elements of the octatonic collection that also includes E, F, G and Ab.
rhythms in the progression, 3-1-2-3-2-1-3 (see Ex. 2.57). Shapey later reintroduces the cello theme in an extended form. When the piano takes over the theme, the cello’s accompanimental line begins with a segment of the octatonic scale, F#–G#–A–B–C (see Ex. 2.58).

**Example 2.57** Octatonicism in the cello theme, in Ralph Shapey, *Sonate* for Cello and Piano (1953-54), II, mm. 4-7. Shapey annotates the score with “TP,” indicating the “tension point” of the treble line. © 1954 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

* TP = Tension Point in curve of melodic line.
Example 2.58  Octatonicism in the cello line, in Ralph Shapey, *Sonate* for Cello and Piano (1953-54), II, mm. 26-34 (cf. Ex. 2.57). Octatonic segments of the cello line are circled. © 1954 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.
Shapey juxtaposes motivic development with circular and repetitive narrative strategies in the *Sonate*, a technique that he had previously employed in Symphony No. 1 and the Oboe Quartet. He presents a polyphonic interchange between piano and cello in movement I that is periodically disrupted by brief “windows” of repetitive figures (mm. 7, 16-7, not shown). In mm. 34-6, the music reaches a point of complete stasis, with multiple repetitions of a dissonant piano figure before the beginning of the recapitulatory concluding section of the movement (not shown). In movement II, Shapey again introduces a “window” of stasis when the music increases in intensity, using a motive derived from the piano’s initial chromatic theme (see Ex. 2.59).

**Example 2.59**  Sound block, in Ralph Shapey, *Sonate* for Cello and Piano (1953-54), II, mm. 22-5. © 1954 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

The cello and piano present a polyphonic dialogue throughout most of the rondo finale (see Ex. 2.60).
Early in the movement, Shapey interrupts the contrapuntal discourse to introduce a brief lyrical interlude. The piano initiates the episode with a flowing ostinato in the middle register (m. 25). The cello then enters with a motive in its highest register (mm. 27-9). The first six notes of the motive comprise an octatonic subset (see Ex. 2.61a). The piano’s ostinato pattern is coupled with a transposed and augmented statement of the first five notes of the movement’s opening theme, presented in the low bass. Shapey employs this thematic figure as a cantus firmus. Its first four notes are identical in shape to the beginning of the “Thème de l’étoile et de la Croix,” stated in double octaves throughout the “Regard de la Croix,” no. 7 of Messiaen’s *Vingt Regards sur l’Enfant-Jésus* (1944) (see Ex. 2.61b). Shapey’s possible use of the music of Messiaen as a compositional model during the 1950s and early 1960s will serve as a recurrent motif in the remainder of this study. His interest in Messiaen’s music and ideas seems to have culminated in a detailed critique of the Frenchman’s rhythmic procedures, presented in a lecture at Yale University that will be discussed in chapter 5.
The cello’s lyrical motive and the piano’s cantus firmus return in the final pages of the Cello Sonata. The work concludes with a melding of the weaving atonal motive central to the discourse of the movement and the piano accompaniment of the lyrical episodes, including the cantus firmus (mm. 99-107, not shown).

Shapey’s appropriation of ideas from the music of Messiaen at this relatively early date is consistent with evidence both from his other scores of the 1950s and from his correspondence. As a young composer, Shapey would have had many opportunities to hear Messiaen’s music, which was played frequently in New York during the late 1940s and early 1950s. Both Trois petites Liturgies de la Présence Divine (1943-44) and the Turangalîla-Symphonie (1946-48)
were performed in New York in autumn 1949, while the composer’s own recording of *Visions de l’Amen* (1943) was issued on the Dial label in 1950. During this period, the American musical establishment promoted Messiaen as a major figure. Prior to the American premiere of *Turangalîla*, Serge Koussevitsky, music director of the Boston Symphony, gave interviews stating that he considered the Frenchman to be “the future hope of European music.” Similarly, composer Irving Fine asserted in a 1950 *New York Times* article that Messiaen’s influence, both as composer and teacher, “reached fantastic proportions” in France after the end of World War II, and that younger French composers perceived “almost limitless possibilities” in his “elaborate rhythmic theory.” Under the circumstances, it would have been almost impossible for an ambitious young musician like Shapey to ignore Messiaen’s music. Shapey referred approvingly to a performance of Messiaen’s music in an undated letter to Edward Levy about the International Conference on Twentieth Century Music, held in Rome in April 1954.

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70 Irving Fine (1914-62), composer and professor of music at Brandeis University.


72 “The music was bad, bad, bad!!! Out of 11 concerts I would say I heard 12 good works (a lot perhaps) but in a lot of cases I’m giving the benefit of [a] doubt. Chavez was quasi good, Prokofief – good, Honegger – good, Messiaen – good, Carter – good, Schoenberg – Op. 19 and 25 for piano (put in concert at last moment from guilty conscience to leave him out)! Petrassi – good, Hartmann – good (hysterical), Berg - Op. 5 for clar. and piano – beautiful! Varèse, *Octandre* (bad performance), Nono – talented but very young, Webern – *Cantata*, bad performance, Stravinsky (good, bad, indifferent) but hailed like a God!” Shapey to Edward Levy, letter (undated), 1954. Shapey Papers, Box 145. On the contemporary music festival held in
In retrospect, the Cello Sonata represents an aesthetic compromise, in which Shapey tried to combine traditional narrative strategies with his use of sound blocks. It was a compromise that Shapey was not able to sustain, and which he soon abandoned. Shapey’s vacillation between two fundamentally different approaches to composition in the Sonata produces an unsettling effect, as if a piece by Roger Sessions were repeatedly interrupted by snippets of music by Philip Glass.

Although Shapey completed the Sonata in early 1954, it was not premiered until 10 March 1956, when it was performed by cellist Jackson Wiley and pianist Russell Sherman at Carnegie Recital Hall in New York. During the two-year interval between conception and performance, Shapey’s circumstances changed radically. Two transformative events in his career took place: the premiere of his Concerto for Clarinet and Chamber Group by the New York Philharmonic Chamber Players on 20 March 1955, and the cancellation of the Philharmonic premiere of Challenge: The Family of Man, which was to be performed on 9-10 February 1956 (see chapter 3).

In preparation for the premiere of Challenge, Shapey received publicity photos from the New York Philharmonic at the beginning of February 1956. His photo was printed in *The New York Times*, together with an announcement of the forthcoming performance. Shapey thought that he would finally achieve the recognition that he felt he had been denied in 1951, when he received an honorable mention for his Fantasy for Orchestra (1951) in the George Gershwin

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73 Joan Abel, Press Department, New York Philharmonic, letter to Shapey, 3 February 1956. Shapey Papers, Box 93.

Memorial Competition. He was, understandably, bitterly disappointed when the Philharmonic cancelled the performance of his work. A month after the Challenge fiasco, Shapey attended the premiere of the Cello Sonata at Carnegie Recital Hall, at a “twilight concert” of contemporary music that had been scheduled at 5:30 PM to save money. After all of the media attention that he had received in the previous twelve months, he must have felt like Cinderella after the ball. This circumstance made the first performance of the Cello Sonata somewhat anticlimactic from the standpoint of Shapey’s professional development. Reviewing the performance by Wiley and Sherman, the New York Times critic, Edward Downes, noted stylistic variation within Shapey’s Sonata, yet gave it a positive reception:

[An] interesting work despite its seeming inconsistencies of style was a ’Cello Sonata of Ralph Shapey. The extreme thematic angularity of its opening movement, reminiscent of some twelve-tone music, gave way later to some positively neo-baroque sounding counterpoint and a romantically fervid finish.

While he was composing the Cello Sonata, Shapey planned an additional work, Burnt Norton, based on the first poem in T. S. Eliot’s Four Quartets. Shapey left two closely related drafts for a setting of the first ten lines of Eliot’s poem. While the first draft is undated and unsigned, the second draft is signed and headed, “Munich, 18 December 1953.” Burnt Norton is radically different in style from the Cello Sonata: jagged music, highly dissonant, full of large leaps and rhythmically fluid. The first draft is scored for voice, narrator and piano, while the second draft is scored only for narrator and piano (see Ex. 2.62). Shapey was apparently drawn to Eliot’s poem by its discussion of the “eternal present:”

Time present and time past

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75 See chapter 2, note 26.
77 Both drafts of Burnt Norton are written on fourteen-stave Circle Blue Print paper. Shapey Papers, Box 26.
Are both perhaps present in time future
And time future contained in time past.
If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable.
What might have been is an abstraction
Remaining a perpetual possibility
Only in a world of speculation.
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present.  

Shapey Papers, Box 26. By permission of the Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.
Shapey’s use of Eliot’s text about the “eternal present” recalls his epigraph for the first of the *Three Essays on Thomas Wolfe* (1948-49), “It was as if God had lifted his baton sharply above the endless orchestration of the seas, and the eternal movement had stopped, suspended in the Timeless architecture of the Absolute.”

Shapey temporarily set aside his theories about musical time when he composed the *Piece in the Form of Sonate-Variations* (1954) for piano. He began work on the *Sonate-Variations* on 2 January 1954, the day after he completed the Cello Sonata. The *Sonate-Variations* is an imaginative synthesis of variation form and sonata form. The work can be divided into a theme and thirteen variations, which are separated by double bars but are not labeled or numbered. The variations can be grouped into larger sections that symbolize the four movements of a sonata cycle on two different levels.

The theme is an arch-like structure centered around the completion of the aggregate on the pc, E. The music moves in contrary motion between the hands. At the beginning of the theme, the treble line ascends while the bass line descends. At its conclusion, this motion is reversed (see Ex. 2.63).

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80 Theodore Presser Co. publishes the *Piece in the Form of Sonate-Variations*: #110-40696.
The theme and the first six variations can be conceptualized both as a single movement that simultaneously incorporates all four movements of a sonata cycle, and as the exposition of the first movement of a four-movement sonata cycle that comprises the entire work (see Table 2.4).

Example 2.63  Thematic symmetry, in Ralph Shapey, *Piece in the Form of Sonate-Variations* for Piano (1954), page 1, system 1. © 19-- Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.
Table 2.4  Ralph Shapey, *Piece in the Form of Sonate-Variations* (1954): Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variation</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Small Form</th>
<th>Large Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>First movement</td>
<td>First movement exposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3-4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>Slow movement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>5-7</td>
<td>Scherzo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>7-8</td>
<td>Finale</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>8-9</td>
<td>(Variant of theme)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>9-12</td>
<td></td>
<td>First movement development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>12-15</td>
<td>(Related to var. 2)</td>
<td>First movement recapitulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>16-18</td>
<td>(Related to var. 3)</td>
<td>Slow movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>18-19</td>
<td>(Elaboration of theme)</td>
<td>Scherzo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>19-22</td>
<td>(Related to var. 4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>(Variant of theme)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>24-28</td>
<td>(References to vars. 5, 4/11, 6)</td>
<td>Finale</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The theme and variations 1-2 constitute the “first movement” of the small form. Variation 3 is a “slow movement,” variation 4 a “scherzo” with obsessive dotted rhythms. Variations 5 and 6 serve both as the “finale,” and, on another level, as the conclusion of the first movement exposition within the larger form. The brief variation 6, a reworking of the original theme, delineates this structural landmark. Variation 7 serves as the development section of the first movement of the large form, with a more expansive character and a wider registral range than the previous variations. In variation 8, an elaboration of variation 2, the theme is presented in imitation and diminution (see Ex. 2.64). Variation 8 serves as the recapitulation of the first movement of the large form.
Variation 9 constitutes the slow movement of the large form, with affinities of rhythm and pitch structure to the first slow variation, variation 3. Variation 10 is a transformation and elaboration of the original theme. Like the other variants of the original theme, variations 6 and 12, it serves to demarcate divisions within the overall design of the work. Variation 11 serves as the scherzo, sharing its obsessive dotted rhythms with variation 4. Both variations end with the same tetrachord (also employed at the conclusion of variation 6), with the E–G# dyad sustained in the treble, while the Eb–G dyad is repeated in the bass (not shown). After the brief interlude of variation 12, variation 13 serves as an extended finale to the large sonata form that combines elements from many variations.

Lalan Parrott premiered the Sonate-Variations at Carnegie Recital Hall in New York on 13 October 1956. When Irma Wolpe performed the work in New York in 1958, David Baruch wrote in Musical America, “the Sonata-Variations was notable for its communicative rhythms,

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Example 2.64  Theme presented in imitation and diminution, in Ralph Shapey, Piece in the Form of Sonate-Variations for Piano (1954), variation 8, p. 15, system 1 (cf. Table 2.4). © 19-- Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.
strong and logical sense of direction, and pleasing sonorities.\textsuperscript{82}

At the end of January 1954, Shapey briefly interrupted work on the \textit{Sonate-Variations} to sketch a piece for ensemble, entitled \textit{For 11 Instruments}. \textit{For 11 Instruments} represented Shapey’s second attempt within a month to compose in a style that violated traditional concepts about musical continuity.\textsuperscript{83} The one-page sketch, scored for two pianos, is highly repetitive, with dissonant, widely spaced figures (see Ex. 2.65). In March 1954, Shapey wrote out a three-page full score for the opening measures of what he apparently considered to be a revised version of the first sketch but which, in fact, appears to be the beginning of a different piece.\textsuperscript{84} As in the case of \textit{Burnt Norton}, Shapey abandoned the project despite, or perhaps because, of the originality of his conception.

The two-piano sketch leaf is of great importance in charting Shapey’s development as a composer. The rapid leaps, wide registral span and repetitive gestures evoke the music of Varèse, which Shapey knew through the Elaine Music Shop recording, issued in 1950. Both the sketch for \textit{Music for 11 Instruments} and the fragmentary setting of \textit{Burnt Norton} stand in sharp contrast to the “official” music that Shapey completed in 1953 and the early months of 1954.

\textsuperscript{82} David Baruch, “Composers’ Showcase,” \textit{Musical America} 78, no. 6 (May 1958): 26.
\textsuperscript{83} The sketch is dated Munich, 30 January 1954. Shapey Papers, Box 26.
\textsuperscript{84} The ensemble draft of \textit{For 11 Instruments} is dated Florence, 16 March 1954. Shapey labeled the new version, “reconceived.” Shapey Papers, Box 26.
Example 2.65  Ralph Shapey, *For 11 Instruments* (1954), sketch, short score, mm. 1-7. Shapey Papers, Box 26. By permission of the Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.
When Shapey met Karl Amadeus Hartmann\textsuperscript{85} in Munich at the end of January 1954, the two composers argued about their differing approaches to the question of musical continuity. In a letter of 25 January 1954, Shapey wrote to Ed Levy:

I finally saw Hartmann – the big shot here last night. We got there at 4 PM. We argued & fought till 9 PM. . . . Even he – however he is a good composer & is seeking a new form. This is good & I for one agree, but to get involved with charts with numbers for a new form, to me, becomes childish. Actually all he is doing is what Schoenberg did for 12 note Rows. Hartmann is trying to do the same thing for form. Agreed it’s possible – except for the glaring fallacies. A binding formula which binds nothing – a form which is rigid in the most superficial way resulting in new names for old tricks. His form comes from a preconceived regulated metric series; the argument got very heated and [-----] when I yelled back at him – “you dictate to your material, but my material dictates to me.” Then we parted, good close friends, his arm around me. . . . Oh yes – I forgot – Hartmann was yelling that nature dictates the form – when I pulled the above and ended the discussion.\textsuperscript{86}

Given Shapey’s ongoing experiments with a radical reformulation of the elements of his compositional language in the winter of 1954, it is not surprising that the Cello Sonata and the \textit{Sonate-Variations} proved to be an ending rather than a beginning. A conjunction of musical and psychological factors led Shapey to change his style in his next piece, the Concerto for Clarinet and Chamber Group. This change of compositional direction seems to have been spurred by Wolpe’s announcement of the imminent recording of his Quartet for Trumpet, Tenor Saxophone, Percussion, and Piano (1950, rev. 1954). Shapey had conducted the premiere of the original version of the Quartet in 1950, and had, rightly or wrongly, a possessive attitude towards the performance of the work. In a February 1954 letter, Wolpe wrote, “Esoteric is going to bring out my Sonata [for violin and piano] and the Saxophone Quartet in one Package. It’s planned for April. I certainly want you to conduct this piece (with a new first movement). If I can delay

\textsuperscript{85} Karl Amadeus Hartmann (1905-1963), German composer.

\textsuperscript{86} Ralph Shapey, letter to Edward Levy, 25 January 1954. Shapey Papers, Box 145.
Esoteric’s plans when do you plan to be back. Write me immediately.”

On 7 April 1954, Wolpe wrote to Shapey:

I worked much. Wrote a new first movement to the second of the Saxophone Quartet. Much much better, less maudlin, less melodious very terse, compact and acutely there (I am moved by it)… Also, I added a vibraphone.

It is too bad that you can’t conduct the piece. Sam Baron is going to do it. I hear splendid comments about him…Esoteric will bring out the LP in September.

As Shapey later recounted, he lacked the funds to return to America for Wolpe’s recording sessions. Shapey’s bitter disappointment at the missed opportunity to conduct Wolpe’s recording was all the more reason for him to have Wolpe’s Saxophone Quartet uppermost in his mind as he thought about his future compositional path. In March, he began writing the Concerto for Clarinet and Chamber Group. More than anything else, the Concerto evokes the sound world of Wolpe’s Quartet. Shapey’s stylistic detour of 1950-54, sparked by his admiration for Wolpe’s Violin Sonata, was at an end. The Concerto for Clarinet and Chamber Group set him on a path to return to the musical ideas that he had cultivated in the works of 1948-49.

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87 Stefan Wolpe, letter to Ralph Shapey (in Munich, Germany), postmarked 4 February 1954. Shapey Papers, Box 147, Wolpe Material (Restricted).
88 Stefan Wolpe, letter to Ralph Shapey (in Florence, Italy), postmarked 7 April 1954. Shapey Papers, Box 147, Wolpe Material (Restricted).
89 Ralph Shapey, undated note on yellow paper (?1990s). Shapey Papers, Box 147, Wolpe Material (Restricted).
CHAPTER 3:
THE SEARCH FOR A NEW CONCEPT OF CONTINUITY, 1954-58

During the second half of the 1950s, Shapey attempted to reformulate the concept of musical continuity. In a series of works (see Table 3.1), he gradually abandoned traditional procedures of musical development based on the unfolding of motives or themes. He created a music in which contrast and continuity are produced mainly through variation of register, density, texture and timbre. Although he worked out many of his ideas within the medium of chamber music, he focused primarily on the creation of a new way of writing for the orchestra in which he was able to fully realize the implications of his new musical language. Shapey reconfigured the orchestra, dividing the ensemble into small groups and using a large battery of percussion instruments. He employed brief, forceful musical gestures, which he called “graven images,” elaborating them by the use of extreme registers, complex, layered textures, dramatic timbral contrasts and spatial manipulation, both within pitch space and physical space. Shapey’s quest to develop a new musical language was inspired by the concepts of musical time and space developed by his teacher and mentor, Stefan Wolpe, and by Edgard Varèse, whose music he championed as a conductor.
Re-engaging with Wolpe’s Music

In March 1954, Shapey suddenly abandoned the neo-Schoenbergian language that he had employed in String Quartet No. 4 (1953) and the Sonate-Variations (1954). His stylistic evolution was undoubtedly stimulated by Wolpe’s own change of style in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Under the impact of Varèse, Wolpe had begun to write music that was more texturally fragmented and widely arrayed in physical space than his earlier works, a process that culminated in his two compositions for three pianos, Seven Pieces for Three Pianos (1951) and Enactments (1950–53).1

1 According to Austin Clarkson: “[Wolpe] had previously written pieces for two pianists, but three pianists opened up new possibilities for realizing his emerging concept of diverse and

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Table 3.1 Ralph Shapey: Chronology of Compositions, 1953–58

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composition</th>
<th>Dates Composed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trio for Violin, Cello and Piano, mvt. I</td>
<td>8 February 1953–16 April 1953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>String Quartet No. 4</td>
<td>4 June 1953–9 September 1953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sonate</em> for Cello and Piano</td>
<td>15 October 1953–1 January 1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Piece in the Form of Sonate-Variations, piano</td>
<td>2 January 1954–15 February 1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerto for Clarinet and Chamber Group</td>
<td>24 March 1954–7 June 1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ballet-Oratorio</em>, narr., chorus, solo voices,</td>
<td>1954–56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chamber orch. and dancers, unfinished</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trio for Violin, Cello and Piano, mvt. II</td>
<td>5 August 1954–3 April 1955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trio for Violin, Cello and Piano, mvts. III-IV</td>
<td>11 April 1955–2 May 1955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge: The Family of Man, orchestra</td>
<td>1 June 1955–17 October 1955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Mutations I</em>, piano</td>
<td>23 June 1956–31 July 1956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Short Piece</em>, piano</td>
<td>9 September 1956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duo for Viola and Piano</td>
<td>24 November 1956–9 June 1957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Rhapsodie</em> for Oboe and Piano</td>
<td>14 June 1957–21 July 1957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Songs of Eternity</em> for mezzo-soprano and eleven players (later withdrawn)</td>
<td>24 July 1957–10 September 1957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>String Quartet No. 5 with Female Voice</td>
<td>1 September 1957–20 March 1958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ontogeny</em>, orchestra</td>
<td>18 June 1958–20 August 1958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Invocation” Concerto for Violin and Orchestra</td>
<td>26 August 1958–4 December 1958</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In retrospect, several pieces that Shapey wrote in 1951-52 foreshadow his new stylistic departure. Shapey’s change of direction may, however, have been precipitated by his emotional distress over Wolpe’s plans to record his Saxophone Quartet. Shapey’s next composition, the Concerto for Clarinet and Chamber Group (1954), bears many similarities to Wolpe’s Quartet. The ensemble in Shapey’s Concerto resembles that of Wolpe’s piece. While Wolpe employs a quartet of trumpet, tenor saxophone, percussionist and piano, Shapey’s clarinet soloist is accompanied by a group of six players: horn, violin, cello, piano, and two percussionists, who play tom-toms (high, medium, low) and bass drum. Shapey provides a seating plan that places one of the percussionists at the front of the ensemble, to the right of the conductor, an arrangement reminiscent of Stravinsky’s seating plan for the instrumental ensemble of *L’Histoire du soldat* (see Fig. 3.1).

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The three movements of the Concerto are played without pause. The Concerto begins with an evocation of jazz. Shapey presents piano clusters and percussion riffs, followed by the entry of the wailing clarinet (see Ex. 3.1).
Example 3.1  Jazz timbres and textures, in Ralph Shapey, Concerto for Clarinet and Chamber Group (1954), mm. 1-4. © 1978 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.
The timbres and textures of these opening measures are reminiscent of Wolpe’s Quartet, which commences with tom-tom riffs, piano clusters, and brief saxophone and trumpet figures (see Ex. 3.2).³

³ Wolpe’s Saxophone Quartet is known today only in the revised version (1954), which Shapey did not see until after he had completed his Concerto.
Although Wolpe made obeisance to American jazz in his quartet,\(^4\) his irregular rhythms and jagged counterpoint owe more to European works like Stravinsky’s *L’Histoire du soldat* (1918) (see Exx. 3.3a and b),\(^5\) which influenced Shapey’s Concerto as well. In an interview with Eric Salzman, Wolpe commented:

\(^4\) Austin Clarkson has pointed out Wolpe’s debt to the instrumentation of *Counterpoise #1* (1948), a classically oriented work for trumpet, baritone saxophone, percussion and piano by his student, jazz composer John Carisi. See Austin E. Clarkson, “Stefan Wolpe in Conversation with Eric Salzman,” *The Musical Quarterly* 83, no. 3 (Autumn 1999): 378-412, especially 389.

I didn't intend at all to write a piece [the Saxophone Quartet] which even by its faintest traces would include jazz. But it came out as a piece which allows to think of jazz in a remotely related way. Because among my students which came to me in the years from '46, immediately after the war till including the present days, I taught an enormous amount of jazz people. I didn't teach them jazz altogether, I taught them theories and the concepts of serial music, or even of serious music.6

While jazz also had only a limited influence on the style of Shapey’s Concerto, he would draw on jazz gestures and timbres repeatedly throughout his career.7

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The melding of jazz gestures and timbres with classical techniques in Wolpe’s Quartet and Shapey’s Concerto was intentional on the part of both composers. The editors of The Ophicleide, the newsletter of Wolpe’s Contemporary Music School, announced a contest in 1950 to stimulate discussion about the interchange with jazz:

Our school has developed into a common meeting ground for progressive jazz and the modern classics. A question has arisen as to how strongly these two kinds of music
influence each other. We consider this question of such vital importance to everyone, that we have decided to run a contest. In 500 words or less, describe your theories on * THE COUNTER-INFLUENCES OF THE MODERN CLASSICS ON JAZZ, AND OF PROGRESSIVE JAZZ ON MODERN CLASSICS.  

Perhaps coincidentally, a notice in the same issue of The Ophicleide announced the forthcoming premiere of Wolpe’s Saxophone Quartet.  

The issue also included a lengthy discussion of Schoenberg’s music by faculty and students of the Contemporary Music School, moderated by Shapey. For both Wolpe and Shapey, jazz would always be secondary in importance to the great music of Schoenberg, Bartók and Varèse.

Shapey employs unordered segments of the twelve-tone collection as the basis of pitch organization in the first and last movements of the Concerto for Clarinet and Chamber Group. Although Shapey uses a succession of pcs resembling a series at the beginning of the Concerto, he does not employ this procedure systematically, and he only hints at the use of the operations of transposition and inversion. Shapey reuses the pitch groupings of the opening measures in an identifiable manner as the work progresses, however. For example, there are multiple correspondences between the pc content of m. 5 and that of m. 41 (see Exx. 3.4a and b). The pc content of the figure played by the clarinet in the second half of the first beat of m. 5, \{D#, E, F\}, is identical to that of the first three-note chord of m. 41. The pc collection, \{F, Gb, G, A, Bb\}, played by the clarinet on beats 1-2 in m. 5, is divided in m. 41 between the clarinet’s A–Bb dyad and the three-note chord, \{F, F#, G\}, played by the violin and cello. The horn presents the melodic figure, F4–B4–G4–C5, on the fourth beat of m. 5, at the same time as the clarinet and violin combine to state the pc set, \{Db, G, Ab\}. Similarly, the clarinet plays the dyad, B–C, immediately after the violin and cello present the chord, \{C, F, G\}, on the last beat of m. 41. As

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8 *The Ophicleide* 1, no. 3 (February 1950): 6.
9 Ibid., 9.
the clarinet sounds the pc, B, the violin, cello and piano combine to play the chord, \{C#, G, G#\},
the enharmonic equivalent of the pc set, \{Db, G, Ab\}.

**Example 3.4a** Opening clarinet line, in Ralph Shapey, Concerto for Clarinet and Chamber Group (1954), m. 5. © 1978 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.
Shapey introduces a clarinet melody that moves through the circle of fifths in the second movement. According to Shapey’s own analysis, this diatonic melody presents the “twelve-tone set” that undergirds the entire Concerto (see Ex. 3.5).  

10 “For the first time, the true structural organization of a 12-tone set is fully revealed, although handled in a rather free manner. The clarinet solo always uses the 12 notes in their [its] organized

Example 3.4b  Ralph Shapey, Concerto for Clarinet and Chamber Group (1954), m. 41 (cf. Ex. 3.4a). © 1978 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.
Example 3.5  Melodic motion through the circle of fifths, in Ralph Shapey, Concerto for Clarinet and Chamber Group (1954), mm. 110-2. © 1978 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

Shapey’s use of the circle of fifths in the second movement is reminiscent of Wolpe’s use of tropes, each of which employs a single interval class; an example of this procedure occurs in

the *Passacaglia* for Piano (1936), a work that the younger composer particularly admired.\textsuperscript{11}

Shapey presents the “twelve-tone set” with chromatic interpolations, reminiscent of the thematic material of the first movement (see Ex. 3.6). While the chromatic interpolations serve to unify the entire work, the spacious, fifth-dominated textures and the absence of percussion writing in the second movement produce timbral and textural contrasts with the rest of the Concerto.

**Example 3.6** Chromatic interpolations within the “twelve-tone set,” in Ralph Shapey, Concerto for Clarinet and Chamber Group (1954), mm. 113-7, clarinet only. In the example, the pcs of the series are numbered, while interpolations are marked by dashed brackets. © 1978 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

Shapey conducted the premiere of the Concerto for Clarinet and Chamber Group at one of the New York Philharmonic’s Chamber Concerts on 20 March 1955, with Stanley Drucker as the clarinet soloist. In *The New York Times*, Harold C. Schonberg wrote,

> Mr. Shapey’s eleven-minute work sounded twelve-tone. In any case, it was decidedly atonal. Like many compositions of its class, it was nonmelodic, and its form did not easily break down on first hearing. Plenty of force and rhythm were in evidence. With two musicians out of the six working on percussion, and with the piano also handled in a

percussive manner, a degree of force was inevitable. What Mr. Shapey has done, he has
done well and he even has achieved a degree of personality in the rather arid writing.\textsuperscript{12}

The first piece that Shapey completed after his return from Europe in the summer of 1954
was the Trio for Violin, Cello and Piano (1953-55).\textsuperscript{13} He had began to compose the Trio at the
suggestion of cellist Benar Heifetz of the Albeneri Trio in 1953, but set it aside to write String
Quartet No. 4. The Trio is dedicated to physicist and inventor Robert Adler (1913-2007).\textsuperscript{14} It is a
transitional work, and lacks stylistic unity. For that very reason, it is of particular interest in
showing how Shapey’s compositional technique evolved during a critical period in his artistic
development.

Like many of Shapey’s pieces of the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Trio reflects the
influence of Wolpe’s \textit{Battle Piece} and the string quartets of Bartók. The first two movements
draw on the motivic language of the opening measures of part IV of \textit{Battle Piece}, most notably
the repeated chord gesture in m. 2 (see Exx. 3.7a and b).

\textsuperscript{13} Theodore Presser Co. publishes both score and parts for the Trio for Violin, Cello and Piano.
Parts: 11440566P; full score: 11440566S.
\textsuperscript{14} Ralph Shapey, letter to Rosalyn Tureck, 13 September 1954. Shapey Papers, Box 4.

Vivo $\text{ } \frac{3}{8} \text{ } = 84$

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{example37a.png}
\end{figure}
Shapey does not develop his ideas in Wolpe’s manner, but creates a circular, repetitive discourse, particularly in movement I. Shapey’s rhythmic procedures in movement I also lack subtlety. The instrumental lines fit together within a rigid rhythmic grid, a characteristic of

Example 3.7b  Ralph Shapey, Trio for Violin, Cello and Piano (1953-55), I, mm. 6-8 (cf. Ex. 3.7a). © 1958 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.
several of the works of 1952 and 1953, including the Oboe Quartet. Although subdivisions within beats are complex, the interlocking rhythms are stiff, and seem to constrain the composer’s imagination (see Ex. 3.7b).

The second movement was composed between August 1954 and April 1955, after Shapey had embarked on his new stylistic path by writing the Concerto for Clarinet and Chamber Group. Shapey employs musical material similar to that of movement I. He uses repetition in a comparable manner, but his handling of his materials is more sophisticated. The music has greater rhythmic and contrapuntal complexity than that of movement I, and the phrase structure is more fluid (see Ex. 3.8).
Example 3.8 Ralph Shapey, Trio for Violin, Cello and Piano (1953-55), II, mm. 1-5. © 1958 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

Allegro $\frac{4}{4} = 80$ ( $\frac{3}{4} = 160$)

* $f$ within the orbit of “$p$ to $mf$.” This entire movement should have the dynamic range from “$p$ to $mf$,” but “$f$” is a “$f$” intensity without “$f$” sound.
After the protracted genesis of the first two movements, Shapey appears to have treated the final two movements of the Trio as afterthoughts. The brief third movement consists primarily of a series of alternating fifths on different pitches with interspersed glissandi (not shown). Movement IV is a set of variations on an ostinato. Shapey employs a declamatory theme and elaborates rather than develops his ideas.

The Trio was premiered at the concert that Shapey and Wolpe presented together at Carl Fischer Hall in New York on 22 May 1959, together with three other, more recent, pieces by Shapey: String Quartet No. 5 (1957-58), Rhapsodie for Oboe and Piano (1957) and Form for Piano (1959). Eric Salzman’s critical New York Times review displayed ambivalence about Shapey’s use of traditional forms in the work: “The conventional four movements are thematic and vigorous, with a coy scherzo that doesn’t quite belong. The medium is mastered but the technique is bound by the form.”

Challenge: The Family of Man

Shapey’s next major composition, Challenge: The Family of Man for Orchestra (1955), was commissioned by Dimitri Mitropoulos and the New York Philharmonic (see Fig. 3.2).

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15 Four works by Wolpe were also performed: Form for Piano (1959), three movements from Enactments for Three Pianos (1953), the Saxophone Quartet (1950, rev. 1954) and the Oboe Quartet (1955). On the 22 May 1959 Shapey-Wolpe concert, see Patricia Morehead, “Analysis of Form for Piano by Ralph Shapey,” Perspectives of New Music 40, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 68-79.
17 The score and parts of Challenge: The Family of Man are available from the Theodore Presser Co. Rental Library.
Mitropoulos had followed Shapey’s career with great interest. He awarded Shapey honorable mention in the 1951 George Gershwin Memorial Contest for his Fantasy for Orchestra (1951), and arranged for the stipend that Shapey received from Alma Morgenthau. Two years later, Mitropoulos arranged for the premiere of Shapey’s Concerto for Clarinet and Chamber Group on one of the New York Philharmonic’s Chamber Concerts. The success of the Clarinet Concerto resulted in the commission for Challenge: The Family of Man. The “commission” consisted of the copying of the parts at the expense of Mitropoulos, plus two tickets to the performance. Mitropoulos originally suggested that Shapey entitle the work, “Challenge.” Shapey, however, was inspired by the catalogue of the landmark photographic exhibition, “The

Family of Man,” to change the name of the piece to “Challenge: The Family of Man.” Edward Steichen (1879-1973), director of the Department of Photography at New York’s Museum of Modern Art, mounted the “Family of Man” exhibition at MoMA in January 1955. Steichen’s exhibition and its accompanying catalogue stand as classic representations of post-World War II American liberalism. The exhibition attempted to embody the unity of human experience. “It was conceived . . . as a mirror of the essential oneness of mankind throughout the world.” In addition to the many images depicting different aspects of life, “The Family of Man” portrayed the horrors of war (see Fig. 3.3) and warned of the danger of nuclear annihilation. The exhibit included a photograph of deliberations at the United Nations, underlining the necessity of international cooperation.

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21 Ibid., 4.
24 “[T]he best authorities are unanimous in saying that a war with hydrogen bombs is quite likely to put an end to the human race. . . . there will be universal death—sudden only for a fortunate minority, but for the majority a slow torture of disease and disintegration . . .” Bertrand Russell, in Edward Steichen, *The Family of Man*, 179.
In unpublished program notes, Shapey discussed the relationship of his piece to the “Family of Man” exhibition, using concepts that echoed the exhibition’s language and images:

This piece is not a tone poem in the sense of a musical portrait of any ethnic group or groups, past, present or future. But rather a kind of philosophical concept of the last frontier left to mankind. For centuries it has been Nature which has always presented the Challenging force to man, but now as never before, since the advent of the Atomic Age, Jet, Medicine and all the other fantastic strides Man has made in his conquest of Nature, Man stands at the threshold of the one last Challenge left to him; Man unto Man. All of
the barriers of time, space, travel, ideas and even language are quickly being torn down. Never before has the need for the true understanding of mankind as a family been so desperate.

“And God said, let there be light” ----light of reason, understanding, life & love; the light of Mankind, one Mankind; the greatest Challenge of all time; The Family of Man, all Mankind.26

Shapey’s words evoke one of the opening images of the exhibition catalogue, a photograph by Wynn Bullock of dawn over a winding river, entitled by Steichen, “And God said, let there be light (Genesis 1:3)” (see Fig. 3.4).

![Image](image.png)


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26 Ralph Shapey, draft of the program note for *Challenge: The Family of Man*, 1956. Shapey Papers, Box 93.
Shapey also expressed universalist sentiments similar to those conveyed by the exhibition in his unfinished *Ballet-Oratorio*, subtitled, *They Shall Not Have Died in Vain*, for narrator, chorus, solo voices, chamber orchestra and dancers (1954-56).\(^\text{27}\) In a text draft for the work, Shapey wrote:

Thus it is written in many books; spoken by the many tongues; & the Lord God (called by many names: Jehovah, Allah, Mazda, Brahma, Christ the Son of God) looked upon this formless void which was the earth & sent His spirit upon the face of these waters.
So began the eternal laws of creation.
The Heavens, the earth, the waters & all therein, each a law & life unto itself.
And God saw fit in His Infinite Love to send to man His truths, in many forms through many voices:
Music – they shall not die in vain (chorus)\(^\text{28}\)

When Shapey devised the scenario of the *Ballet-Oratorio* in 1954 and compiled its text, he drew on Carl Sandburg’s book-length poem, *The People, Yes* (1936),\(^\text{29}\) which repeatedly employs the phrase, “the Family of Man.”\(^\text{30}\) Sandburg (1878-1967) was the brother-in-law of Edward Steichen, and wrote the “Prologue” to the catalogue for the “Family of Man” exhibition.\(^\text{31}\)

In *Challenge: The Family of Man*, Shapey realized the musical vision that he had first articulated in his 1954 sketch, *For 11 Instruments* (see Ex. 2.65). He also built on the

\(^{27}\) Shapey originally collaborated on the *Ballet-Oratorio* with dancer and choreographer Jean Erdman (b. 1916), wife of mythologist Joseph Campbell (1904-87). Erdman wrote Shapey an undated letter, postmarked 28 February 1955, withdrawing from the project due to other artistic commitments. Shapey Papers, Box 2.


\(^{30}\) “The living flowing breath of the history of nations./Of the little Family of Man hugging the little ball of Earth . . .” Carl Sandburg, *The People, Yes*, 55.

\(^{31}\) Carl Sandburg, “Prologue,” in Edward Steichen, *The Family of Man*, 4-5. In the Prologue, Sandburg reuses phrases from *The People, Yes* with little or no modification: “the living flowing breath of the history of nations” and “one big family hugging close to the ball of Earth.” See chapter 3, note 30.
achievements of his previous works for orchestra and large ensemble, including Symphony No. 1 (1952) and the Concerto for Clarinet and Chamber Group (1954), creating music of far greater complexity than anything he had previously written. Challenge: The Family of Man is characterized by continuously changing meters, thick, layered textures, use of extreme registers, and an extensive use of percussion. It is divided into five sections that are symmetrically balanced, with the final section both recapitulating the music of the first and incorporating ideas from the other sections of the piece. In his program note for Challenge: The Family of Man, Shapey wrote:

In form, [Challenge: The Family of Man] is a one movement, five section work. Each section has an individual personality of its own, using both new material as well as elements from preceding sections. The unifying force is the underlying thematic material of the first section in an almost cantus-like handling. . . . Rhythmically it carries to the inevitable conclusion my ideas started in the last movement of my Symphony No. 1, and the Concerto for Clarinet and Chamber Group, performed March 20, 1955, of quickly changing, moving eddies. Sudden shifts from slow to fast all within themselves, the pulsating vibrancy of many different levels of “time,” each a unit unto itself and yet working as a part of the greater unit of the whole.

Time and sound combined through spatial interrelations give the score a luminosity and dramatic intensity.32

Shapey’s approach to orchestration is modeled on the music of both Stravinsky and Varèse. The opening measures of Challenge: The Family of Man repeatedly delineate a huge pitch space that spans the highest and the lowest possible sounds provided by the instruments of the orchestra. Its breadth is emphasized by the striking acoustic properties of these sounds, which deliberately test the limits of auditory perception. Just as Varèse had juxtaposed the piccolo and the tubas in his recently completed Déserts (1954) (see Ex. 3.9), Shapey pits the violins, flutes and piccolos against the contrabass tuba, the contrabassoon and the contrabasses (see Ex. 3.10).


\[ \frac{3}{8} = 66 \left( \frac{3}{8} = 132 \right) \]
Shapey fills out the wide pitch space with timbres that are particularly penetrating. *Challenge: The Family of Man* presents high, nasal bassoon sounds doubled by the English horn rather than by the oboe, and by violas rather than violins. Shapey’s use of the highest register of the bassoon recalls the opening measures of the *Rite of Spring* (see Ex. 3.11). In addition to the acoustic qualities of Shapey’s music, its deliberate pace and static, block-like construction portend a work of large dimensions.

Thematic ideas and subsidiary figures are repeated and elaborated within the sound blocks of *Challenge: The Family of Man*. These passages are integrated effectively into a dramatic musical structure based on contrasts of texture, timbre and rhythm, as well as on motivic manipulation. The symmetrical arrangement of section II exemplifies Shapey’s method. Section II has the form, A–B–A₁–B₁–A₂. Shapey establishes a steady sixteenth-note pulse within a layered polyphonic orchestral texture at the beginning of the section (mm. 1–35). At the end, the musical material of the opening measures is transformed into rhythmically intricate counterpoint (see Ex. 3.12).
During the intermediate episodes, two closely related sound blocks (mm. 36–47, 61–74) frame a brief return of the opening sixteenth-note string figures (mm. 48-60). These string
figures are frequently interrupted by the newly dominant brass choir, which develops a motive stated at the outset of the section by the winds. Shapey presents rapid ascending and descending figures simultaneously in the two sound blocks. The descending figure is a diminution of the ostinato that is repeated in the bass during the opening measures.

The beginning of the final episode of section II is signaled both by the reintroduction of the leaping motivic figure played by the first violins at the beginning of the work (mm. 79ff.) and by a stentorian brass theme (mm. 75ff.) (see Ex. 3.13). Similarly, the turbulent orchestral writing in the first half of section III leads not to a conventional climax, but to sonorous brass chords (see Ex. 3.14a), reminiscent of Messiaen’s orchestral music (see Ex. 3.14b). Shapey begins the passage with a succession of chords using subtractive rhythms, arranged in the descending series, 3, 1, 2, 1, 1, 1 (see Ex. 3.15).\(^3\) Shapey’s handling of the climaxes of sections II and III reflects his abandonment of the concept of a linear musical narrative in favor of a non-linear, non-narrative approach to musical continuity, which he was soon to articulate verbally.\(^4\)

\(^3\) Shapey discussed similar rhythmic techniques in a lecture that he gave at Yale, probably in the early 1960s. See Ralph Shapey, “Lecture on Rhythm Given at Yale University” (undated, ca. 1963). Shapey Papers, Box 10.

Example 3.13 continued

\[
\begin{array}{c|c|c}
\text{Hn. I-III} & \text{Hn. II-IV} & \text{Tpt. I-II} & \text{Tpt. III} & \text{Tbn. I} & \text{Vln. I} & \text{Vln. II} & \text{Va.} & \text{Vc.} & \text{Cb.} \\
&&&&&&&&&
\end{array}
\]
Example 3.13 continued
Example 3.14b  Motto theme, in Olivier Messiaen, *Turangalîla-Symphonie* (1946-48), I, mm. 24-29 [mm. 2-7 after rehearsal number 3] (cf. Ex. 3.14a). © 1953, 1992 Durand éditions - Paris. All rights reserved. Reproduced by kind permission of Hal Leonard MGB, Italy.
Example 3.15  Subtractive rhythmic processes, in Ralph Shapey, Challenge: The Family of Man for Orchestra (1955), III, mm. 50-3. © 1957 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.
In section V, the leaping motivic figure of section I is transformed into an ostinato, while the low winds, brass, strings and the piano sustain pitches at the bottom of their ranges. The work ends with a tolling gong and a brief reminiscence of the sonorous chords of section III.

Shapey uses a vivid timbral palette throughout Challenge: The Family of Man. The strings and brass alternately play glissandi during the second half of section III (mm. 72-124). The percussion instruments dominate the musical discourse of section IV in a manner that presages Shapey’s later music.

When Shapey finished Challenge: The Family of Man in October 1955, Wolpe was at Black Mountain College in North Carolina, working on his Symphony No. 1 (1955-56). Aware of Shapey’s orchestral project, Wolpe wrote to him on November 4: “How are you? And how is your Symphony? Is it finished? I am awfully curious to read it. (And sense, get acquainted with what you have to say and how you say it.)”

When Shapey informed him that Challenge had been completed, Wolpe wrote a long letter in which he tried to relate Shapey’s compositional evolution to his own musical ideas:

I am happy to read that your symphony (or whichever you call it) will be programmed in the first week of February. I will be there certainly!! . . .

I am curious to read the score of yours. (Who copied the thing for you?) When you write “all kinds of new things happen: new dynamics, intensities, dimensions, actions, reactions, planes & levels” I had to think of the title of pieces which I wrote in 1947 which was the following: “Displaced spaces, chords, negations[,] a new sort of interrelationship in space, Pattern[,] Tempo, diversity of action, interreaction & intensities” which all later were (programmatically) fused in to what my Enactments for 3 Pianos really & verily are.

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35 This may be indebted to Stravinsky’s example. See The Rite of Spring, rehearsal nos. 175-9, trombones and horns.
36 Stefan Wolpe, letter to Shapey from Black Mountain College, North Carolina, 4 November 1955. Shapey Papers, Box 147, Wolpe Material (Restricted).
A few weeks later, Shapey sent Wolpe a copy of the score of *Challenge* and received an ecstatic response:

I dreamt this night of a performance of your “Challenge.” It sounded extraordinary[,] like huge organs, many of them[,] and the double bass’s steppings in the second mov[ement] sounded like nightingales plus ocarinas, the brass sections in the second to the last part sounded like phantastic accordions. O what a joyous night I had with you!!

The compositional achievement of *Challenge: The Family of Man* represents the culminating point of Shapey’s early career. Unfortunately, the piece was never performed. In a 1950 letter, Mitropoulos had expressed admiration for Shapey’s music, but warned that Shapey’s tendency to excessive rhythmic and textural complication could impede performances of his orchestral works. Mitropoulos’s letter reflected his own difficulties in teaching orchestras to play rhythmically complex contemporary works. He compared Shapey’s “unplayable” rhythms to those of both Wolpe and Artur Schnabel, recalling the problems he experienced in 1946 when he premiered Schnabel’s Symphony No. 1 in Minneapolis. Milton Babbitt attended the Schnabel premiere and testified to the orchestra’s inability to master the music:

Mitropoulos was beside himself with unhappiness at the inadequate rehearsal time and the way the men played it [Schnabel’s Symphony No. 1]. If you just look at the score, you’ll see it’s a forest of notes, and Dimitri just couldn’t untangle it—he simply couldn’t.

Despite his consistent advocacy of challenging music written in a language that strained the comprehension of both orchestras and audiences, Mitropoulos had no desire to repeat his traumatic Minneapolis experience. When Shapey was awarded honorable mention in the George Gershwin Memorial Contest in 1951, Mitropoulos again warned him about the excessive

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38 Stefan Wolpe, letter to Shapey, undated (December 1955 or January 1956). Shapey Papers, Box 147, Wolpe Material (Restricted).
39 See chapter 1, note 95.
41 Trotter, 207.
difficulty of his orchestral writing, and indicated that Shapey was denied first prize for this reason.\textsuperscript{42} Despite the admonitions of Mitropoulos, Shapey wrote music in \textit{Challenge: The Family of Man} that was more rhythmically and texturally complex than anything that he had yet produced. Before the rehearsals, Mitropoulos complained about Shapey’s use of irregular rhythms, and demanded permission to omit one of the sections of the piece, a request Shapey denied.\textsuperscript{43} After the first rehearsal (see Fig. 3.5), Mitropoulos canceled the premiere of \textit{Challenge}, although he played through the work at the dress rehearsal as a favor to Stefan Wolpe.\textsuperscript{44} In retrospect, the cancellation should not have come as a surprise. For the board of directors of the New York Philharmonic and the orchestra’s audience, even the music of Hindemith was considered problematical in 1955.\textsuperscript{45} Most of the leading American composers of intricate, atonal music, including Wolpe, Carter and Babbitt, found it nearly impossible to obtain performances of their orchestral works during the 1950s and 1960s.\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{42} See chapter 2, note 26.
\textsuperscript{43} Shapey, “Remembrances,” 20. Shapey Papers, Box 136.
\textsuperscript{44} “The Challenge was read through, when he [Mitropoulos] decided that he just couldn’t do it. . . . Wolpe was in Black Mountain [North Carolina], and he . . . drove up . . . and Mitropoulos did go over it for him.” Vivian Perlis, interview with Ralph Shapey, 75. Oral History American Music, Yale University; Finley, 9.
\textsuperscript{45} “Confidentially to you, we – including Mitropoulos – think that a week of Hindemith will not be very beneficial because first of all he is not a conductor, and secondly few of his works are accepted by the public.” Memo from Bruno Zirato (1884-1972), co-manager of the New York Philharmonic, to Floyd G. Blair (1891-1965), president of the Philharmonic-Symphony Society of New York, 20 June 1955. New York Philharmonic Leon Levy Digital Archives, ID: 005-01-24, accessed 7 March 2013, http://archives.nyphil.org.
Figure 3.5 Shapey and Dimitri Mitropoulos at the rehearsals for *Challenge: The Family of Man* by the New York Philharmonic, February 1956. © 1956 New York Philharmonic. By permission of the New York Philharmonic.
A notational problem seems to have been the immediate pretext for the cancellation of Shapey’s New York Philharmonic performance. According to clarinetist Stanley Drucker, rhythmic errors in the score and parts of Challenge made the piece unperformable. An examination of both the draft short score and the full score confirms that Shapey repeatedly made a rhythmic error in the first movement. In addition to any questions that he might have had about the playability of Shapey’s demanding score, Mitropoulos felt pressured by the recent decision of the Board of Directors of the Philharmonic to search for a new music director for the orchestra. This development was at least partially precipitated by hostility generated by his advocacy of difficult contemporary works. Under the circumstances, Mitropoulos was not in a position to perform Shapey’s demanding music.

After he canceled Shapey’s premiere, Mitropoulos spoke to the press and provided a diplomatic explanation for his action:

I commissioned the work because I had, and still have, a great esteem for Mr. Shapey’s compositorial talent. Unfortunately, after putting the work through rehearsal, it appeared so difficult in its design, so complicated in structure and notation, that the rehearsal time at our disposal would not have been sufficient to guarantee a performance of the desirable

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48 Shapey wrote sixteenth rest, dotted eighth note, thirty-second note = quarter note repeatedly in the first section (m. 18, violin I; m. 22, violin II; m. 12, trumpet; m. 41, cello; m. 42, viola). This error is also found in the short score of Challenge: The Family of Man. Shapey should have written sixteenth rest, eighth note tied to thirty-second note, thirty-second note. See Shapey, Challenge: The Family of Man for Orchestra, short score, draft. Shapey Papers, Box 27.
50 “As you know, we have been severely criticized for playing too much modern and new music. The criticism is not only from our audiences in New York, but also from the radio audiences. Maestro Mitropoulos has been the strongest advocate of new music and is the one responsible for our programs.” Floyd G. Blair, president of the Philharmonic-Symphony Society of New York, letter to Mr. L. M. Symmes, Jr., 3 August 1955. New York Philharmonic Leon Levy Digital Archives, ID: 005-01-24, accessed 7 March 2013, http://archives.nyphil.org.
perfection. In addition, the work’s provocative character might have caused antagonism to future performances of contemporary works. Thus, I regretfully had to change the program.\footnote{H. W. L. [Henry W. Levinger], “New York Concert and Opera Guide,” \textit{The Musical Courier} CLIII, no. 4 (1 March 1956): 17.}

In contrast, Edward Steichen, whose MoMA exhibition gave \textit{Challenge: The Family of Man} its name, wrote a supportive letter to Shapey that summarized the plight of composers who write for American orchestras, with their tight rehearsal schedules:\footnote{According to violinist Rolf Schulte, James Levine requested that Elliott Carter simplify his rhythmic notation and write for orchestra in 4/4 when he invited Carter to compose a piece for the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Elliott Carter Colloquium, Graduate Center, City University of New York, 14 February 2013.}

Of course I was shocked when I heard of the cancellation and without knowing the details realized that there must be production problems and we all know that that is not unusual – that ever since composers have written music for a symphony orchestra, both orchestra and conductor have on many occasions stated that it could not be done, that it was not playable and today they have become standard repertoire and even the high school orchestras are not stumped by the scores.

\ldots Keep up your dander and be assured of my deep interest.\footnote{Edward Steichen, letter to Shapey, 23 February 1956. Shapey Papers, Box 4. Shapey later recalled that “[Steichen] was going to come to the concert, and he was terribly disappointed.” Vivian Perlis, interview with Ralph Shapey, transcript, 76. Oral History American Music, Yale University.}

When Mitropoulos referred in his statement to the press about “antagonism to future performances of contemporary works,” he had in mind the forthcoming premiere of Leon Kirchner’s Piano Concerto No. 1 (1953). On 23 February 1956, two weeks after Shapey’s cancellation, Mitropoulos conducted the world premiere of Kirchner’s Concerto, with the composer as soloist. The performers recorded the work the following day.\footnote{Leon Kirchner, Concerto for Piano and Orchestra. Kirchner, piano; New York Philharmonic, Dimitri Mitropoulos, cond. Columbia ML 5185 (1956).} In \textit{The New York Times}, Harold C. Schoenberg complained, “The trouble with [Kirchner’s] score, as much as one can hazard a guess about such complicated organization at one hearing, is that it sounds overworked.” He continued,
It carries on a flirtation with twelve-tone elements, though Mr. Kirchner does not use a tone row and even ends the slow movement with a tonic chord. Dissonances elsewhere are piled on dissonances. The piano writing—and Mr. Kirchner proved an exceptionally able exponent of his own music—is rather percussive but thoroughly idiomatic and very difficult.55

Despite the relatively conservative nature of Kirchner’s music, Henry W. Levinger, critic of the *Musical Courier*, complained about the Concerto’s incomprehensibility:

> It is a composition which cannot be grasped at first hearing, at least by this reporter. . . . It is ugly sounding, dissonance is piled on dissonance, and there is no relief for the ear. . . . The bewildered audience paid respectful homage to the composer.56

In his biography of Mitropoulos, William R. Trotter singles out Kirchner as one of the composers of complex, rebarbative music championed by the conductor.57 Kirchner’s Concerto was representative of the most “advanced” compositional idiom acceptable by orchestral players, critics and the Philharmonic’s audience in the mid-1950s. Mitropoulos had commissioned Shapey to compose *Challenge: The Family of Man* after the premiere of the Concerto for Clarinet and Chamber Group demonstrated that the younger man had learned to write music that was both performable and comprehensible by audiences.58 Under the circumstances, Mitropoulos had hoped that he could trust Shapey to refrain from writing music for full orchestra that explored the boundaries of the possible.

In March 1958, the press recalled Shapey’s experience with the New York Philharmonic when an international jury chose the Concerto for Clarinet and Chamber Group for performance at the forthcoming ISCM Festival, to be held in Strasbourg, France, in June 1958. Shapey’s selection was noted in a *New York Times* article, entitled, “World of Music: Two Are

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57 Trotter, 409.
58 See chapter 3, note 12.
Chosen/I.S.C.M. Jury Picks Copland and Shapey Works for Festival.\textsuperscript{59} The article recounted the story of the aborted premiere of \textit{Challenge: The Family of Man}, and connected Dimitri Mitropoulos’s patronage of Shapey to his new success. The ISCM performance marked the first real European recognition of Shapey’s accomplishments, although Shapey was not able to attend the festival for financial reasons.\textsuperscript{60}

\textbf{Shapey’s New Style}

Shapey was deeply hurt by the cancellation of the premiere of \textit{Challenge: The Family of Man} by Mitropoulos and the New York Philharmonic in February 1956. He reacted in a characteristic way to the crisis: he changed compositional direction, just as he had done when he was denied the opportunity to conduct the recording of Wolpe’s Saxophone Quartet in 1954. Throughout the spring and summer of 1956, Shapey wrote little music while he meditated on his future direction as a composer. When he returned to composing, he deliberately sought a new musical discourse. His style emphasized the reiteration of brief motives, somewhat in the manner of Varèse. At the time, Shapey thought of his compositional philosophy as a radical break with his musical past. He perceived, however, that it represented an intensification of ideas that were already present in the music that he had written in the preceding years:

\begin{quote}
I spent one whole year asking myself, “What is it that made the old masters so great?” . . . [I]t was a very intensive year of looking and searching until I formulated for myself that which I knew I was doing, but had not yet come to clearly understand.\textsuperscript{61}
\end{quote}

In 1958, Shapey articulated his new conception of music in unpublished notes:

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{60} Shapey: “I couldn’t raise the money to go. I was a pauper. Nobody would give me the money.” Carol K. Baron, interview with Ralph Shapey, transcript, 196. Wolpe/Baron Archive.
\textsuperscript{61} Cole Gagne and Tracy Caras, \textit{Soundpieces: Interviews with American Composers} (Metuchen, NJ; London: Scarecrow Press, 1982), 370-1.
\end{flushright}
I must freeze sound & movement. No longer can I go on writing organic music which goes, goes, goes. I’m tired, tired, tired of music that like a dog runs in circles after its own tail; & yet never will I deny any of that which I had written before this new moment. The line does start, however in the past; perhaps, only vaguely, I can see it in the Clarinet Concerto.\textsuperscript{62}

The music that Shapey wrote in the late 1950s was heavily influenced by his perception of Varèse’s most recent work, \textit{Déserts} (1954). Much has been written about the way in which Varèse reordered the elements of musical language, creating a radically new perspective on musical time and space, integrating the percussion ensemble into the orchestra and merging the boundaries between pitched sound and noise. Varèse used his new language to contrast musical stasis and motion in a discourse that differed from the traditional concept of musical narrative.\textsuperscript{63} He did not abandon this concept, however. An important aspect of his music is the effect produced by its dialogue with the expectations generated by traditional ideas of musical continuity. Shapey proceeded from more radical premises in the late 1950s. In his most ideologically extreme works, he partially abandoned the concept of directed activity that lies at the heart of Western music in a way that Varèse never did. Shapey relied on the Varésian concepts of register, timbre, and texture to fashion a musical narrative in the first movement of his String Quartet No. 5 (1957-58). In \textit{Ontogeny} for Orchestra (1958), he created a continuum of pitched and unpitched sounds, and juxtaposed sections of different timbral characters to obtain structural contrast. These pieces embody some of the central tenets of the members of the “New York School,” which John Cage summarized in his statement, “Where people had felt the

\textsuperscript{62} Ralph Shapey, handwritten manuscript [thoughts about musical structure], ca. 1958. Shapey Papers, Box 11.
necessity to stick sounds together to make a continuity, we four felt the opposite necessity to get rid of the glue so that sounds would be themselves.”

The stylistic differences between Shapey and Varèse later led Shapey to deny the influence of the older composer on his music:

Vivian Perlis: The ideas that you write about and that other people write about your music, sound more like Varèse than your music sounds like Varèse. That is, masses of sound in time and space, and colliding masses of [sound] . . . because it sounds like you, it doesn’t sound like Varèse.

Shapey: I happen to admire him. I think he is one of the geniuses of the twentieth century. . . . I’ve conducted a lot of Varèse, I’m fascinated by it. . . . There are many who think or say that I’ve been influenced by Varèse. I don’t think that’s true at all.

Roughly speaking, Shapey’s music of the late 1950s represents an abandonment of the “German” tradition of rigorous pitch manipulation, and an embrace of the “French” preoccupation with timbre and texture. Although Shapey never desired to “get rid of the glue,” to use Cage’s terminology, he certainly focused on permitting “sounds [to be] themselves.”

When Shapey was interviewed by William Allaudin Mathieu in 1965, he discussed his interest in the purely physical properties of sound:

We are definitely in the period of transition. I think the electronic instrument caused a tremendous revolution, if for no other reason . . . perhaps than for the first time . . . we . . . are beginning to know . . . something about the structure of sound itself. This has caused a tremendous revolution, this has made all serious people aware that sound is not only a fantastic thing by itself but all the incredible things that can happen to and with sound.

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Shapey’s new manner reflected his interest in the visual arts, particularly the idea of objects moving relative to each other in space, as in the mobiles of Alexander Calder, a friend of Varèse. In his 1983 interview with Vivian Perlis, Shapey discussed his ideas about the “shape” of sound:

Shapey: I knew Eric [Salzman] . . . in New York, and he gave it [Discourse I (1961)] a writeup and he talked about that it was like a piece – like a sculpture, frozen . . . frozen in space, that you can walk around and see it from all angles.

Perlis: It doesn’t remind me of Calder, because Calder’s too delicate, but a mobile that is . . . affected by –

Shapey: Other things . . . that’s a Calder, okay, but he mentioned that this was like a frozen piece of sculpture that you could look at . . . from all angles. . . . I said [to Eric], “Did we ever talk about this?” He said, “No.” . . . I said, “Well, well, I really did it.”

Shapey’s second wife, Vera Klement, was (and is) an abstract expressionist painter. In later years, Shapey emphasized the importance of the interaction of composers and artists in New York at the time he was developing his new approach to composition:

Shapey: [Wolpe] would also go into the other direction: that he was doing in music what [the artists are] doing in painting, and that they’re doing in painting what he’s doing in music. . .

Vera Klement: It isn’t only [Wolpe] that made the analogy between painting and music at that time. It was also Morty Feldman and [Philip] Guston who saw . . . and Cage who crossed over the borders. There was a great deal of that.

Shapey: Well, we all did that. . .

Shapey: It was nice. That I can’t deny. It was a wonderful milieu. That it was.

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70 Vera Klement (b. 1929), professor emerita of art at the University of Chicago, where she taught from 1969-95. Klement was married to Ralph Shapey from 1957-76.
71 Philip Guston (1913-80), painter and printmaker.
72 Carol K. Baron, interview with Ralph Shapey, transcript, 57-8. Wolpe/Baron Archive. See Dore Ashton, The Unknown Shore: A View of Contemporary Art (Boston, Toronto: Little, Brown
Retreat from the Orchestra

Shapey wrote several pieces for small ensembles in the two years following the Challenge debacle before he was again willing to use an orchestral canvas. Between June 1956 and July 1957, he composed three works of modest scope: Mutations I\textsuperscript{73} for Piano (1956), Rhapsodie for Oboe and Piano (1957) and the Duo for Viola and Piano (1957). He also wrote an occasional work, the Short Piece for Piano, in September 1956. The first of these compositions, Mutations, seems to have served as a “trial run” for Shapey’s new style. Although Shapey avoided one set of musical anxieties by writing for piano solo, the new piece may have been a response to another.

Wolpe’s student David Tudor served as one of the leading American advocates of the European and American avant-garde during the 1950s, performing frequently both in New York and at European music festivals. Tudor helped to prepare the score of Wolpe’s Battle Piece, and premiered the work in March 1950.\textsuperscript{74} He gave the American premiere of Boulez’s Piano Sonata No. 2 later that year.\textsuperscript{75} During the 1950s, Tudor became closely associated with John Cage. Shapey perceived Tudor’s collaboration with Cage and his associates as an act of aesthetic

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{73} Mutations I was published by Theodore Presser Co. in 1978: #110-40688. In 1966, Shapey composed a companion piece, Mutations II for Piano. He consequently retitled Mutations as Mutations I.

\footnotetext{74} See chapter 1, note 120. Tudor had been one of Irma Wolpe’s most important piano students. He also studied composition with Stefan Wolpe. See Austin Clarkson, “David Tudor’s Apprenticeship: The Years with Irma and Stefan Wolpe,” Leonardo Music Journal 14 (2004): 5-10. Also see John Holzaepfel, “David Tudor and the Performance of American Experimental Music, 1950-1959” (Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 1994).

\end{footnotes}

Shapey composed *Mutations* between 23 June and 31 July 1956, completing the work two months after the concert at Carl Fischer Hall. He may have intended *Mutations* to serve as a critique of the highly publicized piano music of his professional rivals.

Shapey constructed *Mutations* as a series of eight short movements that are played without pause. He devised the musical narrative of the work from brief, eruptive musical gestures. The primary musical ideas of *Mutations* are a motive employing double-dotted rhythms, and the rapid accompanimental chordal figures with which it is coupled (see Ex. 3.16). These accompanimental chordal figures also function within *Mutations* as an independent motive.
The eight movements of *Mutations* are linked by statements of the opening motives at the conclusion of every movement, except for movements VI and VII. Movement I includes a B section, in which Shapey introduces a contrasting “walking” motive in an even eighth-note rhythm (see Ex. 3.17). This episode is omitted in the final movement, which otherwise serves as a literal recapitulation of movement I.
The inner movements elaborate ideas embedded within movement I. In movement II, Shapey employs rapid, dissonant repeated chords, derived from the initial accompanimental motive. He builds movement III around the “walking” motive. In movements V and VI, Shapey elaborates upon the large leaps of the accompanimental motive. In movement VII, he transforms the opening double-dotted motive into a lyrical melody. Shapey’s intent was seemingly to take motives from the opening movement and submit each in turn to permutation.

In movements II and V, Shapey subjects brief, widely spaced motives to additive rhythmic processes. He emphasizes the abruptness of his discourse, created by the use of jagged rhythms and large, rapid leaps. Shapey transforms a three-note rhythmic pattern into a four-note pattern at the beginning of movement II. The original succession, consisting of two sixty-fourth notes followed by a sixteenth note, becomes a sixty-fourth note, two thirty-second notes, and a sixteenth note (see Ex. 3.18).
At the end of movement VI, Shapey gradually pares a motive down to the reiteration of a single tone (see Ex. 3.19). In these passages, Shapey reduces the connections between musical events to a minimum, testing the meaning of the idea of continuity in a way that recalls the works of his most radical contemporaries.\(^78\)

While the (0156) tetrachords of the opening movement are emblematic of the characteristic chromaticism of *Mutations*, Shapey also uses intervals systematically to produce structural contrasts within the work. He employs perfect intervals prominently in the middle section of movement I and in movement III. In movements IV and VII, he employs thirds (ics 3 and 4) for melodic purposes (see Ex. 3.20).
Shapey dedicated *Mutations* to Irma Wolpe-Rademacher, who premiered the work at a concert held at the Nonagon Gallery in New York as part of the Composers Showcase series in April 1958. She performed Shapey’s *Sonate-Variations* (1954) as well. In *Musical America*, David Baruch wrote that *Mutations* “offered examples of the composer’s manner of subjecting germinal motives to a complex, interestingly varied intellectual development.”\(^79\) The *New York Times* reviewer, Ross Parmenter, was less sympathetic to Shapey’s piano music. He wrote, “*Mutations* left in the mind an impression of repeated sound patterns. Yet they seemed disjointed and a little feeble.”\(^80\)

Shapey’s next work was the *Duo for Viola and Piano* (1957),\(^81\) dedicated to the writer Vivienne Tallal Winterry.\(^82\) Like *Mutations*, the Duo consists of a series of brief sections, played *attacca*. The sections are articulated by concluding double bars, but are unnumbered, unlike the short movements of *Mutations*. The motive that opens the Duo (see Ex. 3.21) serves as a

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\(^81\) Theodore Presser Co. publishes the Duo for Viola and Piano: 11440559S.

\(^82\) Winterry (Vivienne Tallal Weinberger Winterry Goodman) was the author of the text for two volumes of photographs by Fritz Henle (1909-93).
unifying device, closing all but two of the seven sections (sections 3 and 6) and linking them in the manner that Shapey had previously employed in *Mutations*.


Andante con espressivo $\frac{3}{4} = 60$

An additional set of three musical ideas is introduced by the piano in mm. 5 and 6 of section 1 (see Ex. 3.22). These ideas become central elements of the discourse in section 2, and also play a prominent role in sections 3, 5 and 7. The parallel between the concluding measures of sections 5 and 7 (compare mm. 88-91 and mm. 136-39) provides internal symmetry within the overall form of the Duo. In contrast, the brief, delicately textured section 6 has the character of a formal parenthesis. It features a rapid staccato repeated-note motive (not shown) that is untypical of the work as a whole.
The Duo embodies a fusion of static and developmental procedures. The lyrical opening motive, shared by the viola and the piano, undergoes a process of transformation and extension throughout the work, while the gestures introduced by the piano in mm. 5 and 6 of section 1 are not developed, but juxtaposed in continually new configurations. The developmental aspect of the musical narrative is dominant at the beginning of the Duo, due to the emphasis on the lyrical motive and its extension through transposition and transformation. The static element, represented by the piano’s unchanging gestures, comes progressively to the fore as the work unfolds. Shapey presents these gestures in a highly repetitive, almost obsessive fashion in several sections (see Ex. 3.23).
In addition to his use of recurrent motives and gestures, Shapey creates structural coherence in the Duo by employing unordered pc sets in a systematic manner. All of the pitch relations of the Duo can be traced to the beginning of the work. Shapey circulates the aggregate

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83 See the discussion of the Concerto for Clarinet and Chamber Group above for an examination of Shapey’s use of similar procedures.
in the first two measures. Six pcs (E, F#, Ab, A, Bb, B) are stated in m. 1, four more pcs (C, C#, D, F) on the first beat of m. 2, and the last two pcs (Eb, G) on the following beat. The gestures introduced by the piano in mm. 5 and 6 include three dyads and a tetrachord derived from the opening of the work: {Ab, Bb} (labeled “A” in Exx. 3.24a and b) (m. 1, bass), {B, C} (“C”) (m. 2, treble), {F, F#} (“D”) (m. 2, bass) and {D, Eb, E, F#} (“E”) (m. 2, treble and bass). The viola adds the dyad, {A, B} (“B”) (m. 1, bass) (see Exx. 3.24a and b).

**Example 3.24a**  Unordered pc sets, in Ralph Shapey, Duo for Viola and Piano (1957), mm. 1-2. © 1957 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

Andante con espressivo $\frac{3}{4}$ = 60
The tetrachord stated by the piano in the concluding measures of section 1 (mm. 20-2) has the same pc content as the tetrachord (a trichord decorated by a grace note) on the second eighth note of m. 1, \{A, Bb, B, E\}. The viola’s C4 corresponds to the C5 that is part of the treble trichord on the first beat of m. 2 (see Ex. 3.25). Similarly, the viola line in mm. 48-9 freely retrogrades the pc content of m. 1 and the first chord of m. 2, omitting B and F#: C–D–C#–E–A–Bb–Ab (see Ex. 3.26).
While Shapey was working on the Duo, he wrote a letter to Wolpe discussing his current projects, fitting them into the historical framework that he had created to describe his compositional evolution. The letter confirms the thesis that Shapey considered his “new” style to be a logical development of his earlier work, rather than a fresh start:

I have just finished 1st mvt of a new work, Duo for Viola & Piano, & started second movement. Although there are many relations to my past writings, I am working out new ideas of sound relationships. As yet these ideas are not completely formulated [in] my own mind, but the main line of development comes from the “Challenge.” The next step in the formulation will be (1st few measures already written) my 5th Qt. & then a work I call “Dimensions” for soprano, sax, guitar, bass, piano, celesta, piccolo & percussion.
These 3 wks [works] exploiting completely new realms of sound intensities as time intensities form the yrs. [year’s] planned works.\textsuperscript{84}

On 26 March 1958, violist Walter Trampler and pianist Lalan Parrott premiered the Duo for Viola and Piano at the Third Street Music School Settlement in New York. Trampler and Parrott repeated the work on 6 April 1958 at the Nonagon Gallery in New York, on a program that also included the \textit{Sonate-Variations} and \textit{Mutations}.\textsuperscript{85} In \textit{Musical America}, reviewer David Baruch wrote that “Mr. Trampler’s impressively skillful, intense playing brought out the fiercely impassioned, strange quality of the work’s craggy melodic lines,”\textsuperscript{86} while Ross Parmenter commented in \textit{The New York Times} that “the Duo for Viola and Piano, played with intensity and skill by Walter Trampler and Miss Parrott, was a much more vigorous and impressive work [than the \textit{Sonate-Variations} and \textit{Mutations}]. It received the biggest hand of the evening.”\textsuperscript{87} The Duo’s successful mixture of static and developmental procedures shows a composer in transition. In the following months, Shapey realized his new concept of musical continuity in a more thoroughgoing manner in the \textit{Rhapsodie} for Oboe and Piano, \textit{Songs of Eternity} and String Quartet No. 5.

The one-movement \textit{Rhapsodie} for Oboe and Piano (1957)\textsuperscript{88} was Shapey’s third work featuring the oboe, following the \textit{Sonate} for Oboe and Piano (1952) and the Oboe Quartet (1952). Like the \textit{Sonate}, it was premiered by Josef Marx, the leading advocate of avant-garde music for the oboe in New York. Marx gave the \textit{Rhapsodie} its first performance together with pianist Lalan Parrott at the concert of works by Wolpe and Shapey that was jointly presented by

\textsuperscript{84} Ralph Shapey, draft of a letter to Wolpe, undated (ca. 1957). Shapey Papers, Box 147, Wolpe Material (Restricted).
\textsuperscript{85} See chapter 3, notes 79 and 80.
\textsuperscript{86} David Baruch, “Composers’ Showcase,” \textit{Musical America} 78, no. 6 (May, 1958): 26.
\textsuperscript{88} Theodore Presser Co. publishes the \textit{Rhapsodie} for Oboe and Piano: #114-40568.
the two composers at Carl Fischer Hall on 22 May 1959. A comparison of the *Rhapsodie* with the *Sonate* for Oboe and Piano shows that Shapey returned to the essentially static discourse of the first movement of the *Sonate* in the later work. Shapey’s use of repetition in the *Rhapsodie* is more extensive and more fundamental to the structure of the entire piece, however.

The *Rhapsodie* has three sections that are played without pause. The music is rhythmically fluid. As in *Mutations I*, rhythmic subdivisions are indicated by dashed bar lines. Due to the complexity of rhythmic interrelationships in the *Rhapsodie*, the dashed bar lines are not always coordinated between the parts, or, in the case of the piano part, between the staves. In the first section (pp. 1-5), the oboe plays a widely spaced, winding theme. The narrative progresses in circular fashion, returning again and again to the oboe’s opening thematic figure. The constituent elements of the oboe theme are altered rhythmically, inverted, occasionally transposed, and developed by the technique of near repetition, the restatement of musical ideas with slight modifications so as to produce continuous variation. The piano accompanies the oboe line with its own motives (see Ex. 3.27). Shapey develops these motives by the use of both near repetition and retrogression (see Ex. 3.28).

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89 See chapter 3, note 15.
The second section of the *Rhapsodie* is based on an ostinato figure related to the oboe theme, unobtrusively introduced in the piano early in section 1 (see Ex. 3.29a). This ostinato figure is repeated continuously, using both exact repetition and near repetition, while the oboe plays a widely spaced, winding line that can be partitioned into a series of ic1 and ic2 dyads (see Ex. 3.29b).

In the third section, the oboe primarily plays trills, with periodic interjections of widely spaced ic1 dyads that recall the opening theme. This motivic relationship is reinforced by the oboe’s C#–Bb dyad at the end of p. 9, line 1, which similarly echoes the C#–Bb dyad in the opening theme (see Ex. 3.30). The trills can be perceived as a variation of the widely spaced ic1 dyads of the opening theme within pitch space.


Shapey continued his intense engagement with Wolpe’s musical ideas when he composed the *Rhapsodie*. Both Shapey’s use of close intervals for the opening oboe theme and his extensive use of trills later in the piece are clearly indebted to Wolpe’s Oboe Sonata. Wolpe’s Sonata was inspired by the music of the Middle East, which he imbibed during his years in Mandate Palestine.\(^9\) Similarly, the sinuous solo line of Shapey’s *Rhapsodie* is reminiscent of Middle Eastern wind playing, while the middle section ostinato evokes non-Western percussion. Nevertheless, there are significant differences between the two works. Shapey abandons the narrative directionality of Wolpe’s intricate musical argument in the *Rhapsodie*. In addition, his music has a rhythmic fluidity that contrasts with the complex but angular rhythms of Wolpe’s Sonata.

The 1959 premiere of the *Rhapsodie* was not covered by the press; the work was played

\(^9\) See chapter 1, notes 8 and 9.
late in the program, by which time the music critics had left the concert hall in order to file their reviews.\textsuperscript{91} When oboist James Ostryniec performed the *Rhapsodie* in 1983, reviewer Joseph McLellan commented, “In Shapey’s ‘Rhapsodie,’ the oboe melody is intense, compressed and lyrical.”\textsuperscript{92}

**Thinking on a Larger Scale**

Although Shapey had tried to articulate his new artistic vision in the three works that he wrote between June 1956 and July 1957, he did not fully realize his ideas until he composed *Songs of Eternity* (1957) and String Quartet No. 5 (1958). *Songs of Eternity* is scored for mezzo-soprano soloist and an ensemble of eleven players: flute/piccolo, Bb clarinet/bass clarinet, cello, contrabass, celesta, piano and percussionists playing cymbals (high, medium and low), gong, tom-toms (high, medium and low), bass drum, timpani and vibraphone.\textsuperscript{93} The opening pages are scored for cymbals, gong, tom-toms and bass drum, which play in a complex polyphony. The winds and strings enter with held notes in their highest register, reinforced by chords played by the vibraphone and celesta (see Ex. 3.31).

\textsuperscript{91} At the time, newspaper reviews were always filed immediately after a concert, and were published on the following day.
\textsuperscript{93} Sometime after 1962, for unknown reasons, Shapey removed *Songs of Eternity* from his list of works. A copy of the score is included in the Shapey Papers, Box 47. Shapey arranged the fourth movement of *Songs of Eternity* and inserted it into *This Day* for Soprano and Piano (1960) as the first movement, “The Universe Resounds.” He subsequently produced a new work using the same collection of texts, *Songs of Ecstasy* for Soprano, Piano, Percussion and Tape (1967).
Example 3.31  Percussive texture, in Ralph Shapey, *Songs of Eternity* for Mezzo-soprano and Eleven Players (1957), Prologue, mm. 6-8. Shapey Papers, Box 47. By permission of the Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.
In the second movement, “Song I,” the melodic line is a chromatic figure that loops around the pitch, A4, and is elaborated by the use of additive and subtractive rhythmic processes similar to those Shapey had employed in Challenge: The Family of Man (see Ex. 3.32).

**Example 3.32** Additive and subtractive rhythmic processes, in Ralph Shapey, Songs of Eternity for Mezzo-soprano and Eleven Players (1957), Song I, mm. 1-9, celesta only (cf. Ex. 3.15). Shapey Papers, Box 47. By permission of the Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

The fourth movement, “Of Joy,” employs a text by Alexander Scriabin that had been used as a wall caption, accompanying one of the photographs in the “Family of Man” exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art (see Fig. 3.6): “The Universe resounds with the joyful cry I am.”

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94 The text is taken from Scriabin’s Mysterium: Preliminary Action. It was one of many texts used in the “Family of Man” exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art that Shapey placed at the front of the score of Challenge: The Family of Man.
Shapey’s setting of Scriabin’s ecstatic paean to Being underscores the meaning of the text by repeating the words, “I am,” continuously as the music dies away at the end of the movement (mm. 55–63). In private notes of the period, Shapey referred to “the acceptance of the inevitability of ‘I Am,’ the promise of here & now.” He associated this idea with his new conception of musical time:

“Time” moves along so hurriedly only in [a] narrow sense; there is another “Time,” the Eternal Time! . . . A “Time” which does not move, goes no place; simply “Is”! Frozen in space, complete and fulfilled. The organism has gone through its many metamorphoses; it has reached its state of “Infinitude.” It has nothing else to do but to “Be.” To “Exist!” . . .

95 Ralph Shapey, handwritten manuscript [thoughts about musical structure], ca. 1958. Shapey Papers, Box 11.
A moment becomes
Eternity
as
Eternity
Becomes the moment. 96

Shapey also expressed his concept of “being” by contrasting the terms, “it is,” and “it
becomes.” 97 The art historian Dore Ashton has pointed to parallels between Shapey’s ideas and
the language employed by the abstract expressionist artists, several of whom founded a magazine
entitled, *It Is*, in 1958, a year after the composition of *Songs of Eternity*. 98

Shapey realized his new concept of musical rhetoric even more fully in his next work,
*String Quartet No. 5 with Female Voice* (1958). 99 The quartet was begun before the completion
of *Songs of Eternity*. Shapey composed the first movement in a brief burst of activity at the
beginning of September 1957, as a partially erased date on the handwritten score reveals.
Significantly, the quartet, like Schoenberg’s *String Quartet No. 2*, is scored for string quartet
with solo voice. Like his great predecessor, Shapey felt that he was exploring uncharted musical
 territory. Stefan Wolpe’s recently completed *Quintet with Voice* (1956-57) provided an
additional model for Shapey’s combination of solo voice with instrumental ensemble.

*String Quartet No. 5* is notable for the single-minded manner in which Shapey presented
his new compositional techniques. Particularly in the first movement, Shapey reduces his
material to a minimum, creating a musical narrative based primarily on the reiteration and
juxtaposition of a few brief gestures and motives, although he uses traditional procedures of
motivic development as well. Shapey’s practice was clearly modeled on Varèse’s handling of

96 Ibid.
97 Ralph Shapey, “‘A Composer is an Architect in Sound, Time and Space’: Questions Submitted
99 Theodore Presser Co. publishes *String Quartet No. 5*: #111-40120.
musical time and space in works like *Intégrales* and *Déserts*. In his 1956 lecture, “On New (And Not-So-New) Music in America,” Stefan Wolpe discussed the music of Varèse in terms that parallel Shapey’s ideas:

> There are works by Varèse in which everything develops itself in an unusually slow way. This is of great value for the concept of extremes. . . . There is a minimum of ordinary musical dialectic. . . . Simply composed . . . with repetitions of single phrases that are complete in themselves . . . generally occupying the musical space monolithically . . . held together by a constellation of sonorities that articulate time with a minimum of elements.\(^\text{100}\)

While Shapey adopted a musical discourse modeled on the works of Varèse, he also drew on the related ideas about musical space and time developed by Wolpe during the 1940s and early 1950s.\(^\text{101}\) Wolpe’s compositional strategy was premised on controlling the rates of change of musical parameters, including pitch, register, density and tempo.\(^\text{102}\) In a 1964 lecture, Wolpe elucidated his techniques. Discussing his *Form* for Piano (1959), he explained,

> Specific modes of behavior determine shape and type of action, argue about the articulation of time, organize levels of interactions, where to act, how to move, at what distances from each other, in what dynamic strength and so on.\(^\text{103}\)

Wolpe was concerned with the juxtaposition of contrasting elements:

> In the *Form* for Piano the art of moulding opposites into adjacent situations becomes the main concern. . . . Opposites become complementary and allow the infinite and instant conversion of line into lines, into sounds, into varying

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\(^{101}\) The period in which Wolpe developed these concepts was that of his closest association with Shapey, before the gradual deterioration of their relationship.  
\(^{102}\) See Robert Morris, “Some Processes in Wolpe’s *Piece in Three Parts,*” in *On the Music of Stefan Wolpe*, ed. Clarkson, 263-78, especially 263: “Any attempt to hold onto a passage as a fixed and self-enclosed set of relations, akin to a ‘motive,’ ‘theme,’ or ‘section,’ will be frustrated by the piece’s manifold warp and woof. There are no stable forms, only processes of formation and destruction, of accretion and deletion, intersection and complementation.” See also Elliott Antokoletz, *Twentieth-Century Music* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1992), 415.  
quantities of action, from much to nothing, from nothing to little, from little to scarcely anything, from scarcely anything to a conjuring plenty of abandon. Since opposites become adjacencies, the modes of opposite expression—as hard and soft, wild and tame, flowing and hesitant, etc.—all these modes become self-inclusive.\textsuperscript{104}

Wolpe discussed his \textit{Piece In Two Parts} for Six Players (1962) in similar terms:

[R]arely is a shape seen without its own diversification accompanying it. . . .

. . . Because of the following, this often occurs in my music: a note, a sound, several short layers of moving lines converting into, let us say, a sudden large mass of sounds followed by a single rapid figure, etc. To make this procedure possible, you need multidimensional space and must abandon one focal point in favor of multifocal points as well, for my music does not move only in one direction, but simultaneously in a variety of directions.\textsuperscript{105}

At least one critic grasped the underlying dialectic of Wolpe’s discourse. In \textit{The New York Times}, Peter G. Davis wrote, “He alternates opposites to maximum advantage, juxtaposing static moments and passages of furiously intense motion, complex textures and simple ones, rhapsodic and explosive melodic lines.”\textsuperscript{106}

Shapey’s String Quartet No. 5 expounds a series of Wolpean contrasts in its presentation of musical ideas (see Table 3.2).

\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., 197.
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid., 199.
\textsuperscript{106} Davis reviewed a retrospective concert of Wolpe’s music, presented at Town Hall in New York by Shapey and the Contemporary Chamber Players of the University of Chicago. See Peter G. Davis, “Chicagoans Play Music by Wolpe,” \textit{The New York Times}, 25 March 1968: 54.
In the first movement, rapid gestures repeatedly outline the registral extremes of the ensemble. The movement opens with a sustained B4, played by violin II, while violin I and the cello both leap downwards from their highest to their lowest registers. The viola leaps downward an octave from its highest register as well (see Ex. 3.33a). These downward leaps, encompassing a wide pitch space, resemble the opening gesture of *Challenge: The Family of Man*.

**Example 3.33a** Delineation of a wide pitch space, in Ralph Shapey, String Quartet No. 5 with Female Voice (1958), I, m. 1 (cf. Ex. 3.10). © 1958 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.
At the end of the movement, the registral space of the opening measures is inverted, as all four members of the quartet combine to play pentachords in close position, symmetrically arranged around the pitch, D4. Shapey enriches his presentation of this simple idea with glissandi, moving in contrary motion in the two inner voices, and with changing dynamics that continually alter the listener’s perception of the chord (see Ex. 3.33b).
Example 3.33b  Cluster chords around an axial pitch, in Ralph Shapey, String Quartet No. 5 with Female Voice (1958), I, mm. 48-54. © 1958 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.
In comparison to the first movement, the second movement is more complex in its form, use of timbre and texture, and pitch organization. The movement includes passages of numbered measures that repeat and extend the musical ideas of the first movement. They continue the numbering of the measures in the first movement as well. The other measures of the second movement are not numbered, raising the possibility that they were composed after Shapey had completed the first draft of the entire quartet. Shapey may originally have conceived of the quartet in far simpler terms, with the main contrast between the sections being the introduction of the voice at the end of the piece. The continuous numeration of the first movement material may also indicate that Shapey broke off several passages from the latter half of the original movement in order to interpolate them at different points in the second movement.

At the beginning of the second movement, violins I and II play an ascending, leaping motive, balancing the descending, leaping gestures that open the first movement (see Ex. 3.34).
Immediately after the opening flourishes of the second movement, Shapey introduces complex dissonant counterpoint for the first time in the quartet (rehearsal letters A–D). The voice then enters, accompanied alternately by sustained chords, and by motivic figures derived from the beginning of the movement (see Ex. 3.35). The fact that these figures are not transposed makes it easier to perceive them within the continuous, kaleidoscopic variation of timbre, texture and register.
The entrance of the voice is preceded by the most thickly textured music so far presented in the quartet. When it falls silent, Shapey presents an extended passage for solo viola, *con sordino* (rehearsal letter J). This music is succeeded by a second passage of dissonant counterpoint (rehearsal letter K) (see Ex. 3.36). Shapey’s juxtaposition of thick and thin textures serves as an additional illustration of Wolpe’s concept of contrasts. The remainder of the movement illustrates Shapey’s dictum that his music should present a limited number of ideas in constantly changing configurations.
The text recited by the vocal soloist in the second movement of the quartet was taken by Shapey from a poem by his second wife, Vera Klement. It includes the words, “I Am,” first heard in *Songs of Eternity*. They are inserted here within a different context, however:

A seagull rent the beaded cord with a shriek

I Am

filling my mouth with sudden salt

Like the fourth movement of *Songs of Eternity*, String Quartet No. 5 ends with a repetition of the assertion, “I Am.” These words seem to encapsulate Shapey’s musical evocation of a transcendent present, created by means of his new concept of narrative discourse.

Although String Quartet No. 5 is essentially cyclic in nature, Shapey’s use of modified repetition produces a structure of considerable complexity. The subtlety of his episodic form is reinforced by his techniques of pitch organization and motivic elaboration. In the quartet, he uses both ordered and unordered pc sets that are never transposed. They are presented both vertically...
and horizontally, and are deployed in constantly changing registral configurations. The second movement opens with the presentation of two sets in violins I and II: the unordered set, \{C, C#, D, D#, F\}, is divided between the two instruments, and the ordered set, (G, Ab, D, E, F, Bb), is played by violin I. The first of these two sets is closely related to the main motivic material of the opening movement. The second set is constantly restated throughout the second movement, either as part of the melodic line or within the polyphonic texture. The two sets are united in the first entrance of the voice (rehearsal letter E), which states both sets, first A, then B (see Ex. 3.35).

In a 1963 interview with Eugene Bruck,\textsuperscript{107} Shapey explicitly identified String Quartet No. 5 as a serial, but not twelve-tone, composition:

*Shapey: The organization is based on a series. This is serial music, not twelve-tone, that’s a different thing. This is serial music.*

*Bruck: What kind of series?*

*Shapey: It’s no different to my mind than taking a C major scale. I consider that a series also. . . . I did not add this up numerically, I am not a twelve-tone composer, this is not a twelve-tone work. But I do work with these fragmented ideas, these fragmented notes that add up to a certain particular image in a serial manner, and they will come back over and over and over again.*\textsuperscript{108}

Like the Trio for Violin, Cello and Piano, *Form* for Piano and the *Rhapsodie* for Oboe and Piano, String Quartet No. 5 was premiered at the concert that Wolpe and Shapey jointly presented at Carl Fischer Hall on 22 May 1959. In *The New York Times*, Eric Salzman provided


a detailed account of the work:

The harmonic vocabulary is highly “dissonant” and the primary interest lies in pitch relationships rather than in color and rhythm.

The quartet is in one movement and is dominated by a single idea—long held notes are passed around from one instrument to the other punctuated by rich chords. After this material is presented and varied somewhat, there is a cadence motion, a pause and a new section introduces the voice.

The unidentified text is treated rather cavalierly. The prosody and the setting allows very little to be heard or understood . . . The idea is apparently that the text has a sound value to contribute to the music.

A return of the opening section with a bit of "sprechstimme" in the voice rounds the piece off neatly. At the very close, the held note gets passed on the voice itself making a very effective finish.109

1958: Return to the Orchestra

Shapey’s next work, Ontogeny for Orchestra (1958),110 illustrates the lessons that he had learned in the three years since the composition of Challenge: The Family of Man. The name of the work refers to the development of an organism from conception to maturity. At the bottom of the first page of the score, Shapey appended the following note: “Ontogeny—a pattern of processes in time through which the inherent potentialities of ---- proceeds freely to be realized.” Similar comments relating artistic and natural processes were common in Shapey’s circle.111

In Ontogeny, Shapey used many of the ideas that he had developed in Challenge: The Family of Man, but recast them within the context of his new, more radical, musical language. In

110 Ontogeny is available from the Theodore Presser Co. Rental Library.
contrast to orchestral works of the 1950s that embody a complex dialectic of pitch relationships, like Wolpe’s Symphony No. 1 (1956) and Carter’s Variations for Orchestra (1955), Shapey’s music is primarily concerned with texture and timbre. He juxtaposes static blocks of sound, using variation form to organize the constant changes of texture and timbre into a coherent whole. The work embodies an ordered progression of musical ideas, described by Donal Henahan in *The Musical Quarterly*: “Each of the ten sections takes the development of the germinal material one step further until the organism’s life history is complete, and all potentialities (in theory) are exhausted.”

Shapey’s notes for *Ontogeny* reveal conceptual and compositional links to the earlier *Challenge: The Family of Man* and the later *Dimensions* (1960). Shapey originally entitled the work “Dimensions,” and did not change its name to *Ontogeny* until late in the compositional process. He made an outline of the form of “Dimensions,” and described both his musical intentions and their metaphysical resonance. He headed the outline, “Dimensions/I Segregations (diversities)/Move[ment] I.” Shapey described “Dimensions” in terms that would become familiar elements of his descriptive vocabulary. Using language derived from Wolpe, he conceived of his music as consisting of unchanging figures and gestures that were continuously recombined in different configurations:

Preset constellations each functioning of & by itself in **non-growth, no change**: retaining always its own individuality, its own concreteness but is in continuous flux, growth & change due to the occurrences around each one, each ones, spheres of influence, spheres of counter-influence, negations; pilings up, segregations & desegregations, that which was in orbit around a given situation now becomes the situation, orbits & non-orbits dependent only upon their immediate functions; & each is unique unto itself.

On a sketch page, he elaborated:

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113 Ralph Shapey, sketches for *Ontogeny*. Shapey Papers, Box 35.
Preset constellations: each development dependent primarily upon itself only, not necessarily interdependent. Time flux is occurring on all different levels simultaneously, independently as well as interdependently but strongly conditioned by its own constellation.\textsuperscript{114}

Shapey was attempting to describe his creation of distinct, simultaneous layers of sound, a procedure that he had previously employed in the final movement of his Symphony No. 1 (1952), and that he had discussed in a letter to Wolpe after he completed the symphony.\textsuperscript{115} In 1952 he had relied almost exclusively on Wolpe’s terminology to articulate his ideas; by 1958, however, his verbal as well as his musical language had been transformed by his contact with Edgard Varèse. This was demonstrated by Shapey’s summary of his artistic credo for “Dimensions:” “Dimensions (in Collage)/A–Time/B–Space/C–Density/Collage in Dimensions.”\textsuperscript{116} Shapey’s new terms of reference are reminiscent of Varèse’s description of his own music: “I conceive music as spatial, not only order and proportion in time but also in space.”\textsuperscript{117}

Shapey’s outline for “Dimensions” provides measure numbers that correspond precisely to the first 247 measures of Ontogeny. He divided the work into six sections, labeled A–F. On a separate page, headed, “Dimensions in Time & Space,” Shapey detailed the forces needed for performance. The orchestra was to be subdivided into three parts, with the third consisting exclusively of percussion. It was to be accompanied by vocal soloists and two choruses, one small and the other large.

\textsuperscript{114} Shapey, sketches for Ontogeny. Shapey Papers, Box 35.
\textsuperscript{115} See chapter 2, note 48.
\textsuperscript{116} Shapey, notes included with the sketches for Ontogeny. Shapey Papers, Box 35.
In other notes, Shapey articulated his ideas about both the historical and metaphysical significance of his music:

Let there be (light) -- The Word -- I Am that I Am -- light
Manifestation (Stages)
The Graven Image (in Art)
New tonality resulting through Atonality
The “Absolute”
The “I Am”\textsuperscript{118}

On the sketch page that also includes a statement about “preset constellations,” Shapey wrote, “Hymn to Joy/Symphony to (of) Light.”\textsuperscript{119}

The assertion, “I Am,” recalls String Quartet No. 5 and Songs of Eternity, as well as the epigraph for the second section of Challenge: The Family of Man, which quotes Scriabin’s exclamation, “The Universe resounds with the joyful cry, I am.” Shapey’s celebration of the cosmic joy of consciousness in the provisional title, “Hymn to Joy,” also evokes his use of Scriabin’s text in Challenge.

Shapey’s use of the divine command, “Let there be light,” is an explicit allusion to Challenge. “And God said, Let there be light” (Gen. 1:3) is the epigraph for the first of the five sections of the earlier work. Shapey made this connection clear at the outset of the compositional process when he wrote, “Let there be light,” at the top of a sketch for the opening measures of Ontogeny, dated 13 January 1958.\textsuperscript{120} On another sketch page, Shapey set the words, “light let there let Be light,” under a widely spaced melody that became the source of the pc collection that he employed in the opening gesture of the piece (see Ex. 3.37).\textsuperscript{121} Shapey’s linkage of the

\textsuperscript{118} Shapey, notes included with the sketches for Ontogeny. Shapey Papers, Box 35.
\textsuperscript{119} Shapey, sketches for Ontogeny. Shapey Papers, Box 35.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid.
texts, “Let there be light,”\textsuperscript{122} “The Word,”\textsuperscript{123} and “I am that I am,”\textsuperscript{124} at the top of this sketch page, and in his notes, can be perceived as an attempt to construct a theology of creation embodying the musical processes at work in \textit{Ontogeny}.

\textbf{Example 3.37} Ralph Shapey, \textit{Ontogeny} for Orchestra (1958), sketch. Shapey Papers, Box 35. By permission of the Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

Shapey divides the orchestra into seven groups in \textit{Ontogeny}, positioning them around the stage in order to facilitate the spatialization of sound. He labels the groups, A–G:

\begin{itemize}
  \item A: Celesta, xylophone, bass clarinet
  \item B: Piccolo, contrabassoon, wood block, snare drum, tom-toms (H-M-L), bass drum
  \item C: Oboe, horn, trumpet, piano, bass drums (H-M-L)
  \item D: B flat clarinet, bassoon, five timpani, gongs (H-L)
  \item E: Piccolo, trumpet, two contrabasses, gamolin (H-L)\textsuperscript{125}
  \item F: E flat clarinet, English horn, two horns, trombone, nine violins, eight violins, four cellos
  \item G: Two flutes, oboe, six violas, E flat tuba, cymbals (H-M-L)
\end{itemize}

At the beginning of the score, Shapey provides a diagram for the positioning of the groups on stage. His arrangement places several wind instruments that play in extreme registers at the front of the ensemble. By way of contrast, the strings are all relegated to the rear. The percussion instruments are distributed among all of the instrumental groups except for group F.

\textsuperscript{122} Genesis 1:3.
\textsuperscript{123} Genesis 1; Psalm 33:6; John 1:1.
\textsuperscript{124} Exodus 3:14.
In general, Shapey brings the loud instruments forward, while pushing the softer, less resonant instruments to the back of the stage in his orchestral layout. The delicate celesta, however, is positioned at the front of the stage, and plays a major role in the music (see Fig. 3.7).

Shapey’s desire to create the perception of a wide musical space (both in pitch space and physical space) is evident from the inception of the work. In the opening measures, he contrasts the highest and lowest pitched instruments in the orchestra, including the piccolo, the contrabassoon and the contrabass (groups B and E) (see Ex. 3.38). Violin harmonics and the
extreme ranges of the piano enhance Shapey’s timbral palette.


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\text{\( \text{\textcopyright 1958 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.} \)}
\]
Shapey delineates the arrangement of the ensemble in physical space by distributing sustained chords and brief motivic figures among all seven instrumental groups before introducing the percussion in m. 14. A gong tremolo (mm. 26-7) leads to section II, which is devoted solely to the percussion instruments (mm. 27-51) (see Ex. 3.39). Shapey’s use of registral extremes in section I, shimmering gong sounds in the transition to section II, and unpitched percussion sounds in that section, all suggest a comparison with the original version of Varèse’s *Déserts* (1954). Varèse similarly contrasted the opening instrumental portion of *Déserts*, marked by the use of a wide pitch space and harsh timbres, with unpitched “percussion-like” sounds at the beginning of the first electronic interpolation. Varèse later revised the three electronic interpolations of *Déserts* in a manner that obscures the similarities between his piece and *Ontogeny*.126

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Section II of *Ontogeny* is cut short by a fanfare, marked “quasi cadenza,” played heterophonically by the trumpets. This fanfare, as well as a motto theme played by the low-pitched instruments of the orchestra, reappears periodically throughout *Ontogeny*, delineating sectional divisions.
The following sections focus on the individual instrumental groups. The trumpet cadenza heralds a new, contrasting texture, the pointillism of section III, in which the ensemble is limited primarily to the instruments of group E. Similarly, section IV is initially limited to members of group F, who play dotted figures in rhythmic unison and close harmony. Section V is a delicate dialogue between the celesta and two flutes, which is cut short by loud bass drum strokes (see Ex. 3.40). In these three sections, Shapey uses closely related motivic figures, a procedure obscured by differences in texture and timbre between the sections as well as by the process of motivic transformation. Shapey employs the motivic figures, textures and timbres of sections I-V in increasingly dramatic ways during the second half of Ontogeny until he melds them all together in the final pages of the work.

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Although Shapey may be said to have “exhausted”\(^{128}\) the potential of his ideas, his technique cannot be described in traditional terms. In each section of *Ontogeny*, musical ideas are deployed in static, repetitive fashion. Shapey wrote,

\(^{128}\) See chapter 3, note 112.
My newest works are fundamentally dependent upon fixed situations and their juxtapositions to each other as well as themselves. They do not have developments as conceived in 19th century music; but rather, the material is always in a state of “it is” as opposed to “becoming.” . . . They depend rather on shifting proportions, shifting focus, and an elastic state of flux.  

The periodic return of the trumpet fanfare and the thunderous motto theme, as well as the re-entry of blocks of musical material throughout the work, create not just a “mosaic-like” design, but a “stabile” type of musical construction.  

In Ontogeny, pitch is ultimately subservient to the musical parameters of texture, timbre and register. As noted above, Shapey juxtaposes the delicate timbre of the celesta with that of the loudest percussion instrument, the bass drum, in section V (m. 168). He sets up an opposition between sustained wind and brass instruments and plucked strings in section VII (mm. 197ff.). Many of the pitched instruments are exploited primarily for their timbral and registral qualities. The sounds of the highest and lowest pitched instruments, such as the piccolo, the contrabassoon, the double bass and the tuba, are deliberately employed at the limits of acoustic tolerance. Shapey carefully differentiates the percussion instruments, creating polyphony between the timpani, the bass drums, the wood block, the snare drum, tom-toms, gamolin, cymbals and gongs.

129 Ralph Shapey, “‘A Composer is an Architect in Sound, Time and Space’,” 4.  
131 Martin Zenck, “Beyond Neoclassicism and Dodecaphony: Wolpe’s Third Way,” in On the Music of Stefan Wolpe: Essays and Recollections, 169-86, especially 170-1. See also Vivian Perlis, interview with Ralph Shapey, transcript, 97. Oral History American Music, Yale University. Elliott Carter’s comments about the influence of Varèse’s compositional techniques provide a summary of Shapey’s practice in Ontogeny: “What has interested recent composers, also, is that Varèse’s music does not depend on thematic motives for its continuity, but rather the relationship between vertical, harmonic structure, instrumental sonorities, spacings, and of course, the play of rhythmic motives. . . . Varèse . . . carried these three phases—rhythmized orchestra, percussion alone, and a combination of both with each contributing different elements to the total effect—to a much more extensive development.” See Carter, “On Edgard Varèse,” in Elliott Carter: Collected Essays and Lectures, 1937-1995, ed. Jonathan W. Bernard, 146-51, especially 148-9.
As the title of the work indicates, *Ontogeny* was apparently intended to represent a kind of musical “big bang,” beginning with the most basic of musical ideas, which gradually proliferate in order to fill the musical “universe.” Shapey restricts himself to highly limited pitch material, primarily clusters (in pc space) of several pcs, which are presented in constantly changing registral configurations. In keeping with the timbral and registral contrasts that are the true “theme” of *Ontogeny*, the widely spaced orchestral cluster chords in the opening measures lead to both diatonic and chromatic piano clusters (in pitch space) in section II, which is devoted to the percussion ensemble. These piano clusters function as part of the continuum between pitched instrumental sounds and unpitched percussion sounds in *Ontogeny*, a concept that Shapey derived from Varèse. When Shapey conducted the Buffalo Philharmonic in the premiere of *Ontogeny* in May 1965, reviewers focused on his virtuosic manipulation of timbre and texture:

“Ontogeny,” a series of explosive incidents involving a martial array of percussion – field drums face-down, snare drums, tympani, gongs, wood blocks, cow bells, celeste – and an orthodox orchestra given to such doublings and contrasts as trumpet-viola, tuba-fiddle and so on. . . .

Well, it was pretty great, anyway, a muscular and undiplomatic manifesto of individualism, hard-edged declarations and rhythmic barrages with a kind of brawny grace and surprising sensitivity in the unfolding.132

In his 1966 review of Shapey’s performance of *Ontogeny* with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Donal Henahan described it as “a 10-section orgy of sound that often recalled Varèse’s *Ionisation.*”133

A comparison of *Challenge: The Family of Man* with *Ontogeny* helps to illuminate

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133 Donal Henahan, “Remarkable Mandel Hall Concert: New Music by Four Good Men,” *Chicago Daily News*, 27 May 1966: 23. The Chicago Symphony Orchestra performed at Mandel Hall, the concert hall of the University of Chicago. *Ontogeny* was coupled on the program with Schoenberg’s Violin Concerto, conducted by the orchestra’s music director, Jean Martinon. The concert was played twice, on 26 and 27 May 1966.
Shapey’s thought processes during the period when he changed his style. Mitropoulos had pleaded with Shapey to clarify his ideas, and to omit nonessential details that would be impractical in performance. During the early 1950s, Shapey was defiant about the rhythmic complexity of his orchestral writing. However, given the prevailing conservatism of performers and audiences, Shapey was, like his colleagues, confronted with the possibility that he would never hear his music. His solution, beginning in the late 1950s, was to simplify and streamline his compositional intentions. His orchestral music became more heavily conceptual in nature, losing some of the richness of detail that had been so important in his previous works. Nevertheless, it was still considered nearly unplayable.

There are a number of direct parallels between Challenge: The Family of Man and Ontogeny, all of which show Shapey reusing ideas from the earlier work in the later, within a much simpler context. The opening sections of the two compositions are similar in character and use similar thematic material, but the earlier work employs more complex, intricate rhythms. The pizzicato string chords of Challenge: The Family of Man (section III, mm. 22-42) have an analogue in the pizzicato string chords of Ontogeny (mm. 197-223). Again, the earlier work presents these chords within a highly complex orchestral fabric, while the later work juxtaposes two textures, sustained chords and pizzicato chords. The bass drum strokes at the conclusion of the duet of the flutes and the celesta provide one of the most memorable moments in Ontogeny (see Ex. 3.40). Shapey uses the bass drum in a similarly dramatic manner near the end of section III of Challenge: The Family of Man (mm. 90-6, not shown). However, within the section as a whole, this is only one element of a complex musical discourse.

After Shapey completed Ontogeny, he immediately turned his attention to his next major
project, the “Invocation” Concerto for Violin and Orchestra (1958). In this work, he attempted to bring together the disparate strands of his musical identity: modernist, virtuoso violinist and Jew. Significantly, Shapey dedicated the “Invocation” Concerto to his teacher, Stefan Wolpe. He later removed the dedication from the score after a series of disagreements virtually ended their long professional relationship.

Shapey went further in the Concerto than he did in Ontogeny in his attempt to create a music of rotating sound objects. The orchestra is similarly divided into seven groups. Shapey relies on groups A and C, which include instruments with dramatic registral contrasts, to outline the wide pitch space of the work. All of the percussion instruments are placed near the front of the ensemble in groups B, D and F, while a large collection of strings is spread out across the back of the stage in group G. Shapey provides a diagram of the spatial arrangement of the orchestra at the front of the score (see Figure 3.8).

134 The “Invocation” Concerto for Violin and Orchestra is available from the Theodore Presser Co. Rental Library.
135 See Shapey, “Remembrances,” 27. Shapey Papers, Box 136. I have examined a copy of the conductor’s score of the “Invocation” Concerto in which the dedication seems to have been ripped off the thick paper, leaving a large thin spot. Wolpe’s name is still faintly perceptible, however.
In an unpublished discussion of the concerto, Shapey described his new approach to the orchestra:

Each [instrumental] group is a homogeneous self-sufficient entity. . . . Instead of growing from within, its growth is from without because of the multiple relationships forced upon it. It would be like the placing of several diversified objects in varied organizational relationships. . . . The properties of each musical “object” must have a finite construction, a “graven image,” and yet be only a small individual factor in the infinite structure.

The displacement of the orchestra as a series of individual entities causes a desegregation of color sound. Time and space both become an inherent factor of all sound.

A. In my two latest orchestral works [Ontogeny and “Invocation” Concerto], I dealt with a totally different concept of sound - Organized sound of our musical language-heritage
Sound in a new element of time

Figure 3.8  Ralph Shapey, “Invocation” Concerto for Violin and Orchestra (1958), seating plan. Groups D and F mirror each other, and group G has a symmetrical arrangement. © 1959 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.
Sound as space
Redistribution of the orchestra¹³⁶

In other comments about the genesis of the concerto, Shapey struck a more personal note:

“To evolve an incantation–Vl. Conc. [Violin Concerto] on principle of religious reading between cantor & congregation (remembrance from childhood).”¹³⁷

While the descending C–G fourths in the solo violin line may have been envisioned by Shapey as an imitation of synagogue cantillation, his incorporation of the gestural language of the nineteenth-century virtuoso violin concerto is a far more important component of the musical language of the work. Shapey’s transformation of the conventions of the virtuoso tradition in the solo violin line extends his modernist vocabulary, providing the musical discourse with both a vividly communicative eloquence and a linear dialectic that it would otherwise lack (see Ex. 3.41).


The first movement of the “Invocation” Concerto opens with a brief introduction for the solo violin and the instruments of group A (see Ex. 3.42a), in which the violin establishes its

¹³⁶ Ralph Shapey, typescript draft for Fulbright grant application, 1959. Shapey Papers, Box 93. See also “Exposition” of “Project,” in Guggenheim Fellowship application for 1960. By permission of the J. S. Guggenheim Memorial Foundation.
¹³⁷ Ralph Shapey, handwritten manuscript [thoughts about musical structure], ca. 1958. Shapey Papers, Box 11.
dominance within the musical narrative by a series of abrupt, assertive gestures. The ensemble writing in the opening measures is reminiscent of the beginning of Schoenberg’s Violin Concerto (1936) (see Ex. 3.42b), the work that Shapey had so admired when he attended one of its premiere performances as a young student in 1940.\textsuperscript{138} The stepwise figures played by the bass clarinet and cello at the beginning of Shapey’s piece echo the figures played by the solo violin and the uppermost of the \textit{divisi} cellos at the beginning of Schoenberg’s Concerto. Both composers pair these figures with ics 5 and 6 in the orchestral accompaniment.


Sounds as written except for 8va transposing instruments

\textsuperscript{138} See chapter 1, note 11.
The main body of the movement is divided into three sections, each of which is inaugurated by the return of group A, playing the motives it originally stated in the opening measures. This procedure provides the movement with an easily discernable form. In the first section, the violin is accompanied by the instruments of group C. Shapey emphasizes the extremes of the wide registral space encompassed by the instruments of the group. The music proceeds in even successions of eighth notes, leavened periodically by beats with added values (see Ex. 3.43). The percussion instruments accompany the soloist in the second section, while the rest of the orchestra falls silent. Shapey carefully differentiates the percussion instruments (tom-toms, bass drum, timpani, gamolin and cymbals), both timbrally and registrally. The complex rhythms of Shapey’s percussion writing contrast markedly with the simpler rhythms of the first section (see Ex. 3.44).
Shapey employs the full ensemble to produce an explosion of sound in the opening measures of the brief final section (mm. 107-8, not shown). He concludes the movement symmetrically with a second cadenza for the violin soloist (mm. 132-47, not shown), similar in length and musical content to the first cadenza.

Shapey handles musical time and space in contrasting ways in the second and third movements. In movement II, entitled “Recitative,” the rhapsodic rhythms and sparse textures of the opening and concluding sections (rehearsal letters A-E, J-N) contrast with the clearly defined rhythms and thicker textures of the first and third movements. Movement II is bisected by a passage for the full ensemble (rehearsal letters F-H) that culminates in a repetition of the thunderous first movement climax at an even higher dynamic level (rehearsal letter H). The percussion writing in the final measures recalls the boisterous central section of movement I.

The structure of movement III inverts that of movement II. The thin textures in the
opening and closing sections of movement II contrast with the full textures in the central episode. The thickly scored opening and closing sections of movement III are separated by a more sparsely orchestrated accompanied cadenza for solo violin. The simultaneous multiple “rotating” musical stabiles in the concluding pages of the Concerto create a blurring effect reminiscent of electronic works that use a tape loop, such as Alvin Lucier’s *I Am Sitting in a Room* (1970), in which the cumulative reverberation obscures the details of the sounds.

Shapey left forty-four sheets of sketches for a *Rhapsody* for Violin and Orchestra among his papers. These sketches are dated 1 March 1956, less than a month after the cancellation of the premiere of *Challenge: The Family of Man*. Shapey dated the music twice, on the first page of a group of sketch sheets and on the opening page of the full score, which breaks off on page four.

Shapey habitually wrote the date of inception, and that of completion, of his work on an orchestral score on the title page. He often inserted this information at the top of the first page of music as well. Shapey did not, however, record the date that he began working on the sketches for an orchestral piece. For example, he began to sketch *Ontogeny* in January 1958, but the title page and the first page of the score bear the inscription “6/18/58-8/20/58,” which encompasses the period in which he wrote out the full score. It is therefore plausible to suggest that Shapey began to sketch the *Rhapsody* shortly after he finished *Challenge: The Family of Man* in October 1955. He apparently began to write out a full score of the piece on 1 March 1956, but quickly changed his mind.

An inspection of the sketches reveals that they belong to the “Invocation” Concerto. Shapey never admitted that he had planned this work before the *Challenge* fiasco. The sketches

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139 Ralph Shapey, *Rhapsody* for Violin and Orchestra. Shapey Papers, Box 25.
for the *Rhapsody* include a complete continuity draft for the first movement of the Concerto, which Shapey used with little alteration in the final version of the piece. The continuity draft breaks off at the beginning of the second movement. The sketches also include a carefully notated full score for the first thirty-one measures of the opening movement, written in pencil. The score breaks off in the middle of a page. Shapey began to enter the notes for m. 32, but erased the measure and never returned to this draft. In addition to the first movement materials, the sketches include fragmentary notations for ideas that Shapey employed in the finale of the Concerto, including the dramatic passage that begins in m. 64.

Shapey conducted the premiere of the “Invocation” Concerto at a concert presented by the Chicago Symphony at the University of Chicago on 24 May 1968. Esther Glazer, wife of Irwin Hoffman, associate conductor of the Chicago Symphony, was the violin soloist. The exceptionally demanding program also included the first Chicago performance of Elliott Carter’s Piano Concerto (1965), and Luigi Dallapiccola’s *Variazioni per Orchestra* (1953-54), both conducted by Jean Martinon. In the *Chicago Daily News*, Bernard Jacobson wrote,

> Esther Glazer gave a superb account of the solo part, and even with the intermittent orchestral bloopers, the quality of the music came across. Here the proliferating textures serve to further the communication of a vibrant, white-hot lyricism. . . . The Concerto is full of stimulating ideas and new, exciting beautiful sounds.\(^{140}\)

In the *Chicago Tribune*, Thomas Willis gave a more detailed description of Shapey’s orchestral techniques:

> The violin part is expressive and interesting, and some of the echoes from the seven antiphonies of instruments were exceptional. In the middle, there is a Varèse-like segment which enfolds the soloist with gently whispering percussion. Some nonsense remains, including putting the violins at the back of the stage where they were almost inaudible and attempting ecstasy with a lumpy cyclic jumble of tipped over musical toys. But that, one suspects, is under par for the contemporary course.\(^{141}\)

Searching for New Solutions

In both *Ontogeny* and the “Invocation” Concerto, Shapey’s intent was clearly to emulate Varèse’s creation of an ensemble of sound sources in *Déserts*, a work in which the electronically produced noises are integrated seamlessly into the aural fabric, and in which texture, timbre, register and dynamics are as important as pitch. After he completed *Ontogeny* and the “Invocation” Concerto, Shapey applied for a grant to work at the electronic music studio in Milan with Bruno Maderna.¹⁴² His desire to investigate the possibilities of the new medium of electronic music was closely linked to the concept of orchestral sound that he had attempted to realize in the two big orchestral works of 1958. He was also undoubtedly motivated to investigate the possibilities of electronic music by Varèse’s triumphant return to New York from the Brussels World Fair of 1958, where his *Poème électronique* had been played continuously at the Philips Pavilion, designed by Le Corbusier and Xenakis. Like Varèse, Shapey professed the belief that the possibilities of the modern orchestra had been exhausted. He wrote, “In my latest works, I have reached the limit in the use of [the] normal orchestral body in varied sound and spatial ways.”¹⁴³

Shapey outlined his program for work in Italy as a synthesis of his compositional aspirations:

I wish to do a two-fold project.

A. Continue composing using the new ideas as formulated in my new works.


¹⁴³ Ralph Shapey, draft for Fulbright grant application, 1959. Shapey Papers, Box 93.
B. Investigate and do research in the possibilities of electronic music: considering it as a new instrument, being an entity in itself; also a synthesis with our already existing instruments. . . .

The constantly new forces in the world are re- shaping the concepts of our musical language. Approximately 50 years ago, Schoenberg freed the “dissonance.” Today due to the ever growing need for a greater means of expression, more diversified sound structures, greater fluctuations of timbres and intensities, composers are searching for new instruments. “Music Concrete;” tape music; electronic music–are some of the new possibilities afforded a contemporary composer. . . .

. . . I wish to work in electronic music and to create a synthesis between the past and future concepts.145

Shapey’s application for a grant to study in Italy was successful. He did not travel to Europe, however, because his wife, artist Vera Klement, had also applied for a grant, and her application was rejected. Since Shapey did not wish to travel to Italy without his wife, he turned down his award.146 He never made another attempt to study electronic music, nor did he ever seek another grant for travel to Europe.

In Shapey’s works of the late 1950s, he successfully emulated Varèse’s creation of an ensemble of sound sources, writing music in which “fluctuations of timbres and intensities” took precedence over pitch organization and the traditional concept of compositional narrative. Shapey eventually felt compelled to incorporate additional elements into his approach to composition, however. In subsequent years, he created a new synthesis, more fully assimilating

144 Shapey’s discussion of “timbres and intensities” echoes the language of Varèse, Messiaen (Modes de valeurs et d’intensités for Piano [1949]) and Boulez.
145 Ralph Shapey, draft for Fulbright grant application, 1959. Shapey Papers, Box 93. There are several drafts for this statement. One is marked “Guggenheim,” but this is cancelled on the page. Another is marked, “G.” A third is marked, “Fulbright.”
146 In a letter of 30 September 1959, Congressman Ludwig Teller wrote to Shapey, “I have just been advised that you have been awarded a grant to study Composition at the Giuseppe Verdi Conservatory of Music in Milan, Italy, under the International Educational Exchange Program of the Department of State.” Shapey Papers, Box 1. In a letter to David Ewen, Shapey stated that he received an Italian government grant for travel in 1959-60, but that he did not use it, because his wife, artist Vera Klement, also applied for a grant, and her application was rejected. Letter to David Ewen, 27 May 1980. Shapey Papers, Box 2.
the lessons of the music of both Wolpe and Varèse. In works like *Movements* for Woodwind Quintet (1959–60) and the Piece for Violin and Instruments (1961–62), he employed more complex pitch structures and created more subtly differentiated event structures than he had used in the music of 1957–58. These pieces differ from Shapey’s earlier works, such as the Concerto for Clarinet and Chamber Group, in the fragmentation and spatialization of their musical language, their more radical use of timbre as a compositional element, and their abandonment of traditional continuity strategies. Shapey’s achievement in these works would not have been possible without the transformative experience of the late 1950s.
RALPH SHAPEY AND THE SEARCH FOR A NEW CONCEPT OF MUSICAL CONTINUITY, 1939-66

by

BARRY WIENER

VOLUME II

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CHAPTER 4:

ARTICULATING AN INDIVIDUAL AESTHETIC, 1959-61

Shapey completed two orchestral works in the second half of 1958. At the end of the year, he applied simultaneously for a Guggenheim Fellowship and a Fulbright grant in order to pursue studies in Europe. These activities, considered together, mark a turning point in Shapey’s career. Shapey seems to have felt that he had overcome artistic and emotional crises, solved compositional problems to his satisfaction, and reached a certain level of professional accomplishment. He wanted to explore new horizons.

When Shapey applied for a Guggenheim Fellowship, he added a letter of recommendation from Elliott Carter to his Guggenheim file.\(^1\) The letter reflects some of Carter’s central compositional preoccupations, which he later discussed at greater length in his essay, “The Orchestral Composer’s Point of View:”

Merely to consider the possibility of writing orchestral music of any quality as a field of endeavor for a composer in the United States calls up a barrage of contradictory problems, each of which would seem to militate against any kind of new, vital, or original music being produced. . . . The fact that such music has been written here, though not often, amid miserable circumstances, at great human cost to its creators, and in almost utter neglect— that Edgard Varèse, Charles Ives, Carl Ruggles, Stefan Wolpe, and others fought this desperate battle—means that these composers had such a strong inner vision that they were able to overlook the preposterous circumstances that surrounded them in our musical society, particularly in the orchestral field.\(^2\)

Although Shapey had a “strong inner vision,” he lacked sufficient experience as a composer to remain completely unaffected by the repeated disappointment of his orchestral aspirations during the 1950s. Nevertheless, he did not abandon the hope that conductors,

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1 Elliott Carter, letter of recommendation for Ralph Shapey, 22 December 1958, in Ralph Shapey, Guggenheim Fellowship application for 1959.
orchestras and audiences would eventually embrace his innovative musical message. At the end of 1958, however, there was still considerable hostility to Shapey’s work among his colleagues, along with growing recognition for his accomplishments, both as a composer and conductor.

Table 4.1  Ralph Shapey: Chronology, 1959-60

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composition</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evocation No. 1 for Violin, with Percussion and Piano</td>
<td>January–April 1959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form for Piano</td>
<td>26 April–10 May 1959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolpe-Shapey Concert, Carl Fischer Hall, NY</td>
<td>22 May 1959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soliloquy for Narrator, String Quartet and Percussion</td>
<td>6 July–18 July 1959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rituals for Symphony Orchestra</td>
<td>25 July–15 August 1959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This Day for Soprano and Piano</td>
<td>3 February–9 February 1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De Profundis for Solo Double Bass and Instruments</td>
<td>22 February–14 June 1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five for Violin and Piano</td>
<td>15 June–3 July 1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimensions for Soprano and 23 Instruments</td>
<td>7 July–3 October 1960</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evocation No. 1 (1959) and the Concept of the “Graven Image”

Question [Cole Gagne and Tracy Caras]: Your 1957 piece Ontogeny has been described as marking a break from your earlier approach to your concept of “it is,” “the graven image.” . . .

Shapey: I don’t think there’s a break. The “it is” business that you’re talking about was clearly formulated at the time, but I was always interested in “it.” I had never formulated it that clearly for myself. But historically, somebody else will do a better job than I.

I find a constant line throughout my music. Looking backwards, I was always struggling with that formulation. The whole idea of the graven image has always been pertinent to me.³

Between 1959 and 1961, Shapey wrote a series of pieces in which he realized his new ideas about composition in a didactic manner. He also began to verbally articulate his new compositional philosophy, both in program notes and interviews. Perhaps inevitably, he used his newly developed compositional techniques—including the exploitation of timbre and texture, as well as the use of repetition, a wide pitch space and a wide physical space—in a more formulaic manner than in his later music.

Evocation No. 1 for Violin, with Percussion and Piano (1959)\(^4\) represents Shapey’s pragmatic attempt to replicate the timbres and textures of the “Invocation” Concerto for Violin and Orchestra (1958) while employing a compact ensemble. Shapey shrunk the orchestral forces of the Concerto to a chamber group. The violinist often acts as a “soloist,” with several cadenzas comparable to those in the Concerto. The percussion writing of Evocation likewise evokes that of the Concerto, most notably in the tom-tom rhythms of the third movement (not shown).

The work begins with Shapey’s presentation of ideas for the violinist, percussionist and pianist. The violinist states a series of brief gestures, while the percussionist plays unpitched rhythmic figures, which it quickly fragments and repeats. Dramatic piano cluster chords in the treble and bass accompany the violin and percussion (see Ex. 4.1). The violin follows its initial series of gestures by repeating the first three in a modified retrograde, creating a free palindrome. D4 is added to the D#5/E5 dyad in the thirty-second-note quintuplet, while the eighth-note dyad, B/C, is transposed upward by an octave (see Ex. 4.2).

\(^{4}\) Theodore Presser Co. publishes the score of Evocation No. 1: #414-41161. Originally entitled Evocation, it was numbered when Shapey wrote Evocation No. 2 in 1979.
While the violin presents its retrograde, the original series of percussion figures is stated in retrograde order, although the gestures are not modified. The coupled percussion riffs and piano cluster chords at the beginning of *Evocation* recall both the opening of the Concerto for Clarinet and Chamber Group and the second section of the orchestral *Ontogeny* (1958).

The beginning of *Evocation* represents Shapey’s first deliberate construction of a “graven image.” Whereas Shapey had employed motives and themes as the building blocks of his earlier music, he often used groups of linked gestures in their place in his new manner. He gave the name “images” to these collections of musical ideas. Shapey’s term, “space-time image,” reflects his creation, in both *Evocation* and the following work, *Form* for Piano (1959), of linked gestures that are repeated verbatim, or with small changes, throughout the piece. Shapey sometimes described these collections of ideas as “preset constellations.”

An examination of Shapey’s writings and interviews shows that the meaning of the concept of the “graven image” or “space-time image” evolved over several decades. When

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6 Shapey, sketches for *Ontogeny*. Shapey Papers, Box 35. See chapter 3, notes 112 and 113.
Shapey discussed his “Invocation” Violin Concerto in 1958, he wrote, “Each group [of the orchestra] becomes a new homogenous unit. . . . To each unit is given a preset musical entity; fixed, memorable, graven in time and space; its splatterings off are only momentary diffusions. . . . Its changes occur through juxtaposed relationships.” In his 1959 grant application for study at the electronic studio in Milan, Shapey elaborated on his conception: “The properties of each musical ‘object’ must have a finite construction, a ‘graven image,’ and yet be only a small individual factor in the infinite structure.” Shapey’s program note for *Evocation*, “Some Basic Concepts about My Work,” defines the “graven image” in different, more comprehensive terms, however. A “graven image” is no longer to be considered as a “small individual factor” of the structure:

In my music, the initial space-time image generates through expansions of itself all textures and a structural totality. . . . The very freedom and diffuseness of sound combinations have led me to the use of a focal ‘image’ which I choose to call the ‘graven image,’ it being a state of ‘it is’ as opposed to a state of constant abstruse development.

Shapey has reconceived his description of the interaction of a large group of juxtaposed elements, so that their initial presentation together, now defined as a “graven image,” is to be considered as the central focus of a piece of music. This definition was repeated by Shapey’s friend, composer Charles Whittenberg, in his brief essay, “Ralph Shapey: A Brief Appraisal of

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7 Ralph Shapey, handwritten manuscript [thoughts about musical structure], ca. 1958, Shapey Papers, Box 11.
8 See chapter 3, notes 142 and 145.
9 “Exposition” of “Project,” in Ralph Shapey, Guggenheim Fellowship application for 1960. By permission of the J. S. Guggenheim Memorial Foundation.
11 Charles Whittenberg (1927-84), composer and professor at the University of Connecticut. He was heavily influenced by the music of Varèse.
the Music,” apparently employed as a pre-concert talk before a performance of *Evocation*.

Whittenberg wrote,

> What occurs in [Shapey]’s work is that which I can only describe, not without some trepidation, as a sculptured expansion and contraction of some huge, multi-partitioned event which presents itself in the NOW of our experience.\(^1\)

Despite Shapey’s insistence on the centrality of the “graven image” in his comments about *Evocation*, he seemingly returned to his initial definition of an “image” in the program note that he used for many of his works during the early 1960s. Shapey wrote of “related, interrelated and unrelated images organized into an organic whole,” and “varied phases resulting from the juxtapositions of designs.”\(^1\)\(^3\) Similarly, when Vivian Perlis interviewed Shapey in 1983, he discussed his aversion to traditional methods of musical development, and described his manipulation of fully realized “objects”: “I want to deal with the fact that is here already. Not with the seed any longer, but the object is here. This is it. Now what happens? Well, the most important thing is that it, whatever it is, begins to go to different relationships with its surroundings.”\(^1\)\(^4\) Shapey related the movement of musical objects in space to the movement of the planets in the solar system:

> The so-called, if you will, cosmology idea is that--that too has something to do with it, you know. The incredible wonder, you know, of nature and where we are, and the stars, the moon, whatever, you know, and that each thing has its particular place, each thing is doing its particular thing, okay? . . . And I brought--try to bring all that into the music, into my music.\(^1\)\(^5\)

\(^{1}\) Charles Whittenberg, “Ralph Shapey: A Brief Appraisal of the Music” (ca. early 1960s). Shapey Papers, Box 93.
\(^{1}\) Ibid., 100.
In a 1984 interview with composer Robert Cogan, Shapey repeated this description of an “image” as a component of a larger discourse, rather than as Whittenberg’s “huge, multi-partitioned event.” He described *Evocation* as composed of “different images and/or gestures. I present each one by itself for the moment as slowly, more and more, they do fuse into one showing that they belong together, that they are part of the whole.” Nevertheless, theorist Mee-Eun Jeon has more recently described the opening section of *Evocation* as a single “graven image,” returning to Shapey’s definition of the term during the early 1960s. Jeon attempts to distinguish between “images” and “graven images,” discussing both “specific pitch and rhythmic images” and the “unified opening graven image” of *Evocation*. She also describes the prime-retrograde relationship within the opening section of *Evocation* as an integral aspect of the “graven image” of the work.

Jeon’s distinction between “pitch and rhythmic images,” and a “unified opening graven image,” creates an unnecessary layer of analytical complication in the analysis of *Evocation*. I would like to propose a different approach to the definition of “images” in the work that aligns it with many other compositions by Shapey. The linked violin gestures, percussion figures and piano chords at the outset can be perceived as individual instrumental “images” that interact and occasionally fuse as the piece progresses, rather than manifestations of separate “pitch” and “rhythmic” elements. Even if Whittenberg’s concept of a “huge, multi-partitioned event” is

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16 Robert Cogan (b. 1930), composer and professor at the New England Conservatory.  
19 Jeon, “Ralph Shapey’s ‘Unforgettable Moments’,” 2.  
20 Ibid., 6.
retained, I suggest that the identification of the opening “graven image” of *Evocation* be limited to the first statement of the group of linked gestures. The immediately following retrograde presentation of these gestures would then be considered an outgrowth, rather than an integral component, of the “image.” By eliminating the element of formal extension and balance within the definition of a “graven image,” the term can be applied to works in which Shapey employs event structures of a different type from those in *Evocation*.

In this study, I have adopted Shapey’s most broadly conceived definition of a “graven image,” while noting the applicability of his more restrictive—and in some ways antithetical—definition, when appropriate. The inconsistencies in Shapey’s use of terms can never be completely reconciled, however.

**The Structure of *Evocation* and Shapey’s Approach to Serialism**

Shapey modifies traditional forms in *Evocation*, rather than creating new narrative structures. The first movement presents an extended, multi-sectional musical argument. The periodic return of the opening ideas produces a rondo-like arrangement. The second movement is a scherzo, while the third movement begins with the “slow movement” of a sonata cycle. It ends with a section linking together the structure of the entire piece. Shapey presents a truncated version of the ideas of the first movement, before concluding *Evocation* with a violin cadenza.

The first movement has five episodes, distinguished by contrasts of instrumentation, articulation and rhythm, as well as by Shapey’s use of motivic development. The sustained textures, reiterative rhetoric and free rhythms of the opening music are succeeded by a contrasting episode (rehearsal letter C, m. 3–letter G), in which the piano’s cluster chords are replaced by rhythmically even non-legato patterns (see Ex. 4.3).
After the return of the opening music at rehearsal letter H, Shapey again employs drier instrumental colors to create contrast. The violin states a series of brief motives, derived from the
opening music (see Exx. 4.4a and b), before repeating them, accompanied first by percussion,
then by both percussion and piano.

**Example 4.4a** Brief motives, in Ralph Shapey, *Evocation No. 1* for Violin, with Percussion
and Piano (1959), I, rehearsal letter J. The motives are labeled A–C in the example. © 1984
Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

**Example 4.4b** Opening violin line, in Ralph Shapey, *Evocation No. 1* for Violin, with
Percussion and Piano (1959), I, beginning, violin only. The source sets of motives A–C in Ex.
4.3a are correspondingly labeled in the example. © 1984 Theodore Presser Co. Used by
permission.

Shapey transfers a slightly modified version of the initial piano pattern of the second
episode to the violin in the following section (rehearsal letters M-N) (not shown). This is
followed by the concluding restatement of the opening music (letters O–P). The two episodes
create a kind of palindromic symmetry that supplements the rondo-like elements of the
movement’s structure.

Shapey continuously circulates the aggregate in the first movement of *Evocation*. At the
beginning of the work, the violin’s melodic line presents eleven of the twelve pcs of the
aggregate in a series of six chromatic dyads, with one pc repetition, G: {C#, D}, {B, C}, {D#, E}
The aggregate is completed by the piano’s F6 in its repeated cluster chords (see Ex. 4.1). Conversely, at the beginning of the second episode, the piano’s even non-legato patterns are coupled with the violin’s whole-note F# double octave (echoed by the piano’s F#s at the end of the same measure) and its repeated F4s in the following measure to complete the aggregate (see Ex. 4.3). Shapey’s presentation of the aggregate as an ordered succession of pcs at the beginning of the second episode suggests his use of a twelve-tone series, in which the first ten pcs are stated by the piano, and the final F# and F are added by the violin: (Db–D–B–C–E–Eb–G–G#–A–Bb–F#–F). Shapey often omits one of the pcs of the aggregate when he presents the “series,” employing Wolpe’s technique of “chromatic circulation.”

At the end of the second episode, Shapey creates formal symmetry by introducing a statement of the first eleven pcs of the “series” by the violin at rehearsal letter G. The violin duplicates both the order and the registral position of the pitches in the first of the piano’s two related patterns at the beginning of the episode, as well as the register of its own subsequent F#6 harmonic. Beginning with F#6, the violin immediately repeats this statement of the “series” in retrograde form (modified both with respect to pc order and rhythm), echoing its presentation of the chromatic segments, followed by their retrograde, at the beginning of the movement (see Ex. 4.5). The violin creates additional formal symmetry by fusing its pitch palindrome with the series of rhythms presented by the percussion instruments at the beginning of Evocation.

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21 Ibid., 5.
22 For a discussion of Wolpe’s concept of “chromatic circulation,” see chapter 1, notes 29-32.
23 For a detailed analysis of movement I, see Jeon, “Ralph Shapey’s ‘Unforgettable Moments’.”
The busy textures of the second movement scherzo contrast sharply with those of the first movement. The histrionic gestures of the violin soloist are accompanied by an ostinato, stated continuously by the piano in even sixteenth notes (see Ex. 4.6).

The ten-pc ostinato sequence (C–E–C#–D–Ab–A–Eb–B–F–F#) is supplemented by the violin’s G and Bb, which complete the aggregate. The sequence recalls the piano’s non-legato patterns in the first movement, preserving three pc pairs from those patterns, (C–E, C#–D and Ab–A), while reordering the “series.”

Shapey varies both register and texture in his repetition of the ostinato. He continuously alters the registral arrangement of the pcs, and inserts octaves into the steady stream of sixteenth notes as well. In addition, Shapey reshuffles the pc content of the ostinato in order to generate dyads and trichords (rehearsal letter C, m. 3, not shown). As in the analogous episodes of the first movement, Shapey emphasizes the least resonant percussion instruments in movement II, matching the timbral dryness of the piano writing. At the climax, he instructs the percussion instruments to “let ring,” while the piano plays at its registral extremes (not shown). The musical narrative gradually disintegrates in the final pages of the movement.

In movement III, the violin takes precedence over the other members of the ensemble, playing a lyrical, widely spaced line, while the piano quietly repeats a single trichord. Shapey concludes *Evocation* with a brief section that serves as a coda to the entire cycle. After a literal repetition of the first three lines of the work, he presents a violin cadenza that recalls several episodes in the opening movement. The final lines of the cadenza successively present direct quotations from the violin line of the opening measures, the violin solo at rehearsal letter G and the piano pattern that begins the second episode (see Ex. 4.7).
On 26 March 1960, *Evocation* was premiered at the Third Street Music School Settlement in New York by pianist Yehudi Wyner, percussionist Paul Price, and violinist Matthew Raimondi, to whom Shapey dedicated the score. *Evocation* became one of Shapey’s most popular pieces. It was the first of his compositions to receive a commercial recording, CRI 141, played by the artists who had performed at the premiere. The LP was issued in 1961 with jacket notes by Shapey, articulating his compositional philosophy. Despite Shapey’s repeated expressions of admiration for Beethoven and Brahms, his description of the “graven image” and its variation seems to echo the compositional procedures of the nineteenth-century New German
School, in which forceful, strongly characterized motives are continuously transformed throughout a piece without losing their original identity:

Through permutations of [the initial space-time] image I continue, rather than destroy, its state of being. . . . The expansion of the image is achieved through diminutions of itself. . . . The changed focusing of the image preordains changed proportions, i.e., dissolutions of organic sound-units (which are each a part of the image), reestablishing themselves as modified reflections of the original unit.\textsuperscript{25}

Shapey was aware of the historical origins of his technique, as he admitted to Carol K. Baron in 1975:

Shapey: The idée fixe is--supposedly started by Berlioz--the idea, the fixed idea, alright, which carried through Wagner and then other composers to Varèse. And I have carried it even further, you see? There’s no question of that.

Baron: An idea that comes back.


Baron: And these are structurally reinforcing?

Shapey: Right. They make up the whole piece, you see.\textsuperscript{26}

Critic Eric Salzman lauded \textit{Evocation} when he reviewed the CRI recording in \textit{The New York Times}:

The Shapey “Evocation for Violin, Piano and Percussion” seems built up in juxtaposed, vertical planes. The basic material, direct and clear in its stark, “dissonant” character, comes around again and again; yet each time the sense is different, the context changed. It is a structure that has been solidly blocked out and then viewed from all possible points of view. . . .

The piano, with its big tone clusters, often operates as a percussion instrument and, in a sense, one could even say that the violin operates percussively and the percussion melodically. The sheer effect and dynamism of all this are exciting just in terms of sound projected almost spatially. Yet the effect is by no means purely abstract. Within a strong austere frame, there is a kind of scherzo as well as a spun-out arioso for violin that leads to the remarkable final page for violin alone, a closing curve of condensation and


\textsuperscript{26} Carol K. Baron, interview with Ralph Shapey, transcript, 115. Wolpe/Baron Archive.
In *The Musical Quarterly*, Vincent Persichetti gave the recording of *Evocation* an equally enthusiastic response:

In *Evocation* [Shapey] creates a many-sided musical image, a fat tonal prism reflecting familiar “avant-garde” sound patterns. . . . He achieves structural totality with skill; he is clever with the instruments and handy with the atonal kit.  

**The Twinned *Forms* and the Wolpe-Shapey Concert of 22 May 1959**

Shapey and Wolpe jointly presented a concert of their music at Carl Fischer Hall on 22 May 1959 (see Fig. 4.1). The ambitious concert, at which Shapey conducted two chamber works by Wolpe, was a defining moment in his early career. At Wolpe’s initiative, both composers wrote short piano pieces for the occasion, entitled *Form* for Piano. The two compositions were premiered by David Tudor. Wolpe devised a pitch collection that served as the basis for both works. A comparison of the *Forms* by Wolpe and Shapey illustrates the similarities and differences between Shapey’s style and that of his teacher.

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29 The concert is discussed in Patricia Morehead, “Analysis of *Form for Piano* by Ralph Shapey,” *Perspectives of New Music* 40, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 68-79.

30 Theodore Presser Co. publishes Shapey’s *Form* for Piano: #110-40692. It has also been published in *Perspectives of New Music* 40, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 80-90. Wolpe’s *Form* for Piano was published in 1962 by Edition Tonos, Darmstadt [Germany] (#7103).

31 Eric Salzman, “Music: An Involved Style,” *The New York Times*, 23 May 1959: 19. Salzman’s review of the concert omitted a discussion of Shapey’s *Form* for Piano, which he was unable to hear, due to his need to leave in order to meet his newspaper deadline.
Wolpe’s *Form* for Piano is a “late” work in which the structural function of each note is carefully delineated, a pure play of dialectic in the manner of his Symphony No. 1 (1955-56) and the works of the 1960s.\(^{32}\) Wolpe was aware of his own mortality as he approached his sixtieth birthday. In a 1960 letter to Shapey from Vienna, he wrote, “If you care still look at me nearing 60. This is a graves prescenting [sic: presentiment].” He closed the letter: “I am happy little Max [Shapey’s newborn son] grows so well. I envy His\(^{33}\) long life’s while.”\(^{34}\)

Wolpe controls his musical resources with great economy. He uses abrupt contrasts of dynamics as a structural tool, moving rapidly between dynamic extremes. Similarly, he oscillates

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\(^{33}\) Wolpe’s anomalous use of capitalization reflects his imperfect command of the English language.

\(^{34}\) Stefan Wolpe, letter to Shapey, dated, “Vienna (beloved city) 1960.” Wolpe was in Vienna during the summer of 1960. Shapey Papers, Box 147, Wolpe Material (Restricted).
between long and short note values. His characteristic pulse, nevertheless, is the eighth note, to which he returns throughout his piece.

In contrast to Wolpe’s compressed discourse, Shapey’s *Form* displays the exuberance of a young composer. Shapey delineates the structure of his composition by means of changes of tempo and texture, rather than through subtle permutations of ideas within a continuously evolving musical dialectic. In his essay, “Sensibility Defined: Set Projection in Stefan Wolpe's *Form* for Piano,” Martin Brody quotes Wolpe’s essay, “Thinking Twice:” “The form must be ripped endlessly open and self-renewed by interacting extremes of opposites. There is nothing to develop because everything is already there in reach of one’s ears.” While Wolpe employs these concepts on the syntactic level in his *Form*, Shapey uses them on the level of overall design. Shapey’s *Form* consists of a series of six episodes that alternate between slow and rapid music, and between closely spaced and widely dispersed textures: the “interacting extremes of opposites.” Each episode of Shapey’s piece has a radically different look on the page from the preceding music. The slow, conjunct motion of the opening section is contrasted with the fourth episode, “with wild elation,” which presents the fastest music and the most widely spaced textures of the piece. Leading to and from the central panel of the structure are the stuttering discourse of the third episode and the even rhythms of the fifth episode.

The pianistic idiom of Shapey’s *Form* is indebted, not to Wolpe’s *Form*, but to his *Enactments* for Three Pianos (1950-53). The profuse, virtuosic figuration of *Enactments* contrasts strongly with the idiom of Wolpe’s *Form*, while paralleling certain aspects of the pianistic language of Shapey’s *Form* (see Exx. 4.8a and b). Three movements of *Enactments*
(“Chant,” “Held In” and “Inception”) were premiered at the 1959 Wolpe-Shapey concert, with Shapey’s *Form* as the following piece on the program.


Patricia Morehead has labeled Shapey’s *Form* as a set of variations. It can also be described as a combination of variation and rondo form, in which Shapey presents a series of statements of an “image,” separated by contrasting episodes in which its components are developed. The opening “image” of *Form* consists of several linked gestures: a chord, a thirty-second-note triplet, a downward leap and an eighth-note quintuplet figure (see Ex. 4.9).


When Shapey attempted to trace the origins of his new style in 1958, he mentioned *Mutations I* (1956) as a significant landmark in his development. Shapey’s use of the opening “image” of *Form* as a refrain is reminiscent of his recurrent use of the opening motives of *Mutations* (see Ex. 3.16). The two pieces are structured similarly as well. The climactic fourth episode of *Form*, like movement VI of *Mutations*, is characterized by the insistent reiteration of brief, rapid figures. In both episode five of *Form* and movement VII of *Mutations*, Shapey

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36 Morehead, 70.
37 “The line does start, however, in the past; perhaps only vaguely, I can see it in the Clar[inet] Con[certo]. More positive, starting with the *Mutations* (perhaps a new form), to the Vla. Duo, to the *Songs of Eternity*, the Qt. No. 5!” Ralph Shapey, handwritten manuscript [thoughts about musical structure], ca. 1958. Shapey Papers, Box 11.
employs a “walking” figure with a steady pulse. Both works conclude with a slightly curtailed repetition of the opening episode/movement.

Shapey and Wolpe take somewhat different approaches to the use of the aggregate in their twinned Forms. Wolpe partitions the aggregate into two unordered hexachords, \{E, F, G, Ab, A, Bb\} and \{B, C, C#, D, Eb, F#\}. He arranges his first complete statement of the second hexachord around an axis of symmetry centered on C#4. Wolpe first slows his discourse to a single point, a C#4 grace note, in m. 5. He symmetrically unfolds the surrounding pitches in mm. 5-6, introducing the two pcs, B and Eb, as part of the chord, D3/B3/C4/Eb4: C#4–C4–D4–B3–Eb4. Wolpe then presents the entire hexachord, divided between the two-note Eb4–C#4 figure on the following sixteenth note and the reiterated B4/C5/D5/F#5 chord, which registrally balances the D3/B3/C4/Eb4 chord (see Ex. 4.10).

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In m. 22, Wolpe states the hexachords simultaneously, with the left hand playing hexachord 1, and the right hand hexachord 2 (see Ex. 4.11). Beginning in m. 29, Wolpe transposes the two hexachords by $T_5$ (not shown).
In contrast to Wolpe’s procedure, Shapey partitions the aggregate into three segments. Two pentachords, \{E, F, G, A, Bb\} and \{B, C, C#, D, Eb\}, are separated by a mediating dyad, \{F#, G\#\} (see Ex. 4.9). Shapey does not transpose pitch sets within his *Form*, and generally avoids the operation of transposition in his music. While Wolpe sometimes states hexachords in isolation, Shapey continually juxtaposes or interleaves the three aggregate segments throughout his piece. In the fifth episode, Shapey presents the aggregate segments as a linear succession of pitches, creating a twelve-tone series.³⁹ He partitions the series by two dashed bar lines to define the three subsets that preserve the pc content of the aggregate segments. Shapey then divides the subsets between the treble and bass (see Ex. 4.12). While the bass presents the first and second subsets (the first pentachord [E–G–A–Bb–F] and the mediating dyad [Ab–F\#]), the treble presents a retrograde version of the third subset (the second pentachord), along with one pc, F\#, from the second subset (the mediating dyad) and the final pc, F, of the first subset (the first pentachord) (B/Eb–C/D–C#–[D#(Eb)]–F\#–F). A simpler manner of describing Shapey’s procedure is to identify the succession of pcs in the bass as order numbers 1-7 of the prime form

³⁹ Morehead, 72.
of the series, and the treble succession as order numbers 1-6 and 8 of its retrograde.


Like Wolpe, Shapey creates an axis of symmetry in pitch space around C#4 at the beginning of his *Form*. He uses the axis of symmetry to construct the eighth-note quintuplet figure that introduces the mediating dyad, \{F#, G#\}, and the second pentachord, \{B, C, C#, D, Eb\}. C#4 bisects the three successive dyads, F#3–G#4, C3–D5 and B1–Eb7, in pitch space. The pitch class, C#, also bisects the dyads, C–D and B–Eb, within pc space (see Ex. 4.9).

The young American pianist, Howard Lebow, a student of Irma Wolpe, was a strong advocate of Shapey’s music. He played *Form* in both America and Europe, repeatedly pairing it with the *Klavierstücke* of Stockhausen. Lebow performed *Form* at Darmstadt in 1961. After he

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41 Lebow performed *Form* on 31 August 1961, at a concert entitled, “Junge Komponisten – Studiokonzert I.” It was the only piece that Lebow played at the concert, which also included works by Jan van Vlijmen, Renato de Grandis, Franco Evangelisti, Norma Beecroft, Ernstalbert Stiebler, Robert Taylor, Henri Pousseur and Gilbert Amy. See *Im Zenit der Moderne: Die Internationalen Ferienkurse für Neue Musik, Darmstadt 1946-1966: Geschichte und*
returned to America, he wrote to Shapey,

The Shapey “Form” was unappreciated in Darmstadt. Rather curiously – or perhaps not? – your greatest defender was the Great Man himself, Karlheinz Stockhausen. He felt, although he didn’t talk to me about this, that the composer really had some ideas in his head, even though he found the piece too long.42

Shapey prepared a program note for performances of Form by Lebow. Revealingly, he used the word, “mutations,” to describe the transformational operations within the piece, echoing the title of his earlier piano work. He emphasized the static harmonic and thematic qualities of the music, and pointed to his manipulation of the parameters of tempo, rhythm and density of texture:

On a succession of inexorably fixed pitch classes, allowing no permutations, merely octave transference, a series of mutations occurs along the time axis. . . . The harmonic unit is the aggregate weighted in various ways. . . . Rhythm in the large progresses from initial tempo through 5:3 to 2:1 ratio which serves as functionally equivalent to original tempo and prepares its return for the finale.

Variation of vertical density derives from initial association within the subgroups. The climax of horizontal density occurs in the faster 5:3 section.43

A few weeks after Lebow’s letter to Shapey, the two musicians participated in the Conference on Contemporary Arts at Vassar College, part of the centennial celebrations at the school.44 Lebow played a concert on 4 November in which he juxtaposed Stockhausen’s Klavierstücke I-IV and Shapey’s Form. He interspersed his performance with remarks comparing the music of the two composers. On 5 November, Shapey and Lebow participated in a

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42 Howard Lebow, letter to Shapey, 10 October 1961. Shapey Papers, Box 3, Folder L + M.
43 Ralph Shapey, program note, Form for Piano (ca. 1961). Shapey Papers, Box 93.
roundtable discussion. In a review of the conference, Constance Mersel, a Vassar student, recounted Lebow’s comments about the music of Shapey and Stockhausen:

The Shapey “Form” has in common with the Stockhausen “Pieces” the technique of proceeding from initial patterns. What Mr. Shapey likes to call the “profile” of his composition appears on the first page. Whatever else appears after that is derived from it, even though subsequent moods may differ from the original one.45

Shapey’s music had been ignored when David Tudor performed Stockhausen’s Klavierstücke in New York in 1956. By 1961, however, Shapey had achieved sufficient recognition to be perceived as an important American composer of radical tendencies, a counterweight to the leading European radical, Stockhausen.

Rituals for Symphony Orchestra (1959)

After the Wolpe-Shapey concert of 22 May 1959, Shapey went to the MacDowell Colony in New Hampshire, where he composed Rituals for Symphony Orchestra, the third and final work of his Trilogy for Orchestra (Testament to Man).46 In the two movements of Rituals, Shapey enacted the order/freedom dichotomy central to his music. Shapey employs his idiosyncratic techniques of pitch organization and motivic development in the first movement. According to Shapey, the movement represents society’s externally imposed strictures on the individual. The second movement represents the individual’s desire to express him/herself freely without artificial constraints. It includes controlled improvisation, reminiscent of free jazz, which Shapey associated musically with the liberation of the human personality. The title page of the score bears an epigraph by Shapey’s wife, Vera Klement: “With silver mallet/against bone/I chisel/at the calcified/truth/of gained maturity.”

46 The score of Rituals is available from the Theodore Presser Co. Rental Library.
Shapey gave a detailed explanation of the meaning of the title, *Rituals*, in his 1975 interview with Carol K. Baron:

Shapey: And I became very involved and interested in the whole concept of ritualism . . . that for man . . . to understand the unknown, he ritualizes his fears, his loves, and his hates. Through the act of ritual, the unknown becomes known to him. Whether it’s really known is not the point. Man thinks--I use “man,” I mean “humankind”--thinks he now knows the known because he has ritualized it. So it’s become his. He’s made it his own. You see what I mean. And by doing that, he has now, he’s now in control of the unknown. The fact that it’s not, that it’s untrue, is beside the point. That’s what he thinks: that he has made the unknown known to himself. And he does it through ritualism. And yes, you can be silly about it. The ritual of brushing your teeth in the morning. It’s the same thing. That all life really has become a system of rituals. And that’s why I wrote *Rituals* as a testament against the concept of “rituals,” you see. That the saxes [saxophones], especially in the second movement, and the piano are supposed to be activated as the free spirits who are fighting against the rigidity of ritual; and that man will never be free and never mature as long as he keeps up with his ritualisms. . . .

. . . The orchestra in the second movement are [sic] playing “the rituals,” which was all already worked out in the first movement. And they are blocks. They are like huge blocks blasting against the free spirits who want to fly and soar out into the universe.47

In his jacket notes for the LP release of *Rituals*, Shapey wrote that its musical language is based on “a post-Webern practice decidedly tempered by a tendency toward romantic expression.” The work is composed of motives and gestures that constantly interact in fresh ways, so that the music displays continuous variation: “The principle of repetition with variation dominates the construction.” The key to Shapey’s synthesis of static and developmental techniques is his statement that “changes in color, texture and motive-shape are continuous.”48

As in his other orchestral works of the 1950s, Shapey uses the spatial arrangement of the ensemble as a structural tool in *Rituals*. He divides the orchestra into eight groups, providing a diagram for the seating arrangement of the performers at the front of the score (see Fig. 4.2).

47 Carol K. Baron, interview with Ralph Shapey, transcript, 131-2. Wolpe/Baron Archive.
Shapey subdivides the winds between four groups, three of which are positioned at or near the front of the stage. The violins, violas and cellos are divided between the left and right sides of the stage, with the peculiarity that the violas and cellos are placed at the front, separated by wind instruments, while the violins are pushed towards the back. The bass players sit at the

Figure 4.2 Ralph Shapey, *Rituals* for Symphony Orchestra (1959), seating plan. © 1977 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.
rear, between drums, cymbals and gongs. The brass instruments are positioned in the middle of
the stage, divided between groups C and G, which also include the piano, several percussion
instruments and some wind instruments. The saxophones, which play an important role in
movement II, are placed at the center of the orchestral layout (group F), immediately behind the
piano (group C). Shapey’s arrangement of the instruments seems primarily designed to
emphasize the importance of the “jazz ensemble” central to movement II: the piano, brass
instruments and drums of group C, the saxophones and xylophone of group F, and the basses and
percussion instruments of group H.

While the orchestral seating plan has a special significance in movement II, the
arrangement of timbral sources within physical space is less significant in movement I than in
Ontogeny and the “Invocation” Concerto for Violin and Orchestra. Shapey’s continuous
recombination of motives in movement I takes on correspondingly greater importance within a
scheme that can seem, at times, to be formulaic. In his jacket notes for the CRI recording of
Rituals, Shapey indicated that this formulaic quality was intended to be programmatic: “A series
of concrete acts in repetition are bound into a tight formal structure . . . resulting in a ritualistic
formulation of sound.”

Shapey’s approach to motivic manipulation in Rituals is similar to the technique that he
employs in the Duo for Viola and Piano (1957). Some motives are constantly varied, while
others are usually repeated without altering their rhythm or shape. At the beginning of movement

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49 Ralph Shapey, jacket notes, Shapey, Rituals for Symphony Orchestra, CRI SD 275.
I, Shapey presents a “space-time image” consisting of four motives that are circulated throughout the entire work\(^5\) (see Ex. 4.13):

a) the opening fanfare  
b) a rapid neighbor-note figure  
c) a chorale-like peroration  
d) a held note, to which string harmonics give an eerie timbre

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\(^5\) “The two movements are based on the same material—motives which are heard at the opening of the first movement.” Ralph Shapey, jacket notes, Shapey, *Rituals* for Symphony Orchestra, CRI SD 275.
Example 4.13 Presentation of motives, in Ralph Shapey, *Rituals* for Symphony Orchestra (1959), I, p. 4, m. 1–p. 5, m. 1. The score is notated in C. It contains no measure numbers, nor does it include rehearsal letters or numbers. Each motive is circled and marked by a letter name. © 1977 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.
The first movement of *Rituals* is divided into three sections. The “exposition” is followed by a slow, thin-textured middle section, in which Shapey presents fresh motivic material. The movement concludes with a brief recapitulation of the ideas of the opening section. Formal transitions within movement I are demarcated by the interjection of proclamatory motives. The spatial arrangement of the orchestra reinforces the musical discourse. The divided winds, brass and strings circulate motives back and forth between the two sides of the stage, and between the front and back of the orchestra (see Ex. 4.14).
Shapey repeatedly denied that his music was serial. On occasion, however, he asserted that specific works were serial, such as String Quartet No. 5 (1958) and Seven for Piano Four Hands (1963). Shapey unequivocally identifies Rituals as a serial work in his jacket notes for the CRI recording.\textsuperscript{51} The “Improvisation material for Sax’s & Piano: Movement II,” included as an appendix to the score of Rituals, provides the key to Shapey’s interpretation of the concept of serialism in this piece.\textsuperscript{52} It consists of nine sets of musical ideas,\textsuperscript{53} of which the first corresponds to the five-voice “chorale-like peroration” (motive “c”) presented at the beginning of movement I (see Ex. 4.15).

**Example 4.15**  “Improvisation material for Sax’s & Piano: Movement II,” Fig. 1, in Ralph Shapey, Rituals for Symphony Orchestra (1959), p. 68 (cf. motive “c” in Ex. 4.13). © 1977 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

![Example 4.15](image)

Three pcs are duplicated within the fourteen pitches of Ex. 4.15: F#(Gb), D and Eb. In the “chorale-like peroration,” the pc, G, is duplicated as well (tuba, group C; trombone, group G). The initial horn motto of Rituals, “the opening fanfare” (motive “a”) shares two pcs (D and F) with chord 2 of Ex. 4.15 and the “chorale,” and three pcs with chord 1 (C#[Db], C and F#(Gb)).

\textsuperscript{51} “The music is serial.” Ralph Shapey, jacket notes, Shapey, Rituals for Symphony Orchestra, CRI SD 275.

\textsuperscript{52} For a survey of the wide variety of approaches to serialism among American composers, see Joseph N. Straus, Twelve-Tone Music in America (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

\textsuperscript{53} Shapey employs these ideas in a manner that has similarities to the aleatory procedures used during the 1950s by Stockhausen and Boulez.
One pc, Bb, is omitted from the aggregate in Ex. 4.15. It is not stated in *Rituals* until m. 7, when it is introduced simultaneously by the bassoon and contrabassoon.

Shapey also presents a second “chorale” in the first movement of *Rituals*, played by four brass instruments (see Ex. 4.16).


Since the tuba duplicates the trombone line, the “chorale” has only three voices. Bb, the only pc missing from the aggregate in the first “chorale,” is included in the nine-pc set of the second “chorale,” which has no pc duplications. The three chords of the second “chorale” correspond to the treble trichords of Fig. II of the “improvisation material” (see Ex. 4.17).
Shapey employs “chorale I” both as a motive, subject to permutation, and as a source set. He rotates the “chorale,” and also horizontalizes its pc content to create fresh motivic material. For example, on p. 7, m. 1, the first chord of the triplet figure played by group G comprises the pc content, \{C, Db, Gb, G\}, of the first chord of “chorale I.” Two measures later (p. 7, m. 3), the horns introduce a new motive, C4–Db4–G3–F#4, that is a horizontalized statement of the first chord of “chorale I,” with F2 added from the bass line of the second chord of the “chorale” to produce the dyad, F/F# (see Ex. 4.18).


Shapey employs “chorale I” both as a motive, subject to permutation, and as a source set. He rotates the “chorale,” and also horizontalizes its pc content to create fresh motivic material. For example, on p. 7, m. 1, the first chord of the triplet figure played by group G comprises the pc content, \{C, Db, Gb, G\}, of the first chord of “chorale I.” Two measures later (p. 7, m. 3), the horns introduce a new motive, C4–Db4–G3–F#4, that is a horizontalized statement of the first chord of “chorale I,” with F2 added from the bass line of the second chord of the “chorale” to produce the dyad, F/F# (see Ex. 4.18).

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54 The top line of the three-chord “chorale I” progression (Example 4.15) can retrospectively be perceived as a motive (Gb–A–Ab) with associated chords, an early form of the “Mother Lode.” The “Mother Lode” is a twelve-tone series, coupled with “assigned aggregates,” that served as the basis of almost all of Shapey’s works written after 1980. The concept of the “Mother Lode” can be perceived as a formalization of procedures that Shapey used earlier in his career. For a discussion of the “Mother Lode,” see Patrick Finley, *A Catalogue of the Works of Ralph Shapey* (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1997), 65-92; Amelia S. Kaplan, “The ‘Mother Lode,’ the *Gottlieb Duo*, and Ralph Shapey’s Compositional Strategy in the Early 1980s,” *Contemporary Music Review* 27, nos. 4/5 (August-October 2008): 511-29.
Like the motive on p. 7, m. 3, the thematic idea introduced on p. 8, m. 3 (see Ex. 4.19) may also be intended as a horizontalization of “chorale I,” now slightly rearranged and used in a manner resembling a serial matrix (see Exx. 4.20a and b).


Gb  A  Ab  
Db  D  Eb  
C  Eb  E  
G  B  D

Example 4.20b  “Chorale I” (Fig. I, p. 68), rearranged and displayed as a serial matrix. Lines 1 and 2 of Ex. 4.20a are reversed. Ralph Shapey, *Rituals* for Symphony Orchestra (1959). The thematic idea introduced on p. 8, m. 3, begins with the pc, E (marked by bold italics and numbered as 1), in column 3. The other pcs are also italicized and numbered in the matrix chart (cf. Exxx. 4.15, 4.19 and 4.20a). © 1977 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

\begin{verbatim}
Db6  D7  Eb8  
Gb  A5,  8  Ab8  
C  Eb4  E1  
G  F3  F#2  
G  B  D
\end{verbatim}
The succession of pcs within the thematic idea is numbered in both Exx. 4.19 and 4.20b. Pitch classes 1 and 2 (E–F#) can be derived from adjacencies in column 3 of Ex. 4.20b, pcs 3-5 (F–Eb–A) from column 2. The path of the thematic idea then moves upward and diagonally to the left in order to reach pc 6. Pitch classes 6 and 7 (Db–D) are adjacencies in the top lines of columns 1 and 2, while the concluding trichord simultaneity, Eb/Ab/A, consists of adjacencies in columns 2 and 3.

On pages 14-15, Shapey demarcates a formal transition by linking three of the central motives of movement I: the opening fanfare, “a,” the chorale-like peroration, “c,” and a new motto, motive “e.” Two repetitions of the opening fanfare frame a horizontalized statement by the full orchestra of the first chord of “chorale I:” C–F#–G–Db (see Ex. 4.21). The first two notes of this figure are identical to the last two notes of the opening fanfare.


The second statement of the opening fanfare is rounded off by a motto, motive “e,” G–F–Db–F# (see Ex. 4.22), derived from the bass line of Fig. IX of Shapey’s “improvisation material” chart (see Ex. 4.23). This motto includes three of the four pcs of the first chord of “chorale I” (Db, F#[Gb] and G), as well as the three pcs of the bass line of “chorale I” (F, F# and G).
Shapey introduces an additional motive, “f,” at the beginning of the middle section of movement I (see Ex. 4.24).

Example 4.24  Motive “f,” in Ralph Shapey, Rituals for Symphony Orchestra (1959), I, p. 16, m. 3–p. 17, m. 1, flute and oboe. The melodic succession of pcs is numbered in the example. © 1977 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.
Like other motives in *Rituals*, motive “f” can be perceived as an arrangement of pcs derived from “chorale I,” created by moving both vertically and horizontally through the “serial matrix” for the “chorale” (see Ex. 4.25). The first three pcs (C#[Db]–C–G) are taken from column 1, the fourth (A) from column 2, and pcs 5 and 6 (Ab–Eb) from column 3. Beginning with pc 6 (Eb), motive “f” moves horizontally across the chart from right to left: Eb–D–Db.\(^5\)

**Example 4.25**  “Chorale I” (Fig. 1, p. 68), displayed as a serial matrix (cf. Exx. 4.20a and 4.24). Ralph Shapey, *Rituals* for Symphony Orchestra (1959). The pcs of motive “f” are italicized and numbered, with the initial pc marked by bold italics. © 1977 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

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The motive has a circular structure, ending on Db(C#), its opening pc. In addition to his introduction of fresh motivic material, Shapey distinguishes the middle section of the movement by restricting his palette of instrumental colors. The first part of the middle section is almost entirely confined to the winds, the second to the strings.

Shapey brings together four motives at the end of the movement. “Chorale I” (motive “c”) is stated in both its original and retrograde forms, together with unaltered presentations of motives “a” (the opening fanfare) and “b” (the rapid neighbor-note figure). Shapey also reintroduces the motto, motive “e,” previously stated at the conclusion of both the opening and middle sections of the movement.

\(^5\) It is preferable to derive the pc, D, from column 2 rather than column 3, due to its mediating position between Eb and Db within the motive.
The brief, improvisatory second movement has a much simpler form than the multi-sectional opening movement. According to Shapey, “the second movement is built on an ostinato in the percussion. The entire movement is a grand crescendo, beginning softly and culminating with a triple forte.” Shapey’s assertion that the same musical ideas are presented in both movements is confirmed by the application of the improvisation chart for movement II to the analysis of movement I. The difference between the two movements in Shapey’s handling of motivic material is a realization of the order/freedom dichotomy central to Rituals. Shapey was not interested in free improvisation, however. During the preparations for the initial performances of the work, and its later recording on the CRI label, Shapey carefully supervised the rehearsals of the improvising instrumentalists as they interpreted the chart of “improvisation material” that he had appended to the score.

The primary orientation of the spatial movement of sound within the orchestra shifts between movements I and II. While sound usually moves between the left and right sides of the stage in movement I, it moves between the front and back of the stage throughout movement II. The saxophones of group F and the piano of group C are positioned at the center of the ensemble, symbolizing their pivotal role in the musical discourse. The sonorous, unpitched percussion instruments of group H (gong, tenor drum, cymbals and snare drum), silent in movement I, are given a leading role in movement II. They are linked to the percussion instruments (bass drum, tom-toms and timpani) of group C, which flank the piano. Shapey also pairs the anvil, iron and cowbell of group B and the woodblocks of group E, positioned at opposite sides of the stage.

56 Ralph Shapey, jacket notes, Shapey, Rituals for Symphony Orchestra, CRI SD 275.
57 Barry Wiener, telephone interview with William Allaudin Mathieu, 6 February 2008. Mathieu was pianist for the 1966 world premiere of Rituals with the Chicago Symphony.
58 Carol K. Baron, interview with Ralph Shapey, transcript, 131. Wolpe/Baron Archive.
Rituals is a polemical work, not just because of Shapey’s use of elements of free jazz, but also because of his use of his own version of serialism as a contrast to controlled improvisation. Shapey’s musical enactment of the social control/freedom dichotomy in Rituals paralleled the compositional paths taken at the time by many of his European contemporaries, including Stockhausen, Berio and Ligeti, who abandoned serialism in the late 1950s to write a different, more gestural kind of music. His assertion that free jazz represented a higher synthesis between two different cultural forms, avant-garde classical music and jazz, was echoed by other commentators. When William Allaudin Mathieu interviewed Shapey about jazz, he was frustrated by Shapey’s refusal to characterize free jazz as “merely” a variety of jazz.

Shapey conducted the premiere of Rituals in a concert presented by the Chicago Symphony at the University of Chicago on 12 May 1966. In the Chicago Tribune, Thomas Willis vividly described the piece:

Both of the new works [including George Perle’s Three Movements for Orchestra], not unexpectedly, were serial. . . . Somewhat in the manner of Gunther Schuller’s “Spectra,” the orchestra [of Rituals] is split and repositioned into eight large and small chamber ensembles. . . .

In the second movement, a repeated figure mainly heard in the timpani organizes the variations into a rugged outline and a wild, jazzy quartet of saxophones stirs the pot to a bubbling boil of a din. It takes about 12 minutes . . . and makes a lot of strong, colorful noise in a short time.

When the CRI recording of Rituals was released in 1971, Donal Henahan perceptively summarized the elements of Shapey’s style:

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59 Shapey’s attitude towards society’s control over the individual is typical of liberal discourse about society during the late 1950s. See William H. Whyte, Jr., The Organization Man (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956).
61 Barry Wiener, telephone interview with William Allaudin Mathieu, 6 February 2008.
62 Schuller composed Spectra in 1958, a year before Shapey composed Rituals.
Shapey, in “Rituals” as well as several other major pieces, achieves the improbable in merging post-Webern ideals of delicacy, serialism and economy with Varèse’s counter-Webern penchant for using sounds in block form, and for blowing the roof off periodically with percussive climaxes.  

A New Synthesis

In the three-part Movements for Woodwind Quintet (1960), Shapey explores not only the integration of stasis and developing variation, but also pitch space, timbre, texture and the acoustic properties of instruments. He employs extreme registers both simultaneously and singly, creating piercing acoustic effects in a manner that recalls the orchestral works of 1958.

Like Rituals, Movements can be described by Shapey’s term, a “one-fabric work.” Shapey creates an interlocking formal structure by periodically reinserting ideas from the beginning of the piece throughout the musical narrative. The first movement, Adagio, opens with four presentations of an arching motive, paired (in all but one case) with a descending leaping dyad. The first three are followed by an ascending leaping figure, the last by simultaneous ascending and descending figures (see Ex. 4.26). This sequence can also be characterized as successive statements of an “image,” varied by transposition, near repetition and rhythmic augmentation.

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65 Theodore Presser Co. publishes Movements for Woodwind Quintet: score (11440563S) and parts (11440563P).
66 Shapey: “There’s another thing that’s important to me, and I believe in the past great composers: that a work is a one-fabric work, that the last movement comes right out of the first movement, if there are movements.” Carol K. Baron, interview with Ralph Shapey, transcript, 171. Wolpe/Baron Archive.
67 Shapey employs dashed bar lines as an aid to the performers, but does not number the measures. He uses rehearsal letters throughout the score. I use hypothetical measure numbers, together with Shapey’s rehearsal letters, in order to identify passages in the score.
The flute adds a rocking figure to the arching lines at rehearsal letter B (not shown). At rehearsal letter D, Shapey begins a new episode, introducing a second “image,” centered around the tetrachord, \{D-Eb-G-Ab\}. He presents the tetrachord using a combination of simultaneities and ip11 (\{Ab4, G5\}) dyad gestures. Shapey decorates his insistent repetition of the tetrachord with tremolo ip4 and ip14 dyads that together comprise a second tetrachord, \{Gb, G, A, Bb\} (see Ex. 4.27).
Shapey begins the final section of the movement with an altered statement of the initial “image,” adding grace notes to the arching motive and changing its rhythms (not shown). The clarinet then introduces an ascending septuplet motive, while the flute presents a modified retrograde version of the arching motive, in which two dyads, F♯–B and Eb–E, retain their original ordering (see Ex. 4.28).
At the end of the movement, Shapey transforms the tetrachord, \{D-Eb-G-Ab\}, into the pentachord, \{Db, D, Eb, G, Ab\}. He presents the pentachord as a simultaneity, widening the registral span of the tetrachord’s presentation at rehearsal letter D, and altering its dynamics. Shapey’s use of the registral extremes of the quintet, together with \textit{ff} dynamics, produces a shrill, startling sonic outburst (see Ex. 4.29).
In addition to his modification and combination of motives, Shapey uses aggregate completion as a structural device in *Movements*. The first of the four statements of the initial “image” (see Ex. 4.26) comprises the eight-pc chromatic set, B–F#. The bassoon supplies two additional pcs, Bb and A, in the second statement of the “image.” The final two pcs of the aggregate, Ab and G, are introduced as part of the horn’s presentation of the “image,” the third of the series (not shown). After Shapey concludes the initial statements of the “image,” the oboe presents a thematic idea that complements the arching motive, developing the motive and extending its length. This complementary idea includes a complete statement of the aggregate, along with one pc repetition, E (see Ex. 4.30).
Movement II opens with two motives that produce axial symmetry around D4. Shapey begins the movement with the bassoon’s descending motive, followed by the clarinet’s presentation of the ascending septuplet motive, first stated in movement I. The descending motive begins on F4, while the ascending motive begins on D4. Nevertheless, since the first pitch of the descending motive may be perceived as a decorative flourish, D4 can be considered as the initial pitch of both motives (see Ex. 4.31a). Later in the movement, Shapey presents a permutation of the ascending motive (see Ex. 4.31b). He preserves its initial shape, but reorders its pc content:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{movements, II, m. 3, clarinet (Ex. 4.31a)} & \\
D & - E & - D# & - B & - Bb & - C\# & - C
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{movements, II, rehearsal letter A, m. 3, oboe (Ex. 4.31b)} & \\
Bb & - D# & - C & - D & - C\# & - E
\end{align*}
\]
**Example 4.31a** Axial symmetry around D4, in Ralph Shapey, *Movements* for Woodwind Quintet (1960), II, mm. 1-3 (cf. Ex. 4.28). D4 is circled in both the ascending and descending motives. © 1960 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

\[ j = 72 \]

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At rehearsal letter B, Shapey reintroduces the “image” that includes two tetrachords (see Ex. 4.27). He omits one of the two dyads of the second tetrachord, however. Shapey links the G–Ab leaping gesture of the first tetrachord to the initial F4–D4–C#3 gesture of the opening
bassoon motive of movement II by creating the three-note motive, G5–Ab4–F4. Both motives include ics 1 and 3. Shapey employs the new variant of the G–Ab gesture repeatedly throughout the second movement (see Ex. 4.32).


Movement III presents a synthesis of ideas derived from the first two movements (see Ex. 4.33). At the inception of the third movement, the clarinet plays a decorated version of the opening motive of movement I. Shapey combines it with the twisting figure, Eb5–F#5–E5–G5, first presented during his reintroduction of the dual tetrachord “image” in the second movement (see Ex. 4.32). This figure imitates the bassoon’s flourish, C#3–E3–Eb3–F#3, part of its descending motive at the beginning of the second movement (see Ex. 4.31a). The bassoon’s counterpoint to the opening clarinet gestures of movement III, the leaping, descending figure, Db4–D3–Bb1, similarly recalls its descending motive at the beginning of the second movement.

\[ \dot{\prec} = 132 \]
In the third movement, Shapey employs instrumental techniques that accentuate the brilliant, sometimes deliberately shrill sound of the ensemble. Horn glissandi (marked, “rip”), first presented at rehearsal letter A, mm. 1-2 (see Ex. 4.33), are used with increasing frequency as the movement progresses. Shapey provides contrast with a brief dolce episode, built upon the complementary thematic idea first presented in movement I (see Ex. 4.30). At rehearsal letter F, Shapey introduces a modified version of the opening “image” of the third movement, initiated dramatically by a horn glissando. He then segues smoothly into a truncated recapitulation of movement I, which lacks a true recapitulation. Movements ends with a series of forceful statements of parts of the opening “image” of the third movement, each of which begins dramatically with a horn glissando. Shapey first repeats the opening elements of the “image,” then its final gesture (see Ex. 4.34a). He concludes the movement with a widely spaced ff chord in which he employs the registral extremes of the ensemble. The music strongly recalls the closing pages of Messiaen’s *Oiseaux exotiques* (1956) (see Ex. 4.34b).
Example 4.34a  Repetition of the final gesture of the opening “image,” in Ralph Shapey, *Movements* for Woodwind Quintet (1960), III, rehearsal letter H, mm. 9-12. Note that there is no bar line at the conclusion of the piece. © 1960 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.
The Concert Arts Wind Quintet premiered *Movements* at the University of Virginia on 17 February 1960. In *The Richmond Times-Dispatch*, John White expressed his astonishment at what he had heard:

There was one more piece, and I feel quite helpless about it. Ralph Shapey’s “Movements 1959” was receiving its first performance anywhere. This almost unplayable piece was the most arousing, the most surprising item of the forum and it must be heard again. The general effect is that of hearing five brilliant musicians simultaneously warming up their instruments and concentrating on the least explored registers, the ones other composers do not use.  

In 1964, Barney Childs reviewed the score of *Movements* in *Music Educators Journal*. He juxtaposed Shapey and Stockhausen, calling *Movements* “savagely difficult. . . . With the Stockhausen [Zeitmasse Nr. 5], probably the hardest wind piece we have found, but musically well worth the time.”

Reprise I: *Five for Violin and Piano (1960)*

*Five* for Violin and Piano (1960) is linear in a way that *Evocation*, its immediate predecessor among Shapey’s works for violin, is not, due to the absence of percussion. Shapey used contrasts of texture, timbre, register and density to build a musical structure, lacking the opportunity to manipulate sound within physical space that would have been provided by the spatial arrangement of a larger ensemble.

*Five* has five movements, which presumably give the work its name: “Recitative,” “Capriccio,” “Canto,” “Scherzo” and “Dialogue.” The symmetrical arrangement of the

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70 *Five* for Violin and Piano is unpublished. Copies of *Five* are housed in the Shapey Papers, Box 28, the circulating collection of the University of Chicago Library, and the American Music Collection of the Performing Arts Research Collections, New York Public Library.
movements resembles Bartók’s formal schemes, with the slow third movement, “Canto,” flanked by two scherzos. Movement I, “Recitative,” recalls the opening measures of the Piano Trio (1953-55), with thick, weaving piano chords that accompany the violin’s leaping figures (see Exx. 4.35a and b). Shapey employs a rhythmically free discourse, in which the coupled violin and piano lines constitute a free-floating “image,” similar to the beginning of *Evocation*.

After Shapey presents the opening “image” of “Recitative,” he immediately restates it in altered form. The discourse quickly arrives at a point of complete stasis, a long-held diatonic cluster chord (not shown).

The centerpiece of the movement is a cadenza for violin, in which Shapey rearranges the opening music of both instruments. He employs transposition, and makes changes of register and order. In the cadenza’s concluding lines, Shapey presents a modified repetition of the violin music of page 1, systems 2-4 (see Ex. 4.36), that leads to the return of the thick, weaving piano chords originally presented at the beginning of “Recitative.” Shapey’s repetition of ideas from

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Maestoso $\frac{4}{4} = 42$ ($\frac{\text{crotchet}}{\text{quaver}} = 84$)

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71 This music can also be considered as the first half of the initial “image,” with the completed “image” resolving on the diatonic cluster chord in page 1, system 4.
the beginning of the movement in the cadenza recalls his use of a similar procedure in the concluding violin cadenza of *Evocation*.


At the end of “Recitative,” Shapey frames the movement by reintroducing the opening “image” (not shown). Despite his use of repetition, and his technique of circling back to ideas rather than proceeding in a logical progression, Shapey fashions a structure with many traditional features in “Recitative.” He contrasts solo and ensemble writing, employs motivic development, and creates a symmetrical form.

Like “Recitative,” “Capriccio,” the second movement of *Five*, displays a structure that combines both repetition and motivic development in a manner that permits the listener to perceive a logical progression of ideas. Both the violin and piano employ varied ostinati. Shapey’s use of ostinati recalls the piano’s ostinato in the second movement of *Evocation I*, composed in the previous year. Shapey’s technique in “Capriccio” is less straightforward, however. He inserts brief windows of stasis into the musical narrative, repeatedly interpolating an ascending, leaping two-chord gesture into the piano part (see Ex. 4.37).
Windows of stasis appear with increasing frequency in the piano part as the movement progresses, gradually affecting the violin’s discourse. Eventually, the violin abandons its own ostinato, and presents a sequence of short figures to accompany the piano’s repetitions of a descending, leaping two-chord gesture (see Ex. 4.38).
The movement ends with a dramatic series of modular repetitions by both violin and piano that employ the ostinato patterns of both instruments, as well as the piano’s ascending, leaping chordal gesture, which is reiterated seven times at the conclusion (see Ex. 4.39).
In the fourth movement scherzo, Shapey creates a mosaic-like design. The musical ideas are deprived of any developmental “dynamism,” rhythmic or thematic. The discourse proceeds by way of additive and subtractive processes. At the center of the movement are two presentations of contrary motion figures by the piano. They are first staggered rhythmically between the treble and bass of the piano by an eighth rest (m. 21), and then coordinated between the hands (mm. 24-5). The violin interjects its own statements of the piano’s descending figure as well (not shown).

The parallel between the symmetrical arch form of *Five* and Bartók’s formal strategies is reinforced by Shapey’s use of typically Bartókian articulations in the Scherzo. The violin frequently employs snap pizzicato, while the piano plays marcato chord patterns (see Ex. 4.40).


The two scherzos of *Five* are separated by the central movement, “Canto,” the shortest and least musically significant of the cycle. Slowly moving gestures related to the musical ideas of the first movement, “Recitativo,” are rotated around each other. The motive, Eb4–Db4–E4, provides a clear example of Shapey’s use of “Recitativo” as a source for the musical ideas of
“Canto.” Shapey presents the motive in the piano part of “Canto,” coupled with the violin’s pizzicato D5, and followed by the violin’s arco E7 (see Ex. 4.41a). This passage echoes the violin’s Eb4–Db4–E4 triplet figure at the beginning of movement I, and is also related to a series of permutations of the unordered pc set, {Db, D, Eb, E}, employed by Shapey in the first movement (see Ex. 4.41b).


The fifth movement finale is a “Dialogue” between the violin and the piano, in which ideas similar to those of the first movement are continuously reiterated. Shapey modifies these ideas by fragmenting and reordering their elements. The work ends symmetrically with the repetition of the opening page of the first movement. Shapey frames this repetition by sonorous diatonic cluster chords in the bass of the piano, which he had previously employed in both the first and last sections of movement I, and at the conclusion of movement II.

*Five* seems to have been bypassed by performers during Shapey’s lifetime. Violinist Miranda Cuckson and pianist Blair McMillen premiered this unknown work in 2007, recording it for the Centaur label, and playing it in concert as well. In his review of the Shapey “portrait” concert that Cuckson presented in 2009 at Miller Theatre, Columbia University, in New York, Anthony Tommasini perceived the humor in *Five*:

> Parts of the piece reveal Shapey’s plucky humor; imagine, in the Capriccio movement, that a Paganini showpiece, full of virtuosic arpeggios, has awakened confused and angry from some bad dream and erupts with sputtering violin riffs and fractured piano chords.

**Reprise II: Dimensions for Soprano and 23 Instruments (1960)**

*Dimensions* for Soprano and 23 Instruments (1960) was commissioned by the Paul Fromm Foundation. The work requires an ensemble of sixteen, including a soprano, six wind and brass players, a pianist, and eight percussionists. The soprano stands at the center of the back of the stage, grouped together with the piano, tenor saxophone and contrabass in a kind of core

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73 Miranda Cuckson played the concert premiere of *Five* with pianist Blair McMillen at the Greenwich House Music School in New York on 7 February 2008. Miranda Cuckson, email to Barry Wiener, 8 December 2012.


75 The score of *Dimensions* is available from the Theodore Presser Co. Rental Library.
“jazz combo.” The large array of percussion instruments, with their contrasting timbres, relates *Dimensions* to works of 1957-59 in which Shapey used percussion extensively.

Shapey provides an elaborate spatial diagram for the layout of the ensemble at the beginning of the score, similar to those that he prepared for other large ensemble and orchestral works during the late 1950s and early 1960s. The performers are divided into nine groups, positioned around the stage in a semicircle (see Fig. 4.3). Groups of percussionists are placed at the sides of the front of the stage, paired with the trumpet and French horn. The flute and oboe flank the “jazz combo,” together with the bass drums, at the back of the stage. Four additional groups of percussion instruments are divided between the left and right sides of the stage, placed in an intermediate position.
The name, “Dimensions,” embodies Shapey’s conception of the music, which explores multiple “dimensions” of physical space, pitch space, timbre, texture and perhaps even the “inner space” of the psyche. Shapey differentiates several planes of sound by timbral and spatial

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76 “[Philip Guston]’s questioning existentialist attitude . . . is described in his abstractions – physical symbols of his own relentless probing for the essence or definition of interior life. Not his own life only, but life itself.” Dore Ashton, The Unknown Shore: A View of Contemporary Art (Boston: Little, Brown, 1962), 65.
means (both in physical space and pitch space). For example, the percussion writing explores timbral contrasts between sustained sounds and those that are not sustained, resonant and non-resonant sounds, high and low sounds, and pitched and unpitched sounds, as well as contrasts between instruments dispersed around the stage. Shapey’s handling of timbre, texture and physical space in *Dimensions* is more important than specific musical ideas.

Although *Dimensions* is divided into three movements, the work actually comprises a single large form, ending with the “cadenza” for voice that comprises movement II, and a closing peroration for percussion that comprises movement III. The first movement is divided into seven episodes (see Table 4.2).

**Table 4.2 Ralph Shapey, *Dimensions for Soprano and 23 Instruments* (1960): Form.**
Parentheses are employed when a member of the ensemble plays a minor role.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movement: Episode</th>
<th>Measure Nos.</th>
<th>Instrumentation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I: 1</td>
<td>1-42</td>
<td>sop. cb., winds, brass, piano perc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I: 2</td>
<td>42-65</td>
<td>sop. cb., winds [fl. solo], brass, piano perc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I: 3</td>
<td>66-92</td>
<td>(sop.) cb., winds, brass, piano perc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I: 4</td>
<td>92-106</td>
<td>cb., sax., piano perc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I: 5</td>
<td>106-130</td>
<td>picc., ob., hn., tpt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I: 6</td>
<td>130-148</td>
<td>sop. fl., E.h.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I: 7</td>
<td>148-162</td>
<td>(sop.) (cb., sax., piano) perc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>sop. solo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>sop.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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In the first episode (mm. 1-42), all of the members of the ensemble participate in a discourse akin to that of free jazz. The musical narrative is centered around the soprano, trumpet and tenor saxophone. At the beginning of Dimensions, they introduce motives with which they are identified throughout the work. The tenor saxophone plays in a style that might be described as cool jazz, rather than free jazz (see Ex. 4.42).
Example 4.42 continued
In the second episode (mm. 42-66), the soprano sings without the other members of the “jazz combo,” varying and elaborating the trumpet’s original motive. The soprano is accompanied by a large number of percussion instruments, positioned around the stage (see Ex. 4.43).
The percussion instruments have only a limited role in the third episode (mm. 66-92).

Within a chamber music-like texture, the other members of the ensemble again play in a style comparable to free jazz. The episode concludes with a lengthy solo for flute, the longest solo episode in *Dimensions* apart from the brief movement II, written for soprano alone.
Shapey also employs chamber music-like textures in episodes five and six (mm. 106-48). In contrast, he combines the instrumentalists of group A (tenor saxophone, piano and contrabass) with percussion in the brief fourth episode (mm. 92-106), which serves as a formal landmark within movement I. After this short passage, the percussion instruments are silent (with the exception of their momentary punctuation of the end of episode five) until the final episode of the movement.

After m. 153 of the first movement, the winds, brass and piano drop out of the ensemble for the rest of Dimensions. The percussionists alternate with the soprano throughout the remainder of the work. The first movement ends with a dramatic passage for the percussion instruments (mm. 154-62). They play ostinati in a long decrescendo, beginning $fff$ and ending $ppp$, as the music fades into silence. After the soprano solo interlude of the second movement, the percussion instruments return in movement III to conclude Dimensions, with a brief postscript for soprano that recalls the end of movement II. Shapey shifts between percussion at the front and back of the stage, before employing all of the percussion instruments simultaneously in the final measures. The last two-fifths of the twenty-one minute work are thus devoted to the percussion instruments, interrupted only by the soprano solo interlude of movement II. This block-like conception of form contrasts dramatically with the structure of the first three-fifths of the work, in which all members of the ensemble participate, with contrasting passages for large ensemble, small chamber groups and percussion alone.

Although motives are associated with specific instruments in Dimensions, they are occasionally shared between instruments as well. Shapey creates timbral variation by reassigning motives from both pitched instruments and non-pitched percussion to the voice. He also reassigns motives from non-pitched percussion instruments to wind and brass instruments. For
example, the saxophone’s characteristic motive, repeated throughout the initial episode of
movement I, is transferred to the soprano in m. 39 (see Ex. 4.44). Similarly, in mm. 42-9, the
bass drums of groups B₁ and B₂ repeatedly present a motive that is transferred to the soprano in
m. 52 (see Exs. 4.45a and b).

Example 4.44  Saxophone motive, presented by the soprano, in Ralph Shapey, Dimensions
for Soprano and 23 Instruments (1960), I, mm. 37-9, soprano only (cf. Ex. 4.42, tenor

Example 4.45a  Bass drum motive, in Ralph Shapey, Dimensions for Soprano and 23
Instruments (1960), I, m. 49, group B₁, bass drums only. © 1977 Theodore Presser Co. Used
by permission.
In mm. 91-2, the flute line employs the rhythmic pattern of the motive associated with the tom-toms and bass drum (see Ex. 4.46). In *Evocation I*, Shapey had used the same technique, transferring a rhythmic pattern from the percussion to the violin (see Ex. 4.5).

**Example 4.45b** Bass drum motive, transferred to the soprano, in Ralph Shapey, *Dimensions* for Soprano and 23 Instruments (1960), I, m. 52, soprano only (cf. Ex. 4.45a). © 1977 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

Shapey does not treat his motives as fixed, unvarying figures, but modifies and develops his initial ideas as the music evolves. In m. 102, he presents a highly decorated variant of the saxophone motive that begins with the thirty-second-note triplet, Db4–Bb3–E4, part of the closing flourish in its initial statement (see Ex. 4.47).

**Example 4.46** Flute figure based on drum motive, in Ralph Shapey, *Dimensions* for Soprano and 23 Instruments (1960), I, mm. 91-2, flute only (cf. Ex. 4.42, m. 2, group E₁, tom-toms and bass drum). © 1977 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.
Shapey also fuses elements of different motives. In mm. 71-3, he presents a saxophone phrase that opens with an allusion to the beginning of the saxophone motive. It continues, however, with the soprano motive, in a version that concludes with the falling gesture, C5–G4 (see Ex. 4.48). The soprano had introduced this falling gesture moments before, in mm. 64-5.

Example 4.47  Variant of saxophone motive, in Ralph Shapey, *Dimensions* for Soprano and 23 Instruments (1960), I, mm. 102-3, tenor saxophone only (cf. Ex. 4.42, m. 5). © 1977 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

Example 4.48  Fusion of saxophone and soprano motives, in Ralph Shapey, *Dimensions* for Soprano and 23 Instruments (1960), I, mm. 70-3, tenor saxophone only (cf. Ex. 4.42). © 1977 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

Despite Shapey’s sophisticated and, in some ways, conventional use of motivic development, the structure of *Dimensions* is based primarily on the periodic recurrence of timbrally specific, highly recognizable motives, as well as on global contrasts of texture and timbre between clearly defined episodes. Shapey carefully juxtaposes instrumental combinations, alternating between solo, chamber and “large ensemble” textures, and rotating his sound sources around the stage. The structure of *Dimensions* represents a synthesis, in which Shapey combines
the timbral and textural contrast strategies of *Ontogeny* (1958) with the motivic variation that he employs in movement I of *Rituals* (1959).

On 13 May 1962, Shapey conducted the premieres of both *Dimensions* and Wolpe’s *Piece in Three Parts* for Piano and Sixteen Instruments (1961) at the New School in New York, in a concert presented by the League of Composers-ISCM. This concert was one of the most important events of Shapey’s early career. In *The Musical Quarterly*. Richard F. French commented,

Merely in terms of the physical energies needed to produce the noise, Shapey has written a work of enormous, primitive power whose superficial appeal is undeniable. Formally, too, the work is primitive, being a kind of frozen improvisation . . . phrases whose beginnings are clear and impulsive but whose terminations are unpredictable. The vocal line, which utilizes an “abstract” series of consonants and vowels, taxes to the full the singer's capacities for intonational and rhythmic precision, and the exertions demanded of the players are equally complex and strenuous. In the context of this program, however, the work's virtue – the comparative simplicity of its conception – began to sound like a fault, possibly because of a disproportion between the technique and the tasks it was asked to perform. It is risky, for example, to disregard the contribution that the movement of harmonies might make to the vitality of texture – or, to put it another way, absence of harmonic movement creates a kind of anti-movement that no amount of frenzy in other departments can overcome.

In his review, French showed little sympathy for Shapey’s fundamentally Varésian orientation, focused on musical space and timbre rather than harmony. In a later issue of *The

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*Musical Quarterly*, Donal J. Henahan described the same musical phenomena, but gave the work a much more enthusiastic reception:

*Dimensions* . . . is another of [Shapey’s] canny excursions into sophisticated primitivism. . . . Like most of Shapey's later music, *Dimensions* disposes its instruments in satellite ensembles, each with its own character and function, and builds on a mosaic principle, first spelling out brief germinal ideas, such as the rising triplet figure by the trumpet that opens the piece, then stirring these chunks together in a variety of colorful ways. Several other triplet-obsessed figures appear over and over in new guises but intact in shape and innocent of development, sequential or otherwise. Parallel lines often are being played at different tempos, so that the music develops a sense less of fluid linearity than of rigid stratification.\(^{81}\)

For the premiere of *Dimensions*, Shapey provided a program note that summarized the salient elements of his emerging compositional philosophy, presenting many ideas that he had discussed repeatedly during the previous years. Shapey employed a vocabulary that synthesized terminology derived from Varèse and from contemporary art. He handed out a similar sheet for all of his works of the period, including *Rituals* for Orchestra (1959) and *Incantations* for Soprano and Ten Instruments (1961):

*Dimensions* (1960)

. . . is one of a series of recent works dealing with my concepts of:

Music as an object in Time and Space.

Aggregate sounds structured into concrete sculptured forms.

Images existing as a totality from their inception, each a self-involved unit of individual proportions.

Related, inter-related and unrelated images organized into an organic whole.

Permutations occurring only within each self-contained unit.

Varied phases resulting from the juxtapositions of designs.

Imposed discipline by ritualistic reiteration.

The voice projected as an instrument, using syllables in organized sound-structures.\textsuperscript{82}

A few weeks after the concert, \textit{New York Times} chief music critic Harold C. Schonberg\textsuperscript{83} gently satirized Shapey’s statement of principles:

Up to now composers writing about their own work have generally avoided the fantastic prose encountered in art magazines and exhibition catalogues. But the rapprochement is at hand, and the commonwealth of art interlocks all the more sturdily.\textsuperscript{84}

Schonberg’s teasing indicated that Shapey had finally gained recognition as an important figure within the American music world.

\textbf{From Private Thoughts to Public Statements}

At the end of 1958, Shapey felt compelled to put his compositional philosophy into words, even if those words were meant only for his own use. During the years 1959 to 1965, he produced a series of statements about his compositional technique that were meant for public consumption. Among these documents are the brief declaration of his compositional principles discussed above, used in program notes for several pieces of the period, including \textit{Rituals}, \textit{Incantations} and \textit{Dimensions};\textsuperscript{85} the program note for \textit{Form} for Piano;\textsuperscript{86} the statement, “Some Basic Concepts About My Work,” used in Shapey’s CRI jacket notes for \textit{Evocation};\textsuperscript{87} the answers to questions about his compositional ideas posed by Stefan Wolpe in March 1960, later


\textsuperscript{85} It was later employed in Shapey’s jacket notes for the recording of \textit{Rituals} for Symphony Orchestra (1959), CRI SD 275 (1972).

\textsuperscript{86} Ralph Shapey, program note, \textit{Form} for Piano. Shapey Papers, Box 93.

\textsuperscript{87} Ralph Shapey, \textit{Evocation [No. 1]} for Violin, with Percussion and Piano, CRI 141 (1961); Shapey, “Some Basic Concepts About My Work,” 29 November 1960. Shapey Papers, Box 93.\end{footnotes}
published in *Sonus*; a lecture on rhythm, presented at Yale; and William Mathieu’s interview with Shapey about free jazz, part of which was published in *Down Beat’s Music ’66*. In these documents, Shapey discusses his ideas about pitch organization, rhythm, pitch space, physical space and form.

“‘A Composer is an Architect in Sound, Time and Space’ (Questions Submitted to Shapey by Wolpe, March-1960)” is a statement of Shapey’s compositional principles more detailed than anything that he had previously attempted. It illustrates Shapey’s subtle shift from a stress on the repetition of unchanging motives to a new conception of dynamic developmental processes, a change manifest in * Movements for Woodwind Quintet* (1959-60), completed two months earlier. Shapey’s use of strongly defined motives enabled him to produce innumerable variations of his ideas that were clearly related, generating both contrast and coherence in his music.

Wolpe’s provocative question, “Are you tired of pitch structures, loose or fixed ones?,” permitted Shapey to discuss his interest in the spatial manipulation of sound masses and his de-emphasis on the parameter of pitch:

> Up to now I have dealt with them through several means: forced them into unholy alliances, destroyed their individuality into a mass and proceeded to work on the basis of a group of pitches or non-pitches as a prior situation of masses; rotated them within themselves in order to “freeze” them into space.

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91 Ralph Shapey, “A Composer is an Architect in Sound, Time and Space.”
92 Shapey, “‘A Composer is an Architect in Sound, Time and Space,’” 2. Wolpe’s terminology, “loose or fixed ones,” refers to unordered and ordered pitch structures, respectively.
93 Ibid.
Shapey’s language evokes the use of sound masses in contemporaneous works such as Ligeti’s *Atmosphères* (1961) and Penderecki’s *Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima* (1960). A careful reading of Shapey’s responses to Wolpe’s questions indicates that he was deeply interested in traditional techniques of pitch manipulation, however:

By extending, contracting, verticalizing, inverting, redeploying, refocusing of the materials, the same state of being and its varied phases can move on diverse time and space differentials. Shapey explained this seeming contradiction by insisting that all musical ideas in each of his compositions are merely “permutations” of an “initial ‘image.’” Consequently, he denied that his music embodies traditional processes of “development.”

Shapey connected his ideas about motivic manipulation to his belief that sound, as a compositional parameter, cannot be isolated from the parameters of time and space:

“Sound to me is closely related to its time factor and spatial relationships as expressed in its organic design.” This concept was of such overriding importance to Shapey that he inserted it into the title that he chose for his dialogue with his teacher.

The tension within Shapey’s philosophy unerringly reflects his use of an unstable mixture of language and compositional concepts derived from Wolpe and Varèse. Shapey’s discussion of sound masses, space and time can be traced to the polemical verbal formulations of Varèse, while his description of the manipulation of motives employs language characteristic of Wolpe. The document as a whole faithfully reflects the trend of Shapey’s thought. In the following

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95 Ibid.
96 Ibid., 4.
97 Ibid., 1.
98 See Clarkson, “Ralph Shapey’s Apprenticeship.”
99 Shapey drew heavily on this text in the slightly later statement, “Some Basic Concepts About My Work.”
years, Shapey would attempt to create a synthesis of the ideas and compositional techniques of Wolpe and Varèse.
CHAPTER 5: COMPOSITIONAL SYNTHESIS, 1961-63

In the early 1960s, Shapey combined concepts derived from disparate sources into a coherent and masterly style. Shapey’s use of Wolpe’s compositional procedures provided the framework for his fusion of Varèse’s spatial and timbral ideas, the loose give-and-take of free jazz, Messiaen’s rhythmic techniques and melodic gestures, and Schoenberg’s harmonic structures. In the works of this period, Shapey created a subtle, flexible and powerful language, in which all of the elements of his compositional vocabulary, including his use of pitch, timbre, space (both physical space and pitch space) and form are mutually reinforcing. Shapey’s reintegration of traditional techniques of motivic development into his overall conception of “objects” or “images” that move in musical and physical space – already visible in Movements for Woodwind Quintet (1960) – provided the final element of his grand compositional synthesis (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1  Ralph Shapey: Chronology, 1961-63

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Incantations</em> for Soprano and Ten Instruments</td>
<td>4 Jan.–27 Feb. 1961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Discourse I</em> for Four Instruments</td>
<td>12 July–11 Aug. 1961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recording: <em>Evocation No. 1</em> (1959), CRI 141</td>
<td>1961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Convocation</em> for Chamber Group</td>
<td>26 Jan.–16 Feb. 1962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brandeis University Creative Arts Citation</td>
<td>18 Mar. 1962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recording: Milton Babbitt, Comp. for Twelve Instr., Shapey, cond., Son-Nova LP</td>
<td>1962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamber Symphony for Ten Solo Players</td>
<td>15 July–29 Sept. 1962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Birthday Piece for Stefan Wolpe</em> for Piano</td>
<td>7 Nov.–5 Dec. 1962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premiere: <em>Dichotomy</em>, choreographic work by Pearl Lang; music: Shapey, <em>Evocation No. 1</em></td>
<td>20 April 1963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Seven</em> for Piano Four Hands</td>
<td>10 June–7 July 1963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Brass Quintet</em></td>
<td>30 June 1962–22 July 1963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>String Quartet No. 6</em></td>
<td>26 July–21 Aug. 1963</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Shapey’s professional progress as a composer was matched by his growing career as a conductor of new music. In 1961, he became the conductor of the League of Composers-ISCM (known informally as the League-ISCM), a development hailed by Paul Henry Lang in his New York Herald Tribune review of a concert conducted by Shapey that included performances of Webern’s Concerto, Op. 24, Babbitt’s Composition for Twelve Instruments (1948; 1954) and Varèse’s Octandre:

The International Society for Contemporary Music (U. S. branch) is back in business. Led by an able and enthusiastic group of fine musicians, it should add zest to our musical life. . . .

The concert introduced a musician in the person of Ralph Shapey, the conductor, who impressed with a musicianship one does not often encounter. His knowledge of these difficult scores was as extraordinary as it was absolute; Mr. Shapey is a man to watch—who said that there are no American conductors who can rival their European colleagues?¹

Shapey’s performance of Milton Babbitt’s Composition for Twelve Instruments led to his recording of the work on a Son-Nova LP in 1962.² The LP was Shapey’s first recording as a conductor. It was only the second recording by a conductor of an ensemble piece by Babbitt.³

Shapey’s accomplishments as a composer and conductor led to other professional opportunities. In November–December 1962, he presented a series of lectures under the auspices of The Fine Arts Workshop, Inc., entitled, “Motivations of Twentieth Century Music.” According to his press release for the lectures, Shapey intended to “give the music lover an approach [to] and further understanding of contemporary music,” covering topics including “discussion of general aesthetics,” “historical viewpoint,” and “music from Wagner to the

³ The first commercial recording of a work by Milton Babbitt was a performance of All Set, conducted by Gunther Schuller, in Modern Jazz Concert: Brandeis Jazz Festival, Columbia WL 127 (1957), with jazz ensembles conducted by Schuller and George Russell.
4 In addition, dancer and choreographer Pearl Lang\(^5\) employed Shapey’s *Evocation No. 1* for Violin, with Percussion and Piano (1959), in her work, *Dichotomy*,\(^6\) premiered by the Pearl Lang Dance Theater at the Fashion Institute of New York on 20 April 1963.\(^7\) Lang seems to have used the new CRI recording of *Evocation I* (at the time the only recording of a work by Shapey) for her performances of *Dichotomy*, rather than live music.\(^8\) In *Dance Magazine*, Marcia Marks differentiated between the three sections of *Dichotomy*, “Exterior,” “Interior I” and “Interior II.” She commented, “[T]he jangle of a telephone bell seemed to echo now and then through Ralph Shapey’s clangorous ‘Exterior’ score, but a solo violin alternating with percussion created a new texture for ‘Interior.’”\(^9\) Music and dance critic Robert Sabin\(^10\) provided an enthusiastic evaluation of Shapey’s contribution to *Dichotomy* in *Dance Observer*, writing, “Ralph Shapey's music -- piano, percussion and violin -- mirrors the

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4 Press release for lecture series presented by Shapey, entitled, “Motivations of Twentieth Century Music.” Shapey Papers, Box 93.


6 Lang alternately entitled her choreographic work *Dichotomy* and *Broken Dialogues*. The program and reviews of the 1963 premiere labeled the work as *Dichotomy*. On the title, see Library of Congress Name Authority File, “Broken dialogues (Choreographic work: Lang),” accessed 30 July 2013, http://id.loc.gov/authorities/names/n97820739.html.


8 Thanks to Arlene Yu, Specialist, Archive of the Recorded Moving Image, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, for providing reviews by dance critics of the premiere of *Dichotomy*, permitting me to identify the recording of Shapey’s music employed by Pearl Lang.

9 Marcia Marks, “Pearl Lang; Fashion Institute [New York], April 20, 1963.” *Dance Magazine* 37, no. 6 (June, 1963): 64-5, especially 64.

10 As a young man, Sabin studied music at the Eastman School and the University of Leipzig. He also studied dance with Martha Graham. He was later chief editor of the magazine, *Musical America*, and an editor of *Dance Observer*. See “Robert Sabin, Critic and Music Editor, 57,” *The New York Times*, 20 May 1969: 47.
wild fantasy of the movement, not literally but in a subtler and more organic way. The flickering wisps of tone take on weird shapes, just as the dancers get into equally weird positions.”

“Objects Moving in Space” I: 
*Incantations for Soprano and Ten Instruments* (1961) and the Piece for Violin and Instruments (1962)

*Incantations* (1961), a four-movement work for soprano, cello, trumpet, alto saxophone, French horn, piano and two percussionists, can be perceived as a smaller and more intimate companion piece to *Dimensions for Soprano and 23 Instruments* (1960). It is dedicated to soprano Bethany Beardslee, one of the leading new music performers of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. On 22 April 1961, Beardslee premiered *Incantations* with Shapey conducting, at McMillin Theater, Columbia University, in New York.

The instrumentation of *Incantations*, like that of *Rituals for Orchestra* (1959) and *Dimensions*, is reminiscent of free jazz ensembles. In comparison to the earlier works, Shapey’s use of the timbres, rhapsodic rhythms and improvised polyphonic interplay of free jazz is more sophisticated, and more carefully integrated into his compositional vocabulary. The music is organized around the parameters of pitch space, physical space, timbre and texture. Shapey creates the perception of a vast musical space by his use of free, often rhapsodic rhythms, as well as by his use of the vivid timbres of percussion instruments, including cymbals and gongs. The soprano acts as a member of the instrumental ensemble, singing wordless vocables rather than a text. As in the earlier *Dimensions*, Shapey may have intended to evoke jazz by his use of

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12 The score of *Incantations* is available from the Theodore Presser Co. Rental Library.
13 Bethany Beardslee (b. 1925). Beardslee is particularly associated with the music of Schoenberg and Babbitt.
14 The “voice [is] projected as an instrument, using syllables in organized sound-structures.”
wordless vocables for the soprano. Shapey’s use of a wordless text in *Incantations* may also be a reaction to his lack of success when he employed Hamlet’s soliloquy in *Soliloquy* for Narrator, String Quartet and Percussion (1959).\(^{15}\)

In *Incantations*, the soprano is paired with the cello both onstage and in the musical discourse. The trumpet, alto saxophone, French horn and piano are positioned across the back of the stage. Percussion instruments are positioned on both sides of the stage: five timpani and cymbals to the right, tom-toms, irons and two gongs to the left. Like the core ensemble of *Dimensions*, the ensemble of *Incantations* can be perceived as an expanded jazz group, not only because of the composer’s choice of instruments, but because of the interaction of the voice, “horns” and percussion in the work within a rhythmically free and spatially (within physical space) wide context (see Fig. 5.1).

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\(^{15}\) “That Mr. Shapey intended a deep interpretation of the text is beyond doubt, but it didn’t work. The over-familiar words have been underscored enough for us without the pounding of a tympani to punctuate them at irregular intervals.” Eric Salzman, “Musical Query Raises Question: ‘To Be or Not to Be?’ Read With Strings, Percussion Backing at ‘Y’ Concert,” *The New York Times*, 19 November 1959: 43.
The formal shape of *Incantations* is unbalanced, with the first of the four movements comprising fully half the work. The opening movement is divided into three main sections, of which the second is the most elaborate and dramatic. The middle movements may be characterized as a brief intermezzo and scherzo. They are followed by the quiet, lyrical finale. The first movement is the only one in which Shapey employs the full ensemble. In the boisterous third movement, the voice is omitted, while the trumpet plays in a “quasi-improvisatory”
manner, accompanied by ostinati. Delicate percussion sounds accompany the humming of the soprano in the fourth, final, movement.

The spatial arrangement of the ensemble reflects the structure of *Incantations*. Musical activity radiates outward from the paired soprano and cello. Movement I exhibits a carefully planned arrangement of sound blocks. The movement can be divided into three loosely defined episodes, or “waves of activity,” each of which begins with a passage in which the soprano and cello take a leading role (see Table 5.2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure Nos.</th>
<th>Instrumentation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-23</td>
<td>Soprano and cello, with piano, saxophone, horn, trumpet and percussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-9</td>
<td>Piano, saxophone, trumpet and percussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-4</td>
<td>Soprano and cello</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>Piano solo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-60</td>
<td>Gradual expansion of ensemble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61-7</td>
<td>Dramatic climax: saxophone, horn, trumpet and percussion (see mm. 24-9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68-77</td>
<td>Soprano and cello</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78-93</td>
<td>Piano and percussion added to ensemble; cello silent after m. 82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94-9</td>
<td>Percussion alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-1</td>
<td>Soprano and piano</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Incantations* opens with a low-pitched gong tremolo that continues throughout the first nine measures. The gong tremolo serves as the backdrop for a dialogue between the soprano and cello, in which the soprano sings a highly melismatic motive, while the cello plays a motive that includes multiple-stop chords (see Ex. 5.1). This dialogue is interrupted in mm. 10-1 by an
ensemble consisting of the low gong, irons and piano (playing cluster chords in the low bass) as well as the trumpet, which introduces one of the central motives of *Incantations* (see Ex. 5.2). The combination of piano cluster chords with the timbres of the gong and irons produces a soundscape reminiscent of section II of the orchestral *Ontogeny* (1958), which had not yet been performed when Shapey composed *Incantations*. 

Sounds as written

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Rear} & \quad \text{Alto Sax} \\
\text{Piano} & \\
\text{Left} & \quad \text{Horn in F} \\
\text{Trom-toms H} & \quad \text{M} \quad \text{L} \\
\text{I Man} & \quad \text{Irons H} \quad \text{M} \quad \text{L} \\
& \quad \text{Gongs H} \quad \text{L} \\
\text{Right} & \quad \text{Trumpet in B} \\
\text{5 Timpani} & \\
\text{1 Man} & \quad \text{Cymbals H} \quad \text{L} \\
\text{Front} & \quad \text{Soprano} \quad \text{mp} \\
\text{Cello} & \quad \text{mp} \\
\end{align*}
\]

\(\swash = \text{upbeat} \quad \downline = \text{downbeat}\)
Example 5.1 continued

Slow gliss. of "c" str. peg

O→ = Let ring
**Example 5.2 continued**

To loosen "c" str. with enough tension to sound ————
In *Incantations*, Shapey creates large structures by repeating motives, often with subtle changes. He does not treat the motives as unchanging “objects.” Rather, they are continually modified throughout the work. For example, the original version of the cello motive has two parts. A leaping gesture is followed by an arching succession of single notes and chords (see Ex. 5.3a). Halfway through the first movement, Shapey presents a variant of the motive in which some details of the opening gesture are changed, while the second part retains only a general resemblance to its original form. This resemblance is based on the presence of tuplets and the prominence of the pcs, C, D, and A, in both variants of the motive (see Ex. 5.3b).\(^\text{16}\)

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**Example 5.3a**  First statement of cello motive, in Ralph Shapey, *Incantations* for Soprano and Ten Instruments (1961), I, m. 4, cello only. © 1977 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

**Example 5.3b**  Variant of cello motive, in Ralph Shapey, *Incantations* for Soprano and Ten Instruments (1961), I, mm. 56-7, cello only. © 1977 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

\(^{16}\) For a detailed discussion of Shapey’s use of modified repetition in *Incantations*, see chapter 7.
The stentorian motive introduced by the trumpet in m. 10 (see Ex. 5.2) functions as an identifiable “image,” undergoing less development than the soprano and cello motives over the course of *Incantations*. Like the opening gesture of the cello motive, the first half of the trumpet motive is sometimes presented independently. Shapey often rearranges the order of pcs within its descending triplet. He does not transpose the figure or change its rhythm. Shapey does not alter the pc content of the first half of the motive, except to make the kinds of small changes that can be subsumed under the rubric of near repetition. In contrast, Shapey never repeats the soprano motive in its original form, subjecting it to development throughout the first movement. The trumpet, horn and saxophone, along with the soprano soloist, present variants of the soprano motive. For example, in m. 27, the trumpet and timpani divide the trumpet motive. The timpani reorder the descending triplet that closes the first half of the trumpet motive, transforming the pc sequence, D–C–F#, into D–F#–C. The saxophone plays a series of improvisatory gestures based on the soprano motive. In addition, the piano states the three-chord motive, C4/C#4/Eb4–B3/D4/Eb4–C4/C#4/Eb4 (see Ex. 5.4).
In mm. 35-44, the piano develops the three-chord motive (see Ex. 5.5). This passage is the only piano solo in *Incantations*. Its unique timbre helps to delineate the form of movement I, and highlights the structural importance of the piano motive within the four-movement work.

After the piano solo, the soprano is paired successively with the trumpet and cello before Shapey reintroduces the percussion instruments, creating a dramatic climax that concludes the second episode. The saxophone, horn and trumpet play variants of the soprano motive (see Ex. 5.6). The saxophone’s extended “riff” on the soprano motive in this passage is reminiscent of its music in the climax at the end of the first episode.
Shapey reinforces the formal parallel at the conclusion of the second episode by an additional formal parallel in the following measures. The third episode begins, like the second, with music for soprano and cello (mm. 70-7). The movement ends with a passage for percussion alone (mm. 94-9), followed by the pairing of soprano and piano (mm. 100-1). The soprano states a variant of its motive, while the piano echoes the widely spaced figures and irregular rhythms of its extended solo (see Ex. 5.7).
In the second movement, the soprano, cello and piano serve as the core ensemble. The movement has an ABA form. Shapey begins by repeating the piano solo passage of movement I, verbatim (see Ex. 5.5), but now accompanied by the soprano and cello. The cello combines the upward leap of the opening gesture of its motive with the arching lines of the soprano motive (see Ex. 5.8).

Example 5.8  Melding of the opening gesture of the cello motive with the soprano motive, in Ralph Shapey, *Incantations* for Soprano and Ten Instruments (1961), II, m. 2, cello only (cf. Exx. 5.1 and 5.3a). © 1977 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

In the central episode, Shapey presents a static construction. The piano music of the opening measures of movement II is reduced to its essence, the three-chord piano motive.
Shapey employs the motive as an ostinato, presented (to recall the title of the work) in an "incantatory" manner. It is accompanied by cymbals, gong and saxophone, which also play ostinati (see Ex. 5.9).


The soprano and cello are silent during the third movement. Perhaps evoking a jam session, Shapey produces a raucous polyphony of ostinati for the horns, piano and percussion, while the trumpet plays an evolving melodic line. The piano ostinato is based on the initial presentation of the three-chord motive in movement I. The saxophone employs an abbreviated version of its first movement "riff" on the soprano motive (see Ex. 5.10).

_A. Sx._

Pno.

Hn.

T.-t.

Irons

Gongs

Quasi improvisatory (in a talking manner)

_Tpt._

_Timp._

_Cym._

\( f \) intensity but less sound – do not cover tpt.
Example 5.10 continued
In contrast to the cacophony of the third movement, the fourth and final movement of *Incantations* is both dynamically and timbrally restrained, with the soprano often humming rather than singing. Quiet touches of cymbals, gongs and tom-toms evoke a spatially wide soundscape. Shapey uses the gongs in movement I to create a “sustaining pedal” that underpins the ensemble. In the final movement, he uses both cymbals and gongs to give the music a floating quality (see Ex. 5.11). The beginning and end of *Incantations* are linked by Shapey’s use of quiet percussion sounds as a background for the soprano soloist.


The resonant, shimmering sounds of the gongs and cymbals define some of the climactic moments of *Incantations*. Shapey’s vivid timbres do not, however, define the musical discourse
of the work as a whole. In *Incantations*, Shapey achieves a balance between the elements of texture, timbre, rhythm and register, together with the logical unfolding of ideas.

The premiere of *Incantations* earned Shapey some of the most enthusiastic reviews of his entire career. In *The New York Times*, Allen Hughes responded to the work in an overtly emotional manner:

One of the most searing, terrifying and altogether extraordinary compositions this listener has ever heard was played in the Donnell Library Auditorium on Saturday night in the final concert of the Composers Forum 1960-61 series. . . .

What Mr. Shapey has produced is a composition of abstract expressionism that seems to lay bare the most secret and elemental doubts, yearnings, torments and despairs of the human soul trapped in the chaos of the urban jungle. . . .

The shattering blare of street and machine, the crazy din of the cabaret, the frenzied rush that won’t slow down—all are there. And against all, a lone human voice cries out—wondering, questioning, imploring. . . .

These “Incantations,” so overwhelming in their impact, rise above all questions of style and technique. They may, or may not, be serial compositions; nothing could matter less.\(^{17}\)

The sounds of *Incantations* are in some ways reminiscent of Luciano Berio’s *Circles* (1960).\(^ {18}\) Shapey’s former student, Joan Franks Williams, apparently perceived a stylistic kinship between the two composers. In a letter to Shapey of 30 November 1963, she wrote:

The main reason I want to write to you, at this time, is because of something Berio said about you. . . . He has a tape of your “Incantations.” . . . He said that you are the most original American composer that he has heard. He wants to meet you & I gave him your address. He asked all about you & your ideas, & I did the best I could to tell him. It was not the most intricate description. He asked me to send him scores of yours. . . .

. . . At the moment I feel kind of good about the fact that, at least, I will bring you two together, as I feel that, in many ways, you travel the same route. . . .

P.S. One of the other things Berio said about you was that your music was truly “American,” not only just original!!!\(^ {19}\)


\(^ {18}\) For female voice, harp and two percussionists.

\(^ {19}\) Joan Franks Williams, letter to Shapey, 30 November 1963. Shapey Papers, Box 5, Folder W. Joan Franks Williams (1930-2003) was an American composer who studied privately with Shapey and Berio before moving to Israel, where she lived for almost twenty years before returning to the United States. She helped to arrange for Shapey’s visits to Israel in the 1970s.
“Objects Moving in Space” II: Piece for Violin and Instruments (1962)

The Piece for Violin and Instruments\textsuperscript{20} is a three-movement work for large chamber ensemble, with the soloist accompanied by cello, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, trumpet, French horn, trombone and percussion. It was composed for violinist Max Pollikoff. Pollikoff gave the premiere, with Shapey conducting, at the 92\textsuperscript{nd} St. Y in New York on 9 May 1962. The concert was part of the contemporary music series, “Music of Our Time,” presented by Pollikoff at the 92\textsuperscript{nd} St. Y.

Not surprisingly, Shapey’s structural methods in the Piece for Violin and Instruments strongly resemble those that he employs in \textit{Incantations}. In addition to pitch class, Shapey uses the parameters of pitch space, physical space, timbre, texture and resonance as building blocks. His use of contrasting timbres produces multiple timbral planes within physical space. The listener’s differentiation of these timbral planes is reinforced by the spatial separation of the different timbral groups in the seating plan. Shapey places the winds to the left and the brass to the right of the conductor. The cellist faces the conductor, centered behind the winds and brass, while the percussion instruments are arranged at the back of the stage. The violin soloist, as is customary, stands in front of the conductor, to the left (see Fig. 5.2).

\textsuperscript{20} The score of the Piece for Violin and Instruments is available from the Theodore Presser Rental Library.
Shapey employs four motives, for violin, trumpet, xylophone and percussion (including xylophone), in the Piece for Violin and Instruments. The violin motive is composed of a rapid, ascending flourish and a series of heavy bow strokes, including a dotted figure. The trumpet motive begins with a triplet, and continues with a series of proclamatory gestures, idiomatic to the instrument. The xylophone motive consists of two widely spaced gestures: a descending, leaping quintuplet figure and a triplet, followed by a dyad. By way of contrast, the xylophone acts as a non-pitched percussion instrument within the percussion motive, repeating a single note to conclude the flurry of brief figures that comprises the motive.

The Piece for Violin and Instruments begins with Shapey’s introduction of the four motives. Rather than interacting contrapuntally, they act as “graven images” or “objects moving in space,” creating the kind of “musical mobile” that Shapey conceptualized when he described his music (see Ex. 5.12).
The xylophone and trumpet motives are composed of pc sets that intersect with the pc content of the violin’s initial ascending figure. The xylophone motive includes four pcs (C, F, A and B) not present in the violin figure. Both the xylophone motive and the violin figure include the five pcs, Db, D, F#, G#(Ab) and Bb. C#(Db) and G# are included in the trumpet motive as well. This prioritizing of certain pcs generates a kind of pitch centricity that is sustained throughout the Piece for Violin and Instruments, given Shapey’s limited use of transposition. It also facilitates Shapey’s creation of interrelationships between the motives as the piece unfolds.

Shapey continuously modifies the motives by transposition, rearrangement of pitch order, change of register and alteration of pc content. The motives are frequently restated by instruments other than those to which they were originally assigned. For example, in m. 7, the cello presents the xylophone motive, changing its pitch order, pc content and shape (see Ex. 5.13).

**Example 5.13** Xylophone motive, in Ralph Shapey, Piece for Violin and Instruments (1962), I, m. 7, cello only (cf. Ex. 5.12, m. 1, xylophone). © 1962 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

The full ensemble enters in m. 11. The violin and percussion repeat their motives, while the trombone and horn play glissandi. The clarinet plays widely spaced figures derived from the xylophone motive, and the trumpet plays a figure that combines the pc content of its own motive with the shape of the xylophone motive (see Ex. 5.14). In the following measures, the trumpet takes over the violin motive, as Shapey juxtaposes the timbres of the wind and brass instruments,
creating an antiphonal exchange of ideas that reflects the spatial arrangement of the ensemble (see Ex. 5.15).
At the end of the movement, Shapey presents a slightly modified version of the opening trumpet-violin dialogue (not shown), followed by a violin cadenza in which he develops all four motives in alternation. Although he preserves their rhythmic identities, he frequently alters pc content as well as register, and often reorders or repeats motivic gestures. For example, he presents variants of the trumpet and percussion motives in the second line of the cadenza (see Ex. 5.16).
In the slow second movement, the violin develops the trumpet motive, modifying and rearranging its components (see Exx. 5.17a and b). Shapey also introduces a new timbral element by using mutes for the winds and brass until the last few measures of the movement (see Ex. 5.17b). During the second half of the movement, the violin stops playing, while other members of the ensemble present fragments of the trumpet motive in a contrapuntal interchange (see Ex. 5.18).

Example 5.17a  Trumpet motive, in Ralph Shapey, Piece for Violin and Instruments (1962), I, mm. 1-3, trumpet only. © 1962 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

Example 5.18  Contrapuntal interchange employing the trumpet motive, in Ralph Shapey, Piece for Violin and Instruments (1962), II, mm. 19-20. © 1962 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.
In the final measures, Shapey frames the movement by presenting the opening measures of the violin part in slightly altered form. The violin is accompanied by non-pitched percussion instruments that play a simplified version of the percussion motive (not shown). The percussion motive acts as a “boundary figure,” signaling the end of movement II. It is also stated at the end of the opening section of movement III, which is repeated to conclude the Piece for Violin and Instruments.

In movement III, the violin plays variants of the xylophone and percussion motives. The winds play figures derived from a fusion of the trumpet and xylophone motives. Shapey simultaneously employs the trichord, \{F, F#, B\}, derived from the opening gesture of the xylophone motive, in both vertical and horizontal configurations. In mm. 1-4, the violin presents the xylophone motive, twice stating the leaping figure that includes the \{F, F#, B\} trichord. The clarinet also presents the trichord horizontally, divided between consecutive gestures. The brass instruments play a chord comprising the trichord, \(F^#/B_4/F_5\) (see Ex. 5.19).
Example 5.19  Vertical and horizontal presentation of the trichord, \{F, F\#, B\}, in Ralph Shapey, Piece for Violin and Instruments (1962), III, mm. 1-4 (cf. Ex. 5.12, m. 1, xylophone). Instances of the set are circled. © 1962 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

When Max Pollikoff and Shapey premiered the Piece for Violin and Instruments, *New York Times* reviewer Alan Rich wrote,
Among the brand new pieces, two works for chamber ensemble merit special attention. . .

The Ralph Shapey “Piece” is for violin, with winds, brass and percussion. It is somewhat farther-out in harmonic style than Billy Jim Layton’s Septet, which was also on the program, but consistently attractive and lively. It also has a moving and atmospheric slow section full of fascinating quiet sounds.21

In the New York Herald Tribune, Martin Bernheimer was less enthusiastic about Shapey’s music:

Ralph Shapey’s intricate Piece for Violin and Instruments employed Mr. Pollikoff as soloist, but managed to bury his playing in a bizarre, playfully explosive tonal fabric much of the time. A lengthy violin solo in the middle section provided relief, but it also disrupted the stylistic unity somewhat.22

The attention that the Piece for Violin and Instruments received from the critics was only one manifestation of a growing appreciation of Shapey’s accomplishments within the musical world. On 18 March 1962, Shapey received a Brandeis University Creative Arts Citation.23 On 27 April 1962, his String Quartet No. 5 was programmed on a League-ISCM concert, presented at the New School in New York. It was treated with the attention reserved for the work of eminent composers (see Fig. 5.3). In The New York Times, Raymond Ericson wrote,

Mr. Shapey’s String Quartet No. V seemed almost violently expressive and self-assertive (“I am,” the soprano kept reiterating at the end of the piece). But the composer’s feelings ring true. They are stated powerfully by the strings weaving around held tones, and by the evocative vocal line, and it is impossible not to be stirred by the work.24

Similarly, Paul Henry Lang wrote in the New York Herald Tribune,

Ralph Shapey’s Fifth String Quartet instantly changed the climate. The piece has structure and purpose, real chamber music sound and texture. It was fascinating to watch an ostinato consisting of a single tone, always played *messa di voce*, meander through all parts until it ends in a rousing unison. In the second part or movement a singing voice joined the quartet, and to my surprise the vocal part was not speech-song but honest-to-goodness singing superbly executed by Valerie Lamoree. This is a fine piece, though I could not quite grasp the second half.  

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Recapitulations: Chamber Symphony for Ten Solo Players (1962) and Birthday Piece for Stefan Wolpe (1962)

During the second half of 1962, Shapey went through a period of technical consolidation and systematization. He wrote two works, the Chamber Symphony for Ten Solo Players and Birthday Piece for Stefan Wolpe, in which he drew on the repertoire of compositional techniques that constituted the basis of his “new style.” Despite their somewhat formulaic character, both works embody Shapey’s powerful expressiveness and creative originality.

Shapey wrote the Chamber Symphony for Ten Solo Players\(^27\) for a new ensemble, the Group for Contemporary Music, founded at Columbia University by flutist/composer Harvey Sollberger, cellist Joel Krosnick and pianist/composer Charles Wuorinen.\(^28\) He dedicated the piece to his baby son, Max Shapey. The instrumentation of the Chamber Symphony is that of a small chamber orchestra, reflecting the work’s title: flute, oboe, English horn, trumpet, French horn, piano, percussion, violin, cello and contrabass.

In a letter to Paul Turok, Shapey provided a brief analytical description of the work. Despite his concern with musical space and timbre, Shapey employed nineteenth-century concepts of sonata theory and motivic development when he discussed his own music:

The work is in three movements. The basic material for all three movements is exposed in the first three measures of the piece, namely, the cello–violin opening, the counterpoint between flute and oboe in measure two, and a third figure between violin, English horn, and cello. These five diverse “graven image” figures constitute the prime materials throughout the entire work.

The first movement is, in a sense, the exposition of a sonata form. However, within this exposition are slow but florid developmental ideas of each individual basic idea.

\(^27\) The score of the Chamber Symphony for Ten Solo Players is available from the Theodore Presser Rental Library.
The second movement is conceived in a cadenza form. Each instrument takes one of the original ideas and exposes it in a cadenza-like manner.

The third movement is a very slow pastoral movement based completely on the first measure of the piece, which acts as a kind of coda to the entire work.

As described in the title, 10 Solo Players, the Chamber Symphony is constructed with the idea that although there are ten performers in an ensemble group, they are all soloists. In each case each instrument is explored in its fullest potential by the performer. The knitting together is through the use of the musical material as exploited through the individual instrumental development. The work exploits my concern with the immobility of the “graven image.”

While the syntax of the Chamber Symphony relies on the reiteration and elaboration of motives, Shapey’s formal strategy is based on the seating plan for the ensemble, a technique reminiscent of Dimensions and Incantations. As in many other works of the period, Shapey positions a “jazz group” at the back of the stage, and a combination of winds and strings, labeled here as the “front group,” in a semicircle around the conductor at the front of the stage. The “jazz group” is centered around the percussionist. The piano is paired with the French horn on the left, and the contrabass is paired with the trumpet on the right (see Fig. 5.4).

Ralph Shapey, letter to Paul Turok, 9 November 1966. Shapey Papers, Box 5.
Shapey delineates the structure of the first movement by the spatialized arrangement of musical ideas, alternating between the “front group” positioned at the front of the stage, and the “jazz group” in the back (see Table 5.3).
Shapey also employs motivic repetition and development to unify the movement. Some motives are repeated with little or no alteration, while others are subjected to extensive development, although they always retain recognizable features. The motives are not associated with particular instruments, contrary to Shapey’s practice in other works. The work opens with simultaneous rising and falling intervals, paired gestures that are repeated throughout movements I and III in many variations. They function as a “boundary figure” at the end of episodes, demarcating formal divisions within the Chamber Symphony.\(^\text{30}\)

In mm. 2 and 3, Shapey introduces three motives. The oboe plays an ascending pattern, which is answered by the violin’s descending quintuplet. In tandem with the oboe motive, the flute plays a figure consisting of linked triplets, followed by a rising dyad (see Ex. 5.20). The oboe and flute motives are related through the use of a common hexachord, \(\{\text{C}, \text{D}, \text{E}, \text{F}, \text{F}, \text{G}\}\),

\(^{30}\)On Shapey’s use of cadential “boundary figures,” see chapter 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Sonata Form”</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Instrumentation</th>
<th>Measure Nos.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exposition</td>
<td>Episode 1</td>
<td>“Front group”</td>
<td>1-6</td>
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<td>“Jazz group”</td>
<td>7-10</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Boundary figure</td>
<td>Full ensemble w/o perc.</td>
<td>11-3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Episode 2</td>
<td>“Jazz group”</td>
<td>14-21</td>
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<td>“Front group”</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Front group”</td>
<td>22-30</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Jazz group”</td>
<td>31-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boundary figure</td>
<td>“Jazz group”</td>
<td>34-6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>Episode 3</td>
<td>Full ensemble</td>
<td>37-50</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boundary figure</td>
<td>Full ensemble w/o perc.</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recapitulation</td>
<td>Episode 4</td>
<td>“Front group”</td>
<td>52-60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boundary figure</td>
<td>Full ensemble w/o perc.</td>
<td>61-64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
which furnishes the pc content of the flute motive, and all but the first and last pcs of the oboe motive (henceforth described as the “leaping motive”).
While the violin motive functions as an unchanging refrain throughout the Chamber Symphony, Shapey uses the rhythmic template of the “leaping motive” as the source for musical ideas presented by the piano and percussion when they function as members of the “jazz group,” which makes its first appearance in m. 7 (see Ex. 5.21).

**Example 5.21** Entrance of the “jazz group,” in Ralph Shapey, Chamber Symphony for Ten Solo Players (1962), I, m. 7. Variants of the “leaping motive” are circled (cf. Ex. 5.20). © 1962 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.
In mm. 11-3, the ensemble presents consecutive statements of the “boundary figure,” rounding off the initial episode (see Ex. 5.22).

In the second episode, Shapey alternates between the “jazz group” and the “front group.” The episode concludes with a cadential passage that includes repeated statements of the “boundary figure” (not shown). The entire ensemble plays together at length for the first time in the third episode, in which the “leaping motive” is subjected to extensive development by the oboe, violin, piano and percussion (see Ex. 5.23).
Example 5.23  Development of the “leaping motive,” in Ralph Shapey, Chamber Symphony for Ten Solo Players (1962), I, mm. 43-4 (cf. Ex. 5.20, oboe, m. 2). Variants of the motive are circled. © 1962 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.
Example 5.23 continued
The brief final episode is primarily devoted to the presentation of the “front group.” It concludes with consecutive statements of the “boundary figure,” in a passage that reproduces mm. 11-3 with minor changes. This structurally significant repetition provides the movement with formal symmetry.

The first movement of the Chamber Symphony can be analyzed as a three-section form. It is possible to divide the movement into an “exposition” (the first and second episodes), “development” (the third episode) and “recapitulation” (the fourth episode). Episode 2 (mm. 14-36) can also be considered a section separate from episode 1, elaborating on its ideas (see Table 5.3). This perspective highlights the musical parallels between episodes 1 and 4.

In his discussion of the Chamber Symphony, Shapey stressed the importance of cadenza-like passages in the second movement, but neglected to mention the movement’s symmetrical form. The movement opens with solos for both percussion and violin, in which Shapey develops the “leaping motive” (see Ex. 5.24). At the end of the movement, Shapey truncates the two solos and reverses their order. Shapey likewise presents an abbreviated version of mm. 5-8 in mm. 20-2.
In the central episode of the movement, Shapey employs a trio consisting of the piano, horn and contrabass, all members of the “jazz group.” The piano varies a four-chord progression,
a simplified version of the piano motive first stated when Shapey introduces the “jazz group” in movement I. Shapey reorders the chord progression, and uses additive and subtractive rhythmic processes. He also combines the two procedures, interpolating the first chord of the progression before the final chord in order to generate an additive process (see Ex. 5.25). While the piano modifies the four-chord progression, the contrabass presents a motive that Shapey alters in a similar way, interpolating an additional pitch before its final note.


The final movement is divided into two halves. As Shapey noted, the movement is based on the “boundary figure” motive. In the first half of the movement, Shapey develops the motive, employing the “front group.” He simplifies his ideas in the second half of the movement, employing the entire ensemble, except for the percussion instruments (not shown).
Taken on its own merits, the Chamber Symphony is a compelling, successful work. It exhibits Shapey at his most formulaic in the application of his compositional procedures, however: the use of brief motives (“images”), some of which are repeated without alteration, while others are subjected to development; the division of the ensemble into small groups placed around the stage; and the alternating presentation of musical ideas by performers positioned at the front and back of the stage.

Shapey conducted the premiere of the Chamber Symphony at the inaugural concert of the Group for Contemporary Music on 22 October 1962. Shapey considered the performance to be a fiasco. Later performances of the Chamber Symphony proved to be far more successful. When Arthur Weisberg conducted the work at the Coolidge Auditorium of the Library of Congress on 25 November 1966, the critic of the Washington Evening Star was deeply impressed by Shapey’s music:

A very severe, three-movement work, it is entirely in dissonant counterpoint, much of it in a state of chaos, with extremely concentrated thematic ideas made up of minute motives. Shapey does not use many trick effects here, such as flutter-tonguing, glissandos, etc., that one has come to expect of the avant-garde. His emphasis is rather on wide spacing of chords and dark instrumental colors.

In November 1962, Shapey composed a short work for piano solo at the request of Stefan Wolpe. Pianist Howard Lebow premiered Birthday Piece for Stefan Wolpe (1962) at a celebratory concert in honor of Wolpe’s sixtieth birthday, presented at Carnegie Recital Hall on

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33 Theodore Presser Co. publishes Birthday Piece for Stefan Wolpe: #110-40699.
18 December 1962. The concert also included works by several other friends and former students of Wolpe, including Milton Babbitt, Earle Brown, Morton Feldman, Gunther Schuller, Nettie Simons, Harvey Sollberger, Edgard Varèse, Beatrice Witkin and Charles Wuorinen. Shapey conducted a new cantata by Wolpe, written especially for the event: *Street Music: A Counter Offering to the Musical Offerings of Ten Composers on my 60th Birthday* for baritone, narrator, flute, oboe, clarinet, cello and piano. The concert did not receive a review, due to the New York newspaper strike that had begun on 8 December 1962.

Both the musical ideas and the structure of *Birthday Piece* recall Shapey’s *Mutations I* for Piano (1956). *Birthday Piece* opens with a musical “image” that includes three gestures, the first two descending and the last ascending. These gestures incorporate three separate musical ideas (henceforth labeled as “elements” of the “image”), the first two of which are interleaved in their initial presentation. The three elements of the “image” combine to present the aggregate. Element “A” comprises the chromatic segment, B–Eb, element “B,” the chromatic segment, F#–Bb, and element “C,” the dyad, E–F (see Ex. 5.26). Shapey’s division of the aggregate into chromatic segments reflects Wolpe’s practice.

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The six main sections of *Birthday Piece* are framed by five presentations of the initial “image”: a prologue (not so labeled), brief interludes at the end of sections 1, 3 and 5, and an epilogue. In the first section, “of varied motions,” Shapey develops the “image” by conventional methods of motivic development: augmentation, diminution, inversion, transposition, verticalization (turning linear patterns into chords) and horizontalization (turning chords into linear patterns). For example, the first three pcs of element “B” of the “image,” A–G#–Bb, are presented vertically as the simultaneity (a quarter-note trichord together with a sixteenth note), Bb1/Bb3/A4/G#5, near the beginning of line 2. At the end of line 2, Shapey presents element “B” in its original configuration, but with augmented note values. At the same time, he presents a chord in the treble that comprises three pcs of element “B”: F#, G, and G#. In line 3, Shapey juxtaposes verticalized and inverted forms of element “B.” The rapid ascending figure, Bb3–G#4–A4–E5–G5–F#5–F7, includes the pc content of element “C” (the dyad, {E, F}) as well (see Ex. 5.27).
Birthday Piece alternates between vigorous activity and stasis. In section 2, “with repose,” Shapey frequently uses the sustaining pedal, creating clouds of sound. The impressionistic textures recall the second movement of Three Essays on Thomas Wolfe (see Ex. 5.28). Shapey develops the ideas of section 2 in section 4, “as a song.” The whispered dynamics, widely spaced textures and glacial tempo of section 4 make it the still center of the entire work.

\( \frac{1}{2} = 58 \) with repose

The dry staccato textures, rapid alternation between registers, and simultaneous use of extreme registers in section 3, “with brilliance,” create a dramatic contrast to the slow, sustained music of the preceding and following sections. Shapey uses repetition to exploit the novelty of the timbres and textures. At the same time, he propels the musical argument by reshuffling a two-chord progression that shares the two pcs, D#(Eb) and E: Eb5/E6/C#7/D7, F5/F#5/G5/D#6/E6 (see Ex. 5.29). Shapey interrupts the narrative to insert a brief reminiscence of section 1, “of varied motions,” before concluding section 3 (not shown).
In the fifth section, “with great gesture,” Shapey reorders the ideas of section 1 (see Ex. 5.30) and subjects them to development by permuting their pc content (not shown). He alternates between lengthy trills and ppp octave progressions in the final section, “vibrant movement and stillness.”

Howard Lebow performed *Birthday Piece* during the “22\(^{nd}\) American Music Festival” at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D. C., on 2 May 1965. In the *Washington Evening Star*, John Vinton commented perceptively, “By tying the piece end to end with the frequent reiteration of a single rhythmic pattern, [Shapey] was able to employ a wide variety of melodic sizes and shapes, dynamic levels, and textural densities, all without losing a sense of direction and cohesion.”\(^{38}\)

The Lecture Notes on Rhythm

As a student of Stefan Wolpe and an advocate of his music, Shapey had learned to create rhythms of great complexity. It is therefore not surprising that Shapey took an interest in Olivier Messiaen’s rhythmic techniques, as presented in the influential book, *The Technique of My Musical Language*. In lecture notes compiled during the early 1960s, Shapey discussed Messiaen’s rhythmic concepts and related them to his own practice.

There are two sets of related, undated notes in the Shapey Papers for lectures on rhythm, both probably written around 1963 and entitled, “Structural Functions of Rhythm.” The first set, a group of handwritten sheets, is described in the Finder’s Aid for the Shapey Papers as “Lecture on Rhythm Given at Yale University.” It includes several pages of scribbled musical examples. The other set of notes is a typescript, described in the Finder’s Aid as “Lecture Notes on Rhythm and Aesthetics, n.d.” The typescript is accompanied by musical examples that are neatly copied in ink, unlike the examples included in the handwritten notes. The neatly copied musical examples may have been prepared for use as a handout. The typescript includes a series of definitions, an outline of rhythmic concepts and a list of recordings. The list of recordings included in both sets of notes provides a tentative date for their genesis, due to Shapey’s use of the CRI LP of George Rochberg’s String Quartet No. 2 (1961), issued in 1963.

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annotated the typed list of recordings in ink, writing, “Philadelphia St. Qt. CRI 164,” next to the name of Rochberg’s piece.\(^{42}\)

The typed notes present a general survey of rhythmic practice. Shapey includes “basic definitions” for fourteen terms, including meter, pulse, accent, stress, pitch, duration, time and rhythm. In his enumeration of “basic techniques,” Shapey focuses on contemporary procedures, such as the use of variable meters, additive and subtractive processes, and rhythmic serialization. As an example of variable meters, Shapey cites mm. 60-3 of the second movement of Hans Werner Henze’s String Quartet No. 2 (1952). He also names German composers Boris Blacher\(^{43}\) and Karl Amadeus Hartmann\(^{44}\) in connection with his discussion of variable meters, without mentioning any examples from their works. For his discussion of the serialization of rhythm, Shapey relies on György Ligeti’s analysis of Pierre Boulez’s Structures 1a in Die Reihe 4.\(^{45}\)

Shapey outlines several of Messiaen’s most fundamental rhythmic concepts in the typed notes. He describes additive and subtractive rhythms as “multiplicity (additive) change through addition of note, rest, dot” and “contractions, elimination of note, rest, dot; twice as fast etc.” In the accompanying sheets of musical examples, Shapey provides short, pitchless illustrations of additive and subtractive rhythms that are keyed to the text. To illustrate the term, “retrograde,” Shapey presents a non-retrogradable rhythmic pattern, pointing out the “pivot point” at its center. He contrasts it with a rhythmic retrograde (see Ex. 5.31).

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\(^{42}\) Ralph Shapey, “Lecture Notes on Rhythm and Aesthetics.” Shapey Papers, Box 143.

\(^{43}\) Boris Blacher (1903-1975).

\(^{44}\) When Shapey visited Germany in 1953-54, he engaged in a lengthy discussion with Hartmann about the latter’s use of variable meters. See chapter 2, note 86.

Although Shapey gives a detailed exposition of Messiaen’s rhythmic ideas in his lecture notes, he does not cite any works by Messiaen, nor are there any works by the French composer in his list of recordings. Instead, Shapey uses examples taken from Webern’s Concerto, op. 24 (1934) and Cantata No. 1, op. 29 (1938-39), Varèse’s *Ionisation* (1929-31), and his own *Discourse I* (1961) and *Evocation No. 1* (1959). The only contemporary works included in the sheets of music examples are Shapey’s *Discourse I* and *Evocation No. 1*. Messiaen’s book is listed in Shapey’s bibliography, along with several other recent books and journal articles.

Shapey discusses Messiaen’s rhythmic techniques in greater detail in the handwritten notes. As in the typescript, Shapey focuses on additive and subtractive rhythms, retrogrades and non-retrogradable rhythms. His detailed discussion of these rhythmic procedures confirms the

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46 *Discourse I* has never been recorded commercially, so Shapey necessarily employed a concert recording of the piece in his lecture.

hypothesis that their presence in his own music stems from his interest in the music of Messiaen, a surmise suggested by his occasionally explicit stylistic imitation of the French composer beginning in the late 1950s.

The handwritten notes are divided into two parts. One is a discussion of rhythmic techniques phrased in terms of Shapey’s own rhythmic practice. For example, Shapey describes “polyphony” as “no longer deal[ing] with [a] linear line but 2 or more opposing forces.” He writes of “the interreaction of individual parts acting together under a simultaneous action: the relationships set up; inferred; acted out, conscious or unconscious, are placed into action as opposing forces. . . . Rhythmic relationships resulting from similar or dissimilar activated forces.” To illustrate his conception, Shapey draws a diagram with multiple crisscrossing vectors (see Fig. 5.5).

![Crisscrossing vectors depicting polyphony](image)

**Figure 5.5** Crisscrossing vectors depicting polyphony, in Ralph Shapey, “Lecture on Rhythm Given at Yale University,” undated (ca. 1963). Shapey Papers, Box 10. By permission of the Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

Shapey’s description of rhythmic forces within a polyphonic texture recalls his description of his music as “an object in Time and Space.”

The rest of the handwritten notes are a description of, and occasional commentary on, Messiaen’s rhythmic concepts. Shapey seems to have planned to interleave his discussion of

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48 See chapter 4, note 82.
Messiaen’s techniques within his overview of rhythmic practice. He divided the first three pages of his discussion of Messiaen into a series of ideas, numbered from 1 to 14, and indicated where they should be inserted during the lecture.

Shapey insisted on the clarity of Messiaen’s rhythmic procedures. He prefaces his discussion of the French composer by asserting, “Messiaen: The values are always notated very exactly hence, whether it is a question of barred passages or not, the reader or performer have only to read and execute ‘exactly the values marked.’” He describes the basis of Messiaen’s practice as the “replace[ment] of ‘measure’ and ‘beat’ by short note value (sixteenth note) and its free multiplications (augmentation and diminution).” Messiaen’s music is “ametrical,” with “free but precise rhythmic patterns–opposed to ‘measured’ (equally barred).”

Shapey discusses Messiaen’s use of additive and subtractive rhythmic processes at length. He points to Messiaen’s “simple mechanism of rhythmic change through addition of: note, rest, dot,” citing an excerpt from “Les Anges” [The Angels], the sixth movement of Messiaen’s La Nativité du Seigneur [The Birth of the Savior] for Organ (1935), employed by Messiaen as Ex. 10 in vol. 2 of The Technique of My Musical Language

49 (see Ex. 5.32). Messiaen identifies crosses over notes in the example as indicators of added values within the rhythmic patterns.50

Commenting on his own practice, Shapey writes, “added values also fall into line of subdivisions of original design (also subtractive).” He gives an example to illustrate this concept, the first two beamed groupings of which display an additive process, generated by the addition of a dot to the first note of the second beamed grouping. In the third beamed grouping, Shapey removes the dot, illustrating a subtractive process. He also reorders the note values of the first beamed grouping, placing the sixteenth note first. The consecutive sixteenth notes in the fourth beamed grouping represent a process of rhythmic diminution (see Ex. 5.33).


Example 5.33  Additive and subtractive processes, in Ralph Shapey, “Lecture on Rhythm Given at Yale University,” undated (ca. 1963). Shapey Papers, Box 10. By permission of the Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

Shapey follows the example with the explanation, “all ex[amples] of added and subtractive elements (augmentation and diminution) fall into category of subdivision or breaking apart a basic idea into its own manifold parts.” In conjunction with this remark, Shapey refers to
Messiaen’s table of forms of rhythmic augmentation and diminution, Ex. 24 in vol. 2 of *The Technique of My Musical Language* (see Table 5.4).

**Table 5.4 “Table of Some Forms of Augmentation or Diminution of a Rhythm,” Ex. 24, vol. 2, p. 3 in Olivier Messiaen, *The Technique of My Musical Language*. Translated by John Satterfield. Text with musical examples. © 1944 & © 1956 & © 1966 by Alphonse Leduc for the English translation.**

Shapey emphasizes the significance of non-retrogradable rhythms, drawing on Messiaen’s own words in his discussion. In *The Technique of My Musical Language*, Messiaen writes, “the symmetry of the rhythmic groups is a retrograde symmetry.”

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“M[essiaen]: Rhythmic symmetry is established not by metrical or measured pulsation but by rhythmic retrograde action.”\(^{52}\)

Given that Shapey entitles his lecture, “Structural Functions of Rhythm,” it is not surprising that he posits a large-scale structural function for rhythmic configurations:

S[hapey]: Last notes of rhythmic design are usually activated as pivot points through common value factor, akin to common note or tone concept in harmonic progressions: vs. Rhythm of its own accord can be used in a harmonic sense by applying rules of harmony to rhythmic structures.

S[hapey]: Thus we arrive at a M[essiaen] structural unit. A comparison to an educated listener’s ability in hearing harmonic structures in similar music, the listener can perceive the same unity of movement, the same structural forces at work in the rhythmic plan in a given piece of music.\(^{53}\)

Shapey concludes his examination of Messiaen’s rhythmic techniques by subsuming them within his own compositional methods, asserting, “a lot of this falls into my concept of ‘it is’ instead of ‘becoming.’”\(^{54}\)

Shapey’s interest in Messiaen’s ideas about rhythm is indicative of what Jonathan Cross identifies as “a challenge to our understanding of time through a new attitude to rhythm and meter, the consequences of which range from local additive and symmetrical rhythms to large-scale repetitions, simultaneities and innovative block and verse-refrain structures.”\(^{55}\) Despite Shapey’s lack of sympathy for the music of many of his European contemporaries, his understanding of rhythm and its relationship to structure closely paralleled the thinking of members of the international avant-garde such as Messiaen, Boulez and Stockhausen. According to Eric Smigel,

The principal compositional concern of the post-war avant-garde was the component of

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\(^{52}\) Ralph Shapey, “Lecture on Rhythm Given at Yale University.” Shapey Papers, Box 10.

\(^{53}\) Ibid.

\(^{54}\) Ibid.

rhythm and its natural correlates, form and time: how to organize temporal relationships. . . .

This “new set of rhythmic premises,” according to Ernst Krenek, “caused fundamental changes in the structure, appearance, perceptibility, and meaning of music.” The new sound world created by the young composers was not so much due to the use of new pitch collections, but largely the result of a new manner of organizing the placement of these collections in musical time.

Similarly, Elliott Carter wrote in 1953,

True novelty and progress in music now reside not in inventing new harmonies, new irregularities of rhythm, and all the rest, but in incorporating these into new patterns. . . . It is primarily from this point of view that composers of very recent vintage seem to be working.

**Seven for Piano Four Hands (1963)**

During the summer of 1963, Shapey composed two new works, *Seven* for Piano Four Hands and String Quartet No. 6. He also completed the Brass Quintet, which he had begun in the summer of 1962. During the previous four years, Shapey had written many compositions for broken consort and large ensemble, permitting him to employ the parameters of timbre and physical space as major structural components of his music. In contrast, *Seven*, String Quartet No. 6 and the Brass Quintet are all works for small, timbrally homogeneous ensembles.

Inasmuch as the parameters of timbre and physical space play a lesser role in these three pieces, Shapey’s manipulation of the parameter of pitch assumes greater importance. One might also suggest that the terms of this equation can be reversed. Shapey may have written a series of pieces for timbrally homogeneous ensembles because of his renewed interest in the creation of varied pitch structures.

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57 Eric Smigel, “Alchemy of the Avant-garde: David Tudor and the New Music of the 1950s” (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 2003), 82-83.
Seven for Piano Four Hands\textsuperscript{59} was commissioned by duo-pianists Milton and Peggy Salkind.\textsuperscript{60} It was premiered by the Salkinds in 1963, and recorded by them in 1965 on the Friends of Four-Hand Music label.\textsuperscript{61} The title of Seven refers to Shapey’s use of a series of five heptachords as structural elements. Shapey described the series of heptachords as a “7-note circular row of 7’s.” The first heptachord is transposed once, inverted twice and repeated at the end of the “circular row.” The last note of the third heptachord overlaps with the first note of the fourth heptachord. Similarly, the last note of the fourth heptachord overlaps with the first note of the fifth heptachord. Shapey included the series of heptachords in his analytical chart of pitch and rhythmic structures for Seven. He partitioned each heptachord into a tetrachord and a trichord, marked by brackets. Below the line of heptachords, Shapey included a second line in which he verticalized the tetrachords and trichords (see Ex. 5.34).\textsuperscript{62}

\textsuperscript{59} Theodore Presser Co. publishes the score of Seven for Piano Four Hands: #110-40693.
\textsuperscript{61} Music for Piano Four-Hands by Schubert, Hindemith and Shapey, Milton and Peggy Salkind, piano; jacket notes by Andrew Imbrie (Berkeley, CA: Friends of Four-Hand Music, 1965).
\textsuperscript{62} Ralph Shapey, “Lecture Notes on Rhythm and Aesthetics.” Shapey Papers, Box 143.
Seven is divided into a succession of refrains and episodes, producing a rondo-like form (see Table 5.5). Each of the sharply demarcated sections appears, at first glance, to have a static character. An analysis of the music reveals Shapey’s deeply ingrained reliance on Wolpe’s dynamic techniques of musical development, however.\footnote{On the contrast between Wolpe’s metamorphic processes and Shapey’s block forms, see the discussion of the twinned \textit{Forms} of Wolpe and Shapey in chapter 4.}
As Seven unfolds, Shapey gradually synthesizes material that is initially divided between the two pianos. The opening refrain contains three musical “images,” superimposed in dissonant counterpoint. Piano II presents a rhythmically irregular theme in the low bass that employs the unordered pc set, heptachord I: \{A, Bb, B, C, C#, Eb, F\}. Piano II accompanies the theme with a complementary idea: a succession of forceful chords in the mid-bass. Piano I simultaneously plays a chord progression in the treble (see Ex. 5.35). In his sketches for Seven, Shapey introduced the term, “montage,” to describe his compositional procedure:

making a composite picture bringing together into a single composition a # of different pictures or parts & arranging these by superimposing one on another so they form a blended whole yet remain distinct.

Shapey’s definition of “montage” aptly describes the vigorous and multifaceted opening refrain.

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64 For a discussion of Shapey’s musical “images,” see “Evocation No. 1 (1959) and the Concept of the ‘Graven Image’” in chapter 4.
66 Satyendra, 480-1.
67 Ralph Shapey, Seven for Piano Four Hands, sketches. Shapey Papers, Box 29. See Satyendra, 477.
Shapey uses the highest and lowest registers of the piano in the refrain, reaching both D7 and A0. For example, the opening C#4/D4/Bb4 trichord and its variants are presented in three different registers. C#4, the lowest pitch of the opening trichord, acts as the spatial axis for the widely dispersed events of the refrain. At the end, Shapey restates C#4(Db4), underlining the music’s spatial symmetry.

In episode 1, Shapey creates motivic figures that synthesize elements of the three “images” introduced in the refrain. Piano I plays the opening gesture of the episode, just as it begins *Seven* with the C#4/D4/Bb4 trichord. The initial pc of the gesture, B, is also the first pc of piano II’s theme. Shapey also introduces a new motive derived from the second half of piano II’s theme into the music of piano I (see Exx. 5.36a and b). A few beats later, Shapey links a variant of the new motive to the initial trichord of *Seven* (see Ex. 5.37).

Example 5.36b  Piano II theme and new, related motive, in Ralph Shapey, *Seven* for Piano Four Hands (1963), p. 1, systems 1 and 2. The second half of piano II’s theme is circled in the example (cf. Exx. 5.35 and 5.36a). © 1978 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

![Example 5.36b](image)


![Example 5.37](image)

In the middle of the episode, Shapey separates and juxtaposes the music of pianos I and II (see Ex. 5.38).
When the two pianos briefly play in dissonant counterpoint, the musical “images” of *Seven* intersect to produce a new pc set. Piano II adds the pc, A, to the closing tetrachord, \{A#, C#, D, Eb\}, of piano I’s initial “image,” creating the unordered set, \{A, A#(Bb), C#, D, Eb\}. The set includes both piano I’s initial trichord, \{Bb, C#, D\}, and the last four pcs of heptachord I, which serves as the basis of piano II’s theme. Episode 1 ends with the first statement of the newly-constructed set as a chord, in music that recalls a passage in the orchestral *Ontogeny* (1958) (see Ex. 5.39).
In his analytic chart for *Seven*, Shapey employs the term, “extension,” to describe the new chord as an outgrowth of the pc set employed by piano I in the refrain (see Ex. 5.40). The new chord is forcefully reiterated throughout episode 4, and concludes the entire work.
Episode 2 functions as a static parenthesis within the form of Seven. The essentially repetitive nature of the music is reinforced by its restrained mood, sparse textures and quiet dynamics. Shapey presents several permutations of a rhythmically varied version of piano I’s “image” (not shown). At the same time, he states three of the five linked heptachords of the title, nos. I, IV and V, illustrating the circularity of the row of “sevens.” The first and third of four heptachord statements in the episode serve as slow-moving cantus firmi underlying piano I’s figures. While piano I is silent, Shapey presents heptachord I as a succession of even eighth notes within a septuplet, bisecting the episode (see Ex. 5.41).
Example 5.41  Presentation of heptachords, in Ralph Shapey, *Seven for Piano Four Hands* (1963), p. 5, system 2–p. 6, system 1. Heptachord 1 (H/I) and the first four notes of heptachord 4 (H/IV) are circled in the example (cf. Ex. 5.34). © 1978 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

A repetition of the refrain divides the slow, quiet music of episode 2 from the rapid and dramatic music that follows. In episode 3, Shapey first develops piano II’s theme, elaborating on the music of the contrapuntally linked pianos at the beginning of episode 1. The writing for piano II employs thirty-second-note figures that alternate between the hands and echo each other in contrary motion (see Ex. 5.42).
At the beginning of the episode, Shapey superimposes the radically different musical ideas of the two pianos, with piano I stating variants of its “image.” He briefly unifies the textures and rhythms of the two pianos during the second half of the episode. Shapey reintroduces piano I’s “image” as the episode concludes. Like episode 1, episode 3 ends with a complete statement of the chord, Bb/C#/D/Eb/A, divided between pianos I and II. Shapey places Bb, the lowest note of the chord, in the low bass for the first time. The thunderous ff tolling of Bb0 emphasizes the chord’s structural significance. The “concluding chord” is followed by Db4, the pitch that ends the first statement of the refrain at the beginning of the work. It serves here both as a response to the Bb/C#/D/Eb/A chord, and as the initial pitch of episode 4 (see Ex. 5.43).
In episode 4, Shapey continues the ongoing process of motivic development and structural synthesis within Seven. He presents a series of contrapuntal variants of piano I’s “image,” imitating its general shape while incorporating the dotted figures and sixteenth-note triplets of piano II’s theme. Shapey rounds off each of these motivic syntheses with the “concluding chord,” followed by Db4 (see Ex. 5.43).

**Example 5.43**  End of episode 3 and beginning of episode 4, in Ralph Shapey, Seven for Piano Four Hands (1963), p. 12, systems 1-2 (cf. Exx. 5.35 and 5.39). Note that the line separating the first chord from the following music is not a bar line, but serves to demarcate the end of a section. © 1978 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

* hold – but no break to next note

Shapey repeats the last of these linked “concluding chords” and Db4s for emphasis in order to signal a major structural event. While episode 2 includes an incomplete presentation of Shapey’s five-part “circular row of sevens” (see Ex. 5.41), episode 4 closes with a complete ppp statement by piano II of the entire cycle of heptachords (not shown).
In the fifth and final episode, Shapey employs motivic figures originally presented in episode 1. At the end of the episode, piano II again presents heptachord I as a cantus firmus, first in retrograde form, then in its original ordering. The work ends with the structurally significant “concluding chord” (not shown).

The Salkinds premiered Seven at a concert of the San Francisco Chamber Music Society on 18 November 1963. The work received uniformly enthusiastic reviews. In the San Francisco Chronicle, Alfred Frankenstein wrote, “‘Seven for Four Hands’ packs an enormous lot of color, rhythmic zest, and melodious freedom into the seven minutes for which it is named. It confirms one’s idea that Shapey is one of the young men destined to restore the blandishments of listenability to modern American music.” In the San Francisco Examiner, Alexander Fried wrote,

> The piece, in 12-tone idiom, alternates between a Webern type of atmospheric, elusive softness and a Schoenberg type of dissonant splash. With all the dissonance . . . “Seven for Piano” was interesting, even expressive from many viewpoints – coloristic, impressionistic, energetic, emotionally declamatory. And despite its intentional lack of disciplinary regular barlines, it held its interest as a consistent unit.

**String Quartet No. 6 (1963)**

String Quartet No. 6 was composed during the summer of 1963. It is dedicated to art critic Harold Rosenberg and his wife, May Tabak. Like Seven, String Quartet No. 6 is a work in which Shapey employs musical “objects” or “images” and clearly identifiable pc

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70 Theodore Presser Co. publishes the score of String Quartet No. 6: #114-40573.
71 Harold Rosenberg (1906-78). Primarily known as an art critic, Rosenberg was professor of social thought in the art department of the University of Chicago from 1966 to his death. See

collections. In his sketches for the quartet, Shapey used the Hegelian dialectic of thesis, antithesis and synthesis to describe the music:

- **Thesis:** in logic – an unproved statement assumed as a premise/an essay or dissertation presented – as evidence of knowledge of and individual research on a subject
- **Antithesis:** the second part – a contrast or opposition, the exact opposite
- **Synthesis:** A whole made up of parts or elements put together

The Quartet has six sections, divided by double bars but otherwise unlabeled. All of the sections share motivic material. Shapey contrasts rapid music with slow, timeless episodes to create satisfying contrasts within a symmetrical formal scheme (see Table 5.6).

### Table 5.6  Formal Symmetry in Ralph Shapey, String Quartet No. 6 (1963)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Measure Nos.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-2: four-part dissonant counterpoint</td>
<td>1–11; 12–23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: slow, timeless</td>
<td>24–34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: frenetic activity, dissonant counterpoint</td>
<td>35–50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5: slow, timeless; resembles section 3</td>
<td>51–65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6: return to opening ideas; resembles end of section 1</td>
<td>66–75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

String Quartet No. 6 begins with Shapey’s introduction of four “images” that orbit around each other, each associated with a specific member of the ensemble. The cello plays a wide-ranging, swaying theme, while violin II presents a series of chords. The viola adds a widely spaced quintuplet figure. Violin I alternates between a sustained A7 harmonic, a rapid ff sixty-

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fourth-note septuplet figure, and a trichord, stated in two versions, D4/Eb4/C5 and D4/Eb4/C#5 (see Ex. 5.44).

Example 5.44  Introduction of “images,” in Ralph Shapey, String Quartet No. 6 (1963), mm. 1-4. Shapey writes in the score, “barlines are only for the convenience of eye division (as small units) not to be interpreted under any of the existing barline concepts.” © 1977 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

# Lower "C" string to "B." All notes on lowered strings sound as written.

**non-emotional (in a straight matter of fact manner [like steps],

using enough vibrato for a good sound.
The seemingly disparate musical gestures presented by the four instruments are unified by their related pc content. Violin I’s septuplet employs the same pc set as violin II’s series of chords. The septuplet first states the pc content of chord 4 of violin II’s figure, then that of chord 1 (see Ex. 5.45). Similarly, the opening dyad of the cello theme, C#2–C4, is immediately echoed by two of the four pcs of violin II’s first chord, D4/C#5/E5/C6.
Shapey rarely transposes themes or motives. He does, however, use transposition within the opening cello theme. The theme is divided into two variants of the same idea, the second beginning on Bb2, a diminished seventh higher than the opening pitch, C#2 (see Ex. 5.44). Both variants have the same general shape. Both include a triplet figure that contains the tetrachord, \{D, Eb, G, G#(Ab)\}. By employing these two variants, Shapey is able to complete the aggregate within the cello theme. The first part of the theme comprises the ten-pc chromatic collection, B–Ab. The second, shorter part provides the previously omitted pcs, Bb and A. The structural significance of these pcs is underlined by their position at the beginning and end of the second part of the theme.

Shapey also uses the concept of aggregate completion in his expansion of violin I’s septuplet. The septuplet contains the chromatic segments, C–E and G#–A (see Ex. 5.45). In m. 7, violin I introduces a related twelve-pitch thirty-second-note motive that comprises the aggregate (see Ex. 5.46).
The bipartite cello theme evolves continuously throughout section I. Shapey successively presents three complete versions of the theme, followed by two additional variants of its first part (not shown). He transforms the theme by rhythmic augmentation, as well as the reordering of its pc content (see Ex. 5.44, mm. 2-4).\(^7\) Shapey transfers the third complete statement of the theme to the treble, in the cello’s expressive tenor register, beginning on C#5 (see Ex. 5.47).

\(^7\) See Fig. 3 in Andrew Mead, “How to Be, What to Do: Character and Action in Ralph Shapey’s String Quartet No. 6,” *Contemporary Music Review* 27, nos. 4/5 (August-October 2008): 489-509, especially 495.
Shapey’s presentation of the cello theme and its variants in section 1 serves as a foundation for the structure of the entire Quartet. The theme and its variants are repeated in their entirety in section 2, and are divided between sections 4 and 6 as well.\(^7^4\)

As he had done in *Seven*, Shapey orders pitch space in a symmetrical manner. In m. 1, violin I sustains an A7 harmonic at the same time as the cello presents B1 (produced by retuning its C string). The huge pitch space, A7–B1, is bisected by violin II’s A4/B4 dyad, the second chord of its opening figure. Shapey repeats the dyad at the beginning of m. 2 (see Ex. 5.44). In the slow, “timeless” music of sections 3 and 5, Shapey employs the highest register of the violins. Violin I plays C8 and D#8, exceeding the upper registral boundary created at the beginning of the Quartet (see Ex. 5.48).\(^7^5\)

\(^7^4\) Mead, 499, 502, 504.
\(^7^5\) Shapey adds a note in section 3: “Please: The composer realizes how difficult these & similar passages are, but under no conditions should harmonics be substituted unless so specified in the score!!!!”
While Shapey frequently asks the violins to play at or near the top of their range, he instructs the cellist to lower the tuning of the C string by an additional half step at the end of section 1. This permits the cellist to conclude both sections 1 and 6 with the otherwise unavailable pitch, Bb1 (see Ex. 5.49). Shapey’s use of the extremes of pitch space in a manner acoustically challenging for the listener is comparable to his practice in the orchestral *Ontogeny* (1958) (see Ex. 3.38).
In section 2, Shapey uses the techniques of fragmentation and rearrangement to transform the “images” associated with the four members of the ensemble. The “images” are shifted to different instruments and occasionally fused together. In addition, the viola “image” and the cello theme are shifted to different registers.

Shapey’s transfer of the cello theme to the instrument’s treble register near the end of section 1 serves as a bridge to section 2. In the first measure of the new section, violin I presents a rearranged version of the cello theme in the high treble, while violin II merges the viola “image” with a fragment of its own “image.” The viola plays a version of the first part of the cello theme, an octave higher than that of its initial appearance (see Ex. 5.50).
In the following measures, Shapey restates the cello theme and all of its variants in their original form, with a short digression that includes repetition of the second part of the theme. The other three members of the ensemble simultaneously play modified versions of the cello theme, interleaved with the other “images.” Both violin II and the viola play the treble version of the cello theme. Violin II and the cello present this version in a canon at the unison (not shown).

Violin II’s widely spaced motivic figure in the penultimate measure of section 2 (see Ex. 5.51) is a variant of its music in m. 12, the opening measure of the section. The new figure serves as the basis of sections 3 and 5. In these sections, Shapey creates a slow-moving dialogue
between the two violins. The viola and cello accompany the violins by sustaining the chromatic trichord, A4/Bb4/B4. Shapey’s use of a drone, together with frequent *luftpausen* in the slow-moving violin lines, produces a “timeless” music (see Ex. 5.48).

**Example 5.51**  Widely spaced motivic figure, in Ralph Shapey, String Quartet No. 6 (1963), m. 22, violin II only (cf. Exx. 5.48 and 5.50). © 1977 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

By way of contrast, in the coruscating music of section 4 (marked, “with brilliance”), Shapey creates the densest textures and most rapid counterpoint of the quartet. The dominant musical idea of the section is violin I’s “image,” conspicuous by its near-absence in section 2 and its omission in section 3. All of the instruments develop the twelve-note version of violin I’s rapid figure, just as they develop the cello theme in section 2 (see Ex. 5.52).
The brief final section recapitulates the end of section 1. Shapey concludes the quartet with a dramatic statement of the beginning of the cello theme that underlines both his use of a single set of ideas throughout the work, and his use of register as a formal device. All of the members of the ensemble play the opening gesture of the quartet, a sustained C#, followed by the dyad, C–D#. The cello states the opening pitches of its theme, C#2, C4 and D#4. The violins leap from C#4 to the dyad, C8–D#8, the upper registral boundary of sections 3 and 5. The first violin’s leap from C#4 to the C8–D#8 dyad in sections 3 and 5 is now revealed as a registrally

Example 5.52  Development of the twelve-note version of violin I’s rapid figure, in Ralph Shapey, String Quartet No. 6 (1963), m. 40 (cf. Ex. 5.46). © 1977 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

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76 Mead, 504.
shifted statement of the opening notes of the cello theme.\textsuperscript{77} Shapey’s thematic statement in octaves distantly echoes his early String Quartet No. 1 (1946) and his first model for quartet writing, Schoenberg’s String Quartet No. 4 (1936) (see Exx. 1.43 and 1.44).

String Quartet No. 6 ends with Shapey’s simultaneous presentation of the treble and bass registral extremes of the ensemble in a chord that spans more than six octaves. The violins sustain D#8, while the cello unfolds the same descending figure that concludes section 1, ending on Bb1, the lowest note of its range (see Ex. 5.53).

\textsuperscript{77} Mead, 502.
Example 5.53  Simultaneous use of treble and bass registral extremes, in Ralph Shapey, String Quartet No. 6 (1963), mm. 74-5 (cf. Exx. 5.44, 5.48, and 5.49). © 1977 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

* Change bows as much as needed in order to keep a vibrant sound.

The overall structure of String Quartet No. 6 has many similarities to that of String Quartet No. 5, written five years earlier. Both works contrast busy counterpoint with passages of “timeless” music, in which repetitive motivic figures move over a background of sustained chords (see Ex. 5.54).
Both quartets also include passages that serve as interpolations within the dominant musical narrative. String Quartet No. 6 differs from its predecessor in that this procedure is projected on a larger scale. Shapey interrupts the presentation of the cello theme at the end of section 4 in order to reintroduce the slow, static music of section 3. The cello resumes the narrative of section 4 at the beginning of section 6, continuing with the original sequence of variants of its theme to conclude the Quartet (not shown).\textsuperscript{78}

\textsuperscript{78} Mead, 504.
The Composers String Quartet\textsuperscript{79} premiered String Quartet No. 6 at New York University in 1966. The new work received detailed reviews by attentive critics. In \textit{The New York Times}, Theodore Strongin wrote,

Last night’s only complete first performance was of Ralph Shapey’s 10-minute String Quartet No. 6, written in 1963. For it, the members of the Composers’ Quartet . . . stood up to play, rather than sit close together in conventional fashion. . . . All were spread out roughly in a line across the stage, more or less facing the audience.

Each instrument of Mr. Shapey’s quartet has music to play that is at times quite independent of the others, and the unconventional stage setting helped the ear keep the elements apart.

Played without interruption, the quartet is highly poetic in nature and very lyrical, with beautiful quiet, sustained episodes during which the viola and cello sustain a dissonant interval very softly, while the two violins stroke soft, separated, almost inaudible notes, many of them upper harmonics.

\textbf{Piece Has Personality}

In its more active passages, each instrument is given motto-like material. By repeating and fragmenting each motto, Mr. Shapey keeps his piece well-knit and with a strong sense of direction. Post-Webern the quartet may be in derivation, but its personality is definitely Shapey.\textsuperscript{80}

\textbf{Continuities}

By the time that Shapey presented his rhythm lecture at Yale – presumably during the 1963-64 academic year – his interest in Messiaen’s rhythmic irregularities and symmetries had already peaked. The sharp-edged rhythms of many pieces that Shapey composed during the 1950s harmonize well with Messiaen’s rhythmic procedures, and his music occasionally displays intriguing similarities to the French composer’s compositions. In contrast, Shapey’s works of the


early 1960s are distinguished by a carefully crafted rhythmic amorphousness irreconcilable with Messiaen’s rhythmic concepts.

The rhythmic freedom of Shapey’s String Quartet No. 6 may have been inspired by Stefan Wolpe’s ten-measure String Quartet fragment (1950-51), written at a time when the two men were close collaborators. Wolpe’s brief sketch exemplifies his concept of simultaneous musical actions, which reached its fullest expression in Enactments for Three Pianos (1950-53). In a conversation with critic Eric Salzman, Wolpe articulated his vision of musical multiplicity:

> So that kind of idea, where the ideas live within a multidimensional space and behave that way, behave discontinuous, behave abrupt, behave collapsing, behave cohering, coalescing. That was a new experience to me. And, really, I found for the first time in my life an adequate technique to present material in use.\(^8\)

Wolpe’s Quartet fragment is characterized by arhythmic, multidimensional textures. It begins with two trichords, followed by a P5 (ip7) dyad, D4–A4. In m. 2, the viola and cello interject rapid turn figures, derived from the opening trichord, while violin II sustains the D4–A4 dyad. Wolpe develops the two contrasting ideas in m. 4, creating an opposition between highly differentiated musical events. Violin I and the viola present expanded versions of the turn figures in a contrapuntal interchange, while the cello and violin II rapidly reiterate D–A dyads in alternation (see Ex. 5.55).

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In mm. 7-10 of the ten-measure fragment, Wolpe again divides the ensemble into two duos, creating rapid, rhythmically intricate counterpoint. Violins I and II echo each other, while the viola and cello play in contrary motion. The obvious performance difficulties of the music,
particularly at the time of its composition, may have prompted Wolpe to abandon the sketch (see Ex. 5.56).


Shapey took the better part of a decade to assimilate Wolpe’s new rhythmic and textural concepts. During the early 1950s, his style differed widely from that of Wolpe’s most recent works. Nevertheless, Shapey’s musical ideas continued to reflect those of his teacher. At the beginning of the first movement of Shapey’s Trio for Violin, Cello and Piano (1953-55), composed in 1953, he presents a weaving treble piano motive that resembles the five-note motivic figures played by both violin I and the viola in m. 4 of Wolpe’s Quartet fragment. Unlike his teacher, however, Shapey coordinates the parts by means of a rigid rhythmic grid, creating music very different from Wolpe’s fluid discourse (see Ex. 5.57).
As his career progressed throughout the 1950s and 60s, Shapey often employed similar motivic material, but treated it with progressively greater gestural freedom. In the first movement, “Recitative,” of *Five* for Violin and Piano (1960), the piano repeatedly plays a weaving chordal gesture, reminiscent of the piano motive in the opening measures of the Trio for Violin, Cello and Piano. The violin simultaneously plays a large leap, recalling the string leaps that accompany the piano’s weaving motive in the Trio. Although the two pieces employ similar motivic ideas, the rhythms of “Recitative” are more fluid. Unlike the Trio, “Recitative” lacks barlines. Despite Shapey’s desire to free his rhythmic structures from predictable organizational patterns, the shadow of his early style is still discernable, however. Shapey coordinates the violin part with the piano’s treble and bass lines, so that the two instruments
begin and end their gestures together. It would be possible to insert barlines without doing any violence to the music (see Ex. 5.58).


Shapey again uses a weaving chordal motive in String Quartet No. 6 (1963). The chords, first played by violin II, contrast with the cello’s melodic leaps (see Ex. 5.44), which are comparable to the violin’s melodic leaps at the beginning of *Five*. In the quartet, the members of the ensemble play independently to a far greater degree than in *Five*, although their lines occasionally converge. Although Shapey employs barlines in the score of the Quartet, they are inserted purely for convenience, and have no rhythmic significance. Both the motivic ideas and the unmeasured rhythms of the opening measures of String Quartet No. 6 recall Wolpe’s Quartet fragment, written a dozen years earlier (compare Exx. 5.44 and 5.55). At long last, Shapey had
fully integrated the compositional concepts that Wolpe developed during the early 1950s into his own distinctive style.

By the end of 1963, Shapey had become a major figure in the New York new music world, both as a composer and as a conductor of new music. In the previous four years, he had written a series of acclaimed works, one of which had been recorded (*Evocation No. 1*). In addition, Shapey had made his first recording as a conductor (Babbitt’s Composition for Twelve Instruments), performing music that other conductors avoided because of its technical difficulty. Shapey was now about to step onto the national stage.
CHAPTER 6:

MASTERY AND NATIONAL RECOGNITION, 1964-1966

Career Advancement: University Positions

By 1963, Shapey’s activities as both composer and conductor had brought him considerable recognition within the new music world. He was now offered professional opportunities that had been unavailable to him in the past (see Table 6.1).

Table 6.1  Ralph Shapey: Chronology, 1963-66

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conductor, University Orchestra and Choral Society, University of Pennsylvania</td>
<td>1963-64 academic year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonance for Carillon</td>
<td>25 February 1964–13 March 1964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appointed to the faculty of the U. of Chicago</td>
<td>June 1964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Configuration for Flute and Piano</td>
<td>15 June 1964–11 September 1964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inaugural Concert, Contemporary Chamber Players</td>
<td>1 December 1964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varèse 80th Birthday Concert, Carnegie Hall, NY</td>
<td>31 March 1965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeat of Varèse 80th Bday. Concert, U. of Chicago</td>
<td>11 May 1965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>String Trio</td>
<td>6 May 1965–27 May 1965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death of Varèse</td>
<td>6 November 1965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partita for Violin Solo</td>
<td>9 November–29 November 1965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partita for Violin and Thirteen Players</td>
<td>5 January–30 August 1966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prem. of the Partita for Vn. and Thirteen Players</td>
<td>25 January 1967</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the 1963-64 academic year, Shapey was simultaneously offered a one-year position as a guest conductor and lecturer at Princeton, and a part-time position as conductor of the orchestra and choral society of the University of Pennsylvania. According to Shapey, his friend, Henry Weinberg,\(^1\) a member of the Penn faculty, convinced George Rochberg,\(^2\) chairman of the

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\(^1\) Henry Weinberg (b. 1931), composer, professor of music at the University of Pennsylvania and the City University of New York (retired).

\(^2\) George Rochberg (1918-2005), composer, professor of music at the University of Pennsylvania.
music department, to offer him the position at Penn. Shapey decided to accept the job at Penn, due to the possibility that it might eventually become a full-time position. Shapey’s student assistant, composer Andrew Rudin, recalled the rehearsals for the first concert of the Penn orchestra and chorus:

He was indeed precise, but his rehearsals were surprisingly a lot of fun. He'd sometimes take the violin from the concertmaster and show what he wanted. He was a quite good violinist. He also enjoyed clowning around and imitating the conducting mannerisms of people like Reiner, Bernstein, etc. . . . It surprised me how much Ralph loved the Chausson [Poème], and he had fun in rehearsals playing parts of the solo line himself . . . just to mess with Charlie [violinist Charles Castleman].

On 4 December 1963, Shapey conducted Varèse’s Offrandes (1921) and Webern’s Concerto, op. 24 (1934), along with Chausson’s Poème and works by Haydn and J. S. Bach. Andrew Rudin recalled the concert:

I played the piano in the Webern Concerto and cello in the other pieces. . . . Unknown to us, Ralph had invited Varèse and he came. . . . To our great astonishment, Varèse appeared after Offrandes, kissed the soprano's hand, then went back to the percussion section and put his arms around the players.

On 4 March 1964, Shapey conducted Webern’s Cantata No. 1, op. 29 (1938-39), Roger Sessions’ Mass for Unison Choir and Organ (1955) and Henry Weinberg’s choral Vox in Rama (1956), as well as works by Mozart and Beethoven. On 29 April 1964, Shapey conducted the university orchestra and choral society in excerpts from Mendelssohn’s Elijah at Temple Adath.

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4 Andrew Rudin (b. 1939), composer, professor of music (retired) at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, PA.
5 Andrew Rudin, Facebook exchange, 8 January 2012.
6 The concert had originally been scheduled for 22 November 1963, but was postponed due to the assassination of President Kennedy. See Daniel Webster, “At the University Museum: Penn Renditions Please Varèse,” The Philadelphia Inquirer, 5 December 1963: 42; Daniel Webster “Pioneering Varèse,” The Philadelphia Inquirer, 8 December 1963: D5.
7 Andrew Rudin, Facebook exchange, 8 January 2012.
Israel of the Main Line, a synagogue in the Philadelphia area. In addition to his work at the university, Shapey conducted the Sinfonietta of Philadelphia on 8 December 1963 in a concert of works for chamber orchestra from the Soviet Union. The concert included music by Nikolai Rakov (1908-90) and Revol Bunin (1924-76), as well as the First Piano Concerto, op. 35 (1933), of Shostakovich.9

In the spring of 1964, the music department of the University of Chicago decided to hire a composer/conductor. At the same time, the University of Chicago applied to the Rockefeller Foundation for two grants: one to create a new music ensemble, and the second to enable the Chicago Symphony to perform contemporary American works for orchestra at Mandel Hall, the concert hall of the university. Both grants were approved, the first of $250,000 on “a part-matching basis,” for a “program to foster the composition and performance of contemporary music, through June, 1967,” and the second, of $15,000, for “premiere performances of symphonic works by American composers.”10

At the urging of Henry Weinberg, Shapey applied for the faculty opening at the University of Chicago. Years later, he recalled his predicament:

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9 On cultural exchange programs with the Soviet Union, see Yale Richmond, Cultural Exchange and the Cold War: Raising the Iron Curtain (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003).
10 The Rockefeller Foundation: Annual Report for 1964, 129, accessed 4 December 2013, http://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/uploads/files/3c97a37d-7c73-4db4-b395-7168edf9d0ed-1964.pdf. In 1965, the Rockefeller Foundation awarded the University of Chicago an additional $60,000 grant to host concerts of new American orchestral music by the Chicago Symphony in 1966-68. See University of Chicago, Office of Public Relations press release, 2 December 1965. Leonard B. Meyer Papers, Box 15, Folder 12: Rockefeller Foundation Grant, 1965, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library. Thanks to Barbara Gilbert, Reading Room Coordinator, and Christine Colburn, Reader Services Manager, Special Collections Research Center, for providing me with a copy of this document.
I get this letter from the University of Chicago, that there’s a search committee, and they’re looking for a composer. . . . In the meantime, Leonard [Meyer],\(^{11}\) who was the Chairman, had made application to the Rockefeller Foundation for a grant to create the CCP [Contemporary Chamber Players]. . . . Finally they [the University of Chicago] did make the offer. . . . Now Rochberg was the chairman at Philly, and he got up and tried to counter it . . . he said, “I will try to get you in as a composer via the back door.”\(^{12}\) . . . Because here in Chicago, [I was] coming in the front door, as a composer. . . . Then, about a week or so after I had accepted the job here [in Chicago], Lenny [Meyer] calls me . . . and he says, “Congratulations.” I said, “That’s nice, for what?” He said, “Well, you got the Rockefeller grant.” I said, “I didn’t have anything to do with the Rockefeller grant.” “It makes no difference, you got it, and it’s your money, and you create the CCP.”\(^{13}\)

In his handwritten 1998 memoir, “Remembrances of my Life in Music,” Shapey gave additional details:

Then I got a call that Easley Blackwood\(^ {14}\) was in town (NYC) & wanted to meet & have a talk. It never occurred to me that this was a preliminary interview re: Univ. of Chicago. . . . A short while later, I was called to come to Chicago for the formal interview, which to my complete surprise went extremely well. The now-famous interview with Dean [Robert E.] Streeter, where getting fed up with the academic

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\(^{11}\) Leonard B. Meyer (1918-2007), professor of music at the University of Chicago (1946-75), and professor of music and the humanities at the University of Pennsylvania (1975-88). He studied composition privately with Stefan Wolpe after World War II, at the same time as Shapey.

\(^{12}\) On 19 May 1964, Rochberg wrote: “Let’s assume you decide to stay at Penn. . . . [He then discusses Shapey’s work as conductor of the university orchestra and chorus.] Then there is the teaching of composition, a very important element in the whole picture as it affects the future should you stay at Penn. Next year I expect there will be approximately 10 composition students on the graduate level, 7 of them new to Penn. As I told you, I need help very badly. I cannot teach all these people privately, conduct a seminar & do all the administrative work & committee work that I know lies ahead. . . . In future years you might want a crack at the composition seminar. You’re welcome to it. I will need a rest from it at some point. . . .

Now, what about Chicago? . . . [I]t suddenly dawned on me – & perhaps it has on you – that your going to Chicago . . . is essential to the success of whatever program they are planning with the grant money should it come through. . . . [W]ithout someone like yourself, without a conductor with your experience & capacity, the project they plan cannot be successfully expedited. . . . [I]f the grant does not come through, they could let the whole offer lapse. . . . If it should, you have no problem of choice any longer & your situation at Penn still is assured.” George Rochberg, letter to Shapey, 19 May 1964. Shapey Papers, Box 4.


\(^{14}\) Easley Blackwood (b. 1933), pianist and composer, professor emeritus of music at the University of Chicago, where he has taught since 1958.
nonsense, I blurted out, “Look, gentlemen (Leonard Meyer, chairman of the Music Department, was present), let’s get one thing straight. I have no intentions of becoming a dusty book on one of your shelves. I’m a revolutionary.” . . . Seeing their looks of surprise staring at me, I took a deep breath and added, “Well, I guess I just talked myself out of this job,” when suddenly Dean Streeter doubled up his fist, banged it on the table, exclaiming, “That’s what we stand for!” . . . A short time later, I was appointed. The result was deep agonizing. Should I or not leave NYC, impossible. . . . [All] agreed that I would be a fool not to accept. Also in the plans was to create for the first time in its history, a professional chamber players ensemble that I would conduct as its music director. . . .

Before leaving New York [before I left New York], Norman Lloyd, then head of the Rockefeller Foundation,15 called me in for a talk whose main point was “Ralph, we’re sending you to Chicago because as far as contemporary music is concerned, it’s a desert. Your job is to make it bloom!”16

On 5 July 1964, The New York Times reported that Shapey had been appointed to the faculty of the University of Chicago.17

Sonic Explorations (I): Sonance for Carillon (1964)

When Shapey visited Chicago to be interviewed for the faculty position, he was commissioned by Daniel Robins, carillonneur of Rockefeller Memorial Chapel at the University of Chicago, to write a piece for the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial Carillon.18 Shapey composed Sonance for Carillon19 between 25 February and 13 March 1964. Due to the nature of the carillon, Shapey worked directly with sounds in Sonance. The reverberative haze and rich overtones produced by the instrument in Sonance cannot be fully captured by notation. The

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18 Finley, 36.
19 Theodore Presser Co. publishes the score of Sonance for Carillon: #114-40534.
compositional structure of the piece is determined by the resonance of the carillon, as well as by theories of pitch organization and form.

Shapey’s interest in working with the very substance of sound had been a recurring feature of his music since *Challenge: The Family of Man* (1955). The timbres of *Sonance* are particularly indebted to Shapey’s exploration of percussion sonorities in *Dimensions* (1960), *Incantations* (1961) and the Piece for Violin and Instruments (1962). *Sonance* also recalls the chimes of Varèse’s *Déserts* (1954) and the bell sounds of his *Poème électronique* (1958).

In *Sonance*, Shapey carefully stratifies the sounds of the carillon by register. The highest sounds are brilliant but have little resonance, while the actual pitch of the lowest sounds is sometimes obscured by the lower partials. Shapey employs the middle register as the primary vehicle of the musical narrative.

*Sonance* has nine brief sections. The sections are not numbered, but are clearly demarcated by double bars. Each of the sections ends with sustained, reverberant chords, except for section 8. Sections 1, 2, 5 and 6 all conclude with an E3/F4 dyad (see Table 6.2).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Measure Nos.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>stately</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with varied motions</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10-23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tempo</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>24-35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with bravura</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36-56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bass ostinati. Treble figure is derived from central “image.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with delicacy</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>57-66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(a) Further development, as well as direct quotation, from sections 2 and 3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with sensitive motions</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>67-79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>80-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Fantasy on one note,” followed by brief recall of central “image.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with joy</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>84-105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with majesty</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>106-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Development of ideas of section 4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Recall of central “image” at conclusion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sections 1, “stately,” and 9, “with majesty,” frame *Sonance* by presenting the central “image” of the work (see Ex. 6.1).


Two sets of paired sections, sections 2/3 and sections 5/6, develop similar musical ideas. In section 2, Shapey introduces a descending triplet motive, which he restates in sections 3 and 5. He devotes section 6 almost exclusively to the descending triplet motive (see Exx. 6.2 and 6.3). The descending motive contrasts with the ascending gestures that conclude the central “image” of *Sonance* (see Ex. 6.1).


In section 4 (“with bravura”), paired ostinati are presented in the bass and middle registers. At the same time, the rhythmic position of a third, treble ostinato, gradually shifts relative to the other voices, as it undergoes a process of rhythmic augmentation (see Ex. 6.4).
The dense textures of section 4 generate a sonic haze that highlights its prominence within the overall form of *Sonance*. In section 8, Shapey returns to the ideas of section 4, varying motives derived from the paired bass and middle register ostinati of the earlier section (see Ex. 6.5).
Shapey’s development of the ideas of section 4 in section 8 parallels his development of the ideas of sections 2/3 in sections 5/6. The symmetries between sections 2/3 and 5/6, and sections 4 and 8, prevent the listener from perceiving a single focal point within the overall structure of Sonance, and draw attention back to the periodic restatements of the initial “image” throughout the piece. One of these restatements concludes the short, almost parenthetical, section 7. The section is a “fantasy on one note,” in which Shapey creates a crescendo and decrescendo on Db4, a very idiomatic gesture for the carillon. Shapey seemingly underlines the position of section 7 within the form of Sonance by stating Db4 seven times before presenting a truncated version of the initial “image.”

Shapey varies the “tempo of chromatic circulation” throughout Sonance. At the beginning of the work, he completes the aggregate only gradually, with the E3 in m. 5 (not shown). Later in the piece, Shapey speeds up the circulation of the aggregate. In section 4, the ostinati in the two lowest staves combine to present the aggregate in each measure (see Ex. 6.4). In the rhythmic sphere, Shapey repeatedly employs additive and subtractive processes as a
thematic device, reflecting his interest in Messiaen’s rhythmic procedures.\textsuperscript{20} For example, in mm. 59-60, Shapey first presents a subtractive series consisting of a dotted quarter note, a quarter note, a dotted eighth and a sixteenth note. Beginning with the C4 at the end of m. 59, he presents an additive series consisting of a sixteenth note, an eighth and a quarter note. The quarter note serves as a pivot, with Shapey again reversing direction to present a subtractive series. It is followed by a dotted eighth, an eighth note and a sixteenth note (see Ex. 6.6).


Daniel Robins gave the premiere of \textit{Sonance} on 1 July 1964.\textsuperscript{21}

\textbf{Sonic Explorations (II): Configuration for Flute and Piano (1964) }

\textit{Configuration} for Flute and Piano\textsuperscript{22} was the first piece that Shapey composed when he arrived in Chicago in the summer of 1964. It is dedicated to flutist Sue Ann Kahn, who premiered the work in 1966. In \textit{Configuration}, Shapey juxtaposes frenetic music with timeless,

\textsuperscript{20} See “The Lecture Notes on Rhythm” in chapter 5.
\textsuperscript{21} Finley, 36.
\textsuperscript{22} Theodore Presser Co. publishes the score of \textit{Configuration} for Flute and Piano: 11440599S.
floating textures in a manner that recalls his String Quartets Nos. 5 and 6, but within a structurally simpler context. The name, *Configuration*, precisely describes Shapey’s method of development. Shapey employs several motives or “images,” musical gestures that are permuted throughout the piece and juxtaposed in constantly changing “configurations.” Shapey’s use of the resonance of the sustaining pedal to underline his use of a static construction in the piano part throughout the second movement of *Configuration* is undoubtedly indebted to his experience in writing *Sonance* for Carillon.

Shapey divides the twelve pcs of the aggregate between the initial three “images” of *Configuration*. In the opening measure, the flute presents two “images” that can be analyzed as pc collections. “A₁” consists of the trichord, Db–Eb, while “B” consists of the pentachord, E–G♯, and the dyad, B–C. “A₁” and “B” together include ten of the twelve pcs of the aggregate, omitting only A and Bb. In m. 2, Shapey completes the aggregate by stating a third collection, the dyad, A–Bb, in the piano. I label this collection “C.”

In m. 3, Shapey presents an expanded version of “A₁,” which I label “A₂.” “A₂” consists of the hexachord, B–E, which is divided between the piano’s treble and bass. One pc, D, is duplicated between the two staves. The treble presents a leaping, ascending gesture, while the bass presents an arching figure. The ascending gesture in the treble parallels the shape of “B.” The piano restates “C,” both before the first presentation of “A₂” by the piano, and after the repetition of “B” by the flute (see Ex. 6.7).
In an early sketch for *Configuration*, Shapey wrote out preliminary versions of “A1” and “B,” together with pitch charts in which he identifies the A/Bb dyad as an independent element within the pitch structure of the work. In the second line of the sketch, Shapey circles the dyad,
A4/Bb4, within the chromatic scale from C4–B4. In lines four and five, Shapey presents the dyad as a chord, labeled III (see Fig. 6.1).

During the first movement, Shapey frequently redistributes the “images”/pc sets between the parts. At the beginning of m. 18, the piano plays “B” and “C,” while the flute plays the upper voice of “A₂” (see Ex. 6.8).

In addition to his use of motivic recombination (juxtaposition and superimposition of “images” in changing configurations), Shapey employs large-scale formal strategies in *Configuration* that he had not previously used. Movement I is subdivided by the insertion of three flute cadenzas, after mm. 9, 20 and 28 (see Ex. 6.9).
Shapey’s use of cadenzas as interludes between the episodes of movement I is comparable to Elliott Carter’s use of cadenzas in String Quartet No. 2 (1959) and the Brass Quintet (1974). In Shapey’s piece, the cadenzas following mm. 20 and 28 also serve to anticipate the melodic and rhythmic characteristics of the flute writing in movement II (see Ex. 6.10).


\[ \begin{align*}
\text{Flute:} &
\begin{array}{c}
\text{p}
\end{array}
\end{align*}\]
The piano presents a soft, sonorous ostinato background pattern in movement II (see Ex. 6.10), related to a widely spaced permutation of “B” that Shapey employs periodically throughout movement I (see Ex. 6.11).
In the third movement, Shapey both knits together and breaks apart the components of his discourse. In mm. 9-10, he presents “B” and “A₂” successively in the flute line, while stating “A₂” and “C” in the piano part (see Ex. 6.12). In m. 34, he presents “A₂,” “B” and “C” successively in the piano part (see Ex. 6.13). Shapey’s rapid presentation of all three “images”/pc sets in movement III creates a synthesis of the musical elements of *Configuration*, and intensifies the “speed of chromatic circulation” as well.
Example 6.12  Pairing of “A₂” and “B” in the flute line, while the piano states “A₂” and “C,” in Ralph Shapey, *Configuration* for Flute and Piano (1964), III, mm. 9-10. © 1977 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

Example 6.13  Successive statements of “A₂,” “B” and “C” in the piano part, in Ralph Shapey, *Configuration* for Flute and Piano (1964), III, m. 34. © 1977 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.
In the final section, Shapey dissolves the narrative structures of the work rather than bringing it to a triumphant conclusion. The piano’s extended solo is followed by a cadenza for the flute. The piece ends with a reminiscence, \textit{ppp}, of the floating music of movement II (not shown).

The conclusion of \textit{Configuration} underlines the important structural role of texture, timbre and pitch space in Shapey’s compositions. In movements I and III, the music continuously oscillates between the extreme registers of both the piano and flute. Shapey’s repeated use of the very top of the flute’s range creates an acoustic effect that strains the limits of auditory perception, a technique reminiscent of the violin writing in sections 3 and 5 of String Quartet No. 6 (compare Exx. 5.48 and 6.7). Shapey contrasts the alternating flurries of rapid figures for both instruments in movement I with the busy ensemble writing in movement III, the cadenzas for flute and piano in movements I and III, and the “meditative,”\textsuperscript{23} rhapsodic\textsuperscript{24} music in movement II.

Sue Ann Kahn and Robert Miller premiered \textit{Configuration} at a concert in Max Pollikoff’s “Music in Our Time” series at the 92nd St. Y in New York on 23 March 1966. Writing in the \textit{New York Herald Tribune}, Eric Salzman was enthusiastic about the new work:

Six pieces on last night’s Max Pollikoff Music in Our Time 92nd St. “Y” modern-music concert, one stand-out: Ralph Shapey’s “Configurations” for flute and piano. This is one of Shapey’s great static periodic pieces that revolve rather than evolve. Big sonorous shapes are spread over and right to the edges of the audible and performable range. . . . these are framed in a complex, set, overlapping rhythmic cycle—a kind of fixed, resonant solar system turning on its own axis and illuminated with a great central intensity and vision.\textsuperscript{25}

In \textit{The New York Times}, Theodore Strongin was similarly enthusiastic:

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{23} In the score, Shapey writes, “Move II with meditation.”
\item \textsuperscript{24} See note, \textit{Configuration}, p. 8, bottom: “fl.[ute] must be free!”
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
The Shapey is extreme in the demands it makes on its players, but the over-all impression is poised and sure, sometimes ebullient and always carefully in balance.\(^{26}\)

**The Contemporary Chamber Players**

Shapey’s first task when he arrived in Chicago was to organize his new contemporary music group, the Contemporary Chamber Players of the University of Chicago. Shapey made ambitious plans for the first season of the new ensemble. The inaugural concert took place on 1 December 1964. It included performances of Webern’s Concerto, op. 24 (1934), Pozzi Escot’s *Cristos* for Ensemble\(^ {27}\) (1963), Mario Davidovsky’s Electronic Study No. 2 (1962) and Varèse’s *Octandre* (1923). In the *Chicago Daily News*, Donal Henahan focused on Shapey’s role in making difficult contemporary works accessible to the non-specialist listener:

> [T]he satisfaction of this program (the first in a Rockefeller Foundation-financed series of five) came in discovering how lucid once-controversial scores seemed. Much of the thanks goes to Shapey, a genius at conducting this type of music . . .

Shapey led the ensemble in Webern’s Concerto for Nine Instruments, Op. 24, and Varèse’s *Octandre*, clarifying the former to an especially remarkable extent. It has been a long time since we have heard a more expertly played contemporary program of local origin, or a better balanced one.\(^ {28}\)

In the second concert, on 26 January 1965, Shapey presented Stravinsky’s Septet (1953), George Perle’s *Serenade* for Viola and Seven Instruments (1962), Donald Martino’s Trio for Violin, Clarinet and Piano (1959), Henry Weinberg’s *Five Haiku* (1958) and Schoenberg’s *Phantasy* for Violin and Piano, op. 47 (1949). The third concert of the season took place only three weeks later, on 16 February 1965. Shapey conducted Babbitt’s Composition for Twelve

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\(^ {27}\) Pozzi Escot (b. 1933), American composer, born in Peru. She is a member of the faculty of the New England Conservatory, and is editor-in-chief of the journal *Sonus*.


Shapey’s demanding concert schedule served as preparation for his most important project of the year: a series of concerts to celebrate the eightieth birthday of Edgard Varèse. When Shapey arrived in Chicago during the summer of 1964, he initiated plans to honor Varèse in New York, Chicago and Philadelphia during the following year. On 31 March 1965, Shapey conducted the Contemporary Chamber Players at Carnegie Hall in performances of *Intégrales* (1925), *Octandre* (1923) and *Déserts* (1954). In *The New York Times*, Theodore Strongin gave accolades to both Varèse and Shapey:

> The Contemporary Chamber Players of the University of Chicago paid tribute to that towering prophet of 20th Century music, Edgard Varèse, in a concert at Carnegie Hall last night. This year is Mr. Varèse's 80th. Two of his earlier works were played, “Octandre” (1924) and “Intégrales” (1926), and two recent ones, “Poème Electronique” (1958) and "Déserts" (1954). They showed again as in the past the immense vitality of his universe, undimmed, unspoiled, completely his own creation, as thrusting with life 30 years ago as now, and as pertinent. . . . Ralph Shapey conducted the Chicago group. He is its music director. Under a Rockefeller Foundation grant, skilled musicians sympathetic to contemporary music were chosen for the group. . . . The effects of talent and ample rehearsal were very evident last night. Shapey led careful performances that were not at all precious and at times were surpassing.

The concert represented a culminating point for both Shapey and Varèse. The still-youthful, ambitious Shapey had finally reached the main stage of Carnegie Hall, while the elderly Varèse had his greatest American triumph. Many years later, Shapey recalled Varèse’s

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29 Composers Chou Wen-chung and Peter Westergaard both commented that Shapey’s conducting technique was very cautious. He subdivided the beat with his left hand in a way that the players considered unnecessarily detailed. As a result, they were somewhat constrained in their performances. Barry Wiener, interview with Chou Wen-chung, New York, NY, 27 July 2010; Wiener, interview with Peter Westergaard, Princeton, NJ, 17 January 2011.

poignant words as they stood together on stage at the conclusion of the concert: “[W]e were standing together, he had his arm around me. . . . He turns to me and he says, ‘Ralph, now I can die. I have finally heard my music.’ One year later he died.”

Shapey repeated the all-Varèse program at the Ethical Society Auditorium in Philadelphia on 2 April 1965. In the *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, James Felton reaffirmed Varèse’s status as one of the twentieth century’s greatest composers:

At the age of 80 Edgar Varèse remains one of the commanding composers of the twentieth century. . . . Four of his works were heard last night at the Ethical Society auditorium, three of them played by The Contemporary Chamber Players of the University of Chicago, Ralph Shapey conducting. They covered the major span of Varèse’s activity and the earliest – “Octandre” (1924) – sounded as vital and non-dated as if it had been written yesterday. . . . “Déserts” (1954) . . . simmered in stunning volumes of energy unleashed like fury in the wilderness. . . . The hall was filled and the audience responded with strong applause. Long live Varèse.

After the concerts in New York and Philadelphia, Varèse and his amanuensis, Chou Wen-chung, took stock of the performances of his orchestral music during the previous decade by conductors including Frederic Waldman, Jacques Monod, Robert Craft, Gunther Schuller and Shapey. They judged Shapey to be the finest conductor of the music of Varèse.

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33 Chou Wen-chung (b. 1923), Chinese-American composer, professor of music at Columbia University.
35 Jacques-Louis Monod (b. 1927), conductor and composer.
36 Robert Craft (b. 1923), conductor, amanuensis of Stravinsky.
37 Gunther Schuller (b. 1925), composer, conductor, horn player, historian of jazz and administrator.
On 1 April 1965, Shapey conducted the Contemporary Chamber Players at Carnegie Recital Hall in a concert that concluded with his own *Incantations* (1961). Harold Schonberg’s review in *The New York Times* celebrated Shapey’s new status as a central figure in the American new music establishment:

The third and last program of the Contemporary Chamber Music Players of the University of Chicago was given last night in Carnegie Recital Hall. In a way it was the most interesting of all, as it gave an insight into the orientation of the group and of its musical director, Ralph Shapey. . . .

The Shapey work [*Incantations*] . . . presented a new world of sound treated in an individual manner. . . . Mr. Shapey has bent the materials to his own service, creating a work that has strength and tonal imagination.

Like all music of its kind, it is not easy listening. And, like all music of its kind, it pushes instrumental and vocal resources as far as they currently can go. . . .

But the purpose is not to shock. A fine musical mind is operating behind all this. Mr. Shapey . . . is 44 years old, is an important theorist, a conductor who specializes in new music and a composer whose own music is highly admired in the post-Webern group.  

Shapey performed the all-Varèse program again at the University of Chicago on 11 May 1965, with the composer in attendance (see Fig. 6.2). After he returned to New York, Varèse wrote to Shapey, “I cannot repeat enough how wonderful it is to hear my music purely and simply recreated. You not only understand – you penetrate the spirit of the works, and the players respond to you as if they had been playing under you for years instead of months.”

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39 On Tuesday, 30 March 1965, Easley Blackwood played a piano recital at Carnegie Recital Hall, the first of the three concerts presented at Carnegie Hall and Carnegie Recital Hall under the auspices of the Contemporary Chamber Players. Blackwood’s program consisted of Pierre Boulez’s Piano Sonata No. 2 (1947-48) and the Piano Sonata No. 2, “Concord, Mass., 1840-1860” (ca. 1916-19, revised 1947) by Charles Ives. Shapey conducted the Contemporary Chamber Players in the other two concerts.


In 1965–66, Shapey wrote three works for strings that served to summarize many of his compositional preoccupations during the preceding two decades. In the String Trio (1965), Shapey recycled some of the ideas that he had employed in String Quartets Nos. 5 (1958) and 6

Figure 6.2 Ralph Shapey and Edgard Varèse, after the dress rehearsal for the all-Varèse concert at Mandel Hall, The University of Chicago, 11 May 1965. © 1965 The University of Chicago. By permission of the Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

Closing the Circle (I): String Trio (1965)

In 1965–66, Shapey wrote three works for strings that served to summarize many of his compositional preoccupations during the preceding two decades. In the String Trio (1965), Shapey recycled some of the ideas that he had employed in String Quartets Nos. 5 (1958) and 6
(1963), including the use of static constructions and extreme registers. In the Partita for Violin Solo (1965), he recalled *Etchings* for Solo Violin (1945) by his use of variation form and dotted rhythms. In the Partita for Violín and Thirteen Players (1966), Shapey revisited his “Invocation” Concerto for Violin and Orchestra (1958), reconceiving his ideas within smaller, more practical dimensions, and incorporating compositional concepts that he had developed during the late 1950s, including the circulation and juxtaposition of “images.”

Shapey wrote the grim two-movement String Trio\(^{42}\) between 6 May and 27 May 1965. The work was commissioned by, and dedicated to, the Kindler Foundation of Washington, D.C.\(^{43}\) Shapey began the Trio a few days before the arrival of Edgard Varèse in Chicago on 10 May 1965\(^{44}\) to attend a repeat performance of the Carnegie Hall all-Varèse program on the following day, and to give a lecture about originality in twentieth-century music at the University of Chicago.\(^{45}\) It would be reasonable to posit that the music of Varèse was very much on Shapey’s mind when he composed the String Trio, and this hypothesis is borne out by the

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\(^{42}\) Theodore Presser Co. publishes the String Trio: #11440516S.


\(^{44}\) Itinerary for Varèse’s trip to Chicago, in Ralph Shapey, letter to Edgard Varèse, 5 May 1965. Shapey Papers, Box 4.

\(^{45}\) Olivia Mattis suggests that Varèse delivered the lecture on 12 May. Shapey’s letter of 5 May, however, seems to indicate that Varèse’s activities at the university would end with the reception after the 11 May concert. This would suggest that Varèse gave his lecture on the morning of 11 May. The Paul Sacher Stiftung in Basel, Switzerland holds Varèse’s text. Thanks to Olivia Mattis for information about the subject matter of the lecture. Olivia Mattis, email to Barry Wiener, 19 November 2009.
massive, block-like style of the work. Shapey requested that the viola tune down the C string to B2, and that the cello tune down the C string to Ab1. These retunings give the Trio a distinctive dark timbre, which is accentuated by Shapey’s constant repetition of the cello’s Ab1.

The first movement of the Trio begins with an untitled “introduction,” followed by three distinct, unlabeled sections in which Shapey develops its ideas. At the end of each section, Shapey employs the ideas of the “introduction” as a refrain, repeating them in abbreviated form. These refrains function in a manner analogous to Shapey’s periodic repetition of a “motto” or theme as a unifying device in many of his works. The “introduction” and section 1 comprise more than half of the 78-measure movement. The refrains, as well as sections 2 and 3, have the character of brief episodes, with sections 2 and 3 serving the purpose of providing rhythmic and timbral variety within the formal structure. Formal divisions within the movement are demarcated by double bars, except for the beginning of the first and third refrains (see Table 6.3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6.3</th>
<th>Ralph Shapey, String Trio (1965), I: Form. Parentheses indicate that the beginnings of refrains 1 and 3 are not demarcated by double bars.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section</strong></td>
<td><strong>Measure Nos.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Introduction”</td>
<td>1–8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>9–38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Refrain 1)</td>
<td>39–47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>48–56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refrain 2</td>
<td>57–61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>62–70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Refrain 3)</td>
<td>71–8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The entire first movement of the Trio revolves around the cello’s constant repetition of its thunderous low Ab1. Shapey emphasizes the intensity of the sound of the cello’s Ab1 as well as
his use of a maximally wide pitch space by simultaneously presenting the violin’s C7 and the
cello’s Ab1 four times within the opening eight-measure “prologue” (see Ex. 6.14). The viola’s
Bb3–Db4 dyad bisects the registral extremes unevenly, serving as a chordal “axis,”\textsuperscript{46} three
octaves below C7, and two octaves above Ab1.

\textsuperscript{46} See Ex. 1.25, which illustrates “direct balance through immediate acceptance of space
centers.”

\[\text{\textit{\textbf{Example 6.14}} \quad \text{Use of a wide pitch space, in Ralph Shapey, String Trio (1965), I, mm. 1-8. Motivic variants are circled and labeled. © 1993 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.}}\]
The violin’s opening C7 serves as the initial pitch of a descending motive that spans three and a half octaves (labeled as “A₁” in Ex. 6.14). The motive begins with a concave arc, C7–B3–A4, before ending with the sustained dyad, G3/F#4 (labeled as “X₁” in Ex. 6.14). The violin motive is echoed by the cello’s mirroring motive (“B₁”), which has a convex shape. The cello begins with a sustained Ab1, and leaps to an F4–G#3 descending dyad (“X₂”). Shapey varies the violin and cello motives by exchanging their concluding pitches in m. 2. The violin substitutes Ab3/F4 for its original G3/F#4 dyad, while the cello substitutes the descending leap, F#4–G3, for its original F4–G#3 gesture. In m. 3, Shapey introduces an ascending cello motive (“C₁”), in opposition to the opening violin and cello motives, which both conclude with a descent. The new motive covers the two and a half octave span, E2–B4. Shapey couples the cello’s B4 dotted quarter note with the violin’s F5/Ab6 double stop, creating the diminished trichord, B4/F5/Ab6. The pc content of the violin’s F5/Ab6 double stop replicates that of the “X₂” dyad.

When the diminished trichord is restated in m. 7, the accompanying “ascending” cello motive is placed after, rather than before it. Shapey reverses the direction of the concluding leap.
of the motive. He creates a motivic variant ("C₂" in Ex. 6.14) that mirrors the first statement of the "ascending" motive. The new motivic variant descends to the low bass, ending with the final C#2 of the "prologue." By inverting the direction of the concluding leap of the "ascending" cello motive, Shapey creates a structural parallelism between the two versions of the motive ("C₁" and "C₂") and the mirroring "A" and "B" motives in mm. 1-2, linking three of the compositional ideas that serve as building blocks for the "introduction," and for the first movement as a whole.

In section 1, Shapey interleaves the ideas of the "introduction" in short polyrhythmic passages and develops them. In the second half of m. 9, he transposes the triplet figure that begins the "ascending" cello motive by ip +3, and links it to the cello’s Ab₁, the first pitch of its "B₁" motive (see Ex. 6.15). Shapey also presents the "ascending" cello motive in an altered configuration while preserving its original pc content. On the second beat of m. 9, the viola states "C₁" in a permutation, E₃–Eb₅–B₄–B₂, that includes the registral descent at the end of "C₂" (see Ex. 6.15).
In the succeeding measures, Shapey broadens his presentation of the “ascending” cello motive by halving its tempo, transforming eighth-note triplets into quarter-note triplets through the rhythmic device of augmentation.\(^{47}\) In mm. 31-2, he also lengthens the original “C\(_1\)” version of the motive (E\(_2\)–Eb4–Bb3–B4), incorporating two additional pitches, including the cello’s structurally significant Ab1 (see Ex. 6.16).

\(^{47}\) Shapey employs a similar technique in String Quartet No. 6 (1963). See Ex. 7.3, which reproduces Fig. 3, p. 495, from Andrew Mead, “How to Be, What to Do: Character and Action in Ralph Shapey’s String Quartet No. 6,” Contemporary Music Review 27, nos. 4/5 (August-October 2008): 489-509.
Shapey also introduces quarter-note triplet figures that share the concave and convex shapes of the paired opening violin and cello motives, “A” and “B” (see Ex. 6.17).

Example 6.16  Motivic extension, in Ralph Shapey, String Trio (1965), I, mm. 31-2. The cello’s C sub 1 motive is circled. © 1993 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

Example 6.17  Mirroring shapes, in Ralph Shapey, String Trio (1965), I, mm. 36-7, violin only. © 1993 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.
Shapey accompanies these figures by insistently repeating fragmentary variants of motive “A” in the viola and cello (not shown). The cello’s transposed motivic figure, A3-Ab1, is particularly noticeable because of Shapey’s reiteration of Ab1.

Shapey uses the technique of motivic development with increasing subtlety during the latter part of the movement. In section 2, the violin presents a subtractive rhythmic series that begins with a quarter note and ends with a thirty-second note. Shapey combines the rhythmic series with a veiled statement of motive “A1.” The final two trichords and the concluding dyad of the rhythmic series together include four of the five pitches of “A1:” B3, A4, G3 and F#4 (see Ex. 6.18).

**Example 6.18** Subtractive rhythmic series, in Ralph Shapey, String Trio (1965), I, m. 48. Motives are circled. © 1993 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

Values in thirty-second notes:
While the violin introduces its subtractive rhythmic series in mm. 48-9, the viola plays two- and three-note leaping figures (Eb5–Bb3 and Eb5–Bb3–B2) that include three of the four pcs of motive “C1.” The cello completes the motive by stating E2, its opening pitch. As a counterpoint to the violin and viola figures, the cello also plays a new variant of the “B” motive (see Ex. 6.18).

All three members of the trio employ mutes throughout section 2, producing an eerie timbre that contrasts with the full-bodied ensemble sound of section 1. In section 3, the viola and cello accompany a violin melody by playing linked ostinati. The whispering timbres of the section are produced by Shapey’s instruction that the two instruments play flautando, connecting the music timbrally to section 2, and contrasting with the intervening refrain.

The violin melody of section 3 employs the upper registral boundary of the ensemble. It recalls Shapey’s use of the highest register of the violin in sections 3 and 5 of String Quartet No. 6. The violin melody fuses the pc content of the cello’s motives, “B1”/{F, F#, G, G#(Ab)} and “C1” {Bb, B, Eb, E}. It concludes with the diminished trichord, B–F–Ab, originally stated as a simultaneity at the conclusion of the first statement of “C1” in m. 3 (see Ex. 6.19).

In the shorter, more schematic second movement of the Trio, the members of the ensemble take turns in elaborating a group of motivic gestures, both soloistically and within the polyphonic texture. Shapey continuously reorders the thematic ideas. He also alters their pc content. The motivic shapes are always clearly perceptible to the listener, however, reflecting Shapey’s conception of the circulation of recognizable “images” within his music. The opening violin tetrachord of movement II, G3/F#4/C5/B5, includes four of the five pcs of motive “A₁,” the opening violin motive of movement I, excluding only A (see Ex. 6.20).


The Trio concludes with a reminiscence of the beginning of the first movement, unifying the entire work. The opening motives are strikingly reintroduced by the cello’s retuning of its C string to Ab1, and the viola’s retuning of its C string to B2 as the instruments are played,
producing glissandi (not shown). Shapey later reused the beginning of the second movement in the opening section of the Sonata for Solo Violin (1971).

Violinist Allen Ohmes, violist William Preucil, and cellist Joel Krosnick, all members of the Iowa String Quartet, premiered Shapey’s String Trio at the Textile Museum in Washington, D. C., on 10 January 1966. In The Washington Post, Paul Hume wrote,

The Shapey Trio is a tough business. Its outer movements are marked “molto legato,” while the middle movement, taking no chances on Italian, says, “In a bravura cadenza-like manner.” During one moment of purposeful monotony, the cellist tunes his C string down a minor third, bowing all the while. It is an interesting device that permits the remainder of the work to use lower notes than ordinarily come out of the cello.

The style is tormenting in its insistent repetitions. In that the stringed instruments are allowed to play sustained lines and phrases there is a kind of lyricism. How much the music says, I find it hard to say after a single performance, yet I cannot find it easy to ask for a second. 48

Closing the Circle (II): Partita for Violin Solo (1965)

The Partita for Violin Solo 49 was composed in November 1965 for violinist Max Pollikoff. Shapey began composing the Partita three days after the death of Edgard Varèse on 6 November 1965, 50 and shortly after the death of his mother as well. 51 Despite the events

48 Paul Hume, “Iowa Quartet Performs New Works Skillfully,” The Washington Post, 12 January 1966: C7. When members of the Arditti quartet performed the String Trio in Chicago in 1988, John von Rhein wrote, “Amid a program almost evenly divided between the older and younger generations of European avant-gardists—the former represented by Scelsi’s Quartet No. 5, Ligeti’s Quartet No. 2 (the ‘classic’ of the bunch) and Xenakis’ ‘Tetras’; the latter by Ferneyhough’s Third Quartet and Rihm’s Quartet No. 3—it was perhaps not surprising that Chicagoan Shapey’s 1965 String Trio, with its typically tough, resonant power, should have held its own so well.” John von Rhein, “Arditti Conquers in Debut Concert,” Chicago Tribune, 8 March 1988: 9.
49 Theodore Presser Co. publishes the Partita for Violin Solo: #11440482.
50 There was no funeral. Varèse was cremated. See Fernand Ouellette, Edgard Varèse, trans. Derek Coltman (New York: The Orion Press, 1968), 218.
surrounding its composition, the style and technique of the Partita have little overt connection with the music of Varèse, much less so than most of the music that Shapey had written over the preceding decade.

Max Pollikoff premiered the Partita on a concert in the new music concert series, “Music in Our Time,” presented at Town Hall in New York on 30 January 1967. According to New York Times critic Theodore Strongin, Pollikoff “played it as though it belonged to him. It is full of bravura double stops and large melodic skips, and comes out as though through clenched teeth, it is so intense.” In Carol K. Baron’s interview with Shapey, he discussed Alan Rich’s review of the concert for New York Magazine, recalling both Rich’s praise of the work and criticism of Pollikoff’s playing, and mentioned approvingly Rich’s suggestion that the piece was “on the borderline of tonality.”

Although Shapey had written several works for his own instrument during the 1950s and early 1960s, the three-movement Partita was his first piece for solo violin since Etchings (1945). Despite the twenty-year gap between Etchings and the Partita, the two compositions have notable similarities that underline the essential originality of Shapey’s style. The first movement of the Partita, like Etchings, is a set of variations. Shapey conspicuously employs dotted rhythms in

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54 Carol K. Baron, interview with Ralph Shapey, Chicago, 5-9 July 1975, transcript, 67. Wolpe/Baron Archive.
both works. The violinistic requirements for both pieces are similar as well: large intervals, leaps and chords.

In the Partita, Shapey synthesizes variation form and symmetrical structures. The first movement consists of an “introduction” and five variations. Neither the “introduction” nor the variations are labeled. Shapey demarcates each of the internal divisions of the movement by a caesura, however.

As in the first movement of the String Trio, Shapey employs the ideas of the “introduction” as a refrain. He presents an abbreviated statement of the “introduction” at the end of each of the first four variations. The first movement is framed by the “introduction” and its modified, full-length repetition in the second half of variation 5. At the conclusion of movement III, Shapey again restates the first movement “introduction” in truncated form as a refrain.

Shapey presents an “image” consisting of three linked motivic elements at the beginning of the Partita. He divides the “introduction” into three parts by forceful statements of the opening Bb3/D4 half-note dyad, motivic element “A.” A brief flourish, “B,” and a descending closing gesture, “C,” complete the “image.” Shapey places a virtuosic expansion of motivic elements “B” and “C” at the center of the “introduction.” The elaboration of motivic elements “B” and “C” includes two tremolandi, followed by a series of variants of the closing gesture. The “introduction” ends with a modified version of the opening “image” (see Ex. 6.21).

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56 Cuckson, 6-7, 8-10.
Shapey divides the six sections of the first movement into three pairs. He links the “introduction” and variation 1 by employing similar motivic figures. In variation 1, Shapey often inverts the direction of motivic elements “B” and ”C,” while preserving their general shape and pc content (see Ex. 6.22).
Shapey also couples together variation 2 with variation 4, and variation 3 with variation 5. In variation 2, Shapey transforms motivic element “B,” employing it exclusively in the compressed, verticalized form of chords. The chords of “B” imitate those of the originally chordal motivic element “C,” with which they alternate throughout the variation (see Ex. 6.23). Shapey again employs the chordal conceit in the energetic variation 4, described as “march-like” in the score. The vigorous dotted rhythms of the variation recall both the early Etchings for Solo Violin (1945) and Beethoven’s Grosse Fuge, Shapey’s favorite composition (see Ex. 6.24).  

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In variations 3 and 5, Shapey creates widely spaced lines, in which he repeatedly links dotted figures with triplets. Shapey achieves harmonic and structural contrast with the thickly-textured variation 2 by limiting the violin to single notes and dyads in variation 3 (see Ex. 6.25), except for the brief concluding refrain. In variation 5, Shapey echoes the melodic gestures of variation 3. In particular, he repeats a Bb6–C#4–G#5–A3–C#7–C5 figure (“A”), grouped within a half-note triplet (see Ex. 6.26). Shapey also presents dotted eighth-note chains of dyads,
trichords and tetrachords (“B” in Ex. 6.26), recalling the series of eighth-note chords in variation 4 (not shown).


Shapey creates additional symmetries between the first movement and movements II and III. Lyrical successions of expanding dyads, first employed in variation 5 of movement I, punctuate the polyphonic texture of the slow, legato outer sections of movement II (see Ex. 6.27).


The vigorous dotted rhythms of the first movement’s variation 4 return in movement III (see Ex. 6.28).
In the middle section of movement II, Shapey creates a looping *moto perpetuo* in which the three elements, “A” ({F, F#, G#}), “B” ({G, C, Db}) and “C” ({A, B, Eb}), of a nine-pc motive are continuously reshuffled, and frequently modified by change of register and/or pc order (see Ex. 6.29). Shapey also expands the figures, adding pcs (A in “A₁,” Gb in “B₂,” E in “C₁”) and employing pc repetition (G# and A in “A₁”).
Shapey uses the opening Bb3/D4 dyad of the Partita to create structural contrast. Although the Bb3/D4 dyad is repeatedly restated during the “introduction,” it is not presented at the inception of any of the first movement’s five variations. Rather, its return usually demarcates the beginning of the closing refrain at the end of a variation.

Near the end of the “introduction,” Shapey inserts a B3/D4 dyad that serves as a complement to the Bb3/D4 dyad (see Ex. 6.30a). He employs the B3/D4 dyad prominently in variation 3, and later substitutes it for the Bb3/D4 dyad throughout the third movement refrain, which concludes the Partita. In the final refrain, Shapey makes additional chromatic modifications to the “introduction” as well (see Ex. 6.30b).

Given the many thematic links within the Partita, the concluding third movement refrain gives the work as a whole the character of a large rondo (see Table 6.4).

Table 6.4  Ralph Shapey, Partita for Violin Solo (1965): Form. “A” represents the “introduction” of movement I, while “(A)” designates its truncated presentation in the refrain.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Movement/Section</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>I, “introduction”</td>
<td>Presentation of “image.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1; (A)</td>
<td>I, var. 1; see I, “introduction”</td>
<td>Inversion of “image;” refrain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B; (A)</td>
<td>I, var. 2</td>
<td>Chords; refrain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C; (A)</td>
<td>I, var. 3</td>
<td>Widely spaced lines; refrain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1; (A)</td>
<td>I, var. 4; see I, var. 2</td>
<td>Chords/dotted rhythms; refrain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1; A</td>
<td>I, var. 5; see I, var. 3 and “intro.”</td>
<td>Widely spaced lines, progressions of expanding dyads; modified full restatement of introduction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>II (a); see I, var. 5</td>
<td>Progressions of expanding dyads.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>II (b)</td>
<td>Moto perpetuo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>II (a)</td>
<td>Progressions of expanding dyads.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>III (a); see I, var. 4</td>
<td>Dotted rhythms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B3</td>
<td>III (b)</td>
<td>Dotted rhythms divided between polyphonic voices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2; (A)</td>
<td>III (a)</td>
<td>Dotted rhythms; refrain.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Closing the Circle (III): Partita for Violin and Thirteen Players (1966)

The twenty-minute, three-movement Partita for Violin and Thirteen Players, a second violin concerto in all but name, was by far the most important of Shapey’s compositional projects of 1966. The University of Chicago commissioned the work for its 75th anniversary. The Contemporary Chamber Players premiered the Partita for Violin and Thirteen Players with soloist Esther Glazer on 25 January 1967. In the following year, Glazer played the premiere of

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58 The score of the Partita for Violin and Thirteen Players is available from the Theodore Presser Co. Rental Library.
the “Invocation” Concerto for Violin and Orchestra (1958), with Shapey conducting the Chicago Symphony. In the Partita for Violin and Thirteen Players, the older and more mature composer revisited the idiom of the Concerto and employed his compositional techniques more efficiently, with an absence of the youthful bravado that marks (and occasionally mars) the earlier piece. Although the two works are of approximately equal length, the narrative structures of the Partita for Violin and Thirteen Players are more concise.

The size of the ensemble that Shapey employed in the Partita for Violin and Thirteen Players is necessarily smaller than that of the “Invocation” Concerto, limited by the forces that he had at his disposal at the University of Chicago. While the score of the Concerto calls for a full complement of strings, winds in twos, brass (3-2-2-1), three percussionists, piano and guitar, the new work was composed for a large chamber group. It requires two percussionists, along with solo string, wind and brass players, as well as the violin soloist. The inclusion of two parts for violin, one for a member of the ensemble, permits Shapey to occasionally present a “concertino” dialogue.

The Partita’s resemblances to *Ontogeny* (1958), *Rituals* (1959) and the “Invocation” Concerto (1958) are explainable by Shapey’s immersion in those scores while he was composing the piece. As a result of music director Jean Martinon’s advocacy of his music and admiration for his skills as a conductor, Shapey was able to conduct the Chicago Symphony in performances of all three works. Significantly, Shapey had originally planned to conduct the

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59 Jean Martinon (1910-76), conductor and composer. Martinon was music director of the Chicago Symphony from 1963-68. He was a composition student of Albert Roussel during the 1930s. Martinon’s papers are housed at Northwestern University. See the Finding Aid for the Jean Martinon Papers, Northwestern University Library, accessed 31 December 2013, http://findingaids.library.northwestern.edu/catalog/INU-ead-mus-archon-242.

60 The concerts were part of a series, funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, designed to promote the performance of orchestral works by American composers. See The Rockefeller Foundation,
“Invocation” Concerto in May 1966, while he was composing the Partita for Violin and Thirteen Instruments, but (according to critic Thomas Willis) the orchestral parts were lost in the mail.  

Martinon’s advocacy of Shapey’s music must be accounted more important than that of any other conductor, even taking into account the assistance that Dimitri Mitropoulos gave him in the 1950s and that Riccardo Muti would provide in the 1980s. The French conductor’s affinity for Shapey’s style was undoubtedly connected to their shared interest in the music of Varèse. Unfortunately for Shapey, the members of the Chicago Symphony disliked Martinon, at least partially due to his promotion of difficult contemporary works. Matters came to a head in 1968 when he programmed Elliott Carter’s Piano Concerto (1964-65) and Shapey’s “Invocation” Violin Concerto on the same concert, shortly before his tenure as music director was to come to an end. Martinon was succeeded as music director of the Chicago Symphony by George Solti, who never performed Shapey’s music in his twenty-two years with the orchestra. The Chicago

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63 “Contrary to what some revisionist critics assert, Martinon championed contemporary music more extensively than any of the CSO's postwar music directors; his long list of new repertoire is a matter of public record.” John von Rhein, “The CSO's Greatest Hits,” *Chicago Tribune*, 4 October 1990: 17E. See also Donal Henahan, “Jean Martinon, Conductor, Dead at 66: Wrote an Opera; A Controversial Figure,” *The New York Times*, 2 March 1976: 32.

64 24 May 1968, Mandel Hall, University of Chicago. According to Shapey, the orchestra tried to sabotage Shapey’s rehearsal of his “Invocation” Concerto because of their dislike of Martinon. Shapey, in turn, threatened to cancel the performance of the Concerto, but Martinon persuaded the players to cooperate. See Vivian Perlis, interview with Ralph Shapey, transcript, 21-22. Oral History American Music, Yale University.

65 George Solti (1912-97), music director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra from 1969-91.
Symphony did not perform Shapey’s music again until after Daniel Barenboim succeeded Solti as music director. Shapey conducted the premiere of his *Concerto Fantastique* (1988-89) with the orchestra at the University of Chicago’s Mandel Hall on 21 November 1991.

The formal organization of the Partita for Violin and Thirteen Players is based on two principles. Shapey employs his favorite concept of the juxtaposition and superimposition of “images.” While he never modifies some of the thematic and motivic ideas of the Partita, he subjects others to continuous development, producing a synthesis of dynamic and static processes.

In addition to his circulation of themes and motives, Shapey uses physical space as a major element of the musical structure, partitioning the ensemble into smaller units that are positioned in a widely dispersed arrangement. The instruments are divided into four instrumental groups. The strings, except for the double bass, are placed at the front of the stage (violin, viola, cello and solo violin). The oboe, clarinet, horn and double bass are placed at the back of the stage. The two flanking groups both include percussion, wind and brass instruments. Although Shapey does not provide a diagram for the instrumental layout, he indicates the spatial arrangement of the ensemble at the beginning of the first movement, making it possible to create a visual representation of the seating plan (see Fig. 6.3).

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Movement I of the Partita is divided into three parts, with two large episodes followed by a coda. The opening violin solo theme is central to the first episode and the coda, giving the movement a clear ABA form. The violin theme strongly recalls the violin cadenza that immediately follows the beginning of the “Invocation” Concerto, in what is undoubtedly a conscious reminiscence by Shapey (see Ex. 6.31a).

**Figure 6.3** Ralph Shapey, Partita for Violin and Thirteen Players (1966), seating plan. © 1977 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.
Shapey develops the violin solo theme both by registral expansion and the use of rapid triple- and quadruple-stopped chords (see Ex. 6.31b).

Example 6.31b Development of the violin solo theme, in Ralph Shapey, Partita for Violin and Thirteen Players (1966), I, mm. 32-3, violin only. © 1977 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

In m. 43, Shapey highlights the beginning of the second episode by presenting paired, unpitched percussion motives without accompaniment (see Ex. 6.32a). Both motives had previously been stated in the opening episode (not shown).
Shapey quickly transforms one of the percussion motives into a pitched idea, played by the marimba (see Ex. 6.32b). He had previously used the same developmental procedure in Dimensions (1960), transferring unpitched percussion motives to pitched instruments, as well as to the soprano soloist (see Exx. 4.45a and b). The pitched and unpitched percussion motives are related to a winding theme, played by the wind instruments, that Shapey derives from the violin solo theme (see Ex. 6.32c).
During the first half of the second episode, the percussion instruments are dominant within the ensemble texture. The strings are silent, with the exception of the violin soloist. Shapey exploits the spatial arrangement of the ensemble, with percussion instruments positioned on both sides of the stage, playing contrasting figures (not shown). Flanking wind and brass players then unite to present two statements of a proclamatory chordal motive, accompanied only by the violin soloist, who plays virtuosic gestures that recall the soloist’s passagework during the last movement of the “Invocation” Concerto (see Ex. 6.33).
Shapey treats the first movement chordal motive lyrically in movement II. He continuously permutes a decorated and extended version of the motive (see Ex. 6.34), passing it around the four groups of the subdivided ensemble. The solo violin does not participate in the main thematic working-out of movement II, playing only widely spaced figures that serve as decorative commentary on the chordal motive.

$\frac{3}{4} = 54$ ($\frac{3}{4} = 108$, $\frac{1}{2} = 27$)

Adagio delicatissimo (of simple tenderness)
The first episode of movement III is entitled “Adagio maestoso (of great gesture).” The movement opens and closes with a variant of the violin soloist’s initial theme. At the beginning of the movement, the theme is accompanied by other ideas derived from movement I: the viola’s quarter-note triplet figures and the cello’s widely spaced melodic line (see Ex. 6.35).
Shapey creates an interchange between the solo and ensemble violins (not shown), just as he had done at the beginning of the first movement of the Partita. He symbolizes the equal status of the two violins by positioning their lines together in the score. After m. 15, Shapey notates the violin solo part at the bottom of the score throughout the rest of the movement.

The opening twelve bars of movement III are written for strings alone. When the percussionists enter, they play the paired, unpitched motives that they had originally presented in movement I. The percussion motives are framed by the violin soloist’s introduction of a new, widely spaced, oscillating motive (see Ex. 6.36).

The second episode of movement III is headed, “Moderato con brio (of happy verve).” It begins with the violin soloist’s ascending thirty-second-note flourishes, accompanied by brief interjections by the winds, brass and contrabass (see Ex. 6.37).
The entrance of linked percussion ostinati announces the beginning of the third episode, entitled “Andante (of elegance).” The wood blocks and tom-toms divide one of the first movement’s paired, unpitched percussion motives, while the irons and bass drums present a new, briefer motive that is repeated in each measure (see Ex. 6.38). This motive is derived from the wood block/tom-tom motive by rearrangement and rhythmic diminution.
Midway through the third episode, several thematic/motivic ideas or “images” converge: the violin solo theme, played by the ensemble violinist; the violin’s ascending thirty-second-note flourishes, now played by the clarinet; the linked percussion ostinati; the violin’s widely spaced oscillating motive; and the viola’s quarter-note triplet figures (see Ex. 6.39).

The fourth episode serves as both culmination and recapitulation of the form of the movement. The violin soloist begins the episode by playing a steady stream of sixteenth notes, in a passage that recalls the finale of the “Invocation” Concerto (see Ex. 6.40).
The fourth episode has many links to earlier episodes. In mm. 79-81, the percussion instruments again play the linked ostinati of the third episode (not shown). Measures 83-92 replicate mm. 54-64, with the omission of a few subsidiary parts, and one redrawing of a bar line. The Partita ends with a synthesis of the opening and closing solo violin lines of movement I (see Ex. 6.41).


The formal symmetries of movement III are linked on a higher level to the structure of the first movement. In both movements I and III, the violin solo theme is stated both at the beginning and the conclusion. In addition, Shapey employs many of the same virtuosic gestures for the soloist in both movements. An additional parallel is the dominance of the percussion instruments at the center of each movement.

Much of the solo writing in the third movement recalls the violin’s virtuosic display in the “Invocation” Concerto. It is notable, however, that the Partita lacks a cadenza, which Shapey included in all of his other works for violin and ensemble during the 1950s and early 1960s.
Although Shapey’s solo violin writing is very demanding, the form of the Partita is focused instead on the canny circulation of themes and motives in a structurally and dramatically effective arrangement. In the Partita, Shapey created a compositional synthesis integrating two groups of seemingly incompatible techniques. He used static constructions and employed physical space as a structural element, procedures that he had learned from Varèse. Shapey combined these techniques with motivic and thematic development, as well as symmetrical formal structures. Shapey’s grand compromise justifies Leonard Meyer’s description of him as a “radical traditionalist.”

When Shapey premiered the Partita for Violin and Thirteen Instruments with soloist Esther Glazer on 25 January 1967, both the concert and its press coverage showed how far he had traveled from the beginning of his professional career less than twenty years before. The New York Times sent critic Theodore Strongin to Chicago to cover the event (see Fig. 6.4). Strongin eulogized Shapey as one of the central figures in the Chicago music world, and as a brilliant composer:

C.C.P. [the Contemporary Chamber Players of the University of Chicago] . . . led by its music director, Ralph Shapey, gave a concert of world premieres last night in honor of the university’s 75th anniversary year. Jean Martinon, conductor of the Chicago Symphony, showed up. What’s more, he brought his wife.

The Martinons’ presence caused a stir at Mandel Hall on the university campus where the concert was held. They were a symbol, said many, of a significant change in Chicago musical life since C.C.P. was founded and began giving concerts in 1964. . . .

As to the concert itself, it was a major contemporary event. . . .

Mr. Shapey’s Partita recalls at a distance the violin partitas of Bach as filtered through a keen, lyrical 20th century mind, with extra instrumental comment added.  

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The Partita both sums up major trends in Shapey’s compositional development and anticipates his future evolution. It exemplifies his reconsideration of the techniques that he had employed in his orchestral Trilogy (Ontogeny, “Invocation” Concerto and Rituals) (1958-59) when he finally had the opportunity to perform all three of its parts in the mid-1960s. At the same time, the Partita adumbrates a tendency that manifested itself repeatedly in Shapey’s music during the following decade: the use of larger, more discursive structures than those of most of his works of the early 1960s. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Shapey conceived many of his pieces in monumental terms. He designed the Partita-Fantasia for Cello and Sixteen Players (1967), a work approximately twenty minutes long, as a companion piece to the Partita for

Violin and Thirteen Players. String Quartet No. 7 (1972) is the longest of Shapey’s mature quartets. The *Fromm Variations* for Piano (1966-73), the oratorio, *Praise* (1971), and *The Covenant* for Soprano and Sixteen Players (1977) are all between forty minutes and an hour in length. These compositions were among the central accomplishments of the next decade of Shapey’s career.
CHAPTER 7:
RECONSIDERATIONS – THINKING TWICE ABOUT RALPH SHAPEY

Shapey’s Use of Varied Repetition in the Light of Contemporary Theory

Most composers today . . . generally have the most primitive and obvious way of dealing with time; they do a little bit of something that repeats itself over and over again and then a bit of something else, a pattern that remains most unimaginative no matter how strange the pieces sound. Their only concern is with block-like, terribly simplified structures of time—and this I find distressing.¹

Instead, you have static chunks of repetitive design. I find this only one very small and not-too-interesting possibility. We had so much of that with the Rite of Spring and the period around it. In fact, I think Stravinsky himself stated later that he gradually lost interest in this way of composing and soon started to develop more interesting continuities, such as those of the Symphony in Three Movements and many other later works.²

Elliott Carter (1971)

During the 1950s, Stefan Wolpe reconceptualized his ideas about musical continuity. He moved from a structural model based on traditional definitions of causation to a new notion of “oblique” time structures³ that “integrated motivic developmental processes . . . with jarring moments of radical disruption.”⁴ Among the compositions in which Wolpe presented his new

² Edwards, 38.
³ “Wolpe conceived ‘oblique time-structures’ as an alternative to ‘horizontal’ time structures, which he defined . . . as highly developmental textures shot through with ‘linear-thematic forces.’ . . . And it was also an alternative to what he called ‘vertical’ time structures . . . which he associated with the chance music of John Cage.” Brigid Maureen Cohen, Stefan Wolpe and the Avant-Garde Diaspora (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 71-2.
⁴ Cohen, 71-2. In “Thinking Twice,” Wolpe wrote, “The empirical notion of any one-dimensional (that is causal and argumentative) connection between aspects of an event renders the event as conditional and one-sided. . . . To move in all directions because all aspects are exposed to each other . . . will yield the view from all sides. Everything becomes connectable.” Wolpe, “Thinking Twice,” in Das Ganze überdenken, ed. Thomas Phleps (Saarbrücken: Pfau Verlag, 2002), 167-97, especially 191.
type of musical discourse were *Seven Pieces* for Three Pianos (1951), *Enactments* (1950-53) and the brief String Quartet fragment (1951).

Although Ralph Shapey did not take an immediate interest in Wolpe’s new musical language, he began to find it increasingly meaningful as he searched for his own mature idiom during the late 1950s. Shapey did not, however, follow Wolpe in his development of a multifaceted discourse that integrated the concepts of development and discontinuity. He seized on Wolpe’s new gestural language, only to situate it within Varèse’s “movement of sound-masses, of shifting planes . . . taking the place of linear counterpoint.” Shapey became a leading figure among the many young composers who were influenced by Varèse during the 1950s, both in Europe and in America.

In place of Wolpe’s complex dialectic, Shapey employed repetition within continuously varied contexts. Dora Hanninen has attempted to evaluate this particular aspect of repetition, labeling the phenomenon as “recontextualization:”

A “repetition” may be effectively transformed by a change in musical context. To give this kind of experience (and our subject) a name, I offer the term recontextualization. Recontextualization indicates a (listener's perception of) phenomenal transformation of repetition . . . induced by a change in musical context. It is a strange kind of repetition—better, an estranged repetition, in which repetition doesn't sound (primarily) like repetition.6

Referring to Morton Feldman’s *Crippled Symmetry*, Hanninen suggests that “phenomenal transformation of repetition creates coherence and continuity.”7 She clarifies her definition of

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7 Ibid.
recontextualization by specifying that it “is not a kind of varied repetition but its opposite, signaling perception not of repetition but of change.”  

In String Quartet No. 5 (1958), Shapey employs a procedure that can be defined as “recontextualization.” He interpolates passages from the first movement into new contexts within the second, a technique in some ways comparable to Stravinsky’s use of cross-cutting to reposition episodes within a score. The passages are not internally modified and serve as impermeable elements within a mosaic-like construction. Measures 1-6 of movement I are repeated in the middle of movement II, labeled as mm. 55-60. In mm. 61-8, Shapey superimposes a vocal line over the otherwise unchanged music of movement I, melding the ideas of movements I and II (see Ex. 7.1).

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8 Hanninen, 64.
10 As discussed in chapter 3, the use of measure numbers in movement II of String Quartet No. 5 has no bearing on their position within the movement, merely indicating their relationship and their continuity with the music of movement I.
From the middle of m. 68 to the end of m. 70, Shapey presents slightly altered material from the beginning of movement I, along with a superimposed vocal line. This leads to another literal repetition, that of mm. 51-2 in movement I as mm. 71-2 in movement II. Shapey repeats the opening three measures of the Quartet twice more in movement II, first as mm. 75-7, then as mm. 78-80. By superimposing the words “I Am” over the final repetition of the opening measures, Shapey transforms their meaning in a manner that encapsulates both the musical and ideological trajectory of the work (see Ex. 7.2).

12 Measures 55-74, 75-7 and 78-80 are separated by music that is labeled, not by measure numbers, but by rehearsal letters.
13 For a fuller discussion, see the analysis of String Quartet No. 5 in chapter 3.
Example 7.2  Concluding measures, in Ralph Shapey, String Quartet No. 5 with Female Voice (1958), II, mm. 78-80 (cf. Exx. 3.33a and 7.1). © 1958 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.
Stravinsky’s Continuity Strategies and Shapey’s Music

Gretchen Horlacher has demonstrated that Stravinsky’s continuity strategies are based on the careful arrangement of “ordered successions” of permutations of musical ideas, rather than on the juxtaposition of static blocks of sound.\textsuperscript{14} Her analyses offer a broad set of tools with which to approach Stravinsky’s music. The concept of recontextualization is subsumed into a comprehensive critique of Stravinsky’s use of small variations to generate directed motion.

\textsuperscript{14} Horlacher, viii: “An ordered succession identifies how Stravinsky manipulates repetition by showing both those things preserved in a series of iterations and those things that change.”
The music that Shapey composed during the 1960s can be fruitfully interpreted from a similar analytical perspective. It provides many examples of the use of “ordered successions,” analogous to those described by Horlacher. Ironically, Shapey denigrated the music of Stravinsky:

Shapey: He [Wolpe] didn’t really have to say, “Don’t you know the Stravinsky score?” Of course, I knew the Stravinsky score. Matter of fact, I hated Stravinsky in those days. I didn’t like Stravinsky. I still don’t like Stravinsky. That’s funny. I only like his early works. But anyhow, I knew Stravinsky, and I studied the scores.¹⁵

Like Stravinsky, Shapey employed ordered successions of different types. In String Quartet No. 6 (1963), the cello theme and its successively presented variants undergird the structure of the entire Quartet.¹⁶ Shapey continuously rearranges the pc ordering of the theme while preserving its basic shape. In addition, he transforms the theme by employing processes of rhythmic augmentation and diminution. Shapey also structures the passage by creating a registral arch. The cello ascends to its highest register before descending back to the bottom of its range. It concludes with a whole note on its lowest pitch, Bb1 (see Ex. 7.3).

¹⁵ Carol K. Baron, interview with Ralph Shapey, Chicago, 5-9 July 1975, transcript, 91. Wolpe/Baron Archive.

Figure 3 Ralph Shapey, String Quartet No. 6, motivic development in the opening cello recitative, mm. 1–11. © 1977 Theodore Presser Co.
In the second movement of the Partita for Violin and Thirteen Instruments (1966), Shapey similarly employs an ordered succession of thematic variants. Shapey creates a structure dependent as much on the circulation of the theme within the instrumental texture as on its modification throughout the movement. The theme is stated eight times. The first, sixth and eighth statements of the theme are presented by the strings. Statement 2 is presented by a quartet comprised of the flute, bassoon, trumpet and trombone. Shapey makes small changes to the theme, providing a foil for its original version. In the fourth statement (clarinet, bassoon, trumpet and glockenspiel), Shapey combines the first half of statement 2 and the second half of statement 1. Shapey repeats statement 1 as statement 6 and statement 2 as statement 8, producing a rondo-like form.

The most significant change in the contour of the theme during the course of the movement concerns the structure of melodic motion. Within the ordered succession of thematic statements from 1-5 (excluding the fusion of statements 1 and 2 within statement 4), Shapey reaches the pc, A, with increasing rapidity (see Exx. 7.4 and 7.5).
Shapey concludes the movement with a brief melodic figure, G#3–B3–G3–A3, that summarizes the structural motion within the theme, from G# to A (see Ex. 7.6).

Example 7.4  Ordered succession in Ralph Shapey, Partita for Violin and Thirteen Players (1966), II, mm. 2-9, excerpted from ensemble score. The pc, A, goal of melodic motion, is circled in each variant of the theme. © 1977 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

Example 7.5  “Statement 5” of ordered succession in Ralph Shapey, Partita for Violin and Thirteen Players (1966), II, mm. 12-3, excerpted from ensemble score. The pc, A, goal of melodic motion, is circled (cf. Ex. 7.4). © 1977 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.
In statement 5, the violin soloist interrupts the ensemble’s presentation of the theme (see Ex. 7.5), obscuring its compressed shape. Shapey produces a climax in statement 7 by dividing the theme and circulating its elements spatially within the ensemble, in an imitation of Webernian pointillism (see Ex. 7.7).

Example 7.6  Melodic figure, illustrating structural motion within the theme, in Ralph Shapey, Partita for Violin and Thirteen Players (1966), II, mm. 22-3. The pc, A, goal of melodic motion, is circled (cf. Exx. 7.4 and 7.5). Note that the beginning of m. 22 is not shown in the example. © 1977 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.
Example 7.7  Pointillistic texture within a thematic statement, in Ralph Shapey, Partita for Violin and Thirteen Players (1966), II, mm. 18-9. Note that only the first part of m. 19 is included in the example. © 1977 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.
In the second movement of *Configuration* for Flute and Piano (1964), Shapey creates a more complicated structure. He presents five statements of a winding flute theme, suspended above a slow piano ostinato. These statements partition the movement into segments. The theme, in turn, can be subdivided into three smaller fragments, distinguished by characteristic pitch relationships, motives and rhythmic patterns (see Ex. 7.8). Fragment “x” consists of the initial Eb4 and the following F#4. This figure appears in fuller form near the end of segment 1 as D#–C–F#. It is later presented in an enharmonic respelling (Eb–C–F#), and with its pcs reordered (C–F#–D#). The second fragment of the theme, “y,” begins with a sixteenth-note G#4, and concludes with the ascending sixteenth-note triplet, C4–Bb4–A5. It includes a series of motivic figures that twist and turn melodically, echoing each other: G#4–D4–F4; B3–C#5–Ab4–B4; G4–Eb4–G4–Eb4–F#4. Shapey rhythmically differentiates these related thematic shapes. He contrasts a short–long sixteenth-note–eighth-note pattern, eighth-note and sixteenth-note triplets, and a thirty-second-note quintuplet. The last part of the theme, “z,” begins with a sixteenth-note C#5, and ends with the descending diminished fourth, Ab4–E4. While its melodic shapes are similar to those of the previous thematic fragment, its rhythms are appropriately slower, given that it rounds off the phrase.

**Example 7.8** Subdivisions of the flute theme, in Ralph Shapey, *Configuration* for Flute and Piano (1964), II, mm. 1-5. © 1977 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.
The five statements of the theme can be analyzed as an ordered succession, in which Shapey manipulates motives and rhythmic patterns to create a series of varied repetitions (see Exx. 7.9 and 7.10). Shapey continuously modifies his presentation of thematic elements. Only segment 3 offers an additional complete statement of the theme, comparable to segment 1. Shapey truncates the theme in the second segment. The segment consists primarily of motive “B,” repeated in a slightly altered pc ordering and registral arrangement. Shapey links motive “B” to an abbreviated version of motive “D” (G–F#) that omits the pc, Eb. By way of contrast, in the fourth segment, Shapey elaborates upon each of the three thematic fragments. The fifth and final segment is devoted primarily to development of the concluding fragment, “z.” The flute’s final pitch, Eb4, is identical to its opening pitch, underlining the essentially circular character of Shapey’s musical narrative.

In segment 4, Shapey generates new pc relationships by transposing the second half of fragment “y,” the central portion of the theme. In segment 5, Shapey focuses on the related motives, “A” and “E.” By introducing the “C” motive (B4–G4–D#4) as well, he links segment 5 to segments 1 and 3.

Shapey uses rhythm as well as pitch as a structural tool throughout the movement. The short–long figure, “a,” is transformed into its opposite, a long–short figure, “a1.” Shapey employs half-note (“f”), quarter-note (“e”), eighth-note (“b”) and sixteenth-note (“d”) triplets, as well as thirty-second-note quintuplets (“c”). From the standpoint of rhythm as well as pitch, Shapey presents a profusion of figures throughout the first four segments, while the last segment approaches a point of stasis as the movement nears its conclusion.
Example 7.9 Motives in Ralph Shapey, *Configuration* for Flute and Piano (1964), II, flute only. Motives and their variants are circled and labeled from A–E. Each segment of the ordered succession is numbered (cf. Ex. 7.8). © 1977 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.
Example 7.10  Rhythmic patterns, in Ralph Shapey, *Configuration* for Flute and Piano (1964), II, flute only. Patterns are labeled by letter: “a” = short–long; “a₁” = long–short; “b” = eighth-note triplet; “c” = thirty-second-note quintuplet; “d” = sixteenth-note triplet; “e” = quarter-note triplet; “f” = half-note triplet. Each segment of the ordered succession is numbered (see Ex. 7.8). © 1977 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.
In the fourth movement of *Incantations* for Soprano and Ten Instruments (1961), Shapey manipulates the parameters of an ordered succession with greater precision than in *Configuration*. The soprano soloist sings against a delicate percussion backdrop. The entire soprano line of the movement can be divided into fifteen segments. The boundaries between segments are usually articulated by Shapey’s periodic return to the initial pc, C#.

The segments are, in turn, subdivided into varied presentations of a set of four motives, differentiated by durational values, rhythm, direction and articulation, as well as by pc content (see Ex. 7.11).

Segment 1 begins with a motive consisting of a single sustained tone, C#5. After a sixteenth rest, Shapey presents motive 2, the ascending gesture, G3–D#4–G#4. It includes a series of durations of progressively decreasing length: quarter note, dotted eighth note, eighth note. The ascending gesture is followed by motive 3, a rapid, leaping gesture that begins with two slurred staccato notes. The durations of this three-note motive, comprised of two sixteenth notes and a thirty-second note, continue the series of diminishing values displayed by the previous two motives. The fourth and last motive is a symmetrical neighbor-note gesture, E5–D5–D5–E5. It consists of a dotted quarter note, followed by three quarter notes that are punctuated by an interpolated eighth rest. These durations are noticeably larger than those of the previous motive.

As the movement proceeds, Shapey shuffles the order of the four motives, as well as modifying pc content, pc order, gestural direction, register and rhythm within each motive.

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17 Horlacher, 25: “When a work is easily grouped into segments . . . those segments also define a succession of events, since the partitioning of elements into groups also necessarily arranges those groups into order.”
Shapey often combines motives as well. To elucidate the movement’s structure, each segment of the soprano line is presented on a single staff in the example below.\footnote{Horlacher, 34: “An initial model phrase . . . is superimposed with subsequent phrases/repetitions such that features held in common between them are vertically aligned. This format describes the phrasal form of the excerpt as it also draws our attention to variations the composer makes to a returning iteration. . . . By tracing a path through a series of ordered, successive phrases, this format identifies how varied repetition may also be regarded as continuous development.”}
Example 7.11  Ordered succession, in Ralph Shapey, *Incantations* for Soprano and Ten Instruments (1961), IV, soprano only. Each segment of the soprano line is numbered. Motives are numbered and bracketed. Instances of the pc, C#/Db, are circled. © 1977 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.
As in the case of *Configuration*, the table shows that what, at first hearing, seems to be a group of minimally varied phrase repetitions is actually a series of carefully plotted developments. Shapey articulates the boundaries between segments by his characteristic technique of narrative circularity. He repeatedly returns to the beginning of his sequence of ideas, creating a sense of stasis that contradicts the progressive elements of the form. On occasion, Shapey deliberately creates ambiguity in demarcating divisions between phrases/segments. For example, the quarter-note C#5 in segment 4 might also be considered the first note of the segment, rather than the dotted-eighth-note G3 that opens the statement of
motive 1/2 (see Ex. 7.11). Repositioning C#5 as the opening note of segment 4 restores the parallelism between statements of motive 1 at the beginning of segments. At the same time, however, it destroys the parallelism between statements of motive 2 throughout the movement.

On the level of thematic manipulation, the evolution of ideas in the fourth movement of *Incantations* is dependent on three main factors: 1) changes in the order of motives; 2) changes in their content within segments; 3) transformation of motives between successive segments. After the first two segments, Shapey repeatedly changes the order of the four motives. He combines motives within most of the segments as well. In addition, he often omits one of the motives within a segment. For example, motive 4 is omitted in segments 7-11. Shapey also creates motivic parallelisms and directional symmetry. He balances the ascending gestures in segments 1, 2 and 4 and segments 7-9 by descending gestures in segments 4-6 and segments 10-12.

Although Shapey’s music can be parsed by using Horlacher’s intellectual construct, his permutation and variation of motives fits her model for Stravinsky’s music only intermittently. Shapey’s handling of motives is indebted, rather, to Wolpe’s teaching and practice.

In “Broken Sequences: Fragmentation, Abundance, Beauty,” Christopher Hasty points to Wolpe’s use of “massive repetition, much of it tantalizingly close but never ‘exact.’”19 He provides an example from Wolpe’s *Form IV* for Piano (1969), showing Wolpe’s variation of a three-note motive, C#–Bb–C. The graphic layout of the example displays two versions of the motive with a different central pc (see Ex. 7.12, “C” and “A”), together with a transposition of the motive (“B”). In addition, it illustrates how Wolpe registrally expands and compresses the motive (see Ex. 7.12, “E” and “F”).

19 Christopher Hasty, “Broken Sequences: Fragmentation, Abundance, Beauty,” *Perspectives of New Music* 40, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 155-73, especially 159.
In the final movement of *Incantations*, Shapey employs a similar arching three-note figure, C5–B5–Bb4, as the third of the four motives. Like Wolpe, he both reorders (segments 1, 2 and 3), and alters (segments 4–9) its pc content (see Exx. 7.11 and 7.13). In segments 1-3, Shapey presents the motive in three different pc orderings: C–B–Bb (1), Bb–C–B (2) and B–C–Bb (3).
Shapey registrally compresses (segments 3 and 6) and expands (segments 4, 5, 7, 8 and 9) the motive. For example, in segment 3, he states the motive in close position (B3–C4–Bb3),
while in segment 8, he presents it as an ascending gesture, spanning a +17 (B3–C5–E5) [note: names of pcs not originally included in a motive are italicized in the following discussion].

In addition, Shapey frequently fuses motives together. In segment 3, Shapey combines the durational values of motive 2 with two of the three pcs of motive 3, creating the progression, D#4–B3–C4. He then immediately restates motive 3 in its original rhythmic configuration, while presenting all three pcs of the motive.

In segment 4, Shapey interleaves the pcs of motives 3 (\{Bb, B, C\}) and 4 (\{D, E\}): Bb4–D5–C5–E5–B3. Similarly, segment 5 includes the progression, C5–D5–E4–Bb3, in which two of the three pcs of motive 3 frame the two pcs of motive 4. In segments 7, 8 and 9, Shapey creates three-note figures that incorporate two of the original pcs of motive 3, although their shapes and durational progressions (including an eighth note, dotted eighth note and quarter note) echo motive 2. In segment 7, Shapey presents the ascending gesture, C4–B4–D#5; in segment 8, B3–C5–E5; in segment 9, Bb3–B4–F5.

In addition to motivic variation, Shapey employs Wolpe’s technique of “chromatic circulation,” as well as rhythmic procedures of augmentation and diminution derived from Messiaen’s *Technique of My Musical Language*. Shapey’s combination of motivic and rhythmic variation, together with “chromatic circulation,” provides the form of movement IV with both symmetry and structural dynamism.

Segment 1 includes nine pcs. Shapey omits the pcs F, F# and A, all of which later play central roles within the movement. Shapey balances the longer note values of motives 1 and 4 with the shorter note values of the intermediate motivic figures. By rearranging the four motives

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in the sequence, 1, 4, 2, 3, however, they can be portrayed as the elements of a descending durational progression, with each characterized by a distinctive rhythmic character (see Ex. 7.14). In this hypothetical configuration, the group of motives begins with a duration of five eighth notes and ends with a thirty-second note. Shapey’s use of duration as a distinct structural parameter permits him to subject it to development, along with the parameter of pitch class, throughout the fourth movement of *Incantations*.


In segment 2, Shapey repeats the four motives with minor modifications. He does not change their order within the segment, nor does he alter their pc content. He does, however, modify the ordering of pcs in motives 2, 3 and 4, while preserving their gestural shapes. By way of contrast, Shapey radically alters motives 2 and 4 in segment 3. He does not employ the ascending gesture that characterizes motive 2 in the first two segments. The pc, G, originally included in motive 2, is transferred to motive 4 and linked to the introduction of a previously unstated pc, A. This pc ends the segment with the same duration, five eighth notes, that had previously been assigned exclusively to C#5 at the beginning of each segment.

Segments 4-6 comprise a transitional episode, characterized by many descending melodic leaps. These three segments are also marked by a de-emphasis on motive 1, the pc, C#, which is assigned shorter note values. At the same time, Shapey begins to incorporate C# into larger
motivic combinations. C# is joined to motive 2 in the figures G3–D#4–C#5 (segment 4) and C#4–G3–G#5–D#4 (segment 5).

The opening pitch of segment 7, F#3, is a decisive landmark in the movement. F# is the second of the originally excluded pcs to be introduced, and F#3 the lowest pitch thus far presented. Its importance is stressed by its duration, identical to that of the opening C#5s of segments 1-3, as well as its position at the beginning of a segment. Shapey reinforces the significance of this event within the movement’s structure by repeating F#3 with the same duration, five eighth notes, at the beginning of segment 8. In both segments 7 and 8, the initial F# is followed by variants of motive 2 that imitate its ascending motion in segments 1, 2 and 4.

Segment 8 concludes with a descending ic3, F4–D4. F4 completes the presentation of the aggregate within the movement. Shapey underlines the structural significance of the pc, F, in later segments. The final note of segment 11 is a sixteenth-note F3, the lowest pitch of the entire movement. After an eighth-note rest, Shapey leaps to C#5, the first note of segment 12. By successively stating F3 and C#5, Shapey links C# and F, the first and last pcs to be introduced in the movement. At the end of segment 14, Shapey presents the three pcs, A, F# and F, that are excluded from segment 1. This is the only time in the movement that these three pcs are stated consecutively.

In segment 9, Shapey states the entire aggregate without pc repetition. This important structural event is distinguished by the rapidity of its presentation, which includes an eight-pitch succession of sixteenth notes and thirty-second notes. While Shapey had originally employed C#5 as the opening pc of each segment, segment 9 incorporates C#5 as its final pitch. Shapey immediately repeats C#5 to begin segment 10, inaugurating the “recapitulation” of the movement. The descending leap from C#5 to G3 at the beginning of segment 10 recalls the same
pitch succession at the beginning of segment 1, reinforcing the structural primacy of C#5 and underscoring the beginning of the “recapitulation.”

In segments 10-12, Shapey presents three consecutive pairs of descending gestures. Their rhythmic and directional parallelism creates symmetry with the ascending figures in segments 7-9. The nine-pc variant of motive 3 that closes segment 9 divides the groups of ascending and descending motivic gestures.

In segments 13-15, Shapey makes explicit allusions to the beginning of the movement, rounding off the form. The double statement of motive 3 in segment 13 recapitulates its pc content and order in segments 1 (C–B–Bb) and 2 (Bb–C–B), as well as restoring its link to the original version of motive 4. In segment 14, Shapey creates an additional correspondence with segments 1 and 2 by presenting motive 2 as an ascending gesture, combining the pc set, {D#, G, G#}, with the durational series, quarter note, dotted eighth note, eighth note.

Shapey ends the movement with the dyad, F4–Db4. This final gesture resembles the concluding dyad of segment 8, F4–D4, which is also a descending interval beginning with F4. In addition, it repeats the F–C# motion that connects segments 11 and 12, linking the first and last pcs to be introduced in the movement.

Shapey’s fusion of dynamic and static elements represents a mid-point between the continuity procedures of Wolpe and Stravinsky. His use of rhythmic patterns, pc sets, motivic parallelism and motivic directionality to organize the fourth movement of Incantations creates a contemporary analogue to sonata form that incorporates palindromic elements. The most notable of these are the symmetry between Shapey’s manner of presenting all four motives in segments 1-2 and 13-15; the alternation of ascending and descending versions of motive 2 throughout the movement, in an ABABA pattern; motivic parallelism in segments 7-9 and 10-12; and Shapey’s
statement of the aggregate in segment 9, serving as a structural pivot that separates the
“development” from the “recapitulation” (see Table 7.1).

### Table 7.1  Ralph Shapey, Incantations for Soprano and Ten Instruments (1961), IV: Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Motive 2: Directionality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>“Exposition”</td>
<td>Ascending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Segments 1-2: Introduction and permutation of motives; motivic parallelism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Horizontal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Segments 3-15: combination and variation of motives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ascending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>Segments 4-5: all four motives presented in combination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>“Development”</td>
<td>Ascending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>Change of central pc from C# to F#.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>Segments 7-9: motivic parallelism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>“Recapitulation”</td>
<td>Descending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td>Return to use of C# as central pc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td>Segments 10-12: motivic parallelism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>“Coda”</td>
<td>Omitted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-15</td>
<td></td>
<td>Two variants of motive 3, originally stated in segments 1 and 2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>All four motives presented individually; motive 2 stated, using original pc set.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Coda: Shapey’s Debt to Wolpe’s Pedagogy

Ralph Shapey derived some of his most radical ideas about timbre, musical space and
time from Edgard Varèse. His approach to pitch organization and rhythm throughout his entire
career was based, however, on the techniques that he learned from Stefan Wolpe during the
1940s. Although some of the concepts that he derived from the music of Varèse became less important to Shapey as he aged, his devotion to the bedrock principles that he had imbibed from Wolpe remained unchanged.

Shapey used Wolpe’s techniques as the cornerstone of his teaching of composition for fifty years. At the University of Chicago, he taught a course employing a set of composition exercises that he published in 2001 as a pamphlet, entitled, *A Basic Course in Music Composition.*

*A Basic Course* deals necessarily with only the most fundamental aspects of pitch organization, rhythm, musical space and dissonant counterpoint. With *A Basic Course*, Shapey came full circle, lucidly summarizing concepts almost identical to Wolpe’s ideas, as documented in lecture and lesson notes preserved in the papers of Isaac Nemiroff and Milton M. Kraus that are examined in chapter 1 of this study.

The lesson notes and composition exercises of composer Ursula Mamlok, a student of both Wolpe and Shapey during the early 1960s, supplement the documents supplied by Nemiroff and Kraus as a source for parallels between the ideas of her two teachers. An additional source for Shapey’s intellectual debt to Wolpe is Carol K. Baron’s lengthy 1975 interview.

There are many specific parallels between the compositional pedagogy of Wolpe and Shapey:

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22 For a detailed discussion of Wolpe’s ideas, as reflected in the notes of Nemiroff and Kraus, see “Wolpe’s Pedagogy” in chapter 1.

23 Ursula Mamlok, composer (b. 1923), born in Berlin, Germany. A composition student of George Szell, Roger Sessions, Stefan Wolpe and Shapey, she is professor emerita at the Manhattan School of Music.

24 Carol K. Baron, interview with Ralph Shapey, transcript, especially 113-29, 165-75. Wolpe/Baron Archive.
1. Use of the entire pitch continuum.

In his composition classes, Wolpe stressed the necessity of employing the entire pitch continuum. He provided an example in which he outlines a seven-octave range, from B₀ to B⁷ (see Ex. 7.15).²⁵

**Example 7.15** Use of the entire pitch continuum, in Isaac Nemiroff, notebook for classes with Stefan Wolpe: “Home on the Ranges (Gas)” [heading and commentary in Nemiroff’s handwriting], excerpt (cf. Ex. 1.23). Dr. Isaac Nemiroff Collection, University Archives, Stony Brook University Libraries, Box 20, Spiral Music Notebook #3 (small). By permission of Catherine Nemiroff.

![Example Music Notation](image)

Similarly, Shapey discusses the use of the entire pitch continuum at the beginning of *A Basic Course*: “Most students never think in terms of the piano keyboard’s 88 spatial sounds.

²⁵The piano keyboard spans the range from A₀ to C⁸.
They are basically locked into the octave space. . . . I point out that there is no instrument in an orchestra that has a larger range than the piano unless one includes the organ.”

When Carol Baron interviewed Shapey, he confirmed that he taught his students about Wolpe’s concept of pitch space:

Baron: Do you think, for example, that article, that was called “Second Thoughts,” or “Thinking Twice,” you know, the article that I read, that was in Perspectives [of New Music], that deals with these ideas of space . . .

Shapey: I don’t think I ever read it. Okay. He called it the “spatial relations.”

Baron: Yeah, spatial relations. Were they the basics?

Shapey: Yeah, all right, those were a basis.

Baron: Are they basic, or are those superimposed?

Shapey: No. They were basic. They were supposedly his ideas of sound and space. I teach it.

2. Rearrangement of a chord/pc set.

In “Modulation as Process,” Wolpe rearranges the chord, D2/F#3/F4/Ab5/G6/Bb7, in order to create a new chord with the same pc content and ic vector (333321), but different intervallic relationships. Wolpe juxtaposes his original chord with a second chord, G1/Bb2/F3/Ab4/D5/F#6 (see Ex. 7.16). Although the chords share the same unordered pc set (\{D, F, F# G, Ab, Bb\}), their top two and bottom two pcs are reversed, while the middle dyad is transposed downward by an octave, from F4/Ab5 to F3/Ab4. The bottom three notes of the first chord, D2/F#3/F4, comprise an ic4, topped by an ic1, while the bottom three notes of the second chord, G1/Bb2/F3, comprise an ic3, topped by an ic5. Due to the inclusion of the F/F# dyad, the

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26 Shapey, *A Basic Course*, 5.
28 Carol K. Baron, interview with Ralph Shapey, transcript, 41. Wolpe/Baron Archive.
lowest trichord of the first chord has a higher dissonance content than that of the second. Wolpe describes these chords as “new alloys, for which no accurate description exists.”

His exercise implicitly negates the principle of octave equivalence.

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**Example 7.16** Rearrangement of a chord, in Stefan Wolpe, “Modulation as Process,” first two chords of Ex. 18b. I have corrected one pitch in the example that I believe to be a misprint. In m. 1, Gb7 has been changed to Bb7. I have also annotated the example, indicating interval class relationships within the chords (cf. Ex. 1.3). Stefan Wolpe, *Das Ganze überdenken*, ed. Thomas Phleps (Saarbrücken: PFAU-Verlag, 2002), 56. © 2002 by Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel, und PFAU-Verlag, Saarbrücken. Alle Rechte vorbehalten. By permission of the Stefan Wolpe Society, Inc.

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29 “The more unequal the intervals that participate in the combination of the chord, the more new alloys are created; for these, no other accurate description exists, other than the bare facts of the analysis of the components, for example, a sound consisting of a sixth, a fourth and a seventh. And in fact such a chord already contains far more intervallic elements, because between the individual intervals new intervals are again produced.” [My translation] “Je ungleicher die Intervalle sind, die an der Kombination des Akkordes teilhaben, umso mehr entstehen neue Alloys, für diese keine andere exakte Beschreibung gibt als die nackten Tatsachen der Analyse der Komponenten, zum Beispiel ein Klang, der aus einer Sext, einer Quart und einer Septime besteht, Und in der Tat enthält schon [ein] solcher Akkord weit mehr intervallische Elemente, weil zwischen die einzelnen Intervallen wieder neue Intervalle entstehen.” Stefan Wolpe, “Modulation as Process” [“Die Modulation als Prozess”], in Wolpe, *Das Ganze überdenken*, 42-57, especially 55.

30 See chapter 1, notes 64 and 65.
In lectures transcribed by Isaac Nemiroff, Wolpe provided a more extended example of the same concept. He arranges a chord in many different superpositions, showing how to create different intervallic and registral relationships within a gradually expanding pitch space (see Ex. 7.17).

Example 7.17  Rearrangement of a four-pc chord, in Isaac Nemiroff, notebook for classes with Stefan Wolpe (cf. Ex. 1.24). Dr. Isaac Nemiroff Collection, University Archives, Stony Brook University Libraries, Box 20, Spiral Music Notebook #3 (small). By permission of Catherine Nemiroff.

When the composer Ursula Mamlok studied with Shapey in 1962, he assigned her a similar exercise: to create as many variants as possible of a chord, based on the pc set, \{D, Eb, E, F, F#, G\}, which is notated at the top of the page (Ex. 7.18).

In *A Basic Course*, Shapey devotes part of the first lesson to the intervalllic and registral rearrangement of a chord. His presentation of this technique is almost identical to that of his
teacher, and corresponds to the exercise that he gave to Mamlok in 1962. Shapey entitles his illustrative example, “Sound Structure – Vertical.” He begins with the intervallic analysis of a chord (see Ex. 7.19a): “I use only 5 arbitrary notes . . . and place them on the treble and bass clefs. Then we analyze them intervallically.”


Shapey arranges the chord in many different configurations (see Ex. 7.19b): “We will now manipulate the same notes *without adding any new ones* over the piano range, creating different intervallic relationships.”

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32 Ibid.
In Carol Baron’s interview with Shapey, he related his conception of the rearrangement of a chord to Wolpe’s ideas:

Shapey: For instance, my first lesson with them [my students], I give them five notes. I say, all we’re going to do is use five notes. . . . This is, agreed, from Wolpe’s “spatial relations.” All right. This is where they say, “Well, isn’t that just an octave higher or an octave lower?” I say, “Sure. That’s all it is. But if you notice the interrelationships that are involved, it’s not just an octave higher, because it’s based on intervallic sounds. It’s based on the relationship of the intervals, which are constantly changing, you see.”

Shapey: [O]ut of five notes to write a whole page of structural sounds, which, even though you . . .

Baron: By structural sounds, you mean related or . . .

Shapey: An aggregate of sounds. You want to call it a harmony of five notes, call it a harmony of five notes.

Baron: Okay.

Shapey: And the interrelationship of just, only those notes. You never add another note. You understand? Never add another note. As fantastic, the incredible differences of sound you can get.

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* Changed C# to Db for convenience

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33 Carol K. Baron, interview with Ralph Shapey, transcript, 118. Wolpe/Baron Archive.
Baron: Now. That was an idea that you got from Wolpe?

Shapey: Well, I would say the basic idea; but I’m not sure that he worked it out the way I did. I don’t really remember that--that he worked it out. I spent a whole “thing” on it.  

Shapey: [plays chord] First chord. Second chord [plays chords]. No, all right [plays chords]. So I got the two chords. All right, I’ll do the third chord [plays chord]. One [plays a few more chords]. They’re all the same chord. Each one. See how different they sound? Because of the relationships that I have set up. Look at this third in here. Or the third down here. See? Or I’ll do to this stupid little five notes. And yet changing the interrelationships. You understand? So that’s the first lesson.

3. Creation of varied rhythms.

Stefan Wolpe considered rhythm to be an integral part of musical structure. In a lecture, entitled, “Principles of Composition,” he posited, “Rhythm as used in a musical situation, even as pure accompaniment, should have a design and scheme and purpose, resulting in [a] final achievement of its own, in conjunction with the achievement of the musical situation proper.”

When he tutored Milton Kraus about rhythm, Wolpe wrote out a simple, continuously varied abstract rhythmic pattern on a sheet of music paper that he headed, “Design of Rhythm(s)” (see Ex. 7.20a).

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34 Carol K. Baron, interview with Ralph Shapey, transcript, 119. Wolpe/Baron Archive.
35 Ibid., 121. Wolpe/Baron Archive.
In the example, Wolpe produces rhythmic variety by the simplest of means. He begins by establishing a quarter-note pulse. In the second measure, he shifts the pulse to the second half of each beat. In mm. 3-5, Wolpe creates a syncopated rhythm.

Like Wolpe, Shapey thought of rhythm as a fundamental element of musical structure. In *A Basic Course*, he echoed Wolpe’s term, “Design of Rhythm(s):” “It is very seldom that someone brings up the idea that rhythm is design and gives definition, shape and even structure to music.”37 Beginning in lesson 1, Shapey asks the students to create rhythmic patterns, first in one, then in two, three and eventually four voices.38 Shapey’s simple, but varied, abstract rhythmic pattern in lesson 1 corresponds to the rhythmic example that Wolpe provided for Milton Kraus (see Ex. 7.20b).


Like Wolpe, Shapey begins with a quarter-note pulse, although he does not hesitate to use

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38 Ibid., 6, 8, 10-1, 16-7, 24.
dotted rhythms. In the second measure, he introduces sixteenth notes and triplets. In m. 3, Shapey, like his teacher, employs syncopation.

In Lesson 2 of *A Basic Course*, Shapey offers a more complex single-line rhythmic progression (see Ex. 7.21).


In lessons 3 and 5, Shapey offers examples of two and three-part rhythmic counterpoint, in which each voice has a unique profile (see Exxs. 7.22a and b).

The rhythmic exercises that Ursula Mamlok completed for Shapey in winter 1962 parallel his later pedagogic treatment of rhythm in *A Basic Course in Music Composition*. Like the other exercises that Shapey assigned to Mamlok, they show that he established his pedagogic method early in his career as a teacher of composition. Mamlok’s realizations of Shapey’s instructions are far more complex than any of the rhythmic examples included in *A Basic Course*. Mamlok began by creating rhythms for a single line (see Ex. 7.23).
She then progressed to rhythmic counterpoint for two and three voices (see Ex. 7.24).

4. Creation of motives by the horizontal rearrangement of a pc set.

In lesson 1 of *A Basic Course*, Shapey discusses the use of pc sets to build chords, and the creation of varied, abstract rhythmic patterns. In lesson 2, Shapey combines pc sets with rhythmic patterns, connecting the chordal, vertical arrangement of a pc set to its melodic, horizontal, presentation. Shapey told Carol Baron, “The second lesson is to do the same thing melodically, from a melodic viewpoint. . . . And I can build an entire, I would say, at least a half a movement, a large movement, on just those five notes.”

Under the heading, “Sound Structures – Horizontal,” Shapey demonstrates the use of unordered pc sets to invent motives (see Ex. 7.25): “Again I ask for 5 arbitrary notes. . . . We are going to invent motifs.” Shapey uses the pc set to create a motive, as well as many motivic variants. His approach to motivic permutation resembles Wolpe’s technique, as elucidated by Christopher Hasty (see Ex. 7.12). All of Shapey’s variants are characterized by distinct rhythmic patterns, registral arrangements and pc orderings.

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39 Carol K. Baron, interview with Ralph Shapey, transcript, 121. Wolpe/Baron Archive.
41 Hasty, “Broken Sequences: Fragmentation, Abundance, Beauty.”
Shapey discussed the relationship between his practice and Wolpe’s methods during his conversations with Carol Baron:

Baron: Can I . . . I just wanna ask this question. I have to keep asking this question.

Shapey: Go ahead.

Baron: Wolpe did something somewhat similar . . .

Shapey: Right.

Baron: Right. In that he would work with cells of just several notes, several notes from the chromatic scale. But he wouldn’t use a row, except if it would be a row of . . . from five notes . . .
Shapey: Well, he has used rows, but okay. We all have used rows.

Baron: But, no, he would be working, really, with a cell of a certain number of notes and create a whole composition.

Shapey: Yeah. . . .

Baron: All I’m interested in is your relationship to Wolpe.

Shapey: Okay.

Baron: Or your relationship to other composers, too.

Shapey: Yeah, all right. This is one of the techniques, that’s true, he definitely uses, no question, and I obviously got it from him. And expanded it in my own ways as well.42

5. Creation of a varied musical line.

Stefan Wolpe taught his students to create both variety and symmetry within a melodic line. In a lecture transcribed by Isaac Nemiroff, Wolpe provided his students with an example that includes contrasts of rhythm, register and motivic directionality. Wolpe alternates between successions of eighth notes and quarter notes. He begins the example with a gesture that outlines a concave arc, and ends symmetrically with a gesture that delineates a convex arc (see Ex. 7.26).

Example 7.26  Symmetry and variety in thematic construction, in Isaac Nemiroff, notebook for lessons with Stefan Wolpe. The entire example is in Wolpe’s handwriting (cf. Ex. 1.28). Dr. Isaac Nemiroff Collection, University Archives, Stony Brook University Libraries, Box 20, Manuscript Music Notebook #9 (large, no cover). By permission of Catherine Nemiroff.

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42 Carol K. Baron, interview with Ralph Shapey, transcript, 121-2. Wolpe/Baron Archive.
When he gave composition lessons to Milton Kraus, Wolpe created a theme that includes a motive and its inversion (see Ex. 7.27). The first two measures begin with short–long rhythmic patterns. In both measures, these patterns are followed by three eighth notes in stepwise motion. The ascending eight notes of the second measure balance the descending eighth notes of the first measure. Each measure concludes with a long–short rhythmic pattern that creates symmetry with the short–long pattern with which it commences. Wolpe ends the theme with the short–long rhythmic pattern, repeating the initial notes of measure 1. In connection with this example, Wolpe spoke of “active correspondence” and “compensation” (presumably, between the two parts of the theme). He also offered a variant of the second half of the example, characterized as an illustration of “new attacks.” Wolpe’s example recalls the music of Bartók, which he frequently analyzed for his students during the late 1940s.43


43 See chapter 1, note 105.
In his next meeting with Kraus, Wolpe provided details about the process of motivic development. He divided a nine-note theme into three parts, speaking of the “multiplication of motivic elements.” Wolpe expanded the theme with examples that illustrate “new beginning[s],” “intrusions,” “arresting heavy parts of the motif (middle)” and “enlarged endings” (see Ex. 7.28). Wolpe also demonstrated his interest in creating contrasts of motivic directionality by graphically portraying the melodic defect of creating “too many downward patterns” (not shown).\footnote{Milton M. Kraus, “Composition Studies with Stefan Wolpe,” 9 February 1948. Wolpe/Baron Archive.}
Ex. 7.28 Multiplication of motivic elements, in Milton M. Kraus, notes for lessons with Stefan Wolpe, 9 February 1948. Kraus entitled the page, “Motivic Development.” Both the examples and the descriptive terms are notated in Wolpe’s handwriting. Wolpe’s examples are shown here in an annotated, interpretive version of the original document (including added letter names), prepared by Barry Wiener. Milton M. Kraus, “Composition Studies with Stefan Wolpe,” Wolpe/Baron Archive, Performing Arts Research Collections, New York Public Library. By permission of The New York Public Library.

Multiplication of motivic elements

A: new beginning

B: arresting heavy parts of the motif

C: enlarged ending

Ex. 7.28 summarizes Wolpe’s improvisatory, haphazardly notated examples for the multiplication of motivic elements. The three segments of the original theme are marked “A,” “B” and “C” in the annotated example. Three lines below the theme, Wolpe wrote out an unstemmed expansion of the “A” segment that incorporates a new, two-note introductory gesture, F5–C5. He then skipped a line, and created an expanded version of the “B” segment that begins with its first two pitches, B4–Bb4, and ends with its final two pitches, Bb4–G4. Wolpe drew an arrow across the page, connecting the final two pitches of the original “B” segment to
the identical concluding pitches of its new, enlarged version. Finally, on the next page, Wolpe lengthened the three-note “C” segment by duplicating its first two pitches, producing a turn figure: D4–Eb4–D4–Eb4–B3. Wolpe’s revision of the theme expands its registral scope, and creates rhythmic variety and additional contrasts of motivic directionality.

In lesson 4 of *A Basic Course*, Ralph Shapey presents a melodic line intended to serve as a model for the development of a musical idea. Shapey’s example comprises a motive and its inversion, divided by what he describes as a “dead or inactive space” (see Ex. 7.29). The example has a structure similar to that of the theme that Wolpe employed when he showed Milton Kraus how to construct a melodic line that included both variety and symmetry. Both composers create contrasts of motivic directionality and rhythm. Shapey alternates between descending and ascending gestures that span the range from Bb6 to G3. On the rhythmic level, long–short rhythms (quarter-note–eighth-note figures) are juxtaposed with short–long rhythms (sixteenth-note–eighth-note figures). Both halves of the example conclude with an eighth note, tied to a quarter note.

Shapey’s use of a motive and its inversion together with sixteenth-note–eighth-note figures recalls the opening two measures of his Prelude for Piano (1946). These similarities provide evidence of noticeable continuities within the development of Shapey’s style (see Ex. 7.30).

Example 7.30  Motive and its inversion, in Ralph Shapey, Prelude for Piano (1946), mm. 1-2 (cf. Exx. 1.47 and 7.29). Shapey Papers, Box 22. By permission of the Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

6. Counterpoint.

Stefan Wolpe taught his students to compose counterpoint in which each line has a distinctive rhythmic character. He offered examples that have been preserved in the lecture notes of Isaac Nemiroff and the lesson notes of Milton Kraus (see Exx. 7.31a and b). In the Nemiroff example, Wolpe segments the aggregate into four trichords, then transforms them into rhythmically differentiated counterpoint. For the relatively inexperienced Kraus, Wolpe combines two voices with different rhythmic patterns, one of which is a succession of quarter notes; a third voice holds a single pitch.
Example 7.31a  Rhythmically differentiated counterpoint, in Isaac Nemiroff, notebook for classes with Stefan Wolpe. Dr. Isaac Nemiroff Collection, University Archives, Stony Brook University Libraries, Box 20, Spiral Music Notebook #3 (small). By permission of Catherine Nemiroff.

Example 7.31b  Combination of different rhythms, in Milton M. Kraus, notes for lessons with Stefan Wolpe, 9 February 1948: “Design of Rhythm(s)/Combination of Vertical and Horizontal/diversity of direction/variety of the motivic phases” (cf. Ex. 1.27b). Milton M. Kraus, “Composition Studies with Stefan Wolpe,” Wolpe/Baron Archive, Performing Arts Research Collections, New York Public Library. By permission of The New York Public Library.
In *A Basic Course*, Shapey provides rhythmically, intervallically and registraly varied examples of two-voice counterpoint, employing the same five-note unordered pc set in both voices. Shapey’s examples bear a striking stylistic resemblance to the counterpoint example by Wolpe transcribed by Isaac Nemiroff. All of Shapey’s examples display similarly differentiated rhythms between the parts. Shapey’s handling of contrasts of directionality within the individual lines also recalls Wolpe’s example. Shapey’s treble “motif” describes a registral descent, followed by a concave arc. Counterpoints 2 and 6 for the bass line display comparable changes in motivic directionality (see Ex. 7.32).

**Example 7.32**  Two-voice counterpoint examples, employing the same five-pc set in both voices, Ex. 3B in Ralph Shapey, *A Basic Course in Music Composition*, “Lesson 3 Examples: Counterpoint – 2 lines,” 11 (cf. Ex. 7.31a). © 2001 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.
7. “Chromatic circulation” and “autonomous [aggregate] fragments.”

In “Thinking Twice,” Stefan Wolpe objected to the continuous circulation of the aggregate in serial music. He described serial methods of pitch organization in highly negative terms:

The saturated balance of twelve tones is partly a very mechanistic affair and of a neutral quality, though the structural set-up of the twelve renders the circuit [series] undoubtedly as a particular one. . . . No amount of transposition, permutation and the various modes of projection and exposure of a twelve-tone set, no amount of dislocation or of multiplied sets in motion can relieve the ear from a hypertrophic abundance of a pitch-totality which in this exclusive form must become stagnant.\(^{45}\)

As a substitute for this “mechanical sort of chromatic rotation,”\(^{46}\) Wolpe proposed that composers vary the speed of aggregate completion: “The all-chromatic chain can be unhinged, its sections interrupted, isolated, and arrested.”\(^{47}\) Wolpe labeled his technique “chromatic circulation.”\(^{48}\) He employed this procedure as a tool to effect structural change. Elliott Antokoletz has noted, “Wolpe’s concern was to integrate the multidimensional levels within the chromatic continuum as the basis for generating the large-scale form and, at the same time, to produce a constellation of textural changes resulting in constant reinterpretations of the colors of the individual elements.”\(^{49}\)

By slowing the tempo of aggregate presentation, Wolpe is able to divide the twelve pcs into “pitch regions:” “The slower the speed of complementary circulation is, the more focal the various pitch regions become.”\(^{50}\)

\(^{45}\) Wolpe, “Thinking Twice,” 168.
\(^{46}\) Ibid.
\(^{47}\) Ibid., 170.
\(^{48}\) Ibid., 168. See chapter 1, notes 29-32.
\(^{50}\) Wolpe, “Thinking Twice,” 178.
Wolpe provides two examples of groups of “pitch constellation[s] smaller than the all-chromatic circuit.” In each case, the groups combine to present the aggregate (see Ex. 7.33).


Example 20
slow accumulation of the (total) chromatic circuit

Example 21
quick accumulation of the (total) chromatic circuit

In lesson 7 of A Basic Course, Shapey introduces Wolpe’s concept of “focal” pitch regions. Shapey employs what he calls “four-tone circulation” in order to isolate subsets of the aggregate.

In his musical examples, Shapey subdivides a chromatic five-pc set into a “prime tone,” surrounded by two pcs above and two below it. He circles around the “prime tone” to establish its importance, before moving to a second “prime tone.” Shapey relates his procedure to the use

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51 Shapey, A Basic Course, 23-4.
of “extended key centers” in music of the Classical period. Shapey’s movement from one “prime tone” to another recalls Wolpe’s comparison of “chromatic circulation” to modulation.

In the first example, the pc, C, is surrounded by two lower pcs, Bb and B, and two higher pcs, C# and D (see Ex. 7.34a). Shapey vividly describes this pc collection as “the prime note C and its moons.” Shapey underlines the centrality of the pc, C, by frequent oscillation between surrounding pc pairs, including B–D, Bb–D and Bb–C#. At the end of the passage, the music resolves by step to a new “prime tone,” C#: “Using the four notes plus the prime [Bb, B, C, C#, D], we create a line with only those five notes. Because we are going to C#, we do use C# judiciously. . . . It is like marking time in one place, seeing all that is around it, and then finally moving . . . a small distance away.”


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53 Wolpe, “Thinking Twice,” 177; Antokoletz, 412. See chapter 1, note 32.  
55 Ibid.
When Shapey wants to change the “prime tone” twice, he proceeds in similar fashion:

“we circulate around C [Bb, B, C, C#, D] and F (Eb E F F# G) and go to A (Prime Tone A) and stop!”  

Shapey does not create a smooth transition between the pc sets, \{Bb, B, C, C#, D\} and \{Eb, E, F, F#, G\}, but segues abruptly from one set to the other (see Ex. 7.34b).

**Example 7.34b**  Two changes of the “prime tone,” beginning with C, Ex. 7A: II in Ralph Shapey, _A Basic Course in Music Composition_, “Lesson 7 Examples: Four-tone Circulation (5 notes),” 25. © 2001 Theodore Presser Co. Used by permission.

Shapey derived the concept of a “prime tone,” surrounded by its “moons,” from Wolpe. Wolpe used the term, “focal point,” rather than “prime tone.” The papers of Ursula Mamlok document her use of “focal points” in the Variations for Solo Flute (1961), the last piece that she wrote during her brief studies with Wolpe. Mamlok marked “focal points” in the manuscript of the Variations. In variation 9, each repetition of the pitches, F6 and C#5, is preceded by grace

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56 Shapey, _A Basic Course_, 25.
note figures. These grace note figures were initially intended to alternately approach the “focal” pitches from below and above, although Mamlok later modified her design. In the manuscript, Mamlok inserted the comment, “focal point approached from both sides by row,”\(^{57}\) between the lines that include the gestures circling around F6. Above the following line, she noted, “similar procedure on C#\(^{58}\)” (see Exx. 7.35a and b).

\(^{57}\) \(P_0 = \text{C#–D#–D–C–G#–E–F#–G–F–B–A–Bb. In the figures surrounding F6, Mamlok employs an inverted and transposed form of the series, I}, \(I_1\), together with its retrograde. For the figures surrounding C#5, Mamlok uses a similar procedure. For a different view of Mamlok’s use of serialism in variation 9, see Roxane Lise Prévost, “A Woman Composer Among Men: A Theoretical Study of Ursula Mamlok’s Serial Works” (Ph.D. diss., State University of New York at Buffalo, 2003), 72-6. See also Eugena Denise Riehl, “From Pitch to Tension: A Theory of Motive in the Solo Woodwind Music of Mamlok, Krenek, Carter, and Berio” (Ph.D. diss., State University of New York at Buffalo, 2012), 43-4. Neither Prévost nor Riehl had access to Mamlok’s annotated manuscripts, in which she makes frequent notations relative to the serial structure of her music.

\(^{58}\) In the published score, C# has been changed to Db throughout variation 9.
Shapey does not explicitly discuss “chromatic circulation” in *A Basic Course*. He discusses “four-tone circulation” without placing it within a larger theoretical framework, other than to suggest that it can serve as a substitute for traditional key relations. Shapey’s conceptual simplification is, however, typical of his compositional thinking. As Richard Wernick points out in the “Praeludium” to *A Basic Course*, Shapey was always a practical musician rather than a theoretist. He preferred to present his ideas in concrete rather than abstract terms, a method that he perceived, probably incorrectly, to have isolated him within the community of academic composers. Nevertheless, it is possible to extrapolate important theoretical principles from his teaching.

The publication of *A Basic Course* shortly before Shapey’s death in 2002 represented a kind of musical last will and testament. It is fitting that Shapey closed the circle of his career by acknowledging his intellectual debt to his teacher in the dedication of his book. He credited Stefan Wolpe first and foremost for the compositional tools that he had learned almost sixty

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years earlier, in Philadelphia and New York: “As for credits: to my teacher Stefan Wolpe, to all
of our past masters whose scores have been my best and most profound guides.”

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60 Shapey, *A Basic Course*, 3.
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