ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation:	THE ROLE OF NEOCLASSICISM IN GENERALIZING TRADITION: INTEGRATING TEXTURAL, TONAL AND TOPICAL ELEMENTS AT THE KEYBOARD
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While neoclassicism is viewed as a reaction against tonal saturation of late Romanticism, this dissertation discusses an array of works (both within and outside the scope of interwar neoclassicism) that absorbed elements of the aesthetic. Beyond Martha Hyde's description of the neoclassical impulse as a "metamorphic anachronism," I propose that it can extend to the following: (1) an opposition (or apposition, as proposed by Marianne Kielian-Gilbert) between specific musical elements, (2) a capitalization on ahistorical aspects of tradition, and (3) a generalization of tradition by placing the predecessor as a special case of a larger phenomenon.

The first category is exemplified through chromatic displacement technique in Francis Poulenc and modified dominants in John Ireland, illustrating the coexistence of conventional periodicity with disruptive tonal practices. The second category manifests

through non-contemporaneous musical codes, such as the use of musical topics (originally put forth by Leonard Ratner) within a neoclassical framework as points of departure from tradition, or the hypermeasure (proposed by Edward Cone) that capitalizes on Baroque and Romantic-era sequencing. The third category relates to Harold Bloom's fourth revisionary ratio of a successor de-individuating the predecessor. For example, the generalization of thematic transformation while disregarding thematic character, and the generalization of the asymmetrical *Fortspinnung* while disregarding metric regularity, are exhibited in the works of Ernst Krenek and Peter Mennin respectively.

In summary, this dissertation identifies how neoclassical-leaning composers confront tradition without placing themselves subordinate to their predecessors, forcing the listener to engage at a more fundamental level of musical syntax.

The repertoire presented in this dissertation were premiered between 2018 and 2019 in the Joseph & Alma Gildenhorn Recital Hall at the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, University of Maryland, College Park. Recital recordings are accessible through the Michelle Smith Performing Arts Library at the University.

THE ROLE OF NEOCLASSICISM IN GENERALIZING TRADITION:
INTEGRATING TEXTURAL, TONAL AND TOPICAL ELEMENTS AT THE
KEYBOARD

by

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
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1. Introduction: The Neoclassical Impulse

Deciphering musical meaning is a challenge to many musicologists. Kofi Agawu's distinction of extroversive and introversive semiotics – the former being the use of musical topics and the latter framed as a temporal, "beginning-middle-end" relationship[1] – is a method of sidestepping this challenge towards an objective framework for musical interpretation. However, directly applying such frameworks to neoclassical music is a complex task, due to more relaxed compositional rules and a distortion of traditional forms. Identifying possible compositional *motivations* that drive neoclassical impulses might allow us to refine these frameworks to neoclassical music.

While all roads might lead to Rome, many musical roads lead to neoclassicism. From neoclassicism as satire, profound respect, or establishing a middle-ground between common practice and dodecaphony, there are a host of motivations behind neoclassical impulses. Roy Harris and Peter Mennin, while gravitating towards Nationalism and Universalism respectively in their writing, used neoclassical forms as a medium to express these intentions. Ernst Krenek saw neoclassicism as a disruption in tradition, while Arno Babajanian saw it as a compromise between tradition and dodecaphony. While Francis Poulenc turned towards Romanticism as he was writing *Les Soirées de Nazelles*, his continued referencing of the keyboard writing of Couperin and adherence to Classical periodic structures kept his reputation as a French neoclassicist relatively intact. Neoclassical impulses are both geographically and motivationally diverse.

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[1] V. Kofi Agawu, *Playing With Signs* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 23.

Universalism

Francis Poulenc
Carl Nielsen

Ernst Krenek
Peter Mennin

Reactive

Progressive

Arno Babajanian
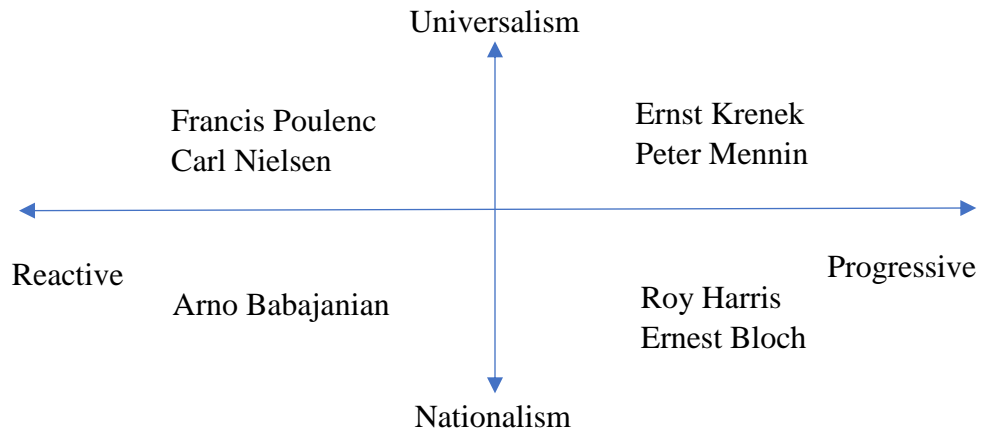
Roy Harris
Ernest Bloch

Nationalism

Figure 1: A placement of composers within two dimensions of neoclassical impulses

The three recitals, each separated by chapter, have distinct sub-themes. The first recital is concerned with works that adopt the neoclassical aesthetic by assimilating it with common practice. This creates either an opposition of musical forces through a juxtaposition of new and old practices, or an apposition that seeks a co-existence of new and old through a newer, modified framework. The second recital discusses how Carl Nielsen and Ernest Bloch contributed in distorting a linear buildup of tradition. The third recital discusses composers who, apart from Poulenc, were not traditionally associated with the neoclassical aesthetic but adapted neoclassical elements in their writing.

Beyond the traditional view of neoclassicism as a reaction against Romanticism, this dissertation addresses the role of neoclassicism in directly engaging "musical polarities" – Nationalism vs. Universalism, Classical vs. Romantic, extroversive vs. introversive are revisited through neoclassical impulses. Since current musicology in neoclassical piano literature is surprisingly overlooked, especially works beyond the interwar period, this dissertation aims to address just that.

2. Tongue-in-Cheek Neoclassicism

2.1. Ernst Krenek: Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 59 (1928)

This series of three recitals begins befittingly with Ernst Krenek's Second Piano Sonata, written at a juncture where he was continually seeking to break from tradition or any organized musical movement, much like the spirit of neoclassicism in general.[2]

Krenek was a self-proclaimed neo-romanticist at this point in his life,[3] although the work reeks of neoclassical impulses which will be subsequently discussed. It follows the same kind of progressive tonality (each movement a major third lower than the preceding one) exhibited in Stravinsky's own Piano Sonata (1924), and bears an uncanny resemblance to Beethoven's Op. 101 – both works exhibit a harmonic stasis in the first movement, a march in the second and an obsessive falling third motif in the final movement. It also borders on nineteenth-century aesthetics, including pre-emptive motivic usage and a modified thematic transformation technique. It is certainly neoclassic and neoromantic all at once – what Martha Hyde would consider as an example of eclectic imitation.[4]

Pre-emptive snippets of second and third movement material are featured in the development of the first movement. This overall inter-movement connection is a prominent feature in cyclic works, even though it is conventionally used as a recalling device rather

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[2] Ernst Krenek, "Tradition in Perspective," *Perspectives of New Music* 1, no. 1 (Autumn 1962), 27-38.
[3] Ernst Krenek, Stephen Town and Dennis Shrock, "An Interview with Ernst Krenek: On the Occasion of his 90th Birthday," *The Choral Journal* 31, no. 10 (May 1991), 12.
[4] Martha Hyde, "Neoclassic and Anachronistic Impulses in Twentieth-Century Music," *Music Theory Spectrum* 18, no. 2 (Autumn 1996), 205.

than a pre-emptive one. In Example 2a, the first few measures pre-empt the hocket-like opening of the third movement, while the scherzando-like quality of the second movement makes its pre-emptive appearance in the dotted rhythms, abruptly marked *Allegro molto*. This is a convincing yet rare case for "reversed temporality",[5] where a motif's derivation occurs before its formal statement, not unlike an operatic overture which gives a brief overview of thematic material to come.

The announcement of such pre-emptive and brief gestures is an unmistakable nod to eighteenth-century musical topics. The use of musical topics in the Classical setting thrives on topical contrast as a rule – Mozart did so "often in the shortest space and with startling contrast."[6] While it might be unfortunate that a composer whose adeptness at disparate musical styles sidelines himself from the mainstream of musical discussion and performance,[7] it can at least prove effective in the discussion of topical analysis.

Example 2a: Krenek, Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 59 – mm. 64-71

[5] Edward T. Cone, "On Derivation: Syntax and Rhetoric," *Music Analysis* 6, no. 3 (October 1987), 254.
[6] Leonard Ratner, *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style* (New York: Schirmer, 1980), 26-27.
[7] Claire Taylor-Jay, "The Composer's Voice? Compositional Style and Criteria of Value in Weill, Krenek and Stravinsky," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 134 no. 1 (2009), 102.

It is also noteworthy how Krenek places these pre-emptive moments: in the opening of the development section, in quick succession, as parenthetical functions. Similarly, the opening of the second part of the (rounded binary) third movement is a literal representation of his early dabbling in dodecaphony. Example 2b is possibly one of Krenek's first inclusions of a twelve-tone row. The point of illustrating these two examples is to show Krenek's treatment of development material as the most experimental – an adherence to conventional form, or in the words of Marianne Kielian-Gilbert, allowing a non-standard vocabulary to speak (in contrast to Stravinsky).[8] It is, therefore, not a contention of tradition, but allowing post-classical influences to infiltrate the conventions of the design. The distinction between this approach, and something considered more "appositional", is important in the discussion of Mennin's work later.

Brief venture into dodecaphony

Example 2b: Krenek, Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 59 – mm. 58-60

A subsequent thematic modification process to be used in a different context is identified by William Caplin as liquidation, taken in the Classical context of a theme's fragmentation. As seen from Example 3 (which uses just the head of the theme), the

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[8] Marianne Kielian-Gilbert, "Stravinsky's Contrasts: Contradiction and Discontinuity in His Neoclassic Music," *The Journal of Musicology* 9, no. 4 (Autumn 1991), 463.

original theme is modified in a way that depicts a different musical topic, the heart of Classical contrast exhibited in a single theme.

Location of theme	Primary Theme	Secondary theme	Development (head of theme)
Thematic Illustration			
Implied Topic	*Sarabande*	Jazz	*Hocketus*

Example 3: Krenek, Piano Sonata No. 2 – Topical usage in 1ˢᵗ movement

Another feature of the first movement is its extension of the thematic transformation principle exhibited by Liszt. In conventional thematic transformation, the reuse of thematic material occurs in a changed characterization, usually depicted by a change in harmonic context, volume or tempo. In the Sonata, the recapitulation is not just an application of thematic transformation, it is barely recognizable as thematic material. The melodic content and meter is different, in fact, the only clue that identifies it as a recapitulation is the tonality asserted by the bass (shown in Example 4a and 4b).

Interestingly, the recapitulation also begins on the flattened tonic of G flat. The emphasis on "flat" regions in the recapitulation has been something discussed by theorists,[9] but of course, this emphasis refers to flatter areas in relation to the circle of fifths. The

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[9] William E. Caplin, *Classical Form: A Theory of Formal Functions for the Instrumental Music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 165.

literal depiction of "flatness" suggests a literal, neo-tonal depiction of harmonic flux away

from a centric point, which occurs extensively in twentieth-century neo-tonal repertoire.

Example 4a: Krenek, Piano Sonata No. 2 – I (Primary theme, Exposition)

Example 4b: Krenek, Piano Sonata No. 2 – I (Primary theme, Recapitulation)

2.2.   Peter Mennin: Five Piano Pieces (1949)

Despite being unambiguously modernistic in terms of metric irregularity and tonal language, this set of five pieces is saturated with allusions to Baroque and Classical aesthetics, encompassing areas of formal functions, thematic interplay and its unrelenting perpetual motion. In fact, it was originally titled a *Partita*, which already indicates his intention in terms of design.

Mennin's compositional style, in general, has been described by Walter Simmons as a Traditional Modernist: less concerned with creating an identifiably American "sound", and an emphasis on a symphonic sound palette.[10] Sandwiched between his fourth and fifth symphonies, this work encompasses such characteristics, yet maintaining pianistic brilliance and economical usage of (mostly) two-part counterpoint.

However, Simmons' distinction between Traditional Modernists and neoclassicists, the latter being distinguished by a "return to eighteenth-century musical values,"[11] runs the risk of painting neoclassicists under a broad brush. The use of neoclassicism as satire or contention serves as a counterexample, to make (in Richard Taruskin's terms) the regressive deviation disappear.[12] A purely retrospective take on eighteenth-century musical values would simply serve a reverential function, and composers such as Mennin go beyond that by questioning the conventions of an implied design. The strategic use metrical modulation exemplifies this, elaborated below.

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[10] Walter Simmons, *Music of William Schuman, Vincent Persichetti, and Peter Mennin: Voices of Stone and Steel* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2011), 9.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Richard Taruskin, *The Danger of Music and Other Anti-Utopian Essays* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 365.

Elliott Carter's metrical modulation in his own Piano Sonata (1946) was perhaps exploited by Mennin. In both sonatas, the notion of the unchanging unit – the sanctity of the perpetual motion, remains undisturbed while phrases portray an accelerando and rubato through their changing meter amidst an unchanging smallest unit – the sixteenth note.[13]

Example 5a and 5b illustrate how both Carter and Mennin portray a deterministic rubato of phrases. In both cases, the smallest unit (sixteenth-note) is played at a constant speed amidst a rapidly changing meter. Since we do know that perpetual motion is not traditionally associated with phrase irregularity, i.e. added values and additive rhythms (even if it is associated with phrase asymmetry), this clash of period styles is a clear illustration of a musical anachronism, as defined by Martha Hyde.[14] Specifically, we are forced to notice the anachronism between perpetual motion and irregular meter.

But more importantly, Mennin's metrical modulation bears a structural purpose: in terms of the overall form of the movement, the metrical modulation serves as a Baroque *Fortspinnung* after a fugal exposition. It goes beyond a mere anachronism – perhaps an application of what Kielian-Gilbert describes as appositional terms.[15] It is a literal take on the phrase asymmetry of a typical *Fortspinnung*, highlighting *metric* asymmetry.

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[13] Richard Franko Goldman, "The Music of Elliott Carter," *The Musical Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (April 1957), 151-170.

[14] Martha Hyde, "Neoclassic and Anachronistic Impulses in Twentieth-Century Music," *Music Theory Spectrum* 18, no. 2 (Autumn 1996), 205.

[15] Marianne Kielian-Gilbert, "Stravinsky's Contrasts: Contradiction and Discontinuity in His Neoclassic Music," *The Journal of Musicology* 9, no. 4 (Autumn 1991), 451.
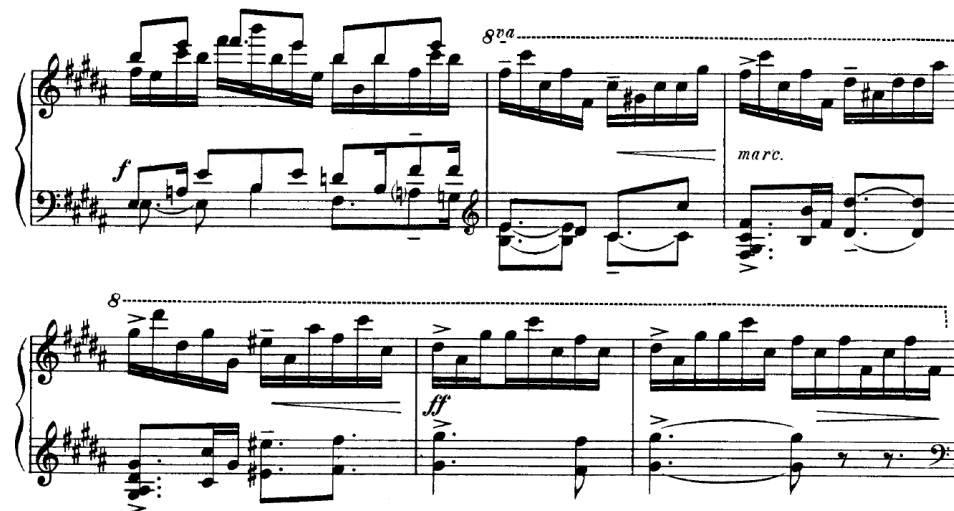
Example 5a: Carter, Piano Sonata (1946), I

Example 5b: Mennin, Five Piano Pieces, III

The opening left-hand accompaniment in the *Prelude* serves a greater unifying purpose – an inexact inversion of the first five notes becomes the theme of the third movement, *Variation-Canzona*. Similarly, the opening of the *Aria* is modified to form the ostinato in the *Canto*.

Example 6a: *Prelude*, opening

Example 6b: *Aria*, opening

Example 6c: *Variation-Canzona*, opening

Example 6d: *Canto*, opening

Balanced with a slow second and fourth movement, the third, middle movement is arguably the gravitational center of the set. Titled *Variation-Canzona*, makes a compelling case for sonata form through the unique presentation of the retransition. A prolonged, seven-note bass ostinato in the retransition of the set alludes to a tonality centered on A, perhaps Mennin's interpretation of a post-tonal dominant prolongation before settling in the recapitulation of D. This is illustrated in Example 7 and serves as a fine example illustrating pitch content supporting overall form – or as James Mathes explains, the coinciding of formal segmentation and changes in pitch content.[16]

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[16] James Mathes, *The Analysis of Musical Form* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2007), 337.

Example 7: Mennin, *Variation-Canzona* – mm. 86-91 (implied dominant key area)

2.3.   John Ireland: Piano Sonata (1920)

Written at a time when the neoclassical aesthetic was about to reach full bloom in France and Germany, this piece might appear conservative relative to contemporaneous works. Tonally, this work alludes strongly to Debussy with its heavy emphasis on color, and a plethora of ninths, elevenths, and thirteenths. However, it bears the progressive tendencies overlooked in composers such as Rachmaninoff, similarly criticized for being a reactionary against modernism. In Rachmaninoff's case, Yasser highlights the harmonic innovation employed, labelled intra-tonal chromaticism. Yasser describes intra-tonal chromaticism as the use of "altered chords, progressions, and digressions within the limits of a single or, at any rate, long exploited key."[17] I argue that the use of modified dominant relationships within the constraints of conventional tonal progression, in this Sonata, shows the same type of tonal progressiveness exhibited in Rachmaninoff.

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[17] Joseph Yasser, "Progressive Tendencies in Rachmaninoff's Music," *Tempo* 22 (Winter 1951-52), 21.

The one prevailing tonal relationship that overshadows all others is the use of a tri-tone as a secondary pole. The most conspicuous evidence is the key relation of the second movement to the outer movements. Furthermore, in both outer movements, B flat functions as a modified dominant. Such a terminology can be asserted here because of the location of these tri-tone key areas. In the first movement, the B flat key area appears in the initial statement of the secondary theme of the exposition and is reiterated in the closing of the exposition. In the third movement, the B flat key area appears in the beginning of the subsequent return of the primary theme. Since the first movement is in sonata form and the third movement is a rounded binary, the B flat tonality supports the overall formal structure and acts, then, as a substitute dominant.

The use of modified dominants has been used to describe the music of late Scriabin,[18] and there is evidence that Ireland did absorb elements of that influence. The highlighted progression in Example 8 demonstrates what a modified dominant relationship looks like. The underlying circle of fifths progression is well-masked by the tri-tone on the off-beats, demonstrating that the tri-tone does not just have structural significance, it functions as an integral secondary pole at the micro level.
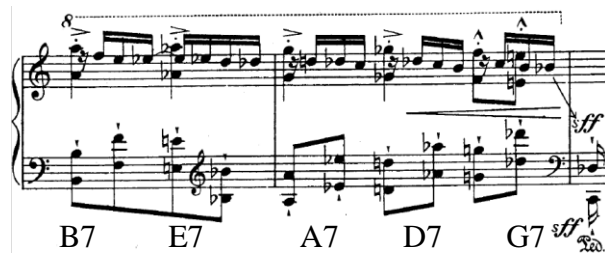
Example 8: Ireland, Piano Sonata – mm. 182-183

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[18] Philip Ewell, "Scriabin's Seventh Piano Sonata: Three Analytical Approaches," *Indiana Theory Review* 23 (Spring/Fall 2002), 23-67.

In Example 9, an expressive form of modified dominant takes place, this time featuring both a sharpening of the fifth (D flat) and a flattened fifth (C flat), implying a dominant chord that resolves to B flat major. The dominant of the V chord (i.e. C natural) is avoided altogether.
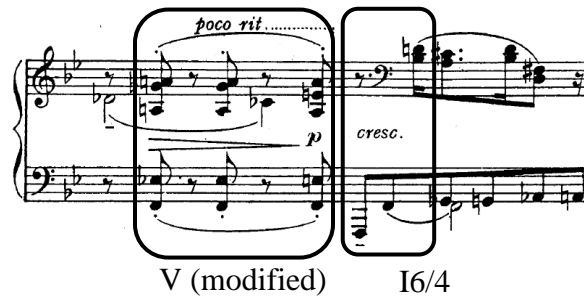
Example 9: Ireland, Piano Sonata – mm. 48-49

Another major feature of this work is the constant use of folk-like themes. The qualification of folk-like is important because Ireland had never shown interest in folksong nor deliberately incorporated them into his music.[19] The most plausible explanation, therefore, is using these folk-like tunes as examples of contemporary musical vernacular, i.e. a topical treatment of phrases.

Example 10 is a perfect manifestation of an 18th-century three-part musical sentence with contrasting topics at the subphrase level. The initial statement (and subsequent repetition) each consist of two subphrases, the former sweeping lyricism balanced by the latter subphrase, scherzando-like and punctuated with eighth rests. The continuation (third part of the sentence) then expands on both these two characteristics,

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[19] Nigel Townshend, "The Achievement of John Ireland," *Music & Letters* 24, no. 2 (April 1943), 68.

with the latter scherzando half transitioning smoothly into secondary thematic material (after the double bar).

Example 10: Ireland, Piano Sonata – mm. 22-38

2.4.   Concluding Remarks

While the three works presented in this recital do not fit the traditional neoclassical mold, Krenek, Mennin and Ireland have, at the very least, absorbed crucial aspects of the overall aesthetic. Krenek and Ireland maintain traditional musical forms: Both first movements are in sonata form, and both third movements in rounded binary. Because of their adherence to formal functions, it also sheds light on the tonal relationship that is of primary importance – tertian relationships in Krenek and the tritone in Ireland. Mennin's forms are relatively loose, in part because of their extended climaxes within each movement, serving as a distortion to an implied overall form. However, it is a clearly

referential: right to the *passaggi*-like reference in the end of the third movement to the *nota cambiata* in the fourth movement. Taking a leaf from the early serial works of Schoenberg, a classicizing framework allows a neo-tonal vocabulary to thrive.

The fact that a work is referential does not make it reverential. Formal functions are used in these works in the traditional sense, such as development functions that serve to destabilize the norm (e.g. a brief dodecaphonic outing in Krenek). However, these works challenge the use of tradition through deliberate means. The literal depiction of asymmetry through the stretching of meter in a *Fortspinnung* as seen in Mennin, or the modified dominant polarity of Ireland, suggest a tongue-in-cheek reference to tradition.

3. Ahistorical Neoclassicism: Carl Nielsen and Ernest Bloch

Neoclassicism is traditionally referred to as a reaction against Romanticism, especially late-German tonal saturation. Scott Messing refers to it as "a term originally intended to derogate the nineteenth-century German lineage."[20] This presentation aims to challenge this stereotypical claim, emphasizing more on the role of neoclassicism and retrospectivism in deviating from a larger common-practice lineage. The purpose of programming these two works is to highlight neoclassicism and retrospectivism as a reaction against *linearity* of musical tradition, of which a rejection of the immediate past, i.e. nineteenth-century late Romanticism, is of peripheral importance.

While we can acknowledge that neoclassical forefathers Stravinsky and Hindemith did not go about "forfeit[ing] their reputations as modernists,"[21] it is tempting to assume that a neo-tonal context sets them apart from the plethora of retrospective compositions that cannot be labelled as neoclassical. Limiting neoclassicism to a "superficial preservative restructuring"[22] of the doomed tonal system implies that a post-tonal vocabulary is essential for preserving the modernist aspect of neoclassicism.

Peter Burkholder's redefinition of modernism – "music written by composers obsessed with the musical past and with their place in music history"[23] captures the perpetually relevant relationship of new music to past music. This chapter aims to address

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[20] Scott Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music: From the Genesis of the Concept through the Schoenberg/Stravinsky Polemic* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press: 1988), 153.
[21] Richard Taruskin, *The Danger of Music and other Anti-Utopian Essays* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 382.
[22] Ibid., 383.
[23] J. Peter Burkholder, "Brahms and Twentieth-Century Classical Music," *19th-Century Music* 8 no. 1 (Summer 1984), 76.

how retrospective and neoclassical impulses in Nielsen's *Symphonisk Suite* and Bloch's *Piano Sonata* align more closely with this definition. This is despite Nielsen and Bloch utilizing a tonal vocabulary that, placed alongside Hindemith's or Bartok's, would appear archaic.

3.1.   Reinforcing the ahistorical notion

Nielsen's *Symphonisk Suite* is a typical example of what Walter Frisch, in describing the works of Max Reger, would label as historical modernism. While Frisch makes a distinction between Reger's historical modernism with later neoclassicists, he emphasizes that Reger was going beyond a reverential treatment of Bach: "he proudly included himself among the "moderns" like Strauss and endorsed a vision of music in which one could revere the older masters and still "ride to the left," a metaphor that he takes from – and turns against – Riemann."[24] Frisch explains that Reger, unlike Hugo Riemann, did *not* view Bach as a towering, unsurpassable figure.

Early neoclassicism shows a similar, deliberate swerve away from reverential treatment. Regarding *Pulcinella*, Stravinsky followed a similar line of thought in his autobiography, claiming "respect alone remains barren, and can never serve as a productive or creative factor." Therefore, while retrospection is not a necessary nor sufficient criterion for neoclassicism,[25] both retrospectivism and neoclassicism embody the same "metamorphic anachronism,"[26] concerned with "bringing the present into relation with a

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[24] Walter Frisch, "Reger's Bach and Historicist Modernism," *19th-Century Music* 25, no. 2-3 (Fall/Spring 2001-02), 301.
[25] Taruskin (2009), 386.
[26] Martha Hyde, "Neoclassic and Anachronistic Impulses in Twentieth-Century Music," *Music Theory Spectrum* 18, no. 2 (Autumn, 1996), 205.

specific past and making the distance between them meaningful."[27] This is why Hyde

asserts that reverential imitation does not produce a large body of masterworks,[28] because

composers like Nielsen and Bloch consciously make their works meaningful in relation to

the legacy that they connotate.

While Nielsen's work is *prima-facie* neo-baroque, it is far from an outright rejection

of nineteenth-century aesthetics. As Charles Rosen states, the impulsive energy of the

Romantic work is no longer a polarized dissonance and an articulated rhythm, but the

familiar Baroque sequence.[29] The sequencing used in both Nielsen and Bloch relies on

heavily expanded metrical units, which Edward Cone defines as the hypermeasure,[30] such

that the focus of the sequence is not on the general direction of one sequence (as in the case

of a Bach sequence), but the general intensification of multiple sequences in succession.

Examples 11a and 11b illustrate the "sequence of sequences" motion in both works using

Brahms-like cross-rhythms, highlighting the nineteenth-century usage of the word.

An important distinction between the hypermeasure usage in Examples 11a and

11b is that in the Bloch Sonata, the phrase elision over the bar-line is much more prominent,

further complicated by the changing meter that is not seen in Nielsen. This anti-metrical

principle is the hallmark of late Romanticism, as Cone notes, being particularly rampant in

Strauss, Mahler and Debussy.[31] Therefore, while both works bring the importance of the

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[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid., 210.
[29] Charles Rosen, *The Classical Style* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc, 1971), 515.
[30] Edward T. Cone, *Musical Form and Musical Performance* (Princeton, NJ: W.W. Norton & Company, 1968), 81.
[31] Ibid., 82.

Baroque sequence to a different level, the perceived romanticism of Bloch can be attributed to its metric irregularity.

Example 11a: Nielsen, *Symphonisk Suite* III – mm. 55-65

Example 11b: Bloch, Piano Sonata II – mm. 66-77

What I have just described can be viewed along a broader continuum towards the overall breakdown of meter (Figure 12). The nineteenth-century anti-metrical principle is an extension of the Baroque *Fortspinnung*. While the goal of the *Fortspinnung* is an elongation of phrase, the anti-metrical principle goes a step further, using the hypermeasure to achieve an elongation of *sequence*. This breakdown of meter eventually culminates in its final form in the twentieth century through metrical modulation. The elongation of *meter* is the modern perspective of phrase asymmetry, where metric predominance has been fully replaced with motivic predominance. Composers like Elliott Carter and Peter Mennin

relentlessly use phrase elisions and added values to support the rhythmic profile of the motif, changing the meter as necessary. At this point, the breakdown of meter is complete.

Metric
predominance

Motivic
predominance

Fortspinnung

Anti-metrical principle
Use of hypermeasure
Use of phrase elisions

Metrical
modulation

Elongation of phrase

Elongation of sequence

Elongation of meter
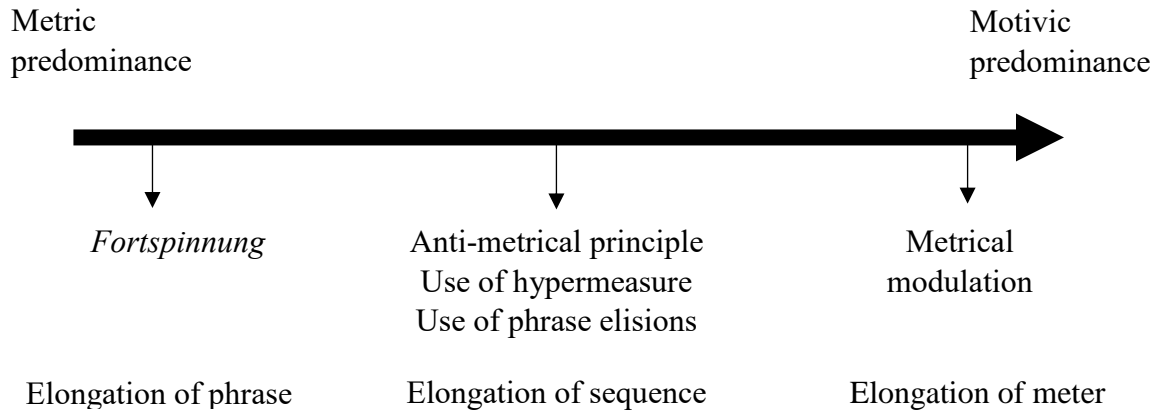
Figure 12: An illustration of the breakdown of meter

A final syntactical connection between the Baroque and Romantic is the concept of tiered polyphony. First introduced to describe Baroque "multimetric" layering, it was expounded upon by Brahms, whose usage in Op. 79 No. 2 was described as "strictly tiered" (Example 13a).[32] The use of strictly tiered is primarily due to the soprano being locked in a four-note pitch cell, irregular rhythms in the bass, with the top, middle and lower voices each asserting their own rhythmic identity, resulting in metric layering. Example 13b in the third movement of the *Symphonisk Suite* shows a very similar pattern. While the broader concept of metric layering found its home in the Baroque, strictly tiered polyphony has its roots from the German choral prelude,[33] where the *cantus firmus* technique is an invitation for metric layering and coinciding of pitch content between faster and slower-

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[32] Brent Auerbach, "Tiered Polyphony and Its Determinative Role in the Piano Music of Johannes Brahms," *Journal of Music Theory* 52, no. 2 (Fall 2008), 288.
[33] Ibid., 282.

moving voices. This is a defining feature that allows our ears to consider the *Symphonisk Suite* as neo-baroque.
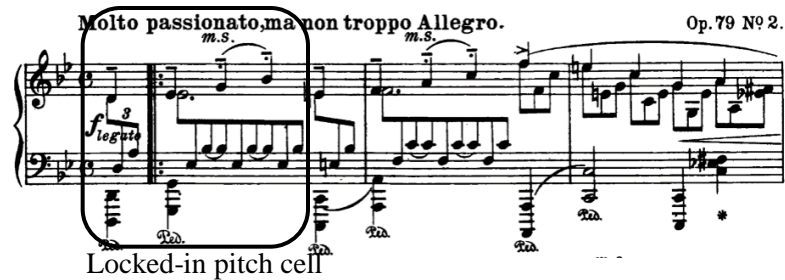
Example 13a: Brahms, Op. 79 No. 2 – mm. 1-3
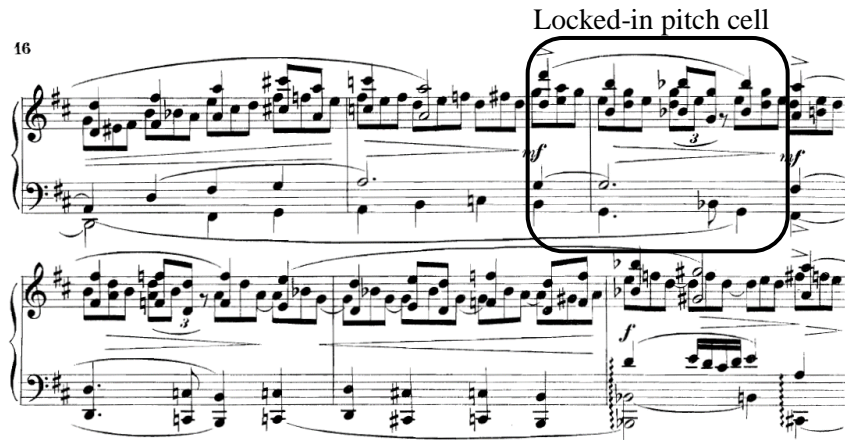
Example 13b: Nielsen, *Symphonisk Suite* III – mm. 75-80

3.2.   Thematic Recall

The thematic recall in the middle of the fourth movement of Nielsen's *Symphonisk Suite* brings back material from all three preceding movements. Unlike the cyclic usage in, say, Franck's D minor Symphony or Bruckner's Symphonies, the use of recall does not bring the weight of the overall theme back to centerstage. In Nielsen's case, there really isn't an overall theme of overwhelming importance. Each of the movements have their

defining *affekts* and associated themes, and the cyclic device in the fourth movement highlights all of these.

Nielsen is looking further back to Beethoven, where the recalling serves a formal function: such as Beethoven Op. 27 No. 1 (limited to a concluding function) or his Ninth Symphony (limited to an introductory function). In the *Symphonisk Suite*, most of the cyclicity is *contained within a sonata-rondo episode*, serving an episodic function. Therefore, Daniel Grimley's claim that the *Symphonisk Suite*, featuring an "archaic-modernist coexistence" due to cyclicity contributing to the modernity of the work, [34] must be interpreted with caution. Cyclicity in the context of Beethoven and a nineteenth-century usage of the term should be clearly distinguished.

While Bloch was said to have "furthered his neoclassic and nationalistic tendencies as a composer" from 1930,[35] the *Piano Sonata* is not a reaction against romanticism. In fact, it utterly reeks of nineteenth-century characteristics: the joining of movements, the cumulative usage of thematic material, and possible programmatic intent. Example 14 shows five main recurring themes used throughout Bloch's *Piano Sonata*, reiterated in all movements in various capacities. Cyclic form, an integral component of the nineteenth-century symphony, is used to describe a unity of themes across movements. The idea of a "seed motif,"[36] where one principal motif is used to derive subsequent motifs, can at least be applied towards Themes C and D: Theme D is an augmentation of Theme C.

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[34] Daniel Grimley, "'Tonality, Clarity, Strength': Gesture, form and Nordic Identity in Carl Nielsen's Piano Music," *Music & Letters* 86, no. 2 (May 2005), 209.
[35] Charles Brotman, "The Winner Loses: Ernest Bloch and His America," *American Music* 16, no. 4 (Winter 1998), 440.
[36] Constantin Floros, *Gustav Mahler and the symphony of the 19th century*, trans. Neil K. Moran (Frankfurt am Main: PL Academic Research, 2014), 45.

Example 14: Bloch, Piano Sonata – List of principal recurring themes

A feature of nineteenth-century cyclic form is "enhanced recurrence,"[37] where the final movement summarizes previously stated motifs through an intensification. The same concept can be applied to Bloch's *Piano Sonata*, at least for Themes A, B and E (in Example 14): the final reinstatement of these two themes, in the coda of the third movement, is highly dramatic. Additionally, Theme A serves as a *leitrhythm*, defined by its prolific French Overture dotted rhythm, while Theme B identifies as a bass ostinato.

A departure from Liszt, who tends to avoid introducing new motifs in later "movements" and instead rehashing all preceding motivic material, the opening theme of both movements (see Examples 15a and 15b) is new and defines its respective *affekt* as a Pastoral and March.
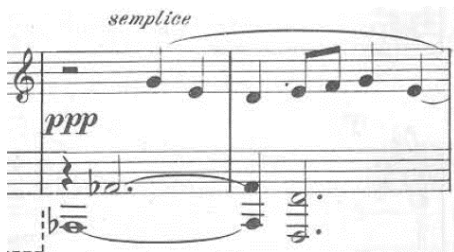
Example 15a: Bloch, Piano Sonata II, "Pastoral"

Example 15b: Bloch, Piano Sonata III, "March"

Furthermore, these motifs serve as what Cone terms as *textural* motifs, aiding expression rather than structure.[38] The distinction between this type of motifs, and what we generally understand as motifs susceptible to motivic development (Themes A through E), is crucial because that helps us understand that the primary function of these two themes is to underscore the entire movement's musical aesthetic. The concept of Cone's definition

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[37] Ibid., 46.
[38] Edward T. Cone, "On Derivation: Syntax and Rhetoric," *Music Analysis* 6, no. 3 (October 1987), 239.

of textural motifs is also related to Rosen's discussion a "return to the principles of the Baroque"[39] in nineteenth-century music in terms of impulsive energy and rhythmic homogeneity. Both deal with the consistency of musical *affekt* within a movement, and this is largely relevant in the discussion of Nielsen's *Symphonisk Suite*, and less so in Bloch's *Piano Sonata*.

This is a fine distinction between both works. In Bloch, thematic recall is cumulative and transformative, in Nielsen, thematic recall is subordinate to an overall architecture. There lies the claim of Bloch being more "romantic". The susceptibility of a motif to character transformation is exploited in the nineteenth-century, not the eighteenth. In a Classical context, thematic recall is peripheral to overall structure. Bloch has more susceptible motifs, therefore aligning closer to nineteenth-century ideals. The susceptibility of motifs is also a nineteenth-century application of musical topics, where a sign is transformed into a (more general) symbol: a leitmotif, for instance, is not necessarily associated with contemporaneous musical vernacular,[40] instead, serving a larger unifying purpose. In Nielsen's case, however, the textural homogeneity of each movement makes the use of textural motifs redundant. The recalling in the final movement, reintroducing first, second and third movement material in succession, is easily recognizable by the listener because the individual movement *affekts* are retained.

Frisch describes the Brahms' cyclicity in his Third Symphony as an "emblem of how far we have come", in reference to the final reinstatement of the opening theme right

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[39] Rosen (1971), 515.
[40] V. Kofi Agawu, *Playing With Signs* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 138.

at the end of the final movement.[41] Here lies a prerequisite for this compositional technique: the cyclicity is a strict one, connecting only the last movement to the first.[42] Nielsen's *Symphonisk Suite* comes very close to this approach, but is far from a mere reinstatement. While thematic recall is confined to the last movement, mainly within a sonata-rondo episode, the coda unexpectedly recalls the first movement again (Example 16a and 16b). Here, it references a part of a theme that has never been recalled before.

Example 16a: Nielsen, *Symphonisk Suite* I – mm. 1-2   Example 16b: Nielsen, *Symphonisk Suite* IV – mm. 125-130

In addition, Nielsen proceeds to demonstrate the thematic integration of all four movements, combining the intervallic and rhythmic identities of motifs from each of the four movements: the descending scalic passage from the first movement, the syncopated rhythm in the second movement, the ascending fourth interval from the third movement and falling thirds from the final movement (Example 16c). This is considerably in line with Frisch's description of Brahms' cyclicity: the cyclic return is certainly earned – in this case not just through an enhanced recurrence, but macro-level thematic interplay.

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[41] Walter Frisch, "The Snake Bites Its Tail: Cyclic Processes in Brahms's Third String Quartet, op. 67," *The Journal of Musicology* 22, no. 1 (Winter 2005), 158.
[42] Ibid., 157.
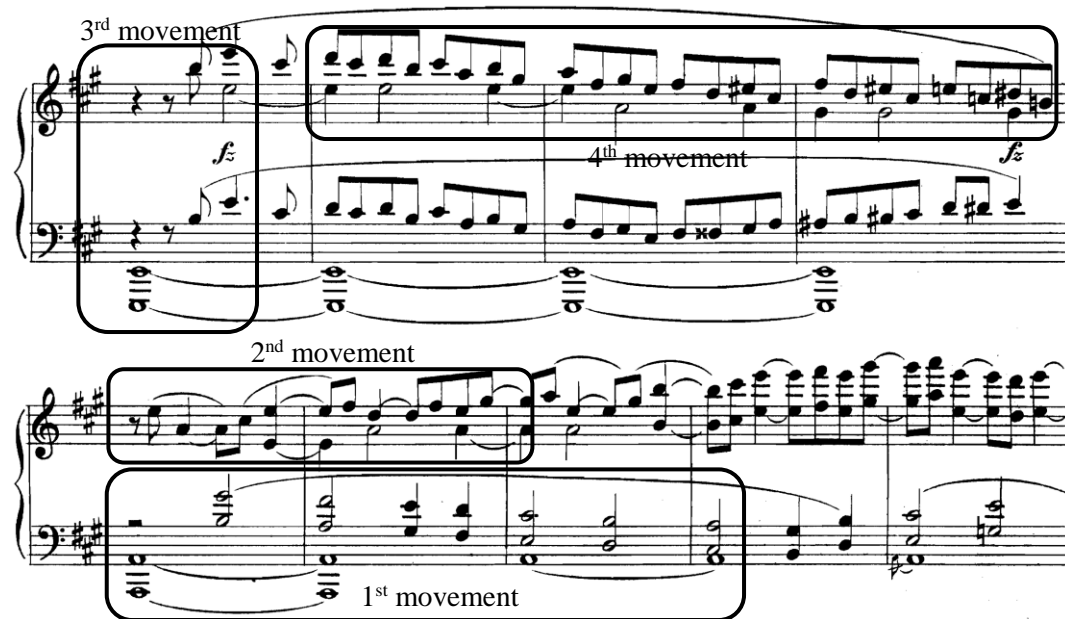
Example 16c: Nielsen, *Symphonisk Suite* IV – mm. 135-143

Like Nielsen, Bloch's Piano Sonata features a theme that connects the beginning to

its end: the opening ostinato of the exposition of the first movement (denoted as Theme B

in Example 14) is reinstated in the ending of the final movement (Example 17).

Example 17: Bloch, Piano Sonata III, ending

In contrast with Nielsen, the enhanced recurrence of Bloch's motifs occurs throughout all movements and is not a strict form of cyclicity. Furthermore, Bloch's recurrence of Theme B is not a dynamic enhancement. Marked *misterioso* and *pianississimo*, it is an eerie, final reinforcement of the ostinato. We could hardly say that Bloch earned this cyclicity, because the ostinato has been particularly pervasive and subject to a different variety of emotional contexts across movements.

This type of recall serves a more timbral, rather than thematic, function. As Marianne Wheeldon explains, this is a defining feature of Debussy's more progressive version of cyclicity in his String Quartet.[43] In addition, an increased level of cyclic integration is a hallmark of the quartets of Franck and Debussy, considered by highly contentious French nationalist Vincent d'Indy as the basis for considering the worth of a cyclic sonata. Accordingly, we are more inclined to view Bloch's as a more progressive version of cyclicity, and at least according to d'Indy, a more righteous representation of Romantic writing in the shadow of Franck.

A final feature of cyclicity that should be mentioned is that the "tonality is capable of cooperating with the cyclic unity of the work."[44] When d'Indy mentioned this, he was referring to how parallel major and minor keys serve as poles of attraction in Franck's piano quintet. Both Nielsen and Bloch capitalize on this, and comparing both approaches yields some significant observations. Nielsen's recall of the 2nd movement material is a reiteration a semitone up, that sets the pretext for the eventual *sharpening* of the rondo episode to its eventual final tonality of A major (Examples 18a and 18b). Bloch's recall of

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[43] Marianne Wheeldon, "Debussy and *La Sonate cyclique*," *The Journal of Musicology* 22, no. 4 (Fall 2005), 649.
[44] Ibid., 665.

the cyclic Theme A, first in a D acoustic scale and then in a G acoustic scale, demonstrates a *flattening* of tonality to the subdominant – a harmonic relaxation from the opening which is tonally centered on D, spilling over from the first movement (Examples 18c and 18d). In both cases, cyclic material is used to pivot to a sharper or flatter key area, providing a coloristic dimension to cyclicity and facilitating progressive tonality.

Example 18a

Nielsen, *Symphonisk Suite* II – m. 1

Example 18b

Nielsen, *Symphonisk Suite* IV – m. 61
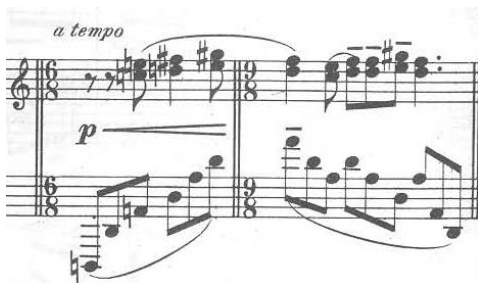
Example 18c

Bloch, Piano Sonata II – m. 62
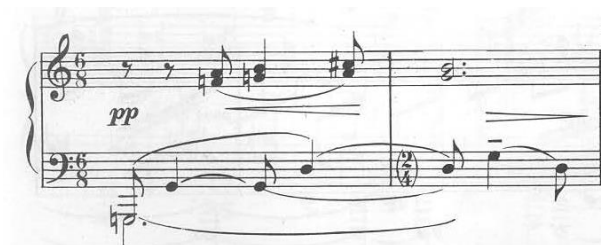
Example 18d

Bloch, Piano Sonata II – m. 123

3.3.   Nationalism: Flavor vs. Narrative

While neoclassicism is often sought as a reaction to musical purity and aesthetic value, it has been noted by Grimley[45] and Fulcher[46] that Nationalism never took a backseat despite a fundamental shift towards more "Universalist" musical values. In fact, in the case of d'Indy, neoclassicism was precisely a pretext for Nationalism, through the deliberate exclusion of select nineteenth-century Germans from an existing musical lineage.[47] Nationalism and Universalism are two sides of the same coin. Nielsen's deviation from the overtly chromatic style of Reger, a key figure along the German-Austrian lineage at the turn of the century, is accompanied with a nod towards masculine Nordic musical aesthetics.

However, unlike Bloch, folk inflections in Nielsen are not a fundamental pillar to overall structure. The primary directional impulse in each movement is the Baroque sequence, with the folk flavor as a finishing touch – a "regional variant" of the Brahms tradition.[48] In fact, it is more Brahmsian than it is Danish – the opening falling thirds from the third movement of the *Suite* have been compared to opening of the second movement of the F minor Sonata.[49] Perhaps the most prominent folk injection – just enough to make its presence felt – is his obsession with the flattened 7th as a substitute to the leading tone.[50] This implied flattened 7th is seen in the first measure of the second and fourth movements.

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[45] Grimley (2005), 216.

[46] Jane F. Fulcher, "The Composer as Intellectual: Ideological Inscriptions in French Interwar Neoclassicism," *The Journal of Musicology* 17, no. 2 (Spring 1999), 198.

[47] Wheeldon (2005), 660.

[48] John C. G. Waterhouse. "Nielsen Reconsidered: I," *The Musical Times* 106, no. 1468 (June 1965), 426.

[49] Mina F. Miller, "Carl Nielsen's Tonal Language: An Examination of the Piano Music," *College Music Symposium* 22 no. 1 (Spring 1982), 37.

[50] Niels Krabbe, "A Survey of the Written Reception of Carl Nielsen, 1931-2006," *Notes*, Second Series 64, no. 1 (Sep 2007), 46.

In contrast, Bloch's use of motifs, which encapsulate the modal inflections, are necessary to the underlying narrative that Bloch is trying to portray. An example is the extensive use the Phrygian Dominant scale, explicitly spelled out in the closing chord of the first movement and an identical, softer repetition in the opening chord of the second movement (Example 19a and 19b). Special attention should be paid here: this is typical nineteenth-century syntax – a reordering of a closing function as an opening function in a separate context.[51] In addition, the French Overture rhythms in Example 19a serve both an introductory and closing function for the first movement – emphasizing the role of cyclicity not just across movements, but *within* movements. The underlying case in point here is the use of nationalistic flavor to support an underlying narrative, which is rampant in nineteenth-century music. For example, Mendelssohn's Midsummer Night's Dream Overture's four closural chords serve as "a retrospective progression which is past-oriented."[52] The similar gesture in Bloch is in line with the Romantic narrative of transporting the listener to another world, creating a radical contrast in context.

Example 19a: Bloch, Piano Sonata I, ending

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[51] Agawu (1991), 138.
[52] Raymond Monelle, *The Sense of Music: Semiotic Essays*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 2000), 84.

Example 19b: Bloch, Piano Sonata II, opening

Bloch's final movement is described as "a cry to all humanity from a member of the Hebrew race at a time when justice toward his race was at one of its lowest points."[53] This is largely attributable to the concept of enhanced recurrence of Theme B (Example 20a and 20b). The final ostinato of Theme B, outlined in Example 17, not only serves as a timbral recall; it is a chilling depiction what was to be the Final Solution.

Example 20a: Bloch, Piano Sonata III

Theme A (Coda)
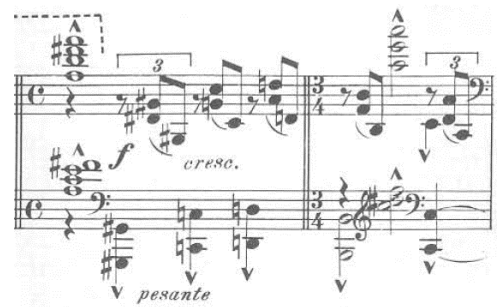
Example 20b: Bloch, Piano Sonata III

Theme B (Coda)

3.4.   Concluding Remarks

Both Nielsen and Bloch are considered musical independents, and not part of a prevailing musical school of thought. This meant that they assimilated influences across

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[53] Charles Lynn Wheeler, "Ernest Bloch's Solo Piano Music," *American Music Teacher* 30, no. 2 (November-December 1980), 24.

leading figures of their time and integrated existing stylistic practices. Furthermore, the nineteenth-century opposition between Nationalism and Universalism in music is no longer meaningful – the apparent appeal towards the latter can itself be a powerful nationalist strategy.[54] Both works are an extension of nineteenth-century Nationalism, either as an injection of folk flavor (in Nielsen) or to support an underlying narrative (in Bloch).

While the above discussion segments differences in cyclic treatment and nationalistic tendencies, it is important to note that the two ideas are very much intertwined. In Nielsen, the stricter treatment of cyclicity is much related to a folk flavor rather than a narrative. In Bloch, the fluidity of the cyclic form reiterates the thematic transformation and is therefore fundamental to the overall narrative. The Phrygian Dominant scale, for instance, permeates the work through theme B and C which are susceptible to character transformation. However, the underlying mechanisms behind both compositions – the *affekt* in Nielsen and the susceptibility of motivic transformation in Bloch – suggest an adherence to a more sequence-based, additive musical syntax that is, ironically, closer to works of the Baroque and Romantic.

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[54] Richard Taruskin, *The Danger of Music and Other Anti-Utopian Essays* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 293.

4. An Incidental Adoption of the Neoclassical Aesthetic

4.1. Roy Harris: Toccata (revised 1949)

An introductory prelude that draws directly from the *Stylus Phantasticus* of the early Baroque, Harris's *Toccata* recalls the seventeenth-century *fantasia* – used interchangeably with *toccata* and *ricerar* – as a free-form compositional medium. This medium, whose most prominent exponent was Frescobaldi, is characterized by the alternation of *passaggi* (fast-moving passages) with *affetti* (intimate and meditative parts). Example 21 shows the *affetti* section of the *Toccata*. The use of consecutive second inversion chords, which renounce their harmonic function, resembles the medieval *fauxbourdon* (false bass) within an organum texture.

Example 21: Harris, *Toccata* – mm. 74-77

The seventeenth-century *fantasia* also features slower harmonic rhythm compared with the late Baroque, captured in this work through the sostenuto pedal. Harris's harmonic language is relatively conservative, choosing to stay with common-tone modulation from

one drawn-out harmony to the next. A typical example of which is found in the *passaggi* shown in Example 22 (from D flat major to E major through pivot G sharp/A flat). This, in combination with what Cowell and Copland dismissed as "forced and experimental" polyphony[55] (the fughetta section in the *Toccata* qualifying as a brief polyphonic venture at best), made him susceptible to criticism as essentially creating his "own version of the age-old forms"[56] within the shackles of tradition.

Example 22: Harris, *Toccata* – mm. 24-30

However, the *Toccata* gives a valuable snapshot into his overall style: he studied and clashed with Nadia Boulanger over the direction of his study,[57] and had an insatiable desire for creating an American sound. The *Toccata* heralds the keyboard tradition of the

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[55] Dorothy Slepian, "Polyphonic Forms and Devices in Modern American Music," *The Musical Quarterly* 33 no. 3 (Jan 1947), 321.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Louise Spizizen, "Johana and Roy Harris: Marrying a "Real" Composer," *The Musical Quarterly* 77 no. 4 (Winter 1993), 581.

sixteenth century, while possessing a melodic wealth that contains "a certain irregularity and looseness,"[58] following closely behind Copland's "Americana" style of the 1940s.

This looseness is articulated by Walter Simmons in describing Harris's symphonic sound as "lofty, expansive, and open-ended rather than symmetrical". [59] This description certainly applies to the *Toccata*, its changing meters asserting American rhythmic asymmetries. A more extreme version of this can be found in his Piano Sonata Op. 1 (1928), featuring what Nicolas Slonimsky labels as "melorhythmic units", [60] where metric expansion and contraction constitute a metric palindrome. In contrast to Europeans, whose rhythm served as the largest common denominator, Harris's melodic high points rarely coincide with metrical strong beats,[61] creating two opposing forces between meter and melody. The improvisatory nature of the *Toccata* was arguably an ideal medium for him to capitalize on this resulting tension.

4.2.   Francis Poulenc: *Les Soirées de Nazelles* (1930-1936)

Les Soirées de Nazelles is a collection of eight musical portraits of friends whose identities Poulenc did not reveal, framed by a *Préambule* and a *Finale* which represent self-portraits.[62] Meant as a source of musical entertainment for his friends at Nazelles in Touraine, and being his most comprehensive work for piano, its severe underrepresentation in performance is puzzling. While it might be in part due to Poulenc's own disdain for the

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[58] Nicolas Slonimsky, "Roy Harris," *The Musical Quarterly* 33 no. 1 (Jan 1947), 19.
[59] Walter Simmons, *Music of William Schuman, Vincent Persichetti, and Peter Mennin: Voices of Stone and Steel* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2011), 11.
[60] Slonimsky (1947), 23.
[61] Ibid., 32.
[62] Nicolas Southon, ed., Roger Nichols, trans., *Francis Poulenc: Articles and Interviews – Notes from the Heart* (Dorchester, UK: Dorset Press, 2014), 102.

piece, he acknowledged it as "a work that goes further than any other in expressing a generalized spiritual and emotional atmosphere."[63] Perhaps an increasingly romanticized Poulenc did not sit well with his reputation as a neoclassicist from the previous decade. Putting this statement in context, the year of its completion (1936) was when Poulenc returned to his Catholic faith after a death of a close friend. Contemporaneous with *Les Soirées de Nazelles* are other sacred works including *Litanies à la Vierge noire* (1936) and his *Mass in G major* (1937).

Notwithstanding Poulenc's turn to Catholicism, religion and French folklore were both political points of contention during this period, and aesthetic legitimacy was politicized. Poulenc's religious influence in his music might be at least in part related to his hostility towards the short-lived Popular Front, a party that capitalized on the anti-clerical sentiment of the French Revolution.[64] Seeking to emulate the "devotional tone and rustic simplicity"[65] of French peasant prayers, religious connotations in Poulenc's output during the period could not go unnoticed with the present political climate.

There are traces of this in *Les Soirées de Nazelles,* most prominently in the penultimate *Cadence*, featuring an organum-like passage over a single pedal (Example 23). Not surprisingly, this allusion to medieval organum only appears in his own musical portrait.

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[63] Ibid., 100.
[64] Jane F. Fulcher, "Musical Style, Meaning, and Politics in France on the Eve of the Second World War," *The Journal of Musicology* 13 no. 4 (Autumn 1995), 434.
[65] Ibid.

Example 23: Poulenc, *Les Soirées de Nazelles*, Cadence – mm. 1-3

The tonal language of Poulenc overlaps considerably with that of Prokofiev. Shock tactics and disruptive musical gestures,[66] hallmarks of the Piano Sonatas of Sergei Prokofiev, find themselves at home in Poulenc's *Les Soirées de Nazelles*. Central to Prokofiev's tonal language is the concept of chromatic displacement, which capitalizes on "expanded tonality" as opposed to "tonal dissolution" – the latter being a Wagnerian tradition. As Richard Bass aptly puts across, "[the] function is clear but terms in the diatonic syntax are not in strict agreement."[67]

Chromatic displacement features prominently in *Les Soirées de Nazelles*. In Example 24a and 24b, the minor second clash in the left-hand provides two alternative diatonic interpretations. Example 24a could be interpreted as a diminished (if E) or German 7th (if E flat), while Example 24b could be interpreted as a dominant 7th (if F) or secondary dominant (if F sharp). In both cases, either diatonic possibility is viable, but the simultaneous attack on both notes creates the illusion that one note is wrong, since no preparation or resolution is necessary.

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[66] Christina K. Guillaumier, "Ambiguous Modernism: The Early Orchestral Works of Sergei Prokofiev," *Tempo* 65 no. 256 (April 2011), 27.

[67] Richard Bass, "Prokofiev's technique of chromatic displacement," *Music Analysis* 7, no. 2 (July 1988), 199.

Example 24a: Poulenc, *Les Soirées de Nazelles*, I – mm. 6-7

Example 24b: Poulenc, *Les Soirées de Nazelles*, VIII – mm. 23-24

In relating both Prokofiev and Poulenc's phrase structure back to Classical formal functions, Deborah Rifkin distinguishes mild, moderate and extreme-modern tonal phrases, the degree determined by their level of disruption. Higher levels of "modernity" are achieved when formal design and voice-leading structure clash, and surface design considerations (i.e. whether the accompaniment texture changes to accommodate the chromatic intervention).[68] Extreme-modern tonal phrases occur when there is a temporary absence of goal-directed melodic motion.

Generally, Poulenc's periodic structures do not compromise melodic motion, and tonal phrases are either classified as mild or moderate. A typical example of a moderate-modern tonal phrase is shown below, both by Rifkin in Prokofiev's fifth sonata (Example 25a) and the sixth movement of *Les Soirées de Nazelles* (Example 25b).

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[68] Deborah Rifkin, "Making it Modern: Chromaticism and Phrase Structure in Twentieth-Century Tonal Music," *Theory and Practice* 31 (2006), 143.

Example 25a: Prokofiev, Sonata No. 5, II – mm. 1-8 as quoted by Deborah Rifkin[69]

Example 25b: Poulenc, *Les Soirées de Nazelles*, VIII – mm. 1-11

[69] Ibid., 135.

In both cases, the step-wise progression maintains the goal-oriented motion to the cadence, but it does feature some disruptive harmonic and textural changes (surface design considerations). However, the adherence to an eight-bar periodic structure still maintains William Caplin's concept of tightly-knit construction (characterized by, namely, cadential confirmation and symmetrical phrase groupings).[70] In Haydn or Mozart, such disruptive harmonic changes, referred to by Rifkin as remote chromaticism, loosens periodic structures. In Poulenc and Prokofiev, however, periodicity is unaffected – as if the disruption never happened.

4.3.   Alexei Stanchinsky: Five Canon Preludes (1908/1913)

The five canon preludes of Alexei Stanchinsky represent the only known works of the composer written with such strict imitation. These canon preludes (apart from the one in B minor) were written a year before his untimely death.

	Canonic interval	Time interval between *dux* & *comes*	Implied no. of voices
C major	5th, inversion	2 measures	2
G major	Unison	1 measure	3
E mixolydian	Unison and 4th	1 measure	4
E flat minor/G flat major	4th, augmentation	1/3 measure	2
B minor	Unison	4 measures	2

Figure 26: Canonic relationships of Stanchinsky's Five Canon Preludes

Stanchinsky's choice of canonic and time intervals for all five preludes are shown in the table above. In contrast with a voice-leading canon, Stanchinsky's preferred canonic interval – other than unison – is the subdominant, considered a prohibited canonic interval

[70] William E. Caplin, *Classical Form: A Theory of Formal Functions for the Instrumental Music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 17.

in seventeenth-century canonic literature due to voice-leading concerns.[71] Nineteenth and twentieth-century composers of canonic literature generally do not subject themselves to such constraints, and Stanchinsky does so by avoiding the concept of a stacked canon, where voices enter at equal time intervals as well as at similar harmonic intervals.[72] Stanchinsky does not meet the second criterion, since subsequent intervallic entries resemble more of a fugal response.

In the five canon preludes, Stanchinsky often treats the head of the *dux* as a fugal subject and uses that duration as a point of imitation. Therefore, the *comes* appears as real or tonal answers, resulting in the blurring between canon and fugal forms – the two distinguished as strict vs. free oration.[73] This is further complicated by the presence of a clear exposition and/or recapitulation section or the presence of countersubject material. This blurring of canon and fugal forms is especially relevant in the discussion of the canon preludes in C and E mixolydian, and less so in the canon preludes in G flat major and B minor, while the canon prelude in G alludes to sonata form.

Like his two published piano sonatas, Stanchinsky's affinity for odd meters is evident in two of the five canon preludes (5/2 in the G major prelude and 7/8 in the E mixolydian prelude). He takes advantage of this to feature a rhythmic palindrome in the *dux* of the E mixolydian prelude, and an inexact rhythmic palindrome in the G major prelude. Incidentally, these two canon preludes deviate most from a traditional canon, as the heads of both canonic subjects are distinguished from the rest of the canonic material.

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[71] Denis Collins, "Bach's Occasional Canon BWV 1073 and "Stacked" Canonic Procedure in the Eighteenth Century," *Bach* 33, no. 2 (2002), 21.
[72] Ibid., 16.
[73] Gregory G. Butler, "Fugue and Rhetoric," *Journal of Music Theory* 21 no. 1 (Spring 1977), 64.

The canon prelude in E mixolydian focuses on the head of the *dux*, lasting a measure, as a quasi-fugal subject. Subsequent subject entrances, even when two subjects appear together, are still separated a measure apart, rather than a few measures apart, emphasizing the head of the subject in the foreground, while relegating the rest of the canonic material to countersubject or peripheral importance (see Example 27).

Example 27: Stanchinsky, Canon Prelude in E mixolydian – mm. 13-17

The canon prelude in G is an anomaly even for this peculiar set of canon preludes, as it alludes to Sonata form. First, it has an expository section, clearly defined by the repeat sign. The introduction of subsequent material introduces harmonic instability, suggesting a developmental function of canonic material. A closer look at the development section shows the canonic imitation being passed from the middle to lower to upper voice,

representing a chain of incidental invertible counterpoints that is prevalent in the entire set

(Example 28).

Motif A
(middle)

Motif B
(middle)

Motif A
(lower)

Motif A
(top)

Motif C
(middle)

Motif B
(bottom)

Motif B
(top)

**Dux
(false recap)**

Motif C
(bottom)

Example 28: Stanchinsky, Canon Prelude in G major – mm. 9-12

In a fugal context, the rhetoric of invertible counterpoint is a form of opposition to elevate the primary theme relative to the other themes.[74] In this example, however, the invertible counterpoint brings a new theme, motif A, to primary importance within the development section. The reentry of the *dux* toward the end of the development resembles a false recapitulation (an inexact repetition of the original *dux*), the actual recapitulation occurring with a decisive key change two measures later. These deviations from traditional sonata form – a new theme in the development section and a false recapitulation – are certainly not unusual in Classic music, but their appearance within a strict canonic framework is exceptional.

4.4.   Arno Babajanian: Polyphonic Sonata (1956)

Keyboard music was largely immune to the underlying "Soviet Realism" that found its way into Soviet music since the 1930s. The concept of Soviet Realism embodied three ideas: content over formalism, an element of Nationalism and accessibility, and party-mindedness.[75] However, composers were still allowed to compose "serious music" (for example, in a learned style) which did not embody a programmatic idea, as long as it sounded patriotic or at least optimistic in tone and still accessible to the masses.[76]

In this respect, the music of Arno Babajanian naturally adheres to the mainstream, drawing from Armenian folk melodies while still carrying the heroism and virtuosity of Russian pianist-composers, of whom Sergei Rachmaninoff is a prime example. Considered

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[74] Ibid., 90.

[75] David G. Tompkins, *Composing the Party Line: Music and Politics in Early Cold War Poland and East Germany* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2013), 18.

[76] George G. Weickhardt, "Dictatorship and Music: How Russian Music survived the Soviet Regime," *Russian History* 31 no. 1/2 (Spring-Summer 2004), 125.

a "middle group" composer, Babajanian was part of a larger predominant middle-ground that produced swaths of Soviet music that synthesized old and new techniques, keeping their dissonance threshold contemporaneous with works written in the 1930s,[77] the Golden Age of interwar neoclassicism. Music written by these composers naturally received more praise at home than abroad,[78] as it steered clear of "unaccepted" practices such as dodecaphony and other evolving modernistic compositional techniques.

It is therefore surprising that Babajanian later wrote *Six Pictures for Piano* (1964), which hybridizes twelve-tone structures, at a time when dodecaphony was forbidden, with intonations borrowed from traditional Armenian music.[79] A possible intention was for it to serve as "drawer music", and to present it publicly only when it was appropriate to do so. Such was the case with the chamber music of Shostakovich – the genre was deemed less threatening than a large-scale orchestral work.[80] It was likely that piano music was considered as "safe" as chamber music. In any case, Babajanian's earlier works like the *Heroic Ballade* (1950) would have already appeased the regime, allowing him to take some calculated risks.

Sandwiched between the aforementioned works, Babajanian's middle-ground, neoclassical impulse in the *Polyphonic Sonata* (1956) might be considered as passé by the West. But it certainly was representative of a Soviet middle-ground work that safeguarded his reputation. The sonata also appears to fall under the spectrum of "serious music", each

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[77] Boris Schwarz, *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1983)*,* 449.
[78] Ibid., 450.
[79] Levon Hakobian, *Music of the Soviet Age 1917-1987* (Stockholm, Sweden: Melos Music Literature, 1998), 222.
[80] Weickhardt (2004), 133.

movement having its own fugal exposition. Nonetheless, the incessant laments through the descending two-note slurs in the fugal subject of the second movement (Example 29a), and a parodistic take of *Dies Irae* in the third provide some extramusical context beyond its traditional form. The latter (Example 29b) contains the opening notes of the original plainchant (except for the raised seventh in the third measure). The rhythmic profile of the third movement resembles a Dance of Death along the likes of Schubert's *Death and the Maiden* and the *Saltarello* in Mendelssohn's "Italian" Symphony. The use of Dance of Death in a modernistic context creates an additional dimension of musical influence: Dance of Death is traditionally a nineteenth-century topic, which in turn derives from medieval literary topics.[81] Therefore, the use of this topic hinges on both non-contemporaneous literary and musical codes.

Example 29a: Babajanian, Polyphonic Sonata, II – mm. 1-3

Example 29b: Babajanian, Polyphonic Sonata, III – mm. 1-4

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[81] Raymond Monelle, *The Sense of Music: Semiotic Essays*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 20.

Babajanian is adept at integrating fugal technique across the three movements, labelled Prelude, Aria and Toccata respectively. Such use in late Beethoven was a deliberate separation of polyphony from "both monody and homophony, which had been tenuously integrated in earlier classicism."[82] Similarly, Babajanian distinguishes his stylistic content from formal seriousness. For instance, the climax of the second movement, with an unconventional use of four staves, boasts more of its organ-like textural layering than its fugal complexity (Example 30a). The polyphonic complexity of the third movement fizzles out after the fugal exposition of both subject and countersubject have completed, entering pure toccata mode – an incessant perpetual motion that occasionally reduces to monody (Example 30b).

Example 30a: Babajanian, Polyphonic Sonata, II – mm. 98-100

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[82] Jeffrey Swinkin, "The Middle Style/Late Style Dialectic: Problematizing Adorno's Theory of Beethoven," *The Journal of Musicology* 30 no. 3 (Summer 2013), 291.

Example 30b: Babajanian, Polyphonic Sonata, III – mm. 179-182

4.5.   Concluding Remarks

This recital features works that exhibit neoclassical impulses, while not confronting the aesthetic directly. Poulenc's *Les Soirées de Nazelles* and Babajanian's *Polyphonic Sonata* seek to uphold the Caplin principle of periodicity through tightly-knit structures and the deployment of Prokofiev's chromatic displacement technique. Stanchinsky's musical style, on the other hand, has been accused of revealing an "underlying pathological tone,"[83] despite its strict canonic imitation. A possible explanation is Stanchinsky's tendency to feature the dissonant intervals as melodic, rather than sounding both notes simultaneously. For instance, the Canon Prelude in C prominently displays the diminished 9th interval in the recapitulation as a huge melodic leap, rather than chromatic dissonances incidental to the overall structure.

Babajanian was certainly aware of the regime's preferred aesthetical tastes, and the Polyphonic Sonata qualifies as a middle-ground work. Poulenc wrote *Les Soirées de Nazelles* with his disdain of the Popular Front in mind, in addition to his personal reconversion to Catholicism. Harris, while in Europe, explicitly acknowledged the

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[83] M. Montagu-Nathan, "Was He A Genius?" *Tempo* 28 (Summer 1953), 24

importance of the League of Composers (in a letter to Claire Reis, the chairperson of the League) in promoting the musical work of modern Americans.[84] Unlike the other three composers, Stanchinsky's Canon Preludes were likely entirely a personal project, although little is known about the exact circumstances of his composition.

These motivations played a defining role in their respective musical influences. Poulenc and Babajanian drew from extroversive elements, Poulenc from the French Overture and medieval organum and Babajanian drawing from musical topics such as the musical lament (or *pianto*) and Dance of Death. Stanchinsky's musical derivation, on the other hand, is purely introversive. In the Canon Prelude in C, the recapitulation is a derivation of two earlier parts of the canonic subject, and the resultant effect is what Edward Cone deems as epiphanic,[85] a technique that draws from Beethoven and Schubert. Therefore, while Stanchinsky's work is not overtly neoclassical, its method of motivic derivation is a classicizing tendency. Harris was pivotal in shaping an American legacy, and the exhibited opposition between melody and meter is a consequence of his motivation of furthering the "Americana" style of Copland.

I hope to challenge the listener to rethink the scope of neoclassicism. Beyond the Stravinsky-Schoenberg polemic, classicizing tendencies of composers come in many forms, including motivic derivation, formal seriousness, and an uneasy compromise given political upheavals and attempts to subvert aesthetic legitimacy.

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[84] David Metzer, "The League of Composers: The Initial Years," American Music 15 no. 1 (Spring 1997), 52.

[85] Edward T. Cone, "On Derivation: Syntax and Rhetoric," *Music Analysis* 6, no. 3 (October 1987), 246.

Repertoire List

First Dissertation Recital: Friday, September 28, 2018

Ernst Krenek   Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 59 (1928)

> [CD 1 Track 1] *Allegretto – Moderato, comodo*
> [CD 1 Track 2] *Alla marcia, energico*
> [CD 1 Track 3] *Allegro giocoso*

Peter Mennin   Five Piano Pieces (1949)

> [CD 1 Track 4] *Prelude*
> [CD 1 Track 5] *Air*
> [CD 1 Track 6] *Variation – Canzona*
> [CD 1 Track 7] *Canto*
> [CD 1 Track 8] *Toccata*

John Ireland   Piano Sonata (1920)

> [CD 1 Track 9] *Allegro moderato*
> [CD 1 Track 10] *Non troppo lento*
> [CD 1 Track 11] *Con moto moderato*

Second Dissertation Recital: Wednesday, December 5, 2018

> [CD 2 Track 1] LECTURE

Carl Nielsen   *Symphonisk Suite*, Op. 8 (1894)

> [CD 2 Track 2] *Intonation: Maestoso*
> [CD 2 Track 3] *Quasi Allegretto*
> [CD 2 Track 4] *Andante*
> [CD 2 Track 5] *Finale: Allegro*

Ernest Bloch   Piano Sonata (1935)

> [CD 2 Track 6] *Maestoso ed energico*
> [CD 2 Track 7] *Pastorale: Andante*
> [CD 2 Track 8] *Moderato alla marcia*

Third Dissertation Recital: Tuesday, May 7, 2019

Roy Harris   Toccata (revised 1949)

                              [CD 3 Track 1]

Francis Poulenc   *Les Soirées de Nazelles* (1936)

                              [CD 3 Track 2]

                                  Préambule
                                  Le comble de la distinction
                                  Le cœur sur la main
                                  La désinvolture et la discrétion
                                  La suite dans les idées
                                  Le charme enjôleur
                                  Le contentement de soi
                                  Le gout du malheur
                                  L'alerte vieillesse
                                  Cadence
                                  Final

Alexei Stanchinsky   Five Canon Preludes (1908/1913)

                              [CD 3 Track 3] C major
                              [CD 3 Track 4] G major
                              [CD 3 Track 5] E mixolydian
                              [CD 3 Track 6] E flat minor/G flat major
                              [CD 3 Track 7] B minor

Arno Babajanian   Polyphonic Sonata (1956)

                              [CD 3 Track 8] Prelude
                              [CD 3 Track 9] Aria
                              [CD 3 Track 10] Toccata

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