JONATHAN HARVEY’S STRING QUARTETS

BY

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DISSERTATION

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This study examines Jonathan Harvey’s core musical processes and spiritual background through his four string quartets—No. 1 (1977), No. 2 (1988), No. 3 (1995), and No. 4 (2003). The paper surveys Harvey’s eclectic background in religion and musical education, and several trends with which he is associated—serialism, spectralism, electronic music, and spiritual music. Four chapters are dedicated to discussing unique analytical aspects of each quartet. The First Quartet’s multiple structural levels show a Schenkerian global approach. At the local level, a governing principle of integral serialism is found. The Second Quartet’s primary materials derive from a melodic chain. The Third Quartet’s instrumental writing is inspired by electronic music and shows Harvey’s evolution in timbre. The use of a symmetrical harmonic field symbolizes a floating state and freedom from obsession. The Fourth Quartet, one of his most representative pieces incorporating electronics, uses several processing techniques (amplification, spatialization, harmonizers, time stretching, and granulation) signifying the ambiguity of the live sound source. The final chapter investigates Harvey’s ideas of spirituality. Some analytical findings are shown to have direct parallels with tenets of Buddhism.
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INTRODUCTION

What I seek is music that is as fresh as an improvisation and yet has not a sound out of place.¹

—Jonathan Harvey

Jonathan Harvey (May 3, 1939 – December 4, 2012, Sutton Coldfield, England) is a leading English composer. Self-described as “largely Buddhist”² but with a background in Christian church music, his musical thought centers around “Buddhist-inspired spirituality.”³ He studied and worked in Europe and America, and his diverse musical influences include Benjamin Britten, Olivier Messiaen, Milton Babbitt, Karlheinz Stockhausen, and French spectralists such as Gérard Grisey and Tristan Murail. Absorbing many seemingly contradictory principles of the twentieth century, his music blends the aesthetics of modernism with an essentially lyrical expression and attempts to communicate the spiritual in an objective musical language. He has studied and worked in England, France, and America and has contributed in the fields of electroacoustic music, serialism, and spectralism. His musical works, various in style and technique, share in common one fundamental principle: the pursuit of unity through “transcending dichotomies.”⁴ Harvey attempts to blur the distinctions between subject and object, music and listener, and darkness (suffering) and light (transcendence), often in a journey through a dramatic discourse. The violent musical materials and thematic contrasts in his music show the nature of suffering, while healing from suffering is guided by manifestations of musical ambiguity, symbolizing insubstantiality.⁵

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⁴ “In an important sense, in fact, a dualistic subject/object distinction is inappropriate when dealing with music. For music is intimately concerned with transcending that dichotomy, with healing Descartes’s ontological separation of self and world and Kant’s epistemological separation of self and certain knowledge, both formative of today’s dominant paradigms (and difficulties).” Jonathan Harvey, *In Quest of Spirit: Thoughts on Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 1.
⁵ This study’s approach progresses from the detailed to the general. Each quartet and its specific techniques are discussed first; broader issues of Harvey’s spirituality and aesthetics follow in the conclusion. Readers unfamiliar with Harvey’s core musical ideas may find it helpful to read pp. 95–99 prior to the main chapters.
Biographical Information

Harvey’s early musical background was developed at St. Michael’s College, Tenbury, where he sang as a chorister from 1948 to 1952. Harvey traces the beginning of his “spiritual journey”⁶ to this period and recounts his spiritual awakening while studying old church music manuscripts and playing organ improvisations. During adolescence, his focus shifted from God to nature. In the 1960s, following his encounter with Evelyn Underhill’s book Mysticism, he found that his vivid experiences of spiritual presence were not uniquely his, but “part of a substantial tradition.”⁷ His spiritual journey continued under the guidance of Rudolf Steiner;⁸ Harvey recalls Steiner’s “view of art, and in particular of music, was that it is the communicating link between levels of perception, spiritual and material, clairvoyant and normal.”⁹ He subsequently accepted Buddhism in 1977 and started practicing Vedic meditation daily.¹⁰

Harvey’s eclectic religious background should be understood as a reconciliation rather than a series of conversions, although he finds the most fulfilling answer from Buddhism:

Finally (so far—for nothing is predictable or conclusive on this journey), I came to want a greater synthesis between my reason and my nagging questioning of the inherent existence of God or gods. Having spent so much of my life in universities, I was fully aware of the force of scientific empiricism and also of scientific uncertainty; of the relative, perspectival nature of “facts;” of postmodernism in all its forms. To me, the most profound way of thinking that reconciled such nihilistic views with my spiritual certainties was Buddhist. When encountered superficially, Buddhism, with its doctrine of emptiness, the idea that nothing, not even oneself, has inherent existence outside self-grasping delusion, can seem quite nihilistic. In fact, however, it embraced much of what is now current in critical theory, Derrida, and Lacan millennia ago, emerging as a blissfully happy and fulfilling, compassionate and ethical, way of life.¹¹

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⁶ Harvey, In Quest of Spirit, 1.
⁷ Ibid., 3.
⁸ Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925) was an Austrian philosopher and the founder of anthroposophy, which proclaims the existence of an objective spiritual world that is proved by direct experience. He sought a link between science and mysticism. His writings are included in part or as a whole in about 400 volumes. Selections include Theosophy: An Introduction to the Spiritual Processes in Human Life and in the Cosmos (1904), How to Know Higher Worlds, a Modern Path of Initiation (1904–5), and An Outline of Occult Science (1922). For more information, see Gary Lachman, Rudolf Steiner: An Introduction to His Life and Work (New York: Penguin Group, 2007).
⁹ Harvey, In Quest of Spirit, 4.
¹⁰ Veda in Vedic meditation stands for knowledge or truth. It is a transcendental meditation originating from ancient India, which emphasizes quieting the mind.
¹¹ Harvey, In Quest of Spirit, 5.
Harvey says “selfless Christian love leading to profound peace I find again in Buddhism, as I do in Vedic and Anthroposophical experience of higher consciousness,” indicating that, in his view, his acceptance of Buddhism does not contradict the spiritual revelations of other religions. In his piece Weltethos (2011), he sets a text by theologian Hans Küng in six movements symbolizing six world religions: Confucianism, Judaism, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, and Christianity. The message is epitomized by Hans Küng: “No peace among the nations without peace among the religions.”


His extensive musical background partially explains the multifarious compositional techniques he employs. His works for church choirs are reminiscent of Britten. Having studied with Babbitt and Stockhausen, Harvey frequently incorporates serial techniques. While his music often welcomes melodies, simpler textures, and limited referential pitch collections (such as pentatonicism), he consistently maintains a modernist aesthetic. He speaks of the expressive possibilities and necessities of atonal music, claims support for progressive artists whose work is not appreciated during their

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12 Ibid., 6.
13 From the talk delivered by Hans Küng on March 31, 2005, at the opening of the Exhibit on the World’s Religions at Santa Clara University.
14 His doctoral thesis “The Composer’s Idea of His Inspiration” (PhD Thesis, University of Glasgow, 1965) was revived 30 years later as Music and Inspiration (London: Faber and Faber, 1999).
lifetimes,\textsuperscript{17} and has gone as far as to say that music lacking ambiguity has little value.\textsuperscript{18} As Richard Taruskin points out, Harvey belatedly resonates with Boulez’s proclamation of the musical necessity of dodecaphony,\textsuperscript{19} writing, “In our age of tolerant pluralism this could sound like a statement of Erich Honecker. And yet, is it asking so much? To experience this necessity is the gateway to seeing a fresh (!) issue for mainstream European musical language.”\textsuperscript{20} His research periods at IRCAM and the teaching post at Stanford resulted in roughly a third of his output since 1977 incorporating electronics; in turn electronic music has affected his instrumental writing. Extended techniques became more common and at times emulate electronic sounds. Also, his interest in sound spectra propelled him to the forefront of spectral music.

Michael Downes observed that Harvey’s music “seems to embody a series of paradoxes.”\textsuperscript{21} According to Downes, Harvey’s “archetypal Englishness”\textsuperscript{22} coexists with broad European influences, particularly those of Stockhausen and French spectralism. Similarly Christian mystical thoughts might seem to contradict Harvey’s acceptance of Buddhism. Harvey’s view of “music as an essentially abstract art,”\textsuperscript{23} hinted from his fascination with sound spectra, challenges the narrative aspects of many vocal works including the three operas to date. In addition, despite the fact that the initial stage of spectral music can be seen as a reaction to serialism,\textsuperscript{24} Harvey finds ways to conjoin both techniques. Harvey says “I am not a very monolithic composer. For instance, I don’t think I could ever write much that is purely spectral as some French composers do. I would also always want to flirt in and out of the spectral thought,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{18}“. . . if we try to define the spiritual per se, we end up with what Wittgenstein called a cluster of properties rather than any property in itself. But what one can say is that the most important property of spiritual music, or even perhaps of good music, is that it is ambiguous, or that it is perceived as ambiguous. One could also say that only ambiguous music is good; unambiguous music is banal music, or chaotic music. If music has a certain quality of complexity and subtlety—we might even find it in a ‘simple’ good pop song—then it has something ambiguous.” Jonathan Harvey, “Spiritual Music: ‘Positive’ Negative Theology?” 1; unpublished article on Harvey’s website, accessed March 3, 2010, http://www.vivosvoco.com/.
  \item \textsuperscript{19}“Any musician who has not experienced—I do not say understood, but truly experienced—the necessity of dodecaphonic language is USELESS.” Pierre Boulez, “Possibly...” (1952) from his \textit{Stocktakings from an Apprenticeship} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991): 113.
  \item \textsuperscript{21}Downes, \textit{Jonathan Harvey: Song Offerings and White as Jasmine}, 5.
  \item \textsuperscript{22}Ibid. “Englishness” cannot be defined so neatly. Downes seems to be referring to a national music tradition represented by composers like Elgar, Vaughan Williams, and Britten.
  \item \textsuperscript{23}Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{24}“At a certain point the ‘spectral movement’ was seen as a reaction against the ’avant-garde.’ And clearly it was a reaction against certain composers who believed that they were the avant-garde. But, in reality, it was a reaction against their refusal to make even the slightest concessions to the phenomena of auditory perception. Abstract combinations on paper are not musical research.” Tristan Murail, “Afterthoughts,” \textit{Contemporary Music Review} 19, no. 3 (2000): 6.
\end{itemize}
back into intervallicism or atonality or whatever. I like that.”  

Harvey is not alone in this aspect, since soon after the birth of spectralism, “the extreme divisions between post-serialism and spectralism blurred, and spectral composers began to acknowledge that elements of serial technique could exist within a spectral framework.”  

An example is Gérard Grisey’s *Prologue*, which has a melodic construction based on elements of serial thinking.  

Another paradoxical element is found in Harvey’s notion of time. Harvey strives for the global structure by applying the principles of unity found in integral serialism and Schenkerian analysis. The latter, an analytical tool, is used in Harvey’s First String Quartet as a compositional aid that controls multiple structural layers. He mentions that “both Stockhausen and Babbitt were interested in global time: they shared the High Modernist belief that time becomes space, and that one views a musical work, a work of art, as one object, very complex, which should be experienced somehow from above, moving through it but yet conscious of it as a whole, and with no particular sense of line pushing from moment to moment.”  

Harvey considers this new idea of time as “evolutionary attempts to break down how music was made.”  

However, one of Harvey’s early teachers Hans Keller advised that “the young composer should be guided away from the frequent distractions of excessive ‘pre-composition,’ the search for an elusive ‘purity of style,’ and ‘totally inaudible structuralisation.’”  

Also, Keller suggested the importance of “tension between the ‘moment’ and the ‘accumulated weight’ of what has gone before.”  

These two ideas of time—transient and frozen—are reconciled in Harvey’s music in the late seventies. He mentions that he then became “less global-time orientated” and learned “to listen more to what Hans [Keller] had taught [him] before.”  

Furthermore, as evident in the epigraph to this introduction, Harvey’s passion for improvised music is not hindered by his knowledge of objective structural methods. Elements of improvisation and disorder are also deeply rooted in Harvey’s musical development. He recalls the organist’s
improvisations in Tenbury: “I used to love his improvisations because I found them more modern—just a
hint of chaos—than anything we ever encountered in our singing. And in this particular improvisation . . .
there was a moment of great epiphany and I knew that I would always be a composer.”\textsuperscript{33} As will be
discussed in the main chapters, it is precisely these disparate and often paradoxical elements and his
unique way of reconciling them—not merely in the abstract, but also via specific compositional
techniques—that make Harvey’s music meaningful.

\textbf{Research Background}

Harvey’s string quartets—No. 1 (1977), No. 2 (1988), No. 3 (1995), and No. 4 (2003)—are
spread throughout his creative career. The Arditti Quartet’s recent release of the complete string
quartets\textsuperscript{34} in 2009 provides a substantial source and impetus for the current study. Despite the manifest
artistic and technical achievement of the quartets, they remain relatively unknown and little studied
(possibly due to their small scale and technical difficulty). It is also interesting to note that the quartets do
not have any programmatic titles, which are so common in Harvey’s other pieces. Although it is not clear
whether he thought of the quartets as separate from the rest of his catalogue, they can be seen as
representative points within his creative output. The high quality and evenly-spaced dates of the quartets
enable us to trace both passing and lasting compositional thoughts.

There are numerous publications about Harvey’s music. The most notable is \textit{In Quest of Spirit}, a
collection of the Ernest Bloch lectures from the University of California at Berkeley (1995). Also, Arnold
Whittall’s \textit{Jonathan Harvey} (1999), published by Faber and Faber in association with IRCAM, contains
the core ideas of the composer up to its date of publication. However, studies of the quartet cycle are
scattered in small fragments. The analysis presented in this paper thus relies on comparable studies
based on contemporaneous pieces by Harvey, published scores, unpublished papers, Harvey’s analytical
notes, and personal communication with the composer.

\textsuperscript{33} Whittall, \textit{Jonathan Harvey}, 3.
\textsuperscript{34} Jonathan Harvey: \textit{Complete String Quartets \& Trio}, Aeon AECD 0975, CD, 2009.
Harvey is one of the very few contemporary composers who find it crucial to make a direct connection between the spiritual aspects of music and modernist compositional methods. This research will attempt to bring forward the composer’s humanistic aims (such as showing the nature of suffering and offering healing) and to investigate how these aims are approached in his musical language.

**Overview of Chapters**

This paper discusses the compositional methods essential to Jonathan Harvey’s string quartets. A chapter is dedicated respectively to each quartet. Harvey’s frequently-used techniques such as melodic chains and symmetrical harmonic fields were established in the early-to-mid 1980s, between the first two quartets. The later three quartets thus share similar compositional principles. Each chapter begins with a brief background of each quartet, followed by an overview of the form, and then focuses on the unique aspects relevant to the quartet under discussion.

The First Quartet’s tranquil beginning is inspired by the teachings of Steiner and Stockhausen. Written after Harvey’s studies with Babbitt, the quartet’s multiple levels show a quasi-Schenkerian approach, while serial procedures are used locally to structure rhythm and pitch. Elements of chaos counteract quiet passages, extremes Harvey brings together in its dramatic discourse.

Harvey’s melodic chain technique is introduced in the Second Quartet. Several serial procedures are still found at the local level, and intricate metric modulations accelerate the tempo systematically. Notable is the aleatoric procedure he uses to compose the chords in its middle section, after which a lengthy cello solo follows. Temperature and gender expression markings are used throughout the first half of the score, disappearing altogether toward the end.

The Third Quartet uses a melodic chain in a fixed metric structure. It is influenced by the sound world of electronics, its extended techniques recalling the disintegration of sounds frequently heard in electronic studios. One section features breathing sounds, using both the instruments and the actual breaths of the performers. A short passage is written based on a symmetrical harmonic field.
The Fourth Quartet is unique among the quartets for incorporating live electronics. The melodic chain provides the main musical materials. Structured in five cycles separated by near-silence, consistent recurrences of earlier materials symbolize obsession. Several electronic processing techniques are used, each having special metaphysical significance. Despite the complexity of the music, the piece ends with a simple pentatonic passage, attempting to imitate a state of transcendence.

The conclusion discusses Harvey’s ideas of spirituality including the necessity of confronting suffering, comprehending ambiguous nature, and healing through unity, and their connection with his compositional techniques. Despite the 26-year gap between the First and Fourth Quartets, Harvey’s core ideas remain surprisingly intact, providing a lasting record of the composer’s musical language. While his quest for spirituality has remained, the methods he employs have evolved over time, reflecting his spiritual development and his increasing immersion in electronic media and spectralism. Lastly, there follows a discussion of the place Harvey occupies in the canon of twentieth- and twenty-first century music literature within the contexts of serialism, spectralism, and spiritual music. Due to his eclectic nature, further research possibilities are abundant. Investigating a larger portion of his catalogue may provide a more definitive interpretation of the changes over his long creative career, and studies on his vocal genres will reveal another layer of interest in his dramatic thinking.

On December 4, 2012, the day of the first public presentation of this study, Jonathan Harvey passed away. The research is greatly indebted to his input during the last two years of his life, and it is my hope that his ideas and inspiration live on through his music and in composers, performers, and scholars who continue to study and perform his music.
CHAPTER 1
FIRST STRING QUARTET (1977)

Playing continuously, the work starts with the gradual arrival of the note D, played in all kinds of ways and so seeming indeed a sound in growth, almost a tangible substance, which then gives rise to a melody, whose journey is the rest of the piece.  

—Paul Griffiths

... arguably Harvey’s finest and most original achievement of the 1970s came with the most conventional of ensembles, the string quartet.  

—Michael Downes

As Downes observes, the First Quartet marks the emergence of Harvey’s unique voice glimpsed by his preceding pieces. Lyricism infiltrates its modernist language while transient tensions live in a carefully planned global structure. Many characteristics found in the First Quartet will continue to flourish in the subsequent quartets. It was commissioned by the Arditti Quartet with funds provided by the Arts Council of Great Britain and premiered by them at the University of Southampton in March of 1979. The duration indicated on the score is 15 minutes, but both recordings by Arditti (1995 and 2009) last a little over 18 minutes.

Overview

Griffiths’s epigraph neatly summarizes the structure of the First Quartet. After an introduction lasting two and a half minutes exploring the pitch D4, a lengthy unison melody of 44 notes follows. The rest of the piece segments, varies, and transforms this melody. Harvey describes the succeeding passages as the “psychoanalysis” of the melody—“it begins to lose its innocence as it is taken apart and reconfigured into serial rows, and other parts of it are reinserted as parentheses.”  

The importance of this melodic line could not be emphasized enough, particularly since the piece is entirely monophonic

36 Downes, Jonathan Harvey: Song Offerings and White as Jasmine, 18.
37 Ibid., 19.
with the exception of a few heterophonic passages and subtle colorings. Harmonic coherence is achieved by dominant seventh chords, a natural consequence of the introduction utilizing many natural harmonics. Harvey has talked about the relationship between dominant seventh chords and the natural harmonic series, details of which will be discussed later in the chapter.

In addition to its harmonic coherence, this melody can be seen as a microcosm of the piece with striking structural ramifications. It functions as the nexus tying together diverse elements within the quartet. Multilevel structure is detectable not only within the melody, but also between the melody itself and the central pitches to come. These pitches are emphasized by longer durations, usually in unison, functioning as punctuations between sections.

The quartet is kaleidoscopic in expression. It moves from an initial state of tranquility to chaos near the end, exploring the expressive gamut in between. While the chaos is initially presented as an interruption, it is later elaborated independently in a long section. Harvey’s diversity in expression is crucial to his musical language; he has revisited this topic in numerous articles and books authored over the five decades he has been active as a composer and writer.

Discussions of the melody, multi-level structure, melodic analysis, and an interpretation of the disorder will follow after a brief discussion of the initial passage which explores the pitch D4.

The Beginning: Exploring a Single Pitch

Harvey started Vedic meditation in the year 1977, and he compares the opening passage to the process of meditation.

One leaves the tumult of a busy day to settle the mind until it reaches a point of quiescence. There it stays for a while, empty. From that level new, radiant, and often blissful thoughts and feelings arise. Several works, for instance String Quartet no. 1 and From Silence (1988), start with an invocation to emptiness by sounding a “zero-sound”—a long, almost featureless note or complex. This does the opposite of most openings, which seek to arouse, to excite the listener’s interest. Instead, the aim is to invite the listener to a quieter level, there to attend with a subtler, “more refined,” more delicate perception, as Vedic philosophy maintains.\(^{38}\)

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\(^{38}\) Harvey, *In Quest of Spirit*, 5.
Example 1.1 shows that the tranquil beginning comprises only natural harmonics on the open D string.

Example 1.1 The beginning

Decades earlier, a precedence was established for building pieces based on limited pitch materials while invoking timbral manipulations. The “single note” works such as *Quattro pezzi chiascuno su una nota sola* (1959) by Giacinto Scelsi (1905–1988) and *Eight Etudes and a Fantasy* (1950) by Elliott Carter (1908–2012) are perhaps some of the most obvious examples. Timbre fascinated many composers as a newfound musical parameter; however, Harvey’s fascination was beyond mere sound phenomena. A sound may be listened to in a number of ways, underscoring that for even a simple tone its musical material is fundamentally ambiguous. The illusively uncomplicated sound can be
further decomposed into either a harmonic spectrum or into successive grains.\(^{39}\) Revealing this sonic ambiguity is paramount to Harvey insofar as music can tangibly show the insubstantiality of elements, a basic tenet of Buddhist thought. When he described spectralism as a spiritual breakthrough,\(^ {40}\) he was perhaps addressing this ambiguity. Throughout his career, he revisited and reformulated issues of musical identity, ambiguity, and transcending dichotomy. He discusses them explicitly in his recent article.

The identity of timbre—is it a flute, is it an oboe?—this is another ambiguity often exploited by many composers from Berlioz, or more radically from Mahler and Debussy, onward; and when a composer like Lachenmann orchestrates then it becomes extremely ambiguous. With the rise of spectralism and the use of electronics, the transformation of a flute into an oboe and all the spectral stages in between produces a no man’s land which is neither, and both. There are many ways in which morphing and changing one thing into another can be seen as a questioning of identity, that the rigid, name-enforced convention, “you are Jill, I am Jack” is blurred, no longer clear. I can turn into you, you can turn into me at a moment’s notice. The composer likes that, toys with it. Also the borders between pitch, timbre and harmony are completely ambiguous now, for the same reasons.\(^ {41}\)

His fascination with timbre was formed partly through his experience in electronic music studios and exposure to spectral composition techniques, and by the teachings of Karlheinz Stockhausen and Rudolf Steiner.\(^ {42}\) Harvey states that Stockhausen “always justifies his long static passages by saying that they give us time to go inside the notes and perceive their wave structure and harmonic series content: from Kontakte on he would have us re-educate our ears to distinguish the partials of a note, and not be content merely to hear them as a conglomeration, a timbre.”\(^ {43}\) On the other hand, Steiner gave a more profound insight into this topic as early as 1923: \(^ {44}\)

To grasp the essential nature of things is to understand man’s position in the cosmos. The future development of music will be toward spiritualization, and involve a recognition of the special character of the individual tone. Today we relate the individual tone to harmony or melody in order that, together with other tones, it may reveal the mystery of music. In the future we will no longer recognize the individual tone solely in relation to other tones, which is to say according to its planal dimension, but apprehend it in depth; penetrate into it and discover therein its affinity for hidden neighbouring tones. And we will learn to feel the following: If we immerse ourselves in the tone it reveals three, five or more tones; the single tone

\(^{39}\) Grains in electroacoustic analysis are obtained by taking a small number of sound samples to create very short sound bits that can be further modified. Harmonic spectrum analysis is vertical and granular analysis is horizontal.


\(^{42}\) Rudolf Steiner was introduced on p. 2.

\(^{43}\) Downes, Jonathan Harvey: Song Offerings and White as Jasmine, 111.

expands into a melody and harmony leading straight into the world of spirit. Some modern musicians have made beginnings in this experience of the individual tone in its dimension of depth; in modern musicianship there is a longing for comprehension of the tone in its spiritual profundity, and a wish—in this as in the other arts—to pass from the naturalistic to the spiritual element. (italics mine)

Since ambiguity is an important concern of Harvey’s, it will be revisited in later discussions. In later quartets, ambiguity is prevalent in thematic elements—one idea becoming another and two ideas merging back into one. Furthermore, the use of electronics unleashes additional possibilities for musical ambiguity in the Fourth Quartet (discussed in Chapter 4).
As is evident from Examples 1.1 and 1.2, timbral exploration is conveyed through harmonics, varying distance from the bridge, and alternations between different strings. In Example 1.2, the note D is presented clearly for the first time with subtle variations in timbre, gradually coming into focus. Downes remarks that during this introduction, “we experience ‘D’ less as a note and more as a state of
being.” After this lengthy introduction, a melody emerges; its unadulterated presentation is the only such instance without manipulation in timbre, rhythm or contour.

**Melody and Overall Structure**

Harvey has strong affinities toward melody, which can be found in numerous other pieces as well as the subsequent quartets. The First Quartet was written before formulating his unique way of dealing with melodies using “melodic chains,” which are employed throughout the Second to Fourth Quartets. Here in the First Quartet, the melody functions less as a theme, and more as a pitch collection on which the structure and transformation are based. He describes the transforming process as “quasi-serial.”

**Example 1.3 Melody of the First Quartet**

Note several features of this melody in Example 1.3:

1) **Existence of a center tone:** The melody is centered around the note D, as can be observed from the starting pitch, a few swells, and note emphases. The melody ends with a decaying D ultimately replaced by D#. A global movement from D to D# is also apparent from the beginning and ending of the piece.

2) **Timbral homogeneity:** Though not evident from the single voice reduction presented above, the melody is initially played in unison in all four instruments. There is no attempt to incorporate timbral transformations (though such variations will take place in subsequent passages).

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45 Downes, Jonathan Harvey: Song Offerings and White as Jasmine, 19.
46 Jonathan Harvey, e-mail message to author, February 25, 2012.
3) **Outlines of dominant seventh chords:** Several groups of consecutive notes outline dominant seventh chords that will form the building blocks of the quartet. See Example 1.4.

Example 1.4 Dominant seventh chords outlined by the melody

4) **Two levels of structure within the melody:** Five of the melody’s first six notes—D, C, F♯, A, G—are also the roots of the first five dominant seventh chords (although it is not rigorously carried out all the way through and the order is slightly mixed). This contributes to the audible coherence of the melody. Thus, there exist two levels of structure within the melody. See Example 1.5.

Example 1.5 Two levels of structure within the melody

5) **Melody as a microcosm of the piece:** The piece as a whole goes through several pitch centers. It is striking to find that these central pitches outline the beginning of the melody as seen in Example 1.6.47

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47 Example 1.6 is indebted to the analysis by Michael Downes although I draw different conclusions about the number of structural pitches and how they are interpreted. See Downes, *Jonathan Harvey: Song Offerings and White as Jasmine*, 20.
Example 1.6 Central tones outlined by the beginning of the melody

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Thus, this melody not only contains structural coherence within itself, but also foreshadows the structure for the entire piece. Harvey has pondered the possibility of applying the multiple layers of Schenkerian methods to post-tonal music. Such structural principles were found in the works of high modernist composers such as Babbitt and Stockhausen. Many integral serialist works display clear manifestations of viewing musical time as frozen rather than relying on a moment-to-moment progression. We find similar approaches to global structure in other discussions by Harvey. For example, in the contemporaneous *Inner Light* (1976), he expands a collection of intervals to make four levels of structure. As seen in Example 1.7, each of the four levels is governed by similar intervallic principles. The lines represent the rising and falling interval structure of a 12-tone row (line A), the intervals emphasized in derived subsets (line B), the interval contents of harmonic fields (line C), and background intervals that continuously expand (line D). Likewise, self-similar patterns abound in Schenkerian analysis and fractal geometry. Harvey states, “my music has increasingly been concerned with a quest for structural depth (in the Schenker tradition, maybe). This means that several levels of structure are inextricably woven together in a ‘nest,’ ranging from all the details and embellishment at the top to the single macrocosmic idea at the bottom.”

The design of the pitch centers and their strict relationship with the melody is applied rigorously in the beginning, but later used quite freely.

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49 The idea of global (frozen) time was introduced on p. 5.
51 Ibid.
52 Harvey, e-mail message to author, February 25, 2012.
The basic harmonic material (the dominant seventh chord) is worthy of attention in its own right. While it is the fundamental building block for the First Quartet, it appears quite frequently in other pieces by Harvey. Perhaps he finds its ambiguity appealing, containing both stability (from the natural harmonic series) and dynamism (from cultural associations with tonality). He states that since the first dominant seventh chord appears low in the harmonic spectrum, it can thus sound stable, though he still hears “its pristine dynamic with Mozart’s sense of disturbance.”

**Melodic Analysis**

“Everything depends on remembering that melody,” says Harvey. Following the presentation of the melody, various transformations follow. During the initial hearing, the quartet could sound like a theme and variations with an introduction. Harvey’s idea of variation is primarily abstraction and reflection from a distance rather than embellishment. It also suggests the extraction of an inherent quality viewed from other angles. He calls these transformations “analyses.”

As mentioned earlier, Harvey describes this process as “quasi-serial.” Short cells are extracted from the melody and manipulated using serial techniques. Rhythm, too, is sometimes treated with these techniques (see Example 1.11), although timbre appears to be tempered only by his intuition. While it is difficult to count the number of “analyses” since the boundaries are frequently blurred, there seem to be

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53 Harvey, *In Quest of Spirit*, 33.
54 Downes, *Jonathan Harvey: Song Offerings and White as Jasmine*, 19.
55 Harvey, e-mail message to author, February 25, 2012.
at least nine. The following discussion focuses on three short passages where the “analyses” of the melody occur.

Example 1.8 is the first “analysis” following the presentation of the melody. Each note has a composed attack and decay comprising pizzicati, tremolos, and glissandi. The initial hearing suggests that this “analysis” is a reduction of the melody, taking some segments from it and scattering them across a wide registral span. As seen in Example 1.9, segments from the melody appear in different transpositions, usually with contour preserved.
Example 1.8 “Analysis” [mm. 21–29]

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Example 1.9 Pitches used in “analysis” [mm. 21–29]

Further inspection reveals that the first “analysis” is based on only four notes in the beginning of the melody. There is also a surprisingly Babbitt-like structure. As seen in Example 1.10, the first “analysis” contains four transpositions P0, P6, P9, and P8 of the ordered tetrachord P0 (0, 6, 9, 8). As indicated by the arrows, the pitches in P0 are also the starting pitches of the four transpositions. Example 1.11 shows the rhythmic structure from Harvey’s analytical note.56

Example 1.10 Reduction and serial operation of “analysis” [mm. 21–29]

Example 1.11 Rhythmic structure in “analysis” [mm. 21–29]

units: ⊘ □ □ 4-1-2-3

56 Transcribed from Harvey’s own analytical notes, used by permission.
Similar procedures for pitch materials are found in mm. 32–47, as seen in Examples 1.12 and 1.13.

Example 1.12 “Analysis” [mm. 32–47]

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Example 1.12 (cont.) “Analysis” [mm. 32–47]

(c) Copyright 1982 by Faber Music Ltd, London. Reproduced by kind permission of the publishers.
Example 1.13 Reduction and serial operation of “analysis” [mm. 32–47]

The third example of “analysis” is excerpted from mm. 124–129. This peculiar passage sounds strikingly tonal: $b6-#4-5-1$ in C. The following interview by Harvey shows he is well aware of such flashes of association.

I would agree entirely that touching on tonality and complex tonality—let’s say, chromaticism, dissonant tonality or whatever—does get you back into emotional expression very powerfully from a more objective world which was born in the generation after Webern. So, yes, I love that. I love to touch on that, to include it, to make it part of the discourse in the usual process of dialectic and contrast, as part of the picture. It’s always shifting, always turning into different things.  

Even here, a similar procedure, though not quite as rigorous, is observed. The first measure contains three notes which subsequently act as levels of transposition. Example 1.14 is the score portion of the last example of “analysis,” and Example 1.15 shows the same principals of serial operation.

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Despite these elements of serial technique, Harvey’s music cannot be analyzed completely. While discussing the superiority of the subconscious (as opposed to the conscious) mind, he writes that “perhaps the most important things about music when we place it in the context of the total experience and teleology of life lie outside [a boundary line between the logically sayable and unsayable] which surrounds the structurally concrete.”^58 By the same token, his pre-compositional work leaves much room for intuitive decisions, and when deemed necessary changes can be applied freely. It is precisely this dichotomy—the pursuit of structural depth and employment of the elements seemingly irrational and unexplainable—that distinguishes Harvey’s music from many other modernist composers.

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Disruption of Order

An irrational element is observed in several important moments in the piece, as if challenging the logic of the structure. In m. 62, for example, there is a sudden chaotic interruption. The expressions, figurations, and pitch materials are quite foreign. Such interruptions happen again at m. 86 and m. 100, later becoming a long section at m. 190. Expression markings read “nervous,” “passionate,” and “hysterical.” In the beginning of m. 190, Harvey indicates that “from this point on all synchronization is lost though the tempo is maintained.” On the surface, it seems aleatoric; however, scrutiny, along with hints from the composer, reveals that even the seemingly chaotic passages are constructed based on the materials presented before. In Example 1.16, we can see segments of the melody (labeled by number according to Example 1.9) and numerous dominant seventh chords.

Example 1.16 Previous materials found in chaotic passage [m. 190, p. 26]

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Furthermore, upon comparison between the first violin passages in m. 77–82 and m. 190 in Example 1.17, one sees each player roughly follow what has been played before in faster note values. Harvey describes this fast-forwarding as “a compression of history.”59

59 Harvey, e-mail message to author, February 25, 2012.
Example 1.17 Disorder as "compression of history"
Whatever the means, chaos and disorder interest Harvey because they suggest the extreme opposite of tranquility. He emphasizes the importance of reaching unity by way of diversity. This is perhaps the most crucial difference between Harvey and many other spiritual composers who strive for unity through negation of self-expression and avoidance of violent contrast. According to Harvey, Western music tradition considers unity without struggle less valuable than unity that is achieved through effort and contrast. This idea will be revisited later in the conclusion in conjunction with Harvey’s spirituality.

A quintessential theme in musical history even beyond the period of tonal music addressed by Schenker, and at least up to Boulez and Birtwistle, has been that the greater the contrasts successfully unified in a single work, the more important that work seems to be. In this sense, Beethoven’s Ninth is more important than his First. Generally speaking, long great works are seen as greater than short great works, because they contain more to contrast and more to unite. […] Complex unity, then, is a paradigm of Western music. 60

Since this is the only time such a chaotic surface appears in the four quartets, it seems appropriate to touch here on his ideas regarding the representation of chaos. While describing the process of composition for his work The Riot (1993, a work he describes as “non-spiritual”), he says that the “irruption of disorder” was used as a humorous force. 61 Although the comic element does not exist in the First Quartet, the disorder’s function as an articulation and irrationality parallels its treatment in The Riot.

[For The Riot] I eventually found precisely the brief element of chaos needed to be dropped in at certain points: it had the function of articulation—leavening the careful thematic working like a fool in a Shakespeare play. A high-spirited work should allow anarchy; what is humor if not an irruption of disorder? 62

60 Harvey, In Quest of Spirit, 26.
61 Ibid., 13.
62 Ibid.
Summary

The First Quartet melds rigorous structure, timbral exploration, engaging musical surface, and diverse expression owing to Harvey’s unique personality. It follows his encounters with Babbitt and Stockhausen. As discussed in the introduction, after briefly studying with Hans Keller and Erwin Stein (teachers chosen by Benjamin Britten), Harvey chose to study with Stockhausen and Babbitt to “seek some formal structure of greater depth outside their subjectivity.” He continues, “I felt now was the time to make the music . . . more stone-like, more statue-like, less fluid and flowing.” However, Harvey had doubts about Babbitt’s technique. “It didn’t really take the natural impulses of musical perception, how we connect and what we perceive, sufficiently into account.” His quest for structural depth did not hinder his fascination with the transient tensions that exist in each moment of music. In the article “Schoenberg: Man or Woman?” he cites Lutoslawski and Schoenberg as composers who deemed the surface level of music more important than structural depth and implies his fascination with their music.

The chaotic surface at the end is an attempt to bring about oppositions in his otherwise tranquil composition. As Downes put it, Harvey’s early eclectic experiences provided fertile soil for “the interlocking attractions of tradition and chaos, of structure and improvisation—a dichotomy crucial to his development in the ensuing decades.” The First Quartet is a crucible for the essential ingredients of Harvey’s music where diverse musical elements are united in a vibrant structure.

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64 Ibid., 16.
65 This peculiar title demands explanation. Harvey begins by quoting Beethoven: “to be emotionally stirred is only suitable for women . . . but the effect of music on a man should be to fire his mind.” This sexist remark loses its political charge with Harvey, who views each person as having both gender qualities and believes the course of new music should benefit from this coexistence. He exults Schoenberg for overcoming “the dullness of conservatism” while not subjecting himself to the “impoverishment of modernism.” Harvey holds a similar attitude in that he pursues humanistic communication with listeners when his musical language thrives in complex and modern compositional approaches.
66 Harvey cites Lutoslawski for saying, “the quality of the ideas is everything—deep structural thinking is secondary.” Also, Schoenberg said regarding Schenkerian analysis, “[. . .] where are all the bits I love most? Oh there they are, those small black dots.” Jonathan Harvey, “Schoenberg: Man or Woman?,” *Music and Letters* 56, no. 3/4 (1975): 374.
CHAPTER 2
SECOND STRING QUARTET (1988)

[The cello is] the most human of instruments—it looks human and it speaks with every aspect of the human voice, masculine, feminine, powerful, tender, poetic, exclamatory, dreamy..." —Jonathan Harvey

Harvey describes *Song Offerings* (1985) as the first piece where his feminine-self fully spoke, where he had fewer concerns about the pursuit of modernity manifest in his earlier pieces. Hidden behind his strong inclination toward formal unity, the music flows spontaneously through melodies and figurations. Quasi-serial procedures are still in use, along with the technique of melodic chains that he developed in the years between his first two quartets.

The Second String Quartet, written in 1988, was commissioned by the Arditti Quartet with financial support from the Arts Council of Great Britain. The premiere was given by the Arditti at Ars Musica, Brussels on March 17, 1989. The duration indicated on the score is 16 minutes, to which both Arditti recordings (1995 and 2009) adhere.

Overview

The quartet can be broken into three well-defined parts: I. (mm. 1–132), II. (mm. 133–141), III. (mm. 142–283). Although many materials are shared throughout the piece, each part is defined by its dominant musical texture. Part I begins with a fast arpeggiated figure in the first violin with long notes held by the cello in the background. Out of the arpeggio flourishes, a melody grows. The melody and arpeggio figures develop through transposition of segments, quasi-serial procedures, and tempo modulations that almost quadruple the tempo. Almost all of the musical material in the first part is derived from the melodic chains discussed later in this chapter. In m. 132, following a climactic gesture

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69 Downes, *Jonathan Harvey: Song Offerings and White as Jasmine*, 45.
of jeté natural harmonics played by all instruments, a long chord closes the first part where the indication reads “slowest possible bow.”

Part II consists of quiet chords, often encompassing extreme ranges and numerous quarter tones. There is a succession of 61 chords, but only twelve distinct harmonies occur between one and nine times. Toward the end of this chordal passage the first violin breaks free, playing some short melodic lines that foreshadow the third part.

In Part III, the cello comes forward and plays long melodic lines in its highest range. It is interrupted by the material from the accelerating metric modulation in the first part. A short recapitulation of the melodic chain from Part I appears only to slow down, become quieter, and to dissolve.

The most important theoretical issue introduced here is the use of melodic chains. Not only do they show how Harvey conceives melodic structure in an interesting way, but Harvey continues to employ the technique in numerous subsequent pieces, namely, the two quartets to follow (1988, 2003), Ritual Melodies (1990), the Cello Concerto (1990), and Wagner Dream (2006). After a presentation of the principle of melodic chains, there follows a discussion of quasi-serial pitch interpolation, tempo modulation, a semi-random process for Part II, the cello solo, and finally, the temperature and gender expression markings.

**Melodic Chain**

The first published discussion of melodic chains is found in an article written shortly before the Second Quartet. Referring to the first section (“Conflict”) of his *Madonna of Winter and Spring*, Harvey begins with an apologetic for his use of themes.

The first, ‘Conflict,’ is constructed on the principles of ‘thematic working.’ Thematic working has been as taboo among avant-gardistes as it has among minimalists or Cageians. The idea of having themes in the old sense of memorable melodic shapes was bad enough; actually to ‘work’ them was outrageous. [...] So why have themes as opposed to cells, patterns, textures or gestures? Premature senility? Arrested development? Perhaps their treatment in my work may suggest ways in which something long avoided has seemed again desirable, to one composer at least. There are 20 of these ‘melodies’, forming a linked chain. Each ‘primary’ melody has, between it and its neighbour, a melody which is the sum of them both.
This latter reveals that the rests (or long notes) in melody A are exactly the right length for inserting notes from melody B, and vice versa. So put them together and the result is a busier melody, (A+B), made up of both yet, I hope, with a clear coherence of its own, existing as a statement in its own right. 71

Harvey’s passion for melody has already been noted regarding the First Quartet, and his melodic language flourishes after the establishment of “thematic working.” If he was rather cautious initially, he shows an increasing vigor, saying, in an interview in 1999, “I remember one French composer in the 1980s proclaiming in his presentation: ‘Melodies are dead for ever. We will never write any more themes!’ I, who spoke next, said this is exactly the opposite of how I felt and I’m returning to melodies more and more as recognizable, useful things to build with.” 72

In the Second Quartet, Harvey defines interdependent melodies, labeled A, B, and C, and “sums” of consecutive melodic pairs, A + B and B + C. To sum the melodies, he means that melodic fragments from one melody are inserted during the rests or long notes of the next melody. For a melody to sum with another, it may only introduce new material during the former’s inactivity. A sum is always more active than the individual melodies it comprises and has the characteristics of both. Harvey calls these melodies and their sums melodic chains.

Unlike many organizational schemes in contemporary music such as serialism or spectral techniques, melodic chains do not imply a specific style or musical language. Example 2.1 illustrates the principle with melodies invented by the author.

72 Julian Johnson, “An Interview with Jonathan Harvey,” in Aspects of British Music of the 1990s, edited by Peter O’Hogan (Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2003), 120. This interview took place in 1999. It is not clear to which composer Harvey is referring.
Example 2.1 Principle of melodic chains

It is not difficult to see why these melodic transformations attract Harvey. As a Buddhist, he frequently speaks about the illusion of seemingly well-defined objects. He distrusts the concept of self-centeredness. In his book *In Quest of Spirit*, he quotes Albert Low’s statement—“I am at the center, but that to which I am central is also at the center and so I am peripheral to it, but I cannot be peripheral to it because I am at the center.” Each melody in a chain has its own identity; some are similar, others radically different. However, when summed together, their identities are blurred. In Harvey’s words, “If melodies are both strongly themselves and also embed fragments of other melodies in themselves, then they have what I always seek, some degree of ambiguity, some degree of structural depth.”

He initially called this technique a “thematic working.” Harvey’s melodies appear, fragment, and fuse as many classical themes do. However, a strong thematic definition toward the end of the piece (often found in Beethoven’s symphonies, for example) is absent. Harvey’s themes usually become insignificant and ambiguous as if their ultimate purpose is to disappear. Furthermore, the term “melody” can be misleading. His melody may not be lyrical; it may consist simply of figurations, grace notes, trills, or a combination thereof. They are, however, nearly always monophonic, which corresponds to the traditional notion of melody.

The melodic chain technique is not only a way of organizing melodies, but a tool for a complex but recognizable polyphony. Harvey says, “I was very struck by Messiaen’s bird song and by how you

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74 Harvey, “Madonna of Winter and Spring,” 431.
could recognize anything from three to fifteen different birds at the same time [. . .], which wasn’t just a mass texture but had real characters in it . . . as Mozart, for instance, was achieving in the *Jupiter* stretto.”

Harvey formalized the technique of melodic chains in 1985 in his tape piece *Ritual Melodies*. The piece was in progress until 1990, preoccupying Harvey’s melodic thinking throughout this period. An extensive study of melodic chains in *Ritual Melodies* (1992) has been published by Jan Vandenheede. Harvey presented a theoretical note on the Second Quartet during the First European Congress for Music Analysis (1989: Colmar, France) and its proceedings were published in 1991. The following analysis is primarily derived from the score and some analytical notes that Harvey graciously provided.

Example 2.2 shows the melodic chain for the first part. From looking at the measure numbers, one can see that the melodies are not always presented in order and that they are frequently superimposed. Emphasized by duration and frequent returns, centricity around pitch A4 is observed, while the preceding pitch G♯4 acts like a leading tone. Note that melodies B and C have quite contrasting characters. Melody B is virtuosic and melody C is lyrical. Example 2.3 compares the beginning, m. 14, and m. 124. Initially, only melody B is present. At m. 14, melody C is accompanied by melody B. The sum B + C does not appear until m. 124, the end of the first part. The sum B + C undulates between virtuosity and lyricism, reconciling the contrasting characters of melodies B and C. This effect is more audible than it appears in the score. These shifts in character and importance frequently appear in Harvey’s music.

Melodic chains will be revisited in the subsequent chapters. In the Fourth Quartet, a more rigorous treatment defines six melodies and their sums whereby the last melody sums with the first, creating a cycle.

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75 Johnson, “An Interview with Jonathan Harvey,” 120.
76 Ibid.
79 Transcribed from Harvey’s own analytical notes, used by permission.
Example 2.2 Melodic chain used in the first part
Example 2.3 Reconciliation of contrasting characters

Manipulation of Segments and Tempi

From the melodic chain, a row-like series is derived as seen in the boxed area in Example 2.4. Its twelve notes contain eleven pitch classes; the note E is used twice while D does not appear. Even so, Harvey calls this collection and its manipulation a “serial interpolation.”
Example 2.4 Quasi-series derived from the melodic chain

Example 2.5 Serial interpolation
Example 2.5 shows the segmentations and transpositions of the series used to create the driving passage in m. 26. Harvey moves from one row fragment to another by way of common tones using progressively shorter durations.

Also notable is the insertion shown in Example 2.6. Melodies A and B intersect at the two common tones connected by dotted lines in the figure. Compare Example 2.6 with Example 2.4.

Harvey has been a proponent of symmetrical construction in the Webern tradition. He once went as far as saying, “the bass moves into the middle: this is our musical revolution.” In the Second Quartet, the row-like series has some symmetrical properties (Example 2.7).

Furthermore, many instances of symmetrical or quasi-symmetrical chords appear, as shown in Example 2.8.

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80 Transcribed from Harvey’s own analytical notes, used by permission.
81 Ibid.
82 Harvey, “Reflection after Composition,” 2.
In addition to the serial interpolation used to develop pitch material, fractional tempo modulation is used progressively to accelerate the passage in mm. 38–67, more than quadrupling the tempo. As shown in Example 2.9, the modulation allows the tempo to return instantly to the (almost) original tempo by setting 8\textsuperscript{th} note equal to half note.\(^{83}\)

Example 2.9 Accelerating tempo modulation that returns to the beginning

This series of modulations effectively generates an exciting accelerando; the music advances faster and faster, as if heading to a remote destination. At the journey’s end, however, the modulation is paradoxically circular, leading back to the beginning. This illusion resonates with the contradiction of linear time in Buddhist thought. In Example 2.10, mm. 65–69, the end of the metric modulation coincides with the return of the initial material.

\(^{83}\) At each modulation Harvey rounds the calculated tempo to the nearest even number.
Chordal Passage

It is reasonable to say that Jonathan Harvey can be seen primarily as a melodic composer. Even though he has made many contributions in the field of spectral music and has worked with harmonic spectra and symmetrical harmonic fields, he frequently derives melodic lines from them rather than working extensively with chords. The second section of the Second Quartet, which sounds like a chorale, is thus peculiar.

His compositional process began with building twelve chords (Example 2.11) which are laid out in a 61-chord grid (Example 2.12).\textsuperscript{84} The chords vary widely in density, including unison (chord 6),

\textsuperscript{84} Example 2.11 and 2.12 are transcribed from Harvey’s own analytical notes, used by permission.
dense clusters with quarter tones (chord 12), and wide stretches over five octaves (chord 11). There is no obvious harmonic background or intervallic consistency. When asked whether there was an organizational scheme for the chords, Harvey replied, “I wanted to challenge coherence by [using] something not out of a human brain in these chords [. . .] I threw round stones at random onto a large sheet of paper with staves inked on.”

It is important to note that Harvey has a serious reservation about the validity of aleatoric methods, saying “chance or semi-random procedures or obscurity should not be used as a dishonest surface to cover vacuousness or to dissemble the illusion of elite knowledge.”

For this rare instance of aleatoric method, it is unclear whether any restrictions were set up or modifications were made for aesthetic or practical reasons. It is also unknown how accidentals are derived.

Example 2.11 Twelve chords and reduction

Example 2.12 shows the order of the 61 chords in the grid (‡ indicates rest). The arches and boxes indicate recurrences and repetitions. According to Harvey, the repeating patterns “are the start of bringing to coherence the twelve objective chords.”

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85 Harvey, e-mail message to author, March 20, 2012.
86 Harvey, In Quest of Spirit, Preface xvi.
87 Harvey, e-mail message to author, March 20, 2012.
ordering because he believes it is important to balance intuition and intellect.\footnote{Ibid. The exact quotation reads, “The little patterns of repetition (‘arches’) are the start of bringing to coherence the 12 objective chords. But no complex mathematics is used. Left brain and right brain must be balanced.”} This process of linking the chance-derived chords back to the logical realm was recalled by Harvey: “I used ‘found chords,’ constructed completely without any relation to each other at all with crazy microtones and things, the process of treating these isolated objects becomes a formal one because as the work progresses they’re actually made to lose this Cagean object-nature and to split apart and decompose and begin to bleed into each other and become connected in long lines as if they’re melted down and made into something, like metal made into a beautiful bowl.”\footnote{Johnson, “An Interview with Jonathan Harvey,” 126.}

**Example 2.12 Order of chords**

![Order of chords diagram](image)

The pitches for the twelve chords range from C#1 to A7, with the midpoint at B4. See Example 2.13. The pitches are distributed throughout the range relatively evenly.

**Example 2.13 Range of the twelve chords**

![Range of the twelve chords diagram](image)

Some chords are used more often than others. As seen in Example 2.14, chords 1 and 12 are used the most frequently, whereas chord 3 is used only once. Chord 1 becomes the primary harmonic material for the beginning of the cello solo that follows the second part and also for the *codetta* as shown in Example 2.15.
Example 2.14 Repetition of chords

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chord Number</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Times the Chord is Used</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example 2.15 Ending derived from chord 1

![Example 2.15 Ending derived from chord 1](image)

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Many rests are inserted between chords. In general, durations of rests (Example 2.12, boxed with dotted lines) become shorter while their appearances become more frequent. Even though there is no rigorous formula, odd-numbered durations are preferred perhaps to keep the rhythmic structure flexible when the texture is simple and chordal.

Toward the end of Part II, the first violin separates from the rest of the ensemble and plays some melodic segments (Example 2.16). Its initial melodic appearance has the indication “bird-like,” which might be a nod to Messiaen considering Harvey wrote *Tombeau de Messiaen* (1994) for piano and tape not long after the Second Quartet. The first violin melodies play a crucial role in dissolving the verticality of the chords and foreshadowing the entrance of the cello that soon follows.
Harvey’s writing for cello is extraordinary. As a former cellist, he has shown a strong preference for the instrument. He describes how playing cello in ensembles was one of his most important formative experiences. Pieces for cello occupy a sizable portion of his catalogue. In addition to pieces for solo cellists such as Curve with Plateaux (1982), Three Sketches for solo cello (1989), Concerto for Cello (1990), and Chant for solo cello (or viola) (1992–4), the cello is frequently foregrounded in ensemble pieces as well. Such a moment is found in the third part of the Second Quartet. Arguably, the most remarkable aspect of his cello writing is its unremitting range. As shown in Example 2.17, the range of the solo in the Second Quartet is mostly beyond the fingerboard, where even a proficient cellist may struggle, and ensures instability and tension.

 Example 2.16 Separation of first violin

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Cello Melody

Example 2.17 Range of cello solo in the third section

Example 2.18 reveals that the beginning of the cello solo is foreshadowed harmonically (chord 1 from the second part) and melodically (the melodic segments played by the first violin in m. 138).

Example 2.18 Beginning of cello solo

The melody continues to predominate the texture although it is four times separated by interruptions of fast, driving passages. Harvey describes this melody as an “emotional personality”\(^91\) and it is not based on melodic chains or other more strict theoretical procedures. The melody expands typically, usually filling in the registral gaps and lengthening the middle by repetition of segments.

\(^91\) Harvey, e-mail message to author, March 20, 2012.
Temperature and Gender Markings

The Second Quartet contains unusual markings. Gender markings are denoted with ♂ for masculine personality and ♀ for feminine personality. The temperature markings, ‘cold,’ ‘cool,’ ‘warm,’ and ‘hot,’ “represent ascending degree[s] of tone-energy as differentiated from dynamic level.”

Example 2.19 Gender markings: beginning

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The gender markings are used primarily in the beginning, and as can be seen in the passage in Example 2.19, the associations seem stereotypical. These potentially controversial gender markings should be understood as two different aspects of human personality regardless of biological sex. Perhaps Harvey could have avoided specific connotations of gender by using terms that might carry fewer stereotypes, such as Schumann’s Florestan and Eusebius. Masculinity is characterized by loud,

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ascending, and sometimes violent materials whereas the feminine material is mostly slow, soft, and gentle. Harvey has shown his preference toward the feminine: “To understand that we are part of a world that is creating itself is a feminine understanding: an understanding based in wholeness, community, intuition, connection, healing, emotion, ambiguity.”⁹³ The end of the quartet is quiet, lyrical, and soft, suggesting a feminine solution according to Harvey’s view, and the gender markings disappear altogether.

On the other hand, the temperature markings are not so easy to comprehend in musical terms. The Arditti Quartet appears to interpret them as the amount of vibrato in both their recordings (molto vibrato for ‘hot’, non vibrato for ‘cold’). Also, higher bow speed and pressure seem to correspond to ‘hot’ chords. These markings add diversity to the chords. Example 2.20 shows an excerpt of the second part where Harvey uses temperature markings.

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⁹³ Harvey, In Quest of Spirit, 38.
Example 2.20 Temperature markings in part II

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Summary

Harvey strives toward formal unity by embracing struggle. He accomplishes this through seemingly contradictory organizational schemes such as quasi-serial procedures, aleatoric techniques, and the juxtaposition of opposing musical forces (e.g. diverse emotional expressions represented by melodies and figurations, gender and temperature markings). As in the First Quartet, opposition takes the form of chaotic interruptions. During the decade gap between the First and Second Quartets, Harvey had invented a way of forming melodies through the use of melodic chains, another way of reconciling diverse elements.

As in many of Harvey’s pieces, the Second Quartet evaporates at the end (Example 2.21). In fact, the subsequent Third Quartet contains many ethereal textures throughout its duration. These delicate elements, a movement toward a circular discourse, and even more lyricism are heard increasingly in his later pieces.

Example 2.21 The ending of the Second Quartet

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The Third Quartet appears halfway in the 15 year span between the Second and Fourth Quartets. As in the Second and in anticipation of the Fourth, silence and pianissimo prevail and noise created by extended techniques dominates the sound world. As mentioned in the introduction, though there are no extensive published studies on Harvey’s string quartets, this study has benefited from the available (though sporadic) theoretical discussions, analytical notes, and unpublished sources. These types of materials are missing for the Third Quartet, and so the analysis presented in this chapter consists of preliminary observations done solely from the score, which may invite further studies and new viewpoints. The Third Quartet was written in 1995 for the Arditti Quartet, and commissioned by the BBC. It totals 269 measures with a printed duration of 18 minutes. Arditti’s recording from 2003 lasts 14 and a half minutes.

Overview

Like the Second Quartet (and as we will see in the Fourth), a significant portion of the Third Quartet is based on a melodic chain. As seen in Example 3.1, the initial material consists of harmonics, arpeggios, and melodic segments spanning a wide register. The pattern in Example 3.1, a harmonic arpeggio followed by silence, continues while silence is gradually filled in with harmonic tremolos in hairpin dynamics. This pattern becomes the principle material in m. 33 where the quartet imitates the sound of breathing. At the end of the “breath” section, a somewhat ordinary rhythmic ostinato appears. The rhythm is to be played “col legno, vertical bounce with little or no pitch.” On top of the ostinato, some fleeting runs and a melody centered around the notes G and G♯ appears. Example 3.2 shows the.
rhythmic ostinato in the lower three instruments, the melody in the cello, and the run in the first violin—the three primary materials of the quartet.

**Example 3.1** Beginning

![Example 3.1 Beginning](image)

(c) Copyright 1995 by Faber Music Ltd, London. Reproduced by kind permission of the publishers.

**Example 3.2** Three primary materials: rhythmic ostinato, cello melody, and violin run.

![Example 3.2 Three primary materials](image)

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The runs develop into a climactic descending gesture in m. 91, after which they dissolve and become fragmented. In m. 115, the cellist is asked to tune the C string to C#. This change of bass note counteracts the tension between the notes G and G♯ in the melody. A virtuosic cello solo is followed by a brief return of the breath material. The melody around the note G returns and is fully developed at m. 145, after which the entire quartet centers around G until the end of m. 156. Following another build-up and fragmentation of the preceding materials, the rhythmic ostinato returns in m. 211 (“delicate and precise”), and the first violin plays a new melody (not heard up to this point). Example 3.3 shows the ending, which evaporates to pianissimo like many other pieces by Harvey.

Example 3.3 Ending

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As the preceding summary indicates, the form is not easily described. Harvey says the repetitions are the form and that the materials are “aurally hard for the ear to grasp, elusive and insubstantial.”

Clear sectional breaks (as in the Second and Fourth Quartets) are not found, and the piece is strewn with bits from the melodic chain. Some segments of the melodic chain—the runs and the lyrical melody, for example—are developed into sections later in the piece. The melodic chain holds widely-varying materials in a coherent whole and provides a repository on which the quartet’s repeating metric structure and recurrences of materials are based.

**Melodic Chain**

The melodic chain for the Third Quartet appears to be based on a nearly strict seven-bar metric structure. As seen in Example 3.6, the odd lines (melodies A, C, E, and G) and even lines (melodies B, D, F, and H) alternate sound and silence. The odd-lined melodies have sound only in bars 2, 4, 5 and 7 of the chain, while the even-lined melodies have sound in bars 1, 3, and 6. The metric structure is mostly consistent with 3+3+5+3+4+6+4 in quarters. Example 3.4 summarizes this metric structure.

**Example 3.4** Metric structure in melodic chain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>bar 1</th>
<th>bar 2</th>
<th>bar 3</th>
<th>bar 4</th>
<th>bar 5</th>
<th>bar 6</th>
<th>bar 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Melodies A, C, E, and G</td>
<td>silence</td>
<td>sound</td>
<td>silence</td>
<td>sound</td>
<td>sound</td>
<td>silence</td>
<td>sound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melodies B, D, F, and H</td>
<td>sound</td>
<td>silence</td>
<td>sound</td>
<td>silence</td>
<td>silence</td>
<td>sound</td>
<td>silence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examples 3.4 and 3.6 show one possible interpretation of the melodic chain, though it is necessarily incomplete because of the ambiguity in how elements are overlapped. Due to the design of the melodies, it is possible to sum any odd-line melody with an even-lined one. This aspect is unique to the Third Quartet and is advantageous for the juxtaposition and superimposition of the melodies. In

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95 Harvey, e-mail message to author, June 4, 2012.
96 Example 3.6 is an original analysis by the author based on the published score.
97 Melody A is an exception; it sustains over the entire duration of melodic chain while having more activity in measures 2, 4, 5, and 7.
other words, the melodies are reconciled by coexistence rather than by conflation. The subtle change of character between melodies observed in the Second Quartet is not found in the Third Quartet. Harvey says “toward the end, melodies are evolving, no longer repeating,” describing how some melodies escape from the melodic chain and grow into a character that dominates the texture. Example 3.5 shows an excerpt where melody E evolves into a descending gesture. The runs in melody E, initially introduced by the first violin at m. 68 are gradually taken over by all four instruments, prevailing the texture by m. 91.

Example 3.5 Evolution of melody E

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98 Harvey, e-mail message to author, June 4, 2012.
Example 3.6 (cont.) Melodic chain
Extended Techniques

Harvey’s string writing frequently incorporates an abundance of extended techniques as observed in the discussion of the First and Second Quartets. The Third Quartet takes this tendency to an extreme. There is a dearth of classical string sound; most sounds are produced to evoke certain elements of noise.

Harvey’s extended string techniques include multiphonic harmonics, specification of the distance from the bridge defined by levels, *col legno, jeté*, vertical bouncing of the bow, extreme range, varying levels of vibrato, Bartok pizzicato, and *flautando*. Such techniques appear throughout his oeuvre, becoming more common toward the end of his career.

Harvey is not alone in this aspect. Arguably, one of the post-war pioneers in extended techniques is Helmut Lachenmann (born 1935), with his *Pression* (1969–70) for solo cello. However, Harvey and Lachenmann differ in motivation. Lachenmann explains that his *musique concrète instrumentale* is concerned primarily with the energy and physics involved in the generation of sound.

> [This is music] in which the sound events are chosen and organized so that the manner in which they are generated is at least as important as the resultant acoustic qualities themselves. Consequently those qualities, such as timbre, volume, etc., do not produce sounds for their own sake, but describe or denote the concrete situation: listening, you hear the conditions under which a sound- or noise-action is carried out, you hear what materials and energies are involved and what resistance is encountered.  

Harvey, on the other hand, explains his stimulus in spiritual terms.

> Many of my recent works had played with a sort of alchemical distillation process. The sounds become less substantial, more delicate, closer to ‘spirit’ or ‘emptiness’ in the technical Buddhist sense. My *Third Quartet* was one such example. It is perhaps a feature of string writing in our time that the possibilities of ‘noise’—*sul ponticello* and non-standard harmonics giving multiphonics for example—have seemed highly attractive.

Simply put, Harvey uses extended techniques to produce more ambiguous sounds. Furthermore, unconventionality in performance practice bears significant meaning. Despite the existence of a large body of works incorporating the above-mentioned techniques, contemporary music listeners may still...

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100 Jonathan Harvey, “The Genesis of Quartet No. 4,” 43.
experience a disconnect in the juxtaposition of new and old sound worlds. In Harvey’s music, this disorientation becomes the basis for realizing a Buddhist emphasis on the lack of inherent identity (which is believed to be an illusion). Some of his frequently used techniques, such as *sul ponticello* and multiphonics, literally break up sounds, revealing a tone’s multifarious reality. For example, as the bow moves up and down the fingerboard, the partial contents change and the listener becomes aware of the change in timbre, realizing a tone is not merely a tone, but a complex sound continually reshaping itself. Harvey expresses his view of the noise element in extended techniques (non-pitch and half pitch) as a departure from the norms of classical music and hopes to get further away from tradition: “It’s also fascinating in the sense of breaking out of the rules of classical music, where as a rule you have a well-defined pitch and you put in your rather feeble cymbal or tam-tam. That’s not going very far. I want to take that direction much further in the future.”\(^{101}\)

Example 3.7 shows an excerpt where Harvey controls the distance from the bridge and the amount of vibrato. The timbral changes are brought to the fore by the limited use of pitch materials.

\(^{101}\) Johnson, “An Interview with Jonathan Harvey,” 123.
Example 3.7 Controlling the distance to the bridge. The abbreviations expand to s.p. *sul ponticello*, m.s.p. *molto sul ponticello*, o.t.t. *over the top of the bridge*, m.v. *molto vibrato*, and s.v. *senza vibrato*.

As stated in the epigraph by Andrew Clements, the sounds used in the Third Quartet share characteristics of electronic music as though Harvey is attempting to disintegrate the sound to reveal its many facets. The listener is constantly exposed to a fragile state resulting from the sounds between noise and tone, the shifting of the sonic spectrum, the quarter-tone fluctuations, and numerous tremolos and trills. As Whittall points out, even with the resemblance to electronic sounds, “there is no sense of awkward or forced distortions of ‘proper’ quartet style; rather, there is an imaginative extension of that style, and a subtly poetic transmutation of the genre’s most fundamental attributes.”

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102 Whittall, *Jonathan Harvey*, 75.
Breath

Though the use of external sound sources\textsuperscript{103} is rare in Harvey’s music, for a short section soon after the beginning, he asks the performers to synchronize their breathing with the motion of their bows. The section starting from rehearsal D consists of the sound of breathing, in both a literal and metaphysical sense. Example 3.8 shows the middle of the section where the sound progressively becomes a more realistic imitation of breath. The up and down motion of bow is interpreted as the act of breathing. The performers are instructed to breathe in and out following the arrows, softly “through the mouth with lips nearly closed, making a sound that blends well with the music and which gives the impression that the quartet is breathing as one organism.”\textsuperscript{104} The unpitched \textit{flautando} (notehead above the staff as in the cello part in m. 42) contributes to the literal imitation of breathing. It is unlikely that Harvey was making a deliberate connection since quotations and explicit references are rare in Harvey’s music,\textsuperscript{105} but the section is reminiscent of British contemporary Michael Tippett’s (1905–1998) \textit{Fourth Symphony} (1977) which uses a recorded breathing sound to blend with the orchestra.

\textsuperscript{103} Use of external sources includes auxiliary instruments, voices, and other sounds generated by performers by a non-standard method of playing. George Crumb’s (born 1929) string quartet \textit{Black Angels} (1971) is a representative example.

\textsuperscript{104} Preface to the score, Jonathan Harvey, \textit{String Quartet No. 3}, Faber Music Ltd., 1995.

\textsuperscript{105} Exceptions include \textit{Tombeau de Messiaen} (1994), \textit{Hommage to Cage, À Chopin (and Ligeti ist auch dabei)} (1998), and Wagner Dream (2006).
Example 3.8 Breaths, m. 41–49

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It is fascinating to discover how the breath section is approached. Example 3.9 shows the beginnings of passages starting from mm. 1, 7, and 14: a superimposition of melodies B and D, melody C + D, and melody C, respectively. The silences in the initial representation of the melodic chain are
gradually filled in with the sounds that later become the material in the breath section. In other words, Harvey builds breaths out of silence. Comparing Examples 3.6 and 3.9 reveals that the alternating metric structure of the melodic chain plays a crucial role in the scheme.

Breaths appear frequently in Harvey’s pieces. Referring to his 1986 opera *Madonna of Winter and Spring*, he describes breath as the symbol of life and emotion.

*Madonna*, like many of my works, is also concerned with breathing, because breathing is not only the vehicle of life but also the day-to-day physical and sonic representation of states of emotion. In music’s onomatopoeic imitation of its speeds and shapes, we have one of the clearest symbols of human psycho-physical experience. In *Madonna* (as in other works) I also wanted to make a further, deeper, metaphoric use of breathing, that to which St. John of the Cross refers in the lines “And in thy sweet breathing, full of blessing and glory, / How delicately thou inspiratest my love!”

The “breathing of God,” to which St. John alludes, is something that is experienced by many mystics, oriental and Western alike. In it the “normal,” individuated world, in slow, rhythmic oscillation, dissolves into “sheets of transparent flame” and back again to solid material. It’s as if the particle structure, or the pure energy, of matter becomes perceptible. I wanted to compose slow breathing rhythms, in which the inhalation comprised distinct form and the exhalation was luminescent, formless. Form and luminescence thus alternated in gently varying duration-spans of breath.106

His *Tranquil Abiding* of 1998 is composed entirely from swells of varying lengths and intensity. In the Fourth Quartet, Harvey attempts to make the concert hall breathe using electronic spatializers. The breathing rhythm in the Third Quartet returns toward the end of the piece providing a sense of life throughout. Breathing is the crucial entryway for meditation and is a lasting inspiration for Harvey. His more recent piece *Messages* (2008) captures the essence of meditation through breath, building up to the orchestra’s climactic inhalation and exhalation, which eventually evaporates into a quiet noise.

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Example 3.9 Approach to breathing section
Symmetrical Harmonic Field

Harvey’s predilection for harmonic symmetry was glimpsed during the discussion of the Second Quartet and its quasi-symmetrical chords and series. Although symmetrical harmonic fields are frequently used by Harvey in other pieces, only one such example is found in the four string quartets, here in the Third Quartet. Perhaps the small size of the ensemble made it less desirable. Symmetrical harmonic fields provide a means to elude the function of bass. Describing the compositional process for his church opera in two scenes Passion and Resurrection (1981), Harvey says:

It took me a long time to compose the new world of the Resurrection that [Jesus] brings about. Eventually I hit on the idea of symmetrical harmony around a central axis, a floating, weaving world freed from the dark gravity of bass-oriented music—a gravity that has dominated the West since it became obsessed with individuality and its passions, signaled in the birth of the figured bass and early opera. This axial feeling became my preferred technique of harmony for many years afterward.  

According to him, bass domination represents obsession, which is an unfavorable condition. He goes on to say that symmetrical harmony is a result of an “urge for new expression,” and its floating state represents omni-directionality, glimpsed by Schoenberg and realized by Webern. In Harvey’s own words,

. . . the unity of musical space demands an absolute and unitary perception. In this space, as in Swedenborg’s heaven (described in Balzac’s Seraphita) there is no absolute down, no right or left, no forward or backward. Every musical configuration, every movement of tones has to be comprehended primarily as a mutual relation of sounds, of oscillatory vibrations, appearing at different places and times.

Example 3.10 shows the symmetrical harmonic field used from m. 69. Note that the field wraps around once it reaches A♯2, restarting from A♯4. This harmonic field becomes the pitch material for melody E.

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107 Harvey, In Quest of Spirit, 53.  
108 Harvey, “Reflection after Composition,” 2.  
110 Harvey, “Reflection after Composition,” 2.
The complement of the harmonic field (the pitches not present in Example 3.10) is gradually introduced from rehearsal K (m. 88) to reach complete chromaticism as the passage peaks. The incorporation of this symmetrical harmonic field is brief. It does not play a great role in defining the overall pitch characteristics of the passage, though it is worth noting for further studies on Harvey’s music in general.

Summary

Melodic chains, extended techniques, and symmetrical harmonic fields are commonly employed in Harvey’s musical language. Frequent use of extended techniques creates sounds that are more delicate and fragile. Notable is the use of a melodic chain that facilitates juxtaposition and superimposition, which allows, at its busiest, up to four melodies to be used simultaneously. In several moments of the piece, the melodies presented in one instrument are taken over by the ensemble into a larger textural domination. They act as clarifying forces in an otherwise flowing structure that cannot be parsed sectionally. At the end of the piece, a simple melody and rhythmic ostinato (played *col legno battuto*) creates a feeling of ritual. Though this instance is brief, Harvey’s reference to ritual appears frequently in other pieces—*Ritual Melodies* (1992), *Ashes Dance Back* (1997), *String Trio* (2004), *Wagner Dream* (2006)—and could inspire further studies. Some of the sounds and materials are used again in the Fourth Quartet where near silence becomes more manifest and noise from extended techniques thrives in electronic manipulation.
CHAPTER 4
FOURTH STRING QUARTET (2003)

Combined throughout with live electronics, the players were the catalysts for a musical journey that revealed the minutiae of instrumental sound. The tiny noises they made by brushing the outside of their instruments were amplified into vivid electronic fantasies. The piece finally blossomed with an outpouring of voluptuous melody: music that eroded the difference between the live players and their electronic shadows.\(^{111}\)

—Tom Service

I came away from the research period at IRCAM with my head full of flying objects and shadowy sounds.\(^{112}\)

—Jonathan Harvey

The Fourth Quartet was jointly commissioned by Ars Musica, IRCAM, and the Ultima Festival, and was written—like the three previous quartets—for the Arditti Quartet. It was realized at IRCAM with the help of Gilbert Nouno and was premiered in Brussels as part of the Ars Musica Festival on March 11, 2003.\(^{113}\) The length differs significantly depending on the performance, lasting between 30 and 40 minutes. The only published recording by the Arditti Quartet is about 32 minutes.

Overview

The Fourth Quartet ventures on a musical journey sought after by Harvey, as evidenced by its sheer length and the incorporation of live electronics. Although it is not the purpose of this paper to trace the technical details of Jonathan Harvey’s electronic music (his efforts in this regard began in the 1960s), it is important to note that his use of electronics is fundamentally related to his musical thoughts and has also affected his instrumental works. The previous chapter discusses similarities between his electronic music and the sound world of the Third Quartet. Numerous articles by Harvey regarding his electronic music reveal surprising parallels between the electronics and his conception of spirituality, a detailed account of which will be given later in this chapter.


\(^{112}\) Harvey, “The Genesis of Quartet No. 4,” 48.

\(^{113}\) Preface to the score, Jonathan Harvey, *String Quartet No. 4*, Faber Music Ltd., 2003.
The instrumental writing in the Fourth Quartet is similar to that of the Third Quartet with its plethora of melodies and extended techniques. The form, however, is circular and silence prevails throughout. Following an examination of the quartet’s formal aspects, this chapter discusses the metaphysical meanings that emerge through the use of the electronics, the melodic chain, and the pentatonic harmonic field it contains.

**Five Cycles**

Silence is the fundamental structural element of the Fourth Quartet. The piece comprises five sections, and each section begins and ends in near-silence (referred to as “colored-silence” by Stockhausen, one of Harvey’s teachers). Gérard Grisey (1946–1998) uses a similar near-silence between movements in his *Vortex Temporum* (1996–7). The Fourth Quartet’s structural divisions are plainly visible from the waveform of Arditti’s 2009 recording as shown in Example 4.1.

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114 Stockhausen made many comments about his idea of “colored silence.” In this interview, when asked whether silence can be controlled, Stockhausen answered, “Yes, it must be mastered. As I say, this is a new secret science, to master the emptiness and turn it into something that is filled with sound and visual images [. . .] I work with colored silences [. . .] For example, when we are in a hall, there is always sound, some sound. It comes from the ventilation system, or whatever else it is. But in my composed music, I color the silences in different layers. So, for example, there is a silence, and then I take off one of the silent layers, and then I hear another silent layer. And then I take off that second one, and I hear a third silent layer. Because there is no absolute silence in the world. And I like to sometimes work with 3 or 4 layers of silences, of colored silences. And I give every one of these layers a different color through very soft mixtures of vibrations, which then are that particular silence. So silence is no absolute quality, but a relative quality,” accessed September 15, 2012, http://www.furious.com/perfect/stockhauseninterview.html.
Example 4.1 Waveform showing five cycles
Harvey says, “I returned to IRCAM to complete the work with the main poetic idea of writing a music which verges on silence. It turned out to be quite a long work, of some thirty-six minutes, which of course could not be completely concerned with near silence throughout.”\textsuperscript{115} Far from being “near silence throughout,” the piece has many loud and disturbing moments. As discussed in previous chapters, Harvey is ultimately concerned with transcending life’s conflicts in Buddhist terms, but not without first confronting life’s struggles and obsessions. His music reflects a journey through raw problem and conflict. In his own words, “it is not really possible to make everything completely evanescent, though. Life is also characterized by obsession—terrifyingly solid-seeming.”\textsuperscript{116}

The five cycles symbolize five lives. Certain “obsessions” or well-defined musical ideas are presented and developed in the ensuing movements. According to Harvey, they represent \textit{karma}\textsuperscript{117} in Buddhism,\textsuperscript{118} where the consequences of one’s actions are stored as \textit{karma}, affecting in turn the next life cycle. Harvey describes the quiet moments between cycles as \textit{bardos}.\textsuperscript{119} Example 4.2 shows the \textit{bardo} between the first and second cycles. The \textit{bardos} progressively shorten “as if the continuing personality is becoming purer, less in need of ‘purification.’”\textsuperscript{120} See Example 4.1 for the timing and measure information of the five cycles.

\textsuperscript{115} Harvey, “The Genesis of Quartet No. 4,” 49.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 49–50.
\textsuperscript{117} \textit{Karma} in Sanskrit means ‘action, effect, fate.’ In Buddhism, \textit{karma} symbolizes the sum of all actions in one’s life cycle and the consequences that occur in the next life cycle.
\textsuperscript{118} Harvey, “The Genesis of Quartet No. 4,” 50.
\textsuperscript{119} A state of existence between death and rebirth.
\textsuperscript{120} Harvey, “The Genesis of Quartet No. 4,” 52.
Example 4.2 Ending of cycle 1

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The first cycle begins quietly with an airy sound from bowing the tailpiece, captured and subsequently looped by the electronics (Example 4.3). The written rhythm in the electronics on the score indicates the change in placement of the sound to six or eight speakers throughout the hall. In actuality, the rhythmic movement can not be heard as precisely as it is notated.

Four rhythms appear throughout (Example 4.4). They are frequently looped in the background with speed variations, often functioning as a voice in polyphonic textures and as the rhythm in the melodic chain. Harvey describes the tentative beginning of the first cycle as the process of forming a personality.121

Example 4.3 Beginning

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121 Ibid., 50.
The structure for the ensuing movements was set up after he had accumulated materials for the first cycle. A particularly revealing account of his formal idea is quoted:

Up to this point I had little idea of the global form. I wanted to start, and follow wherever the material led me. Formal exigencies should emerge naturally from material. In general I do not like to foreclose their innate tendencies by means of form-plans. But now, at this point, I was able to foresee several (possibly five) cyclic movements resulting from what I had so far written. With each new day further and further distances began to come into view, as if one were climbing a mountain.\textsuperscript{122}

For the second cycle, Harvey chains six melodies resulting in 12 melodic combinations in a cyclic structure: A, A+B, B+C, C, C+D, D, D+E, E, E+F, F, F+A. The second cycle forms a vigorous melodic chain, which breaks apart at the end.

The third cycle begins slowly. The main materials in the beginning are two chords derived from the first cycle (Example 4.5) and one of the melodies in the chain at a much slower rate. The cycle gradually leads to a “skittish waltz passage”\textsuperscript{123} (Example 4.6) that culminates in a long descending line.

\textsuperscript{122} Ibid., 50.
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., 51.
Example 4.5 Beginning of third cycle—two alternating chords

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Example 4.6 “Skittish waltz passage”

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In the fourth cycle, silence becomes more prominent. There is much sporadic reminiscence of previous materials. In this cycle, the obsessions with melody and incessant looping dissipate, preparing for the resolution in the last cycle.

The fifth cycle begins with a slow melody that is derived from one of the melodies in the chain. Example 4.7 compares m. 75 from the second cycle to m. 316 from the last cycle. Harvey’s quest for coherence is found everywhere in the domain of pitch, rhythm, and form. Though not audible from the stereo recording, the rising melody rotates around the hall at a “stroboscopic speed”\textsuperscript{124} giving the illusion of a shimmering stasis.\textsuperscript{125} The slow ascending lines are combinations of scales, dominated by pentatonicism. The music at this point sounds foreign compared to the previous cycles. In addition to the harmonic simplicity, the texture consists entirely of ascending lines and melodic fragments. Yet, it sounds as if the preceding 27 minutes were necessary to achieve this state. As David Fanning put it, “these days, an ecstatic, trance-like conclusion comes relatively cheap; but Harvey’s feels entirely earned.”\textsuperscript{126}

\textbf{Example 4.7 Derivation of the fifth cycle melody}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{example_4_7.png}
\caption{Derivation of the fifth cycle melody}
\end{figure}

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{124} Ibid., 52. The term “stroboscopic effect” is often used to describe an optical illusion where a fast movement results in a distorted perception. A fast rotating propeller perceived as a static circle is an example of this.
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid.
Electronics


Faber Music Ltd. has been Harvey’s publisher since 1977, and of the 103 total pieces published up to 2006, 30 include fixed or live electronics. Only three works are purely electronic (the best-known, now widely regarded as a masterpiece of the genre, is *Mortuos Plango, Vivos Voco*). He prefers to use electronics with live instruments, and furthermore, live electronics to fixed media.

One memorable account from Harvey describes why he was so greatly attracted to electronic media. After recounting his dream of flying and the frustration over the separation of reality and transcendent reality, he says:

“Flying seems to be a symbol for another reality about which in some obscure part of me I am totally convinced, but which is extremely difficult to convey to others. Almost more important than the “fact” of flying is that as I wake I invariably undergo a shock at the precise moment I realise that what seemed so dearly true is “actually” not true at all. It is probably because I feel very unhappy keeping these vivid metaphysical experiences to myself alone that I am driven to communicate, to compose, and even more specifically, that I turn to electronics as a medium.”

In other words, Harvey sees electronics as a tool to liberate himself (and the listeners) from the illusions of reality. Electronics can generate sounds that are beyond the limitations of human performance while hiding the process of transformation. This ambiguity of source and detachment from perceived reality interest Harvey.

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127 Jonathan Harvey: List of Works. Catalogue published by Faber Music Ltd (2006): 30. There are numerous publications on Jonathan Harvey’s electronic music. An incomplete list of publications is provided in an appendix at the end of the bibliography (p. 108) in case the reader wishes to delve into this topic further.

For the Fourth Quartet specifically, he uses several sound processing techniques. In his article “The Genesis of Quartet No. 4,” he discusses five of the primary techniques in detail—amplification, spatialization, harmonization, time-stretching, and granulation—and their metaphysical significance. After a brief presentation of the electronic setup, each of these techniques will be discussed along with some musical examples.

The diagram in Example 4.8 shows the electronic setup. The performance requires a sound engineer and one or two operators who perform the electronic part. Clip-on microphones pick up the sound from the live quartet, and after some processing is applied, the sound is diffused to six or eight monitors around the hall. The operators manipulate the graphic tablet which controls the movement of sounds as well as some parameters for the live processing. Hence the performance of the operators is quite gestural.

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129 Harvey, “The Genesis of Quartet No. 4,” 43–53.
130 The diagram is based on an example from the unpublished article by Gilbert Nouno and Yann Robin. This untitled article is provided by the authors and was written for their presentations at Acanthes Academy, IRCAM (2004). They subsequently presented in conferences held in Bremen, Germany (2006) and at Paris Conservatory (2007). The 20-page article is an extensive study of the Fourth Quartet written in French. All examples are used by permission.
1) Amplification

Even a technique as simple as amplification renders some significant results. Amplification allows Harvey to work directly with near-silence, enabling him to compose with insubstantial sounds. It proves particularly useful for the bardos where the quiet sounds of bowing the tailpiece, rib, and bridge
are amplified and become the main materials. Harvey describes these sounds in terms of shadow, silence, and \textit{karma}.

The projection of the quartet into six or eight loudspeakers arranged around the hall meant that very tiny sounds could be amplified and used as musical substance. For instance, playing on the rib of the instrument, or on the tailpiece, or on the bridge without tone. When such indeterminate noise is treated with various pitch multiplications the effect is of musical shadows—of shadows being structuralised. Often the sounds are so soft it is almost as if silence itself is moving. And a continuous sound on the rib of the instrument is fodder for the spatialisation to construct a ‘metaphysical’ rhythm, even a rhythmic thematicism. In Buddhist terms this struck me like the action of karma in one’s life. All one’s actions have consequences and they follow ‘like the shadow of a body,’ inseparably and invariably. Using electronics meant often that sounds the quartet played were recorded, stored in the computer, and then played back in transformed form later as a consequence of that earlier action. Karma is thought of as, ultimately, an illusion; so I thought of these shadowing sounds in the electronics as having a strong illusory quality to them, perhaps in contrast to the more substantial sounds which were conventional quartet music.\textsuperscript{131}

Electronics are used not only for embellishing, echoing, and processing sounds produced by the live instruments but also for taking part in independent lines. The ability to “structure shadows” means that the shadows can function as a voice in a contrapuntal passage. Example 4.9 shows the duet between the cello and the “shadow.” One of the four rhythms (shown in Example 4.4) is looped in the electronics on top of the cello, which is in the same rhythm but out of sync. Circular bowing is used as if imitating the sound of electronics moving around the hall.

\textsuperscript{131} Harvey, “The Genesis of Quartet No. 4,” 44–45.
Example 4.9 Electronics as a voice in polyphonic texture [m. 68, *senza misura*]

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2) Spatialization

Another important technique is spatialization. For Harvey, spatialization is much more than an embellishment or a way to add excitement. As early as 1986, he discusses his use of spatialization as a way of detaching the source from the result to create ambiguity.
There are many reasons why a composer might want to give his audience a sense of multi-directional sound. There are those who say it is superficial, almost irrelevant to the real essence of the music, which must stand on its own without such cosmetics (Hans Keller, my late and deeply inspiring teacher, would probably have held this view). My own reasons are as follows.

Music has two dimensions. One is its perceived physical sensuous quality, which we usually perceive as a well-known source, e.g. violins, muted trumpet, etc. The other is its constructed quality wherein we string together our percepts in the mind and make shapes, melodies, forms. It has often been my aim to make their borderlines ambiguous, for instance by having acoustic structure perceived as form itself rather than as articulating form. One reason for diffusing sound is that it’s a step in the direction of making more ambiguous the physical source of the sound. It no longer issues from player X with the grey hair and moustache or player Y with red hair and glasses. It becomes disguised, as in theatre, it moves about the ceiling, it inhabits the cornices and arches. One is ‘peopling’ a building with imaginary musical beings, invisible spirits [. . .] And when the sounds are sufficiently transformed or purely electronic, the removal from the easy, unambiguous picture of instrument and player is complete, and we are encouraged as listeners to be more attentive to the actual role of physical percept and its interface with structured form. Everything is called into question.\textsuperscript{132}

Two spatializers are used, one which loops rhythms automatically and another which controls the location and movement of the sound manually. The manual spatializer is controlled by drawing with a graphic pen on a Wacom tablet.\textsuperscript{133} Example 4.10 brings to mind the “breathing” section of the Third Quartet. Here, with the aid of electronics, Harvey attempts to make the entire hall breathe. The sound travels near and far as the bows alternate between \textit{sul ponticello} and \textit{sul tasto} roughly equating the distance of the sound in the hall to the distance between bow and bridge.

\textsuperscript{132} Harvey, “Madonna of Winter and Spring,” 433.

\textsuperscript{133} Harvey, “The Genesis of Quartet No. 4,” 46.
3) Harmonizers

Harmonizers add predetermined intervals to existing notes. Harmonizers with quarter tones, as Harvey observes, “give a more elemental, ‘less musical’ effect more like nature.” He finds them interesting because in such instances “the ‘natural’ world displaces the ‘cultural’ world of instruments.”\(^\text{134}\) He further observes that eighth-tone harmonizers have a chorusing effect.\(^\text{135}\) In Example 4.11, quarter- and eighth-tone harmonizers are used in the chorale passage with simple chords. Toward the end of the piece, harmonizers based on larger intervals create a thicker sonority. In Example 4.12 (m. 346), the melody in the cello part is harmonized with triads; since the output from the harmonizer is significantly softer, it is hard to hear the kind of triads used.

\(^{134}\) Ibid., 46.
\(^{135}\) Ibid.
4) Time Stretching

Time stretching is accomplished by storing a segment of sound in a buffer and playing it back in a loop. Harvey talks about how looping the buffer at progressively slower speeds creates a more
reverberant sound.\textsuperscript{136} He frequently adds pitch shifting and spectral inversion to the stretched sounds. Example 4.13 shows a passage where the cello plays a ritardando from eighth = 66 to 54, while the electronics records a segment of the cello part (notated “input” below the hatched bar) and plays back with continuing ritardando to eighth = 10 over 30 seconds.

Example 4.13 Time stretching

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5) Granulation

In granular synthesis, sounds are broken down into minute particles and reorganized to create different sounds. Harvey describes it as a kind of “distorted echo.”\textsuperscript{137} Depending on the reading speed

\textsuperscript{136} Ibid., 48.
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid., 46.
of the granulator, smooth or grainy sounds are produced. Here is another quintessential Harveyan metaphor: “I came to think of the frozen smooth sounds as having a spiritual quality and the more gritty, grainy, jumpy types of granulation to be materialistic.”\textsuperscript{138} He makes use of both types. In Example 4.14, the granulation is used as a “distorted echo;” the short \textit{tremolando} passages are recorded in a buffer and played back shortly after. Example 4.15, on the other hand, shows the instrumental passage at its most pointillistic; granulation contributes to the texture by the playing of short sounds in the background.

\begin{example}
Granulation I
\end{example}

\textsuperscript{138} Ibid., 47.
Harvey has worked in electronic studios for decades, frequently with engineers. For the Fourth Quartet, Harvey was assisted by musical engineer and composer Gilbert Nouno. The initial stage for developing the electronic part began by playing back existing quartets both by himself and other composers while applying various processes. Harvey then imagined what kind of results he would get from such processes when applied to a newly composed piece.\textsuperscript{139} This approach suggests most of the composition was done away from the electronic setup. The electronic part carries an important metaphysical meaning, but its use is never the single objective of his composition. Thus, his electronic parts combine experimentation and imagination, mostly emphasizing the latter.

\textsuperscript{139} Ibid., 44.
Melodic Chain

The principle of melodic chains has been discussed in the two preceding chapters. Here in the Fourth Quartet one finds the most rigorous example of a melodic chain. Harvey composed six melodies using materials from the first cycle producing a cyclic chain of twelve melodies and sums (Example 4.16). The analysis shown in Example 4.17 is indebted to the unpublished article by Gilbert Nouno and Yann Robin. Even though segments of the chain appear throughout the piece, complete statements of the melodies are found only in the second cycle. These statements are interrupted by the pointillistic texture as seen in Example 4.15.

It is important to note that four of the twelve melodies utilize the four pillar rhythms from Example 4.4. Melody B is built on rhythm 3, melody D on rhythm 2, melody E on rhythm 4, and melody F on rhythm 1. This is another instance of bringing global coherence to the composition, which is typical of Harvey’s music. Likewise, as shown earlier in Example 4.7, a slowed down melody A becomes the main material for cycle 5, and melody F begins cycle 3.

Example 4.16 Cyclic melodic chain

140 Gilbert Nouno and Yann Robin, unpublished article.
Pentatonicism

Harvey seeks liberation from tonality, particularly from the traditional function of the bass. For this reason, many of his harmonic fields are symmetrical around one or more axes. Such an example was presented in Chapter 3 (Example 3.10). His fondness for pentatonicism is based on similar premises. Since some pentatonic scales can be arranged symmetrically without a functioning leading tone, for Harvey, pentatonicism is a symbol of non-attachment that gives an illusion of stasis. The following are a few representative accounts by Harvey on pentatonicism:

A five-part chord, however, can flip over conceptually and be either a chord or a mode: hence the ubiquitous pentatonic modes. Conceptually, they live on the ambiguous edge, complex enough to allow for extended musical development, simple enough to give an impression of stasis, of not developing—an impression of living in the hand of God, which is precisely the purpose of Gregorian chant, for which pentatonicism often forms a backbone.\(^\text{141}\)

When a mode divides the octave symmetrically, it ceases to have the goal orientation of the diatonic system and becomes a musical expression of suspension in space. Here music is not symbolizing; it is itself a form of prayer, a means for experiencing unity. It is not a code for pointing to something; rather, it seems to have an inner feeling of something. The best-known type of pentatonic mode, which divides the octave symmetrically into tone, minor third, tone, minor third, tone, is a good example.\(^\text{142}\)

I have developed the idea of symmetrical pentatonicism in several of my works—for instance, by extending the alternation of tone and minor third so that it does not repeat in each octave but repeats only after five octaves, having encompassed all twelve pitch classes en route. This kind of mode, or harmonic field, is static both in its local, small-scale symmetry and overall (though the complexity of the whole is of course greater).\(^\text{143}\)

This synthetic pentatonic mode to which he refers in the third quotation is shown in Example 4.18. The scheme is a simple alternation of minor thirds and major seconds. Although the overall aural effect is pentatonic, this synthetic mode has enough complexity to flow in and out of atonal passages.\(^\text{144}\)

In the Fourth Quartet, pentatonicism is the dominant sound of the last cycle where the attachments and obsessions evaporate. The texture is simple with all instruments playing ascending lines and the first violin playing independent lines. The symmetrical pentatonic scale from Example 4.18 is used for the ascending lines in Example 4.19.

\(^{141}\) Harvey, In Quest of Spirit, 70.
\(^{142}\) Ibid., 71.
\(^{143}\) Ibid., 73.
\(^{144}\) Ibid., 73–74.
Before this last ascent begins, there is a *fuggeta* passage in which all instruments make their entrances using a melodic segment derived from melody A. Example 4.20 shows the beginning of the last cycle. The initial note of each entrance forms an ascending line of perfect fourths which contributes to the sound of pentatonicism since any four consecutive perfect fourths form a pentatonic collection (Example 4.21).\(^{145}\)

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\(^{145}\) Similar analysis is found in Gilbert Nouno and Yann Robin, unpublished article.
Example 4.20 Beginning of the fifth cycle

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This type of pentatonic passage is found in other pieces by Harvey—notably at the end of the third song from *Song Offerings* (1985), a section beginning at rehearsal 16 from the *Cello Concerto* (1990), the beginning of *Curve with Plateaux* (1992), and throughout his opera *Wagner Dream* (2006). The fifth cycle is a symbol of transcendence, finally freed from obsessions and the resultant endless rebirth. Pentatonicism along with the simpler texture plays a crucial role in achieving this state.

**Summary**

The Fourth Quartet is the culmination of Harvey’s string writing and a representative example of his use of live electronics. The integration between the instruments and the electronics is particularly notable. The electronics are used to expand instrumental capabilities, imitate shadow, add ambiguity and complexity, and bring the quartet to life. The main musical material is still derived from melodic chains. As in the Third Quartet, much of the sound material is created using unconventional techniques to achieve less traditionally defined sounds. The arrangement of five structural sections to parallel life cycles in Buddhism is unique among the quartets. In the Third Quartet, silence and pianissimo become more prevalent. In the Fourth Quartet, they become the most important structural feature. The pentatonic passage at the end shows, in addition to its Harveyan eclecticism, the stylistic confidence of the modernist composer in his seventh decade.
CONCLUSION

“The Buddhist view of reality as lacking inherent existence from its own side is one of the most important insights into the ‘reality’ of music I know.” 146

“What is the purpose of music? It is, in my view, to reveal the nature of suffering and to heal. The one big question of existence.” 147

—Jonathan Harvey

This study has explored the basis of Jonathan Harvey’s compositional thought as found in his four string quartets. For each of his innovative techniques, an underlying spiritual purpose was shown through musical examples and remarks by Harvey. In this chapter, Harvey’s broader ideas on spirituality are discussed. Lastly, following an examination of the place his music occupies in twentieth- and twenty-first century music literature, the evolution of Harvey’s output as reflected in the four quartets is traced and potential avenues of further study are suggested.

Jonathan Harvey’s Spirituality

Although his compositional techniques as seen in the previous discussion of his four quartets have evolved a great deal throughout his career (the perpetual quest being another modernist trait?), his aesthetics have remained surprisingly consistent. Many books, interviews and articles of the past three decades show his wide-ranging interest in different musical techniques, religion, and philosophy. In the end, all technical innovations should be considered as support for the aim, which is, to borrow the title of his book, the “quest of spirit.” As discussed in the main chapters, for Harvey, spirit and compositional technique are intrinsically connected. When asked “how it is possible to link spiritual concerns” with the “specifics of modern compositional techniques,” Harvey answered, “for me, there is certainly a direct connection, and technique is simply a tool, a means for the expression of the other.” 148 For this reason,

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146 Harvey, “The Genesis of Quartet No. 4,” 43–44.
147 Whittall, Jonathan Harvey, 34.
148 Ibid.
as early as 1975, Peter Evans observed that Harvey “can pass disconcertingly from an almost mystical exposition of his aspirations to a pithy account of his serial operations.”

According to Harvey, the term ‘spirit’ is impossible to define, as “spirit has to be meditated.”

However, even for a composer whose long career centered around the idea of spirit, it is “not a comfortable word,” since it is “subjective” and “excessively broad.” In order to understand how Harvey’s objective musical ideas represent his elusive concept of spirituality, it is crucial to interpret Harvey’s notion of spirituality from his own words. In his book *In Quest of Spirit*, Harvey, rather than defining the term, talks around it. Here I have included several quotations by Harvey in an attempt to understand which phenomena he considers spiritual.

In the presence of what we respond to as ‘great art’ we experience a loss of self, a loss of the observer. And that sort of transcendence of the narrow ego may be called, even in the case of ‘depressing’ or tragic art; the uplift of spirit.

Perhaps the category of the spiritual, then, is demarcated by the feeling we have of the music having somehow reached beyond, rather than by any associations evoked by a text, “program,” or the composer’s stated intention.

Thomas Mann (that hypersophisticate!) once said that all artists must be just a little naive. I have no compunction in singing of what is most charming, no hesitation in trying to portray, sometimes as directly or naively as possible, the experience of spirit itself—always failing, of course, because in the end it is true: spirit has to be meditated. But the attempt is crucial.

Great art is cathartic and to some extent does alleviate suffering by confronting suffering in the most tragic works. Nevertheless I think we would not feel it is great art unless there is something revealed beyond and above that suffering, some other dimension to it than just itself.

The more contrasts there are, the more violent the contrasts, the more difficulties that are unified, the more interesting the music. Ultimately this is a spiritual and ethical matter.

The greater the conflicts it successfully unifies, the more spiritual the music.

Fundamentally, and following tradition, the ‘spiritual’ is the experience of unity.

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150 Harvey, *In Quest of Spirit*, 36.
151 Ibid., 36.
152 Ibid., 8.
153 Ibid., 36–37.
155 Ibid., 33.
156 Harvey, *In Quest of Spirit*, 52.
157 Ibid., 82.
Thus, for Harvey, spiritual music is essentially an “experience of unity” in Buddhist terms. Buddhist unity encompasses all seemingly contradictory ideas—namely, subject and object, suffering and happiness, emptiness and bliss—via a realization that there is no division to reconcile to begin with.\(^{158}\) It is a result of Harvey’s core idea of “transcending dichotomies,” presented in Chapter 1.\(^{159}\) In Harvey’s music, unity is meaningful only when it is achieved after confronting suffering (via obsessions, violence, or contrast). Alleviation from suffering is precipitated by the revelation of insubstantiality, and this is where Harvey’s Buddhist-inspired spirituality materializes in concrete musical techniques designed to impart ambiguity. Following a confrontation with suffering and revelation of ambiguity, there follows an experience of unity. Harvey says this experience is spiritual. This state of unity is expressed by “naively portraying,” since the actual experience of the spiritual cannot be described. Unity is the basis of the Buddhist conception of compassion and love, attained not by desire or possession, but by realizing there is no distinction between ‘you’ and ‘me,’ or between ‘object’ and ‘subject.’ Following Harvey’s ideas of the Buddhist conception, this experience of unity and compassionate love provides healing from suffering. This complex idea of spirituality is perhaps the reason why Harvey “has never excluded the dark side of experience, or the use of expressionistic elements, from his music,”\(^{160}\) since the unity needs to be attained via active pursuit, not by passive submission.

The second chapter of Harvey’s book *In Quest of Spirit* is called “The Role of Ambiguity.” As mentioned above, the realization of ambiguity and insubstantiality is an essential step to arrive at unity. In the discussion of melodic chains in Chapters 2, 3, and 4, it was made clear that when melodies sum, their identities blur, revealing that their seemingly definite identities are an illusion. Harvey is explicit about this idea, and some of his comments were quoted in the relevant chapters.\(^{161}\) Also, Harvey describes timbral transformation as a presentation of insubstantiality, one of the fundamental Buddhist ideas.\(^{162}\) This was discussed in detail in Chapter 1 in conjunction with spectralism,\(^{163}\) which he considers a

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\(^{158}\) “Many of the philosophers were asking ‘What is happiness?’ Well it’s the same questions: what is suffering? What is happiness? It’s the same. But I see art as one of the great door-openers. Particularly music.” Johnson, “An Interview with Jonathan Harvey,” 122–123.

\(^{159}\) See p. 1.

\(^{160}\) Whittall, *Jonathan Harvey*, 79.

\(^{161}\) See p. 33–36.

\(^{162}\) Harvey, “The Genesis of Quartet No. 4,” 43.

\(^{163}\) See p. 10–13.
“spiritual breakthrough.” The dissipation and transformation of sounds (frequently found in electronic music) is related to the Buddhist view of the world as a thought-only entity—some Buddhists claim that advanced meditators can change earth into water. The breaking down of seemingly definite elements to their smallest atoms, and then to silence, is based on the Buddhist rejection of permanent self. For Harvey, electronics provide the most tangible proof (and method) that this idea can be achieved musically. Following are two accounts of Harvey on ambiguity.

So music has to do with two things—with ambiguity. A drive to unity is there, but it must be by way of variety. Both must coexist, be held in vibrant tension—what Goethe called “dynamic unity.” The unconscious is at least a metaphor for the darkness in which the process of creating such a vibrant tension takes place. I take no joy in composing if I set out in broad daylight knowing exactly what I want: I feel cheated of the adventure that makes music art. Instead each new work must grope out into some dark region, in which the imagination and the unconscious can operate together. It must be full of contradictions—of “uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason,” as the poet John Keats said.

As Keller put it, “The Law of Contradiction says that A is not both B and not B: in music it must, axiomatically, be both. The Law of Excluded Middle says that A either is or is not B, whereas in music it goes without saying that A must have it both ways if it is to be meaningful.”

Portrayal of unity, on the other hand, is more difficult to pinpoint in theoretical terms. It may take the form of an expression of tranquility (the beginning of the First Quartet), the floating quality of symmetrical harmonic space (one of the melodies in the Third Quartet, the pentatonic passage at the end of Fourth Quartet), near silence (electronics in the Fourth Quartet), breathing (Third and Fourth Quartets), or various schemes that insure structural coherence (the Schenkerian model of the First Quartet, serialism, melodic chains, metric structure in the Third Quartet, and structural rhythms in the Fourth Quartet). In the following extracts, Harvey discusses unity.

... serialism became really more of a harmonic thing for me, rather than a method of spinning out lines of notes or polyphonies. By harmonic, I mean more the kind of thing that can occasionally be found in Schoenberg and Webern, and also Boulez. They will set up what are often twelve-note harmonic fields, then explore the symmetrical recurrence of harmonic types. Series are moved through in combinatorial conjunctions, taking the harmonic axial symmetry which results from the combination of prime and inversion, or the combination of several primes and inversions, and the composer examines how the

165 Peter Harvey, An Introduction to Buddhism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 109–110.
symmetrical parade of intervals systematically created from this can reflect a certain axial symmetry and release from bass functions.\(^{168}\)

Music, then, may emphasize unity in stasis, in lack of discourse, or in background coherent structure.\(^{169}\)

So there we have the two contrasting elements we’ve talked of so often before in reference to music’s ambiguity: stillness and moving vividness, emptiness and fullness, unity and variety, the One and the Many. Stillness, in “spiritual” music, could be seen as a vessel for energy. Stillness permeates energy; energy is shot through with stillness.\(^{170}\)

. . . whereas the boy is mobile, flying like a free spirit. The “dead” bell is the mortuos, the “living” boy the vivos. They are one.\(^{171}\)

To summarize, Harvey’s idea of spirituality takes the form of an active confrontation with suffering, revelation of insubstantiality, and a portrayal of unity, though not necessarily in that order. The compositional techniques he employs, however novel, are devoid of purpose within themselves. Technical innovation and modernism are never simply the goal, but a tool for mimicking the spiritual in a tangible musical form.

Harvey’s Music Since 1977

Due to Harvey’s eclectic nature, his place in the canon of twentieth- and twenty-first century music literature is difficult to pin down. Harvey describes his pieces from the 1960s—Symphony (1966), Three Lovescapes (1967), Four Images after Yeats (1969), Ludus Amoris (1969)—as “intensely emotional” and “mystical,” but implies they lacked structural coherence.\(^{172}\) Harvey’s initial search for structural depth was through serialism and Schenkerian structure, examples of which are found in the First Quartet, perhaps the most structurally rigorous among the quartets. Despite his large number of pieces incorporating serialism, the serial discourse never takes the center stage, and its uses in the quartets are quite liberal. In the First and Second Quartets, serial techniques appear sporadically, and the

\(^{168}\) Whittall, Jonathan Harvey, 18.
\(^{169}\) Harvey, In Quest of Spirit, 51.
\(^{170}\) Ibid., 69.
\(^{171}\) Ibid., 61. He is referring to his piece Mortuos Plango, Vivos Voco, where he synthesizes the sound spectrum of a boy’s voice with a bell spectrum.
\(^{172}\) Whittall, Jonathan Harvey, 8.
series are often incomplete. Harvey appears to use serialism to construct atonal passages and symmetry (some examples were found in the Second Quartet), or to lay down a large structure (*Bhakti* for chamber ensemble and electronics is a good example).\textsuperscript{173}

Harvey as a spectralist poses a similar problem. He is heavily influenced by spectral music, and his knowledge of sound spectra remains close by. He recognizes the historical importance of spectral thoughts, saying “I would not want to echo Boulez’s famous ‘inutile’ when he described those not acquainted with serialism; nevertheless, I find those composers working today who are completely untouched by spectralism are at least less interesting. History seems grand, for once; spectralism is a moment of fundamental shift after which thinking about music can never be quite the same again.”\textsuperscript{174}

There are pieces that use explicit spectral techniques (analysis and manipulation of sound spectra through resynthesis, composed inharmonic spectra, granular synthesis, etc.), such as *Advaya* (1994), *Tombeau de Messiaen* (1994), *Mortuos Plango, Vivos Voco* (1980), *Ritual Melodies* (1989–1990), and *White as Jasmine* (1999), but many of his pieces are composed without using any specific spectral techniques. The four quartets are examples of pieces touched by spectralism, but without a straightforward application. One original aspect of Harvey’s spectralism is that he frequently uses sound spectra as a repository for melodies. His love for lyricism and influence from spectralism propels him to connect his harmonic and timbral origins into melodic thinking.

Spectralism, like harmony, is in essence outside the world of linear time [. . .] But the fascination of spectral thinking is that it, too, can easily shift into the realm of linear time, into melodic thinking: there is a large borderland of ambiguity to exploit. It is not a question of forsaking harmony and regarding everything as timbre, as some French composers do, but rather of harmony being subsumed into timbre. Intervallicism can shade into and out of spectralism, and it is in this ambiguity that much of the richness in the approach lies.\textsuperscript{175}

Another important aspect of spectral music is the idea of music as gradual transformation, propounded by Gerárd Grisey (1946–1998)\textsuperscript{176} and continued by Philippe Hurel (born 1955).

\textsuperscript{173} For more information on Harvey’s serialism, see John Palmer, *Jonathan Harvey’s Bhakti for Chamber Ensemble and Electronics: Serialism, Electronics and Spirituality* (Lampeter, Ceredigion, Wales, United Kingdom: Edwin Mellon Press, 2001).

\textsuperscript{174} Harvey, “Spectralism,” 11.

\textsuperscript{175} Harvey, *In Quest of Spirit*, 28.

\textsuperscript{176} “Just as the series is not a question of chromaticism, spectral music is not a question of sonic color. For me, spectral music has a temporal origin. It was necessary at a particular moment in our history to give form to the exploration of an extremely dilated time and to allow the finest degree of control for the transition from one sound to the next.” Gerárd Grisey, “Did You Say Spectral?,” *Contemporary Music Review* 19, no. 3 (2000): 1.
However, Harvey rarely repeats and transforms musical materials in linear succession, which sets him apart from archetypal spectral composers. Harvey typically takes away only the relevant aspects from the established trends as needed for his musical ideal. He can be put in line with the group of composers roughly defined as post-spectralists such as Kaija Saariaho (born 1952), Philippe Hurel (born 1955), and Marc-André Dalbavie (born 1961), who adapted principles of spectralism for their own aesthetics.

Harvey is also a peculiar figure in the area of spiritual music. The term “spiritual” often has a connotation of monotony and repetitiveness that induce a reflective and receptive state of mind, as found in the music of his British contemporary John Tavener (born 1944) and Arvo Pärt (born 1935). Harvey, referring to the music of Tavener and Pärt, says “It is a balancing act between utter selflessness, on the one hand, and expression that is a renewal of tradition, on the other. Music that is so stripped of polyphonic and harmonic elaboration that it takes second place to the symbolic significance may prove inaccessible to those unsympathetic to that significance; in others, however, such music can often trigger powerful spiritual experiences.” However, Harvey’s musical version of spirituality, as discussed above, could hardly be described as “stripped of polyphonic and harmonic elaboration,” and is often arrived at after an active and often painful encounter with reality.

The evolution of Harvey’s music parallels his Buddhist immersion and influence from electronic music and spectralism. The Fourth Quartet evolved a great deal from the First Quartet, written 26 years before. Paul Griffiths observes:

If Harvey’s First Quartet thus provided the seed for so much that has followed—and it is an extraordinary amount that has, indeed, followed—his output has been as various as abundant, and the distance travelled immense. Some of that distance may be tracked by comparing his First Quartet with his Fourth (2003), in every way spaced out: longer, larger (involving electronics), open to silence and the pianissimo, its posture alertly attentive, its sounds, by virtue of the electronics, released from the instruments into space, as Harvey likes to have them.

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178 This idea was briefly discussed on p. 30.
179 Harvey, *In Quest of Spirit*, 71.
The Fourth Quartet is expansive, not only because of the electronic spatialization, but also due to the longer duration and wider range of expression. Considering that Harvey continues to write small-scale works to the present day, this tendency towards expansion should not be overly generalized. However, his formal concept has expanded, producing pieces like *Wagner Dream* (2006) and *Weltethos* (2011), both of which approach the two-hour mark.

According to Harvey, he “loosened up” between the First and Second Quartets. He began to see the forefront of modern music as peripheral to his musical objectives, and he became less “global-time orientated.”

In the Second Quartet, he seems more at ease with his musical instincts (as reflected in the cello solo), and thanks to melodic chains, his lyrical language flourishes.

As electronic music and Buddhist spirituality engrossed him more, his sound world became less defined. The breaking up of sound is a representation of insubstantiality, often achieved by extended techniques and electronic processes. As Griffiths observes, the last two quartets are more open to pianissimo and silence, and this tendency surfaces often in his recent music. Downes, while comparing *Song Offerings* (1985) and *White as Jasmine* (1999), notes a change in overall form:

> The trajectory of Harvey’s musical journeys has not always been the same: whereas his earlier works often took us from one place to another, later pieces, influenced by Hindu and Buddhist ideas of reincarnation, have increasingly traced a circular course.

The idea of journey remains, but the course of the journey changes. Comparing the first three quartets with the Fourth Quartet, a similar formal evolution is found: the idea of reincarnation and multiple lives inspire its five cycles.

**Prospects for Further Study**

The main purpose of this study of Harvey’s music is to explore the explicit link he makes between the objective and the mystical, attempting to show they do not necessarily need to be separate. He openly speaks about inspiration, emotions, and the enactment of subconscious will, without falling back on

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idioms of the past; he promotes the belief that matters beyond the objective can often be achieved with a complex, modern, and original language.

It is hoped that this study contributes toward the understanding of a highly accomplished yet less studied composer. Due to the originality and high quality of the quartets, this will not only benefit scholarly interest among composers, but also hopefully encourage the inclusion of the quartets in the string repertoire of the twenty-first century. In the opinion of the author, the forbidding technical difficulty will be gradually overcome as performers become more acquainted with contemporary string writing. In addition, composers could benefit from his philosophical concerns, considering music as something beyond technological development, and thus move from the still lingering postwar mentality of music as a merely scientific advancement to rethinking music as something more human or divine.

This work has sought to provide an insight into Harvey’s core musical ideas and compositional techniques, which may stimulate other studies of Harvey’s music, regardless of genre. While the composer’s structural principles vary widely, there are some consistent techniques such as serialism, melodic chains, symmetrical harmonic fields, and spectralism. However, Harvey also flirts transiently with random processes and creative expression markings. Some sections have even been composed entirely without the aid of objective techniques (e.g. the cello melody in the Second Quartet). Future research should thus consider his techniques, but with an open mind that anything is possible when it comes to Harvey.

Harvey’s musical evolution over time has been briefly outlined. However, for a more definitive characterization, research on compositional changes will have to investigate a larger portion of his catalogue. Arguably, the quartets show the most complex side of Harvey’s music (reasonable when we consider that they are written for the Arditti Quartet),¹⁸³ which may not provide the most representative examples. An open question not answered by this study is how his increasing immersion in Buddhist thought and electronic music over the decades has changed his music in other genres. The topic seems particularly significant since many of his more recent pieces are even more explicit with their

¹⁸³ “Irvine Arditti] commissioned the Arditti Quartet’s first commissioned quartet from me (Quartet No. 1, 1977). He and his colleagues have remained a model, unequalled and unique, for what is possible in this genre, and any account of how my new quartet was born must start with the enabling and inspiring force of that model, present throughout the thought-processes of my composing,” Harvey, “The Genesis of Quartet No. 4,” 43.

Harvey’s eclectic nature leads to a myriad of future possibilities for research. His music can be viewed in multiple contexts: serialism, spectralism, electronic music, and spiritual music. Furthermore, the genres of his output are manifold. This research focused on his instrumental writing, but Harvey’s vocal music occupies roughly one-third of his output; his choice of texts and their settings reveal another layer of his musical thoughts not found in his purely instrumental pieces.

Composers and researchers should be concerned with the importance of art music and its future in the twenty-first century and understand that its value can be increased when the goals of music transcend objectivity. It is urgent that the composer’s compelling ideas live on in the next generation of composers. As Harvey put it, “In my view, [new listeners] will be retained if they see that music is dealing with matters which concern them philosophically and spiritually. They will lose interest if it doesn’t, and music will once again play a peripheral elitist role. Music must be clearly concerned with something central.”

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APPENDIX

List of References for Harvey’s Electronic Music


DISCOGRAPHY
