Interpreting Finn Mortensen's Piano Music in an International Perspective

Reflection Text

by

Kristian Thunestvedt Evjen

Faculty of Performing Arts

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discovery. At the same time, concepts commonly associated with atonality, such as the absence of a tonal centre and a non-hierarchical organisation of equal and independent tones, seemed increasingly contrary to my experience of the music. The term 'atonal' used in connection with Mortensen's music might be more a result of the limitations experienced with attempts to approach his tonal procedures with the tonal theory of the common-practice period than an accurate depiction of his music.

Inspired by Paul Hindemith's view of tonality as a perceptible musical force rather than a specific theory, I started looking for ways of exploring the tonal coherence in Mortensen's music. These processes resulted in new insights into the expressive qualities of his music, insights I find essential for its performance. Moreover, these insights challenge some beliefs about Mortensen's music as theoretical abstractions and open up one possibility of approaching his music through more personal, perceptional methods.

Upon starting conscious investigations into my experiences with the tonal aspects of Mortensen's music, I realised that it is guided by a strong sense of tonal hierarchy, where all notes serve a function defined by their relations with each other and their relations to a, often implicit, central tone. The tonal hierarchy gives the music a continuous, subtle fluctuation in the degree of tension and colour variations.

Mortensen's tonal hierarchy is, however, different from traditional conceptions of tonality. Firstly, it is focused around a horizontal rather than a vertical axis, and central tones are defined by a voice-leading rather than a harmonic perspective. Secondly, it is dominated by extreme mobility of the central tones, which can be defined at any given point but are often left immediately, resulting in a constant and rapid jumping from one central tone to another. Finally, because voices usually meet in dissonances, each voice can have its own central tone, resulting in multiple, simultaneous tonalities. Therefore, the tonality in Mortensen's music has a local expressive function rather than a large-scale structural one.

Taking the opening of the Fugue from *Sonata*, Op. 7, as a starting point for investigating Mortensen's tonal language, I demonstrate patterns in cadential voice-leading and modes. I use them to draw parallels to his earlier, neo-classical, and later modernist works, tracing similarities in tonal handling across otherwise widely differing aesthetic expressions. I also show parallels in the tonal procedures of Mortensen's music and the music of some of his modernist predecessors, Fartein Valen and Arnold Schönberg.

The performative results of having a tonal analysis of Mortensen's music are, however, not direct and straightforward, and the analysis does not produce a kind of knowledge that leads to performative decisions on a conscious level. Instead, the potential value of analysing his tonal language comes from the gradual change and enrichment of perception resulting from the practical, auditive analytical process itself, and its effect on performance is indirect and largely subconscious.

or parts of figures from their connection with the metric grid and counter the uniformity found in Mortensen's notation of dynamics.

Mortensen's music contains several layers of phrasing or higher levels of organisation not indicated by the notation, requiring the performer to experiment extensively with the flexibility of the temporal flow, as well as the strength of the metric hierarchy.

In the eruptively gestural first movement of the *Sonata, Op. 7,* the autonomous shaping of the individual gestures happens within the context of a simple, linear, structural idea, raising performative questions regarding the relationship between gesture and structure.

Mortensen seems to avoid metric points and instead reserves heavy downbeats for rare and structurally significant moments. Awareness of this technique leads to new perspectives on the build-up of energy and shaping of sections and the role of the temporal flow and metrical strength in such processes.

The ending of Mortensen's *Fantasy and Fugue*, Op. 13, is challenging from a performer's point of view. Its gradual dissolution of recognisable musical material seems to leave a feeling of anticlimax in its wake, making the whole ending lack energy and purpose. However, through a combination of motivic analysis and gestural focus, I propose that the ending benefits from the performer's strive towards connectedness where larger units, though internally separated, can be perceived. Drawing experience from my work with Anton Webern's *Variationen*, Op. 27 and what Peter Stadlen calls Webern's *"anti-pointillist manifestos"* as well as Pierre Boulez's concept of *"pointillistic phrasing,"* I discuss performative parallels between Mortensen and Webern and the performer's methods for gaining a different perspective on Mortensen's points.

Using analysis of the long-term registral development in the third movement of Webern's *Variationen*, Op. 27, as a starting point, I explore the performative implications of Mortensen's technique of registral expansion as a form of pointillistic structure. I demonstrate how, in particular, his *Sonata,* Op. 7, and *Fantasy and Fugue,* Op. 13, are saturated with these pointillistic structures of different lengths, ranging from a few notes to spanning entire movements. Used as performative tools, they can serve multiple functions, from reaching over a single transition to helping to express the energetic shape of longer sections or entire movements.

I discovered some parallels between Mortensen's registral developments, Pierre Boulez's multidimensional dodecaphonic structures in *Trope* from *Troisième Sonate* and the multidimensional sentence structure in Stephane Mallarmé's poem *Un coup de Dés Jamais*

N'Abolira le Hasard. These parallels became a starting point for exploring the interconnectedness and synthesis of Mortensen's local and global structures in more depth.

Based on the experiences outlined in this chapter, it seems that the relationship between the long-term and the short-term aspects of music is not as dichotomic as it sometimes is portrayed. Instead, it appears to me as a dialectic relationship. Thus, structural thinking becomes not just a tool for long-term, dramatic development, it also results in and involves shaping details in more dynamic, unpredictable and individual ways.

Finn Mortensen's sonata for two pianos is among his best-known but rarely performed works. Its large amount of diverse indeterminate processes and free improvisation puts it outside the traditional training of classical performers and forces them to reassess fundamental parts of their musical practice and develop new approaches and methods for working with the music. Mortensen's inclusion of free improvisation, combined with a clear focus on the sounding musical result, puts the individual performer's musical agency at the forefront of creation. The sonata was a unique and ground-breaking work at the time and is distinctly different from other contemporary directions of indeterminacy dominated by the choice-based processes of the *Darmstadt school* and the detachment from human intentions within the *New York school*.

Apart from sections within the score itself, performers can draw inspiration from multiple sources to develop the individual improvisational agency needed to perform the piece. I describe a process of using strategies and ideas from André Boucourechliev's *Archipel I* as a point of departure for starting to improvise, tweaking and adopting them to gain relevance for the idiosyncrasies of Mortensen's sound universe.

As a piece where the order of tones cannot be determined, rehearsing together took on a different character from traditional chamber music work. Instead of conventional rehearsing, we spent our time together drawing inspiration from each other to develop our improvisations further, experimenting with the frames for the improvisations, developing and expanding our mutual understanding of aesthetics and possibilities within the sonata, and exploring our shared space to lift the focus from our individual improvisations and develop an aural awareness for the unity of the combined sounds.

On paper, with the precise series of dynamics and tempi and a crescendo sign even represented in the layout of the score itself, the teleologic form of the piece appears clear-cut. In performance, however, the form is created by constant negotiations of multiple parameters. Based on the few notated details of the score and drawing from my experience with the composer's other teleologic pieces, it seems that the teleologic developments act mainly on a global scale and that, locally, the performers can have considerable freedom for departures.

Finn Mortensen's concept of neo-serialism, born out of a reaction to new, post-modern tendencies of the time, became an essential formative element of his late musical style. In this chapter, I investigate new perspectives and analyses to better understand neo-serialism and its consequences on the performance of *Sonata No. 2*, Op. 47.

The composer's references to James Joyce in a private letter offer insights into the style unexplored in previous research. Joyce's '*stream of consciousness*' has multiple musical parallels in Mortensen's sonata, suggesting aesthetic and performative similarities to Boulez's *Troisième Sonate.* Furthermore, Mortensen's explanation of neo-serialism being a synthesis between the *old* and the *new* by adding melodic elements to the serial style seems to be merely one symptom of a wider eclectic and pluralistic vision created by an inward-looking '*self-historicism'*, paralleling the use of stylistic plurality and memory in Joyce's *Ulysses*.

In most of Mortensen's pieces characterised as dodecaphonic, for example, *Fantasy and Fugue*, Op. 13, and *Piano Piece*, Op. 28, he used a *'free'* form of the technique where aggregates are constantly permutated and reworked through non-interval-preserving processes not resulting in recognisable patterns of notes. My findings from analysing the dodecaphonic structure of *Sonata No. 2* oppose the traditional understanding that the sonata belongs to the same category. Instead, the sonata is composed with four separate rows with distinctly different characteristics, used as a foundation for the sonata's stylistically and aesthetically diverging material. My twelve-tone analysis of *Sonata No. 2* suggests a connectedness of separated sections and can provide new perspectives on the character of sections and the overall form and coherence of the movement.

The indeterminate section covering two pages towards the end of the sonata stands out due to its unusual notation. It does not seem to indicate specific procedures but appears to be meant as a signal to the

performer to participate actively as co-composer and improvisator, and I discuss my reasoning behind one possible solution on how to perform the various parts that make up this section.

Despite the comparatively well-organised twelve-tone structure of the second sonata, neo-serialism is not primarily driven by pitch organisation. The twelve-tone structure is only one of many dimensions where various spectra are serialised, and rather than being serialism on a note-by-note level, neo-serialism is best understood as a form of meta-serialism, where the eclectic multiplicity is created in the meeting points between different parameters.

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Chapter 1: Point of Departure

At a time when most Norwegian composers were writing music in a nationally inspired neo-classical style, Finn Mortensen (1922-1983) started seeking his own direction. Oriented towards music by the internationally leading modernists, he began developing an idiosyncratic musical language. His constant search for new sounds and new expressions became a hallmark in his ever-evolving compositional output, and his, for the time, unusual sounds, modernistic language and constant play with contrasting extremes made him a polarising figure. Many have considered him merely a constructor who built abstract structures detached from the human experiences of music, a narrative that has been enforced by the composer's tendency to talk about his music in purely technical terms. Unlike many other 20th-century composers, he made little attempts at writing his own meta-narrative. In addition, his written scores are void of details and nuances, giving the performers few indications about the performance.

Yet, others have pointed out Mortensen's emotional relationship with music and his fundamentally '*romantic*' personality and have found his music powerfully expressive. The contrast between the lack of expressed intentions and the sparse notation in his scores, and what I experience as complex, rich, and nuanced musical language, leaves a formidable task for the performers, a task with considerable freedom and obligations where they can only to a relatively small degree rely on their intuition derived from previous practice.

Using Mortensen's international sources of inspiration as a starting point for contextualising his music, I have endeavoured to explore what kind of knowledge, understanding, and methods might lead to new and personal performances of his piano music and aimed for interpretations resulting from co-creative processes arising from the individual meeting point between music and performer. I borrow the term *performer's analysis* to discuss how I, as a performing musician, interact with and explore the music in a practical situation and how this can be used for new, critical assessments of various musical aspects and ultimately lead to personal and creative performances.

Introduction

Finn Mortensen (1922-1983) is today a symbol of Norway's post-WWII movement of modernist and internationalist composers. Growing up in an environment where the predominant musical style was based on building a national musical identity in a post-Grieg tradition,[1] combined with a French neoclassical idiom,[2] he decided at a very early age to go in a completely different direction.

His first compositions, the two *Sonatinas* Op. 1 and 2, already inhibit some of the individuality that should later mark all of his compositional output. Although they might sound somewhat traditional and simple to modern ears compared to his later music, they already contain some ideas that would form his mature style. Many years later, the composer describes the two pieces as the result of an attempt to create *"a personal language on free-tonal technique, without being founded on a national ground. Here, I attempted an internationalism I constantly have followed. I have almost an aversion towards national rose-painting."*[3] Even with these early compositions, the traits that would define his compositional path seemed to be consciously formulated if not fully developed.

The most defining characteristic of the composer's path was his constant need for development and renewal. According to Elef Nesheim: *"[h]e was always looking. Composition is researching the sound material, as he said in an interview - the search for the new was a central hallmark in his compositional activities."*[4] In addition to constantly developing his musical language and technique, he also searched for a high level of originality in each individual composition. As Nesheim explains, *"[e]very composition should represent a new realisation, conquer new compositional terrain."*[5]

Mortensen's constant search for new expressions and techniques is one of the things that makes his music both fascinating and challenging from a performer's perspective. Every work is aesthetically, technically and expressively different from the next. Although one can draw many

[1] Elef Nesheim, "Modernismens døråpner i Norge : Finn Mortensens musikk i lys av norsk etterkrigsmodernisme" (2001:1 Norges musikkhøgskole, 2001), 56.
[2] Ibid., 62.
[3] «[...] et personlig tonespråk med fritonal teknikk, uten å være tuftet på nasjonal grunn. Jeg forsøkte her en internasjonalisme som jeg stadig har fulgt. Jeg har nærmest en aversjon mot nasjonal rosemaling.» Finn Mortensen, *Cover text to Philips - 6578 100* (1979). All translations are my own unless otherwise stated.
[4] «Han var alltid på leting. Komposisjon *er å forske i lydmaterialet*, uttalte han i et intervju, -jakten etter det nye var et sentralt kjennetegn i Mortensens kompositoriske virksomhet.» Nesheim, "Modernismens døråpner i Norge," 6.
[5] «Hver komposisjon skulle representere en ny erkjennelse, erobre nytt kompositorisk terreng.» Ibid., 15.

parallels between them, and there are numerous connections and similarities to be explored, the high level of originality requires the performer to search for uniqueness within each work.

Furthermore, his search for a personal but internationally oriented modernistic style places his music in the context of various styles and movements within twentieth-century art music. Mortensen studied with great interest and diligence everything from Paul Hindemith's neoclassical style to the idiosyncratic free-jazz improvisations of Cecil Taylor via the Second Viennese School and the early Norwegian modernism of Fartein Valen, the post-WWII avant-garde around the Darmstadt Summer courses, and the diverse directions of musical indeterminacy from the 1950s onwards, and gained ideas and knowledge he would entirely reshape into his own personal language.

My first meeting with Mortensen's music was through Kjell Bækkelund's old recording of *Fantasy and Fugue* Op. 13 during a music history lesson in high school. I remember it as a completely captivating experience. While my textbook could only tell me that *"In Fantasy and Fugue for piano Op. 13 from 1957, he used twelve-tone technique. In the fugue, he went even further: if it's not strictly organised, it is apparent that it was conceived inspired by Stockhausen's serial compositions,"*[6] it seemed apparent to me that there was much more to this music. I was fascinated by the dynamic power, the flexible gestures, the colourful harmonic language, and what I perceived as strong emotional content. I also remember a fascination with the idea that all this was achieved using a compositional technique that had been described to me as so dull and technical that seemingly no good music could come from it.

Since that day, I have been interested in Mortensen's music, an interest I failed to act upon for a long time. One reason for this is the severe technical difficulties. As Robert Riefling points out, Finn Mortensen's piano pieces are *"[…] difficult to learn and technically extremely demanding […]. I have had and still have severe difficulties with it. It takes an awfully long time."*[7] During my studies, I was hardly capable of performing this music, and as a professional,

[6] «I Fantasi og Fuge for klaver opus 13 fra 1957 brukte han tolvtoneteknikk. I fugen gikk han også lenger: Om den ikke er strengt organisert, så er det tydelig at den er blitt til under inspirasjon av Stockhausens serielle komposisjoner.» Ståle Reinåmo Stein Roger Martinsen, Knut Steffenak, *Crescendo – fra renessanse til rock* (Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag A/S, 1996), 264.

[7] "[…] Finn Mortensen, hvis klaverstykker desværre er vanskelige at indøve og teknisk kræver uhyre meget. […] Jeg har selv haft og har fortsatt meget vanskelig ved det, det tager fryktelig lang tid." Robert Riefling, "Musikken, frihederne og de store horisonter," in *Musikalske Selvportrætter*, ed. Torben Meyer, Müller-Marein, Josef & Reinhardt, Hannes (København: Jul. Gjellerups Forlag, 1966), 233.

it is difficult to find the time to learn even a single one of his pieces, let alone several, which I think is necessary to gain an understanding of his rich and complex musical style.

Becoming a research fellow in the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme provided the time and resources necessary for me to look deeper into this relatively unknown and unexplored part of our recent music history.[8]

Upon starting this research project, I had little more than an idea that performing Mortensen's music in a way that I would consider artistically satisfactory would require far more than just an accurate rendering of the available scores. What knowledge and understanding are needed to address Mortensen's music? How can I gain this knowledge and develop this understanding? What knowledge, understanding, and processes are necessary to perform it as meaningful music rather than an arbitrary collection of random notes? These questions have preoccupied my mind during the project, and I will attempt to address them in the following reflection text.

For the past fifty years, research on Finn Mortensen has been linked to the Norwegian musicologist, historian and author Elef Nesheim. His Mag. art. dissertation from 1971[9] is the first academic text on Mortensen's music. The paper is an in-depth analysis of three pieces, *Evolution for Orchestra*, Op. 23, *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra,* Op. 25, and *Sonate für zwei Klaviere,* Op. 26 and shows the development from dodecaphonic technique to the use of sound blocks and *aleatoric* elements in Mortensen's music in the mid-1960s.

Nesheim's PhD thesis from 2001[10] must be regarded as the primary research work on Mortensen. The thesis is focused on Mortensen's development as a modernist. Though it covers the whole period Mortensen was active as a composer, it focuses in particular on the years 1956-65, intending to *"describe Finn Mortensen's compositional development in the period 1945-*

[8] While it is true that Mortensen's music has mostly failed to gain popularity among performers, most of his piano works have been previously recorded.

Sonatina no. 1, Op. 1:	Bjørn Jahren, 1979, Philips 6578 100
Sonatina no. 2, Op. 2:	Bjørn Jahren, 1979, Philips 6578 100
Sonata, Op. 7:	Elisabeth Klein, 1977, Philips 6507 058.
	Håkon Austbø, 2009, Aurora B002SSZ7BY
Fantasy and Fugue, Op. 13:	Kjell Bækkelund, 1967, Philips – 839 248 AY.
	Einar Henning Smebye, 1987, Aurora ARCD 1911
Sonate für zwei Klaviere, Op. 26:	Erika Haase and Colette Zérah, 1965, Ny Musikk NM-1
Piano Piece, Op. 28:	Elisabeth Klein, 1989, Aurora NCD 4923
	Aleksandr Shtarkman, 1988, PSC 1042

[9] Elef Nesheim, "Fra dodekafon struktur til aleatorisk klangflateteknikk" (1971).

[10] Nesheim, "Modernismens døråpner i Norge."

65, seen in the light of the impulses he received from the contemporary modernism"[11]. The thesis combines structural analysis with thorough research on contemporary written sources to trace Mortensen's musical and stylistic development and place his production in a historical context. Through his four decades of research, Nesheim has documented how the leading modernists internationally influenced Mortensen's musical style and compositional ideas.

Building on Nesheim's research and inspired by similar methods within other artistic research projects,[12] I decided to use an international contextualisation as the starting point for my project.[13] Through the study and performance of music by the composers that influenced Mortensen, I aimed to get a closer connection to the context he developed within. However, this is not a straightforward process; one cannot expect specific solutions, ways of performing, or even ways of thinking suitable for Schönberg, Webern or Boulez to be automatically transferable to a piece by Mortensen. Nevertheless, looking at how the different composers worked on similar issues becomes a *triangulation tool*,[14] helping me to view details in Mortensen's music from a different perspective. This enabled me to ask new questions and find new areas of musical reflection, leading to examining aspects of Mortensen's music that I might otherwise have given a more superficial treatment or go unnoticed altogether.

This contextualisation brought me in contact with and allowed me to draw knowledge and ideas from performances of and research on some of the greatest and most iconic piano music by some of the greatest composers of the 20th century. From the neo-classicism of Paul Hindemith, the expressionism of the Second Viennese School to the post-WWII avant-gardism of the

[11] «Forskningsprosjektet har hatt som mål å beskrive Finn Mortensens kompositoriske utvikling I perioden 1945-65, sett i lys av de impulser mottok fra samtidens modernisme.» Ibid., 352.

[12] See for example Annabel Guaita, "Critical Reflection" (UiB, 2014). and Friederike Wildschütz, "Into the Hanging Gardens - A Pianist's exploration of Arnold Schönberg's Op. 15" (University of Stavanger, 2017).

[13] Nesheim's final major work on Finn Mortensen is the biography Elef Nesheim, *Alltid på leting: Finn Mortensen : en kraft i norsk musikkliv* (Oslo: Norsk musikforl., 2010).
Gunnar Sigve Aurdal's master thesis Gunnar Sigve Aurdal, "Paul Hindemiths påverknad på norske etterkrigskomponistar : Eit studie av Hindemiths påverknad på Finn Mortensen, Egil Hovland og Conrad Baden" (2007). constitutes the remaining academic research on Finn Mortensen. The thesis discusses Paul Hindemith's influence on Norwegian composers and has some chapters on Finn Mortensen.
Some other writings by various authors have proven valuable for me. The composer's 60th anniversary led to a focus on him and his music, and there were published several articles in the magazine *Ballade* and a separate commemorative publication Ole Henrik Moe & Synne Skouen, ed., *Mortensen 60: festskrift til Finn Mortensen på hans 60-årsdag* (Oslo: Cappelen, 1982).
Finn Mortensen's own papers, articles, newspaper clippings, letters, and original manuscripts are stored in the collection of the music department of the Norwegian National Library.

[14] Jeremy Cox, "What I say and What I Do," in *Sound & Score - Essays on Sound, Score and Notation*, ed. W. Brooks & K. Coessens P. de Assis (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2013).

Darmstadt generation, I have followed in Mortensen's footsteps trying to learn about what inspired him and trying to find new perspectives on how to approach his music.

While I am in this project greatly indebted to Nesheim's research, I have aimed for something different than merely finding practical applications for the material he presents. Musical interpretation and performance are neither subordinated to theoretical knowledge nor are the two entirely epistemically overlapping. Nesheim's analysis of Mortensen's scores and contextualising of their creation, while revealing many interesting aspects of Mortensen's music that have been important to me, also have their limitations. Performers have different backgrounds, contexts, aims and methods for researching music than theoreticians. Looking at the music from a performer's perspective inevitably meant focusing on other elements, revealing new knowledge and insights about music that is not easily accessible or even interesting from a musicological point of view. Classical performers have little tradition of documenting and sharing the knowledge and understanding that shapes our practice to a broader audience. Artistic research can potentially have an essential function in filling this void. Through artistic research, we can disseminate, share and discuss knowledge that would otherwise often be kept private or shared only through personal contact. This way, artistic research can play an essential role in developing the art field further.

The AEC White Paper states that *"Artistic Research may be defined as a form of research that possesses a solid basis embedded in artistic practice and which creates new knowledge and/or insight and perspectives within the arts, contributing both to artistry and to innovation."*[15] It is an umbrella term containing multiple different artistic fields, approaches and methodologies, with the common denominator that they, according to Henk Borgdorff, *"centre on the practice of making and playing. Practicing the arts, creating, designing and performing is intrinsic to the research process. And artworks and art practices are partly the material outcomes of the research."*[16]

While artistic practice in itself cannot be defined as artistic research, artistic research is not a special form of artistic practice that necessarily requires different processes or methods from the artistic field in question. Nor are the activities or knowledge within artistic research necessarily limited to those unique to artistic research, but they must represent the wide spectre

[15]Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen, *Key Concepts for AEC Members, Artistic Research, An AEC Council 'White Paper'*, (2015), 2.
[16] Henk Borgdorff, The Conflict of the Faculties - Perspectives on Artistic Research and Academia (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2012), 123.

within the specific art fields. Artistic research may, therefore, similarly to artistic practice, take methods or knowledge from various fields, themselves being not definable as artistic research.

According to Borgdorff, art practice qualifies as research if it fulfils the following characteristics: Firstly, it must have a purpose to *"expand our knowledge and understanding by conducting an original investigation in and through art objects and creative processes."*[17] It intends to address questions or areas that are *"pertinent in the research context and in the art world*."[18] and must therefore reach beyond the personal artistic development of the individual researcher. Furthermore, it must *"employ experimental and hermeneutic methods that reveal and articulate the tacit knowledge that is situated and embodied in specific artworks and artistic processes"*[19], and finally, *"research processes and outcomes are documented and disseminated in an appropriate manner to the research community and the wider public."*[20]

Within the artistic field of Western art music performance, it is necessary to problematise the definition of "*original investigation*". Work in this field often involves performing music written centuries ago and performed numerous times before, but the performer's work, thoughts and processes have rarely been documented and discussed.[21] While being on seminars and courses in The Norwegian Artistic Research Programme, my impression was that the emphasis very much was on the originality and novelty of the artistic result. While this understanding of artistic research is suitable for many art forms, it meant that most of the questions I found important and interesting for my project were deemed insufficiently interesting to warrant further investigations. Performing music that has been performed before, has by some artists been considered not to meet the required level of originality to fall within the definitions of artistic research, apart from in the few cases where the performer's contribution to the performance is explicitly ingrained in the conception of the musical work itself. Instead, I have

[17] Ibid., 53.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Kathleen Coessens writes that "the vast literature on musical creativity is almost exclusively concerned with the listening or analyzing experience as perceived by critics and researchers, not by the creative experience of the artists themselves."Kathleen Coessens, "The Agile Musical Mind: mapping the musician's act of creation," in *Creativity and the Agile Mind - A Multi-Disciplinary Study of a Multi-Faceted Phenomenon*, ed. Kurt Feyaerts and Charles Forceville Tony Veale (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 2013), 1. Mine Doğantan-Dack writes: "Close study of musical performances over the last decade did not bring along a similar focus on performers in that their musical activities and musicianship continue to be represented, in theoretical writings, in terms of received notions, tools and concepts that historically were developed to understand the composer's musical activities." Mine Doğantan-Dack, "Recording the performer's voice," in *Recorded Music: Philosophical and Critical Reflections*, ed. Mine Doğantan-Dack (London: Middlesex University Press, 2008), 294.

been encouraged to stop working on the *musical* parts of the performance and instead focus on creating a new performance *situation*. However, focusing on the novelty of the performance situation or form of performance while simultaneously reducing the musical content and expression to an automatic, predetermined activity would be entirely contrary to my interests and motivation as a musician. I would argue that precisely focusing on music-making as the primary aim of my research and going through musical processes and reflections leads to results that can be considered artistically original. Therefore, I decided throughout this project to focus on the processes and reflections going into the creation of musical interpretations of Mortensen's music, as with the current level of collective knowledge, understanding and shared experiences of this subject, I believe it will be a valuable contribution to my art field.

At the beginning of my project, I was uncomfortable formulating detailed research questions. While feeling rather awkward about it, I later realised this was not necessarily negative. Although there is good cause to distinguish between 'search' and 'research,'[22] I believe 'search' to be such a fundamental part of artistic practice that artistic research cannot exist without it. When I started the project, my knowledge of the topic wasn't sufficient to formulate precise questions without drastically reducing the areas where answers could be found. Borgdorff argues that *"[t]he requirement that a research study should set out with well-defined questions, topics, or problems is often at odds with the actual course of events in artistic research,"*[23] and following up that *"[t]he erratic nature of creative discovery – of which unsystematic drifting, serendipity, chance inspirations, and clues form an integral part – is such that a methodological justification is not easy to codify. […] Research is more like exploration than following a firm path.*"[24] My project definitively was more like an exploration, and I don't think I could conduct an investigation into this topic in a more orderly and methodical fashion without running the risk of potentially losing many valuable insights.

I have had multiple goals with this project. The main one was artistic: to explore what I perceived as great interpretational potential in Mortensen's piano music and, as an extension to this, to make my interpretations of his complete piano music publicly available, several of the pieces for the first time. Focusing on and documenting my work with exploring the musical dimensions of his compositions, my secondary goal has been to, both through artistic output

[22] See Godfried-Willem Raes, "Experimental Art as Research," in *Artistic Experimentation in Music, An Anthology*, ed. D. Crispin & B. Gilmore (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2014).
[23] Borgdorff, The Conflict of the Faculties, 64.
[24] Ibid., 65-66.

and the reflection text, challenge and nuance what I have perceived as a reductionist and one-dimensional long-lived paradigm of his music. Furthermore, I have had the goal of disseminating and discussing the working methods and processes of a classical performer working with music where performance tradition and the composer's expressed intentions on performance are relatively small parts of the process, necessitating the performer to play an active and creative role in interpretation.

During this project, I have played five main concerts:

Concert 1: September 20th 2016

Finn Mortensen: *Sonatina No 1*, Op. 1

Paul Hindemith: *Sonata No. 2*

Finn Mortensen: *Sonatina No 2*, Op. 2

Alban Berg: *Sonata, Op. 1*

Finn Mortensen: *Sonata, Op. 7*

Concert 2: September 26th 2017

Arnold Schönberg: *Drei Klavierstücke*, Op. 11

Fartein Valen: *Intermezzo*, Op. 36

Finn Mortensen: *Fantasy and Fugue*, Op. 13

Finn Mortensen: *Tolv små tolvtonestykker for barn/ Nocturne*, Op. 22

Finn Mortensen: *Piano piece*, Op. 28

Anton Webern: *Variationen*, Op. 27

Pierre Boulez: *Douze Notations*

Concert 3: April 23rd 2018

André Boucourechliev: *Archipel I* (two versions)

With: Håkon Austbø, piano, Jennifer Torrence and Hans Petter Vabog, percussion

Concert 4: October 9th 2018

Finn Mortensen: *Sonata No. 2*, Op. 47

Pierre Boulez: *Troisième Sonate*

Concert 5: November 13th 2018

Finn Mortensen: *Sonate für zwei Klaviere*, Op. 26 (Three versions)

With: Sanae Yoshida, piano

Documentation recordings done in connection with these concerts can be found on my "Other Project Recordings"-page on Research Catalogue: https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/778684/2124386.

My artistic results: recordings of Finn Mortensen's complete piano music, Pierre Boulez's *Troisième Sonate*, and live recordings of André Boucourechliev's *Archipel I*, can be found here: https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/778684/2088394

Mortensen about His Own Music and Performance of It.

Many of the great modernist composers were also prolific writers about music. Paul Hindemith, Arnold Schönberg, Pierre Boulez, Igor Stravinsky, and John Cage are only a few of the significant twentieth-century composers who stood at the forefront of public debate on musical aesthetics, philosophy, technique and frequently their own music and its place in history. As such, the composers themselves set the premises for the discourse about and the understanding and performance of their music.

Standing in the middle of such a tradition and being a lifelong writer and teacher himself, it is surprising how little Mortensen said about his own music and its performance. Having read through numerous of his hundreds of concert reviews, newspaper articles and interviews, I think that he kept his public voice on most topics in an objective and distanced tone. Moreover, Mortensen seemed hesitant to talk about his own music. According to Synne Skouen, he almost lived by the principle not to be an ambassador of his own music,[25] and Yngve Slettholm described how Mortensen was unwilling and needed convincing and persuasion to lecture on his music in his composition classes.[26]

Nesheim notes that when Mortensen had to say something about his music, he always did so in purely technical terms, talking about form principles and row technique, but never mentioned inspiration, musical expression or aesthetics.[27] The following paragraph from the composer's program notes from the world premiere of *Fantasy and Fugue* is a good illustration of the tone he usually kept:

> *"The composition is based on a free use of the twelve-tone technique; the fantasy develops from ppp to fff, then returns to ppp again. A short transition leads us into the fugue, where the subject, after it has been performed in its original form, comes in inversion, retrograde and retrograde inversion. The fugue is finally dissolved into pointillism."*[28]

[25] Synne Skouen, "På Uriaspost," in *Mortensen 60 - Festskrift til Finn Mortensen på 60-årsdagen 6. januar 1982* (Oslo: J. W. Cappelens forlag AS, 1982), 7-8.
[26] Yngve Slettholm, "En langsom eksplosjon," in *Mortensen 60 - Festskrift til Finn Mortensen på 60-årsdagen 6. januar 1982* (Oslo: J. W. Cappelens forlag AS, 1982), 69.
[27] Nesheim, "Modernismens døråpner i Norge," 5.
[28] «Komposisjonen er basert på fri utnyttelse av tolvtoneteknikken, Fantasien utvikler seg fra ppp til fff, for deretter å gå tilbake til ppp igjen. En kort overledning fører oss inn i fugen, hvor temaet etterat det er gjennomført i sin opprinnelige form, kommer i omvending, kreps (temaet spilt baklengs) og omvending av kreps. Fugen løses til slutt opp i en punktuell sats.» Finn Mortensen in Ibid., 214.

Any attempts to find the composer's view on the performance of his works are no more fruitful. Of the three people I have talked to who have performed his music with the composer present,[29] none seems to have gotten any other feedback than him showing gratitude for performing his music. Furthermore, despite having written more than 300 concert reviews, he never seemed to have reviewed a concert where his own music was performed. Nor has he published any other text discussing the performance of his music.

Elef Nesheim told me he once had a conversation with the composer where Mortensen stated that above everything else, *'character'* was the most important thing when performing his music,[30] and he seems to have preferred performers with a strong and individual artistic expression. In private company, he is said to have expressed a distaste for some of the dry, mechanical performances his music would sometimes be subjected to, although publicly, he would never make a negative statement about someone promoting his music or modern music in general.

It was the individualistic artistic qualities he, uncommonly enthusiastically, praised in a review he wrote of a solo recital with Håkon Austbø:

> *"Håkon Austbø is a rare talent with a hyper-individual way of playing, a way of playing that is always interesting. […] This way of playing, to always find new gateways to the well-known repertoire, is what characterises our young piano artist. This was not least obvious in Schumann's Kreisleriana, Op. 16, which was wonderfully unconventionally played, with sudden gestures and unexpected formulations, something that under Austbø's hands seemed fully convincing. […] Valen is usually played somewhat carefully and academically. Not so this time. Håkon Austbø showed us the composer from a new and probably plausible angle. It seemed very refreshing."*[31]

[29] These are: my supervisor Håkon Austbø, who played the Sonata, Op. 7, the flutist Vidar Austvik, who performed the Sonata for Flute solo, Op. 6, and Anne Eline Riisnæs, who premiered Sonata No. 2, Op. 47 (conversation September 7th 2018).

[30] Conversation October 5th 2018

[31] «Håkon Austbø er en sjelden begavelse med et hyperindividuelt spillesett, et spillesett sin interesserer hele tiden. […] Denne måten å spille på, dette alltid å finne nye innfallsporter til velkjent stoff, er det som kjennetegner vår unge klaverkunstner. Dette merket en seg ikke minst i Schumanns Kreisleriana, Op. 16, som ble herlig ukonvensjonelt spilt, med brå kast og uventede formuleringer, noe som imidlertid under Austbøs hender virket fullt overbevisende. […] Valen pleier å bli spilt noe forsiktig og akademisk. Ikke slik denne gangen. Håkon Austbø viste oss komponisten fra en ny og sikkert plausibel vinkel. Det virket meget forfriskende.» Finn Mortensen, "Håkon Austbø - en stor kunstner," *Dagbladet* n.d..

The enthusiasm he displays for Austbø's personal and unpredictable interpretations makes it clear that this is something he values in performance. Therefore, it seems plausible that the composer had these qualities in mind when he, some years later, expressed a desire for Austbø to perform his *Piano Sonata*, Op. 7.

Mortensen seems to have been a composer who highly valued the intuition and individual musicality of the performer. On several occasions, he made revisions, in many cases drastic ones, to his works on the performer's requests. For example, Anne Eline Riisnæs told me how Mortensen, on her request, made several drastic cuts to *Sonata No. 2*, Op. 47,[32] [33] and added a crescendo in bar four. The composer giving the Kontarsky brothers permission to perform the sonata for two pianos with half its duration,[34] as well as statements from Erika Haase on her work with the composer, show his willingness to consider the performer's opinions as valuable feedback when composing, although as Erika Haase's statement demonstrates, he also had clear opinions:

> *"I was allowed to come with suggestions. He often agreed: sometimes he objected, and then he could have problems setting his objections into words. The most important for him was to cultivate and intensify feelings that at the same time should appear with crystal clear sharpness: to compose was for him an eternal struggle to find his real self."*[35]

It also seems Mortensen often considered specific qualities of the intended performer when composing. His third piano sonata, intended for Kjell Bækkelund, for instance, existing only as a written sketch, was meant to have: *"Style: Harsh twelve-tone with all kinds of technical finesses, clusters, inside the piano etc. […] Rapidly changing in character and tempo, brilliant, driving like Kjell's play."*[36] It is also interesting to reflect upon how much of the vast differences in style and expression between his *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra* Op. 25 and his *Fantasy*

[32] In conversation September 7th 2018

[33] The section starting in bar 2 on page 6, being cut with more than half, from nine to four row-statements, and the waltz on page 13, where the original manuscript indicates that the section is to be repeated for exactly 90 seconds before abruptly moving on, has been changed to a normal repetition sign, making it less than a third of its original duration.

[34] Nesheim, *Alltid på leting*, 201.

[35] «Jeg fikk også lov å komme med forslag. Ofte var han enig: enkelte ganger protesterte han likevel, og da kunne han ha vanskeligheter med å sette ord på sine innvendinger. Det vesentlige for ham var å rendyrke og intensivere følelser som samtidig skulle framstå med krystallklar skarphet: å komponere var for ham en evig kamp for å finne fram til sitt egentlige jeg». Erika Haase in ibid., 194.

[36] «Stil: krass tolvtone med allehånde tekniske finesser, cluster, inne i klaveret osv. […] Raskt skiftende i karakter og tempo, glitrende, drivende som Kjells spill.» Finn Mortensen in Nesheim, "Modernismens døråpner i Norge," 406.

for Piano and Orchestra Op. 27, written only a few years apart, depend on him considering the specific personality of the intended performers, Kjell Bækkelund and Erika Haase respectively.

Following one of the presentations I held during my project, I was confronted with the idea that it should be my only concern as a performer and researcher to get closer to the 'right' way of performing Finn Mortensen's music, something that could subsequently be taught as *truth*, *authentic*, or *authoritative*. However, even for those musicians aiming for such an approach to performance, arriving there would prove particularly futile in the case of Mortensen's music. Not only is there minimal performance history and nothing that comes close to being called a performance practice, but there are very few verifiable comments from the composer about how one can understand or perform his music. Considering how little guidance the composer gave for the performance, it seems to me that aiming for the 'right' way of performing his music would be contrary to the composer's intentions.

During this project, I have instead strived for the opposite and have attempted to work towards interpretations that reflect a Taruskinian approach to authenticity:

> "*It seems to me that the special opportunity, and the special task, of a movement in musical interpretation that aspires to authenticity is to foster an approach to performance that is founded to an unprecedented degree on personal conviction and on individual response to individual pieces. Such an approach will seek to bring to consciousness and thereby to transcend the constraints that are variously imposed by fashion, by conventional training, by historical evidence, and even, or especially, by our intuition."*[37]

Such an approach is, in my mind, not only artistically more interesting, but I think it also has more potential value as research as it aims to disseminate and discuss new approaches to understanding of and experiences with performing this music.

[37] Richard Taruskin, "The Authenticity Movement Can Become a Positivistic Purgatory, Literalistic and Dehumanizing," *Early Music* 12, no. 1 (1984): 10.

Others about Mortensen

Mortensen was throughout his life a polarising figure, and in the void created by the absence of his own views and explanations on his music, other, often less sympathetic opinions have become dominant. As the pioneer of an internationally oriented modernism, he became a symbol of modern music in Norway and, for many, an impersonation of the fundamental evil it represented.

Nesheim writes how absent most kinds of new music were on the concert scenes in Norway.[38] For example, Arnold Schönberg's music was not performed between two early works in the 1920s[39] and his *Violin Concerto* in 1953. The Norwegian music life and audiences were more or less unaware of most of the international musical development during the first half of the twentieth century. They were, therefore, ill-equipped to deal with the new aesthetics, techniques and expressive extremities Mortensen's music introduced.

Nesheim writes in his dissertation that there were "[…] *multiple examples of music critics struggling to accept the quality of the compositions because they, based on the classic-romantic composition tradition, have been unable to recognise the models of construction."*[40] Moreover, the unusual melodies, sonorities, gestures, and lack of predictability and repetitions might have made critics and audiences struggle to perceive Mortensen's music's expressive and emotional content. Quotes from a few of the harsher reviews he received illustrate this well:

> *"[…] musically, it seemed completely pointless."*[41]
>
> *"I must admit that I understood nothing of any of it. I'm sure it looked good and interesting on the paper, but it truly sounded bad."*[42]
>
> *"But if you want to be warmed a little bit around the root of the heart, you won't get any sympathy from Finn Mortensen."*[43]

[38] Nesheim, "Modernismens døråpner i Norge," 66.
[39] Verklärte Nacht performed in 1921, Gurrelieder in 1926. Ibid., 85.
[40] «Vi skal i framstillingen møte flere eksempler på musikkritikere som i sine vurderinger har hatt problemer med å akseptere komposisjonenes kvalitet, fordi de på grunnlag av [d]en klassisk-romantiske komposisjonstradisjonen ikke kunne gjenkjenne konstruksjonsmodellene.» Ibid. 23-24
[41] «[…] musikalsk virket det totalt hensiktsløst.» H.O., *Bergens Arbeiderblad* June 10th 1960.
[42] «Jeg må åpent innrømme at jeg ikke skjønte det grann av det hele. Det tok seg sikkert bra og interessant ut på papiret, men sannelig låt det ille.» , *Bergens Arbeiderblad* March 1st 1957.
[43] «Men ønsker man å bli varmet en smule om hjerteroten møter man ingen medfølelse hos Finn Mortensen -.» Conrad Baden, "Lille Abonnement," *Vårt Land* October 6th 1962.

"For me, the atonal system stands as a highly impersonal way of expression which doesn't have room for the more human emotions and impulses."[44]

"They [Mortensen's chamber music works] were *to a degree marked by a somewhat dry and theoretical handicraft. Hindemith appears to be his idol."*[45]

"It sounded like an applied instruction manual."[46]

"The whole thing seemed like a harrowing turmoil, brutal and immensely discouraging."[47]

In particular, the notion that his music was *well-constructed* but severely lacking in *emotional* content seems to be a constant leitmotiv in the contemporary criticism of Mortensen. It has been the root of a long-living paradigmatic judgement of Mortensen's music, which I have experienced is still present today. One of my motivations for doing this project has been that I disagree with this paradigm and would like, from a performer's perspective, to explore and document an opposing view. I believe these and similar reviews reveal a few implicit viewpoints that should be discussed further.

The first point is that '*construction'* and '*emotion'* are in some ways opposites, and if not directly mutually exclusive, at least operating independently of each other. This view was not unique for Mortensen's time but is, in my experience, still present today. It does, however, seem to be a view Mortensen did not necessarily share. For example, in a 1982 article in *Ballade*, he explains the neo-serialist material of his orchestra work HEDDA, Op. 42, consisting of multiple twelve-tone rows, multiple series of dynamics, and series of durations. After long, technical explanations, he ends with the following words:

[44] «For meg står det atonale systemet som en høyst upersonlig uttrykksmåte som ikke gir rom for de mer menneskelige følelser og impulser.» Dag Fluge, "Review," *Bergens Tidende* June 10th 1960.
[45] «De [Mortensens kammermusikkverk] var til dels preget av noe tørt og teoretisk håndverksmessig. Hindemith er vel hans forbilde.» Reimar Riefling, "Ny norsk musikk," April 27th 1954.
[46] «Det lød som en anvendt bruksanvisning», Dag Winding Sørensen, "Filharmonien," *Aftenposten* October 6th 1962.
[47] «Det Hele virket som et opprivende rabalder, brutalt og uhyre forstemmende.» Øistein Sommerfeldt, "Ny musikk," *VG* January 12th 1965.

> *"This way, I claim to have created a musically useful way of composing, which can give the necessary freedom of work, a work that can give breathing space for the diverse emotions."*[48]

This comment seems to indicate that for Mortensen, the constructions were a way to support the creative, musical work, not to replace it. Nesheim claims that *"[h]e was a 'system composer', dependent on basic structures to release his compositional freedom."*[49] However, Mortensen seems to me to rely rarely on any form of compositional system. On those occasions where a form of system can be detected, its construction is neither haphazard nor is it created for any *"mathematical"* or other non-musical reasons. Instead, it seems to be the results of musical, artistic, and emotional reflections, or as Magne Hegdal puts it*: "His musical elements are not pieces in a game, but carriers of a strong emotional expression."*[50]

I believe it is more fruitful to view music as the result of intellect and emotion not being a dichotomy but rather as a result of a synthesis between the two. Arnold Schönberg argued that *"[i]t is not the heart alone which creates all that is beautiful, emotional, pathetic, affectionate, and charming; nor is it the brain alone which is able to produce the well-constructed, the soundly organised, the logical, and the complicated*."[51] The task of exploring how 'heart' and 'brain' work together, support each other, and ultimately blend as one musical expression has become a reflective area of significant importance to me as a musical performer.

It seems to me that the word 'constructed' is sometimes used to describe music that has something about it that is personally unfamiliar to us, something stylistically or aesthetically not immediately understandable and therefore difficult to relate to emotionally the same way as more frequently heard music. As a result, 'Construction', which I would argue is heavily present in one way or another in almost all music in the Western tradition, often becomes a negative feature, uniquely for modern music.

The second implicit viewpoint is that the immediately *understandable* or *pleasant* is a relevant or even good measurement of the quality of a composition. The view of Mortensen's friend and

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[48] «På denne måte mener jeg å ha fått i stand en musikalsk anvendelig komposisjonsmåte, som kan gi den fornødne frihet i arbeidet, et arbeid som kan gi pusterom for de forskjellige følelser.» Finn Mortensen, "Om det nyserielle grunnlag for orkesterverket HEDDA op. 42," *Ballade* 2 (1982).

[49] «Han var en «systemkomponist» som var avhengig av grunnleggende strukturer for å kunne slippe løs sin kompositoriske frihet.» Nesheim, "Modernismens døråpner i Norge," 251-2.

[50] «Hans musikalske elementer er ikke brikker i et spill, men bærere av et sterkt emosjonelt uttrykk.» Magne Hegdal, "Konstruktør i følelsenes verden," *Ballade* 2 (1982).

[51] Arnold Schönberg, "Heart and Brain in Music (1946)," in *Heart and Brain in Music*, ed. Leonard Stein (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1975), 75.

colleague, Arne Nordheim, is likely representative of their circle when he states that *"[i]f the art doesn't have an element of research in it if it's only referring to the past, it is second rate."*[52] Mortensen seems to always aim for an expansion and renewal of musical expression, and his musical language had developed far beyond his audiences' immediate recognition and understanding. His, for the time, unusual sounds, dramatic play with extremes and unrecognisable melodic material challenged their, and I think still our, view of what music is or can or should be.

Asbjørn Schaathun put it rather colourfully in a 1988 article, stating that Mortensen's crime was to *"[…] commit the cardinal sin to rape the Norwegian conception that music is something that leaps out of undefiled nature."*[53] However, I think it is also possible to say that Mortensen challenge people's self-sense of musical competence, which often triggered the automatic response of judging the music's quality based on a lack of immediate understanding. As Wittgenstein put it: *"People nowadays think that scientists exist to instruct them, poets, musicians, etc. to give them pleasure. The idea* that these have something to teach them - *that does not occur to them."*[54] For a performer, I think it is vital to approach Mortensen's music with the mindset of trying to discover what it has to teach us and, moreover, aim to develop some of the familiarity the composer felt towards his own music:

> *"But it has never stopped puzzling me that what I write awakens such reactions. For me, it's "familiar", completely natural. I don't think there is anything drastic about what I'm doing […] In a way, I'm always unprepared for the effect my music has."*[55]

It seems that, though many have found his music provoking, that was not his intention. In an article in the newspaper Dagbladet, he elaborates on the struggle of maintaining a personal musical expression:

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[52] «Hvis kunsten ikke har et moment av forskning i seg, hvis den bare refererer fortiden, da er den annenrangs.» Arne Nordheim in Nesheim, "Modernismens døråpner i Norge," 332.

[53] «[…] begikk den kardinalsynd å voldta den norske forestillingen om at musikk er noe som springer ut av ubesudlet natur.» Asbjørn Schaathun, "Finn Mortensen Militant serialist eller følsom bamse? - og hvor tok allting veien," Ballade 2/3 (1988): 37.

[54] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, trans. Peter Winch, Paperback ed., ed. Georg Henrik von Wright (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 36e.

[55] «Men det har aldri sluttet å forundre meg at det jeg skriver vekker slike reaksjoner. For meg er det "familiært", helt naturlig. Jeg synes ikke det er noe drastisk ved det jeg gjør […] På en måte er jeg alltid uforberedt på den virkningen musikken min har. Synne Skouen, "Finn Mortensen - Den standhaftige modernist (Intervju)," *Ballade* 1 (1982).

> *«A collected shrivel of critics appears with sharpened pencils, musicians and audiences perhaps tell him that this isn't real, it's a deranged way of writing music – and this is when the young composer gets his first chock, his honesty is doubted […] His emotional life is exposed to callous scorn, laughter, headshaking […] Is he not strong enough, he will look to fashion and the audience's taste and adapt accordingly. Then he might hear he has finally become true to himself."*[56]

Those who have taken their time to familiarise themselves more with his music seem to have discovered far more than the constructions. Schaathun, in his article, writes about his impressions on starting to listen to *Fantasy and Fugue*: *"It strikes me quickly that these works definitely is not written by a man whose interest is primarily structures and organisation. In the best of his works, there is an unusual, delicate expression. A kind of sped up and vitalised Fartein Valen."*[57] Others have commented on Mortensen's romantic side. His lifelong love for Anton Bruckner is well known[58], and Nesheim writes about *"his fundamental and overriding romantic personality. All his compositions, even the most organised, were inspired by something else, something emotionally personal."*[59]. Øistein Sommerfeldt tells a story of when they sat in Mortensen's room listening to Bach's double-concerto, which made Mortensen so emotional that he had to remove his shirt and tie[60]— tell-tale signs of the passion and emotions driving his relationship with music.

What strikes me when working on his music is how unorganised it is, particularly on a detailed level, from a perspective of predefined organisational parameters. While his works have been called largely '*unanalysable*',[61] at least in explaining them in terms of pre-existing rules, or recurring patterns and systems, they also appear full of meaning, where every note is put there

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[56] «En samlet kritikergarde møter opp med hvessede penner, musikere og publikum kan hende forteller ham at dette ikke er ekte, det er en søkt måte å skrive musikk på - og her får den unge komponist sitt første sjokk, hans ærlighet dras i tvil […] Hans innerste sjelsliv kan bli utsatt for hjerteråhån, flir, hoderysten, […] Er han ikke sterk nok, skjeler han til motene, til publikums smak og innretter seg deretter. Da får han kanskje høre at han endelig er blitt ærlig mot seg selv.» Finn Mortensen, "Om å være komponist," *Dagbladet* November 18th 1965.

[57] «Det slår meg ganske raskt at disse verkene i hvert fall ikke er skrevet av en mann hvis interesse var strukturer og organisering. I de beste av hans verker finnes et eiendommelig, sart uttrykk. En slags oppspeedet og vitalisert Fartein Valen.» Schaathun, "Finn Mortensen Militant serialist eller følsom bamse? - og hvor tok allting veien," 38.

[58] See for example interview with Mortensen: "Norske uroppførelser på Aula-podiet mandag," *VG* April 23rd 1954.

[59] «[…]hans grunnleggende og overskyggende romantiske personlighet. Alle komposisjonene, selv de mest organiserte, ble inspirert av noe annet, noe emosjonelt personlig.» Nesheim, "Modernismens døråpner i Norge," 263.

[60] Øystein Sommerfeldt, "Musikalske demringstimer," in *Mortensen 60 - Festskrift til Finn Mortensen på 60-årsdagen 6. januar 1982* (Oslo: J. W. Cappelens forlag AS, 1982), 17.

[61] Nesheim, "Modernismens døråpner i Norge," 219.

due to intuitive and personal musical reasonings. A case could be made that his development as a composer, from the two sonatinas, via the *Sonata*, Op. 7, and *Fantasy and Fugue*, to the *Sonate für zwei Klaviere*, Op. 26, tells the story of an almost twenty-year-long period of relying less and less on pre-existing constructions and known techniques and more and more on a purely intuitive and personal approach to composing.

The Role of the Performer

> *"The performer, for all his intolerable arrogance, is totally unnecessary except as his interpretations make the music understandable to an audience unfortunate enough not to be able to read it in print."*[62]

Schönberg's statement, while seemingly extreme, represents a common line of thought within Western art music over the last two hundred years. Jeremy Cox writes that *"Western art music, with its strong tradition of transmitting via the notated score, has given rise to the concept of the musical work, once written down and disseminated, as having an autonomous identity to which it is our individual and collective responsibility, as performers, to be faithful."*[63] Musical creation becomes the work of composers solely, leaving performers to be, in Taruskin's paraphrasing *"essentially corrupters—deviants, in fact,"*[64] in as much as all they can add for themselves must represent a departure from the idealised conception of the composer.

The concept of *Werktreue* brings with it numerous ways of externally regulating the performers' work and still has practical implications for how we regard our position as performers and how we work and think about music. Cox notes that *"Werktreue brings with it a set of quasi-ethical imperatives concerning the preparation and execution of a "proper" performance,"*[65] often leading to score-fidelity as the score, in most cases, is the most direct and stable source.[66] While *Werktreue* requires some form of intersubjective consensus, which tends towards faithfulness to the most concrete and objective sources, performance practice, either contemporary or historic, brings its own sets of imperatives and acts as an additional regulatory agent.

In a series of articles in *The New York Times*,[67] Richard Taruskin questions many principles regulating classical music performance. For example, rather than performers being objective recreators, he argues that *"[m]usic has to be imaginatively re-created in order to be retrieved."*[68] He suggests that performers should, in the absence of knowledge of the

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[62] Dika Newlin, Schoenberg Remembered: Diaries and Recollections 1938–76 (New York: Pendragon, 1980), 164.
[63] Cox, "What I say and What I Do," 12.
[64] Richard Taruskin, "Last Thought First," in *Text and Act* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 13.
[65] Cox, "What I say and What I Do," 12.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Collected and published as Richard Taruskin, *Text and Act - Essays on Music and Performance* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).
[68] Taruskin, "On Letting the Music Speak for Itself," 56.

composer's intentions, *"be unafraid to have intentions of their own, and to treat them with comparable respect."*[69] The result is a different kind of performer, one whose aim is not complete faithfulness neither to past performances, the composer's intentions, nor the abstract concept of the *'work'*, but who acts as a co-creator where the value of the performance "*lies not in its unprovable and sometimes improbable historical accuracy, but rather in its creation of a new approach to old repertory."*[70]

Kathleen Coessens argues that a musical score, rather than being something that communicates objective knowledge, is something that *"mediates between radically different senses and dimensions*, rendering in the visual that which can be heard, in the immediate that which is time-dependent. Moreover, there is no iconic relation: the score *does not mimic or resemble the music, it is not a photograph of the music […but rather a] symbolically loaded reduction and radical translation of something very different."* [71] A score, or any symbol in it, having a multiplicity of potential meanings and interpretations, can neither tell the performer what the music is supposed to sound like nor what actions the performers should instigate. It requires a performer's independent, co-creative work to get a resulting sound.

To me, Mortensen's scores seem to be written by someone who fully understood this and embraced it in practice. His music is notated in scores that contain very little performance information on dynamics,[72] tempo changes,[73] balance, timbre, or character.[74] The contrast between the sparse indications in the score and what I perceive as very rich, complex, nuanced, and subtle music leaves a formidable task for performers, and, at the same time, it opens up for a diversity of different possible interpretations.

In connection with the research project *The Reflective Musician*,[75] Håkon Austbø criticises what he experiences as the predominant hierarchy of criteria for judging musical performance. [76] The

[69] Ibid., 57.
[70] Nicholas Cook, "Performing Research: Some Institutional Perspectives," in *Artistic Practice as Research in Music: Theory, Criticism, Practice*, ed. Mine Doğantan-Dack (Oxford: Ashgate, 2015), 15.
[71] Kathleen Coessens, "Interlude I: Exploring Musical Integrity and Experimentation," in *Sound & Score*, ed. W. Brooks & K. Coessens P. de Assis ((Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2013), 61.
[72] Usually just a single main dynamic with no modifications for entire sections, sometimes lasting several pages.
[73] In all his mature works, there is a one single bar ritardando in op. 7 (page 3) and one allargando (page 4).
[74] Even in his second sonata, which is a juxtaposition of opposing styles and expressions, there is only a 'leggiero' on page 3, and a 'dolce' on page 9.
[75] "The Reflective Musician: Interpretation as Co-Creative Process ", 2016, accessed January 28th 2021, https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/86413/86414.
[76] Håkon Austbø, "About quality in musical performance," The Reflective Musician: Interpretation as Co-Creative Process, 2016, accessed January 28th 2021, https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/86413/86414.

excessive focus on more or less objectively measurable criteria, such as playing correct notes and following tradition, at the expense of more subjective criteria like a personal and unique music-making, has, according to Austbø, led to a "*musical life marked by correctness, predictability and lack of originality."*[77] Morten Carlsen and Henrik Holm argue that the art of interpreting music has long been undervalued in music education, displaced by a focus on craftsmanship and technical execution.[78] They say that often within education, *"copying of teachers, recordings or other performers has been allowed to replace a personal expression"*[79] and ask why within musical performance, a copy labelled as authentic is not simply considered a crime as it is in other forms of art.[80]

Instead of the predominant hierarchy, Austbø argues for one that puts personalness and uniqueness[81] on top,[82] thus highlighting the role of the performer as a co-creator rather than a re-creator. The performer's relationship with the composer's intention is one of the most fiercely debated topics within the field, and putting the personal and unique higher than the composer's intentions, as Austbø does, might be close to sacrilege for many. The reasons for Austbø's priorities might not be to assert the irrelevance of the composer's intentions but rather to acknowledge their limitations. The composer's expressed opinions, whether on the music itself or the performance of it, come from a position of great knowledge and understanding and should, therefore, always be taken seriously. However, two problems, in particular, seem to occur when expressing the composer's opinion is made the highest priority of performance.
Firstly, the composer, unless he lived in modern times, and was a great performer himself, has expressed his opinions in an *unmusical* form. While verbal or written comments often can guide the performer's attention towards certain aspects or qualities of the music, they will not give a specific audible result and will still need the performer's personal understanding to have any artistic effect, at which point the lines between the composer's and the performer's intentions becomes blurred.

[77] Ibid.
[78] Henrik Holm & Morten Carlsen, *Å Tolke Musikk* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2017), 13.
[79] «[...] kopiering av lærere, innspillinger eller andre utøvere har fått lov til å erstatte et personlig uttrykk.» Ibid.
[80] Ibid.
[81] The words 'personal' and 'unique' are not necessarily synonymous. Although the concepts frequently occur together and might come from the same processes, a performer can decide to do something new and unique, just to be different, without a personal conviction or there being a personal musical understanding behind it.
[82] Austbø, "About quality in musical performance."

Secondly, the composer's comments will always concern just a fraction of the vast knowledge within multiple musical dimensions required to give a high-level performance, and most of what makes a musical performance is left without explicit comments.

In such circumstances, speculations regarding the composer's intentions are largely futile, running the risk of significantly reducing the performance's potential artistic value through the passivity of the performer. This is particularly limiting when working on a composer like Mortensen, who seemingly has gone to great lengths not to express his opinions on either his music or the performance of it and instead left the interpretation up to the performer.

Austbø's research question of *"[w]hat kind of performing knowledge might lead to specific, unique interpretations"*[83] insinuates that the performer's role as a co-creator is more than a de-facto ontological realisation. Instead, it is a change in the role that raises multiple questions concerning what knowledge, in the widest of definitions, we seek as performers and how we approach and apply this knowledge, and ultimately questions how we are trained to think about and work with music.

Great, creative artists exist today, as they always have, within Western classical music performance today and can legitimately claim to have a significant place in the tradition. However, I have often felt considerable pressure for conformity, both from the art field and from the Norwegian artistic research community, regarding how specific music is supposed to be performed and, more importantly, what kind of knowledge and which working processes can be permitted to get to the correct result. The pressure to obey a stereotypical image can quickly become reflected in how we think about and work with music, what kind of information we seek, and how we approach it. Therefore, instead of researching to find new or more precise means of regulating the performance of Mortensen's music, I have aimed for an interpretation created at the meeting point between acquired knowledge and personal, artistic intuition.

Kathleen Coessens views the artistic performance as the observable manifestation of a process of interaction between five complexly interwoven dimensions: embodied artistic know-how, personal knowledge, cultural-semiotic codes, ecological environment, and interactivity.[84]

[83] Håkon Austbø, "Architecture of a project," The Reflective Musician: Interpretation as Co-Creative Process, 2016, accessed January 28th 2021, https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/86413/86414.
[84] Coessens, "The Agile Musical Mind," 340.

These dimensions, and the constant interaction between them, make up what Coessens calls the *"web of artistic practice"* and act as *"fertilisers of creative outcome*"[85] and further argues that *"[t]he web is homologous but not homogenous, it can be alike but never the same for different musicians."*[86]

I think in the meeting point between this five-dimensional personal artistic web and the *music*, in the broadest possible definition of the word, including the score, the composer's comments, any documented formal and informal analyses of the score and the sound, extramusical connotations, historical context, formal and informal analysis of score and sound, performance practice, and performance history, is where personal and unique interpretations are born. I believe a wide variety of research into external knowledge is crucial for a creative process as long as the knowledge is approached to inform and inspire rather than to regulate. Approach external sources can quickly become finding solutions, to use them as some form of external authority to guide our interpretation, whether in the form of recordings, writings by or about the composer, generic rules of performance practice, or other forms of knowledge. However, instead of being used to expand one's own perspective and deepen one's personal understanding of the music, such sources can quickly form an externally based measurement of quality, something outside and independent of the particular performer. I often find, at least in my own practice, that this tends to lead to interpretations that are not only predictable but also lack a sense of meaning and is marked by an impersonal expression and an emotional detachment.

Seeing the act of musical interpretation in light of Coessen's web has some consequences. Firstly, rather than being an automatic act of 'translating' a score into sound, musical interpretation depends on the interconnectivity of multiple factors, many of which are personal and unique to each interpreter. I find it more relevant to treat musical interpretation as a creative artistic process rather than a learned automatic skill, although the process does involve and require the preexistence, and indeed constant honing, of multiple, many-faceted skills.

Secondly, a creative artistic process has a chaotic, unpredictable nature dependent on multiple, and often implicit and tacit, dimensions. It is, therefore, not bound to follow any recognisable logic. It can neither be planned as a simple input-output process nor traced as such after the fact. Instead, it will take unexpected trajectories leading to both conscious and subconscious

[85] Ibid., 341.
[86] Ibid.

reflection and reasoning, with too unpredictable and unexplainable outcomes, often even to the artist himself.

And thirdly, at least for me, the artistic process is never finished but is in constant, dynamic development, making a performance or recording just a symptom of the current state of the process rather than a final end-product or conclusion.

I believe interpreting a piece of music cannot be understood as a process of making decisions but rather a constant strive for a deeper, more meaningful, and more comprehensive perception of the music. All the nuances one does as a performer, whether they are slight variations in tempo, dynamics, gesture and tone colour, connecting notes, shaping phrases and larger sections, in short, all aspects that make up a musical interpretation, are rooted not so much in a conscious decision to shape it this or that way, or indeed the instigation of concrete actions based on logical argumentation. They all depend on too many complexly intertwined dimensions to be conceived this way, not to mention physically expressed through the instrument.

A performance is more a manifestation of how the performer auditorily, emotionally, and physically experiences the music. There are far too many aspects of performances that I experienced as good, important, or meaningful that can only come from the performer's personal connection with the music. This connection draws on the assimilation of numerous, many-faceted external sources, which are filtered and reshaped through the performer's artistic web.

Though relying largely on subconscious decisions, such an interpretation process is far from automatic but depends on a wide variety of conscious work. Rather than limiting the field where I search for knowledge, the aim for a more personal interpretational practice has expanded it. It means that I seek knowledge about performance practice and the composer but also knowledge within musicology, work analysis, and theory, which I frequently hear I should not be interested in but that on numerous occasions have given me insights I would not otherwise have gotten. These insights have gradually changed my understanding and perception of the music and thus influenced my performance.

Interpreting music is, in all its ambiguity, also an oddly detailed and specific art. It requires a very subtle and multi-dimensional musical understanding and perception on a note-to-note basis, a level of detail that no score could come close to matching, even with the additional

information of all possible external sources. This external knowledge can, however, act as a guide in our seeking process. It can help us look for meaning and connections, a starting point for more specific and personal discoveries. I think this meeting point between acquired knowledge and personal, artistic intuition, through long-term experimental and reflective processes, could eventually lead to personal and unique performances.

The Performer as an Analyst

Since I, in my original project description,[87] wrote that *analysis* would form part of my methodology for this project, I will elaborate on my ideas on analysis and why I think it can be an indispensable tool in bridging the gap between the score and performance.

When I finished my master's degree in music performance at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in 2007, I got the opportunity to continue my education at the University of Stavanger, studying Olivier Messiaen's large piano-cycle *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jèsus* with Håkon Austbø. Austbø shared with me not only first-hand knowledge acquired through his studies with Yvonne Loriod[88] and Messiaen himself and a lifetime of subsequent experience working with and performing this music, but he also shared with me how he had used analytical perspectives on this music and how they can lead to a deeper understanding of the performative and interpretational issues.

The gap between theory and practice seems unusually small in Messiaen's music. The entirety of his idiosyncratic musical language and compositional technique is shaped around his personal aesthetics and visions. Whether it is colours, religious symbolism, profound conceptions of a pantheistic cosmology, or the nature of time, it is not just hinted at in texts accompanying the pieces but also manifested in the musical structure itself. Inspiration and technique are, as it were, two sides of the same thing, and approaching one without a deep understanding of the other gradually seemed more and more futile to me.

In Messiaen's foreword to his *Quatuor pour la fin du Temps*, he writes that the performers: *"[…] should read the 'comments' and the 'little theory' first. But they should not preoccupy themselves with this during performance: it's sufficient to play the text, the notes, and the exact values, to do the indicated nuances well."*[89] I experienced, however, that any attempt at approaching Messiaen's music in musically meaningful ways required far deeper and more personal processes where just reading through Messiaen's theoretical writings can give you a *starting point*, but probably not more.

[87] Kristian Evjen, "Prosjektbeskrivelse," (2015).
[88] Messiaens wife, and dedicatee and first performer of virtually all his piano music
[89] « Qu'ils lisent tout d'abord les "Commentaires" et la "Petite théorie" ci-dessus. Mais ils n'ont pas à a préoccuper de tout cela pour l'exécution : il leur suffit de jouer le texte, les notes et les valeurs exactes, de bien faire les nuances indiquées. » Olivier Messiaen, "Quatuor pour la Fin du Temps," (Paris: Durand, 1942), iv.

When more personal enquiries have been made into Messiaen's rhythmical and tonal language, his idiosyncratic religious visions, and his ornithology, and how all of this has left an imprint in the musical sound, it might be possible just to play « *le texte, les notes et les valeurs exactes, de bien faire les nuances indiquées.* » It seems to me, however, that the performer would have a very different understanding, perception and experience of the music and that the resulting performance would be different from a pure performance of the score without this understanding, however carefully and accurately it is executed.

I believe that my work on Messiaen's music has had a fundamental impact on my subsequent artistic practice and my approach to music in general and has opened my eyes to analysis, done right, as a powerful and important performative tool.

John Rink coined the term 'performer's analysis' to discuss how performers engage with music in their practice and how it might differ from theoretical analysis.[90] Rink points out that *"[a]ll performance […] requires analytical decisions of some sort, if 'analysis' is regarded not as rigorous dissection of the music according to theoretical systems but simply as considered study of the score with particular attention to contextual functions and means of projecting them."*[91] It is indeed difficult to imagine any performer on a reasonable level performing any of the classical masters without understanding the shaping forces of harmony and counterpoint and how they relate to larger formal constructions and motivic and melodic content with an understanding of underlying hierarchical considerations. Many aspects of performance can be traced back to 'analysis' of some kind, but often, however, both the 'analysis' and the performative decisions resulting from it are done on a subconscious and intuitive level, referred to by Rink as *'informed intuition'*.

While informed intuition is very valuable and critical to any performance, I still find it insufficient in the context of my project. Rink points out that *"[t]his term ['informed intuition'] acknowledges that musicality is probably not innate (although the importance of talent should not be underestimated) but arises through imitation."*[92] Approaching a performance of the classical repertoire with 'informed intuition' requires a familiarity built over years of one-to-one tutoring where a teacher disseminates, explains and demonstrates the intricacies of this music in great detail, as well as listening for hours after hours of a wide variety of recordings

[90] John Rink, "Review: Wallace Berry: Musical Structure and Performance," *Music Analysis* 9, No. 3 (1990).
[91] Ibid., 323.
[92] Ibid., 324.

of great performers. It also relies on years of theoretical study of the fundamental aspects of this music, such as harmony, counterpoint, form, and historical context, in addition to an aesthetically relevant instrumental approach. It takes decades of work on similar or related music to be able to approach a new piece of music with 'informed intuition'.

A pianist's practical and theoretical education is heavily focused on work with the standard repertoire. This work profoundly influences how we approach and think about music. It builds an intuition concerning the specifics of this music and aesthetic preferences and technical instrumental solutions to deal with these specifics. I find performing music by Mortensen, Schönberg, Webern, Boulez, Messiaen or any other modern masters with this foundation *alone* can lead to a somewhat unsatisfactory result. As Lydia Goehr puts it, *"[t]his would be more like persons who, entering into a foreign cultural context, make use of their native linguistic or social apparatus in order to acquire what is for them a sufficient grasp of unfamiliar customs."*[93] When one is used to working with understandable harmonic progressions, recognisable motives, cantabile melodies, a clear hierarchy between components, recognisable form, and well-established performance practice, one can easily get lost when playing music that doesn't have any of these, at least in a form immediately recognisable.

In his conversations with Célestin Deliège, Pierre Boulez talks about the concept of *'stupid'* notes, a note that is *"performed divorced from the context[… a note whose] constituent parts the performer doesn't understand […and is therefore] incapable of the concentration necessary to make the note interesting."*[94] I see Boulez's concept of 'stupid notes' as an explanation of some of the differences I perceived between the two performative approaches to Messiaen mentioned earlier. While 'stupid' performances might appear entirely *correct* in every way, I find that a lack of intentionality can often be detected, which gives me a feeling of pointlessness, as if the performance is detached from the performer's mind. Particularly vulnerable are not notes but rest and transitions, which fill the space between phrases, melodies, and sections. I believe that in my project, the performance of many of the pieces, for example, Boulez's *Troisième Sonate* and Webern's *Variationen,* Op. 27, in addition to many of Mortensen's pieces, relies more than average on the performer's understanding of rests. In my experience, the filling of such spaces with meaningful musical content is something that cannot be learned from tradition or by copying others, it has to come from the performer's deep,

[93] Lydia Goehr, "Being True to the Work," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 47, no. 1 (1989): 61.
[94] Pierre Boulez, *Conversations with Célestin Deliège* (London: Eulenburg Books, 1976), 79.

personal understanding of the music, and I find analysis to be a necessary tool in developing that.

In a conversation with Daniel Barenboim, Boulez said that in modern music, *"[y]ou have to clarify the situation much more than before. Because it is certainly less obvious, […]what is important, what is less important. In the tonal language, in the scores which are very well known, this kind of hierarchy between the components is very clear. […] The difference between Mahler and Berg, for instance, that Berg -, the chords are unknown, so you have to do with objects, you have to identify each time."*[95] I often find that approaching unknown music *solely* by intuition might lead to stereotypical interpretations based more on what is *not* there than what *is* there. Intuition might, in such cases, take the forms of *"thoroughly domesticated beasts, trained to run along narrow paths by long years of unconscious conditioning, endowed with vast reserves of cliche, naive posture, and non-sense. If you are a trained musician, what you will find if you scratch your intuition will be the unexamined mainstream, your most ingrained responses, treacherously masquerading as imagination."*[96]

In his conversation with Barenboim, Boulez explains the first meeting with unknown music as if the music seemingly *"[…] has no expression, it's a vocabulary which has no meaning, of course, because you don't know the language, you don't know what the core of the expression of this music is, therefore you say it does not mean anything to me."*[97] I have, during my practice, experienced that learning the musical language is not only a matter of passive exposure. To approach modernism not only in a general stylistic way but also in a way that deals with the idiosyncrasies of specific works, deeper and more specific working processes are needed.

In an interview with David Walters, Boulez talks about three levels of musical understanding:

> *"[…] there is an approach when you don't know anything, and there is an approach where you know practically how the work is constructed, how it is made, and if you go deeper to the real source then you end up once more without an explanation. Very often people will go from the very beginning to the central point, but they do not go further and they say that's only mathematical because they are not making the last step which*

[95] Pierre Boulez, *Barenboim Im Gespräch mit Pierre Boulez über zeitgenössische Musik* Accessed November 22nd 2016, YouTube, 2000.
[96] Taruskin, "The Authenticity Movement," 10.
[97] Boulez, Barenboim im Gespräch mit Pierre Boulez über zeitgenössische Musik.

is the most important: the how. The how you cannot discover; you can give some intuitive reasons, but you cannot give any explanation any more."[98]

Here, Boulez touches upon some essential points about 'performer's analysis' versus 'theorist's analysis'. I believe the existence of a level of musical knowledge that lies beyond notation, theoretical models or our abilities of verbal explanations is fundamental to performer's analysis because it is fundamental to music performance. In short, performer's analysis is not an analysis of the notation but rather an analysis of the musical consequences of it. While theoretical analysis is often focused on the meaning of music as notation, the performer focuses on the meaning of music as sound, as forces. The analysis is not aimed towards, and therefore not restricted by, a verbal or model-based explanation but rather an expansion of the performer's personal musical perception.

Robert S. Hatten notes how 'separation' characterises the theorist's analytical approach to music. Musical elements such as *"pitch inventories, scales, chords, rhythmic units, etc."* are *"treated as separate meaningful units, not only in the historical theories of music but also in treaties or manuals devoted to performance practice."*[99] In contrast, he underlines the importance of *"synthesis through which various musical elements combine into an emergent entity (not predictable as merely the sum of its parts."*[100]

Boulez expresses similar opinions and elaborates:

"*It is no use analysis studying [sic] the different 'aspects' of the sound in different lights; it must, from within the work, address the various components which combine into the end product. It would be as well to explain this term 'components', which is open to misunderstanding; we should not understand it as referring to isolated factors (rhythm, melody, harmony) which are added up in a kind of monstrous fantasy arithmetic; rather it means vectorial components which, when added together vectorially, give a resultant whose direction is different, although defined by the components".*[101]

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[98] David Walters, "Artistic Orientations, Aesthetic Concepts and the Limits of Explanation: An Interview with Pierre Boulez," in *Contemporary Music - Theoretical and Philosophical Perspectives*, ed. Max Paddison/ Irène Deliège (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 311.

[99] Robert S. Hatten, *Interpreting Musical Gestures, Topics and Tropes* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004), 2.

[100] Ibid.

[101] Pierre Boulez in Peter O'Hagan, "Pierre Boulez "Sonate, que me veux-tu?" An investigation of the manuscript sources in relation to the third sonata" (PhD Surrey, 1997), 85.

And I think this is a crucial point: synthesis challenges the understanding that musical components have a fixed and universal meaning and instead says that their context creates the meaning, how the components work together and interact, and how this is experienced.

The great pianist Alfred Brendel writes in his book *Music Sounded Out* that *"[he feels] that few analytical insights have a direct bearing on performance, and that analysis should be the outcome of an intimate familiarity with the piece rather than an input of established concepts."*[102] The more I have worked with analysis and performance, the less sense makes the idea of a direct link between theoretical analysis and performance. I cannot remember many occasions where theoretical analysis directly led to conscious performative decisions. Much more important is the performer's analysis process within the practical work with the music.

While the performer's analysis, as I understand it, is embedded in artistic practice, the starting point of the analysis can be purely theoretical. I have often experienced that a theoretical analysis, whether it was motivic, harmonic, contrapuntal, formal, dodecaphonic, or any other, has created a starting point for a musical exploration I could not predict into topics I was not previously aware of. While they started as purely theoretical concepts, they led to discoveries of new musical insights with expressive and emotional impacts on my performance. One such case is my dodecaphonic analysis of *Sonata No. 2*, Op. 47, elaborated on in Chapter 7. While starting as a purely automated identification of rows and transformation, it ultimately led to reflections about the performer's role in creating style, character, and continuity versus contrast in large sections of the sonata.

While I often find theoretical analysis useful in helping me see patterns, systems and relations that could otherwise go unnoticed or seem irrelevant or uninteresting, it's bearing on performance is rarely *direct*. For it to have performative consequences, I need the performer's analysis process of exploring, finding or creating the musical meaning. However, in Mortensen's music, which has sometimes been referred to as "*unanalysable*,"[103] the challenge is to figure out what to analyse and how to analyse it. Indeed, much of this project has been trying to find new ways to interact with the music and hear and analyse it.

[102] Alfred Brendel, Music sounded out : essays, lectures, interviews, afterthoughts (New York: The Noonday Press, 1992), 249.
[103] Nesheim, "Modernismens døråpner i Norge," 219.

Nicholas Cook points towards something important when he says that *"[…] on one hand we don't have to be as sweeping about the usefulness of theorist's analysis to performers as Brendel is, while on the other we can expect that-for performers who do find it useful-its application will be to a greater degree individualistic, idiosyncratic, and contingent."*[104] There seems to be a widely held belief that musical analysis will lead to predictable, stereotypical interpretations without room for individuality and creativity. I have, however, often found that the opposite is the case. I have experienced that recordings of a piece that appeared exemplary, maybe even authoritative, before my working process, and at some point must have had a profound impact on my understanding of the work later have appeared unrecognisable. My work to gain my own understanding had led me in different directions, and the recordings, rather than representing the truth about the work, become one particular of many possible truths. Used as a tool in creating as many areas of contact as possible in the meeting between a performer and the music, I find analysis on a deep level to be as individual and personal as music-making itself and can thus form an integral part of the way to an independent, original artistic result.

I have often felt the need to create a certain distance from the physicality of playing my instrument, a kind of abstraction to get away from the usual patterns, the over-trained solutions of how the piano is supposed to be played and how it is supposed to sound. To build what one can call, in Heinrich Neuhaus' words, *"[t]he artistic image of a musical composition"*[105] requires a distance to free oneself from generic habits and respond to the specific of the unique situation. For Taruskin, the use of period instruments can have such an effect. He argues that the idea that *"'Baroque instruments, played in an appropriate manner, have a greater expressive range than their modern equivalents' is the purest gabble. [… the effect is] "primarily a heuristic benefit to the player, and only secondarily an aesthetic benefit to the listener, […and the] unfamiliarity of the instrument forces mind, hand and ear out of their familiar routines, and into more direct confrontation with the music."*[106] For me, analysis serves much the same function. It helps me see beyond the obvious and the common and can lead me to imagine things I have not heard before. Whether it is Schönberg's new and, at the time, highly unusual, ways of writing for the piano, Boulez' and Messiaen's wide variety of new sonorities,

[104] Nicholas Cook, *Beyond the Score: Music as Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 48.
[105] Heinrich Neuhaus, *The Art of Piano Playing* (London: Kahn & Averill, 1973), 7.
[106] Taruskin, "The Authenticity Movement," 11. For a definition of *"gabble"*, see Ibid. 9.

not to mention Messiaen’s birdsong, or indeed the piano works of Mortensen, they all require flexibility in sonority and ability to rethink how the instrument can sound.

As I understand it, analysis does not aim to reach a definitive conclusion or arrive at an ideal interpretation. It is an ongoing part of an interpretation process constantly evolving through the performer gaining new insights and evolving their practice. The main goal of analysis should not be to facilitate the making of interpretive choices but to enhance the performer's perception of the music. I think this has a much more profound influence on the performance, leading to a more personal interpretation and more intensity and presence in performance.

Chapter 2 – *Sonata*, Op. 7, and Mortensen's Tonal Language

Throughout the project, I felt a growing unease with the atonal paradigm Mortensen has been connected to and the implications commonly associated with it. As it is a negative term, denoting the absence of something, it appeared counterproductive for further musical discovery. At the same time, concepts commonly associated with atonality, such as the absence of a tonal centre and a non-hierarchical organisation of equal and independent tones, seemed increasingly contrary to my experience of the music. The term 'atonal' used in connection with Mortensen's music might be more a result of the limitations experienced with attempts to approach his tonal procedures with the tonal theory of the common-practice period than an accurate depiction of his music.

Inspired by Paul Hindemith's view of tonality as a perceptible musical force rather than a specific theory, I started looking for ways of exploring the tonal coherence in Mortensen's music. These processes resulted in new insights into the expressive qualities of his music, insights I find essential for its performance. Moreover, these insights challenge some beliefs about Mortensen's music as theoretical abstractions and open up one possibility of approaching his music through more personal, perceptional methods.

Upon starting conscious investigations into my experiences with the tonal aspects of Mortensen's music, I realised that it is guided by a strong sense of tonal hierarchy, where all notes serve a function defined by their relations with each other and their relations to a, often implicit, central tone. The tonal hierarchy gives the music a continuous, subtle fluctuation in the degree of tension and colour variations.

Mortensen's tonal hierarchy is, however, different from traditional conceptions of tonality. Firstly, it is focused around a horizontal rather than a vertical axis, and central tones are defined by a voice-leading rather than a harmonic perspective. Secondly, it is dominated by extreme mobility of the central tones, which can be defined at any given point but are often left immediately, resulting in a constant and rapid jumping from one central tone to another. Finally, because voices usually meet in dissonances, each voice can have its own central tone, resulting in multiple, simultaneous tonalities. Therefore, the tonality in Mortensen's music has a local expressive function rather than a large-scale structural one.

Taking the opening of the Fugue from *Sonata*, Op. 7, as a starting point for investigating Mortensen's tonal language, I demonstrate patterns in cadential voice-leading and modes. I use them to draw parallels to his earlier, neo-classical, and later modernist works, tracing similarities in tonal handling across otherwise widely differing aesthetic expressions. I also show parallels in the tonal procedures of Mortensen's music and the music of some of his modernist predecessors, Fartein Valen and Arnold Schönberg.

The performative results of having a tonal analysis of Mortensen's music are, however, not direct and straightforward, and the analysis does not produce a kind of knowledge that leads to performative decisions on a conscious level. Instead, the potential value of analysing his tonal language comes from the gradual change and enrichment of perception resulting from the practical, auditive analytical process itself, and its effect on performance is indirect and largely subconscious.

Introduction about tonality and atonality

The current understanding of the music of Finn Mortensen is closely linked to the concept of atonality, and his development towards musical maturity is usually explained as a gradual process moving from tonality towards atonality. However, using the term *atonal* to describe Mortensen's music is not unproblematic. Firstly, atonality is a negative term that leads to defining musical content based on the absence of something. And secondly, it is a term that has, together with its counterpart *tonality*, avoided concrete and uncontested definitions, making it unclear what exactly is absent. Using the term can quickly become a way of saying there is little or nothing of musical interest or consequence to be discovered about how the tones are organised in this music. What kind of meaningful musical relationships between notes can be perceived in Mortensen's music and, in particular, how performers can relate to these has not been a topic in the literature.

Arnold Schönberg argues that the term atonal originated in an attempt to pass judgement on the inferiority of modern music compared to that of the past:

> *"Moreover the expression, atonal, cannot be taken seriously as an expression, since that was not how it first came about; a journalist derived it by analogy from* amusisch*, as a means of overaggressive characterization - such, at least, was the context in which I first noticed it. That could also explain why it is an exaggeration, and why it is inexact; journalism needs gesticulating expressions, which do not strike dead-center, because it must be able to withdraw everything next day; all these things said 'without obligation!'. But expressions in aesthetics must sit better, should not originate in satire (Geusen!), nor should they scream as publicity does."*[107]

Using the term as a form of implied criticism seems colloquially widespread, and the word can become more of a slogan to indicate the superiority of the music written by the old masters. So much of what makes the classical music comprehensible and beautiful is created by, or at least involves, processes that depend on how tones interact with each other and form meaningful and perceptible connections on every level of a musical composition. It would be difficult to see the value of music where all of this is supposedly absent.

[107] Arnold Schönberg, "Hauer's theories," in *Style and Idea*, ed. Leonard Stein (Berkeley Los Angeles London: University of California Press, 1923), 211.

Bryan Simms notes that when the word *atonal* started to appear, it had no concrete meaning but was used *"broadly to describe modern music that seemed dissonant, unmelodious, devoid of key, or otherwise lacking a sense of traditional beauty."*[108] While modern scholars sometimes use the term more sophisticatedly, a sense of condemnation seems still frequently present in everyday use.

According to Simms: *"[t]he word 'atonality' is generally used by modern writers to designate a style of twentieth-century music evincing three primary characteristics: the absence of traditional key or tonality, equal use of the full chromatic spectrum of pitches rather than according priority to seven tones of a diatonic scale, and the presence of harmonies that are largely dissonant rather than based on triads or triadic extensions."*[109] The phrase *'traditional key or tonality'* seems to point away from a possible tonal experience and towards focusing on the procedure that creates it. It is a definition that moves away from the musically perceptible towards a theoretical approach based on a single, geographically and temporarily limited tradition and defines *tonality* as the sole property of this tradition.

While such an understanding might be widespread and have its uses theoretically, it poses practical problems for musicians. Our understanding of common-practice music is guided by years of practical experience, playing and listening, and theoretical studies of how matters of tonality play a crucial role in what we do as performers. Defining music primarily in terms of the absent tonality creates a void that moves the music away from the performer's musical perception and experiences.

Assessment based on the absence of meaningful tonal relations has often influenced the public appraisal of Mortensen's music. For example, Dag Fluge's review after a performance of *Fantasy and Fugue*, Op. 13 in 1960, states, "*For me, the atonal system stands as a highly impersonal way of expression which doesn't have room for the more human emotions and impulses."*[110] As a result, Mortensen's music has frequently been assessed by attaching it to logical and cerebral systems outside of human experience rather than by examining and exploring the qualities of the music itself.

[108] Bryan R. Simms, "Arnold Schoenberg," in *Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern A companion to the Second Viennese School*, ed. Bryan R. Simms (Westport, Connecticut – London: Greenwood Press, 1999), 165.
[109] Ibid.
[110] «For meg står det atonale systemet som en høyst upersonlig uttrykksmåte som ikke gir rom for de mer menneskelige følelser og impulser.» Fluge, "Review."

My first involvement with Mortensen's so-called atonal music was in the *Sonata*, Op. 7, arguably his first mature work and one directly inspired by Arnold Schönberg's music. The sonata marks a turning point in Mortensen's development as a composer. He composed it following two years of creative crisis and doubt after his *Sonata for Flute Solo*, Op. 6, during which he did not write a single note,[111] and according to the composer, it is the first composition he wrote out of his own "*artistic needs".*[112]

In 1956, he received funding to study and decided to travel to the Danish composer and pianist Niels Viggo Bentzon to acquire what would become his only formal education as a composer. The three months he spent in Copenhagen became significant for Mortensen, first and foremost for a concert he attended at Danish Radio where Bentzon performed Schönberg's Op. 24, 25 and 33.[113] This performance would lead to an important discovery for Mortensen. Nesheim wrote in his biography on Mortensen that *"[i]t was a momentous experience he did not think possible. He was practically 'converted' during this concert. Precisely this concert should give him the courage to move into the 'twelve-tone-universe' and become a spokesman for it in the Norwegian domestic milieu. He experienced that the twelve-tone technique was no hindrance for expressing emotions; romantic emotions."*[114]

This discovery profoundly affected Mortensen's music and the *Sonata*, Op. 7 was, according to the composer, *"inspired by twelve-tone technique and bears the mark of this. But it is not written in a consistent twelve-tone style."*[115] Indeed, Mortensen's inspiration from twelve-tone music did not lead to him applying twelve-tone technique in a strict Schönbergian sense but instead seemed to have made him explore the aesthetic expression he had experienced in the dodecaphonic style.

When I started working on the Fugue from the *Sonata*, my perception of this music differed from today. Apart from during a few isolated moments, for example, in the head of the subject, I had no particular perception of a meaningful organization of the tones in this piece other than

[111] Nesheim, *Alltid på leting*, 71.
[112] Nesheim, "Modernismens døråpner i Norge," 186.
[113] Nesheim, *Alltid på leting*, 88.
[114] «Det var en sjelsettende[sic] opplevelse som han ikke trodde var mulig. Han ble nærmest «omvendt» i løpet av denne konserten. Nettopp denne konserten skulle gi han mot til å bevege seg inn i «tolvtone-universet», og bli en talsmann for dette i det norske hjemmemiljøet. Han opplevde at tolvteteknikken ikke var til hinder for å uttrykke følelser, romantiske følelser». Ibid., 88.
[115] «Den [Sonaten] er inspirert av tolvteteknikken og bærer nok preg av det. Men den er ikke skrevet i gjennomført tolvtonestil.» Finn Mortensen in Ibid., 87.

the contours and shapes of the individual voices, and what I heard was, to some degree, a non-hierarchical mass, quite similar to how *atonality* is described in a leading Norwegian encyclopaedia:

> *"Atonal music is music that is without a tonal centre or a specific key. This is contrary to tonal music, which has a fundamental tone (tonic) to return to. In atonal music, all the tones in the composition work independently of each other, also those within the chromatic scale. All the tones are, in other words, equal."*[116]

The independence and equality of tones in this definition put it in sharp contrast to how the same encyclopaedia describes tonal music:

> *"Tonality is about tones and chords in the music being organised so that we can experience stability, tension, direction and rest in the music. Tonality is, in other words, a way of organising tones and chords that gives an experience that the music is pointing towards a stable point."*[117]

Most expert writers, however, tend to write from a different definition of tonality. For example, Charles Rosen writes that *"[t]onality is not, as is sometimes claimed, a system with a central note but one with a central perfect triad: all the other triads, major and minor, are arranged around the central one in a hierarchical order."*[118] While often criticised,[119] this definition of tonality is essential for understanding much of the literature on 20th-century music but leaves much modern music falling in a void between the triad-based understanding of tonality and the non-hierarchical understanding of atonality. Between these two extremes, there is room for a

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[116] «Atonal musikk er musikk som er uten et tonalt senter eller en bestemt toneart. Dette er i motsetning til tonal musikk, som har en grunntone (tonika) å vende tilbake til. I atonal musikk fungerer alle tonene i komposisjonen uavhengig av hverandre, også de som er innenfor den kromatiske skalaen. Alle tonene er med andre ord likeverdige.» Even Ruud, "Atonal Musikk," Store Norske Leksikon, accessed November 29th 2021, https://snl.no/atonal_musikk.

[117] «Tonalitet handler om at toner og akkorder i musikken er ordnet slik at vi kan oppleve stabilitet, spenning, retning og hvile i musikken. Tonalitet er med andre ord en måte å ordne toner og akkorder på som gir en opplevelse av at musikken peker mot et stabilt punkt.» Even Ruud & Nils E. Bjerkestrand, "Tonalitet," Store Norske Leksikon, accessed November 29th, 2021 https://snl.no/tonalitet.

[118] Charles Rosen, *Arnold Schoenberg* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 27-28.

[119] Particularly by musicologists within popular music who finds it less than useful for their field of study. Philip Tagg writes that *"The terminological appropriation of 'tonal' to refer to just one set of tonal practices during a brief period in the history of the world's smallest continent is, to say the least, problematic.",* and argues that what Rosen describes is one special case of tonality among many. Instead, he proposes that *"TONALITY should mean the system or set of norms according to which tones are configured in any musical culture."* Philip Tagg, "Troubles with Tonal Terminology," in *Festschrift for CORIÚN AHARONIÁN AND GRACIELA PARASKEVAÍDIS* (2011 (Rev. 2013), 13-14.

broad spectrum of diverse tonal practices, with different degrees of and techniques for creating a tonal hierarchy or other forms of tonal meaning and coherence. However, modern music is often understood from a definition of tonality-atonality as a dichotomy where the tonal system is created either by a system of perfect triads or not at all.

One peculiar point becomes apparent in the dictionary entries. While tonal music is understood in terms of how it is *experienced*, no corresponding experience lies beneath the understanding of *atonality*, and there often appears to be a divide in musical theory. While music from earlier periods is understood using approaches derived from its experience, much modern music is often described using theory and models detached from perception. Definitions of tonality thus become incommensurable with those of atonality as the terminology refers to different ways of seeing reality. The failure to create relevant theories for modern music based on perception can highly affect our work as musicians. Describing music as *atonal* could easily lead to understanding the music as abstract and theoretical, instigating a state of active, conscious and deliberate non-listening.

Lansky and Perle point out that *"[a]s understanding of tonality is aided by the existence of a relatively highly developed theory, while no such assistance exists for atonality, the former is perceived as a more highly unified musical language than the latter."*[120]

Rather than being able to, to some degree, rely on pre-existing knowledge and experience, performers often need to create this knowledge from scratch, work from within the music itself, and develop methods and skills to do so. For me, the realisation that Mortensen's music could be understood as something other than atonal was a necessary catalyst to start such a process.

The implications of the term 'atonal' and an inability to develop a theoretical method to investigate the material had acted as an inhibiter, stopping me from properly exploring the music, and because of the negativity implied in the term 'atonal', I had denied myself usage of some of my basic musicality.

Schönberg claimed that:

[120] Paul Lansky and George Perle. "Atonality," Grove Music Online, 2001, accessed November 29th, 2021, https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000047354?rskey=0ahaz6.

> *"[…] a habit has arisen of regarding music first, not with the ears of listening, second not with the eyes by playing and reading it, and third, not with the mind but according to some technical peculiarity, for which there is a suitable slogan, a most striking term,"*[121]

and further argues that

> *"[i]f audiences and musicians would ask about these more important things and attempt to receive answers by listening, if further they would leave the idle talk and strife rather to school-masters, who also must have something to do and wish to make a living, I, who have the hope that in a few decades audiences will recognize the* tonality *of this music today called* atonal*, would not then be compelled to attempt to point out any other difference than a* gradual *one between the tonality of yesterday and the tonality of today. Indeed, tonal is perhaps nothing else than what is understood* today *and atonal what will be understood in the* future*."*[122]

However, the above-mentioned encyclopaedia definition of atonality came close to how I initially heard Mortensen's fugue. Indeed, a lot was going on in the movement, both beautiful and exciting, but very little I would have described as *tonal*. Over several months, this started to change gradually. The isolated moments of perceiving tonal meaning increased in number, became more assertive, and appeared more meaningful. Timothy Jackson described Schönberg's discoveries related to atonality as follows:

> *"Schoenberg discovered that it is possible to hear linear progressions, both small and large-scale, in a post-tonal context. He realized the possibility of creating leading tones, passing tones, and neighbour tones without relying upon traditional definitions of consonance and dissonance."*[123]

This quote comes close to describing how I started hearing the polyphony of Mortensen's fugue: as a meaningful, hierarchical structure created by the relationship between tones, with its own concept of consonance and dissonance defined not in relation to a harmonic basis but created linearly within the voices themselves.

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[121] Arnold Schönberg, "Problems of Harmony," in *Style and Idea* (1934), 283.
[122] Ibid., 283-4.
[123] Timothy Jackson in Arnold Whittall, *Serialism*, Cambridge Introduction to Music, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 110.

As the relationships between the tones became gradually stronger in my mind, I started exploring what I perceived as a form of tonal thinking governing the linearity of the piece. This perception strongly challenged my preconceived notions of *atonality* to such a degree that the term seemed less and less relevant as a description of Mortensen's music. As a result, my experience of the music gradually became that of *tonality*, not *atonality*. I started hearing the fugue more as a form of classical counterpoint with tones of varying degrees of tension, creating local gravitational points of tonal coherence. These new perceptions transformed my view on the tonality of the music from a grey, monotonous mass to an incredible complex of expressivity and colour, thus breaking the uniformity of the polyphony. Tonal relations started acting as a primary musical shaping force, creating individual, living voices.

I have frequently, both before and during this project, experienced that what appears *atonal* can change radically over time. Often, when I worked with pieces that initially seemed, and were theoretically supposed to be, *atonal*, they gradually revealed themselves to contain many aspects associated with tonality. For example, the concept of the tones working 'independently' from each other and thus being 'equal' became modified so much over time it eventually lost all meaning.

My increasingly more profound and nuanced perception of the music initially caused only a modification of my understanding of what *atonality* could contain, not a fundamental dismissal of the term altogether. This was a much harder realisation, but ultimately one that I think had considerable importance to the development of my project.

In *The Craft of Musical Composition,* Paul Hindemith argued for a more inclusive and phenomenological view of tonality:

> *"Whenever two tones sound, either simultaneously or successively, they create a certain interval-value; whenever chords or intervals are connected, they enter into a more or less close relationship. And whenever the relationships of tones are played off one against another, tonal coherence appears. It is thus quite impossible to devise groups of tones without tonal coherence. Tonality is a natural force, like gravity."*[124]

[124] Paul Hindemith, *The Craft of Musical Composition : Bk. 1 : Theoretical Part*, trans. Artur Mendel, Fourth Edition ed. (London: Schott, 1970), 152.

The importance of Hindemith's quote in the perspective of my project goes beyond that of being the opinion of a highly trained musician. As Nesheim points out, the influence of neo-classicism in general and Paul Hindemith in particular, made a significant mark on Mortensen's early development as a composer, to such a degree that the period up until and including the *Symphony*, Op. 5 is often referred to as his *neo-classical* period.[125] However, there might be reasons to ask whether Hindemith, the composer, the theoretician, or the pedagogue, had the most significant influence on Mortensen's music.

Mortensen points to the importance of Hindemith's book *Unterweisung im Tonsatz* as a source of inspiration,[126] and Nesheim gives testimony to the worn-out condition of Mortensen's copy of the book, which evidently has been read and reread multiple times.[127]

Regarding tonality as a fundamental musical force rather than a theory to describe specific dimensions of some types of music can open new perspectives on Mortensen's music, often referred to as *atonal*. From such a perspective, usage of the term *atonality* might be more a reflection of personal limitations of either ability to explain theoretically or to practically perceive the tonality rather than an objective assessment of the nature of the music itself. Nevertheless, the tonal coherence might be no less present or significant, just created and manifested differently.

It is easy to assume that the book's impact on Mortensen relates to the neo-classical idiom in which he wrote his early works, which gives the impression that the book's influence is primarily stylistic and aesthetic. *Unterweisung im Tonsatz* is, however, not a book centred around the practice of Hindemith, the *composer*. Although Hindemith's preferences are noticeable in the text, its real value lies in its perceptional perspective on the tonal building blocks of music in a fully chromatic and non-tertiary harmonic context on a more general basis. As Nesheim puts it, it allowed Mortensen to develop an *"insight and competence to treat a free-tonal language. He handled the use of tonal centra, with hierarchical relations to a central tone, and could therefore free himself from the major/minor-tonality."*[128] I believe that the

[125] See for example Elef Nesheim, "En konstant evolusjon," in *Mortensen 60 - Festskrift til Finn Mortensen på 60-årsdagen 6. januar 1982* (Oslo: J. W. Cappelens forlag AS, 1982), 25.
[126] See Mortensen, Cover text to Philips - 6578 100.
[127] Nesheim, *Alltid på leting*, 35.
[128] «Gjennom sine studier av Hindemiths komposisjons-lære hadde Mortensen utviklet en innsikt og kompetanse i å behandle et fritonalt tonespråk. Han håndterte bruk av tonale sentra, med hierarkiske slektskapsforhold mellom tonene i relasjon til en sentraltone, og kunne derfor gi slipp på dur-/molltonaliteten.» Nesheim, "Modernismens døråpner i Norge," 119.

competence developed had a more profound and far-reaching impact and was not limited to a mere stylistic feature of the style of Mortensen's early works. It appears plausible to me that Hindemith's *musical* perspective on how tonality can be perceived in a chromatic, non-common-practice context became a starting point for Mortensen to develop his own musical language, one that is freed from the specific procedures of the past but is nevertheless founded on a deep, perceived understanding of tonal coherence.

The lessons from the book became equally important to me when I, as a performer, eventually attempted to approach the tonality of Mortensen's music. Its emphasis on how tonality can be perceived in a context beyond the common-practice period helped me to gain a focus on methods founded on practical listening rather than theoretical explanations.

Due to the profound impact Hindemith had on the young Mortensen, I decided to perform Hindemith's *Zweite Sonate* from 1936 as a part of my project. I found this composition, the shortest, lightest and most sonatina-like of his three sonatas, a relevant accompaniment to Mortensen's two sonatinas, Op. 1 and 2. On the one hand, the sonata gave me a perspective on a certain similarity in style and thinking between the two composers, but on the other hand, the juxtaposing highlighted Mortensen's individuality in writing from an early age. The points where he departs from Hindemith's style have shaped my view of these works, and the most interesting and educational perspective for me has been seeing how Mortensen used Hindemith's theoretical teachings to compose music that goes well beyond Hindemith's stylistically and aesthetically.

While it is tempting to explain Mortensen's early compositions as the results of studying Hindemith, it seems to me that his compositional starting point was much more complex than this. I believe many of his early neo-classical works, including the two sonatinas, also show inspiration from other sources; his lifelong love for Anton Bruckner's music is often mentioned,[129] but maybe even more critical were his studies of Fartein Valen's music which he conducted enthusiastically as far back as the 1940s, [130] at approximately the same time as he started studying Hindemith's book.[131]

[129] See f.ex. Arne Nordheim, "Bud bedes gaa kjøkkenveien," in *Mortensen 60 - Festskrift til Finn Mortensen på 60-årsdagen 6. januar 1982* (Oslo: J. W. Cappelens forlag AS, 1982).
[130] Skouen, "Finn Mortensen - Den standhaftige modernist (Intervju)," 3.
[131] Nesheim, *Alltid på leting*, 33.

The importance of Fartein Valen to Mortensen both as a musical inspirator and as someone who before him had penetrated *"the wall of conservatism and musical nationalism",*[132] a wall Mortensen himself had the opportunity to meet on numerous occasions, can hardly be overstated. Mortensen referred to Valen's Violin Concerto, Op. 37, as *"among the most beautiful things written."*[133] In an interview with Synne Skouen, he stated that Valen is the only other Norwegian composer he felt spiritually related to.[134] According to Nesheim, the inspiration was, however, *"aural, not thematic and formal"*[135] and that it was the "*timbral, dissonant and atonal expression"* of Valen's music that inspired and not the compositional technique.[136]

I included Valen's *Intermezzo* Op. 36 (1939-40) in my project, a work that, according to Asbjørn Schaathun, strongly resembles the Fantasy from Mortensen's *Fantasy and Fugue*, Op. 13, at least pianistically.[137]

On working with the Intermezzo, I noticed similarities between how the two composers expressed a sense of tonality in their music. In his article on Valen's *Violin Concerto*, Mortensen only involuntarily refers to Valens music as atonal because the term *"[…] is so inextricably connected to Valen's music that it is difficult to get past it here"*. Mortensen's problematic relationship with the term is expressed in an interview where he, on the question whether his *Fantasy and Fugue*, Op. 13, is atonal, replied: *"I don't like that word. But one would say it is."*[138] In the continuation of the article he states that *"[i]n the Violin Concerto there seem to be so many consciously tonal elements that it is tempting to conduct an investigation within this field [...],*"[139] and then proceeds to analyse excerpts from the concerto in purely tonal terms.

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[132] Finn Mortensen, "Fartein Valens fiolinkonsert," *Nutida Musik* (1961): 14.

[133] Reportedly from the newspaper article "To Oslo-gutter debuterer,". According to Tjøme, (Berit Kvinge Tjøme, *Trekkfuglen - Komponisten Fartein Valen* (Oslo: Novus Forlag, 2012).footnote 1210), it was printed in Arbeiderbladet, April 22nd 1954. Nesheim, (2001 and 2010) give the source as Morgenposten April 23rd 1954. I have been unable to find the article in either newspaper.

[134] Skouen, "Finn Mortensen - Den standhaftige modernist (Intervju)."

[135] «klangmessig sett om ikke tematisk og formelt» Nesheim, "Modernismens døråpner i Norge," 11.

[136] «Det klanglige, dissonerende og atonale uttrykket i Valens musikk virket inspirerende, men ikke det komposisjonstekniske apparatet.» Nesheim, "Modernismens døråpner i Norge," 11.

[137] Schaathun, "Finn Mortensen Militant serialist eller følsom bamse? - og hvor tok allting veien," 40.

[138] «Jeg liker ikke ordet. Men man vil vel si den er det.» -thon, "Tre norske uroppførelser på "Ny Musikk" mandag," December 3rd 1969.

[139] «I violinkonserten synes det imidlertid å være såvidt mange bevisste tonale elementer at det er fristende å foreta en undersøkelse på dette felt […]» Ibid., 17.

Mortensen, who worked from a definition of atonality as *"music free of tonal centres",* and based on this, argues for a clear tonality of some of his Twelve-tone pieces Op. 22, [140] seemingly found Valen's music incoherent with such a definition.

I found Mortensen's unconventional analytical approach to the tonality of Valen's Violin Concerto intriguing, as I developed similar views on Valen's *Intermezzo* throughout my project. I realised that despite Valen consistently talking about his music using the term 'atonal', I found it drenched in a deep, personal and idiosyncratic sense of tonality, an understanding of which opens up new possibilities for performing his music.

Understanding tonality in a Hindemithian way, not as a specific procedure but as a force that can be perceived independently from our ability to explain it and its creation in words or models, made me approach tonality not as a unique feature limited to the music of a specific temporal and geographical location, but as a fundamental aspect of music. Ending up with the definition of tonality as *any aspect of a piece of music created by how pitches interact with each other* opens for the possibility of analysing it with a focus on its musical effect rather than the technique that creates it. Penetrating deeper into the perceptible result of the tonal organisation convinced me that much of Mortensen's music labelled atonal contained musically important aspects incompatible with a common understanding of the term *atonality*. These aspects might be without a discernible theoretical pattern but could nevertheless be of fundamental importance to performance. For me, such a way of thinking opened for new ways of listening to the music, changing how I experienced the music emotionally and spent my time working at the instrument, shifting from 'practising' to a more aurally analytical and experimental approach.

[140] Preface to Finn Mortensen, *Tolv små tolvtonestykker for barn hefte I, op. 22. no. 1* (Oslo: Norsk Musikkforlag, 1965).

Mortensen's Linear Tonality

I have come to regard the fugue of Mortensen's *Sonata*, Op. 7, as an archetype for studying how he shapes and handles tonality linearly. While the sonata marks the beginning of a new epoch in the composer's career, its tonal language seems to be developed by cultivating elements already present in his earlier works. At the same time, it points forward to his later pieces and provides a starting point for approaching the tonal language of his mature music, and a close study of the fugue has been fundamental to my overall understanding of Mortensen as a composer.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will, through a closer look at the means and effects of the fugue's tonal language, contextualise it within Mortensen's own production and the modernist tradition and discuss performative and interpretative implications of this approach to his music.

When approaching the tonality of this fugue, I have found it helpful to analyse it by listening for three separate but intertwined effects: firstly, its central tones; secondly, the fluctuation of tonal tension; and thirdly, the tones' colour quality.

Figure 1 shows my perception of central tones in the first twelve bars of the fugue. Once I had gained the idea that this was something worth listening for, I was frequently surprised to what degree I suddenly was able to hear the central tone of a phrase, even when, as is often the case with Mortensen, the central tone does not occur in a way that makes them readily identifiable as such, and their creation is initially challenging to explain.[141] Furthermore, starting to hear the tones of the piece not only in relation to each other but also in relation to often implicit, central tones very quickly led to a change in my perception of the tones' quality.

[141] Schönberg in his Theory of Harmony refers to similar phenomenon as *fluctuating tonality* (schwebende Tonalität), where a certain tonic is implied but never explicitly stated. He gives as example his own *Lockung*, Op. 6, no. 7, which *"expresses an Eb-major tonality without once in the course of the piece giving an Eb-major triad in such a way that one could regard it as a pure tonic"*. He takes no credit for the invention, however, and traces it back via the prelude to Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* to the last movement of Beethoven's string quartet Op. 59, no. 2. Arnold Schönberg, *Theory of Harmony - 100th anniversary edition*, trans. Roy E. Carter (Berkeley - Los Angeles - London: University of California, 2011), 383-4.

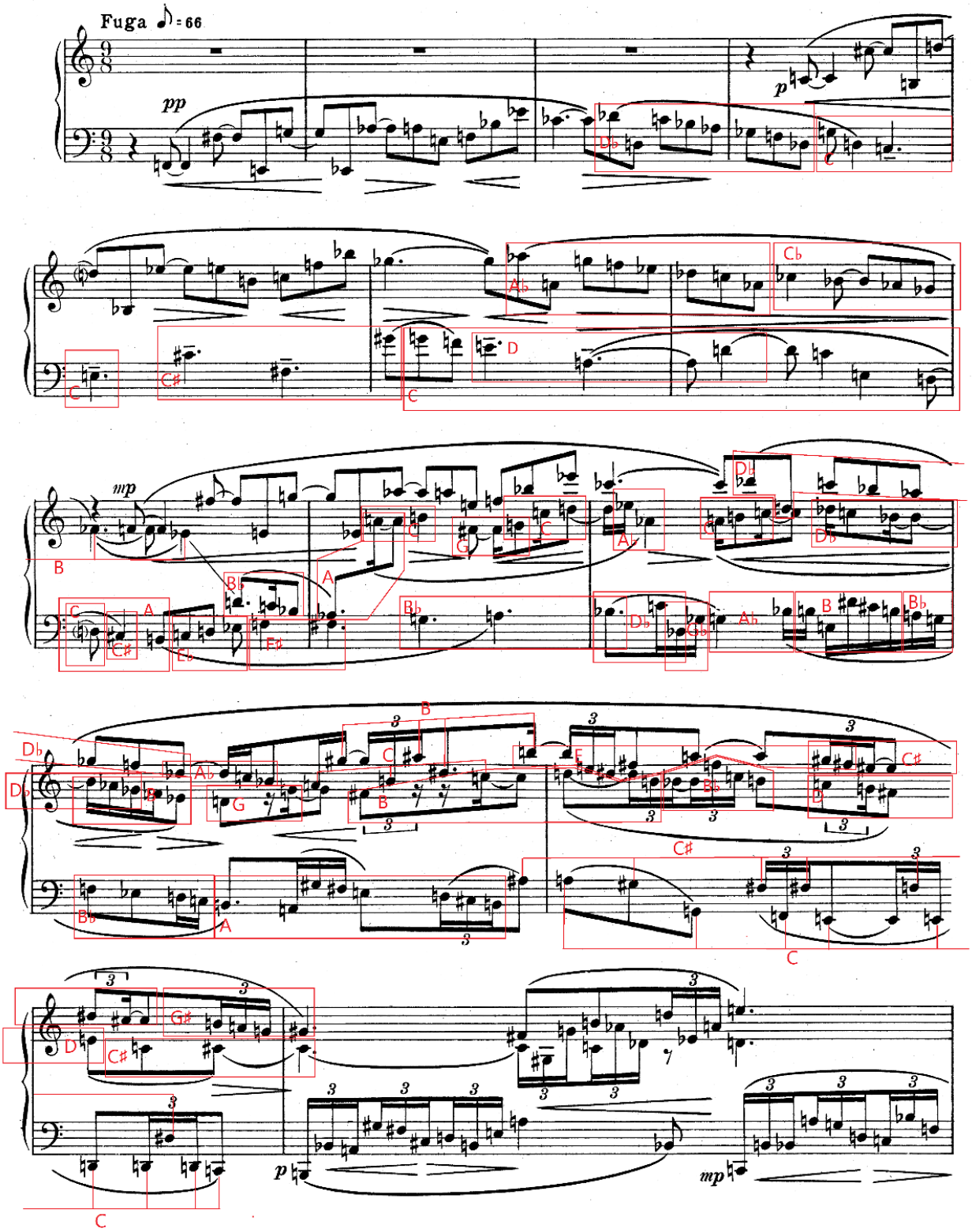

Figure 1. *Mortensen: Sonata, Op. 7, II. Fuga, bars 1-13.*

There are, however, limitations to the applicability of an analysis of central tones. I found that knowing the tonic and even eventually being able to explain some of the techniques used to create it never led *directly* to any decisions concerning performance, and I initially put it in writing mainly for documentation. However, I nevertheless found it to be a valuable exercise. It made me listen differently and more purposefully and opened for a clearer and stronger perception of the individual qualities of every single note, as defined by their context.

Moreover, while knowledge of the central tones might not be essential, I believe the perceptual expansion it might result in is. From a performer's perspective, the value of such an analysis comes not from the documentable result of the investigations but from the analytical process itself, and the resulting change in interpretation happens on a more subconscious, *indirect* level.

The second way of analysis I employed was to listen for the degree, the relationship, and the direction of tonal tension in a horizontal dimension. While closely related and to some degree inseparable from the first perspective, I find that this slightly different perspective also brings other kinds of knowledge. It is a way of listening that focuses more on the notes' relations to each other rather than on how they relate to the central tone. However, it is a way of listening that is difficult to give a visual representation, and my goal has been to attempt to perceive a function or property of a note, whether or not I can relate it to any theoretical concept.

It appears to me that Mortensen was a composer who very rarely resolved all tonal tension. Therefore, thinking of tension and relief in a classical way as a dichotomy makes little sense in this context. Instead, it seems much more beneficial to perceive the melodic dissonances as fluctuations on a spectrum, where I attempt to experience the meaning within a constantly fluctuating degree of dissonance rather than viewing the dissonance as an *abnormality* in need of being released to a consonance. In his book on Schönberg, Charles Rosen writes that *"[i]n this swing between tension and resolution, the complete "emancipation of the dissonance" meant, and could only have meant, a freedom from consonance, from the obligation to resolve the dissonance."*[142]

The third perspective grew from the realisation that each note, once I had a firmer perception of its context, gained a unique colour quality, and an increased need to investigate these qualities more closely. By listening intensely for the constant and nuanced changes in colour,

[142] Rosen, Arnold Schoenberg, 26.

darkening and brightening, I gained yet another perspective on the effect Mortensen's tonal organisation has on the music.

While much within these three perspectives can be perceived more or less automatically when working with the piece, I found that in the beginning, my senses were inhibited by the implications of the concept of *atonality*. In retrospect, I have realised that I understood it more as serendipitous observations with some musical consequence but not entirely as fundamental and meaningful parts of Mortensen's personal musical language worthy of more conscious examinations.

Only when I could free myself from the atonal paradigm was I able to approach the phenomena with the systematic and long-term work I think is needed to fully perceive the complexity and subtlety of his language. In addition, I found that the goal was not only to gain a deeper understanding of what Mortensen had written but also to concurrently develop my own perceptual, emotional, and cognitive abilities in connection with the music. I realised that, in some ways, I needed to develop the musical competence to work independently and artistically with this music and that this competence could only be developed from working within his music itself.

The Opening of the Fugue of Op. 7

Mortensen uses several cadential patterns and techniques in his music to create tonal coherence, many of which are found throughout his diverse production and in the music of modernists who came before him. In the following section, I will use the opening of the Fugue from Op. 7 to display various uses of the most important ones, draw parallels to his earlier and later works, and show similarities within the works of Schönberg and Valen.

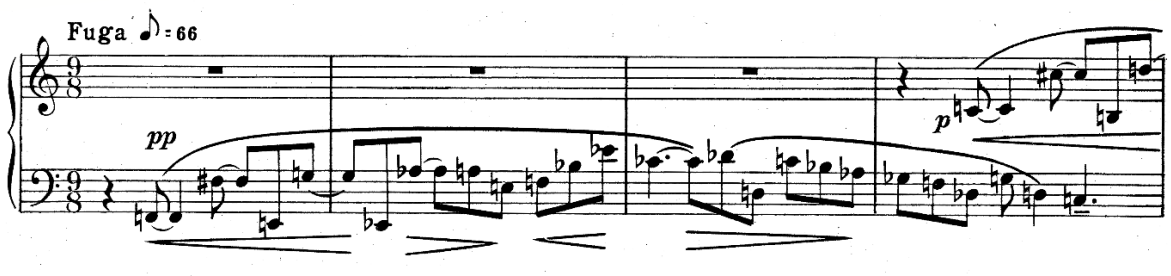

Figure 2. *Mortensen: Sonata, Op. 7, II. Fuga, subject, bars 1-4.*

Numerous tonal centres can be detected in the fugue subject, first presented in a low register, **Figure 2**. Most immediately noticeable is the G – E♭ – A♭ movement of notes 4-5-6 suggesting a V-I progression in A♭, where the G takes the form of a leading tone, and the rising fourth suggests the root progression. This progression is easily relatable to a classical harmonic point of view, and initially, I found it was very easy to overemphasise in my playing in a way that made it too conclusive. It tended to negatively affect the overall shaping of the entire subject by isolating the first six notes from the rest of the subject. I find the role of this cadence much more significant in the ending of the piece, Figure 3, where just the head of the subject is used repeatedly, juxtaposed with motivic material from the first movement, to establish a proper final tonic. Therefore, in the opening, I felt I had to treat this with much more subtlety not to make the effect too obvious and disruptive at the start of the piece.

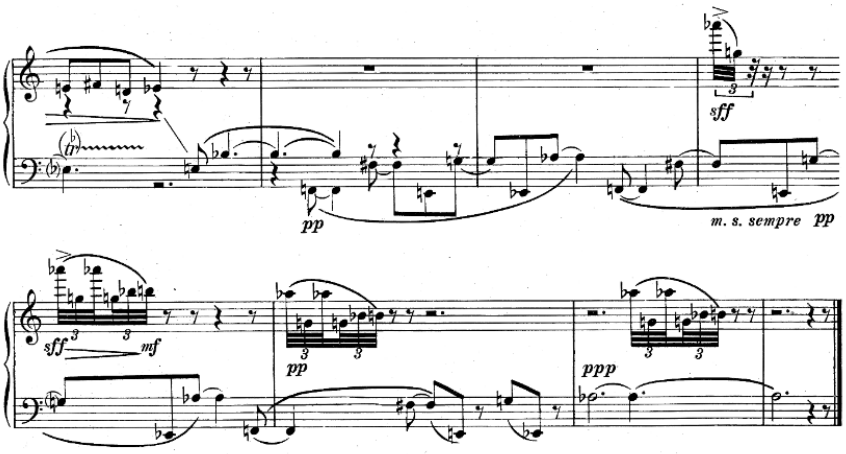

Figure 3*. Mortensen: Sonata, Op. 7, II. Fuga,ending, bars 42-48.*

Fifths

The fifth, including its inversion, plays a significant role as a cadential pattern in Mortensen's music. While in music with a clear harmonic structure, the tonicizing nature of the fifth in melodic successions usually plays a subordinate role to that of harmonic progressions, in purely linear contexts, their impact often assumes a more significant role in turning the lowest note of a fifth or the highest note of a fourth into a temporary tonic.

Their function depends on their context and can therefore range from serving as important structural resting points on one side to merely drawing a slight hint of attention to a single tone that is otherwise subordinate in a larger tonal context on the other side. While the impact of fifths can vary tremendously, I usually find their presence of interest in a tonal reflection.

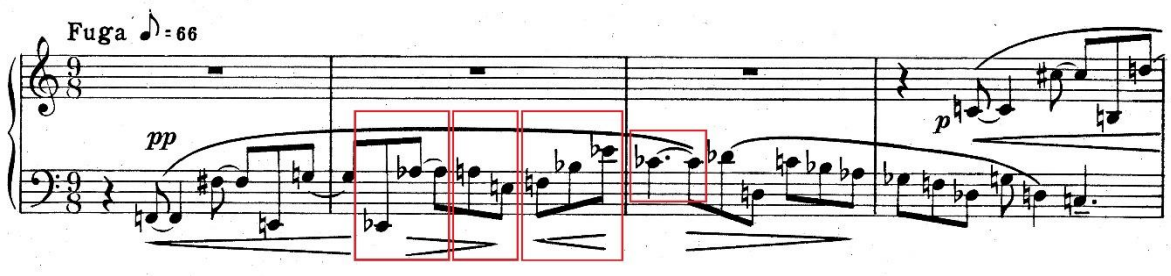

Figure 4. *Mortensen: Sonata, Op. 7, II. Fuga, bars 1-4.*

I already mentioned the function of the fourth E♭–A♭ in the fugue's subject, but it is only the starting point of the second, and very fourth-dominated, part of the subject. While the first fourth has a clear V – I function, the continuation is more complicated and ambiguous. The sudden colour change on the A in bar 2 as a low supertonic to A♭ appears significant. Since an E follows the A, the tonic of the A – E pair is the first note, not the second and the tension created by the A is not resolved but continues upwards to an E♭ through another pair of chromatically ascending fourths. In connection with F and B♭, the E♭ can be heard either as a low seventh or as an appoggiatura on the fourth. In either case, a resolution downwards to a D as the third of a B♭-major mode seems to be indicated, giving tension to the surprising C♭, which follows in its place.

Ascending Semi-tones

The fourths are not the only tonal elements of significance in the previously discussed excerpt from the subject. Three chromatic notes in ascending succession con often constitute a meaningful tonal progression where an instability on the second note is resolved into the third if the first of the three notes has some degree of tonal stability. In the excerpt from the subject, I hear this pattern as a significant, overarching element spanning the three pairs of fourths, tying them together into a more extended unit, and putting them in an internal hierarchy. This effect shall later become important, see **Figure 5**, as the tension of the A, the second unstable note in the A♭ – A♮ – B♭ movement, is left unresolved in the bass at the culmination of the fugue, bars 33-34, and thus contributes significantly to the tremendous psychological impact of this moment.

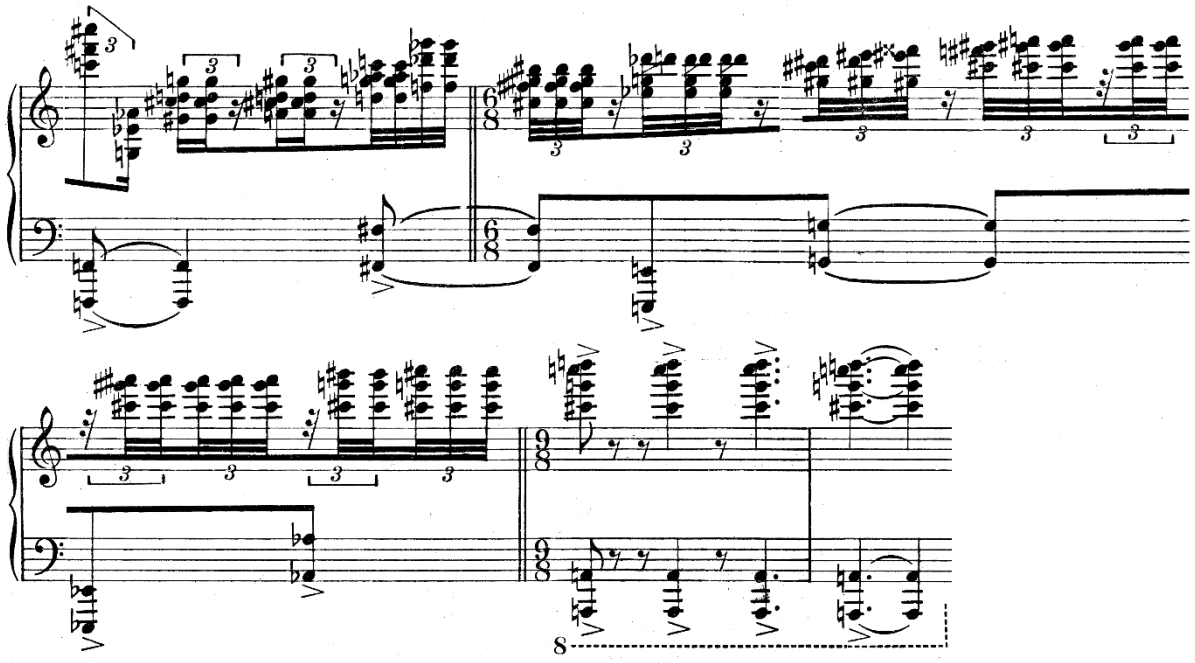

Figure 5. *Mortensen: Sonata, Op. 7, II. Fuga, bars 31-34.*

It is easy to assume that the ascending line F♯-G-A♭ at the subject's opening might also be perceived as such a cadence. However, the initial lower F makes the F♯ too unstable for me to hear it in such a manner. Equally, the line F - F♯ - G cannot be heard that way, as the intermediate E disturbs this interpretation. It could be argued that the head of the subject can be understood motivically as two separate lines and, as such, become a unifying factor between the Sonata's two movements.[143] However, I find the increasing tension from the gradually

[143] In chapter 4, I argue that longer chromatically ascending lines plays an important role in the shaping of the first movement of this sonata.

larger leaps between the two chromatic lines a too important emotional factor for the subject's character. Performing the two lines heard as separate units would appear artificial to me, as the expressivity of their mutual interaction would be lost. From bar 27 onwards, see **Figure 6**, however, due to the much higher tempo achieved by the diminutions, I experience the two parts as sufficiently separated units for this effect to be heard, and the shaping of the ascending semi-tones becomes a part of my interpretation.

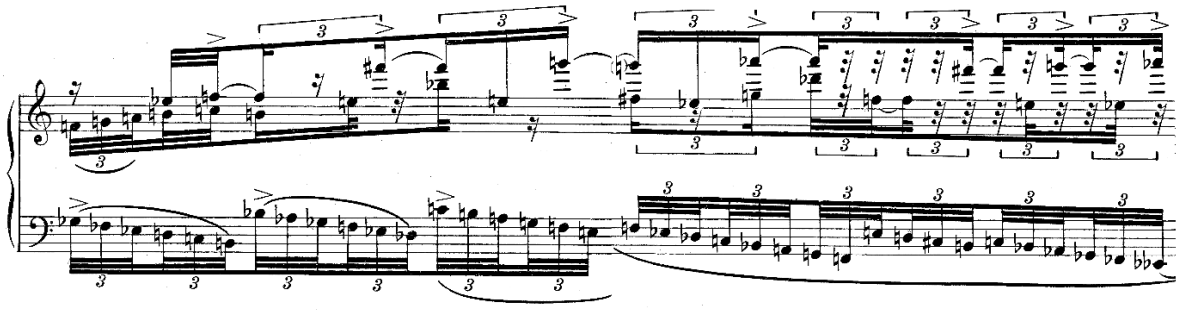

Figure 6. *Mortensen: Sonate, Op. 7, II. Fuga, bar 28.*

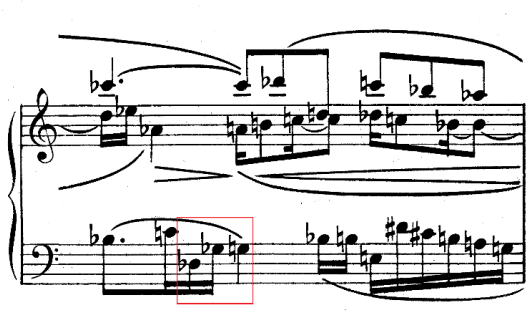

Figure 7. *Mortensen: Sonate, Op. 7, II. Fuga, bar 10.*

In bar 10 of the fugue, see **Figure 7**, there seems to be an incomplete ascending semi-tone motive. The fourth D♭-G♭ makes the G♭ appear as a temporary tonal centre and the following G as a melodic dissonance, a leading tone to an absent A♭, momentarily leaving the short figure hanging in the air.

The ascending semi-tone motive as a cadential pattern is prominently used in the opening of the first of Schönberg's *Drei Klavierstücke*, Op. 11, **Figure 8**.

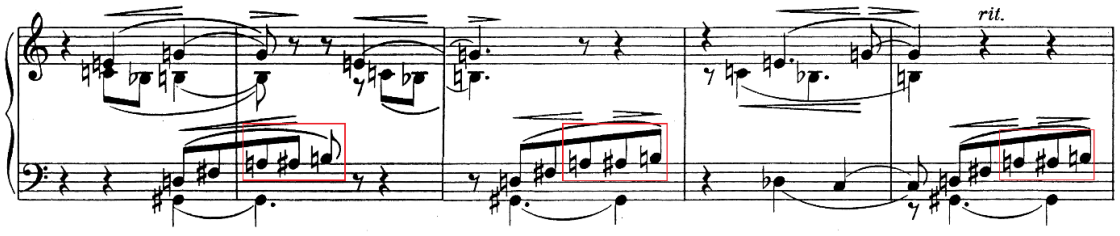

Figure 8. *Schönberg: Drei Klavierstücke, Op. 11, No. 1, bars 5-9.*

While the opening bars have suggested E as the tonal centre, these five bars feature two chromatic patterns to give weight to B as an important tone.

The first pattern is a double, chromatic neighbour-note motive in the alto voice, where the C and the B♭ are circling the B♮. The B♭ gets tension from being a tritone away from the E in the soprano, thus lending credibility to the interpretation that it is being resolved into the secondary tonal centre B♮. The B♮, however, must be heard in relation to the centre E of the opening and the E - G movement in the soprano voice.

The tenor answers this neighbour-note motive with the ascending semi-tone motive, A-A♯-B. This motive also points towards the B by making the A♯ appear as a leading tone.

The second part of the opening, bars 9-11 marked *langsamer*, Figure 9, is a recapitulation of the opening, but with augmented intervals, and pointing towards the B as a tonal centre rather than the E of the opening.

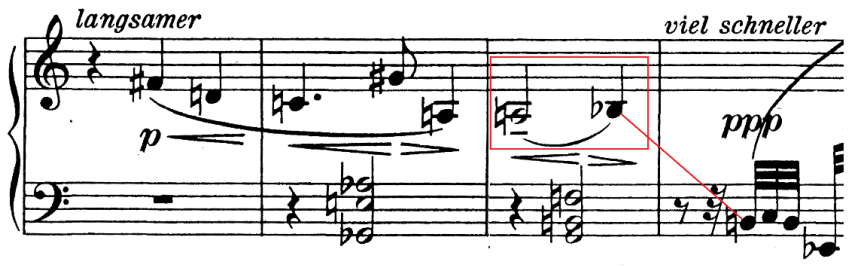

Figure 9. *Schönberg: Drei Klavierstücke, Op. 11, No. 1, bars 9-11.*

The tritone, F♯-C, from bars 9 to 10 is noticeable, but its resolution to B is delayed. Instead, more emphasis is put on A and B♭, a reminiscence of the preceding A-A♯ -B motive, but the phrase is cut short and left hanging in the air as if ending on a leading tone, giving it a high degree of tension leading into the rest. The rest, therefore, appears very intense, and the actual resolution to B♮ after the rest is almost unnoticeable.

The ascending semi-tone motive also features prominently in Mortensen's earlier works. I find its appearance in the central part of the second movement of Sonatina No. 2, Op. 2, particularly interesting, Figure 10, as it is a good illustration of the consequences the performers' feeling for the tonal effect of this motive can have. For me, perceiving the G in the first bar and the A in the second as dissonances that are resolved into the following notes affected not only the dynamic shaping of the phrases but also the timing and the colour palette used, as well as how the two phrases connect and relate to each other.

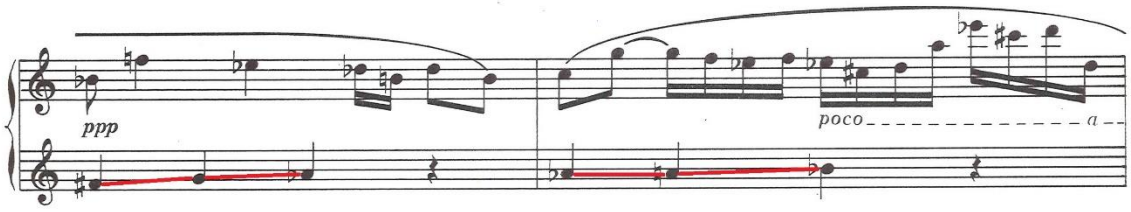

Figure 10. *Mortensen: Sonatina No 2, Op. 2, II. Andante, bars 20-21.*

In the fugue of Op. 7, the C♭, appearing instead of the expected D, **Figure 11**, after B♭ has been established as the tonal centre, has a prominent place in the subject. It is the note in the subject with the most tension as it appears dissonant to the insinuated B♭ tonality and instead changes the perception of the tonal centre, taking us through D♭ as a leading tone to D. Due to the octave displacement, the D's function as a tonic is, however, hard to perceive. The importance of the C♭ is further enhanced by it being the first note in the entire subject placed on a down-beat. The combined effect makes this note the expressive central point of the whole subject.

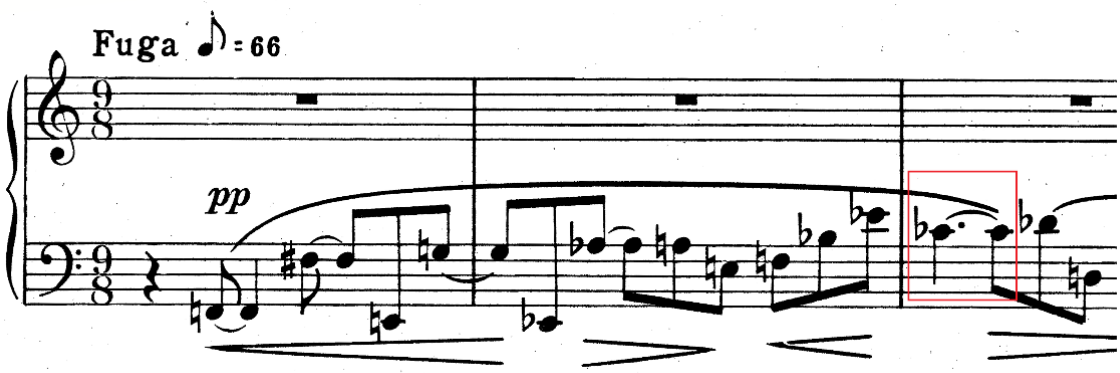

Figure 11. *Mortensen: Sonata, Op. 7, II. Fuga, bars 1-3.*

In the score, Mortensen has equipped the subject with dynamic markings that point the attention towards the tonally most tense notes, and I think a sensibility for the tonality is necessary to perform the spirit of these crescendi properly. From bar 4 onwards, the dynamic markings seem to be just repetitions of the previous ones and appear, therefore, to be most relevant for the voice that at any given time has the subject, which raises questions regarding the dynamic shaping of the other voices. Automatically applying the given dynamics to the other voices is unlikely to provide a musically satisfactory result. The counter-voices appear to be shaped with a significant degree of individuality and autonomy, and the tension curves do not necessarily follow those of the subject. Given that the score gives minimal indications of how the other voices unfold musically, working out how they could be shaped dynamically and musically independent from each other is a long and time-consuming process, where I think the

performer's personal understanding of Mortensen's tonal language is one of the primary driving forces.

Diatonism

A descending D♭-major scale dominates the third and final part of the subject. While this descent does arrive at the tonic, the arrival is so understated that it is hardly felt as such. Because of its weak metric placement, the immediate tritone jump to G, and the simultaneous entry of the second voice on a C, the arrival at the tonic is disguised and appears sufficiently insignificant not to halt the mobility of the tonal centres.

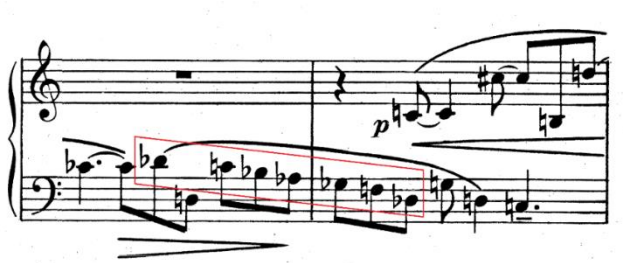

Figure 12. *Mortensen: Sonata, Op. 7, II. Fuga, bars 4-5.*

The amount of diatonism in this fugue is surprising, considering both the immediate aural impression the sound world of the fugue gives and the music-historical context it is associated with. The composer's statement that the sonata is inspired by twelve-tone technique[144] and one critic's remark that it was *"[…] a work that seemingly is built on the new Viennese School, and appears more 'thought' than an immediate musically necessary unfolding…,"*[145] raise associations to far more chromatic processes. While extremely flexible, the widespread use of diatonic modes in the voice-leading brings a familiar element to the music that can be perceived as immediately meaningful both for performers and audiences and can, therefore, be an effective way of building and breaking tonal expectations.

I find the moments my expectations are broken, the single note that does not belong in the perceived diatonic mode but instead instigates the experience of a new tonal centre, to be particularly interesting. Such tones immediately stand out as significant, and the tension created by their unexpected appearance provides an emotional quality and expressivity that make their resolution appear tonally meaningful.

The section immediately following the *dux*, Figure 13, has a relatively stable tonality by Mortensen's standards.

[144] Nesheim, *Alltid på leting*, 96.

[145] "[…] et værk der øjensynlig bygger paa den nyere Wienerskole og forekommer mer «tænkt», end en umiddelbart musikalsk nødvendig udfoldelse…" "Norsk klavertalent," *Berlinske Tidende* October 23rd 1956.

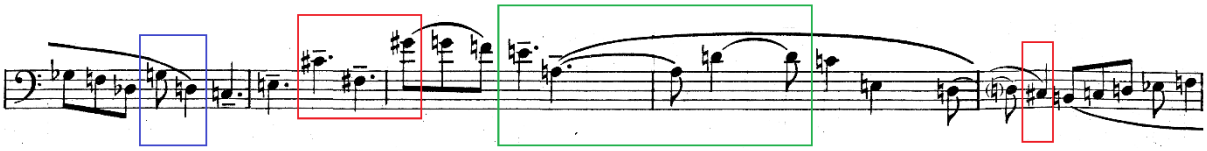

Figure 13. *Mortensen: Sonata, Op. 7, II. Fuga, lowest voice, bars 4-8*

The first two notes, G and D, marked in blue, seem to give the following C a tonical function, and the mode of C-major is kept for much of the following three bars, although some strong intervals (E – A – D) inject a hint of d minor, marked in green. I hear the C♯ - F♯ - G♯ interpolation and the final C♯, marked in red, of the phrase belonging to a separate and opposing tonal layer. The C♯, coming unexpectedly as a replacement for the anticipated C♮, makes more sense as a consequence of the C♯ - F♯ - G♯ movement as a I – IV – V progression in C♯. The C♯ and the B also create the perception of A as the central tone, a note which, similarly to the C♮, is never explicitly stated.

This stability of the C as the primary tonal centre, before it eventually moves to A, is an interesting example of how a single central tone can be felt over longer stretches, even past minor modulations and interpolations of opposing and distant tonalities. Thus, the C tonality takes on a higher structural significance over the 30 seconds this melodic line lasts. Similar effects are heard on several other occasions where tension is resolved to a less tense note that, nevertheless, is not the primary tonic.

While there are numerous examples of tonality serving minor structural functions in this fugue, the tonal language is largely dominated by free mobility, characterised by frequent and rapid changes of central tones[146] and a simultaneous plurality of tonal centres and diatonic modes.[147]

[146] Schönberg in his Theory of Harmony refers to *suspended* (aufgehoben) tonality where "at any particular moment, a key may be unmistakably expressed, yet so lacking in support that it can be lost at any time." Schönberg, *Theory of Harmony*, 384.

[147] It seems likely to me that Mortensen developed his contrapuntal language inspired by Fartein Valen's *dissonant counterpoint.* Olav Gurvin describes it as a reversed classical counterpoint («[…]omsnutt det klassiske polyfonigrunnlaget») where two primary voices meet in dissonances, and one or more additional voices («fyllerøyst») are added, which do not necessarily need to be dissonant to the other. Olav Gurvin, *Frå Tonalitet til Atonalitet* (Oslo: H. Aschehoug & Co, 1938), 80-81. This technique highlights each individual voice's autonomy, but their meeting points are nevertheless frequently important for the music's expression. In the excerpt from Mortensen's fugue, one of the places I find it particularly important is in bars 4-7, where *comes* and its counterpoint are circling around each other in dissonances. Another important place is the long, dissonant relationship between the two upper voices starting in bar 9 which is finally being resolved, significantly and uncharacteristically, in an open fifth on the downbeat in bar 13.

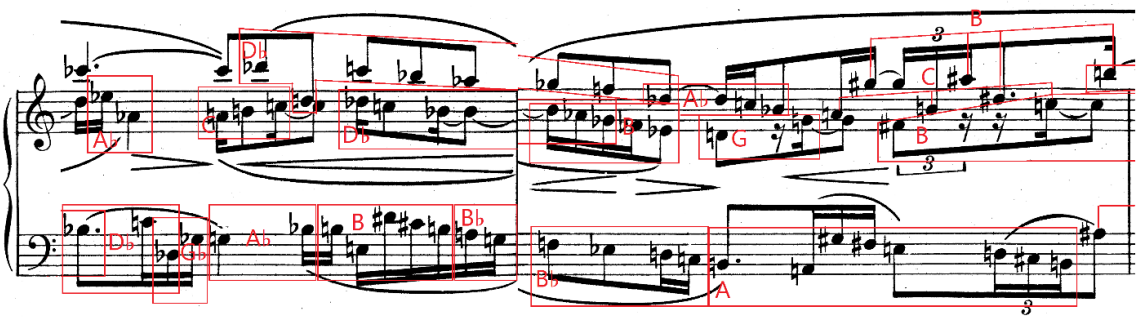

Figure 14. *Mortensen: Sonata, Op. 7, II. Fuga. Bars 10-11.*

The excerpt in **Figure 14** clearly shows the complex, mobile, and unstable nature of Mortensen's tonal language, and while it might appear chaotic, in my experience, it is far from void of tonal function. John Cage argues that "*The term, atonality, makes no sense [… because] present even in a random multiplicity of tones […] is a gravity. [… what is called atonal is] simply the maintenance of an ambiguous tonal state of affairs. It is the denial of harmony as a structural means" […and that] [f]reed from structural responsibility, harmony becomes a formal element (serves expression).*"[148] Cage's perspective can lead to insights into the function of Mortensen's tonality; while the tonality in this excerpt might serve little function from a structural standpoint, it can very much serve expression for a performer willing to go through the long process of discovery. The numerous abrupt jumps between distant modes that create expressive points for phrasing nuances and dynamic colour changes are particularly relevant.

Extreme tonal mobility is an essential element of Mortensen's mature language but originated as an important feature in his first published compositions. The opening of *Sonatina No. 2*, Op. 2, **Figure 15**, can illustrate the importance of tonal mobility within his tonal language in his early works.

The initial tonic, B, is immediately left in a way that makes it appear completely insignificant,[149] and through a series of whole-tone steps, the most remote key, F, is reached already in bar three. Then, the progression moves in major thirds through A and F to D♭; the D♭ acts as a dominant to the following C.[150] From the C, the movement continues in elaborated whole-tone steps

[148] John Cage, "Forerunners of modern music," in *The Boulez-Cage Correspondence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 40-41.

[149] This opening is felt very differently when played as a repetition, as the long F♯ section before the repetition makes the B tonality of the first bar sound much more like a tonic.

[150] Mortensen, similarly to Hindemith (for example in bars 16-17 in the first movement of his second piano sonata), frequently favours the use of the lowered second degree for cadential purposes in his early works. Hindemith in Hindemith, *The Craft of Musical Composition*, 142. refers to it as "*the mildest of all cadences*".

downward to F♯, which is later further established through a secondary dominant. It is hard to imagine a more elaborate way of getting from I to V than going via the tritone of both functions. It is, however, far from a unique example for the writings of the young Mortensen, which, I think, demonstrates that he already, to take up the tread from Cage, values *expression* over *structure*.

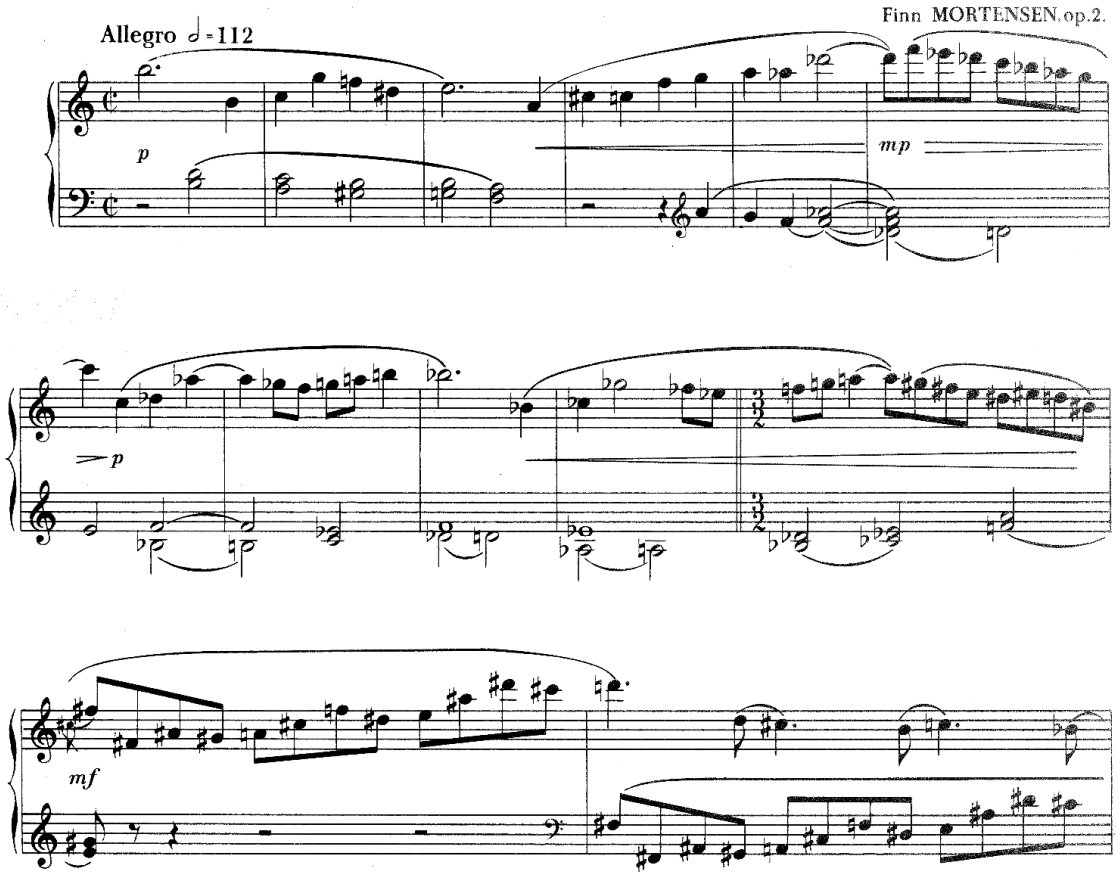

Figure 15. *Mortensen: Sonatina No 2, Op. 2, I. Allegro, bars 1-13.*

From a performer's perspective, it makes sense to me to focus on the colouring effect of the harmonic progressions in this *Sonatina* rather than the functionality and structural effect, the latter being usually reserved for only the most significant formal moments. I find, in particular, the second movement shows the composer's interest in and mastery of a complex and nuanced use of colours. This sonatina has become important for developing my perspective of Mortensen's music as containing a vibrant colour dimension. It has inspired me to explore similar dimensions in his later music, where it might be less immediately apparent but ultimately of no less importance.

The ending of the excerpt of the fugue from *Sonata,* Op. 7, shows yet another aspect of Mortensen's diatonism, **Figure 16**. This excerpt takes up the *textural ambiguity* from the head of the subject but in a different form. It can be understood and heard in tonal terms as two

separate lines, one in C major and one in C♯ major. I have found such an interpretation relevant for performance, bringing essential aspects of phrasing and form, but it is not the only relevant interpretation for the section. Similarly to the subject, much of the character and expressivity comes from an understanding that it is also a single line with large expressive intervals.

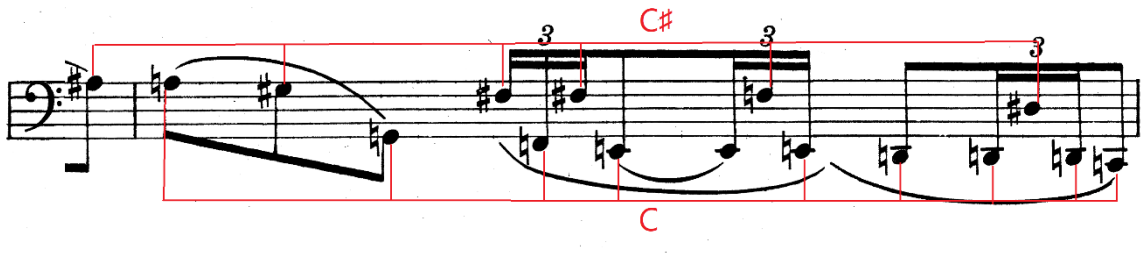

Figure 16. *Mortensen: Sonata, Op. 7, II. Fuga, lowest voice, bar 12.*

It seems to be a common feature in this fugue that a central tone is very rarely explicitly stated, and often the perception of a new central tone is created before it is reached. Many of the tonal centres that are reached are frequently displaced as octaves. The D in the subject, the A in the middle voice in bar 9, and the D♭ flat in the lowest voice in bar 10 are notable examples within this excerpt in **Figure 1**. While I used to think octavation was merely a technique to obscure the perception of the tones' connections,[151] I now find that the picture is somewhat more complicated in the context of a legato melody. While resolving a melodically dissonant tone to a less dissonant one through the means of a semi-tone, for example, the A♭-A in bar 9, is perceived as a tonally meaningful process, the octavation of the resolution may not only serve as a means to obscure this but can change the character of the note entirely. Frequently, I find that the feeling of an augmented octave played legato, as in this example, a major seventh or a minor ninth being similar, creates tension in itself and, in many cases, even more tension than the arrival to the central tone resolves.

His next piano piece after the *Sonata Op. 7, Fantasy and Fugue*, Op. 13 from 1958, highlights the Second Viennese School's profound influence on Mortensen even clearer. Nesheim writes, "*Fantasy and Fugue for piano is the first composition where he used twelve-tone technique, and is usually presented as Norway's first twelve-tone work."*[152] Interestingly, Bentzon and Mortensen seemingly agreed that the *Sonata, Op. 7,* already went *"too far"*[153] stylistically.

[151] Which may be true when notes are detached, as seen in Chapter 5.
[152] «Fantasi og fuge for klaver er den første komposisjonen der han tok i bruk tolvtoneteknikk, og er gjerne presentert som Norges første tolvtoneverk» Nesheim, "Modernismens døråpner i Norge," 27.
[153] Nesheim, "Modernismens døråpner i Norge," 194-5.

Mortensen wrote in a letter that *"somewhere between the quintet [Wind Quintet, Op. 4 (1951)] and the new sonata is my style. I think that is correct."*[154] However, it is difficult not to see the Fantasy and Fugue as further development away from the neo-classical idiom of his youth and towards a more internationally oriented, yet deeply personal, modernism.

Nevertheless, the piece is not the fundamental break with the composer's past as it has often been portrayed to be. Instead, it is further developing the same musical elements by a more mature, artistically and technically more secure composer.

The opening of the Fantasy, **Figure 17**, shows clearly that tonal thinking is still fundamental to his style.

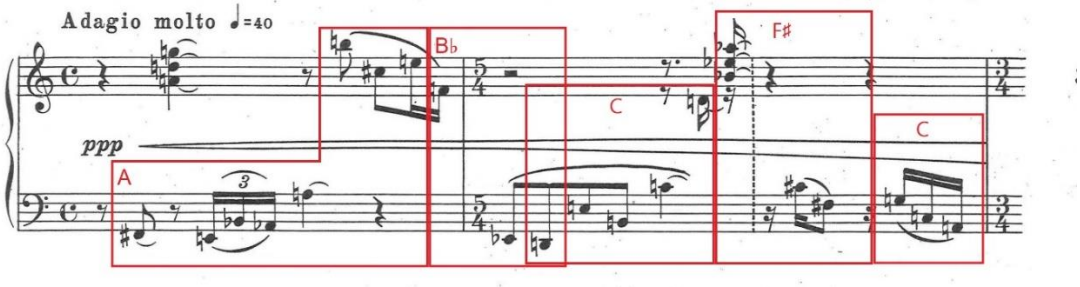

Figure 17. *Mortensen: Fantasy and Fugue, Op. 13, bars 1-2.*

With the tritone E - B♭ resolved via a double leading tone motive, the opening bass melody establishes A as the central tone, further enhanced through the B - C♯ - E diatonic movement. However, this tonal centre is broken by the F, and via E♭ and D, the tonal centre of B♭ is heard before we move further along, and C is established as a new centre. The relationship between the C-part and the interposing F♯ in the second half of the example appears very similar to the distant diatonic movements we have seen in the fugue of Op. 7, and the widespread diatonicism in this Fantasy heavily modifies this piece's status as a twelve-tone work. In the example, we see all twelve pitches presented within a thirteen-note span, the C being repeated but organised as opposing diatonic levels rather than as a series.

The absence of an identifiable series in this opus means this is not twelve-tone technique in any traditional sense but rather a highly modified version derived from Bentzon's *"free twelve-tone technique."*[155] This technique involves the composer working through a constant reshuffling of the aggregate rather than from a twelve-tone row that decides the ordering of the notes. The

[154] «Han (Niels Viggo Bentzon) mener at et eller annet sted mellom kvintetten og den nye sonaten ligger min stil, og jeg tror det er riktig.» In Nesheim, "Modernismens døråpner i Norge," 195.
[155] Niels Viggo Bentzon, *Tolvtoneteknik* (København: Wilhelm Hansen, 1953).

order of the notes does not follow any predetermined pattern, apart from a general rule that all twelve pitches are used before a new set of tones is started, a rule that, in Mortensen's case, is also frequently abandoned, either through repetitions or omissions of pitch-classes, or both.

This way, he breaks not only with the technique Schönberg describes[156] but also, to a certain degree, the intentions behind it.[157] This makes Op. 13 a piece where no discernible system governs the generation of the next note; it has no audible repetitions[158] and little recognisable thematic or motivic material, apart from a preference for specific intervals. Thus, the piece seems exceptionally intuitively composed around the overarching dynamic developmental scheme.[159] This does not necessarily mean that the music is as *"impossible to analyse"* as it has been said to be,[160] only that traditional twelve-tone analysis or motivic analysis are very unlikely to be the methods that give the most meaningful insights.[161]

While the analysis of the Fantasy clearly shows how this piece is, tonally speaking, a continuation of his previous musical project, in the corresponding Fugue, the topic appears to be less relevant. While it is possible, and maybe in some places useful, to analyse the fugue tonally, the technique being much the same as in the Fantasy, tonal aspects appear to play a much smaller musical role here. Contrary to the Fantasy, where I think my personal understanding of the tonality is of fundamental importance to my interpretation, the Fugue seem to have other musical dimensions, such as rhythmic drive and violent gestures, that take precedence and modify the felt impact of the tonality. Tonal considerations are then reduced to a more subordinate aspect of the interpretational work, although probably not irrelevant.

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[156] Arnold Schönberg, "Composition with Twelve Tones (1) (1941)," in *Style and Idea*, ed. Leonard Stein (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), 218-19.

[157] Schönberg explains (in ibid., 219-220) that a too early repetition of a note would put too much emphasis on a single pitch and *"there would arise the danger of interpreting the repeated tone as a tonic",* and that the *"basic set functions in the manner of a motive",* and in ordering both melodic and harmonic dimensions of the music *"gives it an effect of unity"*. Both these functions of the basic row disappear in Mortensen's technique.

[158] Disregarding the obvious fact that the second half of the fantasy is a note-by-note retrograde of the first half, mirrored around the central culmination.

[159] It should be noted that the corresponding fugue, with its recognisable subject, which is subsequently broken down into, to some degree identifiable, motives is a slightly different story to the Fantasy, although, also here, the vast majority of the material seems to follow no specific pre-described system.

[160] See Nesheim, *Alltid på leting*, 219.

[161] I have elaborated on Mortensen's twelve-tone technique in chapter 7

Tritones

In the excerpt from the fugue of *Sonata,* Op. 7 in **Figure 1**, there are multiple occurrences of tritones. In some ways, the tritone can be regarded as having the opposite function of a fifth. Berit Kvinge Tjøme argues while analysing Fartein Valen's music that the tritone *"takes over a considerable part of the form-decisive element in non-tonal music",* and functions either as an *"element of harmonic polarity"*, a *"non-tonic"*, or *"a contribution to an effect of the Dominant"*[162] which gives it a cadential property. She argues that the examples she provides from Valen's music *"give reason to assert that the tritone in certain cases might exhibit strong harmonic implications"*.[163]

Mortensen was very aware of and exploited the cadential properties of the tritone from early on in his production, although the first tritone in the fugue, D♭-G in bar 4, see the lowest voice, **Figure 12**, shows a disregard for the four possible resolutions of a tritone given by Hindemith.

Figure 18. *Illustration from Hindemith: "The craft of Musical Composition", 89.*

Rather than the customary halftone resolution of the second note to one that would be consonant with the first note, Mortensen opts for a retrospective resolution of the melodic tension by returning to a note a fourth away, but one that is a chromatic resolution of the first note. The result is the perception that the final D is not the central tone but instead defines the previous G as the centre. This way, he establishes the relationship while never arriving at the tonic and, therefore, not losing the music's movement forward. The definition of G as the central tone does, in this case, point towards the following C as the proper tonic.

There are other examples where the cadential properties of the tritones are weakened without them losing their function entirely. For example, the F♯-C movement in bar 11 reaches its anticipated resolution but only after an interpolated *echappée* (the D), Figure 19.

[162] Berit Kvinge Tjøme, "The articulation of sonata form in atonal works by Fartein Valen: analysis of his Violin concerto, op. 37 and Symphony no. 3, op. 41" (Ph.D. Universitetet i Oslo, 2002), 180.
[163] Ibid., 182

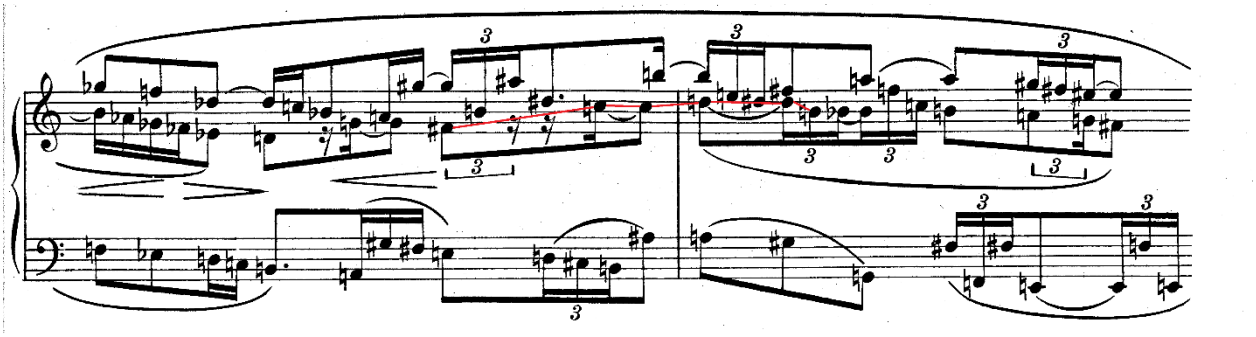

Figure 19. *Mortensen: Sonata, Op. 7, II. Fuga, bars 11-12.*

Already in the *Sonatina,* Op. 1, the tritone is so prominent that one could argue that the entire work can be seen as an exploration of its cadential properties, and as a performer, one must reflect on it and explore them with Mortensen.

The subject from *III. Fuga,* **Figure 20**, is so heavily saturated with the tritone, D -A♭, B – F, and D♭ - G, that the dominant function to C of the entire subject is unmistakable.

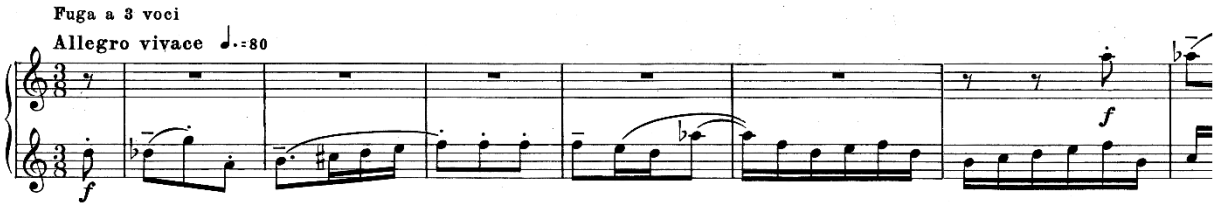

Figure 20. *Mortensen: Sonatina No. 1, Op. 1, III. Fuga a 3 voci, Allegro Vivace, subject.*

The following examples show how the tritone is used to modulate between distantly related tonalities rapidly. The first, **Figure 21**, from the opening of the development section in the first movement, contains a brief modulation from G, as the dominant of C, to F♯.

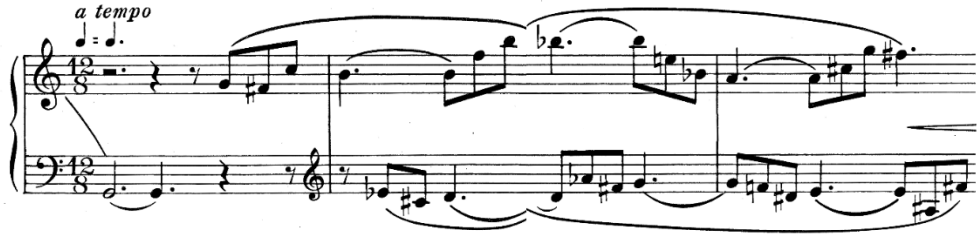

Figure 21. *Mortensen: Sonatina No 1, Op. 1, I. Allegro, bars 27-29.*

In **Figure 22**, Mortensen uses several consecutive tritones to illustrate a chain of dominants modulating in fifths from A-major to F-major. Both examples foreshadow the tremendous tonical mobility so fundamental to his modern style.

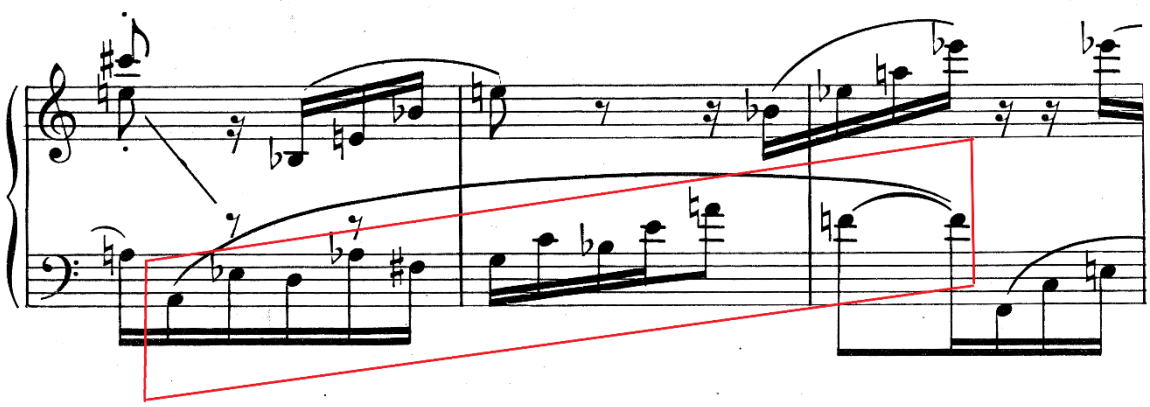

Figure 22. *Mortensen: Sonatina No 1, Op. 1, III. Fuga a 3 voci, Allegro Vivace, bars 26-28.*

Interestingly, the tritone, so crucial to Op. 1, is almost absent from *Sonatina*, Op. 2, with the direct form of the interval being virtually non-existent, both harmonically and melodically. Instead, the composer explores less open forms of the interval. One way to develop the tritone relationship, typical for Mortensen, is to reach the tritone via a series of whole-tone steps. This series is presented in the first bars of Op. 2 and further developed as an essential motivic element throughout the *Sonatina.* In the initial presentation, the motive is more hidden but can nevertheless act as a vital shaping force of the three-bar-phrase. In addition, the unresolved end might affect how the performer shapes the continuation into the following phrase.

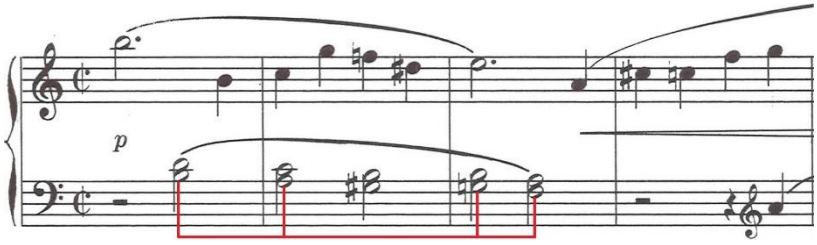

Figure 23. *Mortensen: Sonatina No. 2, Op. 2, I. Allegro, bars 1-4.*

Figure 24 shows a more typical and straightforward example from the third movement. The motive in the left hand is resolved chromatically into the fifth of a D-major seventh chord, and the two motives in the right hand are also resolved chromatically but chained together, achieving a modulatory effect.

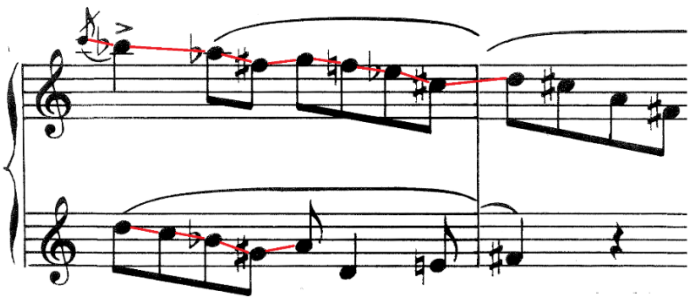

Figure 24. *Mortensen: Sonatina No. 2, Op. 2, III. Allegro vivace, bars 17-18.*

In the shape of four whole-tone steps, the tritone is one of the four motivic elements presented in the first three bars of the Sonatina, Op. 2, the others being the fifth, the chromatic neighbour notes, and the major seventh.

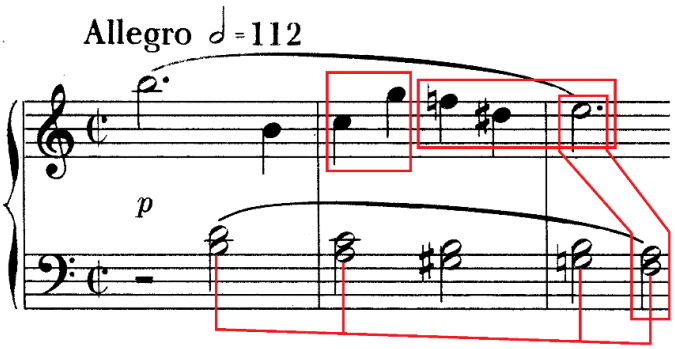

Figure 25. *Mortensen: Sonatina No. 2, Op. 2, I. Allegro, bars 1-3.*

These motives are so omnipresent that there is barely a single moment, melodic phrase or harmony that is not marked by one or several of them. I think it is not coincidental that these same motives also form an essential part of Valen's music, both melodically and harmonically, **Figure 26**.

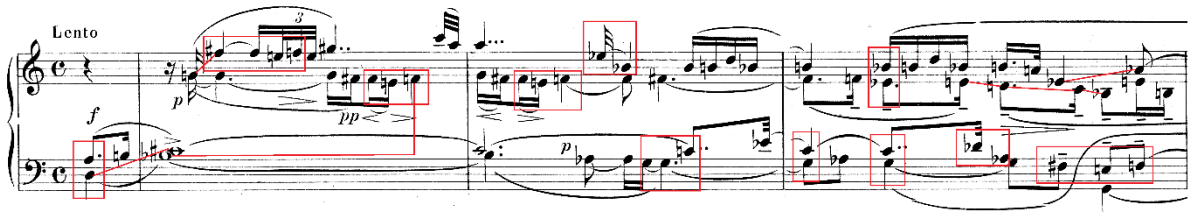

Figure 26. *Valen: Intermezzo, Op. 36, bars 1-3, with highlighted motives.*

Noticing these similarities between the early Mortensen and the mature Valen became a starting point for me to explore what I perceived as a duality between the neo-classical and the Valen-inspired style in Mortensen's earlier pieces. Far from being a copyist, who studies other's music

to imitate it, Mortensen can be more precisely described as an 'assimilator'. He learned from others but then completely reshaped what he had learned into a very personal and idiosyncratic expression that changed and developed over time but was seemingly always rooted in a personal and intimate desire for musical expression. The two early sonatinas already show signs of assimilation from various sources, and I find that a pure neo-classical view of them is too simplistic and superficial. An attempt at approaching the side of them that points forward and strives towards the expressive style of his later pieces became a vital part of my process of interpreting the two sonatinas.

While Valen's motives form the foreground of his music and are brought into focus, Mortensen's use of the motives remains primarily unnoticed. They work purely in the background, and any attempts at bringing them to the foreground by emphasising them, or making them more audible in other ways, only lead to an awkward-sounding and artificial performance. However, by treating them as small units of tonal reflection and experimentation, they will gradually assert a function of gravitational tonal shaping, adding many nuances to the pieces' neo-classical surface.

There are several occurrences of the same motive with four whole tones in the excerpt from the fugue of Op. 7. One of these occurrences, albeit not a very strong one, can be found in bars 3-4, **Figure 4**, as part of the diatonic descent in the subject: C-B♭-A♭-G♭, being chromatically resolved to F. Two other whole-tone-motives appear immediately following the *comes*, Figure 27, first B♭-Ab-G♭-Fb-Eb and the D-C-B♭-A♭-A. In both cases, because of their matric placement, the two last notes take the character of an appoggiatura with their chromatic resolutions.

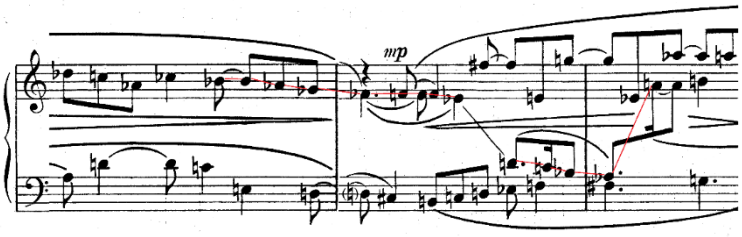

Figure 27. *Mortensen: Sonata, Op. 7, II. Fuga, bars 7-9.*

There are two simultaneous, more extended versions of the whole-tone motives in bars 10 and 11, **Figure 28**, in the middle and lower voices and another important one leading into this part's

final cadence in the upper voice in bar 12, which, although they no longer outlines a tritone, seem to serve much the same tonal function.[164]

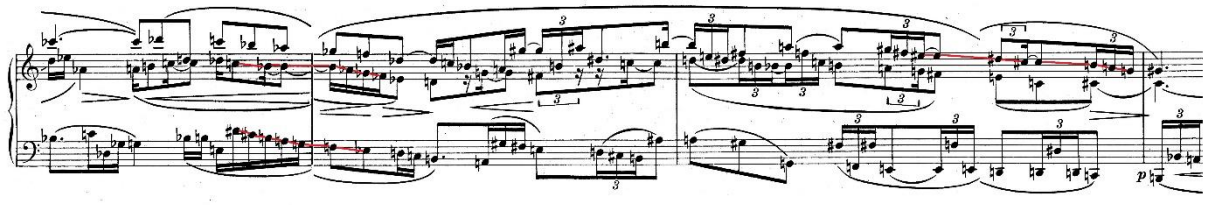

Figure 28. *Mortensen: Sonata, Op. 7, II. Fuga, bars 10-12*

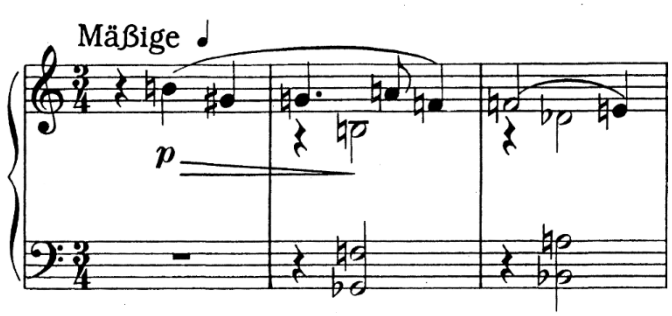

Figure 29. *Schönberg, Drei Klavierstücke, Op. 11, no. 1, bars 1-3*

This linear usage of the tritone is reminiscent of the opening of Arnold Schönberg's piano piece Op. 11, no 1. The opening melody, **Figure 29**, made up of two three-tone motives, outlines a tritone B-F, with the tones G and A filling out the gap, giving a variation of the same four-tone motive as in the examples from Mortensen. The second F, falling on the first beat of the bar, is easily perceived as an appoggiatura, a moment of significant tension that is resolved into the E. Adding the G♯ gives more colour to the motive, as it creates an additional expressivity on the G, which also falls on a downbeat. This addition does not, however, in my mind, diminish the function of B - F - E as the most meaningful cadence.

Double, Chromatic Neighbour Notes

The motive of the double, chromatic, neighbour note played a significant role as a cadential pattern in Mortensen's voice-leading throughout his entire career. Its functionality as a cadential pattern is not universal and clear-cut but depends heavily on the perception of the initial notes. In the following excerpt from the fugue of Op. 7, **Figure 30**, the few occurrences of the motive are, however, rather straightforward, both in the middle voice in bars 8-9 and the upper voice in bars 12-13, although the octave displacement complicates the former.

[164] Mortensen frequently does not resolve the fourth tone, the one that is a tritone from the starting note, but rather continues in whole steps,where the tonal tension seems transferred and often intensified. This example contains one motive moving from C to F♭ which is resolved into E♭, and one going a full octave from D♯ to E♭, being resolved into a D. On this occasion he accually hints at the effect by writing a crescendo up to the meeting point between F♭ and E♭.

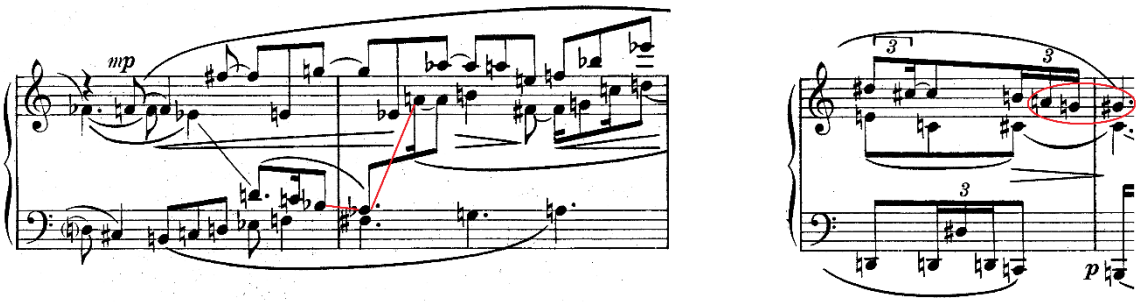

Figure 30. *Mortensen: Sonata, Op. 7, II. Fuga, bars 8-9, and 12-13.*

As described earlier, the motive's second note is part of a linear tritone and thus constitutes a tension resolved into the final tone. Often, the motive is used this way: one or both neighbour notes are chromatically resolved dissonances. In bar 16 of the fugue, **Figure 31**, however, there are five occurrences of the motive, all of which appear to have a different function. Rather than circling the resolution, the neighbour notes have a relatively low degree of tension. However, the final note of each motive introduces a new tonality and colour, and the circling movement acts as a smooth, subtle way of doing so.

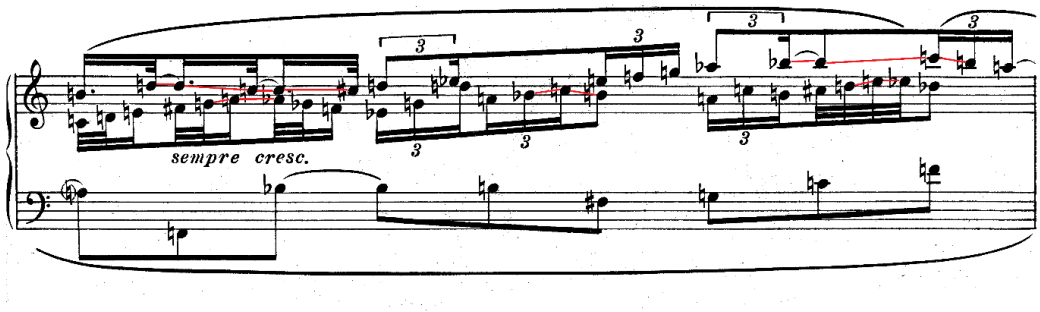

Figure 31. *Mortensen: Sonata, Op. 7, II. Fuga, bar 16.*

I find Fartein Valen's use of this motive in the opening of *Intermezzo,* Op. 36 very interesting. The first bar contains two motives built around the idea of the double chromatic neighbour note.

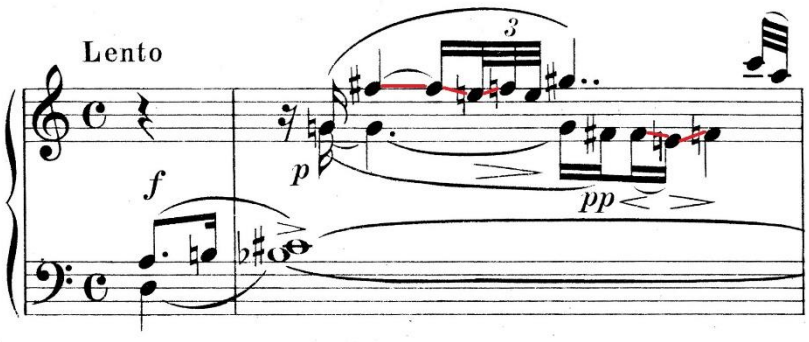

Figure 32. *Valen, Intermezzo, Op. 36, bar 1.*

The first one comes from F♯, the second note in a major seventh leap, which is in itself an important motive in this *Intermezzo,* followed by the notes E and F as a gesture leading into the G♯. The second

one starts with the G, the first note in the previously mentioned seventh-leap, goes through F♯ and E, and ends eventually on F. Both these motives I hear very strongly influenced by E as the tonic,[165] which makes the Fs, as the final central notes in both of the double chromatic neighbour note motives, very expressive. In clear opposition to the E-tonality, the Fs appear very tense and dissonant in the linear context. Still, being the perfect fifth of the underlying B♭, it is by far the most consonant note seen from a harmonic context, fulfilling a B♭-minor triad.[166]

This double function as simultaneous consonance and dissonance raises interesting questions regarding the balance between how we perceive the note's horizontal and vertical properties. While I think it is vital for a performer to perceive both aspects of this duality, the horizontal character as a dissonance often weighs heavier for me, not least because I hear the initial enharmonic equivalence to a minor third (B♭-C♯), not as the two lowest notes of a B♭-minor triad but rather with the brightness of an incomplete F♯-major chord, something that also fundamentally changes how I perform the initial motive.[167] The F thus becomes not a fulfilment of one triad but a leading tone to another and much more anticipated triad, which is only eventually and, as the lowest voice has already moved on only retrospectively, reached in the second bar, **Figure 33**.

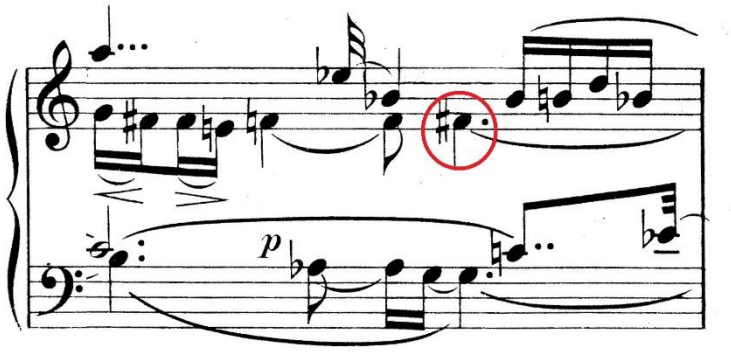

Figure 33. *Valen Intermezzo, Op. 36, bar 2.*

[165] When I started working on this piece, the final E of the piece appeared to be a very significant arrival, and one of the big questions concerning the structure of the piece was how this feeling was created, taking into consideration the clear references to a D-tonality at the beginning of every part of the piece. I now believe the E tonality is present already from the beginning of the piece, and it is interesting to see how the melodic motives from the opening phrase are eventually redefined as a structurally functional bassline pointing towards the final E.

[166] Having some form of ambiguity or contradiction between the horizontal and the vertical dimensions seems to be a typical trait in Valen's music. Another example is the bright perception of the C♯ of the opening motive due to it melodically being a major third, despite it, harmonically, sounding like a minor third.

[167] Adding to the perception of a major mode is also the A-B- C♯ ascent.

The uses of the double, chromatic neighbour notes in the tenor voice in bars three and four are, however, leading to a dissonance whether you regard them horizontally or vertically.

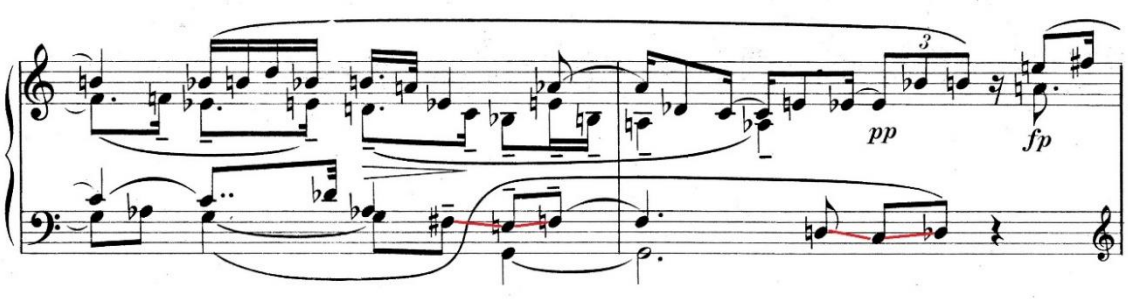

Figure 34. *Valen Intermezzo, Op. 36, bars 3-4.*

The first occurrence, F♯ - E – F, gets an extra dimension as the final F is now a minor seventh from the long G in the bass and, together with B and A♭, as part of a dominant ninth chord in C. In the second occurrence, D-C-D♭, I perceive the C-tonality as fundamental to the melodic shaping. The final D♭, which is also a tritone to the still present G, gives the ending of this section a distinctive quality, which remains through the following rest and is a key component in the transition into the next phrase. As mentioned in Chapter 1, I find these kinds of transitions particularly significant as they can quickly become dead points where the feeling of musical continuity can be replaced by mere emptiness due to a lack of perceived continuity, and the performer's perception of the lingering tension can help solve this problem.

Performing Mortensen's Tonality

Through this chapter, I have attempted to put focus on an aspect of Mortensen's music that has been largely ignored in the existing literature but that I think has profoundly influenced my interpretation and performance of his music.

The aims of this chapter are manifold. Firstly, I wanted to document a more perception-based and personal approach to basic elements of Mortensen's musical language than research has previously managed and thus demonstrate the plausibility of less platonic approaches to his music. I have frequently found that attempts at conveying the expressivity of Mortensen's melodic writing through applying prelearned solutions, whether pianistic or musical, somehow do not work for me. The result usually gave me the feeling of imposing elements from a different style, and while displaying the outer signs of expressivity, it felt empty and insincere.

Secondly, I wanted to illustrate how an understanding of how Mortensen was influenced by and assimilated knowledge from various sources has resulted in new perspectives on Mortensen's music. Realising the similarities in tonal handling between Mortensen, Schönberg, and Valen has not only been instrumental in developing insights into Mortensen's mature music but has also given me a new appreciation of his earlier pieces.

Thirdly, by finding similarities in tonal treatment throughout his output between pieces of otherwise wildly contrasting aesthetics, I have found ideas in one piece that had consequences for my understanding of other of Mortensen's pieces, regardless of style and period.

Lastly, by discussing some of the techniques and cadential patterns he used to create his tonality, I hope to give anyone else attempting to approach the complexity of Mortensen's music a better starting point than I had.

I don't think, however, that it can work as anything more than a starting point, partly because words cannot convey any actual experience of Mortensen's dynamic and complex tonal language and partly because the knowledge that can be conveyed does not readily lend itself to decision-making of an interpretative and performative nature. Rather than trying to answer questions concerning interpretations, I think it is necessary for performers to go into a personal long-term analytical process to build a more physical and emotional relationship with how one experiences each tone's tonal relations. Only by doing such work do I think the tonal analysis can have an important musical effect on performance.

Listening back today to some of my earlier recordings in the project, whether of Valen, Schönberg or Mortensen, I can detect a lack of attention to tonal coherence in my approach, and while I would not *do* anything differently today, I think my intervening work on the topic would make it *sound* differently. I think my two recordings of the *Fuga* of Op. 7, made four years apart, can go some way towards illustrating this point.[168] While they are very similar on the surface, showing much the same spirit and basic aesthetic understanding, there are many subtle differences in the details caused by my gaining a deeper understanding of the tonality during the intervening years. The differences are manifested not only in a more individualistic shaping of the various voices but also in a better and more nuanced legato articulation and general tone production, as well as subtle nuances in timing, all of which would be impossible to make through conscious decisions. Although the differences are slight, I think the second recording has an increased intensity and stronger sense of meaning and purpose, while I, in the first one, can detect a certain superficiality and emptiness.

The tonality I experience in Mortensen's fugue differs from how tonality is traditionally understood. Firstly, it is a more linear, melodic phenomenon rather than a harmonic one, and it is primarily a locally working expressive force rather than a global structural force. More importantly, however, it is because Mortensen departs both from the historically established practice of which tonality has traditionally been created and how it is used, making it very difficult, if not impossible, to analyse it using traditional methods.

Mortensen's contrapuntal technique creates a strong sense of tonal hierarchy, a web of relations between tones, where some are perceived as having more tension while others seem to resolve the tension. I found that with a stronger perception of these relations came a new understanding of the direction and shape of the lines. What at first glance appeared as 'grey' lines moving purposelessly around seemed more and more meaningful, and every note appeared to have its place, its own function and meaning within the phrases.

I have come to believe that every note in Mortensen's music is chosen, at least in part, because of the composer's great sense of tonal understanding, and, in my experience, it makes a fundamental difference to a performer to gain a similar understanding, albeit to a varying degree. Sometimes the tonality seems unimportant, maybe even imperceptible, overshadowed by other more dominant parameters, while sometimes, it can make all the difference between a

[168] https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/778684/2088394#tool-2088436 and https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/778684/2124386#tool-2168467.

musically meaningful performance and the playing of seemingly random notes. I find that for it to have an effect, it is necessary to analyse it from within the music, to develop and reflect upon the experience of what can be heard and felt rather than what can be read. I believe it is fundamental to modern music's performance to develop this into more conscious and systematic practice-based analytical methods rather than relying on numerous, casual observations as I initially did. I think, however, that such a process will be different for every performer, as will the understanding of the material and the sounding result. Therefore, such a process will not lead to a standardised, positivistic performance but rather to more diversified, individual and personal interpretations.

Chapter 3 - *"Fondu", "Textural Ambiguity"*, and a Re-Evaluation of Colour in Mortensen's Music

Mortensen's notation does not reveal many of his intentions regarding sound production, harmonic colours and pedal use, and his music has often been performed rather articulated and dry.

In this chapter, I look at two concepts that serve to re-evaluate some of his music's resonant properties. Firstly, I look at the idea of *'fondu'*, borrowed from Maurice Ravel, that extinguishes the perception of individual tones but instead puts focus on the timbral effect of collections of tones.

Secondly, I discuss the *'textural ambiguity'* I often perceive in Mortensen's structures, where the dichotomy between harmony and melody becomes blurred, and the structures assume the simultaneous properties of melody, polyphony, and harmony, a perspective that leads to new ways of hearing them.

On the background of these two concepts, I discuss Mortensen's pedal notation. While he only indicated the use of pedal in a few extreme examples, Erika Haase's personal score of the *Phantasie für Klavier und Orchester*, Op. 27, suggests that he tolerated, or indeed expected, at times very generous pedalling.

Mortensen's harmonic material seems often devised from a perspective of autonomous timbre and colour properties and appears often emancipated from melody and voice-leading. As such, it defies an automatic treatment, and instead, the performer must treat each chord's timbral qualities and possibilities individually and experimentally.

Fondu

Upon starting to work on the *Sonata*, Op. 7, I realised that reflections around the nature of the sound, particularly the handling of the numerous trills in the first movement, *Quasi Una Fantasia*, would play a significant role in how the sonata appears to a listener. The movement contains 48 out of the 49 trills in Mortensen's piano literature,[169] and the performer's handling of them significantly impacts the unique sound this movement has in Mortensen's oeuvre. My supervisor, Håkon Austbø, told me that he had always seen something of Maurice Ravel in the numerous trills, seeing them as related to Ravel's comment *« le trémolo très fondu »* in bar 112 of *"Une barque sur l'océan"* from *Miroirs*.[170]

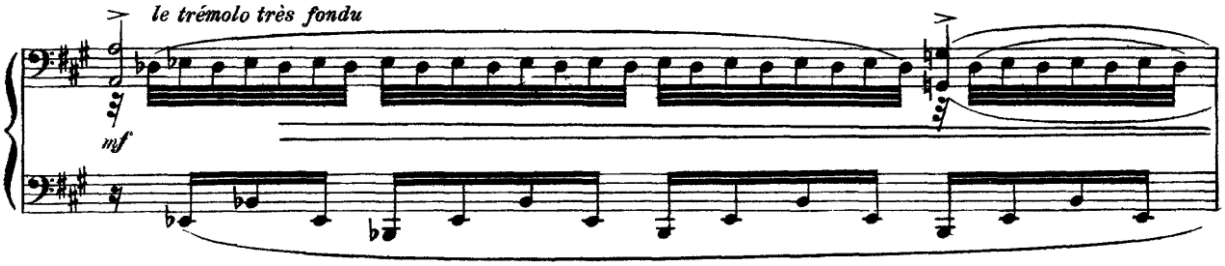

Figure 35. *Ravel : Miroirs: Une barque sur l'océan, bar 112.*

These tremolos, forming part of Ravel's depiction of the shimmering fluidity of the ocean, move the focus away from individual notes to their combined sound.

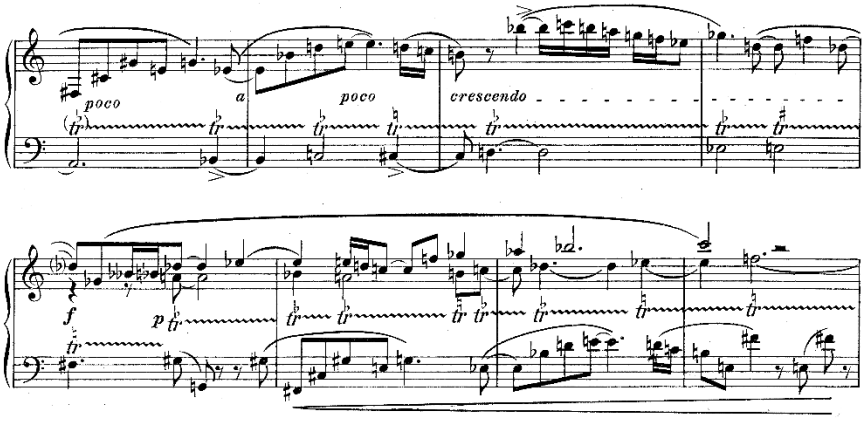

Figure 36. *Mortensen: Sonata, Op. 7, I. Quasi una fantasia, bars 14-21.*

Mortensen's trills, **Figure 36**, become, with such inspiration, not distinct and well-articulated ornaments but a sonority where individual tones are indistinguishable from each other. They function not only as a background for the lyrical melody, where each note change instigates a slight colour change, but also, through their constantly raising motion, as a driving force of increasing

[169] The final trill is at the end of the second movement of the same sonata

[170] Miroirs: Une barque sur l'océan" from Maurice Ravel, Piano Masterpieces of Maurice Ravel - Reprint of first edition, E. Demets, Paris, 1906 (Dover, 1986), bar 112.

intensity and are thus instrumental in the disposition of the build-up of the energy, and the large-scale dramatic shape of the piece.

The final trill of the movement is eventually, in bars 33-44, transformed into a sequence of scales, which continue the character of *fondu* but transform it into something different. The scales, constantly growing in range and dynamics, as well as constantly changing in colour through the numerous, sudden changes in modes, are, however, not the brilliant, virtuosic passages one might immediately read from the score but rather a misty background for the melody, where individual notes decrease in importance, and may not even be distinguishable. Instead, the various properties only perceptible from the notes' combinations become the most important.

As a comparison between my recording of this piece and the one by Elisabeth Klein[171] can attest to, this approach leads to a very different auditive effect, and the entire section leaves an entirely different musical impression. For me, however, this was to have consequences far beyond the performances of Op. 7 and seems to me to have consequences for my understanding of various parts in virtually all his subsequent piano pieces, leading me to re-evaluate my notions about sound in Mortensen's music in general.

The Ambiguity of Mortensen's Texture

In the Fantasy of *Fantasy and Fugue*, Op. 13, the composer opened up the possibility of using the sustaining pedal by notating open-ended slurs. Upon starting my work on this piece, it was, however, far from obvious to me how this should be executed. How long should the pedal be? When and how far should it be pressed down or changed? In other words: which notes should be sounding together? As a mere instigator of instrumental action, Mortensen's notation is very imprecise, ambiguous and insufficient.

As the work progressed, however, I realised that the notation was probably not meant as mere performance instructions which told me what to do or how it should be played. Instead, the effect of the notation is to hint at a layer of harmonic content one might otherwise overlook due to the strict linear appearance of the notation.

[171] https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/778684/2088394#tool-2088435 and Elisabeth Klein. *Contemporary Music from Norway*, Philips 6507 058, 1977.

Appreciating the potential for harmonic qualities made me start experimenting with the texture differently than earlier. It was no longer the linear or melodic aspects I focused on but the textural and timbral mixture of combinations of notes.

The diverse harmonic material revealed is, however, not easily approachable. In an interview with Daniel Barenboim, Pierre Boulez elaborates on the difference between working on modern repertoire versus older music:

> *"You have to clarify the situation much more than before. Because it is certainly less obvious, […] what is important, what is less important. [...] Which is the difference between Mahler and Berg, for instance, that Berg -, the chords are unknown, so you have to do with objects, you have to identify each time."*[172]

Just as Boulez found in Berg, I discovered that in the Fantasy, harmonies I was previously unfamiliar with needed to be 'identified'. The harmonies often have a level of ambiguity and do not have a start and an end but constantly merge and evolve through subtle changes. Also, the progressions between them, which were often unusual, and relied on no predetermined system or theory, needed to be explored regarding their timbral and colour effect. Through this experimental-analytical process, my perception and understanding of the piece changed and grew.

I found the diverse structures that made up this piece were rarely readily determinable as melody, polyphony, or harmony. They are usually better described as somewhere on a spectrum between these extremities or as a simultaneous combination of these various properties.

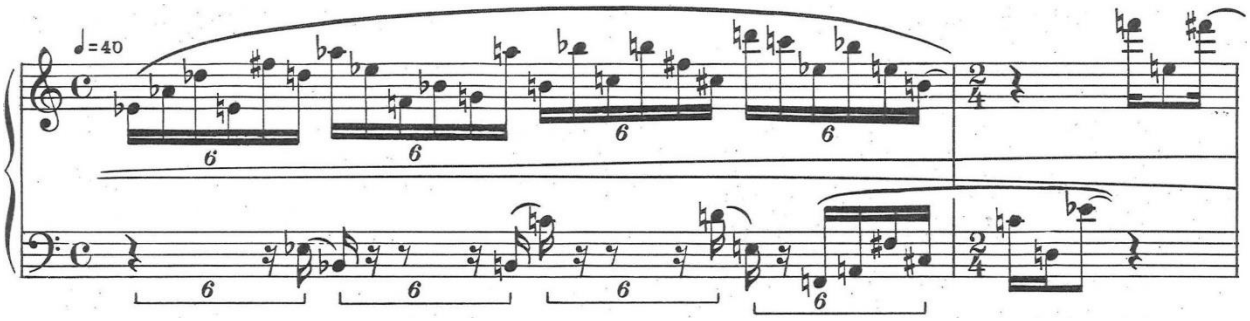

Figure 37. *Mortensen: Fantasy and Fugue, Op. 13, bars 8-9.*

[172] Boulez, *Barenboim im Gespräch mit Pierre Boulez über zeitgenössische Musik*.

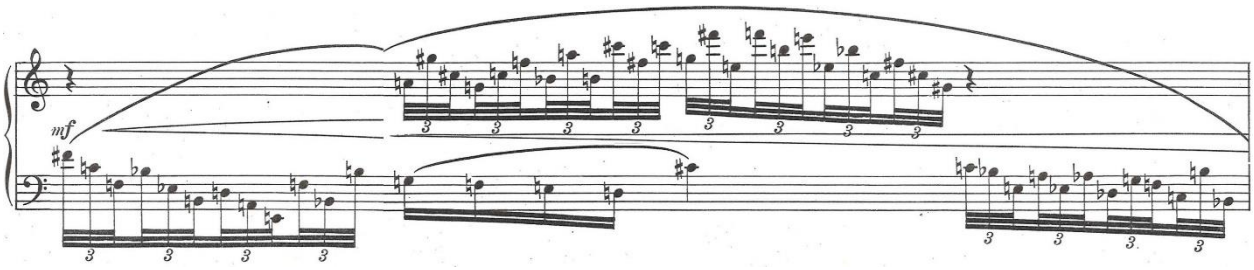

Figure 38. *Mortensen: Fantasy and Fugue, Op. 13, bar 14.*

Figure 37 and **Figure 38** show just two of the many examples of figures in this piece that cannot be texturally determined but whose characteristics remain ambiguous. While the figures in both examples have some element of singular linearity, compound melodies and harmony, they also show how flexible the relationship between the components is and how the character of their relationship depends on tempo.

I have tried to perform the first example with more focus on the singular and compound melodic elements, thus giving it a combination of melodic expressivity and harmonic colours. However, in the second example, the diminution of the note values shifts the balance and puts more focus on the sound-cloud properties of the figure. At the same time, the melodic elements, while I think still present, become less pronounced.

Throughout the piece, each figure's melodic, tonal, polyphonic, harmonic, timbral, and even metric qualities needed individual exploration, both with regard to how they worked autonomously and, more importantly, how they, horizontally and vertically, combined into a whole. This experimental, analytical process was not directly focused on finding a way to perform the piece but on developing new methods and abilities to perceive the complexity of the ambiguous texture.

My increased perception of this textural ambiguity significantly impacted the direction my performance of this piece would take. To convey the subtle nuances of the melodic tonality, the timbre of the implied harmonies, the colour changes throughout the progressions, and the relationships between notes of similar or different functions, I experimented with different ways of pedalling. How and when to change, how deep the pedal is depressed, and how one can hold down specific notes with fingers across pedal changes are all elements that affect our perception of the harmonic material of the piece. Maurice Ravel famously said that the *"pedal is the*

orchestrator of the piano,"[173] a principle that became essential for me in exploring Mortensen's sound world.

However, the pedal alone cannot convey an understanding of the complexity of Mortensen's textural ambiguity. A note aimed at harmonically blending with the previous or following notes can be played with a very different touch from one meant to succeed or precede another note melodically.

Marguerite Long quotes Claude Debussy in saying that *"One must forget that the piano has hammers"*[174], and I have often aimed at a similar light, almost immaterial touch, in places that, in my understanding, have interesting, harmonically colourful content, rather than a well-articulated, weight-based attack. The attack needed is further complicated by considering the fluctuation of differences in balance between the melodic and the harmonic material, as well as between the voices in the polyphonic material, development in dynamics, changes in temporal flow and alterations in metric perception.

All this work aimed to simultaneously expand my perception of the different ways of hearing the structures and finding ways of expressing them at the instrument. The experiments thus became more a building of musical imagination and creativity aimed at expanding what I could hear in my inner ear than it was a physical, mechanical work guided by my inner ear.

Mortensen and Pedal

It is interesting to note that Mortensen extremely rarely wrote indications for using the sustaining pedal. Apart from those hinted at in Op. 13, there only exist six unmistakable markings on when to apply pedal throughout his entire piano production, all of which are in the soft parts of *Piano Piece*, Op. 28. Three are almost entirely redundant and more or less evident from the rest of the notation. The lack of pedal markings elsewhere does, however, not necessarily mean that the composer intended no use of pedal elsewhere.

During her work on premiering the *Phantasie für Klavier und Orchester*, Op. 27, Erika Haase points out the clarity Mortensen wanted from his performers. *"The important thing for him was to purify and intensify emotions that at the same time should appear with crystal-clear*

[173] In Håkon Austbø, Interpreting Ravel - cover text for Maurice Ravel - complete works for piano, (2018).
[174] Long Marguerite Long, *At the piano with Debussy*, trans. Olive Senior-Ellis (London: Littlehampton Book Services Ltd, 1972), 13.

sharpness […].”[175] Any mention of the word ‘clarity’ in connection with modern music can quickly lead to a mechanical emphasis on every note in isolation. However, such a reading seems repeatedly opposed by the handwritten comments in Haase’s score[176], particularly in the solo cadenza (pp. 69-72).

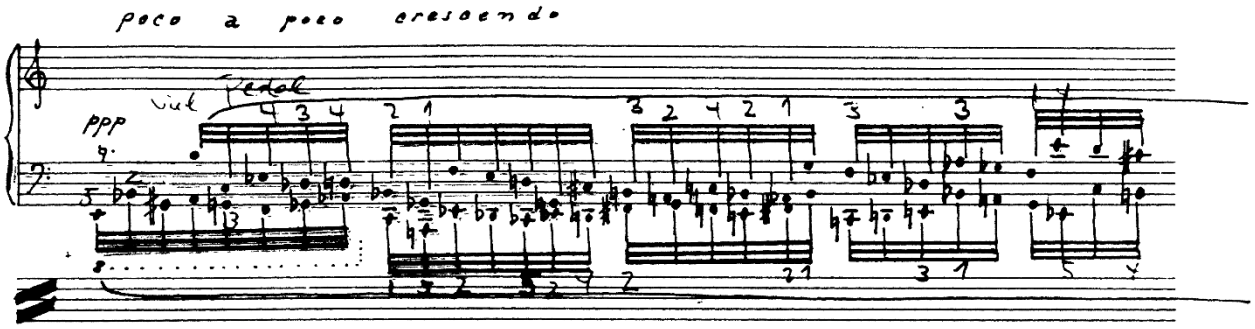

Figure 39. *Mortensen: Phantasie für Klavier und Orchester, Op. 27, p. 71.*

In the long 32-note sequence starting on page 71, **Figure 39**, her notes contain the words ‘viel Pedal’, revealing an idea I think is very similar to Austbø’s ‘fondu’. Applying a lot of pedal transforms the section from rapid virtuosic runs into something that might be better described as a dynamically movable mass.

Also, the previous section of the cadenza, **Figure 40**, contains some very generous pedal markings.

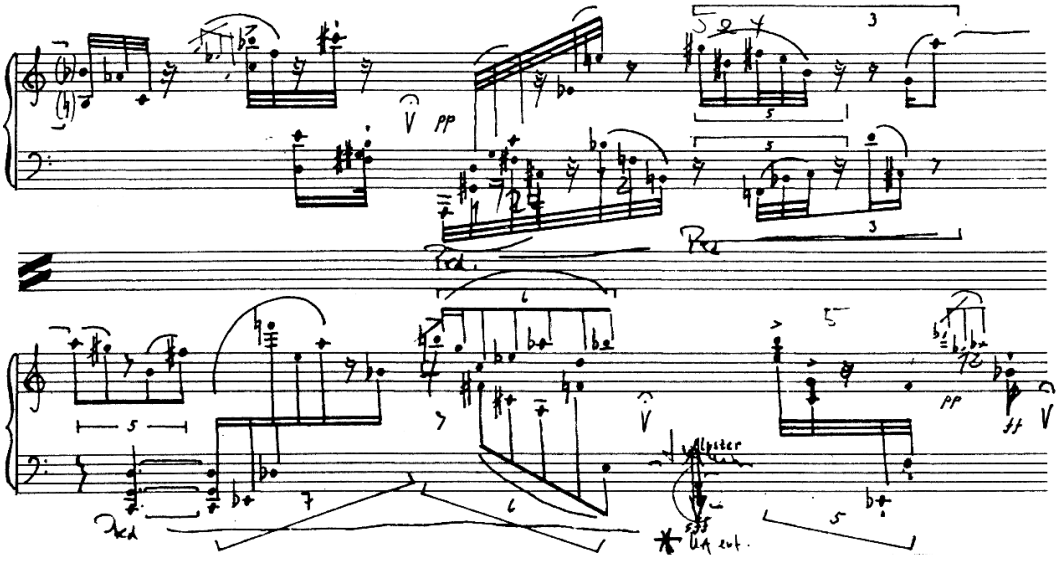

Figure 40. *Mortensen: Phantasie für Klavier und Orchester, Op. 27, p. 70.*

[175] «Det vesentligste for ham var å rendyrke og intensivere følelser som samtidig skulle fremstå med krystallklar skarphet […])» Nesheim, *Alltid på leting*, 194.

[176] She seems to have studied and performed the piece from the same score that is today available from NB noter.

The three long pedal markings in this example indicate that her understanding of the structures is, at least in part, harmonic and that a stereotypical, instrument-technical understanding of 'clarity' would contradict this musical idea.

Mortensen seems to have reserved the explicit pedal indications for very few extreme cases, where what he was after is something a performer would be unlikely to do on their own initiative. The following example from Piano Piece, Op. 28, shows a pedal containing 27 notes spanning more than two complete aggregates. For the rest, he leaves it to the performer's discretion, with considerable room for generous sound, as Haase's notes seem to indicate.

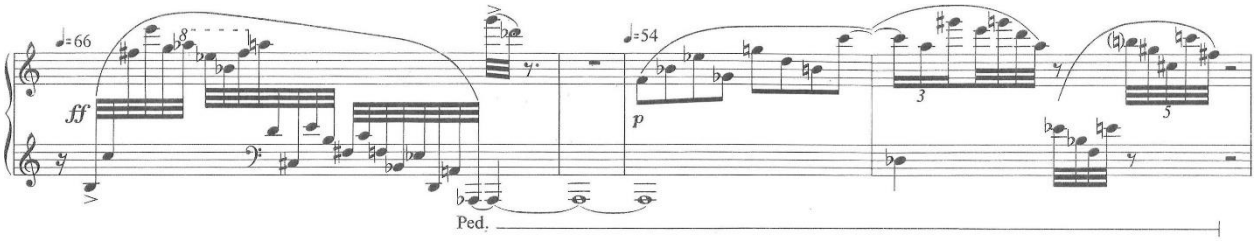

Figure 41. *Mortensen: Piano piece, Op.28, bars 4-7.*

Balance in Mortensen's Chords

While I argue that Mortensen's music has much more harmonic material than first meets the eye, it is rarely expressed as unambiguous chords. Since I started working on the piece, the few notated chords in the fantasy of Op. 13 have had unique characteristics in my mind. They seem to be very carefully written to avoid invoking classical contrapuntal associations or voice-leading implications. The first chord of the piece, the A-D-G in the right hand in the first bar, for example, could, on its own, very quickly be heard as a chord with an appoggiatura on the fourth. Thus, it could be understood as either a chord with D as a root and the G as the appoggiatura or as a chord with A as the root with G as the seventh and D as the appoggiatura. However, in the context it is written, mainly because of the F♯ in the bass, I hear it purely as a harmony without any other functions than its sound colour. It has, in my mind, something non-temporal about it, a quality that opposes the flow of the linear structures and, therefore, slightly halts the pace of the music and gives it a lingering quality. For this reason, I have often associated these chords, which permeate the entire Fantasy,

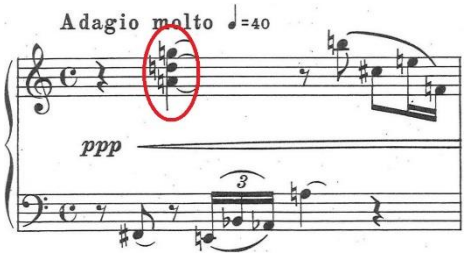

Figure 42. *Mortensen: Fantasy and Fugue, Op. 13, bar 1.*

with those in the third movement of Webern's Op. 27, marked first by rit. and later by molto rit. by Webern.

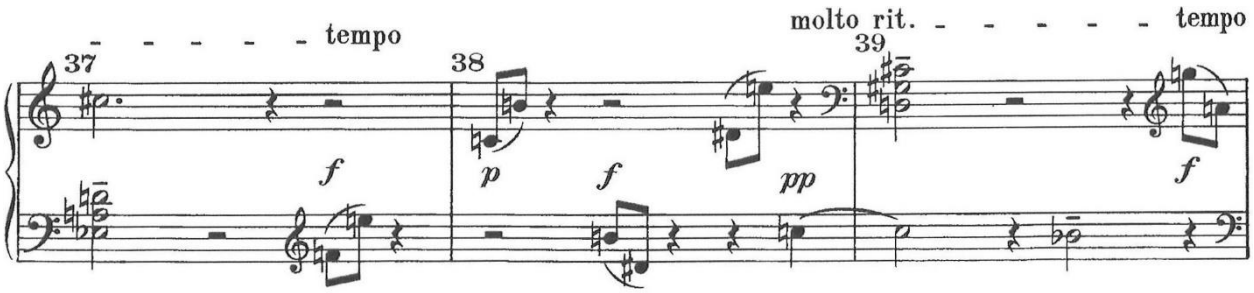

Figure 43. *Webern: Variationen, Op. 27, III. bars 37-39.*

I find it challenging to keep the colourful quality of the chords towards the middle of the piece, where the dynamics become louder, and the chords need extreme attention not to sound stiff and colourless. The voicing of the chords plays a significant role here, and I rarely find that an typical approach of emphasising the top of the chord gives a particularly successful result but instead makes it sound hard and lacking in colour. Instead, each chord must be balanced according to its characteristics and context, and the best way rarely appears obvious to me.

Many of Mortensen's chords, like the one in **Figure 44**, contain a combination of open and dissonant intervals, and I often perceive the balancing of chords as an attempt to get the most out of both these characteristics.

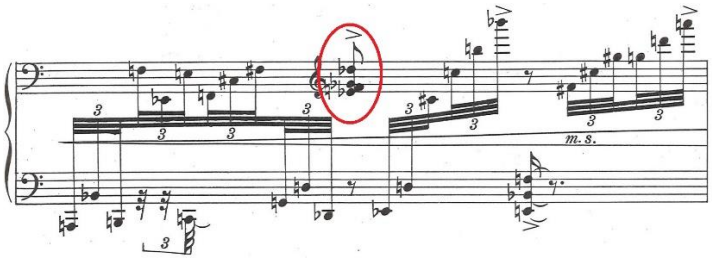

Figure 44. *Mortensen: Fantasy and Fugue, Op. 13, bar 26.*

In this particular example, I eventually concluded that the F needed slightly more emphasis than the other notes and that I needed to change my fingerings to using the thumb rather than the second on the F to gain the sound I wanted.

I have found the opening chord of *Piano Piece*, Op. 28, Figure 44, particularly challenging. At first, I was inclined to find a way of balancing the chord that allowed the entire aggregate to form one complex sound. However, I discovered that the chord resisted such an interpretation. Rather than adding up, the different parts seemed to conflict with each other. The second chord,

E♭-G♭-D♭, appeared as a resolution of the first, with the chromatic voice-leading appearing prominent. In addition, B♭ in the last part sounded like a resolution of the previous A♭ as I heard it as the fifth to the previous E♭. Later, however, I discovered that by balancing the two first chords just right, I could make it all sound together but as a vibrant conflict, not a unified sound. In addition, I started balancing the treble chords differently, with more emphasis on the F and G in the first one and the B and C in the second, and with a fast, staccato attack. This way, I was able to make all the parts sound together without creating voice leading, but with a very different result than I initially imagined.

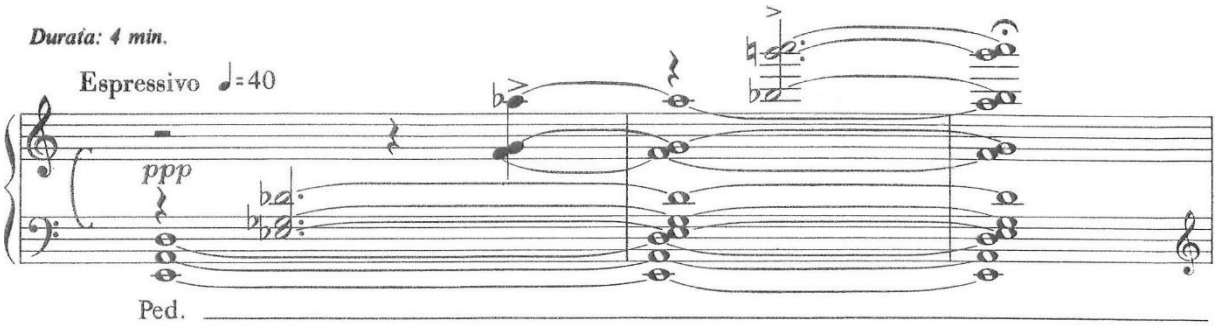

Figure 45. *Mortensen: Piano Piece, Op. 28, bars 1-3*

Mortensen's notation throughout his production can easily be understood to imply a relatively dry and clear sonority. However, through thorough experimenting, listening and reflecting on my perception of the diverse possibilities of sound and colour in Op. 7 and, in particular, Op. 13, I have formed an understanding of Mortensen as a composer with rich but subtle colours and someone who leaves a large room for the performer to interpret them. Since this is a quality I value very highly in music, I have been looking for the same qualities in his other music. I believe these two works have, on this point, significantly influenced how I understand and approach his music in general and have opened up new areas of exploration, discoveries and solutions in his later works I might not have realised had I played them in isolation.

Chapter 4 - Gesture, Pulse, Metre and a Multidimensional Flexibility in Mortensen's Temporal Dimensions

Mortensen's notation reveals very few nuances in the temporal dimension and can easily be treated with a literalistic approach. While I often find Mortensen's music to have a driving, forward-moving, and sometimes even restless character, I have attempted in this project to find ways to explore a more flexible and dynamic temporal treatment.

Through my work on Fartein Valen's *Intermezzo* Op. 36, and Pierre Boulez's *Troisième Sonate,* I developed a stronger focus on musical gestures. Thinking of musical gestures as something that represents a fully synthesised and unquantifiable idea of musical movement can affect the experience of temporal hierarchy and the flow of the metre itself, liberate figures or parts of figures from their connection with the metric grid and counter the uniformity found in Mortensen's notation of dynamics.

Mortensen's music contains several layers of phrasing or higher levels of organisation not indicated by the notation, requiring the performer to experiment extensively with the flexibility of the temporal flow, as well as the strength of the metric hierarchy.

In the eruptively gestural first movement of the *Sonata, Op. 7,* the autonomous shaping of the individual gestures happens within the context of a simple, linear, structural idea, raising performative questions regarding the relationship between gesture and structure.

Mortensen seems to avoid metric points and instead reserves heavy downbeats for rare and structurally significant moments. Awareness of this technique leads to new perspectives on the build-up of energy and shaping of sections and the role of the temporal flow and metrical strength in such processes.

Early on in my work on Fartein Valen's *Intermezzo*, Op. 36, my supervisor, Håkon Austbø, challenged me to explore beyond the slow-moving uniformity I often find characteristic of performance practice of Valen's music and experiment more with the gestural nature of the details. Valen's music usually involves the constant rearranging and recontextualising, albeit rarely metamorphosing, of a set of primary motives, often with their own autonomous identity and character. Exploring this identity of each motive, not only in its autonomous form but also in how it evolves through the various recontextualisations, gradually appeared to me as an increasingly important area of musical work necessary to approach the complexity of his music. Thinking about the music in terms of gestures became instrumental to me and significantly impacted the direction my understanding and performance of the piece took.

An understanding of gesture as musical motion and, as Robert S. Hatten puts it, an *"energetic shaping through time"*[177] is fundamentally at odds with the nature of our notational system. As the poet Peter Viereck put it: "*Metronome*s *can't feel; the motion they tick is not gesture but tic,"*[178] and the unquantifiable nature of the gesture's movement is given a quantified, literal representation in a score. Working with a gestural focus led me away from the 'objectivity' of the score's rhythms and into a more personal and subjective reflection of the character and movement of the music.

Working on the opening of Valen's *Intermezzo*, **Figure 46**, I found that all three gestures in the top voice require a modification of the notated rhythm to become 'movement'.

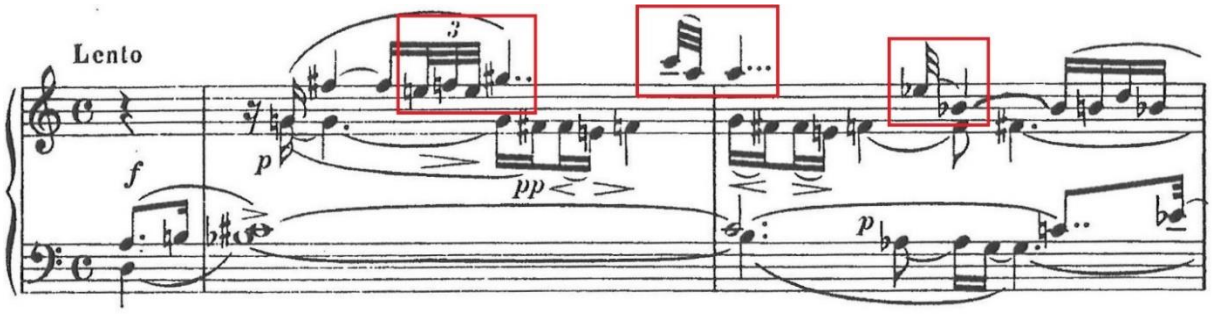

Figure 46. *Valen: Intermezzo, Op. 36, bars 1-2*

My exploration of their gestural character resulted in modifying the rhythmic figures and made me realise that parts of them needed to be released from the metric grid altogether. According

[177] Hatten, Interpreting Musical Gestures, 93.
[178] Ibid., 94.

to Hatten, a prototypical gesture is *"a unit in the perceptual presence"* that has *"initiation and closure"* analogous to *"prosodic units in speech, organized around nuclear points."*[179] Identifying the nuclear points of the three small gestures, in my understanding, the final notes in each of them, made me sense a metrical impulse only on these points, with the rest of the gestures purely revolving around them without themselves being metrically attached.

An interesting gestural development of Valen's *Intermezzo* is connected to the opening harmonic motive and its evolution into a more linear form throughout the piece, an element I understand as fundamental to its development and variation. For example, in bars 7-8, **Figure 47**, the linear form of the motive becomes a gestural unit and is instrumental in creating the sudden outbursts from p to f. A gestural understanding transforms the moment from just a dynamic increase into a more multidimensional synthesis, significantly adding to its impact and meaningfulness, foreshadowing the prominent role gestural variation and development will have in the further development of this piece and the central place the topic must have in the performer's work with it.

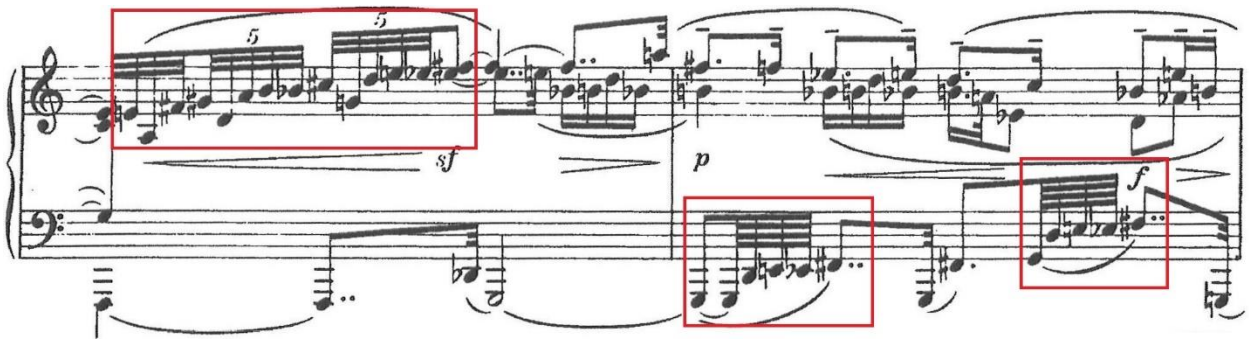

Figure 47. *Valen: Intermezzo, Op. 36, bars 7-8, opening motive as linear gestures*

Austbø shared with me an understanding of Fartein Valen's music as something of a musical analogue to an anthill, emphasising the rich, internal life in the details of the voices. This image not only started a process of me rediscovering the performative possibilities of Valen's music but also, in many ways, transformed my view on a gesture from being a performative action, something does to the music as a performer, into a fundamental dimension of musical perception, ultimately opening up for deeper exploration of the phenomenon.

[179] Ibid.

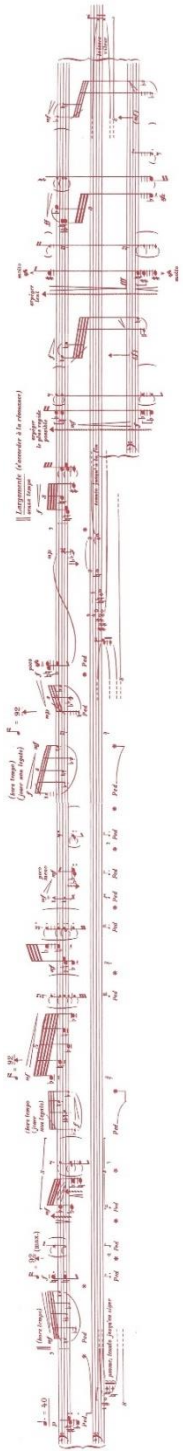

Figure 48. *Boulez: Troisième Sonate Pour Piano, Formant 3 - Constellation-Miroir, Blocs II, excerpt*

My focus on gestures grew during my work on Pierre Boulez's *Troisième Sonate*. It is a composition where much of the surface layer is dominated by the tremendously rich and complex combination of gesture and colour as the dominant musical parameters. The excerpt in **Figure 48**[180] might serve as a good illustration of this point. During my work, I found an increasing need to explore the individual shaping of the gestures, their autonomous character, how they relate to each other, how they impact the energetic flow, and how this flow continues and fills the gap between the gestures, while the colours from the silently depressed tones keep changing and evolving as a consequence of the gestures. In addition, in the absence of the temporal hierarchy created by a regular traditional metre, Boulez's gestures seem to bring about their own irregular and dynamic temporal hierarchy.

Boulez's *Troisième Sonate* is a work that, for me, more than anything, emphasised the potential of musical gestures as a mirror of human emotion. Reflecting on this sonata's musical gestures, as analogous and comparable to physical human movement, has been instrumental to me eventually arriving at the realisation that this is fundamentally intimate and emotional rather than the cold and intellectual music as one often reads.

Moreover, the musical gestures instigated a change in my physical approach to the instrument. Because of the gestures' nature as 'movement' through time, I felt an increased need for a physical movement matching it to express it properly; pre-practised and stereotypical pianistic movements appeared increasingly unsuited. The exploration of and experimentation with the musical gesture and the physical pianistic movements in parallel became a double evolution where they developed and changed together. Surprisingly, because no piece I have ever played has been more detailed in the notation and seemingly more controlled from the composer's side, I started feeling a close physical connection with the material and a large room for personal interpretation I could not have imagined initially.

[180] Larger version is available at https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/778684/2100746#tool-2142188

The increasing focus on gestures I developed through the work with these two pieces led to changes in how I perceived Mortensen's music and directed my work with this music.

Gestures in Mortensen's Music

It seems to me that Mortensen used gesture consciously as one of the dimensions creating contrast and variation between the different parts in his *Sonata No. 2*, Op. 47. The juxtaposition of lively, sometimes even violent gestures, with sections where the gestural nature seems significantly downplayed, if not absent, appeared to me more and more as an essential formative element of the work.

One very gestural section starts on page 8, **Figure 49**. The added dynamics as a serial element in addition to the tone row, a feature always associated with the *motivic* row[181], creates an additional level of hierarchy to the structure, one that, in my mind, takes over and becomes the dominant shaping force of the section.

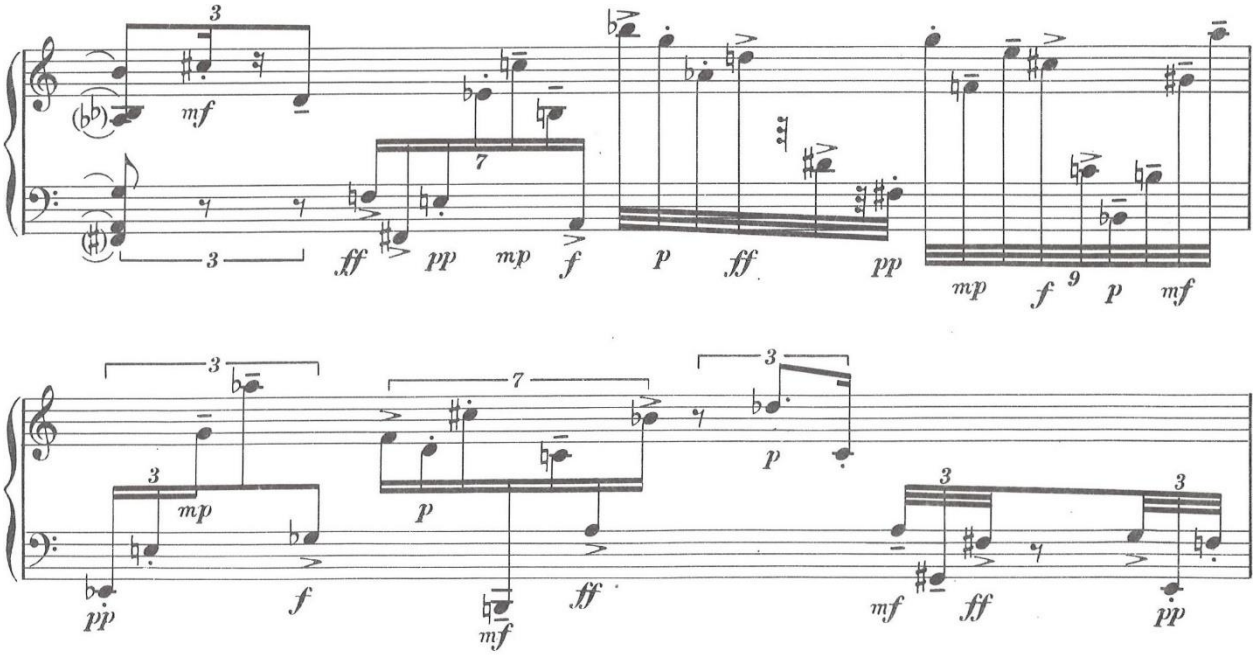

Figure 49. *Mortensen: Sonata No. 2, Op. 47, p. 8*

While working on this part, I sensed, to an increasing extent, that any attempts at performing it with a focus on a regular pulse would, to my taste, cost too much of the character and leave the section stiff and lifeless. I felt I needed considerable flexibility in the temporal flow to express the gestures created around the dynamic focal points adequately. Hatten notes that: *"[g]estures may be comprised of any of the elements of music, although they are not reducible to them; they*

[181] See chapter 7

are perceptually synthetic *gestalts with* emergent *meaning, not simply "rhythmic shapes."*[182] This section of the sonata highlighted to me that not only are the gestures created by synthesising multiple dimensions, but the syncretization also leads to modifying all the said dimensions. A gestural understanding must inevitably lead to a departure from the notated text, and the sounding rhythms thus become different from the notated ones. One possible interpretation could be to erase the sense of pulse entirely and rethink the section as a stream of autonomously shaped gestures emancipated from any metric connections. However, I believe much of the character comes precisely from the interplay between the gestural focal points and the heavy metric points, how they constantly move around each other, sometimes coinciding, sometimes contrasting and creating syncopations. The interplay of different levels of hierarchy creates a very different character than each in isolation, and much of my work in this section has been to explore this interplay within the very flexible temporal flow.

The eventual introduction of a different and contrasting element on the bottom line, shown in **Figure 50**, poses a new set of performative challenges.

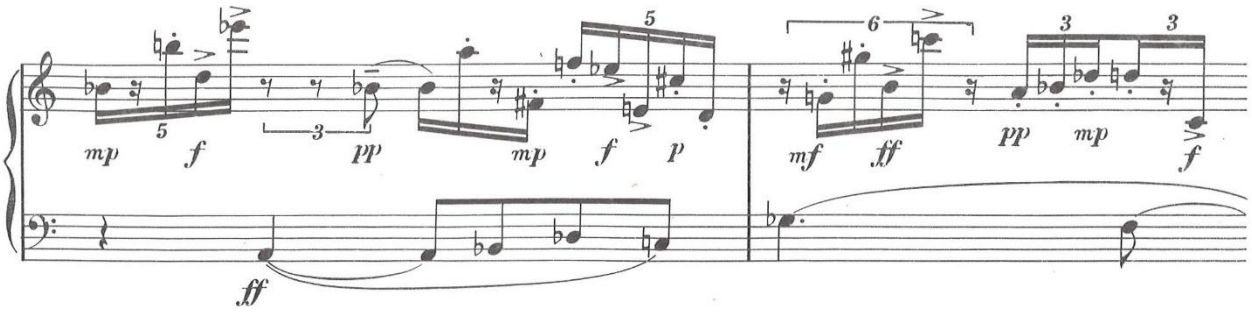

Figure 50. *Mortensen: Sonata No. 2, Op. 47, p. 8*

The 'romantic' melodic cello line comes with its own set of temporal, metrical, expressive and tonal characteristics, combined with the gestural flexibility of the right hand makes it, in my experience, very difficult to give it an independent musical shaping. For me, one of the elements easily takes mental precedence; depending on which, it's easy to be left with either a non-shaped melody or lose some of the gestural flexibility. I tend to find the melody the dominant level in this section, and my work to regain the gestural autonomy of the other layer seems not to be entirely finished at the time of my recording.

[182] Hatten, Interpreting Musical Gestures, 94.

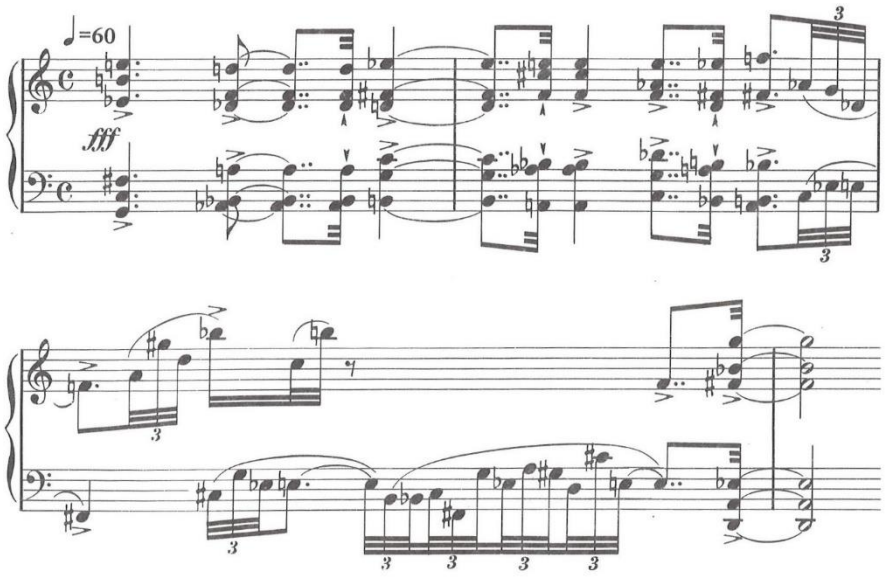

Figure 51. *Mortensen: Sonata No. 2, Op. 47, p. 4*

Another section of the *Sonata No. 2* with a strong gestural character is the heavy, double-dotted section shown in **Figure 51**, which is, to a certain degree, shaped around the elaboration of a rhythmical idea and a single, simple gestural idea: the nuclear point and various ways of getting to and from it, added to a steady sense of pulse. The third bar, with upbeat, shows multiple instances of this idea; the basic form with a triplet leading into the main note comes first in mirrored motion in both hands on the upbeat to bar 3, immediately followed by an elaborated version in the top voice, where a similar triplet precedes the main note B♭, but this time also with a tail. The bottom, however, seems to reverse the idea, arguably having the main impulse on the first note C♯, which is elaborated on and developed further on the next page. The following figure is also gesturally fascinating, as one long gesture leading into the F in the right hand.

As in the previously mentioned section, a performance built on an understanding of *gesture* rather than *rhythm* significantly affects the sounding result. As in Valen's music, gestural thinking detaches the non-central notes from the metric grid, thus reducing the number of impulses and allowing for a more dynamic performance. Highlighting the non-quantifiable nature of these figures, focusing on their movement to and from the centre, also affects how I experience the dynamics within figures. In particular, I experienced that the long one leading into the F needed to start softly with a very steep crescendo, culminating in the central tone, without any of the previous tones having a metric connection, to be gesturally effective.

The gesture's function of 'loosening up' Mortensen's habitually notated dynamic uniformity is also essential in other works, particularly in the *Piano Piece*, Op. 28. The long ff sections are notated entirely without any dynamic modifications, and, in addition, the fast tempo makes it very easy to play an endless stream of loud notes. I find this approach musically very

unsatisfactory as it does not correspond to what I see as a richness of present gestural possibilities. However, by working with the individual gestures in separation, I felt that I managed to get a more extensive understanding of the hierarchy created by the gestures, which helped me aim towards a performance that I think is richer, more nuanced and ultimately more characterful.

The rhythmical idea of the double-dot, so characteristic of this section, can be regarded as having a gestural identity that is still based on leading to a heavy central point. Again, the search for an autonomous character of the gestures makes the accurate reproduction of the notated rhythm less relevant and dependent on factors other than just the rhythm. Taking the first two bars, for example, I perceive the gesture of the double-dotted rhythm leading into the fourth beat of the first bar as entirely different to the one leading into the second beat of the second bar. The melodic figure E-D-E♭-E and the rhythm in combination make me understand these first six beats as a single phrase with the E♭ on top clearly has the most weight. Hearing this chord as the main dissonance being resolved in the next gesture dramatically influences how I understand the difference in the movement of the two gestures. In particular, I think having a physical feeling of the gestures adds something to the instances where the double-dotted rhythm is transformed into syncopations, see Figure 52. The sense of unfulfilledness, analogous to that of a forcibly restricted or hindered physical movement, adds great intensity to these parts.

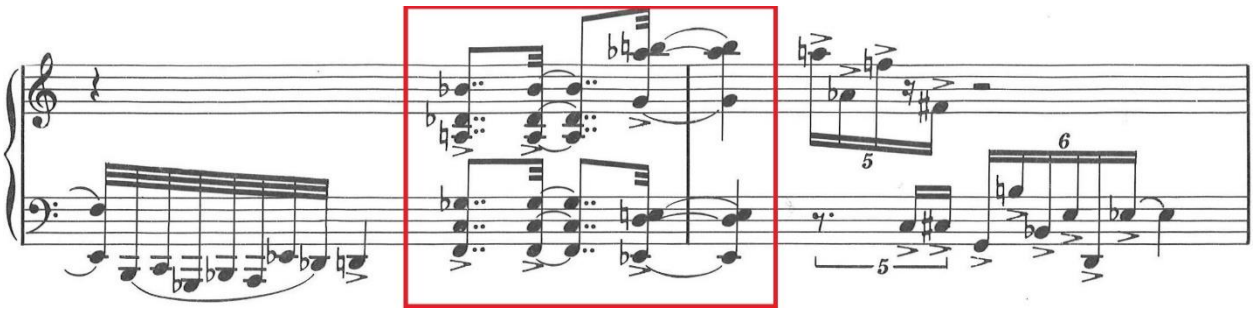

Figure 52. *Mortensen: Sonata No. 2, Op. 47, p. 4*

The gestures in this section seem to correspond to and enhance the feeling of a strong, heavy pulse, as the different figures are clearly organised around regular quarter notes. But it also seems to me that the weight of the pulse indicated is not uniform but instead forms groupings around particularly heavy points, similar to a true metric feeling but not corresponding to the notated metre or, in other ways, easily readable from the score.

While the entire section is notated in four-four time, it appears to start with one three-four bar, making the fourth beat in the three first bars feel like the heaviest. Similarly, it seems that from

bar 5, the emphasis is moved to the third beat; indeed, the third beat in bar 5 seems to instigate the start of a new phrase. Only towards the very end, and arguably in two bars in the middle, does the emphasis seem to be put unambiguously on the first beat of the bar. It appeared that the notated metre is just a literal convention, and the actual metre has to be discerned through a synthesis with other factors. The feeling of temporal hierarchy that developed during my work on this section has significantly affected how I experience the phrases and shape them around a new understanding of their focal points. Slowly a sense of musical organisation on a slightly higher level than the immediate gestural became a further critical development of how I thought about the performance of this section.

Performing the violent, eruptive nature of the first movement, *Quasi una Fantasia*, of the *Sonata* Op. 7, a movement that in my mind has a character of restlessness and a strong need to move forwards, seems to depend, at least partially, on understanding the autonomous movement of the individual gestures. *Quasi una Fantasia* is the only piano piece by Mortensen that consists of several recognisable, recurring motives. The motives are constantly transposed, recontextualised and sometimes slightly altered, even fragmented, but rarely transformed or in any way made unrecognisable. Even though the composer in interviews underlined his inspiration from Schönberg, the way motives are used in this movement seems more reminiscent of the idiosyncratic usage one finds in the music of Fartein Valen, albeit in a freer, personally intuitive interpretation, and with the addition of a significant amount of non-motivic material which, nevertheless, has great importance to the movement.

To me, all the motivic cells in *Quasi una Fantasia* clearly indicate gestural movement, and experimenting with the character of these became an important part of my musical work and greatly affected how I understood timing and dynamic on a local level. Even more interesting is that the gestures are tied together by a very simple but effective structural idea that I find to be a powerful shaping tool on a slightly higher level of local organisation. While the complexity and richness of this work are tremendous, structurally, it can be seen as an elaboration of a straightforward linear idea, as seen in an elementary, obvious form in the top voice in the opening:

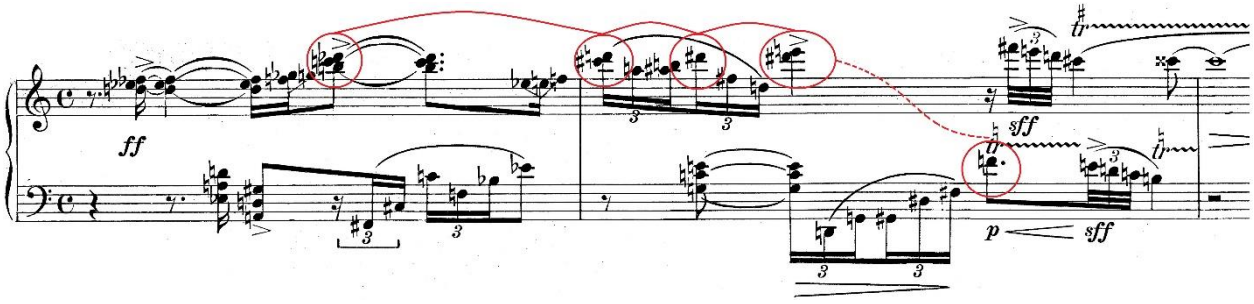

Figure 53. *Mortensen: Sonata Op. 7, I. Quasi una fantasia, bars 1-2*

While the chromatic line, going from D♭ in bar 1 through D-D♯ to E on the second beat in bar 2, is in itself a typical, almost trivial idea, within this sonata and his next piece, the *Fantasy and Fugue*, Op. 13, it appears to form part of a systematic structural concept on several levels of the organisation, which have significantly impacted how I understand the creation of overall shape and the control of directional pace in longer sections of these pieces. In the next chapter, I

elaborate on these lines on a more extended, structural level, but I also find it fascinating to explore how they interact with gestures locally.

The appearance of a linearly ascending idea in the opening, with a clear indication of development and expansion, adds a greater context to the individual gestures. The gestures and the linear structure together give both the incentive and the means to start to imagine the fortissimo opening, not as a uniform static section, as the notated dynamics could insinuate, but as a dynamic entity with internal development and a concept of phrasing. The individual gestures and their overall context adds layers of modification to the notation throughout this movement.

It is, however, open to interpretation whether the E is the goal of the phrase or whether the phrase goes all the way to the F on the next beat. I think both interpretations are reasonable, but I have felt an increasing need to phrase towards the F rather than the E, which leads to a very different-sounding result. Regarding the E as culmination creates a highpoint in a completed phrase, which I tended to underline by slightly expanding the space it gets and thus separating it marginally from the following arpeggio figure. Phrasing toward the F, however, creates a feeling of not so much a complete phrase but that the music dynamically moves forward without any clearly defined segmentation.

Non-notated Phrasing

The perception of phrases and other higher levels of organisation not indicated in or even contradicting the text of the score is not restricted to the previously mentioned section but seems to be a regularly occurring feature in Mortensen's music.

The opening of *Fantasy and Fugue*, **Figure 54**, is a good example. The notation seems to suggest shorter, somewhat independent figures, but the more I worked on it, the more I started hearing longer phrases spanning several of them. For example, I hear the phrase beginning with the E♭ in bar 2 directed towards the F♯, and the following phrase, starting on the next G, goes to the F♯ on the first beat of bar 4. However, it seems to me that dividing the opening into phrases this way is too simplistic. For example, I can hear the figure at the end of bar 2 as an anacrusis to the following figure, starting with B♭, but I can also hear it as an afterthought to the phrase starting on the E♭ in bar 2.

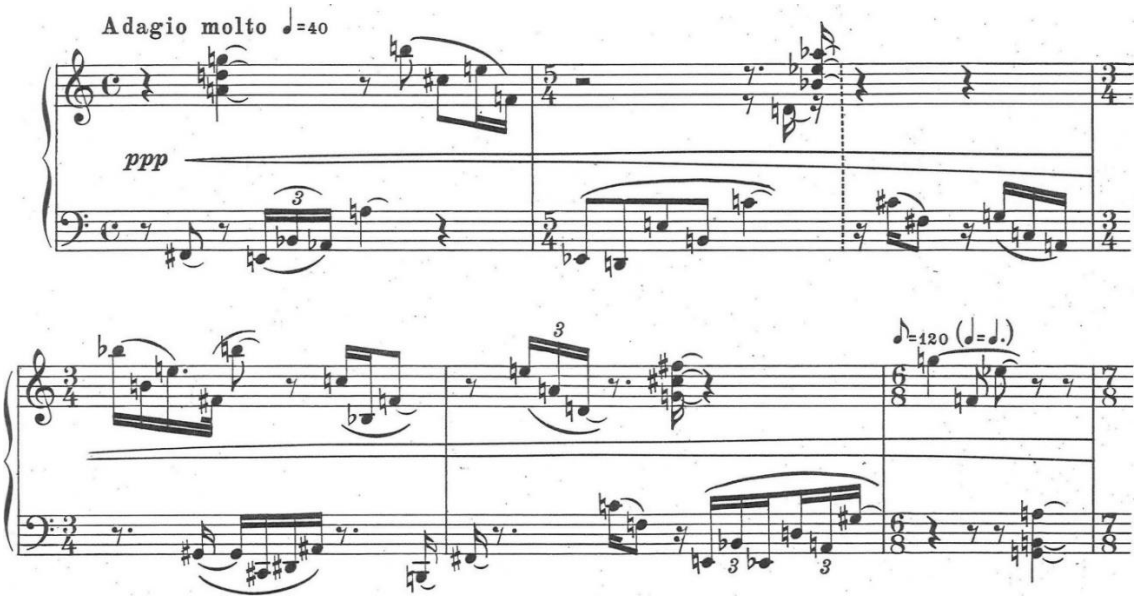

Figure 54. *Mortensen: Fantasy and Fugue, Op. 13, Fantasy, bars 1-6*

Similar observations can be made about virtually any phrase one can identify in this movement. Therefore, I found it more beneficial to explore it in terms of 'flow-flexibility' than of phrases, where the perception of a higher organisational level created as a consequence of tonality, shape of figures and gestures, and linear structures manifests itself more in the sense of flexibility of the pace than it does in any form of segmentation of the material. The phrases, thus, have no clear start or end; sometimes they move on, and sometimes they are left lingering, hanging in the air, but I find there is always something left unresolved that demands a continuation. The

entire fantasy does, therefore, in my mind, require great performative flexibility in terms of temporal pacing to express the variety of nuances possible in this piece.

One can find a similar example right after the repetition mark in the first movement of the *Sonatina*, Op. 2, Figure 55, where two slurs cover a section spanning almost eight bars.

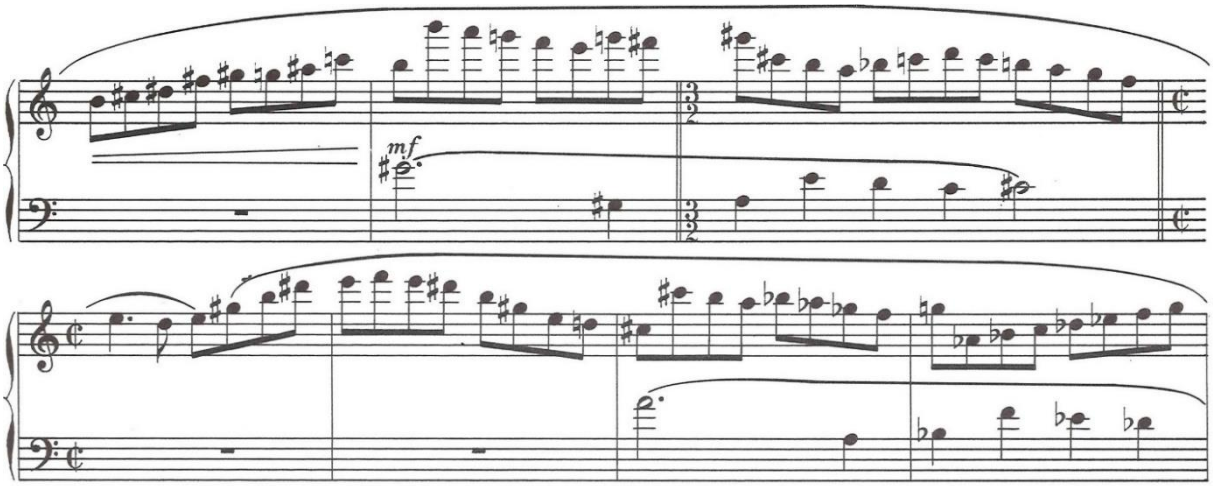

Figure 55. *Mortensen: Sonatina No. 2, Op. 2, I. Allegro, bars 35-41.*

These slurs, while possibly indicating a general articulation, also initially seem to suggest a uniformity that disguises the existence of numerous interesting harmonic details that, in my mind, requires a hint of flexibility in timing and dynamics as well as tone colour production as part of the performer's expression. Moreover, the ending of the first slur and the beginning of the second seems to indicate more of an articulation, pointing out the neighbour-note motive that has some prominence in this development section of the sonatina rather than a real indication of phrasing that affects pacing.

The section starting on the second page of *Sonata No. 2*, Op. 47, is particularly fascinating for several reasons. First, it seems, together with the long chord section starting on page 9, an opposite to the more gestural parts of *Sonata No. 2*. Considering one of Mortensen's defining criteria of serialism is that it is "*aperiodic music*,"[183] these two sections must, with their regularity in metre, periods, and even with the possibly only example of hypermeter in his mature production, be considered as the opposite of serialism. In this example, the hypermeter, together with the shaping of the figures, does seem to indicate the presence of phrases hidden behind the uniformity of the notation and going against the twelve-tone structure. While the basic unit is two bars, contrary to the regular three-bar durations of the twelve-tone rows, they

[183] Finn Mortensen, *Kortfattet innføring i tolvtoneteknikk og serialisme*, ed. Nils E. Bjerkestrand (Oslo: Norsk Musikkforlag A/S, 1991), 25.

usually group up into longer units. Thus, the first phrase is four bars, 2+2, and the next two are each six bars, 2+2+2. Then, Mortensen starts playing around with our expectations, not so much by varying phrase length, but by seemingly leaving out endings of the phrases, leaving them hanging in the air, or interrupted by the start of the following phrase, as in, for example, bars 21, 24 and 33 of this section.

These three examples from Op. 13, Op. 2 and Op. 47 are just a few of many with vast room for different shapings and phrasings in Mortensen's music which is in no way indicated in his scores but rather becomes an essential part of a performer's creative musical work.

These mentioned sections in *Sonata No. 2* also seem to suggest that the strength of metrical hierarchy is a further dimension the composer uses to create contrast between the different sections of this piece. The very light sense of metre I have in these parts contrasts sharply with the heavy metricality I find crucial for other parts. Moreover, this sonata contains some of Mortensen's rare occurrences of sections that are entirely non-metric, based purely on organisational patterns of durations, and more reminiscent of Messiaen's or Boulez's way of thinking rhythms.

These sections, and in particular the one located at the centre of the piece, on page 6, Figure 56, raise practical issues of how to play the durations accurately without enforcing a metrical hierarchy onto the structures, particularly with the tempo indication *"as fast as possible"*, and note-lengths that are subdivided into thirty-second notes. The practical option would probably be to rewrite the entire section into an eighth-note pulse, tremendously facilitating the learning and the excecution of a high tempo. I fear, however, that this counting would be audible and enforce a hierarchy entirely at odds with the multiple dimensions already employing forces on the section.[184] My solution to avoid this by maintaining a rapid sixteenth-note pulse with an added dotted sixteenth-note where necessary allows for playing accurate rhythms without superimposing metrical organisation, but it has its downsides. In particular, it requires a tremendous mental focus, meaning that it needs a lot of practice to get the fluency necessary for this not to limit expression.

[184] See chapter 7 for an elaboration of this

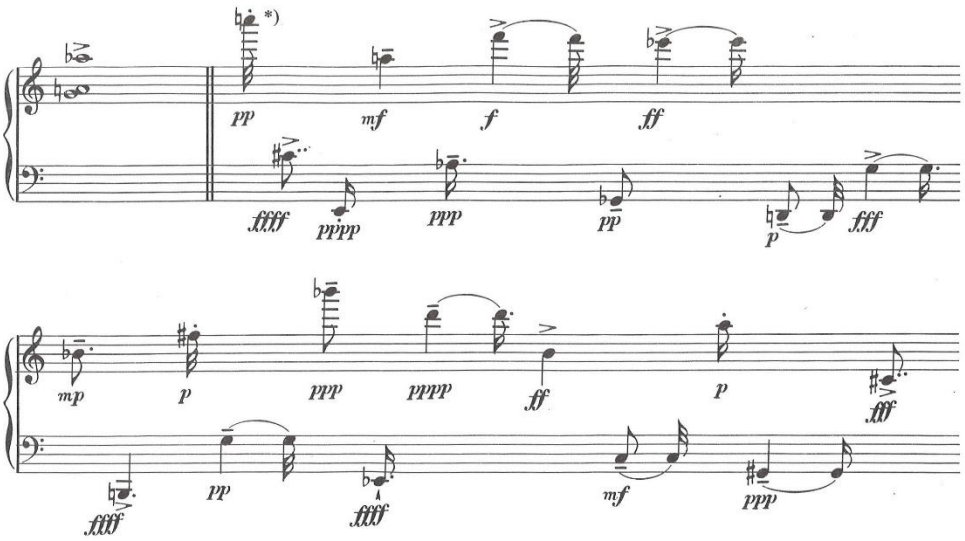

Figure 56. *Mortensen: Mortensen: Sonata No. 2, Op. 47, p. 6*

Similar issues are found throughout Boulez's *Troisième Sonate*, see example in **Figure 57**,[185] which, as in the section in Mortensen's sonata, is unmeasured in metrical terms, but created with a series of durations, often, as in the example under, in a polyphonic texture. Here, I found it challenging to find a way of counting that did not interfere with or go against the hierarchy created by the gestural nuclear points. I needed to revise my way of counting several times as my understanding of the gestural subtleties developed.

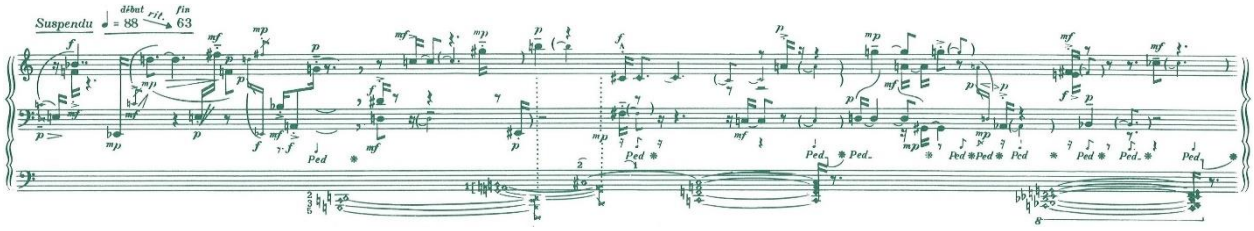

Figure 57. *Boulez: Troisième Sonate Pour Piano, Formant 3 - Constellation-Miroir, Points 2, excerpt*

In Mortensen's *Sonata No. 2*, the metrical extremities, the heavy double-dotted 'French Ouverture' pp. 4-5, and the non-measured serialist section on page 6 are juxtaposed towards the middle of the sonata, which seems to me to be a conscious way of highlighting the contrast between the diverse metrical strengths. These contrasts might be most pronounced in his second sonata, but one can detect the same kind of thinking throughout his entire production. For example, in the following excerpt from *Fantasy and Fugue*, **Figure 58**, I think having a strong, regular sense of pulse is as essential to bringing out the character of the second bar as a very light, flexible one is for shaping the structures in the first. This leads to a character change when

[185] Larger version is available at https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/778684/2100746#tool-2142187

the flexible, dynamic figures give way to the accentuated chords moving around the newly created sense of pulse.

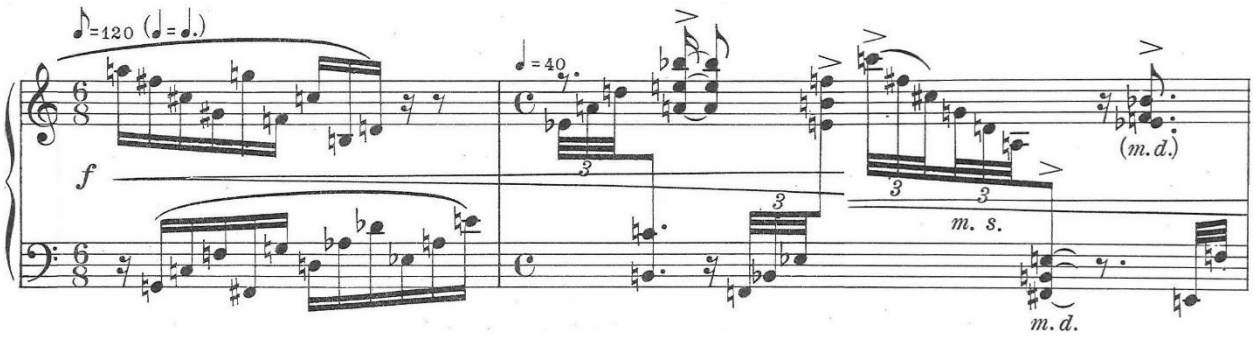

Figure 58. *Mortensen, Fantasy and Fugue, Op. 13, Fantasy, bars 20-21.*

Usually, however, I find the issue to be more complex and ambiguous. In most of his music, the performer is forced to continually reflect upon the flexibility of Mortensen's metre, which constantly varies in strength, and how their feeling of metre affects the character of the music.

Much of the ambiguity in the opening of the *Sonata*, Op. 7, arises, in my opinion, from the lack of a clearly defined metre. Instead, the notes move around the notated metre, avoiding heavy metrical points. When something does land on a heavy metric point, it is often done in a way that makes it appear insignificant so that the notated metre is more of a notational convention. It shows where the arguably still existing beats are but seemingly avoids the traditional hierarchical functions of combining heavy and light beats in a more or less regular pattern. It seems to me that this is a general trait in Mortensen's musical language and instrumental in creating the dynamically flowing character of his music.

There are, however, sections where I think a more prominent feeling of metre is necessary. For example, in the descending scale in the subject of the fugue in Op. 7, **Figure 69**, where not having a sense of groups of three gives the impression of losing direction and diminishes the effect of the legato. The part starting on the top of page 9, **Figure 59**, in the same movement is another example where the loss of a proper hierarchical metrical function makes all the beats heavy, and the music sounds too uniformly loud.

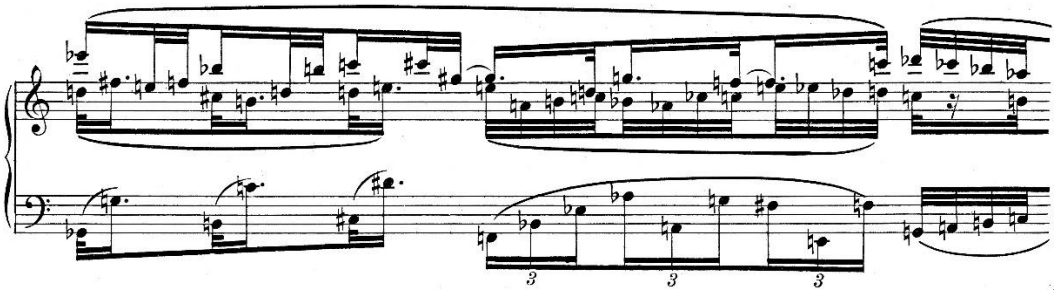

Figure 59. *Mortensen: Sonata, Op. 7, II. Fuga, bar 22*

Sometimes Mortensen underlines and emphasises particularly important downbeats. The first real downbeat in Op. 7 is in bar 11, **Figure 60**:

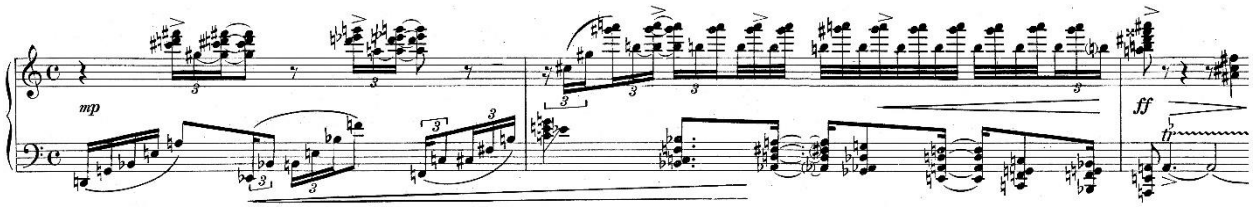

Figure 60. *Mortensen: Sonata, Op. 7, I. Quasi una fantasia, bars 9-11*

This structural high point is prepared by the quasi-tremolo figure with the raising top line F♯-G-A in the right hand. The A does not, however, constitute the goal but is prolonged with a gradual rise in intensity towards its culmination on the A♯ in bar 11. The intensity is further

built by the linear falling motion in the left hand starting on B♭ in bar 10 and going through the pitches A♭-G♭-E-C-B♭ with a gradual increase in force pointing towards the goal, A, which coincides with the culmination in the right hand, underlines the structural importance of this moment and establishes A as the clearest tonal centre of the movement so far. The high point is thus created by the joint effort of multiple musical dimensions pointing towards a simultaneous culmination. The fact that it is on a downbeat might musically be less significant, and the notation has perhaps more the function of directing the performer's attention towards the structurally important point, and only then, indirectly, can the performer create the feeling of a downbeat.

The structural metricality in Mortensen is very reminiscent of what Stadlen refers to as the *"dearth of coincidence between notes and beats*" in Anton Webern's late music. He continues: *"in those days in Vienna we used to say that Webern was nowadays composing exclusively on 'er' (derived from 'one-er and-er two-er and-er')."*[186] In Webern's music, too, downbeats are often reserved for particularly important points. Wason particularly emphasises the E♭ in bar 12 of the third movement of Op. 27, [187] but Stadlen's performance score also points out several other places where Webern wanted an emphasis on notes that coincide with downbeats.[188]

Realising the similarities in thinking between Webern and Mortensen regarding the use of downbeats to direct attention towards structural points has made me look more consciously for these moments in his music, which in itself has led to several new discoveries. The numerous examples I have found of this resulted in a more conscious performative-analytical approach to these moments. Through his notation, the composer can only tell us that these are potentially important points. Why and how they are important is, to a much smaller degree, transferable through print. Even less can he tell us how they should be performed for this 'importance' to be manifested into sound. Obviously, each moment is very individual and needs to be treated as such. A general idea that they need to be emphasised in some way for the audience to notice them is insufficient, superficial, and often even counterproductive. The discoveries can only start a practical-analytic process synthesising all the musical dimensions with an understanding of the long-term structurality, and where the result is not an intellectual understanding, nor can

[186] Peter Stadlen, "Serialism Reconcidered," *The Score* 22 (1958): 14.
[187] Robert W. Wason, "Webern's Variations for Piano, Op. 27: Musical Structure and the Performance Score," *Intégral* 1 (1987): 80.
[188] See Stadlens performance score: Anton Webern/Peter Stadlen, "Variationen für Klavier Op. 27," (Wien: Universal Edition A.G.). For example p. 7a, bars 3 and 6.

it be expressed intellectually or verbally, but an enhanced personal perception of the music, and the performer can only convey his analytical work through the sound.

Chapter 5 - Mortensen's Points – *"Pointillistic Phrasing"* and *"Pointillistic Structure"*

The ending of Mortensen's *Fantasy and Fugue*, Op. 13, is challenging from a performer's point of view. Its gradual dissolution of recognisable musical material seems to leave a feeling of anticlimax in its wake, making the whole ending lack energy and purpose. However, through a combination of motivic analysis and gestural focus, I propose that the ending benefits from the performer's strive towards connectedness where larger units, though internally separated, can be perceived. Drawing experience from my work with Anton Webern's *Variationen*, Op. 27 and what Peter Stadlen calls Webern's *"anti-pointillist manifestos"* as well as Pierre Boulez's concept of *"pointillistic phrasing,"* I discuss performative parallels between Mortensen and Webern and the performer's methods for gaining a different perspective on Mortensen's points.

Using analysis of the long-term registral development in the third movement of Webern's *Variationen*, Op. 27, as a starting point, I explore the performative implications of Mortensen's technique of registral expansion as a form of pointillistic structure. I demonstrate how, in particular, his *Sonata,* Op. 7, and *Fantasy and Fugue,* Op. 13, are saturated with these pointillistic structures of different lengths, ranging from a few notes to spanning entire movements. Used as performative tools, they can serve multiple functions, from reaching over a single transition to helping to express the energetic shape of longer sections or entire movements.

I discovered some parallels between Mortensen's registral developments, Pierre Boulez's multidimensional dodecaphonic structures in *Trope* from *Troisième Sonate* and the multidimensional sentence structure in Stephane Mallarmé's poem *Un coup de Dés Jamais N'Abolira le Hasard.* These parallels became a starting point for exploring the interconnectedness and synthesis of Mortensen's local and global structures in more depth.

Based on the experiences outlined in this chapter, it seems that the relationship between the long-term and the short-term aspects of music is not as dichotomic as it sometimes is portrayed. Instead, it appears to me as a dialectic relationship. Thus, structural thinking becomes not just a tool for long-term, dramatic development, it also results in and involves shaping details in more dynamic, unpredictable and individual ways.

A Non-pointillist Perspective on the Points of Op. 13

At its premiere in 1959, Finn Mortensen's Fantasy and Fugue, Op. 13, drew much attention. Critics were divided, and while the more conservative found it either "*emotionally cold*"[189] without room for "*human emotions and impulses*"[190] or even "*completely pointless*"[191], the more progressive Arne Nordheim, however, pointed out the *"poetic expression"* and the *"power and tenderness."*[192]

In particular, the idiosyncratic ending seemed to have caused controversy, and both Klaus Egge[193] and Øistein Sommerfeldt[194] found it anticlimactic and expressed the opinion that the music should have ended earlier. After a performance of the same piece at the ISCM festival in Köln in 1960, one of the critics, however, had an interesting perspective on the piece: *"In accordance with the Biogenetic Law,[195] the piece seems once again to go through a development that took the contemporary Avantgarde approximately ten years."*[196]

The perspective that the piece mimics a stylistic odyssey through the development of musical modernism, from the early works of the Second Viennese School to the latest, most modern representatives of the Darmstadt generation, has later been endorsed by the composer[197]. It is an interesting and potentially fruitful perspective on the piece as a whole and may also suggest a potential historical context to understand the ending.

From a performer's point of view, I initially found the ending particularly challenging. How is one to create the highest intensity Nordheim spoke of[198] when the music appears to simply dissolve into nothingness, a complete fragmentation of all recognisable musical coherence? The stream of musical motives and gestural ideas is gradually torn apart, and we are left with only

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[189] «[…]følelsesmessig kald» Finn Benestad, "Ny Musikk," *Vårt Land* December 8th 1959.
[190] «[…] ikke gir rom for de mer menneskelige følelser.» Fluge, "Review."
[191] «[…] totalt hensiktsløst.» H.O.
[192] «Det poetiske uttrykket […]» «Den har kraft og ømhet.» Arne Nordheim, "Samtidens toner," *Dagbladet* December 8th 1959.
[193] Klaus Egge, "Ny Musikk," *Arbeiderbladet* December 8th 1959.
[194] Øistein Sommerfeldt, "Ny Musikk," *VG* (December 8th 1959).
[195] Referring to a theory of development and evolution proposed by Ernst Heinrich Philipp August Haeckel in the 1860s. According to M. Elizabeth Barnes, "Ernst Haeckel's Biogenetic Law (1866)," *Embryo Project Encyclopedia (2014-05-03)* (2014), accessed October 24th 2021, http://embryo.asu.edu/handle/10776/7825.) it theorizes that: *"the stages an animal embryo undergoes during development are a chronological replay of that species' past evolutionary forms"*, but is today, to my understanding, more or less entirely refuted.
[196] „Nach biogenetischem Grundsatz scheint das Stück noch einmal eine Entwicklung zu durchlaufen, für die die heutigen Avantgardisten etwa zehn Jahre gebraucht haben." In Nesheim, *Alltid på leting*, 139.
[197] See Njål Gunnar Støyva, "Fantasi og Fuge op. 13 - ei historiebok skriven med tonar," *Ballade* 1 (1982).
[198] «Komponisten kjører intensiteten opp i høyeste temperatur […]» Nordheim, "Samtidens toner."

staccato fortissimo notes spread over the entire keyboard and separated by gradually more extended areas of silence. It is challenging to perform this so that it does not get reduced to the anticlimactic redundancy some critics objected to.

While analysing this section's motivic material, I found that the notes are not the isolated entities they appear at first glance but are always tied together as parts of motives derived from the subject. The systematic motivic usage throughout this section, see Figure 62 for an analysis,[199] does, in fact, make it stricter organised and thematically more coherent than much of the rest of the piece. At the beginning of the example, the motivic material is very varied but mainly drawn from the three different types of material found in the subject.

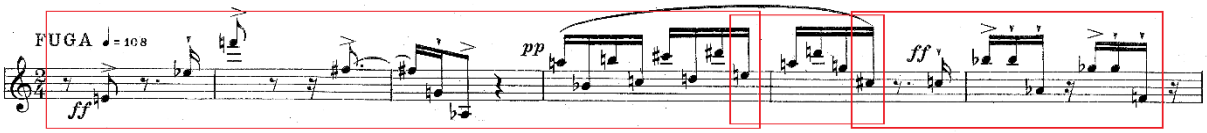


Figure 61. *Mortensen: Fantasy and Fugue, Op. 13, Fuga, subject, bars 1-6.*

Speaking in terms of intervals, the subject is divided into three overlapping parts. The first is entirely chromatic, the second contains fourths and one tritone, and the third is a diatonic descent.[200] These intervals constitute the material used in the ending, as seen in Figure 62, with chromaticism marked with blue lines, fourths, including fifths and tritones, drawn with red lines, and the diatonic part, which also, more than the other parts, has kept their rhythmical character from the subject, marked with yellow lines. In addition, there are occurrences of material from the countersubject, marked with green lines, usually recognised by thirds or sixths, intervals not found in the subject.

However, motivic material is not the only thing tying notes together in this excerpt. Initially, the gestural statements and phrases are even more important, grouping notes into larger musical units, which are themselves seen as having some form of relationship with each other.

Gradually, however, the phrases become shorter, and the spaces between them grow longer and more prominent until they appear as the main musical material. This gradual increase of distance corresponds with a simplification process in the motivic material, in which the intervals become less and less varied, and the purely chromatic motives from the first part of the subject are the remaining intervallic material.

[199] Larger version is available at https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/778684/2100746#tool-2142182
[200] In his previous fugue, the second movement of Op. 7, the subject has an identical three-part structure, with the final diatonic descent indicating the same D♭-major mode.

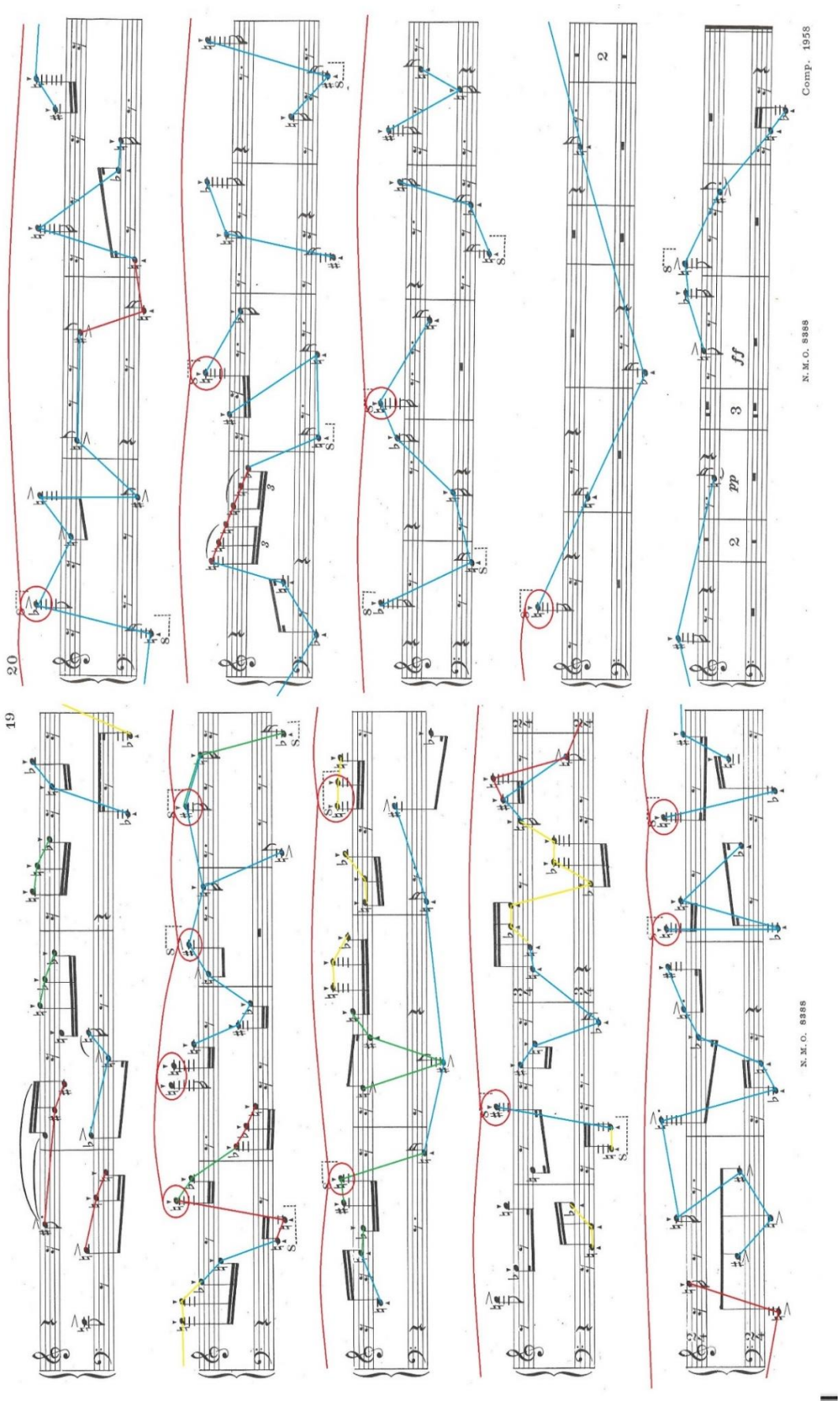


Figure 62. *Mortensen: Fantasy and Fugue, Op. 13, pp. 19-20, motivic analysis.*

I find this correlation between the fragmentation and simplification of the material interesting. It seems to be something Mortensen did on several occasions, the material from the fourth row in the *Sonata No. 2*, most prominently used on page 6 in the score, and the ending of the second ff section in *Piano Piece* being relevant but not unique parallels.

My understanding of Mortensen's pointillism sets it apart from how pointillism is often generally understood in modernism, where the separation of sounds is a fundamental principle. For example, Robin Maconie described the experience of Karlheinz Stockhausen's pointillism as if *"[e]ach note was entire in itself: serially fixed in pitch, attack quality, duration loudness, and totally unconnected with every other note."*[201]

Rather than trying to separate sounds, Mortensen seemingly always tries to provide something to bind them together and form longer lines and connections into musical units. His apparently conscious simplification of the interval material has the effect of either making it easier to perceive the relationships or, at the very least, making it easier to *see* them and then potentially starting a process of exploring the performative implications of such connections.

[201] Robin Maconie, *Other Planets - The Music of Karlheinz Stockhausen* (Lanham, Maryland - Toronto - Oxford: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2005), 42..

Anton Webern's *Variationen*, Peter Stadlen's *Anti-pointillist Manifestos*, and Pierre Boulez's *Pointillistic Phrasing*

"*A high note, a low note, a note in the middle – like the music of a madman!*"[202]

Anton Webern's famous quote shows the composer's dissatisfaction with the separation and isolation of notes in Klemperer's performance of his *Symphony*, Op. 21. Before his premiere of Webern's *Variationen*, Op. 27 in 1937, pianist Peter Stadlen worked extensively with the composer. Over several weeks, Webern revealed that his musical intentions were distinctly different, much richer and more nuanced than one can read from the ascetic score. Stadlen writes, "[*i]n his score, Webern almost totally scorned the use of any clues to suggest that here, too, a fervently lyrical mind bent on expressiveness has been at work."*[203]

In 1979 Stadlen published his working copy of the score, which contains both Webern's pencil marks and many of Webern's aural comments added by Stadlen. Stadlen's score formed an essential argument in his project to criticise an increasingly dominant contemporary view of Webern. This view was manifested partly in the literature, with talk about *"total objectification,"*[204] *"classical, even academic asceticism,"*[205] and *"increasing withdrawal into a cool, self-sufficient world of abstract forms,"*[206] and partly in the text-centred, literalistic post-WWII performance tradition of his music. By documenting interpretive and aesthetic intentions way beyond the printed score, Stadlen, and his performance score, have played a significant role in shaping the modern understanding of Webern and his music.

Crucial to the discussion in this chapter is the many indications Webern gave about the connectedness of notes separated by register and by rests, which Stadlen refers to as *"anti-pointillist manifestos."*[207] There are several such indications on the first page of the third movement, Figure 63. Immediately notable is the arrow from the first E♭ in bar one to the D in bar two, showing an intent of polyphonic phrasing reaching across the B-B♭ in the other voice, indicating that the two notes are indeed connected despite the separation by the quarter-rest.

[202] Webern's description of Otto Klemperer's performance of Symphony Op. 21 in Hans Moldenauder & Rosaleen Moldenauer, *Anton Von Webern: a Chronicle of His Life and Work* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 76.
[203] Stadlen, "Variationen für Klavier Op. 27."
[204] Theodor W. Adorno in Ibid.
[205] Ernst Krenek in Ibid.
[206] Krenek in Ibid.
[207] Ibid.

III

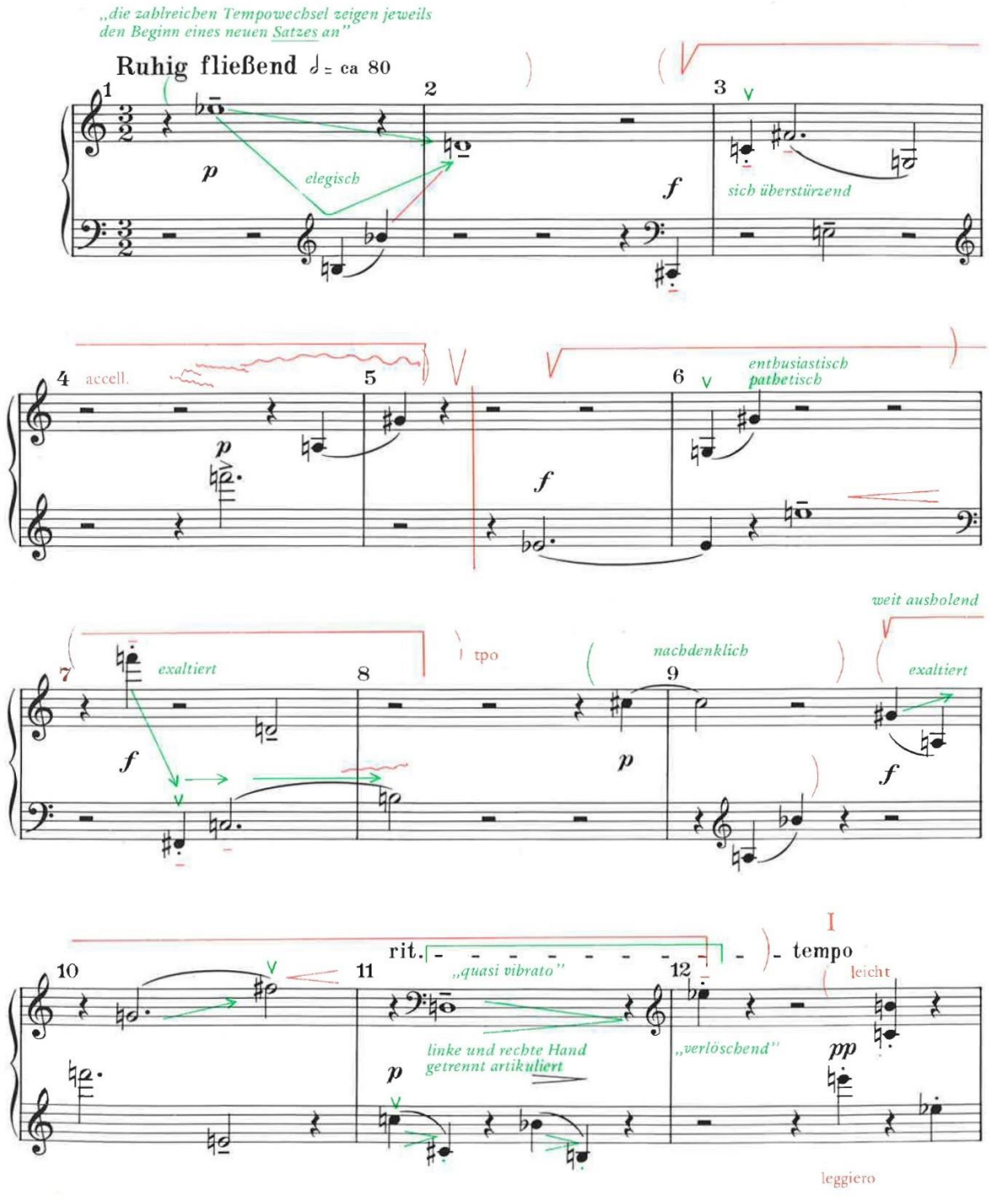


Figure 63. *Webern: Stadlen's performance score, p. 7a*

Even more interesting is the indication that the following eight notes, from the upbeat to bar 3 until the first note in bar 5, are to be understood as one phrase, despite a long rest before the final three notes.

Robert W. Wason points out that the twelve-tone row, as used in this section, *"can be heard as a series of conjunct and disjunct interval-class 1s,"*[208] as seen in **Figure 64**, a reading that seems to be consistent with Webern's polyphonic indications.

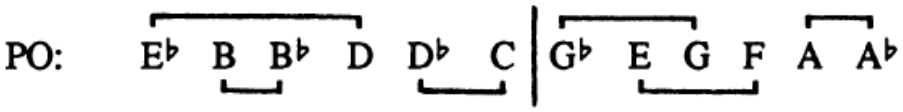


Figure 64. *Analysis from Wason, p. 75.*

From such an interpretation, the high F in bar 4 forms a pair with the E in bar 3 and should somehow be felt as connected despite the five quarter-rests and the three octaves that separate them.

In his conversations with Célestin Deliège, Pierre Boulez talked about the importance of what he calls *pointillistic phrasing* in performing Webern's ensemble works:

> *"You have to discover how an instrumentalist can play an isolated sound in a way that links it* intelligently *with what has gone before and what follows. You must make him understand pointillistic phrasing, not just with his intellect but with his physical senses. So long as a player does not realise that when he has a note to play it comes from another instrument and passes from him to yet another, or that if he has an isolated note it has a precise role within the polyphonic texture, then he will be incapable of the concentration necessary to make the note interesting. He will then produce a note that is 'stupid', divorced from the context. This is why these earlier performances of Webern had seemed idiotic to me: the musicians did not understand their roles, they played stupidly, and this was reflected in the resulting sonority, which also became stupid. An instrumental player produces an interesting sonority when he is a part of a whole whose constituent parts he more or less consciously understands."*[209]

[208] Wason, "Webern's Variations for Piano," 75.
[209] Boulez, Conversations with Célestin Deliège, 79.

Boulez talked, of course, from the perspective of a conductor, and a pointillistic phrase spread between different instruments and performers may be more challenging to perform than one in a piano piece where the same musician plays everything, but I have often found in my own work that I face many of the same challenges. As the space between the notes grows more prominent and the notes making up the musical units grows increasingly disjointed, I often feel my playing becomes increasingly more *'stupid',* and the music appears empty and static.

I found it particularly challenging to achieve a musically good shaping of the first page of the third movement of Webern's *Variationen*. Motivated by the unsatisfactory fragmented and incohesive result from merely performing what is in the score, I decided I needed a different understanding of how this section could function in terms of phrasing. This started a long process of experimentation where I did not play the passage as written in the score but removed rests and octavations and made specific notes last longer until I could not only hear and understand as longer, continuous units, but I could also physically feel and perform it as such.

This distilled version thus became the primary material where I explored the musical and physical characteristics of the piece in a way that was difficult to do in the original piece; the shape of phrases, the hierarchy between them, and the colour qualities of tones became much more tangible this way and aided me in hearing and feeling the piece in different, and more musical ways. I felt gradually more able to experience the physical 'need' connected with shaping the tone groups and, to a larger degree, elevate them from a theoretical twelve-tone construction to something that gives rise to more physical musical force.

This process also made me aware of several tonal features that were challenging to explore in the original piece. For example, the weight on the C in bar 3, a weight given through its placement on a strong beat, by this point in Webern's career, a rare and often significant occurrence and one Webern felt compelled to mark with an accent in Stadlen's score, in combination both with E and G, makes a cadence to F an easily perceived musical unit. In addition, the tritone C-F♯ adds to the tension and is resolved into the same F through the other chromatic neighbour-tone E. Whether or not Webern intended these relations to be heard, I have found them a useful private strategy in attempting to feel the connectedness of the severely dislocated high F.

As is a similar strategy in bars 11-12, where the long D, marked 'quasi vibrato' by Webern, enhanced through the C-B♭ movement in the other voice, gets the function of a leading note, whose force carries over the rest to the E♭, giving the performer the means and motivation to

carry out Webern's remark of "*verlöschend*". As Wason puts it, the *"sense of incompleteness and expectancy,"*[210] is enhanced by this feeling of tonal coherence and forms part of the strategy I use for shaping the pointillistic phrases in this piece.

The musical result of me as a performer of this music going through such a process is not so much an increased ability to fulfil Webern's private intentions on how the piece should be performed, that is to say, a more correct way of phrasing based solely on the fact that Webern said it should be done this way. It also goes beyond finding a more detailed set of instructions for the performer to execute. At its best and most successful, it creates intensity and dynamism in phrasing and pacing, transforming the detached notes into meaningful, musical units, perceived regardless of any concepts of authenticity.

In my work on Webern, I found that aiming towards a stronger physical sense of this connectivity led to a more coherent interpretation. The notes carried on into the rests differently and filled them with an intensity that shaped the lines. And I believe working on Webern helped me immensely with Mortensen's fugue, where the music is even more disconnected and more challenging to perceive than in Webern.

Using my experience from playing Webern, which I think regarding pointillistic phrasing is more straightforward and more intuitive than in Mortensen, helped my work on creating a more coherent and meaningful interpretation of Mortensen. I found it helpful to play the notes connected, without rests, and either octavated to the same octave or doubled by a connected middle voice, to gain a deeper understanding of the connections and train my ability to perceive them physically and aurally. This method helped me perceive each tone's place and function within the relationships and hierarchies of its context, of which the printed score gives few hints.

[210] Wason, "Webern's Variations for Piano," 75.

Robert W. Wason, in his article on Webern's Op. 27, points out that pointillistic connections in Webern's Variationen are not limited to localised phrases but include far more subtle and far-reaching structures. For example, in discussing the fourth variation of the third movement, bars 45-55, he argues that "[*t]he most important formal function of this variation is its achievement as registral highpoint and climax of the piece.*"[211]

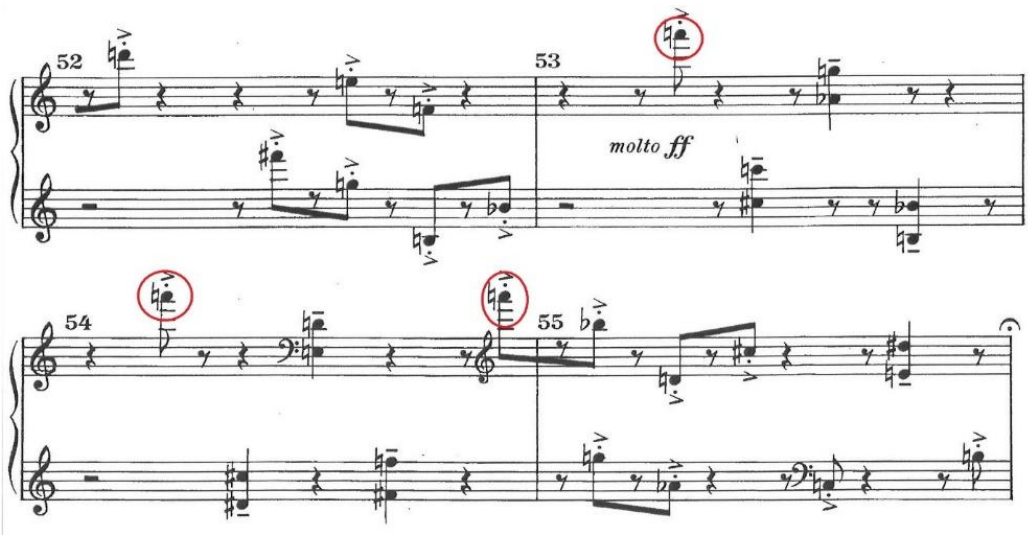


Figure 65. *Webern, Variationen, Op. 27 III., bars 52-55.*

The A, presented three times in bars 53, 54 and 55, is the culmination of a registral development that starts in bar 46 with an F♯ and goes through the two G occurrences in bars 48-49.

Interestingly, Webern indicates a hierarchy between the three As by marking the second one as the *"Höhepunkt"*, possibly feeling that the first one was too restricted by its placement on a weak metric point to form an effective high-point. The second one is more liberated from this restriction and has more opportunity to shine as a more unrestrained release of energy.

Moreover, Wason argues that the fourth variation contains an internal registral development and is the culmination of a development that spans the entire movement.[212] The starting point is the F of the theme, stated three times and forming the registral high point of the opening. The development continues through the F♯ marked sf in bar 16, to the G♯ in bar 19, marked ff in the printed score, and given the additional comment *"hartes Staccato"* by Webern in Stadlen's score.

[211] Ibid., 89.
[212] Ibid.

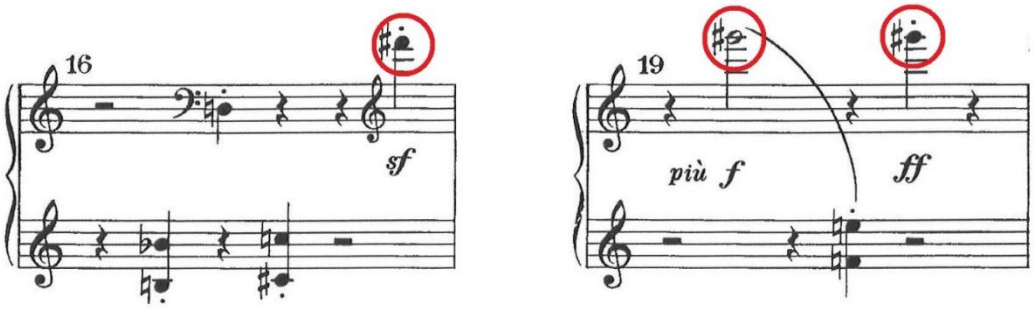


Figure 66. *Webern, Variationen, Op. 27 III., bar16 and 19.*

The implied intentions of this registral development line certainly pose challenges to the performer. The extreme distances between the points make it difficult, if not impossible, to have a continuous physical sense of the integrity of the connectedness of this ascending line. Just the 28-bar distance between the penultimate G♯ and the culminating A is too far to follow mentally, and moreover, attempting to do so might mean having to minimise or eradicate too many of the details happening in the meanwhile, details which have a profound impact on the expression of the piece.

I felt that, over time, my approach to performing these moments gradually changed. I found that understanding these points' function and placement in an overall dramatic whole changed the meaning I assigned to them and the immediately surrounding areas, changing how I played them and the sections leading to and from them. This change was instigated by having developed a feeling no less physical than the local pointillistic phrasing mentioned earlier.

A Pointillistic Structural Level at the End of the Fugue of Op. 13

During my work with Mortensen's music, I gradually became aware of to what degree similar forms of registral expansion seemed to have played a significant role in how he thought about continuity and development in his music. Returning one more time to the end of the fugue in Op. 13, **Figure 62**, I would like to draw attention to one particularly significant, single, long line permeating the entire section, as indicated by the red circles.

It starts on the A in bar 209, goes through C-B in bar 210, C♯ in 211, D♯ and D in bars 212-213, and from there moves steadily upwards until a long gap after the B♭ in bar 222, delaying the final ascent to the B in bar 226. I see the B not only as the culmination of this single line

but also as the fulfilment of the global tonal processes of the piece.[213] Its importance is underlined, not only by it being the highest pitch in the entire work but also through the double repetition, first in bar 231 and then in bar 234, where, similarly with Webern's *Variationen*, the second occurrence is placed on a downbeat. However, unlike Webern, Mortensen does not attempt to draw our attention to it in terms of performance indications or signs of any other kind.

Over several months of work on this piece, this line's significance gradually grew in my consciousness. However, I found that no attempt at highlighting the line by emphasising it to make it audible for the listener resulted in a particularly satisfying result. Questions such as how to perform this structure or make it audible or noticeable for a listener did not make sense. Attempts at, so to speak, *performing the structure*, which seems to often become the premise of discussions on the performativity of a structural understanding, by making it artificially more prominent, only lead to awkward and stiff-sounding results due to a lack of synthesising with the other musical elements.

I felt I needed to focus less on thinking about performance resulting from conscious choices or actions and move away from a perspective of what I am supposed to do with this, towards an attitude of listening to what this line can tell me about the connection of smaller units and the direction and pace of the larger development of the section. From this perspective, the presence of the line started appearing far more meaningful. Experimenting with how a large-scale developmental understanding of the section was synthesised with the smaller gestures and phrases, I think, had a much more profound and meaningful effect on my performances.

Rather than undermining and fighting for attention with the more local note-to-note connections and the autonomy of the gestures, I started to perceive the line as a way of contextualising the smaller units, tying them together and putting them in a relationship with each other. By feeling that the gestures physically connected and collectively progressed towards a goal, I felt more able to give this section an overall sense of form and development it previously was missing.

With this perspective, the structure became less of a musical feature to be enjoyed in terms of its own value and more of a performative tool which, from a position in the background, provides a sense of dynamism and meaning to the smaller units in the music, essential to a performance of this section where the notation gives no hint of any nuances.

[213] I discuss this further in chapter 7

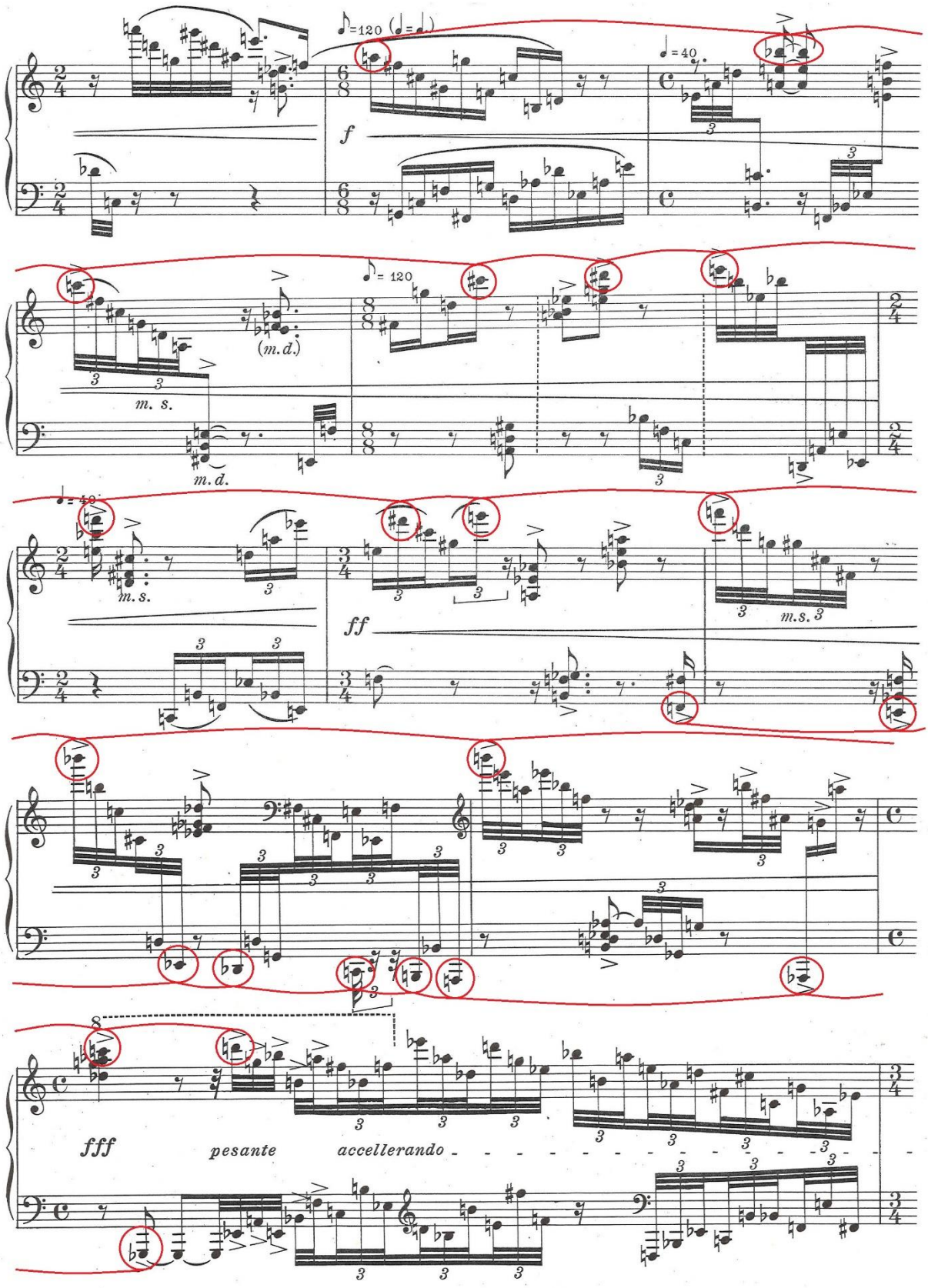


Figure 67. *Mortensen: Fantasy and Fugue, Op. 13, bars 19-27.*

While pointillistic lines serve some important functions in various sections of the fugue, I believe their purpose in the fantasy is more systematically pronounced and structurally significant. One of those lines starts with a high A in bar 23, Figure 67, moving gradually upwards until it culminates in the top C in the chord in bar 31. From bar 28, it is joined by a bass line moving in the opposite direction. Starting on F, this line moves downwards towards the G♭ in bar 31, echoing the opening and closing pitch of F♯. This moment becomes essential, not only as a culmination of the teleological development of the entire movement[214] in terms of dynamics, pitch extremes, and gestural frenzy and as the pivot point around which the entire Fantasy is mirrored, but it also gets a significance within the large-scale tonal design of the piece.[215]

As I have elaborated in Chapter 6, these lines became essential to me as a tool to shape the direction and build up to the fff. Moreover, since the top line does, in fact, not end with the C but reaches all the way to the next D, it suggests that the culminating chord is not the end of the development. By feeling the crescendo continuing, and maybe accelerating, through the chord and ensuing rest, the tremendous energy I put into the following accented notes became a musical motivation to perform a very broad but naturally sounding pesante.

In addition to these long, structurally and dramatically essential lines, the fantasy has several shorter lines that create more local connections. One I have found particularly useful is the one going from bar 4 to 5.

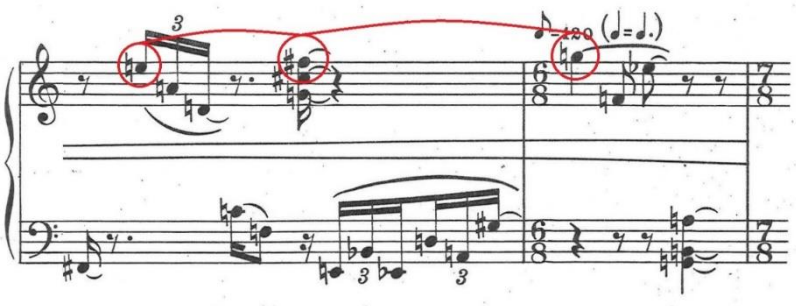


Figure 68. *Mortensen: Fantasy and Fugue, Op. 13, bars 4-5.*

Initially, the bar starting with the high G seemed to be disjointed from the previous material, appearing as a start of a new idea, something I found unsatisfactory considering my

[214] This is discussed further in chapter 6.
[215] See chapter 7.

understanding of this movement as extremely gradually evolving. However, this line helped me to hear how bar 5 grew organically from the preceding music, which changed both the timing I performed it with and the colour pallet I used. By noticing the significance of this short progression, I felt it aided me in making a more musical transition into the six-eighth bar.

This fantasy is saturated with a web of lines of various lengths and functions. I do, however, not consider all of them of equal importance. While many lines in the initial build-up of the first half of the fantasy serve various essential purposes, the same seems not necessarily true about their counterparts in the mirrored second part of the fantasy.[216] Most of them seem to be, at least according to my current understanding, more or less inconsequential and play very little if any, part in my performance, as I find that they serve no musical function. It seems to me that any musical effect of these lines is created not by their mere existence but by what significance, function and properties the individual performer can give them.

The Fugue of Op. 7

The subject of the fugue in Op. 7 starts with a manifestation of the same linear idea.

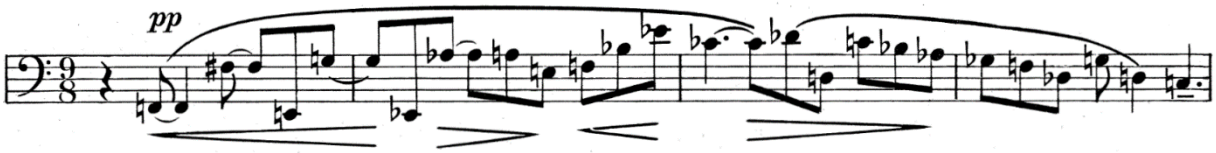


Figure 69. *Mortensen: Sonata, Op. 7, II. Fuga, bars 1-4.*

Although the enormous tension in the increasingly larger leaps between the two voices is fundamental to the character of the subject, and I think it is essential for a performer to hear them as a single voice, on another level, they can be heard as two chromatic lines moving in opposite directions. This second perspective ties it thematically to the first movement, *Quasi una Fantasia*, where short ascending lines permeate the entire movement. However, while the first movement contains short and medium-long build-ups of energy, the fugue is built around one global crescendo, going gradually from pp to fff and, in fact, a little beyond, over the course of about four and a half minutes.

To me, the discovery that an upward-moving line guides the entire movement, **Figure 70**, and subsequently working on my perception of the upper extremities of the register, helped plan the disposition of the crescendo. At first, the points are few and far between, starting with the B in

[216] Since the second half of the fantasy is a retrograde version of the first half, every ascending line in the first half has a corresponding descending line in the second half.

bars 11-12, Figure 70, followed by the C♯ in bar 14, repeated but approached differently, as a D♭ in bar 17. The difference with which these two notes are approached gives the D♭ a different character from the C♯. The E♭ in bar 22 and E in bar 23 mark the top points of smaller, arch-like phrases.

These notes are extremely far between, and I find it difficult, if not impossible, to 'feel' a continuous connection between them. However, as was the case with the Webern variations mentioned earlier, it is possible to build an understanding that each new top represents a new level of progression from the previous one. I find it a helpful practice strategy to cut them out, similar to how they appear in **Figure 70**, to juxtapose the various culmination points while practising to understand better how they relate.

Naturally, the overarching structure is far from the only shaping force, and each arch-like phrase's individual contour, pace and tonal function has a crucial impact on the performance. Having a physical sense of that the top of the arch as something that resonates outside of its own immediate presence does, however, bring a new dimension, one that seems to me to, over time, affect the understanding of the entire local phrase, not just the top of it.

From the F♯s and G in bars 25-26, the progression starts accelerating by using rhythmical diminutions and transpositions of the head of the subject in bars 27-29.

In addition to the expansion's acceleration, the shape of the phrases also takes on a new character. Unlike the arch-like shapes we have seen so far, they now expand more in a straight line towards their top point, immediately followed by the start of a new development. The B♭, reached in bar 29, is prolonged into a tremolo before a jump to C♯ in bar 30. New, shorter build-ups go to the same C♯ before a longer, more frenetic and desperate build-up finally crashes into the D as the top note of four extremely thunderous chords.

The tremendous psychological impact of this moment, shattering the expectation of a great transcendence by unexpectedly and repeatedly running into a brick wall, relies a great deal on the architecture of the development leading to it, a development I think, in parts, is guided by the performer's understanding of this long-term structural line.

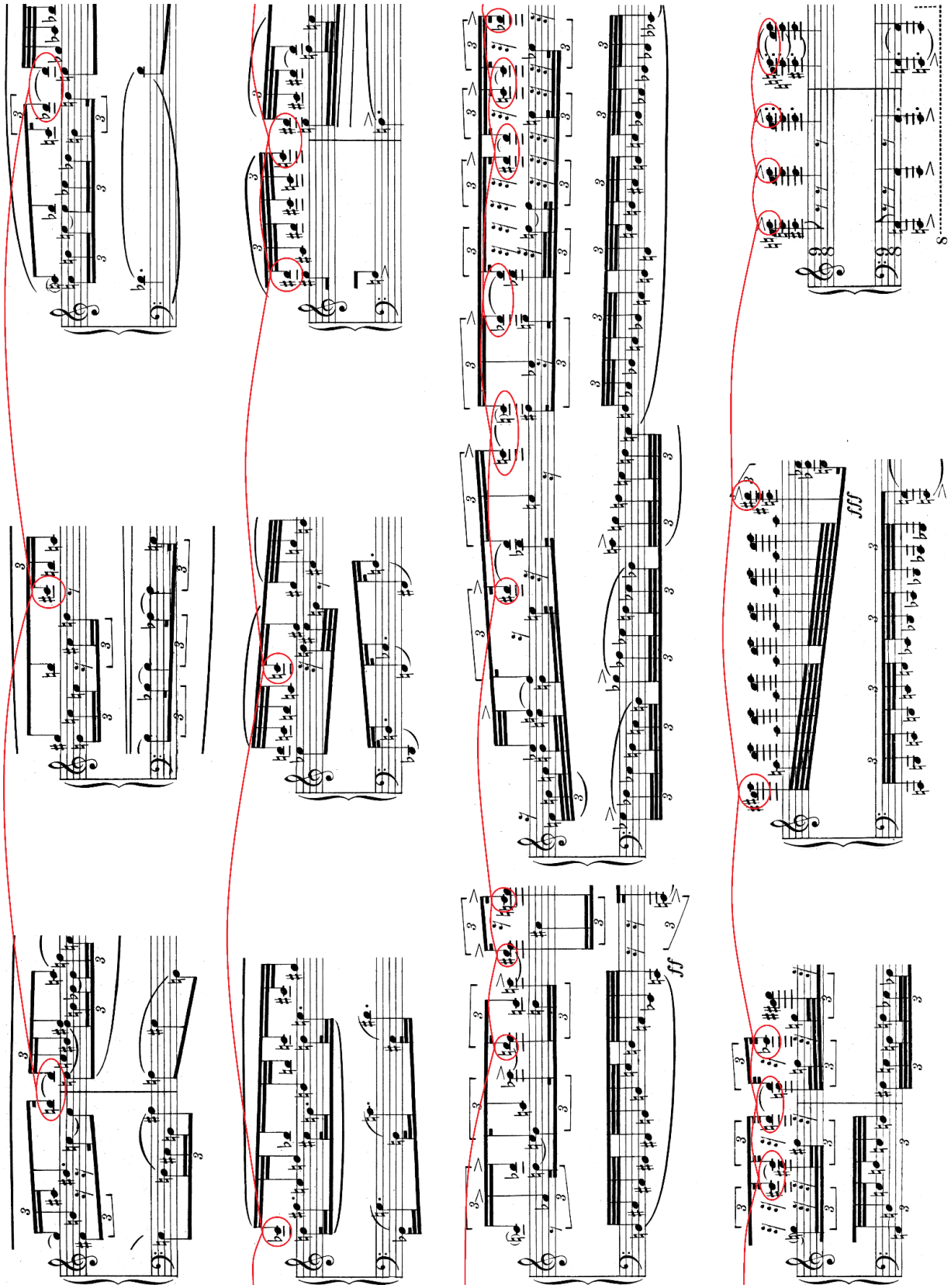


Figure 70. *Mortensen: Sonata, Op. 7, II. Fuga, bars 11-12, 14, 17, 22, 23, 25-26, 27, 28, 28-29, 30, 33-34*

During my work on Boulez's *Troisième Sonate*, I started noticing some performative similarities between Mortensen's pointillistic structures and the multi-dimensional structures in the sonatas *Formant 2: Trope*.[217] Each of the formant's four sections, *Texte*, *Parenthèse*, *Glose* and *Commentaire*,[218] elaborates on a different relationship between long-term processes acting globally, called *squelette*, which are expanded, embellished and commented on[219] by more local structures, called *champs* (fields).[220]

A single twelve-tone row, segmented into four cells, forms the basis for both the *squelettes* and *champs*:

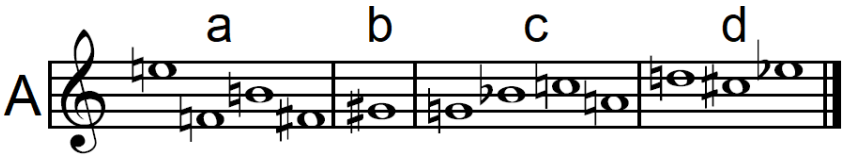


Figure 71. Boulez*: Troisième Sonate*, *Formant 2 - Trope*, *row segments*

For creating the squelette, the row is linked with another row, taking advantage of isomorphic properties between different row transpositions and transformations to form longer sequences, **Figure 72**.[221]

[217] "I have called them thus [Formants] by analogy with acoustics. We know that a timbre owes its characteristics to its formants; similarly, I deem the physiognomy of a work to derive from its structural formants: general specific characters, capable of engendering developments. Pierre Boulez, "Sonate, Que me Veux-tu? ," *Perspectives of New Music* 1, no. 2 (1963): 37-38.

[218] These sections can be played in different orders. *Texte*, *Parenthèse*, *Glose* is most easily seen as a circular form, performed in that order, with any of them the starting point (i.e., if you start at *Glose*, you have to go back to *Texte* as your next section). *Commentaire* can be inserted on any side of *Glose*, resulting in eight possible orders. Given the absence of three of the formants; *Antiphonie*, *Strophe* and *Sequence*, which were never published, most modern performers (including myself) seem to think that *Commentaire* is the most effective place to end the piece.

[219] The formant's title "Trope" refers to the medieval practice of additions and embellishments of plainchants, and not to Josef Matthias Hauer's tropes in connection with his twelve-tone technique (see Whittall, *Serialism*, 273.).

[220] These are the basic premises given in Pierre Boulez, *Boulez on Music Today* (London: Faber and Faber, 1975). and further elaborated by O'Hagan based on his extensive study of Boulez' sketches. (see Peter O'Hagan, *Pierre Boulez and the piano: a study in style and technique* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016). for an overview, and O'Hagan, ""Sonate, que me veux-tu?"." for an extensive treatment of the subject). The four different relationships between squelette and champs are given by Boulez as: α at the same time (Texte), β separated (Parenthèse), δ hollow (without the pitches for squelette) (Glose), or γ separated or hollow at the same time (Commentaire)

[221] I will for the remainder of the text follow Boulez' terminology in naming the row transpositions A to L for the prime forms, and M to X for the inversions. Retrograde forms are named as retrogrades of whichever transposition they are retrogrades of.

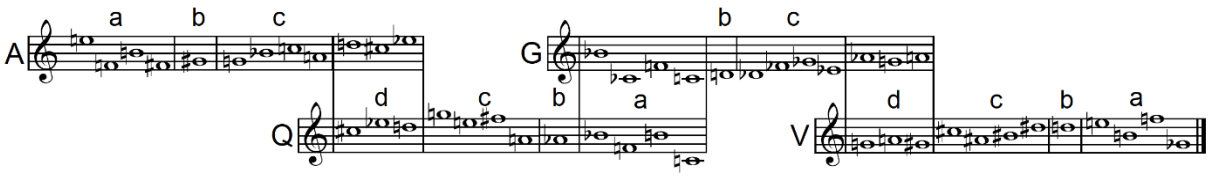


Figure 72. *Boulez: Troisième Sonate, Formant 2 – Trope, from O'Hagan, 2016, 209.*

This illustration shows the sequence that makes out the squelette of the section *Texte*. Peter O'Hagan's study of Boulez's sketches reveals that already at this point, the squelettes were fully worked out with details of rhythms, dynamics, attacks, and register,[222] **Figure 74**, making it clear that the squelette is much more than just a twelve-tone construction. As Erling E. Gulbrandsen notes, Boulez's serialist procedures always had a dimension of unpredictability about them:

> "*Though it is hard to distinguish between earlier (generative) and later stages in his compositional process, given his constant back-and-forth movement between them, an irruption of free elements characterises both. On the one hand, Boulez makes striking free aesthetic choices in later phases of his musical articulation, constantly moulding and rephrasing his final textures. On the other hand, even more interestingly, the serialist procedures that he develops in the early stages of the compositional process—inside his very laboratory of technical generation—are marked by an intentional renunciation of compositional predictability and control."*.[223]

By creating the daily habit of practising only the squelette without the champs, with dynamics and rhythms, as in **Figure 74**,[224] I gradually got a feeling for the dynamic musicality within the structure. The squelette indicates both some basic gestures, an important prototype of which is the 'Webernesque' pairs of legato leaps over several octaves in the a and c sections, and different modes of pacing, for example, the prolonged pedal point with a slower sense of time progression created by the long single notes of the different b-sections.

Both these features led me to understand the structure as dynamic and flexible and that studying the generative serialist procedures in connection with performance should be as much an

[222] O'Hagan, Pierre Boulez and the piano: a study in style and technique, 208.
[223] Erling E. Guldbrandsen, "Playing with transformations. Boulez's Improvisation III sur Mallarmé," in *Transformations of Musical Modernism*, ed. Erling E. Guldbrandsen and Julian Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).
[224] Larger version is available at https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/778684/2100746#tool-2142186

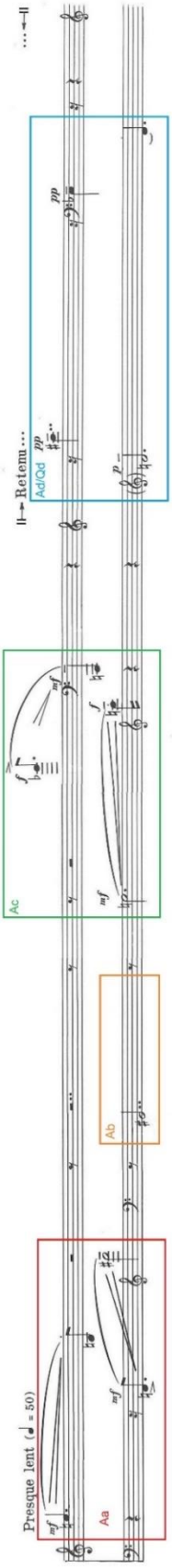


Figure 74. *Boulez: Troisième Sonate, Formant 2 - Trope, Texte, first line, squelette*

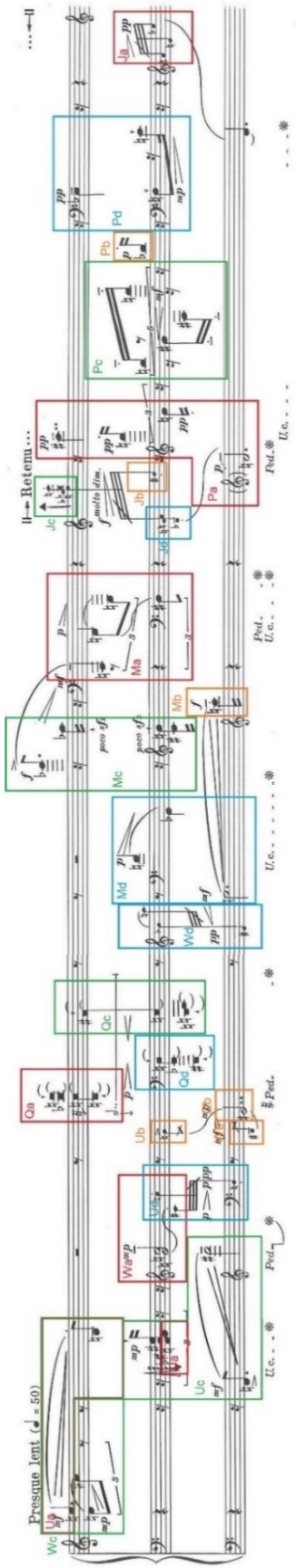


Figure 73. *Boulez: Troisième Sonate, Formant 2 - Trope, Texte, first line, analysis of champs*

unpredictable back-and-forth movement, as Guldbrandsen's quote seems to indicate it was for Boulez to compose it.

This *squelette* is further embellished by adding the *champs*, **Figure 73**,[225] [226] using material from rows that are inversions of the row used in the *squelette* while simultaneously sharing common tones with the squelette, leaving no tones as the sole property of the squelette. Aa is enriched with rows W and U,[227] and Ab is increased with Q, the only inverted row sharing the b-segment with A. Ac is enriched with M, and Ad, which simultaneously is Qd, and therefore exists in a superposition of prime and inversion, is enriched with P (inversion) while surrounded by J (prime).

The analysis in **Figure 73** shows how the champs are formed by continually reworking the basic blocks of notes that share their interval structure with the squelette and, as such, how linear and harmonic structures are related throughout the section, which is itself highly relevant for a performer trying to grasp the basics of the unifying factors and internal integrity of this musical language. But understanding the relationship between champs and squelette purely in terms of pitches or intervals would be a somewhat reductionistic approach, and many features fundamental to the performance of this piece could be overlooked.

The champs also act as a commentary and enrichment to the squelette both as local gestures and in a more long-term dramatic form. For example, the initial legato leap in the squelette (E-B) is immediately mimicked and mirrored in the upwards leap D-C♯ before the slightly disruptive, staccato, downwards arpeggio chord brings in a completely different character. The high F♯ is coloured with the addition of a perfect fourth, ending and fading out with grace notes. The grace notes, either leading onto a tone or ending it, while unbound by any meter, form a recurring gestural motive infinitely varied throughout the sonata. The Ab section consists of a

[225] In this figure I have colour-coded relations in row-segments, rather than the rows themselves, for clarity of related interval-structures.
[226] Larger version is available at https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/778684/2100746#tool-2142185
[227] For an alternative reading, in: Håkon Austbø, "Can musical thinking enhance performance? A study of three piano works by Brahms, Boulez and Beethoven," (www.nmh.no, 2013)., Austbø proposes that the opening is better explained by the row E rather than U, which, although it does not seem to correspond with Boulez' sketches, makes sense as it gives the performer the possibility to perceive the secco-arpeggio-chord as a single complete segment, Ea, rather than a mixture of parts of two segments (Ua+Uc). Thus, it can be understood as a brusque, snappy comment on the two legato leaps by being a transposition of the same material, which is arguably a more elegant and practical solution. I think two points could be made from this. Firstly, even the most basic analysis is based on personal interpretations and is thus far from "objective". Secondly, there might not always be a correspondence between the theoretically "correct" analysis and the analysis that will best enhance the performers perception of internal relationships, i.e., the theorist's and the performer's analyses might not match, because they serve different purposes, and perhaps also follow different logics.

pedal point coloured with various free rhythm chords within a given duration. It is a recurring pattern that the different b-sections, where the squelette suggests a slowing down of pace, are elaborated with a section of freer, more floating rhythms in the champs.

The b-sections also draw attention to the G♯-D axis, which becomes a crucial tonal reference point throughout the formant. This axis is further enforced in the two d sections, which also tend to emphasise pedal points on either D or G♯. With altered pace, this time with a *Retenu,* the d sections seem to function similarly to the b sections in pacing and structure.

A critical moment of *Texte* is the centre, formed by the shared a-segments of Q and G, **Figure 75**. Its central position is underlined by the arch-like shape and the palindromic tempo treatment, making it possible to understand it as the central point around which the entire *Texte* revolves.

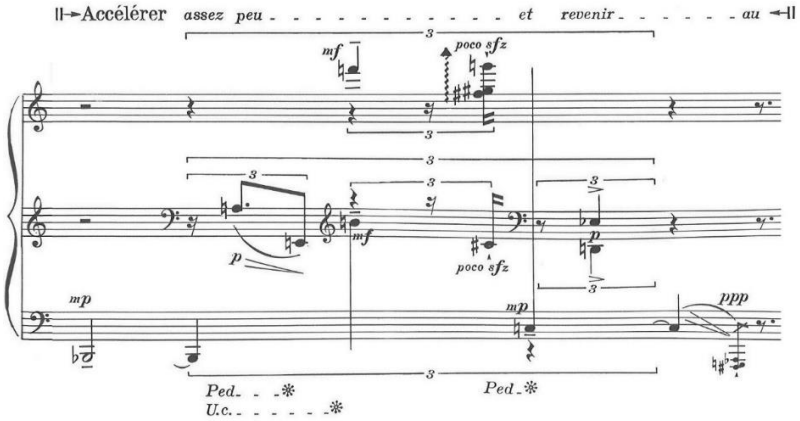


Figure 75. *Boulez: Troisième Sonate, Formant 2 - Trope: Texte, centre.*

This short overview of certain aspects of *Texte* is meant to shed some light on what I experience as the interconnectivity between these apparent dichotomous elements of this music.

On one side, there is the free, gestural nature of the figures, sometimes violently abrupt, sometimes lyrically expressive, sometimes quiet, colourful harmonies. Indeed, the constant reflection on and experimentation with the shape, character, momentum and expression of each gesture, and an attempt at perceiving them as autonomous units, significant, interesting and meaningful in their own right, has occupied my mind immensely during work on this piece. However, this work was accompanied by a sense that this was insufficient. I often felt that a one-sided focus on the gestures created a vacuum in their wake, a lack of energy or tension between them as if I had no real musical motivation to continue playing. The gestures became

isolated from each other, making them feel pointless and, in the Boulezian sense of the word, 'stupid'.

On the other side, there is sketched out, in a purely musical sense, a continuous 'storyline' giving direction, shape and dynamic changes of pace within the entire section, an aspect that I find much more challenging from a performer's point of view. I have found it necessary to start with the analysis, understand the musical forces of the squelette alone, and then work out how the champs and the squelette dynamically interact. This way, the local and the global forces do not form opposites but become an integral synthesis in the performer's conception of the work, and the long-term development not only forms the overall dramatic shape but also transmits a higher sense of meaning to the local structures, and vice versa.

In his 1960 article *'Sonate, que me veux-tu'*, Pierre Boulez elaborates on his literary inspirations for creating new formal concepts. He refers to the works of Stéphane Mallarmé and James Joyce as examples to follow to achieve a *"[…] total rethinking of the notion of form"* and to *"[…] jettison the concept of a work as a simple journey starting with a departure and ending with an arrival."* [228]

While much of the literature concerning parallels between Boulez's music and Mallarmé's poetry focuses on the concept of chance and its many and varied manifestations in Boulez's music, Boulez also suggests a different direction that I believe is highly relevant to the current discussion. In the previously quoted article, he writes: *"I believe that some writers at the present time have gone much further than composers in the organization, the actual mental structure, of their work,"*[229] and it seems to me that the similarities of the multidimensional structures between Boulez' *Trope* and Stephane Mallarmé's *Un coup de Dés Jamais N'Abolira le Hasard* can bring a new dimension to the performance of *Trope*, and ultimately be relevant for how one imagines the unfolding of structure in Mortensen's music.

In his comprehensive book on *Un coup de Dés*, R. Howard Bloch writes that *"[t]he fiction shows through, then quickly dissipates, following the expressiveness of the writing, around the fragmentary interruptions of a central sentence, introduced by the title and continuing on. […] The difference in typefaces, between the dominant size, a secondary and adjacent ones, dictates their importance for oral performance […]."*[230]

[228] Pierre Boulez, *Orientations: collected writings* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 1986), 144.
[229] Ibid., 143.
[230] R. Howard Bloch, *One Toss of the Dice* (New York - London: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2017), 164.

The long, fragmented sentence *"Un coup de Des…Jamais…N'Abolira…le Hasard"*[231] is a complete sentence that makes a certain sense, despite its enigmatic nature. These words are set off in bold capitals and 16-point type and act as a poetic cantus firmus, as they, despite the big gaps in the sentence,[232] are continuously present in the reader's mind *"like a proverb, a sentence of wisdom with an epigrammatic ring."*[233] The sentence stops four pages before the end but is echoed in the final words: *"Toute Pensée émet un Coup de Dés"* bringing the reader back to the central thought and echoing the poem's beginning, suggesting a full circle.

The various interruptions elaborate, commentate, modify, and sometimes digress, keeping the reader in suspense, anticipating the continuation of the sentence, illustrated very well by **Figure 76**, showing in multiple layers the departures from the word 'jamais'.

The same is true about the varying secondary structures. For example, this sentence fragmentarily spread over four pages towards the end: *"RIEN…N'AURA EU LIEU…QUE LE LIEU…EXCEPTÉ…PEUT-ÊTRE…UNE CONSTELLATION"* creating another layer, subordinate to the top layer, but separated from the other text by capitalisation, Figure 77.

Mallarmé's typeface makes the reader circle back and forth between the primary phrase, different layers of sub-phrases and enclaves of interruptions *"as if the reader were moving in time, while repeatedly returned to a fixed place in time - or, if it is not fixed, to a place that is moving syntactically at a different pace than the interruptions."*[234]

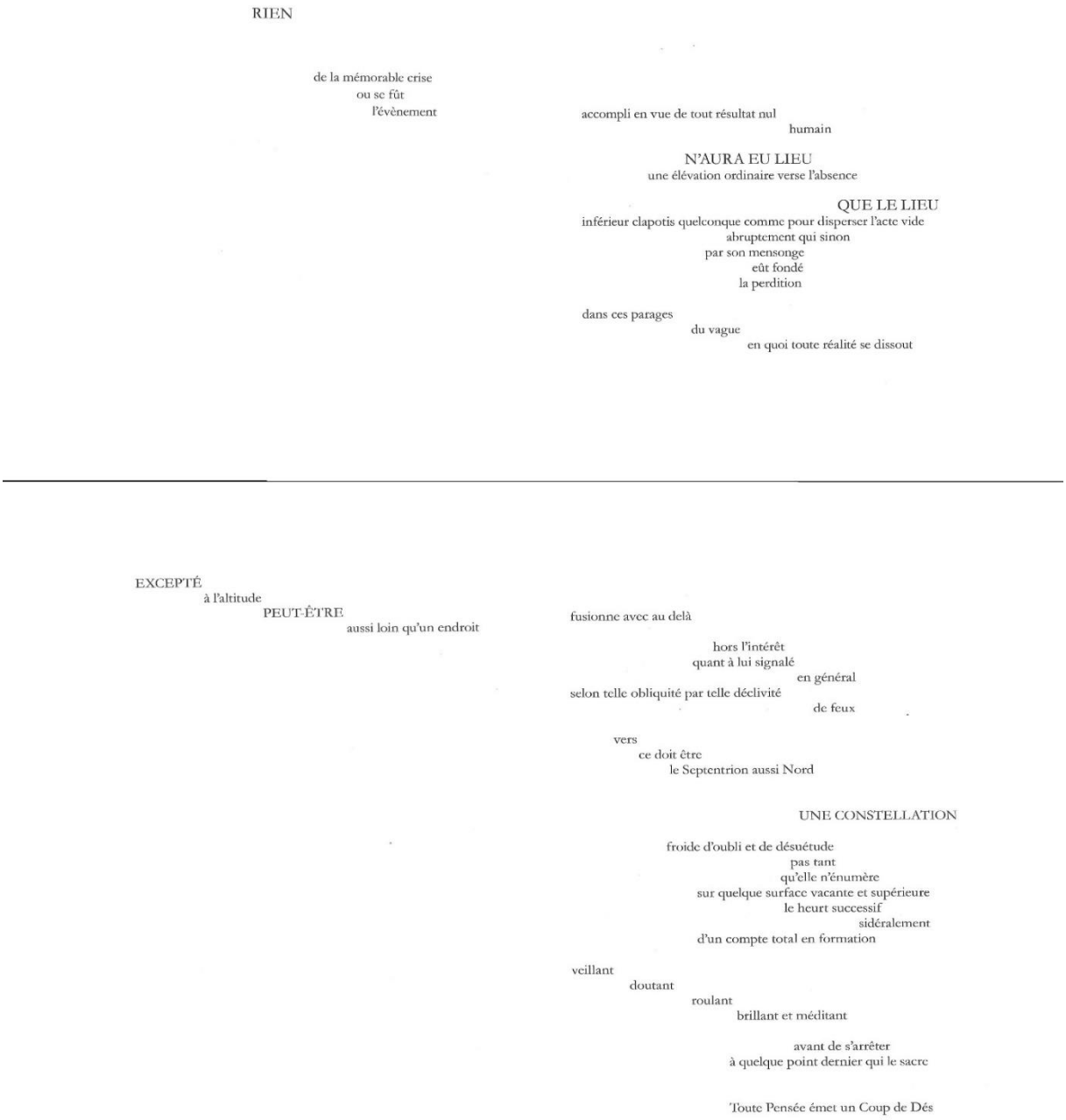
It seems to me that Mallarmé's multi-dimensional structure indicated by differences in typeface has parallels not only to the multidimensionality created by the relationship between *squelette* and *champs* in Boulez' *Trope* but also to the relationship between the pointillistic linear structures and smaller semi-autonomous figures in Mortensen's music. These similarities have brought me new perspectives and tools for performing the pointillistic structures, whether continuous or separated, that Mortensen has in common with Boulez and Webern.

[231] I will in this text refer to the French original text. For an English translation see either Bloch, *One Toss of the Dice*, 167-87. or Stéphane Mallarmé, *Collected Poems and Other Verse with parallel french text*, trans. E. H. and A. M. Blackmore, Oxford World's Classics, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 161-81.
[232] The words "JAMAIS" and "N'ABOLIRA" are separated by six pages, and the words "N'ABOLIRA" and "LE HASARD" being separated by eight.
[233] Bloch, One Toss of the Dice, 217.
[234] Ibid.

Figure 76. *Mallarmé: Un coup de Dés Jamais N'Abolira le Hasard, pp. 3-4*

Since they are told through the medium of language, the different layers of structure in Mallarmé and their relationship seem more accessible to approach and more immediately *felt* than their analogous musical counterparts. Moreover, the multiple deviations, interruptions, elaborations, and modifications of the subordinate levels are immediately more meaningful on a deeper emotional level with the "*physical senses"*[235] in Mallarmé's poem and have, for me, been a starting point for an exploration of how to get a deeper, more personal relationship with the complexities of the music of these composers.

[235] Boulez, Conversations with Célestin Deliège, 79.



RIEN

de la mémorable crise
ou se fût
l'évènement

accompli en vue de tout résultat nul
humain

N'AURA EU LIEU
une élévation ordinaire verse l'absence

QUE LE LIEU
inférieur clapotis quelconque comme pour disperser l'acte vide
abruptement qui sinon
par son mensonge
eût fondé
la perdition

dans ces parages
du vague
en quoi toute réalité se dissout

EXCEPTÉ
à l'altitude
PEUT-ÊTRE
aussi loin qu'un endroit

fusionne avec au delà

hors l'intérêt
quant à lui signalé
en général
selon telle obliquité par telle déclivité
de feux

vers
ce doit être
le Septentrion aussi Nord

UNE CONSTELLATION

froide d'oubli et de désuétude
pas tant
qu'elle n'énumère
sur quelque surface vacante et supérieure
le heurt successif
sidéralement
d'un compte total en formation

veillant
doutant
roulant
brillant et méditant

avant de s'arrêter
à quelque point dernier qui le sacre

Toute Pensée émet un Coup de Dés

Figure 77. *Mallarmé: Un coup de Dés Jamais N'Abolira le Hasard, pp. 18-21*

Some Thoughts on Performers' Long-Term Musical Thinking

In this chapter, I have elaborated on four sources of long-term musical thinking in Mortensen, Webern, Boulez, and Mallarmé, and the relationship between the local details and different levels of more extended developments that I have found particularly important during my project.

Working on this in the music of Webern and Boulez, in connection with Mortensen, has been highly synergetic and has helped me gain perspectives on Mortensen's music previously unmentioned in literature. In addition, it has helped me develop my skills and reflection on the topic to a higher level than I could have by working with Mortensen's music in isolation.

Often, the long-term and the short-term seem to be portrayed as dichotomies, where any focus on one will inevitably lead to neglect of the other. Many performers seem to share the opinion of the well-known pianist who told me that performers should not study structure because it is not music, and I have heard similar statements repeated so often that it seems to me to be an integral and unchallengeable part of our profession's mythos. A typical attitude appears to be that structure is theoretical and static, of little real musical value, and will only inhibit expression.

Anabel Guaita argues the flipside in her critical reflection on *"The atonal piano"*. In her comments on Håkon Austbø's recording of Fartein Valen's Nachtstück, Op. 22, no. 1, she writes:

> *"Austbø's timbral preferences are here very similar to his treatment of Messiaen and Scriabin. All the same, it seems that what he wins in tone colour and imagination, he loses in structure and clarity. At the beginning of this essay, I wrote that one of the most unique aspects of Valen's music is how he builds a musical whole. Every note is important and constitutes a building stone in a larger structure."*[236]

While the same dichotomy seems still to be the fundamental premise, for Guaita, the structure appears to take precedence over detail. The note's fulfilment of the music's one-dimensional long-term destiny becomes the most crucial thing in the music and must not be disturbed by the performer.

Nicholas Cook argues yet another perspective:

[236] Guaita, "Critical Reflection," 54.

> *"[w]hile the developing analytical literature on performance tends to focus on issues of structural interpretation, often on a relatively largescale, there is a strong argument that large-scale structure is to a high degree hard-wired into music as composed, and that the performer's ability to generate musical meaning depends much more on the handling of details. (Another way of saying this is that the analytical literature on performance reflects the agenda of score-based analysis rather than that of performance)."*[237]

On Cook's claim that large-scale structure is somehow hard-wired into the music Mine Doğantan-Dack argues that, if this were the case: *"the large-scale form of a piece of music would always be identified in the same way by different analysts, and different performers would always work from one and the same formal understanding of it."*[238] Moreover, the sounding result would be predictable and the same regardless of the performer, and, finally, the result should be present in any performance of the piece, irrespective of the performer's involvement with or awareness of the topic.

For me, the dynamic and dialectic relationship between long-term and short-term aspects of music should be at the heart of a performer's artistic work, yet it is largely neglected in the literature. The discourse on the possible effect the performer's long-term thinking has on the sounding result has happened almost without the critical participation of performers. It has, therefore, often been limited to what of the performer's thinking can be consciously identified from an outsider's perspective. In this chapter, I have tried to argue that the consequences usually are more subtle, far-reaching, dynamic, unpredictable, and individual and that the performer's structural reflection usually has audible results that are difficult to trace back to its source.[239] Doğantan-Dack says: *"Whether there are systematic relationships and possible interdependency between the local and the global expressive variations observed in a performance has not been investigated extensively in research."*[240] Still, she argues that *"the way a performer handles local details is very much related to her conception of large-scale relationships – or her lack thereof"* an initial conclusion that seems consistent with my own experiences.

[237] Nicholas Cook, "Performance Analysis and Chopin's Mazurkas," *Musicae Scientiae* XI, 2 (2007): 189.
[238] Doğantan-Dack, "Recording the performer's voice," 305.
[239] Also chapters 6 and 7 have sections relevant to the discussion.
[240] Ibid.

Contrary to Cook, I find that any musical effect of structural thinking in an audible result is created by the performer. Through a dialectic, experiment-analytical response process, relying on a deep personal understanding of every level of the specifics of the music at hand and developed through long-term conscious work with the concrete music rather than through automatic processes, the sounding effect is, however, not necessarily recognisable for an outsider, and the performer's own reflections are fundamental to the discourse.

I find structural work is at its most successful when it is not thought of in terms of dichotomies, and the structure does not overshadow the details but becomes a way of enriching them. To my taste, a performance rich in subtle details but devoid of their proper contextualisation is just as emotionally unsatisfactory as a well-structured performance lacking in richness of details. I find that handling the dialectic relationship between the long-term and the short-term must be treated as a specific performative skill to be honed and consciously developed over time, but that it is a skill that, in my experience, is often neglected and undervalued. I believe it is a skill that, at least in the context of the post-Webernian repertoire, is of fundamental importance for personal musical expression.

Chapter 6 – Improvising *Sonate für zwei Klaviere*, Op. 26

Finn Mortensen's sonata for two pianos is among his best-known but rarely performed works. Its large amount of diverse indeterminate processes and free improvisation puts it outside the traditional training of classical performers and forces them to reassess fundamental parts of their musical practice and develop new approaches and methods for working with the music. Mortensen's inclusion of free improvisation, combined with a clear focus on the sounding musical result, puts the individual performer's musical agency at the forefront of creation. The sonata was a unique and ground-breaking work at the time and is distinctly different from other contemporary directions of indeterminacy dominated by the choice-based processes of the *Darmstadt school* and the detachment from human intentions within the *New York school*.

Apart from sections within the score itself, performers can draw inspiration from multiple sources to develop the individual improvisational agency needed to perform the piece. I describe a process of using strategies and ideas from André Boucourechliev's *Archipel I* as a point of departure for starting to improvise, tweaking and adopting them to gain relevance for the idiosyncrasies of Mortensen's sound universe.

As a piece where the order of tones cannot be determined, rehearsing together took on a different character from traditional chamber music work. Instead of conventional rehearsing, we spent our time together drawing inspiration from each other to develop our improvisations further, experimenting with the frames for the improvisations, developing and expanding our mutual understanding of aesthetics and possibilities within the sonata, and exploring our shared space to lift the focus from our individual improvisations and develop an aural awareness for the unity of the combined sounds.

On paper, with the precise series of dynamics and tempi and a crescendo sign even represented in the layout of the score itself, the teleologic form of the piece appears clear-cut. In performance, however, the form is created by constant negotiations of multiple parameters. Based on the few notated details of the score and drawing from my experience with the composer's other teleologic pieces, it seems that the teleologic developments act mainly on a global scale and that, locally, the performers can have considerable freedom for departures.

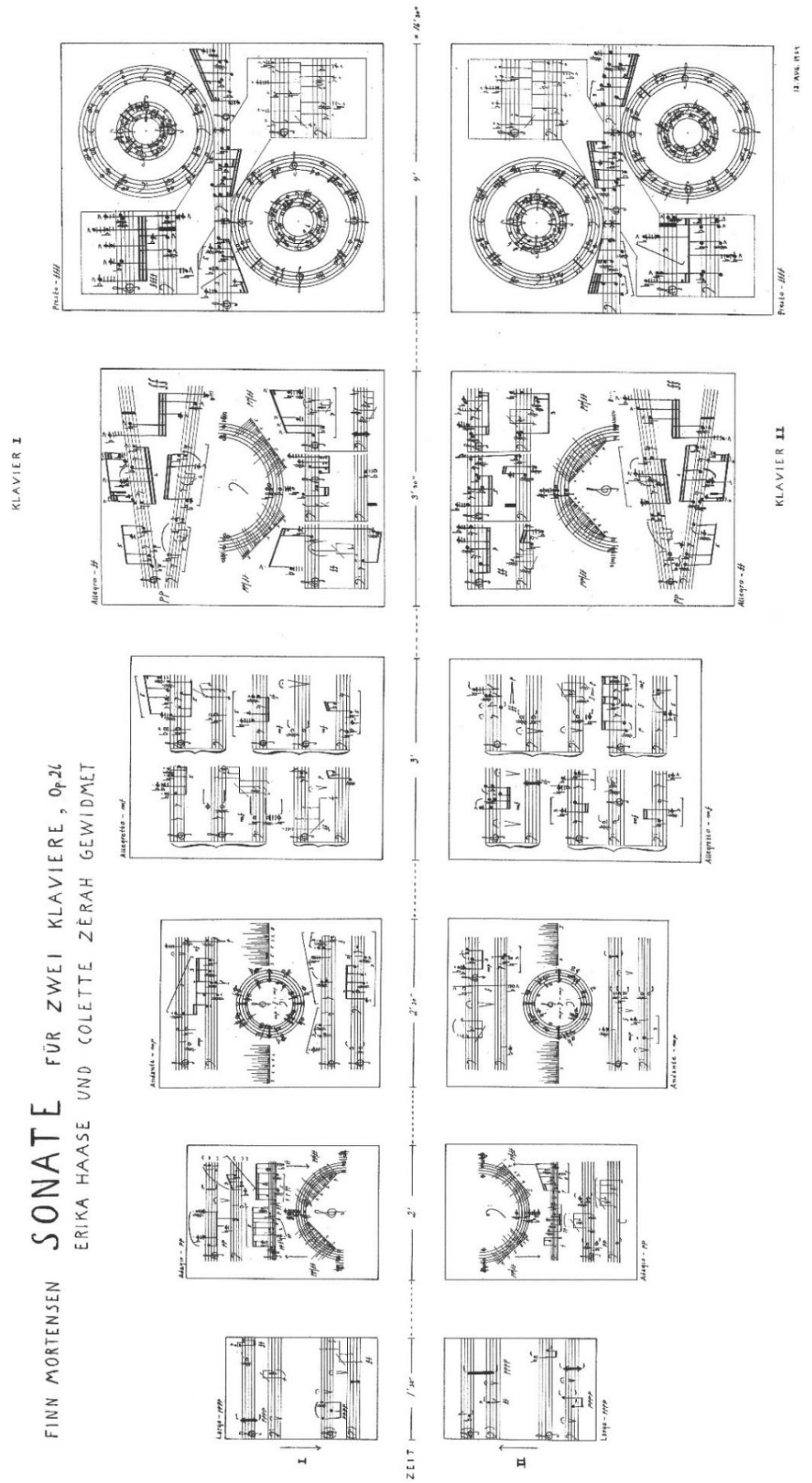


Figure 78. *Mortensen: Sonate für zwei Klaviere, Op. 26, full score*

Introduction and Historical Context

Finn Mortensen's *Sonate für zwei Klaviere,* colloquially called the *Wheel of Fortune Sonata,*[241] is by far his most puzzling and enigmatic score, see **Figure 78**.[242] While the score itself might be well known, at least as an image, the musical piece is not. The only published recording was made in 1965, is of poor sound quality, and was never reissued as CD, thus being only available in specialist archives, and due to legal issues, the TV performance, recorded not long after the premiere,[243] has been made unavailable from NRK's online archive.[244] Performances have happened from time to time but are rare and far between. The unusual score is undoubtedly one of the reasons for this. Upon seeing the score for the first time, it is hard not to be puzzled or even intimidated by its idiosyncrasies. While having similarities to, and fragments of, traditional notation, the signs and symbols seem to be in a context that appears meaningless, and the page layout resembles very little, if anything, found elsewhere in the literature.

The score reveals very few immediate hints at the sounding result, nor does it tell them what to do to get there. Moreover, the processes necessary to prepare a performance of the music are, while not mysterious in any way, outside of the training of the traditional classical pianist. In fact, for a field that is to a large degree formed around the idea of a faithful execution of someone else's intentions, performing a piece that depends to a substantial degree on the performers bringing their own ideas, not only on how to perform it but what to perform in the first place, might by many even be seen as contrary to their training.

In June 2021, I performed a solo piano piece where the performer was given a considerable choice in shaping the ending. After the performance, the composer told me that performers generally do not take advantage of the invitation to participate in the ending of the piece opens for. The final bar or the piece, a long bar with numerous figures, can be repeated up to three times and is to be ended at a random figure of the performer's choice. However, according to the composer, performers have invariably avoided an active engagement in the creation, instead stopping the piece at the end of the score without repeating anything, thus fulfilling the text of the score without actively engaging in its spirit.

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[241] «Lykkehjulsonaten»
[242] Larger version is available at https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/778684/2100746#tool-2142174
[243] "Sonate for to klaverer - TV performance with Haase and Zérah," 1966, accessed February 22nd 2018, https://tv.nrk.no/program/FTEM66000166?msclkid=df669b2fa53b11eca40a1d97d3ed4c4e.
[244] According to nrk.no, the broadcast will be made available again from August 17th 2023.

While that piece differs significantly from Mortensen's sonata, the two have interesting conceptual parallels. Both pieces require that the performer works towards an opinion on how to perform them and even, to varying degrees, develop a view on *what* to perform. The performers must actively engage in the multiplicity of possible solutions and develop the skills and framework to evaluate them. Unfortunately, the terminology used in literature and the focus of the literature itself have tended to imply a certain disregard for the performer's contribution to such works. The consistent use of the word *aleatoric* within the literature on Mortensen's sonata is one example, implying something arbitrary and random and disguising the need for the performers to create and develop their own musical agency concerning the performance of the pieces, at which point any implications of *randomness* must be considered misplaced.

Within a tradition where concepts of musical quality are usually connected with the composer's work, not the performer's, a piece such as Mortensen's sonata that, to a vast degree, relies on improvisation and the performers' creations, could, for many, seem to fall outside of our usual criteria for quality. However, for those who are intent on taking it seriously, it is a piece that challenges their role as performers and musicians and forces them to rethink and expand upon how to create, perform, work with, and think about music on a fundamental level.

Multiple commentators have seen the *Sonata für zwei Klaviere* as a typical representative of contemporary mainstream international musical currents.[245] One critic even went as far as to accuse Mortensen of *"jumping over where the fence is lowest"*,[246] and therefore, I think it is interesting to look at possible predecessors to the sonata and how it's related to international modernism at the time in general.

It is an obvious hypothesis that Mortensen's work with indeterminacy[247] should be inspired by his friendship with Karlheinz Stockhausen. As the leader of *NyMusikk*, Mortensen organised two concerts with Stockhausen together with David Tudor and Christoph Caskel in Oslo in 1960, where they performed some of Stockhausen's pieces displaying the composer's recent advances in indeterminacy.[248] Mortensen also spent some time socialising with the musicians, and it is not unreasonable to assume that the concept of indeterminacy was a significant part of

[245] Indeed, much of the previous research, above all, tend to focus on Mortensen as a typical representative of his time, and less on his uniqueness.
[246] «[…] som også hopper over hvor gjerdet er lavest […]» Dag Winding Sørensen, "Dekomponeringsmusikk," *Aftenposten* January 13th 1965.
[247] There seems to be no established consensus on terminology for this kind of pieces. *Indeterminacy* seems to me to be the most suitable in this context.
[248] Nesheim, *Alltid på leting*, 143-44.

the conversation. However, while Stockhausen was a pioneer within this field, there are many differences between Stockhausen's indeterminacy and the direction Mortensen would eventually go.

In *Klaviertücke XI*, which David Tudor performed in the concerts, Stockhausen had written a score consisting of 19 unordered fragments. The performer chooses one fragment as a starting point in the spur of the moment and then continues to select between the fragments until the same one has been reached for the third time, marking the end of the performance. Tempo and dynamics for each fragment are notated at the end of the previous fragment, ensuring that each fragment will differ from performance to performance, and even when repeated during the same performance. The piece is ambivalent and indeterminate in its large-scale form but very carefully and detailed notated at a detailed level. Therefore, the indeterminacy within this piece is restricted to the performer making specific choices during the performance. The same can be said about *Zyklus* for solo percussion, which was also performed at the Oslo concerts, albeit here, the choices are made on a more detailed level than in *Klavierstücke XI*.

While this form of predominantly choice-based indeterminacy grew out of the circle associated with Darmstadt[249] and became typical for the European concept of indeterminacy, a very different kind of indeterminacy, one that went further in performer participation and, to a large degree, abandoned the composer's control of the sounding result, developed in the 1950s in the circle around the composer John Cage in New York, later often referred to as the 'New York School'.

At the time of writing his Sonata, Mortensen would have been well aware of the New York School, if for nothing else, through David Tudor, a central figure in the American avant-garde movement and a close associate of Cage. While, at first glance, Mortensen's score seems to fit perfectly in the tradition of American indeterminacy, I believe there are key fundamental differences that set them apart. Most importantly, the improvisation Mortensen calls for, which makes up the majority of the playing time of his sonata, is not necessarily conceptually the same kind of improvisation Cage intends to realise *his* scores. The following conversation can illustrate the difference:

> *"Rob: [...]After the first run-through he just sat there. Silent. And we thought: What´s he thinking? We sensed that something was wrong, but he didn't say anything.*

[249] Pierre Boulez's *Troisième Sonate* is another example of the same

[...]

Christian: [...]Cage acted like a true Zen-master; he was very reserved, he challenged us with his silence and let us figure out on our own. [...]

Kjell: We [the performers]agreed that the core of the problem was the term "improvisation".

Rob: We had a jazz musician´s understanding of the term.

Kjell: But it wasn't meant that way.

Rob: Little by little it dawned to us that perhaps it wasn't we *that should be at the center of attention, but the sounds. Out task was to make sure that the leaves and the twigs and the tree trunk and everything could express* their *sounds.*

[...]

Rob: And we were to go separately, without any sort of collaboration or planned progression.

Kjell: And completely without any willed intention.

[...]

Rob: But doesn't the word "improvisation" point mainly towards the performer?

Kjell: Cage agreed that the term was up for discussion.[250]

While the jazz musicians' concept of improvisation focused on their own personal music-making, Cage was more interested in the sounds themselves, unsoiled by human intentions, planning, meaning and limitations. In the words of Storesund, Cage *"creates the conditions for an ensemble situation where the performers are supposed to play at the same time, but not respond or actively interact with what the other performers are doing."*[251]

Cage explained his philosophy of keeping sounds uncontaminated from the human ego as follows:

[250] In Else Olsen Storesund, *Åpen Form - en Utvidet Utøverrolle. En Håndbok.* (Bergen: Universitetet i Bergen, Griegakademiet - Institutt for musikk, 2015), 155.
[251] «[…} legger opp til en samspillsituasjon hvor utøverne skal spille samtidig, og ikke respondere eller interagere aktivt mot det de andre utøverne gjør» Ibid., 30.

> *People expect listening to be more than listening. And so sometimes they speak of inner listening. Or the meaning of sound. When I talk about music it finally comes to people's minds that I'm talking about sound that doesn't mean anything. It's not inner, but it's just outer. And they say, these people who understand that, finally say: You mean it's just sounds? Thinking for something to just be a sound to be useless. Whereas I love sounds just as they are. And I have no need for them to be anything more than what they are. I don't want them to be psychological, […] I just want it to be a sound.*[252]

This detachment, where the sounding result is emancipated from the composer's and performers' personal agency and taste, is fundamental to many *open form* compositions. Storesund says that *"[t]hrough non-controlling methods, they developed ways of structuring the composition with intensions to create music without bonds to their personal taste, and therefore without personal limitations. As composers, they focussed on processes in composing, and not necessarily on the result of the performance itself."*[253]

While Cageian philosophy is fundamental to understanding and performing much of the open form tradition, I ultimately find it alien in the context of Mortensen's sonata. Mortensen said that *"[…] half the musical impression depends on the performing musician and his ability to improvise. Then the composer can be equally anticipating every time a musician attempts to perform the piece, which is obviously interesting […]."*[254]

This quote seems to suggest that Mortensen's intention was not to eliminate the performers' taste, idiosyncrasies, preferences, and ultimately, their personal imprint on the sounding result, but rather to bring it to the forefront of the musical creation. Seen in such a light, the sonata becomes the culmination of a long-developing tendency in his music; to encourage and give room for the performer's personal music-making.

It also seems his intentions were not to eliminate the *composer's* influence on the sound but instead constituted a rethink of the level of detail the composer must control. His imagination

[252] John Cage in Ibid., 86.

[253] «Gjennom ikke-kontrollerende metoder utviklet de måter å strukturere komponeringen på som skulle skape musikk som var uten bindinger til deres personlige smak og dermed også uten personlige begrensninger. Som komponister fokuserte de på prosessen i komponeringen, og ikke alltid på resultatet av selve fremføringen.» Ibid., 151.

[254] «[…] halvparten av det musikalske inntrykket avhenger av den utøvende musiker og hans evner til improvisasjon. Så kan komponisten være like spent hver gang en musiker prøver seg på komposisjonen, og det er selvfølgelig interessant […]» Mortensen in Nesheim, *Alltid på leting*, 174.

for this piece had gone towards a sound world too complex to be practically realised with the level of precise compositional control a composer more traditionally would keep.

> *"[…] I have just put the notes on turntables, for when the music comes to the point where it becomes so complicated it exceeds the ear's ability to perceive the timbral details – one actually might as well improvise – within a given frame".*[255]

Therefore, he intends to *"Stimulate improvisation within the frames of the style. Rather than writing out a complicated score, one leaves most to the performers. The result is then better and more vivid."*[256] Mortensen's reasons for utilising improvisation thus seems closely related to those of Witold Lutosławski, who said about a passage in his string quartet:

> *"The point at issue is not a matter of differences between one performance and another. …I did not intend, either, to free myself of part of my responsibility for the work by transferring it to the players. The purpose of my endeavours was solely a particular result in sound".*[257]

I think for Mortensen's sonata, an alternative and more relevant form of improvisation was outlined by André Boucourechliev, a Bulgarian-French composer well acquainted with the open form of the New York School. Boucourechliev ultimately rejected Cage's concept of *chance* for Earle Brown's idea of *choice,* containing a *"distinctly un-Cagean level of subjective involvement"*.[258] He did, however, take the concept of *choice* much further than his European colleagues, resulting in music marked with *"what he has termed 'creative ambiguity', which enables the performers to engage in the creative process, but within parameters (and using material) clearly defined by the composer."*[259]

Archipel I for two pianos and two percussionists from 1968 was the first in a series of pieces exploring the combination of precomposed material with an extreme degree of performer's choice, essentially taking it so far that it, at times, explores a grey area between choice and free

[255] «[…] derfor har jeg like gjerne satt notene på en dreieskive, for når musikken kommer til det punkt hvor den blir så komplisert at det overstiger ørets evne til å ta de klanglige detaljer – kan man i grunnen like gjerne improvisere – innenfor en gitt ramme» Ibid., 173-4.
[256] «Stimulere til improvisasjon innenfor stilens rammer. I stedet for å skrive ut et komplisert notebilde, overlater man det meste til musikerne. Resultatet blir da bedre og mer levende.» "Sonate for to klaverer - TV performance."
[257] Robert P. Morgan, "Twentieth Century Music - A history of Musical Style in Modern Europe and America" (New York - London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1991), 375-6.
[258] David Nicholls (rev. Keith Potter),"Brown, Earle (Appleton)," Grove Music Online 2001 (Updated 2002, 2009), accessed March 4th 2021.
[259] Jeremy Drake, "Boucourechliev, André," Grove Music Online, 2001, accessed March 4th 2021.

improvisation. In his foreword to the piece, Boucourechliev says about the performers' decisions:

> *"Every individual decision, however, must be made in close and constant liaison with those of the partner. The performance must be in a state of profound communication at all times, a state based upon mutual aural awareness. The pianists are not to exchange signals of any sort (gestures, etc.). On this intense and constant collaboration depends the form of the work, a form that is utterly unforeseeable and still not in the least arbitrary. Accident is excluded."*[260]

He thus highlights the performers' music-making and focuses on the musical result as the key to realising the music. This focus on the musical result as the basis for quality sets Boucourechliev apart from Cage philosophically and in terms of the performative process and methodology. The performer's understanding of the conceptual and philosophical background is fundamental to their approach to the music. Storesund instigates the following warning in her reflection:

> *"A challenge with the open form works is that many performers think they are allowed to do anything because of the unconventional and open notation. This is not the case and can quickly lead to the work becoming something other than the notation instructs or the composer intended."*[261]

Still, the literature on musical indeterminacy has focused on the composer's work. The performer's agency is often entirely absent or reduced to an arbitrariness[262] that is fundamentally at odds with the actual work and reflections behind a performance of this music. Approaching Mortensen's sonata with the understanding that the outcome is the result of random happenings, rather than the performers themselves being the creators and judges of musical quality, is, I believe, not going to lead to a very satisfactory result.

Storesund's statement also hints at some differences between Mortensen's sonata, and the New York School, which Storesund primarily focused on in her research project. For example, while

[260] André Boucourechliev, "Archipel I," (London: Universal Edition (London) Ltd., 1968). Performance instructions for piano I and II.

[261] «En utfordring med Åpen form-verkene er at mange utøvere, på grunn av den ukonvensjonelle og åpne noteringen, tror det er lov å gjøre hva som helst. Dette er ikke tilfellet, og kan fort føre til at verket blir til noe annet enn det notasjonen gir deg instruksjoner om, eller noe helt annet enn det komponisten hadde tenkt seg.» Storesund, *Åpen Form - en Utvidet Utøverrolle*, 12.

[262] In Norway the term 'aleatoric' is used almost exclusively about any form of indeterminacy, a term I find increasingly problematic as it suggests a randomness in outcomes that are often determined by the performer.

she highlights the observance of instructions and the composer's intentions, the absence of both seems to be a fundamental premise of Mortensen's piece. Mortensen's lack of instructions and expressed opinions requires an entirely different process from the one she describes.[263]

During an interview with Elef Nesheim in 1999,[264] Mortensen's close associate and colleague Arne Nordheim revealed that Mortensen might have drawn inspiration from a completely different source than the indeterminacy tradition when writing the sonata. In October 1962, the American pianist Cecil Taylor stayed for a week in Oslo[265], performing daily at the Metropol Jazz Club with his trio.[266] Mortensen, apparently having entered by a coincidence one evening, was so excited he returned several more evenings and exclaimed in an interview at the time: *"It was so refreshing to hear this pianist, he is fantastic – I went from Metropol with the feeling of having experienced something tremendous."*[267]

Taylor's idiosyncratic improvisational technique, in Oslo imprecisely nicknamed *twelve-tone-jazz*,[268] has often been seen to be inspired as much by the European and American avant-garde as by the jazz tradition[269]. Eric Charry describes the peculiarities of Taylor's playing:

> *"Taylor's piano improvisations demonstrated an innovative and uniquely personal language that had a far-reaching impact. His conception explored texture more than melody or harmony to generate and develop ideas, while still respecting a repeating chorus structure. Eschewing the standard practice of playing chords in the left hand and melody in the right, Taylor played similar material with both to create a conversation, which, among other things, exploited register and rhythm, used static and moving tone*

[263] I had, during my project, but independent of it, the chance to perform Christian Wolff's Burdocks, together with among others, the composer himself. As a work that highlights much of the characteristic features of the New York School, both in terms of performer detachment and in terms of setting process in front of sounding result. While I agree performing Burdocks requires serious work, it is a very different kind of work from performing Mortensen's Sonata.
[264] Nesheim, *Alltid på leting*, 155.
[265] Ibid., 153.
[266] Consisting of, in addition to Taylor, Jimmy Lyons on saxophone and Sunny Murray on percussion.
[267] «Det var så forfriskende å høre denne pianisten, han er fantastisk – jeg gikk fra Metropol med følelsen av å ha opplevd noe virkelig stort.» Randi Hultin, *Dagbladet* October 17th 1962.
[268] Nesheim, *Alltid på leting*, 154.
[269] For a more extensive treatment of this topic, I refer the reader to Mark Micchelli, "Sound Structures and Naked Fire Gestures in Cecil Taylor's Solo Piano Music," *MTO - a journal of the Society for Music Theory* 28, no. 3 (2022), https://mtosmt.org/issues/mto.22.28.3/mto.22.28.3.micchelli.html. and just quote his view that "*I consider the charge that Taylor stole from "European modernists" to be nothing more that a racist myth, borne from the fact that Taylor's music is (in some superficial sense) "dissonant" […]*".

clusters, juxtaposed parallel and conjunct lines, and repeated motives across the range of the piano."[270]

Nordheim's statement that the sound world of Taylor inspired Mortensen's sonata sheds some light on the piece's origins and Mortensen's intentions with it. It makes it plausible that the piece originated not from the idea of a procedure or a philosophy of indeterminacy but rather from a vision of sounds. The different improvisational and indeterministic procedures were simply tools to achieve the desired sound result.

I, therefore, believe that Finn Mortensen's sonata is not an attempt at changing the traditional focus away from the sounding result of music. Instead, the effect he imagined required a reassessment of the relationship between composer and performers to be practically realisable. The responsibility for creating a coherent musical structure is no longer the sole area of the composer but is equally dependent on the performers, and their role as co-creative artists is no longer optional but required from them.

My work on the sonata also led me to see my role as a performer of Mortensen's other works in a different light. Rather than as a unique piece in his production, one can see the sonata as a specific case, perhaps even a culmination, of his project to include the performers as co-creators of his music. This feature of his compositional personality was rare among modernist composers and contrary to some who tried to control the performance as much as possible.

Mortensen's sonata illuminates how he viewed his role as a composer and forces the performer to reflect on his role and how to acquire a creator's skills and mindset. Therefore, it can be viewed as not only a piece of musical art but an excellent didactic tool for developing a more actively engaging approach to making music and an individual co-creative agency, something that is traditionally not often a part of either the education or the daily work of classically trained musicians.

[270] Eric Charry, "Taylor, Cecil (Percival) " in *Grove Music Online* (2013 (Print), 2022 (Online)).

Developing an Improvisatorial Agency

Mortensen's sonata contains a variety of different forms of indeterminacy. However, the most innovative aspect of this piece lies in the various circles and semi-circles in fields 2, 3, 5 and 6, which indicate areas of freer improvisation contrasting the other forms of indeterminacy. According to the composer's foreword, the performers should improvise harmonically and melodically on the chord, while the rhythmic cue notes may hint at rhythmic figures. [271]

This, however, seems to raise more questions than it answers. What does it mean to improvise in this specific context? Are there frames for the improvisation or hints at how it might sound? How do we interpret the material the composer has given? What are the criteria for the quality of the performance? As a predominantly non-improvisational musician, how do I develop the skills necessary to perform this piece? I had already performed Boucourechliev's Archipel I earlier in my project because I thought there were possible synergies to explore between the two pieces as a starting point for developing my improvisational skills.

Archipel I does not have a general score but one large individual sheet, approximately 79 by 63 cm, for each performer, **Figure 79** contains the sheet for Piano II.[272] Numerous fragments are spread around the sheet, like an archipelago on a naval chart, inspiring the piece's name. The fragments have no fixed order, but the performers are free to choose any in the spur of the moment. Although they are not required to play all fragments during any given performance, the composer stresses the importance of carefully preparing them all, always to have the option to play any. Fragments marked "R" may be repeated once during a performance, while fragments marked "RR" may be repeated twice or more. Repeated patterns thus form what Jean Ducharme calls "*the constant renewal of associations[*…allowing for] *reappearance without redundancy* […and encouraging to] *resume while prohibiting repetition."*[273]

[271] Finn Mortensen, "Sonate für zwei Klaviere," (NB Noter, 1964).
[272] Larger version is available at https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/778684/2100746#tool-2142178
[273] Jean Ducharme, "André Boucourechliev. Pianiste, écrivain de musique et compositeur," 2007, https://brahms.ircam.fr/composers/composer/521/#parcours. « Tout (ou presque) peut servir plusieurs fois moyennant le renouvellement constant des associations. La scission schéma/matériau permet ainsi la réapparition sans redondance : elle incite à reprendre tout en interdisant de répéter. »

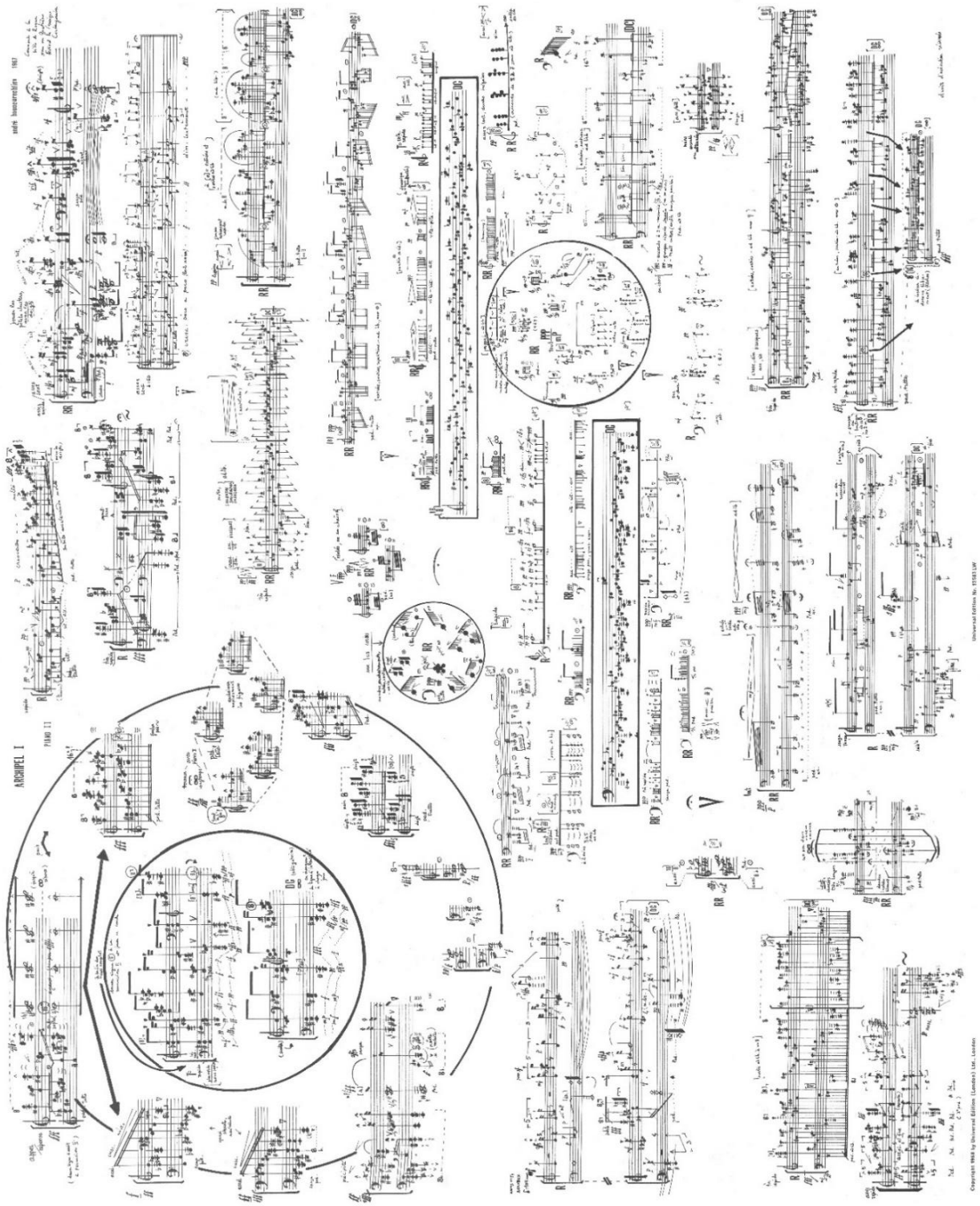

Figure 79. *Boucourechliev, Archipel I, piano II,*

However, performers can vary repetitions not only through their recontextualisation but also through other choices given by the composer, such as tempo, dynamics, and starting and ending points of the fragments. Furthermore, when revisiting this piece for this project about eight years since I last performed it, I started appreciating more the room for personal and contextual interpretation of each fragment and an improved ability to form each chosen fragment to its surroundings, making subtle adjustments to tempo, dynamics, timing and character, all within the given parameters.

The piece has no fixed duration nor any given start or end. Instead, the composer states that the end should come *"spontaneously and unforeseeably, the players in tacit agreement,"*[274] and it was indeed essential to us not to have any form of preconceived plan before starting a performance.

Perhaps the most important structures of Archipel I in the context of Mortensen's sonata are the two central *'reservoirs'* with their corresponding satellite structures. **Figure 80** contains the treble reservoir; each pianist also has similar bass reservoirs. These structures form a considerable part of the material the pianists play in this piece and also come closest to a kind of improvisation relevant to Mortensen's sonata.

Each satellite structure indicates a particular style, rhythm and texture rather than an exact performative model and offers a wide variety of options regarding dynamics, octavations, and general freedom created from the interpretational ambiguity of the notation. These are paired with the reservoir pitches, starting from any note.[275] The many possible combinations ensure that most fragments can be varied enough to be used repeatedly without any perception of redundancy.

Pairing the satellite structures from *Archipel I* with Mortensen's harmonic material for improvisation provided a useful starting point for exploring how I can improvise within Mortensen's sonata. I used each satellite fragment as one kind of rhythmical and textural style to be varied indefinitely, each becoming a model for developing a specific style of improvisation that could later form a part of a performance of the sonata.

[274] Boucourechliev, "Archipel I." Performance instructions for piano I and II

[275] The reservoirs are, similarly to many of the other fragments, best understood as circular structures, and appear to be notated linearly just to facilitate reading.

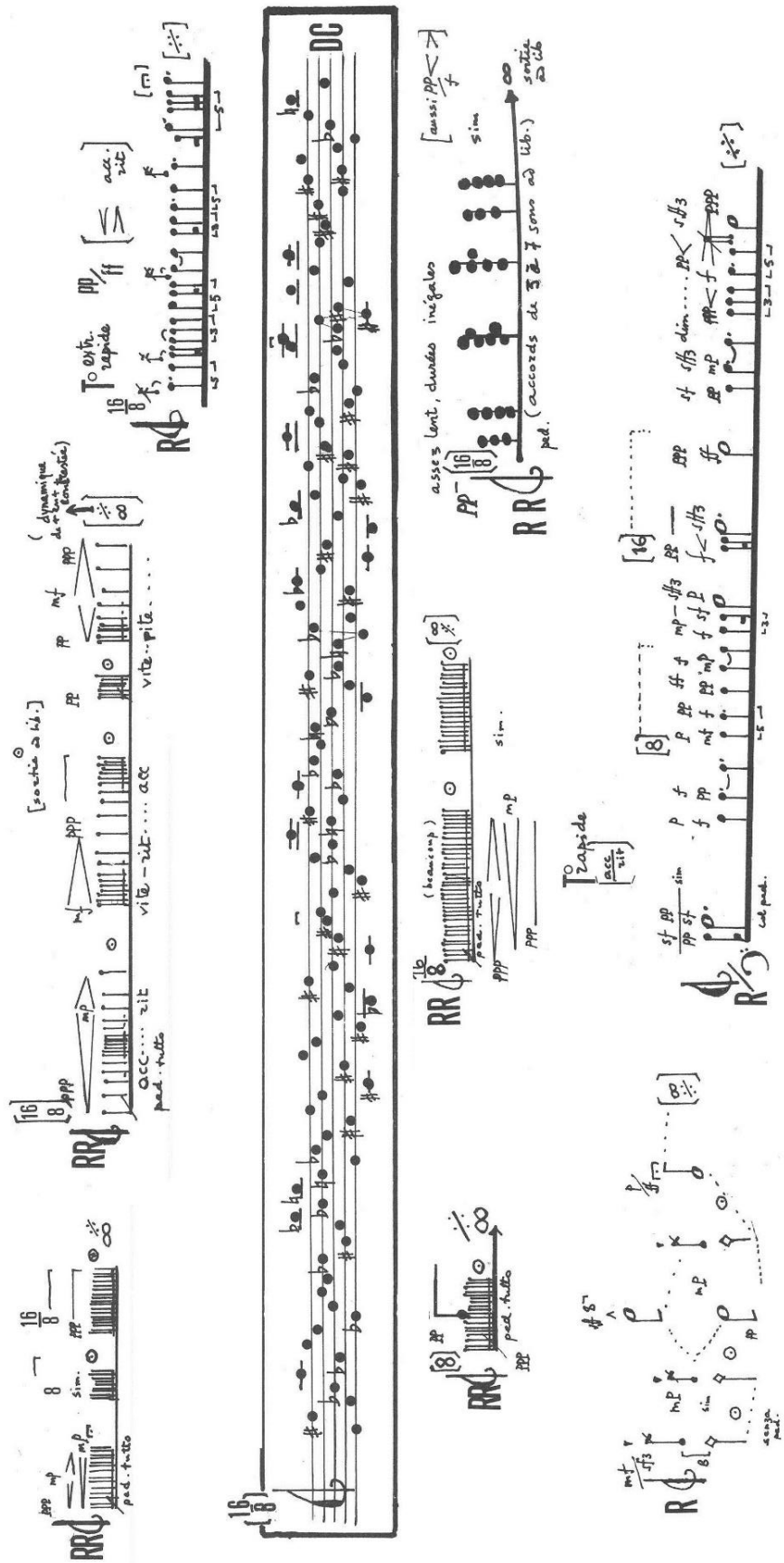

Figure 80. *Boucourechliev: Archipel I, Treble reservoir*

In my work with Mortensen's sonata, I started by choosing a fragment, for example, the upper right one in Boucourechliev's reservoir. The uneven, jagged stream of rapid notes was something I was used to from playing the piece by Boucourechliev. However, I quickly noticed two tendencies when I started playing around with these rhythms over the six pitches Mortensen gave.

Firstly, I tended to start repeating figures, creating my own personal clichés that made my playing a bit too predictable without enough variation. So, I made it a part of my process to identify these little figures and force myself to find alternatives. I frequently found my clichés were created not by an artistic agency but by a physical preference, that they were immediately easier to perform than the alternatives. Therefore, I tried to force myself to avoid them, partly by finding as many orders of notes to pair with that specific rhythm as possible and partly by working on expanding the number of rhythmical possibilities.

Secondly, I found that, despite having worked on similar things in Boucourechliev, Mortensen's sonata was sufficiently different for the improvisatory skills developed there only to take me so far. In Boucourechliev, I had achieved a fluency in improvising on these fragments, while in Mortensen, I tended to stop for short periods due to confusion or hesitation.

The significant difference between Boucourechliev and Mortensen is that Boucourechliev's reservoirs are ordered successively, while in Mortensen, no order is, or can be, decided. In *Archipel I*, I had spent much time practising the reservoir as a stream of ordered notes without rhythm, trying to play it as fast as possible to gain the freedom needed for fluent improvisation. In contrast, in Mortensen, the order of notes is itself a parameter of variation within the material. I found that to gain the feeling for the material to be able to improvise over it fluently and with sufficient variation, I needed to start very slowly and work up the tempo gradually.

I then proceeded by not just playing the notes as their notated pitch but octavating individual notes freely up or down, which, I found, increased the problems with fluency I had earlier. In particular, when jumping with the hands between octaves, I noticed they tended to follow each other and move in predictable stereotypical patterns that I needed to work on consciously to avoid. Finally, I added dynamic variations, playing around with isolated figures or single notes with different dynamics.

Obviously, this work process resulted in only one specific kind of structure, one that certainly can be varied tremendously but that will nevertheless be insufficient for a complete

performance of Mortensen's sonata, not to speak of several performances. The next, and perpetually ongoing, task became to expand with several different structures, or indeed as many as possible. For example, the structure at the bottom right of the reservoir leads to a completely different style than the one previously discussed, one that is much more varied in temporal pacings, like gestures leading into or away from a nuclear point. The constant variation between the rapid movements and the long lingering notes gives this style a unique character.

Another important source of inspiration for improvisation is the more detailed notated parts of Mortensen's score. For example, the second notated line of the second field in Mortensen's score, Figure 80, could form yet another stylistic prototype. The expressive legato melody, more slowly moving but very varied in dynamic and register, can form yet another starting point for experimentation that can also potentially create a bridge between the notated and the improvised sections in this field.

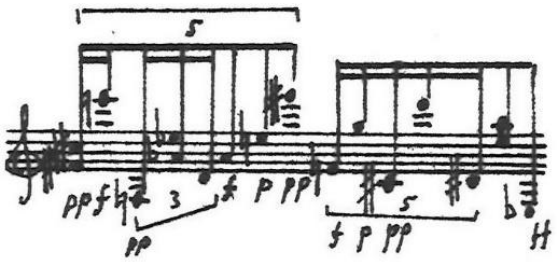

Figure 81. *Mortensen: Sonate für zwei Klaviere, Op. 26, second field,detail*

One can find numerous sources of inspiration, both in the notated parts of Mortensen's score and in Boucourechliev's fragments, not to mention the improvisations of Cecil Taylor, that can start work on slightly different kinds of improvisation in a long-lasting and ever-ongoing quest for further variation, and renewal of individualised realisations of Mortensen's score. My partner, Sanae Yoshida, pointed out a tendency that other music she worked on simultaneously, particularly a piece by the Norwegian composer *Jon Øivind Ness*, tended to find its way into her improvisations. I noticed I sometimes played fragments sounding like a nightingale from Messiaen's *Catalogue d'Oiseaux*. These occurrences illustrate how unpredictable and uncontrollable the process of performing this piece ultimately is.

Perhaps the most fundamental difference between Mortensen's and Boucourechliev's scores is that Mortensen decided to give a harmonic material for improvisation rather than the succession of notes found in Boucourechliev. Although one can, and is indeed encouraged to, create harmonies from Boucourechliev's reservoirs, Mortensen's material constitutes an entirely different level of harmonic identity. The particularity with which the notes are voiced and

spaced greatly influenced how we imagined the sounding result and, thus, how we thought during the working process.

All the notated material seems to indicate a balanced relationship, although flexible and varied, between harmonic sonority on one side and gesture and rhythm on the other. Particularly when working on the fourth field, we gained a feeling of how the harmony and gestures could unify into a whole. The conscious work we did with the mixture of harmony and gesture in the fourth field provided further inspiration, and perhaps even frames, for the improvised parts.

Within the improvised sections, I spent a lot of time playing around, listening to different harmonic constellations, not just complete 6-note chords but also various 2-, 3-, 4-, and 5-note figures, trying to figure out how different constellations lead to different harmonic colours, how they differ in character and thus can be thought of as various aspects, with slightly different identities, of the complete sonority.

Later, I worked on incorporating this harmonic experience into rhythmic ideas by juxtaposing harmony and gesture and focussing more on harmonic colours in the more linear improvisatory styles. I also practised arpeggios with all six notes, trying to avoid having physical preferences towards any specific ordering but repeating them until I was equally comfortable with all different permutations. I find that gaining the necessary mastery to improvise freely and varied is a major undertaking, particularly in the sixth field, with its tremendous rapidity and force and 24 chords to improvise on, all with a separate identity and colour, not to mention physical qualities.

This way of developing and practising different styles of improvising outlined in this sub-chapter is, however, not necessarily clearly perceived in performance, nor do I think it should be. Rather than becoming different sections in an interpretation, the different styles tend to merge into a unified musical conception, and what is left is the improvisational skills developed and a richer improvisational vocabulary.

Rehearsing Together

I find that rehearsing this piece together is very different from traditional chamber music work. Our work together had more the goal of widening the scope and range of possibilities and the frames of improvisation and sharing ideas for improvisation than arriving at and rehearsing a specific result. Our aim became to develop and practice a way of playing where listening and reacting is a very different mental state from traditional music, and rethinking and exploring our role as performers and co-creators is an integral part of the rehearsal process.

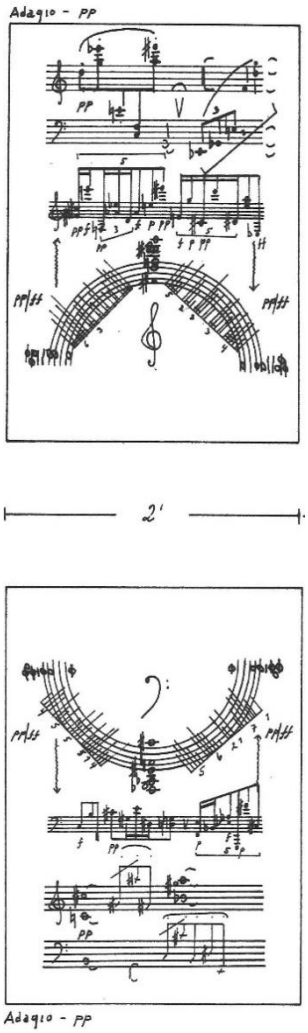

Figure 82. *Mortensen: Sonate für zwei Klaviere, Op. 26, Field 2*

Our most interesting and productive session was a few days before we performed the piece for the first time.[276] We used the session mainly to test different solutions for performing individual fields and various parameters for the improvisational frame, elaborated on below.

Second Field

Audio examples 1 – 8[277] all show different approaches to improvisation in the second field, Figure 82.[278] In examples 1 and 2, we made a very conservative choice on what material we improvised over and tested improvising with only the six notated pitches each, without octave displacement. While this choice already contains much scope for variation, and these two versions show some differences in character and texture, it inevitably felt very restrictive and led to a feeling of monotony. The sparse pitch material seemed to limit the possibility for gestural variation and made their strong nuclear point appear on predictable pitches after a while.

In 3 and 4, we added the possibility of octave displacements, leading to more possibilities concerning timbral and, indeed, gestural variety. Still, I think the examples suffer from the inevitable repetitions of

[276] Sanae Yoshida and I living in different cities meant we could not rehearse together very often. This piece has very few things that need to be rehearsed together in a traditional sense, so this was not really a problem. However, I believe there is an inherent danger in over-rehearsing this kind of piece, ending up with stale clichés and, in the worst case, a sense of routine among the performers that may result in an inactive way of listening and an unengaging musical result.

[277] All audio examples are available at https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/778684/2124386.

[278] The upper fields are read traditionally, while the bottom fields, belonging to piano 2, are read from the bottom up.

intervals, making the music feel predictable and uninteresting after a while.

Therefore, we tried a new approach, where we did not think of the material as chords with fixed interval structure but rather as a mode where piano one has all the chromatic notes between D and G, and piano two has the remaining notes between G♯ and C♯, as demonstrated in examples 5 and 6. This approach vastly expanded the possible range of gestures, facilitating a lot more variety in the rhythmical figures, but at the cost of losing some of the harmonic character and unity, which we ultimately perceived as very important for the music.

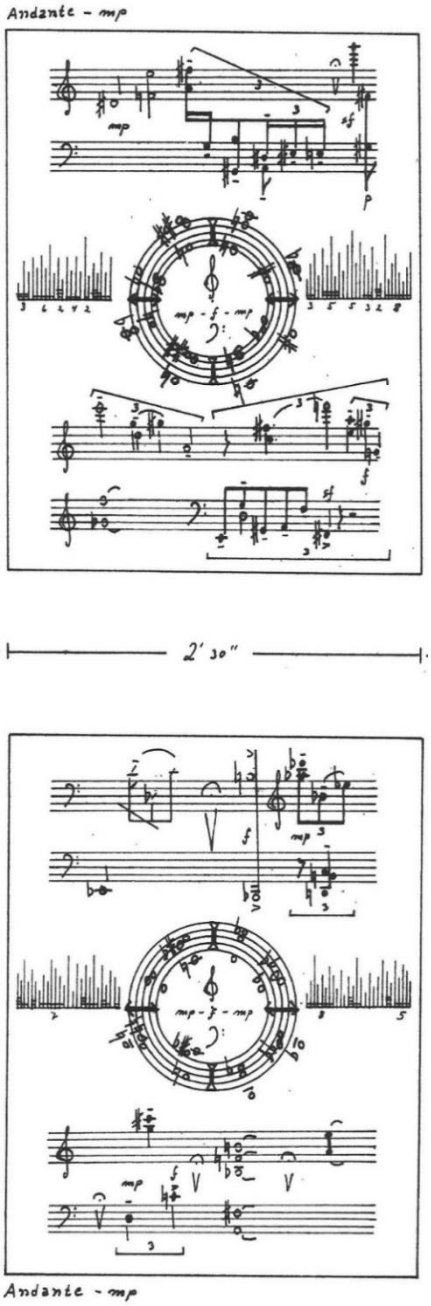

Figure 83. *Mortensen: Sonate für zwei Klaviere, Op. 26, field 3*

Examples 7 and 8 show attempts at combining these two approaches, allowing us to change freely between improvising over modes or chords and trying to combine gestural freedom with harmonic identity. This approach we felt was the most open within the parameters of the field and a strategy we have kept and developed further through our first performances, later performances, and subsequent recordings.

Third Field

In the third field, both pianists are given not one but four chords each, in addition to several different cluster chords, to improvise over. This raises questions about; how long we stay on each chord before moving to the next. In examples 9-12, we tested different approaches to the harmonic pulse. While our work with field two convinced us of the viability of improvising over longer stretches on a single chord, we then ultimately moved towards partly breaking down the harmonic structure to gain more freedom. In field three, we experimented with different harmonic pulse pacings to achieve some of the same variety in the improvisations. In example 9, we stay relatively long on each chord, ultimately arriving on each of the four chords only once during a performance. In examples 10-12, we progress with more frequent jumps between chords.

The issue of the harmonic pulse is even more significant in the sixth field and raises both artistic and practical questions. After having started the field at the given starting point, the procedure that seems to be indicated in the instructions is to spin the first wheel, improvise on the chord you get, then, sometime later, spin the second wheel and improvise on that chord until the end of the piece. This did not occur to us as a very good or practical solution. The approximately two minutes spent improvising on each chord as loudly and fast as possible will inevitably make the piece feel monotonous. Furthermore, the wheels with chords are barely readable at the best of times, and any procedure requiring the performers to read anything on them during a performance is highly impractical.

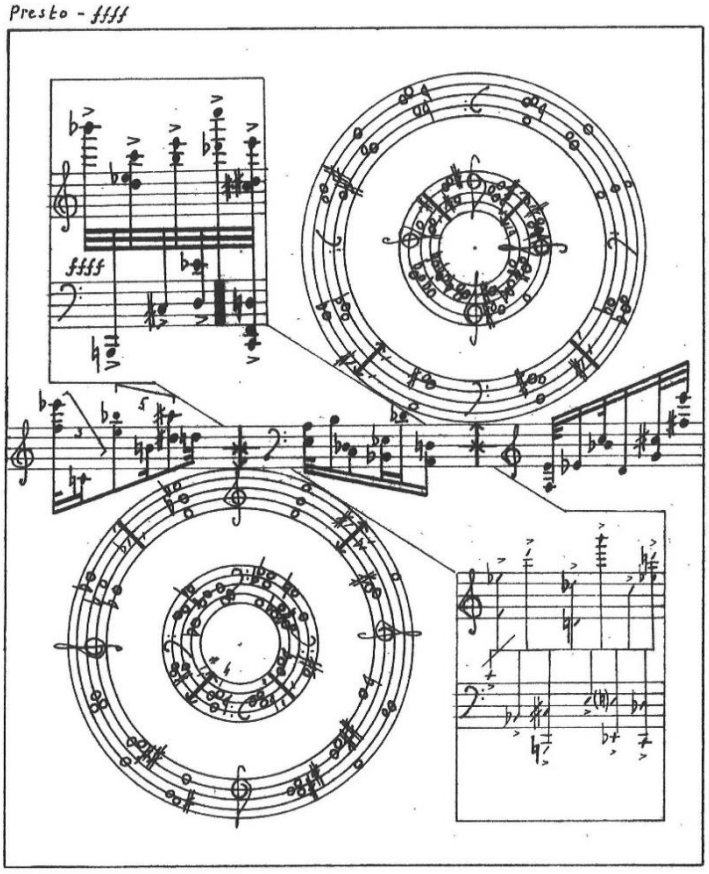

Figure 84. *Mortensen: Sonate für zwei Klaviere, Op. 26, Field 6, Piano 1*

Because of this, the composer has opened for an alternative solution in the foreword, inviting the performers to write all the chords in a free space on the score and jump freely between them during the performance. We found this solution more practical because it eliminates the time needed for spinning and reading and opens for a wider variety of harmonic colours and more flexibility in the harmonic pulse, reducing the risk of redundancy. But on the other hand, it eliminates the element of randomness inherent in the spinning concept. Additionally, the performers risk choosing between the same few chords every performance and not using the full spectrum of harmonic possibilities. I have tried to solve this by choosing a few chords I have previously not used very much, marking them in the score, and making sure to use them more in the next performance. An alternative solution we tried is to program a random chord generator into the second version of the app we used to time the piece[279] so that

[279] Information about the app can be found at https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/778684/2124396

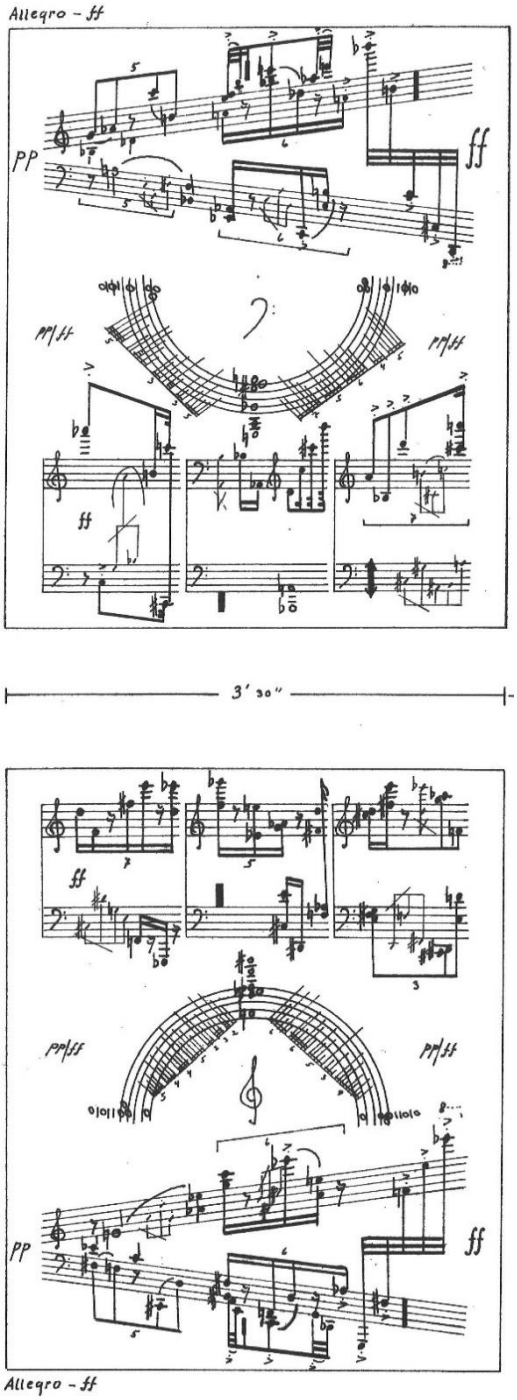

Figure 85. *Mortensen: Sonate für zwei Klaviere, Op. 26, Field 5*

we can tap the screen to get a new chord at random.[280] This process is both immediate and more readable than spinning the wheels.[281] [282]

Second and Fifth Fields

The piece's foreword contains a general direction stating that when both pianists have played from top to bottom, they continue by choosing among the figures, independent of each other, until the allotted time frame is reached.[283] Whether this instruction is valid also for the fields where one is to improvise is left very much open. Is one supposed to interpret the foreword to mean that, in, for example, field 5, one is to play the top/bottom line first, then stay in the improvisational wheel until the time for the field is nearly up and then end the field with the remaining three fragments before continuing to the sixth field? Or is one to stay in the improvisation wheel for some time, proceed to the remaining fragments, and then mix pre-notated material with improvisation freely for the rest of the time?

These are questions whose answers depend partly on where one is in the process of developing the improvisational skills for performing the piece. Initially, we found ourselves using the second solution for both fields 2 and 5, but when revisiting the piece months later, our skills and confidence as

[280] The performers must choose beforehand whether they are playing piano 1 or 2 to make sure they get chords from the right pool.
[281] The spinning of the wheels do, however, have a theatrical element, and indeed an element of humour, and Yoshida demonstrated that it can therefore have an effectful place in performance, even if you have no intentions of actually playing the chord.
[282] This function of the app was only implemented the evening before our recording of the piece and have therefore still to be tested in a live performance. Initial testing in the practice room suggests, however, that this is a workable solution.
[283] Mortensen, "Sonate für zwei Klaviere."

improvisators had grown, and we were much more comfortable improvising freer in longer stretches, without the need for the precomposed fragments, at least in the second field.

However, in the fifth field, which I held to be the most challenging of all in terms of improvisation, the need for free usage of the pre-composed fragments has remained to a certain degree, partly because of the extensive duration of the improvisation combined with the general speed and dynamics of the field, which limit improvisational possibilities somewhat, and partly because the transition between improvisation and the material ending the field makes it feel a bit too segmented in an unwanted deliberate, examples 13 and 14. In examples 15 and 16, we attempted to mix the material more freely, and I much prefer the results of this approach. However, I cannot rule out that there will come a time when this might change, as it did in the second field.

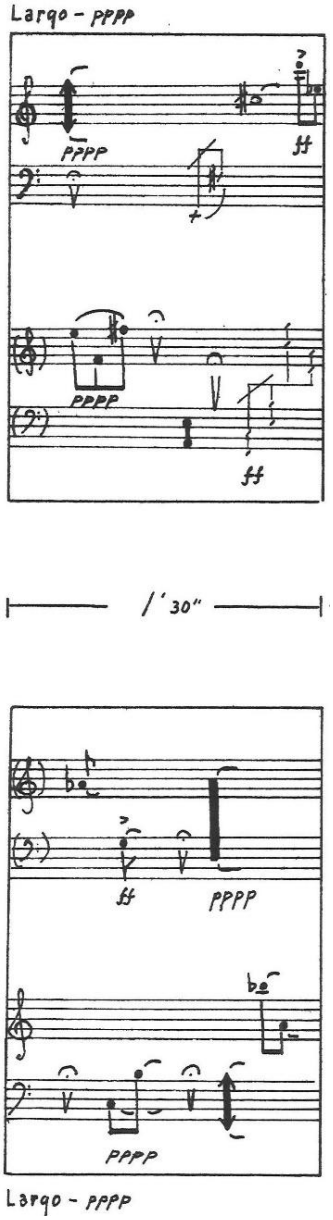

Figure 86. *Mortensen: Sonate für zwei Klaviere, Op. 26, Field 1*

First and Fourth Fields

In fields one and four,[284] the procedure of indeterminacy is very different from the improvised circles and seems to fit much better with the general instructions mentioned above. The idea in each of these fields is that each pianist plays as notated, in their own tempo without synchronisation, and when they reach the end, they choose fragments individually until the time is up. We found that the difficulty in these fields lies not so much in dealing with the indeterminacy but in the listening, or what Boucourechliev calls *"profound communication"* through *"mutual aural awareness."*[285] A concept that is obviously equally crucial in the improvised parts, but I find it to be more accessible through the non-improvisatory fields. For both fields, it is about exploring mutual space, mutual musical agency, and, in my understanding, above all, lifting attention from what one performer is doing to how it sounds combined; to unify two separate parts into one musical whole and gather both musicians' attention around the creation of this whole. It is also about moving from a form of aural awareness found in

[284] In terms of type of indeterminacy, the fields seem to be organized in pairs (1-4, 2-5, 3-6).
[285] Boucourechliev, "Archipel I."Performance instructions for piano I and II

more usual forms of chamber music, where one very often listens for something pre-agreed one expects and reacts to, to a more open, spontaneous and creative way of listening, where one hears something unexpected and must respond to it in an unforeseen way.

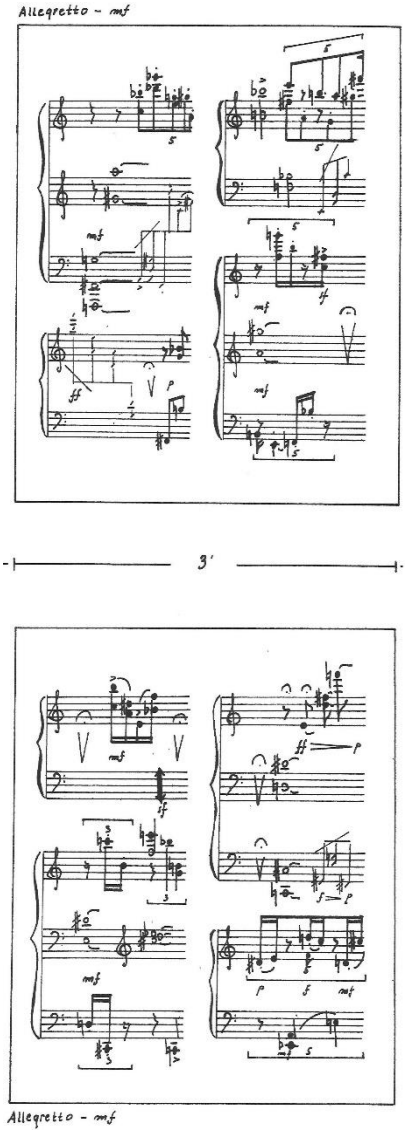

Figure 87. *Mortensen: Sonate für zwei Klaviere, Op. 26, Field 4*

Examples 17-20 show our experimentation with space and time within the first field. Examples 17 and 18 are affected by a more individual approach, where the result is perhaps more a consequence of a combination of simultaneous, individual parts than *"mutual aural awareness".* In examples 19 and 20, we attempted to listen more, being more aware of each other and our mutual space. The difference is most apparent in the pace of the material. In the later clips, the individual notes are given more space, and more attention is given to what happens between them, whether it is the lingering resonance of a previous note or just silence. A more active way of listening gave us the confidence not necessarily to do something all the time but just to let sounds resonate and linger.

The time the initial play-through of the field took us nearly doubled from 35-40 seconds to 70. Even without repeating fragments, this takes longer than the shortest permitted time, 45 seconds. This factor contributed to my changing perception of the piece throughout our work with it. Initially, I thought it was a good idea to shorten it, as many have before, most notably the brothers Aloys and Alfons Kontarsky, who, with the composer's permission, performed it at half duration in Darmstadt in 1966.[286] Over time, however, we became increasingly aware of the piece's vast possibilities, more skilled in improvising it, and confident in our abilities. As a result, we gradually moved towards the understanding that the original timeline is, in fact, very effective.

Examples 21 and 22 show a similar progression of the fourth field. The first clip shows the busyness of a non-listening simultaneity. In contrast, in the second one, we listened more and were more aware of not only the combined result of the pianos but also the combination and

[286] Nesheim, *Alltid på leting*, 201.

interplay of harmony and gesture I find essential for that field. Developing a higher awareness of listening and reacting through working with these two fields also affected our performance within the other fields, our approach to improvisation, and our mental state of very concentrated and intense aural cooperation, which became essential for realising every moment of the piece.

Improvisation within a Teleologic Form

Mortensen saw the teleology of the piece's form as a result of a serial process, pointing out that *"[s]ome of the points of the serial is to connect extremes, i.e., the very soft and the very loud, with transitions"*.[287] He likens this to the process of making a book: *"One can almost say that you can compare to everything that happens from a tree stands in the wood to a book lays on the table, a series of transitions, and these transitions you can see in the fields."*[288]

Maybe therein lies some of the composer's fascination with serial processes; they gradually unravel the transition of one thing into something that appears fundamentally different to the point of being unrecognisable, thus blurring the distinction between qualitative and quantitative differences. This interesting perspective on serialism inspired me to get a firmer grasp of how such processes could unfold on a global scale within the *Sonate für zwei Klaviere*. It made me, maybe more than anything, try to find out exactly how far apart the extremes could be, to experiment with the dynamics, texture, tempo, pace and gestures, to maximise their differences and move them further apart.

Parallels to Mortensen's Other Teleologic Forms

Fully teleologic movements occur only sporadically within the piano literature. For performing the *Sonate für zwei Klaviere*, I have found it highly beneficial to have worked extensively on Mortensen's other teleological movements, the Fuga from the *Sonata, Op. 7*, and the Fantasy from *Fantasy and Fugue, Op. 13*. Both these movements have highlighted the flexibility in his developments, something he also pointed out in the interview*: "This does not mean that it goes completely like an arrow. It will go like in a wavelike motion."*[289] The relationship between the different parameters creating the development could be treated with much more freedom, imagination and unpredictability than what the gradual, one-directional basic idea of the notation could lead one to believe.

The wave-like development he talks about is perhaps most clearly pronounced in the fugue from Op. 7. In Chapter 5, I have described how the series of waves progress through a registral expansion, globally pointing in the direction of the telos, while locally, the arrow seems less

[287] «Noe av vitsen med det serielle er å forbinde ekstremer, altså det helt svake og det helt sterke, med overganger». "Sonate for to klaverer - TV performance."
[288] «Man kan nesten si man kan sammenligne med alt som foregår fra et tre står i skogen og til en bok ligger på bordet, altså en mengde overganger, og disse overgangene ser man da i disse feltene». Ibid.
[289] «Dette betyr ikke at det går helt som en strek. Det vil gå i en bølgelignende bevegelse». Ibid.

clear-cut. There are multiple deviations from the determined path, both in dynamics and note values, and the overall contours and shapes of the phrases.

The same is arguably the case with the Fantasy from Op. 13 but with two possible differences. Firstly, the structure is much more gestural, with smaller musical units than in the linear melodic fugue from Op. 7. Secondly, Op. 13 has none of the numerous possible nuances in the composer's notation. It contains only the arrow of development, in terms of the gradual crescendo constantly going from the beginning to the top point, fff, on page 6, and then down again, leaving no hint of the enormously nuanced and flexible nature this development could have.

I perceive the break of character in bar 7 of page 5, Figure 88, and similarly in the first complete bar on page 7 in the retrograde as particularly interesting. The short gestures and heavy metric feel bring about a brief moment of something completely different, a characterful interlude in the context of this slowly evolving movement, which seems to suggest Mortensen did not strive for an affective unity.

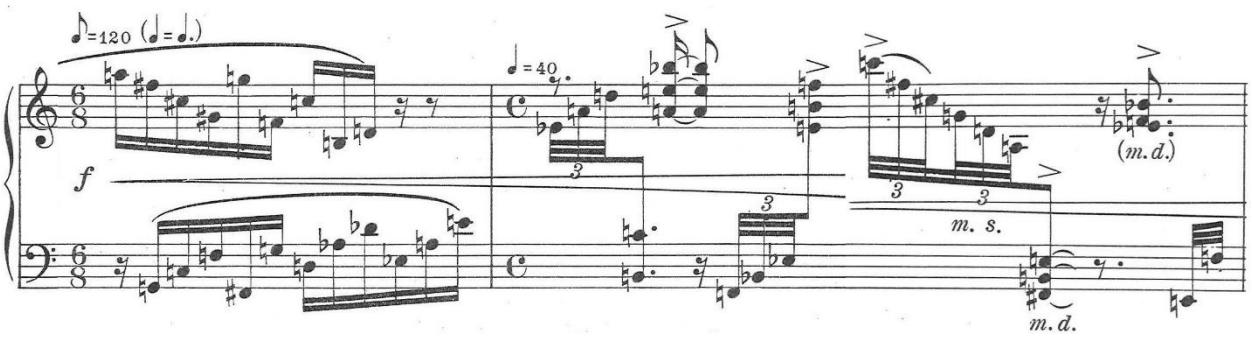

Figure 88. *Mortensen: Fantasy ang Fugue, Op. 13, Fantasy, bars 21-22*

In these movements, Mortensen seemed to know exactly where he wanted to go but had no particular hurry to get there. This inspired me to explore more nuances, character changes and counter-teleological ideas and explore the limits of what is possible to do before the overall feeling of form and progression falls apart.

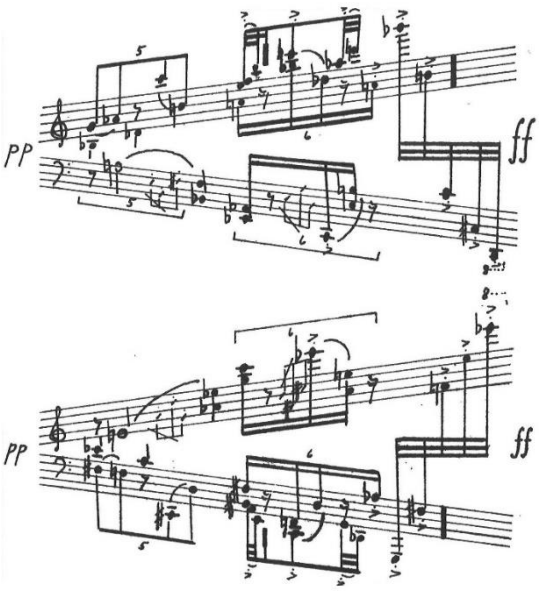

Figure 89. *Mortensen: Sonate für zwei Klaviere, Op. 26, field 5, start, both pianos juxtaposed.*

Moreover, the sonata for two pianos contains small episodes with composed synchronicity, which stand out from the other improvised parts due to their idiosyncratic character. One such episode is the start of the fifth field, Figure 89, a short, simultaneous[290] figure in both pianos but horizontally mirrored. With its giant, rapidly growing crescendo from pp to ff, it becomes a special moment that stands out from its surroundings.

Other noticeable moments are created by the loud, martellato-like figures framing the sixth field, another testament to the sonata's potential for non-uniformity. Noticing such moments makes it a far shorter leap to imagine the possibilities of changing character through dynamics, texture, and gestures within the piece's improvised sections.

All the first four fields have notated sections with dynamics differing, sometimes radically, from the general dynamic marking of the field. Especially notable are the three ff-figures in field one, particularly the rapid gesture in piano one, the single note, or single figure f and ff in the second line of field two, and the several f and ff markings in field four in the second piano. These deviations seem to open for more extensive dynamic freedom on a detailed level but raise questions about how these non-teleologic dynamics should be spatially and temporally placed.

The first field is an excellent example. While it is entirely written out in the score, it consists largely of individual figures where the room and the performers' spacing of them become a considerable part of the character of the section. By experimenting with different pacing and spacing in this field, we aimed to get a feeling of how much space such outbursts would need not to ruin the teleologic concept. Over time, we gained the confidence to give the field more space, let the sounds be isolated, and not force a continuum or a progression, allowing the loud figures to take the space they appeared to need.

[290] However, we decided not to synchronise it completely note by note to avoid the rigidity of a fully rehearsed synchronisation but still trying to keep the mirroring effect noticeable.

The notation of the improvisation part of the third field might be interpreted as indicative of a more extensive dynamic process. Within the wheel, both pianos are given the dynamics *"mp – f – mp"*, while the general dynamic marking for the field is *mp*. We interpreted this as an indication of a long swell,[291] which eventually manifested itself not only dynamically but rather as a more general increase in intensity created as much with tempo and character of gestures as with dynamics.

This extended departure from the field's general dynamics led to questions regarding the possibility of dynamic diversions within the corresponding section in field six. Hammering as fast and loudly as possible for four minutes can be problematic both for performers and audiences. The motivation for including a semi-long diminuendo with changes in tempo and textural ideas was undoubtedly there before we noticed the notational detail in field three. Rather than determining a course of action, we decided to keep the idea of longer dynamic developments within both fields open, just as a possibility for any given performance, and let the dynamic processes develop in the spur of the moment, cooperatively deciding if, when, and how they should happen.

Structural versus Episodic Change

In his instructions, the composer indicates that the performers should synchronise transitions from one field to another with visual signs.[292] I have, however, felt the need to raise questions regarding the nature of the transitions between the fields. For example, how clear or noticeable should the start of a new field be? Should the dynamics grow in terraces, or is that just an optical illusion of the score?

These questions are complex, and I think they raise further questions regarding the function of the transitions. For example, does the change instigate some form of meaningful novelty, or is the indicated growth part of the long-term teleologic structure alone? Apart from the previously mentioned transitions to the fifth and sixth fields, which also suggest a small episode, I did not feel the need to point out any of the transitions between fields; in fact, quite the contrary. In transitions in the other pieces, I had found myself asking why I constantly underplayed the moments where change is clearly indicated when I otherwise spent so much time working out

[291] As, it would seem, did Haase and Zérah before us in the TV-performance
[292] See foreword to Mortensen, "Sonate für zwei Klaviere."

the character, tempo, dynamics and gestures on a local level and found that local concerns might legitimately take precedence over global concerns.

One of my reasons for underplaying those moments lies mainly in effectively shaping a 16,5-minute-long crescendo regarding its rate of growth and its overall shape. The fundamental problem with long crescendi is avoiding becoming too loud too early, reaching a climax, or a limit, prematurely. I have encountered similar issues in the fantasy from Op. 13[293] and the fugue from Op. 7.[294]

In contrast to, for example, Olivier Messiaen's *L'échange* from *Vingt regards sur l'enfant-Jésus,* one of the few other fully teleologic pieces I have performed, the problem is particularly complex in Mortensen's developments as they are not created solely by dynamics, but perhaps even more so by tempo and texture.

I find that in Mortensen's works, most of the time, a performer must avoid crescendoing and instead let the growth unfold within the other dimensions. It is a valuable exercise to play the build-up without any crescendo at all to get a feeling for how much happens purely from the diminutions of the note values and the resulting impression of increased density. I find that by doing this, I get a closer relationship with what function the dynamics have in the build-up of the movement and a more precise grasp of when a crescendo adds to the development and when it should be avoided.

I have found that I intuitively make a separation between *structural* and *periodic* change. While a periodic change is something that sticks out from the general character, like, for example, one of the single ff-figures in the first field or the swell in the third field, appears temporarily and is reversible, a structural change is something that ultimately brings us one step closer to the teleologic fulfilment and is more definite and irreversible. It is these structural changes I often

[293] For example, the 32-triplet figures, starting from page 5, are so fast and active that the dynamic tends to follow, leaving little room for progression.
[294] For example, starting from page 9, there is easy to become too loud, and the figures becomes hard and pounded.

feel the need to disguise. The transition from 32nd notes to 32nd triplets on the lower half of page 9 in Op. 7, Figure 90, is an interesting example.

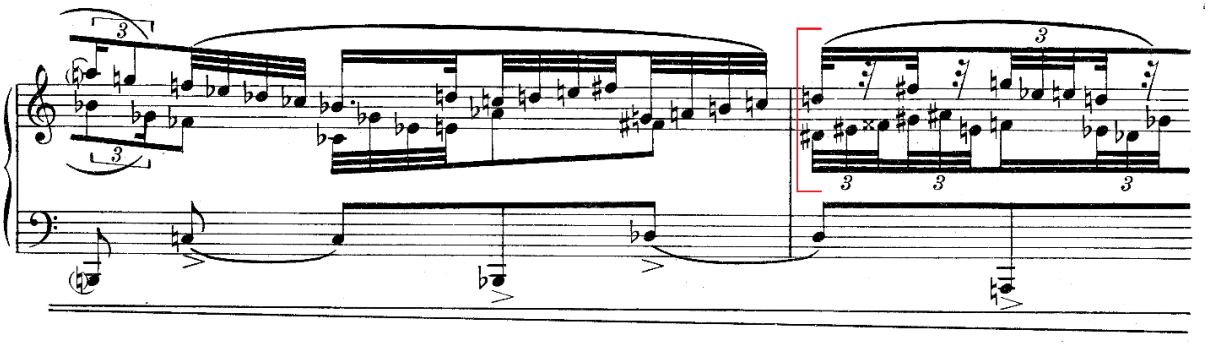

Figure 90. *Mortensen: Op. 7, bars 24-25*

While I cannot say it is *wrong* to point out this transition and make it noticeable, I have tried to hide it for several reasons. First, I experience the change as being structurally founded. Its purpose is to increase the experienced tempo. It is irreversible and represents a fundamental, permanent change to the movement. Moreover, it is the movement's final level of development when it comes to speed,[295] meaning that anything that happens from now on, in terms of large-scale build-up, must be done dynamically.[296] In addition, the rhythmic change can in itself be experienced as a crescendo. Therefore, instead of highlighting this moment, as I might have done if I understood it as a purely local event, it makes more sense to me to downplay its effect. I find that such structural changes are often more effective if they are allowed to work in the background and let their impact be felt without making the audience conscious of how the effect is created.

I experience the transitions from field to field in the sonata for two pianos in much the same way. The transition from the first to the second field instigates a fundamental change, in as much as it is a transition from predominantly isolated notes and figures, separated in space in the first field, to the predominantly linearly based structures in the second field. This transformation contributes in itself so much to the overall feeling of development that underlining it with the notated change from pppp to pp and from Largo to Adagio might be too much too soon and make the overall shaping of the movement ineffective. Therefore, we played the first four fields without underlining transitions or much deliberate crescendo. Using the app

[295] Apart from the 64th note tremolo, which I would argue is not fully experienced as a diminution.
[296] Strictly speaking only partially true, as both the registral expansion written about earlier, and the diminutions of the subject itself, which has not yet occurred, plays a role in the remaining build-up.

permitted us to let the shift from one field to the next happen simultaneously in both pianos without any visual signs, facilitating a smooth transition without any clear emphasis.

The Overall Shape of Dynamic Development

It is generally understood that crescendi are often more effective if they happen exponentially rather than linearly, and experimenting with creating an effective exponential curve has been an essential part of my work on Mortensen's three teleologic movements, resulting in me holding back the crescendi as much as possible, letting other dimensions play a more significant role in the overall shaping.

For example, in the Fantasy of Op. 13, I consciously started my crescendo as late as at the start of the linear structure in the middle of page 5, letting that line, and eventually, the opposite line, guide the way to the top point. Correspondingly, I have tried to hold back the decrescendo in the retrograde section of the same movement, making it also exponential, see Figure 91.

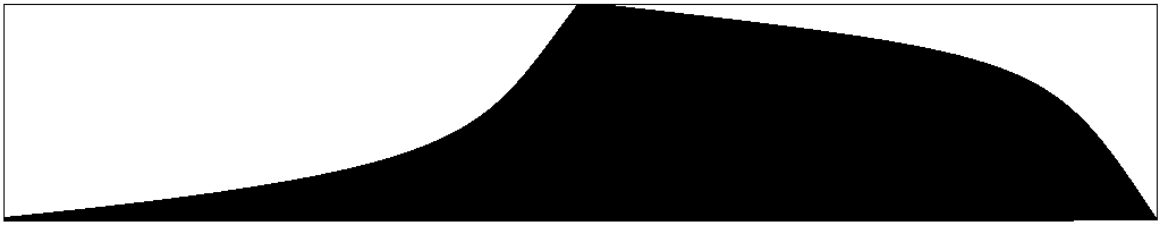

Figure 91. *Dynamic shape Mortensen: Fantasy and Fugue Op. 13, Fantasy.*

What I experience as a problem in the *Sonate für zwei Klaviere* is that considering the timeline, the growth is not *exponential* but *logarithmic*. Performing this piece according to the literal instructions would mean that most of the crescendo would happen in the piece's first half, after which the curve would flatten out. This would make the last 7,5 minutes, more than half of the total duration, be from ff and allegro to ffff and presto. To address this issue, we tried to perform the piece on two occasions with a modified timescale, where we started with 90 seconds for the first field and decreased the duration by 10 seconds for each subsequent field. This solution, however, didn't feel right, partly because the time spent in each field felt insufficient and the room for developing improvisations felt too short and hurried, and partly because it fundamentally breaks with one of the piece's central ideas.

However, the inherent ambiguity of the dynamic notation gives room for flexibility. The key seems to me to be the fifth field, which can dynamically be held back, relating it more to the previous, softer fields and not as the start of the loud part. The opening of the field, dominated

by what the composer calls *"psychological notation,"*[297] can very easily become too effective, and the end of the steep crescendo can set a new benchmark for general dynamics rather than being a local outburst of energy. I believe the sixth field must be allowed to stand out more as the sole climax. Although we consciously worked on it, I think our recordings of the work are only partially successful in achieving this, and if I were to perform the piece again, I would work on reshaping the improvisation in the fifth field.

My experience performing these three teleologic movements indicates that understanding the growth as a fixed, static structure given by the composer and ready to be executed is inaccurate. Instead, I find it more accurate to think of growth as a result of a constant negotiation between multiple dimensions where general tempo and dynamics are only part of the ingredients. Gestures, linear structures, short dynamic outbursts, local changes in character and texture, and in the case of the sonata for two pianos, the unpredictable outcome of a successful negotiation between the performers in real-time all take part in creating the dynamic form. This form displays its teleological tendencies only on a global scale. At the same time, locally, the growth arrow can point in any given direction at any moment.

[297] See Figure 89 and "Sonate for to klaverer - TV performance."

Chapter 7 – *Sonata No. 2*, Dodecaphony and *Neo-Serialism*

Finn Mortensen's concept of neo-serialism, born out of a reaction to new, post-modern tendencies of the time, became an essential formative element of his late musical style. In this chapter, I investigate new perspectives and analyses to better understand neo-serialism and its consequences on the performance of *Sonata No. 2*, Op. 47.

The composer's references to James Joyce in a private letter offer insights into the style unexplored in previous research. Joyce's '*stream of consciousness*' has multiple musical parallels in Mortensen's sonata, suggesting aesthetic and performative similarities to Boulez's *Troisième Sonate.* Furthermore, Mortensen's explanation of neo-serialism being a synthesis between the *old* and the *new* by adding melodic elements to the serial style seems to be merely one symptom of a wider eclectic and pluralistic vision created by an inward-looking '*self-historicism'*, paralleling the use of stylistic plurality and memory in Joyce's *Ulysses*.

In most of Mortensen's pieces characterised as dodecaphonic, for example, *Fantasy and Fugue*, Op. 13, and *Piano Piece*, Op. 28, he used a *'free'* form of the technique where aggregates are constantly permutated and reworked through non-interval-preserving processes not resulting in recognisable patterns of notes. My findings from analysing the dodecaphonic structure of *Sonata No. 2* oppose the traditional understanding that the sonata belongs to the same category. Instead, the sonata is composed with four separate rows with distinctly different characteristics, used as a foundation for the sonata's stylistically and aesthetically diverging material. My twelve-tone analysis of *Sonata No. 2* suggests a connectedness of separated sections and can provide new perspectives on the character of sections and the overall form and coherence of the movement.

The indeterminate section covering two pages towards the end of the sonata stands out due to its unusual notation. It does not seem to indicate specific procedures but appears to be meant as a signal to the performer to participate actively as co-composer and improvisator, and I discuss my reasoning behind one possible solution on how to perform the various parts that make up this section.

Despite the comparatively well-organised twelve-tone structure of the second sonata, neo-serialism is not primarily driven by pitch organisation. The twelve-tone structure is only one of many dimensions where various spectra are serialised, and rather than being serialism on a note-by-note level, neo-serialism is best understood as a form of meta-serialism, where the eclectic multiplicity is created in the meeting points between different parameters.

Introduction – Neo-Serialism, Stylistic Plurality and *Stream of Consciousness*

The 1970s, following the most extended period of inactivity in his career,[298] saw a peculiar change in Mortensen's compositional approach. From the mid-1960s, a new generation of composers largely rejecting modernistic ideas and aesthetics became prominent in Norway. The concepts behind this new direction, often referred to as *"new friendliness*,"[299] was later explained by Kåre Kolberg, one of its leading proponents:

> *"The complex and hard Darmstadt-music got its counterpart in the simplicity and friendliness of the 60ies, the serialist's dehumanisation got its counterpart in the close connection to everyday human experiences and the social involvement."*[300]

Mortensen, in many ways the Norwegian personification of the Darmstadt school, was obviously a central part of this discussion and suddenly found himself in a position where he was no longer part of the avant-garde but seen as an outdated *"old modernist*".[301]

Mortensen's vision of a music for the future, which he called *neo-serialism*, was a combination of the old and the new: *"I believe the 70s will bring these results in the form of a fusion between the serialism from the 50s and the new-tonality from the 60s."*[302]

In the early 1970s, Mortensen specified his ideas in a note, possibly intended for teaching purposes but probably never used,[303] entitled *Working Instructions for Neo-serialism*.[304] In the short note, he draws up the guidelines for a new approach to composing, influencing the music for the remainder of his career, including the *Sonata No. 2*, Op. 47. The note not only explains the basic premises for the technique behind the style but also reveals some of its aesthetic reasoning.

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[298] See Elef Nesheim, "Nyserialisme - hva er det?," *Studia Musicologica Norvegica* 29 (1999): 564.
[299] Nyvennlighet
[300] «Den komplekse og harde Darmstadt-musikken fikk sitt motstykke i 60-årenes enkelhet og vennlighet, serialismens menneskefjernhet sitt motstykke i den nære tilknytning til dagligdagse menneskelige erfaringer og i det sosiale engasjement.» Kåre Kolberg, "Mot en ny musikk og Ny musikk i en endret verden," in *Kunst eller kaos. En antologi*, ed. Kjell Bækkelund (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1969).
[301] Gammelmodernist
[302] «Jeg tror 70-årene vil bringe disse resultatene, i form av en sammensmelting av seriemusikken fra 50-årene og ny-tonaliteten fra 60-årene.» Finn Mortensen, "Om melodien som ble vekk og den musikalske framtid," *Verdens Gang* 26th April 1969.
[303] See Nesheim, "Nyserialisme - hva er det?," 565.
[304] Finn Mortensen, Arbeidsanvisninger for nyserialisme, (n.d.).

The composer's main point was introducing a melodic element to contrast the serial. The composer himself stated that this was something he felt missing around 1971.[305] Therefore, in the new style, he aimed to introduce twelve-tone technique as a melodic element[306] *"without losing valuable experience from serialist technique."*[307]

Mortensen's inclination to let serialism form the basis of a more pluralistic style seems to me to indicate that he found the 'new-friendly' criticism of modernism imprecise and that Mortensen had a very different perception of serialism to the 'hard' and 'inhumane' technique Kolberg talked about.

In a letter to Anne Eline Riisnes, written after her premiere of *Sonata No. 2*, the composer revealed a perspective unmentioned in previous literature on the piece that might shed some new light on the concept of neo-serialism. Moreover, the letter is one of the very few occasions he reveals any thoughts or inspirations behind his music:

> *"An attempt to talk about the experience: it was this about the pluralism – the diversity. James Joyce, the world-famous Irish author of 'Ulysses', you know, used a technique called 'stream of consciousness' (what goes through one's brain over the course of, for example, one day). This technique can appear pretty formless from a purely artistic viewpoint, but correctly perceived, this very technique will give coherence. I do not exactly want to claim that 'Ulysses' was an easy matter, but I then did have some sort of sense of what it was about: that there was coherence in the seemingly incoherent sentences. When I wrote the sonata, James Joyce was likely in the back of my mind. I was not conscious of it at the time, but I later thought there must be something there. 'Pictures from a life' or something like that going through my head during the week I wrote the work. Maybe."*[308]

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[305] «B: Hvorfor, og når, fikk du behov for å gjenninnføre det melodiske?
F.M.: Vanskelig å si hvorfor. Jeg følte det var et element som manglet. Det var I 1971, da jeg skrev "Greners tyngde" for sopran og klaver.» Skouen, "Finn Mortensen - Den standhaftige modernist (Intervju)."

[306] Mortensen considered twelve-tone technique as a primarily melodic phenomenon, and serial technique as pointillistic. See for example the first paragraph of Mortensen, "Om det nyserielle grunnlag for orkesterverket HEDDA op. 42."

[307] «At melodien er gjeninnført uten at verdifulle erfaringer fra seriell teknikk går tapt.» Skouen, "Finn Mortensen - Den standhaftige modernist (Intervju)."

[308] «En prøve på å snakke om opplevelsen: det var altså dette med pluralismen – mangfoldigheten. James Joyce, den verdensberømte irske forfatter av «Ulysses» du vet brukte jo en teknikk som kalles «stream of consciousness» («strøm av bevissthet», det som farer gjennom ens hjerne i løpet av f.eks ett døgn). Denne teknikk kan virke temmelig formløs, rent kunstnerisk sett, men riktig oppfattet, vil nettopp denne teknikk gi en sammenheng. Nå vil jeg ikke nettopp si at «Ulysses» var noen lett sak, men jeg hadde da en slags følelse av hva det dreide seg om: dette at det var en sammenheng i de tilsynelatende usammenhengende setningene. Da jeg

The composer's references to *Ulysses* bring a new perspective to attempts to penetrate deeper into the sonata, however, a perspective not unusual among modernist composers, as Scott W. Klein says:

> *"The major avant-garde movements that emerged in continental Europe included a group of composers for whom Joyce was a central intellectual presence, and who were mainly centered around the summer music courses held in Darmstadt. Of these composers, the major voices were Pierre Boulez, Luciano Berio, John Cage, and Karlheinz Stockhausen: and of those, only Stockhausen, whom history has shown was far more interested in creating his own mythological systems, was not influenced by Joyce."*[309]

Klein argues that Joyce's influence was, unlike most other interactions between literature and music, mainly conceptional:

> *"[…] the more avant-garde musicians of the twentieth century were attracted to the formal innovations suggested by Joyce's work, by his use in Ulysses of a variety of different styles, by the musicality of his language, particularly in the late and highly experimental Finnegans Wake."*[310]

Considering Joyce's widespread influence on leading Darmstadt composers, it is not unsurprising that Mortensen's curiosity should be aroused, and this connection can explain some of the stylistic plurality and sudden, opposing contrasts of *Sonata No. 2*.

Several sections seem particularly inspired by a Joycean 'stream of consciousness'. For example, the opening exposition, the long passage with indeterminacy, and the ending all have rapid streams of contrasting material, wildly changing dynamics, pacing and characters, and the coherence Mortensen talked about is challenging to perceive, let alone convey performatively.

These challenges in *Sonata No. 2* and the skillset needed to work actively on them parallel some of the performative difficulties encountered in Boulez's *Troisième Sonate*.

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skrev sonaten spøkte nok James Joyce i bakhodet. Jeg var meg ikke det umiddelbart bevisst, men jeg har etterpå tenkt på at det må være noe der. «Bilder fra et liv» eller noe slikt farende gjennom hodet i løpet av den uken jeg skrev verket. Kanskje.» Finn Mortensen, *Letter to Anne Eline Riisnæs* (22.11.1978, 1978).

[309] Schott W. Klein, "James Joyce and Avant-Garde Music" (ReJoyce in Music Seminar, Contemporary Music Centre, Dublin, 2004).

[310] Ibid., 1

The section in Figure 92,[311] *Mélange* from the formant Constellation, can be considered a microcosmos of the entire formant.[312] As the rest of the formant, it consists of a collection of fragments, each with individual characters, appearing, at least initially, as autonomous structures. The ordering of the fragments depends on the performer's choices during a performance, each resulting in a different stream of consciousness that challenges the coherence of the piece in the same way as in Mortensen's sonata.

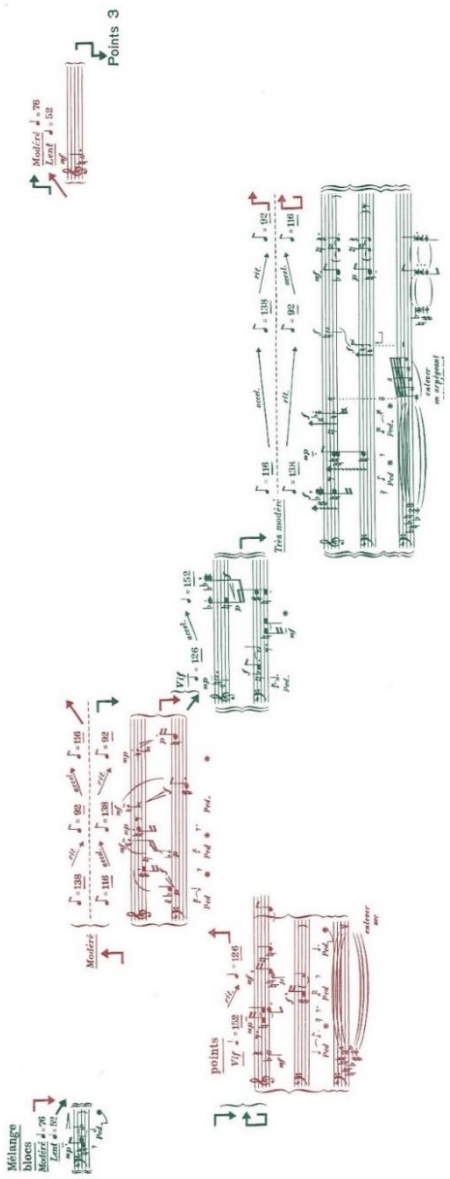

Figure 92. *Boulez: Troisième Sonate Pour Piano, Formant 3 - Constellation-Miroir, Mélange.*

While I started working on each fragment in isolation, the more I worked on this formant, the less autonomous the fragments appeared. By spending months listening to how the different gestures carried on after their ending, how the transitions between fragments felt, how each fragment's character to a certain degree is defined as much from the fragment before and after as in itself, and eventually being able to see larger parts of the formant as wholes rather than as a collection of fragments, I became gradually aware how each one made up a part of a continuous storyline, and how the pacing of time was never interrupted but rather slowing down and speeding up in a dynamically changing flow.

The most significant realisations came when I started practising the formant in its originally intended order, Constellation, rather than the printed and almost universally performed, *Constellation – miroir*.[313] I found that reversing the order of the formant's larger sections led to me making completely different choices regarding the

[311] Larger version is available at https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/778684/2100746#tool-2142184
[312] O'Hagan, ""Sonate, que me veux-tu?"," 157.
[313] With its five-formant final version, the sonata was meant to have the *Constellation* as a middle with the four other formants in various permutations surrounding it, two on either side. Formants 1-2 and 4-5 acts as pairs but can be switched around individually within the pair. Each pair can be placed on either side of the Constellation, resulting in a total of eight possible permutations. In the cases where the 1-2 pair are placed after the Constellation (and the 4-5 pair first) the Constellation is meant to be performed in its mirrored version, with every section in the formant played in the opposite order. However, Boulez never finished formants 1, 4 and 5, and for some reason, the Constellation was only ever published in its mirrored version.

order of the fragments within each section. More importantly, I started hearing each fragment differently. Every new recontextualising of fragments resulted in a new interpretation process.

In the case of the *Mélange*, for example, I realised that its function and effect change drastically from the original to the mirrored version, where it makes up the ending rather than the opening of the formant, and I discovered that its total effect differs fundamentally depending on which of the two possible routes through *Mélange* one chooses, in particular, the final note, given a fragment of its own. In the printed order, the fragments, in terms of tonality, gesture and temporal pace, seem to cadence towards the E as a resting point, giving the note a concluding effect. However, choosing the other order involves creating a different large-scale form, where four of the six fragments get new tempo indications, two having their accelerando-ritardando-processes reversed, giving the E the opposite effect, appearing more as an upbeat to the next section.

Mélange, with only two possible orders, is comparatively less complex than most other sections of the formant. However, considering the exponential growth of possible sequences, shapes and forms of the larger sections, Boulez's Constellation becomes an apex of how to handle a musical analogue of Joyce's 'stream of consciousness'. The multiple analytical, perceptional and performative skills honed in attempting to achieve a deeper and more personal relationship with the phenomenon are highly transferable to working on Mortensen's *Sonata No. 2*.

While the 'stream of consciousness' is singled out in the composer's letter, it is not the only stylistic feature where Mortensen's sonata parallels *Ulysses*. Joyce's mastery in absorbing and portraying literary styles shines through and is a fundamental part of his book to the degree that, in Samuel Beckett's words, *"[h]ere form is content, content is form."*[314] The manner with which something is told becomes inseparable from what is told to such a degree that: "*[h]is writing is not* about *something;* it is that something itself*."*[315]

The fullest extent of Joyce's stylistic plurality is shown in Chapter 12: *Cyclops*, where 33 separate, usually heavily parodied literary styles, ranging from Irish legends and medieval

[314] Samuel Beckett, "Dante... Bruno. Vico.. Joyce," in *Finnegans Wake: A Symposium - Our Exagmination Round His Incamination of Work in Progress* (New York: WW Norton Client New Directions, 1972).
[315] Beckett, "Dante... Bruno. Vico.. Joyce."

romance to journalistic idioms, effectively become part of the author's protest against the one-dimensional worldview of the narrator of the chapter, the one-eyed cyclops.[316] [317]

Similarly, but less explicitly, Mortensen builds this sonata further to develop his modernist musical language through stylistic pluralism. Not, however, to point out its cyclopean one-dimensionality, but quite the contrary to argue its continuous value and future relevance. For Mortensen, serialism seems to be not a relic of the past, as many would have claimed in the 1970s, but a source of authentic musical expression, and therefore something not limited to a specific time but something worth developing further.

It is, however, worth pointing out that serialism is not one of many styles used to create contrast and plurality but the very fabric from which the work is conceived. Mortensen's pluralism becomes not primarily an outward-looking process developed by imitating other styles but an inward-looking process. Just like Joyce's literature is created not by outward action but through the *"intimate view that we get of each character's inner life"*, which exposes us to *"the vast expanse of their memories,"*[318] Mortensen's sonata is created through the composer's own reflections about his past and its consequences for the present and future.

[316] "Ulysses Episode Twelve: "Cyclops"," 2005, accessed February 7th, 2022, https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/ulysses/section12/page/3/.
[317] "Ulysses Cyclops Analysis," accessed February 7th, 2022, https://www.shmoop.com/study-guides/literature/ulysses-joyce/summary/cyclops-analysis.
[318] "Ulysses Memory and the Past," accessed February 7th, 2022, https://www.shmoop.com/study-guides/literature/ulysses-joyce/themes/memory-and-the-past.

Mortensen as a Twelve-Tone Composer

Integral to neo-serialism, as expressed in *Sonata No. 2*, seems to be a complete rethink of how Mortensen uses dodecaphonic technique. A closer look at the transformation of his approach reveals several new perspectives on the work that I find vital for performance.

There seems to me, however, that opinions are divided regarding the benefit of a performer studying the composition's twelve-tone structure. Many points out the purely theoretical cerebral nature of this knowledge. The mechanical identification of rows, transpositions and transformations set up in matrixes seems much more like a crossword puzzle or a game of sudoku than the practical, musical and emotional world we as performers live and work within. Twelve-tone analysis is therefore often considered an unnecessary distraction, an abstract intellectualisation of an art form that is at heart emotional and can, as such, be considered not only unfruitful but even harmful.

Moreover, in criticising the study of twelve-tone structures, one can refer to no greater authority than Arnold Schönberg himself. In his famous letter to Rudolf Kolisch, he wrote:

> *"[…] you have identified the tone rows of my string quartet correctly […] But do you think knowing it serves any purpose? I cannot imagine how. I am convinced that for a composer who knows nothing whatever about using rows there is a stimulus in learning how he can proceed, a purely technical hint as to the row's potential. But aesthetic qualities are not disclosed in this way, or only incidentally. I cannot caution often enough that this kind of analysis must not be overestimated, because it leads only to what I have always fought against: to the knowledge of how something is* made, *whereas I have always helped people to realise what something* is*."*[319]

It is not impossible to see these comments in light of Schönberg's usual habit of trying to control his legacy and aftermath, and his understandable desire to be remembered as an artist rather than a technician shines through in a later paragraph:

> *"I know, of course (and never forget) that despite such examinations, you never lose sight of what attracted you to this kind of music in the first place: its spiritual, tonal and musical substance."*[320]

[319] "Arnold Schoenberg Letters," ed. Erwin Stein (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), 164.
[320] "Arnold Schoenberg Letters," 164.

In the foreword to his edition of Webern's Op. 27, Stadlen writes that Webern shared his teacher's sentiments:

> *"Although for Webern, as distinct from Schoenberg, the dodecaphonic scheme made a vital contribution to the beauty of a work, he never referred to that aspect during our meetings which continued for several weeks. Even when I asked, he refused to talk about it – what mattered, he said, was for me to learn how the pieces ought to be played, not how it is made."*[321]

The instinct to control the performers, limit their contribution to the music, and indeed make them play the music in the "right" way is very common among 20th-century composers. Darla Crispin argues that:

> *"Schoenberg's reply might be read as a manifesto, a gathering together of key points concerning the interface between his compositional world and the double-sided "other" world of music analysis and musical performance, both of which he appeared to regard as problematic and in need of certain checks and controls. This drive for control is shot through the Kolisch letter."*[322]

Limiting the performer's knowledge, or the areas they might search for knowledge, limits the possibility of independent investigations, discovery and thought and leaves the performer to choose between doing as they are told or expected to or speculating wildly in a void.

The performance perspective on twelve-tone music is thus not a popular area of study, and research and literature on it are still marginal. There are, however, a few notable exceptions of researchers and performers looking into the relationship between twelve-tone analysis and performance, and multiple voices have argued that the topic is not as clear-cut as Schönberg claims.

In his investigations into the connection between twelve-tone analysis and Stadlen's performance score, Wason concluded:

> *"What then is the relationship between structure and authentic performance in Op. 27? Clearly it is not a simple one, and certainly not as simplistic as Stadlen has claimed. In*

[321] Stadlen, "Variationen für Klavier Op. 27."
[322] Darla Crispin, "Of Arnold Schoenberg's Klavierstück op. 33a, "a Game of Chess," and the Emergence of New Epistemic Things," in *Experimental Systems Future Knowledge in Artistic Research*, ed. Michael Schwab (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2013), 75.

actual fact Webern's performance indications may be arranged along a continuum from those which closely parallel structural features of the piece to those which are largely irrelevant to them."[323]

This conclusion seems to suggest that the importance or relevance of a twelve-tone analysis is not to be found within the analysis itself but only becomes revealed through further practice-based and perhaps more experimental analytical methods. One such example is Mitsuko Uchida's work with Schönberg's Piano Concerto. In a video from the Arnold Schönberg Center, she reveals a methodology that is simultaneously simple and endlessly complex: *"I can explain to you the structure, all sorts of things about this piece, and then you listen, you listen, you listen..."*[324] Crispin notes that:

"Uchida does not *follow Schoenberg's prohibitive injunctions concerning performers recourse to music analysis; instead, she does something much better, which is to play with the tone-row material as a part of experiencing its manifold properties, exploring its intervallic "physiognomy" by touch and sound, and developing an intellectual, aesthetic, and emotional relationship with the material. Here, performance and analysis merge in a critical reading, full of poetry. Uchida becomes an ideal kind of Schoenberg performer – respectfully disobedient."*[325]

This is a different approach that does not aim directly towards making performative decisions based on the analysis but does not necessarily exclude the possibility of such opportunities emerging. It is an approach that seeks to use the analysis to enter the 'sound world' of the music to get a more profound experience and an intuitive understanding of how the specifics of the piece's construction leave an imprint in its sounds. How the row, through its many transformations, is always present as a character in the music and thus becomes a deciding factor of the idiosyncrasy of the work.

With such an approach, the twelve-tone structure is no longer seen as the basic logic of the music, merely an external symptom of a more profound musical logic and an understanding of the piece's twelve-tone structure is not the real result of the analysis but the starting point of further discovery.

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[323] Wason, "Webern's Variations for Piano," 101.
[324] "Mitsuko Uchida on Schoenberg's Piano Concerto," (YouTube) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PmWRttCo7lo.
[325] Crispin, "a Game of Chess," 74.

Although such an explorative approach to twelve-tone analysis does not easily lend itself to concrete decision-making, and its importance might not be conclusively proven in any way, it can be essential to the performer familiarising themselves with the work on a detailed level. Furthermore, it might transform the piece from something strange and alien to something familiar and close, thus contributing to the performer's music-making abilities.

Working on Mortensen's *Twelve Twelve-Tone Pieces for Children*, Op. 22, with this perspective, was eye-opening to me. The twelve-tone row these pieces are based on has unusually strong and easily perceived properties.

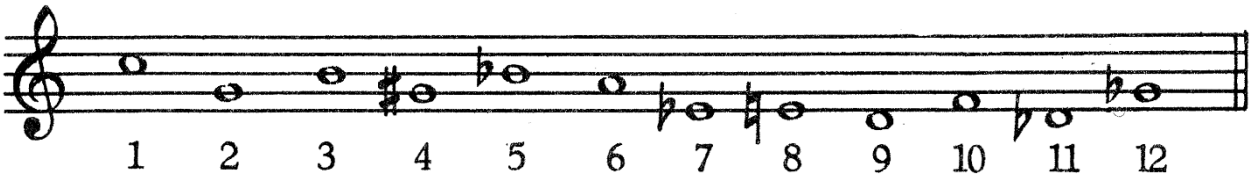

***Figure* 93**. *Mortensen: Op. 22, row*

The initial 4-3 appoggiatura, the colour change created by the shift in the tonal centre at the G♯-B♭ double leading note motive to A, the tritone being resolved to E, the large degree of tension of the D, and the tonal cadence of F-D♭-G♭ at the end, are all more or less immediately noticeable when playing through the row. Moreover, I felt the presence of the row throughout the pieces and how my understanding of the row coloured my perception of the music, despite the differences in rhythm, texture, and style between the pieces.

Moreover, I also realised that my change of understanding went in both directions. Not only did my reflections on the row's properties influence my experience of the pieces, but frequently, a new row statement in a new context led to new insights, which influenced how I understood both the row and analogous details in other pieces. In particular, the ninth tone, the D, had some unclarity about it at first, but new insights into that tone came from studying how it increases in melodic importance in the late pieces, particularly the last piece, *Fugue*, where its change in metric placement compared to the earlier pieces elevates it to become the central emotional point of the subject.

In this work, the row acted as a centre for musical reflection, everchanging according to new insights from the pieces and radiating these changes to other row statements. Within these pieces, reflections regarding the close relationship between twelve-tone theory and the musical and performative result are easier accessible than in most twelve-tone music and make this, in my opinion, a very valuable pedagogic work that, at least for me, led to realisations that were

to have consequences for how I worked with other and infinitely more complex twelve-tone pieces.

The potential benefits for a performer to study the dodecaphonic structure of a piece of music with this perspective are largely unpredictable. Still, my experience indicates that such a study can potentially be far-reaching and musically profound, even if it remains ideologically inconvenient.

There is, however, good cause to take Schönberg's worry regarding overly focusing on row analysis seriously. As Wason notes, *"[i]t is also important to point out that twelve-tone structure is not the only 'structure' going on there, although one would never know this to judge from the many writings on this piece."*[326] I have several times experienced, for example, in the early stages of the work on Mortensen's *Sonata No. 2*, a particular danger in investigating a dimension that is so concrete, easily understandable, at least in technical terms, and easily communicated through writing, graphs and matrixes that it tends to expel all other dimensions from the discussion. The presence of any kind of easily identifiable *system* often makes it easy to overlook everything that is not part of it. This is perhaps most prominent within the literature about twelve-tone music, which often becomes literature about twelve-tone technique, where other aspects that are perhaps much more important musically play little role.

[326] Wason, "Webern's Variations for Piano," 64.

Mortensen's *Free* Twelve-Tone Structure

Fantasy and Fugue, Op. 13 has often been called Norway's first twelve-tone piece.[327] Attempting to analyse the tone material in terms of the twelve-tone technique, however, I found the anomalies piling up. The illustration in **Figure 94** next page shows one attempt at such an analysis, but I am sure several others would be equally plausible. While it is vaguely possible to identify groups of notes containing all twelve pitch classes, there are several differences from what one would traditionally understand as twelve-tone technique.

Firstly, attempting a horizontal twelve-tone analysis makes little sense. In the top voice, the first aggregate is not completed until the 17th note, the C, with D, E and B♭ occurring twice and B occurring three times. To get all twelve notes in the next aggregate, one has to include 25 notes, the aggregate being completed by the B towards the end of the fourth line, most of the notes being repeated by now, with E, F, and G being repeated twice, and F♯ occurring four times.

A vertical analysis, as in the figure, shows similar discrepancies, but the aggregates seem initially easier to identify. For example, covering the first 13 notes, the first has A and E repeated but contains no C. The C is, however, repeated in the next aggregate.

The repetition of pitches in this manner is contrary to the standard twelve-tone procedure, where pitches are rarely repeated so as not to put disproportionate emphasis on one pitch. It is, therefore, interesting to investigate whether the repetitions can lead to meaningful insights. Indeed, the repeated A in the first bar has some tonal meaning, as it requires no stretch of the imagination to call A the tonal centre in this bar, but, as I have argued in chapter 2, this is probably more due to the melodic diatonicism than the repeated pitch. The same can be said about the repeated C in the next bar. The repetitions of the B-B♭ relationship in bar 3, however, are interesting as these two notes stand in a kind of opposition or symbiotic duality throughout this piece, but I do not feel the twelve-tone analysis adds anything to this understanding.

The repetition of the F♯-B, B-F♯ in the same bar is significant, but only in confirming something we already know, that the B is the goal of a linear process starting on the first note, see Figure 111 and Figure 112.

[327] For example Nesheim, "Modernismens døråpner i Norge," 213.

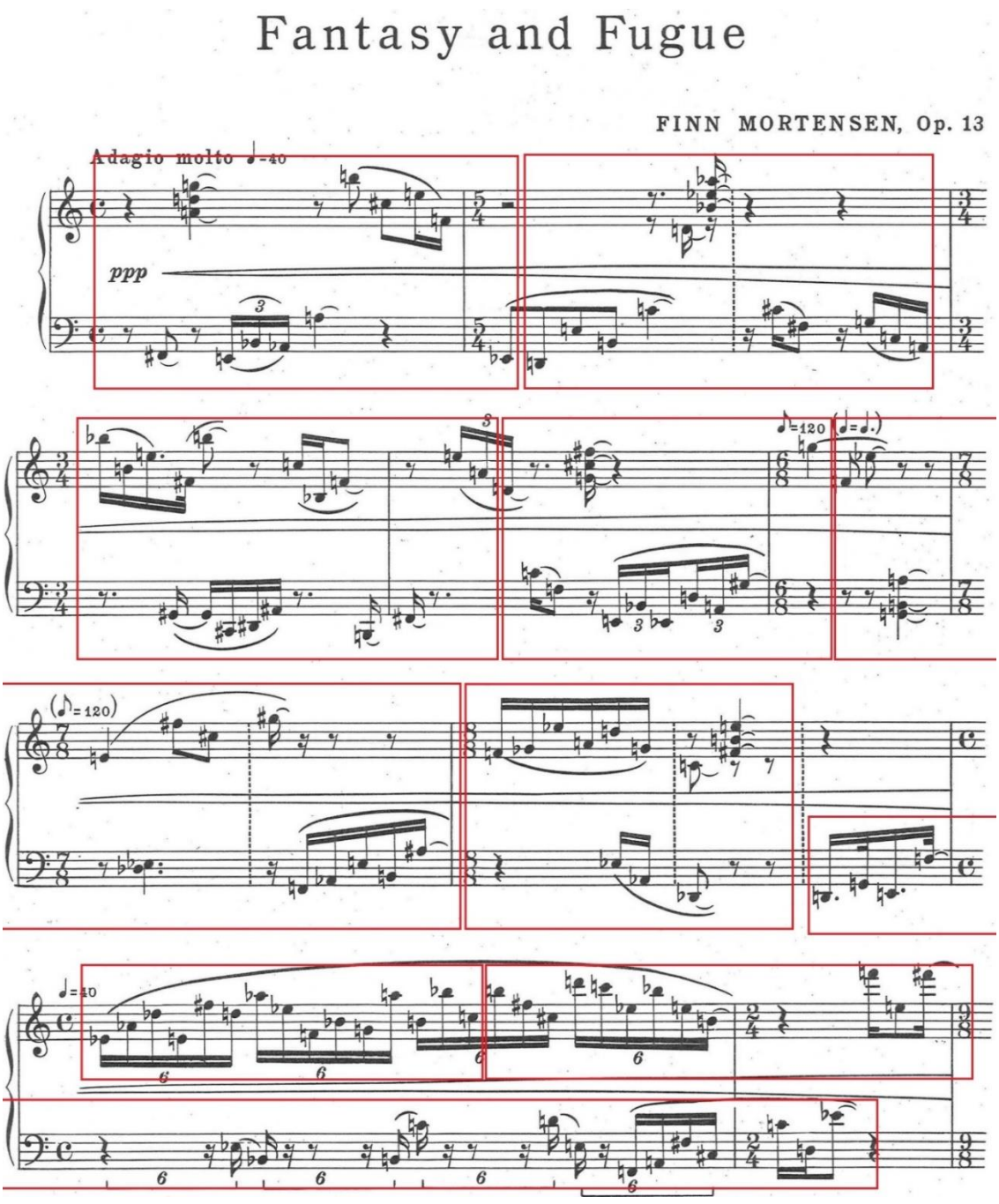

Figure 94. *Mortensen: Fantasy and Fugue, Op. 13, twelve-tone aggregates first page*

Secondly, the aggregates do not create a system; it is difficult, if not impossible, to identify something that can be understood as a row in any traditional meaning. However, they somewhat correspond with what Niels Viggo Bentzon called "*freer forms*".[328] In his book on twelve-tone technique, Bentzon gives the example in **Figure 95** and states that "*the 'random' order of tones*

[328] "friere former" Bentzon, *Tolvtoneteknik*, 72.

in the 2nd half of the quoted 'prolonged' formulas give room for a freer practice,"[329] and that "*any decisive approach for the* ordering *of the 2nd half can and* shall *not be given.*"[330]

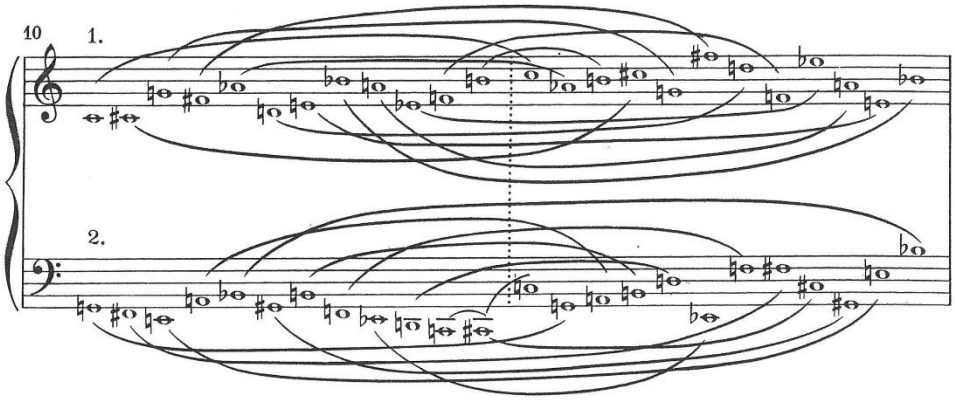

Figure 95. *Bentzon: Illustration,from Tolvtoneteknik, 72.*

The *free* twelve-tone technique does not involve the interval-preserving transformations of the more traditional twelve-tone technique. The ordering of notes is left to the composer's discretion and does not automatically lead to any forms of recognisable systems or patterns. In addition, Mortensen interprets Bentzon's principle more freely than Bentzon does in his textbook with his frequent repetitions and omissions of pitches.

The result is not a compositional technique but merely an implied goal of mixing all twelve pitches as much as possible. This is, however, not a new feature in Mortensen's music. For example, the subject from the Fugue of Op. 7 contains all twelve pitches within the first 15 notes, with only the three bass notes F-E-E♭ being repeated, and sets the scene for a movement which mixes the chromatic total to such a degree that having most of the pitches within a relatively small area can be regarded as the rule rather than the exception. Much the same can be said about opp. 1 and 2. **Figure 96** shows only one of many complete aggregates created through chromatic modulations of modes in Op. 1.

[329] "den "vilkårlige" rækkefølge af tonerne i 2. halvdel af de her citerede "forlængede" formler giver et spillerom for en mere fri udformningspraksis" Bentzon, *Tolvtoneteknik*, 72.
[330] "Nogen bestemt fremgangsmåde for *rækkefølgen* af 2. formelhalvdels toneforråd kan og *skal* ikke gives." Bentzon, *Tolvtoneteknik*, 72.

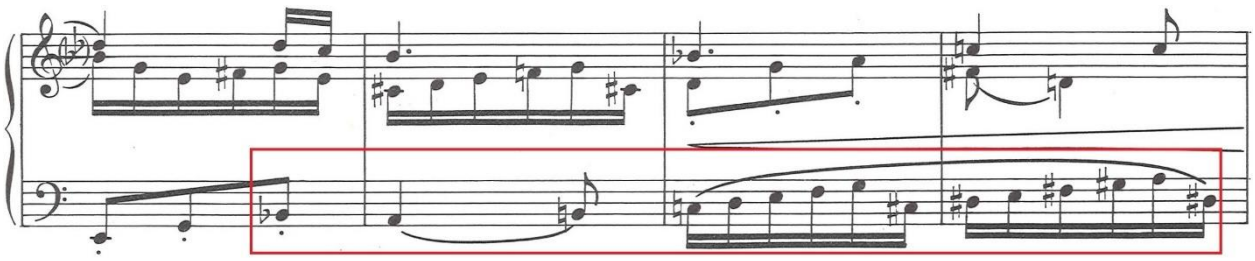

Figure 96. *Mortensen: Sonatino no. 1, Op. 1, III. Allegro vivace, bars 74-77*

Figure 97 shows the opening melody of Op. 2, which contains the chromatic total within the first 17 notes.

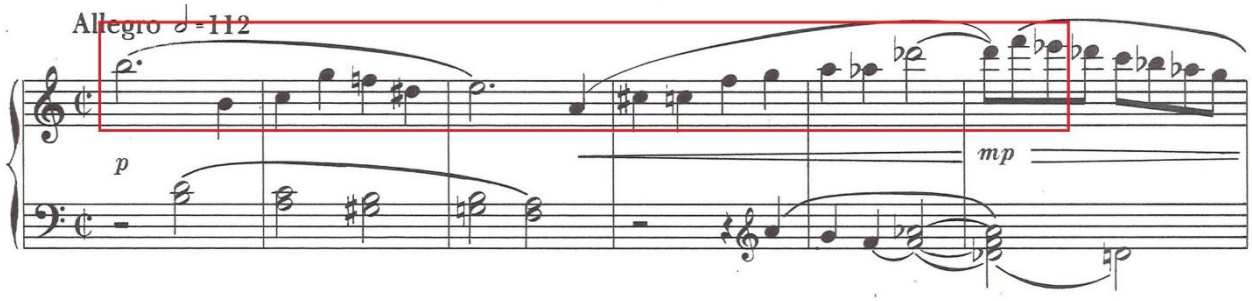

Figure 97. *Mortensen: Sonatino no. 2, Op. 2, I. Allegro, bars 1-6*

Figure 98 shows a recurring motive of the third movement of Op. 2, which contains all twelve pitches within a bar, lasting precisely one second.

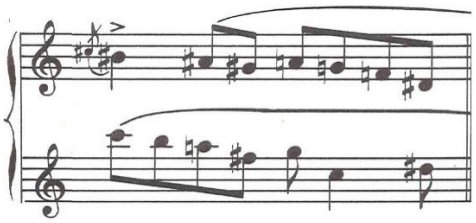

Figure 98. *Mortensen: Sonatino no. 2, Op. 2, III. Allegro vivace, bar 20*

The frequency with which Mortensen mixed the chromatic total already from his first compositions makes it legitimate to ask whether there is a fundamental change in technique between his early pieces and Fantasy and Fugue, which is often referred to as twelve-tone music, or whether there is a much more gradual development with the same musical mind behind the compositions, choosing his notes for reasons that lay beyond twelve-tone technique.

My investigations into *Piano Piece* Op. 28 show similar approaches as in *Fantasy and Fugue*, albeit less 'free', with a large part being close to how Bentzon describes the technique. **Figure 99** shows the aggregates of the first two bars of the first fortissimo part.

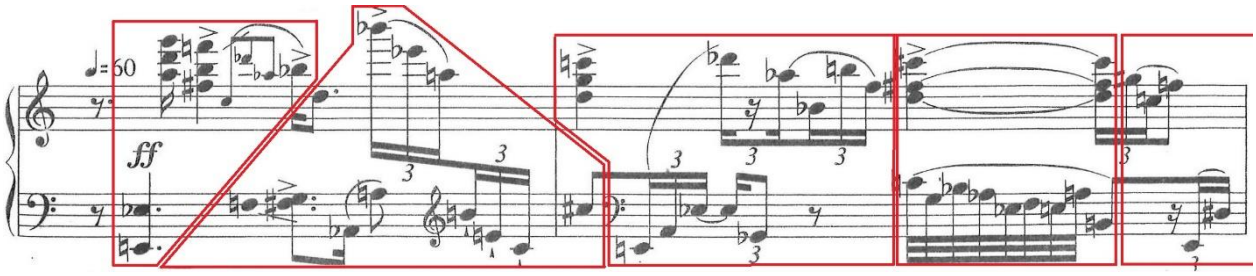

Figure 99. *Mortensen: Piano Piece, Op. 28, bars 16-18, aggregates*

In this excerpt, they mostly add up to twelve tones, apart from the first one where A is repeated. However, each aggregate seems to be a complete reinvention with no determinable process behind generating tones. Furthermore, and similarly to *Fantasy and Fugue*, the aggregates do not seem to imply meaningful musical units but instead go across phrases, gestures, motives, and figures, making the twelve-tone structure seem inconsequential. In addition, there are substantial parts of the composition where even identifying meaningful aggregates becomes almost impossible.

I have previously discussed multiple interesting perspectives on how a performer could approach these pieces. Unfortunately, I do not think a dodecaphonic analysis adds much in these particular instances. Instead feels like a distraction and, like many other attempts at explaining Mortensen's music purely as a 'system' or 'construction', fails due to the unsystematic and seemingly, intuitive approach he had to composing.

The twelve-tone technique in the second sonata has previously only been described in terms that relate it to Bentzon's free twelve-tone technique. As a basis for the free development, Nesheim identifies the row numbered by the composer on page 12, **Figure 100**, as the principal row of the composition.[331]

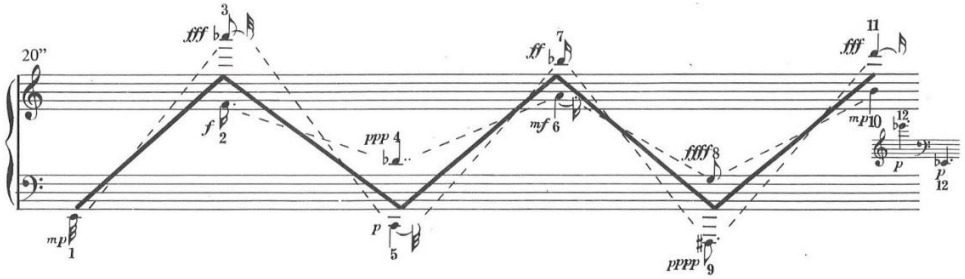

Figure 100. *Mortensen: Sonata No. 2, Op. 47, p. 12*

He then goes on to state that *"[...] Mortensen uses the rows relatively freely, with different permutations of the row."*[332] and later *elaborates: "each of the formal sections is built on the twelve-tone row, or permutations of it, -partly by keeping the three first notes, the original cell, but by permutating the row's three-tone groups, -or on other combinations."*[333] Nesheim's text remains, however, vague about how the three-tone groups are permutated, or what *"other combinations"* could refer to, and his analysis is, in general, lacking in concrete references to the music.

This abstract nature of Nesheim's analysis led me to start my own investigations in the first place. Twelve-tone technique primarily governs the order of tones on a note-to-note basis, and his abstract meta-level analysis was of very little use from a performer's perspective. While analysing the sonata, I realised that my analysis was not the expected concretisation of what Nesheim describes but something fundamentally different.[334]

Instead of the constant reworking or reinvention of the primary aggregate, characterising the 'free' twelve-tone technique described by Bentzon, there are, in fact, only four forms of the aggregate, and all the tone material of the sonata can be traced back to one of these four primary forms. Moreover, throughout the work, the treatment of the rows suggests that Mortensen saw

[331] Nesheim, "Modernismens døråpner i Norge," 344.
[332] «Imidlertid bruker Mortensen rekkene relativt fritt, med ulike permutasjoner av rekken.» Ibid., 344.
[333] «Hvert av formavsnittene i eksposisjonen er bygget opp av tolvtonerekken, eller permutasjoner av den, -dels ved at de tre første tonene er beholdt, utgangscellen, men ved at rekkens tretonegrupper er permutert, -eller ved hjelp av andre kombinasjoner.» Ibid., 345.
[334] My full analysis is in the Appendix

them as separate entities and not as permutations of each other. The four rows are presented in the opening of the work, Figure 101.[335]

While united by a common opening triad, the four rows have very different characteristics and properties. They are used throughout the work to form sections that differ widely both stylistically and aesthetically and, as such, become one fundamental way of creating diversity and contrasts within the piece. This analysis differs radically from Nesheim's analysis as he identifies bars 1-4 as one single basic melodic idea and bars 5-10 as the pointillistic contrast to the first idea.[336] However, this binary understanding of the opening coincides with the composer's claim that neo-serialism is built upon the contrast between melody and points.

While I think most performers would initially identify three contrasting ideas[337] in the opening, the analysis points out a fourth one and a fundamental difference between bars one and two. In searching for this difference, I started enhancing the deep cantabile qualities I often associate with Mortensen's accentuated notation in bar 1 versus the ragged gestural qualities I have come to associate with the green row, ultimately using the twelve-tone analysis as a starting point to reflect and experiment with the musical character of the two bars.

The detailed working out of the twelve-tone structure in this piece is not only of theoretical interest but of practical use for a performer. It reveals not only an insight into the musical thinking behind the composition process but can form a starting point for a performative reflection regarding the nature of the diverse characters of the parts of the piece and how they relate to each other and form a whole or a continuity.

My analysis shows for the first time, contrary to Nesheim's permutation theory, how the twelve-tone structure of *Sonata No. 2* fits in with the neo-serialist concept as outlined in Mortensen's *work directions*[338] and how the composition has similarities with his other works from the same period.

---

[335] The first row in its P_0 form in bar 1, marked in blue in the analysis. The second row, starting from the final note in bar 1, covers the entirety of bar 2, also in P_0, marked in green. Next, the third row is presented in bars 3-4 in the upper voice in P_0, simultaneously with I_0 in the lower voice, marked in red. Finally, the fourth row is presented in bars 5-10 in P_0, marked in yellow.
I use the conventional terminology for twelve-tone analysis: P = prime, I = Inversion, R = Retrograde and RI = Retrograde Inversion. Then we are counting the transpositions (not the number of versions) upwards from the original row, which is numbered 0. P_0 is thus the row in prime form not transposed.

[336] Nesheim, "Modernismens døråpner i Norge," 345.

[337] The much softer and melodically expressive idea in bars 3-4, is easier heard than read as a contrast to the two opening bars.

[338] Mortensen, Arbeidsanvisninger for nyserialisme.

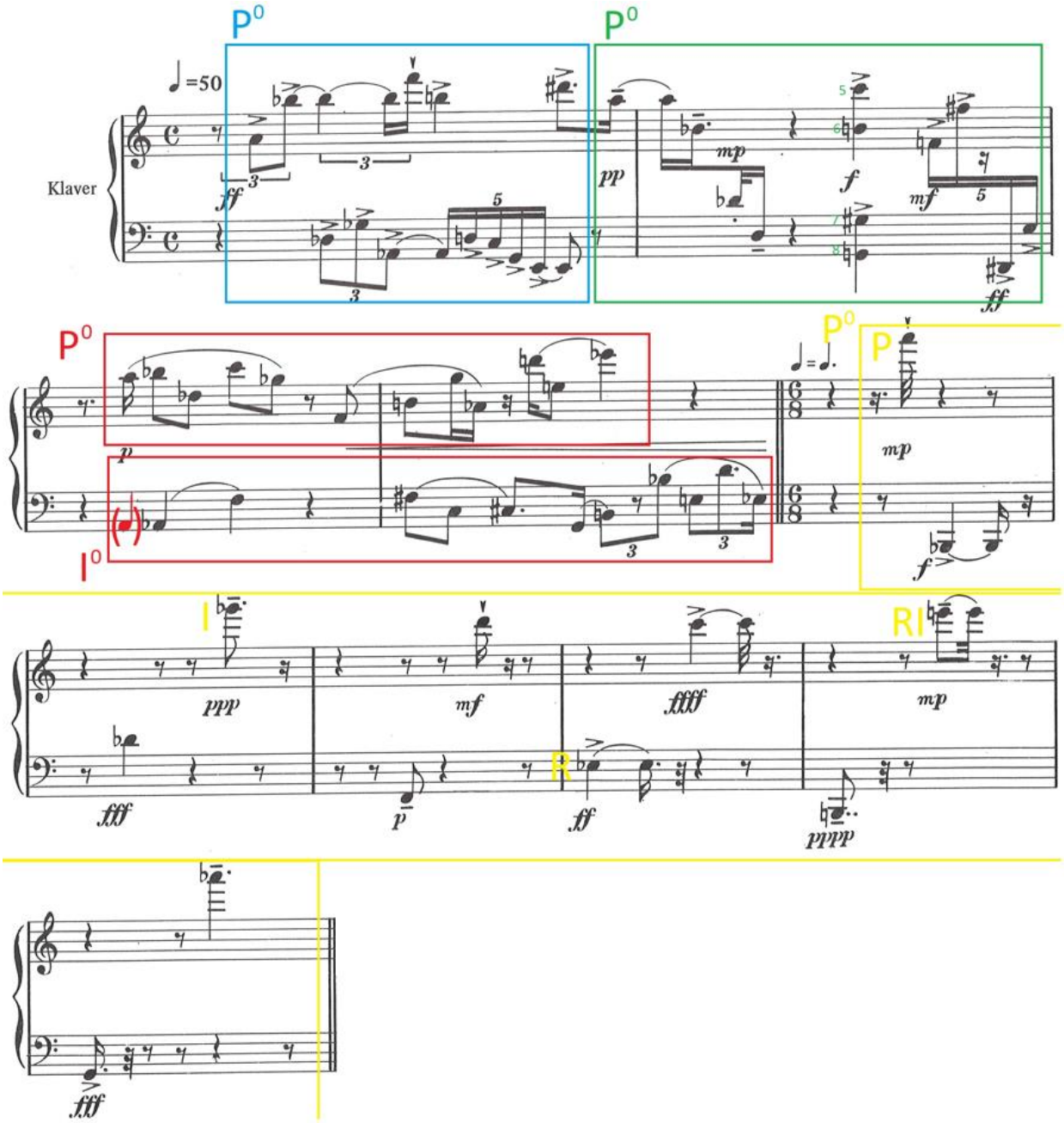

Figure 101. *Mortensen: Sonata No. 2, Op. 47, analysis of row material, p. 2*

The *punctual* row, which is a transposition of the one identified as the primary row by Nesheim, marked in yellow in my analysis, has several interesting characteristics.

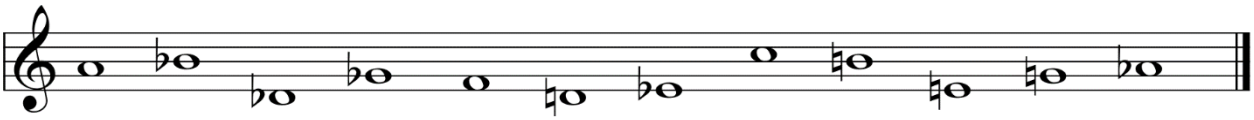

Figure 102. *Mortensen: Sonata No. 2, Op. 47: Punctual row*

Firstly, it consists of four trichords, each a transformation of the other. The prime motive, A-B♭-D♭, is first inverted, G♭-F-D, then presented in retrograde, E♭-C-H, and, lastly, in retrograde

inversion, E-G-A♭. This way of constructing a row out of all four basic three-tone motive forms is one of the principles of neo-serialism.[339] I have speculated that the row whose occurrences are in other parameters treated most abstractly and are, therefore, most difficult to perceive has deliberately been kept simple in the tonal dimension. Its construction makes the pitch material easier to follow, at least for the performer. Similar to the end of Op. 13, but through a different process, the simplification of the pitch material facilitates the perception of coherence in the increasingly fragmented material.[340]

Secondly, whenever it occurs in the composition, this row is always associated with two other series, one dynamic and one durational. The table in **Figure 103** gives complete information on all three parameters of the first occurrence of the row on page 2.

Transposition	P_0											
Cell	P			I			R			RI		
Note	A	B♭	D♭	G♭	F	D	E♭	C	B	E	G	A♭
Duration[341]	1	10	8	6	4	2	11	9	7	5	3	12
Dynamic	mp	f	fff	ppp	p	mf	ff	ffff	pppp	mp	fff	p[342]

Figure 103. *Mortensen: Sonata No. 2, Op. 47, punctual row, table of the first occurrence*

The series of durations range from one to twelve 32-notes, and the dynamics range from pppp to ffff in all different values apart from pp.[343] Both parameters form a level of note-organisation independent of the tone-material and each other. In this first occurrence, the durations form two accelerandi: first 10-8-6-4-2, then 11-9-7-5-3. The 1-value is always placed first in the P-cell, and the twelve-value is always placed last in the RI-cell, and thus they form the start and the end, respectively, of every complete row presentation.[344]

In my experience, the durational dimension effectively groups notes in ways that are easily perceivable musically. The two accelerandi are indeed felt and thus become a meaningful structural parameter. The 1-duration that usually starts every occurrence of the row appears to have a valuable identity as a gestural quality, similar and identifiable on every occurrence. In several sections, as in the row's long development section on page 6 and the last page of the

[339] See Mortensen, Arbeidsanvisninger for nyserialisme.
[340] See chapter 5
[341] Measured in number of 32-notes
[342] This dynamic is missing in the printed score but is given as p in the manuscript.
[343] Although in most later occurrences all ten different values are used.
[344] Unless they are transformed through cell permutation. In accordance with Mortensen's notes, this series is not transformed through the normal means of inversions or retrogradations, but by rotating the order of cells. This, however, occurs only once throughout the piece, as all other occurrences found in the manuscript were edited out before printing.

piece, the basic tempo is decided from the quality of this gesture with, as Mortensen says, *"[t]empo as fast as is compatible with demisemiquavers of the utmost rapidity."*[345] In cooperation with what I perceive as a cadential tonal quality of the RI-cell, the 12-duration makes the end of each presentation seem like the end of a phrase, and together they give the impression that each statement of the row is, to a certain degree, an autonomous, rounded off, musical unit.

The dynamic series, similarly to the series of durations, creates another structural dimension. On the first occurrence, it forms three crescendi: mp-f-fff, ppp-p-mf-ff-ffff, and pppp-mp-fff. These form groups independent of and contrary to the grouping of the durations, creating a phrasal counterpoint. Rather than being a fixed or predetermined process, they are perpetually varied and reinvented throughout the piece, as illustrated by the developing section on this row, on page 6 of the score. See table:

Transposition	P_3											
Cell	P			I			R			RI		
NoteTe	C	C♯	E	A	A♭	F	G♭	E♭	D	G	B♭	B
Duration	1	7	2	8	3	9	4	10	5	11	6	12
Dynamic	pp	ffff	pppp	mf	ppp	f	pp	ff	p	fff	mp	ffff
Transposition	P_9											
Cell	P			I			R			RI		
Note	F♯	G	B♭	E♭♯	D	B	C	A	G♯	C♯	E	F
Duration	1	9	6	3	11	8	5	2	10	7	4	12
Dynamic	p	pp	ppp	ffff	pppp	ff	mf	p	ppp	fff	f	mp
Transposition	P_1											
Cell	I			R			RI			P		
Note	G	F♯	D♯	E	C♯	C	F	A♭	A	B♭	B	D
Duration	11	7	3	10	6	2	9	5	12	1	8	4
Dynamic	ppp	mf	ffff	pppp	fff	ff	f	mf	mp	ff	pp	f
Transposition	P_6											
Cell	P			I			R			RI		
Note	E♭	E	G	C	B	G♯	A	F♯	F	B♭	D♭	D
Duration	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Dynamic	pppp	ppp	pp	p	mp	mf	f	ff	fff	ffff	pppp	pp

Figure 104. *Mortensen: Sonata No. 2, Op. 47, table of the development section of the punctual row*

As this table shows, the tone material stays, although transposed on each occasion, mainly with the original order, except for the P_1-row, where the groups are permutated, and the P-cell has been moved to the end. Because this particular row statement does not have its usual 1-12

[345] Page 6 in the score

framing, it appears slightly unordered compared to the others. As a result, it does not work as well as a unit anymore and needs a resolution or continuation.

The relationship between the different parameters is continually developed and explored throughout this section, and some interesting features are worth pointing out. In the first statement, dynamics and durations are organised in two increasing series, which are then interposed.[346] In addition to being felt as two parallel longer processes, this organisation also gives the impression the notes are grouped into pairs.

The final row statement, which has the two parameters in its most organised form as a chromatic scale of durations and dynamics, crescendo and ritardando, becomes a recurring motive throughout the piece. It often marks the beginning of a new section, for example, the section with indeterminacy on page 12 and the final section on page 14. Because of its organisation, it is easily recognisable, even if octave displacement is different for every occurrence.

These sometimes contradictory, sometimes coinciding groupings created by three separate structural dimensions raise many questions regarding coherence, gestures and even phrasing, which I found fascinating and have preoccupied me much during my work with this sonata. Through an experimental process, I explored the complex and subtle relationships between these parameters and investigated how they worked together, contradicted each other, created parallel formations, minor, isolated occurrences etc. These experimentations brought me away from the mechanical process of performing the *text*, something I have often found challenging when dealing with music where parameters are so accurately notated and controlled. The ease of following static instructions was countered with the exploration of and experimentation with the dynamic forces behind the notation, leading to new knowledge and understanding of the music, ultimately resulting, I think, in a performance that is more musically interesting than it would be without it.

Only later did it occur to me that I should explore this row's pointillist aspect more. The idea came after witnessing a particularly inspiring performance of Olivier Messiaen's *Livre d'Orgue*, especially the final movement, *Soixante-quatre durées*. I experienced some parallels between the single notes in Mortensen's sonata and the isolated durations in Messiaen's piece. In *Livre d'Orgue*, however, each duration was not a single note but a harmony coloured by the

[346] In the series of durations, the series *1-2-3-4-5-6* and *7-8-9-10-11-12* result in *1-7-2-8...* etc. The series of dynamics consists of two initial dynamics followed by the two series *pppp-ppp-pp-p-mp* and *mf-f-ff-fff-ffff,* which are combined into *pppp-mf-ppp-f…etc.*

organ's registration and superposed other material. This made the seemingly static structures come alive and made me realise more than before the potential of single isolated occurrences. I brought this realisation with me back to Mortensen's sonata and started to explore the character of every single note in itself, not as part of a line or group, but certainly still coloured by their context. Maybe the point of the earlier experimentation was to train myself to perceive the context so that I would later be able to understand how this context influences and colours the character of every note. I think the process of gradually experiencing the autonomous character within every note would be impossible without this long initial process of playing around with the multiple dimensions in which the notes are connected to each other.

In the composer's explanation of neo-serialism as a contrast between melody and points, the *melodic* row, **Figure 105**, forms the antithesis to the pointillistic row, as it occupies the opposite extremity of the pointillist-melodic spectrum. The melodic row is frequently used for sections in the sonata that differ stylistically from the rest, such as the various cantabile melodies, the heavy, double-dotted section resembling a *French Ouverture* on page 4, and the waltz on page 13.

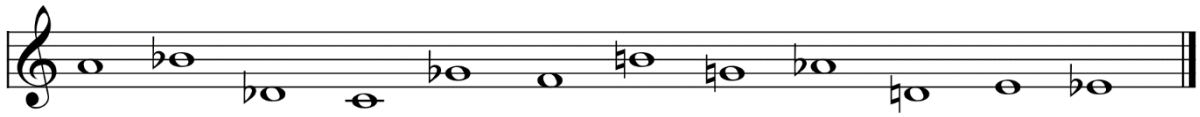

Figure 105. *Mortensen: Sonata No. 2, Op. 47: Melodic row*

In the melodic row, after the initial three notes that are the uniting element of all four rows, Mortensen seems to have emphasised the expressive qualities of intervals to make the contrast to the pointillistic row as large as possible. Mortensen, interestingly, refers to this row as "*musikantisk*",[347] a word that brings associations to the practical and intuitive situation of music-making.

The three tritone intervals, C-G♭, F-B and A♭-D, are particularly characteristic of this row and bring an element of apparent tonal tension and release. The first is resolved chromatically downwards to F, and the last is elaborated through a double neighbour-note motive, eventually resolved into E♭. These properties seem reminiscent of his very first published composition, Sonatina Op. 1, which on an interval level, explores the melodic properties of the tritone

[347] Mortensen, Arbeidsanvisninger for nyserialisme.

interval.[348] This is an interesting parallel between Mortensen's first and last piano compositions and perhaps one aspect of the self-historicism, or 'Pictures from a life' that the composer hints at with the Ulysses reference in his letter to Anne Eline Riisnæs.

The *motivic* row, **Figure 106**, is what Mortensen calls the motivic row.

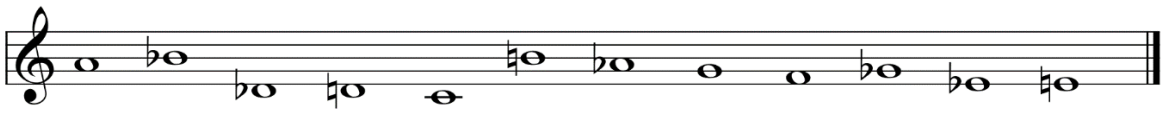

Figure 106. *Mortensen: Sonata No. 2, Op. 47: Motivic row*

In the *Working Instructions*, he writes: *"In the motivic technique, the organisation of the dynamic parameter disappears. Otherwise, it is built on the structural series 3 x 4 and the same principles as I a). The same goes for the series of durations."*[349] In this sonata, however, the composer has departed from these instructions in two ways.

Firstly, the three motivic cells are not created through interval-preserving transformations, as the third cell does not follow the minor second – minor third – minor second structure of the two first ones but consists of four consecutive chromatic notes. However, by inverting parts of the cell, some of the basic characteristics of the cell have been preserved; the two pairs of chromatic tones and the minor third separating them.[350]

Secondly, and more importantly, the series of durations indicated in the quote has, in this sonata, been replaced by a series of dynamics forming steep crescendi. For example, when the row first appears, on the upbeat to bar 2, the dynamics are pp-mp-f-mf-ff, and when it appears later to close the exposition, it is f-p-mf-ff-pp-mp-p-mf-ff-pp-mp-f-mf-ff-pp-mp-f-p, always with two notes, a chromatic pair, sharing the same dynamic. All other occurrences of the row follow similar patterns, where usually three and three dynamics together create a steep crescendo. In Chapter 4, I have elaborated on how this basic crescendo-idea leads to a strong gestural quality that I experience as crucial to the idiosyncrasy of this row and a fundamental element whenever it appears.

[348] See chapter 2

[349] «I den motiviske teknikk faller organiseriengen av parameteret dynamikk vekk. Ellers bygger den på strukturserien 3 x 4 og de samme prinsipper som I a). Det samme gjelder tonelengdeserien.» Mortensen, *Arbeidsanvisninger for nyserialisme*.

[350] It is worth noting that this row, as is the case with the pointillistic row, does not undergo transformations in its entirety, only through cell permutations and transpositions.

The *thematic* row, **Figure 107**, is mirrored around itself so that its retrograde version is identic in interval structure to its prime version.

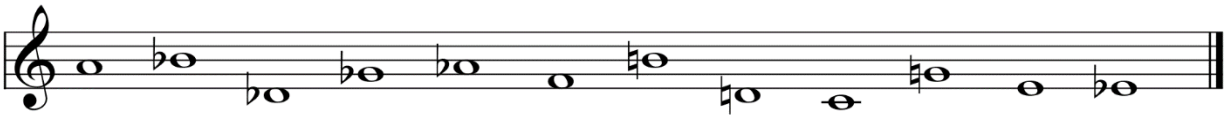

Figure 107. *Mortensen: Sonata No. 2, Op. 47: Thematic row*

Also interesting is the clear functional harmonic idea in this row, B♭-D♭-G♭ A♭-F-B-D and C-G-E, usually avoided in row construction. While the concept is audible in the row's first presentation in bar 1, I do not experience it as particularly prominent in the continuation, as it is usually disguised by rhythm, texture or changes in register. This row is never transformed in any way.

These four rows, serialised on a spectrum, punctual – motivic – thematic – melodic, constitute one of the dimensions building conflict, contrast, and continuity in Mortensen's reinterpretation of a sonata form. However, it is not the only dimension creating contrasts in this piece. One could even argue that in Mortensen's neo-serialism, perhaps even more important than the organisation of the pitch material is the conscious thinking behind the variation and opposition of practically all other parameters.

It is interesting that despite Mortensen's claims that the new element in neo-serialism is the introduction of the melodic component, represented by the *melodic row*, the organisation of multiple parameters on a note-by-note level, as is the case with the *pointillistic row*, has never been a prominent feature of his music, and is entirely absent in all other piano music. Thus, it is possible to claim that both extremes are equally new and that neo-serialism represents an expansion of the spectrum on both ends.

Suggestions of Formal Structures within the Row Material

The distribution of the different rows throughout the sonata, as shown in **Figure 108**,[351] suggests some formal elements. Two features stand out in particular: the large sections of red and blue in the piece's first half at the left side of the figure and the rapid changes between all four rows at the beginning and end of the sonata.

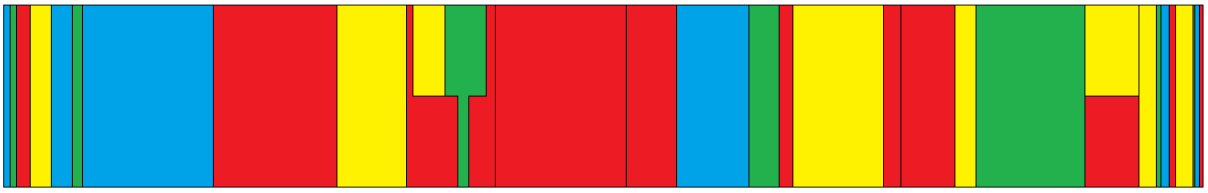

Figure 108. *Mortensen: Sonata No. 2, Op. 47, row distribution.*

Distributed palindromically around a middle section dominated by yellow but also including some red and green, the large blue and red sections in the first half seem to suggest the idea of a large-scale formal concept. At least one dimension connects these parts, although they are wildly contrasting in other dimensions. For example, the two red parts differ in dynamics, metric regularity and gestural properties, but they share a common tone material. Seeing one dimension of connectedness through the multiple contrasting dimensions is a perspective that can help a performer see the coherence Mortensen talks about in his letter by leading to realisations of similarities across the sections.

One particular problem I encountered in the first red section, **Figure 109**, was that the extremely loud dynamics, and a certain physical awkwardness in playing due to the large and uncomfortably voiced chords, led to a very grey and hard sound.

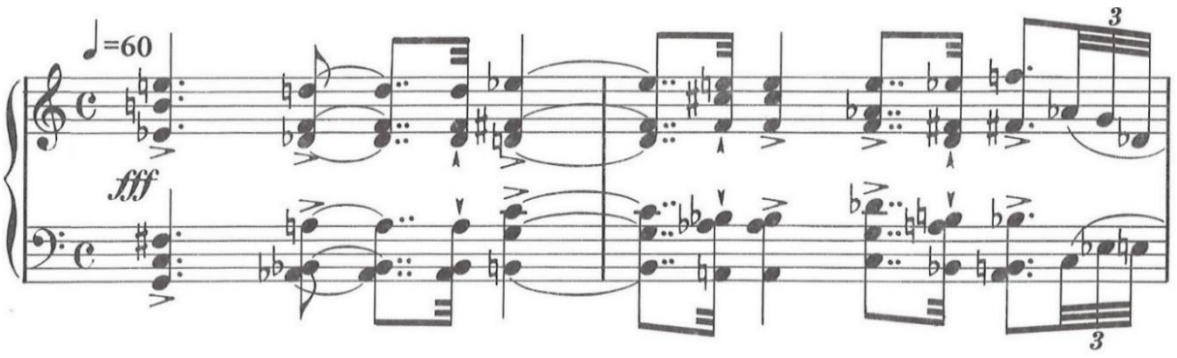

Figure 109. *Mortensen: Sonata No. 2, Op. 47, p. 4*

[351] Colours correspond to the colours used in the analysis. The x-axis represents actual playing time and shows an approximate relationship between parts that are measured metrically, and parts that have been given an accurate duration.

However, the corresponding section, Figure 109, seemed to have much richer and more colourful chords.

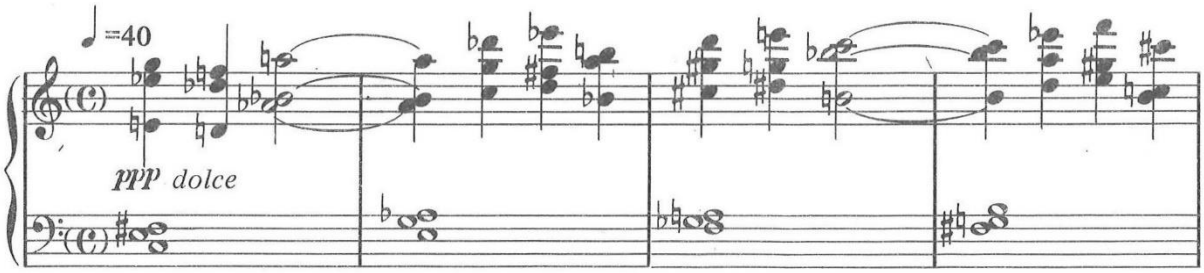

Figure 110. *Mortensen: Sonata No. 2, Op. 47, p. 9*

Realising that despite the immense contrasts between these sections, they are built on the same twelve-tone row and that the harmonies, therefore, should have some similarities inspired me to have a second, closer look at the timbral possibilities of the loud first section to try to discover some of the same qualities there. However, the thick and physically awkward chords make this challenging to convey in a performance.

The rapidly changing rows at the end of the sonata seem to correspond and form a counterpart to the *stream of consciousness* of the opening, and indeed, the principles behind the row configurations seem comparable, albeit with a few notable differences. For example, the melodic row takes on more pointillistic qualities in its final statement than elsewhere in the sonata, meaning that some of the stylistic plurality in the opening section is reduced in the ending.

Another interesting feature of these two sections is revealed by looking at the differences in the transpositions of the rows. In the opening, the four rows are presented in the same transposition, P_0. In the ending section, all four rows are again presented in P_0, thus returning to the same level as the opening, potentially symbolising a dodecaphonic parallel to more classical tonaø schemes, and is enhanced by all four rows first being presented in P_6, a tritone away from P_0, the furthest away we can get from the tonic level. While this is probably not perceptible in any way by a listener, it hints at what kind of function the final page is meant to have and creates an interesting parallel with some of Mortensen's other works where endings have similar tonicalising functions.

While most of my perspective and work on understanding Mortensen's tonality, as outlined in chapter 2, is focussing on the expressive effect his tonality can have on a micro-level, there are

also several instances where he, in different ways, creates tonal coherence on an overarching structural level.

My discovery and investigation of more extended linear structures[352] originated with the observation that at the end of the fantasy of Op. 13, I increasingly heard the final F♯-note like a dominant. While trying to determine why this was the case, I discovered that the last note was the end of a longer disconnected line, connecting it with an earlier perfect fifth, F♯-B, through an upwards movement in B-major.

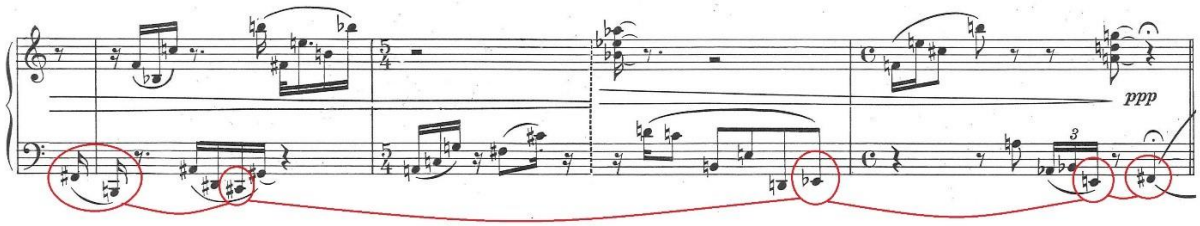

Figure 111. *Mortensen: Fantasy and Fugue Op. 13, Fantasy, bars 51-53*

This discovery was guided by a musical perception, and I do not think I could have noticed it any other way, as its appearance on the page is insignificant, if at all noticeable. The discovery deepened my understanding and perception of the section. Rather than merely being the natural conclusion of a three-page diminuendo, it also has a tonal function, leading into the transitional section that ties the fantasy with the fugue. This transition repeats the F♯-pitch numerous times and normalises it to a certain degree. The B-pitch occurs again in a significant way only at the end of the fugue.

This movement has a large-scale palindromic structure, so this discovery naturally affected my understanding of the corresponding non-retrograde section.

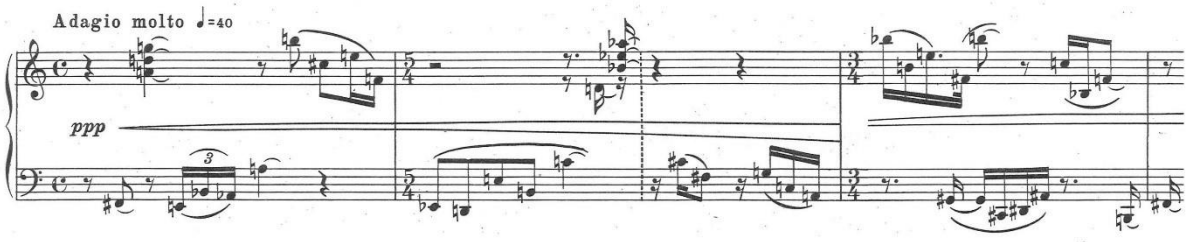

Figure 112. *Mortensen: Fantasy and Fugue Op. 13, Fantasy, bars 1-3*

The subtle difference in the perfect fifth in the two examples is interesting. In the retrograde version, a legato line connects the final F♯ with the preceding B, while in the non-retrograde version, the indication that they should sound together makes the B more prominent than it would otherwise be.

[352] See chapter 5

Considering the tonal importance of the F♯ at the beginning and end of the fantasy, it appears significant that after a long linear progression, the same pitch is reached in the centre of the piece, this time as a long, accentuated bass-note.

A few recurring pitches appear prominent on the second page of the fantasy of Op. 13, **Figure 113**. The C♯ in the bass feels both significant and new and marks a different section or episode in the dramatic development of the movement. Its multiple occurrences throughout the page become focal points of tonal continuity and development, with the relationship to the F♯ apparent. In addition to the C♯s, the repeated B/B♭s occupies a prominent place in the section, appearing to have significance in the unfolding of the section and forming similar important focal points as the C♯, albeit more subtle in meaning and effect.

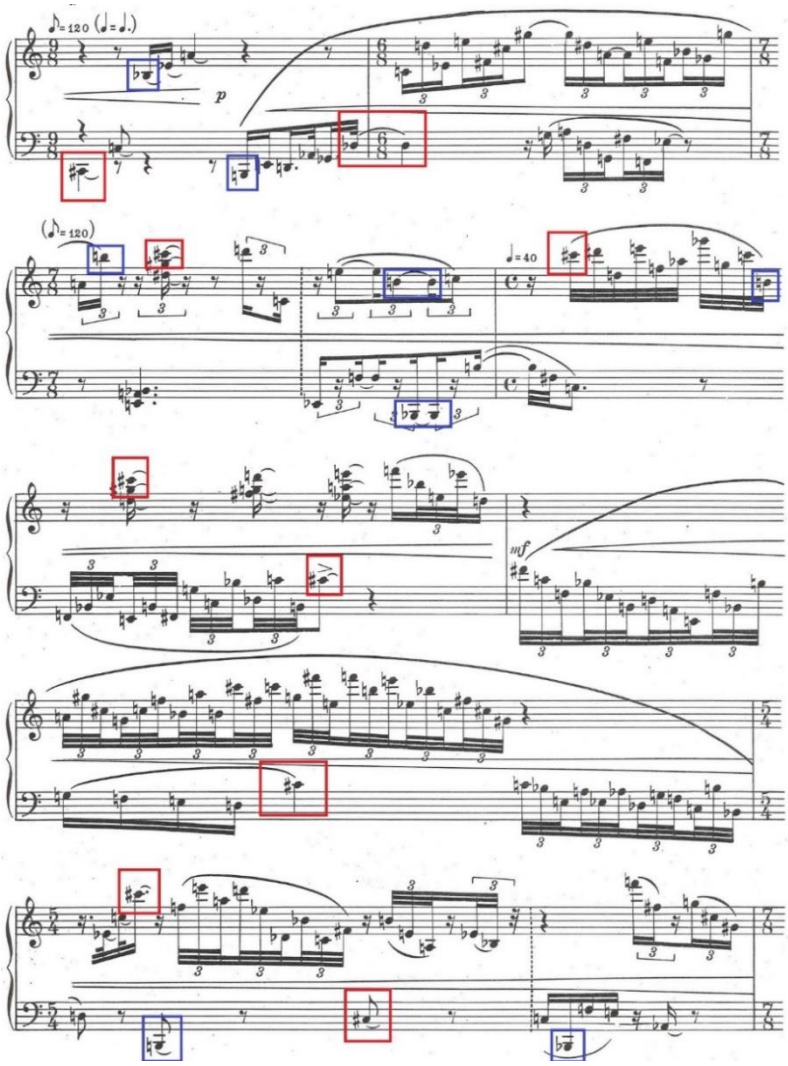

Figure 113. *Mortensen: Fantasy and Fugue Op. 13, Fantasy, bars 10-15, significant pitches*

The fugue of Op. 7 has similar recurring tonal centres, although their occurrence here seems much more episodical than even in *Fantasy and Fugue*. The tonal centre presented in the G-E♭-A♭ cadence in the opening subject gets re-established through two repetitions of the head of the subject in double octaves in the bass, starting in the middle of page 11. The immediate function is primarily felt in the added impact the following A gives to the repeated chords abruptly ending the development, which would be far less effective if it did not create a dissonance to an established tonal centre. With the A sounding prominently against the A♭-tonic, I hear the chords as having a similar function to a Neapolitan subdominant. In addition, the entire last page of the fugue is built around the idea of re-establishing the tonic and unifying

the contrast in motives between the two movements. This re-establishment starts with a long pedal point with a trill on the dominant, followed by three statements of the head of the subject in increasingly soft, and in the end, even fragmented, states, as it dies away in quiet resignation.

One could ask what relevance these references to the opening tonality have for a performer since it is not created from a continuous process and is likely never heard nor felt by a listener. Mortensen could have ended either piece on any tonal centre had he wished, with much the same effect. This question is even more pertinent at the end of *Sonata No. 2*, where the return to the opening tonality is so disguised that only a detailed analysis of the twelve-tone structure allowed me to realise some of the hidden processes.

I believe that knowledge about such moments can indeed play a part in a performance, albeit a subtle and indirect one. Even if Mortensen probably could have ended in any other key, this would have given a very different signal to a performer. The return to the opening tonality, enhanced by an idea of unification of other contrasts, imitates a classical functionality of the endings. While little effect comes from tonality as a global musical force, there is an effect created by how the moment is symbolic and meaningful to the performer. The performer can use their understanding of this symbolism to shape a different and more meaningful conceptual understanding of the function of the section. Over time, this understanding changes how the section is heard and felt in its context and may, that way, have a bearing on the performance of the piece.

The degree and nature of compositional control vary tremendously throughout *Sonata No. 2*. One extreme consists of the parts created from the pointillistic row, where every note is given individual dynamics and exact durations, with relatively little room for the performer's divergence. The other extreme can be found in the two pages towards the end, pages 12 and 13, immediately noticeable by its cryptical notation. Although large parts of this section are based on the pointillistic row, the performer must be both a co-composer and improvisator.

I have spent much energy and time trying to determine what meaning could be hidden behind the bold lines going through various parts of this section. I previously had never encountered notation without any accepted meaning or verbal explanation in a score. For example, in the section's opening, **Figure 114**, the lines seem to resemble a decrescendo, which makes little sense considering the dynamics distribution within the part.

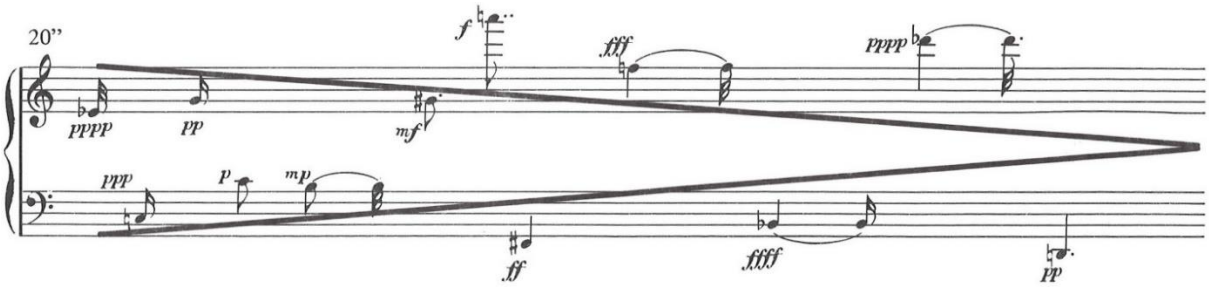

Figure 114. *Mortensen: Sonata No. 2, Op. 47, p. 12*

Is it possible that the lines do not indicate anything specific but are deliberately nonsensical to signal to the performer that they are meant to use the material freely? The nagging sensation that there might be a specific idea behind the notation I did not understand held me back for a while. Finally, Anne Eline Riisnæs told me there was, in fact, no specific meaning behind the lines that she knew about and that this part is meant to be played as notated.[353]

This confirmed had a liberating effect and was necessary to think creatively enough to develop what to perform in this section. Nevertheless, this section does not require improvisation, at least not in the same sense as in the sonata for two pianos. On the contrary, to create the feeling of a 'stream of consciousness' with its rapid shifts and contrasting emotions, I think a fluent strictness in the execution is necessary, and in this particular instance, I found it preferable to

[353] Conversation September 7th 2018

work out most of it in advance to have then the chance to practice it rigorously. The performer thus becomes more of a co-composer than an improvisator.

In the next part, the notation indicates the possibility of playing one or more pairs of notes simultaneously.

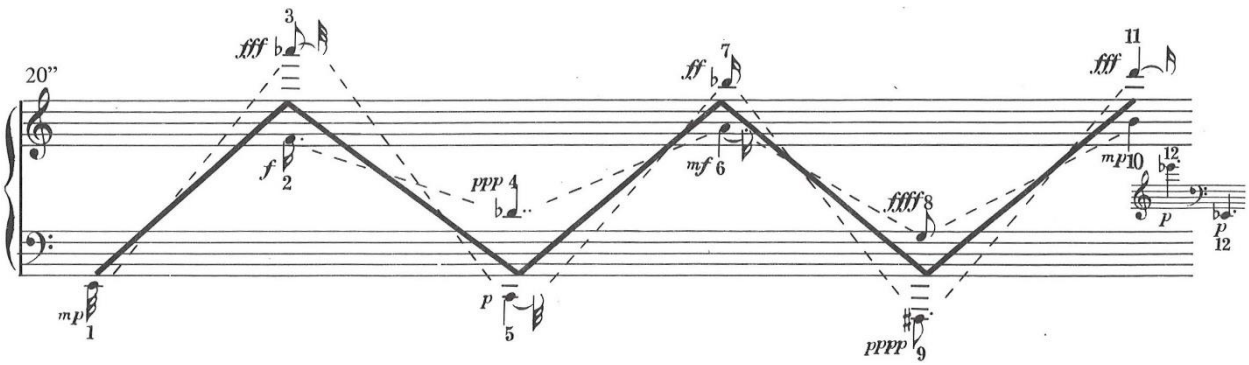

Figure 115. *Mortensen: Sonata No. 2, Op. 47, p. 12*

In addition, the part should, according to Riisnæs, be performed twice, once with the first E♭ and once with the second E♭. I decided to make the repetitions complimentary of each other, where the first and last notes were always alone, the final pair always together, but the intervening four pairs were changed between being played together and being played in succession. After testing numerous possibilities, I came to the solution notated in **Figure 116**. Due to the relative difficulty in performing such sections well, I wrote it out to be able to practice it accurately.

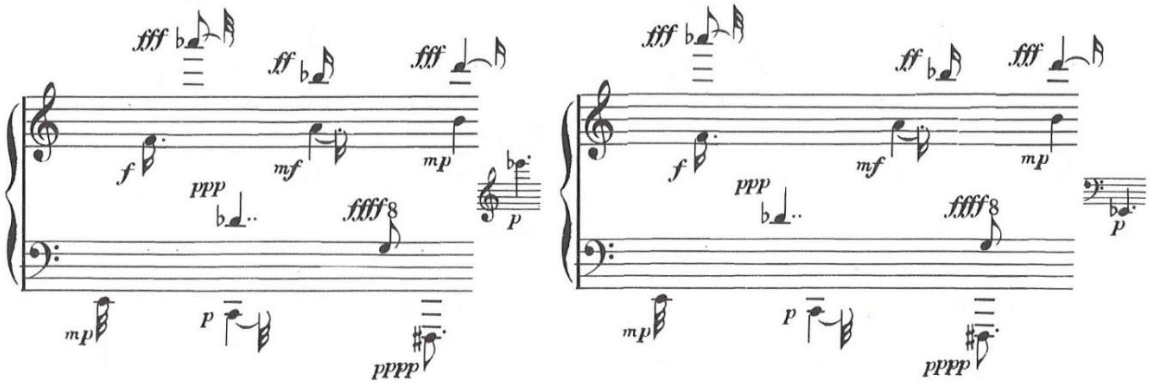

Figure 116. *Mortensen: Sonata No. 2, Op. 47, p. 12: private performance score*

Parts of the following line, **Figure 117**, also need some level of working out for a convincing performance. The initial structure seems to indicate a two-part polyphony, and while rhythms are given exactly in each voice, the synchronicity is not given, and it is up to the performer to figure out how the voices are best synchronised.

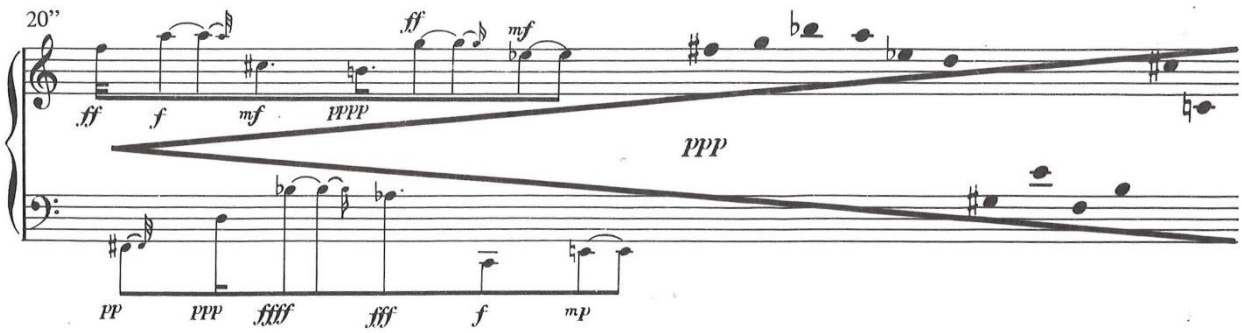

Figure 117. *Mortensen: Sonata No. 2, Op. 47, p. 12*

The performer's decisions on the matter clearly has consequences for the character of the rhythm of the notated part and depend to a certain degree on how one understands the following unmeasured notation. According to Riisnæs, the composer meant the unmeasured notes to be played with a swing rhythm, a tribute to Riisnæs' interest in jazz music and part of the work's multi-stylistic nature, and indeed taking up in it some of the eclectic nature of the 'newfriendly' music.

This clear reference to the personal interests of the initial performer raises the question of whether subsequent performers are bound to continue in the spirit of the intended idea or if they are allowed, or indeed meant, to go their own way. I decided that references to jazz music would, in fact, not be the most relevant to me. So instead, I tried to give it some of the textural ambiguity from the fantasy of Op. 13 by combining a slight *fondu* with the expressivity connected with the *melodic row* used here. Thus, I decided to choose a version of the initial figure that ends with a rhythm that tones down some of the previous gestural activity and, **Figure 118**, together with the decrescendo the dynamics indicate, prepares the new character and builds a bridge between the two parts.

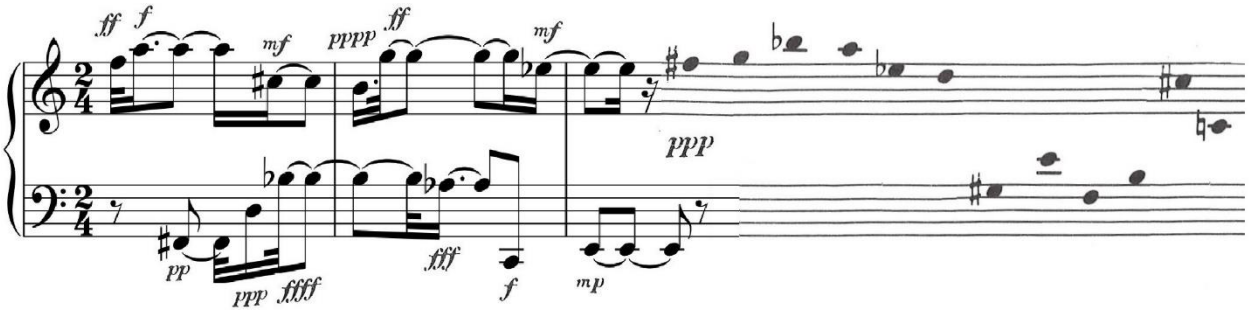

Figure 118. *Mortensen: Sonata No. 2, Op. 47, p. 12, private performance score*

In addition to contributing to the sonata's eclecticism, the following waltz is another part that refers to Riisnæs, who studied in Vienna at the time of composition. The original manuscript,

Figure 119, contains an idea of a total duration that, for some reason, is absent in the printed score.

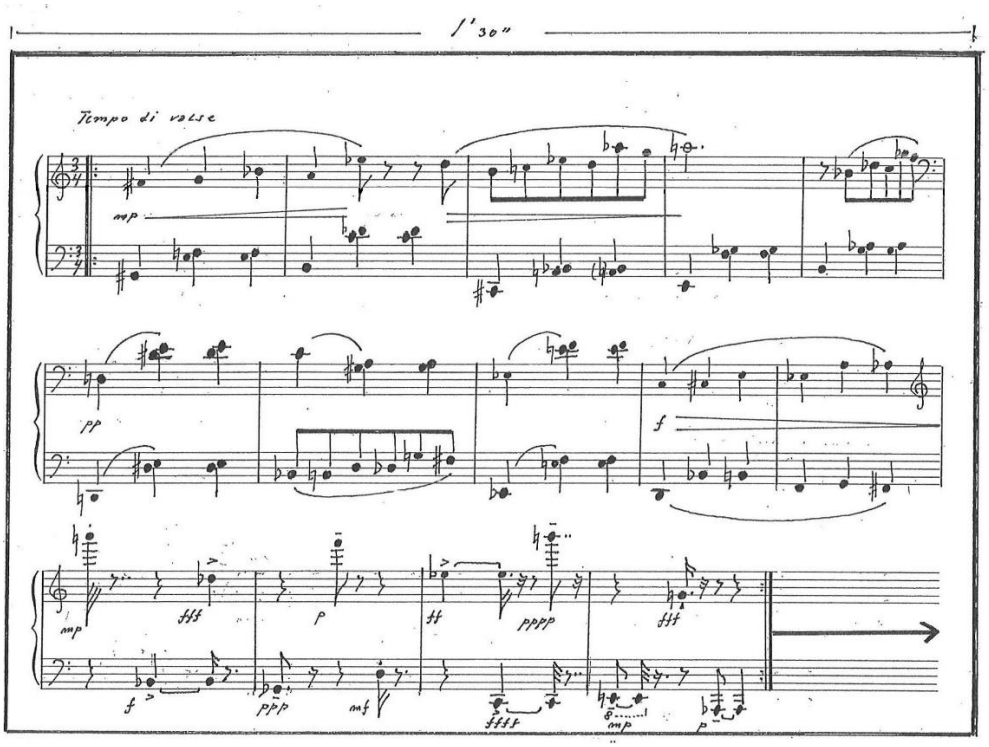

Figure 119. *Mortensen: Sonata No. 2, Op. 47, original manuscript. p. 11*

The indication of duration on the top of the section must be seen in connection with a similar idea at the end of the piece and indicates that the last page of the piece should be repeated for a total duration of 1'30".[354] In my tempo, this corresponds to somewhere between two and three repetitions. The notation implies that the performer should end wherever they are at that time, and my interpretation of the notation in the original manuscript indicates that the same procedure is valid for the waltz.

While I prefer the printed version at the end of the piece with a fixed ending on the ffff figure, I decided to use the idea in the waltz but disregarded the given duration, as I find playing it more than six times overly excessive. I decided to end the waltz somewhere in the first repetition and make the transition as abrupt as possible, as if the next part rudely interrupts the waltz.

The performer's freedom is most prominent in the following part, **Figure 120**, where they can be the closest to actually improvising.

[354] «Repetér siden inntil 1'30" er gått»

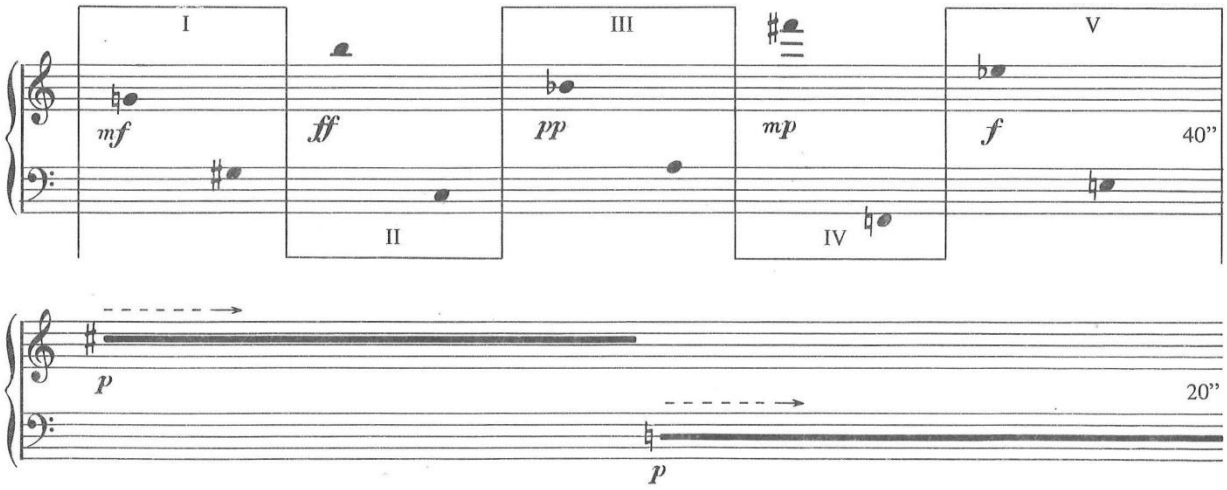

Figure 120. *Mortensen: Sonata No. 2, Op. 47, p. 13*

The notation appears to indicate the improvisation of rhythms over the groups of chromatic notes associated with the motivic (green) row. During my conversations with Riisnæs, she revealed an idea of Mortensen that I decided to incorporate. She agreed with the composer that the top part could be played twice, the first time up to and including the C♯, interrupted by a repetition which includes the final D. I think this being a plan coming from the composer, indicates that the performer might not need to feel restricted by what the notation seems to suggest, but is free to search outside of it. Similar to several other parts in this section, I decided to write down ideas for the execution of this section as well, **Figure 121**, as I found the rapid and abrupt changes in dynamics and character, combined with large jumps in registers, challenging to perform convincingly and fluently without specific practice.

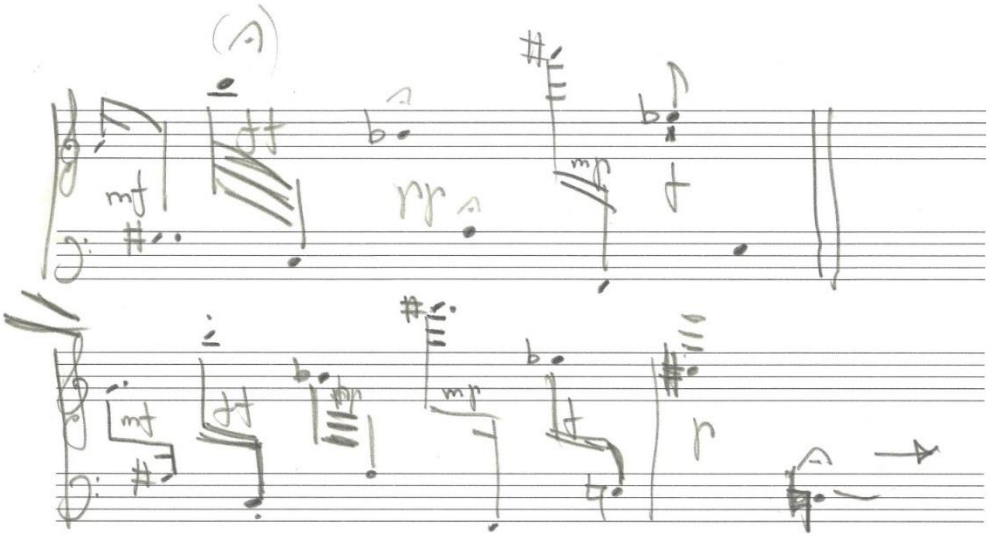

Figure 121. *Mortensen: Sonata No. 2, Op. 47, p. 13: private performance notes*

The final part of the indeterminate section, **Figure 122**, contains a combination of the row-extremes with the pointillistic row in the treble and the melodic row as a walking bass.

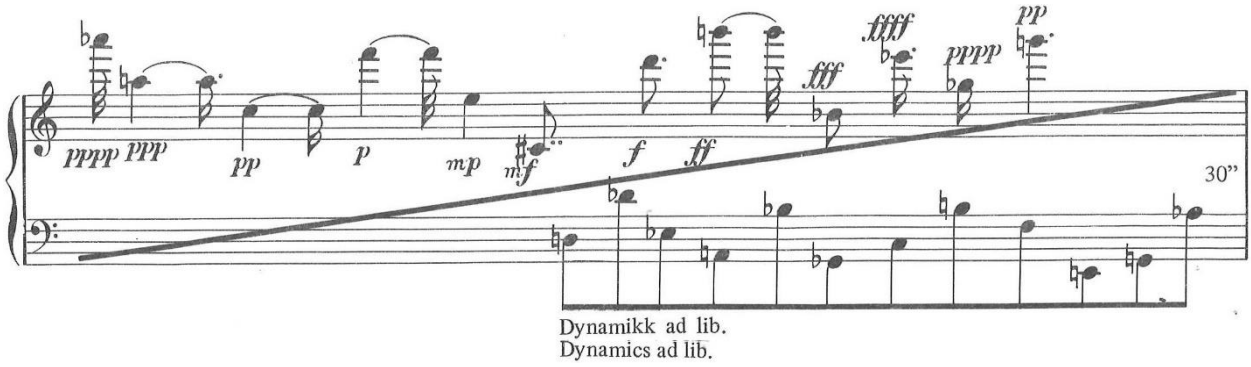

Figure 122. *Mortensen: Sonata No. 2, Op. 47, p. 13*

According to Riisnæs, the idea is to start with the top row, eventually add the bass line, and then continue improvising on the top while repeating the bass. Initially, I wanted to keep the idea of improvisation in this section but found the material in the pointillistic row unsuited. The strictly determined material in multiple dimensions made it very difficult to improvise, and I could not see how improvisation added anything of value to the section.

I briefly thought about, and once performed, this section with added material from the previous section for improvisation, **Figure 123**, which I found to be an interesting idea and one that worked better in practice than improvising on the given material.

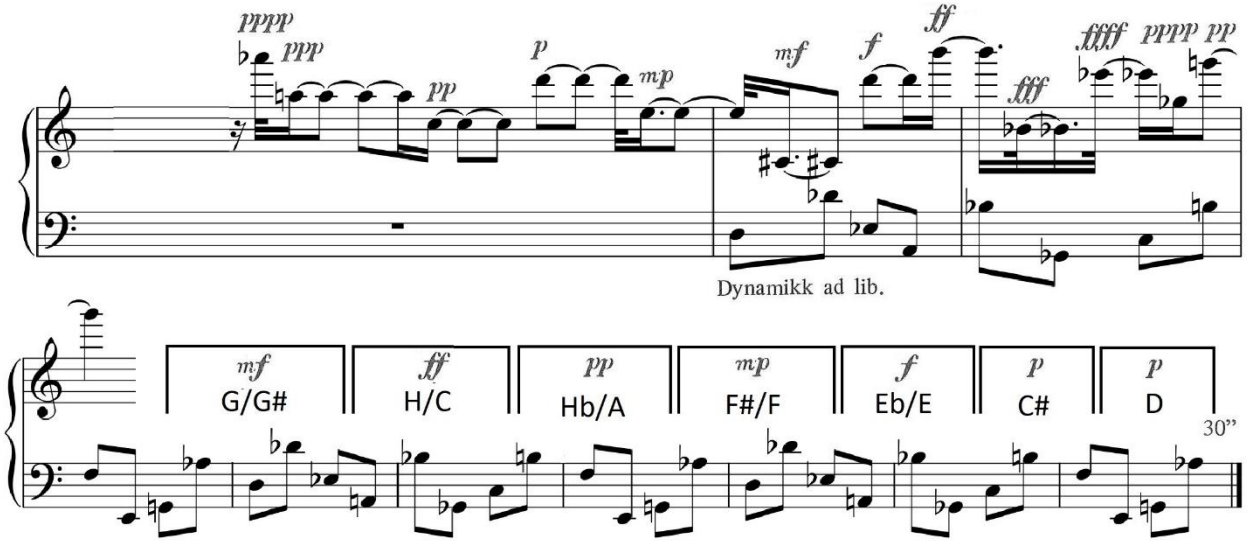

Figure 123. *Mortensen: Sonata No. 2, Op. 47, p. 13: private performance score 1*

Ultimately, though, I decided against it, partly because it constitutes a fundamental deviation from the score but also because, on a conceptual level, I liked the idea of the simultaneous juxtaposition of row extremes. So, in the end, I wrote the version in **Figure 124**.

I found early on that I preferred to play the bass line a total of three times and also found no preferable alternative to keeping the entry from the previous example. The initial top row is chained to its own retrograde through a shared 12th note before introducing a third row. This new row, $P_{0,}$ has the same dynamic and rhythmic properties as the first time the pointillistic row is presented in the opening.

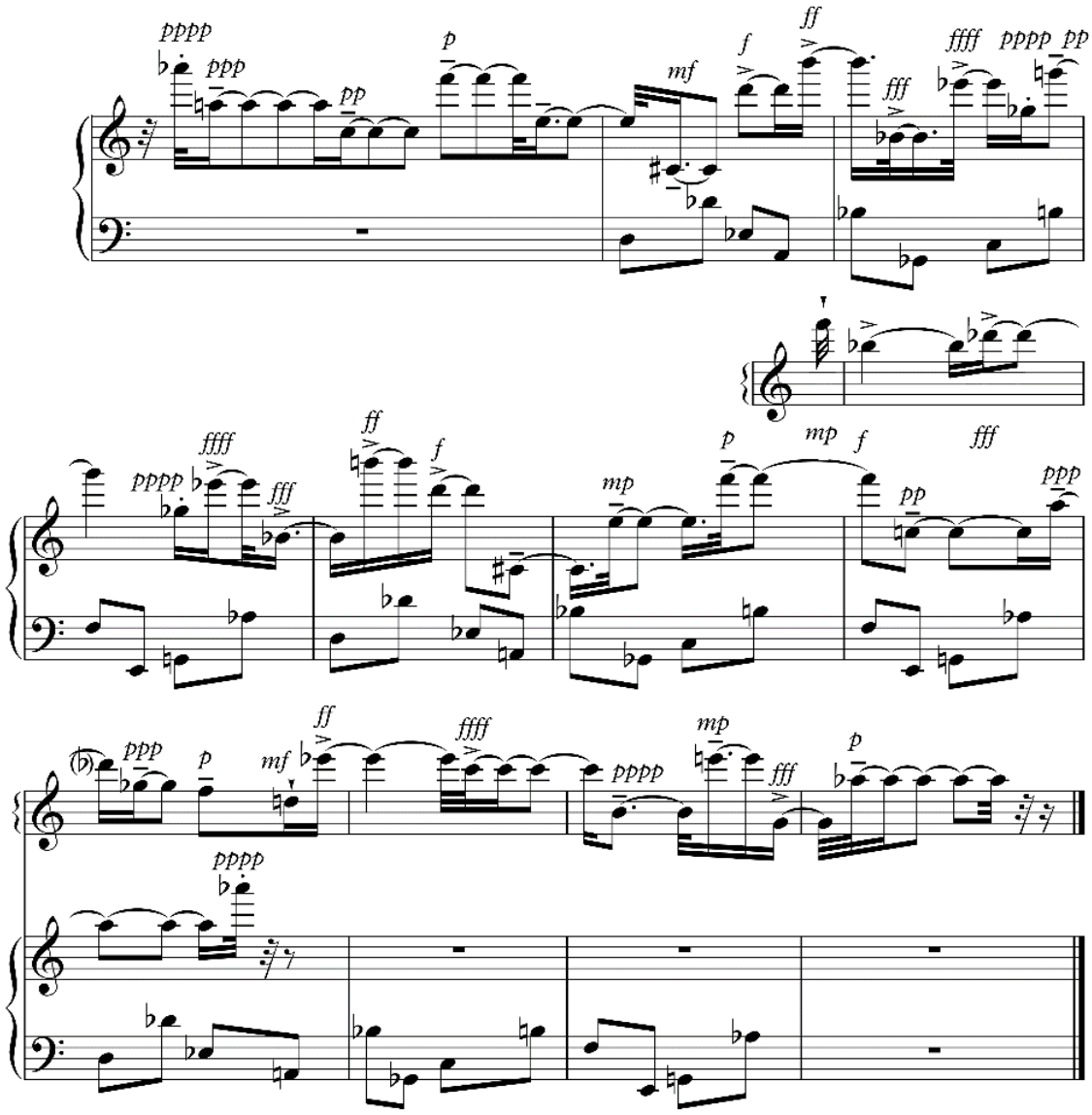

Figure 124. *Mortensen: Sonata No. 2, Op. 47, p. 13: private performance score 2*

Sonata No. 2 and the Multidimensionality of Neo-Serialism

As interesting as reflections around aesthetics, style and form born from a dodecaphonic analysis are, pitch only seems to constitute a single dimension within Mortensen's concept of neo-serialism. In his analysis of the sonata, Nesheim states that:

> *"The exposition consists of four short sections, each presenting its individual character and can be called A – B – C – D, where A includes the composition's first four bars, p. 2 b. 1-4, B goes from p. 2, b. 5 to b. 10, C from p.2, b. 11 to b. 16 and D from p. 2, b. 17 to p. 3, b. 1."*[355]

In his analysis of the sonata's exposition, Nesheim's subdivisions go across and are independent of the row material. Nor is he, as he claims, considering character. How can, for example, the soft, expressive polyphonic melody in bars 3-4 be regarded as the same character as the loud, eruptive, strongly gestural opening? It seems to me that what he analyses is *texture*, which to him must appear to be an essential formative dimension in this piece, and I find no reason to dismiss an analysis on this basis as less musically viable and less performatively beneficial than one based on tone-material.

The highly developed and exploited conflict between the predominantly two-part polyphonic A, the highly detached B, the chord-based C, and the single line, non-detached D of Nesheim's analysis seems equally viable to the development to the development of the piece as twelve-tone structure. This example is one of many reasons why I find an explanation that only considers tone material and dodecaphonic technique too reductionistic to form the basis for understanding Mortensen's neo-serialism. Instead, differences in texture between adjacent parts, and variations in texture between related parts throughout the piece, appear as critical elements of the performer's reflections on the character and form of the piece.

For example, the textural development or variation of the melodic row alone clearly shows that texture is not fixed to a row but functions as an independent form-building and expressive dimension. The way it appears fundamentally different in its second statement, starting in the middle of page 5, compared to its first statement, and the texture works together with the thick, broad and heavy double-dotted rhythm to bring something entirely new to the piece and is maximally contrasted to the two sections on either side of it. How it takes on yet another new

[355] «Eksposisjonsdelen består av fire korte avsnitt, som presenterer hver sin karakter og kan betegnes A – B – C – D, der A omfatter komposisjonens fire første takter, s. 2 t. 1-4, B går fra s.2 t.5 til t.10, C fra s.2 t.11 til t.16 og D fra s.2 t.17 til s.3 t.1.» Nesheim, "Modernismens døråpner i Norge," 345.

function through textural variation in the sonata's final bar and through excessive octavations of every note completely loses the expressive melodic character previously associated with it. By developing the melodic row in a pointillistic direction, the composer resolves one of the major central conflicts of the work, between the melodic and the pointillistic style, and makes it clear that the serialist elements are the fundament of the style.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, gestures, metricality, and periodicity vary enormously throughout the work. The conflict in the metrical dimensions seems to a large degree to follow the conflict lines of the row material to a large degree. On one extreme, there is the completely non-metrical section on page 6, created by the pointillistic row, without any references to an underlying metre. Conversely, the heavily metric French Ouverture starts on page 4, where a strong and steady metre is fundamental to the character. Between these two extremes, there is a wide variety of different metric functions. For example, the long 2/4 section on pages 3 and 4 certainly has a sense of metric, and even hyper-metric, hierarchy. The same can be said about the expressive melodic lines, for example, on page 10. However, in neither part is the metricality as strong as in the *French Ouverture*.

The inherent non-materiality of the pointillistic row is also challenged on several occasions. Both at the initial row presentation, when combined with the melodic row on page 7, and when it ends the waltz section on page 13, the beginning of every note is tied to the metric grid. In my version of the end of the indeterminate part, I kept the non-metric nature but combined it with the more metrical walking bass, making a simultaneous juxtaposition between metrical and durational thinking not existing elsewhere in the work.

Periodicity is another dimension that seems to be used for creating contrasts. One extreme is represented by the sequence of soft chords starting from the double line on page 19, with very regular two-bar periods, or the section starting on page 3, where the establishment and subsequent departure from 2+2 bar periods is an important element of the section. For example, the other extreme is represented by the part created by the thematic row starting at the bottom of page 10 or the part created by the motivic row on page 8. Both sections have a highly irregular periodicity, although the last one is eventually counterpointed by a more periodically and metrically founded melody. One interesting aspect of the periodicity in this sonata is that the most periodic sections have a larger degree of, and more regular, periodicity than anything found anywhere else in Mortensen's earlier music, which seems to indicate that the composer

is using the neo-serialistic idea of multidimensional contrast to widen the possibilities of his musical language.

While the composer in interviews underlines the importance of the contrasts between melody and pointillism, and both the *Work directions* and his article on the neo-serialism in the orchestra work *HEDDA*, Op. 42, described neo-serialism as primarily a row-created process, where different rows are placed on a pointillistic-melodic spectrum, I have, during the work on this sonata, come to appreciate to what degree these statements are over simplifications of the style and that neo-serialism is a lot more complex and diverse.

Fundamental to the concept, as I now understand it is to imagine all mentioned musical parameters, including dodecaphonic rows, texture, pulse and metre, periodicity, gesture, style, and dynamics, as spectrums that have been serialised. Neo-serialism must be understood primarily as serialism on a meta-level rather than a note-by-note level. Every section of the music, as diverse and different as they are, can be understood as a result of intersections between the serialised spectra of these parameters.

Elef Nesheim told me that, according to Mortensen, the most important thing for a performer of his music is 'character'.[356] For me, the realisation that neo-serialism is a multi-dimensional meta-serialism has been an essential tool in the process of developing this *character*. It has helped me see the uniqueness of every single part of the work and how every part of the work is related to every other part through multi-spectral connections. Meta-serialism has thus been a key concept in developing both the character and a more personal understanding of Mortensen's ideal of *contrast and continuity*.

[356] In conversation October 5th 2018

Afterword

This project was conceived and driven by my curiosity about Finn Mortensen's music and my great interest in 20th-century music in general. It is a privilege to have the time to delve into such an unexplored topic in the depth and width a PhD project permits. I have visited many paths and asked questions I have rarely had the opportunity to in my everyday artistic practice.

I have felt a personal need to look at the music with a critical and creative view on its performance. Ultimately, on many occasions, I needed to emancipate the music and my performance from the score and the composer's descriptions and seek other sources and methods for knowledge and inspiration to help me develop my own interpretation. I think my recordings are a valuable artistic contribution to disseminating Norwegian modernism.

Throughout this reflection text, I have aimed to document some of the processes, knowledge and experiences shaping my work with Mortensen's piano music and my personal views on Mortensen as a composer. I believe this project is a considerable contribution to new perspectives and knowledge on Mortensen's music, and I felt it was important to give some space for this in my text, even when elaborations have become somewhat extensive. Mortensen was not just an important figure in shaping modern music in Norway, but he also had a unique approach to composing. There is still much to be studied in his compositions, and I believe doing so would be of more than merely historic interest. His approach to modernism resulted in compositions that, like many great works, can add to our understanding of music.

The reflection text does not contain an objective description of Mortensen's music; it is far too biased towards my own preferences and taste. Nor is it a recipe for reaching any *authentic* or *authoritative* performance of his music. I have, throughout the project, not aimed to justify my performances by external means. They reflect my personal and subjective views. My aim has rather been to gain the competence and hone the intuition needed to develop my own interpretations. *Personal* and *subjective* does not necessarily mean *arbitrary* or *haphazard,* and I have attempted to document a certain plausibility in my approach to his music.

I have used a large number of sources on and by the composers, and while my use of them has been pragmatic, I have shown how they have guided and coloured my search. Above all, I have put weight on Mortensen's own artistic references and tried to find a way for them to inform my view on his music. Mortensen's artistic references are extremely wide and have brought me into complex and profound areas, some of which would warrant a lifetime of study to do them

justice. If I were to do such a project again, I would choose a smaller topic with clearer demarcations that allows for a more comprehensive treatment. However, literature from the performer's perspective on the interpretation of modern music is not plentiful, and I believe the width of this project means this text provides some knowledge, perspectives and methods with relevance for more than just the performance of Mortensen's music.

Such a reflection text is, of course, meaningless without the music. I once again refer the reader to my recordings of the music[357] and hope they will recognise some of what I write about in the music and what I play in the text. There are certainly elements I miss in the recordings, either because I could not convey them that particular day, because I would have needed more time for the aspects to be properly manifested in the sound, or maybe because they are not as musically important as they seemed to me.

There is also another factor: Mortensen's music is incredibly awkward to play. His understanding of the physicality of piano playing was extremely poor, and it took a lot of effort just to make even the simplest of his pieces sound decent. While they are always on the right side of being *playable*, it sometimes requires luck for them to be *performable*, making me lose many of the finer points of the music in live performance. This contributed to the decision not to include live recordings in my artistic results and rerecord many of the music examples for documentation, as I felt the live recordings did not represent my current artistic intentions.

This project has taken longer than I expected and would have liked. However, I found that my approach to the music became different when I had prepared and performed it and then revisited the compositions after some time. I was less in a learning mode and more in a mode of discovery. First then, I was really free to start exploring the music properly. This led to me not only preparing Mortensen's music for recording but also taking up some of the other music that had meant the most to me during the project to bring them further with me in the artistic and reflective process. My recordings of Schönberg's *Drei Klavierstüucke*, Op. 11, Webern's *Variationen*, Op. 27, Valen's *Intermezzo*, Op. 36 and Boulez's *Troisième Sonate* were not meant as artistic results for public release but can be found in my Research Catalogue exhibition.

In this project, I have aimed to expand the perception of the interpretational space of Mortensen's music. However, I am only one person. Another performer working with this

[357] https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/778684/2088394 and https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/778684/2124386

music with the same aim might be drawn to different topics, ask different questions, and be led down different paths, and might, therefore, make the music sound different. I can only provide one of what I believe to be many plausible interpretations of this rich and complex music, and the exploration of Mortensen's music must therefore be a collective effort.

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- Mikkelsen, Terje; Münchner Rundfunkorchester: *Finn Mortensen*, Simax Classics – PSC 1306, 2011.
- Jansons, Mariss; Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra: *Mortensen – Symphony Op. 5*, Philips – 6529 088, 1982.

- Szilvay, Peter; Stavanger Symphony Orchestra: *Finn Mortensen – Symphony Op. 5*, SSO Recordings – 3917-1, 2018

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- Andersen, Alf: *Alf Andersen,* Philips – 631053 NL, 1964.

Mortensen, Finn: *Sonata,* Op. 7:
- Austbø, Håkon: *Norwegian Imperatives*, Aurora B002SSZ7BY, 2009.
- Klein, Elisabeth: *Contemporary Music from Norway*, Philips 6507 058, 1977.

Mortensen, Finn: *Duo per Soprano e Violino,* Op. 8
- Mæland, Kirsten Landmark; Veselka, František, Simax Classics – PSC 1026, reissue, 1990.

Mortensen, Finn: *Pezzo Orchestrale,* Op. 12:
- Mikkelsen, Terje; Münchner Rundfunkorchester: *Finn Mortensen,* Simax Classics – PSC 1306, 2011.

Mortensen, Finn: *Fantasy and Fugue,* Op. 13:
- Bækkelund, Kjell: *Finn Mortensen,* Aurora NCD B 4942, 1988, orig. Philips – 839 248 AY, 1967.
- Smebye, Einar Henning: *Expressionism Anticipated and Fulfilled,* Aurora – ARCD 1911, 1987.

Mortensen, Finn: *Sonata for Violin and Piano,* Op. 17
- Veselka, František; Dratvová, Milena, Simax Classics – PSC 1026, reissue, 1990.

Mortensen, Finn: *Three Pieces for Violin and Piano,* Op. 21
- Veselka, František; Dratvová, Milena, Simax Classics – PSC 1026, reissue, 1990.

Mortensen, Finn: *Evolution*, Op. 23
- Mikkelsen, Terje; Münchner Rundfunkorchester: *Finn Mortensen,* Simax Classics – PSC 1306, 2011.

Mortensen, Finn: *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra*, Op. 25
- Bækkelund, Kjell; Andersen, Karsten; Bergen Symphonic Orchestra: *Finn Mortensen*, Aurora NCD B 4942, 1988, orig. Philips – 6507 040, 1975.

Mortensen, Finn: *Sonate für zwei Klaviere*, Op. 26:
- Haase, Erika; Zérah Colette: *Erika Haase & Colette Zérah Playing Egil Hovland – Varianti Per Due Pianoforti, Op. 47 & Finn Mortensen Sonate Für Zwei Klaviere, Op. 26,* Ny Musikk NM-1, 1965.

Mortensen, Finn: *Fantasy for Piano and Orchestra*, Op. 27
- Haase, Erika; Ehrling, Sixten; Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra: *Finn Mortensen*, Aurora NCD B 4942, 1988, orig. Philips – 6507 010, 1971.

Mortensen, Finn: *Piano Piece,* Op. 28:
- Klein, Elisabeth: *Mysterious Mountains*, Aurora NCD 4923, 1989.
- Shtarkman, Aleksandr: *The crown Princess Sonja International Music Competition*, PSC 1042, 1988.

Mortensen, Finn: *Per Orchestra,* Op. 30:
- Mikkelsen, Terje; Münchner Rundfunkorchester: *Finn Mortensen,* Simax Classics – PSC 1306, 2011.

Mortensen, Finn: *Greners Tyngde, Tre Sanger til et Dikt av Paal Brekke*, Op. 33

- Egge, Guri; Smebye, Einar Henning: *Songs from the last century*, Simax Classics PPC9055, 2006.

Mortensen, Finn: *Sonata in 5 Movements*, Op.44, for Oboe and Cembalo:

- Hoff, Brynjar; Herresthal, Harald: *Brynjar Hoff Plays Finn Mortensen, Sparre Olsen, Kjell Mørk Karlsen, Folke Strømholm*, Talent – TLS 4036, 1980.

Mortensen, Finn: *Fantasy for Violin and Orchestra*, Op. 45

- Veselka, František; Eggen, Christian; Bergen Philharmonic: New Norwegian Violin Music, Vol. III, Aurora – ACD 4972, 1993.

Ravel, Maurice: *Miroirs*

- Austbø, Håkon: Maurice Ravel Complete Works for Piano Solo, Simax Classics – PSC1366, 2018.

Schönberg, Arnold: *Drei Klavierstücke*, Op. 11

- Gould, Glenn: *Glenn Gould plays Schoenberg, Berg Webern*, CBC Records PSCD 2008, 1995.
- Klein, Elisabeth: *Arnold Schoenberg, Alban Berg, Anton Webern, – Complete Piano Works*, Classico – CLASSCD 180-81, 1997.
- Pollini, Maurizio: *Arnold Schoenberg – The Piano Music*, Deutsche Grammophon – 2530 531, 1975.
- Steuermann, Eduard: *Vol. 1: Schoenberg*, Archiphon, 2013.

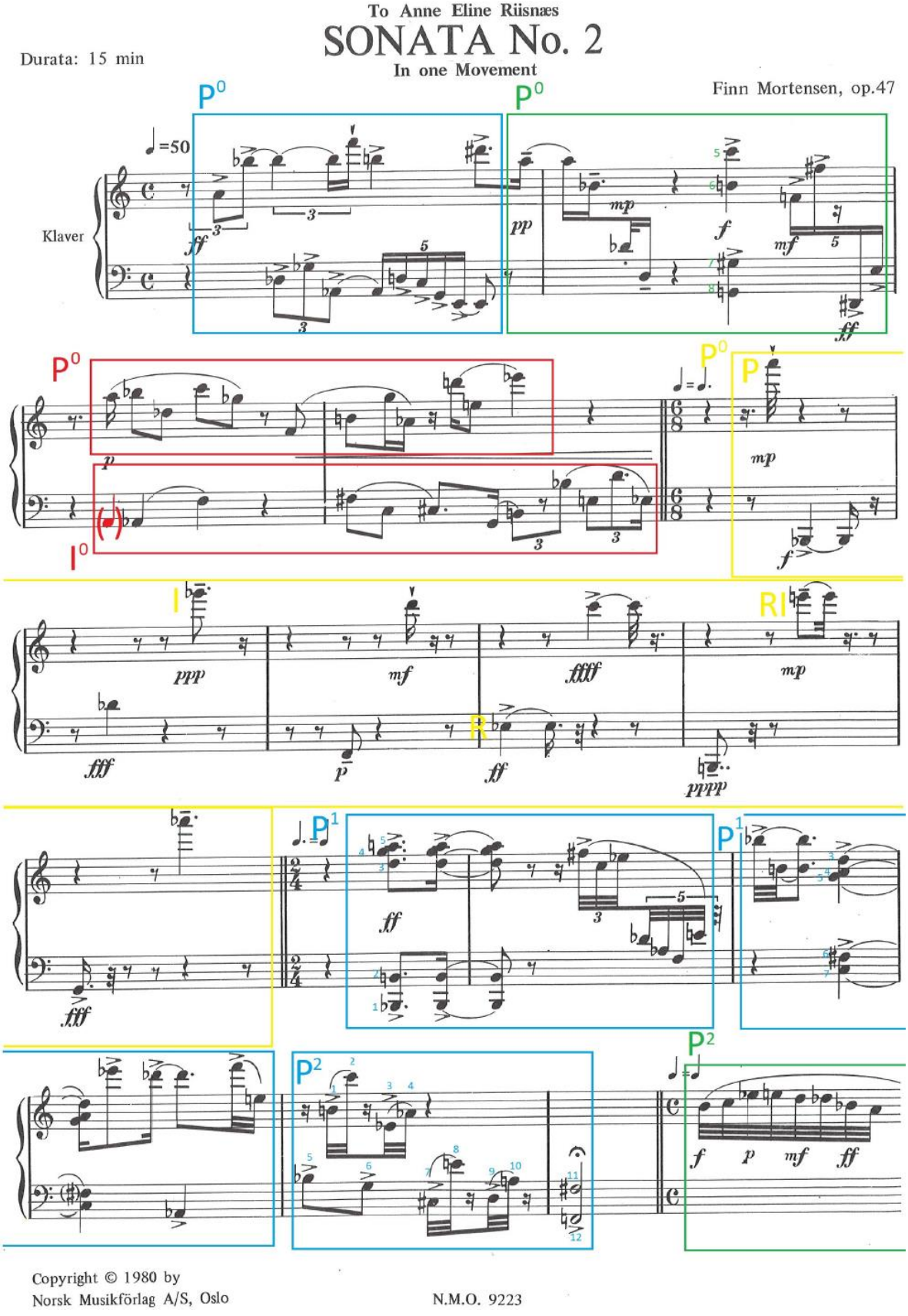
Valen, Fartein: *Intermezzo*, Op. 36

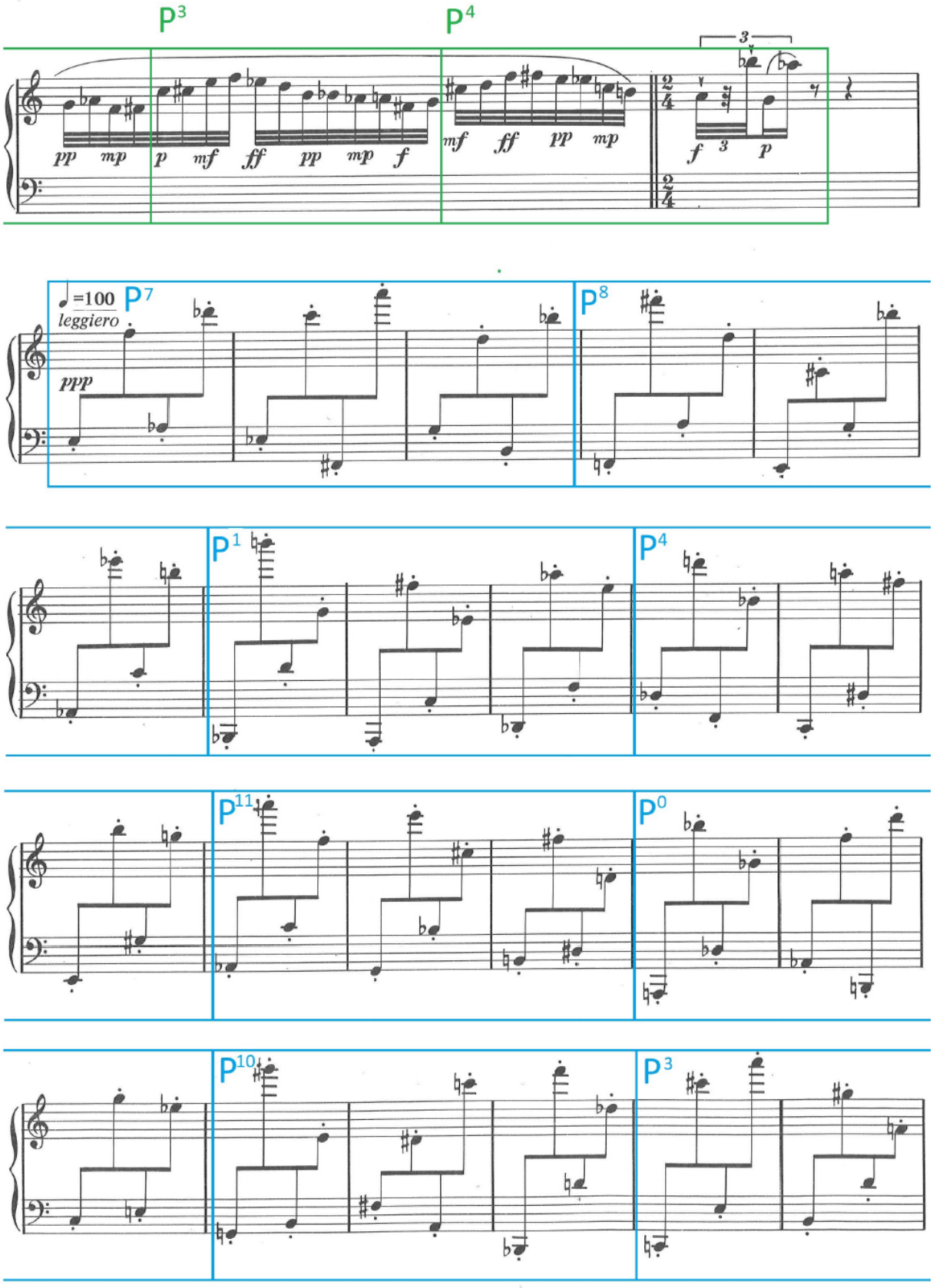
- Austbø, Håkon: *Norwegian Imperatives*, Aurora B002SSZ7BY, 2009.
- Guaita, Annabel: *L'Altra Beltà*, Lawo Classics – LWC 1024, 2011.
- Riefling, Robert: *Piano Music From Norway*, BIS-CD-173/174, 1992, rec. 1980.
- Smebye, Einar Henning: Fartein Valen – Complete Piano Works, Arena AR05002, 2005.

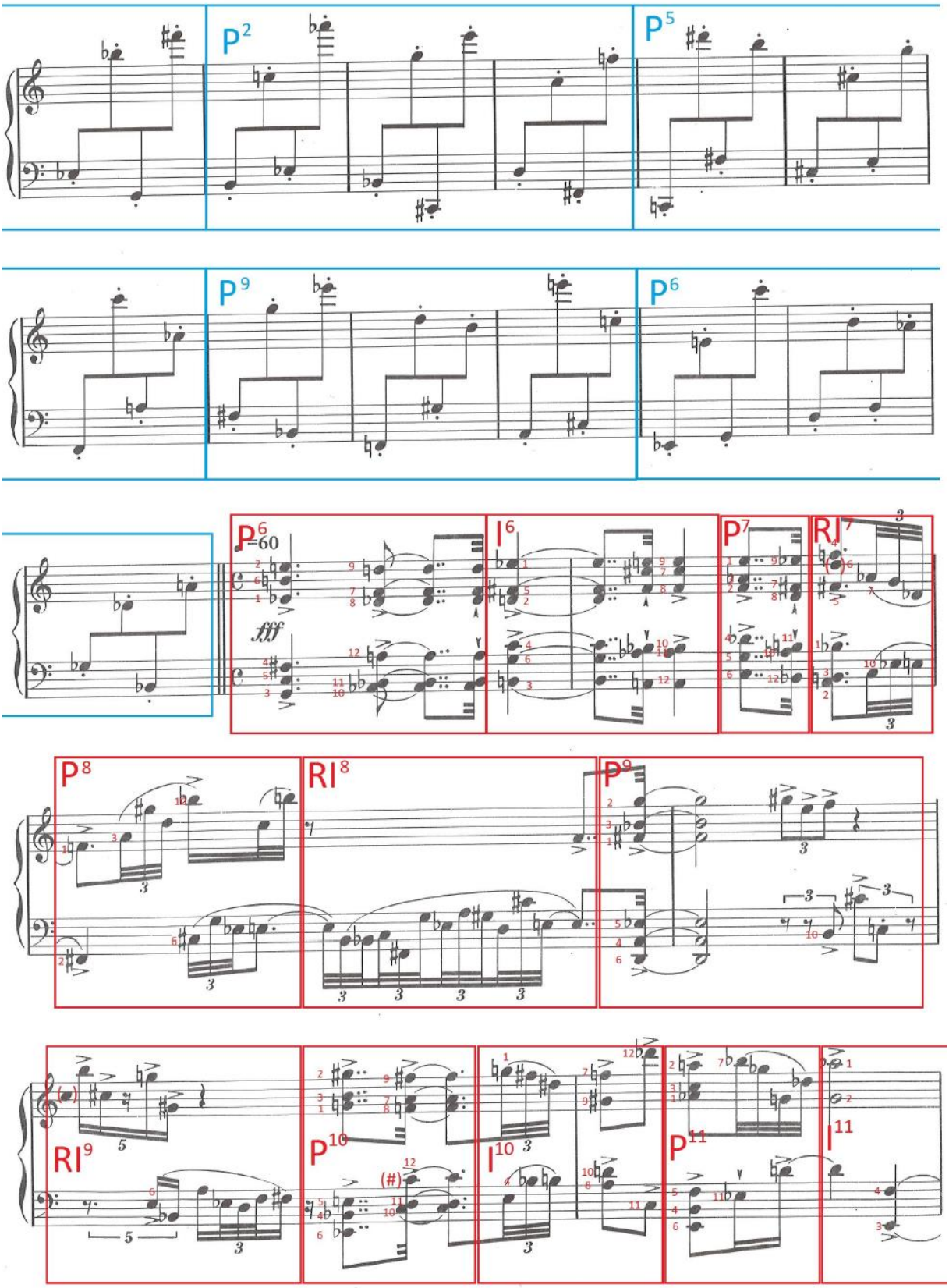
Webern, Anton: *Variationen*, Op. 27

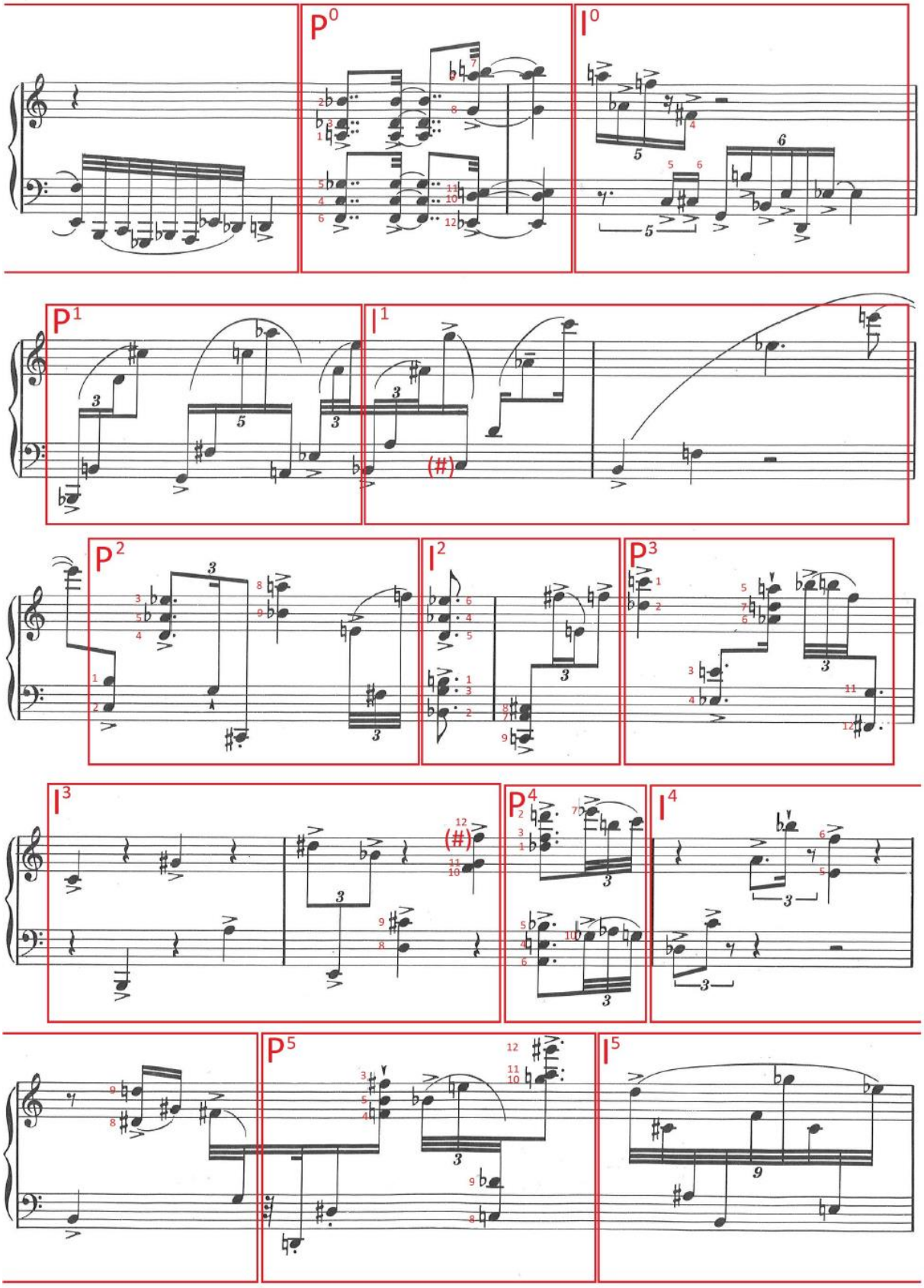
- Gould, Glenn: *Glenn Gould plays Schoenberg, Berg Webern*, CBC Records PSCD 2008, 1995.
- Klein, Elisabeth: *Arnold Schoenberg, Alban Berg, Anton Webern, – Complete Piano Works*, Classico – CLASSCD 180-81, 1997.
- Richter, Sviatoslav: *The Lodi Concert*, (1989), Da Vinci Classics – C00628, 2022.
- Stadlen, Peter: *Darmstadt Aural Documents, Box 4: Pianists*, NEOS Music, 2017.

Appendix: Analysis of the Twelve-tone Structure of Sonata No. 2, Op. 47

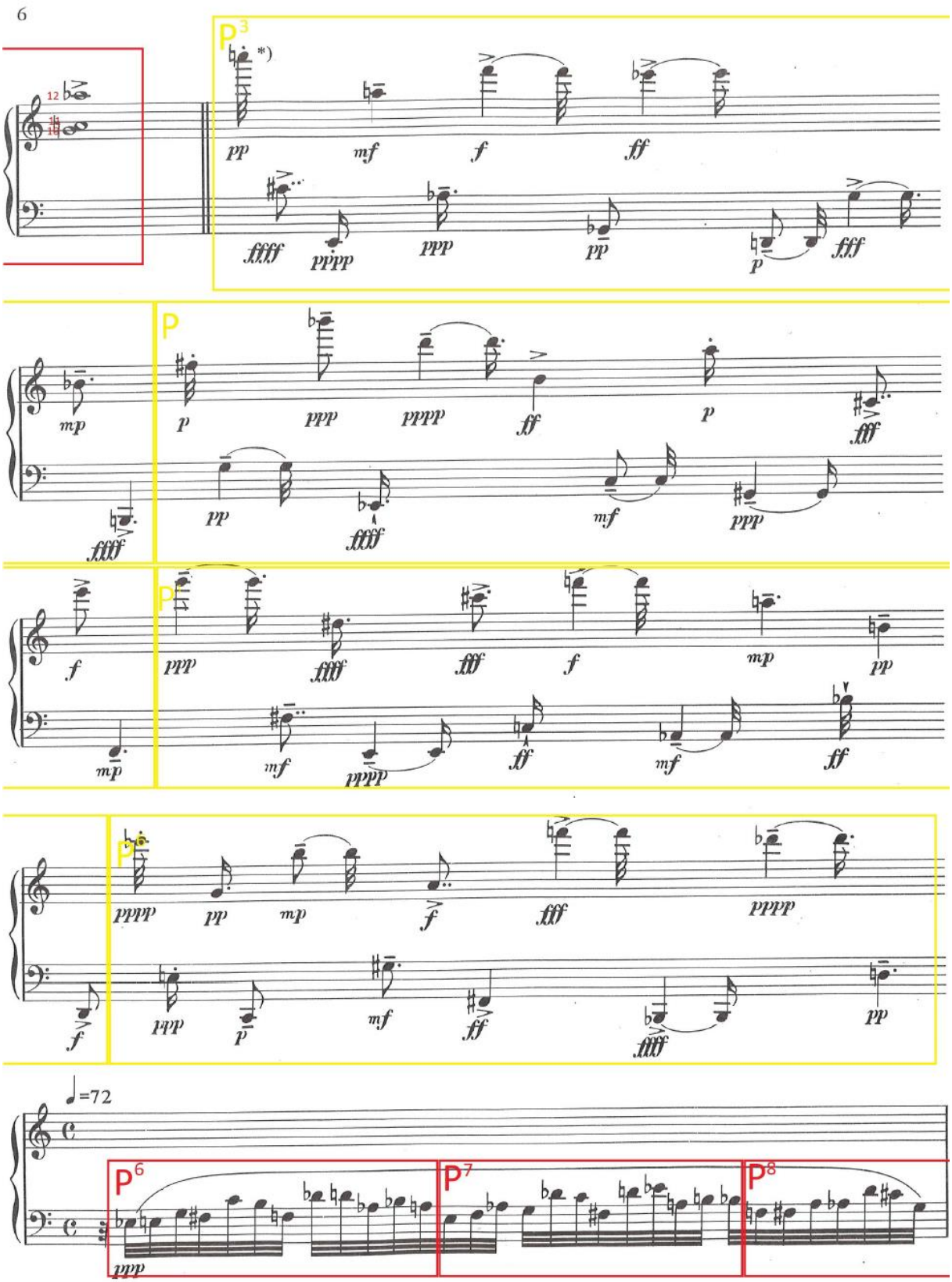



P3
P4
3
pp mp p mf ff pp mp f
mf ff pp mp
f 3 p
♩=100
leggiero
P7
ppp
P8
P1
P4
P11
P0
P10
P3


P2
P5
P9
P6
P6 ♩=60
fff
I6
P7
RI7
P8
RI8
P9
RI9
P10
I10
P11
I11



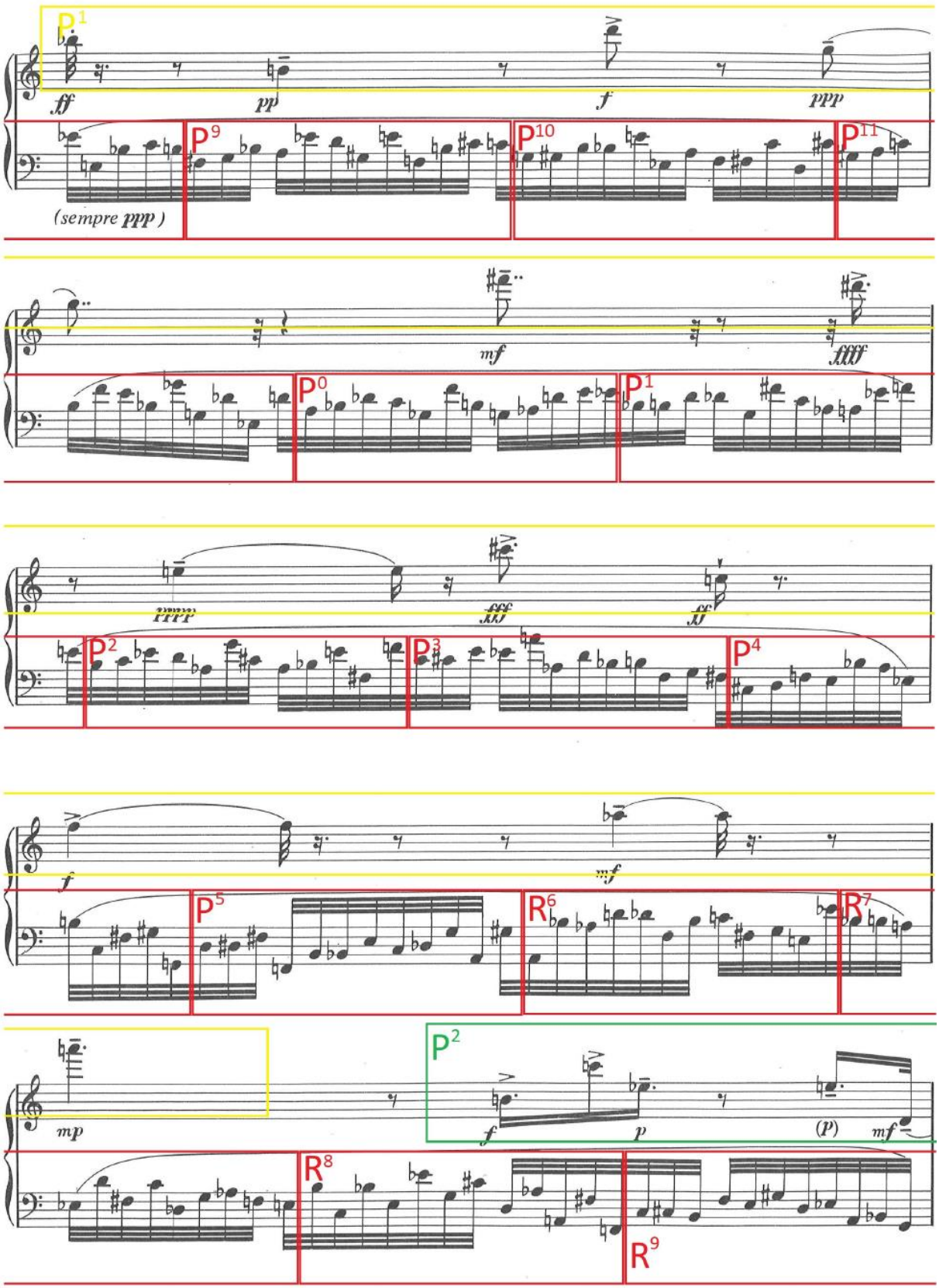
N.M.O. 9223

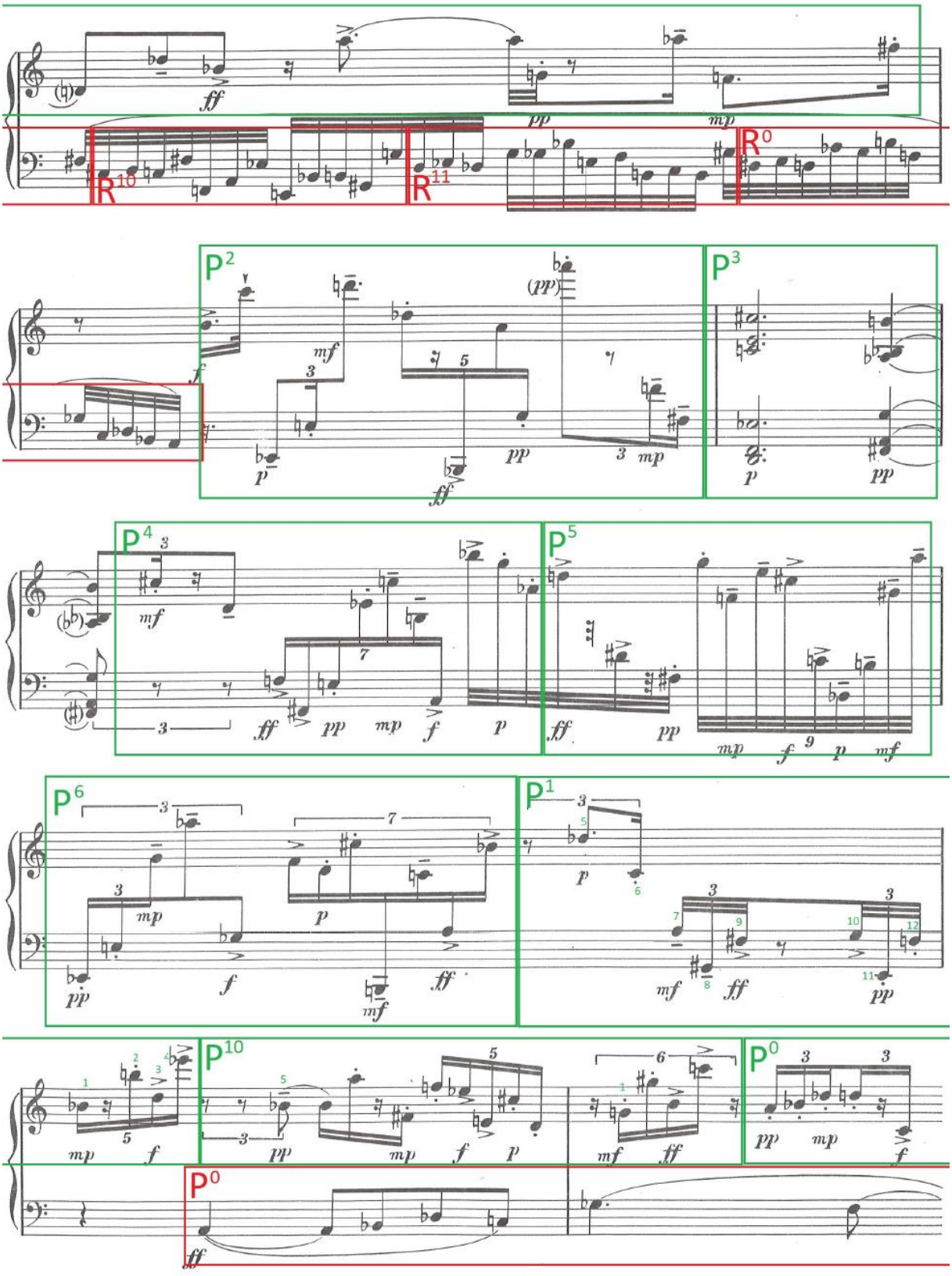


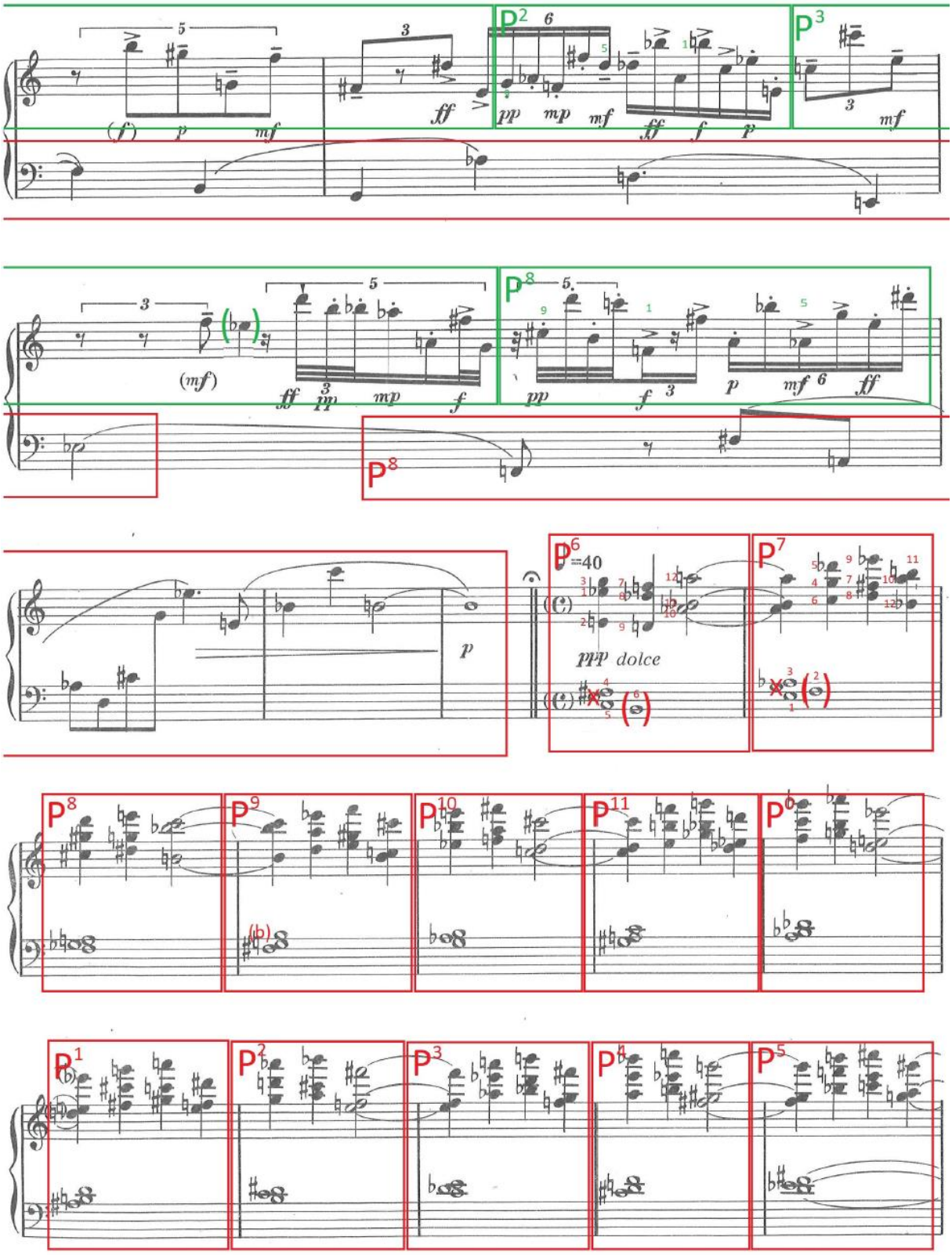
*) Tempoet bestemt ut fra en så hurtig som mulig 32. del.

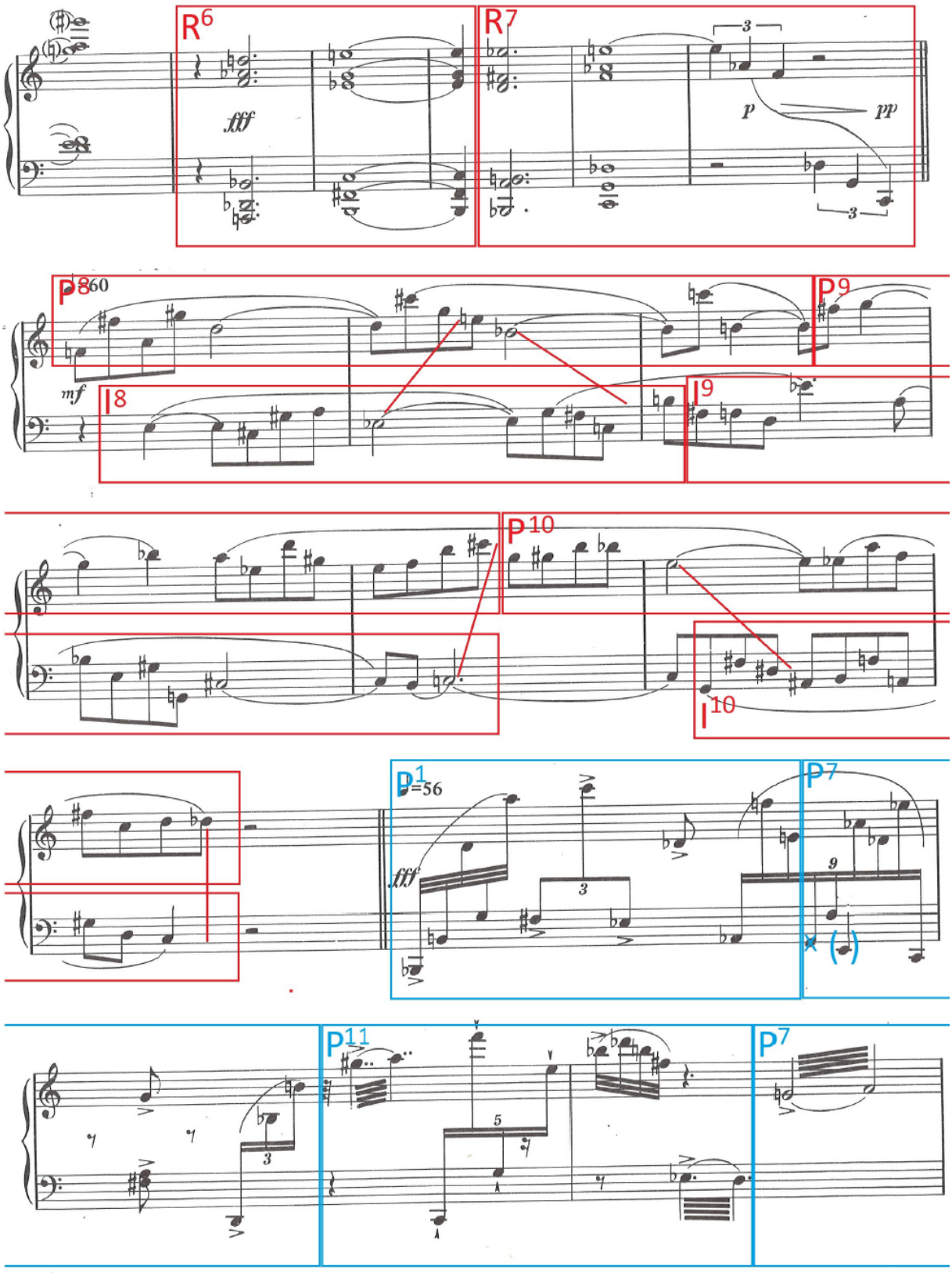
*) Tempo as fast as is compatible with demisemiquavers of the utmost rapidity.

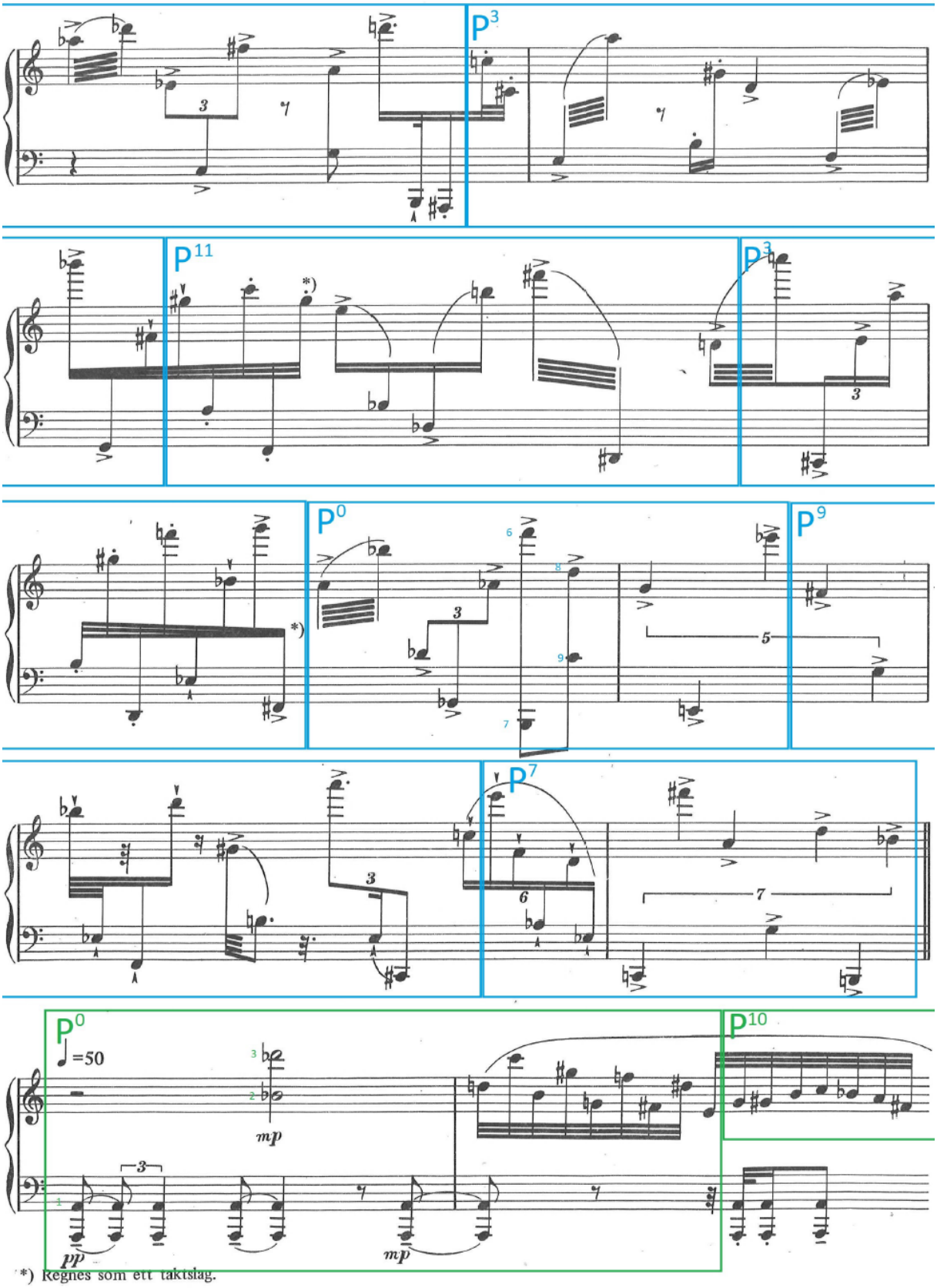
N.M.O. 9223


P1
ff
pp
f
ppp
P9
P10
P11
(sempre ppp)
mf
ffff
P0
P1
fff
ff
P2
P3
P4
f
mf
P5
R6
R7
mp
P2
f
p
(p)
mf
R8
R9


R10
R11
R0
P2
P3
P4
P5
P6
P1
P10
P0
P0

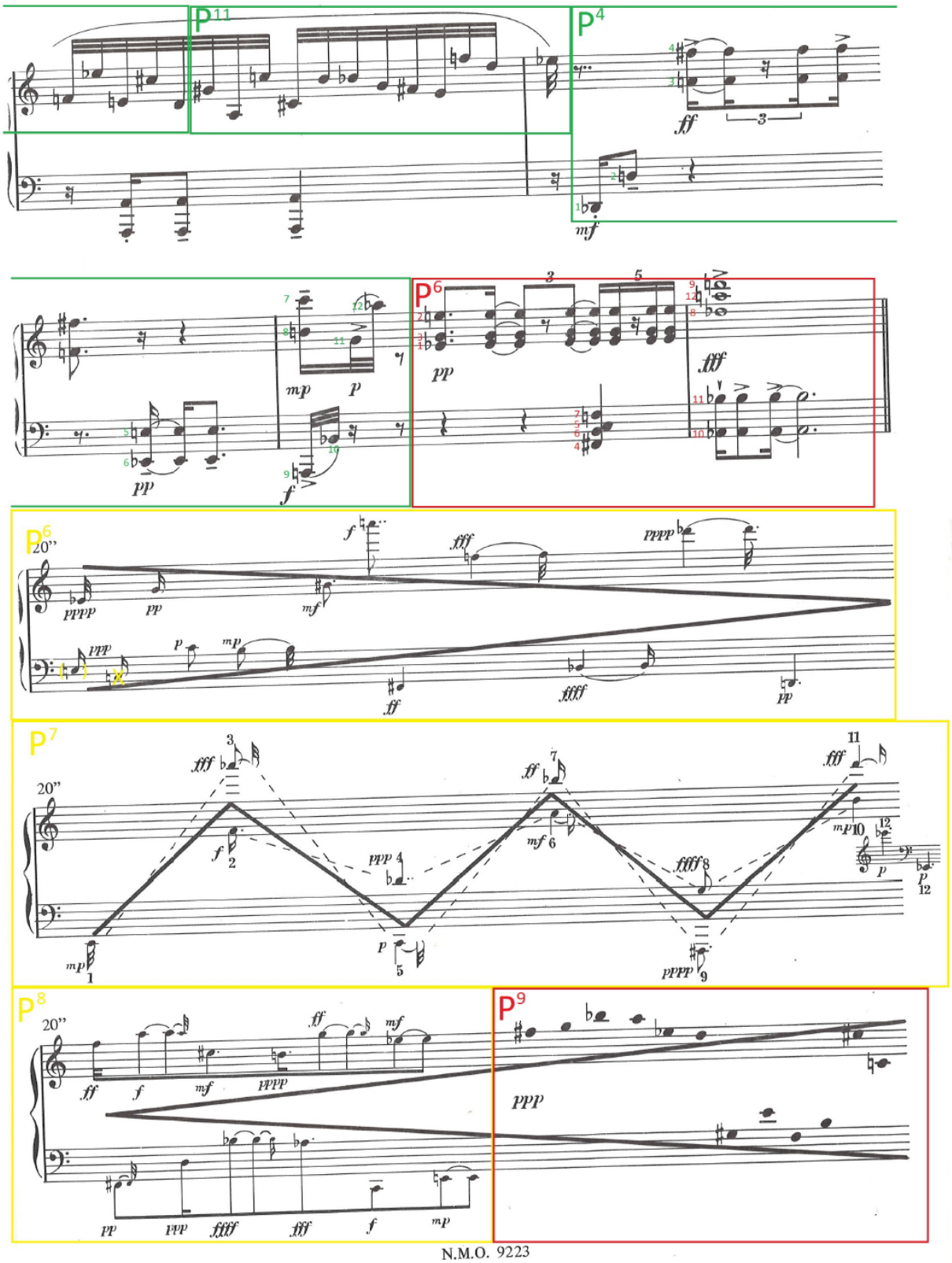

P2
P3
P8
P8
P6
P7
P8
P9
P10
P11
P6
P1
P2
P3
P4
P5

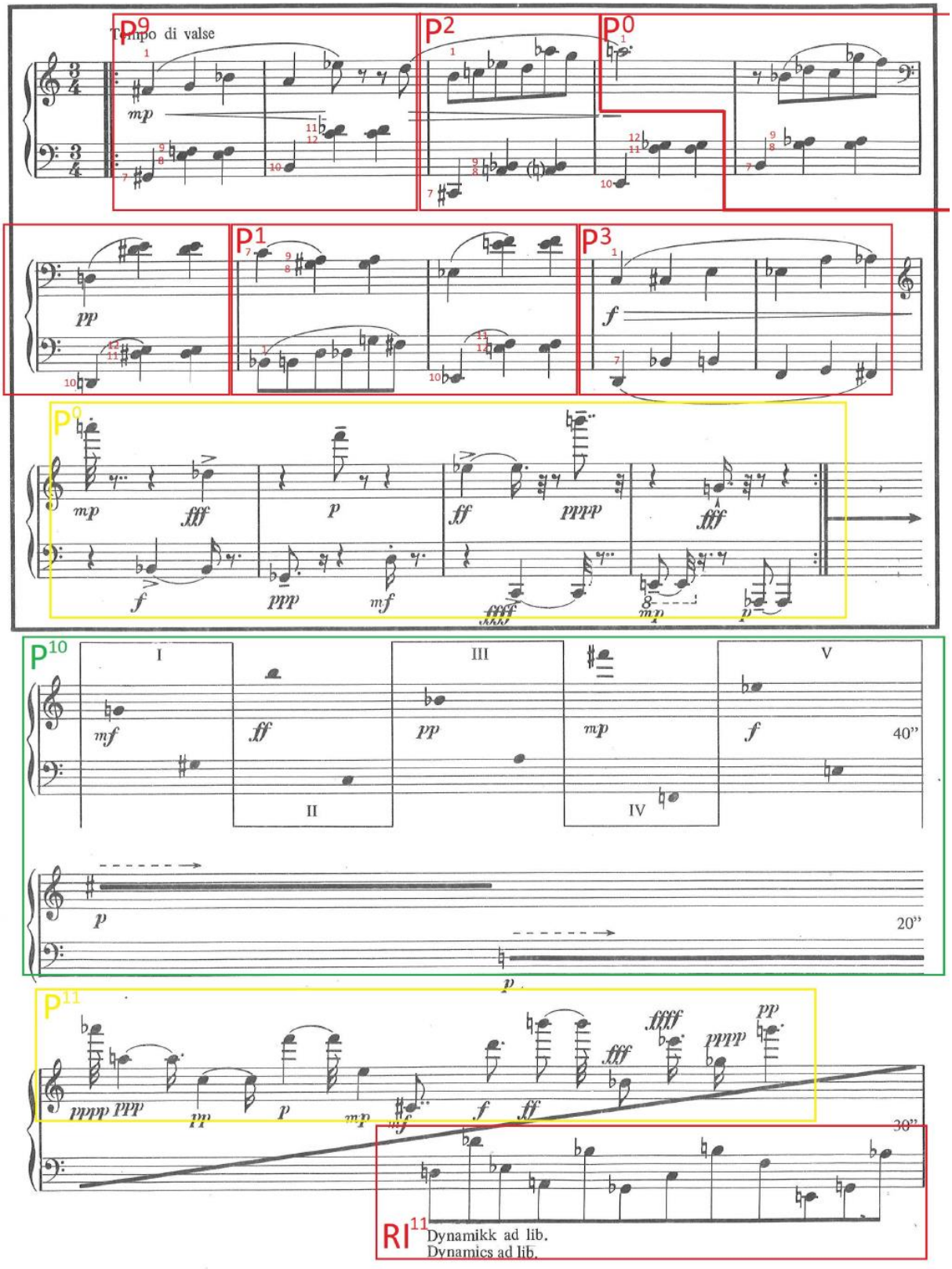

R6
R7
fff
p
pp
P8
60
mf
I8
P9
I9
P10
I10
P1
♩=56
fff
P7
P11
P7



*) Regnes som ett taktslag.
To be considered as one beat.

N.M.O. 9223

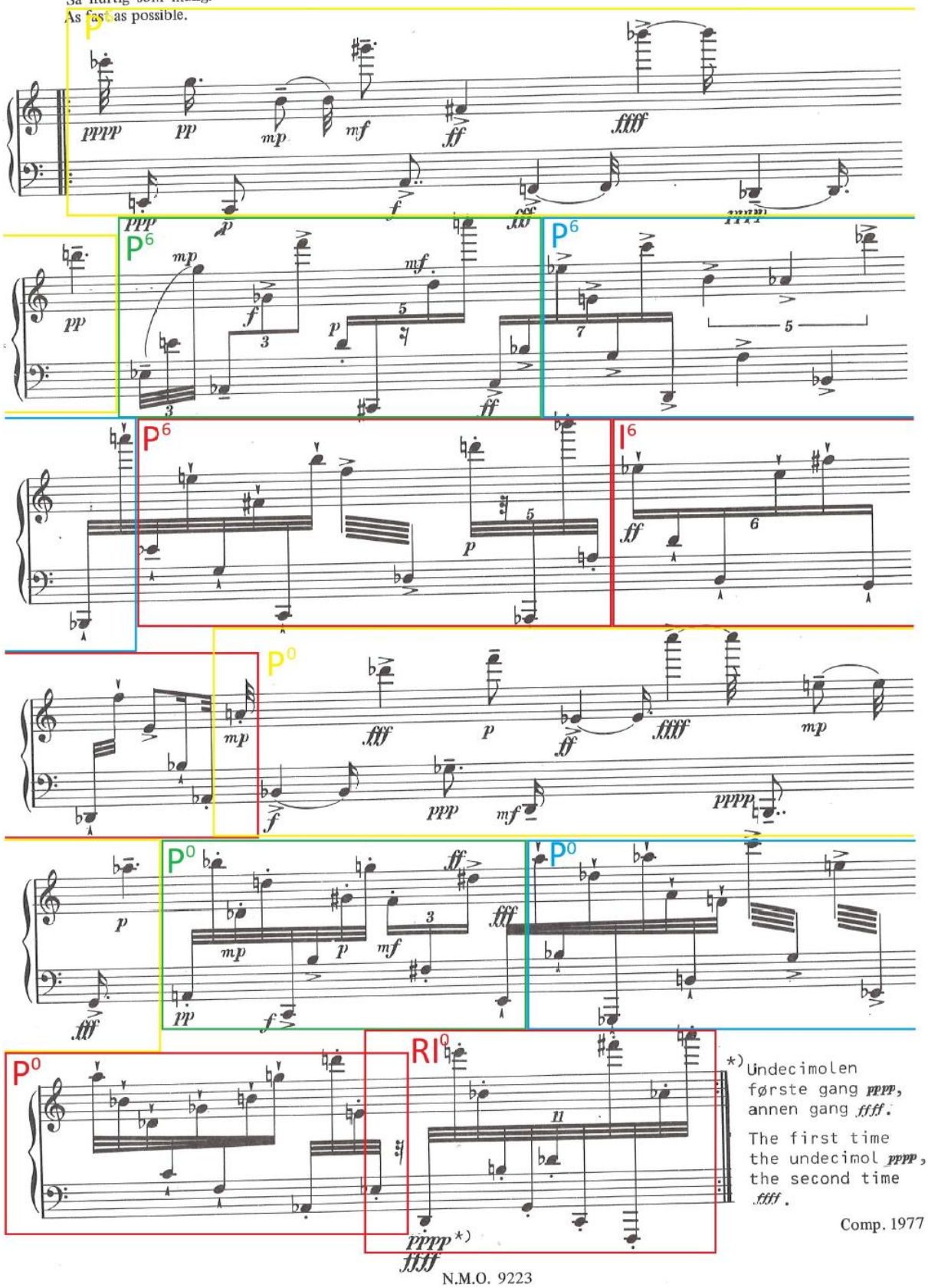

P11
P4
P6
P6
20"
P7
20"
P8
20"
P9


P9
Tempo di valse
P2
P0
P1
P3
P0
P10
I
II
III
IV
V
40"
20"
P11
30"
RI11
Dynamikk ad lib.
Dynamics ad lib.

N.M.O. 9223

14

Så hurtig som mulig.
As fast as possible.



Comp. 1977

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