MUSICAL BORROWING IN THE WORKS OF CAROLINE SHAW

By

JOHN WILSON

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Written under the direction of

Scott Ordway

and approved by

_____________________________                  _____________________________
Scott Ordway, Project Advisor                          Signature

_____________________________                  _____________________________
Patrick Gardner, Primary Studio Teacher                Signature

_____________________________                  _____________________________
Douglas Johnson, Additional Reader                      Signature

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

Mason Gross School of the Arts

New Brunswick, New Jersey

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION
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by JOHN WILSON

Dissertation Director:
Scott Ordway

Caroline Shaw’s compositions resonate with audiences and critics alike. She was the youngest recipient of the Pulitzer Prize for Music in 2013 for Partita for 8 Voices, and her other works have been performed by a litany of exemplary musicians and ensembles. Many of Shaw’s works use or respond to preexisting material but do so to varying degrees. Of her sixteen self-published works, twelve engage with preexistent compositions.

This study addresses the manner in which Shaw utilizes borrowed material and the resulting expressive effect that is achieved through this borrowing. Four of Shaw’s pieces were selected for analysis: Blueprint (2016), Entr’acte (2011), both works for string quartet, Gustave Le Gray (2012), written for piano, and To the Hands (2016), written for choir and string ensemble.

While composers can integrate borrowed material in a wide variety of ways, a tension exists between newly composed music and passages that originate from other sources. This study describes how certain motivic and formal methods impact this tension. Additionally, I focus on how unity and large-scale coherence is affected by the presence of borrowed material.
Acknowledgements

I would like to express my profound gratitude and appreciation to my wife Clara for her unwavering support, and to my son Elliot for making this process more joyful. I would also like to thank Scott Ordway, Patrick Gardner, and Douglas Johnson for their encouragement and valuable suggestions throughout the process of writing this paper. I am also grateful to Caroline Shaw, who generously gave of her time to complete an interview.
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Introduction

Caroline Shaw’s compositions resonate with audiences and critics alike. She was the youngest recipient of the Pulitzer Prize for Music in 2013 for Partita for 8 Voices, and her other works have been performed by a litany of exemplary musicians and ensembles.

Many of Shaw’s works use or respond to preexisting material but do so to varying degrees. Of her sixteen self-published works, twelve engage with preexistent compositions. Blueprint, a work for string quartet, contains formal and motivic echoes of Beethoven’s Op. 18 No. 6, a connection which is amplified in the very title of Shaw’s work. Also for string quartet, Entr’acte was written as a response to a specific performance of Haydn’s Op.77 no 2, and makes explicit use of classical-era minuet and trio form. Shaw’s piano piece Gustave Le Gray is a meditation on Chopin’s Op. 17 No. 4 Mazurka in A Minor. In her 2016 composition To the Hands for choir and strings, Shaw refashions musical and dramatic material from Dieterich Buxtehude’s Ad Manus to comment on the Syrian refugee crisis.

While Shaw is given to revealing her model piece in a program note, not all of her compositions name their sources. However, even when a specific connection is not revealed by the composer, allusions to past style periods are apparent. Dolce Cantavi, a work for three treble voices, is a setting of a poem by Francesca Turina Bufalini Contessa di Stupinigi (1544-1641). Both the text itself and Shaw’s setting invoke the madrigals of Monteverdi. Shaw’s Partita for 8 voices uses the structure of a Baroque dance suite and incorporates archetypes from other genres, such as line-dancing calls. Her predilection for manipulating preexistent material extends to texts as well. One example is And So, a piece for soprano and string quartet. Here, Shaw creates a composite text from sources including Gertrude Stein, Billy Joel, and Robert Burns.
In this paper, I will present analyses of four of Shaw’s works, *Blueprint (2016)*, *Entr’acte (2011)*, *Gustave Le Gray (2012)* and *To the Hands (2016)*. By doing so, I will explore the manner in which borrowed material is utilized and the resulting expressive effect that is achieved through this borrowing. I will show that:

1. Motives from the model piece are magnified in the new composition, sometimes becoming their own discrete sections.\(^1\)

2. Direct quotation is often employed to delineate formal divisions.

3. Borrowed material is treated as a stable ‘home’ area. Newly composed or highly varied forms of borrowed material constitute ‘away’ areas. This tension is analogous to tonic/dominant tension in common practice era works.\(^2\) Direct quotation can be used to create a sense of resolution.

4. Movement to and from “home” areas are a shaping force in these pieces.

The first chapter reviews the current scholarship on musical borrowing and explores relevant nomenclature and analytical methods. The analysis of *Blueprint* featured in chapter two demonstrates that Shaw can manipulate the inherent tension between new and quoted music to create interest and long-term resolution. It also reveals Shaw’s tendency to use exact quotations as signifiers of formal divisions. Chapter three demonstrates that Shaw utilizes form and degrees of allusion to shape her compositions. Shaw controls the degree of similarity between *Entr’acte* and the model piece to recreate the act of remembering an influential musical performance. Chapter 4 shows Shaw’s tendency to generate large formal passages through *persistent*

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\(^1\) A process that Joseph Straus calls *motivicization*. This will be discussed further below.

reiteration and centralization, exemplified in a work for piano, *Gustave Le Gray*. The final chapter demonstrates Shaw’s ability to use quotations of borrowed material to create a sense of large-scale resolution. This chapter also analyses how Shaw refashions Buxtehude’s libretto for *Ad Manus*.

Shaw’s musical language generally favors a stylistic alignment with the music to which she responds. Despite this fact, a tension exists between passages that are newly composed and music that is indebted to previously written works. In this paper, I argue that controlling and manipulating this tension is an expressive compositional tool that can create unity in a work that contains borrowed material.
Chapter 1

Musical Borrowing

The most recent studies of musical borrowing build upon the work of J. Peter Burkholder. In his 1994 article “The Uses of Existing Music: Musical Borrowing as a Field,” Burkholder states that many scholars have approached the appearance of preexistent music within a composition as “a problem within any one era or type of music.” Burkholder makes the argument that approaching musical borrowing as a field that “crosses periods and traditions” enriches the way we analyze and interpret music. According to his definition, musical borrowing refers to the practice of adding “one or more elements from a specific piece” to a new composition. This differentiates borrowing from intertextuality, a concept that places a specific text in a web of relationships with all other texts, regardless of the intent of the composer. In the Grove Dictionary of Music entry on musical borrowing, Burkholder states that “in the widest sense the history of borrowing in music is the history of improvisation, composition and performance,” clearly implying that this field of study offers a parallel way of understanding the history of music. Included in the article is a typology which identifies the different forms of borrowing that might be operational in a given work.

(table reproduced below)

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4 Ibid
Example 1-1, J. Peter Burkholder, “Borrowing,” *Grove Music Online*, page 3

**TABLE 1: Elements of a typology of musical borrowing**

1. **What is the relationship of the existing piece to the new piece that borrows from it?**
   - **type**
     - of the same genre, medium, style and musical tradition
     - of a different genre, medium, style or musical tradition
   - **texture**
     - a single-line melody used in a new monophonic melody
     - a single-line melody used in a polyphonic work
     - a polyphonic work used in a new polyphonic work
   - **origin**
     - by the composer of the new piece
     - from the same circle of musicians
     - by a contemporary from another place or circle
     - from a distant place
     - from an earlier time

2. **What element or elements of the existing piece are incorporated into or referred to by the new piece, in whole or in part?**
   - the full texture
   - a combination of parts that is less than the full texture
   - a melodic line, gesture or contour
   - a rhythmic figure
   - an aspect of harmony, such as a chord progression, striking sonority or pitch collection
   - the form or a formal device
   - texture
   - instrumental colour
   - other parameters

3. **How does the borrowed material relate to the shape of the new piece?**
   - provides the structure, virtually unaltered, but other features are changed enough to create a new entity
     - contrafactum (change of text)
     - transcription or arrangement (change of performing forces)
     - intabulation or arrangement (change of medium and figuration)
   - provides the structure and is varied or altered
     - melodic paraphrase
     - variation embellishment or ornamentation
   - forms the basis of the structure or of a melodic line, with new material added or interpolated
     - trope
     - refrain
   - serves as a structural line or complex to which other parts are joined contrapuntally
     - organum (of every kind)
     - medieval motet
     - cantus-firmus composition
     - paraphrase (hymn paraphrase, paraphrase mass)
     - setting
     - arrangement
   - used as a theme, including extensions and development
     - for variations
     - for a dance movement
     - for sonata form, rondo, fugue or other form
     - for a march
     - in a fantasia
     - for cumulative setting
     - for improvisation, as in jazz
   - provides material (motifs, structural ideas, contrapuntal combinations etc.) that is freely reworked
   - used as a motif
   - appears once, marking a significant event in the form
   - appears once, in passing
   - combined linearly with other borrowed (and some new) material
     - linear quodlibet (successive, homophonic)
4. How is the borrowed material altered in the new piece?
- complete and not altered
- incomplete but otherwise not altered
- minimally altered
- embellished or ornamented
- melodically paraphrased or restructured
- substantially reworked
- appears only in fragments
- placed in a new context, changing its effect
- used as a theme, perhaps not greatly altered when presented as a theme but elsewhere developed and fragmented as themes are changed to conform to a new function (e.g. as a cantus firmus in long notes, or a folktune reworked as a theme)
- disguised
- only alluded to, with a similar gesture, without itself being incorporated

5. What is the function of the borrowed material within the new piece, in musical terms?
- initial
  served the composer as a starting point for composition (often literally, if the new piece begins like the model)
- structural
  forms the basic structure of a single line
  is incorporated as an element in a principal melodic line
  is the structural basis for a polyphonic work

This typology can help an analyst clarify their observations but does not provide any analytical methods. Burkholder’s research on the music of Charles Ives provides some such tools, such as the idea of cumulative setting, but the specific nature of his analyses impedes its use in a general application.7

**Joseph Straus, Remaking the Past**

Harold Bloom’s *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973) became a vehicle for Joseph Straus to explore how and why composers integrated preexistent music into new works.8 In *Remaking the Past*, Straus begins by placing Bloom’s observations about artistic influence in a musical context.

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7 On page 854 of his article “The Uses of Existing Music: Musical Borrowing as a Field,” *Notes*, vol. 50, No. 3, Burkholder defines cumulative setting as “a complex form in which the theme, either a borrowed tune or a melody paraphrased from one or more existing tunes, is presented complete only near the end of a movement, preceded by development of motives from the theme, fragmentary or altered presentation of the theme, and exposition of important countermelodies.”
8 Harold Bloom (1930-2019) was an important American literary critic.
Straus outlines three models of musical influence in music from the 20th century to the present; “influence as immaturity,” “influence as generosity,” and “influence as anxiety.”

The first model describes influence as a sign of immaturity and weakness, citing students’ tendency to emulate a teacher in their younger years. The second model stems from T.S. Eliot’s generosity theory. Here, influence from the past is not a sign of immaturity but of “creative self-denial” and a “willingness to open and subordinate oneself to the influence of the past.”

This view suggests that an artist can incorporate whatever styles and philosophies of the past appeal to them and can do so without any loss of artistic dignity.

In his book, however, Straus adopts the third model, the “influence as anxiety.” This theory describes any new artistic offering as an act of aggression against an overbearing tradition. New artists must, in grappling with the past, use and manipulate the work of old masters and bend it to their expressive purposes. This act is labeled a “misreading.” A misreading constitutes a negation of the old work by altering the context in which it was originally introduced. Straus describes this action in Oedipal terms, a symbolic murder of a composer’s artistic forefathers.

For Straus, the expressive potential of large-scale forms dependent on tonal idioms becomes a less compelling tool for many composers of the 20th and 21st centuries. Instead, he observes the ascendancy of motive as a primary organizational tool for composers: “The late nineteenth century now appears as a period in which motivic association, a secondary and dependent determinant of structure in the classical and early romantic eras, was elevated into a

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central and independent organizing principle.” Twentieth-century composers “begin increasingly to see themselves, and each other, as motivic composers and to take pride in that.”

Motives derived from borrowed music manifest themselves in different ways in a new composition. Straus provides a useful framework for exploring how borrowed motivic material may be utilized in a new composition.

**Example 1-2, Joseph Straus, *Remaking the Past*, page 17**

*Motivicization.* The motivic content of the earlier work is radically intensified.

*Generalization.* A motive from the earlier work is generalized into the unordered pitch-class set of which it is a member. That pitch-class set is then deployed in the new work in accordance with the norms of post-tonal usage.

*Marginalization.* Musical elements that are central to the structure of the earlier work (such as dominant-tonic cadences and linear progressions that span triadic intervals) are relegated to the periphery of the new one.

*Centralization.* Musical elements that are peripheral to the structure of the earlier work (such as remote key areas and unusual combination of notes resulting from linear embellishment) move to the structural center of the new one.

*Compression.* Elements that occur diachronically in the earlier work (such as two triads in a functional relationship to each other) are compressed into something synchronous in the new one.

*Fragmentation.* Elements that occur together in the earlier work (such as the root, third, and fifth of a triad) are separated in the new one.

*Neutralization.* Traditional musical elements (such as dominant-seventh chords) are stripped of their customary function, particularly of their progressional impulse. Forward progress is blocked.

*Symmetricization.* Traditionally goal-oriented harmonic progressions and musical forms (sonata form, for example) are made inversionally or retrograde-symmetrical, and are thus immobilized.

In terms of analytical tools, Straus utilizes pitch-class theory to demonstrate how motives are integrated and transformed from a model work into a new composition.

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11 Ibid, 22-23.
Collage

Musical collage is also relevant to a discussion about borrowing. There are two competing definitions of musical collage, one used more broadly to describe the referential practice of composition in the 20th century to the present, and another that uses more limited criteria to label a musical work as a collage. In his book *Pyramids at the Louvre*, Glenn Watkins defines the term in a broad sense:

“It should be understood from the outset, however, that the term *collage* is used here as a metaphor; that the citation typically refers less to thematic recall of familiar tunes than to the assemblage and rearrangement of a rich parade of cultural loans involving textures, timbres, temperaments, and generative procedures ranging from the banal to the esoteric; that juxtaposition characteristically italicizes complementary qualities in the seemingly contradictory; and as a consequence surfacing questions more often evoke polychromatic illumination rather than single-hued answers.”

Burkholder, on the other hand, describes a type of piece rather than a more general cultural attitude of referencing and appropriation: “the juxtaposition of multiple quotations, styles or textures so that each element maintains its individuality and the elements are perceived as excerpted from many sources and arranged together, rather than sharing common origins.”

C. Catherine Losada’s definition of collage is narrower still and is used to identify a specific body of repertoire from the 1960s, specifically, Berio’s *Sinfonia*, George Rochberg’s *Music for the Magic Theater*, and Zimmerman’s *Musique pour les Soupers du Roi Ubu*. Losada describes the compositional processes used to modulate between quoted passages in this repertoire. She identifies *overlap* and *rhythmic plasticity* as two means of transitioning between juxtaposed materials. *Overlap* describes the temporary layering of multiple quotations while *rhythmic plasticity* describes “the ways in which the rhythmic profile of the music is manipulated

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in order to gradually introduce or lead away from a quotation.”¹⁴ These concepts have utility when applied to works outside of this isolated band of repertoire and offer compelling terminology to describe common traits in pieces that borrow from other music.¹⁵

**Conclusion**

There are a wide variety of ways a model piece may be integrated in a new composition. A composer working with borrowed material must decide what material to use, whether to use that material in the same order as the original composition, how to integrate it into a contemporary harmonic language, and whether that material can be used to achieve or enhance a large-scale resolution. The composer also needs to decide if borrowed material will contrast or be assimilated with new musical material. While there are any number of solutions to these challenges, analyzing the works of one composer will reveal trends and techniques employed in works that incorporate previously existing compositions.

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¹⁵ Ibid, 100-103.
CHAPTER 2

Blueprint

Shaw weaves motives, harmonic progressions, textures, and a web of contrasting characters from Beethoven’s Op. 18 into her 2016 work for string quartet, Blueprint. Writing in the program note, she says that “This piece began its life as a harmonic reduction — a kind of floor plan — of Beethoven's string quartet Op. 18 No. 6. As a violinist and violist, I have played this piece many times, in performance and in joyous late-night reading sessions with musician friends.” The way the “harmonic reduction” of Op. 18 No. 6 undergirds Shaw’s work is not immediately apparent. In fact, this program note is slightly misleading. Most of the similarities between Shaw’s work and Beethoven’s are motivic rather than harmonic, or take the form of attempts to exaggerate elements of contrast found in Op. 18. No. 6. While present to a certain extent, these large-scale harmonic similarities are superficial compared to the way Shaw reworks motives, textures, and contrasting characters from the model work.

The final movement offers the most affecting music of Beethoven’s Op. 18 No. 6. The most significant feature of that movement is the extensive slow introduction and its eventual return and interruption of the primary theme. Notably, the movement has a programmatic title, La Malinconia, a feature which sets its unique qualities into greater relief. While slow introductions are commonly used in first-movement forms, the uncommonly expansive adagio of La Malinconia begins the final movement. In all of Beethoven’s string quartets, there are only two other instances of a final movement beginning with a brief adagio before moving to primary

material in a faster tempo. The 43 measures of *La Malinconia’s adagio* may not appear extraordinary relative to the movement’s 296 total measures, but the approximately three and a half minute playing time the *adagio* occupies is significant, comprising nearly half of the eight-minute movement.

**Form**

*La Malinconia* magnifies the inherent contrast of the rondo form through the juxtaposition of the somber opening with the carefree primary material. The most explicit instance of Beethoven exploiting the contrasting character of *La Malinconia* occurs when the material from the slow introduction returns at the end of the work (measure 195, example 2-1). The material is truncated and then immediately followed by the primary theme, now cast in A minor, as if some past bitter memory has momentarily cast a shadow over the prevailing positivity. Once again, a smaller fragment of the *adagio* returns, and is quickly abandoned by a return to the primary material, now in the key of the submediant, G Major. In measure 272, a brief *poco adagio* section occurs, but it is no longer the material from the opening; instead, it is the primary material, played in the tonic key (example 2-2). Two small fragments are heard, stalled by two fermati. The concluding passage is a *prestissimo* delivery of the primary theme.

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17 The final movements in question come from op. 95, often referred to as the “Serioso” quartet, and op. 135, the famous “Muß es sein?” quartet, one of Beethoven’s final compositions.
Example 2-1, Beethoven Op. 18 No. 6 mov. 4, measures 195-219

Example 2-2, Beethoven Op. 18 No. 6 mov. 4, measures 269-286
The rapid shifts between the music of the *adagio* and the primary theme signal that contrast is a shaping force in this music. This seems especially notable if we consider that this movement is in rondo form, a form whose structure is defined by setting contrasting material against a primary theme.

Of all the Beethoven quartet’s movements, *La Malinconia* exerts the strongest influence on Shaw’s *Blueprint*. The large structure of her work exhibits numerous similarities to Beethoven’s rondo form.

**Example 2-3, Beethoven Op. 18 No. 6 mov. 4, formal structure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slow intro</th>
<th>A (2x)</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>Slow Intro/A material (4x)</th>
<th>A then coda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bb---V</td>
<td>Bb</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>m77</td>
<td>F then Bb m105</td>
<td>Bb m150</td>
<td>Bb m182</td>
<td>Bb</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Example 2-4, Blueprint, formal structure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slow intro</th>
<th>Warped Transition</th>
<th>A (2x)</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>B1</th>
<th>Warped Transition</th>
<th>C (x4)</th>
<th>Slow Intro then coda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>Ends with quote</td>
<td>Bb</td>
<td>Bb</td>
<td>Bb/gm---ending C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>Bb, ends with quote</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While motivic fragments and textural allusion to other movements of Op. 18 No. 6 occur throughout *Blueprint*, all direct quotations come exclusively from *La Malinconia*. Notably, these
quotes appear at corresponding formal junctures in the Shaw. For instance, the final cadence of Beethoven’s opening *adagio* is quoted at the conclusion of Shaw’s slow introduction in measures 58-59. In a parallel formal move, Shaw follows this cadence with a reworking of Beethoven’s primary theme.  

**Example 2-5, Beethoven Op. 18 No. 6 mov. 4, measures 43-46**

![Example 2-5, Beethoven Op. 18 No. 6 mov. 4, measures 43-46](image)

The remaining quotations appear at the end of the work in a masterful web of borrowings and relationships. In measure 157 (see example 2-7), Shaw first fragments motives from measures 21-27 of *La Malinconia*, manipulating the material so that it references her earlier reworking of Beethoven’s Movement I primary theme in measure 61. This music, labeled *thorny*, is rhythmically active and imitative in nature before it is stalled by the appearance of static half-note chords. The harmonies of the static passages are lifted from *La Malinconia*’s opening. These two musical ideas are exchanged in rapid succession in measures 157-194.

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18 The primary theme from movement 1 of Op. 18 No. 6
Example 2-7, *Blueprint*, measures 152-169
Shaw both adopts and exaggerates the contrasting nature of the conclusion of La Malinconia in her parallel passage by rapidly alternating between the thorny and static passages (example 2-9). These thorny/static contrasting pairs occur a total of four times before concluding with another direct quote from Beethoven’s slow introduction. After a brief transitional passage, Shaw recalls her own slow introduction, followed by a reworking of Beethoven’s B material. The recurrence of Shaw’s slow introduction adds an additional layer of formal reference. At one level, Shaw is directly manipulating material from Op. 18 No. 6 whose contrasting nature is an exaggeration of the adagio/allegro juxtaposition of Beethoven’s conclusion. On another level, Shaw has created additional contrast by introducing new material (non-borrowed material) alongside material—already contrasting—that is derived from the model piece. This passage is followed by the most extensive direct quote in the work, the prestissimo passage at measure 275 in Op. 18 No. 6. This quotation contributes to a sense of large-scale resolution. Shaw extends and elaborates some of the gestures in this passage before concluding the work with the same perfect authentic cadence that ends Op. 18 No. 6.

Example 2-8, Blueprint, measures 190-265
almost inaudible.  
dainty & mechanical, like a music box.

Transition with 'turn' figure

\( \text{\(206\)} \quad j=130\)

Return of Shaw's introduction

\( \text{\(213\)} \quad j=90\)
Motive

There are also numerous motivic connections between Beethoven’s Op. 18 No. 6 and Shaw’s *Blueprint*. While Shaw’s formal scheme was derived from Beethoven’s *La Malinconia*, she sourced motivic material from the outer movements of the string quartet. These motivic relationships can occur on a variety of levels. Some are immediately apparent at a surface level through a direct quote of a melody, accompaniment, or texture. Other motivic connections are obscured by treating a source motive as an unordered pitch collection and developing that material (which Straus calls *generalization*).

Measure 58 clearly reveals surface-level motivic connections between these two compositions. This passage contains a direct quote from measures 42-43 of Beethoven’s *La Malinconia* (see examples 2-5 and 2-6). In the model piece, this somber cadential figure concludes the slow introduction and is followed by the *allegretto* section and the first statement of the primary theme. In *Blueprint*, the appearance of this quote acts as a signpost, marking the end of the slow introduction and setting similar expectations for new contrasting material. Shaw
delivers, importing the key of B♭ major, the tempo of the first movement of Op. 18 No. 6 (half note equals 80 bpm), and—as if to alleviate any question about the passage’s origins—gives the marking “yay opus 18 partay.” The second violin presents the same accompanying material (with the same staccato articulation) as in the first movement of Op. 18 No.6. All other voices arpeggiate a B♭ major 7th chord. The composite relationship of the first and second violins in measures 61-63 recalls the characteristic ascending fanfare of Beethoven’s opening movement. Its relationship to the source material can become quite explicit, as in the case of measure 62, when the second violin interjects with a harmonic on a B♭ 6 which is then followed by F-D-F in the first violin, a melodic reduction of the first five beats of Op. 18 No. 6. Shaw creates distance from Beethoven’s material by manipulating harmony, using rapidly changing articulations, and increasing the rhythmic interplay between the voices.

Example 2-9, Beethoven, Op. 18 No. 6 mov. 1, measures 1-11
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example 2-10, <em>Blueprint</em>, measures 55-66</th>
<th>Example 2-11, Beethoven, Op. 18 No. 6 mov. 1, primary theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Example 2-10, Blueprint, measures 55-66**

**Example 2-11, Beethoven, Op. 18 No. 6 mov. 1, primary theme**

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**Example 2-12, Blueprint, measures 61-66**

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*Accompanimental figure from mov. 1*
The ‘turn’ figure of Op. 18 No. 6 that decorates the opening subject of the first movement is extensively developed in subsequent movements. Beethoven employs it as transitional material between first and second subjects in the first movement and features it extensively in the development section (measures 91–174). In the second movement, it can be found written out as thirty-second notes in the consequent phrase of the A section and with increasing regularity when A material returns (measure 45), and once again as a closing device in the coda. While cloaked, this motive appears in the trio section of the Scherzo (measure 49), now more fragmented and “spun out.” The turn figure permeates much of the La Malinconia finale at various levels, contributing to a sense of unity in the work as an entity and as a counter-balance to the first movement specifically. Considering the significance of this gesture, it should come as no surprise that Shaw makes use of it in Blueprint.

Example 2-13, Beethoven, Op. 18 No. 6, ‘turn’ figures

Mov. 1, measures 1-5, primary theme

(examples continued below)
Mov. 1, measures 91-102, development

Mov. 2, A theme, measures 1-4
Shaw sets this motive in dialogue between the first and second violins in measures 70-72 as written out sixteenth notes. This gesture is prepared in the preceding two measures, here augmented slightly to eighth notes and anticipated by the leap of a minor 7th. Shaw uses the turn motive to transition back to her introductory material (measures 208-215). The influence of this motive is evident in passages that Shaw quotes from Op. 18 No. 6, such as the sextuplet gestures of measures 224 through 233 and the quoted *allegretto* (marked *gangbusters* in the Shaw) that close the work.
Example 2-14, *Blueprint*, ‘turn’ figures, measures 67-75

Example 2-15, *Blueprint*, ‘turn’ figures, measures 208-212
A convergence of different types of motivic material can be found in *Blueprint* at measure 157. Appearing after ten measures of transitional material, measure 157, marked *thorny*, is explicitly connected to the finale of Beethoven’s Op. 18. No. 6. This section is driven by a motive first heard in the cello and then imitated by all other voices in ascending score order (see example 2-16). The points of imitation are separated by a single beat, and the imitation is not exact, with some iterations containing five notes, others four and still others six. The initial pitches of these points of imitation belie the chromatic content of this passage, with the cello, viola and second violin sounding D, D and A as their starting pitches before the first violin enters on a B. This seems both an acknowledgement and subversion of the tonal devices idiomatic of the source material.

Example 2-16, *Blueprint*, measures 157-163
The motivic connections of this passage move beyond surface level representation to an obscured reordering of pitches (again, the process that Straus calls *generalization*). Shaw reorganizes the pitch material from measures 20-28 of *La Malinconia*. Beethoven’s striking sequence of secondary dominants moves from *e minor* to, eventually, C major, in the space of eight measures.

**Example 2-17, Beethoven, measures 20-28**

*Circles = Tetrachord ‘A’*  
*Squares = Tetrachord ‘B’*

Beethoven’s sequence is driven by two tetrachords that, when reorganized to begin with the smallest interval, are quite similar. Tetrachord ‘A’ can be described as two half-steps separated by a major third. Tetrachord ‘B’ can be described as two half-steps separated by a perfect fourth. The sequential nature of this passage yields multiple occurrences of both tetrachords. Notably, the root pitches of Beethoven’s sequence follow a similar pattern, E - F# - B - C#, that is two whole-steps separated by a fourth.
Shaw uses altered forms of these tetrachords in her parallel passage (see example 2-19). Her reordering of tetrachord ‘A’ is an example of generalization. The perfect-fourth of tetrachord ‘B’ has been augmented to a tri-tone.

*(see example below)*

---

19 Circed in blue, example 2-19
The connection between these two passages is further strengthened by the material that follows the *thorny* passage discussed above. In the following four measures of half notes, Shaw begins to import Beethoven’s harmonic progression from measures 12 to 16, also writing her passage entirely in half notes (example 2-21). Shaw’s quotations begin by importing the first chord of Beethoven’s sequence. These half-note harmonic quotations appear after each iteration of the *thorny* music. The harmonic motion in these passages increase with each recurrence, featuring more sonorities from the Op. 18 No. 6 chord sequence.
Example 2-20, Beethoven, Op. 18 No. 6 mov. 4, measures 12-16

Example 2-21, Shaw, measures 152-189
The juxtaposition of the *thorny* passage with the harmonic quotation from Op. 18 No. 6 occurs in four pairs of varying lengths. These two phrases demonstrate a high degree of contrast. They differ in texture, rhythmic activity, harmonic motion, and distance from the source material. The tension created between these two contrasting sections is also, in and of itself, an allusion to *La Malinconia*. Beethoven’s extensive slow introduction contains contrasting material; a wonderful example is the harmonic progression borrowed by Shaw, that alternates between *piano* and *forte* dynamics. At the conclusion of the work, the *adagio* returns alongside the music from the *allegretto* in three pairs, the differing characters of each theme magnifying the essential
qualities of the other. Beethoven uses the tension between these two phrases to create rapid contrasts in tempo and motivic material before the work's conclusion. This idea of repetition and contrast acquires additional import when considered the form of the finale is a rondo, a structure dependent upon contrast to create musical interest.

Conclusion

*Blueprint* is a complicated tapestry of quotation and allusion that uses motives from the outer movements of the model work as its primary material. Shaw also frames newer or reworked material by direct quotes from Beethoven’s Op. 18 No. 6. Shaw exaggerates the contrasting qualities found in the model work by exploiting the tension between quoted material and new or highly altered material.\(^{20}\) For instance, by rapidly alternating between quoted and highly altered material, Shaw generates rising tension that is released at the appearance of the work’s longest quotation, a quotation that concludes the entire work. This reinforces the assertion that Shaw treats material directly tied to the model piece as a stable ‘home’ area, while newly composed or highly varied forms of borrowed material are treated as ‘away’ areas.

\(^{20}\) For example, see *Blueprint* measures 157-192
CHAPTER 3

Entr’acte

Shaw composed *Entr’acte* for string quartet (2011) “...after hearing the Brentano Quartet play Haydn’s Op. 77 No. 2 — with their spare and soulful shift to the D-flat major trio in the minuet.”\(^{21}\) The minuet and trio from Haydn’s Op. 77 is cast in conventional ABA form with each large section divided into two parts, demarcated by repeat signs. Shaw starts with the same form, but then moves beyond it, describing *Entr’acte* in her program note as “…riffing on that classical form but taking it a little further.”\(^{22}\) Shaw’s program note reveals her fascination with the transition between Haydn’s trio and minuet, describing the experience of moving from one musical world to another as an “absurd, subtle, technicolor transition” or a shift to “other side of Alice’s looking glass.” The contrast between the minuet and trio of Haydn’s Op. 77 No. 2 is typical of the form. Shaw’s interest seems to reside in the aesthetic impact of contrast, and in her memory of a specific performance.

The opening section of *Entr’acte*, like the corresponding passage to Haydn’s minuet, is divided by repeat marks. Shaw uses a rhetorical procedure similar to the opening of *Blueprint*, beginning with a series of small phrases separated by silences and extended in length. The motivic material from this section is derived from a circle of fifth’s sequence of Haydn’s, a passage that concludes his minuet.


\(^{22}\) Ibid
If we compare the transition between the minuet and trio of both works, multiple connections are revealed. The jocular affect of Haydn’s minuet is offset by the hymn-like quality of his trio. The sudden shift from the F major minuet to the D♭ major trio magnifies this contrast. Haydn does not prepare the listener for this tonal shift. The circle of fifths passage creates temporary tonal disorientation, a fact which does not diminish this exciting harmonic juxtaposition.

There are many similarities in Shaw’s related passage (example 3-3). Shaw’s trio has a homorhythmic texture like Haydn’s Op. 77 No. 2. Shaw also alludes to another musical idiom, but instead of a hymn, the listener hears a passage evocative of a Baroque dance. The change from *arco* to *pizzicato* playing enhances the contrast between these two passages.
Example 3-3, Shaw, *Entr’acte*, measures 32-63, transition between minuet and trio
Motive

Unlike *Blueprint*, *Entr’acte* contains no direct quotations from its model work; it is a reaction to minuet and trio form exemplified in Haydn’s Op. 77 No. 2, and more specifically, a reaction to the transition between the minuet and trio. While Shaw’s program note and the previous analysis acknowledge this important relationship, many motivic connections do exist. Shaw centralizes three peripheral motives from Haydn’s minuet and trio; the perfect fifth, the circle of fifths, and a descending minor sixth.

One of the defining characteristics of Haydn’s minuet is its playful metric disorientation, created through the use of a repeated melodic fifth.

**Example 3-4, Haydn, Op. 77. No. 2, Trio, measures 1-14**
The fifth is both a feature of the thematic and accompanimental material, and its repetition is used to subvert metric stability. The frequency of this fifth motive lends itself well to a smooth transition into the circle of fifths sequence in measures 56-66.

Haydn prepares his circle of fifths sequence by recalling the motivic fifth first heard in the principal theme; it can be heard in the cello in measure 49 and then again in the second violin and viola in measures 57-60. This motivic fifth is then transformed into the bass line for a circle of fifths sequence. Haydn’s circle of fifths employs a suspended third which turns into a seventh as the chords cycle through the progression, a feature that Shaw mirrors and repeats in measures 32 through 38 of *Entr’acte*. This sequence occupies the same space formally in each piece, that is, the end of the second section of the minuet.

**Example 3-6, Entr’acte, measures 32-38**
Haydn’s motivic fifth appears in Shaw’s C section (measure 68), now as accompanimental material played by the second violin and viola.

Example 3-7, Shaw, *Entr’acte*, measures 70-81

* stop string (control pitch) with the bow hair, and pizz with left hand. if there is a buzz in the sound, use more weight on the bow hair (staying right at the frog helps with this). the result is something soft but open, like the hure stop of a harpsichord.
The lyrical violin and cello writing in this passage is a conflation of two gestures found in the concluding phrases of Haydn’s minuet. The first of these phrases is typified by a reiterated descending sixth (example 3-8). The second features a chromatically descending long-tone passage (example 3-9).

Example 3-8, Haydn, Op. 77. No. 2, Minuet, measures 20-24

Example 3-9, Haydn, Op. 77. No. 2, Minuet, measures 57-60
Shaw returns to the circle of fifths in measures 106-123, where she combines this progression with fragments of her opening musical material.

Example 3-10, *Entr’acte*, measures 102-124
Form

The form of *Entr’acte* can be viewed at two different levels. When we identify new sections by shifts of motive and texture, it reflects the form below.

Example 3-11, *Entr’acte*, formal structure I

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m1-41</td>
<td>m42-67</td>
<td>m68-123</td>
<td>m124-173</td>
<td>m174-197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Coda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>m198-206</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An alternative view of the form is apparent if we consider not only the musical material, but the level of abstraction of each section as it relates to Haydn’s Op. 77 No. 2 example 3-12). Sections ‘a’ and ‘b’ are directly related to the minuet and trio form, complete with repeat marks and shifts of character that parallel Haydn’s Op. 77 No. 2. Sections ‘c’ and ‘d’ move farther away from a literal importation of Haydn’s form and motives. These sections reveal Shaw’s “riffing” on specific moments from Haydn’s Op. 77 No. 2 Mov. 2, specifically, moments of transition. Shaw’s ‘c’ section meditates on the last two phrases of Haydn’s minuet (examples 3-8 and 3-9) and expands it into its own formal section. Shaw combines and ‘stretches’ elements from these two phrases, and in doing so, exaggerates the moment prior to the transition to the trio. By taking this peripheral musical material and making it an important formal feature, Shaw is centralizing material from Haydn’s minuet and trio.23 The ‘d’ section points to material from her ‘b’ section (see below, example 3-15). Shaw’s B section abstracts the structure and material presented in the A section by stretching moments of transition into a refashioned minuet and trio. The repetitive accompanimental figures of the B section stall forward motion, contributing to a feeling of stretched or distorted time.

Example 3-12, *Entr’acte*, formal structure II
*Arrows indicate origins of motives sections ‘c’ and ‘d’*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>A,</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m1-41</td>
<td>m42-67</td>
<td>m68-123</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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23 See Straus’s typology, page 8
Shaw’s ‘c’ passage is undergirded by a persistent fifth between the second violin and viola. The first violin plays more lyric material that is set in canon against the cello, softening the edges of this motive. Shaw’s music is an allusion to the concluding cadence of Haydn’s trio (measures 57-78). This connection is strengthened by noting that the penultimate phrase of Haydn’s minuet contains a shift to the parallel minor. Shaw’s ‘c’ passage contains similar modal mixture, first alternating between B minor/Major, then shifting to Gb minor/Major. This section explores and magnifies the two phrases that immediately preceded Haydn’s trio.

Example 3-13, Shaw, *Entr’acte*, ‘c’, measures 70-81
Shaw’s ‘d’ section begins in measure 124. The appearance of bariolage in the viola, a gesture connected with the Baroque idiom, is a semiotic connection to the Baroque dance topic of the ‘b’ section. The viola initiates a tonal harmonic progression (EM-AM-DM-Db#/EbM) that is highlighted by open-fifth forte triple stops in the first and second violins. The raw sound of
these open fifths, especially as played by the Brentano String Quartet, are evocative of Bluegrass music. By alluding to another musical style, Shaw strengthens the connection between the ‘d’ and ‘b’ sections.

Example 3-15, Shaw, *En trav’acte*, measures 127-132
A transitional passage begins in measure 151 that references Haydn’s measure 61 harmonic progression. Shaw then distorts these gestures by removing musical elements bit by bit, first thinning the texture, then simplifying the rhythm, then moving from specific pitches to harmonics, then to pitches with portamento, then to pitchless bow-noise. This pitchless bow-noise foreshadows the return of the A section in measure 174. The expression marking for the cellist at the start of the coda reads “like recalling fragments of an old tune or story.” The cellist is to play these triple stop chords without a strict rhythm. The harmony of the coda is composed largely of B♭ Major and G Major/minor chords, a slightly distorted recollection of the B♭ Major/minor and G♭ Major/minor third relationship of the ‘c’ section.

Example 3-16, Shaw, *Entr’acte*, measures 149-175
In *Blueprint*, Shaw exaggerated salient characteristics of the model piece in her composition. The motives and contrasting elements that are imported by Shaw are structurally and developmentally significant in the model piece. On the other hand, *Entr’acte* is an example of how a model piece may exert influence in a different fashion. The memory of a specific performance of Haydn’s Op. 77 No. 2 serves as the catalyst for *Entr’acte* (specifically, the transition between the minuet and trio).

* Notes with fall-off gesture are basically that. Slide down from the written pitch (which does not have to be absolutely exact, except where tenutos are marked), maybe a half or whole step, with a slight coming away. Like a little sigh.

**Conclusion**

In *Blueprint*, Shaw exaggerated salient characteristics of the model piece in her composition. The motives and contrasting elements that are imported by Shaw are structurally and developmentally significant in the model piece. On the other hand, *Entr’acte* is an example of how a model piece may exert influence in a different fashion. The memory of a specific performance of Haydn’s Op. 77 No. 2 serves as the catalyst for *Entr’acte* (specifically, the transition between the minuet and trio).
While the transition between Haydn’s minuet and trio is typical of this genre, this particular performance nevertheless had a lasting impact on the composer. In *Entr’acte*, Shaw is attempting to create a parallel experience for listeners by exaggerating the elements in Haydn’s piece that made such an impression on her. The A section represents a more literal importation of the minuet and trio. The B section is a highly abstracted minuet and trio built on motivic cells sourced from transitional moments from Haydn’s work. By moving from more literal representation to an abstract rendering of the source material, Shaw exaggerates the concept of a transition, a movement to the “other side of the looking glass.”

Shaw is attempting to illuminate her personal experience in listening to, and remembering, a particular performance. 

*Entr’acte* does not contain any direct quotations from its model work. Instead, Shaw imports the form while altering motives sourced from Haydn’s moments of transition. These transitional moments are then expanded, creating their own formal sections, a strategy which is used even more dramatically in *Gustave Le Gray* (the following chapter). This is an example of *centralization*, where peripheral moments from the source piece become central organizing features of the new work.

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25 The definition of *centralization* is found on page 17 of Straus’s *Remaking the Past*, and is as follows: “Musical elements that are peripheral to the structure of the earlier work (such as remote key areas and unusual combination of notes resulting from linear embellishment) move to the structural center of the new one.”
CHAPTER 4

Gustave Le Gray

*Gustave Le Gray* (2012) is a piano work based on Chopin’s Mazurka in A Minor (Op. 17). The title of the work is a reference to a 19th-century French photographer and to the experience of watching a photo being developed. Here, the programmatic imagery supports the assertion that Shaw plays with distance from source material as a means of manipulating tension and release. The work is also a clear example of *centralization*, and more specifically, the incessant repetition of a motivic cell articulated by silences, which I will call *persistent reiteration*.26 Shaw writes at the top of the score that the piece should create the image of “a photograph slowly developing on waxed paper.” The opening key area of G Minor/B♭ Major and its intentional ambiguity recalls Chopin’s introduction, in which the tonal areas D Minor and A Minor compete. The B sections of both pieces modulate to major key areas, the Shaw going to G and the Chopin to A. This is a direct borrowing of key relationships.

**Example 4-1, Chopin, Mazurka in a minor Op. 17 No. 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intro</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F or d minor? Ambiguous</td>
<td>a minor</td>
<td>A Major</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Example 4-2, Shaw, Gustave Le Gray**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intro</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>g minor or B♭? Ambiguous</td>
<td>g minor</td>
<td>G Major</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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26 *Persistent reiteration*—The repetition of a small motivic cell, sometimes exactly or with alteration, articulated by silences. While *motivicization* and *centralization* broadly comment on the impact borrowed material has in a new composition, I argue that the term *persistent reiteration* offers greater insight into the manner in which the motive is integrated, namely through incessant repetition which is rhetorical in nature. In texted music, this may or may not involve the repetition of a text with a given motive. *Persistent reiteration* describes a prevalent aspect of Shaw’s compositional approach that spans many of her works. Though his style is distinct from Shaw’s, this term can also be used to describe the music of David Lang.
The opening section of *Gustave Le Gray* is a *persistent reiteration* of Chopin’s *sotto voce* introduction, which is played seven times before it is fragmented. This four-measure phrase dissipates and then reemerges in measures 31-40. These repetitions of Chopin’s introduction are followed by a harmonic progression emblematic of measures 9-12 of the mazurka.

**Example 4-3, Chopin, Mazurka in A Minor, Op. 17, No. 4, measures 1-15**
Example 4-4, Shaw, *Gustave Le Gray*, measures 1-22

\[ \text{\textit{\[ with push and pull \]}} \]

\textit{like a photograph slowly developing on waxed paper}

\[ \textit{\[ with push and pull \]} \]
Example 4-5, Shaw, *Gustave Le Gray*, measures 39-54

Example 4-5, Chopin, comparison of borrowed harmonic sequence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chopin</th>
<th>m9</th>
<th>m10</th>
<th>m11</th>
<th>m12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F#--d#m</td>
<td>F7--d</td>
<td>E7</td>
<td>am-E7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaw</td>
<td>m41</td>
<td>m42</td>
<td>m43</td>
<td>m44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d7--g--g7</td>
<td>cm7--f9--f7</td>
<td>D7--bb</td>
<td>CM7+6--F#half dim--BM7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What connects these passages, more than specific harmonic progressions, is the practice of changing chords while maintaining as many common tones as possible. Chopin’s harmonies are related by third. Shaw uses an elaborated circle of fifths.

Shaw’s persistent reiterations are repeated to such a degree that they become their own formal sections. *Gustave Le Gray* is a quintessential example of this practice, illustrated in both of the aforementioned examples. Another instance of persistent reiteration and centralization occurs in measures 76-108, where Shaw develops the ornamental sextuplet gesture from Op. 17 No. 4 into an extensive formal passage (example 4-6). Notably, the start of the next section begins with a direct quote of measure 109 from Chopin’s mazurka, another instance of Shaw using a quote to delineate formal structure. The engraving of the score is of especial interest, as it appears the quote has been ‘grafted’ onto the staff, appearing slightly skewed and blurred, a very literal instance of collage (example 4-7).

![Example 4-6, Chopin, Mazurka in a minor Op. 17 No. 4, measures 26-30](image)
Example 4-7, Shaw, *Gustave Le Gray, measures 78-113*

- like an expensive Hermes silk cravate?
- let these R.H. figures become a bit maniacal, freely - spinning off into their own time and world.
- what's written is just a guideline - not exact.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>86</td>
<td></td>
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<td>90</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>94</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Particularly interesting is the programmatic transformation that the ornamental sextuplet motive undergoes. Initially, we identify Shaw’s *persistent reiteration* with Chopin’s original gesture. Elements of this motive are stripped away before transitioning seamlessly into a direct quote of Chopin’s introduction. Shaw introduces a new formal section defined with a direct quote from the introduction of Chopin’s Op. 17 No. 4. After this quote, a new section begins, again employing the ornamental sextuplet motive. However, Shaw layers this motive over new music, recontextualizing this gesture. Marked *deep and heavy*, Shaw seems to be invoking a sea
topic, perhaps recalling *Brig upon the Water*, a daguerreotype taken by the eponymous photographer and included on the composer’s program note. Straus classifies this recontextualization as a *misreading*, as Shaw is able to transform the borrowed material in such a way that it decorates her new music.

**Brig upon the Water, Gustave Le Gray, 1856**

![Brig upon the Water, Gustave Le Gray, 1856](image)

**Conclusion**

Shaw consistently magnifies salient aspects of model works in her new compositions. In pieces in which form is an important expressive device, as in the case of *Entr’acte*, a reference is likewise built into her large-scale form. She also frequently generates large formal sections through the incessant repetition of a motivic cell, a process called *persistent reiteration*. Sometimes multiple methods of allusion are at play simultaneously, as I have demonstrated through this analysis of *Gustave Le Gray*. 
CHAPTER 5

To the Hands

_To the Hands_ was premiered on June 24, 2016 as a part of The Seven Responses Project.

Donald Nally, artistic director of The Crossing, commissioned seven composers to create fifteen-minute works that responded to Dieterich Buxtehude’s _Membra Jesu Nostri_, a cycle of seven cantatas written in 1680. Each of Buxtehude’s cantatas is directed toward a different part of Christ’s body on the cross; feet, knees, hands, side, breast, heart, and face. The main texts are stanzas from the Medieval hymn _Salve mundi salutare_—also known as the _Rhythmica oratio_—a poem formerly ascribed to Bernard of Clairvaux, but now thought more likely to have been written by Arnulf of Leuven (d. 1250). These texts are framed by biblical prose chosen by Buxtehude. Shaw was commissioned to write the response to the cantata addressing the hands of Jesus, _Ad Manus._

Connections between Shaw’s _To the Hands_ and Buxtehude’s _Ad Manus_ range from large-scale formal organization to motivic allusions. Shaw utilizes many of the methods discussed in the previous chapters to exploit the tension inherent between borrowed and newly-composed material, such as using direct quotations at important structural junctures and the _centralization_ of a particular harmony from the model piece. From the broadest possible view, Shaw draws a direct line between her work and _Ad Manus_ through its scoring by writing for single strings and choir. While Buxtehude would have employed a continuo group, Shaw’s instrumentation is nevertheless an explicit reference to the model piece. This bears additional

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28 Ibid.
significance in light of the fact that other composers commissioned for this project utilized wildly different scorings than the model piece.\textsuperscript{29} In the premiere performance, her work was bookended by movements from \textit{Membra Jesu Nostri}, the model piece preceding \textit{To the Hands}, and \textit{Ad Latus}, a cantata from which Shaw excerpts text. The D Minor tonality (concluding with a tierce de Picardy) of the closing movement reflects a consciousness of this position in the program, leading into the D Minor tonality of \textit{Ad Latus}.

Form

A defining characteristic of \textit{Membra Jesu Nostri} is the setting of biblical prose in the outer vocal concerto movements. In an interesting reversal of standard practice, these biblical texts reframe the poetic texts of the arias, which form the core of each cantata. Although \textit{Membra Jesu Nostri} was obviously written before Bach’s tightly structured Leipzig cantatas, there were still certain expectations and normative practices for the treatment of biblical texts at the time when Buxtehude was writing. One would expect the poetic texts to respond to or reflect on the biblical prose, which would typically be narrative or devotional in nature. However, in a reversal of standard practice, Buxtehude uses short excerpted biblical verses to frame texts from the \textit{Rhythmica oratio}. These texts are not narrative or contemplative, and owing to their brevity, acquire an atmospheric quality which colors the poems that follow.

\textsuperscript{29} For example, Hans Thomalla’s \textit{I come near you} is scored for choir, saxophone, bass clarinet, bassoon, piano, percussion, and strings. David T. Little’s \textit{dress in magic amulets, dark from My feet} is scored for choir, flute, english horn, bass clarinet, baritone saxophone, contrabassoon, percussion, electric guitar, and solo strings.
Example 5-1, Buxtehude, *Ad Manus*, text and translation movements 2 and 3

**Zechariah 13:6**

II. *Quid sunt plagae istae in medio manuum tuarum?*

*What are those wounds in the midst of Your hands?*

**From Rhythmica oratio, Arnulf of Leuven**

III. *Salve Jesu, pastor bone,*

*Hail, Jesus, good shepherd,*

*fatigatus in agone,*

*wearied in agony,*

*qui per lignum es distractus*

*tormented on the cross*

*et ad lignum es compactus*

*nailed to the cross*

*expansis sanctis manibus*

*Your sacred hands stretched out*

Shaw adopts and intensifies this unique feature of Buxtehude's work. The outer movements (1, 2, and 6) contain quoted and borrowed material from Buxtehude’s *Ad Manus*, while the inner movements have new text and music. This is both an importation and amplification of Buxtehude’s structure, one which layers the tension between borrowed and new material overtop of this framework.

*(see examples below)*
One of the most striking features of *Ad Manus* is the harmony in the sinfonia and vocal concerti. The affect of Buxtehude’s music is one of shock and dismay, painted through a series of dissonances, particularly between the pitches D - Eb.³⁰ Buxtehude repeats the Zechariah text for emphasis (*epizeuxis*), and with each reiteration, the passage takes on new shades of meaning. Some phrases depict anguish (measure 4) while others are decidedly more plaintive (measure 21).³¹

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³⁰ On page 6 of *Baroque String Playing for Ingenious Learners*, Judy Tarling writes: “One of the basic elements of the language of Baroque music is the fluctuation which occurs between consonance and dissonance. Dissonances represent the emotions of trouble, excitement, sorrow, grief and suffering.”

³¹ In her program note written for the premiere of *Seven Responses*, Snyder says of the vocal concerti: “Since the text is prose, it imposes no metrical structure on the music, and the composer is free to proceed phrase by phrase, with voices and instruments echoing one another, emphasizing particular words or emotions with musical devices derived from rhetoric, and repeating these phrases as often as seems necessary. This results in a through-composed movement of great affective power.”
Example 5-4, Buxtehude, *Ad Manus*, mov. 2
quid sunt plagae

i-stae in me-di-o ma-nu-um tu-ar-um, in me-di-o ma-nu-um tu-ar-um!

quid sunt plagae

i-stae in me-di-o ma-nu-um tu-ar-um, in me-di-o ma-nu-um tu-ar-um!

quid sunt plagae

i-stae in me-di-o ma-nu-um tu-ar-um, in me-di-o ma-nu-um tu-ar-um!

quid sunt plagae

i-stae in me-di-o ma-nu-um tu-ar-um, in me-di-o ma-nu-um tu-ar-um!

quid sunt plagae

i-stae in me-di-o ma-nu-um tu-ar-um, in me-di-o ma-nu-um tu-ar-um!

quid sunt plagae

i-stae in me-di-o ma-nu-um tu-ar-um, in me-di-o ma-nu-um tu-ar-um!

quid sunt plagae

i-stae in me-di-o ma-nu-um tu-ar-um, in me-di-o ma-nu-um tu-ar-um!

quid sunt plagae

i-stae in me-di-o ma-nu-um tu-ar-um, in me-di-o ma-nu-um tu-ar-um!
Shaw quotes this affecting music in her second movement, initially setting the passage in imitation, and then altering and repeating corresponding passages from Buxtehude’s *Ad Manus*. The strings abandon the “unsettling pattern” in measure 95, returning with material that foreshadows newly composed motives of future movements. For instance, in measure 75, the second violin plays a G minor bariolage gesture, an allusion to the string accompaniment of the fifth movement. The *pianissimo* harmonics of the violins in measures 93-94 foreshadow the introduction of the fourth movement. By overlapping new and borrowed material, Shaw recontextualizes this quoted material.

*(see examples below)*
Example 5-5, Buxtehude, *Ad manus*, movement 2
Example 5-6, Shaw, To The Hands, movement 2, measures 57-90
The second movement ends with a quotation of the final cadence of Buxtehude’s vocal concerti, but stops short of full resolution by prolonging the penultimate dominant sonority. This quote marks the transition between borrowed and newly composed text and music. This cadence returns at the conclusion of the piece, but now receives its full and complete statement. The return and completion of this quoted material creates a resolution that balances the work as a whole.

Example 5-7, Buxtehude, *Ad Manus*, movement 2, measures 19-26
Harmony

The final cadence from Buxtehude’s vocal concerti features a C Minor 9 chord that is emblematic of the striking sonorities of this movement (example 5-3, measure 24) which I will call the *medio* chord. This particular sonority is amplified through *persistent reiteration* in Shaw’s setting. Allusions to this sonority exist throughout *To the Hands*.

Example 5-9, Medio chord
The most explicit use of the *medio* chord occurs in the first movement. The interval of a seventh is defined and repeated in measures 11-19 (D in cello and contrabass and C of the vocal parts), a sonority derived from the Buxtehude’s soprano arias (measures 10-12 in movements 3 and 4). A D Minor 9 is first sounded by the orchestra in measure 35 and repeated and sustained by the treble voices of the choir in measures 36-39, presaging the appearance of the same striking harmony in the quotation in the movement that follows.

**Example 5-10, Shaw, *To the Hands*, mov. 1, measures 30-47**
Another reference to the *medio* sonority occurs in the conclusion of the fourth movement. Singing a *persistent reiteration* of the text *in caverna/in the cavern (of the rock),”* the choir moves in parallel motion. As this text is repeated, the harmony is elaborated. This results in a recurrent E Minor 9 at the high point of this phrase.
Text and Form

As the piece progresses, it becomes more distant from the model piece. Shaw employs new material, texts and performing techniques to dramatize this separation. While the first two movements are explicitly connected to Ad Manus by quotation and motivicization, the third movement contains newly composed music. Shaw appropriates a familiar text that helps shape the narrative of the work, quoting Emma Lazarus’s “The New Colossus,” the poem inscribed at the base of the Statue of Liberty. The familiar phrase “Give me your tired, your poor,/Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,” is fragmented and repeated in her setting. The vivid
imagery of the text is heightened by similarly pictorial music. Shaw introduces an Inuit throat-singing technique which requires singers hum, open to the syllable “ba,” and then audibly inhale. This figure is imitated in pairs of voices, offset by a quarter note. The effect created is one of breathless retreat.

**Example 5-11, Shaw, *Partita for 8 voices*, performing instructions**

These are textured breaths, related to the Inuit throat singing tradition. They are featured primarily in the *Courante*.

Audible exhale. Typically on “ah”

Audible inhale. Typically higher in pitch, and on “oh”

An inhale-exhale gesture, as in Inuit throat games. These can be more or less “noisy” depending on the dynamic context.

**Example 5-12, Shaw, *To the Hands*, measures 182-187**

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32 Shaw’s notation is identical to the *Courante* from *Partita for 8 voices* as of August 2020.
The text of the fourth movement—written by Shaw—depicts a woman who has been separated from members of her family. Shaw cites the influence of the Syrian refugee crisis that occurred between 2011 and 2016 on this particular movement. Shaw states “When I was writing this [To the Hands] everyone was talking about the Syrian refugee crisis. I was imagining someone who had escaped a horrible situation but needed to leave their family behind.”

Example 5-13, Shaw, To the Hands, Text of movement IV

ever ever ever
in the window sills or
the beveled edges
of the aging wooden frames that hold
old photographs
hands folded
folded
gently in her lap
ever ever
in the crevices
the never-ending efforts of
the grandmother’s tendons tending
to her bread and empty chairs
left for elijah

33 See interview in appendices, page 96.
where are they now
in caverna
in caverna

When compared with the others, the fourth movement is unique, as it contains few instances of textual reiteration, that is, until the movement’s conclusion. This creates a movement driven largely by the natural delivery of Shaw’s newly-written text. Shaw describes this movement as follows: “While the third movement operates in broad strokes from a distance, the fourth zooms in on the map so far that we see the intimate scene of an old woman in her home, maybe setting the table for dinner alone. Who is she, where has she been, whose lives has she left?”34 The movement ends with a persistent reiteration of text excerpted from Ad latus, the cantata that follows Shaw’s model piece. From the Song of Songs, this text, in its original context, uses the image of the “cavern of the rock” as a safe haven:

“Arise, my love,
my fair one, and come,
my dove in the clefts of the rock,
in the hollow of the cliff
(Song of Songs 2:13–14)

(see example below)

34 Caroline Shaw, Program note for Seven Responses, https://static1.squarespace.com/static/55215c2ce4b0e4ad50063b7d/t/576986d58419c2500dd98110/1466533590876/ Program+Pagniated.pdf, 10.
Example 5-14, Shaw, *To the Hands*, movement 4, measures 239-248

\[ \text{S:} \] in the crevices of the never-ending ever-end ing efflux of the grand-mother's ten-dons tend-ing

\[ \text{A:} \] in the crevices of the never-end ing efflux of the grand-mother's ten-dons tend-ing

\[ \text{T:} \] in the crevices of the never-end ing efflux of the grand-mother's ten-dons tend-ing

\[ \text{B:} \] in the crevices of the never-end ing efflux of the grand-mother's ten-dons tend-ing

\[ \text{Vla I:} \] 
\[ \text{Vla II:} \] 
\[ \text{Vla:} \] 
\[ \text{Vc:} \] 
\[ \text{Cb:} \]

\[ \text{S:} \] to her bread and empty chairs left for E-li-jah where are they now

\[ \text{A:} \] to her bread and empty chairs left for E-li-jah where are they now

\[ \text{T:} \] to her bread and empty chairs left for E-li-jah where are they now

\[ \text{B:} \] to her bread and empty chairs left for E-li-jah where are they now

\[ \text{Vla I:} \] 
\[ \text{Vla II:} \] 
\[ \text{Vla:} \] 
\[ \text{Vc:} \] 
\[ \text{Cb:} \]
This motive is expanded harmonically in measure 267 by moving the first sopranos to the major seventh of the chord, an alteration of the “medio” sonority.

Example 5-15, Shaw, *To The Hands*, movement 4, measures 261-277
As was the case in *Blueprint* and *Entr'acte*, Shaw’s musical material becomes the most distant from the source material immediately before the work’s conclusion. This distance amplifies a sense of return and resolution when the material from the model piece appears. Many elements of the fifth movement distance it from Buxtehude’s *Ad Manus* as well as Shaw’s surrounding material. For the entirety of the movement, the choir “speaks global figures of internally displaced persons, by country.” The movement is structured in three large sections, defined by a repeated harmonic progression in the strings. The accompanimental bariolage arpeggiations of the strings evokes an image of a rolling number counter, relentlessly climbing.
The introductory motive of the sixth movement is fragmented and repeated, another instance of *persistent reiteration*, not unlike the beginning of *Blueprint, Entr’acte* or *Gustave Le Gray*. The tutti chorus treats this idea in similar fashion at measures 356-359 before the text is expanded to “ever will I hold you, ever, ever, will I enfold you.” The text is set to a five note ascending scale in D minor with an ever increasing rhythmic profile, first as a five-tuplet, then two groups of triplets, then sixteenth notes. The violins respond to this acceleration with scalar sixteenth note sextuplets. These swirls of notes eventually take over the rhythmic ostinato that has accompanied the choir from the start, instrument by instrument, first the viola in measure 269, then the cello in measure 373, and finally the contrabass in measure 374. All of these breathless, rushing gestures stop abruptly in measure 376 just before the choir’s third statement of the “in medio” quotation, now briefly for solo voices, a technique which amplifies the intimate imagery of holding the displaced or outcast in the palm of our hand. The bariolage arpeggiation return, now *ppp*, in the viola, while other strings sound harmonics on D or A. As in the second movement, a fragment of the cadential “in medio” quote is presented 6 times. The
piece concludes with a full resolution in D major, finally resolving the half cadence that ended Shaw’s second movement.

Example 5-17, Shaw, *To The Hands*, movement 4, measures 347-392
Conclusion

Shaw magnifies striking elements from Ad Manus in To the Hands, modernizing and exaggerating Buxtehude’s unique arrangement of biblical prose and sacred poetry. The new material of movements three through five are analogies to Buxtehude’s setting of the Rhythmica oratio. The texts are written by the composer and feature few allusions to the model piece. Shaw frames this new material with movements that contain direct quotes from Ad Manus. By beginning with quoted material, Shaw asks us to share in her experience with Buxtehude’s work. The half-cadence at the end of the second movement highlights Shaw’s new material. The final movement represents a looking back, beginning with new music that seems to be a statement of Shaw’s beliefs of how societies and individuals should care for people that are in pain: “I will

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35 The conceptual impulse that drives these inner movements is identified by the composer in a note that accompanies the piece on her website: “To the Hands begins inside the 17th century sound of Buxtehude. It expands and colors and breaks this language, as the piece’s core considerations, of the suffering of those around the world seeking refuge, and of our role and responsibility in these global and local crises, gradually come into focus.”
hold you *in medio manuum tuarum.*” This macaronic text is, in and of itself, a *misreading.* We now hear the Zechariah text as a completion of Shaw’s artistic concept. The achievement of a *misreading* from a musical standpoint is made more complicated by the appearance of Buxtehude’s music. This quotation is so compelling that it dominates our final impression of the piece. Given the weight and complexity of the inner movements and the relative brevity of the last, Shaw is able to recontextualize this borrowed material.
CONCLUSION

An essential characteristic of Caroline Shaw’s work is its inclusion and manipulation of borrowed material. In this study, I have explored the relationship between borrowed and new material in her body of work. I have shown that the selection and inclusion of these materials are not motivated by the sense of competition that Bloom calls “the anxiety of influence,” but instead create their own dynamic tension and resolution.

The value of music that contains borrowed material is sometimes questioned because it resists analytical methods that are based on the idea of organic unity. In this study, I have shown that the tension inherent between borrowed and new music can be manipulated to create a unified composition. Chapters two and five (the analyses of Blueprint and To the Hands) demonstrate that Shaw creates and controls long-term tension by utilizing quoted material as a stable “home” area among newly composed passages. The tension created in this relationship is one of contrast rather than competition. Shaw manipulates this tension with the goal of creating large-scale resolution at the work’s conclusion.

In chapter three, I demonstrate one way that form can be used as an expressive device. In Entr’acte, Shaw uses formal structure and stylistic allusion to manipulate its proximity to Haydn’s Op. 77 No. 2. Entr’acte alludes to the formal structure of its model piece. Although no quotations are present in the work, the beginning contains motivic and stylistic allusions that bear clear similarities to Haydn’s Op. 77 No. 2. As the work progresses, these allusions become less specific, until eventually, the work evaporates, ending with only a single member of the

36 Losada, p. 155
string quartet playing. Additionally, by choosing such a brief, ephemeral moment as her subject, she necessarily engages with concepts of time and memory.

An important contribution of this is study is the idea of persistent reiteration. Chapter four defines this particular aspect of Shaw’s compositional style. These repetitive passages share surface similarities but are used for different expressive purposes. Sometimes, persistent reiterations exhibit the qualities of a musical rumination, a turning-over of an object in the mind, considering and exploring the different facets of a motive. Sometimes, as in the case of Blueprint and Entr’acte, these repetitions take on a rhetorical quality. A principal feature of these reiterations are the silences by which they are framed. Persistent reiteration can also generate large formal sections, as I demonstrate through my analysis of Gustave Le Gray.

Shaw’s use of borrowed material acknowledges the way music is consumed in the early 21st century. Instant access to music from an impossibly wide range of historical and cultural traditions poses real challenges for both composers and listeners. By embracing the past in highly personal ways, Shaw is able to speak with a clear, distinctive, and original musical voice.
Appendices

Interview with Caroline Shaw
January 29, 2020
New York City, New York

JW: Would you say most of your music in some way directly engages with preexistent music? If yes, could you talk about why that might be?

CS: Yes, I'd agree with that. My guess is that it's because I came to composition from a performance training background. It always felt very natural to make new music out of my love for older music, or out of my curiosity about that music. I often just wanted it to go another way, or I wanted to sort of build a new house out of its materials. Sometimes out of an intellectual exercise, and sometimes just to see how it feels. And sometimes just because the chords (e.g. of Buxtehude) are so good.

JW: What makes having a dialogue with a preexistent piece, and by extension the piece’s composer, exciting or interesting to you?

CS: It just sort of feels like riding a wave and then breaking through it—like an interactive or deeper way of listening. I love the sensation of not knowing if you're listening to something old or something new, similar to when you can't remember if something had been a dream or not. Working with existing music also gives you more tools to work with. Like a painter working in mixed media, or a filmmaker working within unstable timelines. I like thinking about narrative tension in music. I also like making music feel like a good conversation. The way we communicate with each other involves references to existing things blended with any combination of conjectures, imperatives, declaratives, etc. I think it's interesting to make music that also works like that.

JW: In the case of the “Seven Responses,” you were asked to react to a specific piece of music. When those restraints aren’t there, how do you choose what piece to react to or to work with?

CS: It's usually something I love! Or something that I have a strong (usually positive but sometimes just funny) memory of playing or singing. I'm thinking through the things I've worked with (that I've chosen): the chorale from Bach's St. Matthew Passion, a Chopin mazurka, a Haydn quartet, a Beethoven quartet, Sibelius 2, Strauss' Don Juan, Dowland's Come Again, Fritz Kreisler's Liebeslied, Handel's Lascia ch'io pianga, Tallis' In Manus Tuas, and Twinkle Twinkle Little Star. They just feel like incredibly vivid memories and colors and textures to paint with. In the case of the Don Juan reference, it's definitely a cheeky jab at orchestral training (all string
players have to learn that *Don Juan* excerpt). The Sibelius 2 bit (it was only two bars) was because I liked it and have good memories of playing it. And the quotation of the Kreisler was part of a gift for my former violin teacher. The Handel bit is just a nod to a great songwriter. I don't know. Those pieces each have very different reasons for folding in that other music.

JW: When you write a piece that responds to a preexistent work, do you have the score nearby, or do you work from memory?

CS: I really work mostly from memory, but I'll check with the score if I need to know something specific. For the Buxtehude, I definitely consulted the score in order to get the right voicings for the direct quotes, but a lot was a kind of freeform riffing. Now that I think about it, I'm sure I've looked at the score for almost all of these works (if a score exists). But it's not something I'm closely analyzing or dissecting. It's always about the feeling more than the exact details on the page.

JW: Let's talk about memory. We reform and remake our memories when we access them. I notice that lots of your pieces start from a distance from the model piece, until motives or quotes eventually come into a clearer focus (*Blueprint, Entr'acte, Gustave Le Gray, In Manus Tuas, To The Hands*). Do you think that your compositions in some way parallel the process of remembering?

CS: Yes! Can I just answer "yes" to this? Especially in the case of *Gustave*. It was about something coming slowly into focus. Exactly as you said. For *To the Hands*, it's a less passive kind of remembering. The Buxtehude sort of comes in like a lion, rather than the gentle emergence of the Chopin in *Gustave*. Memory can work that way too. For *Punctum* (which quotes the Bach chorale), it's got a bit of both. Hints of the ‘Thing to Be Remembered’ come in early on, but then it sort of slams into you at the end. Sudden memory. (*Punctum* references a book by Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, which has a kind of relationship to Proust.)

JW: Is silence important in your music?

CS: I’ve heard it said that ‘music is in the rests.’ I always think of a second movement of a Mozart sonata in E minor that has one of the most beautiful pauses in music. I think about that moment a lot. This is also true in conversation, when someone says something and they pause for a moment.

JW: What is the function of that silence? Does it italicize or highlight what was just said?

CS: It does. It’s rhetoric essentially. What happens before and what happens after the thing you want to communicate.
JW: That happens all over your music. Often, these silences are coupled with repetition of a motive. Repetition and silence seem to be related.

CS: I don’t think about it that concretely, but now I am thinking about it in terms of your question or your observation about memory. Memory and repetition are very tied. Silence is important because it is a cleanser. You may also do the opposite of that, which is to present a highly complex passage. But music cannot be highly complex all the time. I think about conversation when I am writing. I’ve been interested in writing music that has the pace of conversation. Listening to it should feel less like someone talking at you, closely, at a party. I may switch to ‘someone talking closely to you at a party’ in a couple years, or for an effect.

JW: Blueprint and Entr’acte share some similar features, specifically the measured silences in their beginnings. It reminds me of David Lang’s works, like Little Match Girl Passion, for instance. How might you name those silences?

CS: I think of public speaking and rhetoric. It reminds me of a sermon or a political speech with practiced pauses. David Lang has a particular style. I would not deny his influence. Lang can hold you in suspense for an incredibly long time, and then just give you a little bit. It is so perfect. I am a lot less patient. I always think, “Oh, my Mom would get bored.”

JW: You’ve compared the way that a composer conceives of a piece to the way an architect might design a space in which people will live. Could you say more about that?

CS: I like to think about how we live, and the spaces we live (and think and work) in. And the conversations and journeys we have in those spaces. How visitors enter. The front door. What's open and what's hidden. And really practical things, like does the house stand up? Is the engineering sound and secure? Is there a sense of play in the design? Is it a place people want to be in, or is it just a concept? Is it interesting? Is it warm? Is there a kitchen where you can make your own food? Are there phrases that you can shape the way you want? Is there freedom in the design, or is it controlling?

JW: Could you retell your experiences with Membra Jesu Nostri as a performer, specifically your memories of rehearsing the piece with Andrew Megill at Trinity Wall Street?

CS: Yes! I was probably twenty-six when I sang alto in the Trinity Choir for the Buxtehude with Andrew.37 I loved singing in the ensemble, and I just loved how he would talk about the music. He has so much love for music, and for people, and for words. I remember him describing "in the cleft of the rock, in the hollow of the cliff" in a way that was just devastating and beautiful. I think he made a kind of cradling gesture with his hands. This was how he created the sound he wanted for "in caverna, caverna" in Ad latus. I just never forgot it, so I put it into To the Hands.

37 Andrew Megill, Director of Choral Activities, University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana.
It's one of my favorite parts.

JW: Can you respond to this quote by Stravinsky? “My instinct is to recompose, and not only students’ work, but of old masters’ as well. When composers show me their music for criticism, all I can say is that I would have written it quite differently. Whatever interests me, whatever I love, I wish to make it my own.”

CS: Ha! I laughed at the "all I can say is that I would have written it quite differently." I get that. It's one of the reasons I started writing music again in my twenties. I just wanted to hear music that I wasn't hearing, and the only way to hear it was to make it myself. There was also a lot of music I was playing or singing that I just felt could have been better, and I think I just spent my extra brain space in rehearsals thinking about that. But I also identify, for better or worse, with the next thing he says: "Whatever interests me, whatever I love, I wish to make it my own." That sounds a little entitled and dangerous, when viewed in a certain light. But I also know what that feels like. You love something so much that you want to embrace it and give it wings and plant it everywhere and cultivate it and watch it grow. What if music is a kind of vast garden that we tend, for nourishment and sensory delight and to pass the days during our brief time on Earth?

JW: Do you compose every day?

CS: No, I definitely don’t compose every day. I think about things every day and I have notes for all kinds of projects but the actual writing I usually do in pretty concentrated periods of time, usually very close to the deadline or after. Generally, the process has a long gestation period and a quick birth–unless it is something for orchestra, then it must take a long time because there is so much going on.

JW: Is there ever a moment where that gestation process has taken place and you have to write but there is something in your way, or is there some state of mind that is not conducive to composing?

CS: I am thinking about the fall of 2016. I had to write a bunch of stuff that fall. It was a really stressful time. During that time, I wrote a piece that I really hate (I can’t tell you what it is). I’ve never listened to it again. I went to the concert, and afterward, I was horrified. I thought that no part of it was good, but I had to do it. That conundrum is also an interesting thing; we could think of composing like an athletic exercise. I can make it, but if I haven’t properly conceptualized the work, or reflected on the pieces I’ve just composed, or had enough time to consider how this work might speak in the current social climate, I may produce something that is interesting and complex, but it would not be me. Another thing I struggle with is choosing a text. It takes me forever to find or construct a text. The text, of course, determines the whole thing. Music I find really easy, but constructing [a libretto] is truly challenging.

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JW: Can you talk about the controversy surrounding Partita and the appropriation of Inuit-throat singing?

CS: I used to think that at the very least, when I write music, I’m not hurting anybody, but I actually hurt someone by making music. It really destroyed me for a couple of minutes. Pieces always evolve and change, and I’m changing it [Partita]. I rely on intuition and instinct when I compose, but is it ok to trust that process? What if I do this again? What if I borrow something that I shouldn’t?

JW: Do you like writing for people or for a program more than just writing to write?

CS: Definitely. I usually think about where and when the piece will first be performed, who is performing it, who might be listening, and what the context of the program might be. I suppose this means that I’m not really writing for other programs, but I find that this approach is my most honest way to engage with the process. It helps to connect with the idea that I am making something for people.

JW: Did you think about the program at large when writing To the Hands?

CS: Definitely. I’m not really sure how much it affected specifics in the work, but I was aware that the concert would be Buxtehude paired with a lot of new music. It helps to know that the piece you are relating to will be featured on the same program. In the case of Blueprint, it was not clear if the Beethoven [Op. 18 no. 6] would be on the program.

JW: Can you talk about the ‘movie scene’ of the fourth movement of To the Hands?

CS: Yes, I also think of the fourth movement as a movie scene. It’s cinematic in nature. I imagine an exterior view of a house. First, you see the window, then you zoom-in to a specific person. In a way, up until that point, To the Hands is painted in big, broad strokes. There is a definite shift to the perspective of a single person. When I was writing this [To the Hands] everyone was talking about the Syrian refugee crisis. I was imagining someone who had escaped a horrible situation but needed to leave their family behind.

JW: Is borrowing or referencing music of the past our new common practice?

CS: That is an interesting question. We are surrounded by so many things. I think it seems unnatural to try to block all of them out and to force a new path, aiming only to do things that have never been done before. I think that is where a lot of composers go wrong. I used to play a lot of European-based modernist music, music that was more about timbre and trying to find new things within sound. I think there is a danger in progress for the sake of progress, and we could quickly find ourselves in a place that is musically uninhabitable.

I like using the love of other art when I am writing music. It is fun to make references that people recognize, for much the same reason it’s fun to talk about things that you may have in common. I know that someone could hear Blueprint having never heard any Beethoven quartets before and
still enjoy the work, but it is a little more fun if you know the references. It is all about engaging with something that is familiar, perhaps using it as a little *mise en scène* that sets you up, and then you make something new with it. I think that is happening all the time. This happens so much in our visually-centered world. For instance, people may use a certain font to convey or represent something. It happens all the time.

JW: Memes may be an example of this.

CS: Memes are a great example. There, the idea is to recontextualize something that is familiar, and then have fun recontextualizing it continually. There is something delightful in that. And you can use it for delight, to make a point, or to be serious.


——. Notes for To The Hands. February 3, 2017.

——. Notes for Blueprint. March 2016.

——. Notes for Entr’acte. April 2011.


https://static1.squarespace.com/static/55215c2ce4b0e4ad50063b7d/t/576986d58419c2500dd98110/146653590876/Program+Pagniated.pdf.


