An analysis of György Ligeti's Nonsense Madrigals

Dennis Malfatti
Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College

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AN ANALYSIS OF GYÖRGY LIGETI'S
NONSENSE MADRIGALS

A Monograph

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts

in

The School of Music

by
Dennis Malfatti
B. Mus., University of the Pacific, 1996
M. Mus., The Pennsylvania State University, 1998
August, 2004
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Abstract

While other contemporary composers have written works called madrigals, Ligeti’s *Nonsense Madrigals* are truly unique as exemplified by the myriad of influences that went into their creation, the technical challenges of their performance, and in the aesthetic result, one which is incomparable to most musical compositions past or present including works by Ligeti himself. Ligeti’s compositional style in these works include the parodying of compositional techniques from the 14th century as well as the rhythmic provocativeness of jazz. The use of parody in these works is compatible with Ligeti’s choice of texts which includes literary parodies by Lewis Carroll.

In Chapter One, the monograph provides a brief biography and explores a chronological survey of Ligeti’s compositional techniques and influences leading up to the *Nonsense Madrigals*. Chapter Two provides a detailed analysis of each individual madrigal. The analysis includes an exploration of rhythmic organization, pitch organization (including motivic relationships, pitch class set relationships, and key relationships), vocal scoring, and the relationship of text to these musical parameters. Various forms of musical parody are revealed in the analysis and how musical parody mirrors textual parody. The analysis also draws similarities between this work and earlier works by Ligeti both in terms of technical procedures and in terms of general ideas and concepts. Chapter Three discusses relevant performance considerations of the madrigals. The rhythmic considerations alone pose an enormous challenge to the performance of these works. The lack of any kind of doubling instrumental accompaniment poses difficulties with pitch. Chapter III also discusses issues related to appropriate performing forces required for the *Nonsense Madrigals*. 
Chapter I
György Ligeti: Life and Works

György Ligeti was born May 28, 1923 to Jewish parents in Transylvania, a region that was part of Hungary until after World War I when it became part of Romania. His mother was an ophthalmologist and his father, Sandor, was a banker. Sandor was described as an “idealistic socialist and pacifist with no religious beliefs.”\(^1\) Ligeti himself said that he was Jewish only through persecution, implying that he did not hold Jewish religious convictions.\(^2\)

As a child, Ligeti expressed his desire to play the violin but his father was against it despite himself having been a violinist as a child.\(^3\) It wasn’t until the age of fourteen that Ligeti was able to take piano lessons and only by practicing at a friend’s house. Ligeti has stated how he always desired to be a fine pianist but blames his lack of technique on having started piano so late. Ligeti began writing short compositions shortly after beginning piano lessons.

Despite Sandor’s apparent lack of enthusiasm for his son’s musical education, the family did go to symphony concerts and opera productions in Cluj, the provincial center of Transylvania. Ligeti became particularly fond of opera as a child. He says that after seeing his first Verdi opera *La Traviata*, he went into a “sort of trance, into this dreamlike state.”\(^4\) On another occasion, Ligeti stated “Ever since I was a child I have been a Verdi fan. I like *Otello* and also Verdi’s middle period almost as much as *Falstaff*.”\(^5\)

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2 Ibid.
4 Toop, 14.
As a child, Ligeti was also exposed to movies. He cites as a highlight of his childhood having seen Charlie Chaplain’s *Modern Times*. He credits this movie as being one of the influences of his “meccanico” (machine-like) compositions of the 1960’s.⁶

In 1941, it was decided that Ligeti, now eighteen, should attend the university to study physics. However, due to rising anti-Semitism, this was virtually impossible. At this point, Ligeti’s father decided he could attend the conservatory in Cluj to study composition. Once at the conservatory, Ligeti studied harmony and counterpoint with the composer Ferenc Farkas who was a former student of Respighi. Ligeti also began studying organ. During his time at the conservatory, Ligeti gained his first exposure to the music of Bartók. As he stated:

> I was very much impressed by Bartok. You know, he was the great Hungarian composer, I knew very little other modern music: a little Stravinsky – *Petrushka* but not yet *Le sacre* – no Schoenberg. Bartók was the big genius: I think he still is, for me.⁷

The influence of Bartok lasted well into the 1950s.

Ligeti’s studies were interrupted in January 1944 when he was drafted into the Forced Labor Service. As a Jew, he was essentially a prisoner of war and he was given the dangerous task of bringing explosives to the front lines. The irony is that the draft saved him from the deportation of Jews which began in the summer of 1944. Such was the fate of his brother and parents, all of whom were sent to Auschwitz. His mother was the only one to survive.

In October of 1944, Ligeti deserted from the labor corps during battle on the front and he made his way back to Cluj where he stayed until the end of the war. At the end of the war, Ligeti went to Budapest to continue his musical training. There he studied with

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⁶ Ibid. 17.
⁷ Griffiths, 8.
Sándor Veress, Pál Járdányi, and again with Farkas. As Bartok and Kodály did before him, Ligeti followed his studies with an extended tour of Romania during which he notated hundreds of Transylvanian/Hungarian folk-songs.8

From 1950 to 1956, Ligeti served as a lecturer in harmony, counterpoint, and musical analysis at the Budapest Academy of Music. It is from this period that Ligeti created his first works of repute. His String Quartet No. 1 “Métamorphoses nocturnes” dates from 1953-54. This eight movement work clearly shows the influence of Bartok in its rhythmic vitality and chromaticism within common practice era formal design. The Six Bagatelles for wind quintet, also from 1953 was another work from this period that Ligeti considered worthy of publication.

His greatest output during this time consisted of unaccompanied choral works and other vocal works influenced by Hungarian and Romanian folk music, as well as works on texts by famous Hungarian poets. As the grip of communism tightened in Eastern Europe, these folk-based works were crucial to Ligeti’s survival as a composer:

Beginning in the winter of 1948-49, the political and cultural life of Hungary was forced into line with the Soviet dictatorship. Now my knowledge of folklore served as a protective shield against the prescribed “Socialist Realism”: folksongs and folk literature were tolerated, as were the classics of Hungarian literature. Many of [my] Hungarian choral works...were commissioned by professional lay choirs; some were actually performed, even published, but others were forbidden on account of “adolescent recalcitrance” or “excessive dissonance.”9

This communist cultural oppression meant that Ligeti’s exposure to leading twentieth century composers was limited to works by Kodály and works by Bartok that were not banned by the communist regime. The Second Viennese composers as well as the post

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8 Ligeti, 7.
war avant-garde composers such as Messiaen and Boulez were virtually unknown to Ligeti.

Despite his isolation from composers outside of Hungary, he nonetheless experimented with new compositional forms on his own:

I asked myself: What can I do with a single note? What can I do with its octave? What with one interval? What with two intervals? What with definite rhythmic relationships which could form the foundation of a whole based on rhythm and interval?...From these questions and the attempt to solve them, certain characteristics appeared which were not wholly unconnected with serial ideas. This seems to me remarkable since I arrived at them from a completely different starting point and via a completely different path.10

An example of his developing compositional voice is a pair of unaccompanied choral works titled Éjszaka, Reggel (Night, Morning) from 1955. These two short pieces foreshadow the direction of Ligeti’s ultimately unique style in their use of canonically built clusters of sound (Example 1).11 This compositional technique of canonically conceived clusters would later evolve into Ligeti’s “micropolyphony” of the 1960s.

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Example 1, Éjszaka, mm. 1-11

Ligeti ÉJSZAKA REGGEL
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for Schott Musik International
Towards the middle of the 1950s, the blockade of mail to and from Western Europe was gradually lifted allowing Ligeti to receive scores and records from abroad.\(^{12}\) Thus, he became acquainted with the rest of Bartok’s output, as well as more works by Stravinsky and Schoenberg. It was also during this time that Ligeti contacted Karlheinz Stockhausen who was, at the time, the leading modernist composer in post-war Germany.\(^{13}\) Despite jammed radio broadcasts from the west, Ligeti was able to occasionally pick up German broadcasts. Through this, he was gradually introduced to the post-war European avant-garde.

1956 was a pivotal year for Ligeti and for all of Hungary. On October 23, 1956 the Hungarian Revolution took place. After weeks of fighting in the streets of Budapest between Hungarian rebels and Soviet troops, the Soviets began to withdraw. After the brief elation of victory, Soviets bombarded the city again.

Ligeti had received a letter from Stockhausen saying that two of his electronic tape pieces, *Kontra-Punkte* and *Gesang der Jünglinge*, would be broadcast late at night on November 7.\(^{14}\) While others sought safety in the cellar to avoid stray bullets from the battle outside, Ligeti obstinately remained upstairs to receive the radio broadcast:

...the first time I heard a Stockhausen piece was during the revolution, because [radio] jamming was stopped...The Soviets had come in and everybody was down in the cellars, but I went up so that I could hear the music clearly. There were detonations going on, and shrapnel, so is was quite dangerous to be listening.\(^{15}\)

Ligeti decided that he must leave Budapest. Stockhausen had arranged for a scholarship to be granted to Ligeti to study at the electronic music studio in Cologne. Ligeti described his dramatic escape from Hungary to the west:

\(^{12}\) Griffiths, 12.
\(^{13}\) Toop, 43.
\(^{14}\) Toop, 46.
\(^{15}\) Griffiths, 13.
The railway people organized trains for people who wanted to go in the direction of the Austrian frontier... The train stopped at every station, and they telephoned ahead to the next station to find out if there were Russian soldiers there... I and my wife took the train one day, and we got to a town in west Hungary about sixty kilometers from the border. There had been some mistake and the warning had failed: the train was surrounded by the Russian military. But they didn’t have enough people to cover the whole train. Within seconds they took away everybody from the front half of the train, but we in our end very quickly got out and into town. Somebody told us to go to the post office, where we could be hidden overnight... And the next day the postman took us on by train, just an engine and a mail wagon, with ten or twelve people hidden under the mailbags. It was quite dangerous, because there was a three-year old child with us, and he had to be given tablets to make him sleep.

Then we were dropped quite close to the frontier, not in a station but outside, and we were told to get out and do what we could. It was perhaps ten kilometers from the border, and already within the prohibited zone, with Russians patrolling. Then the next night somebody showed us the frontier, while all the time the Russians were lighting the sky with rockets. We knew we had reached the border when we fell into the mud where the mines had been.16

After making it to the west, Ligeti stayed for a brief time in Vienna. In February 1957, he made his way to Cologne where he stayed with Stockhausen. Once there, Ligeti immersed himself in the modern music scene. He wrote an analysis of Boulez’s Structures for piano. After that, he went to the Electronic Music Studio of Cologne where he began experimenting with electronic music.

One of the works he wrote while at the studio was Artikulation (1958). In some ways, this work set Ligeti apart from other composers of electronic music. Rather than ignore the inadvertent humor associated with many of the bizarre sounds in electronic music, Ligeti welcomed and even exploited the humorous sounds. He also intentionally created sounds that were speech like.17 In that sense it may be seen that Ligeti brought a more sensual human element to a medium that was generally seen as more “highbrow” and pure. As Griffiths states, “Sounds and sound processes speak in their own language

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16 Griffiths, 15-16.
17 Toop, 58.
(the point of *Artikulation*) and do not need a higher language of tonal or serial ordering to make them mean.”

Ligeti eventually decided to leave the world of electronic music and in 1959 he moved back to Vienna. His first orchestral work *Apparitions* written between 1958 and 1959 was premiered at the International Society for Contemporary Music Festival in 1960. The performance of this work put Ligeti on the international stage as an important new figure in avant-garde music. In particular, listeners were drawn to the work’s new and original sound world which was quite different from the integral serial works prevalent at the time.

Ligeti’s next major work for large orchestra was *Atmospheres* (1961). This work was also a huge success. At its premiere, the audience demanded an encore of the entire work. The most striking element in this work are the huge, dense sound masses. Ligeti has described the piece as “floating, fluctuating sound.”

The sound masses of *Atmospheres* are not simply tone clusters as one might see in the music of Penderecki, but rather the result of a technique that Ligeti had been cultivating for several years, what he has called “micropolyphony”:

Technically speaking I have always approached musical texture through part-writing...but you cannot actually hear the polyphony, the canon. You hear a kind of impenetrable texture, something like a very densely woven cobweb. I retained melodic lines in the process of composition, they are governed by rules as strict as Palestrina’s or those of the Flemish school, but the rules of this polyphony are worked out by me. The polyphonic structure does not actually come through, you cannot hear it; it remains hidden in a microscopic, under-water world, to us inaudible. I call it micropolyphony.”

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18 Griffiths, 27.
19 Ligeti, 8.
20 Ibid., 14.
21 Ibid., 14-15.
The sound masses from micropolyphony are the result of tightly woven chromatic lines. In the case of *Atmospheres*, this chromatic canon, as it were, is at times as many as forty-eight parts. With micropolyphony, one hears the overall texture, rather than the “interplay of individual lines as in traditional contrapuntal contexts.” Ligeti often makes the analogy of micropolyphony to Renaissance polyphony, especially the dense and seamless canonic writing of Ockeghem:

To this day, I am more interested in Ockeghem than Palestrina, because his music does not tend towards culminating points. Just as one voice approaches a climax another voice comes to counteract it, like waves in the sea. The unceasing continuity of Ockeghem’s music, a progress without development, was one point of departure for me to think in terms of impenetrable textures of sound.

Ligeti states further:

I first began to think about a kind of static music you find in *Atmospheres* and *Apparitions* in 1950; music wholly enclosed within itself, free of tunes, in which there are separate parts but they are not discernable, music that would change through gradual transformation almost as if it changed its color from the inside.

Ligeti used these “impenetrable textures of sound” in his next work *Volumina* for solo organ written in 1961-62. Unlike the worked out micropolyphony of *Atmospheres*, *Volumina* uses graphic notation leaving a certain degree of freedom to the organist as to the content of the sound masses.

The next work, *Poème symphonique* (1962), is most unusual in that it is scored for one hundred metronomes. In this work, each metronome is set to a specific speed, started, and then left to wind down. The piece is over when the last metronome runs

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22 Griffiths, 35.
24 Ligeti, 26.
25 Ibid., 33.
In addition to being a somewhat tongue in cheek work, *Poème symphonique* represented another current in Ligeti’s music, the so called “meccanico” style in which music takes on a mechanical, machine-like nature.

Between the years 1962-65, Ligeti wrote another unusual pair of works titled *Aventures* and *Nouvelles Aventures*. These two works are scored for coloratura soprano, Alto, and Baritone soloists with flute (doubling piccolo), horn, harpsichord, piano (doubling celesta), percussion, cello, and double bass. In these works, Ligeti returns to the ideas with which he experimented in *Artikulation* by the creation of speech-like sounds. Ligeti has described the work as “a kind of ‘opera’ with the unfolding adventures of imaginary characters on an imaginary stage.”

He also uses an imaginary language: “I wrote my own text, which is semantically meaningless and has only emotional content.” The idea for writing such a piece was partly inspired by James Joyce:

> I was...influenced by Joyce, especially by *Finnegan’s Wake*...What impressed me in Joyce at the period when I was working on *Aventures* was his way of treating language as raw material.

Ligeti uses this raw material in *Aventures* and *Nouvelles Aventures* to depict an enormous range of emotions; in a sense Ligeti has human voices making sounds not words in a way that expresses various emotional states more vividly and dramatically than words alone can:

> The form is very complicated: five parallel streams of events – as it were, five ‘stories’ – that diverge from one another. The form arises from the combining and intertwining of these streams. Each stream consists of a number of separated episodes (seven to eleven per stream), and each episode has its own very

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26 Toop, 86.
27 Griffiths, 41.
28 Ligeti, 45.
29 Ibid., 57.
distinctive expressive character (e.g. mystical, idyllic, nostalgic, funereal, redeemed, excited, ironic, erotic, becalmed, humorous, hypocritical, cold, indifferent, triumphant, pathetic, stupid, hysterical, emotional, startled, fiery, exalted, anxious, unrestrained, mannered-ornamental, malicious, etc., etc.)

*Aventures* and *Nouvelles Aventures* and its concept of “language as raw material” was influential in the third movement of the *Nonsense Madrigals* written over twenty years later.

The emotional hysteria of *Aventures* and *Nouvelles Aventures* along with the micropolyphonic techniques of *Atmospheres* culminated in his Requiem written between 1963 and 1965. This work is scored for soprano solo, mezzo-soprano solo, two choruses and large orchestra. In wanting to write such a work, Ligeti states, “The idea of the Last Judgment was a constant preoccupation with me for many years, without any reference to religion.” In this work, Ligeti sets the Introitus, Kyrie, Dies irae, and the Lacrimosa. The Kyrie is an especially vivid example of micropolyphony. Note that while the canon is followed strictly in terms of pitch, such is not the case with rhythm. This adds to the “fuzziness” of micropolyphonic technique (Example 2).

**Example 2, “Kyrie” from Requiem, mm. 1-6**

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30 Griffiths, 41-42.
In the “Dies irae,” Ligeti likens the wild, franticness of that movement to similar passages in *Aventures*.  

In 1966 Ligeti followed the Requiem with *Lux aeterna*, which also uses text from the Requiem rite. This work, scored for sixteen voice a cappella choir also uses micropolyphonic technique. In addition to *Lux aeterna*, Ligeti also wrote a Cello Concerto in 1966 followed by *Lontano* for large orchestra written in 1967. Ligeti has described this work a “parody of *Lux aeterna*” in the same sense as Renaissance masses which parody pre-existing polyphonic works. While both *Lux aeterna* and *Lontano* begin with the same canon (though transposed) and have other structural similarities, what sets *Lontano* apart from his other works post 1956 are the references to tonal centers.  

In 1968, Ligeti wrote *Continuum* for harpsichord. The work is often classified as part of his “meccanico” style in that the entire piece is made up of fast moving, machine-like eighth notes without rests or tempo changes. The score is marked Prestissimo with the composer’s disclaimer, “extremely fast, so that the individual tones can hardly be perceived, but rather merge into a continuum.” The piece begins from a rapidly oscillating minor third, (G-Bb). From this kernel, the pitch spectrum gradually expands. In this sense, *Continuum* is not unlike *Atmospheres* or *Lontano* in that the rapid eighth notes create a similar “impenetrable texture” that slowly transforms into various sound masses.

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31 Ligeti, 46.
32 Griffiths, 57.
33 Ligeti, 56.
In addition to *Continuum*, 1968 was the year that Ligeti wrote his Second String Quartet. Ligeti has cited this work as being a summation of all his compositional techniques up to that point.\(^\text{35}\) The *Ten Pieces for Wind Quintet* were also written in 1968.

Unbeknownst to Ligeti, it was also around this time that he was thrust into mainstream culture with Stanley Kubrick’s film *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Without Ligeti’s permission, Kubrick used over thirty minutes of Ligeti’s music including passages from *Atmospheres, Aventures*, the Requiem, and *Lux aeterna*. Although Ligeti apparently liked the movie, when he expressed his indignation to MGM at the flagrant copyright infringement, the response was, “you should be happy. With this movie, you have become famous in America.”\(^\text{36}\) In the end, Ligeti received a modest $3,500 settlement.

As he entered the 1970s, Ligeti began moving in new directions with his orchestral work *Melodien* (‘Melodies’) written in 1971. While his works of the sixties focused on the blurring of melodies through micropolyphony, this new work brought melody to the foreground: “one could say that *Melodien* is an exercise in muddying the waters, in breaking from ‘Ligeti characteristics’ that were in danger of becoming too comfortable.”\(^\text{37}\)

Ligeti spent 1972 in the United States as visiting professor at Stanford University. During this time he wrote a work for twelve voice women’s chorus and orchestra titled *Clocks and Clouds*. Similar to *Aventures*, the work uses an artificial text written using the International Phonetic Alphabet. Regarding the title, Ligeti states:

\(^{36}\) Richart, 6.
\(^{37}\) Toop, 137.
The title stems from an essay by Karl Popper on the philosophy of science...In my piece, the clocks and clouds are poetic images. The periodic, polyrhythmic sound-complexes melt into diffuse, liquid states and vice versa.38

While in California, Ligeti gained a commission from the San Francisco Symphony for which he wrote the orchestral work *San Francisco Polyphony* (1973-74). During this time, Ligeti was also exposed to the music of American composers Harry Partch, and the minimalists Steve Reich and Terry Riley. The latter two composers were partially influential in the second movement of Ligeti’s *Three Pieces for Two Pianos* written in 1976. According to Ligeti, the second movement of this set, titled “Selbsportrait mit Reich und Riley (und Chopin ist auch dabei)” – (trans. Selfportrait with Reich and Riley (and Chopin is also there)) combines “Riley’s pattern repetition and Reich’s phase shifting with my own techniques of superimposed grids and supersaturated canons.”39

The most significant work of the decade, however, was Ligeti’s large scale opera *Le Grand Macabre* (1974-77) which was commissioned by the Royal Swedish Opera in Stockholm. This opera, based on the play *La Balade du Grand Macabre* by Belgian playwright Michel de Ghelderode, takes place in an imaginary place called Breugelland (after the painter Breughel the elder who was a favorite of Ligeti’s) during an unspecified time. The main character is Nekrotzar, the Grim Reaper who appears in Breugelland to announce the end of the world. When the moment of doom comes however, Nekrotzar gets drunk amidst various bizarre characters who inhabit Breughelland. In the end, it seems that death comes to Nekrotzar alone. In the play, Nekrotzar is made out to be a charlatan but in the opera, Ligeti leaves it somewhat open ended since in the final scene,

38 György Ligeti, Liner notes to Teldec 8573-87631-2, 2002 Compact Disk.
39 Griffiths, 92.
comprising all the opera’s characters, the audience is unsure as to whether the characters are dead appearing in the form of spirits or if they are fully alive.

The opera is tremendously ironical in that scenes and themes of great terror are juxtaposed with raucous comedy inclusive of both drunken antics and rather explicit references to sexual acts. The opera opens with an overture for vintage car horns. This overture is meant to be a parody on the fanfare to Monteverdi’s Orfeo in which Monteverdi’s trumpets are replaced with noisy, off-pitch motor horns. In the first scene, the comic character Piet the Pot enters, completely drunk, singing the Dies irae. Later in the opera, just as the world is violently ending, Nekrotzar is drunk on wine while comically trying to stay on a child’s wooden rocking horse which he thinks is his actual horse. From these moments, we get a sense of what Ligeti means when he says, “in the opera what is comical is at the same time demoniac, just as in the earlier Aventures.”

We can also understand how Ligeti’s own life informs the perspective on death as revealed in both the Le Grande Macabre and the Requiem when considering the following statement:

To come back to the Requiem and Le Grande Macabre, one dimension of my music bears the imprint of a long time spent in the shadow of death both as an individual and as the member of a group. Not that it lends a tragic quality to my music, quite the opposite. Anyone who has been through horrifying experiences is not likely to create terrifying works of art in all seriousness.

Throughout Le Grande Macabre, there are moments that harkens back to previous works by Ligeti. The frantic, meaningless sounds of Aventures are heard again in the opera especially by the code-text of the character Gepopo who is the chief of

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40 Ligeti, Ligeti in Conversation, 68.
41 Ligeti, 20.
42 Ibid., 21.
Breugelland’s secret police. There are also moments in the music reminiscent of works like *Atmospheres*, *Lontano*, and the Requiem.⁴³

Following its premiere in Stockholm, *Le Grande Macabre* received performances in Hamburg, Saarbrucken, Bologna, Nuremberg, Paris, and London. Ligeti was particularly fond of the staging for the 1979 Bologna production.⁴⁴

Ligeti’s next significant work was his *Trio for Violin, Horn, and Piano* written in 1982. This work was modeled in part on Brahms’s horn trio. Next, Ligeti returned to the medium of a cappella choral music. In 1982 he wrote *Drei Phantasien nach Friedrich Hölderlin* scored for sixteen voice a cappella chorus. In the *Drei Phantasien*, Ligeti sets three poems by the German Romantic poet Hölderlin using a fairly dense polyphonic texture though as Ligeti emphasizes, it is not micropolyphonic.⁴⁵ This work was followed in 1983 by *Magyar Etüdok* also for sixteen voice a cappella chorus. The work, translated “Hungarian Etudes,” uses text by the twentieth century Hungarian poet Sándor Weöres. Prior to 1956, Ligeti had set Weöres’ poetry to a cappella choral music a number of times. The pair *Ésjaka, Reggel* of 1955, discussed earlier, is one example. This return to setting Hungarian poetry to a cappella choral music (though in a far more sophisticated style compared to his settings from the 1950s) reflects a renewed closeness to his homeland spurred in part by the gradual demise of the Iron Curtain.⁴⁶

In 1985, Ligeti completed the first of his three books of piano etudes. In part, Ligeti’s own sense of digital inadequacy at the keyboard led him to write these etudes. Through writing these etudes, he has sought the “transformation of [his] inadequacy [at

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⁴³ Griffiths, 101.
⁴⁵ Ligeti, Liner notes to Sony SK 62305, 1997, Compact Disk.
the piano] into professionalism.”47 In many ways, these etudes reflect some of the new
directions in Ligeti’s compositional palette particularly his recently acquired interest in
African polyrhythm and the illusion of “polytempo”:

Two insights were important to me: one was the way of thinking in terms of
patterns of motion (independent of European metric notions): the other was the
possibility of gleaning illusory melodic/rhythmic configurations – heard, but not
played – from the combination of two or more real voices...

In *Automne à Varsovie* [the sixth etude from Book I] a single pianist, with only
two hands, seems to play simultaneously at two, three, sometimes four different
speeds.48

In the second book of etudes from 1988-1993, the influences go beyond African
rhythmic complexes and include the influence of Indonesian gamelan music. This is
evident in the first etude from Book II, *Galamb Borong* which seeks to evoke the sounds
of a gamelan orchestra.49

Ligeti’s interest in non-Western rhythmic complexes is also apparent in his Piano
Concerto written between 1985 and 1988. In the opening of this piece, the strings are
written in 4/4 while the piano and percussion are written in 12/8. The rhythm is further
complicated by the groupings in the piano part which suggests a mixed meter of 9/8 5/8
6/8 5/4 6/8 with bar lines displaced from the string parts (Example 3).

49 Toop, 204.
Example 3, Piano Concerto, mm. 1-3

Ligeti PIANO CONCERTO
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Ligeti also developed an interest in unusual and inexact tunings. This is true in the second movement of the Piano Concerto which begins as a canon between piccolo, bassoon, slide whistle (inexact tuning) and piano over a double bass pedal.\textsuperscript{50} This is also apparent in Ligeti’s next major work, the Violin Concerto written between 1989 and 1993. In this work, Ligeti has the French horns tuned in natural harmonics while one violin and one viola are tuned to the 7\textsuperscript{th} and 5\textsuperscript{th} partials of the double bass. The pitch spectrum is further blurred by the use of various inexact tuned instruments including slide whistles and ocarinas.

Following the Violin Concerto, Ligeti returned to the piano etudes starting a third book in 1995. His work on the etudes continued into 2001. His next major project however, was a major revision of \textit{Le Grande Macabre} for the 1997 Salzburg production. One of the most important outcomes of these revisions to the opera was the replacement of spoken dialogue with text set to music.

In 2000 Ligeti again returned to the Hungarian poet Sándor Weöres. Instead of choral music, this time Ligeti used one low mezzo-soprano and four percussionists. This percussion ensemble also includes slide whistles and chromatic harmonicas. The work titled \textit{Sippal, dobbal, nádihegeduvel} (With Pipes, Drums, Fiddles) is a cycle of seven Hungarian songs. The poems range from fantastic images to nonsensical plays on words.\textsuperscript{51}

Other projects that have been mentioned but have not yet surfaced include an opera based on Lewis Carroll’s Alice character. There has also been work on a horn concerto, as well as an anticipated Third String Quartet.

\textsuperscript{50} Paul Griffiths, Liner notes to Deutsche Grammophon 439 808-2, 1994, Compact Disk.
\textsuperscript{51} György Ligeti, Liner notes to Teldec 8573-87631-2, 2000, Compact Disk.
More important than what’s to come is Ligeti’s legacy of what has already been accomplished. In nearly every one of his works there seems to be fresh insight. While one may conveniently categorize his music as avant-garde, his music is also nothing like the music of his contemporaries. When he came to the west in the 1950s to join the pantheon of European modernists, he quickly rejected their rigid serialism, and their approach to composition in which intellectualism superseded human emotion. Later, when others began to reject modernism with neo-romanticism, Ligeti instead turned to new influences outside the realm of western musical traditions. In a sense, the only generalization that might be made about his approach to composition is a strong propensity for discovery:

Creating something that already exists is not interesting for me. If something new has been tried out and a result has emerged from it, it is not worth making the same experiment again.\footnote{Ligeti, 94-95.}

I have no fixed idea as to where all this is leading; I have no definitive vision of the future, no overall plan; from one work to the next, I grope around in various directions, like a blind man in a labyrinth. As soon as a further step has succeeded, it’s already in the past, and then there are any number of conceivable ramifications for the next step.\footnote{Toop, 179.}

While Ligeti may feel uncertainty as he looks to the future, there is certainty in an entire lifetime of discoveries to be made for those who listen to, study, and perform the intricate, wholly original, humorous, and provocative music of György Ligeti.
Chapter II
Analysis of the Nonsense Madrigals

Introduction

The Nonsense Madrigals of György Ligeti began with a commission by the English male vocal sextet The King’s Singers. The first performance, in four movements, took place on September 25, 1988 at the Berlin Festival Week. After this performance, Ligeti decided that the work was not complete and that it required additional movements.54 A fifth movement was added and received its performance by The King’s Singers on October 28, 1989 at London’s Queen Elizabeth Hall as part of the “Ligeti by Ligeti” Festival. Four years later, Ligeti added yet a sixth movement dedicated to two of its members, Simon Carrington and Alastair Hume, both of whom were leaving the ensemble after having been part of the ensemble for twenty five years. This final movement was performed on November 27, 1993 as part of the Huddersfield Festival.

The Nonsense Madrigals are currently Ligeti’s only English texted vocal works. The text consists of children’s literature from the Victorian era, predominantly by Lewis Carroll, but also including texts by William Brighty Rands and Dr. Heinrich Hoffman. The themes range from utter nonsense, as exemplified by the movements with text from Carroll’s Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland, to moralizing admonishment in the fourth madrigal using text from Heinrich Hoffman’s Der Struwwelpeter (translated into English). Perhaps the most unique movement is the third movement in which the text is nothing but the individual letters of the English alphabet. The movements are divided as follows:

1.) “Two Dreams and Little Bat”-text by both Lewis Carroll and William Brighty Rands
2.) “Cuckoo in the Pear-Tree”-text by William Brighty Rands
3.) “The Alphabet”
4.) “Flying Robert”-text by Heinrich Hoffman
5.) “The Lobster Quadrille”-text by Lewis Carroll
6.) “A Long, Sad Tale”-text by Lewis Carroll

Ligeti’s interest in Lewis Carroll goes back at least as far as 1968, the year of his Second String Quartet.\(^5\) On the last page of the score of the quartet, Ligeti included a rather curious phrase from Carroll’s *Through the Looking Glass* in which Humpty Dumpty, while reciting a poem to Alice, stops abruptly with:

...but-’ There was a long pause.
‘Is that all?’ Alice timidly asked.
‘That’s all,’ said Humpty Dumpty. ‘Good-bye.’

Ligeti likened the absurd abruptness of this passage to the abrupt musical changes that occur in the quartet.\(^6\)

With the exception of part of the sixth movement, all of the Lewis Carroll texts in the *Nonsense Madrigals* are from *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*. Among all the bizarre images bordering on complete madness that occur in Carroll’s famous book, there are also many places where Carroll includes nonsensical textual parodies on poems well known to readers in Victorian England.\(^7\) One example is in Chapter Five when Alice is instructed by the Caterpillar to recite, “You are Old, Father William.” This text, by Robert Southey (1774-1843) begins:

“You are old, father William,” the young man cried,

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\(^{5}\) Griffiths, *György Ligeti* 68-70.
\(^{6}\) Englbrecht, 31.
\(^{7}\) Martin Garnder, notes to *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1960), 38.
“The few locks which are left you are grey;
“You are hale, father William, a hearty old man;
Now tell me the reason, I pray.”

“In the days of my youth,” father William replied,
I remembered that youth would fly fast,
And abused not my health and my vigour at first,
That I never might need them at last.”

Alice however, responds with Carroll’s parody:

“You are old, father William,” the young man said,
“And your hair has become very white;
And yet you incessantly stand on your head-
Do you think, at your age, it is right?

“In my youth,” father William replied to his son,
“I feared it might injure the brain;
But, now that I’m perfectly sure I have none,
Why, I do it again and again.”

As in the above example, Carroll often maintains the same, or similar rhyme scheme as the original poem.

In addition to textual parodies, word puns abound in Carroll’s text. One such example is in Alice’s encounter with the Duchess in Chapter Six:

“You see the earth takes twenty-four hours to turn round on its axis—”
“Talking of axes,” said the Duchess, “chop off her head!”

In the Nonsense Madrigals, Ligeti chooses both textual parodies and word puns from Carroll's Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland similar to the examples above.

58 Ibid., 69-70.
59 Ibid., 84.
Parody is, in fact, one of the primary elements which link the *Nonsense Madrigals* to Ligeti’s overall compositional style. Ligeti has referred to his work *Aventures* of 1966 as “a kind of anti-opera” suggesting the work is, in part, a parody on opera. The prelude to his opera, *Le Grande Macabre* (1974-77) is scored for noisy, off-pitch, motor horns and is meant to be a twisted parody of the fanfare that opens Monteverdi’s *L’Orfeo*. Later in the opera, Ligeti uses a chromatically altered version of the theme to the finale of Beethoven’s *Eroica* Symphony as a bass line ostinato. Ligeti has in fact used the word “parody” to describe this use of Beethoven’s theme.

The use of parody in Ligeti’s music extends to structural elements as parodies of techniques used in earlier generations. As stated in the previous chapter, Ligeti has often described his compositional process, particularly in reference to his micropolyphonic works as akin to Renaissance Franco-Flemish polyphonic technique. In her dissertation, *Compositional Process and Parody in the Music of György Ligeti*, author Amy Marie Bauer states:

> Ligeti’s compositions open a gulf between the past and the present characterized by a critical, deliberately constructed distance that can be called parody...I follow Linda Hutcheon’s definition of parody ‘repetition with critical distance, which marks difference rather than similarity.’ This critical distance is usually signaled by irony, but carries no necessary satiric ethos or specific intent to ridicule.

The most prevalent parodying technique to which Bauer refers are the canonic techniques of the 15th century Flemish composers, most notably Ockeghem. Ligeti’s admiration for the music of Ockeghem and the similarity between the two composers’ canonic

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60 György Ligeti, *György Ligeti in Conversation*, 68.  
61 Ibid., 69.  
62 Ibid.  
63 Ibid.  
66 Ibid., 53.
techniques has been noted. This similarity with “critical distance” in Ligeti’s music (a very old technique distanced by an entirely modernist language) corresponds to Bauer’s definition of parody.

While this use of the term parody as a complex compositional process may seem irrelevant to its use in reference to the nonsense of Lewis Carroll, Ligeti’s *Nonsense Madrigals* run the full gamut of parody from the ridiculous to the sophisticated. On the technical level, the title alone suggests a parody, on some level, of the late 16th century secular vocal form. But a more substantial analysis reveals parodies of even earlier complex compositional techniques in a similar manner to that of the aforementioned micropolyphonic works. Analysis of the *Nonsense Madrigals* will, among other things, reveal Ligeti’s use of parody on multiple levels both as a humorous device (a la Carroll) and as a substantial compositional technical feature.

Because of the complexity of the *Nonsense Madrigals*, there are many technical features that merit extensive discussion. One of the most notable complex elements is the rhythmic organization. Consider, for example, the time signatures of the first madrigal, marked \(3\left(\frac{4}{4}\right)\) and the second madrigal marked \(3\left(\frac{4}{4}\right)\). This use of unusually complex polymeters is consistent with Ligeti’s late style when one considers the rhythmic complexity of his *Piano Concerto* written almost immediately prior to the madrigals.

In terms of pitch organization in the *Nonsense Madrigals*, there is a dichotomy in that tonal gestures abound within a non-tonal framework. In the liner notes to the Sony recording of the madrigals, Ligeti states that in these works, he is experimenting with a “new kind of diatonicism.” While these works are not tonal, there is considerable pitch organization that includes recurring intervals associated with tonality, artificial scales that

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67 György Ligeti, liner note to Sony SK 62311, compact disk.
sometimes come close to traditional major and minor scales, tertian harmonies, as well as the emphasis of certain pitches by their recurrence at structurally significant places in the music.

In nearly all these cases, one does not actually hear a tonality even though certain structures associated with tonality are present. An exception to this is the third madrigal which does contain noticeable, albeit brief tonal centers as well as references to functional harmony. It is not surprising that this movement should be different from the others in terms of pitch organization since this is also the one movement that does not use words.

The primary method of pitch organization in the *Nonsense Madrigals* is intervallic unity. This unity exists primarily within each individual movement rather than as cyclical recurring patterns throughout all the movements. One exception to this is the relationship between the second madrigal and the fifth madrigal in which the primary intervals of both madrigals are the perfect fifth, major third, and tritone. Hence a unified architecture exists within the *Nonsense Madrigals* in which the second madrigal is related to the second to last madrigal in terms of intervallic content. The intervals that Ligeti uses in the second and fifth madrigal show the irony of Ligeti’s “new diatonicism” in which the most tonally stable intervals, the perfect fifth and major third, co-exist with the least tonally stable interval, the tritone.

In the case of the first madrigal, and to some extent, the last madrigal, intervallic unity is not always immediately apparent. In these cases, structural unity is best revealed through the use of pitch class (pc) set analysis.\textsuperscript{68} Because of the clarity of intervallic unity in the second and fifth madrigals, the tonal references in the third madrigal, and the

\textsuperscript{68} For an explanation of pitch class set analysis, see: Joseph N. Straus, *Introduction to Post-Tonal Analysis* (New Jersey: Englewood Cliffs, 1990), 1-58.
clear thematic organization of the fourth madrigal, pc set analysis is not appropriate to these movements. The unusual complexity of the first and last madrigal merit the use of pc set analysis.

Another structural feature related to pitch and rhythm in the madrigals is Ligeti’s use of very old compositional techniques. In the first madrigal he uses an isorhythmic cantus firmus in the tenor voice. The fourth madrigal is organized around a passacaglia as Ligeti indicates in that madrigal’s subtitle (“Flying Robert” – Passacaglia).

Prior to the addition of the sixth madrigal in 1993, Ligeti’s work was a symmetrical whole in which the third movement, already identified as being quite different from the others, served as the fulcrum. The fifth and until 1993, final madrigal was, in some ways the culmination of the entire set. In addition to being related to the second madrigal through intervallic unity, the analysis will show that the fifth madrigal also resembles the first madrigal in that both use preexisting melodic material. The fifth madrigal is also related to the fourth madrigal in that it too uses a passacaglia-like construction. Figure 1 shows the layout of the work as it stood in 1989.
Ligeti’s addition of the sixth madrigal, already identified as something of an afterthought, changed this symmetrical design. Even with this additional movement, however, the unusual qualities of the third madrigal still give it a central role in the entire set. By comparing the organizational techniques of the various movements and how they are best represented in theoretical analysis, the large scale analysis of the complete work can be summarized as shown in Figure 2.

With the exception of the first madrigal, the analysis of each madrigal is divided into two parts. In the initial discussion of each movement, the overall structure of the
madrigal is considered. Text and text source, large-scale form, rhythmic framework, and the more salient characteristics of the movement are dealt within this subsection. The second part of each discussion considers pitch and/or melodic organization. In particular, the second subsection reveals issues related to intervallic structure, thematic/motivic unity, and in the case of the third movement, tonal references. In the discussion of movement one, a third subsection on pc set relationships is also added.

1. "Two Dreams and Little Bat"

Overall Structure

"Two Dreams and Little Bat" contains examples of parody on multiple levels. Despite being called a madrigal, it seems to be more a parody of the 14th century *Ars nova* motet. As in the *Ars nova* motet, Ligeti's work contains multiple texts, a polyphonic texture, a complicated rhythmic structure, and a cantus firmus organized isorhythmically.

The title of the madrigal refers to the text sources. The Alto I and Alto II draw their texts from William Brighty Rands' "The Dream of a Girl Who Lived at Seven-Oaks" while the Baritone I, II and Bass draw text from Rands' "The Dream of a Boy Who Lived at Nine-Elms." While not necessarily nonsensical in the same manner as Lewis Carroll's poetry, the images in Rands' poetry are certainly dream-like.

"The Dream of a Girl Who Lived at Seven-Oaks:"

Seven sweet singing birds up in a tree;
Seven swift sailing-ships white upon the sea;
Seven bright weathercocks shining in the sun;
Seven slim racehorses ready for a run;
Seven gold butterflies, flitting overhead;
Seven red roses blowing in a garden bed;
Seven white lilies, with honeybees inside them;
Seven round rainbows with clouds to divide them;
Seven pretty little girls with sugar on their lips;
Seven witty little boys, whom everybody tips;
Seven nice fathers, to call little maids 'joys';
Seven nice mothers, to kiss the little boys;
Seven nights running I dreamt it all plain;
With bread and jam for supper I could dream it all again!

"The Dream of a Boy Who Lived at Nine-Elms:"

Nine grenadiers, with bayonets in their guns;
Nine bakers' baskets, with hot' cross buns;
Nine brown elephants, standing in a row;
Nine new velocipedes, good ones to go;
Nine knickerbocker suits, with buttons all complete;
Nine pair of skates with straps for the feet;
Nine clever conjurors eating hot coals;
Nine sturdy mountaineers leaping on their poles;
Nine little drummer-boys beating on their drums;
Nine fat aldermen sitting on their thumbs;
Nine new knockers to our front door;
Nine new neighbours that I never saw before;
Nine times running I dreamt it all plain;
With bread and cheese for supper I could dream it all again!

One of the more striking elements of the piece is the time signature which is $\frac{3}{4}$.

Ligeti reinforces the differences in text with these two simultaneous different meters. The Alto I and II are conceived around the $\frac{3}{4}$ meter, whereas the Baritones and Bass are conceived around the $\frac{4}{4}$ meter.

The third text is from Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and is heard in the Tenor. Carroll's book contains many parodies on texts and songs that were popular in Victorian England. Here, Ligeti uses Carroll's nonsensical parody of Jane Taylor's well known poem "The Star," more commonly known as the song "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star." The parody occurs in Chapter VII of Carroll's book:

Twinkle twinkle little bat
How I wonder what you're at!
Up above the world you fly,
Like a tea tray in the sky.
Twinkle, twinkle...
The character of The Hatter recounts to Alice how he was required to sing this song to the Queen of Hearts. He proceeds to sing the song as printed above. After he sings the final phrase he says to Alice, "Well, I'd hardly finished the first verse...when the Queen bawled out 'He's murdering the time! Off with his head!'" Ligeti sets The Hatter’s song to the familiar melody “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star,” thus the indication "cantus firmus" as printed in the score. Treated in a repetitive rhythmic framework (isorhythm), the Tenor serves as the fulcrum between the opposing meters of the Alto voices and the Baritone/Bass voices.

The madrigal is divided into two large sections. The first section concludes with the end of the cantus firmus in measure 34. Following two measures of scalar activity in the lower three voices, measure 36 combines all of the voices in ascending scalar activity and the earlier clear metrical distinctions between the voices become blurred. These quick scales culminate in the climax of the movement at the end of measure 40. From measure 40 to the end, the voices converge primarily around the \( \frac{4}{4} \) time signature. Measure 41 functions as a coda. Figure 3 illustrates the large scale design of the movement with the three opposing metrical/textual planes represented by different shades and patterns. In his dissertation on Ligeti’s late choral music, Bernd Englbrecht maps out the work in similar fashion though with far less detail (no indication of sections, pitch organization, textural features, etc.).\(^{69}\) Also there are discrepancies between this analysis and some of his observations on the metrical organization at various moments.

\(^{69}\) Englbrecht, 43.
### Figure 3, Flow Chart of “Two Dreams and Little Bat”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>II</th>
<th>Peak</th>
<th>Coda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measures</td>
<td>m. 1</td>
<td>m. 7</td>
<td>m. 17</td>
<td>m. 24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Voices:</td>
<td>Alto I and Alto II</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text:</td>
<td>“The Dream of A Girl Who Lived At Seven-Oaks”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metrical Organization:</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Voice:** Tenor (Cantus Firmus)
- **Text:** “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Bat”
- **Metrical Organization:** Isorhythm
- **Cantus Firmus Ends**
- **Metric Planes Converge; Tenor shifts to same text as Alto voices**
- **Large Scale Dynamic Shape:** $pp$
- **Pitch Centers:** C F C B E

| Voices: | Baritone I, II, and Bass | | | | |
| Text: | “The Dream of a Boy Who Lived at Nine-Elms” | | | | |
| Metrical Organization: | 4 | | | | |

- **Textural Features:**
  - Independent melodic material in each voice; Alto II has pedal C for first four measures
  - Ascending scalar activity in lower three voices
  - Meters assimilate; ascending scales in all voices
  - Climax; scales culminate in whole tone cluster
  - Upper voices have melodic gestures; related to opening; Lower two voices have pedal C2-G2
- **Large Scale Dynamic Shape:** $pp$
- **Pitch Centers:** C F

---

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- Independent melodic material in each voice; Alto II has pedal C for first four measures
- Ascending scalar activity in lower three voices
- Meters assimilate; ascending scales in all voices
- Climax; scales culminate in whole tone cluster
- Upper voices have melodic gestures; related to opening; Lower two voices have pedal C2-G2

**Large Scale Dynamic Shape:**

- $pp$
- $cresc.$
- $ff$
- $sub. ppp$
- $morendo$

**Pitch Centers:**

- C
- F
In measures 1-34, Ligeti binds the opposing time signatures through the repetitive rhythm of the Tenor. Using the eighth note as the common value, Ligeti alternates the duration of each syllable of the text beginning with a duration of ten notes, followed by a duration of five eighth notes, followed by ten and so forth. The pattern starts over for each line of text. The only exception to this pattern is in measures 26-27 in which the word "sky" is held for the equivalent of eight eighth notes (Figure 4).

Figure 4, “Two Dreams and Little Bat,” mm. 1-33 Tenor (cantus firmus)
The strict repetition of the rhythm and the long duration of each note of the Tenor seems to be a parody on 14th century isorhythmic cantus firmus treatment. The fact that it is a children's song and not a plainchant melody adds humor to the parody. The humor is also seen in the melody itself which is slightly altered. Ligeti uses a raised fourth (in this case, F natural) instead of scale degree four which we normally hear in the tune "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" (refer to Figure 4).

By setting this text to a strict rhythmic framework, Ligeti may be playing on the Queen's criticism that the Hatter is "murdering the time." Ligeti reflects the Queen's interruption of the Hatter's song by cutting short the well known melody at the end of measure 33 (refer to last line of Figure 4). Beginning in measure 36, the Tenor is absorbed into the polyphonic texture with "The Dream of a Girl Who Lived at Seven Oaks," the same text as the two Alto voices.

The rhythmic complexity of this movement occurs in the voices above and below the Tenor. Using the Piano Concerto as an example, we have seen Ligeti's interest in complex rhythmic structures influenced by his exposure to African music. In this madrigal, Ligeti is operating on two different rhythmic planes around the cantus firmus. Independent of each other, their rhythms are not terribly complex. The complexity is in the superimposing of these polymetric planes.

The concept of superimposing duple time against triple time may very well be evidence of Ligeti's interest in African polyrhythms. In the mbira tradition of Zimbabwe, when two mbirists play together, one may follow a triple meter, while the other follows a duple or quadruple one, thus creating polyrhythm. The alternation of duple and triple is

---
also a part of the Ghanaian tradition and when this alternation occurs, the length of the triple bar, is the same as that of the duple bar.\footnote{J. H. Kwabena Nketia, "The Scholarly Study of African Music: A Historical Review" in \textit{The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music}, vol. 1, Africa, ed. Ruth M. Stone (New York: Garland, 1998), 24.} Both of these traits, triple over quadruple and equal bar lengths between the two, apply to Ligeti's madrigal (Example 4).

\textbf{Example 4, “Two Dreams and Little Bat,” mm. 1-3, Alto I & Baritone II}

These "bi-metric" planes, as it were, continue until measure 36 which is the point where the tenor is no longer bound to the cantus firmus. It is also at this point that the rhythmic activity increases in all the voices. Fast moving ascending scales in all the voices provide pictorial emphasis on the word "running." These runs are not unlike the "running down amain" figure in Thomas Weelkes' madrigal \textit{As Vesta Was from Latmos Hill Descending} (only running up instead of down). This use of word painting may be another parody, this time on the 16th century madrigal.

The tension of these fast moving scales builds to the dramatic climax of the movement at the end of measure 40 where all of the sounding voices, now completely
organized around the the \( \frac{4}{\text{meter}} \), converge on a whole tone cluster marked \( ff \), (see Example 17-page 47). At measure 41, the dynamic drops immediately to \( ppp \), and the rhythmic activity slows considerably. Measure 41 begins a coda that winds down to the final measure of the piece.

**Melodic/Harmonic Structure**

On first hearing “Two Dreams and Little Bat,” one is struck by the prevalence of perfect fifths, a very tonally oriented interval. One need only think of Schoenberg's admonition to avoid the fifth and the octave when constructing twelve-tone rows to avoid tonal implications. The first four notes of the piece in the Alto I part are made up of a pair of descending perfect fifths, G4-C4 and A4-D4. The first interval, G-C, combined with the sustained C4 from measures 1 – 4 in the Alto II suggests that the note C has structural significance (Example 4-page 36 and Example 5).

**Example 5, “Two Dreams and Little Bat,” Alto II - first three measures of work.**

A sense of C major is immediately obscured however by the all the flats in the Baritone I and II in the opening measures (Example 4-page 36).

The intervals of the first several measures of the Baritone II part are exclusively stepwise scalar motion and perfect fifths and fourths (Example 4). Between each of the rests in the first five measures, the interval is a 5th or 4th. This has aural significance since it is the lowest voice until measure 5 when the Bass enters with an ascending perfect fourth.
The next three Bass notes, Eb2 Db3 and F2 can be heard as a varied repeat of the first three notes in the Baritone I part (mm. 1-2), a scalar descent F-Eb-Db. This same collection is heard again in the Bass in measure 14 (Example 6).

**Example 6, “Two Dreams and Little Bat,” Baritone I mm. 1-2/Bass m. 6/Bass m. 14**

a) Baritone I mm. 1-2

b) Bass mm. 5-6

c) Bass m. 14

Throughout the movement, Ligeti employs the 5th, usually descending, to introduce or highlight an important melodic moment. In measure 9, while the other voices move slowly, attention is drawn to the *leggiero* eighth note melody in the Alto II which opens with a descending perfect 5th (Example 7).
Example 7, “Two Dreams and Little Bat,” Alto II, m. 7-9

In measure 15, the Alto II has a pair of descending perfect 5ths followed a measure later by an ascending perfect 5th in the Alto I (Example 8).

Example 8, “Two Dreams and Little Bat,” Alto II measure 15/Alto I measure 16

a) Alto II measure 15

b) Alto I measure 16

Beginning in measure 27, as the rhythmic activity in the lower three voices increases, so does the repetition of the descending perfect 5th motive culminating in the repeated B3-E3 descent of measures 29-33 (Example 9).
Example 9, “Two Dreams and Little Bat,” mm. 26-33
Ligeti exploits the perfect fifth harmonically as well. Because the rhythmic nature of the piece is complicated, when two or more voices move in the same rhythm, it is obviously a noticeable event. Ligeti underlines these events harmonically with the perfect 5th.

Consider the following moments of homorhythm: At the end of measure 4 going into measure 5, the Alto I and Alto II move together in parallel 5ths (Example 10).

Example 10, “Two Dreams and Little Bat,” mm.4-5, Alto I and Alto II
On the final attack of measure 8, the Baritone I, II and Bass voices are made up of stacked perfect 5ths (Example 11).

Example 11, “Two Dreams and Little Bat,” mm. 8-9, Baritone I, II and Bass

The downbeat of measure 22 is a perfect 5th from B-F# within all five sounding voices. It is followed by parallel 5ths in the upper two voices and the lower two voices (Example 12).

Example 12, “Two Dreams and Little Bat,” m. 22
The fifths of measure 22 in the Baritone II and Bass continue through measure 23 and invert to parallel fourths going from measure 24 into measure 25 (Example 13).

**Example 13, “Two Dreams and Little Bat,” mm. 22-25, Baritone II and Bass**

In measure 41, the Baritone II and Bass arrive together on a perfect 5th C3-G3 and gradually move downwards in parallel fifths until the final chord of the piece (Example 14).

**Example 14, “Two Dreams and Little Bat,” mm. 41-46, Baritone II and Bass**
The final sonority of the piece is made up of stacked perfect fifths starting from F2 on up through the Alto II. The Alto I reinforces the C over F (Example 15).

**Example 15, “Two Dreams and Little Bat,” mm. 51-52**

As mentioned, the other diatonic element within the work is the stepwise scalar movement, usually ascending. As the madrigal progresses, these scalar passages gradually increase the level of tension in the work. As mentioned, these scales begin to move more rapidly beginning in measure 36 and by the next measure, permeate all the voices leading to the final sonority of measure 40 which was identified earlier as the dramatic climax of the movement.

The scales employed by Ligeti are largely artificial, though many of them resemble whole tone scales as well as octatonic, pentatonic and modal scales. With the exception of the last note in measures 2-3, the ascending scale in the Baritone II is a whole tone scale (see Example 4-page 36). The short ascending scalar passages in the lower three voices of measures 27-28 and 34-35 are primarily made up of whole steps.
(see Example 9-page 40-41). The melodic passage in the Baritone II part of measure 16 is made up of a pentatonic scale (the traditional "black key" scale) which also occurs in the two baritone voices in the first half of measure 11 (see Example 18-page 48).

The rapid scales of measures 36-39 are made up of various types of scales (Example 16). The ascending scale in the Bass in measure 37 is a mixolydian scale on F# while in measure 38, the Alto I has an ascending octatonic scale on C#. This is followed by the Bass having the exact same scale in the second half of measure 38 with a different enharmonic spelling. Other scales in that measure resemble octatonic scales but contain pitches that obscure their otherwise octatonic construction.
Example 16, “Two Dreams and Little Bat,” mm. 36-39
In measure 39, the scales begin like major and minor scales but as in measure 38, other pitches obscure their construction. As Ligeti gets closer to the climax of the movement at the end of measure 40, he is also getting closer to true diatonic scales. Ligeti also seems to take all of the earlier suggestions of whole tone scales and compresses them into the climactic vertical sonority at the end of measure 40 which is made up entirely of adjacent whole steps (Example 17)

Example 17, “Two Dreams and Little Bat,” mm. 39-40

While the movement may not be tonal, Ligeti seems to concentrate on certain pitches. This use of tonal gestures within an otherwise non-tonal work is a trait seen in *Lontano* and *Lux aeterna* from the 1960s. As Ligeti states, "Although *Lontano*
encompasses the entire chromatic scale, strictly speaking it is based on a diatonic scale. In *Lux aeterna*, tonal focal points are achieved by the repetition of a unison F natural at the beginning (which serves as the first note of the microcanon) and culminates in all voices on A natural at the end of the canon in measure 36-37. Tonal gestures within non-tonality also play an important role in his more contemporaneous *Piano Etudes*, especially the second etude of Book One in which the basic motive is a series of descending perfect fifths.

Pitch repetition and doubling seem to have a background structural purpose in this madrigal. The C natural first heard in measures 1-4 returns in measure 17 and sustains for two and a half measures. This arrival is even more significant because not only is it doubled at the octave between the two alto voices, but the primary melodic voice at that moment, the Baritone II, repeats a C natural (Example 18).

**Example 18, “Two Dreams and Little Bat,” mm.16-17**

![Example 18, “Two Dreams and Little Bat,” mm.16-17](image)

---

The sustained C returns at the coda at measure 41, this time in the Bass and reinforced with the fifth above in the Baritone. It sustains in the Bass for nearly four full measures serving as a pedal point (see Example 14-page 43). The final sonority of the madrigal is built on a low F (see Example 15-page 44) so that one could see the recurring C as a prolonged V leading to the final I in the last measure. While a traditional V-I may not necessarily be heard, Ligeti does use this tonal gesture as a structural device. This is all the more plausible when we consider the pervasive melodic use of descending perfect fifths. In addition to those small scale melodic gestures, Ligeti seems to be organizing the large scale pitch centricity of the madrigal around the descending perfect fifth C – F.

The plausibility of F as the final goal is reinforced by the Bass in measure 7. Not only does the Bass sustain a low F, the lowest sustained pitch in the piece thus far, but if we combine the C and the A of the Baritone I part of measure 7 and note that the Bass moves up a fifth to C at the end of measure 7, we have all of the components of an F major triad (Example 19).

**Example 19, “Two Dreams and Little Bat,” mm 7-8, Baritone I, II, and Bass**

![Example 19, “Two Dreams and Little Bat,” mm 7-8, Baritone I, II, and Bass](image)
Within this larger C to F motion, other more localized pitch centers are suggested. A good example is the downbeat of measure 22 in which we hear B and F# suggesting B as the central pitch. B is reinforced in measures 22 and 23 by the Alto I and Alto II parts which are comprised almost exclusively of pitches from the key of B major (Example 20).

Example 20, “Two Dreams and Little Bat,” mm. 22-23

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B major was hinted at earlier in measures 16 and 17. While C is the important pitch in measure 17 as discussed, the Bass in measures 16 and 17 is comprised exclusively of pitches from B major, cadencing in fact, on a B at the end of measure 17 (Example 21).
Another significant moment begins midway into measure 29 through measure 33 in which the repeated B₃-E₃ descents in the lower three voices imply E as a tonal center in those voices (see Example 9-page 40-41). We can conclude that within the large-scale fifth relationship of C to F that is not fully revealed until the final measure of the work, there is a smaller scale fifth relationship of E to B operating within the work. These large scale fifth relationships are reinforced by the persistent melodic use of descending perfect fifths throughout the movement. The fact that these relationships are present but that actual tonicization does not take place is perhaps what the composer means by “new diatonicism” in which tonal gestures are used to hold the piece together structurally, but actual establishment of key never happens. Figure 5 outlines this framework.
Thematic/Motivic Relationships

The pitch organization of this movement stems from more than the use of perfect 5ths. As the following examples show, closer investigation using pitch class set analysis reveals some interesting relationships. The opening Alto I melody in measures 1-5, in many ways, provides much of the motivic material for the movement. In Example 22a, the melody is broken up into its components, each being identified with a pc set in prime form. (026) occurs three times in this melody. This pc set, along with the descending perfect fifths, returns at measure 41 (the coda) thus rounding out the movement (Example 22c-page 54). Note that in both the first measure of the piece and in measure 41-42, there are two consecutive descending perfect fifths followed by exactly three statements of the (026) set. (The third statement in the coda occurs in the Alto II voice in measure 43). In addition, the rhythmic and melodic contour of the (026) statement in measure 4 is nearly identical to the rhythm and contour of the (026) statements in measures 41-42 (Examples 22a-page 53 and 22c-page 54).

The first measure of the work presents (0257). This set, along with its subset (025) occurs several times throughout the movement as the opening motive of important melodic phrases. There is a clear sense of imitation in the outer voices between the opening Alto I gesture (Example 22a) and the opening Baritone II gesture (Example 22b). Both are (0257) and both contain two descending perfect 5ths. (0257) and the subset (025) also occurs in melodically significant places (Example 23-pages 54-56). The last pc set heard in the Alto I opening melody is (027) in measures 2-3 and in measure 4. This pc set also reappears in several melodic gestures (Example 24-pages 57-58).
Example 22, “Two Dreams and Little Bat,” mm 1-6, Alto I / mm.1-2, Baritone II / mm.41-43, Alto I & II

a) mm 1-6, Alto I

\[\text{(0257)} \quad \text{(026)} \quad \text{(027)} \quad \text{(026)}\]

Descending Perfect 5th

Sev-en sweet sing-ing birds up in a tree; sev-en swift

\[\text{(026)} \quad \text{(027)}\]

Descending Perfect 5th

sail-ing ships white up on the sea;

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b) mm.1-2, Baritone II

\[\text{(0257)}\]

Nine gren-ad- ters,

Descending Perfect 5th

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Example 22 (cont.)

c) “Two Dreams and Little Bat,” mm.41-43, Alto I & II

Example 23, “Two Dreams and Little Bat,” Occurrences of (025) and (0257)

a) mm. 10-12, Alto I, Alto II
Example 23, (cont.)

b) m. 15, Baritone I, Baritone II

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c) m. 16, Baritone II

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d) “Two Dreams and Little Bat,” mm.21-23, Alto I & II

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e) mm.24-25

them: seven pretty little girls with sugar on their lips.

them; seven pretty little girls with sugar on their lips,

tea in

I

that

that I never saw before; nine
Example 24, “Two Dreams and Little Bat,” Occurrences of (027)

a) mm.4-6, Alto I & II

\[ (027) \]

\( \text{sailing ships white up on the sea;} \)

\( \text{seven singing birds;} \)

\[ (027) \]

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b) m.7, Alto II

\[ (027) \]

\( \text{seven bright weathercocks,} \)

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c) mm.11-12, Bass

\[ (027) \]

\( \text{with buttons all complete;} \)

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These examples clearly show that the Alto I melody of the first four measures of the madrigal is a melody whose component parts are seeds from which many of the madrigal's melodic gestures grow. Referring back to Examples 23a, 23b, 23d, 23e-pages 54-56, and 24a-page 57, we also see that, just as he had done with the use of parallel fifths, Ligeti highlights certain pc sets by the use of parallel motion or by putting melodic statements of those sets close together but in different voices (imitation) just as was heard in the opening measure of the piece between the Alto I and Baritone II parts.

"Two Dreams and Little Bat" presents traits which have been a part of Ligeti's compositional technique for decades. The parodying of earlier musical forms is a trait that goes back to his micropolyphonic works of the 1960s in which the tightly knit polyphony of those works draws its influence in part from the music of Ockeghem. In this madrigal, Ligeti parodies the 16th century madrigal with the use of word painting but structurally, the work is more a parody on the 14th century motet. The humorous element of Carroll's parody on "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" and Ligeti's setting it to a
slightly altered version of the well-known melody, is similar to his parodying of the theme to the third movement of Beethoven's *Eroica* symphony in his opera *La Grande Macabre*. As with the cantus firmus in the madrigal, Beethoven's theme as heard in the opera is altered chromatically to give a certain satirical twist to the drama.

2. "Cuckoo in the Pear-Tree"

Overall Structure

As in the previous madrigal, this madrigal uses text by William Brighty Rands, in this case, the poem "Cuckoo in the Pear Tree." This poem leans more towards the entire set’s use of children’s poetry rather than the use of nonsense poetry. A conversation between two animals is fairly typical in children’s literature and as such is not especially nonsensical. This is in contrast to the utter nonsense of Carroll’s “Twinkle Twinkle Little Bat” in the first madrigal. Of special note to this poem is its consistent, cartoon-like “cuckoo” refrain.

The Cuckoo sat in the old pear tree. Cuckoo!  
Raining or snowing naught cared he. Cuckoo!  
Cuckoo, cuckoo, naught cared he.

The Cuckoo flew over a house-top high. Cuckoo!  
"Dear, are you at home, for here am I? Cuckoo!  
Cuckoo, cuckoo, here am I."

"I dare not open the door to you. Cuckoo!  
Perhaps you are not the right Cuckoo? Cuckoo!  
Cuckoo, cuckoo, the right Cuckoo!"

"I am the right Cuckoo, the proper one, Cuckoo!  
For I am my father's only son, Cuckoo!  
Cuckoo, cuckoo, his only son."

"If you are your father's only son-Cuckoo!  
The bobbin pull tightly,  
Come through the door lightly-Cuckoo!"
If you are your father's only son-Cuckoo!
It must be you, the only one-
Cuckoo, cuckoo, my own Cuckoo! Cuckoo!

In many ways, Ligeti’s setting of this poem is simpler than the first madrigal. It uses only the one text, its rhythmic and phrase structure is not multi-layered as in the first madrigal, and its melodic and intervallic structure is audibly clearer.

The work is laid out in three large sections (Figure 6). Section I, measures 1 – 31 is marked by the use of the movement’s first theme heard in the Baritone I and II (referred to as theme a). Interpolated between the statements of a, is a short motive that represents the “cuckoo” calls at the end of each line of the poem. This “cuckoo” motive is referred to as motive b. After measure 31, this theme is no longer heard. The theme marked c (Example 31-pages 72-73) contrasts a in its use of parallel tritones and, on several occasions sung in a “distorted nasal voice” as indicated in the score.

Section II begins at measure 32 and is marked by shorter phrases and an increasing use of the cuckoo motive in all of the voices. Section III begins at measure 64 with motive b heard in multiple voices but “out of phase” with each other (refer to Example 26-page 64). At measure 53 in section II, Ligeti uses sustained tones to fill out the texture (indicated s.t.). The climax of the madrigal occurs at measure 78-79 towards the end of the madrigal. As the analysis will show, Ligeti unifies all of the themes by the use of recurring intervals, namely the major third, perfect fifth, and tritone.

Because of the clarity of thematic material and the fact that all of the themes are stated independently of each other, there is a clarity of phrase structure in this madrigal that is completely obfuscated in the first madrigal because of its complex polyphonic and polymetric layers.
**Key**
a – first theme (folk tune derivative)  
b – cuckoo motive  
b’ – cuckoo motive extended  
c – parallel tritones  
c’ – related to c but different  
c.d.n. – parallel tritones with distorted nasal voice  
c.t. – chord tone  
d – solo melody  
x – additional melodic material  
s.t. – sustained tones

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<th>Section I</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phrase Length</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Alto I | b___ | b___ | b’___ | b___ |
| Alto II | a___ | a___ | a___ | a___ |
| Tenor | b___ | b___ | b’___ | b___ |
| Baritone I | a___ | a___ | a___ |
| Baritone II | a___ |
| Bass | c___ | d.n.___ | c___ | c___ | c___ | c___ | b___ | x | s.t. | b___ | x___ |

**Text**
The cuckoo sat in the old pear-tree
Cuckoo! raining or snowing naught cared he

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phrase Length</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Alto I | b___ | c’___ | c___ | d.n.___ | c___ | c___ | c___ | c___ | b___ | x | s.t. | b___ | x___ |
| Alto II | b___ | b___ | b___ | b___ | b___ | x | s.t. | b___ | x___ |
| Tenor | b___ | b___ | b___ | b___ | x | s.t. | x | b’fragment | x | s.t. | x | s.t. | x | s.t. | x | s.t. | x |
| Baritone I | b___ | c’___ | b___ | b___ | b’___ | b___ |
| Baritone II | b___ | c’___ | b___ |
| Bass | b___ | c___ | d.n.___ | c___ | c’___ | b___ | b___ | s.t. | d___ | s.t._ |

**Text**
The right cuckoo
I am the right cuckoo
I am the right cuckoo
for I am my father’s only son

**Figure 6, Flow Chart of “Cuckoo in the Pear-Tree”**
Text:

If you are your father’s only son,
It must be you

The only cuckoo

Figure 6, (cont.)

Bb major seventh, second inversion
In examining the time signature, once again we see a seemingly complex bi-meter: $\frac{3}{4}$ with the metronome marking $\frac{\text{dotted quarter}}{\text{quarter}} = 180 / \text{quarter} = 240$. In the first madrigal, there were clearly two different metric planes, a triple meter in the upper voices and a quadruple meter in the lower voices with the Tenor serving as a fulcrum between the two. The meter in the second madrigal is primarily $\frac{3}{4}$. The purpose of the $\frac{4}{4}$ meter is to designate the recurring "cuckoo" motive which almost invariably occurs as two dotted eighth notes followed by one or more rests. This “cuckoo” motive (motive b) repeats throughout the movement. Ligeti may prefer the quadruple meter to give the sense of a random birdcall occurring in between the otherwise melodic phrases (theme a) which are in triple meter (Example 25). Later in the madrigal, Ligeti adds to the rhythmic variety in the Alto I, II, Tenor, and Bass to give the sense of multiple birds cuckooing independent of each other (Example 26-page 64)

**Example 25, “Cuckoo in the Pear-Tree,” mm. 1-7**
Example 26, “Cuckoo in the Pear Tree,” mm. 67-70, b motive boxed, s.t. circled

b ("cuckoo” motive)
The use of multiple meters in the first madrigal parodied the complex rhythmic structure of the medieval motet. In the second madrigal, the multiple meters do not serve the same structural purpose. Rather, the conflicting meters serve to highlight the word painting of the cuckoo calls by offsetting its rhythm from that of the rest of the text. This mirrors the poem in that just as the cuckoo motive recurs throughout the music, it is also a refrain at the end of each line of poetry.

While this movement is less obviously tied to earlier forms at least in its rhythmic structure, Ligeti’s vocal setting of bird sounds can be seen as a parody of the sixteenth century Parisian chanson (which itself is a parody type genre), such as Janequin’s *Le Chant des oyseaux*. In the passages where the cuckoos are actually speaking, Ligeti indicates in the score, "distorted, nasal voice." (He uses a similar indication in the first madrigal at measures 29-33.) In the second madrigal, this device highlights the cartoon-like nature of the poem in its depiction of birds talking.

The climax of this movement is reached by the use of dynamic emphasis and by all sounding voices arriving on a single sonority in measure 77 (Example 27). There follows a subito *p* dynamic in measure 79 which is sustained to the end of the madrigal. This shape, in which the climax is reached after the midpoint of the work followed by a subito *p* dynamic, is one that Ligeti uses in the first four madrigals of the set.
Example 27, “Cuckoo in the Pear-Tree,” mm. 76 to the end showing \textit{fff} peak followed by \textit{subito p} and the final Bb seventh chord of the movement.
Melodic/Harmonic Structure

A fairly regular construction is exhibited in the first thirty measures of the piece. The first melodic theme in the Baritone I (theme a) with its “harmony” in the Baritone II, appears five times with interpolations of the "cuckoo" motive (motive b) in the Alto II and Tenor (see Example 25-pages 63-64). Englbrecht points out that the Baritone I theme is based on the German Medieval folk tune *Grüß Gott, du schöner Maien* (May God greet you beautiful month of May) (Example 28).73

Example 28, German folk-tune and “Cuckoo in the Pear Tree,” mm. 1-3 Baritone I

a) German folk tune

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Grüß Gott, du schöner Maien}
\end{array}
\]

b) “Cuckoo in the Pear-Tree,” mm. 1-3, Baritone I – theme a

\[
\begin{array}{c}
The cuck - oo sat in the old pear - tree,
\end{array}
\]

Englbrecht also points out that, in the use of this folksong about spring time, Ligeti plays on the meeting of the cuckoo and its lover in Rands’ poem with the erotic connotations of springtime and the month of May.74

In four of the five statements of this theme, Ligeti uses the first four notes of the folk tune verbatim (scale degrees 5-1-2-3). The accompanying Baritone II part hides any

73 Englbrecht, 57.
74 Ibid.
tonal implications of the Baritone I in that its first four notes are scale degrees 6-5-1-7 of the key one whole step lower than that of the Baritone I. The potential for any tonal reference is obscured by chromaticism in both voices from the fifth pitch onward (Example 29).

**Example 29, “Cuckoo in the Pear-Tree,” Baritone I and Baritone II motive - a statements**

**a)**

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>unis.</th>
<th>P5</th>
<th>M3</th>
<th>P5</th>
<th>M3</th>
<th>P5</th>
<th>°5</th>
<th>m6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measures 1-3</td>
<td>folk based theme</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

```
The cuckoo sat in the old pear-tree,
```

**“harmonization” of theme**

**b)**

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>unis.</th>
<th>P5</th>
<th>M3</th>
<th>P5</th>
<th>M3</th>
<th>P5</th>
<th>°5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measures 4-7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

```

```
```

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Example 29 (cont.)

c) Intervalically, the fifth statement of a deviates more from the original folk tune (Example 29e).

```
measures 12-15

unis.   P5  M3  P5  M3  P5   °5   m6

The cuck-oo flew over a house-top high.
```

d) `I dare not open the door to you, `mezza voce, unsurely

```
measures 26-28

unis.   P5  M3  P5  M3  P5  °5  m6

```

```
measures 29-31

unis.  P5  M3  P5  M3  P5  °5  m6

perhaps you are not the right cuck-oo?`
```

Interventially, The fifth statement of a deviates more from the original folk tune (Example 29e).
The content and order of intervals between the two baritone parts is common to all five statements of a. Referring back to the previous examples, with minor exceptions, the order of intervals between the two Baritone parts is: Unison-perfect fifth-major third-perfect fifth-major third-perfect fifth-diminished fifth-minor sixth. In mm. 29-31, another major third is included before the diminished fifth. This is another example of Ligeti's "new diatoncisim" in which the hallmark intervals of tonality, the major third and the perfect fifth are exploited, but in a context that evades traditional tonicization.

As seen in the next example, the “cuckoo” sounds (b) which occur between the statements of a, are made up of parallel major thirds between the Alto I and Alto II voices. The cuckoo sounds themselves are descending minor thirds. In measures 10-12, the cuckoo voices actually become melodic (indicated b’—“cuckoo motive extended” in Figure 6-pages 61-62). Even in these more melodic measures, Ligeti continues using parallel major thirds, followed by a tritone, and ends on a minor sixth, simply a major third inverted. This same motive b’ occurs in measures 22-26. The melodic fragment (b’) that occurs in measures 10-12 and measures 25-26, also occurs in measures 53-54 between the Baritone I and II voices (Example 30).
Example 30, “Cuckoo in the Pear-Tree,” Occurrences of motives b and b’

a) mm. 6-12, Alto II and Tenor

\[ \text{diminished fourths (major thirds)} \]

\[ \text{tritone} \]

b) mm. 22-26, Alto II and Tenor

\[ \text{diminished fourths (major thirds)} \]

\[ \text{tritone} \]

\[ \text{minor sixth} \]
Example 30, (cont.)

c) mm. 50-54, Baritone I and Baritone II

Between the third and fourth statement of theme a with their subsequent motive b interpolations, the Alto I and Bass sing a third theme, theme c, which portrays the talking cuckoo (Example 31a). Theme c uses the least tonally oriented interval, the tritone. Theme c also occurs in measures 36-46 (Example 31b).

Example 31, “Cuckoo in the Pear-Tree,” Occurrences of theme c

a) mm. 17-21, Alto I and Bass
Example 31, (cont.)

b) mm. 35-46

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In measure 47-48, the two Alto voices continue with parallel tritones but this time a third
voice, the Bass, is added with a series of perfect fifths (Example 32).

**Example 32, “Cuckoo in the Pear-Tree,” mm. 47-48**

A harmonic sequential reference is suggested between the Alto I, Alto II and Bass in
measures 47-48. If the B natural and E natural in the Bass of measure 48 (circled) were
each a half step higher, (C natural and F natural) the progression of vertical sonorities
would produce a descending sequence of dominant seventh chords.
Based on the overwhelming prevalence of the major third, tritone, and minor sixth in the three primary themes of this madrigal, it be can be concluded that these three intervals serve as fundamental building blocks of this madrigal. The importance of the major third, tritone and minor sixth in this madrigal is all the more convincing when one considers Griffith’s observations of Ligeti’s Piano Etude No. 1 Désordre, written around the same time as the Nonsense Madrigals, where the interval between the two hands in the first segment of the melody is always a minor sixth, tritone, or major third.75

There are several places in this madrigal where voices hold out a sonority over two or more measures (referred to as s.t. in Figure 6-pages 61-62). In two of these cases, Ligeti uses the perfect fifth and the major third to create these vertical sonorities though not in the context of a triad (Example 33).

---

75 Griffiths, 119.
Example 33, “Cuckoo in the Pear-Tree,” Occurrences of sustained tones (s.t.)

a) mm. 52-56

Intervallic content of s.t.:

- Bb – D = Major Third
- C – G = Perfect Fifth
- G – D = Perfect Fifth
b) mm. 63-70

Example 33, (cont.)

Intervallic content of s.t.:
C – G = Perfect Fifth
G – B = Major Third

Cuck-oo, cuck-oo, cuck-oo, cuck-oo, cuck-oo, cuck-oo,

Intervalllic content of s.t.:
Example 33, (cont.)

c) mm. 76 to end

Intervallic content of s.t.:
C – E = Major Third
A – E = Perfect Fifth

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The primary intervals used harmonically in this movement are the perfect fifth, the major third, its inversion the minor sixth, and the tritone. Many people, including Ligeti himself observed the consistent use of certain intervals in his works from the 1960s and 1970s. Ligeti has referred to these intervals as “typical Ligeti signals.” This favoring of certain intervals reinforces the conclusion made about recurring intervals in this madrigal considering the recurring use of the major third, and tritone in the first of Ligeti’s Piano Etudes. These same intervals play an even greater structural role in the fifth madrigal, “The Lobster Quadrille.” Perhaps the major third, minor sixth, tritone and, possibly the perfect fifth, are the “Ligeti signals” of the late 1980s exemplified by the Nonsense Madrigals and the Piano Etudes both from the late 1980s.

In some ways, “Cuckoo in the Pear-Tree” is a parody on tonality itself in the way Ligeti uses intervals and tonal references. There is irony in the prevalence of perfect fifths and major thirds, the basic components of a major triad, the signature of tonality, being juxtaposed with parallel tritones, an interval that, because of its central location within the octave, has absolutely no tonal orientation.

3. “The Alphabet”

Overall Structure

“The Alphabet” is the most unique of the set in that it uses no poetic text but rather the letters of the English alphabet set using their phonetic spelling. Thus, the letter “A” is indicated in the score as “ei,” “B” is written as “bi,” “C” is written as “si,” etc. Because of the lack of any semantic meaning, this madrigal can be viewed as the most nonsensical of the set.

76 Ligeti, Ligeti in Conversation, 28-29.
Ligeti’s use of semantically meaningless texts has precedence in his works Aventures and Nouvelles aventures discussed earlier. The entire text of these two works, meant to be performed as a pair, is a contrived, semantically meaningless language made up of phonetic spellings. The effect is both humorous and serious. The composer states, “Listening to Aventures for the first time, you at once become aware of its funny side. Later, when you have heard it several times and are familiar with the music, you may come to find it terrifying.”77 As Griffiths states, “Indeed, one of the most distinctive features of his output is the Aventures principle: that music has words (expressive gestures) but no language.”78 This “Aventures principle” is at the heart of “The Alphabet.”

In “The Alphabet,” Ligeti reins in the emotional palette by using actual letter names rather than invented syllables as in Aventures. While the letters are used exclusively as sound, one might make certain visual or psychological associations with each letter. Ligeti stated some ten years prior to the Nonsense Madrigals:

In general, my works abound in images, visual associations, associations of colours, optical effects and forms...I am inclined to synaesthetic perception. I associate sounds with colours and shapes. Like Rimbaud, I feel that all letters have a colour.79

While the concept of setting the alphabet to music for purely aesthetic purposes might be considered humorous (and humor is certainly an important part of the Nonsense Madrigals), in "The Alphabet" Ligeti seems to juxtapose emotional depth with humor. As stated, this is true in Aventures and Nouvelles aventures. It is very much true as well in his opera Le Grande Macabre where scenes of great terror combine with comedy.

77 Ligeti, Ligeti in Conversation, 20.
78 Griffiths, 45.
79 Ligeti, 57-58.
Even in the Requiem, Ligeti is able to present The Last Judgment with a tasteful element of ironic humor:

I am thinking of Brueghel and especially of Bosch, whose paintings present a mixture of fear and grotesque humour; you find the same mood in his pictures that do not represent the Last Judgment, such as the Garden of Earthly Delights in Prado. In Kafka’s writings too, horror is often laced with humour.80

The Nonsense Madrigals are imbued with irony but unlike the other madrigals, where textual phrases combine to have semantic meaning, in “The Alphabet” only the sounds of the English language and not the language itself are heard so that the meaning and psychological associations are left purely to the listener’s imagination. The piece begins serenely on two sustained pitches at pppp and builds in chromaticism and tension to the peak at measure 49 marked fffff followed by a subito pp three measures later. The contrasting moods of the opening compared to the climax are as divergent as humor and horror.

The form of the movement is an arch form which is reinforced by its dynamic scheme (pppp - fffff - pp). The texture of the movement involves the slow buildup and transformation of sonorities around tonal centers leading to the peak at measure 49 (Figure 7-page 83). The piece opens with tied whole notes centered on B. Sonorities gradually lead to measure 24 which is marked by a rapid crescendo to f and a sudden shift of key area centered on Bb. After measure 24, the tonal references begin to shift at a somewhat faster rate and at measure 34 the first signs of melodic material appear.

Measure 36 is the next pivotal point where the voices suddenly arrive on an Eb minor triad marked fppp. From this point to measure 49, the note durations gradually become shorter and more disparate among the voices. The result is that the declamation

80 Ibid., 46.
of each letter becomes closer together. This increase in rhythmic/textual activity is accompanied by an increase in chromaticism and a gradual crescendo leading to the $f_{ffff}$ peak at measure 49. After measure 50, the tension is released by a return to $pp$, a relaxing of the chromaticism with a return to tonal centers, and longer note values in all the voices. The piece concludes quietly on a C major 7, 9 chord held for three measures (Figure 7).
Figure 7, Flow Chart of “The Alphabet”
From the outset of “The Alphabet,” Ligeti seems to be influenced by his own earlier music in ways other than just the text. This piece is very much in the style of *Lux aeterna* and *Atmospheres* in its slowly evolving sound mass. The opening, in fact is very much like the opening of *Lux aeterna* in that both pieces start *pp* from a single kernel from which the texture slowly thickens. *Lux aeterna* starts from a single F4 in the Soprano 1 followed by voices gradually entering, one by one on the same F before each voice then moves down one 1/2 step to E natural. *Lux aeterna* uses canons in which the same pitches occur among the voices in the same order but the durations vary between the voices (an example of Ligeti’s micropolyphony). Thus, chromatic clusters slowly build as the canon progresses (Figure 8 and Example 34).

![Figure 8, Lux aeterna-first eleven notes of canon](image)

84
Example 34, Lux aeterna mm. 1-8 working out first eleven notes of canon (soprano 1 is dux)
Ligeti adopts a similar concept in the opening measures of “The Alphabet.” By assigning a single pitch or set of pitches to each letter of the alphabet, and by starting each voice or group of voices one after the other, there is a buildup of pitches, in an established order, not unlike the buildup of pitches resulting from the canonic techniques used in *Lux aeterna*. Figure 9 shows this order of pitches/sets of pitches and the alphabet letter to which they are assigned. Example 35 shows how this order of pitches/letter names is worked out in the opening measures of “The Alphabet.” Figure 9 shows pitch-letter assignments only through “i” because after letter “i” Ligeti is less formulaic about pitch-letter name assignments.

![Figure 9, Pitch-letter name assignments in “The Alphabet”](image)

Figure 9, Pitch-letter name assignments in “The Alphabet”
Example 35, “The Alphabet,” mm. 1-23

III. The Alphabet

Commissioned for the King’s Singers
with the assistance of a grant from the Barlow Endowment for Music Composition
at Brigham Young University
and the Berlin Festival

György Ligeti
1988

B-C#-D: B minor

B-C#-D-D#: B minor/major
Example 35, (cont.)

All voices, except Alto II sustaining [i] vowel

A-B-C#-D#-E-F#: A Lydian (measures 15-23)

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Before moving to “ef,” Ligeti exploits the [i] vowel common to “bi,” “si,” “di” and, of course, “i.” In measure 23, all but one of the voices are singing the [i] vowel from one of those four letters (see previous example). There is a crescendo to f in measure 24 (the first dynamic greater than p) followed by all voices rearticulating [i] on a three-note sonority (Bb F C), marked subito ppp (Example 36).

Example 36, “The Alphabet,” mm. 24-28

D natural completes Bb Major triad with ninth (C natural)

addition of G natural creates Bb 6, 9 chord

Bb F C sonority

f - ppp
In measures 22-26, Ligeti continues to sustain the [i] vowel by repeating the [i] vowel-based letters including the pitches that were initially assigned to them (Example 35-pages 87-88, Example 36-page 89, and Figure 9-page 86). He also postpones letter “ef”, which does not contain the [i] vowel, and instead proceeds in measure 28 to “di” which does contain [i].

In measure 35, there is a similar gesture to that of measure 24 in which all voices arrive on a vertical sonority, in this case, an Eb minor triad in second inversion with the dynamic marking \textit{fppp}. What follows is a series of subtle crescendos. Beginning in measure 44, the note durations become shorter, the pitch movement more chromatic, the tessitura of the voices becomes higher, and the crescendos become more intense. This tension builds to measure 49 where the upper voices are at \textit{ffff}. Just as in \textit{Aventures} and \textit{Nouvelles aventures} where Ligeti uses question marks and exclamation marks along with the nonsense syllables as indications of voice inflection and character, Ligeti uses exclamation marks and question marks in measures 47-49 to reinforce the growing tension in the music. Here is another example of Griffiths’ “music having words (expressive gestures) but no language.” Like the previous two madrigals, this climax occurs roughly two thirds into the piece, is marked by a forte dynamic, and is followed by soft dynamics in measure 52 to the end of the movement (Example 37).
Example 37, “The Alphabet,” mm. 34-52

Eb minor triad $f-ppp$
(compare to measure 24)

C Major #11
Example 37, (cont.)

- Example text with musical notation

- Compare to measures 36-44 from Atmospheres (see next example)

- Peak of movement
In measure 49, the rising tessitura of the previous measures is answered by the lower three voices in the same measure, now at $f\text{fffffff}$ and in the lowest part of their range. Though less extreme, this passage is similar to the passage in *Atmospheres* where, as Griffiths describes, “screeching high piccolos are cut off and answered by double basses from six octaves below” (Example 38). 81

---

81 Griffiths, 33.
The lower voices at measure 49, singing at the bottom of their range, at an almost impossibly loud dynamic level, are made all the more humorous by the plosive sounds of “dablju!” In fact, Ligeti takes advantage of the moment by articulating this letter before “vi” which is a slightly more innocuous sounding letter. Ligeti has used this low tessitura vocal writing before in the Requiem when, in the Kyrie, the basses drop down to a C#2 and D#2 dyad on “Domine.” This use of such a low register in the voices further reflects Ligeti’s interest in Ockeghem who was unique among fifteenth century composers in his extending the range of the bass.82

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82 Bauer, 100.
Harmonic Structure

While the slowly building sonorities of this madrigal refer back to *Lux aeterna* and *Atmospheres* and the wordless text harkens back to *Aventures* and *Nouvelles aventures*, “The Alphabet” is not simply a pastiche of Ligeti’s style from the 1960s. The pitch organization, in particular, is very much in keeping with Ligeti’s contemporaneous techniques.

Unlike the aforementioned works from the 1960s, this madrigal contains brief tonal centers. One of the more unique elements is the use of sonorities often associated with jazz. The most striking example is the final chord of the piece which is a C Major 7, 9 chord in second inversion. Ligeti’s interest in jazz harmonies is apparent in some of his Piano Etudes written around the same time as the madrigals. As Ligeti states in reference to the etudes, “Jazz...played a big role for me, above all the poetry of Thelonius Monk and Bill Evans.”

In many ways, this madrigal is the most tonal of all the madrigals. Tonal centricity in this madrigal is achieved generally, by one of three methods:

1) Tonicization by gradual change of pitch
2) Tonicization by assertion
3) Tonicization by function

In the first method, sonorities gradually build around a tonality, or pitches from one sonority are gradually eliminated, or pitches move one by one to another tonality. An example of method 1 tonicization is the opening of the piece in which sonorities...

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83 Ligeti, liner notes to Sony SK 62308, 1997, compact disk.
84 These terms, “tonicization by assertion and tonicization by function” are adapted from Kofi Agawu’s article “The Musical Language of Kindertotenlieder No. 2,” in *The Journal of Musicology* 2 (Winter 1983): 81-93.
gradually build towards B minor (measures 1-9), then B major/minor (measures 10-14) eventually transforming to A Lydian (measure 15—see Example 35-pages 87-88). In the second method, tonicization by assertion, a tonality arrives unexpectedly and without preparation. In this piece, tonality by assertion is usually accompanied by a strong change in dynamic to help highlight the change. The *subito piano* in measure 24, in which the Bb is the central pitch is an example of method 2 tonicization (Example 36-page 89). The third method of tonicization is in some ways the most unique element in this madrigal since it involves standard dominant to tonic motion. Examples of this method will be identified shortly.

In the opening six measures, marked *pppp*, B and C# are the only two pitches heard. In measure 7, D natural is added to make a three-note sonority; the first three notes of the B minor scale (pc set 013). This sonority is repeated in measure eight where, as Englbrecht points out, the dynamic level has increased to *pp*, which helps to highlight the structural importance of this moment.\(^{85}\) In measure 11, D sharp is added to the sonority. Since this cluster, BC#DD# has B in the lowest voice, B remains as the tonal center but the quality (major/minor) is obscured by the split third. Measure 11 sounds as if B major has been superimposed over B minor. This D sharp also serves as a gradual change of pitch to the next key area in measure 15.

In measure 15, the D sharp continues and the D natural is eliminated (method 1 tonicization). Also in this measure, the Alto voices have E and A. Now the sonority is ABC#D#E with A on the bottom. As Englbrecht points out, this is now A Lydian.\(^{86}\) This tonal center continues through measure 22 where another note from the A Lydian mode, F#, is added in the Alto I voice (Example 35-pages 87-88).

---

\(^{85}\) Englbrecht, 64.  
\(^{86}\) Ibid., 64.
As discussed earlier, there is a crescendo leading to the subito ppp sonority at the end of measure 24 (Example 36-page 89). The crescendo, beginning in measure 23, is built on the A Lydian cluster ABC#D#EF# and is immediately followed by the three note sonority of Bb, F and C. At this point, Bb is heard as a tonal center. This is the first example of method 2 tonicization by assertion. Unlike the gradual and subtle move from B to A Lydian at measure 15, the arrival on Bb is sudden without any pitches common to the A Lydian cluster in the previous measure. Bb asserts itself in measure 24 without any preparation leading up to it. As Englbrecht points out, the D natural along with letter “bi” to which the D was initially assigned in measure 7, returns in measure 26 in the Alto I and Baritone II voices. This D, combined with Bb, F, and C completes the chord so that the sonority is a Bb 9 chord. In measure 27, G is added to make a Bb 6, 9 chord (Example 36-page 89).

In measure 28, we see the first tonicization by function (method 3). The D natural in the Alto II of measure 28 slips down to a C# (enharmonic equivalent of Db) and at the same time the Bass goes from the sustained Bb from measure 24 down to Eb creating with the other voices, an Eb 7, 9, 13 chord. The Bb 6, 9 chord of measures 26-28 moving to the Eb 7, 9, 13 at the end of measure 28 is a clear dominant-tonic motion using jazz harmonizations. The dominant seventh harmonization of Eb, being preceded by a Bb chord, suggests a brief circle of fifths progression (Example 39).

---

87 Ibid., 65.
Example 39, “The Alphabet,” mm. 24-28

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Bb 6, 9  
Eb 7, 9, 13
What actually follows is a hybrid of method 1 techniques and method 3 techniques. In measures 29-31, while the Eb is held in the Bass, pitches from the next key area begin to infiltrate the texture (the E natural of measure 30 and the A natural of measure 31). This suggests method 1 tonicization. At the end of measure 31, the Bass slips down to a D natural. This D with A and C above it, suggests a D dominant seventh chord, without the third (V7 of G). This suggests a method 3 tonicization (Example 40).

The new tonality here is G major. While Ligeti maintains the notes of the D7 chord in the lower voices, the upper voices one by one sing D, G, and, now into measure 32, B natural so that the resolution to the I chord happens within the sustained dominant seventh chord. This B natural in the Alto I moves up to a D in measure 34 and down to an A in measure 35 and is marked molto espressivo. This set of pitches, pc set (025), is the first purely melodic gesture of the piece. During this melodic gesture, the D of the Bass has given way to the C in the Baritone II (mm. 32-33) but the melodic gesture of measure 34 keeps our ears focused on G major. When we reach measure 35, the harmony is essentially a D 7 sus. chord. In fact, it would seem quite natural for the A in the Alto I, the final note of the melodic gesture, to resolve down to G (Example 40).
Example 40, “The Alphabet,” mm. 29-38

G Major

(025) melodic gesture

D 7 (V7)

D 7 sus. (V of G)

Eb minor (method 2 tonicization)

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Instead, we have another tonicization by assertion (method 2) with the crescendo to the Eb minor second inversion chord of measure 36. This is also the second forte of the piece, measure 24 being the first. The two sonorities at measure 24-26 (Bb 9 chord) and measure 36 (Eb minor triad) are pivot points in the madrigal. In addition to asserting new tonics and having a similar f-p dynamic shape, they show a large-scale underlying tonality for the madrigal in which the key of Eb has a central role (measure 24 is V, measure 36 is I). As we saw in the first madrigal with the B-E and the C-F large-scale key relationships, there is a large-scale tonal movement in this madrigal involving Eb that will continue to unfold through the movement.

At the end of measure 38, B natural and E natural enter into the texture in the Tenor and Bass voice respectively (Example 41). This method 1 tonicization brings us to the downbeat of measure 40 which is an E 9, 11 chord sustained from the previous measure. This is followed immediately by an A Major 7 chord in the second half of measure 40. This is a clear method 3 (V-I) modulation to A major. In measures 40-41, the Alto I sings a transposed/retrograde form of the melodic gesture of measures 32-35 (pc set 025), again marked molto espressivo. This time Ligeti adds a counter melody in the Alto II. This counter melody, E-G-F#, is pc set (013). The first three notes of the movement, B-C#-D as heard in measures 1-8 are also pc set (013). This set, used melodically, will serve an important function in the measures leading to the climax of measure 49.
Example 41, “The Alphabet,” mm. 34-43

E natural and B natural begins method 1 tonicization

E minor

(025) melodic gesture in A1 (transposition and retrograde of gesture in measures 24-36) with (013) counter melody in AII.

E 7, 9, 11
(V)

A Major 7
(I)

(method 3 tonicization)

C Major #11 (method 2 tonicization)
Measure 38 begins a series of crescendos leading to measure 49 (refer again to Example 37-pages 91-93). The first crescendo leads to a C major #11 chord in measures 42-43, asserting C as tonic. Note that the F# again suggests Lydian mode. As the crescendo and rhythmic activity increases in measures 44-49, the voices ascend chromatically with occasional whole steps (Example 42). Ligeti also uses the (013) gesture heard as an ascending minor third followed by descending minor second as in the Alto II counter melody in measures 40-42.
Example 42, “The Alphabet,” mm. 44 -51 – (013) gesture circled; whole and half steps boxed

C minor triad

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The chord that is heard on the downbeat of measure 49 is a C minor triad in second inversion. Ligeti established C in measures 42-43 (the C major #11 chord), followed it with essentially chromatic sonorities in measures 45-48 only to return to C (C minor) at the climax. As mentioned, C is the ultimate goal as heard in the C Major 7, 9 second inversion of the final three measures of the work. This final chord is preceded by a D# major triad in first inversion (enharmonic equivalent of Eb) in measures 57-58 (Example 43).

Example 43, “The Alphabet,” mm. 57- end
This final Eb-C gesture completes the underlying tonal movement of the work. The first tonal assertion was in measure 24 with a Bb 9 chord that turned out to be the V of Eb (measure 28). This Eb is asserted again in measure 36 to be followed by C in measure 42. C is again asserted at the climax in measure 49. This tonal relationship (C-Eb) climaxes at measure 49 since the C minor triad contains Eb (Example 42-page 104).

While other tonal centers are suggested in this piece (B minor, A Lydian, G major, etc.), Eb and C serve a larger scale structural function: their tonalities occur throughout the work, they are the only two tonal centers arrived at by assertion, and their arrivals occur at pivotal points in the work (usually reinforced by a strong dynamic). Their importance is further affirmed by the final “cadence” of the piece; Eb (measures 57-58) – C (measures 59-end). Figure 10 shows the tonal/harmonic layout of the work. In this diagram, open note heads are used to designate key areas and/or harmonies. Filled in note heads are used to designate gradual pitch changes from one sonority or key to another. Slurs indicate that pitches of one sonority continue to sound as other pitches are introduced. Dotted slurs indicate only some pitches of a sonority continue as other pitches are introduced. Chord names are indicated using jazz-chord nomenclature.
Figure 10, Tonal Layout of “The Alphabet”

Tonicization Types:

1. Gradual change of pitch
2. Assertion
3. Function
As shown, “The Alphabet” is unique among the six *Nonsense Madrigals*. Other madrigals in this set have characteristics that suggest parody on compositional practices of the Renaissance, particularly on the work’s namesake, madrigals. The influences of “The Alphabet” point, instead, to Ligeti himself. The purely phonetic text is clearly related to his earlier vocal set *Aventures* and *Nouvelles Aventures*. The almost static sustained quality marked by the slow build up of sonorities in a canonic-like method is a return, albeit with fresh insight, to his “floating, fluctuating” sound masses found in works like *Atmospheres* and *Lux aeterna*. The austerity and sublimity of these two works from the 1960s, has in the 1980s, returned in a context of nonsense.

“The Alphabet” is a parody on Ligeti himself. The expressive/psychological extremes of the work (humor plus horror), echo Bauer’s definition of parody as being “marked by a range of intent, from the serious to the gently mocking.” As Griffiths writes, “Ligeti’s capacity for self-mockery is rare among composers, and endearing.”

4. “Flying Robert”

Overall Structure

The fourth madrigal is unique in that its text is an English translation of a German text. The poem titled “The Story of Flying Robert” is from the collection *Der Struwwelpeter* by Dr. Heinrich Hoffman. It was translated into English in 1848 thus placing it within the Victorian time frame of the other texts:

> When the rain comes tumbling down,  
> In the country or the town,  
> All good little girls and boys  
> Stay at home and mind their toys.  
> Robert thought, “No, when it pours,  
> It is better out of doors.”

---

88 Ligeti, 14.  
89 Bauer, 36.  
90 Griffiths, 39.
Rain it did, and in a minute,
Bob was in it.
Here you see him, silly fellow,
Underneath his red umbrella.
What a wind! Oh! How it whistles
Through the trees and flow’rs and thistles!
It has caught his red umbrella;
Now look at him, silly fellow,
Up he flies
To the skies.
No one heard his screams and cries,
Through the clouds the rude wind bore him,
And his hat flew on before him.
Soon they got to such a height,
They were nearly out of sight!
And his hat went up so high,
That it nearly touch’d the sky.
No one ever yet could tell,
Where they stopp’d or where they fell:
Only, this one thing is plain,
Bob was never seen again!

Hoffman, a German physician and writer, published the collection of poems, Der *Struwwelpeter* in 1845 though its title (translated “Slovenly Peter”) was not used until the third edition. Dr. Hoffman put the collection together as a gift for his three-year old son. It is a collection of short poems meant to warn children of the consequences of disobedience. The influence came from Dr. Hoffman’s own experiences with his younger patients.

The title of the collection refers to the fictional character Peter who refused to comb his hair and cut his nails. The collection is full of obstinate children like Peter who, because of their disobedience, pay a price. Sometimes they pay with their life as in “The Story of Flying Robert.” In this poem, Robert, after refusing to return indoors as a storm approaches, is swept away in the storm never to be seen again.
Other poems in the collection are even more violent like “The Dreadful Story of Pauline and the Matches.” In this poem, young Pauline, having been reminded by her own cats that her parents forbade her to play with matches, decides to strike a match anyway. Her initial enthusiasm turns to horror when the flame catches her apron and, as the poem states:

So she was burnt with all her clothes,
And arms and hands, and eyes and nose;
Till she had nothing more to lose
Except her little scarlet shoes;
And nothing else but these was found
Among her ashes on the ground.

Hoffman’s collection had the clear intention of scaring young children into compliance. It was apparently quite popular in Victorian times, having been translated into some thirty languages.

In his use of Hoffman’s “The Story of Flying Robert,” we can again see Ligeti’s penchant for combining humor and horror. The innocent image of little boys and girls playing with their toys is contrasted with the terror of little Bob who, choosing to continue to play despite inclement weather is carried off into the wind screaming never to be seen again. This image of a boy being carried off into the wind is also quite fantastical and, as such, nonsensical.

Ligeti indicates under the title of this madrigal that the work is a passacaglia. Unlike the traditional definition of this form, in which the passacaglia theme is heard as a single line (usually in the bass), the repeating figure to which Ligeti refers (referred to here as $p$) occurs in a three voice texture thus giving the passacaglia both a melodic and a harmonic structure. This theme is first heard in the Baritone I, II and Bass voices.
In addition to \( p \), there is a recurring melody that functions as the primary melodic theme of the madrigal (referred to as \( a \)). This theme is first heard in the Tenor. A two voice recurring secondary theme (referred to as \( b \)) occurs beginning in measure 8 in the Alto I and II. The third theme (referred to as \( w \) for “wind”) is arguably the most salient in its vivid word painting of the wind.

The movement can be broken up into three sections of unequal length. Like the previous movements, there is a gradual crescendo and buildup of musical activity leading to an extremely loud peak (\( ffffffff \) at measures 39-40) followed immediately by subito \( pp \). This build up to measure 39 is also marked by a gradual dissipation of the passacaglia. After this peak, a short second section leads to measure 48. Measure 48 begins the third section which is marked by a return to the passacaglia in the lower voices and theme \( a \) in the upper voices but this time theme \( a \) is in retrograde. Thus, the work has a rounded form in which the third section brings back material from the opening.

The phrase structure of this madrigal is less homogenous among the six voices in comparison to the phrase structure of the second and third madrigal. This is because the repetitions of the passacaglia as well as the overlapping statements of the other themes often do not line up (Figure 11).
When the rain comes tumbling down in the country or the town.
All good little girls and boys stay at home and mind their toys.
Robert thought No, no when it pours, it's better out of doors.
And, in a minute, Bob was in it. Oh how it whistles through the trees and flowers and thistles.
It has caught his red umbrella. Up he flies. Now look at him silly fellow. Up he flies to the skies.

Through the clouds the rude wind bore him and his hat flew on before him soon they got to such a height.
And the hat went up so high that it really touch'd the sky.
No one ever yet could tell when they stopp'd or where they fell.
Only this one thing is plain.

Figure 11, Flow Chart of “Flying Robert”
**Key**

- **a** – Primary Theme
- **a’** – Retrograde of a
- **a’’** – Fragment of a
- **b** – Secondary Theme
- **w** – Chromatic “Wind” Scales
- **p** – Passacaglia
- **p’** – Passacaglia Fragment
- **x** – additional melodic / accompaniment material
- **(l.t.)** – Low Tones

### Section III cont.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure Phrase</th>
<th>61</th>
<th>66</th>
<th>68</th>
<th>69</th>
<th>71</th>
<th>77</th>
<th>83</th>
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<tr>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Bob was never never never never</td>
<td>(All good little girls and boys stay at home and mind their toys) seen again</td>
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*Figure 11 (cont.)*
As the poem progresses, Ligeti uses fast moving chromatic scales (with occasional whole steps) to depict the wind and rain. This is the \( w \) theme. These scales begin in the Tenor voice in measures 20-22 with quarter note/eighth note triplet figures. This rhythm appropriately matches the trochaic scansion of the text (Example 44).

**Example 44, “Flying Robert,” mm. 20-22, Tenor – first statement of \( w \) theme**

Gradually, the \( w \) scales begin to include more voices and move at a faster rate. At measure 26 the scales begin as triplet eighth notes followed by sixteenth notes (Example 45). As these scales increase in speed and include other voices, there is a sense of the building intensity of the storm. Here again we see madrigalean word painting particularly with the phrase “How it whistles through the trees and flowers.” In measure 30, Ligeti has the Tenor and Baritone I actually whistle an upward glissando (bracketed in Example 45). Here, word painting has given way to all out sound effects.
All of this rhythmic activity culminates in the peak of the movement at measures 39-40 when all voices come together on the words “He Cries” marked $\text{ffff}$ and $\text{tutta la forze}$ (Example 46). These fast moving scales leading to a vertical sonority are reminiscent of the first madrigal “Two Dreams and Little Bat” in which increasing scalar activity used as word painting on the word “running,” comes together on one vertical sonority (refer to Example 17-page 47). Just as in the first madrigal, where the whole-tone scalar passages culminate in a whole tone cluster, the chromatic scales (w) of the fourth madrigal peak with a chromatic cluster in measure 39. In both cases, Ligeti unifies pitch organization on the horizontal plane (scalar) with the vertical plane (chordal).

**Example 46, “Flying Robert,” mm. 38-40**

![Chromatic Cluster](image)
The extremely loud peak followed by very soft dynamics in the next measure as seen in the previous example, is a feature shared by earlier movements. It will be recalled that in the first three madrigals, Ligeti marks the road from the peak to the end of the madrigal with sustained low notes (measure 41 in the first madrigal, measure 80 in the second madrigal, and measure 49 in the third madrigal--this last example was compared to a similar passage in *Atmospheres*). This also occurs in the fourth madrigal where, at measure 47, a D2 and A2 are heard in the Bass and Baritone II voices respectively. These two lowest voices carry over into measure 48 where the third and final section begins (Example 47).

**Example 47, “Flying Robert,” mm. 45-47, Baritone I, Baritone II, and Bass – end of Section II**
**Pitch Organization**

As stated earlier, Ligeti indicates that “Flying Robert” is a passacaglia.

Traditionally, a passacaglia, a repeated melodically conceived line, is revealed in one voice, generally the bass. Here, the passacaglia is revealed in three voices, the Tenor, Baritone I and Baritone II. The descending shape of this passacaglia (Bb-A-G# in the Baritone I) along with its consistent repetitiveness seems to depict the rain continuously coming down. Also, note the prevalence of perfect fifths that occur vertically between the voices (Example 48).

**Example 48, “Flying Robert,” mm. 1-10, lower three voices “Passacaglia” with pitch classes indicated**

![Example 48](image)

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Ligeti also used the technique of passacaglia in the final scene to *Le Grande Macabre*. In the opera, all twelve pitches are used in the passacaglia theme. Ligeti states, “The bass subject consists of twelve minor and twelve major sixths, one major and one minor sixth for all twelve notes of the chromatic scale.”⁹¹ In “Flying Robert,” the three-voiced passacaglia contains all but one of the 12 pitches of the chromatic scale (see previous example). The missing note is F natural (pitch class 5). Ligeti sufficiently makes up for the missing F natural of the 11 note passacaglia by centering the work’s primary melodic theme (a), stated in the Tenor voice, in F natural minor (Example 49). Permutations and fragments of this theme occur several times in the madrigal.

Example 49, “Flying Robert,” mm. 1-5, Tenor - “Primary Theme” – a

\[ \text{F natural minor} \]

⁹¹ Ligeti, *Ligeti in Conversation*, 70.
Theme b recurs at measure 18 with only one pitch difference. (In measure 21, the Alto II goes from Bb3-C4 whereas in measures 11-12, it stays on Bb).

Up to measure 20, there are three layers to the piece: the passacaglia (p), the primary theme (a), and the secondary theme (b). At measure 21, the fourth layer, which ultimately becomes the most conspicuous, is added in the Tenor voice. This fourth layer is comprised of the chromatic “wind” scales (w) described earlier. In measure 24, the a theme returns in the Bass beginning on G2 only to be quickly absorbed into the chromatic wind scales at measure 26 (Example 51).
Example 51, “Flying Robert,” mm. 24-27

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As seen in the previous example, the b theme is heard yet a third time at measure 25 in the Alto I and II voices exactly as it was stated in measure 8. This third statement is the last time the secondary theme is heard in the piece. The elimination of the secondary theme is consistent with the narrative since it invariably occurs with the text “all good little girls and boys stay at home and mine their toys.” The emphasis after measure 25 is on Robert who is clearly not one of those “good little girls and boys” and, like the secondary theme itself, is swept away in the wind as it “whistles through the trees and flowers.”

The primary theme (a) on the other hand, which always occurs with the stormier lines of the text, is quite prevalent in the measures leading to the peak in both its literal form and in modified form (Example 52).

**Example 52, “Flying Robert,” statements of the primary theme – a – both modified and literal**

a) Baritone II mm. 26-30
Example 52, (cont.)

b) Alto I mm. 31-37
modified

(c) Alto II mm. 33-37
modified

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At each of the statements above, Ligeti indicates in the score “Solo” thus reinforcing the structural significance of a. Swirling around these statements of the primary theme are the other voices which have w, the frantic chromatic sixteenth note scales depicting the wind.

Beginning in measure 15, the notes of the passacaglia, though still clearly present, begin to scatter to voices beyond the lower three voices. As the layers of the piece build, the passacaglia is gradually absorbed into these other layers until it becomes virtually unrecognizable. The deliberate half notes of the passacaglia in the opening measures with gaping rests in between may be Ligeti’s musical depiction of the few random drops of rain at the beginning of the poem’s impending storm. As the storm builds, the layers of musical activity increases to the point where the individual rain drops (the passacaglia) are indiscernible.

After the storm builds to the peak at measure 39, there follows immediately subito pp in measure 40 (refer to Example 46-page 116). At this point, the musical activity calms considerably. The texture becomes thinner, fast moving notes are replaced by long held notes, and the sixteenth note “wind scales” return to the triplet quarter note/eighth
note figures as first heard in measure 21. This leads to the low tones of measure 47 (refer to Example 47-page 117).

Measure 48 begins the third section. As shown in example 64, over the sustained D-A in the Baritone II and Bass held over from measure 47, the Alto II returns with a fragment of the primary theme in retrograde and transposed (a'). It is followed by a complete statement of a in its original form. We also see beginning in measure 49, a return to the passacaglia though voiced differently and with different pitch content from the opening. Beginning in measure 53, the Alto I also makes clear references to the primary theme both in its original direction and in retrograde (Example 53).

Example 53, “Flying Robert,” mm. 48-60

```
Low tones; carry over from m. 47
```
As seen in the previous example, the fragmented statements of a in the Alto I, in which the melody is broken down into short motivic elements interspersed with rests, represents a gradual deconstruction of the primary theme. By measure 61, theme a is reduced down to its initial interval, the minor third rocking back and forth between Ab and the F natural. The Alto I ominously repeats “never, never, never, never seen again” and ends on a sustained Bb with the indication at measures 76-77 *dim. niente*. At measure 61 we also see a return to the passacaglia in its original form with its stark half notes interspersed with rests as heard in the opening measures of the piece (Example 54).
Example 54, “Flying Robert,” mm. 61-77

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In measure 77, just as the Alto II Bb dissipates *al niente*, the passacaglia continues verbatim in the Tenor voice though its “harmonization” in the lower voices is different than at the opening of the movement. These voices instead are now derived exclusively from the initial three note descending chromatic figure of the upper voice of the passacaglia (described earlier as the falling rain). This creates a gradual downward chromatic descent. The final gesture of the piece is in measures 88-89 in which only the first two notes of the passacaglia (Bb-A in the Tenor) are heard on “their toys” (Example 55).

**Example 55, “Flying Robert,” mm. 76-end**
From measure 48 to the end, Ligeti seems to brilliantly create a sense of the dying storm along with the sense of Robert disappearing into the atmosphere. He accomplishes this through the gradual reduction of the four melodic layers, the breakdown of the primary theme to its principal motivic elements, and finally the passacaglia heard by itself, gradually broken down to its initial motive, the $\frac{1}{2}$ step. This systematic breakdown of musical elements, like the breakdown of machinery, is not uncommon in Ligeti’s music, particularly in his “meccanico” compositions (i.e. Poème symphonique). As he states:
I have always been fascinated by machines that do not work properly; in general, by the external world of technology and automation... Transposed into music, the ticking of malfunctioning machinery occurs in many of my works... Recalcitrant machinery, unmanageable automata have always fascinated me.\textsuperscript{92}

In “Flying Robert,” the “ticking machinery” is exhibited by the musical layers. The regularity of the passacaglia, so clear and deliberate in the opening, winds down like a clock in the closing bars, stopping before it can complete its final statement, while the primary theme (a) stated so solidly and repeatedly earlier in the movement, is shattered into small motivic pieces.

5. “The Lobster Quadrille”

Overall Structure

The fifth madrigal, “The Lobster Quadrille” is the first of the set to use text exclusively by Lewis Carroll. The nonsense poem/song, “The Lobster Quadrille” comes from the fifth chapter of Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland. In the chapter, Alice meets the Mock Turtle and the Gryphon, two strange characters who teach Alice a dance associated with the poem. As Carroll writes, “So they began by solemnly dancing round and round Alice, every now and then treading on her toes when they passed too close, and waving their fore-paws to mark the time, while the Mock Turtle sang this, very slowly and sadly:

“Will you walk a little faster?” said a whiting to a snail.
“There’s a porpoise close behind us, and he’s treading on my tail!”
See how eagerly the lobsters and the turtles all advance!
They are waiting on the shingle – will you come and join the dance?
Will you, won’t you, will you, won’t you, will you join the dance?
Will you, won’t you, will you, won’t you, will you join the dance?

“You can really have no notion how delightful it will be,
When they take us up and throw us, with the lobsters, out to sea”
But the snail replied, “Too far, too far” and gave a look askance.

\textsuperscript{92} Ligeti, 16-17.
Said he thanked the whiting kindly, but he would not join the dance.
Would not, could not, would not, could not join the dance.
Would not, could not, would not, could not join the dance.

“What matters it how far we go?” his scaly friend replied.
“There is another shore, you know, upon the other side.
The farther off from England the nearer is to France-
Then turn not pale, beloved snail, but come and join the dance.
Will you, won’t you, will you, won’t you, will you join the dance?
Will you, won’t you, will you, won’t you, will you join the dance?”

This poem, like “Twinkle Twinkle Little Bat” from the first madrigal, is another
parody on a pre-existing song/text. The text parodies the first line and adopts the meter
of Mary Howitt’s poem The Spider and the Fly which begins, “Will you walk into my
parlour?’ said the spider to the fly. ’Tis the prettiest little parlour that ever you did spy.”
Hewitt’s poem is itself based on an older song.93 The “whiting” in the first line of
Carroll’s parody refers to a certain food fish of the cod family. A “shingle,” mentioned in
the fourth line is a British word referring to a beach covered with stones and pebbles.94
Carroll’s parody is in the context of a quadrille. The quadrille was a kind of square dance
that was quite fashionable in Carroll’s time.95

This text is similar in nature to the text of the second madrigal, “Cuckoo in the
Pear-Tree” in which two animals have a dialogue. In the case of the second madrigal,
two cuckoo birds have a conversation. In this poem, two sea creatures talk. Talking
animals are typical in children’s literature and, as such, this madrigal is another example
of the child-oriented theme of these madrigals.

Unlike the first, second and fourth madrigals, in which time signatures are
indicated as two figures with independent though related metronome markings that imply

93 Gardner, 133.
94 Ibid., 134.
95 Ibid., 131.
polymeric relationships, this madrigal is simply marked 4/8 with eighth note equaling 160. The strait forwardness of the meter matches the transparency of the work’s formal elements particularly with regards to pitch organization. As far as the tempo, Ligeti seems less interested in trying to re-create what Carroll had in mind since his metronome marking hardly implies a “slow and sad” dance as Carroll’s text describes.

Like the fourth madrigal “Flying Robert,” the fifth madrigal has a consistently repeating musical/textual pattern in the manner of a passacaglia. Also like the fourth madrigal, this passacaglia exists in more than one voice. Unlike the fourth movement, however, Ligeti does not actually indicate “Passacaglia” on the score.

This madrigal can be divided into three sections. Clear, deliberate repetitions of the passacaglia are the defining feature of the first section. Other themes gradually enter the texture. Each of these additional themes is recognizable by their rhythmic construction. The first theme which occurs alongside the passacaglia, theme a, is made up of a group of between four and eight sixteenth notes. Theme a is always heard in the Bass with the text “There’s a porpoise close behind us.” The next theme, theme b which begins in measure 12, is marked by a swing-like rhythm: \( \text{\textbullet\textbullet\textbullet\textbullet\textbullet\textbullet} \). The third theme, theme c, begins in measure 18 and is marked by the following rhythm: \( \text{\textbullet\textbullet\textbullet\textbullet\textbullet\textbullet} \).

The first section ends at measure 21 when the passacaglia stops briefly to allow the introduction of theme d. The rhythm of this theme seems to fight the meter more than the other themes in that it is made up of a long, steady stream of dotted sixteenth notes. The third section begins in measure 48 when again the passacaglia is interrupted by the introduction of a new musical idea. Here, Ligeti quotes the English and French National
Anthems (indicated E.N.A. and F.N.A. respectively). The passacaglia resumes in measure 56 followed by earlier themes leading to the end of the madrigal.

As has been seen throughout the Nonsense Madrigals (especially the first and fourth madrigals) and in other works by the composer, Ligeti again seems to be thinking in terms of the juxtaposition of multiple musical layers (the passacaglia and the four themes). Because these layers are usually “out of phase” with one another, it is virtually impossible to view the movement as being organized into homogenous phrase units. Therefore, the following figure makes no attempt to show phrase groupings beyond the larger sections indicated (Figure 12).
Key
p – Passacaglia (repeating theme)  a – ♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫ (Bass melody – “There’s a porpoise close behind us”)

b - ♫♫♫♫...  c - ♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫...  d – ♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫...  

x – additional material  ENA – English National Anthem  FNA – French National Anthem

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### Section I

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<tr>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Will you walk a little faster? Said a whiting to a snail (text repeats with each statement of “p”).</td>
<td>There’s a porpoise close behind us and he’s treading on my tail.</td>
<td>See how eagerly the lobsters and turtles all advance!</td>
<td>They are waiting on the shingle will you come and join the dance?</td>
<td>Will you won’t you join the dance?</td>
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### Section II

| Measure | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 32 | 33 | 34 | 35 | 36 | 37 | 38 | 39 | 40 | 41 | 42 | 43 | 44 | 45 | 46 | 47 |
|---------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Alto I  | x___ | p___ | c___ | x___ | x___ | x___ | x___ | b___ | c___ | b___ | p___ |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Alto II | x___ | p___ | c___ | x___ | x___ | x___ | x___ | b___ | p___ |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Tenor   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Baritone I |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Baritone II |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Bass    | d___ | d___ | p___ | b___ |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Text    | You can really have no notion how delightful it will be. | When they take us up and throw us, | With the lobsters, out to sea! | Too far! Too far! | Said he thanked the whiting kindly, but he would not join the dance. | Would not, could not...join the dance! | What matters it how far we go? | There is another shore you know, upon the other side. |

### Section III

| Measure | 47 | 48 | 49 | 50 | 51 | 52 | 53 | 54 | 55 | 56 | 57 | 58 | 59 | 60 | 61 | 62 | 63 | 64 | 65 | 66 | 67 |
|---------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Alto I  | ENA | FNA | FNA |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Alto II | ENA |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Tenor   | ENA |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Baritone I | ENA |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Baritone II | ENA |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Bass    | ENA |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Text    | The farther off from England the nearer is to France | Will you walk... | Then turn not pale beloved snail but come and join the dance. | Will you, won’t you... | join the dance? |

---

Figure 12, Flow chart of “The Lobster Quadrille”
One of the notable elements of the piece is the extensive use of performance instructions that are more akin to instructions in the script of a play than in a piece of vocal music. These instructions include the following: *annoyed, indignant, enthusiastic, chattering snobbishly, distorted, very impatiently, hilarious.* While some of these instructions appear in previous movements (i.e. the instruction to sing in a “*distorted nasal voice*”), the abundance of these descriptive instructions in this madrigal alone is evidence that much of the *Nonsense Madrigals*’ charm, irony, and humor come from the charismatic abilities of the performers.

While this madrigal is a culmination of various performance instructions, it is also, in several ways, a culmination of the compositional/formal traits of previous movements. As stated earlier, this madrigal borrows the concept of passacaglia as used in the fourth madrigal. This recurring pattern is revealed in the opening five measures of the piece (Example 56). As seen in measure five, the end of the first statement of the passacaglia in the Alto II and Baritone I voices dovetails with the start of the next statement in the Alto I and Baritone II voices.
Example 56, “The Lobster Quadrille”, mm. 1-8

Allegro molto leggiero e ritmico

\( \text{\( \frac{\text{F}}{\text{F}} \) = 160} \)

György Ligeti

1989

Will you walk a little faster?

pp

Said a whiting

p (annoyed)

End of first statement of passacaglia (All, Bar. I) overlaps with beginning of second statement of passacaglia

Will you walk a little faster?

to a snail.

Said a whiting

pp

There’s a porpoise close behind us,

Ligeti NONSENSE MADRIGALS

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This passacaglia continues with a brief interruption in measure 22, though it is not always in the Alto II and Baritone I voices. At measure 39, statements of the passacaglia overlap much like the stretto of a fugue ultimately leading to the $fff$ peak at the end of measure 41. There is a rhythmic displacement and overlap of the passacaglia between the Alto II, Tenor, Baritone I, and Baritone II voices. Also, note theme c in the Alto I (Example 57).

Example 57, “The Lobster Quadrille,” mm. 39-41

The passacaglia resumes in measure 43 in its normal fashion until measure 48 when one of the more salient events of the whole work occurs. At this point, in which the
text is “The farther off from England the nearer is to France,” Ligeti quotes both the English and the French national anthems at the point each respective country is mentioned.\textsuperscript{96} In measure 56, the passacaglia pattern resumes in the Alto I and Baritone I (Example 58).

\textbf{Example 58, “The Lobster Quadrille,” mm. 46-55}

\textsuperscript{96} Englbrecht, 82-83.
This madrigal relates to the first madrigal on two counts, one being the use of Lewis Carroll text, and two, the use of pre-existing melodic material (the tune “Twinkle Twinkle Little Star” in the first madrigal and the French and English National Anthems in this madrigal). This use of pre-existing musical material also highlights the overall use of parody which runs throughout the *Nonsense Madrigals.*

**Pitch Organization**

The most striking parallel between “The Lobster Quadrille” and earlier movements is its relationship to the second madrigal, “Cuckoo in the Pear Tree.” We recall that the major third (and its inversion, the minor sixth), the perfect fifth, and the
tritone are the primary intervals used between pairs of voices in the second madrigal (refer to example 29-pages 68-69). These same three intervals are pervasive in the fifth madrigal. In fact, the occurrences of these intervals in the fifth madrigal exceed their appearance in the second in part because Ligeti uses them melodically as well as vertically whereas in the second madrigal they were primarily used vertically. Referring back to the opening five measures of “The Lobster Quadrille,” we can see how the passacaglia theme is constructed almost exclusively out of these three intervals (Example 59).
Example 59, “The Lobster Quadrille,” mm. 1-5

Will you walk a little faster?

Said a whiting

Will you walk a little faster?

There’s a por-pose close behind us.
In addition to each of the themes having a signature rhythm, they also have a signature intervallic content. In measures 7-8 theme a first appears in the Bass. This figure occurs several times throughout the movement. Its content is entirely derived from the major third, tritone, and perfect fifth (Example 60).

**Example 60, “The Lobster Quadrille,” mm. 7-8, Bass – theme a**

```
P5  M3  TT  M3  TT  M3  P5
```

There’s a por-poise close-be-hind us

---

At measure 11, another melodic idea, theme b, appears in the Alto I and Tenor voices. These two voices move at first in parallel major thirds then followed by parallel tritones (Example 61).

**Example 61, “The Lobster Quadrille,” mm. 11-13, Alto I and Tenor - theme b**

---

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Theme b continues in measures 15-16 as parallel minor sixths (inverted major third) followed by a perfect fifth (Example 62).

Example 62, “The Lobster Quadrille,” mm. 15-16, Alto I and Tenor – theme b

Ligeti’s commitment to intervallic unity continues even in the references to the English National Anthem which is scored as parallel major thirds between the Alto II and Baritone II and later, Alto II and Bass voices (Example 63).

Example 63, “The Lobster Quadrille,” mm. 46-51
The consistency and deliberateness of intervallic unity in the fifth madrigal exceeds that of the other madrigals in the set. While it is arguably clear that the perfect fifth, major third, and tritone are the primary intervals of the second madrigal, the sheer omnipresence of these intervals in the fifth madrigal may even suggest that the fifth madrigal is a parody of the second from the standpoint of intervallic content. As discussed earlier, these same intervals have importance in the contemporaneous Piano Etudes suggesting the “Ligeti signals” that seem to unify his various works of this period.

Most important to the Nonsense Madrigals, however is that the relationship of musical form between the second and fifth madrigals (in terms of intervallic content) combined with the similar texts (both a dialogue between talking animals), establishes a
large scale framework for the *Nonsense Madrigals* in which the second madrigal of the set is the complement to the second to last madrigal of the set.

6. “A Long, Sad Tale”

**Overall Structure**

Although the sixth madrigal is something of an afterthought, since it appeared some five years after the performance of the fifth madrigal, it nevertheless possesses a feature that rounds out the entire set. There is a sense of closure in “A Long Sad Tale,” in that like the first madrigal, it incorporates two separate texts. Englbrecht points out, however, that unlike “Two Dreams and Little Bat,” this madrigal is not modeled on the 14th century motet tradition of multiple texts.\(^97\) Also unlike the first madrigal which uses texts by two different authors (Carroll and Rands), the sixth madrigal uses separate text sources which are both by Lewis Carroll. The text is made up of passages from *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* as well as four word games from Carroll’s series of *Original Games and Puzzles* titled *Doublets*.

In addition to his larger works, Lewis Carroll published some two hundred pamphlets approximately twenty of which were original games.\(^98\) One of these games, titled *Doublets*, was published over a period of five months in 1879 in the magazine *Vanity Fair*. The first game of Doublets appeared in the March 29th issue of the magazine with Carroll’s own instructions to the reader:

> The rules of the Puzzle are simple enough. Two words are proposed, of the same length: and the Puzzle consists of linking these together by interposing other words, each of which shall differ from the next word *in one letter only*. That is to say, one letter may be changed in one of the given words, then one letter in the word so obtained, and so on, till we arrive at the other given word. The letters must not be interchanged

\(^97\) Englbrecht, 89.  
\(^98\) Gardner, 111.
among themselves, but each must keep to its own place. As an example, the word ‘head’ may be changed into ‘tail’ by interposing the words ‘heal, teal, tell, tall.’ I call the two given words ‘a Doublet’, the interposed words ‘Links’ and the entire series ‘a Chain’, of which I here append an example:

```
HEAD
  h e a l
  t e a l
  t e l l
  t a l l
TAIL
```

The "Head-Tail" chain that Carroll uses as the example for *Vanity Fair* is the first of the four chains Ligeti sets in the sixth madrigal.

While word play is a common element in Lewis Carroll’s writing, one of the more intriguing elements in the sixth madrigal is Ligeti’s own use of word play between the two text sources. The very opening of the madrigal begins with the infamous recurring line from *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, “Off with her head!” This is immediately followed by the “head-tail” doublet seen in the above example. Ligeti is playing on the word “head” which occurs in both text sources.

The doublet chain ends with the word "tail." This final word from the chain launches the next and most extensively used text in the sixth madrigal, the “Mouse’s Tale” from Chapter Three of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*. This is more than a play on two of the same words from different texts, but rather a pun between the homonyms “tail” and “tale.” The pun is highlighted by the layout of the mouse’s tale which occurs in the following context:

‘Mine is a long and sad tale!” said the Mouse, turning to Alice, and sighing.

---

99 Lewis Carroll, *Doublets.*
It  is  a long tail, certainly,’ said Alice, looking down with wonder at the Mouse’s tail; “but why do you call it sad?” And she kept on puzzling about it while the Mouse was speaking, so that her idea of the tale was something like this:

Fury said to
a mouse, That
he met
in the
house,
‘Let us
both go
to law:
I will
prosecute
you.——
Come, I’ll
take no
denial;
We must
have a
trial:
For
really
this
morning
I’ve
nothing
to do.’
Said the
mouse to
the cur,
‘Such a
trial,
dear sir,
With no
jury or
judge,
would be
wasting
our breath,’
‘I’ll be
judge,
jury.’
Said
sneering
old Fury,
‘I’ll try
the whole
case,
and
condemn
you
to
death.’”

The “Mouse's Tale” is an emblematic poem in which the poem is printed in a way that resembles something related to its subject matter. In this case, the “Mouse’s Tale” is printed in the shape of his “tail.” Ligeti takes the word play a step further by

---

100 Gardner, 50.
matching it with the final word of Carroll’s "head-tail" chain from *Doublets*. Ligeti, taking his cue from Carroll’s own use of puns, has elaborated on the word play by devising his own word play in highlighting the word “tail” common to both Carroll texts.

In addition to the “head-tail” chain, Ligeti uses three other chains found in *Doublets*. The second chain beginning at measure 21 is “witch-fairy” and progresses as follows:

```
WITCH
  winch
  wench
  tench
  tenth
  tents
  tints
  tilts
  tills
  fills
  falls
  fails
  fairs
  FAIRY
```

The third chain beginning at measure 28 is “furies-barrel” and progresses as follows:

```
FURIES
  buries
  buried
  burked
  barked
  barred
  BARREL
```

The final chain beginning at measure 53 is “quilt-sheet” and progresses as follows:

```
QUILT
  guilt
  guile
  guide
  glide
  slide
  slice
```
Ligeti sets off the doublet chains from the rest of the text by setting each to an ostinato pattern usually at the interval of a tritone. The four chains and their respective ostinatos are referred to in this analysis as O1, O2, O3, and O4 respectively. Even though there are only four chains, the third one, “furies-barrel” (O3) occurs twice, the second occurrence set to a different ostinato from the first occurrence thus making a total of five ostinatos. The second ostinato associated with the chain “furies-barrel” is referred to O3b.

The madrigal can be divided into five sections marked by each of the five ostinatos. Between each new ostinato, there is always an interpolation of two to five measures where the ostinatos do not occur. These interruptions of the ostinatos not only relax the rhythmic drive of the piece, but they act as pivot points in the music where one section is divided from the next section.

In addition to the ostinato settings of the chains from Doublets, the text from Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland is set to a number of additional themes and motives. The first of these, heard in measure 1 to the famous phrase “Off with her head!” is referred to in the analysis as theme a. Theme a functions as an “announcing theme” since it invariably occurs before the start of the first three ostinatos, in a sense, “announcing” them. The next important melodic idea is a long, sinuous melody first heard in the Bass starting in the second measure of the piece. This recurring theme which
begins with pc set (024), is referred to as theme b. There is other melodic material which contains the (024) set. This additional (024) based material is referred to as c. A third element to the piece is the sustained pitches E, D, and Bb designated by s. t. (sustained tones) (Figure 13).
**Section I**

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**Text**

Off with her head!

Mine is a long and a sad

**Section II**

| Measure | Phrase | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 32 | 33 | 34 | 35 | 36 | 37 | 38 | 39 |
|---------|--------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Alto I  |        | 2 | 6  | 2 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 5  |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Alto II |        |   |    |   |    |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Tenor   |        |   |    |   |    |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Baritone I |    |   |    |   |    |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Baritone II|     |   |    |   |    |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Bass    |        |   |    |   |    |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
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**Text**

Tale (Tail) Tam witch into fairy It is a long tail Certainly but why do you call it sad?

Fairy said to a mouse she met in the house Let us both go to court We must be cute have a trial For really this morning I've nothing said the mouse to the cut such a trial clear sir with no jury or judge

**Section III**

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**Text**

Turn witch It is a (Tail) into fairy Certainly but why do you call it sad? Fairy said to a mouse she met in the house Let us both go to court We must be cute have a trial For really this morning I've nothing said the mouse to the cut such a trial clear sir with no jury or judge

**Sustained Tone Content**

- B♭

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**Figure 13, Flow Chart of “A Long, Sad Tale”**
| MeasurePhrase | 40 | 41 | 42 | 43 | 44 | 45 | 46 | 47 | 48 | 49 | 50 | 51 | 52 | 53 | 54 | 55 | 56 | 57 | 58 | 59 | 60 | 61 | 62 | 63 |
|--------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Alto I       | 03b| x  |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Alto II      | 03b| x  |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Tenor        | 03b| b  | x  |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Baritone I   | s.t.| s.t.| s.t.| b |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Baritone II  | s.t.| s.t.| s.t.| b |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Bass         | s.t.| s.t.| s.t.| b |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Text         | mine is a long and sad tale. | I'll be judge, I'll be jury | said cunning old fury | I'll try the whole cause | And condemn you | To Death. | |
| Sustained Tone Content | E natural | All=E natural | T=Bb | E natural | | | |

Figure 13 (cont.)
The tempo $\frac{3}{8}=300$, combined with the quick repetitiveness of the ostinatos gives the madrigal a driving, rhythmic momentum. This rhythmic drive is also propelled forward by a fairly consistent alternation of 9/8 and 7/8. The mixed meter keeps the ostinatos from settling into a comfortable metrical sense marked by downbeats.

In the first ostinato (O1), rather than simply repeat the chain from “head” to “tail” over and over again for the first seventeen measures of the piece, Ligeti instead inverts the chain back and forth (“head, heal, teal, tell, tall, tail, tall, tell, teal, heal, head...”) (Example 64).

Example 64, “A Long, Sad Tale,” mm. 1–6, Baritone I and Baritone II – O1
Englbrecht likens this technique to highlighting the swinging back and forth between the two poles from “head” to “tail.” It will be shown however that Ligeti uses this inverting technique with the “non polar” chains as well.

The $O_1$ ostinato continues through the downbeat of measure 18. At that point, the ostinato cycle of once through the chain and then in reverse has occurred six times. Six is also the number of words that make up the first doublet chain itself. This mirroring of the number of words in the chain to the number of occurrences of the chain only occurs with this first chain.

The first chain is announced in measure 1 by theme $a$. It has been noted how Ligeti matches the word “head” from this opening line with the first word of the doublet chain. Englbrecht refers to this “announcing theme” as the “fanfarenartigen Initialimpuls” (Example 65).102

**Example 65, “A Long, Sad Tale,” m. 1-2, Tenor – “Announcing Theme” – a**

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101 Englbrecht, 94.
102 Ibid., 98.
Ligeti uses motive a to announce the next chain as well (Example 66).

Example 66, “A Long, Sad Tale,” mm. 20-25

The second chain is announced by theme a (tritone ostinato).
The text of this second statement of a, “Turn witch into fairy!” is a unique occurrence in that it comes from Carroll’s instructions on the game of doublets found in the 1879 issues of *Vanity Fair*. As the prompt for each week, Carroll gave the readers the two doublet words leaving it to the readers to figure out the links. Rather than simply give the two words, he used this opportunity to yet again make puns. For example, on March 29th, the readers were given the doublets for that week in following manner:

```
Drive PIG into STY
Raise FOUR to FIVE
Make WHEAT into BREAD
```

“Turn WITCH into FAIRY,” the text of theme a at measure 20, was the instruction given on July 5th for the chain that Ligeti uses.

Curiously, while Englbrecht acknowledges the occurrence of theme a at the start of the first and second chain, he seems to dismiss its occurrence in announcing the third chain, “furies-barrel.” In measure 28, the same measure where the third chain (O3) begins, the Alto I and II has a truncated and transposed version of theme a comprised of a descending minor second followed by a descending major third (Example 67 – compare to Example 65-page 154). Ligeti repeats this altered version of the motive again in measure 29. Also, at measure 31, Ligeti again inverts the direction of the chain at the word “barrel” (“...barked, barred, barrel, barred, barked...”).

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103 Carroll, *Doublets.*
Example 67, “A Long, Sad Tale,” mm. 26-34

- Theme a fragment (minor 2 Major3)
- Chain inverts (mm. 31-32)
- Start “Mouse’s Tale”
The altered version of theme a at measure 28 uses text from the “Mouse’s Tale.”

Unlike theme a at measure 1 and measure 20, at measure 28 Ligeti does not match a word from the statement of a with the chain that follows. Ligeti is able however, to again make a pun between the Doublets text and the Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland text.

As example 78 shows, the word play is between the word “furies” from the third chain (O3) and the first word of the “Mouse’s Tale” which is “Fury.” “The Mouse’s Tale” begins in the Tenor and Baritone in measure 26, only two bars before the truncated statement of a.

---

104 Englbrecht, 100.
The setting of the third doublet chain (O3) is unique from the two previous ostinato patterns. Referring again to Example 67-pages 157-158, we see that the ostinato occurs in three voices (Tenor, Baritone I, and Baritone II) rather than two as in the previous chains, and instead of the tritone, Ligeti sets this one as stacked perfect fifths (G2-D3-A3). Also, in the previous two chains, where most of the words were single syllables, the ostinato pattern was \( \uparrow \downarrow \uparrow \downarrow \). In O3, which has two syllable words, the ostinato pattern is \( \uparrow \downarrow \uparrow \downarrow \uparrow \downarrow \uparrow \downarrow \).

At measure 35, O3 stops abruptly only to resume again in measure 40 (O3b). The rhythm of O3b is \( \uparrow \downarrow \uparrow \downarrow \uparrow \downarrow \) (Example 68). The elimination of the second eighth note rest from the one eighth note rest of O3, gives this section a sense of excited energy. Ligeti scores O3b as a Bb major triad in first inversion. Also, just as he did at measure 31, Ligeti again inverts the words of the chain at measure 43.
Example 68, “A Long, Sad Tale,” mm. 38-47

O3b, Bb major triad

**Chain Inverts**

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The fourth and final doublet chain, "quilt-sheet" begins in measure 53 (O4). For this ostinato, Ligeti returns to the original rhythm and, like O3, scores it as a perfect fifth (B-F#). Ligeti also inverts the chain in measure 56 at the word “sheet” (‘...shier, shear, sheet, shear, shier...’) and again in measure 59 at the word “guilt” (‘...guide, guile, guilt, guile, guide...’) (Example 69).

Example 69, “A Long, Sad Tale” mm. 53-60 – voices carrying O4
Thematic/Intervallic Relationships

In addition to the recurring “announcing theme” (theme a), other thematic as well as intervallic unifiers exist in this madrigal. The opening melody, theme b, which begins in measure 3 in the Bass is significant in terms of its recurrence and in terms of its intervallic relationship to other melodic passages in the madrigal (Example 70a). The first recurrence of b is in the Baritone I at measure 41 transposed up one step (Example 70b). At measure 53, theme b occurs again in the Baritone I part starting on C. Only one measure later, the Bass picks up this theme starting on F# (Example 70c).

Example 70, “A Long, Sad Tale,” Statements of theme b

a) mm. 3-4, Bass

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\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{example70a}
\caption{“Mine is a long...”}
\end{figure}
```

b) mm. 41-42, Baritone I

```
\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{example70b}
\caption{“Mine is a long...”}
\end{figure}
```
Example 70, (cont.)

c) mm. 53-55, Baritone I and Bass

The first three notes of b form the pc set (024). This set is one of the unifying devices of this madrigal melodically and, to some extent, harmonically. The following examples show instances of the (024) set both by itself and as a subset of slightly larger pc sets. These instances of (024) when not part of theme b are generally referred to as c (Example 71).

Example 71, “A Long, Sad Tale,” Occurrences of motive c

a) mm. 13-15, Bass

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Example 71, (cont.)

b) mm. 16-19, Tenor

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c) mm. 26-28, Tenor, Baritone I, Baritone II

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d) mm. 29-31, Alto II and Tenor

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Example 71, (cont.)

e) mm. 59-63, Alto II and Tenor

While theme a may unify the work in terms of its recurrence at structurally significant places and also serves to unify the multiple texts of the piece, from the standpoint of intervallic unity, the opening of the Bass melody (b) at measure 3 is the primary melodic seed for the movement in terms of pc set relationship to other melodic gestures.

Another recurring figure in this madrigal is the short descending chromatic figure usually associated with the phrase “and a sad [tale]” which first appears at measure 12 in the Tenor. This melodic idea is referred to as d (Example 72).

Example 72, “A Long Sad Tale,” m. 12, Tenor - motive d
One of the more interesting moments is in measures 32-33 where Ligeti combines both motives \(c\) and \(d\): the Alto I is the (024) set while the Alto II is a descending chromatic scale (Example 73).

**Example 73, “A Long, Sad Tale,” mm. 32-34, AI and AII**

Throughout this madrigal, Ligeti has one or more voices sustaining pitches over several measures (referred to as s.t.). Usually it is just one single pitch being sustained, but sometimes there are two pitches sustained. This creates tonal focal points within the work. In particular the pitches Bb and E natural are especially highlighted. D is emphasized as well. Ligeti juxtaposes these sustained pitches with the ostinato doublet chains. We recall that \(O1\) begins in the second measure of the piece in the two Baritone voices and continues through measure 17 (Example 64-page 153). Starting in measure 2, Bb3 is sustained between the two alto voices for sixteen measures without interruption (Figure 13-pages 151-152). \(O2\) begins in measure 21 in the Alto II and Baritone I voices and continues through measure 25 (Example 66-page 155). In these same five measures,
the Bass sustains a low E2 (Figure 13-pages 151-152). The third chain begins in measure 28 (Example 67-pages 157-158). Beginning in measure 28, the Bass sustains a low D2 for over three measures. These sustained tones coordinate with the various ostinato passages thus providing a role in the large scale structure of the madrigal (Figure 13).

As shown earlier, after a brief interruption, the third chain continues as $O_{3b}$ at measure 40 in the upper three voices. At this point, the Bass again sustains a low E2. This E is approached by descent from the Bb above it (Example 74).

Example 74, “A Long, Sad Tale,” mm. 39 (last beat) – 42, Bass

At the point this Bb quarter note in the Bass is sounding at measure 39, all the other voices are silent. We recall in measure 40, when the Bass moves to the E natural, the three ostinato voices comprise a Bb major triad (Example 68-page 160).

At measure 53, when $O_{4}$ begins in the Alto I and Tenor voices (Example 69-page 161), the Alto II is sustaining an E4 (Figure 13-pages 151-152). This E continues in the Alto II in measure 57. Midway through measure 58, the Baritone I begins sustaining a Bb along with the Alto II E until the final two chords of the piece.

All of these examples clearly show an E - Bb relationship. This relationship is sustained throughout the piece by these two notes being sustained for long stretches at a
time. The tritone interval of E-Bb is also reinforced by the continuous tritones of the ostinato passages.

D and more specifically, D minor also plays a role as a tonal focal point in this madrigal. As pointed out earlier, in measure 28, which is where O3 begins, the Bass sustains a low D2 for almost four full measures. The sense of D as a central pitch is reinforced by the Alto I and Alto II voices which have the transposed variant of a. This variant of a occurs in both measure 28 and in measures 29 and begins with the pitches D, C#, A and ends on D. This sense of D is prepared three measures earlier where the Alto I, Alto II and Tenor sustain a D minor triad in first inversion (Example 75).

Example 75, “A Long, Sad Tale,” mm. 23-31
Example 75, (cont.)

D minor triad
(continued from previous measure)

Variant of theme a centered in D

D tonal reference

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D minor returns to conclude the madrigal and ends up being the final sonority of the *Nonsense Madrigals* (Example 76).

Example 76, “A Long, Sad Tale,” last three measures

There are certain features in “A Long Sad Tale” that set it apart from the other madrigals. One of its most interesting features is the unusual text source. It seems that
setting word puzzles to music could really only be done in a work with “nonsense” in its title. Another feature are the word puns that not only exist within Carroll’s Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland text, but also Ligeti’s own word puns between the two Carroll texts.

“A Long Sad Tale” also has a musical language that is somewhat different from the other madrigals. This musical language is defined by the rhythm. While not simple, the rhythmic complexities of this madrigal seem more visceral, having more of a “feel” as compared to some of the rhythmic complexities of the other madrigals. Even before listening to the madrigal, Ligeti gives us a clue to this rhythmic sense in marking “Vivacissimo leggiero e molto ritmico (Like Jazz!)” at the beginning of madrigal. This is in rather stark contrast to the almost neo-mannerist, 14th century modeled rhythmic complexities of “Two Dreams and Little Bat” which seems to have more to do with complexity for the sake of complexity rather than “feel.” From this standpoint, perhaps Ligeti intentionally reinforces this contrast of rhythmic purposes, as it were, between the first and sixth madrigal with his indication “Like Jazz!” at the heading of the sixth madrigal.

Within these madrigals composed over a span of five years, Ligeti is able to include over five hundred years of compositional influences, ranging from 14th century motet writing to the rhythmic provocativeness of twentieth century jazz. All things considered, the Nonsense Madrigals are a tour de force of parody writing, ranging from the playful, exemplified by Carroll’s nonsense parodies on poems, to the technically complex exemplified by over half a millennia of compositional techniques.
Chapter III
Insights on Preparation and Performance of the *Nonsense Madrigals*

In general, Ligeti’s music is extremely difficult to perform. While much has been emphasized on how Ligeti is somewhat of a maverick compared to other post-war avant-garde composers, he does share with them a strong penchant for pushing performers to their limits both technically and musically:

I like pushing things to the limit of the possible. Performers have often said, ‘you cannot play this piece’ or ‘it is impossible to sing it’. My answer always was, ‘it is almost impossible, but just try and you’ll almost make it’. On one occasion when rehearsals for my Requiem were going on in Stockholm, I received a telegram asking me to go there because the choir was unable to sing the fugue in the *Kyrie*. In fact they were perfectly capable of singing it, only they were taking everything too strictly, they wanted to render the septuplets precisely. I explained to the choir that it was all right if they did not sing all the notes exactly; all they had to do was to approximate to what they saw in the score both rhythmically and melodically and that it did not matter if they made little mistakes – the mistakes had been reckoned with. Whereas I wrote down everything precisely I was aware that the choir could not sing it all exactly. My reason for ‘overwriting’ the score was to achieve the effect I wanted, a sense of danger. I used the twelve-note chromatic scale in the *Kyrie*. But what you actually hear is not a chromatic scale, since the singers cannot help making mistakes in the intonation, which produces a kind of microtonality, dirty patches...

From this, we get a sense of a composer who, while uncompromising in utilizing voices and instruments to their highest potential of musical expression, is also sensitive to the needs of musicians. As Toop states:

Seeing Ligeti in rehearsal, one has the impression of a composer who knows exactly what he wants, and how to get it. Not that he is a tyrant; on the contrary, he is a practiced diplomat...everything he says is aimed at making the music as effective as possible, and every comment is something to which players can respond immediately.

The *Nonsense Madrigals* are no exception in terms of difficulty. From conversations with Simon Carrington, founding member of the King’s Singers and

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106 Toop, 220.
Baritone II in the first performances of the madrigals, it is clear that the *Nonsense Madrigals* were among the most difficult works the King’s Singers ever performed even when compared with works written for the ensemble by composers such as Berio and Penderecki. The sense of the composer knowing exactly what he wants, though entirely amicable in his approach, was also apparent in Ligeti’s coaching sessions with the King’s Singers.

Before identifying specific rehearsal problems in the work, it is relevant to ask if this work, written for such a specialized ensemble can be performed by other vocal ensembles including mixed choirs. The first consideration is that of vocal range. Figure 14 shows the vocal range from the lowest note to the highest note for each of the voice parts in the *Nonsense Madrigals*.

- Alto I: Bb3 – E5
- Alto II: A3 – D5
- Tenor: C3 – A4
- Baritone I: A2 – Gb4
- Baritone II: F2 – E4
- Bass: Db2 – E4

*Figure 14, Vocal Ranges in the Nonsense Madrigals*[^109]

Ligeti is obviously aware of appropriate vocal ranges in that the demands of range are quite reasonable. The next consideration, then, is tessitura. While the Alto I part could

[^107]: Simon Carrington, former member of the King’s Singers, interview by author, 5 March 2004 and 21 November 2003.
[^108]: Ibid.
[^109]: Middle C is C4.
easily be performed by sopranos, one would need sopranos who could quite comfortably sustain notes with a good presence of tone in the lowest part of the range (especially in the third madrigal).

The Tenor part also has specific demands in that its tessitura often reaches A4. Some of these A4’s are forte but in several instances they are piano thus requiring good vocal control over the entire range. The Tenor part is further complicated by the need for clarity in the baritone range down to C3.

The Baritone and Bass voices are helped by the fact that a strong falsetto is not uncommon among those voice types allowing the upper notes to be performed without great difficulty. Note however, that the Baritone II part does sometimes “sit low” as exemplified in measures 47-56 in “The Lobster Quadrille” when it is in parallel tenths with the Alto II quoting the English and French National Anthems (Example 58-pages 138-139).

Tessitura is especially difficult in the third madrigal “The Alphabet.”110 In the opening measures especially, the voices must sustain tones which are occasionally in extremes of the range for very long stretches at very soft dynamics, and with clear and unwavering intonation (Example 35 pages 87-88).

In addition to range and tessitura, one must consider the idiomatic quality of the vocal writing. Referring again to “The Alphabet,” the problems of tessitura are only augmented by Ligeti’s dynamic scheme in which the opening is marked ppppp and later, in measure 49 the Baritone II and Bass are expected to sing an F#2 marked fffff. It is doubtful that even the most ambitious of singers works to achieve such a dynamic range. Nevertheless, one must refer again to Ligeti’s earlier quote “it is almost impossible, but

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110 Ibid.
just try and you’ll almost make it.” Furthermore, one must not forget that these madrigals are based on nonsense and approaching these pieces with too much propriety for musical conventions would probably be inappropriate. The idea of a piece that ranges from $pppp$ to $fffff$ is in itself rather nonsensical. Such indications require a certain degree of thoughtful imagination on the part of the performer as to what the overall character is that Ligeti is trying to convey and how that performer can utilize the qualities unique to his/her vocal instrument to communicate that character.

Despite the extreme dynamic range, many elements of the writing are vocally idiomatic. Unlike the vocal writing of any number of modernist vocal works by other composers, there are few awkward leaps in the *Nonsense Madrigals* (with exception to the first seventeen measures of the Bass part in “Two Dreams and Little Bat”). Most of the writing consists of leaps of less than a sixth. In fact, it is the rapid chromatics of the scalar writing as found in “Two Dreams and Little Bat” (Example 16-page 46 and Example 17-page 47) and in “Flying Robert” (Example 45-page 115) that, in the end, may prove especially difficult.

The next consideration is size of ensemble. While one may conveniently categorize the *Nonsense Madrigals* as a “choral” work, this composition was conceived for one singer per part. This is the case in general, however, when one thinks of madrigals. This does not seem to be a problem for choral musicians since 16th century madrigals are certainly claimed by choral conductors as being part of their repertoire as are 19th century German part songs which were also conceived for one voice per part. So, even though to be accurate, the *Nonsense Madrigals* are better categorized as vocal
chamber music rather than “choral music,” this alone certainly does not exclude it from being performed by a choir of mixed voices.

The problem that would arise from attempting to perform this work with more than one voice per part is the potential for added confusion in terms of rhythmic coordination and tuning. There is a certain level of virtuosity to each of the vocal lines in the madrigals in terms of complex rhythms as well as in the soloistic, melismatic passages. This complexity of the individual vocal lines is enhanced by the fact that the voices are rarely moving together except for occasional moments of voice pairing. As the analysis has shown, the madrigals are conceived very linearly in which layers are combined to produce complex polyphonic fabrics.

Choral conductors generally choose to perform Renaissance madrigals with small chamber choirs usually numbering anywhere from four to sixteen voices. The reasons for this are twofold. One, using smaller forces is more consistent with the conventions of historically informed performance practice, and two, because all of the subtleties of the polyphonic layers are better illuminated with smaller forces. This second reason is very pertinent to performing the Nonsense Madrigals. A twelve voice chamber choir (two voices per part) of exceptional musicians with good vocal control could perform this work and all of the subtleties of each line could be clearly expressed. Moving on to three voices per part (eighteen voices) might prove unwieldy both in terms of the difficulties in coordination within each section and between the other voice parts. Eighteen voices might also cause a blurring of the complex polyphonic interplay.

An exception might be made to this statement in reference to “The Alphabet.” Some of the difficulties of this madrigal might actually be simplified by the use of
additional voices (three or four to a part). Multiple voices could stagger breathe on the long sustained tones thus reducing intonation problems caused by vocal fatigue from sustaining notes in an uncomfortable tessitura for long stretches. Also, the lack of rapid-fire virtuosic scales in this madrigal eliminates the problem of coordination within a section if multiple voices per part were used. Furthermore, this madrigal’s momentum is achieved by the transformation of sonorities rather than the complexity of rhythm thus simplifying problems of coordination between voice parts. In this sense, “The Alphabet” might be seen as the most “choral” of the Nonsense Madrigals.

Beyond purely vocal considerations, the difficulties of the Nonsense Madrigals are related to pitch and rhythm. The problems are augmented in that pitch and rhythmic problems are not isolated from one another but intertwined. Many of these difficulties can be deduced from Chapter II. The first madrigal, “Two Dreams and Little Bat”, arguably the most challenging of the six, exemplifies this the best.

While the Nonsense Madrigals are wrought with rhythmic complexities, the first madrigal is especially complex due to its isorhythmic construction. As one may assume from the analysis, the initial step in preparing “Two Dreams and Little Bat” is through each of the voices gaining a sense of the independent meters in which the Alto I and II are centered in $\frac{3}{4}$ and the Baritone I, II and Bass are centered in $\frac{4}{4}$. The Tenor coordinates its part within these two metrical planes. More importantly, however, is that for the King’s Singers, the rhythmic solidification of this madrigal came over time from a sense of the overall rhythmic flow of the madrigal; a flow that was felt collectively by all

\[111\text{ Ibid.}\]
the musicians. In a sense then, for the King’s Singers, there was a sense of building something together slowly, rather than trying to cram disparate meters together in which each metrical plane was learned in a vacuum.

This slow building was also necessitated by pitch difficulties. As the analysis has clearly shown, the Nonsense Madrigals rely heavily on tonal language (tertian harmonies, diatonic scales, perfect fifths, major thirds, etc.). These tonal gestures proved important in learning the work. While it was understood, that certain pitches might not be exact (particularly in the aforementioned rapid scalar passages), for rehearsal purposes, certain moments were identified as places where all voices would be sure to be in exact agreement in terms of tuning. In rehearsal, the singers would presumably pause at these moments and tune the chord before moving on or repeating the passage. One might view these moments in the music as tonal reorientation “sign posts.” These sign posts were usually places where the voices arrived on actual chords that could be tuned according to the conventions of tonality even if the given chord might not be in the context of a larger scale tonic. This rehearsal process required some pre rehearsal analysis in which chords and tonal centers were identified as tuning points. Two of these moments can be seen in the opening nine measures of “Two Dreams and Little Bat” (Example 77).

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112 Ibid.
113 Ibid.
114 Ibid.
115 Ibid.
Example 77, “Two Dreams and Little Bat,” mm. 1–9

Poco animato, gently swinging
($\frac{1}{4} = 75 / \frac{4}{4} = 100$)

György Ligeti
1988

Alto I
(Counterenr)

Alto II
(Counterenr)

Tenor

Baritone I

Baritone II

Bass

A I

A II

T

Bar I

Bar II

B

D 6 Chord
Identification of sign posts was also important in the scalar passages beginning in measure 36 leading to the peak of the madrigal at measure 40. While individual notes of the scales may not be perfectly exact when performed up to tempo, there are moments within these measures to reorient pitch. This passage can be broken into very small groups based on the occurrence of tertian harmonies. Sometimes this means dropping a “non harmonic” tone from the chord to allow the tuning to take place and then, after the

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116 Ibid.
singers are comfortable with the tertian sonority, adding the non harmonic voice(s) back in (Example 78).\footnote{Ibid.}

**Example 78, “Two Dreams and Little Bat,” mm. 38 – 40**

- G minor 7 chord; third inversion
- Eb dominant 7 chord; Tenor has non harmonic tone
- Gb major triad with 9th
- Parallel motion (Tenor/Bass)
In addition to tuning chords, understanding the intervallic relationship between parts that move together was an important element in the work’s initial preparation.\textsuperscript{118}

Referring back to Example 78 for instance, it was beneficial to isolate the Tenor and Bass parts in the second half of measure 38 so that these two voice parts could hear each other moving in parallel sixths followed by two parallel fifths.

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid.
In addition to this kind of “microanalysis,” in which any and all possible tonal reference points that could be found were used in rehearsal to help anchor the singers’ ears, larger tonal reference points proved useful in initial rehearsals of the work. As shown in Chapter II, various pitches serve a large scale structural role to some of the madrigals. In the case of “Two Dreams and Little Bat,” C serves a significant structural role followed by F (Example 77, Alto II mm. 1-4-pages 179-180, Example 14-page 43, and Example 18-page 48). E is also referenced at measures 26-33 (Example 9-pages 40-41). Recognizing these pitch centers did serve the rehearsal process in that the singers would remember the given pitch not unlike choral singers remembering the tonic when performing chromatically altered tonal music.\textsuperscript{119}

Because of the double challenge of pitch difficulties tied in with incredible rhythmic challenges, “Two Dreams and Little Bat” was in many ways, the most challenging of the set.\textsuperscript{120} As such, many of the rehearsal techniques discussed could also transfer to other movements with similar, though less daunting difficulties.

As discussed, the unique challenge of the “The Alphabet” is the stamina required to sustain pitches for long durations.\textsuperscript{121} The fact that this madrigal has clear tonal centers means that intonation is paramount. The “dirty patches” that Ligeti refers to in reference to his Requiem does not apply to “The Alphabet” since nearly every sonority plays a role in the tonal skeleton of the madrigal (Figure 10-page 107). In preparation, absolute clarity as to the make up of each chord is imperative so that each voice can tune to each other.

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid.
The fourth and fifth madrigals, though certainly not easy, are made less difficult by the passacaglia patterns. In both cases, the repetitive patterns provide a point of orientation for all of the voices both in terms of pitch and in terms of rhythmic coordination. In “Flying Robert,” the passacaglia is made up entirely of perfect fifths between the Baritone I, II and Bass (Example 48-page 118). Because of their strong tonal associations, these repeating perfect fifths help anchor the pitch for all voices. Though less tonally oriented, the consistently repeating second theme also helps provide an anchor for the madrigal (Example 50-page 120). Just as slight inaccuracy of pitch was expected with the fast ascending scales in “Two Dreams and Little Bat,” the same was expected with the rapid chromatic “wind” scales (referred to as w in the analysis) in “Flying Robert.” The multiple points of orientation provided by recurring themes with tonal suggestions allow the voices with the rapid scales to reorient themselves in terms of pitch.

The recurring passacaglia of the fifth madrigal “The Lobster Quadrille” is also made up primarily of perfect fifths and major thirds thus providing a solid pitch reference for the other voices (Example 59-page 141). Like the second madrigal “Cuckoo in the Pear Tree,” there are few significant rhythmic problems. It will be recalled that the second and fifth madrigals were related in terms of intervallic organization. Texturally they are similar in that many of the themes and motives are paired between two voices, often at parallel intervals. (See the following examples of voice pairing from: “Cuckoo in the Pear Tree”- Example 25-pages 63-64, Example 29-pages 68-69, Example 30a and 30b-page 71, and Example 31-pages 72-73; from “The Lobster Quadrille” –Example 61-page 142, Example 62-page 143, and Example 63-pages 143-144.) In these cases, pairs

122 Ibid.
of voices would be isolated in rehearsal and solidified in terms of tuning and rhythmic coordination.\textsuperscript{123}

A disclaimer about rhythm should be made about what is referred to in the analysis of “The Lobster Quadrille” as theme d (Figure 12-page 134). The dotted sixteenth notes are very isolated from the fairly square rhythms of the other themes. While a metric relationship can be found common to all the rhythms (such as the 32\textsuperscript{nd} note), at performance tempo, attempting to sense an exact relationship is impractical. Initially, this theme was learned separately from the other voices. Then effort was made to be sure that downbeats lined up even if it meant that the duration of each of the notes of theme d was not absolutely exact within the meter.\textsuperscript{124} This again refers to an overall rhythmic flow of the piece rather than individual rhythms conceived by the performers in isolation.

Like the fourth and fifth madrigals, the sixth madrigal, “A Long, Sad Tale,” contains elements that help anchor the work both rhythmically and in terms of pitch. The long sustained notes such as the Bb\texttextsuperscript{3} that sustains from measure 2 through measure 17 provides a solid pitch reference for all the voices (Figure 13-pages 151-152). Rhythmically, the ostinatos provide a solid rhythmic framework. While all voices can essentially organize themselves around the eighth note, Ligeti helps the performers by consistently organizing the beats in measures of unequal length alternating 7/8 bars with 9/8 bars. Unlike “Two Dreams and Little Bat” in which the barlines do not necessarily match the flow of the musical gestures, the meter in “A Long Sad Tale” is generally in alignment with the musical scansion. Referring to the first ostinato for example

\textsuperscript{123} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{124} Ibid.
(Example 64-page 153), the meter of the first 9/8 bar can be divided as 2+2+2+2+1 and can be visualized as a conductor’s five pattern while the 7/8 bar can be divided as 2+2+3 visualized as a conductor’s three pattern.

This is not to say that “A Long, Sad Tale” is easy. In fact, the King’s Singers had only one week to learn this piece before performing it which suggests that their initial preparation of it was probably not an “easy” experience. Nonetheless, the clear pitch centers anchored by the sustained tones, as well as the metric organization, give this madrigal certain elements that can help the rehearsal process.

As is the practice with the King’s Singers, the Nonsense Madrigals were performed without a conductor though one or two of the singers did provide pre-rehearsal “microanalysis” to facilitate rehearsals. If one were to perform the Nonsense Madrigals with an ensemble of one per part, a conductor’s role should be that of a chamber music coach and rehearsal technician. The primary responsibility would be that of pre-rehearsal microanalysis to facilitate the rehearsal process.

Questions arise as to a leadership role beyond coach if an ensemble of multiple voices per part were to perform the work. It is not uncommon for small chamber choirs including high school choirs to perform Renaissance madrigals without a conductor. As the analysis has shown, much of the Nonsense Madrigals parodies Renaissance music through both compositional structural techniques as well as through extensive word painting. A conductor-less performance of the Nonsense Madrigals would be consistent with typical performing practices of madrigals as well as with vocal chamber music in general.

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125 Ibid.
126 Ibid.
On the other hand, with multiple voices per part, a conductor may be crucial. In the event that a conductor is used, care must be taken to not actually cause more harm than good. In the case of “Two Dreams and Little Bat” for example, the performers would be aided by seeing downbeats as well as places where all or most of the voices articulate together. Too much emphasis on beat pattern, however, could cause confusion because of the disparate meters. In general, the conducting style for the *Nonsense Madrigals* should be cool and controlled, showing only the most crucial information as necessary to keep the ensemble together. Just like in a performance of Renaissance music where a leader might only show a steady tactus and nothing else, effective conducting of the *Nonsense Madrigals* may very well be a situation where less is more.

Finally, beyond all technical considerations, performing the *Nonsense Madrigals* requires a willingness to go beyond the work’s difficulties so as to bring a strong element of wit and theatrics. The work must not sound difficult. To dismiss this point would be to dismiss a crucial element of the piece. As discussed at length, humor and even a certain degree of ridiculousness is a cornerstone to the aesthetic concept of these madrigals. Anything less would be nothing more than an exercise in rhythm and pitch hurdles.

A performer must bring a level of thoughtful imagination to the *Nonsense Madrigals*. How else but with imagination could one sing dynamics ranging from *pppp* to *fffff* and portray performance indications like *annoyed, enthusiastic, indignant, chattering snobbishly, hilarious,* and *very impatiently*? It is these elements linked to the work’s technical features that make it a viscerally satisfying work for the listener.
Ligeti was quoted earlier as stating, “I like pushing things to the limit of the possible.” If a conductor/vocal ensemble coach had the desire to prepare an ensemble to perform the *Nonsense Madrigals*, he or she must be honest with themselves about their own level of musicianship and imagination. Then, they must ask themselves the same question about their singers. Once those questions have been answered, this piece should only be attempted by those who want to push the limits of their musicianship, who want to be challenged, who are exacting, who are imaginative, and who are willing to convey some fun in music.

The contradiction of rigor and fun, both opposites and both imperatives to the *Nonsense Madrigals* are perfectly consistent with the work’s theme. Ligeti sought Carroll’s Wonderland, a place of maddening contradictions, as the primary textual/thematic basis for this work. Perhaps performers of the *Nonsense Madrigals* get a glimpse of this Wonderland especially when considering the Cheshire Cat’s summation of Wonderland when he says to Alice, “we’re all mad here. I’m mad. You’re mad.” “How do you know I’m mad?” said Alice. “You must be,” said the Cat, “or you wouldn’t have come here.”

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127 Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* 89.
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Appendix A:
Score of the Nonsense Madrigals

Nonsense Madrigals

I. Two Dreams* and Little Bat**

Commissioned for the King’s Singers
with the assistance of a grant from the Barlow Endowment for Music Composition
at Brigham Young University
and the Berlin Festival

György Ligeti
1988

*) “The Dream Of A Girl Who Lived At Seven-Oaks” and
“Poco animato, gently swinging

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Ligeti NONSENSE MADRIGALS
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192
seven bright weather-cocks,
seven slim race horses ready for a row;
in a row; nine new veloc-

butterflies, flitting o-ver-
run, butterflies, flitting o-ver-head,
nine knickerbocker suits, nine pair of skates
-nine knickerbocker suits, nine pair of skates
-i-pedes, good ones to go; with buttons all com-

...
A I

13

A II

- head, seven red.

T

what you're at!

Bar I

with straps for the feet; nine clever conjurers eating hoo

Bar II

with straps, nine clever, conjurers eating hoo

B

nine clever, nine sturdy

A I

16

A II

in a garden bed, seven white.

T

Up a

Bar I

coals; leggiero

Bar II

coals; nine little drum-mer-boys beating on their dru-ru-ru-ru dru-da-rum dru-ru-ru-ru-

B

mountain-ers leaping on their poles;
lil-ies, with honey bees in-side them:

above the world you fly,

nine fat al-der-men sit-ting on their thumbs; nine new

-drum; nine fat al-der-men, nine new

nine fat thumbs.

sev-en round, round rain-bows with clouds to di-vide

Like

knock-ers to our front door; nine new neigh-bours that

cowork to our front door; nine new neigh-bours

nine thumbs; nine new neigh-bours
in a curious, distant, nasal voice

seven nice fathers, nice

Tinkle, tinkle, little bat!

A I

mothers, to call little maid's joys;

A II

mothers, to kiss the little boys;

T

Bar I

I dream, I dreamt, I, I dreamt running, I dreamt, I

Bar II

I dream, I dream, I dreamt running, dreamt running.

B

I dream, I dream, I dreamt running, dreamt running, dreamt
I dreamt, I dreamt all

I dreamt it all

I dreamt it all

I dreamt it all

I dreamt it all

I dreamt it

| crescendo: more and more obstinately |

plain, with bread and jam, and bread, and bread, and bread, and bread, and bread, and bread,

plain, with bread and jam, and bread, and bread, and bread, and bread, and bread, and bread,

plain, sub. * and cheese! and cheese!

plain, sub. * and cheese! and cheese!

plain, sub. * and cheese!

plain, sub. * and cheese!

plain, sub. * and cheese!

*) Breathe alternating with the other five singers
and jam for supper.

bread, and jam... could dream it all.

and cheese!

no longer solo

again!

*) see footnote page 12
II. Cuckoo in the Pear-Tree
(William Brighty Rands)

Commissioned for the King's Singers
with the assistance of a grant from the Barlow Endowment for Music Composition
at Brigham Young University
and the Berlin Festival

Lively

A I

A II

T

B I

B II

B

Cuck-oo!

Cuck-oo!

Cuck-oo!

The cuck-oo sit in the old pear-tree,

The cuck-oo sit in the pear-tree,

Cuck-oo, cuck-oo, cuck-oo, naught cared he, cuck-

Cuck-oo, cuck-oo, cuck-oo, naught cared he, cuck-

Cuck-oo, cuck-oo, cuck-oo, naught cared he, cuck-

Cuck-oo, cuck-oo, cuck-oo, naught cared he.

Cuck-oo, cuck-oo, cuck-oo, naught cared he.

Cuck-oo, cuck-oo, cuck-oo, naught cared he.

Cuck-oo, cuck-oo, cuck-oo, naught cared he.

Durata: 1’30”

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The cuckoo flew over a house - top high.

pp (distorted nasal voice)

"Dear, are you at home, for here am I?"

Cuck-oo, cuck-oo,

Cuck-oo, cuck-oo,

"Dear, are you at home, for here am I?"
cuck-oo, here am I, cuck-oo!

mezza voce, unsurely

T

“l dare not o - pen the door to you,

mezza voce, unsurely

Bar I

“I dare not o - pen the door to you,

Bar II

B

Cuck-oo, cuck-oo!

Cuck-oo, cuck-oo, cuck-oo, cuck-oo,

per - haps you are not the right cuck-oo?

per - haps you are not the right cuck-oo?

(c echo)
The right cuck-o! "I am the right cuck-o.

cuck-o, cuck-o, cuck-o, cuck-o!

Cuck.
cuck-o, sh!

Cuck-

Cuck-o, cuck-o, cuck-o, cuck-o!

Cuck-o, the right cuck-o!

cuck-o, cuck-o, cuck-o! "I am the right cuck-o.

the proper one, for I am my father's only son,

-co, cuck-o, cuck-o! (distorted voice)

-o, cuck-o, cuck-o! "For I am my father's only son."

Cuck-

the proper one!"
his only son.”

"His only son.”

Cuck-oo, cuck-oo!

Cuck-oo, cuck-oo, cuck-oo!

Cuck-oo, cuck-oo, cuck-oo!

Cuck-oo, cuck-oo, cuck-oo!

Cuck-oo, cuck-oo!

Cuck-oo, cuck-oo, cuck-oo!

Cuck-oo, cuck-oo, cuck-oo, cuck-oo!

Cuck-oo, cuck-oo!

Cuck-oo!

Cuck-oo! On-ly son, cuck-oo!

Cuck-oo! Son!

"If you are your father’s only..."
Cack-oo, cack-oo!

"Cack-oo, cack-oo!

"Come through the door light-

The bob-bin pull tightly!"

"Pull tightly, tightly!"

"Pull tightly, tightly!"

"Pull tightly, pull!"

*) Breathe alternatingly
A I
you, the on-ly

A II
you, the on-ly
cuck-oo,

T
the on-ly
cuck-oo,

Bar I
you, the

Bar II
- ly one, my own,

B
must be you, my own

possitile

(breathe imperceptibly)

A I

A II
cuck-oo, my own cuck-

T
cuck-oo, my own cuck-

Bar I

- ly one!

Bar II

my own cuck oo oo!

B
cuck oo oo!
III. The Alphabet

Commissioned for the King’s Singers
with the assistance of a grant from the Barlow Endowment for Music Composition
at Brigham Young University
and the Berlin Festival

György Ligeti
1988

Lento \( \text{\( \text{\textit{\textit{d}} = 56} \))}

A I

A II

T

Bar I

Bar II

B

A I

A II

T

Bar I

Bar II

B

*) Phonetic Spelling

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Durata: 3'30''

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IV. Flying Robert

("The Story of Flying Robert" from the "Truwwelpeter"
by Dr. Heinrich Hoffmann [1845], English translation from German 1848)

Passacaglia

Commissioned for the King’s Singers
with the assistance of a grant from the Barlow Endowment for Music Composition
at Brigham Young University
and the Berlin Festival

Tempo giusto

\( \left( \frac{d}{3} \right) = 63 \)  \( \left( \frac{d}{4} \right) = 126 \)

György Ligeti
1988

A I

A II

T

When the rain comes tumbling down in the

Bar I

Comes down, rain comes down,

Bar II

Rain comes down,

B

Down, rain

\( p \) dolce

A I

A II

T
country or the town...

comes down, comes down, rain comes down,

comes down, rain comes down,

Bar II

comes down, rain comes down,

\( p \) dolce

All good little girls and

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boys stay at home and mind their toys,
boys mind their toys, oh!

Rob - en thought:

comes down, comes down, rain comes
down, rain comes

comes down, down...
"No_

all good little girls
all good little girls

"No!"

Rain it did_
down, comes down. Rain it did_
down, comes down. Rain did_

no, when it pours, it's bet-ter out of doors." Did!"
and boys stay at home and mind

Sotto voce

And in a minute Bob was in it; here you see him, sily fellow,

Rain it did. Here you see him, sily fellow,

Rain it did.

Rain it

their toys, all good

their toys, oh! all good

underneath his umbrella! Oh! Oh!

underneath his umbrella! How it whistles

Oh! How it whistles through the trees and flow'rs and this tles!

What a wind! Oh! How it
Ah! little girls and boys

Oh! How it

through the trees...

Oh! Oh! Oh! It has

whistles through the trees and flowers...

28

stay at home and mind their boys

and mind their (whistle) (whistle) (gloss)

whistles through the trees and flowers!

it whistles!

caught, it has caught his red um-

How it whistles! Now look at him.
A I

Solo

A II

Up he flies to the skie-

T

Now look at him, silly fellow, up-

Bar I

has caught his umbrella.

Bar II

he flies-

B

up he flies to the
bore him, and his hat flew on before him; soon they got to such a height!

(crie-) - - - s! ...be-fore him; soon they got to such a height! Oh!

Soon they got to such a height!

his hat went up so

And his hat went up so

They got to such a height; they were no longer solo (sempre $j = 126$)

High...

And the hat went up so high...

high, that it really touch'd the...

high, that it really touch'd the sky,

nearly out of sigh -
never, never, never, never seen a

little girls and boys stay at home and

little girls and boys

all good little girls

morendo

- gain ...

diminuendo poco a poco al siete

- gain ...

All good little girls

mind their toys, stay at

stay at home and mind

and boys
and boys stay at home and mind their toys,

home, at home and mind their
diminuendo al

t heir toys, stay at home and

stay at

and mind, mind their toys, and mind their toys...
diminuendo al fine

t toys, ...
diminuendo poco a poco al fine

mind their toys, mind their toys...

diminuendo poco a poco al fine

home and mind their toys, mind their toys...
V. The Lobster Quadrille

(Lewis Carroll [1865])

This work was commissioned by the South Bank Centre for the King's Singers as a part of the "Ligeti by Ligeti" Festival in autumn 1988.

Allegro molto leggero e ritmico

($ \frac{3}{2} = 160$)

György Ligeti
1989

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Will you walk a little faster?

to a snail.

Will you walk a little faster?

and he's reading on my tail.

how eagerly the lobsters and the turtles all advance!

whirring to a snail.

will you walk a little faster?

There's a per-sonal class behind us
They are waiting on the shingle, will, will you walk? Will

-elf? Said a whirring to a snail.

They are waiting on the shingle, will you come and join the dance?

Said a whirring to a snail. ... the dance?

Will you walk

and he’s tread-ing on my tail. Come, join the dance!

you—won’t you—will you—won’t you—will you—join the dance?

... a little fast-er? Will you join the dance?

Said a whirring

Said a whirring

... a little fast-er? You

There’s a por-poise close be-hind us, and he’s tread-ing on
A I
21

Will you join the dance?

A II

Will you join the dance?

T

(puzzled)
to a snail.

Will you walk

Bar I

to a snail.

Will you walk

Bar II

più f

can really have no notion how delightful it will be,

B

my tail.

Will you walk

41

A I

24

(puzzled)

pp sotto voce, leggerissimo molto râmico

... a little faster?

With the lobsters, out to sea!

A II

Said a whistling to a snail.

pp sotto voce, leggerissimo molto râmico

With the lobsters, out to sea!

T

a

Bar I

walk?

Said a whistling to a snail. But the

B

when they take us up and throw us, out to

a little faster?

Will you walk

*) Baritone I: “But the snail replied”: like in a baroque recitative. Solemnly.
...a little faster? Said a whiting to a snail.

Said a whiting to a snail.

snail replied:

Will you walk

...a little faster?

Will you walk

far!

Said he thanked the whiting kindly.

...a little faster? Said a whiting to a snail.

and gave a look a-skance.

Will you walk

and gave a look a-skance.

Will you walk

far!

Said he thanked the whiting kindly.
sotto voce, leggerissimo molto rítico
(normal)

but...
he would not join the dance.

Would...

He would not join the dance.

a l i t t l e f a s t e r?
whi...-

Bar I
a...
... said a whi...-

Bar II
But...
s u b .
(normal voice)
(annoyed)

... said a whi...-

B
but...
... l i t t l e f a s t e r?
There's a porpoise close behind us.

not... could not... would not... could not... would not... join the dance!

... to a snail. Will you walk a little... join the dance!

... to a snail. Will you walk a... the dance!

Will you walk a little fast...? What mat-

Bar II
(sempre f f f)
(very impatiently)

Will you walk a little fast...? Join... dance!

and he's tread-ing on my tail! Yes, on my tail!

*) Baritone I: "What matters it how far we go?" and "There is another shore, etc.": Shouting like a karker.
A I
---
(annoyed) His scal-y friend re-plied.

A II
---
Will you walk a lit-tle fast-er?

T
---
His scal-y friend re-plied. Said a

Bar I
- ters it how far we go? There is an-o-th-er shore, you

Bar II
- ters it how far we go? Said a

poco a poco bocca chiusa
(sempre pp)

B

46
---
... to a snail.

A II
---
Will you walk? The far-ther off

T
---
whit-ing Will you walk?

Bar I
know, up-on the oth-er side.

Bar II
whit-ing to a snail The far-ther

(open)

B
---
... far-ther off
from England the nearer is to France.

...to France, the nearer is to

...from England the nearer...

... from England the nearer...

Will you walk a little faster?

...little faster? Said a whiting

Then turn not pale, beloved snail, but come and join the

Will you walk a little faster?

Then turn not pale, beloved snail, but come and join the

France.

France.
dance Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, will you, won't you join the dance...

to a snail. said a whiting.

dance Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, will you, won't you join the dance...

(answering)

Will you walk a little faster?

to a snail. said a whiting.

Will you walk a little faster?

join the dance?

Will you, won't you, will you join the dance?

(answering)

... to a snail. Will you join, won't you dance?

Will you walk a little faster? ... dance?

Will you walk a little faster? ... dance?
Dedicated to Simon Carrington and Alastair Hume

VI. A Long, Sad Tale
(from Lewis Carroll's "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland"
and "Original Games and Puzzles")

Commissioned by the King's Singers

Vivace all Leggiero e molto ritmico (Like Jazz!)

\( \frac{\text{A}}{\text{A II}} \)

Head,

\( \text{T} \)

"Off with her head!"

\( \text{B} \)

"Mint is a

\( \text{Bar I} \)

Head, heal, teal, tell, tall, TAIL, tall, tell

\( \text{Bar II} \)

Head, heal, teal, tell, tall, TAIL, tall, tell

\( \text{B} \)

Whining p noto esp.

\( \text{A I} \)

pp

\( \text{A II} \)

mm

\( \text{T} \)

pp

\( \text{Bar I} \)

mf

\( \text{Bar II} \)

mf

\( \text{B} \)

long,

Durata: 1'30"
and a sad, sad, sad, sad, sad tale.

and a long, long, long, long, long, long tale.
"It is a long tail.

Witch, witch, wench, tench, tenth,

Turn witch into fairy!

Witch, wench, wench, tench, tenth,

till.

Tale."

certainly, but why do you call it sad?

tents, tints, tills, fills, falls, fairs, FAIRY? Sad?

tents, tints, tills, fills, falls, fairs, FAIRY? Sad?
Let us both go to law:

Fury said to a mouse, that she met in the house, fury, fury, fury.

She met in the house, fury, fury, fury.

Fury said to a mouse, that she met in the house, fury, fury, fury.

Oh!

I will prosecute YOU!

I will prosecute YOU!

(a) "Come take no denial, we must have a trial,"

Bar: bar-ke’d, bar-ke’d, bar-ke’d, a trial.

T: bar-ke’d, bar-ke’d, bar-ke’d, bar-ke’d, bar-ke’d, bar-ke’d, bar-ke’d, bar-ke’d.

Bar: bar-ke’d, bar-ke’d, bar-ke’d, bar-ke’d, bar-ke’d, bar-ke’d, bar-ke’d.
"For really this morning I've no thing

said the mouse to the car. "Such a trial,

said the mouse to the car. "Such a trial,

"Such a trial, dear Sir.

*) Squeeze the nose with two fingers
*Squeeze the nose with two fingers
judge, I'll be jury.

judge and I'll be jury.

judge and I'll be jury.

judge and I'll be jury.

Quilt, guilt, guile, guile, glide, slide, slice, spice, spine, spins, shins, shies, shier,

Quilt, guilt, guile, guile, glide, slide, slice, spice, ... You.

And condemn you.
glove, guide, guile, GUILT, guile, guide, glide, slide.

“To...

glove, guide, guile, GUILT, guile, guide, glide, slide.

*) Voice pp but breathing intensively (ff) — a kind of voiced whisper.
November 28, 2003

European American Music Distributors LLC
Attn: Erica-Sommer Dudley
P.O. Box 4340
15800 N.W. 48th Avenue
Miami, FL 33014

Dear Erica-Sommer Dudley:

I am in the process of writing a doctoral monograph on the *Nonsense Madrigals* composed by György Ligeti and published by Schott. I am writing to request permission to use passages from the score of this work as well as from Ligeti’s *Piano Concerto* as musical examples in this document. This monograph is being written as part of my Doctor of Musical Arts degree and has no commercial purpose.

The following are particulars requested by Elizabeth Schneider from the Legal Department Schott Musik International in Mainz, Germany:

Scores: *Nonsense Madrigals* by György Ligeti ED 7866 (published in 1999 by Schott Musik International, Mainz)

*Piano Concerto* by György Ligeti ED 7746 (published in 1986 by B. Schott’s Söhne, Mainz)

University Granting My Degree: Louisiana State University

Advisor’s Name: Dr. Kenneth Fulton
Louisiana State University
School of Music
205 School of Music
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
U.S.A.
(225) 578-2569

Expected Date of Completion: May 2004

Name and Address of Licensee: Dennis P. Malfatti
1000A Longwood Avenue
Farmville, VA 23901
U.S.A.
(434) 391-3884
List of Measures and voice parts from The *Nonsense Madrigals* by György Ligeti to be used as examples:

**Movement 1**

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<tr>
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<td>Alto I</td>
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<td>1 – 34</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alto II</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Baritone I, Baritone II, Bass</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alto I, Alto II</td>
<td>11 – 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bass</td>
<td>11 – 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bass</td>
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<td>All Parts</td>
<td>22</td>
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<td>Baritone II, Bass</td>
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**Movement 2**

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<td>17 – 21</td>
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<td>Baritone I, Baritone II</td>
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<tr>
<td>All Parts</td>
<td>36 – 43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alto I, Alto II, Bass</td>
<td>47 – 48</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alto I, Alto II, Tenor, Bass</td>
<td>53 – 54</td>
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<td>Baritone I, Baritone II</td>
<td>53 – 54</td>
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<td>Alto II, Baritone I, Baritone II</td>
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<td>Alto I, Alto II, Tenor, Baritone I</td>
<td>69 – 70</td>
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**Movement 3**

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**Movement 4**

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<tr>
<td>Baritone I, Baritone II, Bass</td>
<td>1 – 8</td>
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<td>Alto I, Alto II</td>
<td>8 – 14</td>
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<td>20 – 21</td>
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Movement 5

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<td>Alto I, Tenor</td>
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Movement 6

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</table>

In addition to the above examples from the *Nonsense Madrigals*, I would like also to cite measures 1 - 3 of Ligeti’s *Piano Concerto*.

I thank you for your consideration of my request.

Regards,

Dennis Malfatti
20 January 2004
Page 1 of 5

Dennis P. Malfatti
1000 A Longwood Avenue
Fairview, VA 23901

RE: Excerpts as listed on the attached Schedule A, only

Dear Mr. Malfatti:

In accordance with your request of 28 November 2003, we hereby grant a non-exclusive license for you to use the above-referenced excerpts in your doctoral dissertation, provided the conditions listed below are satisfied:

1. Under each excerpt, the following copyright information must appear:

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2. Mention will be given us in the preface or appendix acknowledgements, if any.

3. This permission is valid providing your doctoral dissertation is completed within one (1) year of the date of this letter.

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6. One (1) copy of your dissertation is to be provided to the publisher, gratis, upon completion thereof.

CLIENT'S COPY
20 January 2004
Page 2 of 5

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Sincerely yours,

European American Music Distributors LLC

James Kendrick, Acting President

Accepted and agreed on this 4th day of March 2004.

By: [Signature]

CLIENT'S COPY
### SCHEDULE A

#### Movement 1

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#### Movement 2

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## Movement 4

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tenor</td>
<td>1 – 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bartitone I, Bartone II, Bass</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alto I, Alto II</td>
<td>8 – 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenor</td>
<td>20 – 21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bass</td>
<td>24 – 27</td>
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<tr>
<td>All Parts</td>
<td>25 – 29</td>
</tr>
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<td>Bartone II</td>
<td>27 – 31</td>
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<td>31 – 35</td>
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<td>Alto II</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bartone I</td>
<td>35 – 37</td>
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<tr>
<td>All Parts</td>
<td>38 – 40</td>
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<td>Bartone I, Bartone II, Bass</td>
<td>43 – 47</td>
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<td>48 – 60</td>
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<tr>
<td>All Parts</td>
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<td>All Parts</td>
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### Movement 5

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<tr>
<td>Bass</td>
<td>7 – 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alto I, Tenor</td>
<td>11 – 14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alto I, Tenor</td>
<td>15 – 16</td>
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<td>All Parts</td>
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<td>All Parts</td>
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<td>All Parts</td>
<td>47 – 51</td>
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### Movement 6

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<td>Baritone I, Baritone II</td>
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<td>Bass</td>
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<td>Tenor</td>
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<td>Bass</td>
<td>13 – 15</td>
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<td>Tenor</td>
<td>16 – 18</td>
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<td>All Parts</td>
<td>20 – 25</td>
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<tr>
<td>All Parts</td>
<td>23 – 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenor, Baritone I, Baritone II</td>
<td>26 – 28</td>
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<tr>
<td>All Parts</td>
<td>26 – 31</td>
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<td>Alto II, Tenor</td>
<td>29 – 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alto I, Alto II</td>
<td>32 – 33</td>
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<tr>
<td>All Parts</td>
<td>38 – 47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bass</td>
<td>39 – 40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baritone I</td>
<td>41 – 42</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alto I, Alto II, Tenor, Baritone I</td>
<td>53 – 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baritone I, Bass</td>
<td>53 – 55</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alto II, Tenor</td>
<td>59 – 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Parts</td>
<td>51 – 63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Composition Information

Title: Atmospheres
Composer: Copeland, Ligeti
Catalog Number: Discriminator
Exact measure numbers to be quoted: Measures 33 (title & pieces only), 39 (from 90-4867[conductor only])

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Phone (972) 891-8834 Fax (—) (—)
e-mail cellulotrob@excite.com

Composition Information

Title Garszaka
Composer Greg Lipton
Catalog Number ED 648 Publisher Schott

Exact measure numbers to be quoted Measures 1-11
- Count from the first full measure of the work. Do not include anacrusic measures, i.e. measure 274 - 301; 405-410.
- Please use one form per requested work.

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Phone: (434) 391-8884  
e-mail: dmalafati@execco.com

Composition Information

Title: Nonsense Madrigals  
Composer: Wray A. Light  
Catalog Number: ED 79667  
Publisher: Schott  

Exact measure numbers to be quoted: Entice Work as Appendix  
Count from the first full measure of the work. Do not include staccato measures (e.g., measures 216 - 301, 409-414).  
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Name of Advisor: Dr. Kenneth E. Patton  
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Originally from California, Dennis Malfatti graduated *summa cum laude* in 1996 from the University of the Pacific with the Bachelor of Music Degree in composition. He was a finalist in the 1997 ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composer Awards for his work *Cantata on Poems by e. e. cummings*. In 1998, he received his Master of Music Degree in conducting from the Pennsylvania State University. After two years teaching high school choir and music theory in Brooklyn New York, he began his doctoral studies at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. At LSU, Mr. Malfatti served as conductor of the Collegium Musicum and also conducted performances with the LSU Symphony Orchestra, Chamber Ensembles, and Chamber Singers, and served as cover conductor/chorus master for LSU Opera's production of Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*. Since 1999, Mr. Malfatti has served as chorus master/assistant conductor for *Operafestival di Roma* in Rome, Italy, and served as chorus master for the Bronx Opera Company in New York City for their 1999-2000 season. In October of 2003, he was guest conductor for the Plymouth State University production of Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd*. In April through May of 2004, he served as conductor of the Virginia Commonwealth University Opera Orchestra/Opera Theatre where he conducted performances of Puccini’s *Gianni Schicchi* and *Suor Angelica*. As an organist, Mr. Malfatti has performed for the College Music Society Regional Convention at Union University in Tennessee, and has served as organist for a number of churches in Pennsylvania, Louisiana, and Virginia. Since August of 2002, Mr. Malfatti has served as Director of Choral Activities at Longwood University in Virginia where he conducts the thirty-three voice Camerata Singers, the seventy-five voice University Choir, and the twelve voice Chamber Singers. Mr. Malfatti also teaches sightsinging and dictation, choral methods, beginning and advanced conducting, and keyboard improvisation at Longwood.