

Construction 1

My initial aim for this solo piano piece was to produce something that featured a continually shifting texture, which I would achieve with a static rhythm and some means of generating an exhaustive sequence of chords. I was particularly interested in the pitch-generation methods used by Pierre Boulez and Elliot Carter, and sought a compositional methodology that would allow me to generate a mass of pitch material comparable in diversity to that of Boulez's for *Le Marteau sans Maître* from an all-interval chord as employed by Carter in a piece such as *Night Fantasies*. My starting point was the following chord, which features all 11 intervals and nine notes of the chromatic scale:



Intervallic sequence: 4, M2, m6, m7, 5, m2, M6, TT, m3, M7, M3

I then began applying transformations to this chord to produce variations of it. My first step was to transpose it on to each note of the chromatic scale, giving 12 chords from my original sequence of intervals. From here I employed typical serial transformations to my sequence of intervals, including their inversion (I), retrograde (R) and the retrograde of the inversions (RI), each of which also allowed for 12 transpositions. Most important for my purposes were the 11 chords I generated by building chords from each interval of my original sequence ('2-variant chords'). Doing this provided me with chords that varied in proportions to my prime chord, and each allowed for transpositions. I quickly realised that I could apply this same procedure to my I, R and RI chords, but decided to limit

myself to what I had produced so far and transpositions of a selected number of my 2-variant chords.

The piece begins with a simple exposition of my prime chord in contrary motion. I decided that the evolving textures of the piece offered themselves to temporal flexibility, and my notation allows the performer to dictate the proportion as well as overall duration of chordal passages. After the prime chord is sounded, I begin my first procedure. I noticed after deciding on my prime chord that it features a minor-second interval at its midpoint, which I found interesting. I decided that this interval would serve a structural purpose in the piece, as a means of anchoring chords together and guiding my compositional procedures. My first of these procedures was to feature two minor seconds separated by each of the 11 possible intervals in the sequence that they appear in my prime chord (Example 1). Identifying chords that featured minor seconds at the ranges I required, I took surrounding pitch material from them in order to build a series of small chords. This process continues in a simple format until b. 46, where I began placing measuring the interval not from the minor second of the prime chord, but from that of chord 2ac, which provided the minor second placed a minor second below that of the prime chord, resulting in a stack of three minor seconds. This procedure concludes at b. 66 with a stack of four minor seconds that contains that last two intervals of my sequence, after which comes a passage of elaboration of the material I had generated up to this point. I discovered that the material with which the piece begins resembles a kind of motif, and I began reusing it here to make changes in harmony audible. The motif reappears at b. 83 and takes on several new forms with the pitch material that I designated to this section.

For the next major procedure, I wanted to undertake a transformation of my prime chord into one featuring the minor second at every interval. I originally intended to

Example 1: bb. 16–31. Minor second appears at five different intervals.

Pitch material taken from chord 2ak

1i, P

4th

M2nd

16

15^{mb}

pp < p >

pp < p >

pp < p >

1i, P

2cd

2cg, 2cd

m6th

M7th

5th

29

pp < p >

pp < p >

pp < p >

Example 2: Chord built by using minor seconds in RI chord intervallic sequence. Starting note is taken from prime chord.

15

15^{mb}

pp

p

Intervallic sequence: m6, m2, M6, TT, m3, M7, 4, M2, M3, m7, 5

use my original intervallic sequence, which I felt would have produced a chord audibly identical to the original yet distant enough to stand and as altogether different chord, but in the end decided to move into a new area of pitch material by using the sequence of the RI chord (Example 2). This process begins at b.

Example 3:

The musical score for Example 3 consists of four staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature. The second and third staves are grand staff notation (treble and bass clefs). The bottom staff is a bass clef. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 and letters k, e, h, a, c, d, p. A tempo marking of 15 *mb* is present at the beginning.

15 *mb*

P+5a 2de

2cd 1h P

3k 4e 3h 4a

I 2f