AN ANALYSIS OF *FOR THE LEFT HAND* BY LEON KIRCHNER

WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO THE USE OF THE OCTATONIC SCALE

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ABSTRACT

The study proposes an analysis of Leon Kirchner's *For the Left Hand* with specific reference to the use of the octatonic scale in this composition. Its aim is to test the hypothesis that the composer used the octatonic scale because it is ideally suited for compositions limited by the restrictions of single-handed performance. A related question to which an answer is sought in this study, is whether the different transpositional possibilities of the octatonic scale are used to delineate structural junctures in this piece.

A survey of the available relevant literature on the composer himself, on the left-handed pianist Leon Fleisher, the octatonic scale and its properties, and theories of the analysis of twentieth century music are followed by an independent comprehensive analysis of *For the Left Hand*. Where appropriate, the applicability of some observations by other authors on Kirchner's style characteristics to *For the Left Hand* are investigated.

As orientation to the analysis, attention is given to how Kirchner adapted the styles of his teachers into a unique personal compositional idiom, to Leon Fleisher as an exponent of music for the left hand, to definitions and properties of the octatonic scale, to Kirchner's motivation behind composing this piece, to examples of successful styles of composing for the left hand as employed in *For the Left Hand*, as well as to aural impressions created by the piece.

The analysis itself considers aspects such as temporal fluctuations, rhythmic flow, dynamic structure, directional tonality, range, tessitura, density, texture, flexion count, meter, tempo, pitch class content, pedalling, unifying melodic elements, polyphonic characteristics, and the use of specific intervals and modes.

The conclusion summarizes the findings of the analysis, and indicates that the research hypothesis proves to be accurate.

LIST OF MUSIC EXAMPLES

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Motivation behind the study

Shortly before embarking on music study at the Eastman school of music, the present researcher was introduced to the piano music of the American composer Leon Kirchner. On closer inspection the researcher realized that, with the exception of one compact disc recording by Yo-Yo Ma of the *Music for violoncello and orchestra*, none of this composer's music was available at the Music Library of the University of Pretoria. A similar scarcity of sources was found to prevail in the rest of South Africa. A Sabinet search of music scores and sound recordings of Kirchner's work held by South African libraries delivered a total of only 9 hits. It is the hope of the researcher that in addition to providing an intensive analysis of one of Kirchner's recent compositions and possibly stimulating interest in his music with South African students and performers, this study will be useful as reference source to this composer.

On first hearing *For the Left Hand* at a recital in Buffalo on October 1, 2004 by the pianist Leon Fleisher, to whom this piece is dedicated, the researcher, being familiar with Kirchner's *Sonata* of 1948, was startled by the differences in both style and aural impression between these two works by the same composer. Especially striking were the remarkably romantic undertones, even tonal-sounding nature, standing in stark contrast to the highly atonal and intellectually challenging *Sonata*. These dissimilarities inspired this researcher to investigate Kirchner's compositional techniques in greater detail in order to determine the unique features of *For the Left Hand*.

1.2 Research questions and hypothesis

Leon Kirchner's choice of the octatonic scale as the predominant mode used in *For the Left Hand* may lead one to suspect that some characteristics of this scale are better suited to overcoming the restrictions of single-handed piano performance. This study aims to test this hypothesis by posing and attempting to answer the following question: do the findings of a style analysis of *For the Left Hand* support the theory that the octatonic scale is ideally suited for compositions limited by the restrictions of single-handed performance? Another question related to the above, and which is also examined in this study, is whether the

different transpositional possibilities of the octatonic scale are used to delineate structural junctures in the piece under consideration.

1.3 Objectives of the study

The study proposes an analysis of *For the Left Hand*, with specific reference to the use of the octatonic scale in this composition. By this analysis the researcher will attempt to illustrate the suitability of the octatonic scale to compositions for left hand alone, as well as the diverse possible effects of the use of this scale – particularly the romantic-sounding idiom created in *For the Left Hand* as opposed to the colouristic and impressionistic effects created in the second movement of the *Sonata*. Emphasis will be given to the way in which the use of the three possible transpositions of the octatonic scale at different junctures in the former piece may serve to delineate its structural elements. As background to this study, a short biographical introduction to the composer and his work, an introduction to the dedicatee of this specific work, the injured pianist Leon Fleisher, as well as a short history of the origins of and motivation behind works composed for one hand alone, will be given.

1.4 Research method

The first phase of this study was a survey of relevant literature. The available literature on the composer himself, on the left-handed pianist Leon Fleisher, on the history of composition for the left hand alone, existing works for one hand alone, the octatonic scale and its properties, and theories of the analysis of twentieth century music such as those by Forte (1973) and Strauss (1990) have been consulted and will be discussed as orientation to the analysis of *For the Left Hand*.

As a second step, *For the Left Hand* will be analysed with regard to the use of the octatonic scale, range, tessitura, density, texture, flexion count, rhythm, meter, tempo, dynamics, polyphonic characteristics, melody, pedalling, pitch class content, and the use of specific intervals and modes.

Where appropriate, comparisons will be made between the style characteristics of the work in question, and those of Kirchner's earlier compositions for piano. The applicability of observations made by other authors on Kirchner's style characteristics to *For the Left Hand* will be investigated.

1.5 Delimitation of the study

The scope of this study is very specific, concentrating on a single composition – *For the Left Hand* by Leon Kirchner. The special characteristics of this piece will be shown in greater perspective by way of a converging focus: from piano literature in general as the outermost of a series of concentric circles, through compositions for one hand alone, to one-handed performance by injured pianists, to specific compositional techniques such as the octatonic scale, to Leon Kirchner's use of this scale, to the culmination of all of the above in this particular piece.

The research will culminate in a detailed analysis of *For the Left Hand*, the only piece for left-handed performance in this composer's output. This analysis will be done in order to illustrate the effectiveness of Kirchner's technique of writing for left-handed performance and the role of the octatonic scale therein, as well as to investigate various elements in the piece, and to clarify its form.

1.6 Discussion of contents

The study is divided into two parts. The present chapter, Chapter one, serves as an introduction to the entire study. Chapters two to four form Part I, and Part II consists of chapters five and six. A conclusion, chapter seven, rounds off the study, and the sources consulted are listed in the bibliography.

Chapter two focuses on the composer of *For the Left Hand*, Leon Kirchner, a student of Bloch, Schönberg, and Sessions. His life, his compositions for solo piano, as well as his compositional style are discussed. Emphasis is given to ways in which he adapted the strongly serial influences of his teachers into a highly personal free chromatic but expressive style of writing. The difference in style between Kirchner's early compositions for piano and his later works, as represented by *For the Left Hand*, is discussed.

Leon Fleisher, the pianist to whom the work under discussion in this study is dedicated, is discussed in chapter three as an exponent of music for the left hand. An incapacitating nervous disorder, *focal dystonia*, severely impaired the use of the fingers of his right hand for the greater part of his pianistic career. This precipitated his dedication to the performance of left-hand piano compositions.

In chapter four the emphasis falls on the contributions of Theodor Edel and Donald Patterson in cataloguing the works in the piano literature composed for one hand alone as comprehensively as possible. The pioneers in performance with the left hand alone, Alexander Dreyschock and Adolfo Fumagalli, as well as two important figures coming after them, Geza Zichy and Paul Wittgenstein, are discussed with regard to how they influenced, inspired and commissioned composers to write works for the left hand alone. Thereafter specific reasons behind composing for the left hand are discussed, such as injury, technical development or pedagogic reasons, compositional challenge, and virtuoso display. Kirchner's motivation for composing for the left hand is discussed and explained by means of a quotation. Other one-hand works composed specially for Leon Fleisher are briefly discussed. Specific reference will be made to compositions resulting from the abovementioned reasons. Mention is made of the different genres represented in the one-hand literature. Passages from Kirchner's *For the Left Hand* as well as some other passages from the literature are used to illustrate examples of successful writing for the left hand. The availability of information on works for one hand alone in the standard catalogues of the piano literature is examined. A short discussion of performance practise of works for the left hand alone with regard to the positioning of the hand that is not playing, sitting position at the piano, pedalling, and fingering will conclude the first part of this study.

Chapter five, the first chapter in Part II, starts with definitions of the octatonic scale as found in sources such as the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. Mention is made of composers in whose works use of the octatonic scale is specifically prevalent, such as Olivier Messiaen, who identified it as the second of his seven modes of limited transposition. Properties of the octatonic scale as well as the person who coined the description 'octatonic', Arthur Berger, and his groundbreaking article, "Problems of pitch organization in Stravinsky" (1963), is discussed. It is also explained how the Prometheus and Petrouchka chords can be derived from the interaction between octatonic and whole tone collections. Attention is drawn to the limited availability of information on this important scale in standard references of music. The chapter closes with a short discussion of how the octatonic scale by its nature is very suitable for compositions over a limited range on the piano, such as compositions for the left hand alone.

In chapter six, temporal fluctuations, rhythmic flow, and dynamic structure, as well as directional tonality as employed in Leon Kirchner's *For the Left Hand*, are looked at first. The structural plotting of dynamics is illustrated in diagrammatic form. Thereafter the way in which the use of the three possible transpositions of the octatonic scale at different junctures in the piece delineates its structural elements is discussed. Aspects of the piece that are also investigated in the subsequent sections are its range, frame tonality, tessitura, density, texture, flexion count, meter, tempo, pitch class content, and pedalling. It is shown how unifying melodic elements originate from highly figurative writing that is almost continuously moving. Polyphonic characteristics in the writing are discussed. The use of specific intervals, chords, and modes, such as the whole-tone and pentatonic scales, among others which in themselves are derivates of the octatonic scale, are discussed. Different effects achieved by the use of the octatonic scale in *For the Left Hand* as compared to the second movement of the *Sonata* are discussed. After discussing all the abovementioned elements, a possible analysis of the former piece is proposed. Mention is made of how the aural impressions created by this piece – described by Bernard Holland in his *New York Times* reviews (Holland 2003 and Holland as quoted in Patterson 1999) as 'beautifully organized, but implying great freedom … passionate yet highly civilized' and 'sweeping Lisztian agitation conciliated by tender interludes[,] [I]t draws much from the Romantic age' – were achieved compositionally, as well as the role of octatonism in suggesting a romantic idiom.

The conclusion summarizes the findings of Part II especially and will indicate whether or not the research hypothesis proves to be accurate. The sources consulted are listed at the end in the bibliography.

1.7 Music examples

In order to avoid excessive duplication of music examples in the text, all lines quoted from *For the Left Hand* will only be inserted in the text at either the point where the first reference is made to the particular line, or at the most important reference to a particular line. In successive references to examples taken from the piece, the section under which the particular line can be found will be indicated. Lines are numbered (in addition to bar numbers being provided) and will be indicated as 'Line 1, 2', etc., in the text. All music examples taken from works other than Kirchner's *For the Left Hand* are indicated as

'Figure 1, 2', etc. A list of all music examples in this dissertation is provided on page v. This is intended especially as a reference to where any particular line from *For the Left Hand* occurs in the text.

PART I

CHAPTER 2: INFORMATION ON THE LIFE AND WORKS OF LEON KIRCHNER WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO HIS COMPOSITIONS FOR SOLO PIANO

2.1 Biographical information

Leon Kirchner was born in Brooklyn, New York in the United States of America on January 24, 1919 from Russian Jewish parents. In 1928 his family moved to Los Angeles where the intellectual and artistic life of the city was undergoing major positive changes due to leading artists fleeing Europe under Hitler's rule in search of a better life on the North-American continent. Kirchner at first started studying medicine in order to please his parents, but soon decided to change to music. The correct pronunciation of Kirchner's name is 'kirtshner'. This pronunciation differentiates his name from that of individuals carrying the last name of Kirchner pronounced 'kirshner' or 'keerkhner'.

John Crown (n.d.) introduced Kirchner to Ernest Toch (1887-1964), who recommended him to Arnold Schönberg (1874-1951), who eventually became his principal mentor. According to Ringer (1957:2), Kirchner worked for a year in order to support himself before commencing his studies with Schönberg. Later he studied with Ernest Bloch (1880-1959) at the University of California in Berkeley. According to Ringer (1957:3), Kirchner received the highest musical award offered by the University of California, the George Ladd Prix de Paris. Unfortunately, the war prevented him from continuing his studies in Paris, but instead he studied privately with Roger Sessions in New York. Four years of military service interrupted his studies. In 1947 Kirchner completed his Master of Arts degree at Berkeley and also received an appointment as lecturer there.

In addition to being a pianist with many significant performances behind his name as well as a conductor, Kirchner is a very dedicated educator, having held positions on the faculties of the University of Southern California, Mills College, and Harvard during his lengthy teaching career. According to True (1976:39) the Peabody Conservatory of Music conferred an honorary doctorate on Kirchner in 1970. He currently holds the position of *Walter Bigelow Professor of Music, Emeritus: Honorary Associate of Dunster House* on

the Faculty of Arts and Sciences of Harvard University. According to True (1970:32, 44), Kirchner married the singer Gertrude Schönberg and they have two children.

During his lengthy compositional career Kirchner received various prizes and awards, including the Guggenheim Fellowship, New York Music Critic's Circle Award, National Institute of Arts and Letters Award, Naumburg Award, Pulitzer Prize, and the Friedheim Award. He received commissions from various orchestras, music festivals, and foundations. He was composer-in-residence, performer, and conductor at various music festivals worldwide.

The genres of opera (his only opera is titled *Lily*), vocal compositions, orchestral composition, chamber music, and works for solo instruments are all represented in Kirchner's output that is moderate in scope but comprehensive. In fact, the only genre that he has not contributed to is that of ballet music. According to Ringer (1957:1), his work has even attracted the attention of popular magazines such as the *Life* and *Time* magazines. Ringer is of the opinion that this is due to the power of Kirchner's music to deeply stir large audiences.

2.2 Works for piano

Kirchner's compositions for piano are not numerous but of very high quality. The fact that he was a pianist himself certainly predisposed him towards writing for this instrument and his knowledge of this instrument is evident in his highly successful pianistic style of writing. His piano compositions span over his entire compositional career of well over sixty years, up to the present. In his entire compositional output he shows a strong preference for conventional titles. According to True (1976:11) the composer's earliest works are a piece for solo piano, a *scherzo* for piano and a set of two-part inventions, but all three the works were rejected by the composer. His biggest published earlier work for solo piano is the *Sonata* of 1948. Both Friskin and Freundlich (1954:274) and Hinson (1987:415) still list the last movement as *Allegro Barbaro* despite the fact that Kirchner changed it to *Allegro Risoluto* after Arthur Schnabel's (1882-1951) suggestion. *Grove Music Online* lists Kirchner's works for piano as (in chronological order) the *Piano Sonata* (1948), *Little Suite* (1949), *A moment for Roger* (1978), *5 Pieces for piano* (1984), *5 Pieces for piano* (1987), *Interlude* (1989), *For the left hand* (1995), and *Interlude II* (2003). For piano and orchestra he wrote *Piece for piano and orchestra* (1946), which remained

unpublished, *Piano concerto no. 1* (1963), and *Piano concerto no. 2* (1963). However, to the best knowledge of the present researcher, there exists another solo piano composition by Kirchner, *Piano Sonata no. 2*, composed in 2003 (Holland 2005:1). In Schirmer's biography on the composer (Schirmer 2004:1), mention is made of this sonata that was commissioned by Joel Fan. Schirmer also mentions recent piano works commissioned for Russell Sherman and Jonathan Biss, but does not state the titles of these works that are presumably not yet included in the works list of the composer in *Grove Music Online* (Ringer 2004:3) updated on 26 November 2003.

There is some uncertainty as to the exact title of *For the Left Hand*, the piece under discussion in this study. *Grove Music Online* lists it under all Kirchner's works as *For the Left Hand*, while on the title page of the perusal copy it says '*Left hand for Leon Fleisher*'. In Holland's reviews (Holland 2003:2 and Holland as quoted in Patterson 1999:112) of recitals where the piece was performed by Fleisher, as well as the Amherst College Music Department's programme notes to a recital Fleisher gave in 2004, the piece is referred to as *For the Left Hand*. The dedication to Fleisher seems to be contained loosely in the title on the perusal score instead of as a subscript, which could be responsible for the discrepancy.

2.3 Compositional style

Kirchner's philosophy serves as an introduction to what constitutes the motivational drive behind his own unique style. As quoted in Ringer (1957:5) he criticises the 'new objective' and the tendency, in his view, of contemporary composers who in fear of self-expression seek security in complexity and fad worship. He states (Ringer 1957:5):

> Idea, the precious ore of art, is lost in the jungle of graphs, prepared tapes, feedbacks, and cold stylistic *minutiae*. An artist must create a personal cosmos, a verdant world in continuity with tradition, further fulfilling man's 'awareness', his 'degree of consciousness,' and bringing new subtilization, vision, and beauty to the elements of experience. It is in this way that idea, powered by conviction and necessity, will create its own style and the singular, momentous structure capable of realizing its intent.

Kirchner also feels that the composer should be connected to the past and to tradition. As quoted in True (1976:7):

> One of the essential characteristics of an art work is its uniqueness or singularity. The dynamic balance of this totality is without peer. It is superb and inimitable. And yet this work is rooted in tradition, it is dumb without historical connectedness. Our consciousness, our 'nowness' is rooted in the 'engrammed'

> reflections of time past. We move into, and test, unknown paths; we are able to extend ourselves into the future because of the balance established in historical precedent.

Despite his background as a student of Schönberg, Kirchner never became an exponent of the twelve-tone system, but the characteristic forward drive of his music owes a debt to the traditions of the Second Viennese School. According to True (1976:5), Aaron Copland (1900-1990) places Kirchner on the Bartók-Berg axis. Schirmer (2004:1) refers to Kirchner's individuality, but also mentions earlier influences of Hindemith, Bartók, and Stravinsky, which later yield to identification with the aesthetics but not necessarily the specific procedures of Schönberg, Berg, and Webern. An example, perhaps subconscious, of Kirchner's familiarity to dodecaphonic techniques can be found in the opening phrase of the *Sonata* of 1948, which in itself presents a complete tone row (see fig. 1).

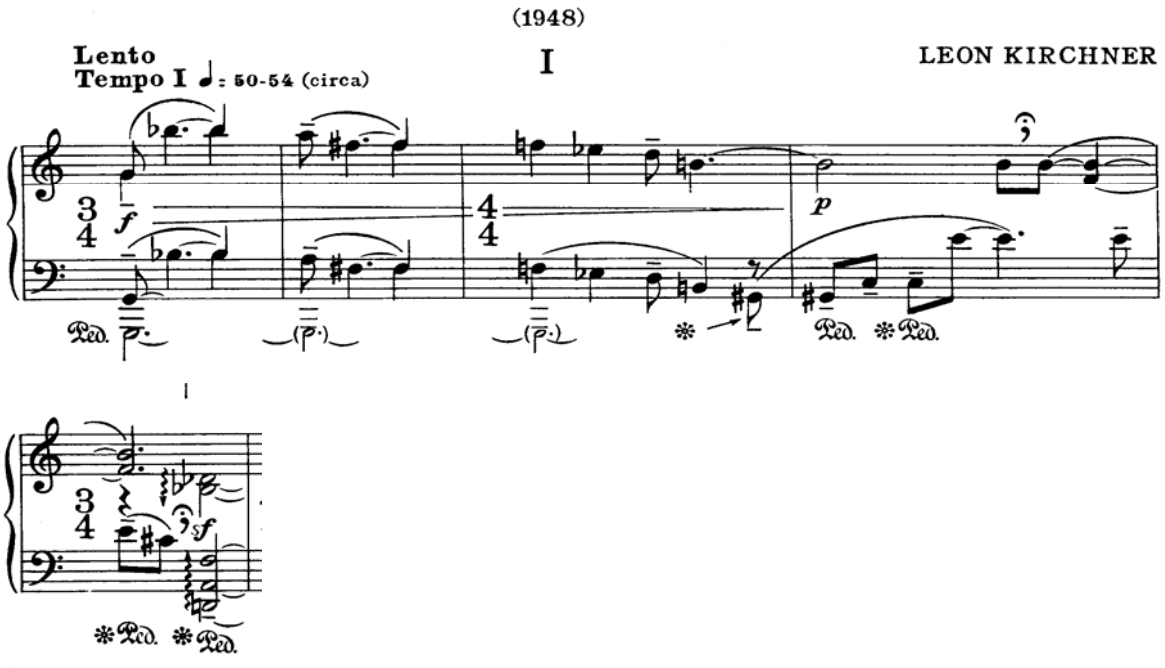


Figure 1

With the possible exception of another tone row presented by the left-hand material in Figure 2, he totally abandons adherence to dodecaphonic principles after this initial twelve-tone row. The rest of the work remains true to his style of employing free chromatisicm. In the edition of the *Sonata* quoted here, the a-natural is omitted – accidentally, it seems – from the RH material of the second line.

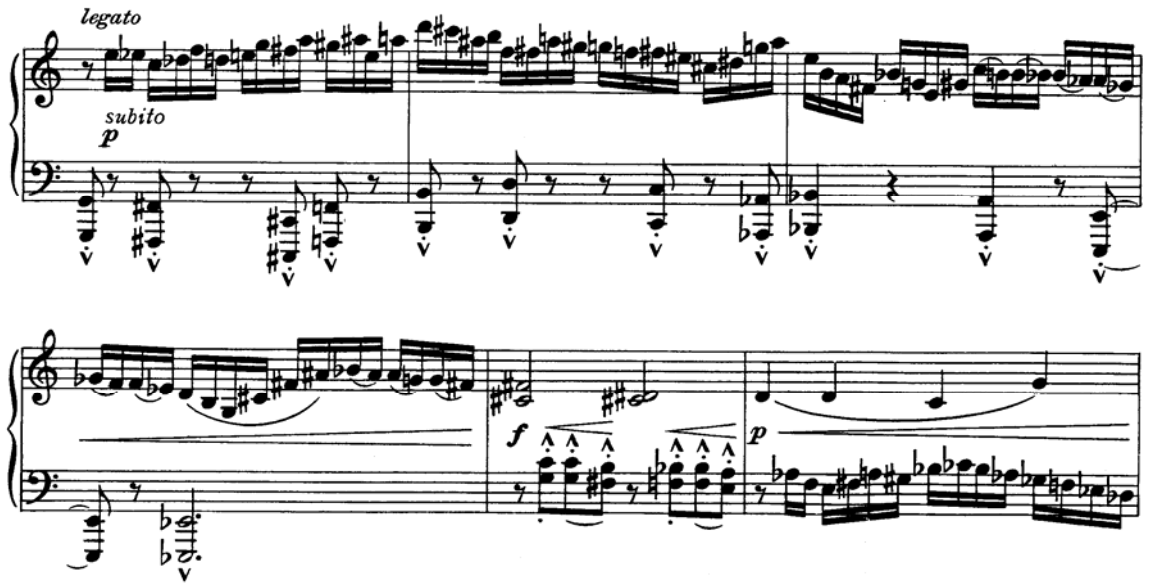


Figure 2

Ehle (1970:30) states that Alban Berg picked up the romantic elements from Schönberg's style and composers such as Roger Sessions, Andrew Imbrie, Leon Kirchner, Ben Weber, and Gunther Schuller represent the romantic side of the development of contemporary or even *avant-garde* music. Ehle also makes the observation that for a romantic movement in any particular time period in music to develop, the basic music material must be presented first in abstract form without expressive connections and then, by associations and experience other composers can find ways in which to romanticize the style by using the same material or techniques in a more expressive context. Therefore it could be said that periods in music history of relatively romantic objectives follow periods in which classical ideals are dominant. Ehle (1970:31) proposes that Kirchner and others mentioned above developed techniques based on the aural results of the twelve-tone technique rather than intellectually applying the technique. This supports the observation of the present researcher that Kirchner does not set out to assert strict theoretical formulae as the sole motivation for composition, but rather relies on his sound musical instincts. The abovementioned aural similarity to the twelve-tone technique must be what is referred to in "Synopsis of twentieth century styles and composers" (n.d:9), where Kirchner is somewhat surprisingly listed as an exponent of serialism in the second half of the century, a category under which "Integral serialists" are listed as well.

Peles (1998:498-499) states that the composers Kirchner, Elliot Carter (b 1908), and Milton Babbitt (b 1916) wrote 'atonal' music that was indebted to the European tradition of

the early twentieth century and not to the American 'experimental' school. He adds that their art shows a kinship with 'Joycean' ideals where 'every word will be bound over to carry three score and ten toptypsical meanings throughout the book'. In music this analogy with literary ideals refers to a fascination with complexity in the sense of the number of associations that might be bestowed on an event through the control of its context rather than merely the number of notes in time.

Hinson (1987:415) describes Kirchner's compositional style as 'characterized by strong dissonance; driving rhythms; rhapsodic, quasi-improvisational qualities; and a personal lyricism' and declares the composer to be 'a vital force in American music'. In *Grove Muic Online* Ringer (2005:1) describes Kirchner's music as '… rang[ing] from agonizing ruminations over the human condition to the interplay of rhythmically energized pitches and timbres'.

Griffiths (2004:417) states that the Russian influence of Scriabin and Stravinsky could be detected in his music. This researcher found evidence of this when the analysis of *For the Left hand* illuminated the presence of the Prometheus and Petrouchka chords (see section 6.6). Ringer (2005:2) sees the influence of Mahler in a work composed only two years earlier than *For the Left Hand*, the *Second Piano Trio* (1993). He also describes the latter work as 'evok[ing] … some particularly passionate episodes in late Romantic music[.]'.

After summing up and duly acknowledging the most important influences on Kirchner's style, Ringer (1957:19) comes to the conclusion that the composer's style is indeed unique. This is even more true today, nearly fifty years after Ringer made this observation. In Ringer's words: 'Kirchner proceeds firmly on a road that he built piece by piece with the power of his own mind and the moral strength derived from both self-confidence and humility'.

CHAPTER 3: SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF LEON FLEISHER

3.1 Short biography

Leon Fleisher was born in San Francisco in 1928. His father was Ukrainian and his mother Polish. He began his piano studies at the age of four and gave his first recital at the age of eight. Thereafter he studied with Arthur Schnabel for ten years, starting in 1937 in Italy. According to Garside (2004:3), Schnabel took Fleisher with him when he moved to New York in 1939. These years saw the beginning of Fleisher's lifelong friendship with Gary Graffman and Eugene Istomin. Fleisher made his début with the New York Philharmonic under Pierre Monteux at the age of sixteen. In 1952 he became the first American to win the Queen Elizabeth International Competition in Belgium. This resulted in a close relationship with Belgium throughout his career, and Belgium's equivalent to knighthood, *Chevalier of the Order of King Leopold II*, was conferred on him in 1999.

In 1965 the symptoms of what was to be diagnosed later as *focal dystonia* made the continued use of his right hand in playing the piano impossible. In the time that Fleisher's career as a pianist performer was limited, he devoted even more time to teaching and took up the art of conducting in 1967, founding the Theatre Chamber Players at the Kennedy Center in the same year. According to Garside (2004:2) he became director of the Annapolis Symphony in 1970 and Associate Conductor of the Baltimore Symphony in 1973, as well as having associations as guest conductor of various prestigious orchestras all over the world.

In the time that Fleisher's injury made performance with both hands impossible he became an exponent of the left-hand literature. The programme notes to a recital given at Amherst College (2004:9) state that Fleisher's performances and recordings of the repertoire for the left hand won him two Grammy nominations.

Fleisher is a very distinguished pedagogue. He has been holder of the Andrew W. Mellon chair at the Peabody Conservatory of Music since 1959, and in addition to this he also serves on the faculties of the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia and the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto. He was artistic director of the Tanglewood Music

Center from 1986-1997, and also taught at the Aspen, Lucerne, Ravinia, and Verbier festivals (see Anonymous 2004:2).

According to (Amherst College 2004:10), Fleisher holds honorary doctorate degrees from the Juilliard School of Music, the Cleveland Institute of Music, the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and Towson University. He is also a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Fleisher was the first living pianist to be inducted into the Classical Music Hall of Fame.

3.2 Fleisher the artist

According to Garside (2004:1), *The Johns Hopkins Magazine* of November 1995 described pianist Leon Fleisher's right hand as 'the most famous right hand in the history of symphonic music[;] [I]t is famous because for more than thirty years it has not worked'. Fleisher, the (coincidental) namesake pianist to whom Leon Kirchner dedicated his composition *For the Left Hand*, lost the use of his right hand for a great length of time beginning in 1965 at the age of 37. At the date of composition of this piece Fleisher had already begun to play in public with both hands again, however, usually dividing his platform time between works for left hand alone and works for both hands in order not to overtax his vulnerable right hand.

Of importance and even more tragic is the fact that Fleisher, unlike the four pioneers of left-handed performance discussed below, was already a pianist of the highest calibre when he developed the neurological disorder, *focal dystonia*, which incapacitated his right hand. Tommasini (2004:2) describes Fleisher as seemingly 'the most complete pianist of his generation' in the 1950's. According to Tommasini (2004:2) '[h]is playing combined the virtuosity of the new roster of competition-honed Americans with probing intellectual insights gleaned from Arthur Schnabel'. His recordings from the 1950's of the Beethoven and Brahms concerti are still being regarded as definitive. By no means did playing left hand works superficially add to the stature of this performer, as is at least true to some extent of the careers of the pianists discussed below. In the case of Fleisher it formed an intermediate vehicle for artistic expression for an already fully established artist who never abandoned the hopes of playing with both hands again, and in the end triumphed also in the latter pursuit. This inextinguishable spirit formed the basis of an artistic talent of the greatest integrity and perhaps created the foundation of a talent far superior to the left-

handed players who came before him. Although it can be argued that Wittgenstein was, like Fleisher, an established pianist when he got injured, reports by noteworthy musicians such as his teacher Theodor Leschetizky and the conductor Trevor Harvey cast some doubt on the actual extent of his innate abilities as a musician. Wittgenstein's teacher's description of him as a 'mighty string smasher' (Edel 1994:33) serves to throw some light on the impression he created as a two-handed pianist before an injury changed the course of his career.

3.3 Fleisher's victory over *focal dystonia*

Focal dystonia is a form of *dystonia* localized to a specific part of the body. According to the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke n.d.:1), *dystonia* is a collective term for a set of nervous disorders in which sustained muscle contractions cause twisting and repetitive movements or abnormal postures.

After trying every remedy imaginable in an unsuccessful attempt to cure the *focal dystonia* of his right hand, Fleisher started working with Tessy Brungardt, a Certified Advanced Rolfer, at the Ruscombe Mansion Community Health Center in Baltimore. Rolfing is a form of therapy that structurally changes connective tissues in order to restore their pliability and range of motion and possibly to reprogram affected parts of the nervous system (Anonymous n.d.:2). Brungardt worked with Fleisher's fingers, hand, forearm, upper arm, shoulder, and neck, and also gave him a series of stretches to do. Under Brungardt's care his hand responded and within a few weeks he could play some pieces from the two-handed repertoire. According to the above source (Anonymous n.d.:2), Fleisher performed a two-handed concert with the Cleveland Orchestra in 1995, only weeks after beginning the treatment at Ruscombe. It is unfortunate that musicians of high achievement who lost the use of their hands in the past did not have access to the medical knowledge and procedures that are available nowadays.

Since his recovery from the disease, he has performed concertos such as the Brahms *D minor Concerto* Op. 15 and the Mozart *Concerto in A major*, K. 414 with major orchestras. He also performed numerous recitals, including the momentous Schubert *Sonata in B-flat major*, D. 960 in his programmes. Fleisher gave his first two-handed Carnegie Hall recital since 1947 on October 31, 2003.

CHAPTER 4: HISTORY OF COMPOSITIONS FOR LEFT HAND ALONE

4.1 Cataloguing of works for one hand

The scope of music for one hand alone is much larger than many would imagine. The piano literature intended for one-handed performance has been catalogued well, albeit arguably not quite comprehensively, by Theodore Edel and Donald Patterson. Both of these men were professors of piano – Edel at the University of Illinois in Chicago, and Patterson at the University of Wisconsin at Eau Claire – when unforeseen injuries to one arm resulted in their being compelled to delve into the literature for the left hand if they were to keep performing at all. The former's interest in one-handed music originated after breaking the navicular bone of his right hand, and the latter became interested in one-handed music after a severe shoulder injury. Both men then went on to compile a catalogue with short descriptions of the existing works for one hand alone. Patterson's catalogue, being the more recent of the two, indeed lists Kirchner's *For The Left Hand* (Patterson 1999:112), the work analysed in this study. Edel (1994:vii) documented the left-handed literature to encompass nearly a thousand works for left hand including dozens of concerti, and much chamber music, as well as at least sixty pieces for right hand. However, Patterson (1999:v) managed to locate over 1800 pieces for one hand alone, with 35 of these being concerted works for orchestra and one-handed or three-handed piano. He further specifies the chamber music that was written for voice and one hand, or solo instrument and one hand, and also makes mention of ensemble music for three, five, or seven hands. The pieces for right hand alone were composed more recently, while the repertoire for left hand alone dates from the last 200 years. The rarity of compositions for right hand alone could possibly be contributed to three factors: less frequent occurrence of injuries of the left hands of performers, the fact that there is already a wealth of material for right-hand development available in the two-handed repertoire, and the consideration that using the right hand alone for purposes of display would probably not have such a dramatic effect since audiences are used to right hands executing technically daunting passages. The structure of the right hand is also not as beneficial for executing a melody with accompaniment as that of the left hand.

Quite a number of compositions for one hand are listed in the anthologies compiled and edited by Shirley Harris (*Piano music for one hand by Australian composers*), Walter

Georgii (*Einhändig: Eine Sammlung von originalen und übertragenen Kompositionen*), and Raymond Lewenthal (*Piano music for one hand: A collection of studies, exercises and pieces*). The information contained in standard catalogues and reference works of the piano literature on works for one hand alone is surprisingly sparse however. Therefore Edel and Patterson's contributions prove to be all the more valuable and necessary. In Hinson's *Guide to the Pianist's Repertoire*, there are sections devoted to such areas as music by black composers, music by woman composers, music for prepared piano, and music for more than one piano, but no specific mention is made of compositions for one hand alone. The few most often performed compositions for the left hand are listed, sometimes stating the indication 'for left hand alone' almost as an afterthought and without mentioning any dedicatees of the works in question. Important composers and pianists of left-handed music such as Adolfo Fumagalli, Ferdinando Bonamici, Otakar Hollman, Siegfried Raap, Cor de Groot, and Cyril Smith are indeed not even mentioned in other important reference works such as Gillespie's *Five centuries of keyboard music*, Kirby's *A short history of keyboard music*, and Matthews' *Keyboard music*. Of works for one hand by the abovementioned composers, only De Groot's *In any direction*, for the right hand only, is mentioned in Hinson (1987:336, 531). While Hinson only lists solo piano works, Friskin and Freundlich list music for piano and orchestra in a separate section. Of the numerous works for left handed pianist and orchestra, only Britten's *Diversions* and Ravel's *Concerto for the left hand* are mentioned. Friskin and Freundlich's *Music for the piano*: *A handbook of concert and teaching material from 1580 to 1952* (1954) was published before the composition of the works (listed below) for piano duo team of which one member is one-handed.

The history of music for one hand alone is rich and a study in itself. Only the most important facts will be mentioned here. According to Edel (1994:3), the first pianist to perform in public with his left hand alone was Alexander Dreyschock. Adolfo Fumagalli followed him. In his book Edel devotes a chapter each to the life stories of these pianists, as well as to the better-known left-handed pianists, Geza Zichy and Paul Wittgenstein. The first published piece for the left hand alone was an *Étude* (1820) by Ludwig Berger and the next was an *Étude* (c.1828) by Charles Thibault. It needs to be mentioned here that Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach indeed wrote a *Klavierstück* in A major for one hand, sometimes called *Solfeggio* and written some time before 1770. It is written for a child and consists of simple patterns in single notes. It is contained in Lewenthal (1972). Berger's piece could, however, still be considered the first published piece specifically for the left hand.

Thereafter, mostly as a result of the inspiration Dreyschock's performances provided, Alkan's *Fantaisie* appeared in 1846, Czerny published his *Études* Op. 735 in the same year, and Bovy-Lysberg published his *Étude* Op. 20 in 1848. According to Patterson (1999:11), the first group of exercises and studies published for the left hand alone is *Training of the left hand (Die Pflege der linken Hand in Clavierspiel)* by Hermann Berens (1826-1880).

A very large number of the compositions for left hand alone are called *études*, as will be seen in the following pages. This illustrates the conscious connection composers made between composing for the left hand and improving the technical capabilities and agility of this hand, maybe sometimes for sheer display and even at the expense of the musical value of a composition. The left hand has always been considered the weaker hand, not least because until quite recently almost nobody wrote with their left hands, since in schools naturally left-handed children were forced to use their right hands instead. This negative regard of the left hand's capabilities is a factor contributing to the infatuation of composers with improving its powers. Studies for the left hand alone were composed not only as an end in itself but also as a means to an end, namely to develop the left hand in order to have a more satisfactory result in two-handed playing. After focused attention the left-hand parts would hopefully subsequently be executed more convincingly. The belief that the left hand was the weaker hand made it all the more impressive when a performer played with this neglected hand doing all the work by itself. The Italian word for 'left', *sinistra* (also meaning 'awkward'; 'wrong'; 'unfavourable'), and the French for 'left', *gauch* (also meaning 'crooked'; 'clumsy'), are hardly descriptions with positive connotations.

4.2 Pioneers of left-handed performance

It is interesting that the very first pianist to perform in public with only one hand did not do so out of necessity due to injury, but rather as a result of an inner challenge and as a means of impressing his audiences. In short, the Czech Dreyschock (1818-1869) had a life-long fascination with his left hand and set out the goal for himself to play the left-hand part of the *Revolutionary Étude* by Chopin, Op. 10 no. 12, in octaves. As is so often the case with great virtuosi vying for the honour of being considered the greatest player of the time, there developed a rivalry between Franz Liszt and Dreyschock, who responded to the challenge by playing the Chopin *Étude* Op. 25 no. 2 in octaves. Only two of Dreyschock's many compositions for piano were for the left hand alone, the most famous being his *Variations*

on God Save the Queen, but they served their purpose well and impressed since it was such a novelty for the listeners.

An Italian, Adolfo Fumagalli (1828-1856), the second concert pianist to perform parts of a recital with his left hand alone in public, made an art of writing opera paraphrases for the left hand alone. Especially his *Fantasy* on Meyerbeer's opera *Robert le Diable* made him famous. He wrote six opera paraphrases, the famous tunes from great composers raising the stature of these compositions by Fumagalli who was only an average composer. He died of cholera at the age of 28.

The first truly one-armed pianist in history was the Hungarian, Geza Zichy (1849-1924), who only decided to become a pianist after his injury. According to Edel (1994:26), Zichy was injured at the age of fifteen during a hunting expedition when he accidentally shot himself in the arm. This necessitated the amputation of his right arm. In 1876 his arrangement and performance of Schubert's *Der Erlkönig* so impressed Franz Liszt that the older man encouraged him to publish *Six Études*. Zichy had a major career as a pianist, performing in many cities and for distinguished audiences. He even performed his three-hand arrangement of the *Racoczy March* several times with Liszt as the other pianist. In May 1915 Zichy gave an inspirational concert and lecture as one-armed pianist to an audience of men who were crippled during the first year of World War I. The remarkable side of his story is that he was an extremely wealthy man and felt it would be wrong to take a fee for his performances, resulting in him donating to charity everything he earned through playing the piano. He published fifteen original compositions as well as some transcriptions of Bach, Chopin and Wagner for left hand alone and also composed the first concerto for left hand and orchestra. However, there exists no documentation of any performances of the latter work. The only left hand work Liszt composed, an arrangement of one of his last songs, *Hungary's God*, was produced especially for Zichy's use.

Due to the fact that Ravel's *Concerto in D major* for the left hand was dedicated to him, the Austrian Paul Wittgenstein (1887-1961) is perhaps the most widely known of the pianists discussed in the present chapter. It is ironic that, while the Ravel work contributed to the immortality of Wittgenstein's name, Wittgenstein himself did not appreciate Ravel's *Concerto*, took the liberty to make drastic changes to the music without the composer's approval before the first performance by himself with the composer in attendance, and also

wrote that the concerti by Labor, Schmidt, and R. Strauss were musically worth more than the Ravel.

The living room of the Wittgenstein household was a venue where famous musicians of the time such as Brahms, Clara Schumann, Casals, and Mahler gathered. Like Zichy he came from a wealthy family, which without a doubt was helpful in marketing himself and securing commissions and performances. Paul did his initial piano studies under Theodor Leschetizky and already had a Viennese début to his credit when he was wounded during World War I while doing service at the front, necessitating the amputation of his right arm. Reports create the impression that Wittgenstein might perhaps not have been the best of players when he still had the use of both his arms (see Edel 1994:31-33). The compositions from the existing repertoire that he chose to perform after his injury are representative of the finest of the compositions for one hand alone up to that date. They are the Brahms transcription of Bach's *Chaconne*, the *Études* by Saint-Saëns and Reger, the *Prelude and Nocturne* by Scriabin, German salon pieces by Alexis Hollaender, and Godowsky's *Chopin paraphrases*. These being small in number for a pianist relying solely on the one-hand literature, the need arose for more sophisticated compositions for one hand than the existing repertoire could offer. The result was his own transcriptions from opera, lieder, and the two-hand literature, as well as perhaps his most important legacy for left-handed piano playing in the form of a series of commissions from high-ranking composers of the day. One of his arrangements is the *Liebestod* from Richard Wagner's opera *Tristan und Isolde*. Wittgenstein was a temperamental man, and being from the romantic generation of pianists was slow to accept the style of the younger generation of composers. Dissatisfied with Strauss' *Parergon* ('companion-piece'), which was commissioned by himself, he demanded a second work from the composer. He never played the Hindemith *Concerto*, wrote to Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953) that he did not understand one note of his *Fourth Concerto* in B-flat, Op. 53, and would not play it, and annoyed Benjamin Britten (1913-1976) by changing the solo part of his *Diversions* for piano and orchestra. Already being a man permanently scarred in World War I, Wittgenstein's life was again influenced by the events of World War II when he had to flee Vienna just before the Nazi takeover, settled in New York City, and spent the last twenty-three years of his life there. His pedagogic legacy, a collection titled *School for the left hand*, is a publication in three volumes.

Attention should be drawn to the fact that, although Edel (1994:31) states that the *Concerto* by Paul Hindemith (1895-1963) 'has completely disappeared', this information proves to be outdated. In actual fact this concerto had been recovered since. Garside (2004:1) refers to Fleisher 'giving the world première of a long-lost left-handed concerto by Hindemith with the Berlin Philharmonic'. This work was originally titled *Klaviermusik*, Op. 29.

4.3 Reasons behind composing for left hand alone

The life stories of the four pianists mentioned above serve as examples of incentives to composers for writing music for one hand alone. Various writers propose different reasons for the composition of music for one hand alone. Apart from the obvious reason of pianists who suffer injuries of one arm, other incentives behind composing for one hand alone are technical development, compositional challenge, virtuoso display, and even friendship (see section 4.4).

The tendency of the literature to have the most difficult parts in the right hand, with the left hand merely playing a supportive role, necessitated the composition of works of didactic nature for left hand alone as a means to technical development. Études and technical exercises especially fulfil the role of strengthening and refining the abilities of the left hand. Berens, Bonamici, Phillip, and Wittgenstein created four *Schools* for the left hand in the form of complete courses including exercises, studies, and transcriptions. According to Edel (1994:4), the codification of teaching materials in contemporary times produced an array of left-handed music for children as a result. Others who created études for left hand alone with a pedagogic rather than a compositional purpose in mind were Saint-Saëns (*Six Études*) and Moszkowski.

Brahms had a particular reverence for the works of J.S. Bach, especially the *Chaconne* for violin solo, and was motivated by the compositional challenges that transcribing this work presented. He felt that the closest he could come on the piano to Bach's original intention of the execution of the piece on the violin, was by using only the left hand (five fingers). In his arrangement Brahms keeps close to the original out of respect for Bach. The name of Leopold Godowsky (1870-1938) from Poland immediately comes to mind in a discussion of compositional challenges, since not only did he create the largest number of works for left hand, but his works are the most complex, the most ingenious in a compositional sense, and technically the most difficult. According to Patterson (1999:12), Godowsky is also

known as 'the Apostle of the Left Hand'. Some of Godowsky's music is virtually unplayable. According to Edel (1994:8), Godowsky aimed at revolutionizing piano composition. He predicted that if the work usually done by two hands could possibly be assigned to the left hand alone, and this attainment could then be extended to both hands, entire new vistas would be opened to future composers. His legacy to left hand piano compositions that came after him in the form of figurations and finger patterns could certainly not be denied, but his prediction of revolutionizing piano writing in the form of his one-handed pyrotechnics being extended to both hands simultaneously turned out to be a misconception. On the contrary, his achievements proved to be a summit rather than a beginning. Composers writing in the era after the late-romantic style of which Godowsky was an exponent tended to simplify and condense rather than further expand. Twenty-two of Godowsky's *53 Paraphrases on Chopin's Études* are for the left hand alone. The challenge posed to the composer was that of transferring Chopin's difficult right-hand passages to the left hand not only in the studies for the left hand alone but at least to some extent in all of these devilish paraphrases. In the Preface he states his compositional purpose:

> … to develop the mechanical, technical, and musical possibilities of pianoforte playing, to expand the peculiarly adapted nature of the instrument to polyphonic, polyrhythmic and polydynamic work, and to widen the range of its possibilities in tone colouring.

Felix Blumenfield (1863-1931) produced his *Étude*, a work for the left hand, after hearing Godowsky's left-hand playing. A performance of Blumenfield's composition in turn inspired John Corigliano (b 1938) to compose his *Étude-Fantasy*. The first of the five études in this cycle is for the left hand alone.

The fugue with its many independent voices would probably be considered the least likely candidate for performance with only five fingers; however, overcoming the challenges seemed to be the motivational factor behind the fugues for left hand by Frederic Kalkbrenner (1785-1849), Max Reger (1873-1916), Frederic Bontoft (n.d.), Jeno Takács (1902-), Erno Dohnányi (1877-1960), and Godowsky.

Soloistic display and show-off is another big reason behind the creation of a substantial part of the body of works for the left hand. The musical substance of the works written for bravura display is often not of a very high quality. Like Dreyschock and Zichy, two

perhaps more famous performers, Bartók and Godowsky, included their own compositions for the left hand alone in their début recitals in Berlin in order to capture the imagination of the audience. In both these cases it was with great success.

Another reason for composing for the left hand alone is that the shape of the left hand is beneficial for playing independently, since the strong thumb is in the right position for playing the melody, while the bottom part of the hand is in the right position to play the bass or accompaniment pattern.

It goes without saying that there is a huge legacy of works created for injured students, friends, or colleagues, in addition to those mentioned above. Some important compositions and their dedicatees deserve mention here. The first published work for the left hand is documented by Edel (1994:5) to be a study for left hand alone from Ludwig Berger's *Studies*, Op. 12. The composer suffered a stroke that incapacitated his right arm. Therefore, the first published composition for left hand alone, unlike the first left-handed pianists, was probably indeed inspired by a physical disability. Tendinitis temporarily kept Scriabin from playing with his right hand, resulting in the composition of the *Prelude and Nocturne*, Op. 9, as well as a richness in the left hand parts of all his piano compositions dating from after the injury. Important works composed for Zichy include a song transcription by Liszt and an *Étude* by Emil Sauer (1862-1942). The Czechoslovakian Ottakar Hollman suffered the same fate as Wittgenstein, returning with a permanently paralysed arm after fighting in World War I. Leoš Janáček (1854-1928) composed a *Capriccio for piano and winds*, Bohuslav Martinu (1890-1959) a *Divertimento* for piano and chamber orchestra, and Janoslaw Tomášek (1896-1970) a *Sonata* for Hollman. Arnold Bax wrote a *Concertante* (1949) for the British pianist Harriet Cohen, who suffered permanent injury to her right hand when a glass she was holding suddenly shattered. Well-known American pianists of contemporary times, Leon Fleisher and Gary Graffman, lost the use of their right hands for some time, and this inspired several compositions including a *Concerto* by Curtis Curtis-Smith (b 1941) for Fleisher and *Concerto no. 4* by Ned Rorem (b 1923) for Graffman. The former work is discussed in section 4.5 below, and the latter work starts with a twelve-note motif played by the piano and is shaped like a suite according to the composer, being in eight short movements played almost without a pause (Edel 1994:109).

4.4 Kirchner's motivation behind composing *For the Left Hand*

For the Left Hand is Leon Kirchner's only contribution for the left hand. A friend in need proved to be the primary stimulus for Kirchner to explore the genre. The injury of Leon Fleisher served as motivation for Kirchner to compose this piece. As seen from the discussion in section 4.3 above, this is often the case when the injured person does not compose for him or herself, or commissions compositions from others in addition to expanding his or her repertoire by composing or transcribing the works of others. Kirchner and Fleisher were life-long friends and Kirchner had already composed a two-handed work (the *Concerto no. 2*) commissioned by Fleisher in earlier years when the latter was still performing with both hands.

In the programme notes to Fleisher's recital at Amherst College, Kirchner is quoted about the origin of the piece: 'Leon Fleisher is an old friend. He needed music for the left hand. I stopped whatever I was doing at the time to write a piece for him' (2004:6).

Of secondary importance behind Kirchner's motivation to compose this piece could possibly be compositional challenge and virtuoso display. The intricate nature of the compositional techniques employed in the piece, as will be discussed in chapter 6, could have made the exploration of this genre rewarding to the composer. Writing a satisfactory piece for one-handed performance on an instrument where listeners are conditioned to the sounds and effects produced by two-handed playing could also have been a rewarding challenge. Also, the composer could possibly have regarded it a worthwhile venture to experiment with adjusting his unique style of writing, characterized by dissonance, wide range between voices, and high levels of energy, to see whether it could sound convincing within the limitations encountered when writing for one hand. Virtuoso display seems to be an important element used by the composer in ensuring the effectiveness of the piece, but never at the expense of musical value.

4.5 Other one-hand compositions especially for Fleisher

Musical offerings for left hand alone by George Perle is another work closely associated with Fleisher. Although the individual movements are officially dedicated to musical colleagues of Perle, Richard Ortner, Dan Gustin, and Gil Kalish, according to the programme notes to Fleisher's recital at Amherst (2004:4) the work was written in celebration of Fleisher's 70th birthday and premièred by Fleisher on December 6, 1999.

According to Edel (1994:114), Gunther Schuller (b 1925) was commissioned by the Springfield Association to write a Concerto for three hands for Lorin Hollander and Leon Fleisher. This work for one normal and one left-handed pianist with orchestra is the only one of its kind, since the other existing works for a similar combination are for one right-handed and one normal pianist with orchestra (see section 4.6 below). Also according to the abovementioned source the work was premièred in 1990 by the dedicatees assisted by the Illinois Chamber Orchestra conducted by Kenneth Kiesler. This is an unconventional work in that it is in five continuous movements. In each of the first four movements the pianists are accompanied by a different group of instruments, namely percussion, woodwinds, strings, and brass, while only in the fifth movement does the whole orchestra play together.

The Concerto for left hand by Curtis Curtis-Smith mentioned above was commissioned by the Irving S. Gilmore Keyboard Festival for Fleisher and premièred at this festival by the dedicatee in 1991. According to Edel (1994:109) the composer described the 'timbral metaphor' of his Concerto to be that of a 'struck bell', and the third movement carries the subscript of 'brilliant and ringing!'

According to Garside (2004:2) there exists a Piano Concerto for the Left Hand especially written for Fleisher by Lukas Foss (b 1922). In the programme notes to a Carnegie Hall concert on Sunday, March 18, 2001 featuring this work amongst others, it is stated that the Boston Symphony commissioned the work for its Leonard Bernstein Memorial Concert at Tanglewood. The performance on March 18, 2001 featured Fleisher as soloist with the American Composers Orchestra conducted by Dennis Russell Davies. The work is in three movements. According to the programme notes to this concert (Anonymous 2001:2), the fugal last movement includes a cue for the orchestra to shout an homage from the composer to the pianist: "Here's to L.F from L.F."

4.6 Genres represented in the one-hand literature

In a discussion of this scope attention should be drawn to the different genres represented in the repertoire for one hand alone. Firstly, as will be seen in the discussion in subsequent chapters, Kirchner's contribution to the one-hand literature with its rather tentative title, *For the left Hand*, can be seen to represent various genres. As a matter of fact it is a solo piece. The nature of the title could hint at a possible character piece. The length and

manner of writing seems to suggest a possible étude for the left hand. The free style of writing seems to suggest a fantasy, while the form also contains some elements of sonata form.

The genre represented most abundantly in the available literature for one hand is that of the étude. It is closely followed by the transcription, while the least popular genre is that of the sonata. The reasons behind the composition of études are explained above, while the popularity of the transcription is fuelled by two factors, namely the popular appeal of a well-known tune or melody, and the impressive appeal of writing a version for one hand only of a (sometimes very difficult) piece that is known as a two-handed composition.

Composers not mentioned above who contributed a significant number of études each include Emile R. Blanchet (1877-1943), Ferdinando Bonamici (1827-1905), Carl Czerny (1791-1857), Joseph Dichler (1912-?), Alain Louvier (b 1945), Ernst Pauer (1826-1905), Isidor Philipp (1963-1958), and Max Reger (1873-1916).

One-handed transcriptions were especially popular in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Representing the genre of transcriptions, one of the most popular earlier left-handed compositions is the *Andante finale* from *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Op. 13 by Theodor Leschetizky (1830-1915). Fumagalli's success with opera paraphrases was mentioned above, as well as the importance of transcriptions in the repertoire and compositional output of Zichy and Wittgenstein. Godowsky's *Chopin paraphrases* are a monumental contribution to this genre.

The only composers to contribute sonatas are Tomášek (mentioned above), Carl Reinecke (1824-1910), and Geza Zichy. Composers writing sonatinas are Dinu Lipatti (1917-1950), Oscar van Hemel (1892-1929), and Sotireos Vlahopoulos (b1926). The *Sonatina Terza* by Soulima Stravinsky (b 1910) is not strictly for one hand, since the first movement is for the right hand, the second for two hands and the last for left hand.

Most of the earlier works for left-handed pianist and orchestra were written specifically for Wittgenstein. Contemporaries of Kirchner contributing to this genre are Cor de Groot (b 1914), Kurt Leimer (1920-1974), Lucijan Marija Skerjanc (1900-1973), and Karl Wiegl (1881-1949). Another contemporary of Kirchner, Henri Cliquet-Pleyel (1894-1963) wrote

the only concerto for right hand and orchestra. In addition to the work for Hollander and Fleisher discussed above, concerti for three hands were created by Malcolm Arnold (b 1921), Arthur Bliss (1891-1975), and Gordon Jacob (1895-1984). The works by Arnold, Bliss, and Jacob are for one right-handed and one normal pianist, specially composed for Cyril Smith, who lost the use of his left arm due to a stroke, and his wife Phyllis Sellick.

A one-handed pianist can find chamber music repertoire to play, since there exists quite a number of works for the genre. The better-known contributors are Leoš Janáček (1854-1928), Erich Korngold (1897-1957), and Franz Schmidt (1974-1939). Clara Koehler-Heberlein (n.d.) and Robert Phillips (n.d.) both composed works for two left hands, and Franco Margola (b 1908) contributed a duo *Sonata* for two right hands. A number of composers also composed works for three and five hands, the more noteworthy being Robert Schumann's (1810-1831) *Abendlied*, Op. 85 no. 12 (for three hands) and Maurice Ravel's *Frontispiece* (for five hands).

The higher incidence of injuries to the right hands of pianists could seemingly be attributed to chance. Seldom does one hear of someone who injured their left hand and reverted to playing works for the right hand only. One explanation might be that right-handed individuals (who account for the majority of the population as well as the majority of pianists) tend to injure their right arms more frequently since in an emergency situation individuals instinctively fence with their dominant arm. Occupational injuries of the right hand (meaning injuries caused by pianists over-practising their right hands) are a natural result of the higher complexity of the right hand parts, including the projection of the melody with the weaker fingers of the right hand. Robert Schumann (a contemporary of Dreyschock) is a famous case in point, having caused permanent injury to his right hand by using a device with the purpose of strengthening his right fourth finger. His career as a pianist curtailed, Schumann turned to composition but never, unlike others, tried to either compose for left hand alone or resume playing as a one-handed artist.

4.7 Examples of successful styles of writing for the left hand with particular reference to Kirchner's *For the Left Hand*

As mentioned by Edel (1994:9), the major obstacle to be overcome in writing for the left hand is the problem of not being able to be in two places at once. In compositions of a purely technical nature, the music often moves in single notes with occasional added tones in the manner of writing a solo suite for the flute or violin, sometimes going up and down the entire range of the piano. Examples include *Moto Perpetuo* by Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921) and *Étude no. 8* from Op. 62 by Moritz Moszkowski (1854-1925). In lyrical writing where a melody is sustained by added harmonic material, the best effects were achieved by composers who delayed either the bass or melody notes, giving the hand time to move into the right position for the next material by means of a lateral motion. In contrast, the worst effects were achieved when composers made the mistake of thinking and writing in a two-handed fashion that necessitates the insertion of many rolled chords and grace notes. A particularly successful example is the first phrase of Scriabin's *Nocturne* (see fig. 3), in which he delays the bass in favour of the melody everywhere except at the climax of the phrase, where the emphasis given by having the bass on the beat increases the drama.

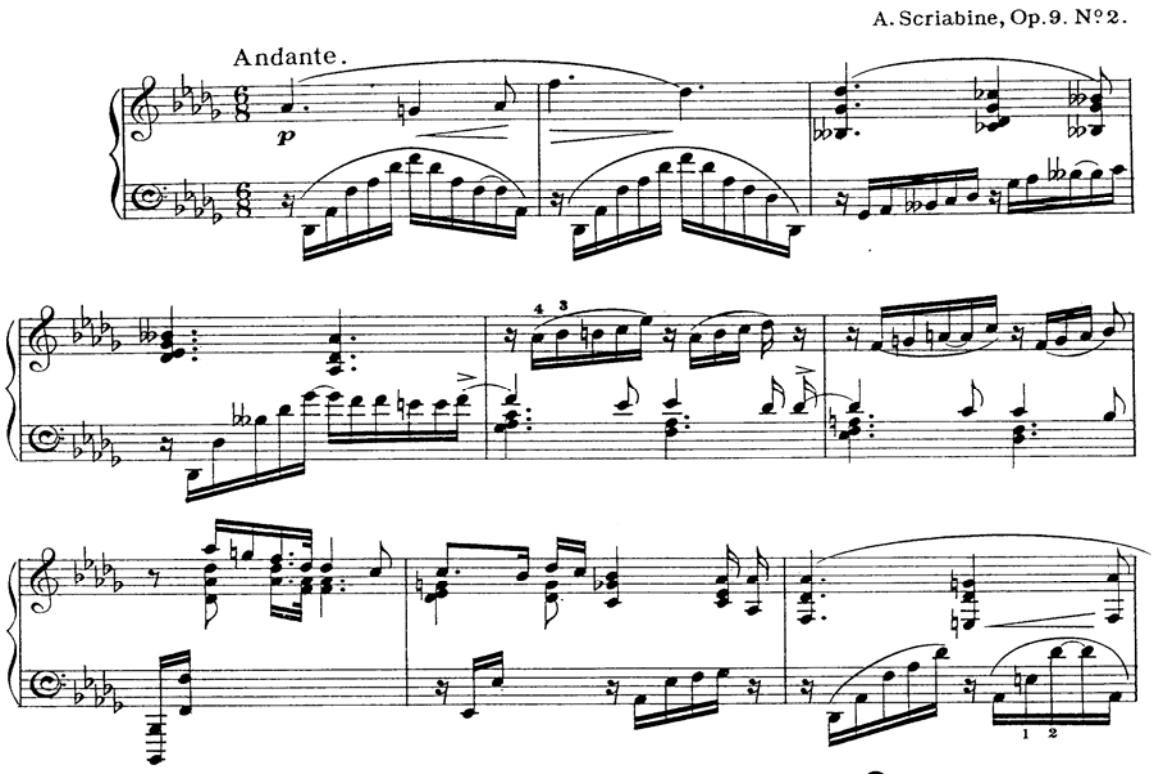


Figure 3

Another example where lateral movement of the arm between the treble and bass of the piano is facilitated, this time with beautiful rhythmic effect, is found in a work by Béla Bartók (1881-1945). This work was originally intended as the first movement of a sonata and is cast in sonata form, but the other movements were never written, and the composer later called it *Étude*. In this particular example (fig. 4 and fig. 5) the rolled chords are used at suitable junctures and with good judgement.

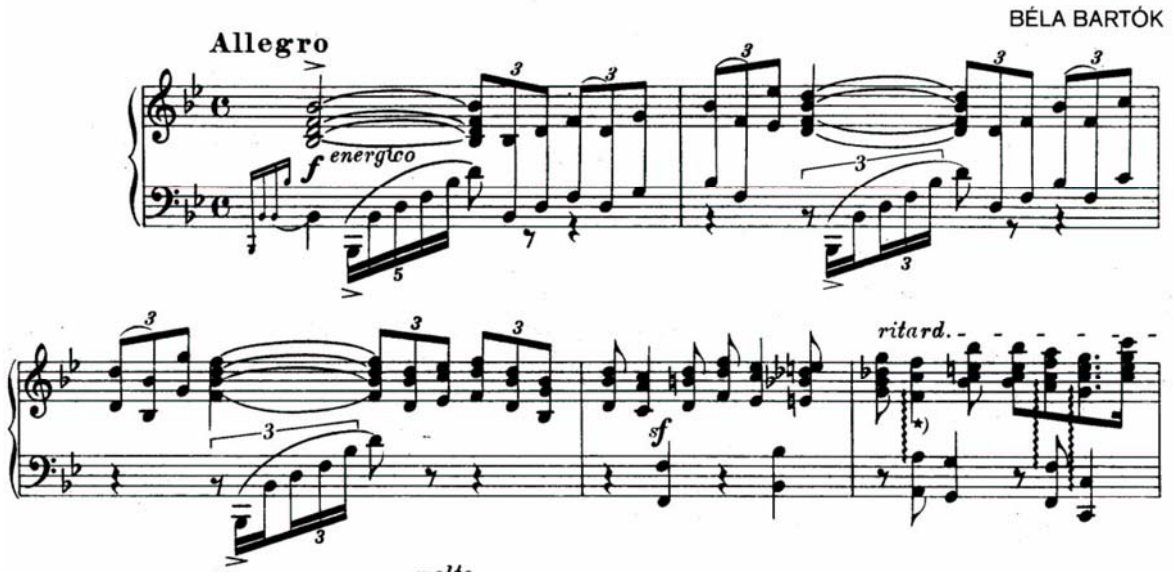


Figure 4

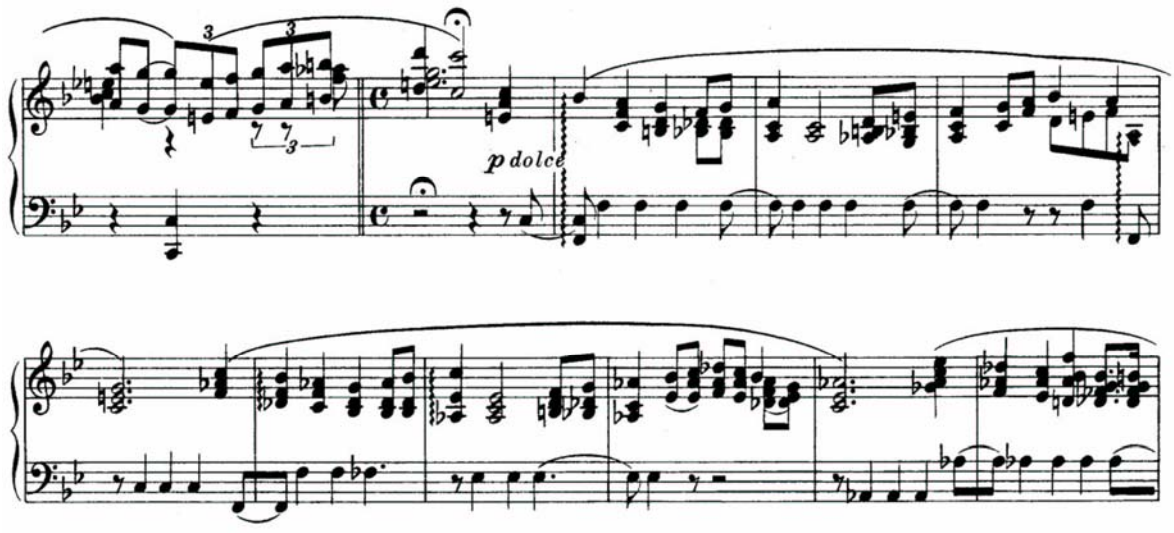


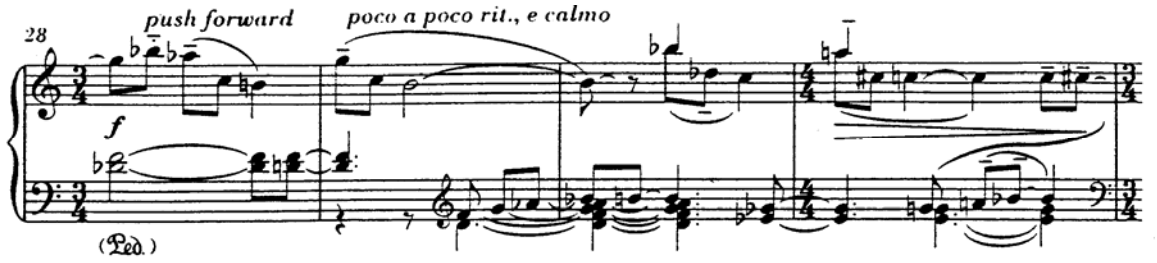
Figure 5

Although *For the Left Hand* was hardly composed with technical purposes as the sole motivation, the improvisational nature of the piece results in single-note movement for a

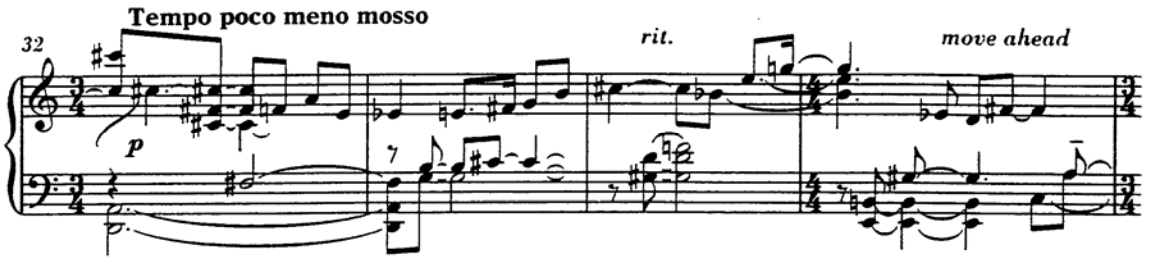
great deal of the duration of the piece, like in technique-oriented pieces mentioned above. However, the upward and downward motion of this figuration on the keyboard is mostly restricted to a limited span. Although the range of *For the Left Hand* lies between CC# and c4, the tessitura of the piece is mostly concentrated in the middle four octaves on the piano (between C and c3). In addition to the faster improvisational sections, the piece also has a number of slower predominantly melodic sections.

At this juncture it is necessary to give an explanation of the system of classification of pitches used in this study. 'AAA' represents the lowest note on the modern piano, while 'CC' represents the C a minor third above 'AAA'. 'C' stands for the C two octaves below middle C, and 'c' stands for C one octave below. 'c1' represents middle C, 'c2' is an octave above middle C, and so on.

In spite of the fact that this is Kirchner's first and only compositional effort for one hand alone, his lifetime of experience as composer shows in how he remarkably successfully employs all the better techniques of dealing with the problem of not being able to be in two places at once. Two examples of such techniques are his clever use of tied notes sustaining the harmony (see Line 7), and syncopation (see Line 8).

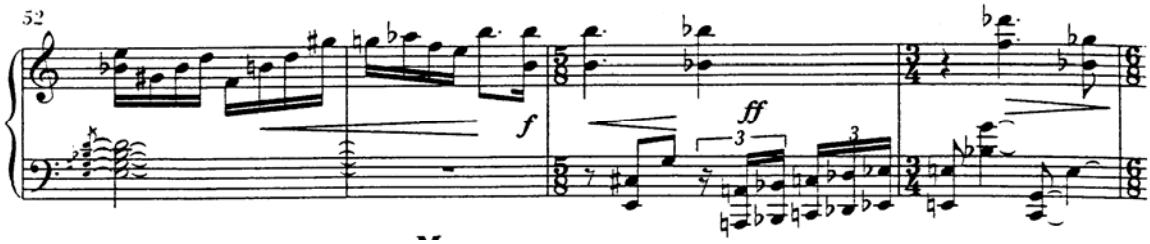


Line 7

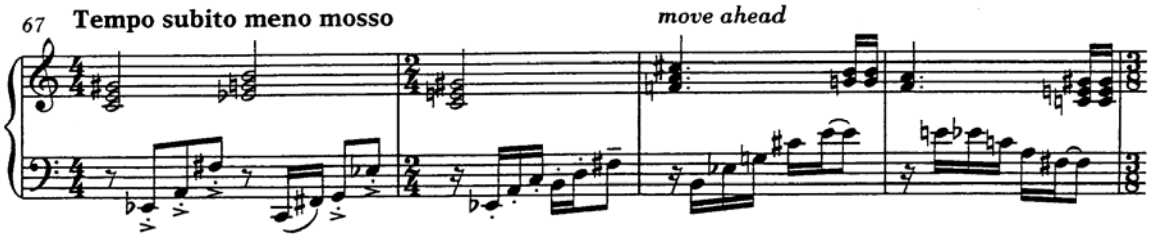


Line 8

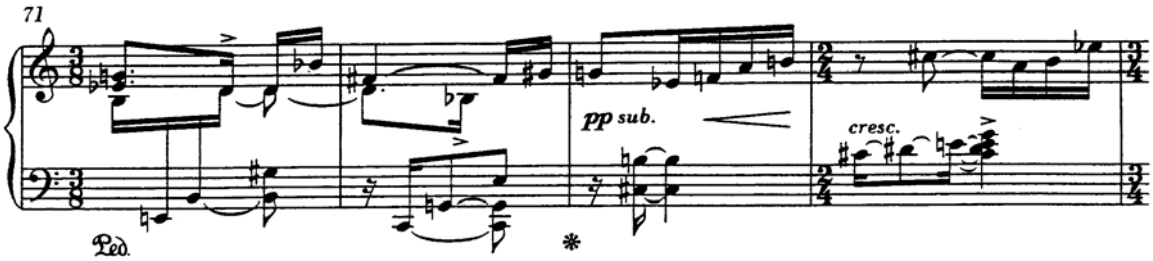
Like Bartók, he often uses the technique of delaying the bass note in favour of the melody:



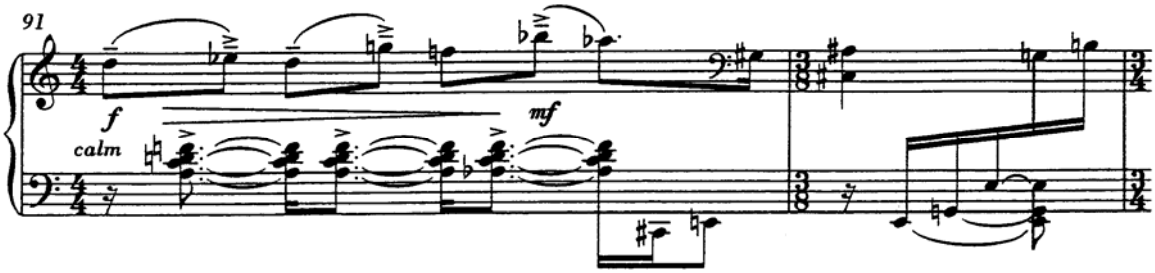
Line 13



Line 17

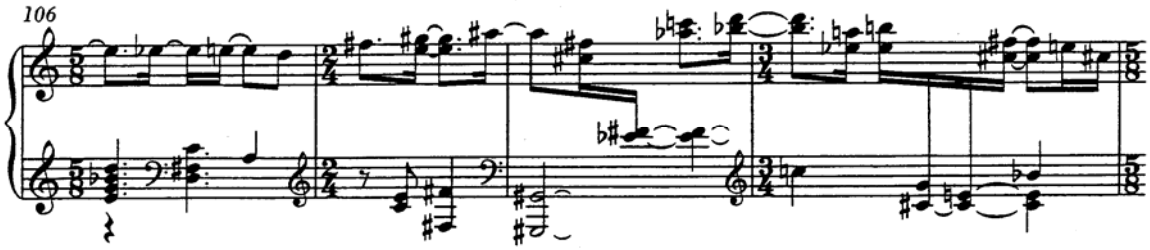


Line 18



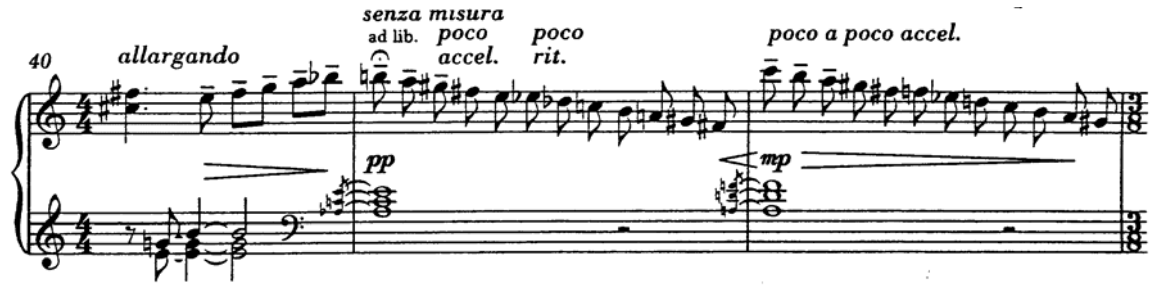
Line 23

At other times he anticipates the melody in order to keep the bass-note on the beat:



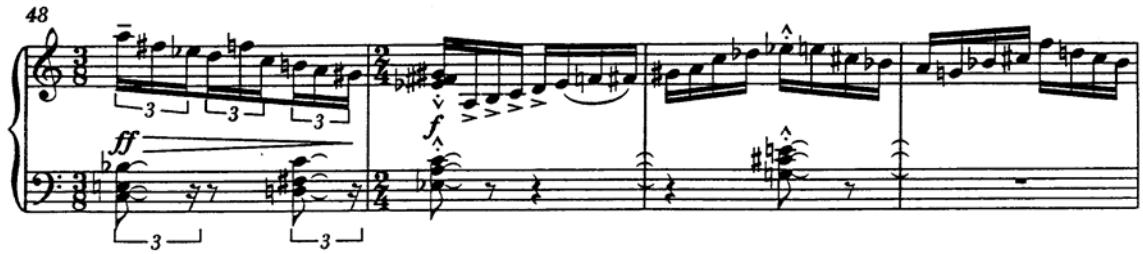
Line 28

In Line 10 the bass is anticipated by an *acciaccatura* tied to the main beat:



Line 10

Occasionally he does write chords that are not playable with one hand at the same time. In these events the performer has to decide whether to split the chords either upwards or downwards:



Line 12

4.8 Performance practice of one-handed performance

Performance practice in left-handed performance varies. Those performers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who gave entire recitals with their left hands alone but indeed still possessed a right arm, such as Zichy, frequently wore a glove on their right hand to show that it indeed was not being used in the performance. Instead of leaving the right hand in the lap for the entire time, it is common for the performer, in cases where the

pianist still has the right arm, to use it as a support for the body by placing it on the edge of the piano. This facilitates balancing the body, especially when playing in the upper registers. When playing left-handed music, the pianist is required to sit more to the right side of the keyboard to allow more keys to be within reach of the left hand. The opposite scenario applies for right-handed playing. In both the pianist must plan ahead and might even have to slide on the bench. This makes balancing the body more challenging than usual. According to Wing-Yee Lau as quoted in Patterson (1999:8), the torso now serves as a weighted support of the left arm instead of assuming its usual function of acting as a fulcrum between two hands.

The use of the pedals becomes more important. In fact Patterson (1999:6) states that '[i]t is the damper pedal that makes left hand or right hand solo playing possible to a great extent'. In addition to aiding the legato and widening the available range of colour by means of creating sympathetic vibrations, the damper pedal should be used to provide a sustained sound when the left hand is unable to do so when moving all over the keyboard. In left-handed playing the thumb is mostly responsible for playing the melody. Patterson also draws attention to the fingering in left-handed music often being unconventional, such as fingers sliding from one key to the next, or the same finger could be used several times consecutively on different keys, fingers might be crossed under or passed over in ways which would not be considered to be correct in normal playing.

PART II

CHAPTER 5: THE OCTATONIC SCALE

5.1 Definitions and properties

The *Penguin companion to classical music* (2004:559) defines 'octatonic' as a 'term describing a scale of eight notes to the octave, normally alternating semitones and whole tones'. Slightly more specific, the *New Grove dictionary of music and musicians* describes it as a term that is 'theoretically applicable to any mode or scale using eight different pitches to the octave, but which has found wide acceptance … as a designation for the scale (or pitch class collection) generated by alternating whole tones and semitones'.

Octatonic scales can be found in the works of Beethoven (in the Diabelli variations), Liszt, Debussy, Ravel, Scriabin, Rimsky-Korsakov, Mussorgsky, Stravinsky, Messiaen, and Webern. For Messiaen (1908-1992) the octatonic scale was the second 'mode of limited transposition'. He identified seven modes of limited transposition in his book *Technique de mon language musical* of 1944 (additional modes of limited transposition have been discovered since). The present writer is of the opinion that, since the octatonic scale so often is a natural result of the intuitive process of composition, examples of octatonic use can be found in the work of many more composers who lived and worked earlier than 1963, when the term was officially coined by Arthur Berger (Berger 1963). Not the least of these is Chopin (see figure 6, where the two hands play octatonic material in unison in the *Polonaise-fantasy* Op. 61).

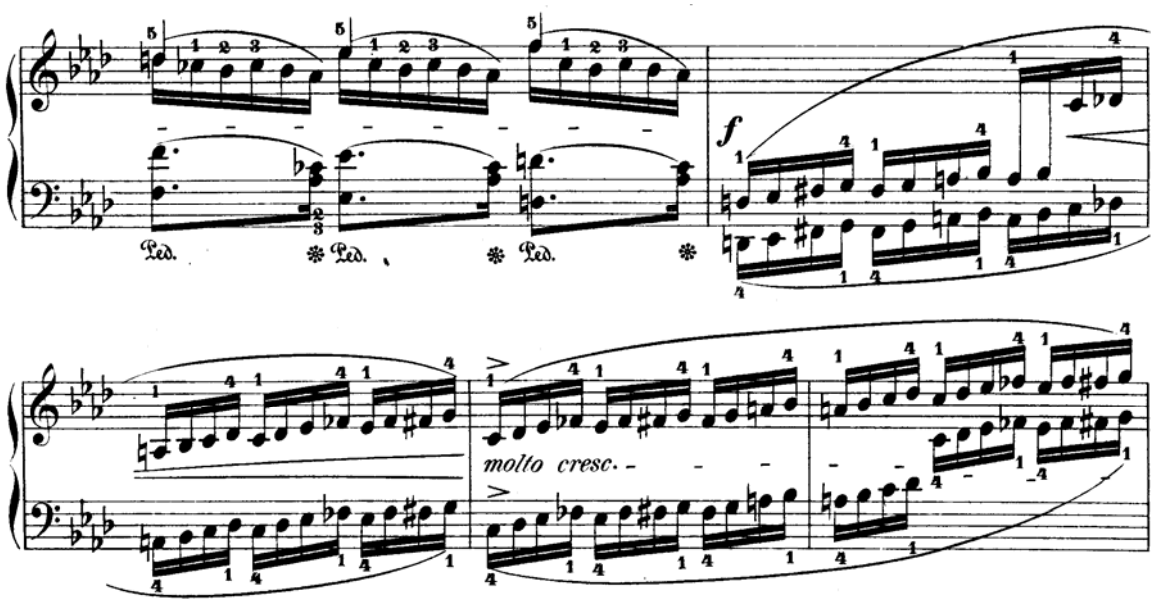


Figure 6

In a discussion of the properties of the octatonic scale, Cohn (1991:263) refers to internal and external properties. Internal properties are properties not associated to entities outside the octatonic collection itself, while external properties depend on a relationship to other pre-existing concepts and entities in music. All the properties of the octatonic scale discussed below will be either internal or external and referred to as such. Different transpositions of this scale constitute an internal property. Only three transpositional possibilities exist. These are C – C# – D# – E – F# – G – A – A#; C – D – D# – F – F# – G# – A – B; and C# – D – E – F – G – G# – A# – B. For the purposes of this discussion, model A begins with a half step and model B begins with a whole step. When both these original models are transposed twice, a semitone higher each time, creating six forms in total (three forms for both model A and model B), the result is that the first transposition of model B is identical to model A itself, the second transposition of model B and the first transposition of model A turns out to be the same, and model B itself and the third transposition of model A consist of the same pitches. Therefore, any single octatonic collection can be transposed up or down a semitone only twice before doubling occurs. In other words, the octatonic collection has four degrees of transpositional symmetry and the whole-tone collection has six. In the present discussion, set classes will be referred to by means of giving the prime form interval sets or by making use of Allen Forte's names for the set classes respectively, as listed in Strauss (1990:180-183). Any single octatonic collection consists of two diminished seventh [0,3,6,9] chords juxtaposed, an external

property. This follows logically, since when a minor third is divided into two intervals, the only possibility is one major second and one minor second. Also, a diminished seventh chord is made up of minor third intervals. According to Baur (1999:532) theorists have also referred to the scale as the 'diminished mode', since minor thirds and diminished fifths often are predominant in octatonic contexts. In the same vein an octatonic collection can also be defined as the union between two French sixth [0,2,6,8] tetrachords. Another way of defining the octatonic scale is by calling it a scale consisting of four symmetrical overlapping groups of three notes, each group containing a semitone followed by a tone. The symmetric nature is an internal property, while the relationship with tones and semitones is external. It should be noted that its distribution of intervals is asymmetric however.

Often in a work in which the octatonic scale plays a dominant role, the whole-tone scale will be found together with it, or the two could even interact. Many traditional harmonic constructions found in traditional tonality also exist as octatonic or whole-tone sonorities. The fact that the first three notes of a major scale are the same as any three-note [0,2,4] segment of a whole-tone scale, and the first four notes of a minor scale [0,2,3,5] are the same as four existing tetrachordal segments of an octatonic scale, forms important links between the octatonic and whole-tone scales to traditional tonality. Other links include the dominant seventh sonority with the fifth omitted [0,2,6] as found in both the whole-tone and the octatonic collections, the diminished triad [0,3,6], major or minor triad [0,3,7], augmented triad [0,4,8] as found only in the whole-tone collection, dominant augmented seventh tetrachord [0,2,4,8] as also found only in the whole-tone collection, French sixth [0,2,6,8], minor minor seventh [0,3,5,8] as found only in the octatonic collection, dominant seventh or diminished seventh [0,2,5,8] as found only in the octatonic collection, and diminished seventh [0,3,6,9] as also found only in the octatonic collection. These properties allow for some continuity between movement from a diatonic context to either octatonic or whole-tone contexts even when harmonies undergo a radical change. Also important to note is that an octatonic collection contains four pitch classes from each form of the whole-tone collection. In addition to this, a single tritone is common to any two octatonic collections and a whole-tone collection, facilitating modulation from one to the other. As Bass (1994:161) explains, it follows that the juxtaposition of contrasting collections could often rely on the retention of common tones for musical continuity. The alternation of opposing whole-tone sets could logically also result in octatonic collections.

The properties mentioned in the above paragraph are all external, since all relate to other pre-existing entities.

5.2 Prometheus and Petrouchka chords as derived from the interaction between whole-tone and octatonic collections

Altered slightly, the octatonic and whole-tone sets give rise to important chordal collections in the literature, such as Scriabin's Prometheus chord and Stravinsky's Petrouchka chord. As Bass (1994:157) indicates, the [0,1,3,6,7,9] hexachord or "Petrouchka chord" is an octatonic subset. The "Prometheus chord" [0,2,4,6,8,9] as associated with Scriabin, could be derived from an interaction between the whole-tone and octatonic scales. The occurrence of these related chords will be investigated in the analysis of *For the Left Hand* in the following chapter.

5.3 Arthur Berger's contribution

The first person to use the term 'octatonic' was Arthur Berger in his famous 1963 article. As mentioned above, Messiaen had previously called it the second 'mode of limited transposition'. In Berger's (1963:20) discussion of a passage from the music to Stravinsky's peasant-wedding ballet *Les Noces*, a work in which four pianos and percussion accompany vocal soloists and a chorus, he describes the process in which the octatonic scale originated as follows:

> … as a result of which everything, both linear successions and simultaneities, fits together like well-meshed gears, so that it is not surprising to discover, from a tabulation of the total pitch class content, that a single referential collection of eight pitch classes accounts for all – with a few exceptions so marginal as scarcely to require mention… If it is granted that the pitch class A is the most likely element to determine the referential order within the collection, the scale drawn from the collection may be represented as follows:

	I	ii	iii	iv	v	vi	vii	viii	(i)
	a	B-flat	c	D-flat	e-flat	E	F#	G	(a)
pitch numbers:	0	1	3	4	6	7	9	10	(1)
intervals:		1	2	1	2	1	2	1	(2).

Incidentally Kirchner conducted his own production of Stravinsky's *Les Noces* in 1956. According to True (1976:35), this performance was staged at Mills College, which is a women's college. Since the conductor of the men's chorus from a neighbouring institution believed the work was too difficult to perform, Kirchner organized a chorus consisting of

husbands, bosses, male relatives and boyfriends with the help of his students and taught the men their parts by rote with great success. It is the opinion of the present researcher that Kirchner's familiarity with *Les Noces* with its strong octatonic qualities might have sub-consciously or consciously influenced him where octatonic qualities occur in his subsequent compositions, such as *For the Left Hand*.

It should be mentioned here that, according to Baur (1999:531), Richard Taruskin investigated the origins and appearances of the octatonic scale prior to Stravinsky, and eventually traced the origins of the octatonic and whole-tone scales to the mediant relationships so common in the compositions of Schubert and Liszt.

It is interesting to note that the older as well as newer but more concise general music reference works such as the *Harvard dictionary of music* (1970), *Oxford Companion to Music* (1970), and *Concise Oxford dictionary of music* (1996) do not contain entries on the octatonic scale, even though the term has already been in use since 1963. Nor is it referred to in the Trinity College of London's educational publication *A handbook of musical knowledge* or *The AB guide to music theory* of the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music. The conclusion can be drawn that octatonic principles, being a relatively advanced compositional concept, are not routinely referred to in general music education at the pre-college level, neither does the term exist in the musical language of the non-professional music-lover. This is unfortunate, since an understanding of this concept can enhance the understanding and enjoyment of the listener to such an important part of twentieth century musical literature.

5.4 Octatonic techniques in single-handed compositions

It should be mentioned here that there are some special considerations that come into play when analysing the way in which Kirchner used the octatonic scale in *For the Left Hand*, particularly since he was working in a limited span on the keyboard. Compositional techniques very often are a result of the creative process rather than a technique being decided upon beforehand. As Stephen Soderberg (2003:1) rightfully asks, especially when taking into account the various internal structures that can generate octatonics as briefly explained above, '[d]o we use the octatonic, or does the octatonic use us? Anthropomorphizing, this is one way sneaky scale.' A notable exception to the unintentional generation of structures, of course, is the dodecaphonic principles, which are

predetermined at the start of the compositional process, and applied like a mathematical formula. In contrast, the octatonic scale could easily be a result of the compositional process rather than a planned technique being applied at a particular juncture in a piece. By its nature the octatonic scale presents more tonal possibilities within a narrower range on the keyboard than the diatonic scale. It also overlaps with an extraordinary number of tonal entities, as explained above. Therefore it seems possible that, in composing for left hand alone and working with the span of one hand only while creating a complete piece of music, the composer naturally arrived at the solution of using the octatonic scale and its transpositions. This view is supported by Robert Helps' (b 1929) observations on the challenges of writing for left hand alone as quoted in Edel (1994:66): '[u]sing as a norm one-piano 2-hand music, I would say that a composer writing for one-piano left-hand has to face the availability of too few notes – notes that also tend to be too close together…'.

CHAPTER 6: ANALYSIS OF *FOR THE LEFT HAND*

6.1 Aural impressions created by the piece

In his *New York Times* review of the première of Kirchner's *For the Left Hand* by Leon Fleisher in Carnegie Hall on December 6, 1995, Bernard Holland described the work as "beautifully organized, but implying great freedom … passionate yet highly civilized" (Holland as quoted in Patterson 1999:112). This statement has significance to this study, since the present writer will argue that it is specifically the use of octatonic principles in this piece that creates the impression of high organization and, simultaneously, great freedom.

On first hearing the piece on October 1, 2004 at a recital in Buffalo by Fleisher himself, the author, being familiar with the *Sonata* of 1948, was startled by the differences in both style and aural impression beween these two compositions by the same composer. Especially striking were the remarkably romantic undertones, even tonal-sounding nature, standing in stark contrast to the highly atonal and intellectually challenging *Sonata*. Holland's (2003:1) impressions of the same piece performed by the same pianist eight years after his review of the première shed a slightly different light on this composition by describing *For the Left Hand* as incorporating "sweeping Lisztian agitation conciliated by tender interludes", and concluding that "it draws much from the Romantic age". This poses an additional question for analysis, namely what exactly the compositional procedures are that cause this piece to sound romantic while it in turn is not based on the diatonic-chromatic procedures of the romantic era but is based in its entirety upon and incorporates octatonic principles.

On closer inspection after acquiring the score of this music, the present researcher discovered that the quasi-tonal sounding nature of this short but substantial piece could be attributed to the use of octatonic principles throughout the entire composition, while the few sections not explicitly employing octatonic principles employ modes and chords closely related to the octatonic scale instead. The construction of the octatonic scale seems to be particularly suitable to Kirchner's style of creating a flow of ideas with '[e]ver new intervallic combinations … of Schönbergian seconds and thirds', as described by Ringer (2005:2). Of immediate interest is a comparison of octatonism in *For the Left Hand* with Kirchner's use of octatonism in other of his works for piano. In the slow movement of the *Sonata* of 1948, Kirchner uses the octatonic scale, but with entirely different effect from

the lush romantic sound created in *For the Left Hand*. Rather, the effect created in the slow movement is atmospheric, mimicking bird-sounds and recalling Bartók's *Night music* from the *Out of doors suite*.

6.2 Temporal fluctuations, rhythmic flow, and dynamic structure

In any attempt at determining the overall structure of a composition by Kirchner, the first elements to investigate are temporal and rhythmic fluctuations, and dynamic structure. An important aspect mentioned by Ringer (1957:7) that could even be considered an obstacle to analysts of Kirchner's music, is that both conventional analytic methods and modern systems fall short in rationalizing Kirchner's art that exploits dynamic time relationships above all else. These temporal fluctuations are punctuated by changes in volume and intensity. Ringer alerts to the fact that Kirchner's sense of form is expressed mainly by his treatment of rhythm and tempo, while his dissonant and chromatic harmonic and melodic procedures are not as unusual in nature.

As can be observed from the table below, in addition to the constantly changing tempo indications, the time signature changes at least every few measures and in some places even every measure. Simple time signatures predominate in the work in question, with only the occasional 6/8 or 6/4 compound time signature indication. No particular preferred meter comes to the fore. The time signatures with a quaver-note denominator are consistently used for sections in which shorter note values (mostly semi-quavers) predominate, while the crotchet denominators are used for sections in which longer note values predominate. Rostkoski (1970:27) also refers to Kirchner's changing the meter in almost every measure in the works including a piano part that he analysed, namely the *Piano Sonata*, *Little Suite*, and *Concerto No.2*. In addition he mentions that the composer seems to use a constantly changing meter in the works for solo instrument or the works where a conductor's beat could hold the performers together, and to prefer a more stable time signature in ensemble works. Had Rostkoski's study been conducted after the composition of the work in question, the work would obviously have been included in the former category.

In the following table (fig. 7), each rectangle represents one measure. Measure numbers are given in the border, changes in time signature are indicated at the left of each rectangle, tempo indications in the top half, and dynamic indications in the lower half.

bar 1	3 8 ***p***		*cresc. poco a poco*	
5		*hold back a little*	Fermata	***mf*** *sub.*
9	***mf***	***mp*** *sub.,* *quasi dolce*		, *cresc.*
13	***mf*** *sub.*		***f***	2 *move forward a little* 4
17		*cresc., poco a poco*		
21	3 8	3 *accel* 4 *cresc., molto*	2 4	3 *move ahead a little* , 4
25	2 4 ***ff***	3 *poco ritenuto* 4	3 8	3 *push forward* 4
29	*poco a poco rit., e*	*calmo*	4 4	3 Tempo poco meno 4 ***p***
33	mosso	*rit.*	4 *move ahead* 4	3 4
37	4 *poco rit.* 4	3 *hold back* 4		4 *allargando* 4
41	*senza misura* *poco accel. poco rit.* ***pp***	*poco a poco accel.* ***mp***	3 8 ***pp*** *cresc.*	
45	Tempo I	***f***	2 8	3 8 ***ff***
49	2 4 ***f***			
53	***f***	5 8 ***ff***	3 4	6Fermata **Meno mosso** 8 ***mp*** ***f*** *appassionato*
57	2 *molto rapidomento* 4 ***mf***	3 , 8	4 Poco Adagio 4 ***mf***	6 *gradually more* 4 ***p*** *cresc.,poco a poco*
61	4 *violent and rapid* 4		3 4	4 4
65	3 *slow* 4	*down a bit*	4**Tempo subito meno** 4	2 **mosso** 4
69	*move ahead*		3 8	
73	***pp*** *sub.*	2 4 *cresc.*	3 4 ***f***	***ff***
77	3 8		***mf*** *sub., cresc.molto*	
81			5 Fermata *slow down* 8 ***ff*** ***mf***	2 *poco a poco* 4
85	3 Quasi Adagio 4 ***mp***	5 Rapidamento 8 ***f***	3**Tempo meno mosso** 4 ***ff*** ***f***	2 Hold back 4 ***mf***
89	3 4 ***mp***	5 8	4 *calm* 4 ***f*** ***mf***	3 8
93	3 4	2 4	4 4	3 4
97	5 4		2 4	5 4 ***f*** ***mp***

101	4 Fermata 4 ***pp***	***pp***	2 *a little forward* 4 ***mp*** ***ff***	4 4 ***mf*** *dim.*
105	3 4 ***p***	5 8	2 4	
109	3 4	5 8		2 4
113	1 4	2 4		
117		1 4	2 4	3 4
121	2 4		3 4	2 4
125	3 4	2 4	4 4	
129	3 4		3 8	3 4
133		Fermata	6 fermati ,	, ,
136	3 4	5 4		

Figure 7

The following shape can represent the overall dynamic contour of this piece:

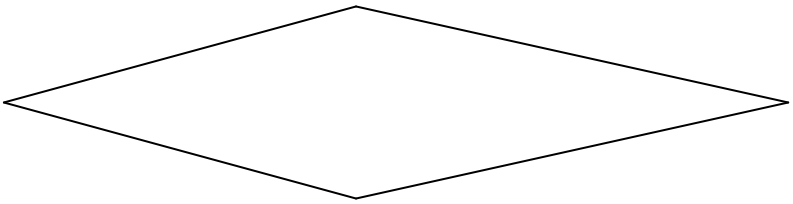


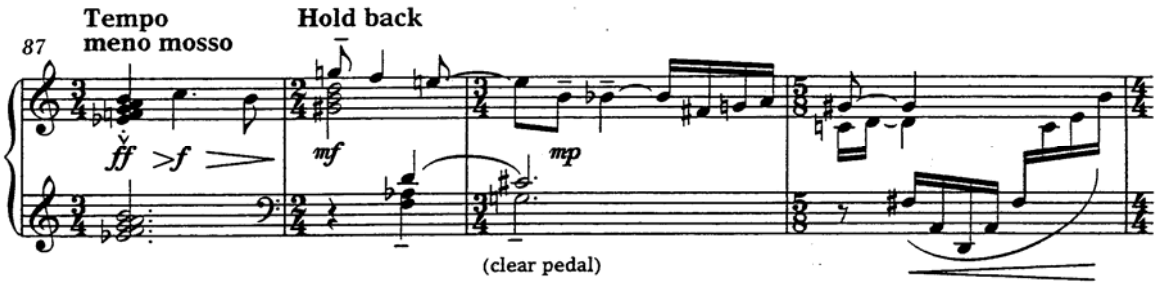
Figure 8

The piece starts and ends at a *piano* dynamic level. This correlates with True's (1970:101) observation that individual movements from as well as Kirchner's earlier piano works themselves begin and end at approximately the same dynamic levels.

In the piece under investigation, the highest dynamic level, *fortissimo*, is reached for the first time in measure 48, slightly before the halfway mark of the piece. Although the dynamic level fluctuates dramatically, a dominating high dynamic level is maintained until measure 91. Thereafter a gradual decline in dynamic energy prevails. The dynamic range, *pianissimo* to *fortissimo*, is relatively narrow in comparison with the dynamic range of *pianissississimo* (*pppp*) to *fortissississimo* (*fff*) encountered in the *Sonata*. This could possibly

be attributed to Kirchner's acknowledging that the left hand alone will not be capable of achieving the same dynamic levels on the instrument that two hands can achieve together. Since the hypothesis was stated that a change in Kirchner's style of composition took place between his earlier compositions for piano and the later works, it should also be observed that the narrower range of dynamics is more in line with nineteenth-century or romantic conventions, as opposed to Kirchner's very decisively *avant-garde* earlier style. In contrast to Kirchner's avoidance of mid-range dynamics, *mezzo forte* and *mezzo piano*, in his early style that emphasized sudden and dramatic changes, he uses these dynamic indications quite a number of times in *For the Left Hand*. This possibly indicates a milder approach to contrasts and an acceptance of gradual dynamic change.

Not documented in the table, the five occasions at which Kirchner uses his heaviest accent indications (^) occur in measures 22 (first beat, second quaver of first triplet – see Line 5), 49 (on the first beat – see Line 12), 50 (second beat), 87 (first beat – see Line 22), and 100 (second beat – see Line 26). None of these occur in stable sections, but rather in sections where other elements are more active. These include higher dynamic levels, rhythmic movement, quickening of tempo, a sudden halt within a moving section, and within sections with faster note values. On closer inspection, the accents appear to be situated within larger sections. They do not coincide with the beginnings or ends of sections, but rather demarcate important arrival points within sections.



Line 22

Fermati occur in measures 7, 56, 59, 83, and 101 (see Line 7 in chapter 4, and Lines 14, 15, 21, and 26 below). Those in measures 59, 83, and 101 could be considered to indicate structural breaks. The first of these three *fermati* occurs on a chord that has FF# as a bass note, up to the current point in the piece the lowest note used, while the second of the abovementioned *fermati* occurs on FF# itself. (See Chapter 4, section 4.7, for an

explanation of the classification system used for pitches in this study.) The *fermata* in measure 101 occurs on an augmented eleventh chord built on another very low C.

Considering a change in the predominant type of note-values used as a possible indication of the beginning of a new section, possible sectional divisions could be made in measures 28 (change to longer note values – see Line 7), 43 (return of shorter note values – see Line 11), 60 (first instance of the use of minims – see Line 15), 67 (minims combined with shorter note values that become dominant after two measures – see Line 17), 85 (dotted rhythmic idea and slower note values between shorter ones – see Line 21), 101 (arrival on a tied breve from which a flowing section combining previous rhythmic ideas arises – see Line 26), 134 (return of quavers with longer note values in the bass creating slower rhythm – see Line 37), 135 (shimmering semiquaver accompanying figure with longer note values in the top register this time – see Line 39), and measure 136 (calmer rhythmic flow, abandons shimmering figure, repeated crotchets – see Line 40).

Solely from the data on dynamics, tempo indications, accents, *fermati*, and changes in the types of note values assimilated above and without yet considering any melodic or harmonic relationships, the following deductions on possible structural divisions can be made: Structural breaks indicated by *fermati* occur in measures 59, 83, and 101. In the first section semiquavers predominate and the general dynamic direction is one long *crescendo* starting at a *piano* level. The indication of *Tempo poco meno mosso* in measure 32 could also possibly be indicative of a new section, while the change to slower note values four measures earlier and the indications of *push forward, poco a poco rit., e calmo* that run into measure 32 could suggest that this section starts already in measure 28. The *accelerando* towards and return to *Tempo I* in measure 45, the change to shorter note values two measures earlier, as well as the drop in dynamic level to *pianissimo* and the start of a long *crescendo* could be significant structurally. In addition to the *fermati* in measures 59 and 83, dramatically slower tempo indications, a drop in dynamic level, and the changes in note values one and two measures later respectively, possibly indicate new sections. The former section again has a long *crescendo* starting from *piano*. Fluidity in the types of note values used from measure 67 to 83 and the integration of dynamic levels leaves some doubt as to whether or not this is a section on its own. Measure 85 with its initial *Quasi Adagio* tempo indication definitely demarcates the start of a new section featuring dotted note values in combination with familiar note values. At or somewhere

near the point where the indication of *hold back* is negated by *a little forward* (around measure 103), and the *pianissimo* tied breve has died away to a whisper, another section starts. The many changes in note values in the last few lines do not necessarily each indicate a structural break, but rather represent the diffusion of energy at the end of this piece. Where the lowest point in energy is reached at the *fermati* at the end of measure 134 and the sudden change to the shimmering semiquavers take place, a possible *coda* starts.

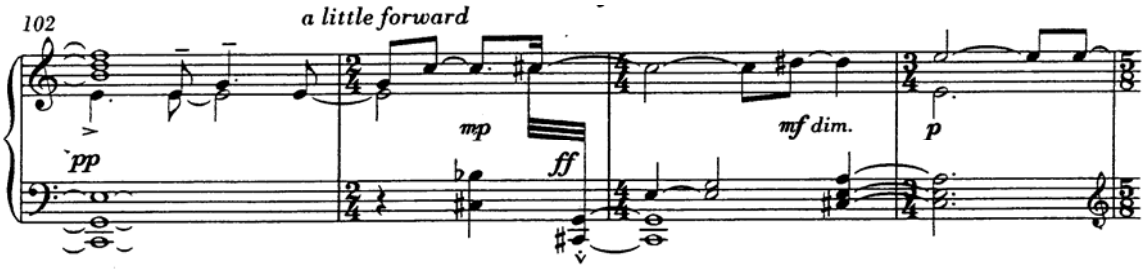
The sectional divisions proposed above make for a division into 7 or 8 possible sections, depending on whether or not measures 67-84 is seen as a separate section. The first section (either 28 or 32 measures in length) and penultimate section (approximately 33 measures in length), which in effect is a closing section since it is followed by a *coda* of 4 measures, are close to each other in length, while the middle sections of 15, 17, 25 (or 7 and 18), and 18 measures respectively are much shorter. This creates a balanced effect in that longer sections frame the shorter middle sections. It seems consistent with Kirchner's style, since True (1976:73) also refers to the stability created by longer outer sections alternating with faster changing middle sections in the first movement of the *Sonata*. The abovementioned structural divisions will be confirmed, adjusted, or proven to be incorrect in section 6.7 of this study, after the structural implications of the use of the different transpositions of the octatonic scale and melodic elements have been discussed.

By the composer's remarkable technique of keeping control of the changes of tempo and metre, he achieves a certain temporal fluidity. Since Rostkoski (1970:27) also refers to the temporal fluidity in Kirchner's earlier compositions, the deduction can be made that this has indeed been a fundamental characteristic of Kirchner's style throughout his career. Also related to this temporal fluidity, the observation by True (1976:248) that *allargandi* or *ritardandi* close every section, as well as that *accelerandi* initiate the fast sections, could be of further help in determining sectional divisions in this piece. The indication of *poco ritenuto* in measure 26 ends the first section and the new section starts with *push forward*. *Allargando* ends the second section while a gradual *poco a poco accelerando* starting in measure 42 makes for a smooth transition to the third section. The transitional measure between sections three and four is *Poco Adagio*, followed by the indication of *gradually more violent and rapid* initiating section four. *Slow down a bit* in measure 66 and *move ahead* in measure 69 could be seen as indicating the start of a new section, but in the opinion of this researcher other elements neutralize the importance of these. The

transitional measures 83-84 are indicated as *slow down poco a poco* while *rapidamento* accelerates the beginning of section five. The music comes to a halt at the end of section five, and the beginning of section six is made clear by the indication to *move a little forward*. The *fermati* at the end of measure 134 indicate the end of section six, while the semiquaver 'shimmering' motive speeds up the beginning of section seven or *coda*. A written out *ritenuto* or *allargando* closes the piece, since the repeated longer crotchet note values and dotted minim at the end extinguishes all the built-up energy of the shimmering motive and indeed of the entire piece.

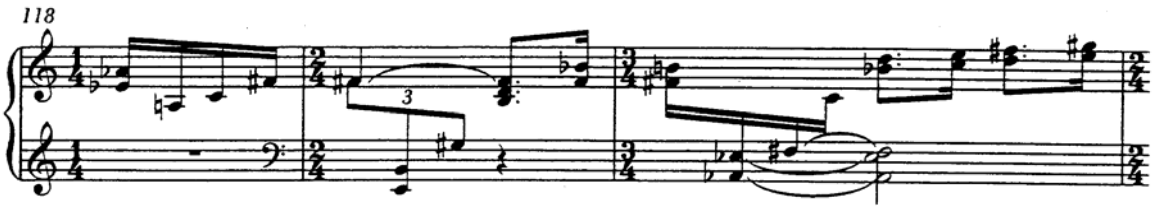
Ringer (1957:8-9) mentions the difficulty for the composer of bringing to a satisfactory halt all this built-up energy created by such a dynamic approach to writing. He even criticizes Kirchner's early procedures for not being fully convincing in this regard, since the composer often moves to a more tonal harmonic language at the conclusion of a piece, reducing the dissonant nature of his style. In Ringer's view this does not solve the temporal problem completely and it also does not sound fully integrated with the rest. In spite of the possible influence of a not fully finalized score, the lack of dynamic indications after the final *piano* indication in measure 105, indicating a relatively low dynamic level to be maintained up to the end of the piece, could be attributed to Kirchner's attempt at resolving the tremendous build-up of energy earlier. *For the Left Hand* is a considerably later composition than the works Ringer was referring to in his article, and this could well be a more successful solution to the abovementioned problem. The time signature indications from measure 105 onwards are of the same nature as those of the previous part of the piece, while measure 103 indeed has the last change in tempo indication. Investigating and comparing the extent of tonal writing in the piece as compared to earlier dissonant writing, the researcher found that there exists an element of increased tonal writing with predominantly a colouristic effect, but also that it is used by the older Kirchner in a way that proves to be more successful than in his earlier compositions to which Ringer refers.

As discussed in the section below on the *Frame tonality* of the piece, measures 101-102 serve as a water-shed since the part of the piece thereafter seems to be hinting at a frame tonality of C-sharp instead of C. The clear A major tonality in first inversion with C-sharp in the bass comes to a satisfactory halt (possibly as a reference to the next frame tonality) in measure 105 (see Line 27) and momentarily sounds tonal indeed in contrast to the preceding material.

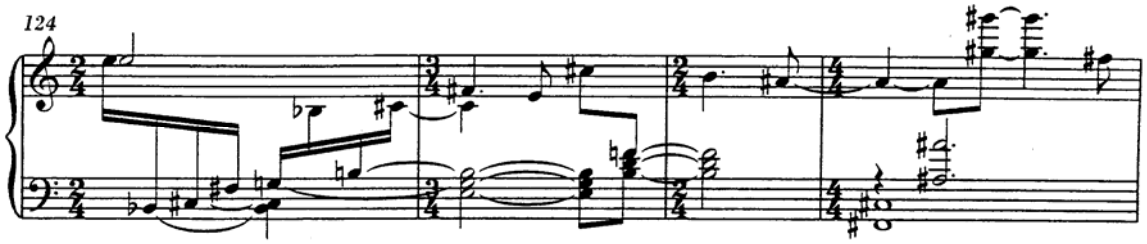


Line 27

From here onwards the whole-tone (see Line 28) and pentatonic (see Lines 31 and 33) sonorities become increasingly important, as well as major tonality, dominant seventh sonorities and diminished sonorities (see Line 31 also).



Line 31



Line 33

The abovementioned modes and sonorities can be derived from the octatonic, and the pitch class content indeed overlaps with the octatonic scale (see discussion in 5.1 and 5.2). This kinship with the octatonic scale results in a much more convincing diffusion of the earlier dissonance than when atonal writing merely becomes tonal towards the end of a composition.

6.3 Frame tonality

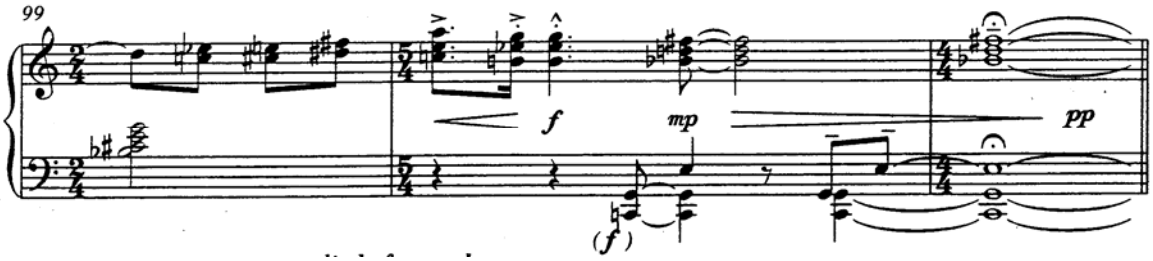
In a discussion of Kirchner's use of tonality in the piece in question it needs to be mentioned that, as in all Kirchner's works studied by Rostkoski (1970:11), he does not indicate a key signature but makes use of accidentals throughout.

For the initial indication and final clarification of tonality typical of most of Kirchner's work, Ringer (1957:12) coined the term 'frame tonality'. Internally, nontonal or pantonal material is mostly used. As will be discussed below, *For the Left Hand* is exceptional in that the shifting from one octatonic collection to another causes its frame tonality to move from C at the beginning of the piece to C# at the end instead of outlining only one definite frame tonality. This shifting frame tonality can more properly be called 'directional tonality', where the tonality in which a piece begins cannot be considered the main tonality of the piece, but instead holds some relationship to the actual tonality of the piece to be arrived at later. In this case this relationship lies in the different transpositions of the octatonic scale as well as the pull of the semitone relationship between C and C#.

Another element that comes into play here has to do with the method of employing the octatonic scale and the context in which it is employed. According to Whittall (2005:1), the effect of the octatonic, when Stravinsky employs it, is that of an 'extended' or 'floating' tonality. Kirchner achieves a similar effect in the piece under consideration. This is caused by the underlying harmonic relationships between the octatonic scale and other modes or tonalities, as well as the use of the different transpositions of the octatonic scale in the same work instead of only using one version of the scale. The 'shifting frame tonality' or 'directional tonality' arrived at is a logical result of this process.

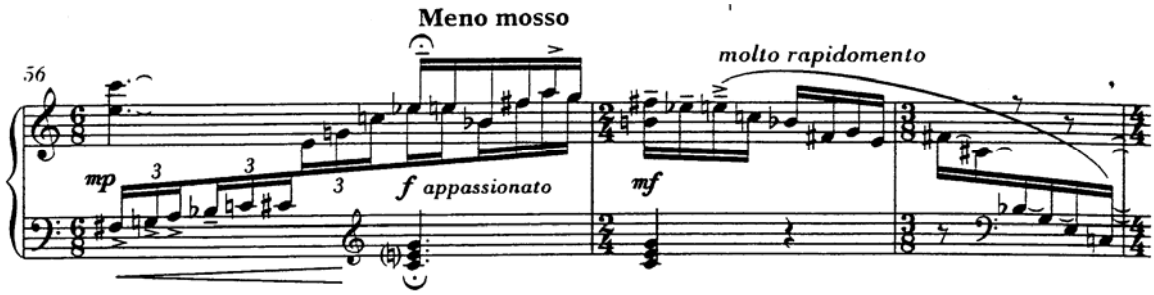
Kirchner also employs this shift of a semitone from the initial 'tonal nucleus' (term used by True 1970:113) in other works. For instance, in the *Sonata* the frame tonality is without a doubt C, but in the second movement the tonal nucleus becomes B. However, there is a return to C as the tonal nucleus in the final movement.

Measures 101-102 (see Lines 26 and 27) serve as a water-shed between the first part of the piece that hinted at a possible tonal reference point of C as reinforced by certain points of rest, and the remaining part of the piece that emphasizes a tonal reference point of C#. As can be seen below, the double bar line further clarifies the composer's intentions.



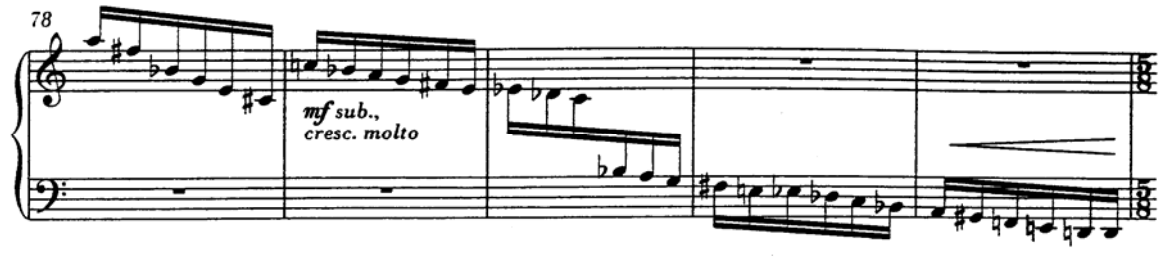
Line 26

The abovementioned references to C can be seen, among other points of reference, in Lines 1 (see below), 3 (see below), 14, and 26.



Line 14

Even the resting point on F-sharp in Lines 15 and 21 could be interpreted to refer to an underlying main tonality of C in contemporary music, since it lies exactly half-way between any two C's. In Line 21 the low F-sharp forms a deceptive substitute for an obvious resolution on C of the descending mostly octatonic scale in Line 20. This is a type of imperfect authentic cadence Kirchner uses to prepare for the melody starting in measure 85 (Line 21), since a perfect cadence on C is not desired at that point.



Line 20

The shift to an underlying tonality of C# is made in measure 103 (Line 27) and confirmed at subsequent junctures, most clearly in measure 128 (Line 34) and 135 (Line 39). Line 40

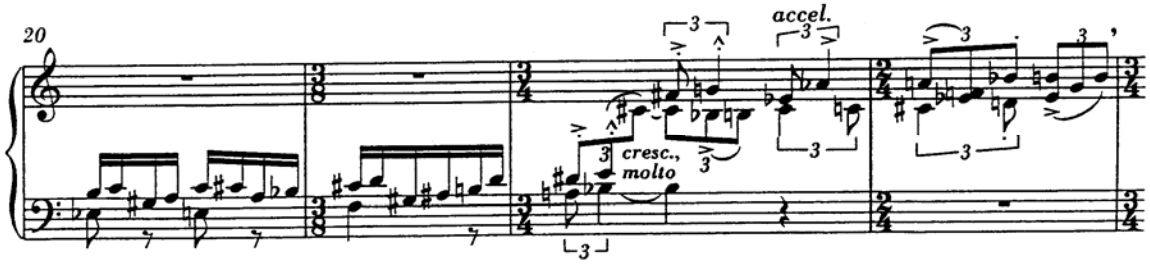
also shows the only incidence of the same pitches being repeated for any extended length of time, confirming the importance of C#.

Another important chord to mention in a discussion of the frame tonality is the G dominant seventh harmony encountered in Line 37 (see below). In a nineteenth century tonal context this could seem to be a dominant seventh of C, the frame tonality of the first section of the piece. However, this chord very strongly refers to C# in a contemporary context, since it lies a tritone away from C# that is the frame tonality at that particular juncture in the piece. The mid-point of the octatonic scale built on C# (model C as defined in the present study as well as the equivalent to model B built on C#) is G and this increases the impression that the pitch of G in this context emphasizes C#.

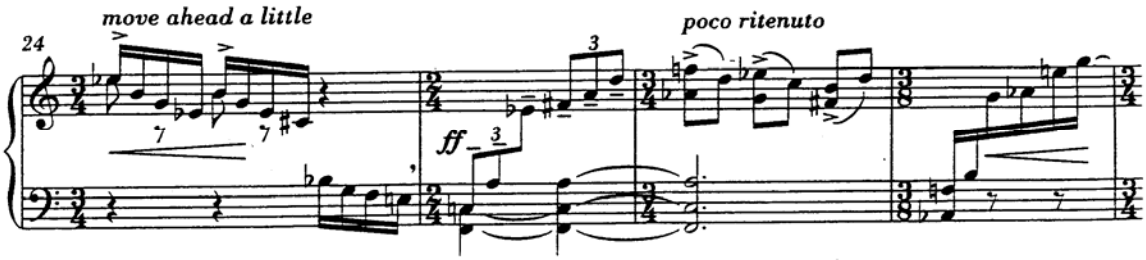
The respective tonal nuclei are further confirmed by the highest note in the piece being c4, the fairly regular presence of C or C# at the beginning or end of sections (an exceptional section being the second one that begins with D-flat, the enharmonic equivalent and anticipation of the ultimate tonal nucleus of C#), its presence in the final chord as the lowest note used in this piece, as well as the frequency of its manifestation as pedal points or as part of chords acting as pedal points (see measures 1-2, Line 1; 25-26, Line 6; 35 beat 4 to 37, Lines 8-9; 55 beat 2 to 57, Lines 13-14; 91, Line 23; 99-105, Lines 26-27; and 135-138, Lines 39-40).

In a discussion of what she calls Kirchner's use of a 'tonal nucleus', True (1976:113) states that the magnetic pull created by the tonal nucleus as the most important harmonic relationship in Kirchner's music is used by the composer as a substitute for conventional harmonic relationships. True further clarifies this by explaining that attraction between pitches increases in this music when any pitch is closer to the tonal nucleus of a piece. Therefore, the intervals of a minor and major second above and below the tonal nucleus assume dominant function. If a strong and consistent tonal nucleus exists, it follows that the frame tonality and tonal nucleus will be the same pitch. In *For the Left Hand* there is ample evidence of the attraction of surrounding pitches to the tonal nucleus. In fact, this statement is confirmed in a sophisticated way in the piece in question by the way in which Kirchner avoids too frequent arrivals on the tonal nucleus. The neighbouring tones of C, and neighbouring tones of C# in the last part of the piece, are masterfully pulled away from their destination in order to prolong the melodic line and sustain the flow of the piece.

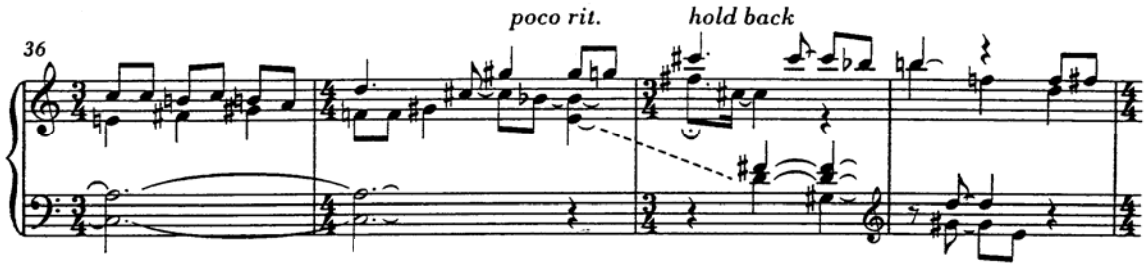
Examples can be found in Lines 3-4 (measures 15-16), Lines 5-6 (measures 23-24), Lines 9, 14-15 (measures 58-59), the melodic material in Lines 15-16, Lines 20-21, 25-26 (measure 98), Line 29, as well as numerous other occurrences of the same phenomenon.



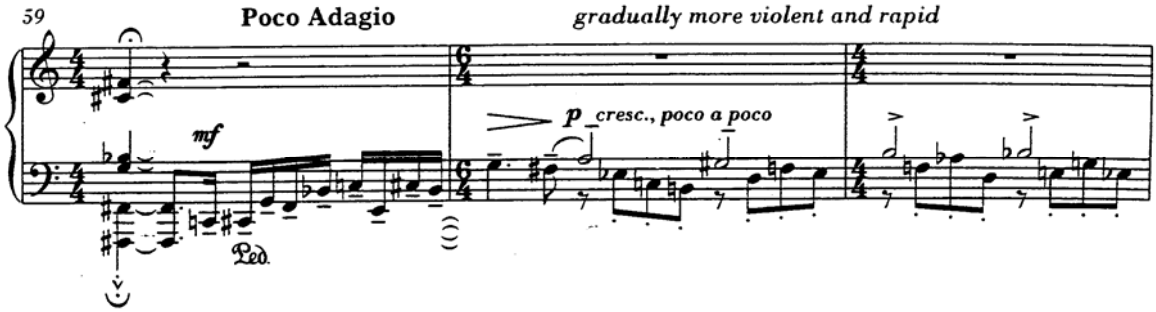
Line 5



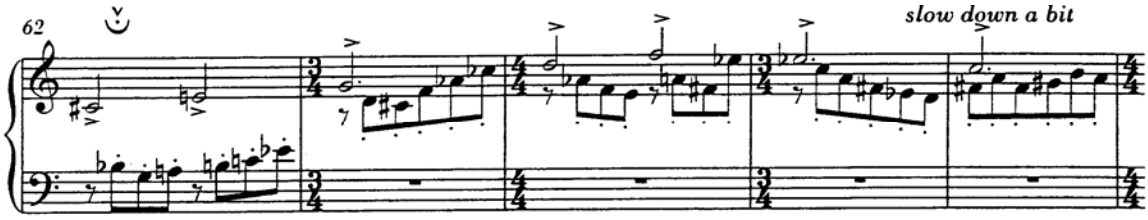
Line 6



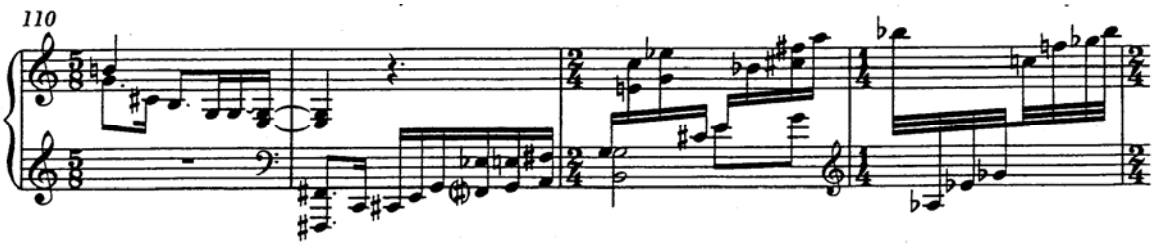
Line 9



Line 15



Line 16



Line 29

The tendency of the octatonic scale to form diminished harmonies, the abundance of augmented and whole-tone sonorities, as well as the pentatonic sonority at the close of this piece, obviate any sense of pull towards either a major mode or a minor mode. At the very beginning any reference to C major is already negated by the E-flat and F# immediately following the E. Therefore bimodality, defined as the juxtaposition of parallel major and minor modes, is not present in this piece. However, if a different definition of modality is used, the piece could indeed be considered to be 'multi-modal' since multiple modes, firstly the octatonic, then the whole-tone and the pentatonic, are used.

6.4 Structural significance of the use of the octatonic scale's transpositions

Rostkoski (1970:36) quotes Kirchner as saying that the listener should "concentrate on organic growth rather than thematic recognition". In addition to the present discussion, the discussion below on *Unifying melodic elements* may further serve to clarify this concept as it manifests in *For the Left Hand*. Some of the observations Rostkoski made already in 1970 about the characteristics of structural aspects in Kirchner's music still hold true for the piece in question. These include Rostkoski's observation about *Grundgestalt* sections at the beginning of compositions by Kirchner as a source for subsequent material. He also refers to reappearing motives that are frequently transformed, as well as the combination of seemingly new material with material used in preceding sections in order to achieve length and development. The octatonic scale is indeed the source of almost all the unifying ideas

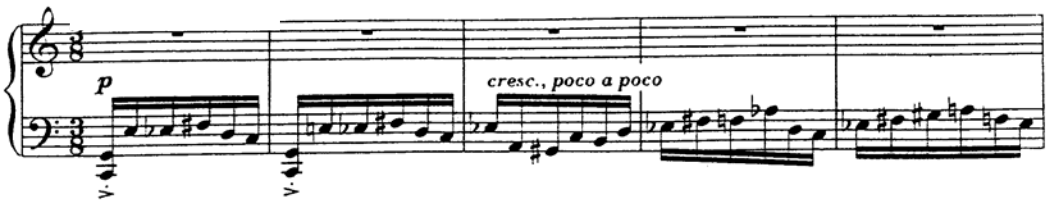
presented in *For the Left Hand*. True (1970:243) also favours the concept of growth in determining structural implications in Kirchner's music above the concept of form:

> The term "growth" implies an evolutionary process that, in turn, infers the passage of time. The term "form", on the other hand, suggests a tangible entity unaffected by temporal influences. Therefore, while form can describe the codification of structural elements in the visual arts, it is too limited in meaning to account for the element of time in music.

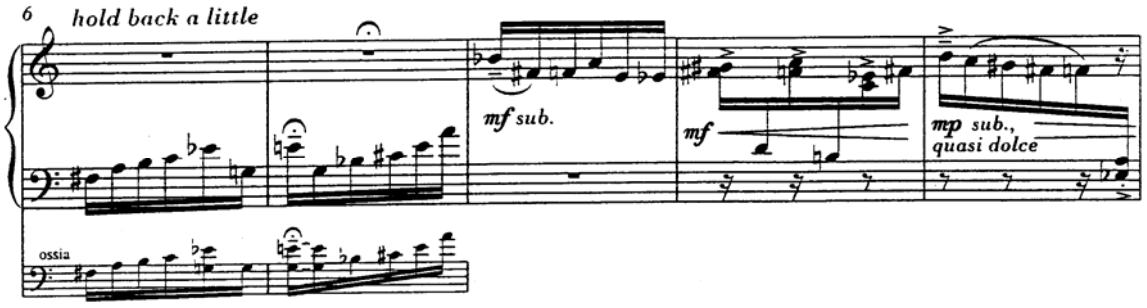
A factor that makes this composition unique is that, in addition to the motivic importance of the octatonic scale itself, the different transpositions of the octatonic scale turn out to be of the utmost importance on a structural level. After an investigation of this aspect of the structure of the piece, the findings will be compared to the structural analysis proposed in the section above on the basis of observations about dynamics, tempo indications, accents, *fermati*, and changes in the types of note values alone.

From the opening of the piece models A and B of the octatonic scale, as described in Chapter 5, are present. Kirchner's relatively sparing use of model C gives rise to the following question: could the strategic occurrence of model C possibly be of special significance structurally or analytically?

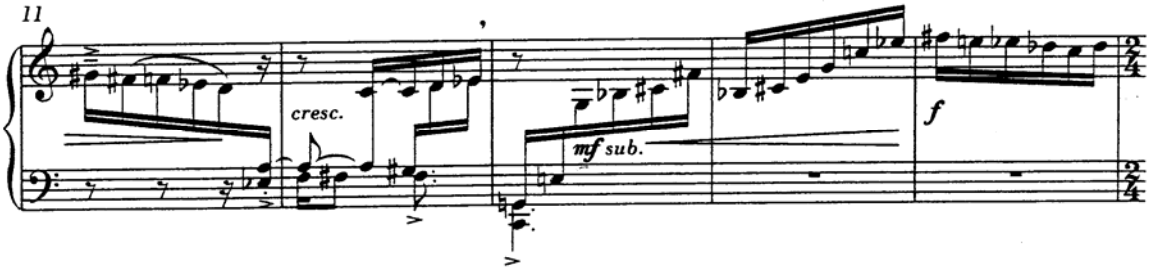
At the very opening of the piece (see Line 1) a combination of models A and B of the octatonic scale, the two collections containing the pitch C, is encountered. Measures 10 and 11 (Lines 2 to 3) clearly use model B, and from measure 12 onwards model A becomes dominant.



Line 1

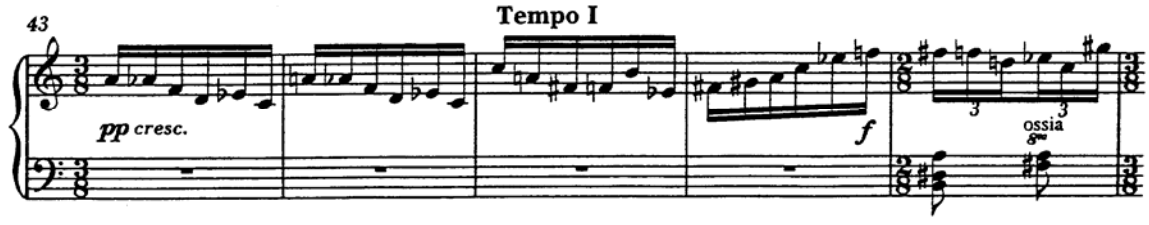


Line 2



Line 3

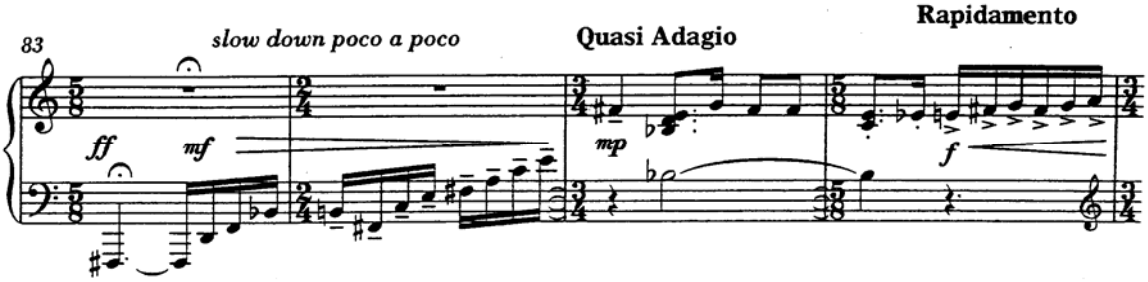
A section in which major seventh, dominant seventh, and ninth harmonies dominate (from measure 32 – see Line 8) follows a highly chromatic section. From measure 40 (Line 10) a return to octatonic characteristics, albeit a combination of the different models, occurs. In measure 43 there is a return to model B (Line 11), the foreign pitches E natural and B-flat perhaps belonging to an accented passing chord, model A appears again briefly in measure 50 (Line 12), and in measure 52 (Line 13) a French augmented sixth chord in the bass with the missing pitches of the collection in the top gives rise to the first clear arrival of model C of the octatonic scale. Of significance is that the first occurrence of the sparingly used model C is at the first major climax point in the piece.



Line 11

In measure 56 (Line 14) there is again a clear return to modal A while, with the exception of the b natural, measure 57 again presents model B, measure 59 (Line 15) presents model A, and this model indeed is carried through to the structural break in measure 59.

The abovementioned break gives rise to a very chromatic section followed by a section dominated by augmented harmony (see Lines 17 and 18), which of course is incompatible with the octatonic scale. In measure 78 (Line 20) there is a return to model A, altered towards the end of the descending run. If the D is considered a non-essential tone, the *Quasi Adagio* section starting in measure 85 (Line 21) clearly belongs to model A, while the augmented nature of the whole tone cluster in measure 87 (see Line 22) disqualifies it for possible inclusion in the octatonic.

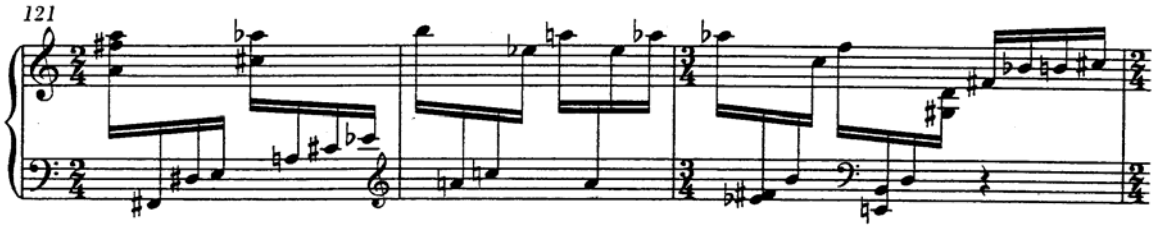


Line 21

Measure 88, representing the first arrival of the prominent melody starting in measure 85 on a high pitch, clearly belongs to the sparingly used model C. In measure 90 this changes, however, to the use of the interaction between a whole-tone fragment (C, D, E, F#, G#) and an octatonic fragment belonging to model B (G#, A, B, C). In measure 91 (Line 23) the melody hints at model B, but with the arrival of the B-flat, truly the highest point in this melody, model C is used. Model C is maintained throughout the dramatic change in register at the end of measure 91 as well as for the duration of measure 92. The augmented harmony used in measure 93 is foreign to the octatonic, while in the very next measure model C is again confirmed. It again yields to model A in measure 95, and returns in measure 96. For the first half of measure 97 model A is hinted at, while model C returns in the second half of the measure, only to yield again to model A in measure 98 up to the first chord in measure 100. The heavy accent is used on a brief reference to model B, as if alerting us to this model for the last time in a while, because hereafter it loses importance in the piece. The augmented eleventh chord arrived at in measure 100 is a combination of models A and B, a recapitulation of the dominating models up to this point in the piece. The whole rivalry between models A and C between measure 91 and 98 serves as

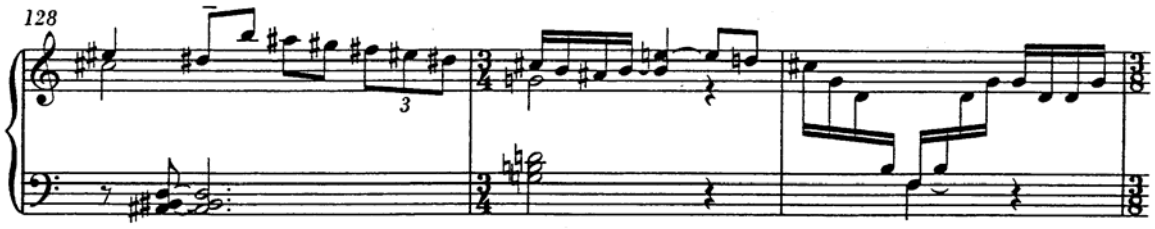
preparation for the shift to C# as tonal nucleus in measure 103. In measures 103-105 a shift to this tonal nucleus is effected by means of model A.

From measure 101 onwards the two models containing C#, namely models A and C, play a dominating role. The downbeat of measure 106 sees a temporary model C, while the next beat belongs to model B. Measure 107 is a whole-tone fragment, while measure 108 combines a pentatonic fragment with a whole-tone fragment. Measure 109 predominantly represents model A (with the B natural as a foreign tone), measure 110 turns to model C, the next two measures again represent model A with the exception that the B and G on the downbeat of measure 112 belongs to model C. Thereafter a quick arpeggio-like figure that represents an interaction between the whole-tone scale (G-flat, A-flat, B-flat, C) and model B of the octatonic (C, E-flat, F, G-flat, A-flat) facilitates the change to a higher register. From measure 114 to 118, which is a reference of the opening material, model B again assumes importance. Measure 119 is an interaction between the whole-tone scale and model C, measure 120 combines the whole-tone scale with model B, and measure 121 (Line 32) again returns to model A. Measure 122 to the downbeat of 123 represents model B, while the next two beats belong to model C (the F# being a borrowed tone from model A), and the next measure again starts out as model A and then shifts to model C in preparation for the arrival point in the following measures. In measure 127 models A and C interact to form an arrival on the pentatonic mode.



Line 32

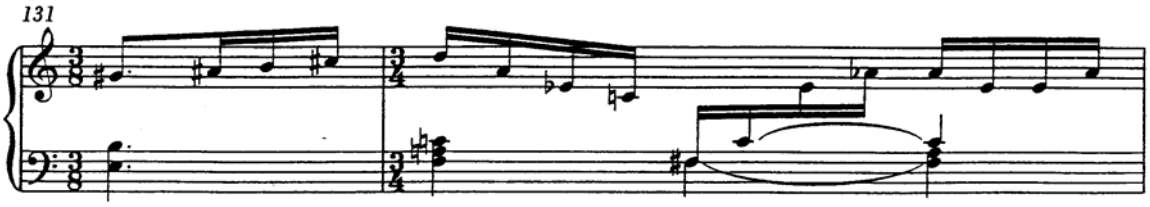
This researcher is of the opinion that the bass clef in measure 128 (Line 34) is a misprint and proposes that it should rather be F#, G#, B in the treble clef, still representing an interaction between the whole-tone scale and models A and C but creating the sonority of F-sharp major. The reading as A#, B#, D in the bass clef would uncharacteristically muddy the sonority and would not resolve as logically to the G major harmony in the following measure.



Line 34

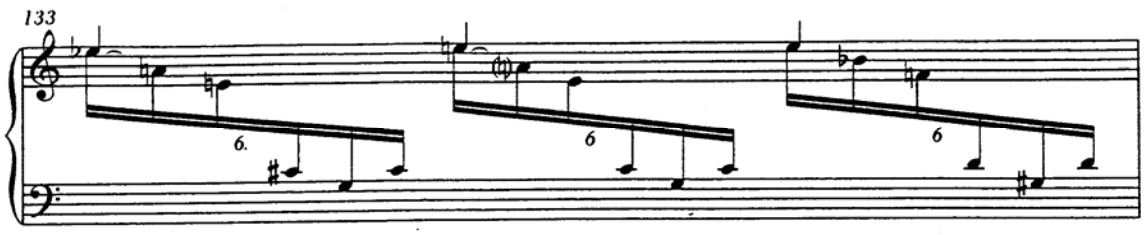
The arrival of G major harmony in measure 129 is the beginning of a series of interactions of model C with traditional major triads (see also measure 131). It seems that Kirchner started using traditional major triads in his music after the composition of the first *Sonata* for piano but long before *For the Left Hand*. In a review of Kirchner's *Second String Quartet*, Richard Franko Goldman (1960:74) states that Kirchner's harmonic vocabulary is 'unsystematic' enough even to include major triads.

In measure 132 (Line 35) model B is encountered in clear form for the last time.

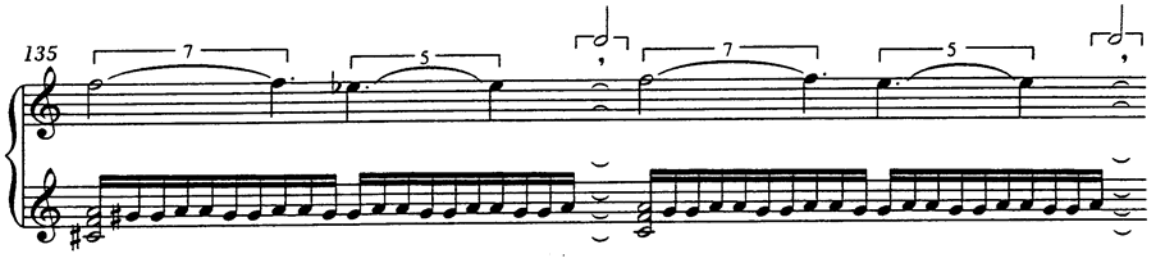


Line 35

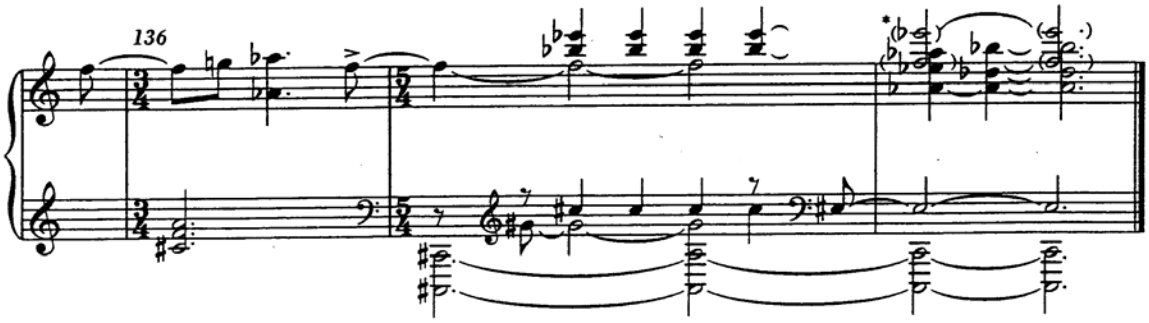
Tension builds in Line 36 as model A transforms itself into model C in preparation for the big arrival of model C at the climax in Line 37. The bass in Line 134 temporarily moves through model B (C, F, A) and model A (D-flat, G-flat, B-flat) towards a clear confirmation of model C's superiority in the last three lines (Lines 38-40) of the piece.



Line 36



Line 39



Line 40

The only tones foreign to model C in these last three lines are E-flat and A, both of which play an important role to unify the melodic value attributed in this piece of the sigh-motifs of descending minor seconds (A to G#) and descending major seconds (F to E-flat). E-flat creates an important interaction between models A and C, confirming their importance in the last part of the piece and creating the suspended pentatonic sonority at the end of the piece.

Structurally the abovementioned observations show a clear change occurring in measure 101. In the piece up to this point, the sparing use of model C usually correlates with important arrival points or climaxes. Hereafter, the continuous nature of the writing and low dynamic level has the result of very few arrival points before the important G dominant seventh harmony followed by model C descending scale (see Line 37). The following material asserts the importance of model C and the dual importance of models C and A in the very last two measures. In addition to these structural considerations, Kirchner's technique of using the different transpositions of the octatonic scale sometimes in quick succession creates a floating feeling of tonality, while the occasions on which he uses one version of this scale predominantly again creates a sense of stability.

The use of different harmonic procedures to define certain sections in this piece, as well as the tendency of certain chords to be associated with individual sections (see section 6.6), seem to contradict the following observation by True (1970:137) about this composer's earlier compositions for piano:

> Kirchner rarely defines structural divisions by way of changes in harmonic procedure. Instead, he uses similar harmonic patterns to integrate successive sections and entire movements.

These tendencies could, however, possibly be regarded as representing a stylistic development that happened later in the composer's career.

6.5 Unifying melodic elements

In Kirchner's music, melody and rhythm can not be completely separated, since the melodic motives are closely associated with, and even originate from, rhythmic motives. The style of writing in this piece is highly figurative and nearly continuously moving. Quavers and quaver triplets, semiquavers and semiquaver triplets, and thirty-second notes in measure 113 only, all within the context of a constantly changing metre, create the flowing movement as well as the melodic flow and continuous expansion of melodic motives. Where longer note values are used, the impression of continuous rhythmic movement is usually sustained by faster note-values in the other voices. The use of dotted rhythms usually implies a melodic purpose. *For the Left Hand* has a considerably more limited range of note values in comparison with other compositions for piano by Kirchner. For instance, where the shortest note-values encountered in this piece are demisemiquavers (and then only in one measure, namely measure 113 – Line 29), those in the sonata are hemidemisemiquaver quadruplets.

Where melodic elements are investigated, a composer's use of silence should also be investigated. True (1976:65) describes Kirchner as 'seemingly averse to silence' and alerts to the fact that in his *Sonata* and *Little Suite* there is sound almost at all times. She also observes (1976:216) that '[c]ontinuous rhythmic activity is a logical corollary of the virtually uninterrupted sound in Kirchner's piano music'. Investigating this property in *For the Left Hand* revealed that there is indeed not a single moment where even the shortest absence of sound creates silence in this piece, and also that the piece in question is another example of this continuous melodic-rhythmic activity in this composer's music. The continuity of rhythmic activity, primarily quaver and semiquaver note values with the odd

crotchet or dotted crotchet, is also divided between the voices. When one voice has a resting point or long note value, the other voices continue moving. The only exception to this is in measure 101, creating the suspicion that this is an important divisional point in the piece. The pause in rhythmic activity in measures 59 and 83 is long enough to indicate structural divisions but not to interrupt the flow, since figuration immediately precedes and follows these points.

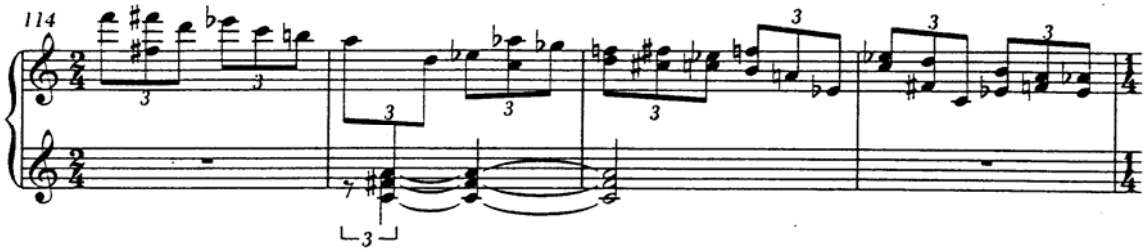
Another observation by True (1976:149) serves to shed some light on Kirchner's use of melody, as well as the interaction between melodic and rhythmic elements in his work:

> Chromatic, motivic, non-repetitive—these terms describe the majority of melodies in Leon Kirchner's solo piano works. Largely owing to these characteristics, Kirchner's melodies are not easily engraved in the listener's memory …

Ringer already observed in 1957 that many melodic-rhythmic aspects found in Kirchner's music are improvisational in origin (1957:6). This still holds true for the piece under discussion. The piece does not present a highly memorable melody, but unifying melodic elements rather originate from the figurative and improvisatory style of writing.

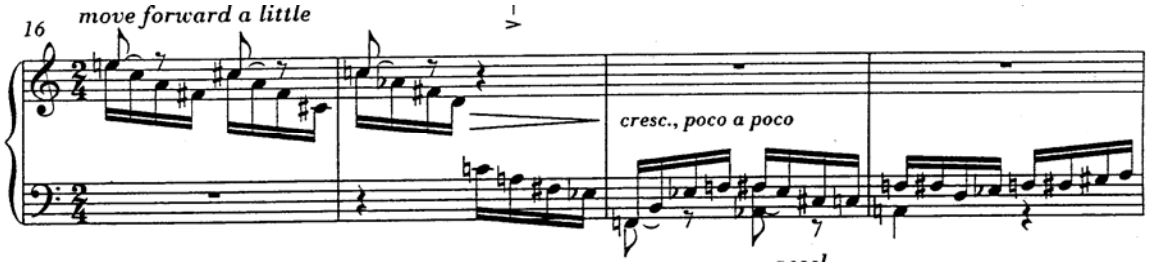
In a discussion of the melodic elements used in this piece, a very important aspect to keep in mind is the fact that most of Kirchner's melodic material is based on the intervals of a minor second, major second, or minor third. Their inversions (major sevenths, minor sevenths, and major sixths) and compounds (minor ninths, major ninths, and minor tenths) also sometimes assume importance. These are all encountered in descending and ascending form, with descending perhaps being more prevalent. In addition, these are the three most important intervals on which the octatonic scale is built, since this scale is a succession of minor thirds divided by the interval of a minor second and the interval of a major second. Therefore it can be said that the harmony and melody in this piece are based on the same intervals. Important to note is that these are also the same intervals that the *Sonata* is built on. This can be seen in the first phrase (see Figure 1) where the *Grundgestalt* material is announced. However, the difference lies in that in the *Sonata* these intervals are the result of a predominantly chromatic and bitonal idiom, while in *For the Left Hand* these intervals naturally result from the octatonic idiom which creates an aural effect entirely different from the chromatic and bitonal idioms.

From the figurative writing at the opening of the piece a certain melodic quality emerges (Lines 1 and 2). This material is later also used in free inversion (Lines 11 and 30). Note the predominance of the intervals of a second and third.



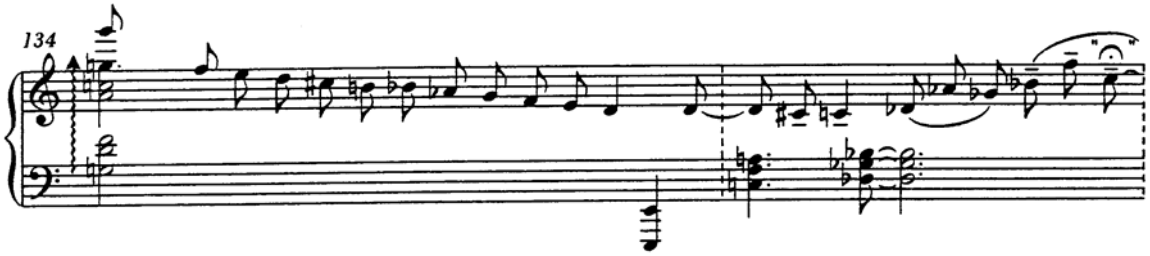
Line 30

Measure 16 (see Line 4) is the first instance where the composer indicates a melody that protrudes from the opening material. The pitches in this melody represent the [0,1,5] pitch class, also used in the bass in measure 18. The same idea of a melody originating from the figuration continues, but with a different pitch class content. Again, note the importance of the minor second and minor third.



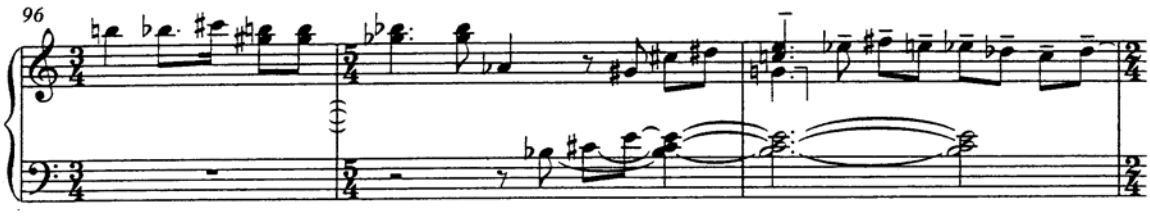
Line 4

Descending octatonic scales often assume melodic characteristics in the work, for example Lines 10 and 37, and are by nature a series of minor and major seconds.



Line 37

The first genuine melody is encountered in measure 28 (Line 7) where the motive of a descending jump followed by a semitone as first encountered in measure 8 (see Line 2) assumes melodic value. This all happens over an ascending bass line in preparation for the first major arrival point in measure 32 (Line 8) on a strong D major seventh harmony. The dotted quaver-semiquaver melodic motive is first introduced here, to be repeated at further melodic junctures in the piece. The rhythmic placement and character of the motive in measure 33 is a pre-reference to measure 85 (Line 21) and later 96 (Line 25), where this rhythmic idea assumes importance as a new melodic idea. This idea is built entirely on minor and major seconds and minor thirds.

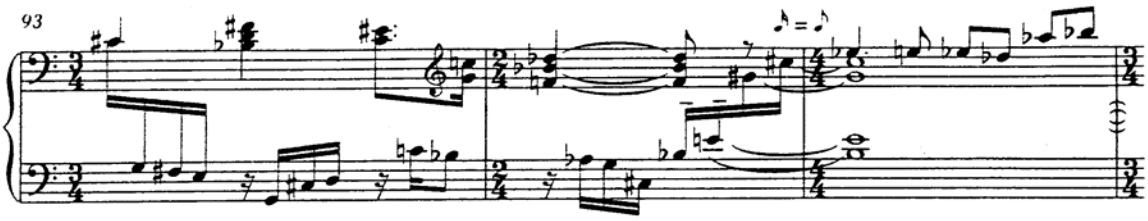


Line 25

In Lines 15 and 16 a melody that starts as chromatic intervals and later becomes a succession of minor thirds is presented in minim note values. The first minims in this melody, A, G#, B, B-flat in measure 60 (measure 59 can be seen as an introductory measure to this melody) is the BACH motif transposed a semitone lower. This melody, like so many others in Kirchner's work, is derived from earlier motivic material. The first three notes can be derived from the very opening material, in particular the notes E, E-flat, F# from Line 1. Different trichordal shapes of minor thirds, such as [0,1,4], [0,1,3], [0,1,6], [0,2,3], etc. dominate the accompaniment to this melody. These trichords later become pentads, but still with the minor third as the predominant interval.

The contour of progressively larger ascending intervals that descends stepwise again after the melody reached its peak, from measure 67 onwards (see Line 17), could be compared to the same idea from measure 91 (see Line 23) onwards. The latter idea forms a part of perhaps the longest sustained melody in the piece, starting from measure 85 (Line 21) and connecting the idea to measure 96 (Line 25). This is the melodic highpoint of the piece where all the ideas presented in the first part are combined and come to full expression. This comes to a halt in measure 101, and the remaining thirty-seven measures see a diffusion of melodic interest, the unifying melodic ideas still present but in their motivic

form, while sonorities and figurative writing again assume importance above melodic value.



Line 24

All the fast figuration belongs to the category of instrumental melodies, if in fact the reader considers that as melodic and not exclusively figurative. The constantly changing register of both slower and faster melodies also seems to suggest instrumental melodies rather than *cantabile* melodies, while the large and frequent intervallic jumps encountered also support the argument for instrumental melody.

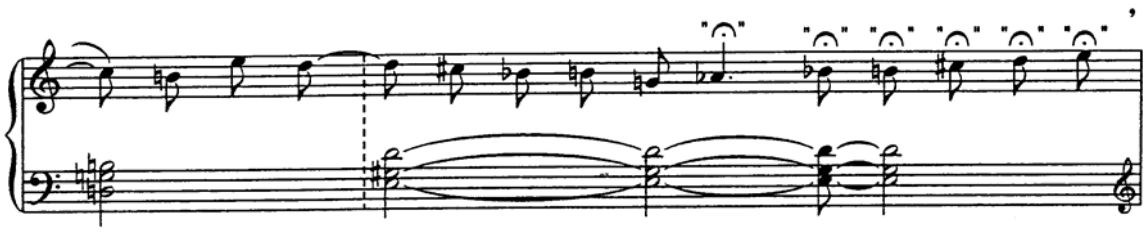
True (1976:79) describes Kirchner's writing as predominantly polyphonic. Taking into account the limitations posed by one-handed performance, one can expect the work in question to be an exception to this in most places. Indeed homophonic figuration plays a very important role in this music. Most melodies are single-line melodies supported by other voices. Two noteworthy incidences of polyphonic writing are encountered early in the piece. The first is a remarkable spot where the melody protruding from the figuration as discussed above is combined in measure 23 to clearly form two independent lines (Lines 4 and 5). The fact that these two lines move in parallel direction makes it possible for the left hand to play both lines simultaneously. The melody starting in Line 7 is a polyphonic melody where the voices are in different registers. This is made executable by the rhythmic placement of one voice being static and held with the pedal while the left hand moves laterally over the keyboard to get into position to play the other voice. The melody starting with a transposition of the B-A-C-H motif (Line 15) has an accompaniment figure that is separated from it by means of articulation that could qualify this as polyphonic writing. Accompaniment figures in the piece often assume a character of their own and could sometimes momentarily be thought to be an independent polyphonic line, while closer investigation reveals that it actually only plays a supportive role to the melody.

6.6 Use of specific intervals, chords, and modes

In an analysis of this kind it is very important to isolate the various partitioning properties of the octatonic scale in order to facilitate identification of octatonic subsets in the piece in question. As Cohn (1991:272-273) explains, the octatonic can be broken down into eleven tetrachordal partitions representing seven different classes of tetrachords, and also into nine dyadic partitions. As mentioned in the previous chapter, many of these have familiar nineteenth century contexts. The tetrachord types are [0,1,3,4], [0,1,6,7], [0,2,3,5], [0,3,4,7], [0,2,6,8], [0,3,5,8], and [0,3,6,9]. The octatonic scale's dyadic partitions represent all six the available dyad-classes, the only other collection with this property being the full collection of 12 semitones of the chromatic scale. Therefore, between the different models of the octatonic scale, any single interval is possible.

These dyads become important here in the form of the interval of the descending (and sometimes ascending) second that always plays an important role in Kirchner's music. In this piece not such a huge emphasis on minor seconds is encountered as in more atonal works, but the natural result of the octatonic scale is to produce quite a number of minor seconds.

Rostkoski (1970:23) also writes that roots often tend to move a half step in Kirchner's music. On a macro scale this is very true in this piece, the C tonal centre moving to C#. On a micro scale this phenomenon is also very prevalent. For instance, the D-flat–D–E-flat–E bass line in Line 7, the root of A-flat moving to A in Line 10, E–F–F#–G–G#–G in Line 35, and C–D-flat–D in Lines 37-38. This researcher discovered that in the piece in question stepwise root motion by a whole step is also prevalent and sometimes leads up to important points. Examples include C–D–E-flat in Line 12, D–E–F# in Lines 19-21, E-flat–F–G–A in Lines 22-23, the extended B pedal point in Lines 24-26 that resolves to C nearly two octaves lower in Line 26 also indicate this structural juncture, and D–E in Line 38 (see below). The major sixth interval (inversion of minor third) announces the arrival of the final harmony of the piece. An octatonic segment is encountered in the bass in Line 13, the only incidence of octaves in this piece that were described as 'Lisztian' by Holland (2003:2).



Line 38

According to Rostkoski (1970:15), Kirchner often uses triads with two added tones. This has the purpose of avoiding an obvious triadic sound. Examples of triads with one, two or three added tones can be found in *For the Left Hand* in measures 25, 32, 57, 98, 101, 104-105, 128, 129, 132, 134, and 135. The triads with added tones in this piece often tend to form part of specific modes, such as the pentatonic scale (for example, see measure 127 Line 33).

Two chords juxtaposed and often found at the ends of phrases are termed 'bi-chords' by Rostkoski (1970:15). Examples in the piece in question are encountered in measure 40 (Line 10), 59 (Line 15), 101 (Line 26), and 137-138 (Line 40). The most common bi-chords are defined by the root and third of a chord, often omitting the fifth in order to sustain a thin texture. However, in measures 137-138 a C# major harmony is suggested (with the F being the enharmonic spelling for E#), while the E-flat and B-flat seem to be the root and the fifth of E-flat minor. This combination of pitches forms the [0,2,4,7,9] pentad, which is the pentatonic collection. Depending on the distribution of voices, bi-chords can often sound chromatic. The difference lies therein that in chromatic writing the emphasis falls on the half step or inversion and compound thereof, while in a bitonal context the focus falls on the interval of a third. It follows that two juxtaposed chords that can be defined by their roots and thirds will most probably be classified as bitonal.

Two other chords that can be derived from the octatonic, the Petrouchka or [0,1,3,6,7,9] chord, and the Prometheus or [0,2,4,6,8,9] chord that can more specifically be derived from the interaction of the octatonic with the whole-tone scale as mentioned in Chapter 5, section 2, assume important status in *For the Left Hand*. Emphasis will be given in this discussion to chords that share a significant number of pitches with these chords, confirming their relationship to these chords and dimming or even alienating their relationship to the octatonic or whole-tone collections. Taken into consideration in

deciding whether or not they belong to the Petrouchka or Prometheus chords, is their aural impression in any given context.

The theme in measure 28 has strong Petrouchka qualities (B, C, D, A-flat), and the next reference to the Petrouchka chord belongs to the same theme and is in measure 31 (C, C#, E-flat, G-flat, G, A). In measure 33 the Prometheus chord appears briefly (G, B, C#, E-flat, E) and is followed by a return to the Petrouchka chord in measure 34 (G#, D, F) which changes to another form of the Petrouchka chord in the next measure (B-flat, E, G) and changes to the [D, E, F#, G#, B-flat, B] version immediately thereafter with the C# as a foreign tone. The chord is abandoned hereafter, however, but its significant presence in this theme indeed gives rise to the suspicion that the theme could have been derived from the aural characteristics of the Petrouchka chord.

The theme starting in measure 85 is clearly built on the Prometheus chord [B-flat, C, D, E, F#, G] being completed on the first beat of the next measure and again confirmed by another transposition thereof in measure 87 [E-flat, F, G, A, B, C]. If the G in the top voice in measure 88 is interpreted to be an *appoggiatura*, and the B a foreign note, this measure is built on another Prometheus chord [A-flat, D, E, F]. Measure 89 starts out as a Prometheus chord [G, B, C#, E], but thereafter changes to a fragment of the octatonic scale. The following measure contains all the pitches of the Prometheus chord on C, and the next reference to this chord is only encountered in the second half of measure 91 [A-flat, B-flat, C, D, F] and immediately negated again with the C# in the bass. Measure 92 could possibly be interpreted as the Petrouchka chord on C#. The next very strong Prometheus chord lasts from measure 100-102, being prepared by triads on the first two beats of measure 100 that could be derived from this chord. The last section of this piece does not show such a strong presence of this chord, but in the preparation for the arrival on the dominant seventh harmony in measure 134 one version of the Prometheus chord [G, A, C#, E-flat, E] transforms itself into another version [G#, B-flat, D, E, F] and this is responsible for the increase in intensity.

As briefly referred to in section 6.3, the very opening notes, C and G followed by first E and then E-flat, give rise to the question whether or not the composer uses bimodality in this piece. With the possible exception of the C# major chord, which in itself is also not clearly major but assumes a pentatonic character soon after its first statement, never does

the writing seem to be in either the minor or the major mode. The assumption can be made that the suggestion of bimodality is a result of the nature of the octatonic scale and not of the construction of diatonic scales. Therefore the traditional concept of bimodality as using the major and the minor modes of the same scale is not present in this piece.

In the light of Whittall's (2005:1) definition as stated below, Kirchner's habit of juxtaposing different modes could be termed bitonality or even polytonality. Especially the observations about the superimposition of 'contrasted modal segments' and about 'new symmetries' (the octatonic and whole-tone scales are symmetric modes) hold significance to this study:

> Bitonality: The simultaneous, superimposed presence of two distinct tonalities. In practice the term is applied not only to compositions which employ two unambiguously diatonic keys, but also to those which superimpose contrasted modal segments, or two conventionally unrelated triads without other elements of diatonic progression. Techniques loosely categorized as bitonal are often passing effects within a harmonic language that is subtly balanced between traditional hierarchies and new symmetries.

6.7 Comparison between different effects created by the octatonic in *For the left hand* and the second movement of the *Sonata*

Despite the obvious difference in tempo, the composer seems to use the octatonic with an entirely different purpose in the second movement of the *Sonata* of 1948 than in *For the Left Hand*. The tempo indication of the second movement of the *Sonata* (hereafter referred to as 2nd mvt only) is *Adagio*, while there are only occasional *Poco Adagio* and *Quasi Adagio* sections, in addition to sections indicated to be played at a slower tempo, in *For the Left Hand*. These allow for a more direct comparison between the two pieces.

In the 2nd mvt the octatonic is employed very often for colouristic effect. Right at the start of the movement tone clusters that are wholly octatonic are encountered (Figure 9). This is indeed model C, which logically results from the B pedal point encountered throughout the movement.

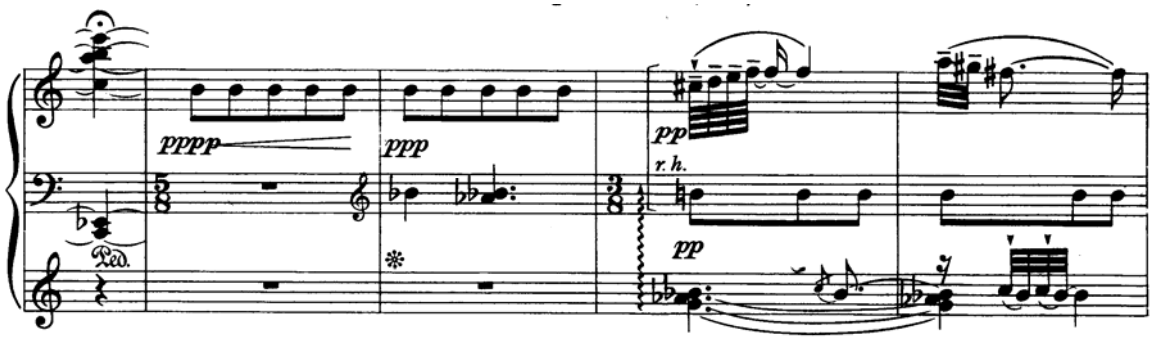


Figure 9

Not one instance of solely colouristic use of this scale can be found in the other piece. Its use always has some melodic quality, or it appears in extended figuration. However, like in *For the Left Hand* there are instances in the 2nd mvt where octatonic fragments are used as melodic material, or where melodic material are derived from octatonic fragments (Figure 10).

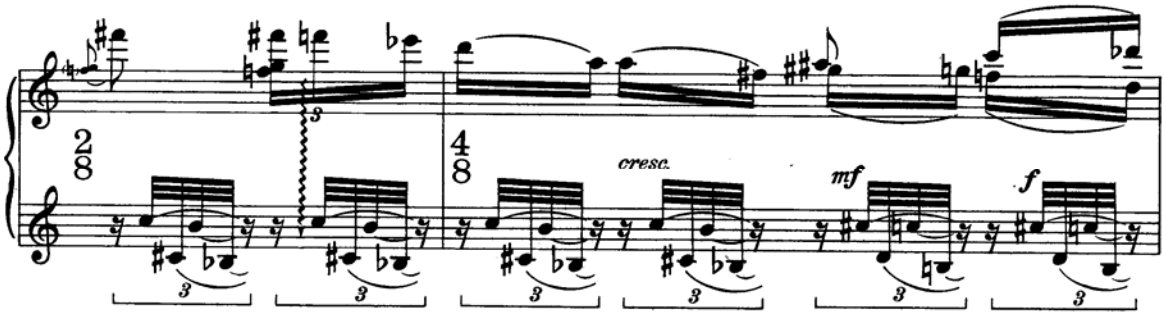


Figure 10

The octatonic is occasionally used in both pieces to create a feeling of descent. The use of this scale cleverly avoids the necessity of a descending diatonic scale that will result in a tonal feeling. Lines 10 and 37 are examples from *For the Left Hand*, while Figure 11 shows the same phenomenon in the 2nd mvt. In the former piece it serves the purpose of a transition to the return of the opening material in slightly altered form in Line 10, and register displacement in Line 37, while in the 2nd mvt it has the function of closure of the movement and emancipating the energy before the start of the final movement.

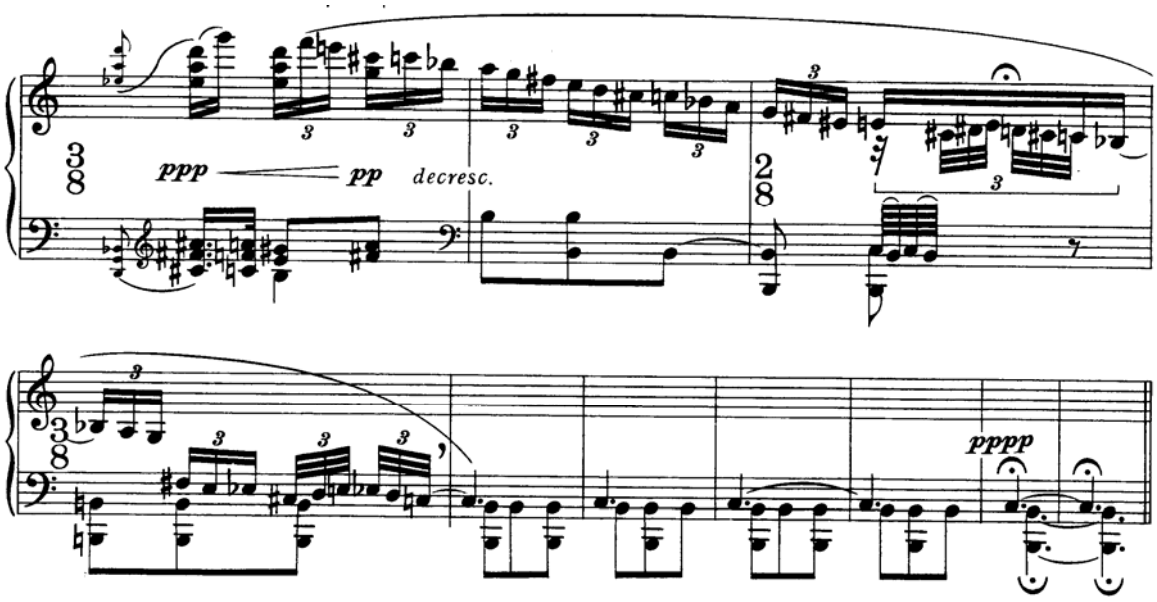
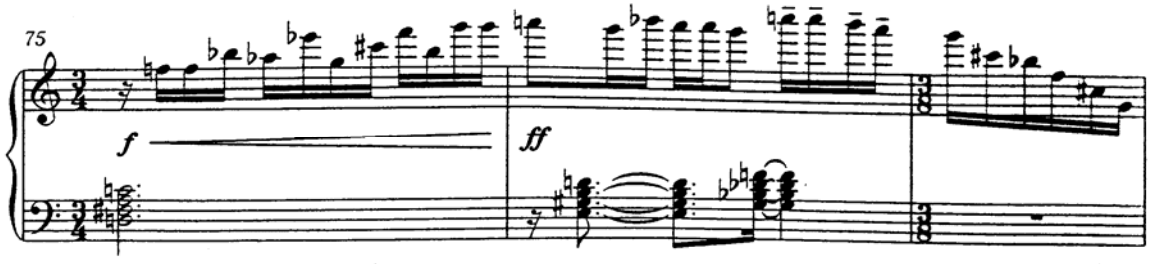


Figure 11

6.8 Analysis of miscellaneous aspects

The range on the piano used in *For the Left Hand* lies between CC# and c4. Considering the part of Jander's (2005:1) definition that describes *tessitura* in the following terms: '[t]he *tessitura* of a piece is not decided by the extremes of its range, but rather by which part of the range is most used', the *tessitura* of the piece in question is predominantly in the middle four octaves of the piano (C and c3). Notes outside this are usually associated with climaxes, lowest or highest turning points of sweeping figuration, or endings of sections (see Lines 13, 15, 19, 21, 29, 30, 33, 37, and 40).



Line 19

Another element enhancing climaxes is the separation between voices, which in one-handed playing have added dramatic effect in that one voice will have to be delayed. All of the above examples where notes beyond the normal *tessitura* is the distinguishing factor also fall in the latter category, while others are well within the most commonly used

tessitura (see Lines 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 23, 26, 39). The slower sections usually coincide with a relatively stable *tessitura*, even the slowly ascending or descending *tessituras* have a sense of stability, while the faster sections in this piece are always associated with a rapidly changing *tessitura*.

In section 6.2 the influence of dynamic indications upon structure was discussed, but taking into account data on the influence that *tessitura* and separation between voices have on climaxes, a more integrated view emerges. In the first 100 measures of this piece the climaxes are usually at a high dynamic level. Two notable exceptions are the descending octatonic scale at the end of a section in measure 41 (Line 10), and the end of the first part of the piece in measure 101. In the final section of the piece all the material including climaxes are at a lower dynamic level. Adding to this, the dynamic rhythm at the beginning of the piece up to and including the transitional section taking place in measures 101-105 is fast. Many changes of dynamic level as well as sudden changes in dynamics take place in a short period of time. After measure 105 no further dynamic changes are encountered and the only factor indirectly influencing the dynamic rhythm beyond this point is the change in sound level that accompany a change in the number of voices heard at any given moment, or density.

Since there are no moments of silence in this piece, the minimum number of voices at any one moment is one, the maximum seven. The impression created by a hearing of *For the Left Hand* is that of a surprisingly thicker texture than would be expected for a piece played with only five fingers instead of ten. With the exception of the arrival point in measure 83, density increases at climax points. In some places the texture on the page looks thin, but the use of pedal as well as high dynamic levels that frees up the overtone series causes the texture to sound much thicker than it looks on the page. At other times, chords played in the bass and indicated by ties of indeterminate length to be sustained in the pedal create a denser texture. These ties serve as indication for the use of pedal. Other means by which the composer indicates where the use of pedal or unusual use of pedal is required, are the following: a pedal indication in brackets in measure 28, a pedal indication in measure 59 (which probably indicates that the harmony should be cleared after ties of indeterminate length, which in themselves indicated that the pedal was to be used, have created a mass of sound), pedal indications in measures 71-73 which indicate that two measures must be kept under one continuous pedal (contrary to what the inclination of the

performer would be), and the indication of 'clear pedal' in measure 89. This researcher is of the opinion that these indications are given at junctures where the pedal is used in an unusual way and that would not have been the natural inclination of the performer, and that this does not mean that the pedal would not be used at other places in the piece. To the contrary, use of pedal is central to Kirchner's style and it is assumed that the pedal will be used throughout. Pedal indications are also taken into account in this study when harmony is determined, since they have an influence on the pitches sounding together at any one moment.

Textural changes at beginnings of new sections could also help to clarify sectional divisions. After the initial thin texture at the beginning, the texture changes in measure 28 (Line 7). Other texture changes are encountered in measures 43, 59, 67, and 85. It should also be taken into account that the texture tends to become denser towards the end of sections. This explains the fairly dense texture in measures 25-26 (Line 6), anticipating the denser texture in the slower section starting in Line 7. At the beginning of the second fast section there is only one voice, but the texture gets thicker towards the climax. Use of the pedal in the penultimate section and the higher number of voices in this section with fast figuration will create a dense texture. The densest texture covering the largest range at any single junction in this piece is encountered at the very end. This is unique in the piece and increases the feeling of finality as well as compensates for the lack of change encountered in the harmonic rhythm of the penultimate section and *coda*. All the above taken into account, the generalization can be made that the density starts out relatively thin with occasional thickening in slow sections and at climaxes, and increases towards the end of the piece.

The one element that gives rise to the suspicion that the texture change in measure 67 does not necessarily coincide with the beginning of a new section is the element of dynamics. Unlike most sections, the dynamic level does not change at this juncture. There is a gradual dynamic build-up in addition to drops and rebuilds of the dynamic level from measure 60 towards a culmination in measure 83. This is suggestive of one continuous section. The researcher is aware that the final dynamic level of one section is usually carried into the new section in order to make for a smooth connection between sections. However, a new dynamic level in the next section is always prepared for in the previous section or in the transitional measure(s) that create(s) a change in dynamic level. This is not the case in

measure 67. In fact, measure 67 finds itself in the middle of one long *crescendo poco a poco* that started in measure 60, while the first *subito* drop in dynamic level is only encountered in measure 73.

The flexion count (number of changes of direction of melodic or figurative material) alternates between extremely high (a change of direction on almost every note) to very low (the line moves in one direction only). In addition to changes in note values, this is an element that plays an important role in creating the ebb and flow of energy. The sections with a higher flexion count create a built-up of excitement, while the sections with a lower flexion count assist in lowering the excitement. Long sections with a high flexion count usually alternate with only a few measures with a low flexion count. The latter fulfils different functions, namely temporarily lowering the excitement, acting as transitory measures between different sections, and rapidly changing the register on the piano.

Rostkoski (1970:31) describes Kirchner's phrase construction as follows:

> The typical Kirchner phrase is eight measures long, with an opening rhythmic pattern one measure long. The usual procedure is to confirm the pattern through a re-statement in the following measure, then to develop the motive over the succeeding six measures. In an introductory passage, or during one of the slow sections, the one-measure pattern may consist of only two notes… In the more complex *marcato* passages, this basic one-measure is much more extensive.

In contrast, the investigation of the *Sonata* and *Little Suite* by True (1976:247) lead her to the conclusion that the various possible phrase options she determined were all asymmetrical in length and that no pattern of the number of phrases in sections exists. This is more in line with the findings of the present researcher on the extremely irregular phrase lengths encountered in *For the Left Hand*. The only characteristic mentioned by Rostkoski that is indeed retained, is the tendency to have a repeated rhythmic pattern at the beginning of a phrase (see Lines 1, 11, and 17). Thereafter phrase lengths are extremely irregular however. The tendency of this music to be continuously developing in nature as well as the constantly changing time signature, complicating any attempted regular distribution of numbers of beats into numbers of measures into phrases, both contribute to the avoidance of definite distribution of the material into regular phrases. This irregular phrase structure could also serve as explanation of the irregular lengths of sections. Unlike phrases, sectional divisions are much easier to identify in this music. The numerous important elements in determining the latter are mentioned throughout this study.

True's (1976:247) observation that the primary consideration in determining phrase lengths is aspects of rhythm, further supports the view mentioned in section 6.2 that temporal and rhythmic fluctuations, and dynamic structure play the most important role in determining the structure of Kirchner's music. No phrase lines are indicated in the score of *For the Left Hand*, but in addition to the abovementioned aspects commas and *fermati* provide clues as to the beginnings and endings of phrases. The continuous nature of this style causes difficulty and ambiguity in determining phrases. Kirchner's fondness of beginning a new phrase on the same note (or octave displacement of the same note) or a neighbouring tone of the note on which the previous phrase ended, also increases the continuity so often singled out as the most prominent characteristic in this piece. Obvious examples include measures 15-16, 27-28, 31-32, 39-40, the very effective link between measures 42-43 of A-G# repeating as A-A-flat, 47-48, 59-60 with measure 59 acting as a link displacing F# to G, 66-67 with the A in the accompaniment figure acting as neighbouring tone to G#, 83-85 with measures 83-84 acting as a link displacing the F# two octaves higher, 91 beat 4 displacing the A-flat (G#), 105-106, 127-128, and 130-131. The fact that this does not apply to measures 101-103 is significant. This is another component emphasizing that a change in the piece occurs at this juncture.

According to Ringer (1957:12) the composer usually shares Schönberg's aversion of literal repeats. In *For the Left Hand* this is taken to an extreme. The only instances of exact repetition is encountered in the first two measures (measure 2 being a repetition of measure 1), a derivate of the same motive in measures 43-44, the first and second halves of measure 135, as well as the repeated sigh-motif in the third-to-last measure. Although it is not a case of a motive being repeated, the repeated chords in the penultimate measure are exact repetitions of each other. With the exception of measures 100-102 and the end of the piece, not even are repeated chords encountered at climaxes or phrase endings. The absence of exact reinforcement of ideas is extremely taxing on the concentration of the listener, and more than one hearing might be necessary in order to grasp the piece. Although rare, a type of free sequential treatment is encountered on a number of occasions. True (1976:178) already observed in her analysis of the *Little Suite* and *Sonata* that Kirchner tends to use the same contours instead of exact sequences. In the absence of literal repeats, development of motives, as well as the re-use of motives in a different guise, forms the

basis for the construction of ideas in the piece. The absence of repeats also strengthens the feeling of organic growth referred to by Rostkoski (1970:36).

6.9 Form of this piece

Rostkoski (1970:40) attributes the tendency of this music not to fall into any single specific formal structure to Kirchner's use of small segments as thematic sources. With regard to formal structure he also makes the following observations:

> The result might be a form similar to some recognized form: sonata form, for example, where the motives could be shaped into contrasting themes. Or, in the opposite direction, a kind of perpetual variation of motives could result, where the formulation of recognizable themes would be avoided. Kirchner's solution is to allow a perpetual variation while at the same time hinting at some standard form.

This serves to shed some light on the formal problem encountered in an analysis of *For the Left Hand*: that of providing a satisfactory explanation for the elements of sonata form and binary form that seem to be closely integrated with perpetual variations.

Taking into consideration everything discussed previously in this chapter, certain deductions can be made. Measures 1 to 27 seem to present *Grundgestalt* figuration that could possibly also be seen as theme one of the piece. The more lyrical section starting in measure 28 (Line 7) could be seen as theme 2. This is four measures earlier than was initially proposed by the analysis of dynamic and temporal elements, but in line with melodic considerations and the use of slower note values. The return to the opening material in measure 43 (Line 11) could be seen as the beginning of a developmental section. All the subsequent material, figuration as well as melody, in some way or another develop the ideas presented in the opening *Grundgestalt*. All activity comes to a halt in measure 101, the first major break in the piece. The final section from measure 102 establishes the move to the new tonal nucleus of C#, a semitone above the previous tonal nucleus of C up to this point. Some but not all motives presented earlier in the piece are recapitulated. A very definite reference is made to the opening material in measure 114 (Line 30). Prominent in this section are dominant seventh chords.

On a macro level, the clear division around measure 101 seems to suggest binary form. However, this is too simplistic a view and does not take into account the feeling of organic growth encountered and the alternation between faster and slower sections in what would

have to be called the A part in an analysis in terms of binary form. Faster moving figuration with a hint of a thematic basis at the opening of the piece that gives way to a slower theme in Line 7 could be interpreted as the first and second themes of a piece in sonata form. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the return of the opening material in altered form could represent the beginning of a development section. Although the second theme is not heard in any recognizable form in this development section, the material developed can all be derived in some way or another from the opening *Grundgestalt*. The slower sections share a kinship with the second theme, and could be the closest that a composer who shuns repeating the same idea comes to develop that idea. Also in this style with its emphasis on intervals, the same intervals are used in these slow sections. After measure 101 a recapitulatory section starts. In addition to the definite reference to the opening material mentioned above, the rhythmic idea that assumed importance in measure 100 is used often, especially in a whole-tone context. Already in measure 106 it is announced that the intervals of the minor and major second, the very intervals on which most of the ideas in the previous sections were also based, will assume special importance in the recapitulatory section. In measure 39 the final chord in the piece arrives, and the following material and restatements and enhancements of this chord (by presenting it in a pentatonic context) can be seen as a *coda*.

Goldman (1960:74) succinctly explains this phenomenon of the partial recapitulation of materials referred to above in a review of the *Second String Quartet*:

> … [T]he structure of his quartet… makes use of traditional recapitulations or at least of references to subjects in unaltered or almost unaltered forms.

In the general resemblance of sonata form by this piece, elements of growth as well as variation are also manifested. Variation is not encountered in its classical sense, but rather a form of variation is encountered in that the intervals of a minor and major second and minor third present themselves in many possible variations. Variation is also manifested through the absence of repeats. In all this presentation of different ideas, the octatonic scale serves a unifying function. The opening *Grundgestalt* that forms the skeleton for all the interesting ventures later in the work, the use of the different transpositions of the octatonic scale and whole tone scale, its transforming into the Prometheus and Petrouchka at times, and the directional tonality encountered, give rise to a general formal development much more sophisticated than can be explained only by traditional sonata form, namely that of organic growth.

In addition to the above, the title seems to suggest a character piece, while the figuration and the fact that this piece was written for the left hand shows a kinship with études written for left hand. However, as discussed in this study, the complexity of this music calls for a much more sophisticated classification than would be implied by classifying it merely as a character piece or an étude.

6.10 The role of elements such as the octatonic in suggesting a romantic idiom

Bass (1994:155) refers to extremes of tonal orientation as represented on one side by Schönberg and his followers and by a group of composers including Debussy, Bartók, Scriabin, and Stravinsky on the other. He made note of the avoidance of triadic tonality and chordal constructions associated with common-practice harmony by Schönbergian expressionists as opposed to the group of composers who were not similarly self-conscious about the retention of these traditional sonorities. He also alerts to the fact that in the style of the latter group of composers, the harmonies move freely between tonally focused, tonally ambiguous, and nontonal progressions. In the latter group's compositional style referential pitch-class collections as described by Forte, Strauss, and others are of cardinal importance. Bass (1994:156) also alerts to the fact that it is particularly the octatonic and whole-tone scale, as well as the interplay between them, that is of importance in the work of these composers.

It can be argued that the change in Kirchner's style from the spirit of dodecaphonic compositions as in the *Sonata*, to the strong use of octatonic elements in *For the Left Hand* suggests a shift by the composer from a kinship with the former group of composers to the latter group.

Copland described Kirchner's earlier music as 'sometimes out of control' (Ringer 2005:2). No such criticism is applicable to *For the Left Hand*. In addition to this being a sign of the expected maturity of the older composer, it is closer to the romantic idiom, while a description of 'out-of-control' could more probably be applied to some contemporary composers, or an 'out-of-control' effect is even sought by them at times.

As mentioned in section 6.2, the range of dynamics is much narrower in *For the Left Hand* than in the composer's earlier compositions for piano. Dynamic indications still range from *pianissimo* to *fortissimo*, only avoiding the utter extremes, but notably the mid-range dynamics such as *mezzo piano* and *mezzo forte* are used here, in contrast to Kirchner's earlier compositions. Both this and the aspect mentioned in the previous paragraph are in line with nineteenth-century or romantic conventions and possibly indicate a milder approach to contrasts and an acceptance of gradual change by the composer.

The range of tempo changes includes all the possible extremes of tempo within a relatively short composition. This is one reason for the impression that this music sounds free, but in the hands of a lesser composer could have had the effect of letting the music sound erratic. However, Kirchner's tempo changes are always gradual and therefore do not give a stop and start effect. This is one element that could be responsible for creating the effect of 'organized freedom'.

Also of importance in creating a more romantic sound is Kirchner's much less severe use of accents than in his more atonal works. The exact interpretation of accents in his works holds so much importance to Kirchner that he devised his own system and included an explanation of the varying intensities of the different accents used by him as a preface to the *Sonata* of 1948. In *For the Left Hand* there is an increasing emphasis on the *tenuto* in preference to the more percussive accents so common in his earlier piano works. This also suggests a move away from treating the piano as a percussive instrument towards the older tradition of treating the piano in a more melodic way. In contrast to True's (1976:103) observation that Kirchner favours the heaviest accents in the *Little Suite* and the *Sonata* of 1948, in *For the Left Hand* the composer uses the heaviest accent only at four occasions while using the very light and light accents in abundance. Adding to this effect is the more liberal use of the pedal in a work for one hand alone, since harmonies that could be held in the hand under normal circumstances now have to be sustained with the pedal. This has an effect on opening up the sympathetic vibrations of other strings, which in turn creates a less percussive effect.

Martellato techniques, so common in contemporary compositional procedures but foreign to music from the romantic tradition, are often encountered in Kirchner's earlier compositions for piano, but none are present in *For the Left Hand*.

The composer took great care in communicating his exact intentions to the performer by means of generous articulation indications in the score. These are used to underscore and emphasize structural, melodic, and rhythmic aspects of this composition and are yet another means at the composer's disposal that he uses to organize the various elements in this free style. These also clarify the texture and the relative importance of various elements and lines to each other in what could otherwise look like a confusing mesh of notes on the page.

It was shown that the piece in question employs a type of 'shifting frame tonality' that could more properly be termed 'directional tonality'. This is a concept that originated in the romantic period particularly with the music of Franz Schubert (1797-1828) and Hugo Wolf (1860-1903). The effect of a 'floating tonality' created by the way in which the composer uses the octatonic scale gives the impression of freedom, while the way he clarifies his intentions structurally by means of directional tonality lends a feeling of organization to the concept of 'floating tonality'.

Although this piece does not employ romantic harmonic concepts, the enormous variety of pitch class combinations that the octatonic scale can produce has the result of a more romantic sound, since many romantic harmonies are employed, although sometimes only fleetingly. The sound effect produced by the modes, scales, and harmonies employed in this piece are indeed much softer than the sound effect resulting from Kirchner's earlier strongly chromatic style of writing. A chord used quite prominently, the Prometheus chord, is closely associated with Scriabin's late-romantic style, and the whole-tone scale used so often in this piece creates impressionistic colours at certain junctures like that associated with the impressionistic idiom of Debussy. The fact that this piece remains tonal results in a feeling of stability. Its gravitating towards a definite tonal centre, first that of C and then of that C#, also plays a role in making the music sound tonal.

The nature of the title could hint at a possible character piece. The length and manner of writing seems to suggest a possible étude for the left hand. The free style of writing seems to suggest a fantasy, while the form also contains some elements of sonata form.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

For the Left Hand, composed for his friend Leon Fleisher, is the only piano composition for one hand alone in Leon Kirchner's oeuvre. This study culminates in an analysis of this work. The friendship between Kirchner and Fleisher served as motivation for the composer to write the piece, since *focal dystonia* prevented Fleisher from playing with his right hand for nearly forty years. Biographical information on the lives of these two important figures in contemporary music history is given, since without both of them the piece in question would never have come into existence.

A short discussion of the history behind the composition of works for one hand alone placed this piece's place in the piano repertory into perspective. By way of comparison, successful elements in Kirchner's style of writing for the left hand were discussed.

It was shown how the piece analysed in this study incorporates elements of sonata form in a style that favours organic growth and therefore the feeling of perpetual variation to thematic recognition. It was also shown how temporal aspects and the use of the octatonic scale takes preference to melodic elements in the determination of the form of this piece.

The findings arrived at in the study show that the stylistic fingerprints of Kirchner, that are to be seen in his earlier works already, are indeed still present in *For the Left Hand* – a work that was composed nearly half a century later than the *Sonata*. However, by means of comparison and quotations of the findings of other authors it was also illustrated how Kirchner's style matured and how his unique style arguably became even more refined late in his productive lifetime.

The research hypothesis proved to be correct in that model C of the octatonic scale (consisting of the pitches C#, D, E, F, G, G#, A#, B) was found to be used at the climaxes of phrases and at important points in the piece. Model C also became dominating in the penultimate and ultimate sections of the piece, confirming its importance at the juncture where the initial tonal nucleus of C shifted to C#, as well as maintaining this importance up to the end of the piece.

The second part of the research hypothesis was also confirmed, since it clearly emerged from the research that the octatonic scale proves to be beneficial for one-handed performance in that more pitches are available and within reach of the left hand in a shorter span on the keyboard. It was also shown that variety of tonal possibilities available in closer proximity on the keyboard was not sacrificed but in fact enhanced by the nature of the octatonic scale to form and interact with other modes and chords, as well as to give rise to and interact with elements of traditional tonality. This unique property of the octatonic scale ensures the availability of an enormous amount of pitch class constructions within closer proximity on the keyboard, and further strengthens the argument for the octatonic scale's suitability for use in one-handed composition.

An investigation of Kirchner's compositional style showed that it proves difficult to be certain whether the composer made deliberate use of the octatonic scale, pentatonic mode, whole-tone scale, Prometheus chord, and Petrouchka chord, or intuitively arrived at these pitch class collections. The investigation of the writings of other authors on the composer's methods as well as the analysis of the way in which these elements are used in *For the Left Hand* leads one to suspect that the latter scenario could be true. However, only a personal interview, which proved to be impossible due to geographical separation and the advanced age of the composer, could provide definite answers to this question.

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