CHAPTER 3

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

3.1   Problems of terminology

In the introductory chapter the words "phrase", "phrasing", "slur", "slurring" and "articulation" were used in a typically vague, and yet generally understandable context. But for the exigencies of further in-depth study these and similar terms need to be investigated and defined.

3.1.1 Redefining old terms

A performing musician will commonly, and without any feeling of ambiguity, use words like "phrase", "phrasing", "slur", "slurred", "articulation" and "tongued". His general meaning, although considered vague and imprecise by anyone desiring accurate discussion of these elements of interpretation, will be adequately understood by other performing musicians. Amongst wind-players words like "embouchure" and "diaphragm" are equally used quite adequately to describe, discuss and teach playing techniques, despite the fact that these words are, as used, by no means definitive in their meaning. Rothstein (1989:11) even goes so far as to state the following:

> [...] 'phrasing' is one of those words that, in a more perfect world, would probably be outlawed, so meaningless has it become. It might be possible to salvage some definite meaning for the word, if it could be clearly defined and then rigorously used.   But I fear that its degradation is too deeply entrenched for that.

Consequently Rothstein outlaws the word from his discussions. Thus in order to use terms like "phrasing" without any degree of vagueness, they must be securely defined before successful critical analysis and discussion can take place.

3.1.2 Inventing new terms

Some authors do not, apparently, consider merely outlawing problematic words or redefining common terms the best option, and conjure up much ingenuity in order to invent new sets of terms to describe existing phenomena. These terms may, once fully understood and remembered (without necessitating the continual referral back to initial definitions), temporarily provide a succinct analytical language; but it is doubtful whether any will find its way into everyday common usage - least of all by the practical musician, whose performance the analysts are purportedly attempting to describe (or influence).

3.1.3 Intelligibility

As complex analytical discussions are an anathema to the more pragmatic performing musician, a communication gap often exists. In order to render this dissertation intelligible to the performing musician the commonly-accepted vocabulary with regard to the performance and interpretation of instrumental wind music will, once securely defined, be employed. No new terms will be invented.

Rothstein (1989:3) acknowledges both this gap between performer and analyst, and the problems associated with attempts at reaching definitions acceptable to both camps:

> Every musician thinks he knows what a phrase is, and certainly every musician *must* know if music is to be made at all. But ask a musician to define *phrase*, and you will probably get a blank stare. Then, if you are lucky, you will hear an awkward, abstract explanation using such words as energy, tension, motion, expectation, release, arrival and fulfilment, perhaps accompanied by metaphors derived from visual perception ("a line of motion," "an arc of tension," and so forth).

The 18th-century composer and theoretician Koch (1749-1816) realised that unclear language can easily prove a barrier to the unambiguous transfer of information. He states the problem thus (1983:4):

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[...] the insufficient definition of the nature of phrases makes the teaching of musical period structure more difficult with regard to the punctuation sequence of sections and the rhythm. In this way one creates an obstacle, for the maxims according to which the sections are joined into a whole cannot be formed generally enough.

American composer Milton Babbitt even goes so far as to call musical discourse "that wonderful language which permits anything to be said and virtually nothing to be communicated" (Rothstein 1989:3). In order to bridge the gap, find common ground and communicate, there follows in Chapter 3.2 a microlevel investigation of the manner in which each term is commonly used or defined. In the light of this investigation, each term will be newly defined and thus rendered unambiguously intelligible for the rest of this dissertation - and hopefully beyond.

3.2 Examination and definition of terms

3.2.1 Dynamic/dynamics

A differentiation must be made between the terms "dynamic" and "dynamics". "Dynamic" is defined in *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (Little et al 1972:575): "As or pertaining to force producing motion." Thus energy is contained within a moving, or potentially moveable, system. In music this system would be any unfolding musical process (e.g. a melody line or harmonic sequence).

"Dynamic" in this dissertation will pertain to the horizontal, forward momentum of the musical line. It will infer a self-creating and self-perpetuating energy engendered in the course of the evolution of a musical phrase; and thence throughout the whole musical composition.

On the other hand, the word "dynamic<u>s</u>" will refer to the notational devices indicating relative volumes of sound; also the use of relative volumes of sound in performance. The singular of these dynamic<u>s</u>, "dynamic", will thus only refer to the relative volume of sound when used in a context like 'a softer dynamic' (meaning fewer decibels).

3.2.2 Phrase

Both as a noun and as a verb (as in "to phrase") this is probably one of the most difficult of musical terms to define. Below are arranged a selection of attempts to do so by a variety of authors.

The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians (Sadie 1980:663) states that "phrase" is a term "adopted from linguistic syntax and used for short musical units of various lengths; a phrase is generally regarded as longer than a Motif but shorter than a Period. It carries a melodic connotation". "Phrase" is thus a word that is used in both linguistic and musical contexts. Colloquially the word "phrase" in music is often used to describe a compact area, independent or contained within some greater whole, rather like a written sentence. (This will be discussed in detail in Chapter 8.)

Koch (1983:4) seems to agree that the length of a common phrase would be between those of a motif and a period: "[...] every melodic section which takes three or four measures of simple meter is usually called a phrase, without distinction; the thought may or may not be complete."

Zuckerkandl (1959:130) on the other hand states that "[w]e think of a melody always as a whole, while phrase applies to wholes or parts". He goes on to complicate matters by mentioning "a large phrase", "smaller phrases" and "still smaller member phrases". For this he provides this example where, he avers, there is one melody, but "three levels of phrase (indicated by appropriate symbols)":

Example 3-1: Haydn, String Quartet Op. 76/3, II:3-15

Three other definitions disagree about the completeness or incompleteness, and require only that a phrase be goal-orientated; it need not necessarily reach the goal. Koch (1983:6-7) says that a "basic phrase is complete when it can be understood or felt as a self sufficient section of the whole, without a preceding or succeeding incomplete segment fortuitously connected with it." And Randel (1986:629) states that a phrase is "the product, in varying degrees, of melody, harmony and rhythm and concludes with a moment of relative tonal and/or rhythmic stability". The American composer Roger Sessions (in Rothstein 1989:3) calls a phrase "a portion of the music that must be performed, so to speak, without letting go, or, figuratively, in a single breath [...]. The phrase is a constant movement towards a goal - the cadence."

In this description Sessions introduces the important concept of breath. Throughout musical history the length of a single vocal phrase (except in cases of extreme tempi; e.g. Grave or Vivace) has usually been based on what can be sung within the span of a single breath. The same concept basically applies to instrumental wind music.

Some definitions go even further than the statement in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (Sadie 1980:663) that the term phrase merely "carries melodic connotations", and are of a purely melodic nature. For instance Westergaard (in Rothstein 1989:4) avers the following:

> A phrase 1) establishes one set of pitches and then 2) moves to a
> second set of pitches in such a way that
> a. we expect those pitches
> b. we have some sense of when they are about to occur and,
> c. once they have occurred we know the phrase has gotten
>   where it's going and that no further pitches are needed to
>   complete that phrase.

Other authors combine the melodic with the goal-orientated: for example Rothstein (1989:5) states that "[...] a phrase should be understood as, among other things, a directed motion in time from one tonal entity to another; these entities may be

harmonies, melodic tones (in any voice or voices), or some combination of the two. *If there is no tonal motion, there is no phrase*." Here the notion of horizontal melodic movement, which may be harmonically directed, is emphasised.

Auer (1980:71) states the following: "The musical phrase on the violin is naturally a melody-sentence [...] it forms an uninterrupted sentence in which its composer develops his thought and his feeling." While combining the melodic, the goal-orientated and the linguistic metaphor, this also introduces the more subjective elements of the composer's inner processes (thoughts and feelings).

In establishing a definition of a "phrase" then, the elements of it's length, the breath, linguistic metaphor, melodic-orientation, goal-orientation and harmonic structure apparently need to be incorporated.

"Phrase" in this dissertation will be taken to mean a directed series of pitches forming a melodic sentence with both syntactic (= meaning) and breath (= dynamic/living) connotations. The series of pitches will have metric, rhythmic and harmonic frameworks, but it is the connection of the pitches in forming a melodic sentence that will be addressed here. Most phrases will end with some form of cadential feeling, but in ensemble and orchestral playing the performer may make only a contribution to a compositional whole, i.e. the phrase may be completed and/or begun by other performers. Nevertheless, this phrase contribution will, unless it is only of motive length (see Chapter 3.2.4), be called a phrase. This is because in this dissertation the performer's contribution and approach is being considered, not the composer's - except where the composer's point of reference influences the performer's perception and choices, and thus influences his interpretation.

The term "period" will not be used; the practising musician does not readily use this term. A cadencing period is usually considered to consist of a series of two or more non-cadencing phrases; but this dissertation will be investigating only components of phrases or sub-phrases.

3.2.3 Sub-phrase

"Sub-phrase" will be taken to mean a segment of a longer phrase, but one that is longer than a motive but shorter than a phrase. In most cases a sub-phrase will be a half or a quarter of a full phrase. In the following example there are two sub-phrases of two bars each:

Example 3-2: Donjon, Adagio Nobile, mm. 3-6

Sub-phrases can also be of irregular lengths. In Ex. 3-3 the first sub-phrase is five and a half beats long, the second four beats long and the third twelve and a half beats long (the sub-phrases are marked above with a straight bracket):

Example 3-3: Roussel, Pan, mm. 1-6

3.2.4 Motive

All sources seem to agree that "elements shorter than the shortest phrase are termed motives" (Randel 1986:629). The spelling "motif" is frequently

encountered. Motives have rhythmic and/or melodic elements. Ex. 3-4 shows a repeated three-note motive:

Example 3-4: Rutter, Suite Antique, I:53-6

3.2.5 Tonguing

This is the physical act of starting a note on a wind instrument by means of withdrawing the tongue from its prepared position inside the mouth in order to allow a stream of air to exit the lips (or enter the reed or mouthpiece) and hence produce sound within the instrument. A note started in this way is said to be "tongued". See Hinch (1991:32-50) for a detailed analysis and description of all related matters.

Generally, on wind instruments all notes not connected by a slur (see Chapter 3.2.7) are expected to be produced in this way. Thus all the notes in this example will be tongued:

Example 3-5: Prokofiev, Sonata Op. 94, II:180-185

3.2.6 Legato

The following three sources state in essence the same thing. Apel (1979:465) says that legato means: "To be played without any perceptible interruption between the notes." Blom (1975:366) calls legato "a sustained manner of singing or playing, one note leading smoothly to the next". While Harnoncourt (1989:111) calls it "the supple linking of tones into a melody, a sweeping line".

To a player of a wind instrument legato signifies basically 'not tongued', and is notated by a slur over the notes. An exact analogy with singing would appear not really accurate as a group of syllables for a singer may be marked legato but actually include 'tongued notes', i.e. clearly re-articulated syllables in the sense that all consonants are re-articulated sounds. A wordless *Vocalise* by Rachmaninov or the *Bachianas Brasileiras* No 5 by Villa-Lobos, which is sung with vowel sounds only, would be the true vocal equivalent to a legato wind phrase.

In context though, an instrumental phrase may be marked legato either by means of a slur(s) or by the written indication "legato", but include articulated notes within the general legato flow:

Example 3-6: Fauré, <u>Fantaisie</u>, mm. 1-5

Thus the words used above in the definitions, "smoothly", "supple" and "sweeping", provide descriptive images of the flow of a legato line; this flowing, forward movement being a more important musical aspect than the mere technical aspect of simply ensuring that the legato notes are not tongued. As with the singing of a legato phrase, all articulations occur within the exhaled airstream.

"Legato" will be taken in this dissertation to mean the smoothest possible flow of a melodic line, wherein any tongued notes are tongued within the outward flow of the breath - hence there will be no feeling of separation of tones in a musical line played legato.

3.2.7 Slur/slurring

As the slur forms the single most important notational symbol under investigation in this dissertation, it is important that it be fully defined.

Apel (1979:780) describes a slur as a "curved line placed above or below a group of notes to indicate that they are to be played legato, eg, with one breath as in singing". This description contains both the symbol used and couples the slur to the concept of legato.

Rothstein (1989:11) acknowledges two types of slur, namely the (original) "legato slur" and the (subsequent) "phrasing slur". The "legato slur" is the same as that defined by Apel above; but the "phrasing slur" (called in this dissertation the 'phrase-slur' - see Chapter 3.2.11) refers to the (usually) longer curved line which indicates to the performer the extent of the phrase or sub-phrase. The following example shows both types of slur:

Example 3-7: Fauré, Fantaisie, mm. 116-125

Rothstein (1989:11-12) blames 19th-century editors for using the former alongside the latter and blurring the distinction. The distinction certainly exists in practical

terms, both from the composer's and the performer's point of reference; but there has never been a notational difference - apart from where both slurring systems are used concurrently (as in the above example). Much of Chapter 4, regarding notation, will address this issue.

An element that is missing from most descriptions of the slur is that of stress. As will be investigated in Chapter 5, the slur implies some form and degree of stress on the initial tongued note.

"Slur" in this dissertation will refer to the notational arched line drawn in the music above or below a series of notes, signifying that they should be played as a single group without any note (apart from the initial note) being tongued. This initial tongued note is usually stressed in some way.

"Slurring" refers to the writing of, or the performance of, groups of notes in the above manner.

3.2.8 Articulation

As mentioned in the above definition of "slur", the first note of a slur is usually tongued or articulated in some way. As Galway (1982:123) states: "Articulation on the flute boils down to a certain combination of tongued and slurred notes, in the patterns common in standard classical pieces."

But there is sometimes confusion as to exactly how the word should be used. Harnoncourt (1982:39) says that articulation "signifies the linking and separation of tones, the legato and staccato and their mixture, sometimes misleadingly called 'phrasing'". This description unfortunately compounds a common misuse of the term 'staccato' to mean simply detached (i.e. tongued separately). Staccato has a much more definite meaning and usually has technical, accentual, dynamic and characterizing implications. See Hinch (1991:52-6) for a detailed account.

To a practising musician the term "articulation" can have two meanings:

*   musically, the combinations, patterns and mixtures of tongued and legato areas within a phrase; and

*   technically, the relative strengths and lengths of the tongued notes.

Thus the term "well-articulated" can mean a more forceful, perhaps more accented tonguing; and "clean articulation" will probably mean more separation of the notes and may be synonymous with a more staccato effect.

Despite Harnoncourt's above admonition, the word "articulation" will not be used in this dissertation to include the slurred patterns of music. The word "articulation" is nevertheless intimately bound up with slurs in the sense that the initial note thereof is probably tongued; and further notes contained under a slur may be articulated in some way. See Hinch (1991:46-9) for a discussion of tongueless and labial attacks.

"Articulation" will be taken in this dissertation to mean the delineation and usually, but not necessarily, the separation of notes - usually by means of the tongue, but also by other variations in airstream pressure. It includes the integration into the musical line of various strengths and lengths of attacks, e.g. sforzando, staccato and tenuto. See Hinch (1991:8-12) for a full discussion of the various attacks.

A single note that is "articulated" is provided with some form of separate attack.

"Articulation markings" will refer to all notational devices that attempt to communicate relative strengths and lengths of notes and their attacks.

3.2.9 Attack

This refers to the initial moment of tone production and the relative strength or force thereof. Attack is notated by means of symbols such as ^ , > , ¹ or by means of written indications such as "martellato", "dolce" or "fz". Attack forms part of the world of articulation. Tonguing is the main technical element involved

in its production; but there are other means of articulating the airstream, e.g. by means of the diaphragm or lips. Although not as critical a technical element in the musical process as with, especially, the piano, the wind player's control of attack (in all its varieties) is a vital element in interpretation and characterisation of phrases.

3.2.10 Phrasing

Like the noun "phrase" the concept of "phrasing", whether as a noun or as a verb, is open to a variety of interpretations, and hence definitions.

Apel (1979:668) succinctly defines phrasing as "the separation of a melody into its constituent phrases". He also agrees with Harnoncourt's quoted comment (1982:39) on the general state of confusion regarding the two terms "phrasing" and "articulation".

Randel (1986:629) defines "phrasing" first as a verb: "the realisation in performance, of the phrase structure of a work"; and then as a noun, "the phrase structure itself".

Conti (in Clardy 1992:10) renders a poetic description:

> Phrasing is like an arch, with a beginning, middle, and end. It relates
> to a tonic-dominant-tonic harmonic progression, much like the stages
> of human life: babyhood, middle age, and the decline to death.

This infers that, rather than "separating" elements of the music, as Apel's definition suggests, phrasing has to do with creating wholes.

Like Conti's arch, flutist Alain Marion (in Goll-Wilson 1992b:9) is concerned with shape, describing phrasing as "the manner in which a player shapes and contours musical statements".

Auer, a practising violin teacher, presents the most all-embracing picture of the word "phrasing" as seen from the performer's viewpoint (1980:71-2):

> [Phrasing] is a very specific application of nuance - for phrasing is in the broadest sense tonal shading and inflexion combined with rhythmic delineation - all of which applied to compositions as a whole resulting in what is known as 'a correct interpretation'. Phrasing is always something essentially personal. It has really no fixed laws - though various conflicting systems of phrasing exist - and depends wholly on the musical and the poetical sense of the performer.

Rothstein (1989:11), also viewing it from the practical point of view, attempts to define "phrasing" in dictionary style:

> 1. The delineation and internal shaping of phrases [...] by a musical performer. Includes both the joining of notes into phrases and the separation of these phrases from each other.   2. The legato performance of notes under a slur: or, the legato performance of notes as if they were under a slur. Involves the physical connection of notes (legato playing) regardless of their position within the phrases.

Michel Debost, a well known flute player and pedagogue, equates phrasing with the musical expression (1994:2):

> Musical phrasing is an attempt, much like syllables in a spoken sentence, to organize sounds to project their intellectual, spiritual, and emotional content. Phrasing is a connection between freedom and constraint, tension and release, intensity and repose, time and space, and sound and silence.

He also acknowledges a duality of meaning engendered by the common usage of the word. The first part of his description does not, apart from the presumed articulation of the initial note of a phrase, refer to any physical articulation (i.e. attack or tonguing of notes), while the second part essentially bears no relation to phrase structure (although it may in context).

Thus the term "phrasing", perhaps more than any other term in music in general, is taken by writers to mean whatever they take it to mean. This far-reaching word,

with its multiplicity of inherent meanings, seems to be the one to use when discussing the performance of expressive subtleties that notation either only hints at or does not allow the composer to communicate. The only problem would seem to be that each writer assumes that it refers to only some of the elements of expression; and each one decides which elements they wish to include and exclude.
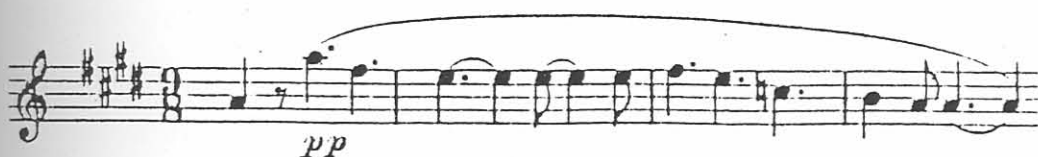
"Phrasing" in this dissertation will be used as the widest-ranging term. It will refer to the addition, by a composer, editor or performer, of any element that directs the performance of a musical line (be it of motive or phrase length) in order to make that line intelligible and meaningful, both on its own and in context. It also describes the performance thereof. Phrasing usually consists of patterns of slurred and non-slurred notes - with or without the addition of various notated articulations. Often the notated dynamics are also included as elements of phrasing. Harmony, or the harmony implied by a melodic phrase, is intimately bound up with phrasing and helps direct the phrase.

The word "phrasing" will not essentially include the phrase-slur - except where this has a direct influence on other parameters of phrasing.

3.2.11 Phrase-slur

"Phrase-slur" (see also Chapter 3.2.7 above) in this dissertation will refer to the (usually) long notational arc written above or below a series of notes to indicate a (usually) self-contained phrase. Various combinations of slurred and tongued notes usually occur under this phrase-slur.

Example 3-8a: Griffes, Poem, mm. 234-237

The phrase-slur will often, although certainly not always, suggest that the affected phrase be played relatively smoothly. If the phrase-slur is excised from Ex. 3-8a then the articulated notes will probably receive greater emphasis:

Example 3-8b: Griffes, <u>Poem</u>, mm. 234-237 (re-phrased by the author)

Thus phrase-slurs need to be added with great caution by composers and editors.

The main argument against the indiscriminate use of phrase-slurs in wind music is that, if used in conjunction with slurs, then confusion may arise. If used without slurs, while delineating a phrase or a sub-phrase, they do not leave enough leeway for the finer shaping of sub-phrases, for the bringing out of implied two-part textures, for the shaping of interpolations and for the emphasising of motives. This is further discussed in Chapter 5.