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Website Context and Research

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Acoustic Composition 18

Ensuen (2009/19)

(Musical Interludes from the Continuum of Life)

Four movements for small chamber ensemble and percussion (11 musicians)

Ensuen: Middle English: to follow, to take place afterwards or as a result ...

In four movements (scenarios from the continuum of life) for small chamber ensemble and percussion, the first sketches for *Ensuen* date back to November 2009. The score was originally completed in June 2010. Very little material was thrown away during a compositional process, which progressed fluidly (and to plan). This work was a continuation of research into equidistant scales and chromatic consonance and was the composer's first real piece since the completion of his PhD portfolio.

Whilst composing with African equidistant pentatonic scales (octave split into five steps of 2.4 semi-tones), clarinet microtonality and multiphonics for the electroacoustic pieces *When a Snake Eats its Own Tail* and *Equidistance – An African Hymn of Praise* during 2007, the composer found it difficult to utilise vertical harmony, so in more recent work (*Instant Conception* and *Acoustic Mandala*, 2009), Western forms of equidistant scales were explored, of which the cycle of fourths was one. It was noted how the cycle contained each of the twelve interval-types without repetition and produced symmetrical interval-classes:

Cycle of Fourths [in intervals]: No interval is repeated within the cycle

unis. P4 min7 min3 min6 min2 tritone Maj7 Maj3 Maj6 Maj2 P5 octave

Cycle of Fourths [within an octave]: Symmetrical interval classes

unis. P4 min7 min3 min6 min2 tritone Maj7 Maj3 Maj6 Maj2 P5 Octave

Pitch number: 5	10	3	8	1	6	11	4	9	2	7	0
Interval class: 5	2	3	4	1	6	1	4	3	2	5	

The cycle of fourths can be described as a twelve-tone equidistant chromatic consonant scale. Like the six notes of the equidistant whole-tone scale, there is no inherent hierarchical reference to a home-tone unless one is established through the act of composition. The cycle of fourths is also a Symmetrically Inverted All-Interval Twelve-Note (SI AITN) Chord.

Having flirted with the 'all-interval' connection and composed almost entirely with the cycle of fourths in Instant Conception, it seemed the logical next step was to focus exclusively upon the two All-Interval Tetrachords (AIT) and their retrograde inversions in this piece:

All-Interval Tetrachords (AIT): Contain all twelve interval types (six interval-classes) without replication <111111>

4-z29: Mvt. 1

4-z15: Mvt. 2

4-z15b: [RI of 0146]: Mvt. 3

4-z29b: [RI of 0137]: Mvt. 4

0 1 3 7 0 1 4 6 0 2 5 6 0 4 6 7

0256 (4-z15b) is a retrograde inversion of 0146 (4-z15)

0467 (4-z29b) is a retrograde inversion of 0137 (4-z29)

Scales were generated through combining the literal prime and inverted spellings for each of the four tetrachords:

Prime 0137: 4-z29

Inverted 0137: 4-z29

0137 Combined: 7-33 (012468T) <262623> (Mvt. 1)

0 1 3 7 0 11 9 5 0 1 3 5 7 9 11 0

Prime 0146: 4-z15

Inverted 0146: 4-z15

0146 Combined: 6-z48 (012579) <232341> (Mvt. 2)

0 1 4 6 0 11 8 6 0 1 4 6 8 11 0

Prime 0256: 4-z15b

Inverted 0256: 4-z15b

0256 Combined: 6-z48 (012579) <232341> (Mvt. 3)

0 2 5 6 0 10 7 6 0 2 5 6 7 10 0

Prime 0467: 4-z29b

Inverted 0467: 4-z29b

0467 Combined: 6-z37 (012348) <432321> (Mvt. 4)

0 4 6 7 0 8 6 5 0 4 5 6 7 8 0

Primary (and secondary) chords were generated from each step of each combined scale:

4-z29 [0137] Combined P&I Scale 'primary' chords: 7-33 (012468T) <262623> (Mvt. 1)

Musical staff showing primary chords for 4-z29: Cm⁴, Db⁴⁺, Eb⁷⁺, F⁷, G^{7b5}, A^ø, B^{7b5}, Cm⁴.

4-z15 [0146] Combined P&I Scale 'primary' chords: 6-z48 (012579) <232341> (Mvt. 2)

Musical staff showing primary chords for 4-z15: C⁴⁺, C^{#m7}, E⁶, E⁹, F^{#7sus4}, A^{b7+}, B^{9sus4}, C^{4b5}.

4-z15b [0256] Combined P&I Scale 'primary' chords: 6-z48 (012579) <232341> (Mvt. 3)

Musical staff showing primary chords for 4-z15b: C^{7sus4}, D⁷⁺, F^{13sus4}, F^{#Ab5}, G^{m7}, B^{b13}, B^{b13+}, C^{add9sus4}.

4-z29b [0467] Combined P&I Scale 'primary' chords: 6-z37 (012348) <432321> (Mvt. 4)

Musical staff showing primary chords for 4-z29b: C^{add11}, E^{add9+}, F^{m(ma7)}, F^{#9b5}, G^{9sus4}, A^{b7+}, C^{#11+}.

Ensuen Pitch Matrices:

4-z15: (0146/0256) <111111> All-Interval Tetrachord 1 (Inverts to 4-z15)

0	1	4	6
11	0	3	5
8	9	0	2
6	7	10	0

C	C#	E	F#
B	C	E ^b	F
G#	A	C	D
F#	G	B ^b	C

4-z29: (0137/0467) <111111> All-Interval Tetrachord 2 (Inverts to 4-z29)

0	1	3	7
11	0	2	6
9	10	0	4
5	6	8	0

C	D ^b	E ^b	G
B	C	D	F#
A	B ^b	C	E
F	G ^b	A ^b	C

6-z37: (012348) <432321> (Inverts to 6-z37) – Complement: 6-z4 (012456) <432321>

	I0	I1	I2	I3	I4	I8	
P0	0	1	2	3	4	8	R0
P11	11	0	1	2	3	7	R11
P10	10	11	0	1	2	6	R10
P9	9	10	11	0	1	5	R9
P8	8	9	10	11	0	4	R8
P4	4	5	6	7	8	0	R4
	RI0	RI1	RI2	RI3	RI4	RI8	

6-z48: (012579) <232341> (Inverts to 6-z48) – Complement: 6-z26 (013578) <232341>

	I0	I1	I2	I5	I7	I9	
P0	0	1	2	5	7	9	R0
P11	11	0	1	4	6	8	R11
P10	10	11	0	3	5	7	R10
P7	7	8	9	0	2	4	R7
P5	5	6	7	10	0	2	R5
P3	3	4	5	8	10	0	R3
	RI0	RI1	RI2	RI5	RI7	RI9	

7-33: (012468T) <262623> (Inverts to 7-33) – Complement: 5-33 (02468) <040402>

	I0	I1	I2	I4	I6	I8	I10	
P0	0	1	2	4	6	8	10	R0
P11	11	0	1	3	5	7	9	R11
P10	10	11	0	2	4	6	8	R10
P8	8	9	10	0	2	4	6	R8
P6	6	7	8	10	0	2	4	R6
P4	4	5	6	8	10	0	2	R4
P2	2	3	4	6	8	10	0	R2
	RI0	RI1	RI2	RI4	RI6	RI8	RI10	

Context and Revision:

The original version of *Ensuen* was withdrawn after a couple of years as it never really caught the imagination of the composer. The score was very much in the 'controlled' style, reminiscent of his PhD portfolio, but did not have the same sense of defined musical units (more a collective ensemble texture) and after six years of attempting the 'perfect composition', one simply needed to (almost literally) 'throw pianos at the wall' for a while.

However, the story had not ended for this piece ...

Research into musical pitch and rhythm palindromes in preparation for an orchestral composition gave life to a triptych of works during 2017 and the research for *Ensuen* became elevated in importance within the progression of the composer's portfolio.

Fragments of material (melody, themes and chords) had been scavenged (salvaged) for *Palindrome Triptychs – Part Two* (2017), where the material was developed with clearly defined formal and thematic functions, given more tangible character and musical substance.

Upon reflection, although *Ensuen* was intended as the continuation of previous research, it provided an important catalyst for future work. Composing with the AIT led to the next logical step of composing with the All-Triad Hexachord (ATH), Carter Hexachord 35, Forte 6-17 012478/014678 in *Rotations and Resonances* (2012) and can be seen as an important link in the evolutionary chain leading to research into Elliott Carter's Symmetrically Inverted All-Interval Twelve-Note (SI AITN) Chords for *Perhaps We Will All Wake Up In Time* (2017).

All of these pieces (including *The Palindrome Triptychs*) were composed in explorative planning for an orchestral work: *Sacsayhuaman* and it was whilst needing a break from the intensity of this orchestral composition during 2019 that one rediscovered the original *Ensuen* score and the music contained within.

It was quite simply a 'no brainer' to revise this work (in fact it was difficult to understand why it had been withdrawn in the first instance) and one immediately diverted all time and energy into doing so ...

2019 revisions 'borrowed from the borrowings' used in *Palindrome Triptychs – Part Two* and extensively recomposed the score whilst remaining faithful to the original methods and processes. This time, the results did indeed capture the imagination of the composer and it offered a pleasing symmetry to be able to complete the piece (hopefully for the final time) in November 2019 (a decade later).

Form and Narrative:

1st movement: 0137 (4-z29)

... After the Party: An Intimate Conversation ...

2nd movement: 0146 (4-z15)

... The Day of the Big Game ...

3rd movement: 0256 (4-z15b)

... Waiting on an Important Decision ...

4th movement: 0467 (4-z29b)

... The Morning After THAT Argument (or is it still the night before) ...

... Grotesque Shadows and Dancing Demons ...

The length of the first three movements bears a direct theoretical relationship to the AIT from which it was composed. The first movement (0137 material) is approximately 1' 37" in length (97 seconds). The second movement (0146 material) is ca. 2' 26" in length (146 seconds) and the third movement (0256 material) is ca. 2' 56" in length (176 seconds). The golden ratio (a, is to b, what b is to c) was applied in retrograde and used to determine the length of the final movement resulting in ca. 3' 11" (191 seconds):

$$\begin{aligned} [a] I + 50.51\% &= II & [b] II + 20.55\% &= III & [c] III + 8.36\% &= IV \\ [a] 97 + 49 &= 146 & [b] 146 + 30 &= 176 & [c] 176 + 14.7 &= 190.7 (191) \end{aligned}$$

Closing Statement:

The title makes reference to the continuity of practical research (now recognised both forwards and backwards). The subtitle alludes to the individual scenarios suggested by the additional subtitles for each of the four movements, which in turn offered a preconceived sense of character and atmosphere for the music.

It would have been so much easier to entitle this revised work Palindrome Triptychs – Part Three (which is currently a work-in-progress), but that would have felt dishonest and would have deprived the composer of the chance to recognise the true journey this research has undertaken. The revised version of *Ensuene* has musically 'borrowed from the borrowings' and its research has 'followed on from the followings' it created to re-emerge recomposed in 2019.

How very non-linear and palindromic ...!

For further information and resources contact the composer at: contact@ianpercy.me.uk