

Technique and Evolution in Peter Lieberston's
Three Songs and Rilke Songs
Volume II

by

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The Ph.D. in Composition and Music Theory dissertation consists of two discrete projects: an original composition and a scholarly essay. This is Volume II of the dissertation, the scholarly essay. Volume I is bound separately.

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The whole of this dissertation is dedicated to my parents
for their patience, encouragement, and unwavering support.

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Preface

Scores

A consumer edition of the *Rilke Songs* does exist (AMP 8189), but print copies of the *Three Songs* are available only through direct contact with G. Schirmer, Inc. Digital facsimiles of Lieberson's scores are accessible in increasing number via the G. Schirmer website (<http://digital.schirmer.com>), but only a handful are represented at present, and none of which feature prominently in this essay. In any case, the reader is encouraged to consult the discography in Appendix Two.

Figures

The excerpts in this document reproduce as much musical information as is practical, but for space and clarity are occasionally pared down. Thus, with regard to figures: a "selection" reproduces only a portion of the musical surface, whereas an "excerpt" is complete; figures marked "reduction" summarize the total musical surface, unless otherwise noted; empty (blank) measures contain score material that is not shown, whereas rests are definitive; barlines and double barlines cap complete measures, whereas partial measures are not closed. Finally, transposing instruments are notated in C, without exception.

Nomenclature

The analyses in this dissertation make use of standard “fixed-*do*” pitch-class integer notation, whereby C = 0, C-sharp/D-flat = 1, . . . , A-sharp/B-flat = t, and B = e. Set-classes in normal form are enclosed in straight brackets, and are preceded by their Forte number where appropriate (a.).¹ Unordered sets are enclosed in curly brackets (b.), and ordered sets in parentheses (c.).

a. 4-Z29 [0, 1, 3, 7] b. {5, 8, 4, t} c. (3, 4, 7, 8, e, 0)

The terms “pitch class,” “interval class,” “hexachord,” and “aggregate,” and their plurals, are abbreviated in certain figures as “pc(s),” “ic(s),” “hc(s),” and “agg(s).” Similarly, “octatonic” is abbreviated “octa,” again only in figures. Pitch registration is delineated via octave number, with C4 correspondent to middle C.

¹ See Allen Forte, *The Structure of Atonal Music* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973).

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Chapter One

Introduction

Peter Lieberson's musical career now spans nearly four decades, and it has been some time since he ascended to a position of prominence among living American composers. To take stock of his music is no easy endeavor. Though not an especially prolific composer, his language has undergone significant evolution since the early 1970s, trending generally from the thorniness of modernism to simpler, more approachable surfaces. Not surprisingly, this progression has improved his standing in the eyes of concert-goers and critics, but Lieberson has produced works of high quality at both ends of the stylistic spectrum. Even his recent pieces – which tend quite openly toward Romantic modes of expression – bear vestiges of serialism and its extensions. In short, the elegant balance and rationality of his earliest compositions is felt throughout his catalogue.

A number of catalysts have hastened the evolution of Lieberson's idiom, none more important than the late mezzo-soprano Lorraine Hunt-Lieberson, whose intuitive musicality Lieberson found keenly influential. His collaboration with Hunt-Lieberson began with her performance in the opera *Ashoka's Dream* (1997), and occasioned three large-scale vocal works that now rank among Lieberson's most acclaimed compositions: the *Rilke Songs* (2001), *Neruda Songs* (2005), and *The World In Flower* (2007). In fact,

nowhere is his current aesthetic more vividly displayed than in the vocal music he has written over the past decade.

That being the case, it is remarkable that the four works above very nearly represent the extent of Lieberson's involvement with voice. Prior to meeting Hunt-Lieberson, he completed only one other vocal work: the *Three Songs* (1981). The *Three Songs* do not rank among Lieberson's better-known compositions, but date from a pivotal stage in his career, and more importantly, are emblematic of his early mature style. If the *Neruda Songs*, for instance, portray Lieberson's penchant for lyricism and accessibility, the *Three Songs* are thoroughly, unabashedly modernist. What emerges from all of this is that Lieberson's vocal music, though not profuse, nevertheless encapsulates the broad trajectory of his language, and is thus an excellent – and untapped – forum for technical inquiry.

At its essence, the present study is an analytical venture, and arises from a desire to understand better the materials and structure of Lieberson's vocal music. The essay proceeds with three principal objectives. First, it attempts to develop a detailed conception of Lieberson's compositional technique, with particular emphasis on his approach to pitch (harmony), vocal writing, and text. There is a trade-off, unfortunately, between breadth and resolution: the repertoire under consideration is primarily limited to the *Three Songs* and *Rilke Songs*, and further still, to particular members of these collections. The upside is that these songs are reviewed in their entirety.

Why these works were selected rather than others is a matter taken up at various points throughout the dissertation, but the simplest explanation is that they represent the poles of Lieberson's expressive sensibility. A second project in this dissertation,

therefore, is to compare the *Three Songs* and *Rilke Songs* in an effort to formally characterize some of the changes that have taken place in Lieberson's style. Transitively, this undertaking will also reveal those technical and stylistic constituents he has maintained over the years, and permit some conjecture as to the general mechanics of his music, vocal or otherwise.

Finally, it is hoped that the present research will enliven and facilitate discourse on Lieberson's music, as it is a repertoire that is likely to become even more intriguing as time goes on.

Organization of the Dissertation

The dissertation is arranged in four chapters, of which 2 and 3 are the most substantial. The remainder of the present chapter briefly assesses literature pertaining to Lieberson's music, and situates the *Three Songs* within the context of his early output. Chapter 2 is the first of the analytical sections, and is focused on "Listen and Hear," the first of the *Three Songs*. The second chapter also introduces the concept of "momentary homophony" in reference to a special sort of surface that recurs in Lieberson's work. Chapter 3 begins with an appraisal of "So Many Years Have Passed" from *Ashoka's Dream*, and continues with an examination of "Stiller Freund," the last of the *Rilke Songs*. Momentary homophony is revisited in this chapter, and is established as a device of appreciable consequence. Chapter 4 summarizes the analytical findings of chapters 2 and 3, and retraces certain analytical issues *vis-à-vis* the *Neruda Songs*, and to a very limited extent, instrumental compositions like *The Six Realms* (2000) and third *Piano Concerto* (2003).

A Brief Survey of Literature

The growing popularity of Lieberson's music in recent years has, so far, not precipitated a great deal of consideration by music analysts. Most of what has been written about him is biographical in nature, and only a handful of sources engage his music directly.¹ Among these, by far the most extensive are two dissertations on the first *Piano Concerto* (1983), which are similar in topicality. Mia Chung's chapter-length study explores the general aesthetic situation of the *Concerto*, and catalogues its basic materials, structure, and program. She also contemplates Lieberson's interaction with the concerto genre in general, principally by way of performing forces and their distribution. Chung does delve into the pitch structure of the work, and identifies rows, combinatorial regions, and certain derivational strategies. Her observations are elucidative, but are somewhat difficult to assimilate, as no score excerpts are provided, and musical examples are limited to single-line row and set illustrations.²

Mendez-Flanigan's thesis is more substantial. Following a thorough account of Lieberson's career and key works, she describes the commissioning, conception, and premiere of the *Concerto*, and examines issues pertaining to the performance of its solo part. As with Chung, Mendez-Flanigan's analysis is principally occupied with Lieberson's twelve-tone methodology, in particular the deployment and permutation of the "source row." She also draws attention to other means of organization – octatonic, pentatonic, and whole-tone collections, and so on – and relates them to the local twelve-

¹ A number of biographical treatments are cited in the final section of this chapter. The interested reader may wish to start with the excellent summary in Robert Kirzinger, *Peter Lieberson* (New York: Associated Music Publishers, 2004), 1-10.

² Mia Chung, "The Contemporary Piano Concerto: A Blend of Old and New Treatments as Seen in Works by Peter Lieberson, Joan Tower, and Ellen Zwilich" (DMA diss., The Juilliard School, 1991), 65-97.

tone background. Moreover, she is attuned to Lieberson's use of unordered and loosely-ordered aggregates, a recurrent feature of his writing, and one that Chung overlooks. Unfortunately, Mendez-Flanigan's analysis lacks any generalization as to Lieberson's practice beyond the *Piano Concerto*, but is certainly suggestive of the technical devices present in his other early mature works.³

Apart from Chung and Mendez-Flanigan, two other authors engage Lieberson's music analytically, but do so in more limited contexts. In his article on Lieberson and fellow American composer Arthur Kreiger, Morris Rosenzweig provides a technical overview of *Lalita* (1984), a set of variations for chamber ensemble. He identifies a twelve-tone array in the work's introduction, and reviews some aspects of its construction and application. He also briefly characterizes Lieberson's approach to rhythm and metrics, and hints at the composer's propensity for meticulous orchestration and dramatic gestures.⁴ Joseph Straus discusses the first of Lieberson's *Bagatelles* (1985) in his forthcoming book on twelve-tone music in America. His analysis uncovers a series of hexachordal aggregates, as well as a pattern in their partitioning. From these he develops a "compositional space," which serves as an elegant abstraction of the pitch material of the first fifteen bars, and by extension much of the movement.⁵

³ Maria Mendez-Flanigan, "Peter Lieberson's First Piano Concerto: A Buddhist-Inspired Poetic Vision Realized Through Twelve-Tone Language and Other Contemporary Compositional Techniques" (DMA diss., The University of North Texas, 2002), 36-82. Curiously, Mendez-Flanigan does not cite Chung's dissertation in her bibliography.

⁴ Morris Rosenzweig, "Contemplated Balances: A Brief View of Arthur Kreiger and Peter Lieberson," *Contemporary Music Review* 10/1 (1994): 101-119.

⁵ Joseph Straus, *Twelve-Tone Music in America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming), 237-241. As Straus notes, the "compositional space" is akin to those developed by Robert Morris. See Robert Morris, "Compositional Spaces and Other Territories," *Perspectives of New Music* 33/1-2 (1995): 328-358. The *Bagatelles* are also reviewed by In-Sun Paek in her recent dissertation on twentieth-century contributions to the genre. Her critique is primarily focused on performance considerations, however, and is only loosely analytical. See In-Sun Paek, "Selected Twentieth-Century Bagatelles for Piano" (DMA diss., Florida State University, 2007), 28-32.

For his part, Lieberon has written virtually nothing about the technical properties of his own music, nor has he contributed to music-theoretical literature in the manner of his teachers – especially Babbitt and Martino – and many of his peers.⁶ The most sizeable swath of Lieberon’s published prose takes the form of a quasi-autobiographical essay in *Asian Art and Culture* that recounts his discovery and embracement of Buddhism. The article is striking in its depiction of Lieberon’s evolving creative mindset, and of Buddhism’s impact thereupon, but relates few specifics as to compositional technique.⁷ Likewise, Lieberon’s brief contribution to *Perspectives of New Music* pertains to his tenure under Martino, and is a recollection rather than a scholarly work. Though he describes some of the technical insights acquired while studying at Brandeis, this is done only generally: he avoids direct reference to his own compositions.⁸

Prelude to the *Three Songs*

The *Three Songs* (1981) mark a point of embarkation for Lieberon inasmuch as they are the first of his compositions to involve a vocalist, at least within the corpus of his published oeuvre. From a stylistic standpoint, though, the collection is a mature work, composed some ten years after the *Variations for Solo Flute* (1971), Lieberon’s first

⁶ Strauss, *Twelve-Tone Music*, 237. One exception is Lieberon’s PhD dissertation, cited and summarized below, which is a rigorously analytical work. Lieberon does appear to be willing to discuss the details of his music with interested scholars: Mendez-Flanigan cites personal interviews with the composer in her bibliography.

⁷ Peter Lieberon, “Why is the Buddha Laughing?: A Composer’s Journey,” *Asian Art and Culture* 8/3 (1995): 3-12. *Asian Art and Culture* was produced by the Arthur Sackler Gallery at the Smithsonian, and is no longer widely available. A slightly modified version of Lieberon’s article has been reprinted in *Shambhala Sun*, a magazine devoted to Buddhist culture. See Peter Lieberon, “Concept Becomes Experience: A Composer’s Journey,” *Shambhala Sun*, May 1997.

⁸ Peter Lieberon, “Don – A Reminiscence and an Appreciation,” *Perspectives of New Music* 29/2 (1991): 394-396.

publication.⁹ The intervening decade, particularly the latter half, was a period of compositional turbulence for Lieberson, but it was also an important phase in his technical development, primarily due to studies with Milton Babbitt and Charles Wuorinen, and with the late Chögyam Trungpa, a Buddhist philosopher. As mentioned, Lieberson's early training and career have been chronicled by a number of authors;¹⁰ the brief review below is intended to situate the *Three Songs* – which have not been discussed – within this narrative, and to introduce some of the major influences on Lieberson's early musical language. The hope is that this will provide sufficient context for the technical exploration of the *Three Songs* in chapter 2.

As has been widely noted, Lieberson's exposure to music as a youth was prodigious, which might be attributed to the position and acquaintances of his father, Goddard Lieberson, who served as president of Columbia Records from 1956 to 1971, and again from 1973 to 1975.¹¹ Though initially drawn to jazz and musical theater, the young Lieberson regularly encountered music of the avant-garde, noting that he “grew up with [the works of] Elliot Carter, Babbitt, Boulez, Stockhausen, Schoenberg, Webern, and Berg.”¹² Stravinsky, too, was a significant figure: the two met on more than one occasion (Goddard Lieberson was partly responsible for Columbia's complete Stravinsky

⁹ Babbitt was to thank for the initial success of the work. He introduced it to Harvey Sollberger in 1972, leading to a premiere by the prestigious Group for Contemporary Music, of which Sollberger was a founding member. See Mendez-Flanigan, 4.

¹⁰ Including: Kirzinger, 1-5; Mendez-Flanigan, 1-18; Chung, 65-67; Rosenzweig, 101-108; and Norman Ryan, *Composer Handbook: A Brief Introduction to Composers* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1994), 18.

¹¹ Mendez-Flanigan, 1-2.

¹² Virginia Beaton, “Inside *Ashoka's Dream*: Halifax-Based Peter Lieberson has a Scheme for a Cycle of Operas on Buddhist Themes,” *Opera Canada* 38/2 (1997): 15.

edition), and Lieberson has commented that Stravinsky's late works were important compositional models.¹³

The influence of the composers listed above is tangible in the music of the 1970s and later, but Lieberson's earliest published compositions after the *Variations* – the *Concerto for Four Groups of Instruments* (1972), *Concerto for Violoncello with Accompanying Trios* (1974), and *Accordance for Eight Instruments* (1975) – owe a greater debt to the tutelage of Milton Babbitt, with whom Lieberson began his first serious composition study during the early 1970s.¹⁴ It was Babbitt who introduced Lieberson to the intricacies of post-war serialism, and instilled in him a sense for surface-level activity as an outgrowth of global compositional constraints.¹⁵ Babbitt's fully-wrought conception of the twelve-tone system was especially revelatory for Lieberson, who later wrote of the 1970s that:

This was the era of twelve-tone music and, especially, twelve-tone theory. Theory to me meant the mysteries of a new musical universe locked up in the relationship between numbers, their inversions and retrogrades, their multiplicative transformations . . . Not all composers were suited to this kind of thinking, but those who were not were made to feel irrelevant. For the rest of us, this was clearly the path of the future.¹⁶

¹³ Ibid., 15. Several scholars have noted connections between Lieberson and Stravinsky, but without much specificity. Mendez-Flanigan remarks that “evidence of Stravinsky's influence may be found in the vertical harmonies and orchestration [of Lieberson's] *Piano Concerto*,” (p. 18) but does not elaborate. She also refers to “Stravinsky-influenced chords” (p. 24), but does not define such sonorities (they are tallied separately from octatonic sonorities, though, eliminating the most obvious possibilities). Kyle Gann asserts that “tonality, cadences, and airy orchestration [in the *Piano Concerto*] owe much to neoclassical Stravinsky,” but provides no examples. See Kyle Gann, *American Music in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1997), 250.

¹⁴ Mendez-Flanigan, 4.

¹⁵ This crucial facet of Babbitt's music has been the subject of dozens of analyses, some of them quite approachable. See, for example, the analysis of Babbitt's *Around the Horn* in Andrew Mead, “Still Being an American Composer: Milton Babbitt at Eighty,” *Perspectives of New Music*, 35/2 (1997): 101-126; or the discussion of his *String Quartet No. 2* in Joseph Straus, “Listening to Babbitt,” *Perspectives of New Music* 24/2 (1986): 10-24. Lieberson's preoccupation with germinal motivic cells early on has been identified by Kirzinger (p. 3), who likens the practice more to Stravinsky's music than Babbitt's.

¹⁶ Lieberson, “Buddha Laughing,” 5.

In Lieberson's case, anyway, it was: with varying rigor, twelve-tone organization is a feature central to his compositional praxis in the 1970s and 1980s, and echoes of its ideology are present even in his recent works.

The mention of "inversions and retrogrades" above indicates Lieberson's familiarity with what might be considered basic serial operations, but his understanding of contemporary twelve-tone practice was far beyond that of a novice, at least by the early 1980s. In fact, his PhD dissertation, defended in 1985, is a thoroughgoing treatment of Babbitt's *Post Partitions* (1957), and provides ample evidence that he was well acquainted with Babbitt's most important technical essays.¹⁷ The principle focus of the document is pitch organization, and in particular:

those extensions of the original twelve-tone method applied to the concept of the aggregate and arrays of aggregates . . . [as well as] more radical extensions, specifically the transfer of relationships to the rhythmic domain and to dynamics as the indicators of ordered time points within different tempi.¹⁸

The extent to which these, and similar, manifestations of dodecaphony appear in Lieberson's own compositions during the 1970s is a matter that remains unexplored, and unfortunately lies somewhat beyond the ambit of this study. Nevertheless, the whole of Lieberson's dissertation makes evident his grasp of – and appreciation for – the sophisticated compositional methodologies of the so-called "uptown" New York new-music scene, a milieu with which he readily associated early on.¹⁹

¹⁷ Those listed in Lieberson's bibliography include: "Some Aspects of Twelve-Tone Composition," "Set Structure as a Compositional Determinate," "Twelve-tone Rhythmic Structure and the Electronic Medium," and "Since Schoenberg." All four are available in Stephen Peles and others, eds., *The Collected Essays of Milton Babbitt* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2003).

¹⁸ Peter Lieberson, "Milton Babbitt's *Post-Partitions*" (PhD diss., Brandeis University, 1985), 1.

¹⁹ Kirzinger, 53. The New York "uptown/downtown" dichotomy is discussed at length in Kyle Gann, *Music Downtown: Writings from the Village Voice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 1-16; 106-110; 136-140.

Lieberson's formal musical education began at Columbia University, where he studied with Charles Wuorinen and earned a master's degree in 1974.²⁰ The direct impact of Wuorinen's instruction is difficult to gauge. Lieberson has said little of the experience, but remarked that Wuorinen's approach was impressive for "how details in the small can reflect the overall progression of pitch relationships in the piece," and that Wuorinen's "global approach to composition," like Babbitt's, was a great influence.²¹ Wuorinen himself was a proponent of Babbitt's additions to twelve-tone practice, especially the "more radical extensions" in the rhythmic arena that Lieberson investigated in his dissertation.²² Wuorinen's design predilections may also have been influential: Morris Rosenzweig has identified "a hint of Wuorinen's orchestrational sensibilities" in *Lalita* (1984), while Justin Davidson notes that Lieberson's "scores . . . still have some of the density he absorbed from Wuorinen."²³

Whatever technical knowledge Lieberson gleaned from Wuorinen during their two years together, the most important result of their collaboration was a burgeoning curiosity regarding eastern religion and philosophy brought about in part by Wuorinen's increasing preoccupation with Taoism. In 1974, at the suggestion of his friend Douglas Penick, Lieberson met with the late Chögyam Trungpa, a leading practitioner of Vajrayana Buddhism in the United States.²⁴ The introduction proved fruitful: Lieberson's

²⁰ Lieberson had already had contact with Wuorinen via the Group for Contemporary Music, which was based at Columbia until 1971. As mentioned, the ensemble premiered some of Lieberson's early compositions, including the *Concerto for Four Groups of Instruments*.

²¹ Lieberson, "Don," 395.

²² See, for example, Charles Wuorinen, *Simple Composition* (New York: Longman Inc., 1979), 111-162. Babbitt's "time-point" system is the focus of Chapter 10, and is the subject of further elaboration in Chapter 12.

²³ Rosenzweig, 109; See also Justin Davidson, "Ashoka's Dreamer," *Opera News* 61/17 (1997): 29.

²⁴ Davidson, 28. At the time, Lieberson was already familiar with Trungpa's *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism* (Berkeley: Shambhala Publications, 1973). See Lieberson, "Buddha Laughing," 4.

deepening involvement with Buddhism over the ensuing decades is well documented, both via personal recollection and by scholars and critics.²⁵ Initially, at least, it was Buddhist thinking – not further technical inquiry – that supplied the liberating creative insights Lieberson sought following his studies at Columbia.

As the 1970s waned, Lieberson found himself increasingly dissatisfied with the twelve-tone methodology he had adopted and assimilated under the tuition of Babbitt and Wuorinen. He became frustrated with both the vastness and abstraction of the method:

I would erect theoretical edifices capable of housing multiples of the twelve-minute piece I was working on. The possibilities were endless: the relationships within one set of notes could be extended to aggregates of sets and further expanded to multiple arrays of sets. Then one had to realize all this stuff as music, for performers who needed time to breathe or draw a bow across as a string.²⁶

Lieberson also sought a more intuitive compositional process, one that would eliminate the need for “an enormous conceptual superstructure” to get through simple musical situations:²⁷

Curiously, after each piece was finished, I would forget what I had done. Beginning a new piece involved the formulation of yet another set of theoretical concepts. I found these circumstances to be true for other composers as well. Individually we all understood what we were doing, but each piece required its own particular explanation.²⁸

Along with sharp disdain for the “politics of musical life” in the late 1970s, Lieberson’s dwindling confidence in his creative process brought about what Mia Chung has called a

²⁵ Lieberson, “Buddha Laughing,” 3-9. See also Rosenzweig, 102-108; Chung, 66-68; Mendez-Flanigan, 1-6.

²⁶ Lieberson, “Buddha Laughing,” 5.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

period of “musical claustrophobia,” manifested by a year-long cessation of compositional activity.²⁹

Unequivocally, it was Buddhism that made evident to Lieberson solutions to the technical and aesthetic difficulties underlying his hiatus. In 1976, he moved to Colorado to study with Trungpa, and later was instructed to establish a center for Shambhala training in Boston.³⁰ This task complete, he returned to New York in 1978, creative outlook bolstered by increased self-trust and an understanding of compositional techniques “not as concepts that prevent genuine musical expression, but as passports to different worlds of experience.”³¹ Lieberson later described the practical effects of this new mindset:

I began to play with the techniques my musical teachers had shown me. I threw them around and threw them out, and like boomerangs they would return. I used them in different ways, looking at them from inside and outside. They became like putty, reshaping and reforming for each new piece even if I could still not remember from one piece to the next what I had actually done or what I had spent so much time trying to understand.³²

Thus, Buddhism’s impact was largely methodological: it engendered (or perhaps reinforced) expressive ideals of clarity and balance, and allowed greater instinctiveness throughout the compositional process, and particularly with regard to the situation of pre-

²⁹ Chung, 66. The narrative here is reminiscent of the familiar “reluctant modernist” grappling, if subconsciously, with oppression of the “serialist establishment.” See Joseph Straus, “The Myth of Serial Tyranny in the 1950s and 1960s,” *The Musical Quarterly* 83/3 (1999): 301-343. Opposing views are offered in Gann, “*American Music*,” 218-222; and Ladislav Kupovic, “The Role of Tonality in Contemporary and ‘Up-To-Date’ Composition,” *Tempo* 135 (1980): 15-19. The latter of these, however, seems generally biased against non-tonal music.

³⁰ Lieberson, “Buddha Laughing,” 9. See also Kirzinger, 3. At its essence, Shambhala training is a secular approach to meditation; it was espoused by Chögyam Trungpa. See Mendez-Flanigan, 16-17.

³¹ Lieberson, “Buddha Laughing,” 9.

³² *Ibid.*, 9.

compositional structures. Importantly, Lieberson has shown virtually no interest in imitating or incorporating “Eastern” sounds in his music.³³

Most of Lieberson’s output since the late 1970s engages with Buddhism at some level, as noted in many studies.³⁴ A work of special significance with respect to the *Three Songs*, however, is the eponymous *Tashi Quartet* (1978), the first to benefit from Lieberson’s new creative mindset and “willingness to let the materials find their own space.”³⁵ Lieberson’s comments on the work portray vividly the insights governing his language at the time:

Beginning again with the *Tashi Quartet* was therefore a process of rediscovery: rediscovering former musical passions and also suspending a certain asceticism brought about by my training in twelve-tone theory. I was seeking a richness of musical experience, strongly feeling that the traditional twelve-tone system could accommodate a great deal more rhythmically, harmonically, and even stylistically without abandoning that elegantly ordered world for a dream world based on the past . . . Taking that approach and exploring the resultant discoveries proved to be fertile ground for the future.³⁶

In a literal sense, the *Three Songs* are the “future” to which Lieberson refers. They alone bridge the five-year span between the seminal *Tashi Quartet* and epochal first *Piano Concerto* (1983), and therefore emerge from a period of intense introspection and creative development.

In 1981, Lieberson began working towards a PhD at Brandeis University, the home of another twelve-tone master: Donald Martino. The *Three Songs* were finished by November of that same year, so most (if not all) of Lieberson’s work with Martino

³³ Rosenzweig, 108. See also Mendez-Flanigan, 19; and Davidson, 29.

³⁴ Including: Rosenzweig, 102, 108-109; Chung, 66; Mendez-Flanigan, 11, 19; Kirzinger, 5; Davidson, 5; and James North, “Peter Lieberson: *Neruda Songs*,” *Fanfare* 30/5 (2007): 131.

³⁵ Kirzinger, 4.

³⁶ Quoted in Straus, *Twelve-Tone Music*, 240-241. Lieberson’s “rediscoveries,” then, did not lead him to renounce the twelve-tone system, but rather to apply it in ways more attuned to his expressive sensibility. His reference to the potential of “traditional” twelve-tone theory, for example, suggests declining interest in the more intricate pre-compositional schemata of his teachers.

postdates their completion. Still, it appears that Lieberson found Martino's instruction especially elucidative with regard to harmony, a realm in which he had just begun to come into his own. As well, Lieberson described his experience with Martino in far more detail than that with Babbitt or Wuorinen, and his comments allude to the growing synchronization of his technique and expressive mannerism:

In class, [Martino] led us through the study of hexachords, their intervallic makeup, their trichordal generators . . . What Don seemed to be getting at was a very practical matter and it addressed an issue I had been thinking about for years: in crudest terms, how to move in a piece from one bunch of notes to a different one. Perhaps I had never gotten the message of derived sets, or the possibilities of ordering hexachords within aggregates . . . A message seemed to come through when Don taught this material, and most important, showed how he used it in pieces like *Notturmo*. Within the phrase itself, within a group of phrases, the material could be structured such that the original hexachord itself contained the seeds of modulation to other hexachords . . . through trichord generators or other means . . . The method of transformation was not superimposed on the music but came from within the guts of the music itself, inseparably. To this day, I am never without this xeroxed [sic] sheet from Don that contains all the hexachords, their generators, and so on.³⁷

Many works of the 1980s and 1990s put this synchronization on display, none more powerfully than the aforementioned first *Piano Concerto*, a work both deeply expressive and technically exhilarating.³⁸ *Drala* (1986), too, is another excellent example, and marks the point at which Lieberson himself felt that he had “completely internalized the mechanics of his technique, resulting in a more intuitive and directly communicative flow of ideas.”³⁹

³⁷ Ibid. 395-396. The charts to which Lieberson refers may be variants those presented in Donald Martino, “The Source Set and its Aggregate Formations,” *Journal of Music Theory* 5/2 (1961): 224-273 (see pp. 229, 237, 244, and 269).

³⁸ The first *Piano Concerto* is widely regarded to be Lieberson's most successful early composition, and its premiere in 1983 by Peter Serkin and the Boston Symphony thrust Lieberson into the national spotlight for the first time.

³⁹ Kirzinger, 5.

Chapter Two

“Listen and Hear” and the *Three Songs*

At around six minutes in total length, the *Three Songs* are considerably less substantial than the proximate *Tashi Quartet* and first *Piano Concerto*. In spite of their brevity, however, they surrender little in terms of technical sophistication. The intricacy of the *Songs* is such that the analysis in this chapter is limited for the most part to the first of the collection, “Listen and Hear.” This approach makes possible a fairly thoroughgoing characterization of Lieberson’s early mature idiom, in particular his baseline approach to text and the voice. A necessary trade-off is that many interesting facets of “The palm and its lines” and “The reed is broken” are omitted, but Lieberson’s writing is consistent to the extent that, in many ways, “Listen and Hear” is representative of the collection as a whole. There is one notable exception: a unique coda in “The reed is broken” that has special implications for Lieberson’s later compositions, including the *Rilke Songs*; this passage is addressed in the final portion of the chapter.

Poetry, Form, and Setting

Lieberson met American author Douglas Penick in New York during the early 1970s. Penick studied English and philosophy at Princeton, graduating in

1967.¹ A dedicated Buddhist, he was a pupil of Chögyam Trungpa, and was responsible for Lieberman's introduction to Trungpa in 1974. Lieberman's setting of Penick's poetry in the *Three Songs* marks their earliest collaboration, but Penick later adapted portions of his novel *The Warrior Song of King Gesar* to form the text of Lieberman's monodrama *King Gesar* (1991), and also penned the libretto of the composer's full-scale opera, *Ashoka's Dream*.² These two works comprise the initial installments of a planned tetralogy on enlightened rulers, but no additional chapters have been added as of yet.³

The texts of the *Three Songs* are selected from a collection Penick's poetry entitled *Epistrophia*. No published version of this work is available at the time of writing, so it is difficult to speculate on the content of the poetry beyond that set by Lieberman.⁴ The title of the collection is certainly enigmatic: "Epistrophia" was a cult name for the goddess Aphrodite used in the ancient Greek city of Megara (roughly translated, it means "she who turns men to love").⁵ Etymologically, the word is closely related to "epistrophe," a figure of speech akin to anaphora, whereby words are repeated at the end of successive clauses or sentences. In the texts of the *Three Songs*, however, epistrophe is not overtly present.

¹ Peter Safir, "Douglas Penick '67 Pens Opera," *The Princeton Alumni Weekly* (July 1997): 38.

² See Douglas Penick, *The Warrior Song of King Gesar* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1996). The libretto for *Ashoka's Dream* has been published independently, and is available in Douglas Penick and Peter Lieberman, *Ashoka's Dream* (Santa Fe: Santa Fe Opera, 1997).

³ Beaton, 15.

⁴ The excerpts in this chapter have been drawn from the musical score, which raises some uncertainty with regard to punctuation, line breaks, repetition, and so on. While less than ideal, the situation is not so grim as it might be. In the score, the poetry is devoid of punctuation; had it been there, it seems rather unlikely that Lieberman would have removed it. Repeated words are present in only two locations, both in "Listen and Hear," the opening song. Finally, the sequence of capitalization in the poetry suggests that it may be an indicator of line breaks; it has been treated as such in this case.

⁵ The cult name is noted by second-century Greek geographer Pausanias in his description of Megara. See Pausanias, *An Account of the Statues, Pictures, and Temples in Greece*, trans. Uvedale Price (London: Printed for T. Evans, 1780), 36.

Penick’s poetry, though spare, is richly atmospheric, and seems eminently suited to musical treatment. Figure 2.1 reproduces the text of “Listen and Hear,” the first of Lieberson’s settings.

Fig. 2.1. Douglas Penick, *Epistrophia*, “Listen and Hear”

1	Listen and Hear	9	Beneath the willow
2	Selfish, whatever hour	10	O eye
3	From them thrumming selves	11	The automatic grasper chasing
4	And inchoate	12	Through the wood
5	O wait	13	O at the edge of hearing
6	You beside the river	14	Some sigh
7	Rising in mists	15	These sent shimmering
8	The beckoning shade	16	In the eerie night

Beside its vibrant imagery, the most striking aspect of “Listen and Hear” is probably the deployment of “O . . .” constructions in lines 5, 10, and 13. These utterances are noteworthy for several reasons. First, they are emphatic, and underscore “wait,” “eye,” and “at the edge of hearing” by virtue of repetition and suspended motion. They are also cast in relief by assonance, especially in lines 3-4 (“And inchoate | **O** wait”) and 9-11 (“Beneath the willow | **O** eye | The automatic grasper”). As a result, they divide the poem into four sections: lines 1-4, 5-9, 10-12, and 13-16.

Lieberson’s musical response to “Listen and Hear” proceeds from a similar reading of the poem, and communicates a five-part structure very much in line with these divisions.⁶ The diagram in Figure 2.2, henceforth the “roadmap,” summarizes the basic form of the song, and provides additional information pertaining to text, harmony, and the musical surface.⁷

⁶ Whether a musical setting constitutes a “reading” of a poem is a matter of debate in some circles. An interesting discussion of this issue can be found in Joseph Coroniti, *Poetry as Text in Twentieth-Century Vocal Music* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), 1-9.

⁷ The term “roadmap,” in the present sense, is borrowed from Brian Alegant. See Brian Alegant, “Listen Up!: Thoughts on iPods, Sonata Form, and Analysis without Score,” *Journal of Music Theory*

Fig. 2.2. Peter Lieberson, *Three Songs*, “Listen and Hear,” roadmap

Part I:	m. 1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Text:		<i>Listen and Hear...</i>		<i>Selfish...</i>	<i>From them...</i>	<i>And inchoate...</i>	
Harmony:	6–Z36/6–Z3 (linear)		hc1/hc2	hc1	hc1/hc2 (layered aggs)		hc1/h2
	hc1/hc2 (vertical)			C/C-sharp (5–16)			hc1
Partition:	trichord						trichord (hc1)
Comments:	distinctive clarinet tune		[014] vocal motive		thickening texture (chromatic saturation)		
Part II:	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Text:	<i>O Wait...</i>		<i>You beside...</i>	<i>Rising in...</i>	<i>beckoning...</i>	<i>Beneath...</i>	
Harmony:	hc2	hc2	hc1	hc1/hc2 (layered aggs)		C/D (6–30, 7–31, etc.)	
		free agg		6–27/6–27 (octatonic)			
Partition:							
Comments:	sparse texture		clarinet "riff"	thickening texture		sustained octatonicism	
Part III:	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Text:	<i>O Eye...</i>		<i>The automatic...</i>		<i>Through...</i>		
Harmony:	hc1	6–Z29/6–Z50		hc1/hc2 (layered aggs)		6–34/6–34	hc1/hc2
	6–Z36/6–Z3			6–Z41/6–Z12		6–Z36/6–Z3	
Partition:	trichord (agg)	trichord		trichord (6–Z41/6–Z12)		trichord	trichord
Comments:	sparse texture		cello "riff"	instrumental interlude			
Part IV:	22	23	24	25	26		
Text:	<i>O at the edge...</i>		<i>Some sigh...</i>	<i>These sent...</i>			
Harmony:	hc2 (<i>f!</i>)	hc2		hc1/(7–31)/{8, e, 3}			
				{6, 9, t, 1}/{8, e, 0, 3}/{2, 4, 5, 7} (?)			
Partition:				tetrachord			
Comments:	dramatic rhythmic unison			punctuating upward gesture (octatonicism recalled)			
Part V:	27	28	29	30	31		
Text:	<i>In the eerie night...</i>						
Harmony:	6–Z13/6–Z42 (linear)		hc1		{t, 1, 2, 5} sustain		
	hc1/hc2 (vertical)			hc2	{8, e, 0, 3} sustain		
Partition:	trichord						
Comments:	return of opening tune		violin restates [014] vocal motive				

Of course, many aspects of the roadmap call for further explanation. For now, though, notice that lines 5, 10, and 13 (the “O . . .” constructions) initiate new musical regions (Parts II–IV), which are articulated via melodic, harmonic, and textural cues. For instance, the last three bars of Part I are marked by considerable harmonic and instrumental density, both of which subside at the onset of Part II in m. 8. Part V, a codetta, arises from Lieberson’s isolation of the poem’s final line, and issues a

Pedagogy 22 (2008): 1-28; and Brian Alegant and Gordon Sly, “Taking Stock of Collections: A Strategy for the Teaching of Post-Tonal Music,” *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy* 18 (2004): 23-51.

restatement of the song’s opening melody. It therefore contains one of the few examples of literal melodic repetition in the *Three Songs*, and evokes a feeling of return strong enough to warrant separation from Part IV. Broadly, then, the roadmap reveals Lieberson’s sensitivity to poetic form, as well as his willingness to project that form musically, at least in this case.

Perhaps expectedly, aspects of text setting play a part in the projection of poetic content, most directly via Lieberson’s shrewd handling of the “O . . .” statements. The excerpts in Figure 2.3 depict the vocal presentations of lines 5, 10, and 13, along with a bit of surrounding vocal material.

Fig. 2.3. *Three Songs*, “Listen and Hear,” mm. 6-10, 15-17, 22-24, soprano

mm. 6-10

Andante
mp *p* *poco* *p* *sotto voce* *cresc. a piacere*

And in-cho-ate (te) O wait (t) You be-side the ri-ver Ri-sing in mists

mm. 15-17

O eye O eye you au-to-ma-tic grasp-er

mm. 22-24

O at the edge of hear-ing Some sigh Some sigh

In the first passage, mm. 6-10, the juncture of Parts I and II is identified with brackets. Clearly, “O wait” is drawn out from the texture, both via rhythm and contour. Its two syllables occupy nearly six beats, which is remarkable given the terse rhythmic treatment of neighboring text. Similarly, the major-sixth ascent stands in relief to the registral stasis of “And inchoate” and “You beside the river.” In fact, Lieberson’s penchant for

pitch repetition in the vocal part of “Listen and Hear” is well represented in all three passages, and imbues the song with the flavor of recitative. Agogic accent and contour are also prominent in the setting of “O eye” in mm. 15-17; there, the upward gesture is still more dramatic, spanning a minor-tenth. By contrast, no leaps accompany “O at the edge of hearing” in mm. 22-24, as it occurs entirely in the upper register. In effect, though, it is akin to the foregoing.

Another passage warrants discussion along these lines, as it contains the only other bit of text to be vocally accented in ways similar to lines 5, 10, and 13. Figure 2.4 provides the soprano part for mm. 25-29, the last two measures of Part IV and the first three of Part V. Once again, brackets are used to indicate the seam.

Fig. 2.4. *Three Songs*, “Listen and Hear,” mm. 25-29, soprano

The musical score for the soprano part consists of five measures. The first measure is in 4/4 time, marked 'Andante' and 'mf', and contains a triplet of eighth notes. The second measure is a whole rest. The third measure is in 4/4 time, marked 'f', and contains a quarter note followed by a half note. The fourth measure is in 4/4 time, marked 'p', and contains a quarter note followed by a half note. The fifth measure is in 4/4 time, marked 'p', and contains a quarter note followed by a half note. The lyrics are: 'These sent shim-mer-ing _____ In the eer - ie night _____(t)'. Brackets indicate a seam between the first and second measures.

Much as with “O wait,” the setting of “These sent shimmering” outlines an ascending sixth (augmented-fifth), and incorporates a rhythmic value substantially longer than those of surrounding notes. Moreover, it is cordoned off by rests, and attains a registral highpoint less than a whole-step removed from those in mm. 9, 15 and 22. It seems no accident that these features are recalled at this juncture: they help to demarcate, and thereby accentuate, the final section of the song.

However sensitive Lieberson’s depiction of poetry on the large scale, he seems less enthusiastic about more local musical-rhetorical devices. There are rather few examples of word painting, for example, and those that are present are not especially conspicuous. Two of the more obvious cases are visible in Figure 2.3, above: the

distinctly ascending figure chosen for “Rising in mists” (m. 11), and the *quasi-portamento* treatment of “Some sigh” (m. 24). A subtler instance occurs in mm. 4-7 (Figure 2.5), and involves the ensemble.

Fig. 2.5. *Three Songs*, “Listen and Hear,” mm. 4-7, selection

Andante

The musical score for measures 4-7 of "Listen and Hear" from *Three Songs* is presented in a selective view. It features six staves: Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Bsn.), Soprano (Sop.), Violin (Vln.), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vlc.). The tempo is marked "Andante" and the time signature is 4/4. The vocal line (Sop.) includes the lyrics: "Selfish, what e ver hour From them thrum - ming selves". The instrumental parts are highly rhythmic, featuring many triplets and quintuplets, often marked "pizz." (pizzicato). Dynamics range from piano (p) to mezzo-forte (mf). The tempo is marked "Andante".

Here, the strings and low winds provide a delightful depiction of “thrumming,” replete with pizzicato, staccato articulation, and a very dense rhythmic texture (the rolled “r” – Lieberson’s direction – is a nice touch). There are additional instruments playing in mm. 4-7, such that total effect of the “thrumming” is not quite so striking as the figure suggests. Still, even with a selective view of the surface, as offered here, moments like this are rare in “Listen and Hear,” and the collection as a whole.

Vocal Writing: Point of Departure

As his first attempt in a vocal genre, the *Three Songs* constitute the earliest vantage from which to assess Lieberson’s vocal writing. How much experience he may

have had in this area is a matter of speculation, but aside from comments regarding his knowledge of jazz and Broadway tunes as a young man, there is nothing in the literature to indicate that he experimented with vocal music earlier in his career.⁸ Given that the *Three Songs* were completed just after Lieberson matriculated at Brandeis, he may have received some guidance from Martino, who was already a prolific vocal composer.⁹ Of course, Babbitt and Wuorinen had also made major contributions to vocal genres by that time, so it is reasonable to assume that Lieberson would have had plenty of exposure to modernist vocal repertoire.¹⁰

Lieberson's involvement with the *Three Songs*, however, seems not to have aroused any new affection for the voice. In fact, the *Songs* are separated from *Ashoka's Dream* by some sixteen years, making them the sole vocal work among his first thirty-odd compositions.¹¹ One explanation for this might be that Lieberson had difficulty rectifying the vocal instrument with his personal idiom, which was already quite developed by the early 1980s. Certain aspects of the writing in "Listen and Hear" bear this out, but the issue may also have been a practical one: the success of the first *Piano Concerto* inevitably brought with it requests for similar works, which Lieberson met with large-scale instrumental pieces like *Lalita* and *Drala*.¹² In any case, the exploration of

⁸ Such comments appear in Kirzinger, 2; Mendez-Flanigan, 2-3; Chung, 65; Rosenzweig, 108; Beaton, 15; and John Rockwell, *All American Music: Composition in the Late Twentieth Century* (New York, Da Capo Press, 1997), 36.

⁹ In fact, Lieberson was present at an early performance of Martino's sprawling *Paradiso Choruses* (1974), an event described in Lieberson, "Don," 394.

¹⁰ Babbitt, for instance, had already composed *The Widow's Lament in Springtime* (1950), *Du* (1951), *Philomel* (1964), and *Phonemena* (1969-70), to name just a few examples.

¹¹ *King Gesar* (1991) involves a narrator, but no definite vocal writing.

¹² Indeed, the commission that led to the composition of *Drala* was granted by the Boston Symphony as a direct result of the *Concerto*. Still, an abundance of instrumental commissions does not explain the absence of vocal music during the decade that spans the *Variations for Solo Flute* and the *Three Songs*.

vocal writing in “Listen and Hear” that follows is intended to illustrate the salient features of Lieberson’s approach, primarily for the purpose of comparison with later works.

The most noticeable tendency of Lieberson’s vocal writing in “Listen and Hear,” touched upon already, is his use of pitch repetition in longer phrases (mm. 5, 10, 13, 17, 23-24), and occasionally with single words (m. 25). The parlendo quality of these passages owes much to Lieberson’s rhythmic approach, which is made supple through frequent recourse to triplets and syncopation, and responds to prosody in most respects (see Figure 2.5). In fact, there is not a single melisma in to be found in the entire song; the setting is entirely syllabic.

It is apparent, too, that Lieberson shies not from large leaps or rapid shifts in *tessitura*. There is a surprising paucity of stepwise motion in the soprano part: only four steps are present in Figures 2.3, 2.4, and 2.5, and there is but one more elsewhere in the song (m. 19). Despite the prevalence of disjunct motion, the vocal line sounds somewhat less disjointed than it looks on the page. In part, this is due to the support of the ensemble, but the melody itself contains large-scale shapes and embedded registral connections that help to attenuate the leaps. For example, consider the excerpts in Figure 2.6.

Fig. 2.6. *Three Songs*, “Listen and Hear,” mm. 11-13, 4-5, soprano

mm. 11-13

Ri - sing ___ in mists The beck - on - ing shade ___ Be - neath - the wil - low

mm. 4-5

Self ish, what - e - ver hour From them thrum - ming ___ selves

The first tune, in mm. 11-13, inscribes a large, variegated arch, rising from F4 to B-flat5 (the upper boundary of the soprano part), and then falling to A4. Within the gesture, notice the fixed registral position of A4, D5, and F-sharp5, as well the proximity of C-sharp to D. The oscillations in mm. 4-5, by contrast, are more or less stationary in their large-scale trajectory, but even so, it is possible to relate by register the C-sharp and C-natural, the E-flat and E-natural. In both passages the effect is delicate, but does come across.

In general, though, it is hard to shake the impression that Lieberson's vocal writing in "Listen and Hear" is based more on compositional strategy – pitch, interval, register, and so on – than on lyricism or strengths of the vocal apparatus. The passage in Figure 2.4 is telling: in just two bars, mm. 27-28, the soprano part spans a perfect-twelfth – nearly the total range of the song – with a sequence of dramatic leaps. The tune happens to be derived from a clarinet solo at the opening of the work (see Fig. 2.7, below), and for a number of reasons is significant from the standpoint of compositional design. Vocally, however, the figure is awkward and difficult to sing in tune; frankly, it seems better suited to clarinet. On the other hand, melodic interchange between voice and instrument is a well-worn compositional gambit, and raises questions about the accompaniment. To characterize fully the interplay of soprano and ensemble in "Listen and Hear" would be a formidable undertaking, so the survey below is narrowed to four key topics: the pitch preparation of vocal entrances; instrumental doubling; solo instrumental passages that emerge from the soprano part; and finally, a distinctive rhythmic technique that intersects with the voice intermittently.

Figure 2.7 duplicates most of the opening three bars of the song, and with them the first soprano entrance.

Fig. 2.7. *Three Songs*, “Listen and Hear,” mm. 1-2, excerpt

The musical score excerpt shows three staves: Clarinet (Cl.), Soprano (Sop.), and Strings (Str.). The tempo is marked 'Andante'. The Clarinet part begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic, followed by a forte (*f*) dynamic with the instruction '(non troppo) sub. *p*'. The Soprano part has lyrics 'Lis - ten and Hear' and a trill marked 'niente' over a triplet. The Strings part includes tremolos (*trem.*), a crescendo (*cresc. colla parte (clarinet)*), and dynamics ranging from piano (*p*) to fortissimo piano (*sfp*) and back to piano (*p*).

At issue here is the practical consideration of how the vocalist is to be oriented with regard to starting pitch. In “Listen and Hear,” to be frank, this matter is largely ignored. Lieberson habitually begins vocal phrases on pitches that have not been prefigured by the ensemble, and – to further raise the stakes – is fond of doubling the entrances. In the present excerpt, for instance, the soprano’s D4 doubles the final pitch of an aggregate; the vocalist has thus heard every pitch-class *but* that which is required. The high C-sharp in the clarinet is obviously a point of reference, but it is nearly two octaves removed, and obscured by a dissonant tetrachord in the strings.

The organization of pitch is not quite so apparent in mm. 16-17 (Figure 2.8) but the soprano receives a similarly small amount of assistance from the ensemble, and again, the entrance is doubled. It seems likely that the D-naturals in the violin and winds are meant as a cue for the vocalist, but they are merely an eighth-note long, and cast against a rich sonority in the other strings.

Fig. 2.8. *Three Songs*, “Listen and Hear,” mm. 16-17, excerpt

Whatever the relative difficulty of these two entrances, the point is that, in “Listen and Hear,” Lieberon prefers the soprano to supply new pitch material rather than emerge from the existing harmonic surface.¹³ The other two songs are not substantially different in this respect.

Despite regular instrumental punctuation at vocal entrances, no portion of the soprano line in “Listen and Hear” is doubled at any significant length. One of the longer instances is found in mm. 4-5, and represented in Figure 2.9. Spanning only five attacks, there is nothing much remarkable about the doubling here, though it is indicative of Lieberon’s overall application. For one, the voice is usually mirrored at the unison, though Lieberon occasionally favors octaves, as in m. 5. Also, where soprano pitches are doubled consecutively, Lieberon typically maintains directed motion. That is, he avoids inversion (octave displacement does occur, as between mm. 4 and 5).

¹³ For a sense of how a vocalist might approach these sorts of passages, and the vocal writing in general, see Sharon Mabry, *Exploring Twentieth-Century Vocal Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 15-37.

Fig. 2.9. *Three Songs*, “Listen and Hear,” mm. 4-6, selection

The musical score is for the selection of measures 4-6 from "Listen and Hear" in *Three Songs*. It is marked *Andante* and in 4/4 time. The score includes parts for Horn (Hn.), Trumpet (Tpt.), Soprano (Sop.), and Violin (Vln.). The Soprano part has the lyrics: "Self ish, what-e-ver hour From them thrum-ming selves". The Violin part features an "instrumental outgrowth" starting in measure 6. Dynamics include *p*, *mp*, *mf*, and *trem.* Performance instructions include *flz.*, *ord.*, *poco*, and *(roll 'r')*. The score is marked with various slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

What falls out of this strategy is that, for much of “Listen and Hear,” the vocal melody carries on somewhat independently of the ensemble. This is used to good effect: there is an overriding sense of the soprano “floating” above the accompaniment.

Of course, there are also moments of intersection between the voice and the ensemble, and one of Lieberson’s trademarks in this arena is the “instrumental outgrowth,” a solo instrumental line that takes as its point of origin the concluding pitch of a vocal phrase. Presumably, these outgrowths are meant to draw attention from the singer back to the ensemble, and are thus characterized by sweeping shifts in register, rhythmic intricacy, and volatile dynamics. One of the better examples in “Listen in Hear” is present in m. 6 of Figure 2.9, above. The first violin emerges from a unison with the soprano, and unleashes a barrage of notes in rapid succession (only a portion is shown). Another example, this time with clarinet, takes place in mm. 8-10, and appears in Figure 2.10.

Fig. 2.10. *Three Songs*, “Listen and Hear,” mm. 8-10, selection

Cl. *Andante*
ppp (doubling) *mp*
 instrumental outgrowth

Sop.
p *poco* *p*
 O wait (t)

Finally, while Lieberson mostly shuns note-by-note doubling in “Listen and Hear,” there are certain instances in which short melodic cells are layered upon some rhythmic permutation of themselves, often a contracted version. The effect of such layering is that certain melodic figures are set against their quasi-echoes, and this tends to obfuscate the tune to some degree. For the most part, Lieberson reserves this sort of gesture for the ensemble, but there are occasional intersections with the voice.

Fig. 2.11. *Three Songs*, “Listen and Hear,” m. 11, selection

Vlns. *Andante*
p *poco* *p*
 b.

Sop.
p *poco* *p*
 a.
 Ri - sing in mists

Even without these intersections, the effect is used frequently enough in the *Three Songs* to deserve notice as one of the important tools in Lieberson’s compositional toolbox. The selection in Figure 2.11, for example, depicts the soprano’s arpeggio (a.) and a contracted version of it in the second violin (b.). Notice that the contraction is not a strict diminution; such liberties are common with this device, as are adjustments in contour, as present here. The proximity of the two figures in this case is such that the clarity of the arpeggio is diminished, rather as though two people were speaking the same sentence at

different rates. By contrast, the concurrent presentations of the tune in mm. 27-28 (Figure 2.12) are separated to the extent that they maintain some independence. The condensed variant (b.) takes on a summarizing quality, which is appropriate given the significance of this melody with respect to form (see Figure 2.4, and below).

Fig. 2.12. *Three Songs*, “Listen and Hear,” mm. 27-29, selection

Pitch Structure and the Surface

As outlined in chapter 1, Lieberon composed the *Three Songs* during a period in which his approach to compositional systems grew less austere than it had been under Babbitt or Wuorinen. In terms of pitch, at least, the surface of “Listen and Hear” is nevertheless quite rigorously organized, and is certainly indicative of Lieberon’s continued engagement with twelve-tone – though perhaps not serial – methodology. As such, much of the discourse below is focused on the means by which Lieberon structures and deploys aggregates, and on the interaction between aggregate-based surfaces and those built with other resources. The analysis proceeds with several objectives: first, to develop a broad conception of how the song operates with regard to pitch; second, to

identify and interpret passages of local harmonic interest, in conjunction with the preceding; and finally, to postulate and engage with certain pitch abstractions via features of the surface itself.

The opening measures of “Listen and Hear” are already present in Figure 2.7, but they introduce a number of consequential pitch elements, and are thus worth reproducing in full. Two alternate hearings of the passage are proposed in Figure 2.13.

Fig. 2.13. *Three Songs*, “Listen and Hear,” mm. 1-3, excerpt

In the first two measures, a striking melody in the clarinet is set above eerie tremolo accompaniment in the strings, and peters out to match the soprano entrance on D4. The melody is formed of two different trichords, (0, 3, 4) and (9, 1, 2), which are members of set-classes [0, 1, 4] and [0, 1, 5], respectively. The accompaniment in the strings is constructed similarly, with [0, 1, 4] and [0, 1, 5] trichords that are partially layered: (7, e, 8) and (5, t, 6). There are intriguing details in the presentation here – the repeated notes

in the [0, 1, 4,]s, for instance, and the juxtaposition of the sweeping clarinet tune with closed-position sonorities in the strings – but of greater significance with respect to the remainder of the song is the way trichords combine to form larger units.

As a preliminary observation, recall that mm. 1-2 contain an aggregate, the sum of the four trichords just catalogued (see Figure 2.7). Though the trichords are audible discretely, a listener is more likely to hear the melody as a complete unit, cast against the two trichords in the strings. Thus, it seems logical that the melodic and accompanimental trichords be grouped into two hexachords, {0, 3, 4, 9, 1, 2} and {7, e, 8, 5, t, 6}, forming members of set-classes 6–Z36 [0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 7] and 6–Z3 [0, 1, 2, 3, 5, 6], respectively. Another interpretation, however, might reflect the relationship between melody and accompaniment, and account for the vertical combination of trichords. In this situation, the resulting hexachords would be {0, 3, 4, 7, 8, e} and {9, 1, 2, 5, 6, t}, members of set-class 6–20 [0, 1, 4, 5, 8, 9], alike. Both readings of the passage turn out to be significant with respect to the song as a whole, but the latter reveals a fundamental aspect of its pitch organization: most of the surface in “Listen of Hear” is fashioned from complementary pairs of 6–20 hexachords.

Set-class 6–20 has unique properties, many of which merit closer inspection. Before getting to these, however, there are two additional points to be made via the opening of the song. Looking back to Figure 2.13, mm. 3-4 contain a second aggregate that is starkly partitioned into 6–20 hexachords. The widespread pitch-class duplication therein, particularly in the first hexachord, suggests that Lieberson is not especially concerned with ordering in these sonorities. Indeed, Mendez-Flanigan and Straus have both noted Lieberson’s tendency to treat hexachords as unordered “building-blocks,” and

this inclination is certainly manifest throughout “Listen and Hear.”¹⁴ Notice also that the soprano entrance in m. 2 does not supply any unique pitch-class content to the two aggregates identified above; that is, were the part not present, the aggregates would remain intact. Such an arrangement is typical of this song: the vocal line often intersects with pitch constructs in the ensemble, but is rarely an essential participant.¹⁵

Set-class 6–20, more commonly known as the “E-type” all-combinatorial hexachord, has been extensively studied, so an exhaustive survey of its properties is not necessary here.¹⁶ For convenience, the chart in Figure 2.14 summarizes the behavior of the hexachord under certain operations, and identifies its unique forms and component trichords. The latter two sections are of special relevance. The inversional symmetry and unusual intervallic content of 6–20 are such that only four unique forms of the hexachord exist, order notwithstanding. On the chart, they are presented as complementary pairs, and labeled as hexachords (hc) 1-4. In a curious compositional gambit, Lieberson makes use of just two of these forms in “Listen and Hear” (hc1 and hc2), reserving the other pair for “The palm and its lines” and “The reed is broken.” Perhaps he sought to maximize the impact of those intervals present only between the two hexachords: 6–20 itself is devoid of whole-steps, tritones, and minor-sevenths (interval-classes 2 and 6), so these intervals are marked, at least in the abstract.

¹⁴ Mendez-Flanigan, 37, 52; Straus, *Twelve-Tone Music*, 237. These sources also both speak to the hexachord as the normative aggregate partition in Lieberson’s music, an observation that likely stems from the composer’s own remarks on the first *Piano Concerto*. See Mendez-Flanigan, 37.

¹⁵ This is not to say that pitch is not a means of interaction between the voice and the ensemble; clearly, it is. It is no accident, for example, that the first three pitches of the soprano part are present in the ensemble’s {1, 2, 5, 6, 9, t} hexachord.

¹⁶ The default reference in this regard is probably Babbitt’s “Some Aspects of Twelve-Tone Composition.” See Peles and others, eds., 38-47.

Fig. 2.14. Some Properties of Set-Class 6–20 [0, 1, 4, 5, 8, 9]

Invariant Under:

T_0 {0, 1, 4, 5, 8, 9}	I_1 {1, 0, 9, 8, 5, 4}
T_4 {4, 5, 8, 9, 0, 1}	I_5 {5, 4, 1, 0, 9, 8}
T_8 {8, 9, 0, 1, 4, 5}	I_9 {9, 8, 5, 4, 1, 0}

Combinatorial Under:

T_2 {2, 3, 6, 7, t, e}	I_3 {3, 2, e, t, 7, 6}
T_6 {6, 7, t, e, 2, 3}	I_7 {7, 6, 3, 2, e, t}
T_t {t, e, 2, 3, 6, 7}	I_e {e, t, 7, 6, 3, 2}

Swaps One [0,4,8] Under:

T_1 {1, 2, 5, 6, 9, t}	I_0 {0, e, 8, 7, 4, 3}
T_3 {3, 4, 7, 8, e, 0}	I_2 {2, 1, t, 9, 6, 5}
T_5 {5, 6, 9, t, 1, 2}	I_4 {4, 3, 0, e, 8, 7}
T_7 {7, 8, e, 0, 3, 4}	I_6 {6, 5, 2, 1, t, 9}
T_9 {9, t, 1, 2, 5, 6}	I_8 {8, 7, 4, 3, 0, e}
T_e {e, 0, 3, 4, 7, 8}	I_t {t, 9, 6, 5, 3, 2}

Unique Forms:

{1, 2, 5, 6, 9, t}	(hc1)	{0, 1, 4, 5, 8, 9}	(hc3)
{3, 4, 7, 8, e, 0}	(hc2)	{2, 3, 6, 7, t, e}	(hc4)

Trichordal Generators:

[0, 1, 4]	[0, 1, 5]
{0, 1, 4, 5, 8, 9}	{0, 1, 4, 5, 8, 9}
{0, 1, 4, 5, 8, 9}	{0, 1, 4, 5, 8, 9}
{0, 1, 4, 5, 8, 9}	{0, 1, 4, 5, 8, 9}
[0, 3, 7]	[0, 4, 8]
{0, 1, 4, 5, 8, 9}	{0, 1, 4, 5, 8, 9}
{0, 1, 4, 5, 8, 9}	
{0, 1, 4, 5, 8, 9}	

Not all hexachords in “Listen and Hear” can be convincingly parsed into trichords, but many derive from combinations like those in mm. 1-4. Four different trichordal set-classes will generate 6–20. Two of them, [0, 1, 4] and [0, 1, 5], have been seen in action already; in “Listen and Hear” they are the most commonly used generators. Logically, [0, 1, 4] and [0, 1, 5] are also the trichordal components of 6–Z36 and 6–Z3 in the “alternate partition” of the opening passage. Lieberson thus develops the option to foreground different hexachordal set-classes with the same two trichord types, a potential he exploits repeatedly. Set-class 6–20 may also obtain from the combination of two members of [0, 3, 7], the major or minor triad. Although triadicism is not a marked

feature of the surface in “Listen and Hear,” triadic partitions of 6–20 do occur occasionally, and [0, 3, 7] trichords are a significant point of intersection between the hexachord and some of the octatonic collections that appear in the song. Perhaps because of its symmetry and distinctive (augmented) sound, Lieberson largely avoids the final trichordal generator, [0, 4, 8].

The next several examples showcase aggregates derived from the combination of hexachords 1 and 2, as well as other aggregates that are related. Although Lieberson has placed stringent limitations on the background hexachordal vocabulary of “Listen and Hear,” the surface of the song is nevertheless quite variegated. More often than not, hexachords 1 and 2 are layered such that multiple aggregates unfold simultaneously; this eliminates any sense of hexachordal oscillation, and allows for considerable harmonic density. In the present case, however, the objective is not to relate every note to some hexachordal conflation – though it is generally possible to do so – but rather to take stock of recurring partitioning strategies, and reach an understanding of how aggregates shape the surface in general.

The excerpt in Figure 2.15 is drawn from mm. 7-9, and includes a single aggregate that bridges Parts I and II of the song (the reader may wish to refer to the roadmap in Figure 2.2). Much like the sustains and leaps in the vocal part, the hexachordal partitioning of the aggregate articulates the formal division between mm. 7 and 8. Hexachord 1 is set as a punctuating gesture, and is itself broken into two [0, 1, 5] trichords.

Fig. 2.15. *Three Songs*, “Listen and Hear,” mm. 8-9, excerpt

The musical score shows three measures. The Soprano part begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a *poco* marking. In measure 8, the soprano plays a half note 'O'. In measure 9, there is a triplet of notes with a *p* dynamic and a *poco* marking, followed by a rest. The Ensemble part includes 'Tutti' and 'Str.' markings. Dynamics range from *sfz* to *p*. A horn part is also indicated with a 'Hn.' marking.

By contrast, the presentation of hexachord 2 is more sustained, and the sonority partitioned differently: with the voice, five of its six notes are intoned on the downbeat of m. 8, an arrangement that emphasizes the “missing” G-sharp when it arrives in m. 9.¹⁷ Once again, although B-natural and G-sharp in the soprano are members of hexachord 2, they are also present in the horn. The aggregate in the ensemble is thus self-standing, the voice an autonomous element.

The music in Figure 2.16 is more typical of “Listen and Hear,” and incorporates several overlapping aggregates. Those formed of hexachords 1 and 2 appear throughout the passage, such as in the tuneful statements of the clarinet and oboe in m. 17-18 (partially doubled in the viola and cello). Measures 16 and 17 feature the first triadic aggregate partition, dovetailed into a setting of hexachord 1 in the strings. The articulations on the last eighth of m. 16 and downbeat of m. 17 illustrate the 6–20 partition most clearly: {2, 9, 5} links with {t, 1, 6} to make hexachord 1, and {8, e, 4} with {3, 0, 7} for hexachord 2.

¹⁷ Once again, the pitch-class duplication in the second hexachord suggests that the internal ordering of these hexachords has been freely devised. Many of the forthcoming excerpts bear similar indication.

Fig. 2.16. *Three Songs*, “Listen and Hear,” mm. 16-19, excerpt

Andante

Wnd. Fl. / Ob. *mf* *p* *cresc.* *mf*

Bsn. *p* *mp* *cresc.* *mf*

Br. Tpt. *esp.* *mp*

Hn. *mp*

Tbn. *p*

Sop. *p* *cresc. sub.* *p ma ben articolato*
 O eye The au - to - ma - tic grasp - er

Str. *mp* *mf molto* *sfmp* *p* *p molto leggiero* *trem.*

Ob. *mf* *poco ten.*

Fl. *p*

Bsn. *p* (to cb.)

Cl. *p*

Br. *mp* *poco*

Sop. *mp* *poco*
 chas - ing Through the wood

Str. *mp dolce* *trem.* *colla voce* *colla voce* *colla voce*

(to bsn.)

In practice, though, these pairings are reversed such that 6–20 is not present as a verticality; the sounding sonorities are {2, 9, 5, 8, e, 4} and {3, 0, 7, t, 1, 6}, and are members of set-classes 6–Z29 [0, 2, 3, 6, 7, 9] and 6–Z50 [0, 1, 4, 6, 7, 9], respectively. The former is of no particular consequence, but the latter – which occupies the strings for the whole of m. 17 – is an octatonic hexachord, and prescient of more extensive octatonicism elsewhere in the song. Thus, Lieberson once again derives new hexachord types via the trichordal subsets of hexachords 1 and 2.

Looking back to Figure 2.16, the aggregate at the onset of the excerpt is another that deserves special attention. On the surface, it could not be more marked: it is homophonic, registerally contained, and rhythmically uncomplicated; and from the standpoint of sonority, at least, seems not to have anything to do with hexachords, 6–20 or otherwise. Moreover, the melodic trichords in each respective part (tetrachord in the trombone) are not available via 6–20, as they all contain at least one instance of interval-class 2. One way a listener might apprehend this aggregate is to take account of the tetrachordal vertices that result from the combined melodic trichords and tetrachord. In order, these are members of set-classes [0, 1, 4, 8], [0, 1, 5, 8], [0, 1, 4, 8], and [0, 1, 4, 6], the first three being subsets of hexachords 1 and 2, and the fourth, obviously, of neither. A second hearing – requiring, admittedly, a bit of concentration – might respond to the possibility of pairings between the bassoon and horn, and trumpet and trombone. Grouped as such, each pair presents one hexachord of the aggregate, the bassoon and horn {7, t, e, 0, 1, 2}, and the trumpet and trombone {3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9}. As it happens, these two hexachords are members of set-classes 6–Z36 and 6–Z3, and thus recall the “alternate partition” of mm. 1–2. What is especially clever about the recollection is

Lieberson's avoidance of the melodic [0, 1, 4] and [0, 1, 5] trichords that were so prominent in the initial realization of these hexachords.

If the partitional reference in m. 16 is somewhat tenuous, a more decided allusion to the opening of "Listen and Hear" is on display in m. 19. The quintuplets in the flute and clarinet, along with the gracenotes that follow, comprise an aggregate that is parsed very similarly to that in m. 1-2. Once again, vertical merging of the trichords yields complementary versions of 6-20: {9, 5, t} in the flute and {1, 2, 6} in the clarinet sum to hexachord 1, {e, 3, 8} and {7, 0, 4} to hexachord 2. A melodic understanding of the gesture flips these pairings, producing not the "alternate partition" hexachords, but a pair new to the song's inventory: 6-Z41 [0, 1, 2, 3, 6, 8] and 6-Z12 [0, 1, 2, 4, 6, 7]. The trichords here, [0, 1, 5] and [0, 3, 7], are thus indicative of another path by which subsets of 6-20 might join to form sonorities other than 6-Z36 and 6-Z3, much as in the triadic partition (m. 16). Incidentally, the B-flat and F-sharp that conclude the overall gesture in m. 19 intersect with both hexachord 1 in the strings and a member of 6-34 [0, 1, 3, 5, 7, 9] in the trumpet, both of which appear in Figure 2.19, below.

One last aggregate to review in Figure 2.16 is that which occurs between the bassoon, low brass, and contrabass in m. 18.¹⁸ The members of this set are linked by means of register, duration, and articulation, but it must be owned that the upper string and wind parts make it exceedingly difficult for them to be discerned as a unit. By visual reckoning, at least, the collection might be broken into four trichords, the first two set with something akin to a "boom-chick" figure, the third an inversion of this figure, and the fourth a more sustained gesture. The trichords projected by these vertical groupings

¹⁸ It may at first seem a stretch to link the double-stop in the bass to the bassoon and brass parts, but it is set in the same register, articulated similarly, and participates in the second "boom-chick" gesture. In any case, Lieberson must have meant for the stop to be interpreted in this way, as the "to bsn." note is his.

are, from first to last, {6, 9, t}, {0, 4, e}, {5, 1, 2}, and {3, 8, 7}; they thus alternate between set-classes [0, 1, 4] and [0, 1, 5]. In a familiar way, those trichords of like set-classes will generate hexachords 1 and 2 when joined, but a more intuitive hexachordal division— if one is to be pronounced at all — would couple consecutive trichord pairs. Framed as such, the hexachords that obtain happen to be members of 6–Z41 and 6–Z12, meaning that the partition in m. 18 almost exactly prefigures the more appreciable specimen in m. 19.

The preceding figures showcase some methods by which Lieberson extends the partitional “recipe” of mm. 1-2 to aggregates later in the song, but little has yet been said about the direct repetition, cited above, that occurs at the onset of Part V. In the commentary to Figure 2.2, the varied return of the opening clarinet melody in the soprano is cited as principal justification for the five-part conception of form in “Listen and Hear” issued in the roadmap. The scale of recollection in these measures, however, goes beyond mere melodic reference, and involves a varied repetition of the entire opening aggregate. Figure 2.17 reproduces the whole of the surface from just before m. 25 to the downbeat of m. 29. There is an abrupt shift in demeanor following the sweeping ascent in m. 25, effected via reversion to the simpler rhythm and texture of the introduction and first vocal phrase. On that score, though, mm. 27-29 impart a sense of repose, owing to the lack of jittery tremolo and affected dynamics.

Figure. 2.17. *Three Songs*, “Listen and Hear,” mm. 25-29, excerpt

The musical score is for an orchestral excerpt from *Three Songs*, "Listen and Hear," measures 25-29. The tempo is marked *Andante*. The score includes parts for Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Bsn.), Trumpet (Tpt.), Trombone (Tbn.), Horn (Hn.), Harp (Hp.), Piano (Pno.), Soprano (Sop.), and Strings (Str.). The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The score features various dynamic markings such as *f*, *mf*, *poco sf*, *p*, *esp.*, *mp*, *dim.*, *meno f*, *pizz.*, *arco*, and *pp*. The soprano part has the lyrics: "These sent shimmer-ing — In the eer - ie night ————— (t)".

As noted earlier (Figure 2.2), the melodic allusion sounds in the oboe, with the soprano doubling at first. The bassoon supplies a countermelody, the first note of which intersects with the trilled E3 in the viola, and thus with a separate tetrachordal aggregate taken up by the strings collectively.¹⁹ What might be described as a descant is assigned to the clarinet; the figure replicates the near-two-octave leap between C-sharp and D that

¹⁹ Actually, the tetrachords in the strings combine to form an eleven-note collection, though this may be due to a mistake in the score. The string harmonics on the last beat of m. 25 project {9, 6, 1, t}, the cello and bass harmonics {e, 0, 8, 3}, and the viola by itself {4, 5, 2, 8}. Given the emphasis on the aggregate as harmonic unit in this song, there is at least a possibility that Lieberson intended a G-natural in the viola, and {4, 5, 2, 7} as the final tetrachord.

occurs in m. 2. This distinctive leap aside, it is the oboe melody and bassoon countermelody that call to mind the opening partition. The tune itself is fashioned from two trichords, (0, 3, 4) and (9, 1, t), one each from hexachords 1 and 2. With some pitch repetition, the countermelody advances (7, 8, e) and (6, 5, 2), predictably supplying the complementary subsets. All of these trichords are members of set-class [0, 1, 4], so while their vertical combination results in the familiar forms of 6–20, the linear hexachords they project do not restate 6–Z36 and 6–Z3, as neither of these can be generated by like trichordal set-classes. Rather, they sum to members of set-classes that have not yet appeared in the song: 6–Z13 [0, 1, 3, 4, 6, 7] in the oboe, and 6–Z42 [0, 1, 2, 3, 6, 9] in the bassoon; the former is another octatonic hexachord.

As a summary, the chart in Figure 2.18 lists by hexachord the major aggregate partitions in “Listen and Hear.” In all but one case, the component hexachords of these divisions derive from various combinations of 6–20’s trichordal subsets, and thus emerge as extensions of what is undoubtedly the chief partitional hexachord. Naturally, there are many more discrete aggregates in the song than listed here, as no specific locations are provided for the many sets that parse without ambiguity into hexachords 1 and 2, such as those in Figures 2.13 and 2.15. Interested readers may consult the roadmap for the general location of collections like these, and in any case, a few more are present in forthcoming illustrations.

Figure 2.18. Aggregate Partitions in “Listen and Hear”

6–20	[0, 1, 4, 5, 8, 9]	var.	[0, 1, 4] / [0, 1, 4] x 2 [0, 1, 5] / [0, 1, 5] x 2 [0, 3, 7] / [0, 3, 7] x 2
6–27	[0, 1, 3, 4, 6, 9]	m. 11:	[0, 3, 7] / [0, 1, 4] x 2
6–34	[0, 1, 3, 5, 7, 9]	m. 19 m. 20	[0, 3, 7] / [0, 4, 8] x 2 [0, 3, 7] / [0, 4, 8] x 2
{ 6–Z36 6–Z3	{ [0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 7] [0, 1, 2, 3, 5, 6]	m. 1: m. 16: m. 20:	{ [0, 1, 4] / [0, 1, 5] x 2 not 6–20 subsets [0, 1, 4] / [0, 1, 5] x 2
{ 6–Z29 6–Z50	{ [0, 2, 3, 6, 7, 9] [0, 1, 4, 6, 7, 9]	m. 16	[0, 3, 7] / [0, 3, 7] x 2
{ 6–Z41 6–Z12	{ [0, 1, 2, 3, 6, 8] [0, 1, 2, 4, 6, 7]	m. 18: m. 19:	{ [0, 1, 4] / [0, 1, 5] x 2 [0, 1, 5] / [0, 3, 7] x 2
{ 6–Z13 6–Z42	{ [0, 1, 3, 4, 6, 7] [0, 1, 2, 3, 6, 9]	m. 27:	[0, 1, 4] / [0, 1, 4] x 2

The chart in Figure 2.18 lists two aggregate types that have not been examined, and which involve self-complementary hexachords beside 6–20. The latter variety is especially striking, and occurs twice during a brief instrumental passage in mm. 19-20; this music appears in Figure 2.19. Although rendered at a *piano* dynamic, the trumpet solo in m. 19 cannot help but be slightly jarring. Set above a chordal presentation of hexachord 1 in the strings, the tune is rife with whole-steps: there are four in total, counting those that are non-contiguous. Taken together, the first six pitches of the solo, (6, e, 2, 4, 8, t), form a member of set-class 6–34 [0, 1, 3, 5, 7, 9], a hexachord that, by virtue of its intervallic content, represents a marked departure from the arena of 6–20. In m. 20, the flute, oboe, and clarinet pick up where the trumpet left off, and issue a fluttery rendition of the complement, {0, 1, 3, 5, 7, 9}; meanwhile, the piano supplies a closed-position encapsulation of the two sonorities in its own 6–34 aggregate.

Figure 2.19. *Three Songs*, “Listen and Hear,” mm. 20-21, excerpt

The musical score is for an excerpt from mm. 20-21 of "Listen and Hear" from *Three Songs*. It is in 4/4 time and marked "Andante". The score includes parts for Wind (Flute, Oboe/Clarinet, Bassoon), Brass (Trumpet, Horn, Trombone), Piano, and Strings. The flute part is marked *p misterioso* and features a rapid sixteenth-note passage. The piano part has a complex chordal texture. The strings play a rhythmic pattern with "col legno bat." and "pizz." markings. Dynamics range from *p* to *sf*.

Since three of the four hexachords are realized more or less as verticalities, and as there are no orchestrational or other clues to suggest further divisions, a trichordal interpretation of mm. 19-20 is probably untenable. Howsoever that may be, it is at the trichordal level that these sonorities evince their relatedness to hexachords 1 and 2, as both divide neatly into alternately-paired trichordal subsets: {6, 2, t}, {e, 4, 8}, {0, 3, 7}, and {1, 5, 9}.²⁰ In this way, even a hexachord so sonically disparate as 6–34 coheres with Lieberman’s large-scale derivational strategy, wherein trichords of hexachords 1 and 2 make up the kernels of many different hexachordal set-classes. In fact, two further examples are present in Figure 2.19 alone, the first constructed with 6–Z36 and 6–Z3, and the second with hexachords 1 and 2 themselves. Incidentally, the latter of these

²⁰ The vertical presentation of 6–34 hexachords undermines the aural perception of trichordal interaction, so while [0, 4, 8] is active here in an abstract sense, it is still eschewed as far as the surface is concerned.

serves to demarcate the boundary between Parts III and IV, in much the same manner as in Figure 2.15.

If the articulation of 6-34 hexachords represents a conspicuous departure from the default harmonic landscape of “Listen and Hear,” the unique partition in m. 11, shown in Figure 2.20, is rather less likely to impose upon the listener.

Fig. 2.20. *Three Songs*, “Listen and Hear,” mm. 11-12, excerpt

The musical score for Figure 2.20 is an excerpt from the second movement of *Three Songs*, "Listen and Hear," measures 11-12. The tempo is marked *Andante*. The score is written for a full orchestra and a soprano. The instruments and their parts are as follows:

- Flute (Fl.):** Part 1, starting with a *p* dynamic and a 5-measure phrase.
- Oboe (Ob.):** Part 1, starting with a *p* dynamic and a 3-measure phrase.
- Bassoon (Bsn.):** Part 1, starting with a *pp* dynamic and a 5-measure phrase, marked *p possible*.
- Clarinet (Cl.):** Part 1, starting with a *p* dynamic and a 6-measure phrase.
- Harp (Hp. 1):** Part 1, starting with a *p l.r.* dynamic and a 5-measure phrase, marked *étouffez*.
- Piano (Pno.):** Part 1, starting with a *p* dynamic and a 5-measure phrase, marked *poco sf* and *sub.* (subito piano).
- Soprano (Sop.):** Part 1, starting with a *p* dynamic and a 3-measure phrase, marked *cresc. a piacere, ma troppo forte, e sempre dolce*. The lyrics are: "Ri - sing in mists The beck - on - ing shade Be neath the wil - low".
- String (Str.):** Part 1, starting with a *p* dynamic and a 3-measure phrase, marked *gliss.* and *pizz.* (pizzicato).

Nestled in the bassoon, harp, piano, and cello is a setting of the total chromatic expressed via two complementary 6–27 hexachords. From a technical standpoint, the particulars

are nothing new: the hexachords divide into trichords – {4, 8, e}, {5, 1, 2}, {0, 7, 3}, and {6, 9, t} – and will pair variously to either 6–27 or 6–20. Like set-classes 6–Z50 and 6–Z13, 6–27 is an octatonic hexachord, and is similarly difficult to discern by ear in “Listen and Hear,” especially on first hearing.²¹ What is significant about the aggregate in m. 11 is less its local impact, however, and more what it portends for the next few bars. There is a palpable harmonic shift in m. 13-14 brought about by Lieberson’s wholesale abandonment of 6–20 partitions for subsets of set-class 8–28 [0, 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, t], the octatonic scale.²² On a technical level, such an interpolation raises important questions with regard to Lieberson’s rationale, and to the particular nature of the juxtaposition. These two topics are central to the remainder of this section.

In general, Lieberson is fond of octatonicism; it is a feature of many works in his catalogue, including very recent compositions.²³ In published analyses, Straus draws attention to octatonic hexachords in the first of the three piano *Bagatelles*, while Mendez Flanigan devotes a sizeable portion of her essay to the broad role of octatonicism in the first *Piano Concerto*.²⁴ Octatonic sonorities are not explicitly noted in Rosenzweig’s article, but the row array he develops for the *Lalita* variations is based upon two forms of set-class 6–30 [0, 1, 3, 6, 7, 9], a self-complementary octatonic hexachord better known

²¹ With regard to 6–27, Lieberson’s practice is in line with that of Luigi Dallapiccola, who makes extensive use of octatonic resources in twelve-tone environments. See Brian Alegant and John Levey, “Octatonicism in Luigi Dallapiccola’s Twelve-Note Music,” *Music Analysis* 25/1-2 (2006): 39-87.

²² With regard to pitch-class content, there are three distinct forms of 8–28, generally labeled according to their first two notes: C/C-sharp (0, 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, t), C/D (0, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, e), and C-sharp/D (1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, t, e). Any further permutation will result in a reordering of one of these sets.

²³ It is quite common, for instance, in the first three movements of the *Neruda Songs*, and also in *The World In Flower*. Both of these works are briefly discussed in chapter 4.

²⁴ Straus, *Twelve-Tone Music*, 237-239. Mendez-Flanigan, 57-64. As Straus discovers, the first *Bagatelle* happens to be based upon a network of 6–27 aggregates.

as the “Petruška Chord.”²⁵ Likewise, Chung fails to recognize octatonic resources outright, but identifies octatonic hexachords in her appraisal of row regions in the *Concerto*.²⁶

That octatonicism features in the *Three Songs* is thus not especially surprising, but it is curious that its appearance in “Listen and Hear” should interrupt a surface otherwise so consistently wrought with 6–20 hexachords. As demonstrated in Figure 2.20, however, the seams of the interruption are quite well sewn, which is to say that octatonic material is not cordoned off, but rather dovetailed into a number of hexachordal aggregates. One reason for the smoothness with which Lieberson is able to traverse these two harmonic arenas has to do with certain subsets that are common to both. The table in Figure 2.21 summarizes the trichordal and tetrachordal intersections that obtain between any two members of 6–20 and 8–28.²⁷

Fig. 2.21. Set-Classes 6–20 [0, 1, 4, 5, 8, 9] and 8–28 [0, 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, t]

Trichordal Intersections

[0, 1, 4]	[0, 1, 4, 5, 8, 9]	[0, 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, t]
	[0, 1, 4, 5, 8, 9]	[0, 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, t]
[0, 3, 7]	[0, 1, 4, 5, 8, 9]	[0, 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, t]
	[0, 1, 4, 5, 8, 9]	[0, 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, t]

Tetrachordal Intersection

[0, 3, 4, 7]	[0, 1, 4, 5, 8, 9]	[0, 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, t]
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The sets will always share two different forms of [0, 1, 4] and [0, 3, 7], along with single variety of [0, 3, 4, 7]; there are no intersections of higher cardinality. The chief result of

²⁵ Rosenzweig, 110. Hexachords A and B in Set I of his array are complementary members of 6–30.

²⁶ Chung, 71-82.

²⁷ Of course, various pairings will have an impact on the particular pitch-classes that are doubled, but the type and number of set-classes will be consistent across the board. The chart does not include dyadic intersections, as there are several. In any given pairing, there will be one member of interval-class 1, one of interval-class 5, two of interval-class 3, and two of interval-class 4.

this is that Lieberson can situate these sonorities as pivots, linking them variously to either 6–20 or 8–28 (or a subset thereof). Consider the application in m. 12 (Figure 2.20). The viola, cello, and bass together present $\{0, 8, e, 3\}$ while the first violin sustains $\{4, 7\}$, the result being hexachord 2.²⁸ As $\{0, 8, e, 3\}$ is a member of $[0, 3, 4, 7]$, the tetrachord also represents a point of maximum intersection with the C/D octatonic scale, which three lower strings – and eventually the entire ensemble – take up.

A second example of this type of linkage appears a bit later in the song, during a passage that is already present in Figure 2.17, above. The ascending flourish in m. 25 synthesizes both octatonic and hexachordal elements, and might be thought of as a technical “echo” of the passage in mm. 13-14. It is possible to parse the gesture into three distinct surface components. Distributed among the bass, trombone, and horn is a sustained, swelling setting of hexachord 1. This same sonority is also projected, both in scalar and arpeggiated forms, by the upper winds, trumpet, and harp. Finally, the cello, piano, and bassoon discharge arpeggiated settings of set-class 7–31 $[0, 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9]$, an octatonic septachord. These 7–31 arpeggios open with a C-major triad $(0, 4, 7)$, and conclude with $(t, 1, 6, 9)$, a member of $[0, 3, 4, 7]$. All seven pitches are elements of the C/C-sharp octatonic scale, while the latter $[0, 3, 4, 7]$ couples to the greatest possible extent with the pitch-class content of hexachord 1. There are, by extension, nine unique pitch classes in m. 25: $\{1, 2, 5, 6, 9, t\}$ from hexachord 1, and $\{0, 4, 7\}$ from the C-major triad. The remaining trichord, $\{8, 3, e\}$, is set as a reverberation, and appears in the bassoon, horn, and trombone in m. 26.²⁹

²⁸ The $\{4, 7\}$ dyad is also a component of a 6–Z3 hexachord that is issued by the first violin; there is no apparent complement to this hexachord in the vicinity.

²⁹ Thus, the flourish is essentially a setting of hexachord 1 that is sandwiched between the two

As an aside: Lieberson’s decision to articulate 7–31 is probably no accident.

Nowhere in “Listen and Hear” is an entire 8–28 heard as a verticality; the densest octatonic sonority is reserved for beats two and three of m. 14, shown in Figure 2.22, and happens to be a member of 7–31.

Fig. 2.22. *Three Songs*, “Listen and Hear,” mm. 14-15, excerpt

The musical score excerpt shows measures 14 and 15. The tempo is marked 'Andante'. The score includes parts for Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Bsn.), Horn (Hn.), Harp (Hp.), Piano (Pno.), Soprano (Sop.), and Strings (Str.). The music features various dynamics such as *p*, *mp*, *mf*, and *pp*, along with articulations like trills and tremolos. Performance instructions include 'Rit. colla voce' and 'Tempo'. The Soprano part has lyrics 'O eye'.

[0, 3, 7]s of hexachord 2. This is an ingenious arrangement, as it makes available members of 7–31 from two different octatonic scales. For instance, the present ordering yields (0, 7, 3, t, 1, 6, 9, 5, 2, 8, 3, e), wherein the first seven and last seven notes form the septachord: {6, 7, 9, t, 0, 1, 3} from C/C-sharp, and (2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, e), from C/D.

The figure also shows the juncture at which the surface reverts from octatonicism back to hexachordal sonorities. As before, there is some overlap: the accented B-flat in the bassoon on the final beat of m. 14 anticipates a shift away from the C/D octatonic scale, while the soprano's intonation of "O eye" sets A-flat above a delicate presentation of hexachord 1 in the clarinet, horn, and strings.³⁰

Although the subset commonalities of 6–20 and 8–28 may have been a technical inducement for the inclusion of octatonicism in "Listen and Hear," the impact of the octatonic episode in m. 13-14 is more direct. Its most immediate effect, to be sure, is variety: surrounding measures are densely populated with 6–20-based aggregates, and the octatonic verticalities – primarily forms of 6–30 – beget an arresting change in color. A corollary to this is the shift in local harmonic density that results from the use of just one form of the octatonic scale, that is, from an upper limit of only eight unique pitch-classes rather than twelve. Finally, the return of hexachordal aggregates in m. 15 coincides exactly with the onset of Part III, so once again, Lieberson cleverly relates harmonic design to large-scale form. In fact, a glance at the roadmap and preceding excerpts will show that this is invariably the case: all five sections of "Listen and Hear" are similarly accentuated. Lieberson's response to the text is therefore reflected at the deepest levels of structure in this song.

³⁰ The F and C-sharp in the clarinet and horn are sustained over the tetrachord in the strings to form hexachord 1. The rests on the downbeat of m. 15 are such that the sounding harmony there, including the voice, is a minor/minor seventh-chord, an arresting sonority that makes the vocal entrance that much more dramatic.

Momentary Homophony: Initial Considerations

As stated in the introduction to this chapter, the second and third of the *Three Songs* have much in common with “Listen and Hear,” and embody a similar approach to text setting and large-scale form, vocal writing, and surface aesthetics. They also display certain technical consistencies, most importantly the widespread use of 6–20 hexachords, including the two unique forms that do not appear in “Listen and Hear.” There is, however, a four-measure coda passage at the conclusion of the “The reed is broken” for which there is no precedent in the other two songs, and which advances such characteristics as render it truly exceptional. Moreover, in both content and situation, the coda is a direct forerunner to special passages in Lieberson’s later works, including the *Rilke Songs* and *Neruda Songs*. The brief treatment below is intended to acquaint the reader with its most salient features, and to develop from these a generalized concept of “momentary homophony” that might be applied to more recent examples.³¹

The final five measures of “The reed is broken” are reproduced in Figure 2.23; these include the passage in question, in mm. 16-19, and for context, the measure just before. Observe that the coda as a whole is separated from the rest of the song by way of breath marks and a fermata. It is set in the same tempo, but features a new expressive suggestion, “*sostenuto e seréno*” (the rest of the song is marked only “*stesso tempo*”), and soft dynamics. So too does the music itself effect a substantial departure: mm. 16-19 display a consistently homophonic texture, remarkable rhythmic simplicity, and extensive instrumental doubling, particularly between the winds and strings. These peculiarities collectively imbue the passage with a lushness that is singular in the *Three Songs*.

³¹ Mendez-Flanigan seems to draw attention to such passages when she notes the isolated presence of “expressive writing” and “warmth and sweetness of sound” in works like *Drala* and *The Six Realms*. She does not provide any concrete examples, however. See Mendez-Flanigan, 22-23.

Figure 2.23. *Three Songs*, “The reed is broken,” mm. 15-19, excerpt

Though impossible to tell from these measures alone, the harmonic palette of the coda is softened slightly with respect to the rest of the song. The softening is brought about by the predominance of pentachordal (and smaller) collections as opposed to hexachordal, and of course, by the sonorities themselves.³² While an exacting depiction of pitch organization is not necessary for present purposes, consider the catalogue of sounding verticalities that appears in Figure 2.24. The figure is organized according to measure and beat, with quarter-note resolution (the “beats” represent half-notes). Indeed,

³² One such hexachordal sonority is present in m. 15, where the upper strings intone hexachord 3. The F-sharp, B-flat, and E-flat in the harp and bass are members of its complement, hexachord 4, the rest of which occurs in m. 14. The winds in m. 15 advance an unrelated hexachord.

the survey makes plain the unusually regular harmonic rhythm of this passage: changes generally occur twice per beat, with reduced activity toward the end.

Figure 2.24. *Three Songs*, “The reed is broken,” coda sonorities

m. 16	bt. 1		2		3	
Pitch-Classes:	{7, t, 0, 1}	{t, 0, 1, 4, 7}	{5, 7, 9, 0, 1}	{8} (unison)	{7, 8, 0}	{4, 7, 8, e}
Set-Class:	[0, 1, 3, 6]	[0, 1, 3, 6, 9]	[0, 1, 4, 6, 8]		[0, 1, 5]	[0, 3, 4, 7]
Comments:	octa	octa/triadic				octa
m. 17	1		2		3	
Pitch-Classes:	{4, 5, 7, 8, e}	{2, 4, 5, 7, 8, e}	{1, 3, 5, 6, 8}	{1, 2, 5, 6, 9}	(...)	{1, 3, 5, 9}
Set-Class:	[0, 1, 3, 4, 7]	[0, 1, 3, 4, 6, 9]	[0, 2, 3, 5, 7]	[0, 1, 4, 5, 8]		[0, 2, 4, 8]
Comments:	octa	octa				whole-tone
m. 18	1		2		3	
Pitch-Classes:	{e, 1, 3, 5, 8}	{2, 3, 5, 8, t}	(...)		{2, 3, 5, 6, 8, t}	(...)
Set-Class:	[0, 2, 4, 6, 9]	[0, 1, 3, 6, 8]			[0, 1, 3, 4, 6, 8]	
Comments:	triadic					
m. 19	1					
Pitch-Classes:	{3, 5, 8, 2, t}	(...)				
Set-Class:	[0, 1, 3, 6, 8]					
Comments:						

Tallying semitones is at best an indefinite way to measure dissonance, but one explanation for the milder sound of the coda is that not a single sonority therein incorporates as many half-steps as a 6–20 hexachord. That is, no verticality contains more than two instances of interval-class 1, and in fact, all but four contain one or none.

To reflect what is probably their most distinctive attribute, passages like this coda are said to exemplify Lieberson’s fondness for “momentary homophony.” There is, however, a good deal more comprehended in the generalized device than the descriptor would suggest. The four most important properties of momentary homophony are all well represented in Figure 2.24, namely: that it is set apart, though some rhetorical means, from surrounding music; that it involves a rhythmically uncomplicated, homophonic texture; that this texture represents an appreciable divergence from what

might be considered normative in the work; and that it occasions some shift in harmonic disposition, usually to more consonant sonorities.³³ Crucially, Lieberon avails himself of such an aesthetic only sparingly; it might, as it does in the *Three Songs*, occupy only a few measures of an entire work (hence: “momentary”). Thus, momentary homophony is not a vehicle for rapid or frequent juxtaposition, and typically spans at least one complete phrase, or series of phrases. Lastly, a glance back at Figure 2.23 will reveal that a portion of mm. 16-19 is set above pedal tones; such pedals are another integral component of momentary homophony, as will be apparent in subsequent examples.

³³ Lieberon’s later compositions are rendered in a freer atonal idiom than that of the *Three Songs*. In these works, momentary homophony is often accompanied by pervasive triadicism, which often sets it in stark harmonic contrast. For an example, consult the recording of *Drala* listed in Appendix Two; *Drala* is also briefly discussed in chapter 4.

Chapter Three

“Stiller Freund” and the *Rilke Songs*

Like the *Three Songs* some twenty years before, the *Rilke Songs* are situated between two works that are considerably more substantial: *Ashoka's Dream*, Lieberson's full-scale opera, and the *Neruda Songs*, an orchestral song cycle. Thus, whereas the earlier collection amounts to a mere archipelago in a vast sea of instrumental music, the *Rilke Songs* emerge from a period of passionate engagement with the voice and vocal music, one that continues through the present day. Most of the analysis in this chapter pertains to the final song in the collection, “Stiller Freund,” which was initially conceived as a stand-alone work, and is easily the gem of the set.¹ More importantly, it elegantly encapsulates a number of developments in Lieberson's idiom, many of which arose as result of his collaboration with Lorraine Hunt-Lieberson. For context, the chapter begins with a brief examination of the aria “So Many Years Have Passed” from *Ashoka's Dream*, proceeds with a close reading of “Stiller Freund,” and concludes with a reappraisal of momentary homophony that identifies a quotation from *Drala* and suggests avenues for further inquiry.

¹ Mendez-Flanigan lists the date of “Stiller Freund” as 1997, and Kirzinger notes that it “was the first of what would become a cycle of five Rilke settings eventually completed in 2001.” See Mendez-Flanigan, 9; and Kirzinger, 8.

A Precursor: “So Many Years Have Passed”

Ashoka’s Dream was commissioned by the Santa Fe Opera, and was premiered in 1997 by that company. Lieberson began sketching the work during the early 1990s, around the time of the *Viola Concerto* (1992), and at a point when many of his larger works involved soloists.² Lieberson called upon Douglas Penick to provide the libretto; the story itself deals with Ashoka Maurya, an initially-bellicose third-century Indian ruler whose eventual enlightenment “transforms him into a model of generosity and his kingdom into one governed by the example of Buddhist principles.”³ Just as the *Tashi Quartet* and *Drala* had been decades earlier, *Ashoka’s Dream* was a watershed composition for Lieberson, and ushered in an attentiveness to the role of melody in his music. As Robert Kirzinger observes:

From a stylistic perspective, it may be instructive to consider *Ashoka* the start of a new consideration on the part of the composer of the expressive potential of lyric melody. This would not only affect the way his works are perceived on first experience – being now, perhaps, more immediately welcoming to a broader base of concertgoers – but also alter the details of his compositional method.⁴

He goes on to describe a shift in Lieberson’s overall methodology from a “strict application of architectural strategies” to intuitive decision-making at even the deepest levels of compositional structure.⁵ If this scenario sounds familiar, it runs more or less parallel to Lieberson’s struggle with systemization in the 1970s, as briefly chronicled in chapter 1.

As for the particular mannerisms that render Lieberson’s music “more

² Kirzinger, 6. See Appendix One for a chronological listing of Lieberson’s compositions. The *Viola Concerto*, *Rhapsody for Viola and Orchestra* (1994), *Horn Concerto* (1998), *Red Garuda* (1999), and *The Six Realms* are all major works for soloist and orchestra.

³ Ibid., 6-7. See also Beaton, 15. Recall that Lieberson and Penick had also collaborated on *King Gesar* the year before, which involves a narrator, but no singing.

⁴ Kirzinger, 7.

⁵ Ibid.

immediately welcoming,” Kirzinger does provide a few details, albeit without illustration. For instance, he asserts that:

In *Ashoka*, Lieberson applies in more sophisticated fashion . . . the lessons learned in his work on *King Gesar*, supporting the voices with clear instrumental texture and demarcating phrases into satisfyingly audible, discrete arcs. Working for the first time with dramatized singing, he also reinvents for himself . . . the pure and singable lyric line, which is a constant presence in *Ashoka*.⁶

Moreover, he draws attention to the augmentation of Lieberson’s harmonic palette through a “new approach to tonality,” by which he is more likely referring to the widespread presence of triadicism in the work; any sense of tonality is vestigial, at best. Likewise, his claim that vocal writing *Ashoka’s Dream* approaches that of vernacular music is probably a bit of a stretch:

the vocal lines and instrumental textures have a transparency and outward simplicity that evoke vernacular music . . . that anyone might be heard singing for pleasure.⁷

Still, to make such a remark in reference to an earlier work – “Listen and Hear,” for example – would be patently ridiculous, so it is evident that Lieberson’s expressive ideals evolved to some significant extent as he grappled with dramatized singing for the first time.

There are many passages in *Ashoka’s Dream* that might be called upon to demonstrate Lieberson’s newfound lyricism, but one standout is the aria performed by Triraksha, one of Ashoka’s two wives, toward the end of act two. In “So Many Years Have Passed,” Triraksha looks back upon her life with Ashoka, and worries over her son’s uncertain future as an heir to Ashoka’s kingdom.⁸ The aria begins with a short

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid. Interested readers might attempt to corroborate Kirzinger’s claim by singing through the vocal part in the figures below, gauging its difficulty, memorability, and so on.

⁸ As cited in chapter 2, Penick’s libretto is available in published form, though not widely.

introduction, which arrives at the ostinato and vocal phrase that appear in Figure 3.1.

Fig. 3.1. Peter Lieberon, *Ashoka's Dream*, "So Many Years Have Passed,"
mm. 11-20, excerpt

Mez. $\text{♩} = 63$ (*p*)
So — many years have passed and we — are old. — But

Orch. *p*

time, time has giv - en me no cer - tain - ty.

ten. *poco allarg.*

poch.

$\text{♩} = 54$
Once this was a lord — who need - ed me to con - quer;

It is immediately apparent that Lieberon has not lost his taste for syllabic setting and pitch repetition: the vocal part is “stuck” on F4 for most of the passage, and mm. 18-19 are effectively recitative, replete with slower tempo and suspended accompaniment. On the whole, however, the melody is unaffected, consistent in *tessitura*, limited in range,

and mostly without large leaps. In short, it is indicative of a melodic sensibility almost entirely divorced from that of the *Three Songs*.⁹ Harmony is another contributing factor in this regard, as Lieberson's "new approach to tonality" is writ large throughout the passage. Measures 11-13 are unabashedly based on an A-major triad – the D-sharp in the bass imbues the section with a Lydian tinge – and several other triadic sonorities are present, such as the C-sharp minor triad at the conclusion of the vocal phrase.¹⁰

The excerpt in Figure 3.2 is taken from about two-thirds of the way through "So Many Years Have Passed," and might broadly be cited as evidence against the depiction of Lieberson's writing as approaching colloquial simplicity. That there is a discernable arc to the phrase, however, is irrefutable: over the course of six measures, the mezzo-soprano line circuitously traverses an augmented-twelfth, and crescendos from *piano* to *fortissimo*. The phrase that follows the ascent marks the climax of the aria. Compared with "Listen and Hear," which had no melisma whatsoever, the searching, undulating depiction of "where" is astonishing both for its length and stepwise motion. Though it is not overtly audible, triadicism is at the core of the accompaniment material in this phrase, at least at first. Beginning in m. 36, staggered chromatic lines combine vertically to form triads of varying quality and inversion, which mirror the voice in their ascending sequence. This arrangement breaks down around m. 39, and is completely absent by m. 42. Incidentally, the sonority selected for the downbeat of m. 42 happens to be a member of 6–30 [0, 1, 3, 6, 7, 9], one of the octatonic hexachords that appears in "Listen and

⁹ There is no argument herein as to whether either of these sensibilities is superior; such a one could never fail to be spurious. Although Lieberson is somewhat disparaging of modernism at present, it obviously does not follow that his more recent vocal compositions are "better" simply because they are more traditionally idiomatic with regard to the voice.

¹⁰ Another major harmonic element here is the chromatic tetrachord, which is embedded in a number of locations. See, for example, the concatenated dyad pairs in the bass-clef staff of mm. 14-16. There are also melodic presentations in mm. 16-17.

Hear.” That it should accompany what is arguably the most important point in the aria suggests Lieberson’s continued regard for octatonic resources.

Fig. 3.2. *Ashoka’s Dream*, “So Many Years Have Passed,” mm. 36-43, excerpt

The musical score for "So Many Years Have Passed" (measures 36-43) is presented in a mezzo-soprano (Mez.) and orchestral (Orch.) format. The tempo is marked as $\text{♩} = 54$. The score begins in 4/4 time and features a mezzo-soprano line with lyrics: "Where, where, where, where, where, where, where, where, where is my life?". The orchestral accompaniment is marked *p* and includes dynamic markings such as *(p) gradually intensifying*, *cresc. poco a poco*, and *ff*. The score includes various musical notations, including triplets, slurs, and dynamic markings.

As a final illustration, a portion of the aria’s conclusion is reproduced in Figure 3.3; the passage occurs just after the climax of the song, and is representative of momentary homophony in a developed form. The requisite surface texture is obviously

present, and is the primary means by which the passage is differentiated from that which precedes it. Likewise, the harmonic disposition of the passage is unmistakably triadic, more so even than the ostinato measures, noted above, that bear closest resemblance. In typical fashion, triadic sonorities in the middle and upper registers are set above an E-flat pedal tone, which spans the entire section and takes on different hues depending upon the chords above it. For example, it is heard rather as a D-sharp in m. 48, where it is a participant in the E-major seventh-chord.¹¹

Fig. 3.3. *Ashoka's Dream*, “So Many Years Have Passed,” mm. 47-51, excerpt

Compared with the coda of “The reed is broken,” one novelty here is that the vocalist remains active during the homophony, and in this case, adds rhythmic interest while

¹¹ The two triadic harmonics in m. 48 are both major seventh-chords, but the D-flat variety (beats two and four) has an added G-flat, which might be heard as an eleventh. In any case, the two sonorities are chromatic mediants, so m. 48 projects quite a different color than the Debussy-esque whole-step oscillations in mm. 47 and 50. It would seem that Lieberson is – or grows – fond of chromatic mediants: they appear in several of the *Rilke Songs*.

tracing an inner voice through the middle register. The very limited vocal range, and preponderance of stepwise vocal motion therein, lend more weight to the dramatic leaps in m. 51, which are already set off by virtue of the halted accompaniment.

When *Ashoka's Dream* premiered in Santa Fe, the mezzo-soprano responsible for the part of Triraksha was none other than Lorraine Hunt-Lieberson (then Lorraine Hunt), who was by that time already established as a leading operatic vocalist. However much Lieberson's technique was shaped by the experience of writing the opera, there can be no two opinions as to the profound influence of Hunt-Lieberson in shaping his music thereafter.¹² In recent years, Lieberson has spoken candidly on this point, both with reference to the production *Ashoka's Dream*, and more generally. His own statements do far more justice to the situation than any paraphrase might, and two in particular are worth quoting at length:

In 1997 my life, and my composing life, changed completely when I met my wife, Lorraine. I can't adequately express how much her intuitive and profoundly musical approach to performance has affected me. Her instincts are fiery and definite in terms of what needs to be done to elicit the best performance, whether it concerns how a phrase is shaped, for example, or what needs to be done in terms of the accompaniment . . . This has led many to admire her, and for me, admiration has been accompanied by a deep gratitude for lessons learned.¹³

Hearing [Lorraine] perform I became more and more aware of the significance of melodic line and what a great performer can do to invest it with meaning and integrity. I think it is important to remember that for many composers in the 60s and 70s, melody was simply regarded as one dimension of the musical space. Vocal lines themselves were generally treated as an instrumental line, without overdue attention to how the words were articulated, or to the placement of consonants and vowels in particular registers, or even to the complexity of the vocal instrument itself.¹⁴

¹² Their involvement on a more personal level is addressed in Alex Ross' notes for the *Neruda Songs*. See Alex Ross, *Neruda Songs* (notes, Warner Music: Nonesuch Records 79954-2, 2005), 1.

¹³ Peter Lieberson, *Rilke Songs* (notes, Bridge Records 9178, 2006): 1.

¹⁴ Ibid.

It is impossible not to be struck by Lieberson's jab at what can only be the "uptown" modernist music he found so engaging earlier in his career. Indeed, there is a feeling that he may even be directing a measure of tacit disapprobation toward his own *Three Songs*, whose deficiencies in vocality – if argued as such – align with those enumerated in the citation. More pertinent, of course, is the almost immediate impact that Hunt-Lieberson's guidance had on Lieberson's aesthetic outlook, and which arose initially on account of her interpretation of the very aria examined above.¹⁵ In fact, Lieberson was so taken with Hunt-Lieberson's abilities that his very next work, a setting of Rilke's "Stiller Freund," was written expressly for her.¹⁶

Poetry, Form, and Setting

As one of the twentieth century's greatest German-language poets, Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926) has been the subject of innumerable studies, and his works widely translated. Though Rilke was generally unenthusiastic about musical adaptations of his poetry – he felt it musical enough of its own accord – his verse has been popular among composers for more than a century, and has inspired myriad settings.¹⁷ Lieberson first became acquainted with Rilke through his mother, Brigitta Hartwig, a Norwegian-born German national who often quoted Rilke during Lieberson's childhood.¹⁸ Why he

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Kirzinger, 8; Mendez-Flanigan, 9.

¹⁷ Some notable examples include Schoenberg's "Alle welche dich suchen" from the *Vier Lieder*, Op. 22; Webern's *Zwei Lieder*, Op. 11; Milhaud's *Quatrains valaisans*; and Hindemith's *Das Marienleben*, Op. 27. Martino used Rilke's texts for his *Two Rilke Songs* (1961), which Lieberson may have known. A discussion of Rilke's attitude toward music can be found in George Schoolfield, "Rilke and Music: A Negative View" in *Music and German Literature: Their Relationship Since the Middle Ages* (Columbia: Camden House Publishers, 1992), 269-291.

¹⁸ Lieberson, *Rilke Songs*, 1-2. Brigitta Hartwig, known professionally as Vera Zorina, was a ballerina of the Ballet Russes de Monte Carlo, and later a stage and screen actress. See Chung, 101; Mendez-Flanigan, 1; and Kirzinger, 1-2.

returned to the poet when writing for Hunt-Lieberson he has not disclosed, but bearing in mind the intimate relationship he was to have with her, one motivation might be inferred from a quote in the program notes of the completed Rilke collection:

I think of my *Rilke Songs* as love songs even though they are not overtly about love. They are, for example, about being child-like and open in “O ihr Zärtlichen;” about the breath being a complete exchange of our own essence with the universe in “Atmen, du unsichtbares Gedicht;” about the mysterious ways in which we might transform ourselves in “Stiller Freund” . . . To me, these Rilkean insights are gifts of love.¹⁹

Expressive intent aside, Lieberson cites as general inducements Rilke’s ability to “evoke feelings and states of being that are the edge of awareness,” his sense for the ineffable, and his capacity to “provoke our intuition.”²⁰

Like all of the *Rilke Songs* texts, “Stiller Freund” is excerpted from the *Sonette an Orpheus* (Sonnets to Orpheus), a collection that Rilke composed amid a flurry of activity during the early months of 1923.²¹ The *Sonette* are dedicated “als ein Grab-Mal” (“as a grave-marker”) to Wera Knoop, a long-time playmate of Rilke’s daughter who died from leukemia at the age of nineteen. Rilke was an indirect witness to this affair – Wera’s mother had sent to him Wera’s diary of her last days – and the experience affected him deeply: the chief exploration of the collection is that of the confluence of life and death, a theme already inherent to the familiar myth of Orpheus and Euridice.²² Thus, while there is no doubt of Lieberson’s perspicacity when it comes to Rilke’s poetry, his conception of the *Rilke Songs* texts, as quoted above, is a highly personal one. Indeed, had he truly been after “love songs,” he might better have applied to other of Rilke’s works.

¹⁹ Lieberson, *Rilke Songs*, 2.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ The creation of the *Sonette an Orpheus* intertwined to great extent with that of another Rilke masterpiece, the *Duineser Elegien* (Duino Elegies). See Ralph Freedman, *Life of a Poet: Rainer Maria Rilke* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1996), 392, 479-500.

²² Ibid., 479-485. See also Rainer Maria Rilke, *Sonnets to Orpheus: A New English Translation*, trans. Rick Furtak (Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 2007), 28-29.

“Stiller Freund” happens to be the final poem of the *Sonette*, and bears the inscription “An einen Freund Weras” (“to a friend of Wera”).²³ The text of the poem, along with a translation, appears in Figure 3.4.²⁴

Fig. 3.4. Rainer Maria Rilke, *Sonette an Orpheus*, “Stiller Freund”

1	Stiller Freund der vielen Fernen, fühlen,	1	Silent friend of many distances,
2	wie dein Atem noch dem Raum vermehrt.	2	feel how your breath is still expanding space.
3	Im Gebälk der finstern Glockenstühle	3	Let yourself peal among among the beams
4	lass dich läuten. Das, was an dir zehrt	4	of dark belfries. Whatever preys
5	wird ein Starkes über dieser Nahrung.	5	on you will grow strong from this nourishment.
6	Geh in der Verwandlung aus und ein.	6	Know transformation through and through.
7	Was ist deine leidenste Erfahrung?	7	What experience has been most painful to you?
8	Ist dir Trinken bitter, werde Wein.	8	If the drinking's bitter, turn to wine.
9	Sei in dieser Nacht aus Übermass	9	In this vast night, be the magic power
10	Zauberkraft am Kreuzweg deiner Sinne,	10	at your senses' intersection,
11	ihrer seltsamen Begegnung Sinn.	11	the meaning of their strange encounter.
12	Und wenn dich das Irdische vergass,	12	And if the earthly has forgotten
13	zu der stillen Erde sag: Ich rinne.	13	you, say to the still earth: I flow.
14	Zu dem raschen Wasser sprich: Ich bin.	14	To the rushing water speak: I am.

It would be a stimulating exercise to grapple with the symbolism and deeper meaning of Rilke’s writing, but as such investigation has been conducted by many authors more qualified than the present, to do so here would be gratuitous.²⁵ There are, however, exterior features of the poem that call for closer inspection, especially since Lieberson has already demonstrated his regard for poetic structure. As an archetype of the sonnet genre, the form of “Stiller Freund” is largely preconceived. It displays typical stanzaic

²³ The other poems in Lieberson’s collection are: “O ihr Zärtlichen” (I/4); “Atmen, du unsichtbares Gedicht” (II/1); “Wolle die Wandlung” (II/12); and “Blumenmuskel...” (II/5). “Stiller Freund” closes Lieberson’s work, as well. As for the dedication, scholars disagree as to whom Rilke was referring: Wera’s friend may be Orpheus, or perhaps even Rilke himself. See Alan Keele, “Poesis and the Great Tree of Being: A Holistic Reading of Rilke’s *Sonette an Orpheus*” in *A Companion to the Works of Rainer Maria Rilke* (Rochester: Camden House Publishing, 2001), 222.

²⁴ The translation of the poem is drawn from Rainer Maria Rilke, *Duino Elegies and the Sonnets to Orpheus*, trans. A. Poulin (Boston: Houghton Mifflin: 1977). All subsequent translations are also excerpted from this source.

²⁵ See, for instance, Keele, 221-222; Freedman, 500; Rilke (trans. Furtak), 27.

divisions – two quatrains and two tercets – regular meter, and a standard rhyme scheme.²⁶ With the exception of the first sentence of the second quatrain, which begins in the fourth verse, the stanzaic design of “Stiller Freund” aligns with shifts in the poem’s topicality and demeanor. The final sestet, for instance, speaks first of the poet’s existence, and in turn of his exchange with the flowing consciousness of the “still earth.” Finally, though there are no recurring word emphases in the sonnet, Rilke layers subtle accentuations throughout, relying on devices like alliteration (“Stiller **F**reund der vielen, **F**ernen, **f**ühlen”), manner of address (“Was ist deine leidenste Erfahrung?”), and juxtaposition (“zu der **stillen** Erde sag: Ich rinne. | Zu dem **raschen** Wasser sprich: Ich bin.”).

As was the case in “Listen and Hear,” Lieberson’s musical treatment of “Stiller Freund” closely mirrors the anatomy of the poetry. A glance at the roadmap in Figures 3.5a and 3.5b – which is configured similarly to that in the previous chapter – shows the song’s five main branches as disposed more or less according to stanzaic structure. After a brief piano interlude in mm. 20-23, Part II begins with the final line of the first stanza (“Das, was an dir zehrt”), and thus responds to the distinct change in tenor at that point in the poem.

²⁶ “Stiller Freund” is primarily rendered in trochaic pentameter; its rhyme scheme is as follows: ABAB CDCD EFG EFG.

Fig. 3.5a. Peter Lieberson, *Rilke Songs*, “Stiller Freund,” roadmap

Part I:	m.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Text:				<i>Stiller Freund...</i>		<i>fühle, Wie dein Atem...</i>		
Harmony:		C-sharp pedal, E (dyads) mid-register seventh-chords		C-sharp, F		C-sharp, F-sharp local C/D (A-flat + F)		vocal ascent vocal sustain
Comments:		registral stratification						
		8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Text:								<i>Im Gebäk...</i>
Harmony:		C-sharp, F-sharp A/M and h/d seventh-chords				C-sharp, F-sharp M/M and M/m seventh-chords		
Comments:		(sustain continues)				(sustain continues)		
		15	16	17	18	19		
Text:			<i>finstern...</i>	<i>Laß dich läuten.</i>				
Harmony:			C-sharp, F		C-sharp, E	C-sharp, F		
Comments:		non-triadic sonorities		chromatic mediants (voice exchange?) <i>Drala</i> quote prefigured				
Part II:	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	
Text:					<i>Das, was an dir zehrt...</i>		<i>wird ein...</i>	
Harmony:	(no pedal) 6–27 flourish	dyadic agg 6–Z36/6–Z3	6–Z41/6–Z12	C/C-sharp (in part)	C/C-sharp	C/C-sharp {t, 7, 9}	C/C-sharp C/D	
Comments:	brief piano interlude			wedge motif		wedge motif		
	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	
Text:		<i>Geh in der Verwandlung...</i>			<i>aus und ein.</i>			
Harmony:	C/C-sharp (in part)	C/D (complete)	C/D	C-sharp/D	octa dissolves		6–27 flourish (repeated)	
Comments:	wedge motif					[0, 3, 6, 9] wedge motif (transposed)		
	34	(35)						
Text:								
Harmony:		{t, 7, 9} (<i>sfp</i>) A pedal						
Comments:	(motif cont.)							

Along these lines, Lieberson divides the second stanza into two contrasting regions, and thereby underscores the powerful interrogative and exhortation in lines seven and eight. The third and fourth stanzas are also set as contrasting musical units, and Part V (stanza four) is actually a truncated recollection of Part I. There was a comparable, though far less transparent, restatement at the end of “Listen and Hear,” so this is the second time Lieberson has favored large-scale repetition as a closing gesture. The final stanza of “Stiller Freund” does echo the first in certain ways – notice the dualism of the “stiller

Fig. 3.5b. Peter Lieberson, *Rilke Songs*, “Stiller Freund,” roadmap

Part III:	35	36	37	38	39	40	
Text:	<i>Was ist deine Leidendste...</i>			<i>Ist der Trinken...</i>		<i>Wein.</i>	
Harmony:	A pedal A (maj) triad G-flat triad (chrom. med.)			A pedal A ninth-chord G-flat triad		A (in octaves)	
Comments:	cessation of rhythmic drive			dramatic vocal leaps			
Part IV:	41	42	43	44			
Text:	<i>Nacht aus...</i>	<i>Zauberkraft am Kreuzweg...</i>		<i>Ihrer seltsamen...</i>			
Harmony:	triad series (chrom. med.)	(repeat)	(repeat)	concatenated triads			
Comments:	<i>Drala</i> quote w/dyads			vocal leaps signal end of section			
Part V:	45	46	47	48	49	50	51
Text:			<i>Und wenn dich...</i>		<i>Zu der stillen...</i>		
Harmony:	C-sharp pedal, E (dyads) mid-register seventh-chords		C-sharp, F		C-sharp, F-sharp local C/D		
Comments:	repeat of Part I		text omission ("stillen")				
	52	53	54	55	56	57	58
Text:		<i>Ich rinne...</i>		<i>Zu dem raschen Wasser...</i>		<i>Ich...</i>	<i>bin.</i>
Harmony:	C-sharp, F-sharp		C-sharp, F		pedal dissolves (codetta)		A ninth-chord B half-dim.
Comments:	(phrase truncated)		melody from m. 17; new accomp.			striking textural inversion	

Freund” and the “stillen Erde” – but it seems more likely that the recurring passages in Lieberson’s setting arise out of a general fondness for rounded forms.²⁷

Once again, the roadmap summarizes some of the means by which Lieberson delineates form in “Stiller Freund,” and points to the increased role of surface design in this arena. Although design was a central element in Lieberson’s inflection of the repeated textual cues in Penick’s poetry, the overall surface of “Listen and Hear” was fairly consistent in demeanor. Lieberson’s writing in “Stiller Freund,” on the other hand, is quite sectional, and cycles through several different musical moods. As an illustration, Figure 3.6 contains the conclusion of Part I and the opening of Part II.

²⁷ Such partiality is also on display in the first of the *Rilke Songs*, “O ihr Zärtlichen,” and is evident with regard to both melody and harmony. See, for instance, the striking return of the opening motif in mm. 47-48.

Fig. 3.6. *Rilke Songs*, “Stiller Freund,” mm. 17-21, excerpt

The disparity of the two sections is immediately apparent, even in this short excerpt: the tranquil, sonorous sound of mm. 17-19 gives way to a rapid arpeggio and aggressive (“urgent”) dyadic punctuations in mm. 20-21. The onset of Part II is also marked by a sudden shift to *forte*, considerably faster tempo, and a harsh articulation (m. 21) that opens up new registral space in the accompaniment, and introduces a triplet rhythm that recurs throughout the section.²⁸

It turns out that the very same articulative chord marks the close of Part II in m. 35, at which location there is yet another marked design change; this juncture is reproduced in Figure 3.7. Plainly, Part III ushers in a substantial reduction in harmonic and rhythmic activity, as well as a return to the opening tempo. Moreover, the near-static accompaniment and rhythmically unencumbered vocal part together render the writing akin to recitative. This sort of *parlando* surface has already been observed in both “Listen and Hear” and “So Many Years Have Passed,” and despite few other examples in this work, might at present be confirmed as a device to which Lieberon is decidedly predisposed.

²⁸ In Part I, the registral boundaries are been C-sharp2 and F-sharp6; in Part II, these are expanded symmetrically to A1 and B-flat6. Given the persistence with which the piano articulates register in Part I, the expansion is quite noticeable.

Fig. 3.7. *Rilke Songs*, “Stiller Freund,” mm. 32-37, excerpt

The musical score for "Stiller Freund" (mm. 32-37) is presented in two systems. The first system shows the mezzo-soprano (Mez.) and piano (Pno.) parts. The tempo is marked "A tempo primo" with a metronome marking of 56. The mezzo-soprano part begins with a rest, followed by the lyrics "Was ist dei - ne". The piano accompaniment features complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and sixteenth notes, with dynamic markings of *f*, *sf*, *sf*, *mf*, and *sfp* (*p*). Performance instructions include *f* freely and *colla parte*. The second system continues the mezzo-soprano part with the lyrics "lei - dend - ste Er - fah - rung?" and the piano accompaniment with a *legato* marking.

The broader point, though, is that Part III is fashioned from musical fabric quite different from that woven in Parts I and II, and this is true of Part IV, as well. Exactly how harmony figures into all of this is a matter taken up below, but “Stiller Freund” is most noticeably parsed via the concerted manipulation of surface elements, and in this sense is traditional in its projection of poetic form.

On a smaller scale, Lieberson’s attitude toward the literal representation of textual content seems not to have changed much since the *Three Songs*. Instances of overt word painting remain uncommon – words like “raschen” (“rushing”), for example, receive no special treatment – but the device is not altogether absent. Consider the mezzo-soprano entrance at the opening of the song, which appears in Figure 3.8.

Fig. 3.8. *Rilke Songs*, “Stiller Freund,” mm. 3-13, 49-50, mezzo-soprano

mm. 3-13

The musical score for measures 3-13 is written on a single staff in treble clef. It begins with a tempo marking of quarter note = 56. The first measure (m. 3) is marked *dolce* and *(p)*. The melody consists of eighth notes. In measure 4, the tempo changes to 2/4. In measure 5, the tempo changes to 3/4. In measure 6, the tempo changes to 3/8. In measure 7, the tempo changes to 2/4. In measure 8, the tempo changes to 3/8. In measure 9, the tempo changes to 2/4. In measure 10, the tempo changes to 3/8. In measure 11, the tempo changes to 2/4. In measure 12, the tempo changes to 3/8. In measure 13, the tempo changes to 2/4. The score includes dynamic markings: *(p)* at the start, *accel. poco a poco* above measures 5-7, *cresc. poco a poco* above measures 8-10, and *a tempo poco f* above measures 11-13. The lyrics are: (p) Stil - ler Freund der vie - len Fer - nen, füh - le, Wie dein A - tem noch dem Raum ver - mehrt. —

sempre dim.

mm. 49-50

The musical score for measures 49-50 is written on a single staff in treble clef. It begins with a tempo marking of quarter note = 56. The first measure (m. 49) is marked *(p)*. The melody consists of eighth notes. In measure 50, there are two quarter rests, followed by a half note. The score includes a dynamic marking of *(p)* at the start and a *poco* marking above the half note in measure 50. The lyrics are: (p) Zu der stil - len Er - de sag:

The supple melody in mm. 3-5 is formed almost entirely of eighth-notes, which makes the extended stasis in mm. 6-14 especially striking.²⁹ The accompaniment is active in these measures (see Figure 3.16), but so conspicuous a sustain in the vocal part must be intended to reflect the “expanding space” described in Rilke’s poem. A related example can be found in mm. 49-50 (also Figure 3.8), where Lieberson inserts two beats of actual silence in allusion to the word “still.” The resulting perforation is made all the more arresting by the awkward position of the interruption, both in Rilke’s verse, and the contour of the phrase: the listener will already have heard a “complete” version of the tune, as it is adapted from an earlier statement in mm. 5-6.³⁰ Finally, it is worth noting that the many musical moods in “Stiller Freund” seem intuitively to resonate with the diverse imagery of the text. This is a matter of interpretation, of course, but consider the passage in Figure 3.9.

²⁹ The rhythm in m. 4 also subtly separates “fühlen” from the rest of the first line, and groups it with the second. The effect is delicate, but speaks to Lieberson’s personal reading of the first stanza.

³⁰ A literal translation of the text in mm. 49-50 would read “To the still . . . earth say,” so the two quarter rests break up the entreaty in a most unnatural way. It is difficult to imagine that such an arrangement would arise by chance, or in an attempt to rectify new text with repeated melody.

Fig. 3.9, *Rilke Songs*, “Stiller Freund,” mm. 23-25, excerpt

The musical score shows three measures. The first measure (23) is a whole rest for the voice. The second measure (24) contains the lyrics "Das, was an dir zehrt," with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The piano accompaniment consists of eighth notes with triplets, marked with *f*, *meno f come sopra*, and *f*. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 84.

These measures are drawn from the opening of Part II, and include the first vocal entrance in that section. Plainly, Lieberson’s personal reaction to “Das, was an dir zehrt” is behind the *forte*, implicitly *marcato* vocal statement, as well as the aggressive writing in Part II generally.

Vocal Writing: Point of Arrival

It may at first seem strange to designate the *Rilke Songs* a point of arrival rather than *Ashoka’s Dream*, which is after all nearly an order of magnitude greater in scale. While it is true that the most significant developments in Lieberson’s vocal idiom are already present in *Ashoka’s Dream* – and as a matter of course, originate there – it must not be forgotten that the farthest-reaching consequence of the opera’s composition was probably Lieberson’s relationship with Hunt-Lieberson. The *Rilke Songs* and *Neruda Songs* were written expressly for her, as was the mezzo-soprano part in *The World in Flower*, Lieberson’s most recent vocal work.³¹ With the exception of two minor songs for baritone, Lieberson has composed nothing else for voice since *Ashoka’s Dream*, so it is

³¹ The untimely death of Hunt-Lieberson in 2006 prevented her from ever performing *The World in Flower*; the work was very recently premiered (May, 2009) by the New York Philharmonic, with Joyce DiDonato as mezzo-soprano soloist.

not an exaggeration to say that Hunt-Lieberson's instrument is at the very heart of his current vocal praxis.³² It is in the *Rilke Songs* that Lieberon first integrates the aesthetic sensibility of *Ashoka's Dream* with an awareness of Hunt-Lieberson's expressive idiosyncrasies, and the collection is therefore a touchstone in Lieberon's vocal catalogue.

Admittedly, some important issues have been swept aside in the preceding account, perhaps the most glaring of which is Lieberon's baffling decision to undertake a full-scale opera with only a single vocal work to his credit. There is also the fact that *Ashoka's Dream* already espouses the expressive melodicism that Lieberon later attributes – almost entirely, in fact – to the influence of Hunt-Lieberson. It is uncertain whether this stylistic shift was prompted by the prospect of extensive vocal writing, but there is little in neighboring instrumental works, at least, that would indicate a broader trend toward the lyric.³³ Thus, even if it was Hunt-Lieberson who revealed to Lieberon the true “significance of melodic line,” the vocal writing in *Ashoka's Dream* suggests that his approach to vocal melody was already changing before their collaboration. Intriguing though these points may be, further elaboration would unfortunately run far afield of the forthcoming technical exploration of vocal writing in “Stiller Freund;” for efficiency, they are left to the reader's further consideration.

As in the preceding chapter, the analysis below is divided into two main sections: the first is concerned with characteristics of the vocal part itself, while the second is

³² Both stand-alone songs were composed in 2001, and neither is longer than three minutes. “Forgiveness” is scored for baritone and solo cello, with text by John Ashbery. The farcical “C'mon Pigs of Western Civilization Eat More Grease,” for baritone and piano, sets text by Allen Ginsberg.

³³ For instance, *The Ocean that has No West and No East* (1997) and *Free and Easy Wanderer* (1998) are very much in the style of earlier works when it comes to melody. They are tuneful in their way, but not vocal in orientation. The situation is somewhat different in slightly later instrumental works like *The Six Realms* and the third *Piano Concerto*, both of which are touched upon in chapter 4.

focused on the relationship between voice and accompaniment. In this case, however, there is a technical baseline with which “Stiller Freund” might be compared, and much of what follows is organized in response to the account of vocal writing in “Listen and Hear.” Such an approach helps to isolate those elements that are maintained in Lieberson’s more recent works, and streamlines the identification of new techniques. It may as well be stated at the outset that “Stiller Freund” differs from “Listen and Hear” in many of the same ways that “So Many Years Have Passed” does. Several of the upcoming figures showcase the predominance of conjunct vocal motion, consistent *tessitura*, and dramatic phrase-level trajectories. All of these also happen to be present in the opening phrase of the song, which appears in Figure 3.8, above. Indeed, Lieberson’s careful – perhaps even conservative – treatment of leaps and register is such a pronounced novelty in “Stiller Freund” that its independent examination is not necessary; the matter is underscored, however, in forthcoming discussion.

Although Lieberson handles vocal motion similarly in “So Many Years Have Passed” and “Stiller Freund,” there are some interesting retrogressions in the latter that distance it from the aria. For one, “Stiller Freund” is entirely devoid of melisma, and the device occurs only twice in the whole of the *Rilke Songs*. The predomination of syllabic writing cannot help but recollect the situation in the *Three Songs*, and raises the question of whether genre may have had something to do with the inclusion of melisma in *Ashoka’s Dream*: perhaps operatic convention compelled Lieberson toward more florid vocal mannerisms, which he then relinquished in returning to art song. This is a plausible scenario, certainly, and one supported by the infrequent appearance of melisma in the later *Neruda Songs*, which are otherwise quite supple. Also largely absent from “Stiller

Freund” is the recitative-like setting that features in both “Listen and Hear” and “Triraksha’s Aria.” There are one or two phrases that approach this sort of surface, for instance the mildly conversational gesture in Figure 3.10, but nothing like the passage in Figure 3.1.

Fig. 3.10. *Rilke Songs*, “Stiller Freund,” m. 44, excerpt

Mez. $\text{♩} = 56$
 Ih - rer selt - sa - men Be - geg - nung Sinn.
 Pno.

A more convincing example, already noted, takes the form of an expressive arc at the onset of Part III; Figure 3.7 illustrates.

Since Lieberson is sparing in his use of large leaps in the vocal part of “Stiller Freund,” their very presence effects rhetorical accent: they are dramatic. This is generally not the case in “Listen and Hear,” where disjunct lines are normative, not exceptional. On the face of it, then, there is less cause in “Stiller Freund” for the sort of registral fixation that helped to smooth the melodic line in the earlier song, but large leaps are nonetheless deployed with much delicacy. Consider the melody at the end of Part I, which is reproduced in Figure 3.11.

Fig. 3.11. *Rilke Songs*, “Stiller Freund,” m. 16-19, mezzo-soprano

$\text{♩} = 56$
p *mp*
 der fin - stern Glock - en - stüh - le Laß dich lau - ten.

There is but one step in these four measures, between D and E-flat, though stepwise connections might be heard between a number of non-consecutive pitches. The most noticeable link is probably that between D-flat and C-sharp in mm. 16-17 (stepwise only nominally), as these pitches share the local registral highpoint. Other linear relationships exist between D, E-flat, and E-natural (mm. 16 and 18), and A-flat and A-natural (mm. 16-17). Still more dramatic is the series of leaps just before the onset of Part IV, which serves to mark the momentary homophony that is introduced in that section.³⁴

Fig. 3.12. *Rilke Songs*, “Stiller Freund,” mm. 39-41, mezzo-soprano



In mm. 39 and 41, D-flat and C-sharp are once again cast as an upper registral boundary, and it is not difficult to hear the interplay of the A-natural/B-flat dyads in the low and middle registers. Both examples point to Lieberson’s continued awareness of what might be considered the embedded “voice-leading” of his melodic constructs.

The evaluation of accompaniment interaction in the preceding chapter focused on four issues: the handling of vocal entrances, doubling, “instrumental outgrowth,” and a unique, quasi-canonic device. Neither of these last two has any significant part to play in the *Rilke Songs*, and some reasons for why this is the case are proposed below. As for vocal entrances, it is plain that Lieberson has adopted a more sympathetic approach in

³⁴ As an aside: the major-tenth leap in m. 39 is the largest in the song, and nearly the largest in the collection (surpassed only by a perfect-eleventh in the first song). There is a similar ascending major-tenth at the conclusion of “O ihr Zärtlichen (m. 46), which differs in pitch by only a semitone. It is impossible to tell from the score, but these intervals are especially well-situated for Hunt-Lieberson’s voice, and it would appear that Lieberson has reserved them for moments of particular dramatic import.

“Stiller Freund” than was observed in “Listen and Hear.” The opening of the song, in Figure 3.13, amply demonstrates this point.

Fig. 3.13. *Rilke Songs*, “Stiller Freund,” mm. 1-3, excerpt

Though at first obscured by half-step dissonance, the G-sharp with which the mezzo-soprano begins is present in the accompaniment almost immediately. Its removal from the final chord of m. 2 silhouettes A-natural above the bass pedal, and makes it easier to imagine G-sharp as both one semitone below, and in a perfect-fifth relationship with C-sharp. True to his prior practice, Lieberson doubles the vocalist’s opening pitch, but clearly, this passage requires no special solicitude. Not every entrance in “Stiller Freund” is so accommodating of the singer, but on the whole, there can be no doubt of Lieberson’s greater sensitivity to practical vocal concerns.³⁵

An area of further disparity between “Listen and Hear” and “Stiller Freund” is the extent to which Lieberson mirrors the vocal part in the accompaniment. A considerable portion of the vocal melody in “Stiller Freund” is doubled by the piano, often in such a way that the doubling is tenebrous. That is, while the pitch content of the mezzo-soprano part is regularly duplicated, the duplications is often dispersed among non-melodic

³⁵ A somewhat more difficult entrance, for example, can be seen in Figure 3.7. In most cases, however, the vocalist’s pitch is clearly prepared, as in Figure 3.9.

accompanimental gestures. The passage in Figure 3.14 is paradigmatic in this regard, and presents the full surface of mm. 14-19.

Fig. 3.14. *Rilke Songs*, “Stiller Freund,” mm. 14-19, excerpt

The musical score for Figure 3.14 consists of two systems. The first system covers measures 14-19. It features a mezzo-soprano (Mez.) vocal line and piano (Pno.) accompaniment. The tempo is marked *p teneramente* with a quarter note equal to 56. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature changes from 2/4 to 3/4 to 4/4. The lyrics are: "Im Ge - bälk der fin - stern Glock - en - stüh - le Laß dich". The piano accompaniment is marked *p teneramente* and *mp*. The second system covers measures 20-21. The vocal line continues with the lyrics "lau - ten." and the piano accompaniment is marked *p*.

The accompaniment continues the striated texture that began the song (see Figure 3.13), and maintains activity throughout a rather large swath of register. For the most part, the vocal line is reproduced at pitch, and in similar rhythm, though without any indication of melodic grouping. In a few places, though, it is echoed in different octaves, as on the downbeat of mm. 17-18. This distinction is crucial: pitch-class doubling emerges as a technical mainstay in “Stiller Freund,” as some of the foregoing excerpts confirm, and is widespread in the other *Rilke Songs*. Looking forward, the music in Figure 3.15 is an excellent representation of momentary homophony, and will receive further attention in

due course. For the time being, though, it serves as a second exemplar of Lieberson’s new approach to doubling.

Fig. 3.15. *Rilke Songs*, “Stiller Freund,” mm. 41-44, excerpt

The image displays a musical score for the song "Stiller Freund" by Rilke. It consists of two systems of music. The first system includes a vocal line for a mezzo-soprano (Mez.) and a piano accompaniment (Pno.). The tempo is marked as quarter note = 56. The vocal line begins with the lyrics "Sei in die-ser Nacht aus Ü-ber-maß Zau-ber-kraft am Kreuz-weg dei-ner". The piano accompaniment features a "spaciously p sonoro" texture. The second system continues the vocal line with lyrics "Sin-ne, Ih-rer selt-sa-men Be-geg-nung Sinn." and includes triplets in the vocal melody. The piano accompaniment continues with sustained chords and melodic lines.

The preceding paragraphs confirm certain material changes in Lieberson’s vocal writing since “Listen and Hear,” yet there has so far been no contemplation of the broader results these changes have engendered. As a precursor to this topic, it might be appropriate to review those two accompanimental devices Lieberson chose to omit from “Stiller Freund,” as their exclusion speaks to a shift in his conception of the vocal instrument.

The analysis in chapter 2 describes an effect whereby melodic figures are layered with their own rhythmic permutations, often in some complex relationship. It would be

an understatement to say that the rhythmic surface in the *Rilke Songs* is less intricate than that of the *Three Songs*, so it may be that Lieberson imagined that these quasi-echoes would be out of place in “Stiller Freund” (and if so, he was probably right). An alternate explanation, however, is that this rhythmic layering tended chiefly to muddle melodic writing, and would only have detracted from the mezzo-soprano part, at least as it is presently realized. As for the other device, it is perfectly conceivable that Lieberson found instrumental outgrowth gestures – those that depart from the concluding pitch of a vocal phrase – less satisfying in a piano-only environment.³⁶ Or perhaps he felt reluctant to draw upon an effect so decidedly the province of modernism: after all, “instrumental outgrowth” is essentially an elaborate form of *Klangfarbenmelodie*. Still, the consequence of these flashy embellishments in “Listen and Hear” was to transfer attention from the vocalist back to the ensemble, and so the contrivance itself is indicative of a mindset in which these two elements operate independently of one another.

Here, then, is the crux of the matter: in “Stiller Freund,” the mezzo-soprano and piano are thoroughly integrated. There is no sense, as there is in “Listen and Hear,” that the vocalist is merely an autonomous participant in an ensemble work, however cleverly coalesced; on the contrary, the primacy of voice in this song is evinced in almost every particular of the accompaniment. The evocative text setting, straightforward entrances, well-chosen leaps, and creative doubling – as well as the excision of the two devices just

³⁶ A litmus test for this conjecture would naturally invoke the *Neruda Songs*, which follow by only a few years, and are scored for orchestra. Though there is certainly some degree of interplay between vocal and instrumental melody in the *Neruda Songs*, the explicitly-linked flourishes of the *Three Songs* do not materialize. Instrumental doubling, however, is common. See Figure 4.1 (chapter 4) for an example.

mentioned – all point to a composer who truly has become “aware of the significance of melodic line” as more than just a single parameter of musical space.

Harmonic Design: Some Developments

By now it is probably apparent that the exploration of pitch in “Stiller Freund” will trace rather different elements than were present in “Listen and Hear.” For one, the aggregate is no longer a default surface unit, nor does it hold sway as a generative or organizational abstraction. Exactly when this demotion took place is difficult to pin down, as Lieberson’s application of twelve-tone methodology grew quite idiosyncratic in the years following the *Three Songs*. There is at least the knowledge that, by *Red Garuda* (1999), Lieberson was “no longer concerned with writing within the extended twelve-tone system,” but it seems hasty to associate such a significant dissolution with one composition.³⁷ To uncover the broader process by which the aggregate is supplanted in Lieberson’s music would likely be a fascinating project, but for present purposes, it is sufficient to note only that the *Rilke Songs* are not aggregate-based.

Since the aggregate is not a point of reference in “Stiller Freund,” one task at hand is to come to an understanding of the materials that have replaced it. Based on what was seen in “So Many Year Years Have Passed,” triadicism cannot help but be strongly implicated in this regard, and indeed, is a central topic below. Octatonicism, too, reprises its role as an important harmonic resource, and interacts to a limited extent with triadic music. The relative simplicity of the surface in “Stiller Freund” makes it easier to discern certain linear features of Lieberson’s writing, and so a second occupation of this section

³⁷ Kirzinger, 8.

is to examine his involvement with large-scale registral organization, particularly in Part I of the song. In addition, the discourse below details the cooperation of harmony and form – as alluded to above – and lays the groundwork for the review of momentary homophony that concludes the chapter.

Fig. 3.16. *Rilke Songs*, “Stiller Freund,” mm. 1-14, excerpt

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system shows the vocal line (Mez.) and piano accompaniment (Pno.). The tempo is marked $\text{♩} = 56$ and the dynamics are *p dolce*. The lyrics are: "Stil - ler Freund der vie - len Fer - nen,". The second system continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked *accel. poco a poco* and *cresc. poco a poco*. The dynamics are *poco f* and *sempre dim.*. The lyrics are: "füh - le, Wie dein A - tem noch den Raum ver - mehrt." The third system shows the continuation of the piano accompaniment. The dynamics are *poco f ma tranquillo* and *sempre dim.*. The score includes various time signatures (3/8, 3/4, 2/4, 3/16, 2/16) and dynamic markings.

From a harmonic standpoint, Part I of “Stiller Freund” is representative of much of the song’s content (the reader may wish to refer back to the roadmap in Figure 3.5).

Most of the opening section is reproduced in full in Figure 3.16; the vocal line was reviewed in Figure 3.8. Given the mercurial temperament of “Listen and Hear,” the consistency in overall design here is remarkable. An immediately captivating aspect of the passage is Lieberson’s treatment of register, which evokes in a powerful way the “distances” of Rilke’s poetry. The texture divides neatly into two components: the piano repeatedly articulates dyads whose members are positioned at registral extremes, and alternates these with what are primarily closed-position tetrachords in the middle register. It is with these tetrachords that the mezzo-soprano part is principally aligned, and a great many of the vocal pitches are doubled by the accompaniment. It is perhaps for this reason that there is little variance in the dyads – which project compound minor-thirds, major-thirds, and perfect-fourths – and quite a diverse array of tetrachords.

To streamline the inspection of mm. 1-14, Figure 3.17 offers a reduction in which dyadic (a.) and chordal (b.) components are displayed independently, and ordered according to measure. It may seem odd to partition the passage in this way, as intuition would suggest that the middle-register sonorities be interpreted in the framework of the outer voices. Suspending, however, the possibility of a more empirical reading, the present arrangement makes evident the divergent trajectories of these two components: though their upper boundary varies slightly, the dyads are grounded on C-sharp, and as a unit are essentially static; the chords, on the other hand, embark upon a graduated expansion, which proceeds circuitously by semitone and reaches a crest in m. 17.

Figure 3.17. *Rilke Songs*, “Stiller Freund,” mm. 1-19, harmonic reduction

Figure 3.17 consists of two parts, a and b, showing harmonic reductions of the first 19 measures of the piece "Stiller Freund" from Rilke Songs. Part a shows the first four measures (m. 1, m. 3, m. 4) and measures 16, 17, 18, and 19. Part b shows measures 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, and measures 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18. The harmonic reduction is shown as a series of chord symbols below the staff, indicating the chord structure for each measure.

Part a. m. 1 m. 3 m. 4 m. 16 m. 17 m. 18 m. 19

Part b. m. 1 m. 2 m. 3 m. 4 m. 5
 m/m ∅ m/m M/m M/m M/m ∅ M/m M/m ∅ A/M

Part b. m. 7 m. 8 m. 10 m. 11 m. 13 m. 14 m. 15 m. 16 m. 17 m. 18
 A/M ∅ A/M ∅ M/M M/m M M/M

At no point do these trajectories impinge upon one another, and it is not difficult to hear them as dissociated assemblies. What comes across most strongly in the chordal writing is the parsimony with which pitch space is traversed: stepwise permutation accounts for every sonority in mm. 1-14, and with the exception of leaps in mm. 14, 15, and 17, the rest of Part I, as well. Thus, while register is the decisive factor, other criteria also indicate that the linearity of this passage is quite carefully intentioned.³⁸

However smooth the path by which Lieberson navigates the registral landscape of mm. 1-19, a second glance at the lower half of Figure 3.17 shows that his harmonic outlook is even more fastidious. Triadicism is behind the vast majority of middle-register verticalities, with seventh-chords nearly the exclusive representative. Six different types of seventh-chord are intoned, but apart from the repeated oscillation of half-diminished and augmented/major varieties in mm. 5-11, there does not seem to be any pattern to their

³⁸ Recall that similar stepwise cycling was on display in “So Many Years Have Passed,” and also involved triadic sonorities. See Figure 3.2.

arrangement.³⁹ It may be that the distribution of seventh-chord types arises merely as a byproduct of the stepwise cycling mentioned earlier, as in m. 4, where inner-voice slide effects a shift from half-diminished to minor/minor. On the other hand, certain seventh-chord adjacencies suggest that the pitch content here is premeditated. The three seventh-chords in m. 4, for example, collectively entail six pitch-classes, {0, 2, 3, 6, 8, e}, all of which are drawn from the C/D octatonic scale.⁴⁰ As it turns out, all seven of the sonorities in m. 5 are also octatonic, and are subsets of the same scalar form. Although dyads are also present in these bars – and if anything attenuate the octatonicism – it cannot be happenstance that the seventh-chords conflate as they do.

Not all of the middle-register articulations in Part I are seventh-chords. The section begins and ends with an identical pair of non-triadic harmonies, and four others of this ilk are present in mm. 15-16. To understand how these sonorities are likely to be heard, and indeed, to truly grapple with the “sound” of Part I – some attempt must be made to characterize the interaction of middle-register entries and the dyadic articulations that break them up. There are two considerations at the heart of this issue: first, nearly all of Part I is set above a C-sharp pedal, which is regularly articulated and often literally sounding; second, both the upper dyadic line and alternating chords are inevitably cast against this pedal, and so C-sharp takes on a loose organizational role.⁴¹ For instance, the first non-triadic sonority might be taken as an E-major triad with an added fourth. In the

³⁹ These being the major/major (M/M), major/minor (M/m), minor/minor (m/m), half-diminished (\flat), and fully-diminished (\circ) seventh-chords. The sixth entry is the much rarer augmented/major seventh-chord.

⁴⁰ If the pitches in m. 4 are included, the additional octatonic sonorities in m. 5 complete the C/D collection, adding {5, 9} to {0, 2, 3, 6, 8, e}.

⁴¹ The latter of these considerations is, at least potentially, a Pandora’s box, since it posits the operation of a vague tonality in “Stiller Freund.” A few authors have taken up this issue with regard to Lieberson’s music, and to a limited extent engaged with the mechanisms by which centrality is asserted. See Mendez-Flanigan, 24-26; and Carl Robert, “Peter Lieberson: *Neruda Songs*,” *Fanfare* 30/3 (2007), 158.

context of the pedal, however, it is transformed into a triadic harmony: a ninth-chord.⁴²

Likewise, the B, F, and A in m. 2 acquire the air of an inflected dominant when C-sharp is situated below.⁴³

Lieberson seems aware of the fact that seventh-chords whose members duplicate the C-sharp pedal have the potential to sound more consonant than others. The mezzo-soprano, for instance, enters in conjunction with a C-sharp minor/minor seventh-chord, and her re-entrance in m. 14 (Figure 3.14) is heralded by three further verticals that include the note. The D-flat major triad and A major/major seventh-chord in m. 17 also involve C-sharp (D-flat), and foreshadow an important quotation that appears later in the song. It is little wonder, then, that their juxtaposition is so striking: not only are these sonorities the fullest in Part I, they are chromatic mediant, and thus recall the octatonic confluences of m. 5. Finally, it need hardly be stated that the most immediate impact of the C-sharp pedal is unification. In the ways just related, it colors other harmonic components, equates to a local criterion for harmony stability, and subsides only at the onset of Part II in m. 20. An interesting corollary to this is that the opening of “Stiller Freund” actually imparts a sense of harmonic stasis. Surely, there is an arc to the section, but it is driven by the voice. Texture, harmony – these are merely the scaffolding upon which the melody rests.

One way to characterize Lieberson’s harmonic practice in this portion of “Stiller Freund” would be to say that he is composing with “tonal analogues.” The term is borrowed from Richard Parks, and describes music whose materials are “familiar from

⁴² Namely: A, C-sharp, E, G-sharp, B. Given that C-sharp is in the bass, the sonority could also be interpreted as an inflected minor/minor seventh-chord.

⁴³ Such a chord would exist, for instance, in the key of F-sharp minor; the thirteenth (A) would have a tendency to resolve downward to G-sharp.

[their] frequent and conspicuous occurrence in tonal contexts,” but that is divorced from the topographical and relational axioms of tonality.⁴⁴ Such a description applies quite readily to the passage at hand, though the linear organization therein (the pedal especially) does raise the question of just how thorough the divorce has been. At any rate, several other passages in the *Rilke Songs* are constructed with triadic materials – the opening of “O ihr Zärtlichen,” for example, is nearly identical in its conception to Part I of “Stiller Freund” – and while these have certainly not become default in Lieberson’s music, there is no doubt that tonal analogues now account for many of the colors on his harmonic palette.

The foregoing appraisal of Part I vastly outweighs those of remaining sections, as these mostly demonstrate Lieberson’s reliance on harmonic elements with which the present study is already conversant. Part II is the focus of remaining analysis, since it contains a rather cleverly partitioned aggregate. Most of the second part, however, is organized via octatonicism, and so the account below is primarily intended to acquaint the reader with a few noteworthy design elements; there is little novel about the pitch structure. Parts III and V are not reviewed directly, as they are both devised along the lines of the opening: triadic sonorities predominate, and are set above a bass pedal that runs the length of the section. In fact, as the roadmap indicates, Part V is effectively a truncated repetition of Part I. Lastly, Part IV exemplifies momentary homophony, and is appraised separately in the final portion of this chapter.

Part II begins with a sixteenth-note flourish in m. 20 that immediately dispels the affect of Part I. The first four measures of the section are reproduced in Figure 3.18.

⁴⁴ Richard Parks, “Tonal Analogues as Atonal Resources and Their Relation to Form in Debussy’s *Chromatic Etude*,” *Journal of Music Theory* 29/1 (1985), 33-35.

Fig. 3.18. *Rilke Songs*, “Stiller Freund,” mm. 20-23, excerpt

The flourish itself is a complex gesture, but any tenable segmentation of it will uncover the essence of octatonicism, which is shrouded slightly by the addition of a “rogue” pitch. Parsing the figure vertically, the two beats in m. 20 yield members of set-classes 6–27 [0, 1, 3, 4, 6, 9] and 7–16 [0, 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 9], respectively. As was seen in chapter 2, the first of these is an octatonic hexachord, one that Lieberson derives in “Listen and Hear.” The septachord is not an octatonic sonority; however, were E-natural to be omitted from the second beat, the resultant collection would be {0, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9}, or another member of 6–27 (though not the complement of the first). Although it is intriguing that m. 20 might have projected two octatonic hexachords of the same set-classes, the larger issue is that Lieberson’s engagement with octatonicism is more flexible here than in earlier works. It is left to the reader to decide whether the categorization of music as “nearly octatonic” is an empirically valuable exercise, but if so, there are several spots in the *Rilke Songs* where the concept might be applied.

The ascending gesture in m. 20 culminates in a marked [0, 1, 3] trichord, {t, 7, 9}, on the downbeat of m. 21. Thereafter, this trichord is attached to a “wedge” motif that appears for the first time in m. 23, and which interrupts the surface repeatedly in Part II. Like the dyad pairs of Part I, the wedge is an expansive registral element, and

encompasses more than five octaves. Thus, despite the drastically different demeanor in Part II, the alternation of the wedge gesture with material in the middle register sets up a texture that is analogous to the opening of the song. Harmonically, though, Parts I and II remain discrete. As a whole, the wedge motif is not octatonic, but its outer trichord and tetrachord are subsets of the C/C-sharp scale. This property enables Lieberson to dovetail the figure into surrounding octatonic material, which is a feature he exploits more than once in this section. For instance, the two measures in Figure 3.19 display the entrance of the mezzo-soprano in Part II, as well as a second iteration of the wedge motif.

Fig. 3.19. *Rilke Songs*, “Stiller Freund,” mm. 24-25, excerpt

The musical score shows two staves: Mezzo-soprano (Mez.) and Piano (Pno.). The tempo is marked as quarter note = 84. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The time signature is 3/4. The mezzo-soprano part begins in measure 24 with a forte (f) dynamic, singing the lyrics "Das, was an dir zehrt,". The piano accompaniment features repeating triplets in the right hand and a melodic line in the left hand. The piano part is marked "meno f come sopra" in measure 24 and "f" in measure 25.

The vocal line is doubled by the accompaniment, but not conspicuously. At first, vocal pitches are embedded in the repeating triplets, and are subsequently mirrored in a lower octave. The pitch material in m. 24 and on the first beat of m. 25 is drawn entirely from the C/C-sharp octatonic scale, and in sum expresses $\{0, 1, 3, 4, 6, 7\}$. When the wedge reappears on beat two of m. 25 its first trichord supplies $\{t, 7, 9\}$, and thus completes the C/C-sharp collection. This process repeats variously in the remaining nine measures of Part II, though octatonicism begins to dissolve around m. 31.

For all the sweeping changes in Lieberson’s harmonic language over the past three decades, echoes of his involvement with twelve-tone ideology are still occasionally

intelligible. An excellent case in point is the dyadic aggregate in mm. 21-22 (Figure 3.18), which by virtue of rests divides neatly into two hexachords. The aggregate is the only one of its kind in “Stiller Freund,” and while this makes it incidental to the surfaces identified above, it does not mean that Lieberson simply cordoned off six unique dyads. The structure of the aggregate is intricate, and remarkably, ties to directly to the writing in “Listen and Hear.” For example, if the set is partitioned linearly and according to register, the upper and lower components yield members of set-classes 6–Z3 [0, 1, 2, 3, 5, 6] and 6–Z36 [0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 7]. These are the familiar “alternate partition” hexachords of the opening aggregate in “Listen and Hear.” A vertical partition, on the other hand, yields members of 6–Z41 [0, 1, 2, 3, 6, 8] and 6–Z12 [0, 1, 2, 4, 6, 7], another pair of 6–20 derivatives that appears twice in “Listen and Hear.” It is possible that these references are intentional, but more likely that they are indicative of Lieberson’s preferred hexachordal vocabulary. In either case, it is clear that even vestigial aggregates are subject to the structural rigor of the music they reference.

Momentary Homophony: Reemergence

It is, unfortunately, impractical to attempt a full reckoning of Lieberson’s engagement with momentary homophony since the years of the *Three Songs*. In varying guises, the device is present in many – perhaps the majority – of his compositions, seemingly without regard to genre or ensemble. Whether other trends might be present in its application is a question left to future researchers, but one certainty is that momentary homophony materializes with increasing frequency in Lieberson’s recent vocal music. It is well represented in *Ashoka’s Dream*, and in the *Rilke Songs* and *Neruda Songs* might

even be considered commonplace: both works contain several examples. Given the prevalence of momentary homophony in later compositions, it is convenient that the coda of “The reed is broken” remains an archetypical embodiment. The evaluation of “Stiller Freund” below thus requires no substantial amendment to the account of momentary homophony in chapter 2. Most of the following commentary is taken up with surface detail in Part IV of the song, and with a passage in *Drala* that serves as basis for the section. The chapter concludes by identifying a few aspects of momentary homophony that are suitable for further inquiry.

Part IV of “Stiller Freund” is already transcribed in Figure 3.15, but for convenience is duplicated in Figure 3.20.

Fig. 3.20. *Rilke Songs*, “Stiller Freund,” mm. 41-44, excerpt

Mez. $\text{♩} = 56$
 (p) Sei in die-ser Nacht aus Ü-ber-maß Zau-ber-kraft am Kreuz-weg dei-ner

Pno. *spaciously*
p sonoro

Sin-ne, Ih-rer selt-sa-men Be-geg-nung Sinn.

It is apparent even on first hearing that the writing in mm. 41-43 references the texture of Parts I and V: the surface divides into two basic components, with dyads at extremities, and a sequence of triads in the middle register. Since textural differentiation was indicated as a fundamental criterion for momentary homophony, the registral organization of Part IV calls into question whether it is truly an “appreciable divergence from what is normative” in the song. Intuitively, the answer is “yes,” and with recourse to the music itself, there is at least one good justification. Whereas the surface in Parts I and V is fashioned from alternating dyads and chords, in Part IV these elements are separated: in each of mm. 41-43, there is a single dyad statement followed by four uninterrupted triads. This alteration makes it much more likely that the triads will be heard as a group, and along with rhythm, meter, and melody, ensures that Part IV will be perceived as a distinct section.

The sequence of triads in mm. 41-44 is drawn from Lieberson’s *Drala*, a chamber symphony that predates “Stiller Freund” by more than a decade.⁴⁵ The sequence is featured in two movements of the symphony, and in both is presented more or less as in the song; tempo, dynamics, and articulation are similar. Figure 3.21 contains a reduction of the strings in m. 35 of the first movement. Beginning on the downbeat, the first four triads in the measure are those that Lieberson repeats after the dyads in m. 41-43 of “Stiller Freund;” the remaining seven verticalities are mirrored in m. 44 of the song. Notice that Lieberson’s later adaptation maintains the A-flat pedal, and also the rough melody of the upper voice. The mezzo-soprano melody is largely devised from the inner

⁴⁵ Lieberson was comfortable with triadic materials long before the *Rilke Songs*, but in earlier works, they generally appear in conjunction with momentary homophony, or are obscured on the surface (as in “Listen and Hear”). The extended, pervasive triadicism in the opening and closing sections of “Stiller Freund” would be quite out of place in earlier pieces, particularly those of the 1970s and early 80s.

voices of the progression, but branches out slightly in m. 44 to better reflect the violin tune.

Figure 3.21. Peter Lieberson, *Drala*, “Invocation,” m. 35, reduction

Luminous and Expressive (♩ = 54)

Vln. I (div. à 3)
 Vln. II (div. à 3)
 Vla.
 Vlc.

p whole bow
p whole bow
p whole bow
p whole bow

unis.
sf in p

What is remarkable about this quotation is just how well it seems to “fit” in “Stiller Freund,” and there are several facets of the song that suggest it may have been composed with *Drala* in mind from the start.⁴⁶ In any case, the fact that Lieberson should elect to quote a homophonic passage – which by its very nature is marked on the surface – points to some aspects of momentary homophony that have not been addressed, and which subsequent studies might investigate. While the mechanics of Lieberson’s homophonic episodes are fairly easy to discern, it is more difficult to grapple with the contextual significance of such passages. A major issue here is that of rationale: at a basic level, momentary homophony is a means of articulation. One question to ask, therefore, is whether Lieberson calls upon it at similar points in his forms, or with particular rhetorical goals (“spaciousness,” for instance). In vocal works, there is also the

⁴⁶ Most notable among these is the pair of middle-register triads in m. 17, which prefigure the first two sonorities of the quotation. Also, the second and third triads in the *Drala* progression combine to form an octatonic hexachord (6–30), and tinge the sequence in much the same way as the seventh-chords in m. 5.

text to consider, and the question of whether phrases set in momentary homophony are inherently emphatic. Finally, though homophony is typically set apart from surrounding music, “Stiller Freund” demonstrates that there may be meaningful interaction between this sort of music and the surface in general. The nature of such interaction is yet another avenue that might be explored.

Chapter Four

Conclusion

In the end, the *Three Songs* and *Rilke Songs* are but two points on the still-lengthening line of Lieberson's compositions. The mere comparison of these works cannot hope to do justice to the broader developments in technique and expression that are so crucial to a holistic understanding of Lieberson's music. As a portrayal of evolution, then, the preceding study is little more than a first step. Still, it difficult to imagine a better place to start than the *Three Songs* and *Rilke Songs*: their genre is signal, stylistic divergence illustrative, and technical disposition fascinating. The next few paragraphs summarize the analytical findings of chapters 2 and 3, following the topical schematic of these chapters. The second section below provides a brief overview of the *Neruda Songs*, with two examples. Following this is a short discourse on two of Lieberson's recent instrumental compositions, with an eye toward technical intersection. The concluding remarks highlight a passage in *The World In Flower*.

The poems that Lieberson set in "Listen and Hear" and "Stiller Freund" were markedly different, the former organized primarily via word repetition, the latter according to conventions of its genre. Lieberson's treatment of these texts, however, is remarkably consistent, and demonstrates keen awareness of poetic form and structure. In both "Listen and Hear" and "Stiller Freund," he is entirely content to allow poetry to

shape his music, particularly in the area of form. Though perhaps less enamored with literal representation of poetic ideas, in general his approach to text is rather traditional, and there is nothing in later works to suggest that this may be changing.

The way that Lieberon writes for voice, on the other hand, has transformed since the mid-1980s, a fact borne out vividly by “Listen and Hear” and “Stiller Freund.” The soprano melody in the earlier song is by no means unattractive – indeed, it is quite expressive at times – but is beset by technical difficulties: large leaps, rapid changes in *tessitura*, and these with little help from the ensemble. The situation is drastically different in “Stiller Freund,” in which the mezzo-soprano part – crafted as it was under the influence of Hunt-Lieberon – is primarily conjunct, invested to a greater degree with large-scale shape, and very well-integrated with the piano accompaniment. An important intermediary here is *Ashoka’s Dream*, as the vocal writing in “So Many Years Have Passed” suggests Lieberon’s melodicism had begun to shift even before he met Hunt-Lieberon. Finally, it is worth noting that “Listen and Hear” and “Stiller Freund” are not altogether different in their use of voice: both illustrate Lieberon’s penchant for syllabic writing.

“Listen and Hear” and “Stiller Freund” also make plain the marked variation in Lieberon’s harmonic language since the 1980s, a topic on which Lieberon himself has weighed in. “Listen and Hear” is wonderfully elegant in its pitch structure, and encapsulates many proclivities of Lieberon’s twelve-tone idiom. Aggregate structure is at the core of the song, and is negotiated by way of clever trichordal derivational strategies. Octatonicism is another major component of “Listen and Hear,” and is skillfully intermingled with other surface constructions. By “Stiller Freund,” Lieberon

has abandoned the aggregate as a generative abstraction, but vestiges of twelve-tone music persist at a surface level. For the most part, “Stiller Freund” is triadic, and features surfaces more consistent in texture and register than “Listen and Hear.” Widespread use of pedal tones renders the opening and closing sections of the song somewhat static, and engenders certain local relationships. Not all of “Stiller Freund” is triadic: octatonicism is a central element toward the middle of the song, and if anything, takes on an even larger role than in “Listen and Hear.” Lieberson’s fondness for octatonic surfaces is one of the major consistencies between his earlier and later works, a point further underscored by hints of octatonicism in “So Many Years Have Passed.”

Lastly, both the *Three Songs* and *Rilke Songs* contain evidence of Lieberson’s propensity for stylized homophonic surfaces, which he calls upon more frequently in later works, and repeatedly in the *Rilke Songs*. In “The reed is broken,” momentary homophony is displayed in the coda, and distinguished from surrounding music by virtue of a softer semitonal landscape (among other things). Homophony in Lieberson’s later works tends toward triadicism, as exemplified by the *Drala* quotation in “Stiller Freund.” The quotation is striking, and proves that triadicism in general is not a novelty of Lieberson’s recent music. There are additional comments on Lieberson’s homophonic writing in the next two sections.

The Neruda Songs: An Overview

Lieberson has finished four major works since the *Rilke Songs* were completed in 2001, two of which – the *Neruda Songs* and *The World In Flower* – are vocal. The others include *Ah* (2002), a piece for large orchestra, and his towering third *Piano Concerto*. As

it stands today, the *Neruda Songs* are probably Lieberson's most acclaimed composition. They were co-commissioned by the Los Angeles and Boston Symphony Orchestras, and since their premiere have earned Lieberson three Grammy nominations, as well as the 2008 Grawemeyer Award.

One reason for the popularity of the *Neruda Songs* is undoubtedly their lush, approachable soundscape: aesthetically, they pick up more or less where the *Rilke Songs* left off, and venture even further toward Romantic means of expression.¹ The remarks of arts journalist Robert Hilferty begin to detail the work's appeal:

He (Lieberson) has never been so lyrical. It [*Neruda Songs*] is a ravishing work, saturated with love. It's a gorgeous score, mostly tonal, though spiked with pungent dissonances. The composer seems to have abandoned his hard edge, and *Neruda Songs* was so much the better for it.²

More than this, Lieberson composed the *Neruda Songs* under the guidance of Hunt-Lieberson, for whom it was written, and who was its sole champion until her tragic death in 2006. There is no question that, by this time, Lieberson knew very well his wife's instrument:

Lieberson listens very closely to his wife. How else could he have composed a work that so lovingly takes advantage of every glorious aspect of her range, color, and technique?³

Lastly, there is the matter of the texts, which are excerpted from Pablo Neruda's ravishing *Cien Sonetos de Amor* (1959), and deal explicitly with the "joy, sensuality, fushion, ecstasy, and triumph" of love.⁴

¹ Several authors have connected Lieberson's recent music with late-Romantic composers. Stephen Tapscott, for example, notes that "Lieberson's framework tonality [in the *Neruda Songs*] recalls Berg, and structurally [they] resemble Mahler's song cycles." Likewise, James North asserts that "[Lieberson's] harmonic language and the general sound of the music touches on the practice of Strauss, Wolf, and Mahler." See Stephen Tapscott, "Coda: Fidelity," *Opera News* 73/2 (2008): 68; and North, 131.

² Robert Hilferty, "Concerts Everywhere: New York City – Boston Symphony: Lieberson, Strauss, Mahler," *American Record Guide* 69/2 (2006): 29.

³ *Ibid.*, 29.

The *Neruda Songs* deserve a comprehensive appraisal, and given their reception, seem likely to receive one before long. In the meantime, the passages below permit a few pertinent observations with respect to vocal writing, harmony, and surface design. The first excerpt, in Figure 4.1, is drawn from the second song in the collection, and is an example of momentary homophony.

Fig. 4.1. Peter Lieberon, *Neruda Songs*, “Amor, amor, las nubes a la torre del cielo,” mm. 45-51, reduction

The musical score is presented in two systems. The first system, labeled 'Suspended' with a tempo of quarter note = 46, includes staves for Wind (Cl.), Mezzo-soprano (Mez.), and String (Str.). The vocal line (Mez.) has lyrics 'el mar, la na - ve,'. The piano accompaniment (Str.) is marked 'p sonoro'. The second system, labeled 'Tempo primo' with a tempo of quarter note = 63, includes staves for Bassoon (Bsn.), Mezzo-soprano (Mez.), and Piano (Pno.). The vocal line (Mez.) has lyrics 'el di - a se des - ter - ra - ron jun - tos.'. The piano accompaniment (Pno.) is marked 'dolce' and 'mf'. The score includes various musical notations such as dynamics (p, mp, pp, mf), articulation (accents, slurs), and performance instructions (Suspended, Tempo primo).

Translation: The sea, the ship, the day were all exiled together.

⁴ Manuel Duran and Margery Safir, *Earth Tones: The Poetry of Pablo Neruda* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), 25. Lieberon sets five poems from the collection: “Si no fuera porque tus ojos tienen color de luna” (VIII); “Amor, amor, las nubes a la torre del cielo” (XXIV); “No estás lejos de mí un solo día” (XLV); “Ya eres mía. Reposa con tu sueño en mí sueño” (LXXXI); “Amor mío, si muero y tú no mueres” (XCII).

The triadicism of the passage is immediately apparent, as is the persistent E-flat pedal in the bass. Like previous examples, the homophonic writing in mm. 45-50 is separated from surrounding music; the normative surface returns in m. 51. In this excerpt, however, the mezzo-soprano proceeds freely, and is doubled by oboe and bassoon. In general, this arrangement is more common in later works than the very close vocal interaction in Part IV of “Stiller Freund.”

Figure 4.2 reproduces the first four measures of the final song, and these also feature a triadicism and homophonic design. Once again, a pedal tone is present, and the mezzo-soprano given license to weave about the quarter-notes in the strings.

Fig. 4.2. *Neruda Songs*, “Amor mio, si muero, y tu no mueres,” mm. 1-4, reduction

Sustained, peaceful ♩ = 48

Translation: My love, [if I die and you don't]

What is of great consequence here is that these bars are indicative of the default surface in “Amor mio, si muero.” Put another way, there is nothing momentary about the homophony: a style of writing that once constituted an effect, of sorts, is in this case nothing less than the song itself. Even if this particular example is exceptional, it provides some idea of the extent to which Lieberman’s idiom has softened since the *Three*

Songs.⁵ In most respects, though, the *Neruda Songs* are similar to the *Rilke Songs*, and in text setting and vocal writing have no closer relation.

Lieberson's Instrumental Music

One obvious way to expand the scope of the present study would be to admit Lieberson's instrumental compositions, which are after all far more numerous and diverse than his vocal works. Though instrumental genres carry their own concerns, many findings of the forgoing analysis are reflected in non-vocal works. Take, for example, the excerpt in Figure 4.3, which is drawn from *The Six Realms*, a cello concerto Lieberson finished just before the *Rilke Songs*. There is no precedent in place for Lieberson's early instrumental music, but it is clear enough that this passage bears resemblance to the writing in the *Rilke Songs*. The cello melody, for one, is decidedly vocal: it is mostly conjunct, limited in register, and reserves large leaps (m. 407-408) for dramatic moments. Notice also the triadic accompaniment in the strings, and recurring E pedal; on the whole, the excerpt savors strongly of A major. In sum, the organization of these measures would be familiar to anyone who had studied "Stiller Freund."

⁵ Moreover, music like this is clearly behind Hilferty's assertion that Lieberson's writing in the *Neruda Songs* is "mostly tonal."

Fig. 4.3. Peter Lieberon, *The Six Realms*, “The Jealous God Realm,”
mm. 399-412, reduction

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system features a Violin (Vlc.) line with glissando markings and a dynamic of *mp*. The English Horn (Eng. Hn.) and Flute (Fl.) parts are marked *mp*. The Strings (Str.) are marked *mp dolce*. The second system shows the Violin (Vlc.) line with dynamics *mf* and *mp dolce*, and the Flute (Fl.) part marked *p*. The Strings (Str.) are marked *mf* and *mp*. The third system includes the Bassoon (Bsn.) line with dynamics *pp* and *mp*, and the Percussion (Perc.) part. The Piano (Pno.) part is marked *f*. The Horn (Hn.) part is marked *p*. The Viola (Vla.) part is marked *mp*. The Strings (Str.) are marked *mp* and *p*. Performance instructions include *gliss.*, *pizz.*, and *arco*.

The next two figures are taken from Lieberon’s third *Piano Concerto* (2003), a work composed in the years between the *Rilke Songs* and *Neruda Songs*. Both examples occur during the third movement, and again, display organizational features that have

been observed in Lieberson’s vocal music. Figure 4.4 presents a brief stretch of the solo part, which is accompanied only by low strings. Whether this music is homophonic could be debated, but it’s rhythmic simplicity, textural consistency, and overall affect (“*tranquillo*”) certainly differentiate the passage from what surrounds it. The piano part is not triadic; rather, it demonstrates once again Lieberson’s enthusiasm for octatonicism: most of mm. 55-56, for instance, is derived from the C-sharp/D form of the scale, and the same is true of mm. 58-59.

Fig. 4.4. Peter Lieberson, *Piano Concerto No. 3*, Rondo, mm. 55-61, reduction

Triadicism is present in the *Concerto*, however, and is vividly displayed in one of the rondo’s secondary themes. The theme is reproduced in Figure 4.5, and begins with a two-measure piano solo. The triads in the treble-clef staff of the solo part are hard to miss, but the bass notes with which they are paired intersect only intermittently, and so

the sound of the passage is quite chromatic. There are also tinges of octatonicism in this phrase that result from the juxtaposition of octatonic tetrachords. One such juxtaposition occurs in m. 116: aside from the C-sharp in the bass on the downbeat, the pitches in that measure are drawn exclusively from the C/D octatonic scale. It would appear that Lieberson is fond of this technique, as a similar strategy was observed in the opening section of “Stiller Freund.”

Fig. 4.5. *Piano Concerto No. 3*, Rondo, mm. 113-117, reduction

The musical score for Figure 4.5 is a reduction of the Rondo section (mm. 113-117) from the Piano Concerto No. 3. It is written in 4/4 time with a tempo marking of *Tempo Primo* and a quarter note equal to 120. The score consists of three staves: Tpt., Pno., and Str.

- Tpt. (Trumpet):** The trumpet part is mostly silent, with a few notes in measures 114 and 115.
- Pno. (Piano):** The piano part is the most active. It features a chromatic bass line in the left hand and a more complex right hand. Dynamics include *mp*, *mf*, and *f*. Markings include *rhythmically very marked* and *f sempre*.
- Str. (Strings):** The string part is marked *f leggiero* and includes a *pizz.* (pizzicato) marking. It features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes.

The score is divided into two systems. The first system covers measures 113-117, and the second system covers measures 118-121. The key signature is one sharp (F#).

Finally, all of the examples in this section are from recent works, and so their features correlate most directly with those of the *Rilke Songs*. The technical relationships outlined above might just as easily have been demonstrated using the *Three Songs* as a lens through which to view earlier works.

What the Future Holds

What is most exciting about studying a living composer is the fact that, no matter how broad the inquiry, it cannot take into account all the data that may one day be available. Lieberson's catalogue is still growing, and it remains to be seen whether his interest in vocal music will endure, what new trends might develop in his musical language.

Fig. 4.6. Peter Lieberson, *The World In Flower*, "Owl Woman's Song," mm. 1-7, reduction

The musical score is presented in two systems. The first system features a mezzo-soprano (Mez.) line and a string (Str.) ensemble. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 54. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The vocal line begins with a rest, followed by the lyrics "How shall I be - gin my". The string part consists of a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with triplets, marked *mp sonoro* and *pizz.*. The second system continues the vocal line with the lyrics "song In the blue night that is set - tling?". The string part includes chords and a triplet figure, marked *espr.* and *p*. Performance markings such as *colla parte*, *arco*, and *pizz.* are used throughout.

Lieberson's most recent composition, *The World In Flower*, is a sprawling cantata for choir, mezzo-soprano soloist, baritone soloists, and orchestra. It was composed with Hunt-Lieberson in mind, but as mentioned, her untimely death prevented her from ever performing it. The work has not yet been recorded, but even a cursory glance at the score shows it to be a very close relative of the *Neruda Songs*, at least in terms of its materials. Figure 4.6 above contains the opening of measures of the "Owl Woman's Song," one of the movements Lieberson composed for Hunt-Lieberson. The materials are all familiar: triadicism is pervasive, and in most cases unadorned; the vocal writing is idiomatic, and even declamatory; the texture is lush and inviting; and there is even a short octatonic flourish in m. 6.

Since *The World In Flower* is already a few years old, it is impossible to say whether it represents the future of Lieberson's music, or a bygone era. But there is every indication that it will not take long to find out, and in the meantime, the rest of Lieberson's catalogue to explore.

Appendix One

Chronological List of Published Compositions

* Denotes Vocal Work

Flute Variations (1971)

Instrumentation: fl.
Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

Concerto for Four Groups of Instruments (1972)

Instrumentation: I: fl. ob. cl. II: 2 vln. vla. III: bsn. vlc. cb. IV: hp. pno.
Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

Concerto for Violoncello with Accompanying Trios (1974)

Instrumentation: I: fl. ob. tpt. II. drm. man. hp. III: 2 vln. vla.
IV: bcl. pno. cb. V: 3 timp.
Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

Accordance for 8 Instruments (1975)

Instrumentation: afl. bcl. ob. vib. (glock.) hp. pno. vla. cb.
Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

Piano Fantasy (1975)

Instrumentation: pno.
Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

Tashi Quartet (1978)

Instrumentation: cl. vln. vlc. pno.
Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

Three Songs (1981)*

Instrumentation: fl. ob. cl. bsn. tpt. hn. tbn. hp. pno. 2 vln. vla. vlc. cb.
Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

Concerto for Piano (1983)

Instrumentation: pno. solo, lg. orch.
Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

Lalita, Chamber Variations (1984)

Instrumentation: fl. (pic.) cl. (bcl.) hn. perc. pno. vln. vla. vlc. cb.
Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

Bagatelles (1985)

Instrumentation: pno.
Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

Feast Day (1985)

Instrumentation: fl. (pic. afl.) ob. pno. (hpd.) vlc.
Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

Drala (1986)

Instrumentation: ch. orch.
Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

Ziji (1987)

Instrumentation: cl. hn. pno. vln. vla. vlc.
Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

The Gesar Legend (1988)

Instrumentation: orch.
Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

Raising the Gaze (1988)

Instrumentation: fl. (pic.) cl. (bcl.) perc. pno. vln. vla. vlc.
Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

Fantasy Pieces (1989)

Instrumentation: pno.
Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

Scherzo No. 1 (1989)

Instrumentation: pno.
Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

Elegy (1990)

Instrumentation: vln. pno.
Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

Wind Messengers (1990)

Instrumentation: 3 fl. 2 ob. 2 cl. (2 bcl.) 2 hn.
Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

A Little Fanfare (1991)

Instrumentation: fl. tpt. vln. hp.
Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

King Gesar (1991)

Instrumentation: nar. fl. (pic.) cl. (bcl.) hn. tbn. perc. 2 pno. vlc.
Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

World's Turning (1991)

Instrumentation: lg. orch.
Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

Viola Concerto (1992)

Instrumentation: vla. solo, ch. orch.
Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

A Little Fanfare (II) (1993)

Instrumentation: cl. vln. vla. pno.
Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

Variations (1993)

Instrumentation: vln. pno.
Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

Garland (1994)

Instrumentation: pno.
Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

Rhapsody for Viola and Orchestra (1994)

Instrumentation: vla. solo, orch.
Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

Rumble (1994)

Instrumentation: vla. cb. perc.
Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

String Quartet (1994)

Instrumentation: 2 vln. vla. vlc.
Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

Fire (from "The Five Great Elements") (1995)

Instrumentation: lg. orch.
Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

Piano Variations (1995)

Instrumentation: pno.
Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

Processional (1995)

Instrumentation: orch.
Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

Three Variations for Violoncello and Piano (1996)

Instrumentation: vlc. pno.
Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

Ashoka's Dream (1997)*

Instrumentation: 3 sop. 2 mz. alt. 3 ten. 2 bar. 3 bs. (soloists), ch. orch.
Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

The Ocean that has No West and No East (1997)

Instrumentation: pno.
Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

Free and Easy Wanderer (1998)

Instrumentation: pic. ob. 2 cl. (bcl.) bsn. hn. tpt. tbn. perc. pno. 2 vln. vla. vlc. cb.
Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

Horn Concerto (1998)

Instrumentation: hn. solo, ch. orch.
Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

Tolling Piece (1998)

Instrumentation: pno.
Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

Red Garuda (1999)

Instrumentation: pno. solo, lg. orch.
Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

The Six Realms (2000)

Instrumentation: vlc. solo, lg. orch.
Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

C'mon Pigs of Western Civilization Eat More Grease (2001)*

Instrumentation: bar. pno.
Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

Forgiveness (2001)*

Instrumentation: bar. vlc.

Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

Piano Quintet (2001)

Instrumentation: 2 vln. vla. vlc. pno.

Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

Rilke Songs (2001)*

Instrumentation: mz. pno.

Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

Ah (2002)

Instrumentation: lg. orch.

Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

Piano Concerto No. 3 (2003)

Instrumentation: pno. solo, lg. orch.

Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

Neruda Songs (2005)*

Instrumentation: mz. solo, orch.

Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

Suite from *Ashoka's Dream* (2008)*

Instrumentation: ch. orch.

Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

The World in Flower (2009)*

Instrumentation: mz. bar. (soloists), chr. orch.

Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

Appendix Two

Discography of CD Recordings

* Denotes Vocal Work

Piano Concerto

New World Records NW 325-2, 1984

Peter Serkin, Boston Symphony Orchestra

Piano Concerto (1983)

Peter Serkin: Stravinsky, Wolpe, Lieberson

New World Records 80344, 1992

Peter Serkin

Bagatelles (1985)

Music For Chamber Ensemble

Neuma Records NMA 79, 1993

Boston Musica Viva

Raising the Gaze (1988)

King Gesar

Sony Classical SK 57971, 1996

Emanuel Ax, Yo-Yo Ma, Peter Serkin, William Purvis, et al.

King Gesar (1991)

... In Real Time

RCA 68189, 1996

Peter Serkin

Bagatelles (1985)

Fantasy Pieces (1989)

The Ocean that has No West and No East

Koch International Classics 3-7450-2 HI, 2000

Peter Serkin

The Ocean that Has No West and No East (1997)

Piano Fantasy (1975)

Raising the Gaze

Deutsche Grammophon 457 606-2, 2001

Rosemary Hardy, Cleveland Orchestra, Asko Ensemble, London Sinfonietta

Drala (1986)

Concerto for Four Groups of Instruments (1972)

Accordance for 8 Instruments (1975)

Three Songs (1981)*

Ziji (1987)

Raising the Gaze (1988)

Fire (1995)

Free and Easy Wanderer (1998)

Neruda Songs

Nonesuch Records 79954-2, 2005

Lorraine Hunt Lieberson, Boston Symphony Orchestra

Neruda Songs (2005)*

Rilke Songs, The Six Realms, Horn Concerto

Bridge Records 9178, 2006

Lorraine Hunt Lieberson, Peter Serkin, William Purvis,

Michaela Fukacova, Odense Symphony Orchestra

Rilke Songs (2001)*

The Six Realms (2000)

Horn Concerto (1998)

Songs by Mahler Handel, and Peter Lieberson

Wigmore Hall Live No. 13, 2007

Lorraine Hunt Lieberson, Roger Vignoles

Rilke Songs (2001)*

(“O ihr Zärtlichen” “Stiller Freund”)

Ashoka’s Dream (1997)*

(“Triraksha’s Aria”)

Endangered

Albany Records TR 1051, 2008

Marthanne Verbit

The Ocean that Has No West and No East (1997)

Pleasure is the Law (Feast day)

Boston Records BOS 1074, 2009

Nadine Asin, Elaine Douvas, Darrett Adkins, Steven Beck

Feast Day (1985)

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