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The Early Organ Sinfonias of Herman Berlinski

by

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ABSTRACT

The Early Organ Sinfonias of Herman Berlinski

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As the first composer to forge a Jewish idiom for the pipe organ, and the only composer to produce a major body of Hebraic concert works for the instrument, Herman Berlinski is a composer of exceptional creativity.

The document begins with the fascinating story of the composer’s life. Berlinski, a native of Leipzig, completed his college degree at the Leipzig Conservatory in 1932. When Hitler came to power in 1933, Berlinski fled to France, where he lived on student visa status, studying with Nadia Boulanger and Alfred Cortot. Following the Nazi invasion of France, Berlinski served as an infantryman, and, after the fall of France, emigrated to America. In 1954 he was hired by Temple Emanu El, New York as Assistant Organist/Music Assistant. He soon realized that no Jewish organ repertoire of any significance existed and set about to create the music himself. Major organ works written at Emanu El include “The Burning Bush” and Sinfonias Nos. 2 and 3. In 1963 he moved to Washington, D.C. to become the Organist-Director of Music of the Washington Hebrew Congregation.

Among his compositions for organ are twelve major works entitled “sinfonias,” which he composed between the years 1954 and 2000. This document examines the first three
sinfonias, each of which is a multi-movement suite. Sinfonia No. 1, *Litanies for the Persecuted*, is a nine-movement suite for organ, narrator, and alto soloist, written in memory of Jews who died in the Holocaust. Sinfonia No. 2, *Holy Days and Festivals*, is a five-movement suite of organ preludes, one for each Jewish festival and High Holy Day. Sinfonia No. 3, *Sounds and Motions*, is a six-movement secular suite for solo organ which explores colors and rhythms.

The final chapter summarizes characteristics of Berlinski's compositional style—including the use of chromatic harmony, mixed meters, classic forms, and finely-shaded dynamics—and discusses influences on his style and the significance of his work.

Although Berlinski always writes as a Jew, his music transcends parochial boundaries, to touch the souls of all mankind.
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PREFACE

After Herman Berlinski’s work for solo organ, “The Burning Bush,” was premiered by Robert Baker in New York in 1956 and performed by Baker in London at the International Congress of Organists in 1957, the work quickly gained fame as a great piece of concert organ literature, and Berlinski became an overnight success throughout America and Europe as a brilliant composer for the instrument. There was no other work like “The Burning Bush” written for the organ. The piece employed a rhapsodic, fiery, twentieth-century chromaticism and was the first serious Jewish work to be composed for the concert organ repertoire.

I first learned of this work in my undergraduate years of organ study. It was only years later, however, after I became Organist-Choirmaster of Congregation Emanu El in Houston and had learned additional works written by Berlinski for the Jewish sacred service, that I developed a profound appreciation for the genius of this composer. He had forged a new idiom which allowed him to express Jewish modes and ideas in an authentic repertoire for the pipe organ, where none of any real substance previously existed. The more I knew of this composer’s music, the more I wanted to know about the music itself and the man who wrote it.

When I contacted the composer to acquire a listing of his total oeuvre, I was fascinated to discover that he had written eleven major works for the organ, which he titled “organ sinfonias.” (In addition, he composed a twelfth organ sinfonia during the writing of
this paper, and it was premiered at the Thomaskirche in Leipzig, Germany on October 28, 2000.) In 1992, I visited the composer at his home in Washington, D.C., to talk with him about his organ sinfonias, and about the possibility of writing my doctoral document on these works. His sinfonias comprise a major body of twentieth-century literature for the organ, but his sinfonia writing is largely unknown to the world, because only Sinfonias Nos. 2 and 3 are published. Included in this sinfonia repertoire are two concerti for solo organ and orchestra, Sinfonias Nos. 4 and 6. These two sinfonias, alone, comprise a major addition to twentieth-century organ concerto literature.

My study of his Sinfonias Nos. 2 and 3 led to my performance of those sinfonias on my doctoral lecture recital in 1995, which the composer attended. It has been my further privilege to share in the performance of additional collaborative recitals with the composer in concerts of his music in Houston and New York.

The creativity, warmth, and sophisticated beauty of the music of Herman Berlinski spring, not surprisingly, from a man whose personality and character express these qualities as well. Through my research it has been my great privilege to develop a warm and cherished personal friendship with the composer. My research for this document has led to numerous interviews with him. In these interviews, the composer, who is as articulate in speech as he is in music, shared with me his insights not only into matters musical, but also into matters Judaic, biographical, and philosophical. Ever the communicator, the composer’s gift for imparting wisdom and knowledge with honesty, insight, charm, and humor made the interviews memorable experiences, as well as informative ones. As the consummate storyteller, Berlinski illustrates a point or shares a story in a manner which leaves an indelible
imprint on the listener. I have tried to quote the composer’s own words when possible, so that the reader can enjoy not only the depth and clarity of the composer’s thinking but also his charm and style.

This document provides an analysis of the composer’s first three organ sinfonias and a discussion of the general traits of his writing, as revealed in these early sinfonias. An additional nine sinfonias await exploration, and are listed in Appendix B of this document. Eleven of the sinfonias are available in manuscript only. (Sinfonia No. 2, *Holy Days and Festivals*, is published by Transcontinental Music Publications.) At the time of this writing, however, a collection of Berlinski’s manuscripts is being created at the Library of Congress, and the manuscripts of his organ sinfonias will be included in that collection.
CHAPTER 1

BIOGRAPHY

In Leipzig, Germany, on August 16, 1910, a young Polish couple, Boris and Deborah Wygodzki Berlinksy, gave birth to their sixth child, whom they named Herman. The young couple had immigrated from Poland to Leipzig only five years earlier. Boris Berlinksy had no formal education and had worked as a factory laborer in Lodz, Poland, since the age of ten. When the Berlinksy's arrived in Leipzig, they were barely nineteen or twenty years of age, but were already the parents of three children. With Herman's birth in 1910, their family of six children was complete.

Boris began a new occupation as a haberdasher in his adopted country, and he prospered in the new business. A devoutly Orthodox Jew, he hired a Polish rabbi to come to the home to teach the children to read and write Yiddish, the language in which the parents were most fluent. (Yiddish is a language combining German, Hebrew, and Slavic languages.) As Herman was growing up, the music of the Berlinksy's household and synagogue was that of Eastern, rather than Western Europe, because of the family's Polish heritage. The music in Eastern European synagogues was free-flowing Hebrew chant, based on ancient Oriental modes. This dramatic Eastern European chant was destined to exert a profound influence on Herman, and it would become a wellspring from which his own musical composition would flow in years to come.

Herman's education in piano began when he was only six years of age. Through his
piano lessons. The doors to Western music opened widely. When he was ten years old, his mother died, and, following her death, as a sign of mourning, no one in the family played the piano for a year. At the age of about thirteen, he began studying piano with an especially gifted piano teacher who had been trained at the Leipzig State Conservatory. She was a young, Jewish woman, also an immigrant from Poland, named Bronya Gottlieb. Her teaching was systematic, warm, and positive and, under her tutelage, the young student’s musicianship flourished. In addition to lessons in piano, he studied clarinet.

At seventeen Berlinski entered the Leipzig State Conservatory on a clarinet scholarship, studying the instrument with the principal clarinetist of the Gewandhaus orchestra. He enrolled in the Conservatory as a double major in clarinet and conducting, with a minor in piano. He also studied percussion. By his second year, he had changed his major to piano, with a minor in theory. His teachers at the Conservatory were Otto Weinreich, piano; Siegfried Karg-Elert, theory; Guenther Raphael, counterpoint; and Max Hochkofler, conducting.

On Friday evenings in Leipzig, concerts of Bach motets were held at St. Thomas Church, the church made famous by J. S. Bach’s Cantorate. Berlinski began to attend these concerts regularly, even though his attendance at the concerts on Friday evenings went against his father’s wishes that his son be in synagogue for Sabbath services rather than attending concerts at a Christian church. In these Friday evening concerts, however, the young Berlinski was able to hear in live performance the best organ and choral music that German culture had to offer—sacred music from the time of J. S. Bach to the music of Max Reger, both of whom had been Leipzig composers.
Organ music impressed Berlinski deeply. Karl Straube, who was the Cantor of St. Thomas Church, was also well-known as an organist and Professor of Organ at the Institut der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Landeskirche Sachsen, the institute of sacred music attached to the Leipzig Conservatory. Straube himself had founded the institute, for the purpose of providing education in Lutheran church music to those conservatory musicians who were interested in a career in church music.

In the spring of 1932, Professor Straube overheard Berlinski practicing Bach’s Goldberg Variations on the piano at the Conservatory, and he was so impressed with what he heard that he encouraged Berlinski to undertake the study of organ, along with his piano studies. Straube offered to teach Berlinski himself, through the auspices of the church music institute. There was only one impediment. Berlinski would have to convert to Christianity in order to study the organ at the church music institute, because the Lutheran church music institute required that its students be Christian. Berlinski understood that Karl Straube was not an anti-Semite, but that the rules of the school were fixed and narrow. Because conversion to Christianity was out of the question for the young Jewish pianist, the study of organ was not accessible to him during his years at the Conservatory.

Berlinski graduated from the Leipzig State Conservatory with an Artist’s Diploma in the spring of 1932. In January of 1933, Hitler was appointed Chancellor of the Third Reich. It was no longer safe to live in Germany. Berlinski was in danger not only because he was a Jew, but also because, in his early college days, he had composed music for a political cabaret in Leipzig, writing music of a satirical nature. In March of 1933, at his father’s urging, he applied for and received a Polish passport. (As Jewish immigrants from
Poland, his family had never acquired German citizenship. Had Berlinski been unable to obtain a Polish passport, he would have been a man without citizenship in any country. The Polish passport granted him a national citizenship, thereby allowing him, at that time, the right of emigration from Germany, and, ultimately, saving his life.) With his newly acquired Polish passport, he left Germany and crossed over into Poland. To avoid arousing suspicion, he carried no luggage except for some music in a satchel. His only clothing was that which he wore on his body. Once in Poland, he applied for a student visa to France, the only Western European country open to entry to him as a student. While in Poland, he played piano recitals, working his way northward to Danzig, and staying with various relatives, all of whom later perished in the Holocaust themselves. His own immediate family—his father and his siblings—were all later able to leave Germany and to escape to safety.

The Baltic seaport of Danzig was a free state, but, in the spring of 1933, it was already under the influence of the Nazis. Berlinski was able to arrange passage by sea out of Danzig, and, by means of a circuitous route, eventually to reach Paris. The journey was complicated and dangerous, but he arrived safely in Paris in October of 1933.

After Berlinski reached Paris, his friend, Sina Goldfine, was able to obtain a student visa to France and to make her own journey to Paris where she would join the composer. Ms. Goldfine was an accomplished young pianist whom Berlinski had known through parochial school and college in Leipzig, and with whom he was in love. Upon Sina’s arrival in Paris, the couple began the lengthy process necessary to obtain the legal documents to marry. With dangerous escapes behind them and an eight-month-long process to obtain the legal documents finally completed, the two were at last able to marry. The young couple enrolled
in the Ecole Normale de Musique. There Berlinski studied piano with Alfred Cortot and composition with Nadia Boulanger. Of all his mentors, it is Mlle. Boulanger's teaching which the composer credits with having exerted the greatest influence on his development as a composer.³ The musical discipline and the clarity of sixteenth-century contrapuntal writing he learned from her were indispensable to his growth as a composer. The Berlinskis were living in Paris on six-month, renewable study visas, and for them to continue to live in Paris, it was imperative that they remain in a university.

After three years at the Ecole Normale, Berlinski transferred to another Parisian conservatory, the Scola Cantorum, where he studied composition with Daniel-Lesur and orchestration with Jules LeFebré. It was here that he met Olivier Messiaen, with whom he would later study at Tanglewood. Both Daniel-Lesur and Messiaen were members of a group of French composers, formed in 1936, known as “La Jeune France.” The composers of “La Jeune France” expounded a broad, humanistic approach to composing music in which their goal was to communicate beyond parochial bounds and national interests, and to write music that would speak for all mankind.⁴ This humanistic philosophy helped to shape Berlinski’s own compositional philosophy. Also of great help to Berlinski was the close personal and professional bond that he developed with Daniel-Lesur. In 1937 Madame Lesur, Daniel-Lesur’s mother, who was a virtuoso performer on the newly invented Ondes Martenot, together with students of the Schola Cantorum, performed Berlinski’s suite, From the World of My Father. Daniel-Lesur was so impressed with the work that, from that point forward, he became a champion and promoter of Berlinski’s music, thus establishing a very important French musical connection for the young German refugee composer.
During his student years in Paris, from 1934 to 1939, Berlinski worked as the Music Director of a sophisticated Yiddish theater known as PIAT, or the Paris Jewish Avant-garde Theater. Paris, in those days, was teeming with political refugees. A number of Jewish refugees who were semi-professional actors lived in Paris and acted in the Yiddish plays of PIAT. With and without families, the actors had drifted into France and toiled at various underpaid jobs, continuously under the threat of an arrêt-d'expulsion. In the evening, however, they found their way into the rehearsal hall and rehearsed deep into the night, putting on plays of high intensity and quality. Hired to compose music for the theater company, Berlinski became extremely successful as its composer, and was commissioned to create music in rapid order for major stage plays at the theater. A reservoir of musical creativity opened up within the composer as he wrote for the Yiddish theater, and with it grew an awakened awareness of his own Jewish spirituality. The experience became a turning point in his life.5

Berlinski was also Music Director and Composer-in-Residence of the Hans Weidt Ballet. Hans Weidt, the founder of the Parisian ballet company for whom Berlinski worked, was himself a political refugee, having fled from Germany after the well-known German ballet company, the Joos Ballet, of which he was a member, had fallen into political disfavor with the Third Reich.

In 1939, when the Nazis invaded France, the composer volunteered for military service. Because he was not a French citizen, he was not permitted to join the regular French army, so he volunteered for the French Foreign Legion. His regiment entered into front-line action between the Belgian border and Dunkerque, its assignment being to cover the French
army as it retreated to the center of France. Out of his regiment of 2,500 soldiers, Berlinski was one of only 200 who survived.

Ironically, it was while he was in the French Foreign Legion that he encountered the organ a second time. In December of 1939, his regiment was encamped in the village of Balan near Lyon. There, in an ancient church, he discovered a beautiful French harmonium, a small keyboard instrument related to a pump organ. The composer obtained permission to play on it at night, after duty hours. On Christmas Eve, 1939, while his fellow Jewish legionnaires kept night watch, he played the midnight mass on the harmonium for his Christian comrades. The moment became an especially poignant memory for him, and years later—after he had achieved fame and world renown as a composer of Jewish organ music, as he played organ recitals of his own Jewish music in grand churches, e.g., in the Notre Dame Cathedral of Paris or in the Thomaskirche of Leipzig, while sitting on Karl Straube’s organ bench—he would think back to that Christmas Eve as organist in the humble Catholic church of a French village in the middle of a war.7

With the surrender of France to the Nazis in the summer of 1940, his army unit was demobilized. Paris, at this point, was occupied by the Nazis. The Berlinskis’ apartment in Paris had been broken into, but, fortunately, Sina Berlinski was not at home at the time of the break-in. The composer’s wife was able to leave Paris on one of the last trains out of the city. She traveled to Marseille, where her sister was living, and was welcomed by her sister and her sister’s husband and invited to live with them in their home. Berlinski was able to join her there after the surrender of the French army and the demobilization of his military unit.
Emigration visas to America were available to Jewish refugees from Germany at that
time, and the Berlinskis applied for visas. The visas arrived in March of 1941, and the couple
began their journey to America. On their route they traveled from Marseille by way of Pau,
the Pyrenees, Zaragossa, Bilbao, and Havana to New York, arriving in Brooklyn harbor in
May of 1941.

The early years in America were a struggle professionally. Berlinski taught private
piano, was a free-lance composer, and directed music for a Yiddish theater in New York. A
son, David, was born in February of 1942. In 1947 he became a citizen of the United States.

In the summer of 1948, he won a scholarship to study at Tanglewood with Olivier
Messiaen. He and Messiaen had met earlier in Paris during Berlinski’s student years. From
his summer’s study with Messiaen, Berlinski learned rhythmic techniques and refinements that
he would adapt and incorporate into his own music, particularly Messiaen’s use of Hindu
rhythms and chromatic durations. The summer was also a fortuitous experience in yet
another way, for Berlinski met a publisher at Tanglewood, Milton Feist, the founder of
Mercury Music Corporation. Feist’s father, Leo Feist, had made a fortune in publishing
popular music, and Feist felt it important to invest a portion of that money in publishing
serious music of composers who had not yet attained world fame and whose work didn’t
promise immediate financial reward. Berlinski and Feist developed not only an important
business relationship, but also a deep and lasting friendship and spiritual bond. For Milton
Feist was also a rabbi, and through his own enlightened spirituality, Feist became a spiritual
mentor to Berlinski and, further, became the rabbi whom the composer would call his own.
In 1953 Berlinski began studies toward a Doctor of Sacred Music Degree at the Jewish Theological Seminary, studying organ with Joseph Yasser. In the same year, he was elected President of the Jewish Music Forum, an alliance of Jewish musicians in the city of New York. Through this organization, he became friends with Lazare Saminsky, the Music Director of Temple Emanu El, New York. Saminsky was nearing retirement age and looking for a successor whom he could groom to carry on his work at that prestigious congregation. When the staff position for Music Assistant-Assistant Organist at Temple Emanu El opened in 1954, it was Saminsky who recommended Berlinski for the job, with plans to shape him into his “heir apparent.” Berlinski was hired, and the new career move altered the course of his professional life profoundly.

Temple Emanu El had a distinguished history of music and musicians and was one of the most prestigious synagogues in the world, located on Fifth Avenue in New York. It had the distinction of having been the first Reform congregation in America to add a regular choir (1845) and a pipe organ (1851) to its worship, and a century later, when Berlinski was appointed to its music staff, it was still at the forefront of Jewish liturgical music. His responsibilities at Emanu El included working directly with both Music Director Lazare Saminsky and Organist Robert Baker, both of whom were musical giants.

Saminsky had emigrated from Russia, where his education had included the study of composition with Rimsky-Korsakov, and where he had distinguished himself as a conductor of international stature, an ethnomusicologist active in the preservation of Jewish folk music, and as Director of the Tbilisi Conservatory. During his tenure as Music Director of Temple
Emanu El (1924-56), the quality of the temple’s music program was unsurpassed. He was known for his impeccable taste and for the encouragement of new liturgical composition. Berlinski was one of those fortunate young composers whom Saminsky supported and encouraged. Berlinski learned much from his mentor. Especially important to Berlinski as a composer was the novel approach Saminsky took to the harmonization of Jewish modal music. Prior to Saminsky’s time, the harmonization of Jewish music followed a Tonic/Dominant approach, but Saminsky harmonized the modal melodies with modally-rooted chords.

Senior Organist Robert Baker was also a towering figure in American music. Baker was known throughout America as an outstanding organ recitalist and pedagogue. In addition to being Organist of Temple Emanu El, he had a distinguished career as Organist-Choirmaster at several well-known New York churches, including Fifth Avenue Presbyterian. Dr. Baker was respected as a gifted teacher of the organ, and later became Dean of the School of Sacred Music at Union Seminary and at Yale University, when the school re-established itself at the latter institution. In Robert Baker, Herman Berlinski had finally connected with a great teacher of organ who, as Organist of Emanu El, would teach Berlinski how to play the complex instrument masterfully.

Part of Berlinski’s job at Emanu El would be to write organ music for the Jewish service, very little of which existed in 1954. New York in the early and middle years of the twentieth century was the principal center of Jewish liturgical music production. The enormous waves of immigration to America’s shores of European Jews seeking refuge from
the wars in Europe, especially from the horrors of the Nazi Holocaust, brought to America some of the finest Jewish composers of liturgical music the world has ever seen—among them Sam Adler, Jacob Beimel, Ernest Bloch, Julius Chajes, Isadore Freed, Herbert Fromm, Max Janowski, Ernest Levy, Darius Milhaud, Heinrich Shalit, Robert Starer, Jacob Weinberg, and Herman Berlinski. Europe’s loss was America’s gain.

Musical creativity in New York was encouraged and developed by several Jewish alliances and institutions: first of all, by the Jewish Music Forum, an alliance of Jewish musicians in the city of New York (whose meeting place was at the Ninety-Second Street YMHA); secondly, by two New York City synagogues, Temple Emanu El and Park Avenue Synagogue; and, thirdly, by the schools and departments of sacred music attached to each of the three Jewish seminaries in the city, i.e., Hebrew Union College (Reform Judaism), the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (Conservative Judaism), and Yeshiva College (Orthodox Judaism).

The main thrust of the liturgical composition of these composers was focused on the composition of vocal music for cantor and choir, not on literature for the organ, however. The Jewish liturgical organ music composed before Berlinski began writing for the instrument was quiet and not particularly substantive or idiomatic to the instrument. At this point in the development of Jewish liturgical music, the organ was regarded primarily as an accompanying instrument for the singers. Its use in the service of worship was that of a quiet support for the singers or perhaps as background music for a meditation or for the mourner’s Kaddish. The instrument was not a favorite with many Jewish congregants for several reasons. The
organ was new to Jewish music, as had been mentioned earlier. Although the Talmud refers to the use of an instrument called a “magrepha,” which may have been used in the Herodian Temple in Jerusalem and which may have been somewhat related to a primitive, wind-generated pipe organ,¹⁴ no organs had been used in Jewish worship for thousands of years, until their introduction in the nineteenth century in Germany as a part of the Reform movement. Also, the organ was viewed by many congregants as a “Christian” instrument, because of its historical use in the music of worship in so many Christian churches. A further deterrent to Jewish organ composition arose from the fact that most Jewish composers were not organists themselves, and, therefore, were lacking an in-depth understanding necessary to compose convincingly for the complicated instrument.¹⁵

At last, however, with the immigration of Herman Berlinski to America, a Jewish composer had arrived who was familiar with the organ music of both the German and French traditions. His background as a native son of Leipzig, an alumnus of the Leipzig State Conservatory, and a regular concert-goer at the concerts of sacred music at the Thomaskirche qualified him eminently to draw upon the German organ tradition. His six years of music study in Paris, during which he learned French musical traditions, included a familiarization with the French organ tradition. Now, in New York, Berlinski’s opportunity had arrived. As Temple Emanu El’s assistant organist, he would be playing a magnificent 119-rank, symphonic organ himself, and he would also be studying organ with Dr. Robert Baker, one of the most respected concert organists and teachers of the instrument in America. If Berlinski practiced diligently, he could become a great organist—a great Jewish organist. If
he wanted to play great Jewish liturgical organ music, however, he would have to compose it himself.

When Berlinski arrived at Temple Emanu El, Dr. Baker was in the process of guiding the congregation through a major renovation of and addition to their large Casavant pipe organ. As a part of that process, Baker had proposed the addition to the instrument of two ranks of horizontal heralding trumpets, an addition which, by itself, would cost $22,000, an especially large item for the congregation to agree to fund in the mid-1950's. To insure that the congregation would feel that they had "gotten their money's worth" and to help them understand the power and drama the heralding trumpets would add to the sound of the organ, Baker asked Berlinski if he would compose a Jewish organ work that would feature the trumpets. The work needed to be so dramatic and so thrilling that the congregation would be excited by the addition of the trumpets and realize that their investment was, indeed, justified. Berlinski composed a brilliant work of powerful drama to celebrate the occasion— a work which moved virtuosically from the softest organ sounds through sweeping crescendos to musical climaxes on the organ's new heralding trumpets. He entitled the work "The Burning Bush." The work was like none other which had ever been composed for the organ. Berlinski had forged a new Jewish idiom in which the pipe organ could now speak. Baker premiered the work in concert at Emanu El in 1956 and then took it to London to play on a concert of the International Congress of Organists the following summer. With the creation of "The Burning Bush," Berlinski became an overnight success and secured a permanent place for himself in the annals of American organ music. Where no Jewish organ music for the instrument's concert repertoire previously existed, a work of genius now stood.
The following years were extremely busy ones for the composer as he worked at Emanu El, studied for his doctorate at the Jewish Theological Seminary, met the responsibilities of parenthood and family life, composed music, and practiced the organ. The result of his overwork was a major heart attack in 1958, at the young age of forty-eight. Thankfully, the composer was able to recover over a period of time and be fully restored to good health. He was able to resume his work at Emanu El and continue his study toward the doctorate. He completed the degree and received the first Doctorate of Sacred Music conferred by the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in 1960. His Organ Sinfonia No. 1 is the excerpted organ version of the orchestral work he wrote for his doctoral dissertation at that institution. Organ Sinfonias Nos. 2 and 3 were also composed during his years at Temple Emanu El.

In 1963, Rabbi Norman Gerstenfeld, the senior rabbi of the Washington Hebrew Congregation, came to New York in search of a musician to fill the position of Organist-Director of Music at his congregation, a large Reform temple in the nation’s capital. Berlinski was recommended to Rabbi Gerstenfeld, and the Rabbi offered him the position. Because Temple Emanu El had made it clear to Berlinski that his history as a heart patient would prevent him from ever becoming the senior Organist-Director of Emanu El, the choice was not a difficult one for him to make. Berlinski accepted the position as Organist-Director of Music at the Washington Hebrew Congregation in May of 1963 and moved to Washington in August of that year. He served in that position for the next fourteen years, continuing to compose prolifically all the while. The next seven organ sinfonias were among the works composed during this period.
At the age of sixty-seven, he retired from Washington Hebrew Congregation, turning his substantial energies outward to the world at large. He has continued to compose prolifically, completing his twelfth organ sinfonia, entitled “These are the Holy Ten Commandments,” in the year 2000. At the time of the writing of this document, in the year 2000 alone, he has actively participated in the following major concerts and recordings of his music. In February, his violin sonata, Le Violon de Chagall, which was presented at the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., received enthusiastic reviews in the Washington Post. In April, he traveled to Berlin to be artistic advisor to the Berlin Philharmonic Chorus and the Berlin Radio Orchestra as they recorded his Avodat Shabbat, his musical setting of the Sabbath service. And on October 28, at the Thomaskirche in Leipzig, his twelfth organ sinfonia, These are the Holy Ten Commandments, scored for organ, choir, soprano, tenor, and baritone soloists, two trumpets, and percussion received its premiere. A second performance took place at the Musikhochschule in Munich on November 12, with the composer in attendance. In February 2001, a special honor was bestowed on him by the government of the Federal Republic of Germany, when it decorated him with the Commander’s Cross of Merit for his artistic achievements and his efforts in behalf of the promotion of interfaith understanding.

As this document nears completion, the composer, who is well into his ninetieth year of life, continues to compose, lecture, and make recordings of his music, both in America and in Europe. Concerts of his music are currently scheduled in Australia, Spain, Germany, and America. His vibrancy and energy are remarkable, and the fact that he has just completed a
new organ sinfonia in the year 2000 is a source of joy and inspiration to organists the world over.

In 1984 the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters presented Berlinski with a citation that states: “Herman Berlinski is among the few 20th-century composers who have produced a significant body of music for the organ...” Of supreme significance to organists and to Jewish sacred music is the fact that Berlinski is the first American composer to have forged a Jewish idiom for the organ and the only composer who has produced a major body of Hebraic concert works for the instrument.
NOTES

Biographical information throughout this document comes primarily from oral and taped interviews with the composer. Material from other sources is indicated in note references.

1. *Groves Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 1980 ed., s.v. “Straube, Karl.” Straube was so well respected as a teacher of organ that he was known as “der Organismacher.”

2. Berlinski feels sure that Straube was not trying to pressure him to convert to Christianity and that Straube had no hidden agenda along these lines. The predominantly Christian culture of Germany had for years, however, exerted a strong pressure on German Jews to convert to Christianity. As a result, a number of German Jews did convert, among them composers Felix Mendelssohn, whose family had converted, and Gustav Mahler, who converted as an adult.

3. For Boulanger’s influence on the training of young musicians, see, for example, *Groves*, s.v. “Boulanger, Nadia.”


6. When Berlinski discusses the musical sound made by the French harmonium, he comments on the beauty and expressiveness of the instrument’s tone. The harmonium is related to a pump organ in its production of sound. Both instruments are supplied with air by a pair of bellows pumped by the feet. This steady current of air, then, sets in motion the vibration of metal tongues which act as free reeds. The harmonium’s tone is more expressive than that of a pump organ, however, and lends itself well to the playing of the Romantic music of the 19th-century composers. For more information, see Willi Apel, *Harvard Dictionary of Music*, 1964 ed., s.v. “Harmonium.”

7. Maier, 19.

8. The term “chromatic durations” used by Messiaen is explained by Clyde Holloway thus: “a series of durations which, in simplest form, progressively increases or decreases by a consistent unit of value, frequently a sixteenth note.” See Clyde Holloway, “The Organ Works of Olivier Messiaen and their Importance in his Total Oeuvre” (S.M.D. diss., Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York, 1974), 188.


12. Hieronymus, 49-74. In her survey and discussion of organ music for the Jewish sacred service, Dr. Hieronymus lists the complete body of published organ works for the Jewish sacred service in America up to and including the date of the completion of her document (1969.) She also discusses the one liturgical organ work (composed by Lewandowski) published in the nineteenth century.

13. Ibid., 82-93.


15. Hieronymus, 78-80.


17. Kratzenstein, 52.
CHAPTER 2

SINFONIA NO. 1

FOR NARRATOR, ALTO SOLO, AND ORGAN:

LITANIES FOR THE PERSECUTED

From 1954 to 1960, Herman Berlinski was a doctoral student at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in New York, earning the first Doctorate of Sacred Music conferred by that institution. For his doctoral dissertation, Berlinski chose to compose a major work dedicated to the memory of the Holocaust. He cast the composition in the form of a Baroque oratorio, a form with which he had been familiar from his youth. As a native of Leipzig, he had grown up attending concerts of sacred music at the renowned Thomaskirche, hearing the oratorios of Bach, Handel, Mendelssohn, and others.

His dissertation, a three-hour oratorio for choir, solo quartet, and orchestra, was entitled *Kiddush-Ha-Shem*, which in English translates as "the Sanctification of the Name," composed in memory of the Jews who died for their religious faith—for the Sanctification of God's name—in the Holocaust.

In 1967, Berlinski took excerpts from this work, reshaping it into his first organ sinfonia. The organ called for in the work is one of symphonic proportions, capable of expressing both the nuance of subtle shades of orchestral organ color and also the drama of powerful crescendos and decrescendos. Sinfonia No. 1 is a work not only for organ, however, but includes a narrator and alto solo. The work is laid out in nine movements and
is based on texts from several sources: the poetry of two Jewish poets, Salomon Ephraim Aaron ben Lentschuetz and Shelomo Ibn Gabirol; and Biblical texts from Psalm 94 and from the book of Jeremiah. The nine movements of Sinfonia No. 1 are scored in the following way:

Movement No. 1, “Eleh Eskehrah, This I Will Remember” opens with spoken text by narrator alone on a text by Lentschuetz.

Movement No. 2, “Mourn, O My People,” is scored for medium voice and organ on a text by Lentschuetz.

Movement No. 3, “Ad Matay Adonay,” is recited by narrator alone and is based on the text of Psalm 94.

Movement No. 4, “Organ Solo,” is descriptive of the text of Psalm 94, as recited in Movement No. 3.

Movement No. 5, “Almighty God,” is scored for medium voice and organ on a text by Gabirol.

Movement No. 6, “I Beheld the Earth,” begins with narrator alone, on a text from the book of Jeremiah. Following the narration is an organ solo descriptive of that text from Jeremiah 4: 19-26.

Movement No. 7, “Thus, When the Ram’s Horn Poureth Forth its Sound,” is composed for narrator and organ and is based on the poetry of Gabirol.

Movement No. 8, “Prayer,” is recited by narrator alone on a text by Gabirol.

Movement No. 9, the final movement, entitled the “The Messiah,” is scored for alto solo and organ and is based on a poem by Gabirol.

In an interview with Berlinski in June 1998, the composer offered the following insight into Sinfonia No. 1:

The music is expressive of the text. Under the influence of the twelve-tone school of German expressionism, I have expanded my harmonic palette considerably beyond the scope of Max Reger.
Movement No. 1

“ELEH ESKERAH”

The sinfonia opens without music. A narrator performs the first movement alone, reciting a litany by Salomon Ephraim Aaron ben Lentschuetz. Lentschuetz (d. 1619), who lived in Galicia, a country located in what is now the Ukraine, was witness to the persecution of the Jews by the Cossacks in his native country. He expressed his outcry against the persecution in this litany, “Eleh Eskerah,” a text still included in the Yom Kippur afternoon liturgy of Reform Judaism today.¹

ELEH ESKERAH
This I will remember,
Ignorance and hatred
like monsters have
devoured the innocent
as in one day of blood.

ELEH ESKERAH!
This, I will remember,
Rulers who have risen
through the endless years,
oppressive and savage
in their witless power.

ELEH ESKERAH
This, I will remember
This, that has befallen us,
All this, I must tell,
as I beheld it passing through
the years of bygone ages.
All this I must tell:
of rulers, filled with
futile thought, to make
an end of that which
God has cherished.
Trembling takes hold
on all who hear and
all delight is dead.
ELEH ESKERAH!
This, I will remember,
bitter and loud as the
call of the trumpet of war,
“How is the tongue,
the glorious message, brought
so low to lick the dust?”

ELEH ESKERAH
This, I will Remember.

Movement No. 2

MOURN, O MY PEOPLE

Movement No. 2, for medium voice and organ, is composed on another portion of the
text of Lentschuetz’ “Litany.”

MOURN, O MY PEOPLE

Mourn, mourn, my people, not yet widowed,
not yet widowed.
Still, as in a vision for a worthless whim,
I see your holiest slaughtered.
I see their blood is shed.
In the name of heaven,
Lord,
Lord,
Give ear, O pitying Merciful.
Look from Thine height
upon the blood outpoured of all the righteous.
Make an end of blood outpoured and wasted.
Wash the stain away,
Wash the stain away,
God, King,
God, King,
Who sittest upon Thy precious throne,
Who sittest upon Thy precious throne.
This movement, only twenty-seven measures in length, is through-composed and is expressive of the text. The mood of mourning is established at the beginning in the opening melodic pattern of the organ manuals, and it is further expressed by means of a dissonant harmonic pattern and jagged rhythms. Punctuating the bass line, on the downbeat of each of the first five measures, is the repetition of an ominous-sounding pedal motif that rushes down an octave and a tritone on its fall to a long-held C-natural at the bottom of the pedalboard.

Example 2.1 Opening pedal motif

Text is of supreme importance to the composer and shapes the entire musical work. The melodic line of the alto solo is expressive of the text and, because of its wide range, angularity, and dissonance, demands consummate artistry of the performer. Dynamics throughout the work also make artistic demands on both musicians. Berlinski's dynamics are profoundly dramatic, providing a constant source of shading and nuance. His attention to dynamic nuance reveals him to be a romanticist. His expressive and freely fluctuating dynamics may also reveal the musical and religious roots of his childhood in which, as the son of Polish Orthodox Jews, he was tutored in the cantorial chant of the Eastern European synagogue—a musical idiom full of nuance, fluid melody, drama, and, often, pyrotechnical vocal virtuosity.

The rhythm in the accompaniment, at the beginning of the movement, exhibits a jaggedness, setting the stage for stark, harsh drama. In measure nine, the accompanimental
rhythmic pattern in the organ quickens and intensifies to a pattern of sextuplets underneath the text, “I see their blood is shed in the name of heaven.” The music crescendos to a fortissimo as the alto soloist reaches the high A-Flat on the word, “Lord,” a call which is marked “con molto passione.” Under the soloist’s call to the Lord, the rhythm in the organ slows to triplets which emphatically begin a dissonant descent. At this point, the Lord is called a second time, and the harmony is even more dissonant. Following the two calls, Berlinski, a master text painter, sets the text, “Give ear, O pitying Merciful,” in an unexpected way. At “O pitying Merciful,” the music drops in both pitch and volume, creating a feeling of doubt in God’s mercy. Berlinski ends the movement by expressing the text, “God, King,” with the drop of a tritone on the word, “King.” The composer then sets the text, “...who sittest on Thy precious throne,” m. 24, with a reduction in volume to a “p” and a sameness of pitch as the words are intoned. In m. 25, the soloist’s melody drops a seventh to a G below middle C as the repeated text is intoned “quasi parlando” and decrescendos to the end. The fading text on the last note of the soloist’s melody—on the word “throne”—is covered by the attack of a sforzando dissonance in the organ. The organ’s chord is sustained for two more measures, gradually decrescendoing, then “evaporating” in the final measure as one note at a time is released, leaving only a solitary G, which dies away slowly, guided by the lingering extension of a fermata.

By setting the text in this manner, the composer seems to question his own faith in the image of God’s “throneship.” When asked about his treatment of the text, Berlinski agreed that his musical setting of the text did, indeed, express his own doubts. He explained that in Jewish tradition, a Jew is permitted to question God, and that, in expressing his doubt through
the musical text-painting, he was, in his art, following in the steps of the Jewish patriarch, Jacob, who wrestled with the Angel for his blessing.

In the construction of Biblical verse, the ancient Hebrew poets created poetry which was governed by the device of poetic parallelism. Biblical poetry is frequently composed of pairs of lines in which the first line makes an initial statement or description. The second line of the pair then intensifies the meaning of the first line. This intensification is created through some kind of rising movement in the second line, either by a text which focuses on providing more specific information and implies temporal sequence to the first line, or by a text which heightens the meaning of the assertion stated in the preceding line. Lentschuetz’ poetry follows in that tradition, as does Berlinski’s musical setting of the poetry. Through a dramatic climb or drop in pitch (dependent upon the text of the poetry) and an intensification of dynamics and harmonic tension, Berlinski’s music captures the heightened intensity of the second line of the poetic doublet. Throughout this movement, the composer’s sensitivity to the text is revealed by the way in which he sets the text musically, heightening the musical drama to express the intensified poetic drama of the second line of the poetic doublet.

Movement No. 3

AD MATAY ADONOY

In Movement No. 3, “Ad Matay Adonay,” for Narrator alone, Berlinski has borrowed the musical technique of centonization and applied it as a literary technique in his paraphrase of Biblical verse in Psalm 94. In the practice of centonization, a principle of construction common to ancient Eastern chants, melodies were created by piecing together standard
melodic formulas and melodic motives, rather than by freely choosing the pitches, as is the
practice of modern Western music.¹ In writing this litany based on Psalm 94, Berlinski has
borrowed the Hebrew phrase, “Ad Matay Adonay, Ad Matay?”, which occurs only once in
Psalm 94, and has repeated it to introduce verses from the psalm. With each repetition of the
Hebrew text, “Ad Matay Adonay, Ad Matay?”, he follows the Hebrew with its English
translation, “How long, O Lord, how long?” In so doing, he has again followed in the pattern
of Biblical poetry, creating a pair of lines in which the second line heightens the meaning of
the first line. The composer explains that he created this litany “to delineate the strophical
sequences of the text.”

AD MATAY ADONAY

AD MATAY ADONAY, AD MATAY?
How long, O Lord, how long?
How long shall the wicked triumph?
How long shall the workers of iniquity boast?

AD MATAY ADONAY, AD MATAY?
How long, O Lord, how long
shall they crush Thy people
and inflict Thy heritage?

AD MATAY ADONAY, AD MATAY?
How long, O Lord, how long
shall they utter and speak foolish things;
shall they gather themselves together
against the soul of the righteous
and condemn innocent blood?
AD MATAY ADONAY, AD MATAY?

How long, O Lord, how long
shall they say,
"The Lord shall not see.
Neither shall the God of our fathers
be concerned with it!"

AD MATAY ADONAY, AD MATAY?

Movement No. 4

ORGAN SOLO

In Movement No. 4, Berlinski has written an organ solo which is a musical
representation of the text of Movement No. 3. In this organ solo, the composer explains, he
"expands the harmonic realm into complete atonality. The dissonances are harsh–almost
frightening." The movement is cast in a strict ABA form.

The work opens with a fortissimo pedal in a reiterated, falling-tritone motif,
proclaiming a bold, unrelenting dissonance beneath the upward-reaching music of the
manuals. The opening, two-chord motif in the manuals expands and climbs, growing in
intensity to a climax in measure seven, then abating for two measures and falling to a hushed
tritone in the pedal. The final note of the tritone, a low E-flat, diminishes to a "p" dynamic
level and changes character, as it is sustained alone through a fermata, to take on a new role
as a quiet pedal point, providing the soft, sustained foundation of the B section. In the
B section, marked "Meno mosso, quasi improvisazioni," the composer has employed, to
quote his own words, "a free use of the ancient Hebrew cantillation of the Biblical book of
Lamentations." The composer explains further:
In regard to my use of historical Jewish musical materials, I am a composer, not an arranger. The motifs used in my compositions are not always quoted verbatim. Instead, they frequently have gone through a process of permutation and assimilation, to be shaped into a highly personal musical idiom, which must serve and express the compositional intent of the work itself.\(^5\)

The composer has written the B section in one single, extended measure, in which a line of freely-derived chant expresses its lament over the soft drone of the low E-flat pedal (see Example 2.2). Suggesting that this melody be played only on an English horn or an oboe stop on the manuals, the composer calls for a musical buildup twice in the section, and ends the section “molto calmato”.

Example 2.2 Freely-derived trope from Lamentations, m. 11

![Musical notation image]

The A section returns as a literal restatement of the first seven measures of the original A section, but scored as ten measures in its return and marked to be played a dynamic level
higher than in its original statement. The movement ends with an “fff” pedal solo, a restatement of the pedal solo first heard in m. 3, but with both the final E-flat and the penultimate A-natural sustained and played together to end the movement.

Movement No. 5

ALMIGHTY GOD

Movement No. 5 is composed for medium voice and organ on a text by Shelomo Ibn Gabirol. Gabirol (1021-1058), known in his time as “the Jewish Plato,” was a Jewish poet, philosopher, and moralist who lived in Spain during its golden period of Arabic culture. As heir to the advanced Arabic culture, he was, through his writings, the first teacher of Neoplatonism in Europe, and the first of the Hebrew poets to employ the Arabic development of rhymed poetry, which incorporated the use of Arabic meter.⁶

ALMIGHTY GOD

Almighty God, who sufferest Thyself to be entreated,
   And who payest heed to the poor.
How long wilt Thou from me be far and hidden?
   How long wilt Thou from me be far and hidden?
Night and day I turn, and with a steadfast heart, I call Thee.
I call Thee and pour incessant gratitude for Thy excelling goodness.
   O my King, O my King –
With pain for Thee my heart is torn.
   In Thee it trusts.
Dreaming this shut-in dream, it looks to Thee,
   It looks to Thee for life’s interpretation.
This I ask.
   This is the plea to which I beg assent, my sole petition,
Neither more nor less,
   Neither more nor less.
Movement No. 5, thirty-nine measures in length, although based on the poetry of Gabirol, uses no specific Jewish musical material in its composition. According to the composer, the movement employs an idiom uniquely Berlinski's own, which, while not necessarily atonal, uses dissonance to express the tragic and the mystical.

The movement begins with a three-measure organ introduction. Chords in the manuals crescendo and ascend, in a strong, dotted, short-long rhythmic pattern, over a pedal low A to a climax on the third beat of the third measure. Against this "ff" climax on a G-flat major chord with an added D-natural in the organ manuals, the pedal plays a dissonant low E-flat, dropping a tritone in its melodic line. In the final two beats of the measure, the organ decrescendos to give way to the "mf" entry of the alto solo in m. 4.

Running like a thread through the vocal solo line of the movement is a repetition of pitches on a line of slow melodic ascent, e.g., mm. 4-10. The text-dominated, recitative-related style of the movement is, perhaps, influenced by cantorial chant of the synagogue.

Berlinski, sets the text musically by building slowly to a dissonant climax in m.10 on the word, "Night." He then drops an octave on the text, "and day," and the dynamic level falls to a "p." The most consonant harmony of the movement occurs on, "I turn and with a steadfast heart" in mm. 10 and 11. In the two following measures, "I call Thee. I call Thee," the music climbs in dissonance, dynamics, and pitch, the second call higher and more dissonant than the first. On the text, "for Thy excelling goodness," the melody falls a minor seventh, ending on a minor chord and a "p" dynamic level on the word "goodness," which suggests the composer's doubt in this quality of God. In mm. 17 and 18, a crescendo builds on the text, "O my King, O my King," and reaches a climax on the words "with pain for
Thee." Continuing with the text, "my heart is torn," the music descends in pitch and drops a fifth on the word "torn." Setting the text of m. 19, "in Thee it trusts," the composer lowers the pitch a minor seventh on "trusts" and writes a decrescendo which extends throughout the measure and continues through the word, "trusts." In expressing the text thus, the composer seems to have cast doubt on God's trustworthiness. In Berlinski's own words, he has an "affinity for Gabirol's poem, because the religious faith of Gabirol is not one of naive, innocent, and submissive acceptance of God." The concluding lines of Gabirol's poem give us a clue to Berlinski's own religiosity. Faith is not constant to the composer, and Berlinski's own, sole petition, like that of Gabirol's, is that God reveal the meaning of life- "neither more nor less." 

The form of the movement is A B A (mixed with B) B in the organ score, while the vocal solo sings throughout the movement a continuation of a pattern that it established at the beginning of the movement. The initial presentation of the A section in the organ score unfolds in the first nineteen measures-a section filled with frequently changing chords of dissonance in the organ. Over this, the alto solo moves by small steps in a chromatic melody (with the exception of the several large intervallic drops in pitch described above). In m. 20, however, the organ alone introduces a contrasting, five-measure B section. The B section begins with two measures of the organ playing a quiet "molto delicato" melody in the left hand on an 8' flute, accompanied by a pianissimo pedal point in the right hand and pedal. At m. 22 the vocal line re-enters, doubled by a slowly-building and sustained G-flat diminished seventh chord played in the upper organ register. Against this is played an e-flat minor chord in the left hand, m. 22, followed by an f-minor seventh chord in m. 23. Harmonic tension and
dynamic levels increase throughout these measures on the text, "Dreaming this shut-in dream, it looks to Thee for life's interpretation," reaching an "fff" climax on the word "interpretation," m. 23, but dropping the interval of a tenth on the last two syllables of the word. In this melodic drop of a tenth, the composer is again text-painting, and, through his text-painting, is expressing doubt in God's willingness to reveal the meaning of life to us. At m. 24, dynamics immediately drop to a "pp" level, preparing the way for the return of the A section. The A section returns with the restatement of three measures of the organ introduction, mm. 25-27, which is again centered around a pedal A, as it was at the outset of the piece. The introductory material is extended in mm. 28-31, and, in m. 31, the pedal moves to a low D, where it provides a pedal point, at first repeated and then sustained, to the end of the movement.

Berlinski prepares the movement for conclusion in the organ score, mm. 28–30, by interpolating the "molto delicato" melody of the B section between strong chords of the A-section's dotted-rhythmic material. He concludes the movement, mm. 35-39, with five measures of the B theme's "molto delicato" material stated three times in the organ, beginning at a "p" dynamic level and played in a high register at m. 35, then re-stated twice, with each restatement played in a lower octave and at a softer dynamic. Above the organ's final, sustained whisper, Berlinski brings the vocal solo to an end on a note of quiet emotional exhaustion–numbness–as the soloist quietly intones the final text, "neither more nor less," on the repetition of a single pitch, fading out, "morendo," to a "ppp."
Movement No.6

I BEHELD THE EARTH

Movement No. 6 begins with a recitation from the book of Jeremiah and is followed by an organ solo descriptive of the recitation. Originally, according to the composer, this recitation from Jeremiah 4:19-26 was intoned over the organ solo, but in later performances the composer preferred to separate the narration from the music and let each stand on its own merit.

I BEHELD THE EARTH...

I beheld the earth, and lo,
it was without form and void;
and they had no light.

I beheld the mountains and lo,
they trembled, and all the hills
moved lightly.

I beheld, and lo,
there was no man, and all the
birds of heaven were fled.

I beheld the earth, and lo,
it was without form and void,
and the heavens
and they had no light.

I beheld, and lo,
the fruitful place
was a wilderness, and all
the cities thereof were
broken down at the presence
of the Lord and his fierce anger.

For this, the earth shall mourn
and the heavens above be black.

(Jeremiah 4:23-28)
According to the composer, the organ solo which follows is derived from the melodic formulas for chanting the book of Lamentations. Example 2.3 shows the trope for Lamentations that serves as the source.

Example 2.3 Trope for chanting Lamentations

Thirty-nine measures in length, the movement is in ABA form. The opening 11-measure A section in triple meter, played in the manuals over a soft low C pedal, is chordal and is punctuated by the repetition of a tritone in the left hand, which plays a percussive, syncopated rhythmic pattern. The right hand initiates the syncopated rhythmic pattern in the first measure and alternates with the left hand in presenting this rhythmic foundation for the first three measures. At the fourth measure, the right hand begins a legato, singing climb and
build-up over the left hand's rhythmic ostinato and the organ pedal's low C pedal point, to reach a climax on a sharply-jagged rhythmic pattern of harsh dissonances in m. 8. For the next four measures the jagged rhythms continue in the right hand over the rhythmic tritone ostinato in the left hand and the pedal point in the bass.

The B section begins in m. 12 with the enharmonic transformation of a dyad which, when played in the right hand in m. 11, had been a C-flat, D-flat, but, when sustained into m. 12, becomes a B-natural, C-sharp and is taken over by the left hand. In the new section, the harmonic material is written predominately in sharps, rather than in flats, as it had been in the A section, and a new mood of wistful calm is introduced. While the left hand is sustained quietly, the right hand plays an ethereal, other-worldly, soft, fluid chant, derived from the melodies of the Hebrew chant from the book of Lamentations. In m. 15 the chant is followed by itself in imitation at the interval of a major seventh. Throughout the B section, excerpts of chant are played in one hand or the other against soft, sustained chords, or against a restrained accompaniment derived from the more aggressive-sounding A section, or in imitation with itself at the interval of a major seventh.

The A section returns in m. 25, restating itself in its original form, minus one measure of original introduction. At m. 35, the soft, sustained dyad, which introduced the accompanying voices of the B section in its original statement in m. 12, re-enters to bring the movement to a close. Above it, the rhythmic ostinato of the A section re-enters in m. 36, whispering its rhythmic pattern twice on a repeated F-natural, which is played on the “softest flute only,” and marked “molto delicato.” This repeated F-natural claims a tie to both A and B sections, for its genesis lies both in the two-note, repeated F which introduced the original
statement of the B theme in m. 13, and also in the rhythmic ostinato of the A section. By means of this two-measure ostinato, the movement moves very quietly and delicately to a final, quiet statement of ethereal chant from Lamentations to end the movement.

Movement No. 7

THUS, WHEN THE RAM’S HORN POURETH FORTH ITS SOUND

Movement No. 7, for Narrator and Organ, is composed on a highly dramatic poem by Gabirol. It paints a powerful portrait of the arrival of the Messiah on Judgment Day, announced by the heralding call of the shofar. In this poem Gabirol describes a Judgment Day in which the Messiah will unleash his overwhelming wrath against the ungodly. The narrator and organ begin together. The organ soon takes over, however, playing calls of the shofar and building to an enormously powerful climax. The second half of the poem returns to complete its text at a point of momentary organ calm, after which the organ once again begins a dramatic buildup and unleashes its own power and fury to portray the program of Gabirol’s message. In this 48-measure movement the composer has created the climax of the entire sinfonia.

THUS, WHEN THE RAM’S HORN POURETH FORTH ITS SOUND

Thus, when the Ram’s horn
poureth forth its sound
and ye shall hear the great
Shofar’s long, drawn peal,

On that day He shall judge
the peoples and destroy the upstart
and decree the fate of all
potentates, officers and rulers
nor pay regards to mighty princes
and destroy tyrants and cut off
the scornful, the proud, and presumptuous
who rely on the speed
of their vehicles.

Thus, when the Ram’s horn
poureth forth its sound
and ye shall hear the great
Shofar’s long drawn peal.

On that day
He shall judge the people who have
forgotten their Creator
and put their trust in riches
and pride themselves above God
on high who alone
humbleth and uplifteth.

On that day
He shall judge the peoples
who have built monstrous structures,
erected palaces and great walls,
do not remember the Almighty,
but wax fat in the abundance
of power.

The music begins with the trumpet-like call of the shofar, sounding its heralding figure
in the left hand, against a triplet-based figure in the right hand. In its unembellished, three-note form (Example 2.4), this shofar call becomes the primary motif of the organ manuals
throughout the movement.

Example 2.4 Shofar call, manuals’ motif, m. 7

![Musical notation image](image-url)
The pedal line has its own shofar-call motif (Example 2.5), which is used as an ostinato throughout parts of the movement, and which exhibits the character, rhythmically and intervallically, of a shofar call bent downward and sounding as if it has gone askew.

Example 2.5 Pedal Ostinato, mm. 33, 34

This pedal ostinato continues throughout the first eighteen measures, creating a passacaglia form in that section of the movement. Above it appears the shofar call in the various voices, sometimes in imitation with itself, at other times alternating with triplet-based figures and figures of dotted rhythms. In this opening section of the movement, the music moves from a "p" dynamic level, through a gradual crescendo, to an "ff" climax in mm. 11 and 12, then gradually decrescendos again to a dynamic low in m. 18.

In m. 18, a quiet excitement is set in motion with the "marcato," double-pedal statement of the rhythmic motif of the shofar, followed by the same motif in the manuals. In m. 20 the rhythmic pattern is repeated again in double pedal, followed again by its repetition in the manuals—the intervals in both pedals and manuals expanding at the melodic highpoint in the middle of the motif. In m. 21 the motif evolves into triplets, and by m. 22 the music is crescendoing and picking up energy, its triplets mutating into sextuplets over a double pedal point on a sustained fifth (G and D).

In mm. 24-27, the shofar calls sound "ff" in close imitation in the manuals alone—first in the soprano, then in the alto and the tenor, each voice continuing to sound, as it reaches
its melodic peak, until the other voices have completed their calls. At m. 27 the climax is reached as the composer summons the shofar to herald its motif through the trumpets en Chamade at an “fff” level. He calls for both the eight-foot and the sixteen-foot ranks of pipes of the organ’s horizontally-mounted trumpets to play simultaneously. To add to the energy of this dynamic climax, he also intensifies rhythmic motion through staccato sextuplets in m. 29, and in m. 30 thickens the harmonic texture to triads, pitched high on the keyboard—creating an extremely high decibel level in the organ manuals. To underscore the power and fury of God’s wrath, the composer writes this climax of powerful, raw organ sound in the manuals over an equally powerful, “fff”, dissonant, low C-sharp in the pedals. At this point, the score is marked “Full Organ; Molto pesante.” As the final chord is sustained on full organ crowned by the trumpets en Chamade in the manuals, one last “fff” statement of the opening pedal ostinato is sounded.

Following the fortissimo statement of the pedal ostinato, the pedal line drops to a subito “pp” on the last note of its ostinato and continues to “hum” its low pitch as the narrator re-enters with part two of Gabirols’s poem.

Thus, when the Ram’s horn poureth forth its sound
and ye shall hear the great Shofar’s long drawn peal,

On that day,
when their Creator sits in judgment.
their riches shall not profit them,
their power shall not protect them
and the God of the ages shall abhor the men of blood!
The composer's creative adaptation of established, traditional forms is displayed in this movement. He has composed two portions of music, one to follow each of the two portions of the poetry. Similarly, each musical portion is constructed of two parts, each part constructed of an AB+ Closing material. Following the initial narration of Gabirol's poem in this movement, the first musical portion is thirty-two measures in length and consists of an A section in passacaglia form, mm.1-18; a B section of shofar calls, mm. 19-28; and two measures of concluding material of intense rhythmic, then textural, and registrational buildup that bring the first half of the movement to a monumental climax in m. 30. An abbreviated, dramatic conclusion to the poem, portraying God's harsh judgment upon the wicked, is then presented, and the music returns a second time. The concluding portion of music matches the final portion of the poem in its intensity and brevity. In its second appearance, the music is presented in a sixteen-bar statement, half the length of the first musical section of Movement No. 7. The music is again cast in the musical form of AB+Closing material. The seven-measure A section of Part II, mm. 33-39, is similar to the original A section in its restatement of the initial A section's pedal ostinato. The four-measure B section, mm. 40-43, is again constructed of shofar calls, and is followed by a five-measure, coda-like conclusion that accelerates and crescendos to bring the movement to its furious, dissonant ending.

During the narration of the second portion of the poem, a low pedal point has been quietly grounding the movement, but, following the completed poem, section two of the music comes to life. At m. 33 the pedal ostinato from Part I is reinstated in the organ pedals, while above it, a left-hand pattern, related in character to the triplet patterns of mm. 21-22, is set in motion, beginning its pattern anew with each measure and expanding in pitch and
rhythm with each restatement. Above both patterns, mm. 33-39, a measure-long, right-hand
ostinato plays a rhythmic pattern which accentuates a marcato A-natural six times followed
by an ending flourish (sixteenth note triplets rushing to an eighth note)—the same “flourish”
which had been introduced in m. 1 of the movement. In its presentation in mm. 33-39, the end
of the pattern points alternately up and down in patterns of chromatic dissonance that sound
as if a shofar call has gone mad. The music grows to a climax in m. 39 on an e-11 chord
placed high on the keyboard. In mm. 40-43, shofar calls are presented in a deliberate, three-
note rhythmic pattern and played “fff” on full organ in octaves in the manuals, followed in
close imitation by the same rhythmic call in the pedals. In mm. 40 and 41 the shofar motif in
the organ manuals jumps the interval of a minor sixth, followed by the motif in the pedals
which leaps the interval of a minor sixth plus an octave in mm. 40 and 41. In mm. 42 and 43,
the shofar motif jumps to the top of the pedalboard and is played by both feet in a dissonant
double pedal stretto at the interval of a minor seventh. In m. 43, the double pedal sounds a
fortissimo minor seventh (G, F) while above it a D-flat major chord in the right hand plays
against a G7 chord in the left hand, in a chord of dissonant climax.

Measure 44 initiates a five-measure, accelerated, coda-like conclusion to the
movement. This section reintroduces a well-known figure from Movement No. 4, a motive
which repeats a falling tritone in the pedal, above which a two-chord, upwardly-expanding
motif sounds in the organ manuals. In using this figure from Movement No. 4 here, Berlinski
uses a cyclical principle of composition. The motive inserted at this point lends a special
poignancy. In Movement No. 4, the motive was associated with the text, “How Long, O
Lord, How Long shall the wicked triumph?” By placing the motive into Movement No. 7,
Berlinski underscores his plea to the Almighty to hasten His promised rescue of the persecuted and to bring about justice through the punishment of the wicked. In mm. 45 through the end, a widely-spaced, e-minor chord crescendos to full organ in the manuals, under which the opening pedal ostinato is stated four more times, accelerating and growing all the while, wrathfully and wildly, to end the movement on full organ.

Movement No. 8

PRAYER

Movement No. 8, for Narrator alone, is again based on a text by Gabirol. This text comes from his liturgical masterpiece, “Keter Malkut” or “The Royal Crown.” Gabirol was known for liberating Hebrew religious poetry from the restraints of payyetanic form. In his “Keter Malkut,” a philosophical and ethical hymn in rhymed prose, he describes the universe as composed of spheres one within the other. It is a detailed panegyric of the glory of God both in the material and in the spiritual world. In this poem he expressed the highest ethical and religious thought of his time.9

Gabirol’s poem is a quiet meditation expressing his humility, submission, and resignation, but, even in the calm of this poem, he pleads with God, “Therefore, I beseech Thee, O my God: Remember the distresses that come upon me, and, when Thou placest my sins in the balance, place Thou in the other scale my sorrow.” Once again, a Jewish writer has exercised his right to challenge God, and, in this case, to remind God of God’s own responsibility in having placed the poet in a difficult situation.
PRAYER

O my God, I know those who implore Thee have for ambassadors their antecedent virtues and the righteousness which they have heaped up. But in me are no good deeds, for I am shaken and emptied like a stripped vine. I have no piety, no plea of innocence, no faith, no justice, no quality of goodness, neither service of God, nor turning from sin.

For man entereth the world and knoweth not why, and rejoiceth and knoweth not wherefore, and liveth and knoweth not how long, and time laughs at him, and the master of the house presses.

Therefore, I beseech Thee. O my God, to remember the distresses that come upon man and when Thou placest my sins in the balance place Thou in the other scale my sorrow.

For Thine, O Lord, is the loving kindness in all the goodness Thou hast bestowed on me.

May this word of my mouth and my heart's true thought find, O my Rock and Redeemer, the favour sought.
Movement No. 9

THE MESSIAH

Movement No. 9, for alto solo and organ, is also composed on a text by Gabirol. This final movement differs from the others in several respects. It is tonal, composed in e-flat minor, although the harmonies of the organ accompaniment stretch the tonality greatly. It is also much calmer and more subdued than the other movements.

In “The Messiah,” the worshiper expresses his deep yearning for the arrival of the Messiah. The text follows:

THE MESSIAH

    God, God,
    Tell me, Tell me,
Tell me when shall come to men Messiah blest?
    When shall Thy care his couch prepare,
    To be my guest, to be my guest,
    To sleep on my golden bed
    In my place of rest, of rest?

    Thrice, thrice,
    Welcome him, welcome,
Who comes to me of David’s line.
    O Lord, return,
    For behold we yearn,
    Our love to show,
    And our souls with Thy Souls at one,
    at one as of yore to know.
    To know, to know.

This final movement, fifty-three measures in length, is in AA form. Measures 1-24 comprise verse one and measures 25-53 verse two. The same six-measure organ introduction leads into each verse and also provides an instrumental close to the movement. Its haunting, e-flat minor melody expresses a mood of deep yearning. The alto solo melody, composed
primarily of arch-shaped phrases, is characterized, in its cycle of rising movement, both by lines of step-wise ascent and by lines of larger, upward-reaching intervals—both of which, in their climb to climax, create a character of soulful longing. Similarly, patterns of slow melodic descent within each phrase add to the establishment of a feeling of wistfulness. In the last two measures of each A section, the alto soloist sings two closing melodic motives which dip slightly below the note of resolution before moving upward to the final note. This concluding melodic pattern also lends itself to the production of a poignancy of sound. Berlinski has placed a double “sighing” motif at the end of each six-measure organ interlude. Verse two duplicates verse one, both in its solo melody and in the organ accompaniment, with the exception of the slightly extended, embellished, and downward-turned melodic pattern, which brings the vocal solo to conclusion in mm. 46-47.

Rhythmically, the movement, with its notation in a 6/8 time signature, is an exception to Berlinski’s much more frequent choice of mixed meter. The movement is not wholly in 6/8 meter, however. One measure of 3/8 meter is inserted in the fourth measure of the organ interlude and remains a constant in each repetition of the interlude throughout the movement. Berlinski’s employment of 6/8 meter in an andante tempo has added to the creation of a mood of yearning and wistfulness.

In bringing such an intensely dramatic sinfonia to an end with a deeply beautiful elegance and quiet simplicity, and in closing with a profound expression of poignant longing and quiet hope for the coming of the Messiah, Berlinski makes, perhaps, the most powerfully dramatic and the most noble statement of faith possible.
In summary, Herman Berlinski's Sinfonia No. 1, *Litanies for the Persecuted*, is based upon excerpts from his earlier work, *Kiddush Ha-Shem*, originally scored for large orchestra, chorus, and solo quartet, but, in revised form, composed of nine movements and scored for organ, alto soloist, and narrator. The work is based on four Jewish literary sources. Two of the sources are Biblical and include excerpts from Psalm Ninety-Four and the Book of Jeremiah. A third source is the poetry of eleventh-century Jewish poet-scholar, Shelomo Ibn Gabirol, and the fourth source is a litany by seventeenth-century poet, Salomon Ephraim Aaron ben Lentschuetz.

The movements are short, varying in length from twenty-seven measures in Movement No. 2 to fifty-three measures in Movement No. 9. Movements Nos. 1, 3, and 8 consist of poetry only, exclusive of music. The rhythm is free and fluid. Meter is mixed. Musical ideas of striking contrast are frequently juxtaposed, producing music of great drama. For example, Movements Nos. 4 and 6 juxtapose angular, strongly-rhythmic, dissonant patterns of twentieth-century expressionism and fluid melodies of Hebrew trope (albeit, filtered through the lens of chromatic writing), derived from the book of Lamentations. Dynamics throughout the sinfonia are ever-changing and must be carefully observed to bring about the composer's intentions. The influence of Eastern European Jewish cantillation and 19th-century European Romanticism can be observed in the virtuosity of dynamic nuance in Berlinski's writing. In his settings of movements that are based on text, the composer is careful to write music which is expressive of the text. The composer employs cyclical writing in Movement No. 7, when he inserts a musical idea from Movement No. 4 into Movement No. 7. Harmonic writing
throughout Sinfonia No. 1 varies from that which is tonally organized and mildly dissonant, as in Movement No. 9, to that which employs a harsh atonality in Movement No. 4. Much of Berlinski's harmony in Sinfonia No. 1 lies within the category described earlier by the composer as "Post-Reger harmony, expanded by the 12-tone school of German expressionism." Berlinski's melodic writing is warm, in general, even as he writes in a Post-Reger, chromatic idiom. A hallmark of his musical composition is his use of dissonance to express the tragic and the mystical.

In Sinfonia No. 1, Litanies for the Persecuted, Berlinski has written an impassioned work in memory of those who died for their Jewish faith in the Holocaust. Its drama, richly ornamented with silence, is powerful from the outset, as the narrator begins quietly, intoning the rich cadences of "Eleh Eskerja! This I will remember...Rulers who have risen through endless years, oppressive and savage in their witless power..." The work progresses through contrasting movements of dramatic scoring—movements for narrator only, those for alto solo and organ, and those for organ solo—to reach a wrathful climax in Movement No. 7 in a movement for narrator and organ on the poetry of Gabirol entitled, "Thus when the Ram's Horn Pooreth Forth its Sound..." In high relief, Berlinski brings the work to quiet and dramatic conclusion with a movement for alto solo and organ, entitled "The Messiah," a movement which expresses a quiet but unshakeable hope for the coming of the Messiah.
NOTES


5. Ibid.


CHAPTER 3

SINFONIA NO. 2

FOR ORGAN:

HOLY DAYS AND FESTIVALS

Sinfonia No. 2 has a fascinating genesis. I quote the composer’s own words, offered in a taped interview at his home in Washington, D.C. in June, 1998:

With the composition of Sinfonia No. 2, I entered an entirely different phase of my work as a composer. I began writing this work after I had been appointed Organist at Temple Emanu El, New York, in 1954. This means that, for the first time, I conceived the work for the organ and not for orchestra, which would then have to be transcribed for the organ. The difference is quite remarkable, because in terms of technique and transparency, these are my first real organ compositions, starting out from the organ and directed into the organ.

There were, of course, other reasons. Up to this point, the Jewish literature in connection with the organ consisted of a few little pieces which were ascribed to Lewandowski—very brave, nice, nineteenth-century pieces, but most conventional, really, in terms of modality and themes, and not typically Jewish.

Dr. Robert Baker, who was then the senior organist at Temple Emanu El, preceded each one of the holidays and Friday night services with a wonderful collection of Bach preludes and fugues, and works of some of the French composers, and also a good portion of Mendelssohn. There’s nothing wrong with that [repertoire], except that the time had come in which the synagogue itself would enter into the creative process of writing music which comes directly from the center of Jewish experience and which would express the spirit of the holidays.

Just as Bach had written for his church, a composer was needed to write for the synagogue. Having been brought up in the vicinity of St. Thomas Church in Leipzig, I was highly sensitive to the functional relationship between the prelude and the following services; thus, my prelude to my Avodat Shabbat, my Friday night service, was very much an organistic work and could be used any time as an organ prelude preceding Friday evening services.

Eventually, I thought of the idea of creating a prelude for each of the holidays: for the holy days of Rosh Hashana (the New Year); and Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement); and for the festivals of Pesach (Passover); Sukkoth (the Festival of Tabernacles); and Shavuoth (the Feast of Weeks). Here for the first time also appears
a much more musicological orientation in the choice of musical materials. It stands

to reason that a piece dedicated to the holiday of Rosh Hashana would use melodies

which are part of that holiday celebration. In this context, it is, perhaps, important to

note that there is within the historical body of Jewish music a series of melodies which

are called the Missinai tunes. Missinai tunes are those melodies, which, according to

legend, Moses received when he received the ten commandments—God-given

melodies with which to chant the liturgy. We know, however, that these melodies,

which are the very foundation of Jewish music in the contemporary synagogue, are

melodies which originated most probably in Germany between the Rhine, Main and

Danube Rivers in the eleventh or twelfth centuries of our time. These melodies,

which show a clear affinity to Gregorian chant, are considered sacred. Each holiday

is associated with a specific melody or melodies, which, under no circumstances, can

be used for any other holiday. For example, it is considered sacrilegious to intone a

Rosh Hashana melody on Passover. The ethical function of the melody is of utmost

importance in the Orthodox synagogue. In the Reform Synagogue, however, the

importance of these tunes has been somewhat lost.

In composing this music, I thought I could accomplish two things: create a
dignified frame of expectation in worship in holiday services, and, at the same time,
bring back into the Reform service a musical element which never should have been
abandoned. This I could do without consultation and without any permission.

Sinfonia No. 2 consists of five preludes, which are grouped in two parts according to

liturgical function, and originally published in two separate collections:

I. Two Preludes for the High Holy Days

1. Prelude for Rosh Hashana (the New Year)

2. Prelude for Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement)

II. Three Preludes for the Festivals

3. Prelude for Sukkoth (Tabernacles)

4. Prelude for Pesach (Passover)

5. Prelude for Shavuoth (Pentecost)
PART I: TWO PRELUDES FOR THE HIGH HOLY DAYS

Movement No. 1

PRELUDE FOR ROSSHASHANA

“This Day the World was Called into Being”

Berlinski opens his Prelude with a majestic, two-measure trumpet call, reminiscent of the call of the shofar that sounded in ancient Israel, which summoned the people to solemn assembly in observance of the holy day of Rosh Hashana. Rosh Hashana, the New Year of the Hebrew calendar, is a celebration of the anniversary of the day the world was called into being. Berlinski explains that the Bible also refers to this holy day as “Yom Teruah” or, as one translation describes it, “the Day of the Trumpet.”

He continues.

On the day of “Yom Teruah” or Rosh Hashana, it is widely understood that it was the shofar’s role to call the people to solemn assembly. What is not as well known, however, is that the shofar was not alone in this task. The shofar was accompanied by two trumpets. The shofar played the long notes and the trumpets played the faster notes. The Talmud explains the playing of both instruments and discusses overlaying the mouthpiece of the shofar with gold. The trumpets of the Bible were valueless, of course, and could only produce the natural harmonics of the overtone series—the octave, fifths, fourths, and thirds, primarily. These intervals played on a shofar or trumpet invoke a feeling of awe and majesty. In this prelude, I have especially used the intervals of the major and minor thirds as strategic structural elements of the trumpet calls.²

The movement opens with a trumpet call playing a dotted-rhythmic pattern and sounding a major third.

Example 3.1 Theme A-1, mm.1, 2

\[ \text{Example 3.1 Theme A-1, mm.1, 2} \]
Solo trumpet calls herald their message throughout the movement and alternate with other musical materials in a musical form related to that of a rondo in which the various trumpet calls play the role of the recurring A or rondo theme of the movement. Trumpet calls will be identified as A-1, A-2, A-3, etc., and numbered consecutively to correspond with the order of their appearance in the score.

Using this system of thematic identification, the form of the movement is: A-1 (mm. 1, 2), B (mm. 3-6), A-2 (mm. 7-11), C (mm. 12-25), A-3 (mm. 26-32), D (mm. 33-39), B' (mm. 39-46), A-2 (mm. 46-49), A-4 (mm. 49-53), E (mm. 53-62), A-5 (mm. 63-67), E (mm. 68-74).

Simply written, the form is:

A-1  
B  
A-2  
C  
A-3  
D  
B'  
A-2  
A-4  
E  
A-5  
E

At the end of the trumpet's first call, the lower note of the trumpet's major third is tied over into the third measure where, held under a fermata and described by the term "Longa," the trumpet’s sound decrescendos to a “pp” and yields to new musical material.

A traditional High Holy Day melody, Theme B, follows and is played quietly under the marking “Misterioso” in mm. 3-6 (see Example 3.2). The quiet, flowing linear character of Theme B, provides a gentle contrast to the strong, angular, dotted-rhythmic character of
the trumpet calls. The composer explains that this melody has for centuries functioned as a High Holy Day motif, and, because of its antiquity and its melodic pattern of descending intervals, may even have been used to accompany the priests’ descent from the altar in very early times.

Example 3.2 Theme B, mm. 3-6

The A theme of trumpet calls returns, mm. 7-11. In its second appearance, A-2, it opens into a melodic pattern of rising fourths and fifths that calls in syncopation and which is followed by a dotted-rhythmic pattern that ends with an upwardly-delineated octave.

Example 3.3 Theme A-2, mm. 7-11

Berlinski explains that he “proceeded as a true son of Eastern Orthodoxy” in choosing as his third theme, Theme C, mm. 12-25, an East-European cantillation, which he marked to be played, “Tempo de Marcia funebre” or “tempo of a funeral march” (Example 3.4). The composer continues, “According to Jewish tradition, during the High Holy Days God opens the Book of Life and inscribes in it the fate of each individual for the year to come. For some worshipers, the funeral march is a foreshadowing of things to come. More than that, however, this melody serves as a memorial to those who have died in ages past.”
Example 3.4 Theme C, mm. 12-25

The accompaniment under the C theme evokes the drama of a funeral march. The left hand and pedal play soft, slow, accented chords in a rhythmic pattern which suggests the drudging placement of one foot in front of the other in a walk of grim acceptance and dread. The rhythmic pattern of the accompaniment is atypical for that of a march. In it chords play on beats one, two, and four. On beat three, a quarter-note rest is observed. The chords which make it up, in the left hand and pedal, are mildly dissonant seventh chords which bend the tonality of f-minor, but still operate within the parameters of the tonality, to accompany the f-minor C theme in the soprano.

In dynamic and rhythmic contrast, trumpet theme A-3 begins at an "ff" dynamic level, trumpeting a minor third in m. 26.
Example 3.5 Theme A-3, mm. 26-32

By m. 29 the theme has gathered energy and climbs in pitch and intensity, building to an “fff” in m. 31. A second voice is added which doubles the theme in octaves in m. 32, and the music crescendos to a dissonant chord of climax (G major seventh / D-flat major seventh) on the third beat of m. 32 to usher in the “molto dramatico” section which follows.

Written to be played on full organ, the section, mm. 33-39, continues an emotional and musical buildup with Theme D that moves forward in an energetic duplet, then triplet pattern in octaves to arrive at strong, full chords of a jagged, dotted rhythm.

Example 3.6 Theme D, mm.33-39

This theme reaches its climax on A-flat octaves in m. 37, creating a momentary
suggestion of A-flat major. The A-flat major tonality mutates, however, to f minor on open fifths (F-C) by measure 39, under which is written a decrescendo, and over which is placed a fermata.

Offering great contrast, a second funeral march ensues—this time built on earlier B theme material, which, when first heard in mm. 3-6, was played in “pp,” misterioso, quarter notes, but which, when it returns in mm. 40, is played at an “mf” dynamic and treated in augmentation. The chordal accompaniment to this second section of funeral march, however, follows the rhythmic and harmonic pattern established in the accompaniment of the first funeral march section, listed as section C, mm. 12-25. By m. 44, the melody has lost it accompaniment and becomes a solo voice, diminishing in volume in mm. 44 and 45. The last note of its phrase is treated as an elision in m. 46, and it is then doubled and taken over in the left hand to become the top note of a “pp” harmonic drone—an F-natural, B-natural, the interval of a tritone—which provides a double pedal point under the trumpet themes of mm. 46-52.

Once again in this quasi-rondo form, trumpet themes return, assuming the role of the rondo theme. In mm. 46 and 47 a trumpet call heralding a minor third at an “f” dynamic level ushers in the return of the A-2 theme in mm. 48 and 49. Following that is trumpet theme A-4 marked “echo” and played at a “p” dynamic level.

Example 3.7  A-4 theme, mm. 50-53
In mm. 53-62 the theme of the High Holy Day “Bar’chu” (Theme E), a traditional Missinai melody, enters on the soft organ strings, creating a quiet, “misterioso” shimmer of sound.

Example 3.8 Theme E, mm. 53-62; mm. 68-74

The texture is composed of simple, three-voice imitation, with the soprano entering first, then the alto a fifth below the soprano, and the bass an octave and a fifth below the alto, each voice entering two beats behind the other in a slow-motion stretto. As each voice completes its melody, it continues to sustain its concluding pitch until each of the other voices has completed its statement. By placing each entrance a fifth below its predecessor, the three-voiced, sustained conclusion to each segment is G-D-A, an open sound of a widely spaced ninth.

In mm. 63-66, the trumpet call makes its last appearance. In its final statement, as the A-5 theme, it would seem to end the movement on the bold optimism of a major third, because it makes three consecutive statements of a major third in mm. 64, 65, and 66.

Example 3.9 A-5 theme, mm. 63-67

In the last measure of the theme, m. 67, however, the composer has written a minor
third, to be played as an echo at a "p" dynamic level. The significance of this final minor third may be to provide a realistic reminder that the future of the new year is unsure.

The last note of the echo trumpet is covered by the quiet reentry of the "Bar'chu" melody in m. 67 played on the organ strings in the same three-voice imitative treatment in which it entered earlier. To end the movement thus is to make a final statement of quiet comfort and of praise to God in the theme of the High Holy Day "Bar'chu."

Movement No. 2

PRELUDE FOR YOM KIPPUR

"Open Thou the gates of heaven"

Berlinski composed his "Prelude for Yom Kippur" to be played as an organ prelude to precede the services of the Day of Atonement, the most important sacred observance of the Jewish liturgical year.

Berlinski describes his "Prelude for Yom Kippur" as follows:

The "Prelude for Yom Kippur" is in passacaglia form. The passacaglia theme is fashioned out of the basic tones of the Missinai "Kol Nidre" melody. In this passacaglia, I have tried to follow the procedure of featuring in the music a melodic display of themes taken from the progression of services which make up Yom Kippur, beginning with the eve of Yom Kippur, and continuing through the Yom Kippur morning and afternoon services to the finale of the holy day, the "Neilah" service. In this variation form, I have set a progression of melodies, in the order in which the melodies appear in the services, against the passacaglia theme as it is continually restated.

There are two reasons why I have chosen to use the passacaglia form. The first reason is that in any music which owes its existence to extramusical sources, there exists a danger of creating only a descriptive kind of program music. I have always felt that the music, regardless of its source of origin, must justify itself on its own merit, not by its program. If the music does not have structure, melodic or harmonic, or dramatic quality in itself, a program alone will not salvage it. For this reason, I have forced myself always to cast my music in very clear, definable forms;
and the passacaglia is, of course, one of those forms.

The second reason for the choice of the passacaglia is that, somehow, the recurring drama of Jewish persecution throughout the ages, which comes again and again like an old, familiar story, with all its tragic implications, and which runs like a silver thread through the history of the Jewish people, is, in a symbolic, metaphorical way, best expressed in the form of the passacaglia with its recurring theme.

In this prelude, I'm building up from the very softest, supplicatory type of prayer to a dramatic climax in which the fundamental bass of the passacaglia is played in the pedals against the fully harmonized version of that theme (the "Kol Nidre" melody) in the manuals in an entirely different tonality. This eventually leads to the final themes of the work—melodies from the "Neilah" service, the closing service of the Yom Kippur liturgy.

Berlinski's "Prelude for Yom Kippur" is a creative adaptation by the composer of the classic passacaglia form. While the classic passacaglia is a set of variations on the melody of the ostinato itself, Berlinski has placed against the ostinato not only variations of the theme itself, but has also introduced five additional themes from the Yom Kippur Day liturgies, setting them in counterpoint to the ostinato, in the order in which they occur in the services. Berlinski's passacaglia also differs from the classic model in yet another way. The rhythmic pattern of the classic passacaglia theme, itself, is traditionally written in the trochaic rhythmic mode, which repeats a long-short (e.g., half-note-to-quarter-note) rhythmic pattern in each measure. Berlinski's passacaglia theme built on the "Kol Nidre" melody, however, reverses the rhythmic pattern and presents the "Kol Nidre" theme in skeletal simplicity, two notes per measure, in the short-long (quarter-note-to-half-note) rhythmic pattern of the iambic mode (see Example 3.10).

The movement begins in f-sharp minor, with the quiet, solemn, eight-measure passacaglia theme stated in the pedals. The bass melody is not only the musical foundation of Berlinski's prelude but is also the musical foundation of the Yom Kippur Evening liturgy—a liturgy referred to as the "Kol Nidre liturgy." The "Kol Nidre" melody is at once the most
important melody liturgically of the Yom Kippur services and also the melody most deeply cherished by the Jewish people for its ability to express in musical beauty the soul of the Jewish people on the evening (the first of the services) of the Day of Atonement.

Example 3.10 Passacaglia Theme—“Kol Nidre” Melody

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{m.1} \\
\text{\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image}}
\end{array}
\]

In the second and third statements of the passacaglia theme, mm. 9-24, the composer has placed a freely-derived version of the “Kol Nidre” melody in the right hand, played on a solo oboe stop, against the more austere version in the bass. In the third statement, mm. 17-24, he calls for the addition of soft strings to the right hand oboe melody as it climbs higher melodically, grows in melodic freedom, and then returns to the middle of the keyboard to rest on an F-sharp.

A double bar separates the end of the third statement from the fourth statement of the bass ostinato, and at the beginning of m. 25 a key change appears in the organ manuals. Accidentals are removed from the key signature in the manuals, while the ostinato in the pedals continues to reiterate its “Kol Nidre” bass under the governance of f-sharp minor and its key-signature of three sharps.

A new theme is introduced in this fourth statement of the ostinato. This theme is a Jewish melody used specifically and only in the Yom Kippur morning liturgy and is a part of the Hazzanuth, i.e., the music of the cantorial tradition.
Example 3.11 Theme 2, mm. 25-41

It begins on quiet organ strings and is presented in homophonic, chordal texture, its rhythmic pattern dictated by the dotted-rhythmic pattern of the theme. The composer has treated the harmony of the manuals’ statement in a chromaticism of mild dissonance. In m. 33, the pattern continues over the fifth statement of the ostinato, growing in volume and rising higher on the keyboards through m. 38, then descending and decrescendoing through the end of the ostinato theme in m. 41.

Above the sixth statement of the ostinato in mm. 42-49, the composer has placed the third theme, a melody found in the Yom Kippur afternoon liturgy. As explained by the composer, this theme is believed to be of great antiquity, most probably sung by priests, and perhaps hearkening back as far as the time of the Biblical temple.

Example 3.12 Theme 3, mm. 42-49

Marked “misterioso, molto legato,” it begins as a solo voice in the soprano range in m. 42, and by m. 46 is joined by a second voice, slightly below it in pitch. The two voices
descend in triplets of an artistically-voiced duet.

In the seventh statement of the ostinato, mm. 50-57, the movement gains momentum and power. The theme in the manuals, labeled Theme 4 (Example 3.13), also comes from the Yom Kippur afternoon liturgy. Its melody can be found in both the Haazzanuth of Eastern European tradition and the Missinai melodies of Western European tradition. According to the composer, it is a melody of great antiquity whose rising sequential nature may have been associated with the ascent of steps leading to the High Altar in the afternoon service, a service in which animal sacrifices were offered in the Biblical temple.

Example 3.13 Theme 4, mm. 50-57

The theme begins in m. 50 in the middle of the keyboard in two voices in the manuals, but the texture soon grows to four voices, m. 52, which move together in the rhythmic pattern of the motive. The words “poco a poco crescendo” in m.52 initiate the process of a build-up in energy and excitement. The motive itself is constructed in a rising melodic pattern with a rhythmic pattern of two very short notes followed by a longer note— a motive that, by its own construction and by the composer’s sequential treatment of it in an ever upward climb, creates an anticipation and buildup. Berlinski’s harmony is chromatic and the writing clean and classic. Dissonance is mild in the voices, often created by passing tones on their way between notes of consonance, but sharper when the voices in the organ manuals are heard in their bitonal context above the f-sharp minor “Kol Nidre” theme in the pedals. Measures 56 and
57 broaden and crescendo to an "ff" climax on the final note of the ostinato. Exciting as this climax is, however, its role is that of a fanfare for the musical event to come.

The climax of the movement comes in the eighth statement of the ostinato when the pedal plays its f-sharp minor "Kol Nidre" in strongly accented and separated notes at an "fff" against the "fff" statement of the "Kol Nidre" in the manuals. The manuals play the theme in 6-voice, block chords two beats behind the theme in the pedal and at the interval of two octaves and a third above the bass ostinato. The melody in the manuals still has the tonal feel of f-sharp minor with a flattened leading tone. The chords in the manuals are harmonized in an ambivalent tonal language that moves back and forth between a-minor and f-sharp minor, and which is not as radically bitonal as the dual key signatures would suggest.

Ostinato statement nine, mm. 66-74, moves to the manuals, where it is stated in a two-voice texture in octaves and directed to be played "piu mosso." In this variation, what at first appears to be simple octaves is actually a pointillistic treatment of the "Kol Nidre." The first two notes of the theme are slurred together and played at an "fff" dynamic level, the right hand beginning on the F-sharp an octave and a tritone above middle C. The next two notes of the theme are played down an octave and at an "mf." And so it goes: an echo effect produced by two notes played in the upper octave followed by the next two notes in the lower octave, the two lower notes played at a lower dynamic level than the two upper notes which precede it in each instance. Over the eight-measure statement, the dynamic level gradually diminishes until it reaches "ppp" in m. 74 and lingers under a fermata.

At the beginning of ostinato statement ten, mm. 75-82, the key signatures reconcile with one another, and from here to the end of the movement all voices are notated in f-sharp
minor. The pedal does not play in this variation, however. Instead, with the designation “misterioso e con lenezza,” the “Kol Nidre” melody is presented in augmented, quiet, slowly-moving notes in the right hand, in the middle C-sharp octave. Opposite it in the left hand in a slightly higher range, but also marked to be played at a “piano” dynamic, is the theme, labeled Theme 5 (Example 3.14), which ushers in the “Neilah” or closing service of Yom Kippur. Berlinski describes this theme as having a trumpet-like character and a holy and numinous quality. The theme is found in both the Eastern Hazzanuth and the Western Missinai melodies.

Example 3.14 Theme 5, mm. 75-82

In the eleventh variation, mm. 83-96, the final theme of the Yom Kippur “Neilah” service, designated as Theme 6 (Example 3.15), is set as a right-hand melody on a solo organ flute. This sixth theme is an old Missinai melody which is associated with the imploring of God for the forgiveness of all committed sins. This prayer, and, therefore, the melody to which it is sung, is chanted near the end of the Yom Kippur liturgy, moments before the divine verdict is rendered and the Books of Justice are closed.
Example 3.15 Theme 6, mm. 83-105, 112,113

The eleventh variation is quiet and meditative. The character of the “Neilah” melody itself invokes a mood of contemplation and longing. Played as a flute solo, it is set against a “pp” accompaniment in the left hand. The accompaniment borrows its structure from the “Kol Nidre” ostinato in the following way. The accompaniment plays a soft, mildly dissonant triad in which one or more of the voices resolves up or down by half step in a melodic pattern suggestive of the “Kol Nidre” melody, while the remaining voice(s) continue to sustain their pitches. The left-hand pattern is presented one measure at a time, with a measure of rest interspersed between measures of music. The pedal “Kol Nidre” ostinato, which has appeared throughout the piece in an articulation which slurs together two notes at a time, continues this two-note pattern but prolongs the second note of each set of two notes by tying over the second note of each slur for the duration of an extra measure. The extra measure of tied note in the pedal allows for an interplay between the pedal and the left-hand accompaniment. The “Kol Nidre” is presented in the pedal, two notes at a time, in alternate measures against its
chromatically-altered and harmonized version, also in two-note increments, in the accompaniment of the left hand.

In the twelfth variation, mm. 97-104, the pedal is silent and the ostinato pattern which has traditionally been the property of the pedal moves to the soprano voice. Against the "Kol Nidre" ostinato in the soprano, the "Neilah" theme (Theme 6) is presented in the alto, and a quarter-note pattern that moves by step and by half step is presented in the tenor. A measure and a half of extension follows in which the reiteration of the end of the "Neilah" theme is played at a "pp" dynamic level in octaves and underpinned by quiet thirds that end with an open fifth, then a fourth.

The thirteenth and final statement of the ostinato returns to the pedal, where the "Kol Nidre" is heard one last time, as a pedal solo. At m. 111, fragments of the closing "Neilah" theme, return quietly in the alto range of the right hand, as if to remind the listener that the Books of Justice are now ready to close.

In summary, the "Prelude for Yom Kippur" is composed in a passacaglia form, in which the melody of the ostinato is the "Kol Nidre" melody from the Yom Kippur evening liturgy. Set against this recurring theme, in addition to variations of the theme itself, is a constellation of themes from the complete Yom Kippur liturgy in the order in which they occur. The liturgical themes used in this prelude draw on two major Judaic musical traditions, the Missinai melodies of Central Europe and the Hazzanuth of Eastern Europe. As a Polish Jew, educated in Germany, Berlinski is well acquainted with the Jewish liturgical musical practices of both Eastern and Western European Jewry and has incorporated themes from both traditions into his "Prelude for Yom Kippur."
PART II.

THREE PRELUDES FOR THE FESTIVALS

Berlinski explains the historical background of the three Biblical festivals and the music he has written for them in the following statement.

The three preludes which follow are organ preludes to the three Festival services—services which in Hebrew are called Shalosh Regalim. Shalosh Regalim are the three Biblical holidays in observance of which, according to custom, Jews from all over the world made pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Historically, these holidays were probably more important in the life of the Biblical Jew than were the High Holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, because the Shalosh Regalim were real folk festivals. Many of the Jewish pilgrims made long journeys from as far away as Egypt, often walking the entire journey, including long stretches through the desert, to reach the holy city. The title Shalosh Regalim implies that they went by foot, since the word “regal” translates as “a member of the body.” The three festivals have one thing in common. They are holidays which were celebrated in a city which, at that time, probably attracted more Jews coming from outside the city than the city had inhabitants—a situation that must have given cause to a great deal of rejoicing, entertainment, and wild excitement. My preludes try to convey this joyous spirit, a certain carefree approach to the celebration, and also the festive confusion which must have been a part of the colorful street life of the city of Jerusalem during the festivals.  

Movement No. 3

PRELUDE FOR SUKKOTH

(Prelude for the Festival of Tabernacles)

In the first of his festival preludes, the composer writes a prelude for Sukkoth, the festival of thanksgiving. Berlinski explains,

In the Prelude for Sukkoth I have begun with one Biblical mode and one Missinai melody appropriate for Sukkoth and have juxtaposed them in a bimodal fashion. The left hand plays in the “Magen Avot” mode in a key signature of four flats while, above it, the right hand plays a Sukkoth Missinai melody in a key signature of one flat. This pattern is then interrupted by the solemn entrance of the priest, whose musical material is based on the melodic and rhythmic pattern used in traditional Sukkoth melody.
Eventually, the street music returns and concludes the piece. This prelude is composed in a very clear ABA form.

Fifty-one measures in length, the prelude is constructed in an ABA form, divided into sections in the following way: an initial A section, mm. 1-15; a B section, mm. 16-30 (plus ½ measure more); and a returning A section, mm. 31-51.

The “Magen Avot” mode is used in an undulating pattern of running sixteenth notes in the left hand of the initial A section, and is governed by a key signature of four flats. The mode is characterized by a melodic pattern of shallow and frequent turns.

Example 3.16 Melodic Pattern, “Magen Avot” mode, mm. 1, 2

According to the composer, the music of the “Magen Avot” prayer mode evolved in Jewish music from melodic motives that had probably been in common usage in Jewish music for some time prior to the formulation of the mode. More closely resembling Middle Eastern makamat than Western European church modes, a Jewish prayer mode is a “pattern of melody...characterized by stereotyped turns, by its mood, and even by its pitch.”

The melody in the right hand, labeled the A theme, in mm. 4-14, is written in a key signature of one flat, and is a traditional Missinai melody written in F Major, which produces a bitonality when played with the “Magen Avot” melody beneath it.
Example 3.17 A theme, mm. 4-14

The hands exchange lines in mm. 13 and 14. The left hand holds an F for two measures while the right hand assumes a descending scalar pattern in the “Magen Avot” mode. The dynamic level diminishes in both hands in mm. 13 and 14. By m. 15 the left hand is silent while the right hand quietly slows its activity, previews the motive of the B section, and ends on a fermata.

Preceding m. 16 and the entrance of the contrasting B theme is a change of key signature. All accidentals are removed and both hands play the B material in 4-voice chords of open fifths. The pattern stated in m. 16—in which the motive is stated first in chords in the manuals, then restated in imitation in the pedals—establishes the pattern for the B-motive section, mm.16-23.

Example 3.18 B motive, mm. 16-23

As the composer explains, the B motive is an historically important motif believed to have been played or sung at the procession of the priests to the High Altar in the Biblical temple. It is specific to the holiday of Sukkoth.

The removal of accidentals from key signatures in all parts of the score preceding the
B section would seem to simplify the harmony, since the key signatures now share the same absence of accidentals; however, harmonic simplification is not the case. With the removal of accidentals from the key signatures which, for the most part, governed the harmony of each part, Berlinski is free to compose his B section in chromatically altered dissonance. He uses chromatically altered chords of strong, stark, open fourths and fifths in mm. 16-19, and by m. 20, he has intensified the musical buildup, writing in a higher register and adding tertian harmony in the manuals. In mm. 21 and 22 the harmony expands to three-voice, quartal octaves in each hand. A gesture of trumpet fanfare is created as this priestly processional reaches an “fff” climax in mm. 21-22. By m. 23, the theme lowers in pitch and in dynamic level, coming to rest on a quiet, sustained open fifth which plays alone in the left hand in m. 24.

Measures 24-31 play a transitional role. An A pedal point is quietly sustained throughout the entire eight measures. In the right hand, mm. 25-30 (Example 3.19), the middle and final portions of the Sukkoth Missinai melody are played on a solo oboe and set in two-voice polyphony against the left hand’s sequence of the opening motive of the Sukkoth melody. In m. 29, the left hand imitates the right hand to conclude the section with the final portion of the Sukkoth tune.

Example 3.19 Sukkoth Missinai melody, middle and final portions, mm. 25-30

Measure 31 is pivotal. In it, the left hand plays the opening Sukkoth motif for the first half of the measure, but switches to the “Magen Avot” mode’s flowing sixteenth-note pattern
by the second half of the measure in preparation for the return of the A section, m. 32. In mm. 32-40 the music is structured as it was in the original A section—the right hand playing the A theme Missinai melody in F Major against the left hand’s delicate undulation of running sixteenth notes in the “Magen Avot” mode. At m. 41 the hands reverse roles: the left hand plays another Sukkoth Missinai melody in F Major, labeled Theme C (Example 3.20), while the right hand takes over the sixteenth notes of the running sextuplet pattern in the “Magen Avot” mode.

Example 3.20 Theme C, mm. 41-51

![Music notation](image)

m.41

The pattern continues through m. 48. In m. 49, the right hand’s sextuplets in the “Magen Avot” mode give way to a key signature of F major, and change their pattern to play the latter portion of the Sukkoth melody, which was just completed in the left hand, mm. 41-48. In its restatement of the Sukkoth melody, mm. 49-51, the right hand plays the melody in a “Molto delicato e non legato” fashion. In these final three measures of the movement, dynamics gradually diminish from “mf” to “pp,” and the Sukkoth melody is accompanied by simple, parallel sixths. The tonal centers of both hands are reconciled, and the Prelude for Sukkoth ends quietly and consonantly on an F-major chord.

Movement No. 4

PRELUDE FOR PASSOVER

Berliński explains his “Prelude for Passover” as follows:
Passover was most probably in Biblical times the most important holiday. In its commemoration of the exodus of the Jewish people from Egypt, it is the holiday which not only celebrates freedom from enslavement, but also celebrates the monumental act of the creation of a nation.

In this 'Prelude for Passover', I have composed a dance. Picture the scene. The Israelites have just escaped from the pursuing Egyptians by a miraculous passage through the Red Sea, in which the Israelites were saved and the Egyptians were drowned. My prelude is based on the Biblical story of the Exodus—specifically on the portion of the story which describes the celebration of the Israelites after they had miraculously reached safety, as related in Exodus 15:20: "Then Miriam, the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hands; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and dancing." In my music Miriam's dance is graceful and sensuous. The work is pure elation. It is just a re-creation in musical tones of the dance, the joy, the jubilation, and the excitement of the holiday.

Berlinski's prelude of 78 measures is at once joyful, graceful, and sensuous. It is well described by several directives in the music, e.g. "molto grazioso, " poco scherzando," and "molto delicato." A lilting lightness in color, articulation, and texture are woven into the work. Because of the registration called for in the manuals (Great manual: Flutes 8' and 2'; Choir manual: Flute 8' and Tierce 1 3/5'; and Solo manual: flutes 8' and 4'), the colors of the organ produce a piquancy of sound on light, high flutes, suggesting, by the very properties of their sounds, the light-hearted spirit of the music itself. The writing is clean and spare, composed in a harmonic style that is often made up of fourths, fifths, and intervals other than thirds. The frequent use of detached articulation also helps to evoke the joy and light-hearted spirit of the dance.

The composer has constructed the movement in an A B A B C (Development) D C A form. Melody is placed in the right hand throughout much of the movement.

The movement begins on soft string sounds. On the downbeat of each of the two introductory measures, a grace note resolves to an open fifth, which is then sustained for the duration of each of the measures. In the bass the pedals lightly underscore the key of c minor
by alternating i–V in that key on “pp” staccato quarter notes, reminiscent of the sound produced by a plucked string bass. The tempo is marked “Andante grazioso.” At m. 3, and continuing through m. 10, the A theme is introduced and is played in the soprano voice on flutes 8' and 2'.

Example 3.21 Theme A, mm. 3-10

In the A theme, Miriam’s sensuous, lilting, middle-Eastern dance is portrayed in twentieth-century melody and harmony. The imagery created by the music is vivid, and invites the listener to visualize Miriam and the other women picking up their timbrels and beginning a slow, sensuous dance while the crowd, hushed, looks on.

The dance is constructed of short sections, each extending from four to eight measures in length. The conclusion of each section is, in most instances, marked by a slowing of tempo, either through the designation of a “poco ritardando” or by the placement of a fermata, or by the notation of a long-held note. Also, motion is slowed by the interpolation of a measure or two of connective musical material which is frequently inserted between sections to put forward motion on hold. Following the slowdown at the end of a section, a new section commences, which is frequently governed by the instruction “Tempo primo,” with its immediate renewal of motion and tempo. One can picture this charming dance that slows for a graceful pause at the end of sections and which then immediately resumes its motion and its joy, in each new section which follows.

The key signature remains that of three flats throughout, and the entire piece is
governed by the tonality of c minor, with brief excursions into other tonal centers. In mm. 11-17 a new theme, labeled Theme B (see Example 3.22) is introduced and the movement shifts fleetingly to a b-flat minor tonal center for two measures, mm.11 and 12, before returning to c- minor in m. 13. Whereas the A theme was characterized by quarter-note movement, the B theme consists primarily of eighth-note movement.

Example 3.22 Theme B, mm. 11-17

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{m.11} & \\
\text{Theme B} & \\
\text{mm. 11-17} & \\
\end{align*}
\]

The A theme returns in mm. 18-25. The melody is still in the soprano, but, in its return, an alto counterpoint has been added to the right hand. The pedals, which played a staccato quarter-note pattern on each beat in the initial A section, now play a staccato quarter-note pattern on beats one and three, alternating with the left hand, which plays quarter-note chords on after-beats two and four.

The B theme that reenters in m. 26 is set in spare, two-voice polyphony. Here, the B theme is stated in a four-measure phrase, mm. 26-29, followed by two measures of static, connective material played at a “pp” dynamic level.

Measure 31 prepares an A-flat major tonality for the entrance of the C theme in mm. 32-36 (see Example 3.23). The rhythmic pattern of the head motive of the C theme features a musical pattern of two sixteenth notes followed by an eighth note. This then connects with a pattern of flowing sixteenth notes. A comparison of themes A, B, and C reveals an intensification of rhythmic motion with each successive theme. Theme A is constructed
primarily of quarter notes, theme B of eighth notes, and theme C of sixteenth notes. In mm. 37-39, the tonality of the C theme returns to c minor. Two measures of chromatic, connective material are inserted in m. 39, and a “poco rit.” marks the end of the C section in m. 40.

Example 3.23 C theme, mm. 32-36

Measures 41-46 intertwine thematic material from each of the themes in a short development section. The section begins at a “pp” dynamic level, but, in m. 46, builds in swift crescendo. Dramatically, in m. 47, a “subito ‘p’” immediately quiets the work, but for only two beats. By the end of m. 47, dynamics begin to build again, and the music rises in rapid, chromatic ascent, to reach an exuberant climax in D major at m. 50 in the jubilant D theme, mm. 50-54 (Example 3.24). The D theme is proclaimed “molto rhythmico e poco rit.” in five measures of homophonic writing, which accentuates strong duplet and triplet rhythms, and is punctuated in the bass by double pedal.

Example 3.24 Theme D, mm. 50-54

By m. 52, the D theme begins its melodic and dynamic descent. D minor becomes the tonal center for mm. 53-56, and the end of the D section is marked by a “poco rit” in m. 54. A restoration of the tempo primo, m. 55, and two measures of static introductory material lead
into a return of the C theme in c minor, played in the top voice, mm. 57-60. At m. 60, a “poco rit.” slows the end of the C section.

At the “Tempo primo,” m. 61, a measure of introductory accompaniment prepares for the entry of the C theme, m. 62. In this statement, mm. 62-68, the C theme is stated in C major. The A theme returns in m. 69 to conclude the movement, stating its graceful, c-minor melody, “molto delicato,” in two-voice polyphony—the melody of the A theme in the right hand placed opposite a six-measure line of chromatic descent in the left hand. The final note of the A theme is extended for two additional beats, m.77, during which time the note is sustained alone and diminuendos.

In measure 78 Berlinski completes the movement by composing a final measure, marked “Lento,” in which the right hand plays one last, whispered, reverent measure of B motive at a “pp” dynamic level, on beats 1-3. On the final beat of the final measure, however, the composer treats us to a delightful surprise, for, without warning, he closes the movement with a final, swift “sfz,” grace-note-to-open-fifth, quarter-note “stinger,” to end with a gesture of joyful caprice.

Movement No. 5

PRELUDE FOR SHAHUOTH

(Prelude for Pentecost)

The holiday of Shavuoth celebrates the gift of God’s law to the Jewish people. In the Biblical account of the story, God speaks to Moses, foretelling their soon-to-come summit meeting and instructing Moses to consecrate the people and to prepare them for His coming. God announces that He will descend to Mt. Sinai in a thick cloud, and that His arrival will be
announced by a blast of the trumpet. When the appointed day arrives, the scenario is as God had foretold, but even more dramatic than the people had imagined. God’s presence descends upon Mt. Sinai in a thick cloud; a loud trumpet blast is sounded as a sign to the Israelites that the time has come; but, in addition to these signs, extraordinary atmospheric conditions develop and cause the people to tremble with fear. At the beginning of the prelude, the composer quotes the Biblical account in Exodus 20:18, which reads, “And the people perceived the thunderings and the lightnings and the voice of the horn and the mountain smoking....” Berlinski’s prelude is set against this cataclysmic backdrop.

This movement, sixty-eight measures in length, is a tonally conceived work in g minor, and is constructed as an Introduction and quasi-Passacaglia. The combination of an Introduction and Passacaglia had been employed in organ works by German Romantic composers, e.g., Max Reger, in the earlier part of the twentieth century, but, in this final movement of Sinfonia No. 2, Berlinski offers a creative adaptation of the classic passacaglia structure and labels it a “quasi-Passacaglia.”

This is Berlinski’s second use of the passacaglia structure in Sinfonia No. 2, and in both settings the composer makes adaptations to the classic procedure. In the second movement of Sinfonia No. 2, the “Prelude for Yom Kippur,” Berlinski modified the classic passacaglia pattern by using the “Kol Nidre” melody from the Yom Kippur evening liturgy as the ostinato and setting against its recurring theme, in addition to variations of the theme itself, a constellation of themes from the complete Yom Kippur liturgy, in the order in which they occur. In his second use of the passacaglia in Sinfonia No. 2, the “Prelude for Shavuoth,” Berlinski makes adaptations in the classic passacaglia structure. He suspends the ostinato at
three separate points in the passacaglia, where he inserts sections of musical material based on the Shavuoth Missinai motif, which was presented in the Introduction of the movement. With the third and final statement of Shavuoth Missinai material the quasi-Passacaglia reaches its grand conclusion.

This prelude is built on two themes, the first a melismatic, cantorial Hebrew chant, known as the "Hoel", which is based on a text that proclaims the greatness of God.

Example 3.25 "Hoel" chant

The second theme is a Shavuoth Missinai motif, a melody traditionally associated with the Festival of Shavuoth.

Example 3.26 Shavuoth Missinai motif

The introductory section, which comprises the first twenty-two measures of the movement, begins with the verbatim quotation of the opening measures of the cantorial "Hoel" chant (Example 3.25). The chant is revealed in its entirety, not in one continuous, complete statement, but—over the span of the first eleven measures of the Introduction—in three separate,
consecutive segments of two or three measures each. (A parallelism exists between the three presentations of segments of the “Hoel” chant in the Introduction and the division of the quasi-Passacaglia into three sections.) These three sections of “Hoel” chant are connected by measures of improvisatory melody composed in the style of the “Hoel” chant, but which do not actually quote the chant. Measures of the introduction in which the chant appears in actual quotation are m. 1 (quoting mm. 1 and 2 of the chant); mm. 5 and 6 (quoting mm. 3 and 4 of the chant); and mm. 9-11 (quoting the final three measures, mm. 5, 6, and 7, of the chant).

Strong, “ff” chords punctuate ends of opening measures in the Introduction, adding a gravity and majesty to the freely-flowing melody. Berlinski uses the chords for emphasis and exclamation at points of pause in the melody at the ends of mm. 1, 2, 9, and 10. In these places he inserts two chords of an emphatic, short-long, sixteenth-note-to-quarter-note rhythm. He also places single, heavy, marcato chords on accentuated after-beats beneath slower-moving notes of chant, mm. 6 and 8, thereby helping to establish further a mood of power and majesty, and providing an added weight and definition to underscore the drama of the improvisatory chant.

The swirling flourish of the chant, the crashing chords of accentuation, and the setting of the movement in the tonality of g minor are all musical elements of dramatic intensity which the composer employs to assist in portraying in musical expression the high drama of the Biblical text.

At the mid-point of the introduction, in m. 12, Berlinski introduces the second theme, the Shavuoth Missinai motif. He presents only the first measure of the motif in its initial appearance, however, and treats this head-motif in a two-measure pattern that rises sequentially,
mm. 12-17. The opening Shavuoth Missinai motif, in these measures, is stated first in octaves in the manuals, and is followed by a measure of the same pattern in the pedals. In each two-measure segment, the final ascending interval expands upward by one whole step, until by the third statement, mm. 16 and 17, the interval has enlarged to a perfect fifth, which is the actual melodic interval of the opening measure of the ancient Shavuoth Missinai motif (see Example 3.26).

Measures 18-22 comprise the final measures of introduction. In measure 18, the composer states the five-note pattern of descent which concludes the Shavuoth Missinai motif, A-G-F#-E-D, but presents the descent in a slightly embellished melodic pattern and in a rhythmic pattern of an eighth note followed by two sixteenths.

In m.19, Berliński returns to the improvisatory chant, writing in octaves of freely-improvised triplets which rise to a climax in m. 20 on an “sfz,” g-flat minor seventh chord over a low C pedal point. As the section prepares to cadence, manual octaves begin a descent in pitch and a slowing of rhythm, with a return to the rhythmic pattern of m. 18, i.e., an eighth-to-two-sixteenths. The introduction reaches its conclusion in m. 22 on a D-9th chord, a chord which serves the dual purpose of conclusion to the introduction and chord of fanfare to the quasi-Passacaglia which follows.

The quasi-Passacaglia begins in m. 23 with an opening “ff” statement of the ostinato in the pedals.

Example 3.27 Passacaglia theme mm. 23-28
The dotted-rhythmic pattern of descent with which the ostinato begins is a direct quote of the final measure of the “Hoei” chant. The composer explains that this melodic pattern of four notes of descent metaphorically and symbolically suggests Moses’ descent from Mt. Sinai with the ten commandments.

In m. 28, at the completion of the first statement of this bold, six-measure pedal ostinato, the composer suspends the ostinato’s pattern, drops dynamics to a “p” level, and inserts a six-measure, “misterioso,” statement of the Shavuoth Missinai motif, presenting its opening melodic pattern in the sequential form of intervallic expansion in which it initially appeared in mm. 12-17.

After one phrase of hushed Shavuoth Missinai material, Berlinski returns to the passacaglia. He presents three successive statements of the ostinato, mm. 35-51, beginning with two-voice texture and at a “p” dynamic level in its presentation in mm. 35-40, then building in texture, dynamics, and pitch, in two additional statements of the ostinato, mm. 41-46 and mm. 47-51, to a climax in m. 51.

The composer suspends his passacaglia for the second time at the pick-up to m. 52, which is labeled “Molto maestro.” At this point he calls for the addition of heavy reeds to the organ registration and inserts a four-measure phrase of Shavuoth Missinai motif material. In this presentation of the Shavuoth motif, the two-measure motif is stated twice, its second measure presented in downwardly-flowing, melodically-embellished triplets.

At m. 56, played on “Full Organ,” the passacaglia is presented in its final statement. As a counterbalance to the pedal’s majestic, ostinato pattern of dotted-rhythmic angularity, the music of the manuals, mm.56-61, plays the fluid melody of the introductory pattern of chant, the hands moving in parallel octaves, mm. 59-61.
In m. 62, the grand finale of the movement is reached when, for the third time, the composer suspends the passacaglia and, in one last magnificent gesture of fanfare, features the Shavuoth Missinai melody on the organ's horizontal heralding trumpet. Over a D pedal point and played at an "fff" dynamic level on the state trumpet, the Shavuoth theme is proclaimed twice—the first time in the soprano voice, the second time in the alto voice, under a tied D in the soprano. This final addition of the state trumpet, crowning the full organ sound of a great pipe organ in a proclamation of the Shavuoth Missinai motif in powerful and majestic fanfare, creates a thrilling finale of high drama and spiritual ecstasy.

The work rushes to conclusion with the upward flourish of a g-minor scale into the penultimate measure of the movement, in which three long-held (dotted-half) E-flats in the melody are punctuated on half note after-beats by thick, accented chords, reminiscent of the pattern established in the introduction, m. 6. The after-beat chords expand, progressing harmonically from a C-flat major chord to an A-flat major chord, to an E-flat half-diminished 9th chord, to a final triumphant arrival on a G-major chord. With this final majestic cadence, Berlinski completes his musical portrayal of the Biblical account of God's dramatic mountaintop meeting with Moses in which God transmits His divine law to the Hebrew people.

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In summary, in Sinfonia No. 2 Berlinski created the first real Jewish liturgical organ music of high artistic merit and, in so doing, forged a new idiom. The organ was foreign to Jewish worship until its introduction into the Jewish sacred service in the 19th century by Reform Judaism. Even after its introduction, Jews were especially hesitant to accept the organ as a part of worship, because, to many, the instrument was associated with Christian worship. Although
the movement of Reform Judaism was more than a century old in 1954, when Herman Berlinski became a part of the music staff of Temple Emanu El, there still had been no Jewish liturgical music of any consequence written for the organ. None of the Jewish composers of Jewish sacred music before him had the depth of understanding of the organ required to write idiomatically for it, and non-Jewish composers of organ music did not have the background in Jewish liturgical music to write organ music for the Jewish sacred service. Berlinski realized that if there was to be any Jewish organ music of real significance, he would have to write it.

The composer composed the movements of Sinfonia No. 2 in traditional forms, frequently making creative adaptations to the established forms. He chose for his themes Jewish liturgical melodies and motives specific to each festival and holy day. His “Prelude for Rosh Hashanah” is set in a quasi-rondo form, and, because Rosh Hashanah is known as the “day of the trumpet,” he assigned to the trumpet the rondo theme which returns playing various trumpet motifs of a Rosh Hashanah character. In the “Prelude for Yom Kippur,” he composed a passacaglia in which the “Kol Nidre” theme is the ostinato. His “Prelude for Sukkoth” is in ABA form. The “Prelude for Passover” is in ABABC+Development+DCA form, and the “Prelude for Shavuoth” is written in the form of an extended introduction followed by a quasi-passacaglia, both sections of which are based on two themes: the “Hoel” chant and a Shavuoth Missinai motif.

While Sinfonia No. 2 coheres as one grand work, each of the preludes can stand on its own artistic merit, both as a liturgical organ prelude to a specific Jewish service, and also as a work of concert organ repertoire.
NOTES

1. Hieronymus, 40-42, 50-55. Louis Lewandowski (1821-1894), active in synagogue music in Berlin, became the first choir-master in the history of Judaism, and was known throughout Europe as head of synagogue song. He wrote choral music in the style of Mendelssohn, and he composed one suite of organ compositions entitled “Fuenf Fest Praeludien” (“Five Festival Preludes”), op. 37, in which the prelude for each holiday was based on a major motif of that holiday. His “Fuenf Fest Praeludien” was the only Jewish organ work published in the nineteenth century.


3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.


CHAPTER 4

SINFONIA NO. 3

FOR ORGAN:

SOUNDS AND MOTIONS FOR ORGAN

Sinfonia No. 3, entitled Sounds and Motions for Organ, is a secular suite, but Jewish images and melodies still play a role in the piece. Composed in 1961 for the talented and flamboyant concert organist, Claire Cocci, this sinfonia has been described as having been shaped by a "brooding German expressionism that gives each movement a white-hot intensity."

Sinfonia No. 3 is a suite of six movements ordered as follows:

I. Trumpets

II. Motion and Silence

III. Contemplation

IV. Light Motion

V. Pulsation

VI. Polymodal Sounds and Motions

In discussing the background of this work, Berlinski explained that in 1960, Claire Cocci, who at that time was the official organist of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, introduced herself and asked him to write an organ work for her. Berlinski was widely known among organists in the United States by that time for his dramatic and virtuosic organ work, "The Burning Bush." Based upon her familiarity with this piece, Cocci commissioned the
composer to write a work. Sinfonia No. 3, *Sounds and Motions for Organ*, is the composer’s response to her request. The world premier was played by Cocci at a concert in New York in 1961.

In Sinfonia No. 3 Berlinski composed a suite of six contrasting movements which explore the colors of a large symphonic organ and also explore the creative use of rhythmic patterns, particularly as they interact with silence to produce powerful dramatic effects. The composer sets five of the six movements in classic forms or in creative adaptations of classic forms and procedures. He constructs the second movement, however, in a free adaptation of twentieth-century serial technique. Harmonic treatment varies from movement to movement. Although the composer is known for his use of chromaticism, he employs a wide range of harmonic writing throughout Sinfonia No. 3—from the consonant and tonal to the extremely dissonant. Berlinski employs dissonance in his writing as a means of expression, rather than of principle. He frequently expresses tragedy or mysticism through an increase in dissonance.

**Movement No. 1**

**TRUMPETS**

In Berlinski’s reflections on this work, he disclosed the following.

It is perhaps of little importance whether this music is, in any sense of the word, Jewish. The work speaks in a contemporary musical language, but I think that I can never divest myself of the shadow of the Holocaust. The signature instrument of Judaism throughout Israel’s history has been the trumpet. The trumpets of this first movement are not trumpets of the High Holidays. They are not trumpets of joy. The trumpets in Sinfonia No.3 are trumpets of the Holocaust. They spell doom in cataclysmic events.
The movement, only fifteen measures in length, is constructed on a repeated, two-
ote, trumpet-call motif, which sounds the interval of a perfect fourth.

Example 4.1 Trumpet-call motif, m.1

The interval of a fourth is important in this movement, not only for its use as a trumpet call, but also for its significance as a symbol of Jewish worship, for the fourth is the interval with which almost every blessing in Jewish worship begins, e.g., the "Bar'chu." Throughout the movement, this two-note motif acts as the head-motif of an ostinato, and, in this role, is followed, in each statement, by a fluid melodic pattern. In the opening four statements of the ostinato, Berlinski lengthens each consecutive statement's melodic line by one pitch. By so doing, Berlinski has applied Messiaen's technique of "chromatic durations," i.e. basing the music on a series of durations, which, in the simplest form, progressively increases or decreases by a consistent unit of value. The lengthening process continues through m. 11. In measures 5-11, the melodic material which follows each trumpet call expands harmonically, as well. The composer explains that there is a symbolic meaning as well as a musical purpose to the lengthening of this melodic/harmonic material. For, as the music which follows the repeated motif of Israel's trumpet-call is progressively lengthened by unrelated melodic/harmonic material, so the household of Israel, during the Holocaust, was subjected to an ever-increasing isolation and lonesomeness.

By the pick-up to m.5, the trumpet motif has intensified in texture and dissonance—
its trumpet-call no longer heralded by a solo trumpet, but now played in the manuals by four voices in doubled tritones. Dynamically the music explodes in a "subito ff," and a pedal voice is added, stating its trumpet-call motif in closely following imitation, on an inverted, downwardly-bent tritone. The crescendo pedal gradually begins to open, and in m. 6, beneath sustained, doubled tritones in the manuals, a second voice is added in the pedals. The double pedal lines are featured, mm. 6 and 7, in accented intervals of dissonant descent.

At m. 8, Berlinski has arrived at the climax of the movement and calls for the addition of the stentorian voice of the state trumpet. Its clarion call of pain is felt by the listener, not only in the tension and dissonance of the music, but also in the aural discomfort experienced in hearing the sheer decibel level of two lines played simultaneously on the state trumpet. The lower voice plays the two-note trumpet motif, the latter note of which is tied and sustained throughout most of mm. 8 and 9. Above the insistence of this sustained note, in m. 8, a second voice enters, playing a fluid, chromatic line, pitched high on the heralding trumpet. An excruciating level of sound is reached when a third voice is added in m. 9. Compounding the aural intensity of the extremely loud volume is the dissonance of the writing, when, at this point, the two upper voices of the measure are scored to play consecutive minor ninths in a high range on the state trumpet. These two upper voices then cadence on a major second above the lower, sustained A, thus creating the dissonance of a tritone in the outer voices, with the inclusion of a major second within the tritone.

The music of the state trumpet at its climax, playing multiple voices of extreme dissonance, calls forth the most dissonant sound that the composer can summon from the organ. Written in this manner, the music, played on the organ's heralding trumpet, fulfills
the role to which it has been assigned—that of heralding the Holocaust.

With the pick-up to m. 10, a reversal of the process begins, and a gradual relaxation of tension is set in motion, which ultimately returns the movement by degrees to a level parallel to that which was stated at the beginning. In m. 10 the hands leave the state trumpet and move to another manual of the organ, which is registered to play at a lower “f” volume. The trumpet-call motif gravitates to the pedal and sounds its call in the organ’s bass. It is followed in mm. 10 and 11 by five-voice chords in the manuals, which play a grave, augmented, dotted-rhythmic pattern suggestive of a trumpet call. Although the chords of mm. 10 and 11 are polymodal, and polymodality itself produces dissonance, the dissonance is mild compared to the trumpet’s screams in mm. 8 and 9.

The pedal pick-up note to m. 12 is suddenly hushed, restating the trumpet motif, but now played at a quiet dynamic level. Its final note is tied and sustained for almost two measures, while, over it, each hand descends in a line of quiet, slowly-moving arpeggiation, each on its own solo flute. The hands move in the same general pitch range, in polymodal constellation—the left hand trailing the right hand by an eighth note, and playing in an unusually high position on the keyboard—a tritone to a seventh above the right hand throughout the descent.

In its final statement, at the pick-up to m. 14, the trumpet motif is heard as a still, small voice at a “ppp” dynamic level, its final note continuing to play through the end of the movement. Beneath its sustained whisper, the pedal, with the added underpinning of a quiet 32-foot stop, plays the trumpet motif in an inverted melodic pattern—its final note sustained to the end of the piece, as well. The movement ends in m. 15 with a concluding, four-note
chord played by the left hand on a “ppp” flute stop. This chord, placed high on the keyboard on the downbeat of m. 15, is composed of two tritones, one placed a semitone above the other. Although the painful volume of the state trumpet is no longer heard, the dissonance of the movement is insistent, even at a “ppp” level, through the end of the movement.

Movement No. 2

MOTION AND SILENCE

Twenty-eight measures in length, the second movement is composed in a free adaptation of serial technique. In this movement, each hand has its own tone row, and the pedal line has its own row. The composer begins with a measure of 1/8 meter in which the first three notes of the right hand’s tone row play against the first two notes of the left hand’s melodic row, in simple, two-voice texture. Berlinski then follows the first measure of music with an equivalent period of silence. Next follows another measure in 1/4 meter in which the pedal plays its opening quarter note as a solo sound. Again, the measure of music is followed by a period of silence. This sequence of events becomes the pattern upon which the movement is constructed. With each consecutive repetition of the pattern, the row is restated in its entirety, as revealed to that point, and is expanded by one beat, i.e., by the length of an eighth note in the manuals and a quarter note in the pedals. The silence that follows each entrance is not written in traditional, precise, rhythmic notation, but is designated by an empty bar with only a bracket over the top of the bar, to denote a silence whose length is left to the discretion of the performer. The dramatic effect of the movement is based upon the confrontation between sound and silence.
In the first twelve measures the "manuals-silence-pedal-silence" pattern is presented six times, in systematically-lengthened consecutive statements of the rows. In "Motion and Silence," Berlinski has applied Messiaen's technique of expansion by "chromatic durations" to serial writing. The movement builds gradually in volume from a "piano" dynamic level at the beginning to an "fff" dynamic level on the downbeat of m. 13. By the sixth presentation of the pattern in the manuals in m. 11, the completed tone rows of both the right hand and the left hand have been revealed (see examples 4.2 and 4.3). The tone row played by the right hand is written in a 32\(^{\text{nd}}\)-note pattern, while the left hand row is composed in 16\(^{\text{th}}\) notes.

Following are the two tone rows in the manuals:

Example 4.2 Tone Row for the Right Hand, m. 11

![Tone Row for the Right Hand, m. 11](image)

Example 4.3 Tone Row for the Left Hand, m. 11

![Tone Row for the Left Hand, m. 11](image)

The pedal tone row, played in the slower rhythm of quarter notes, plays a six-note pattern in m. 12, which, if it were following the lead of the manual tone rows, would have completed its pattern by this time. It is only partially complete, however. Only after several
more measures of pedal solo, mm. 13-15, is the pedal’s row complete. The one complete statement of the pedal row is the one presented in mm.12-16.

Example 4.4 Pedal row, mm. 12,13; ending as in mm. 27, 28

The final note of the pedal row, played on the downbeat of m.15, is an elision, its sustained D-flat becoming the foundation and pedal point for the climax of the movement in mm. 15 and 16. In these measures, the second through the fifth pitch classes of the pedal row (plus an additional F-natural) are transferred to the manuals, where they are played and sustained above the D-flat pedal point. A gradual crescendo builds their dynamic level to an “fff” by the downbeat of m. 17.

As the chord of climax is released in m. 17, it is followed in the pedals by an “fff” restatement of the two pairs of sixteenth notes in the pedal which were originally added to the pedal row in m. 13. Following m. 17, however, the pedals are tacit until m. 24.

In mm.18-23 a mirroring process is set into motion, in which the tone rows of the manuals are restated in the reverse order in which they were originally presented. Each restatement of the manual rows is followed by a time capsule of silence. The pedal rows, however, are omitted in the process of mirrored restatement until m. 24. (Tied notes at the ends of rows, which were present in the original statement, are also eliminated in the restatement.) Measure 18 presents the manual rows as they were stated in m. 11; m. 19 states the pattern of m. 9; m. 20 the pattern of m. 7; m. 21 the pattern of m. 5; m. 22 the rows of
m.3; and m. 23 the pattern of m. 1. Dynamics are gradually reduced in a tiered fashion, with each consecutive, shortened presentation of the rows played at a progressively lowered dynamic level.

In m. 23, when the manual-row-statement-reversal process has reached its point of completion, the final notes, a G-flat in the right hand and a D-flat a fourth below it in the left hand, are held and sustained at a whispered dynamic level for the next five measures, through the end of the movement. In m. 24, the pedals break their silence and re-enter playing the pattern of m. 13, in which two pairs of sixteenth notes introduced the latter half of the pedal row. A measure of silence then follows in the pedals. In m. 26 the pedal pattern of m. 24 is restated, but played an octave lower and at a softer “pp” dynamic level. In mm. 27 and 28, the pedal row is completed as the final descending triplet figure of the pedal row quietly flows downward to its point of repose—the low D-flat. There, the final, sustained notes of the three rows decrescendo to a “ppp” through the end of the measure.

Movement No. 3

CONTEMPLATION

Berlinski explains his concept of the third movement in the following words: “In ‘Contemplation’ I have composed a prayer which cannot be found in any liturgy. The music itself becomes the prayer.”

In this movement, a warm cantabile melody plays over slowly-changing, two-voice harmony in the left hand. Under this, the pedal descends by small steps on quiet, repeated, bass quarter notes in a style reminiscent of the slightly detached bass line played by a low
stringed instrument in an Italian Baroque aria. The composer has, indeed, chosen the da capo aria’s style and form in which to set this thirty-five measure movement. Although the form is borrowed from the Baroque era, Berlinski fashions the harmony of the movement from a twentieth-century language, and sets the movement, as a small jewel, in a spare textural elegance of his own. The form is organized thus: the initial A section, mm. 1-10; the B section, mm. 11-23; and the final A section, mm. 24-35.

Although the movement is based upon chromatic harmony and does not linger in tonal centers, the A sections begin in E Major and end in D Major, and the B section closes on an F-Major chord. Harmonic rhythm changes slowly in the A sections—only once or twice per measure. Suspensions occur as the soprano melody flows in a wistful, chromatically-colored line over the slower-moving left hand and pedal. A continuous ebb and flow throughout the A sections is created by the frequent notation of gentle crescendos and decrescendos.

The piece moves in and out of mild harmonic dissonance. Dissonance in the first three measures is brief and is brought about by passing-tone movement in the soprano melody. By m. 4, however, dissonance occurs more intentionally and more frequently between one voice of the left-hand harmony and the bass of the organ pedal. In m. 5, the soprano melody, whose dissonances previously occurred only as passing tones on unaccented beats, now asserts its dissonance on longer and more importantly placed notes, e.g. the F-natural on beats two and three of m. 5. and the two-and-a-half-beat tied notes on the downbeats of mm. 7 and 8. By mm. 9 and 10, however, the A section draws to a close in consonant harmony on the arpeggiation of a D-Major chord.

With the entrance of the B section in m. 11, energy builds. The directions “Un poco
piu mosso” give notice of change. The rhythmic predictability of the A section is replaced by frequently-changing meter. Texture thickens to five and six voices in mm. 11-13. Melody throughout the section is free-flowing, its energy pressing forward in graceful arches of rise and descent. Although harmonic rhythm quickens in the B section, motion is restrained twice—once in m. 14 and again in m. 16—by the insertion of a measure of repose, written in the 4/4, “espressivo” character of the A section. In each of these measures an attempt is made to calm the movement and restore the piece to its former character. In each of these measures an important sub-motif is introduced in the accompaniment, in which two chords of punctuation are played by the left hand and pedal, on beats two and three.

In m. 17 a “poco accelerando” pushes the movement forward. The meter expands to a measure of five beats; the melody climbs upward; and a dynamic buildup occurs which leads to a climax in mm. 18 and 19. In these two climactic measures, two chords of punctuation return to accentuate the accompaniment—their harmonic progression no longer static, but now chromatic. The melody descends in m. 19, returning to the middle of the keyboard.

Measure 20 begins the transition to the returning A section. A calming, slowing process is initiated in m. 20 with the instructions “poco a poco al tempo primo.” The soprano melody no longer moves as freely, but seems anchored in a lower range, coming to rest on a B-flat below middle C. Harmonic rhythm slows to half notes by m. 21, and, under a B-flat pedal point in the soprano, the lower three voices descend in unison half steps, arriving at an F-natural in m. 23. The B-flat in the top voice then resolves downward a half step, and the B section closes in F Major.
Slurs connect octave F-naturals in the last measure of the B section, m. 23, to octave E-naturals in the first measure of the returning A section, m. 24, as it returns on an E-Major chord.

The restated A section of Berlinski’s da capo aria, following in the pattern of its prototype, is presented, in a somewhat elaborated version. In mm. 24-26 the repeated A section begins as it did in its initial statement, except that the two voices of left-hand harmony are played down an octave. In m. 27 a voice is added above the soprano as a quasi-descant, while the original soprano melody moves to the second soprano voice. In m. 28 this second-soprano melody is melodically embellished. By m. 29 the soprano melody line has moved up to the descant line, while the line below it has become the alto. These lines intertwine in two measures of imitative writing, mm. 29 and 30. By m. 31, the A section cadences on a B-flat major chord. Left hand and pedal are then suspended for several measures, while the soprano line expands in a high melodic arch. Upon the completion of the arch, the soprano continues alone in two measures of cadential extension, mm. 33 and 34, in which it brings the movement to a close with a quiet solo in the mezzo range. The final A of its solo line is immediately followed by two “ppp.” D-major chords of resolution—chords whose insertion at earlier points in the movement lent an air of quiet punctuation, and which now impart the finality of a quiet “Amen.”

Movement No. 4

LIGHT MOTION

Movement No. 4 is a piquant dance. It is a playful scherzo—a light, bubbly piece in the style of a French symphonic organ scherzo. When writing this movement, Berlinski
envisioned a grotesque, little Chassidic dance in which the dancer got so carried away with his own spirituality that he tried to "outdance" his body. The result was a playfully grotesque dance.

Characteristics of the French organ scherzo include a light-hearted, playful character, a clean, lean texture, and rapidly moving notes played at a fast tempo. Articulation in an organ scherzo is often slightly detached to further create the effect of lift and lightness. Registration in the organ scherzo is made up of light, clearly-speaking sounds, typically played on organ flues—most often on ranks of the flute family—at eight-foot pitch or in combinations of eight-foot pitch with higher pitched organ flues, e.g., 8' and 2'; 8' and 2 2/3'; 8', 4' and 1 1/3', etc. A registration composed of these light organ flues not only provides the focused, light sound necessary for clarity of pipe speech at a fast tempo, but also helps to convey a lightness of spirit and playfulness. Also, their use makes possible a light enough manual touch (important in the playing of the large, mechanical instruments) for the scherzo to be played at a rapid tempo. Berlinski's scherzo calls for just such a registration. Another characteristic of scherzos in general, which is present in Berlinski's organ scherzo, is a certain abruptness of thought involving elements of surprise and whim. 

The movement is cast in the form of AA+codetta. The movement is thirty-nine measures in length, with both the original A section and the returning A section presented in nearly identical statements. A very effective measure of silence, m.18, provides a pause between the two halves of the movement. The score reveals a treble-dominated texture in which the soprano melody is accompanied by a rhythmically coordinated left hand and pedal. A spare, clean texture prevails throughout the movement. The harmonic style is expressed
in a sophisticated chromaticism, which the composer describes as "non-modulatory" and abruptly changing. Berlinski acknowledges the influence of Shostakovich on the musical style of this movement.

The directives at the beginning of the movement call for an "allegretto scherzando," in which a quarter note = c.144. The movement is based rhythmically on staccato eighth notes, played in harmonic/melodic patterns that change every measure or two. Two contrasting patterns of harmonic/melodic construction emerge—one which emphasizes a static motion, and the other which accentuates lines of chromatic ascent and descent. While the movement does begin in f-sharp minor, mm. 1 and 2, and emphasizes b-flat minor in several measures of the latter half of its A sections, i.e., mm.11 and 12, 15 and 16 (and, in the corresponding measures in the repetition of the A section), the establishment of a tonality is avoided.

Repeated, static patterns appear in several forms in the piece. One type is stated in an accompanimental pattern which introduces the movement in mm.1-3. In it, the accompaniment rocks back and forth in alternation between two notes of a dyad. This "rocking" pattern also occurs in the second half of the A section, in mm. 11 and 12, and in mm.15 and 16, and in the corresponding measures in the repetition of the A section, i.e., mm. 19-21, mm. 29 and 30, and mm. 33 and 34. A second pattern combines the repetition of a dyad with a line of chromatic descent by alternating between the two, e.g., m. 5—left hand; and in a slightly modified version of m. 5, presented in sixteenth-note form in its return, m. 23. A third pattern wedds a single, repeated pitch with a line of chromatic ascent or descent, e.g., m 5—right hand, m. 7—right hand, m. 9—right hand, and their corresponding measures in
the repeat of the A section: mm.23 (in varied form), 25, and 27. Also in operation throughout
the piece is the movement of lines of chromatic ascent and descent in outward contrary
motion, e.g., m.5—the outer voices, the bottom line of the left hand moving in chromatic
descent parallel to the chromatic descent of the pedal; m. 6—right hand moving opposite left
hand and pedal; and correspondingly in mm. 23 and 24. Additionally, at work is the pattern
of lines moving toward one another in contrary motion, e.g., m. 10 and m. 28. Woven into
the fabric in other places are lines of chordal arpeggiation which flow in short patterns of
ascent and descent, e. g., m. 5—right hand; m.10—right hand; m. 16—right hand; and, in the A
section’s repetition, mm. 28, 30, 34, and 37 (codetta).

Surprisingly, after all the rapid rhythmic movement and quickly-changing
chromaticism, the movement comes to an end, mm. 38 and 39, on a subito “pp,” C-Major
chord, in the manuals. The quiet chord is sustained throughout m. 38 and tied over for an
eighth in m. 29. It is on this last tied eight note, at the very last moment, that the composer
plays a trick. In one final, playful gesture of surprise, the composer “zaps” his scherzo with
one quick “szf” pedal stinger, sounded by a single honk of the pedal’s trumpet.

The movement is one of great charm—equally delightful for the organist to play and
for the audience to hear.

Movement No. 5

PULSATION

Movement No. 5 pulsates with a hypnotic, measure-length, rhythmic ostinato in the
organ pedals throughout the work. The ostinato’s rhythmic pattern and its role in the
movement carry a symbolic meaning, as well as serving a musical purpose, for its measure-
long rhythmic pattern represents the pulsation of the composer's own heart.

Example 4.5 Pedal ostinato

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccc}
\text{m.1} & \\
\end{array}
\]

In 1958 Berlinski suffered a major heart attack. He explains that, as he lay in the
hospital following the heart attack, he became keenly aware, for the first time, of the miracle
of the steady, rhythmic beating of his own heart. Composed in 1961, "Pulsation" is the
musical expression of the composer's life-threatening experience.

This fifty-six measure work is cast in an ABA form, and divided into sections in the
following manner: the initial A section–mm.1-21; the B section–mm. 22-33; and the
concluding A section–mm. 34-49.

The movement begins in the pedal with the "ppp" pulsation of the measure-length
rhythmic ostinato on a low A–its unchanging pitch throughout the piece representing the
thump of a heartbeat. In m. 1 the instructions are given to "add gradually" to the dynamics.
Over the course of the opening four measures of the pedal's pulsation, the dynamics slowly
build, so that by the entrance of the right hand's melody in m. 5, the dynamic level has
reached an "mf." The single line of chromatic melody which enters at that point exhibits
characteristics of a cello solo in its "molto espressivo" character and its melodic range. After
five measures of "mf," expressivo solo, however, a buildup is set in motion. In m. 10, a
second line is added as an accompaniment, played by the left hand in a slowly-rising line of
chromatic ascent, which climbs steadily from its point of entrance in m. 10 through its point of climax in m. 20. During mm. 10-20, a general buildup also occurs through a steady addition to organ dynamic level. Other factors contributing to the buildup include an intensified rhythmic activity in the melody, and the textural addition of accompanying voices in the manuals. By m. 20 the A section has reached an “fff” dynamic level and is played by full organ on a sustained, eight-voiced, e-flat minor chord. Beneath this chord in the organ manuals, the pedal ostinato pulsates on A-natural octaves–octaves which, when played in conjunction with the chord in the manuals, accentuate the dissonance of tritones.

Following this climax, a measure of silence brings the A section to an abrupt halt. If one knows the story of the movement, it is possible to interpret this sudden silence as the musical representation of the interruption of the beating of the composer’s own heart, when he suffered a severe heart attack. Perhaps, this interruption of the pulsation and its jarring silence may also be interpreted as a fear of death.

An improvisatory B section follows in mm. 22-31. In contrast to the steady pulsation of the A section, the B section is composed of free, improvisatory gestures played “rapido all’improvvisata.” In each of mm. 22 and 24, the improvisatory gesture in the manuals is followed by a statement of the ostinato in the pedals. However, each of these measures of manual-improvisation-to-pedal-ostinato is followed by a startling, extended measure of silence in mm. 23 and 25. In m. 22 the pedals state the ostinato’s pulsation in octaves. In m. 24, however, although the improvisatory gesture which introduces the measure is lengthened, the pedal pulsation which follows is weaker—no longer played in the octaves of m. 22, but now reduced to a single line of pedal only. Following the measure of extended silence in m. 25,
an all-out effort is made to re-establish the pulsation's steady pattern of repetition—to restart the heartbeat's ostinato. Measure 26 is the measure in which this takes place.

Measure 26 is an extended measure in which tempo accelerates "poco a poco," and improvisatory gestures—symbolic efforts of "ignition" in restarting the pulsation—are presented four times in rapid succession. Each of the first three gestures in the manuals is composed of eleven notes, and each struggles—in a rapid, improvisatory, convulsive-sounding melodic pattern—to rise upward in a consecutively higher arch than its predecessor. However, each falls back down to its low A point of origin, under which a solitary low A is also played in the pedal. These solitary, elongated pedal A's represent a heart whose beat pattern is, at this point, resisting resuscitation. Finally in a fourth extraordinary effort, the improvisatory gesture in the manuals expands to thirteen notes which crescendo and rise upward to a point of climax in m. 26, on an "fff," eight-voiced, a-minor chord, but with dissonant, G-flat octaves included. Beneath it, the pulsation finally—triumphantly—is able to make a complete statement in the pedals. This re-establishment of the pattern of pulsation is short-lived, however, for, once again in m. 27, a startling measure of silence follows.

Measures 28-31 are measures of transition in which further attempts are made to re-establish a steadily pulsating ostinato. At this point, four consecutive measures of manual-improvisation-to-pedal-ostinato are inserted. Although in these measures the pulsation enters a bit late, as if reticent, the pedal does pulsate with its ostinato in each measure. A gradual decrease in dynamic level and a reinstatement of the "Tempo primo" beginning in m. 29 initiates a process of transition from the B section, with its emotional and musical instability, to a gradual return of the rhythmic predictability of the A section and the reinstatement of the
ostinato.

By m. 32 the pedal ostinato has successfully re-established a steady pulsation, and in mm. 32-34, it alone is featured for three measures, in preparation for the re-entrance of the A theme in m. 35.

In mm. 35-40 the melody of the initial A section reappears in its original form. By the end of m. 40, however, the restated A section makes melodic adjustments necessary to close the movement, winding down in pitch and slowing in rhythmic activity. It arrives at the closing note of its final melodic phrase by m. 43. Accompaniment in the restated A section, mm. 35-43, is played by the left hand in a single line of meandering polyphony, rather than rising in a line of chromatic ascension which builds texturally, as it did in the initial presentation of the section.

The movement ends, mm. 46-49, as it began, with four measures of softly-drummed pedal ostinato which gradually fade to a “ppp” dynamic level. By ending thus, the ongoing pulsation is quietly re-emphasized, even as the movement is brought to a calm and whispered conclusion.

Movement No. 6

POLYMODAL SOUNDS AND MOTIONS

In Movement No. 6, “Polymodal Sounds and Motions,” Berlinski has written a chaconne which combines two Jewish prayer modes. The chaconne, with its process of continuous variations in which the theme provides the harmonic basis for each variation, is structured in the following way. The chaconne theme is based on a descending scalar pattern of eight notes in the “Ahavah Rabah” mode, a prayer mode found in the liturgical musical
traditions of Eastern European Jewry. Within the descending “Ahavah Rabah” mode is the inclusion of augmented seconds, intervals which give evidence of the mode’s Middle-Eastern roots.  

Example 4.6 Chaconne theme, based on the descending “Ahavah Rabah” mode

![Music staff with notes]

Opposite the ostinato’s pattern of scalar descent in the “Ahavah Rabah” mode, the composer has placed a line of flowing melody in the style of the “Magen Avot” mode. (The “Magen Avot” mode was also employed by the composer in Sinfonia No. 2, Movement No. 3, in his “Prelude for Sukkoth.”) The “Magen Avot” mode, with its willowy pattern of frequent, shallow bends and turns, plays an accompanying role—its lines of flowing eighth notes moving in counterpoint to the strong, slower-moving pattern of descent of the chaconne theme. Example 4.7 features the melodic pattern of the mode, as used liturgically in the “Magen Avot” prayer, after which the musical mode is named.  

Example 4.7 “Magen Avot” prayer mode, as set liturgically to the “Magen Avot” prayer

![Music staff with notes]

The “Magen Avot” mode is a prayer mode which comes out of the musical tradition of the synagogue of Germany and Central Europe. By composing a piece which combines
an Eastern European prayer mode with a Western European mode, Berlinski pays homage to the musical diversity of his own background, which embraces both the Polish (Eastern) tradition and the German (Western, Central European) tradition.

Throughout the piece, the ostinato of the “Ahavah Rabah” mode is presented as a descending scale, two scalar degrees at a time, and is most often presented in the left hand and/or pedal, while the “Magen Avot” mode is presented in linear flow opposite it. Frequently, at the end of each complete statement of the “Ahavah Rabah” ostinato, a measure of “Magen Avot” material is presented. This insertion, providing a codetta to the variations, is a further example of the composer’s creative adaptation of classic forms and procedures. Although its role is less functional than aesthetic, its inclusion adds an element of subtle balance.

The movement is composed in a key signature of four flats and remains in that key signature from start to finish. The analysis which follows traces the “Ahavah Rabah’s” pattern of descent in each variation. Because the “Magen Avot” mode plays a supporting role in the movement, providing complementary linear movement and balance to the descending chaconne theme, its presence is less dramatic and, therefore, is described less frequently in the following analysis.

The movement begins in measures 1-3 with a line of quiet, flowing, “Magen Avot” introductory material in the right hand. Beneath this line, the left hand and pedal enter in m. 4 with the first statement of the ostinato.

Ostinato statement no. 1, mm. 4, 5:

The ostinato is presented simply—only two consecutive pitches of the scale presented
in the left hand in each portion of the descent. These two descending pitches are then echoed by the same two pitch classes stated an octave lower in the pedal. As promised, a measure of "Magen Avot" material follows the completed ostinato, playing in two-voice polyphony in the manuals, m. 6.

Ostinato statement, no. 2, mm. 7-9:

In the second statement of the chaconne theme, the first of each of the two notes of descent is embellished with a triplet. The first note of the chaconne pattern is stated on the first note of the triplet, and the second note of the pattern falls on the next full quarter note. The ostinato pattern is presented, two notes at a time—first in the left hand—on beats one and two, and beats five and six. The pattern (its pedal triplet presented in a somewhat inverted form) is echoed in the pedal on after-beats—three, four, seven, and eight.

Ostinato statement no. 3, mm. 10-12:

The ostinato is again presented in both the left hand and the pedal. In the left hand the two notes of descent are featured on the first and last eighth notes of quarter-note beats one and two, five and six. These eighths are the longer, outside notes which frame a pattern of inner sixteenth notes. These two descending pitches are then echoed an octave lower, in the top voice of double pedals, on quarter notes which play on beats three and four, seven and eight.

Ostinato statement, no. 4, mm. 13-15:

In mm. 13 and 14, the ostinato descends, two quarter notes at a time, in the top voice of the left hand on beats one and two, five and six. A lower voice in the left hand moves along with it, in the same quarter-note motion. The lower voice begins a fifth below the
chaconne’s first note in the upper voice, and then moves inward in contrary motion to form
a third (a second at one point) against the chaconne’s following note of descent in each two-
note segment of chaconne theme. A double pedal part follows on beats three and four, five
and six, with a two-note, two-voice pattern that imitates the manuals’ pattern, but whose lines
move outward in contrary motion. The variation starts at an “mf” level and crescendos to an
“f” dynamic level by m.15. Dynamics then gradually decrescendo through the measure of
“Magen Avot” material which follows in m. 15

Ostinato statement no. 5, mm. 16-18

In this variation, mm. 16-18, the ostinato is carried in the lower voice of the left hand,
where the first note of each two-note pattern of descent is played on a half note through beats
one and two and beats five and six. Each initial half note is then slurred to its second note of
descent, where it is played on an eighth note on beats three and seven. A descant is played
in triplets in the top voice of the left hand above the ostinato. That triplet pattern of the left
hand then flows smoothly to the pedal where it is taken over on beats three and four, seven
and eight. In m. 18, the last two notes of the “Ahavah Rabah” mode, a G-flat and F, are
repeated in the pedals beneath “Magen Avot” material in the manuals.

Ostinato statement no. 6, mm.19-23

The climax of the first half of the chaconne is reached in this variation. The meter
changes to 6/4 in m. 19, and the “Ahavah Rabah” ostinato begins its descent on long notes—in
a half-note-to-whole-note pattern—in the pedal. The instructions, “open crescendo pedal
gradually,” give notice of a buildup. Music played in the manuals, mm. 19-23, begins with
two lines of gently-flowing polyphony at the beginning of each measure but texture increases
to six and seven voices by the end of each measure. The two notes of ostinato are first articulated by the lower voice of a double pedal, on half-note beats one and three. They are then stated an octave higher in the tenor voice of the left hand. The first note of the ostinato is played on the final sixteenth note of a five-note pattern, and the second note moves in octave synchrony with the pedal’s chaconne descent. This two-note segment of the ostinato is then stated a third time at the end of each measure, in the high range of the pedal, on the third half note of the measure, in a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, the latter of which is extended by a tie.

The climax is reached in mm. 22 and 23 on an “fff,” quartally-constructed, B-flat/F chord. Following that, a measure of “Magen Avot” material follows in m. 24, in which the crescendo pedal gradually closes; the pitch lowers; and the meter changes to 8/4 in preparation for the second half of the movement. Measure 24 is at once the close of section one and the preparation for section two.

Section 2

Ostinato statement no. 7, mm. 25-29:

In mm. 25-29 section two begins quietly, with the “Ahavah Rabah’s” modal descent presented in pointillism—its two-note pattern featured alternately in statements in the alto and the soprano. In m. 25, the first two notes appear in the alto voice in long notes (5 beats on the first pitch and 3 beats on the second pitch). These notes are followed in m. 26 by the next two notes of the ostinato’s descent presented in the soprano voice, and begun a seventh higher. In the accompanying voice played by the right hand—the voice in which the ostinato is not featured—a line of counterpoint plays a pattern of four quarter notes which flow into
sextuplets before joining the ostinato voice in unison (or octaves) in its latter note of descent. Measure 29 is a measure of flowing “Magen Avot” extension in the organ manuals over a soft, sustained F in the pedal.

Ostinato statement no. 8, mm. 30-39:

The dynamic level is reduced to a “pp” in mm. 30-39. The variation is played “molto delicato” on the organ’s harp and celesta only. Meter changes from 8/4 to 4/4, and the new variation begins on light, staccato, arpeggiated sextuplets. In even numbered measures, mm. 30, 32, 34, and 36, the two-note pattern of chaconne descent is presented in the manuals. The first note of the pattern initiates the first sextuplet, and the second note initiates the second sextuplet. Because of the upward arpeggiation, the second sextuplet—and, therefore, the second note of “Ahavah Rabah” chaconne pattern—begins an octave and a seventh above the first note of the chaconne’s pattern in each measure. In this manner, the chaconne is presented in two-note segments of pointillistic treatment. The latter note of this two-note segment of chaconne theme is re-emphasized when the arpeggiation reaches its melodic peak two octaves higher on beat three. Here it is restated as a half note, and tied over for another measure. Under its sustained, high pitch, a dissonant chord made up of two triads a tritone apart is played and sustained at a “ppp” dynamic level. The ostinato shifts to the pedals. There, in uneven-numbered measures, in a double pedal part, the first two notes of the ostinato are played by the right foot on beats one and two, while at the lower end of the pedal board, the left foot plays flowing eighths in the “Magen Avot” pattern. Measures 38 and 39 are measures of extension in which the pedal plays legato eighths in the “Magen Avot” mode.
Ostinato statement no. 9, mm. 40-47:

Variation nine begins "pp" but provides the setting for a powerful acceleration and crescendo. The ostinato is placed in the pedal in whole notes without interruption in mm. 40-47. Above this, a pianistic, staccato, chordal triplet pattern begins softly—the right hand alternating with the left, in chords that move in and out of dissonance. The chords expand to quartally-spaced octaves which climb in pitch and dynamic level. By m. 46 the crescendo pedal gradually begins to open, and an "ff" dynamic level is reached by the end of m. 47.

Ostinato statement, no. 10, mm. 48-51:

In the tenth presentation of the ostinato, mm. 48-51, Tempo Primo is re-instated and the meter changes to 5/4. Again, the ostinato is featured in the pedal without interruption. The pedal ostinato is embellished in this variation, however. On the down beat of each measure, the first note of the ostinato is played on the first and third eighths of a triplet. The second note of the ostinato follows on a whole note on beat two. Music in the manuals begins on beat three with two voices of thirty-second note trills. The trills lead into syncopated, accented chords which expand outwardly and press forward rhythmically. No measure of "Magen Avot" material follows. Instead, ostinato statement no. 11 continues with an urgency.

Ostinato statement., no. 11, mm. 52-55:

The eleventh statement of the ostinato, mm. 52-55, is a continuation of the tenth statement, with one major exception. The second note of the chaconne pattern, which is generally played on the next descending scalar degree of the "Ahavah Rabah" mode, is,
instead, in this variation, set in pointillistic fashion and played an octave and a seventh higher than the first note of each two-note chaconne segment. By the end of the final measure of the variation, m. 55, an "fff" dynamic level has been reached on dissonant, seven-voiced chords in the manuals. In m. 56 the meter changes to 4/4, and the measure becomes a measure of transition, in which the pattern of variation shifts to that of the following variation.

Ostinato statement no 12, mm 57-59:

The words "Maestoso e molto pesante" describe the majestic and heavy character of this variation. A measure of preparatory material introduces the variation in m. 56, but the chaconne ostinato begins its descent in the pedal in m. 57, played in the top voice of double pedals, on beats two and three. The variation is introduced in the manuals before that—on the fourth beat of m. 56 with a crashing, seven-voice, "sfz" chord placed high on the manuals, followed by a large downward leap to an "ff" chord. Berlinski writes boldly, with keyboard instincts, in this variation—grafting piano idioms to his organ composition. The ostinato does not complete its statement in a traditional pattern in the pedals in this variation. Instead, the last two notes, a G-flat and an F, are creatively stated in the following way. An F-sharp (an enharmonic G-flat) is included in a final dissonant chord in the manuals on beat four of m. 59. That F-sharp (G-flat) then descends to its final F in the pedal on the downbeat of m. 60. This pedal F-natural serves as an elision which completes variation twelve, while, at the same time, introducing variation thirteen.

Ostinato statement no. 13, mm. 60-63:

Variation thirteen, mm. 60-63, states the ostinato emphatically in octave double pedals. The first note of ostinato descent is played on the half-note downbeat of each
measure and slurred to the second note of descent on the third-beat quarter note. That two-note pattern in octaves then jumps up an octave to repeat the pattern in eighth notes on the fourth beat of each measure of pedal. Again, pianistic writing comes to the fore in this variation when sixteenth-note triplet arpeggiations, played a seventh apart, rise up the keyboard to cover three octaves and arrive at an “fff” six-voiced chord on the third quarter of each of measures 60-63. When the ostinato is completed on the third beat of m. 63, the highly placed, six-voiced chord of m. 63 is tied over to m. 64, where it connects with the fourteenth variation.

Ostinato statement no. 14, mm. 64-67:

In m. 64, the right-hand chord adds a fourth voice and becomes an F-Major chord, blending its harmony with the left hand’s quartally-spaced G-Major chord. This chord is then sustained throughout the fourteenth variation, mm. 64-67. Below this high-pitched, “ff” bitonality, the pedals play their ostinato in descending octaves, on marcato quarter notes, on beats two and three in mm. 64-67.

Ostinato statement no. 15, mm.68-72:

The final pedal octave F’s which conclude the previous ostinato statement continue to be sustained through the next five measures and provide the pedal point on which the movement draws to a close. The composer calls for the addition of all organ reeds in m. 68. In a final marcato statement, the “Ahavah Rabah” ostinato descends on beats two and three of each measure, played on inner voices of consonant, doubled, minor triads, mm. 68-72. In m. 71 a four-voice, F-Major chord in the right hand, plays a measure of sustained dissonance against the left hands’s G-flat Major triad, played in the same range. After a measure of this
strong dissonant tension, the left hand resolves downward to an F-Major triad and the sinfonia ends in triumphant, consonant resolution.

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In summary, the composer has employed a kaleidoscope of colors, styles, techniques, and forms in the six-movement suite that makes up Sinfonia No. 3. He also explores the drama of silence as it interacts with music.

In Movement No. 1, "Trumpets," the trumpets are trumpets of doom, which herald the Holocaust. The movement is constructed on a repeating, two-note, trumpet-call head-motif, which is followed in each statement by a fluid melodic pattern that expands in length, and builds in texture, dissonance, and dynamic level with each presentation through the climax of the movement. At the climax, the state trumpets are added, and the music reaches a high level of aural compression. After that point, the music gradually begins to reverse its process, until it ends in whispered dissonance.

Movement No. 2, "Motion and Silence," is comprised of three expanding tone rows—one played by each hand and one by the pedals—separated by capsules of silence, the durations of which are left to the discretion of the performer. With successive statements of the tone rows, the rows are expanded gradually, in length and dynamic level. The climax of the movement is reached when the completed pedal tone row is played on full organ—at first by the pedals, and then in the manuals. Following this climax, a creatively-adapted mirroring process is set into motion, which gradually brings the movement to quiet, simple conclusion.

Movement No. 3, "Contemplation," is an expressive, lyric movement composed in the
style and form of a da capo aria, and set in mildly-dissonant, 20th-century chromaticism. In
the A sections, a warm, cantabile soprano melody plays over slowly changing harmony, in the
style of a Baroque aria. With the entrance of the B section, the music becomes restless,
accelerated, and more dissonant, providing a section of dramatic contrast as the centerpiece
of the form.

In Movement No. 4, "Light Motion," the composer has written a playful scherzo in
the tradition of the French symphonic organ scherzo. The movement is piquant, light, fast-
moving, and colorful, representing a grotesque Chassidic dance in which the dancer got
carried away with his religiosity. The form of the movement is AA+Codetta.

Movement No. 5, "Pulsation," is composed over a one-measure pedal ostinato, the
rhythm of which represents the beating of the composer's heart. The work was written after
the composer had suffered a major heart attack and had become aware of the miracle of the
uninterrupted beating of his heart. In this movement's ABA form, the A sections are built on
the regular pulsation of the pedal's heart-beat ostinato, while in the contrasting B section, the
heart-beat's pulsation is interrupted and improvisatory attempts to re-start it are frequently
followed by jarring silences. A build-up in tension reaches its climax in the B section. After
a re-establishment of the pedal's pulsation, the A-section returns, and a gradual relaxation of
tension ends the movement on the whispered pedal pulsation with which it began.

In Movement No. 6, "Polymodal Sounds and Motions," the composer writes a
chaconne which combines two Hebrew prayer modes, the "Magen Avot" mode and the
"Ahavah Rabah" mode. The chaconne theme is based on an eight-note, scalar descent of the
"Ahavah Rabah" mode. Opposite the chaconne's descent, the "Magen Avot" mode flows in
linear counterpoint. The “Ahavah Rabah” chaconne theme is presented in fourteen ostinato statements, in which the composer employs a wide range of polyphonic devices. Frequently, the composer inserts a measure of “Magen Avot” material between statements of the ostinato, in a creative adaptation of the classic chaconne. The movement provides a powerful and dramatic ending to Sinfonia No. 3.

2. Messiaen’s technique is discussed by Clyde Holloway in Holloway’s doctoral dissertation. See Clyde Holloway, “The Organ Works of Olivier Messiaen and their Importance in his Total Oeuvre” (S.M.D. diss., Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York, 1974), 188.


5. For characteristics of the scherzo generally, see Harvard Dictionary of Music, 1964 ed., s.v. “Scherzo.”

6. Joseph A. Levine, *Synagogue Song in America* (Crown Point, Indiana: White Cliffs Media Co., 1989), 98. The “Ahavah Rabah” prayer mode is the only one of the three prayer modes to include augmented seconds, and, as such, reveals itself to have a shorter history than the other two prayer modes. The “Ahavah Rabah” mode was never heard in the First Temple, and only sparingly in the Second Temple. Thus, it was never included in Scripture reading, as it doesn’t appear in the oldest diaspora Psalmodic or Biblical traditions. Instead, it seems to have flourished in ancient Israel, chiefly as accompaniment for the bloody, Phoenician-inspired Baal-rites. The mode was later adopted by exilic Jewish communities living in predominately Tatar environments in the 13th century. Although the mode entered the liturgy at a later date, it has, over the years, become cherished by the Jewish people as no other mode.

7. Levine, p. 91, quoting Abraham Baer, *Baal T’fillah* (Gothenburg: published by the author, 1877), no. 409. Levine reproduces a line of music from Abraham Baer’s cantorial setting of the “Magen Avot” prayer set in the “Magen Avot” prayer mode. In this musical setting, one can see the pattern of frequent shallow bends and turns that characterize the mode.
CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY: STYLE AND SIGNIFICANCE

Herman Berlinski is the first composer of Jewish origin to create a substantial body of organ music based on traditional Hebraic musical elements, and the only composer to produce a body of major Hebraic concert works for the instrument. He is the first American composer to be cited by the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters for a contribution of organ music. That citation reads, "Herman Berlinski is among the few twentieth-century composers who have produced a significant body of music for the organ...." To be in this select group would be cause in itself to celebrate. But to be the first composer to forge a Jewish idiom of great artistry for the instrument makes his contribution one of exceptional creativity.

Having presented a detailed analysis of Berlinski's first three organ sinfonias in previous chapters of the paper, I will now trace general characteristics of the composer's compositional style, examining his organ sinfonias in light of the major musical components of growth, sound, harmony, melody, and rhythm, as laid out by theorist Jan LaRue.²

Growth

In any discussion of Berlinski's style of composition, it seems appropriate to begin with the composer's choice of form (growth), which defines the shape and foundational structure of his music. In taped interviews with this author, the composer has emphasized that,
although he frequently begins his compositional process with an extra-musical idea, he feels strongly that the music itself must be constructed on a strong formal plan of its own. His experience has led him to the conclusion that no literary program will save the music if the music itself isn't well constructed. Berlinski is a classicist in his choice of formal structures, preferring to create his works on well-defined formal plans.

Organ Sinfonias Nos. 1, 2, and 3 are multi-movement suites whose movements embrace a variety of Classical, Baroque, pre-Baroque, and twentieth-century forms and procedures. The composer often adapts the forms in creative ways, but the underlying formal schemes belong to the classic forms of Western music. A favorite method of composition used in his twelve organ sinfonias is the ostinato-variation procedure, which he employs in passacaglias and chaconnes. He also structures movements on shorter, motivic-length ostinatos. Occasionally he employs a twentieth-century procedure of continuous variation in an adapted serial technique. Other forms and procedures in which he composes his works are ABA form, rondo form, through-composed form, strophic form, varieties of the AB form, sonata allegro form, and toccata. Frequently he blends procedures and forms. These occur, for example, in the mix found in his Introduction and quasi-Passacaglia of the "Prelude for Shavuoth" (Sinfonia No. 2, Movement No. 5), and in his combination of ABA form on a pedal ostinato in "Pulsation" (Sinfonia No. 3, Movement No. 5). Frequently he adapts a classic form or procedure, often enriching it, as in his creative use of serial technique in "Motion and Silence" (Sinfonia No. 3, Movement No. 2). Here, each of the three voices has its own tone row, which expands in consecutive presentations, until, by the climax of the movement, each row has reached its full length and begins a mirroring process of gradual reduction. In another
adaptation of a classic device, in his “Prelude for Yom Kippur” (Sinfonia No. 2, Movement No. 2), he composes a passacaglia in which the “Kol Nidre” theme becomes the ostinato over which a constellation of melodic motives from the services of Yom Kippur are presented in the order in which they occur liturgically. In any analysis of Berlinski’s music, it becomes evident that the composer constructs his music upon the strong framework of a clear, underlying logic and knowledge of form.

Berlinski’s fondness for cyclical writing, i.e., the insertion of a motive or theme from one movement into another movement of the same multi-movement work, can be observed in Sinfonia No. 1, as well as in a number of his later sinfonias, which lie outside the scope of this paper. In m. 44 of the seventh movement of Sinfonia No. 1, the composer restates m. 2 from the fourth movement. In its initial appearance in Movement No. 4, the motive was associated with the text from Psalm 94, “How Long, O Lord, How Long shall the wicked triumph?” The motive’s insertion into Movement No. 7, therefore, lends a special poignancy as its return reminds the listener of the original textual message.

**Sound**

A second major category of musical analysis, the “sound” of the music leads to a discussion of three sub-categories which are components of the category of sound, according to LaRue—the sub-categories of dynamics, texture, and registration.
Dynamics

Dynamics are of special interest in Berlinski’s music. The composer is a romanticist in his attention to an exacting detail of dynamic nuance. Berlinski’s musical lines rarely remain at a static dynamic level. Instead, a sensitive fluctuation of dynamics is a hallmark of his writing, providing a barometer to the tension and relaxation of his music. His virtuosic use of dynamics almost certainly traces its beginnings to the cantorial cantillation of the Eastern European synagogue of his childhood. A further contributing factor in shaping the dynamic nuance of his writing has been the composer’s background of formal study with great musicians of the Romantic period, all of whom were practitioners of the music of a period whose style called for a high degree of dynamic fluctuation and contrast. A profound sense of drama also pervades his music and directly influences the dynamic sensitivity of his writing. His years of composing and directing music for the theater and the ballet in Leipzig, Paris, and New York have, no doubt, contributed to a dramatic sculpting of dynamic levels in his writing. Berlinski also understands the dramatic power of silence. Dramatic uses of silence can be found throughout all his sinfonias.

Texture

An analysis of the texture of Berlinski’s music reveals his dedication to a clarity and a transparency of texture—an influence of the French school on his writing. He often prefers to write in a spare texture.¹

Berlinski employs a mix of homophonic and polyphonic writing in his organ sinfonias. The composer’s understanding of counterpoint, formed through the study of German
contrapuntalists and 16th-century techniques, has contributed to the musical clarity and artistic voice leading of the individual line throughout his writing.

Berlinski's textures are frequently influenced by the piano. His background as a pianist is revealed in the roles he assigns to the hands and the feet in his organ music. In his writing for the organ, hands tend to play together as a unit, while the feet have a separate agenda, and one that is frequently simpler than that of the hands. The composer often assigns ostinato pedal patterns to the feet, or writes a line for the pedal which is sequentially "patternistic." The pedal line is not completely devoid of difficult passages, however. From time to time the composer writes music which demands a highly developed pedal technique, e.g., the large, quick, non-repetitive chromatic pedal leaps in his "Polymodal Sounds and Motions" (Sinfonia No. 3, Movement No. 6, mm. 52-55), and passages for double pedal in the same movement (mm. 32-35). Such passages are the exception rather than the rule, however, and when technical demands are made of the organist's pedal technique, the composition of the pedal line is always carefully thought out.

Because there is no damper pedal on the organ, and all sustained and legato playing on the organ must be produced by touch alone, organ writing, in general, is more linear than piano writing. Berlinski, however, frequently grafts pianistic writing onto his writing for the organ manuals. Examples abound in the variations on the chaconne theme in the final movement of Sinfonia No. 3. In mm. 30-36 of the movement, he writes arpeggios in the manuals in which the hands leave the keyboard and cross over one another. In mm. 40-47, he writes with an alternate-hand, percussive, Bartokian, chordal technique that is characteristic of piano music; and in mm. 57-59, he makes large, "crashing," chordal leaps, characteristic of
pianistic writing. Berlinski's understanding of the organ allows him to transfer pianistic patterns to the organ in composition that flows naturally on the organ, and which can be comfortably performed by an organism with good keyboard skills. The pianistic gestures he chooses and the compositional style in which he writes them for organ add a "freshness" and creativity to the organ score, rather than demanding a technique inappropriate to the instrument. It should be noted at this point that Berlinski's compositional style, in general, is very sophisticated and, in most of his works, demands an accomplished level of technique and musicality on the part of the performer.

Registration

A third aspect of the sound of Berlinski's organ music concerns his use of registration or organ color. The art of organ registration parallels the art of orchestration, and, like orchestration, is a complex art. Factors influencing registration are many and varied. They include the individual character and sounds produced by the design and pipework of each organ and the acoustical properties of the room in which the organ is located. On the organism's part, choices of registration are also influenced by a sensitive and experienced ear for nuance of sound and beauty of color, informed by a knowledge of style, registrational practices, and appropriate performance practices of the literature being played. Berlinski's sense of registration was formed in part by the sounds of the organ as it was played in concerts at the Thomaskirche. In these concerts he was introduced to the sounds of German organ literature from Bach to Reger. Following that, his years in Paris introduced him to the great, symphonic French organs. The warm sounds of symphonic organs of the Romantic period,
with their wide palettes of orchestral colors, formed the aural basis for the registration of the organ music which he would later write for the synagogue.

With his appointment in 1954 as the Associate Organist at Temple Emanu El, Berlinski had finally become heir to a large symphonic organ that was his to play—the American equivalent of the great European organs with which he was familiar. The organ in the Sanctuary of Temple Emanu El was a 119-rank Casavant, with a kaleidoscope of orchestral organ colors, the specifications of which can be found in Appendix A of this paper. Sinfonias Nos. 2 and 3 were composed for the Casavant organ at Emanu El, and the organ colors he calls for in his scores are sounds found on that instrument.

Berlinski sets forth his views on his preference for the warm, varied colors of the Romantic symphonic organ in a series of articles he wrote for *The American Organist*. In the second of a four-part series, entitled “The Organ in the Synagogue,” the composer offers historical background on the organ in the German synagogue of the 1930's. He explains that there were thirty organs in the German synagogues, which were destroyed when the synagogues of which they were a part went up in flames, on the infamous Kristallnacht of November 9, 1938.

.... The list of specifications of twenty-eight of these organs that were built for the synagogues of Germany can be found in the archives of the organ builder E.C. Walcker in Ludwigsburg, Germany. Based upon these documents, these organs may be considered as some of the finest examples in the art of romantic organ building. The romantic tone concept corresponds well to the solemnity and mysticism of the Jewish service.

Later, in the same article, he writes,

...The old Casavant organ at Temple Emanu El in New York is closely related in design to the Walcher-built organs in Germany and is ideally suited for the rendition
of Jewish music.\textsuperscript{4}

In the final article of the series, Berlinski explains the colors and sounds that an organ should possess in order to lend itself to Jewish worship.

The organ, in order to fulfill its proper functions in a house of Jewish worship, must be capable of evoking biblical images, the mysticism of the Kabbala and the Hassidim, the tradition of the early reform movement, the 19\textsuperscript{th} century Jewish-Russian school, and eventually provide unlimited tonal vistas for the Jewish composers of our day.\textsuperscript{5}

The wide variety of rich, orchestral colors of a large symphonic organ best meets the composer's requirements for warmth of tone, variety of color, and flexible expression of dynamics.

Harmony

A continued analysis of Berlinski's compositional style addresses his harmonic vocabulary. From Berlinski's Leipzig schooling came his "fervent use of chromaticism."\textsuperscript{6} In a taped interview quoted earlier in this document, Berlinski describes his harmonic vocabulary in the following way: "Under the influence of the twelve-tone school of German expressionism, I have expanded my harmonic palette considerably beyond the scope of Max Reger." In his early organ sinfonias, Berlinski writes in a chromatic harmonic language of his own that expresses itself in a Post-Reger harmony. Occasionally, he employs a form of serial technique and composes in a dodecaphonic harmonic idiom, as in Sinfonia No. 3, Movement No. 2.

The dissonance resulting from chromaticism in his music varies from mild to extreme. In most of his music, and typically that of most twentieth-century composers, Berlinski omits
key signatures, preferring the freedom to move chromatically without the restraints of key. Movements in his early sinfonias which are governed by one continuous key signature from beginning to end are exceptions to his compositional style, but can be found in Movement No. 9 of Sinfonia No. 1, Movements Nos. 4 and 5 of Sinfonia No. 2, and Movement No. 6 of Sinfonia No. 3. Of the three early sinfonias, Sinfonia No. 1, *Litanies for the Persecuted*, is the most dissonant, because it is text-dominated and uses texts that are dark and tension-filled. In Movement No. 4 of this sinfonia, an organ solo descriptive of the text, “Ad Matay, Adonay, Ad Matay?”, Berlinski explains that he “expands the harmonic realm into complete atonality” and employs dissonances that are “harsh—almost frightening.”

In a recent article on Berlinski’s music by Stephen Ackert, the following is offered on Berlinski’s use of dissonance in his text-dominated music:

Berlinski’s use of dissonant and consonant harmonies is an outgrowth of his sense of his historical position in the world of music. He sees himself as a composer who emerged in the heyday of the dodecaphonic school and for whom it has been necessary to define his work in terms of that school. Having chosen not to join the ranks of Schoenberg and his pupils, Berlinski has never abandoned tonality, although he makes use of complex dissonances. This gives him the freedom to give meaning to the presence or absence of dissonance in his music (as it expresses the context of the text)... Put simply, dissonance signals the presence of tension or distress, while consonance signals moments of triumph, joy or peace.  

Berlinski occasionally deploys bitonality in his writing. In Movement No. 2 of Sinfonia No. 2, the “Kol Nidre” ostinato in the pedal never swerves from f-sharp minor. The key signature in the manuals begins and ends in f-sharp minor, but, in the middle of the movement, accidentals are removed from the key signature to allow the music to move about with a greater degree of chromatic freedom. Movement No. 3 of Sinfonia No. 2 is also
composed in a bitonality at beginning and end. In it, the left hand plays a modal pattern in the "Magen Avot" mode, with a key signature of four flats, while the right hand plays Sukkoth motifs in a key signature of one flat. An example of bi-modal writing can be found in the sixth movement of Sinfonia No.3, as well. Here, Berlinski writes a bi-modal chaconne, employing two Jewish modes. Both modes are governed by the same key signature, but follow different harmonic and melodic patterns.

**Melody**

The composer's fondness for chromaticism is revealed not only in the underlying harmony of his music, but in his melodies, as well. Although his melodies are chromatic and frequently include a linear juxtaposition of dissonant intervals, his melodies are almost always "warm" in character. In an interview with the composer, this author asked, "What makes your melodies so warm?" Berlinski's reply was simply, "I don't know, but I can tell you that I am asked that question all the time."

Each of Berlinski's sinfonias has its own distinct melodic character, even as it shares with the others certain aspects of style. Sinfonia No. 1, which was written for alto soloist, narrator and organ, is the only one of the first three sinfonias that includes text which is sung by a vocalist. Berlinski makes enormous musical and vocal demands of the alto soloist in Sinfonia No. 1. Intervals are chromatic and require a superb musicianship and musical "ear" to make possible the tuning necessary to perform the solo line accurately and convincingly. In solo movements for alto, nos. 2 and 5, Berlinski composes the singer's line with an angularity marked by wide ranges, difficult leaps, and precise degrees of dynamic nuance.
Berlinski frequently bases his melodic writing on liturgical Hebrew trope. In Sinfonia No. 1, for example, he composes the themes of the B sections of Movements No. 4 and No. 6 on Hebrew trope for chanting the book of Lamentations. The use of Hebrew trope provides a melodic source of recognizable melody, as well as one of authentic Hebrew melody, and, therefore, is a favorite melodic source employed throughout his writing. Berlinski explains that his use of Hebrew trope in his organ compositions parallels the use of Gregorian chant by composers of the French organ school in their organ compositions.

Berlinski also composes movements on other historical, liturgical, Jewish musical motifs. The melodic writing in four of the five movements of Sinfonia No. 2 is based on traditional Jewish melodies associated with each of the high holy days and festivals. In composing each of those preludes as a liturgical organ introduction to a specific high holy day or festival service, the composer based each prelude on the melodic motifs of the high holy day or festival which it precedes. In being used in this way, the organ prelude provides the services with a "dignified frame of expectation," built on melodies which are clearly recognizable to the worshipers.

The composer also employs Hebrew prayer modes as the melodic/harmonic basis for several movements of his sinfonias. For example, he has employed the Magein Avot mode in his “Prelude for Sukkoth,” the third movement of Sinfonia No.2, and has entwined the “Magen Avot” mode and the “Ahavah Rabah” modes in the final movement of Sinfonia No.3, “Polymodal Sounds and Motions.”

Frequently, Berlinski uses a technique of melodic expansion, in which a melodic interval or motif is presented in a pattern of systematic, sequential, expansion. In this pattern
of presentation, an interval is enlarged by the same or a similar melodic unit with each consecutive presentation.

Rhythm

A salient feature of Berlinski's music is a fluidity of mixed meter. The movements in his organ sinfonias which are governed by the same meter from start to finish are the exception rather than the rule. The exceptions in his first three organ sinfonias are found only in the final movement of Sinfonia No. 1; in the second, third, and fourth movements of Sinfonia No. 2; and in the fourth movement of Sinfonia No. 3.

Favorite rhythmic devices include his fondness for the use of rhythmic ostinatos, whether in several-measure units, as in passacaglias and chaconnes, or in motivic-length units, as in "Pulsation" (Sinfonia No. 3, Movement No. 5). A 20-century device which he adapted from his study with Messiaen is the use of "chromatic duration," i.e., a series of durations which progressively increases or decreases by a consistent unit of value. Examples of this important rhythmic device can be found in Sinfonia No. 3, Movements No. 1 and No. 2, and in the B section of Movement No. 5. The technique of gradual expansion or contraction by a consistent unit is often applied simultaneously by the composer to other aspects of composition, e.g., to melody, dynamics, and texture, as well. In some instances, the composer gradually builds to a climax by an application of this technique, and, following the climax, puts into motion a reversal of the process. Examples of this process of a gradual, systematic expansion and contraction are exhibited in Sinfonia No. 3, Movements Nos. 1 and 2, as well as in later sinfonias.
Musical Mentors And Major Influences

Berlinski identifies the following composers and mentors as major influences in the shaping of his style. From J. S. Bach Berlinski learned Baroque forms, contrapuntal writing, text-painting, and an appreciation for the sound of the music of the pipe organ. From Max Reger and the German dodecaphonic school that followed, he learned to compose in a language of twentieth-century chromaticism. From Karl Straube he learned the beauty of organ music. From Nadia Boulanger he learned to compose in impeccably crafted, 16th-century counterpoint. From Bela Bartok he learned to fuse elements from the music of one’s own people with highly developed techniques of art music. From Ernest Bloch he learned to establish a synthesis between the bold prophetic elements in the Jewish tradition and the musical language of nineteenth and twentieth-century Europe.9 From Joseph Yasser he developed a musicological approach to Jewish music. From Salomon Rosowsky he learned a codified Lithuanian Torah trope, which was to play a role in his own music similar to that which Gregorian chant played in the work of Olivier Messiaen.10 From Robert Baker he learned to refine his skills as an organist and develop into a concert organist. From Lazare Saminsky he learned an overwhelming sense of mission toward liturgical music and the importance of bringing to life the ancient truths and mysteries of the Bible.11 And from Messiaen he learned the technique of expanding intervals of pitch and time throughout the unfolding of a musical phrase.12

One of the striking features of a number of Berlinski’s compositions is that his music is frequently constructed on Holocaust-related writings or expresses a Holocaust-related idea.
In a dialogue with Berlinski, Joseph Maier, noted sociologist and life-long friend, asked the composer,

"Could you tell me to what extent you are a composer concerned with the Holocaust, and how does it show in your work?" Berlinski replied to this question, "... I cannot suppress a continuous urge to come back to it again and again. I may be haunted by the fear that time would mollify the intensity of our memory, that the event will be forgotten altogether. Elie Wiesel once said, 'Memory is our strongest weapon.' I do not need the Holocaust to create music. Those who have been silenced by it need us."13

In the three organ sinfonias which are the subject of this document, Sinfonia No. 1, Litanies for the Persecuted, is a Holocaust-based work, as is the opening movement of Sinfonia No. 3, entitled "Trumpets" in which, the composer explains, the trumpets are Judaic trumpets of doom that foretell of cataclysmic events. In addition, four of the remaining nine organ sinfonias, outside the scope of this paper are Holocaust-based works, Sinfonias No. 5, No. 7, No. 8, and No. 9.

Further information on each of Berlinski’s twelve organ sinfonias is provided in Appendix B of this paper. A catalogue of his total oeuvre is published by The Herman Berlinski Collection of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.14 In summary, one must realize that Berlinski’s work, in spite of its magnitude, both in quality and quantity, remains mostly unknown and awaits further analysis, research, and investigation.

Epilogue

Afore-mentioned sociologist Joseph Maier comprehends a feeling of holiness and transcendent awe in Herman Berlinski’s music and explored the subject in his paper entitled, “The Religious Significance of Herman Berlinski’s Music.” In a dialogue with Berlinski,
Maier draws the following conclusion:

Your religious thought processes, to the extent that I can discern them in your own statements, do not amount to what I would call a coherent, personal religious philosophy. What I do see, however, is an eroded, originally orthodox foundation, which may have left you religiously "out in the cold"! Eventually, there is a regenerative religious process which has been shaped by Conservative and Reform movements and religious thinkers such as Buber and Rosenzweig.

You received your doctorate in sacred music from a Conservative body in Judaism, the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, and for almost 25 years you functioned as Organist and Minister of Music in two major Reform synagogues. This required a religious pragmatism which in the end served you well. Your music comes from an inner religiosity which responds only partially to religious dogmas or theological doctrines. This is for the better, for dogmas and doctrines alone are confining, and do not produce vital music.  

In response to Maier’s insights, Berlinski replied, “Yes, I am a musician, not a theologian...The music I compose is the only truth I know...”

In an earlier quote from the dialogue, Berlinski explains,

I have been imbued with the religious, liturgical experiences of our faith, history and civilization. My music is a response to various life and thought processes. If the resulting music is perceived as religious, then this must be based upon very specific personal and religious experiences. I am afraid, however, that I have none of the profound and secure faith of the composers you mentioned [i.e., Palestrina, Schutz, and Bach]. My faith is insecure and often wavering. I am a Jew, and this means that, like Jacob, I am wrestling with the angel.

Berlinski at one point compared his compositional style to that of one of his mentors, Olivier Messiaen, with particularly telling insight, as seen in the following quotation:

Messiaen is a French Catholic and I am a Jew with an eastern Europe background. What unites us is the fact that we have composed music with obvious religious intent and intensity. Messiaen was able to fall back upon a well-established French organ tradition going back to the 16th century... There simply was no similar tradition of Jewish organ music to which I could appeal. I was, therefore, forced to invent an organ idiom of Jewish significance on my own.

...Catholic mysticism and Jewish mysticism differ greatly from each other.
Messiaen's mysticism is utterly otherworldly. His birds and bird calls are part of his spectral realm of angelology. His contact with earthly reality is tenous. Jewish mysticism, on the other hand, even the esoteric speculations of the Kabbalah and especially the liturgical poetry between the ninth and thirteenth centuries of our time, never leaves the ground of Jewish existence.

Jewish existence moreover, includes an awareness of persecution and this awareness leads in a straight line to the consciousness of the Holocaust. That, after all, is also a tradition, albeit a tragic one. For this, a language steeped in the melos of my people had to be forged, and I forged it in every one of my twelve sinfonias for organ... My organ sinfonias reveal a different approach to religiosity than that of Messiaen. His music suns itself in the felicity of faith and in the radiance of the divine image. Mine hovers over the abyss of Jewish existence. There is little felicity, and faith is continuously shaken by seismographic tremors of Jewish existence throughout the ages. The birds in my compositions do not sing; they hover over a devastated landscape (Sinfonia No. 1) or cry to the Lord for want of food (Oratorio, Job).17

Because so little Jewish repertoire existed for the organ when Berlinski began writing for the instrument in the middle of the twentieth century, he devoted his energies to creating a major body of sacred Jewish works for organ in which the organ is either the solo instrument or an integral part of the ensemble. In all these organ works, the music is an outpouring of his own spirit. "I've always composed as a Jew," stated Berlinski in an interview for the Washington Jewish Week. "Even when I don't write Jewish music I am always writing as a Jew. That is what has distinguished me most radically from all my contemporaries...." He continues, "One writes about what one knows; one composes what one must."18

Organist and musicologist Marilou Kratzenstein, in an article entitled "The Organ Works of Herman Berlinski," published in The American Organist, April 1989, writes,

For non-Jewish audiences, Herman Berlinski's music has become a window opening onto a world of Jewish musical expression that had previously been unknown to them. He, more than any other Jewish organ composer, has introduced his audiences to a musical landscape in which the imagery and musical symbols date from ancient biblical times. For many colleagues in the organ profession, Berlinski's music has provided
the first encounter with a Jewish religious experience expressed in musical terms.¹⁹

Martin Buber, the great theologian, once stated that in order to become a son of humanity, one must, first of all, be the son of one’s own people. Herman Berlinski, as a son of the Jewish people, has expressed his innermost spirit in great works of Jewish art music. In having been the first to forge an idiom of Jewish art music for the organ, and one of the truly great composers for the instrument of the twentieth century, his contributions to Jewish sacred music, to twentieth-century music literature, in general, and to organ literature specifically have been profound. Although Berlinski always writes as a Jew, his music transcends any parochial boundaries, to touch the souls of all mankind.
NOTES

1. Krattenzenstein, 52.


6. Ackert, 63.

7. Ackert, 64.

8. Holloway, 188.

9. Ackert, 64.


11. Ackert, 64.

12. Ibid.

13. Maier, 43.


15. Maier, 64.

16. Maier, 2.

17. Krattenzenstein, 53.


BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDIX A

SPECIFICATIONS OF THE TEMPLE EMANU EL ORGAN, NEW YORK
Casavant Frères, 1929
Austin Organs, 1956

119 ranks; 102 speaking stops; 7681 pipes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>16' Echo Bourdon</td>
<td>8' French Horn</td>
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<tr>
<td>16' Bourdon</td>
<td>8' Open Diapason</td>
<td>8' English Horn</td>
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<td>8' Open Diapason I</td>
<td>8' Gedackt</td>
<td>8' Orchestral Oboe</td>
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<tr>
<td>8' Open Diapason II</td>
<td>8' Quintadena</td>
<td>16' Contra Bombarde</td>
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<td>8' Bombarde</td>
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<td>4' Clarion</td>
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<td>4' Octave</td>
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<td>4' Principal</td>
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<td>III Cymbel</td>
<td>IV Mixture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tremulant</td>
<td>8' Cello</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4' Fugara</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>V Grand Mixture</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>V Harmonics</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

CHAZOZOROTH
An independent reed voiced on 25" wind pressure, and operating through the String Organ couplers to any division. 73 pipes, hooded.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHOIR</th>
<th>PEDAL</th>
<th>COUPLERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16' Contra Gemshorn</td>
<td>32' Double Open Diapason</td>
<td>16', 8', &amp; 4' All Divisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8' Diapason</td>
<td>16' Open Diapason, Wood</td>
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<tr>
<td>8' Melodia</td>
<td>(Ext. 32')</td>
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<tr>
<td>8' Gamba</td>
<td>16' Open Diapason, Metal</td>
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<tr>
<td>8' Gamba Celeste</td>
<td>(Great)</td>
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<tr>
<td>8' Dolce</td>
<td>16' Violone</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8' Dolce Celeste</td>
<td>16' Bourdon I</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4' Prestant</td>
<td>16' Bourdon II</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4' Flute d’Amour</td>
<td>16' Dulciana</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 2/3' Nazard</td>
<td>16' Contra Gemshorn</td>
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<tr>
<td>2' Flageolet</td>
<td>16' Echo Bourdon</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 3/5' Tierce</td>
<td>10 2/3' Quint</td>
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<tr>
<td>III Mixture</td>
<td>8' Octave</td>
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<tr>
<td>16' Contra Hautbois</td>
<td>8' Violone</td>
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<tr>
<td>8' Trumpet</td>
<td>8' Bourdon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8' Clarinet</td>
<td>4' Fifteenth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4' Clarion</td>
<td>32' Contra Trombone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harp (49 bars)</td>
<td>16' Trombone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celesta</td>
<td>16' Contra Hautbois</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Chimes (Echo)</td>
<td>8' Trumpet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tremulant</td>
<td>4' Clarion</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chimes (Echo)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

TWELVE ORGAN SONFONIAS OF HERMAN BERLINSKI

Sinfonia No. 1: *Litanies for the Persecuted*
for
Alto Solo, Narrator, and Organ
(Original orchestral score 1958-1960; Revised organ score 1967)
(Based on texts from the Bible, and poetry from poets Gabirol and Lentschuetz)

Sinfonia No. 2: *Holidays and Festivals*
for
Organ
(1954-1955)
(Based on High Holy Day and Festival modes and motifs)

Sinfonia No. 3: *Sounds and Motions*
for
Organ
(1961)
(A suite for solo organ exploring colors and sounds of the organ, set in a panoply of styles and forms.)

Sinfonia No. 4: *The Tetragrammaton*
for
Organ and Orchestra
(1965)
(Musical expression of three of the emanations of God, as described in the Cabala)

Sinfonia No. 5: *on Poems by Nellie Sachs*
for
Narrator and Organ
(1964)
(Based on the Holocaust poetry of Nellie Sachs)
Sinfonia No. 6: *Prayers for the Night*  
for  
Organ with String Quartet, and Timpani  
(1968)  
(Based on the Hashkiveinu prayer from the Sabbath liturgy)

Sinfonia No. 7: *David and Goliath*  
for  
Tenor or Baritone Solo and Organ  
(1965)  
(Based on the Biblical story of David and Goliath)

Sinfonia No. 8: *Eliyahu*  
Variations for Solo Organ  
(1973)  
(Based on the Hebrew folk melody, *Eliyahu Hanavim*)

Sinfonia No. 9: *The Glassbead Game*  
for  
Organ, Alto, Tenor, Narrator, and Ten Percussion Instruments  
(1974)  
(Based on the Novel, *The Glass Bead Game*, originally *Magister Ludi*, by Herman Hesse)

Sinfonia No. 10  
for  
Cello and Organ  
(1977)  
(Based on Psalm 130)

Sinfonia No. 11  
for  
Violin and Organ  
(1978)
Sinfonia No. 12: *The Holy Ten Commandments*

for

Organ, Choir, Soprano, Baritone and Tenor Soloists, Two Trumpets, and Percussion

(2000)

(Based on the Biblical Ten Commandments)