RICE UNIVERSITY

Unifying Elements in
Leon Kirchner’s Piano Sonata

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
Doctor of Musical Arts

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HOUSTON, TEXAS

APRIL 2007
ABSTRACT

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by

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This thesis presents an in-depth analysis of the musical materials forming Leon Kirchner’s Piano Sonata and focuses on the elements that unify this large-scale, freely-atonal composition. The core of the thesis is devoted to elements of cyclic references, thematic returns, tonal centricity, and melodic transformations.

The individual chapters investigate form, harmony, and melody, illustrated with musical excerpts from Kirchner’s Piano Sonata, Béla Bartók’s Night Music from Out of Doors Suite, and Maurice Ravel’s Le Gibet from Gaspard de la Nuit. Appendices include a list of Kirchner’s most recent works, discography, and bibliography.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many thanks for the support, encouragement, and generosity of all of my professors at Rice University, above all, my advisor, Dr. Anthony Brandt, and the members of my committee, Dr. Walter Bailey, Professor Brian Connelly, and Dr. Hilary Mackie. Only with the help and counsel of their commitments of time and expertise was it possible to bring this project to completion.

To both Leon Fleisher and Robert McDonald I owe my introduction to Kirchner’s music, and the choice of topic for this project. Their inspired guidance for the interpretation of Kirchner’s Piano Sonata for performance has been invaluable.

I am also very fortunate to have had so many wonderful mentors, especially my piano teachers who have been remarkably patient, supportive, and kind throughout my career as a pianist. They include: Brian Connelly, Robert McDonald, Robert Shannon, and Bruce Sutherland. Without their guidance, I would not have been able to attain this achievement.

In addition, many friends, colleagues, and faculty members have been a continuous source of support and inspiration. In particular, Dr. Karim Al-Zand, Dr. Nancy Bailey, Maestro David In-Jae Cho, Marc Durand, Leon Fleisher, Dr. Teresa Han, Dr. Pierre Jalbert, Dr. Richard Lavenda, Tom Littman, Martin Merritt, Maya Nuesell, Maestro Larry Rachleff, Dr. Anne Schnoebelen, and Dr. Carl Dean Shank.
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INTRODUCTION

During the period of “free atonality,” Arnold Schoenberg composed works without reference to a conscious, integrated system of pitch control. Key centers were completely avoided, the triad disappeared as the basis for harmonic reference, and all notes of the chromatic scale were treated equally. Despite the temporary sense of creativity and freedom offered by the less systematic compositional method of “free atonality,” Schoenberg came to believe the method inadequate as a reference for extended, large-scale compositions.¹

Schoenberg faced the difficulties of exhibiting a degree of complexity and coherence comparable to that of tonal music in writing large-scale works using “free atonality.” As a result, his compositions of this period were short and even relied upon texts to aid continuity. In his search for a system that incorporated the preferred sounds of “free atonality” within a more methodically ordered framework, Schoenberg discovered the twelve-tone method “as in a dream.”

Strongly convincing as this dream may have been, the conviction that these new sounds obey the laws of nature and of our manner of thinking – the conviction that order, logic, comprehensibility and form cannot be present without obedience to such laws – forces the composer along the road to exploration. He must find, if not laws or rules, at least ways to justify the dissonant character of these harmonies and their successions.²

Leon Kirchner, a disciple and a true advocate of Schoenberg, attempted to overcome the challenges of organizing music in “free atonality” without using the twelve-tone method as a referential basis in his Piano Sonata. Using a different approach,

Kirchner accomplished coherence by illustrating the organic growth of formal, harmonic, and melodic materials throughout the work. He explored the various aspects of sound that maintained firm connections to his initial ideas, thus stabilizing the atonal language.

Aaron Copland confirmed Kirchner's independence as he remarked,

Considering the teachers he sought out [Schoenberg], and the clearly chromatic propensities of his own music, it is rather surprising that Kirchner has not been won over to adopting the twelve-tone system. The fact that he has not is indicative of an independent mind, an independence that show itself in other aspects of his music.\(^3\)

The following investigation will reveal how Kirchner exploited formal, harmonic, and melodic elements as the basis for organic growth in his *Piano Sonata*. On this fundamental level, the three most important means that Kirchner used to organize and unify this large-scale, freely-atonal composition are cyclic form, tonal centricity, and melodic variation.

\(^3\) Aaron Copland, "Leon Kirchner: Duo for Violin and Piano," *Notes* 7 (June 1950): 434.
CHAPTER 1
FORM

The two most important means that Leon Kirchner uses to organize the Piano Sonata are cyclic references and thematic recurrences. As cyclic references appear within different movements, thematic recurrences are stated within each movement. The cyclic references function as structural pillars which help to unify the three-movement work. Kirchner also utilizes the cyclical returns to connect thematically related sections, and in turn, they develop into individual sections themselves within its movement. These sections are filled with an enormous variety of contrasts throughout the work. When cyclic references are not present, most sections are held together by fleeting thematic recurrences. Most importantly, these thematic returns help to build small ternary or rondo-like forms within each movement. Through these cyclic references and thematic recurrences, Kirchner is able to organize this multi-sectional, and chromatic work.

In movement I, there are two primary references. They are first presented in Sections #1 and #2 of Movement I (see Example 1.1) and they reappear either in exact or in slightly modified form only in Movements II and III. In tracing how Kirchner presents the two primary cyclical references in Movement I, the formal scheme below illustrates how the seven contrasting sections are organized and defined by clear changes in tempo and dynamics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>*Section #</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*Measure #</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Average Tempo</td>
<td>slow</td>
<td>fast</td>
<td>slow</td>
<td>fast</td>
<td>slow</td>
<td>fast</td>
<td>slow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Average Dynamic</td>
<td>$p$</td>
<td>$f$</td>
<td>$p$</td>
<td>$f$</td>
<td>$p$</td>
<td>$f$</td>
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<tr>
<td>*Cyclical Reference</td>
<td>$X^1$</td>
<td>$X^2$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Thematic Return</td>
<td>$T^1$</td>
<td>$T^1$</td>
<td>$T^1$</td>
<td>$T^1$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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(Example 1.1 Kirchner: Piano Sonata, Movement I)
In Section #1, Kirchner presents the 1st primary cyclic reference, specifically in measures 12-14, labeled X¹ in Example 1.1. The length is rather short (three measures long), but it is the most dramatic. This reference performs as fleeting bridge material that helps to intensify the climax of its section.

(Example 2.2 Kirchner: *Piano Sonata*, Movement I, mm. 12-14)

Before Kirchner presents the 2nd primary cyclic reference, the division of Section #1 and #2 is defined by the fluctuations in tempo. He changes the tempo using the *allargando* from Section #1, and *poco a poco doppio movenenti!* (little by little double the speed!) from Section #2, to form a seamless transition into the 2nd primary cyclic reference, labeled X² in Example 1.1.

(Example 1.3 Kirchner: *Piano Sonata*, Movement I, mm. 17-18)
The length and the function of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} primary reference are strikingly different from that of the 1\textsuperscript{st} (see Example 1.3).\textsuperscript{4} First, it is much longer (twenty-two measures). Secondly, it functions as a transitional passage, as well as an individual section of its own. As a result, this reference becomes Section #2 that connects Sections #1 and #3 of Movement I.

In Movement II, the 1\textsuperscript{st} primary cyclic reference reappears for the first time. Unlike its appearance in Movement I, this reappearance functions in two ways. First, the passage acts as bridge material to the climax, as it did in Movement I. Secondly, in addition to that bridge function, the reference in Movement II forms an individual section itself. Illustrated in the formal scheme below, the 1\textsuperscript{st} primary cyclic reference appears in and as Section #6.

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccc}
\text{Section Number} & 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 \\
\text{Measure Number} & 1 & 12 & 25 & 34 & 46 & 55 & 60 \\
\text{Cyclical Reference} & & & & X^1 & & & \\
\text{Thematic Return} & T^2 & & & & & T^2 \\
\end{array}
\]

(Example 1.4 Kirchner: Piano Sonata, Movement II)

In Section #6, the cyclical reference is a direct quotation from the three-measure passage from Section #1 of Movement I (See Example 1.2). The aural perception of this passage is deceptive because the music echoes the exact tempo and pitches. However, the score reveals that the cyclic reference is notated by different rhythm and meter. In the passage below, Kirchner uses groupings of triplet notes, and the abridged meter in 2/8 throughout the quotation. As a result, this particular reference becomes twice the length of its original reference from Movement I (compare two excerpts below).

\textsuperscript{4} This excerpt is only the opening measures of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} principle cyclic material. The entire cyclic reference lasts twenty-two measures from min. 17-36.
(From Example 1.2 Kirchner: *Piano Sonata*, Movement I, mm. 12-14)

(Example 1.5 Kirchner: *Piano Sonata*, Movement II, mm. 54-60)

In Movement III, Kirchner quotes the complete 2\textsuperscript{nd} primary cyclic reference (twenty-two measures) in exact form (see Example 1.3). Serving the same function as the one from Movement I, this reference also becomes an individual section that connects Sections #1 and #3 in Movement III (see Example 1.6).

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<th>Section Number</th>
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<tr>
<td>Measure Number</td>
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<td>66</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>111</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cyclical Reference</td>
<td>$X^2$</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Main Theme or Motive</td>
<td>$T^3$</td>
<td>$T^3$</td>
<td>$T^3$</td>
<td>$T^3$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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(Example 1.6 Kirchner: *Piano Sonata*, Movement III)
As seen in the formal scheme above, Kirchner presents another cyclic reference in Section #4, labeled Y in Example 1.6. In contrast to the primary cyclic references, this new “secondary” cyclic reference (Y) captures the atmosphere of Movement II rather than its precise melodic shapes. Although the passage is considered a secondary reference, it is by far the most dramatic and creative. Kirchner combines all the sensuous and rhapsodic elements from Movement II forming a cadenza-like passage. For example, Kirchner references the rhythmic pedal point and the melodic shape of Sections #1 and #2 from Movement II. More specifically, the two passages recall both the persistent quality of the pedal point on the note “B”, and the melodic contours that consist of irregular groupings of rhythm in the tone clusters (see Example 1.7).

(Example 1.7 Kirchner: Piano Sonata, Movement II, mm. 1-3, 10-12)

In examining the secondary cyclic reference below, the pedal point is most prevalent in the middle voice and the irregular groupings of rhythm pervade in the outer voices as accompaniment figures. In fact, “reminiscence” of Movement II is a more accurate description.
(Example 1.8 Kirchner: Piano Sonata, Mvmt III, mm. 115-117)
Throughout the *Piano Sonata*, when cyclic references are not present, most sections are held together by brief thematic recurrences. As expected, most are strong and sturdy but some are elusive and subtle. Unlike the cyclic references, thematic references only appear within individual movement. As a result, they help to strengthen the structure of individual movements by building smaller formal designs.

In tracing how Kirchner incorporates the thematic recurrences throughout Movement I, the formal scheme (see Example 1.1) illustrates the seven contrasting sections. Their sectional divisions are defined by clear changes in tempo and dynamics, as they alternate from slow to fast, and soft to loud. Interspersing the thematic recurrences evenly throughout Movement I, Kirchner presents the returns in Sections #1, #3, #5, and #7. Consequently, the movement resembles a typical rondo design.

The main theme of Movement I is derived from the first four measures of the *Piano Sonata*. Rhythmically, the passage is characterized by the short-long motive, more specifically, an 8\(^{\text{th}}\)-note followed by a tied dotted quarter note. The melodic line is assembled by a leaping interval of a third, which is followed by a descending interval of a third that is transposed down at the minor second (see Example 1.9).

(Example 1.9 Kirchner: *Piano Sonata*, Movement I, mm. 1-3)
As the theme reappears (a total of three times) in Movement I, Kirchner occasionally transforms it so that it relates with the motives of the section in progress.

The first thematic recurrence, which is found in Section #3, is the strongest as it retains the same rhythm and melody of the original theme from Section #1 (see Example 1.9, mm. 1-2). Although both passages share the exact same melodic intervals and rhythm, this particular return is transformed with embellishing trills. Interestingly, Kirchner subsequently uses the trills as thematic material throughout this section (see Example 1.10, mm. 44).

(Example 1.10 Kirchner: Piano Sonata, Movement I, mm. 42-44)

Looking more closely, the pitch begins at the minor third above (from G to Bb), and the meter is extended (from 3/4 to 4/4). Structurally, Kirchner is able to shape the first three sections of Movement I, using the 2nd cyclic reference in Section #2 to contrast Sections #1 and #3. As a result, the three sections construct a mini-ternary design of (A B A’) within Movement I.
The second thematic recurrence is presented in Section #5 and it is dramatically altered in tempo, dynamic level, meter, pitch, tessitura, and length. As this thematic recurrence only uses the first half its original theme, the passage performs more like an interruptive thematic recurrence. To be more specific, *Tempo largamente* (*Tempo II*) shifts into *Piu andante*, utilizing a sudden dynamic change from *ff* to *ppp*, in the passage below.

(Example 1.11 Kirchner: *Piano Sonata*, Movement I, mm. 85-88)

Additionally, the meter is condensed from 3/4 to 3/8, and as expected, the rhythm is also presented in diminution. Lastly, the melodic line shifts in tessitura to the high register. Kirchner makes this shift to correspond to the high range of graces notes that pervade throughout Section #5.

The thematic recurrence in Section #7 is the climax of Movement I, but it is rather elusive as Kirchner presents the theme in two parts: the chordal accompaniments and the melodic line.
Despite the drastic tempo change (*Quasi Adagio*), the sustaining dynamic level (*fff*), and the excursions beyond the common range of the soprano line, Kirchner preserves the principle rhythmic motive of the short-long phrasing from the primary thematic material of Section #1 (see Example 1.12).

In Movement II, the main thematic materials are the *parlando* (speechlike) rhythms in the outer voices. Melodically, the theme knits around the persistent pedal point on the note “B” in the inner voice. In addition, the rhythmic figures are quite distinct as Kirchner uses irregular groupings of 32\(^{\text{nd}}\) and 64\(^{\text{th}}\)-note rhythms.
Similar to the thematic design of the first three sections of Movement I, the thematic recurrence in Section \#3 of Movement II also helps to construct a mini-ternary form (A B A’) within its movement (see Example 1.4). The thematic return of Section \#3 is almost identical to that of Section \#1. In the example below, the passage retains the same tune until the melodic material begins to deviate into a transitional passage that leads into Section \#4.

(Example 1.14 Kirchner: *Piano Sonata*, Movement II, mm. 24-27)

Similar to the formal design of Movement I, Movement III also resembles the rondo design, as Kirchner uses thematic recurrences to define four of the six sections (see Example 1.6). Introducing the main thematic material of Movement III in Section \#1, the passage presents the motivic idea using a distinct meter in 5/8. In the example below, the main motive is characterized by sharp articulations in the first half of the phrase, and imitative entries for the consequent phrase (see Example 1.15).
Of the three thematic recurrences in Movement III, Section #6 is by far the strongest. The thematic return is emphasized in two ways: the increase in dynamic level (from $f$ to $fff$), and the intermittent interruptions of $sf$’s using the fragments of the main imitation motive from Section #1.

(Example 1.15 Kirchner: *Piano Sonata*, Movement III, mm. 1-4)

The two remaining thematic recurrences in Movement III are not as concrete as the ones examined above. Kirchner frequently combines partial fragments of the imitative motives and sharp articulations to create a sense of return. For example in Section #3, Kirchner presents a more ambiguous transformation of thematic material by combining the intervals of sevenths and octaves, motivic ideas, and the meter changes.

(Example 1.16 Kirchner: *Piano Sonata*, Movement III, mm. 135-137)
The two principal elements that unify the form in Leon Kirchner’s *Piano Sonata* are cyclical references and thematic recurrences. As the thematic recurrences help to build smaller formal designs within each multi-sectional movement, the cyclic references strengthen the higher structural design of the entire three-movement work. Through these means, Kirchner is able to unify a large-scale composition using “free atonality” with clear logic.
CHAPTER 2
HARMONY

Despite the jarring sounds produced by writing in "free atonality," Kirchner uses tonal centricity as the harmonic foundation of the Piano Sonata's compositional logic. First, he is able to find harmonic stability using tonal centers at the beginnings and endings of each movement. The tonal centers are mostly defined by the pedal point: the outer movements focus on the note C, and as the middle movement centers around the note B. Secondly, Kirchner is able to achieve harmonic variety using the chromatic neighbors of its tonal centers, using intervals of seconds and thirds. As these two intervals are derived from the opening measures of the Piano Sonata, Kirchner highlights harmonies outside the tonal centers in two ways. First, he obscures tonality by highlighting notes that are major/minor second away from its tonal center. Secondly, he overlaps both major and minor triads to create bitonality above the root of the movement's tonal center. Using the tonal centers as a harmonic underpinning, Kirchner is able to explore and integrate chromatic harmonies in this three-movement work.

A number of factors confirm C as the tonal center in Movement I. The note C serves as the fundamental of the final chord. In addition to the sudden dynamic emphasis (sfff), the final chord is also sustained over to Movement II above the fermata.
Secondly, Movement I begins on a pedal point on the note G. Implied above this pedal point, is a mixture of G-minor/major harmony, resulting from the note Bb-flat opposed by the B-natural. In addition to the fact that the note is sustained for three measures by the damper pedal, the passage resembles the dominant chord (V) of the tonal center C (I).

Due to the chromatic nature of the opening, the resolution of the implied dominant on G to the tonic on C is unclear. However, as the pedal point comes to a close, the
resolution develops a stronger sense of tonic from the bass line of measure 4. Within this melodic line, the note E is sustained through a tie above the repeated bass notes on C, forming an interval of major thirds (C and E) to reinforce the tonal center of C.

The center of tonality shifts in Movement II through a persistent pedal point on the note B. These pedal points bind the outer sections to strengthen the tonal center. For example, the pulse of the opening pedal point is held together by the steady 8th-note rhythm on the note B (See Example 2.3).

(Example 2.3 Kirchner: Piano Sonata, Movement II, mm. 1-3)

Similarly, the concluding measures confirm B as the tonal center in Movement II, using the pedal point in the bass register. Interestingly, the pedal point that is sustained against the suspended notes of C creates a certain ambiguity between the two tonal centers (B vs C) as the movement comes to a close.
(Example 2.4  Kirchner: Piano Sonata, Movement II, mm. 69-74)

Examining a more subtle reference to the tonal center on B, Kirchner shifts briefly toward functional harmony in Movement II. In the following example, he highlights a hint of dominant function by a melodic ascent to the note on F-sharp, suggesting a dominant (V) – tonic (I) relationship.

(Example 2.5  Kirchner: Piano Sonata, Movement II, mm. 7-8)
In Movement III, a strong sense of functional harmony orients the listener to the tonal center of C in the opening two measures. Kirchner emphasizes the last two chords of each bar (G and C) which suggest a swinging motion from the dominant to the tonic. In addition, the first note and the last two notes of each measure outline the C-major triad (E, G, C) (see Example 2.6).

*(Example 2.6 Kirchner: Piano Sonata, Movement III, mm. 1-3)*

Also in Movement III’s penultimate section, Kirchner provides a strong evidence of dominant-tonic relationship. Using a step-wise motion, the B pedal point resolves to the tonal center of C in Section #7. The motion of the sustained pedal point moving from the note B to C somewhat resembles a cadence found in common tonal music (V6 − I) (see Example 2.7).
Lastly, the tonal center of C in Movement III is firmly established by the final two measures. In addition to the dramatic dynamic level (**f**), Kirchner concludes the movement with a bass octave doubling on the note C (see Example 2.8).

Supported by the strong tonal centers referenced above, Kirchner is able to explore an array of colorful, yet dissonant harmonies that neighbor around the tonal
centers of C and B. The dissonant harmonies evolve from notes that are minor and/or major second away from the tonal centers. Having strong intervallic connections of seconds from the opening measures of the *Piano Sonata*, Kirchner is able to achieve harmonic variety within these tonal centers.

In Movement I, the first harmonic dissonance around tonal center of C is found at the climax of Section #1. In the example below, the note C in the soprano line is clashed by the chord containing the notes B and D in the bass register. The three notes (B, C, D) are struck simultaneously to produce dissonant intervals of both major and minor seconds.

(Example 2.9 Kirchner: *Piano Sonata*, Movement I, mm. 14)

The second evidence of harmonic dissonance using minor seconds is found in Section #7. In the passage below, the four-note chiming chord (C-sharp, A, B, E) in the upper register, which is rooted from the note C-sharp, is persistently struck (total of four times) against the note C in the lower voice. The passage eventually finds harmonic stability as the dissonance is resolved from C-sharp to C in the final two chiming chords (C, A, B, E) (see Example 2.10 – the six chords are indicated numerically).
Illustrating a similar concept of tonal dissonance in Movement II, the single-note pedal point becomes a cluster of notes. Although clusters of notes do not customarily serve to define tonal centers, they can function as a blurred type of centricity, especially when they are persistent. For example in the passage below, the note B in the alto voice is surrounded by neighboring clusters of notes. Using octave displacements on the left hand accompaniment figures to form a cluster of notes (B-flat, B, A), Kirchner repeats
the cluster-like pattern as a pedal point to help define an ambiguous type of tonal center on the note B (see Example 2.11).

(Example 2.11 Kirchner: *Piano Sonata*, Movement II, mm. 12-13)

Secondly, the importance in the intervals of added seconds, from the concluding measures of Movement II, become clearer as the movement closes with the pedal point on the note B. The pedal point is struck against the repeating C’s in the tenor voice, creating a succession of minor seconds (see Example 2.4).

Heightening the harmonic variety at a higher level, Kirchner utilizes bitonality above the tonal centers, which involves clashing of major and minor modes. As Kirchner focused around the interval of seconds for tonal dissonance, bitonality in contrast, uses the interval of thirds. The interval of a third which is derived from the opening four notes of Movement I (see Example 2.12), develops into bimodal harmonies above the tonal centers throughout the work.
(Example 2.12 Kirchner: *Piano Sonata*, Movement I, mm. 1-2)

Examining the concept of bitonality in Movement I, Kirchner creates two different triads above the tonal center. For example, he utilizes intervals of fourths to build two different triads of D-flat major (D-flat, F, A-flat) and F minor (F, A-flat, C) above the tonal center on C in Section #2 (see Example 2.13).

(Example 2.13 Kirchner: *Piano Sonata*, Movement I, mm. 28)

Looking further in Movement III, Kirchner employs a special type of bitonality. The two implied chords comprise of notes held together by a common note on E. In the example below, the tonal centricity is reinforced as the two independent harmonies of C-
sharp minor (C-sharp-E-G-sharp) and C-major (C-E-G) are built above the root of the chord on C.

(Example 2.14 Kirchner: Piano Sonata, Movement III, mm. 20-22)

The tonal centricity becomes a vital component and the unifying device for the harmonic developments and stability in Leon Kirchner’s Piano Sonata. The single-note pedal points that pervade the work provide stable anchors to hold dissonant melodic lines and chromatic tone clusters. Interestingly, the chromatic tone clusters become the pedal points. Although pedal points using clusters of notes do not define the tonal centers as clearly as single-note pedal points, they do function as an obscure type of centricity. Kirchner also experiments with chromatic neighboring harmonies using the tonal centers as the basis to form dissonant and bitonal harmonies. Lastly, the strongest harmonic stabilizing force is the tonal center of C and B. Using tonal centricity as the foundation for harmonic growth, Kirchner is able to organize and unify a large-scale, three-movement work.
CHAPTER 3
MELODY

Motivic, chromatic, and repetitive are probably terms that would describe the majority of melodies in Leon Kirchner’s *Piano Sonata*. These characteristics do not accommodate to the listener’s memory, and one is not likely to leave a performance of this work humming the themes. The initial hearing of the work may only leave the impression of chaotic profusion of different melodic lines.\(^5\) In actual fact, the melodic motives are intimately interrelated. Just as it was true for harmony, the opening two measures of the *Piano Sonata* provide the melodic source material for the entire composition. To achieve melodic variety, Kirchner applies the concepts of developing variation,\(^6\) repetition, sequence, and imitation. As a result, the main motives develop into various dissonant melodies that intensify his chromatic language. Firmly rooted by the primary intervals, Kirchner is able to display the continuous evolution of melodic motives with logic throughout this multi-movement work.

Similar to the primary harmonic intervals from Chapter 2, the primary melodic intervals are also major and minor seconds, and thirds. Among the many different melodic possibilities using these intervals, only two distinct motives are developed in Movement I. First, the primary motive consists of the rising minor third, and the falling minor third (see Example 2.12). The secondary motives alter the primary motives by intervallic re-ordering and inversions.

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In Movement I, Kirchner incorporates the primary motives mostly through rapid passages or long sustained melodies. The two examples below illustrate the primary motive in the soprano line as diminution using the rise and fall of thirds. In strengthening the motivic connection even further, both motives preserve the rhythmic element of short-long phrasing.

(Example 3.1 Kirchner: *Piano Sonata*, Movement I, mm. 79 and mm. 85-86)

The secondary motive appears in Section #1 of Movement I. It is the intervallic re-ordering of the primary motive. The third-second-third intervals of the primary motive (G, B-flat, A, F-sharp) are transformed into third-third-second intervals through the long sustained melodic lines in the example below.
Another example of the secondary motive is presented through octave doublings. Although the motivic statement is already amplified and direct, Kirchner reinforces them by incorporating sharp articulations, crescendos, and sf's.
In addition, the consequent series of octaves in the bass register uses the mirror image of its initial series of octaves (see Example 3.3, mm. 123-125).

In examining a more elusive passage in Movement I, Kirchner alters the secondary motive by an inversion. More specifically, the primary motive of the third-third-second intervals is inverted to second-second-third intervals. In the following case, the third is spelled enharmonically as an augmented second (D-flat, E-flat, D-flat, E).

(Example 3.4 Kirchner: Piano Sonata, Movement I, mm. 141)

The primary and secondary motives are the strongest melodic formations in Movement I. Furthermore, Kirchner also develops other combinations of melodic motives by shuffling thirds and seconds. For example, a collection of thirds and seconds form the longest uninterrupted melody in Movement I.

(Example 3.5 Kirchner: Piano Sonata, Movement III, mm. 78-81)
The motives in Movement II have strong intervallic connections to that of Movement I. More specifically, the primary motive of Movement II (C-sharp, D, E, F) is derived from the primary motive of Movement I (F-sharp, G, A, B-flat). They both share the same half-whole-half step relationship (see Example 3.6).

(Example 3.6 Kirchner: Piano Sonata, Movement II, mm. 3 and Movement I, mm. 1-2)

The primary motive defines the beginnings of all seven sections in Movement II. In order to differentiate the sections more clearly, Kirchner develops seven different variations of the primary motive throughout the movement: bimodality, embellishment, polyrhythm, octave displacement, inversion, transposed retrograde, and whole-tone patterns.

The first variation of the primary motive involves melodic passages from Section #1 that do not begin and end on the same note. For example, the sextuplet melodic idea forms chromatic notes that imply bimodal harmonies (see Example 3.7).
(Example 3.7 Kirchner: *Piano Sonata*, Movement II, mm. 5)

To be more specific, the five notes of the sextuplet motive in the soprano line (C, C-sharp, D, E, E-flat) forms the complete major triads of A, C-sharp, E (A major) and A-flat, C, E-flat (A-flat major) when heard against the bass tones of A-flat and A.

The second variation of the primary motive features a melodic embellishment in Section #2. The variation expands the primary motive from 4 notes to 5-6 notes in the soprano line. At times, two notes are struck simultaneously (see Examples 3.8 and 3.9).
The third variation of the primary motive undergoes rhythmic alterations. More specifically, Kirchner uses polyrhythm to disguise the motive between the two voices (see Example 3.10).

The fourth variation of the primary motive is found in the concluding measures of Section #3. The motive is hidden by octave displacements in the soprano line. To obscure the passage even further, Kirchner increases the rhythmic activity using 64th-notes (see Example 3.11).
The fifth variation of the primary motive can be surveyed from Section #4. Kirchner transforms the motive using a melodic inversion in the soprano line (A, G-sharp, G, E). Creating the same effect as the octave displacement variation above, the melodic line is obscured by the polyrhythm.

The sixth variation of the primary motive is modified by transposition and retrograde. The intervallic transformation is presented in the soprano line (F-sharp, F, E-flat, D) as well as the cluster-like chromatic tones (C-sharp, C, B, B-flat) (see Example 3.13).
Lastly, Kirchner develops the seventh variation by transposing the primary motive into whole-tone patterns, using intervals of rising thirds and falling seconds (A-flat, B-flat, C, D). For example, Kirchner creates exotic melodies using these patterns. Interestingly, the patterns are grouped by distinct rhythms (two 64th-notes followed by a 32nd-note), and they are also imitated by the lower voice at the major seventh below (see Example 3.14).
Throughout Movement III, Kirchner organized and developed his melodic motives by means of developing variation. In addition, musical influences also motivated the origin of melodic elements in Movement II. According to Kirchner, he was inspired by the hypnotic effect of the continuous Bb pedal point in Maurice Ravel’s *Le Gibet*. To create the same effect, Kirchner uses the pedal point on the note “B” in Movement II of his *Piano Sonata*.

(Example 3.15  Ravel: *Le Gibet* from *Gaspard de la Nuit*, mm. 1-3)

Additionally, there is an assumption that Kirchner was paying homage to Béla Bartók by evoking the atmospheric quality of the *Night Music*. As both pieces are anchored by pedal points moving in a steady rhythm, Kirchner attempts to imitate the eerie sounds of Bartók. The first pedal point of the *Night Music*, which is a tone cluster, contains the identical intervals (half-whole-half steps) as the opening melodic line of Kirchner’s in Movement II (see Example 3.16). 

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In achieving melodic variety in Movement III, Kirchner utilizes the repetition of melodic pattern to propel forward momentum. The most important element that drives the repetitive pattern is the metric *accelerando*. More specifically, Kirchner is able to propel melodic material without indicating an *accelerando*. To achieve this effect, he gradually compresses the melodic lines from broken 8\textsuperscript{th}-note figures into blocked chords to create an illusion of forward drive (see Example 3.18).
Similar to repetitions, sequences also organize melodic ideas into unpredictable patterns in Movement III. Kirchner organizes sequential melodic lines in two ways: using the same contour or by melodic patterns that repeat at another pitch level. For example, Kirchner develops melodic sequences by using patterns of same melodic contour with varied intervallic relationships (see Example 3.19).

(Example 3.19 Kirchner: Piano Sonata, Movement III, mm. 114)

Lastly, Kirchner frequently uses imitation to create melodic excitement in Movement III. Referring back to Example 1.17, Kirchner states the initial melodic motive by two other voices in succession. Also, he adds the stretto-like imitation to heighten the climax of Movement III.

Leon Kirchner integrates the growth of melodic lines based on the melodic sources derived from the opening measures of the Piano Sonata. The primary melodic motives, composed of seconds and thirds, form the substance of the melodic variations. Through developing variation, Kirchner is able to construct varieties of chromatic melodies that are closely related. In propelling forward motion with these melodies, he employs repetitions, sequences, and imitations. Using these methods, Kirchner is able to create an illusion of freely conceived chromatic melodies into readily recognizable units in this multi-movement work.
CONCLUSION

In the Piano Sonata, Leon Kirchner firmly took a new independent path away from the twelve-tone system developed by Arnold Schoenberg in 1921. Although Kirchner did gain the sense of logical development as a pupil of Schoenberg through other means, Kirchner was able to incorporate his creative individualism of freedom and flexibility that displayed his rhapsodic and sensual qualities in this work. Cohn remarked that,

this composer has a clarified creative horizon. Each new opus proves him to be unconcerned with the enervating glorification of a system and fully devoted, rather, to the triumph of living music. Kirchner’s works reveal the new outline of modern music knowledge. They are neoteric and personal, derived from and conjoined to the past, as all important art must be, but free of bald imitation. Kirchner deserves his success; the creative tiara sits well on his head.¹⁰

With form, Kirchner used cyclic references and thematic recurrences as structural pillars, and with harmony, he utilized tonal centricity to create a point of harmonic reference. On this fundamental level, he freely experimented and explored the drastic contrasts in his initial ideas, so no matter how distant his compositional imagination extended, there was always a sense of underlying formal, harmonic, and melodic connection.

In addition, the researcher, having performed the Piano Sonata in numerous occasions during the course of this investigation, became more conscious of the way Kirchner’s music was conveyed to the listener. It was a language which was more

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personal and expressive than what was perceived on the page. Copland affirms this point of view after studying Kirchner’s music, as he was.

Struck by how little the written notes convey the strong impression made by a live performance.. It is well to keep this in mind the potential effect of these notes when performed in the concert hall; otherwise I am afraid that the purchaser may be a trifle disappointed. For a measure by measure examination.. will disclose nothing remarkable in the way of melodic invention or rhythmic novelty. Nor is there anything remarkable about Kirchner’s harmonic vocabulary. And yet, undeniably, when sounded in actual performance, the notes themselves cast a spell. What is the explanation? I am not sure that I know.11

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LIST OF WORKS

**Opera**

Lily (1977) in 3 acts

**Orchestral**

Sinfonia in Two Parts for Orchestra (1951)
Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 1 (1953)
Toccata for Strings, Solo Winds, and Percussion (1955)
Scenes for an Opera (1957)
Concerto for Violin, Cello, 10 Winds, and Percussion (1960)
Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 2 (1963)
Music for Orchestra (1969)
Music for Flute and Orchestra (1978)
Music for Orchestra II “Kaleidoscope” (1990)
Music for Cello and Orchestra (1992)
Music for Soprano, Baritone, and Chorus ‘Of Things Exactly As They Are’ (1997)

**Chamber/Vocal/Solo**

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‘The Times Are Nightfall’ for Soprano and Piano (1943)
‘Dawn’ for Chorus and Organ (1943/46)
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