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**Electroacoustic Music
Composition:
Myth, Symbol and Image**

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Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD

City University, London
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August 1997



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Acknowledgements

I wish to express my gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Simon Emmerson for his help throughout the period of this writing. I would also like to thank my colleague Dr. Jeremy Arden for his unstinting support.

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Abstract

This thesis presents the author's musical compositions through the elucidation of their source impulse. In order to facilitate the unveiling of the works presented in this thesis I have subdivided it into sections thus:

Section 1 - Here I introduce the reader to the motivation behind my music composition work and discuss the elements which inform my cosmology through the elucidation of the concepts and methods used in the realisation of the compositions.

Section 2 - An introduction, discussion and conclusion to the series heading of **Raza**. The compositions and chapters are as follows: Chapter 3, **Lucero** for charango and tape; Chapter 4, **Gato's Raid** for marimba and tape; Chapter 6, **De Luna a Luna ...** for two percussionists and tape. In this section I address that particular musical imagery which is directly related to my cultural roots.

Section 3 - An introduction, discussion and conclusion to the series heading of **Urbis**. The compositions and chapters are as follows: Chapter 9, **Urbis #2 'passing moments/riffs & raffs'** for bass clarinet and tape; Chapter 10, **Urbis #3 'Alter ego'** for electric guitar, live electronics and tape; Chapter 11, **Urbis #4** for tape. In this section I address the use of modern urban culture symbols in order to create a contemporary mythological canon.

Section 4 - A conclusion to this thesis.

ARS EST CELARE ARTEM

"art lies in concealing the art"

Section I

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

I originally conceived work in the medium of electroacoustic music more as being that of a luthier, as I felt that, in creating sounds that needed to be performed, I was therefore creating instruments. But as I progressed, I realised that *transformation* was at the core of this sound creation, and alchemy became a very clear analogy and a guiding reference. Alchemy is an art of transformation. The task of an alchemist is to effect evolutionary changes in the material (the *Chaos*, the *Materia Prima*)¹ worked on, transforming it from the basic 'chaotic', raw state to a 'perfect' and purified (divine) form - metamorphosing one into another. As a composer in this medium of electroacoustic sound, working with sound sources and manipulating them, transforming them into something else, changing their appearance and qualities, is in effect working an aural alchemy.

Throughout the ages, one of the principal vehicles for alchemical expression has been the use of mythological symbols² which appear to be the perfect means of conveying information that can be interpreted at both a material (factual) and a spiritual level, defying a single and precise definition. Many artists and musicians have expressed an interest in alchemy and have attempted to weave philosophical truths into their works. The quest for wisdom is not unique, many being followers of Plato actively endeavouring to centre their music around those truths. I find myself in the same position in trying to convey through my compositions an expression of my truth.

'The Baroque artist saw in music an heteronomous art, subordinated to words and serving only as musical means to a dramatic end that transcended music.' (Bukofzer, 1983 p. 8)

In the 16th Century the art/science of music was considered an intrinsic part of alchemy (as numbers were) and was believed to be an avenue to cosmic laws through which the power of sound and mathematical ratios (vibrations) could be understood³. In the same magical way, we find that working in this computer environment, we have not only the numerical values of music itself, but the numerical values through which the computer and ourselves understand sound morphologies, time and space. Even at a more menial level, we instruct operations to the computer largely through numbers. The parallels with my soundworlds and personal enquiry were clear. Alchemy and, for example, Baroque music⁴ also emphasised the role of Nature as a guiding principle, a master and a model whose manner and being was to be understood, was imitated, and transformed through art, the vehicle being a set of mythological symbols and signs.

The works presented were not composed out of an aesthetic need to create or express some undefinable beauty or musical concept, but out of a spiritual and philosophical need, out of a personal set of images, beliefs and cosmology. My references in this case are of a different order to those of traditional music making. This is not to say that I have not composed pieces which stem from a purely musical thought or concept, but the works presented in this thesis, though technically informed by musical experience and craft (those inevitable tools for the execution of the idea), are nevertheless guided and informed in their entirety by a set of parameters which I seek to clarify to the reader to make these works penetrable at the level of their purpose and experience.

I found a very interesting passage which though coming from the world of scientific observation, encapsulates this drive for oneness.

'Quantum theory thus reveals a basic oneness of the universe. It shows that we cannot decompose the world into independently existing smallest units. As we penetrate into matter, nature does not show us any isolated "basic building blocks" but rather appears as a complicated web of relations between the various parts and the whole. These relations always include the observer in an essential way. The human observer constitutes the final link in the chain of observational processes, and the properties of any atomic objects can only be understood in terms of the object's interaction with the observer. This means that the classical ideal of an objective description of nature is no longer valid ... In atomic physics, we can

never speak about nature without, at the same time, speaking about ourselves.' (Capra, 1985 p. 78)

And this same concept of oneness, the 'web', in a more metaphysical text:

The Kosmos also ... has sense and thought; but its sense and thought are of a kind peculiar to itself, not like the sense and thought of man, nor varying like his, but mightier and less diversified. The sense and thought of the Kosmos are occupied solely in making all things, and dissolving them again into itself. The Kosmos is an instrument of God's will.⁵

In the following parts and chapters that form this thesis, we will be looking at the unveiling of the many different layers that make this whole, their interaction and consequent expression through the medium of sound.

Notes _____

1 The notion of the initial chaos, the *Materia Prima* is at the core of many if not all creation myths.

2 There also exists a very large body of paintings and drawings which are an 'explicit' library of alchemical symbols and their resulting myths.

3 The alchemists of that period would, at times, conduct their 'Great Work' (Klossowski de Rola, 1992 p. 10) with the assistance of chanting; music was some sort of magical aid.

4 Not just Baroque music. From primitive music to the neo-mediaevalism of George Crumb, Peter Maxwell Davies and others, the role of nature and of divine events have provided artists with a model for creative work. I use Baroque music as the only musical reference (besides the works presented in this thesis) for two main reasons; one, because since the Renaissance it was a time when there was a unified and collective effort (arts, science and philosophy) at the elucidation and application (reconciling) of the spiritual thought into the world of matter, and the other in relation to its sectional treatment which is an interest I will further clarify in Chapter 2.

5 *Corpus Hermeticum*, Libellus II, tr. Scott.
Hermes Trimegistus, was rediscovered by Cosimo de' Medici in Italy in 1460. It is body of work now known as the *Corpus Hermeticum*. Hermes, closely associated with the Egyptian god Toth (Hermes is probably the

Greek translation for Toth) was said to be an Egyptian priest. Composed in the first 2 or 3 centuries AD, by Greeks and containing strong Gnostic, Jewish and Neoplatonic influences, they affirmed the principle that Nature was the divine force of change operating within the Universe.

Chapter 2

A Composer's Methodology

2.1 Introduction to a personal cosmology

Throughout this thesis I will be using parallels from two worlds, the 'classical' occidental and the 'native' American¹ with the aim of bridging the two and clarifying how my compositional impulses and soundworlds are informed.

These works are highly metaphorical, they are laden with images and symbols. In general, to understand some symbols we have to 'translate' them as to enable us to reinterpret them. Every culture uses facts as it understands them with which to build metaphors and to express its own unique values, so our perceptions of those (less defined) facts are involved and we need to make allowances in order to understand another cosmology. We cannot be literal in our own world view (cosmology). In order to understand the symbols contained in any composer's works and to penetrate their meaning, we must understand that composer's cosmology.

This need to express inner beliefs which I was eventually able to define as neo-mediaevalist in impetus arose while composing strictly acoustic music. This was mainly some sort of 'music of the spheres' which I was able to understand or rationalise through the concepts of *Musica Humana* and *Musica Mundana*. These tenuous and vague ideas and perceptions led me to attempt to expand my soundworld beyond the one already inhabited. The 'music of the spheres' contains a variety of models which have been a preoccupation since early times. They are an intrinsic part of a search, which many have embarked upon and share but which is always individual and recurrent. Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Discourse sur les artes et sciences*, published in 1749, marked an apex of thought of this kind: 'back to nature' was the call; back to the the state of the 'noble savage' as the perfect model of 'natural man'. This call is repeated in every period of our history, there is a need by man to remain part of Nature in

spite of the imbued notion of separateness which traditional organised religions have given us. There is this deeper sense and need for belonging which we see expressed at any given time in our history.

Multiplicity and multidimensionality arise constantly even at this early stage of my attempt to understand these needs. The notion of *Musica Humana* and *Musica Mundana* as an equivalent of the relationship of chaos- order, of the pure and impure, is also looked at by the early music thinkers. These multiplicities are then differentiated by the 'quadrivium' which appears as such for the first time in Boethius; the classifications of *musica mundana*, *musica humana*, and *musica instrumentalis* are then enumerated; and the differentiation between *musici*, theorists of 'pure' music, and *cantores*, performers, is a Boethian concept. At play, there is also this Boethian notion - and not only his, many others throughout history too - of the basic and very vital congruence between the music of the spheres (mundana), the music of the physical man (humana) and of music making (instrumentalis)². That congruity, or concordance, is the main aspect of the relationship or 'oneness', 'at-one-moment' that exists between the human soul and the cosmic soul³.

Because of inhabiting an academic environment where questions were asked such as to the role and function of the composer, I found myself questioning my 'belonging' within this schema. Function became a notion of truth, one of the many congruent and convergent realities that constitute the ineffable whole. The *musici*, those musical theorists of the Middle Ages, saw themselves as scientists, and by the Renaissance epoch they had evolved so as to perceive themselves as philosophers⁴, spiritualists and alchemists. Parallel to that, we find that the (American) pre-columbian 'musici/cantore' (no Boethian distinction here) had a shamanic, spiritual function and were seen as mediators (see 3.1) between the children of the earth and the gods⁵. Thus, the function of music is not one of communication but one of communion.

In writing this thesis I decided that rather than an analysis without any references to anything of a truly personal order, there should be a clarification of the motivation and meaning behind the works, to make sense in words of a catalogue of beliefs, dreams, truths and the vast, abstract area that my search for meaning has thrust me into. I have

learned that, naturally enough, I am not alone in these preoccupations and that, indeed, though the mainstream shift in emphasis particularly since the early 19th Century has been from cosmic to human, the idea of expression that goes beyond an aesthetic pleasure to one of a deeper meaning and one of function has always been there. I align myself to this principle, not out of choice or a stand of sorts, but out of an inner need for my own truth.

These preoccupations lead me to rely on imagery⁶ which in turn appears as symbols, and the narrative, more often than not when attempting to recount the 'fact', appears as myth. I find that, because of this, I am relying on a descriptive vocabulary and references from other arts, most noticeably from the visual arts. Postmodernists see representation and reality as overlapping, because the conventions of representation or language ('signification') are consciously learned, (and/or) subconsciously absorbed and then internalised so that we eventually experience them as real. We have been conditioned by an era when TV and the other mass media play such a consequential role in creating and even directing human consciousness that what we perceive as real is found to be always present in and filtered through representation. Similarly, there is a constant overlapping and superimposition of images in the works presented here (see 2.7). Hierarchies in the sound 'symbols' change, the perceived image varies, the soundscape is a perceived reality which is invoked by an aural image (or representation).

Nothing I do is truly original, for my thoughts and perceptions are constructed from an experience of a lifetime of absorbed representation and listening⁷ and, in not having such an authority or pretense to originality and uniqueness, I am released. I am free to concentrate on the way images and symbols (signifiers) shift or lose their meaning when put in different contexts after they have been appropriated. And because no set of signifiers, either in art or media, is original, all are implicated in the beliefs and myths of the cultures that produce and interpret them. And because these signifiers are shifted and displaced, a different myth appears and a different perception and understanding of it is enacted. On this immediate level of life and structure, myths offer us a myriad of life models, which have to be appropriated to the time in which one is living.

Beyond the cultural translation or adaptation, what was *then* is not so *now*.....

2.1.1 Myths, symbols and signs

I am not intending here to expound on the subject of myths, symbols and signs, for which I refer the reader to the works of Joseph Campbell⁸ and Carl G. Jung; my intention in these brief notes is simply to point out the relevant relationships and parallels to these concepts which are found in the aural images of the compositions presented. 'The myth is the public dream and the dream is the private myth ' (Campbell, 1988 p. 41).

When we read myths, we realise that they use symbols to express their truths. This is not unique; all languages use symbols. But, when in the shape of myth, these are not always easy to understand and may not be common to all of us, and may be related to their referents in very complex ways. Each of the works here presented share these properties. Each one is a myth, each contains a set of symbols, an image to be understood and penetrated. There is a cosmology in each work.

In the reading of myths we are taught that we can turn inward and then we begin to get the message of the symbols. Joseph Campbell tells us: 'Read other people's myths, not those of your religion, because you tend to interpret your own religion in terms of facts - but if you read the other ones, you begin to get the message' (Campbell, 1988 p. 6). Likewise, as we 'read' (listen to) these works we need to understand that these are other 'facts' informed by the culture that created them.

2.1.2 Function of myths

Myths are attitudes towards reality which order and shape the way we perceive facts and how we understand ourselves, our world and our relationship with it. They answer and satisfy our primary questions of value and meaning: Who am I? Why am I here? What is my function? - all of the deepest questions that have given us the enormous variety of creation myths we have.

Campbell summarises thus. Myth basically serves four functions:

- 1 A mystical function - reconciles us with the wonder of the universe, the awe before the mystery.
- 2 A cosmological dimension - showing us the shape of the universe scientifically and yet still showing the mystery by rendering us a total image of it.
- 3 A sociological function - validating and supporting a certain social order.
- 4 A pedagogical function - learning through the myth how to live a human lifetime under any circumstances [the concept of 'oneness', 'at-one-moment'/atonement].

In his 'Creative Mythology' Campbell describes this fourth function as probably the most important:

'to foster the centering and unfolding of the individual in integrity, in accord with d) himself, (the microcosm) c) his culture (the mesocosm) b) the universe (the macrocosm), and a) that awesome ultimate mystery which is both beyond and within himself and all things' [i.e. God]. (Campbell, 1968 p.6)

And on occasion, we need to create our own myths. We resort to what Jamie Jamies amusingly refers to as Plato's *modus operandi* (James, 1993 p. 53): When you cannot convey a truth with certainty, write a beautiful myth.⁹

'The eighteenth century had just made a discovery, and was not a little proud of it, that a mystery is not an explanation. No, and that a myth isn't an explanation either. On the contrary, it was noticed that no sooner is a myth forged than, in order to stand, it needs another myth to support it. The Indians hold that it is upon the back of a tortoise that the world is carried. So be it; but upon whose back is the tortoise borne? ...' (Paulhan 1991, p. 16)

2.2 Music as a functional entity

To understand these works and their intention we must try to get closer to the Platonic ideal of a functional education, freeing ourselves of the modern aestheticism most of us take for granted (a learned habit).

'Diderot's¹⁰ nineteenth century successors, chief among them John Ruskin, were equally moralistic in their approach, and it was only towards the very end of the period that the doctrine of 'art for art's sake' began to take hold, under the aegis of the French Symbolists. Symbolism was the parent of modernism, and the modernists took over important aspects of symbolist critical doctrine, in particular the emphasis on style as opposed to content.' (Lucie-Smith, 1995 p.9)

"Ars gratia artis" is then a Romantic notion of the 19th Century. Somehow, under such an aegis, this is where music lost the sense of deeper purpose, of being functional in the same sense as myths are functional.

We can find a particularly good example of function in the case of 'primitive' music, with shamans using music as a means to call down the planetary deities, having songs for healing or hunting and other specific activities. In the western context we can look at this deeper function as being derived from Orphic practices. Linked as they are in time and context with the Hermetic writings, it brings us back full circle to alchemy¹¹.

In pre-columbian cultures, the function of music and art was not to provoke an aesthetic emotion but to invoke religious fervour. And in the same way, in the occidental cultures, thinkers before the nineteenth century considered the arts were pure and enlightening, reconciling our earthly existence and eternal reality.

While the 'asking of questions' by the Greeks may have been an intellectual breakthrough, the mystery of divinity and everything related to it began to acquire a material form and the communion with it started losing its power. In our modern era, many scientists and particularly the 'new physicists' accept that the cosmos has no underlying logic in the standard sense, but is rather a confluence of quantum events, or accidents, which have their own systems. Further, these are apparently without logic to our manner of viewing events and do not arise from any fundamental orderliness that *we* can understand¹². 'Oneness', which is difficult to perceive or feel, is seen as the beginning and end, providing a spiritual answer to a spiritual question.

Though it started earlier, during the romantic era thought transferred from cosmic issues (Plato's *Timaeus*¹³, *Hermetica*, Pico della Mirandola etc.) which once were a constant source of intellectual inquiry, to man. In the post-Romantic era, the traditional pattern shifted towards what the Greeks thought about the state, or about love and beauty, rather than about The Cosmos, The Universal Soul, etc.. This represents the beginnings of a kind of rationalism and the beginning of the loss of a 'higher' purpose in the arts.

In the *Republic*, Plato decides that music must fit speech, not the other way round. He argues that speech (the poet's words) is to be imitated in metre and rhythm, not unlike John Coltrane (though for different reasons) trying to emulate in his phrasing the rhythmic speech of his ancestral Yoruba language¹⁴. In relating it to language, however tenuous the relationship, we can safely assume that the impetus is in the communication. I must add that in the following compositions I am aware that there is a 'natural' relationship between the patterns and rhythms of my native Spanish¹⁵, and the patterns found in the melodic surface lines and in the 'delivery' of events.

In these older cultures such as the pre-columbian, there is a function, the purpose of communion with the deity, the bridging of the worldly with the other-worldly. Thus, the myths and rites, of which they were and are the masters (Shamans), served not only the apparent, exterior function of influencing nature, causing game to appear, ills to heal etc., but also the inward, factual work of touching and awakening the deep strata and recesses of human imagination; so that the practical need, purpose and reason of inhabiting a specific environment would be fulfilled, all being illuminated by participating in the 'master plan' and setting of the great event of creation and life.

2.3 Reference

Just as many artists, in particular abstract artists who were drawn to music as a model, both in their theorising and in the titling of their work - for example Klee admiring late eighteenth-century polyphony (Mozart) or

Kandinsky's contact with Schoenberg - I find myself deriving very strong and clear models from the visual arts.

In these works, the imagery is the result of what I have seen, the sounds and lines are ones which I have heard. The emotions invoked are ones I have felt. In these works I say to the listener, "Look! I have seen this, I went there, I heard that ..."

Because of the reliance on images and my interest in the visual, I find it clearer to relate what I do to concepts clearly expressed in painting and sculpture. I do not aim to reproduce those concepts in the music but use them as platforms or tools for the realisation of the sound image. The sense of luminosity and spatial relationships evoked by the interaction of pure prismatic sound areas has become one of the many layered subject matters in the compositions. Likewise there is an enormous debt to an aspect of cubism in the way of organizing or breaking down the surface of soundworlds, and the superimposition of images¹⁶.

In relation to the works included here, I would, without hesitation, mention as models: Matisse because of collage, dealing with simplified shapes; Picasso because of the boldness of gesture, the working on an object, a series, until it has been exhausted and Dalí because of his exploration of dreams, the unconscious, transformation and using the craft (the technique of old masters) completely at the service of the idea.

In Orphism¹⁷, there is a parallel with an area of my interest in soundworlds. In trying to define Orphism, Apollinaire beheld the beginnings of something which for him was real; an art which would dismiss manifest subject-matter and rely exclusively on form and colour to communicate meaning and emotion, not unlike Orpheus had done through the *pure* forms of music.

In dealing with the movement and physical space of sound, I realised that there was also this other interest that, though I could single it out, nevertheless remained part of the whole. But in trying to identify it for my own purposes, I came up with the parallel of kinetic art, art that involves movement¹⁸. But not all that moves is 'kinetic' in the precise sense in which the term is used when we speak of kinetic art. This is not a

concern with representing movement; I am not interested in movement for its own sake, but when the sound, the event, requires such movement, generating a concern with movement itself as an integral part of the work. [This functions also as a tool of expression, as gestural device].

2.4 Working in series

The works presented here, are contained within two series. Three works within 'RAZA', another three within 'URBIS'. These series (and others) run concurrently, as the compositions come along they place themselves. Eventually each cycle will complete itself. The decision to work in series was not conscious but arose due to exploring different areas, delving into different interests which, though sharing the same material principles and notions, belonged to different soundworlds. Not only did I need to keep these completely separate as they did not belong together, but the works themselves took on a particular direction that made them part of one or another soundworld, hence the need to explore and stretch a vocabulary of a particular soundworld which contains specific ideas and imagery.

'When I hear people speak of the evolution of an artist, it seems to me that they are considering him standing between two mirrors that face each other and reproduce his image an infinite number of times, and that they contemplate the successive images of one mirror as his past, and the images of the other mirror as his future, while his real image is taken as his present. They do not consider that they are all the same images in different planes.' (Picasso 1993, p.15)

2.5 Compositional methods and construction

Composing (for me) is, broadly speaking, made up of two interacting but completely separate elements. In the first place, there is the 'architecture' or sonic platform by which I mean an abstract composition conceived in terms of surfaces of colours (the soundworld) and their shapes, these originally suggested to me by sound relationship experiments¹⁹ and by the collage derived from them. This architecture is the *means*. The end, on the other hand, is the *representational* aspect of

the piece or its *subject*; this is sometimes partly suggested by the architecture itself, but on other occasions could be imposed on it. However, the subject is vital because as the abstract shapes (sounds and gestures) become objects they become particularized - characters in their own right - and hence more powerful. The subject gives the composition an added dimension.

This procedure of working from abstraction to representation could be firstly defined as 'intuitively deductive' and subsequently as 'purposefully synthetic'. The difference between a synthetic as opposed to an analytic approach could be exemplified by the idea that the subject modifies the abstract, more speculative structure. At this level all of the relationships and materials in a work define their own form.

In spite of wishes and desires of certainty, my compositional method remains empirical, though paradoxically it always conforms to the original 'master plan' or image/idea. Perhaps in setting the 'architecture' I am also setting reference points or signposts along which the composition progresses. Nevertheless, there is a Platonic belief in the perfectability of form, not in a generalised, all-encompassing sense but in its single, unique objective: it only pertains to a single, particular, unique work (idea) and cannot be imposed on another work. A creative idea, the musical 'dream' demands its own soundworld, structure and motifs. It is a mistake to impose on it preconceived ideas about how a piece 'should' be.

2.5.1 Imagery

I have always had a practical²⁰ relationship with the visual and sought a relationship between sound and image. I cannot myself conceive of a sound which does not invoke a colour, a movement, a sensation, an image and vice-versa. Image or sound-related thoughts are of a different order to literary thought. When the story/image is in one's mind, then one can see its relevance to something happening in one's own life. It gives a perspective on what is happening to one.

In these works, the image is not 'just' an idea. It is a cluster, a centre of gravity, a vortex through which and into which ideas and symbols are

constantly rushing²¹. The image has a dynamic and, in the works presented here, at times brutal energy (aided by the apparent fragmentation) and this seeming acceleration (a vortex) of forms into depth (a symbol, an abstraction). In spite of what their surface suggests at first glance, these works do not refer to a traditional iconography of representational work. As elemental forms these are designed to break the conditioned responses to an aural environment and to create new realities no less significant than the realities of nature itself that the work claims to represent at the surface level. Hence the images conveyed are a source of interest and, in some cases, the subject-characters can only be read with some initial difficulty. Indeed some of the subject matter (character material) could not be reconstructed without the help of their sketches²².

2.5.2 The creative loop

Despite all this conscious effort and application of craft, the composer still gets the feeling that some kind of "magic" action is taking place as he manipulates the sound. It seems that it is not him who determines the shapes, but that rather the sound acquires a life and meaning of its own²³, directing the flow and direction of the work. The compositional process may seem to be improvised and without systematic construction and *format* though that *process* is happening as one selects and then works on materials such as sound sources and thematic material. And yet underneath it, there is always the image or symbol, the structure and architecture made alive by this myriad of sound components.

My *modus operandi* seems to be as follows: an image, an idea forms, 'dream-time' is conjured up, I listen to the image, and start creating sounds and selecting from my sound library whatever sound relates even very vaguely to this image. I then create a rough program²⁴ for the sounds in order to observe their behaviour and assess how they can be 'played'. Through further listening and search, the idea becomes clearer and material starts appearing partly suggested by the sound sources, partly suggested by the image/idea itself.

There follows a period of ruthless culling of sound and material, and the preparation of what I call 'runs' which are short improvisations

There follows a period of ruthless culling of sound and material, and the preparation of what I call 'runs' which are short improvisations or 'etudes' in which the quality and interactive capabilities of the sound are assessed, as well as work on refining the programs in which these sounds are contained. By now, the idea is settled in a very general but paradoxically enough, exact sense. The main 'signposts' (the general structure and architecture of the work) are in place. Its 'feel' is clear, and experience has taught me not to force the sound, but to let it demand its own delivery, general curve or gesture. One seems to take a step back and just limit oneself to do what the idea, the image, the sound demands.

2.6 Main components of the works

In all works the following main structural elements are always in evidence and I will attempt to clarify them in further sections:

- 1) The image story which contains the shape and narrative curve of the work. This we largely see through sections and scenes.
- 2) The dynamic balance within and amongst these scenes which we perceive through fragmentation and collage.
- 3) The multidimensionality or multiplicities that reflect on the traditional 'nature', chaos - order relationship and sense of cosmos (the individual work's cosmology). This is expressed through juxtaposition and re-ordering of hierarchical values.

2.6.1 Sections and scenes

There are various reasons, beyond the inherent demands of a purely musical discourse, as to why all of these works are highly sectional. In attempting to aurally communicate a description, an event, a thought, or a factual multidimensional account, a 'setting up' tool was required. In a similar way, as pictorial artists of the Middle Ages told the life story of a saint in a series of static scenes or the Egyptians giving us detailed accounts in their frescoes, I find it essential to 'frame' the ideas or events happening in my works. Referring back to these pictorial artists, each of these scenes depicted an important moment or event in that saint's life, and together

they told their story in an overall frame, whether they were in separate compartments (triptychs, panels, coloured glass windows, etc.) or in one continuous landscape.

There is also a purely abstract 'sonic' reason: the idea of planes and surfaces of sound, this notion being an important ingredient in the sectionalisation of the works and developing gestural continuity²⁵.

M. C. Escher²⁶ offered as a definition of a plane and/or its division:

'A plane, which one must imagine as extending without boundaries in all directions, can be filled or divided into infinity, according to a limited number of systems, with similar geometric figures that are contiguous on all sides without leaving "empty spaces".' (Escher, 1986 p.93)

This concept of a plane or surface (of sound) and its boundaries without empty spaces applies to the sectionalisation, as the regular (or irregular) thematic or symbolic division within all the works. It also relates to the 'transitional' sections or gestures (see 2.6.3) in the works as a device for "bending/transforming" *space*.

2.6.2 Fragmentations and collage

The aural world, as such, cannot be perceived all at once. Our perception of it relies on a succession of sounds (images), because what a single fixation or 'slice' provides us with is but 'a momentary aural field'²⁷. This succession of images takes place in time, but paradoxically our awareness of this succession appears to have been lost. We are not fully aware of the temporal nature of the series of images and we do not find any trace of this series of images in the final experience. The notion of 'fixing' a moment (a sound-image) and then withdrawing it from its world and time-continuum for utilising maybe somewhere else and even in a different function to the one already ascribed to it, brought me to the path of the collage and fragmentation which in their turn opened up an enormous variety of tools.

In the works in this thesis, figures (characters) and objects are often simplified and disjointed²⁸, but the resultant dislocation of form is not so

much an attempt to analyse or dismember their structure as a desire to imbue them with a sense of greater power. It is very much about the 'dynamic sensation itself'²⁹, a shift in perspective intended to propel the events forward, into a 'vortex' or that gravitational centre of the image.

Another valuable parallel is that of Baroque music in which we find the use of sharp successive contrasts to increase tension and heighten the drama of a piece. Often these contrasts are quite violent and occur within a very short musical space, and we find that in the works presented here, there is also that layer of dramatic information or narrative in the violent and abrupt transitions and transformation of gestures through the processes of collage and fragmentation.

The intellectual and aesthetic implications of these collages are potentially disturbing; there is, for example, an element of shock in identifying an obvious (non-transformed) sound source. But this often results in paradoxes, turning one 'substance' into another (alchemy) and extracting from it different meanings and forms, through their being placed in other contexts which in turn evoke to the listener different meanings or soundworlds.

Picasso once said;

'The purpose of the *papier collé* was to give an idea that different textures can enter into a composition to become the reality in the painting that competes with the reality in nature. We tried to get rid of 'trompe l'oeil' to find a 'trompe-l'esprit'. ... This displaced object has entered a universe for which it was not made and where it retains, in a measure, its strangeness. And this strangeness was what we wanted to make people think about because we were quite aware that our world was becoming very strange and not exactly reassuring.' (Guillot and Lake, 1964 p. 77)

In the same manner as the pursuit of fragmenting elements and forms can lead to abstraction, the notions of collage and the ready-made open up a different manner of representing the subject - its character and meaning - in a variety of ways. These include maybe even a cubist approach, but would also help to reintroduce the notion of colour into the composition while still freeing it from the conventions or traditions of representing *Nature*. The ready-made, itself a self-contained and direct

object which is fuelled by its own dynamic, in a way creates a way to negotiate the paradoxes between abstraction, representation and movement. The work then ceases to imitate the real world, but acts within it with the same degree of authority as any other object does.

Besides being a tool for the fragmentation of forms and the emphasising of the object or subject, collage opens for us an avenue into the experimentation and experience of colour. The notion of colour as articulating a complete form provides the composer with a platform from which to experiment with a soundscape devoid of demands from the object or subject. The result can be kaleidoscopic and 'light-imbibed' (light-dark associations as chaos/order relationships) and though traditionally this has been a tool for naturalism (and thus has created a 'conditioned' response to such surfaces) it nevertheless has opened up the approach to abstraction. The notion of colour and its myriad of contrast interactions which develop over time and offer synchronous perception, suggests that colour is a tool for creating not only form but movement in what is in effect an abstract soundscape³⁰.

Compounding the sectional, fragmentary and collage processes, we can say that the vertical divisions (sectional barlines), the 'frames', are a positive resolution to the limitations of the fragmented and 'hermetic' cubist space. These borders echo the frame of each tableau and therefore establish a relationship in which the factual, material limit of the soundscape - its actual edge - acquires its character as a compositional function rather than being solely a condition of composition. These then turn into gestures in their own right, which reiterate the explicit by admitting to a tradition, a history of categorical and quasi-specific relationships, a 'geometry' of symbolic significance; one which serves to emphasise the metaphysical, non-allegorical content in compositions with a representational subject matter. When composing with a narrative / representational content these conventions of association are vital as signifiers of an ultimately non-referential function.

One of the results of the fragmentation and collage seems to be that of freeing the soundscape (and aural space) by decentralising the forms and establishing relationships between all the elements of the soundworld. Nowadays we have reached a stage where the demarcations between

abstraction and representation have been mostly dissolved and can coexist paradoxically within one work.

2.6.3 Transitional gestures

There is another structural 'device' which adds or clarifies all of the above: the transitional gesture which occurs at the end or beginning of a section or 'frame'³¹. Besides those concepts of edge and space which I mentioned above, it has a narrative, dramatic function. A good parallel comes from Greek theatre, specifically the chorus which functions as an intermediary between the action and the spectator, as a commentator, translator and buffer. The declamatory style in theatre (later known as recitative in music) was derived from the interpretation of Greek drama, giving a means of turning the passionate expression of speech into music. In this case it is transformed into music, into a sound gesture but which retains that function of mediator, of master of ceremonies, in this case for the individual sections (or tableaux), producing a change of perspective in the works.

2.6.4 Movement; 'kinetic gestures'

Throughout the works we find the notion of movement mostly in the notion of the 'dynamic sensation' or through changes in colour. However, there exists a 'standard' movement; the physical trajectory of sound-objects. Kinetic sonic gestures open up a wider range of choices for the expressivity of the soundscape. They could either remain static, while relying on the action of timbre and the evolution of its sonics to produce the perception or illusion of movement, or they could physically move in a variety of ways and be mobile within the parameters of space allocated to them. The superimposition of very active gestures (particularly when similar in colour) even produces at times the sensation of randomness in this mobility or at least a sense of unpredictability. At all times the movement contributes directly to the notion of the 'sensation'³².

2.6.5 The dynamic sensation

The notion of the vortex (see 2.5.1 and 2.6.2) revealed the concern with fluidity (independent of movement as kinetics) as sensation, as a momentum and continuum of existence, past and present at once, and the analogous notion of concomitant states of being (an inner-nature viewpoint and yet another mirror of the chaos/order relationships) opens up to the exploration of 'the moment', an eternal and always a present (*now*) sensation of flow which gives rise to the pursuit of the dynamic sensation as a notion. As colour components also form part of a syntax for the works presented in this thesis, and though colour by itself could potentially result in a somewhat static composition, the dynamic sensation in such cases creates a balance through the rhythm stamped by the dynamic placement of elements in relation to each other³³.

2.7 Hierarchies, reordering and juxtaposition (an outcome)

A seemingly inevitable outcome of working with notions of fragmentation, collage etc. is that it leads to a constant re-ordering and reappraisal of elements, not only in one's mind but in the mechanics of the composition itself.

All this juxtaposition and 'bending' brings us into the realm of abstract speculation that borders on mysticism, a mixture of personal belief and inherited subconscious material from one's background. All of these relationships, so abundant, complex and at times even dense, are not deliberately ambiguous or obscure. However; form, structure and material do not simply *merge* into each other to create a soundscape, it is a matter of their *interaction*.

The crossing or overlapping of one form by another and transparency has been used in traditional representation to suggest that one object or form is in front of another. In overlapping one form with another one, the illusion is created (in sound, at least) that the overlapping form is semi-transparent or part of the other, because the colour and even shape of one is modified by that of the other. This juxtaposing of form acts somewhat as a filter or catalyst for transformation, but the forms thus obtained do not necessarily conform to

any rules. We are perhaps made to feel that these imaginary soundworlds work according to sonic or musical laws that are different from those we somehow expect or assume should happen.

The result of all this is a constant reordering of hierarchies and functions throughout the works. The multidimensionality, multiplicity, multifunction is present all the time in a kaleidoscopic effect. This is not arbitrary and is happening even when, on the surface, we can identify very clearly the subject-character and its aural environment and thus automatically assign to it a specific role³⁴.

The value of these techniques of fragmenting and reordering is that they allow the composer great freedom in conveying the image/idea as different viewpoints and aspects of a musical idea (or event) which can be superimposed or placed side by side in a more free, collage-like manner and subsequently fused into a single, 'simultaneous' image.

It is the crossing of the boundaries between abstract and concrete representation, between characters and symbols which are 'mute' (they turn into 'background - environment') and characters, symbols which 'speak' (solo - gesture) via our hierarchical reordering which stimulates different meanings. At a very basic level, horizontality, verticality and gravity are concepts so inherent to our life on this world that we are barely conscious of them any more. In natural phenomena we encounter these elements constantly. In music we have related them in a myriad of forms. However, space is a newer preoccupation, largely brought into the fore by the continuous revaluation of it through the world of modern physics. Thus, how do we deal or represent space in music? In this particular case through and within a multifaceted soundscape.

Myths also use many other metaphors to describe events (eg: the creation), Sometimes they conceive the primary duality of being and not-being in terms of an order-chaos opposition³⁵. In the works presented here, this dualistic characteristic is also expressed in the reordering of the hierarchies of the sound or the events.

2.8 Conclusion to Methodology

I can not find a better way to close this chapter than to quote Picasso:

'I suppose you might call mine [method] an entirely romantic one. I start with the head and wind up with an egg. Or even if I start with an egg and end up with a head, I'm always on the way between the two and I'm never happy with either one or the other. What interests me is to set up what you might call the *rappports de grand écart* - the most unexpected relationship possible between the things I want to speak about, because there is a certain difficulty in establishing the relationships in just that way, and in that difficulty there is an interest, and in that interest there is a certain tension and for me that tension is a lot more important than the stable equilibrium of harmony, which doesn't interest me at all. Reality must be torn apart in every sense of the word. What people forget is that everything is unique. Nature never produces the same thing twice.' (Guillot and Lake, 1964 p. 59)

As I intend to show in the next few chapters, though the notions I espouse in these preceding points are mechanically elucidating, the final and absolute result is always empirical and wholly subservient to the demands of the image of each composition. And once again quoting Picasso:

'He [the artist] must stay as close as possible to his own inner world if he wants to transcend the limitations his reason is always trying to impose on him.' (Guillot and Lake, 1964 p. 117)

Notes _____

1 I will refer as to 'American' in the true sense, including cultures from north, central and south American continents.

2 This latter type explored in the URBIS series of works.

3 Also known as the 'world soul' from Plato's *Timaeus*.

4 The reason that I earlier mentioned Hermes Trismegistus, is the enormous bearing the *Corpus Hermeticum* had for the Renaissance humanists, for whom, amongst many other issues, it revalidated and

authorised the 'great theme/work' of cosmic harmony at a time when it was very dangerous to espouse 'pagan' notions. Pico della Mirandola and others referred to it and in modern times it has been mostly attached to Gnostic thought.

5 This applies to all the native cultures, from north to south.

6 Albeit in a completely 'natural' way, in the sense of it not being a conscious decision, but simply a fact of my 'nature', I always tend to visualise my compositions.

7 Anything I have ever composed, I have heard before.

8 Joseph Campbell, American scholar, was the world's foremost authority on mythology. We will be referring mostly to his writings when in reference to myth.

9 The Myth of Er, the final passage of Plato's *Republic*, is an evocative account of the heavens. Plato resorts to the form of myth when wishing to convey a philosophical or moral truth for which he finds no adequate 'factual' prose (Er was a soldier killed in battle who was allowed by the Gods to return from the afterlife to tell humanity what awaits us on the other side). Accounts of voyages through the underworld can be found in most mythologies of the world; modern day Shamans embark in such voyages and the Orphic mysteries have at their root such a relationship.

10 Dennis Diderot, 18th Century, first major art critic.

11 This loop refers back to pure forms and their subsequent transformations, a belief that humans could participate in the creative process of the universe (through sound). The Hermeticist found a ready made symbolism in the terminology of the Metallurgist and the Chemist, through which they could project the mental process, but in such manner that the Church would be unable to prove a charge of heresy, and constantly referred to the power of 'vibrations' (sound) and used music as a tool of creative participation. In the Orphic tradition, the poet Orpheus paves his way through the underworld by the power of his lyre.

12 There is now a large body of writings on this subject, such as 'The Tao of Physics' (Capra, 1983), 'Chance and Chaos' (Ruelle, 1991), 'The cosmic code' (Pagels, 1982) etc.

13 'The cosmogonic vision of the *Timaeus* is the mystical Pythagorean equivalence of music, the cosmos, and mathematics brought out of the esoteric closet and thrown open for inspection by all thinking persons.' (James 1993 p. 44)

14 In Plato's case, he was arguing for specific needs of education (part III, education: The first stage) e.g.: 398 d, and emphasis-meaning (part X, Theory of Art), 601-601 b. In Coltrane's case it was a search for his roots and their expression within his field. In the biography of John Coltrane (Cole, 1976 p.70) Billy Cole establishes a series of relationships between Yoruba rhythms, patterns of speech and Coltrane's solos and self-confessed interests.

15 There is another 'Spanish': the different songs and rhythms of other Spanish speaking countries, such as Mexico, Cuba and Venezuela. In the years living here, amongst the Latin Americans that I know, we have developed a sort of 'Lingua Franca' whereby we borrow sayings, inflexions and patterns from these other regions. We have unconsciously created a common Spanish language.

16 For example in **Gato's Raid**, for marimba and tape.

17 Orphism can succinctly be described as a tendency towards abstract or - as it was called at the time - 'pure' painting which manifested itself in Paris between late 1911 and early 1914.

18 The word comes from the Greek, *kinesis*, movement, hence *kinetikos*, mobile.

19 While I 'collect' sounds, I usually improvise with them in order to evaluate their compatibility and potential relationships. I refer to these as 'runs', which usually result in parallel études or material to be included in the composition itself.

20 I have painted since an early age, have designed for theatre and video, etc.

21 We will see this examined later, particularly in **Gato's Raid**.

22 Phrases have been 'violently' plucked out from other material e.g.; half a rhythmic *Tango* motif or *Mambo*, this being the case in **Gato's Raid**.

23 An animistic way of seeing sound as living objects.

24 Here by program I refer to the programming capabilities of the Akai S1100 sampler.

25 Eventually this concept expands into considering single sonic shapes and their 'local' interaction.

26 Dutch 'Grand Master' of modern graphic design and engraving.

27 I make this distinction (aural world - aural field) by borrowing the concept of visual world and visual field from the experimental psychologist J. Gibson (Gibson, 1950). The visual world is the world we normally experience in our daily life, whereas the visual field is what we experience by introspecting our perceptions and concentrate solely on the nature of the information registered by our eye.

28 Because these works are hard to 'read' (structurally, etc.) at first hearing, maybe for the time being we can refer to them as belonging to a "hermetic" phase of representation, (Though for example, it is considerably more open in **De Luna a Luna...**)

29 A 'standard' musical analysis in this case, could never explain how it was done and why it produces the effect it does. The reason seems to be one of a purely perceptive, sensorial impetus.

30 This is looked at in more depth in the execution of **Urbis #4** (see 11.3.2).

31 Very often these edges also overlap or crossfade, in short, we can hear a 'preparation' and a resolution. We can then say that the barline defining, 'framing' the section is symbolic as, aurally, we can perceive this gesture before and after the barline. Often this transition is a self-contained 'mini work' or gesture in itself and we will be able to observe this as we elucidate the composition in the following chapters.

32 The notion and effect of sensation is dealt with in more detail in **Urbis #4** (Chapter 11).

33 This is explored at length in **Urbis #4** (Chapter 11).

34 For example, the three creative forces of alchemy (salt, mercury and sulphur, or body, soul and spirit - different names in Cabbala, in Platonic philosophy, Christian doctrine of the Trinity - provide a framework for music, in which each part of the triplicity is highlighted in turn. In these cases elements in play often happen at the same time, to reaffirm the concept of 'oneness', of a cosmic whole. Bringing us back to *Musica Humana*, *Musica Mundana*, *Musica Instrumentalis*.

35 We find these order-chaos concepts in the myths of many cultures such as the Greek, Roman, Aztec, Hopi etc.

Section II

Chapter 3

The 'Raza' series

3.1 Introduction: The "natural" acoustic, local myth, cultural roots.

This series started with a work composed for my MA, entitled **Anaconda**, for flute and tape (1990). This was my first electroacoustic work and literally exploded an opening into a stream of consciousness I was not aware was there.

I was shaken by the realisation that the soundworld I had found was somehow removed from my aesthetic interests at the time, it was beyond my capabilities of controlling, and that what had been unleashed by these processes was really a rediscovery of the sounds I carried imprinted in my memory. This self-discovery I later found expressed in a very clear manner by George Crumb;

'... if we were to reintroduce the ancient idea of music being a reflection of nature. Although technical discussions are interesting to composers, I suspect that the truly magical and spiritual powers of music arise from deeper levels of our psyche. I am certain that every composer, from his formative years as a child, has acquired a "natural acoustic" which remains in his ear for life. The fact that I was born and grew up in an Appalachian river valley meant that my ear was attuned to a peculiar echoing acoustic; I feel that this acoustic was "structured into" my hearing, so to speak, and thus became the basic acoustic of my music...' (Crumb, 1980 p.19)

'**Raza**' literally means race. It is commonly used amongst Latin-Americans as a description of all beings in that continent, it encompasses all ethnic and religious strands; it just means us, the human beings, the ones who are here.

I used this as a generic title for this series of works, as the aural memory that informed these pieces was not specifically from my native

Argentina, but rather a confluence of sounds of the Americas, from its ethnic regional music to the present with all the influences that periods and other cultures have added to it.

I find in electroacoustic music the ideal tool of expression for my multilayered needs. Reflecting upon a Pythagorean-Platonic cosmos where music exists quite independently - but not separate - from man, *musica instrumentalis* is harmoniously perfect because it mirrors the perfection of the cosmos in the shape of ideal forms; some sounds and intervals are congruent to human ears because the pulses and fluctuations in them are in concordance with our own internal human rhythms which we effect in our sound, the *musica humana*. There is a world of ideal forms in the studio environment of sounds that are harmonious to us in the way they resonate within our psyche. The absence of preconceptions towards these sounds (the sounds are always new, the audience has never heard them before, even when we associate them with something familiar, opposed, let us say, to a flute of which all of us have a clear idea), make our reaction to that sound all the more intimate, more personal, more human. We make it ours and assign to it our interpretation which stems from our individual cosmology.

In *The Music of the Spheres*, J. James quotes St. Augustine's *De Ordine*, which he proposes thus:

'... he delineates the essential duality of music:
And since what the intellect perceives ... is always of the present and is deemed immortal, while sound, since it is an impression upon the sense, flows by into the past and is imprinted upon the memory, Reason has permitted the poets to pretend, in a reasonable fable, that the Muses were the daughters of Jove and Memory. Hence this discipline, which addresses itself to the intellect and to the senses alike, has acquired the name of Music. ...' (James, 1995 p.72)

Dualities, oppositions, mirror images are in everything and exist simultaneously. In my personal soundworld these elements, often conflicting - as in the Natural world - are constantly there, and in these works most evidently so. There is my 'natural' acoustic, the expression of my myths (dreams) and of the collective myths of that world. There is a perception of 'within' and 'without', that universal chaos - order duality always at play and in sight.

There is also a very important element to consider, particularly in relation to the *character*, which in these works is mainly but not uniquely represented by the live performer.

At whatever level, music, words and dance have always shaped an inseparable 'whole', an essential ritual of the traditions and systems of belief in the American world. The performer as 'star' and the worship of virtuosity celebrated by western music traditions is not practised by America's indigenous peoples. Theirs is that laconic vehemence similar perhaps to that found in early medieval European religious music.

In the case of these works, the performers are not meant to be soloists and to display their dexterity, though the material requires such dexterity. They are shamans, intermediaries and as such they are functional.

In those traditions, the artist (as an individual) plays a mediumistic role in enacting both the mythology and rites of their world. The precolumbian cultures expressed a deep respect for artistic creation which could not be conceived without a symbolic, mystic or philosophical content. For these cultures the artist was, and is, a kind of shaman, a mediator who establishes a dialogue with his own spirit and the World Soul, the one who knows the ancient myths and customs, the one who travels to the underworld and brings back tidings, the one who makes the beauty and reality of spirit realise itself among humans, and the one who 'speaks the truth'.

In understanding the world-view of these societies, the presence of the divine is an essential and factual element. Arts and music are the main vehicle for enacting their cosmology. Worship and art are then fused into a single concept where religious meaning or substance overrides aesthetic expression. Within this context, music is a vehicle of communion, an ineffable element of contact with the divine.

Here we have the performers constantly bridging the gap, changing functions. They are our intermediaries but they are also actors and spectators. They are the idea and yet also part of the soundscape they inhabit. The tape element shares that same multiplicity. In this

multiplicity, the circumstance of the environment in which the individual (character) lives do not *determine* the character. They provide only the opportunities and obstacles to its fulfilment.

Any cultural manifestation is a record of the way of thinking and acting of that group within which the artist lives. The fact that their creative output or expression may or may not adhere to an specific (or recognisable) type of formalism does not nullify it as a way of thinking and perceiving. In the same way as art is a generator of concepts as much as philosophy or any other discipline, we can also say that the work itself is a generator of thinking , a part of the creative loops. Some sounds, gestures, events etc. do become generators of abstract concepts (symbols). However, this does not mean that all these sound gestures have that characteristic; some of these are not generating the symbol, but representing it.

What I am really being drawn into is the idea precisely of 'those things there are no words for'. In this case we have to refer back to the cultural location and times where it is not an aesthetical accomplishment that we endeavour to achieve, but a set of aural images and symbols which give us our cues for our own and very personal *communion* with the object. In this case the object has, like in those earlier times, a function. In this case the function would be the one of opening us up to long forgotten states of perception where the symbol, the sound, is a vehicle and a model for allowing us to recognise our physical space and our inner map. In short, our relationship with our divinity, with our higher self.

'Thus, as T.S. Elliot says, the end of all our exploring is to arrive where we started, a very appropriate metaphysical passage for a metaphysical concept.' (James, 1995 p. 240)

The creative myth (as creative work), Joseph Campbell tells us, springs from the unpredictable, unprecedented *experience - in - illumination* of an object by a subject (the communion), and the labour then (of the shaman), to achieve communication of the effect (Campbell, 1976 p.40).

3.2 Main characteristics

These are compositions in which the background and figure are regularly changing functions. An apparently continuous competition, an exchange of function exists between the two, and it isn't possible to continue seeing one element or the other solely as figure or subject. Elements functioning originally as background eventually highlight themselves as figures. There is no aural static balance in the compositions. There are ever-shifting relationships and perceptive distortions and manipulations; within these there exists a dynamic balance, occasionally sharp and short in which, however, the figure (character) - background relationship exists for each phase. Only one static balance is feasible, and that is when one perceives the complete work as a *pattern*, an image and thus frees oneself from the notions of 'instrument - solo - character' and 'tape - background - orchestration'.

There is however, precisely due to the perception of the existence of a soloist, an apparent contradiction to the statement of exchange of functions, as I point out the marked character role of the soloist in **Lucero** and **Gato's Raid**. This is inevitable as there is this multiplicity of roles in the 'soloist', being character, spectator and narrator at any given time (in the same way as the 'background' itself carries a series of roles), and not always changing roles in relation to the 'background' in a straight exchange of function.

M.C. Escher in his essay on the regular division of the plane, translated a passage he discovered in Leonardo's writings, which I found to be a very good reference to this character and soundworld multiplicity.

'When you have to represent an image, observe some walls that are besmeared with stains or composed of stones of varying substances. You can discover in them resemblances to a variety of ... landscape(s).' (Escher, 1989 p. 100)¹

Thus, we can observe in the besmeared walls of the images in these works, a series of ideas such as: in all of these works there is conspicuous soundscape and linear distortion (melodic and time structure) used for expressive means. This effectively works as a release of primitive

impulses which are translated into swirling lines and gestures, resonant and evocative soundscapes.

The place and space occupied by figure-characters or sound objects and gestures, the empty spaces² around them and their proportions, all play a part. As in composition being an art of ordering [Stravinsky], in a piece every part will then be audible and will play the role conferred on it. A work must be wholly 'harmonious'; superfluous or 'beautifying' detail can detract from the essential element which in this case is meaning. And in apparent contradiction, at times the elemental idea of 'oneness', of a universal whole, is expressed in the simultaneous confluence and apparent chaos of events and layers. These nevertheless can be perceived independently³.

These are works which have their own internal structure, independent of naturalistic structural devices as opposed to what their surface may suggest. But, contradictorily enough, as they are very much representational, for example, the 'character' in *Gato's Raid*, they do also carry a model of nature.

The notion of the 'dynamic sensation' (see 2.6.5) is carried out here through sounds being torn straight out from their sources into swirling and at times violent lines of superimposition and collage that characterise these works. The sounds are a physical part of the compositions, so that these soundscapes are not merely records of their source and location but vitally, vehicles of expression for the aural memories of this composer.

The subject/character through its hierarchical and functional exchanges, having served as the vehicle for some expressive gestures and ideas, can be dismissed. The expressive power of the soundscape, its shape, dimension and colour suffices. Expressionism has shown that an abstract composition is as effective as subject compositions (referring to traditional representation through a sequence of musical events e.g. melody, harmony). The Baroque, at the service of institutions, church or crown, intended to reaffirm faiths and loyalties. We have our characters in these works doing just that, and yet there is another element juxtaposed which is in this apparently 'expressionist'⁴ realisation, where the *individual* also expresses and asserts beliefs.

My concern with the workings of consciousness and perception leads me to express it in terms of a dynamic force when referring to the 'pattern' of the work (its idea and images) which is expansive and all-embracing. In the electroacoustic works I conceive of this multifaceted world as one composed of dynamic forces (expressed also through exchangeable functions), as opposed to the stable objects in an apparently static space which characterised some of my acoustic works, particularly in the 'Maya' series⁵. The idea of a dynamic force also led me to exploring objects circling in space and sequential, ground-based movement as part of both character and tool of expression.

The presence of a particular object, motif or gesture generates a number of 'clues' which we can sense in terms of gravity (a homing tonality, a gravitational field, a character trait), and our location in relation to the object or to the character. In the **Raza** series of works as a whole, there is no obvious (only an implied) structural relationship to the external world, so that as audience/listener, one cannot appraise one's distance from what is represented, cannot know its scale or form. One's awareness of the structure does not make one lose a sense of the 'otherness' of the works. The fragmentation and dynamic curve of the works does not allow us to anticipate events or have a memory of past ones. There is only the present (see 2.6.5), most noticeably in **Gato's Raid**. The listener is compelled into an awareness of his/her's own consciousness, perceptions and cultural references.

These works aim to encourage a sense of perceived mysteriousness or magic (**Lucero and De Luna a Luna ...**) because of the illusion of transparency⁶ and light-imbibed ('impressionistic') projection in the surface. It is conventional and even instinctive to respond to such surfaces in such manner; this is an aspect of the ritual, - as referring to the aim of mythologies - the journey of transparency to transcendence. It is essential to remember that this illusory soundworld has its origin - not in specific, but in general terms - (the key to the symbol) in this mythological canon, an organisation of symbols, ineffable in import, gathered towards a focus. In the ever-fluid, metamorphic contexts of these compositions, it is a 'world' (soundworld) of its own, one which also refers to an 'other' world.

We are dealing not with music, but with inner worlds expressed though music.

1 This essay forms part of a series he prepared in 1964 which due to illness he had never presented. It is included amongst a number of lectures and articles he had previously prepared during the 1940's and 1950's and was compiled for the purposes of the publication of 'Escher on Escher, Exploring the Infinite'. (Harry N. Abrams, Inc. New York, 1989.)

2 The notion of defining the 'empty spaces' (see 2.6.1) is at this stage (the **Raza** series) still somewhat abstract, and it is not wholly effected purposefully until **Urbis #4**.

3 In chaos, all elements are out of control and behave unpredictably (see theories of modern physics), but in popular vocabulary, chaos means mess. In a mess, one cannot truly identify single elements, a mess then is a blur, involving unidentifiable objects. Chaos interests me, and in order to realise it, paradoxically, we have to be in absolute control of all the elements which are then unleashed.

4 Though some may argue that there is an 'impressionistic' soundscape in these works paradoxically and simultaneously we can make a very strong case for the 'expressionist' label in view of the character function and its meaning, indeed of Expressionism it has been said that if it means anything at all, it means the use of art to transmit personal experience.

5 The 'Maya' series is composed (to date) of acoustic works which delve into the idea of *Musica humana* and *Musica mundana* within a more 'universal' soundworld.

6 I am often going to use this word - transparency - which has mostly a two-fold meaning; one in the sense of a metaphysical clarity, the other in the physical sense of a transparent texture or material.

Chapter 4

'LUCERO' for Charango and Tape (1992)

4.1 The occasion

This work arose as a commission from Sonic Arts Network on the occasion of the "Electrifying Exotica" Festival at the Purcell Room, South Bank Centre, London in May 1992. It was premiered by Agustín Fernandez, fellow composer and charango player, who has since given to the work many performances and broadcasts¹.

4.2 Preliminary considerations

In responding to the challenge, the first questions which arose were: a) what do I know about the charango? and b) where would this fit within my area of interests. This latter question with regards to the series of works (Raza) started with the composition **Anaconda** for flute and tape, the fruit of a series in which I had decided to allow the cosmology, the soundworld of my memories and roots to run unimpeded.

The first question was easily solved: I knew next to nothing about the charango. I had heard the instrument on many occasions, but being young and interested in 'modern' music, I looked down on the folkloric music of the provinces and in particular this music from the Northwest of Argentina which belonged to an Indian/native culture that seemed at the time so alien and so remote from mine. Nevertheless, over the years I started to appreciate such music and culture and with time and from afar had developed an admiration for it and a profound respect for the reasons and motivations behind it, and the deep cultural traditions and system of beliefs that these represented.

The second question also had an easy answer. Not only did it fit within the series of works related to my aural and visual memories (or 'natural acoustic'), but it was also a perfect vehicle for the next step in the

series which was to balance, or rather discover, a language in which the original stimuli and soundworld of most of this very ancient music was reconciled with the gesture and symbol of today as expressed through this very powerful tool of music technology.

These preliminary speculations reaffirmed by instinct, by inclination, those areas of thought regarding myths and symbols which I found myself, albeit in a mostly unconscious manner, deeply involved with. The geographical location of the charango tradition - north-west Argentina, north-east Chile, south-west Perú and the whole of Bolivia - is 'Coya' country, the direct descendants of the Inca civilisation² and resilient keepers of the ancient beliefs of that culture.

4.3 The charango

What I know about the instrument³ is through having observed players (I prefer to call them so rather than 'performers') on a number of occasions, together with lengthy and detailed conversations about its possibilities. In addition Agustín Fernandez furnished me with an invaluable sheet with fingering choices and other details for chords. Finally, I obtained a reference book from Argentina which provided me with further information on the instrument⁴.

The charango is situated somewhere between a mandolin, due to its double strings, shape of the belly of the box⁵ and size, and to the guitar because of its shape of eight, tuning pegs and bridge. It has ten strings (five pairs in unison of which the third pair is an octave) and there are a few regional varieties of it. The instrument is mounted on the back of an armadillo. It is a very deceptive instrument and extremely difficult to play. Its small size makes common fingerings and positions, such as the ones for guitar, difficult, and even more so due to the very particular system of tuning of its double strings. Nevertheless, the charango relates to the guitar through some right-hand techniques such as strumming, harmonics, plucking and damping.



Fig. 4.1 Lucero; *charango* tuning.

My own references vis-a-vis fingerings, strummed and plucked rhythms were originally from the guitar, as besides being an instrument found virtually in every home in Argentina, it had also been my main instrument during my years practising as a musician.

Usually the performer is standing, holding the instrument close to his chest, held under his arm. It is also most commonly played by strumming it, as it tends to play a rhythmic role and certainly the predominant feature of all charango music is its strummed tremolo and its tremolando melodies.



Fig. 4.2 Lucero; *three typical strummed rhythmic patterns*.

Another important characteristic is that it has poor resonance (though good volume), particularly when playing single notes, and the sound is sharp and wooden. The resonance can be maximised by leaving as many open notes as possible. The tremolando, which is its most notable performance feature, is also the result of this lack of resonance as by doing it one prolongs the sound. And the tremolando is the most effective tool of the charango as notes can be often triplicated due to the close re-entrant pitches. The 'punteo' or leading melody does work in spite of the lack of sustain, usually due to the fast tempi of most of the pieces.

4.4 Aesthetic speculations (towards an image and musical language)

In trying to start forming an idea, a picture of a soundworld which contained a charango, I searched in my memory and also listened to some music from the *altiplano* ⁶.

One of my clearest musical memories was of a village procession in the mountains, because of a religious ceremony, which seemed to consist in everybody playing some sort of a melody as loudly as they could, utterly unrecognisable due to the lack of common tuning between the players⁷. Everybody seemed to function within their own personal pitch and rhythmic parameters. This was not about making music for pleasure; it was about the ritual they were embarking upon, the function of the event. A wild, savage and beautiful cacophony⁸ which, as drawn as I was to it, did not completely reconcile with the charango and its sonic possibilities.

The other memory was strictly visual. I was travelling in the north of Argentina on my way to Bolivia and the rest of the Americas by land. I found myself in the middle of nowhere, high in altitude with very thin air, in a harsh, uninhabitable landscape not unlike the Colorado Canyon but more compressed and jagged, of a strikingly beautiful and awesome quality, violent reds and purples, dotted here and there with minuscule patches of greenish, stark and thirsty bushes. Gazing at this breathtaking panorama out of the window of this very old steam train⁹, I happened to see a man in the middle of nowhere. He was perched, somewhat in the lotus position, at the edge of this very tall, red peak, oblivious to the train, gazing into nowhere and maybe everywhere, below him and around him nothing but precipices, with human habitation many, many miles away. I kept asking myself what he was doing there, where he came from, how he got there; indeed whether he was really there at all¹⁰.

The impetus of the work was then reduced out of its own accord to two main points: firstly that mysterious being (or not-being) I had seen on the mountain and secondly a sound that was not like music, but which felt like a being or an organic entity¹¹. It has a function completely beyond and devoid of the concepts or values of an aesthetic ideal. Both of them contained within a cacophony of sorts, which would be represented by the sound environment as a whole.

4.4.1 Lucero's cosmology

The indigenous people in both precolumbian and contemporary culture, do not perform to display their talent. Nor do they attempt to

enthrall or appeal to the spectator. They play and sing to honour their ancestral deities. Their music and arts are the vehicle of expression for their faith, uncertainties and hopes expressed through a communion with divinity in both pagan and Christian - influenced contexts.

Ritual is acknowledged as the other half of the mythic statement: as myths are referring only to an 'absolute' reality, the activity of the ritual grounds it, earths it in the comparable. Within this context, I started to perceive the charango character also as 'the Shaman' leading the ritual.

'A symbol is talking to you, whether the head knows it or not, the heart knows it. And the heart also knows when you are being misinformed as to the symbol's meaning. There comes a dissonance.' (Boa, 1994 p.56)

Lucero then, is a prayer and also the object of the prayer, the guiding light.

4.5 The sound material

What struck me during my Masters degree was the realisation that I could allow myself to deal with 'abstractions', metaphors, allegories, myths, through a primeval sound-world which, paradoxically, can be best realised through state-of-the-art technology - the working of sound away from an aesthetic and a technical perception towards a soundworld which could speak directly in images, the lack of traditional recognisable materials and functions forcing the listener to perceive and associate his/her own experiences to the soundworld represented.

In searching for the sounds that would be used in this work, I tried to keep in mind the characteristics of both the sound of the charango and the sounds common to those locations of the *Altiplano*. The 'sound' of the thin air was something I particularly needed to find or re-create. The resulting sounds¹² had to offer me the possibility of 'magic' of an understated quality and a mythical, 'fantastic' aural picture of the *Altiplano* but without paraphrasing it.

Regarding the charango sound relationships, I searched for sounds that gave me the following qualities:

- 1) Wooden sounds, either because of their original source or resemblance to it. This group also included claves, cabasa and woodblock.
- 2) Sounds derived from plucked strings. These included guitar harmonics, mandolin tremolandos and single plucks.
- 3) Sounds with a muted metallic quality (these could be used to symbolise the air and also as an extension to those sounds that implied strings).

And regarding the location/environment sound relationships, I searched for:

- 1) Sounds of pan flutes, (which I could also transform into '*birds*' or '*calls*').
- 2) Percussive sounds of a 'leathery' quality.
- 3) Sounds of such an abstraction (unidentifiable sources) that could be built into gestures.

4.5.1 The 'musical' live material

The first consideration was the one of rhythm. In order to create a sense of immutable pace within which events unfold in an unpredictable manner, rather than one of rhythmic structures that lead to inevitable developments, a periodicity was created resulting in a stable pulse the notion of 'earthing'. The traditional 3/4 and 3/8 meter¹³ of the music of the *Altiplano* was avoided not only to escape the trap of a 'poor' musical copy of traditional charango music, but by deciding to have certain areas in which, by leaving free the rhythm to be improvised against the tape gestures, the performer's 'habit' of a rhythmic division of three within the pulse would potentially result in tensions and resolutions of these rhythms and further enhance the 'otherworldliness' of the composition.

The same was applied to the chordal/harmonic material. The chords were chosen solely on the grounds of their resonance¹⁴. The harmonic fields were supplied by the soundscape, and being of such an abstract nature, any harmonic analysis resulting in a 'definite' tonality is

merely a coincidence. There is the hint of the flows and ebbs in the accidental mirroring of the traditional harmonic scheme¹⁵ for the music of the Altiplano produced by the flow of tension and the release in the abstract tonality of the soundscape.

I felt that the same ideas had to be applied to the melodic material, keeping in mind the multifaceted role of the character and the concept of its mediumistic role, with an outwardly laconic, humble, non-virtuosic and yet expressive in a behavioural manner. Somehow remaining within the traditional patterns of American Indian music, the character line is on the whole a 'mono' melody (single, not harmonised) with a main rhythmic line underneath it.

Thus, some melodic ideas or motifs are short and of a self-contained nature and are literally a graphic representation of 'peaks and valleys', the nature of the Altiplano, made of simple contractions and expansions of intervals, mirroring the graphic curve of the idea.

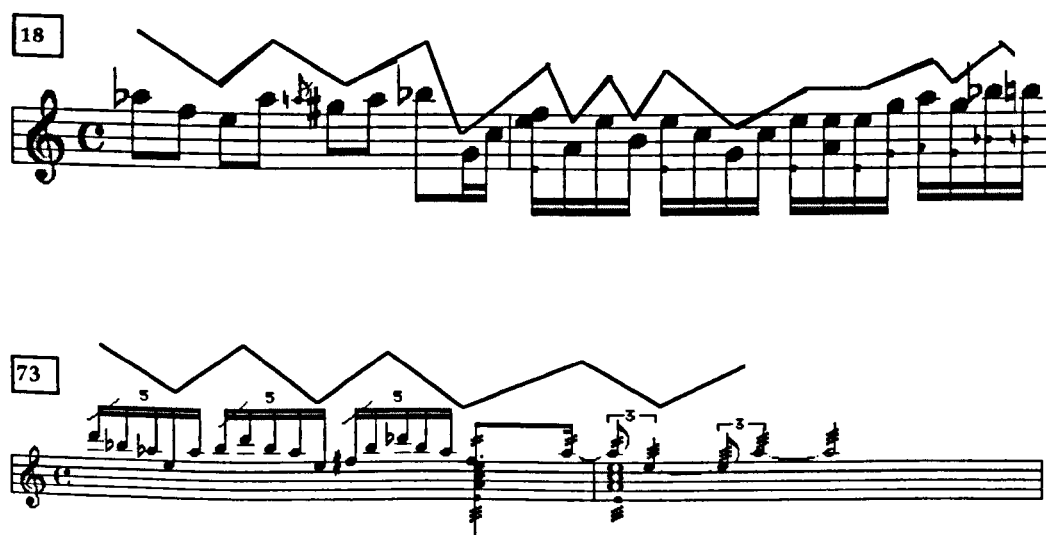


Fig. 4.3 Lucero; two examples of 'peaks and valleys', bars 18-19 and 73-74.

Throughout the work other melodic elements imitate, answer and at times initiate the apparent melodies or 'calls' of the sound on tape. The rhythmic element in these 'melodies' reflects the idea of 'pace' and the disintegration and acceleration of forms into it. The result of this is an apparent rhythmic 'clumsiness' in the melodic lines, which is used as a

vehicle of expression for creating that 'other world' disembodied and even detached feeling of the main character.

4.6 The relationship of the charango as character and the soundworld

In this work, the relationship of the charango and the soundworld on tape is a very straightforward one: the charango is the main character, not in the sense of being a soloist, but in the sense of *being*. An organism, that though consistent in its behaviour, nevertheless interacts with its environment. It is always a central character, albeit multifaceted (shaman, spectator, traveller etc.), looking on a panorama of events from within and without, from different viewpoints, always as a prayer, always immutable, the different environments being perceived only in relation to his distance from and type of interaction with the world he inhabits at that particular time. In a way, this distance is revealed to us in the clues which the titles of the sections provide us with, i.e. 'from above', 'from beyond', 'from within' etc. (see 4.7.1 to 4.7.6).

The soundworld, on the other hand, has a more complex relationship to the main character; at its surface level, it is the environment which the main character inhabits, but it is also the 'chorus', the bridge between us and the events taking place. It 'speaks' to us. Particularly in all the transitional events, which tell us, the audience, about a new section or event (and even location) coming up and about the one which we are leaving behind, it also tells us where the main character is now and, by implication or extension, where we are. The body of the sections themselves not only provide the main character with a transmutable environment but to us, the spectators, it provides us with a landscape, an ever evolving location which also speaks to us and tells us of the state of being of the character.

Character and landscape are related by a series of sonic relationships whose main qualities can be described as wooden, short decay, percussive, derivations from the tremolo, strings, and 'raspy' (strum related) rhythms.

4.7 General structure of the work and sections

In this composition there was no pre-determined plan for the general structure of the work. Indeed, the first section which I composed was the one which is now the last (after a certain amount of manipulation), and this one arose out of one of my improvisational 'runs' while evaluating the interaction of the different sounds and gestures created specifically for the work.

The naming of the sections is a parallel to the 'contents of consciousness', that location where indigenous people find their musical references. These '*contents*' are expressed in concrete facts - in this case musical - *known and named* by their interpreters¹⁶. This is the reason why we find 'songs for the rain', 'songs for healing', 'songs for animals' etc. Usually there is a mythical account through which those 'facts' (events) acquire fulfilment of meaning.

Yet another application to the sectional treatment was the intention of also ascribing to them the characteristic of each of them being another perspective or point of view on the same *being*.

'Myth is a pure ideographic system, where the forms are still motivated by the concept which they represent while not yet by a long way, covering the sum of its possibilities for representation.'
(Barthes, 1973 p138)

In each section (or panel as in triptychs), both the image and the behaviour of the character are always framed by a transitional gesture, there is always a sense of familiarity due to the similarities both in the rhythm and intervallic motives (design) of the melodic lines¹⁷. The periodicity (as a tool of pace) bridges all the sections providing us with a continuity which reasserts the idea of endurance and inmutability.

4.7.1 *Pa' Agustín* (For Agustín) {bars 1-64}

Structurally, this first section is the closest we get to a sort of key map to the whole work, to the bracketing of our character in relation to

the different environments. All throughout the work we find to lesser or greater degrees, mirror images of this opening structure. For the purposes of examination I am here breaking it down into five structural images.

A1; bars 1-7 = sonic introduction. The performer symbolically strikes a match and immediately the mountainscape lights up.

A2; bars 8 -25 = the character is introduced by the rhythm on tape, and by the first melodic element which is characterised by its regular rhythm and stark, sharp sound. The rhythmic periodicity both on tape and charango sets the pace of being and character, self-contained and laconic, that marks the immutability of our character through the different environments, these being always the inner and outward landscapes.

B1; bars 22 - 37 = the environment: initiated by a sudden gesture, here we are introduced to the general physical location of our character, with simple allegorical ideas of the space around him, bird song, the gliding of these in the skies, and clouds.

B2; bars 38 - 49 = a change of scenery, the sense of motion and travel towards another environment. Here we find the first instance of the periodic pulse and rhythm interacting with a rhythmic improvisation by the performer.

B3; bars 50 - 64 = a gesture of transition, nesting in the middle (bar 56) a reaffirmation or a reminder of our character, the melodic and rhythmic elements of it being a simple variation (though condensed) of our original introduction to the character¹⁸.

4.7.2 *Aquí* (here) {bars 65-111}

Lacónico, hermetic even, here in the mountains (Andes) the call of the Cóndor. This 'here' representing an inner landscape, the circling gestures, an allegory of the circling and gliding of the Cóndor and as symbol of the 'outward' landscape. Also 'here' as I call to attention to the now. Within its body, there is almost a subsection at bar 84 where a dance starts, or threatens to ... always ritualistic, not 'happy' but factual¹⁹.

In bar 102 we find a transitional gesture, an assertive, imperious disassembling of the previous location into a new one.

4.7.3 *Allí*(there) {bars 112-122}

This very short section acts as a reminder to adjust or be aware of the outward landscape, the distance, a sudden telescopic view which still has its root in the projection of landscape within. The shaman reminds us of the ritual and ourselves in it. *Allí* is a change of viewpoint from the precedent part and a sort of musical bridge to the following section.

4.7.4 *A lo Alto* (in the heights/at the heights) {bars 123-157}

A macroscopic view, through an increased pace the character here reasserts itself in its shamanic role, leading, though paradoxically this also brings about a highlighting of the environment. Both are propelled to the fore and their sonic edges are sharper. Their apparent roles are in clear evidence and so is their interaction. Despite their relevant contour, the two elements create a gentler world of resonances in their interaction.

Surprisingly, this is a moment, albeit a brief one, where we can illustrate in an almost allegorical manner an expansion to a previous point: the idea of the surface and planes of sound and the spaces in between them (see 2.6.1). Applied in this case to the character roles²⁰ of both the charango and the tape element which, being interactive, and sonically clearly defined, has the 'space' between them highlighted by being occupied by sound itself. A truly 'Escheric' conundrum, or a perfect cycle of an infinite point of departure and of ending.

4.7.5 *Alba* (dawn) {bars 158-202}

Descriptive of the being (in my memory) and the rising sun in the mountains, it is a reminder of the prayer, the object of the prayer and in this case our role within it. The earlier expositions of pace and

immutability within a transforming and evolving environment are once again reaffirmed.

Here I choose to bring your attention to the rhythmic element of the melody, to the periodicity which has been used as a tool of pace (symbolising the immutability of the character). On the whole, in the beginning we had simple subdivisions of quaver and semiquaver to the beat. Later on, not unlike traditional charango music, we had divisions of three to the beat (bar 83) and very clear units of five from the 'A lo Alto' section (bar 123) onwards. The core of this section (bars 169 to 183), contains the melodic element in units of five. Now, I close this paragraph without any further comment, beyond drawing your attention to the number five, which I reveal to be a symbol, the significance of it not being directly related to the stimuli of this composition, but which will be fully revealed and explained in the last work of this series; *De Luna a Luna ...*



Fig. 4.4 Lucero; *Figures of five*, bars 170-171.

At the transition point at bar 185, we find a transitional passage very similar to the one at the end of the first section. In this passage, around midway, we return to the opening four bars (bar 191). Beyond its transitional role, it functions as a recollection of the whole 'state of being' of the work and fades or opens up into a completely different image.

4.7.6 *Lucerita* (little light, in its female form) {bars 203 to end}

The originating section. Here the charango has a choice of staying within the score and/or improvising. This section is a representation of the quiet happiness and resilience of the spirit of the people of the Altiplano. It is also a physical representation, the popular song or dance and gentle lightness²¹.

4.8 Conclusion ('A travelogue')

Composing *Lucero* was a leap of faith regarding my 'aural instincts' towards local myth and environment. One of the most rewarding aspects²² was the apparent fragmentation of the work due to the apparently sudden and abrupt changes in the soundscape. The perception of fragmentation, in spite of the similarity of material, gesture and sound, the sensation of events moving beyond recollection, keeping us very firmly on where we are now, was very reassuring. This meant that I could move beyond musical discourse and development, to a world where the immediacy of the moment, the power of the event are all controlling.

The sectional work as a notion was very rewarding in the sense of it opening a window to the idea that sections need not be developments of a musical nature²³ but become other view-points of the same idea, yet maintaining the appearance of flow and curve that pertain to musical discourse. These were the first inklings of working in the realm of multiplicities and superimpositions of perspective which were then 'worked on' in a much more conscious manner in the following work in this series.

Notes _____

1 This 14' work was awarded an Honorary Mention at the Prix Ars Electronica 1993.

2 The Inca empire included most of what is now Perú, Bolivia, Ecuador, the northern half of Chile and north-west Argentina. Its main language, Quechua, is still spoken by around 10 million people, about half the population of the Andean highlands, making it the largest indigenous language surviving in the Americas.

3 I am giving here a very brief description without trying to get into an in-depth study of the instrument, which has already been made by a number of people to whom instruments and anthropological matters are their chosen profession. I can refer the reader to the specific study of the charango in the *Departamento de Chuquisaca* in Bolivia, conducted by Héctor Luis Goyena, published by the *Secretaría de Cultura* of Argentina (see bibliography, *Temas de etnomusicología* Vol. II.).

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- 4 The aforementioned *Temas de etnomusicología*, Vols.I & II.
- 5 The resonance box is made of the back of an Armadillo.
- 6 Andean highlands.
- 7 Though from completely different cultures, it reminds me of those Southern Italy village processions with their uniformed bands playing their tunes, a 'Fellinesque' experience.
- 8 An interesting paradox of much of this 'folklore' - and not only this particular one, but throughout the Americas - is that though 'happy', at the same time they strike a melancholic note, maybe part of the laconic, reticent manner of the indigenous people.
- 9 Due to the thin air at such altitude, 'normal' modern trains stall, so only the very old, narrow track steam trains manage the climb.
- 10 This image haunted me for many years and I still remember it as vividly as if I am seeing it right now. This was in 1970.
- 11 Eventually I realised that this was a manifestation of an animistic relationship to sound.
- 12 A total of 59 samples with 76 sampler programs were used. These batches of sounds and / or programs were organised in 'family' groups, i.e. percussive, air (pan flute gestures and breaths), metallic, rhythmic gestures, plucked string derivatives etc. Some 'transitional' sounds were created by merging sounds of similar properties but different timbre, i.e. a percussive sound created from striking the inside of a piano and an attacked guitar harmonic; both have a wooden resonating box, both are stringed. FM sounds were also included, but in a small proportion and mainly used as resonance extensions to the main sampled sounds.
- 13 These are not the only meters; occasionally we can find a 2/4 meter such as in Huayno.
- 14 Not unlike the guitar, the more open strings left, the more resonant the chord.
- 15 There is a relatively fixed harmonic sequence, I - II - V - II - I - IV - V - I (*Temas de etnomusicología* Vol. II p. 23).
- 16 Jorge Novati in his paper *El lenguaje sonoro común al hombre y a las deidades* (The sonic language common to man and deity) published in *Temas de etnomusicología* Vol. 1, makes a very interesting study of the music of the Mataco Indians in particular to their different shamanic

songs making a point of using the indigenous people's own perspective as a departure point.

17 Note the similarity between the transition starting at bar 50 and the one starting at bar 185.

18 Though in the score the 'formal' transitional segment is signalled at bar 55 on the double bar and change of tempo.

19 In common with most dances related to cult.

20 We can say that the character in being a sound is also a sonic surface, so that the idea of planes or surfaces of sound, implying a 'blanket' or abstract content, could also be applied to the more defined characteristics of a role.

21 I find also a sense of farewell in its relentless motion of, probably due to the glissando gestures and the charango's tremolos, which seem to produce a sensation of loss.

22 Another thoroughly unexpected reward was learning that this work had been performed in Bolivia, where the charango is the national instrument, and it had been received so well that some other players wanted the piece. Considering that I still regard myself as a complete neophyte with regards to the charango and that **Lucero** was for most of the audience the first electroacoustic work they had heard, it meant to me a wonderful success; that beyond our aesthetics, musical concepts and sonic vocabulary, the piece worked where it had to. It evoked the images I had seen.

23 This comment is solely in relation to the ideas exposed in the sections that refer to this composer's methodology and cosmology.

Chapter 5

GATO'S RAID for Marimba and Tape (1993/94)

5.1 The occasion

This work was composed at the end of 1993 and in early 1994, and arose as a commission from the Mexican percussionist Ricardo Gallardo with funds from the Arts Council of England.

5.1.1 Preliminary considerations

When Ricardo Gallardo first asked me to write a work for him, he mentioned the word 'substantial' as in encompassing several needs and desires he had. He wanted a work which he could 'really' perform, in the sense that somehow the vocabulary and image would go beyond a traditional marimba piece; a work where he would be able to appropriate the image and its musical ideas, a work that could be 'his' and where he could express his exuberance and love of the instrument. Though to a certain extent he wanted a work that highlighted his abilities and musical likes, we felt it also needed depth and length in the sense that, though it was clear we would have a work of an unashamedly 'Latin' impetus, we wanted to avoid that same easy labelling and stereotyped perception.

In starting to think, to dream the work, notions of 'belonging' arose - an inner turmoil of imbibed musical notions as opposed to learnt ones - a confluence of sounds, rhythms and melodies of an extraordinary variety that come from the Latin-American world. Every country in the American continent is very different in traditions, culture, accent and vocabulary, yet all of them linked by their common mother tongue, Spanish; by having a common history of having been a 'Conquest', a colony; and in the musical sense, by sharing the same African musical influences modified by European and various local native cultures.

Because of my friendship with Ricardo Gallardo and through other musicians from different parts of the American continent, I became acquainted not only with their 'folkloric'¹ music and traditions but also with the history of this music, and I was able to appreciate how the sound brought to the Americas by the *conquistadores* and their African slaves spread throughout the continent creating this universal link that contained references to these influences from the very clear to the very subtle.

These thoughts and feelings led me to the decision to write a piece celebrating that which I enjoyed, that which informed me and that which I believe I shared with my friends and people.

5.2 The marimba

There is considerable argument as to where the marimba comes from; European tradition recognises it as coming from the Americas and expanding upon the xylophone. 'Africanists' tend to claim that the earliest references regarding the use of the marimba in the American continent, more specifically in mesoamerica, date back to the 17th century during the period of colonial expansion, and that there is no evidence of it having existed before the *Conquista*; they specify that the term 'marimba' is of Bantú (Congolese) origin and relates specifically to this instrument and to other similar types of tuned idiophones such as the mbira, silimba, etc.; words that are directly related to the instrument and its sound. These instruments appear in many African countries.

This latter claim is historically substantiated as, from the 16th century onwards, the Spaniards brought back slaves from Africa to the Caribbean and thereafter the church introduced the slaves to the areas that today are Southern Mexico and Guatemala (the Mayan world). As a consequence, this probably brought about the introduction and further influence of the marimba in the region. However, many others claim that it is an indigenous Guatemalan (Mayan) instrument, particularly when considering the enormous variety of wooden (tongue) resonators found in the Aztec and Mayan world².

Whatever the source, it is from this period onwards that this African musical tradition developed strength and with the inclusion of local

characteristics in music and construction, the marimba became one of the richest manifestations in 'folkloric' Mexican music. Ricardo Gallardo and many other percussionists believe it so to be.

As for myself, I was interested in the instrument mainly due to its sound and the un-selfconscious 'musical dexterity' exhibited by its practitioners. I had also seen and heard, for example, up to six marimba 'ensembles' producing wonderful wave-like melodies and harmonies and some sort of enormous 'home made' marimba of uncertain pitch played by four musicians simultaneously, not unlike a four-hands piano piece.

5.3 Aesthetic speculations: the Marimba as the 'character'

As this composition was primarily about myself and part of that 'natural acoustic' I carried with me, the marimba character was thus myself. Due to my relationship with the performer this was a 'private' composition, a work meant for friends where, very much like our reunions, where speech was unrestrained, unformalised and a great deal of lateral thought and hidden but understood references existed, I decided to follow that approach which expressed whichever character or mood I was or decided to be in at any time. The title was one of my nicknames; 'Gato' (cat) and the idea of going out on a musical 'raid' derived from the 'Malón', those unpredictable raids that the indians from the Pampas in Argentina would carry out. These elements were meant to be the guide to the work.

In **Gato's Raid** a Cubist aspect arises (see 2.3). It is a work where ideas about the subject and multiple angles of view and their superimposition are far more important than naturalistic depiction. The result being (in contrast to its surface image) a form which is both more abstract and stylised, and in a sense more symbolic. It reflects upon a journey through music (itself laden with personal symbols), the mercurial 'moods' of the marimba's character and the arbitrary changes of direction and attention (the raid).

We find that the rejection of a traditional single viewpoint of musical perspective is essential materialisation of the dimensional habitat of the character in **Gato's Raid**. As stated earlier, there is a desire or need to convey a multiplicity of elements in every one of these works. In this composition

that multiplicity is mostly conveyed through our main 'character' and although the soundworld evokes locations and events, nevertheless the *character* is the one that reflects all the conflicts arising. It is also here we find an example of the image not being an idea but a cluster, the 'vortex' (see 2.5.1), and of the idea of a dynamic energy which is led by, but also leads to, an abstraction of an image, a symbol.

And yet, beyond the ideas of vorticism and the multilayered dynamic of the character there is a sense that the macro view is maybe the one which pervades the somewhat abstract-expressionist ideology³ that is part of this work; the notion of 'action in chaos' which is the overall dynamic impetus to the narrative curve of the work. And on the action and character, we are reminded by Roland Barthes in his notes on the structural status of characters,

'In Aristotelian poetics, the notion of character is secondary, entirely subsidiary to the notion of action: there may be actions without 'characters', says Aristotle, but not characters without an action; a view taken over by classical theoreticians (Vossius). Later the character, who until then had only been a name, the agent of action, acquired a psychological consistency, became an individual, a 'person', in short a fully constituted 'being', even should he do nothing and of course even before acting'. (Barthes, 1977 p 104).

Finally, in this work we find that the *idea* about the subject is more important than a naturalistic depiction of it. In this case, through the fragmentations and superimpositions of the character's perspective, we free ourselves from an aural appearance into a work that, despite its surface 'colour' (soundscape) or environment, is nevertheless simultaneously representational and anti-naturalistic⁴. There seems to be an aural synthesis of these two in the representation of our character.

5.3.1 Gato's Raid cosmology

Through the energy and 'attitude' of our character we are made aware that there is a system of beliefs underlying the composition. The surface images constantly shift or transmute from the temporal to the ineffable. There is the representation of the concept of Nature's order-chaos relationship, that starting point for so many creation myths, the being/not-being⁵. Regardless of the culture, images in myths represent the many aspects of this conflict

through to its resolution. Joseph Campbell in conversation with Fraser Boa puts it thus:

'So it is not only the personal life that it is rendered in dreams, but on the deeper, what can be called mythic, level of dream, it's the statement of bodily powers which have to be dealt with.' (Boa, 1994 p. 15).

Our character, **Gato**, is reflected and reflects (acts) in the conflict of soundworlds and the expression of his relationship to them. A search for reaffirmation of an identity, a tug of war between different worlds which paradoxically are all the same. Gato's instinct is the one of exerting his temporal authority (illustrated by the apparently random and arbitrary switches of attention/direction) as a physical affirmation of a deeper context within, the 'oneness' (see Chapter 1).

5.4 General structure of the work

As the previous points suggest, there is an overall impetus which can best be described as one of dynamic energy. There was then, the need that the discourse of our character should reflect that dynamic created in terms of an intuitive procedure for the generation of potent images.

Thus, this composition was structurally unplanned, beyond two main references or signposts. One was that of understanding the very beginning or grounding of the piece, which reflects upon the physicality or physical nature of our character and its belonging to this earthy world. The other reference was the very end, which had to be one of reconciliation, of oneness with oneself (roots and belonging) and one's environment. The general structure of the work would then reflect a narrative curve of maybe apparent randomness. An account of an inner musical voyage, its main body would simply reflect the awareness and execution of a need to express and highlight objects of (my) interest. Structurally it also needed to allow for the 'feel' of the unpredictable (the raid) and had to be a platform that allowed the performer to seemingly 'run' with it. The mechanics of these platforms were those of producing a space, a soundscape of enough ambiguity in order to allow the character to establish itself in one direction or the other. There is in the general structure - this is replicated in each section - a linearity in the sense of

single-mindedness, purpose and an apparent randomness as its strategy. All of this is encompassed within circular forms, the circularity being the cycle of departure or 'diving' into a raid, the experience of it, the regrouping of our character in a newer environment and then a new raid.

Acknowledging that the works presented in this thesis are hard to 'read' at first hearing, we can nevertheless say that even in this apparently most hermetic⁶ work in this series, we become aware that there is a 'system of clues', keys (sound symbols, rhythms, etc.), which enable us to perceive the subject.

Using the parallel of a deck of cards, this structure is meant to unfold in relation to the listener not unlike a deck being shuffled and the resulting hand being laid face up on the table. There is a succession of images of an apparent random nature that, when placed in a certain order, reveal a panorama or central image. But there is no randomness or coincidence in this order. The apparent randomness is a reflection on the character's impetus, the raid⁷, but it functions also like a structural device in order to keep the spectator always in the present, unaware of any developing curve, as there appears to be no past to remember and there are no clues as to the future.

5.4.1 Sections

The sections are perceived as aurally clear in that their soundworlds are markedly different from each other, the transitions between them unmistakable, but unified in their narrative curve by the consistency in the character's dynamics. In this work, the only reasonable way in which to reveal its structure is by revealing the sections and subsections through their poetics and not through their mechanics. Once again we do find at a structural level that sections are used as means of definition or bracketing for different environments but also they function not unlike chapters to a narrative, the 'auto-narrative' of our character. The elucidation of the narrative concept and its tool of distortions and expansions which we find in our character is clearly laid out by Roland Barthes when he says;

"The form of narrative is essentially characterised by two powers: that of distending its signs over the length of the story and that of inserting unforeseeable expansions into these distortions. The two powers

appear to be points of freedom but the nature of narrative is precisely to include these 'deviations' within its language." (Barthes, 1977 p. 117)

Section 1. (Bars 1-69)

Though the colour of the soundscape is different ('warmer'), the same basic elements as in *Lucero* are present in this opening section: the relationship of the character with the earth, self-contained and laconic, establishing its 'oneness', its belonging in this soundscape; and the adoration of Mother Earth. Gradually, through a combination of the colour of the marimba and the environment, a certain 'African feel' is suggested and this impression further asserted by the pentatonic nature of the melodic element which starts permeating at bar 18. A few bars later, we can hear the sounds of *quenás* (pipes) and the 'calls' which were a feature in *Lucero*, but which in this environment provoke a different sensation.



Fig. 5.1 *Gato's Raid; melodic element in the marimba part bars 18 - 24.*

As this melodic element starts fading - this impression partly created by its arhythmical balance - we can feel a transition arising, a change of soundscape, a sense of impending transformation. The transition itself starts

at bar 54 an unequivocal recall of the African source of the music of the Americas. The material of this section is unified, belonging to the same world, and there is no fundamental distinction between the character and its environment. We have established its *provenance*. This transition has two apparent aural and structural functions; it establishes the *source* and thus a conclusion, but it also provides a sort of introduction or springboard into the next section.

Section 2. (Bars 69-127)

The very beginning of this section reminds us of the first, but almost immediately there is a feeling of events being propelled forward, a feeling of anticipation as the character prepares for the raid, or about to dive on a 'Malón'. We are propelled into a vortex of elements which function on the whole as suspension gestures which are the springboard for the shifts (distortions and expansions) that are going to be the main feature of our character.

The two most identifiable elements in this section are the 'suspension' which is not only created by the sudden breaks in rhythm and delivery of a particular gesture, but also by the rhythmic figure ♩ 7/8 ♩ which is only half of the most basic and important motif in Latin-American music, the *clave*, related to the famous number five, the *cinquillo*, to which I have referred in Lucero⁸. The other main element is the semblance of a *tango*, which we perceive from bar 104 up to bar 116. Though abstracted, its rhythm and melodic outline are very much in evidence, but the soundworld in which it is contained completely removes it from its original source.

This section is a symbol of the 'raid' as the soundscape we are presented with is an amalgamation of various sounds, rhythms and styles from the American continent, we can single out fractions of them very much as in a mosaic we can single out specific colours, but by extracting them in such small portions we translate them into irrelevance. It is the final composite of them what creates the image and its dynamic force. The idea of the 'vortex' is probably best illustrated in this section.

Section 3. (Bars 127-241)

The beginning of this section is really a transition under the guise of a continuation of the preceding material, this impression caused by the dynamic momentum of the marimba line; but its function is one of a disintegration of what precedes it into a new soundscape which in reality starts at bar 139 with a change of tempo and colour.

The section contains three parts: firstly a subsection (bars 131 - 179) representing what is an *inner voyage* as opposed to the outward expressive character of the preceding section. The image is one of mystery, of a black moonless night of an ambiguous nature; this a relaxation from the preceding activity, but one which also contains a sense of impending turmoil. Changing its attitude, this time the marimba is 'within' the environment, the character is not on a raid, here it is being led by the environment.

This is followed from bar 180 by a subsection which recalls childhood feelings or memories operating within a mechanical pace creating a bed for an 'austere' or economical character which nevertheless transmits a feeling of playfulness and lightness. This is the result of the 'music box' effect of the interaction of the marimba line with the image projected to it by the line on tape.

The image displays a musical score for two instruments: Marimba and Tape. It consists of three systems of staves. In each system, the Marimba part is written on the upper staff and the Tape part on the lower staff. The Marimba part features a melodic line with various note values and rests, while the Tape part provides a more complex, rhythmic accompaniment. Dynamic markings, specifically 'v' (forte), are present in the Tape part across all three systems. The notation includes standard musical symbols such as clefs, time signatures, and note heads with stems.

(Fig. 5.2 continues next page)



Fig. 5.2 Gato's Raid 'Music box' bars 183 - 194.

From here, and with an absolute minimum of transition, more like an awakening, we come to bar 218; into a memory not only of the 'malambo'⁹ (the 'southern pull') with its dominant pounding triplet figures, but of a calling back to the present, to the action at hand, implying determination (certainty in its quest) rather than aggression within the nature of 'raiding'.

Section 4. (Bars 241-358)

This section is triggered off by a transitional gesture which is not only a device for announcing a change of environment or direction, but acts mostly to remind us of the 'earthy' quality and relationship of the character with its soundscape. Part of this gesture contains a 'flange' of a salsa sample which provides us with a subliminal but audible connection to the Caribbean, our geographical departure¹⁰ point in relation to the global musical source which is the impetus behind our raid.

Once again, we can apprehend three subdivisions. Firstly, arriving at bar 263, there is an obvious flavour of the Caribbean due to the song-like phrases of our character and the movement in the soundworld. Almost immediately we detect a reference to the African source in the style of the marimba's bottom line. Before this develops (it is just stated) we have in bar 279, a reminder of section II, the 'symbol of the raid'.



Fig. 5.3 Gato's Raid *marimba*, bars 263 - 277.

Towards the end of this second subsection, we find again our tango which this time immediately opens out to the last subsection at bar 300. The summing up of our character is hidden here, and it is the main thread or clue to the whole work which is revealed in this *cubist* way at this point : 'cubist' in the sense that though we are perceiving linearly, nevertheless there exists a superimposition created by the rational, very sectionalised (and even violent), continuous breakdown of the character which provides us with a continuous and simultaneous reappraisal of the subject.



(Fig. 5.4 continues next page)



Fig. 5.4 Gato's Raid bars 307 - 322.

As we distance ourselves (stop the analysis and become *audience*) from these breakdowns, it becomes very difficult to distinguish the individual contributions of these 'musics' and we just absorb the abstract aspects (as opposed to the surface form) of the character. But in a *rational* manner, we can appreciate that there is a stability which is being provided by the tape element in the form of the rhythmic structure of a Chacha-chá, this resulting in a periodicity which our character uses as a spring-board for an apparently random set of images built from fractions of tango, malambo, salsa, in a free-form collage. Besides the technical difficulty for the performer, as the expression changes correspondingly with each phrase or idea, these fragments also create constant points of tension (stresses) that demand an eventual resolution.

The resolution comes at the point when our character (bar 337) suddenly ceases to be 'many' and is one with the music, a point where all the images coincide into a music gentler in spirit, a lighter image, a dance where in spite of the 'soundworld' and 'music' amalgamation we can recognise for example in bar 343, a rhythmic pattern that could originally have been a brass section in a Caribbean dance. This mixture of musical images aims to retain many of the original elements and impetus of this subsection; mainly the character rising from its amalgamated source.

Section 5. (Bars 358-490)

This last section is a very straightforward one. It conjures up the image of our character finally 'settling' down - the raid is over.

The mechanics of this section are vastly different from the preceding ones in that the 'clue' system is a superimposition of our original character (Gato) and the individual character of the live performer. After the establishment of our environment in the first bars of this section, the first appearance of the marimba line is partly the result of a lengthy improvisation I asked Ricardo to do for me at a Midi keyboard (connected to a computer), based on the salsa and the mambo. I then proceeded to 'cut' it up and create a collage and then, by further removing key notes that implied a clear harmony, a 'clumsy' line was produced as a means to create an underlying

tension, a certain feeling of 'far away' struggle in what is apparently a very straight forward 'clip' of popular music.



Fig. 5.5 Gato's Raid 'Rick's jam' bars 387 -392.

In this section the soundworld is 'leaner' and the referential aspect clearer; a loop created out of a few African sound sources and hints of past events created by percussive attacks that, beyond their disruptive appearance, suggest a certain periodicity or constancy. The melodic aspect that *makes* the *character* is also different in its process. It contains elements of what has occurred before, but its mechanics are based on an idea regarding marimba keyboard work. I had shown Ricardo a couple of sketches and ideas where there was an exercise in 'close' keyboard work consisting of an intricate pattern of small intervals which he asked me to develop further as he very much wanted the opportunity to play in such a confined manner (see fig. 5.6).



Fig. 5.6 Gato's Raid 'close' keyboard work (marimba) bars 479-484.

Though the mechanics of the line were produced thus, its impetus and flow remains true to the character but allow it to 'scale' down or find a conclusion to the raid, its enquiry. This was laid on the 'bed' of the African source, with rhythmic attacks of abstract gestures which suggested the tail end of the different states of search (anxieties) of the character and further implied or symbolised the suddenness and pace of change in the soundworlds we had travelled through.

5.5 The sound material

The sound material for this work needed to be of an 'extemporary' nature, having to act as an informing source to the apparently random behaviour of our character. The 'nature/localist' soundworld had to be readily identifiable and yet, within context, abstract enough so as to contrast with the more 'subversive' speech of the character.

In order to do so, besides many others, samples¹¹ from overtly African and Latin-American sources were selected. Most of the processes and treatment of sounds consisted of superimposing and blending them together to create gestures and sounds that though clearly containing a highly recognisable identity in their new detailed 'micro' sound, would evoke a general feeling rather than a specific one; for example a rhythmic gesture created by superimposing a sample from a Bantú ceremony, a sample of a conga playing a salsa motif and a timbale flam would create the illusion of a location - almost any location - within the Latin-American world.

Other chosen sounds had to be malleable and unidentifiable so as to be able to exchange functions between main or signpost gestures to environment or as sonic platforms which might provide structures for the character to spring from or to.

5.5.1 The live material

The solution as to how to represent our very particular character, who expresses these concepts of multiple musical viewpoints and of dynamic energy, was to create the appearance of a 'free-standing' melodic structure where nevertheless certain images or tiny motifs always reappeared. These extracts or fractions placed within completely different contexts and with very small variations - mostly consisting in changes of delivery - add to an interest in the evocative yet deceptive properties of the combined soundscape besides always maintaining for us a subliminal memory of the general motivation or identity of our character.

Though it will be specifically dealt with in the **Urbis** series of works, the notion of improvisation, as a spontaneous creation which speaks as a form of unconscious expression, is a symbol which attempts to express the emotions of its creator. It can be related to free-form improvisation but this does not imply a lack of method, I do not believe in direct expression without reflection; for me, a 'jam' is not a work, the subject needs maturing - through craft - and the guiding hand must be there in an attempt to convey in the realisation the freshness and spontaneity of improvisation. The result is hopefully then, the generation of potent images (see 5.4).

5.6 The relationship of the Marimba (character) and the soundworld

The marimba, ostensibly representing our central character, has, as opposed to what its surface may suggest, a very complex relationship to the electroacoustic soundworld which mirrors its very own complexity. It both determines to which new location it is moving and at the same time responds to it. Also, on occasion, it is part of the environment in its dependence upon it and at the same time (as character), it tries to determine that environment.

There exists one main and simple relationship, a sonic one; the colour of the marimba, its wooden property and origin relates directly to the sounds on tape and subsequently aims to evoke unambiguously the underlying image of the work: the *source* .

5.7 Conclusion

One of the most rewarding aspects of the earlier *Lucero* was that of the apparent fragmentation of the work due to the sudden and abrupt changes in the soundscape. The perception of these fragmentations created a strong sense of a world where the immediacy of the moment, the power of the event are all-controlling. In *Gato's Raid* the earlier desire of moving towards a vortex, aimed at applying to the character these same notions of fragmentation and collage.

At a certain level *Gato's Raid* compresses ideas and material to an almost complete abstraction as opposed to its surface pattern, for it is still possible within it to recognise the subject in its naturalistic entity. Out of this conglomerate of elements the subject emerges sporadically (though consistently) only to be submerged again in the overall spatial and multidimensional activity of the soundscape - with its own exchanges of hierarchies and functions - so that a sort of dialogue is established between the objects highlighted and the soundscape in which they are embedded.

The images are a source of interest and the character can only be read with some initial difficulty. Indeed some of the subject matter - the character's material - cannot be reconstructed without the help of its sketches (phrases have been 'violently' plucked out from other material e.g.; half a rhythmic tango motif etc.). And yet the dynamic of the character itself makes the question of where it is coming from, completely irrelevant; the attention is focused on where it is now and where it may go from here onwards.

'And, too, a sign may be *juxtative*; it may cause an interpreter to take account of something that is present now but not necessarily present earlier or later (...) an object taken as a sign is affected in its signification by its context, by its situation with respect to other objects, and more particularly now by its temporal and spatial circumstances.'
(Coker 1972 p.4)

By the dismissal of a single illusionistic dimension to the sounds, structures and character, the objects and subjects in this composition can stimulate different 'states' of aural experience. The recession and advance of form elements develops the basic *pattern* forward and backward in depth (towards and away from the spectator) with the result that the basic plane - the global soundscape - like an elastic fabric, is simultaneously pulled apart in opposite directions. In addition, the spatial effects (advancing and retreating) of colours and the kinetic gestures are played off against each other and against the linear forms so that the elements of the work seem to be floating freely without any relation to metrical time-space. The concepts arising in terms of these intricately hinged planes and facets that are applied to these multidimensional forms, are also applied to the spaces that surround them (see 2.6.1 and 2.6.2). There is a treatment of a multidimensional nature, containing a different concept of space and soundscape which is complimentary to this different treatment of form. These ideas offered to me a 'dynamic method' of composition to create a lyrical energy from the contradictory tensions which are set up between colour, shapes and character. It is only through poetics that we can solve many of the 'image/perceptive' problems of this complex piece.

I believe the work's vorticism to be a most faithful transcription of my original *source impulse*, a very clear surface flow which suggests and contains a narrative curve, a character on a search and a localist soundworld that leaves no doubt as to its origin. Beyond it and underpinning it, lies a complex web of concepts and associations that, due to the potency of the assembled image, are not readily recognisable. Nor need they be, as they are only part of the skeleton onto which the work is fleshed out. The question whether there is a need to penetrate this 'hermeticism' or just to remain with the image remains an open one. This partly explains why for this work I wrote the briefest programme note: "Gato goes out on a raid through the musics of his time".

Notes _____

1 I use the word 'folkloric' in the same sense as it is used in the American Continent; it means music from the provinces, where the evolution of the earliest traditional music of the area up to its present day form is maintained.

2 I can direct you to Robert Stevenson's 'Music in Aztec and Inca territory' (Stevenson 1968) where there is an in-depth study of all the area's instruments and copious notes and references. In his 'Music in Mexico' (Stevenson 1952 p.177) he refers to the faction that believes the marimba to be an instrument indigenous to Guatemala.

3 Not a conscious decision, but rather an analogy or explanation, a tool for clarification purposes of one of the many perspectives arising in this work.

4 As opposed to the more naturalistic vision expressed in **Lucero**. The idea of representing Nature is not applied here; 'nature' in this particular case is mostly applied to the apparent abstraction of *character perspective* (its nature) and not as the simulacrum of the larger concept of Nature.

5 Being / not being as in the creation myths and as spiritual belief as opposed for example, to the socio-political, secular view of Jean-Paul Sartre's essay on phenomenological ontology in *Being and Nothingness* (Sartre, 1995) .

6 The word 'hermetic' here has a double connotation; a) In the sense of it being closed, hermetic, in regards to its meaning, associations and the mechanics employed to convey its image as opposed to the illusionistic expressiveness of its surface. Cubist painting was also regarded as hermetic, particularly in its early years of development. b) 'Hermetic' in association to the 'mysteries' of the spiritual search of the alchemist. This 'hermetic' image opens up considerably in **De Luna a Luna ...** .

7 This apparent randomness, beyond being a reflection of the character's impetus, is also the result of expanding upon the ideas of violent and sudden fragmentation first explored in **Lucero**.

8 These will be dealt with in the next work **De Luna a Luna**

9 *Malambo* is a fiery dance from the Province of Buenos Aires, (Pampas), Argentina, written either in 6/8 or in 2/4 with triplets.

10 Always in relation to its African source which first arrived in the Americas at this location.

11 At this stage I still refer to many sounds as samples, as at the time, my only means of (re)-producing sounds was via the Akai S1100 Midi Stereo Digital Sampler.

Chapter 6

DE LUNA A LUNA ... for 2 Percussionists & Tape (1994)

6.1 The occasion

This work arose as a commission from the Sonic Arts Network on occasion of their 13th Anniversary Festival at the Purcell Room, South Bank Centre on the 18th February 1995 when it was premiered by percussionists Ricardo Gallardo and Richard Benjafield.

6.1.2 Introduction

Closing the presentation of the **Raza** series of compositions and their cosmology, in this less 'hermetic' composition we find some of the symbols of this composer's mythology seen through a more temporal perspective. It intentionally reflects the composers 'natural acoustic' in as much as gestures and symbols are clearly stated within a locality and also reflect upon an attitude to life.

It is understood that the secret of the spiritual, mythological symbol lies in that it itself must be transparent to transcendence. In this case the symbols are transparent and rather than transcending into an inner, self-contained accord they reflect this transcendence in an outward attitude.

6.1.3 Aesthetic speculations

The first thought was immediate, simple and came about as a sonic idea. The work would move from metals to rattles to drums. Inevitably this provided me with musical ideas which for a variety of personal reasons were of a exclusively Latin vocabulary. This represents the need to express within some sort of formal environment¹, the deeply held belief that those often stereotyped rhythms and dances from the Latin-American world hold for us

deep meanings associated with religious rituals, beliefs of divinity and socio-political matters.

The idea of transparency was pivotal for the realisation of this work, and in so being, the idea of revealing many of my references and thus revealing a system of clues regarding the entire *Raza* series became part of the ideal premise of the composition. Nevertheless in this work we still find ourselves in a magical world, but of a different nature, to the soundworlds we experienced in the previous works of this series.

There is also another significant difference between this and the previous two works - the absence of character. The performers are at all times part of their environment, never leading or determining it, the ideas and concepts about 'the character' applied in the previous two works do not arise here.

6.2 De Luna a Luna ... cosmology and sections

In common with other compositions presented in this thesis, this work too has very clearly defined sections and subsections². However, on this occasion the sections and the cosmology of the work arose as one so they will be described together.

The cosmological overview was already partly provided by what the sonic idea and the title suggested: from one moon to the next, a journey started in one state of being and finished in a different one, an analogy to a day's course and events but in reference to a larger (life -) cycle.

Not unlike the previous works, here we have a surface idea and a subtext, the first one ostensibly in the image of a cultural celebration, an uninhibited joyful dynamic and the subtext one of a world of cultural values, thoughts and deep feelings expressed through references to the popular³. But, in this composition it is time to relate the myth and symbol to the factual, a perceived reality.

6.2.1 Section I: (bars 1 - 147)

This section starts with the metals, the delivery of pitches and events being dictated by the resonance of the instruments, this device being the main contributor to the projected image of mysteriousness, a magical moonlit landscape. Its melodic material is derived from material which is only heard in its entirety later on in the piece, but at this point we very soon encounter a rhythmic motif which provides us with our first clue to the references, the unveiling of one of the musical symbols contained in this series of compositions;



Fig. 6.1 De Luna a Luna ... *glockenspiel* bars 19-20

This two bar rhythmic pattern is encountered several times throughout the work, usually in the foreground. This pattern is one of a personal set of symbols or signs of 'Latin-ness'; it is mainly associated with the salsa⁴ and it is known as the *clave*, literally meaning the key, cue/clue. It is an important symbol as the *clave* is the generator of motion⁵ and pace in all the popular forms of music which use it.

It is also related to the number five (see 4.7.5 & 5.4.1, section 2) Five as in *cinquillo* ⁶, which was a predecessor to the *clave*;



Fig. 6.2 De Luna a Luna ... *cinquillo* figure .

Thus, the number five as a unit or cell appears throughout these works as a 'secret' symbol of identity, a magical number from which countless forms are manifest.

The other-worldliness of the bowed harmonics produced by the tam-tam and gong offered me the perfect sonic opening for the introduction of the tape part (bar 35). The material on tape adds or expands the soundscape created by the live percussion, it is part of the already present soundscape. In bar 64 we find once more our *clave*, which in this aural context provides us with a 'clue' of impending change, a subtle change of texture which starts at bar 71 and which features the setting of a pace which acts as a platform for a melodic line in the live percussion. This melody, which appears in different places throughout the work, is a direct reference to the main symbol, the 'translucent' element in this composition, a sample of a girl's voice.

This unknown voice, a very short sample taken from a recording of 'ethnic' music⁷ captivated me as it seemed to encapsulate the idea of an 'attitude' that this work endeavoured to communicate. As soon as work was started on this sample it acquired a particular phrasing and rhythm. It immediately became a symbol and had to be heard without transformation processes, without any disguising of its source, heard in its complete 'spontaneity'. The symbol 'had to be' in order to unveil its magical luminosity. It also described for me the feeling of freedom and care-free attitude⁸.

This voice then, is the magic-song of the shaman⁹ calling life in its splendour. A different kind of vortex idea arises here; this voice is the giver and receiver and all melodic material relates to it almost paraphrasing it, although due to the different soundscapes where this melody is 'nested' we perceive in it different connotations. It also represents the moon whose luminosity and transparency irradiates a magical landscape. So, in a way, this voice is also a *clave* of sorts; all melodic material and parts of the rhythm are directly directed to it and led by it. The following example offers us an approximation or excerpts of that song.



Fig. 6.3 De Luna a Luna ... marimba at bar 81.

In bar 127 we find again our *clave*, the first half of it announcing a change. This last part or subsection offers a sonic transition to the following section, preparing a change of timbre.

6.2.2 Section II (bars 147 - 198)

This is the 'rattles' section; maracas, shekeres and bean pods. A call to life. The image here is one of the hustle and bustle of daylight life, bright sun and activity. But there is a concurrent second image or subtext related to divinity; all rattles were objects of a highly significant meaning that connected the native peoples of the American continent to fertility and religion. The same meaning can be found in contemporary indigenous cultures, where rattles enjoy magical attributes, for example as used by shamans to get rid of bad spirits and to attract good spirits. Thus, in the same way both performers have an interactive role with the tape part in the shape of improvisations¹⁰ which are meant to be responses and calls to the environment and activity on the tape part.

The written material for the performers is based on standard maraca patterns originally pertaining to the *son*¹¹. The following are three examples of these basic patterns.

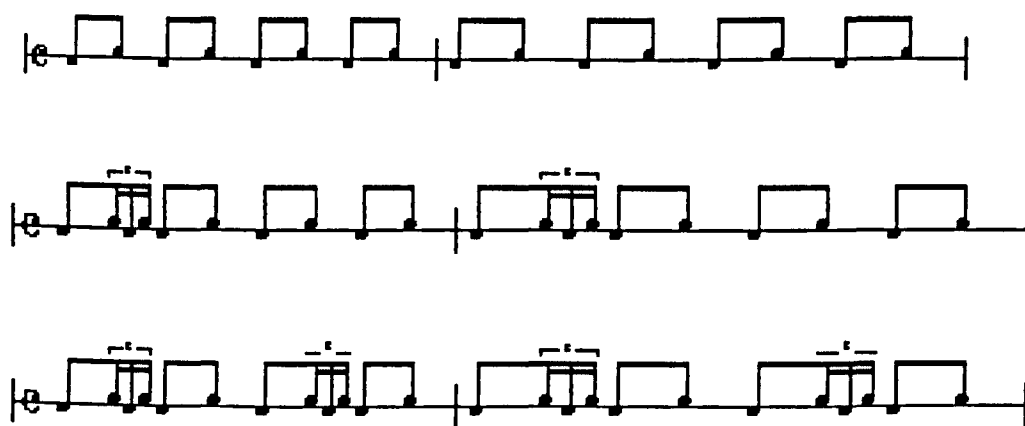


Fig. 6.4 De Luna a Luna ... three basic maraca patterns.

These rhythmic patterns are nested in a polyrhythmic fabric made of a variety of sound objects which, though providing an abstract environment, create this sense of increasing activity where we can clearly hear a 'slice' of salsa music labelled on the score as 'sabrosa' (bars 160, 174, 182), the call of the shamans in bar 177, and a rhythmic voice pattern¹² labelled 'voice' in bar 185. In bar 188 we can hear once again the girl's voice, this time mixed with a drum pattern which leads us into the *clave*, once again announcing a change.

6.2.3 Section III (bars 198 - 264)

This final section is the 'drums' section. The character of this section is the complete opposite to the beginning of the piece, we have arrived at a different 'moon', all the elements previously heard aim to explode into a kaleidoscope of rhythms and colours.

The symbolism is very straightforward; the call of the drum, the celebration of the end of the day, a call to communion, not only as the 'party' but as a reaffirmation of roots: the shamans, the 'straight' salsa, the *tumbao*, the improvisatory element, all nested on a fabric of superimposed¹³ percussion samples recalling the various rhythmic sounds and styles of African extraction in the Latin-American music world. This also functions as the symbol of a joy for playing (as in games) and of producing sound together, a communion in this activity, rather than playing in the sense of the formal activity of performance¹⁴.

In this section, which is roughly divided in two, we are delivered in immediate succession a number of crucial elements from the music of the Afro-Cuban tradition. The opening of the section (voiced in by the shamans) is a standard *bass tumbao*¹⁵ on a bass line together with a percussive element, on tape;



Fig. 6.5 De Luna a Luna ... *bass tumbao*, bar 199 onwards.

This is immediately followed by a recollection of the girl's melody, played in unison by the performers, opening up to a standard *montuno*¹⁶ (bars 210 - 221), this being an 'up-front' gesture symbolising in this case freedom of personal musical expression. The end of this dance gives rise to a series of percussive gestures on the tape which open up or lead to the second part of this section, a confluence of rhythms that create a space for the 'call of the shaman to communion'. The players are meant to improvise on this last part.

Player 1 must improvise on the *clave* and maintain also a sort of a *tumbao* by following the deeper percussive sounds on his side of the stereo field on tape. The second player has to improvise on the timbale set with the traditional breaks and flams in the style pertaining to that instrument¹⁷.

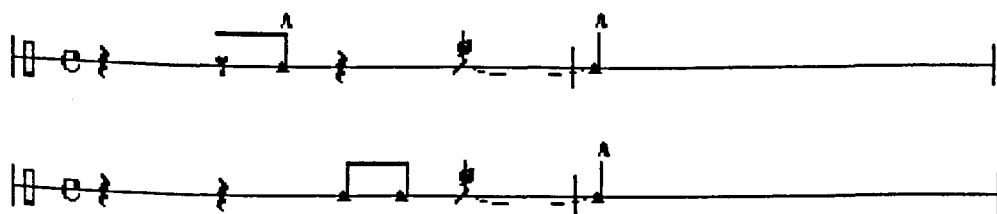


Fig. 6.6 De Luna a Luna ... examples of standard breaks ; rim-shot and *abanico*.

Towards the end, as this percussive climax takes hold, we hear once more the girl's voice, this time nested within a percussive gesture of her own,

this being another of those percussive superimpositions mentioned earlier, this time completely merged or blended within the live percussion gestures (bar 246).

6.3 A different way of structuring sound material

Unlike the previous compositions, we can see in this work that all ideas and images come from a sonic idea, metal - rattle - drum, which in turn suggest a particular cosmology and even ideology in this case. As a result, all the sound sources needed to be relevant and clear, unambiguous references to the musical panorama described and to the sonic colours. There was a need to celebrate, a conscious decision made to unveil certain musical references and images that pertained to this composer's 'natural acoustic'. The relationship of the live percussion and the soundworld on tape is a very straightforward one; they are one at all times with the exception of the girl's song which functions as a 'general' symbol, above and beyond the music this piece offers.

6.4 Conclusion

This work aims to be 'open' as opposed to the more 'hermetic' compositions in this series. It also unveils many clues to those earlier works; in a sense this composition is about itself (the image) but also very much about a facet of the composer's past¹⁸. On this occasion the idea of making music together, the joy of communal music making is very much in evidence.

I was fascinated by the results of the superimposition of all these different styles of popular music and in particular on the rhythmic parts and gestures on tape. It can be argued that this may be due to the relationship of these musics through their shared source and impetus, but I like to think that in having been able to compose an 'outward' work with an impetus based on celebration and sharing, the musical references appeared to create the work on their own. This work aims to be a 'happy' composition with none of the introspective and apparently obscure elements of the previous works in this series. There was a bit of a musico-political stance of sorts, particularly in the defiant use of a 'straight' *montuno* pattern in the last part of the work, but this accounts for no major 'interference' to the pattern or intention of the

composition. It is a clear and happy journey, from one moon to another moon.

Notes _____

1 'Formal environment' in this case being the notion of the setting of this work in an electroacoustic concert situation, with all the formalism that this implies.

2 The unnamed sections and subsections are indicated in the score by double bar lines.

3 I use here the word 'popular' in the sense of common links and tastes, as opposed to 'popular' as used versus 'high' culture.

4 Generally speaking, *salsa* is a very broad term such as 'jazz' or 'rock'. It is a genre which comprises various styles, such as *son*, *mambo*, *bomba*, *merengue* etc. and styles such as *charanga*, *sexteto*, *conjunto* and others. Salsa can be described as a general term which encompasses many rhythmic, instrumentation and song styles of Cuban, Puerto Rican, Dominican and other Caribbean origins, all structured around the rhythmic pattern known as *clave*. Nowadays, there are more 'salsas' as a result of the Latin-American music world getting closer and each part borrowing from each other and each part adding some of its national musical characteristics. An interesting book with historical and anecdotal references is *Salsa! Havana Beat: Bronx Beat* (Ospina 1995).

5 The *clave* pattern shown below is written in the contemporary version of 4/4, traditionally it used to be notated in 2/4 but it has undergone multiple transformations over the years. It is a two-bar phrase with its pulse on beats 1 and 3 and it is the most important rhythmic cell of Afro-Cuban music.



The idea of 'motion' to which I refer, is due to its subdivision into two very distinct parts, a bar with 3 notes and a bar with 2. This cell can be played both ways; '3:2' (tension to relaxation) or 2:3 (relaxation into tension), depending which bar comes first. The pulse maintains the stability of the rhythm as the rest of the ensemble not only plays polyrhythmic parts but these are usually

8 "Don't take life too seriously, we may die tomorrow" a natural Latin American attitude (well informed by everyday historical events) the idea of seriousness referred to as one of wasting time and missing life due to self-absorbing petty detail, life itself being the alpha and omega of ourselves, the guide, mentor and objective. Once again, beyond its surface lightness, lies the idea of oneness, of communion with the *all* [at-one-moment].

9 Continuing the shamanic relationships, there are three samples of authentic indigenous shamans, which are used in this work. We can hear them very clearly in bar 99, just before the girl's voice is revealed. I obtained these shaman voices from original location recordings from a series of documentaries I was commissioned to write music for. This documentary series was *Before Columbus*, directed by Brian Moser for ITV.

10 The improvisation system is relatively straightforward: one of the players has fixed patterns to play, though he is at liberty to improvise with them, particularly towards the end of the section. The second player has to improvise throughout by responding to or imitating the rhythms on his side of the tape stereo field.

11 The *son* is a style of popular dance from Cuba's peasant or working class, which combines Spanish and African elements. The *son* has given birth to several variations such as the *afro-son*, *guajira-son* and *son-montuno*. The *son* is the most important form at the root of modern popular 'salsa' music.

12 This pattern, which we can hear earlier in the piece at bar 72, is a tiny 'slice' from the girls voice, cut and looped in such way as to give us an 'African' sound of sorts.

13 The percussive elements on the tape part are the result of the mixing of percussion gestures from various sources e.g.; timbale strikes from *salsa*, a *merengue* clave, a bongo pattern and a *candombe* bass drum, all mixed into one sample. There was a great deal of experimentation in the process of manufacturing these rhythmic gestures as the different samples were not only in different tempos, but some of them had different '*claves*' a great deal of work led to the co-ordination of these dissimilar sources.

14 An anecdote describes this attitude better. In December 1995 I was invited to give a series of lectures on my work at the University of Mexico to coincide with the Mexican premiere of *Gato's Raid*. At the end of the concert a party was thrown to which many musicians came. I was fascinated to see that all of these 'serious' music performers immediately started scouring the place to find instruments or any object that could produce a sound - even a plastic toy duck was used! - these musicians proceeded to spend (literally) the whole night just improvising, singing songs and generally making as much noise as they could. I was taken aback as it was something I had forgotten, used as I am now to European concerts where after the performance the

players in a very serious and almost ritualistic manner put away their instruments and simply leave. I was reminded of the joy of making music just for its own sake. I was reminded of the celebration of playing together, of the love and joy of producing sound.

15 *Tumbao* is a repeated pattern usually of one or two bars length performed by the bass and/or congas. Its main feature is a syncopation which anticipates the first beat (carries over from the last beat of the bar before) and it often accentuates the second half of beats two and four. One can also ask for a *tumbao*, and this will be understood as a short steady syncopated pattern over which there will be a melodic shape and/or free improvisation.

16 *Montuno* is the name used to identify the repeated and syncopated piano pattern which is used as a percussive strengthening device for the rhythm section. It is also, when referred to as '*montuno* section', an introducing vamp to a song featuring call (as opposed to question) and response singing as well as instrumental solos.

17 The timbales form a set of two tuneable drums created in Cuba and derived from the European timpani. These are mounted on a tripod and played with thin dowel like sticks. Over time, the set has been enlarged by items such as cowbells, a cymbal and woodblocks. The gestures such as the '*abanico*' meaning 'fan' literally imitating the opening and closing of the colonial fan sported by the ladies, are also derived from the military drum of the Spanish colonial garrisons. The timbales are also known as *paila* when in a smaller version than the Cuban timbales. The role of the 'timbalero' involves playing several patterns on each instrument of the set, such as parts played on the shell or sides, known as *cáscara*, patterns for the cow-bells and cymbal (this last one usually being an accompaniment to the *clave*) and the most striking feature, the sound of the rim-shot, which is usually used in several contexts of which the most prominent is an accent or strike finishing a break or *abanico*.

18 I found it strangely therapeutic in the sense of it being not only a celebration but in a way a sort of 'confessional' where I was able to compose what I liked to hear (outwardly) as opposed to composing an expression of inner worlds.

Chapter 7

The 'Raza' series: Conclusion

Throughout the works in this series, each composition, in its apparent freedom of expression through the use of 'pure' sound-ideas (direct nontransformed sound sources and musical references), placed in different contexts and with their exaggeration of line and perspective, seemingly bewilders on first hearing. Soundscapes and character constantly order and re-order themselves in a kaleidoscopic manner. These works demand an absolute immersion in that world, as beyond the compositional process which can be analysed in a variety of ways depending on the school of thought of the analyst, I feel there is an urgency, a propelling force which stems from the soundworld itself and the images and ideas invoked by it.

These works are not easily definable. Due to an 'impressionistic' surface and their perceivable sonic and musical references one can resort to the label of 'Latin/exotica'. But they carry an enormous combination of facets; for example, beyond the apparent surface of the sound environment there is a kind of introduction to a musical cubism, particularly in the character superimpositions of *Gato's Raid* or the rhythmic superimpositions of *De Luna a Luna ...* .

The soundscapes at times produce an impressionistic sense as they create effects equivalent to light and space from within a tightly organised surface pattern through which they evoke different images. And yet this conception is misleading, as this only refers to the surface level, without referring to the multifunction or multidimension of this environment. The encouragement of a sense of perceived 'mysteriousness' (see 3.2) because of the illusory surface also aims to turning the commonplace into magic and the magic into the commonplace. This is the result of an inclination or fascination with abstraction and at the same time a consciousness of the detail of the 'real', outside world.

The forwardness or impressionistic surface projection of the 'Latin-ness' is not only part of this composer's 'natural acoustic'¹, and thus an unavoidable imprint in his aural memory, but, in a wider context, part of a recent phenomenon; though the music of the Latin-American world has many common roots and impulses, there are dozens of different regional styles and types of music and it is only recently that Latin-Americans are listening to each other's music with intent². Coming from a tradition of freely borrowing and adapting whatever is required for the job at hand, without the weight of tradition pre-determining style, the emergence of one style or motif superimposed onto something else is done in an unself-conscious manner, just a celebration and appreciation of what one enjoys. In this case, the surface or 'presentation' (vocabulary/style) aims not to decry the substance.

In the same way as so many composers in the past and in the present have sought to connect the aural matter directly to the inner life of man, the relationship of functionality as in the indigenous people's communication with divinity, these works reflect that endeavour. Abstraction is not essential to this - it is rather an involuntary tool - but rather an 'amalgamation' (confluence) of sound means to the emotional and spiritual urge within the composer.

"If we begin at once to break the bonds which bind us to nature, and devote ourselves purely to combination of pure colour and abstract form, we shall produce works which are mere decoration, which are suited to neckties or carpets. Beauty of Form and Colour is no sufficient aim by itself, despite the assertions of pure aesthetes or even naturalists, who are obsessed with the idea of 'beauty'." (Kandinsky, 1977 p. 47)

There is a need to communicate on the part of this composer a set of beliefs and imagery. The compositions contained in the Raza series have a functional purpose (see 2.2). As myths are an important part of this composer's world and cosmology, these are tools of expression in these works. And in myth being a type of speech and a system of communication - a message - the myths and symbols in these works are expressed as in the oral tradition through a narrative which in turn provides us with an ordered set of images.

"The second important process in the language of narrative is integration: what has been disjoined at a certain level (a sequence for example) is most often joined again at a higher level (a hierarchically important sequence, the global signified a number of scattered indices, the action of class of characters). The complexity of a narrative can be compared to that of an organization profile chart, capable of integrating backwards and forwards movements; or, more accurately, it is integration in various forms which compensates for the seemingly unmasterable complexity of units at a particular level. Integration guides the understanding of the discontinuous elements, simultaneously contiguous and heterogeneous (it is thus that they appear in the syntagm which knows only one dimension - that of succession). [...] Narrative thus appears as a succession of tightly interlocking mediate and intermediate elements [...]. [...] each unit is perceived at once in its surfacing and in its depth and it is thus that the narrative 'works'; through the concourse of these two movements the structure ramifies, proliferates, uncovers itself - and recovers itself, pulls itself together; the new never fails in its regularity". (Barthes, 1977 p. 121-122)

We find the aural parallel to the above words in the 'mechanics' of the compositions which are contained in this series. There is a feeling of satisfaction in the sense that the myriad of elements and structures which make the works and inform their imagery 'work' as envisaged, and yet there is a disembodied feeling in the part of this composer as the works also speak about the composer and also provide him with an inner mirror (the loop). They are also successful in the sense that the aesthetic³ of the works is not their impetus, that the resulting musical aesthetic is somehow the result of the 'natural acoustic' at the service of an idea, this being the communication of a set of symbols and images which are of an image-inducing and 'narratorial' nature. There is also the sense of these soundscapes being more of a 'metasoundscape' as they are not unlike a second language (sound-image) which speaks about a first, the first one being the sound-symbol or sonic-image the myth uses in order to communicate and then the soundscape itself (the myth) which speaks about the first. Yet again, we see 'the loop', the idea of oneness (see Chapter 1) at the core of it all.

As with the Platonists, the inner man and outer man together form the whole, a microcosm wherein the 'great principle' is undividedly present. Musically, then we could say that each event, or sound-object, is whole in itself, yet its behaviour depends on a central control (symbol, metaphor), which is superordinate to them. What these works aim to be is not a musical structure as such, but a myth, an intentional 'great principle' that translates or is represented by a musical structure and hierarchy. Somehow the content has been *symbolised*, and what it seeks is not an emotional response, but an immersion into the image or insight.

'As T.S. Elliot says, the end of all our exploring is to arrive where we started, a very appropriate metaphysical passage for a metaphysical concept.' (James 1993, p. 240)

Notes _____

- 1 See Chapter 3.
- 2 More and more 'fusion' compositions are arising and elements from various styles are being appropriated in a kind of 'lingua-franca' or 'Pan-American' music.
- 3 The pursuit of an aesthetic (as beauty) is not the factor which pre-determines the soundworld at hand; the idea itself (impersonal) drives/decides the 'aesthetic'. Inevitably the aural results imply an aesthetic but it has to be stressed that this aesthetic is the one which is part of the 'natural acoustic' of the composer, rather than a 'formal' one.

Section III

Chapter 8

The 'Urbis' series

8.1 Introduction: Urban contemporary myths and symbols in electroacoustic music.

This series started with a work composed in 1988 entitled **URBIS** for ensemble and tape¹. The original idea of this first work carries through the series, the impetus of it being the expression of a common or universal contemporary musical vocabulary and the symbols and imagery of its soundscape. It is very much not only the musical narration of a contemporary mythology but the actual exercising of it.

The main guiding principles are the same as for the **Raza** series and indeed the main creative processes (methodology and cosmological impetus), are the same for all the works contained in this thesis as stated in Part I. However there is a vital difference, and this lies mostly in the projection and perception of the surface pattern of the works in this series. This surface material or soundscape is instantaneously recognisable as consisting of symbols or clues from one immediate aural environment, that of western contemporary popular culture. This is the most apparent or 'entry level' cosmology that this soundscape expresses.

The title of the series gives away the observations, the ideas and symbols highlighted; **Urbis** as in 'city', the 20th Century citadel, its sounds, smells and music. The soundscape is more universal inasmuch as the sound sources themselves belong to 'daily' common objects such as car-starts, trains, people talking etc. The musical references and gestures are from western popular culture, particularly jazz. Due to its world-wide diffusion we can say these references somehow 'speak' more universally.

One of the elements at the core of this series is the idea of *shared* myths and symbols, a more universal communication which is mostly informed by an aspect of my background: on this occasion not in the sense

of inner and outward location and cultural history but in the sense of personal activity and interaction; as a musician, my musical beginnings were in the field of Latin-Jazz (or 'fusion') and 'standard' jazz as well as playing different styles of popular music as a working and session musician. Thus, there is also a sense of these being more extrovert compositions, as the notion of improvisation - shared activity and interaction - around a set of common symbols/ideas and sharing a common vocabulary is paramount to the effective realisation of these works. The symbols and the images are of a temporal nature - the location and historical time is fixed - as opposed to the atemporality of the **Raza** series. The imagery contained in these works belongs firmly in the 20th Century.

8.1.1 Collage and fragmentations

In this series the processes of fragmentation, collage and free association are in better evidence as, being the ideas and imagery of a more universal nature, the superimposition and interpolation of these are more readily identifiable. Though we have heard the results of fragmentation and collage in the **Raza** series, here these acquire a different connotation; they are associated with the phenomenon of the '3 minute culture'. The rapid succession of apparently random ideas that we can observe, for example, in modern television advertising, seems to be a reflection of this culture, as is one of 'zapping' through different TV channels which raises the idea of a sort of narrative cubism in which imagery is already assumed². It is here we arrive at another very important element pertaining to the **Urbis** series.

8.1.2 Ready - made

In the sources for these collages, the initial symbol is already in existence, the image has already been worked on³ and this is plucked out and utilised in maybe a different context, acquiring a different meaning. But the concept of symbols or ideas which have already been *worked on* provides a new, different platform, giving rise to a parallel with the *objet trouvé*; perhaps an *idée trouvée*. The ideas and notions about the ready-

made object come under exploration in this series as a tool and as an important 'material-conceptual' subtext within the impetus of the works.

I am not, however, attempting to follow in Duchamp's foot-steps, I am not suggesting that an ordinary object placed in an extraordinary location and circumstance and signed is then potentially a work of art⁴. My attempt is to use what I perceive from a ready-made as symbol⁵, in order to place it in a particular order with a particular exchangeable hierarchical value where it will acquire a new or different meaning, beyond the one already generally ascribed to it. Thus, the idea of using ready-mades is for me the adoption of 'big' common signs and symbols and maybe in their abstraction to turn these into a sort of hyper-symbol or even meta-symbol⁶ which can only but create a new or different mythological canon.

8.1.3 Towards a hyper-ready-made or a hyper-gesture

Is the combination of an *objet trouvé* and an *idée trouvée* a hyper-'something'? Is it that the confluence and interaction of these ideas produces what could be tentatively referred to as a hyper-ready-made rather than a meta-ready-made ? These, and a myriad of similar questions, kept arising as I was looking into these works in order to clarify them in words for this thesis and hoped that in formalising my thinking for this purpose I would eventually clarify these for myself.

I cannot but toy with the idea that the sonic object being a single *ready-made* with a usually specific connotation, then the *idée trouvée*, is a ready-made image or idea, a symbol which is made up of several objects and which has already been worked on as much as its components have. Does the implosion of this collective symbol turn it into some sort of 'hyper-image', a hyper-realistic gesture which speaks beyond the objects themselves and their meaning ?

8.1.4 Meaning and form

Although apparently many of the sound-symbols and their abstractions may have initially been assigned to replace, or stand in for

something else, their function becomes much more complex. They acquire a life of their own, interacting in a variety of ways with each other, creating different and even new meanings which go way beyond their apparent original or equivalent meaning, because their function was never as straightforward as that. These original symbols have a vital life and associations of their own which, in their interaction with each other, produce a complete self-sufficient world of forms and colours which in a way parallel the relationships with the real or signed world⁷, but it does not try or intend to mimic these relationships, it tries to create new ones.

Their 'new' meaning is given to us as a result of their association which is contained within a larger shape or form. It doesn't matter how fragmented something is, - a good example would be a mosaic - one can never wholly escape from the inherent associative properties of form, regardless how abstract this form may be. Obviously, the more symbols are interacting, the more complex the form⁸, thus the greater the possible associations. But even these new resulting forms can never completely relinquish their properties as sign or symbol. And these properties are the result of forms which are juxtaposed and interact in such a way that the associations are not chaotic but that in their occasional contradictions create a new accord.

At this time it is best to remind ourselves that beyond the world of concepts highlighted in this series there co-exists, as always, another dimension and one which is the main force behind the compositions, one I have commented on in the first chapter; the inner, personal impetus of the composer:

'Form, in the narrow sense, is the boundary between one surface and another: that is its outer meaning. But it has also an internal significance, of varying intensity; and properly speaking *form is the outward expression of inner meaning.*' (Kandinsky, 1997 p. 29)

1 This *Urbis* composition was my first electroacoustic exploration before I started formally looking into electroacoustic music.

2 I have already commented (see 2.1 towards end) in relation to the Postmodernists seeing representation and reality as overlapping, the term 'simulacrum' - drawn from the writings of the French philosopher Jean Baudrillard - is often used to signify this idea of representation as reality. In a way we could say that these works are 'simulacrums' of real world relationships. In their observation inevitably they concentrate one's attention on the way our images and symbols shift their meaning in these works when in different contexts, revealing in their deconstruction the individual processes by which the new meaning arises.

3 Relating this image/symbol to myth; "Mythical speech is made of material which has *already* been worked on so as to make it suitable for communication" (Barthes, 1973 p. 119).

4 In Marcel's Duchamp letter to Hans Richter dated 10 November 1962, condemning Pop Art, he says: 'This Neo-Dada, which they call New Realism, Pop Art, Assemblage, etc. is an easy way out and lives on what Dada did. When I discovered ready-mades I thought to discourage aesthetics. In Neo-Dada they have taken my ready-mades and found aesthetic beauty in them. I threw the bottle-rack and the urinal in their faces and now they admire them for the aesthetic beauty.' (Richter, 1966, pp. 207-8.)

5 Maybe I am using a complicated argument to explain a simple fact: the ready-made is not a 'final' work but a conceptual and material tool for me to use and adapt as the composition, the music itself, demands. Furthermore, in referring to *my* perception of it, I am also assigning to it a *personal* meaning as symbol and thus, an individual set of relationships.

6 The 'hyper' refers to the stereotype, an outward projection whereas the 'meta' refers to a higher, deeper meaning symbol.

7 We are told by J. Campbell that 'Jung distinguishes between the symbol and the sign. A sign is a reference to something that is known or knowable in a perfectly rational way. For instance you come along a road to a sign that says, "to Boston", the sign "stands for" a knowable, physical place. But a symbol, a mythic symbol, does not refer to something that is known or knowable in that rational way. It refers to a spiritual power that is operative in life and is known only through its effects.' (Boa 1994 p. 31).

8 'the resultant dislocation of form is not so much an attempt to analyse or dismember their structure as a desire to imbue them with a

sense of greater vigour. It is very much about the 'dynamic sensation itself' (see 2.6.2 Fragmentations and collage).

Chapter 9

URBIS#2 (passing moments/riffs and riffs) for Bass Clarinet and Tape (1992) .

9.1 The occasion

This work was composed at the end of 1991 and early 1992 and arose as a commission from the Dutch bass clarinet player Hein Pijenburg. The twenty minute piece was given its first performance on the 27th of September 1992 at the Plaza Futura, Eindhoven, Holland ¹.

9.2 Conception of the piece

The idea for the work was generated at the time of Hein Pijenburg's visit to City University in 1991 when he gave a seminar and concert demonstrating a whole range of playing techniques such as multiphonic sounds, key click effects and a particular effect, the tongue-slap percussive stop, at the lowest possible pitch produced by the instrument. During his week-long stay in London, we had the chance of having many long chats and discovered a variety of common musical interests and experiences. A short while after his return to Holland, he got in touch with me and asked me to write a piece for him.

An item that had featured in our conversations was the one of popular music, in particular jazz, and his interest and experience improvising in that medium. As it mirrored an area of interest and experience of mine added to my longing to return if only briefly to that vocabulary, plus the precedent of an earlier electroacoustic attempt in the same vein, I felt that this common vocabulary was inevitably the expressive vehicle for the work and that the composition should be guided by the idea of popular contemporary imagery and iconography.

In the process of thinking and speculating about the proposed work, all these notions and concepts about collage, three minute culture, ready-

mades, the modern citadel and popular music as some sort of contemporary mythological cannon, started acquiring a whirlwind character in their interpolation, giving me also a sense of extroversion. Thus I realised the work wanted not only to be 'out there'² but to be performed in the sense of it being somehow a 'performance work' as most popular music has been imbibed with a very strong presentation element. The performance aspect of it decided itself; I had an immediate image from the film 'Blues brothers'³ where the central characters have a subversive and unself-conscious single-mindedness and extrovert attitude. Their attire, dark suits, dark glasses and 'porkpie' hats somehow conformed to Hein's physical type, so I decided he would perform the work thus dressed, under a single over-head blue light, lighting and puffing cigarettes during the breaks in his playing, to be discarded all over the stage as soon as he played again⁴.

The dramatic curve of the piece would not be a narration in the traditional sense but a sequence of images related to the concept of the 'three minute culture' suggesting many different moods and environments. Its overall curve would be one of natural resolutions to tensions arising - fluctuations in order-chaos relationships. Thus the narrative would be mostly an illusion, the 'real' story would be one made up by each individual listener reacting to the 'hyper-ready-mades' and the new shapes and form produced by their combination.

9.2.1 Choosing the electroacoustic sounds

As the images were highly self-contained ready-mades and suggested their own, unique environment and meaning or association, an eventually very elaborated process of selection and classification of sounds was undertaken in order to find specific sounds and gestures for each image plus sets of sounds which could eventually form common links between these images.

The largest percentage of the sounds were all derived from bass clarinet sounds. During his visit to City University, Hein Pijnenburg lent himself for a session to record the sound of his instrument for sampling⁵ and it is from the recordings of this session that many of the sounds used in this work originate.

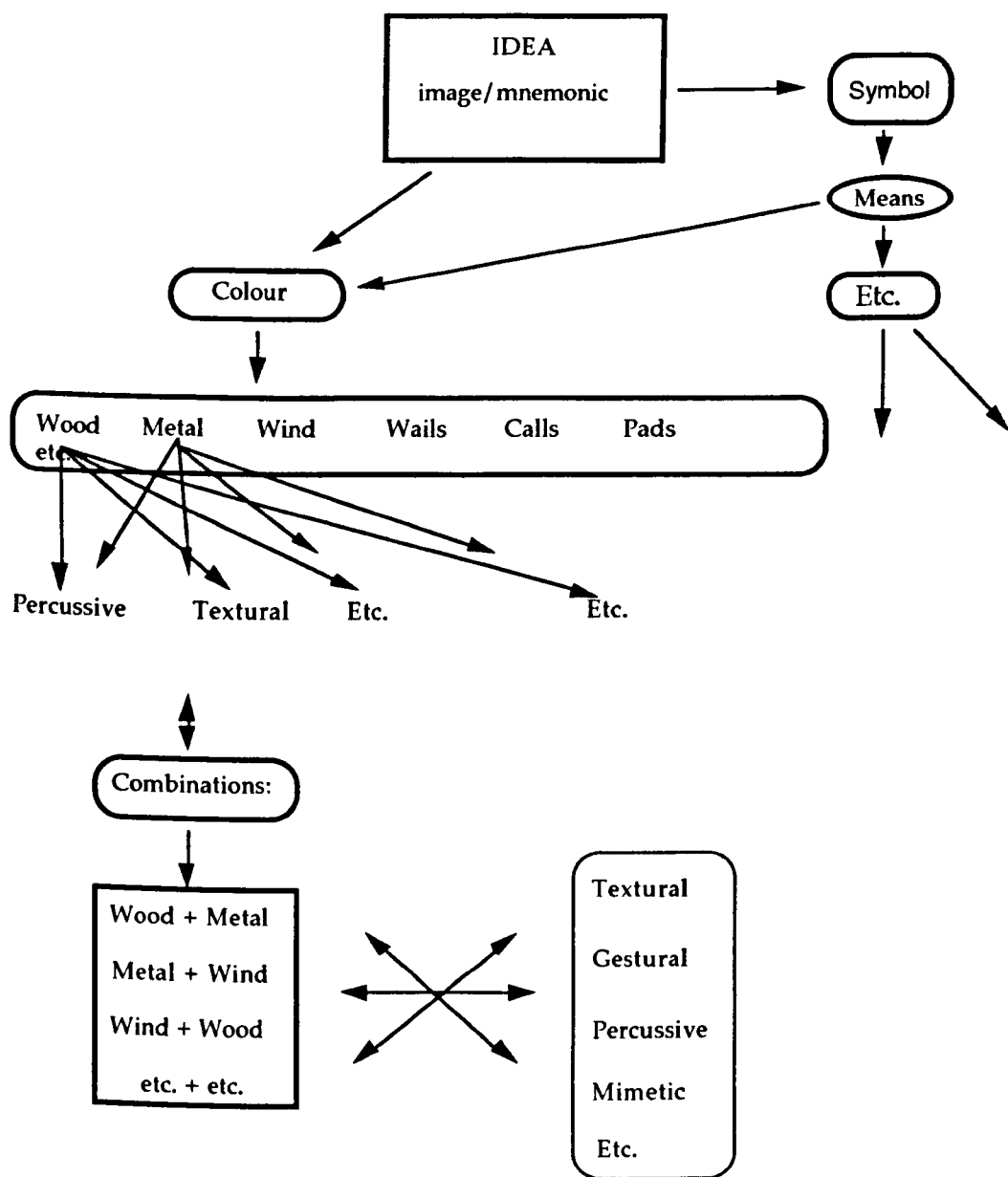


Fig. 9.1 *Urbis #2; an example of a 'family tree' of sounds* ⁶.

Other sounds were selected from sources such as trains, car horns, motor starts etc. all of which had direct and unmistakable relationships with the urban soundscape. Other sonic elements which were meant to have direct associations with the popular were 'translated' or replaced, a good example of which is the drum set, which was created by replacing the bass drum and

toms with bass clarinet tongue-slaps and dog barks, the cymbals were replaced by exhaling and hissing sounds from Hein's original recording and the snare drum was a combination of a car start and bass clarinet. Another example would be in Section III, Part B (p.15 middle system), where the traditional Jazz 'brass jabs' were replaced by a very effective bass clarinet sample which gives us the illusion of a brass section. All sounds were manipulated in a variety of ways⁷. A few sounds of a percussive nature were created with an FM tone generator⁸.

As a whole, the thrust of the search for sound material was based around finding or creating sounds of such expressionistic power and direct association that on their own or even when combined with others they would give rise to very extrovert gestures that by themselves would sign as complete symbols, maybe a kind of hyper-realistic sound image entailing very direct and immediate associations. Nevertheless, when combined or placed in a context which was a different habitat or environment to the one immediately associated with the object, the meaning would suddenly be held by the unfolding of the curve, the direction and form of the work. The meaning of this whole would then be of a completely personal nature as listeners would make their own personal associations to material which, at a surface level, they have already 'heard before' and as such triggers particular memories and sensations of a new or different nature.

Once the sound images were obtained these were 'abstracted' or distorted by the programming of the sound's behaviour and by creating a mimesis of gesture, itself produced by the amalgamation of sounds which are already mimetic in their nature.

On hindsight I can now see that in playing with 'abstracting the abstracted' somehow I was already laying the foundations for the processing of these concepts into the development of the rest of this series. As, in looking at the sound sources chosen for this work, there seems to be a large number of sounds 'open' enough to start interacting in terms of colour. It is the first step in the use of colour⁹ to put sonic shapes together with the purpose of creating illusions.

9.2.2 The role of the tape part

At the most basic or surface level, the tape part in this composition works mostly as a 'flexible' environment within which our main character operates. It nests the character within a world of ideas that only acquire a meaning when taken over or led by the character rather than by their own independent succession or progression. It masks itself as an environmental soundworld but it is a highly gestural world, of explicit and direct symbols which in their interaction and succession rather than consolidating a particular meaning or direction, open the door to many different possibilities.

It is a mobile soundworld of starts and stops, of ever shifting panoramas never knowing which 'neighbourhood' is at the turn of the corner until we finally arrive there led by the character - this is not unlike the mechanics of the *Raza* series, except that in this case there is no 'magic' created by a world of alien soundscapes, but rather a game of mirrors, illusions that distort or change the meaning of what we already hold. It anchors us in the present 'citadel', the *Urbis* of the series title, not only through the use of very direct symbols but that in the sound abstractions themselves there exists this very difficult to define 'industrial' quality to the soundscape. This further anchors us in this modern world with its machine-like, mechanically produced sounds with a 'gritty' quality which we have subliminally absorbed and are often consciously aware of¹⁰.

The tape part further carries a highly 'active' role as not only does it nest the character, it directly provides us with the sets of ready-made images and ideas. In its kinetics there is a very clear level of activity or influence where the sound spatialisation and its movement is not only part of the nature or behaviour of the specific gesture itself or of the (meta)-physical space of the soundscape at any particular time, but in the 'bouncing' or rebounding of sounds against the limits of the stereo field¹¹ it serves also as a demarcation of their physical space as opposed to their perceived space and in a way also measures the movement of an object in relation to its background, thus providing a different notion of depth.

9.2.3 The role of the soloist

The bass clarinet has a central role as character; not unlike **Gato's Raid**, character perspective leads the work. Its attitude (raid-like determination), its timbre and expressive power draws the soundworld towards it.

The performer is given a considerable amount of leeway through elements of improvisation and interaction, as the work is meant to have an improvisatory quality even when passages are strict. Regarding the sound of the instrument itself, the flexibility of a range not unlike a saxophone with similar agility despite the physical difference in size but with a darker timbre and almost mythical looks is an essential ingredient in the sound image projected.

To a certain extent the writing is not idiomatic in the strict sense of 'traditional' bass clarinet writing¹². Though more pertinent to **Gato's Raid's** character¹³, the analogy of the anamorphosis¹⁴ is good for our character; the casual, chance, fragmentary events of an apparently not very particular or notable character disclose the form and dimension of an epic or mythical resolution when our perceptual conic mirror is applied¹⁵.

9.3 Sections: form

To describe the work as a whole and in its sections, I will be using a visual analogy-led description. It is very important at this point to understand that these descriptive or narratorial images did not originate the work, rather they were originated by the sound world which emerged and these images in turn fed back into the work - yet another example of the creative loop.

We find ourselves in a 'surreal' city, not unlike a comic strip city with its perspectives distorted, the images of it constantly shifting and re-ordering themselves. We are in a world of half-lights. The division of the work into three sections corresponds to three main contrasting images and the transitions between these sections (comprising the end of a section and the beginning of the next) are a larger shape of something akin to the 'dissolve'¹⁶ technique used in film and video, which within this context is an accurate description.

In this work the sections are then conceived as 'three short films' and within each of them there is a series of scenes where we experience faster image dissolves or transitions, a faster pace of 'channel zapping'. These dissolves are more in the nature of a disassembling of sound-images and the consequent assembling of a new or different image.

I choose to describe this work in 'filmic' terms as it speaks about a culture which refers mostly to the visual, the 'image' projected as means of identity. There are no bar numbers in the score, just rehearsal or part/scene numbers as each of them is a continuous line and is best practised (also thus helping the improvisatory element) and learnt within its own soundscape.

9.3.1 Section I 'Passing moments'

The title reflects on the whole of the work, every section and subsection is 'just a moment'; an event, an action which 'just is' and which passes by with or without our intervention. There is also the connotation of the ephemeral, this related to the seemingly ephemeral nature of the 'three minute culture' and its 'impact' surface style. This section is divided into three; a sonic introduction to the image and the body of the section itself which is divided into A and B parts.

i) Sonic introduction: In essence this works as an abstraction, a résumé of the soundworld we are entering and not unlike the opening shots of a film where a panorama is set at a glance - the elements sign and in their interaction thus create the symbol. This abstraction is also somewhat a hidden compendium of the work, as we seem to hear 'at a glance' all sorts of sonic behaviour; the bouncing of sounds, acceleration, deceleration, disassembling, assembling, kinetics, etc. that we later experience throughout the work. In the *Raza* series these sonic introductions usually let us know where we are coming from; we establish provenance of which the clearest example would be the very beginning of *Gato's Raid*, but here we are rather establishing a present and future location or soundworld to be inhabited.

ii) Part A: The introduction of the character, which sets an apparently meandering, improvisational style and a vocabulary which will inform the rest of the work. Though as yet of a somewhat introverted nature (this

introversion also as device) it brings us to observe, listen into the character, we are as yet not invited into its life and soundworld. Although making a very strong presence its sonic environment (the tape part) is very open and allows us to solely focus on the character and its own sound, thus establishing very firmly the colour and levels of expression of the character.

iii) Part B: The character suddenly settles into a purpose. The apparent meandering turns into focus through a blues¹⁷ in G major. In order to create this stability within an 'unstable'¹⁸ sound environment, I took the decision of writing a completely unadorned blues, not unlike a learning exercise and took it even further by not allowing the bass line to progress but to simply repeat the first measure of this blues. This created a steady pace towards which everything started gravitating, turning the gestures on tape effectively into accompaniment and counterpoint to the character's blues. Their symbolic-gestural hierarchies being sublimated to the character's action, the expression of the character being the aural focus.

The closing of this section (*senza misura*, page 6) is effectively a disassembling¹⁹ of the ambiguous and supportive soundworld inhabited up to now (so far everything gyrates around the character), into one which presents us with a sense of urgency, and where the first direct references to city and people are heard.

This gesture also acts as an introduction, a 'dissolve' into the panorama presented in the following section. It is worth observing that there seems to be quite an amount of activity, sensation of crowdedness, of events unfolding. Nevertheless this is an illusion, the game of mirrors, as there is a certain economy of sound gestures and yet the perception of an eventful moment exists. This is created by movement both in the musical sense and physical sense, musically forms accelerate, decelerate, go up and down, physically they have a sense of spatial location or activity, panning, circling, spiralling or colliding.

9.3.2 Section II 'Riffs' 20

This section embodies the image of 'the chase', a completely filmic analogy where the composer 'views' the idea of one of those traditional film chases which run under the over-head rail tracks in cities like New York. The relationship between the tape part and the clarinet is deliberately ambiguous; when chasing, is it part of the 'scene' (as a general image) or is it 'the' character in the scene? Is it a witness to the chase not unlike an audience at the movies or a character chasing or being chased?

This section is divided into three; also the central part of the section itself is divided into A, B and C parts with a very short sonic introduction.

i) A ten second opening 'gambit' to this section, which carries the memory of the gestural conclusion to the first section.

ii) Part A: Within an environment of gestures and events of an unpredictable nature, the quasi mechanical periodicity which part A contains, functions as a contrasting device of anticipated tension or activity further accentuated by the sharpness and aggressiveness of the gestures. The character reinforces the periodicity by appoggiatura-like short phrases which 'lean' or end on the beat (Fig. 9.2) and despite this 'stability' there is a sense of hesitancy which further enhances the anticipated tension and events.

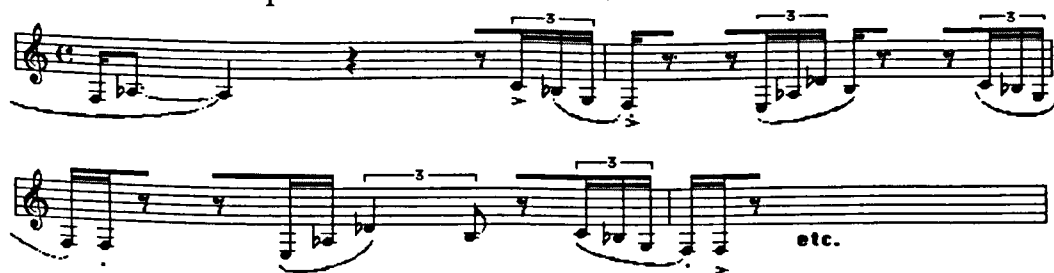


Fig. 9.2 Urbis #2; 'leaning' on the beat (p. 7 last system).

iii) The double line (*senza misura*, first system page 8): The end of part A contains a 'run' or 'rip'²¹, an accelerating gesture toward this double bar line. This subsection acts structurally partly as a tape interlude, but mostly for 'setting up' the chase. This is achieved by the gestural activity which is one of shapes accelerating, decelerating, breaking into sudden stops and starting again. The clarinet here is free to 'pursue' the tape part in a variety of ways

such as imitation, opposition etc. It is the dissolve and setting up of the chase scene. There is another filmic analogy here: a pre-empting of the next scene. It is very common when scoring for film to introduce the music or sound for the following scene a few frames earlier²².

iv) Part B: the chase itself; forms accelerate and decelerate, the bass clarinet 'chases' and another substratum of sound functions as an analogy of pursuing sirens. This is the main body and drive of this whole section; the dynamic sensation itself, in a way the sole reason of existence for the sections that bracket it.

v) Part C: (p. 9 double line, last system). Another 'disassembling' gesture propels us into the aftermath of the chase, an image of emptied, drizzled streets, and our character, suddenly without an apparent purpose, strolls. There is in the soundworld a suggestion of a gamelan of sorts in a percussive manner creating a dreamy, steady pace and the events counterpointing the character are generally of a muted quality.

The periodicity of this part is analogous to a walk, all of these functioning as an inner background to a more inward looking character and the sudden appearance of voices (page 12, top system) and 'louder' events, as an image of 'round the corner', a glance at shop windows, cafés, bright lights and activity, the 'without' environment that brings our character back to us.

9.3.3 Section III 'Raffs'

Here the image is more concise, there is a closer relationship to the exercise of popular music, of the 'band', the jazz-rock group. The soundworld is once again a vortex of tensions and relaxations, but unlike the previous sections where the direction felt open, here there is a spiralling of images towards a seemingly more definite goal.

The body of this section is divided into A, B and C parts. Announced with a brief sonic introduction and with *senza misura* parts which act as interjections, dissolves and bridges between the main parts.

i) The sonic introduction: an opening which reminds us what we left behind and yet is new, as the 'colour' of the gesture has changed more than its movement and dynamic energy.

ii) Part A: The periodicity and pace of the tape part recalls the 'gamelan'- like continuity we heard in the last section, here in the vein of a 'rougher' gamelan, the pace dictated by a more threatening, darker and powerful sound. The apparent linearity of this is a device to create a momentum which gathers towards the following events. We find the character recalling its bluesy beginnings, the timbre and expression of its original identity, but somehow a different, even seedy atmosphere is being conjured. Connecting threads of different sections it brings the character and the spectator back to the character's origins and attitude, away from the 'extravaganza' of the middle section, not unlike having left the movie theatre we are again on the pavement, the 'real' world, our (the character's) identity.

The *senza misura* (page 15 top system) is an allegory; a snap of the fingers to attention and brings back the image to people and activity, to the interaction, here and now. The context we are in now, is the call to stage to join the band. Structurally it acts as a dynamic device, a catapult of momentum and shift of dimension.

iii) Part B: The walking bass line, the jazz, the 'orchestration' and melodic shape suggests the 'combo'. The character interacts and the soundworld, its gestures and sounds turn into the roles or characters that the form, the association, confers on them. They are then so transformed (as interactive characters) that, in their association to the main character, they speak to and with him. There is also an interaction with their 'outside' world and this comes to us in the form of the car horns and car starts, though they occupy a musical function too as part of the percussion set and the applause is an unequivocal direct association to people.²³

The *senza misura* (page 15 end of bottom system and page 16 top system) is not unlike the one at the end of part A, but its main function is that of a short sonic interjection and structurally functions as a dynamic device, raising the stakes of the evolution of the image and the music.

iv) Part C: This last subsection is a very straightforward image. It mostly conjures up the act of playing together as fun and pleasure. Once again we have the 'instrumental' hierarchies not unlike the previous combo set, which now through its jazz-rock type vocabulary and its most powerful symbol, the riff, acquires the 'size' of a band or group. The sound is propelled forward with a rhythmical pattern ('groove') and it launches into a riff.



Fig. 9.3 *Urbis #2; the riff (p.17 last system).*

The riff is a symbol of a musical impetus, a pursuit engaged collectively - the shared. We have established in the preceding part the shared activity. Here in a different or stylistically evolved²⁴ musical vocabulary of jazz-rock we establish its impetus as symbol of dynamic goal. After the riff is played twice (it is traditional in jazz as a whole to expose the 'tune' twice before going into breaks or sets of improvisations) we find in page 19, middle system at the double bar (113 BPM) a brief recollection or interjection of the jazz feeling in the shape of the combo of the preceding part which quickly gives way to some semblance or memory of our riff once again. The closing of the piece is rather abrupt and we hear the crowd's applause, signalling that the performance is over.

9.4 Conclusion

Somehow I cannot disassociate myself from the idea of fun and exhilaration which was a predominant impulse during the composition of this piece; its general curve was not conceived as a narrative line but as a dynamic curve. The notions of an image not as a single idea but as a cluster, the vortex through which and into which ideas rush is as feasible a notion in this work as in the *Raza* series. The absolute similarity in the mechanics and effect produced by these ideas is the same with both series and, in spite of

these extraordinarily different soundworlds, yet again we are brought to consider the idea of the inherent power of the 'surface' environment which we have referred to so often in previous chapters. Underneath this surface enter as many subtexts as in the previous works, except that in this case the aural images and symbols are of a different nature and thus so their relationships and the 'tools' or references by which we can elucidate them.

As the questionable 'hyper-gesture', (of the introductory chapter to this series) the symbol itself, has been abstracted to a large degree, it is very important at this stage to highlight the abstract elements which are found in these works. For it is not the meaning suggested by the myriad of allegorical elements - trains passing, cars and objects crashing, crowd cries - that makes the work meaningful but the combination of these 'obvious' and extrovert elements with the 'hidden' layer or structural subtext - the aural tensions and resolutions, chaos-order relationships set up by these patches of 'irregular' or apparently unhomogenous timbres, shapes and the very energetic, dynamic forces of the lines.

The almost elemental forms created by these abstractions inevitably aim to break a conditioned response to an aural environment and thus create new realities or soundworlds as significant as the realities of that 'nature' itself that at the surface level appears to be represented²⁵. Though, very much as in the *Raza* series, this composition is not of a traditional iconography or a representational work; yet there is an allegorical description which is maybe a different kind of narrative still in its infancy and to which we referred to as a sort of narrative cubism.

In spite of all the concepts and notions here espoused and the apparent purposeful and controlled experimentation, the aural results are far from dry. The compositional method remains empirical, partly explaining why I chose to open this conclusion with the idea of fun. I have noticed that it elicits smiles from the listener, and gestures of recognition and playful understanding. This work rekindled some notions and ideas which had been hovering in the background for some time and which would, as and when relevant, be expanded upon in later compositions. In all, *Urbis #2* is a composition which has opened to me many windows with a smile.

- 1 This work has been released in the 'Mixed' NMC/Sonic Arts Network CD. (1997) NMC D036.
- 2 'Out there' not only encompassing the idea of the 'street', a real world of real people and their likes, dislikes and attitudes, but 'out there' in this challenging, hyper-realistic soundworld.
- 3 The Blues Brothers, 1970's American feature film has reached a cult status which has resulted even in a musical or 'live version' being produced. In the original film, directed by John Landis with the actors John Belushi and Dan Aykroyd playing the main characters, we were given a musical cavalcade through Blues, Rock, R & B, Soul and Gospel.
- 4 Illustrating further the idea of 'performing' the piece, what follows is an excerpt of a letter sent to me by Finnish clarinet player, Mikko Kauppinen on occasion of his performing this work in a concert entitled 'Urban Fantasy' in Helsinki in January 1997;

"... as you suggested we made it a performance: In the beginning I sat in an armchair and my pianist Seppo (who acted a butler) turned on an old radio; The music (your piece) began, Seppo brought me my instrument, I stood up and began to play. During the performance Seppo served me beer and cigarettes during the rests. I wore dark glasses and a yellow Winnie-the-Pooh-tie. I took the liberty to improvise quite a lot in my playing (following Hein P's superb example and your suggestions)." (sic)
- 5 At that time we were developing in the Electroacoustic Music Studio a collective frenzy for collecting sound sources. We used to have a very democratic system whereby once we found an object of interest to record/sample, we would all suggest different takes, engineer the session and then we would share these sound sources on the assumption that since everyone was looking for different elements in these sounds and would process and apply them in their own particular manner, we would not all end up with the same sound in our compositions.
- 6 Usually, when I embark on the process of selecting sound sources and material, I tend to create a 'family tree' of sorts, a map of potential relationships, where I assess and keep track of sounds, gestures etc.
- 7 With the exception of *Urbis #4*, where some sounds underwent direct, digital processing within the hard disk with software such as Sound Designer II and GRM tools, all the other works contain sounds which were mostly

processed within the Akai S1000 sampler and its programming facilities plus the computer software program Alchemy.

8 The Yamaha TX 802 FM tone generator.

9 I make a distinction between timbre and colour; the first I see as an individual 'mechanical' property of a single sound or instrument, the second I see as the amalgamation of certain timbres which produce something more ineffable in import, an emotional response which I see as colour. Thus I see and apply colour as a sensorial device.

10 Are the sounds produced by the street, machines, transport etc. a common 'natural acoustic' of the 20th century city dweller? This maybe be related to the notion of the composer's 'natural acoustic' to which we referred in the 2nd paragraph of the introduction to the **Raza** series.

11 A good example is the opening of the tape part, where some of the sounds seem to literally crash or bounce against the speakers.

12 Though there is the inevitable comparison to the saxophone (I have been asked by a couple of saxophone players to make the work available to them), given the nature of the composition, the timbre of the bass clarinet and Hein Pijenburg's abilities and preferences were the core impulse for the conception of the work, the instrument was never thought of as a kind of saxophone.

13 The anamorphic label for the character of **Gato's Raid** is an excellent one and so considered just in terms of the character itself completely removed from its environment. Here, this label is applied to the character in the **Passing Moments** section in the same manner, except that the soundworld itself is at times included in the character thus the anamorphosis includes fragments which appear in the tape part.

14 The word is from the Greek $\mu\omicron\pi\omicron\acute{\omicron}\omega$, "to form", plus $\acute{\alpha}\nu\alpha$ "again": $\acute{\alpha}\nu\alpha\mu\omicron\pi\omicron\acute{\omicron}\omega$ "to form anew".

15 There are pictures which are called anamorphoses. These appear to be fragmented shapes; when viewed by reflecting them in a conic mirror these show normal forms such as a human body etc.

16 The word 'dissolve' is used in the editing of film as the technique of superimposing, blending, fading of one image into another.

17 In relating the 'city' element to the expressiveness of the character itself, somehow the only 'city' musical analogy that felt 'natural' for the character was the blues as a symbol of the isolated individual, the city and their eventual interaction.

18 I used the word 'unstable' environment in order to describe a sound world that has no apparent (as yet) relation with the character, and a world where the gestures and events seem somehow disembodied from it. Having said that, nevertheless, as the pace acquires prominence and a sense of aural stability is achieved, we can perceive these isolated, unrelated sounds acting as an 'orchestration' to the character.

19 We are given a 'literal' sensation of disassembling; the analogy of a skidding sound into a crash of shorts with the components of the crashed object spiralling into orbits of their own, which in the fallout reconstitute themselves as particles of a different gesture or aural environment.

20 In reality this section (duration 6'16) should be **raffs**, which is a play on the word 'rough/s', and **riffs**, from the idea of the popular music 'riff', should be the last section. However, the rhythm of the spoken title 'sounds' right in the order in which I use it, though the names of the sections do not appear on the score pages, only in the title.

21 In jazz terminology, a 'rip' is usually found in brass writing, when they either end a phrase or move towards a break or gesture through the device of an accelerating quasi-glissando ('slide').

22 Usually, we can observe that towards the last frames at the end of a scene, the music of the next scene is already 'in'.

23 Here is where we can identify a good example of one area of multidimensions and multifunctions in these works. There is a world, an inner soundscape inhabited by our character and those he is interacting with (i.e. the band; the drums player, the brass players, etc.) and that world is their music. We observe it and them from the outside, we are not in that soundworld, we hear them playing, it is their world and ours is in being audience. Yet another world aurally observes and relates to them, it gives them their location; the city and its people. We observe them both, we are still in a passive soundworld outside theirs. Then they make the combined soundworld through their interaction, vocabulary of images together with our perception and familiarity with these. Then we are no longer observing but are another aural dimension created through our interaction with the generation of our own set of meanings.

24 All the earlier musical associations in this composition are somehow related to the blues and its very simple harmonic structure, pentatonic ideas and 'blue notes'. Later it progresses to a form with a walking bass, more apparent harmonic and melodic activity, more 'jazz' as it were. Now, in this last part of the last section it appears as jazz/rock, the latter elements combined with a central idea; the riff as symbol of the pursuit of the phrase, a

forward musical statement with no question or answer, an opening idea which then gives room for improvisation. However, we do not launch into that area, we just express the idea.

25 It is interesting to observe the level of abstraction within the tape part without the bass clarinet asserting the character and through that, as an apparition, unveiling a meaningful or significant soundscape. This abstraction, which could lead us in a variety of directions were not there a central character to inform us, seems to increasingly develop as the series grows.

Chapter 10

URBIS #3 (Alter ego) for Electric guitar, live electronics and Tape.

10.1 The occasion

This piece was composed in mid 1992 and arose as a commission from the Canadian guitar player Tim Brady. The work was given its first performance on the 29th of November 1992 at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London¹.

During a 'scouting'² journey to Europe Tim Brady visited City University and was being introduced to our composers and facilities by Dr. Simon Emmerson when they came to my workstation where I was at the time composing the last section for *Urbis* #2. Tim immediately understood, recognised the ideas and references and was very enthusiastic about the composition and on the spot suggested I wrote a work for him in the same vein. Not long after I received a letter from him formally asking me to write a piece for him.

10.2 Conception of the piece

When I was formally asked to write this work I was immediately thrown into an uncomfortable situation, one reason being that my first love and instrument had been the guitar which I had given up over ten years earlier in order to devote myself to composition full time, and every so often I missed the performing and improvisation aspect of it greatly. Somehow the idea of returning to it made me feel very inadequate.

Another reason for my discomfort, this time of a completely practical nature, was that I felt that there were certain glaring restrictions to the instrument, partly imposed by preconceptions regarding substance and style. The electric guitar has a very clear history regarding its use and even vocabulary, it is an instrument of immediate popular associations and as such

is dismissed, denying to it a 'formal' contemporary music platform. It was clear that Tim Brady was expecting an electric guitar work which would inhabit the type of soundworld and vocabulary that he heard in *Urbis #2*, so in a way the *raison d'être* of his commissioning was the featuring of the electric guitar and its associations in a rather direct manner, albeit within the 'formal' habitat or platform of electroacoustic music concerts. I felt in such manner myself as I wanted to use the guitar idiomatically, address myself to it directly, rather than inventing a process whereby the guitar would be other than itself³.

The key to unlocking these and other conundrums I felt in relation to this work was inadvertently given to me by Tim in the course of some of our conversations and the programme notes for his work 'Imaginary Guitars'⁴ where he dreams about pushing the guitar to the limits of the imagination, beyond style, sound and form.

After long deliberations as to what it was that the guitar meant for me at this stage, I came upon the idea of somehow turning Tim into an extension of myself as a guitar player, an alter ego. So, what about him having his 'imaginary guitars' and me having my 'imaginary solos'? What about me playing sounds and musics I could not longer play?⁵.

I decided to make use of his techniques and sounds and superimpose them onto what would be, for him, an unfamiliar sound-world - *my* world - hopefully thereby creating a vibrant set of musical images. And through that juxtaposition, change or 'bend' the meaning of what we were both familiar with and embark on a voyage through guitar, sounds and musics. The idea became one of moving in and out of what is readily identifiable, into the realm of suggestion, toying with ideas and perception, and most importantly, enjoying ourselves.

10.2.1 The role of the tape part

As befitting it being part of an 'explicit' series, the role of the tape part is very similar to that we encountered in *Urbis #2* (see preceding chapter) but there is a very clear difference: the tape part is considerably more abstract. The piece aims to have a direct relation to popular music⁶ with its associated

soundworld of an industrial and popular quality. Its symbols are very obvious at times, although we find these compressed into such tight blocks of ideas and sounds of an abstract nature which leaves us at a loss for the images⁷ we have grown accustomed to expect in the *Urbis* series.

In this composition the soundworld presented in the tape part starts disengaging from the allegorical image and there is no other option but to wait for the soloist to provide an image in order to complete the idea. Thus, though we can say that in this case the apparent role of the tape part is solely to provide an aural environment of an apparently abstract nature, we do find that the tape part most definitely directs the energy (dynamic) content of the work and the trajectory of such energy through the interaction of colours. The impact of the tape part is the result of abandoning the 'stand in' (see Chapter 8) sound in favour of tensions in lines and colours in their interaction and succession.

The tape part also has a contextual element in this case which is very important to emphasise: it also acts as a sort of 'résumé' of *my* soundworld⁸, as part of the original impetus in this work was to place the performer within a soundworld alien to his own and through both our interactions forge a 'new' symbol and meaning to the images suggested.

10.2.2 The role of the soloist

The role of the soloist in this case is simple: a twofold role, as an 'alter ego' and as himself bringing his vision and elucidation to the work. Not as a character as we understand it but as an instrument: the soloist *is* a guitar (or vice versa) and it takes us into a journey through its various 'incarnations' both in its sound and style-vocabulary.

10.2.3 Choosing the electroacoustic sounds

The sounds were mostly taken from the same pool developed for *Urbis* #2 but naturally discarding those that were far too related to the clarinet⁹. I felt the need for continuity in the soundworld of this series and I took the decision to 'raid' my sound library¹⁰.

But in addition I did produce a new pool of sounds derived from metallic objects and their resonances as a basic timbric bridge between the different 'metallic' associations - metal strings, type of guitar and amplifier - of the electric guitar sound. Another very important tool for the selection of sounds was a tape Tim Brady sent me with a recording of a series of signal processing effects and fretboard techniques I had in mind to use, thus I kept referring to that tape in order to assess the homogeneity and mixing suitability of the chosen sounds.

In essence, we could say that the electroacoustic sounds created were not only the ones that would be fixed on tape, but also a series of sounds to be 'fixed' in the effects rack of the performer. Some care went into devising sound effects that could be reproduced with different brands of equivalent hardware signal processors¹¹.

10.3 Method (development of the composition)

Beyond my experiences in the commercial world composing 'to order', I had never before experienced composing for a performer with so many ideas as to what he would prefer and so interested in taking part in the process¹². As we kept in fairly close contact, I was willingly influenced by some comments regarding his likes and dislikes¹³, and yet at all times keeping at the fore of the compositional process the principle of placing the performer in what for him would be an unfamiliar soundworld.

The composition was always partly fed by the idea of moving in and out of what would be recognisable as guitar sound and guitar vocabulary. While composing I kept testing the different parts against Tim's tape with the examples of guitar gestures and sound effects so as to be aware of the sound and direction of line and form; in other words the 'colouration' and form being controlled at once, one feeding the other¹⁴.

Having reached an advanced stage in the composition and after consulting Tim as to how he preferred to look at what potentially could be a complicated guitar part¹⁵, he announced to my dismay that he wanted a score of no more than two pages¹⁶.

After recovering from my initial disarray, I focused on to the fact that as we both shared what was largely an oral tradition in jazz and popular

music¹⁷ and having often used mnemonics in order to understand each other, I would have to somehow reorganise the guitar part, using some sort of mnemonic system based around our conversations. I would 'talk' the work to him.

The work was then 'savaged', producing what was an edited version of the original, but nevertheless one where the concept of *my* environment and its traits - such as bouncing objects, collage, swirls in space and the use of the physical motion of sounds - was not necessarily more obvious due to the simplification of the material but nevertheless clearly present without detracting from the overall shape.

Originally, the work had a continuous shape of texture and gesture transformation and the result of the editing was an unconscious return to a collage of sorts, more like a succession of blocks of sound or compressed soundworlds and gestures. This largely resulted out of the creation of a table which attempted to summarise or 'cue' the content of the blocks both in tape terms and in performer interaction.

block number	metronome & real time	mnemonic and reference	bar number	guitar activity (type)
1	60 --- 0:00	Fausto/Here	1	nut gesture + 3 breaks a) sputter FX b) random textures c) imitate tape + gated chords
	2:12	Transition	34	
2	84 --- 2:39	M.D. (blues)	41	twangy motif +octaves, jazzy etc.
	3:48	Transition ?	65	
3	60 --- 4:28	Spider	79	The cello, vol. pedal
	4:48	(peaks)	85 guit. IN	
	6:16		106	
4	100 --- 6:52	Brady	115	1st jam (rock) rhythm - riff ?
			142	

5	96 --- 8:31	Close	153	fixed riff ?
6	60 --- 9:59	Recap.	188	standard-solo

Fig. 10.1 **Urbis #3; Summary chart of sections**¹⁸.

The above chart was the trigger for the editing and resulting newer and more 'interactive' version of the work and naturally, as the full written version was abandoned, bar numbers then became an irrelevance and later, the mnemonics and guitar activity were refined considerably so as to achieve a highly controlled performance. Eventually an abstracted score was produced and most of the staves and other musical notations were altogether abandoned.

The guitar part presented a problem as not only was there an instinctive reluctance to allow the performer to just improvise and thus 'endanger' the thrust of the work's idea, but also the awareness of the legendary problems in 'controlling' guitar players and their tendency to play too fast, too much¹⁹. Nevertheless, remembering that Tim was meant to have a substantial input in the work, the idea of using unmistakable mnemonics for the guitar part would result in having what would be a controlled improvisation: the notes and rhythm would be the choice of the performer but the curve (form and line) and style(s) would be fixed.

As a method, strictly speaking, this is a very far cry from the organised and controlled compositions that preceded this work, and in a completely different manner this was a 'creative loop' method of sorts. It also meant abandoning any sort of proprietorial regards on the work and acceptance that part of the method would also be the result: a work which sounds different every time it is performed but one which nevertheless always maintains the same direction.

10.4 Sections²⁰: (form)

The overall shape of the work is dictated by the idea of a journey through guitars, its curve inspired by the sound possibilities of the instrument and its live processing; from the barely recognisable as a guitar to the unveiling of it and in this, too, mimicked in the styles it travels. The sectional

divisions in this case reflects the structural need to support various stylistic changes. In between them, as transitional devices, there are always collapses of one soundworld into another, this also being an allegory of sorts to the theatricality inherent in the image of the guitar player, the equipment and theatrical poses we often associate with guitar players during performance.

10.4.1 Section I 'Here'

This section opens the 'unfamiliar' soundworld the guitar inhabits and it consists of A and B parts, repeated three times; A being generally a bouncing effect not unlike sound-calls. These sonic elements recall the citadel image of the series as within the aural environment we can perceive sounds from car starts, reversed drum sounds, sounds obtained from guitar strings plucked at the bridge and even a sound gesture very much used in popular music - an orchestral stab, in this case looped and panned at speed in a quasi-circular motion. The B part consists of 'breaks', these being apparently random gestures with similar sonic content which disrupt what appears to be a more regular set of events in part A.

The function of the guitar is to answer or imitate these calls by producing a similar sound by playing 'nut notes' produced by plucking the strings next to the tuning nuts of the guitar, not unlike playing a violin behind the bridge, and using the whammy bar²¹ to further 'bend' these notes of almost indeterminate pitch²². During the breaks, the guitar is meant to apply the 'spider' technique which consists of the left hand fingers and thumb hammering on the fretboard and adding the whammy bar with the right hand.

At 2:12 minutes we find a transition or collapse of the present soundworld where the guitar has to play random gestures, these being a mixture of fast undetermined fingerings, spider technique and 'sputter' technique (similar to the spider technique but adding hammering on the fretboard with the right hand too) and all of these submerged by the use of a harmoniser and a volume pedal²³.

10.4.2 Section II 'Miles blues'

Here we find a steady 'groove' or texture with a percussive core. Its structure is simple and bare as many a background texture for popular music is; basically we can hear a bass line, produced mainly from a voice sound and percussive interjections that suggest a drums set.

Onto this 'background' the guitar has to improvise a blues. The requirements are that it should possess a 'twangy' quality²⁴, another sonic expressive requisite is that it has to be played as a slide guitar, with a metallic tube on the fifth finger of the left hand or a cut bottle neck, this last technique is commonly known as 'bottle-necking'. The title, Miles blues, is a mnemonic not only of the bluesy quality, but also of Miles Davies's later style of playing very few notes and of using pitch bending and 'wrong' notes as a tool of expression.

During the transition (at 3:52), which carries through well into the next section, we have a series of 'breaks' produced by an amalgamation of sounds from the preceding section and a harmonic sequence of sorts led by a childlike melody line harmonised with a synthesis of the different pitch shifts produced live in the guitar part (through a hardware harmonisation device). The guitar is meant to provoke a collapse of the soundworld by playing chords and clusters with a reverse gate to create a distortion of sorts without it being a traditional 'distorted' guitar sound²⁵.

10.4.3 Section III 'Spider'²⁶

The tape part continues the build up of dynamic impetus of the line, by continuing with the melodic outline, child-like in quality, and underlined by more abstract lines produced from vocal sources in order to create a contradictory or conflicting soundworld.

The guitar used as a mnemonic the idea of it 'being' a cello in the sense of the stereotype of producing passionate long curved lines. It creates cumulative harmonies by the use of delay and the volume pedal is used to mimic the bow pressure. Superimposed onto the ambiguous tape it finally creates a passage of potential desolation, tension and expectation.

Rather than sounding as a section in its own right, the whole of this section, encourages the perception of it as being a transition due to the cumulative tension that inevitably demands a resolution.

The transition itself (at 6:16) is a short crescendo in intensity which literally collapses the soundworld through the device of compressing the mix²⁷ (at 6:25) by a very high percentage. Likewise, the guitar line collapses through the device of distorting chords with a reversed gate.

10.4.4 Section IV 'Tim B'

This section carries the same surface line as the preceding one, the difference being that here we aggregate rhythm to create a sense of urgency. The soundworld itself hardly offers any clues for the purpose of forming a definite image. Its purpose is to change the perceived drama of the preceding section into one of purely dynamic energy in order to effect the transition onto the next section.

The title of the section is the mnemonic 'Tim Brady'; meaning that here he was quite free to 'take off' in any direction. Originally I had a precise idea of what was required and this is reflected in the score. Nevertheless there was another mnemonic and this was 'modern guitar sound'²⁸ which had no specific meaning but which launched Tim on a 'wild' improvisation which, aided by the drive of the rhythm on the tape part, somehow suggests a rock or 'heavy metal' section.

The transition (at 7:59) is not unlike the 'breaks' we find in the first section and also collapses the section²⁹ to find the space to start anew.

10.4.5 Section V 'Close'

This section was always intended to be transparent (easy to read) as a form: the concept of the riff which we find in the last section of *Urbis #2*, a continuity of image and idea. Nevertheless, the tape environment reflects sonically on the idea of fun; the sounds which make up the riff lines are humorous and are direct analogies of many sounds found in popular music;

the undisguised drum set contains once again a mix of car starts and dog barks in its tom-tom parts.

The guitar this time joins the 'ensemble' on the tape. It plays in unison with the tape part during the first half and is left to improvise over the second half. So the guitar in this section is a reflection on the style, and on the form. Unlike in the preceding sections, where the guitar offers us associations which conjure up a myriad of images, in this part the music is more direct and leaves less room for imagery.

Besides the impetus of clearly exposing the idea of the riff, there is a structural reason for this clarity: it opens up the sonic environment through the use of a more straightforward melodic and harmonic world into our next section, a return to the original uncertain soundscape we experienced at the very beginning of the work.

10.4.6 Section VI 'Return'

As the title suggests, we return to the 'original source', a soundworld almost identical to the opening section. We have 'proven' our sonic world by weaving in and out of the ambiguous to the explicit and vice versa. We are summing up where we came from and our ability to 'travel', to navigate these soundworlds. The guitar follows likewise, once again there is no distinction in the soundworld between guitar and tape, both being part of the same soundscape. The true *raison d'être* is revealed halfway into this section.

From the very beginning there was always present the memory of myself as a guitar player, of the music I had encountered, the places and circumstances in which I had performed and the music I *liked* to play. This formed a confluence of images and feelings that found their way into the conception of the work.

I had this absolutely abstract idea, more of a feeling, an unproven certainty which I heard in my inner ear. To translate this abstraction into a sound that would express it so was ultimately empirical, unnerving and uncertain due to the opposite extremes of the forms involved. I 'knew' it would work, felt it would, but I could not experience it so until actually

played by Tim. The idea felt somehow like a culmination or an apex of abstract ideas realised through non-abstract means.

In order to get the sound-image and its soundworld, the abstraction or résumé of the idea had to be an absolute, it had to be interpreted just one way, so the perfect model had to be found. The perfect model was around *Stella by Starlight*³⁰, a common symbol or mnemonic between Tim and myself vis-a-vis the mood, feel of the guitar, its colour and manner of playing (technique) which was required to achieve this idea. I was so uneasy and yet so certain about this that I asked Tim to just improvise in such manner while at the same time I composed a 'standard' in the particular vein. So a choice was created for the performer; to improvise in the manner of a 'standard' such as *Stella by Starlight* or to use my 'tune'.

It worked for me. A magical moment happened as this unfamiliar, abstract world nests this guitar vignette, and somehow it is not strange, it is 'natural' to hear this very clear, this very expressive guitar within a soundworld of abstract shapes and colours. It is very much like the soundworld 'protects' and includes within itself the delicacy of the moment. An event which is absolutely multilayered (see Chapter 2) regarding its references and which though in such dissimilar vocabulary, reminds us of the 'oneness' which is such a feature of the first part of this thesis. Not very much can be added to this beyond expressing my relief/release and utter delight in its conclusion.

10.5 Conclusion

No direct image has been expressed beyond the 'character' of the series (*Urbis*) which the soundworld together with the electric guitar has achieved. There was in this case a desire to depart from the allegorical image. This leads us to highlight a world of contrasts to create the illusion of a musical world which at no time is 'really' there. Not unlike the *etcetera principle* often mentioned in relation to Op Art³¹ when the mind is tricked into seeing, perceiving something which does not really exist due to the physical conditions created.

Not unlike the painting style mentioned above, this work does not lend itself to intellectual exploration, as at its source there is the impetus of

provoking a sensual or sensational impact which, as a result, can lead us to what is meant to be nothing more and nothing less than a unique experience³² (this last also aided by a performer who will him/herself be experiencing such impact differently each time). And again, beyond its context of belonging to a particular series with a particular emphasis, in the work itself maybe there is a somewhat remote parallel to Dadaism in the sense of trying to establish that there is no fundamental difference between a man-made object and a machine-made object, and that the only possible *personal* intervention in the work is choice.

There is the personal satisfaction that the composition works in the direction (idea) which was intended; that the musical gesture as a whole rather than its note per note deconstruction of it and its many layers, is the carrier and communicator of the (perceived) meaning despite the potentially arbitrary effect of improvisation.

10.5.1 Hindsight

Looking back from the privileged position of having three works in this series from which to observe a development curve, it is in this work that I start moving further away from the conceptual notion established at the beginning of this series of working towards a 'hyper-realistic' sound symbol.

In this work the soundworld starts disengaging from the allegorical image. The editing, the abstraction of the score, everything evolving along the lines of 'cut-outs', triggered renewed interest in *ready-made* abstractions which would come to dominate the next work in the series.

The colours and lines no longer 'stand for' allegorically but attempt to communicate directly through the impact of assembled colours and their interaction with each other (harmony and discord, tension and resolution) creating the illusion of an image. Borrowing from Kandinsky's aims, the sense is created of colours overflowing the limits of the form thus creating an environment where there is a dominance of the sound of the colours (soundscape) over the sound of the form.

- 1 This work was released as the first track in Tim Brady's *SCENARIOS*, 'music for guitar, electronics and tape' CD published by Justin Time Records 1994 (JTR 8445-2), Canada (CBC/SRC).
- 2 Tim Brady usually undertakes overseas trips to organise future concert tours and events.
- 3 There is a body of electroacoustic works where the live acoustic element is treated almost as if it were a duty or challenge to make it sound like something else rather than its traditional self. I believe that this is due partly to a genuine desire to expand the instrument's techniques and expressive power (besides the needs of an electroacoustic homogeneity), which can occasionally lead to the loss or mis-exploitation of the expressive features of the instrument involved.
- 4 'Imaginary Guitars' is a Tim Brady composition released on a CD of the same title (*Imaginary Guitars*, music for electric guitar, electronics and tape.. 1992 Justin Time Records INC. [JTR 8440-2]).
- 5 The idea of 'my imaginary solos' and his 'imaginary guitars' arose from Tim Brady's notes for the above mentioned CD, where he comments on imagining guitars with thousands of strings and frets.
- 6 But never populist.
- 7 Except in section 5, at 8:31, where the form has a very clear jazz rock shape (rhythm and riff).
- 8 Not only my soundworld in relation to the image of this series, but also in the manner of putting sonic elements together at the 'performer level'.
- 9 As most of the sounds for *Urbis #2* had been developed from bass clarinet samples.
- 10 Rather than starting a whole new batch of sounds which had been my procedure so far.
- 11 Though in essence one can set fixed rates of processing such as pitch shift, delays and many other parameters, different makes of equipment have their own 'signature' colour which varies greatly, and in doing so influence the perceived impact of the colour (timbre) as a whole.
- 12 Tim Brady, beyond his performing role, is a successful composer in his own right with numerous compositions ranging from those for electric guitar to large orchestra.

13 I always use what I learn from the player's likes and dislikes. Not only what music that, as professional musicians, they like and want to play, but most importantly what they listen to for pleasure at home. I find that by finding a common symbol and image-inducing vocabulary through which to communicate, then the non-musical parameters which 'complete' the work in performance are easier to communicate to the player. This, in its turn, makes the music more penetrable and enjoyable for the performer through finding these common references.

14 One of the main issues we had dealt with at the beginning of our conversations was that of creating some boundaries to the enormous potential of sound effects that Tim Brady had in the effects rack for his guitar and how to use these as a tool to realise the concept of the piece.

15 We had been trying to agree some sort of 'standardised' notation particularly for unconventional guitar gestures such as the 'sputter' effect which consisted of both hands using all ten fingers playing on the fretboard.

16 He wanted to 'lift my head from the score' and have his hands free from page turns. I managed to negotiate three pages, which forced me to rethink the whole work both in its execution and concept.

17 At the time when I was still a practitioner, amongst fellow musicians we would communicate by using sung examples, mnemonics or references to other tunes or players in order to understand what it was we collectively wanted to hear from our playing. With Tim we largely communicated in such a manner.

18 This chart represents the sections as they are in the work, the mnemonics are as I referred to them while in the process of creating this chart and do not fully reflect the 'formal' naming of the sections in the final score.

19 Though this comment is one that Tim himself has made, not for a minute do I suggest that Tim was such a case. I had very carefully heard his CD and 'knew' his playing, we observed and spoke about what were his 'traits' as a guitar player in order to incorporate them to some extent into the work.

20 In the description of each section, it is necessary to describe the guitar working and approach to it. But these descriptions do not refer strictly to the recording which accompanies this presentation as each performance and recording is slightly different. The description nevertheless is quite accurate as a result of this controlled interaction.

21 The 'whammy bar' is an attachment to the guitar bridge for the purpose of bending or pitch shifting notes, besides producing a difficult to control vibrato. Its most common application has been the tremolando.

-
- 22 Though they are the equivalent open strings tuning.
- 23 As a whole, the volume pedal is used throughout the work as an expression tool and also to deny the effect of attack and allow 'fake' resonances produced by the pitch shifting, harmonisers and delays to appear seemingly untriggered by the performers striking of chords or notes.
- 24 This is usually described as a 'Telecaster sound', referring to the very familiar sound quality produced by that particular model of Fender guitar.
- 25 In the recording presented with this thesis, the performer carries on with the original texture to this section through the transition, adding onto it spider techniques and an apparent crescendo of delays and pitch shifting by reducing the 'dry' signal level. He does use the reversed gate at the beginning of the next section.
- 26 The title of this section is a left-over of the original mnemonic when 'blocking' the work and it is not a mnemonic or image for the section as a whole.
- 27 This work was mixed directly to stereo through the Yamaha DMP 7 mixer. This automated device has inbuilt effects of which at this stage the compressor setting was used at a 65 % in order to distort and collapse for a couple of seconds the dynamic peaks of this passage.
- 28 This label used to amuse us a lot as it really meant nothing at all. For all this 'meaninglessness', this mnemonic (and variety of associated colours) achieved the effect of defining the performing style for the particular section.
- 29 With an even more compressed mix (90 % compression).
- 30 *Stella by Starlight*, jazz classic (thus the term 'standard' in jazz-speak) by Ned Washington and Victor Young.
- 31 'Op Art' as applied in the visual arts world is a style where the term optical or retinal is applied to the two-and-three dimensional works which explore the fallibility of the eye. Generally it is referred to as being abstract, essentially formal and precise, it has been referred to as a generator of perceptual responses. One can surmise that it deals with illusion as it is art which possesses a dynamic quality which provokes illusory images and sensations in the spectator.
- 32 This idea of 'impact' and 'unique experience' created the foundation for *Urbis #4*.

Chapter 11

URBIS #4

Electroacoustic Sounds on Tape 1994 - 1996

11.1 The occasion

Unlike the previous works presented in this thesis, this work was not commissioned. This time it was a 'self-commissioned' work as I wanted to finally formalise some 'runs'¹, where I would be attempting to deal at a more practical level with those notions revolving around the idea of ready-made objects and 'ready-made ideas' which had so preoccupied me in a sonic sense.

11.2 Conception of the piece

The 'ignition factor' for the work was the idea of the *audio-clip* which I once saw mentioned in relation to a competition's call for pieces. This keyword sent my head spinning as within the notion of a 'clip'- perhaps a moment abstracted from a larger shape - there was a building block where the idea of ready-mades could potentially be made to work.

I was aware that as the Urbis series developed, the notion of the *ready-made* and the hyper-gesture were seemingly being diffused inasmuch as the material being produced kept being abstracted more and more, with sounds no longer standing in for something else (see Chapter 8). Though the conception of each work carried as impulse these ideas with respect to their use as tools, and indeed beyond the surface impression of the compositions these are still in evidence, I felt that in the execution - the sonic result - the abstraction had largely come to obscure the initial *ready-made* as a feature.

The possibility of working on such a 'clip' - I understood this as meaning a very short, intense and condensed piece or vignette - meant that there was a chance that I could use very clear and direct references, brutally plucked out from their environment and placed in juxtaposition and interacting with others similar. The sonic sources I then viewed in terms of

assembled colours abstracted from individual timbres and shapes. These sources, stripped of any purely musical connotation, had a multidimensional abstract geometry assigned to them. The tape medium would act as a strictly physical object, not unlike a canvas upon which these sonic objects would be placed, and their order and relationship would mostly be one of colour, shape and dynamics within the space.

Thus my 'runs' were turned into 'clips', and acquired a more formal shape. There would still be an apparent arbitrariness or informality in the sense that I did not set any specific number of clips; I determined that I would experiment, compose and then choose what to present in some order. The only premise was that of creating pieces of, ideally, three minutes and certainly no longer than five minutes duration, partly induced by the idea that a *clip* suggested a very brief piece and partly because I felt that the notions I was entertaining would produce the kind of sensorial impact required if produced in a very short, compressed manner.

Though I aim to withdraw not only any allegorical image but also, equally important, any intellectual properties to this work², nevertheless in order to clarify what it was that shaped the *clips* which *are* the composition, what informs them, I will examine them in many of the conceptual terms that have arisen with this series.

11.2.1 Choosing the electroacoustic sounds

The main concern was then to find available pre-recorded (ready-made) material of such clear provenance with regards to their associative power as symbols or references that it did not matter how short or out of context the sonic slice was, it would still evoke a very clear connotation (always remaining within the 'popular' sonic vocabulary of the series). Regardless of the feeling that, because an audio slice was of too short a length and it being out of context one could not recognise accurately its musical source - a slice of a brass 'jab', a distorted guitar or a drum, could come from any piece in that particular style - these still evoked very powerful and clear associations. My aim was to create a library³ of ready-mades which I could 'simply' place or order in any combination I might desire.

I felt these sonic 'slices' satisfied many of the concepts which had, to a degree, been contributing to, and informing the elaboration of my compositions. Such a slice of sound would inherently satisfy the premise of fragmentation and of collage in its execution. In its interaction it would ideally produce a self-sufficient soundworld of forms somewhat paralleling relationships in the real world (see Chapter 8). My geometrical perspective reawakened the idea of boundaries on a sonic plane (see 2.6.1), previously applied to the sectionalisation of works. This notion here evolves into or, rather, is compressed into the geometrical and physical boundaries of the symbol itself rather than into the soundscape, after its abstraction from its original environment.

The idea of using sounds as geometrical forms was also partially induced by the material fact that in processing sounds or placing audio files onto the sequencer tracks I was always looking at their graphic representation, and this visual representation of sound gradually started permeating the way I looked at these sonic 'cut-outs'. Later on, the geometric figures expanded into just colour shapes for this representational⁴ phase.

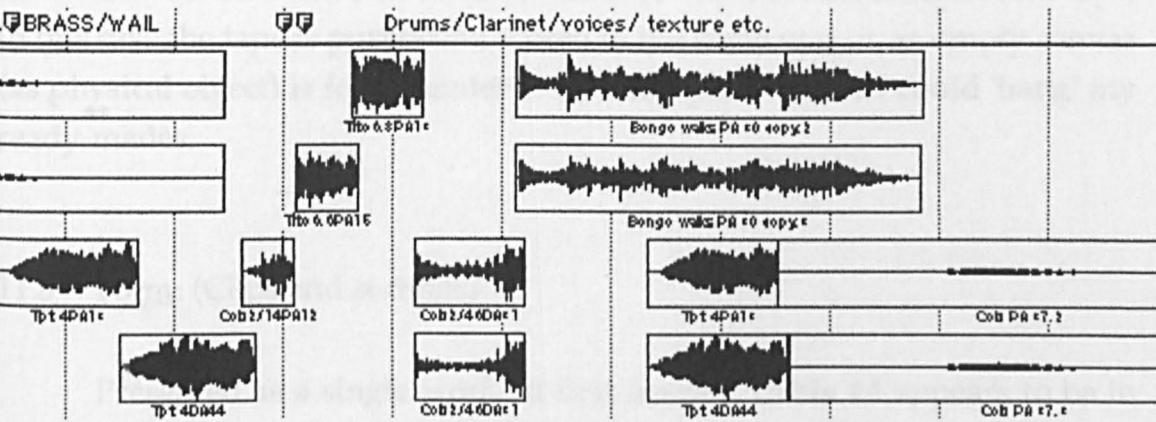


Fig. 11.1 2nd Run; 'geometric' shapes (audio files at end of 2nd Run).

Despite creating this library of ready-mades, many sounds which had been used in the previous works comprising this series were also selected. I wanted to carry on within the same soundworld and image of the series and felt that solely using the new sound sources - ready-mades and the resulting cut-outs - would eventually carry me away from the established soundworld that to an extent defined the **Urbis** series of compositions. This decision eventually created tensions with respect to the 'graphic' or conceptual sonic

execution of this work, problems which I will discuss as I describe the 'clips' and will take up at length in the conclusion to this part.

More than ever⁵, I seem to have an 'animistic' relationship with sound. This perception reinforces and reminds me of the cosmology that runs throughout the works presented in this thesis; the relationship of symbol and divinity, the creation of private myths - the individual dream (see 2.1.1).

11.2.2 A tape composition

My previous compositions for tape⁶ came about for 'functional' reasons such as music for a play or film. More recently, a growing interest in installations and site-specific music has demanded more acousmatic work.

On this occasion, to work exclusively on tape without a live element was an absolute material necessity rather than a primarily aesthetic one; I could not (yet) turn a performer into a 'ready-made', it simply did not seem to fit within the schema at hand⁷. The *medium* (in an active sense) is not the tape; in this case the tape is purposefully seen in the same way as an empty canvas (as physical object) is for a painter ... the only place where I could 'hang' my ready-mades.

11.3 Form: (Clips and sections)

Presented as a single work, at first hearing *Urbis #4* appears to be in sections but such is not the case. The work is a series of independent compositions or clips, grouped under one roof which, besides their core impulse and cosmology, share a number of characteristics such as sound sources, impetus and methodology. However, these clips were composed independently of each other, with gaps of many months between⁸ and, furthermore, each of them can ideally be presented on its own. The order in which they are here presented is circumstantial⁹.

11.3.1 1st Run

This was strictly a *run* in the sense that it came into being during a gathering of material undertaken for a completely different project. I was taken over by the emerging soundworld and true to instinct I once again allowed the material to lead me through and the assessment of its quality. The work itself was composed overnight and I was taken aback by the immediacy of its result¹⁰.

Due to the quasi-improvisational manner in which this work came into being, all elements fell in place at once and the following points are merely for organising the clarification of the elements rather than representing a creative trajectory.

Though not making use of ready-made symbols (sonic cut-outs), these were at the time completely forgotten in the initial 'rush' of the composition, I was maybe unconsciously using a sort of ready-made idea in an allegorical manner. Though the clip itself does not produce a fixed image of any sort, but associations in relation to the theme of the series, the sonic components most definitely had a mnemonic (parallel and/or allegory) for myself, which helped to observe and control the juxtapositions of the elements.

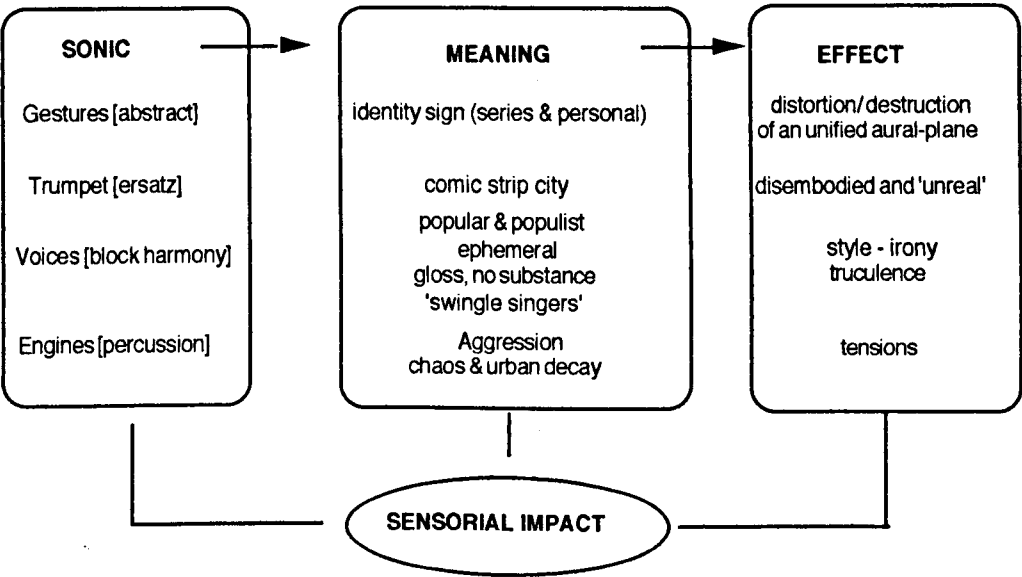


Fig. 11.2 1st Run; chart of personal images/mnemonics .

I must note here that though the withdrawal of the image narrative with respect to the audience still carries through, nevertheless to *my ears* the resultant soundworld is contained in this set of *personal* symbols and associations. I did and do have a set of images associated with this clip but in

trying not to distract from what I am choosing to highlight, I will not refer to the images in this case.

The above-mentioned sonic relationships (fig. 11.2) provided the structure. While 'composing', I was aware that I then had three basic layers or platforms of a very self-contained nature and linear direction which I was interpolating. These are in better evidence at around 40" into the work, the first few introductory seconds being a 'signature'¹¹ gesture which also introduces the sonic elements of the work.

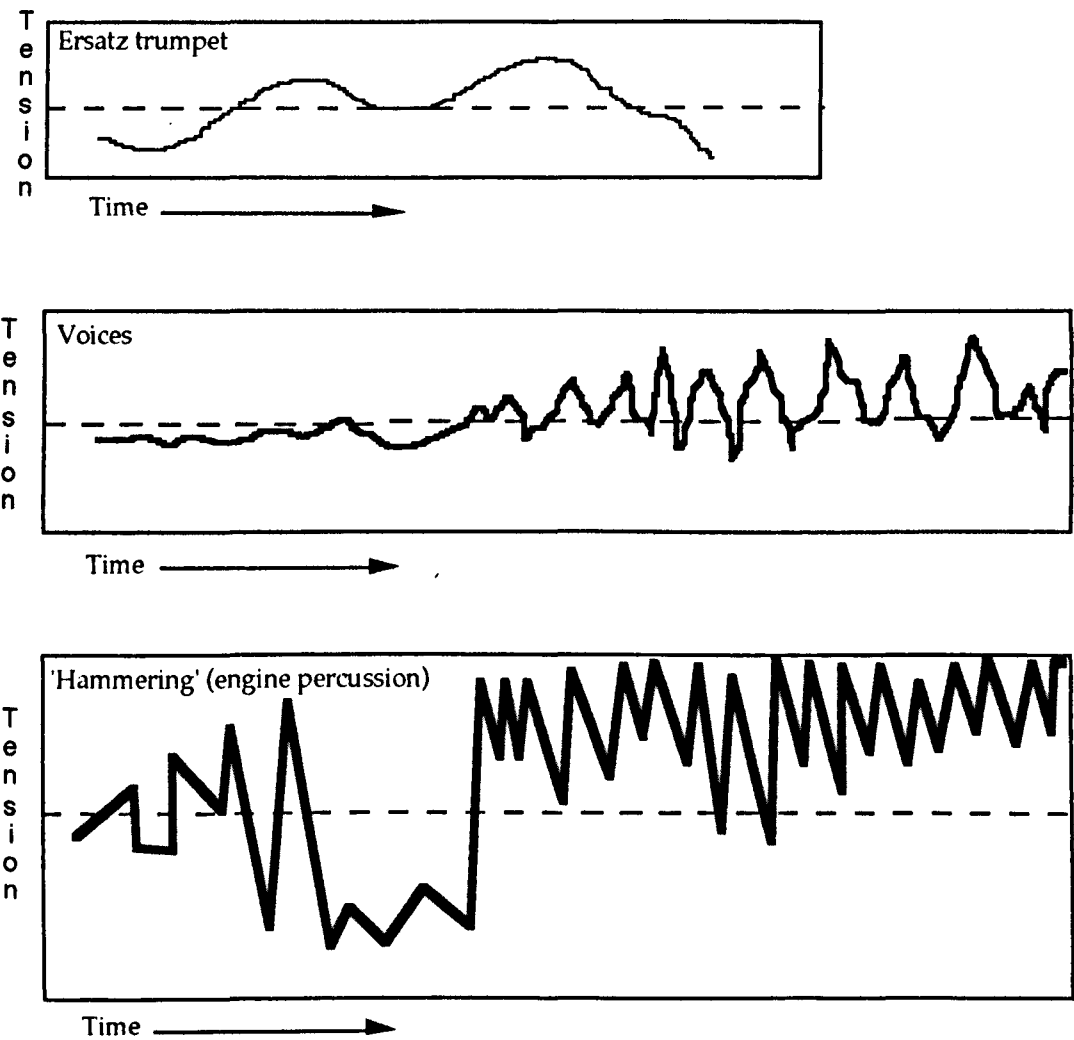


Fig. 11.3 1st Run; *three basic layers.*

These three apparently disparate layers, each of them linear, occupying their own dimension and suggesting their very own associations, were to be stacked on top of each other and their resulting interaction created a particular 'out of balance' dynamic.

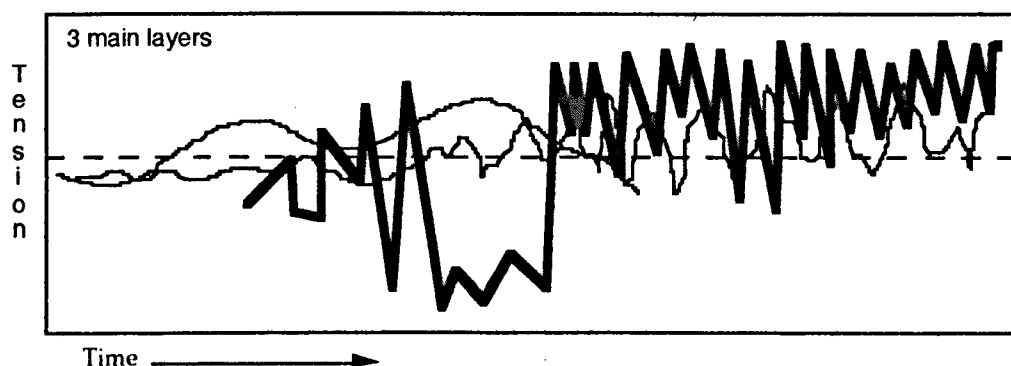


Fig. 11.4 **1st Run;** *layer/colour interaction and resulting dynamic.*

These interacting layers when aided by the added dimension of purely gestural events (such as the one opening the work), allow for the destruction or distortion of the 'aural-plane' introducing what I had best describe as a floating sensation¹², which creates a particular sense of general disembodiment. This distortion or disembodiment seems to create the sensation of an 'out of balance' world, a quasi-surreal environment despite the presence of outwardly rhythmical and signed elements. A clear example of this would be the generally arrhythmic, 'floating' sensation which starts at 1:02 until 2:00 after which it seemingly settles into a more defined dynamic.

The sound sources and type of gestures were derived from previous works in this series and hardly any sounds were 'new'¹³. The most important sonic element or rather the main object of my interest, was that of the 'massed' abstract percussion kit. Whereas previously the motor starts and engine noises were 'fun' replacements for parts of a drum kit (*Urbis #2*), here they *are* a percussive object or texture; they do not 'stand in' for something else. The 'unified' hammering (rather than rhythmic) texture towards the end of this work is the trigger which released the ideas for *Martellato* (see 11.3.3).

11.3.2 **2nd Run** ¹⁴

It was my wish in this clip to make use of the *ready-made* (see 8.1.2), and it is here where I found my first stumbling block regarding the strict application of the concept. I had assumed that the usage of borrowed imagery would be relatively straightforward; a matter of finding the 'right' spot in

time and space where to 'impact' with the *ready-made*. However, I kept noticing that in creating, or rather expanding, the global soundworld of the series I needed some sort of processing of this original symbol (the *ready-made*) in order to make it viable.

It is here that I started thinking of these original sources more in terms of 'cut-outs' than 'ready-mades'. I needed the *ready-mades* to belong to the soundworld despite their uniqueness and self-contained nature. To make this feasible I had to somehow process them so as to create a unified 'palette' where the symbol, the ready-made-idea, could sign and be seemingly part of this different¹⁵, particular environment.

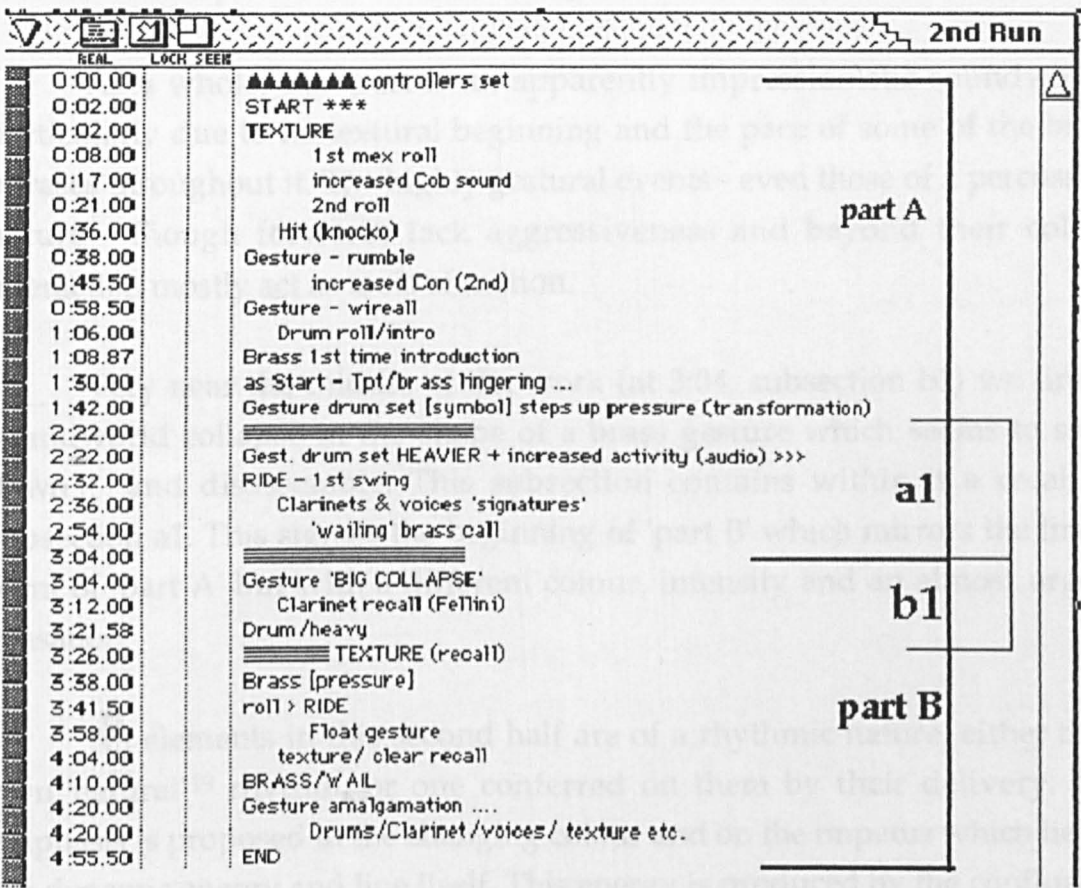


Fig. 11.5 2nd Run; markers in the sequencer file.

The piece falls into two main sections with a transitional section. This is confirmed if we observe the markers list¹⁶ of my sequencer files (fig. 11.5). While composing this piece, I was not aware of these structural parts.

I perceive the texture of the 'part A' as formed from self-contained elongated¹⁷ events or gestures, which around 0:36 minutes start being

interjected or disrupted by 'sharp' gestures. This gestural event activity then quietens down, settling into what is seemingly more of a texture again, (brass & trumpet) but one which seems to carry a different, somewhat 'stepped-up' level of intensity. Perhaps the shapes, curves and attributes of the brass sonic sources create a particular emotional association - only to suddenly be cut into by yet another gesture (i.e. 1:40 minutes), not unlike the ones before in its 'suddenness', but also of yet another heightened quality due to the directness of the *ready-made* drum pattern.

It was at this stage that I started thinking of these interjective gestures or events as 'points' which in their repetition created a basic rhythm or momentum despite the event itself being seemingly static (see 11.4.3).

As a whole, this part is an apparently impressionistic soundworld, particularly due to its textural beginning and the pace of some of the brass phrases throughout it. The highly gestural events - even those of a percussive nature - though forward, lack aggressiveness and beyond their colour interaction mostly act as tools of motion.

Very near the middle of the work (at 3:04, subsection b1) we find a soundworld collapse in the shape of a brass gesture which seems to slow down¹⁸ and disassemble. This subsection contains within it a recall of subsection a1. This signals the beginning of 'part B' which mirrors the linear form of 'part A' but with a different colour, intensity and an almost urgent sensation.

All elements in this second half are of a rhythmic nature, either their own 'natural'¹⁹ rhythm, or one conferred on them by their delivery. The emphasis is proposed in the changing colour and on the impetus which lies in the dynamic energy and line itself. This energy is produced by the confluence and interaction of different sonic cut-outs and their various 'fixed' rhythms. These shapes create a polyrhythmic texture where I can perceive a common 'gravitational' rhythm, an abstract pulse.

The work reveals another structure which is really based in 'stepping-up' levels of intensity through change in colour and motion. The subsections seemingly act as catalysts or spring-boards for this to occur abruptly.

In subsection a1 (2:22 minutes) we find the sudden drum pattern of earlier on, appearing at a sonically stronger level; there is almost a recall of the earlier brass texture but of a more urgent and anxious quality, followed by a 'swing/ride' sonic cut-out which dramatically increases motion sensation, clarinet sounds which increase tone colour sensation and a recall (within this heightened environment) of the voices of **1st Run**.

At the collapse gesture (3:04 minutes) which marks the boundary between these apparent two halves, we find a general recall of subsection a1, hence defining it as subsection b1.

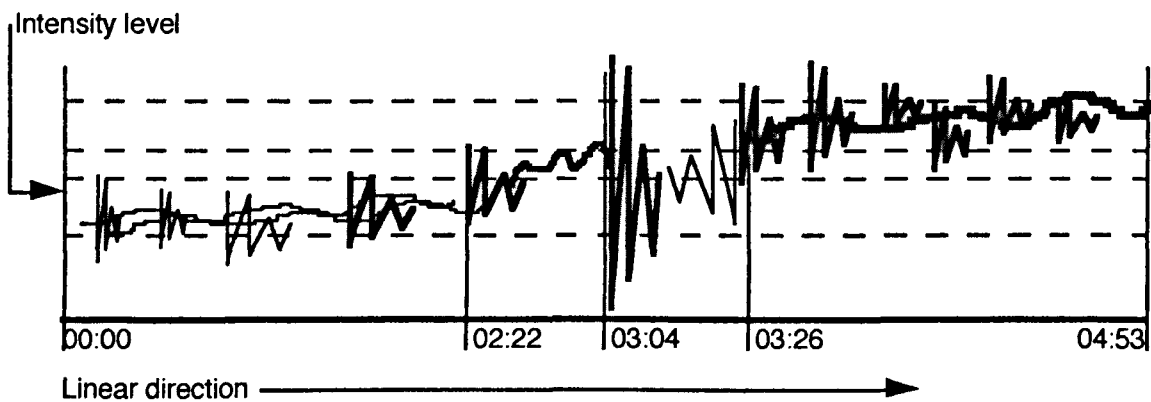


Fig. 11.6 **2nd Run;** *graphic comparison of the intensity levels and curve of both halves.*

As we can observe at a glance in the graph above, the second half is identical to the first in terms of shape and direction, the difference being in the pace of events and general colour of the texture - both are of increased intensity. Both subsections act as areas of sudden triggering of a newer level of intensity introducing new sonic elements.

As mentioned earlier (11.2.1 choosing the electroacoustic sounds), I started looking at the sounds mostly in terms of colours and shapes, without altogether dismissing their inherent musical properties. A balance was aimed at between the soundworld established in the **Urbis** series and the new ready-mades and resultant cut-outs.

The work was conceived as a colour curve which is created by linear progression rather than by simultaneous interaction as in previous works. In this case the interaction is confined to the symbols and rhythm, but not to

their colour. Likewise in terms of looking at sounds for their geometry; there exists a progression of longer shapes, regardless of their inherent activity. A practical example regarding colour progression or succession would be the increasing intensity created by moving from a growling brass into a shriller one, thereon into shrill clarinets having their 'tops' mixed with the cymbal resonances. All of these sonic elements are always perceived in the sense of colour²⁰.

The structure and form of the work is the direct result of looking sonically at it in terms of colour and shapes, and the musical curve seems to be produced by the energy trajectory of the resultant form. As most sonic components already sign on their own behalf, for the purpose of structuring the material I felt free to disregard their symbolic properties as a given and therefore concentrate solely on 'sensation'; and this I could only do through the appreciation of the sonic components as colour and material shapes which could suggest an order or form.

11.3.3 Martellato/FYSOB.

The original idea was the of delivering an incessant pounding, using just one single sound and this notion arose from the hammering sensation of the rhythmic element toward the end of **1st Run**.

Instead, a sort of *deja-vu* regarding the beginning of **2nd Run** seemingly develops. With the difference of an immediate sonic cut-out at the very beginning which in a way announces the dynamic of the work, the beginning gives the sensation of an evolving texture. This evolution moves towards the eventual release of a 'martellato' sensation.

Though **Martellato/FYSOB** is a unity, meaning that it has no sections in the sense in which I have used the term thus far, nevertheless it has a distinct profile (see fig. 11.7), which suggests three subsections or areas of apparent symmetry, all of them similar in their basic shape²¹ but each with an increased level of activity and intensity, an accumulation of points (see 11.4.3). The part or area in the middle, (part 2), has the same profile but is very much more condensed in its length.

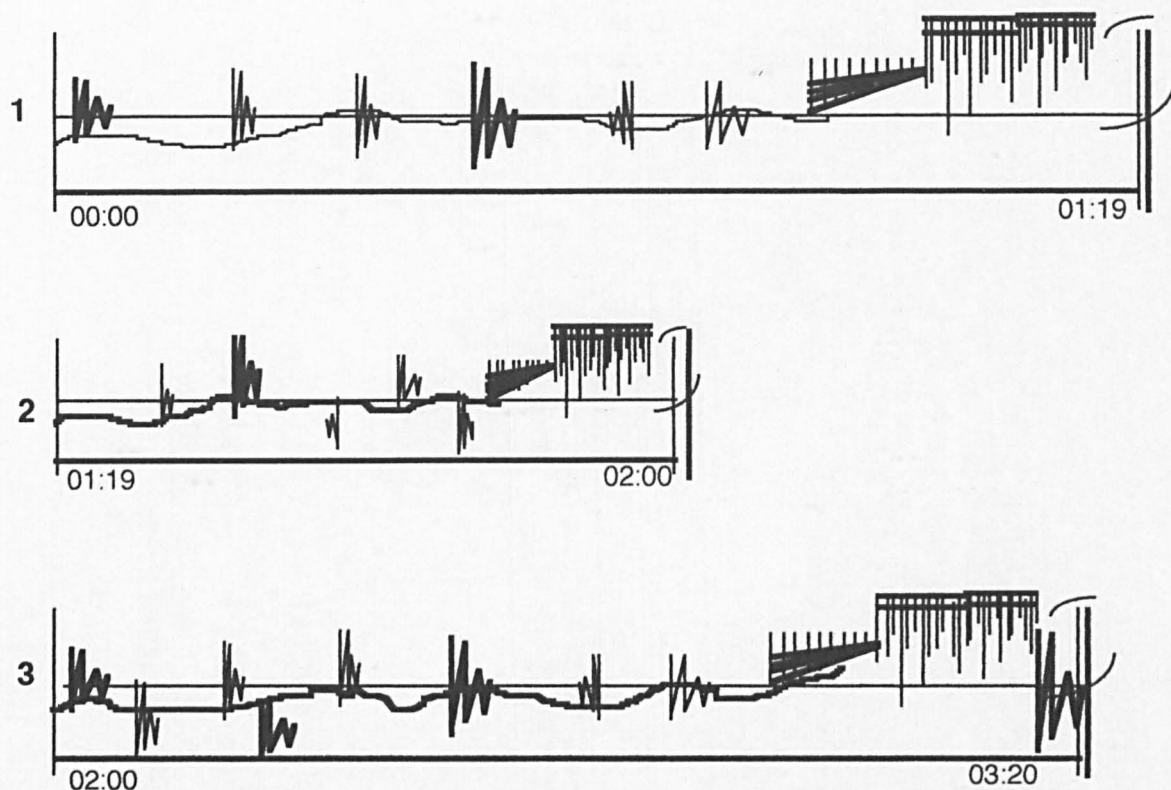


Fig. 11.7 Martellato/FYSOB; *graphic linear structure (areas of symmetry).*

The most salient element which gives the impression of there being sections or delineated boundaries is the percussive (phrase/break) gesture which we find at 1:07, 1:47 and 3:03 minutes respectively (see fig. 11.8).

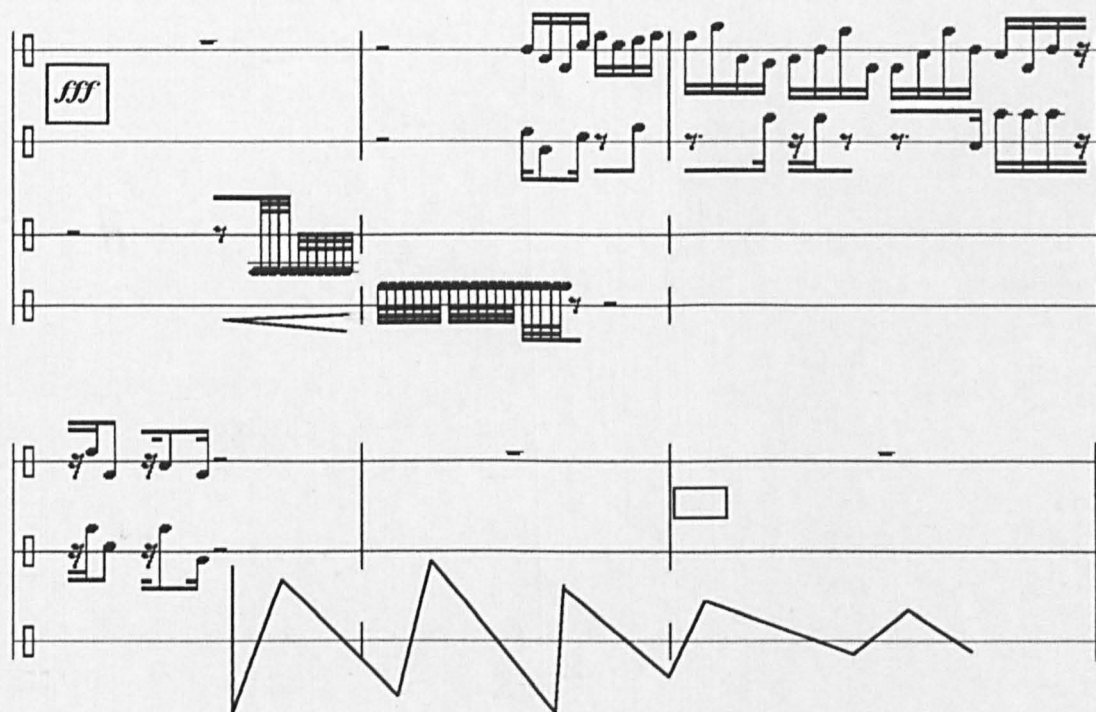


Fig. 11.8 Martellato/FYSOB; *percussive phrase/break gesture (at 3:03 minutes).*

Martellato/FYSOB fine marke		
REAL	LOCK	SEEK
0:00.00		Texture - START
0:00.00		
0:04.00		Fraa >>>
0:06.00		* HIT SIGNS >>
0:06.00		
0:20.00		roll - Cob 2/46 into >>>>
0:22.00		* HIT - drop heavy - bounce
0:22.00		
0:38.00		* >> HIT
0:41.25		Droplets 1
0:41.50		
0:42.40		* >>> hit SOFT !!!
0:42.50		
0:48.00		* >> smaller HIT
0:50.00		Droplets 2
0:52.00		
0:58.00		Texture - single voice Freq. drone intensity
1:03.00		* hit - drop/short
1:07.35		- Fraa to into >>>
1:08.91		<<< peak martellato EVENT >>>
1:09.00		BREAK 1
1:11.25		
1:15.00		*** break dissolve slice
1:18.00		

Fig. 11.9 Martellato/FYSOB; *markers list* (First part).

I view the first part or area, as seemingly textural, creating space. There are percussive events of decreasing intensity, released at roughly even times (see 11.4.3 and fig. 11.9).

The '2nd part' (1:18 -1:58 minutes, Fig. 11.10) - a very short section of forty seconds - offers to us the same linear structure as the first part. The equivalent textural level of the beginning of the previous part is present here in the shape of a sound that has its own wave-like motion. This stabilises or cushions the aftermath of the percussive gesture (see Fig. 11.8) which 'breaks' or marks the final boundary of the first area.

The events are introduced here at a faster rate than in the first section (see fig. 11.10) and the gestures themselves are highly rhythmic up to the boundary-marking percussive phrase gesture. Besides the seeming compression of activity and gesture, there is an even more important change and this lies in the colour: the difference being (beyond the individual properties of the gestures) in the sensation of aggressiveness and even anger in the 'orchestration' of the sound colour.

Martellato/FYSOB fine marke		
REAL	LOCK	SEEK
1:18.00		
1:18.53		Pulz (har voz) - pull back
1:28.00		* Rovkpell / distortion
1:34.50		BK - 1 [new signature]
1:36.00		*** Tpt sm ooo (X2)
1:40.75		*** Tpt sm 9.19
1:44.00		fraa into
1:45.35		- Fraa to into >>>
1:47.00		<<< break EVENT >>>
1:48.00		BREAK 2
1:53.00		Texture (recall)
1:53.53		Pulz - pull back / tobogan
1:54.12		***cut-out gesture-Zuma sda PA35
2:00.00		

Fig. 11. 10 Martellato/FYSOB; *markers list* (Second part).

It is also here in this part, at 1:35 minutes into the work, that a rhythmic object appears announced by a sharp fast roll. This sound was the one which originally provided the initial idea for **Martellato** and which would have just been left hammering away for a couple of minutes interacting with itself in a variety of behaviours²². This sound is heard - and almost lost - within a texture which is reminiscent of the rhythmic texture towards the end of **1st Run**. Likewise, we can hear a 'real' trumpet phrase underneath it all which is related in its impetus to the 'ersatz' trumpet of that initial clip. This is maybe an unconscious return to the idea of establishing provenance which arises in most of the works presented in this thesis.

The last area or third part (2:00 - 3:19), seemingly has two portions; the first one which is an unequivocal re-call of the voices of **1st Run** and a return to the idea of riffs (Chapter 9, Urbis #2). The riff is interrupted by a recall or threat of a 'break' provided by a smaller version of the 'break' percussive phrase (see fig. 11.8).

The second portion introduces (at 2:37 minutes) martellato gestures in rapid yet clear succession; the gaps in between percussive events get smaller. There is a sense of momentum. In a way, the main original idea of the work is concentrated here, the sense of a hammering and pounding, an overtly linear dynamic. The rhythmic objects take over each other in mostly linear succession (as opposed to interpenetrating) and effect a change of colour and intensity.

In the first section it is particularly noticeable that the soundworld has an imprint of the manner, both textural and gestural, in which I have treated surface sound in the previous works here presented. With the exception of the very outward gesture at the very beginning, a cut-out, the soundworld is 'diffuse', an image for its sound components is not altogether clear and the global result seems impressionistic.

As we enter the second section, we begin to encounter ready-mades and yet these still do not qualify as such (in the sense in which I was looking at them) and I rather express these in terms of cut-outs - an existing sonic slice or gesture which has been treated for expressive purposes in a variety of ways.

In this clip, the main signature sound (and motif/symbol) from the series is the vocal sound which by this time I had decided would be present in every clip of this work. This particular sound makes its appearance near the middle of the work, sonically cutting into the texture aided by its melodic shape which is almost identical to that of **1st. Run**. Otherwise, there are very few previously heard sounds and the soundworld cohesion lies more in the treatment given to the newer sonic sources than in the recall of earlier ones.

11.4 Conclusions (re-capitulation and reflections)

The main elements highlighted in this composition are part of an ongoing exploration, though I do believe that the popular context which frames it in this case is also the most feasible as, due to its immediate associations, the *ready-mades* are clearly in evidence and so their interaction is more readily available for observation²³.

I do not feel that the use of the *ready-made* as originally envisaged has come to fruition on its own, but rather it has actively co-operated and informed what has evolved as a particular sound image or idea. The 'sensation' of the music itself always took precedence and the concepts at play were not always 'purely' represented in the works. The concept always gave way to the practical, empirical approach. Not only the demands of the **Urbis** series' image but of the particular work itself always holding sway.

'Conceptual art carried this process still further. The proposition here, was that art could be reduced to documentation or a series of written statements and/or diagrams, and that physical embodiment, even of the reductive kind found in Minimalism, was therefore essentially superfluous. Contrary to what was intended, however, this allowed non-aesthetic content in through the back door, since the propositions put forward in the name of Conceptual art soon began to stray from the realm of pure aesthetics'. (Lucie-Smith, 1995, p12).

11.4.1 Image

The global image, the 'signature' of the series is clear and all-pervasive. Initially, the idea for this particular work was very straightforward; within this global soundworld - or even reproducing it - there would be borrowed imagery²⁴, a common imagery materialised through the 'simple' use of ready-mades, of sonic cut-outs. Rather than this 'simple' usage I found myself abstracting these ready-mades more and more. The borrowed imagery evolved into something more akin to an appropriated imagery which blends in or is taken into the signature soundworld of the series.

The attempt to investigate hyper-ready mades and the hyper- realistic image (see Chapter 8) as a tool towards a mythological canon opened up different resolutions;

'Language is a form, it cannot possibly be either realistic or unrealistic. All it can do is either be mythical or not, or perhaps, as in *Bouvard and Pécuchet*, counter-mythical.'there is no antipathy between realism and myth. It is well known how often our 'realistic' literature is mythical...' (Barthes, 1973 p.148-9).

Naturally, the realistic material references which are the *ready-mades* and other signature symbols in what in effect is the partial abstraction which *is* this work, are far more important than the apparent lack of highlighting seems to indicate. Though pointing out geometrical abstractions and abstract process at the expense of the non-abstract associations, the fact that the non-abstract elements clearly appear points to their continuing importance²⁵, too.

Within the global abstraction, larger or smaller references to objectivity (signs) somehow do produce that subtext which such objects call to the fore. As subtext within this context I mean the *associations* that recognisable objects

in a soundworld conjure up (the associations being of a subjective nature). This trace of subjectivity must not be taken away, as it is the last bastion of the individual.

11.4.2 The sensation itself

In this work, the notion of the vortex (see **Gato's Raid**) evolves into an exploration of the sensation itself. The impact produced by an assembly of colours and shapes. The allegorical image is eliminated completely. The effect is directly a result of the withdrawal of the 'mediator'. There is no longer a symbolical 'stand for' and there is a focus on energetic *tensions* of line and form.

For the purpose of looking at line and form in the manner they were treated in this work, I will purposefully ignore the allegorical elements and stress only the abstract elements of dynamic energy, colour and form.

The line is made up of the 'points' I have mentioned throughout the work and another way of paralleling them would be in reference to Kandinsky and his ideas on point and line²⁶. The line and the time element contained within it was the area where the sensation of motion²⁷ as linear energy occurred.

I started viewing the delivery of gestures, particularly in the first part of **2nd Run**, as points on a line and that the repetition of single points (gestures, signature symbols *et. al.*) created an elementary pace made of a complex of rhythms along the line. And though any or all of these gestures (points) might seem not to move in any particular direction, the relationship between several creates the sensation of movement or motion.

Colour is an important factor in these works. Beyond the apparent control of the symbols (ready-mades) themselves, the form of each clip is generated by the interaction of one colour with another, the edge of a sound on the space of its environment and onto another.

I perceive sonic colour as a more basic *sensation* than line and one which *could* be experienced in an environment without motives or gestures.

But for *perception* the line (over time) is of great importance because it is what displays the transition from one colour, shape or intensity area to the next and this makes the basis of the perception of form.

11.4.3 Final thoughts

I found this work the most difficult one to describe, partly due to the fact that the notion of the *ready-made* and *idée trouvée* is something which I would like to pursue further and partly due to the almost physical nature of the concepts themselves which are here at play.

The application of these notions even contradicted the objective of writing, as the concept has attached to it an 'attitude' or ideology which is partly represented in the execution - withdrawing the allegory, intellectual properties, focus on sensation etc. - which also proclaims no need for words;

'There is no rebus, there is no key. The work exists, its only *raison d'être* is to exist. It represents nothing but the wish of the brain that conceived it.' (Picabia, 1920 p. 44)

In the purely conceptual level of application, what I found most problematic²⁸, at times even disturbing, was that not unlike Pop art I 'crashed' against the fact that though figurative, explicit and with direct association, the *ready-mades* were not easy or malleable to use as observed at first hand. To be viable these *ready-mades* needed to be processed²⁹ in some way, hence my term *cut-out* which, beyond implying collage, I feel implies a 'non-pure' or somewhat appropriated *ready-made*. I did however use them as they were; reproductions of other things, existing *knowable* symbols, which rearranged into abstracted shapes created newer associations and at the primary level a sensorial impact.

Beyond the academic tug of war between concept and application, I wrote the works I had wanted, my ears and sensations were satisfied. The many questions arising and their half-answers have given me stimuli for the continuation or further exploration of the use of these concepts or notions in future works for this series.

Notes _____

- 1 Runs: (see 2.5) I have often meant to formalise runs into either etudes or vignettes, and had not found an excuse to do so until this occasion.
- 2 In the sense that the aim of the work is solely 'the sensation itself' and not the resulting imagery or the mechanics of its components.
- 3 As a good parallel I started thinking of the commercially available sampling CDs directed to the professional market where one finds ready-made orchestral textures, brass band riffs, 'ethnic' chanting etc. I had the chance of working on a few commercial productions where time and costs implied creating collages of pre-composed material in order to achieve a complete sound-track.
- 4 While abstracting the image for myself, I was more and more being left with just shapes and colours, but the central image for the series was always implicit.
- 5 Or, at any rate, definitely more in evidence despite the conceptual vocabulary employed to describe the series.
- 6 Until now, I have only produced three 'tape' compositions for concert performance, otherwise, what I class as functional reasons roughly includes four works for dance, two plays, a site-specific play and six 'art' films.
- 7 Unless I looked at the work as a pure 'performance' work, in which case certain mannerisms or qualities are imbibed into the performer giving the potential of assigning to the performer a *ready-made* connotation.
- 8 Between each of them and between the compositions belonging to other series (all of which run concurrently), and projects for dance etc.
- 9 Though the order follows their elaboration, there are 'in-between', compositions which I am not presenting here as these have not been 'formalised' and might never be.
- 10 Over a period I returned to this work several times and attempted to manipulate, to 'tidy it up', to reorganise it in several different ways, but each time I was defeated by the immediacy of the original *run*, hence its title.
- 11 I start using the term 'signature' here as signifying either the global image and content of the composition or the types of gestures and soundworld which are somewhat typical of mine.
- 12 As 'floating sensation' I do not mean a sensation of lightness, as indeed the dynamics, the colour, the gestures are of a very powerful nature. Here I

mean a sensation such as a lack of anchoring, an apparent lack of inner synchronisation or cohesion in the soundworld.

13 The most important new sounds were three vocal samples created by Dr Jeremy Arden who generously allowed me to use them in this work. I did of course manipulate these original sounds and created Akai sampler programs for them.

14 The title of this work (duration 4:53), unlike **1st Run**, does not mean that this is a second version of any previous material, the reason is that it really never had a title and since it was placed second within the 'clips' that conform the work, I started naming the files and all sketches in such manner.

15 Different in that this is not the environment where it came from originally.

16 The markers window in the Performer sequencer is not unlike a cue-sheet and note pad where one can make notes or comments. It was devised with film in mind; used with the frame clock one can note 'hits' when working-to-picture and by clicking the computer mouse on the bar number or frame instantly brings the sequencer to that particular point.

17 'Elongated' in the sense that these are gestures not only of a muted quality but which also have a considerably longer developing time when compared with the more typically aggressive and compressed type of gestures of, for example, the 'signature' events.

18 I think of this also as a partial 'floating' area (see **1st Run 3.1.3 Structure**)

19 I use the word 'natural' rhythm in the sense that the sonic slice, this ready-made brings with it the rhythm and tempo which was embedded within its original sonic environment. This also accounts as to why I did not work as I usually do; with time signatures and tempos. Tempo was not set (I only use the second as a unit of time) in order to be able to respond 'gracefully' to the inherent tempos contained within each sonic cut-out and allow them to interact or respond to each other in their original state.

20 Noticeably, the use of direct sonic symbols such as a swing walking jazz bass with a riding cymbal pattern does not turn the work suddenly into jazz and, though the association is there, this is pushed back into the sub-conscious as the form is completely dominated by the change of colour in the sonic shapes (as opposed to images).

21 The realisation that here there was also a structure which was primarily created in the manner of a musical dynamic effected through the

change of colour and intensity over the same basic form, partly created my *deja-vu* .

22 I have always looked at the programming parameters of the Akai S1100 sampler as a behavioural tool for the sound: to imbibe the sound with a particular behaviour beyond its already present character.

23 Having said that, I would like to emphasise that this observation is not the object.

24 Both as concept and effect:

'A collage picture by Richard Hamilton, entitled *Just What is it that Makes Today's Homes so Different, so Appealing?* has a muscle-man from a physique magazine and a stripper with sequinned breasts. The muscle-man carries a gigantic lollipop, with the word P O P on it in large letters. With this work, many of the conventions of Pop art were created, including the use of borrowed imagery.' (Lucie-Smith, 1995, p. 129)

25 Against the conceptual resolve of the work (the 'traditional' use and implications of *ready-mades*).

26 Amongst his many writings he dealt with these ideas in *Point and Line to Plane* (Kandinski, 1947).

27 Motion as opposed to rhythm.

28 In fact, a purely 'academic' problem as I had never intended in the first place to literally effect 'pure' concepts in my works. As always, these concepts merely inform certain aspects of the work and do not intend to 'be' the work.

29 The processing of sounds was conducted with the sole purpose of highlighting certain colours in the sound rather than for the purpose of sonic art (aesthetic) transformation. Viability concerned the blending of colour into the signature soundscape.

Chapter 12

The 'Urbis' series: Conclusion

In this series I attempted to present an image which once fixed, in complete contrast to the Raza series of works, is gradually withdrawn in the mechanics of the successive compositions. The language used to describe the works changes accordingly.

In the pursuit of assembling a contemporary mythological canon, cultural observations of style and fashion gave rise to analogies or parallels with modern art and this provided me with a graphic vocabulary to unveil elements which are finally perceived in these works.

'But Pop went much further than Abstract Expressionism in its insistence on the importance of stylistic signals and indicators. Pop artist's interest in the new mass culture was directed towards its glittering surface, its methods of presentation, far more than toward any social, political, or even moral concepts which could be deduced from these.' (Lucie-Smith, 1995 p. 11)

And yet, despite this notion of glitter and presentation, there is no glamour in the sound, nothing aesthetically stylised or so promoted; the soundworld is somewhat raw (largely due to the treatment of the sound), the symbols are not glossy even if in their original context they were so. This I feel arises from the curve (image) of the music itself, as sensation, as opposed to the early conceptual intention.

The pursuit of imagery and symbols created a fluid curve from representation into abstraction. This could best be described or paralleled to a linear movement from a cubist narrative (see 8.1.1) into a single global symbol, not unlike a single frame montage. Despite this evolution and transformation, most concepts and material elements remain similar throughout this curve.

The notions arising from hyper-realism, the 'hyper-gesture' or 'hyper-image', created many interesting paradoxes as my references and experience

of it to a great extent were only in relation to material, factual objects. Never before I had thought of hyper-realism in such abstract terms as that of a sonic idea.

Some things are better expressed in a hyper-realistic way or naturalistic one. The image for this series is for me better expressed in the shape of a mythological canon realised through realistic *ready-mades* and *ready-made-ideas*.

This also raised the question of whether this manner of abstracting the allegory into one single form was then some sort of 'hyper-expressionism' or a new and different kind of *objet trouvé*, the *idée trouvée*? since the ready-made was already very sophisticated by associative fact. Using the example of the CD library sample collections (see Chapter 11, footnote 2), the ready-made gestures or ideas which these contain when standing alone seem to acquire mythical proportions. This opens up for speculation whether this is a further development of contemporary expression or the sign of a culture that has developed symbols and signs not as meaningful entities but rather as sort of *aide memoires*¹.

The *ready-made* carries inherent and very powerful associations, thus making it very difficult in the first instance to see these as simple forms or just as a concrete object, though by insisting on the withdrawal of the allegorical image we can somewhat start perceiving them so. These compositions aim to be realities pure and self-reliant with no cerebral or conceptual intent². No attempt has been made towards mimesis or description, rather, there is a desire to give in to the primary (dynamic sensations, the *sensation itself*) and to spontaneous, intuitive forces. The perceived meaning is then an illusion created by the associations the spectator is creating and not by the composer (a game of mirrors).

In pursuing the hyper-realistic by attempting to transform these everyday musical references and sounds (trains, cars, crowds etc.) into mythical speech, I was made aware of the different impact of different myths as, when referring to an unfamiliar culture as in the *Raza* series, this type of speech is normally perceived as magical and mysterious. Yet in its direct application to a popular culture with well known relationships and associations it seemed to me that instead of magic we have illusions or maybe a sort of western 'magical realism'.

In these works the allegorical, descriptive sound gestures and the elements of colour, line and form eventually seem to appear to be made to 'clash', to be completely separate entities, their seeming provenance belonging to different worlds. There is the use at times of somewhat expressionistic gesture and soundscape to inhibit or distort what would be - within this context - a traditional response to the allegorical, illusionistic elements in these works.

From the very outset, the sound-gesture and symbol organisations are constituted in a such a way that they are as open³ as possible in their resultant form so as to be able to include and respond to new phenomena. This open or flexible constitution creates a larger shape or canvas resulting in a 'fluid' accommodating soundscape which transforms and is transformed by the new sonic phenomena.

When observing elements I started noticing that, in a way, the sound images or ready-mades when being considered as geometrical shapes which have a defined contour (as boundary and as definition of their location in space) are elements which in such execution owe more to the idea of 'hard edge' abstract shapes and sonic planes and surfaces of sound (see 2.6.1) than to the concepts behind the Pop imagery usage⁴. When these shapes overlap one creates maybe the illusion that these forms are semi-transparent because the colour of one seems to be modified by the colour of the form overlapping it, both forms or shapes though originally belonging to different soundworlds give the illusion of 'belonging', of being part of each other, they seem to work by different aural laws than those we might expect.

As with the Raza series, there is a concern for movement, either the kinetic reflection in *Urbis #2* or the comments made in *Urbis #4*. By the time we arrived at the latter work, the idea of movement has evolved to include static sounds that when delivered along a line start creating the sensation of movement. In essence there is yet another dimension of movement, one in time (observed but not measured through it) as linear representation and another one physical; the movement of the single object. What was originally set out in terms of the dynamic of a cubist narrative (see 8.1.1) seems to create by the end a 'free-standing' linear structure.

I felt as a whole that the soundscape, in structural as opposed to physical and image terms, is the essential background *against* which the relationship between gesture-symbols is established and the primed canvas upon which the cut-outs are hung in order. The experience of space here is then based upon the virtual movement of the different sonic shapes embedded in the soundscape. These movements can only be perceived if the frame of reference, the multi-dimensional soundscape is evident; one cannot measure (or experience) the sensation of moving things without a background or context.

As the series progressed it became more focused than ever on the experience of the 'sensation itself'⁵ and paradoxically, in refusing to ascribe any intellectual properties to the stimuli, I found myself having to clarify general concepts even more, 'speaking out' the abstraction and subjectivity of the sensation in terms of concepts, somehow objectifying the subjective.

'There is the usual musicologist's rejection of the musician's discourse: "the composer doesn't know what he's talking about. He's the last to know anything about the results of his creative activity. Only the result counts."' (Nattiez 1990, p. 189)

The result is what counts and in this case, is 'all about' sensation. The works aim to elicit immediate responses and the processes and concepts really appear *only* when ideas about the 'thing' are discussed.

At all times it is important to note that even when abstracting a sonic shape or gesture from another object which contained it, dismissing its colour, texture, depth and even dynamic, for me there still remains the fact that perceptually, aurally, the colour matters, the line matters, its texture matters in order to be a meaningful form. A particular sound or shape may be the same anywhere we place it, but in a creative form, its location, delivery, the balance of its interaction with other sounds and the environment are determining factors for its communication.

A meaningful form or an expressive form seems to me not to be an abstracted structure but rather a magical (non-illusory) event where the congruence of elements is so revealing that the image and its meaning unfold as a single, unique reality. The heart of the work is in that though paralleling the relationships of the real world nevertheless it can give to us the sensation

or insight into the way these relationships are directly contained in it, not symbolised but truly present.

Notes _____

1 Assuming that this modern culture has, besides the image, the associative memory of its meaning.

2 Though they rely on concept in order to have their mechanics elucidated.

3 In *Urbis #2* (9.2.2) I already make references to the 'flexible' environment.

4 This also can be noted as part of the mechanics and methodology of the Raza series, here it is highlighted differently and 'silhouetted' by the direct association inherent in the ready-made.

5 In *Gato's Raid* (Chapter 5) I refer to the 'dynamic sensation' as I perceived it in relation to the *character*, here *sensation* is used in relation to the notion of the whole, single image (form).

'So the poet too, as artist, will be beautifully ill-informed about the subjects of his poetry' Plato (The Republic , Book X, 602)

Section IV

Chapter 13

General Conclusion

13.1 Introduction

In this thesis I have attempted to clarify the motivation behind the compositions here presented and the notions which contribute directly to the mechanics of their realisation.

I am well aware that each mechanical concept, each metaphysical notion can be a thesis on its own. I have faced the difficulty of attempting to clarify in an orderly manner many different and often contradictory strands without expounding in detail on each notion itself but rather highlighting its contribution. The result of this work has been one of reaffirming beliefs and opening further paths of enquiry.

I cannot claim that these writings wholly define me as an artist, but do define those areas of interest which *are* the work, thus somewhat reflecting myself.

In the chapter *The Musician's Discourse* (in Nattiez 1990) we are told that the circumstance of the discourse and the speaker's personality are decisive;

' [...] This context is at once, as we shall see, social and cultural in the largest sense. A second context, however, is that of the particular circumstances in which the discourse is conducted. [...] It is, in the end, a matter of knowing who is talking. Margaret Mead among others, has taught us not to regard societies of the oral tradition as well-regulated clocks.' (Nattiez 1990 p. 191)

Though within an academic structure, I have attempted to be faithful not only to the impetus of each of the compositions, but, most importantly, to

their source which is wholly informed by my cultural references. Thus in the unfolding of this thesis there is a reflection of that origin.

13.2 Cosmology

I have endeavoured to unveil in this thesis a system of philosophical and spiritual beliefs which are the prime motivators of the compositions.

One of the great advantages of the nature of electroacoustic composition is that we can manipulate a sound in such a way that only the faintest relationship to a familiar sound can be heard, we can create a sound out of noise whose identity and origin can be known only to the creator; we can use rhythm, time and space in such a way that makes it possible for us to be able to manipulate perceptions so as to take them to the foreground of consciousness through the sublimation of the sound material to create this world of symbols and magic, and hopefully transmit to the listener this individual world of ours.

Indeed, if we went back in time and tried to recapture the function of the artist, we could claim that this was one of being the purveyor of myths, and to renew the ritual so as to bring people out of themselves and into the universe. The myth as the foundation structure of a reality is a manifestation both creative and exemplary. Nowadays, science determines our perception of reality and as such narrows our independent creativity. Maybe as modern-day shamans, composers could try to return to the absolute, to the projection of consciousness.

The Platonic notion of man as intermediate between the physical and spiritual worlds is commonly held as equivalent to the biblical notion of man as the image of God. In this sort of interpretation, the world is a model of philosophical and religious truth, not merely a symbol or a metaphor of a supernatural order. It could be argued then, that one of the functions of the composer would be that of being the Shaman, the link between the physical and spiritual worlds. In this task, very much as other arts, noticeably painting, struggled to do, we can make full use of the flexibility of this new technology and the vastness of its territory to bring about this return to consciousness. As with the Platonists, the inner man and outer man together

form the whole, a microcosm wherein the 'great principle' is undividedly present. Musically, we could say that each event - sound-object - is whole in itself, yet its behaviour depends on a central control (symbol and metaphor) which is superordinate to them. This is not a musical structure as such, but a myth, an intentional 'great principle'¹ that translates or is represented by a musical structure and hierarchy.

As I worked on the words for this thesis I could not help being increasingly disquieted by the feeling that the 'magic' in the compositions was being diluted, and to a certain extent my perception of these works has changed. I hope that as time passes and I distance myself from these writings I will be able to recover the *sensation* that these works afforded me as opposed to the *elucidation* in intellectual terms that now (for me) they seem to have been imbibed with. However, the concern with meaning and the metaphysical aspects of these works does not decry the existence and purposeful application of mechanical notions;

'When asked to formulate his "credo", George Crumb replied: "Music can be defined as a system of proportions in the service of a spiritual impulse". This indicates that technical and structural matters are every bit as important to the composer as the purely expressive and sonorous features that first captured the critics' attention, a fact that is too often overlooked.' (Chase in Chase et al. 1986 p.3)

13.3 Myths, symbols and signs

The main tool of communication in these works has been the use of myths, allegories and imagery.

'Myth is a type of speech. But what must be firmly established at the start is that myth is a system of communication, that it is a message. (this allows one to perceive that myth cannot possibly be an object, a concept, or an idea; it is a mode of signification, a form. '(Barthes, 1973 p. 117)

As myths constitute structures of value which reflect on the nature of reality so deeply that they go beyond its limits, by defining these limits metaphysically they disclose the relativity of our reality. As to understand abstractly is so difficult, myths use symbols and metaphors to make the point

concrete. It is then temporalised, localised, factualised and this makes it *knowable* to us.

'The implication of metaphor brings a much richer knowledge of the world. To speak by way of implication is not about standing back and attaining the correct distance in order to see things clearly; implication is about being plunged into things, finding oneself in the middle of things.' (Wheale, 1995 p. 157)

I tend to see myself (and other composers) as modern shamans, who affect the surrounding world through the enactment of rituals and the narration of myths - the difference between this type of shamanism and the traditional one is twofold: firstly, this new one operates within a modern, urban-based, materially-oriented society; and secondly that the rituals and myths are self-invented, neither traditional nor collective. As myths and the sound-image metaphors are an individual creation, as well as the particular perceptive interpretations of the individual listener, we cannot attempt to attach a particular technique to their construction. The realisation is singular.

13.4 Imagery, meaning and illusions

My use of imagery was then largely abstract even when paradoxically enough there was a very clear representational narrative particularly in the *Raza* series of compositions. The abstract frequently baffles people, mostly because it seems unrelated to the world of appearances we normally observe and are part of. The abstract apparently refers to the ineffable, to inner states or to itself.

'The intensely imaged nature of our culture produces quantities of information that has to be tended and managed, an intellectual livestock with its own commodity market.' (Wheale, 1995 p. 61)

I came to understand that unless one displaces an object, shape or image away from its natural form, it has no 'real' momentous significance. The resonant chord in our psyche is struck by the displacement, the highlighting of a particular form. The composer often selects a form and then

simplifies it until it bears only stylised resemblance to the original or even changes beyond recognition.

The assembling of these 'simple' forms reveals the notion that simplicity of shape (overall curve) does not equate with simplicity of experience. The notion and application of collage was a momentous step for a composer already inclined to and practising informal abstraction. This in turn took me further down the path of fragmentation and pushing the forms in the compositions away from any naturalistic starting point, such that without a title the subject's meaning is impossible to read. Reaching the stage of using collage and fragmented forms, an almost 'natural' evolution or expansion was provided by the *ready-made*; not only in its material aspect as a sonic shape but in that when built into the composition as a quote or reference from the outside, it was a conduit for manipulating a myriad of powerfully associative images and likely meanings.

'[...] assemblages of this kind [*ready-mades* etc.] explored the complex relations between perception, memory and identity, and in the process produced works which ironised and reflected upon the assumptions of traditional painting and conventional perception.' (Wheale, 1995 p. 18)

This in turn I manipulated in an attempt to create 'illusions'. In the *Urbis* series of works I set up a particular soundworld and, due to the *apparent* meaning of the common symbols used, the semblance of meaning is there, despite the fact that I did not intend the same meaning myself; as opposed to the *Raza* series where symbols are placed in such manner as to produce a specific image which is intended to carry specific meaning.

'If one occupies oneself with what is full: that is, the object as a positive form, the space around it is reduced to almost nothing. If one occupies oneself primarily with the space that surrounds the object, the object is reduced to almost nothing. What interest us most - what is inside a form? When you look at Cézane's apples, you see that he hasn't really painted apples, as such. What he did was to paint terribly well the weight of space on that circular form. The form itself is a hollow area with sufficient pressure applied to it by the space surrounding it to make the apple *seem* to appear, even though in reality it doesn't exist. It's the rhythmic thrust of space on the form that counts.' (Guillot and Lake 1964, p. 219)

13.5 Contrasts and the 'different' series

Between the **Raza** and **Urbis** series, there are some obvious differences which I perceive to be simply due to their surfaces. Both series are similar in that they share the same notions and mechanics. They are different in that the myths and imagery contain dissimilar cultural references.

I tried not to let surface texture become too appealing, it is intended to create an illusion of space, location etc. (even if at times contradictory illusions) it is never a decorative device; surface texture in this case is yet another tool serving the idea of the composition, just as does every other element or notion. Otherwise, a conflict arises in which the means - the tools - obscure the end.

Some elements are highlighted in different manners. In **Gato's Raid**, the temporal character for the subject, with its forceful push and pull qualities (reflecting on chaos/order relationships), is naturally expressed along a time curve. But this is being distorted as a sensation by the emphasis on the soundscape or structural surfaces which in this case are apprehended more in terms of 'the moment'. In **Urbis #4** the feature of the sensation, the moment, is not expressed through a character but through sound-colour.

Throughout the **Raza** series, the purposeful inconsistency in the use of the character roles has been put to for specific ends. The content and form has been drastically simplified and object-ideas are piled one on top of each other so that the ear is left no escape beyond the immediate image. Objects of an apparent 'low order' in the aural and structural hierarchy are occasionally given the same value as those in the foreground. Thus, the lights and darks of the musical discourse are purposefully juxtaposed in an arbitrary manner.

As opposed to the **Raza** series, the dynamic force that the **Urbis** series intends to convey is not on a cosmic scale; rather, it represents the energy and social culture of a modern city and of those who live in it and are influenced by it. The shapes swirling through these compositions are caught up in rhythms which suggest clearly outlined objects and structures with 'worked on' surfaces, as opposed to the same activity that seemingly 'floats' in the **Raza** series.

In the **Urbis** series the music is made 'visual' through a sort of sublimated geometry, rather than through the apparent content of the *ready-mades*, which suggested structural solutions such as those visual artists experiment with. The **Raza** series seemingly gives greater prominence to the subjective, expressive content. In the **Urbis** series, image rhythm is a means of organising the compositions; both series attempt to exploit notions of colour and shape for their expressive and dynamic qualities. Notions of sensation, fragmented narrative and imagery and this consideration of the 'graphic' elements in particular, further suggest these as gesturally expressive compositions².

13.6 Strategies?

I believe that the creative being attempts to frame those intangible aspects of reality that are generally perceived to be amorphous and chaotic, somewhat objectifying the subjective universe. What is expressed then, is not just the composer's personal feelings, but also what the composers knows and *understands* about feeling. As the creative being acquires an evolving and abounding symbolism, that knowledge even exceeds the composers personal experience. Then the work expresses a conception of life and emotions, an inward reality.

There are two main strands. One relates to the formal qualities of composition, in this case largely abstract work, and the myriad of related elements it contains such as fragmentation, sound-colour, collage etc.³; the other is the 'traditional' pursuit of meaning, beyond conditioned responses to illusory surfaces. The metaphysical elements beyond the work itself.

The different areas which are developed in the works presented in this thesis do not aim at or consist of new discoveries which controvert former thought. It finds new and personal truths which evolve organically from the past, and do not intend to turn older truths obsolete.

As for discovering my compositional processes, the clarification of tools I used do not shed any major light on 'my system' nor do I think there is one, as each new work always feels as 'the first time'. What I have rediscovered is an animistic relationship to sonic materials and a somewhat

eidetic⁴ projection. I have always felt (and often claimed) that I simply 'take note', transcribe that which I hear; the music is already there. I have grown used to allowing the music, the idea, to lead and I respond to this creative impetus by stewarding or facilitating the realisation process.

13.7 Final (continuing) thoughts

Music profoundly modifies in several dimensions the consciousness we have of ourselves, not only in relation to ourselves but also in relation to the world. If we take the premise that, due to the systems of labels imposed on music, nothing is more laden with emotional associations (albeit artificially), nothing is more effective at recreating situations that completely engage our sensibilities. It induces the average listener into a state in which both his or her inner feelings and relationship with the outer world are dominated by emotion. When music is successful, music creates a communion of the self with what is happening, and as such, it brings about a transformation in the structure of the consciousness by realising an exceptional relationship between the self and the world.

It is at these levels of 'altered states', of transformation of the consciousness, where the absence of traditional ready-made sets of symbols and meanings makes electroacoustic music particularly powerful to express these metaphorical worlds of ours. It makes room for the 'magic' of different realities to be expressed and perceived. The materials of electroacoustic music make its essential characteristics more poignant. Music in essence is movement and in return is an incitement to movement. Sound realises itself in time, its relation to itself constantly changing, because even if remaining apparently the same, this 'remaining' would result in a change in duration. Even a sound on its own, isolated from source, cause and effect, will still be perceived as an event which realises itself in space, and this is even more obvious when in conjunction with a visual event. Sound also defines the space in which I am situated and at the same time situates me within this space. In the dimension of time, sound modifies our consciousness of being to a large degree. It signifies an event and the unfolding of events. How can we ignore these areas in our music making if we are trying to communicate? These are the centres of human perception that demand constant stimuli. The

reception of the message that the composer sends is received in these areas and only then rationalised and decoded.

I have provided sound images which are immediate, aimed at creating a direct and unique interaction with the listener, not only making these images theirs but abstracting from them their own and very personal meaning. This composer has revealed his vision and the listener has appropriated it.

Notes _____

- 1 The theory that 'transcendence' is a source of 'balance' because it reveals the coincidence of opposites in the supreme One (...) The mystical scale as such allowed for so many levels of understanding, the principle of 'the whole in the part' permitted so many kinds of foreshadowings and foreshortenings that the speculative phases of the argument could remain hidden in the clouds, and yet be accurately 'mirrored' in a practical adage. Mystical Platonism thus fulfilled the prerequisite of any philosophy fashionable in its day: it combined the obscure with the familiar. But to secure this junction, a magic word is always needed, a felicitous phrase sufficiently compact to be quickly grasped and easily repeated, and at the same time sufficiently wide and mysterious to suggest a comprehensive philosophy of life. Characteristically, the indispensable word was found by the humanists in an ancient grammarian.' (Wind, 1980 p. 97)
- 2 ie. the gestural shape and its content transcends the particular sound object which forms it.
- 3 Strictly as tools and as such adapted to the needs of the idea at hand.
- 4 *Eidetic* imagery is the ability to project mental imagery onto a blank piece of paper. In *Eidetic Imagery* (Jaensch 1930), E.R. Jaensch describes how eidetic images (as opposed to memory images) are seen as projected *outside* the observer (like an after-image). This ability is common with children and so-called primitive societies (maybe like a language of dreams) but rare amongst European adults. I tend to relate this to the 'intuitive' approach of many artists, I also used to think of it as the stream-of-consciousness principle.

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Appendix I: details of the Raza series recordings.

Performance

ID1 - clock 0:21

LUCERO for charango and tape

Duration: 14:30

Performer: Agustín Fernandez, charango

Recording: City University Electroacoustic Music Studios, 2/95

ID2 - clock 14:14

GATO'S RAID for marimba and tape

Duration: 18:00

Performer: ----- see notes

Recording: composer's home studio

* notes: This is a study version to guide the performer. However, the gesture, phrasing and delivery are very clear and provide a very accurate picture regarding the performance and role of the marimba part.

ID3 - clock 32:34

DE LUNA A LUNA ... for two percussionists and tape

Duration: 14:37

Performer: Ricardo Gallardo and Richard Benjafield, percussion.

Recording: tape part realised at the composer's home studio.

Concert performance recorded by the B.B.C. during its premiere at the "Electrifying Exotica" Festival, Purcell Room, South Bank Centre on the 8th May 1992

* notes: This live recording though adequate nevertheless is out of balance, particularly in section II where the cabasa 'cuts through' excessively, and section III where the percussion drowns the tape part. I feel this is partly due to the concert having been recorded with an overhead stereo microphone and due to the lack of monitoring of the recording as the piece progressed in spite of the recording engineers having been provided with a score and instructions.

Tape parts

ID4 - clock 47:39

LUCERO for charango and tape

Duration: 14:34

ID5 - clock 1:01:08

GATO'S RAID for marimba and tape

Duration: 18:00

ID6 - clock 1:19:18

DE LUNA A LUNA ... for two percussionists and tape

Duration: 12:05

AppendixII: details of the Urbis series recordings.

Performance

ID1 - clock 0:20

URBIS #2 for bass clarinet and tape

Duration: 20'

Performer: Hein Pijnenburg, bass clarinet

Recording: recorded live in Amsterdam and re-mixed at the composers home studio, 10/95

(ID 1) clock 0:20 Duration: (I) 7:20

(ID 2) clock 7:45 (II) 6:16

(ID 3) clock 14:08 (III) 5:18

ID4 - clock 20:28

URBIS #3 for electric guitar, live electronics and tape

Duration: 12:56

Performer: Tim Brady, electric guitar.

Recording: Maison Radio-Canada, Montréal, Canada, 1993

ID5 - clock 33:36

URBIS #4 for electroacoustic sounds on tape

(ID 5) clock 33:36 Duration: (I) 1st run; 2:59

(ID 6) clock 36:43 (II) 2nd run; 4:53

(ID 7) clock 41:41 (III) Martellato/FYSOB; 3:17

Recording: composer's home studio, (I) 1994 (II) 1995 (III) 1996

Tape parts

ID8- clock 45:20

URBIS #2 for bass clarinet and tape

(ID 8) clock 45:20 Duration: (I) 7:20

(ID 9) clock 52:45 (II) 6:16

(ID 10) clock 59:08 (III) 5:18

ID11 - clock 1:05:01

URBIS #3 for electric guitar, live electronics and tape

Duration: 12:53