Contrapuntally Inspired: Voice Leading, Texture and Rhythm in the Music of Ben Monder

by

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the use of counterpoint in the music of New York guitarist Ben Monder, arguing that specific contrapuntal elements inform his musical expression and contribute to his unique voice in contemporary jazz. Published pedagogical literature on jazz composition emphasizes big band arranging over small ensemble writing and has not adequately addressed the scope of jazz compositional practices since the 1960s. Consequently, innovative approaches such as Monder's have been neglected and suitable frameworks for analyzing his contributions have not been developed. Synthesizing Walter Piston's notion of opposition and Ernst Toch's interest in textural shifts as a form of contrast with attention to Monder's development of intervallic voicings and voice leading broadens my framework for analyzing contemporary jazz counterpoint. In particular, my analysis emphasizes non-imitative polyphony consisting of opposing elements within a texture (melody, harmony, rhythm, metre) and contrast between textures (shifts).

Score analysis, transcription and a personal interview with Monder form the basis for examining select compositions and related improvisations in solo, duo, trio or quartet settings featured in his

recordings *Flux* (1996), *Dust* (1997), *Excavation* (2000), *Oceana* (2005), and *Hydra* (2013). Analyses reveal a varied use of contrapuntal devices, including voice leading of intervallic voicing structures in chorales, a freer treatment of dissonance in pedal point, polytonality, polyrhythm, polymetre, and textural shifts. Guitar solos illustrate an often-overlooked contrapuntal link between composition and improvisation through motivic development. Most significantly, Monder's extensive treatment of contrapuntal techniques shapes the form and identity of his compositions. This comprehensive approach to counterpoint and his emphasis on notation over improvisation in multi-movement compositions set him apart from his peers and gain him recognition from musicians and critics alike. His unique position within contemporary jazz circles challenges the prevailing tendency among jazz scholars to overlook composers in favour of improvisers who are assumed to have been the driving forces of jazz history. This study, then, builds on a growing direction in jazz scholarship that challenges existing narratives of jazz history and practice. It also serves as a stepping-stone for establishing counterpoint as a rich analytical, pedagogical, compositional and improvisational resource in contemporary jazz practice.

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INTRODUCTION

Published pedagogical literature on jazz composition tends to focus primarily on big band arranging with less attention given to small ensemble writing. Moreover, with several notable exceptions (e.g., Ron Miller's *Modal Jazz Composition & Harmony Volumes 1 & II*, Bill Dobbins' *Jazz Composing and Arranging: A Linear Approach* (1986), David Baker's *Arranging and Composing for the Small Ensemble* (1985), Gil Goldstein's *Jazz Composer's Companion* (1981), or Richard Sussman and Michael Abene's *Jazz Composition and Arranging in the Digital Age* (2012)), most of this work has emphasized arrangement rather than composition of new material. This tendency follows from how the notion of composition was understood among practitioners. For instance, as jazz educator and scholar Ron Miller explains, "Traditionally, a jazz composition was an arrangement for *big band* that was composed by the arranger. Most of the earlier jazz composition text books (and there were few) took that approach."[1] This understanding and the resultant focus on big band composition is not surprising given that these ensembles helped to popularize jazz among the general public during the swing era of 1930s and 1940s in dance halls and on radio stations.

Yet the subsequent decline of big bands, and the rise of small ensembles as the main vehicle for performance, did not prompt widespread shifts in the literature in jazz composition on a scale comparable to the considerable changes in style, form, melody, harmony and rhythm since the 1960s as spearheaded by the likes of tenor saxophonist-composer Wayne Shorter and

[1] Ron Miller, *Modal Jazz Composition & Harmony*, vol. 1 (Rottenburg: Advance Music, 1992), 6, italics in original.

pianist-composer Herbie Hancock, among others.[2] Rather, these elements were addressed through an extensive literature on improvisation, while issues related to composition that address these small group changes have tended to be dealt with by jazz instructors using their own personalized approach to pedagogy. This is significant in that alongside the proliferation of jazz education since the 1960s, many widely used published pedagogical materials are not necessarily in line with practices both on the bandstand and in jazz classrooms.

Not only has composition been less prominent than improvisation in the published literature on small ensemble jazz, but counterpoint has been virtually ignored despite its presence in jazz's past and, as I will discuss in this dissertation, its present, as illustrated by the work of guitarist Ben Monder (b. 1962). Though Monder is a unique voice, he is widely accepted in jazz circles as a jazz musician and his example illustrates the rich potential for counterpoint in jazz composition.

The limited attention in published pedagogical literature to small ensemble jazz composition and especially counterpoint as a viable technique for it may be due in part to false assumptions that counterpoint is exclusive to Western art music or that it is limited to imitative techniques such as fugues and canons that have not been explored in a jazz setting. Moreover, jazz compositions are typically notated on "lead sheets," scores that include only the melody and chord symbols, emphasizing vertical structures over linear movement between chords. This convention reinforces the idea that jazz compositions are springboards for improvisation with imitative/contrapuntal techniques emerging in performance rather than as part of the compositional process. Finally, the lack of attention to counterpoint in jazz is very much in

[2] Many jazz artists have shaped the evolution of jazz composition and performance since the 1960s, including Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Chick Corea, Bill Evans, and Thelonious Monk. While they may have become internationally renowned as improvisers, they have also made lasting contributions to developments in jazz composition.

keeping with a widely held assumption that jazz is a predominantly homophonic art form, a perception reinforced by the common big band technique of block chord writing from the swing era[3] and small ensemble performance conventions based on a model of melody/solo improvisation supported by chordal accompaniment.

Early jazz history, however, dispels any misperception of jazz as a purely homophonic music with little predisposition to counterpoint. While some jazz styles may be homophonic, William Russo stresses, "the collective improvisation of early jazz is nothing if not counterpoint."[4] For the first decades of the twentieth century, New Orleans jazz was defined by collective improvisation involving a small ensemble of performers who created independent melodies with crosscutting rhythms that formed a polyphonic texture.[5] King Oliver's Jazz Band is a classic example of polyphony in early New Orleans jazz featuring a front line of trumpet, clarinet, and trombone improvising independent melodies supported by a rhythm section of percussion and chordal accompaniment.[6] Early jazz is also inseparable from the influence of polyrhythms rooted in African drumming,[7] which ethnomusicologist Simha Arom identifies as

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[3] To be sure, apart from block chord writing, there are countless examples of linear writing in big bands throughout jazz history. Among others, they include Duke Ellington's Orchestra, Stan Kenton's Orchestra, Bob Brookmeyer's big band, the Vanguard Orchestra, Maria Schneider's Orchestra, Miguel Zenon's Identities big band, Darcy James Argue's Secret Society, Guillermo Klein's Los Guachos, and Jon Hollenbeck's Large Ensemble.

[4] William Russo, *Jazz Composition and Orchestration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 130.

[5] Gunther Schuller, *Early Jazz: Its Roots and Musical Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 11, 57. See a further discussion of New Orleans functional polyphony, Gerhard Kubik, *Jazz Transatlantic: The African Undercurrent in Twentieth-Century Jazz Culture*, (Jackson, Miss: University Press of Mississippi, 2017), 374-375.

[6] Ted Gioia, *The History of Jazz*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 48-49.

[7] Mark C. Gridley and Wallace Rave, "Towards Identification of African Traits in Early Jazz," *The Black Perspective in Music*, vol. 12, no. 1 (Spring 1984), 49.

rhythmic polyphony.[8] These historical links between jazz, non-Western music traditions, and polyphony suggest the need for ways of understanding counterpoint that differ from those rooted in the example of Western European art music.[9]

Indeed, counterpoint not only connects early jazz to African polyrhythms, I argue that it also serves as an often-overlooked point of intersection between composition and improvisation through motivic development. Conceptually, jazz musicians have often blurred the line between composer and improviser. Monder, himself, has noted how guitarist Jim Hall's solo on *Angel Eyes* (*Live!* Horizon, 1975) introduced him to the idea of "improvising compositionally."[10] Wayne Shorter famously remarked, "Composing is improvisation slowed down. Improvisation is composing speeded up."[11] Likewise, bassist Charles Mingus stated that the solos of bebop innovators Bud Powell and Charlie Parker are "new classical compositions;" as improvisers, they are "spontaneous composers."[12] Scholars have followed suit, typically seeing composition and improvisation not in binary opposition, but rather as part of a spectrum. In practice, motivic development is an important area of overlap; it figures into many of the most improvisational and

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[8] Simha Arom's work focuses on the music of Central Africa. He distinguishes between polyphony (melodic counterpoint) as multi-part vocal or instrumental music and its analogous term, polyrhythm (rhythmic counterpoint), which is multi-part music for percussion instruments involving the superimposition of different rhythms resulting in rhythmic polyphony. See Simha Arom, *African Polyphony and Polyrhythm: Musical Structures and Methodology*, Trans. from French by Martin Thom, Barbara Tuckett and Raymond Boyd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 38, 41-42.

[9] Arom argues that polyphony exists in multi-part music (either vocal or instrumental) in many other world music traditions, in contrast to the ethnocentric and narrow view of many European musicologists and composers, such as Pierre Boulez, that polyphonic composition is found solely in Western European civilization. See Simha Arom, *op. cit.*, 34-44.

[10] Ben Monder, "Ben Monder on Jazz Guitar Essentials," *JazzTimes*, April 25, 2019, accessed March 3, 2020, https://jazztimes.com/features/lists/ben-monder-jazz-guitar-essentials/.

[11] Wayne Shorter, "The Magical Journey—An Interview With Wayne Shorter," interview by Eric Nemeyer, January 6, 2000, *Jazz Improv* 2, no. 3, 72.

[12] Charles Mingus, "What is a Jazz Composer?" Liner notes for *Let My Children Hear Music* by Charles Mingus, Columbia Records, 1972.

pre-composed approaches to jazz performance.[13] Thus, part of my rethinking of counterpoint and my analysis of Monder's music aim to emphasize the motivic links between improvisation and composition.

These historical and performance connections have not been completely overlooked by jazz scholars, however, and my study builds on a nascent body of academic literature that has emerged since the late 1990s examining the role of contrapuntal techniques in jazz composition. These studies examine counterpoint adhering to the Baroque style (Arthurs 2012, Adams 2013, Heinen 2019) or an expanded/reinterpreted view influenced by twentieth century classical techniques (Terefenko 2004, Sterrs 2012, Ramos 2016). Notably, this scholarship is narrowing the gap between theory and practice by addressing in academic work contrapuntal techniques that jazz musicians have been using since the early days of the music but which has, nevertheless, been largely neglected by jazz researchers.

Despite this growth in scholarship, there are many jazz performers whose music has not been considered with regard to counterpoint in contemporary jazz composition and its ties to improvisation. New York guitarist Ben Monder, the focus of this dissertation, provides numerous examples of the innovative ways counterpoint is being utilized in contemporary jazz practice. Considered one of the leading jazz guitarists and composers of his generation by jazz critics and peers (Kamins n.d., Adler 2005, Ross 2015), Monder is both a gifted improviser and a musician who pre-composes highly complex, dissonant, rigorously through-composed music without repeated sections, as well (Milkowski 1998, Kelman 2015). The analytical literature on Monder's music, however, is limited to his use of rock influences and dissonant clusters (Halley 2013) or a

[13] See for example, Darius Terefenko, *Jazz Theory: From Basic to Advanced Study*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2018), 108.

performative approach to composition[14] (Feakes 2018). There is presently no analysis of counterpoint as a salient feature of his compositions or improvisations.

It should be noted that although many of Monder's multi-movement compositions are fully notated with limited or no solo sections, this does not imply his preference for pre-composed over improvised music. He has stated, "I'm in this for the improvisation. I don't want to abandon really dense writing because it's part of what I'm hearing, but on my gigs I'd like to balance the ratio."[15] In a similar vein, he explains, "I value composition as a means of expression, but I feel improvisation, both free and structured, is equally important. I wouldn't feel complete without both."[16] Essentially, Monder's musical expression includes a dual emphasis on extended composition in most of his recordings and improvisation in live performances.

Monder's inclusion of extensive and fully notated works in his practice counters a common narrative expounded by many scholars that jazz is primarily a player's or improviser's art (Reilly 1993), or that improvisers have primarily spearheaded stylistic innovations in successive generations of jazz musicians (Schuller 1968). Musicologist Stefano Zenni challenges this narrative by arguing that in contrast to the traditional linear/evolutionary approach to jazz

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[14] A performative analysis of composition examines compositional decisions that consider the physical qualities and challenges of the instrument for which the composition is written. See Jameson Feakes, "The Guitar Music of Ben Monder: A Physicalistic Approach" (Masters thesis, The University of Western Australia, 2018). For additional discussion of how instruments can affect music making, see John Baily, "Music and the Body," *The World of Music*, vol. 37, no.2 (1995), 11-30, Jonathan De Souza, *Music at Hand: Instruments, Bodies, and Cognition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), and Elisabeth Le Guin, *Boccherini's Body: An Essay in Carnal Musicology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

[15] David Adler, "Ben Monder: Excavating Ben*," JazzTimes*, Dec. 1, 2005, accessed Aug. 28, 2019, http://www.jazztimes.com/features/ben-monder-excavating-ben/.

[16] Phil DiPietro, "Ben Monder: Le Monde du Monder," *All About Jazz*, Jan. 1, 2002, accessed Dec. 9, 2019, https://www.allaboutjazz.com/ben-monder-le-monde-du-monder-ben-monder-by-phil-dipietro.php.

historiography focusing on improvisers (for example, from trumpeters Buddy Bolden to Louis Armstrong, Roy Eldridge to Dizzy Gillespie), an alternative narrative is possible based on innovation by composers who expand the jazz language and influence improvisers.[17] This alternative narrative can extend to contemporary composers such as Monder who places a larger emphasis on the importance of solo and small ensemble composition.

INTRODUCING BEN MONDER

Ben Monder, who was born in 1962, attended Westchester Conservatory of Music in White Plains, New York, the University of Miami, and Queens College. He is the recipient of a Shifting Foundation Grant (2013) and the Doris Duke Impact Award (2014), which fund artists to pursue non-commercial original projects. He has performed with a variety of artists, including Lee Konitz, Paul Motion, Maria Schneider, Andrew Cyrille, Marc Johnson, Guillermo Klein, Tony Malaby, and Jack McDuff. In addition to appearing on over 200 recordings as a sideman, Monder has released seven recordings as leader, ranging from solo to quartet formations: *Flux* (Songlines 1995), *Dust* (Arabesque 1997), *Excavation* (Arabesque 2000), *Oceana* (Sunnyside 2005), *Hydra* (Sunnyside 2013), *Amorphae* (ECM 2015), and *Day After Day* (Sunnyside 2019). He played on David Bowie's last album, *Blackstar* (2016), which points to his fluency in rock idioms, an aspect of his compositions that has been noted by scholars and critics alike. He has also served on the faculties at the New England Conservatory in Boston and the New School in New York. He performs original music regularly in solo and trio settings, as well as longstanding duo collaboration with vocalist Theo Bleckmann.

[17] Stefano Zenni, "Composers as Jazz Innovators," *Current Research in Jazz* 4, (2012), accessed Dec. 9, 2019, https://www.crj-online.org/v4/CRJ-ComposersInnovators.php.

Monder emerged on the New York jazz scene in the 1990s along with Kurt Rosenwinkel to inspire a new generation of jazz guitar players. He was influenced by then forward-looking guitarists such as Pat Metheny, John Scofield, and Bill Frisell, each of whom came to prominence in the 1970s producing a fusion of jazz shaped by a diversity of styles ranging from rock, African, Latin, and blues to country music. His playing is also strongly rooted in more traditional jazz approaches as exemplified by jazz guitarists such as Jim Hall, Joe Pass, Barney Kessel, West Montgomery, and Pat Martino, and he draws influence from jazz musicians who do not play guitar, as well. For example, he was attracted to the fluid lines of iconic saxophonists such as Sonny Rollins and, in particular, John Coltrane. In keeping with the general theme of this study, Monder's influences extend beyond jazz to twentieth-century classical composers including Béla Bartók, Milton Babbitt, Elliott Carter, György Ligeti, and Morton Feldman, as well as Baroque composers such as Bach.

MONDER ON COMPOSITION

Since this dissertation focuses primarily on compositional analysis, it is important to provide some context for Monder's compositional process. With regard to his method, he has stated, "I don't have a compositional approach as such. Each piece is unique and suggests its own problems and solutions regarding harmony and form."[18] In both solo guitar and group settings, Monder limits himself "to as few parametres as possible, to give myself some kind of direction, and things proceed from there." Working with these constraints, he adds, "everything stems from a really minimal idea, whether it's rhythmic, harmonic or melodic."[19]

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[18] Bill Milkowski, "Ben Monder," *JazzTimes*, 1 Mar. 1998, https://jazztimes.com/archives/ben-monder/, accessed 22 July 2019.
[19] Adler, *op. cit.*

Monder explores his initial ideas using motivic development. Motives have been described in several ways in jazz and classical texts, either as a figure or fragment (Russo 1968, Wright 1982, Coker 1998), as the smallest unit in a phrase from two to five notes (Sussman and Abene 2012), the "germ" of an idea (Schoenberg 1967), one unit above a figure (Stein 1979), or larger statements ranging from one to three measures (Kennan 1999, Piston 1947). My analysis in this research treats motives as the smallest unit of a phrase.

What is more constructive than exact definitions is that, as Arnold Schoenberg has commented regarding motivic development, "Everything depends on its treatment and development."[20] Motivic development involves compositional procedures that create variation and continuity throughout an entire work based on an initial thematic motive.[21] For Monder, this dual notion of what changes and what remains the same underscores the benefit of using motivic development. He states: "It's much more interesting to see how an idea can be transformed and still maintain its initial integrity. That's the whole idea behind developing an idea: developing an idea is not repeating an idea; it's taking it somewhere else imaginative. That's where you can actually see somebody's mind taking a journey, the decisions behind how the thing grows."[22]

For motivic analysis of Monder's music, I will use the following terms: head (for phrase beginnings); body (for the main part of a phrase); and tail (for the end of a phrase). Motivic expansion or contraction is understood in two basic forms: 1) external, in which new material is added to or removed from the head or the tail; and 2) internal or interpolation where new

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[20] Arnold Schoenberg, *Fundamentals of Musical Composition*, ed. Gerald Strang and Leonard Stein (London: Faber & Faber, 1967), 8.

[21] Leon Stein, *Structure & Style: the Study and Analysis of Musical Forms* (Miami, FL: Summy-Birchard Inc., 1979), 4.

[22] Ben Monder, "Pablo Held Investigates Ben Monder," Interview by Pablo Held, Feb. 23, 2019, accessed Sept. 16, 2019, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sYet9E6Lac4.

material is added to the original motive.[23] Therefore, note additions or subtractions will be named head or tail expansions/contractions. Augmentation and diminution are opposite forms of rhythmic transformation. William Russo describes these forms of motivic development as "an increase [or decrease] in the note values of the original figure." The rhythmic change may be either exact (all note values are altered by the same proportion) or inexact (notes change by different proportions).[24] Monder's alterations tend to be more inexact augmentation and diminution. His extensive use of motivic development provides an important contrapuntal link between composed and improvised material that I examine throughout this research.

METHODOLOGY

The primary goal of this dissertation is to uncover contrapuntal techniques that are integral to Ben Monder's compositions and improvisations. As I will discuss, a central aspect of Monder's contrapuntal techniques is that they are used extensively to develop the form and overall identity of each of his compositions. Crucially, his use of counterpoint is not restricted to what I have suggested is a limited conception of the term exemplified by, for instance, a Bach fugue; rather, his approach embraces an expanded view of counterpoint, focused on voice leading, textural shifts, and rhythm but also illustrates the relevance and utility of counterpoint, broadly conceived, for contemporary jazz composition.[25] Throughout the dissertation I will develop this broader understanding of counterpoint, building on the critiques I provide below.

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[23] William Rothstein, *Phrase Rhythm in Tonal Music* (New York, NY: Schirmer Books, 1990), 68.

[24] William Russo, *Jazz Composition and Orchestration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 684.

[25] It should be noted that the intention of this work is not to qualify Monder as a predominantly contrapuntal composer, but rather one who integrates specific contrapuntal techniques in a contemporary jazz setting.

I have selected compositions, and where applicable corresponding improvisations, and analyze them for devices that exemplify this expanded notion of counterpoint. Research materials include scores taken from two volumes of Monder's scores published by Mel Bay, recordings of the pieces, and a personal interview. Since chord symbols are not always indicated in the published scores, I have added them where necessary. I have also transcribed improvised solos from specific recordings for my analysis.

Instrumentation on Monder's recordings varies. He commonly features solo guitar, duo (guitar, voice), trio (guitar, bass, drums) and quartet (voice, guitar, bass, drums). Tune analysis focuses on select passages as a more effective means to highlight contrapuntal elements, rather than an overview of entire pieces, many of which are over twenty pages in length. This allows me to highlight contrapuntal elements and engage with them in detail.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This dissertation aims to explore aspects of Monder's contrapuntal composition. Chapter One provides a literature review of jazz and Western classical references that address definitions of counterpoint. The larger goal is to illustrate that, while dominant understandings of counterpoint often limit it to music that sounds like Bach fugues, a variety of scholars have understood the concept in ways that are relevant to Monder's music. Building on this broader understanding of counterpoint, I then dedicate the three chapters that follow to the contrapuntal aspects of Monder's music that I consider most important: Chorales, Pedal Point and Polytonality/Polyrhythm/Polymetre. A concluding chapter summarizes the analysis and considers areas for future research.

Chapter Two examines Monder's use of counterpoint in a chorale setting. It begins with a comparison between his chorales and those of J.S. Bach. Next, the ballads *Luteous Pangolin*, *O.K. Chorale* and *In Memoriam*, and up-tempo piece *Tredecadrome* are analyzed for chorale features that contribute to a contrapuntal texture. Each chorale is shown to exhibit a range of attributes in terms of voice leading (outer-voice and multi-part frameworks), rhythmic distribution across parts, motivic development, contour, textural shifts in and out of a chorale setting, intervallic chord construction, and polymetre. Overall, the four pieces will demonstrate a varied treatment of the chorale setting.

Chapter Three analyzes pedal points in four compositions, *Late Green*, *Sleep*, *Aplysia*, and *Muvseevum*. Similar to his chorale writing, Monder employs a diverse approach to pedal point in order to create colour and tension. In addition to composed pieces, I also examine several solos in which he uses contrapuntal techniques similar to the compositions. Viewed through a jazz context, the select improvisations and compositions illustrate the pedal using tonally functional and non-functional harmonies with less conventional voice leading. Structurally, pedal point plays a defining role at key junctures to help define the form of each piece.

Chapter Four focuses on polytonality, polyrhythm and polymetre in the songs *Orbits* and *Double Sun*. This chapter represents the deepest exploration of the expanded view of counterpoint I am developing that emphasizes the notion of opposition, specifically, opposing or contrasting tonalities, rhythms, metres and textural shifts in a composition. Both pieces are fully notated with no improvised sections. The simultaneous interplay of several contrapuntal techniques generates shifting tension as each device increases or decreases in intensity.

Chapter One
LITERATURE REVIEW and BROADENING THE NOTION OF COUNTERPOINT

LITERATURE REVIEW

Particularly important for my project of analyzing Monder's music is reconsidering the notion of counterpoint and recognizing that, as suggested in the writing of several music theorists, it is a useful lens through which to understand a twentieth and twenty-first century African-American art form such as jazz. This necessitates problematizing the sole or predominant reliance upon rather strict definitions of counterpoint that are rooted in Western European classical music and that tend to be prevalent in a great deal of music literature, including writing on jazz.[26] Thus, an aim of this literature review is identifying jazz literature that: 1) addresses counterpoint in some fashion; and 2) that is relevant for contemporary jazz composition in solo and small ensemble settings. My focus on composition is guided by two key considerations, including Monder's heavy emphasis on notated material over improvisation in his compositions, and an alternative narrative of composers also having a role in shaping jazz history.[27]

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[26] The term "counterpoint" is commonly associated with Western European art music, originating from the Latin meaning *punctus contra punctum*, or point against point. Generally, counterpoint refers to the art of combining two or more voices that are independent in melodic contour and rhythm. Although the terms polyphony and counterpoint are often used interchangeably, polyphony can refer to the musical texture of combining voices simultaneously, whereas counterpoint is the range of techniques to achieve that texture. The modal counterpoint of the Renaissance and the harmonic counterpoint of the Baroque period are considered the high points of polyphony in Western art music, however the twentieth century featured a proliferation of different styles such as expanded tonal techniques of polytonality or twelve-tone writing. See Klaus-Jürgen Sachs and Carl Dahlhaus, "Counterpoint" January 20, 2001, https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000006690?rskey=Kbdlil.

[27] Jazz scholar and ethnomusicologist Ingrid Monson notes the historical importance of composers and ensembles (large and small) in the shaping of jazz. She argues that inasmuch as jazz improvisers have defined jazz history, "a particular sound produced through distinctive rhythmic, harmonic, melodic, and timbral vocabularies of the ensemble are just as crucial in defining jazz as a genre." She cites Jelly Roll Morton, Duke Ellington, Fletcher Henderson and Don Redman among composers who helped to shape jazz as it emerged in the early-mid twentieth

An in-depth survey of the literature shows that there are only a couple of jazz texts that provide a thorough explanation of polyphonic writing. Likewise, a few authors have provided discussions, albeit fairly limited ones, of homophonic writing for small ensembles. Even then there are several gaps in this literature on jazz composition and arranging using techniques that might be considered contrapuntal and that are evident in jazz music including but not limited to Monder's. As I will explain, these include voice leading, textural shifts and rhythm. Essentially, then, a synthesis of several references, beginning with jazz sources and expanding into relevant classical scholarship, supports the idea that there are contrapuntal elements in Monder's music and that counterpoint becomes a useful lens for analyzing it. In other words, counterpoint provides a means to highlight features in his compositions that would be overlooked if I had used approaches typical of most jazz analyses that tend to prioritize harmony (and/or improvisation). This comes as no surprise to New York pianist and colleague Frank Kimbrough who notes, the guitarist "has practically created his own musical language."[28]

Jazz Literature and Counterpoint

Composer and pianist William Russo's book *Jazz Composition and Orchestration* (1968) contains a thorough chapter on counterpoint in jazz by providing an historical background and outlining a series of rules on how to write two- to four-part counterpoint while covering topics related to jazz such as suspensions, syncopation, and chromaticism. Russo describes two historical approaches or streams in jazz counterpoint. The first one adheres to the major/minor diatonic system of the Baroque period, as seen in the music of Modern Jazz Quartet pianist John

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century. See Ingrid Monson, "Jazz: Chronological Overview," in *African American Music: An Introduction*, ed. Mellonee V. Burnim and Portia K. Maultsby (New York: Routledge, 2006), 150.

[28] Adler, *op. cit*.

Lewis or bebop pianist Bud Powell. A second contrapuntal style more relevant to Russo's discussion involves a freer treatment of dissonance and voice leading that accommodates the idiosyncrasies of jazz intervals and rhythms as illustrated in the music of Duke Ellington, Gerry Mulligan, and Jimmy Guiffre. In the latter approach, dominant seventh chords are no longer prepared and they do not necessarily resolve in stepwise fashion. Parallel motion of voices is also permitted. By detailing these two approaches and noting the polyphonic connection to early jazz, Russo provides an informative historical background to jazz counterpoint that is lacking in other jazz texts.[29]

However, since Russo's book was written in 1968, it does not account for the many changes in jazz over the past fifty years. Developments such as melodies using post-bebop language, pitch sets or tone rows, atonal or tonal non-functional harmony that extends beyond tertian chords, metric modulation, or rhythms in mixed metre are common features of contemporary jazz practice and prominent in Monder's writing. As we will see, these techniques can be productively understood as contrapuntal. Thus, even while Russo suggests that his guidelines can be applied to, for example, non-tertian harmony,[30] they nevertheless need to be augmented in order to provide enough theoretical foundation for understanding the even more contemporary language of Monder's music.

Notwithstanding these limitations, which are primarily a matter of the age of Russo's book, his explanations of various elements in a contrapuntal texture transcend style or era and are quite relevant to my research. Indeed, techniques he explores and asserts as counterpoint including variety in melodic contour and intervals between voices, outer voices in a multi-voice

[29] Russo, *op. cit.*, 130.
[30] Russo, *op. cit.*, 202.

texture, and rhythmic distribution across parts are all evident in Monder's compositions. Thus, Russo provides a kind of conceptual foundation for my study.

Gordon Delamont's *Modern Contrapuntal Technique* (1969) is the only other comprehensive jazz text to address contrapuntal technique that is applicable to small ensemble writing. A trumpet player and composer, Delamont (1918-1981) was a prominent music educator who taught many of Toronto's leading commercial and jazz artists. In comparison to Russo, Delamont offers an even broader application of counterpoint to contemporary jazz practice by addressing twentieth-century extended techniques such as pan-diatonism, quartal harmony and polytonality. The book focuses on tonal linear counterpoint, a form of counterpoint often associated with twentieth-century classical practice, in which emphasis is placed on individual lines based on scales having a tonal or modal centre while vertical sonorities do not necessary follow traditional conventions of consonance and dissonance.[31]

While providing more rationale for the analysis of Monder's music through the lens of counterpoint, Delamont's approach still needs enhancing. In particular, his diatonic emphasis in linear counterpoint, although allowing for a freer treatment of dissonance and the use of unconventional chord progressions, does not explain Monder's music and contemporary jazz in general. While Delamont's book is relevant to Monder when considering polytonality and the adherence of each line in a multi-voice texture to one particular diatonic scale to create contrast between opposing key centres (see Chapter Four), it is less useful outside of the polytonal contexts Monder creates where, for example, a multi-voice texture moves through frequent modulations and non-traditional cadences, or exhibits a high degree of chromaticism between

[31] Gordon Delamont, *Modern Contrapuntal Technique: An examination of non-chordal counterpoint for the contemporary composer, including pan-diatonism, quartal harmony, and polytonal techniques*, (New York: Kendor Music, 1969), III.

individual lines. These characteristics offset a sense of diatonism within each voice, ultimately diminishing the relevance of Delamont's linear counterpoint to this dissertation.

As I noted, most jazz texts focus on homophonic two- or three-part horn arranging in a small ensemble or big band setting and work in a conventional harmonic setting. Most are, thus, even less useful than writing by Delamont and Russo in terms of their engagement with counterpoint and providing a conceptual framework for understanding Monder's music. Yet some of these books do touch on aspects of contrapuntal writing in jazz. Topics covered range from linear voice leading (Dobbins 1986), writing counterlines (Nestico 1993, Sussman and Abene 2012), rules on two-part writing (Baker 1985), and the species approach of Western art music (Boras 2005). While these authors may have various shortcomings in their presentation of counterpoint, it is worth noting that they do provide some basis for analyzing counterpoint in jazz. Yet, like Delamont and Russo, their work overlooks several key concepts that limit its applicability for providing a framework that is sufficiently broad and agile for analyzing Monder's music. Examples of these omissions include attention to voicing construction, voice leading, notions of opposition and textural shifts.

Voicing Construction and Voice Leading

I will provide an in-depth discussion of expanded notions of counterpoint in Chapter Four. However, two components that will underpin my expanded conceptualization of contrapuntal compositions – voicing construction and voice leading – need to be elaborated prior to the analysis to follow in Chapters Two and Three. More importantly, these aspects, which refer to the vertical and horizontal elements of a polyphonic texture that could be seen as contrapuntal when used in particular ways also help to define Monder's compositional concept and overall

sound. In addition to tertian-based voicings, many of Monder's voicings are derived from "intervallic structures" based on any combination of intervals, for example a chord built with a second, a fifth and a sixth in ascending order. This approach features prominently in his writing (see Chapter Two, "Chorales"). Monder focuses primarily on four-note chords, although he notes that intervallic structures can involve three to six notes.[32] Even with such a wide range of voicing options, he stresses that "this technical material should be in the service of a logically thought out melodic idea that will help decide what structures or what triads or what chords to actually use."[33]

The potential for counterpoint in Monder's music lies in how he combines his voicings with voice leading to create linear movement and strong dissonance between parts. At a foundational level, his approach to voice leading is a result of extensive development, in part, by studying voicing types with guitarist Chuck Wayne as well as working through Ted Greene's *Chord Chemistry* book. Since Wayne and Greene focus primarily on learning different guitar voicing "grips" or positions and taking each chord diatonically up a scale,[34] Monder invented his own voice-leading exercises by adding contrary, oblique motion and passing tones to create multi-voice textures with more varied melodic contour and rhythmic motion between parts. About his use of intervallic structures, Monder explains, "I would voice lead those structures within each other and among themselves and I came upon some interesting contrapuntal solutions."[35] Ultimately, those solutions have become integral to Monder's voice leading and

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[32] Ben Monder, "Jazz Guitar Lesson (2)," *My Music Masterclass*, accessed Sept. 1, 2019, http://ww.mymusicmasterclass.com/premiumvideo/ben-monder-jazz-guitar-lesson-2.

[33] Ben Monder, *Ibid.*

[34] "Ben Monder Interview," accessed Sept. 3, 2019, www.abstractlogix.com/interview_view.php?idno=82, (n.d.).

[35] Ben Monder, Interview with Darren Sigesmund, June 28, 2018.

voicing construction in composition, accompaniment and improvisation, and which provide a contrapuntal basis to his music.

As Monder developed his own voice leading and voicing concepts, he found a similar approach in the work of jazz guitarist and educator Mick Goodrick. Goodrick's method, as Monder explains, systematizes voice-leading combinations through cycles. Essentially, Goodrick has organized and published much of the voice leading and voicing construction that Monder has developed independently. Monder states, "Mick's books have led me to a really different way of thinking about voice leading than I had been because he's all about cycles... He's kind of doing a similar thing except that he's taking every structure methodically through every cycle."[36]

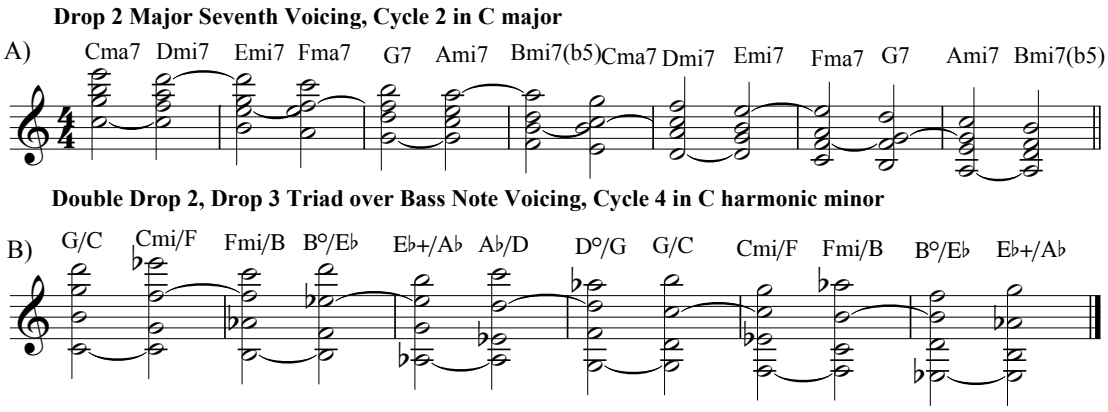
Goodrick's books *Almanac of Guitar Voice Leading Volume 1*, *Volume 2*, and *Volume 3* explore all possible voicing movements through all six diatonic root cycles in five seven-note scales (major, melodic minor, harmonic minor, harmonic major and Hungarian minor).[37] The volumes cover a range of chords from triads, various seventh chords, hybrid or triad-over-bass note voicings, three- and four-part voicings, and "spread" or open clusters. Each exercise consists of moving a given voicing through the six root cycles or harmonic progressions. For example, root motion by a second is Cycle 2, moving through C-D-E-F-G-A-B-C. Six voicing strategies are used, including "drop" position techniques where a voice is lowered below the melody down an octave from a close position, or two octaves in the case of "double drop." The resulting voice leading consists of common tones, stepwise and disjunct motion connecting notes

[36] *Ibid*.

[37] "Jazz Guitar Interviews: Ben Monder," *PlayJazzGuitar.com*, Aug. 16, 2012, accessed Aug. 6, 2019, http://www.playjazzguitar.com/jazz-guitar-interviews-ben-monder.html.

from chord to chord (Example 1.1).[38] The second book, in particular, works with chords built with seconds and fourths, comprising many of the four-note chords that Monder has used for his own writing.[39]

Example 1.1 Goodrick Voice Leading



Inasmuch as Monder combines voice leading with a range of chords and voicing strategies to create a rich, dissonant and dense musical fabric, there remain significant elements in his writing that are not explained adequately by traditional notions of counterpoint or even expanded interpretations that encompass a freer treatment of dissonance.

Toward a Broader Notion of Counterpoint

In practice, compositional elements such as polytonality, polyrhythm, and polymetre are common features of Monder's compositions and improvisations, as well as twentieth-century classical writing. Conceptually, it is less clear in jazz literature how these devices relate to counterpoint and to a contemporary composer such as Monder. American classical composer and theorist Walter Piston (1894-1976) provides some clarification by highlighting that the notion of

[38] Mitch Haupers, "How to Play Mr. Goodchord Goes Keyboard, Part 1," *Keyboard Mag.com*, accessed Sept. 5, 2019, http://www.musicbookshop.co.il/l-image/Mr_Goodchord_1.pdf.
[39] Ben Monder, Interview with Darren Sigesmund, June 28, 2018.

disagreement is inherent in the original meaning of counterpoint.[40] He states, "The interplay of agreement and disagreement between the various factors of the musical texture constitutes the contrapuntal element in music. The study of counterpoint involves a study of these qualities of agreement and disagreement, or, to put it differently, of dependence and independence."[41]

Agreement or dependence may occur harmonically through the use of consonances, rhythmically through alignment of stresses, or melodically through similar motion. Disagreement or independence can exist between two or more voices by means of dissonances, non-alignment of rhythmic stresses, or contrary motion. With this perspective, polytonality, polyrhythm and polymetre can be viewed as contrapuntal techniques in that they produce disagreement through opposing tonal centres, rhythms or metres. Monder uses all three compositional devices in two of his compositions examined in Chapter Four.

As powerful and flexible as Piston's view is on definitions of counterpoint — his emphasizing of opposing factors within a musical texture, whether in harmonic, melodic or rhythmic terms — it, nevertheless, does not encompass a salient, and as I discuss below, contrapuntal aspect of Monder's music: a shift between contrasting textures.

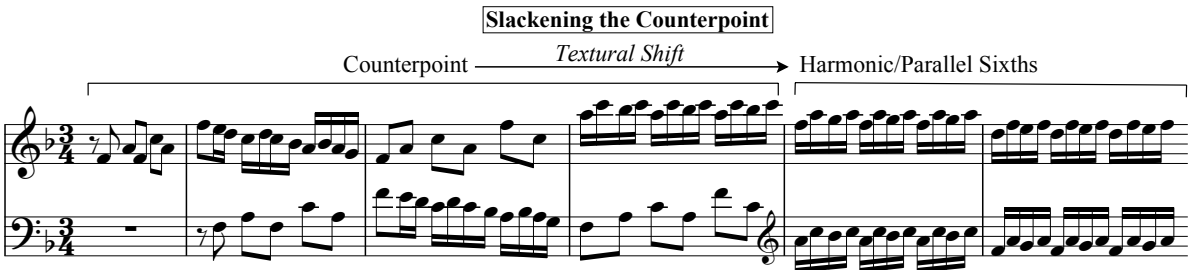
Austrian classical composer Ernest Toch (1887-1964), however, does provide another important perspective on counterpoint that does account for such shifts. Toch argues convincingly that contrast is the foundation of counterpoint. In *The Shaping Forces of Music* (1948), he deconstructs the traditional notion of counterpoint by shifting the emphasis from "point" to "counter." Consequently, as a "point of contrast," counterpoint has a much broader

[40] Although Piston focuses on eighteenth- and nineteenth- century classical composers, his observations on counterpoint can arguably apply to music of various periods and genres, including contemporary jazz. See Walter Piston, *Counterpoint*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1947.
[41] *Ibid.*, 9.

application in shaping musical form through the contrast or opposition between changing musical textures, for example, a shift from a contrapuntal to homophonic texture. Toch stresses that strict adherence to contrapuntal principles, such as independent rhythm and melodic contour between voices as definitive of contrapuntal writing, is not typical in polyphonic music, including that of Bach. Instead, he describes the changing textures as a "slackening the tension of 'counterpoint'," which takes the effect of "counterpoint *inside* of counterpoint."[42] At the heart of this deviation lies the idea that "any quality is apt to weaken and to lose its effect after a while."[43] To avoid an overly prolonged use of one technique or texture, a shift is needed to a contrasting texture. The ensuing tension and relaxation from this shift connects counterpoint to form, or more accurately reveals how counterpoint generates form.[44]

An example of a textural shift is Bach's Invention No. 8 in F major (Example 1.2) where a change from counterpoint to "harmony" (homorhythm) in the form of parallel sixths, albeit for a brief shift of two bars, creates a marked contrast that is in itself a salient form of counterpoint.

Example 1.2 J.S. Bach, *Two Part Invention in F major*: "Slackening the Counterpoint"



Since textural shifts are a frequent part of Monder's music, whether as contrasting sections in

[42] Ernst Toch, *The Shaping Forces in Music* (New York: Dover Publications, 1977), 133-139, italics in original.
[43] *Ibid.*
[44] *Ibid.*

shorter pieces or interludes in extended works, Toch's revised framing of counterpoint combines with voice leading and dissonance from voicing construction to offer an insightful perspective for tune analysis in this dissertation.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In summary, I view diverse techniques such as chorale setting, pedal point, polytonality, polyrhythm, polymetre and textural shifts as integrated into the fabric of Monder's compositions. Conceptually, I view them as part of a broadened contrapuntal framework that encompasses opposing elements within a texture (tonalities, rhythm, metre) and between textures (shifts). While the compositions analyzed may be non-imitative and seem less recognizable than a fugue or canon, they do exhibit horizontal and vertical relations in the form of voice leading, rhythm and textural contrast that are, on this view, contrapuntal. These contrapuntal elements are integral to Monder's music and in many ways definitive of it.

Voice Leading as Counterpoint

As the above suggests, analyzing Monder's music through a broad contrapuntal lens invites the basic question: is there counterpoint in Monder's music? I believe that the perspective of established classical theorists and the evolution of Western classical art music support my contention that there is. In *Counterpoint in Composition: The Study of Voice Leading*, noted classical music theorists Felix Salzer and Carl Schachter provide a key insight by equating counterpoint with voice leading:

> The study of counterpoint is above all the study of voice leading. Wherever there is voice leading, wherever there exists motion and direction of voices, in any style or period whatever, there is counterpoint. The view that contrapuntal studies lead solely to the understanding and writing of sixteenth-century vocal polyphony, or of inventions, canon,

> and fugues, is narrow and misleading. It completely ignores the pervasive influence of the contrapuntal concept, so characteristic of Western tonal, as well as modal, music.[45]

Contrapuntal study not only leads to an understanding of Western tonal and modal music but also the contemporary jazz practice of Monder. If, according to Salzer and Schachter, counterpoint is synonymous with voice leading, then there is certainly counterpoint in Monder's music considering the importance of voice leading as an integral part of his approach to composition and improvisation. Moreover, the bold statement by Salzer and Schachter on the "pervasive influence" of counterpoint in music regardless of period or style is echoed by another well-established classical theorist, Kent Kennan, who states, "The chief objective of counterpoint study… is to awaken in students a feeling for the contrapuntal element that is present to some degree in virtually all music."[46] In other words, counterpoint did not end even as more homophonic techniques took precedence in Western art music or jazz.[47] Deeming a piece of music contrapuntal or not—or perhaps better, more or less contrapuntal—is also arguably more a matter of perspective — the composer's process, the performer's experience or the listener's perception — rather than the actual content of the score. My study refocuses on counterpoint as a way to account for Monder's compositional practices.

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[45] Felix Salzer and Carl Schachter, *Counterpoint in Composition: The Study of Voice Leading* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), xviii.

[46] Kent Kennan, *Counterpoint: Based on Eighteenth-Century Practice,* 4th ed. (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1999), 1.

[47] In *Twentieth Century Counterpoint*, classical composer and author Humphrey Searle summarizes the importance and continuation of counterpoint in the predominantly homophonic period of the First Viennese School and romantic composers, or what he refers to as the second main epoch of Western art music in terms of texture. See Humphrey Searle, *Twentieth Century Counterpoint: A Guide for Students* (Westport, CT: Hyperion Press Inc., 1955), 2.

The Evolution of Counterpoint

In addition to highlighting the prevalence of counterpoint and its relevance to Monder's music through voice leading, the evolution of counterpoint reveals how ambiguous and limited general definitions of the term can be and how changes in twentieth-century Western classical practice substantiate the need for an expanded framework. Counterpoint is commonly defined as the simultaneous combination of two or more voices that are independent in contour and rhythm. Contour refers to the shape of a line produced by voice leading, which involves the linear movement of a line and its vertical or intervallic relationship to other voices. Rhythmic independence arises from different rhythms spread across parts. In order for a texture to be contrapuntal, therefore, both independence through voice leading and rhythm are essential requirements.

The beginnings of counterpoint in Western art music, however, contradict this common definition. The anonymous treatise, *Musica enchiriadis* (Music Handbook), describes the earliest evidence of counterpoint in the ninth century practice of *organum* that involved a plainchant in a "principle voice" (*vox principalis*) doubled below in an "organal voice" (*vox organalis*) moving note-against-note in parallel motion by a fourth or fifth.[48] While more elaborate forms of organum with greater differentiation do emerge later in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, such as florid organum and Notre Dame organum, the simpler parallel organum shows little or no independence in contour or rhythm between voices.

The ambiguity around voice independence continues in chorale writing of the Baroque era where many Bach chorales, for example Chorales 6, 108, or 142, contain passages in a note-against-note setting or *contrapunctus simplex*. In the absence of rhythmic independence, can

[48] Donald Jay Grout and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 5th edition (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1996), 75.

these passages be seen as contrapuntal? Drawing on Salzer and Schachter's emphasis on voice leading, the presence of contrary and oblique motion creates counterpoint, even in moments of simpler rhythms across parts. Although Monder's chorales may exhibit less rhythmic differentiation across parts than those of Bach, the voice leading in both cases produces a contrapuntal texture.

The reliance on independent contour and rhythm to define counterpoint becomes even more problematic due to the many changes in harmony, melody, rhythm and texture in twentieth-century Western classical practice that justify the need for an expanded contrapuntal framework. For example, Charles Seeger's dissonant counterpoint, Elliott Carter's stratified or multi-layered counterpoint, Stravinsky's stratification, Milhaud's polytonality, Ligeti's micropolyphony, or Schoenberg's atonality and serialism are amongst the diverse forms of counterpoint that emerge in the twentieth century.

Seeger developed the idea of dissonant counterpoint where rhythm replaces pitch as the main musical element. Horizontal and vertical relationships in a texture are then defined by rhythmic, rather than melodic, consonance or dissonance.[49] Ligeti also moved away from conventional notions of counterpoint by composing music that avoids traditional melody, harmony, rhythm or metre. His 1961 composition for orchestra, *Atmospheres*, explores micropolyphony in which clusters of dense canons move at different tempos to create contrasting sound masses.

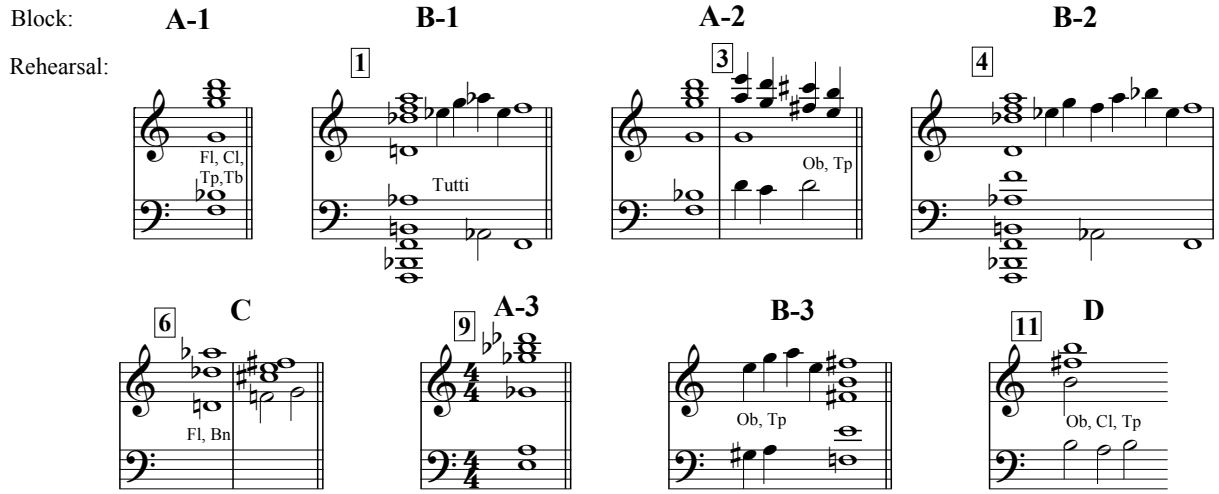
Stravinsky offers one of the most compelling arguments not only in favour of an expanded definition of counterpoint in twentieth-century classical practice, but also in support of my broader framework for analyzing Monder's music. American musicologist and composer

[49] Charles Seeger, "On Dissonant Counterpoint," *Modern Music*, vol. 7, no. 4 (June-July 1930), 25-26.

Edward Cone characterizes Stravinsky's style by sudden breaks or shifts in texture between juxtaposed blocks of sound. Stravinsky presents each of these blocks as incomplete musical fragments that are distinguished through various means, including instrumentation, register, harmony, rhythm, dynamics, modes and motives, in order to produce extreme contrast. Vertically, these blocks appear in the form of stratification — Cone's term for simultaneous layers of sound — while horizontally, they are interlocked as a succession of musical events. Cone equates this alternating effect to one of polyphonic fragments of melody that are "counterpointed one against the other."[50]

Stravinsky's *Symphonies of Wind Instruments* (1920) illustrates the juxtaposition of stratified blocks. A modified version of Cone's sketch shows an alternating sequence of A-1, B-1, A-2, B-2, C, A-3, B-3, D (Example 1.3).[51]

Example 1.3 Igor Stravinsky, *Symphonies of Wind Instruments*: Juxtaposition of Blocks



[50] Edward T. Cone, "Stravinsky: the Progress of a Method," *Perspectives of New Music*, vol. 1, no. 1 (Autumn 1962), 18-19.
[51] *Ibid*, 19.

Symphonies of Wind Instruments is just one of the many examples in Stravinsky's body of work that highlights how simultaneity (stratified blocks) and succession (alternating blocks) underpin his compositional method. These notions of vertical and horizontal textural contrast not only help to redefine counterpoint in twentieth-century Western classical practice but also support my broadened contrapuntal framework of opposition within a texture (simultaneity) and textural shifts (succession) to examine Monder's music.

To be sure, there are conventional contrapuntal techniques in Monder's compositions, such as imitation, a hallmark of counterpoint in Western art music.[52] However, I focus on devices that are not necessarily imitative yet still add contrapuntal qualities to a musical fabric in order to provide additional grounding for the utility of broadening the meaning of counterpoint in music. Indeed, the focus of the next chapter, chorale setting, is not in and of itself an imitative form but provides a framework in which voice leading, voicing construction, rhythmic differentiation and textural shifts foster a contrapuntal texture in a predominantly four-part setting.

[52] Monder points to his use of canon and stretto, for example, in his composition *Tredecadrome* (*Hydra*, 2013). Ben Monder, Interview with Darren Sigesmund, June 28, 2018.

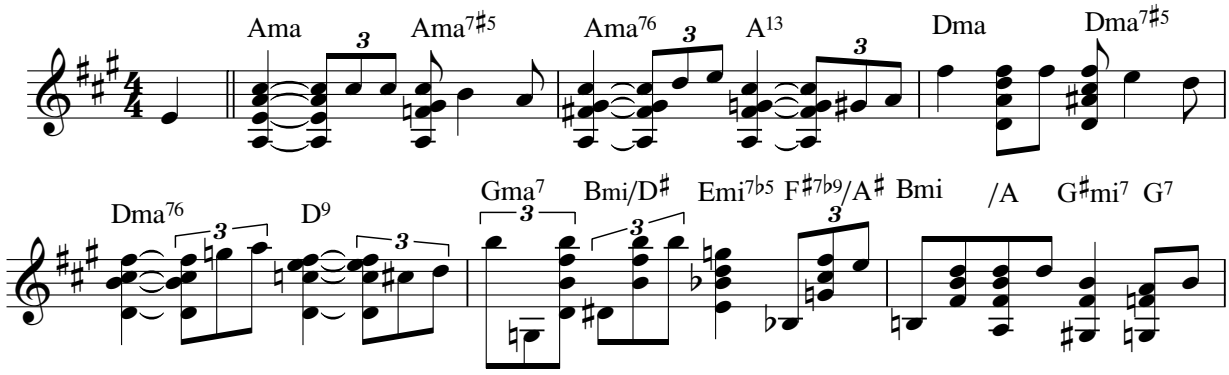
Chapter Two
CHORALES

INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the use of chorale setting in several of Monder's compositions. His use of chorale writing as either the main texture in ballads or a secondary texture in more up-tempo pieces demonstrates a diverse approach to this compositional technique in which contrapuntal devices help to define the identity of each composition. To preface the discussion of chorale writing, chord melody – a more commonly used homophonic approach to playing jazz ballads in solo guitar or guitar trio settings – is briefly examined. Four-part chorale writing follows to provide a more contrapuntal treatment of ballads that is more representative of Monder's approach. Four compositions are examined: *Luteous Pangolin*, *O.K. Chorale*, *In Memoriam*, and *Tredecadrome*. I consider how voice leading, voicing construction, rhythm across parts and textural shifts help to shape a contrapuntal texture, ultimately defining the character of his compositions. I also discuss motivic content in Monder's solos as a contrapuntal link between his improvisations and compositions.

Chord melody, or harmonizing a melody with supporting chords, is a common homophonic approach on guitar for interpreting jazz ballads from lead sheets. Guitarist Jim Hall (1930-2013), one of Monder's main influences, gives a solo guitar rendition of the standard *Deep in a Dream* using a chord melody approach (Example 2.1). In the case of solo guitar, the voicings in a chord melody are often root-based and may contain large intervals between voices due to the use of drop technique.

Example 2.1 Jim Hall, *Deep in a Dream*: Chord Melody



Composed by Jimmy Van Heusen, Lyrics by Eddie DeLange

In contrast, chorales, the traditional four-part hymns of the Lutheran Church, provide a more contrapuntal framework for composing and interpreting jazz ballads. Pianist Dave Brubeck (1920-2012) composed a considerable number of chorales throughout his career.[53] As one of the main exponents of "cool" jazz in the post-World War II period, Brubeck was heavily influenced by the music of J.S. Bach. At an early age, he practiced Bach chorales learning piano from his mother and analyzed chorales and fugues under the tutelage of classical composer Darius Milhaud at Mills College in Oakland, California. Brubeck's eight-movement ballet suite "Points on Jazz" (1962) includes a chorale (movement No. 6) written in four-part texture similar to the Baroque style (Example 2.2). The piece contains a C major/minor bimodality that can be understood as chords with extensions, particularly sharp or flat ninths.[54] Moreover, the movement shows various voice leading motions and rhythmic layering across parts[55] that

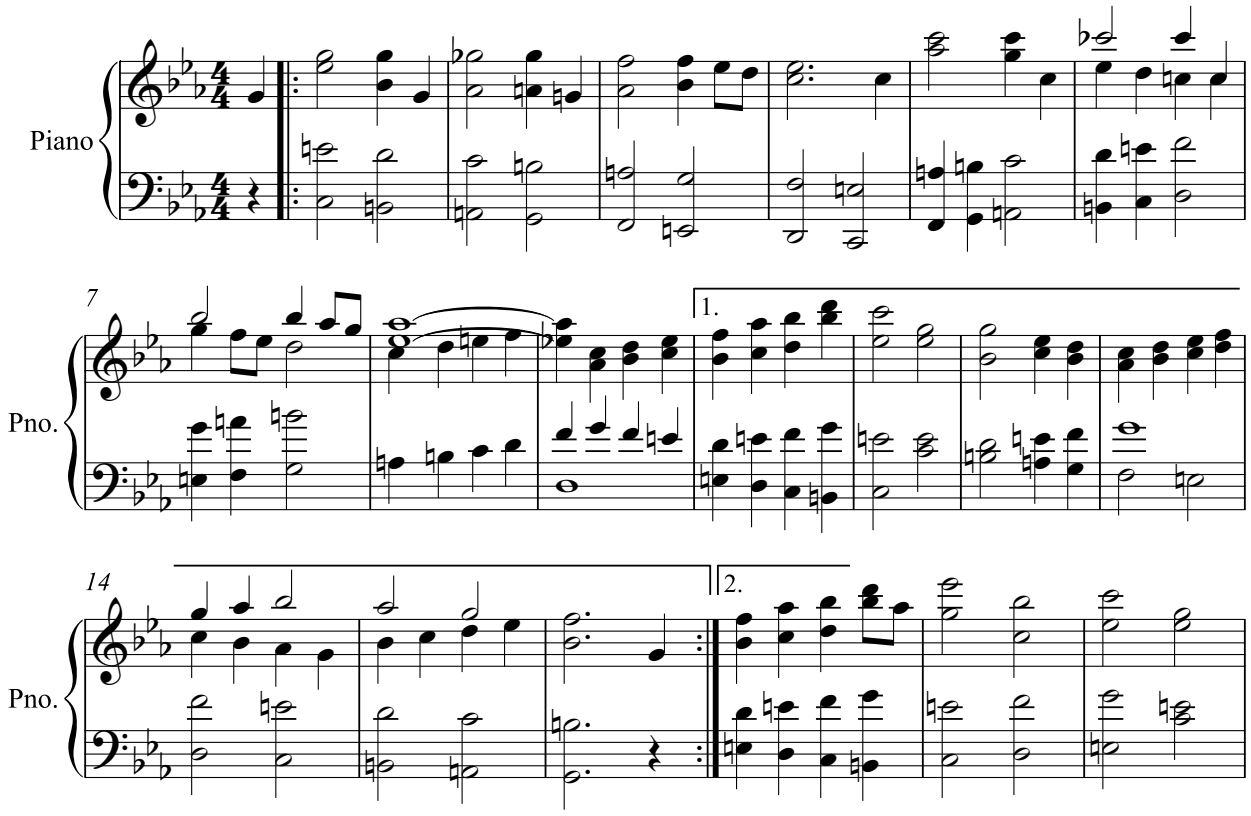
[53] See Floyd Slotterback, "The Choral Music of Dave Brubeck," *The Choral Journal* 34, no. 1 (August 1993), 45-48.

[54] Tamika Sakayi Sterrs, "Toward a Compositional Paradigm Based on Post-Tonality, Jazz, and Counterpoint," (PhD diss., The University of Georgia, 2013), accessed May 20, 2019, https://getd.libs.uga.edu/pdfs/sterrs_tamika_s_201305_phd.pdf, 179-180.

[55] Rhythmic layering can mean the sounding of the different rhythms and melodies at the same time, for example, the subject, answer and countersubject in a Baroque fugue. The effect is a complex polyphonic texture. In a chorale setting, contrast can also result from rhythmic layering across parts, for example, quarter notes in opposition to eighth notes.

contribute to voice independence and, consequently, a polyphonic texture reminiscent of Bach.

Example 2.2 Dave Brubeck, *Chorale* (*Points on Jazz*, 1962)



Monder also features writing that references Bach-style chorales, whether as the main texture or a contrasting section in a larger structure. As such, Monder's approach to composing and playing ballads is more contrapuntal than the typical homophonic jazz guitar practice that uses chord melody. Moreover, as I will discuss, his varied treatment of the chorale style in ballads and up-tempo pieces reflects a compositional adeptness in applying contrapuntal elements to the chorale setting. Chorale writing appears in several of Monder's recordings, including *Flux* (1995), *Dust* (1996), *Excavation* (2000), *Oceana* (2005), and *Hydra* (2013). Just as with Brubeck, the reference to Bach is similarly unmistakable since Monder's writing is

informed by practicing Bach chorales on guitar.[56] Monder, however, moves beyond a Baroque style to include non-tertian chord constructions and a freer treatment of dissonance arising from jazz voice leading.

Monder's chorales exhibit similar and contrasting qualities to those of Bach. Similar features include: 1) the music is fully notated in four-part harmony where the melody is placed in the soprano voice; 2) the metre may vary from duple to triple pulse based on the quarter note; and 3) phrases are typically two or four bars ending with a caesura. In contrast to Bach's chorales, which are primarily based on a pre-existing *cantus firmus* or fixed song for voice,[57] Monder's chorales are original instrumental compositions. Moreover, rather than use chord progressions that express a particular tonality, Monder employs more dissonant harmonies arising from voice leading, creating a sonority that relies less on a traditional hierarchy of root relations embodied in chord melody playing. I will next examine compositions and related improvisations in which Monder uses chorale writing as a basis for integrating contrapuntal techniques in both ballad and more up-tempo settings.

LUTEOUS PANGOLIN – COMPOSITION

Luteous Pangolin provides an excellent illustration of how Monder's chorale writing combines traits of both a Baroque style as well as twentieth-century Western art music and contemporary jazz. The composition is a 77-bar ballad written in AABA form common in jazz standards from

[56] Monder cites Bach as an influence on his writing and has adopted Bach chorales to guitar from piano scores as part of his practice regimen, in Olson, *op. cit.* For his part, Monder notes that playing the chorales on guitar requires few adjustments outside of an occasional octave change in the bass voice (Ben Monder, Interview with Darren Sigesmund, June 28, 2018).

[57] Albert Riemenschneider, ed., *Bach: 371 Harmonized Chorales and 69 Chorale Melodies with Figured Bass* (New York: G. Schirmer Inc., 1986), v.

the American songbook.[58] Monder recorded the piece on his *Excavation* CD (2000) with a quartet including guitar, voice, electric bass and drums. The score on Mel Bay publications features fully notated parts for voice, guitar, and bass, as well as a solo section. Chord symbols are only indicated in the solo section. This reflects the importance of voice leading over labeling harmonic progressions as a key part of Monder's polyphonic composition practice and his attention to single lines within as opposed to the more homophonic approach that is typical of most jazz tunes.[59]

Single Line Construction

The initial examination of a clearly defined single line reveals qualities that also contribute to voice independence and, therefore, a polyphonic texture. These qualities include direction and climax, and balancing conjunct (stepwise) versus disjunct (skips or leaps) motion and ascending versus descending lines.[60] The melody in *Luteous Pangolin* has a sustained *cantabile* or singing quality in the soprano voice that moves predominantly in conjunct motion. Monder's use of

[58] Monder's score for *Luteous Pangolin* (Mel Bay 2006) does not indicate rehearsal markings. I have designated the form as AABA with a Coda based on the thematic development. Both the repeat at A and double bar lines to begin the B and Coda sections are indicated in the Mel Bay score. A double bar line is added at the third A section due to the return of the original theme in exact imitation.

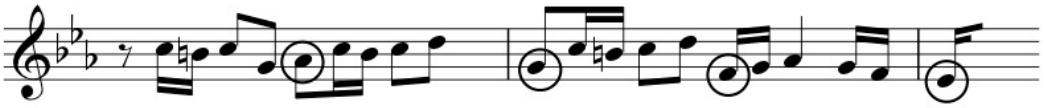
[59] It should be noted, however, that in addition to Monder, many other contemporary jazz composers do not include chord symbols in their compositions so as to stress voice leading over harmonic progression, or the horizontal line over vertical construction. Moreover, improvisations based on chordless scores can use the linear content of the head, rather than specific chords. This contrapuntal emphasis on lines and voice leading is evident in the music of many established New York-based jazz composers and performers, including tenor saxophonist Mark Turner, alto saxophonist David Binney, bassist Scott Colley, and trumpeter Ralph Alessi.

[60] Kennan, *op. cit.*, 5.

longtime collaborator singer Theo Bleckmann on his recordings reinforces this lyrical quality by doubling the guitar melody with wordless vocals.[61]

Step progression is an important aspect of melodic construction in which the main tones of a melody form a progression in seconds. Classical theorist and composer Paul Hindemith originated the term "step progression" to highlight how certain notes in a melody have more significance than others by guiding the overall contour of a melody. These notes can include the highest points, lowest points or rhythmically prominent tones.[62] While they are often nonadjacent, these notes create a strong sense of direction and continuity by outlining a melodic arc in step progression. As pointed out by Kennan, this technique is found in Bach's Fugue No. 2 in Book I of *The Well-Tempered Clavier* (Example 2.3).[63]

Example 2.3 J.S. Bach (*W.T.C. Book 1, Fugue 2*): Step Progression



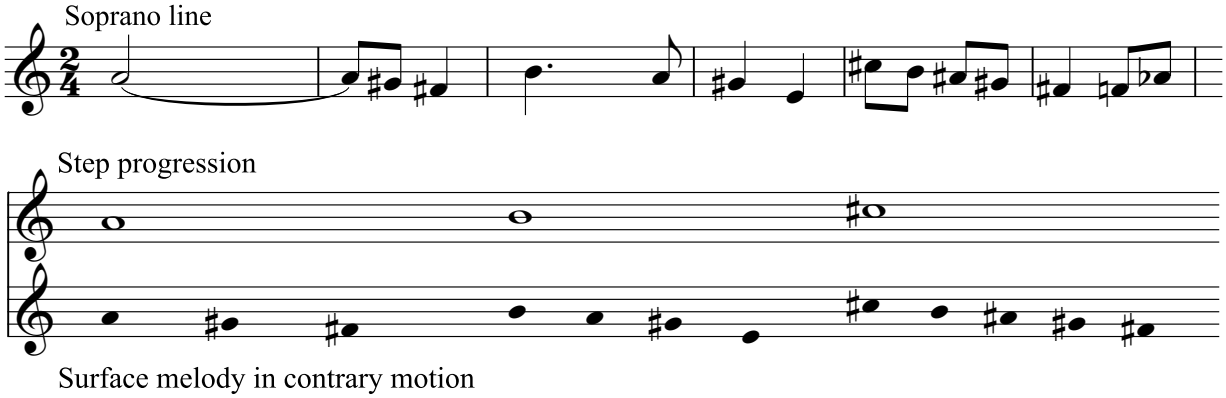
In *Luteous Pangolin*, the initial phrase contains a step progression where the soprano line ascends across five bars (Example 2.4). Contrary motion occurs between the ascending step progression (A-B-C#) and the descending line of the surface melody.

[61] When Monder began working with Theo Bleckmann, Monder initially incorporated wordless vocals to reinforce the melody in the guitar, as noted in *Luteous Pangolin* and on *O.K. Chorale.* More often, Monder has written the voice as a separate instrument with its own independent part. This distinct role not only provides a unique timbre but it also enhances the contrapuntal texture of Monder's compositions. See Paul Olsen, "Ben Monder Surprise From Cohesion," *All About Jazz*, Feb. 6, 2006, accessed Aug. 6, 2020, https://www.allaboutjazz.com/ben-monder-surprise-from-cohesion-ben-monder-by-paul-olson.php.

[62] Paul Hindemith, *The Craft of Musical Composition*, *Book 1: Theory*, 4th ed., trans. Arthur Mendel (London: Schott, 1942), 193-194

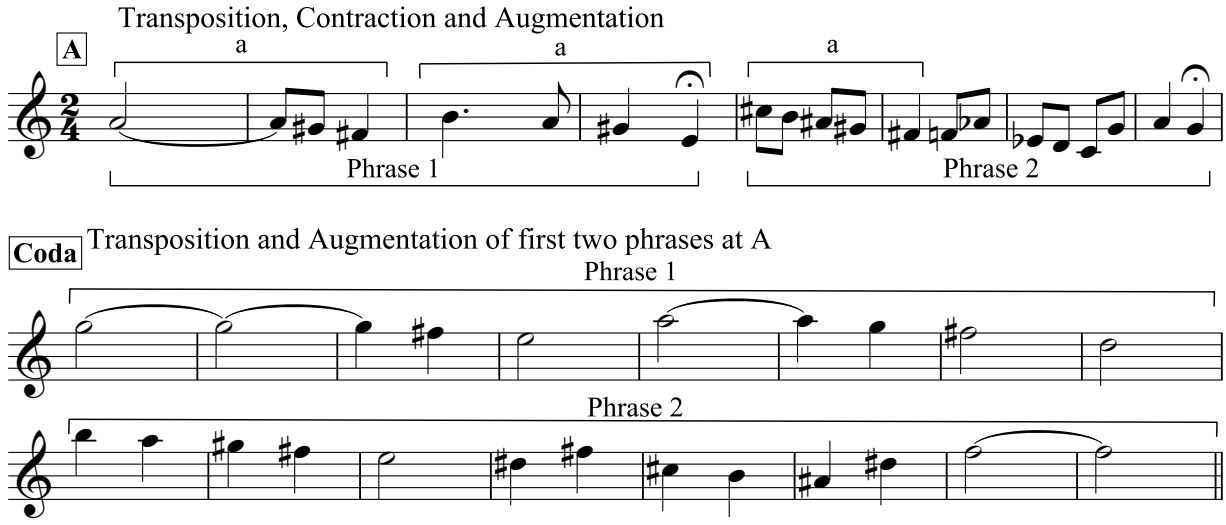
[63] Kennan, *op. cit.*, 7-8.

Example 2.4 Ben Monder, *Luteous Pangolin*: Step Progression mm.1-6



The soprano line is further developed through motivic variation. The opening stepwise motive A-G#-F# is transformed in mm. 3-4 and mm. 5-6 through transposition up a whole step, contraction in time value from four to three beats, and augmentation from three to five notes. Rhythmic augmentation appears in the Coda where the first two phrases from rehearsal A are doubled in value and transposed down a whole step (Example 2.5).

Example 2.5 Ben Monder, *Luteous Pangolin*: Motivic Variation



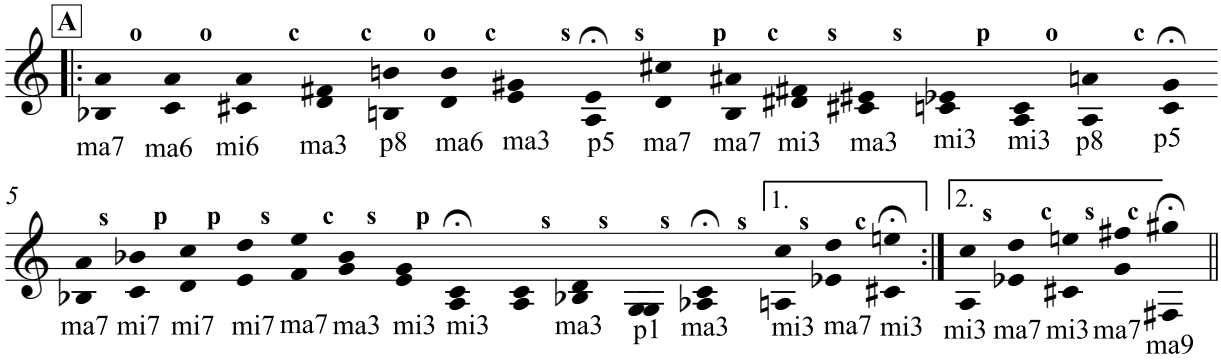
Two-Voice Framework

Before considering the full texture, a two-voice analysis of the melody and bass is useful for revealing basic intervallic relationships and how outer-voice contour contributes to a contrapuntal texture. In a conventional harmonic setting, the outer-voice framework can delineate the harmonic progression of a piece. In compositions such as *Luteous Pangolin* involving less conventional harmonies, the outer-voice framework nevertheless illustrates important voice leading tendencies. Monder employs all four types of voice leading or relative motion between voices: contrary, oblique, similar and parallel.

In the first section, Monder breaks from Baroque contrapuntal practice by using unconventional voice leading with dissonance. After the opening theme initially unfolds largely in oblique and contrary motion, it continues in several consecutive sevenths and thirds in similar and parallel motion (Example 2.6). Although Baroque contrapuntal practice allows for all types of motion, contrary and oblique motion are preferred over similar and parallel motion, particularly in successive fashion, to avoid a loss of independence between voices that is essential to a polyphonic texture.[64] Most significantly, Monder uses the dissonant interval of a seventh in parallel or similar motion, which is not permitted in conventional counterpoint.

[64] Piston, *Counterpoint*, 83-90.

Example 2.6 Ben Monder, *Luteous Pangolin*: Melody/Bass Voice Leading



***c=contrary motion o=oblique motion s=similar motion p=parallel**

Monder also goes beyond voice leading norms of either Western classical common practice or jazz practice in his chorale settings by using more than three parallel successions.[65] Such practice in two-part counterpoint contradicts jazz theorists who themselves draw on rules of conventional classical counterpoint. For example, Gordon Delamont advises against "*more than three parallel intervals in succession,*"[66] and Dariusz Terefenko stresses the need for using contrary motion more often than other forms of melodic motion in outer-voice jazz counterpoint.[67] Certainly, Monder's series of four or more sequential sevenths and thirds creates the effect of parallel harmony instead of two independent parts. Yet such passages with repeated parallel voice leading can be quite effective, as classical theorist Vincent Persichetti notes, "when used to accentuate a rise or fall in a melodic line," as is the case in *Luteous Pangolin*.[68]

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[65] Traditional counterpoint rules allow for the consecutive use of the same interval no more than three or four times to avoid the loss of independence. See Kennan, *op. cit.*, 37.

[66] Gordon Delamont, *Modern Contrapuntal Technique*, 10, italics in original.

[67] Darius Terefenko, *Jazz Theory: From Basic to Advanced Study* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 34.

[68] Vincent Persichetti, *Twentieth-Century Harmony* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1961), 198.

Essentially, an outer two-voice framework reveals Monder's extensive use of parallel motion to create linear direction and forward motion in his melodic construction.[69]

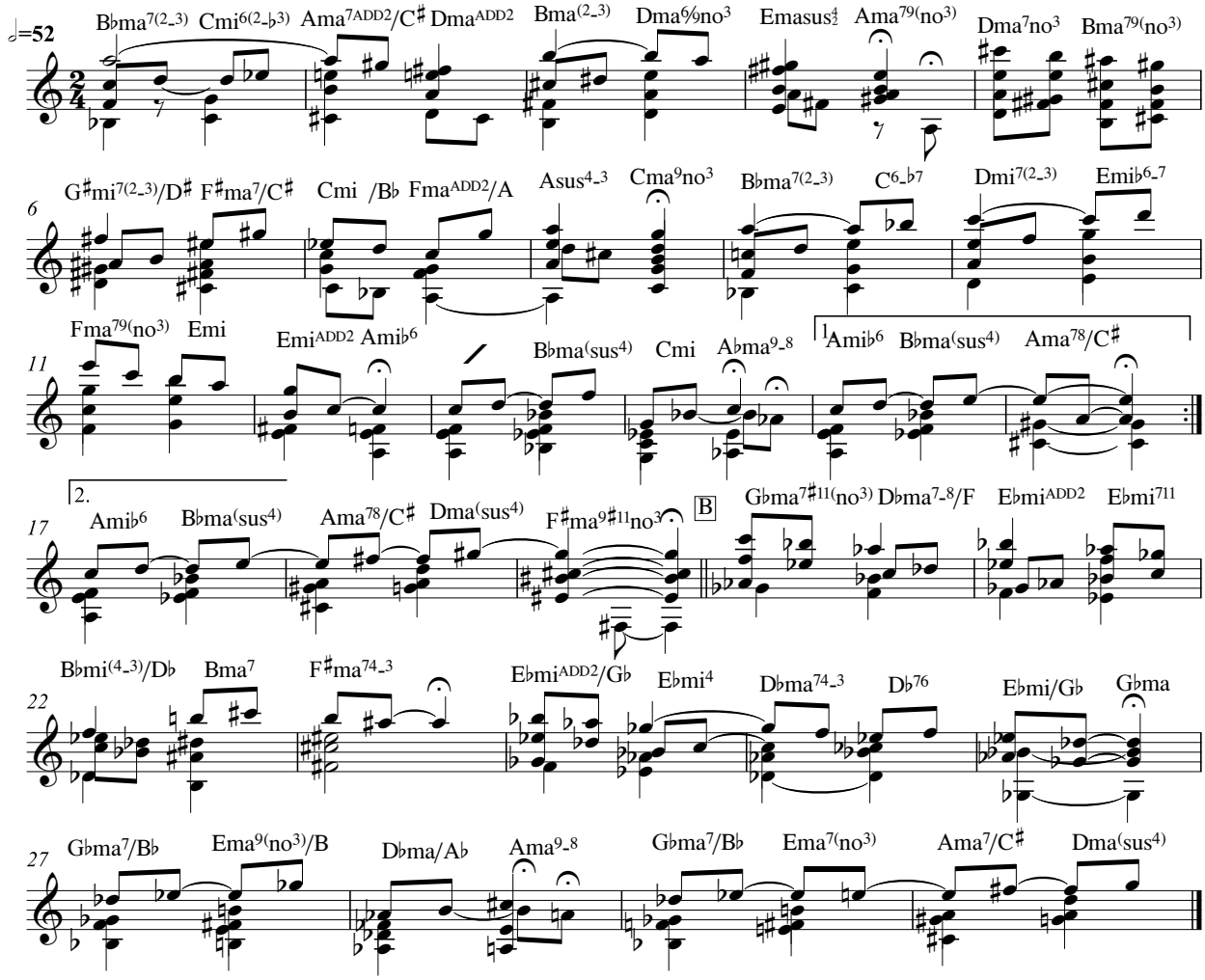
Full Texture

An examination of the full texture of *Luteous Pangolin* offers a more complete understanding of Monder's use of contrapuntal devices and his compositional approach (Example 2.7). The piece is based on a voice-leading exercise using intervallic structures in place of stacked thirds. Monder sees the piece as a series of "exercises going from one structure to another… I could go through a diatonic scale [but] it's always more interesting if you modulate. The melody tells you where it wants to go."[70] In particular, the exercise involves moving from one intervallic structure to another through various voice leading motions. In the opening measure, the voicing of Bb-F-C-A with the intervals 5-5-6 moves to a second intervallic voicing of C-G-D-A or 5-5-5. The initial 5-5-6 structure begins most phrases in the A section, while 2-6-5 and 5-2-5 voicing structures both feature prominently in the B section (Example 2.8).

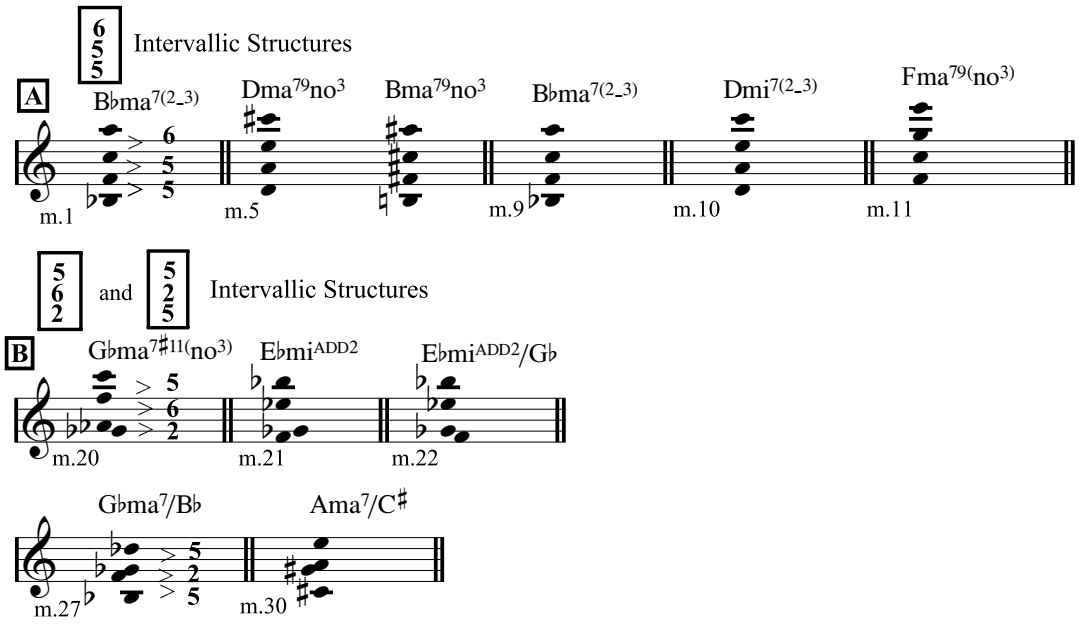
[69] It should be noted that parallelism is common in the music of twentieth century classical and jazz composers and has contributed to a redefining of counterpoint and texture in the twentieth century where the harmonic colour is emphasized over its functionality. See Stefan Kostka, *Materials and Techniques of Twentieth-Century Music*, Third ed. (Englewoods Cliff, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2006), 85.

[70] Ben Monder, Interview with Darren Sigesmund, June 28, 2018.

Example 2.7 Ben Monder, *Luteous Pangolin*: Full Texture



Example 2.8 Ben Monder, *Luteous Pangolin*: Intervallic Structures



Similar to the settings in Bach chorales, Monder's rhythmic layering varies from simple note-against-note setting (m.5) to more complex mixed note values (mm.1-4, 6-8, 20-26). Distributing rhythm across voices creates forward motion that drives the composition through key junctures. For example, a two eighth note/quarter note motion in the alto alternates with an eighth note on beat 2+ in the soprano, driving motion through to the E climax in the A section (mm.9-11). While the reduced outer-voice counterpoint examined earlier highlights a more static view of parallel motion of this passage (Example 2.6), the rhythm across all parts provides a more detailed picture of how phrase climax is generated. A second illustration of rhythmic layering is the shifting eighth-note motion between the top three voices leading to cadences in the first two phrases at B (mm.20-26).

Expanding harmonic texture through chord construction is evident in the practice of composers of twentieth-century Western art music and post 1950s jazz. Likewise, in addition to triads (mm.7, 8, 23, 26, 28), Monder uses several other chord formations, including added note

chords (mm.12, 15, 17, 18, 21, 30), quartal and quintal sonorities (mm.1-5, 9-11, 20), and upper structure triads (mm.8, 27, 29).[71] His voicings are largely root-based and in open position, either Drop 2, Drop 2 and 3 or Drop 2 and 4. This diversity of chordal types and voicing designs ensures variety in harmonic density, as well as a rich and dynamic texture. Moreover, the chord formations help to mask the underlying tonality as the frequent lack of a third in quartal and quintal chords creates a tonally ambiguous quality that implies more of a modal rather than a major or minor sonority.

Monder's bass voice leading also combines both a Baroque and twentieth-century approach. In *Jazz Composition and Arranging,* Tom Boras identifies three types of bass voice leading in jazz: 1) pedal point or static bass; 2) harmonic root by the circle of fifths; and 3) linear root motion by step involving chord inversions to create more melodic bass movement.[72] While these types of bass voice leading are part of Baroque and twentieth-century practice, in the latter case, bass lines also support non-functional tonalities and more ambiguous sonorities not typically found in the major or minor systems of the Baroque style. In *Luteous Pangolin*, stepwise movement occurs frequently (mm.1-3, 9-11, 20-22, 24-25), while cadences in root position follow the circle of fifths (mm.4, 12), suggesting the influence of Bach.[73] Linear voice leading appears through non-functional bass movement by major/minor seconds or thirds, and tritones (mm.8, 15-19, 27-30).

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[71] Chord symbols have been added to the score excerpt. In a personal interview, Monder notes that he has no specific rationale for including or excluding chord symbols in his scores. He does remark, however, "there's no point having them if you are just reading a part" (Ben Monder, Interview with Darren Sigesmund, June 28, 2018).

[72] Tom Boras, *Jazz Composition and Arranging*, (California: Thomson Schirmer, 2005),

[73] Salzer and Schachter, *op. cit.*, 206.

In general, and despite its many twentieth-century rooted deviations, *Luteous Pangolin* exhibits many common attributes with a Bach chorale including variety in voice leading, rhythmic texture, and motivic development. However, Monder distinguishes his writing from a Baroque style with his integration of parallelism, an accepted feature of jazz harmony and texture, and a treatment of dissonance and chordal construction that is more in keeping with twentieth-century Western art music and post 1950s jazz.

IMPROVISATION

Composition has traditionally been viewed as a process involving reflection and revision without real-time limitations, whereas improvisation can be seen as a process of prepared spontaneity within the constraints of real-time performance. Often, such assessments assume composition as complex and cultivated with improvisation viewed as simpler and intuitive. Music theorist and jazz pianist Steve Larson dispels such distinctions in his analysis of Bill Evans' solos on the recording *Conversations with Myself*. Instead Larson suggests, "all music creation relies on a continuum between these two poles," leading to a "coherence of expression."[74] Similarly, ethnomusicologist Bruno Nettl argues that improvisation and composition are not separate processes, that they differ "only in degree, not in nature," and that aspects in the compositional process of Western classical music exist in improvisatory traditions.[75] Jazz historian Lewis Porter echoes Nettl's argument by equating tenor saxophonist John Coltrane's improvisations

[74] Steve Larson, "Composition versus Improvisation?" *Journal of Music Theory* 49, no. 2 (Fall 2005): 242.

[75] Bruno Nettl, "Thoughts on Improvisation: A Comparative Approach." *The Musical Quarterly* LX, no. 1, January 1974: 2-20.

with composition. Porter notes, "Coltrane improvises with extraordinary compositional clarity" on his suite *A Love Supreme* (Impulse Records, 1964).[76]

Even the use of the terms composition and improvisation can reflect an over-simplistic view of performance practice that ignores the complexities of music creation in several music traditions, according to musicologists Laudan Nooshin and Richard Waddell.[77] As a case in point, they emphasize the relationships between composed melodic content and improvisations in Iranian and Indian classical music.

Similar relationships have been analyzed in studies of jazz improvisation. For example, music psychologist Jeff Pressing has noted that the song form of a jazz composition (including the melody and chords) provides a "referent," a structural reference of material for improvisation.[78] This structural link to improvisation is evident throughout jazz history; however, the nature of that link has changed considerably in style and substance through different periods and soloists. This can be seen in the examples of Louis Armstrong's referencing the melody in his 'hot solos' of the early jazz period. As Armstrong said of his approach: "First I plays the melody, then I plays the melody on the melody, and then I routines."[79] In the swing era, however, Coleman Hawkins' harmonic improvisation on his famous 1939 take of "Body and Soul" outlines the chord progression. Several years later, Charlie Parker extended this approach

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[76] Lewis Porter, "John Coltrane's "A Love Supreme": Jazz Improvisation as Composition," *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, vol. 38, no. 3 (Autumn 1985): 600.

[77] Laudan Nooshin and Richard Waddell, "Improvisation and Composition in Iranian and Indian Music." *Journal of the Indian Musicological Society*, 36/37: 104-119.

[78] Jeff Pressing, "Psychological Constraints on Improvisational Expertise and Communication," *In the Course of Performance: Studies in the World of Improvisation*, ed. Bruno Nettl and Melinda Russell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 51-52.

[79] Ben Schwartz, "What Louis Armstrong Really Thinks," *New Yorker*, 25 February 2014, accessed September 15, 2019, https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/what-louis-armstrong-really-thinks.

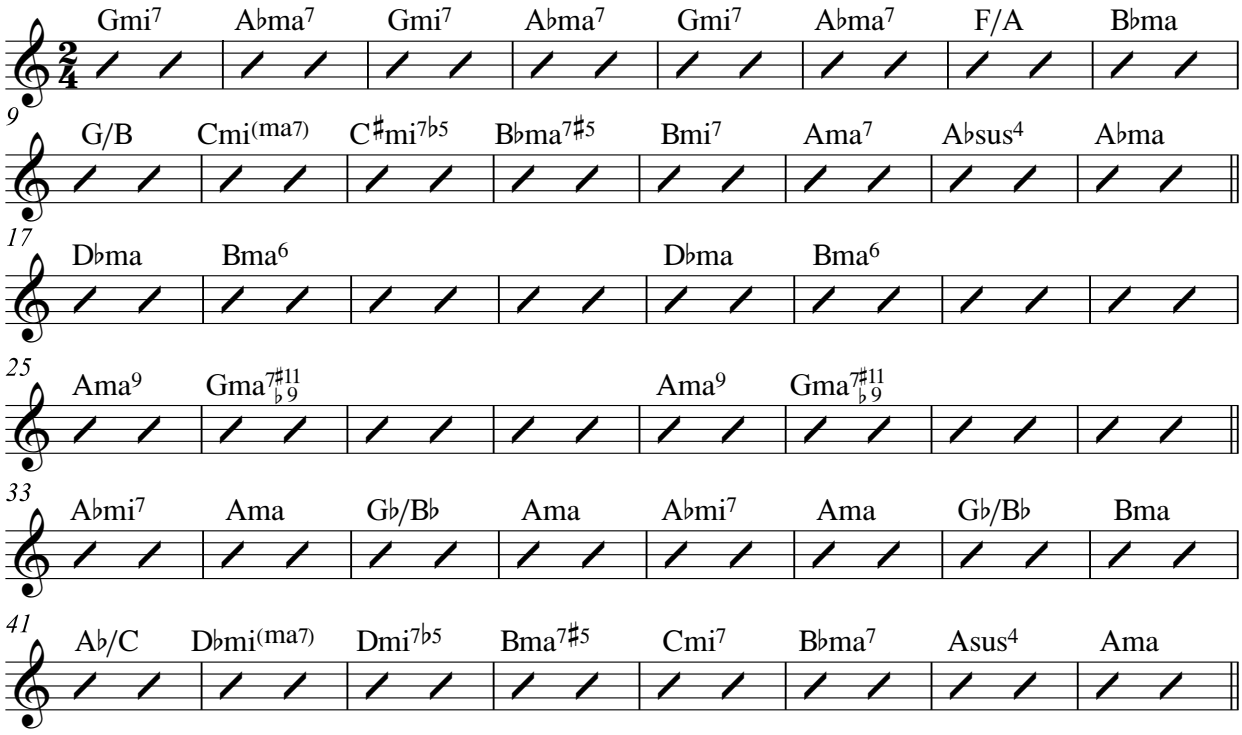
through his use of upper partials and shifting rhythmic phrasing in what would become the norm during the bebop period. Much as Hawkins and Parker (and countless others who followed) departed from Armstrong's reliance on melodic referencing, I argue that Ben Monder's compositions inform his improvisations less through melodic references than harmonic or especially motivic means.

LUTEOUS PANGOLIN - IMPROVISATION

Though, understandably, there are differences between the compositional content of *Luteous Pangolin* and the solo section from a contrapuntal perspective, there are also several similarities that suggest how Monder's improvisation and composition relate to each other in contrapuntal terms. Most significantly, Monder's improvisation evolves through subtle linear alterations, using a similar approach from the composition – that of developing his initial idea through motivic development.

Harmonically speaking, voice leading of the bass in the solo section is predominantly conjunct, mirroring similar stepwise movement by the bass voice in the composition (Example 2.9).

Example 2.9 Ben Monder, *Luteous Pangolin*: Solo Changes/Bass Motion

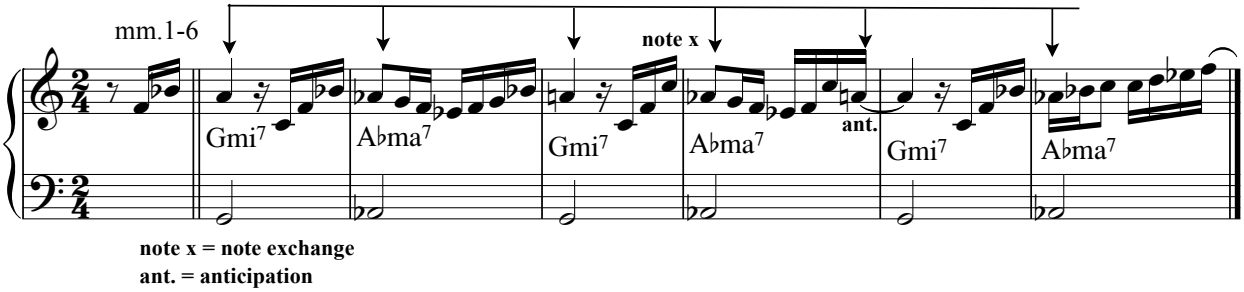


In sharp contrast to a four- or five-note texture of the composition, Monder's solo unfolds largely in single-line texture. To set up the single-line improvisation, Monder has the bass and drums enter in the latter part of the composition, the Coda section, to mark the beginning of a steady pulse out of the previous rubato time feel. With this harmonic and rhythmic support from the bass and drums in place just before the solo section, Monder creates an effective textural shift from the composition (multiple voices) to the improvisation (linear single voice).

Transformations of initial motivic material in the solo underscore Monder's common contrapuntal approach to developing his ideas, whether composed or improvised, even though the motive in the solo does not directly reference the theme in the composed section. The solo opens with a three-note motive that develops through chromatic inflections, note exchanges, and phrase extensions (Example 2.10). Horizontally, voice leading across bars reveals an underlying

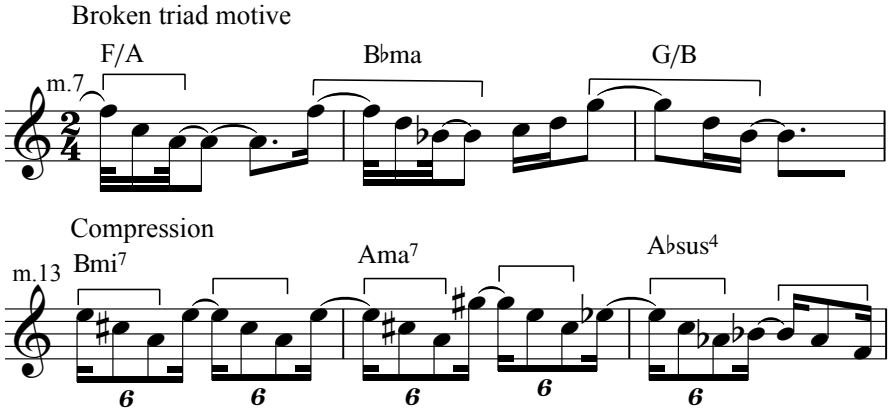
stepwise chromatic oscillation between A and Ab occurring on or near beat 1 of consecutive bars (mm.1-6). This back-and-forth motion builds tension that precedes an ascending motion. Contrapuntal tension arises between the oscillating solo line moving in contrary motion to the bass voice (A-G, Ab-Ab, A-G, Ab-Ab), building independence between these outer-voices through voice leading similar to the composition.

Example 2.10 Ben Monder, *Luteous Pangolin*: Guitar Solo



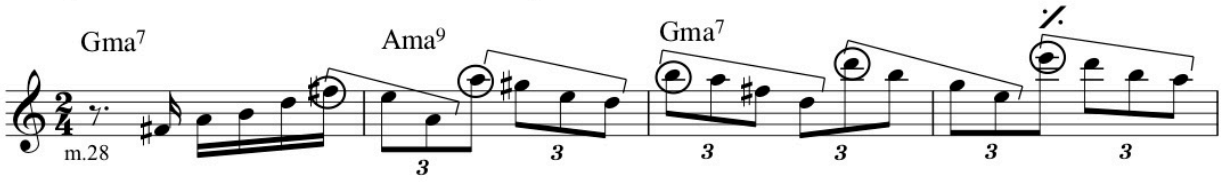
The solo intensifies with the aid of motivic techniques – elongation, imitation and compression of a fragment of the opening motive. The motive (F-Bb-A) is altered with a note exchange (F-C-A) (m.4). The fragment, C-A, is expanded into a syncopated broken triad that appears once in measure 7 and is repeated in measures 8-9. The triad sequence is then compressed rhythmically into two repetitions per bar (mm.13-15), building more tension and accelerated forward motion (Example 2.11).

Example 2.11 Ben Monder, *Luteous Pangolin*: Rhythmic Compression



Following the chromatic oscillations in the opening of the solo, Monder expands the range of his lines with ascending directional tones[80] (mm.28-33). At a surface level of analysis, groups of three- and four-note triplets descend; however, the larger contour, highlighted by the peak of each grouplet, ascends (Example 2.12). This contrary motion within the single line recalls the step progression from the first two phrases of the composition (Example 2.4), demonstrating a common motivic technique in Monder's playing and writing.

Example 2.12 Ben Monder, *Luteous Pangolin*: Solo, Directional tones



In general, Monder pursues a more linear approach to his improvisation with bass/drum support in contrast to the more vertical/chordal texture employed in the composition of *Luteous*

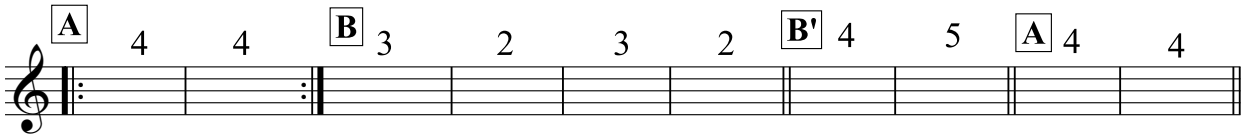
[80] Directional tones are similar to step progression in that they are nonadjacent tones that guide the melodic contour of a phrase. In contrast to step progression, directional tones are often but not always stepwise. See Ludmila Ulehla, *Contemporary Harmony: Romanticism Through the Twelve-Tone Row* (Rottenburg, Germany: Advance Music, 1994), 306-307.

Pangolin. However, the composition and improvisation share a common contrapuntal approach to developing initial motives through motivic development and using voice leading (step progression on the melody and stepwise bass motion) to shape the texture and overall identity of the composed and improvised sections.

O.K. CHORALE - COMPOSITION

O.K. Chorale (*No Boat*, 1997) is another ballad set in chorale style. However, it contrasts in structure, voice leading, and texture from *Luteous Pangolin*. *O.K. Chorale* appears on the *Flux* CD (1996) as guitar/bass/drums trio and *No Boat* CD (1997) in quartet format that includes Theo Bleckmann reinforcing the melody on wordless vocals.[81] The piece consists of 43 bars set in a quasi-ternary structure of AABB'A. The A section is structured in symmetrical four-bar phrases. The B section is constructed with five-bar phrases while B' contains a four- and five-bar phrase, the latter elongated through repetition of the final bar (Example 2.13).

Example 2.13 Ben Monder, *O.K. Chorale*: Phrase structure

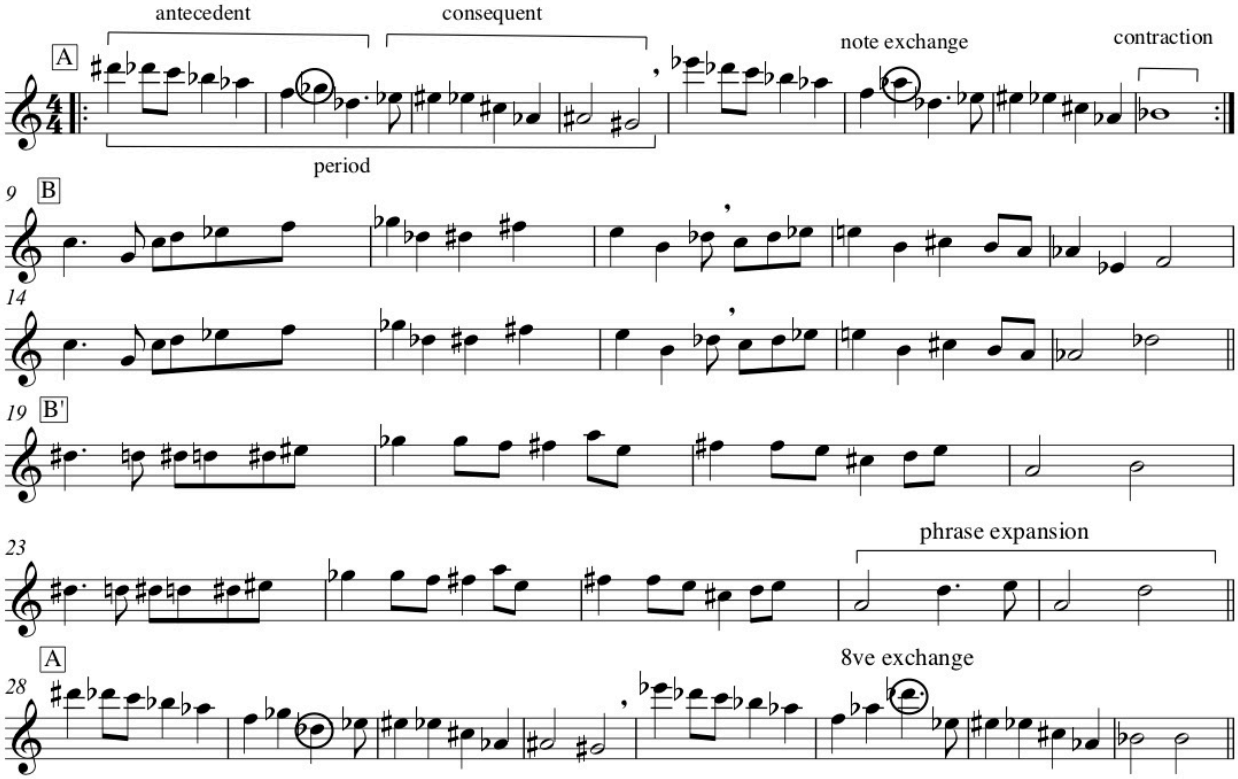


Phrase development is based on minimal motivic variation. The A section follows a periodic design of a two-bar antecedent and two-bar consequent similar to phrase conventions in the Classical era, except that in the latter case, the antecedent and consequent are each four bars in length. The second period is varied slightly by a note exchange in the antecedent (m.2 Gb to m.6 Ab) and a contraction of the cadence in the consequent (two half notes in m.4 reduced to one

[81] It should be noted that the inclusion of voice on the *No Boat* version of *O.K. Chorale* adds timbral contrast to the composition compared to the guitar trio version on *Dust*. There is also a greater emphasis on the soprano line in the contrapuntal texture, as Bleckmann's vocals reinforce the guitar melody.

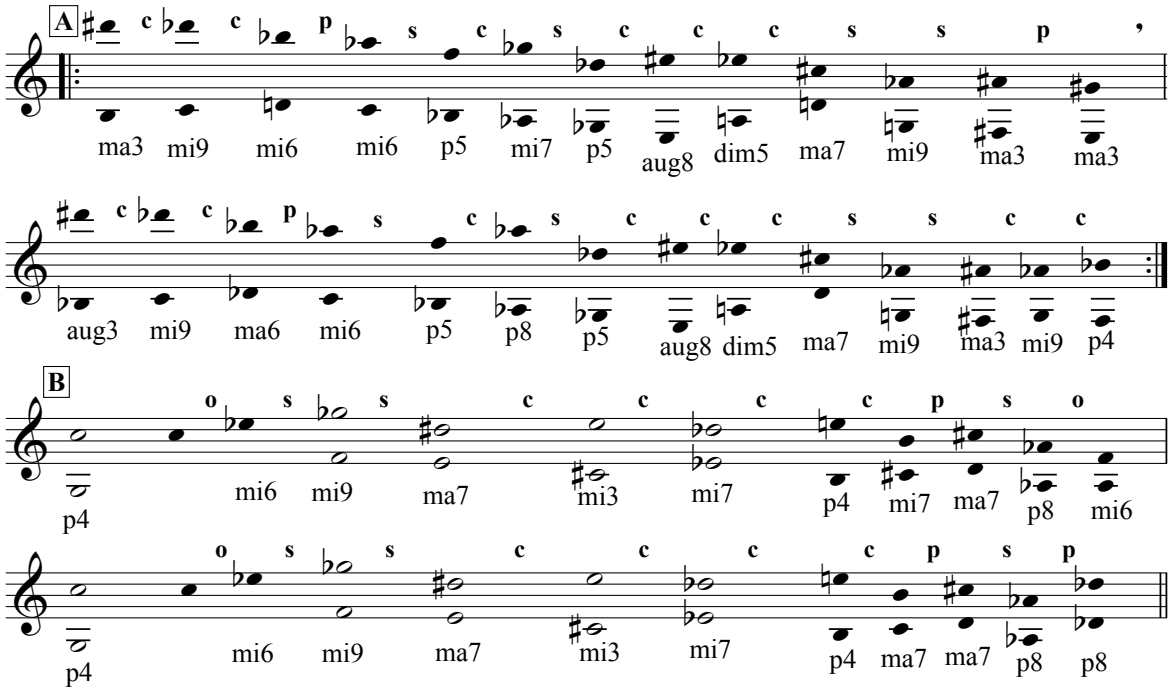
whole note in m.8). Phrase expansion occurs at B' through cadential repetition (mm.26-27). In the final A, an octave exchange to Db (m.33) creates a secondary melodic peak before leading to the final cadence (Example 2.14).

Example 2.14 Ben Monder, *O.K. Chorale*: Phrase Development



Outer-voice counterpoint of the A and B sections shows a variety of melodic motion, similar to *Luteous Pangolin* (Example 2.15). While similar and parallel motion is not as prevalent, there are parallel major sevenths and a "forbidden" octave cadence in B. There is, furthermore, a greater frequency of contrary motion in *O.K. Chorale*, which ensures a degree of linear independence despite less rhythmic variation across parts.

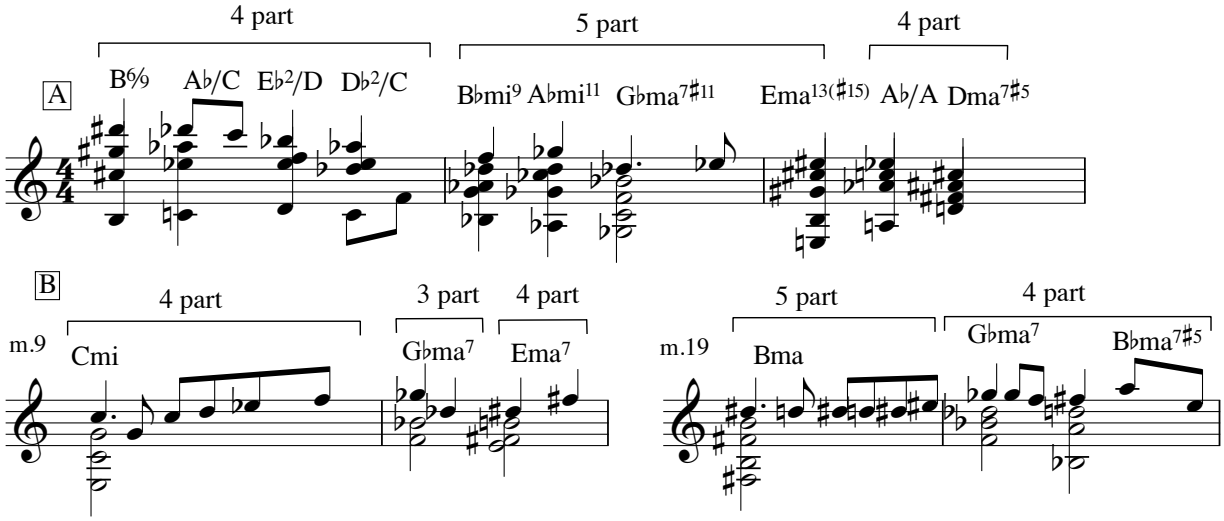
Example 2.15 Ben Monder, *O.K. Chorale*: Outer-Voice Framework



Texturally, *O.K. Chorale* is more diverse than both *Luteous Pangolin* and typical Bach chorales,[82] as the number of voices alternates between three, four and five parts (Example 2.16). Textural contrast shapes the overall form through distinct A and B sections. A note-against-note harmonic setting in A is followed by a more homophonic texture in B where the moving melody is supported by block chord accompaniment in the lower voices. Adding to this contrast, the harmonic rhythm in A (mainly one chord per beat) is reduced in B (one or two chords per bar).

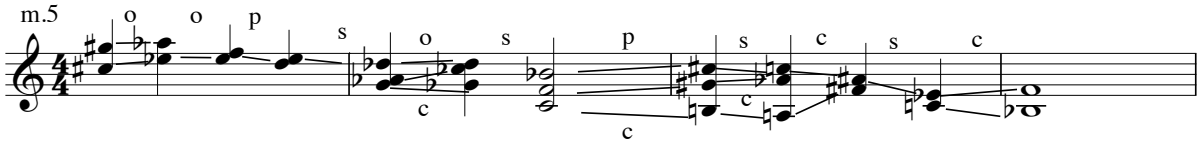
[82] The texture in Monder's chorale fluctuates more than in a Bach chorale which largely maintains a consistent number of voices. Textural variation in Bach occurs more so between different chorales rather within a single chorale. To be sure, defining features of Bach's writing include his varied application of the chorale to numerous forms (i.e., motet, mass, prelude, cantata, fantasia), as well as his diverse harmonic treatment of each cantus firmus. See Riemenschneider, *op. cit.*, vii.

Example 2.16 Ben Monder, *O.K. Chorale*: 3-5 Part Texture



The rhythm across parts is less varied than in *Luteous Pangolin*. Quarter and half notes dominate the texture of the lower parts, while a mix of quarter and eighth notes run through the soprano voice. To compensate for less rhythmic differentiation, melodic contour plays a greater role in shaping contrapuntal movement. Monder incorporates varied motion between all voices. Due to their position as the top and bottom lines, the aforementioned outer parts shape the contrapuntal texture as the more prominent lines. The inner voices also drive the linear progression through contrary and oblique motion (mm.1-3, 5-8, 28-30, 32-34) (Example 2.17). This contrapuntal movement of voices contributes to a blurring of the vertical harmonies.

Example 2.17 Ben Monder, *O.K. Chorale*: Inner Parts Voice Leading



Tonal ambiguity also arises from voice leading of non-tertian or less conventional chord constructions. By using vertical formations such as sus2 chords and slash chords (mm.1, 3, 5, 7, 12, 17, 28, 30), quartal and quintal voicings (mm.1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8), and upper structure triads

(mm.3, 10),[83] I hear Monder changing the perception of the underlying tonality. These harmonies and voicings obscure chordal roots by: 1) omitting chord tones (m.8, Bbno3rd/F); 2) widening the spacing between voices (m.1, B6/9 voiced from the bottom as B-C#-G#-D#); 3) re-arranging root position tertian stacks (m.10, Gbma7 voiced as F-Bb-Db-Gb); and, 4) enhancing the impact of dissonant bass tones in a note-against-note texture. Minor ninth dissonances are heard between the bass and third voice in Eb2/D and Db2/C of m.1 as D-Eb and C-Db, while an augmented fifteenth between the bass and soprano voice occurs in Ema13(#15) as E-E# in m.7.

The harmonic progressions are non-functional where the root motion moves by step/half step, major/minor third or tritone, rather than functional changes through closely related diatonic keys commonly associated with Baroque music or many jazz standards from the American Songbook. From the beginning of *O.K. Chorale*, the bass moves stepwise through white keys B-C-D-C (m.1) and black keys Bb-Ab-Gb (m.2) and then in leaps by a circle of fifths E-A-D-G (m.3). This conjunct motion is characteristic of Baroque voice leading. The root motion in the circle of fifths, however, is more common in dominant harmony found in jazz standards and bebop tunes.[84] Yet considering the full harmony in *O.K. Chorale*, the bass tones moving in fifths play an important role in creating strong dissonance against the upper voices arranged as major triads in the progression at measure 3: C# major triad over an E bass; Ab major over A; F# major over D; and Ab major over G (Example 2.18). The tension from this dissonance resolves in a half cadence at measure 4.

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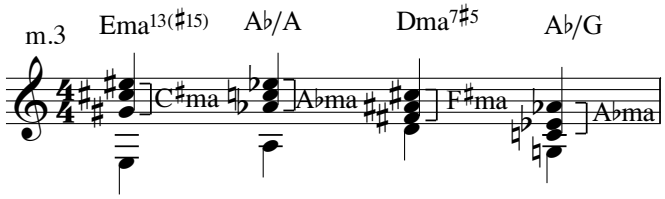
[83] Chord symbols for *O.K. Chorale* are indicated in the published score.

[84] Richard Sussman and Michael Abene, *Jazz Composition and Arranging in the Digital Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 88.

Example 2.18 Ben Monder, *O.K. Chorale*: Triads over Dissonant Bass



From a linear perspective, consonant upper voices such as triads can mitigate dissonance in a bass line, according to jazz educator Bill Dobbins. He notes that this linear approach appears in the music of Duke Ellington, Gil Evans and Bob Brookmeyer.[85] In Monder's case, the consonance from triads moving over a dissonant bass in *O.K. Chorale* provides smooth voice leading, in particular the soprano line outlining an added note C# major triad (E#-D#-C#-G#). However, Dobbins' perspective does not account either for Monder's use of dissonant bass motion in sequential fifths beneath upper triads (the bass ought to move stepwise), an augmented octave (E-E# in m.3), or minor ninths between outer voices (G-Ab in m.3 and F-Gb in m.10). Although Dobbins claims these dissonances are rare in jazz,[86] it is integral to Monder's contrapuntal approach.

In summary, the composed section of *O.K. Chorale* features variety in voice leading, unconventional chord formations that blur the underlying tonality, and sharp dissonance abetted by contrapuntal and non-functional root motion. These aspects of the composition distinguish Monder's chorale writing from that of Bach, however, the ensuing discussion of the improvisation also reveals a distinction from the Baroque style through the use of the blues as a basis for motivic development.

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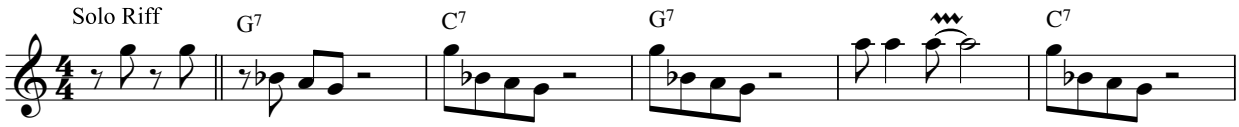
[85] Bill Dobbins, *Jazz Arranging and Composing* (Rottenburg, Germany: Advance Music, 1986), 66.
[86] Dobbins, *Ibid*., 13.

O.K. CHORALE - IMPROVISATION

Similar to the subtle phrase developments he included in the composition itself, Monder employs linear concepts in his solo in *O.K. Chorale* that are transformed motivically while the rhythm section provides the underlying pulse and root progression. Most notably on the recording *No Boat* (Songlines 1997),[87] Monder places particular emphasis on motivically developing his initial solo idea, a b3-1 blues riff moving from B-G#, through rhythmic transformations.[88] Louis Armstrong uses a blues riff in a solo during his 1929 recording of "St. Louis Blues" (Example 2.19).

Example 2.19 *St. Louis Blues* (*OKEH* 1929): Louis Armstrong solo excerpt

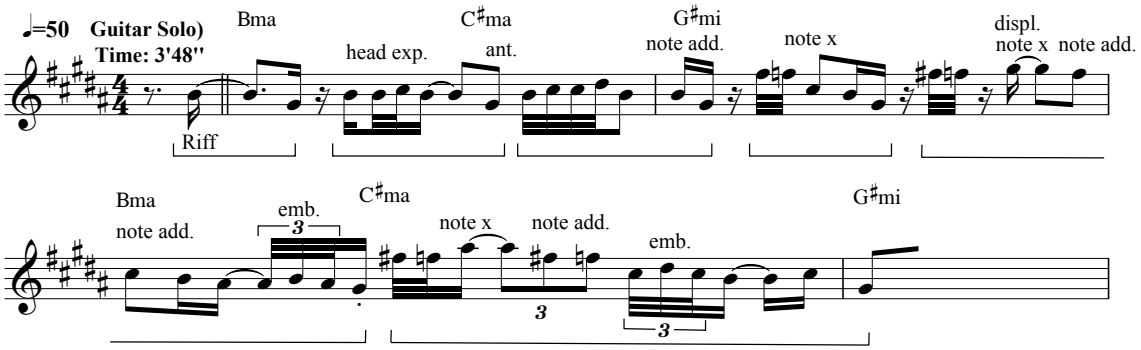


Monder plays his blues riff in *O.K. Chorale* over a Bma-C#ma-G#mi vamp. This bIII-IV-I progression may be understood as a fragment of the opening theme, F-Gb-Db (III-IV-I) (m. 2), effectively turning melody into harmony. Rather than repeat the riff in exact imitation as in the Armstrong example, Monder chooses to continuously develop his initial B-G# riff motivically through note additions, exchanges, embellishments, rhythmic displacement and expansion (Example 2.20).

[87] Monder also solos on *O.K. Chorale* on his *Flux* CD. The solo on *No Boat* was chosen because of the blues riff at the beginning of the solo that piqued my interest. Both solos, however, offer much in terms of motivic development.

[88] Riffs are short repeated rhythmic phrases that commonly serve as the basis for jazz compositions, background accompaniment or improvisation.

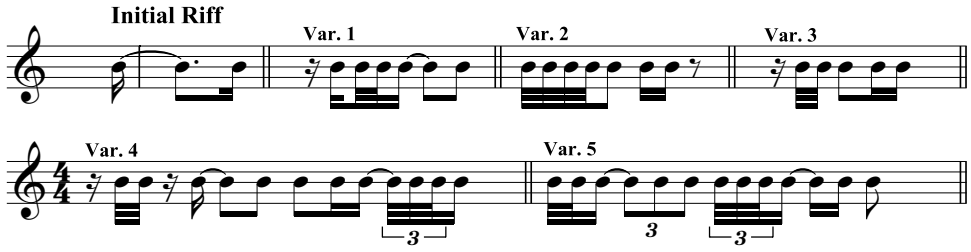
Example 2.20 Ben Monder, *O.K. Chorale* (*No Boat* CD, 1997): Blues Riff



***__head exp.__ = head expansion, __ant__.= anticipation, __note add__. = note addition, __note x__= note exchange, __displ__.=displacement
__emb__.=embellishment

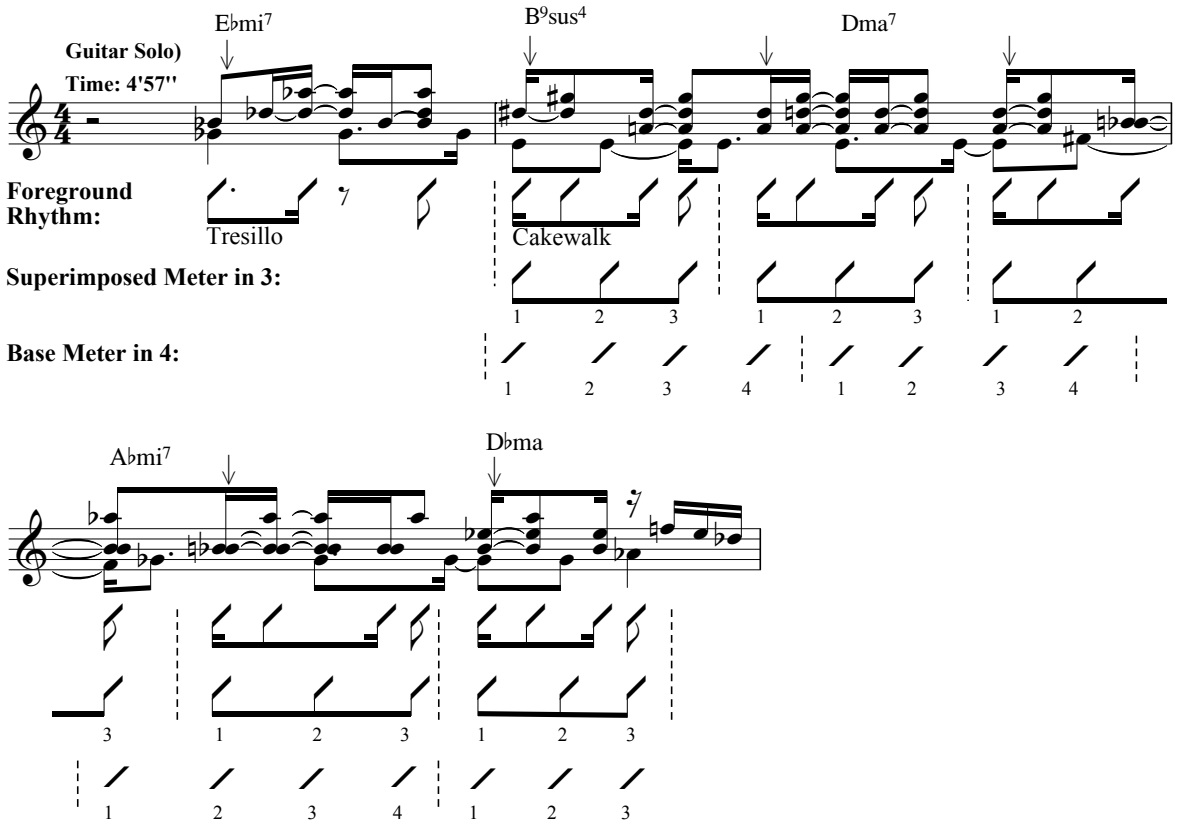
A rhythmic analysis reveals continuous variation of the initial blues riff (Example 2.21). The degree of transformation of a simple two-note riff not only speaks to the skill and ingenuity in Monder's solo construction, but even more to how continuous motivic development is central to how I view his overall approach to counterpoint in composition and improvisation.

Example 2.21 Ben Monder, *O.K. Chorale* (*No Boat* CD, 1997): Blues Riff Rhythmic Transformation



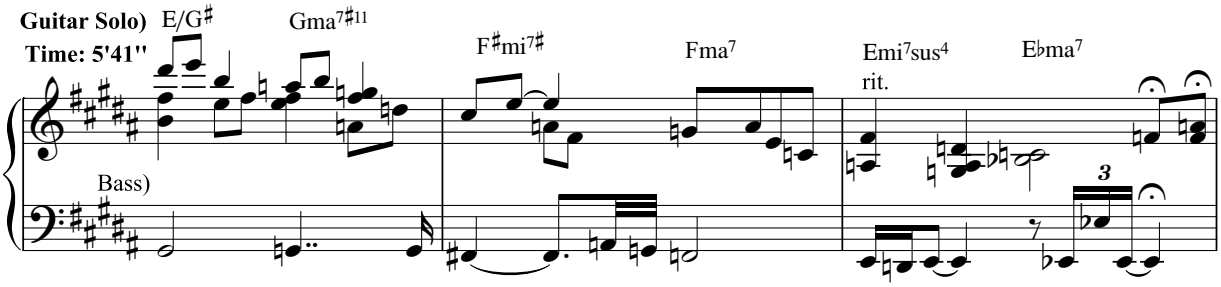
Rhythmic variation continues with a polymetric pulse of three over four. A tresillo figure precedes a series of cakewalk rhythms producing a chain of shifting accents and over the bar phrasing (Example 2.22). The excerpt features interlocking rhythm distributed across parts within the guitar, creating a composite stream of sixteenth notes. This rhythmic layering mirrors Monder's approach to voice leading in the composed material in *O.K. Chorale* and *Luteous Pangolin*.

Example 2.22 Ben Monder, *O.K. Chorale* (*No Boat* CD, 1997): Polymetre



Near the latter part of the solo, a dramatic shift occurs with a drop in dynamics to pianissimo. Monder thickens the texture by reverting to a chorale setting where rhythmic content is simplified to quarter notes and eighth notes, and rhythmic motion is distributed across parts. This is very much in keeping with the composed parts of the tune (Example 2.23).

Example 2.23 Ben Monder, *O.K. Chorale* (*No Boat* CD, 1997): End of Solo Chorale Setting



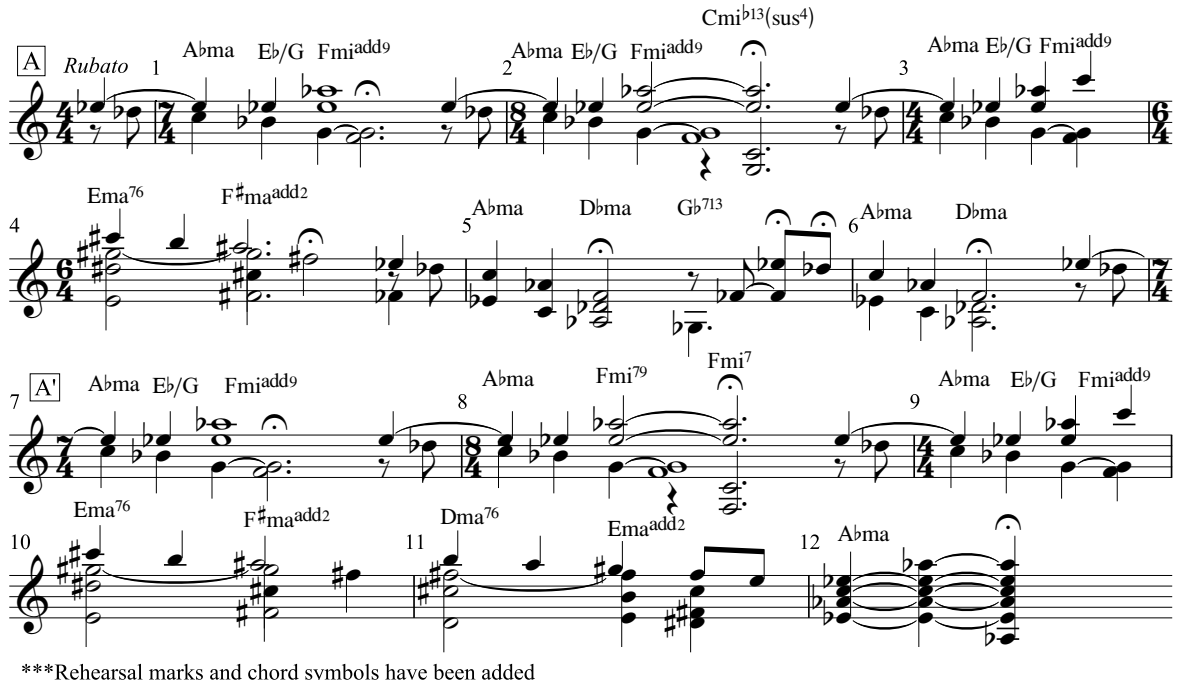
The fact that Monder sets his ballads in chorale style using Baroque and jazz influences highlights a compositional aesthetic in his music defined by old techniques fused with more contemporary sonorities. This is especially evident in the composed sections of *O.K.Chorale*, but it also informs the improvisation. In contrast to *Luteous Pangolin* and *O.K. Chorale,* the following ballad, *In Memoriam*, is a through-composed and extended piece in which voice leading of the unfolding theme and a textural shift to an intervening chorale setting shape the contrapuntal texture.

IN MEMORIAM - COMPOSITION

Like the other tunes discussed thus far in this chapter, *In Memoriam* (*Dust*, 1997) is a multi-movement ballad for solo guitar that incorporates a chorale as part of the larger form. For instance, phrasing is punctuated by caesuras, similar to *Luteous Pangolin* and *O.K. Chorale*. However, in addition to being a multi-movement piece, one of the contrapuntal features that distinguishes *In Memoriam* from Monder's other chorale style ballads is the theme expanding and unfolding in contrary motion between the outer voices.

For example, the opening passage (Example 2.24) features a melody moving across parts, a diverging contour, and increasing density of voices.

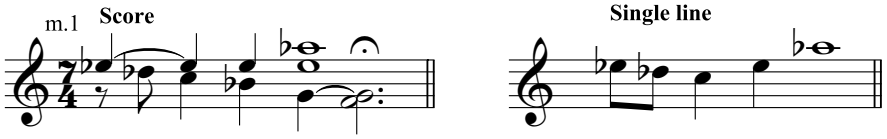
Example 2.24 Ben Monder, *In Memoriam*: Opening Passage



***Rehearsal marks and chord symbols have been added

As the melody unfolds, it crosses from the soprano down to the bass and back up to the soprano voice (Example 2.25). The texture also thickens from one to four voices, and eventually to six by the final chord in the passage (m.12)

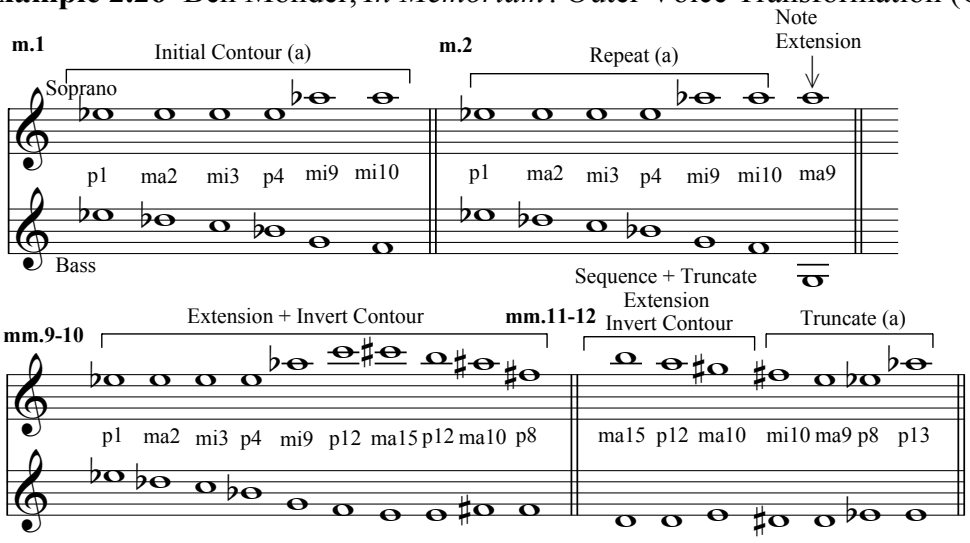
Example 2.25 Ben Monder, *In Memoriam*: Melody across parts



As this happens, a diverging contour emerges between the soprano and bass voices moving away from one another in contrary or oblique motion. The two lines form a mix of consonant and dissonant intervals that widen over time (ma2-mi3-p4-mi9-mi10) in measure 1. After the phrase repeats with a note extension in measure 2, a converging contour appears in the third iteration as

an inversion and extension of the original theme (mm.9-10). The extension is then sequenced and truncated. The passage ends with a truncation of the opening contour. In Example 2.26, these transformations are shown with both voices placed in separate staves to highlight the diverging and converging contours. As the voices spread outwards to the phrase climax (C# at m.10) and converge thereafter, the voice leading in this progression contributes to tension and release through a widening and contracting of intervals.

Example 2.26 Ben Monder, *In Memoriam*: Outer Voice Transformation (Opening Passage)

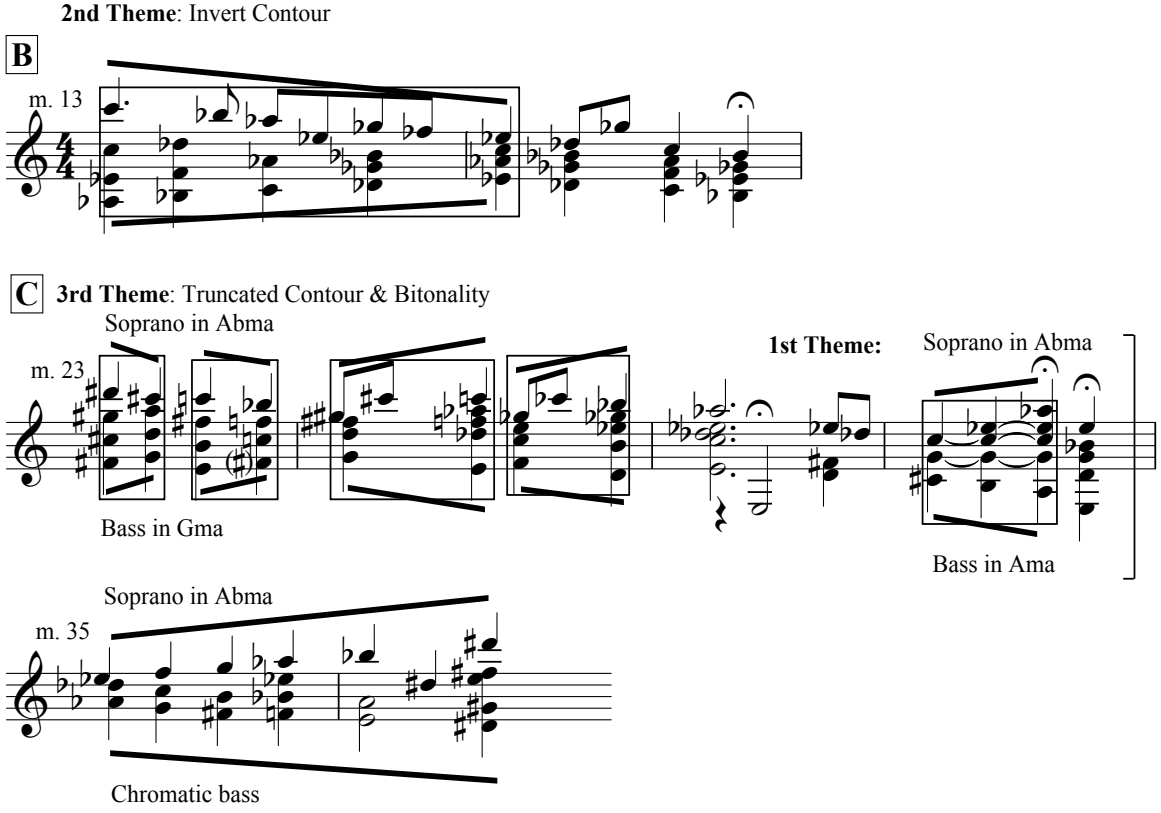


Together with the outer-voice progression, motivic expansion in *In Memoriam* also contributes to thematic growth. Each phrase in the opening passage increases in "stroke factor," here defined as the number of notes (including repeated notes) or note stems in both the melody and bass: 6, 7,10, and 12. The change in time signatures also reflects this expansion: Phrase 1 (7/4), Phrase 2 (8/4), and Phrase 3 (4/4+6/4).

Voice leading of outer voices continues to play a key role in shaping thematic development of the contrapuntal texture as linear expansion in the first section leads to a textural

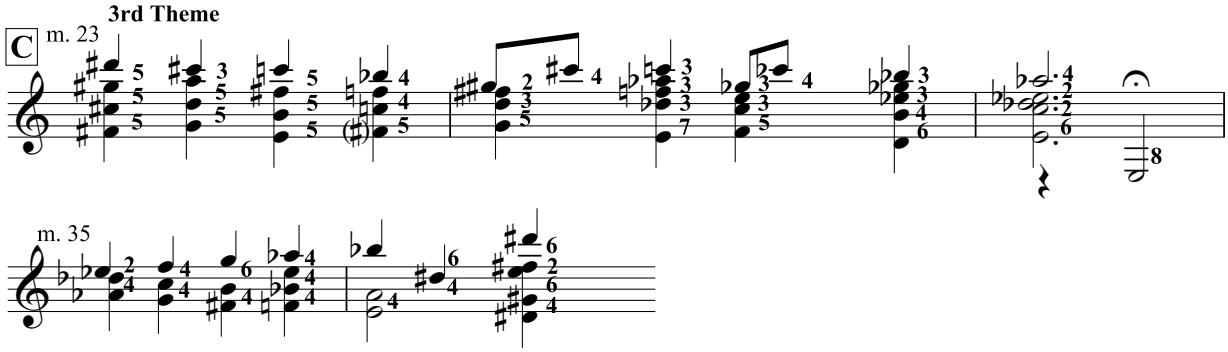
shift with a 1:1 or 2:1 chorale setting of the second and third themes, similar to *O.K. Chorale*. The second theme inverts the shape of the initial passage to a diverging contour. The third theme is much more dissonant as it departs Ab major from the first two sections to a more dissonant sound. The bass in G major moves contrary to the soprano line in Ab major, creating a bitonal effect through converging and diverging voices in truncated form. The initial theme returns as a response with a different bitonality of Ab major melody over an A major bass. Dissonance continues to evolve in measure 32 as the soprano ascends in Ab major against a chromatically descending bass, creating a diverging contour (Example 2.27).

Example 2.27 Ben Monder, *In Memoriam*: Chorale Section Contour



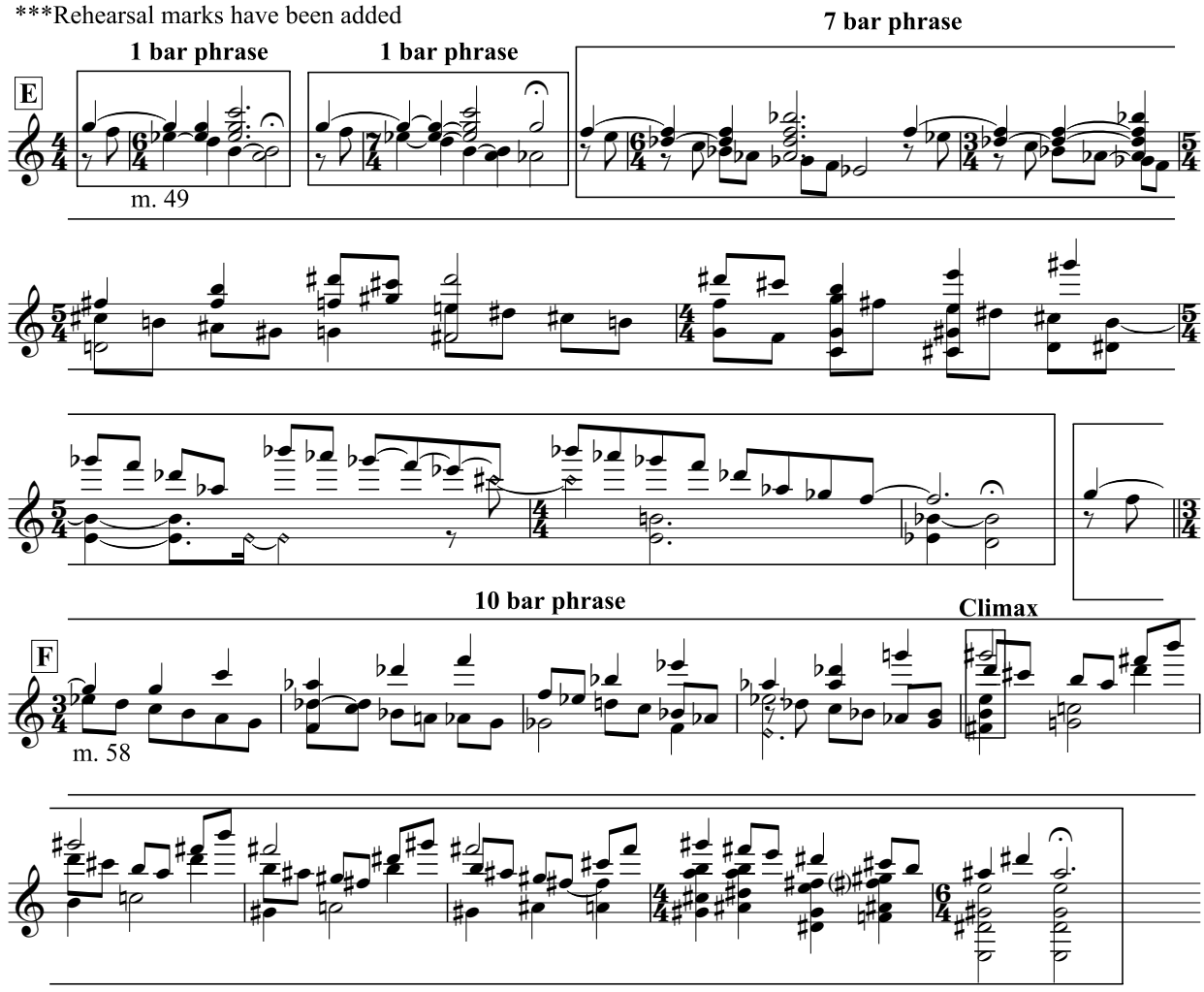
The full texture beginning at measure 23 reveals Monder's use of intervallic structures to form voicings, thicken the overall texture and create greater dissonance, thus shaping his contrapuntal approach. The first chord is a stack of fifths. In contrary motion to the first three soprano notes D#-C#-C, the bottom three voices progress in parallel motion as a quintal block in the aforementioned third theme (m.23), creating a thickened two-voice framework. The quintal block dissolves by the last quarter note to accommodate the converging melody. A similar use of intervallic structures occurs at measure 35 where the ascending soprano is countered by a chromatically descending quartal block, Ab-Db, G-C, etc., also in parallel motion. Intervallic structures are integral to creating dissonant voice leading throughout, including at letter C where Monder moves from one configuration to another (Example 2.28).

Example 2.28 Ben Monder, *In Memoriam*: Intervallic Structures



Monder reworks the first theme in a development section that intensifies the contrary motion between outer voices. Instead of using mostly quarter notes in the first theme, Monder propels the music forward by inserting a steady stream of eighth notes in the bass or inner parts cascading downwards against the ascending soprano line. Phrase structures marked by caesuras expand from the previous one to four bars to one, seven and ten bars in length. These longer spans add to the growing tension that climaxes at a high G# in measure 62 (Example 2.29).

Example 2.29 Ben Monder, *In Memoriam*: Phrase Structure, Development Section



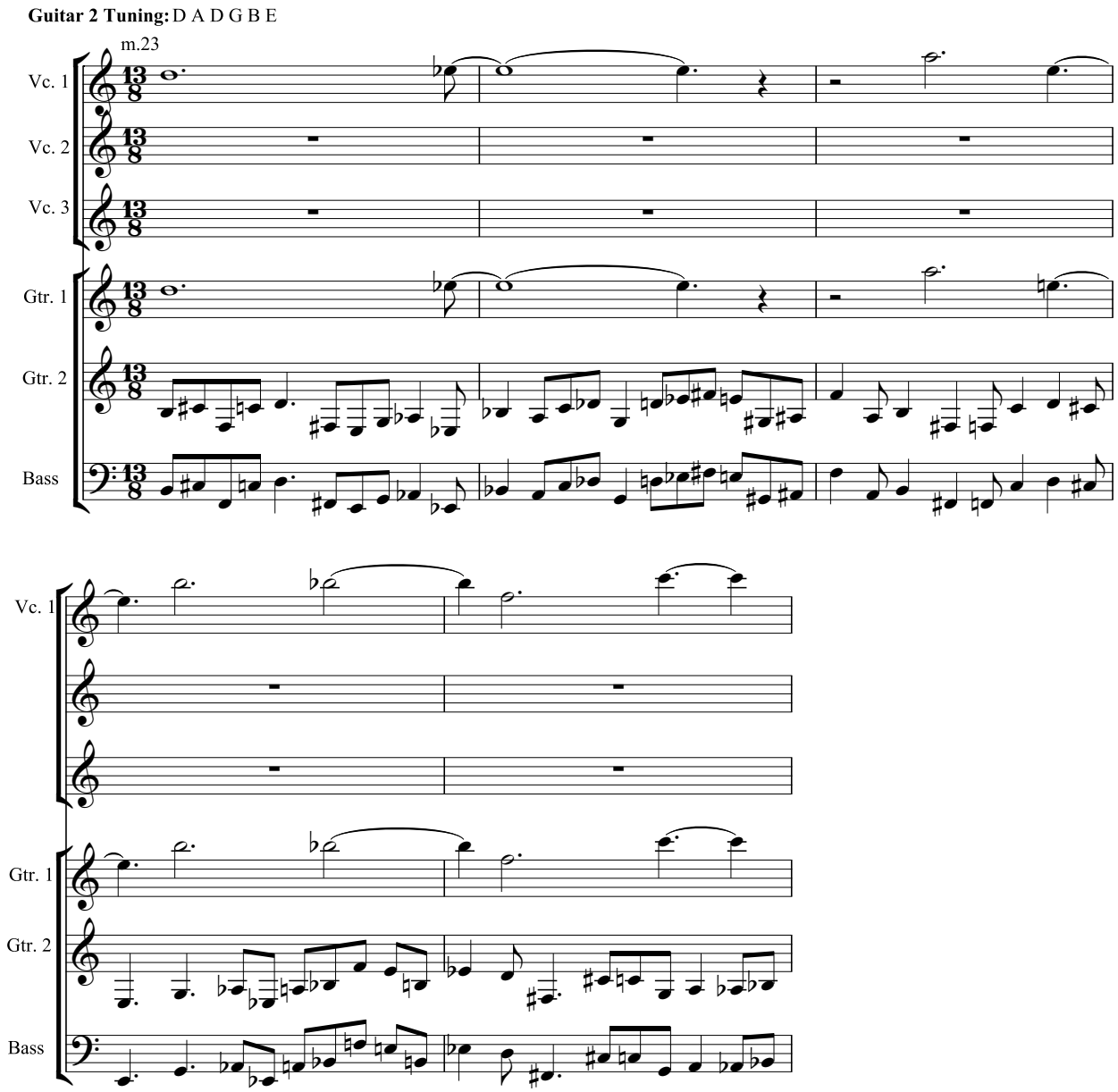
In Memoriam does not feature a solo section. The absence of improvisation reflects Monder's emphasis on notated material alone to convey the essence of the work.

TREDECADROME – COMPOSITION

Tredecadrome (*Hydra*, 2013) is an extended, multi-movement, 12-tone piece that features guitar distortion, overdubbed vocals, and employs electric bass and drums, thus suggesting a genre alignment with rock. Its main theme is based on a 13-beat rhythmic cycle. Despite an overall

rock sensibility, chorale writing provides a textural contrast within the larger form. After an introduction in 13/8 metre with short angular unison statements in the guitar and bass, the tune proceeds to a two-part texture of guitar/vocal melody over a guitar/bass ostinato (Example 2.30).

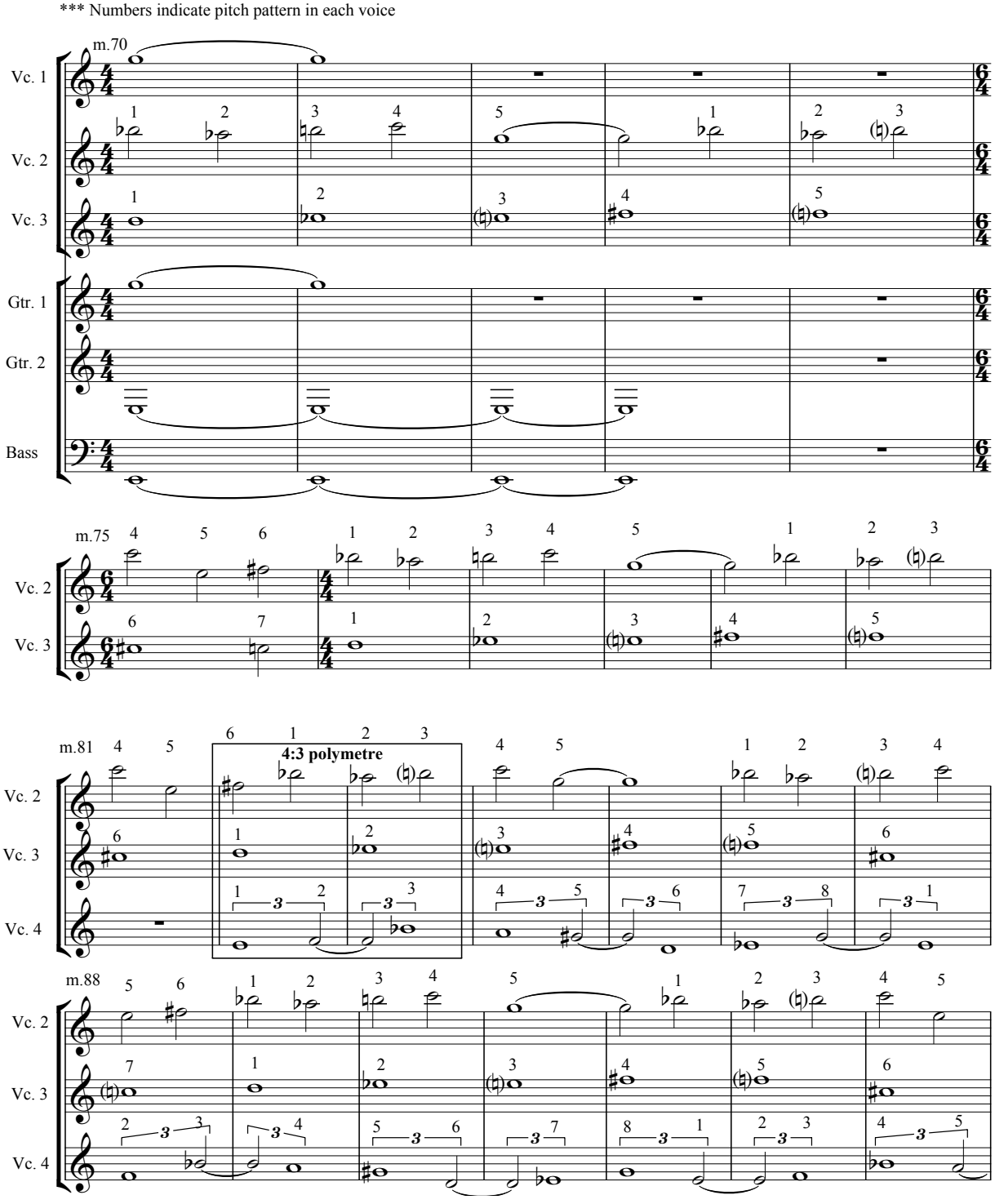
Example 2.30 Ben Monder, *Tredecadrome*: Head, Two-voice Texture (excerpt)



The first chorale is a three voice setting in *a cappella* that serves as a bridge to the guitar solo (Example 2.31). The previous two-voice texture (voice 1/guitar 1 and guitar 2/bass) sustains

long tones into the chorale interlude, overlapping with two voices in mostly 2:1 setting. The arrival of the third voice in measure 82 creates an intriguing polymetre of 4 against 3 that leads to the guitar solo. The polymetre repeats every two bars. To add more complexity to the passage, Monder arranges each voice with a different repeating pattern of pitches: Voice 1, 5 and 6 notes; Voice 2, 7 and 6; Voice 3, 8 and 7. The result is an asymmetrical web of voices moving in rhythmic and melodic counterpoint. This *a cappella* section provides a stark textural contrast and release from the previous two-voice texture (with drums) and the ensuing guitar solo. In effect, Monder's use of chorale writing helps to define and drive the overall form of this extensive piece.

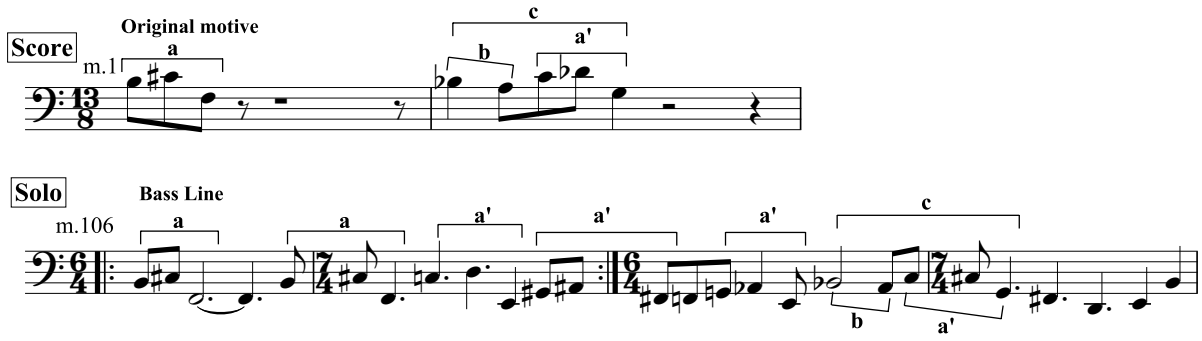
Example 2.31 Ben Monder, *Tredecadrome*: Three-part Chorale, Transition to Guitar Solo



TREDECADROME – IMPROVISATION

Monder launches into a rock guitar style solo filled with sweeping single lines, odd metre bursts, and soaring sustained notes. While there are no solo chord changes, the composition and solo sections are metrically and motivically linked. The 13/8 metre of the original theme is augmented in the solo section to alternating bars of 6/4 and 7/4. Motivically, the composed and improvised sections are further linked by a fully notated bass line in the solo that emulates the initial three-note theme of the composition (Example 2.32).

Example 2.32 Ben Monder, *Tetradecadrome*: Bass Motive in Composition and Solo



Even with the motivic and metric continuity between the composed and improvised sections, the short duration of the guitar solo (roughly one minute) in this otherwise fully notated fifteen-minute composition underscores Monder's emphasis on pre-composed material over improvisation in *Tredecadrom*e.

SUMMARY

Luteous Pangolin, *O.K. Chorale*, *In Memoriam*, and *Tredecadrome* offer varied treatments of the chorale setting. While they differ somewhat in phrase structure, formal design, use of contour, and rhythmic texture, they do share a similar approach to chord formations, non-functional progressions, treatment of dissonance and voice leading. Monder's use of intervallic structures

replaces a more conventional tertian approach to voicing construction, creating sharper dissonances that arise through voice leading. Textural shifts to or from chorale sections generate contrast and musical interest, thereby shaping formal design in multi-movements works. With a supporting rhythm section in his solos, Monder chooses a predominantly linear over a chordal approach. However, motivic development remains a common link between his compositional and solo material. The fact that Monder employs the chorale style in ballads and up-tempo works further attests to his diverse treatment of this compositional technique in which contrapuntal elements shape the overall identity of each piece. This defining of an entire composition through counterpoint is discussed further in the following chapter on pedal point. Similar to chorale writing, pedal point is not in and of itself a contrapuntal technique, but it does provide a framework for creating contrapuntal textures and tension through voice leading, expanded harmony, and rhythm.

Chapter Three
PEDAL POINT

INTRODUCTION

This chapter analyzes the use of pedal point in four of Ben Monder's compositions *Late Green*, *Sleep*, *Aplysia*, and *Muvseevum*. In each case, I examine pedal point in a contrapuntal context as oblique voice leading that shapes tension and release in Monder's compositions and solo work.[89] As in the previous chapter on chorale writing, I explore pedal point in a variety of structural settings, helping to define important junctures, such as transitions or climaxes, and ultimately the form of each composition under consideration. In pieces where Monder does solo, I provide an analysis to examine similar contrapuntal devices used in the composition.

Because Monder's writing exhibits both a tonal and freer treatment of pedal point, I draw on both Western classical common practice and jazz theory. In both contexts, pedal point creates colour and tension that shape form regardless of the harmonic conventions. However, a common practice perspective can account for elements of Monder's compositions constructed within a tonal functional framework, whereas jazz theory offers an added range of colour with a freer approach to dissonance and voice leading that allows for non-functional harmony or freely tonal writing outside of diatonic harmony based on the circle of fifths. In the following section I discuss how several classical and jazz theorists define pedal point as a means to create tension and either establish or blur tonality, effects that I treat as an aspect of Monder's contrapuntal style.

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[89] To be sure, pedal point is not exclusive to contrapuntal writing, as it is found in homophonic writing in many musical genres and traditions. However, it can contribute to a polyphonic texture as a form of oblique voice leading against the movement of other voices or harmonies.

In his book on Baroque counterpoint, Kent Kennan defines pedal point as "a sustained or repeated note, usually on the tonic or dominant pitch, which lasts through two or more harmonies…It usually begins and ends as a harmonic note, but may, between these points, be dissonant to the harmony – that is, nonharmonic."[90] Walter Piston points out the tonal pull of pedal points: "The strength of tonality inherent in the pedal makes it a very effective device for establishing or maintaining a key, even though the accompanying harmony may go far afield."[91] In Western common practice, pedal points are usually in the bass voice, however, they can appear in the middle voice as an internal pedal or the top voice as an inverted pedal.[92] Although the term "pedal point" originates from the pedal parts of organ music, it is used in a variety of settings and musical styles.

A frequent means by which pedal point establishes a principal key in the common practice is the tonal scheme of a Tonic-Predominant-Dominant-Tonic cycle (T-P-D-T). As Edward Aldwell and Carl Schachter describe in *Harmony and Voice Leading*, "most often a pedal point begins and ends with a statement of the chord it prolongs; the progression I-IV-V7-I is particularly frequent over the tonic pedal."[93] The Allemande from Bach's *English Suites,* Partita No. 1 shows this progression with a repeating pedal point (Example 3.1).

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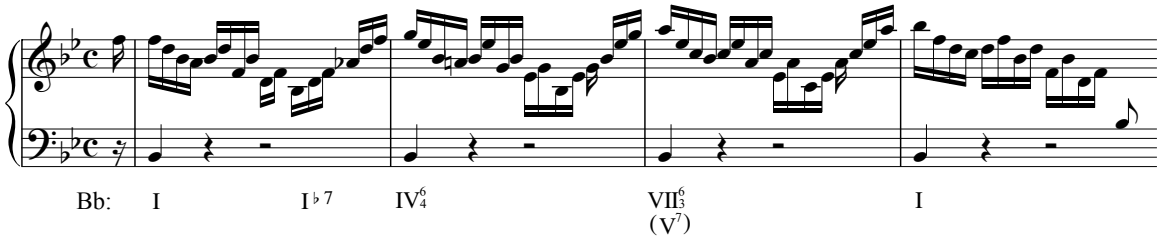
[90] Kennan, *Counterpoint,* 43.

[91] Walter Piston, *Harmony*, 5th ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1987), 132.

[92] Gustavo Assis-Brasil, "The Art of Repetition: A Guide to Pedal Points and Ostinatos," *Premier Guitar*, Nov. 25, 2017, accessed January 25, 2019, http://www.premierguitar.com/articles/26506-the-art-of-repetition-a-guide-to-pedal-points-and-ostinatos.

[93] Edward Aldwell and Carl Schachter, *Harmony and Voice Leading*, vol. 2 (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979), 40-41.

Example 3.1 J.S. Bach: Allemande (from *English Suites* Partita No. 1, in Bb major)



In a jazz context, pedal point can be interpreted more loosely. Mark Levine defines pedal point as "a series of chords over the same bass note" in *The Jazz Theory Book*,[94] while in his book *Jazz Theory* Darius Terefenko describes it simply as a form of oblique voice leading.[95] In *Inside the Score,* Rayburn Wright calls pedal points "a continuing bass (usually tonic or dominant pitch) through several chord changes,"[96] while Russell Garcia, in *The Professional Arranger*, suggests even more casually to "write an intro to some song using organ point."[97] Supporting a broad application of the pedal in jazz, saxophonist Dave Liebman notes in *A Chromatic Approach to Jazz Harmony and Melody*, "unlimited are all types of scales, chord cycles and modes to be used as superimposed material over the pedal point;" he adds, in contrast to Piston's reference to the tonal strength of the pedal, "the pull of resolution is quite negligible."[98] The pedal point in jazz, in essence, does not necessarily establish tonality but may instead blur it.

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[94] Mark Levine, *The Jazz Theory Book* (Petaluma, CA: Sher Music Co., 1995), 344.

[95] Terefenko, *Jazz Theory*, 31.

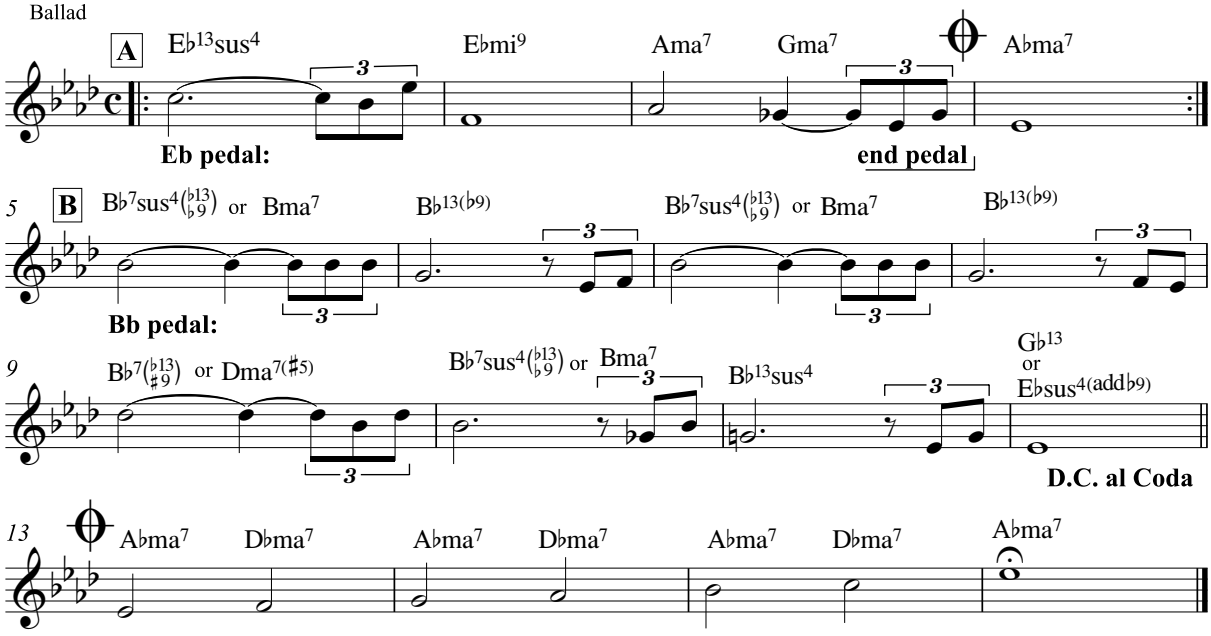
[96] Rayburn Wright, *Inside the Score: A Detailed Analysis of 8 Classic Ensemble Charts by Sammy Nestico, Thad Jones, and Bob Brookmeyer* (New York: Kendor Music, 1982), 186.

[97] Russell Garcia, *The Professional Arranger* (New York: Criterion Music Corporation, 1954), 149.

[98] David Liebman, *A Chromatic Approach to Jazz Harmony and Melody* (Rottenburg: Advance Music, 1991), 28.

John Coltrane's composition *Naima* (*Giant Steps* 1959) illustrates this tonal ambiguity through a series of altered dominant and dominant "sus" chords that create shifting colours, tension and a floating quality.[99] Based in the key of Ab major, the composition features an Eb dominant pedal in the A section and a Bb pedal in the B section (Example 3.2). In the A section, the Ab tonic is largely implied rather than stated overtly. Although the bass does resolve to Ab in bar 4 on the 1959 recording, this is only temporary before the Eb pedal returns. A Bb pedal, the secondary dominant of Eb, anchors the B section. The motion from the Bb to Eb pedal in the third A section creates an unclear V-I resolution, as the Eb is not the actual tonic of the piece. A sense of tonal resolution does arrive in the Coda with the oscillating Abmajor7-Dbmajor7 (I-IV) chord changes, yet pedal point clearly plays a key role in shaping an undefined tonal context in the majority of the composition.

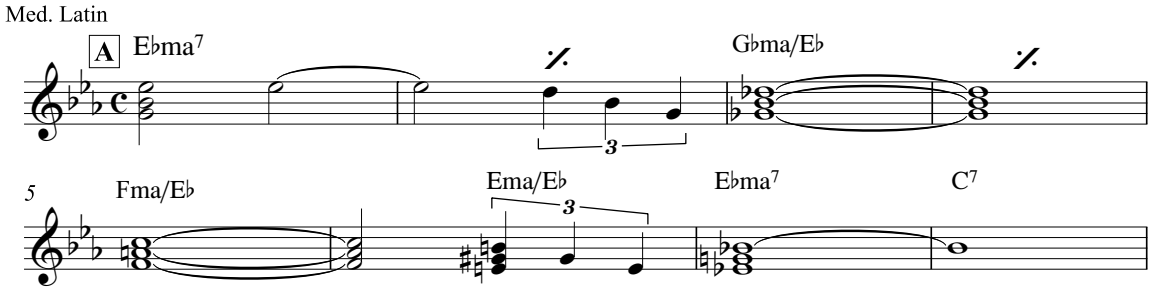
Example 3.2 John Coltrane, *Naima*: Pedal Point with Chord Suspensions



[99] "Sus" is shorthand in jazz parlance for "suspended." Sus chords are dominant chords in which the major third is suspended to the fourth degree. While in classical common practice the fourth degree of a suspended dominant chord resolves down to the third, this is not the case in jazz practice. The result is a floating quality. Sus chords can also serve as the tonic in modal compositions, such as Herbie Hancock's "Maiden Voyage." See Levine, *op. cit.*, 43.

Even in cases where a tonal centre is clear, jazz pedal points do not necessarily follow conventional Western common practice voice leading norms, such as avoiding parallel fifths or octaves. The 1947 song "On Green Dolphin Street" by Bronislau Kaper and Ned Washington opens with a tonic pedal in C, however, harmonic parallelism undermines a traditional T-P-D-T tonal scheme (Example 3.3). In the opening passage, the descending melody is supported by a progression of parallel triads (Gbma-Fma-Ema-Ebma), creating a chromatic planing effect. Triads have been added to the melody to emphasize chromatic motion.

Example 3.3 Bronislau Kaper and Ned Washington, *On Green Dolphin Street*: Harmonic Parallelism

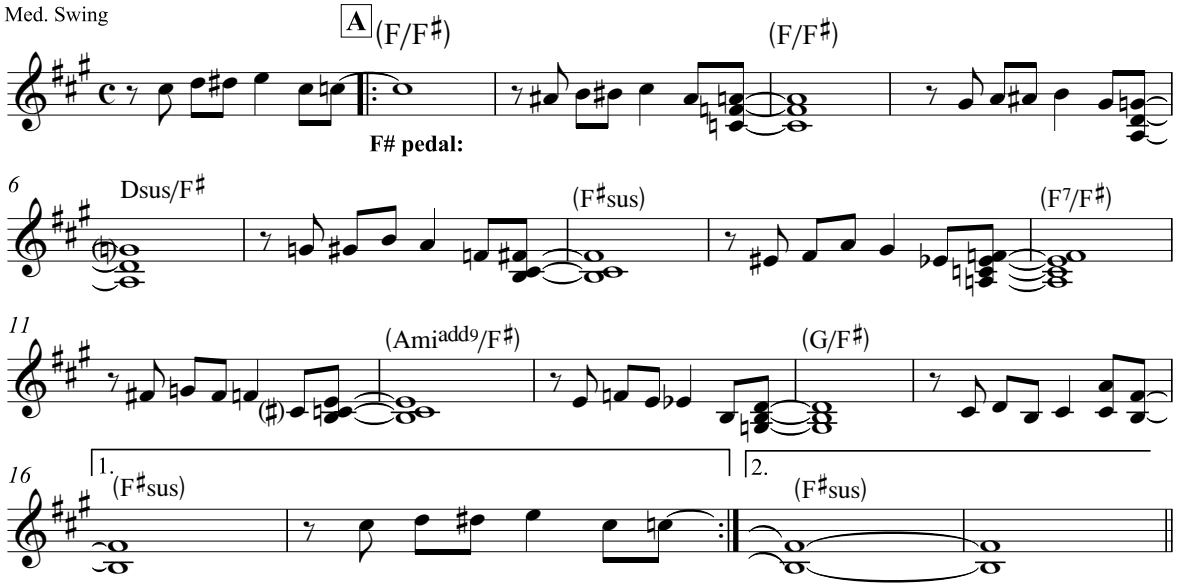


Pianist Richie Beirach's composition *Pendulum* (*Elm* 1978) shows an even greater degree of dissonance and tension using pedal point under a chromatic melody (Example 3.4). In contrast to the previous examples, the pedal point is not tonic or dominant-based. Guided by voice leading in the melody, a series of non-functional harmonies[100] avoid a traditional chord progression over an F# pedal point. Although there is no dominant to tonic resolution, there is

[100] Tom Boras defines non-functional harmony as "harmony that is not controlled by dominant relationships. In other words, linear bass movement is equally as important as harmonic movement by fifths" in Boras, *Jazz Composition and Arranging,* 58. Functional tonality refers to a hierarchical system of harmonies that function either as a tonic, subdominant, or dominant; the latter two are dependent on the tonic. For a more detailed discussion of functional and non-functional tonality, see Darius Terefenko, *Jazz Theory*, 23-24, and Stefan Kostka, *Materials and Techniques of Post-Tonal Music*, 4th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2012), 5-7.

nonetheless a sense of direction and arrival on the final F#sus chord. This treatment of a sus chord as a tonic and without need for resolution is common in jazz practice.[101]

Example 3.4 Richie Beirach, *Pendulum*: Pedal Point with Harmonic Dissonance



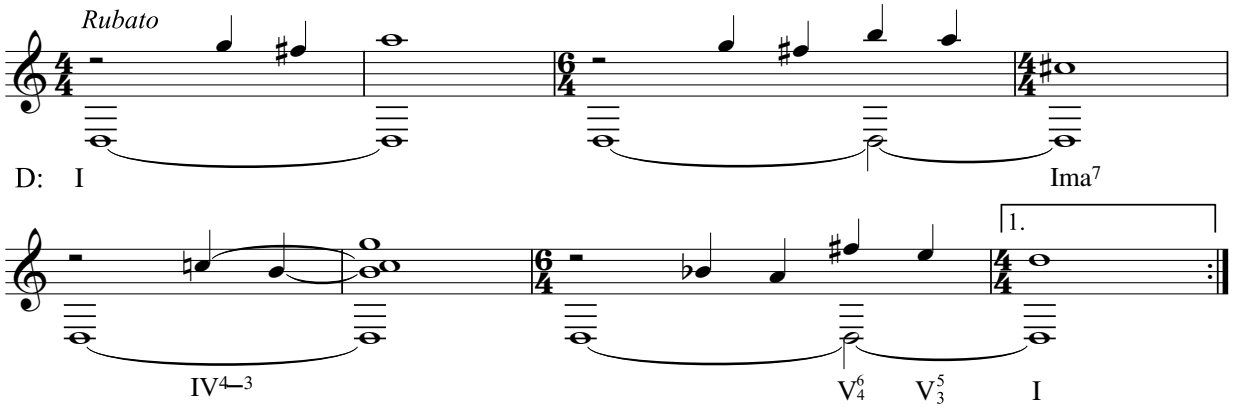
In general, pedal points in jazz composition do not necessarily adhere to tonal harmony. While in certain cases pedal points do establish tonality, more frequently they obscure a sense of key or convey a tonal centre through less traditional chord progressions. Without the constraints of conventional voice leading, a variety of harmonies may be superimposed of over a static bass to create a range of colour and tension. Monder's music illustrates both a tonal and a broader treatment of pedal point, which is firmly rooted in his embrace of counterpoint in his writing and improvisation.

[101] Terefenko, *op. cit.*, 54-55, 183.

LATE GREEN – COMPOSITION

Late Green is an atmospheric ballad prominently featuring a tonal and expanded pedal point as a key element that creates contrapuntal tension. The piece was recorded with guitar/bass/drums trio on the *Dust* CD (1997) and also in the same year on the *No Boat* CD with vocalist Theo Bleckmann as guitar/voice duo. In the Mel Bay published score, the first section is based on a D pedal point on a de-tuned guitar with the low E string transposed down to D (DADGBE) (Example 3.5). Although Monder does not include chord symbols in the score, the melody suggests a I-IV-V-I progression where the pedal point establishes a D tonality through more traditional chord changes.

Example 3.5 Ben Monder, *Late Green*: Pedal Point



Pedal point ends in the second section where the theme is restated up a whole tone in E major over a series of harmonic changes that eventually resolve back to the original D tonal centre by the end.

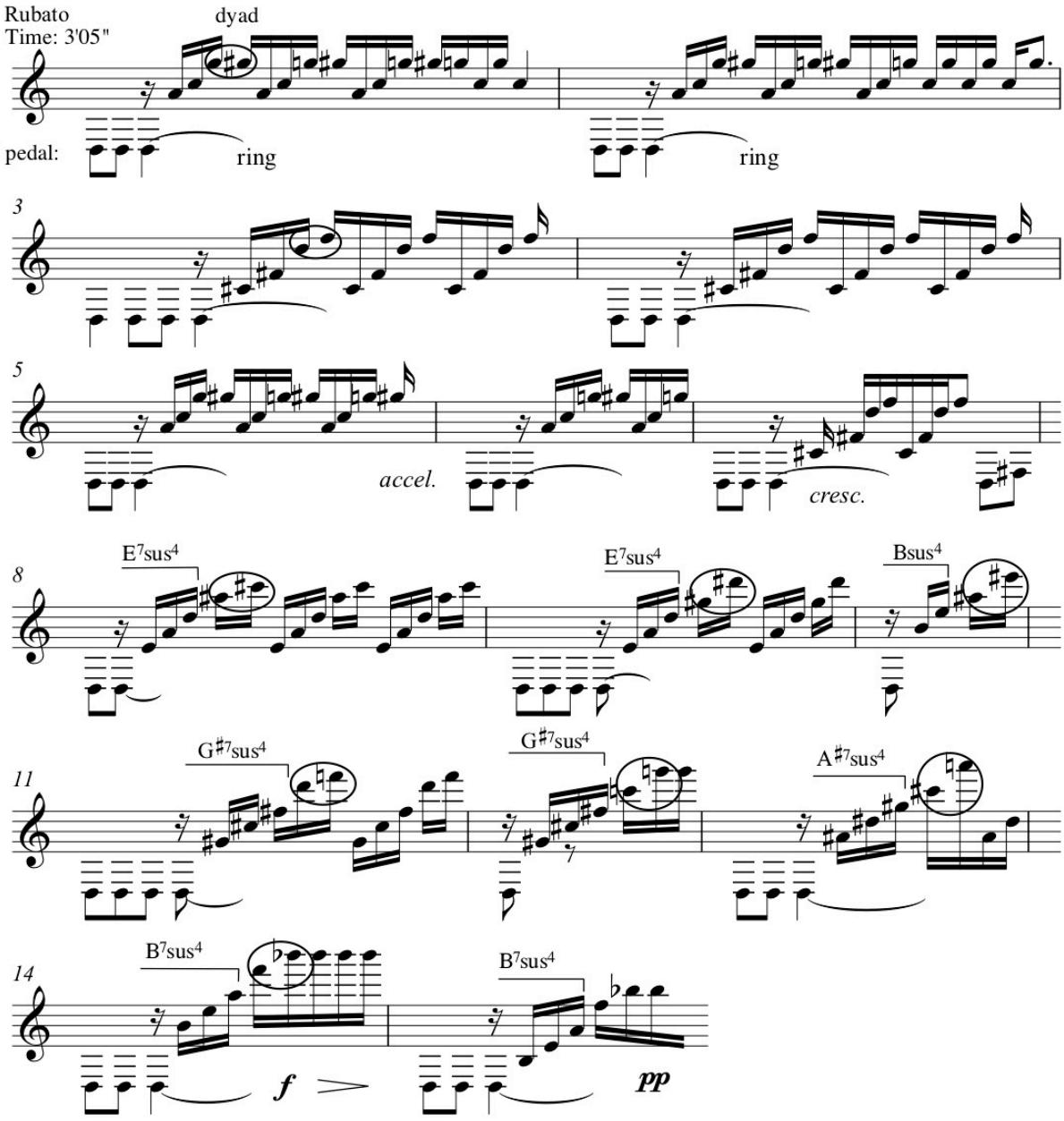
LATE GREEN – IMPROVISATION

Pedal point continues from the composition to underpin the guitar solo in both the *Dust* and *No Boat* versions of *Late Green*. Monder grounds both solos in coloristic sounds from arpeggios

rather than extensive motivic exploration found in his other improvisations; however, the solo in *No Boat* offers more stark dissonance and a dramatic climax abetted by the use of pedal point. Rather than craft lines that establish a D tonality as in *Dust*, Monder uses a broader application of pedal point in *No Boat* by exploring more dissonant sonorities through bitonal arpeggios that stretch beyond a I-IV-V-I tonal framework.

From the beginning of the *No Boat* solo, there is no initial consonant tonic harmony. The guitar solo overlaps with the end of Theo Bleckmann's vocal extemporization that closes on a sustained G#, the #11 of D major. Monder echoes the G# and places it atop a series of bitonal arpeggios (to be discussed further in Chapter Four) that outline dissonant extensions above a repeated D pedal point. The arpeggios evolve into a series of quartal Dom7sus chords under dyads that, as a grouping, stretch further away from the static bass note (mm.8-13). The repetition of each arpeggio within each phrase intensifies the dissonant intervals and widening contour. To build contrapuntal tension towards the climax against the pedal, Monder uses several devices: 1) accelerated motion (m.6); 2) an increase in dynamics (m.7); 3) dyad interval expansion from a minor second (m.1) to a minor sixth (m.13); and 4) ascending directional tones across phrases (G#-C#-D#-E#/F-G-A-Bb) (Example 3.6).

Example 3.6 Ben Monder, *Late Green* (*No Boat* CD): Solo, Pedal Point



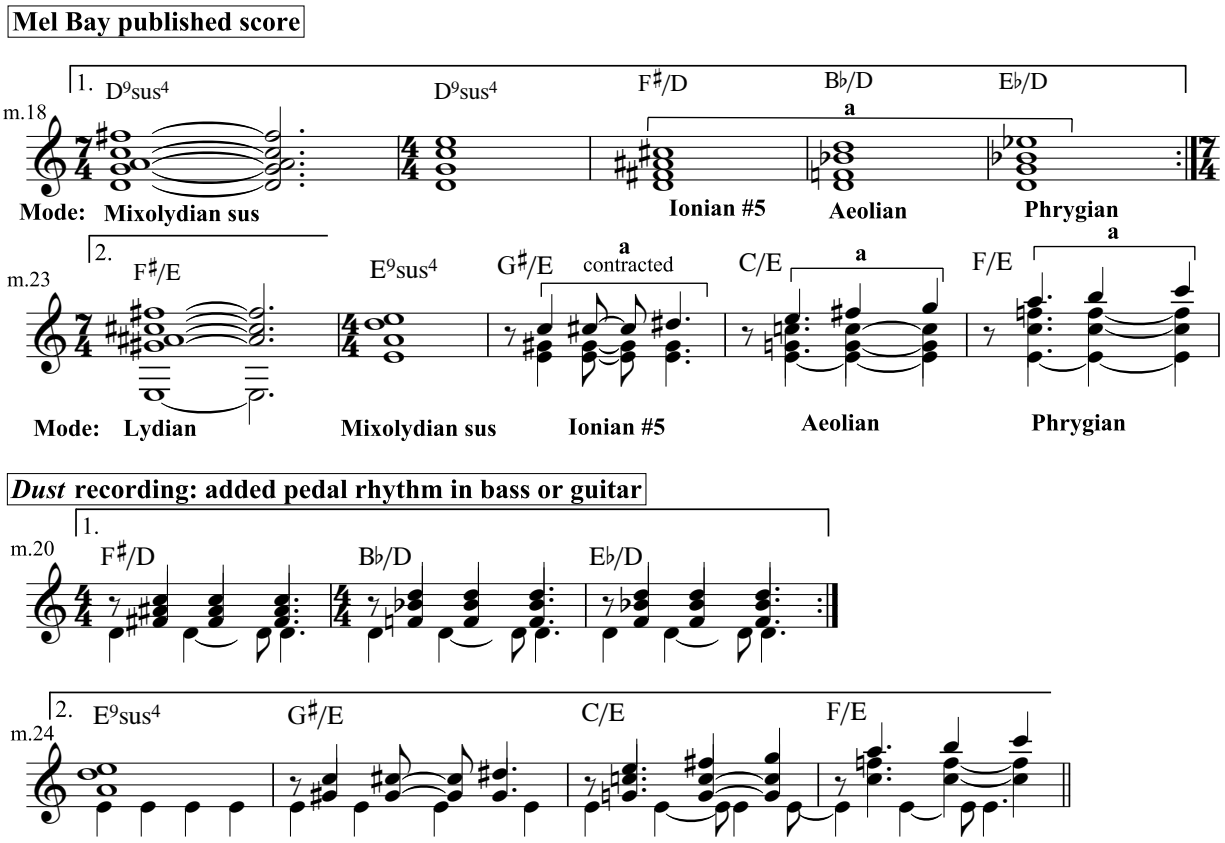
Essentially, Monder generates considerable colour and contrapuntal tension throughout *Late Green* by adopting a tonal approach to pedal point in the composition and a broader harmonic application in his solo on *No Boat*.

SLEEP - COMPOSITION

Also on the *Dust* CD, the piece *Sleep* is a medium tempo straight-eighth tune (♩= 132) using tonal and expanded pedal point in a guitar trio setting. The form is AABBC followed by a solo section, an extended interlude, and a recapitulation with the theme. Pedal point shapes contrapuntal tension and release at key junctures including transition, climax and closing sections.

In the first and second endings of the A section, pedal point creates tension through voice leading in the form of a widening contour, as well as increasing dissonance and interlocked rhythms. What is apparent from the Mel Bay score is a widening gap between the soprano voice and bass pedal that produces greater melodic tension in the last three bars of both endings, as well as increasing harmonic tension as the chords progress generally from light to dark modes (Lydian-Mixolydian-Ionian#5-Aeolian-Phrygian). Missing from the score, however, are the quarter note and syncopated rhythms added to the pedal point in the guitar and bass on the *Dust* recording (Example 3.7). These added rhythms generate considerably more forward motion than the score indicates through interplay between the lower and the upper parts. More importantly, Monder further accelerates melodic motion in the second ending by contracting the melody across three bars from the first ending (mm.20-22) into single bar gestures (mm.25-27) leading to a melodic climax a letter B. Essentially, pedal point is key to increasing melodic, harmonic and rhythmic tension as the piece either transitions back to the beginning or onto the climax at letter B.

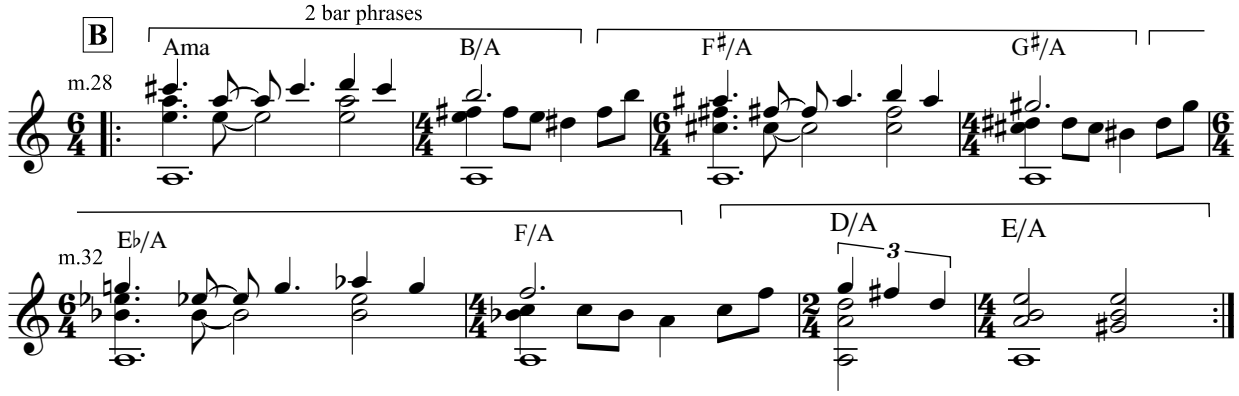
Example 3.7 Ben Monder, *Sleep*: Pedal Point First/Second Endings, A section



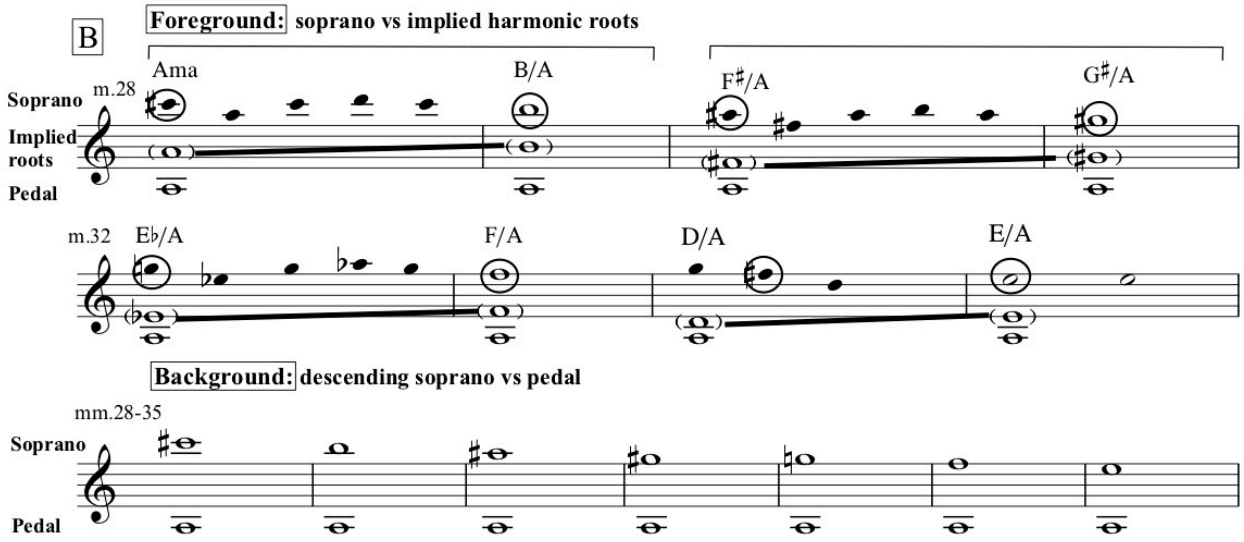
Pedal point continues to underscore contrapuntal motion in the B section through several levels of voice leading between parts. An A pedal point anchors a series of chord changes for the entire climax section, beginning with the melodic peak on C# at the beginning of letter B (Example 3.8). In two-bar groupings, the soprano melody and implied harmonic roots move in contrary motion. This melodic foreground complements a large-scale background of a converging contour across the entire eight bar section between the soprano voice descending stepwise against the static bass (Example 3.9). This converging contour contrasts with the widening voice leading noted in section A. Moreover, Monder employs both non-functional and tonal chord successions over the pedal in section B: non-functional harmonies form the majority

of chords until a traditional IV-V cadence (D/A-E/A) occurs in measures 34-35, resolving to the A major tonic.

Example 3.8 Ben Monder, *Sleep*: Climax Section

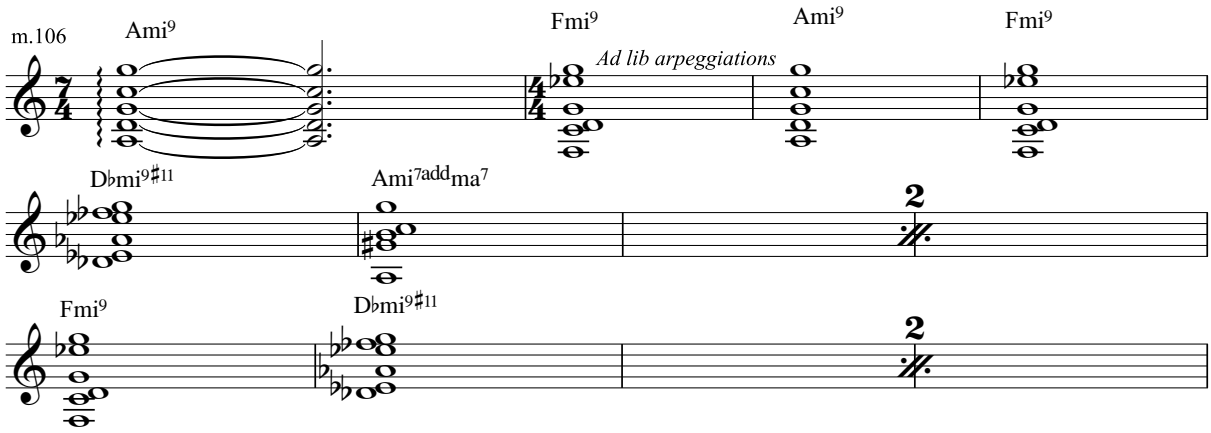


Example 3.9 Ben Monder, *Sleep*: Climax Section, Converging Contour



Following the solo section, Monder continues to demonstrate a thorough and varied treatment of pedal point technique in the composition by using an inverted pedal. He returns to the climax point leading to the end of the initial composed material. At this juncture, he changes from a bass pedal point to an inverted pedal, a G in the top voice that serves as a common tone through a series of Imi-bVImi vamps (Example 3.10).

Example 3.10 Ben Monder, *Sleep*: Inverted Pedal (Imi-bVIImi Vamp)



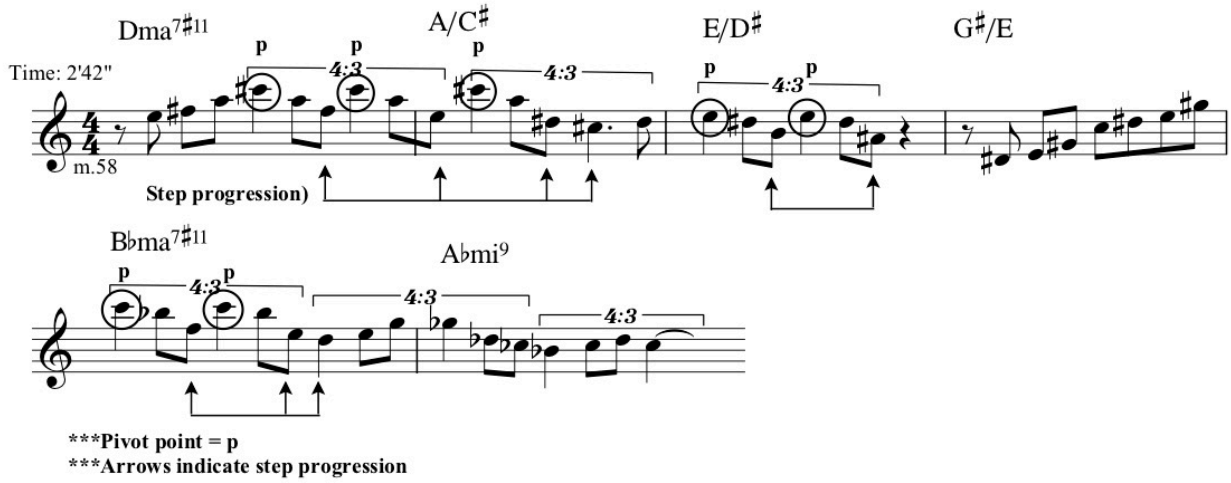
In general, Monder uses an expanded treatment of pedal point in *Sleep* to generate contrapuntal tension (melodic, harmonic and rhythmic) through voice leading at several key junctures in the composition. The following discussion of the guitar solo examines contrapuntal links to the composition through voice leading references to the main theme as well as motivic development of improvised material.

SLEEP – IMPROVISATION

Monder's improvised soloing in *Sleep* takes a linear approach using thematic material from the composed section in ways that, while not standing out prominently as pedal points, emphasize the effect and contributes to the overall contrapuntal quality of the tune. Near the beginning of the solo, voice leading and rhythmic counterpoint add tension and shape contour through polymetre, pivot point and step-progression techniques (Example 3.11). A series of quarter note/two eighth note cells moves in 4:3 polymetre. Voice leading of the rhythmic cells involves pivot points on the downbeat with a step-progression moving in contrary motion (mm.58-63). The step progression, according to Kent Kennan, provides direction to a line across non-adjacent notes as "the strong melodic relationship of a second causes those notes to be heard as a line

even though other notes intervene."[102] While these pivot points are more temporary than a pedal point, they still provide an oblique anchor against the widening step progression leading to increased tension as the single line unfolds. This use of a stationary voice mirrors a similar treatment of voice leading to create diverging/converging contours found in the composition.

Example 3.11 Ben Monder, *Sleep*: Solo, Polymeter, Pivot Point and Step Progression

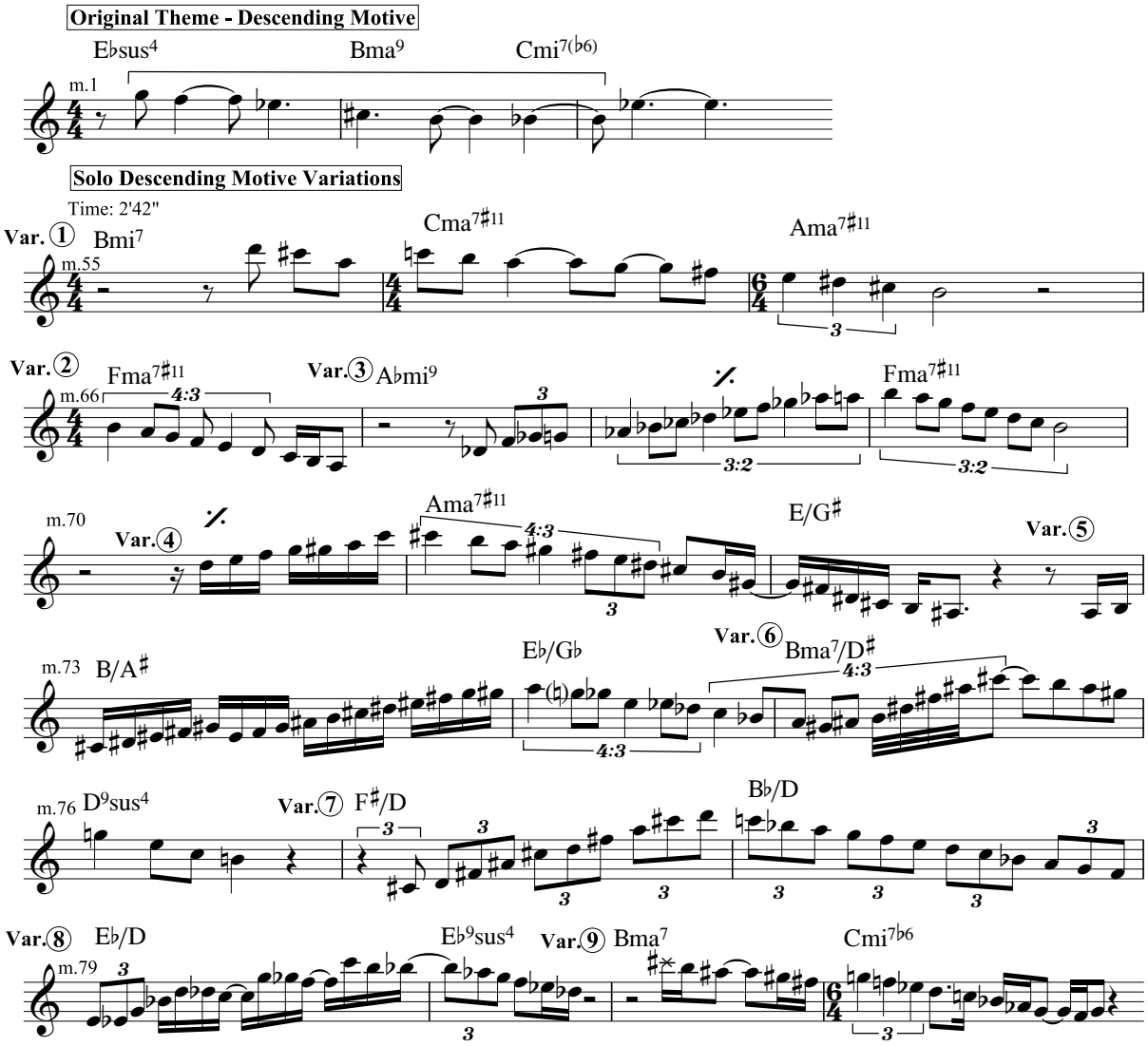


Apart from pivot point/step progression, the most salient voice leading reference to the main theme is a two-bar descending motive in the first half of the solo. Following introductory phrases, Monder alludes to this motive in the sixth bar of the solo (m.56). To develop the motive, Monder adds an ascending line to the descending theme to form a rising/falling contour. All subsequent repetitions of the motive vary in rhythmic content and length; however, the basic ascending/descending contour remains constant (Example 3.12). This rhythmic development creates greater tension beginning in measure 72 where consecutive phrases (Var. 5 to 6, and 7 to 8) are linked by half step, respectively. By the fifth phrase, Monder eliminates rests between sequential rising/falling phrases. He further intensifies the ascending lines through two

[102] Kennan, *op. cit.*, 7-8.

developments: 1) rhythmic transformation of eighth notes to sixteenth notes, thirty-second notes, and triplets; and 2) intervallic expansion of stepwise motion to leaps (arpeggios in phrases 6 and 7, and wider intervals in phrase 8).

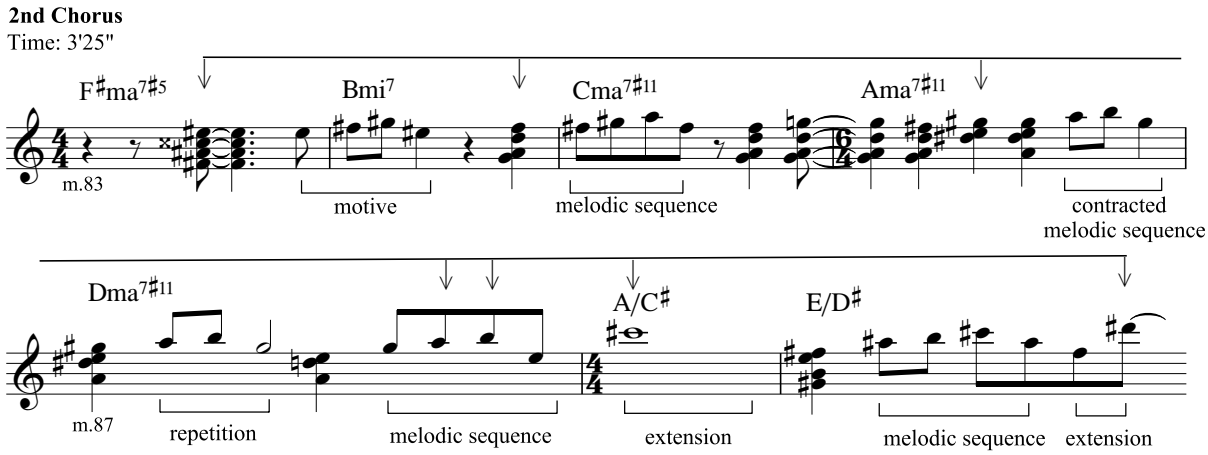
Example 3.12 Ben Monder, *Sleep*: Solo, Variations on Descending Motive



In the second chorus, Monder introduces a textural shift by moving from a single line strategy to one of interjecting chords with the linear statements (Example 3.13). This chord use is a common guitar self-accompaniment technique that provides harmonic support, given that the

bass and drums offer a more root-based and rhythmic foundation for the soloist. The chords not only thicken the solo texture but also reinforce the stepwise ascending sequence E#-F#-G-G#-A-B-C#-D# indicated by arrows.

Example 3.13 Ben Monder, *Sleep*: Solo, Chord Interjections and Sequences



In general, Monder takes an expanded approach to pedal point in *Sleep* where voice leading generates contrapuntal tension through diverging and converging contours, shaping overall form throughout. The guitar solo draws on step progression voice leading, contour and motivic development of thematic references, thus linking the improvisation to the composition through counterpoint.

APLYSIA - COMPOSITION

Aplysia (*Hydra*, 2013) is a medium tempo (♩= 130) straight-eighth note composition that features Monder's use of counterpoint through an expanded pedal point supporting a more sparse treatment of melody, harmony, and rhythm. Even with a simpler use of these elements, Monder makes effective use of pedal point to shape tension and release in the AABCD form.[103] The

[103] Rehearsal marks are not indicated in the Mel Bay publication score.

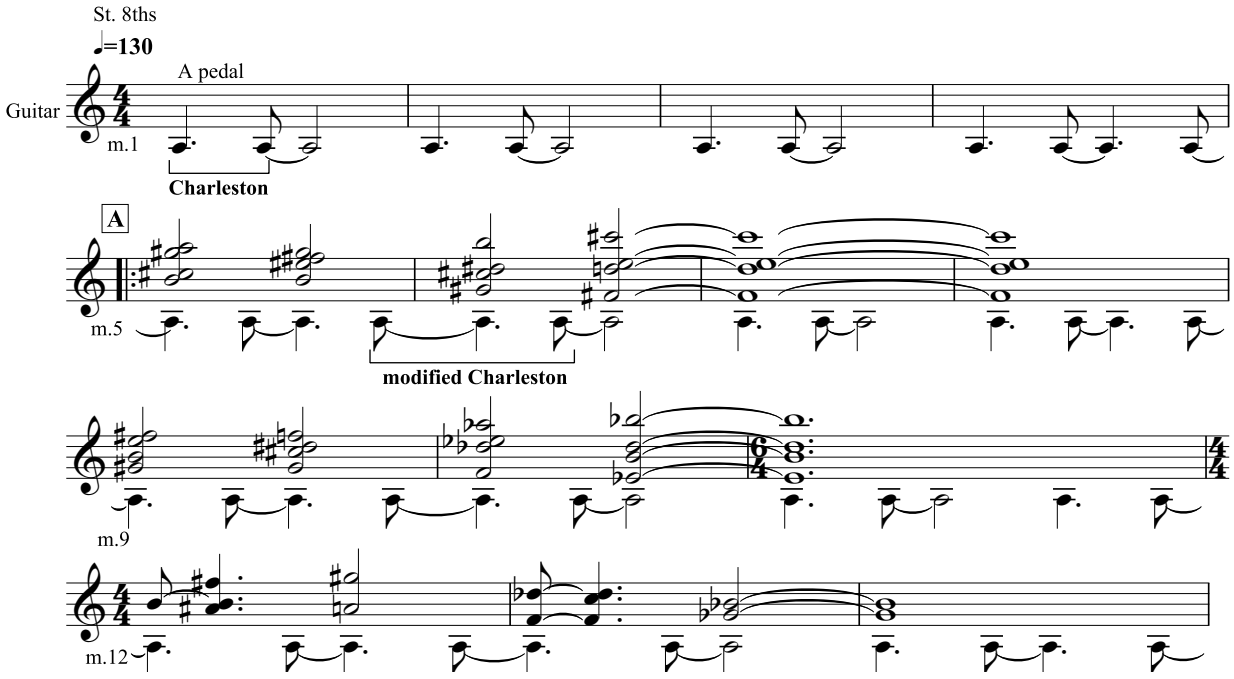
piece is performed by quartet with guitar, vocals, bass, and drums. Since the improvised section features a textural canvas of vocal loops and effects with rhythm section accompaniment, there is little relation to counterpoint as it is examined in this dissertation.[104] Therefore, my discussion will focus solely on the composition.

Pedal point plays a voice leading (oblique motion) and rhythmic function (interlocking rhythm) in shaping the overall form. The composition begins with solo guitar playing a Charleston rhythm on an A pedal point. As the melody enters in the fifth bar, the Charleston pedal point with accents on beat one and the "and" of two is modified with frequent anticipations on the "and of four" (i.e., mm.5-6) throughout the first section.[105] The result is an interlocking rhythm between the melody (with supporting voices) and the bass to produce a recurring off-beat/downbeat pattern that generates forward motion (Example 3.14). The melody in the first section is constructed with combinations of three basic two-beat rhythmic cells, accounting for the sparse melodic motion (Example 3.15). The third rhythmic cell (eighth note/dotted quarter note) first appears in measure 12 and plays a key role throughout the piece.

[104] As I discuss in Chapter 5, "Conclusion," future analyses of jazz counterpoint in improvised settings could provide additional insights into counterpoint as conceived in a broader perspective, including group improvisations not reliant on motivic material but rather textural effects as a form of contrast to pre-composed material.

[105] The modified Charleston is not indicated in the Mel Bay published score, however, it does occur in the recording.

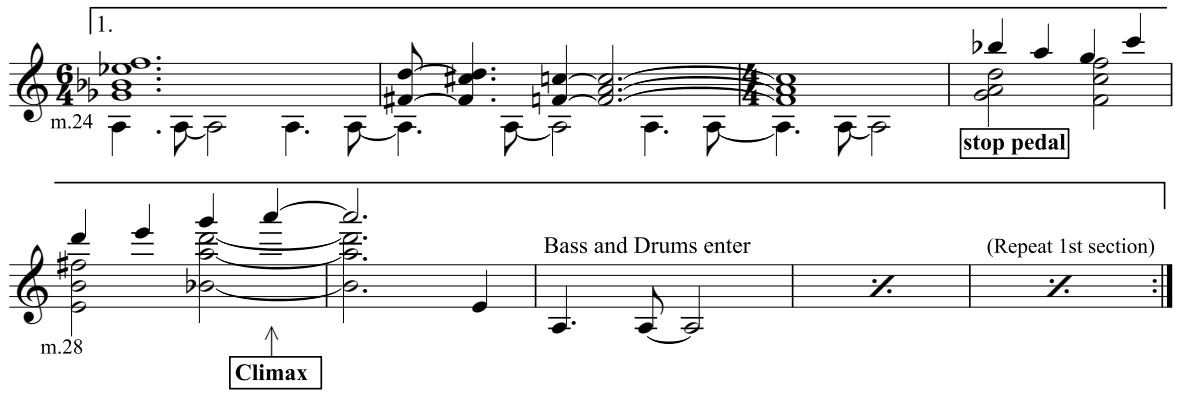
Example 3.14 Ben Monder, *Aplysia*: Interlocking Melody and Pedal Point



Example 3.15 Ben Monder, *Aplysia*: Rhythmic Cells, First Section

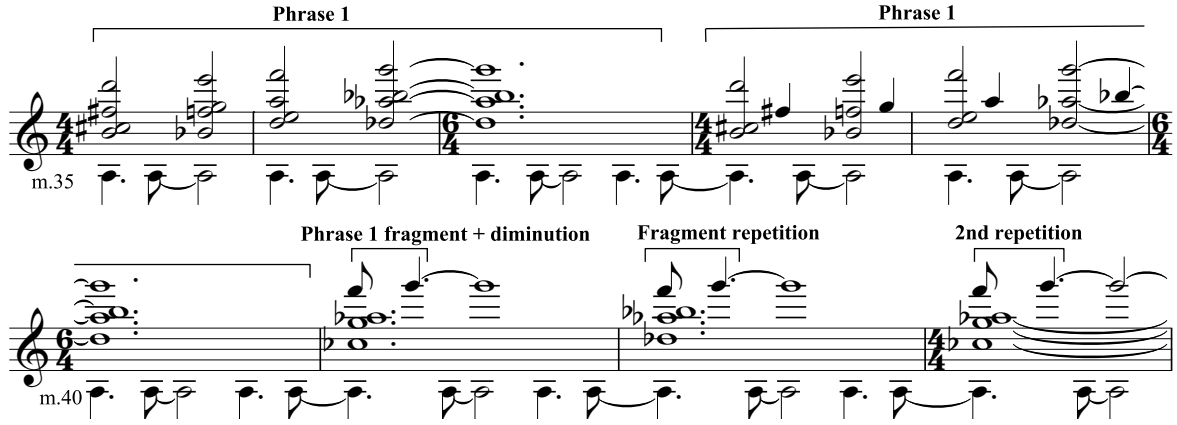
In the first ending, the pedal point plays a structural role in generating phrase climax. The continuous pedal pulse sets up a three bar break (mm.27-29) where the melody reaches an A climax held over four beats. This melodic suspension creates tension that releases with the return of the Charleston pedal in the guitar and is reinforced soon after in the bass and drums enter (Example 3.16).

Example 3.16 Ben Monder, *Aplysia*: Pedal Break, First Section



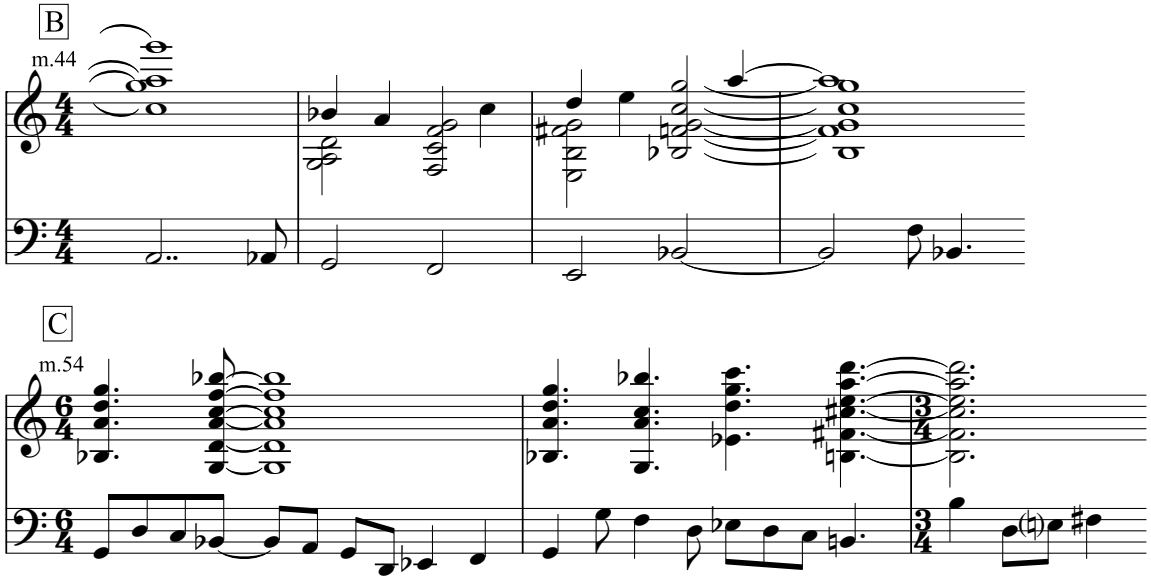
Whereas omission of pedal point in the first ending facilitates the climax, the pedal presence in the second ending contributes to developments in voice leading, contour and motivic construction. The original half note theme continues in the second ending as an ascending line D-E-F-G that creates a widening contour against the oblique pedal point. The tail of this line, F-G, repeats as a fragment reduced from half notes to the aforementioned eighth note/dotted quarter cell that continues as an important rhythmic element (Example 3.17).

Example 3.17 Ben Monder, *Aplysia*: Second Ending, First Section



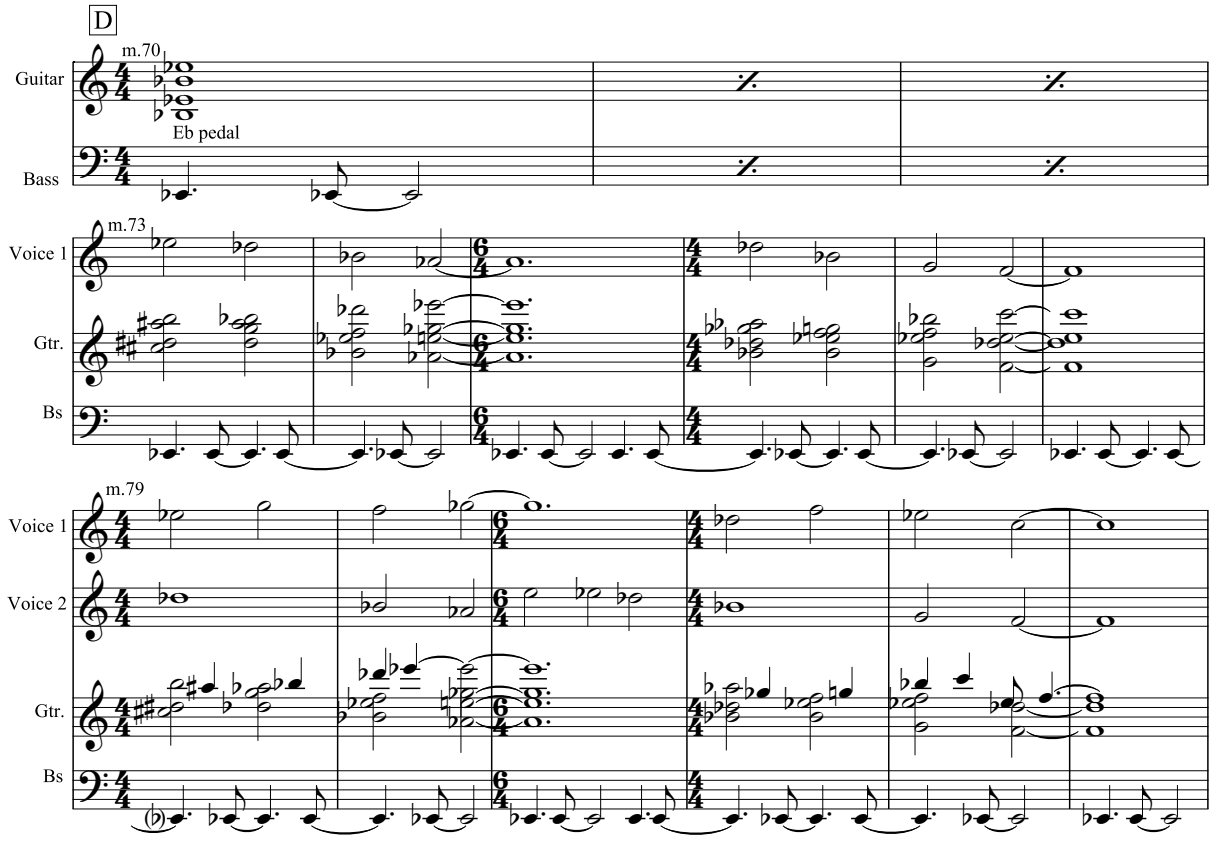
The syncopated F-G fragment leads the composition into a textural shift in the B section. Here the pedal point ceases altogether and is replaced by a more active bass line both melodically and rhythmically, moving from half notes to eighth notes in section C (Example 3.18). In effect, the absence of the contrapuntal technique (pedal point) creates this textural contrast and becomes a form of counterpoint in itself.

Example 3.18 Ben Monder, *Aplysia*: Active Bass



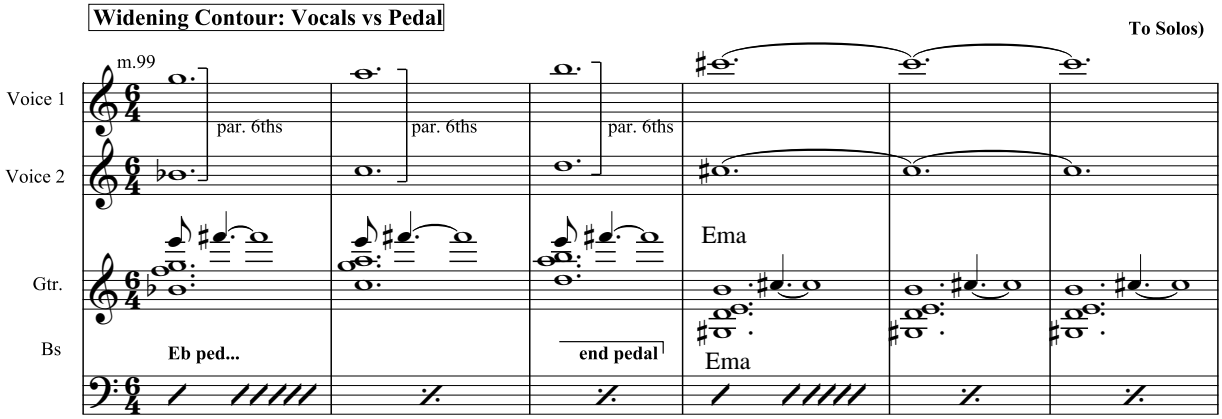
Pedal point resumes in section D highlighted by transposition and thickened texture. The Charleston pedal resumes on Eb, a tritone from the initial A pedal point in the first section. The guitar melody and supporting voicings are transposed a whole tone higher. Texturally, two vocal parts are added to thicken the texture by either doubling or adding to lower parts already present in the guitar voicings (Example 3.19).

Example 3.19 Ben Monder, *Aplysia*: Section D, Thickened Texture and Transposition



Section D rounds out the form to AABCD by reiterating section A and provides rhythmic continuity to transition smoothly to the solo section. As in the A section, the end of D finishes with the repeated eighth note/dotted quarter rhythm in the guitar. The Eb pedal point anchors the composition as both vocal parts ascend in parallel 6ths, creating a widening contour that culminates in an E major chord announcing the solo section (Example 3.20).

Example 3.20 Ben Monder, *Aplysia*: Section D, Transition to Solo



In summary, Monder makes effective use of a modified Charleston pedal point in *Aplysia* that interlocks with sparse melodic, harmonic and rhythmic content. Subtle alterations either to the pedal point (i.e., climax break, change to an active bass) or upper voices (added vocals) create an evolving polyphonic texture.

MUVSEEVUM – COMPOSITION

Pedal point plays an integral part of *Muvseevum*, the first composition on Monder's debut recording, *Flux* (1996). The piece is performed by guitar trio as a medium fast waltz with a tempo of ♩=184. A repeating sixteen-bar solo section and an extended Coda follow the AB form.[106] Although *Muvseevum* features less complex and dense melodic, harmonic and rhythmic material similar to *Aplysia*, an expanded pedal point shapes much of the tension, release and form throughout the majority of the composition. Notably, pedal point plays a formative part in

[106] Rehearsal marks are not indicated in the Mel Bay publication score, but rather added to clarify the form based on the presence of double bar lines or repeat signs. The Coda sign is indicated in the published score.

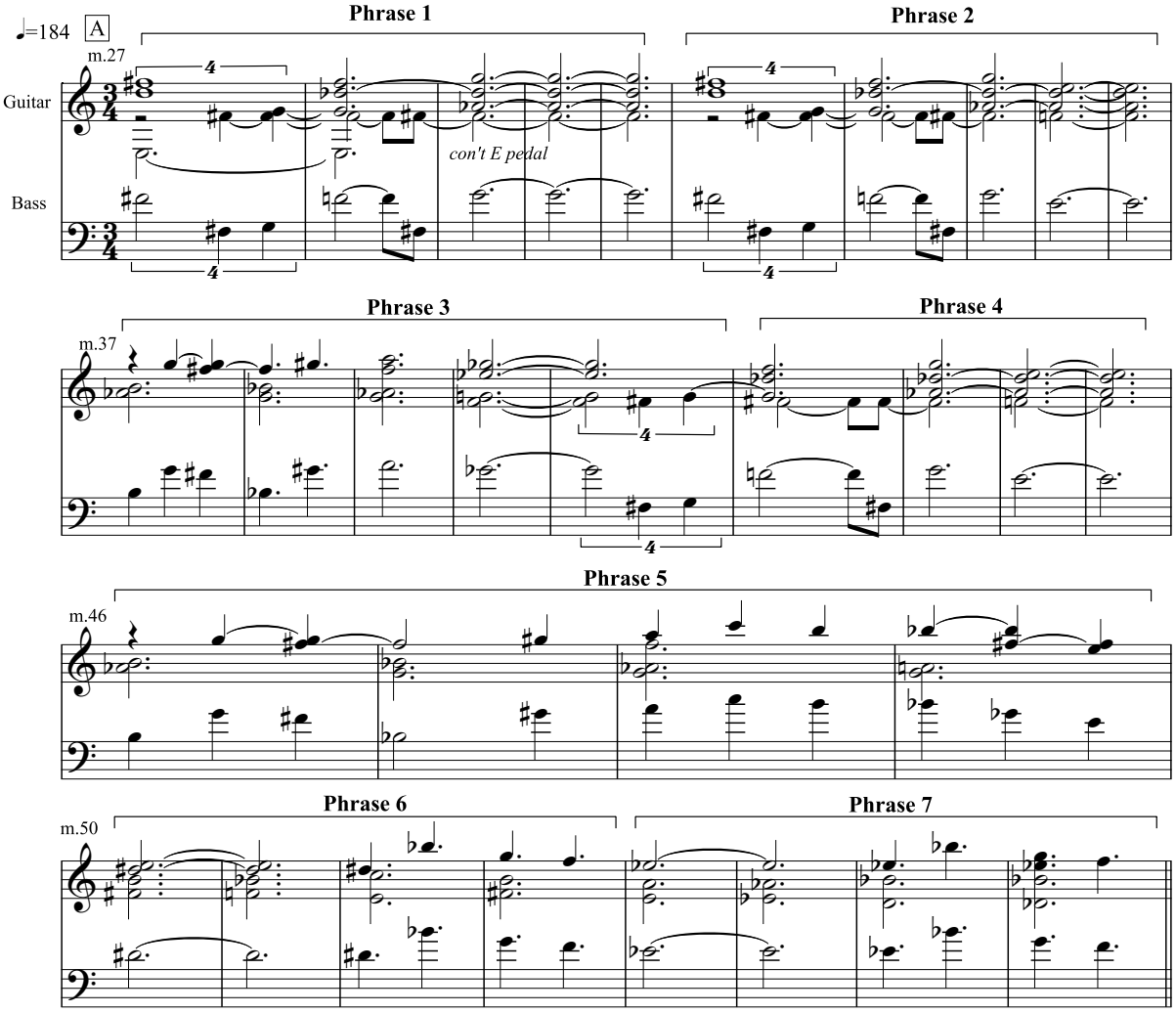
motivic development of the theme, shaping dissonance, voice flipping, altering pedal pitches, and pitch centricity.[107]

Pedal point first appears following a rubato introduction where unaccompanied guitar introduces the main theme. The full character and texture of the piece emerges at measure 27 as the guitar, in unison with the bass, reiterates the theme over an E pedal in time (Example 3.21).

Monder uses pedal point to underpin several motivic developments of the melody. Rhythmically, the melody is constructed using simple rhythms of either quarter notes, dotted quarter notes, or dotted half notes. Intervallically, a sinewy theme emerges from chromatic and stepwise motion. An initial motive of F#-F-G is developed with intervening octave leap notes (F# and G) for elaboration. The full melody is more clearly discernable in the bass part. The three-note motive is transformed by: 1) tail expansion in phrase 2 (F#-F-G-E); 2) expansion, transposition and inexact diminution in phrase 3 (B-G-F#-Bb-G#-A-Gb); and 3) contraction in phrase 4 (F-G-E). Phrase 5 expands phrase 3 further with the addition of C-B-Bb-F#-E (Example 3.22).

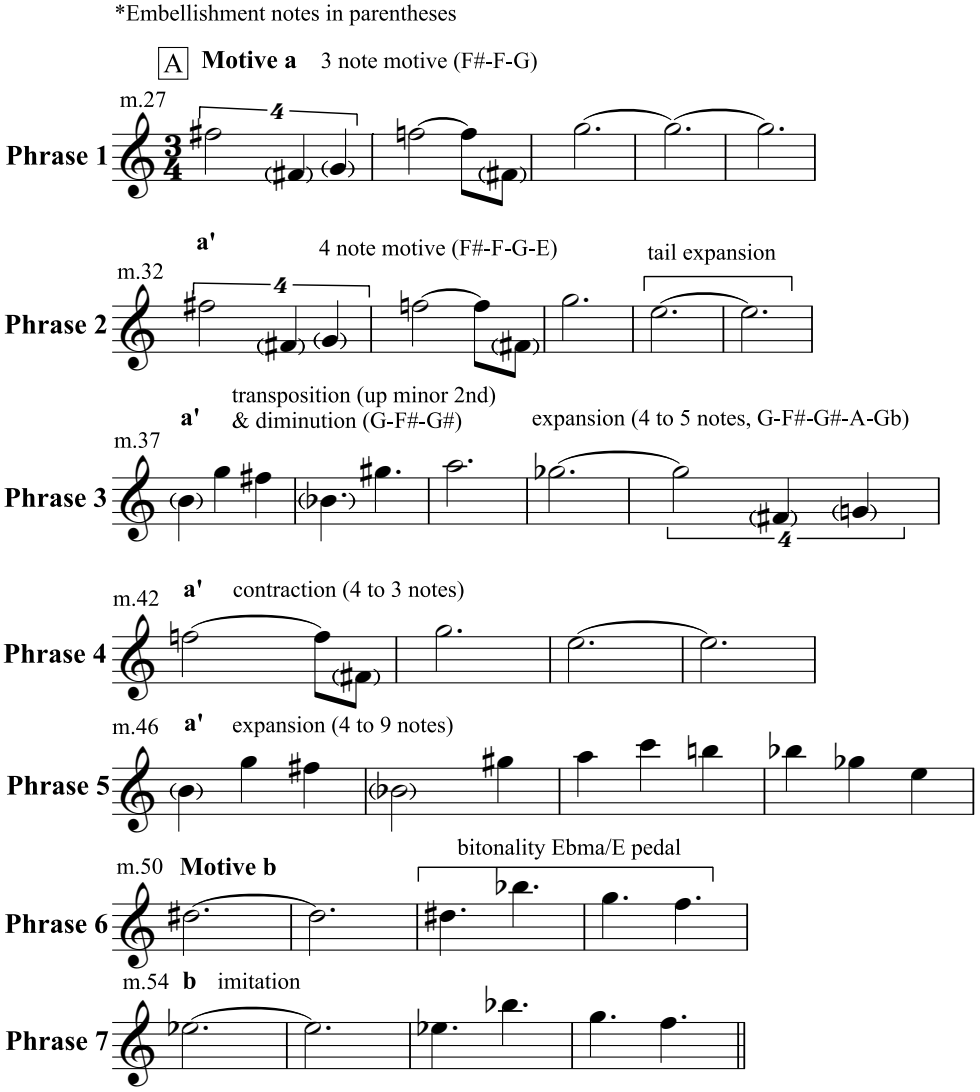
[107] Pitch centricity is a common feature of twentieth-century classical music. It refers to the notion of music being organized around a central pitch without the use of functional harmony or traditional voice leading. As Stefan Kostka remarks in *Materials and Techniques of Post-Tonal Music*, a pitch centre may be established through several techniques, including "reiteration, return, pedal point, ostinato, accent, formal placement, register…." See Stefan Kostka, *op. cit.*, 92-93.

Example 3.21 Ben Monder, *Muvseevum*: Theme (Guitar/Bass) with Pedal Point (Guitar)



Harmonically, strong dissonance occurs in the A section between the E pedal point clashing with the chromatic theme, obscuring the hearing of an E tonality. Neither the initial motive of F#-F-G nor the pitches in subsequent phrases affirm an E tonic. The harmonic clash evolves into a bitonal effect in phrases 6 and 7 where a new motive (b) expresses an Eb major sonority (D#/Eb-Bb-G-F) over the E pedal point.

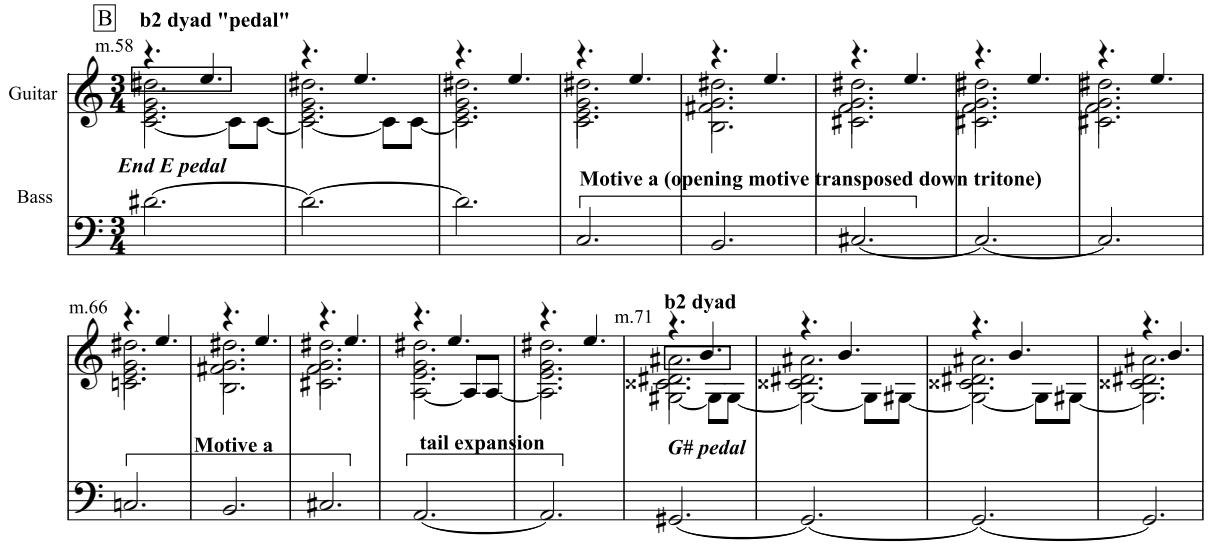
Example 3.22 Ben Monder, *Muvseevum*: Motivic Development, Initial Theme



As the E pedal point ends at letter B, the top and bass voices flip. The top voice changes to a two-note oscillating pattern on D#-E (m.58) and then A#-B (m.71), suggesting an inverted pedal that repeats every bar. One reading may view this minor 2nd interval as a retrograde fragment from the opening motive F#-F-G. The bass line, in turn, expresses the first two phrases of the theme transposed down a tritone to C-B-C# and C-B-C#-A (Example 3.23). Generally, in

the A and B sections, Monder effectively demonstrates a varied treatment of pedal point and motivic material as both appear linearly in the soprano and bass voices at different junctures.

Example 3.23 Ben Monder, *Muvseevum*: Inverted Pedal with Bass Motive

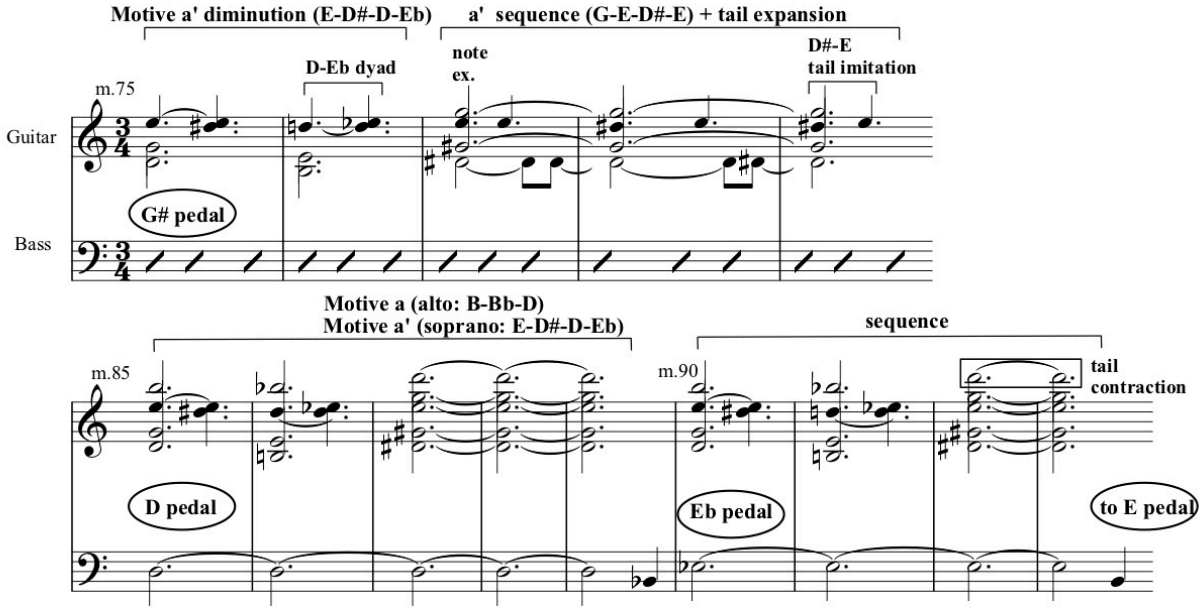


From measure 75, Monder subsumes the b2 dyad in thematic permutations over changing pedal points (Example 3.24). The first transformation of the initial 3-note motive F#-F-G (mm.27-29) is: 1) exact diminution from dotted half notes to dotted quarter notes; and 2) transposition down a whole step to E-D#-D (mm.75-76). The initial and transposed motives may differ in their intervals (i.e., b2/ma2 vs. b2/b2), however they both consist of three notes spanning a major second. The transformed motive is sequenced up a semitone and expanded with a D#-E tail repetition.

Monder thickens the texture further at measure 85 where the soprano and alto voices express contrasting rhythmic and intervallic variations of the initial theme. The alto part reiterates the E-D#-D-Eb motive in dotted quarter notes and provides rhythmic momentum in the

two consecutive phrases as the bass pedal is sustained on D (m.85) and Eb (m.90). The soprano line repeats the dotted half note rhythm of the F#-F-G theme and transposes the pitches to B-Bb-D. The intervallic pattern of F#-F-G (mi2/ma2) is slightly modified to B-Bb-D (mi2/ma3), while the descending/ascending contour is preserved. In the second iteration of this phrase (mm.90-93), the tail is contracted. These intervallic and rhythmic permutations underscore Monder's subtle and continuous motivic manipulation of the initial compositional material to sustain musical interest.

Example 3.24 Ben Monder, *Muvseevum*: Thematic Permutations and Pedals

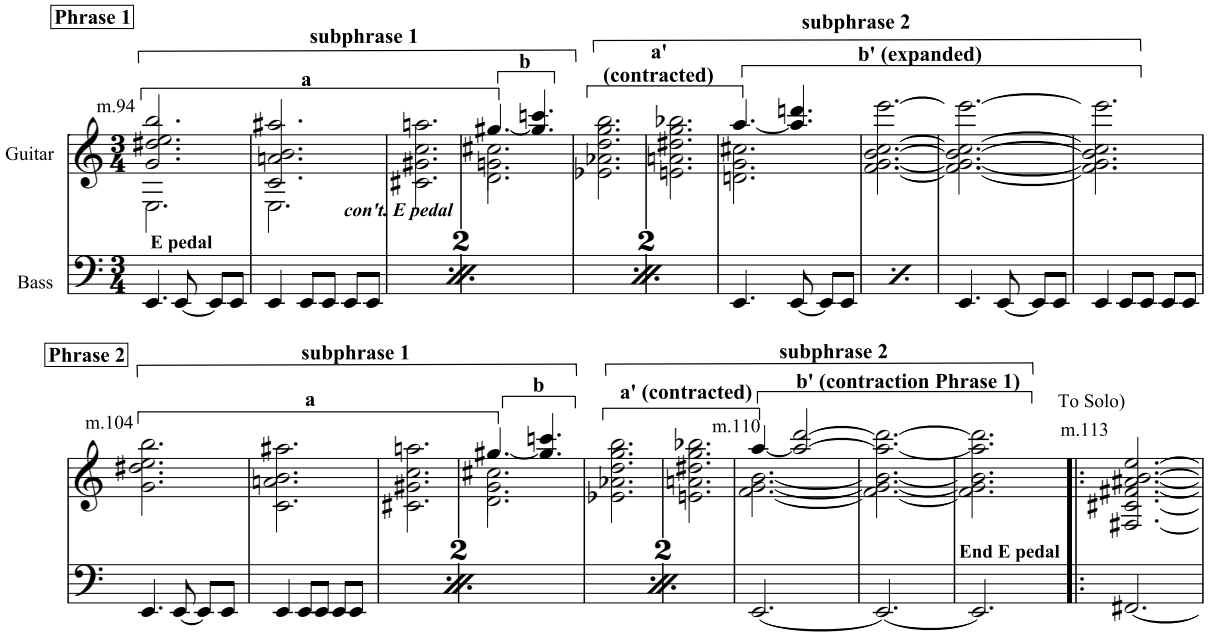


The previous passages with sustained pedal points set up a pivotal transition section in which a more active pedal point helps to build tension into the solo section (Example 3.25). From measure 94, the score indicates slash notation for the E pedal point, however, the recording of *Muvseevum* features the guitar and bass playing a more rhythmically active pedal in unison. This transition marks the first time both instruments are playing the pedal together, thus

reinforcing the driving forward motion of the bass part. Moreover, the shift from sustained to rhythmically active pedal point underscores the progressive nature of Monder's counterpoint.

This increasing tension may also be attributed to voice leading and phrase structure. The outer voices in the guitar move in contrary motion to form a converging axis: a descending chromatic line (B-A#-A-G#) in the soprano counters an ascending chromatic line in the lowest voice (C-C#-D-Eb-E-F). As a result, the outer voice leading creates tension and harmonic dissonance against the pedal. The phrase structure, in turn, involves a contracted ending in Phrase 2 (subphrase b', m.110) in which the pedal point and upper voices are suspended. This pause in melodic and rhythmic motion intensifies the anticipation for resolution which arrives on F# in the solo section (m.113).

Example 3.25 Ben Monder, *Muvseevum*: Active Pedal, Transition to Solo



Following the solo, shifting pedal points support the entire fifty-six bar Coda section. As Monder repeats the original thematic material, he uses G# rather than the original E as the pedal

point for most of the Coda. Subsequently, consecutive four-bar pedal points occur on B, Bb and C. The descending mi2/ascending ma2 pattern between these last three pedals recalls the original F#-F-G motive of the composition.

The initial E pedal brings melodic and harmonic closure anchoring the first two phrases from the A section, the F#-F-G and F#-F-G-E motives (m.172). Given the prevalence of the E pedal in the first section, the final cadence of the composition from a C (bVI) to an E (I) pedal point suggests E as the main pitch centre of the composition.

MUVSEEVUM – IMPROVISATION

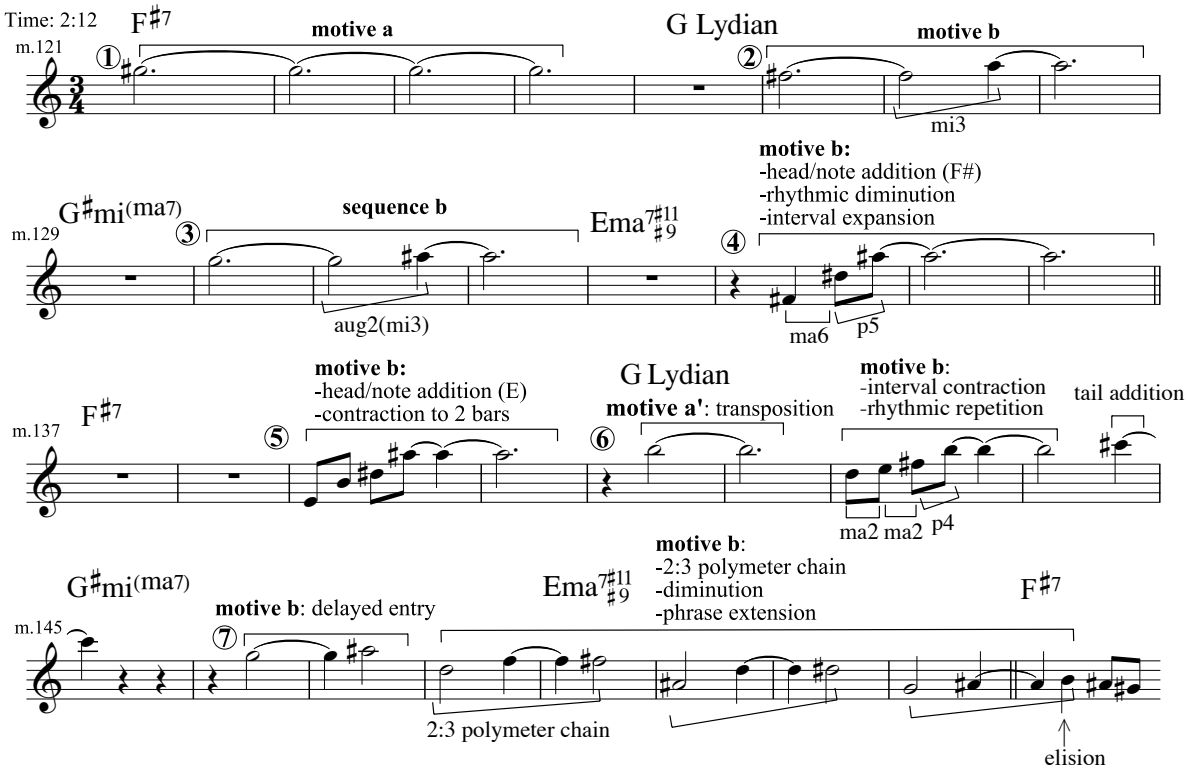
The solo section of *Muvseevum* reveals how Monder connects motivic content between the composed and the improvised sections in harmonic and melodic terms, leaving pedal point as a formative feature of the composition alone. Harmonically, the solo changes consist of a sixteen-bar vamp that is motivically linked to the main theme. The vamp consists of a four chord progression: F#7, G Lydian, G#mi(ma7)#4/b6, and Ema7(#9#11) (Example 3.26). The roots F#-G-G#-E may be viewed as a transposed variation of the opening three-note motive with a tail extension, thus linking motivic material as melody in the composition with harmonic roots in the improvisation.

Melodically, Monder's solo lines contain considerable motivic development and cohesion despite the sparse movement in sustained tones and subphrase fragments, each separated by several rests. To open the solo, a G# sustained across four bars initiates an ascending step progression (G#-A-A#-B-C#) that spans several subphrases. The tones in this underlying melodic curve provide linear direction to the improvisation.

The foreground or surface melody, in turn, transforms motivically in a series of subphrase fragments. The motivic content evolves from the single G# to a minor third interval, F#-A (mm.126-128), which Monder develops over the course of two repetitions of the vamp chord progression. After a sequence (mm.130-132), fragment four shows the minor third motive (b) being transformed with a head/note addition (F#), expanded intervallically to a major sixth and perfect fifth, and rhythmically diminished. Subphrase five also has a head addition and is rhythmically contracted from three to two bars. Subphrase six opens with the single sustained B (motive a transposed) leading into motive b with contracted intervals and an expanded tail (C#). The last fragment, subphrase seven, bookends the solo introduction with a return to the original minor third motive (enharmonically an augmented second). Here, however, the motive is rhythmically reduced to half notes forming a three-note chain of 2:3 polymetre. This "over the bar line" phrasing resolves into the next vamp repetition by means of elision.[108] The pitch B is contracted from a half note to a quarter note and serves simultaneously as the end of subphrase seven and the beginning of a new statement. With this phrase overlap, Monder ensures a seamless link between introductory solo statements and new material, as well as rhythmic continuity, rather than closure.

[108] In elision, the last note or chord of the first phrase serves simultaneously as the first note or chord of a subsequent phrase. See William Rothstein's *Phrase Rhythm in Tonal Music* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1990), 44-46.

Example 3.26 Ben Monder, *Muvseevum*: Solo, Motivic Development



Essentially, pedal point, motivic development and voice leading shape the composed material of *Muvseevum*, while linear development of thematic references is a key element of the improvisation.

SUMMARY

Pedal point is a defining characteristic in many of Ben Monder's compositions and improvisations. Although Monder does use pedal point in some traditional tonal contexts (i.e., a I-IV-V-I tonal scheme in *Late Green*, a V7-I cadence in *Sleep*), he more often takes a broader approach to pedal point that encompasses non-functional harmonies and less conventional voice leading (the use of parallel consonances and non-resolution of dissonance). His comprehensive treatment of the pedal, moreover, is not restricted to one part of a composition but rather helps to

define different sections (exposition, transition, climax, coda) through voice leading (contour) and rhythm (interlocking, sustained vs. active). In so doing, Monder exploits pedal point as a contrapuntal device to shape formal design, as well as tension and release in his music. Improvisations, in turn, reveal a strong connection to counterpoint through linear development often with thematic references, which provides cohesion and continuity in his melodic construction. The extensive use of a contrapuntal device as a formative element and motivic manipulation continues in the following chapter, which focuses on polytonality, polyrhythm and polymetre.

Chapter Four
POLYTONALITY, POLYRHYTHM, AND POLYMETRE

INTRODUCTION

Disagreement between opposing tonal centres, rhythms or metres is the defining contrapuntal element in polytonality, polyrhythm and polymetre. This chapter examines how polytonality, polyrhythm and polymetre not only function as counterpoint in Monder's compositions *Orbits* and *Double Sun* but also how in that capacity, they define the overall character and even identity of the tunes.

POLYTONALITY

Polytonality refers to the simultaneous use of two or more key centres.[109] From a Western classical perspective, polytonality is a technique that can be traced back to Bach and his predecessors in the Renaissance period. Canons and fugues can be considered early examples of bitonality owing to the conflict between tonic and dominant or related keys. While the imitation of voices in a fugue or canon that creates this conflict is presented sequentially, for theorist and composer Humphrey Searle, "It was clearly only a matter of time before the rival disputants were presented simultaneously."[110] Searle's statement is borne out in the work of several composers working in the early twentieth-century.

European and American composers such as Darius Milhaud, Igor Stravinsky, Charles Ives, and Bela Bartok were amongst the leading proponents of polytonality, the active use of at least two key centres simultaneously. As theorist Vincent Persichetti explains, polytonality in

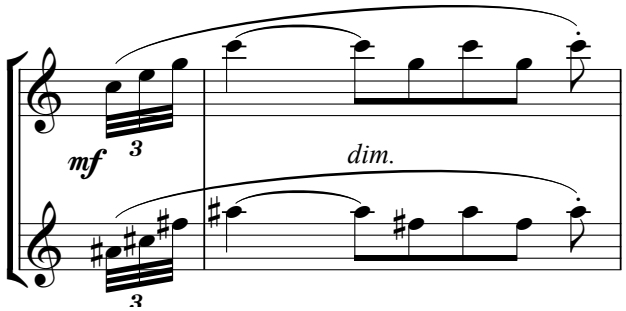
[109] Polytonality is also referred to as bitonality in which only two layers of different tonalities are used.
[110] Searle, *op. cit.,* 32.

twentieth-century classical practice is a particular form of tonal organization where the voices in each tonal plane adhere to one scale, whether diatonic or synthetic, as chromatic alterations tend to blur the overall effect.[111] Tension in a polytonal texture is shaped by key relationship. Persichetti notes, "In major-key combinations, a polytonal order of tension from consonant to dissonant is secured by combining two keys that lie a perfect fifth, major ninth, major sixth, major third, major seventh apart – and so on up the cycle of fifths . . . Those keys that are not closely related according to the circle of fifths will more easily set apart the tonal key spheres."[112] In other words, the most dissonant or resonant polytonal key combinations are the tritone, the minor 9th or minor 2nd.

Persichetti also identifies two general types of polytonality, harmonic and melodic.[113] The harmonic form refers to chordal writing with two or more harmonic planes, as exemplified in Igor Stravinsky's ballet *Petrouchka* (1910). Stravinsky (1882-1971) superimposes two major triads, a tritone apart, forming the "Petrouchka chord" (an F# major triad sounding over a C major triad) (Example 4.1). In keeping with Persichetti's prescription for the most resonant polytonal combinations, Stravinsky produces strong dissonance and tension from the remote key relationship of a tritone.

[111] Persichetti, *op. cit.,* 255-256.
[112] *Ibid.*, 257.
[113] *Ibid.*, 259.

Example 4.1 Igor Stravinsky, *Petrouchka, tableau II*: Harmonic Polytonality



Melodic polytonality consists of horizontal writing. Whereas in harmonic polytonality some examples such as the Petrouchka chord can prove difficult to discern both harmonic planes, presenting each key centre in successive fashion helps to hear each layer of a polytonal texture. Piston states, "For maximum clarity in the projection of different tonalities, one key is introduced and as the next key is added, the preceding key, having been established, becomes less obvious."[114]

Theorist David Cope adds other ways to distinguish key centres: 1) strong progressions within each key; 2) defining the major or minor mode to stress contrasting notes between keys; 3) timbre (i.e., string versus woodwinds); 4) articulation; 5) dynamics; and 6) material (i.e., ostinato versus melodic counterpoint).[115]

Polytonality is not frequently cited in jazz literature or often used in jazz composition particularly for extended sections.[116] In jazz improvisation, however, it has been a common solo device since the bebop era. Even so, it is typically used only for brief interludes. A notable

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[114] Piston, *op. cit.*, 255.

[115] David Cope, *Techniques of the Contemporary Composer*, 1st ed. (New York: Schirmer, 1997), 20-21.

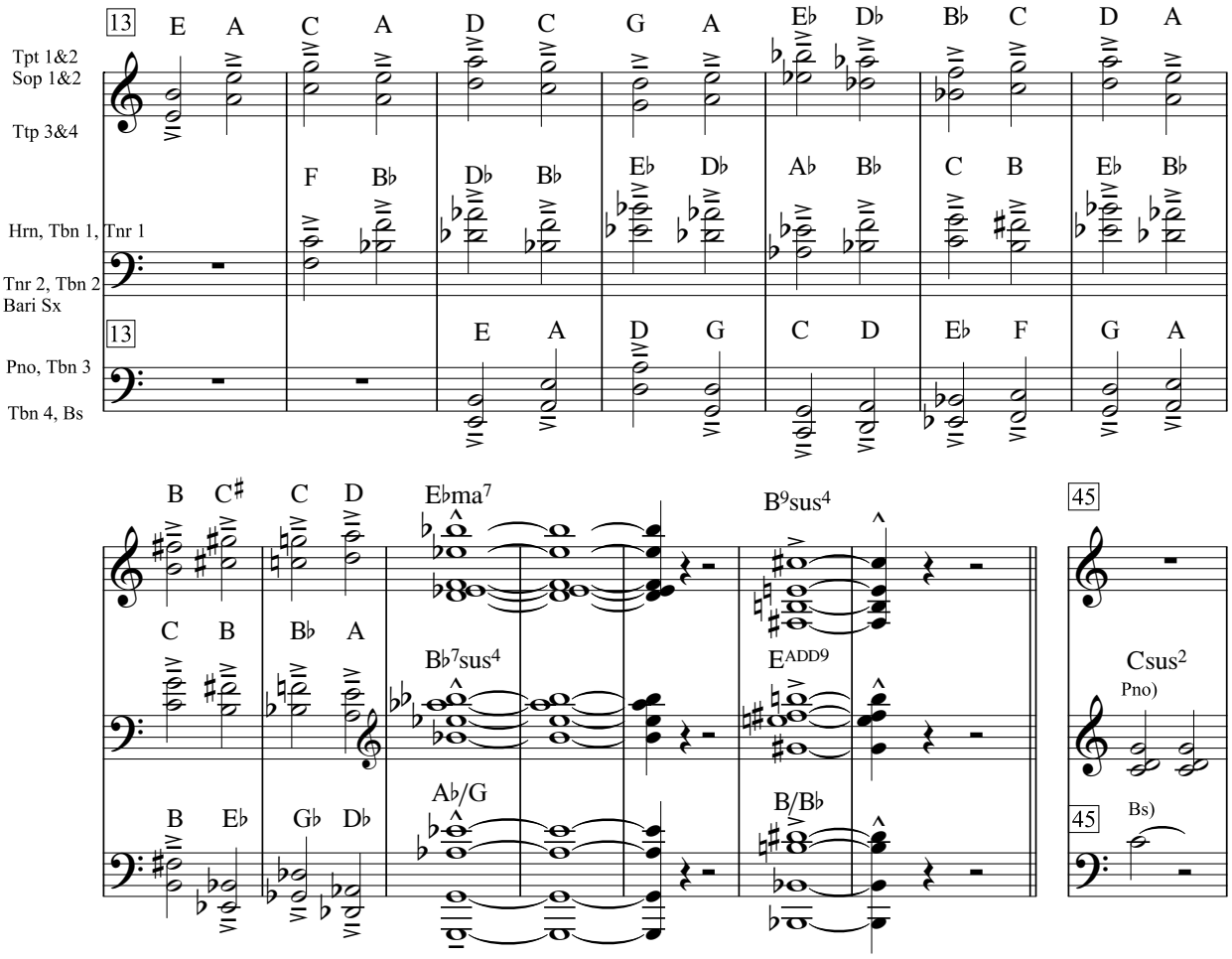
[116] Diego Alejandro Celi Ramos, "Polymodality, Counterpoint, and Heptatonic Synthetic Scales in Jazz Composition; and its Application in an Original Piece "Polymodal Jazz Suite for Quartet,"" (PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2016), 38.

example is pianist Lennie Tristano (1919-1978), a well-known innovator in the "cool jazz" era of the 1940s and 1950s, and a musician who used a technique called "side-slipping" to suggest polytonality. Side-slipping involved playing outside the main key with chromatic harmony superimposed over the standard harmonic progression to produce a bitonal effect. The harmonic tension arising from this technique, however, is only temporary as jazz soloists typically return or "slip" back to the main harmonic progression after a few bars.

Whereas polytonality has been primarily heard in brief moments during improvised solos, a few jazz composers began employing a more prolonged treatment of polytonality after the initial forays into the technique during the bebop era. Among them are Bob Brookmeyer, George Russell, and Dave Brubeck, and, as will be discussed, Ben Monder.

Brookmeyer (1925-2011) uses polytonal harmony in big band compositions such as *The Big Time* that was released posthumously on the Vanguard Orchestra recording *OverTime* in 2014 (Example 4.2). From measure 13 onwards, Brookmeyer places the half note-based theme in a polytonal texture of three layers. Each layer consists of harmonic blocks of fifths (root with fifth) moving mostly in contrary motion to one another. As indicated in the example, the fifth blocks are distributed across the ensemble. This polytonality produces tension and forward motion that release at measure 45 with the arrival of a single tonality of C.

Example 4.2 Bob Brookmeyer, *The Big Time*: Harmonic Polytonality

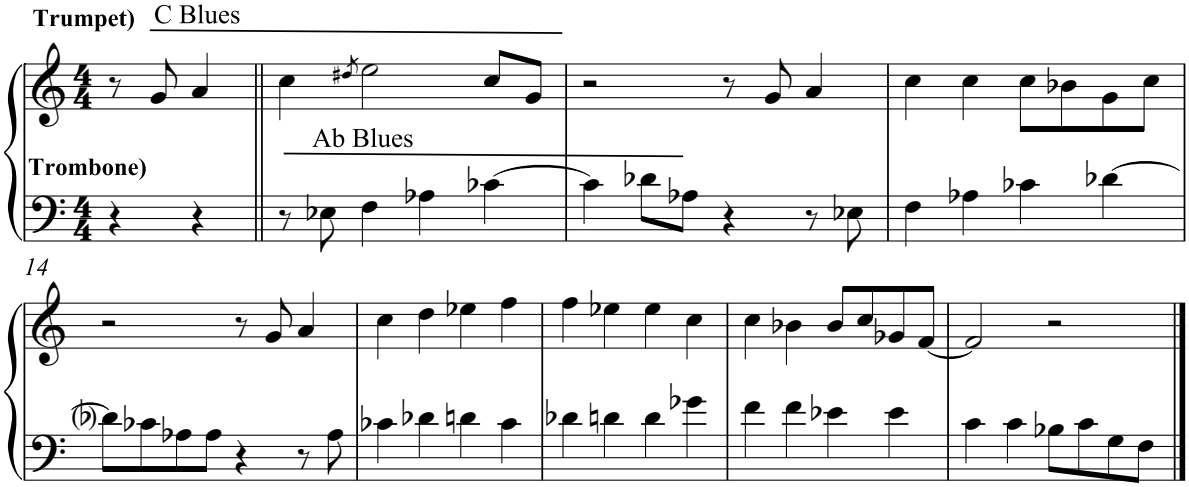


George Russell (1923-2009) was one of the first jazz composers to use polytonality in an extended fashion. He writes a polytonal canon in the big band piece *Miss Clara* on his 1956 *Jazz Workshop* recording. This example is based on the blues, which serves as the basis for much of his polytonal writing.[117] The opening passage features staggered entries of a C blues superimposed over an Ab blues. Russell distinguishes the two melodic planes further through

[117] Peter Ellis Kenagy, "George Russell's Jazz Workshop: The Composer's Style and Original Methods of 1956," (DMA diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2009), 81.

timbre, as the top voice is played by trumpet and the lower line is performed by trombone (Example 4.3).

Example 4.3 George Russell, *Miss Clara*: Melodic Polytonality

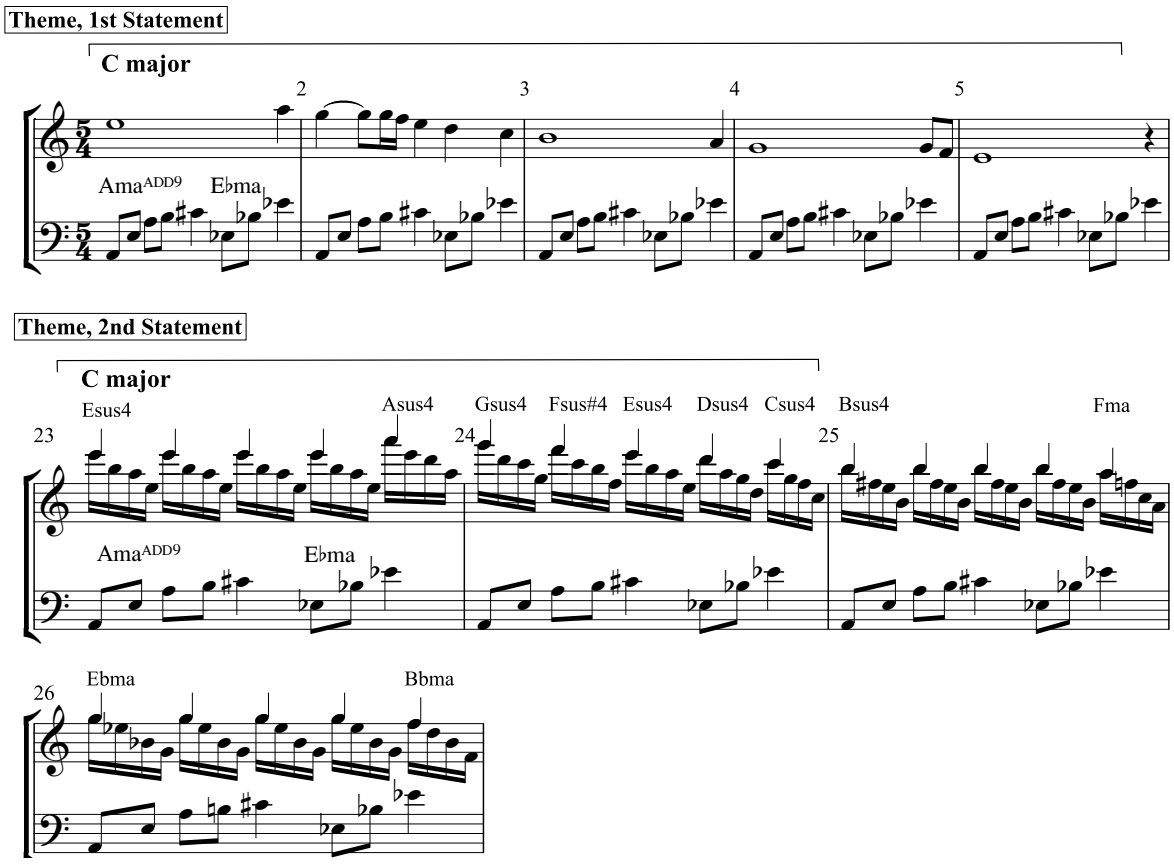


Pianist Dave Brubeck was another exponent of polytonality in a jazz setting. He identified polyrhythm and polytonality as central elements of his music: **"**My whole idea in jazz is superimposing rhythm on rhythm, and harmony on harmony."[118] Brubeck considered *Tritonis* (*Tritonis*, 1980) the high point of his experimentation in polytonality.[119] Initially composed for flute and guitar and later adapted for jazz quartet, *Tritonis* contains polytonal elements in the form of arpeggiated chords moving against an ostinato. Set in 5/4 metre, each bar is divided into three and two beats. For most of the composition, the main harmony appears on the first three beats as an arpeggiated triad with an added ninth followed by a second arpeggiated triad a tritone away on the last two beats. The main triad pairings in the lower voice are A major with added

[118] "The Art of Dave Brubeck – archive.," *The Guardian*, 17 February 1958, accessed July 13, 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/music/2017/feb/17/dave-brubeck-jazz-interview-1958.
[119] Mark McFarland, "Dave Brubeck and Polytonal Jazz." *Jazz Perspectives*, vol. 3, no. 2, August 2009, 170.

ninth and an Eb major on the last two beats. The initial thematic statement is a single line; the second statement embellishes the theme with a descending series of arpeggiated sus4 chords and triads, creating a polytonal clash with the lower ostinato (Example 4.4).

Example 4.4 Dave Brubeck, *Tritonis*: Polytonality



As I will show in the remainder of the chapter, Monder continues and extends the polytonal concepts that Russell, Brubeck and Brookmeyer explored. However, while Monder's treatment of polytonality is, in itself, exemplary of his use of multiplicity as a contrapuntal technique, it is only part of the picture. Indeed, the large-scale contrapuntal tension he builds to define his compositions with opposing tonalities is complemented by his use of polymetre and polyrhythm.

POLYRHYTHM AND POLYMETRE

Polyrhythm and polymetre are the temporal equivalents of polytonality. Like polytonality, both rhythmic devices create tension and forward motion through the use of opposition, however, instead of different key centres, rhythms or metres produce the contrast. There is much confusion about the terms polyrhythm and polymetre. They are often confounded as the same idea[120] or are defined by a Western art music notational framework without considering other musical traditions that are either not notated or do not rely on the bar line.[121] For this research, I refer to polyrhythm as the superimposition of two or more contrasting rhythms with unequal number of notes that fill the same total length of time, often for a short duration.[122] Polymetre, on the other hand, can be understood as the superimposition of two or more metres where the conflicting rhythms have the same type but unequal number of notes and fill an unequal length of time. The difference between the two concepts is clearer when the polyrhythm and polymetre share the same ratio such as a 3:2 grouping or hemiola. The 3:2 polyrhythm completes a cycle in a shorter length of time compared to the polymetre (Example 4.5). With the same ratio, polymetre sounds like an expanded version of polyrhythm. Regardless of the distinctions between these two

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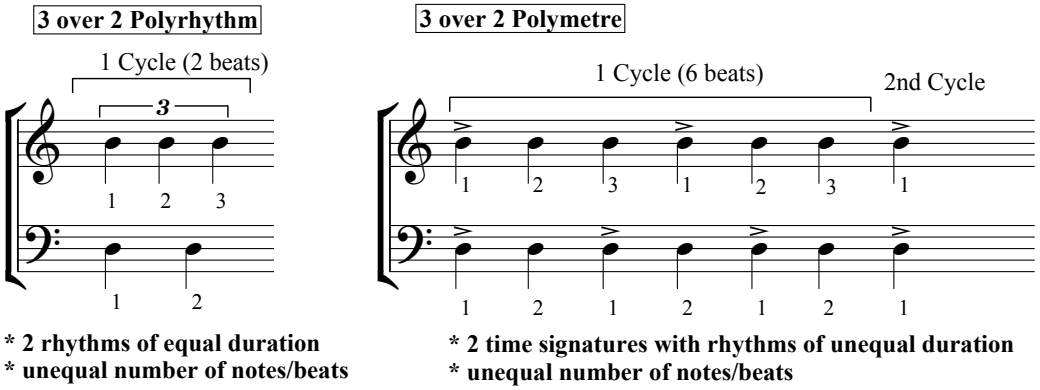
[120] "Polyrhythm," *Grove Music Online,* Oxford University Press, accessed August 13, 2020, https://doi-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.22059.

[121] Willi Apel, *Harvard Dictionary of Music* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1950), 593-594.

[122] For my definition I rely on the note, since Monder's compositions are notated. While this conveys the notation of Western art music, it is also important to be aware of other musical traditions that have polyrhythm or polymetre but do not rely on the bar line for organizing time. In this light, contemporary jazz musicians such as guitarist Miles Okazaki and alto saxophonist Miguel Zenon define polyrhythm using this broader view beyond a notational framework of Western art music. Okazaki refers to polyrhythm as "layered rhythms" while Zenon defines it as contrasting rhythms "in the same space." See Miles Okazaki, *Fundamentals of Guitar*, 1st ed. (Pacific, MO: Mel Bay Publications, 2015), 37, and Miguel Zenon, "What is a Polyrhythm? Beats Taking Turns," Interview by Patrick Jarenwattananon, Jazz Night in America, NPR, November 5, 2014, accessed August 14, 2020, http://www.npr.org/event/music/361740535/what-is-a-polyrhythm-beats-taking-turns.

concepts, they both offer a multitude of rhythmic possibilities for composers and improvisers to instill rhythmic counterpoint in their musical expression.

Example 4.5 Polyrhythm and Polymetre



Many twentieth-century classical composers such as Stravinsky, Ives, Bartok, Messiaen, Ligeti, and Elliott Carter incorporated polyrhythms or polymetre in their writing.[123] Similar rhythmic influences in jazz can be traced back to West African drumming practices, which have made use of polyrhythms for centuries.[124] Throughout jazz history, polyrhythms and polymetre can be found in the innovative playing of jazz drummers such as Max Roach, Art Blakey, Elvin Jones, Tony Williams, Jeff "Tain" Watts, and Ari Hoenig. Miles Davis' Second Quintet (1965-68) is noted for pioneering the use of polymetre as heard on tenor saxophonist Wayne Shorter's composition *Footprints*. While the piece was originally released on Shorter's recording *Adam's*

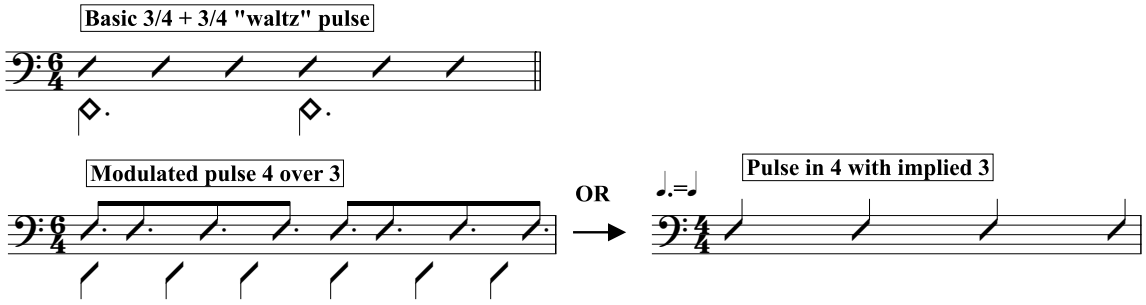
[123] Ligeti cites the influence of complex African polyrhythms in his writing. See Stephen Satory, "An Interview with György Ligeti in Hamburg," *Canadian University Music Review*, vol. 10, no 1, 1990, 110-111. He further distinguishes between the European and African way of conceiving of polyrhythm. The Western approach is based on metre and groupings of beats in a division of a bar, while the African way has no measures and involves rhythmic levels or layers of a ground layer and a superimposed layer. See Simha Arom, *African Polyphony and Polyrhythm*: *Musical Structure and Methodology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 4-5.

[124] See Schuller, *op. cit.,* 6-25; Gridley and Rave, *op. cit.*, 48-49; and Brian Anthony Rodesch, *Developing a Rhythmic Vocabulary: Exercises Derived from the West African Influence on Jazz*, (PhD diss., University of Northern Colorado, 2016), 37-38.

Apple (1966), it is on Davis' album *Miles Smiles* (1967) that polymetre is more fully explored by bassist Ron Carter and drummer Tony Williams.

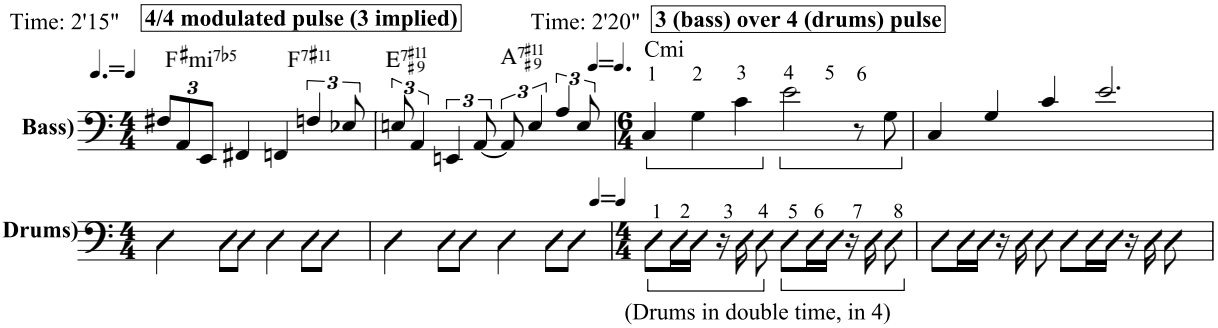
Polymetre appears in *Footprints* as interplay between the main 6/4 pulse and a second rhythm in 4/4, mirroring the triple and duple pulses that underscore many West African drumming practices (Example 4.6).

Example 4.6 Wayne Shorter, *Footprints* (*Miles Smiles*, 1967): Basic and Modulated Pulses



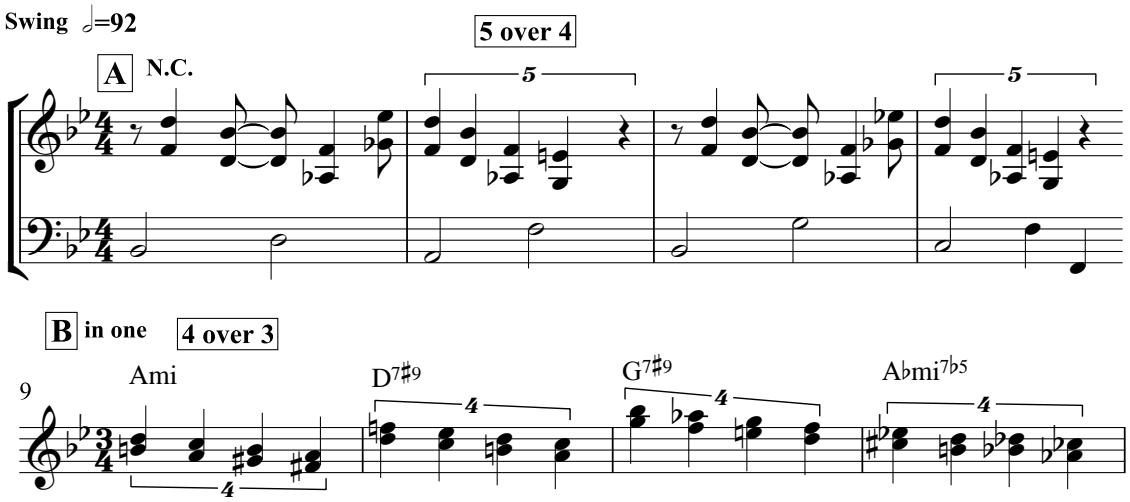
In bars 9 and 10 of the form, the bass and/or drums often modulate to the 4/4 pulse where a dotted quarter note equals a quarter note. This modulation in the third chorus of the trumpet solo (2'15") sounds like a slower tempo in relation to the implied 6/4 pulse. Thereafter, the opposing duple and triple pulses sound together (2'20"): the bass returns to the original 6/4 pulse as the drums continue the dotted quarter note feel in double-time on the ride cymbal. The resulting polymetre is 6/4 against 8/4 (Example 4.7). Whether the pulse modulates to 4 over 3 or to a double-time feel, the bar line remains fixed throughout.

Example 4.7 Wayne Shorter, *Footprints* (*Miles Smiles*, 1967): Polymetre, Trumpet Solo



Pianist Bill Evans applies polyrhythms for rhythmic contrast in his trio rendition of *Five* (*New Jazz Conceptions*, 1956). In the first section, Evans alternates the melody in the main 4/4 pulse with five quarter note groupings over four (mm.2 and 4). As the B section shifts to a 3/4 metre, the melody moves in groupings of four quarter notes over three (Example 4.8).

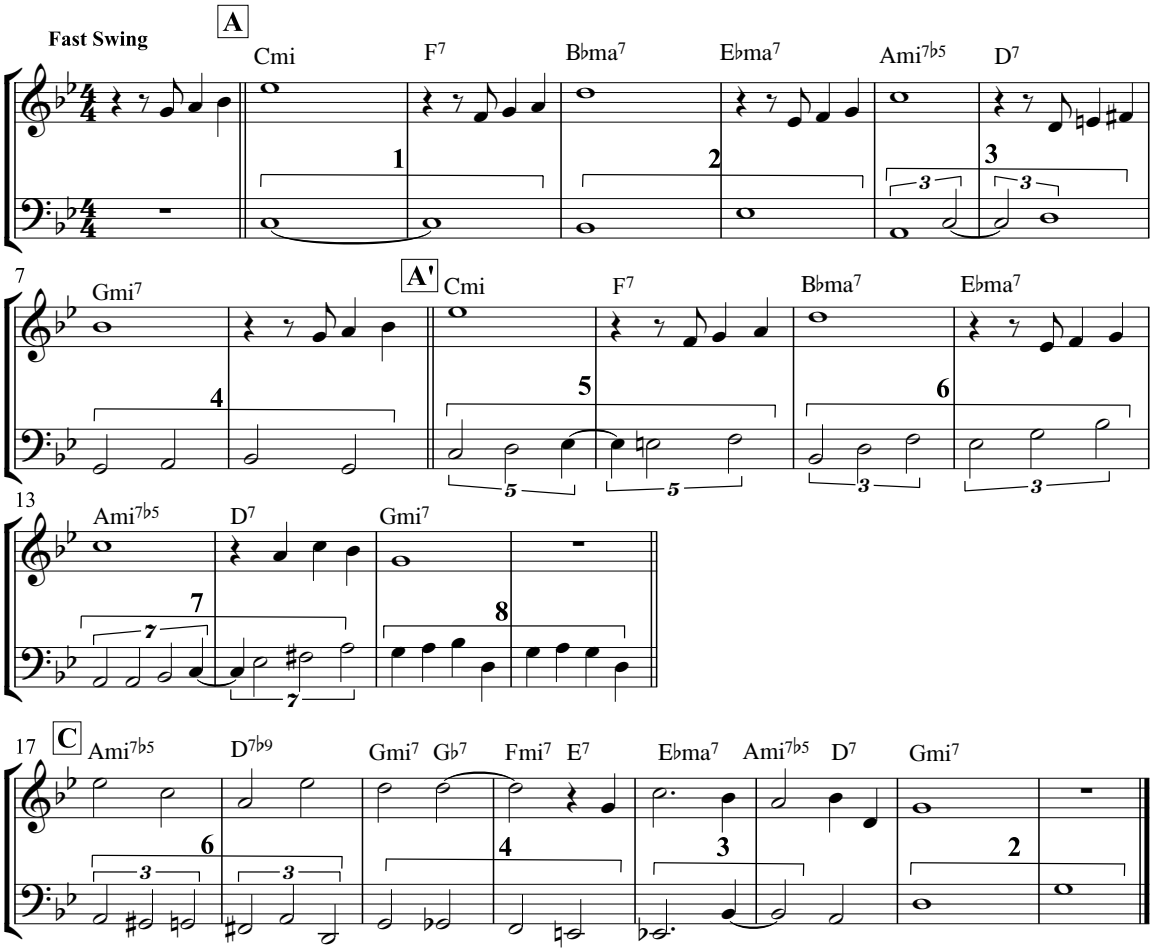
Example 4.8 Bill Evans, *Five*: Polyrhythm



In a more sequenced fashion, trumpeter Wynton Marsalis integrates polymetre into the well-known standard *Autumn Leaves* (*Marsalis Standard Time Vol. 1*, 1987) to create the effect

of an accelerating or decelerating tempo. The AABC tune is performed at an up-tempo swing feel with the trumpet playing the melody. As a counter to the 4/4 metre in the A section, the rhythm section plays an accompanying polymetre spanning two-bar phrases moving from one to eight beats. The overall effect is an accelerating pulse towards the B section. The reverse process, a decelerating pulse, occurs at C where the rhythm section moves from six to two beats over two-bar phrases (Example 4.9).

Example 4.9 Wynton Marsalis Arrangement, *Autumn Leaves*: Polymetric Sequence



As the above examples suggest, polyrhythm and polymetre add considerable musical interest to both jazz composition and improvisation. The examples cited are just a few of many.

Indeed, most contemporary jazz ensembles make use of these rhythmic devices in some fashion.[125]

Key to this study is more than the simple identification of opposing key or rhythmic occurrences in Monder's music. Rather, my goal is to explain: 1) how these contrapuntal elements are used in an extended fashion, thus playing defining roles throughout his compositions; 2) how they create tension and release; 3) and ultimately, how they shape the form. As will be demonstrated, Monder clarifies opposing tonalities or rhythms through register, separation, changing textures and timbre/instrumentation. Both compositions to be analyzed, *Orbits* and *Double Sun*, share a similar contrapuntal approach to composition by separating different music voices in guitar string sets. Monder further distinguishes the voices through rhythmic independence. *Orbits* explores polyrhythms between three groups of voices, whereas *Double Sun* examines polyrhythms between two voices.

ORBITS – COMPOSITION

Orbits (*Flux,* 1996) is an example of how Monder turns the guitar into a contrapuntal instrument through the use of polyrhythms. Opposing rhythms are central to this eight-section through-composed solo guitar composition. While Monder does not necessarily compose using particular influences or borrowed material, some pieces do deliberately draw on ideas from other musicians and other music practices. In this case, *Orbits* is based on a one-bar Afro-Cuban ostinato that Monder learned from a saxophonist colleague.[126]

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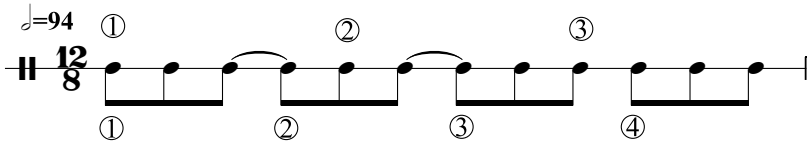
[125] Ari Hoenig and Johannes Weidenmueller, *Intro to Polyrhythms,* vol. 1, (Pacific, MO: Mel Bay Publications, 2009) 2.

[126] Ben Monder, Interview with Darren Sigesmund, June 28, 2018.

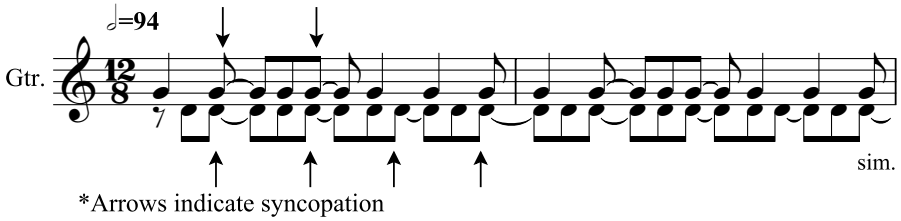
The ostinato is set in 12/8 metre, and Monder stresses its dualistic quality: "You can interpret it as four or three."[127] A composite rhythm of the ostinato reveals the three against four pulses (Example 4.10).

Example 4.10 Ben Monder, *Orbits*: Ostinato Composite Rhythm (3 over 4)



The actual two-voice ostinato shows points of alignment/agreement and non-alignment/disagreement between the top and lower rhythms. More importantly, syncopation in one or both parts drives the overall pulse forward across every beat and barline, and by extension, the entire piece (Example 4.11).

Example 4.11 Ben Monder, *Orbits*: Ostinato with Syncopation

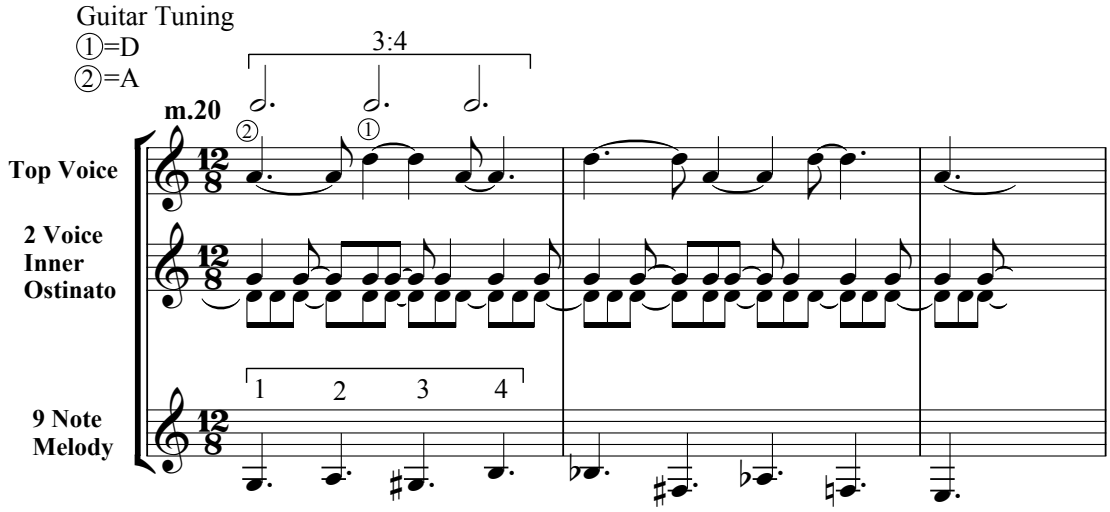


Using the ostinato as an anchor, Monder forms a three-layered polyrhythmic texture that spans most of the work. He explains how he adapts the texture to guitar: "I can do the original [ostinato] rhythm on the middle two strings, D and G, with my left hand I can do the fours, my

[127] Ben Monder, Interview with Darren Sigesmund, June 28, 2018.

other two fingers can do the threes, and it all happens at the same time."[128] The full texture, in essence, consists of: 1) an upper voice in three; 2) the 12/8 ostinato in the middle voice; and 3) the bass voice in four (Example 4.12). In effect, Monder creates rhythmic counterpoint between three layers of rhythm distributed across the guitar.

Example 4.12 Ben Monder, *Orbits*: Three-Layer Polyrhythmic Texture



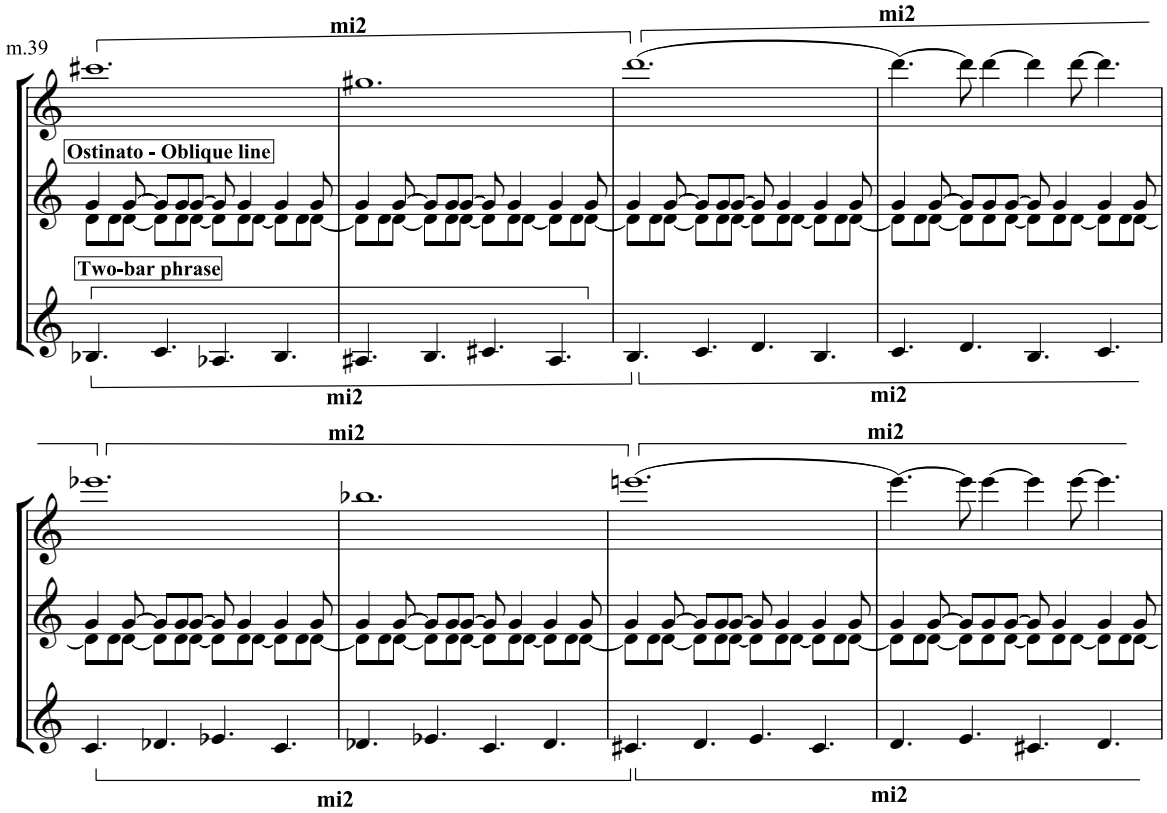
In terms of pitch content of the three layers, both the upper and middle voices span a perfect fourth, the former linearly (A to D) and the latter harmonically (D and G). The bass voice introduces what Monder refers to as the melody in a nine-note phrase,[129] providing colour and harmonic tension through chromatic inflections clashing with the upper voices.

Monder continuously evolves the three-layer texture through voice leading, polyrhythmic changes, and register. Voice leading plays a prominent role in building tension after the first section. Both the upper and lower voices ascend (second section) and descend (third section) in step progression against the inner ostinato that serves as an oblique line. The outer 3:4

[128] *Ibid*.
[129] *Ibid*.

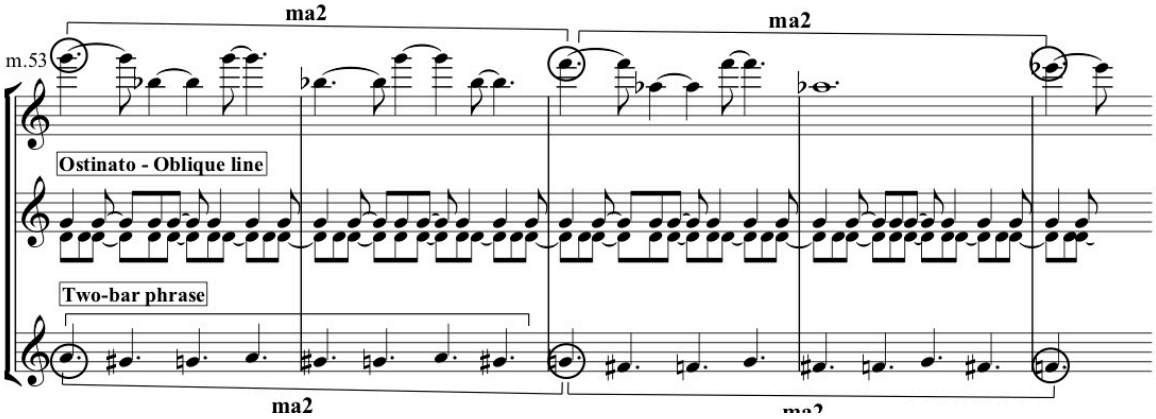
polyrhythm is maintained, albeit less explicitly: the top voice is reduced mostly to long tones with some notes expressing the pulse in three, while the bass voice remains in the dotted quarter pulse in 4 (Example 4.13).

Example 4.13 Ben Monder, *Orbits*: Chromatic Ascending Contour, Second Section



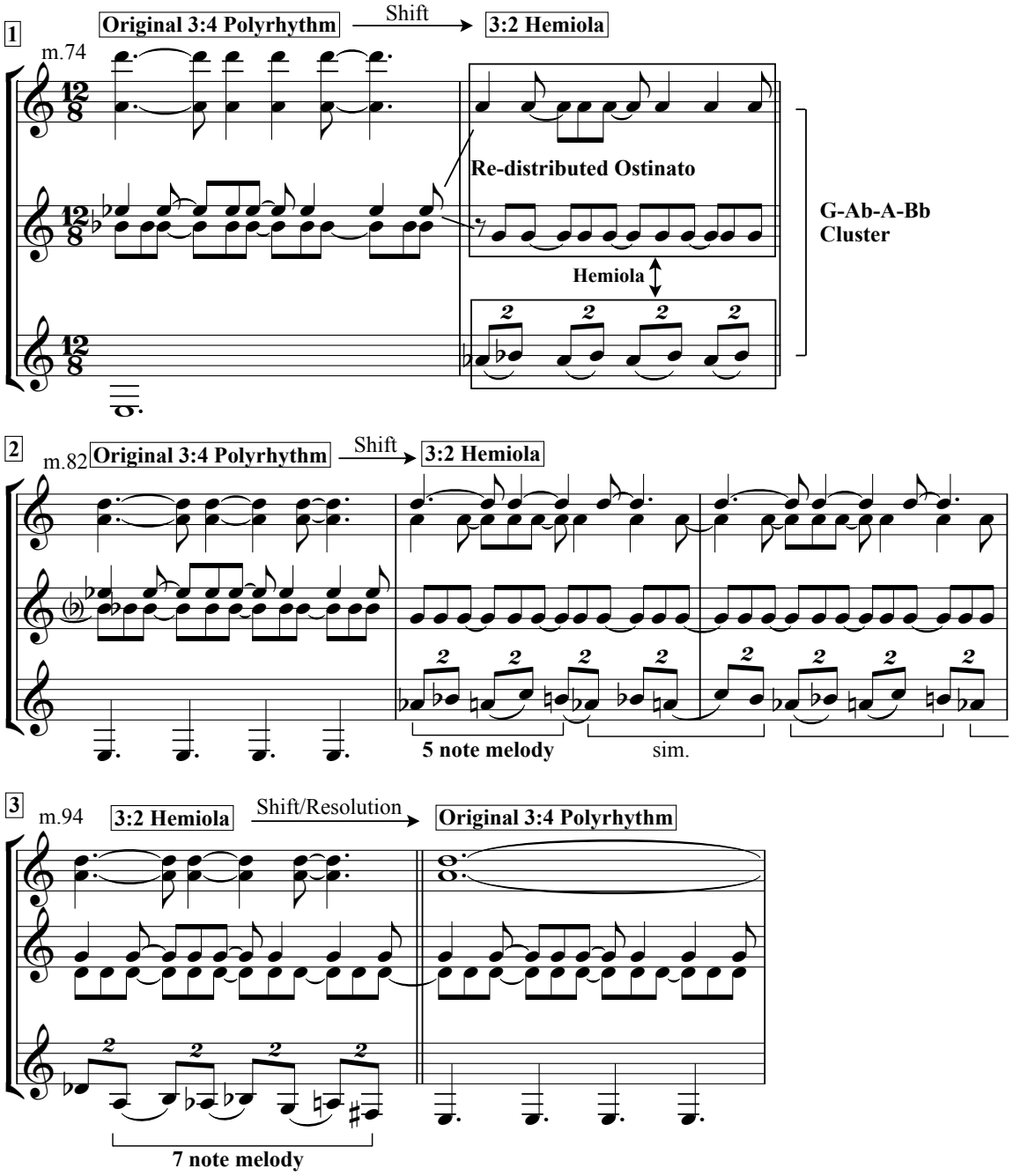
As the third section opens at a melodic peak, both the top and bass voices descend stepwise in whole tones (Example 4.14), ultimately resolving back to the initial G.

Example 4.14 Ben Monder, *Orbits*: Wholetone Descending Contour, Third Section



To heighten contrapuntal tension further in the fourth section, Monder creates several textural shifts by modifying the three-layered polyrhythm. A switch from the original 3:4 polyrhythm to a 3:2 hemiola produces an accelerated tempo as the bass voice changes from a whole note or dotted quarter note pulse to eighth notes (mm.75 and 82). A chromatic cluster (G-Ab-A-Bb) stretching vertically across the three layers adds harmonic dissonance to the polyrhythmic tension. Register and range further contribute to this tension as the cluster involves the bass voice moving up a tenth from a pedal E, while the ostinato is reduced from a fourth to a second (Example 4.15). The instability and rhythmic tension from shifting polyrhythms resolves into the fifth section as the hemiola changes to the original 3:4 polyrhythm (mm.94-95). The bass voice facilitates this resolution by slowing the pulse down from eighth notes to dotted quarter notes. Overall, tension from polyrhythms results vertically from opposing rhythms across layers within a bar and linearly from textural shifts across measures, generating forward motion in the composition.

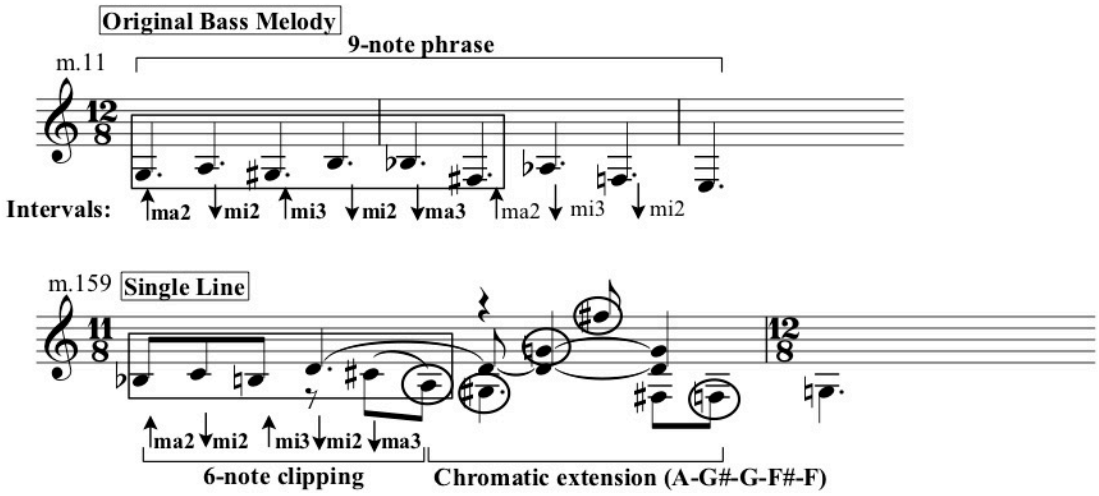
Example 4.15 Ben Monder, *Orbits*: Polyrhythmic Shifts, Fourth Section



Changing polyrhythms are not the only form of textural shift in *Orbits*. A single line derived from the bass is often used to contrast with the three-layered polyrhythm. Over the course of the tune, the single line plays a greater role in shaping tension and release, growing

from one bar to more extended phrases that interject between the main polyrhythmic texture. Monder transforms the initial bass melody (mm.11-12) motivically by diminishing the dotted quarter notes into eighth notes while retaining intervallic content. In measure 159, the single line contains a clipping of the original melody (the first six pitches following the same intervallic sequence) and a chromatic extension disguised by octave displacements (Example 4.16). This extension references chromatic material in the initial bass melody that spans a perfect fifth.

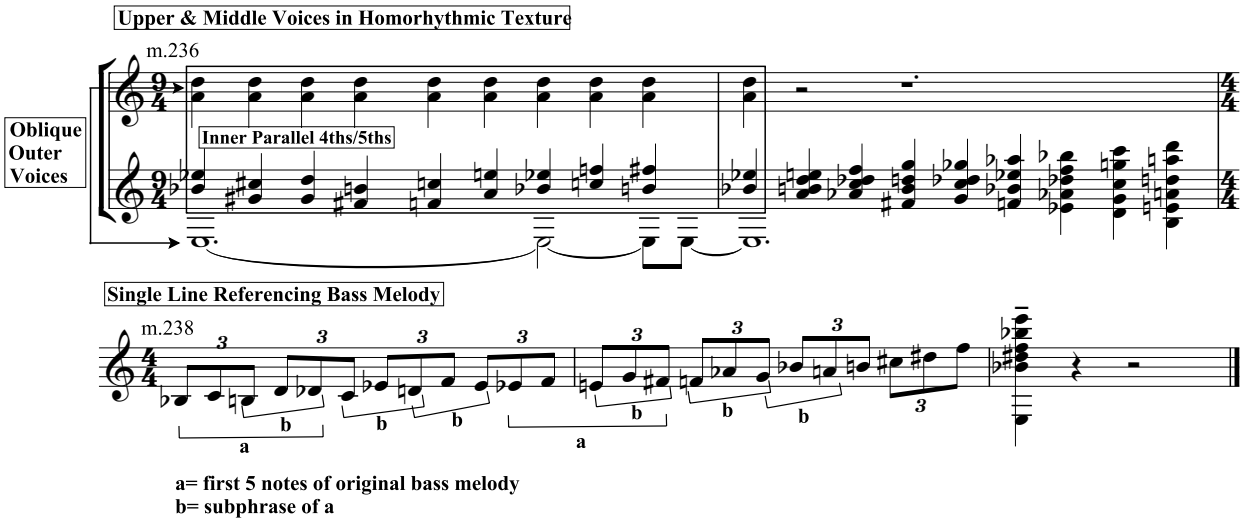
Example 4.16 Ben Monder, *Orbits*: Single Line Texture



The closing statement features changes in rhythm and voice leading that lead to a final resolution of contrapuntal tension. Rhythmic counterpoint ends altogether as the polyrhythms that have defined the piece stop. What remains is a brief interlude of homorhythm. Both the inner ostinato and the 3:4 polyrhythmic clash between the upper and bass voices have ceased, leaving the upper and inner voices moving with the same quarter note rhythm. Changes in voice leading involve the inner voice moving in parallel fourths and fifths against two outer oblique layers (upper and bass pedals). With this penultimate textural shift, contrapuntal tension lessens as rhythmic agreement replaces rhythmic opposition. Having resolved the polyrhythmic clash,

Monder chooses the single line texture, still referencing the original bass melody that formed part of the three-layered polyrhythm, to drive the work to the final chord (Example 4.17).

Example 4.17 Ben Monder, *Orbits*: Closing Statement



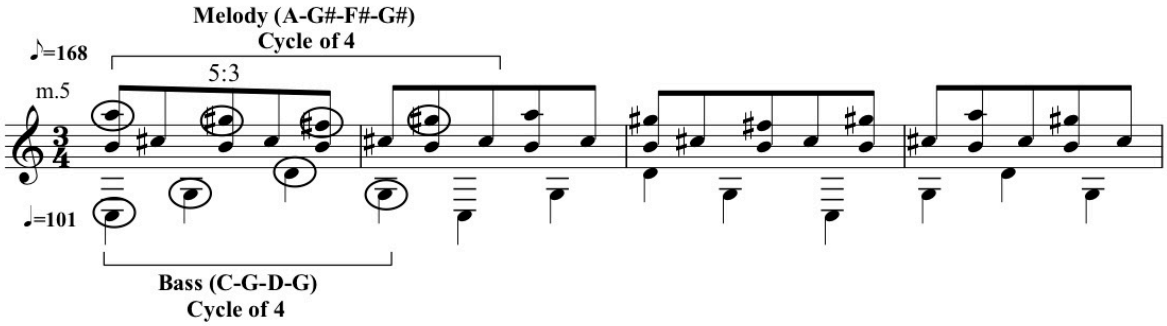
In general, Monder transforms the guitar into a contrapuntal instrument through the use of polyrhythms distributed across string sets. Voice leading and textural shifts in the polyrhythms and the change to a single line also serve to underpin the contrapuntal basis of *Orbits*.

DOUBLE SUN – COMPOSITION

Whereas counterpoint in *Orbits* is based primarily on opposing rhythms, the approach in *Double Sun* (*Oceana* 2005) not only includes rhythmic counterpoint (polyrhythm) but also contrasting tonalities (polytonality). The repeated and varied treatment of these two contrapuntal techniques accounts for an evolving level of contrapuntal tension throughout the composition. Monder describes the rhythmic counterpoint in this twelve-minute through-composed piece for solo guitar: “I'm exploring this polyrhythm of five against three. I've got three in the bass and five on the top three strings, and I'm playing a cycle of four in each of the parts, so the five over three is

disguised" (Example 4.18).[130] To highlight the competing rhythmic streams, I have indicated the pulse in 5 as ♪= 168, while the pulse in 3 moves at a slower tempo of ♩= 101.[131]

Example 4.18 Ben Monder, *Double Sun*: Opening Theme



To complement the polyrhythm, Monder adds harmonic dissonance, or his term "harmonic rub,"[132] in the form of bitonality. The piece begins from a point of harmonic tension with the theme in A over a lower part in C and evolves through Ab over C, A over G, eventually resolving to a more consonant single key of C. This large-scale movement from dissonant remote keys to consonance, or dark to light, creates a strong sense of harmonic resolution over time, even while the polyrhythmic tension persists throughout the work.

The theme and bass voices are contrasted further through voice leading and register, reinforcing the rhythmic and harmonic counterpoint. In separate registers, the melody of A-G#-F#-G# moves stepwise while the bass moves in quintal leaps, C-G-D-G (Example 4.19). Moreover, the treatment of melody in *Double Sun* is similar to Monder's superimposition of a stepwise diatonic melody over a dissonant bass in both ballads *Luteous Pangolin* and *O.K.*

130 Adler, *op. cit.*

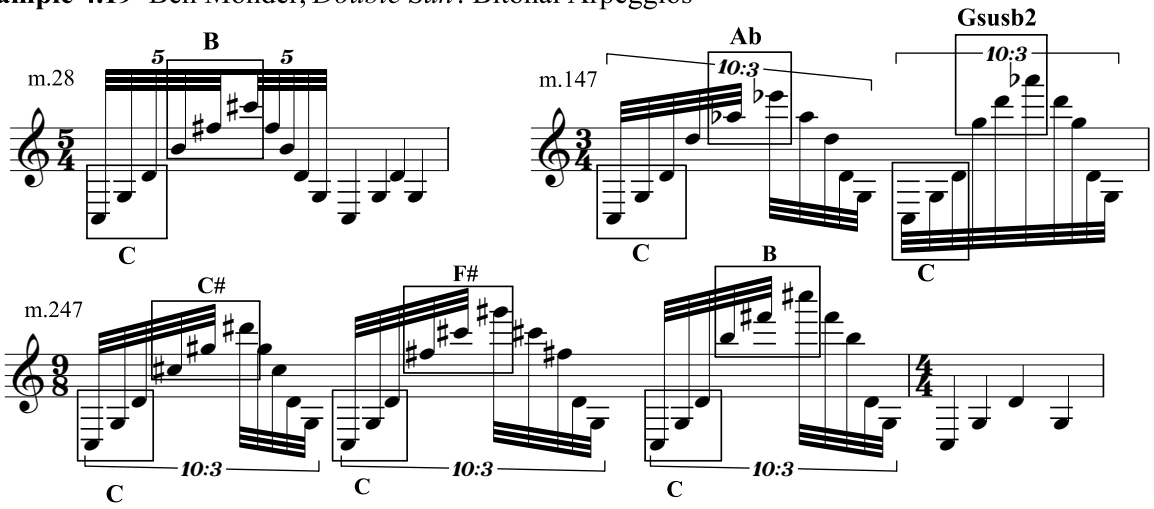
131 I have calculated these tempi at measure 5 based on the initial pulse of ♩= 84 indicated in the Mel Bay score.

132 Adler, *op. cit.*

Chorale.

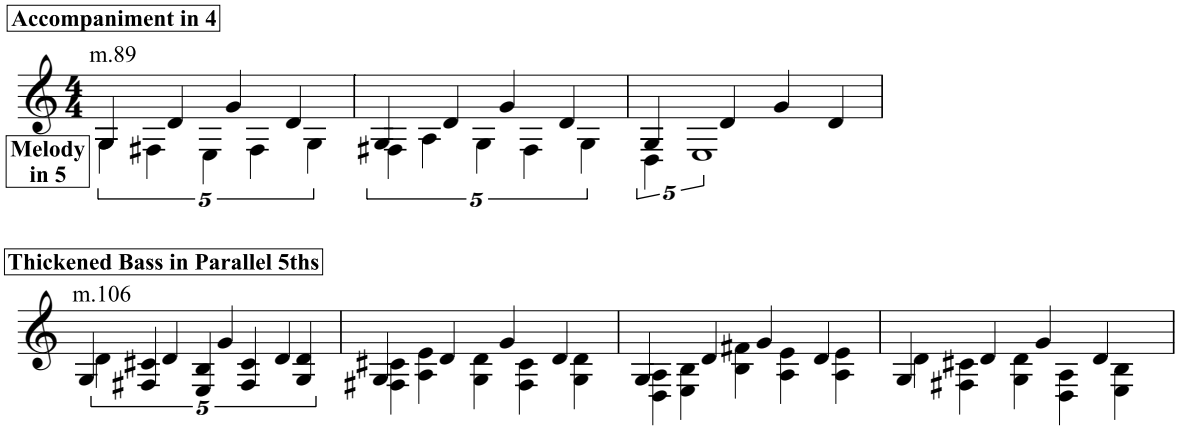
As in *Orbits*, textural shifts in the polyrhythm and harmony in *Double Sun* create contrast, tension and release. Beginning in measure 28, a single line of bitonal arpeggios repeatedly interjects between the main two-part theme/bass texture in 5:3, producing a shift from polyphony to monophony. The original two-layered vertical opposition of bitonal eighth notes (theme)/quarter notes (bass) merges into a single line of 32nd notes grouped as five tuplets (Example 4.18). The rapidly ascending and descending 32nd notes partially blur the bitonal quality, creating a colouristic effect from the clashing tonal centres. Nonetheless, the bitonal opposition builds increasing tension through longer phrases: arpeggios expand from single (m.28) to repeated iterations (mm.147, 247) that release back into the original quarter note accompaniment pattern.

Example 4.19 Ben Monder, *Double Sun*: Bitonal Arpeggios



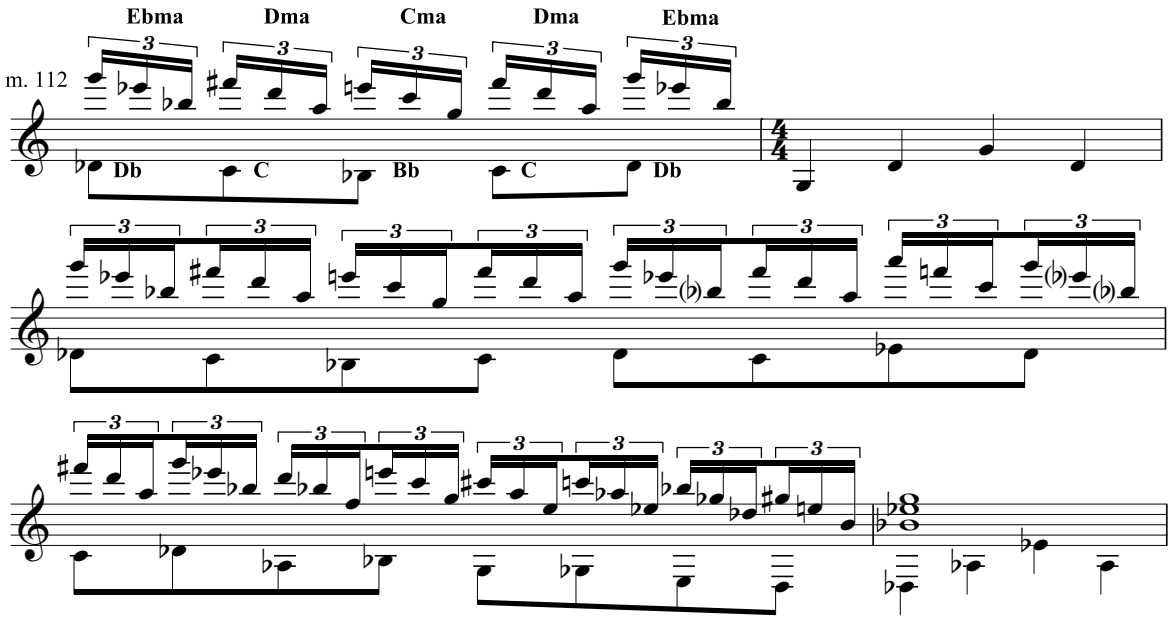
Textural developments continue through voice exchange and a new polyrhythm in 4:5. The upper part theme reverses roles with the bass ostinato (m.89). The theme is subsequently thickened in the bass with double stops creating parallel fifths (mm.106-109) (Example 4.20).

Example 4.20 Ben Monder, *Double Sun*: Voice Exchange and Parallel Fifths



Monder continues to evolve the contrapuntal texture with a marked shift away from polyrhythm in measure 112. Rather than forming part of the previous polyrhythm, the harmonic parallelism (parallel fifths) becomes the dominant texture by means of voice redistribution and accelerated motion. The melody is redistributed from the bass in parallel fifths to both the bass and upper voices separated by a tritone running through a series of parallel Lydian modes (II major triad/I root) (Example 4.21). Moreover, rhythmic diminution intensifies the parallelism as both voices are reduced to broken triplet sixteenth notes (upper voice) and eighth notes (bass). These textural changes in rhythm and harmony create accelerated motion and dramatic contrapuntal tension that drive the piece forward to the ensuing bitonal and polyrhythmic section of Ab over C in measure 122.

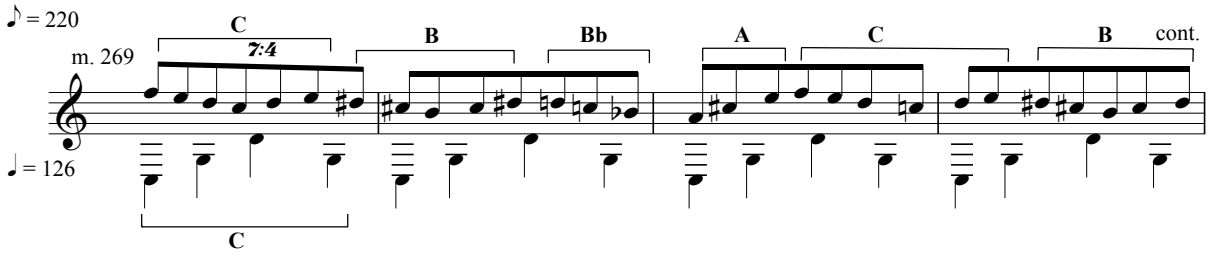
Example 4.21 Ben Monder, *Double Sun*: Parallel Lydian Modes



Monder's varied treatment of polyrhythm and polytonality reaches a pivotal point of rhythmic and harmonic tension from measures 265 to 293 (Time: 8'36"), roughly two thirds through the piece. Rhythmically, the music moves at its most rapid pace in a 7:4 polyrhythm with a metronome pulse of 220:126, compared to the original 5:3 polyrhythm moving at 168:101.[133] To speed up the pulse further, Monder adds an indication to gradually accelerate (*grad. accell*). Tonal tension arises vertically (m.269) from the upper part cycling through chromatic key changes (C-B-Bb-A) against the bass ostinato in C. The upper voice maintains motivic continuity with the original theme by similar stepwise motion and a descending/ascending melodic contour (Example 4.22).

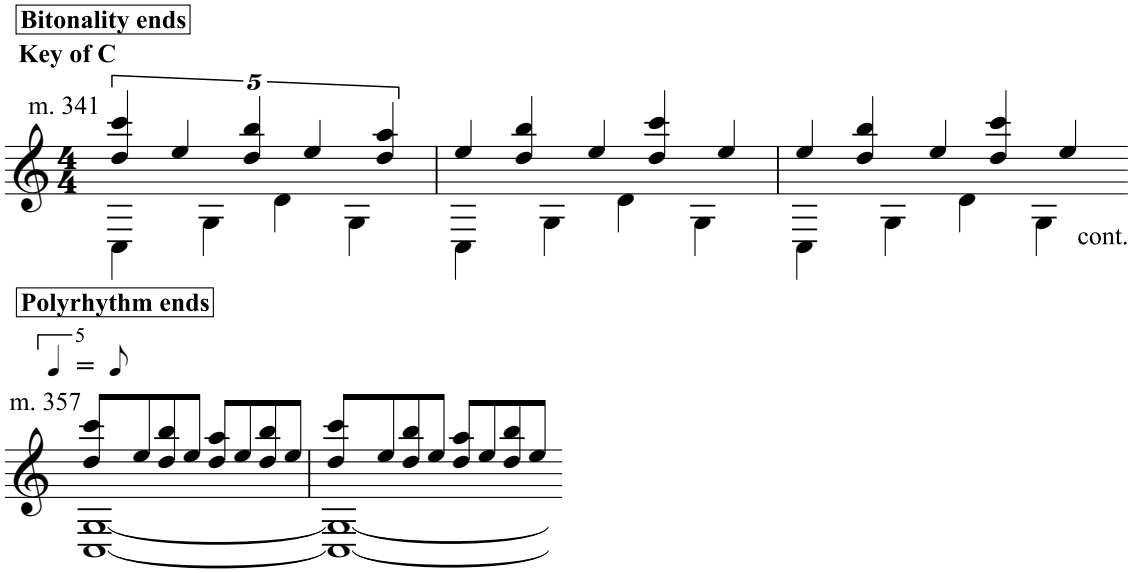
[133] Similar to the metronome markings at measure 5, these markings at measure 269 are not indicated in the Mel Bay score. I calculated and compared to the recording based on the initial given pulse of ♩= 84.

Example 4.22 Ben Monder, *Double Sun*: Rapid Polyrhythm and Chromatic Cycling



This high point of rhythmic and harmonic tension intensifies the release into the closing section of slower polyrhythms and, in particular, the resolution to the single key of C. Even as rhythmic opposition persists, there is still a strong sense of arrival into harmonic consonance. As a result, the harmonic resolution diminishes the effect of rhythmic tension. The polyrhythmic texture ends in the fifth last bar (m.357) to bring the both the rhythmic and harmonic counterpoint to full closure (Example 4.23).

Example 4.23 Ben Monder, *Double Sun*: Closing Section



As a whole, *Double Sun* reveals how the interplay between rhythmic and harmonic counterpoint produces varied tension throughout a composition: tension is greatest where both polyrhythm and bitonality are most pronounced, and less so as one or both devices decrease in intensity.

SUMMARY

In both *Orbits* and *Double Sun*, Monder creates rich musical textures through a varied treatment of rhythmic and harmonic counterpoint while maintaining motivic continuity through textural shifts. Sustaining the same degree of opposition between musical elements, whether melodic, rhythmic or harmonic, can produce monotony. As Humphrey Searle remarks on classical composer Darius Milhaud's radical use of polytonality in the twentieth-century, it is "chiefly useful… to create an elaborate and complex texture; but it is in itself too rigid a concept." As contrapuntal devices such as polytonality are integrated in musical language, Searle contends that there is the need for the texture to evolve.[134] Monder avoids compositional stasis in his treatment of polytonality and polyrhythm in *Orbits* and *Double Sun* through a series of contrapuntal transformations (textural shifts through changes in the polyrhythm, voice exchange, from polyrhythm to homorhythm, or polyphony to monophony). As a result, Monder fashions an engaging and evolving exploration of contrapuntal rhythm and harmony in his extended works. This large-scale integration of rhythmic and harmonic counterpoint defines the identity of Monder's compositions similar to the work of many twentieth-century classical composers who have influenced him, highlighting how such expanded contrapuntal rhythmic and harmonic concepts translate across different musical genres.

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[134] Searle, *op. cit.*, 42-43.

Chapter Five
CONCLUSION

This dissertation has examined counterpoint in the music of New York guitarist Ben Monder. In order to do this, I synthesized an expanded framework for contrapuntal analysis for application to Monder's compositions and related improvisations. Various types of opposition define this framework, for instance, melodic material (diverging/converging contours), harmonies (extreme dissonance, polytonality), rhythms (polyrhythm and polymetre) and textural shifts (changes from counterpoint to harmony, for example). By virtue of this analytical approach and the topic of analysis, my research contributes to emergent directions in jazz scholarship that explore areas of jazz history and contemporary practice that were overlooked until the 1990s. My study focuses on two of these neglected areas: composition and counterpoint. This research also recognizes Monder as an important musician whose work has not been addressed substantially by scholars owing to its ill fit with dominant narratives and definitions of jazz.

I have concentrated primarily on composition for several reasons: 1) to reflect Monder's extensive and fully notated pieces; 2) to challenge how published pedagogical jazz literature disproportionately favours big band writing over solo and small ensemble composition; and 3) to counter the narrative that improvisers, to the exclusion of composers, have shaped jazz history.

Not exclusively focused on composition, however, my research also highlights composition and improvisation on a continuum of music creation. This perspective has been expressed by jazz musicians, in addition to a variety of scholars (Nettl 1998; Pressing 1998; Solis and Nettl 2009) in their efforts to demarginalize improvisation. My analysis of Monder's music aligns with and adds to this outlook by noting how counterpoint links the two processes through

motivic development. Indeed, in many of Monder's solos, motivic development provides continuity with the composed material, whether through a bass line, a harmonic progression or a solo passage. This contrapuntal connection between improvisation and composition evident in Monder's music exemplifies what I have argued is an overlooked aspect of jazz practice.

The three analysis chapters presented excerpts from a selection of Monder's compositions that featured contrapuntal techniques, albeit viewed as such from an expanded perspective on what counterpoint is. That is, rather than limit counterpoint to techniques heard in, for example, Bach fugues, I drew on ideas of opposition and textural shifts as theorized by Walter Piston and Ernst Toch, respectively, as a framework to define and analyze Monder's counterpoint. Analysis was based on compositions from published scores, recordings, and an in-person interview with the guitarist.

In Chapter Two, "Chorales," I discussed how a varied treatment of Baroque-style chorale appears in both ballad and up-tempo settings. In place of conventional sonorities from tertian voicings, however, Monder uses intervallic structures to create striking dissonances through voice leading. His use of chorales as intervening sections in up-tempo compositions, moreover, provides a marked textural shift, another type of counterpoint, that aids in shaping tension and release in his multi-movement pieces. His improvised solos often feature linear development rather than chordal material and, thus, do not use some of the compositional techniques evident in the composed sections, except for the emphasis on voice leading and motivic development.[135]

[135] It should be noted that, in combination with voice leading and motivic development, Monder frequently uses a chordal approach in many solos not featured in this dissertation.

Chapter Three examined pedal points as a form of oblique voice leading. While Monder occasionally uses a tonal pedal point in keeping with Western classical common practice composition, he more often adopts a freer treatment of dissonance common to jazz. His use of dissonance includes non-functional harmonies and less conventional voice leading (parallel consonances and non-resolution of dissonance) that blur rather than clarify tonality. Improvisations, in turn, link to the compositions thematically through linear development. Most importantly, pedal points are not used intermittently but rather at many junctures, thereby shaping the form and basic character of Monder's music.

In Chapter Four, "Polytonality, Polyrhythm and Polymetre," I explored how opposing tonalities, rhythms and metres constitute harmonic and rhythmic counterpoint. Monder clarifies these techniques by grouping voices across guitar string sets to achieve contrasts of register and textural shifts. As a result of the fluctuating interplay between harmonic and rhythmic counterpoint, Monder creates shifting contrapuntal tension that defines each composition.

My analysis has shown that seemingly disparate materials and techniques such as chorales, pedal point, polytonality, polyrhythms and polymetre are integral to shaping the form and identity of each of Monder's pieces analyzed. Indeed, they are some of the most striking aspects of his music. That he manages to integrate these techniques extensively in multi-movement pieces further attests to his skill as a composer. Moreover, his mention of interest in counterpoint led me to explore a notion of counterpoint that is broader than is often assumed and can encompass these different techniques. Rather than limit the concept to imitative techniques or vague definitions, I noted how counterpoint has evolved from simple parallel textures to the diverse works of twentieth-century Western classical composers who provided precedent for expanding the notion of counterpoint. I also highlighted how several established classical

theorists discussed counterpoint in terms of horizontal relationships ranging from voice leading to contrasting textures across the form of a composition. This type of horizontal focus, what I would call counterpoint broadly understood, permeates Monder's music far beyond the multiple examples studied here.

While Monder is in some ways a singular performer in his utilization of counterpoint, his example challenges a problematic, but common assumption: that counterpoint is unique to Western art music and based on imitative techniques. Indeed, in addition to excluding Monder's place in the contemporary jazz scene, this misconception has overlooked various examples of counterpoint in the development of jazz such as New Orleans polyphony and the polyrhythms of West African drumming (Russo 1968; Schuller 1968; Gridley and Rave 1984) that underpin jazz practice and sensibilities. Moreover, examples of contrapuntal procedures are not restricted to early forms of jazz or its antecedents. Rather, techniques such as voice leading and rhythmic layering have been utilized to contribute to voice independence in numerous more recent jazz performance and pedagogical settings. To be sure, many examples throughout jazz history employ imitative writing to accomplish this: Duke Ellington's *Fuguaditty* (1946), Dave Brubeck performing David van Kreidts' *Fugue on Bop Themes* (1950), Jimmy Giuffre's *Fugue* (1953), The Modern Jazz Quartet's fugal *Vendome* (1966), Astor Piazzolla's *Preludio y Fuga* or *Fuga y Misterioso* (1968), Charles Mingus' *Canon* (1973), and Argentinean pianist Guillermo Klein's *Fugue X* and *Canon* (2002) are but a few instances. Yet as I have argued, Monder's music is not a break with this history. Instead, it can be heard as an expansion of it in which contrast between voices produces contrapuntal effects in a non-imitative setting.

The intersection between composition, improvisation and counterpoint in Monder's music has significant applications to pedagogy in jazz practice. By including twentieth-century

techniques such as polytonality, polyrhythm and polymetre, intervallic structures in chorales, and a freer treatment of dissonance in pedal point, this expanded contrapuntal framework offers a wider umbrella for teaching and learning techniques that are more commonly used. The inclusion of textural shifts in this framework, moreover, provides a means to add contrast in both shorter and more extended multi-movement pieces. These techniques, which all fall within my expanded notion of counterpoint, can be a valuable resource for re-contextualizing counterpoint in many areas of jazz pedagogy, beginning with composition and arranging, as well as theory and analysis, and extending to improvisation and ear training.

As I have suggested, this project is just a starting point, and there are several areas of future research that immediately come to mind from it. Some pertain to Monder's music while others extend to jazz practice more broadly. For instance, explorations of Monder's compositions that include imitative devices such as canons and stretto, or twentieth-century techniques such as pitch sets or tone rows viewed through counterpoint could lend additional insight into his musical output and offer up new understandings of the relationship between composition and improvisation. Another perspective on Monder's music is a performative approach, incorporating the physical challenges and possibilities of the guitar (which is suggested in his use of different string groups to create polyrhythms as detailed above), in conjunction with other levels of analysis such as counterpoint, harmony or rhythm to guide compositional choices.[136] The

[136] I noted earlier (See Introduction) that Jameson Feakes has analyzed Monder's compositions from a performative perspective where the physical possibilities and challenges of the instrument guide the writing process. Feake's contention, however, that the performative approach should be considered before score-based factors in compositional decisions, such as counterpoint or harmony, is debatable. I would suggest that Monder's vast technical facility offsets compositional choices purely based on the physical attributes/constraints of the guitar and that an analysis that includes both a performative and a score-based approach would be more realistic and instructive. See Feakes, *op. cit.*, 1-2.

expanded frameworks and related methodologies used to pursue such studies can be applied to the study of other jazz composers and improvisers.

For example, embracing the notion of counterpoint as opposition and contrast opens up avenues of researching concepts such as polytempo as employed in the music of New York jazz guitarist Miles Okazaki. Contrast, further, is a productive means of analyzing free jazz settings that move beyond strictly notated and motivic material. As free jazz British saxophonist Evan Parker has commented, different styles of improvised music (which may include some notational methods) can reflect either agreement or disagreement between performers with respect to pitch selection, rhythm and harmony.[137] In this light, the open improvisations in Monder's second last recording *Amorphae* (2016) could form the basis of a future study exploring counterpoint in more abstract sonorities.

This research has put forth the central idea that Monder's use of counterpoint in his compositions and improvisations allow him to create rich sonorities that in many ways defy categorization even as his practice is grounded in the jazz tradition. At the same time, his mix of jazz conventions with rock and twentieth-century classical influences yields his unique voice. Yet this too is very much within the tradition of jazz, which has continuously changed over time as jazz musicians explored new sonic possibilities by incorporating a diversity of musical expression within and outside their jazz roots. Not the least of these are techniques from Western art music. In hindsight, 16th century Italian music theorist Gioseffo Zarlino's suggestion to

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[137] Evan Parker describes how two or more musicians performing the same piece can produce different outcomes. He qualifies the style of his improvising and that of American saxophonist Anthony Braxton in terms of "agree to agree," whereas the free jazz duo of Dutch pianist Misha Mengelberg and drummer Han Bennink is characterized more as "agree to disagree." See Graham Lock, ed., *Mixtery: A Festschrift for Anthony Braxton*, (Devon: Stride Publications, 1995), 183.

conceive of counterpoint as "countersound"[138] foreshadowed an evolution of polyphony within Western art music. This perspective resonates with polyphonic practices in numerous non-Western traditions and it is, as we have seen, applicable to jazz, especially as practiced by Monder. As such, attention to counterpoint conceived of in a broader way can ultimately be a means to further analytical, pedagogical, compositional and improvisational developments in contemporary jazz practice.

[138] Gioseffo Zarlino, *The Art of Counterpoint: Part Three Il Institutione de Harmoniche 1558*, trans. Guy A. Marco and Claude V. Palisca (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 2.

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