

## **ULYSSES KAY'S FOURTH PERIOD**

**Au courant with his heritage and times**

# 1

## INTRODUCTION

The passing of African-American composer, teacher, and scholar Ulysses Kay, on May 20<sup>th</sup> 1995, marked the end of an illustrious career. Born on January 7<sup>th</sup> 1917, his musical education commenced at the tender age of six, when he began the study of the piano. Study of the violin was added in the ensuing years and he began to play the saxophone at age fourteen. It was around that time that the young Kay became involved in a neighborhood combo and his interest in composition and orchestration was kindled.

In 1934 Kay entered the University of Arizona as a liberal arts major. He soon chose music as his major and graduated with his Bachelor of Music degree in 1938. He then pursued a Master's degree in composition at the Eastman School of Music. Scholarship grants allowed him to study with the renowned German composer, Paul Hindemith, first at the Berkshire Music Center and then at Yale University.

Kay enlisted in the United State Navy in 1942 and played saxophone, flute, and piccolo in the Navy Band. He also played the piano in a dance orchestra. This period of military service (1942-46) proved to be extremely fruitful for Kay as a composer. Some of his compositions written during this period include: *Flute Quintet* (1943), *Of New Horizons* (1944), and *Suite for Orchestra* (1945), which received the B.M.I Orchestral award in 1947.

After the war, Kay studied at Columbia University on an Alice M. Ditson Fellowship. He was the recipient of numerous other fellowships: a Fulbright Scholarship, two Prix de Rome (scholarship awarded for study at the American Academy in Rome), a Julius Rosenwald fellowship, and grants from the National Institute of Arts and Letters. These allowed Kay to travel and study in Europe. During this period he produced his *Piano Quintet* (1949), *String Quartet No. 1* (1949), *Brass Quintet* (1950), *Fugitive Songs* (1950), and a film score: *The Lion, The Griffin and the Kangaroo* (1951), for a documentary filmed in Italy.

After returning from Europe, Kay became music consultant for Broadcast Music. He has been honored with prizes from the American Broadcasting Company and the New Jersey Council of the Arts. He has received commissions from symphony orchestras and universities, and has been the recipient of honorary degrees from Lincoln College (1963), Bucknell University (1966), the University of Arizona (1969), and Illinois Wesleyan University (1969). In 1968, Kay was appointed Professor of Music at Lehman College, City University of New York, and became Distinguished Professor of Music at the university in 1972.

Kay's offering to the twentieth century's pool of music has been plentiful. As Hobson and Richardson point out, Kay produced more than 135 compositions representing a tremendous outpouring of diverse forms<sup>1</sup>. His works include five operas, over twenty large orchestral pieces, fifteen chamber pieces, a ballet score, and numerous other compositions for voice, solo instruments, film, and television. Throughout his career, which spanned five decades, Kay's music has received tremendous acclaim. Performances of his compositions have been reviewed in many literary publications, including the *New York Times* and the *American Composers Bulletin*. In fact, following his death, obituaries appeared in major print media such as: *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Washington Post*, *Boston Globe*, and *Amsterdam News*. These obituaries all testify to the high regard with which Kay's work had been held, and point to his significance as a twentieth-century composer.

Kay's music has also been the subject of scholarly study. His choral works received the scholarly attention of Donald Armstrong, who in 1968 critiqued Kay's compositions for women choruses, together with the works of other contemporary composers such as Elliot Carter, William Schumann, and Virgil Thomson<sup>2</sup>. And in

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<sup>1</sup> See Hobson, Constance Tibbs, and Deborah A. Richardson. *Ulysses Kay: A Bibliography*, Greenwood Press, Westport, CT, 1994, 3.

<sup>2</sup> Donald J. Armstrong. *A Study of Some Important 20<sup>th</sup> Century Secular compositions for Women Choruses, with a Preliminary Discussion of Secular Choral Music from a Historical and Philosophical Viewpoint*, D. M. A. dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 1968.

1972, Richard Hadley presented an analysis of Kay's published choral music<sup>3</sup>. In his article Kay's Fantasy Variations, Lucius Wyatt writes that the composer's ingenious handling of the resources of the orchestra and his skillful organization of the harmonic, formal, rhythmic, and textural details, show Kay's appreciation and understanding of the past, although he employs compositional techniques of the twentieth century<sup>4</sup>.

L. M. Hayes recognizes three stages in the development of Kay's musical style. He points out that in the 1940s Kay produced music that contains a strong harmonic base with mild dissonances. In the 1950s his work becomes more contrapuntal, harmonies are more dissonant but tonality remains secure, although clouded by more active chromaticism. At the beginning of the 1960s, according to Hayes, Kay's musical style crystallizes into a music that is articulate, expressive, moderately dissonant, lyrical, and predominantly contrapuntal<sup>5</sup>.

Hayes goes on the note that Kay's musical style has been termed neoclassical on occasion, and neo-chromatic at other times. He attributes this inability to firmly categorize Kay's style to the fact that the composer successfully assimilated the styles and forms of past eras. Hayes concludes that the most accurate classification of Kay's musical style should be that of eclectic modernist, since his music has a personality of conservative yet modern<sup>6</sup>.

This essay examines two of Kay's compositions: his *Scherzi Musicali* (1968) written for chamber orchestra, and *First Nocturne* for piano, which was composed in 1973. In analyzing these two pieces I aim, firstly, to show that Kay progressed stylistically to be worthy of the classification "full-fledged modernist" and reveal some of the

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<sup>3</sup> Richard Hadley. *The Published Choral Music of Ulysses Kay*, Ph. D. dissertation, University of Iowa, 1972.

<sup>4</sup> See Wyatt, Lucius. "Ulysses Kay's *Fantasy Variations*: An Analysis". *Black Perspective in Music* 1 (1977): 75.

<sup>5</sup> See Hayes, Laurence M. *The Music of Ulysses Kay, 1939-63*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1971, 332-334.

<sup>6</sup> See Hayes, 337-40.



twentieth century Art Music compositional procedures that Kay utilized. In doing so I rely primarily on the tenets of post-tonal musical analysis as outlined by Joseph Strauss in his *Introduction to Post-Tonal Theory*<sup>7</sup>.

Secondly, Kay musical output has rarely been described as reflecting or incorporating African-American stylistic traits. This article also endeavors to show how aspects of these two works point to Kay's integration of purported African-American musical practices as part of his compositional style. To achieve this end, I take into account musical traits that scholars have long propounded as being features of African and African-American music performance.

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<sup>7</sup> Joseph N. Strauss. *Introduction to Post-Tonal Theory*, Prentice Hall: Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1990.

## 2

### ***SCHERZI MUSICALI***

#### **First Movement**

Kay wrote this work in 1968 for chamber orchestra of flute, oboe, clarinet, horn, bassoon, and strings. The Chamber Music Society of Detroit commissioned it on the occasion of its Twenty-fifth Anniversary. *Scherzi Musicali* is atonal in its entirety and it shows that Kay had fully embraced twentieth-century techniques of composition. This piece is aggregate-based in which the composer ensures the circulation of all twelve tones of the chromatic scale throughout most of the work. It also presents and develops the all interval heptachord (0123456).

#### Form

The first movement is AB in form with an introduction and coda. The introduction is distinguished by a static texture created by the superimposition of the notes of the heptachord [B, C, Eb, D, C#, E, F] on each other. This heptachord is transposed at rehearsal marking 1 (mm. 7), but the texture remains the same (see ex. 2.1).

Ex. 2.1 shows the title page of *Scherzi Musicali*.

redwinds throughout. During measures 18-19 the flute carries the trip  
 17-21 and it is taken up by the clarinet in measures 22-25. The  
 piece then return to the flute in

To Karl Haas  
**SCHERZI MUSICALI**  
 For Chamber Orchestra

Ulysses Kay

Andante solenne  $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 72$

Flute  
 Oboe  
 Clarinet in B $\flat$   
 Horn in F  
 Bassoon

Violins I  
 Violins II  
 Viola  
 Violoncello  
 Bass

5  
 set x.  
 16  
 1  
 1

Fl.  
 Ob.  
 Cl.  
 Hn.  
 Bsn.

Vns. I  
 Vns. II  
 Vla.  
 Vc.  
 B.

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There is a change in tempo to poco più mosso to mark the beginning  
 of the second section.

Section A begins in measure 13 with the P designation in the flute. This section presents a linear, contrapuntal working out of thematic ideas and it is characterized by the triplet rhythmic pattern, which is featured in the upper woodwinds throughout. During measure 13-19, the flute carries the triplet pattern and it is taken up by the oboe and clarinet in measures 22-26. The triplets then return to the flute in measure 33.

In this section, each instrument is given its own melodic line but there are imitative passages as well. Imitation is heard in measure 13 where the cello is answered by the viola and double bass respectively, and in measure 22-23, where the clarinet answers the oboe. The melody that begins in the second violin is answered by the cello, first violin, and double bass in succession (see ex. 2.2). Section A ends with a brief return of the introductory texture in measures 38-40.

Ex. 2.2 shows measures 21- 23.

The image displays a musical score for measures 21-23. The top system includes staves for Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), Horn (Hn.), and Bassoon (Bsn.). The bottom system includes staves for Violin I (Vns. I), Violin II (Vns. II), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Double Bass (B.). The score is in 4/4 time. Handwritten annotations include a circled triplet in the Flute part in measure 22, with a 'T6' label and an arrow pointing to a similar pattern in the Clarinet part. Another circled triplet is in the Oboe part in measure 23, with a 'T5' label. The Viola part in measure 21 has a 'p espr.' marking. The Violoncello part in measure 22 has a 'mf' marking. The Double Bass part in measure 23 has a 'p' marking. Measure numbers 20, 21, and 22 are written above the woodwind staves.

There is a change in tempo to *poco piu mosso* to mark the beginning of the B section. This section commences with the violins in unison, the only unison passage in this first movement. This passage, which spans measures 41-45, provides rhythmic



contrast to the preceding triplets and possesses a proliferation of sixteenth notes (see ex. 2.3).

Ex. 2.3 shows the first four measures of section B.

The image displays a musical score for the first four measures of section B. The score is written for a chamber orchestra. The top system includes staves for Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), Horn (Hn.), and Bassoon (Bsn.). The bottom system includes staves for Violin I (Vns. I), Violin II (Vns. II), Viola (Via.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Double Bass (B.). The tempo marking 'Poco più mosso' and the tempo indication '♩ = ca 84' are present above the first staff of each system. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or D minor). The time signature is 4/4. The first four measures show a transition where the woodwinds (Fl., Ob., Cl., Hn., Bsn.) play a sixteenth-note figure in measures 1-4, while the strings (Vns. I, Vns. II, Via., Vc., B.) play a similar sixteenth-note figure in measures 1-4. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'p' (piano) and 'f' (forte).

These sixteenth notes constitute the composite rhythm of the B section. After the strings, the oboe and then the clarinet carry this sixteenth-note figuration in measure 50-54. It is presented in a linear fashion until rehearsal 8 (mm. 55). At this juncture, the static texture of the opening returns and all the instruments of the chamber orchestra share the sixteenth-note figuration. At measure 61, the first violin takes up the figuration for one measure.

The coda is preceded by a measure of rest and marked by a return to the original tempo – *tempo primo* – in measure 68. It possesses the static texture of the introduction, which it imitates in “spelling out” set class (123456).

#### ROLE OF SET CLASS (0123456)

Members of set class (0123456) function as structural pillars in this first movement of Kay’s *Scherzi Musicali*. In particular, the members (B, C, C#, D, Eb, E F) = x, and (A,

B, C, C#, D, Eb) = y, are the main pillars in this regard. This conclusion is based on the fact that these set class members occur at significant points in the piece. Set x is the set with which the piece begins. Set y is featured prominently at rehearsal 6 (mm. 38-40), just prior to the commencement of the B section and, it is prominently positioned at the onset of the coda.

Further, sets x and y are used by the composer at the beginning of section A. This section starts with set x in the flute while set y is played by the oboe and the clarinet (see ex. 2.4). In this respect Kay follows the practice of the tonal composers, such as Beethoven, who often presented important macrocosmic structural material on a microcosmic structural level.

Ex. 2.4 shows the occurrence of sets x and y (mm. 13-15)<sup>8</sup>

The image displays a musical score for three instruments: Flute, Oboe, and Clarinet in Bb. The score is divided into two systems. The first system covers measures 13-15. In the first system, the Flute part is labeled 'set x' and the Oboe and Clarinet parts are labeled 'set y'. A bracket labeled 'T7' connects the Flute's set x to the Oboe's set y. The second system shows a closer view of the Flute's set x, with a bracket labeled 'set y' under the Oboe and Clarinet parts.

<sup>8</sup> N.B: The notes of the clarinet are as they are heard and not written, which would be a tone higher.

Of less significance, but also important in this regard, is the set (E, F, F#, G, G#, A, Bb) = z. with which the flute melody ends at rehearsal 2. This set is played collectively by the strings at the very end of the movement (mm. 73-74). And T6 transposition of it occurs in the melody of the viola at rehearsal 3. In fact the set z is arrived at in the flute by a T6 transposition. Here the composer is developing the idea he presented at the very opening, where he uses a T6 transposition of set x at rehearsal 1 (see ex. 2.5).

Ex. 2.5 shows the relationship of set z to the viola melody in mm. 21-26.

### THE AGGREGATE-BASED NATURE OF THIS WORK

The drive to have all twelve tones in circulation, or to complete a line of twelve tones melodically, is a main characteristic of this piece. This drive is created in the introduction when after the sounding of set x, four new pitches (F#, G, G#, and A) are heard in measure 5. The note Bb is at this point missing to complete the chromatic scale of twelve tones. The triplets figures which follow in this measure includes the Bb and, more significantly, Bb is featured prominently in the flute and first violin throughout the rest of the introduction. Kay then proceeds to meet the needs of this aggregate-based drive. For instance, the flute melody in measures 13-19 possesses all twelve tones, as does the clarinet melody in measure 16-19 (see ex. 2.6).

Ex. 2.6 shows clarinet melody (concert pitch) mm. 16-19.



One of the principal ways in which Kay fulfills this aggregate-based need is by the use of the concept of complimentary sets. In the above example, the lower notes of the clarinet part constitute the set (D, Eb, E, F, F#, G), while the upper notes belong to its complimentary set (G#, A, Bb, B, C, C#). In measure 22 the oboe plays the hexachord (F, F#, G, G#, A, Bb) and in measure 23 this is answered by the clarinet with its T6 transposition, which is also its complement, that is the set (B, C, C#, D, Eb, E). Thus the chromatic scale is completed (see ex. 2.3).

In order to complete the succession of twelve tones, Kay also utilizes transpositional relationships that provide sets in which complementary sets are contained as subsets. For example, set x is transformed into the set (F, F#, G, G#, A, Bb, B) by the operation T6 in mm. 7-8 (see ex. 2.1). This set contains the subset (F#, G, G#, A, Bb) that constitutes the complimentary set of set x. This subset is also a subset of the set (F#, G, G#, A, Bb, B, C) into which set x is transformed, by the mapping operation T7, in the flute's melody at rehearsal 2 I measure 15 (see ex. 3.4). Also in the first measure of section B (mm. 41), the set (D, Eb, E, F, F#, G, Ab) is played by the violins. This set is a transformation of set y, which is achieved by the mapping operation T5, and it contains the complementary set (E, F, F#, G, Ab) as one of its subsets. When taken together with set z, which immediately precedes it, the twelve-note aggregate is completed (see ex. 2.7).



3.8: shows map 72-75

Handwritten musical score for "Set y." (Set y.). The score is written on two systems of staves. The first system includes staves for Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), Horn (Hn.), Bassoon (Bsn.), Violin I (Vns. I), Violin II (Vns. II), Viola (Via.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Double Bass (B.). The second system includes staves for Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), Horn (Hn.), Bassoon (Bsn.), Violin I (Vns. I), Violin II (Vns. II), Viola (Via.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Double Bass (B.). The score is marked with a tempo of "poco più mosso" and a time signature of 4/4. A large circle is drawn around the first system, and a line points from the circle to the second system. The score is handwritten and includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Another very important example of this occurs at the very end of the movement where set z is heard in the lower strings (two measures from the end), while the notes of its complement (B, C, C#, D, Eb) are contained in set y that is sustained around set z (see ex. 2.8).

Ex. 2.8 shows mm. 72-75

The image displays a musical score for measures 72-75, featuring ten staves for different instruments: Flute, Oboe, Clarinet in B $\flat$ , Bassoon, Horn in F, Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Cello, and Double Bass. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and slurs. Annotations are present: 'set y' is written near the Bassoon staff, 'set z' is written near the Cello staff, and 'T7' is written near the Viola staff. A large oval encircles the Cello staff in measures 73-74, and a smaller oval encircles the Double Bass staff in measure 74. The score is written in a standard musical notation style with treble and bass clefs.

On occasion Kay simple states the twelve tones as a row of pitches. This is particularly evident in rehearsals 2, 9, and 10. In the strings at rehearsal 2, during measures 13-17, each active instrument states a row of pitches imitatively. The cello plays a complete row of twelve pitches. This is actually made up of a member of set class (0123456), (C $\sharp$ , D, D $\sharp$ , E, F, F $\sharp$ , G), followed by its compliment. The viola melody contains eleven pitches and begins with a rhythmic figure similar to that of

the cello. Significantly, the three notes in this figure (D# F# G), together with the first four notes of the cello melody, constitute the above-mentioned set. The melody in the double bass also possesses eleven notes and its first six are a T 4 transposition of the cello's melody in pitch class space. The note B should follow as the next note in order to complete the transposition of the afore-mentioned set, with which the cello's melody begins. This B does not appear in the bass' melody but the viola part ends with a B, while the bass ends with the missing note of the viola, an E (see ex. 2.9).

Ex. 2.9 shows the strings in mm. 13-19.

In measure 61, the first violin plays all twelve tones. At measure 65, eleven notes are shared between the fortissimo chord on the downbeat of this measure and the following chord, which is held through the rest of rehearsal 9. The absent note D is featured prominently in the horn (see ex. 2.10). At rehearsal 10 (mm. 68 -75) the twelve chromatic tones are shared between the bass and the cello.



Ex. 2.10

The image displays two pages of a musical score, numbered 60 and 64. The score is written for a symphony orchestra, with staves for Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), Horn (Hn.), Bassoon (Bsn.), Violin I (Vns. I), Violin II (Vns. II), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Double Bass (B.).

**Page 60:** The music begins with a tempo marking of 60. A box containing the number 9 is present. The score includes a crescendo (cresc.) marking. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 4/4. The bottom of the page is marked with a double bar line and the word "cresc.".

**Page 64:** The music begins with a tempo marking of 64. A box containing the number 9 is present. The score includes a fortissimo (ff) marking, a mezzo-forte (mf) marking, and a ritardando (rit.) marking. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 4/4. The bottom of the page is marked with a double bar line and the word "rit.".

### 3

#### ***THE FIRST NOCTURNE***

Ulysses Kay composed two nocturnes in 1973. Of these, only the first was published. In the *First Nocturne* Kay wholly embraces compositional techniques of the twentieth century and becomes a full-fledged modernist. This is seen in his use of the principles of free atonality and twelve tone row techniques. This analysis presents a brief appraisal of the form and deals with the role of the twelve-tone row in shaping the piece. It shows that the twelve-tone series, which is presented at the onset, provides the material from which this work is constructed.

#### Form

The First Nocturne is clearly ABA' in form with an introduction and a coda.

Fig. 3.1. Diagram of overall form:

Introduction	Section A	Section B	Section A'	Coda
mm. 1-9	mm. 10-37	mm. 38-68	mm. 69-96	mm. 97- 108

The features that delineate the form of the piece are quite distinct. In the introduction a twelve-tone row, D Eb G B C# A F Bb C E F# G# (P<sub>0</sub>), is stated, and is followed immediately by one of its inversions, (I<sub>6</sub>) G# G Eb B A C# F C Bb F# E D. The note G#, which is sounded on the last quarter of measure 4, is tied across the barline and it is simultaneously the last note of P<sub>0</sub> and the first note of I<sub>6</sub>. Section A is characterized by its homophonic texture (melody and accompaniment). The rhythmic figure of the accompaniment and the triplets of the melody are distinguishing features of this section (see ex. 3.1)

Ex. 3.1 shows the title page of The First Nocturne

2

*Commissioned by Mrs. Eric Stein  
Dedicated to James Dick*

# FIRST NOCTURNE

for Piano

ULYSSES KAY

Andantino ♩ = ca. 80

*p* *cresc.*

*gva* *mf* *p* *cantabile*

*con pedale*

*mp cantabile*

61511-03

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28

*p*

*l. cresc.*

*3*

*3*

*3*

*3*

*30*

*poco f*

*mp*

*cresc.*

*mf cant.*



The B section is marked primarily by steady sixteenth notes, but it can be divided texturally as measures 44-49 takes on a chordal texture before the return of the sixteenth notes in measure 50. Nonetheless, measures 38-50 are held together by the progression of the bass line and other harmonic factors, as will be shown later (see ex. 4.2).

Ex. 3.2 shows first six measures of section B.

The musical score for Ex. 3.2 is presented in three systems, each containing a piano (piano) staff and a vocal staff. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or D minor), and the time signature is 3/4. The score begins at measure 38 and ends at measure 49.

**System 1 (Measures 38-40):** The piano staff starts with a *p sub.* (piano subito) marking at measure 38. The vocal staff has a *cresc.* (crescendo) marking at measure 39. The system concludes with a *poco* (poco) marking at measure 40.

**System 2 (Measures 41-43):** The piano staff begins with a *a poco* (a poco) marking at measure 41. The vocal staff continues the melodic line. The system ends at measure 43.

**System 3 (Measures 44-49):** The piano staff starts at measure 44 with a *poco f* (poco forte) marking. The vocal staff has a *dim* (diminuendo) marking at measure 47. The system concludes at measure 49.



Section A" begins with the melody, rhythm, and harmony of "A" but in measures 69-74 the melody and accompaniment return as invertible counterpoint (see ex. 3.3). Also, significant portions of the melody of the section A are restated against a background that varies harmonically and is texturally more dense. The closing measures of this section mirror those of section A in texture and rhythm (see ex. 3.4).

Ex. 3.3 shows mm. 68-71



Ex. 3.4 shows mm. 35-37 and mm. 95-97.

a.



b.



The coda recalls the sixteenth notes of section B (mm. 97-99) and ends with a statement of the rows of the introduction in retrograde (mm. 101-108), where  $R(I_6)$  is followed by  $R(P_0)$  (see ex. 3.5).

Ex. 3.5: shows the coda, mm. 101-108

The form is symmetrical to a significant extent. Section A is twenty-eight measures long, as in section A'. There is a nine-measure introduction and a twelve-measure coda. Thus. The middle B section is approached by thirty-seven measures and followed by forty and, were it not for the measures in which the sixteenth notes are recalled in the coda, section A' and coda would equal thirty-six measures. I have already alluded to the thematic similarity between the introduction and section A on the one hand, and section A' and the coda on the other. As such, the conclusion can be drawn that the form of the *First Nocturne* possesses a high degree of symmetry around the middle, section B. It will be seen that this middle section, when compared to sections A and A', brings different aspects of the twelve-tone series to the forefront.

# 4

## TWELVE-TONE TECHNIQUES

Kay's First Nocturne cannot be categorized as a wholly twelve-tone composition. Nevertheless, it exhibits clear references to the twelve-tone system of composition. Although this work can be more correctly considered as free atonal, it is significantly influenced by the properties of the twelve-tone row, given in figure 4.1, that Kay presents at the very beginning.

Figure 4.1: shows the related prime rows and inversions of the twelve-tone series.

		I												
		0	1	5	9	11	7		3	8	10	2	4	6
P	0	D	E♭	G	B	C♯	A		F	B♭	C	E	F♯	G♯
	11	C♯	D	F♯	B♭	C	G♯		E	A	B	E♭	F	G
	7	A	B♭	D	F♯	A♭	E		C	F	G	B	C♯	E♭
	3	F	F♯	B♭	D	E	C		A♭	C♯	E♭	G	A	B
	1	E♭	E	A♭	C	D	B♭		F♯	B	C♯	F	G	A
	5	G	G♯	C	E	F♯	D		B♭	E♭	F	A	B	C♯
	9	B	C	E	G♯	B♭	F♯		D	G	A	C♯	E♭	F
	4	F♯	G	B	D♯	F	C♯		A	D	E	G♯	B♭	C
	2	E	F	A	C♯	E♭	B		G	C	D	F♯	A♭	B♭
	10	C	C♯	F	A	B	G		E♭	A♭	B♭	D	E	F♯
	8	B♭	B	E♭	G	A	F		C♯	F♯	A♭	C	D	E
	6	G♯	A	C♯	F	G	E♭		B	E	F♯	B♭	C	D

The clearest reference to the twelve-tone system occurs in the introduction of the piece, where the prime row and its inversion (I<sub>6</sub>) are presented in succession (see

ex. 3.1), and in the coda, where the retrograde of the introduction is played out (ex. 3.5).

One clear statement of the tone row is found in measures 45-46, where the first hexachord (D E $\flat$  G B C $\sharp$  A) of the prime row, P<sub>0</sub>, is heard melodically, while the notes of the second hexachord (F B $\flat$  C E F $\sharp$  G  $\sharp$ ) are held in suspension in the chords played in the bass and upper treble clef. The B $\flat$  is notably absent from these chords, but it is given prominence with its arrival in the bass (see Ex. 4.1.).

Ex. 4.1: mm. 44-46.

The image shows a musical score for measures 44-46. It consists of two staves: a treble staff and a bass staff. The treble staff contains a melodic line with various accidentals (sharps, flats, and naturals). The bass staff contains a series of chords, some of which are circled and labeled. Annotations include 'P<sub>0</sub>' above the treble staff, 'H<sub>2</sub>' in the middle of the treble staff, and 'H<sub>1</sub>' in the middle of the bass staff. There are also circles around specific notes in the bass staff, including one labeled 'b' (flat) and another labeled 'P'.

In measures 48-49, five notes of the retrograde of the second hexachord of P<sub>0</sub> (A $\flat$  F $\sharp$  E C B $\flat$ ) are presented melodically, while the F occurs in the chords suspended around this melodic fragment. Five notes of the first hexachord (A C $\sharp$  B G E $\flat$ ) occur before the statement of the retrograde of the second. The missing note D is played as the first note of the florid sixteenth-note passage in measure 50 in which other statements of the prime row are made (see ex. 4.2).

Ex. 4.2: mm 47-50

The musical score for Ex. 4.2, measures 47-50, is presented in two systems. The first system (measures 47-49) features a complex texture with multiple staves. The second system (measures 50-51) continues the texture. Annotations include 'P0 (H1)' and 'P0 (H2)' with arrows pointing to specific notes, and 'no C#' and 'no F' indicating omissions. A circled note in the bottom staff of the second system is also highlighted.

In measures 65-67 there is a full statement of  $P_0$ . The first hexachord is followed by the first hexachord of  $I_3$ . Here Kay is exploiting the combinatorial properties of the row. Combinatoriality occurs between transpositions of the prime and inversions that begin a minor third above the prime transposition. Thus  $P_0$  and  $I_3$ ,  $P_3$  and  $I_6$ ,  $P_4$  and  $I_7$  etc. are combinatorial (see ex. 4.3).

EX. 4.3: shows combinatoriality.

The image displays a musical score for piano, consisting of two systems. The first system is in 3/4 time and features a treble and bass staff. A box labeled 'P0 (H1)' highlights a specific melodic phrase in the treble staff. The second system is in 4/4 time and also features a treble and bass staff. A box labeled 'I3' highlights a specific melodic phrase in the treble staff. A curved line connects the end of the first system to the beginning of the second system, indicating a continuation of the musical material.

Coupled with these presentations of the tone row as an ordered group of pitches, Kay frees the notes from the row, and frequently traverses the twelve chromatic tones on an unordered basis in the measures that feature the sixteenth notes. Generally, each group of sixteenth notes, which are linked by a common phrase marking in measures 38-43, 50-62, and 98-100 of the coda, constitute a group in which the twelve tones are in circulation. In a few instances one note is missing. For example, in measures 41-42 where there is no C and measure 50 in which F is absent. This aggregate-based drive to keep all twelve pitches in circulation is also featured prominently in measures 74-83, where the composer fills in the chromatic space in the treble clef below the melody that is based on set class (013) (see ex. 4.4).

In addition to the obvious usage of twelve-tone row compositional techniques, Kay relies on properties of the row in the construction of this work. This will be explicated in the following section.

Ex. 4.4: showing measures 72-80.

The musical score for measures 72-80 is presented in four systems, each consisting of a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The notation is highly complex, featuring a variety of rhythmic values, accidentals, and articulations. Measure numbers 4, 6, and 8 are indicated at the beginning of their respective systems. The score includes numerous triplets, some marked with '3' and others with '013'. There are also larger groupings marked with '6' and '9'. The key signature is complex, with multiple sharps and flats. The overall structure suggests a highly organized, possibly twelve-tone, composition.





### Properties of the Twelve-tone Row

In addition to the obvious usage of twelve-tone row compositional techniques, Kay relies on properties of the row in the construction of this work. This will be explicated in this section.

In the presentation of the prime row and its inversion  $I_6$  in the introduction, Kay uses register placement to highlight an octatonic scale and the octatonic subset (013), an inversion of which is stated in the bass (see ex. 4.5).

Ex. 4.5.

Ex. 4.6 that shows the relationship between the two rows of the introduction, also shows that four dyad – (Eb G), (A C#), (Bb C), and (E F#). These dyads are held as

invariant segments between the two rows. It should be noted that they functions as axes around which the two rows are symmetrical, and collectively they constitute the same octatonic scale highlighted in Ex. 4.12. It is this octatonic scale that governs A and A'.

Ex. 4.6

a.

The musical notation for Ex. 4.6a consists of two staves, a treble staff labeled 'Po' and a bass staff labeled 'I6'. The treble staff contains a sequence of notes: C4, B3, A3, G3, F3, E3, D3, C3. The bass staff contains a sequence of notes: C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3, C4. Vertical lines connect corresponding notes between the two staves, and 'X' marks are placed between the staves at specific intervals, indicating a symmetrical relationship between the two rows.

The subset (013) permeates the melody of section A, and its progression, through different transpositions and inversions, map out or lead to larger octatonic subsets. This procedure can be observed in measures 13-29. In measures 28-29 the octatonic scale of the opening is restated and, most interestingly, it is preceded by a whole-tone set in measure 27 (see ex. 4.7). Hence in these three measures Kay presents the two principle scalar collections that embody the some of the main properties governing the composition of this work.

Ex. 4.7: Analysis of the melody mm 12-29.

[illegible]

## The Harmonic Background

Another important unifying factor of section A is the harmonic background. This background is provided by four-note sets, which are all members of set class (02360, another subset of the octatonic collection. Ex. 4.8a shows the transpositional and inversional relationships between the sets that supply the background harmony of section A. From this example, it is apparent that the inversions used by Kay are such that set class (013) is mapped out over the measures of the section. Sets "x", "z", and "n" are transpositions of each other and the intervals of transposition that transform each into the other outline set class (013). Further, in the progression of set class (0236), Kay also maps out two larger octatonic segments, which are actual subsets of the octatonic scale highlighted in the introduction.

Ex. 4.8.

a.

Example 4.8a is a musical score in piano style (treble and bass clefs) showing five measures. Above the staff, five four-note chords are labeled: "set 'x'", "set 'y'", "set 'z'", "set 'm'", and "set 'n'". "set 'x'" is in the first measure, "set 'y'" in the second, "set 'z'" in the third, "set 'm'" in the fourth, and "set 'n'" in the fifth. Arrows labeled T1 and T2 indicate transpositional relationships between the sets. T1 connects "set 'x'" to "set 'z'" and "set 'm'". T2 connects "set 'y'" to "set 'n'".

b.

Example 4.8b is a musical score in piano style showing two staves. The top staff contains a melodic line with notes from "set 'z'" and "set 'm'". The bottom staff contains a continuous eighth-note scale labeled "octatonic segment". Arrows indicate that the notes in the top staff are drawn from the octatonic segment.

c.



Ex. 4.8b shows that set “z” and set “m” are inversionally symmetrical around the axis Eb/G, just as the two rows of the introduction are. In addition, when set “z” is transformed into set “m”, the mapping of the invariant segments shown in ex. 4.6 are maintained and the octatonic subset (G A Bb C Db Eb) is produced. Ex. 4.8c shows the circled notes of 4.8a that are mapped out in the progression of (0236). Collectively, these notes constitute a subset of the octatonic scale presented in the opening, and it is mapped out over the over the course of the entire A section.

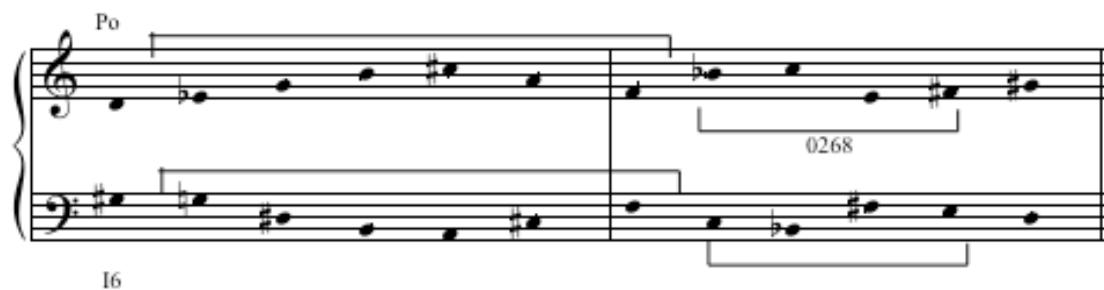
### The Whole-Tone Properties

Ex. 4.9

a.



b.



C.



The twelve-tone row also possesses a distinct whole-tone character. Ex. 4.9a shows the whole tone scale and whole-tone segments, which are contained in the row. Further, 4.9b shows that the whole tone scale, Eb F G A B C#, is held invariant when  $P_0$  is transformed into  $I_6$  in the introduction. The whole-tone segment, Bb C E F#, is also held invariant in this transformation. Ex. 4.9c shows the hexachords of  $P_0$  in normal form and it illustrates the whole tone plus one content of each. Both hexachords contain the whole-tone subset (02468) and an additional note, which introduces half-step intervals into the collection. These properties of the series are featured more prominently in the B section of the *First Nocturne*.

Ex. 4.10 presents the end of section A, (mm. 35-37), and the beginning of section B. In the bass clef of these measures Kay makes use of the whole-tone-plus-one collections. The whole-tone subset (Bb C D E F#) occurs together with the note A, which belongs to the other whole-tone scale. Similarly in measures 38-40 the whole-tone subset (C# Eb F G A) is used in conjunction with Bb that belongs to the previous subset.

Ex. 4.10 showing mm. 35-40.



Let us call the whole-tone scale (C D E F# G# Bb) set M and the other (C# Eb F G A B) set N. In measure 44 (see ex. 4.18a) the five highest notes are of set M, which the three lowest belong to N. On the second chord of measure 45 an abstract voice exchange takes place, whereby the top five notes now belong to set N, while those of the lowest notes are contained in M. Ex. 4.18b shows the occurrence of M and N in measures 48 and 49.

Ex. 4.11

a.

Handwritten musical score for measures 44 through 49. The score is written for piano (p) and includes dynamic markings such as *mp* (mezzo-piano), *pp* (pianissimo), and *coll'8* (coll'8va). The notation includes treble and bass staves with various notes, rests, and slurs. Handwritten annotations in purple ink identify specific notes and groups of notes as belonging to set M or set N. For example, in measure 44, the five highest notes are circled and labeled 'M', while the three lowest notes are circled and labeled 'N'. In measure 45, the top five notes are circled and labeled 'N', and the three lowest notes are circled and labeled 'M'. Similar annotations are present in measures 48 and 49. The score also includes a 'coll'8' marking at the end of measure 49.

## 4.11

b.

Set class (013) continues to fulfill a structural role in section B. The progression of the bass in measures 38-50 outlines two of the sets, which were featured in the top voice of the introduction, that is (Eb E C#) and (C# Bb C). Here the composer is making a large-scale structural link and he is also using (013), along with the whole-tone usage, to maintain the structural integrity of a section that contains texturally contrasting measures. Measures 38-43 are marked by a steady sixteenth-note composite rhythm, while 44-49 takes on a chordal texture. The sixteenth notes return at measures 50. One is therefore tempted to consider each of these textural contrasting groups as a section in its own right, but the progression of these (013) sets in the bass unifies these measures as a structural whole. In addition, the highest notes in measures 44-49 constitute the set (C Eb C# E), which possesses two inversionally related (013) subsets.

The use of set class (013) to unify section B, in which the whole-tone scale is more prominent, lends overall unity to the work as a whole. Set class (013), while being an octatonic subset, mirrors the whole-plus-one construction of the hexachords. The same is true of set class (0236), which provides the harmonic surrounding of section



A. In addition to being an octatonic subset, it can be viewed as being constructed of the whole-subset (026) plus one note of the other whole-tone scale. As such, these two set classes embody the properties of the twelve-tone series that wield the greatest influence in this work, the octatonic and whole-tone characteristics.

## AFRICAN-AMERICAN FEATURES

"To hear it in purely aesthetic terms, unsullied by cultural heterogeneity, we have to avoid listening to much of what is there to be heard"<sup>9</sup>

These are the words of Lawrence Kramer in his examination of the finale of Mozart's Violin Concerto in A major, K. 219. In this section of this essay I examine Kay's *First Nocturne* for piano as a work in which "cultural heterogeneity" resides. In so doing I rely composer-scholar Olly Wilson's assertion that the African-American composer "fits the bill" of W. E. B. Du Bois' concept of "double consciousness", as it relates to the dual European (American) and African identities that permeate the African American reality<sup>10</sup>. In referencing Du Bois' notion of "double consciousness", Wilson postulates that black musicians have inherited a number of conceptual approaches from the African heritage, and these concepts – rhythmic and metrical contrast, percussive approach to instrumental playing, call-and-response, "the heterogeneous sound ideal" – impact on the composition and performance of African-American music.

As well, Samuel Floyd argues for the development of critical criteria for the analysis of the music of African-American composers in *The Power of Black Music*<sup>11</sup> and the article "Ring Shout! Literary Studies, Historical Studies, and Black Music Inquiry."<sup>12</sup> In so doing, he relies on historian Sterling Stuckey's hypothesis that the practices of the "ring shout" provided the foundation for Black America's cultural heritage, and draws on Henry Louis Gates Jr's postulation that black literary writers inscribe their

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<sup>9</sup> Lawrence Kramer. "Music, Cultural Mix and the Aesthetic," *The World of Music* 45 (3) (2003): 19

<sup>10</sup> Olly Wilson. "Black Music as an Art Form," *Black Music Research Journal* 3 (1983): 1-22

<sup>11</sup> Samuel Floyd, *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting its History from Africa to the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995)

<sup>12</sup> Samuel Floyd, "Ring Shout! Literary Studies, Historical studies, and Black Music Inquiry," *Black Music Research Journal* 22 (2002): 49-70.

blackness by the use of signifying tropes derived from the black vernacular tradition. Floyd suggests “a cultural studies approach to black music” that relies on the “frame of the ring”, for a thorough understanding of black music, and recommends a critical approach in which “inquiry into the music of black Americans, including all genres from spirituals to the Afro-influenced, European-oriented concert works ... engage perceptions, beliefs, and assumptions from within Afro-American culture, and that the expressive values of the ring provide the best means of achieving that goal.”<sup>13</sup>

Ronald Radano critiques this perspective and suggests that matters have not been enhanced with the emergence of Afro-centered musicological scholarship, since this has tended to be responsive to the “older legacy of white-over-black narration’ and bear strong resemblance to the white supremacist thought. He is of the view that Afro-centricity does not take into account “the historical and cultural complexities of African in the name of a hegemonic black America,, and is often viewed as a form of “black anger”<sup>14</sup> which joins the essentialist discourse. Hence, the work of Gates, Baker and Floyd are problematic “ in their participation of anachronistic beliefs in music’s ability to rise above the circumstances of political, cultural, and social change.”<sup>15</sup>

Notwithstanding these observations of Radano, this essay in part relies on Floyd’s perspective, but my use of the concept of “signifying” is not aimed at “writing the authenticity of black music.” I find it a useful tool for the interrogation of this particular work, *First Nocturne*, which is ostensibly posited in the Western Art tradition, but can be read/heard differently if the social/cultural background of the composer is taken into account. If this is done Kay’s *First Nocturne* will be revealed to be an embodiment of “cultural heterogeneity” that can be positioned in the discourses of the Western Art and African-American musical practices.

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<sup>13</sup> Floyd: 2002 pp.58.

<sup>14</sup> Ronald Radano, *Lying up a Nation: Race and Black Music* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2003).

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.* p. 35-39

In an interview with David Baker,<sup>16</sup> Ulysses Kay named his uncle King Oliver and William Grant Still as having influenced his musical life. He categorized black music as “music written and conceived by blacks.” He said that his music was a reflection of him and black in its expressive content. These statements suggest that, as far as Kay was concerned, his works possessed qualities that signified his African-American background, despite being steeped in the Western Art tradition. The following quote is instructive, not for the opinion expressed, but also for the views attributed to Kay:

“Of the many outstanding black composers on the scene today, Ulysses Kay ranks among the finest. It would not be presumptuous to say that this statement also would be true if the “black” were omitted... It is easier sometimes to describe a composer’s style by what it is not. It is not black. *Kay believe that a composer is a product of his extraction and environment as well as his political and ethnic interests, but should not be limited by them.*” - “The Choral Work of Ulysses Kay” Choral Journal, December 1970.<sup>17</sup> (Italics, this author’s)

If the latter statement were applied to Kay, it may be concluded that his compositional output must of be heterogeneous in nature, reflection the varied conditions and interests that shaped his development as a composer. It presents the composer as being endowed with “double consciousness,” in fact “multiple-consciousness.”<sup>18</sup> It may be use to recall some of Kay’s biography at this juncture.

Ulysses Kay grew up in the south, in a household in which his father sang to the accompaniment of his own “rhythmic hand-drumming”, and his mother (jazz great King Oliver’s sister) played the piano and sang in church. He began piano lessons at age six and was introduced to the saxophone as an eleven year old. His fascination with the sax made him gravitate towards the arrangements and styles of Cab

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<sup>16</sup> David Baker, et al, *The Black Composer Speaks*, (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1977).

<sup>17</sup> Constance Hobson and Deborra A. Richardson. *Ulysses Kay: A Bio-Bibliography*, (Greenwood Press, Westport, CT, 1994) pp.117

<sup>18</sup> David O’Brien, “The African Diaspora in Carrie Mae Weems’s Sea Islands Series”: *Identity and the Arts In Diaspora Communities*, ed., Thomas Turino and James Lea (Harmonie Press, Michigan 2004): 78

Calloway, Duke Ellington, and Benny Goodman. In the 1940s he became a member of the US navy band, and also played piano in a dance band of the time<sup>19</sup>. Alongside these activities, it is well known that Kay continued to pursue his formal music education in the compositional techniques and theories of the Western Art tradition. In his personal life, it is useful to note that his wife Barbara Kay was a Freedom Rider, who was arrested and hauled before the courts during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 60s. His daughter, Hilary Kay is a blues singer has been for over 25 years<sup>20</sup>.

On a visit to Moscow in 1958, Kay, as a member of a group of composers, “took with him recordings of prominent and predominantly black jazz greats.” These recordings included: *Miles Ahead* (Davis-Evans), Ellington’s *In a Mellotone*, *Louis Armstrong Plays W. C. Handy*, and *Monk’s Music*<sup>21</sup>. As well, two of his operas, *Jubilee* and *Frederick Douglas*, are works extracted from the African-American idioms and experience<sup>22</sup>. These facts point to Kay’s “extraction”, “environment”, “political”, “ethnic” and other interests of which he was a product. They point to a composer of heterogeneous works. Laurence Hayes describes his musical style as eclectic modernist<sup>23</sup>, while Leon Bostein, musical director of the American Symphony Orchestra, makes the following observation.

“The composers on this program born into Jewish families who integrated African-American materials in their work – Gershwin, Gruenberg and Gould – did so in ways which earned the respect and admiration of their African-American contemporaries and colleagues. The composers of African-American descent – Price, Ellington and Kay – who integrated European traditions with African-American traditions,, did so in ways which earned the respect and admiration of the non-African-

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<sup>19</sup> Hobson and Richardson, 1994.

<sup>20</sup> Web page, “Wildsang ” – blues duo, <<http://www.soundclick.com/pro/?BandID=240377>>

<sup>21</sup> Hobson and Richardson, 1994, pp.16.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.* pp. 19.

<sup>23</sup> Laurence M Hayes, *The Music of Ulysses Kay, 1939-63* : Ph.D. dissertation; (University of Wisconsin, 1971).

American contemporaries and colleagues”<sup>24</sup>

These brief biological examples illustrate the cultural complexity that filled the life of Ulysses Kay. They indicate the difficulty observers may experience in efforts to ascribe cultural labels an identity to some of his work. The rest of this section is devoted to the examination of some the characteristics that contributes to the heterogeneity of the works considered in this essay.

### The Hemiola/Cross Rhythms

The term hemiola, in the modern metrical system, denotes the articulation of two units of triple meter as if they were notated as three units of duple meter<sup>25</sup>. This linear realization does not occur in Kay’s nocturne, but it is referred to here – in so far as the nocturne contains instances of the juxtaposition of “triple feel” and “duple feel”, both linearly and vertically. Such apparent metrical juxtaposition is found in the western art tradition, and have been incorporated by composers such as Beethoven and Brahms in their works. The exponents of the nocturne genre also made use of this. For instance, it can be observed in Chopin’s Op. 9 no. 3, in the section designated “Agitato” – measures 88 – 91; Op. 27 no.1 – measures 53 – 62; or Op. 72 no. 1 – measures 51-53. Faure makes even more extensive use of cross rhythms, as is evident in his Op. 33 no. 3 – a work that incorporates 3:2 rhythms almost throughout; Op. 36; and Op. 74 – measures 11-18. Hence it can be concluded that Kay’s nocturne is faithful to the established western art musical practices, but another interpretation is possible.

Authors on African music have written about the hemiola. Rose Brandel speaks of

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<sup>24</sup> Leon Bostein, Program notes; 5<sup>th</sup> concert, 1993-94 season

<sup>25</sup> Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell ed., *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* [electronic resource] (London: Macmillan Reference; New York: Grove’s Dictionaries 2001)  
<<http://www.grovemusic.com/index.html> >

“the African hemiola style” with its “far greater diversity of durational contrast”<sup>26</sup>. In so doing, she broadens the concept of the hemiola to reflect the occurrence of unequal beat patterns (not just 2:3), simultaneous or sequentially. Others have identified the phenomenon of “cross rhythms”<sup>27</sup> in African music. Cross rhythms, identified by Floyd and others as one of the vernacular tropes of black music, is a pervasive phenomenon in the vernacular folk music of West Africa. In *The Music of Africa*, Nketia points out:

“ Cross rhythms occur frequently between the scheme of hand clapping and the hemiola grouping of notes in the melodic line. A section of a phrase maybe in duple rhythm where the hand clapping has a triple pattern, and the opposite”<sup>28</sup>

Kofi Agawu, in appraising the impact of language on musical composition in Ghana and the musical style of Ghanaian composer Ephraim Amu, says of Amu’s setting of the song *Adawura Bo Me*:

“ This piece, *Adawura Bo Me* , is an attempt to portray the rhythm of the song *Adawura* in the context of other drum rhythms, in which the two against three effect, so characteristic of African rhythmic practice, is maximally exploited”<sup>29</sup>.

Steven Friedson - in his *Dancing Prophets*<sup>30</sup>– challenges the notion of two against three with statement that " In African musical practice, these beats, made up of differing numbers of pulses, are not against each other but occur simultaneously”<sup>31</sup>. Similarly, James Burns (2010) considers the simultaneous occurrence of three pulses against two or

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<sup>26</sup> Rose Brandel. *The Music of Central Africa: An Ethnomusicological Study*, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1961) p. 15.

<sup>27</sup> Kwabena Nketia. *The Music of Africa*, (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1986) pp.135.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.* pp. 170.

<sup>29</sup> Kofi Agawu. “The Impact of Language on Musical Composition in Ghana: An Introduction to the Musical Style of Ephraim Amu,” *Ethnomusicology* (January 1984): 59.

<sup>30</sup> Steven Friedson. *Dancing Prophets: Musical Experience in Tumbuka Healing*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

<sup>31</sup> Daniel Avorgbedor. Review of *Dancing Prophets: Musical Experience in Tumbuka Healing*, by Steven Friedson, *Research in African Literatures* 32.2 (2001) 213-219.

four as an example of a typical rhythmic “archetype” in the musical practice of Africa and the Diaspora. While not favoring the terms “cross rhythms” and “polymeter”, he suggests that: *“these archetypes to be the result of an aesthetic preference for interweaving notes with the metric background.”*<sup>32</sup>

These scholars all point to the phenomenon of cross rhythms in African music as a norm that has its occurrence in song, hand clapping, dance and drumming practices. As such the occurrence of cross rhythms in sections of Scherzi Musicali and the First Nocturne can be interpreted as Kay referencing the vernacular traditions of his African-American ancestry and repositioning them in the context of the western art music tradition (see examples 3.4 and 4.1).

Associated with cross rhythms is the “tendency to create musical structures in which rhythmic clash or disagreement of accents is an ideal”<sup>33</sup>. This is highly relevant to the First Nocturne. And, in consideration of the role of the pedal tones – C, D#, Db, A – in section ‘A’, it becomes evident that they contribute to the perception of “rhythmic clashes” and gives a syncopated rhythmic feel to the phrase of this section. This arises because of the articulation of these pedal tones at irregular intervals. Each of statement of these pedal tones – [C] in measures 10-14 in the bass, [D#] in measures 15-19 treble clef, [Db] in measures 20-24 bass, and [A] in measures 24-28, the inner voice bass top line - begins with the identical irregular rhythm between the first and fifth pulses and then the rhythm is varied. Brandel identifies “the additive, irregular-pulsed rhythms” in her analysis of Central African music<sup>34</sup>, and Nketia discusses “additive rhythms” in which “durational values may extend beyond the regular divisions.”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> James Burns. “Rhythmic Archetypes in Instrumental Music from Africa and the Diapora,” Music Theory Online, Vol. 16, no. 4, December 2010.

<<http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.10.16.4/mto.10.16.4.burns.htm>>

<sup>33</sup> Wilson 1983.

<sup>34</sup> Brandel 1991, pp. 73.

<sup>35</sup> Nketia 1986, pp. 129.



While the notion of rhythmic clash is by no means singular to African derived music, as it is evident in the western art tradition – particularly in the twentieth century works of composers such as Igor Stravinsky, Arnold Schoenberg, Bela Bartok and others, it is also reasonable to situate these occurrences in Kay’s work in context of the musical concepts of the African Diaspora. Further, it is instructive to critically examine the texture of section ‘A’. I am of the view that this section possesses a polyrhythmic texture. This is substantiated by the placement of the three parts. The pedal tone, diminished triad and melody are each given their distinctive pitch range, even when they are inverted. This allows for the section to be heard as an “interweaving “ of the rhythms of these parts, and not simply as a melody and accompaniment.

### Pendulum Thirds

Samuel Floyd lists the phenomenon of “pendulum thirds”, in which melodic motion ascends a third and this ascent is immediately followed by a descent of a third, among “primary features of African and African-American expression” of which the blues is a “remarkable manifestation”<sup>36</sup>. This melodic characteristic is also a prominent feature of the spirituals. Perusal of *The Book of American Negro Spirituals* by James Weldon Johnson and J Rosamond Johnson reveals that of twenty-five of the first thirty-one of sixty spirituals in the book possess this melodic trait. In most cases the pendulum thirds are prominently positioned in the opening phrases of the spirituals or the “Reponses”. Example 5.1 shows some of these occurrences.

#### Examples 5.1

##### a. *Heav’n Boun’ Soldier*



<sup>36</sup> Floyd. 1995, pp. 126

*b. We Am Clim'in Jacob's Ladder*



c. *Didn't Old Pharaoh Get Los'?*



d. *Up On De Mountain*



e. *Lit'le David Play On Yo' Harp*



*f. Die In De Fiel'*



*g. All God's Chillun Got Wings*



#### *h. Gimme Dat Ol' Time Religion*



i. *Lis'en To De Lam's*



j. *He's Jus' De Same Today*



Examination of measures 44-48 (Ex. 4.11a and 4.11b) of the *First Nocturne* shows that the highest notes in the block-chord phrases swing up and back down a minor third – C Eb C (mm. 44-45) and C# E C# (mm. 47). This occurrence of “pendulum thirds” provide further evidence that this work, which can be firmly positioned among twentieth-century atonal art music compositions, definitely embodies traits long associated with music of African-Americans.

The music that accompanies the aforementioned “pendulum thirds” illuminates Kay as a composer very cognizant of his African-American musical heritage. At this juncture in the piece the music takes on the texture of block chords. Examination of these chords reveals sonorities that can be clearly situated in jazz. The notes played in the left hand of measure 44 represent a C#7#9(with adjusted spelling), while Bb7#11b9 is played in measures 46-47, the third D and seventh Ab/G# along with the other upper partials occur in the cluster played in the right hand. Floyd associated these altered, dissonant sonorities with the Earl Hines band of 1942-44, which included the bebop greats Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker. He says: “They

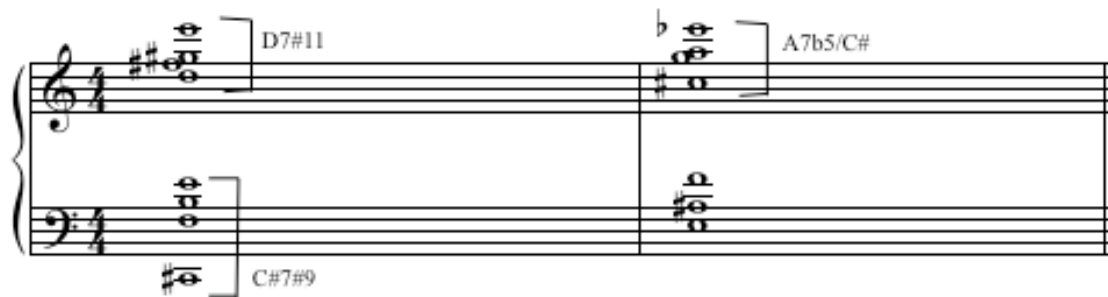
were playing all the flatted fifth chords and all the modern harmonies and substitutions.”<sup>37</sup>

Jazz scholar Gunther Schuller in writing about the swing era<sup>38</sup> credits Duke Ellington for being the harbinger of the use of the “upper extension of triadic harmonies” in whose wake the greats of the forties followed. Additionally, in presenting analysis of Ellington’s 1935 recording, *Reminiscing in Tempo*, as a ground breaking work, Schuller summarizes the development of the use of discordant upper extensions in music in general and jazz in particular. He notes that such practice arose in European classical music as a result of the derive towards increased chromaticism , while in jazz the use of came to fruition because of the flatted third, fifth, and seventh degrees inflections of the blues scale, as well as the incorporation of the chromaticism of classical music. <sup>39</sup> It should be noted that the main theme of *Reminiscing* is a melody in which “pendulum thirds” are prominent.

The block chords in measures 44-47 may also be viewed as examples of Kay’s use of bitonality, and in so doing he referencing both the traditions of Western art music and jazz. Examples 5.2a and 5.2b shows the chords stated in measures 44-45 and 47 respectively.

#### Ex. 5.2

a.



<sup>37</sup> Floyd 1995, pp. 126.

<sup>38</sup> Gunther Schuller, *The Swing Era: The Development of Jazz, 1930-1945*(*History of Jazz*), (Oxford University Press) March 2, 1989, Chapter 2, Kindle Edition.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

b.



I have already noted the C#7#11 that is shown/heard in the bass clef (ex. 5.2a). The cluster in the treble clef forms the sonority of D7#11, which is neighbored by an A7b5 in first inversion. Similarly, I previously indicated how the sonority in measure 47 maybe be viewed/heard as Bb7b9#11, however the four-note cluster above constitute Dmaj7#11 that is in turn neighbored by a first-inversion A7 chord.

This bitonality, the simultaneous use of two tonalities, has long been existent in American music, in the work of the composer Charles Ives for instance. However, Schuller also credits the composer Ellington as the person, who (to his knowledge) first introduced bitonality to jazz. Specifically, he points to the opening chord of Ellington's introduction to *Eerie Moan* (1933-34), that being A7 superimposed on G7.<sup>40</sup> Taking all these factors into consideration, Kay's *First Nocturne* is more lucidly shown to be a heterogeneous work that embodies musical traits of the Western Art and African-American musical traditions

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

## 6

### CONCLUSION

The works, *Scherzi Musicali* and *First Nocturne*, both belong to Kay's post-1963 period of composition. Both are wholly atonal and each possesses aggregate-based characteristics in which the twelve chromatic tones are kept in constant circulation. In the first movement of *Scherzi Musicali*, Kay develops the chromatic heptachord, set class (0123456), while the cleverly crafted *First Nocturne* utilizes twelve-tone row structures and derives material from the whole tone and octatonic scales. Use of these scales grew in popularity at the turn of the century. Kay's use of rhythm is also characteristic of twentieth century art music practices. Frequent changes of metre and the use of cross rhythms, such as two against three, can be found in each of the works. Additionally, clearly marked changes in tempo are used to demarcate section of the music. Such features though not unique, became more prevalent among the composers of art music in the twentieth century.

The presentation of thematic and/or motivic material, initially on a microcosmic level and then eventually on the macrocosmic scale, is a very outstanding feature of Kay's composition style in these works. Thematic ideas are presented at the beginning in each case. In the *Scherzi Musicali*, the structurally important set class (0123456) is presented in the opening measures and its use is developed in the course of the movement. Similarly, in the introduction of the *First Nocturne* Kay highlights all the materials from which the piece grows. Twelve-tone and aggregate-based ideas are shown clearly with the statement of the prime row and its inversion. The whole tone ideas are also lucidly stated as part of the construction of the tone row, while the octatonic ideas are presented in more subtle fashion. Kay utilizes registral placement and the concept of segmental invariance to give prominence to the octatonic scale in the introduction.

Another significant feature of Kay's compositional style in these two works is the incorporation of African-American musical traits. His use of cross rhythms in



sections of both pieces, the polyrhythmic interweaving texture of Section A of the nocturne, the use of melodic pendulum thirds, and the jazz/blues sonorities in portions the *First Nocturne*, reveal that in analysis of his musical style cognizance must be taken of his familial and cultural background. Such consideration leads to the conclusion that also Kay sought to inscribe his cultural heritage into his craftily composed works.

These works point to fourth period in the development of Kay's compositional style. This is the post-1963 period in which atonality comes to the forefront. In these two works Kay is neither neo-romantic nor neo-classic, but reveals himself as a full-fledged modernist, who embraced the new ideas of his time, as well as the musical practices of his African-American heritage.

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