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‘OUT OF THE AIR’: JUDITH WEIR’S EMERGENCE IN 1970S BRITAIN, OR INTERPRETING CREATIVE SELF-CENSORSHIP

BY DAVID BEARD*

ON 21 JULY 2014, Judith Weir was appointed Master of the Queen’s Music, the first woman to hold this prestigious title in its almost 400-year history.[1] This recognition adds lustre to a lively and varied career, which has already been marked by a stream of awards, commissions, residencies and visiting fellowships, community and youth music projects, multimedia collaborations, a major retrospective at the Barbican Arts Centre, London,[2] an output in excess of 125 works, including three highly acclaimed operas,[3] and a strong conviction that the ‘role of the composer is to create wider musical communities’.[4] Public attention came early: according to most accounts,[5] Weir first emerged on the British music

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[1] Weir performs this role until 2024. She was also appointed President of the Royal Society of Musicians of Great Britain in 2016.

[2] ‘Judith Weir: Telling the Tale’, a series of concerts, talks, and free events organized by the BBC Symphony Orchestra, held at the Barbican Arts Centre, 17–20 Jan. 2008.

[3] These are *A Night at the Chinese Opera* (1987), *The Vanishing Bridegroom* (1990), and *Blond Eckbert* (1994). She is currently working on an adaptation of Max Frisch’s *Count Oederland* for a joint Covent Garden/Frankfurt/Scottish Opera commission.

[4] Judith Weir quoted in Alison Carter, ‘Parade Profile: Judith Weir’, *King’s Parade* [a special issue of the King’s College, Cambridge alumni magazine, titled ‘King’s & Opera’], [n.n] (Spring 2004), 4–5 at 4.

[5] Representative examples include: Pwyll ap Siôn et al. (eds.), *Eduqas A and AS Level Music Study Guide* (London, 2017), 265; Tom Service, ‘A Guide to Judith Weir’s Music’, *The Guardian*, 28 May 2012; Matthew Greenall, ‘Repertoire Guide’, *Music Teacher*, Sept. 2004, 38; Barbara White, ‘Music Drama on the Concert Stage: Voice, Character and Performance in Judith Weir’s *The*

scene following the premiere of *King Harald's Saga* in 1979, three years after she graduated from King's College, Cambridge. In the same year, aged 25, she signed to the publisher Novello.[6] Yet despite this early vault from the starting blocks and the recognition that followed, it is often asserted that Weir was a slow developer—a problematic notion that may have been informed by some of her own remarks,[7] but is also arguably symptomatic of gendered aspects of the reception she has received, from scholars and journalists alike.[8] In contrast, I argue that key tenets of Weir's music were established in her early works (1972 to 1980), and that an analysis of these pieces provides critical insights into her musical development. Moreover, the techniques Weir explores in these works highlight the need to reassess her reception, her relationship to modernism and the avant-garde, and questions of creativity more broadly, as discussed below.

By Weir's own account, *King Harald's Saga* marked the 'first time' she felt she had written a piece 'which was really something'.[9] Titled a 'Grand Opera in Three Acts', the work lasts just ten minutes and employs an unaccompanied solo soprano to portray nine characters and a male chorus. The apparent irreverence of this breakthrough piece led some, notably Paul Griffiths, in the 1995 revised edition of his influential monograph overview of post-war music, to associate Weir with postmodernism.[10] For Griffiths, Weir's music is characterized by irony, scepticism, and 'amused disbelief', her works being 'beautiful things that cannot be trusted'.[11] Citing her 'outsider' status, as a Scot and a woman, her musical displays of unpretentiousness, and her Stravinskyan 'offbeam' way of building music from 'the folk-music ground-up', he concluded: 'Weir delights in the inappropriate', in the sense

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Consolations of Scholarship', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 12 (2000), 55–79.

[6] At this point, Weir handed over a number of works she had composed already, and granted Opus 1 status to her wind quintet *Out of the Air* (1975).

[7] See e.g. Brian Morton, 'The Slow Leap Forwards', *The Wire*, 56 (1988), 42–3, in which Weir states: 'I'm very slow . . . It really takes a long time to sort yourself out' (p. 42). Similarly, a detailed article written when Weir was in her thirties refers to her 'vision of the kind of composer she wishes to be'; Tom Morgan, 'Judith Weir', in Michael Finnissy, Malcolm Hayes. and Roger Wright (eds.), *New Music 88* (Oxford, 1988), 22–50 at 23.

[8] Lisa Colton, 'The Female Exotic: Tradition, Innovation and Authenticity in the Reception of Music by Judith Weir', *Contemporary Music Review*, 29 (2010), 277–89.

[9] Judith Weir in Bernard Hughes, 'Judith Weir in Conversation', *Tempo*, 59, no. 234 (2005), 20. The next significant landmark was *A Night at the Chinese Opera*, commissioned by the BBC on behalf of Kent Opera, which one critic described as 'simply brilliant, brilliantly simple, fresh, colourful, enchanting and quite the wittiest thing to be done in the musical theatre for years'; Paul Griffiths, 'Cheltenham Festival', *The Times*, 9 July 1987.

[10] Paul Griffiths, *Modern Music and After: Directions since 1945* (Oxford, 1995), 240.

[11] Ibid. 240 and 241.

of 'a friendly apartness from the rules, formulae, standards, and instruments of western music'—for example by 'the placing of tonal chords contrary to conventional practice'.[12] The suggestion of impropriety may also relate to a sense that Weir sits outside any clear British or international schools of composition. In a similar spirit, Weir is often described as having a distinctive personal style, frequently expressed as some combination of the following: clarity and economy of expression; relative consonance with a quirky use of modal, octatonic, and tonal gestures in a non- or quasi-tonal context;[13] wry theatricality and humour; detached objectivity; fastidious attention to detail; a 'capacity to disconcert';[14] rhythmic dexterity, informed by a close study of Scottish, Balkan, and other folk music; ironic references to Classical, Romantic, medieval, and other more distant historical periods or exotic styles; and a commitment to story-telling and narrative.

While this overview is in one sense accurate, it unwittingly bolsters Griffiths's triply Othered discourse (Weir the inappropriate female Scot), which suggests an ironic and playful postmodern rather (or more) than a critical and antagonistic modernist relationship with canonical composers and historical styles, an over-reliance on, rather than dialogue with, her models. Gordon Downie, for example, argues that Weir, like John Adams, Thomas Adès, Mark-Anthony Turnage, and others, assumes the 'role of an entertainer' by using titles that evoke 'playfulness, titillation, and amusement' to reassure listeners that their neo-liberal 'desire for uninterrupted play and distraction during leisure' will be fulfilled.[15] Similarly, Richard Barrett accuses Weir of possessing 'a comfortable, selfcongratulatory [*sic*], bourgeois kind of wit without incisiveness or purpose . . . ignoring the realities of its time . . . But then again: we do live in times of triviality and complacency; is this music a comment

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[12] Ibid. 240–1.

[13] Weir does not think of her music as tonal, although she has remarked: '[I] grew up loving classical music, and functional harmony, and in a childlike way I like playing my way through chord patterns. So I suppose there has been this lifelong wish to bring that together with a sophisticated interest in new music.' Stephen Johnson, 'Waiting for Rain', *The Full Score* [Music Sales Group] (Summer 2003), [n.p.]. For more detailed examinations of this topic, see Anna Theresa Weesner, 'Tonality in Nontonal Music: A Study of Judith Weir's *The Consolations of Scholarship*' (DMA thesis, Cornell University, 1995), and Andrea Daly, 'Beautiful Baubles', unpublished paper, posted at www.youtube.com/watch?v=CVTCVDydWYo (accessed 20 Jan. 2018). The only piece Weir has referred to in terms of 'large-scale tonal planning' is her String Quartet (1990); from 'Judith Weir Talks to Anthony Burton', BBC Radio 3, 5 May 1992 (BL Sound Archive, H326/3).

[14] Malcolm Hayes, Record Review of Judith Weir, 'Three Operas: *The Consolations of Scholarship, Missa Del Cid, King Harald's Saga*'; Jane Manning (sop.), Linda Hirst (mezzo), Lontano, cond. Odaline de la Martinez, and Combattimento, cond. David Mason. Novello Records NVLCD109 [1989]', *Tempo*, 172 (1990), 44–5 at 45.

[15] Gordon Downie, 'Aesthetic Necrophilia: Reification, New Music, and the Commodification of Affectivity', *Perspectives of New Music*, 42 (2004), 264–75 at 271–2.

or a symptom?'[16] Yet these perspectives arguably elide the 'Foucauldian disciplinary processes and practices of exchange' that create 'the uniqueness of individual composers, their musical and social personalities',[17] which is to say, they fail to consider endorsements Weir has received from certain composers, and her attempts to distance herself from others. They also pass over a not inconsiderable number of earlier works, which have now almost all been withdrawn.

The purpose of this article is to contextualize and analyse the early withdrawn works, for they provide important insights into the evolution of Weir's musical language, suggesting new perspectives that have been downplayed in existing studies.[18] They also help chart Weir's emergence in the context of 1970s Britain in which an unprecedented stylistic pluralism arose partly in response to the golden years of the 1960s,[19] a loss of faith in the idealism of the 'long 1960s',[20] and a resulting confusion about how to proceed. Post-Cageian experimentalism existed alongside neo-Romantic and other historically conscious voices, Tippett's late lyricism succeeded Britten's 'middlebrow' modernism,[21] but high modernism persisted: Peter Maxwell Davies blazed a trail with his Fires of London ensemble, a taciturn Harrison Birtwistle grew steadily in stature, and the 'New Complexity' was born. Where was Weir located in this diverse creative field? Was her irreverence evident from the start? What was her relationship to her modernist and avant-garde contemporaries, and how might her distinctive personal style be reconsidered in this context?

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[16] Richard Barrett, review of *Judith Weir: Three Operas* (Novello NVLCD109) [1989], *The Wire* 72 (Feb. 1990), 71–2 at 72. For the opposite perspective, see White, 'Music Drama on the Concert Stage' (2000), and Hannah Castein, 'The Composer as Librettist: Judith Weir's "Romantic" Operas *Heaven Ablaze in His Breast* and *Blond Eckbert*', *Comparative Criticism*, 21 (1999), 253–72.

[17] Hettie Malcolmson, 'Composing Individuals: Ethnographic Reflections on Success and Prestige in the British New Music Network', *Twentieth-Century Music*, 10 (2013), 115–36 at 117.

[18] Earlier references to some of these works exist in the following: Martin Dreyer, 'A Talent to Amuse', *Musical Times*, 122 (1981), 593–6; Tom Morgan, 'Judith Weir'; and Barbara White, 'Music Drama on the Concert Stage: A Study of Judith Weir's *The Consolations of Scholarship*, with *Life in the Castle* (Original Music Composition)' (Ph.D. diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1997) [reproduced by UMI Dissertation Services].

[19] Paul Griffiths, 'Music', in Boris Ford (ed.), *Modern Britain: The Cambridge Cultural History* (Cambridge, 1992), 48–83 at 81.

[20] Cornelius Cardew's rejection of the avant-garde in his 1974 essay *Stockhausen Serves Imperialism* was arguably 'symbolic of a pessimism regarding 1960s idealism which came over many in British society more generally'; David Addison, 'Politics, Patronage, and the State in British Avant-Garde Music, *c*.1959–*c*.1974', *Twentieth-Century British History*, 27 (2016), 242–65 at 264.

[21] See Christopher Chowrimootoo, *Middlebrow Modernism: Britten's Operas and the Great Divide* (Oakland, Calif., 2018).

To answer these questions, I begin by touching on Weir's early reception and her stance on modernism and the avant-garde before itemizing the withdrawn works (1972–80). I then re-examine Weir's emergence and gendered reception in three stages: (1) in relation to creativity theories; (2) in the context of the practice of withdrawing works in general; and (3) through an analysis of the early withdrawn works, based on scores and recordings held at the British Music Centre in Heritage Quay, University of Huddersfield, the British Library, the Victoria and Albert Museum Archive, and materials provided by the composer, her publisher Chester Novello (part of the Music Sales Group), and Michael Finnissy.

EARLY RECEPTION OF WEIR, AND WEIR'S RECEPTION OF MODERNISM

Weir's early reception was directly influenced by two profiles published in the 1980s: an essay by Martin Dreyer published in 1981, and a survey by Tom Morgan published in 1987.[22] Dreyer presents Weir as someone who rejected the Continental avant-garde and had little interest in modernism beyond Stravinsky and Messiaen, whose music she was introduced to by her first teacher, John Tavener. Morgan, on the other hand, highlights an objectivity and anti-Romantic fastidiousness, which he associates with Stravinsky, although he insists that Weir pursued 'a radical and unique voice *against* all the trends and fashions of the day'.[23] In essence, both writers present Weir as an independent mind from the start, and someone certainly not pulled towards any of the myriad trends in British music that existed in the 1970s.

When asked about her attitude towards the avant-garde, Weir has spoken enthusiastically of growing up in London in the 1960s and early 1970s, where she attended concerts conducted by Boulez in the Round House, heard *Le Marteau sans maître* and Berio's *Sinfonia*, and performed Second Viennese School classics under Boulez with the National Youth Orchestra.[24] However, it is not until 1980, during an interview published in *The Sunday Times*, that we find Weir's first public statement regarding high modernism:

> Audiences find it remarkably difficult to follow a musical argument—in the way they follow a film, for example . . . The music of the last decade has hardly helped in this respect. Still I wouldn't want

[22] Dreyer, 'Judith Weir, Composer: A Talent to Amuse'; Morgan, 'Judith Weir'.

[23] Morgan, 'Judith Weir', 23; italics added.

[24] Weir had a direct link to the London concert scene through her oboe teacher, Robin Miller (1946–2014), whom Boulez appointed principal oboist of the BBC Symphony Orchestra in the early 1970s. A founder member of the Nash Ensemble from 1964, Miller played with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and the London Sinfonietta, and he was the dedicatee of Peter Maxwell Davies's *Strathclyde* Concerto No. 1 (1987).

to discount the achievements of the avant-garde. They are part of us. But I feel we no longer need to shock. For me the emphasis is on making every one of the notes count.[25]

Nine years later, when asked whether she felt any affinity with the Manchester School, or with an English tradition, she responded: 'Well, to start off with, I feel very strongly that I'm *not* English, I'm Scottish. [Regarding the Manchester School] the techniques in their work are a constant source of enrichment.[[26]] [But] I don't believe we're using a similar library of techniques.'[27] In 1995, Weir's stance had shifted only marginally, with modernism still placed at a respectable distance:

When I started to write music, it was very much the age of high modernism, which I don't necessarily disapprove of, but abstraction was the thing that you were always talking about. That's what you were taught. So perversely I began to do the opposite, which to me seemed to be stories and music attached to concrete events.[28]

In 2003, however, Weir remarked: 'I'm not one of those people who've repudiated post-war modernism. I'm grounded in it.'[29] She has further commented: 'I'm not in any way anti-modernist or anti-complexity, but my reaction to so much new music is that it seems to be massively cluttered. It's all going on down there in the bass half of the orchestra, and it

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[25] Weir quoted in [n.a.] 'Judith Weir', *The Sunday Times*, 24 Aug. 1980 [n.p.].

[26] Weir has stated that during her early years she felt she needed to develop 'a stronger sense of line' and in this regard the cor anglais melody in Harrison Birtwistle's *The Triumph of Time* (first performed 1972; recorded 1975) was 'a big piece for me in that direction'. Quoted in Stephen Johnson, 'Waiting for Rain', *The Full Score* (Summer 2003), [n.p.].

[27] Weir in conversation with Christopher Cook in 'Kaleidoscope Extra', broadcast on BBC Radio 3 on 13 Dec. 1989 (BL Sound Archive, B5278/0/52). Weir was born and educated in England but has strong links to her Aberdonian parents' families, north of the border. Her stance on national identity has changed over the years. In 1988, she remarked: 'I was brought up in England and maybe for that reason think of myself very strongly as a Scot'; quoted in Morton, 'The Slow Leap Forwards', 43. By 2011, however, this position had shifted: 'I don't even think of myself as a *Scottish* composer, because I never know where I'm from, really—I've lived in so many places. In that sense, "British" actually suits me better, because it means partly from England and partly from Scotland.' Judith Weir in Andrew Palmer, *Encounters with British Composers* (Woodbridge, 2015), 443–55 at 447.

[28] Judith Weir, 'Judith Weir', in Neil Brand (ed.), *Dramatic Notes: Foregrounding Music in the Dramatic Experience* (Luton, 1998), 35–48 at 35.

[29] Weir quoted in Johnson, 'Waiting for Rain' [n.p.]. In the same year, she referred to 'the flower of the European avant-garde . . . Boulez, Stockhausen, Berio, Ligeti' as 'all people I enormously admire still'; Nicholas Reyland, 'Judith Weir in Conversation', The Warehouse, London, 12 Mar. 2003. Originally posted on the London Sinfonietta website but subsequently removed. Last accessed by the author on 19 June 2007.

obscures the harmonics of the other instruments. I want whatever there is in the piece to emerge with clarity, even if it's complex music.'

In most of these statements, Weir positions herself to one side of modernism and the avant-garde; she remains connected to them in some way ('they are a part of us'; 'a constant source of enrichment'), but she seeks to move beyond them by adopting different techniques, avoiding shock tactics and overly congested sounds,[30] helping audiences follow a musical argument,[31] and making 'every one of the notes count'. Weir presents herself as 'informed by, but not beholden to' modernist practice,[32] and she neither fully rejects the past nor entirely embraces the avant-garde, a position that has been characterized as 'mainstream' in contemporary British music.[33]

THE WITHDRAWN WORKS, 1972–80

A study of Weir's work lists published at various stages of her career reveal that she has continually revised her official catalogue, with more works being withdrawn as time has progressed. In 2018, just two compositions prior to 1981 are listed: *King Harald's Saga* and *Several Concertos* (1980).[34] These are privileged survivors from a series of withdrawals, dating back to 1972–3, when she composed the first of her pieces to receive a major public performance,[35] and they highlight Weir's growing dissatisfaction with her earliest works. In 1987, there are an additional six compositions in the catalogue, including *Out of the Air* (1975) and *An mein Klavier* (1980), which will be discussed later. In 1981, a further five works are listed, including a commission by The Fires of London, *Twenty-Five Variations*. Finally, if we factor in works that Weir had already withdrawn or not published before 1981, it transpires that over twenty works were composed in eight years, between the ages of 18

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[30] Weir quoted in Andrew Clark, 'Clear, Uncluttered Voice of Music Today', *Financial Times*, 11 Mar. 2000.

[31] There are possible echoes here of Benjamin Britten's Aspen Award Speech, in particular his notion of the 'composer's duty, as a member of society, to speak to or for his fellow human beings', and his warning against the young composer feeling self-consciously pressured into using the 'latest *avant-garde* tricks'; Benjamin Britten, 'On Receiving the First Aspen Award', in Peter Wiegold and Ghislaine Kenyon (eds.), *Beyond Britten: The Composer and the Community* (Woodbridge, 2015), 9 and 10.

[32] White, 'Music Drama on the Concert Stage' (2000), 57.

[33] Arnold Whittall, *Musical Composition in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 1999), 388.

[34] See www.musicsalesclassical.com/composer/works/Judith-Weir (accessed 20 Jan. 2018). Weir has stated that she wrote a lot of music in her teens, in the late 1960s, but this is no longer extant; the author has seen nothing prior to 1972. See Palmer, 'Judith Weir', 452.

[35] *Where the Shining Trumpets Blow* was performed by the New Philharmonia in 1974.

and 26 **(**see Table 1**)**. <Place Table 1 near here>

RECALIBRATING THE DISCOURSE

The importance of examining the early withdrawn works needs to be understood in the context of the reception of Weir's music more generally. Lisa Colton has correctly observed that Weir reception and comments she has made herself 'are tied closely to a historical line that continues to feel anxious about the creative powers of women composers'.[36] Colton's arguments are carefully made and they are aimed at the apparent paradox whereby Britain's most celebrated female composer is also subject to a form of gendered reception.[37] The legacy of Weir's practice of withdrawing works has also played into this question in ways that, as Colton observes, are 'impossible to untangle from historical expectations of women and their behaviour'.[38] This point is illustrated by an interview with the BBC broadcaster and journalist Ivan Hewett for an article promoting a week of events devoted to Weir's music, hosted by the Barbican Arts Centre in 2008:

> It took Weir a long time to find her voice . . . 'When I was a teenager I had a few lessons with . . . John Tavener, who lived down the road,' she says, 'and then in 1975 I had a piece played at a youth orchestras festival in Aberdeen [*Campanile*]. One of the jurors was . . . Aaron Copland, and he

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[36] Colton, 'The Female Exotic', 277. See also Sally Macarthur, 'The Woman Composer, New Music and Neoliberalism', *Musicology Australia*, 36 (2014), 36–52, and Lauren Redhead, '"New Music" as Patriarchal Category', in Catherine Haworth and Lisa Colton (eds.), *Gender, Age and Musical Creativity* (Farnham, 2015), 171–84.

[37] Weir's music has received a mainly positive response in the UK press, with a blend of mostly congratulatory but occasionally mixed reception, ostensibly little different from that of her older contemporaries, Birtwistle and Davies. The principal exception to this is the opera *Miss Fortune*. The libretto, which Weir wrote herself, largely diverted attention away from the music, and a turn to realism in the plot introduced problems that are largely avoided in the earlier, more objective, Brechtian operas—a shift that probably reflects David Pountney's unusual request to write 'for an entirely normal audience'; Jessica Duchen, 'The Wheel of Fortune Turns for New Opera', *The Independent*, 2 Mar. 2012. Following a mostly positive response to the world premiere in Bregenz, under the title *Achterbahn* [*Rollercoaster*], the reception in London was vitriolic, far in excess of the work's shortcomings. Even when reviewers acknowledged Weir's track record, they did not pull their punches, the language in at least one instance veering into the misogynistic: Rupert Christiansen described the work as a 'limping, flaccid non-starter . . . wishy-washy stuff without belly, genitals or legs. It may tinkle prettily, it may amble gracefully, but it has no oomph'; '*Miss Fortune*, Royal Opera, Covent Garden, review', *The Telegraph*, 13 Mar. 2012. Appropriately, one of the opera's principal themes was 'human recovery; the ability to pick up and move on from tragedies and setbacks'; Weir in conversation with the author on 10 Mar. 2010, when the opera was being written. For a more positive review, see Paul Conway, 'London, Royal Opera House: Judith Weir's "Miss Fortune"', *Tempo*, 66, no. 262 (2012), 50–1.

[38] Colton, 'The Female Exotic', 281.

suggested I go to Tanglewood.' Her visit to the famous summer music school in New England was a life-changing experience, but years of confused struggle would follow before Weir found her own compositional voice. 'It was the tail end of the modernist period, which in a way I found very inspiring. It was wonderful to hear Boulez conducting the BBC Symphony Orchestra, and new pieces by Birtwistle. But I was trying to do something completely different, which didn't feel like "proper" music, and I just felt incompetent compared with these great figures.' That 'something different' was a self-deflating wit, which came into focus with *King Harald's Saga* of 1979 . . . 'That's the real me, I think, because of the way it refers to the history of opera and compresses something big into a small frame.'[39]

As this illustrates, Weir's statements about her musical identity and self-situation in historical and stylistic terms, which Colton refers to as Weir 'knowing her place and frame of reference',[40] are often couched in terms of reverence, modesty, and self-deprecation. This has led some commentators to amplify and distort her remarks. Accordingly, Hewett paints a distinctly unflattering picture of a woman awed by the serendipitous presence of great male composers around her, while she grapples 'for a long time' in a 'confused struggle' to find her own voice.[41] The works composed prior to the breakthrough in *King Harald's Saga* did not feel like 'proper music', and when the 'real me' was discovered, it amounted to a 'self-deflating wit'. Although Hewett is drawing upon Weir in this portrait, and Colton rightly highlights the susceptibility of Weir's remarks to 'a historical discourse of women as little more than "sponges" of male creativity',[42] the question is whether any of this is supported by the music? Colton's success in exposing the gendered discourse of Weir reception risks reinforcing it, leaving Weir on the ropes.

Invoking Harold Bloom, Colton refers to the supposed masculine traits of certainty, and the need for composers (modernists, especially) to speak confidently of their intentions, to reassure the listener they know where they are going: 'Commentators need the composer

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[39] Ivan Hewett, 'Judith Weir: What Tavener and Copland Taught Me', *The Telegraph*, 10 Jan. 2008.

[40] Colton, 'The Female Exotic', 287.

[41] Hewett's notion of four years (1975–9) as a 'long time' pales in comparison with the trials of many prominent male composers, for example Brahms, who claimed he aborted around twenty string quartets before his first three were published, and who took almost twenty years to complete his First Symphony. It also pales in comparison with the widely accepted 'ten-year rule', which is the average amount of time spent on intensive study before a creative work of significance is produced; see John R. Hayes, 'Cognitive Processes in Creativity', in John A. Glover, Royce R. Roning, and Cecil R. Reynolds (eds.), *Handbook of Creativity* (New York, 1989), 135–45.

[42] Colton, 'The Female Exotic', 287.

to have shown a purposeful, assured artistic intention',[43] and promote the appearance of effortless creativity,[44] one consequence being that modernism in particular is perceived to be a 'man's world'.[45] Although an emerging body of work centred on female modernist composers promises to transform this impression,[46] such studies also highlight a broader critical-cultural tendency to focus on women composers only when they engage directly with a Central European 'New Music' tradition governed by an Adornian discourse of materialism, thereby effectively gendering them male.[47] As will be seen, this is directly relevant to Weir, whose engagement with materialist values in her early withdrawn works, including the pursuit of the new through complex conceptual approaches and extended techniques, arguably helped to secure her success at an early age. Weir is certainly purposeful and assured in the cogent explanatory notes she writes to accompany her works, but, as we have seen, this is sometimes downplayed in other statements, and when Weir's determination is acknowledged it is often in gendered terms—as one critic remarked: Weir's 'gentle tones and shy laugh still hide strong opinions'.[48] Colton also draws attention to Lloyd Whitesell's assertion that 'artists who work with an aesthetic based on generosity, mutual exchange of ideas or a sense of nurture would be characterized, under Bloom's theory, as weak, and thereby feminized'.[49] These traits (one could equally call them attributes) are central to Weir's aesthetic.

My contention is that the entire discourse on Weir can be meaningfully recalibrated if it is resituated in the context of the widespread practice of withdrawing works, and in relation to recent creativity theories in which dialogue, serendipity, and uncertainty are

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[43] Ibid.

[44] Malcolmson, 'Composing Individuals', 126.

[45] See e.g. Annika Forkert, 'Magical Serialism: Modernist Enchantment in Elisabeth Lutyens's *O Saisons, O Châteaux!*', *Twentieth-Century Music*, 14 (2017), 271–303, esp. 272.

[46] See especially: Ellie H. Hisama, *Gendering Musical Modernism: The Music of Ruth Crawford, Marion Bauer, and Miriam Gideon* (Cambridge, 2001); Judy Lochhead, *Reconceiving Structure in Contemporary Music: New Tools in Music Theory and Analysis* (London and New York, 2016), which includes case studies on works by Kaija Saariaho, Sofia Gubaidulina, Stacy Garrop, and Anna Clyne; Laurel Parsons and Brenda Ravenscroft (eds.), *Analytical Essays on Music by Women Composers: Concert Music, 1960–2000* (New York, 2016); Denise Von Glahn, *Music and the Skillful Listener: American Women Compose the Natural World* (Bloomington, Ind., 2013), and Tim Howell with John Hargreaves and Michael Rofe (eds.), *Kaija Saariaho: Visions, Narratives, Dialogues* (Farnham, 2011).

[47] Lauren Redhead, '"New Music" as Patriarchal Category', 176.

[48] Martin Hoyles, 'Judith Weir', *Time Out*, 13–20 Apr. 1994, p. 110.

[49] Colton, 'The Female Exotic', 285; the reference is to Lloyd Whitesell, 'Men with a Past: Music and the "Anxiety of Influence"', *19th-Century Music*, 18 (1994), 152–63.

essential, irrespective of gender. The economic theorist Pierre-Michel Menger, for example, argues that successful artists benefit most when they 'negotiate, cooperate and exchange points of view . . . putting themselves in the place of the other as much as they communicate with the other'.[50] This perspective is comparable to Howard E. Gruber's notion that creativity requires the 'active search and inquiry' of a 'welcoming mind'.[51] In other words, creativity flourishes when it reaches out to existing ideas within a specialist field, and beyond. Support for this idea is provided by the concept of distributed creativity,[52] which highlights the importance of dialogue in creativity. Even traditional sketch studies have challenged the notion of 'purposeful, assured artistic intention'. Clarity of purpose may exist at a general level before a work is started, or be applied retrospectively, but creative processes are altogether more messy in detail: as is routinely observed, musical sketches often 'illuminate a vast labyrinth of fragmentary gestures, partially successful methods, failed attempts and dead ends that seem to run in many different directions at the same time'.[53] Moreover, the common practice of revising works following first performances or publication further undermines the notion of 'assured intention'.[54]

Conceptions of uncertainty and unpredictability are central to a range of creativity theories at the micro-level of working practices, the macro-level of creative life cycles, and in social fields more broadly, where recipients and users are inevitably involved. Menger, for example, stresses the importance of serendipity, chance, and uncertainty in the career trajectories of artists. Small advantages, such as rewards for early signs of promise or endorsements from peers and those already established, arising from 'incessant relative comparisons',[55] may become significant advantages in crowded scenes in which artists are often barely separable in terms of talent. Although to some extent aligned with the relational approaches of Janet Wolff, Howard Becker, Pierre Bourdieu, and others, according to whom

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[50] Pierre-Michel Menger, *The Economics of Creativity: Art and Achievement under Uncertainty* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 2014), 7.

[51] Howard E. Gruber, *Darwin on Man: A Psychological Study of Scientific Creativity* (Chicago, 1981), 248.

[52] See Eric F. Clarke and Mark Doffman (eds.), *Distributed Creativity: Collaboration and Improvisation in Contemporary Music* (New York, 2018), and Margaret S. Barrett (ed.), *Collaborative Creative Thought and Practice in Music* (Farnham, 2014).

[53] Friedemann Sallis, 'Afterword', in Jonathan Goldman (ed.), *Texts and Beyond: The Process of Music Composition From the 19th to the 20th Century* (Bologna, 2016), 289–94 at 291.

[54] Revision is arguably standard practice in music but published works are seldom perceived in this context, especially canonical works, such as Musorgsky's *Boris Godunov* or Britten's *Billy Budd*.

[55] Menger, *The Economics of Creativity*, 318.

art is filtered through and success constructed by networks of cultural value and market demand,[56] Menger highlights the fundamentally unpredictable character of the creative field as a whole, which he defines as a nexus of 'labor, talent, and chance',[57] in which, crucially, artistic agency emerges from interactions, comparisons, and dialogue among fellow artists.

Menger's ideas are key to the approach taken here, but it is worth noting that unpredictability is present in most other creative theories in some shape or form. Behavioural psychologists, for example, also acknowledge the role of uncertainty and indeterminacy in creativity.[58] Unpredictability is central to Margaret Boden's definition of creativity as 'the ability to come up with ideas or artefacts that are *new, surprising and valuable*'; the surprising element is 'unexpected', and creative ideas are 'unpredictable'.[59] Although there is disagreement over the precise role and importance of these factors, consensus exists regarding the importance of 'dual-process' models of cognition, in which autonomous thought and working memory combine in the generation and evaluative exploration of ideas, even as arguments continue about whether or not expertise and logic retain the upper hand over the unplanned and accidental.[60]

Some behavioural theorists even try to differentiate artists as either decisive or indecisive. Such attempts soon run into trouble, however, although in ways that are

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[56] Seee.g. Janet Wolff, *The Social Production of Art* (2nd edn., London, 1993), and *Aesthetics and the Sociology of Art* (London, 1983); Howard Becker, *Art Worlds* (Berkeley, 1982); and Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (Cambridge, 1993), and *The Rules of Art* (Cambridge, 1996).

[57] Menger, *The Economics of Creativity*, 319. Menger describes artistic labour as 'a constantly grueling challenge, always accommodating to trial and error—oriented toward completion, but without a clearly and readily definable end. In this sense, regimes of artistic invention are coupled with regimes for managing uncertainty' (pp. 177–8).

[58] For a useful overview see Aaron Kozbelt, Ronald A. Beghetto, and Mark A. Runco, 'Theories of Creativity', in James C. Kaufman and Robert J. Sternberg (eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Creativity* (Cambridge, 2010), 20–47.

[59] However, although Boden argues that chance is important, she also insists that 'structural constraints and specialist knowledge are crucial': 'Chance with judgment can give us creativity; chance alone, certainly not'. Margaret A. Boden, *The Creative Mind: Myths and Mechanisms* (London and New York, 2nd edn., 2004), 1–3 and 237.

[60] Liane Gabora, for example, does not believe Darwinian selection and creativity are closely matched, although she admits that the comparison has drawn attention to 'nonmonotonicity' in creative practice (deviations from gradual improvement, such as random experiments, false starts, and backtracking), and the fact that creativity is not restricted to 'purely logical, rational processes'; Liane Gabora, 'An Analysis of the Blind Variation and Selective Retention (BVSR) Theory of Creativity', *Creativity Research Journal*, 23 (2011), 155–65 at 164. See also Paul T. Sowden, Andrew Pringle, and Liane Gabora, 'The Shifting Sands of Creative Thinking: Connections to Dual-Process Theory', *Thinking and Reasoning*, 21 (2015), 40–60.

instructive. David W. Galenson's highly reductive 'finder-seeker' creator typology,[61] for example, divides artists into two types: conceptualists and experimentalists.[62] The conceptual artist makes a breakthrough early, at the age of twenty-something. This 'young genius' finds an idea, plans and executes it quickly and with precision, then follows up the early breakthrough with a series of new conceptual innovations or stylistic changes (Wagner, Picasso, Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Cage, Stockhausen).[63] Experimentalists, on the other hand, engage in the slow, more uncertain process of incremental evolution, building upon rather than rejecting existing traditions. These seekers are less clear on where they are heading but, through painstaking trial and error, they arrive at heights of maturity later in life (Monet, Cézanne, Brahms, Bruckner, Verdi). While the finders are known especially for a handful of key works (Stravinsky's Russian ballets), the seekers are admired for a corpus of work and a sense of culmination towards the end of their lives (Verdi's *Otello*). Both types are essential to the development of art: 'conceptualists create new styles and forms while experimentalists develop such styles and forms into mature symbol systems'.[64]

Clearly, this theory is problematic. Besides its reliance on value-laden concepts ('masterworks', 'genius', 'eminence'), and the notion of success (how is this measured?), there is a focus on individuals—in particular, exceptional, male individuals—in contrast to more relational approaches to art. Galenson and his followers, such as Aaron Kozbelt, are also overly reliant on what artists say they do, rather than on empirical evidence, and their judgements are shaped by the kind of hindsight that is not available to composers, who cannot predict how their musical languages or careers will develop. (This also raises the question of how best to approach early works, which are effectively steps in the dark: there is a balance to strike between interpreting them on their own terms and in relation to later music.) But fundamentally, the notion that artists are separable into finders or seekers itself is questionable: all creativity surely involves a combination of these approaches (ideation

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[61] Yana Durmysheva and Aaron Kozbelt, 'Psychologizing the "Finder-Seeker" Creator Typology: Relations between the Creative Approach Questionnaire (CAPPQ) and Other Measures', *Imagination, Cognition, and Personality*, 33 (2014), 341–58.

[62] See David Galenson, *Painting Outside the Lines: Patterns of Creativity in Modern Art* (Cambridge, Mass., 2001), and *Old Masters and Young Geniuses: The Two Life Cycles of Artistic Creativity* (Princeton, 2006).

[63] I use 'artist' in this paragraph in the broadest sense, to cover visual artists, composers, novelists, poets, sculptors, and so on. The composers listed here are mainly drawn from Aaron Kozbelt, 'Process, Self-Evaluation and Lifespan Creativity Trajectories in Eminent Composers', in Dave Collins (ed.), *The Act of Musical Composition: Studies in the Creative Process* (Farnham, 2012), 27–52.

[64] Kozbelt, 'Process, Self-Evaluation and Lifespan Creativity Trajectories', 47, following Galenson, *Old Masters and Young Geniuses*.

and elaboration), in a reflexive, dialectical process of certainty and self-doubt, determined direction, and self-criticism. Musical sketches detailing Schoenberg's evolution of twelve-tone technique, for instance, show this so-called assertive conceptualist either uncertain where he is going,[65] or 'exploring a spectrum of approaches to row ordering'.[66] In other words, the idea of a conceptualist working with quick precision is flawed.[67] Moreover, composers frequently associated with a desire to control ideas, such as Pierre Boulez and Brian Ferneyhough, are arguably more concerned with freedom of expression within systems of constraint.[68] Such nuances are potentially lost in the 'finder-seeker' model.[69] If we are to take anything from this model, it is that artists are broadly classifiable as early starters or late developers; that they have varied practices and work at different speeds; that there is some heuristic value to the notion of conceptual and experimental approaches, if they are considered to work in conjunction.

Although Weir's breakthrough work was written at the age of 25, existing discourse tends to present her as an experimentalist, drawing on her own admission that she works slowly, especially in the early stages of a piece, and that she builds up a technique for each piece as she goes.[70] This results in a sense that 'it's only in the last few minutes that the

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[65] Ethan Haimo observes Schoenberg making 'tentative', 'awkward' calculations for the Op. 29 Suite; Ethan Haimo, 'Atonality, Analysis and the Intentional Fallacy', *Music Theory Spectrum*, 18 (1996), 167–99; see 169–75.

[66] Jack Boss on Schoenberg's Op. 25 Suite for Piano, in Jack Boss, *Schoenberg's Twelve-Tone Music: Symmetry and the Musical Idea* (Cambridge, 2014), 37.

[67] For example, the myth of Mozart composing rapidly and with little effort has been debunked by studies of surviving drafts, sketches, and revisions; see William Kinderman, 'Mozart's Second Thoughts', in *The Creative Process in Music: From Mozart to Kurtág* (Urbana, Chicago, and Spingfield, Ill., 2012), 17–41.

[68] See Robert Hasagawa, 'Constraint Systems in Brian Ferneyhough's *Third String Quartet*', in Goldman (ed.), *Texts and Beyond*, 271–88. Hasagawa observes that the constraints Ferneyhough sets up must be 'solved through an assortment of local strategies. The ad-hoc nature of these strategies and their irrevocability once chosen suggest the activity of an improviser—though of course Ferneyhough's improvisation is in slow motion, through notation rather than in sound' (p. 285).

[69] In a highly critical response to Galenson's work, Dean Keith Simonton notes that 'most creators adopt a combination of conceptual and experimental styles'; Dean Keith Simonton, 'Creative Life Cycles in Literature: Poets Versus Novelists or Conceptualists Versus Experimentalists?', *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts*, 1 (2007), 133–9 at 134. Kozbelt points to Beethoven and Debussy as figures who show 'a curious mixture of characteristics of Galenson's categories'; 'Process, Self-Evaluation and Lifespan Creativity Trajectories', 35. Why the mixture is deemed 'curious' is unclear, beyond the fact that it points to a problem with Galenson's theory, which Kozbelt is otherwise keen to adopt.

[70] Weir shares this less directed approach with many other composers who devise systems as they go, such as Birtwistle. Colton often compares Weir unfavourably to Birtwistle in this regard, but the latter is arguably more uncertain and doubtful about his direction.

piece gets going', by which time it is too late to 'tear up the first twenty minutes and start again'.[71] Weir even describes herself as 'an "experimental" composer', which, according to Morgan, helps to explain 'the reason why she has withdrawn works: some "experiments" simply do not work'.[72] Yet this approach is deemed beneficial by Kozbelt, who argues that experimentalism offers valuable 'learning opportunities' to those who 'deliberately seek improvement within tradition'.[73] Weir's stance is more nuanced, however, since she does not work 'within' so much as draw on tradition, as it suits her, in which respect she is a model for the kind of 'anxiety free' use of the past frequently associated with Thomas Adès.[74] As White correctly observes, Weir 'appropriates established conventions but places them in a rarefied "frame"': her 'dialogue with [tonal and expressive] conventions, and her refusal to conform to their established implications, is one of the most intriguing aspects of her language, and one of the most difficult to analyze'.[75]

In the light of these observations, I approach Weir's early withdrawn works as a series of experimentalist dialogues with increasingly conceptualist traits, each illustrating Menger's concept of putting oneself 'in the place of the other', as much as communicating with the other, and Gruber's notion of the 'welcoming mind' that actively searches and inquires.[76] Before turning to Weir's music, however, it will be instructive to examine the

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[71] Andrew Ford, 'Seeing Both Sides: Judith Weir', in *Composer to Composer* (London, 1993), 107–14 at 109. This is occasionally reflected in Weir reception, for example, a review of the fifteen-minute orchestral piece *Forest* observes: 'What the work lacks is . . . the feeling that it knows its destination'; Richard Fairman, 'Weir and Wonderful', *Financial Times*, 19 Dec. 1995, p. 13. However, this opinion is consistent with Weir's intention to generate a series of organic, self-propagating shapes having started the piece 'with nothing but the opening melody in mind'. From Weir's Composer Note in the published score: *Forest* (London, 1995).

[72] Morgan, 'Judith Weir', 23. Similarly, Bayan Northcott has observed: 'most of the overtly Experimental pieces were among those withdrawn early'; 'Light Hand through the Darkness', *The Independent*, 16 Apr. 1994.

[73] Kozbelt, 'Process, Self-Evaluation and Lifespan Creativity Trajectories', 40. Kozbelt illustrates this point with reference to Beethoven, whose creative life cycle, he argues, demonstrates 'a relationship between self-criticism and longitudinal improvement'; see Kozbelt, 'A Quantative Analysis of Beethoven as Self-Critic: Implications for Psychological Theories of Musical Creativity', *Psychology of Music*, 35 (2007), 144–68 at 41.

[74] See Tim Rutherford-Johnson, *Music after the Fall: Modern Composition and Culture since 1989* (Oakland, Calif., 2017), 244–5; Edward Venn, 'Thomas Adès and the Spectres of Brahms', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 140 (2015), 163–212; and Arnold Whittall, 'James Dillon, Thomas Adès, and the Pleasures of Allusion', in Peter O'Hagan (ed.), *Aspects of British Music of the 1990s* (Aldershot, 2003), 3–27.

[75] White, 'Music Drama on the Concert Stage' (1997), 38.

[76] My approach here reflects Latour's insistence that it is 'the work, and the movement, and the flow, and the changes that should be stressed' when considering actor networks. Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford, 2007), 143.

practice of withdrawing works more generally, both in order to challenge gendered interpretations of Weir's actions, and to raise ethical considerations.

CREATIVE SELF-CENSORSHIP

Creativity theories have largely failed to consider the significance of the 'willing' withdrawal of works from artists' official catalogues, as with Weir, or the withdrawal of musical works following first performances. These acts amount to forms of creative self-censorship, which may provide important insights into an artist's creativity as a whole.[77]

There is not space to develop a gender-discourse analysis of the topic here, but clearly, Weir is in the company of numerous male composers who have expressed doubts about works subsequently withdrawn, but whose reputations remain undamaged.[78] With Brahms, for example, the practice is held to demonstrate admirable levels of self-criticism and awareness, linked with artistic growth and a heroic battle for perfection—in other words, 'experimentalist' struggle.[79] As will be seen, the ghost of Brahms hovers appropriately, even ironically, behind a number of Weir's early works—as, indeed, it haunts the music and thought of other British composers.[80] Yet the decision to remove from historical or audible

[77] Although such decisions may be reluctant, I use the term 'willingly' to refer to withdrawals made essentially for creative and aesthetic reasons as opposed to those determined primarily by other factors, such as political censorship. However, it is unlikely that a decision to withdraw a work is ever based exclusively on matters of creative practice, although it may be based entirely on external factors—for example, during the Yugoslav conflict in the early 1990s Weir understandably chose to withdraw *A Serbian Cabaret* (1984).

[78] György Kurtag, for example, composes 'painstakingly and haltingly: in 1985, when he was 59, his output had reached only Op. 23, and several works remained unfinished or had been withdrawn for revision'; Rachel Beckles Willson, 'Kurtág, György', *Grove Music Online*, www.oxfordmusiconline.com (accessed 20 Jan. 2018).

[79] For example: 'Brahms's *agens* [motivation] as a composer wishing to reach the "very best" makes more understandable the hesitation he had in admitting that a work was completed'; Imogen Fellinger, 'Brahms's View of Mozart', in Robert Pascall (ed.), *Brahms: Biographical, Documentary and Analytical Studies* (Cambridge, 1983), 57.

[80] This topic has been explored in detail by Edward Venn in relation to the music of Thomas Adès, in particular his work for baritone and orchestra *Brahms* (2001); see Venn, 'Thomas Adès and the Spectres of Brahms', which also examines Brahms's spectral presence in the musical thought of Schoenberg, and of Adès's teachers in Cambridge, Alexander Goehr and Hugh Wood. This phenomenon actually dates back earlier, to the emergence of the English Musical Renaissance, when Stanford 'strenuously advocated Brahms as a compositional paradigm'; Jeremy Dibble, 'Stanford, Sir Charles Villiers', *Grove Music Online* (accessed 31 Aug. 2018). A consequent anxiety of Brahmsian influence is evident in the early, unpublished works of Vaughan Williams and in Britten's juvenilia, although by 1940 Britten had developed an 'intense dislike' of Brahms; Christopher Mark, 'Juvenilia (1922–1932)', in Mervyn Cooke (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Benjamin Britten* (Cambridge, 1999), 11–35 at 14.

record a work that took time and effort to complete, perform, and even publish is far from inconsequential. What are the ramifications of such acts? Do they suggest hesitancy and self-doubt, or are they vital forms of critical reflection that strengthen artistic development? Moreover, when a work is withdrawn, what is the ontological status of that piece, and what are the ethics of writing about such works, if they are offered up for study? Before turning to Weir's own withdrawn works, it will be instructive to consider some of these issues and the practice of creative self-censorship more generally.

Musical works are withdrawn for numerous reasons, and some composers withdraw works more frequently than others. All work lists are fluid, with pieces removed, restored, and sometimes not even officially acknowledged (certain genres are especially vulnerable to omission, such as incidental and film music). Weir has stated that she removes works to tidy her workshop: it is a practical solution to the problem of keeping on top of an expanding catalogue.[81] Most often, however, the practice is associated with the sins of youth: juvenilia, student works, and early opus numbers are deemed to be underdeveloped, derivative, or unrefined—Gustav Holst, for example, referred to his 'Early Horrors'.[82] Richard Rodney Bennett withdrew all the works he composed while studying with Pierre Boulez, Bernard Rands those written under the guidance of Luigi Dallapiccola, and Henri Dutilleux nearly everything he composed before his Piano Sonata (1946–8), each perhaps seeking to erase their respective anxieties of influence.[83] Weir is similarly critical of her early pieces, describing them as impractical and unsympathetic to performers, written in an overly complicated idiom with which she did not feel comfortable, in contrast to the more practical music she wrote at this time for community and non-professional groups, which gave her greater satisfaction.[84] She found her community work liberating, and it clearly influenced the development of her mature style. But what lessons were learned from the withdrawn works? Were they relevant to later developments? The danger is that we simply accept the

[81] Conversation with the author at the composer's home, 14 Dec. 2013.

[82] See Colin Matthews, 'Some Unknown Holst', *Musical Times*, 125 (1984), 269–72 at 269. A broader survey would include around eight operas and Singspiele that Schubert began but failed to complete. Robert Winter suggests a range of reasons for this, including a 'lack of self-criticism' in the earliest attempts, the poor state of opera in Vienna at the time, and the lure of more immediate commissions; Robert Winter, 'Franz Schubert, (iv) Dramatic Music', *Grove Music Online* (accessed 20 Jan. 2018).

[83] See Philip Rupprecht, '"Something Slightly Indecent": British Composers, the European Avant-Garde, and National Stereotypes in the 1950s', *Musical Quarterly*, 91 (2008), 275–326 at 323 n. 92); Christopher Small, 'Bernard Rands', *Musical Times*, 108 (1967), 905–7; Roger Nichols, 'Dutilleux at 75', *Musical Times*, 132 (1991), 701–2.

[84] Conversation with the author in Aberdare Hall, Cardiff, 1 May 2012.

composer's view and brand such pieces as failed attempts or, worse still, overlook them altogether.[85]

But the practice of withdrawing works is not restricted to early development. To take a handful of examples: when George Antheil's career was in full maturity, in the 1930s and 1940s, he withdrew two symphonic works;[86] Karl Amadeus Hartmann's symphonies Nos. 3–6 were based on manuscripts that had been withdrawn or destroyed;[87] Salvatore Sciarrino's Fifth Piano Sonata, composed when he was 47, was withdrawn for revision.[88] In the case of Boulez, matters become more complex. As Edward Campbell has observed:

> A great admirer of Joyce, [Boulez] took to heart the notion of the work-in-progress, routinely spending several years on a single composition. He worked on *Pli selon pli*, arguably his greatest achievement, from 1957, revising parts of it as late as 1989. Other works such as *Le Soleil des eaux* and *Le Visage nuptial* exist in multiple versions, all of which will make for interesting debate as scholars and performers in the future pour [*sic*] over the composer's choices and compare manifestations.[89]

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[85] An excellent example is provided by Sebastian Wedler's efforts to bring out the 'other—repressed—voices in Webern's work', following a detailed, sketch-based analysis of the String Quartet (1905), widely considered the turning point in Webern's career when he began taking lessons with Schoenberg. Wedler notes 'the *inconsistencies* in Webern's later self-historiographical account as put forward in his 1932–33 lectures on *The Path to New Music*, where the composer aimed at bringing his entire musical development into a coherent narrative', suppressing voices that had 'a great impact on his early development', notably Strauss but also Mahler, Wagner, Wolf, Pfitzner, and Puccini. Sebastian Wedler, 'Thus Spoke the Early Modernist: *Zarathustra* and Rotational Form in Webern's String Quartet (1905)', *Twentieth-Century Music*, 12 (2015), 225–51 at 249 and 226. See also Ross Cole's interrogation of Steve Reich's formative 'proto-countercultural' collaborations, which he later downplayed: Ross Cole, '"Fun, Yes, but Music?": Steve Reich and the San Francisco Bay Area's Cultural Nexus, 1962–5', *Journal of the Society for American Music*, 6 (2012), 315–48.

[86] Sabra Statham, '"Back to Baltimore": George Antheil's Symphonic Excursion from European Modernism to American Postmodernism', *Musical Times*, 153 (2012), 3–16. At the same time, Antheil laboured on an 'American' symphony, which was rejected several times by potential conductors, revised multiple times, and not performed until fifty years after his death.

[87] See Andrew D. McCredie, 'Karl Amadeus Hartmann (1905–1963): New Documents and Sources in a Decennial Perspective', *Miscellanea musicologica: Adelaide Studies in Musicology*, 7 (1975), 142–85. For an associated discussion of Hartmann's suppression and revision of works from 1930 to 1945, to hide his earlier socialist convictions from West German audiences, see Ulrich J. Blomann and Jürgen Thym, 'A Semblance of Freedom: Karl Amadeus Hartmann between Democratic Renewal and Cold War, 1945–7', *Twentieth-Century Music*, 9 (2012), 143–59.

[88] This piece was withdrawn for revision after its premiere by Mauricio Pollini in Salzburg on 24 Aug. 1994.

[89] Edward Campbell, 'Open Form: Pierre Boulez, 1927–2016', *Radical Philosophy*, 197 (2016), 70–2, available at www.radicalphilosophy.com/obituary/open-form-pierre-boulez-1927-2016

For Boulez, arguably the most forthright modernist of all, uncertainty was part and parcel of his approach, as further examples attest. The first version of *Polyphonie X*, composed in 1949–50, was superseded by an entirely new version in 1951, which was subsequently withdrawn.[90] In 1969, at a critical moment in his development, Boulez withdrew *Pour le Dr Kalmus* following its premiere, for reasons that are still not understood. He then reintroduced the piece into his official catalogue in 2005.[91] And the withdrawn *Notation I* for piano (1945) was later revised as *Notations I* for orchestra (1978), which is essentially a new composition written in response to the original piano piece.[92]

Many of these examples reflect the practice of withdrawing works in order to revise them at a later date, which highlights the unpredictable (some would argue evolutionary) nature of creativity and artistic self-perception. Weir has explained that this applies to some of her early works, such as *Hans the Hedgehog* (1978), a children's 'music-drama' based on a Grimm brothers fairy tale, for reciter, two oboes, bassoon, and harpsichord, composed while she was Composer in Residence with the Southern Arts Association (1976–9). She could see the work needed revision but also did not feel it appropriate to have a piece written for non-professionals in her catalogue in the heady climate of 1970s experimentalism amid what she perceived to be 'a rather doctrinaire atmosphere that it was hard to break away from'.[93]

In other words, the decision to withdraw or withhold a work combines critical self-reflection with public image management, the dynamics of which will change during a

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(accessed 20 Jan. 2018).

[90] See Martin Zenck, 'Pierre Boulez: *Polyphonie X* (1951)—Ein gescheitertes, weil zurückgezogenes Werk: Ein "tombeau à tête reposée"?', *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*, 72 (2015), 277–301.

[91] See Brice Tissier, '"A Garland on Pierre Boulez": Quelques considérations sur *Pour le Dr. Kalmus* (1969/2005)', *Intersections: Canadian Journal of Music/Revue Canadienne de Musique*, 34 (2014), 153–79.

[92] See Christian Ofenbauer, 'Vom Faltenlegen: Versuch einer Lektüre von Pierre Boulez' *notation(s) I(1)*', *Musik-Konzepte*, 89–90 (1995), 55–75.

[93] Conversation with the author, 1 May 2012. During her time as Composer-in-Residence with the Southern Arts Association, Weir was invited in to schools for up to a week at a time, and worked with other groups, such as brass bands. *Hans the Hedgehog* and *From our Island: Scenes from the Isle of Wight* (1979) were written in this role, the former for schoolchildren and professional quartet Sheba Sound (see www.oboeclassics.com/Sheba.htm (accessed 20 Jan. 2018), the latter for the pupils of Medina High School, Newport, Isle of Wight, to celebrate the school's opening. Weir clearly relished composing this substantial, ambitious work, although she withheld it from her publishers. Scored for orchestra, piano, chorus, tape, slide projector, and mimes, it presents eight snapshots of the island's history (including early monastic settlers, invaders, smugglers, Queen Victoria), its present (represented by a *musique concrète* created by the children) and future.

composer's lifetime. In 1988, for example, promotional needs trumped artistic choices when an extract of Weir's harp piece *Harmony and Invention* (1978; revised 1980, withdrawn by 1987) was used to promote the composer on the cover of *The Wire* (issue 56), the experimental notation superimposed across a fashionably blurred, sepia-toned photograph of Weir, clearly projecting the image of a young, modern, and progressive artist. As a composer's style and priorities evolve, so earlier works may seem flawed or less valid. Even a work as canonical today as Stravinsky's *Symphonies of Wind Instruments* was withdrawn for a period during the composer's lifetime; the original 1920 version was eventually reworked in 1947, and when both were performed in 1968 Stravinsky 'did not like anything in the old version'.[94] Stephen Walsh argues that the revision was an attempt to resolve the 'many questions and uncertainties surrounding the work', including Stravinsky's own 'puzzlement' with his creation.[95] A more extreme example is provided by Hans Werner Henze's *Ein Werkverzeichnis 1946–1996*. As Charles Wilson has argued, this authorized volume, with entries on each of Henze's acknowledged works, amounts to 'a wholesale "meta-revision" of his published output—an undertaking that involved, to be sure, the revision of individual compositions, but above all sought to mark out the boundaries of his official *oeuvre*'.[96] In addition to recomposing scores, and even altering titles, which in certain instances removed political associations that had been integral to the conception of those works, Henze concealed his withdrawn works: although these appear in the chronological index (in square brackets), they are excluded from the alphabetical list, therefore locating them 'requires either knowledge of their date or a willingness to scan the index from start to finish'.[97] In other words, Henze exercised the composer's right to forget entire works, reconceiving his evolution in subtle and more interventionist ways that

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[94] Robert Craft, from a private communication with Stephen Walsh (1985), cited in Stephen Walsh, 'Stravinsky's Symphonies: Accident or Design?', in Craig Ayrey and Mark Everist (eds.), *Analytical Strategies and Musical Interpretation: Essays on Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Music* (Cambridge, 1996), 35–71 at 36.

[95] Ibid. Walsh suggests that Stravinsky's puzzlement was partly attributable to the confused nature of his sketching practices in the wake of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution (p. 39).

[96] Wilson notes that the 'handsomely produced volume' comprises 'entries on each acknowledged work (many with short commentaries) and replete with colour-plate illustrations, excepts from scores and sketches, a preface and a short essay, a biographical chronology, indexes of works (chronological, alphabetical and by scoring) and a roster of text authors and librettists. A designer engaged at Henze's expense had assured the catalogue's bibliophile quality, which won it prizes from the German book trade.' Charles Wilson, 'The Composer's Catalogue and the "Right to Be Forgotten"': Hans Werner Henze's *Ein Werkverzeichnis 1946–1996*', unpublished paper.

[97] Ibid. Wilson observes that this approach was also applied to 'incidental music for film, stage and radio (including only independent concert works refashioned from it), "occasional music" (such as dedication pieces), and contributions to collective compositions'.

amounted to 'a self-conscious act of conservation and self-canonization'.[98]

As already discussed, comparisons of work lists presented by Weir's publisher have changed throughout her career, with the notable omission of incidental music.[99] Some of Weir's music has evaded cataloguing altogether, including *Memoriale* in memory of Britten, from 1986, the *Alveley* symphonies for amateur musicians,[100] and music for a story-telling project with Vaya Naidu and Sarvar Sabri, *Psyche* and *Manimekelai*, which toured the UK with the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group in 1996 and beyond.[101] And some pieces have even eluded Weir herself, such as her *Mass* for string quartet, which was performed forty times then apparently lost (the full score and parts, I discovered, are located in the Victoria and Albert Museum Archive). Similarly, Michael Finnissy holds the 'missing' manuscript of Weir's Cello Sonata (1980). As this example demonstrates, performers are also important stakeholders in withdrawn pieces. The Arditti Quartet, for example, has repeatedly asked Gerald Barry to return the string quartet *Cork* to his performing catalogue.[102] Similarly, Michael Finnissy has petitioned Weir to reinstate *An mein Klavier*, not only because he believes in its artistic value (the work was commissioned and premiered by him), but also because other players have asked to perform it.

But what are the artistic merits and ethical implications of studying or performing withdrawn works? Efforts to restore early, withdrawn versions do not always receive critical approval. After attending a series of 'Vaughan Williams rarities', including the original withdrawn version of the *London Symphony* (1911–13), Mark Doran lamented the 'defective slow movement (disappointingly short in some places and crushingly long in others), its

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[98] Ibid.

[99] Examples include: *The Gift of the Gorgon* (1992), incidental music for Peter Shaffer's play, premiered at the Barbican Arts Centre, London, directed by Peter Hall; and *Oedipus the King* and *Oedipus at Colonus* (1996), incidental music for plays by Sophocles, directed by Peter Hall at the Royal National Theatre. However, Weir's incidental music for the premiere of Caryl Churchill's *The Skriker* (1994) is included in the 2018 catalogue.

[100] There are at least three symphonies in this cycle; the first was composed for the Alveley Village Band, in Shropshire.

[101] The project toured Birmingham in 1997. In 2000 it was repackaged as *Future Perfect*, touring England as part of an Arts Council Contemporary Music Network venture, which travelled to India in 2002. A further revised UK tour happened in 2005. See https://www.bcmg.org.uk/manimekalai (accessed 18 Jan. 2018).

[102] This was most likely withdrawn because it was conceived as a contrapuntal exercise in preparation for Barry's opera *The Intelligence Park*. See Adrian Jack, 'Introducing Gerald Barry', *Musical Times*, 129 (1988), 389–93 at 391–2. For an example of a conductor championing the restoration of an abandoned piece, see Oliver Knussen, 'In Search of "Grohg"', *Tempo*, 189, June 1994, pp. 6–7.

shipwreck of a finale, and its longer "epilogue" vitiated by the slow end of the (extended) scherzo', leading him to regret the painstaking restoration and resurrection of 'imperfect, withdrawn scores and unsatisfactory, rejected "first attempts" . . . to form the basis of gala events attended by royalty and relayed by radio. World's gone mad.'[103] For others, however, the original *London Symphony* proved to be a 'valid' work in its own right, and 'certainly worth hearing'.[104]

During the fifteen or more years Michael Tippett composed before his first published work, his early symphony in B flat (originally titled Symphony No. 1) was performed then withdrawn.[105] Despite a clause in the composer's will requesting that the work be left alone because he 'regarded it as immature and overly influenced by Sibelius',[106] Martyn Brabbins and the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra received permission from the Michael Tippett Musical Foundation to perform and record the piece in their 2017–18 season. Tippett's early symphony is potentially instructive because it was the first orchestral composition he completed following his counterpoint studies with R. O. Morris (the work was composed in 1933 then revised the following year). As Thomas Schuttenhelm has revealed, the symphony generated a positive critical response when it was first performed in 1934, with Tippett conducting, at Morley College. Tippett subsequently campaigned hard for a performance by the BBC, revising the work several times, but it was rejected, twice. With the outbreak of war the manuscript was deposited in the vaults of Schott in Mainz but it was subsequently withdrawn from Tippett's catalogue, and on 6 July 1994 a note was appended to the copy in the British Library: 'TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN: This manuscript may be inspected and studied for research purposes but not copied for publication performance or exploitation in any way until fifty years after my death.'[107]

Owing to the efforts of Brabbins and the BBC SSO, audiences will not have to wait until 2048 to hear Tippett's symphony. But should musicologists remain silent?

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[103] Mark Doran, 'First Performances: London, Barbican: Vaughan Williams Rarities', *Tempo*, 58/228 (2004), 70–3 at 73.

[104] Colin Matthews, 'Going behind Britten's Back', in Lucy Walker (ed.), *Benjamin Britten: New Perspectives on his Life and Work* (Woodbridge, 2009), 8–16 at 9.

[105] Thomas Schuttenhelm, *The Orchestral Music of Michael Tippett: Creative Development and the Compositional Process* (Cambridge, 2014), 31.

[106] Kate Molleson, 'Tippett's Work Resonates in Politically Charged Times', *The Herald*, 23 Nov. 2016, https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/14921328.michael-tippetts-work-resonates-in-politically-charged-times/ (accessed 20 Jan. 2018).

[107] Add. MS 72010; in Schuttenhelm, *The Orchestral Music of Michael Tippett*, 34. My thanks to Fiona McHenry in the British Library for confirming that there is no comma between 'publication' and 'performance' in Tippett's note.

Schuttenhelm evidently thinks so, since he refrains from detailed commentary on the piece despite having seen two extant manuscripts, remarking: 'it is probably wise to consider the composer's caution against "exploitation in any way" before any such performance is arranged'.[108] The word 'exploitation' sounds an ethical alarm bell, and clearly permission needs to be granted. But what does the Tippett symphony reveal? Set against the view to 'leave well alone', Colin Matthews has argued it is 'unthinkable that musicologists should be able to gloat in private over music that they consider unsafe for ears other than their own'.[109] These remarks may be, in part, a defence of Matthews's own ongoing work to revive or orchestrate Britten's early music, but others have also argued for the value of this music and, in doing so, challenged the common division between 'juvenile' and 'mature'.[110]

Armed with Weir's permission to examine her scores, many of which she kindly placed at my disposal, I proceed now to the music. In discussing these works, I do not mean to ignore or in any way diminish Weir's decision to withdraw them. Rather, I seek both to appreciate them on their own terms and understand how they informed her subsequent development. I will move forward chronologically and selectively, emphasizing certain works over others according to my own perception of their relative importance. And while I wish to avoid acting as an uncritical spokesperson for Weir—a problem that has been the subject of recent debate—it is worth emphasizing that I am concerned with music that the composer would prefer us not to hear.[111]

WEIR'S EARLY WITHDRAWN WORKS

Weir's earliest works reveal what we might clearly call an experimentalist engagement with historical models, inspired by Berio's *Sinfonia*.[112] The first three acknowledged pieces are based on Mahler, Monteverdi, and Bach, and yet each in its own way demonstrates that far from being a slow developer Weir had immediately identified what would go on to be some of her main preoccupations, even some of her key stylistic traits. But this realization

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[108] Ibid. 34.

[109] Matthews, 'Going behind Britten's Back', 11.

[110] See Lucy Walker, '"How a Child's Mind Works": Assessing the "Value" of Britten's Juvenilia"', *Notes*, 64 (2008), 641–58; Mark, 'Juvenilia (1922–1932)'; and Christopher Mark, *Early Britten: A Study of Stylistic and Technical Evolution* (New York and London, 1995), esp. 7–36.

[111] I am referring to the conference 'Writing about Contemporary Artists: Challenges, Practices and Complexities', hosted by the Institute of Advanced Studies, Surrey University, 20–2 Oct. 2017.

[112] It is also possible that Weir was influenced by John Tavener's use of Bach and medieval Spanish music in his *Ultimos Ritos* (1972).

emerged from experimentation. Rather than comprehend these traits as *sui generis*, the early withdrawn works demonstrate they grew from, and through, a deliberate modernist misreading and critical reinterpretation of the music of others, casting pre-existing music in a new, revisionist light. Dreyer refers to these earliest works as 'classical parody pieces'.[113] Inasmuch as they are clearly modelled on pre-existing music, Weir's earliest works are indeed parodies. However, parody is often narrowly defined as oppositional—a negation, rejection, or ironic inversion of a model—when in fact, as Linda Hutcheon highlights, it is a complex genre that covers a variety of approaches, 'from respectful to playful to scathingly critical'.[114] She notes that parody is 'repetition with critical distance', 'a formal and structural relation between two texts', 'a mode of self-reflexivity', and 'one of the ways in which modern artists have managed to come to terms with the weight of the past', perhaps by drawing attention to an ideal or a norm 'from which the modern departs'.[115] My reading of Weir's earliest works is that they are all of the above but that fundamentally they are sympathetic dialogues with pre-existing models that seek points of rapprochement and common interest from which to depart, elaborate, and extend, rather than ridicule, satirize, or transgress. In this sense, they are closer in attitude and intent to sixteenth-century 'parody Masses', inasmuch as they pay a certain respect to and may seek to learn from a model, reimagining it through processes of 'transfer, transformation and transfusion', as John Milsom has usefully argued.[116] Weir does misread and critically reinterpret her models, and this is consistent with Hutcheon's idea of parody as a form of 'authorized transgression' that is 'double and divided', its ambivalence stemming from the 'dual drives of conservative and revolutionary forces'.[117] We might therefore conclude that Weir's earliest works are parodies in the broadest sense but with an emphasis on the constructive and sympathetic; they are open to a range of attitudes but are never mocking or 'scathingly critical'.

The first piece, *Where the Shining Trumpets Blow*, around seven minutes long, represents Weir's earliest reflection on German Romanticism, which is an important strand in her later music.[118] It was composed in 1972–3, the year before Weir went up to

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[113] Dreyer, 'Judith Weir', 593.

[114] Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (Urbana and Chicago, 2000), p. xii.

[115] Ibid. 6, 22, 29 and 5.

[116] John Milsom, 'The T–Mass: *Quis scrutatur*?', *Early Music*, 46 (2018), 319–31 at 320.

[117] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody*, 26.

[118] For more in this, see Castein, 'The Composer as Librettist', and David Beard, 'From "Heroische Bogenstriche" to "Waldeinsamkeit": Gender and Genre in Judith Weir's *Heroic Strokes of the Bow* and *Blond Eckbert*', in Beate Neumeier (ed.), *Dichotonies: Gender and Music* (Heidelberg, 2009), 77–96.

Cambridge and at the end of her private studies with John Tavener, a near-neighbour in her home borough of Harrow.[119] In an expansion of the original, Weir took Mahler's 'Wo die schönen Trompeten blasen', from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, and recomposed it for eighteen solo strings (9/3/3/3). Given the importance of trumpets in the title and narrative, Weir's instrumental choice may seem ironic, but her gentle dynamics and softened fanfare gestures are sympathetic to Mahler's direction for the movement as a whole, 'Geheimnisvoll zart, verträumt [Secretly delicate, dreamy]', which reflects the song's subject matter: a maiden is awoken by her soldier lover whose ghostly presence and parting remark, that he must return to his 'Haus' under the green turf of the battlefield, suggests he has been killed.[120] Weir's song choice and approach further demonstrate her clarity about future preoccupations: gendered narratives of disappearance, loss, and senseless slaughter, distanced by framing devices, are central to her oeuvre.[121] She may also have been attracted by the provocative aspect of Mahler's apparently naïve turn to folk tales as a counter to the materialism and modernity of *fin de siècle* Vienna.[122] Weir amplifies the original (transposed down, from D to C minor, apparently to exploit the darker tones of the lower open strings on the viola and cello), clearly relishing Mahler's instrumental doublings and sometimes repeating ideas, such as the fanfare flourish in bar 126. Yet she also extends the original through extensive use of *divisi* to create an intricately contrapuntal canvas in which the melody is distributed democratically between the violins; at the opening, for example, the oboe melody (Weir's own instrument) is passed from first, to third, then fourth violin (see Pl. 1(*a*)). <Place Pl. 1a and b near here> The opening section is then further amplified by the addition of numerous short-note cells, which echo a demisemiquaver figure heard at the start of Mahler's song.

This elaboration of Mahler's delicately haunted soundscape, added to Weir's description of the piece as a 'fantasia', recalls Robin Holloway's orchestral 'paraphrases', *Scenes from Schumann* (1970), although Weir claims she was unaware of Holloway or his

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[119] The autograph score is dated 'December 1972—February 1973', which places it in a gap year between her attendance at the North London Collegiate School and university. Weir began lessons with Tavener in 1970. According to Dreyer, she studied with Tavener for three years, although Weir has stated 'we met five or six times over a couple of years'; quoted in Nicholas Wroe, 'The Storyteller', *The Guardian*, 12 Jan. 2008.

[120] Weir returned to Mahler's *Wunderhorn* in 1978 in her own eponymously titled orchestral work, lasting twelve minutes. At the time of writing, however, neither score nor recording is extant.

[121] Examples include *King Harald's Saga*, *Thread!* (1981), *Missa del Cid* (1988), and, more recently, *Armida* (2005) and *In the Land of Uz* (2017).

[122] See Julian Johnson, *Mahler's Voices: Expression and Irony in the Songs and Symphonies* (Oxford, 2009), 225.

music at the time.[123] Unlike Holloway, however, Weir adopts certain avant-garde techniques, which have a more striking transformative effect. One 'mildly aleatoric' feature,[124] which further illustrates a democratizing purpose, is her instruction that the players should avoid their standard instrumental groupings and instead sit randomly on the stage or scattered throughout the auditorium, ensuring that Mahler's melody is spatially dispersed and the piece will sound different each time it is performed. There are also Manchester School overtones in Weir's reference to three basic strands in the music: (1) Mahler's notes freely orchestrated; (2) variations on the original; and (3) 'a homophonic line which rises one quarter-tone per bar, occasionally coinciding with Mahler's bass . . . or with something in strand (2) of the music'.[125] Each player moves from one strand to another every few bars.

The result is a distancing of Mahler's voice, the fragments of his melodies woven more or less audibly through Weir's invented textures. Sustained and quarter-tonal, sometimes chromatic and insistent, occasionally inserted between the original material, rather like Berio's linking sections, or 'cement', in *Rendering* (1989), Weir's new textures distort the original: her rising homophonic line undermines, at times submerges, the dynamics of Mahler's tonal world (see Pl. 1(*b*) above). Consequently, when Mahler modulates from D minor to major, as the soldier addresses his lover for the first time, Weir marks the transition texturally, replacing the previous mixture of ghostly *col legno* and *arco* with more vivid snap *pizzicato*. Similarly, Mahler's subsequent modulation to G{fl} major (E major modified by quarter-tones in Weir's score), is marked by multiple descending chromatic figurations played *fortissimo*, 'at the heel' of the bow; these are used extensively until the music modulates again.

Many features of the original are inevitably lost in this translation, notably Mahler's poignant shifts between narrating and speaking voices, which would have attracted Weir to the song. Some semblance of this device is retained, however, at the moment in the original when the soldier begs his lover not to weep, assuring her that within a year 'sollst du mein

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[123] Although Holloway's work was composed in 1970, Weir did not meet him or become aware of his music until her third year at Cambridge (1975–6), during which time she recalls having 'about ten composition lessons'; Judith Weir in Palmer, 'Judith Weir', 451. In her final year, Gordon Crosse also gave some seminars in his capacity as a visiting composer at King's College. Composers Robert Saxton and James Wood were in the year above Weir and they ran a new music group with whom she performed on the oboe, including performances of Webern and Messiaen. From conversation with the author, 1 May 2012.

[124] Judith Weir, 'Composer Note', *Where the Shining Trumpets Blow* [unpublished autograph score].

[125] Ibid.

Eigen sein'. Here Weir's rising homophonic line dominates in *fortissimo* tremolo figurations, its shivering gestures implying the maiden's distress in contrast to Mahler's focus on the soldier's desire to be reunited. Weir also undermines Mahler's habit of drawing out certain poetic images. For example, his lyric epiphany at the soldier's 'O Lieb auf grüner Erden' is grounded in her version by ominously repeated *tenuto* bass pedal notes, marked *crescendo*, again implying a darker reality for the maiden. Weir also emphasizes the subsequent contrast between the soldier's reference to 'the shining trumpets' blowing on the battlefield (the melody carried by all nine violins) followed by the darker image of his 'Haus' of green turf (played by a single violin).

Despite these modifications to Mahler's narrative, it is remarkable how in certain respects Weir's approach anticipates Dieter Schnebel's *Schubert-Phantasie* (1978; rev. 1989), for chamber orchestra, in which the late G major Piano Sonata, D.894, is 'placed behind a thick, widely spaced veil of orchestral strings Schnebel called a *Blendwerk*, literally a "blinding work" . . . a product of the mid-1970s spectral turn [that] meticulously filters out and smudges together the overtones of Schubert's harmonies, while figurations from the earlier composition come and go in slow succession'.[126] In an interpretation that might also apply to Weir's piece, Seth Brodsky argues that Schnebel's 'string supplement', or 'sound screen', preserves Schubert's distance and absence, and is both a means of elucidation and an impediment to reception, serving 'as a kind of modernist horizon onto which the Schubertian forms are projected'.[127] Weir's mildly aleatoric, Berio- and Manchester School-inflected score, which unknowingly parallels Holloway and anticipates Schnebel, is certainly not shocking, but its textures are intricate, surprising, and subtly askew, and its concept indicative of a 1970s trend to re-examine Romanticism, later adopted by a swathe of other composers.[128]

The second of the student pieces, *Ohimè: Variations on Monteverdi's Messenger Scene*,[129] around eight minutes long, is an original response to the moment in Act II of *Orfeo* when the female messenger, Sylvia, informs Orpheus of Eurydice's death, leading Orpheus

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[126] Seth Brodsky, *From 1989, Or European Music and the Modernist Unconscious* (Oakland, Calif., 2017), 165. 'Blend' may also be translated as 'dazzling' or 'deceiving'.

[127] Ibid. However, when he emerges from behind the screen, Schnebel's Schubert becomes distinctly Wagnerian or Mahlerian, suggesting a prismatic approach, as in Berio's *Rendering*.

[128] For a sample of such works, see ch. 8, 'Recovery: Gaps between Past and Present', in Rutherford-Johnson, *Music after the Fall*, esp. 244–52.

[129] The autograph is dated 'London–Cambridge, Dec. 1973–Feb. 1974', placing it in Weir's first year at university.

to declaim 'Ohimè! [Alas!]' (see Ex. 1 and Pl. 2). <Place Ex. 1 near here> <Place Pl. 2 together with Ex. 1 or at least on the same opening> Composed for the Cambridge New Music Group, conducted by Edwin Roxburgh, Weir adopted the instrumentation of the Birtwistle/Hacker Pierrot ensemble: flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano, and percussion (xylophone and glockenspiel). The 'Theme' is based on the famous chromatic twist between Orfeo's G minor sigh, 'Ohimè! Che odo?' and the messenger's preceding E major harmony. Appropriately, Weir's Theme begins with a bright E major triad momentarily blotted by a D^7 chord before E is hesitantly then testily reasserted—a very early example of the 'framing' device White believes is central to Weir's musical language, whereby tonal conventions, such as cadential figures, are alluded to but distorted somehow and 'placed in a rarefied "frame"'.[130] We then hear Orfeo's melody in the flute followed by Sylvia's response ('La tua diletta sposa è morta [Your beloved bride is dead]') in the piano. However, the notes from Sylvia's melody are displaced through different octaves, in a leaping figuration, with repeated pitches omitted. In the remainder of the Theme, Weir freely adapts several other passages from the messenger scene. The pitch content and rhythm of the *recitativo* is largely retained but is broken up, transposed into different octaves and distributed through the ensemble. The harmonies are generally consistent with the original, too, but added notes begin to creep in (E{fl} is added to B flat major; E to E{fl} major), amplifying chromatic inflections in Monteverdi's vocal line.

The real interest lies in the variations, the first of which begins with another framing device: a short, bright E major chord, followed by a sustained G minor triad in the strings beneath an extended chromatic melody in the flute, beginning G–B{fl}–C{sh}–D{sh}. This recurring idea retains the G and B{fl} from Orpheus's sigh (D–B{fl}–C–G), but sharpens the C and D, thereby bringing elements of G minor and E major together (see Pl. 2(*b*)).Of course, the E major and G minor triads are present in one of the three transpositions of the octatonic scale (collection CI: C{sh}, D, E, F, G, G{sh}, A{sh}, B), and the recurring four-note motif belongs to another (collection CIII: D{sh}, E, F{sh}, G, A, A{sh}, C, C{sh}); therefore Weir transmutes Monteverdi's tonal tension through octatonic colouring.[131] The remainder of the melody is entirely chromatic, however, Weir working through a sequence of quasi-serial rotations. A recitative-like quality is not entirely lost, but the melody becomes increasingly fragmented. Octave displacements then figure prominently in an extended piano solo, which cunningly ends by combining the wide leaping figuration with the notes of the E

[130] White, 'Drama on the Concert Stage' (1997), 38.

[131] The octatonic labelling used here is derived from Pieter van den Toorn, *The Music of Igor Stravinsky* (New Haven and London, 1983).

major triad, the tonal reference almost evading recognition. A rapid *moto perpetuo* texture with G minor- and E major-based clusters follows, before a return of the chromatic sigh motif in extended arpeggios, the piece ending with gleaming E major trills in two triangles, glockenspiel, and upper register piano, alternated with very soft G minor chords in the strings. Once again, preoccupations in Weir's later works (in this instance speech-melody and narration) are approached experimentally, Weir juxtaposing quasi-serial passages with neo-tonal gestures, dramatizing the chromatic conflict at the heart of Monteverdi's messenger scene, but in a manner that becomes her own and barely resembles the original at all. Of the new ideas generated in the process, the *moto perpetuo* tonal clusters (triads with added pitches) frequently reappear in later works, notably during the 'Reel' in *Airs from Another Planet* (1986), and 'Kite in *moto perpetuo*', Act I, scene 3 from *A Night at the Chinese Opera* (1987).

Weir's growing confidence is demonstrated by a willingness to depart further from her model, and this trend is continued in *Campanile* (1974), scored for full orchestra. The band is Classical but with harp, extended brass (four horns, three trumpets, two tenor trombones, bass trombone, tuba), arranged either side of the conductor, and two sets of tubular bells, also placed antiphonally. According to Dreyer, the piece comprises 'a concertino core' derived from Bach's Cantata No. 50, *Nun ist das Heil und die Kraft*, BWV 50, 'framed by two Brahmsian elegies, all threaded together by an effective bell motif'.[132] It is unclear whether he actually saw the piece since the outer sections develop chromatic clusters around F and G{fl}, these notes introduced by the tubular bells at the start and subsequently extended by the orchestra, down to E and up to A{fl}, forming knotted spectral harmonies akin to those of Ligeti, Xenakis, or Lutosławski, albeit punctuated by Stravinskyan bell-like chords. If Brahms is present at all, a likely model is the Serenade No. 1, in D major (the same key as the Bach), although it would be more accurate to suggest that elements of this piece haunt Weir's score. For example, Brahms's pastoral opening (a repeated open-fifth drone on D and horn melody that evoke hunt and pastoral topics, commonly considered a reference to the finale of Haydn's Symphony No. 104), which might have attracted Weir given her interest in folk traditions, could have prompted thoughts of natural overtones and, hence, of bells. Likewise, a prominent chromatic descent from A to E, first heard in the bassoon at Letter B in the first movement of Brahms's Serenade, subsequently repeated in the oboe and horn, may have led to Weir's notion of working within that pitch space (see Ex. 2). <Place Ex. 2 near here> Repeated syncopations in Weir's

[132] Dreyer, 'A Talent to Amuse', 593.

melodic-like rhythmic figurations could be ghostly repetitions of any number of lilting Brahmsian melodies, such as the rocking *dolce* horn solo from bar 64 in the Serenade's third movement (see Exx. 3 and 4), and an irregular walking bass recalls numerous Brahmsian perambulatory bass lines (see the cellos, double basses and harp in Ex. 4). <Place Exx. 3 and 4 near here> But any model Weir used has been refracted beyond easy recognition. This means that the insertion of the Bach cantata, from the reprise of the principal fugue subject in bar 76 of the original, is a rude intrusion, its tonality and clear melodic profile (the parts rearranged) forming a complete contrast with the preceding chromaticism. Likewise, the abrupt return to Weir's opening clusters wrenches away the expected resolution on 'Gott', in Bach's final bar. Moreover, what Dreyer refers to as a bell motif threading the whole together is in fact the chromatic cluster idea. Introduced into the cantata by a sustained bass pedal on F, the cluster (joined by the irregular walking bass) expands through the orchestra and, like a creeping plant on its host, strangles Bach's counterpoint.[133] In short, *Campanile* demonstrates an impressive display of instrumental dexterity and a continued interest in framing, corrupting, and refracting tonal models through increased chromaticism.

The result was striking enough to win a competition in Aberdeen, where one of the judges was Aaron Copland, which in turn led to a Koussevitzky scholarship to study at Tanglewood in 1975, where Weir was tutored by the musical polymath Gunther Schuller.[134] According to Dreyer's masculinist reading, Schuller

> became a crucial influence at a vital moment . . . With typical American pugnaciousness about the European avant-garde, Schuller disabused her of any remaining shreds of Darmstadt dogma and set her on a new harmonic track. This immediately found concrete expression in the wind quintet *Out of the Air*, which she considers her true opus 1.

As we have seen, however, prior to her time in Tanglewood, there was little Darmstadt dogma in Weir's approach. Moreover, contrary to Dreyer's statement, *Out of the Air*

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[133] The recovery and corruption of Bach chorales in this manner is reminiscent of Birtwistle's *Medusa* (1969; rev. 1970), in which Bach's Chorale Prelude on the Magnificat *Meine Seele erhebt den Herren* and the Chorale *Wer nur den lieben Gott last walten* are appropriated and transformed, and it is possible that Weir attended a performance of a revised version of this work at the Queen Elizabeth Hall on 3 Mar. 1970, performed by the Pierrot Players under Birtwistle's direction. In a telling parallel with Weir, Birtwistle was uneasy about his use of the Bach material and withdrew the piece, describing it as 'a lie'; see Birtwistle interview in Michael Hall, *Harrison Birtwistle* (London: Robson Books, 1984), 147.

[134] This occurred in the summer vacation between Weir's second and final years at Cambridge.

demonstrates that Weir actually moved closer to the avant-garde.[135] What is immediately apparent from the opening is not just the slow rate of harmonic change but the chromatic nature of that movement (see Pl. 3). <Place Pl. 3 near here> The first nine bars unfold a closing chromatic wedge in which the upper voice descends by regular semitone steps, from G to D, while the lowest voice ascends by a mix of small intervals, from F{sh} to D{sh} (see Fig. 1). <Place Fig. 1 near here> In fact, the very soft, slowly unfolding harmony, in which one chord emerges gradually from another, followed by rapid, staccato single-note repetitions, then stabbing chords, all point to a particular model, namely Ligeti's *Ten Pieces for Wind Quintet*, from 1968 (see Ex. 5). <Place Ex. 5 near here>

The opening pages of Weir's and Ligeti's pieces bear a striking resemblance, including the opening measured silence. To be clear, *Out of the Air* is more original composition than parody. Indeed, to employ Yayoi Uno Everett's distinction, it is more *unmarked* allusion than *marked* double-voiced parody because the model is not set in sharp relief from its new context: model and host are closely entwined, the music heard as one style rather than two.[136] This stylistic consistency means that the listener is not called upon to decode an incongruity, as in parody. However, the trend, established in Weir's earlier works, of transforming a model is continued, and there are important formal, technical, and structural relations between the two works.[137] From Ligeti's *Ten Pieces*, Weir derives the idea of nine short sections, each roughly a minute long, separated by silences of different lengths. She also draws from Ligeti an interest in instrumental role-play, and his fragmentation of form and clarity of expression become vital ingredients in her later music. And yet initially Weir pushes her music in a more chromatic direction than Ligeti: her opening chord (E{fl}–E–F{sh}–G) contrasts with Ligeti's initial white-note cluster (E–F–G–A–B), and she adds quarter-tones to further distort her model, as in *Where the Shining Trumpets Blow*.

Weir's opening chord is actually derived from the opening of Ligeti's second

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[135] *Out of the Air* was preceded by the string sextet *Italian Doubles* (1975); Dreyer states this piece was performed when Weir arrived at Tanglewood, where it impressed Schuller but not Olivier Messiaen. According to Weir, this work is no longer extant.

[136] Yayoi Uno Everett, 'Signification of Parody and the Grotesque in György Ligeti's *Le Grand Macabre*', *Music Theory Spectrum*, 31 (2009), 26–56 at 30.

[137] White suggests, somewhat disingenuously, that the Ligeti influence in this piece is 'discrete', and that Weir 'quickly moved away from the Ligetian harmonic language'. However, she also notes that Weir's 'more recent pieces share something with [Ligeti's] music of the 1960s, in that she has retained her interest in minimal materials, in stark, crisp phrasing, and in episodic forms'. White, 'Music Drama on the Concert Stage' (1997), 28–9.

movement, although she omits the central F. In other words, she conducts a form of dialogue with Ligeti, his score functioning as an agent that, in Bruno Latour's sense, speaks back to her.[138] For example, Weir's response to the rapidly repeated *staccatissimo* tones introduced in Ligeti's fifth movement comes early, at the end of her first section, where they disrupt Ligeti's notion of a slowly evolving harmonic field (although she omits his extended techniques). At the start of Weir's second section, Ligeti answers back: his dry *sff possible* chords appear literally 'out of the air', following a silence of five to nine seconds. But Weir responds again: her chord is different (widely spaced and not fully chromatic) and is repeated and distorted with sustained quarter-tone bends, up and down, followed by a descending three-note figure in the flute and bassoon, which later assumes a thematic agency that is absent from Ligeti's piece. Weir's third section is a free interpretation of Ligeti's virtuosic fourth movement, whereas her remaining sections follow their own logic. From here onwards the mood changes and Weir's agency emerges more clearly, although she achieves this by using Ligeti's figurations in new ways, like actors in a new drama. Ligeti's sound world is ultimately left behind, the music at times resembling late Stravinsky or the gentler moments in early Birtwistle, but with a sense of poise and theatrical gesture that is Weir's own. Unlike Ligeti, Weir ends with a varied reprise of the opening, the repeated chords gradually shortened and separated by longer rests, until all trace of her interlocutor is gone.

Even as late as 2003, Weir commented that Ligeti is 'a composer I'd love to think I approach'.[139] How much Schuller actually guided Weir in this direction is unclear. Weir's near contemporaries Oliver Knussen and Simon Bainbridge, who also studied with Schuller at Tanglewood in the 1970s, moved in an entirely different direction, returning to late Romantic and early modernist textures, possibly in the light of Nicholas Maw's sumptuous *Scenes and Arias* from 1962.

Weir's experiment evidently paid off, for in 1974 *Out of the Air* won a Greater

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[138] See Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, esp. 63–86. My attribution of agency to Ligeti's score is more specifically informed by Benjamin Piekut's 'Actor-Networks in Music History: Clarifications and Critiques', *Twentieth-Century Music*, 11 (2014), 191–215, in particular his observations that 'the social extends out across the objects we share' (p. 200), and that these objects have agency if they make a difference, for example as a consequence of the fact that they 'represent, summarize, exhort, cajole, afford, implore, or persuade' (p. 199). Additionally instructive are his arguments that: in Actor-Network Theory (ANT), it is 'an action or an event—not an intention—that manifests an agent' (p. 195); 'a musicological approach informed by ANT will take seriously the agency of the aesthetic object' (p. 197 n. 26); and ANT is a research methodology 'committed to empirical work' (pp. 211–12), in which 'an action is always a kind of translation' (p. 198).

[139] Weir in Reyland, 'Judith Weir in Conversation'.

London Arts Association award and received its UK premiere in the Purcell Room. Moreover, the resulting exposure and associated prestige led to a commission by one of the UK's leading modernist ensembles, Peter Maxwell Davies's The Fires of London. A period of experimentation with avant-garde techniques followed, a fact that has gone largely unreported in accounts of Weir's development. Weir is disingenuous on this point, however, stating that prior to her lessons with Robin Holloway, in 1975–6, her music 'had been congested with little cells: Robin forced me just to write a line'.[140] Line is not a key feature of her first work for the Fires of London, however, and an interest in extended melody only fully emerges in Weir's music from the millennium onwards, notably in *The Welcome Arrival of Rain* (2001–2), *I Give You the End of a Golden String* (2011–13), and *Blue-Green Hill* (2013). And yet the origins of this development are revealed in a hitherto unknown piece composed in Cambridge, which bears Robin Holloway's initials ('RGH') in pencil on the last page of the score, indicating that he had looked it over.

A substantial piece, lasting around fifteen minutes, *Stone Columns and Sky* for string orchestra (1975–6) explores a dramatic dialogue between floating, cirrus-like melodic figures, initially moving in fairly constricted spaces, and more grounded, lower-register tremolo textures. Initially the former are associated with the violins and the latter with the other, lower, strings, but in the second half of the piece the situation is reversed: the violas and cellos assume the role of melody makers and the tremolos pass to the violins. This work may have been a response to Holloway's criticism, for it charts an evolution from short, cellular ideas to more extended melodies, initially presented in the first violins from bars 50–71 (see Pl. 4(*a*) and (*b*)). <Place Pl. 4a and b near here> The piece is framed by a series of softly sustained, widely spaced chords—presumably, the 'stone columns' of the title—heard at the start and reprised near the end. The close attention to relative weight and density in these chords clearly relates back to the slowly changing harmonies in Ligeti's *Ten Pieces*, but their broader spacing is more characteristic of Weir's approach in later works. An analytical summary of the first thirteen bars, up to Figure 1, is given in Fig. 2.[141] <Place Fig. 2 near here> Most of these chords are hexachords based on dominant seventh triads (for example, E flat major 7 in b. 1, F major and F sharp major 7 in b. 3), corrupted by additional notes. In their smallest form, four of these chords (those in bb. 8, 9, 12, and 13) are subsets

[140] [Anon.], 'Judith Weir', *The Sunday Times*, 24 Aug. 1980. According to Holloway: 'I remember finding what she wrote in those long ago days very exiguous. Her music is made up of very spare, beautiful images, precise and delicate. She's very exact. As the pieces developed and as she grew into her full nature I saw that she was something very special.' Quoted in Tom Service, 'Judith Weir: The Female Music Master with Royal Seal of Approval', *The Guardian*, 3 July 2014.

[141] The piece is 220 bars long.

of octatonic collections CII, CII, CI, and CIII respectively, and the remaining chords (those in bb. 1, 3, 5, 7, and 11) are subsets of octatonic collections but with an additional rogue note (E{fl}, F, E, C{sh}, and G respectively). This approach, used later in *Isti Mirant Stella* (1981) and *Ballad* (1981), is another early indication of Weir's interest in octatonicism.[142] The stacked minor and major thirds in the penultimate hexachord, especially, become a hallmark of Weir's mature style in which augmented and diminished added-note triads are used as floating signifiers in a post-tonal context where no harmonic direction is implied.

Weir subsequently received two commissions from the Fires of London. The first, *Twenty-Five Variations*, scored for the full Pierrot ensemble, was premiered at the St Andrews Festival in 1977 then performed at the Queen Elizabeth Hall the following year. It is a substantial piece lasting twenty-three minutes, and it is significant because it was Weir's first vocal setting and her first foray into Scottish folklore. The work sets ballads from Orkney and Islay that refer to mythological figures known as 'silkies', seals that shed their skins and assume human form when they come on land, seducing unsuspecting villagers. In the two versions Weir sets, 'The Great Silkie' and 'A Sealchie Song', a woman tending a baby ponders who the father can be. The silkie then appears, claiming to be the father, and returns with the baby to the sea. Given this context, Weir's generic title is somewhat obscure. It may be an allusion to Brahms's *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by G. F. Handel*, Op. 24, which comprises twenty-five variations, and which is referenced more directly in another work discussed below, but Weir presents neither theme nor variation in any clear sense. Rather, her score is divided into five sections, with settings of the two versions of the story in the first and last sections respectively (in the first, the silkie is killed; in the latter he mocks the gunner: 'pouther winna burn i' saut' ['powder won't burn in salt']).

Weir provided a piece that fits the Davies/Fires of London mould neatly: it is a theatrical, experimental score, with serial-like part-writing, although the vocalist is not stretched unduly. The overall sense is of Weir stepping into Davies's world, striving for a broader, expressionistic palette with richly varied textures, albeit on her own terms. This is especially evident at the climax towards the end when the vocalist, depicting the defiant silkie, plunges from A{sh}{2p} to 'as low a pitch as possible', in two extended sections for E{fl} clarinet with virtuosic leaps, and from several striking sound effects involving

[142] Tom Morgan discusses this approach to harmony in *Isti Mirant Stella*, where it also unfolds as a series of ascending scales; see Morgan, 'Judith Weir', 37–8. Similar ascending scales also figure prominently in *Blond Eckbert* in association with the bird.

washboard, guiro, high register *col legno battuto* on viola and cello, and knocks on the wood of the piano. The magical shape-shifting silkie is also evoked through vivid timbres, combining vibraphone with rapid figurations in the celeste, and glinting string harmonics and glissandi. Elsewhere, piano and marimba feature prominently, with an array of percussion in section 3. Distinctive to Weir, however, is a geometric poise and dramatic counterpoint formed through an abstract attachment to certain intervals and rhythmic figurations, supported by numerous *moto perpetuo* textures.

As Pl. 5 illustrates, with its five meticulously notated and independent parts, this piece is the origin of the objectivity and fastidiousness that some commentators have detected in Weir's mature style. <Place Pl. 5 near here> The result is highly restless, the textures notably denser and more fragmented than in previous works, with frequent changes in tempo, as if Weir felt the need to produce a more complex-looking score, or feared the performers might feel insufficiently challenged. There is some use of microtones and overall the melodic profile is angular, the harmony chromatic in a broadly post-tonal, modernist manner. Closer inspection, however, reveals the presence of octatonicism. This is audible in the frequent use of repeated minor thirds, at times extending to subsets of the interval-three cycle, but obscured by jagged leaps, especially elevenths and thirteenths, and a constant shuffling between subsets of the three transpositions of the octatonic scale (see Ex. 6). <Place Ex. 6 near here> However, section 4 begins by unfolding a whole-tone pattern in the solo viola, and section 5 reintroduces Ligeti in the form of tremolando-like semiquaver quintuplets, in a narrow chromatic cluster (C4 to F4).

This particular figuration, of written-out tremolos, is especially prominent in Weir's second commission for the Fires, *King Harald Sails to Byzantium*. Here a series of layered tremolo effects closely resembles the continuous, rapid polyphonic figurations in Berio's *Points on a Curve to Find*, from 1974—although in Berio's piece the piano is afforded a more important role (see Exx. 7 and 8).[143] <Place Exx. 7 and 8 near here, preferably on the same opening> More isolated, but no less striking, references to avant-garde music also occur in *Black Birdsong*, composed in 1977, in which Weir sets two Scottish ballads. Both ballads concern the fate of a fallen knight overlooked by hungry ravens. In the first version,

[143] The comparison to Berio's *Points on the Curve to Find* was also made in a review of the premiere, which described *King Harald Sails* as a 'severely disciplined *perpetuum mobile* of about eighteen minutes' duration . . . [that] impressed by the purity of its intentions, [but] seemed to suffer a little from a lack of formal articulation'. Paul Driver, 'First Performances: 1979 St. Magnus Festival', *Tempo*, 130 (1979), 35–8 at 38. On her interest in Berio, Weir has commented: 'I thought Boulez, Stockhausen, Berio were all great composers—especially Berio, who had melodic poetry and eloquence that stood out for me'; Wroe, 'The Storyteller'.

sung in English, the knight's hounds, hawks, and pregnant maiden (symbolized by a 'fallow doe') seek him out, the latter dying by his side. However, in the second, sung in a Scottish dialect form of English, he is abandoned: since his 'lady's ta'en anither mate', the birds descend to feast and the wind blows over his bare bones 'for evermair'; once again, the futility of masculine conflict is underscored, with nature an oblivious but resourceful onlooker. Here the image of the birds pecking out the dead knight's eyes and making a nest from his 'golden hair' is evoked by a texture that could have been lifted from any number of avant-garde works from the 1960s and 1970s (see Ex. 9). <Place Ex. 9 near here> It is another accomplished, vivid score, although the use of experimental techniques largely for illustrative purposes shifts the emphasis at times towards an ironic form of parody.[144] Clearly, both Fires of London commissions encouraged Weir to develop a range of techniques, put to use in her later narrative-based pieces.

Present in the audience at the premiere of *Black Birdsong* was another young composer who had become an admirer and good friend of Weir's. Eight years Weir's senior, Michael Finnissy was at the time embarking upon some of his most uncompromisingly virtuosic, often frenetic piano works when he met and became friends with Weir in 1976.[145] The two met through a mutual friend, the American choreographer and dancer Kris Donovan, with whom Finnissy had collaborated, and whom Weir first encountered when she attended the National Choreographic Summer School at Surrey University in 1976. Weir subsequently received a Gulbenkian Foundation commission to compose a new score for a rerun of Robert Cohan's *Mass*, a London Contemporary Dance production. Finnissy had been involved extensively with this company since his student days in the mid-1960s as a pianist and composer, and although he had moved away from it by 1976, Weir recalls encountering him quite often at dance-related events at the time. Impressed by Finnissy's 'incredible breadth of knowledge', Weir felt that he represented a welcome escape from the 'inertia and smugness of English creative life'.[146] Musically, she especially admired his flow of lines and clarity of register, more recently remarking: 'I always say it's very lyrical, melodic writing.'[147]

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[144] White notes that 'the composer's comments confirmed my suspicion that the language of this piece was situated "on the fence" between inherited conventions and her own developing style: "yes, it is still very modernist. One of the movements, the one with the English song, was deliberately on the verge of parodying that very kind of angular style.' White, 'Music Drama on the Concert Stage' (1997), 25–6.

[145] From email communication between Michael Finnissy and the author, 16 Sept. 2016.

[146] From an email to the author, 14 Sept. 2015.

[147] Conversation with the author, 1 May 2012.

Despite some obvious differences, both composers share many common interests, including an attraction to remote ethnic cultures and distant historical periods, a concern for vocal forms of story-telling,[148] and the use of pre-existent material, especially folk music. Yet for Finnissy, several of these concerns emerged only fully from around 1979–80.[149] His *Verdi Transcriptions* and *Gershwin Arrangements* were under way at this time and almost all works 'from this point on make reference to some other music'.[150] At this very time, in 1980, Weir composed the piano piece *An mein Klavier* to a commission from Finnissy.[151] In the following year, Finnissy dedicated the piano piece *Reels* to Weir, in which he explored the pibroch, which Weir then began to examine in the mid-1980s. When Finnissy became President of the British Music Information Centre in 1985, Weir composed the piano piece *Michael's Strathspey* for him, and this gesture was reciprocated with a work for Weir's fiftieth birthday.[152]

So what kind of piece is Weir's *An mein Klavier*? Despite the obvious nod to Schubert's eponymous song, set to a poem by Christian Schubart (essentially a love letter from a pianist to his piano), Dreyer detects in this work an 'anti-Romantic austerity',[153] while Morgan suggests it is a character sketch revealing something of Finnissy's personality.[154] In fact, Weir was following a form of emulation and critique that Finnissy had himself pursued in his portrait works *Ives* (1974), *Grainger* (1979), and *Nancarrow* (1980), which explore aspects of these personalities but in a style that is entirely Finnissy's own.[155]

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[148] It was Finnissy who suggested Weir base her 1978 children's 'music-drama' *Hans the Hedgehog* on 'Hans mein Igel'; see Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Kinder- und Hauschmärschen*, 7th edn., vol. 2 (Göttingen, 1857), no. 108, pp. 114–19.

[149] Ian Pace, essay on Finnissy's *A History of Photography in Sound*, 8. https://divineartrecords.com/recording/finnissy-the-history-of-photography-in-sound/ (accessed 20 Jan. 2018). Weir's detailed work on folk sources began around 1984.

[150] Ibid. 9.

[151] Finnissy premiered this piece on 20 July 1980 at South Hill Park Arts Centre, Bracknell.

[152] In 1996, Weir was included in a list Finnissy gave of composers 'I prize very highly, and whose work undoubtedly influences mine' (Michael Finnissy in Christopher Fox, and Ian Pace, 'Conversations with Michael Finnissy', *Uncommon Ground: The Music of Michael Finnissy* (Aldershot, 1997), 9), and in 2008 Weir declared Finnissy to be 'the most important living British composer' (www.theguardian.com/music/2008/jan/22/classicalmusicandopera1 (accessed 20 Jan.2018)).

[153] Dreyer, 'A Talent', 595.

[154] Morgan, 'Judith Weir', 24.

[155] Regarding his *Gershwin Arrangements*, for example, Finnissy uses the term 'critique', commenting that he tore up his first attempt at this piece and the first versions of the *Verdi Transcriptions* because they were '[t]oo close to the originals. No profile. No insight'; Fox and Pace, 'Conversations with Michael Finnissy', 9.

A clue to the kind of dialogue Weir's piece explores is offered in the Schubart poem, in which the performer breathes 'celestial and pure' thoughts to the piano, the piano speaks 'innocent and virtuous' feelings to the pianist, and the two sing together. Similarly, Weir's *An mein Klavier* alludes to the kind of frenetic virtuosity expressed in Finnissy's *English Country-Tunes* and *all.fall.down* (both 1977), but does not adopt the precisely notated yet fluid, asynchronous textures of those works (see Pl. 6). <Place Pl. 6 near here> Weir uses her own means to approximate Finnissy's virtuosity: her dynamic range is less extreme, there are no extended broken chords or intricate time ratios. Like Finnissy, Weir dispenses with bar lines, although in Finnissy's performing score the composer implements his own metrical scheme—a practical necessity, no doubt, but one that reveals his own hand in realizing Weir's musical portrait. Although the metrical scheme was not introduced into the published score, Weir did incorporate Finnissy's preferred method of half pedalling, which she has gone on to use in subsequent works, such as *Ardnamurchan Point* (1990).

The markings in Finnissy's performing score are revealing, highlighting the music's instability, its irregular phrase lengths with misfires and constant interruptions. Its nervous energy and attention to detail seem purposefully designed to draw in performers, forcing them to analyse the piece when working out how to make it their own. Finnissy's metrical scheme emphasiz

es frequent hemiola-like shifts, and draws particular attention to Weir's interest in shaping pockets of time through the relative weight of harmonic events, with downbeats generally falling on chords or clusters with more notes. However, Finnissy is not consistent in this regard; for example, the first chord in the piece, on the third crotchet, is marked '3' in a phrase of four crotchets.[156]

Although somewhat uncharacteristic of Weir's music in general, any sense that *An mein Klavier* is a parody of Finnissy, or of modernism more generally, sits awkwardly with the two composers' mutual respect. Rather, Weir's piece is a kind of transcription of Finnissy's pianism, one that, to paraphrase Finnissy's own thoughts on transcription, is in the business of discovering its object and revealing what its perceptions and insights about that object are.[157] The work is also clearly concerned with identity and identification and, in this sense, it anticipates both Weir's and Finnissy's empathetic but inevitably subjective

[156] Finnissy's metrical scheme for the opening of the first section, with each number falling on a crotchet beat, is as follows: 1234, 12, 12, 12345, 1, 12345, 12, 12, 12, 12, 1, 12, 12, 12, 12, 1234, 1234, 123, 12, 12 [etc.].

[157] Fox and Pace, 'Conversations with Michael Finnissy', 3.

responses to different musical styles and folk traditions: in each case, the composer learns something about his or her own identity by engaging with another.

An mein Klavier comprises eight, roughly one-minute long sections, each of which is characterized by a particular textural idea and an improvisational quality of Weir's own. Like Finnissy, Weir is concerned with densities and gestures, extremes of register and range.[158] Finnissy's interest in Gershwin is reflected in section 4, and elsewhere other voices are implied, including those of Ligeti, Messiaen, Bartók, and Boulez. In some sections, such as the fifth, shown in Pl. 7(a), the music becomes more abstract with ideas leaping across multiple registers. <Place Pl. 7(*a*) near here> Humorous touches notwithstanding, Weir evokes the violence in Finnissy's piano music from the 1970s, but also the passion, directness, and raw commitment that are central to his output as a whole. Yet these emulated qualities are expressed through gestures (the leaping block chords) that are distinctive to Weir, not Finnissy. An internal dialogue, therefore, arises between gestures associated with portraiture and new directions in Weir's own language. A tendency to vacate the middle register and emphasize high, suspended textures (for example, the high semiquavers suspended over low bass notes in section 3, shown in Pl. 7(*b*)) becomes a hallmark of Weir's later music. <Place Pl. 7(*b*) near here> While the tremolo figuration of the opening is familiar from earlier works, the rising scales become characteristic of later pieces, their scampering quality suggestive of a theatrical imagination (see Pl. 7(*c*)); here the accidentals imply A major but the D-centricity established by the D major triad and repeated octave Ds in the inner voices suggest a mode based on D in which the raised fourth note (G{sh}) is equivalent to the raised fourth in the Lydian mode). <Place Pl. 7(c) near here> The deployment of tonal shapes, especially dominant sevenths and ninths, relates back to the quasi-tonal play, or 'framing', in *Ohimè*, but more clearly anticipates works composed in the 1980s, such as *A Night at the Chinese Opera*, where their placement adds poise and surprise, illustrating Weir's interest in the way 'Stravinsky sometimes had that sharp timing that just makes you lose your balance a bit'.[159] Most important, however, is the use of cinematic, montage-like cross-cutting, which increases as the piece progresses, bringing back snippets of the opening material. This is a technique that Finnissy himself had deployed from as early as the mid-1960s and that reflects his strong interest in film and photography. Rather than sound like Finnissy, however, Weir's portrait clarifies the *qualities* that she values in his music, in particular the cross-cutting device, which she then makes her own in subsequent

[158] For more details on Finnissy's piano style, see Ian Pace, 'The Piano Music', in Brougham, Fox, and Pace (eds.), *Uncommon Ground*, 43–134.

[159] Weir cited in Reyland, 'Judith Weir in Conversation'.

works.[160]

But there is one more model lurking beneath the surface of this piece, revealed in the first four notes: Brahms's *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by G. F. Handel*, Op. 24, mentioned earlier in relation to Weir's *Twenty-five Variations*, in which not just Handel but Bach and Beethoven are clearly enshrined.[161] Here is a likely source not only of the opening figuration—derived from the first four notes of Brahms's fugue subject, a truncated written-out tremolo (see Ex. 10(*a*))[162]—but perhaps also the idea of a succession of contrasted miniatures (most of Brahms's brief variations are further subdivided, each half repeated), as well as numerous textural and virtuoso devices, including the opening rising scale motif (variations 1, 2, and fugue; see Ex. 10(*b*)), regular semiquaver motion (variations 4, 8, 12, 14–16, 18, 21, 24, and fugue), cross-metric shifts created by denser chords (23, 24, fugue; see Ex. 10(*c*)), sliding chromaticism (2, 9, 12, 20), split registers (15–17, 25, fugue), leaping block chords (fugue) (Ex. 10(*d*)), contrasting humorous sections (10, 14, 16), mannered ornamentation (14, 19, 21), and arrested motion (19, 22). <Place Ex. 10a–d near here> However, besides the allusion to the fugue subject, which recurs throughout Weir's piece, Brahms is nowhere fully audible, hence there is no sense of historical distance as in *Where the Shining Trumpets Blow*. Nor is there any suggestion that Weir based her work on Brahms's in a more specific manner, as did Mauricio Kagel in his *Variationen ohne Fuga* for large orchestra (1972), in which Brahms's Handel variations are both audible and distorted by new techniques.[163] In effect, *An mein Klavier* is a matryoshka doll-like portrait of Handel (Bach and Beethoven), inside Brahms, inside Gershwin, Messiaen, Ligeti, and company, inside Finnissy, each layer nuanced, added to, or significantly reinterpreted by

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[160] Twenty-four years later, Finnissy returned the compliment with his own portrait of Weir. His short chamber piece, *Judith Weir* (2004), brings together various components redolent of Weir's mature style, principally a breezy strathspey melody in the violin, which moves in steady cycles, continually varying and regenerating itself. Beneath this, a pizzicato cello tags along, never fully in step with the violin. Meanwhile the keyboard (Finnissy played a melodica at the premiere) adds florid bursts that at times contribute to the ensemble but otherwise go their own way. Finally, the clarinet provides a series of halting, solitary pitches that suggest a withdrawn, solemn character, entirely detached from proceedings. This somewhat incongruous yet astutely etched tableau, while relevant to Weir and her interests (Scottish folk music, non-professional music-making, instrumental agency, humour), has an Ivesian feel that very clearly emanates from Finnissy's attraction to multiple lines moving in different directions, each part speaking a different dialect or language, yet somehow shepherded along together.

[161] I am indented to Cameron Gardner for pointing out this correspondence.

[162] The resemblance is disguised by the fact that whereas Brahms's metrical placement stresses the third note in the motif, Weir's notes are evenly weighted.

[163] It is tempting to see *An mein Klavier* as an ironic response to Kagel's piece, since it is the reverse of his conception—a *Fuga ohne Variationen*.

Weir herself.

CONCLUSIONS

It should now be clear that modernism of various hues, from Stravinsky through Berio, Ligeti, Davies, and Finnissy, played a formative role in Weir's development. Key aspects of her personal style, including experimentation with historical models, economy of expression, fastidious attention to detail, instrumental role-play, expressionistic imagery, fragmented structures, written-out tremolos, and cinematic structuring devices, all arose directly from her engagement with modernism. Moreover, the fact that many of these works won awards, which then led to prestigious commissions—notably the first Fires of London commission that followed the success of *Out of the Air*—supports Menger's theory that creativity is founded upon uncertainty, chance, and reputation-building through risk-taking.

Weir's 'indebted independence' is really no different from that of any other composer,[164] although where Weir has been prone to hide this relationship, by withdrawing works, others have chosen different strategies. Thomas Adès's openly parodic *Brahms*, for example, is an intriguing psychological exercise in 'sending-up' a composer whose approach clearly mirrors Adès's own, most obviously in a shared obsession with intervallic cycles.[165] Whether stated openly, hidden, disguised, or undermined in some way, all such relationships can be understood as forms of dialogue that are central to creativity.

Further dialogues are also suggested by the titles of some of Weir's early withdrawn works, such as *Italian Doubles* (1975), for string sextet, with its punning allusion to a game with two pairs of players, and the septet *Between Ourselves* (1978), in which Weir deliberately heightens the situation in ensemble music where close communication between players is essential—it is 'so full of tempo modulations, pauses, and rhythmic coincidences,

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[164] Arnold Whittall, 'A Fine First Recording of Weir's mid-1980s Opera on the Life of a Chinese Architect' [Review of Judith Weir, *A Night at the Chinese Opera*, Scottish Chamber Orchestra and soloists, cond. Andrew Parrott, NMC D060 [released 2000]', *Gramophone*, Nov. 2000, p. 127.

[165] Adès's satirical approach clearly calls into question Rutherford-Johnson's argument that his use of the past is free of anxiety or 'aesthetic hang-ups'; *Music After the Fall*, 244–5. Indeed, Venn's masculinist interpretation of *Brahms* sees Adès 'confronting the authority of Brahms in order to "master it, to appropriate its power to go on composing"', in an attempt to 'exorcise' the spectres of Brahms that continue to haunt modernist music, in a manner that is 'more ambivalent, less reverential, and altogether more confrontational' than Schoenberg; Venn, 'Thomas Adès and the Spectres of Brahms', 209 and 211. By contrast, Weir's approach is neither reverential nor confrontational, her preferred method being to bring Brahms into dialogue with other voices, including her own.

that the players are forced to make a great many individual decisions in the course of performance and to communicate these decisions clearly to one another'.[166] Other early works pair instruments, requiring them to shadow each other in rapid unison, overlap, and interact closely, as in the *Pas de Deux* (1980) for violin and oboe,[167] and *Etude basse* (1978–9) for tuba and piano. Dreyer rightly describes the former as 'a supreme exercise in playing together, as violin and oboe dance in a close clutch, tripping each other briefly in the middle. The oboe just fails in an escape-attempt towards the close, and the piece ends abruptly in mid-air, exactly as it began'.[168] Given the oboe was Weir's instrument, Dreyer's description may be seen to imply that she was attempting to free herself in some way. However, a social, democratic impulse is fundamental to her aesthetic:

> It's not very interesting to do music on your own. Interaction is what makes it valid, I think, for amateur musicians, and professional musicians too. You know, I'm not doing this to show that I'm a really decent person who's got democratic ideals. It's a true need on my part to say, 'do you or don't you think that's right. What do you think about this music?' It's important for me to feel that there's a connection with other people's thought processes.[169]

Menger refers to 'the indeterminate nature of the emergence of what is original and new':[170] some experiments will not satisfy the artist, but with luck a reputation builds through relationships with contemporaries who 'test' one another and impart reputation by association, through commissions and collaborations. As noted earlier, Menger also argues that successful artists benefit most when they 'negotiate, cooperate and exchange points of view . . . putting themselves in the place of the other as much as they communicate with the other'.[171] As we have seen, far from being derivative, Weir's key musical and aesthetic preoccupations all emerged in her earliest works, even as she reached out to others. Moreover, her willingness to remain open to an exchange of ideas and perspectives with such a radical artist as Finnissy, even after she had composed *King Harald's Saga* and by most accounts already emerged fully on the British music scene, is surely testament to a

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[166] From the announcer's introduction to the BBC Radio 3 broadcast of the work on 29 Apr. 1980; the words are most likely Weir's but neither her Composer Note nor the score is extant (BL Sound Archive, M8396).

[167] This piece was commissioned by the Southern Arts Association and composed for Alan Wilkinson and Sarah Ionides.

[168] Dreyer, 'A Talent', 593.

[169] Reyland, 'Judith Weir in Conversation'.

[170] Pierre-Michel Menger, *The Economics of Creativity*, 7.

[171] Ibid.

strength of character in one who is willing to go on listening to others. Even if the immediate results of that exchange were subsequently withdrawn, the lessons learned are there for us to hear in subsequent, so-called 'original' works.

ABSTRACT

Most accounts of Judith Weir's music focus on her mature, apparently postmodern approach. By contrast, my analysis of the early withdrawn works highlights a series of creative dialogues with some of Weir's older British and Continental contemporaries, and more historical models. These interactions reveal that modernism and the avant-garde were essential to the evolution of Weir's musical language—a formative experience that has been downplayed in attempts by critics to distance Weir from modernism. The gendered reception of Weir's music is also noted, in which her natural modesty and withdrawal of early works have been portrayed as symptoms of feminine uncertainty, self-criticism, and anxiety. This discourse is recalibrated by relating it first to creativity theories, in which dialogue, uncertainty, and serendipity are valued, and second to the more widespread practice of withdrawing works, which illustrates how self-censorship is a common and vital part of creative practice, irrespective of gender.

<captions>

PL. 1. Judith Weir, *Where the Shining Trumpets Blow* (1972–3), bb. 9–16: (*a*) violins; Mahler's oboe melody passed 'democratically' from violin 1 to 3, to 4; (*b*) lower strings, quarter-tone distortions of Mahler's harmony. From the composer's unpublished autograph manuscript

PL. 2. Weir, *Ohimè: Variations on Monteverdi's Messenger Scene* (1973–4), Variations, bb. 36–45. From the composer's unpublished autograph manuscript

PL. 3. Weir, *Out of the Air* (1975), bb. 1–9

PL. 4. Weir, *Stone Columns and Sky*, for string orchestra (1975–6): (*a*) short cellular ideas, Fig. 4, bb. 29–32; (*b*) Weir, Fig. 5, bb. 37–42, start of violin 1 melody. From the composer's unpublished autograph manuscript

PL. 5. Weir, *Twenty-five Variations* (1976), bb. 44–6

PL. 6. Michael Finnissy, *all.fall.down.* (1977) (extract from *all.*, p. 2). © Michael Finnissy. Reproduced with permission

PL. 7(*a*). Weir, *An mein Klavier* (1980), section 5 (extract)

PL. 7(*b*). Weir, *An mein Klavier*, section 3 (extract)

PL. 7(*c*). Weir, *An mein Klavier*, section 1, opening

FIG. 1. Weir, *Out of the Air*, summary of outer voices, bb. 1–9

FIG. 2. Weir, *Stone Columns and Sky*, analysis of opening chords, bb. 1–13, which return near the end at Fig. 18

EX. 1. Monteverdi, *Orfeo* (1609), Act II, Orfeo's 'Ohimè' from the Messenger scene

EX. 2. Johannes Brahms, Serenade no. 1, Op. 11 (1860/1), for small orchestra, 1st mvt., from letter B, chromatic descent from A to E in *espressivo* bassoon solo, passed to *dolce* horn and oboe solos

EX. 3. Brahms, Serenade No. 1, 3rd mvt., b. 64 ff., *dolce* horn solo

EX. 4. Weir, *Campanile* (1974), bb. 46–53. Transcribed from the composer's unpublished autograph manuscript

EX. 5. György Ligeti, *Ten Pieces for Wind Quintet* (1968), bb. 1–4. © Schott Music Ltd. Reproduced with permission

EX. 6. Weir, *Twenty-five Variations*, octatonicism, bb. 1–3

EX. 7. Weir, *King Harald Sails to Byzantium* (1979), bb. 209–10. © Hal Leonard Europe

EX. 8. Luciano Berio, *points on the curve to find...* for piano and twenty-two instrumentalists (1974), at Fig. 6. © Copyright 1974 by Universal Edition S.p.A., Milano. Copyright assigned to Universal Edition A.G., Wien. Reproduced with permission

EX. 9. Weir, *Black Birdsong* (1977), bb. 224–5, after the words 'Wi' ae lock o' his gowden hair / We'll theek our nest when it grows bare'

EX. 10(*a*). Brahms, *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by G. F. Handel*, Op. 24 (1862), fugue, bb. 1–3

EX. 10(*b*). Brahms, *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by G. F. Handel*, Variation 1, bb. 1–3

EX. 10(*c*). Brahms, *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by G. F. Handel*, Variation 24, bb. 1–4

EX. 10(*d*). Brahms, *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by G. F. Handel*, fugue, bb. 94–109