

ECLECTIC COMPOSITIONAL STYLES IN THE PIANO WORKS OF CRAIG WALSH

by

Chia-Chun Ko

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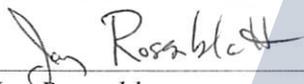
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## ABSTRACT

Craig Walsh (b. 1971) is an American composer whose music has earned him a worldwide reputation. His versatile output includes electronic music, instrumental music and the combination of the two. While modernism and pop music engage his compositional attention, a wider variety of musical styles that evoke many prominent composers of the twentieth century contribute to and enrich his musical language. An eclectic tendency is present in much of Walsh's music, and the fusion of styles is distinct in each work. The purpose of this study is to examine the eclectic styles found in the three solo piano works by Craig Walsh: *Rhapsody*, *Black Scissors* for prepared piano, and *Lines*. The research will provide a formal analysis and a detailed investigation into the stylistic characteristics of each work.

The discussion on *Rhapsody* will focus on the influences of Igor Stravinsky and Cecil Taylor, as well as the resemblance between this work and Aaron Copland's *Piano Variations*. The study of *Black Scissors* will examine the disparate musical influences Walsh absorbed in New York City in the 1990s, including the music of the minimalists, Morton Feldman, John Cage, Gamelan orchestra, and the funk music style of James Brown. The investigation into *Lines* will demonstrate Walsh's organic compositional approach, the post-composition examination of the Golden Mean, and its diverse compositional settings including impressionistic textures and the Messiaen-like chords.

## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Craig Walsh (b. 1971) is an American composer whose music has been performed throughout the United States, Europe, South America, New Zealand, the Ukraine, and Asia.<sup>1</sup> He has been commissioned by, or written for, renowned musicians and ensembles such as the Manhattan String Quartet, New York New Music Ensemble, Rhonda Rider, Madeleine Shapiro, and others. Walsh is the recipient of a Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship, a prestigious award in music composition, the Salvatore Martirano Award, the Lee Ettelson Composers Award and a Meet the Composer grant, to name a few. His versatile output, traversing electronic music and acoustic music, has earned him a worldwide reputation. Many of his compositions have achieved success, as demonstrated by over fifteen awards and honors, and through distinguished national and international live performances and CD recordings.

Walsh's music has been described by Richard Buell of the Boston Globe as "teemingly imaginative..., from whom we want to hear more."<sup>2</sup> As a composer, he possesses "a particular sensitivity to the nuances of timbre and the possibilities afforded by the use of unusual instrumental combinations..."<sup>3</sup> noted James Baker of Records International. Restless energy is a hallmark of Walsh's music, and is typically achieved through repetition, complex rhythm, chromatic harmony, and pointillistic writing. In addition, a variety of styles are to be found in his

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<sup>1</sup> Craig Walsh, "Craig Walsh," <http://www.cfa.arizona.edu/craigwalsh/> (accessed September 28, 2015).

<sup>2</sup> Richard Buell, "Music Worlds Collide at CyberArts Festival," *The Boston Global*, May 12, 1999, <https://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P2-8550382.html> (accessed June 9, 2017).

<sup>3</sup> James Baker, description of *WALSH Zook. Lines. Neshanic Waves. Zoom. Bugaboo. 0 to 33 in 1098.5*, <http://www.recordsinternational.com/cd.php?cd=09K112> (accessed June 9, 2017).

compositions, many of which are linked to the composers of the twentieth century. An eclectic tendency is present in much of Walsh's music, and the resulting fusion of styles is distinct in each work.

In this study, the author will examine the eclectic styles found in the three solo piano works by Walsh: *Rhapsody*, *Black Scissors* for prepared piano, and *Lines*. These works reveal a wide variety of musical and creative influences. The author will provide a detailed investigation into the stylistic characteristics of each work while seeking to answer the following questions concerning his creative processes: What influences and musical styles are found in each of these piano works? In what ways has Walsh been influenced by a variety of styles? How does he manipulate these styles and aesthetics within his own writing? How is each composition distinct in comparison to the other two solo piano works?

*Rhapsody*, composed in 1988, is one of Walsh's early achievements. At age sixteen, he first performed this piece as part of a European tour and throughout the New York area. Within the one-movement work, Walsh composed *Rhapsody* as a free-flowing structure with contrasting expressive qualities that emerge in the fantasy-like statements and the rhythmic vitality. Walsh's two recorded video performances,<sup>4</sup> one in New Jersey and the other in Germany, reveal a fresh improvisational approach to each of his interpretations. Through listening to these recorded live performances, one becomes aware of the composer's fascination with the avant-garde jazz pianist, Cecil Taylor.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> "*SAT FINAL CELE- Part II*" (VHS, Arts Foundation of N.J. Production, Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ, August 6, 1988); (audio recording, Bremen, Germany, 1988). Walsh performed *Rhapsody* in several concerts associated with the Bremen Youth Symphony in the late 80s. Two of these recorded performances are known to exist. They are all unpublished.

<sup>5</sup> Craig Walsh, interview by author, September 11, 2015.

A series of interviews from 2015-2017 has provided an abundance of information that is foundational to this study of the three solo piano works. In these discussions, Walsh identified the significant influence of Igor Stravinsky in *Rhapsody*, specifically its rhythm, meter, sophisticated harmony and overall energy.<sup>6</sup> He also pointed to the resemblances between *Rhapsody* and Aaron Copland's *Piano Variations*, especially in regard to dramatic gesture and the dissonant harmonic vocabulary.<sup>7</sup>

*Black Scissors* for prepared piano was written in 1993 in New York City, which at that time had become a thriving home for pop music and classical music. Walsh absorbed many aspects of the disparate musical influences in New York City at that time, and *Black Scissors* reveals the wide array of styles that interested him. This is most evident through the use of close repetition<sup>8</sup> of the minimalists; the spatial notation and stasis of Morton Feldman and John Cage;<sup>9</sup> the timbres of the Gamelan orchestra and of prepared piano drawn from Cage's music; and the syncopated rhythms and dance figures often associated with the funk music style of James Brown.

*Lines* (2000), written for and premiered by American pianist, Andrew Willis, is regarded by Walsh as one of his most traditional and organic pieces. Unlike most of his compositions, many of which are quirky, witty and somehow surprising, *Lines* tends to be more linear and

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<sup>6</sup> Craig Walsh, interview by author, September 25, 2015.

<sup>7</sup> Craig Walsh, interview by author, September 11, 2015.

<sup>8</sup> Close repetition is operated by an individual figure or cell, repeated invariably and constantly. This occurs on the surface of music and results in a sense of mobility over a static state. It is one of the main characteristics of minimalist music.

<sup>9</sup> Craig Walsh, interview by author, August 11, 2015.

straightforward.<sup>10</sup> The analysis will focus on the various ways that he interweaves horizontal and vertical lines to create diverse compositional settings, such as impressionistic textures and Messiaen-like chords.<sup>11</sup>

The opening two chapters of the document will comprise an introduction and biographical sketch of Walsh's education, professional career, and the general characteristics of his music. Chapters 3 through 5 will provide a detailed investigation of the three piano solo works—*Rhapsody*, *Black Scissors*, and *Lines*. These chapters, which include a formal and stylistic analysis of each work, will demonstrate the ways in which these compositions present a unique diversity of influences and styles.

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<sup>10</sup> Craig Walsh, interview by author, September 16, 2015.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

## CHAPTER 2. A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF CRAIG WALSH: HIS LIFE AND MUSIC

### Walsh's Life

Craig Walsh was born in New Jersey in 1971. His father was an amateur guitarist, and his sister played the flute. Walsh's musical education began by playing trumpet in the school band. At the age of eight, his parents, recognizing his musical talent, bought him a piano, the instrument that has continued to play an important role throughout Walsh's creative life and output. The study of these two instruments encouraged an important exploration of improvisation and composition. During these formative years, Walsh began what would be a lifelong fascination with jazz music. However, at the same time he became convinced that formal training in classical piano would be beneficial for his musical development and began piano studies with Brenda Gerlipp. As a young student, Walsh was fond of arranging certain sections of music that he found to be "not quite right," and he recalls that these revisions pertained most often to the solo piano works of Joseph Haydn and Frédéric Chopin. These early experiences: the study of classical piano; his experimental approach toward improvisation, composition and the altering of existing works; and his exposure to and love of jazz, served as a foundational aesthetic for Walsh that would later support his work as a composer.

When he was fourteen years of age, Walsh discovered Stravinsky, the composer who would continue to serve as his most significant musical influence and who profoundly changed his approach to composition. Walsh's earlier fascination with jazz was reignited at this same time as he became acquainted with prominent jazz artists such as Art Tatum, Chick Corea, Keith Jarrett and Cecil Taylor.

According to Walsh, his rigorous musical education at Mannes College was a crucial element in his development as a composer. At Mannes, Walsh continued to study piano while pursuing a Bachelor of Music degree in Composition. He studied composition with David Loeb for a year, whose instrumental writing combined with his approach to closely working with performers had a lifelong impact on Walsh's instrumental music. Walsh also studied with Robert Cuckson whose teaching style became a model for Walsh in later years. As Walsh states, Mannes College offered a thorough grounding not only in composition but also in theory. He was also intrigued by his experiences working in the recording studio.

Walsh studied electronic music formally and continued in composition at Brandeis University, where he received his Master of Fine Arts (1997) and Ph.D. degrees (1999) in Composition and Theory. He absorbed new compositional techniques under the tutelage of serialist, Martin Boykan, and Pulitzer prize winner, Yehudi Wyner, whose music encompasses diverse interests including vernacular and Eastern music. Under the instruction of Eric Chasalow, Walsh began to take courses in electronic music, which prompted an interest in the sound world possibilities of every instrument and more expansively, the sound world of everyday life. Like Chasalow, Walsh writes both acoustic music and electronic music.

Walsh has taught composition and music theory at Brandeis University, Bridgewater State University, and University of North Carolina at Greensboro. He is currently a member of the composition faculty at the University of Arizona, where he teaches composition, theory, electro-acoustic music, and orchestration.

## Walsh's Music

Walsh's compositional output may be categorized into three groups: electronic music, instrumental music, and the combination of the two. Most of his electronic music was written in the late 1990s, including *Fallout City* (1997), *Junket* (1999), and *Radix* (1999). Acoustic music represents the majority of his output, and he is particularly fond of writing chamber music. His representative chamber works include: *0 to 33 in 1098.5* (1994), *Zoom* (1995), *Zook* (1997), *Quien era aquella que te amo en el sueno, cuando dormias?* (1998), *Schism* (2000), *Bugaboo* (2002), *Pointing Out Your Ruse* (2004-05), *Neshanic Wanes* (2006-07), *Cookin' the Books* (2007), *String Quartet* (2010), and *The Destruction of the Temple of Heaven* (2011-12). Walsh's two published solo piano works are *Black Scissors* (1993) for prepared piano and *Lines* (1999-2000) for piano. The third category—the combination of instrumental music with electronic music—allows him to blend his sensitivity to instrumental sounds into the compositional techniques of electronic music. These works include: *Shifting Trajectories* (1996), *Pipeline Burst* (1998), *Terma* (2002-03), and *Sugar Touch* (2008). A complete list of Walsh's compositions is found in the appendix.

When asked to describe his musical aesthetic, Walsh defined himself as foremost a modernist composer, even though a small portion of his compositions is considered post-modern. He stated, "I love Stravinsky, I like all the things I mentioned: pop music, Schoenberg, Ligeti, Cecil Taylor, but as far as aesthetics, I am for the most part, firmly planted in the modernist school."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Craig Walsh, interview by author, September 16, 2015.

Most of Walsh's music is abstract, without religious, political or programmatic implications. There are a few notable exceptions, however, including *The Destruction of the Temple of Heaven* for chamber ensemble inspired by the composer's study of religious history and the commissioned *String Quartet* in which he incorporated Bosnian musical elements.

Walsh's compositional style has been described as a "bright and snappy music rooted in modernism, but also referencing the carefree attitude of American pop culture."<sup>13</sup> While modernism and pop music engage his compositional attention, a wider variety of musical styles that evoke many prominent composers of the twentieth century contribute to and enrich his musical language.

Walsh regards rhythm, repetition and atypical form as the distinctive features of his composition process.<sup>14</sup> The rhythmic influences derived from Stravinsky, jazz, and pop music<sup>15</sup> are transparent in Walsh's music and reflect his fascination with more sophisticated rhythmic patterns that include meter changes, polyrhythm and syncopation. When these rhythmic figurations are at work in the form of repetition, an inexhaustible and highly rhythmic energy is created. Another factor that makes Walsh's music unique is the way in which he creates atypical musical structures. Since the mid-1990s, Walsh has considered possibilities in formal structure beyond traditional frameworks. One of his most interesting formal ideas appears in *Zoom* for violin and piano, where Walsh, inspired by photography, presented the concept of zooming in and out in musical terms. The main idea of *Zoom* is a series of nine pitches, C, D, A, A-flat, B-

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<sup>13</sup> Robert Carl, review of WALSH *Zook. Lines. Neshanic Waves. Zoom. Bugaboo. 0 to 33 in 1098.5*, by Craig Walsh, *Fanfare* 32, no. 4 (March/April 2009): 270-271.

<sup>14</sup> Craig Walsh, interview by author, September 11, 2015.

<sup>15</sup> James Reel, liner notes to *Bugaboo*, Craig Walsh, Albany TROY1047, compact disc, 2008.

flat, G, F, C-sharp, E. The appearances of these pitches vary in each of the four movements (180 millimeters, 90mm, 50mm, and 20mm) as zoomed out:

At 180 millimeters (the most zoomed-in movement of the piece), this object [the series of the nine pitches] begins and ends the movement. In the other three movements (90mm, 50mm, 20mm), the statement of the nine pitches becomes progressively more distant, or compressed musically, and images (sound objects) on either side of the main object become visible. The brief phrases and gestures that are juxtaposed are seemingly unrelated sometimes. They are, however, developed across all of the movements.<sup>16</sup>

Another unusual form is seen in *0 to 33 in 1098.5* (1994). 0 to 33 are the rehearsal numbers assigned to the score, while 1098.5 refers to the number of beats that make up the piece. The following rehearsal numbers display the structural design of the composition, and it is heard in the order that starts from 0 and gradually unfolds.

32.....10, 8, 6, 4, 2, 0, 1, 3, 5, 7, 9.....33

Walsh provides instructions for determining the performing order: “One now has to imagine that a curtain covers the entire score. The curtain opens in sequential increments. At first the music between 0-1 is heard, and then 2-3, 3-4, etc., with all of the musical material performed from left to right and between successive numbers.”<sup>17</sup> The repetitions of musical materials and complex structures create a disturbing sense of being “stuck in a time vortex.”<sup>18</sup>

Other characteristics of Walsh’s music include difficult performance techniques that enhance the dramatic qualities of his music; rapid and constant shifts in contrast; compact writing in which various musical ideas occur in close proximity to one another; a juxtaposition of

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

playful and serious qualities; preference for a single movement or multi-movements without pause; and imaginative titles.

### CHAPTER 3. RHAPSODY

Walsh's *Rhapsody*, composed in 1988, began as an improvised work. As a young boy, Walsh was encouraged by his teacher, Brenda Gerlipp, to experiment at the piano and write down his improvisations. *Rhapsody* is one of his notated compositions from that time and is dedicated to her.

*Rhapsody* marked a turning point in Walsh's style, as it clearly departed from the diatonic musical language found in his earlier compositions. Prior to *Rhapsody*, he had become acquainted with the music of Stravinsky; Stravinsky soon became the most significant musical figure for Walsh and his influence is obvious in *Rhapsody*. From that point onward, Walsh's music would become more dissonant and reveal a strong preference for more complicated rhythms. Sophisticated approaches to compositional organization began to take preference over his earlier improvisational approach. Walsh also identified several characteristics in *Rhapsody* that parallel specific compositional techniques found in Copland's *Piano Variations*, a solo piano work that he has long held in high regard.

At the time of writing *Rhapsody*, Walsh was fascinated with the jazz music of Cecil Taylor, Art Tatum, Keith Jarrett, and Ornette Coleman. Among these preeminent jazz musicians, Walsh was particularly drawn to Taylor's approach to experimental improvisation. The recorded performances of *Rhapsody* from Walsh's European tour not only display his improvisatory skills, but also reveal resemblance to that of Taylor. It is mostly evident in the motivic development, flow of ideas, and the use of clusters.

## Formal Analysis

The word “rhapsody,” derived from the Greek *rhapsōdos*, means a reciter of epic poetry.<sup>19</sup> Musically, it possesses “an inspired, rapturous character often expressed in an idiosyncratic, even improvisatory form.”<sup>20</sup>

Walsh’s *Rhapsody* is a single-movement work, and its basic outline of form is a slow-fast design. Within the introductory slow section, the theme is not developed; rather, the ascending-fourths figuration from the opening returns periodically and juxtaposes with new materials. The fast section with a brief “molto sostenuto” inserted passage is through-composed. A number of musical ideas freely flow throughout a period of time, and there is rarely return of preceding material.

Another defining feature of the origins of the word “rhapsody” is the inclusion of a wide range of emotions. The character of the slow section of *Rhapsody* is for the most part, mysterious and haunting while the fast section exhibits an agitated and ecstatic mood. However, when looking more deeply into each section, a great diversity of characters and highly contrasted sentiments are spread across the composition, ranging from deep somberness to excitement, from a peaceful state to fiery emotion. The richness of expression, as well as the freedom of form and the improvisatory essence of *Rhapsody* claimed by Walsh serve to establish the piece as a successful example of the genre.

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<sup>19</sup> John Rink, “Rhapsody,” *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/23313> (accessed August 15, 2016).

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

## Stylistic Characteristics

The stylistic traits of *Rhapsody* were shaped by many factors. Walsh specifically cited Igor Stravinsky, Aaron Copland and Cecil Taylor as his major influences at the time of composing *Rhapsody*. Although he did not quote or directly emulate the music of these musicians, their distinctive voices are noticeable. The musical features of *Rhapsody* as influenced by the three musicians will be examined individually.

### *Igor Stravinsky*

As one of the most influential and representative composers of the twentieth century, Stravinsky's music is defined as modern, diverse, and innovative. Several of Stravinsky's signature features found in *Rhapsody* include: repetition, constant meter changes, and highly dissonant sonorities.

Among Stravinsky's most noteworthy compositional procedures, Walsh is particularly fond of the cut-and-paste technique, a process that is revealed in several of Stravinsky's sketches. Stravinsky scholar, Gretchen Horlacher, examined the manuscript of *Symphony in Three Movements*, and discovered the composer's extensive use of carbon paper for shorter fragments of music and his cutting, rearranging, and pasting together of the material to create new compositional passages.<sup>21</sup> For Stravinsky, the process of cut and paste created repetition

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<sup>21</sup> Gretchen Horlacher, "Running in Place: Sketches and Superimposition in Stravinsky's Music," *Music Theory Spectrum* 23, no. 2 (2001): 206.

possibilities, while the combination of repetition and the re-ordering process often led to block structure.<sup>22</sup>

Stravinsky utilized two forms of repetition: identical and varied. Musical Example 3.1 shows an example of the varied repetition approach in Stravinsky's music. The alterations are often determined by parameters such as pitch, rhythm, dynamics and texture. When comparing Phrase 1 with Phrase 2, it is clear that Phrase 2 is extended by adding one beat in the second measure, thus resulting in a changed meter. In Phrase 3, the melody is modulated and transposed from the original melody in Phrase 1. Additionally, Phrase 3 is presented with a new texture, where homophonic writing is replaced by contrapuntal texture.

Musical Example 3.1. Repetitive procedure in *Mystic Circle of The Young Girls* from *The Rite of Spring* by Stravinsky, mm. 1-2, 3-4, and 40.

The image displays three musical phrases from Stravinsky's *Mystic Circle of The Young Girls*.  
 - **Phrase 1** (mm. 1-2): A piano piece in 4/4 time, marked *p*. It features a homophonic texture with a complex chordal melody in the right hand and a simple bass line in the left hand. The meter changes to 3/4 in the second measure.  
 - **Phrase 2** (mm. 3-4): A piano piece in 4/4 time, marked *p*. It is an extended version of the first phrase, with an additional beat in the second measure, resulting in a 3/4 meter. A red oval highlights the extra beat in the second measure.  
 - **Phrase 3** (m. 40): A piano piece in 6/4 time. The melody is modulated and transposed from the original melody in Phrase 1. The texture is contrapuntal, with the right hand playing a more active melody and the left hand providing harmonic support.

<sup>22</sup> Pieter C. van den Toorn defines block structure as occurring when “two or more blocks of relatively heterogeneous content are repeatedly and often abruptly juxtaposed.” Pieter C van den Toorn, *Stravinsky and The Rite of Spring* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 97.

Similar treatments of repetition are found in Walsh's *Rhapsody*. Musical Example 3.2 shows a phrase and several of its variations that clearly demonstrate the repetitive process. To further illustrate Walsh's use of repetition, the original phrase (Phrase 1) with its three variations exemplifies the repetitive process. The componential elements of this selected phrase (Phrase 1) consist of an ascending chromatic scale from F-sharp through A-natural on the lower staff, with several inserted D-flats in the upper staff functioning as a pedal point. It is heard under the irregular metric frame of 10/8, with groupings played in a three-three-two-two pattern. The next appearance (Phrase 2) retains the rhythmic figuration but is varied by pitch content, whereby the chromatic scale is transposed to C-sharp with a semitone, F-sharp and G, punctuated in the upper clef. Phrase 3 changes rhythmically with the meter extended to 16/8, and now decorated with more complex articulation. The final recurrence is Phrase 4, which retains the rhythmic identity of Phrase 3. However, along with an expanded register, the texture becomes denser through the use of chords and octaves.

Musical Example 3.2. Phrase 1 and its variations in *Rhapsody* by Walsh, mm. 95, 124, 141 and 149.

Phrase 1

Phrase 2

Phrase 3

Phrase 4

Hailed as “the rhythmic genius,”<sup>23</sup> Stravinsky broke the rhythmic/metric regularity that traditionally had played an important role in sustaining underlying pulse and he is often credited with bringing metric importance into the foreground of musical composition. His mastery of temporal techniques is displayed in his use of irregular metrics, rhythmic displacement, rapidly changing meter, on- and off-beat figures, and other manipulations. Stravinsky’s treatment of meter change is demonstrated in Musical Example 3.3, extracted from rehearsal number 7 in the

<sup>23</sup> Benjamin Boretz, “In Quest of the Rhythmic Genius,” *Perspectives of New Music* 9/10, no.2/1 (Spring/Summer-Autumn/Winter, 1971): 155.

first tableau of *Petrushka*. A succession of regular and irregular meters— $3/8$ ,  $4/8$ ,  $2/8$ , and  $5/8$ —is presented across four measures, with each time signature sustained for only one measure. The constant change of meter with the added complication of ties across bars creates the aural effect of an unpredictable and irregular structure.

Musical Example 3.3. Rapid meter changes in the first tableau of *Petrushka* by Stravinsky, rehearsal number 7.

The musical score for Musical Example 3.3 is a piano part from the first tableau of *Petrushka*. It begins with a rehearsal mark '7' in a box, followed by the instruction 'Stringendo' and a tempo marking of a quarter note equal to 48 (♩ = 48). The music is written in two staves, treble and bass clef. The first measure is in 3/8 time, the second in 4/8, the third in 2/8, and the fourth in 5/8. The notes are often tied across bar lines, and there are various articulations and dynamics, including a forte 'f' marking in the first measure.

Similarly, there is no metric consistency in Walsh's *Rhapsody*, and frequent meter change can be found throughout the work. No single time signature spans more than ten measures, as exemplified by mm.70-77 in Musical Example 3.4. On the eighth-note level, notes are grouped into meters successively; 8, 3, 1, 5, 7, 3, 1, and 4. The groupings are emphasized by accents on downbeats. Here the lack of rhythmic/metric consistency results in a challenging perception of pulse outside the listener's expectation. Following this phrase is its repetition constructed on the same metric plan with a slight variation in pitch (shown in mm.78-84). Moreover, the phrase repeats several times in its complete or fragmented form and thus establishes a feeling of regularity. As in Stravinsky's music, this demonstrates that even with an irregular metric pattern, consistency can be achieved through repetition.

Musical Example 3.4. Rapid meter changes in *Rhapsody* by Walsh, mm.70-84.

The image displays a handwritten musical score for measures 70 through 84 of a piece titled 'Rhapsody' by Walsh. The score is written on four systems of staves, each system containing two staves (treble and bass clef). The music is characterized by rapid meter changes and complex rhythmic patterns. Handwritten annotations include 'heavy accents' above the first staff and 'ritardando' below the second staff. The notation features various note values, rests, and dynamic markings, illustrating the intricate and dissonant harmonic language of the piece.

Harmonic language is another musical element that reveals Walsh's interest in Stravinsky's music. Walsh was drawn to Stravinsky's use of aggressively dissonant chords, the polychord in particular. The polychord is a chord constructed from two or more chords, heard simultaneously.

In *Rhapsody*, Walsh uses polychords frequently through the use of two chords a semitone apart. It is introduced in the opening following a series of repeated chords in implied B major and a subsequent arpeggiation built on the interval of a fourth. The three following chords (shown in Musical Example 3.5) then clash powerfully and create striking sonorities that break

the preceding diatonic environment. The bizarre effect is attributed to the simultaneous use of E-flat minor and E major chords on the first beat, and a combination of G minor over an inverted major ninth chord on B heard on the second and third beats. Consonance is generated by these individual chords, while dissonance is created by the close placement—a semitone—between the chords. The simultaneous existence of consonance and dissonance thus results in a sense of conflict.

Musical Example 3.5. Polychords in *Rhapsody* by Walsh, m. 3.

The musical score for Musical Example 3.5 shows four staves of music. The first two staves are in treble clef, and the last two are in bass clef. The music is marked with dynamics like *sf*, *sub*, and *p*. Annotations include "E-flat minor chord" in red, "G minor chord" in blue, "E major chord" in red, and "B major ninth chord" in blue. A red box highlights the first two staves on the first beat, and a blue box highlights the second and third staves on the second and third beats. A dashed line labeled "Bva" spans the first two staves on the first beat.

Walsh's manipulation of the polychords also includes linear use of chords and superimposed seventh chords, ninth chords, or chords with added and/or omitted notes. In another nod to Stravinsky, semitones prevail throughout the piece in melodies as well as harmonies, a noticeable feature on the surface of music.

Along with other musical innovations, repetition, frequent metric changes and harmonic dissonance are some of the defining factors of the so-called Stravinskian style. Their appearances in *Rhapsody* reveal the composer's strong and indisputable influence on Walsh.

### *Aaron Copland*

Aaron Copland (1900-90) was a towering figure in the twentieth-century American musical scene. His music embraces diverse styles and genres, and is often characterized as “American,” likely due to his incorporation of jazz, folk song, and music that evokes American urban life. Copland named Stravinsky as his favorite twentieth-century composer and his “hero” from the Paris years to the end of his life.<sup>24</sup> He loved the “jagged and uncouth rhythmic effects,” “bold use of dissonance,” and “hard, dry, crackling sonority.”<sup>25</sup> These Stravinskian traits can be heard in Walsh's music as well as Copland's.

Copland's *Piano Variations* (1930) “made a great impression in the 1930s by its terseness and the strange new piano sonorities it exploited,” Douglas Young stated.<sup>26</sup> Its idiom is austere and built upon a modified serial technique. The work is based on a germinal four-note motive, E—C—D-sharp—C-sharp. According to Arthur Berger, the *Piano Variations* stands in a crucial position in Copland's evolution, harking back to jazz elements and looking forward to his later musical rhetoric.<sup>27</sup> The dissonant harmonies, economic usage of thematic material,

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<sup>24</sup> Howard Pollack, *Aaron Copland: The Life and Work of an Uncommon Man* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1999), 65.

<sup>25</sup> Aaron Copland, *The New Music, 1900-1960* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1968), 45-50.

<sup>26</sup> Douglas Young, “The Piano Music,” *Tempo* 95 (Winter, 1970-71): 15.

<sup>27</sup> Arthur Berger, *Aaron Copland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), 43.

suggestion of jazz, fragmented melody, angular melodic contour, and quasi-serial techniques all contribute to its uniqueness. In particular, Copland's emphasis on dissonance and jazz rhythm in his *Piano Variations* are echoed in Walsh's *Rhapsody*. While dissonant harmony has already been investigated in the discussion of Stravinsky's influences on Walsh's *Rhapsody*, it will also be examined in the following paragraphs in order to identify its specific correspondence to Copland's *Piano Variations*.

Harsh dissonance is a prominent feature found in Copland's *Piano Variations* and other works dating from his second compositional period. The highly dissonant intervals of the major seventh and minor ninth prevail throughout the work. Musical Example 3.6 demonstrates the intervals of the first half of variation 2, showing the incorporation of harmonic major sevenths and minor ninths on consecutive beats with only two exceptions, the intervals of a third in mm. 22 and 25. The pungent sound, heard under various guises in the *Piano Variations*, is also an obvious trait in Walsh's *Rhapsody*. In addition to the major seventh and minor ninth discussed above, Walsh uses the dissonant interval of the tritone (as shown in Musical Example 3.7). These intervals create a sense of conflict and pervasive tension.

Musical Example 3.6. Dissonant intervals, *Piano Variations* by Copland, mm. 21-25.

Musical Example 3.6 shows a piano score for the first half of variation 2 from Copland's *Piano Variations*, measures 21-25. The score is in 2/4 time with a tempo marking of *Più mosso* (♩ = 72). The music is marked *p* (piano) and *mf poco marc.* (mezzo-forte poco marcato). The score features several dissonant intervals, which are annotated with red text: m9 (minor ninth) and M7 (major seventh). The intervals are: m9 (mm. 21, 22), M7 (m. 23), M7 (m. 24), m9 (m. 25), m9 (m. 26), M7 (m. 27), m9 (m. 28), M7 (m. 29), and m9 (m. 30). The annotations are placed above the treble staff and below the bass staff.

Musical Example 3.7. Dissonant intervals, *Rhapsody* by Walsh, mm. 275-280.

The musical score for Musical Example 3.7 consists of two staves. The upper staff is in bass clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. The music features a series of chords and intervals. Below the staves, the following chord symbols and interval labels are provided: tritone, M7, m9, m9, m9, m9, tritone, M7, M7, m9, m9, m9, M7, and sf. Dynamic markings include mf, cresc, and sf. The score also includes various musical notations such as accents, slurs, and fermatas.

Another dissonant harmonic device found in the *Piano Variations* is the superimposed intervals of thirds, suggesting bitonality. In variation 2, each chord consists of two superimposed thirds, each of which suggests a different harmonic property (Musical Example 3.8). For instance, the last chord of m. 25 contains two intervals made up of thirds, C and E-flat in the bass staff while C-sharp and E appear on the treble staff. Both are minor thirds, but they are set a semitone apart. Likewise, the chords in *Rhapsody* are arranged in the same fashion but built upon varied intervals, resulting in a similar harmonic ambiguity (Musical Example 3.9).

Musical Example 3.8. Dissonant harmonies, *Piano Variations* by Copland, mm. 25-31.

The musical score for Musical Example 3.8 shows two staves of music. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. The music is marked 'legato'. The score begins at measure 25. The music features complex, dissonant harmonies with multiple notes per chord, creating a sense of bitonality. The notation includes various intervals and chord structures.

Musical Example 3.9. Dissonant harmonies, *Rhapsody* by Walsh, mm. 293-296.

The image shows a musical score for two staves. The top staff is in treble clef and contains a melodic line with various accidentals (sharps, flats, naturals) and dynamics (f, mp, p). The bottom staff is in bass clef and contains a bass line with chords and dynamics (mp, p sub). The music is characterized by dissonant harmonies and syncopated rhythms.

Jazz rhythm is an element found in Copland's *Piano Variations*. The rhythmic structure of variation 17 is most often identified when referring to jazz elements in Copland's music. Despite changing meters, the eighth notes are grouped into twos and threes, repeating periodically (Musical Example 3.10). The rapidly shifting groups of two and three serve as an extended jazz syncopation, evolving from Copland's rhythmic manipulation found in his earlier works.<sup>28</sup> A similar metrical approach is also presented in Walsh's *Rhapsody* (Musical Example 3.11). In both examples, eighth notes provide the metrical basis, over or under which another musical stratum punctuates in a syncopated manner. Along with this layer, accents result in uneven pulses within two and three. The subsequent effect aurally suggests a jazz influence at work through its treatment of rhythm and syncopation.

<sup>28</sup> Stanley V. Kleppinger, "On the Influence of Jazz Rhythm in the Music of Aaron Copland" (Faculty Publications, University of Nebraska – Lincoln, 2003), 103.

Musical Example 3.10. Jazz syncopation, *Piano Variations* by Copland, mm. 223-225.

Musical Example 3.11. Jazz syncopation, *Rhapsody* by Walsh, mm. 148-154.

In addition to the compositional devices discussed, Walsh's *Rhapsody* bears some striking resemblances to Copland's *Piano Variations* in its gestural writing. A comparison of mm. 1-6 of *Piano Variations* (Musical Example 3.12) and mm. 279-287 of *Rhapsody* (Musical Example 3.13) reveals unusual commonalities in terms of phrase construction, textural design, and harmonic structure. First, one of Copland's signature characteristics is constructing longer melodies through thematic transmutation. This appears in both examples, as the phrases begin with short motivic tunes and continue through their repetitions with variations. Second, both examples maintain a lean and transparent texture, while an accented chord punctuates the end of each statement. Each punctuation is followed by an extended silence, which adds to the dramatic gesture. Third, the punctuated chords are formed by a triad with the addition of semitones coexisting with the third of the chord, such as a C-sharp added to an A minor chord. This type of triad formation creates dissonant harmony.

Musical Example 3.12. *Piano Variations* by Copland, mm. 1-6.

Musical Example 3.13. *Rhapsody* by Walsh, mm. 279-287.

Similar approaches to gestural writing are also visible in Copland's variation 4, mm. 42-45 (Musical Example 3.14) and Walsh's *Rhapsody*, mm. 17-20 (Musical Example 3.15). The motive of the former features a rhythmic snap resulting from a short-long rhythmic figure, a rapid thirty-second upbeat note followed by a long note, which then descends stepwise within a third. A melody gradually emerges above the motive after its first statement. A snap-like effect also exists in *Rhapsody* but is derived from a dotted rhythmic figure on the beat written as a sixteenth note followed by a dotted eighth note. The motive spans two measures, falling by step down to a third and accompanied by a treble voice in the upper staff. In addition to the textural and rhythmic similarities, dissonant harmonies also occur in both works.

Musical Example 3.14. *Piano Variations* by Copland, variation 4, mm. 42-45.

Musical Example 3.15. *Rhapsody* by Walsh, mm. 17-20.

### *Cecil Taylor*

While exploring the music of Stravinsky, Walsh was also fascinated by jazz music. He particularly identified Taylor as one of the major influences at the time, explaining, “Cecil Taylor’s recordings will give you an idea about why this piece [*Rhapsody*] is so dissonant and a kind of stream of consciousness. He has a really interesting technique. You can hear how it is similar to my piece in the stream of consciousness.”<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Craig Walsh, interview by author, September 11, 2015.

Avant-garde jazz pianist and composer Cecil Taylor (b. 1929) is viewed as a towering figure in the field of free jazz,<sup>30</sup> most of this attributable to his virtuosic playing and innovative approach to performance. While studying classical piano at the New England Conservatory, he focused on building a strong piano technique, explored experimental performance practices, studied contemporary music, and developed multiple approaches to improvisation. However, Taylor considered his non-academic familiarity with the work of numerous jazz musicians, including Duke Ellington and Thelonious Monk, to be the most beneficial for his musical creativity. He successfully adopted the essences of both classical and jazz music and blended them with a sophisticated pianistic vocabulary in order to develop a recognizable style distinctly his own.

Prominent characteristics of Taylor's music include extreme percussive playing, virtuosity, impressive rhythmic energy, extended tonality to atonal implication, various approaches to clusters, and motivic-based improvisation.<sup>31</sup> Taylor's pianistic strength is exhibited in stiff-fingered tremolos as well as attacking the keyboard by palm, fist, knuckle, forearm and elbow. Since the 1970s his artistic vision has expanded to integrate dance, song, and poetry into his performances.

In the two existing early recorded performances (1988) of *Rhapsody* with Walsh as pianist, his playing deviated from the actual notation and a strong improvisatory tendency based on the thematic motives is clearly displayed. This is a technique that bears resemblance to

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<sup>30</sup> The term "free jazz" refers to a trend in the 1960s musical scene, departing from conventional jazz features such as tonal harmony, sectional structure, metrical rhythm, and traditional instrument timbres. Instead, experimentation was the core of the performance approach and value. Jazz musicians including Ornette Coleman, John Coltrane, Bill Dixon, and Cecil Taylor among others sought progressive, creative, and sometimes radical means in their sophisticated composing and performing processes.

<sup>31</sup> Ekkehard Jost, "Instant Composing as Body Language," *FMP-Publishing*, [http://www.fmp-publishing.de/freemusicproduction/labelsspecialitions/ct88\\_jost\\_en.html](http://www.fmp-publishing.de/freemusicproduction/labelsspecialitions/ct88_jost_en.html) (accessed July 29, 2016).

Taylor's creative process. For example, in this performance, motive A is transformed through parallel ninths and contrapuntal writing instead of the much simpler octave doublings as seen in the score (Musical Example 3.16). The subsequent motive B also changes from monophonic writing in the score to a homophonic texture provided by Walsh in the live performance. Walsh further deviates from the score by performing motive B at a faster tempo than indicated in the score and thus breaking the rhythmic continuity between motives A and B. In addition to the score deviations found in this performance, the second recorded video also provides evidence of Walsh's improvisatory skills. Walsh preserves most of the motives and the improvisational treatments are more daring than the recorded performance five months earlier.

Musical Example 3.16. Thematic materials in the score of *Rhapsody* by Walsh, mm.70-77.

The image displays a handwritten musical score for two staves. The top staff is labeled 'motive a' with a red bracket above it. It begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The notation includes eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and dynamic markings such as 'ritmico' and 'mf'. The bottom staff is labeled 'motive b' with a red bracket above it. It also begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat, featuring similar rhythmic patterns and dynamic markings. The score is annotated with various performance instructions and symbols, including 'ritmico', 'mf', and '5'.

In addition to the improvisatory devices discussed above, a few passages are indicated “cadenza improv.” or “X” substituted for noteheads, allowing the performers the freedom of choosing pitches while playing in the given rhythm.

Taylor, in the 1950s, began to move toward a process of improvisation that replaced structure with stream of consciousness. Ekkehard Jost describes it as a process where “...ideas freely associate with one another; the extremely high density of events, without recognizable formal divisions, or anything resembling goal-directed development adds to the overall feeling of uniformity.”<sup>32</sup> Walsh identifies this as a powerful influence on the improvisational aspects of *Rhapsody*. Although Walsh’s improvisations in *Rhapsody* were predominantly based on the motivic materials, another series of ideas connected to pitch content, texture, dynamics, rhythm, and pianistic display emerged in the recorded video performance. These ideas were sometimes relevant to the motives, and Walsh himself described the improvisational process in this performance as a “stream of consciousness” experience.

Another musical element of *Rhapsody* that reveals Walsh’s fascination with Taylor’s music is the use of clusters. As a representative style of Taylor’s playing, cluster technique, according to Jost, is manipulated in various applications as short cluster-accents, mobile-clusters, static clusters, and cluster-tremolo.<sup>33</sup> Of these, Walsh limits his use of clusters to the short accented cluster type in *Rhapsody*. In Musical Example 3.17, these clusters appear as punctuation within the designated register of the keyboard and are indicated with a specific rhythmic value. Walsh also uses clusters within the given melodic contour, as seen in Musical Example 3.18. Additionally, two indications of extended physical approaches are given: “use palm of hands,” and in the sketch, “banging with an open palm is effective.”

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

Musical Example 3.17. Accented cluster in the score of *Rhapsody* by Walsh, mm. 300-301.

Tone Clusters at  
Top of Piano

Tone Clusters at  
Extreme Bass

Musical Example 3.18. Clusters within the given melodic contour in the score of *Rhapsody* by Walsh, mm. 263-264.

Any tone clusters consisting of groups of notes played within the octaves indicated.  
(use palm of hands) Do not be too particular in choosing notes.

Walsh's performances display his aptitude for spontaneity, and the improvisatory indications in the score of *Rhapsody* elicit interest from performers. The improvisations develop from the thematic materials while Walsh's musical ideas flow freely from a personal stream of consciousness; technically, clusters are employed and played with more strength. These factors all reveal Walsh's affinity for Taylor's music and contribute to the fertile pianistic vocabulary in *Rhapsody*.

## CHAPTER 4. BLACK SCISSORS

*Black Scissors*, written in 1993, clearly reflects a mixture of diverse musical interests. Walsh has drawn from a variety of inspirational sources including Cage's music and philosophy, Feldman's use of graphic notation as artwork, and minimalist compositional processes. The rich sound world and colorful characteristics heard throughout *Black Scissors* is a direct correlation between the funk music of James Brown and the Gamelan orchestra, both of which Walsh had experienced through listening and performing.

According to Walsh, *Black Scissors* is not a descriptive title, and bares no relation to the musical content. He stated, "I have no idea why that is called *Black Scissors*...This was a long time ago. It could be that I was cutting stuff with a pair of black scissors...but it has nothing to do with the form of the piece."<sup>34</sup>

### Formal Analysis

*Black Scissors* is notated without bar lines and uses spatial notation. Because this score deliberately avoids the use of conventional notation, the musical examples in the analysis will use page and line numbers to designate specific places in the score. The basis for rhythmic groupings will be assigned to the individual units as outlined in Musical Example 4.1.

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<sup>34</sup> Craig Walsh, interview by author, August 11, 2015.

Musical Example 4.1. *Black Scissors* by Walsh, page 3, line 4, units 1-8.

The form of *Black Scissors* is a block structure, made up of abrupt and constant juxtapositions of two contrasting sections: perpetual motion (fast) and stasis (slow). The two ideas constitute the foundational structure for the entire composition, which is divided into a total of six sections (Table 4.1). These sections, and even the divisions within, are clearly separated by rests, with no connection or bridge to the following section.

Table 4.1. Formal structure of *Black Scissors*.

Section	A	B	C	D	E	F
Tempo	fast	slow	fast	slow	fast	slow
Page numbers	1-3	4-14	15	16-20	21-22	23-29

The fast sections (A, C, and E) are prominently characterized by thirty-second note passages in a close repetitive structure. Each section comprises several segments, and each of these consists of repetitive figures and is identified by the changing of the figure (as shown in Musical Example 4.2). Some figures are developed from existing ideas while yet others introduce new ideas. Each figure produces pitched and/or unpitched sound generated by the ways in which the piano is prepared. Table 4.2 reveals the structure of section A, in which the lowest

row shows the amount of figure repetition, displaying the highly repetitive quality of each segment. The development of specific single musical elements, figures a and d in particular, are observed in the third row. The initial idea, figure a, transforms slightly into figure a' and a'' in the opening segments 1, 2 and 3 and later returns in segment 5, 7 and 12. These characteristics display the composer's approach to minimalism, which will be discussed in greater detail in the following portion of this chapter.

Musical Example 4.2. *Black Scissors* by Walsh, page 2, line 1, units 1-11.

Table 4.2. Formal structure of section A in *Black Scissors*, pp. 1-3.

	Section A												
Segment	1	2	3	Bridge	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Figure	a	a'	a''		b	a	c	a	d	d'	d''	b	a''
Number of figure repetitions	12	10	10	0	16	3	26	6	7	7	7	16	3

In contrast to the fast sections (A, C, and E), the alternating slow sections (B, D, and F) are static in nature and the sparse texture of the writing is reflected in the graphic notation. The three slow sections are comprised of seven recurring musical materials, labeled t-z (Figure 4.1), and each of the seven produces specific timbre such as drums and wooden blocks. Each section arranges these musical materials in a different order. The unpredictable presentations of the

materials create an improvisatory quality. In sections B and F, Walsh injects brief unrelated ideas into the seven recurring materials. These appearances of new ideas further add to the improvisatory nature and sense of surprise within the static slow sections.

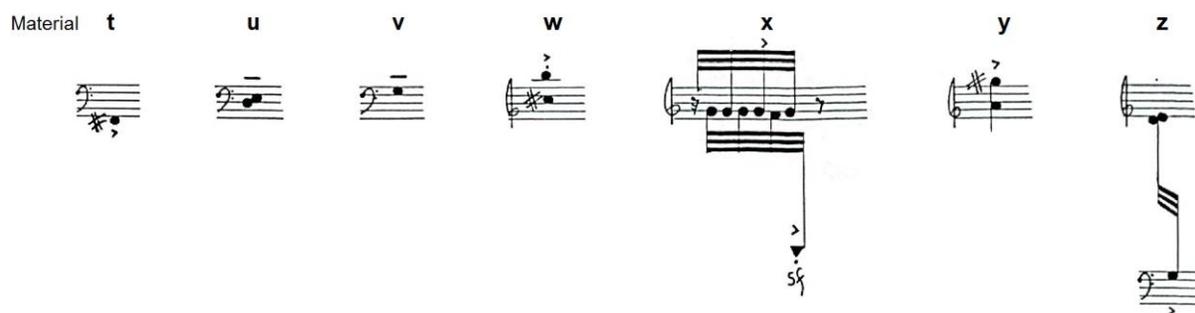


Figure 4.1. Seven materials in the slow sections (B, D, and F) in *Black Scissors* by Walsh.

The formal plan is dominated by two elements: tempo—fast perpetual motion versus stasis; and textural context—rapid repetitive quality versus spatial essence. In other words, the speed and the sounds, rather than melody and harmony, produce the structure of the music.

## Stylistic Characteristics

### *Minimalism*

Minimalism, one of the foremost musical styles of the second half of the twentieth century, has played a leading role in New York City's compositional scene. Minimalist music often features repetitive patterns of simple elements, sometimes within a highly-organized

structure, which incorporates limited complexity and a slow pace of change.<sup>35</sup> The pulse in minimalist music is usually unwavering, and often produces a hypnotic quality.

These essential concepts are demonstrated in *How Now* by Philip Glass. Musical Example 4.3 presents the first four of the eleven figures that comprise *How Now*. The first figure introduces the initial musical idea, which contains only three pitches—F, A-flat, and B-flat—and is repeated three times without variation. Slowly and in a paced fashion, Glass adds individual notes, harmonies, and sometimes altered rhythmic patterns to each of the repeated figures that follow. The pace is further controlled by the instructions in the score that state, “Each figure should be repeated for 20 to 30 seconds before changing to the next figure.” This repetitive gesture, along with the slowly additive procedure developed from limited pitch material, illustrates the sound of the major compositional traits of minimalist music.

Musical Example 4.3. *How Now* by Philip Glass, figures 1-4.

How Now  
for Piano Philip Glass

1. *steady (slow)* *mp* *piano* *Philip Glass*

2. *mp*

3. *mp*

4. *mp*

sitsain palal ynoyhoct

<sup>35</sup> Keith Potter, "Minimalism," *Grove Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40603> (accessed April 10, 2016).

These techniques are also found in the fast sections of *Black Scissors*. The work opens with a group of eight thirty-second notes, on the repeated single pitch C8. Twelve repetitions of this group make up segment 1 (Musical Example 4.4). Segment 2 is made up of a group of notes based on the same rhythmic figure with one additive note, G8. The group is given ten repetitions. In the same manner, F-sharp8 is introduced into the figure in segment 3 and this figure repeated ten times.

It is important to note that because of the composer's specific use of bolts for these notes, the three patterns all produce an unpitched percussive texture. Musical Example 4.4 illustrates the repetitive feature and the additive procedure from segments 1 through 3. When these segments are manipulated by adding one note at a time, the result is not one of added pitches, but rather added timbres resulting in increased volume and a sense of growth in the overall texture.

Musical Example 4.4. The first three repeated figures in the opening of *Black Scissors* by Walsh, p.1, lines 1-3.

**Segment 1**
**Segment 2**
**Segment 3**

15ma
(15ma)
(15ma)

15ma
(15ma)
(15ma)

(2.3)
(15ma)
(15ma)

#
#
#

Repetitions
12 times
10 times
10 times

Following this percussive opening, a bridge passage introduces segment 4. Musical Example 4.6 provides a transcribed score for Musical Example 4.5 to distinguish pitched and unpitched notes in segment 4. It is here that the syncopated melodic pattern is first heard with a

variety of timbres; also, polyrhythm is displayed in the texture. Despite the irregular rhythmic patterns, the sixteen repetitions of this figuration in consistently fast tempo result in a driving motion over a steady pulse, which is also a critical feature of minimalist music.

Musical Example 4.5. Figure b in segment 4 of *Black Scissors* by Walsh, p.1, line 3, unit 12.

#### Segment 4



Repetitions: 16 times

Musical Example 4.6. Transcription of Musical Example 4.5.

The image shows a transcription of Musical Example 4.5. It consists of two staves. The upper staff is labeled 'Pitched notes' and contains a sequence of notes with stems pointing down, some beamed together. The lower staff is labeled 'Unpitched notes' and contains a sequence of notes with stems pointing up, some beamed together. The notes are arranged in a way that suggests a complex rhythmic pattern, possibly involving polyrhythm.

The growing transformation of the repetitive figures from the opening to segment 4 is developed through pitch, timbre, and rhythm. The highly consistent rhythm and unpitched percussive timbre in segment 1 to segment 3 slowly evolve into the polyrhythm and syncopated melodies in segment 4. In conclusion, the gradual unfolding of limited elements and the close repetition found in *Black Scissors* provide evidence of the minimalists' influence on Walsh's

music. It is also heard in the slow change from no pitch to pitch, from single percussive sound to combined instrumental color, and from rhythmic simplicity to complexity.

### *Stasis and Spatiality*

*Black Scissors* was written when Walsh was a student at Mannes College of Music. He had studied the music of John Cage and was interested in the music of Morton Feldman; both composers were major musical figures of the New York School,<sup>36</sup> a movement in the middle of the twentieth century that drew inspiration from the abstract expressionist painters and paralleled the aesthetic idea of visual artists who rejected past traditions and cultivated innovative personal expression.<sup>37</sup> In particular, Feldman admired Mark Rothko's works, whose paintings maintain stasis while also sustaining a certain amount of tension. The resulting sense of "immobile procession"<sup>38</sup> is translated to Feldman's music. Feldman stated, "I'm involved in stasis. It's frozen, at the same time it's vibrating."<sup>39</sup> His compositions explore a static and quiet sound world, underneath the surface of which are ambiguous movements and slight shifts. Stasis in Cage's music, on the other hand, derives from a variety of influences that include the works of

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<sup>36</sup> New York School is a group of poets, painters, dancers, and musicians who were active in the 1950s and 60s in New York City. The members include musicians such as John Cage, Morton Feldman, Earle Brown, David Tudor; painters such as Jackson Pollock; poets John Ashbery and others. The basis of their aesthetic goals is built on Surrealism and Abstract Expressionism, "to erase the past and invent an original culture." Steven Johnson, "Introduction: A Junction at Eighth Street," in *The New York Schools of Music and the Visual Arts*, ed. Steven Johnson (New York: Routledge, 2002), 3.

<sup>37</sup> David Nicholls, "Getting Rid of the Glue," in *The New York Schools of Music and Visual Arts*, ed. Steven Johnson (New York: Routledge, 2002), 18.

<sup>38</sup> Nicola Walker Smith, "Composer among Painters: The Influence of the Abstract Expressionists on the Work of Morton Feldman with Particular Reference to Rothko and Guston" (master's thesis, University of Plymouth, 2003), 175.

<sup>39</sup> Morton Feldman, "XXX Anecdotes and Drawings," in *Morton Feldman Essays*, ed. Walter Zimmermann (Köln: Beginner Press, 1985), 168.

Hindu and Oriental philosophy, and Zen Buddhism. For Cage, stasis allowed freedom from dualities such as tension and release, and embraced the concept that everything in space and time is connected.<sup>40</sup> Both Feldman's and Cage's differing aesthetic of stasis inspired Walsh's creative process in *Black Scissors*.

Graphic notation, frequently used by avant-garde and experimental composers such as George Crumb, Krzysztof Penderecki, and Karlheinz Stockhausen, is one of the products of freedom from tradition embraced by the New York School. Henry Cowell commented on the New York School composers, Christian Wolff, Earle Brown, Cage and Feldman, "Here were four composers who were getting rid of glue."<sup>41</sup> They felt it unnecessary to bind sounds together in order to create continuity as other composers had done, but instead gave sounds the freedom to convey their individual identity.<sup>42</sup> This concept was carried further into graphic notation, and Feldman was the first of the group to experiment with this practice.<sup>43</sup> Cage then adopted a similar notation style for his chance-based music. Cornelius Cardew also utilized graphic notation, finding an aesthetic resonance that aligned with Cage and Feldman. His innovative approach asked the performers to create sounds in response to his graphic notation. For Cardew, this represented an important and authentic approach to creativity.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Richard K. Winslow, "John Cage (1912-1992)," in *Music of the Twentieth-Century Avant-Garde*, ed. Larry Sitsky (Westport, Conn; London: Greenwood Press, 2002), 94.

<sup>41</sup> John Cage, "History of Experimental Music in the United States," in *Silence: Lectures and Writings* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), 71.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 525.

<sup>44</sup> Jonathan Powles, "Cornelius Cardew (1936-1981)," in *Music of the Twentieth-Century Avant-Garde*, ed. Larry Sitsky (Westport, Conn; London: Greenwood Press, 2002), 100.

Walsh was fascinated with the notational approach and adopted a proportional graphic layout for *Black Scissors*. For the slow sections of *Black Scissors*, he used traditional notation, but presented it in a graphic manner. In Musical Example 4.7, explicit note values are not employed. Instead, black note-heads are used with the exception of a set of thirty-second notes that is purposely indicated to be played rapidly. Both register and duration are spatially notated. Pitches cover a wide range and are distributed over the vertical layout according to their registers. The duration is indicated in seconds with a visual representation of the relative length found on the horizontal axis. According to Walsh, “the player is free to take liberties with the horizontal durations in these sections.”<sup>45</sup>

Musical Example 4.7. Graphic notation in *Black Scissors* by Walsh, p. 16.

<sup>45</sup> Craig Walsh, Preparation and Performance notes, in *Black Scissors*, score, 1993.

The sparse texture demonstrates Walsh's fondness for the open-spaced manifestation of sound and the static character it reflects. Additionally, this spatial presentation not only offers performers the sense of interweaving time and space but also suggests a meditative atmosphere. Through the use of graphic notation, Walsh's *Black Scissors* visually conveys both spatiality and static quality.

### *The Timbres of Prepared Piano and Gamelan Instruments*

While clearly interested in the employment of stasis, Walsh was also fascinated with Cage's prepared piano, propelling him to seek out more possibilities for timbre and color in *Black Scissors*. Prepared piano is one of Cage's best-known innovations; he described it as "an instrument having convincingly its own special characteristics, not even suggesting those of a piano."<sup>46</sup> The change of piano tones and pitch on a prepared piano is determined by many physical factors, including the size and material of inserted objects, the scale of the instrument, and the placement of objects on strings.

In *Black Scissors*, Walsh gives a detailed table for preparation of the piano, including varying sizes of materials and their precise positioning on the strings. Musical Example 4.8 shows the graphic notation for the beginning of the first slow section. It opens with an accented F-sharp<sup>2</sup>, unusually marked *sffff*. By placing a large bolt in combination with a nut on the strings, this pitch is transformed into a mixed sound of metal, rattle and F-sharp<sup>2</sup> pitch. The resulting sonority evokes the sounds of a cymbal. It is followed by a dyad, D<sup>3</sup> and E<sup>3</sup>, which is a pure

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<sup>46</sup> John Cage, preface to *Amores* (Peters Edition: 1943).

piano sound without any preparation of the strings. After this dyad is repeated four times, a woodblock-like sound blended with a G4 harmonic is produced by gently playing the key G3. G3 is prepared by a piece of thin rubber that has been interlaced between the three strings of the pitch at the mid-way point of the string's length. The sound is muted and decays quickly. The pitch then shifts to a higher register, transferring the focus to another space. The dyad, C-sharp5 and B5 is marked with an accent and staccato as well as *p*. The placement of a piece of paper underneath the dampers brings a distinctive sparkling buzz to the timbre. The combined use of altered and unaltered sounds described above successfully reproduces the sonority of a miniature percussion orchestra. Richard Bunker, in his description of the effects and convenience of a prepared piano states, "here is an orchestra which can be carried around in a brief case" and suggests that it be named the "Klaviergamelan."<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Richard Bunker, *The Well-Prepared Piano* (Colorado Spring: The Colorado College Music Press, 1973), 2.

Musical Example 4.8. Graphic notation with Walsh's instruction for prepared piano in *Black Scissors*, pp. 4-5.<sup>48</sup> (beginning)

4

Large bolt with head up  
approximate 10" from  
damper with loose nut sitting  
on the strings.

Rubber (plumbing- but thinner).  
Interlaced between string (over 1,  
under 2, over 3) – placed in the  
middle of the string – should produce  
the harmonic



depress si heavily:

depress middle pedal until end

← lift S. Pedal

<sup>48</sup> The author extracts the composer's instruction from *Black Scissors* and includes it in this music example.

Musical Example 4.8. Graphic notation with Walsh's instruction for prepared piano in *Black Scissors*, pp. 4-5.<sup>49</sup> (conclusion)

The image shows a musical score for prepared piano. It consists of two staves. The top staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It contains two notes: a G4 (middle C) and a B4 (B4), both marked with a piano (p) dynamic. The bottom staff has a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. It contains two notes: a G3 (low C) and a B3 (B3), both marked with a mezzo-piano (mp) dynamic. The notes are connected by horizontal lines with arrows at the ends, indicating sustained sounds. The top staff has a '4' above the line between the notes, and the bottom staff has a '3' above the line between the notes. A red callout box points to the top staff with the following text: 'A thin sheet of tracing, vellum, or regular (20lbs) paper should be placed underneath dampers between [musical notation] --and should produce a "buzz" when [musical notation] is depressed'. The musical notation in the callout box shows a G4 note on a treble clef staff with a damper symbol above it.

The sonority and timbre of a gamelan orchestra are implied in *Black Scissors*. The exotic musical influence has a direct correlation to Walsh's life experience. In 1993, the year *Black Scissors* was written, a bulletin board post for auditions for a gamelan orchestra drew Walsh's attention, and he joined the group for approximately a year, performing throughout New York City. He became familiar with gamelan music and the instruments, and like Cage, his interest in gamelan music is reflected in his use of prepared piano to produce exotic sonorities similar to those of gamelan instruments. Some of the specific gamelan instruments that emerge from Walsh's prepared piano sounds include the slentem (a type of metallophone made of bronze bars), gambang (xylophone-like, made of wood), celempung (plucked zither), gong and saron.

<sup>49</sup> The author extracts the composer's instruction from *Black Scissors* and includes it in this music example.

*The Funk Music of James Brown*

James Brown is a major figure in African-American pop music, a leader in funk music, and very influential amongst jazz musicians. He is often referred to as “Soul Brother Number One” and “The Godfather of Soul.”<sup>50</sup> Walsh recalled that while in New York he went dancing one night with his friends and heard a dance mix of music by Brown. The “dance feel, repetitive rhythmic patterns and the syncopated funk rhythms”<sup>51</sup> intrigued Walsh and the exposure to Brown’s music would later become a source of inspiration for *Black Scissors*.

Musical Example 4.9 shows an excerpt from the drum break<sup>52</sup> in Brown’s song, *Funky Drummer* (1970). Walsh’s incorporation of funk rhythm into *Black Scissors* is demonstrated in Musical Example 4.10. Funk rhythm patterns in *Black Scissors* are revealed through the techniques that Walsh uses to separate melody from rhythm. He keeps the melody notes as true pitches but prepares the piano with bolts, rubbers, and screws to create unpitched notes for the rhythmic line. Musical Example 4.11 is a transcription that illustrates the pitches and unpitched notes as heard by the listener. The top line represents melody and the bottom line represents rhythm. When comparing Brown’s funk rhythms found in the snare drum and bass drum in Musical Example 4.9 with the unpitched line in Musical Example 4.11, the similarities in syncopation and pattern are notable.

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<sup>50</sup> *The Oxford Companion To Popular Music*, s.v. “Brown, James.”

<sup>51</sup> Craig Walsh, interview by author, August 11, 2015.

<sup>52</sup> In popular music, a break means that a vocal part takes a break and allows percussive or instrumental section to perform as solo, showing technical skills and bringing more excitement into a song. A break usually occurs two-thirds to three-quarters of the way through a song.

Musical Example 4.9. *Funky Drummer* by James Brown, drum break (5:34).<sup>53</sup>

Musical Example 4.10. *Black Scissors* by Walsh, p.22, line 2, units 4-12.

Musical Example 4.11. Transcription of Musical Example 4.10.

In the article, “*Funky Drummer*’: New Orleans, James Brown and the Rhythmic Transformation of American Popular Music,”<sup>54</sup> Alexander Stewart identified and summarized important elements of Brown’s funk style. One of these defining elements, linear drumming with first beat emphasis, is also pertinent to Walsh’s *Black Scissors*. Linear drumming means that

<sup>53</sup> Alexander Stewart, “‘Funky Drummer’’: New Orleans, James Brown and the Rhythmic Transformation of American Popular Music,” *Popular Music* 19, no.3 (October 2000): 305.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, 293-318.

virtually every sixteenth note is played on one or more pieces of the drum set.<sup>55</sup> Linear drumming is typically highly syncopated, though with an emphasis occurring on first beats of measures.<sup>56</sup> These defining characteristics may be heard on page 22 of *Black Scissors*.

In Musical Example 4.11, the melody is simple in its pitch content yet rhythmically complicated. The rhythmic pattern of the melody includes a dotted rhythm and a group of thirty-second notes that lack a sense of downbeat, followed by a tie connecting a syncopation. Each beat contains its own rhythmic figure contributing to a complex and unstable overall pattern. The irregularity is mostly filled in by unpitched notes to maintain a strong forward momentum. Thus, the sixteenth note value is always implied or heard. The contradiction resulting from the off-beat melodic figure against the angular rhythm in the drum-like unpitched notes creates a sense of polyrhythm. Similar to the linear drumming techniques found in Brown's funk style, Walsh also emphasizes beat one, as shown in Musical Example 4.11. The first beat of the melody is emphasized by a dyad, F-sharp and B-flat, along with an unpitched sound. Walsh also marks beat one with an accent. The ascending motion, F-sharp, G-sharp, and B, preceding beat one<sup>57</sup> creates a sense of gathering momentum toward the downbeat.

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 303.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 309.

<sup>57</sup> James Brown's musical aesthetic of "the one" refers to the placement of accentuation on beat one of one- or two- measure cycles. "The one" allowed his instrumentalists to exhibit their ample improvisatory playing between the regularly spaced downbeats.

Persistently repetitive rhythm is another prominent element of funk music and is commonly referred to as “groove.”<sup>58</sup> This concept is also evident in *Black Scissors*. In Musical Example 4.12, the aforementioned pattern repeats four times and is invariably followed by five repetitions, with slight changes through the addition of G and F-sharp in the bass clef. Although the jagged rhythmic figure disturbs the sense of regular pulse, the nine repetitions of the pattern contribute to an overall sense of order and stability.

Musical Example 4.12. *Black Scissors* by Walsh, p.22, lines 2-3.

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<sup>58</sup> Groove means a persistently repeated pattern. Steven Feld defines it as “an unspecifiable but ordered sense of something...that is sustained in a distinctive, regular and attractive way, working to draw a listener in.” It has strong connection to dance, meaning to compel the body to move. The characteristic usage derived from African dance music is ubiquitous in pop music such as soul, funk, salsa, samba, hip-hop, and others. Steven Feld, “Aesthetics as Iconicity of Style, or ‘Lift-up-over Sounding’: Getting into the Kaluli Groove,” *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 20 (1988): 76.

## CHAPTER 5. LINES

Among Walsh's compositions, *Lines* is perhaps the most traditional in compositional procedure, including its structural design and harmony. This piece was intended for the classical pianist, Andrew Willis, who is an expert in early music and has also recorded the Beethoven sonatas on the fortepiano. In order to compose a piece capable of displaying Willis's virtuosity and artistry, Walsh used the simplest musical cell to create and build colorful sonorities, dramatic textures and interweaving lines, culminating in an extremely energetic work. *Lines* was recorded by Stephen Gosling in 2008 on Walsh's CD *Bugaboo*.<sup>59</sup>

### Formal Analysis

#### *Organic Compositional Technique*

As historical and natural philosopher, Jean-Baptiste Robinet (1735-1820), once stated regarding his concept of an original life form and his view on organic development: "It is a germ [cell, monad] that has a natural tendency towards self-development...The cell develops itself thus, and every level of development produces a variation of the prototype—a new combination of the fundamental universal plan."<sup>60</sup> The cell is a seed that is planted, then germinates, grows,

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<sup>59</sup> Craig Walsh, *Bugaboo*, New York New Music Ensemble, ALBANY TROY 1047, 2008, CD.

<sup>60</sup> Jean-Baptiste Robinet, *De la Nature* (Amsterdam: Chez E. van Harrevelt, 1766), 4: 17-19, quoted in David L. Montgomery, "The Myth of Organicism: From Bad Science to Great Art," in *Musical Quarterly* 76, no. 1 (Spring, 1992), 18.

and eventually becomes a mature plant. These notions of the cell may be extended from natural science into the artistic realm, including musical creativity and theory.

Walsh notes that the approach to *Lines* was quite different from that of most of his compositions. The creative process itself was very organic, and yet the piano work remained well-constructed and organized. Walsh begins *Lines* with the simplest and smallest musical cells, the interval of the second. He uses the second in major, minor and augmented qualities, its inverted version in the seventh, and its octave displacement in the ninth. This essential material and its derivatory variations permeate the work, expanding horizontally to build melodies and vertically to construct harmonies. Thus, the manipulation of the single cell contributes to the overall unity of the work in a variety of melodic and harmonic guises.

The sound event of the first two notes of *Lines* announces the initial cell, the second, which is gradually unfolded and shapes the tune (Musical Example 5.1). The appearance of B to C-sharp implies a continuous stepwise ascending motion to D—E; however, the suspension of C-sharp creates a sense of uncertainty, and the line suddenly drops a seventh below, presenting the cell in a different register. The E serves as the axis of the melody, in which the cell exists in arch form, and the second is achieved by the preceding D and successive C with E in the middle. When taking a further step outward, C-sharp and E-flat form another major second in an enharmonic relationship. This cell is also found in the outermost two notes, B and A, which respectively begin and close the phrase. An intervallic analysis of the phrases demonstrates the employment of the intervals of the major second, minor second, and major seventh.

Musical Example 5.1. The intervallic analysis of the opening of *Lines* by Walsh.

The introductory theme returns in a more complex texture on page 6 (Musical Example 5.2). The melodies in the treble voice are heard with slight reductions and rhythmic variations from the opening statement. At the same time, a bass counter line builds an upward climbing chromatic scale. Between these two contrapuntal lines, the inner voice provides embellishments in rapid sixteenth notes that outline a series of falling gestures. The layering of sounds and the interweaving lines contribute to an increased textural and harmonic richness, all the while maintaining a cohesiveness through the use and development of the “cell.”

Musical Example 5.2. The melody of the opening recurs in a more complex texture, with the bass line constructed by the identical cell, *Lines* by Walsh, page 6.

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system is in 3/4 time, starting with a tempo of quarter note = 92. It features a melody in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The bass line consists of a repeating cell of three notes: a half note, a quarter note, and a half note, all beamed together. This cell is repeated throughout the system. The second system is in 2/4 time, starting with a tempo of quarter note = 112. It also features a melody in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The bass line continues the repeating cell from the first system. Both systems include dynamic markings (cresc., mf, f, sfz) and performance instructions (accel.). Red circles highlight specific notes in the bass line of both systems, and a red arrow points to a note in the second system with the label 'chromatic scale / minor seconds'.

In addition to linear use of the cell, there is also vertical manipulation. The end of *Lines* best demonstrates a different construction of the cell. On line 3 of page 13 (Musical Example 5.3), the first half note presents doubled D-flats and E-flats. In spite of the octave displacement, the essential interval of the two notes is the second. The second chord consists of D-flat, E, G-flat, and A-flat, and each set of two consecutive notes is also related to the second in its varied forms, including augmented second, diminished tenth (enharmonically, major ninth), and major ninth. Each of the two chords in the rest of the measure is built in the same way. Moreover, A-flat, B-flat and C are doubled and pronounced in different registers. When holding the sustained pedal until sounds decay, the blending sonority results in a kaleidoscopic effect, as the cell repeats in a mirrored reflection.

Musical Example 5.3. The vertical/harmonic presentation of the cell in the end of *Lines* by Walsh, page 13.

The musical score for Musical Example 5.3 shows a piano piece in a key with two flats. The tempo is marked 'rit..... molto' with a quarter note equal to 52 (♩=52). The dynamics range from 'p' (piano) to 'pp' (pianissimo) and 'niente' (nothing). The score includes a 'una corda' marking and a 'Ped.' (pedal) marking. The cell is highlighted with a bracket and a circled 'C'.

While this discussion has illustrated the most obvious melodic and harmonic appearances of the cell, it is also occasionally found in the background. For instance, the two sections before and after the climax on page 10 share the same texture and gesture: sonorous chordal writing interrupted by doubled notes in two octaves that serve as pedal points despite a rather high register. The pedal point of the section preceding the climax is G (Musical Example 5.4); following the arrival, the pedal point rises a step to A (Musical Example 5.5). On a higher structural level, the two pedal points reveal the prolongation of the cell.

Musical Example 5.4. Pedal point on G in the section before the climax, *Lines* by Walsh, page 9.

The musical score for Musical Example 5.4 shows a piano piece in a key with two flats. The tempo is marked 'accel.' with a quarter note equal to 72 (♩=72), 84 (♩=84), and 96 (♩=96). The dynamics range from 's' (sforzando) to 'f' (forte). The score includes a 'Ped.' (pedal) marking. The pedal point on G is highlighted with red ovals.

Musical Example 5.5. Pedal point on A in the section after the climax, *Lines* by Walsh, page 11.

The image shows a musical score for piano, specifically a section from 'Lines' by John Walsh. The score is in 2/4 time and features a pedal point on A. The music is marked 'accel.' and 'f' (forte). A red oval highlights the first occurrence of the pedal point on A, and another red oval highlights a second occurrence. The tempo is marked '♩=84' and the dynamics end with 'fff' (fortississimo).

All of the examples display Walsh's organic approach to cell manipulation. The connection, variation, stacking, prolongation, and transformation of the cell, as well as its presentation in layers and with varied structural levels, demonstrate a constructive process generated from a single musical germ. This compositional approach aligns with a view of theorist and follower of organicism, Rudolph Reti: "The composer strives toward *homogeneity in the inner essence* but at the same time toward *variety in the outer appearance*."<sup>61</sup>

#### *Post-Composition Examination of the Golden Mean*

During his years at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Walsh taught composition and theory classes. For one of his theory classes he had students closely examine the formal structures found in the music of Debussy and Bartók. The course included discussions of the Golden Mean and the Fibonacci series, both of which are tightly associated with the musical structure found in these two composers' music. Walsh became interested in discovering whether the form of his piano work *Lines* reflected the two mathematical constructs. He analyzed the form and made calculations with the time duration from the recording of Andrew Willis's

<sup>61</sup> Rudolph Reti, *The Thematic Process in Music* (New York: Macmillan, 1951), 13.

premiere of *Lines*. The outcome of his analysis revealed a close approximation to the Golden Mean, a relationship that had occurred without Walsh's conscious use.

The Golden Mean was first described as an "extreme and mean ratio" in Euclid's *Elements*,<sup>62</sup> where the proportion of the whole to the larger part agrees with the proportion of the larger part to the smaller one.<sup>63</sup> As depicted in Figure 5.1 below, in the Golden Mean the ratio of AC to AB equals the ratio of AB to BC, expressed numerically as 1.618...with point B occurring at the ratio of 0.618...The manifestations of this proportion are widespread in nature, seen in such objects as fir-cones, sunflowers, pineapples, and sea shells, among others. The Golden Mean sequence can be expressed in whole numbers, known as the Fibonacci series (1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55, 89...). In this numerical sequence, each number equals the sum of the two preceding numbers.<sup>64</sup>



$$\frac{AC}{AB} = \frac{AB}{BC} = 1.6180339887 \dots$$

Figure 5.1. Line segments in the Golden Mean.

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<sup>62</sup> *Elements* was a mathematical and geometric treatise attributed to the Alexandrian Greek mathematician Euclid around 300 BC, who is often referred to as the "father of geometry." The *Elements* consists of thirteen books, containing about 465 propositions in all. A majority of them contains geometrical calculation with magnitudes, involving such things as proportion, commensurability, prime numbers and others. Although Euclid does not use the term "golden ratio," there is definition and construction concerning the concept of golden mean in several books of *Elements*.

<sup>63</sup> Ernő Lendvai, *The Workshop of Bartók and Kodály* (Budapest: Editio Musica, 1983), 33.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, 46.

The Golden Mean or Fibonacci series in musical construction can appear in pitch content, harmony, beats, bars and so on. Historically, Debussy and Bartók are the composers whose music has been most frequently referenced and studied when speaking of the Golden Mean, particularly Debussy's *Reflets dans l'eau* and Bartók's *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta*. Whether their uses of the proportion were conscious or unconscious remains a subject of controversy due to the lack of explicit reported or written evidence. Walsh, in contrast, has claimed an unconscious use of the Golden Mean in *Lines*. His post-examination of that topic is demonstrated as follows.

This analysis is based on calculation of time duration, rather than the numbers of bars as in other compositions. Additionally, the tempo marking of Walsh's *Lines* is "free and flexible," which gives performers ample room for interpretation. Therefore, its analyzed correlation with the Golden Mean varies as each performance displays great variability in length. The data employed below is taken from the recorded performance by Andrew Willis.

The total duration of this performance of *Lines* is 08:45 with the climax occurring at 05:10. In the following analysis, the timeline at the bottom presents divisions that are indicated by the progression of time. Another line is placed above that indicates the length of each division and the sum of various combinations of them. The value of the ratio of the climax point in this illustration is approximately 0.618, or that of the Golden Mean. This proportional layout of the structure based on duration is also transcribed in whole numbers in the second portion from the top of Figure 5.2. The durations in squares indicate the exact lengths of the divisions in *Lines*, while those in parenthesis as calculated on the top of the figure, are theoretical and ideal. When comparing each set of two numbers, one will find that the ideal times can be easily matched with the real times without significant differences. In addition, the ratio of these divisions, the

constructive combinations, and the whole structure are labeled 1, 2, 3, 5, 8. That sequence follows a Fibonacci sequence with a slight variant, in which the whole number “1” is divided into two sections, each equaling 0.5 (See the labels close to the right of the second portion in Figure 5.2).

Walsh states “I was interested to find out whether or not my piece was based on the Fibonacci series. Because I am a human being, and because things of nature, many things, pine cones, trees, they grow in the proportions of the Fibonacci series.”<sup>65</sup> For a theorist, the analysis outcome for *Lines* coincides unexpectedly with the Golden Mean. For Walsh, the composer, the intuitive construction of the composition was a reflection of the law of nature embedded in his creative approach to the composition.

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<sup>65</sup> Craig Walsh, interview by author, August 11, 2015.



## Stylistic Characteristics

### *Olivier Messiaen*

Olivier Messiaen (1908-92) remains one of the most influential composers of the twentieth century and is credited for his innovations in rhythmic and harmonic practices. His harmonic language is especially unique due to his development of a large catalogue of unusual chords, most of which either radically depart from tonality or evolve from the harmonic language of Wagner and Debussy. One of Messiaen's harmonic inventions, known as the "Modes of Limited Transposition," includes seven modes and their transpositions. In his treatise *Technique de Mon Langage Musical*,<sup>66</sup> Messiaen explains that these modes are formed in symmetrical groups: after a certain number of chromatic transpositions, each mode begins to utilize the same notes as those of earlier transpositions. Thus, the number of transpositions is limited and varies according to each particular mode.<sup>67</sup> While it is possible to use all of these modes both melodically and harmonically, the renowned music theorist Allen Forte notes that "Messiaen regarded each mode as a large *source harmony*... rather than simply as a scale that consists of contiguous pitches...."<sup>68</sup>

At the time Walsh composed *Lines*, he was interested in Messiaen's music and listened to it frequently. Although he had no intention of adopting Messiaen's harmonic application, his fascination with the extraordinary sonorities is reflected in several successions of chords in

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<sup>66</sup> This book was translated into English as *The Technique of My Musical Language*. Olivier Messiaen, *The Technique of My Musical Language*, trans. John Satterfield (Paris: A. Leduc, 1956).

<sup>67</sup> Messiaen, *The Technique of My Musical Language*, 58-59.

<sup>68</sup> Allen Forte, "Messiaen's Chords," in *Olivier Messiaen: Music, Art and Literature*, ed. Christopher Dingle and Nigel Simeone (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2001), 93.

*Lines*. One of the groups in the chordal section provides the most obvious evidence (Musical Example 5.6). The three chords are bookended by doubled Gs in two octaves, effectively dividing the chords into groups. The scalar analysis data indicate that the harmonic and melodic materials of the three chords are drawn from Messiaen's mode 7 in its sixth transposition. Mode 7 in each of its six transpositions is presented in Musical Example 5.7, designated by the superscripted numbers. The mode consists of two symmetrical groups, each of which contains the intervals of semitone, semitone, semitone, tone, and semitone. Other than the use in the fourth part of "l'Ascension: *Prière du Christ montant vers son Père*,"<sup>69</sup> mode 7 rarely appears in Messiaen's music.

Musical Example 5.6. Chords in Messiaen's mode 7 in its sixth transposition, *Lines*, page 10.

Mode: 7<sup>6</sup> 7<sup>6</sup> 7<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Messiaen, *The Technique of My Musical Language*, 62.

Musical Example 5.7. Messiaen's mode 7 and its transpositions.

The image displays six musical staves, each representing a different transposition of Messiaen's Mode 7. The modes are labeled as follows:

- Mode 7<sup>1</sup>: The first staff, with a red arc highlighting the interval between the second and third notes.
- Mode 7<sup>2</sup>: The second staff.
- Mode 7<sup>3</sup>: The third staff.
- Mode 7<sup>4</sup>: The fourth staff.
- Mode 7<sup>5</sup>: The fifth staff.
- Mode 7<sup>6</sup>: The sixth staff.

Each staff contains a sequence of notes in a specific mode, with Mode 7<sup>1</sup> having a red arc highlighting a specific interval.

Following the three-chord group (Musical Example 5.6) is a succession of chords (Musical Example 5.8), mostly extracted from the same mode, mode 7<sup>6</sup>, with only two exceptions. After the group in mode 7<sup>6</sup> as discussed previously, the first chord of Musical Example 5.8 modulates to mode 3, with a different harmonic property; the second chord returns to mode 7, yet belongs to the fourth transposition; the transpositional modulation then brings the subsequent chords back to the sixth transposition, unifying the sonority with the preceding group of chords. As Messiaen cited in his treatise, "...our modes can modulate to themselves or borrow from themselves in their different transpositions."<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 65.

Musical Example 5.8. Transpositional modulation of modes, *Lines* by Walsh, page 10.

The musical score consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 3/4. The lower staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 3/4. The piece is marked *ff*. A red bracket under the bass line highlights two chords: a triad (3) and a seventh chord (7<sup>4</sup>).

However unconsciously, Walsh's choice of pitch material and the resulting soundscape in *Lines* are suggestive of Messiaen's harmonic vocabulary. The stunning sonorities of the untraditional harmonic environment make *Lines* more fascinating. In addition, as Messiaen suggests that each mode in each transposition creates its own color, Walsh's juxtaposition and superposition of unrelated chords or modes implies a palette of different colors with shades and shadows strategically placed on a canvas.

### *Impressionism*

Several musical elements in *Lines* resemble the characteristics of impressionist music. One of Debussy's harmonic features is the use of interval of the second. Its harmonic value is expressed as the complement of the seventh and the compression of the ninth, both creating chords with typical impressionist sonorities. The sound of the second is found in various applications in Debussy's music, from a gentle manner in *Jimbo's Lullaby* to a powerful effect in *Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest*. Ravel's fondness for this interval is heard in almost three-quarters of his solo piano pieces, including *Jeux d'eau*, "Noctuelles," "Oiseaux tristes" and "Alborada del gracioso" from *Miroirs*, and others, which frequently open or close (or both) with the minor

second or major seventh.<sup>71</sup> In the earlier discussion of the organic compositional technique found in *Lines*, the interval of the second as a musical cell was investigated. This interval serves as a basic unit for horizontal and vertical expansion throughout *Lines*, while creating both linear melody and diverse sonorities.

In *Lines*, Walsh uses an impressionist technique called chordal planing. In this technique chords move in parallel motion instead of within a functional harmonic progression. The use of chordal planing in *Lines* is achieved frequently by the chord sonority built by the interval of the seventh, most often with the third, fourth and/or fifth appearing in the middle. The first line of page 8 shows almost all of the chords in the right hand in this formation, while the chords in the left hand display more variants such as the open seventh, dyads and inverted triads (Musical Example 5.9). Moreover, the chords are juxtaposed in the form of a succession, again resembling the planing technique common to impressionist music. For example, the opening of *Canope* by Debussy presents a series of chords in parallel motion (Musical Example 5.10). Due to their individuality, the chords do not serve a harmonic progressive function, but rather float in a seemingly aimless fashion. Similarly, the paralleled chords on the first line of page 10 of *Lines* (Musical Example 5.9) are unrelated to functional harmony and lack a continuous feeling of linear progression, resulting in an ambiguous tonality. The strand of chords is punctuated by the accented doubling of G, which seems to interrupt the flow of time. Consequently, the chords themselves merely exist in the present, with a notable absence of arriving at or departing from a climax. Also, the chords between each of the consecutive two Gs bring various colors to the foreground while the clarity of the line becomes secondary. Walsh's use of parallel chords,

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<sup>71</sup> Roy Howat, "Ravel and the Piano," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ravel*, ed. Deborah Mawer (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 76.

daring in their freedom of movement as they move from one chord to another, reflects the notion of “emancipation of sounds” in Debussy’s music.<sup>72</sup>

Musical Example 5.9. Harmonic planing, *Lines* by Walsh, page 10, line 1.

Musical Example 5.10. Harmonic planing, *Canope* by Debussy, mm.1-4.

Three-stratum texture in piano works is not an innovation of impressionist music, but it does appear in the works of Debussy. It is particularly evident in his *Images II* and *Préludes II*, which are fully scored on three staves with a few exceptions in the latter. Debussy’s *Ondine* provides an excellent example of a multi-layered texture (Musical Example 5.11). The pedal tones on the lower staff ring on the tonic, followed by passing tones leading to the dominant; the melodies are clearly placed on the middle staff; and decorative figurations murmur on the top staff. The layering of sounds here and its resulting sonority confirm Debussy’s fascination with

<sup>72</sup> David Burge, *Twentieth-Century Piano Music* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2004), 10.

the Gamelan ensemble. In Gamelan, an engaging counterpoint is achieved through the mixture of a variety of instruments playing in varied speeds and registers simultaneously punctuated by the gong in the bass. The polyphonic texture in *Lines* resembles various instrumental sounds woven together.

Musical Example 5.11. Three-staff texture in *Ondine* by Debussy, mm.20-25.

The image displays a musical score for three staves, likely piano and two vocal parts, from Debussy's *Ondine*, measures 20-25. The score is written in G major and 3/4 time. The top staff is marked *à l'aise* and *p léger*. The middle staff is marked *mf en dehors*. The bottom staff is marked *p expressif*. The score features a complex polyphonic texture with overlapping melodic lines and chords. A *Retenu* (ritardando) marking is present above the second system. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat sign.

A corresponding three-part texture appears in the second plateau of *Lines* (Musical Example 5.12). Initially, the long notes in the bass clef may seem to serve as pedal tones. They do not function as an enhancement for the tonality as in the Debussy example, however. Instead, the bass line—D-flat, E-flat, D to E—composed of the basic cell, the second, becomes an underground melody in addition to the gong-like pedal tones. The middle staff displays the recurring melody from the primary tune, but one octave apart rather than two as in its first

presentation. Above the tune, the rapid sixteenth-note oscillations flutter in the high register. The figurations' shimmering timbre takes on a decorative role against the slow-paced melodies and embellishes the overall sound. Like Debussy, Walsh's application of three lines encompasses a wide pitch range that spans over six octaves of the keyboard. The use of a three-stratum texture also emphasizes the polyphonic texture, while most importantly providing a distinct clarity of purpose for each of the layers.

Musical Example 5.12. Three-staff texture in *Lines* by Walsh, page 7.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for a three-staff texture. The first system consists of three staves. The top staff is in treble clef and contains a rapid sixteenth-note oscillation, marked with a forte (*ff*) dynamic. The middle staff is in treble clef and features a slow-paced melody with a forte (*ff*) dynamic and a *legato* marking. The bottom staff is in bass clef and contains a slow-paced melody, also marked with a forte (*ff*) dynamic. The second system also consists of three staves. The top staff is in treble clef and contains a rapid sixteenth-note oscillation, marked with a forte (*sf*) dynamic. The middle staff is in treble clef and features a slow-paced melody with a forte (*sf*) dynamic and a *legato* marking. The bottom staff is in bass clef and contains a slow-paced melody, also marked with a forte (*sf*) dynamic. The notation includes various musical symbols such as clefs, dynamics, articulation marks, and slurs.

## CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

Among contemporary composers, some inherit a certain musical trend, and some are influenced by various styles. As the latter, Walsh has embraced the diverse compositional fashions around him throughout the various stages of his creative life.

In *Rhapsody*, the appearances of repetition, frequent meter change, and harmonic dissonance display the strong influences of Stravinsky. The dissonant harmonies, syncopated rhythms associated with Jazz, and musical gestures in *Rhapsody* reveal similarities to Copland's *Piano Variations*. Walsh's improvisations, driven by his primary thematic materials and dependent on stream of consciousness, as well as his use of clusters, point to the composer's affinity for the music and style of jazz pianist, Cecil Taylor. *Black Scissors* also demonstrates a great diversity of styles and fusion of influences. Through his creative process, Walsh integrates minimalist techniques, the aesthetic of stasis through sparse texture and graphic notation, the colorful timbres of gamelan through the use of prepared piano, and the funk style of "Soul Brother Number One," James Brown. In *Lines*, Walsh's organic approach and the formation of the Golden Mean contribute to the formal plan. Stylistically, Walsh uses Messiaen-like chords to provide colorful and dissonant sonorities, and also impressionist characteristics to create textural and chordal designs.

In the discussion of American art music, Larry Starr notes,

An American art music, by definition, had to be eclectic and pluralistic—a melting pot—if it was to reflect broadly and accurately the society from which it sprang.... A new American art music had to come to terms with an unprecedented variety of available

materials and techniques...these very materials and techniques helped create, and continued to remake, through peaceful or forced “marriage.”<sup>73</sup>

He examines the music of three distinctive American composers—Charles Ives, George Gershwin, and Copland—and identifies the ways in which they forge these materials into an artistic unity. Instead of Ives’s layering and juxtaposition of various styles within individual works, Gershwin’s approach to diversity is to seek a synthesis of elements derived from various stylistic sources.<sup>74</sup> Although Starr comments exclusively on “American” music here, the same compositional fashion is reflected in Walsh’s approach to the fusion of various styles. In *Rhapsody*, Walsh’s dissonant harmonic writing is not inspired by a single composer, but rather by common features shared among Stravinsky, Copland and Taylor. The irregular rhythms and changing meters display Walsh’s preference for rapid shifts of pulses that can be heard in the music of these three musical figures. In *Black Scissors*, Walsh’s use of close repetition is drawn from minimalist technique and corresponds to the “groove” in Brown’s funk music. Walsh’s experience of playing Gamelan instruments links directly to the colorful timbres in the prepared piano. In *Lines*, dissonant harmonies and rich sonorities also contribute to more than one factor—his organic compositional approach, the Messiaen-like chordal application, and the impressionist characteristics. Each of these musical features is the product of Walsh’s unique manner of synthesizing disparate musical styles through the integration of common musical elements. As Starr comments on Gershwin, “He achieved his synthesis through the identification and structural exploitation of musical characteristics shared among these diverse traditions,” Walsh’s mastery of integrating these styles through various aesthetics, compositional devices,

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<sup>73</sup> Larry Starr, “Ives, Gershwin, and Copland: Reflections on the Strange History of American Art Music,” *American Music* 12, no. 2 (Summer 1994): 169.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

sonorities, piano technique, and performance practice brings cohesive voice and “marriage” to each of the piano works. It is an eclectic voice that finds unity in its diversity.

As an advocate of eclecticism, the American composer William Bolcom states, “In a culture made up of as many sources as ours, the synthesis of diverse musics can be potentially broader than any previously experienced in history. Now we need a pedagogic structure that will bring the various musical strains together under the same roof, in a kind of musically beneficial cohabitation.”<sup>75</sup> While Bolcom is referring here to an educational structure that supports the bringing together of “musical strains,” this metaphor of their “beneficial cohabitation” existing under one broad and overriding arch can also apply directly to Walsh’s ultimate achievements in his three solo piano works. Through the process, Walsh creates new possibilities for relationships among diverse styles, while simultaneously preserving the aesthetic essence of each influencing composer. Through the adoption and reconciliation of various musical techniques and styles, each of the three piano works constitutes a unique musical expression. In sum, Walsh’s synthesis of his disparate musical interests gives birth to a new creation.

As an introduction to Craig Walsh and his piano works, with a close examination of his eclectic compositional styles, this paper may serve as a resource for later researchers as they turn to other perspectives and investigations of his compositional output. The intent is that this study will create a greater awareness of his solo piano works, which are deserving of attention equal to that of his more well-known compositions in electronic music and chamber music.

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<sup>75</sup> William Bolcom, “Trouble in the Music World,” *Musical America* 110, no.2 (March 1990): 23.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A — CRAIG WALSH CATALOGUE

- 2011-12     ***The Destruction of the Temple of Heaven***, for chamber ensemble (9 players)  
(Commissioned by Gregg Hanson and pianist Tannis Gibson), 11 minutes
- 2010         ***String Quartet***, 22 minutes  
(Commissioned by the Manhattan String Quartet)
- 2008         ***Sugar Touch***, for alto saxophone and digital media, 8 minutes  
(Commissioned by Todd Rewoldt)
- 2007         ***Cookin' the Books***, for flute, clarinet, violin, viola, cello, percussion, and piano  
(Commissioned by the Empyrean Ensemble), 14 minutes
- 2006-7       ***Neshanic Wanes*** for violin, cello and piano (Commissioned by Triple Helix),  
8 minutes
- 2004-05      ***Pointing Out Your Ruse*** for violin and percussion, 12 minutes  
(Commissioned by the University of Arizona Astrobiology and the Arts Program)
- 2002-03      ***Terma*** for soprano and digital media, 8 minutes
- 2003         ***Chaconnesque*** for clarinet, viola, and piano, 10 minutes  
(Commissioned by Kelly Burke, clarinet, and Scott Rawls, viola)
- 2002         ***Bugaboo*** for chamber orchestra, 12 minutes  
(Written for the Composer's Conference)
- 2000         ***Schism*** for clarinet and viola, 8 minutes  
(Commissioned by Kelly Burke, clarinet, and Scott Rawls, viola)
- 1999-2000    ***Lines*** for piano solo, 10 minutes  
(Commissioned by Andrew Willis)
- 1999         ***Radix*** for digital media, 1 minute
- Junket*** for digital media, 6 minutes

- 1998      *Pipeline Burst Cache* for amplified cello and digital media, 8 minutes  
(Commissioned by Rhonda Rider)
- Quien era aquella que te amo en el sueno, cuando dormias?*  
for voice and piano, 3 minutes
- 1997      *Fallout City* for digital media, 7 minutes
- Zook* for trumpet, clarinet, violin, cello and piano, 10 minutes
- 1996      *Shifting Trajectories* for digital media, 5 minutes
- 1995      *Citrine* for flute, clarinet, violin, cello, and harpsichord, 14 minutes
- Zoom* for violin and piano, 10 minutes
- 1994      *0 to 33 in 1098.5* for violin, clarinet, and piano, 13 minutes
- 1993      *Black Scissors* for prepared piano, 12 minutes
- 1988      *Rhapsody* for piano

## APPENDIX B — PERMISSION LETTER FROM COMPOSER

from: Walsh, Craig T - (ctwalsh) <ctwalsh@email.arizona.edu>  
 to: "Ko, Chia-Chun - (chiachun)" <chiachun@email.arizona.edu>  
 date: Wed, Nov 29, 2017 at 9:38 PM  
 subject: Re: Copyright Permission--Dissertation

Chia-Chun,

I hereby give you permission to use the requested manuscripts and scores as musical excerpts in your dissertation. You also have my permission to use any of my other work as examples in your dissertation.

Dr. Walsh

Craig T. Walsh, Ph.D.  
 Associate Professor  
 Fred Fox School of Music  
 University of Arizona

t: [\(520\) 621-1655](tel:5206211655) e: [ctwalsh@email.arizona.edu](mailto:ctwalsh@email.arizona.edu)  
 f: [\(520\) 621-8118](tel:5206218118) w: <http://cfa.arizona.edu/ctwalsh>  
 Skype: yamswithrum  
<http://music.arizona.edu>

**From:** Chia-Chun Ko <[chiachun@email.arizona.edu](mailto:chiachun@email.arizona.edu)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, November 22, 2017 1:33:36 PM  
**To:** Walsh, Craig T - (ctwalsh)  
**Subject:** Copyright Permission--Dissertation

Dear Dr. Walsh,

I am preparing to submit my dissertation and would like to formally request permission to use your manuscripts and scores as musical excerpts in the document.

1. Rhapsody
2. Black Scissors
3. Lines

Sincerely,  
 Chia-Chun Ko  
[chiachun@email.arizona.edu](mailto:chiachun@email.arizona.edu)

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