

***Synchronisms #10 for Guitar and Electronic Sounds and Festino: Seminal Works for
Guitar by Mario Davidovsky
By Daniel Lippel***

INTRODUCTION

The inherent law of music is that it moves like a clock, it begins and ends, left to right. There is an unavoidable linearity because music has to do with time. I have always thought that although this is a fact, that does not mean that inside the mind we need to think in this way.

What happened in computer music for the last twenty years was the hegemony of the technocrats, people developing more software, and more software... We have software now until hell freezes over. I think we need music now; we need people who are really trained musicians, not nihilists, people that come from the tradition, because the tradition can teach you an awful lot. The best revolutionaries and the best iconoclasts are the ones who know what to be revolutionary about and what to be iconoclastic about.¹

Mario Davidovsky is a fearless sculptor of sound. His music demonstrates a focused intensity on minute details and an uncanny sense of dramatic and structural balance. On both the microcosmic and macrocosmic levels, Davidovsky prioritizes multi-dimensional expression. For a period, this intense commitment to sonic truth drove him into Columbia University's electronic music studios to manipulate the most fundamental aspects of sound. Later in his career, the same obsession with these basic aspects led to an integration of electronics inspired techniques into his acoustic writing. Despite his in-depth involvement with electronic music and his association with the modernist school of composition, Davidovsky owes no allegiance to any specific technology or technique. His music is wildly dramatic, yet carefully balanced; temporally experimental, yet demonstrative of classical structure; sonically avant-garde, yet gesturally traditional. These contradictions lie at the core of Davidovsky's aesthetic, and lend his work mystery. Davidovsky's two significant works involving guitar, *Synchronisms #10 for Guitar and*

¹ Mario Davidovsky, interview by author, 15 March 2006, New York.

Electronic Sounds and *Festino*, are fine examples of the sophistication and profundity of his music. They also represent landmark additions to the contemporary guitar repertoire. This study examines these two pieces from both of these vantage points.

Perhaps the most misleading moniker that can be applied to Mario Davidovsky is that he is an “electronic music composer.” Of course, Davidovsky is one of the most important pioneers of the genre of electronic music. But any rewarding analysis of his music requires deep examination that goes beyond his chosen tool of electronics and to the heart of his aesthetic goals. There is a particular danger in framing his electronic work within the larger, and often tiresome, aesthetic debates that revolve around the genre. In a lecture published by the *Journal of the American Liszt Society*, Wesley True, places Davidovsky’s landmark *Synchronisms #6* in a broader context with such commentaries on modern life and technology as *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Madness*, and the integrated architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright.

Synchronisms #6 demonstrates that the relationship of man and machines can be life-enhancing and beautiful, rather than ugly and dangerous. In *Synchronisms #6*, the listeners see the performer, the piano, and two speakers placed at either end of the piano, so they are not intimidated by the sight of a stage full of electronic equipment devoid of the human presence; rather, they experience the process of a human and machine in imaginative and beautiful interplay. The relationship of performer to machine-made music is both exciting and dynamic—at least for this performer. Thus, the relationship between man and machine in this composition is exciting, variable, intimate.²

True asserts that *Synchronisms #6* is a “non-verbal solution” to the problem of reconciling humanity and art with technology and science³. While there is no harm in waxing philosophic about Davidovsky’s music in such terms, there is little evidence that

² Wesley True. “Men, Music, and Machines. Some Thoughts Generated by the Practice and Performance of Mario Davidovsky’s *Synchronisms #6 for Piano and Electronics*.” *Journal of the American Liszt Society* IX (June 1981): 53.

³ Ibid.

Davidovsky himself saw his work this way. In a published interview, he answered a question about his attraction to the electronic medium.

The genuine value in electronic music concerns such aspects as the control of dynamics in time. For example, you can control a *crescendo* or a *diminuendo* in time with a precision that is not available anywhere else. Since you are not limited by the anatomy of an individual player, you can use the most sophisticated dynamics in the most incredible situations. You could have a tremendously fast succession of sounds—imagine a performance of Paganini's *Moto Perpetuo* in which every single note has a substantially different dynamic.... You also have access to generating speeds and successions of attacks that are not available in conventional music. If these elements happen to be of extreme importance in terms of what you are trying to articulate musically, then you can see why you better do it in the laboratory; people playing instruments simply couldn't do what is needed. So there's an example in which the idiosyncrasy of the electronic medium can be of interest for a very particular musical idea.⁴

Davidovsky's attraction to electronics is based on what the technology allows him to do with the musical material. His interest in a greater level of control over individual dynamics, speed and articulation of passages, and rate of change of *crescendi* and *decrescendi* is consistent with a general trend in 20th century music towards greater notational specificity.

Davidovsky was not unaware of the larger implications of replacing live performers with electronic instruments, though his objections are primarily musical and not philosophical.

I did not write any purely electronic pieces after 1965. In 1961 or '62, I was very, very interested in the combination of live instruments with tape, for several reasons. At that time, one of the many aspects of electronic music which I was bothered by was its elimination of the performer. I was rather philosophically bothered; I asked myself what would happen if music is going to be frozen and not subjected to any possible reinterpretation.⁵

⁴ Mario Davidovsky, interview with Cole Gagne and Tracy Caras in *Soundpieces: Interviews with Composers*. London: The Scarecrow Press, 1982: 133.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 134.

His concerns lie with the prospect of “frozen” interpretations, and with the implications of eliminating the element of spontaneity that is the core of live performance. He does not mention the overarching aesthetic implications that True highlights in his lecture. It is important to establish Davidovsky’s motivation on this issue, because it helps to focus the analysis on his musical intentions. He is primarily concerned with the musical material itself, rather than with an extra-musical allegory. His discomfort with the prospect of “frozen” interpretation is something that manifests itself in the construction of his music; he builds in flexibility to guarantee nuanced distinctions between performances. Though it might be tempting to place Davidovsky’s electronic music within the context of a showdown between humans and technology, this perspective misses the point. He uses electronics to facilitate a profound exploration of the most fundamental aspects of sound.

While Davidovsky does not seem particularly interested in electronic music as an allegorical statement, he is acutely concerned with the subtle interactions between the live instruments and the tape material. For this reason, many of his *Synchronisms* pieces are constructed from ways that electronics can address strengths and limitations of the given acoustic instrument. Davidovsky makes this intention clear in the score for *Synchronisms #6*, writing, “In this particular piece, the electronic sounds in many instances modulate the acoustical characteristics of the piano, by affecting its decay and attack characteristics. The electronic segment should perhaps not be viewed as an independent polyphonic line, but rather as if it were inlaid into the piano part.”⁶

Davidovsky is interested in a symbiotic chamber relationship between the tape and live

⁶ Mario Davidovsky, *Synchronisms #6 for Piano and Electronic Sounds* (King of Prussia, PA: E.B. Marks Music Corp., 1972), 2.

instrument part, one in which he can use the electronic medium to address acoustic limitations of the piano.

If Davidovsky's use of electronics serve his overall aesthetic goals, what are those goals? The following passage from Martin Brody's liner notes to a Bridge Records release of Davidovsky's music eloquently captures some of the underpinnings of Davidovsky's world.

The musical jolts and juxtapositions he conjures are as hair raising as anything surrealism has produced; but his shock effects are always tempered by a shrewd, ultra-civilized traditionalism. But then again, Davidovsky as traditionalist? If so, it's a trickster's traditionalism. His consummately refined music often seems to be dancing near the edge of a black hole--or enacting a primordial, slapstick argument between ancestor worship and irreverence. In his artistic persona, tradition and subversion are twinned, joined, as it were, at the hip. The intercourse that results may be feisty, comic, or complicitous, but it's the doppelganger relationship itself that provides the lift off and momentum.⁷

Throughout *Synchronisms #10* and *Festino*, this dichotomy between meticulous balance and extreme expression is acutely apparent. While moments in Davidovsky's music may engage in absurdist expression or anguished melodrama, he balances these disparate elements with the wise hand of an all-seeing designer. Despite the significant differences between his pieces, there is a model that runs consistently through Davidovsky's music. This broad paradigm involves aesthetic subversion, to use Brody's term, followed later by reconciliation. Of course, this is a model that fits many great composers throughout the ages. What makes Davidovsky an individual is how he articulates subversion and reconciliation. Subversion, in Davidovskian terms, involves a flaunting of expectation with respect to structure, character, instrumental writing, and

⁷ Martin Brody, liner notes to *Mario Davidovsky Flashbacks*, Bridge 9097, 2000, compact disc.

gesture. His expressive approach to reconciliation is less technical and more tied into dramatic narrative. Many of Davidovsky's works, including *Synchronisms #10* and *Festino*, arrive at a moment of truth where the wild swings of mood and character fuse together and give way to a searing calm. This calm lies at the heart of Davidovsky's music, and is the anchor around which swirls the turbulence of his expressive palate. To understand how Davidovsky sets the stage for such revelatory musical moments, it is essential to analyze what is subversive about everything leading up to them. And to understand what is subversive about those aspects, one must start with the treatment of the most basic materials in his pieces.

CHAPTER 1

SELECTED ANALYTICAL APPROACHES TO DAVIDOVSKY'S MUSIC

Analyzing Davidovsky's music defies the application of unexamined models. Because his style is so individual, many of the technical explanations for the organization of musical material that are fruitful in analyzing the works of his contemporaries yield little insight when examining Davidovsky's music. Christopher Malloy addresses this analytic quandary in his document, "Cadential Procedures in Mario Davidovsky's *Divertimento for Cello and Orchestra*."

When I told MD about my interest in analyzing the *Divertimento*, his first response was a warning, "I don't use sets." As it happens, there are a few other techniques that he does not use, any of which would facilitate analysis. Not only is there no row, no array, no partitioning, no derivation of pitch-class sets; there is also no palindrome, no ostinato, no algorithm, no Golden Mean, no static phrasing, no metrical modulation, no aleatoric procedure, no repetitive formal plan, no thematic repetition without transformation, no fixed association between pitch and intervallic content and other elements, and no quasi-grammatical syntax of any kind.⁸

Davidovsky's music is fundamentally led by a powerfully grounded intuitive vision, as opposed to an adherence to an external system. Malloy describes this intuition as, "a creative process that excludes any precompositional plan."⁹ This is an astute observation; not only does Davidovsky eschew the practice of letting the chosen compositional process dictate the form or content, but to a certain extent, each piece he writes generates its own language and behaviors.

The following quote helps to explain why Davidovsky's music resists pat analysis.

⁸ Christopher Malloy, "Cadential Procedures in Mario Davidovsky's *Divertimento for Cello and Orchestra*" (Ph. D. diss., Brandeis University, 1988), 104.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

It is true, I have no ideology, I am a thief. I use whatever compounded techniques are available, and I am going to use them whenever I need them and create a context, if I am successful, to present the music in a consistent way¹⁰.

How, then, does one go about analyzing music like this? Malloy develops a well thought out vocabulary for examining cadences in Davidovsky's *Divertimento*, and it is a language that is flexible enough to be applied to the works being discussed in this study. He divides his analysis into several categories, including pitch, rhythm, texture, and formal closure, and further elaborates several ways of addressing these parameters to indicate a cadential moment in the absence of some external harmonic framework. While this study does not intend to use Malloy's approach as an exclusive way to examine Davidovsky's music, it will be useful as an additional tool for highlighting the variations in his cadential technique.

Other research has reached useful conclusions about Davidovsky's style. In an study of Davidovsky's vocal work, *Scenes from Shir Ha-Shirim*, Meir Serrouya outlines three broad categories of analysis in contemporary music: rhetorical, acoustical, and psychological. Serrouya speaks of the psychological realm in terms of its expression of a text, and therefore this category is not relevant to this study. But the other two parameters do pertain to Davidovsky's guitar works.

Often each work establishes its own applications and as such, an approach is necessary which first discovers the proper rhetoric for each composition and then uses the specific language to perceive the structure of the entire work. Based on that analysis and with the addition of several examples from the second and third movements, I find that the 'building block' of the composition is the interval. I propose that it is the primary unit in this composition, and from it the composer has constructed his language.¹¹

¹⁰ Mario Davidovsky, interview by author, 15 March 2006, New York.

¹¹ Meir Serrouya, "An Analysis of Mario Davidovsky's *Scenes from Shir-Hashirim*." (Ph. D. diss. Brandeis University, 2000), 2.

The composer must decide upon the significance of sound within a work which, as in the pitch content and psychological orientation, turns it into a structural component of the composition. I discussed how attack, sustain, decay, timbre, modes of attack, register, and the particular sound spectrum of instruments become structural units and, as such, decide the form of the composition in the same manner as a harmonic scheme in a tonal work will do.¹²

In the absence of a systematic approach to the organization of pitch, Davidovsky constructs a harmonic palette that relies on the primacy of different intervals within each piece. This intervallic-centered approach is used as the glue that holds the aural fabric of the music together; the listener hears familiar intervallic structures as signposts along the way of the piece. Serrouya also correctly identifies sound itself as a motivating structural unit in Davidovsky's music. An obsession with sound drove him towards electronic music, and it remains his focus as he fashions his acoustic composition around similar sensibilities. This study's concentration on intervallic cohesion and sonic exploration as organizing factors in Davidovsky's music is reinforced by Serrouya's research.

Stephen Gryc contributed an exhaustive analysis of *Synchronisms #6 for Piano and Electronic Sounds* to the literature. He writes, "The music...demands an analytic approach that does not seek to portray the piece as a continuous flow or as an unfolding of a single idea but, rather, one that attempts to demonstrate how the juxtaposed divergent ideas are subsumed within the larger homogenous units which can then be related to some unifying factor and, thus, to each other."¹³ Inspired by an analysis of Stravinsky by theorist Edward T. Cone, Gryc investigates how Davidovsky juggles contrasting material throughout a piece, managing to link similar gestures to each other in the listener's ear.

¹² Ibid., 8.

¹³ Stephen Gryc. "Stratification and Synthesis in Mario Davidovsky's *Synchronisms #6*." *In Theory Only*, 4/4 (Aug-Sept 1978), 17.

Gryc asserts that, “one can perceive the work as comprising several juxtaposed (non-simultaneous) sounds complexes or “strata”, and that understanding Davidovsky’s scores involves an untangling of how those strata are interwoven.¹⁴

Gryc is interested in applying a theoretical model to the aesthetic dialogue that Brody identifies in his liner notes. Davidovsky often introduces divergent musical material in the exposition section of his works without using transitions to smooth over the inherent conflicts between contrasting gestures. The juxtaposition of the disparate strata lays the groundwork for the “quarrel with aesthetic complacency.” Gryc, citing Cone’s analytic approach, posits three cooperating forces in the piece--“stratification”, “interlock”, and “synthesis”.

Stratification--“separation in musical space of musical ideas or areas which are juxtaposed in time”

Interlock--“the process by which segments of music that are temporally discontinuous but linked in terms of a set of shared characteristics are grouped together by the listener to form the several strata of the piece.”

Synthesis--“In this phase the seemingly disparate strata are shown to possess some unifying characteristic or to share a common relation, and the synthesis of these strata transforms an initially atomistic view of a work into a holistic one.”

“But [synthesis] is seldom as explicit as the original stratification, and it almost invariably involves the reduction and transformation of one or more components....”¹⁵

Many of Davidovsky’s works begin with a fundamental gesture, calling attention to the sound of an instrument, or some elemental relationship within an ensemble. After briefly developing this idea, extremely contrasting material is introduced. This is the first manifestation of the “stratification” process. After several strata have been introduced, departed from, and then returned to again, “interlock” describes the listener’s perception of links between the similar gestures of each strata, thereby associating these musical

¹⁴ Ibid., 17.

¹⁵ Ibid., 18-20.

events with one another, even as they are “temporally discontinuous.” Davidovsky recognizes that linking ideas while leaping through time creates aesthetic tension that requires resolution. “Synthesis” is Gryc’s term for the moment in the piece where the disparate elements coexist, demonstrating how the process of stratification and interlock results in growth and development.

Davidovsky affirmed this approach to compositional organization in discussion of his motivic development.

I will begin the piece, more often than not, with a statement like a motive. I try to make a statement in a similar manner to how Beethoven would present a theme in a symphony--very consistent and cohesive and natural and elegant. In my case, I will construct that kind of statement out of motives that are essentially very different from each other. You could say that each of those motives have their own implied rhythm, their own implied harmony, even their own character. Then what I do, more or less looking back at Beethoven, is to take those motives, and actually generate a different piece of music. Instead of constructing voice leading, I will develop a strata. You could say that Carter does stratification, but the difference is that Elliott seems to talk about each instrument as a different person. In a way, my case involves one person telling four stories--the one person is the remnant of the voice leading. What I like to think I do is that each of those motives develops their own trajectory. It’s almost like super-glorified voices that develop a simultaneous story. Even though they might seem completely unrelated, eventually the four voices come together. Let’s go back to the bunch of motives that I have in my theme, one is sweet, etc... As the process of the piece begins, take the sweet guy, rework the material in such a way that it becomes bitter. The next time, go back and make it dancing and funny. What I like to do expressively is take all of these motives that have a certain character and make them imitate every character that exists in the *commedia dell’arte* so to speak. To a certain extent, when you get to the end of the piece, all the motives equal one, like very different types of brick building materials that are capable of transfiguration. In that context, all the materials are mastered and twisted, and by the end they are very at peace with each other. I use this approach as a way to compensate for the fact that I have chosen not to use triadic harmony.¹⁶

Davidovsky’s characterization of how motives develop their own “trajectory” and together form a “simultaneous” story mirrors Gryc’s description of the stratification process. The interlock process occurs as the listener perceives the different motives

¹⁶ Mario Davidovsky, interview by author, 15 March 2006, New York.

reappearing throughout the work, sometimes in a different context, and sometimes associated with other material. When Davidovsky speaks of the four voices “coming together” and arriving at a moment where they are “at peace with one another”, this is in essence the same idea that Gryc is expressing with his concept of synthesis. It is reaffirming to read these ideas in Davidovsky’s own words because he makes his compositional motivations clear. He does not stratify his motivic material for complexity’s sake, but instead organizes his music this way to express the widest possible range of experience, to “imitate every character that exists in the *commedia dell’arte*.” The distinction that Davidovsky draws between the stratification in his music and that in Elliott Carter’s music is illuminating. Carter, especially in his famous string quartets, established different characters for each instrument, thereby stratifying the material in the work by associating particular expressive content with specific members of the ensemble. Davidovsky views the expressive contrast within the context of one individual; he strives to express all the selves that swirl around in each of our own minds.

It almost imitates life. We are having a very focused conversation right now, but that doesn’t mean that I am not aware that it is very sunny, and it doesn’t mean that while I am talking I am not thinking it might be nice to take a walk in the park. We do have a focus, that’s the *hauptstimme*, we have a focus on a conversation. It doesn’t mean that it isolates me from a reality that is very huge.¹⁷

Davidovsky aims to capture a multi-dimensionality of thought and identity in his music. We are often thinking of several things at once, bouncing back and forth between different ideas. And we are many different people, both to ourselves and to others.

Davidovsky music throws all of these ideas and personalities into the ring together, not unlike how we as human beings must integrate these disparate elements in our lives. So,

¹⁷ Mario Davidovsky, interview by author, 15 March 2006, New York.

just as in life, in his music, the contrasting elements produce tension, morph and evolve into different characteristics, and sometimes even fuse together to create poignant moments.

Fundamentally, underneath the garb of a modernist composer, Davidovsky is very much a structural classicist. The notion that the material introduced in the opening of the work generates the rest of the piece is firmly rooted in the lineage of Haydn and Beethoven. In addition, Davidovsky's penchant for wry wit and flaunting of expectation is frequently evocative of Haydn's style. Aside from the difference in musical language, there is another important distinction between Davidovsky's organizational process and that of the classicists. Typical classical structure dictates that themes presented in the introduction be clear and unambiguous in character, saving the contrasting expressive material for subsequent transition or secondary thematic areas (of course, there are notable exceptions to this). Davidovsky, on the other hand, intentionally constructs his opening statement out of several motives that are drastically divergent in character. This sets the stage for a motivic identity shift of sorts as each cell appears in different expressive contexts throughout the piece. Davidovsky was attracted to this stratified structural approach because it is expressive of the way the human mind works, especially in a modern age when many different ideas compete for mental attention.

The analytic approach in this study has been culled from this research and other studies similar to it. Gryc's analysis provides a framework for discussing how Davidovsky organizes events in musical time. Malloy's study is localized, and develops a vocabulary to examine cadences in a musical language that can seem cadentially ambiguous. Serruoya's research reaffirms that Davidovsky's instrumental music is built

on fundamental elements, the interval and basic acoustical properties. However, it seems inappropriate to be dogmatic about adopting a systematic approach to analysis with music that is so resistant to such attempts. The following analysis of *Synchronisms #10* and *Festino*, as well as the more cursory discussion of earlier works, therefore, will be guided by points of interest suggested by the pieces individually, and in relation to each other. General consideration will be given to how Davidovsky's compositional approach to the guitar represents a welcome departure from the norm, and how it is an articulation of his overall stylistic goals. Subsequently, those stylistic goals will be addressed in each work, occasionally referring to the aforementioned research studies in points of analysis, but primarily examining the repertoire from the point of view of how Davidovsky establishes a dramatic narrative in his music. Mario Davidovsky defies systematic analysis because he does not use one technique to make compositional decisions. Instead, he carves meaning out of sound, subverts expectation, and erects a powerful structure of narrative and drama.

CHAPTER 2

DISCUSSION OF SELECTED *SYNCHRONISMS*

I love the idea of somebody giving me a knife and a can of water and dropping me in a desert, and saying, "I'll see you, Mario, in a week."¹⁸

Introduction

Davidovsky's immersion in the world of electronic music was an outgrowth of his drive to reexamine the most fundamental aspects of sound. The electronic music studio in the 1960s was the equivalent of uncharted territory--a musical desert. There were technical problems that accompanied the unexplored technology. More importantly, there was the opportunity to explore how a piece of music holds together outside of the context of existing structural models of pitch, rhythm, or form.

Working in an electronic studio, I started to observe that sound can behave in a completely different way than when sounds are produced by performers. During the wonderful years that I spent in the studio doing electronic music there was real no model whatsoever. You couldn't write real counterpoint because there was no way of controlling the pitch well; if the machine got really hot, the pitch would slide up and down. In a way, trying to understand continuity in music gave me a kind of rationale to write electronic music.¹⁹

Davidovsky's *Synchronisms* series for electronic sounds and acoustic instruments provides comprehensive material to extract an understanding of his compositional goals. Davidovsky interweaves the electronics into a dialogue that addresses the attack, sustain, and decay envelopes of the acoustic instruments in the piece. He used the electronic studio to explore collections of sounds that seemed otherwise impossible with performers

¹⁸ Mario Davidovsky, interview by author, 15 March 2006, New York.

¹⁹ Ibid.

and acoustic instruments. The *Synchronisms* pieces are built from new strains of musical continuity that Davidovsky discovered were possible with electronic sounds. These types of strains included the rapid attacks mentioned in Davidovsky's quote about Paganini's *Moto Perpetuo*, but also ways that perceptions of musical space can be manipulated.

Davidovsky explains how the aural environment can become a color itself.

I started to think about space in the same way that Schoenberg taught me about *klangfarbenmelodie*. I was thinking about 'spacefarbenmelodie,' with space being almost like a color.²⁰

The *Synchronisms* pieces are also engaged with the various ways the electronic sounds can become integrated with live instruments. The title "*Synchronisms*" refers to this integration, as well as to moments of rhythmic coordination that are written between live performer and electronics that require a high level of precision. With each work, he strives to create a different composite musical mechanism that is responsive to the peculiarities of the instrument involved. He describes this process as, "the electronic sounds hybridizing the instrument, or vice versa" acknowledging that in the *Synchronisms*, the process became "almost didactical."²¹ Each instrument that is featured in these pieces is assessed for its strengths, but more importantly for its weaknesses, and the electronic sounds are tailored to address these characteristics.

One of the organic ways that Davidovsky integrated the electronics with live instruments was by fashioning portions of the tape part out of pre-recorded acoustic material. In this way, the acoustic instrument would be engaged in a dialogue with a transformed version of itself. Each of the *Synchronisms* has a different balance between

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

manipulations of pre-recorded material and purely electronic sounds, with some of the works being primarily based on “concrete” sounds, and others exclusively generated in the studio. For *Synchronisms #10*, Davidovsky recorded David Starobin, the dedicatee of the piece, playing notes using several varying articulations and extended techniques. He then took this material and manipulated it with two goals in mind: either to create material that mixed with the live guitar sound, or material that would underscore differences between the electronics and the instrument. The tape sounds in *Synchronisms #10* are about fifty percent drawn from this pre-recorded material, and fifty percent culled from pure electronic sounds.²²

In the *Synchronisms*, Davidovsky also demonstrates how the juxtaposition of divergent musical material propels the structure of the piece. As in his overall output, he craftily subverts expectations in the *Synchronisms*. Finally, the hallmarks of his overall aesthetic and dramatic concerns appear consistently throughout these ten works. This study will select three pieces from the ten for discussion (#11 and #12 are scheduled for premiere in 2006, concurrent to the composition of this thesis)--#5 for percussion ensemble, #6 for piano, and #9 for violin. More attention will be given to the piano work, as it is considered the landmark work in the series, and provides concrete examples of Davidovsky’s characteristic style. Excerpts from the other two works will provide reinforcement to the conclusions drawn in the analysis of the piano piece. The analytic models of Gryc, Serrouya, and Malloy will be road-tested on these earlier works so that their methods can be applied to the guitar works later without the need for burdensome justification. Since these models represent various ways of looking at similar material and

²² Ibid.

often illuminate different aspects of Davidovsky's style, some examples in the music might be examined from more than one angle. Serrouya's analysis is particularly dependent on the journey of an intervallic motive through the structure of the piece, and as such, when applying his model, the analysis will be organized in the order of the piece as it unfolds in musical time.

Synchronisms #6 for Piano and Electronic Sounds

Synchronisms #6 for Piano and Electronic Sounds (1970) is Davidovsky's most famous piece, having garnered him the Pulitzer Prize in Music in 1971. It has been the subject of several studies and dissertations, and serves as the model for Davidovsky's style for many musicians. Within *Synchronisms #6*, we see many of his characteristic stylistic traits: a focus on core acoustic properties as a structural element of the piece, stratification of character ideas, creation of a composite instrument, and an attraction to classical dramatic structure.

“Hybridizing” the Piano

Synchronisms #6 immediately articulates Davidovsky's interest in exploring the sonic properties of the piano. Davidovsky subverts expectations from the very beginning; with all the possibilities that the piano offers, he begins with a gesture that is so simple and spare that there is no chance the listener can misinterpret his focus.

Ex. #1 *Synchronisms #6* mm. 1-2 “*Crescendo* motive” (for all *Synchronisms #6* examples, the piano is in the bottom stave or two staves, and the electronics are in the top stave or two staves, unless otherwise indicated)

The *crescendo* in the electronic part picks up the note G where the piano sustain begins to leave off. By starting the work with this gesture, Davidovsky immediately frames the aesthetic argument for the piece. The tape part is effectively enhancing the piano’s capabilities by doing what a piano cannot--*crescendo* on a sustained note; Davidovsky quips that, “When it’s played in ideal conditions it works almost like the piano is getting pregnant slowly.”²³ The quick, articulated E-natural in m. 2 completes the short opening phrase. As simple as this gesture is, it is entirely impossible to achieve in solo piano music. Davidovsky augments the piano’s capacity again in m. 10, when he introduces a *tremolo* effect in the tape part.

²³ Ibid.

Ex. #2 *Synchronisms #6* m. 10 “Tremolo effect”

The image shows a musical score for two systems. The first system consists of a treble clef staff with three rests and a bass clef staff with a dotted quarter note, a quarter note, and a quarter rest. A thick vertical bar is placed at the end of the first system, with the dynamic marking 'sff' written below it. The second system consists of a grand staff with a treble clef staff containing three rests and a bass clef staff with a dotted quarter note, a quarter note, and a quarter rest. A thick vertical bar is placed at the end of the second system, with the dynamic marking 'sfff' written below it. A dashed line labeled '8vb' spans the bottom of the second system.

Along similar lines, a halo effect is created in m. 28 by writing a unison texture between the right hand of the piano and a bell-like timbre. Here, Davidovsky is expanding the piano in two ways---first, by suggesting a hyper-instrument which has all the capabilities of the piano with the addition of timbral flexibility, and second, by choosing a timbre which modulates color during its envelope, something that a player has little control over on a piano. A similar effect appears in *Synchronisms #10*, mirroring the guitar pitches with a very low, almost inaudible rumble (see Ex #61 m. 171 in the section on *Synchronisms #10*).

Ex. #3 *Synchronisms #6* m. 28 “Halo timbre”

These three elements, *crescendi* within sustained pitches, *tremolo* effects, and timbral expansion, pervade *Synchronisms #6* and help to create a composite instrument between the piano and electronic sounds.

Motivic Stratification

Synchronisms #6 provides several excellent examples of the stratification technique described by Stephen Gryc. In the first ten measures of the piece, Davidovsky introduces several contrasting ideas, including the opening crescendo in the electronic part, a prominent quintuplet in m. 5, the tremolo in mm. 10-11, and a stark minor ninth in m. 3.

Ex. #4 *Synchronisms #6* m. 3 (piano only) “Minor ninth motive”

Ex. #5 *Synchronisms #6* m. 5 (piano only) “Quintuplet motive”

Musical notation for Ex. #5, piano part, measure 5. It shows a single bass clef staff with a 5:4 quintuplet bracket over five notes. The notes are G4, A4, Bb4, B4, and C5. Dynamics are *p* and *mf*. A second bass clef staff is shown above with a forte (*f*) dynamic.

Ex.#6 *Synchronisms #6* m. 28 “Quintuplet motive”

Musical notation for Ex. #6, piano part, measure 28. It shows two treble clef staves. The upper staff has a 5:4 quintuplet bracket over five notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, and D5. Dynamics are *mp*. The lower staff has a 5:4 quintuplet bracket over five notes: G4, A4, Bb4, B4, and C5. Dynamics are *f*, *dim.*, and *mp*. A 'Sua' marking is present above the upper staff.

Ex. #7 *Synchronisms #6* m. 56 (tape only) “Quintuplet motive”

Musical notation for Ex. #7, piano part, measure 56. It shows a grand staff with two treble clef staves and one bass clef staff. The upper two staves have a 5:4 quintuplet bracket over five notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, and D5. Dynamics are *p*. A 'Sua' marking is present above the upper staves.

Ex. #8 *Synchronisms #6* m. 58 (tape only) “Quintuplet motive”

Musical notation for Ex. #8, showing a quintuplet motive in the treble clef. The notation consists of five eighth notes grouped together, with a bracket underneath labeled "5:4". The bass clef is empty.

Ex. #9 *Synchronisms #6* mm. 10-11 (tape only) “Tremolo motive”

Musical notation for Ex. #9, showing a tremolo motive in the treble clef. The notation consists of a series of notes with a tremolo symbol (a wavy line) above them. A bracket underneath is labeled "7:16". The bass clef contains a few notes. The dynamic marking *sf* is present below the notes.

Ex. #10 *Synchronisms #6* mm. 136-140 “Tremolo motive”

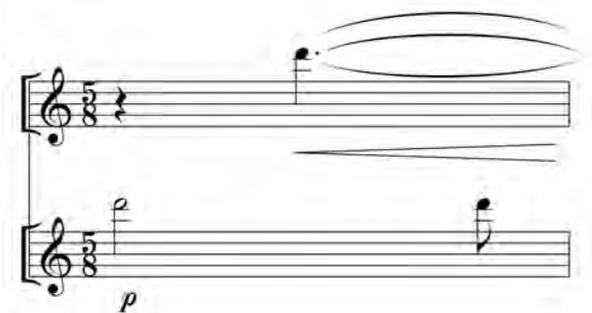
Musical notation for Ex. #10, showing a complex tremolo motive in the treble clef. The notation consists of a series of notes with a tremolo symbol (a wavy line) above them. A bracket underneath is labeled "7:16". The bass clef contains a few notes. The dynamic marking *sf* is present below the notes.

Ex. #11 *Synchronisms #6* m. 170 (tape only) “*Tremolo* motive”



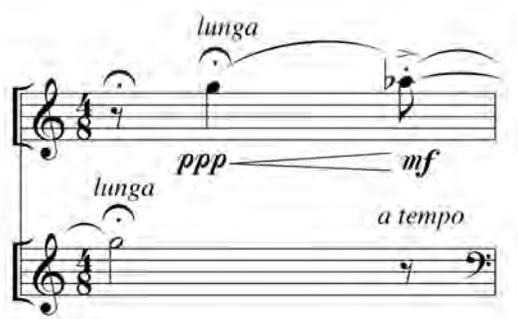
The examples show additional appearances of the original material later in the piece. The gesture where the electronic part extends and amplifies the piano attack reoccurs throughout the work, often punctuating cadential moments. Of all the musical ideas presented within the first ten bars, this gesture combining the piano attack and an electronic *crescendo* most resembles a traditional motive, as it develops and dictates the narrative structure. It returns in pure form up a perfect fifth within the first minute of the piece, reasserting its primacy.

Ex. 12 *Synchronisms #6* m. 16 “*Crescendo* motive”



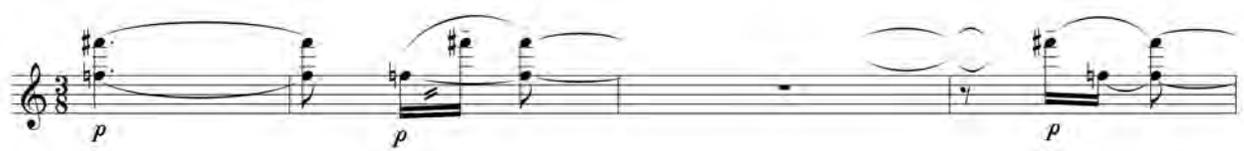
A direct return to the opening gesture of the piece in m. 98 divides the piece into two similar length halves, and suggests several dramatic possibilities for the remainder of the work.

Ex. #13 *Synchronisms #6* m. 98 “Crescendo motive”



In m. 65-70, Davidovsky fuses the saturation of minor ninths with the *tremolo* gesture, in one of the piece’s first examples of motivic synthesis.

Ex. # 14 *Synchronisms #6* mm. 65-68 “Minor Ninth with Tremolo”



In the climactic passage of the work, the composite gesture appears, transformed, as a series of bursts that accumulate energy. The transformation of the original motive is consistent with the Gryc’s model; the characters introduced at the beginning of the work are fluid, and subject to influence from the other material in the piece. In this example of motivic synthesis, the *crescendo* idea is merged with the *tremolo* idea in the tape part.

Ex. #15 *Synchronisms #6* m. 134-135 “Crescendo motive with Tremolo”

During the haunting soliloquy that follows directly after the climax, there is a curious dynamic marking in the piano part.

Ex. #16 *Synchronisms #6* m. 141 (piano only) “Crescendo motive in piano”

Clearly, the pianist is not capable of executing an actual crescendo from *mezzo piano* to *mezzo forte* on a sustained pitch. By including this marking in the score, Davidovsky is indicating that he wants the performer to be conscious of the effect that the electronic part has had on the perception of the piano’s sustain. While the result of the marking is inaudible, it is a subtle subconscious reminder to the performer of the importance of the composite gesture.

Finally, Davidovsky inverts the gesture just before the close of the piece when a tape duration grows into a piano attack. After generating the material for the piece from an expansion of the piano’s capabilities, Davidovsky writes for the composite instrument as if it now has a sound envelope vocabulary of its own. The transformation of this fundamental building block of the entire piece is noted with subtlety, almost as an aside before the flippant final gesture.

Ex. 17 *Synchronisms* #6 mm. 167-170 “Transformation of *Crescendo* motive”

Intervallic and Structural Continuity

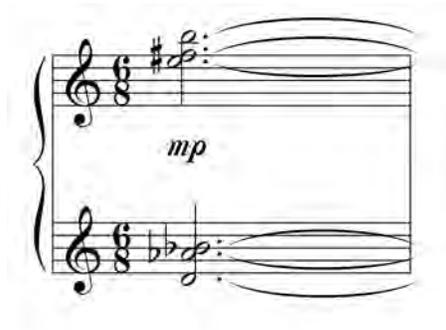
As Serrouya points out, Davidovsky’s music is built on “acoustical” foundations as well as “rhetorical” underpinnings²⁴. If his interest in blending the electronics with the acoustic piano sound generates much of the musical material in *Synchronisms* #6, Davidovsky’s reliance on rhetorical intervallic landmarks helps to organize that material structurally. Tracking the use of prominent intervallic structures, in this case the

²⁴ Serrouya, “An Analysis of Davidovsky’s *Scenes from Shir-Hashirim*”, 2.

appearance of minor ninths, is useful in decoding Davidovsky's music. This type of analysis helps to ascertain how Davidovsky paces the overall dramatic flow of his music.

As was the case with the appearance of the stark chord in m. 3, Davidovsky often uses statements of familiar intervallic structures to indicate beginnings of phrases or cadential moments.

Ex. #18 *Synchronisms #6* m. 12 (piano only) "Minor ninth motive"



Ex. #18b *Synchronisms #6* m. 24 (piano only) "Minor ninth motive"



The *sforzando* minor ninth in m. 24 breaks the delicate texture preceding it, and helps to reconnect the listener's ears with previous events. Familiar intervallic pillars can also be used to indicate cadences, as demonstrated in this example from m. 36.

Ex. #19 *Synchronisms #6* m. 36 (piano only) “Minor ninths at cadence”

The cadential resolution is provided by the punctuated downbeat in unison with the tape, as well as by the familiar “quasi-tonal sonority.” Malloy writes, “The departure from and return to a quasi-tonic sonority--a pitch or collection of pitches given priority over other pitches--is an occasional cadential device.”²⁵

As the piece grows towards its first high point the texture is dominated by more dense rhythmic interplay between the electronics and piano. Replacing the cooperative relationship of the opening gesture is something more antagonistic, with the two elements jabbing and sparring with one another.

Ex. 20 *Synchronisms #6* mm. 91-92 “Sparring chords”

²⁵ Malloy, “Cadential Procedures”, 32.

Sure enough, the four climactic chords in m. 91 and 92 are filled with minor ninths, minor seconds, and major sevenths, the registral cousin of the minor ninth. As the phrase exhales, Davidovsky releases the tension, and arrives at another cadence exploiting a familiar melodic sonority.

Ex. #21 *Synchronisms #6* mm. 97-98 “*Crescendo motive*”

The musical score for Synchronisms #6, measures 97-98, is presented in two systems. The first system features a vocal line with a long, sustained note marked *ppp* and a *lunga* marking, and a piano accompaniment starting with a *p* dynamic. The second system shows the piano accompaniment with a *pp* dynamic, a triplet of eighth notes, and a *lunga* marking. The tempo is marked *a tempo*.

At the return of the opening gesture, Davidovsky amends the motive so that it now ascends by a minor second (inversion of a minor ninth), making a concession to the saturation of the texture by the minor ninth interval. These two unrelated elements from the opening of the piece, the composite piano-tape *crescendo*, and the saturation of minor ninths, have begun to influence each other.

The section that follows is unmeasured, as the piece floats along aimlessly, unable to decide in what direction it will go. Many of Davidovsky’s works suffer a similar “mid-life crisis,” though this lackluster character is absolutely intentional. After vigorous juxtaposition of contrasting material and exploration of the minute details of sound, there is a need for an aesthetic point of repose, to gather energy before the true thrust of the piece becomes clear. Any great drama has these moments, just before the central climax,

when questions of fundamental meaning begin to emerge, but there are no convincing answers in sight. Just after the return of the opening material, the piece explores the *tremolo* gesture, flitting about trying on several other ideas from earlier in the work, but nothing seems to fit.

Ex. 22 *Synchronisms* #6 m. 98 (piano only) “Mid-life crisis”

Musical score for Ex. 22, *Synchronisms* #6 m. 98 (piano only). The score is in 12/8 time and consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and contains a melody starting with a quarter note, followed by a half note, and then a quarter note with a sharp sign above it. The lower staff is in bass clef and contains a melody starting with a quarter note, followed by a half note, and then a quarter note with a flat sign below it. Dynamics include *mf*, *p*, and *poco mp*.

Ex. 22b *Synchronisms* #6 m. 102-104 “Mid-life crisis”

Musical score for Ex. 22b, *Synchronisms* #6 m. 102-104 (piano only). The score is in 4/8 time and consists of two staves. The upper staff is in bass clef and contains a melody starting with a quarter note, followed by a half note, and then a quarter note with a flat sign below it. The lower staff is in bass clef and contains a melody starting with a quarter note, followed by a half note, and then a quarter note with a flat sign below it. Dynamics include *mp*.

Eventually, some degree of rhythmic interplay develops again between tape and piano, and in m. 117, a quadruple *sforzando* minor ninth comes from out of nowhere and points the work towards its inevitable climax. Davidovsky has been preparing the listener for this crucial moment by placing prominent minor ninths at important phrase landmarks and structural moments in the piece thus far. At this turning point in the work before the climax, there is an aural recognition, a call to action of sorts, that a prominent minor ninth interval will catalyze the momentum toward the climax.

Ex. 23 *Synchronisms #6* mm. 115-117 “Minor ninth as catalyst”

As the piano intones foreboding chords, the electronics sound panic gestures that sound almost exactly like R2D2 from Star Wars. A prominent octave in m. 129 stands out even more in relation to the pervasive minor ninth pitch content. The climax of the work, from mm. 129-139 synthesizes several of the strata from the entire piece. The composite instrument gesture connects the piano attacks and the tape swells; *tremolo* gestures are heard first in the tape part, and then in both parts at m. 136; and the chord this *tremolo* is based on is built on minor ninths, major sevenths, and minor seconds. The triplet octaves that follow sound downright alien in this chromatic context, and provide the requisite “dissonance” for the climax.

Ex. #24 *Synchronisms #6* mm. 136-141 “Climactic Tremolos and Piano Octaves”

For every extroverted gesture in Davidovsky’s music, there is almost always a corresponding introverted response, often directly next to one another. This is especially true after the climactic moments in his pieces, and in *Synchronisms #6*, the piano is given a solo soliloquy just after the energetic climax. This dramatic model is applied in *Synchronisms #10* and *Festino* as well, and reveals quite a bit about what Davidovsky is trying to do dramatically. He accompanies bombast with questioning, and lighthearted detachment with angst-ridden melodrama. When asked about this tendency in his writing, Davidovsky responded, “I have this kind of valve inside, it’s almost automatic inside myself. I am always two places at the same time, or nowhere, ever.”²⁶ When expressed in his music, this aspect of Davidovsky’s personality results in an expressive palate wherein moments of meaning and truth rely heavily on a balanced context.

²⁶ Mario Davidovsky, interview by author, 15 March 2006, New York.

The soliloquy that begins in m. 141 is as equally saturated with minor ninths as the rest of the piece, but it is characterized by a long lined lyricism that is absent from the rest of the work. It gives way to another searching section with *tremolos* and piano *pizzicati*, casting a pall over the mood of the entire piece. Both of these long phrases are excellent examples of motivic material that reappears later in the work in a transformed expressive environment.

Davidovsky attempts to sew the piece up neatly, with two gestures near the end of the piece that allude again to his intervallic saturation technique.

Ex. #25 *Synchronisms #6* mm. 164-166 (piano only) “Minor Ninth motive”

Ex. #25b *Synchronisms #6* mm. 167-170 “Minor Second and Major Seventh”

Davidovsky gravitates towards endings that diffuse the gravity of earlier moments of the piece with humor. This is demonstrative of his artistic demeanor; he meticulously straddles the line between intensely felt melodrama and wryly detached wit. These two extremes exist in a co-dependent relationship. Final gestures that expressively thumb their nose need overwrought material at which to direct their derision; hyper expressive melodrama requires a veneer of status quo from which to break free.

The offhand humorous gesture that ends the piece does not diffuse the deep sense of resignation that pervades the work. Later attempts at self-deprecating humor in *Festino* prove to be more successful, but *Synchronisms #6* seems unable to shake a palpable severity. Despite demonstrating several of the hallmarks of Davidovsky's style to be discussed in this study, *Synchronisms #6* stands apart for its comparatively cool aesthetic. This takes nothing away from its potency, but it is interesting to note that the Davidovsky work that has received the most acclaim and the most frequent performance does not seem to fully represent the full range of his expressive palate. *Synchronisms #6* represents Davidovsky's style in its distilled essence--a clear structural outline delineated by intervallic consistency and motivic integration, a concern for addressing subtle acoustic phenomenon with electronics, and a balanced approach to drama and character.

Synchronisms #9 for Violin and Electronic Sounds

While the piano dictates a certain coolness in *Synchronisms #6*, the warmth of string instruments defines *Synchronisms #9 for Violin*. Davidovsky was trained as a violinist, and in *Synchronisms #9* we hear double stops, cross string bowings, and high register vibrato-laden lines worthy of Ysaÿe.

Ex. #26a *Synchronisms #9* mm. 14-15 (violin only) “Virtuosic Violin Writing” (in examples for *Synchronisms #9*, the violin will be on the top staff, and the tape on all staves below, unless otherwise noted)



Ex. #26b *Synchronisms #9* mm. 19-23 (violin only) “Virtuosic Violin Writing”



Ex. #26c *Synchronisms #9* m. 42 (violin only) “Virtuosic Violin Writing”



This is a marked contrast from many of the *Synchronisms*, where Davidovsky strives to create a virtuosity from the ground up, starting with the most basic sound production on the chosen instrument. Instead of using the electronics to augment the violin’s shortcomings, Davidovsky uses the tape part to take the listener further inside the violin timbre. This is consistent with Serrouya’s discussion of Davidovsky’s penchant for

erecting his music on top of “acoustical underpinnings.” In this case, the underpinnings are a violinistic sonic warmth.

Ex. #27 *Synchronisms #9* m. 1-4 “Tape mirrors violin warmth”

The musical score for measures 1-4 of *Synchronisms #9* is presented in a system of five staves. The top staff is for the violin, and the bottom three staves are for the piano. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The violin part starts with a dynamic of *mf* in measure 1, followed by *mp* in measure 2, and *p* in measure 3. It includes a 'match tape' instruction with 'poco vib.' in measure 2 and a 'legato assai' instruction in measure 4. The piano accompaniment mirrors the violin's dynamics and includes a triplet in the right hand and a triplet in the left hand in measure 4.

Beginning the piece with an instrument-only gesture is somewhat of a musical formula for Davidovsky--it focuses attention initially on the sound of the instrument and then subsequently on that of the electronics, instead of vice versa. One could imagine that in a work where electronic sounds start first, the listener would more readily take the sound of the instrument for granted. The opening of the violin work places the electronics in a symbiotic relationship with the instrument, mirroring its rhythms and its pitches. The texture is akin to cubism; we hear the same material, but from various different sides, slightly distorted in pitch. This opening is beautiful, sensuous, and a tad dizzying. The following outburst followed by the virtuosic passage in mm. 14-15 suggest for the listener the mercurial relationship between the violin and tape.

Ex. #28 *Synchronisms #9* m. 11 “Timbral outburst”

The image shows a musical score for a single measure (m. 11) in 4/4 time. The score is written for a violin and piano. The violin part (top staff) begins with a dynamic marking of *mf* and features a series of chords and notes with a crescendo hairpin leading to a *p* marking, followed by a final chord marked *f*. The piano part (bottom two staves) starts with a *mf* dynamic and includes a bass line with a crescendo hairpin leading to a *f* dynamic. The piano accompaniment consists of sustained chords in the right hand and a more active bass line in the left hand.

Throughout the work, the electronics alternate between two roles--distinctive chamber music partner with the violin versus a heavily integrated texture with the instrumental sounds.

Ex. #29 *Synchronisms #9* mm. 60-63 “Integrated orchestral electronics”

Ex. #30 *Synchronisms #9* mm. 72-74 “Distinctive chamber electronics”

Synchronisms #9 also relies more heavily on solo instrumental phrases, and thus distinguishes itself from the piano work in terms of how the soliloquy functions structurally. In *Synchronisms #9*, the narrative is contained primarily in the violin part, which engages in dialogue with the electronics. There is a dichotomy in the violin part

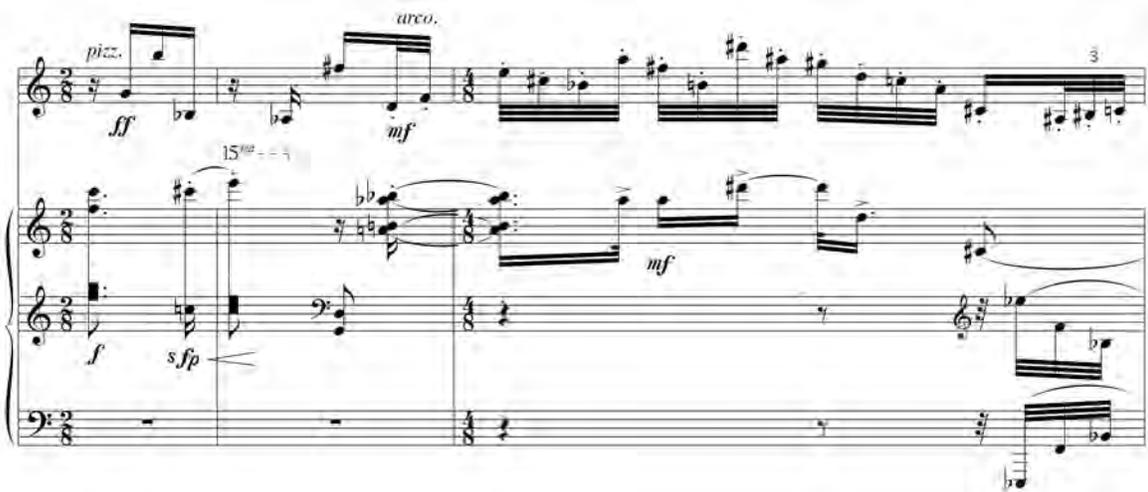
itself between traditional, rhapsodic writing, and angular, modernist gestures. It is as if Davidovsky is struggling with two sides of his relationship to the violin. There is the young student, attracted to the traditional values of the instrument: lyricism and virtuosity. And there is the modernist composer wanting to mold instruments to a new language of unpredictable melodic leaps, intricate rhythms, and a wide timbral palette.

In a few other ways, *Synchronisms #9* is an anomaly among Davidovsky's works. Instead of flaunting instrumental expectations, he fulfills them by writing a virtuoso solo vehicle accompanied by tape. The drama of the piece is less tightly controlled than in his other works, and more oriented towards spontaneous flair in the solo part. He does, however, balance two expressive extremes, the chordal serenity heard in the opening bars with the angular intensity more characteristic of his other pieces.

Ex. #31 *Synchronisms #9* mm. 17-18 (violin only) "Traditional playing"



Ex. #32 *Synchronisms #9* mm. 151-153 "Angular intensity"



The work ends with a rhythmic flourish, similar to *Synchronisms #6*.

Ex. #33 *Synchronisms #9* mm. 228-230 “Closing flourish”

The image shows a musical score for the final measures of *Synchronisms #9*. It consists of three staves: a single violin staff at the top and a grand piano staff at the bottom. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/8. The violin part begins with a dynamic marking of *mp* and a hairpin crescendo leading to *ffff*. Above the staff, the instruction *secco a tutta forza* is written, followed by *pizz.* (pizzicato) above a specific note. The piano part begins with a dynamic marking of *mf* and a hairpin crescendo leading to *s. ff*. The score concludes with a final flourish in both parts, marked *s. ff*.

The final passage of the piano piece derives its bitter humor from the contrast between the melancholy of the last few minutes of the work and the flippant character of the final few measures. In *Synchronisms #9*, this contrast is not as striking, and the ending stands out not for its humor, but for its degree of integration between violin and tape. By the end of the work, the violin has shed its 19th century associations, and embraced its newer, less individualistic role. This is reflected in the integration between the two parts in the last measures of the piece.

In *Synchronisms #9*, material is introduced more traditionally--phrases are allowed to develop over longer gestures. This is in contrast to the condensed introduction of diverse material, or thematic stratification that is integral to *Synchronisms #6*, and, as will be discussed later on, to *Festino*. *Synchronisms #9* takes the violin's sonic warmth as a starting point, and weaves a lyrical, expansive texture from this "acoustical underpinning."

Synchronisms #5 for Percussion Ensemble and Electronic Sounds

Synchronisms #5 for Percussion Ensemble plays with the traditional expectations for a percussion ensemble piece. One expects a percussion ensemble work to be loud and bombastic, but Davidovsky prefers instead to explore the timbral variety inherent in the ensemble and to rely more heavily on pitched, sustaining instruments. When asked about this compositional sleight of hand, Davidovsky responded in characteristically witty fashion.

I don't know what the hell to do with percussion instruments, they always bang. Well, I decided I'm going to have them sing, so I went with a solution that is totally off the wall--in the score I even put *cantabile*.²⁷

Ex. #34 *Synchronisms #5* mm. 1-5 “Vibraphone motive with sustained rolls” (for *Synchronisms #5*, only the staves that are relevant will be notated, and each example will specify which staff corresponds to what instrument) (from top to bottom--timpani, vibraphone, and marimba)

The image shows a musical score for three instruments: Timpani, Vibraphone, and Marimba. The score is in 3/4 time and covers measures 1 through 5. The Vibraphone part is marked 'legato' and 'pp'. The Timpani and Marimba parts have dynamics 'pp', 'p', and 'mp' indicated. The score shows sustained rolls in the Timpani and Marimba parts, and a melodic line in the Vibraphone part.

The opening motive in the vibraphone serves as the seed that is developed in the work, characterized by two notes, separated by the interval of a second. The sustained

²⁷ Mario Davidovsky, interview by author, 15 March 2006, New York.

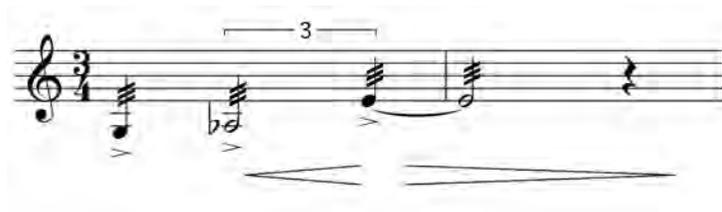
rolls in the timpani and marimba represent a contrasting idea, a different “strata.” As in *Synchronisms #6*, Davidovsky brings back an idea from the opening measures to indicate the beginning of a new section.

Ex. #35 *Synchronisms #5* m. 21 (vibraphone only) “Vibraphone motive”



Soon after, he begins to synthesize the primary motive with the rolled texture of m. 2.

Ex. #36 *Synchronisms #5* mm. 29-31 (vibraphone only) “Synthesis of Motive with Rolls”



Ex. #36b *Synchronisms #5* mm. 43-44 (vibraphone only) “Synthesis of Motive with Rolls”



The entire opening section has an ethereal quality, created by the lightly rolled textures, long held pitch durations, and periodic bell sounds on the glockenspiel, antique cymbal, and gong. The tape part remains tacit for the first three and half minutes of the

piece, a structural model Davidovsky would return to eighteen years later in 1992 when he wrote *Synchronisms #10* for guitar. By withholding the tape part until well into the work, he draws attention to the sound of the ensemble itself, and also subverts the expectation of an integrated electronic element from the beginning of piece. As the percussion ensemble section draws to a close, and the tape entrance is imminent, the texture changes drastically.

Ex. #37 *Synchronisms #5* mm. 54-55 (from top to bottom--maracas, temple blocks, and bongos) “Increased rhythmic activity”

The image shows a musical score for three percussion instruments: maracas (top), temple blocks (middle), and bongos (bottom). The score is in 6/8 time and covers measures 54 and 55. The maracas part features a melodic line with two triplet markings over the first two measures. The temple blocks and bongos parts show a more complex, rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth notes and rests. The dynamic marking *p* (piano) is present in all three staves.

Whereas the piece thus far had been dominated by pitched, mallet instruments, in m. 54 the unpitched percussion take over in a show of power. When the tape finally does enter, it is into this more brash, stereotypical percussion environment, and it is difficult initially to distinguish the tape from the instruments.

The second section of the piece is noticeably more active, with greater frequency of attacks and shorter gestural durations. Eventually, the primary motive makes another appearance in the vibraphone in inversion, but now, the electronic part provides a tail to the sound, adding a swell to the decay of the vibraphone.

Ex. #38 *Synchronisms #5* mm. 103-105 (top stave tape, bottom stave vibraphone)

“Electronics augment vibraphone motive”

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff is for tape and the bottom staff is for vibraphone. Both staves show a melodic line with a long note marked 'lunga' and a dynamic marking 'p'. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 2/4 time signature. The top staff has a long note with a fermata and a slur, with 'lunga' written above it. The bottom staff has a similar long note with a fermata and a slur, also with 'lunga' written above it. A dynamic marking 'p' is placed below the bottom staff. A double-headed arrow with 'p' above it spans the duration of the long notes in both staves.

Even within this subtler context, Davidovsky continues to explore ways that the electronic element can address limitations of acoustic instruments. As the climax of the work approaches, Davidovsky brings back the rolled textures from the beginning, now within a context of frequent attacks and note changes.

Ex. #39 *Synchronisms #5* mm. 168-171 (top stave marimba, bottom stave timpani)

“Synthesis of rolled texture with frequent attacks”

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff is for marimba and the bottom staff is for timpani. Both staves are in bass clef with a 2/4 time signature. The top staff features a triplet of eighth notes marked with a '3' above a bracket. The bottom staff features a series of eighth notes with accents. Dynamic markings include '>' (accents) and a double-headed arrow with a wedge shape below it, indicating a crescendo or decrescendo.

This accumulation of sound in the mallet instruments is accompanied by a huge *crescendo* in the electronic part, and by the time the climax actually arrives, most of the percussion ensemble has dropped out. At the peak of the work, the only percussion instruments playing are cymbals and tam-tam, though the tape part is at full blast, imitating percussion sounds.

Davidovsky draws down the intensity with a twenty three second *diminuendo* in the tape part, without accompaniment by the ensemble. Anyone hoping for a huge, show-stopping percussion ensemble piece is disappointed to hear that the climax is entirely dominated by electronics. The material following the climax when the ensemble reenters is subdued, with allusions to several strains of different moments in the piece passed throughout the ensemble. The final gesture returns to the primary motive, this time registrally inverted, and the work closes with a whisper, as the electronics get the last word.

Ex. #40 *Synchronisms #5* mm. 193-97 (from top to bottom – tape, tom-tom, vibraphone)

“Inverted vibraphone motive”

As with *Synchronisms #6*, the percussion work has a quality of coolness about it that would seem to be a result of the instrumentation. Davidovsky is consistently interested in the aspects of instruments that lie underneath their typical roles. He has effectively written an anti-percussion work. With the piano, he explores the sound envelope of one note, *tremolos*, and light *pizzicatos*; with the violin, he focuses on a duality between idiosyncratic playing and modernist techniques; and with the percussion ensemble, he explores the contained, textural possibilities of the instrumentation.

CHAPTER 3

SYNCHRONISMS #10 FOR GUITAR AND ELECTRONIC SOUNDS

Introduction

*All my music wouldn't exist if I hadn't spent five or six years doing exclusively electronic music. Even today, after forty years, I still find many of my ideas from what I learned about how sound can behave outside the tradition of performance and I slowly weave them into a tradition of performance.*²⁸

Written in 1992, *Synchronisms #10 for Guitar and Electronic Sounds* was Mario Davidovsky's last piece in the series until 2006, during which he has been working on numbers eleven and twelve in the series, for double bass and bass clarinet respectively. The guitar work has similar goals to its predecessors--namely, to use the electronic medium to create a composite instrument that augments the capabilities of the chosen acoustic instrument. There are many affinities between the piano and guitar *Synchronisms*. Both pieces use the electronic medium to address limitations in the sustain of their respective instruments and dynamic modulations within sustained pitches are common in the tape parts of both works. On a broader compositional level, *Synchronisms #10* shares the compact motivic construction of #6, as well as its clear *tutti* climax, reflective coda, and quirky ending. *Synchronisms #5* set a precedent for the guitar work by withholding the tape entrance until several minutes into the piece. The violinistic warmth that provides the foundation in *Synchronisms #9* is present in similarly lyrical writing in *Synchronisms #10*, exploiting the guitar's dual role as a percussion and a string instrument.

²⁸ Mario Davidovsky, interview by author, 15 March 2006, New York.

What sets *Synchronisms #10* apart from the other works in the series is the integration of all of these elements in one piece. There is an extended introduction similar to the percussion work that both suspends expectations for an electro-acoustic piece and establishes contrasting characters in the instrumental writing. Just as the violin sound is fundamental to *Synchronisms #9*, the sustain and decay of the guitar is a constant concern in *Synchronisms #10*, and there are also moments that languish in the silences created by the guitar's natural characteristics. There is the hybridization of the guitar with the entrance of the electronics which is similar to the merging of piano and tape *Synchronisms #6*, and Davidovsky reserves key moments in the piece for guitar soliloquies. Formally, Davidovsky is able to incorporate the long solo introduction into the piece without sacrificing a traditional climax towards the end of the piece, followed by a denouement and coda.

**Solo Guitar Introduction:
Innovative Guitar Writing and Articulation of Compositional Priorities**

Even if Davidovsky had not written the final section of the piece with tape and guitar, the solo introduction of *Synchronisms #10* would stand as one of the most important works for the instrument of the last twenty years. Within this introduction, Davidovsky addresses several of the most pressing issues confronting composers writing for guitar, including achieving registral distinction, sustaining notes beyond their attack, and achieving significant dynamic and gestural contrast. Once the tape finally arrives, it picks up where the introduction has left off, extending the instrument's capacities even further.

Register

In the opening material, Davidovsky immediately establishes a broad register.

Ex. #41 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 1-3 (guitar only) “Harmonics expand register”

(examples for *Synchronisms #10* will either be for guitar alone, or notate guitar stave on top and tape stave on bottom)

The image shows a musical score for guitar, measures 1-3. The score is written on two staves: a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The time signature is 3/4. Measure 1: Treble staff has a whole rest. Bass staff has a triplet of eighth notes (G4, A4, B4) with a circled '1' above the first note. Measure 2: Treble staff has a triplet of eighth notes (B4, C5, D5) with a circled '1' above the first note. Bass staff has a triplet of eighth notes (G3, F3, E3) with a circled '1' above the first note. Measure 3: Treble staff has a whole note G-sharp5 with a circled '6' above it and a '+' sign above the staff. Bass staff has a whole note G-sharp2. Dynamics include *più f* and *mf*.

By employing harmonics in the high and low register, Davidovsky establishes a registral and textural multi-dimensionality not usually found in guitar repertoire. Whereas most uses of harmonics in the guitar repertoire are for coloristic effect, here they are woven directly into the main material. Throughout the piece, Davidovsky resorts to harmonics to expand the registral scope of the guitar. In this instance, using the seventh fret harmonic B instead of the natural note on the nineteenth fret facilitates the integration of this register into the overall texture. After expanding the register upwards in the opening bar, Davidovsky turns to the bass, descending to the instrument’s lowest note by m. 8. Two bars later, he turns again to upper register harmonics, reaching a G-sharp two and half octaves above middle C, which is unplayable as a fretted note, before ending the phrase on E.

Ex. 42 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 4-11 (guitar only) “Harmonics expand register”

Within the first eleven bars of the work, Davidovsky has established a *tessitura* that spans four octaves plus a major third. This expansion helps to serve his other compositional goals, namely contrapuntal delineation.

Contrapuntal delineation

Davidovsky’s contrapuntal intentions in *Synchronisms #10* are made explicit by his decision to notate the part on two staves. This affords him the opportunity to be very specific about stem direction, duration, and individual dynamics, all factors which contribute to the breadth of the instrumental conception.

The opening two measures of the work define three clear voices, as a primary motive, from now on referred to as motive x, is passed from the middle voice to the low voice.

Ex. #43 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 1-2 (guitar only) “Motive x”



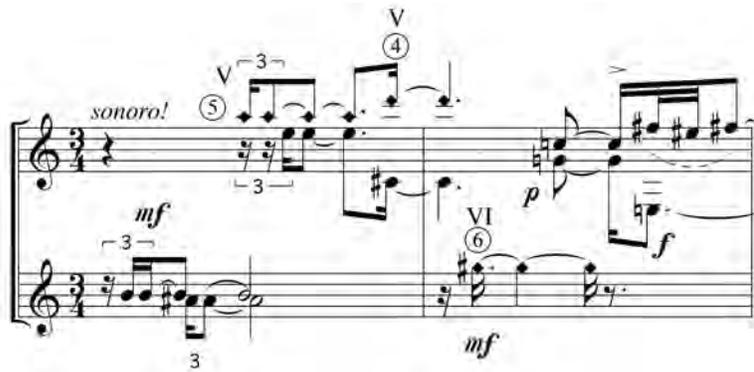
These voices are reasserted in mm. 9-10 (see Ex #42 above), now highlighting the passage of motive x through the middle and top voices. The harmonics in M. 10 help to reconcile the expanded register, as the texture thins down to one voice momentarily and arrives at the work’s first cadence. There are several other moments throughout the piece where Davidovsky achieves a contrapuntal texture through manipulation of motive x.

Ex. #44 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 71-72 (guitar only) “Motive x clarifies multiple voices”



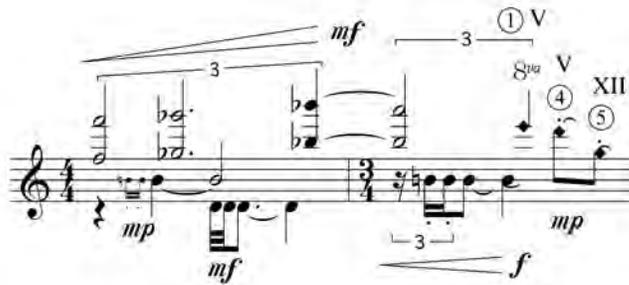
Harmonics can also be integrated in with other timbres to achieve contrapuntal clarity. In m. 71-72, three distinct colors and characters are present: the sonorous low E string, the sassy double-stop statement of motive x, and the bell-like A harmonic.

Ex. #45 *Synchronisms #10* m. 30-31 (guitar only) “Timbral variety distinguishes voices”



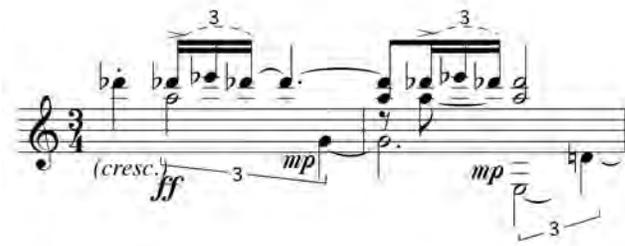
By stating the same motive, motive x from the first bar of the piece, in different registers with harmonics and open strings, several voices are clarified.

Ex. #46 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 118-119 (guitar only) “Stemming of motive x delineates voices”



Shortly after the tape part enters, Davidovsky brings the primary motive into the texture, using it here as an accompanying figure to a heroic gesture in octaves in the high register. Once again, the textural differences between the quick repeated notes and the sustained octaves, along with the clear entrances of the motive, help to define three clear voices. His intentions are born out by the durations and stemming of the inner voices.

Ex. #47 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 244-245 (guitar only) “Motive x in three voice texture”

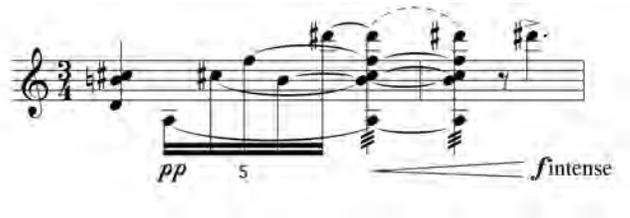


At the end of the climax of the piece, Davidovsky again returns to the three-voice texture, articulated around the sixteenth-note triplets of the primary motive x. This time the motive returns to the upper voice, and open strings define the lower voice and provide resonance.

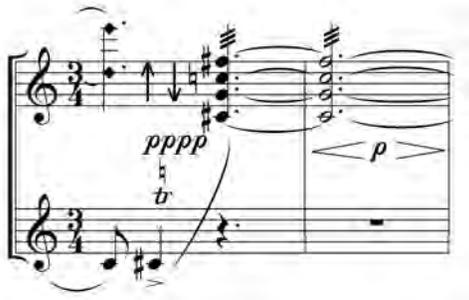
Addressing the Guitar’s Sustain and Decay

As has been illustrated in the analysis of the other *Synchronisms*, Davidovsky is very interested in the entire sound envelope of a note. It is clear that he was acutely conscious of the guitar’s quick decay and limited sustain when he was writing *Synchronisms #10*. There are several gestures in the piece that are targeted specifically to address this issue. The first of these uses an extended technique, the *tremolo*, which calls for a very rapid articulation of the string that imitates a sustained pitch. It can be achieved either through traditional methods, or by using the *dedillo* technique, involving brushing the string back and forth with the side of the finger or nail. In *Synchronisms #10*, the gesture is usually accompanied by a *crescendo*. In this way, Davidovsky is creating an effect that is impossible to achieve using standard method of plucking the guitar string--a change of dynamic within a sustained note or chord.

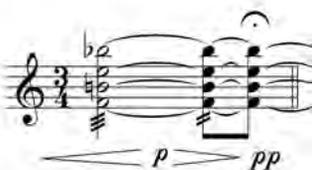
Ex. #48 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 24-25 (guitar only) “*Tremolo facilitates crescendo*”



Ex. #49 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 59-60 (guitar only) “*Tremolo facilitates dynamic swell*”



Ex. #50 *Synchronisms #10* m. 88 (guitar only) “*Tremolo facilitates dynamic swell*”



Ex. #51 *Synchronisms #10* m. 98 (guitar only) “*Tremolo facilitates dynamic swell*”



Another technique Davidovsky uses to propel the momentum forward is the extended trill. Instead of using a trill to finalize a phrase, in these examples, the trill

mitigates the impact of the guitar's quick decay on the direction of a line. The clearest example of this is in m. 55, where the trill on G-sharp serves as a pedal point around the other voices.

Ex. #52 *Synchronisms #10* m. 55 (guitar only) "Extended trill"



Ex. #53 *Synchronisms #10* m. 97 (guitar only) "Trill propels phrase forward"



Dynamic and Gestural Contrast

Davidovsky creates significant dynamic and gestural contrast within the solo guitar introduction. This contributes to the dramatic character of the work, as the guitar writing frequently strives to go beyond the instrument's limitations. Much of the expansion of the louder and more dramatic expressive range is a function of his use of textural devices and extended techniques. After the meticulous orchestration of the opening phrase, Davidovsky turns to a traditional guitar texture, the strummed chord, to generate a *forte* dynamic at the close of the phrase group.

Ex. #54 *Synchronisms #10* m. 13 (guitar only) “Strummed chord expands dynamic range”



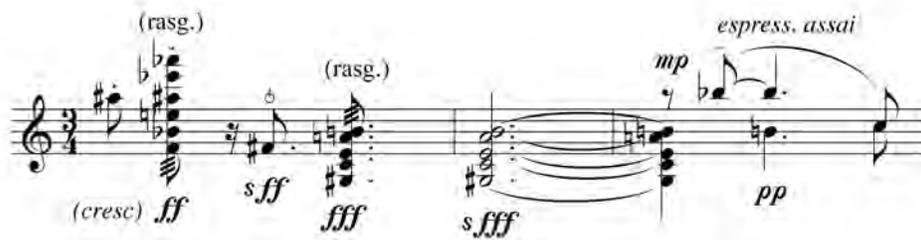
Resorting to quick, successively strummed chords (in a rhythmic incarnation of primary motive x) allows Davidovsky to establish an extended dynamic range just as he has staked out registral and contrapuntal expansion. The intensity of this moment is enhanced by the airy harmonics that precede it. The drastic shifts in dynamic and gesture continue through the next phrase, as sweet, plaintive grace notes in the high register are rudely interrupted by snappish *tambura* chords, an effect which involves hitting the strings of the guitar to generate a pitched percussive effect.

Ex. #55 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 15-18 (guitar only) “*Tambura* percussive effect”

After a rush of accumulated notes in mm. 27-33, Davidovsky again turns to textures that go beyond the standard sound production on the instrument. In measure 34, a thick, *rasgueado* chord (quick, percussive strumming with the back of the nails) is

followed immediately by a brash *Bartók pizzicato*, an effect created by snapping the string against the fretboard. The texture suggests a discourse that has quickly reached its emotional breaking point, as if normal playing technique is not sufficient to release the built up tension of the musical moment. In an apology, Davidovsky immediately retreats to a *pianissimo* dynamic before a secondary burst of energy.

Ex. #56 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 34-36 (guitar only) “*Rasgueado* chords and *Bartók pizzicati*”



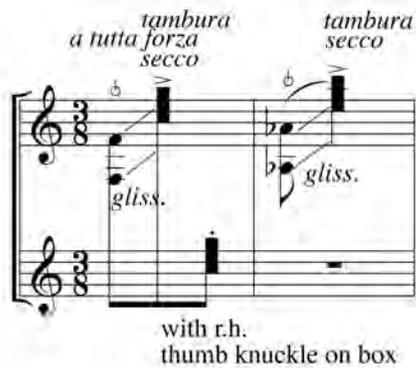
Bartók pizzicati and *rasgueado* chords return in mm. 52-53, except this time, Davidovsky uses them for their timbral quirkiness as opposed to their explosive quality.

Ex. #57 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 52-53 (guitar only) “*Quirky Bartók pizzicati* and *rasgueados*”



The *tambura* technique is used again in mm. 73-74 to facilitate a climactic dynamic.

Ex. #58 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 73-79 (guitar only) “Climactic *tambura* gesture”



In contrast to the first use of *tambura*, here the effect is notated as non-pitched, resulting in a more pronounced aggression. The use of octaves in the low register, followed by a *glissando* to the percussive effect further enhances the drama of the moment. There is a palpable spatial awareness to this moment, as the three eighth-notes in m. 73 are not only executed on different parts of the instrument, but are designed to sound like they occupy different corners of the timbral spectrum. Here is a moment where Davidovsky’s experience as an electronic composer seems to be influencing his approach to acoustic writing; one could easily imagine these three sounds being spread across a stereo field, as a listener’s ears bounce to and fro, following the three-dimensional sonic journey.

Davidovsky’s sense of balance is acute, and it is no surprise that after this high peak in mm. 73-74, he reconciles it with very quiet, delicate material through the next twenty measures until the tape entrance. The reemergence of the primary motive x in m. 76 is lent an acute nostalgic longing by its *pianissimo* dynamic.

The expressive world of *Synchronisms #10* is very much defined by these dynamic and gestural extremes. Davidovsky’s use of *Bartók pizzicati*, *tambura*, and

rasgueado does not merely reflect an isolated fascination with timbre. It reflects his interest in creating a hyper-expressive context for the guitar that expands the dramatic capacity of the instrument. In fact, his desire to enlarge the register of the guitar, to create lines that sustain and have dynamic shape, and his use of drastic contrasts all serve the overall purpose---articulating his Davidovskian language on a confounding instrument. It is a language based on expressive extremes that establish a hyper-reality in sound.

One driving force behind *Synchronisms #10* is the goal of creating a composite instrument in which the tape part augments the guitar's limitations. Yet, in many ways Davidovsky successfully grapples with those instrumental boundaries before the electronic sounds even enter the texture. The density of the material in the guitar introduction definitely has an impact on the texture of the accompanied second half of the piece. If anything, the guitar writing becomes considerably sparser once the electronics have arrived. Yet, this is not necessarily mitigated by an active electronic part--in fact, there are several moments of the second half of the work that are strikingly bare.

Ex. #59 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 138-143 "Stark electro-acoustic texture"

The image shows a musical score for guitar and tape, measures 138-143. The guitar part is written in 3/4 time and features several dynamic markings: *n.* (pizzicato), *mf*, *mp*, *f*, and *mp*. There are also expressive markings such as *espress. assai* and *f*. The tape part is written in 3/4 time and includes a *ppppp* section with a wavy line. The score is divided into two systems, with the guitar part on the top staff and the tape part on the bottom staff. The guitar part has a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 3/4. The tape part has a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a time signature of 3/4. The guitar part has a dynamic marking of *n.* at the beginning, followed by *mf*, *mp*, *f*, and *mp*. The tape part has a dynamic marking of *ppppp* and a wavy line. The score is divided into two systems, with the guitar part on the top staff and the tape part on the bottom staff. The guitar part has a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 3/4. The tape part has a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a time signature of 3/4. The guitar part has a dynamic marking of *n.* at the beginning, followed by *mf*, *mp*, *f*, and *mp*. The tape part has a dynamic marking of *ppppp* and a wavy line.

Electro-acoustic Section of the Piece: Structural Integration of the Electronic Element

Why did Davidovsky establish this huge dynamic and gestural range in the introduction, only to largely abandon that type of instrumental writing once the electronics entered? One possibility is that his intention was to refocus the listener's ear on the fundamental issues of sound and how the interplay between live and pre-recorded elements might explore those issues. Indeed, both the examples above highlight the passing of sustained, *crescendo* gestures between the guitar and the tape part. Another possibility is that he wanted to create a distinction between solo guitar writing and chamber writing. The guitar part in the second section primarily contains expressive single note lines that interact easily with another voice. Davidovsky may also have wanted to control the electronics part so it remained within the expressive world that had been established in the solo introduction.

Underlying all of these compositional decisions is Davidovsky's awareness of the delicacy of the interaction between instrument and electronics. The dichotomy that exists between chamber interaction and composite instrument textures can provide clues about how Davidovsky handles the electronic element and its impact on the dramatic and theatrical dynamic of live performance.

Examination of Effect on Parameters in Guitar Writing

During the second half of the piece, Davidovsky expands upon many of the parameters explored in the introductory section. In fact, these are precisely the parameters that help to create a composite instrument out of the guitar. The initial tape entrance addresses the issue of sustain.

Ex. #60 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 102-108 “Guitar notes stick in the air”

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system shows the guitar part in the treble clef and the tape part in the bass clef. The guitar part starts with a glissando (pp gliss.) and is marked 'intimo, espress.'. The tape part is marked 'pppp'. The second system continues the guitar part with a 'nobile' marking and a triplet of eighth notes. The tape part continues with various dynamics (f, mf, mp) and articulations. Fingering and fretting instructions are provided for the guitar, including (6) XII and (5) IX.

Davidovsky affirms that the introduction of the tape material is an outgrowth of the guitar’s limited sustain.

The tape pedals the guitar, addressing one of the problems of the guitar--that the sounds die very quickly. So suddenly it sounds like there is a string ensemble with bows rather than with nails or fingertips.²⁹

Each note of the guitar part is mirrored in the accumulating tape chord, and the notes sustain, as if stuck in thin air. This moment is particularly effective in performance. For those listening to the piece for the first time, a certain expectation has been set up by the title; one expects to hear electronic sounds. But of course, a listener sits and waits (for over four minutes!) to hear something coming out of the speakers, and there is only

²⁹ Mario Davidovsky, interview by author, 15 March 2006, New York.

silence. By this time, presumably, their ears have been drawn in to the intricate world of the guitar. Then, out of the blue, the guitar notes seem to stick in the air, and it takes a moment to adjust and realize that what is happening is not a supernatural occurrence, but a very stealthy electronic entrance.

Register

For the most part, Davidovsky does not use the introduction of the electronics to further stretch the register being used in the piece. Instead, he primarily remains within the *tessitura* of the guitar. The two moments that he does expand upon the guitar register serve different functions.

Ex. #61 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 171-173 “Registral expansion enhances blend”

The musical score for Ex. #61 consists of three staves in 3/4 time. The top staff is marked *legato calmo* and *mp*. It contains three measures, each with a triplet of notes. The middle staff is marked *p* and also contains three measures with triplets. The bottom staff is marked *p* and contains three measures with triplets. The notes in the top staff are G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5. The notes in the middle staff are G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4. The notes in the bottom staff are G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3.

Ex. #62 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 246-27 “Registral expansion provides pedal point”

The musical score for Ex. #62 consists of two staves in 3/4 time. The top staff is marked *espress.* and *mf dim.*. It contains two measures with a long note that spans across the measure boundary. The bottom staff is marked *mf p dim.* and contains two measures with a long note that spans across the measure boundary. The notes in the top staff are G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5. The notes in the bottom staff are G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4.

In this mysterious first example, the guitar plays haunting, registrally disjunct quarter-note triplets, and it is shadowed by almost inaudible low notes in the electronic part. The unison texture and close match of timbre enhance the blending between live instrument and tape, and the effect created is almost identical to a harmonizer effects pedal, popular among rock guitarists. The second example serves the opposite function. Instead of using the registral expansion to blend into the guitar sound, the low A spreads the *tessitura* down, as the guitar part reaches up high for an urgent, lyrical line. Coming only a few bars after the climax of the work, this use of the low register suggests a pedal point over which the solo instrument will play a cadenza.

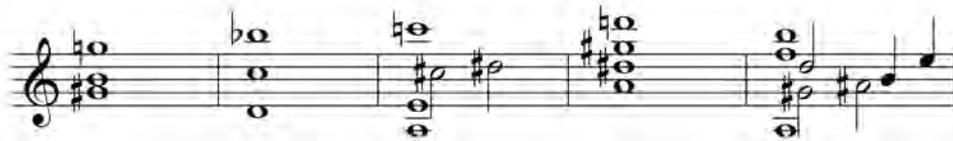
Contrapuntal Delineation

The contrapuntal complexity within the guitar part that Davidovsky established in the introduction is reestablished throughout the second half of the piece. Certain moments continue this density solely within the guitar part, while others divide the contrapuntal duties between instrument and tape. In addition to the examples mentioned above (mm. 118-119, and mm. 244-245), the following example demonstrates a slightly different approach to contrapuntal writing on the guitar.

Ex. #63 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 259-264 (guitar only) “Block chord counterpoint”

Here, instead of very clearly delineated lines, separated by timbre, rhythmic articulation, and register, Davidovsky establishes an accumulating contrapuntal texture. The line moves back and forth between simultaneous block chords, and arpeggiation of the prevailing harmony.

Ex. #64 Four voice simplification of mm. 259-262 texture



On beat two of m. 262, all the voices come together, only to break apart again during m. 263. The simultaneous block chord serves a crucial purpose--it reminds the ear that the closely spaced intervals are separate voices. Without the block chord on beat 2 of m. 262, the closely spaced intervallic material of m. 263 (between the A-sharp and the B in the lower staff, which is clearly down stemmed) could be misinterpreted as part of one line. The guitar lacks the broad registral range of the piano, and so counterpoint on the guitar must be handled delicately so that individual voices are very clear. Davidovsky shows himself to be well aware of this pitfall in guitar counterpoint, and avoids it by deft writing in what amounts to a chorale texture.

Davidovsky shifts the contrapuntal activity away from something that is self-contained within the guitar part to something that is interactive between the electronics and the live instrument.

Ex. 65 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 120-123 “Counterpoint interwoven between guitar and tape”



As the listener’s ear is still adjusting to the new element of the tape part, Davidovsky inserts this passage of call and response. Using the primary motive x, he weaves a texture that is so integrated, it can be hard to distinguish who is playing which notes (even to the performer!). A similarly integrated approach occurs at the climax of the piece, as material from m. 13 is brought back and distributed between the guitar and tape. The arrival in the guitar part on G-sharp is simultaneous with the beginning of the tape scale beginning on the same note—likewise, the tape F is passed to the beginning of the guitar scale in m. 242.

Ex. #66 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 241-242 “Scalar material in separate voices”



Dynamic and Gestural Range

The dynamic and gestural range that Davidovsky establishes in the introduction is unambiguously expanded with the entrance of the electronics.

Ex. #67 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 165-166 “Expanding *forte* dynamic”

The element of visceral surprise in this arrival and others like it would not be possible with just solo guitar. In both cases, the wave of energy from the electronic parts also lends intensity to the guitar material that follows. Davidovsky’s timbral virtuosity is equally apparent in the piano dynamics.

Ex. #68 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 140-144 “Expanding *piano* dynamic”

Shimmering textures persist throughout the work, suggesting both the delicate timbres of the guitar, as well as a breezily ambient sonic space within which the whole piece unfolds.

Davidovsky reserves the gestural *tour de force* for the climax of the piece, a bracing interplay between full guitar chords and walls of electronic sound.

Ex. #69 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 231-241 “Gestural climax”

The musical score for *Synchronisms #10*, mm. 231-241, is presented in four staves. The first staff begins with a *secco* marking and a dynamic of *f*, followed by a *ff* section marked *a tutta forza*. The second staff features dynamics of *mf*, *p sub.*, *f*, *p*, and *ff*. The third staff includes *mf gliss.*, *gliss.*, *f*, and *mf*. The fourth staff starts with *ff*, *p*, *ff*, *mf*, and *mf*. The score is characterized by complex chordal textures, melodic lines with triplets, and sixteenth-note patterns.

Discussion of Dramatic Structure of *Synchronisms #10*

Introduction

While Davidovsky’s exploratory approach to the guitar represents an important addition to the instrument’s repertoire, it is the fact the *Synchronisms #10* embodies many of his core compositional goals that elevates the piece into the pantheon of significant

contributions to the contemporary repertoire at large. The guitar's central role in this important work helps to lend it increased legitimacy in the larger world of new music, and is the primary reason for the inclusion of the piece in this study. A thorough examination of Davidovsky's motivic and dramatic structure for the *Synchronisms #10* is necessary to come to a comprehensive understanding of the significance of the work.

Serruoya's assertion that Davidovsky organizes his music around intervallic and motivic structural pillars will serve as the initial basis for this analysis of *Synchronisms #10*. Merely establishing a consistent intervallic language misses the point, however. More important is how Davidovsky uses intervallic consistency to weave together sections of the work, and provide a pitch oriented thread in music that is not composed systematically. It is for this reason that the subsequent analysis will proceed in the same order as the music is heard in a performance. Davidovsky writes music with an acute sense of how various elements in the composition will be perceived and absorbed by a listener in a performance. An analysis of his work should engage the music on the same level, attempting to explain Davidovsky's marvelous juggling act by describing the balls in mid-air.

Analysis: Solo Guitar Section

The intervallic characteristics of the phrase that introduces motive x help to frame the melodic material for the rest of the piece.

Ex. #70 *Synchronisms #10* m. 1 (guitar only) “Initial intervals introduced”



The major seventh between the C and B, the implied minor seventh between the C and B-flat inverted below, and the tritone between the B-flat and E all figure prominently throughout the work. Within the opening section, Davidovsky consistently returns to these same interval structures, as he moves motive x throughout the guitar register.

Ex. #71 *Synchronisms #10* m. 3 (guitar only) (Maj. 7th between G and F-sharp)



Ex. #72 *Synchronisms #10* m. 8 (guitar only) (Min. 7th between G-sharp and F-sharp, Maj. 7th between G and F-sharp)



Ex. #73 *Synchronisms #10* m. 12 (guitar only) (Inverted Maj. 7th--Min. 2nd and Min. 9th between E-sharp and F-sharp)



Davidovsky establishes significant rhythmic contrast even within these early bars, mitigating the percussive effect of the opening motive with breathy, sustained chords that languish in the resonance of the guitar. This dichotomy between violently rhythmic material and calmly sustained moments persists throughout the work. In m. 11 and m. 13, contrasting material appears that will be developed and stratified later in the work.

Ex. #74 *Synchronisms #10* m. 11 (guitar only) “Quintuplet motive”



Ex. #75 *Synchronisms #10* m. 13 (guitar only) “Scalar material”



The quintuplet figure in m. 11 will undergo significant rhythmic adjustment throughout the piece, and the scalar figure reoccurs at moments of expressive intensity. *Synchronisms #10* is more monothematic than many of Davidovsky's works. Several contrasting ideas are presented, and they become stratified through the work, but there is a sense that the primary motive's journey propels the work forward. This distinguishes *Synchronisms #10* from the piano work in the series, and also from *Festino*.

The next time we encounter motive x, it is buried inside a skittish passage which combines staccato notes with harmonics to delineate textures. The piece has moved into a more developmental area, and the intervallic and textural treatment of the motive reflects the new territory.

Ex. #76 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 19-22 (guitar only) "Integration of motive x"

Here, the major seventh associated with the motive on the downbeat of m. 21 is in inversion, appearing as a minor second, while the minor seventh enters with the open G string on beat four. The composite structure of a major seventh with a tritone is articulated on beat three of m. 22. This pattern of inverting the initial intervallic structure of the motive continues in m. 30, as the passage highlights minor seconds, minor ninths, and major ninths.

Ex. #77 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 30-31 (guitar only) “Motive x with inverted intervals”

The momentum builds through a flash of sextuplets in m. 33, before exploding in one of the gestural climaxes mentioned above in m. 34. As the energy dissipates, the motive is intoned *lontano* in the high register.

Ex. #78 *Synchronisms #10* m. 40 (guitar only) “Motive x over E pedal”

Not only is Davidovsky adjusting the interval context of the motive, placing it a tritone above a pedal point E, but its rhythmic position and melodic characteristics are changing too. In m. 30, the third note of the “flamenco” figure is not a repetition of the first two, and in m. 31, the rhythm is adjusted and the figure becomes an ornament, though with the same quick-quick-long rhythmic shape. In m. 40, the characteristic tritone has returned, but the motive is now placed at the close of a phrase. By now, the commanding authority that was established in the opening section has been replaced by longer gestures, and a tempestuous ambivalence. The succinct character of the primary

motive is now being mixed and diluted with contrasting and conflicting material. With the close of the exposition of the work, Davidovsky has introduced a heroic theme and conflicting material, sending the primary motive well into its journey.

After a fermata establishes a point of repose, the next section begins with a call from afar, also marked *lontano*.

Ex. #79 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 42-44 (guitar only) “Motive x with *crescendo*”

The repetitive C naturals accompanied by a *crescendo* are derived from the motive, despite adding an extra note to the figure. We hear the motive in m. 44, rhythmically displaced, as if it is off-balance. The thoughtful material from the opening sustained chords returns in m. 46, drawing out the airy feel of this passage. It is interrupted immediately by another frenetic burst of notes, which in turn is followed by yet another moment of repose.

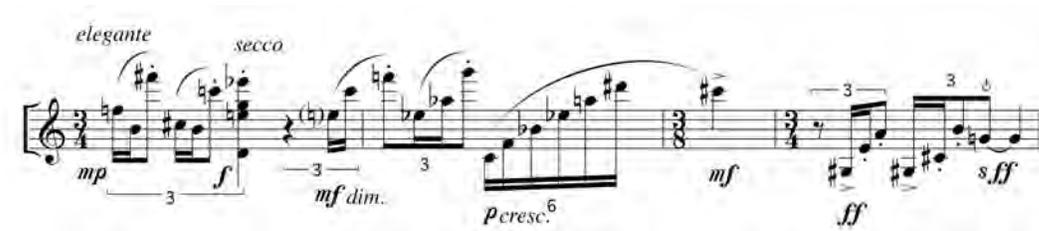
These passages develop the textural conflict between excited and pensive material. Davidovsky’s music sometimes tends to move in fits and starts, rarely accumulating momentum for long periods. In this work, this tendency seems to find a comfortable partner in the guitar, an instrument that lends itself to limited outbursts and thoughtful reflection. These moments of repose are often punctuated by a “quasi-tonal sonority,” as Malloy points out in his analysis.

Ex. #80 *Synchronisms #10* m. 65 (guitar only) “Quasi-tonal sonority at cadence”



The harmony at this *fermata* suggests a C major chord with a raised eleventh degree. The presence of the major seventh between the G and F-sharp reinforces the connection with the interval content of the opening motive.

Ex. #81 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 66-69 (guitar only) “Rhythmic shape of motive provides material for development”



The rhythmic shape of the motive serves as the basis for the accumulating tension of the next several bars. While it is significantly transformed, the material here still represents a gesture of two quick notes arriving on a longer third, and the intervals represented outline major and minor sevenths and tritones. After a section of persistent back and forth between energetic and reflective moments, Davidovsky finally unleashes a longer phrase that culminates in the dramatic *tambura* percussive gesture discussed in the earlier section on gestural expansion.

The subsequent material returns to the opening motive, set in a nostalgic, *pianissimo* frame. The intervallic structure has changed slightly, with the initial figure outlining an octave plus a minor third, and the second, the original tritone. One can speculate why Davidovsky opted not to use a major seventh for the first figure--an option that would have been available to him as a harmonic, since the G string would provide the proper pitch at the fifth fret.

Ex. #82 *Synchronisms* #10 m. 76-77 (guitar only) “Transposition of motive x statement”



The most compelling explanation for this change is that a direct reiteration of the intervallic structure of the opening motive would constitute a true return. Davidovsky may not have wanted to transpose the material literally given that the second section of the piece with tape still remained. The fact that the guitar introduction covers so much expressive territory supports this hypothesis; a literal return to the opening material might just seal the narrative, rendering the remainder of the piece extraneous.

In m. 80, Davidovsky develops the quintuplet material from m. 11, here augmenting the rhythm in a lyrical ascending gesture, followed by vocal, pleading lines in the high register.

Ex. #83 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 80-86 (guitar only) “Development of quintuplet motive”

The musical score is written for guitar in 3/4 time. It consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef, and the lower staff is in bass clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The score includes various performance instructions: *(rit.)*, *dolce*, *vib.*, *mf*, *p*, *pp*, *mp*, and *mf*. There are several quintuplet markings (5) and triplet markings (3). The lower staff features fret numbers: IV, XII, XII, XII, and XII. There are also circled numbers 4 and 6 in the lower staff, possibly indicating fingerings or specific notes. The score ends with a *mf* dynamic marking.

The sudden emphasis on the quintuplet motive lends this moment instability, suggesting that the piece may be entering a transitional stage. In a tonal piece, moving to a distant harmonic area would generate the requisite instability to facilitate a transition. But in music based on a chromatic language, other methods are necessary for indicating that the music is taking a turn away from the previous material. Here, Davidovsky develops the rhythmic gesture of a quintuplet, followed by the use of octaves to call attention to a new direction in the piece. The haunting passage in octaves that follows reinforces the sense of structural suspension, and offers yet another creative example of developing contrapuntal textures on the guitar.

Ex. #84 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 89-97 (guitar only) “Octaves mixed with harmonics”

The image displays two systems of musical notation for guitar. The first system covers measures 89-93. The upper staff features a melodic line with a long, sweeping slur over measures 89 and 90, followed by a series of eighth notes in measures 91-93. The lower staff provides harmonic accompaniment with chords and single notes. Dynamics include *p*, *mf*, and *dim.*. Articulations include a *pizz.* (pizzicato) in measure 89 and a *trill* in measure 93. Fingering numbers like (b) and circled numbers 4, 6, and 3 are present. The second system covers measures 94-97. The upper staff continues the melodic line with slurs and triplets. The lower staff includes *pizzicati* (pizzicati) in measure 94 and continues with chords and notes. Dynamics include *p*, *mf*, *sf*, *mp*, and *mf*. Fingering numbers like circled 5, 1, and 3 are present.

The ascending octave line conjures an otherworldly texture, reinforced by the bell-like harmonics entering in m. 91. Davidovsky increases the intervallic tension by expanding the octave into a minor ninth at the end of m. 92, and then compressing into a major seventh in the following measure. By introducing these characteristic intervals in a lyrical and vertical context, Davidovsky momentarily reorients the expressive content of the pitch language of the piece. Earlier in the work, the use of sevenths and ninths in a rhythmically charged context gave the work an angularity and vitality. Here, as an expansion and compression of the more common vertical octave, these sevenths and ninths sound more wrenching, as if the purity of the octave is being stretched and then magnetically is pulled back to an octave. Another new texture enters in m. 94, as *pizzicati* playfully punctuate the more severe line in octaves above. The playful interjections continue in m. 96, as a gesture evocative of motive x helps the accumulating energy of the phrase. All of these new sounds and reorientations of old sounds lay the groundwork

for a major shift in the direction of the work. The solo guitar portion of *Synchronisms #10* comes to an end with a shimmering chord of stacked fourths with a tritone, as a quixotic gesture closes the section with a question mark.

Analysis: Guitar and Electronics Section

Davidovsky brilliantly links the transitional ending of the solo guitar introduction with the entrance of the tape part. The character of the guitar part from m. 102-108 (see Ex. #60) remains thoughtful, as the octave from the previous measures is carried over into the new section. In addition, the unison doublings of the guitar material in the electronic part reinforce the transitional nature of this moment--the close of the guitar section introduced octaves as a characteristic transitional interval. Meanwhile, the chord that is accumulating in the atmosphere reflects the organizing intervals of the whole work. The *ad lib* repetitive figure in m. 109, marked *liberamente*, serves a crucial function as a coordination point just before the tape part enters with rhythmically rigorous material. There are a few similarly practical moments throughout the second section of the work, but largely, the texture unfolds without these types of rhythmic training wheels.

The link between this otherworldly moment of the tape entrance and the rest of the work jolts the listener (and perhaps the performer!) out of their reverie.

Ex. #85 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 108-113 “Transition to electro-acoustic section”

The musical score for Ex. #85, *Synchronisms #10*, measures 108-113, is presented in three staves. The top staff is for guitar, the middle for tape, and the bottom for bass. The guitar part begins with a triplet of eighth notes (marked with a circled 3) and a natural harmonic (marked with a circled 5 and 'IX'). It then moves to a half note (marked with a circled 5 and 'XII'). The tempo marking 'liberamente' is present. The dynamics range from *mp* to *ff*, with a 'marcato' section. The tape part consists of a series of sustained chords that increase in volume. The bass part has a 'cue' marking and dynamic markings of *mp* and *mf*.

The entrance on the second eighth-note of beat two in m. 110 of a unison E, *Bartók pizzicato* in the guitar, drastically transforms the character of the moment, and presages the increased rhythmic intensity that is to come. In fact, the whole rhythmic basis for the material has doubled in pace, as indicated by the new tempo marking, “Giusto”, quarter=120. The eighth-note quintuplet in m. 113 is an echo of the transitional use of the sixteenth-note quintuplet in m. 80 and m. 86. This appearance of the figure is transformed--there is a new urgency to the material in the guitar part. Davidovsky periodically recontextualizes the quintuplet idea; sometimes it is heard in lyrical passages, and sometimes in energetic settings. This is consistent with his interest in reframing expressive material throughout the piece--what starts as a tender motive returns later as an angry gesture, and so on. In Davidovsky’s aesthetic, all the characters are complex and display many facets of expression.

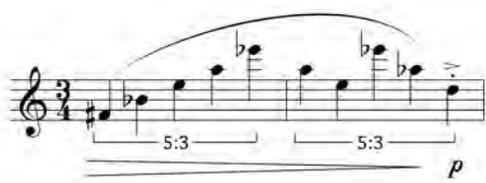
Meanwhile, the accumulated chord in the tape part gets progressively louder over four measures, culminating in a quick hairpin *crescendo* in m. 114. Davidovsky appropriately resolves this gesture in a way that addresses a limitation of the guitar--both

the extended sustain of the chord and the closing burst of dynamic are qualities that the guitar is incapable of achieving on its own. The quick hairpin *crescendo* and urgency of the guitar part intensify the character of the piece.

There are a few possible explanations for the sudden intensification of the material shortly into the second half of the piece. Probably the most compelling is that Davidovsky, ever cognizant of achieving balance, wanted to create a significant contrast to the relative calm that preceded in the guitar introduction. Also possible is the idea that the introduction of a foreign element into the texture, in this case the electronic part, destabilizes the equilibrium of the work. Classical structure dictates that the contrasting elements of a piece are introduced early on in the work, setting up the central conflict to be explored. Davidovsky seems to have turned this model around slightly. He uses a lengthy solo introduction to explore the sound world of the guitar and establish it as a focal point for the piece. While the introduction may cover broad dynamic and gestural ground, it does not really establish conflicting material. The tension to be resolved comes with the arrival of the electronic medium. The violence of the phrase from mm. 110-116 may represent the intrusion of the tape part into the space of the work thus far. In this scenario, the rest of the work stands as the resolution of this tension.

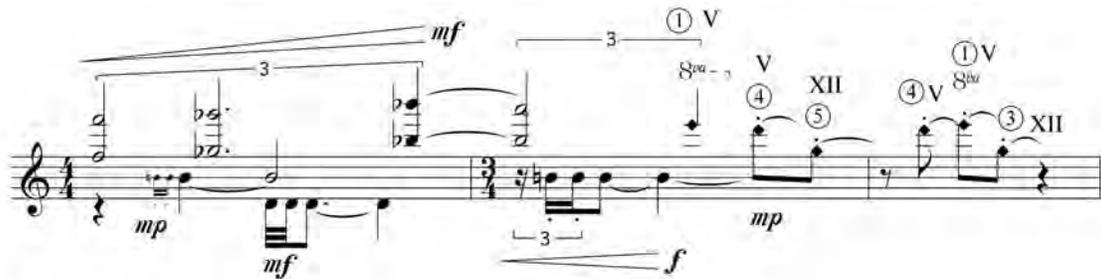
Davidovsky continues to develop the quintuplet motive in m. 116-117, this time augmenting the figure over three quarter-notes in an arching gesture. The intervallic structure of this figure relies heavily on tritones.

Ex. #86 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 116-117 (guitar only) “Quintuplet motive”



He then reiterates the primary motive x, this time as an accompaniment figure underneath a heroic line in octaves.

Ex. #87 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 118-120 (guitar only) “Motive x as accompaniment figure”



The combination of the soaring octave passage with motive x is another example of the reconciliation of the transitional material with the fundamental material of the piece, and as such, demonstrates early examples of motivic synthesis in *Synchronisms #10*. Shortly after, Davidovsky writes the work’s first truly interactive texture for guitar and tape, based around motive x.

Ex. #88 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 122-124 “Interactive texture”



Up to this moment in m. 122, it is not entirely clear if the electronics will play an equivalent role to the guitar in the work, but by integrating the tape part into a chamber like texture with the primary motive, Davidovsky sends a signal that this work will be a dialogue between equals.

The dialogue undergoes a turnaround in mm. 124-125, as the guitar and tape switch roles momentarily.

Ex. #89 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 124-125 “Switching roles”

Instead of using the tape to continue the sustain of the guitar as it drops off, Davidovsky writes a *crescendo* in the guitar part with a *rasgueado*, and a *diminuendo* in the electronic part. It would be a mistake to analyze this piece in a one-dimensional fashion, as if the electronics' only role would be to enhance the guitar. This moment illuminates Davidovsky's interest in developing a symbiotic relationship between the two parts, one in which they complement each other, and perhaps even absorb characteristics from one another.

This interaction is strongly in evidence in mm. 138-141, during a section when the dust has cleared and the listener's ears are drawn into subtle dynamic shapes that sound like gentle waves.

Ex. #90 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 138-141 “Subtle dynamic shaping”

The musical score for Ex. #90, *Synchronisms #10*, measures 138-141, is presented in two staves. The top staff is in 3/4 time and features a melodic line with dynamic markings: *n.* (pizzicato), *mf*, *n.*, *mp*, and *f*. The bottom staff is in 3/4 time and features a bass line with dynamic markings: *n.* and *p*. The score is marked *espress. assai* and includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic hairpins.

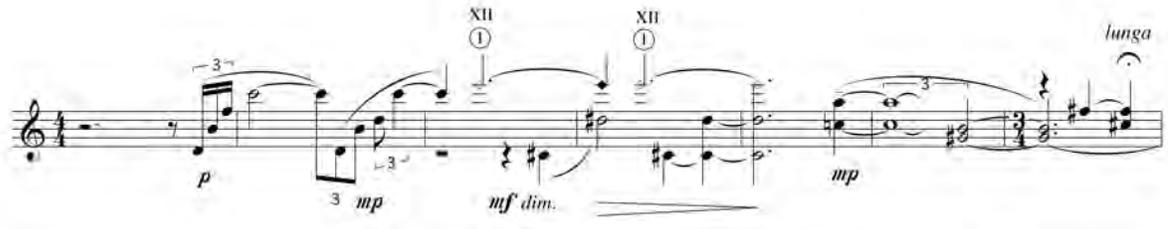
A closer look shows that Davidovsky still has not ventured too far from his intervallic home; major and minor ninths abound as inversions of the sevenths from the opening of the work.

One of the remarkable aspects of Davidovsky’s style is the cohabitation of the simplest and most complex materials. Certainly, mm. 138-141 is an example of shining a spotlight on the most fundamental of sonic phenomenon, the swelling of notes passed between voices. Yet, this elemental moment comes in the middle of a piece that is loaded with dense, intricate passagework and structural integration. Just as Davidovsky frequently pauses for reflective moments in the solo introduction, he does so here in the section with electronics. The effect of such writing is to consistently draw the listener’s attention back to the essential properties of sound. It is as if Davidovsky is constantly reminding listeners to smell the flowers, before launching once again into creative virtuosity.

The next several measures expand upon this idea, focusing attention on passing swells between the guitar, and the tape part. In mm. 147-148, the slow quintuplet figure from m. 116 reappears, suggesting that it has now ingratiated itself upon the texture enough to remain as an integral part of the second section of the piece.

After this exploration of sound, the texture pauses briefly for the first of two soliloquies during this half of the piece.

Ex. #91 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 153-159 “First soliloquy”



The rhythm of the initial ascending figure is inspired by motive x, and the intervallic content is consistent, including a tritone and a minor seventh. The sixteenth-note triplet is immediately augmented, lending more urgency to the restated gesture. In m. 154, Davidovsky again uses harmonics to delineate contrapuntal texture, in this case, outlining more key inverted intervals--major and minor ninths. The phrase ends with a *fermata* of undetermined length. There is a veiled association with the earlier *fermata* on a “quasi-tonal sonority” since both chords have an F-sharp in the top voice. If nothing else, both moments represent a moment of cadential repose.

Here, the built-in flexibility of a *fermata* allows for expressive nuance rather than guarantees ensemble precision. The use of a *fermata* here reinforces that this is a moment of commentary by the live instrumentalist, as if the guitarist steps to the front of the stage momentarily to divulge something intimate. As his statement about the perils of “frozen interpretations” indicates, Davidovsky is concerned with the delicate dynamics of integrating a live performer with a fixed electronic performance. Moments that highlight the fluidity of live performance are reminders that the piece remains an evolving organism from performance to performance.

The following phrase is one of the more quixotic of the piece. The guitar and tape engage in a call and response texture that resembles tolling bells, as each alternates filling in different quarter-notes in the bar.

Ex. #92 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 160-164 “Tolling bells”

The musical score for Ex. #92, "Tolling bells," consists of two staves in 4/4 time. The top staff features a melodic line with a *p* dynamic marking and a *cresc. assai* instruction. The bottom staff features a rhythmic accompaniment with a *p* dynamic marking and a *cresc.* instruction. A large slur encompasses the entire phrase across both staves.

The ear is drawn first to the unique blend of timbres between the guitar and tape part. Alternating offbeats create tension as the regular pulse is disrupted, and the phrase culminates with a burst from the tape part, jolting the listener awake from a brief reverie.

Ex. #93 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 166-167 “Evolving quintuplet motive”

The musical score for Ex. #93, "Evolving quintuplet motive," consists of three staves in 3/4 time. The top staff has a *fff* dynamic marking and a 10:6 ratio indicated above it. The middle staff has a *ff* dynamic marking. The bottom staff has a *ff* dynamic marking for a triplet and a *mp* dynamic marking for a sextuplet.

The ever-evolving quintuplet motive reappears in angry fashion here, and is extended into a ten-note gesture. The periodic submersion and reemergence of material in a different context is consistent with Gryc’s analysis technique of dealing with layers, or “strata” in Davidovsky’s work. As the piece grows, we have already seen examples of “synthesis,” such as the superimposition of the transitional octave gesture with motive x in m. 118. This is a prime illustration of the way structure in Davidovsky’s music mirrors the process of thought--while the human mind may focus briefly on one idea, other ideas recede and emerge adding up to a complete picture of the process of balancing several fields of awareness at one time.

Davidovsky’s level of integration extends to rhythmic material. Over the course of the second section of the piece, he integrates the quintuplet motive that was prominent in the transition into the fabric of the composition. This level of integration is taken one step further in the tape part from m. 211-213, where each grouping entrance is separated by five sixteenth-notes, beginning on the second sixteenth-note of beat three.

Ex. #94 *Synchronisms* #10 mm. 210-215 “Five-note groupings”



Combined with the steady sixteenth-notes in the guitar part, a rhythmic dissonance is created. The function of the quintuplet inspired material has shifted from gestural to structural. Davidovsky carries this idea over into the guitar part by augmenting the rhythm in mm. 214-215. The first held notes of the guitar lasts five eighth-notes, and

the rhythmic tension of the passage is finally reconciled with the prevailing pulse when the phrase concludes with a dotted quarter-note, lasting the duration of three eighth-notes. In this passage, Davidovsky has synthesized two divergent ideas--the quintuplet motive from the transition section and the use of rhythmic augmentation first heard in m. 153 (and presaged with the eighth-note quintuplet in m. 113).

The augmentation of the quintuplet motive continues in m. 216, as the guitar and tape double a quarter-note quintuplet ascending line. Davidovsky has synthesized the hybrid instrumentation between guitar and tape with the saturation of quintuplets.

Ex. #95 *Synchronisms #10* m. 216 “Synthesis of hybrid instrument with quintuplet motive”

Analysis: Structural Climax

After a brief moment for tape alone, and a poignant silence, the character of the piece shifts drastically.

Ex. #96 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 224-228 “Character shift”

Davidovsky returns to the hyper-expressive, almost circus-like atmosphere of m. 34 and m. 72 from the guitar introduction. The return of *Bartók pizzicati* and the primary motive in its original form of three repeated notes (in m. 228) accompany the sudden increase of rhythmic activity. After a prolonged period of sonic exploration and fairly contained energy, the piece suddenly explodes with little warning. The symbiotic relationship between the guitar’s decay and the tape’s *crescendi* becomes transparent again--in mm. 229-232, the two voices trade hairpin dynamics back and forth. In another example of motivic transformation, the subtle *dedillo* effect that appeared in quiet passages earlier now rears its head as a dynamic explosion in m. 229 and 230.

Ex. #97 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 229-232 “Synthesis of *dedillo* with extreme gesture”

The chords that Davidovsky chooses in these measures reflect the intervallic structures that began the work--major ninths, tritones, and minor sevenths. A *fortissimo* six-note chord in the guitar outlines the pervasive intervallic structure.

Ex. #98 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 233-236 (guitar only) “Chord reflects prevailing intervals”



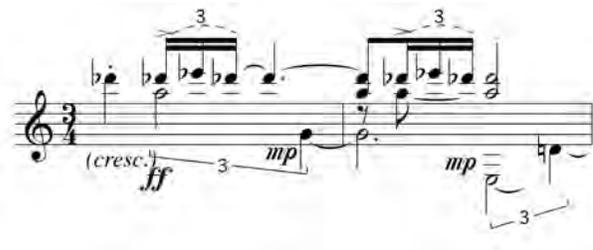
The sparring chords between guitar and tape are reminiscent of a similar passage in *Synchronisms #6*. In fact, in both passages, Davidovsky integrates a rhythmic, block-chord texture with *crescendi* in the electronic part, underscoring both instruments’ dynamic limitations. The scalar material from m. 13 early in the material is expanded to allow the tape room to engage in dialogue with the guitar part. This moment is yet another example of the cooperative relationship that Davidovsky establishes between the tape and guitar parts.

Ex. #99 *Synchronisms #10* m. 241-242 “Cooperative scale material”



Immediately following this scale burst, we hear the primary motive again in the guitar.

Ex. #100 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 244-245 (guitar only) “Motive x variation in top voice”



Davidovsky preserves the rhythmic structure of the motive while varying the notes and straying from the characteristic repeated pitches.

In these climactic twenty measures, Davidovsky manages to bring together several of the strata that exist throughout the piece. The scalar material in m. 241, the tape *crescendi* extending the guitar sustain, the *dedillo* hairpin in the guitar, and rhythmic fragments of primary motive x all coexist in a very short span of musical time, synthesized into a culmination of the accumulated energy of the work.

The rigorously rhythmic climax is then answered by an expressive, rubato passage in the guitar.

Ex. #101 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 246-258 (guitar only) “Second soliloquy”



The tape part rests during this excerpt, as the guitar launches into a lyrical soliloquy, briefly reminiscent in texture, if not in material, to the opening solo section. Just as the material in mm. 133-144 is partly a dissolution of the dynamic peak in m. 125, this expansive solo guitar passage equalizes the tight coordination of the climactic section just before. Since this is the first moment in the second section of the work where the

guitar plays alone for a significant period of time, the rhythm becomes less rigorous. From a practical point of view, this means that the length of the final note of the phrase (m. 256) will be slightly variable until the tape re-enters. From an expressive point of view, the greater degree of freedom in the instrument part has aesthetic implications, suggesting a brief moment of humanity, untethered to its inflexible chamber partner. Davidovsky consistently strives for balance, if there is an extreme moment in the texture, one can expect an equalizing moment soon after. This balance applies to several parameters, including the proportion between accompanied and unaccompanied moments. It provides the thread that connects Davidovsky to the classical tradition, despite his radically modern expressive language.

Davidovsky's tightly controlled use of motivic material and command over structure demonstrate a deep affinity with classicists such as Haydn. The primary motive in *Synchronisms #10*, mentioned above, is in fact a tongue-in-cheek reference to a cliché in the guitar tradition--the quick, articulated repeated notes of a flamenco gesture. Davidovsky admits, "I like to use the most super-exhausted clichés, and have them go off immediately to somewhere else."³⁰ The opening of the work relies on this very succinct gesture. The brevity and forthrightness of the material gives the piece an immediate character of authority. While Davidovsky generates this "flamenco" motive from a quasi-programmatic impulse, his treatment of it sheds its cultural and aesthetic implications, viewing the motive purely for its fundamental musical characteristics. This approach towards a motive--dissecting it and allowing its parts to generate other material--reinforces Davidovsky's connection to the thematic processes of Haydn and Beethoven.

³⁰ Mario Davidovsky, interview by author, 15 March 2006, New York.

The material from mm. 246-270 hearkens back to the solo guitar introduction in its mood and lyricism. It is prepared by a pedal point in the electronic part, launching a structural moment that suggests a cadenza. As in earlier *Synchronisms*, and in *Festino*, Davidovsky often reserves his most personal and poignant material for the moments after the work's dynamic apex. His works unfold inexorably towards their climactic heights, and only then can the preceding events be digested and synthesized. In this example, the absence of the tape part connects mm. 246-258 with the opening of the work, to a texture where the guitarist was the narrator. There is a powerful sense of nostalgia in this moment that longs for the simplicity and lyricism of the solo guitar introduction. This fleeting moment of nostalgia mellows the relationship between tape and guitar for the duration of the piece, as reflection and introspection dominate the mood.

Even outside the context of climactic structural moments, Davidovsky is always intent on balancing extroverted music with introverted music, so that the expressive world expands to fit a broad range of experience. The integration of electronics into the guitar sounds is particularly seamless in mm. 269-264. Davidovsky builds a texture that includes the clarion attacks and pure core of the guitar sound with a shimmering glow and ambience in the electronics.

Ex. #102 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 259-264 “Seamless integration of electronics”

Analysis: Coda

The primary motive reasserts itself in mm. 271-274, signaling that after the expressive extremes of extroverted climax and introverted intensity, the work is prepared to reconcile its disparate emotional worlds.

Ex. #103 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 271-274 (guitar only) “Return of opening motive statement”

In this reiteration later in the work, Davidovsky essentially transposes the opening motive up a perfect fourth (compressing the octave plus a major seventh to simply a

major seventh). He successfully negotiates the tricky contrapuntal territory of the guitar by writing a figure that can be transposed while preserving the use of harmonics. More importantly, he brings the piece full circle, reasserting the character of the opening, but in an entirely transformed environment.

A final dynamic explosion in m. 279 is brought about by a tremolo in the guitar that is augmented by the electronics. The next gesture, starting with the pickup to m. 281, diffuses the emotional gravity of the moment with a quirky compression of several extreme gestural techniques that have been seen earlier in the piece.

Ex. #104 *Synchronisms #10* m. 281 “Diffusing gravity with humorous gesture”

In one measure, Davidovsky employs various extended techniques that were used previously to achieve gestural contrast--*glissandi*, percussive effects on the strings as well as on the body of the guitar, and the *Bartók pizzicato*. To top it off, the gesture concludes with a *forte* minor second. Just as a clown develops dramatic tension between the intensely maudlin and the comic, Davidovsky turns to a character of absurdity near the end of the work. It is as if the music seeks refuge from the intensity it has created by

resorting to wisecracks. The humor only serves to deepen the aesthetic experience, and renders the profound moments all the more powerful by avoiding self-indulgence.

Conclusion to *Synchronisms #10* Analysis

Synchronisms #10 is a seminal work on several levels. The guitar writing expands the expressive, contrapuntal, and motivic language of the instrument. As an electro-acoustic piece, Davidovsky ingeniously explores the sonic world of the guitar, and the ways that the electronic element can complement those characteristics. The level of motivic, rhythmic, and pitch integration of the piece is highly comprehensive, while still allowing for the necessary introduction of contrasting material to provide the piece with a sense of linearity. Perhaps most importantly, Davidovsky's sense of structural drama in *Synchronisms #10* is masterful. He takes a considerable risk by waiting several minutes into the piece to introduce such a crucial element as the electronics. The risk pays off as it illuminates not just the unique sonic aspects of the guitar, but also the narrative versus collaborative strains in the work. His awareness of the emotional impact of the extended solo guitar introduction allows him to stretch the expressive boundaries of the work in its second half. With every extroverted moment, Davidovsky writes corresponding thoughtful material.

Davidovsky's obsession with expressive balance is a guiding principle behind *Synchronisms #10*, and his subsequent chamber work *Festino*. Another important element these two pieces have in common is the fine line between hyper-expression and grotesquerie. The penultimate gesture in *Synchronisms #10* illuminates Davidovsky's penchant for this maudlin character. His sense of balance shows an affinity to the Classicists. His attraction to extreme expressive gestures exposes a Romantic streak in his

artistry. The central role of technology in his work has led many to consider him a Modernist. Perhaps, however, it is his commitment to a potent mixture of resignation and humor in his music that gives us the best picture of who Davidovsky is as an individual artist. While every great composer strives to create drama and express the human condition, what distinguishes one from the other is their way of reconciling dramatic conflict in their music. Davidovsky seems to consistently balance gravity with humor, and tragedy with comedy.

CHAPTER 4

FESTINO FOR GUITAR, VIOLA, CELLO, AND DOUBLE BASS

*I very much enjoy writing a piece for an ensemble that I have no remembrance of. There's a challenge there, and I welcome that. I am by nature a contrarian, and I always like to go a little bit against the practical, logical thing.*³¹

Introduction

As was discussed earlier, Davidovsky's interest in electronics lies in what the technology allows him to do musically, and not in the field of electronic music itself. After writing *Synchronisms #10*, Davidovsky stopped writing electro-acoustic music for over a decade (*Synchronisms #10* was completed in 1992, #11 and #12 are slated for premiere in 2006). Apparently, he began to realize that a crop of younger performers was being trained to play difficult modern scores that required the kind of lightning fast dynamic and gestural contrasts that he had turned to electronic music for in the first place. In addition, he felt that writing for electronics had sufficiently adjusted his approach to crafting sound that he wanted to translate some of those aesthetic changes into his purely instrumental writing.

Any analysis of Davidovsky's late instrumental music must take into account the ways in which working in the electronic medium awoke his interest in certain types of musical gestures. One of the recurring themes in the *Synchronisms* works was an interest in the acoustic and sonic characteristics of different instruments. Davidovsky expanded his exploration of these characteristics by finding ways that the electronic element could comment and complement the instruments that were featured in the series. Such concerns led to Davidovsky's interest in creating a composite instrument between the acoustic

³¹ Mario Davidovsky, interview by author, 15 March 2006, New York.

instrument and electronic part. These considerations manifest themselves in certain characteristic gestures that reoccur through Davidovsky's late instrumental music. Sounds whose attacks begin in one instrument and then grow and are passed into another instrument reflect Davidovsky's interest in sustain and decay in the *Synchronisms* series. Quick percussive attacks that are mirrored in various instruments also highlight the differences in the front end of the sound envelope between the instruments.

Davidovsky continued to be concerned with constructing a composite instrument, this time out of his chamber ensembles. This is consistent with many other composers of our era--Steve Reich, Gyorgy Ligeti, and Gerard Grisey are all composers who have made the construction of seamless ensemble textures a primary concern, albeit in very different ways. This is in contrast to certain prominent composers that many consider to be pillars of the American Modernist style--Charles Ives and Elliott Carter, particularly, both devoted considerable energy to cultivating an ensemble style that highlighted individuality within the whole.

By choosing to title his second work involving guitar *Festino*, Davidovsky immediately places the piece into a specific aesthetic context. A "festino" is historically a lighthearted piece similar to a serenade.

A *festino* is basically like a serenade, an entertainment, like a fiesta. *Festinos* used to be pieces written for entertainment in the Renaissance, they represented the lighter side of music writing, very much like Mozart writing a divertimento for an occasion.³²

Davidovsky's *Festino* takes as its foundation this light-hearted, almost clownish sensibility. But as the piece evolves, the dark side of the clown's life is revealed. *Festino* alternates between comic, quirky textures and melodramatic, hyper-expressive moments.

³² Mario Davidovsky, interview by author, 15 March 2006, New York.

These two disparate characters operate as two sides of the same character; Davidovsky creates an emotional world where bitter humor and tragedy are inevitable responses to an absurd world. As the piece grows, a new sentiment emerges, one of revelation and calm. In *Festino*, the listener is taken on a roller coaster ride from the maudlin to the tragic, with increasing moments of inspired reflection.

Expansion of Guitar Writing Techniques from *Synchronisms #10* to *Festino*

Davidovsky suggests that when he wrote *Synchronisms #10*, he was still learning how to write for guitar, but upon finishing, he felt sufficiently comfortable with the instrument that he actually organized the commission of *Festino*.

I struggled much more with writing the first than the second piece. In a way, I commissioned myself, actually. *Festino* became a *Speculum Musicae* commission afterwards, and I felt that I was more fluid [in composing for guitar].³³

From an outsider's point of view, one can see in *Festino* an expansion of the techniques of guitar writing that he explored in *Synchronisms #10*, though it hardly seems that the earlier piece represents an incompetent approach. Certain fundamental differences between the two pieces make it difficult to assess Davidovsky's comments, namely that *Festino* begins right away with ensemble material, and there is virtually no solo guitar material throughout the work. In fact, the dichotomy in *Synchronisms #10* between constructing a composite guitar-electronics instrument and establishing a narrative between individual voices never surfaces in *Festino*. Instead, *Festino* is a *tour de force* for a new hybrid instrument, consisting of guitar, viola, cello, and double bass. There are only a few brief moments where all four instruments are not playing together. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to take a closer look at the guitar writing in *Festino*, and

³³ Mario Davidovsky, interview by author, 15 March 2006, New York.

deconstruct what may have evolved in his approach to guitar writing since the composition of *Synchronisms #10*.

Addressing Registral, Expressive, and Sustain Limitations

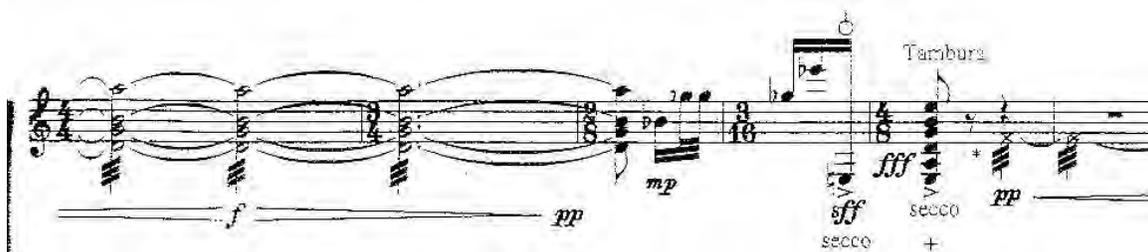
In mm. 6-9, Davidovsky returns to the circus-like gestural techniques he used in *Synchronisms #10* to achieve expressive contrast.

Ex #105 *Festino* mm. 6-9 (guitar only) “Expanded gestural palette” (for examples in *Festino*, the instruments will be arranged from top to bottom stave – guitar, viola, cello, and contrabass, unless otherwise noted)



The extreme dynamic shift in m. 6 is followed by a trill on A, articulated by a *Bartók pizzicato*. As in *Synchronisms #10*, the trill is used to extend the presence and duration of a guitar note. The quick percussion grace notes punctuate the end of the phrase. The familiar *tremolo* technique expands the duration and sustain of a chord in mm. 14-17, and Davidovsky transfers the idea to a percussive roll on the body of the guitar a few measures later.

Ex. #106 *Festino* mm. 16-21 (guitar only) “*Tremolo* effect extends guitar presence”



Many of these examples address the same issues that were of concern to Davidovsky in *Synchronisms #10*: the attack-decay envelope of the guitar. Davidovsky's passagework writing for the guitar is also familiar, with its skittish character outlining contrapuntal implications in different registers.

Ex. #107 *Festino* mm. 26-27 (guitar only) "Implied counterpoint in different registers"



Davidovsky exploits the expressive sound of octaves on the guitar frequently in *Festino*, as he did in transitional sections of *Synchronisms #10*.

Ex. #108 *Festino* mm. 50-51 (guitar only) "Expressive octaves"



Ex. #109 *Festino* mm. 174-179 (guitar only) "Expressive octaves"



The guitar writing in *Festino* does seem slightly freer in highly expressive moments, and Davidovsky allows himself to compose melodic lines that span larger registral territory. In the following examples, the *tessitura* spans one and a half and one five sixths octaves, but all within a melodic context.

Ex. #110 *Festino* mm. 54-57 (guitar only) “Enlarged *tessitura*”

54

p *mf* *p* *mf* *p* *f*

5 10

knuckles on the side (back)

Ex. #111 *Festino* m. 205-207 (guitar only) “Enlarged *tessitura*”

ord.

espressivo *mp* *mf*

5 10

This expanded register differs in one fundamental way from the large *tessitura* of *Synchronisms #10*. These examples are purely melodic, and demonstrate Davidovsky’s use of the guitar in a hyper-expressive, almost vocal context. The registral expansion in *Synchronisms #10* was more geared towards contrapuntal delineation and gestural contrast. Davidovsky returns to his use of harmonics to expand register and achieve timbral delineation to illuminate counterpoint.

Ex. #112 *Festino* mm. 63-64 (guitar only) “Harmonics expand register”

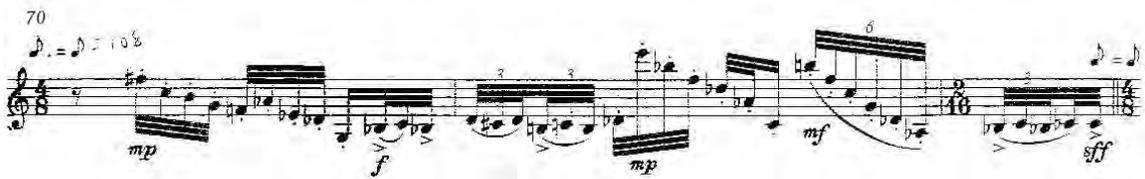
63

mf

5 5 5

One can see an evolution of Davidovsky's single line writing in passages such as the one in mm. 70-73.

Ex. #113 *Festino* mm. 70-73 (guitar only) "Slurred triplets"



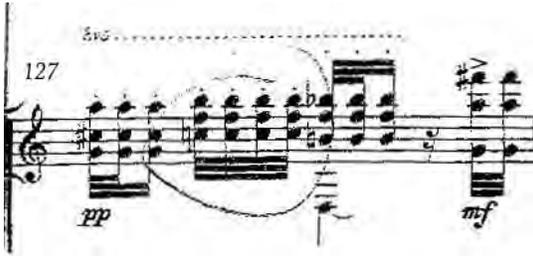
While the character of this moment is similar to that of passages in *Synchronisms #10*, a closer examination reveals that Davidovsky has become more attuned to idiomatic guitar writing. The slurred triplet figures beginning in the latter part of m. 70 reoccur throughout the piece, and are a good example of Davidovsky using the typical hammer-on/pull-off technique (notes that articulated with the left hand), but adapting it to his highly chromatic language by transposing the figure up and down on one string. First the figure is up a major third and reverses direction (down, up, down), then down a minor third in an up-down-up orientation. This type of virtuosic writing for the left hand was not present in *Synchronisms #10*.

Ex. #114 *Festino* mm. 129-130 (guitar only) "Hammer-on/pull-offs"



Davidovsky presents the guitar in all of its various expressive roles; he sets up a humorous moment by exploring the very high register of the guitar.

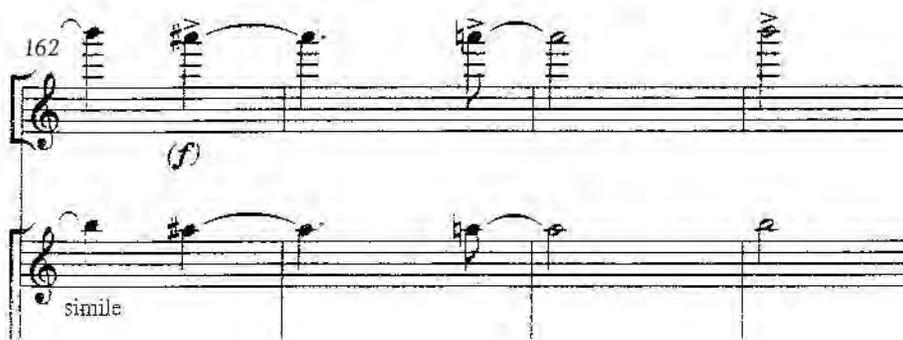
Ex. #115 *Festino* m. 127 (guitar only) “High register used for humorous effect”



While previous passages that have employed the higher register have done so for contrapuntal or structural reasons, here Davidovsky uses the guitar’s diminutive sound above the twelfth fret for a character contrast. The result sounds like a ukulele might have joined the band momentarily. Instead of writing a climactic passage in the guitar that releases the tension of the previous measures, Davidovsky chooses to wittily thumb his nose at our expectations.

Standing in sharp contrast to that moment is a haunting passage where the guitar mirrors the viola in unison in the high part of both instruments’ registers.

Ex. #116 *Festino* mm. 162-166 (guitar top stave, viola bottom stave) “Hybrid timbre”



Contrapuntal Delineation

While most of the guitar part in *Festino* is written on one treble clef stave, the notation splits into two staves at a crucial moment after the climax of the piece.

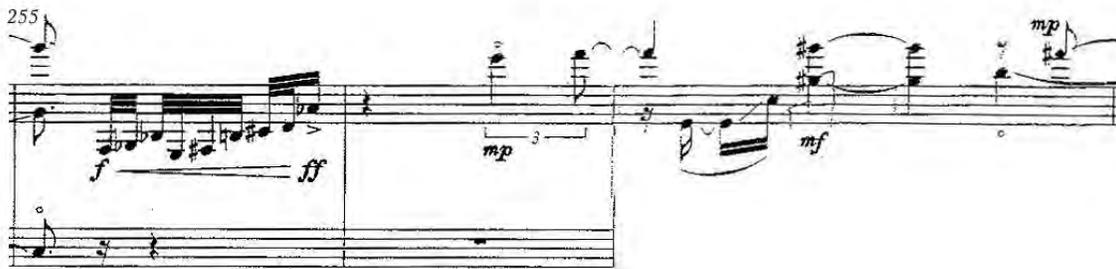
Ex. #117 *Festino* mm. 248-252 (guitar only) “Use of two staves to clarify counterpoint”

The image shows a musical score for guitar, measures 248-252. It consists of two staves. The top staff begins with a *Rasg.* (rasgueado) in measure 248, marked *fff*. The bottom staff has a *mf* dynamic and is marked *espressivo delicato*. In measure 249, the top staff has a *mf* dynamic and the bottom staff has a *mp* dynamic with the instruction *Sul D*. Measure 250 shows the top staff with a *mf* dynamic and the bottom staff with a *mf* dynamic. Measure 251 features a *mf* dynamic in the top staff and a *mf* dynamic in the bottom staff, with a *secco* instruction. Measure 252 shows the top staff with a *p* dynamic and the bottom staff with a *f* dynamic, including a *pizz.* (pizzicato) instruction. The score includes various musical notations such as triplets, slurs, and dynamic markings.

In the solo guitar introduction of *Synchronisms #10*, the double staff notation clarified the counterpoint, as it does in this example. This clarification is especially helpful since the two voices consistently move in opposing directions. First the octave line ascends, as the E-flat falls through a *glissando* down to the open D string. In mm. 250-251, the descending major 6th in the octave line is answered by another *glissando*, this time ascending by a major seventh, arriving on an E, which is then reasserted in the top line. The *secco* D and the following *pizzicato* F-sharp create a new texture momentarily, until the phrase in octaves begins again at the end of m. 252. As the line reaches its melodic apex on a high G, the supporting voice abandons its contrary motion and joins in the ascending motion from E-flat, combining the *glissandi* from the beginning of the phrase with the *secco* texture introduced two measure previous. The

lyrical mood is broken with a quick burst of thirty-second notes. Davidovsky returns to octaves for the cadence in the following phrase.

Ex. #118 *Festino* mm. 255-258 (guitar only, two staves until m. 257) “Dichotomy between quick scale bursts and lyricism”



As in *Synchronisms #10*, Davidovsky turns to the guitar’s lyrical voice directly after the climactic moment, and notates the passages in two staves to reiterate the importance of hearing the independence of melodic voices at this moment. The use of octave textures to express noble sentiments emerges as a consistent thread through both of the guitar works.

Establishing a Diverse Character Palette for Single Note Passagework

The primary shift in the approach to guitar writing from *Synchronisms #10* to *Festino* lies in the fleet single note passages. While *Synchronisms #10* has plenty of moments of creative single note passagework, *Festino* displays a systematic approach to writing these types of gestures on the guitar. Davidovsky establishes several different motifs for these single note passages, and then mixes and matches them according to the requirements of the moment. The characteristics range from quickly articulated notes in largely stepwise motion, slurred patterns which he moves around chromatically towards goal notes to form a larger gestural shape, and passages including large registral leaps which reveal chromatic voice leading through quasi-arpeggiated textures.

Ex. #119 “A”--*Festino* mm. 42-43 (guitar only) “Articulated Stepwise Passagework”



Musical notation for Example #119, measures 42-43. The notation is in bass clef and shows a series of slurred eighth notes with a dynamic marking of *pp*.

Ex. #120 “B”--*Festino* mm. 129-130 (guitar only) “Slurred Patterns”



Musical notation for Example #120, measures 129-130. The notation is in bass clef and shows slurred eighth notes with dynamic markings of *f* and *sul pont. on box (flat fingers)*.

Ex. #121 “C”--*Festino* m. 11-12 (guitar only) “Arpeggiation of Multi-Voice Texture”



Musical notation for Example #121, measures 11-12. The notation is in treble clef and shows arpeggiated chords with a dynamic marking of *f*.

In Example “A,” the larger phrase can be broken into five small groups, each of them between four and six notes long. As the overall phrase goes on, Davidovsky shortens the lengths of the smaller groupings, propelling the gesture to its goal. The overall shape of the phrase ascends from low F to B. While the passage is primarily made up of stepwise motion, the final grouping covers one octave plus a fifth in four notes. The smaller phrase groupings always start off the beat, lending the passage a rhetorical feeling. Davidovsky only uses a slur marking for the final grouping, suggesting that the two previous bars ought to be strictly articulated by the right hand.

Example “B” is oriented around slurred figures that move in blocks, outlining a gestural shape. Each small slurred grouping follows a pattern of articulating a principle note, slurring either up or down a minor second, major second, or minor third (this is in

deference to the anatomy of the left hand, which lends itself to slurs on one string no bigger than a major third), and then returning via a slur to the principle note. The slurred patterns are then moved around the fretboard to give the overall passage shape. In this particular example, the goal notes form a phrase that ascends from E up a major seventh to D-sharp. The slurred notes act as embellishing tones to the principle notes. Since the groupings are arranged in three-note bursts, the natural accent on the first note of the groupings creates a polyrhythm of three against the four units that are implied in the prevailing subdivision of the meter.

Example “C” demonstrates how Davidovsky articulates several voices through quick, arpeggiated textures that leap around the register. This type of gesture is introduced simply early on in the piece, and expanded upon later. In mm. 11-12, two voices are established--the top voice outlines D;F-sharp;D-sharp;B-flat;Dnatural, while the bottom line outlines E-B-G-C. The crisp rhythmic writing lends the passage quirkiness and character.

As *Festino* unfolds, Davidovsky mixes and matches each of these approaches to single note passagework on the guitar, and they become distinct characters in their own right. As this study will address later, these characters become closely linked with the tempo modulations that cement the structure of this piece together.

The following passage in mm. 29-30 is another instance of Example “C,” the arpeggiated texture that illuminates several voices.

Ex. #124 *Festino* m. 87-89 (guitar only) “Combination of Examples B and C”



The slurred texture outlines an ascending motion from G-sharp up to F, and the subsequent leaping texture articulates voices both above and below that F.

The articulated, skittish character forms the material for the climax of the piece, as the other instruments adopt the same texture in a bombardment of notes.

Ex. #125 *Festino* mm. 243-247 (guitar only) “Material from Example A at climax”



Davidovsky plays around with the rhythmic implications of the smaller groupings in this passage. Unlike m. 42-43 in the previous example, where the off the beat groupings lent the passage a rhetorical lightness, Davidovsky chooses to start the groupings in this climactic phrase squarely on the beat. This adds gravity to the moment, especially as the energy accumulates on each beat of m. 245. The final gesture of the climax releases that energy, and breaks from the largely stepwise, compressed register of the character, outlining two octaves plus a major seventh in a heroic gesture. Even with the interjection of a 9/16 bar, the groupings all begin on the beat. The transformation of

the skittish, evasive character of the articulated passages from before into a heroic, declamatory gesture is primarily a function of the rhythmic placement of these smaller groupings.

Davidovsky's guitar writing is not drastically different in *Festino* than in *Synchronisms #10*. He uses several similar techniques--expressive octaves, timbral and textural techniques to delineate counterpoint, and trills and *tremolos* to extend the decay envelope of the guitar. The guitar writing in *Festino* demonstrates more freedom, especially in single note passages of virtuosity, which explore a wider melodic *tessitura* and liberal position shifts. This freedom allows Davidovsky to establish various characters to mix and match, reorienting them as the piece demands. Having these various characters at his disposal allows Davidovsky more traction to integrate his guitar writing into the structural fabric of the piece.

Constructing a Composite Instrument – “Big Guitar”

Just as the musical material for *Synchronisms #10* was largely generated from an exploration of the guitar's sonic properties, *Festino* is an articulation of these concerns in an ensemble context. In *Festino*, instead of the electronics augmenting and addressing the guitar's capabilities and limitations, this role is given to the ensemble. Davidovsky's choice of instrumentation is worthy of attention, in fact, he called it a “crazy ensemble.”³⁴ He opted for a trio of the lower strings so that they would inhabit the same registral world as the guitar, which is essentially a tenor or baritone instrument (a fact sometimes obscured by the practice of notating the guitar one octave above where it sounds). Davidovsky wanted to create a “big guitar”; the ensemble in *Festino* is designed to

³⁴ Mario Davidovsky, interview by author, 15 March 2006, New York.

constantly respond, imitate, and expand upon the actual gestures in the guitar part and idiomatic guitar gestures generally.

To a certain extent, I think that the trio with the guitar is very often playing at the margins...to create that kind of hybrid, huge guitar, or big percussive ensemble...³⁵

This goal is underscored by the fact that there are very few moments in the piece where all four instruments are not playing together, and even fewer moments where the individuality of the respective instruments is highlighted.

What exactly would constitute “electronic” type gestures? Given that Davidovsky turned to the electronic medium to try to achieve specific musical goals, it is appropriate to consult those goals in order to identify the influence that technology had on his acoustic composition. Returning to Davidovsky’s note in the score for *Synchronisms #6*, it is clear that greater control over dynamics was one of the principal reasons he was attracted to working with electronics. He wrote, “the genuine value in electronic music concerns such aspects as the control of dynamics in time.”³⁶

This interest in greater control over dynamics can manifest itself in several ways--with several different dynamics in a fast passage, with precise control over *crescendi* or *diminuendi*, or with achieving sound envelopes that would not otherwise be possible on acoustic instruments. In both *Synchronisms #10* and *Festino*, Davidovsky generally concerns himself with the last two of these possibilities. There are several examples in his music where the composite sound of the instruments and electronics, or of the ensemble, achieves a result that would be impossible on any one instrument due to its limited

³⁵ Mario Davidovsky, interview by author, 15 March 2006, New York.

³⁶ Mario Davidovsky, *Synchronisms #6 for Piano and Electronic Sounds* (King of Prussia, PA: E.B. Marks Music Corp., 1972), 2.

attack-sustain-decay paradigm. Of course, the crucial difference in *Festino* is that Davidovsky has integrated these concepts into his acoustic writing. In his liner notes for Bridge Records, Martin Brody observes this reciprocal relationship between Davidovsky's electronic writing and his acoustic composition.

In his purely instrumental chamber works, Davidovsky has also developed a repertory of orchestrational analogs to electronic techniques, for example, simulating the technique of spliced tape by grafting together dramatically different instrumental attacks and sustains--e.g., a sharp, loud, and short (often *pizzicato*) event in one or more instruments that triggers a sustained (often soft) sound in another. Such composite sounds function not only as articulative nuances but as syntactical elements themselves.³⁷

Examples of Composite Instrument Writing

Various Instrumental Groupings

Within *Festino*, there are several different instances where Davidovsky's interest in constructing a composite instrument is apparent. Some of these approaches reflect a design that is specifically tailored to the strengths and limitations of the guitar. Others are more generalized and are consistent with many of Davidovsky's concerns with the continuity of sounds and gestures throughout his music.

The contrabass is assigned several passages inspired by a guitaristic playing technique.

³⁷ Martin Brody, liner notes to *Mario Davidovsky Flashbacks*, Bridge 9097, 2000, compact disc.

Ex. #126 *Festino* m. 13 (guitar on top stave, bass on bottom stave) “Pairing of guitar and bass”

13 left hand on fingerboard

mf

col legno
batt. left hand on fingerboard
Sul G

f
as loud as possible

The technique of articulating notes with the left hand alone is perfectly natural on the guitar because the frets help to define and sustain the note, but on the fretless bass, this is somewhat thankless. Yet, this moment works, both due to the fact that the bass articulation gives a depth to the unison sound, and because it has a humorous, jazzy character.

Davidovsky pairs the contrabass with the guitar in many of the slurred triplet passages, labeled earlier as Example “B” .

Ex. #127 *Festino* m. 87 (guitar on top stave, bass on bottom stave) “Pairing of guitar and bass”

87

♩. = ♩ = 108

mp

mp

The bass seems to shadow the guitar, rumbling underneath, not unlike the haunting “harmonizer” quarter-note triplet passage in *Synchronisms #10*.

Sometimes Davidovsky divides the ensemble into two groups, again pairing the guitar and bass together, while the viola and cello play skittering lines *pianissimo*.

Ex. #128 *Festino* m. 73 “Dividing the ensemble into two groups”

The image shows a musical score for four staves, likely representing guitar, bass, viola, and cello. The score is in 4/8 time and begins at measure 73. The first staff has a dynamic marking of *pp* and a triplet of quarter notes. The second and third staves are marked *ppp legato assai* and feature a complex, syncopated rhythmic pattern. The fourth staff has a dynamic marking of *ppp* and a triplet of quarter notes. A downward-pointing arrow is placed above the fourth staff, indicating a specific performance instruction.

Adding a bass part to the guitar harmonics lends a rich depth to an otherwise diminutive timbre. There are just as many examples of Davidovsky’s composite technique that substitute interlocking syncopations for rhythmic unisons, erecting temporary mechanisms of ensemble activity.

Ex. #129 *Festino* mm. 88-89 (guitar on top stave, bass on bottom stave) “Interlocking mechanism between guitar and bass”

The image shows a musical score for two staves. The top staff is for guitar and the bottom staff is for bass. The music is in 2/4 time and features a complex, interlocking rhythmic pattern. The top staff begins with a triplet of eighth notes, followed by a series of sixteenth notes and eighth notes. The bottom staff mirrors this complexity with its own rhythmic figures. Dynamics are marked as *mf* and *ff*. The score is numbered 88 at the beginning.

While the bass and guitar fill in the gaps in their respective disjunct figures, the viola and cello play their accompaniment *saltando* (a technique of bouncing the bow off the strings), repeating each note, as if they were playing with a plectrum.

An extended passage from mm. 160-167 pairs the viola and guitar, as they slowly ascend chromatically in unison over a static accompaniment.

Ex. #130 *Festino* mm. 162-166 (guitar on top stave, viola on bottom stave) “Pairing the guitar and viola”

The image shows a musical score for two staves. The top staff is for guitar and the bottom staff is for viola. The music is in 2/4 time and features a chromatic ascent in the guitar part, while the viola part shows a steady sustain. Dynamics are marked as *f* and *ff*. The score is numbered 162 at the beginning. The word "simile" is written below the bottom staff.

The cello and bass are also grouped together during this passage, creating two fields of activity. The clear attack of the guitar gives way to a steady sustain in the viola. Several moments in the piece cultivate a similar stillness--one that is broken momentarily by rhythmic triggers signaling the next event.

Ex. #131 *Festino* mm. 159-160 (guitar on top stave, bass on bottom stave) “Rhythmic trigger in bass”

Musical score for Ex. #131, measures 159-160. The top staff is for guitar and the bottom staff is for bass. The guitar part features a trill in measure 159 and a sustained note in measure 160. The bass part features a rhythmic burst in measure 159 and a sustained note in measure 160. Dynamics include *mp* and *f*.

Ex. #132 *Festino* m. 169-170 (guitar only) “Rhythmic trigger in guitar”

Musical score for Ex. #132, measures 169-170. The staff is for guitar. The guitar part features a rhythmic burst in measure 169 and a sustained note in measure 170. Dynamics include *mf* and *ff*.

Each one of these rhythmic bursts sets off the next sustained event, usually a *tutti* arrival on an unaccented beat. The effect is that the burst of energy comes and goes, but always leaves a slightly transformed harmonic or textural environment.

The viola and guitar imitate each other with extended trills. For the guitar, the trill creates a sustained presence, for the viola, this conventional technique functions as imitation of the guitar in this context.

Ex. #133 *Festino* mm. 37-39 (guitar on top stave and viola on bottom stave) “Extended trills”

Imitation Textures—Electronic Analogs and Guitaristic String Writing

The first minute of the piece is dominated by string gestures that imitate guitar textures.

Ex. #134 *Festino* mm. 5-6 “Ensemble imitates guitar”

Davidovsky immediately establishes a sound world where the emphasis is on the attack of notes, with very quick decays. The string players play *spiccato*, *pizzicato*, *glissandi*, and *col legno battuto*--but never *arco* with any significant duration. He has effectively neutralized the string trio, rendering it a “plucked” ensemble. From this starting point, he can use the ensemble as a composite instrument--a “big guitar”.

As Davidovsky develops this texture, he experiments with various ways that this new instrument can function.

Ex. #135 *Festino* m. 9-12 “Plucked ensemble”

The image shows a musical score for four staves (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello/Bass) for measures 9 through 12. The score is annotated with various performance instructions and dynamics. Measure 9 features a 'percussive sound on box' in the violin part, marked *ff*. The violin II part has 'with knuckle on bridge' and 'arco, secco' markings. The viola part has 'pizz.' and 'mp' markings. The cello/bass part has 'with knuckle on bridge' and 'fast ricochet' markings, with dynamics ranging from *ff* to *ppp*. Measure 10 includes 'ord.' and 'al niente' markings in the violin I part. Measure 11 features 'arco' markings in the violin I and II parts. Measure 12 shows a 'senza vibr.' marking in the cello/bass part. The score concludes with a double bar line and a tempo marking of $\text{♩} = \text{♩}$.

By choosing the *ricochet* bowing in the bass and the pizzicato texture in the viola and cello, Davidovsky effectively leads up to the plucked texture of the guitar in m. 12. In this context, the guitar line sounds climactic, instead of dynamically and texturally diminutive.

Sometimes, Davidovsky succeeds in turning the model around, by giving sustained material to the guitar, through the use of tremolo, and quickly decaying material to the strings.

Ex. #136 *Festino* m. 16-20 “Sustained material in guitar, decaying material in strings”

The image displays a musical score for measures 16 through 20 of Ex. #136 from the piece *Festino*. The score is written for four staves: a top staff (likely guitar), a second staff (violin), a third staff (viola), and a bottom staff (cello/bass). The top staff begins with a *f* dynamic and features a tremolo effect over a sustained harmonic. The second staff is marked *arco* and *mf*, with a 3-measure slur. The third staff is marked *arco sul pont. (very coarse)* and *sfpp*, with a 7-measure slur. The bottom staff is marked *pizz.* and *fff sonore*, with a 3-measure slur. The score includes various dynamics such as *pp*, *mp*, *fff*, *secco*, and *pp*. A *Tambura* symbol is present above the top staff in measure 18. The piece is in 4/4 time, and the key signature has one sharp (F#).

The timbres are brilliantly mixed here to allow the strings to simulate the percussive attack of harmonics when played on the guitar. The bass *pizzicato* and cello *sul pont* give grit to the attacks of the notes, while the viola harmonics provide the airy, bell-like sustain. Meanwhile, the guitar plays suspenseful harmonies in the background. Not only is this a drastic timbral change in the instrumentation, it marks the first major texture change in the piece, as the musical material breaks out of the cell-like gestures from the introduction into more long-winded material.

At the end of this phrase, Davidovsky takes the composite instrument concept to the next level, writing material that is unidiomatic for all the instruments.

Ex. #137 *Festino* mm. 20-22 “Percussive ensemble”

The *Synchronisms* series demonstrates Davidovsky’s interest in percussive effects in both the instrumental and electronic parts. Typically, non-pitched gestures in the electronic part serve as connective material between phrases (except of course in *Synchronisms* #5 for percussion ensemble) whereas any instrumental percussion effects are integrated directly into phrases. Here in *Festino*, however, Davidovsky makes a bold move and asks the entire ensemble to execute a *crescendo* from *piano* to *fortissimo* with a percussive roll on the side of their instruments.

This is a clear example of Davidovsky’s electro acoustic style manifesting itself in his acoustic writing. One of his goals in turning to the electronic medium was to be able to manipulate sound on a minute level to create gestures without the constraints of traditional instrumental writing. This *tutti* percussion roll is exactly the kind of gesture Davidovsky relegates to the electronics in his electro-acoustic work, here assigned to the ensemble.

Most of the expressive material in the first half of *Festino* is given to the guitar. Davidovsky is very careful to restrict the string trio’s function, taking the viola and cello away from their traditional melodic roles. Material in the strings is either quick and cellular, or brisk, articulated scalar patterns that imitate the guitar writing.

Ex. #138 *Festino* mm. 28-29 (guitar top stave, viola bottom stave) “Brisk viola writing”

Musical score for Ex. #138, measures 28-29 of *Festino*. The top staff (guitar) features a melodic line with a *mp sordato* marking. The bottom staff (viola) features a rhythmic pattern with *p* and *sfzp* markings.

Ex. #139 *Festino* m. 36 (cello only) “Brisk cello writing”

Musical score for Ex. #139, measure 36 of *Festino*. The cello part features a rhythmic pattern with a *p* marking.

Ex. #140 *Festino* m. 38 (bass only) “Brisk bass writing”

Musical score for Ex. #140, measure 38 of *Festino*. The bass part features a rhythmic pattern with a *pizz.* and *p* marking.

Sustained moments in the strings tend to “stick in the air” after guitar events, similar to the entrance of the tape part in *Synchronisms #10*.

Ex. #141 *Festino* mm. 33-35 “Guitar pitches stick in the string ensemble”

33

mf pizz *p* (*mf*) (*mf*)

arco *mp* *p* *mfp*

arco *mp*

arco *mp* *mfp*

This model is reversed later in the work. Instead of the string sound growing out of a short guitar attack, the guitar articulates several quick attacks that grow from a viola *crescendo*.

Ex. #142 *Festino* m. 192-193 (guitar on top stave, viola on bottom stave) “Guitar note grows from viola *crescendo*”

192

mp *sf*

pp *assai* *fff*

Ex. #143 *Synchronisms #10* m. 43 (guitar only) “Comparison with Ex. #142”

The musical score for guitar, measures 43-45 of *Synchronisms #10*, is presented in two staves. The first staff, in treble clef, begins with a 5-fingered chord marked *ppp* and *sotto voce lontano*. This is followed by a series of chords and notes marked *p*, *espress. vib.*, *mp*, and *mf*. The second staff, in bass clef, is mostly silent, with a few notes at the end marked *mf* and *p*. The piece concludes with a sharp sign on the bass staff.

The dissonance of the B in the bass and cello propels the *crescendo*, and just as they fade to *niente*, the viola asserts itself and makes its own last ditch *crescendo*. The guitar catches the phrase with quick repeated Cs accompanied by a *crescendo*, a direct reference to a similar transitional passage in the guitar solo section of *Synchronisms #10*. The combination of attacks, sound envelopes, and decays of the four instruments create a complex gestural shape over two bars that includes two swells, like a wave with two crests.

Just five bars later, Davidovsky steals another texture from *Synchronisms #10*, this time from the tape section of the piece.

Ex. #144 *Festino* mm. 198-199 “Imitating electronic texture”

198
a tempo
mp
(pizz.)
mp
arco
pp
(pizz.)
mp

Ex. #145 *Synchronisms #10* mm. 160-162 “Comparison with Ex. #144”

p
cresc. assai
p
cresc.

Again, Davidovsky scores the strings so that their collective sound mirrors the attack envelope of the guitar, with a percussive attack and a very soft decay. Just as the bell-like sounds in the tape part in *Synchronisms #10* obscured the timbral distinction between tape and the guitar, the deft instrumentation here obscures the individual quality

of the instruments in the ensemble, and is timbrally suggestive of music created in an electronic studio.

In some passages, the instruments function like little cogs in a perpetual motion machine, and in others, entire phrases hinge on the articulation of each note as it is passed through the ensemble.

Ex. #146 *Festino* mm. 98-99 “Ensemble mechanism”

The image shows a musical score for measures 98 and 99 of the piece 'Festino'. It consists of four staves. The first staff (top) has a treble clef and contains notes with dynamics *pp* and *p*, and performance markings 'pizz.' and 'ord.'. The second staff has a treble clef and contains notes with dynamics *pp* and *p*, and performance markings 'punta' and 'arco ricochet'. The third staff has a treble clef and contains notes with dynamics *pp* and *p*, and performance markings 'pizz.' and 'col legno batt.'. The fourth staff has a bass clef and contains notes with dynamics *pp*, *p*, *fpp*, and *mf*, and performance markings 'arco' and 'Sul E spicc.'. The score is divided into two measures, 98 and 99, by a vertical line.

Expanding upon the *ricochet* bowing idea introduced in m. 9, Davidovsky sets up a sort of Rube Goldberg (an iconic American tinkerer well known for creating pointlessly intricate, complex inventions) musical contraption in measure 99. The viola pickup to m. 99 activates the short cello downbeat, whose energy bounces off into a *ricochet* bowing, which passes the motive to the guitar. The final note of the guitar motive lands on beat two of the bar, as the bass grows from *piano* to *forte*, culminating in a cello note, played *col legno*. The guitar finally breaks the tension, when, like a bull in a china shop, it erupts with a rolled chord in the pickup to the next bar. The density of events in this

measure is indicative of Davidovsky's electronic style--each sound triggers the next immediately and inevitably, without reflection, as if the gesture was its own miniature mechanism. Achieving this range of timbral and dynamic contrast in so little time with one instrumentalist would be daunting. But *Festino* is testament to the fact that creative scoring can create a musical organism that matches the rhythmic integration and timbral variety of electronics.

A climactic passage of strummed guitar chords stimulates full *pizzicato* chords in the whole ensemble, notated *a tutta forza*.

Ex. #147 *Festino* m. 133 "Tutti pizzicato chords"

The image shows a musical score for four staves. The first staff is in Treble Clef, the second in Alto Clef, and the third and fourth in Bass Clef. The first two staves are marked 'a tutta forza' and feature vertical lines representing chords. The third staff is marked 'pizz.' and shows a sequence of chords with a slur and a '3' below it. The fourth staff is also marked 'a tutta forza' and shows a sequence of chords with a slur and a '3' below it. The score is marked 'I 33' at the beginning.

In another ironic twist of instrumentation and imitation, the guitar joins the strings for a brief *pizzicato* passage.

Ex. #148 *Festino* mm. 293-294 “Ironic *tutti pizzicato* passage”

The image shows a musical score for a passage from Davidovsky's *Festino*, measures 293-294. The score is written for a string quartet and guitar. It consists of four staves. The first staff is the Violin I part, starting at measure 293 with a dynamic of *fff* and a *pizz.* instruction. The second staff is the Violin II part, starting with a dynamic of *p*. The third staff is the Viola part, starting with a dynamic of *p*. The fourth staff is the Cello part, starting with a dynamic of *mp*. The guitar part is written on a separate staff below the cello part, starting with a dynamic of *mp*. The music features complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and sixteenth notes, and is characterized by a 'tutti pizzicato' style, which is a light, muted plucking technique.

Davidovsky initially uses string *pizzicati* to neutralize the dynamic and sustaining power of the bow, and to match the plucked attack of the guitar. In this passage, he goes one step further, and has the guitar match the fuzzy tone of string *pizzicati* by using the guitar version of *pizzicato*, essentially a light, muting technique with the side of the hand.

Davidovsky closes the piece with a gesture characteristic of his electronic composition style.

Ex. #149 *Festino* mm. 305-308 “Reasserting composite instrument at end of piece”

The musical score consists of five staves. The top staff is the guitar part, and the bottom four staves are the string parts. Measure 305: Guitar has a fortissimo (fff) chord with tremolo and the instruction 'on side with flat fingers'. Strings play a three-note motive. Measure 306: Guitar has a fortissimo (fff) chord with tremolo. Strings play a three-note motive. Measure 307: Guitar has a fortissimo (fff) chord with tremolo. Strings play a three-note motive. Measure 308: Guitar has a fortissimo (fff) chord with tremolo. Strings play a three-note motive. Dynamics include *pp*, *secco*, *mp*, *f*, *fff*, *a tutta forza*, *pizz.*, *col legno batt.*, *arco*, *ord.*, *senza vib.*, and *arco*.

In m. 305, the strings play the characteristic three-note motive from the opening of the work, until the last beat of the measure, when percussive gestures in all four instruments set up a quadruple *fortissimo* chord in the guitar, which is extended through *tremolo* as the strings intone the three-note motive once more. Eventually, this chord dissipates just as the strings pick up the four pitches, *senza vibrato*, and extend the guitar sound even further. By ending *Festino* with such an integrated gesture, Davidovsky reasserts his composite instrument approach as one of the primary concerns of the work.

Composite Instrument Techniques at the Climax of the Work

Davidovsky's experiment in constructing a composite instrument culminates in a passage from mm. 211-221, where he blends the instruments seamlessly and manages to merge several of the expressive characters in the piece.

Ex. #150 *Festino* mm. 216-219 "Merging of several characters"

The image shows a musical score for three staves: guitar (top), cello (middle), and bass (bottom). The score covers measures 216 to 219. The guitar staff includes instructions such as 'simile', 'mf on box', 'f on side', and 'sul pont. mp'. The cello staff includes 'simile', 'col legno batt. on tail piece', 'pizz.', 'col legno batt. on box', 'pizz.', and 'pizz. (ord.)'. The bass staff includes 'f', 'più', and 'dim.'. The time signature changes from 9/8 to 6/8 between measures 217 and 218.

The matched unisons between the guitar and viola return, combining the clarity of the guitar attack and steadiness of the viola sustain. Underneath the sustained tones in the top line in the guitar, Davidovsky adds short, quirky punctuations to a lower line, articulated as *pizzicati*, *sul ponticelli*, or percussion effects. The cello is in dialogue with this layer of the guitar part, also playing brusque punctuations, *col legno*, *secco*, and *pizzicato*. In both m. 217 and m. 221, the frequency of these events increases, creating a delightful mini-orchestra of pops and clicks. Meanwhile, the bass continues its solo melodic lament that began in m. 204. In this passage, Davidovsky melds three of the primary characters that he has established in the piece thus far--comic (in the guitar and cello), melodramatic (in the bass), and noble (in the viola and guitar). The expressive effect of combining these three characters is powerful; the noble, steadfast character of

the sustained rising line remains strong and focused amidst the absurdity of grotesque humor and unsettling anguish.

The climax of *Festino* returns to the brisk, articulated passagework that forms the bulk of the opening material, especially in the guitar part.

Ex. #151 *Festino* mm. 243-247 “Placing rhythmic groupings on the beat”

The image displays a musical score for guitar, spanning measures 243 to 247. The score is written for a single guitar part, using a standard six-string staff with a treble clef. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 6/8. The music is characterized by complex rhythmic groupings, often starting on the beat but with notes that are beamed together in a way that suggests a different rhythmic feel. The score includes several dynamic markings: *ff* (fortissimo), *ff cresc.* (fortissimo crescendo), *fff* (fortississimo), *p* (piano), and *sf* (sforzando). Performance instructions include *a la corda* (a la corda), *n. cresc. poco a poco* (no crescendo, poco a poco), *sul pont. (coarse)* (sul ponticello, coarse), and *pizz.* (pizzicato). The score is divided into two systems. The first system covers measures 243 and 244, and the second system covers measures 245, 246, and 247. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed in groups of four or six, creating a dense and rhythmic texture.

Ex. #152 *Festino* m. 42-43 (guitar only) “Original material for the climactic passage”



As was discussed earlier, placing the rhythmic groupings on the beat changes the character significantly. Instead of a skittish, evasive character, these passages take on a bold, urgent expression. In much of *Festino*, the four instruments are fulfilling different roles in the articulation of a composite texture. Hearing all of the instruments play similar material at the climax also adds to the weight of the moment. There is nothing especially revolutionary about using rhythmic unison figures in a climactic moment in the piece. But since Davidovsky continuously experiments with the workings of this chamber ensemble, the climax is even more emphatic when the instruments speak in the same phrase groupings.

There are several moments in *Festino* when the quality of synchronicity between an immovable electronic part and a fluid live instrument is mimicked in the purely acoustic ensemble.

Ex. #153 *Festino* mm. 256-257 “Imitating synchronicity of electronic music”

The image shows a musical score for measures 256 and 257. It consists of four staves: Violin (top), Cello/Viola (middle), Bass (second from bottom), and Guitar (bottom). Measure 256 features a guitar part with a triplet of eighth notes marked *mp*, a bass part with a triplet of eighth notes marked *mp*, and a cello/viola part with a triplet of eighth notes marked *mp*. The guitar part includes a *Sul C* instruction. Measure 257 shows the guitar and bass playing sixteenth-note patterns, with the guitar in octaves. The cello/viola part is marked *arco senza vib.* and *mf*. The guitar part in measure 257 is marked *mf p*.

The guitar dominates the measures preceding this example from the climax of the work until m. 256, as the strings hold onto a *tremolo*. As such, there are very few rhythmic arrivals from mm. 249-256. Out of this free texture, the cello and viola establish a short motive of two ascending notes that is passed around the ensemble four times before it is resolved. First, the guitar and bass imitate the figure, without a *glissando*, and with harmonics in a triplet rhythm. While this figure is unfolding, the cello and viola imitate themselves with a triplet figure of their own, with a *glissando*, leading up to a percussive effect. Finally, the guitar and viola play the gesture in sixteenth-notes, and arrive squarely on beat two of m. 257, with the guitar in octaves. This arrival is the moment of synchronization, and effectively resolves the tension that is developed after the climax. Davidovsky had set up a new expectation in the climactic section--the instruments are scored to play together in a way not previously heard in the piece. He then withdraws this texture right away, retreating to less tightly constructed rhythmic

territory. The moment of arrival at m. 257 reconciles the floating character of m. 249-256 with the ensemble cohesion of the climax.

Summary of Composite Instrument Approach in *Festino*

Davidovsky's approach to writing for the *Festino* ensemble balances several priorities. First, he manifests his interest in addressing the guitar's sonic capabilities and weaknesses by creating a composite instrument, "a big guitar." He does this by exploring ways to produce notes on string instruments that mimic guitar sound production. He also does this by merging attacks on the guitar with sustained notes on the string instruments, allowing notes to "stick in the air" as in *Synchronisms #10*. In other moments, Davidovsky uses the bass to add depth and low register to the guitar sound, or obscures the distinctions between the instruments through percussive effects.

The challenge of writing integrated ensemble music with guitar is not his only concern. Davidovsky also frequently demonstrates the influence of his electronic composition on his acoustic writing in *Festino*. Arrival moments are prepared in such a way as to reinforce the sense of inevitability that is so characteristic of Davidovsky's electro-acoustic style. Little sonic machines are built, with each instrument functioning as one cog in a larger mechanism.

Finally, Davidovsky blends his instrumentation techniques with the establishment of several complex characters within *Festino*. For each new expressive world, Davidovsky creates a new approach to dealing with the ensemble. When he introduces the melodramatic character, he unleashes the string trio in a more conventional context, using their bows and playing long lines with *vibrato*. When the noble character emerges later in the piece, Davidovsky turns to sustained unisons in the guitar and viola. For the

quirky character that pervades the whole work, he vacillates between fast passagework and percussive pops and clicks. Naturally, all these instrumental techniques partially contribute to the character of the moment. However, as will be discussed in the next section, Davidovsky is very much in control of the relationship between these characters as the dramatic structure of the work unfolds. The various models he uses for how the ensemble will interact strengthen the realization of this dramatic structure.

Discussion of Dramatic Structure of *Festino*

Identification of Structural Elements: Intervallic, Motivic, and Temporal

Davidovsky weaves *Festino* together with the threads of several different aspects of composition. The most significant elements that he works with in the piece are intervallic cohesion, tempo modulation as a transitional device, character change, and ensemble orchestration. Since the approach to the ensemble is so unique, it warrants an isolated analysis. The other aspects work collaboratively, and therefore will be examined together. First, it will be necessary to establish fundamentals about each element and how it functions in *Festino*.

As in *Synchronisms #10*, Davidovsky reveals his intervallic toolbox at the outset of the work.

Ex. #154 *Festino* mm. 1-2 “Revealing intervallic toolbox”

The image shows a musical score for measures 1 and 2 of Ex. #154. The tempo is marked as *Festino* with a metronome marking of ♩ = 150-168. The score is for four instruments: Guitar, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabasso. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 8/8. The Guitar part starts with a *pizz.* (pizzicato) instruction and dynamic markings of *p* and *pp*. The Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabasso parts are marked *spicc.* (spiccato) and have dynamic markings of *p* and *pp*. The score shows two measures, with the first measure containing a complex chordal structure and the second measure continuing the harmonic development.

In the two simultaneous chords, the interval of a major seventh, and its inversion, the minor ninth, dominate the harmony. The addition of the tritone between the cello E-flat and the guitar A also figures prominently in the intervallic structure of the work as it unfolds. Throughout the first section of music, Davidovsky hammers home these interval constructions.

Ex. #155a *Festino* m. 5 “Asserting intervallic language”

The image shows a musical score for measure 5 of Ex. #155a. The score consists of four staves. The first staff has a dynamic marking of *mf* and a *ord., spicc.* instruction. The second, third, and fourth staves have dynamic markings of *mp*. The score shows a complex rhythmic and harmonic structure with various intervallic relationships.

Ex. #155b m. 11 “Asserting intervallic language”

11

Musical score for Example #155b, measure 11. The score is written on four staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a single note marked *f*. The second staff is a treble clef with a triplet of eighth notes marked *p* and *f*. The third staff is a bass clef with a triplet of eighth notes marked *mf*. The bottom staff is a bass clef with a single note.

Ex. #155c m. 14 “Asserting intervallic language”

14 ord.

Musical score for Example #155c, measure 14. The score is written on four staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a triplet of eighth notes marked *ord.*. The second staff is a treble clef with a triplet of eighth notes marked *mf* and *ff*. The third staff is a bass clef with a triplet of eighth notes marked *ff*. The bottom staff is a bass clef with a triplet of eighth notes marked *ff*.

Ex. #155d m. 24 “Asserting intervallic language”

The image shows a musical score for measure 24. It consists of five staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a 2/4 time signature. It features a triplet of eighth notes followed by a quarter note, with a *ff* dynamic marking. The second staff is a treble clef with a *f* dynamic marking, followed by a *ff* dynamic marking, and the word "arco" written below the staff. The third staff is a bass clef with a *mf* dynamic marking and the word "espressivo" written below the staff, followed by a *ff* dynamic marking. The fourth staff is a treble clef with a *ff* dynamic marking. The fifth staff is a bass clef with a *ff* dynamic marking.

The pitch construction of a major seventh and a tritone, or its inversion a minor ninth and a tritone, provides the underlying harmonic language for the piece. Davidovsky also uses select intervals, and in fact alludes to select chords, in key transitional moments in the piece.

Ex. #156 *Festino* mm. 85-87 “Transitional intervallic landmarks”

Musical score for Ex. #156, measures 85-87. The score is in 3/16 time and features a key signature of one sharp (F#). The tempo is marked *Festino* with a metronome marking of ♩ = 108. The score consists of four staves. The first staff is the right hand, starting with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a first-order ornament (*ord.*) on the first measure. The second and third staves are the left hand, with dynamics ranging from *p* to *mp*. The fourth staff is a bass line with triplets and a dynamic of *mp*. The score shows a transition from 3/16 to 4/8 time between measures 85 and 86. Circled annotations highlight specific intervallic landmarks in the right hand.

Ex. #157 *Festino* mm. 113-115 “Transitional intervallic landmarks”

Musical score for Ex. #157, measures 113-115. The score is in 3/16 time and features a key signature of one sharp (F#). The tempo is marked *Festino* with a metronome marking of ♩ = 108. The score consists of four staves. The first staff is the right hand, starting with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic and a first-order ornament (*ord.*) on the first measure. The second and third staves are the left hand, with dynamics ranging from *pp* to *mp*. The fourth staff is a bass line with triplets and a dynamic of *pp*. The score shows a transition from 3/16 to 4/8 time between measures 113 and 114. Circled annotations highlight specific intervallic landmarks in the right hand.

In both of these examples, a C major chord is implied, a sonority that jumps out from the highly chromaticized texture. In fact, these two measures represent transitional structural moments, going into and coming out of material in the slower tempo sections

(later labeled as Character B). Though he does not use this collection of pitches exhaustively throughout *Festino*, Davidovsky turns to this allusion to C major at a few crucial moments. Further examples of this phenomenon will be addressed within the overall analysis of the piece.

Much of the rest of the motivic material that underlies *Festino* grows out of the various characters that are developed in the guitar part. And since the string writing is largely generated out of the guitar part, in the interests of creating a composite instrument, these motivic characters pervade the whole ensemble. The exception to this is the material that emerges during the passages without the guitar, which has a distinct character all its own. The first character (hereafter Character A) in the piece is quirky, angular, and punctuated, and most clearly articulated by the music that unfolds in the opening few measures.

Ex. #158 *Festino* m. 11-12 “Character A, quirky”

The image shows a musical score for measures 11 and 12 of the piece *Festino*. The score is written for a string ensemble, with five staves: a single treble clef staff at the top, and two grand staves (treble and bass clefs) below. Measure 11 begins with a treble clef staff containing a series of eighth notes with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The grand staves below show a piano (*p*) part with a triplet of eighth notes and a forte (*f*) dynamic, and a bass clef part with a triplet of eighth notes and a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. Measure 12 features a treble clef staff with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic and a 'arco' marking. The grand staves show a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic in both parts. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

Davidovsky organizes the various characters in *Festino* around linked tempo modulations. Character A appears consistently within the opening tempo indication, eight note equals 160 bpm. Most of the development to the material that occurs within this character expands upon these small groupings of three short notes, cast in different contexts, extended into longer phrases, or passed through the ensemble.

Ex. #159a *Festino* mm. 28-29, m. 80 (guitar only), m. 60-61 “More Character A”

Musical score for Ex. #159a, measures 28-29 and 80. The score is written for guitar and consists of four staves. The first staff shows measures 28-29 with a tempo marking of 160 bpm and dynamics of *mp* *sonoro* and *p*. The second staff shows measure 80 with dynamics of *p* and *sffz*. The third and fourth staves show accompaniment. A note below the staves reads: "massive tremolo on body of instrument with finger:"

Ex. #159b *Festino* m. 80 (guitar only) “More Character A”

Musical score for Ex. #159b, measure 80 (guitar only). The score is written for guitar and consists of one staff. The measure is marked with a tempo of 80 bpm and a dynamic of *p*.

Ex. 159c *Festino* m. 60-61 “More Character A”

The musical score consists of four systems of staves. The first system includes a Tambura part with the instruction "Tambura secco" and a measure number "60 ragg.". It also features a vocal line with the marking "ord." and a dynamic of "pp". The second system shows a vocal line with dynamics "ff" and "pp". The third system includes a vocal line with dynamics "sf" and "ff", a note marked "behind the bridge", and a bass line with a dynamic of "pp". The fourth system shows a vocal line with a dynamic of "sf" and a bass line with a dynamic of "pp" and a guitar-like accompaniment marked "A".

Sections which are written in Character A remain fairly consistent with respect to their rhythmic makeup. Passages that subdivide the beat do so in duple groupings, and are either short interjections elaborating on the primary motive, or extended phrases involving rapid fire scale work or repeated notes.

Ex. #160 *Festino* mm. 124-127 “More Character A”

Ex. #161 *Festino* mm.137-138 (guitar on top stave, and viola on bottom stave) “More Character A”

Character B is the material in the piece that is introduced in the alternate tempo marking, eighth-note equals 108 bpm. The two tempos are connected to each through a three to two relationship; a dotted eighth-note in the faster tempo is equivalent to an eighth-note in the slower tempo. In practice, this means that one and a half beats of the faster tempo equals the pulse in the modulation (the prevailing pulse of the work is an

eighth-note), and going back into the faster tempo from the slower means that one pulse now equals one and one half beats. Davidovsky smooths the modulations over by using 3/8 bars directly before most of the downgraded tempo changes, effectively providing the new pulse early before the change takes place.

Aside from the tempo difference, Character B is more fluid and relaxed than Character A. Though still rhythmic and quirky, Character B is more likely to have subdivisions in triple groupings, with phrases that breathe more.

Ex. #162 *Festino* mm. 87-88 (guitar only) “Character B, fluid, triplets”



Character C will be used to describe the moments in *Festino* that evoke a more melodramatic or hyper-expressive sentiment. These moments are equally likely to be in either tempo field. Davidovsky notates many of these passages with markings such as *espressivo*, *intenso*, or *a tutta forza*, and they are also characterized by superimposed rhythmic groupings over the prevailing pulse. Character C is introduced briefly early on in the piece, especially in the guitar part, and then later expanded in passages for strings alone.

Ex. #163 *Festino* mm. 32-33 (guitar only) “Character C, melodramatic”



Ex. #164 mm. 101-102 “More Character C”

The image shows a musical score for measures 101 and 102. The score is written for a string quartet, with four staves. Measure 101 begins with a forte (*ff*) dynamic and a triplet of eighth notes. The first staff has a *secco* marking above it. The second staff has a *secco* marking above it. The third staff has a *secco* marking above it. The fourth staff has a *secco* marking above it. Measure 102 begins with a *secco* marking above it. The first staff has a *secco* marking above it. The second staff has a *secco* marking above it. The third staff has a *secco* marking above it. The fourth staff has a *secco* marking above it. The score includes various dynamics such as *ff*, *a tutta forza*, and *fff sempre intenso*. It also features articulations like *arco* and *secco*. The notation includes slurs, accents, and a triplet in measure 101.

A fourth character emerges in *Festino* later on after the piece has developed. Character D is noble, resigned, and a touch detached. The angularity, quirkiness, and angst of the rest of the work dissolve in these moments, and leaving behind a reflective calm. The rhythmic activity from the rest of the piece is replaced by weightlessness. Long notes are held, and entrances come at irregular intervals, obscuring any constant pulse.

Ex. #165 *Festino* mm. 174-179 “Character D, reflective”

174

mf espressivo

leg. assai (v)

p (v)

p

Ex. #166 *Festino* mm. 262-268 “More Character D”

262

quasi senza vib.

pp calmo molto legato

quasi senza vib.

pp calmo molto legato

quasi senza vib.

pp calmo molto legato

These four characters lead the listener along the dramatic journey of *Festino*.

Introduction to Analysis

Martin Brody addresses the opening of *Festino* directly.

Consider the opening of *Festino* for guitar, viola, ‘cello, and bass: On the one hand, proliferant signs of order: linked rhythmic motives, coherent grouping structures, a hint of neo-classicism; on the other, events that insidiously tilt toward anarchy: a tipsy, zigzag bass glissando trailing just behind the polite opening gestures; dueling slap-pizzicato effects and percussive body blows to the guitar; and, not long after, a brief but

unnerving threat to skid off its metrical rails in a polyrhythmic argument between guitar and viola. There's a quarrel with aesthetic complacency simmering (and often boiling over) throughout Davidovsky's music. His work achieves its special poise and drive not so much by taking up arms in an aesthetic rebellion, but by playing out its prodigious volatility, constantly subverting (or threatening to subvert) our expectations, and celebrating its affinity for paradox--while remaining taut, coherent, controlled.³⁸

The opening of *Festino* confounds expectations: by asking the string players to play like guitarists, by introducing phrase material that is never longer than the smallest gesture, and by treating the ensemble as if it were a composite machine. Davidovsky constructs the form of *Festino* out of an evolving expression of the push and pull between subversion and order. The structure of the piece seems to take its direction from the aesthetic argument itself, pushing on one character until it exhausts itself, then switching to another, and so on...As Brody puts it, Davidovsky's work "achieves its special poise.. by celebrating its affinity for paradox, while remaining taut, coherently controlled."³⁹

As with the motivic and intervallic analysis of *Synchronisms #10*, this discussion will unfold with examples that are in the order they appear in the piece. *Festino* is a virtuosic feat of composition, as Davidovsky balances several characters, intervallic references, motives, and strata to build the narrative of the work. In order to fully appreciate how skillfully these parameters are manipulated, it is important to consider them in the order in which they are introduced in the work itself. The following analysis is partially informed by the research done by Serrouya, Gryc, and Malloy. Nevertheless, the goal is to examine *Festino* on its own terms, as it is a prime example of Davidovsky's intuitively driven process. Any narrative details assigned to events in the work are intended not to be taken literally, but instead as allegories that might help to illuminate

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

the aesthetic relationships between sections of the piece. While music is too abstract for many people to agree about whether a particular section is about a family quarrel or a dispute at the office, general character relationships can be established between melancholic music and energetic music, etc... In the spirit of invigorating the analysis, coloristic allegorical language will be used to describe particular musical moments, but the function of such commentary is essentially to bring Davidovsky's deft handling of contrasting expressions into full relief.

Analysis: Exposition

Davidovsky begins *Festino* with a familiar opening gesture, this time in the viola.

Ex. #167 *Festino* m. 1 "Three-note motive from *Synchronisms #10*"

The image shows a musical score for the first measure of *Festino*. The score is for four instruments: Guitar, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabasso. The tempo is marked as $\text{♩} = 150 - 168$. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The time signature is 4/8. The music is in 4/8 time. The first measure is marked *p* (piano). The second measure is marked *pp* (pianissimo). The Viola part is marked *spicc.* (spiccato) in both measures. The Guitar part is marked *pizz.* (pizzicato) in the second measure. The Violoncello and Contrabasso parts are marked *spicc.* in both measures. The three-note motive is a quarter note followed by two eighth notes, then a quarter note.

This is the primary motive from *Synchronisms #10*, derived from the cliché “flamenco” gesture of two short notes followed by a longer value. Davidovsky is flexing his compositional muscle a bit here, as if he is challenging himself to start from the same place as he did in a previous piece, and go in an entirely different direction. As with other

pieces, he begins with fundamental building blocks. And while this motive does figure prominently in *Festino*, it functions differently than in the *Synchronisms* work. If the primary motive in *Synchronisms #10* is the protagonist, then its equivalent in *Festino* takes more of a supporting role, as a seed that generates other material, but recedes from the foreground more readily. Whereas *Synchronisms #10* unfolds as a individual journey, of an instrument and a motive, *Festino* is very much an ensemble piece, both in its instrumentation and in its structure. It is organized around sections of varying characters and their interaction. These characters are constructed on various motivic elements, all of which are articulated by different instruments at different times. The appearance of the primary motive from *Synchronisms #10* at the opening of *Festino* should be seen within this context, and not as the motive whose journey is the focal point of the work.

Festino begins rather tamely, with the first three bars establishing a compact ensemble sound as well as a compressed motivic range. These are the “proliferant signs of order” to which Brody points. It is not until the end of the fourth bar that we begin to sense the “quarrel with aesthetic complacency”⁴⁰ when all four instruments break into unconventional and extreme gestures.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Ex. #168 *Festino* mm. 4-6 “Quarrel with aesthetic complacency”

Just as quickly, the low strings pass off a rather simple ascending figure, culminating in sixteenth-note triplet figures spanning an octave plus a major seventh, reasserting that integral interval. The guitar then reenters with a march like rhythm. The ensemble seems to have returned to the character of the first four measures, an engaging mix of neoclassical order with wry humor.

The next measure shows signs that the ordered veneer may break once again, as the guitar and bass play a unison figure with the left hand only, a clumsy gesture at best on the contrabass. Sure enough, the subversive elements boil over once again in m. 14, as the ensemble reaches a *fortissimo* on the second beat, and the guitar plays a *tremolo* chord, and waits in suspense for the strings' next move. The chord, not surprisingly, reflects the pervading intervallic content, including a minor ninth and a tritone.

Ex. #169 *Festino* mm. 16-20 “Suspense created by guitar *tremolo*”

The introduction of the new texture of sustained sound in the guitar is sudden, and creates suspense. This is aided by the fact that the figure begins on the offbeat, the second beat of m. 14 to be exact, as if the clumsy duet between the guitar and bass left hands is interrupted by something much more urgent. This urgency is reinforced when the strings enter with the rough unison triplet figure. We are hardly twenty measures into the piece, and a clear dichotomy has emerged between a contained, quirky character, and a raw, visceral character. Just as quickly, the guitar tosses off the weight of the moment with figures in m. 18-19 which hearken back to the opening motive. The insertion of the 3/16 meter in m. 19 accumulates a little bit of extra tension before the clear arrival on the downbeat of m. 20.

The downbeat of m. 20 seems to be the first clear cadential event in the piece thus far. Malloy defines cadence as, “a musical event that fulfills some expectation of release, following other events that create tension.”⁴¹ Certainly, the suspended feeling of the guitar *tremolo* along with the quick change to the rough character in the strings represents “events that create tension.” The presence of a strong downbeat in a new texture, played *tutti* and *fortissimo*, is a clear release of that tension. A few of Malloy’s qualifications for cadence are met at this moment. Regarding rhythmic stabilization, he writes that “many phrases maintain an erratic sense of pulse until shortly before the cadence.”⁴² This is the case before m. 20, where the rhythmic incision of the opening measures is suddenly suspended, and the ensemble floats momentarily. The groundless feeling is swept away by the upright rhythm in the guitar, which inevitably leads into the downbeat of m. 20.

This arrival also fulfills a textural characteristic of cadences. Malloy writes of two textural scenarios that can intensify a cadence, “the departure from and return to a familiar orchestral sonority,” and a moment that becomes, “strident, then more agreeable.”⁴³ In this example, the return to a “familiar orchestral sonority” is fulfilled by all four instruments playing percussion, hearkening back to the percussive sounds that open the work.

During the first section, Davidovsky has laid out the aesthetic range of the piece. First, there is a taut presentation of rhythmic material, delivered with wry humor through the experimental orchestration techniques. Then, a more violent texture boils underneath, and asserts itself periodically. This is packaged with all of the Davidovskian bells and

⁴¹ Malloy, “Cadential Procedures”, 2.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 49.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 73.

whistles--an acute attention to the details of sound, flaunted instrumental expectations, an immediate dramatic appeal, and a meticulous sense of balance from the outset.

The call and answer figure that follows between the guitar and strings is notable for its allusion to familiar intervallic pillars.

Ex. #170 m. 23 (guitar on top stave and viola on bottom stave) “Familiar intervallic pillars”



After this introduction, Davidovsky introduces another crucial element to the mix, the contrasting tempo. He prepares the tempo modulation, as he does frequently, with a 3/16 bar. The first two appearances of the downgraded tempo material both function as very short transitional moments. But Davidovsky’s neo-classical streak would suggest that all material introduced into the texture will eventually get developed further.

Ex. #171 *Festino* m. 25-28 “Tempo modulations”

25

espressivo

mf *f* *mp* *sonoro*

pp *sfpp* *p*

pp *sfpp*

pp *sfpp*

massive tremolo on body of instrument with fingers

Ex. #172 *Festino* mm. 37-39 “Tempo modulations”

37

mf *(mf)* *(mf)*

mfpp *mfpp*

sul pont.

$\text{quarter note} = 108$

In both of these two bar fragments in the new tempo, Davidovsky calls attention to the modulation by writing explicit rhythms in thirty-second notes. Neither of these examples presents any significant new material, instead, the contrasting tempo character is the new material itself, and the listener is being prepped for a more in-depth exploration of this expressive area later in the work.

The “polyrhythmic argument” Brody refers to is the retransition back from the first tempo modulation, where the guitar passes its thirty-second notes on to the viola’s

faster thirty-second notes. The phrase lengths have begun to lengthen significantly here, in sharp contrast to the punctuated motivic writing of the opening.

Ex. #173 *Festino* m. 27-29 (guitar on top stave, viola on bottom stave) “Longer phrases”

Musical score for Ex. #173, measures 27-29 of *Festino*. The top staff is for guitar and the bottom staff is for viola. The music features longer phrases with dynamic markings such as *f*, *mp*, *p*, and *sfzp*. The tempo is marked *SONTO*.

The dialogue between instruments is distributed more evenly in this section, with the viola and guitar engaged in some heated debate first, and the cello and bass renewing the disagreement several bars later.

The pairing of guitar with bass happens not just literally in time, but also conceptually, as the cello and viola seem to be lobbying for the brisker tempo, with the guitar and bass content to lope along at the slower pace. The guitar relents in m. 42, as it scurries to catch up with the rest of the band.

Ex. #174 *Festino* m. 42 (guitar only) “Guitar joins brisk passagework”

Musical score for Ex. #174, measure 42 of *Festino*. The score shows the guitar part with dynamic marking *pp*.

The composite texture of the opening bars returns in m. 44, and is combined with the rough-hewn string playing from m. 16.

Ex. #175 *Festino* mm. 44-52 “Synthesis of composite texture with brusque string timbre”

It is remarkable how many different expressive worlds Davidovsky can inhabit in such a short time. Most of them are fairly vigorous, but there are rare moments of reflection that are notable for their textural balance and potential for development later in the piece. After a raucous outburst of *rasgueados* and *glissandi* in the guitar and mirrored in the strings, there is a brief plea for understanding in the guitar part in m. 32.

Ex. #176 *Festino* mm. 31-35 “Early signs of reflective Character D”

The broadness of the quintuplet in m. 31 lends earnestness to the phrase, and Davidovsky returns to this rhythmic formula throughout *Festino* for moments of expressive directness and sincerity.

The arrival in measure 48 (see Ex. # 175) is the strongest cadence thus far in the piece, and concludes what can be considered the exposition of the work. Davidovsky creates the sense of cadential resolution with several important signals. As Malloy points out, strong cadential moments are usually characterized by the resolution of tension of several parameters, a concept he defines as “convergence.”

Divertimento typically combines procedures from more than one musical aspect--melody, harmony, rhythm, texture, or form--to produce a cadence. Formal cadence is supported by an unusually forceful and unambiguous convergence of all of these elements.⁴⁴

The cadence is once again prepared by a 3/16 measure, a technique Davidovsky uses at several important moments in the piece, though the subsequent arrival of the guitar on the second beat softens the immediacy of the shortened measure (m. 19 and m. 25 are also examples of the importance of this meter in transitional and cadential

⁴⁴ Ibid., 95.

functions). The four note chord that is formed once the guitar enters on the second beat of m. 48 is consistent with the intervals emphasized throughout the piece thus far, with major sevenths and minor ninths predominating, and a tritone creeping in to the harmony in the next measure between the bass and cello.

The fermata in m. 48 is a strong cadential indicator, as is the stabilization of an “erratic sense of pulse” in mm. 44-46, to use Malloy’s vocabulary. Starting in third beat of m. 46, there is a written out *ritardando*, allowing the texture to breathe for the first time. Malloy writes, “It is often informative to examine ways in which music decelerates toward cadences, elaborating the traditional notation of *ritardando*. Cadential deceleration may take place in the harmony, in a melodic line, or simply in durations between attacks in the overall texture.”⁴⁵ In addition, the ensemble uniformly dips into the low register, sustains unadulterated notes, and plays *pianissimo*, all factors which contribute to a sudden sense of calm and repose after a rather hectic opening few minutes.

Analysis: Development of Strata

Davidovsky carries over the warmth of this cadential moment into the next phrase, with music that promises to explore a more lyrical character. He often employs octaves in the guitar when he wants a singing expressive character, as he does in mm. 51-52. Another *espressivo* characteristic that comes up throughout *Festino* is broad, sweeping lines that are in superimposed groupings over the prevailing pulse, such as in mm. 55-57.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 56.

Ex. #177 *Festino* mm. 55-57 (guitar on top stave, viola on bottom stave) “Broad, sweeping character in guitar synthesized with motive in viola”

The image shows a musical score for guitar and viola, measures 55-57. The guitar part is on the top staff and the viola part is on the bottom staff. The guitar part begins with a long, sweeping phrase starting at measure 55, marked with a *mf* dynamic. This phrase is characterized by a wide interval and a gradual rise in pitch. The viola part enters in measure 58 with a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, marked with a *p* dynamic. The guitar part continues with a fragmented phrase in measure 58, marked with a *p* dynamic, and then a more active phrase in measure 59, marked with a *mf* dynamic. The viola part continues with a rhythmic pattern in measure 59, marked with a *sf* dynamic. The guitar part concludes in measure 60 with a final phrase, marked with a *ff* dynamic. The viola part concludes in measure 60 with a final phrase, marked with a *ff* dynamic. The score includes various performance instructions such as *arco*, *col legno batt.*, and *knuckles on the side (back)*.

The accompaniment for these introspective moments in the guitar part is the needling motive from the opening, gently suggesting that it is no time to be serious. The guitar takes the bait in m. 58, launching into a fragmented phrase, and bringing the quirky character back into the fore. The circus like atmosphere of mm. 60-61 threatens to push the piece over the top, until ethereal harmonics in the guitar in m. 63 turn introspective again.

Ex. #178 *Festino* mm. 60-63 “Passing of motive through ensemble”

The musical score for Ex. #178, *Festino* mm. 60-63, is presented in four staves. The top staff is for guitar, featuring a complex rhythmic pattern of quarter-note equals 108. The second staff is for violin, the third for viola, and the fourth for cello. The score includes various dynamics such as *ff*, *pp*, *p*, *sf*, and *mf*, along with articulations like *rasg.*, *Tambura secco*, and *ord.*. The tempo is marked *Festino*. The score shows a complex rhythmic pattern of quarter-note equals 108, with various dynamics and articulations.

In m. 70, Davidovsky reintroduces the “quarter-note equals 108” material of Character B, this time mixing straight thirty-second notes with the slurred triplet figures. This tempo area has yet to be fully explored, as Davidovsky periodically drops it in, revealing more about its expressive world each time. The mixed thirty-seconds and slurred triplets in the guitar are accompanied by the strident, brusque string writing that was heard in m. 16 and again later in m. 44. There is a true compositional juggling act at work here; as Davidovsky introduces ever more characters, he keeps all of them afloat, juxtaposing them in different combinations and placing each in different instrumental contexts. After three bars, the “polyrhythmic argument” that Brody referred to when describing m. 28 has returned, this time with the cello and viola quietly advancing their quicker tempo underneath unison guitar and bass harmonics.

Ex. #179 *Festino* mm. 71-73 “Tempo modulation”

As family disagreements often do, the dispute erupts in m. 76, as the cello and viola trade gruff pronouncements with each other. The guitar chords in m. 77-78 are built out of the prevailing intervals.

Ex. #180 *Festino* mm. 76-78 “Gruff pronouncements in viola and cello”

They just as soon laugh it off, however, with *spiccato* articulation in the strings recapturing the lighthearted nature of the piece, and the guitar and cello sharing a devilish little dance of thirty-second notes.

Ex. #181 *Festino* mm. 79-80 “Reassertion of light-hearted character”

The coarse string sound from m. 16, again marked *sul pont*, reappears in the cello and viola, as they voice barely masked disapproval at all of the foolishness. This internecine feud comes to a close with a delicate gesture in harmonics in mm. 85-86.

Ex. #182 *Festino* mm. 83-84 (viola top stave, and cello on bottom stave) “Coarse string sound originally from m. 16”

83

dim.

dim.

Ex. #183 *Festino* mm. 85-87 “Arrival at cadence”

85 ord. $\#$ $\text{♩} = \text{♩} \approx 108$

p

ord. sub.

mp

(mp) p

p

(mp) p

mp

n.

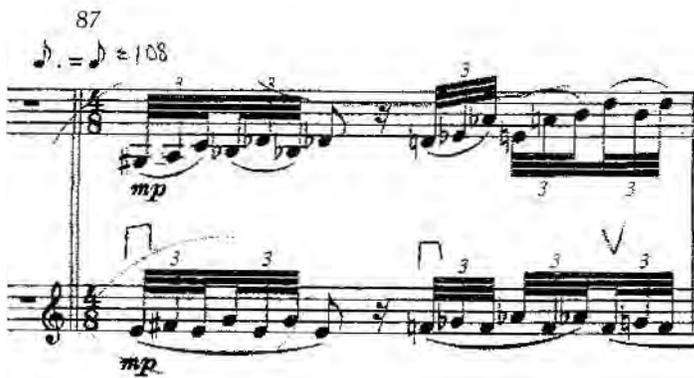
This short cadential moment has a notable intervallic character. The arrival chord in m. 86 is built out of two stacked perfect fifths and implies a C major ninth chord, a sonority that has not played any part in the proceedings thus far. The work is about to enter its first truly contrasting section, and Davidovsky sets off the event with a pitch language that jumps out of the chromatic environment, evoking cadential type harmonic structures from tonal music. The import of the arrival is further underscored by two 3/16

measures; for the first time in the work, this meter is used for more than one measure in a row, holding the music in a suspended area for a moment before moving on to the new section.

Over the first eighty-six measures of *Festino*, Davidovsky sets high aesthetic stakes. We hear a back and forth tension between moments of reflective introspection and others of flippant extroversion; there is an exploration of the numerous available approaches to the ensemble; several different subtle character shadings are introduced and interspersed; and he has stuck to a meaningful organization of pitch material centered around certain intervals as landmarks. All this is done within a larger dramatic context that is already complex, balancing ordered elements with chaos, and combining the comic, tragic, and reflective.

The new section beginning in m. 87 is contrasting not just in its tempo, but also in its rhythmic feel. Replacing the sharp, angular rhythms are triplet figures that swing and saunter.

Ex. #184 *Festino* m. 87 (guitar on top stave, bass on bottom stave) “Character B”



The image shows a musical score for guitar and bass, measures 87-90 of *Festino*. The score is written in 3/8 time and features a tempo marking of $\text{♩} = \text{♩} \approx 108$. The guitar part (top stave) and bass part (bottom stave) both feature triplet figures. The guitar part includes a dynamic marking of *mp* and a fermata over the final measure. The bass part also includes a dynamic marking of *mp* and a fermata over the final measure. The score is characterized by a swinging, sauntering feel due to the triplet rhythms.

Not surprisingly, the guitar line outlines many of the prevailing intervals. Davidovsky is a master of preserving certain compositional elements while others change. As was demonstrated in the *Synchronisms*, this is the core of capturing

transformative experience in music. Here, we see common intervallic content preserved over contrasting tempo and character material. Dramatically, it is as if we are witnessing another side of the same person; we recognize the face, the clothes, but isn't he acting a little strange?

Of course, everyone betrays their true identity soon enough. Broad triplet harmonics in the guitar and bass over *tremolo* in the cello and viola point back to earlier sections, as does a tossed off reference to the three-note motive in m. 99.

Ex. #186 *Festino* mm. 99-103 “Motive sets off chain reaction in ensemble”

The image displays a musical score for measures 99-103. Measure 99 features a guitar part with an 'ord.' (order) marking and a dynamic of *mf*. The string section includes a cello/viola part with 'arco ricochet' and 'col legno batt.' markings, and a bass part with 'arco' and 'Sul E spicc.' markings. Dynamics range from *p* to *mf*. Measure 100 is marked 'secco' and features a guitar part with 'bridge' and 'side front' markings, and a bass part with 'pizz.' (pizzicato) markings. The string section continues with 'arco' markings. Dynamics include *f*, *ff*, and *fff* 'sempre intenso'. The score includes various performance instructions such as 'a tutta forza' and 'arco'.

This motive sets off a chain reaction, and the anguish simmering underneath emerges in m. 100-102, with ascending nested triplets outlining minor ninths and major sevenths. If the contrast in earlier sections was between reflection and flippancy, here it is a shift from smugness to violent insecurity. The markings of *a tutta forza* and *sempre intenso* underscore the gravity of the moment. One wonders what transgression warranted this outburst. Never mind, it carries over into the first section in the work for strings alone, a seven bar assault of hyper-expressive, *vibrato*-soaked material. Upon closer examination, the material is not all new however.

Ex. M. #187 *Festino* 109-110 “Material generated from primary motive”

The image shows a musical score for three staves, numbered 109 at the beginning. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one flat. The middle and bottom staves are also in treble clef. The music features complex rhythmic patterns, including ascending nested triplets. Dynamic markings include *sf* (sforzando) and *f* (forte). There are also markings for *a tutta forza* and *sempre intenso*. The score is divided into two systems by a vertical bar line. The first system covers measures 109 and 110, and the second system covers measures 111 and 112. The music is highly expressive and features a variety of rhythmic values, including sixteenth and thirty-second notes.

The chords consistently reference familiar intervallic structures, and the grace note figure (expressed as sixty-fourth notes in the viola in m. 109) that carries the entire phrase grows out of the three-note primary motive from the beginning. Wherever the building blocks came from, it is clear the these seven bars represent an expressive

departure from what had come before, and one that has significant implications on the dramatic narrative of the piece.

It is worth noting that this hyper-expressive character in the strings is first introduced almost exactly one third of the way through the composition. As in *Synchronisms #10* and *Synchronisms #5*, Davidovsky is fond of toying with the expectations of the listener. In an electro-acoustic piece, the listener expects to hear the electronics, but instead waits four and half minutes before they enter in *Synchronisms #10*. In a percussion ensemble work, one expects bombast and excitement, and instead gets *cantabile* lyricism. In an ensemble piece including strings, the listener expects to hear long, lyrical lines, but instead hears gestures imitating a guitar for over one hundred measures. When the strings are given free reign, the pent-up energy explodes into a triple *forte* passage laden with pathos.

When the guitar reenters, it does so somewhat apologetically, with a sextuplet figure that lacks the previous swagger, followed by a halting phrase that evokes the three-note motive before climbing awkwardly towards an E harmonic.

Ex. #188 *Festino* m. 111 “Apologetic sextuplet figure”



The arrival in m. 113 comes as another surprise; it is a C major chord, and becomes a C major ninth chord with the addition of a D in the bass and guitar in m. 115. After establishing the intervallic pillars of the first section, Davidovsky has introduced a new sonority to listen for, and one that undoubtedly will return in key structural

moments. Just as he used this chord to smooth the transition into the slower tempo area, he uses it to retransition back to the original tempo, this time held over a fermata.

Ex. #189 *Festino* mm. 112-115 “Cadential arrival on implied C major chord”

The viola reasserts the original tempo with straight eighth-notes, dragging the rest of the ensemble along. They readily assent, with an airy triplet figure in harmonics, reminiscent of the texture in the very brief transitional bar, m. 86. Meanwhile, the guitar part plays a *tremolo* swell over the top, on C-sharp, a minor ninth above the viola, thereby marking the section change intervallically. This texture holds for several bars, with short questioning interjections suggesting the earlier quirky character, as if the group was considering where to go next. A 5/16 bar of ascending harmonics in m. 119 grasps for the downbeat with a deeply felt gesture. A 3/16 bar answers the call, and the strings play a long line of detached, skittering thirty-second notes, as the guitar flits about, eventually strumming thin chords in the high register.

Ex. #190 *Festino* mm. 124-127 “Returning to Character A”

By the time m. 128 rolls around, it is clear that the piece has arrived back at its opening Character A, complete with the plucky three-note motive, and the clever composite instrumentation. A sudden outburst in the viola and cello, followed by urgently strummed chords in the guitar, indicates that the melodrama of the previous section has now spilled over. After another intense nested triplet figure in the cello in m. 133, the whole ensemble reaches fever pitch, with more *a tutta forza* chords and emphatic triplet rhythms.

Ex. #191 *Festino* m. 133 “Character C, melodramatic”

The image shows a musical score for four staves, likely for a guitar and piano. The first staff is in treble clef, the second in alto clef, the third in bass clef, and the fourth in bass clef. The music is marked 'a tutta forza' (all forte) and includes a 'pizz.' (pizzicato) instruction. The score features several triplet markings (indicated by a '3' over a bracket) and a '7' marking. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature change to B-flat. The second staff begins with an alto clef and a key signature change to B-flat. The third staff begins with a bass clef and a key signature change to B-flat. The fourth staff begins with a bass clef and a key signature change to B-flat.

While Davidovsky may expend extreme effort to avoid fulfilling expectations, sometimes his trickery backfires. By now, a keen listener would expect that the extreme dramatic moment would be followed by lighthearted material, providing comic relief. That is exactly what happens in mm. 135-136, when the guitar plucks short sixteenth-notes and a 5/16 bar signals another cadential arrival.

Ex. #192 *Festino* mm. 135-138 "Lighthearted material diffuses gravity"

Musical score for measures 135-136. The score is in 4/8 time and consists of four staves. The first staff begins at measure 135 with a *mp* dynamic. The second staff begins at measure 136 with a *mp* dynamic. The third and fourth staves continue the musical material. The key signature has one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 4/8.

Musical score for measures 137-138. The score is in 4/8 time and consists of four staves. Measure 137 is marked *sul pont.* and *sff*. Measure 138 is marked *ord.*, *mf*, and *pp*. The first staff has a circled *sff* and the word *UNISON* written in large letters. The second staff is marked *arco* and *pp*. The third staff is marked *sul pont. (coarse)*, *v*, and *f*. The fourth staff is marked *n.*, *sul pont. (coarse)*, *arco v*, and *f*.

The arrival on a unison D is drawn out by the viola thirty-second notes that are then passed on to the guitar. Davidovsky combines this texture, taken from m. 61, with the coarse, *sul pont* string writing from m. 16. The strength of this cadence is due to its registral, textural, and rhythmic qualities. Malloy writes that “any registral event can be cadential: the arrival of some high notes, or some low notes; a sonority that reaches both extremes, or a contraction of the overall texture into a very narrow register and so on.”⁴⁶ In this instance, the writing directly before the cadence is in the high register for all of the instruments, and they drop to earth for the downbeat of m. 37. The rhythmic character leading to the cadence is somewhat erratic, especially in the strings, and the grid-like momentum that occurs right after the downbeat in the viola part is consistent with an occasional tendency towards “more forward momentum at a cadence.”⁴⁷

The sustained *tremolo* chord in the guitar makes a reappearance in m. 139, again outlining a major seventh and a tritone. The subsequent several measures maintain a warm quality, as the strings play vocal figures around guitar commentary. In m. 151, lyrical strains in guitar reemerge with an *espressivo* quintuplet. The periodic isolation of the guitar from the other instruments humanizes *Festino*; these are the passages that Davidovsky tends to imbue with the most intimate meaning, in contrast to the figures that demonstrate an electro-acoustic inspired synchronicity. An eerie calm hovers over the piece for the next fifteen measures, as the guitar and viola play unison figures that seem to float timelessly, despite the sense of suspense that they create.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 68.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 65.

Ex. #193 *Festino* mm. 162-165 (guitar on top stave, viola on bottom stave) “Unison figures in viola and guitar, Character D”

The image shows a musical score for guitar and viola, measures 162-165. The top staff is for guitar and the bottom staff is for viola. Both staves show unison figures with slurs and accents. The bottom staff starts with the word 'simile'.

Analysis: Structural Mid-Point and Motivic Interlock

At this midway point in the piece, the drama reaches somewhat of a standstill, not unlike the “mid-life crisis” described earlier in *Synchronisms #6*. The carefree nature of the music at the opening is only momentarily disturbed by that which lurks underneath. As the piece progresses, the anguish that was only hinted at early on comes to play a larger and larger role in the story. No longer can the ensemble simply slough off the latest outburst, they have become paralyzed, wary of turning their backs lest another fit of melodrama ruin their lighthearted romp. Several factors create the sense of anticipation that pervades the section from mm. 155-167: the sudden assertion of rhythmic articulation in the bass in m. 159 that triggers an immediate response from guitar and viola, as if they are waiting, on their toes; the chromatic line in guitar and viola that searches carefully, up and down, for a note to settle on; the variable length of each sustained note of the phrase that suggests a constant insecurity. This is highly dramatic music, guided only by a genius sense of where the piece has arrived at this point, and how to hold the listener’s expectations in the palm of one’s hand.

Ex. #194 *Festino* mm. 156-167 “Mid-life crisis”

The musical score is divided into two systems. The first system (measures 156-161) shows a violin part with a tremolo (v) and a piano part with 'legato assai' and 'pizz.' markings. Dynamics range from *ff* to *f*. The second system (measures 162-167) features a violin part with 'simile' and 'ord.' markings, and a piano part with 'arco (punta)' and 'pizz.' markings. Dynamics range from *f* to *mf*. The score concludes with a G-flat-B-flat dyad in measure 167.

When the tension does break, it does so not with a violent rhythmic outburst, nor with a drastic textural change, but instead with a subtle change of harmony. Just as a virtuoso director of a horror movie fakes out his audience by preparing them for an axe murderer and delivering the protagonist’s brother, Davidovsky builds up considerable suspense, and resolves it by simply settling on a G-flat—B-flat dyad, suggesting a G-flat major chord, thereby softening the texture. In a piece with so few implications of simple tonal harmony, the arrival on a major third based on G-flat in m. 167 is a clear allusion to

the similar notable occurrences of its tritone related major third based on C in m. 86 and 113.

The calm is briefly interrupted with another jump out of your seat moment in m. 169, when the guitar articulates a quick phrase in thirty-second notes that wakes up the ensemble on beat two of m. 170.

Ex. #195 *Festino* m. 169-170 “Rhythmic trigger in guitar”

The image shows a musical score for measures 169 and 170. Measure 169 features a guitar part with thirty-second notes, marked *mf*. Measure 170 shows the guitar playing a tritone-related major third (C and F#) with a *ff* dynamic. The ensemble (violin, viola, and cello) plays sustained octaves in unison with the guitar, marked *p* and *fff*, with the instruction "senza vib." (without vibrato).

Instead of following a calm moment with more energy, Davidovsky returns to the contained, introspective character, albeit without the sense of suspense. In m. 173, the guitar enters with sustained octaves, again in unison with the viola. It has become clear that the reserve that characterized the material since m. 140 is not a mere episode, but instead represents a transformation of the mood of the piece. Davidovsky is keenly reflecting something of human behavior in the way he handles the unfolding drama;

many times in life we go inward in response to frequent assaults on our comfort. Brody correctly identified Davidovsky's "quarrel with aesthetic complacency", but he stops short of discussing its dramatic implications. Any quarrel will eventually drive its participants towards introspection, whether out of fear of further tension, or out of the need for self-evaluation. In this instance, the participants are distinct expressive characters, the comic and lighthearted versus the tragic and hyper-expressive. Until the midway point of *Festino*, the two engage in a constant battle for attention and primacy. This extended period of repose in the middle of the work is a musical reflection on the quarrel, *Festino's* maturation process, if you will.

No surprise then, that when the guitar part gives way once again to a section for strings alone, the predominant character is weariness. Gone are the bombastic pronouncements of the three-note motive from the last string *tutti*. They are replaced by longer lines as the hyperactive thirty-second note material is transformed into embellishment material for principle notes that swell and recede.

Ex. #196 *Festino* mm. 186-187 (strings only) "Motive becomes embellishment material"

The image shows a musical score for strings, measures 186-187. The score is written for four staves. The first staff is the Violin I part, the second is Violin II, the third is Viola, and the fourth is Cello/Double Bass. The music features a three-note motive (G4, A4, B4) that is embellished with longer lines and swells. The tempo is marked *mp* (mezzo-piano). The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

The viola finishes this lament with a descending quintuplet, reversing the direction of this earnest gesture that occurred earlier in the piece in an ascending guitar line. This marks the ebb of the work, as the viola settles on its lowest note, C, sustaining sourly over a B in the cello and B-flat in the bass (forming two minor ninths).

Ex. #197 *Festino* mm. 191-193 “Guitar grows out of viola low C”

The image shows a musical score for measures 191-193 of the piece *Festino*. The score is written for four staves: Violin I, Violin II, Cello/Double Bass, and Guitar. Measure 191 begins with a 4/8 time signature. The Violin I staff has a quintuplet of eighth notes descending from G4 to C4, marked *mp* and *ff*. The Violin II staff has a quintuplet of eighth notes descending from B4 to C4, marked *pp* and *fff*. The Cello/Double Bass staff has a sustained note C3, marked *ff*. The Guitar staff has a sustained note C3, marked *ff*. Measure 192 shows the continuation of these parts. Measure 193 shows the guitar entering with a new line, marked *ff*. The score includes dynamic markings (*pp*, *mp*, *fff*, *ff*) and articulation markings (*assai*, *n.*).

Suddenly, the viola C all of a sudden gains strength, and it grows mightily into a guitar entrance on a quick, rearticulation of the same C. In hindsight, it seems that Davidovsky has intentionally prepared the note C as a crucial transitional note in the work, and one might suspect that it will make another appearance.

The guitar follows this dramatic entrance with an ascending septuplet gesture, as an optimistic response to the viola’s recent moribund quintuplet. The *tremolo* that follows in all four instruments is constructed of three major sevenths, followed by a chord in the guitar that is built on a tritone and minor ninth.

Ex. #198 *Festino* mm. 194-197 “Cadential arrival indicated by intervals and repose”

This moment, despite its quality of expressive ambiguity, deserves characterization as a significant cadence. Malloy identifies a Davidovskian technique of using “priority” pitch organization to function in cadential harmonic arrivals.

The departure from and return to a quasi-tonic sonority--a pitch or collection of pitches given priority over other pitches--is an occasional cadential device in the *Divertimento*.⁴⁸

This construction of major sevenths, minor ninths, and tritones is as close as *Festino* has to a tonic sonority. Its occurrence here, alongside a slowing of the pace of music, a prominent fermata, and the beginnings of entirely new material all reinforce the contention that m. 197 represents a major cadence in the piece, albeit a dramatically ambivalent one.

The extended section from m. 140--m. 197 is notable in another respect--it represents a large swath of music that is relatively unconcerned with articulating a composite mechanism. There are moments where the instruments work together, but

⁴⁸ Ibid. 32

there is more of a distinct feeling of the expressive content of the individual instrumental parts. The entrance in m. 198 directly quotes from *Synchronisms #10*, and in so doing reintroduces the "sound" of electronic music into the piece.

Ex. #199 *Festino* mm. 198-199 "Imitating electronic textures"

The image shows a musical score for measures 198 and 199. The score is written for four staves. The first staff is marked '198 a tempo' and 'mp'. The second staff is marked '(pizz.)' and 'mp'. The third staff is marked 'arco' and 'pp'. The fourth staff is marked '(pizz.)' and 'mp'. The music features a mix of notes, rests, and dynamic markings, with a vertical line indicating the start of measure 199.

The bass and guitar have a last minute conference, both individually weighing the pros and cons of jumping back into the ring to face the aesthetic quarrel head on. Their dialogue is disconnected, however, as if they are two people in the same room talking, but not exactly to each other.

Ex. #200 *Festino* mm. 204-211 “Synthesis of skittish character, odd groupings, and melodramatic string texture”

The image shows a musical score for a piece titled "Ex. #200 Festino" in measures 204-211. The score is written for guitar and strings. The guitar part is on the top staff, and the string parts are on the bottom staves. The score includes various dynamics such as *espressivo*, *mp*, *mf*, *pp*, *f*, and *mf sempre*. There are also performance instructions like "ord.", "con sord. arco", and "pp sempre (match guitar) legato assai". The score features complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and groups of four notes in the space of three beats. Handwritten annotations in red ink are present, including "204" at the beginning, "208" near the start of the third system, and "Contour" and "Ma-ty" near the end of the second system.

The disconnection between the instruments is enhanced by how dissimilar the rhythms are in the individual parts. While the guitar plays figures that combine the skittish character of passages such as mm. 42-43 with lyrical phrases in groupings that are superimposed over larger beats (i.e. four notes in the space of three beats, or five notes in the space of four beats), the bass lopes along with triplets, articulating wide melodic leaps. The passage mixes the melancholic with the comic; the bass’ attempts at intimate lyricism are vaguely pathetic, and the guitar line sounds cartoonish as it darts around above the lower line.

The material in the guitar part here is drawn from a combination of sources. First, the quick, fragmented thirty-second note groupings are developments of the kind of writing that form Character A, here transformed into phrases with more lyrical shape. The singing lines, grouped in fours, fives, and tens, reflect the earnest material that was characterized by quintuplets earlier. Taken together, the two characters suggest a conversation with oneself, a sort of rhetorical weighing of the options between various characters that have evolved in the piece. Meanwhile, the bass provides the emotional content for the passage, with wide, vocal lines, reminding the listener of the weariness of the previous section and of the deeply expressive quality of Character C. But with a bold major seventh leap on the downbeat of m. 211 and the coordinated unison entrance on the second beat of the bar, it becomes clear that the work has regained its long sought after direction.

Analysis: Structural Climax and Motivic Synthesis

There are significant similarities between the subsequent section and the suspenseful passage of music between mm. 154-167. In both cases, the guitar and viola are paired in unison, playing sustained notes that vary in duration. And in both cases, those lines are chromatic and in the higher registers. But some other crucial differences transform this passage, giving it more determined and focused energy.

Ex. #201 *Festino* mm. 212-215 “Increased middle-ground activity and unbroken melodic ascent”

The image shows a musical score for three staves, likely representing the guitar, cello, and bass. The score is divided into measures 212, 213, 214, and 215. The top staff (guitar) features a melodic line with notes like G4, A4, B4, C5, and D5, with dynamics ranging from *mf* to *mp*. The middle staff (cello) has a more active line with *pizz.* and *col legno batt.* markings, with dynamics from *p* to *mf*. The bottom staff (bass) plays a descending line from D5 down to E3, with dynamics from *f* to *pp*. The score includes various performance instructions such as *simile*, *secco sul pont.*, *sui pont.*, *con sord.*, and *dolce, espressivo molto*.

Instead of wandering around pitch-wise, searching for a note to settle on, the viola and guitar begin their ascent, and stick with it, all the way up to a high G-sharp in m. 221. Meanwhile, the activity level on the middle ground and background levels is much higher. The cello plays little popping *pizzicato* and percussive noises, and the guitar answers these with a second line underneath the primary sustained voice. The bass continues to play very expressive, vocal lines, starting in m. 214 way up high on a D, and proceeding all the way down to its lowest note E in m. 220. The contrary motion between guitar/viola and the bass creates an inexorable push to the end of the phrase.

In this remarkable section of eleven measures, Davidovsky combines three of the main characters in the piece: noble (in the guitar and viola), melodramatic (in the bass), and quirky (in the guitar and cello). After an intense section of searching, introverted material, Davidovsky integrates disparate elements of the piece in an attempt to begin to synthesize them. Any great work of art must at some point contend with the conflicts that

are born within it, and this passage beginning in m. 211 signals the beginning of the culmination of the work.

A peculiar passage interrupts the momentum, however.

Ex. #202 *Festino* mm. 223-225 “Expansion of ascending triplet motive from m. 11”

At this moment, Davidovsky inserts material from a totally new tempo area, *piu lento*, and expands upon a rather insignificant motive from earlier in the work, the ascending triplets from m. 11.

Ex. #203 *Festino* m. 11 “Ascending triplet material”



Why does Davidovsky opt to complicate the dramatic landscape here? Why not plow ahead straight toward the climax that he has set it up so skillfully? Perhaps the answer lies again in his penchant for fighting “aesthetic complacency” and flaunting expectations. Of course the listener expects the run up to a climax, it is clear that this is where the texture is going, especially after a section that fuses the different characters so adeptly. Not to mention, didn’t the program say this was an eleven-minute piece? Well, he doesn’t have much time left, only about three minutes, and there’s the necessary accumulation of energy, and the climax itself...he’d better hurry up.

All the more reason to insert a short, subversive few bars of material that has been neglected thus far. Who knows, perhaps the whole piece thus far was merely a prelude to this moment, and now this material will serve as the launching point for the rest of the work. Davidovsky is taking a page out of author Italo Calvino’s *If on a Winter’s Night a Traveler*, where the author starts ten novels and abandons each after the first ten pages.

But alas, Davidovsky only toys momentarily with post-modernism; as has been discussed, his neo-classical streak runs strong, and he returns dutifully to the task at hand in short order. He writes just enough material to pull the joke off, and then, for fear of losing the listener altogether out of sheer frustration, sounds a clarion call in m. 225--the three-note motive, articulated in the guitar on a C, a minor ninth over an accompanying B natural.

Back on track, the downbeat chord of the *Tempo primo* includes a major seventh and tritone outlined between the cello and guitar.

Ex. #204 *Festino* mm. 226-229 “Intervallic pillars indicate resumption of structural momentum”

The image shows a musical score for measures 226-229 of 'Festino' by Davidovsky. The score is for a string quartet and guitar. It includes the following details:

- Tempo:** *Tempo primo*, quarter note = 160.
- Measures:** 226, 227, 228, and 229.
- Key Signature:** One sharp (F#).
- Instrumentation:** Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Cello, and Guitar.
- Dynamics:** *p* (piano), *mp* (mezzo-piano), and *f* (forte).
- Performance Instructions:** *arco senza sord.* (arco without mutes), *pizz.* (pizzicato).
- Notation:** The score features various rhythmic values, including triplets, and dynamic markings with hairpins.

The guitar takes the opportunity to smooth over the transition from the diversionary triplet measures with two triplets of its own, but even the ensemble arrival

on beat two of m. 227, with the minor ninth between the viola and guitar, reinforces that the texture is firmly back on track. The next three measures are fairly unique in the piece in that the instruments emphatically reiterate pitches that they are holding. When the guitar leaps out of this dense texture in m. 230, it is with a bravura gesture that combines the rhythmic energy of the opening character with the hyper-expressive registral leaps and longer lines of the more introspective middle section.

Ex. #205 *Festino* mm. 230-231 (guitar only) “Bravura gesture in guitar”



This extreme expressive moment in the guitar proves to be a catalyst, as the cello and viola begin a long build towards the climax. This phrase is dominated by the cello part, as it grows in intensity and rises in register.

Ex. #206 *Festino* mm. 240-242 (from top to bottom – guitar, viola, cello) “Guitar articulates cello arrival notes in build towards climax”

Throughout the passage, the guitar articulates certain arrival points in the cello line with unisons that punctuate the sustained note. In mm. 241 and 242, the range of the cello line outlines a major seventh and minor ninth, D--C-sharp and D--E-flat. Finally, the tension built up by the cello explodes in a downward torrent of notes in m. 243, which is quickly picked up by the guitar and viola and reversed in direction.

Ex. #207 *Festino* mm. 243-248 “Character A provides climactic material”

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system covers measures 243 to 245. It includes staves for Violin I, Violin II, Cello, and Double Bass. The Cello part is marked with *ff* and *cresc.*. The Violin parts also feature *ff* and *cresc.* markings. The Double Bass part is marked with *ff* and *cresc.*. The second system covers measures 246 to 248. It includes staves for Violin I, Violin II, Cello, Double Bass, and Guitar. The Guitar part is marked with *fff* and *pizz.*. The Violin parts are marked with *fff* and *pp*. The Cello part is marked with *fff* and *pp*. The Double Bass part is marked with *fff* and *pp*. The score includes various performance instructions such as *a la corda*, *pizz.*, *sul pont. (coarse)*, and *ord.*. A *Rag.* marking is present in measure 246. The overall dynamic range is from *pp* to *fff*.

The climactic material is drawn from the cell-like motives in the opening of the piece. Davidovsky places the groupings squarely on the beat, giving the music command and definition. The staggered entrances between the three instruments intensify the sense

of exploding energy. The E pedal in the bass gets progressively louder, creating dissonance along the way as the entrances occur on major sevenths and minor ninths above. The cello, viola, and guitar play together in m. 245 and 246 in visceral rhythmic unison. The addition of a 9/16 bar expands on the use of 3/16 measures in the piece at structural high points. The final entrance of the three instruments on the third dotted eighth-note of the bar articulates this division into three bars of 3/16. The bass finally joins on the second eighth-note of m. 247, as the cello rips into a coarse, *sul pont* growl to punctuate the final phrase. All four instruments careen down to a snap *pizzicato* on beat four of m. 247. The final scream happens on the second sixteenth-note of m. 248, with the guitar playing a raw *rasgueado* chord (built on two tritones, a major seventh, and a minor ninth) and the strings digging into double stops.

Davidovsky prepares the climax of *Festino* brilliantly. The first half of the work is energetic, with dueling characters quarreling, and instrumental virtuosity flexing its muscles. The energy turns inward in the middle section of the work, after a series of melodramatic outbursts casts a cautious veil over the texture. Nevertheless, one can feel stored up energy brewing underneath--during the suspenseful passage between mm. 154-167, throughout the determined section in mm. 211-221, and even lurking in the background behind the offhand joke of mm. 223-226. The explosion in the climax does not require a Mahlerian build up, lasting several minutes. Because of the deft handling of the dramatic tension, the moment is truly ripe for release. By choosing passagework that grows out of the character of the opening, Davidovsky both creates a natural release in returning to crucial material and completes a structural circle by linking to the beginning of the work.

Davidovsky's aesthetic. The sideways glances, the dissembling phrase muttered under one's breath--this is what is being expressed by fusing noble octaves with awkward slides, uncomfortable pops, and strange percussive hits. Davidovsky's music is brutal in its honesty; it lays bare the pathetic nature of human experience.

The guitar regains its rhythmic intensity in m. 255, with a burst reminiscent of similar passages in mm. 159 and 169. This event triggers the composite mechanism into action, and bars mm. 256-257 are again reflective of the influence of his electronic music in their meticulously coordinated attacks and arrivals.

Ex. #209 *Festino* mm. 256-257 "Composite ensemble mechanism"

Perhaps the listener would expect that Davidovsky will use this synchronous event to launch back into extroverted material and close the work. Instead, he returns to the reflective mood, again writing a passage for strings alone.

Ex. #210 *Festino* mm. 262-268 “Character D, reflective, string only”

The image shows a musical score for strings, measures 262-268. The score is written for five staves: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabasso. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo and mood markings are *pp*, *calmo*, and *molto legato*. The instruction "quasi senza vib." is written above the Violin I and Violoncello staves. The score features a series of long, flowing lines with many slurs and ties, indicating a highly legato style. There are some specific markings: a "2" (second) above the Violin II staff in measure 264, and a "3" (triple) above the Contrabasso staff in measure 268. The music concludes with a cadence on a low C in unison across all string parts.

Ever cognizant of balance, Davidovsky equalizes the primary role of the guitar directly after the climax with this passage for strings. The mood is one of empty resignation, replacing the complex mix of characters in the guitar part. Each instrument flows easily from one note to the next, with none of the directional intensity of the previous string *tutti* sections. The strings cadence together on a low C in unison, returning to this structurally significant note. After a *crescendo*, there are two desperate calls, first with just the strings, and then *tutti*.

Ex. #211 *Festino* mm. 275-285 “Guitar mirrors lines in all string parts”

First, Davidovsky sends the guitar forward as ambassador in m. 249, to try and connect directly with the audience, but it is still regaining balance from the climax, and speaks haltingly, without clarity. The strings are featured next, banking on their lyrical capacities, but they only express an empty void. The desperate calls in m. 275 are pleas for inspiration to come, for some meaning to emerge from the struggle that has characterized the piece.

This meaning emerges in the passage from mm. 277-289, as the strings and guitar come together in hauntingly beautiful music. Each note in the guitar is doubled in one of

the string parts, as the guitar plays two interwoven lines. The strings hold onto some of the notes even after the guitar part continues on, as if to cradle each note even after the main line has moved on. The subtle juxtaposition of three against two in mm. 81, 83, and 87 lends the passage a lilting calm. In this crucial structural passage, Davidovsky returns to the most fundamental technique of integrating the guitar sound into the ensemble texture; just as in the opening of *Synchronisms #10*, the pitches articulated in the guitar stick in the air, giving a brief sense that the most ephemeral of sounds is not entirely fleeting.

Always guided by an intuitive sense of dramatic structure, Davidovsky finds his way towards profound meaning in the climactic section of *Festino*. He could have returned to extroverted material more quickly, but the work is, at its heart, a melancholy piece of art. Just as in life, sometimes it takes several tries to extract truth and meaning from an experience, and when these things hit us, it is often just at the moment of desperation, it is unexpected, and it is all too brief. Davidovsky's brilliance as an artist lies with his capacity to capture and express truths in his dramatic structure. His orchestration techniques, electro-acoustic analogs, characterization, unity of intervallic structures, and attention to sonic detail all serve this goal uncompromisingly.

Analysis: Coda

After the low C in the strings in m. 290, the bass plays a lumbering figure in triplets, followed by muted call to action in the guitar.

Ex. #212 *Festino* m. 291 (guitar only) “Material from Character A”



The guitar material is drawn from Character A, with registral leaps that have become more characteristic since the middle of the piece. The trickster in Davidovsky emerges in m. 293-294, when the undeveloped triplet theme from mm. 223-226 returns as a transitional element.

Ex. #213 *Festino* mm. 293-294 “Undeveloped triplet theme as transitional material”

Musical notation for Ex. #213, mm. 293-294. The notation is on four staves. The first staff is in treble clef and contains a triplet of eighth notes, marked *ff*. The second staff is in treble clef and contains a triplet of eighth notes, marked *p*. The third staff is in bass clef and contains a triplet of eighth notes, marked *p*. The fourth staff is in bass clef and contains a triplet of eighth notes, marked *mp*. The notation includes various dynamic markings such as *ff*, *p*, and *mp*. The notation also includes a *pizz.* marking. The notation is in 3/4 time and has a key signature of one flat (B-flat).

In this case, Davidovsky gets the last laugh. The quick change in character from spiritual to comic is typical of Davidovsky. It is almost as if he is uncomfortable with holding onto a moment of intimate musical truth for too long. After all, why shouldn't he be? The modern age is saturated with music that has no aesthetic restraint, bathing in “meaning” until all sound is meaningless. Davidovsky’s music derives its power from

this absolute unwillingness to engage in self-indulgence. Life rarely hands us poignancy and clarity that does not float away as quickly as it came, and for Davidovsky, aesthetics ought to reflect that. And humor is the best way to diffuse an emotionally charged moment.

What loose ends, then, are left to tie up? The climactic section culminates in a recasting of the energy of the opening section. The melodramatic character is developed before the climax, in the weary dissolution, as well as after, in the desperate attempts to come to terms with the emptiness left after the explosion. The brief triplet material, introduced originally as an insignificant motive, then flirted with as a possible new direction for the composition, fits in nicely as a retransitional element. But retransition to what? The only character area that remains unresolved is the material from the slower tempo, eighth-note equals 108 bpm, or Character B.

Indeed, Davidovsky turns to Character B and its swinging, slurred triplets for the coda. The material is introduced as before, with a 3/16 measure smoothing the tempo modulation. But this time, the viola leads the way with an authoritative descending sextuplet.

Ex. #214 *Festino* m. 297 “Viola leads to coda based on Character B”

The musical score for measures 297-300 is presented in four staves. The top staff is for the Violin, the second for the Viola, the third for the Bass, and the fourth for the Guitar. The music is in 4/8 time. The Violin part begins with a dynamic of *mf* and includes the instruction "sul pont." starting in measure 299. The Viola part starts with a dynamic of *p* and includes the instruction "a la corda arco" in measure 297. The Bass part starts with a dynamic of *mf* and includes the instruction "a la corda arco" in measure 297. The Guitar part starts with a dynamic of *mp* and includes the instruction "arco (punta)" in measure 299. All instruments play a similar rhythmic figure consisting of eighth notes, with triplet and sextuplet markings. The key signature has one flat (B-flat).

The bass and guitar begin their familiar phrase, again separated by a minor ninth, and accompanied by the viola, playing a minor ninth above the guitar. All four instruments play a similar figure together in mm. 301-302. This time around, the triplet phrases are slightly longer, as even this playful material has undergone growth.

boiling underneath at the beginning of the work remains. In m. 305, another 9/16 measure like the culminating bar of the climax, the frequency of the entrances of the three-note motive intensify, and the complacency is once again shattered with two loud attacks on the last beat. The guitar emerges from this sudden turbulence playing a quadruple *fortissimo* chord in *tremolo*, the harmony, of course, built on a major seventh and a tritone.

Ex. #216 *Festino* mm. 304-308

The musical score for Ex. #216, *Festino* mm. 304-308, is presented in two systems. The first system covers measures 304 and 305. Measure 305 features a guitar part with a quadruple fortissimo chord in tremolo. The second system covers measure 306, where the guitar part is marked with *ppp* and *senza vib arco*, indicating a cross-fade. The score includes various performance instructions such as *secco*, *a tutta forza*, *pizz.*, *coi legno batt.*, and *senza vib arco*.

In a gesture that reiterates the importance of an integrated approach towards the guitar writing in the ensemble, Davidovsky closes the piece by “cross-fading” the guitar

chord with a chord of the exact same pitches in the strings. Analytically, this confirms the influence of Davidovsky's electro-acoustic music as this gesture is drawn directly from studio techniques. Expressively, it answers the violent gesture at the end of m. 305 with a calm sigh of acceptance. The piece closes on the same chord, as the strings play a quixotic *tremolo* attack just as the sound fades to *niente*. Even to the bitter end, Davidovsky resists cliché; the almost imperceptible *tremolo* on the last beat reveals the trickster who needs to get the last word, just before the curtain closes.

Conclusion to *Festino* Analysis

Festino truly juggles several parameters in a virtuoso display of composition. On a purely technical level, the integration of the guitar into the unique ensemble is unparalleled, and the influence of Davidovsky's electro-acoustic style on his orchestrational approach is ever present, but never artificial. The pitch organization of the piece manages to maintain a transparent logic despite the fact that it adheres to no external harmonic system. Davidovsky introduces and successfully merges several contrasting characters, weaving together a powerful dramatic narrative that unfolds as a direct result of the interaction between these divergent materials. He wages a "quarrel with aesthetic complacency" and wins, managing to wrestle away from cliché and still fulfill deeply felt classical aesthetic needs. With Haydenesque wit, he subverts structural expectation at every turn, never succumbing to subversion for its own sake. Most importantly, *Festino* takes the listener on a journey that is compelling in its intense honesty, delivering on the sacred promise of capturing some kernel of truth in music.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

*To me composing is not a profession, it's something I like to do, and it's part of seven other different things I am. I have a moral level, I have a theological level, I am a tax payer... a million things that in a way are part of my music, that you are juggling—it is super polyphony in a way. Fundamentally, writing music is part of everything else.*⁴⁹

The richness in Mario Davidovsky's music is an outgrowth of his openness to receive aesthetic input from all aspects of his life. He consistently strives to express the facets of existence that fascinate him. When he was focused on the minute details of sound, he dove headfirst into the electronic studio and spent decades discovering new sonic behaviors. The *Synchronisms* series stands as a testament to this exploratory process, and also chronicles the development of an intense expressive language. This language strove to invent a new basis for continuity in music, as Davidovsky never relies exclusively on any of the systematic approaches to pitch, form, or rhythm that have been popular with his contemporaries. He discovered this continuity in several different places: sometimes he built structure from the sound of the instrument, sometimes he provided intervallic landmarks. All of this was guided by a keen intuitive sense of how to organize the “linearity” of music and provide a musical narrative. Later on, he applied what he had discovered about sonic behavior in the studio to new ways of approaching writing for acoustic instruments.

His interest in bringing the disparate facets of his own mind and personality into his music resulted in his attraction to the technique of motivic stratification. For Davidovsky, this experimental juxtaposition of elements in time has become a new

⁴⁹ Mario Davidovsky, interview by author, 15 March 2006, New York.

polyphony, a direction that music can go after the myriad experimentations with pitch and rhythm from the earlier twentieth century have been exhausted. But he does not stratify and intersperse contrasting material just for its own sake. Like Beethoven, Davidovsky introduces conflict into his music as a dramatic tool, so that the reconciliation of this tension will facilitate aesthetic catharsis.

From the point of view of the guitar repertoire, *Synchronisms #10* and *Festino* represent landmarks in terms of their approach to their instrument. But more importantly, they are positive assertions of the guitar's capability of integration into works that deserve their place among the most important of Davidovsky's oeuvre. Whenever the guitar is involved in seminal works by an iconic composer, it is beneficial for the future of the instrument.

These two works involving guitar exemplify many of the essential components of Davidovsky's style. *Synchronisms #10* takes the sound of the guitar as its "acoustical underpinning," and uses the electronic element to expand the instrument's range. *Festino* constructs a hybrid instrument, a "big guitar", that generates an expressive and gestural language all its own. Each work relies on intervallic coherence to provide signposts for the unfolding structure. While *Synchronisms #10* leans more toward monothematicism, and *Festino* towards motivic juxtaposition, both pieces represent concrete examples of Gryc's concept of stratification of material. Even within the carefully woven tapestry of these pieces, Davidovsky makes room for Haydienesque subversion of expectation. In *Synchronisms #10*, the listener waits over four minutes before the electronics enter the piece. In *Festino*, the string ensemble is often relegated to plucking and hitting their instruments, and at moments of high tension, extraneous and humorous material is

introduced from out of nowhere. There is a vigilance in Davidovsky's music that grows from an understanding that consistent fulfillment of expectation is a recipe for stagnation. By indulging the trickster within, he keeps the music fresh and the listener on their toes. Finally, each piece tells a powerful story that is at once focused on the sublimity of the local gesture, and directed towards structurally significant moments that are invested with intense dramatic meaning.

Davidovsky's obsession with balance, the "valve" inside himself as he describes it, is partially responsible for his recognizable individual style. Underlying the context of building drama between contrasting material and negotiating reconciliation between extremes of expression, his music exhibits a strong tendency towards ambivalence with a touch of cynicism. He referred to how this ambivalence extends to his spiritual outlook: "Theologically, on the side that I am on, ambiguity... white and black are simultaneous."⁵⁰

In this way, he may reveal himself as a product of the modern age. Whereas Enlightenment thinking emphasized the power of the educated individual, the past century's history reinforced the individual's futility. The kind of heroic character that we hear in a work like Beethoven's Ninth Symphony is very much a product of the tenor of philosophical thought of the time. Beethoven lived in an ecstatic point in intellectual history when optimism overflowed about the political ramifications of the new social awareness of the rights of the individual. After the ravages of the first half of the twentieth century, and the staggering destructive power of technology was unleashed with the advent of nuclear weapons, perhaps there is no context now for unchecked

⁵⁰ Mario Davidovsky, interview by author, 15 March 2006.

expressions of heroism, or melodrama, or joy. Davidovsky's need to balance the extroverted with the introverted, and tender intimacy with detached wit may be a byproduct of the neuroticism of our age. Any artist who strives to capture a full realm of human experience in our modern time must come to terms with this peculiar ambivalence that grows from the contemporary condition.

Many composers give in to an aesthetic paralysis, running away from expressions of profound human emotion for fear that they will fall prey to the acute modern radar for the trite or gushy sentiment. Davidovsky, on the other hand, takes the risk of infusing his work with profoundly personal moments, and delicately contextualizes them so that they never become overblown. *Synchronisms #10* and *Festino* both revolve around such moments, when the fog lifts briefly, and music is allowed to express deep vulnerability and clarity. These passages never last too long in Davidovsky's work, but neither do moments of intense clarity last very long in life.

*This is composition--the word by its origin means to put two things together, to compose. You bring things together that are totally unrelated, like a hard-boiled egg and a donut, and then you make something else with that, you put a hard-boiled egg in the hole of the donut and it becomes a glorified hard-boiled egg. Really the whole idea is to make of the donut a hard-boiled egg, and of the hard-boiled egg a donut.*⁵¹

⁵¹ Mario Davidovsky, interview by author, 15 March 2006, New York.

Bibliography

- Boyle, D. "The Ontology of Virtual Performance." *Context* 8 (Summer 1994-95) : 39.
- Cleamans, H.O.. "Mario Davidovsky's *Synchronisms #1*: An Analysis and Performance Guide." *Flutist Quarterly* 15 (Fall 1990) : 13-17.
- Davidovsky, Mario, interview by Cole Gagne and Tracy Caras, in *Soundpieces: Interview with American Composers*. London: The Scarecrow Press, 1982 : 132-140.
- _____. "A Conversation with Mario Davidovsky." Interview by David Starobin. *Guitar Review* 92 (Winter 1993) : 5-8.
- _____. Interview with the author. 15 March 2006, New York.
- _____. *Festino*. New York: C.F. Peters Corporation, 1994.
- _____. *Synchronisms #10*. New York: C.F. Peters Corporation, 1995.
- Gardner Malloy, Christopher. "Cadential Procedures in Mario Davidovsky's *Divertimento for Cello and Orchestra*." PhD diss., Brandeis University, 1998.
- Griffiths, Paul. *Modern Music and After*. Oxford: Oxford University, 1995.
- Gryc, Stephen. "Stratification and Synthesis in Mario Davidovsky's *Synchronisms #6*." *In Theory Only* 4 (Aug-Sept 1978): 8-39.
- Hodel, Brian. "Twentieth Century Music and the Guitar: Part Two: 1945-2000." *Guitar Review* 119 (Winter 2000): 8-18.
- Kimura, Mari. "Performance Practice in Computer Music." *Computer Music Journal* 19, no. 1 (1995) : 64-75.
- Paulson, J.C. "Electronic Pioneers." *Instrument* 41 (June 1987) : 40.
- Perea, Andrew R. "An Historical Overview, with an In-depth Study of Preparatory Techniques for Mario Davidovsky's *Synchronisms #9* for violin and tape." DMA thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1998.
- Schneider, J.O. "The Contemporary Guitar: The Search for New Sounds Since 1945." Ph.D. diss., University of Wales at Cardiff, 1977.
- Serrouya, Meir. *An Analysis of Mario Davidovsky's Scenes from Shir Ha-Shirim*. PhD, Brandeis University, 2000.

Soule, Richard Lawrence. "Synchronisms #1, 2,3, 5, and 6 of Mario Davidovsky: a style analysis." PhD diss., Peabody Conservatory, 1978.

Susser, P.M. "Attack, Sustain, and Decay: An Analysis of *Synchronisms #3 for Cello and Electronics* by Mario Davidovsky." DMA thesis: Columbia University, 1994.

Tosone, Jim. "David Starobin." *Guitar Review* 116 (Spring 1999): 13-19.

True, Wesley. "Man, Music, and Machines: Some Thoughts Generated by the Practice and Performance of Mario Davidovsky's Synchronisms #6 for piano and electronics." *Journal of the American Liszt Society* 9 (June 1981): 50-54.

Vita

1976 Born in Brooklyn, New York

1990 Began formal guitar studies with Dr. Nicholas Goluses of Manhattan School of Music

1992 Attended Bowdoin Summer Music Festival, studies with David Leisner

1994 Enrolled at the Oberlin Conservatory, Stephen Aron's studio

1996 Transferred to Cleveland Institute of Music, John Holmquist's studio

1998 BM Cleveland Institute of Music

1999 MM Cleveland Institute of Music, Jason Vieaux's studio

2006 DMA Manhattan School of Music, David Starobin's studio

© Daniel Lippel, 2006