An apocalyptic music is one which entertains the prospect of a terminal state of affairs, be that in connection with ideas, society, the planet, the person--whatever is of greatest importance to the mind shaping the musical artifice. This terminal state can be one brought about by transcendant or divine intervention. Post-Enlightenment thinking, however, favors the notion of it being brought about by immanent forces. Nevertheless, it is definitely a music about fall, destruction, and, sometimes, the hope of the establishment of a new order, a new harmony. And regardless of what effects the terminus, the artistic expression of apocalypse asks: "If the end of my world were to take place, what would it mean for me, for us? What would it be like?"

So, the following will address mainly a music which *consciously* engages such a perspective. It will not be designed to support a general theory which treats all authentic art music as being apocalyptic in some sense. This is what Frank Kermode does, in effect, in connection with literary fiction. In his theory (espoused in *The Sense of an Ending*), it is advanced that, since fiction is an attempt to make a beginning, transformative middle, and end which are concordant, it owes its design to fictions about *the* End, the most influential in the West being that of the Apostle John, written when he was exiled on Patmos in the late 90's

of the first century. As he shows, even the "tick-tock" of a clock, which is the simplest of plots, is illustrative of the need to make time articulate and, thereby, to give ourselves some basis for predicting and understanding the end or, at least, an end. True, the kinds of distinct concords that used to seem vital to the fictive experience are no longer seen as such. Note the following quote from *The Sense of an Ending*:

"When tragedy established itself in England it did so in terms of plots and spectacle that had much more to do with medieval apocalypse than with the *mythos* and *opsis* of Aristotle. Later, tragedy itself succumbs to the pressure of 'demythologizing'; the End itself, in modern literary plotting loses its downbeat, tonic-and-dominant finality, and we think of it, as the theologians think of Apocalypse, as immanent rather than imminent. Thus, as we shall see, we think in terms of crisis rather than temporal ends; and make much of subtle disconfirmation and elaborate peripeteia." 1

Here, after contrasting the rectilinear way of perceiving history (the Christian medievalist way) with the cyclical (the classical Greek way), a very valid point is made that is generally applicable. Certainly the same could be said for today's music. Music of the Western tradition truly did at one time rely upon, indeed its very substance was defined by a resistance to and final succumbing to cadence. Furthermore, it was a cadence more universally understood as such. The reason for music's having moved beyond such a point is summed up in what Mr. Kermode goes on to relate next:

"Such a concordance remains a deeply desired object, but it is hard to achieve when the beginning is lost in the dark backward and abysm of time, and the end is known to be unpredictable. This changes our views of the patterns of time, and in so far as our plots honour the increased complexity of these ways of making sense, it complicates them also." 2

So, the same general connection between all fiction and the apocalyptic tradition can also be made respecting music. But this immanentizing of the eschatological phenomenon does not take away from the idea that there still is a musical category which could be termed "apocalyptic".

Also, it will not be the goal of what follows to show that art music, particularly that of European composers living and working in the wake of World War II, has been marked by an increasing concern or interest in either imminent ends or immanent ones and that this is essential to an authentic art. But some among this generation have made important contributions to the literature which have been inspired by what could be called an "apocalyptic vision."

Before going on to detail some of the common (not, in the sense of being common to all but in the sense of being frequently encountered) factors, or tropes of a such a post-World War II musical category, the essentiality and centrality of concern with fall (decadence), destruction, and aftermath (whether that be a joyous or hopeless one) is well evidenced in the following quote, a product of pre-World War I German

Expressionism:

With dead figures of heroes The moon is filling The silent forest. O sickle moon! And the mouldering rocks all round With the soft embraces Of lovers, The phantoms of famous ages; This blue light shines Toward the city Where a decaying race Lives coldly and evilly, Preparing the dark future Of their white descendants. O moon-wrapped shadows Sighing in the empty crystal Of the mountain lake.

George Trakl's "Abend" (1913)3

In Trakl's work, as in that of his contemporaries, there is a symbolic system devoted to the Expressionistic yearning for the end of an age. And some of these symbols are clearly borrowed from the Biblical tradition, such as the sickle which reaps the necessary harvest of destruction before the advent of paradise. In the case of those in Trakl's circle this would have been interpreted as the destruction of the wicked bourgeois, the time of clearing away materialism before the establishment of a new innocent and spiritual race, one fully in touch with its instincts. The

sickle was an important feature in Franz Marc's painting as well and functioned there also as a betokening of a welcomed apocalypse.⁴ Moon and sickle both were prominent symbols in the art of that generation. In music, one could cite as an example Arnold Schoenberg's settings of the symbolist poet Albert Giraud in *Pierrot Lunaire*. In that work, No. 13, *Enthauptung* (Beheading) in particular reminds us of the moon as executioner, as deliverer of adverse judgement. Such an apocalyptic vision was marked by a decided yearning for a termination of an existent decadent order. And it saw such an end, even if cataclysmic, as necessary before the new age could be ushered in. It's hope was not in the gradual reformation of the existent order. In keeping with that, the movement with which it was attached sought to establish a new set of artistic values, an art more purely of spirit, an abstract art.

The inclusion of this reference to a past apocalyptic art was for the purpose of underscoring how a concern with *decadence*, *imminent end*, and *aftermath* are essential features of this particular category. Now, in what ways are these things manifested in certain works of post-World War II European composers? Though we may not speak of common "symbols" in the same way that it was possible to at the beginning of the century, we could speak of commonly encountered "features". They are as

follows:

- (1) Catastrophic Imagery
- (2) Expanded Sense of Time
- (3) Numerology
- (4) Anxiety of Doubles
- (5) Polystylism

This does not purport to be a complete listing. Yet these are all practices, qualities, motivations, and/or attitudes appropriate to an apocalyptic music. They could serve other purposes as well; so it would be wrong to categorize them *exclusively* as apocalyptic. A purely instrumental music which does not deal explicitly or implicitly with an apocalyptic text or that has not been expressly designated by its composer as being concerned with a terminal vision is difficult to so categorize. But it is possible to study those works which are the result of a conscious effort to deal with such themes and, on the basis of our observations, formulate a kind of composite paradigm. The above listing, later to be defined, is the result of such a study.

As an aid to understanding the apparent motivations of those composers we might dub "apocalyptic", it is useful to distinguish between the two principal kinds of apocalyptic *thinking* in the West: the Sacred

and the Secular. Both do exist still; and even though the latter is by far the most frequently encountered in high art (with its adaptation of certain sacred tropes), there is no reason to discount the validity of expressions of transcendant hope based on traditional notions of God and faith in divine intervention. Sacred apocalyptic further divides into these categores: (1) world end and/or millenarianism, and (2) individual apocalypse or the "hereafter". In mainstream Christian theology (excluding more radical fundamentalist movements), belief in an imminent end to the present system of things is not nearly as important anymore as belief in paradise entered into upon ones death. Perhaps due to tragic attempts at literal, earthly millenia (e.g., Jan van Leyden's theocracy at Muenster in the 16th century), the former notion is generally kept under wraps. Hence, many apply Biblical passages referring to any paradisaic restoration to what follows in the heavenly realm after the death of the body. In this kind of apocalyptic we see a more cyclical conception of history. Yet this idea lives side by side with the possibility (albeit in the indefinite, distant future) of history's culmination in the so-called "end of time".

In modern secular thinking, a belief in linear progress towards an improved state, without any a priori notions of help from a divine source,

has developed concurrently with a belief in immanent ends, rather than imminent ones, a belief which assigns eschatological significance to each and every moment. This constitutes a general acceptance of the historical present as perpetually transitional. In a sense, in this belief one sees, as he does with mainstream Christian thought, a co-existence of triumphant progress with the stabilizing influence of cyclical perpetuity. However, such a positive modernist view of apocalyptic has not totally disarmed a belief in "imminent apocalypse". All one has to do is consider the Jeremiads decrying the threats to the earth's environment posed by shortsighted industrial endeavors, the still present threat of vast nuclear destruction, as well as the threats to the world's economic systems (as they all become more and more inextricably linked). The uncertainties of the times still leave many, if not most, quite anxious, if not filled with a certain dread. Eschatological anxiety is not without hope, however. Indeed, it thrives on it. The end is not yet. The obverse of this anxiety is the phenomenon of eschatological ennui, exhaustion, a symptom of a "postmodern" critique which reveals the vainglories of faith in progress, in technology, but cannot clearly offer any alternative. Some also, in fact, have averred that the end of history as linear progress could be seen in the end of the "cold war", in the absence of a central ideological tension (or

power struggle, at least), and in the predominant choice by nations of the liberal democracy with a market-based economy for their governmental structures. If the end of history has been reached, then why act upon history, why endeavor to change it? Or, even if it hasn't been reached, are we not all hapless and helpless victims of history anyway? A resignation to either a violent end or an entropic one may be concealed occasionally by outburts of hopeful enthusiasm; but for the most part such enthusiasm is considered either naïve (ill-founded) or manipulative. One is only free to sensate, not to act with any guarantee of effecting positive, meaningful change in either his own sphere or that of others. Here, then, is the summary of the three sub-categories of secular apocalypticism: (1) immanent apocalypticism, (2) eschatological anxiety, and (3) eschatological resignation or even exhaustion, characterized by acute ennui and a questioning of any sincere enthusiasm. The first category of thinking would give rise to a music which may be teleological in design, yet balances its outward directionality with elaborate concurrences of underpinning perpetual cycles. Since it epitomizes the ideal well-ordered modern mind that reserves some hopefulness in humanistic progress, it is not a music which is overtly apocalyptic. The immanentizing that Kermode discusses amounts to a disarming or muting of a radical idea.

Hence, the following will not deal with what might be considered a noncategory.

Now it is left to discuss specific examples of composers and works, contrasting their approaches and defining the 5 features earlier listed (as they are evidenced in the works). A more detailed discussion of a single work--of Heinz Holliger--will follow in order to give a more complete "revelation" of how a particular approach is given form.

There is an apocalyptic music which is *confrontational*, purposefully and very obviously manipulative. It attempts to wake the listener up to the need to make some change before it's too late, by giving some suggestion of terrible, destructive action. Or the function of giving a warning may be dispensed with and the music allowed to serve mainly as a document of present stresses.

In the first case, a work from 1970/72, *Inwendig voller figur*, by Klaus Huber (a composer not well known in the United States) comes to mind. Huber's music is very much the product of someone who considers it important to be actively engaged in extra-musical issues, be they political or religious, and sees his work as a composer as an integral part of such engagement. The title of this work (translated "inwardly full of figures") is derived from a statement made by Albrecht Dürer regarding

his particular aesthetic stance. In fact, the series of woodcuts on the Apocalypse of John that he made in 1498 along with his fantastic dream image of 1525 (eerily predictive of atomic mushroom clouds and nuclear fallout) were primary inspiration in the Huber work. Two different times in Dürer's writings he makes mention of how a good painter is "inwardly full of figures."⁵ It has been said that, especially earlier in his career, such an expression referred to a spontaneous flow of images, inward creation, which is a special gift of God. Yet, Dürer was far from being solely an intuitivist. His painstaking studies of perspective and proportion were unprecedented for their time, rivaled by none, at least in Northern Europe. Unlike Da Vinci, however, it has been pointed out that Dürer was not so much interested in uncovering "universal laws under the bewildering multiplicity of sensations and phenomena" as he was "having an experience, and being able to savour it..."6 So, appropriately, Huber pays tribute to Dürerian techniques of measurement and proportion management in his own use of ratios applied to the allotment of time for given events. But at the same time it is understood that such craft ultimately serves an extra-musical purpose, something that lies outside of the realm of building elegant musical worlds, namely, that of alerting his audience to the real danger posed by treating the Apocalypse of John

as myth, something so distanced from reality as to not deserve our attention. In a sense, we can see Huber, who could easily be dubbed a mystic just by virtue of his decision to deal with somber religious themes and to deal with them as a believer, attempting to remove such a vision from the purely supra-rational. Some of his statements regarding *Inwendig voller figur* make that apparent:

"The enlightened centuries-particularly the 19th and the early 20thbelieved themselves superior to the extent that they disposed of the visions of horror and destruction as absolute magic, the products of diseased imaginations in a euphoric (in modern language psychodelic) condition.

Beginning with World War II and the year 1945 with its atomic mushroom, which Dürer forestalled by 425 years in his "Dream Vision", it enters our rational-materialistic consciousness ever more that there never has been a time in which the primeval fright of the destruction of life on our earth was more justified than today, although in a significantly modified form: the fear of a self-destruction of mankind."

Huber earlier in the same essay explains his goal in writing a music which engages the apocalyptic perspective:

"...I do not write extremely engaged music with the intent to change the social structures by it. Rather, I create this engaged music in order to shock and thus change the empathic experience and hence the consciousness of the listener by the shock and the turbulence of the musical statement."⁷

Inwendig voller figur is a work for divided choir, tape (using the sounds of choir, trombones, and percussion), orchestra, and amplified solo voices.

The deployment, at 4 strategic moments, of terrific sonic outbursts,

usually preceded by calm or, as in the case of the second one, a sudden timpani summons reminds one of the 4 winds of the great tribulation held back by 4 angels, alluded to in chapter 7 of John's Apocalypse.

The structure of John's book as a whole is not a tight narrative, even though there is a dynamism to be witnessed in the individual visions. In fact, the sequence of events is not to be understood from a laying down of the 15 or 16 separate visions end to end, because more than one vision may actually refer to the same event. Such an expanded non-chronological time consciousness is reflected in Huber's work, which does not select texts from the Apocalypse in any kind of chronological or scriptural order. The delicate and tentative ending, with low harp, low men's voices singing in whispers, then a single voice after a very brief collage of spoken texts, accords nicely with Huber's conception of Inwendig voller figur as remaining an incomplete work. It reminds one of the rather non-final and still expectant tone with which John's book itself (and, thus, the whole Bible) ends: " 'Amen! Come, Lord Jesus.' [May] the undeserved kindness of the Lord Jesus Christ [be] with the holy ones."--Revelation 22: 20b, 21 (New World Translation)

In the Huber work it is possible to isolate three important features which are appropriate to an apocalyptic music: (1) the use of numerical-

particularly measuring or geometrical--techniques in the service of a transcendental art (as opposed to a pragmatic one), taking Dürer as a model; (2) the utilization of or even capitalizing on images of catastrophe, shocking outbursts; and (3) temporal distortion or a non-chronological temporal orientation. The individual moments do not lack dynamism, but the sequence as a whole is not governed by a linear narrative; and the end is purposefully incomplete in effect. Admittedly, the first feature could be considered too general a rubric. Afterall, isn't "number" a core issue in all music? But, numerology, it must be remembered, was an important feature of the sacred in Bach's and Schoenberg's music. To a composer dealing with apocalyptic themes, numbers have an allegorical meaning, in addition to being a vehicle for structural organization. And, even though the particular proportional schemes--the numbers or ratios--may not take on symbolic significance in themselves in Inwendig voller figur, this numerological bent is seen in the very act of paying tribute to the methods of an artist who, especially in later years, felt that the study of proportion and perspective in nature, was essential to eventually achieving that stage when "the stored-up secret treasure of the heart is manifested by the work and the new creature which a man creates in his heart in the shape of a thing."8 Measurement is a necessary part of the

instruction leading to the ability to bring into existence that which was not--a divine privilege the artist has who has been entrusted with it by God. This is quite compatible with the aim of de-mythologizing Apocalypse. Number, ratio (whence comes the word "rational"), rather than being closed off from the transcendant, divine categories, is intercessory. It actually participates in neutralizing the mystical (the distanced, irrational, and unreal aspects of the Divine) and brings us face to face with the power of God as an understood and even intimate reality (if not the power of God, then, at least the potential for total destruction if certain warnings go unheeded).

The second and third features--what we could call sonic *icons* of catastrophe and non-linear narrative strategies--figure prominently in the larger works of Bernd Alois Zimmermann. Two works come to mind: Requiem für einen jüngen Dichter and the opera, Die Soldaten (1965). Requiem für einen jungen Dichter (1967-69) is a work urgently apocalyptic, one whose premiere meant the life of its composer, who, sadly took his own life just six months later. The requiem is for a symbolic poet or a kind of composite poet-type who had tried and failed to endure parts of the same 50 years that Zimmermann had; however the poets Esenin, Mayakovsky, and Bayer, all who had committed suicide, are

examples of the poet Zimmermann had in mind. Their writings comprise a large part of the text montage of the work. The plurality of all times at once (what Zimmermann called the "spericality of time"), so important in *Die Soldaten* as well, is yet another example of the expanded time consciousness which is an important feature of an apocalyptic music. The correspondence between Zimmermann's idea and Augustine's ideas about the nature of eternity, God's time, can be seen from the following:

"The perception of past, present, and future is a question of point of view. The observer sits in the middle of a sphere. All around him is time, a continuum. What he sees at any given instant depends on his field of vision. This is because whatever happens becomes past at the instant of its occurrence; whatever we do determines the future; and the future has already determined the past--all modes of time are interchangeable." 9

"It is in eternity, which is supreme over time, because it is a never-ending present, that you are at once before all past time and after all future time."

"Your years are completely present to you all at once, because they are at a permanent standstill." 10

Appropriately, in the beginning of the *Requiem*, fragments from the *Confessions* of St. Augustine are heard over loudspeakers.

The great diversity of interwoven textual elements (eight different languages are heard; poetry of Aeschylus, Mayakovsky, Joyce, Pound, et al. is heard along with fragments of radio broadcasts and excerpts of The

Beatles' *Hey Jude*) combine with diverse musics (massive choral writing, virtuosic vocal solos, jazz interludes, etc.), which are many times simultaneously juxtaposed, to create an immense and opaque collage. The entire work at times seems like an ongoing explosion, an icon of the idealogical turbulence of the late 1960's.

The "Prelude" to Die Soldaten, composed after the body of the work was completed, is another classic example of such an icon of catastrophe. It is a concentrated five minutes which begins with an exploding tutti chord whose outwardly-flung particles seem to be moving at different speeds over the course of the piece. Some are, like the opening flourish of tubular bells, extinguished earlier than others. This slow-motion explosion features exchanges between the three principal groups of brass, woodwinds, and multiple divisi strings which then coalesce into an Iveslike multiplicity of separable surfaces. Only, here there are heard cliché gestural types, as opposed to recognizable quotes. After a precipitous drop in vertical density, all is paired down to decelerating high string clusters and organ. Additionally, there is the constant thread of the insistent but highly irregular timpani strokes, like a skipping heartbeat. But not only could one hear this as emblematic of fatal and fateful conditions; it is also possible to hear this as the cognitive element, the

watcher whose sense of time's passing is not a steady one, but is affected by the degree to which he is involved in or cooly detached from the things going on around him. The regularity of the beat would be directly proportional to the amount of cool detachment or obliviousness. It is also important to mention that the massive orchestra required to realize this massive explosion is far too large for most theatre pits. The batterie of percussion instruments alone would fill up most pits. So, in some performances, it has been necessary to divide the orchestra and station the one half at a different location, piping its sound into the main hall over loudspeakers.

In the music of Zimmermann, the apocalypticism is still of a confrontational order, even though it may not endeavor to serve as a warning to act before it's too late as much as it does as a document of present stresses. (Could we say that Zimmermann is, in effect, saying that it *is* too late?)

Next we come to a music which mocks an obvious and unambiguous suggestion of a crisis which is to be feared, a naïve apocalypse. It's as if telling us not to be deceived by the obvious, and at the same time not to get too comfortable, either. Or it could be trying to show the folly in taking "the end" too seriously. The latter comes close to being considered

a post-modern attitude which is dubious of any kind of "deeper meaning".

In this connection the examples of Peter Maxwell Davies and György Ligeti come to mind.

Polystylism is an important feature of some of the music of Maxwell Davies. As an apocalyptic device it can be used for two isolated purposes: as research of decadence and as an attempt at historical transcendance. When Zimmermann (and, as we will see in another example, Huber) made use of quotation or montage, it was often more in accord with the second purpose. In the 60's, Davies wrote many works which contained or highlighted the "fox trot", even then an outdated popular dance. (In fact, one work, St. Thomas Wake is subtitled "A Foxtrot for Orchestra".) But it constituted a vulgarity that "seems to offer escape into the safety of society, where music, unlike the music of private affectivity, has a known place with the hierarchy of socially accepted behaviour." 11 The incorporation of a variety of musical styles, particularly those attached to social manipulation like the television commercial, as "research of decadence" is taken to great heights in the recent opera, Resurrection. The opera's protagonist never talks or responds; it is a dummy that is victimized throughout by various societal institutions: well-meaning but limited parents (since they too are victims), the clergy, the school, the

medical profession, and the commercial media. Also, as in so many of Davies' works, there is the requisite appearance of the Antichrist, which is an example of yet another important apocalyptic feature, the anxiety of doubles.

Davies' interest in medieval numerology and isorhythm technique is a general characteristic of his music, particularly of the 60's and 70's. It must be recalled that 14th century isorhythm, in addition to serving the practical function of conferring a consistent structure upon a musical work, was consonant with the medievalist's enjoyment of an idea's existing, in the words of Grout and Palisca's History of Western Music, "partially in the realm of abstraction and contemplation rather than as something capable of being fully grasped by the sense of hearing" and in "concealed meanings, sometimes extending to deliberate, capricious, almost perverse obscuring of the composer's thought" (e.g., the stretching out to the point of unrecognizability of plainsong themes in the tenor parts of 13th century organum).12 Though not an example of obscurity, Ave Maris Stella, a work for six instruments from 1975, draws upon number mysticism in its use of a 9 X 9 magic square (derived from the "magic square of the moon") to control the ordering of pitches and durations.13 It is fitting that such a numerical configuration would be so

adapted, given that the twelfth chapter of Revelation refers to a woman arrayed with the sun, moon and stars. And the traditional interpretations of the text connect her with Mary. Also, Davies speaks of certain mathematical curves which, like concave and convex mirrors, distort a Pavan by John Bull, transforming it into the fox trots of *St. Thomas*Wake.14 Polystylism, the anxiety of doubles, numerology--all these conspire in the work of Davies to make him a quintessential apocalyptic composer. He has even dealt with issues of ecological destruction in *Turn of the Tide*, a piece written for his community in the Orkney Isles. But, as has been earlier posited, he deals with such themes for the purpose of urging his audience not to be taken in by the obvious, by appearances. In the foreword to the score of his *Vesalii Icones* (a work for dancer, cello, and chamber ensemble) Davies explains the function of the last movement:

"In the last dance, 'The Resurrection', the Christ story is modified. It is the Antichrist--the dark 'double' of Christ of medieval legend, indistinguishable from the 'real' Christ--who emerges from the tomb and puts his curse on Christendom to all eternity. Some may consider such an interpretation sacrilegious--but the point I am trying to make is a moral one--it is a matter of distinguishing the false from the real--that one should not be taken in by appearances." 15

Davies' juxtapositional and distortional techniques could be understood to serve a dialectical function, namely, that of pointing to a core morality which cannot be appreciated without first encountering the Devil. If we

take this statement as a general idealogical stance, it is possible to infer from it an ongoing dissatisfaction with the moral relativism of bourgeois culture in Davies' case. 16 Even though clearly critical of modernism, such is not what would commonly be considered a post-modernist attitude, if that is understood to be associated with a doubt of deeper meanings.

Ligeti, in his very comical apocalyptic work, Le Grande Macabre (1977), has an apparently different purpose. Havelock Ellis, in discussing J. K. Huysmann's Against the Grain, stated that "what we call classic corresponds on the spiritual side to the love of natural things, and what we call decadent to the research for the things which seem to lie beyond Nature." 17 Even if this be the case, then it would still not be possible to assign such a lofty purpose to the Ligeti work. And neither was this the composer's intention. Indeed, on first blush it seems to espouse a very light-hearted and hedonistic, live-for-today moral at its close. But even this moral is, like everything else in the opera, ironic. Unlike Des Esseintes in Against the Grain, a character on a very serious quest for a new sensuous experience that will alleviate his acute ennui, never to find one and only to be made sicker, the characters in Ligeti's Bosch and Brueghel musical landscape seem content with the pursuit of pleasure. Yet, simultaneously, there is the prescience of an apocalyptic end, which

does come after the arrival of another Antichrist/grim reaper figure,

Nekrotzar. He ends up getting involved in the same revelry that everyone
else does and falling victim to the same "end". After "the end", everyone
seems unsure whether or not they are dead. They conclude that, since they
still have a thirst for liquor, they must be alive still. The play by Michel
Ghelderode, upon which the opera is based, depicts Nekrotzar as a
charlatan in the end, whereas Ligeti leaves it ambiguous, like their deaths.

It has been proferred that such an ironic treatment of such a serious thing
as death and the end of the world is in keeping with a post-second world
war survivalist mentality. 18

The layering of distinct pulse cycles, especially in the overtures to the two acts, the use of novelty instruments (squeeze horns in Act I's overture), the quotation of older harmonic styles (end of scene 3 and throughout scene 4 in Act II)—these are all innovations which Ligeti had either at that time employed in other pieces, like the *Three Pieces for Two Pianos* (1976), or would take up in future pieces. One could see this as a step in the direction of the Piano and Violin Concertos. Both works make use of the ocarina (a novelty instrument); and, in the Violin Concerto, there is a turning back to an older melodic style, making his "rediscovery" of melody and harmony complete. In the sense that Ligeti

has always been primarily interested in building musical worlds, not deconstruction in either a dialectical or non-dialectical way, it would be inaccurate to label him as post-modernist, even if he incorporates and seems to re-contextualize pre-existent, older elements. He's actually more what could called a discoverer and rediscoverer. It is noteworthy that some of these discoveries have happened or have been tested out in apocalyptic works. It was in the *Requiem* (1965), which still uses comedy at times to confront the tragedy and monstrosity of death, that his rediscovery of harmony took place, it has been said. This ironic bent is a consistent world view, and may be the closest that Ligeti comes to offering social critique.

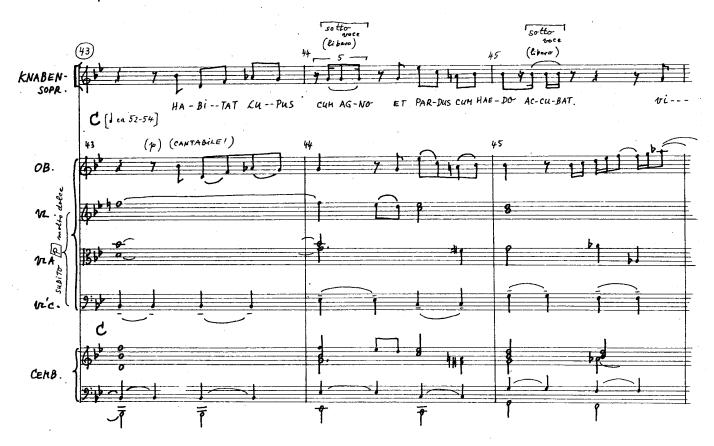
When one thinks of music which nurtures the utopian, the hope of paradise subsequent to great upheavals, one could consider the music of Luigi Nono, as well as Huber again. This would constitute our third category of approach. In Nono's case, his later works in particular do not instill in one so much the hope of a utopic future following catastrophe as they do an expanded time consciousness, an appreciation of time as always being "distant, future and nostalgic". This is particularly the goal of the piece with that title, *La lontananza nosalgica utopica futura*, for violin, 8 tapes and 8-10 music stands. The result of a collaboration with

violinist Gidon Kremer, La lontananza... is another in a series of "traveller" pieces which take their cue from a phrase Nono saw enscribed on the wall of a cloister in Toledo, Spain: "Caminante, no hay caminos, hay que caminar." ("Traveller, there are no roads, there is just the travelling.") The imbuing of time with the qualities of distance, nostalgia, utopia, future is a difficult one to grasp. But it may be understood as an agreement not to try to control time so. In this music there are fleeting, stumbled-upon paradisaic moments, glimpses of utopia. As the composer said,20 the 8 tapes, though independent of each other, "overlap, move away from each other, lose each other, come back, disappear, overlap and disappear again", resulting in "collisions--meetings--silences--interiors--exteriors--overlapping conflicts." There are two distinctive aspects of Nono's music often cited: (1) changes of timbre and dynamics ("pure sound") supercede interval and localized time control in importance; and (2) the compositional method is oftentimes inseparable from long hours spent with the prospective performers, with the final product not being finished until nearly the time of performance. This accords with a desire for, if at all possible, an informal intimacy with not just the sounds themselves but with those producing them. There is in the music of his later period not the urgency of a revolutionary hopeful. (He was well

known amony the 1950's and 60's musical avant-garde for his committed Marxism, and gave form to that in many important works.) It is rather a new form of a Romantic *Weltanschauung* whose ideal of time collapses reflection and prospection into a single distant utopia.

The mention of Nono's Marxism provides a nice link in this discussion with much of Huber's music of the seventies. At the end of the essay referred to earlier, Huber makes mention of and quotes from Ernesto Cardenal, a Latin American priest and poet who was imprisoned and tortured in his native Nicaragua for revolutionary activities. One of his modern Psalms, which are re-workings of Biblical Psalms, serves as text to Huber's Senfkorn (Mustard Seed), a work from 1975, for oboe, violin, viola, cello, harpsichord and young voice. After the point of maximum density and surface complexity in the work--accompanying the words: "Leadership will pass unto the meek (the 'pacifists') "--there is a quotation from Bach's Cantata No. 159, with the young voice singing in Latin the famous words from the 11th chapter of Isaiah: "And the cow and the bear shall feed: their young ones shall lie down together." The music at this point is in the form of a cross (Example 1). This is a point of commonality with Inwendia voller figur, where Dürer's Apocalypse woodcut images are copied into the score itself, as a background or frame. In Senfkorn, rather than awaking the general public to the prospect of dire consequences, faith in future societal change is thus engendered. The blessing and promise of God, emblematized in the Bach quote, which has already been introduced in fragments in the fractured, silence-ridden surfaces of the preceding music, is remembered anew. After its full presentation, according to Huber, the "freely set basic motifs of the opening" are heard "in augmentation", representing the "concretisation of the 'new' in the 'moments of supreme radiance.' "21

Example 1



There is, finally, an apocalyptic music which actually suggests or allegorizes what is actually a post-apocalyptic catatonic or autistic state. Such a work is Heinz Holligers's Scardanelli Cycle (1975-91). In this work there is also the anxiety of doubles, or actually the anxiety of "otherness", which was an important feature of Friedrich Hölderlin's poetry. It is the poetry of his madness which serves as the text for this evening-long cycle of alternating choral and instrumental works. The traumatic shock of being in urban crowds and of seeing "eyes which do not return one's gaze" was a modern phenomenon discussed by Walter Benjamin; and this alienation of one individual from another, like the separation of one second from another in cold, unfeeling chronicity, was thought by him to be a peculiarly modern condition, one whose aura was first captured in the poetry of Baudelaire. Yet, an earlier poet like Hölderlin (who was responding to the same political and idealogical developments as Beethoven, even similar personal ordeals) could also be seen as a poet of isolationalist trauma.²² It is in the poems that he wrote towards the end of his life while being cared for by a carpenter's family, some of which he signed "your humble servant, Scardanelli", that one witnesses a post-traumatic condition, a psychotic one, where the organization of time--the tracking of seconds, days, years--is no longer

necessary but is still kept up as a pretense. That is why he signed these poems with meaningless dates, some in the 17th century, some in the 20th. Hence, the music inspired by this is not unlike late Beethoven in some respects. While not completely lacking in subjective sensuous beauty, it is one of extreme autonomy, where the most objectivizing of all compositional systems--the canon--takes center stage. Hölderlin and Beethoven both were, as their contemporaries, disappointed by the failure of democratic revolutions in their day. The reconstitution of autocratic power was definitely a blow to their idealistic sensibilities, which prized so dearly the attainment of true freedom: freedom of the one and the many. So, much of their work could be seen as an attempt to assert the individual, the heroic, in the face of those objectivizing powers which threaten its freedom. Theodore Adorno felt that in late Beethoven the subject abdicates in order to preserve what freedom it may have, hiding behind a surface of canon, fugue, recitative, aria, etc., all variously juxtaposed in a not-too-obviously coherent way.²³ Hölderlin, perhaps, tried too hard and too long to realize in letters the illusive synthesis of subject and object (oftentimes by alluding to the past Golden Age of ancient Greece), and eventually suffered mental collapse.

The frozen and imprisoned nature of most of the works in Holliger's

cycle is manifested in various ways. After a survey of these various manifestations, it will be left to subject one piece from the cycle--"Der Frühling III"--to the requested "closer reading".

In both the instrumental pieces--Exercizes for Scardanelli (1975-85), (T)air(e) for solo flute (78-83), and Tower Music for flute, small orchestra and tape (1984)--and the a capella choir pieces--The Seasons (1975-78)-that make up the cycle there is utmost attention given to processes of inertia and insularity. The use of canon, natural harmonics, harmonies derived from the harmonic series, formal transparency, and homorhythmia contributes to the woefully self-enclosed nature of this sonic world. The act or process of "going somewhere", of development (which is the one opportunity that the "self" of dialectical thought has of proving its integrity in the "real" world), is reduced to a mere "comment" about such in a remarkably palpable way. This is not to say that these simple textures do not hold manifold irregularities, densities and complexities of sonority, particularly when quarter tones and eighth tones are present. Also, in the world of temporal organization there exists the absolute antithesis of homorhythmia when, in "Der Sommer I" of The Seasons, each voice in the group of 6-8 female voices participating in the canon is directed to execute the syllabic setting of the text according to

her own pulse rate (one syllable/note per pulse beat). The tension between a "public time" and "private time" is set up and displayed in a quite novel way thereby. In "Der Herbst I" (Autumn), one of the homorhythmic pieces (at least in terms of attack points), the flow of time is at the whim of the conductor, who indicates when and for how long a chord is to sound. What adds to the complication is that there are 4 different vocal groups which are assigned to each of the chords in the long succession that will sustain their chords either until the next chord that they sing, or, according to the conductors right hand signal, until just after the beginning of the next chord in the succession, or just after two chords into the succession, or for just a very short time. Overlapping duration and spatial separation thus contribute to an implied polyphony. Added to this is the fact that the bass voices in the group must sing, if possible, in what is called a "straw" or "dummy" bass register. (Their lowest note is the A two octaves below middle C!) Hence, there is the necessity and direction to discreetly reinforce this line with instruments playing very softly. The other parts are equally as extreme in what they demand registrally from the singer. This is because the chords themselves are derived from the overtone structure of the bass line. What is thereby created is a score which looks and reads more like a game chart and a situation that makes transcendental (maybe utopic) demands on the virtuosity of the singers and management skills of the conductor. And to what end is this tremendous effort directed but to the realization of a tensionless harmony, both in terms of succession and sonority!

One other example, an instrumental one, that should be mentioned in passing is "Ice Flowers" for seven strings, from the *Exercizes for Scardanelli*. Based on Bach's chorale "Come, oh death, brother of sleep", "Ice Flowers" is a work which capitalizes on the soothing sonority of what may be associated with a Divine or heavenly harmony. It is not only its basis in the Bach chorale that aids in that association. Since all sounds are "pure", all being natural harmonics, there is an ethereal glow or halo about anything approaching tension. Yet again, tensionless, slack harmony is created, though now imbued with this Divine or heavenly aura.

Interestingly enough, "Ice Flowers" has a "double" in the cycle in "Winter I" of *The Seasons*, where the notes of "Ice Flowers" become rests and the rests are filled in with a spoken declamation of the syllables of the Winter "Scardanelli" poem.

Taking a closer look at "Der Frühling III" will show how this tensionless harmony exists even in a tempered sound world, one laden with historical implications which demand addressing. Reproduced below

is Michael Hamburger's English translation of the poem.

Spring

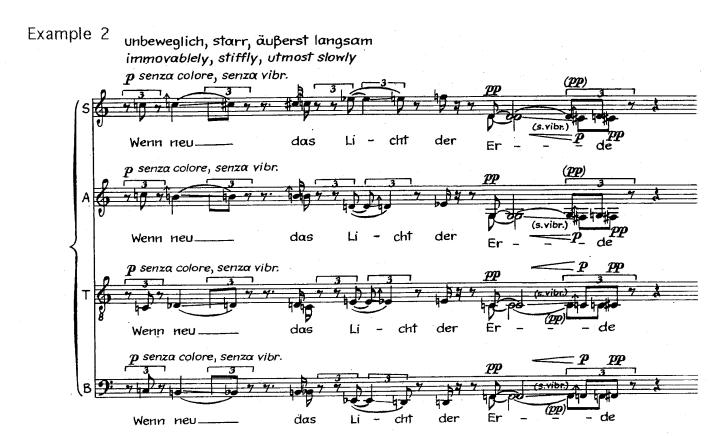
When light to earth has been revealed again, The green vale glistens with spring rain, and right Down the bright river gleams the blossom's white After a clear day has inclined to men.

By vivid contrast visibility gains, The spring sky in its quietude remains, So that a man in undisturbed reflection Sees the year's charms, aware of life's perfection.

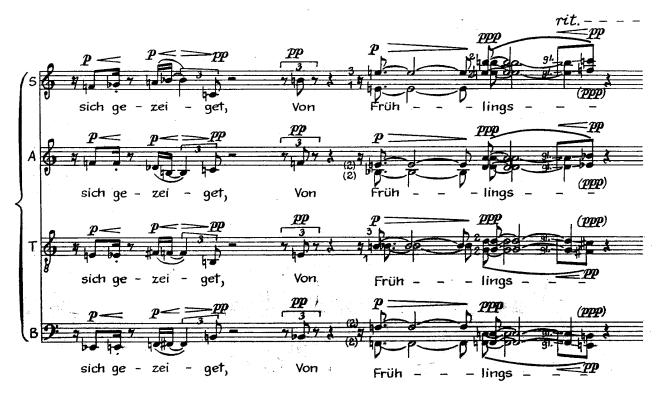
In Example 2 we notice contrary motion pairs (Soprano+Alto, Tenor+Bass) as well as an expansion on the idea of contrary motion, which, in its severest form is exact inversional symmetry. The Soprano on the word "das" ascends a near-minor 3rd (discounting the 1/4 tone inflection: C - E-flat) while the Alto descends a major 6th (which is the inversion of the minor 3rd). So what is ostensibly asymmetrical is, on another more abstract level, an intensification of the symmetrical. Also, it is worthy of mention how the later arrival of the Soprano on the E-natural ("cht" of "Licht") is as if being related to a fuller augmentation of interval (a complete minor 2nd). The earlier arrival in the Alto is on D-1/4 tone sharp (an incomplete minor 2nd). Together, after both arrivals, there is formed a near major 9th (D-1/4 tone sharp to E). But this is a precursor of the true or exact convergence of all 4 parts on paired "true" minor 9ths. Also,

back on the word "das" one notices how both of the contrary motion pairs divide and restate as simultaneities the pitch space that had been defined in the first three beats. The pairing symmetry is also to be noticed in what is different, as well as what's similar: in the first 3 beats, the upper pair is microtonally inflected, seemingly giving us a compressed version of the lower pair which is not microtonally inflected. The first sign of loosening up the severe symmetry is to be found in the Bass, which goes down a perfect 5th to E-flat on the word "Licht". But this facilitates the overarching goal, which is the pairing of near major 9ths at the end of beat 6. Then, when the true major 9ths arrive in the next beat, it is a kind of resolution, though ill-treated durationally. In the secundal harmony which intones the word "Erde" at the end of the line, one notices links of the octave (between Bass and Alto) and the fifth (between Tenor and Soprano), not just an example of symmetry but a betokening of the everincreasing presence of the perfect interval.

Example 3 provides the first example of oblique contrapuntal motion, between Soprano and Alto in the first beat. A comparison with Example 4, the next line in the piece, reveals an inversion and transposition of the two parts (a "mock" invertible counterpoint as it were), with the repeated note now in the Soprano, on B-flat. The lower



Example 3

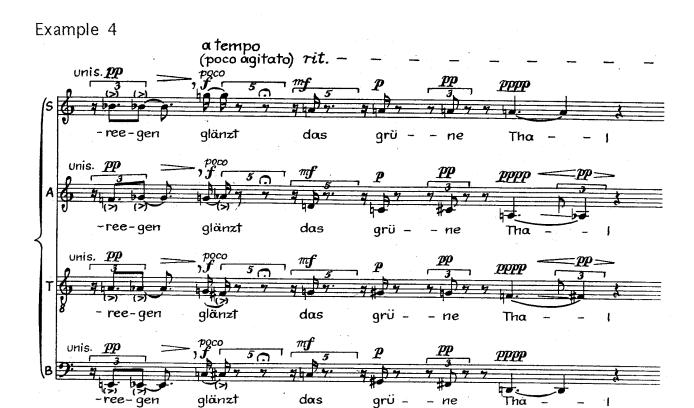


voices in Example 3 are involved in cross-relations; and it is easy to connect the F to F-sharp in the Bass (on "Zei") with the F to G-flat in the Soprano in the preceding beat, an instance of pitch or pith-class circularity. Notice the following convergence on a minor 9th in the 3rd beat: no longer a pairing of intervals but a joining of the two contrapuntal pairs to make one interval. The saturation of minor 2nd (or minor 9th) calls for a change in sonority. And that is indeed what happens. The melodic interval of a tritone (descending diminished 5th in the Tenor) is then projected onto the vertical sonority which sets "Von". Once again, there is a pairing of intervals which are distanced by a semitone-tritones, representing the uninvertible, the most fundamental symmetry offered in the tempered sound world. After a revoicing of this sonority which is interlocking, joining rather than separating the two groups, there are the surprising perfect 5ths which, in the tight sweep of their glissandi, define a larger cross-relation and, in their points of initiation and termination, fill in the 12-tone aggregate. It's now as if there is no place to go, the whole area having been staked out.

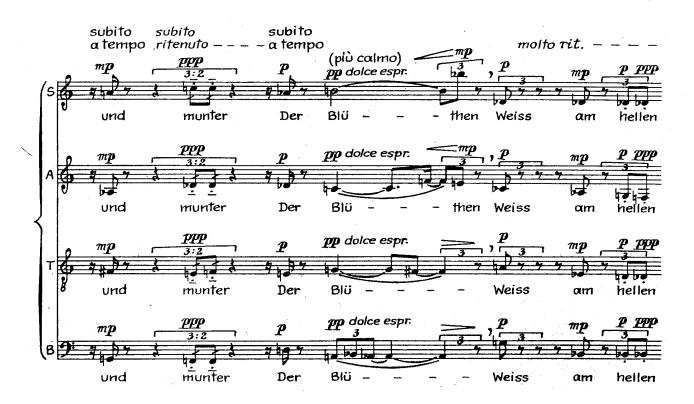
So, in order for something to happen, there is need for a more relaxed contrapuntal structure. Example 4 is marked by more oblique counterpoint, indicative of overarching harmonic concerns, particularly

those connected with sonority. There is still a high degree of symmetry, particularly between the Alto and Tenor, which progresses logically from exact to near exact inversional symmetry. The Soprano clings to an A, making it the center of attention, the pivot around which the sonority modulates. The D minor chord on "Tha" of "Thal", comes as a surprise for two reasons: The three chords preceding it move according to a certain logic which is denied (perfect 5ths a major 2nd apart on "das"; to a major 3rd with an enclosed minor 2nd--[0 1 4]--on "grü"; to a perfect 5th with enclosed minor 2nd and minor 3rd on "ne", combining the two preceding sonority types); and there are no semitonal connections between the minor triad and the chord before it (the three bottom parts leap down to their positions in the triad), only the common tone connection.

There is a break from secundal harmony at the end of the florid melisma which sets "Blüthen" (Example 5). The whole-tone tetrachord of E, F-sharp, G-sharp, A-sharp is then followed by one of its complements (G, A, B, C-sharp) on "Weiss". This line is marked by an unprecedented amount of pitch repetition. Note how, in the last beat, the outer voices hold on to the D-flat and B-flat which then become the outer members of a B-flat minor triad. This time, in contrast with the D minor triad of the previous line, there is a much tighter connection with the preceding



Example 5



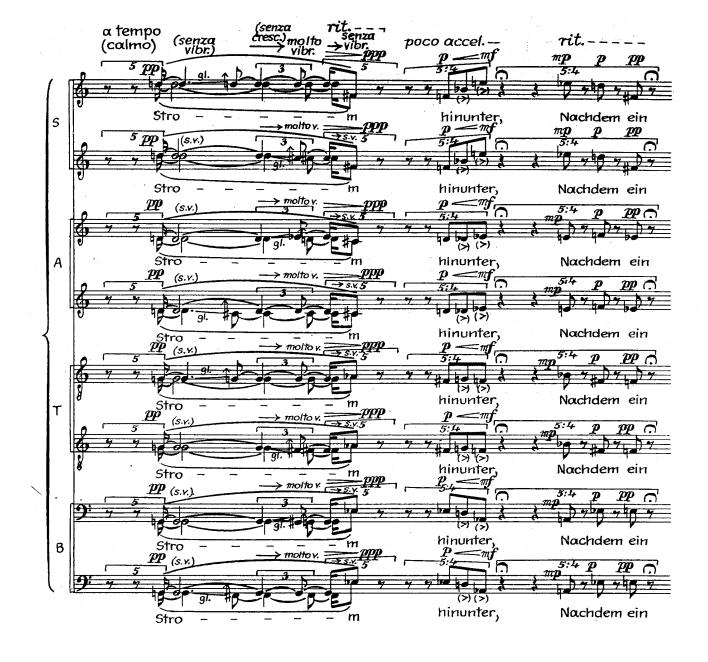
sonority assured by a stepwise descent in the middle parts.

The grand perfect 5th (multiple divisi) of Example 6 is subjected to a high degree of inflectional distortion before it leaps to, in contrary motion, two perfect 5ths which are a major 2nd apart. The voicing of the beginning and end points of this event is significant. From a voicing which divides the two members of the interval up between the gender pairs (D to Sop. & Alto, G to Ten. & Bass) to a voicing which assigns two different 4ths to the gender pairs (C-sharp and F-sharp to the women, E-flat and A-flat to the men)—here we have yet another example of the play of symmetry! Also, though, there is to be witnessed in this example the careful modulation of sonority, mentioned earlier. The two minor 3rds (a minor 2nd apart) at the beginning of "hinunter" signal a movement back to a secundal palette of chords, validated by the chords which follow in the example.

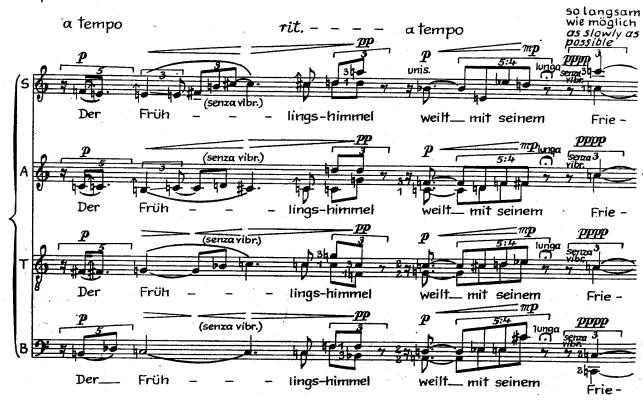
The beginning of the setting of the second stanza is like the first, starting on C's. But there is a more pronounced use of 1/4-tones and a less severe or apparent kind of symmetry in the counterpoint. It is as if what came before resulted in a "freeing up of the line".

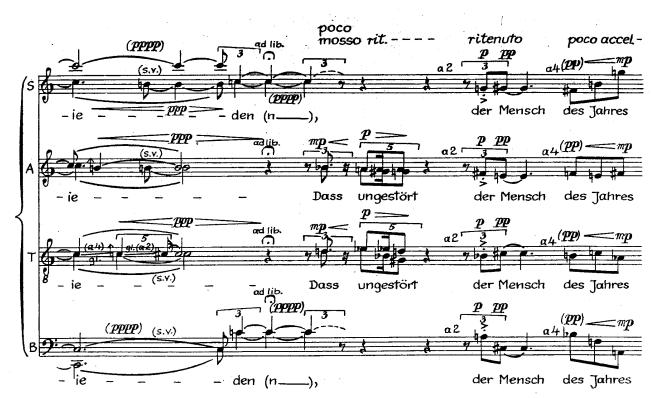
Example 7 contains the most extreme case of perfect consonance in the piece, the widely spaced, *pianississimo* C octave. After its distortion

Example 6



Example 7





and disintegration there is the C-sharp minor triad lurking just around the corner (on "Mensch"). One is tempted to view this as an intensification of the opposition of major and minor, since there have been no major triads in the piece. And it must be mentioned that the C major triad (as an acoustically pure entity, sapped of all tension) plays an important role in "Der Winter III", along with its instrumental double, "Die Ferne Klang" ("distant sound"). "Der Winter III" was actually composed before "Die Frühling III", so it is quite possible that the C major chord is the goal towards which our C octave is tending or pointing to.

Our closer reading of one of the pieces in *The Seasons* has shown that, like the poem it is a setting of, it is largely about symmetry and lack of tension. There is modulation of sonority; but this is perhaps mere syntax, as it assists mainly in an oscillation between different types of chords, not in any general transformation. The poem can be read on its surface as a gentle musing about the beauty following a rainstorm, until we arrive at the last phrase, "life's perfection" ("Lebens achtet"). Not that these words are given any particularly special treatment in the setting; however, they perhaps provide a key to understanding not only the reason for abundant symmetry in the setting (since such is often equated with perfection or completeness), but also the many ironies, not only in this

but in all the pieces making up the cycle. What kind of an expert could a man gone mad be on perfection? What could be more imperfect than one's having lost sanity? Or could it be that the autism of such a state is the nearest one can get (at times, we hasten to add) to any kind of perfection in this life, the only way to appreciate the simple beauty of a canon or of a Spring day, in fact, the only way to spiritual liberation?

With these perhaps disturbing questions it is necessary to close. The foregoing has aimed to show that there are 4 different approaches to engaging the apocalyptic perspective to be seen in the music of the post-World War II avant-garde. In reduced form they are: (1) the confrontational; (2) that which is skeptical, especially of the obvious; (3) the utopic; and (4) the post-apocalyptic. Some of the common features of such a music include the following: (1) catastrophic imagery; (2) an expanded sense of time, a "vision" time; (3) numerology; (4) the anxiety of "Doubles"; and (4) polystylism. Having surveyed this terrain, it is hoped that one not only has received an enhanced sense of what has gone into the making of an apocalyptic music but could, by drawing upon the discussion of this particular paradigm, begin to relate other musics to phenomena and perspectives which exist outside of music proper.

Notes

- ¹Kermode, Frank. *The Sense of an Ending* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 30.
- 2lbid, pp. 30,31.
- ³trans. David Luke, appearing in *George Trakl-A Profile* (Manchester: Carcanet Press Ltd., 1984), p. 65.
- ⁴Levine, Frederick S. *The Apocalyptic Vision-The Art of Franz Marc as German Expressionism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), pp. 123-137.
- ⁵Panofsky, Erwin. *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), p. 280.
- ⁶Levey, Michael. "Dürer and the Renaissance" in *Essays on Dürer* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1973), p. 17.
- ⁷from "Ende oder Wende: Wo ist Zukunft?" ("Where is Future?")-English trans. appearing in liner notes to recording (State Orchestra of Nürnberg; Choir of the Bavarian Radio Munich; conds. Josef Schmidhuber and Hans Gierster; Wergo 0069).
- 8 from Dürer's "aesthetic excursis" quoted in Panofsky. pp. 279,280.
- ⁹Becker-Carsten, Wolfgang, trans. W. Richard Rieves. Program notes to recording-*Requiem für einen jungen Dichter* (Lutz Lansemann, Hans Franzen, speakers; Phyllis Bryn-Julson, soprano; Roland Hermann, baritone; Kölner Rundfunk-Sinfonie-Orchester; Gary Bertini, conductor), Mainz: Wergo, 1989 [WER 60180-50], p. 13.
- 10St. Augustine. *Confessions*, book XI. xiii(16).
- 11Chanan, Michael. "Dialectics in Peter Maxwell Davies" (in *Peter Maxwell Davies--Studies from Two Decades*, sel. and intro. by Stephen Pruslin, London: Boosey and Hawkes, 1979), p. 73.

- ¹²Grout, Donald J. A. *A History of Western Music*, 4th edition (New York: W. W. Norton, 1988), p. 144.
- 13Griffiths, Paul. *Peter Maxwell Davies* (London: Robson Books, 1982), pp. 72-79.
- 14foreword to score, St. Thomas Wake (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1972).
- 15 foreword to score, Vesalii Icones (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1978).
- ¹⁶Sweeney-Turner, Steve. "Resurrecting the Antichrist: Maxwell Davies and Parody--Dialectics or Deconstruction?" (*Tempo* No. 191, p. 14).
- 17Ellis, Havelock. introduction to *Against the Grain* (New York: Three Sirens Press, 1931), p. 45.
- 18Griffiths, Paul. György Ligeti (London: Robson Books, 1983), p.103.
- ¹⁹lbid., pp. 50-57.
- ²⁰quoted in Luigi Pestalozza ("Nono: *La lontananza nostalgica utopica futura* and '*Hay que caminar' soñando*", art. in booklet acc. recording of the work--Deutsche Grammophon, Hamburg 435 870-2, 1992).
- 21 forward to score, Senfkorn (München: Ricordi, 1980).
- ²²Santner, Eric L. "Reading Hölderlin in the Age of Difference" (in *Friedrich Hölderlin--Hyperion and Selected Poems*, New York: Continuum Publishing, 1990), pp. xxiii-xxv.
- ²³Subotnick, Rose R. *Developing Variations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), p. 27.