DIFFUSED PARADIGMS: MUSICAL DEPICTIONS OF BIODEGRADATION, REFRACTION OF SOUND, AND MEMORY DETERIORATION IN SØRENSEN’S STERBENDE GÄRTEN

by

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ABSTRACT

In Sterbende Gärten (Decaying or Dying Gardens) Bent Sørensen employs specific compositional methods in order to depict biodegradation of plants, refraction of sound, and memory deterioration in each of the three movements of the work, respectively. He obscures the formal design of the first movement, and the stylistic genres on which the second and third movements are based, by diffusing the melody of the violin solo through heterophonically placed orchestral lines that replicate the violin solo with variation in duration, timbre, pitch and rhythm. This results in saturation that, through the projection of pitches by the orchestra, produces diatonic implications.

In the first movement, Sørensen employs motivic replication and transformation that produce the saturation that clouds the musical surface. These motivic copies are produced with slight variation in rhythm and pitch, and placed simultaneously against the generating motive. The application of these copies results in varying degrees of depictions of degenerating plant life. In the second movement, Sørensen utilizes the transference of the “choral series”—a series of thirds that contain a half-step relationship between components of a third to the next concurrent third—as a way of representing the refraction of sound. In the last movement, Sørensen employs phased relationships between different strands of the orchestra as a way of representing a clear or a vague perception of a specific memory. While Sørensen references each depiction, the obscuring techniques that depict the degenerative associations are similar, but the generating motive is different. Along with the copying or transferring of musical figures, pedal tones and glissandos obscure the musical surface, adding to the saturation of the work.

In each movement Sørensen alludes to a diatonic framework for pitch generation, but more specifically he utilizes centric notes that result from the overlapping of vertically produced similarities derived from the heterophonic placement of motivic gestures. The employment of repetition and contextual reinforcement of pitch through pedal tones and glissandos enhance the centric nature of the work.
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INTRODUCTION

Despite Bent Sørensen being awarded the prestigious Nordic Council Prize in 1996 for his violin concerto, Sterbende Gärten, not much analytic writing on his music has been published in the U.S. Aside from sound recording reviews, the only U.S. publication is part of a dissertation by Dianne Weisberg on contemporary Danish works for viola by in 2001. Noted Danish music scholar Anders Beyer, composer Karl Aage Rasmussen, and others have written about aspects of Sørensen’s music in Europe. These few publications have appeared in journals and then spread through Internet sites, or have been used as program notes for compact discs.

Sørensen describes his music composition method through visual and philosophical references. Each reference has a specific fundamental association with his compositional practice.

Visual and Philosophical References

When writing about his own music Sørensen frequently skirts direct analytic exegesis, instead referencing two external influences. First, he compares his compositional sensibilities to influences gleaned from specific painters, especially Piranesi and Seurat. In fact, not only does Sørensen compare his music to visual representation, but he also acknowledges visual stimulation as a primary source of inspiration. In writing about his compositional influence, Sørensen states that, “Far more than music, images work as tangible sources of inspiration for me. But it is always where visual elements remind me of something in my own music….” Even his precompositional process is guided by his sketching a visual representation of the material before working with pitch, rhythm, and form. On the subject of his precompositional process, Sørensen says that, “Usually I draw my pieces. These drawings then get more and more differentiated. It is important to me that the structures gain meaning. The development of the structures is only in it to give the picture, the shape that I want. I can’t just sit down with seven tones and then see where they take me.”

Sørensen creates a specific visual analog with each work. In conjunction with his precompositional process, and although he never makes these parallels explicit, he generally associates his music with visual representations and each specific image has a specific musical equivalent.

Sørensen’s second influence is the process of degeneration found in nature—one of his primary compositional influences consistently arises from his observations of the biodegradation of his garden. He also refers to natural decay in historical churches and artwork.

Sørensen has utilized natural decay and visual representation as programs in many of his works, including The Deserted Churchyard, Angel’s Music, The Echoing Garden, Shadowland as well as in his violin concerto, Sterbende Gärten.

Fundamental Associations

Both general and specific aspects of Sørensen’s music depict his perceptions of natural decay. While he does not assign associations to specific musical events, in Sterbende Gärten (Decaying or Dying Gardens) he employs all of the following pictorial and organic associations and influences (see Figure 1).

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1 Bent Sørensen, “The Mystery of Inspiration,” Berlingske Tidende, 5 July 1997. http://www.4komponister.dk/english/Sørensen accessed on 8 December 2008. The Internet site has been eliminated and the contents are for sale on a CD ROM.
2 Jesper Bechman, “Total Polyphony,” Dansk Musik Tidsskrift, 61/ 6, (1986/87). I found the article here: http://www.4komponister.dk/english/Sørensen accessed on 8 December 2008, p. 12. The Internet site has been eliminated and the contents are for sale on a CD ROM.
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Figure 1. Musical Equivalents to Visual Comparisons

**Seurat**

Sørensen associates the atmospheric nature of his music with the pointillist painter Seurat. On a more visual-philosophical level, he states,

> I think one of the reasons the music is so quiet is probably that one of the sources of inspiration or approaches I had right from the start is Seurat’s pictures and other things that you have to stand at a distance to see them. I try to write the music. I like writing and which in some way captures me. There is a kind of pluralism in it, as the tonal elements lie like a dreamy background. I have never put the tonal elements in the foreground and say, ‘here they are’. They are in the background, hidden.3

While Sørensen implies that “atmosphere” is a general aspect of his music, he also states that the backgrounds, fundamental framings of pitch that are not directly apparent on the musical surface, in many of his works contain “tonal elements.” However, since traditional harmony and functional cadences are absent form his work ‘implications of tonality’ is perhaps a more accurate concept. The more common meaning of these tonal implications is the use of centricity-based pitch collections. Sørensen never references these collections or the idea of centricity in his writing. Centricity exists in this work, nevertheless, through contextual reinforcement in the form of pedal tones or the sustaining and repetition of pitch, as the gravitational pull toward specific pitch classes that contain implied tonal elements.4 He creates pedal tones as a way to reinforce specific pitch classes that are first articulated in a line and then doubled and sustained in another line, resulting in the reinforcement of the original pitches. Oscillations between pitches reinforce the centric nature of the work as well. Similar to the employment of sustaining, Sørensen also utilizes repetitions of pitch class, dispersed across instrumental parts that lack the long durations associated with pedal points in the work. After a pitch is played in a single line, Sørensen also transfers the pitch to different lines, rearticulating the pitch in different voices. Both of these elements, sustaining and repetition of pitch as parts of contextual reinforcement create centricity in the work and will be used as criteria in establishing it throughout the piece.

**Decay**

The atmospheric nature of *Sterbende Gärten* is created by the diffusion or spreading out of the music presented in the violin solo line creating multilayered, heterophonic lines, which depict natural decay. Speaking on decay, he says that,

> Decay is so fascinating, because it is one of the most basic things in the world. From the moment we are born there is only one way back – slow, gradual decay. That is the way it goes with nature: time eats it away. A few years ago I was walking in an overgrown garden. It bore the

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traces of once having been a beautiful, well-kept garden. Perfection does not interest me; the overgrown garden fascinated me in the same way as I am inspired by peeling Italian Renaissance paintings, or deserted churches and churchyards out on the west coast of Jutland, where the sea is eating into their foundations. What interests me is the places where there are only suggestions left of the original motif.\textsuperscript{3}

Sørensen connects objects that are degenerated through time with the hints or suggestions of their original appearance by presenting the orchestral diffusion of an original musical motive. In Sterbende Gärten, he employs musical material that is placed in the violin line, which then is diffused across the ensemble.

Sørensen’s fascination with decay is also depicted in this music by obscuring the genres and styles of each movement. This aspect is further heightened by the diffusion or spreading out of the solo violin line into replications and disruptions of the line throughout ensemble, which blurs and obscures the stylistic temperament of the programs or styles of each movement—Gardens (represented by diatonic melodies), Barcarole, and Estampita. While the diffusion process disrupts the stylistic references, each movement, if stripped of the diffused lines, still would only loosely represent or allude to some elements from the materials on which they are based.

\section*{Piranesi}

Another artist whom Sørensen references as influential to his compositional process is the Italian engraver Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720-78). Speaking of Piranesi’s etchings as “architectonic fantasies,” Sørensen states that, “In Piranesi’s fantasies you can also see a wealth of lines that border on the chaotic and a sophisticated balancing-act between the real and the unreal, between an ‘overdriven’ foreground and an indistinct background.”\textsuperscript{6} Sørensen connects visual associations with Piranesi’s works to the blurred nature between foreground and background materials presented in both the superimposition and juxtaposition of musical ideas (Sørensen defines this as “layering”). The obscured musical surface establishes a dialectic in his music.\textsuperscript{7} In speaking of dualism, Sørensen states,

> The word beauty means nothing in my music. I’ve discovered that the things that fascinate me are things that have both beauty and decay in them. When I compose music, I also think that I have always a two-sidedness built into me, because I actually work with something that is very beautiful but I am always on the brink of breaking it down. The trick of it is then maybe in reality finding exactly the right time where there is a perfect balance between the pure and beautiful on the one hand and on the other a something violent, ugly, that is tearing away this beauty from the surface, so it is crackling and peeling off….

> I don’t think the garden that is pretty and well trimmed with nicely raked paths is particularly beautiful. It’s beautiful in an odd, artificial way, I think. I think that the garden that’s just on the edge of decay has a certain beauty. I have trouble with those frescoes from the Renaissance that you see in Italian Churches, which are hardly touched by the ravages of time. There’s something unnatural about them in some way. What fascinates me about the frescoes, including those of the really great masters, when I run my eyes over them, is the places where they are just on the point of disappearing, of becoming decay.\textsuperscript{8}

Sørensen connects his music to this dialectic created between the living and dead portions of the gardens as well the decaying frescoes in Italy. The musical parallel of dualism is connected to the obscuring, masking, and layering of the formal boundaries, which is achieved by utilizing interchanges of static and pulsating music. These alternations and sometimes juxtapositions of rhythmically free music and pulsating music are not only fundamental in each of the movements, but also in the global framework of the piece. The rhythmic interchanges expand beyond each movement, superseding them and rendering the formal design of the three-movement work ambiguous.

\textsuperscript{6} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{7} Sørensen generally employs the word dialectic as a formal demarcation for applications to a string quartet, Adieu. Jesper Bechman, “Total Polyphony,” Dansk Musik Tidsskrift, 61/ 6, (1986/87). I found the article here: http://www.4komponister.dk/english/Sørensen accessed on 8 December 2008, p. 12. The Internet site has been eliminated and the contents are for sale on a CD ROM.
It is the goal of this study to demonstrate that as a way of depicting his views on natural decay in *Sterbende Gärten*, Bent Sørensen obscures the formal design, the program of the first movement, and the stylistic genres of the second and third movements as well as the creation of the atmospheric textures associated with the work. Sørensen employs a different object that is diffused across the orchestra as the method of depicting decay in each of the movements. In the first movement, Sørensen diffuses the melody of the violin solo through heterophonically placed orchestral lines that replicate the violin solo with variation in duration, timbre, pitch class and rhythm. In the second movement he diffuses what he calls the “choral series.” In the third movement he creates phased relationships between the violin solo and other instrumental groupings through alternations of “in-phase” and “out-of-phase” occurrences. Sørensen employs a different generator for the diffusion process of each movement, resulting in the creation of atmospheres that, through the projection of pitch classes by the orchestra produce diatonic implications. While this study is directed solely at *Sterbende Gärten*, similar relationships exist in all of his works. He says,

> When I look back at all of my works, I really think that they are all parts of the same process. You could say there’s a strand running all the way through them. There are things that reappear from work to work. I don’t think that you can say there’s any place in my output where I make a clean break with the things in my music, that recur… I mean, looking back with hindsight, I can see that from one work to the next there is always some kind of line.⁹

As Sørensen believes in utilizing similar compositional processes from piece to piece, the analytical method employed for *Sterbende Gärten* could be used as a blueprint or guide through various compositions that he has written.

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MOVEMENT I: DEPICTIONS OF PLANT BIODEGRADATION

Philosophical Underpinnings and the Program of the First Movement

In each movement of Sterbende Gärten, Sørensen depicts the impact of natural decay on different elements by employing various compositional processes. In the first movement the biodegradation of plant life, specifically the flora of gardens, serves as the inspiration. Decay is depicted through the diffusion, or spreading out, of structurally placed diatonic melodies in the solo violin containing replicated and transformed motives. These transformed motives represent depictions of varying degrees of decay. The simultaneous and heterophonic appearance of these motives that filter throughout the accompanying ensemble in conflation with the deviating motives (motives that do not resemble the original motive) produces centric pitch classes in the background. These centric pitch classes occur as vertical commonalities between all of the instrumental parts, projecting primary pitch classes that are sounded throughout the orchestra. These pitch-class projections vary according to their place in the orchestra and are accented by changes in timbre and range. They also consist of a diatonic collection and, although the density of the lines in the piece obscures them, they still evince a diatonic nature.

In other works, Sørensen’s focus has been on specific depictions of decay of various organic and inorganic objects. In Sterbende Gärten the underlying program for the first movement is based on a specific decaying garden. In talking of the initial program and the mood of the movement, he states that,

One gray and rainy spring day in 1992, I found myself in an old, overgrown garden. The house with the garden had long since been abandoned. In the dense undergrowth and vines, I could make out the contours of the framework that once controlled this refined piece of the garden culture… 'This strange mood was the initial inspiration for my violin concerto…' Besides my immediate fascination with the tone of decay, and my confrontation with the cracking abilities of time, I experienced the garden as a parallel to some essential qualities of my own music.

Sørensen alludes to a cultivated garden that clearly existed but has since decayed over time, with a framework that has been obscured or masked by decay. Sørensen infers that his interest in natural decay flourishes in this work (most of his works contain similar parallels and programmatic titles), but he also states explicitly that a direct relationship exists between gardens and this first movement. Sørensen states that the mood of the movement is inspired by garden culture, and he also infers that connections exist between musical events in Sterbende Gärten and his perceptions of this abandoned garden. He introduces a framework in his music where an object clearly existed but has been obscured or masked. He clarifies this obscuring process by stating that,

I know that parts of the music world condemn any glorification of “unclarity” as heretical, nor do I myself much care for overly well-groomed and “clear” gardens either; with the fertile, unkempt and preferably somewhat decaying plant life within fixed architectural frames, you create the most beautiful and enlightening of gardens. Clarity should be created within the firmness of contours, whether you’re dealing with music or gardening arts.

While Sørensen establishes his perceptions about his compositional practice, he also gives insight into his compositional aesthetic, denoting a dichotomy between identifiable objects (fixed architectural frames) and the process of obscuring them.

In the first movement, these fixed architectural frames are presented by the solo violin and by his own definition are tonal melodies. These melodies are placed almost exclusively in the violin solo and occur in different sections of the music as points that mark and denote transformations of various types of diffused activity. Although the process is very different, the

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11 Ibid.
concept is not unlike Renaissance counterpoint where formal structures utilize points of imitation as formal demarcations.

Referring to the beginning of the work, Sørensen states that,

The melody, which is simple and instantly tonal, derives from a melodic structure I had also worked with in The Echoing Garden, in which the individual melodic intervals keep on reflecting inward in almost fractal patterns…. As previously indicated, the melody becomes the common thread around which the orchestra spins a veil, of which it forms shadows and echoes. In the early bars of the concerto, the long, simple melodies are essentially in complete unison, with a clear and distinct direction, but the individual notes and melodic lines are crackled by glissandi, interferences, held notes, echoes, etc., in order for the simple, clear melody to end up as a heterophonic line or polyphonic mass. 12

Though Sørensen is only speaking of the first ten measures of the work, by inference he drafts a blueprint of his compositional process for the entire movement. He states that the compositional method in the first ten measures is based on a process consisting of a melody—the primary component of his compositional process—which is obscured by shadows and echoes in the form of replications and by interferences in the form of deviations and diffusions. Glissandi and pedal tones (Sørensen’s held notes) also obscure the compositional process, but they can function as either replications or deviations depending on the pitch classes of the transformed cells.

Sørensen’s employment of the term, heterophonic, also contains parallels to his compositional process. A heterotroph is an organism that feeds on and breaks down other heterotrophs and autotrophs, including plant life, getting energy from digesting organisms. The heterophonic lines represent quite literally the decay of organisms that heterotrophs digest. The musical equivalent of this is the obscuring and masking of the original motives by the replicated forms.

Utilizing Sørensen’s conception of the opening measures of Sterbende Gärten, each section of music (in the first movement) consists of what he calls a tonal melody that has motivic replications and transformations, superimposed on deviating material. Sørensen characterizes these motivic transformations and the resulting saturation as being atmospheric and categorizes the piece as a sound mass.13

Compositional Method of the First Movement

In the first movement, Sørensen’s compositional process is based on establishing a diatonic melody and diffusing it throughout the ensemble. This process results in the partitioned replication and reflection of different motives that can be divided into three groupings: motives that are similar to the original motives, motives that have a functional change from melodic to accompanimental, and motives that are dissimilar or distantly related. These motives are dispersed from the melody into different parts of the orchestra, creating varying degrees of saturation. As a part of the saturation, this process of varied replication creates heterophonically-placed strands of diffusion that obscure the identity of the original melody. This process creates the texture and resulting harmonic saturation for the movement. In the first movement, deducing harmony in a chordal, vertical fashion is problematic. First, there is no traditional, systematic employment of pitch class sets. Furthermore, as he mentions in the previous quotation, Sørensen identifies the melody of the first ten measures as tonal. This identification in regard to melody must be qualified in that implications of scale degree occur without utilizing harmonic underpinnings, progression, or even the sparsest of requirements for cadential function, therefore voiding the notion of traditional tonality.

12 Ibid. Sørensen’s speaking of fractal compositional processes is referencing a practice of Per Nøgård, one of his mentors. See Karl Aage Rasmussen, “Connections and Interspaces: Per Nøgård’s Thinking, in The Music of Per Nøgård: Fourteen Interpretative Essays, ed. Anders Beyers (Scolar Press, 19996), 57-70. While Sørensen alludes to a compositional practice utilized by Nørgard, it is the speculation of the author that Sørensen, in Sterbende Gärten, as a quite literal program is depicting fractal pictures. The almost fractal relationship that Sørensen implies is the multilayered melody in the solo violin part in the fifth measure.

However, the melody in these measures is by itself clearly in A major. Both the originating melody and the emergence of the varying degrees of contrapuntal replications reinforce A. The groupings of the replications are based on varying degrees of similarity. The motives that are grouped by similarity share the same identity as the original motive with slight variations in rhythm, duration or pitch. The characteristics of the accompanimental groupings are based on similar aspects of pitch with slight variation, but with acceleration of rhythm resulting in created accompanimental pedal tones. The distantly related motives are primarily found in the deviating material and at the surface do not appear related to the generating motives.

While similar to the original melody, the compositional roles or functions of the replications are altered or transformed. For example, the melody in mm. 1-10 (see Example 1, an orchestral reduction of the first ten measures) begins in violins A and B and then transfers to the solo violin line for the remainder of the section. Sørensen replicates motives from the original melody and then superimposes them simultaneously with some variation of pitch and rhythm throughout the string section of the orchestra, creating heterophonic lines or strands of diffusion. In Example 1 the musical material is presented and organized by showing all of the transformations below the violin solo staff. The lower the register of the staff the greater the transformation occurs. This method occurs in each of the subsequent graphs throughout the article.

Coinciding with these diffused motivic transformations, deviating motives that are not directly connected to the replication process of the original melody exist and not only utilize interruptions and interferences, but create deviating strands leading to an increase in the saturation of sound. Sørensen employs these motives primarily in the piccolo trumpet and clarinet parts. Some isolated moments of deviating material exist in the string parts—mm. 1-4 of the second solo viola, as well mm. 7-8 of violin B and also the other viola parts.

More specifically, the melody contains three different motives identified as X, Y, and Z (see Example 2) that are utilized to generate the diffused strands. Each motive not only functions as a generator for these diffused strands, but also contains implications of scale degree. Motive X (mm. 1-4 in violins A and B) consists of an oscillation between G-sharp and F-Sharp, which eventually creates a leading tone function to A. Since a leading tone relationship exists between G-sharp and A and this motive is placed in violins A and B of the orchestra, motive X also functions as an orchestral anacrusis with an elision to motive Y, which is in the solo violin part.

Motive Y (mm. 4-7 in the solo violin) is a multilayered melody that first functions as the initiation of the tonic in the upper voice of the line. The lower level of the melody contains the pitches B and C, creating a chromatic, linear approach to motive Z (mm. 8-10) and a C-sharp. Motive Z contains the C-sharp, thus still conveying A major. It also contains in the upper layer of the melody the pitch class A, functioning as a sustaining of the tonic, but in an inferior role to the C-sharp and D.
Example I. *Sterbende Gärten*. Movement I, mm. 1-9. (Strands of Diffusion and Deviation)
Example 2. *Sterbende Gärten*. Movement I, mm. 1-9 (Strands of Diffusion)
While each motive is first stated melodically and serves a specific function, when later, in imitation, the motives are diffused simultaneously throughout the ensemble, they are varied so as to progressively depart from their resemblance to the original. In m. 1, motive X is first stated in violins A and B, while the first replication in the cello part doubles it in unison. The role of the repeated version is altered in m. 6, where the oscillation of the G-sharp and A accelerates and then glissandos upward, masking the pitch and transforming the melodic cell into an accompanimental pedal tone, eventually deviating from the pedal tone and transforming into a second, differing glissando. At this point it seems worth mentioning that the transformed motives tend to appear or be sustained after the original generator and that the diffusion is also a result of the statements that disrupt the metrical and rhythmic features of the original motive, which then become quasi or actual pedal tones.

Unlike the first transformation, the replication of motive X in the viola part is based on a functional shift. The original motive is melodic in its nature, while the role of the accompaniment replication of X in the viola part is based on pedal tones, oscillating between the F-sharp and G-sharp. The end of this oscillation deviates by utilizing the A-sharp instead of the A-natural of the original motive. The last transformation (closely related) of motive X occurs in violins C and D, and while it is melodic in its function, it echoes the melody an eighth note later and is rhythmically displaced against the original motive X. It also contains a pitch deviation in which C natural replaces A, masking the A major tonality.

Replications of motive Y utilize similar transformations that alter the orchestrational roles of each statement of the motive. The first replication (closely related) of Y occurs in violins A and B. While the reproduction contains all of the original pitches, its entrance is delayed and rhythmically displaced, creating an echo of the original motive. In violins C and D an additional replication is altered rhythmically by the use of triplets and is altered with a G natural, replacing A. It is still an echo of or closely related to the original motive. Both viola parts contain pedal tones that oscillate between the pitches of the original motive in sixteenth notes, resulting in an accompanimental manifestation. In both violin parts, copies of motive Z are rhythmically displaced from the original and from each other. In the viola parts the replication of Z (a accompanimental repetition) is transformed into oscillating pedal tones, retaining the orchestrational role from the previous statement.

Concurrently with the diffused material, deviations (distantly related) obscure the implication of A major by adding chromaticism foreign to the key (see Example 3). In m. 1 of the work, Sørensen obscures the motive by adding F-natural and G-natural to the motives in the solo viola. The F-natural is also sustained in violins C and D, orchestrationally reinforcing it through a sustaining of the pitch in which the attack begins in the solo viola. In m. 4, this same relationship exists between these instruments, but employing a G-natural instead. With these three pitch classes foreign to the key, Sørensen obscures the implications of Motive X. In measures 9-10, Sørensen utilizes glissandi in the violins as a way to interfere with motive Z. While all of the starting and ending pitch classes can be found in A major, the nature of glissandi not only changes the timbre of the strings, obscuring the sound of the solo violin line, but also new pitches classes as well.

Along with these restricted deviations in the string section, Sørensen utilizes the piccolo trumpets and the clarinet parts as sources of deviation. In m. 1, the piccolo trumpet part contains a motive that is comprised of the pitches G-sharp, D-sharp, and E. While the G-sharp is found in the X motive and the E is part of A major, the D-sharp is alien to the key and deviates from the source motive. These deviations enhance those found in the string section and serve to obscure the original motives contained in the melody.
Example 3. Sterbende Gärten. Movement I, mm. 1-9 (Strands and Isolated Events of Deviation)

While differences between both deviating and diffused materials exist at the musical surface, both are derived from diatonic collections implied by the original generating motive and the A major scale (see Example 4).

Example 4. Sterbende Gärten. Movement I, mm. 1-9 (Diatonic Collections Common to Both Deviating and Diffused Motives)

For Example, the anacrusis gesture in the viola 2 part — F, G, and A-flat — is a half step transposition of the original generating motive of F-sharp, G-sharp, and A. Both collections make up the upper three notes of the major scale, but the original motive is in the A scale while the viola 2 part is transposed to A-flat (G-sharp). The motive in mm. 1-4 of the viola 1 part — F-sharp, G-sharp, and A-sharp — is found in the opening of the F-sharp major scale and is thus transposed a major sixth from the original A major scale. The motive found in the cello part at mm. 5-9 — G-sharp, A-sharp, and B — is also found in the F-sharp major scale beginning on the second scale degree, but could also be a transposition of the A major scale up a whole step to B major, becoming the last three pitch classes of the scale. The first and second piccolo trumpet motives are both derived from E major and A-flat (G sharp). Not only can all of the deviating motives in the beginning of the work be derived from the diatonic collections found either in the generating motives or the A major collection, but the tonics of these scales also comprise various scale degrees of the A major scale — E, F-sharp, G-sharp, A, and B.

The beginning measures of the work are a clear demonstration of Sørensen’s explanation of his compositional process. In order to clarify Sørensen’s assumptions about his compositional method and the application of it to this first
section of music and the first movement as a whole, explorations of centric and tonal implications and orchestrational pitch class projections must be made.

**Linear Tonal Implications and Centricity**

In the first movement, the centric pitch classes, or what Sørensen calls the “tonal elements to background,” are G-Sharp, A, and C-sharp, which viewed in a diatonic framework still would imply A major. The musical background is justified and founded on elements of centricity based on contextual reinforcement through doublings, repetitions (both pedal tones or sustained tones and literal repetition), and oscillations of pitches.

With these criteria in mind, reducing the obscuring and masking processes on the musical surface will make apparent the centric elements in the musical background (see Examples 1 and 5). In mm. 1-3, the G-sharp is sustained by the oscillation with F-sharp in the string section as well as the recurring repetition of G-sharp in the piccolo trumpet parts. Deviating from the original motive, the grouping of D-sharp, C-Sharp, and E is a collection in the first piccolo trumpet part that embellishes and adds color to the G-sharp pedal. At the surface level, the A-sharp acts as a part of a deviating motive that does not resemble the generator, but in the middle ground, it functions as a neighbor tone to the A, resulting in not only embellishing the A, but sustaining it as well. The arrival of A in the piccolo trumpet parts anticipates the arrival of the solo violin line. In the last portion of m. 3, a B also functions as a neighbor tone to A.

Example 5. Sterbende Gärten. Movement I, mm. 1-9 (Linear Analysis and Reduction)

While the A is being sustained in mm. 4-7 through pedal tones with oscillations to B-natural, the C-natural is ornamental, being foreign to the diatonic collection on A. The C-natural, following the B, is transferred to the lower level of the solo violin part and functions in a half-step relationship to the C-sharp, thus creating a motive of three semitones, ending with the C-sharp.

In m. 8, the C-Sharp is reinforced and repeated by oscillations to D, as well as repetitions of C-sharp in the other voices. It should be noted that in this section, once the centric pitches are established, they are sustained as pedal tones throughout mm. 1-9.

**Orchestrational Pitch Class Projections of mm. 1-9**

The centric pitch classes are projected, as a result of the heterophonic nature of the lines, across the orchestra. As the deviating material and diffused motives are superimposed against each other with rhythmic displacement, pitch class common tones occur. These orchestrational pitch class projections result from rhythmic overlap between both diffused transformations of the original motive and deviating material.

In measures 1-4 (see Example 6), both the motive and each of the transformed replications contain the pitches F-sharp and G-sharp. The rhythmic displacement of both pitches throughout different portions of these measures or the
heterophonic usage of the motive creates these projections. In violins A and B, the first entrance of the G-sharp is part of
the anacrusis of the work, while in the cello and viola parts the G-sharp is placed directly on the downbeat. The entrance of

Example 6. Sterbende Gärten. Movement I, mm. 1-4. (Orchestrational Pitch Projections Resulting from Motive X and
Diffused Transformations)

the F-sharp is first stated in the viola line as part of a sixteenth note oscillation, and then is placed in the cello and violins A
and B on the second half of the first beat. Later in the measure the F-sharp appears in violins C and D.

These deviating motives function similarly to the diffused transformations mentioned above (see Example 7), in
that they both double pitch class. While the diffused transformations contain two common tones, the deviating motives
only contain one note consistently in common—the G-sharp. Since the G-sharp is contained in both deviating and diffused
motives, it projects across the ensemble.

Example 7. Sterbende Gärten. Movement I, mm. 1-4. (Orchestrational Pitch Projections Resulting from Motive X and
Deviating Transformations)

In mm. 1-9, each of the orchestrational pitch class projections utilizes the same process throughout the section and
contains the same parameters, including centric pitches throughout the deviated and diffused transformations, rhythmic
placement, and registral placement. Each centric pitch class, G-sharp, A, and C-sharp, is projected across the ensemble,
thus creating an atmospheric implication of tonality.
The significance of the musical material at Letter L is based on the evolution of Sørensen’s compositional method. Unlike the opening of this piece, the musical surface at mm. 124-129 is quite barren. The reduced orchestration of solely upper strings allows for only two copies of each motive. Unlike the opening of the work, all of the copies are diffused transformations and closely resemble the initiating motives and maintain their melodic identity instead of changing to accompanimental roles. As with the opening, the lower the register on the staff, the greater the transformation that occurs.

Also in the opening of the work, the transformations were presented as the solo violin had generated motives that then were simultaneously copied and varied in all of the instruments, creating a vertical heterophony. At Letter L (see Example 8) the transformations also happen linearly in the solo violin line. For example, Motive B is a transposed version of Motive A. As in the beginning, the first motive becomes an anacrusis gesture to the prominent pitch of this section, B-flat.

Example 8. Sterbende Gärten. Movement I, Letter L, mm. 124-129 (Strands of Diffusion)

Motive A extends the G-flat with neighboring-melodic function. The two transformations or copies of motive A contain the same melodic function of sustaining the G-flat, but utilize chromatic interpolations with rhythmic variation on the pitches E-natural, B-natural and G-natural to further obscure the G-flat. Motive B is identified by the sustaining of B-flat with neighboring tone motion to A-natural and C. In the transformations, only two notes are different from the original collection, a B-natural and an F. Motive C functions as a transition from D-flat, finishing with a relaxation or repose on the B-flat. The first copy’s only difference, aside from rhythmic variation, is the absence of the C. The second transformation of motive C contains embellishments of the G-flat and B-natural, creating conflict by arriving at the B-natural, thus obscuring the close on the B-flat.

Linear Tonal Implications and Centricity at Letter L

While the diatonic implications in the melody in the beginning measures of the work were based on A and reinforced by this centric background, at mm. 124-129, the centric elements at Letter L are different from the melodic implications (see Examples 8 and 9). The melody placed in the solo violin suggests B-flat minor, creating a neighbor tone relationship with A, which was projected in the opening of the work. While the melody does not begin on the tonic, the A natural in m. 126 functions as a leading tone.

The centric background outlines a G-flat major triad. The sustaining of pitch at the surface level of each of the motives is still present in the centric pitches of the background in this section of music. The G-flat is sustained through the neighboring, melodic motion of the pitch classes, E-flat, E-natural, and F. The B-flat is sustained through neighboring, melodic motion of the notes, B-natural, C, and A. The C leads to the D-flat, while B-flat recurs in closing.

Orchestral Pitch Class Projections at Letter L

As with opening measures of the work, centric pitch classes are projected across the orchestra resulting from heterophonic placement of each of the lines (see Example 10). With the exception of the chromatic interpolation of the neighbor tones, E natural, G-natural and B-natural, the G-flat is presented in all of the parts. Two of the motives begin and end with the G-flat. It is the sustained pitch class both melodically at the surface and in the background as well.

Example 10. Sterbende Gärten. Movement I, Letter L, mm. 124-125 (Orchestral Pitch Projection of Motive A)
BARCAROLE: DEPICTIONS OF ECHO

In the second movement of *Sterbende Gärten*, Sørensen employs diffusion and obscuring of the “choral series” (his term for an infinite series of thirds) across the orchestra as the compositional process for depicting echoes and sounds of rippling water, resulting in the oversaturation of the musical surface, but using a different process than the first movement.

**Philosophical Underpinnings and the Program of the Second Movement**

Unlike the previous movement, which depicts the biodegradation of plant life, the second movement employs echoes heard in Venice and alludes to the motion produced by its swaying waters. Sørensen states,

I’d been working on *Sterbende Gärten* for almost six months and had actually written only the first half of the first movement when, in the fall of 1992, I left for a study period in Venice. I brought with me scattered sketches and ideas for what would become the second movement of the concerto, which would come close to resembling a classical (cracked) romance with cantabile melodies and small, simple choral fragments almost drowning in their own echoes. It was on one of my many walks through this city, Venice—in a both wonderful and somewhat disquieting way, the epitome of decay within fixed borders—that I got the idea of creating the framework of the movement in the form of a simple barcarole. I don’t think I heard a single barcarole sung in Venice, but—particularly in the evening—you can constantly hear the slow-rocking rhythm a la barcarole in the water.14

As he does not recall hearing a sung barcarole, he personifies the lyric sound of rippling water — perhaps produced by a gondola’s wake – in slow motion or with what he calls a “rocking rhythm,” and connects this program with his imagined version of the barcarole by employing a compound-duple meter and a slow pulse. Sørensen depicts the refraction of pitch by obscuring simple melodic fragments found in the violin solo. These derived figures are then meshed with what he calls the “choral series,’’ which is an infinite series based on half-step relationships between thirds. The product of this synthesis of thirds appears in a number of ways: in straightforward manner, through a particular sort of intersection in combination with sustained tones, through orchestration doublings, as well as in the guise of intermittent repetition of fragments.

**The “Choral Series”**

The techniques pertinent to pitch-class generation and the process of diffusion in the barcarole movement are dissimilar to those found in the first movement. The “choral series,” not melodic transformation, determines the nature of pitch in this movement. Sørensen states that,

The music of the second movement is tender. The solo violin is in charge — in a quasi-romantic, melodic style — again controlled by a ‘choral series’ in which the individual third always functions as a dominant [by which he means half-step motion] to the following third, which again is the dominant to the one following, which creates a perpetual wandering from tonic to new tonic, etc.15

In this above-quoted passage Sørensen references a wandering progression, one that alludes to tonal repose. He realizes this atmospheric mirage by pairing a given note with a sounding major or minor third — or their respective inversions. One of the notes of the third then linearly moves by half-step to either member of the subsequent third. This compositional process creates a half-step relationship between each of the thirds (see Example 11). Sørensen’s phrase, “perpetual

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wandering,” implies that the “choral series” is an “infinity series” or system of pitches that continues without a cyclic return.\textsuperscript{16} However, Sørensen’s infinity series is evocative rather than directed, as the aim of this pitch-class material is to affect a “perpetual wandering” of thirds rather than progressing to a fixed point. For example, in m. 1 the opening minor third, B and D, leads to the next sounding third, E-flat and a microtonally raised F-sharp. The D to E-flat motion contains the half-step relationship. The microtonally raised F-sharp then leads to the next sounding third, G and a microtonally lowered C (functioning as a raised B).

Sørensen’s microtonal adjustments are not based on spectral techniques. Rather they appear as obscuring the focus of pitch in this movement.\textsuperscript{17} He states in referencing one of his choral works, \textit{The Echoing Garden} that, “the quarter-tones are there to make the point of the piece less distinct.”\textsuperscript{18} Sørensen’s use of microtones is a way of creating a lack of clarity in his compositional method. The employment of microtones also is necessary to define the “choral series” as an infinity series, meaning that it needs to have microtonal adjustment to create what he calls a “perpetual wandering.”

The analysis of this movement will demonstrate Sørensen’s perceptions of the “choral series” as a system of thirds. Because of this distinction, all intervals will be reduced to their identifications as thirds, while inversions of thirds, microtonal adjustments, and enharmonic equivalents to thirds, occur throughout the series, Sørensen does not distinguish between them. There is no pattern to his use of thirds or sixths. Nor is it apparent that a pattern exists in his choice of thirds with regard to their size or quality. It is also unclear whether his choice of components of the half-step relationships between each set of thirds has any bearing on the size and quality of the thirds. The “choral series” continues throughout the example and will be discussed later in the article.

**Compositional Method**

As in the opening movement, the compositional method of this movement is also based on techniques that strive to create approximations of a generating object, thus rendering the initiating object as atmospheric, where the details blur each other. While the saturation of the musical surface or atmospheric nature of the first movement is based on replicating a melody and obscuring it by placing heterophonic lines against it—resulting in a hyper saturated texture—the three primary techniques which obscure the “choral series,” resulting in saturation, are 1) the diffusion of the ceaseless and unpatterned series across the ensemble, 2) the use of pedal tones, and 3) orchestral doubling.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{17} This delineation of the second movement not being spectrally based is an important distinction from his teacher, Per Nørgård. Nørgård’s use of infinity series and being a precursor and influence to the spectral technique are two different categories of music. While the harmonic series is an infinity series, other infinity series do not have to be derived or calculated from the overtone series (the definition of spectral technique).

\textsuperscript{18} Jesper Bechman, “Total Polyphony,” \textit{Dansk Musik Tidsskrift}, 61/6, (1986/87). I found the article here: http://www.4komponister.dk/english/Sørensen accessed on 8 December 2008, p. 5. The Internet site has been eliminated and the contents are for sale on a CD ROM
The diffusion of the “choral series” (see Example 12) begins in the bass clarinet part in m. 1 with a melodically placed minor third, B and D, which is harmonically reinforced in the full string ensemble for mm. 1-2. The previous third then leads to the next sounding third in the trombone part on beat 3 of m. 1, which contains an E-flat and a microtonally raised F-sharp, creating a half-step relationship between D and E-flat. Although the next interval in the trombone part on beat four appears not to be a third, when combined with the microtonally lowered C in the cello part, it creates a simultaneous pairing of thirds. The microtonally lowered C functions with both the A-flat as a major third and also acts enharmonically like a microtonally raised B to create a major third relationship with the G, which is placed in the trombone part.

The sustaining of the opening minor third in the string section, B and D, also leads to another major third, C and E, in the viola part in m. 2. This creates a half-step relationship between the B and C. The opening minor third later leads to a minor third, A and C, in the violins A and C on beat 2 of m. 2. The major third placed in the viola part in m. 2, C and E, then transfers the series back to the trombone part in the middle of m. 2, leading to the minor third, F and A-flat (also being doubled in the harp), creating a half-step relationship between the E and F.

Not only does the major third in the viola part in m. 2, C and E, lead to the trombones and the harp, it also moves to the minor third, F and D in the violins B and D. This third, F and D (in violins B and D) leads to a major third, B and D-sharp, in the viola part at m. 3. The major third, B and D-sharp, in the viola part then leads to the third in the violins A and C—C and E—and to the minor third, C-sharp and E in the harp part at m. 3. The minor third in the harp part then leads to major third in the alto flute part, B-flat and D. This third acts as an anacrusis and contains a half-step relationship with the minor third that is placed at the entrance of the solo violin line, G and E-flat at m. 4. The solo violin third then leads to the altered minor third in the viola part, A-flat and a microtonally lowered F, on beat 3 of m. 4, and continues on to the violin A part with an altered minor third, A and a microtonally lowered C.

The third (E-flat and G) in the solo violin is transferred to violins A and C and then leads back to a major third, C and A-flat, in the solo violin line at the beginning of m. 5. The original solo violin third (E-flat and G) also leads to the enharmonic equivalent to C and A-flat, G-sharp and B-sharp, on beat 2 of m. 5 in violins A and C. The G-sharp and B-sharp lead to the major third, A and C-sharp, in violins A and C. This third then leads to a minor third, A-sharp and C-sharp, in the same part and the minor third in the viola part in mm. 5-6, D and a microtonally raised F. The previous minor third, A-sharp and C-Sharp, leads to the minor third, B and D, in the viola part. In the same part, the minor third, D and the lowered F, leads to the a sounding minor third, C and D-sharp, in the trombone part on beat 4 of m. 5. In the trombone part, the sounding minor third, C and D-sharp, leads to a major third, C and E, in the same part, which then subsequently leads to the minor third, D and F-natural, in the viola part at the end of m. 6. This process of transferring the thirds throughout the ensemble is pervasive in the movement.19

As in the first movement, pedal tones are used in the second movement as an obscuring technique (See Example 13). The sustaining of the third, B and D, throughout the string parts creates the first pedal tone of the movement, which rearticulates the violin B and D parts, and lasts for the first four measures of the movement. In m. 4, the G and E-flat create a pedal tone when the third is transferred to violins B and D and the alto flute part doubles the G as well. In m. 5 of the solo violin part, the major third, C and A-flat, is extended in violins A and C as well.

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19 Later in the movement, multiple statements of the “choral series” occur placed in different orchestral families. This process could be expanded upon for future analysis as well as comparing it to other pieces in which Sørensen has said that he has employed it.
Example 12. Sterbende Gärten. Movement II, mm. 1-6, Choral Series
Example 13. *Sterbende Gärten*. Movement II, mm. 1-6, Pedal Tones and Orchestral Doubling
Sørensen also employs orchestral doubling as an obscuring technique. In m. 2 the trombones sustain the minor third, A-flat and F, while it is being rearticulated melodically in the harp part. The melodic nature of both the cellos’ and violins’ B and D parts arises from the doubling of the pitch classes of all other parts participating in the choral series. In m. 3 of the cello part, the notes D and A-flat double the trombone line containing the A-flat, and violins A and C play the D. So while the cello part does not contain a third it is doubling one member of each of the thirds that are presented in the other parts. On beat 2 of m. 3, the cello part contains a G that then produces a minor third relationship with the E in the viola part, adding another third relationship to the harmonic atmosphere and to the saturation of the musical surface. At the end of the cello line in m. 3, the B-flat and E-flat double pitches that form parts of thirds with the viola and alto flute parts, reinforcing the color of these third relationships found in the other parts.

**Centrality in the “Choral Series”**

Pedal points create sustaining that reinforces centric aspects in the second movement (Example 13). While the “choral series” is moving from third to third in the clarinet and trombone parts, the sustaining of the original minor third in the string parts, B and D, creates centrality around these pitch classes and is reinforced through melodic doubling in violins A and B.

The sustaining of the B and D creates, at a background level (see Example 14) an anacrusis to the major third, E-flat and G, at the entrance of the solo violin part in m.4 and employs a similar process to that found in the choral series, which is predicated on the use of half-step relationships between thirds (see Example 14).

The E-flat and G are sustained through the use of repetition and doubling of the pitches of the interval. The G is doubled and sustained in the alto flute part in mm. 5-6. This same interval is repeated in violins A and C.

Example 14. *Sterbende Gärten*. Movement II, mm. 1-6, (Linear Reduction)

The G and E-flat also repeat on beat 2 of m. 5 in the cello part. The E-flat is played in m. 5 in the solo violin part and is played and sustained in the trombone parts at the same time.

In summary, contextual reinforcement through the sustaining of pedal points and repetition of pitch create centric relationships that then utilize aspects of the “choral series” in the background of this section of the movement. The “choral series” is based on half-step relationships between thirds, the goal of which is to create a “perpetual wandering.” In conflation, the “choral series” and pedal points create the programmatic depictions of sounds refracting throughout the canals of Venice.
Example 15. Sterbende Gärten. Movement II, mm. 1-6
ESTAMPITA: DEPICTIONS OF MEMORY DETERIORATION

In the last movement of *Sterbende Gärten*, Sørensen employs phased relationships to depict memory decay of his own listening to a piece of music, producing the oversaturation of the musical surface and obscuring it as well.

**Philosophical Underpinnings and the Program for the Third Movement**

In the third movement, Sørensen depicts the decayed memory of a performance of folk music he heard in the streets of Amsterdam. He states,

> The final movement is an estampita, a conclusion almost like a ‘medieval dance’ with simple and sometimes static rhythmic patterns. It’s a type of movement that has followed me – and haunted me – nearly throughout my production, since the time I heard a lone, busking violinist in front of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam playing an intense, inexplicable devil’s dance. It’s an aggressive sound inspired by folk music full of drone notes and sliding interferences that I’m still searching for, and which more and more has become ‘my own’ imaginary sound. For how else to explain all the things I remember from back then played on a single violin – unless it really was the devil playing that day in Amsterdam.

Sørensen sets the movement as an imagined estampita. He also references the deterioration of his memory of the source material as the inspiration of the movement. Clearly, he cannot actually quote the original estampita, but can allude to the original source material. In fact, aside from his remarks quoted above, he never states what the source material is. What is surface in what he calls the “devil’s dance” is strongly accented rhythmic patterns with various ostinatos presented in a duple meter. Stylistic references to the dance are depicted through “drone notes” (pedal tones) and “sliding interferences” (glissandos). Although all of these musical characteristics are found in both of the preceding movements, they become more emphatic in this movement.

Sørensen’s depiction of memory-decay is conveyed through a compositional process in which melodic groups contain phased relationships with pedal tones and other melodic cells. Normatively, the phased relationships are aligned metrically and rhythmically. These “in-phase” relationships are based on complete similarity of pitch-class material between the different instrumental parts, while the contrasting material or “out-of-phase” groupings will contain different pitch-class material, but share at least one common tone between the paired segments. Also, phasing is presented throughout the movement as both local events and as formal demarcations. The “in-phase” and “out-of-phase” model discussed above is an underlying concept. In the realization of this model, there are very few moments of completely shared pitch-class content or in-phase treatment. In the contrasting or “out-of-phase” segments, groupings of shared pitch-class content are superimposed on the “out-of-phase” parts or contrasting pitch-class material, creating a formal background based on alternations between the phased relationships.

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Compositional Process

While pedal points, heterophonic lines, and glissandos exist in all the movements, the compositional method of the third movement differs from the previous movements in that Sørensen utilizes phased relationships between melodic motives and pedal tones, which either share pitch-class content or contrast pitch-class content. The pitch-class content between melodic cells and pedal points create the phased relationships in this section. When the pitch-classes contained in various melodic cells are identical with the pedals, they would be “in-phase” with each other, but when they are dissimilar they would be “out-of-phase.” The section of music in mm. 232-239 (see Example 16) is, because of its thinner orchestration, a clear example of an “out-of-phase” portion of music that does contain superimposition of some in phase treatment. Sørensen creates a pedal tone based on a diatonic collection—A, C-sharp, D, E—from the third scale degree, C sharp, in A major, conflated with a rhythmic ostinato created by a pedal point in the oboe and clarinet parts. This same rhythmic ostinato figure repeats throughout the section.

While the pedal point exists in the winds, Sørensen creates a melodic cell in the solo violin line at m. 232 that accentuates the leading-tone to tonic relationship in A (focusing on a different collection in the same scale—G-sharp, A, E). However in mm. 235-236, the solo violin part contains the same diatonic pitch-class collection with some rhythmic variation as the pedal point in the winds (C-sharp, D, and E). These alternations of the solo violin between these two pitch-class collections create the phased relationship between it and the upper winds. Another phased relationship exists between the violin solo part and the pedal tones found in the bassoon and cello parts. This pedal point—a chromatic collection of G-sharp, A, and B-flat—creates a leading-tone relationship to A major as well, and chromatically strengthens A as the center by the half-step relationship of B-flat to A. The pedal point continues throughout this section of music. In m. 233 and m. 238 Sørensen employs the pitch classes from both this pedal point and the pedal point in the upper winds as a basis for the pitches in the solo violin line. The A, B-flat and G-sharp are derived from the bassoon and cello parts, while the D is taken from the upper wind parts. The ostinato found in the bassoon-cello parts and the solo violin line contains the same rhythmic pattern (repeated sixteenth notes). Except for these two measures, the solo violin line is out of phase or contains pitch classes that are foreign to the ostinato in the bassoon and cello parts. Since this rhythmic pattern is exact, the phased relationship between the bassoon-cello part and the solo violin is amplified or enhanced.

The remaining portions of the ensemble, starting at G-sharp, glissando up and down. Beginning the glissando on the G-sharp reinforces A major, but the glissandi obscure the ostinatos and melodic cells found in the other parts as well as adding to the saturation of the music.

Centricity at mm. 232-239

Pitch-class centricity in this movement is based on the repetition of notes that appear in pedal points (see Example 17). The upper winds and the bassoon-cello pedals include the pitch-classes G-sharp, A, B-flat, C-sharp, D, and E. Aside from the B-flat, all of these pitch classes are found in the A major scale. Unlike the other movements where specific motives or relationships were employed at the background level, in this section A is projected from the collection sustained throughout the musical surface. While B-flat is not a member of the A major collection, it enhances A though its half-step relationship. More importantly this half-step relationship is the inversion of the leading tone relationship in A major, G-sharp to A. The collection is only missing two of the scale degrees from the A major scale.
Another example of the employment of phased relationships is found at an earlier point in the music, mm. 188-199. In this section, the pedal points are found in the melodically functioning parts of the ensemble—violins, cornets, horns and bassoon—with the pitches, derived from the A major scale as in the previous example: G-sharp, A, C-Sharp, and E. The difference between this example and the previously presented one is that the phased relationships happen between the melodic parts—the clarinet, piano, flute, and the solo violin part—utilizing the phase relationships with the pedal tones less frequently (see Example 18). For instance, in m. 188, Sørensen creates a melodic cell in the clarinet part—E, G-Sharp, and A. This diatonic collection is found in the piano part in the same measure, but the material in the piano part quickly transforms to a different melodic cell, while the pedal parts remain constant. In the next measure, Sørensen employs a different collection in the piano part—G, A-flat, and E-flat—which is then simultaneously sounded in the solo violin part. The alternation of the clarinet part doubling either the piano part or solo violin part happens during the first four measures of the passage. The alternating doublings of the clarinet part finish at m. 92. For the rest of the passage, the clarinet part doubles only the solo violin line. The alternations of the clarinet doublings between the subsidiary piano part and the violin solo line demonstrate phasing of pitch-classes between the clarinet, the primary melody (the solo violin), and the piano part.

Similar to the role of the clarinet part, the flute part also functions in specific phased relationships, but rather than being in phase with the solo violin line, the flute phases in and out with the pedal points. For example, from beat 2 of m. 96 to beat 1 of m. 98 in the flute part, Sørensen employs the diatonic pitch-class collection found in the pedal point—A, G-sharp, C-sharp, and E—but in the rest of the passage the flute part contains pitches foreign to the pedal point.

Moving past the surface level in this section, pitch-class generation is based on the utilization of 015 pitch-class sets. Sixteen different transpositional and inversional relationships are employed in this ten-measure passage. Sørensen utilizes common-tone relationships between the pedal tone trichords and the other transformative trichords as a way to expand the harmonic range of the A major scale. For example, at m. 189 of the piano part, Sørensen employs the pitch-class set 015 (T5) comprised of D-sharp, G, and G-sharp in contrast to the original 015 (G-sharp, A, and C-sharp). This allows Sørensen to utilize the D-sharp and G-natural, while maintaining the G-sharp as a common tone. Another example of this is found in m. 93 of the piano part. Sørensen employs a 015 (T4 I) as the pitch-class set in the piano part. This set shares common pitches with both the (015 T5) in the violin solo part—G and A-flat—as well as G-sharp (enharmonic equivalent to A-flat) found in the original 015 in the upper strings. The flute part also continues this process in conflation with the solo violin part. At m. 96 in the flute part, Sørensen employs 015 T2 I (E, F, and A), while the solo violin line utilizes as a 015 T1 I (F, A, B-flat), creating common tones between the two parts are F and A. In this section the phased
Example 18. Sterbende Gärten. Movement III, mm. 188-199
relationships seem to not only amplify A major when “in-phase,” but also obscure it when “out-of-phase,” by adding pitch-class material not present in A major.

**Centricity at mm. 188-199**

As with the centric properties in the previous passage of the third movement, pedal points project specific scale and scales degrees in the background at mm. 188-199 (see Example 19). While the surface level of the music is more dense, the pedal points still reinforce the quasi diatonic properties of the A major scale. For example in m. 188 along with the pedal points, the violin, piano, and clarinet parts contain the pitch classes G-sharp, A, C-sharp, E, resulting in the implication of A major. In the next measure, against the pedal tone, the other instruments move to G, G-sharp, D-sharp and B, reinforcing G-sharp, the leading-tone of A. Later in the section at m. 195, Sørensen places the A, F and B-flat in the flute and clarinet parts signaling a return to A. In measure 198, Sørensen places a G-natural in conflation with the G-sharp and A. The G-natural creates a half-step relationship leading to G-sharp, amplifying it. In m. 199, Sørensen writes the original 015 in the solo violin part. The pitch-classes, A and G-sharp, are projected throughout the musical surface of this section.

Example 19. *Sterbende Gärten*. Movement III, mm. 188-199 (Linear Reduction)
THE FORMAL DIALECTIC

Formal Ambiguity

The formal design of Sterbende Gärten is obscured by the arrival or delay of centric pitch-classes that elide with the beginnings of the movements, the placement of rests as formal demarcations, alternations of free-flowing material with rhythmic pulse, and by layering. In Sørensen’s music, background elements ultimately become foreground elements and become prevalent aspects of the musical surface.

The anticipation and delay of the centric notes, before and after the beginnings of the second and third movements obscure the beginnings of each of these movements. For example, at the formal level the prevalent pitch class of the first movement is A (see Figure 2). Sørensen establishes A as the centric pitch-class at the beginning of the piece and then shifts the centricity to B-flat at m. 124. B-flat remains as the center until m. 257, after which A returns for most of the remaining portion of the first movement. In the first movement Sørensen anticipates the second movement by shifting the pitch-class content focus to D in the last five measures of the first movement. The second movement then begins with the notes B and D as its prevalent pitch classes. In addition, the second movement closes with D as the prominent pitch class, while the third movement begins attacca. The A major scale returns as the main pitch-class content of the third movement, but not until m. 182, approximately halfway through the movement.

The placement of silences creates ambiguity in the division of movements as well. Only two rests occur in the entire work (see Figure 2). The first silence appears where a rest might be expected between the first and second movements. The second silence occurs between the first and second sections of the last movement. In combination with these silences, the attacca indication between the second and third movements creates ambiguity between the expected closure of the movement with a pause and the actual appearance of the silence. This second pause happens between two ostinatos and functions as a grand pause and not as a formal demarcation.

Along with the ambiguity of pitch classes and silences, rhythmic contrasts exist at each level of the formal design, disrupting the global form of the work. These contrasts create an opposition or a dialectic based on stasis (free flowing material) in contrast to the dynamism (rhythmic pulse) that appears as a depiction of decay.21 The free flowing material depicts the idea of decay, while its opposite, pulsed music, portrays mechanism or growth. In discussing decay in a passage previously quoted in the introduction of this article, Sørensen says that,

When I compose music, I also think that I have always a two-sidedness built into me, because I actually work with something that is very beautiful but I am always on the brink of breaking it down. The trick of it is then may be in reality finding exactly the right time where there is a perfect balance between the pure and beautiful on the one hand and on the other something violent, ugly, that is, tearing this beauty away from the surface, so it is crackling and peeling off… I think that the garden that’s just on the edge of decay has a certain beauty.22

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21 Anders Beyers, notes to Bent Sørensen: Birds and Bells. (1999), CD, ECM New Series 1694, 465 135-2. The ideas of stasis and dynamism that are presented in this article are based on characteristics found in all of Sørensen’s works. However, the formal application of Sterbende Gärten has not been previously discussed. Nor does Sørensen speak of these points. He seems more concerned with obscuring or masking the material.

22 Bent Sørensen, “Interview Part 2,” http://www.4komponister.dk/english/Sorensen/ (2008), accessed 8 December 2008. This quotation was employed in the opening chapter and is used here as reminder of the dialectic or opposites pole that is now being applied to the formal ambiguity of the work.
Movement I (10'12"; calculated)
 Hierarchical
Pitch

Pitch
Centricity

Rhythmic
Binary
(alternations of static -A- and pulsating music, B)
 m. 46 m. 60 m. 79 m. 124 m. 153 m. 192 m. 237 m. 333 m. 1

expansion of binary

opposites pole at
 global level of work

II. (6'30"; calculated)

Rest in Music
between movements

Movement II

Movement III (4'24"; calculated)

Rest in music

Movement III: 2-part form

Movement III: (2'30"; calculated)

attacca break (no rest between movements)

Movement III: 2-part form II (2'01"; calculated)

(A)

m. 31 m. 58 m. 84 m. 40 m. 84 m. 117 m. 182 m. 232

(A)

(B)

(6'54"; calculated time)

Figure 2. Sterbende Gärten. Formal Design, Ambiguity, and Centricities
The formal design of the first two movements is articulated through the contrasts of free flowing material with rhythmic pulses (see Figure 2). The first movement begins with a slow, static and free flowing idea (A), which is then juxtaposed with music that is pulse driven (B). In the first half of the first movement, five alternations between the rhythmically static (A) and pulsed music (B) occur, with the majority of time being spent in the static music (A). The second half of the movement is based on rhythmic pulse. The combination of these rhythmic interchanges creates a two-part form in the first movement, with the first section being saturated with free flowing music, interrupted with pulsed music, while the second section is almost completely pulse driven.

The second movement also contains a two-part form that combines a section of rhythmically static music with a pulse driven section. Unlike the first movement, the second movement passes only once from the static to the pulsed music. In contrast to the first two movements, the third movement is completely pulse driven and its form is demarcated through the grand pause and the return of the pitch classes, A and C# as pitch-class centers. Similar to the other movements, the third movement has a two-part form. As a result of putting the sectional analysis of each of the movements into a larger context, a different formal conception of the global nature of the work appears (lowest level of figure), in which the demarcations of a three-movement structure are obscured by a perceived two-part form. The similar static natures of the beginnings of both the first and second movements, could engulf the pulsed passages of the ending of the first movement, creating a larger section (A) based solely on rhythmically static music with some pulse driven interruptions. Combining the third movement with the remaining section of the second movement creates a larger section of music based entirely on pulsed music. This larger section (B) contains subsequent ostinatos that appear to be transformed with each arrival of new material. The result is the perception of a larger two-part form based on free flowing material for the first section, and rhythmic pulsation for the second section, thus obscuring the nature of the three-movement work.

The ostinatos that comprise the second section of music are derived from the background material of the first section (see Figure 3). Sørensen defines this as layering. He states that,

> I work with a vast amount of layers. Usually there are amazingly many good things happening at the same time and sometimes the powers go against each other. It might be that they’re in some sort of self-destructive drive in it as there is always something in the foreground, which is being overwhelmed by something else. What I want to do is to have some things that seem almost imperceptible, but which gradually emerge though without letting them advance so far that nothing else can remove them again. The many layers I work with in my music sort of peel each other away, which makes things ambiguous.

While each ostinato is several measures long, the source material is generally brief and typically does not function like an ostinato but is background material or sometimes a rhythmic passage contained in the solo violin line. In m. 58 of the second movement, the first ostinato is placed in the harp line.

The rhythm is based on material from the piccolo part in m. 29 of the same movement. Along with the continuous nature of the ostinato, the utilization of one pitch throughout the harp part (b-natural) changes the nature of the original fragment, which utilizes more pitches. The use of such pedal tones is characteristic of many of the different ostinatos that appear in this piece.

Ostinatos that contain consecutive sixteenth notes are placed in two different sections in the work— m. 66 of the second movement and m. 167 of the third movement. These ostinatos are derived from the background music of the opening of the work. In mm. 81-84 of the second movement, the viola line contains an ostinato that is a basic dotted rhythm that is derived from a motive in the solo violin at m. 19 of the second movement.

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23 Jesper Bechman, “Total Polyphony,” *Dansk Musik Tidsskrift*, 61/ 6, (1986/87). I found the article here: http://www.4komponister.dk/english/Sørensen accessed on 8 December 2008, p. 5. The Internet site has been eliminated and the contents are for sale on a CD ROM.
At the beginning of the third movement, the solo violin part and tom-toms create the ostinato, which contains a pulse at the eighth note level, being accented by the motive in the solo violin part. This ostinato is derived from the cello parts in m. 24 of the first movement. In mm. 39-161 of the final movement, the solo violin line contains four-beat rhythmic groups that are set against the three beat groups in the toms.

While the sections based on ostinatos are pulsed and are perceived to be different than the static sections of music, the layering of these rhythmic motives, derived from earlier moments in the music, helps obscure the formal boundaries of the work.

In Sterbende Gärten, formal continuity is enhanced by the programmatic elements of the work, compositional techniques, and devices such as the employment of thirds in each movement. Since all three movements of the work contain various depictions of decay, the work becomes cohesive through the employment of techniques that obscure and mask musical events. Although these compositional techniques are consistently utilized throughout the work, they depict...
different programmatic references. Two of the obscuring techniques are the use of glissandi and pedal points. In each movement, the role of glissandi is consistent. Sørensen creates glissandi as a way of obscuring or masking the musical surface. In defining the role of glissandi in all of his works, he states, “It [a glissando] is simply an effacement of clarity. It gives vagueness as the tones are not posited as isolated tones.” Sørensen states that glissandi create a lack of clarity by not focusing on specific pitches.

Similar to the nature of glissandi, and sometimes in conflation with them, pedal points obscure the musical surface as well. Pedal tones reinforce the beginning of melodic cells in other voices and create a lack of clarity in contrast to these melodic cells by sustaining the original pitches while the melody continues to move and to be transformed.

Along with the consistent use of obscuring techniques, Sørensen also employs the third not only as a pitch-class generator in the second movement, but also as a constant in all of the movements. For example in the opening of the first movement (see first and second staves of Figure 4), Sørensen utilizes thirds throughout each of the motives. In mm. 1-4 of the violins A and B (the second staff of Figure 4), Sørensen creates a melody, which contains a melodic third between the F-sharp and A, surrounding the G-sharp. In the second motive (see top staff at m. 4), Sørensen utilizes two interlocking thirds—B, A-flat (G sharp) and A, C-sharp—in the melodic cell. In mm. 8-9 (again see the top staff of Figure 4), Sørensen employs the C-sharp and A as a third as well, which like the opening motive also surrounds a pitch, D.

Although Sørensen never expounds on this, the employment of the sixteen 015 pitch collections in mm. 189-200 of the third movement (see fifth staff of Figure 4), could have been chosen based on the pitch collection containing a third in each of its transpositions and inversions, reinforcing the employment of thirds in each movement. Sørensen also restricts the transformations of the 015 pitch-class sets to exploit common tone relationships between each of the sets. Similar to the placement of thirds in the first movement, Sørensen continues to exploit linear applications of thirds as well as an additional interruptive scale step in this movement. For example in mm. 189-193 of the violin solo line (the fifth staff of Figure 4), he employs the pitches—G, A-flat and E-flat—as the melodic cell, which contains a third between E-flat and G. In m. 193 on the second beat, Sørensen transforms the cell to C, D-flat and A-flat, containing a third between C and A-flat as well as keeping the A-flat as a common tone. In m. 194 the melodic cell from the opening of this section returns, containing a third, E-flat and G, and on the second beat transforms the pitch collection to C, G, and A-flat, keeping two common tones, but importantly adding another third, C and A flat. In m. 195 on beat 1, the figure—D-flat, F, and C—contains the third, D-flat and F, while the figure on the second beat—A-flat, C, D-flat—keeps two common tones, but also contains another third, A-flat, C. In m. 196 on beat 1, the figure—F, A, and B-flat—contains a third, A and F, while the figure on beat 2—B-flat, A, and D—not only keeps two common tones, but also contains the third, B-flat and D.

Similar to the other instances, in the last example at mm. 232-239 of the third movement (bottom staff of Figure 4), Sørensen again employs groupings of thirds. In m. 232, the motivic grouping—E, G-sharp, and A—contains a third, E and G-sharp. On the following beat, the grouping contains an F-sharp and an A, as well as a repetition of the previous E and G-sharp. In m. 233 the first third, A and C, surrounds a harmonic third, B-flat and D. This happens on both beats of m. 233, as well as an appearance of an interlocking third, G-sharp and B, with the latter third, A and C. Similar to m. 232, m. 233 contains two groupings of thirds: A-sharp and D-flat, and A and C. The B in m. 233 interlocks with the G-sharp in the previous measure and with the D in the subsequent measure. In mm. 235-236, Sørensen employs the E and C-sharp as the third (surrounding D), repeating this collection on each beat for these remaining two measures.

24 Jesper Bechman, “Total Polyphony,” Dansk Musik Tidsskrift, 61/6, (1986/87). I found the article here: http://www.4komponister.dk/english/Sørensen accessed on 8 December 2008, p. 5. The Internet site has been eliminated and the contents are for sale on a CD ROM.
Figure 4. Sterbende Gärten. Third Relationships Between all Movements
Even with the formal ambiguity resulting from unexpected pitch placement of structural points within the formal boundaries, alternations of pulse and static rhythm, and unanticipated rests as formal demarcations, Sørensen nonetheless creates a cohesive work by utilizing pedal points and glissandos, which depict elements of decay. He also employs a consistent interval—the third—as a fundamental part of the motive-creating process of the piece.
CONCLUSION

Understanding Sørensen’s perceptions of compositional inspiration, and his use of the program, which is associated with each movement, arising from his ideas on decay, provides a point of departure for understanding not only Sterbende Gärten, but also many of his other works. He consistently connects compositional techniques to programmatic elements of various forms of decay and obscuring techniques. The employment of pedal tones, glissandos, the transferring and diffusion of lines across the ensemble, and the simultaneous appearance of melodic cells create saturation in the music. The prevalent change in the ethos of each movement originates in and is generated by differences of original untransformed cells—both melodic cells and the “choral series”—before they are obscured. The initiating generator for each movement produces a different effect and, while the placement of the obscuring techniques changes, the actual method does not. Therefore, it is not the obscuring techniques, but the actual generating cells that depict the programmatic elements. At the global level of the work, these elements conflated with the compositional processes of each movement create continuity. Paradoxically, Sørensen’s employment of obscuring techniques throughout the work creates compositional cohesion, even though its intent is to mask or blur the musical surface.
APPENDIX

TEMPLUM: A MOSAIC DIPTYCH FOR 8 PLAYERS
Instrumentation:
Flute
Bb Clarinet
Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Cello
Piano
Percussion: marimba, vibraphone, tam tam, medium gong, tubular bells, castanets, triangle, glockenspiel, cymbal

Duration: 18 minutes (8/10)
Tempo marks should be followed as closely as possible
* signifies the player to "play out"
Sounds as written

Templum is a diptych, meaning that either piece can be performed alone or together. Both Oceanic Reflection and Desert Solitude share a meditative nature. While both titles indicate a strong connection with nature, the pieces are not meant as programs, but as situations for thought and reflection. Much of the austere nature of the work is not only based on the natural beauty of deserts and coastal regions, but also in meditations on current social issues in the world. Templum was written entirely during the political season of the 2008 Presidential Election. I spent much time reflecting on current global problems as well as American history. Originally conceived as a choral piece, both works of Templum were written with the following texts in mind.

“I am loth to close. We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield, and patriot grave, to every living heart and hearthstone, all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.”

Abraham Lincoln

"If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we should find in each life sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility."

Longfellow

"...Written not on ink, but with the spirit of the living God, not on the tables of stone, on the fleshy tables of the heart."

2nd Corinthians 3:3
OCEANIC REFLECTION

Moderato – Mysterioso, Arioso, Austere

Brian Thomas

2010

Flute

Moderato – Mysterioso, Arioso, Austere

B. Clarinet

Moderato – Mysterioso, Arioso, Austere

Violin I

Moderato – Mysterioso, Arioso, Austere

Violin II

Moderato – Mysterioso, Arioso, Austere

Viola

Moderato – Mysterioso, Arioso, Austere

Cello

Moderato – Mysterioso, Arioso, Austere

Percussion

Moderato – Mysterioso, Arioso, Austere

Timpani

Moderato – Mysterioso, Arioso, Austere

Piano

Moderato – Mysterioso, Arioso, Austere

Flute

B. Clarinet

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

Percussion

Timpani

Piano

Marimba (soft)
Poignant, Passionate
Mysterioso, Arioso, Austere
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