

NEW USES OF TONAL HARMONY IN RECENT MUSIC

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INTRODUCTION/STATEMENT OF INTENTION

After a period in the 1950's where new music was dominated by complex 'atonal' pitch combinations, many composers have recently used tonal harmony within their styles. In doing this they have used these tonal harmonies in new ways, either by virtue of original harmonic considerations or by placing them in an original context. The purpose of this thesis is to discuss and attempt to define some of these new uses of tonal harmony.

In order to organise such a wide range of material (as it has turned out), it has been necessary to look for certain common denominators. In any use of tonal harmony after a period dominated by 'atonality' it seems that there are two possibilities as far as pitch is concerned: either to compose with both tonal and 'atonal' harmonies - a new approach which I have chosen to call a 'mixed' use of harmony; or to turn away and establish a style based on predominantly tonal ideas. At the same time however, three main areas of non-tonal innovation have had some bearing on the realisation of these possibilities, and the final division of the essay into three sections is a form of compromise to reflect this:

1. 'Mixed' Harmony (generally within the context of a 'Darmstadt'-based style).
2. 'Unified' Harmony/'Repetitive' Music.
3. Other Approaches/English 'Experimental' Music.

Whilst a general framework like this is necessary, detailed discussion of specific examples is also important in presenting an informed picture - therefore within the first two sections there are chapters on three individual composers:

- 1.1 Henri Pousseur
- 1.2 Frederic Rzewski
- 2.2 Michael Nyman.

The essay ends with a brief summary of the stylistic elements that have contributed towards these new uses of tonal harmony. It suggests that, far from being a complacent return to old styles, this recent music has a new perspective necessarily gained from experiencing many of the developments that took place in the absence of tonality.

1.2: FREDERIC RZEWSKI - THE PEOPLE UNITED WILL NEVER BE DEFEATED!

(El pueblo unido jamás será vencido.)

Pousseur's theories are one highly rational way of using diverse harmony within a piece. Contrastingly, Frederic Rzewski has relied much more on intuition in his 'El pueblo unido' piano variations of 1975. Further comparison also reveals that, in this piece, he has been less concerned with research into 'mixed' harmonic areas as such, and more interested in invoking a wide range of past and present-day styles (which inevitably results in 'mixed' harmony). This interest is a unique development in the context of Rzewski's output, for the harmonic and stylistic language of each of his previous pieces had been consistent on a readily appreciable level. He may have professed that "I don't think I've ever developed what you might call a style," [1] but this comment applies to the changes between works rather than within them. To understand his motivation for moving away from this type of consistency in 'El pueblo', it will be necessary first of all to discuss his method of working.

The main feature of his work to date has been a concern with political ideas which are communicated by the use of novel tonal materials. This links him strongly to Cornelius Cardew and a number of other composers and performers who became politically motivated at the end of the 1960's (Wolff, Takahashi, Tilbury, etc.). Rather than produce work in isolation, however, he has also paid great attention to the audience for which the work is intended. "I think the new question that we're coming up with ... is precisely the first question, WHO is the audience, who am I trying to speak to, and what am I trying to say?" [2] Thus, when he was commissioned by the pianist Ursula Oppens to write a piece as part of the American Bi-centennial celebrations, his reason for tuning towards eclectic stylistic allusion resulted from careful consideration of the implications of this commission. He has stated that he wanted to write a piece suited to Oppens' prodigious pianistic technique, and "a piece which would be suitable for the ... audience for which she often performs - a kind of Middle-American classical audience, not particularly acquainted with or disposed towards avant-garde music ... but not hostile to it either." [3] Rzewski felt that the basic political issue commemorated by the Bi-centennial was the right of a 'small' nation to determine its future against the oppression of a 'large' nation, and that this basic theme of oppression could be seen in Chile where a bloody coup d'état had dispersed the cultural movement of the Unidad Popular two years earlier.

Rather than resort to a text, as he had done in his earlier piece 'Coming Together', he took the Chilean popular song 'El pueblo unido' by Sergio Ortega, which had become a sort of unofficial anthem of the resistance, and used the idea of variations on this as a purely instrumental means of communicating the central idea of the song. This central idea emphasises the importance of creating unity among the democratic forces of the country to effectively resist fascism. Here then is Rzewski's reason for using an eclectic range of styles in the piece - on a simple level each one is analogous to one of the different social types and classes which existed prior to the coup d'état, and the image of the unity is represented by relating them all to one source (the theme) and presenting them in a logical and coherent structure within which they exist quite freely. Although this seems to suggest some sort of grandiose collage piece, the allusions are rarely specific and many variations seem to explore very original ground as a by-product of their interplay between snachronistic ideas. This is especially apparent in those variations which blend tonality with some of the avant-garde ideas of the 1950's and '60's. Concerning the remaining considerations of suiting both audience and performer, Rzewski simultaneously solves these by using a virtuosic pianistic style to present an entertaining play of ideas around a memorable popular song. The resulting product is a natural form of expression for a composer who is himself a brilliant pianist with performing experience of a wide range of 'musics'.

There have been several composers in the past who wrote piano pieces around political subjects (Janacek and Liszt immediately spring to mind), but the most profound influence on Rzewski was Cornelius Cardew whose 'Thaëlmann Variations' had been written a year earlier. These are also a set of variations on a political song and they also use a range of idioms, both associative and quotational. They do not attempt to cover such a wide range of styles and harmonies however, as the text of the song does not require it. (These variations will be the subject of further discussion, in section 3). In that the philosophical background of 'El pueblo' is of immense importance in a full understanding of the music, it may also be related to the work of a composer like Gavin Bryars whose music can be enjoyed on a surface level, but can also be followed through to a deeper plane of thought. (See section 3). The most obvious difference here, however, is that whilst Bryars' philosophical constructs are generally quite 'cool' in tone and not political in any specific way, the brutal political event Rzewski was reaching to demanded a more immediate and intense response.

Relating 'El pueblo' back to the previous chapter and Fousseur's theories then, while both explore the possibilities of 'mixed' harmony, Rzewski's use of stylistic allusion and tonality (which, as Hynes has pointed out, is a valuable binding agent to 'glue' together material [6]), seem that he has no need of a unified way of generating the harmonies. One of the reasons why Fousseur spent so much time on pitch research was that he did not wish to resort to tonality.

Before discussing the 'El pueblo' theme, mention must be made of the combination of structure and key-system in the piece, as these are the main reason for the success of the stylistic fusion.

There are 36 variations (one for every bar of the theme as played in the introduction), which are divided into six groups of six, and in each of these groups the final variation is a recapitulation or summary of the styles of the preceding five. Extending this idea further, Rzewski turns the final group into a summary of the preceding five groups with the final variation as a summary of the entire piece (see Ex. 1). This clever formal device (which has associations with the end of Stockhausen's 'Mantra', and the opening of Pousseur's 'Apostrophe et six réflexions'), enables him to present an increasing impetus towards unity within the piece.

Ex. 1

1 to 5	recapitulated by	6
7 to 11	" "	12
13 to 17	" "	18
19 to 23	" "	24
25 to 29	" "	30

36 = recap. of { 31 recaps: 1, 7, 13, 19, 25
 32 recaps: 2, 8, 14, 20, 26
 33 recaps: 3, 9, 15, 21, 27
 34 recaps: 4, 10, 16, 22, 28
 35 recaps: 5, 11, 17, 23, 29.

The piece also follows a clearly defined key system which lends audit direction to the sequence of variations.

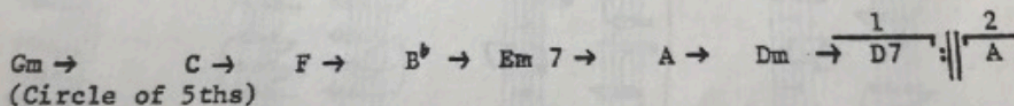
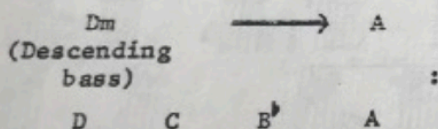
Ex. 2

- 1st half [Variations 1-12 D minor/A minor/E minor/B minor etc. (through the 12 keys)
(circle of 5ths towards the dominant)
- [Variations 13-18 D minor
- 2nd half [Variations 19-24 D minor
- [Variations 25-36 D minor/A minor/E minor etc. (through the 12 keys)
(circle of 5ths towards the dominant)

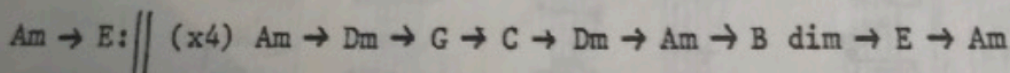
The use of a circle of fifths in both halves of the work could be related to the earlier models of Bach and Chopin, but also perhaps more properly to the sequential second half of the theme (which proceeds towards the sub-dominant).

The 'El pueblo' song itself has been described by Rzewski as particularly suited to variation [5]. (See Ex. 3). The main reason for this would seem to be the chord structure:

Ex. 4

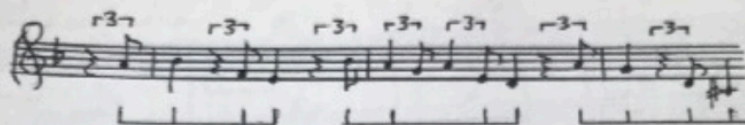


In common with other themes often used for variation, this utilises a sequence in the 2nd half which leads powerfully back to the original key and repetition of the entire structure. Additionally, its harmonic movement in general is sufficiently clear to withstand extensive modification later in the piece. (The well-known Violin Caprice by Paganini - as something that has been the subject of many sets of variations - is very similar harmonically):



Thematically, it uses a simple triadic motif (with a very prominent perfect 4th), and in the sequential second half the following sinuous melody which Rzewski uses as a repeated melodic shape capable of much transformati

Ex. 5



This melodic cell, modified by processes of expansion and contraction, is used as the principal means of generating the 'advanced' tonal formations of the complex variations. It also introduces into the piece what might be termed a 'struggling' element reinforcing a common theme in Rzewski's work which he has spoken about in the following way: "Musicians and artists must listen to the sound of struggle if they are to contribute anything in the way of harmony." [6] In 'El pueblo', it seems at times to represent the struggle of the Chilean people towards unity.

Rather than attempt to trace the variations through in strict order, given the length of the piece, it would seem best to select examples of, firstly, the simple variations, then the more complex ones, and conclude with those variations which seem beyond any realistic analysis in terms of tonality. This method reveals similarities of construction between variations of comparable complexity which would otherwise be ignored. Each variation will be linked to the theme, but more importantly, an attempt will be made to emphasise the creative ideas over and above mere stylistic pastiche which gives the work its contemporary feel despite alluding to past tradition. The chapter will end with a discussion of the links between variations, the thematic relation between the quotations and the 'El pueblo' theme, and a few general observations.

The first variation (in D minor) immediately sets the tone of the work. Whilst using unexceptional simple harmony and preserving the rhythm of the original, it spreads the pitch over several octaves in register thereby changing the sound quality of individual notes and creating a kind of 'tonal-pointillism' with a new and evocative quality. (Cf. the music of Brian Dennis mentioned in section 3 and Berio's 'Wasserklavier' described at the end of this section).

Ex. 6

Var.1
Weaving : delicate but firm

(pp)
(una corda)
use pedal, but sparingly
pp
p
mp
pp

In its interaction of styles it forms a very suitable demonstration of the kind of music described in the introduction to this thesis as 'having a new perspective necessarily gained from experiencing many of the developments that took place in the absence of tonality'.

The fifth variation (marked "Dreamlike, frozen"), again employs an avant-garde technique - in this case a mode of attack - within a generally diatonic context. The performer is instructed to play the chords staccato then catch the harmonics with the pedal. ("... swift, sudden grabbing motion in which not all of the notes are necessarily played ... a little like picking berries or fruit"). (Cf. Berio's Sequenza IV for piano). The chords are 'added-note' ones which bear quite a free relation to the theme - only the alternation between tonic and dominant at the beginning is obvious.

Ex. 7

Var.5 V N.B.

Dreamlike, frozen

fp ppp tre corde fp u.c. ppp t.c.
una corda V V

Rzewski explores the resonance of these harmonies rather than their functional qualities, hence the non-directional tonal harmony would be original even without the added novelty of the mode of attack.

In the ninth variation, Rzewski (like Pousseur and Cardew before him) turns to the bare 5th as the cleanest and simplest harmonic element (apart from the octave, that is), and uses it as a point of harmonic focus and repose among more complex working.

Ex. 8

The musical score for Ex. 8 consists of two staves. The top staff is a piano part in G major, marked *pp* and *una corda*. It features a sequence of chords: a triad of G4, B4, D5, followed by a dyad of G4 and B4, then a triad of G4, B4, D5, and finally a dyad of G4 and B4. The bottom staff is a bass part marked *ppp*, featuring a sequence of notes: G3, B3, D4, G4, B4, D5, G4, B4, D5, G4, B4, D5. Above the piano staff, the tempo is indicated as $\text{♩} = 48$ Evenly. Above the bass staff, the word *(idem)* is written under the first two measures.

Here, the main relation to the theme is the similarity of the opening intervals:

The musical notation shows a sequence of notes on a single staff: G4, B4, D5, G4, B4, D5, G4, B4, D5. Above the notes, there are horizontal lines with vertical bars indicating intervals: a line above G4 and B4, a line above B4 and D5, and a line above G4 and B4. This illustrates the similarity of the opening intervals between the piano and bass parts.

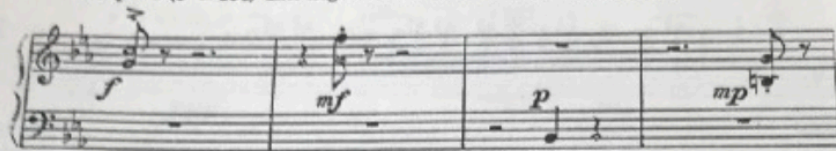
and the suggestion of a sequence in the second half. The potentially 'derivative' nature of the bare 5th interval is displaced by the rhythmical patterns of 5 ♩'s in the time of $\frac{2}{4}$ and 5 ♩'s in the time of $\frac{4}{4}$.

In the 11th variation, most of the song is erased, leaving silence between a few isolated chords (marked "like fragments of an absent melody - in strict time", - an instruction slightly redolent of Schumann's 'innerstimme' from his Humoreske piano piece). What would have been an orthodox sequence is thus modified to form an unusual succession of harmonies. (The clear relation to the song's harmonies is indicated in brackets.)

Ex. 9

Var.11

Tempo I (♩ = 106) Like fragments of an absent melody - in strict time



[Cm → Cm/Bb → Cm (or Fm) / Ab, Cm → Cm/Bb → Cm/Ab → G]

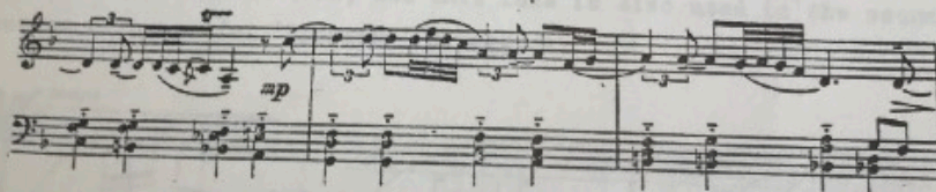
The effect of this pitch element is further transposed by the optional use of avant-garde techniques like slamming the piano lid (used by Cardew in his 'Thalman Variations'), vocal cries, and whistling, common enough in 'atonal' music but much more unusual and unexpected in a 'key-based' context.

Each of the harmonically simple variations examined so far uses the interaction of modern techniques to modify the tonal harmony. Whilst there are deliberately derivative elements, these are brought to life by the newer context. However, in the 13th variation, Rzewski allows the allusion to become more concrete and unchecked in the form of a 'blues'-style version of the theme, without any distinctive characteristics for the most part, but beautifully constructed nevertheless.

Ex. 10

Var.13

♩ = 72 or slightly faster



Only the ending confounds expectations by remaining unresolved and using a device which had particularly impressed him in the work of Cardew - namely the quotations of well-known political songs as "a way of bringing in related ideas." [7]

Here, he quotes very simply part of the melody from 'Bandiera Rossa' which acts as a cadence for the variation even though the underlying chord is not resolved until the next variation:

Ex. 11

cadenza:
♩ = ca 56
freely

ppp *rit.* *tempo*

Following on from this idea of non-transposed allusion, the final harmonically 'simple' variation that will be discussed (no. 28) weaves together three distinct forms of 'pastiche' so that the progression of styles already apparent between variations now takes place within one. The first is a series of repeated chords using unusual harmonic progressions to alter the tonic - dominant of the original. (Cf. Eisler and Weill).

Ex. 12

♩ = 160

mp *L.H.:*

una corda, otherwise no pedal

In its second half, this quotes the 'El pueblo' theme in the left hand against a descending chromatic line, and this idea is also used in the second style - a series of beautiful 'Lisztian' arpeggios.

Ex. 13

mf *tempo*

gradually growing louder

etc.

These give way in turn to the third stylistic allusion - an extended cadence markedly similar to a Bach prelude (such as Book I no. 1 from the 'Well-tempered Clavier'), with the only obvious inconsistency being rhythmical, (the 12 quavers are grouped as 5 + 7).

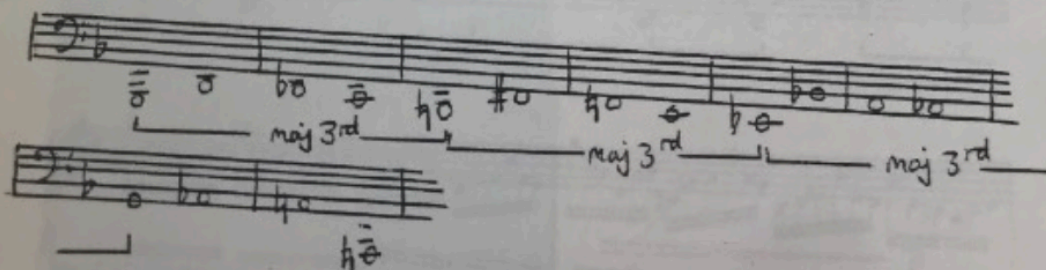
Ex. 14



It is this final allusion which has the greatest 'shock value' in that there is no real attempt to relate it to the 'El pueblo' theme and so the pastiche style is more obvious - having prepared the listener for allusion of this kind in the context of variation around the song theme, Rzewski now presents it in a 'neat' form.

There are several variations in the course of the piece which may be considered 'tonal' (in that they use directional harmony), but which remain unresolved for much longer than the original theme. Among these more harmonically complex variations, no. 17 preserves the idea of a walking bass from the song, (evident in the first four bars: D, C, B^b, A), but modifies the original root movement - most noticeably in the sequential second half which is now based on a cycle of major 3rds instead of the conventional cycle of 5ths:

Ex. 15



This is played in an even minim rhythm which acts as an anchor to the quasi-improvisational set of 'riffs' in the right hand:

Ex. 16

Example 16 consists of two systems of musical notation. The first system shows a piano accompaniment in the left hand with a steady minim rhythm and a right hand with a melodic line. Dynamic markings include *f*, *p*, *f*, and *mf*. The second system continues the piece, featuring a melodic line with a handwritten 'etc.' above it. Dynamic markings include *pp*, *f*, *pp*, *mp*, *p*, *p* (accel.), and *mf*. Brackets in both systems indicate specific melodic cells.

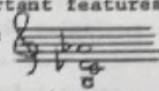
The thematic cell mentioned in the discussion of the song theme is clearly the building block for these sporadic patterns (shown in brackets), which seem liberated from the influence of a harmonic centre by following each other at the interval of a semitone.

Another fairly complex variation (no. 21) fixes this melodic cell by superimposition into a unified chord type which, although quite simple tonally, is then propelled through a manic series of arpeggios whose root movement itself reflects the melodic cell:

Ex. 17

Example 17 begins with a melodic cell in a single staff, showing a sequence of notes with a handwritten 'be' above. Below this are two systems of piano and right-hand parts. The first system shows a piano accompaniment with a manic series of arpeggios and a right hand with a melodic line. The second system continues the piece, featuring a melodic line with a handwritten 'p' above it. Brackets in both systems indicate specific melodic cells.

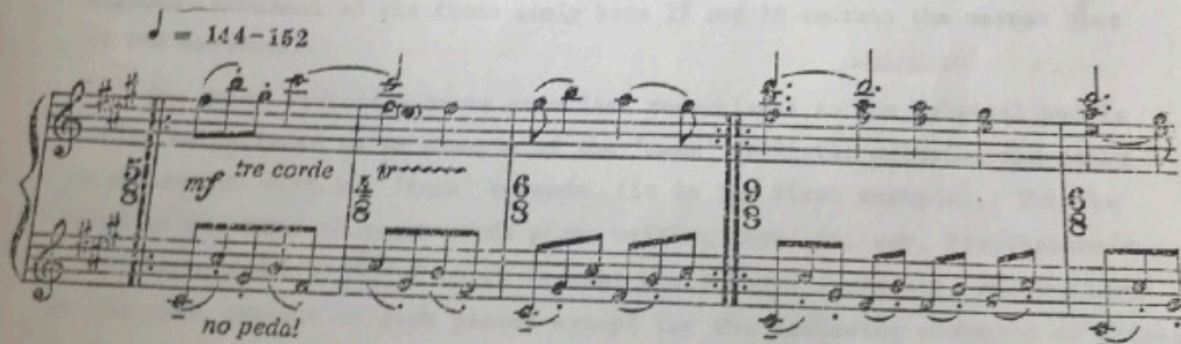
The logic of this passage as a reflection of the song sequence is finally ensured by beginning on the subdominant minor and modifying the final chord change so that it ends on the dominant (which are both very important features of the original). [8] At the repeat the chord type used becomes:



by shifting the top 3 notes down a tone, thus making the music more dissonant and less clear tonally, in preparation for the next chromatic variation - a simple device and one immediately understood by the ear. The stylistic emphasis of this variation as a whole would appear to be aimed at the virtuoso romantic piano tradition, but a certain ambiguity on the part of the composer is maintained by the use of a constant semi-quaver pulse, as emphatic in its own way as the fast continuous quavers in the repetitive music of, say, Philip Glass.

Variation 29, (following immediately on from the 'Bach pastiche' mentioned earlier) is an altogether more original sounding variation based on 'quartal' harmony (deriving from the very prominent perfect fourth motif in the song), which temporarily avoids the minor mode that dominates so much of the piece:

Ex. 18



The harmonic movement of the opening (which should be $F\sharp \rightarrow C\sharp$) is also obscured by simultaneously using the reverse ($C\sharp \rightarrow F\sharp$), but while this ostinato figure is maintained in the left hand for the sequential second half, the right hand slips into triadic harmony to present a more recognisable version of the theme. The potential reference of this variation to the period when perfect 4ths were much used for chordal construction (early to mid-twentieth century) is subverted however (like so many others) by the novel use of rhythm (based on repeated $\begin{matrix} 5 & 4 & 6 & | & 9 & 6 & 9 & 6 \\ 8 & 8 & 8 & | & 8 & 8 & 8 & 8 \end{matrix}$ pattern).

The 16th variation demonstrates the value of the melodic cell as a simple building block from which pitch relations of formidable complexity can be constructed. It is perceived as a very decorative version of the walking bass idea in the song (even crotchet movement), with moments of greater decisiveness ("Expansive, with victorious feeling").

Ex. 21

Two systems of musical notation for piano. Each system consists of a treble staff and a bass staff. The first system shows a melodic line in the treble and a walking bass line in the bass. The second system continues the piece, with a dynamic marking of *mp* in the treble staff.

Variation 19 opens the second half of the piece in a way which could be seen as similar in spirit to the opening of the second half of Liszt's B minor piano sonata:

$\text{♩} = 144 (\text{♩} = 106)$ With energy

Ex. 22

Three systems of musical notation for piano. The first system includes a treble staff with a time signature of $\frac{12}{8}$ and a dynamic marking of *f sempre*, and a bass staff. The subsequent two systems continue the piece with complex rhythmic patterns and chordal textures in both staves.

Whereas Liszt used his motif in a quasi-fugal way however, Rzewski turns to the melodic cell again, using it in interlocking chains to generate a virtuosic burst of activity. Again, only rarely does any other element from the song make an appearance in this intervallic construction (the Dm → A of the opening quoted above is the exception rather than the rule).

These then are some of the variations found in the piece. However, the preceding discussion gives no idea of the way or means by which they are linked together. Far from being an unconnected series of allusions, they do seem to exhibit a considerable sense of flow. The most obvious reasons for this is the grouping of them into miniature 'movements' where a certain type of approach is preserved for several variations. Variations 15 to 17 for example, all utilise a walking bass idea while the 'harmonic' content placed against this changes. Variations 19 to 24 are really only based on two ideas, a motivic use of the melodic cell (one instance is quoted in Ex. 22), which governs 19 and 22, and a tremolo (with arpeggios) for 20, 21 and 23 (24 is a reprise of all this material). Variations 31 to 36 are all recapitulations of preceding material, and variations 25 to 28 are what might be termed 'poly-variations' in that they consist of more than one style of writing (variation no. 28 has already been quoted in Examples 12-14).

Within these groups, Rzewski also considers the sequential suitability of his variations, often making some attempt to modify the nature of a variation progressively, in preparation for the next one. For example, variation no. 2 begins in the diatonic manner of no. 1 (see Ex. 6), but in its first time through the sequence of the song it uses chromatic leading chords prior to each change to make the harmony considerably more complex. In its second time through this is combined with the melodic cell idea to become almost inaudible in terms of precise tonal drive, which is where variation 3 continues:

Ex. 23

The musical notation for Example 23 consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and contains a sequence of chords and melodic fragments. It features several instances of a rhythmic pattern marked with an '8' and a 'v' (likely indicating an eighth note with a vibrato or similar effect). The lower staff is in bass clef and contains a more active melodic line with eighth notes and sixteenth notes, often beamed together. It also includes some chordal accompaniment. The notation is dense and complex, reflecting the 'virtuosic burst of activity' mentioned in the text.

Again no. 7 is based on an appoggiatura idea, quite clear in its harmonic outline at first ($G^{\#} \rightarrow D^{\#}$), which becomes much developed (in the repeat of the sequence) so that the music is temporarily released from tonality. Variation 8 which follows is then able to take up a sort of 'melodic' cell' style without interrupting the continuity.

Of course occasionally Rzewski does suddenly change the harmonic feel between variations (the bare 5th variation 9 is a good example of this, being sandwiched between the complex no. 8 and the 'quasi-Stockhausen' of no. 10), and the same sort of mutual re-inforcement already mentioned in connection with the early Damstadt quotational works occurs ('Apple on the Moon'), but more often the links are smoothed over.

One aspect of the original material which must finally be mentioned are the concluding parts of each recapitulation (the sixth part of the 6th, 12th, 18th etc., variations) as these naturally fulfil an important function in rounding off each group. Unlike the recapitulation itself, which is obviously composed of previous material, these introduce a new cadential feeling which could be described in conventional terms as either 'imperfect' or 'perfect', depending on their location in the piece. For example, the 18th variation, as the end of the first half, has a very clear-cut perfect cadence but one articulated in a 'low-key' way, so that the listener is aware that it is not the end of the piece.

Ex. 24

The musical score for Ex. 24 consists of two staves, piano and bass. The piano staff begins with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. It starts with a piano (*pp*) dynamic and a *subito* marking. The tempo is marked 'a little slower' with a hairpin. The melody features a sequence of notes, followed by a section marked *sfz* (sforzando) with a hairpin, and then a section marked *ritard.* (ritardando) with a hairpin. The bass staff begins with a bass clef and a 4/4 time signature, playing a simple accompaniment. Dynamic markings include *pp* and *PPP* (pianississimo) at the end. The piece concludes with a final chord in the piano staff.

Constrastingly, the 'slight' perfect cadence implicit before the end of the 4th variation (marked in the example) is then followed by a brooding series of chords based on the melody from the second half of the song and thus, although forward momentum has been checked, the variation naturally joins onto the next group of variations:

Ex. 25

Musical score for Ex. 25, featuring piano and violin parts. The piano part includes dynamic markings such as *p*, *pp*, and *ppmp*, along with performance instructions like *poco rit.* and *Cadenza*. The violin part includes markings like *rit.* and *pppp*. The score is divided into measures, with measure numbers 32 and 43 indicated.

Often the score markings reinforce the musical quality of these cadences - "with foreboding" (Vn. 6) and "with finality" (Vn. 12) (although this feeling is neatly subverted just before the end), but the final (highly poetic) imperfect cadence prior to the return of the theme (in its original scoring, after an hour's music) is unmarked:

Ex. 26

Musical score for Ex. 26, featuring piano and violin parts. The piano part includes dynamic markings such as *ff*, *fff*, *ppp*, *pp*, *p*, and *mp*, along with performance instructions like *very slow*, *rit.*, and *Cadenza*. The violin part includes markings like *rit.* and *pp*. The score is divided into measures, with measure numbers 22 and 23 indicated.

In his sleeve note to the Vanguard recording of this piece, [10] Christian Wolff observes that "The Chilean struggle is also ... linked beyond itself to kindred movements throught the world (by quotation..." He also says that "the melodies of the songs quoted ... derive, in the sequence of their pitch intervals, from ... the opening of the 'El pueblo' song." He does not of course show this (the sleeve note is purely verbal), so the following example demonstrates the close relation between the songs which add this extra referential depth:

Ex. 27

The image shows three staves of handwritten musical notation in treble clef. The first staff is for 'El pueblo', starting with a rising 4th interval and ending on E. The second staff is for 'Bandiera Rossa', also starting with a rising 4th interval. The third staff is for 'Solidantaetslied', featuring a rising 3rd interval and ending on E. Annotations include 'r.m. 3rd', 'L 4th', and 'ends on E'.

[The triadic melodies of 'El pueblo' and 'Bandiera Rossa' both begin with a rising 4th - the 'Solidantaetslied' resembles 'El Pueblo' by its movement from D minor to E⁹ at the end of the opening phrase] .

In conclusion, 'The People United...' has generated much approval since its first performance in 1976, mainly on the grounds of its 'purely' musical achievement. It inhabits a unique world where different levels of allusion, pastiche, quotation and originality all mingle in an ultimately spontaneous way so that, for an hour at least, differences are resolved by turning them all towards a common link (- the song). Perhaps the fusion is an illusion however (it is certainly difficult to hold a coherent mental image of the piece afterwards due to its diversity). In the end it is the differences between the various styles as much as the similarities that remain - provoked by the lack of a consistent means of transformation (cf. Bach's repeated harmonic scheme in the Goldberg Variations, and Beethoven's harmonic approach in the Diabelli variations). This should not necessarily be taken as a criticism however for, as Wolff says, "The movement of the whole piece is towards a new unity ... (not to be confused with uniformity) ..." [11] In comparison with 'Couleurs Croisées', perhaps this music does seem to move towards unity, rather than be constrained by 'uniform' harmonic procedures.

The difficulties of using 'mixed' harmony, at this stage in its exploration, are enormous and it may be this that has led certain commentators to be critical. Schiffer, for example, called the piece "long, repetitive and undistinguished" [12] and Driver (whilst praising it) said "If I remain unsure whether it is a masterpiece, it will be because of the disengaged, dreamlike character of Rzewski's achievement ... Rzewski lacks a certain bite on reality." [13] Others, concerned with the political side of the piece have called it "Bourgeois exploitation" and "Imperialist piano-thumping". [14] All are ungenerous however - Rzewski may have written an 'experimental' piece which, like many radically new pieces, attempts too much at once, but all misgivings disappear when the scope of his achievement is considered (particularly in comparison with others exploring the same area). It is a definite landmark in what he himself has termed as "a much broader tendency in recent music towards the recuperation of past styles and languages." [15]

NOTES - CHAPTER 1.2

1. Ed. W. Zimmerman: Desert Plants, Conversations with 23 American Musicians (1976), p. 312
2. ibid., p. 307.
3. Pre-concert talk at the Almeida Theatre, London. (29/5/83).
4. Michael Nyman: experimental music - Cage and beyond (New York, 1974) p. 141.
- Ex.s 1-27 'The People United Will Never be Defeated!' Zen-On Music Co., Ltd., (Japan 1979).
5. Pre-concert talk (see 3).
6. Ed. W. Zimmerman, op. cit., p.311.
7. Pre-concert talk (see 3).
8. Rzewski's range of invention in sequential variation throughout 'El pueblo' is an ability which was already apparent in his earlier song 'Apolitical Intellectuals' (1973). This setting of an aggressive political text is entirely composed of chromatic sequences, decorated at times by very complex chords.
9. Is this coincidental? (10th variation - 10th Klavierstück).
10. Vanguard VSD. 71248 (Played by Ursula Oppens)(1978).
11. ibid.
12. Brigitte Schiffer: 'New Music Diary' in CONTACT Today's Music, No. 22, (Summer, 1981), p. 41.
13. Paul Driver: 'Recordings' in Tempo,
14. Quoted in Richard Steinitz: 'Profile' in 'The Guardian', (Friday, Nov. 2, 1979), p. 11.
15. Letter from Rzewski dated February 7th, 1979, (photocopy attached at Appendix).

address no longer valid - we've
been evicted. You can reach me
c/o Conservatoire Royal de Liège
rue Forquere, 14
4000 Liège, Belgium

-1-

~~Frederic Rzewski
55 via della Luce
00153 Rome, Italy
Feb. 7, 1979~~

Dear Mr. Pamy,

Thanks for your letter. Rather than my
(not-too-legible) manuscript of "El Pueblo Unido..."
you might prefer the nicely engraved edition which
is about to come out in Japan any day now. A
copy may be ordered from:

ZEN-ON MUSIC CO., LTD.
25 HIGASHI GOKENCHO
SHINJUKU-KU
TOKYO 162, JAPAN

There are presently 3 discs of this piece available
in performances by myself, Ursula Oppens, and Yuji
Takahashi. The easiest one to get (for you) would
be the one played by Oppens + recorded in the USA
for Vanguard Records VSD 71248.

Perhaps we may meet when I come to England
this fall. I'd be glad to discuss tonality and
other things with you then. I'm on tour right now
and hasten to get this letter posted.

Best regards,
F. Rzewski

P.S.

Finding myself with some time to wait between trains and a tall glass of Belgian beer, I shall attempt to think of a few wise things to say about tonality. Why do you think it is "re-emerging"? Some strange things were done with it, it is true, in the first few decades of this century by a few central European composers, but none of them, as far as I know, ever really departed seriously from the traditional tonal system of Western music - even 12-tone technique merely carries the possibilities for modulation offered by equal temperament into a systematic form already implicit, I think, in the "Well-Tempered Clavier." Your concern is probably something else = a much broader tendency in recent music toward the recuperation of past styles + languages. Pousseur was one of the first of the Darmstadt generation to explore this area. He perceived - very keenly, I think - that the radical nihilism of the (musical) postwar West (a sort of esthetic reflection of McCarthyism), with its obsessive desire to make a tabula rasa of everything that had preceded it, including its own spiritual father, Schönberg, was an infantile disorder which was bound to give way to a more pragmatic (+ tolerant) approach to the past. I'd like to go on with this but here comes my train. Best regards,

F.R.