

INTERVIEW WITH KEN METZ AND AN ANALYSIS OF
HIS WORK *SONGS FROM MOTHER GOOSE*

THESIS

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by

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DEDICATIONS

This thesis is dedicated with gratitude to Ken Metz who willingly gave his time and openly shared his thoughts and work throughout the course of this research project. I have learned a great deal from him in this process.

My family, in particular my mother Karen Carter-Cohn, was an inspiration to me in writing my thesis. They all value education and made it possible for me to pursue mine. In addition, many of them have written thesis and dissertation documents of their own, and I admire them for that, along with their many other accomplishments.

All the educators in my life, from piano instructors to my thesis committee, have had a profound impact on my thinking, academic endeavors, and aspirations.

To all of these people, I have a debt of gratitude that can only be repaid by sincerely contributing to the growth of human knowledge.

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ABSTRACT

INTERVIEW WITH KEN METZ AND AN ANALYSIS OF HIS WORK *SONGS FROM MOTHER GOOSE*

by

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In an interview conducted in February of 2008 by the author, Ken Metz speaks about his experiences as a composer-professor. Topics addressed in the interview include Metz' development as a composer, his compositional language, his approach to teaching music theory and composition, and the state of contemporary art composition.

An analysis of Metz' song cycle *Songs from Mother Goose* follows the interview, with an exploration of Mother Goose Rhymes as an art song text and a movement-by-movement discussion of the work. The wide variety of compositional techniques found in the work, along with the incorporation of folk styles, speak to Metz' diverse language as an art composer. Conclusions are drawn about art composition and music education.

I. INTRODUCTION

Kenneth Robert Metz (b. 1954) has been drawn to music his entire life. He began to compose shortly after beginning piano lessons. While earning a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry at Emory University, he frequently participated in improvisation sessions as a flutist. After college, he decided to pursue graduate studies in music, culminating in a Ph.D. in Fine Arts from Texas Tech University in 1997. Since then, he has served as an Assistant and is now an Associate Professor of Music at the University of the Incarnate Word (UIW) in San Antonio, Texas. His career as an academic has included a number of executive roles, notably chairing UIW's music department and serving on regional boards of the College Music Society and the Society of Composers.¹

In my quest to better understand the life and work of academic composers in contemporary society, I began looking for a composer who lived in my area to use as a subject for a study that would include an interview and a theoretical analysis. Ken Metz appealed to me, because his compositions included chamber music for a variety of instrumental combinations as well as large ensemble works for wind ensemble and big band. In addition, his experience as a jazz instrumentalist piqued my interest. Although jazz has entered into the Ivory Tower, particularly as a performance art, there is still an uneasy relationship between jazz and the traditional *musics* of academia in my experience. Duke Ellington is acknowledged as a great composer and orchestrator by serious composers; composer-conductors Leonard Bernstein and Gunther Schuller are

¹ Biographical information is taken from the interview and Ken Metz' curriculum vitae.

known for their incorporation of jazz as a stylistic idiom; and more recently, younger composers, such as those of the post-minimalist movement, have incorporated jazz as well as pop sounds into concert music; yet, Ken Metz and I have both met with some consternation when blurring the boundary between jazz and art music.² While discussion of this subject did not ultimately become a major part of this thesis, the interview with Ken Metz helped me to better understand that there are more nuanced ways of incorporating jazz into art music than simply writing a jazz flavored piece for a jazz instrumentation and throwing in a section for improvisation as I had done as an undergraduate. Two of Ken Metz' major works, *Reflections on Monk* for concert band (1997) and *A Mingus Fantasy* for wind ensemble (2005), use the techniques of the art composer to develop ideas that emphasize the rhythms, timbres, and textures (of particular importance to Metz) of jazz. In addition, these works incorporate stylistic features unique to Thelonious Monk and Charles Mingus, respectively. Since the interview in February of 2008, I have come to appreciate the breed of improvisation that is valued by musical experimentalists of today, including practitioners of both electro-acoustic music and jazz: improvisation that is free from conventions. Such an approach to improvisation is removed from the jazz language of the early 20th-century, that of 18th- and 19th-century cadenzas and Baroque realizations and embellishments, but has a lot in common with the approach to composition within academia. Composers in training learn the conventions of the past, so they can make informed decisions about the future of music, so that they can compose deliberately and with intention.

² See the end of the "Language, Idiom and Style" section of the interview for a discussion of this issue with regard to Ken Metz' compositions.

While jazz initially drew me to Ken Metz, it was his diversity as a composer and his wisdom as an educator that inspired me to pursue my research on him further. Metz is a seasoned educator, in the classroom, in applied lessons in composition and double bass, and in the computer music studio. His insights on music pedagogy, with regard to theory, composition and music technology in particular, are a major subject of the interview. As a music theorist, Ken Metz' background in the sciences informs his understanding of music. Much of the discussion of music as an academic discipline found in the interview establishes a connection to acoustics and numerical systems. A global view of music is central to Metz' identity as a composer-professor.

The interview transcript is true to the flow and sequence of the actual interview. The first subchapter, "Development as a Composer," deals with Metz' early experiences with music and how he came to be a composer-professor. As was already stated, music has been a part of Metz' life since he was very young, yet he first completed a degree in chemistry before pursuing music in the academic sphere. As is often the case, a number of composer-professors served a crucial role in his development as a composer.

The "Language, Idiom, and Style" subchapter is a survey of Metz' works and the compositional techniques and language he employs. The discussion of his works focuses on pieces composed during his doctoral studies and since then, spanning from 1994 to 2006. Of the elements of style that combine to create music, Metz is more interested in rhythm and timbre than the elements governed by pitch (melody and harmony). The ideal of finding a balance between "predictability and surprise" is revealing about his approach to form. Metz cannot be pinned down to a certain movement within art composition, which may be disconcerting to the listener who seeks stylistic consistency, but this fact

speaks to his individuality as a composer. His influences are as broad as his compositional palette, spanning from Béla Bartók to Thelonious Monk.

The survey of Metz' recent works is followed by two shorter sections that address some of the practical issues of being a composer. The "Performances of Works" subchapter explores the venues and performers available to Metz for the realization of his works. "Compositional Approach" elucidates the "when" and "how" of the act of composing: from balancing faculty duties, a family and being an artist to how the piano and the computer factor into the process.

As has been stated, Ken Metz, as the term composer-professor would imply, is an educator. In the "Philosophy on Education" subchapter, Metz shares his pedagogical philosophy and perspective. His teaching experience has included ensemble directing, classroom teaching, and private instruction in several disciplines within music, but the focus here is on the teaching of music theory and composition.

"Composition Today" spans a wide variety of issues under the umbrella of new art music. Metz talks about the options for translating study in composition into a career (of which there are many, but with stiff competition), but at the same time makes it clear that he is training his students to become educators. Other topics include the role of orchestras in American culture and how new music is presented by regional symphonies.

A strong background in science and mathematics is once again underscored in the final subchapter of Chapter II, "Music and Numbers". Music as a numerical system has long fascinated Ken Metz and is the subject of his article "Why 7?" (Metz 2000). While this section only scratches the surface of the thorough discussion found in his article, it links his thought about music and numbers to earlier parts of the interview and concludes

with refreshing and optimistic words about the future of art music from none other than Arnold Schoenberg.

Songs from Mother Goose was selected for analysis for a number of reasons, many of which relate to the manifold accessibility of the work, for performers, concertgoers and internet-surfers. The piece is for voice (baritone) and piano and is thus easily performed, and my hope is that this thesis can serve as a resource for future performances. In addition to it being a work that merits performance, because the performance demands are modest, it has been performed on multiple occasions, including a public performance under the auspices of the Composers' Alliance of San Antonio (CASA) that was reviewed by the *San Antonio Express-News* (Windeler 2003). In connection with that performance, the work was recorded and included on CASA's 2005 release *Works by San Antonio Composers Performed by San Antonio Performers*,³ which is available for purchase as a compact disc and on i-Tunes. Thus, *Songs from Mother Goose* is the most facile way for a reader of this thesis to hear a recording of one of Ken Metz' works. The final factor of accessibility is the presence of a text – and it is a familiar text at that!

But of primary interest to me as a student of music theory is the diversity of compositional techniques found in the work. Metz' output as a whole is a veritable encyclopedia of art composition, and *Songs from Mother Goose* is a microcosm of that. In retrospect, it would have been a much simpler task for me to select a work with less breadth than this song cycle, but in my opinion, no other work within his *oeuvre* is as representative of his diverse compositional palette, nor the world of composition at large.

³ Composers' Alliance of San Antonio. *Works by San Antonio Composers Performed by San Antonio Performers*. 2005.

II. INTERVIEW WITH COMPOSER-PROFESSOR KEN METZ

This interview with Ken Metz was conducted and recorded in his office at the University of Incarnate Word in two sessions, on February 12th and February 19th of 2008. The interview recording was transcribed and edited for continuity by the author then approved by Ken Metz.

Development as a Composer

ACC: Tell me about your early musical influences and experiences as a child.

KRM: One of the first things I remember is standing in front of a mirror, singing along with Peter Pan: I'm looking at myself and singing "A Pirate's Life for Me", and suddenly I realize that there is this musical environment and that I'm in this musical environment. I think that was when it really started, so my early musical experiences would be things like Disney records, though I didn't realize it at the time. *South Pacific* was really big, too.

ACC: That's the Disney *Peter Pan*, not the Broadway musical?

KRM: The Disney version. I was also quite impressed by the music of *Bambi*. We had a lot of records. I think that's where it started to happen.

ACC: When did you begin studying and playing the bass? And flute?

KRM: Actually, not until I was older, in my twenties. I started playing the flute at around seventeen or so. Before that, I took some piano lessons when I was a kid and could play a little. I was always hacking at some kind of musical instrument all my life.

ACC: So you had a piano in the house when you were a kid?

KRM: I had a piano in the house, and I would mess around with it a lot. I'm not a very good pianist at this point – I wish I were a better pianist. I was always doing some kind of musical stuff and always singing. I was very good at mimicking, I was able to sound exactly like singers – I could sing exactly and sound exactly like them. In fact I used to do that for people, sit there and entertain them by singing. “Here's so and so,” or they'd say “Do this one!” and I'd sing that person. But then, somewhere along the line I lost that, it went away.

ACC: Was it with your voice changing?

KRM: I don't really remember why it went away, but by the time I was about ten I was no longer able to do that.

ACC: At what age did you start composing? Was it connected with improvisation on an instrument?

KRM: I actually started composing when I was pretty young. I had a piano teacher when I was in the fourth or fifth grade that encouraged me to compose. Before I could even play well on the piano, he had me write a little piece. So, I was very young when I was first exposed to the idea of doing that. At first, it was not connected with improvisation but later I did do a lot of improvisation at the piano and on the flute. During college, I played jazz flute mostly and I would hook up with people and we'd do a lot of improvisation. In fact, I improvised music before I learned how to read music well.

ACC: Would you use diatonic scales, or was it more chromatic?

KRM: I think it was always a little on the chromatic side.

ACC: Would your friends play guitar or piano and play chords?

KRM: It was freer than that at first. Some of them knew more than I did, but I was just blowing. I really didn't even know what I was doing—in fact, I probably still don't really know what I'm doing [Dr. Metz chuckles].

ACC: Your undergraduate degree is in chemistry, why did you decide to pursue advanced degrees in music and change your career path?

KRM: That's a tough story, but basically I majored in chemistry and then I realized that I really didn't want to spend my life in a laboratory – that was not for me. It didn't take me long to realize that. At first, I was really into the idea of synthesis and I wanted to be able to synthesize things. Fortunately, I found my knowledge of chemistry really did apply to music quite well, and it was an easy switch for me. I became obsessed with music by my second year of college.

ACC: Were you playing bass at that point?

KRM: No, I was playing flute and percussion.

ACC: Was composition initially your interest in graduate study, or did your emphasis change?

KRM: I went to the University of Texas long enough to realize that I probably would not be accepted as a flute performance major, and I wasn't good enough to be a bass performance major, so that kind of limited my possibilities to composition and theory – so that's what I did. So when I went to graduate school, it was in composition. I started my graduate program at the University of Texas, but I transferred to the University of Nevada.

ACC: How did formal training affect you as a composer? You started composing early. How do you feel that formal study has changed you?

KRM: I have to say that the professors at University of Texas were really great. I studied with Donald Grantham, Karl Korte in particular, and also Russell Pinkston for a little bit. They really helped shape my composing. Most of all, the formal training made me realize that I had a lot of literature to listen to. I needed to understand more about what I was trying to do and what had been done, what the tradition was and what being creative meant in the context of modern composition. The professors were very valuable to me across the board. When I went to the University of Nevada-Las Vegas, I had a professor that had been Frank Sinatra's arranger for many years. His name was Don Hannah, and he really guided me. All my professors were very effective and really helped me a lot, and what I learned from them was very valuable.

ACC: You have written homages to three renowned musicians: Charles Mingus, Thelonius Monk, and Heitor Villa-Lobos. How have they influenced your music and who are some other composers and performers you enjoy and admire?

KRM: Each of these cases is a very different thing. With Mingus, it was basically a desire to pay tribute to him, a desire to express for myself his very strong personality in music. It really wasn't about his influence per se, but more about his personality as a proud black person who was forced to deliver the mail: his anger and frustration was more or less what I was aiming at. Also, his love of Duke Ellington was part of it. I could get into a long discussion about it. The last movement of the Mingus piece is called "Adios Con Ganges". When Mingus died, he was cremated and his family took his ashes to the Ganges River and threw them in there; so in the music, I try to revisit that experience in a way.

With Monk, I chose to study his approach to melody for my dissertation.⁴ I took some of his melodies and analyzed them with twentieth century techniques. From there, I used these motivic ideas to generate a piece for concert band. The dissertation was an intensive study of his melody and also to some extent his harmony as well. I came to the conclusion that he listened to classical music a lot – in fact I figured out that “Straight, No Chaser” was basically a quote of Strauss’ “Till Eulenspiegel”. It is exactly the same melody, and I write about that in the dissertation.

With Villa-Lobos there was a contest, and they wanted music for a celebration of Villa-Lobos. They wanted music for percussion ensemble – music that didn’t necessarily reflect Villa-Lobos’ music, but elements of Brazilian music. There is a picture of Villa-Lobos smoking a cigar on the score for the first movement, and the title is “Com Cheruto” which means *with cigar*. I also listened to a lot of his music and listened to things I heard him doing, for instance he liked fourths. But his music is really more classical sounding, and I attempted to go away from that and use Brazilian popular music elements in the actual music and for some reason, I guess...

ACC: It was what they were looking for?

KRM: It was what they were looking for. I do have admiration for Villa-Lobos, but my biggest influences are Schoenberg, Stravinsky, perhaps Wagner to some extent, and Bartók. I’ve listened to a lot of Hindemith. It all had an effect in some way or another on what I would do next. I’d say you’d hear a lot of Stravinsky in my music, rhythmic interest and contrapuntal textures, and that comes from all these people. I mean Beethoven, Bach, Haydn, Mozart – I especially admire Haydn in some ways – he’s

⁴ Ken Metz’s dissertation “*Reflections on Monk*” for Concert Band includes both a composition and an analytical paper and is available through University Microfilms International (see bibliography).

underrated, unrecognized as one of the great masters of mood and how to use music to get inside of meaning – he’s very good at that. Schumann and Chopin – I admire a lot as well.

ACC: All the greats?

KRM: Brahms, we could keep going ...

ACC: What about some contemporary composers that you’re not necessarily influenced by, but you like – maybe totally unknown to the rest of us?

KRM: I’ve met quite a few actually. People who are doing great stuff – there are actually too many to mention. I’m fortunate to be in San Antonio with some great composers here that have influenced me. I have a colleague, Misook Kim, whose music I admire, and there is another Korean woman named Hye Kyung Lee whose music I really admire. I go to the conferences, and I meet all these people and they blow me away.

ACC: So you really enjoy what’s going on in music?

KRM: Yes, there’s so many composers that I admire ... David Heuser at UTSA, Tim Kramer at Trinity, then of course there’s the guys at UT Austin, Russell Riepe – these guys are doing major things.

LANGUAGE, IDIOM, AND STYLE

ACC: The titles of your works are far from vague or non-descript. In some cases they are provocative, such as *Jihad*, or rather unusual, such as *Orca Pequeño*. How do you come to these extra-musical ideas and do you use them as inspiration for writing or are they inspired by the music?

KRM: The answer is ‘yes’ [laughter], all possible combinations ... *Jihad* is one where it was after the bombings in London, the subtitle of *Jihad* is “July 7th, 2005” the date that they bombed the busses. Artistically, I never have been able to respond to 9/11. It was just too much of an earth shaking for me to come up with anything. I know a lot of people have, but it hit too close to home for me to respond. But this attack, I could respond to. I was in London as a kid, and I remember seeing Arabic people there.

Adagio

The image shows the opening of the piece 'Jihad' (2005) for a string quartet and flute. The tempo is marked 'Adagio'. The score is written for Flute, Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 7/8. The flute part starts with a half note G4 (F#4) marked 'pp'. Violin I and Violin II play a half note G4 (F#4) marked 'pp'. The Viola part starts with a half note G3 (F#3) marked 'ppp', followed by a half note G4 (F#4) marked 'pp'. The Cello part starts with a half note G2 (F#2) marked 'ppp', followed by a half note G3 (F#3) marked 'pp'. The dynamic markings 'pp', 'ppp', and '<' are used to indicate the relative volumes of the instruments.

Figure 1: Opening of *Jihad* (2005)

When I looked at them, they looked right through me like I wasn't there, and I thought to myself at this young age “Gee, there's these people that don't even see me.” Our world is so different from their world – there's this schism. So I was able to respond to that, and I was able to write music that kind of represented this struggle to me. By the way, G-E-B-A-D is the basis of all the pitches (see Figure 1), but I can substitute G# for G, I can use E or Eb or E# or whatever – I can alter the pitches, but the word ‘Jihad’ is always expressed in all of the musical elements of the piece – its jihad here, its jihad there, its jihad

everywhere. So what is that? Maybe that's an innovative thing: it's the use of the letter names as a serial generator.

ACC: But it's not a strict set, you can alter the pitches by half-step?

KRM: Yes, as long as the pitch has the same letter name, I allowed myself to use it as part of the set. That's how I composed that.

Orca Pequeño means the little whale. The piece was based on a 5/4 rhythm

[sings]:



instruments, because it really forces you to try to have something that's complete with just that one voice. If you can do that, then you're getting somewhere with your music, I'd say. It's good to try to turn that disadvantage of the one instrument into an advantage of being able to make whole musical statements.

ACC: So there weren't too many double or triple stops?

KRM: There are double and triple stops.

ACC: But it's mostly monophonic?

KRM: Yes and no. I take advantage of what a bass can do, for instance, you can drone: use the open strings and move – that's part of what's idiomatic for the instrument. If you're writing for flute, multi-phonics are possible, but by and large you would simply write a solo line. To be able to make that into something that's a successful piece is a real challenge.

ACC: My professors have always emphasized that. Do you find it challenging to write solos or difficult passages for instruments other than your own, and do you consult performers when doing so?

KRM: I think you should always consult performers. I think that's a criticism one could make of my music, I maybe haven't done that enough. There are piano passages in my music that are tough to play, not just because of technical difficulty, but because the passages don't lie well on the instrument. So I think I'm guilty of that in certain ways with some instruments. I have a pretty good understanding of woodwinds. My understanding of brass could probably be better. Because I play the bass, I have somewhat of a good understanding of strings. For me, piano is very difficult to write for but I have always tried to write for piano and I keep trying.

ACC: That bridges right into the next question. The piano has been referred to as the ‘composer’s instrument’, and many composers have a strong preference for composing at an acoustic piano. Do you share this preference?

KRM: I would say that I do, but I think more and more I’m able to just sit there and use my imagination. Then, maybe I’ll go to the piano as a way to translate the idea or to get it down. I can hear the basic ideas without the aid of any instrument. I’m picking up the material that is there, being transmitted to me by my being open to listening for it. That’s happening for me more often, and I don’t have to use the piano as much.

ACC: So you rarely sit at the piano and improvise to come up with the ideas?

KRM: I do, I still do.

ACC: But you prefer to audiate?

KRM: I wouldn’t say ‘prefer’. Most of the time, material comes to me when I’m going for a walk and I don’t have a piano, but I can still know what it’s going to be like. What’s going on with the rhythm, how the harmony would sound and how the instruments playing it would sound – I can imagine all of that. My early musical experiences taught me to hear the colors of music. People say “You have a good ear” or “You don’t have a good ear” – well my good ear is timbral and harmonic hearing.

ACC: You wrote a song cycle on *Mother Goose* nursery rhymes. That seems to be a unique choice, because it is neither heady poetry nor a sacred text, and a number of the rhymes already have folk melodies attached to them. Why *Mother Goose*, and how did you approach the setting?

KRM: [chuckle] “Why *Mother Goose*?” is because I have kids. They are twenty now, but when they were young I would read *Mother Goose* to them and I would always give a

dramatic presentation. So then I decided that I wanted to investigate the imagery in *Mother Goose*. The song that I started with was “The North Wind”:

Cold and raw the North wind blows,

Bleak in the morning early

All the hills are covered with snow.

Winter has now come fairly.

I attempt to create a whole sound atmosphere around *Mother Goose*, not about children’s music, but about the hidden meanings in the rhymes. I began to hear how the oddities in *Mother Goose* could become chromatic ideas that I could inflect into folk sounds. If you look at the score for “The North Wind,” in the beginning piano passage, which is really bizarre, I somehow manage to lead the singer to the first note, D, for the word “Cold.”

Freely without measured time

Baritone

Piano

4" 5" 7"

sfz *p* *mf* *p*

Tempo: ♩ = 72

Cold

Figure 4: Piano introduction to “The North Wind” from *Songs from Mother Goose* (2003)

ACC: So you aren’t emphasizing D, but it still sounds like tonic?

KRM: All the pitches in the piano opening point to D somehow, its kind of a weird beginning.

ACC: Kind of circling around D?

KRM: Yes, it circles, but in a strange way that the singer knew that D was the first pitch of his part.

ACC: Then you don't need you to give them D.

KRM: Right.

ACC: You recently won a competition with the percussion ensemble piece *Musica visto que Villa-Lobos*. How important is rhythm to your work in general?

KRM: In my opinion, timbre and rhythm are the two most important things that make a musical piece successful or not. Pitches are third on the list, maybe, but strong rhythmic and timbral thinking and the connection between those two are fundamental.

ACC: How did you construct the rhythms in *Musica visto que Villa-Lobos*?

KRM: I hate to admit this [guffaw], but for one movement I actually loaded the samba rhythm from Finale and futz-ed around with it and tweaked it to where I wanted it to be.



Figure 5: "Quick Samba" pattern provided by the notation software Finale 2007

Figure 6: Percussion pattern from Movement V of *Musica visto que Villa-Lobos* (2007)

I was sitting there thinking: “What is samba?” “What is *cinquillo* rhythm?” *Cinquillo* is very important, it has five notes:

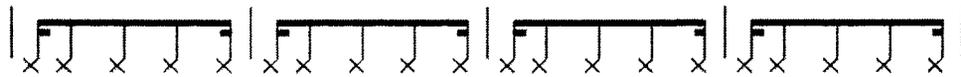


Figure 7: *Cinquillo* rhythm as described by Ken Metz

That is an example of a *cinquillo* rhythm [sings].

ACC: So it's pretty fast.

KRM: I was trying to figure out what the elements of Brazilian music are, and I came up with three influences: there's African, there's European, and there's indigenous Brazilian and Amazonian rhythmic ideas and colors. The music is intended to reflect those various cultural influences. Samba is of African origin, there's a lot of Samba in the piece. I think that *cinquillo* is a synthesis of African and Spanish elements that happened in Latin America. In addition, you have to realize that Spain was under the influence of the moors for over 800 years, and, as a result of that, what's African about Spanish music and what's Spanish about Spanish music is a little difficult to tell. Another difficulty is determining what's from Spain and what's from Portugal, and I didn't know the answer to that.

ACC: In Brazil, there is a large Portuguese influence.

KRM: Yes.

ACC: We have already established that Villa-Lobos is not one of your seminary influences, but his music is strongly tied to his nationality and the folk music tradition of Brazil, but he was also a serious composer and his music is now part of that tradition.

ACC: What effect does living in San Antonio at the turn of the 21st century have on your work?

KRM: Well, I have a job here. I'm able to compose, because I live in San Antonio and I work as a professor here. San Antonio is a very multicultural place, the Hispanic culture is particularly strong, and I don't think that really influences me. But, as it turns out, San Antonio has a lot of composers. We have CASA, the Composers' Alliance, that's a great thing, and I've benefited a lot from that association.

KRM: Have other places influenced your sound?

ACC: Definitely. Everywhere I've lived, everywhere I've visited and everywhere I've breathed has influenced my sound. The desert in Nevada, the ocean in Florida – the sound of the ocean the waves going back and forth, the sounds of cities I've traveled to. Smells are really important – I've smelled all over the world, I've sniffed stuff [laughter]. Traffic! In China, it was the traffic that impressed me – there was no right of way, there was just a merging of things.

ACC: You are a jazz player. How does the Jazz idiom factor in to your style? Is it always there, or only present in some pieces?

KRM: I would like to think that it's not always there – I'm told that it usually is... Let's go back to rhythm and the idea of syncopation. I love syncopated rhythm, and if you love that, you love jazz. I don't listen to a lot of jazz anymore, and that's probably not a good thing to admit. I have been a jazz player, and I would say that it has strongly influenced me. Of course, my dissertation was a study of Thelonius Monk whose music is really different from a lot of jazz – I would say it is idiosyncratic jazz.

ACC: So is Mingus.

KRM: That's true.

ACC: His music is more thoroughly composed than most jazz.

KRM: You're right – he had a chip on his shoulder about being able to do classical stuff. I went to a concert and heard him perform. He had his music on his music stand and he opened up this huge score like this (spreads his arms), and it fell off the stand. It was as if he was saying: “Look, I composed all this stuff. I'm not just a guy up here saying hit me four to the bar.” So the jazz influence is there, and I probably couldn't flush it if I wanted to. But when you're talking about the harmony of jazz, you're talking about the harmony of Bach, so I can't get rid of that part.

ACC: There are a few more ninths in there.

KRM: A few more ninths – but actually, there are ninths in Bach, they're just not chord-tones. Sometimes, the best part is when you get those sounds and you think: “What's that?” And it turns out that it's a ninth.

ACC: When a composer writes quasi-improvisational lines, for instance in a solo piece, does it reach the listener differently than actual improvisation if they don't know which it is?

KRM: As Errol Garner said: “Nobody hears you read” – so it doesn't really matter. If they don't know whether it's composed or improvised, there's no answer to that. I hardly ever write quasi-improvisational lines as a rule.

ACC: So you don't make an effort to make lines sound free?

KRM: Only if I'm trying to write a jazz piece. So the answer to that is: I always write everything precisely. There's nothing in my scores that says improvise here. I don't typically use graphic notation either, where there is a symbol in the score and the player is suppose to wiggle for a while. I have used that kind of a notation in a couple of pieces, but I don't often do that. I guess I'm a stuck-up notation guy.

ACC: What I mean by it is ... it sounds like it's improvised, even if it's not, and it's not too regular.

KRM: Yes, that is a goal to make an idea sound like it's spontaneous. Here we go to the principle of "Is it too confusing or too predictable?" A good composer is always playing with that. A well-constructed line has elements of predictability and surprise.

ACC: And that's true for improvisation as well?

KRM: Yes. The main difference between improvisation and composition for me is: you wouldn't know how long it took me to develop that idea that sounds like it's improvised.

ACC: *A Mingus Fantasy* and *Reflections on Monk* are both for wind ensemble and both named after jazz composer-performers and presumably inspired by them. Outside of the lack of improvisation, is a wind ensemble any different from a giant big band?

KRM: It's a totally different concept. Of course, I use drum set in *A Mingus Fantasy*, so that makes it a little less different. That's an interesting question—I would choose to think of it as very different. Neither of those pieces is intended to be jazz. They're intended to reflect a tradition of jazz to some extent. For the most part there's no swing, I want straight 8ths, and the swing that is there is a result of the syncopated rhythms.

ACC: Well, the players are trained differently.

KRM: Yes, and I want it to be what they're normally doing.

ACC: So there aren't any special technical demands?

KRM: I would like to think that, but for some of the phrasing it would be helpful if they were familiar with jazz. Usually saxophonists are, and usually the brass players would know what to do, and the flutists wouldn't – but I wrote the pieces with that in mind. I am

consciously trying not to make it like a big band – if I wanted to do that, I'd use a big band.

ACC: The wind ensemble is recognized as a new frontier for composition, because it is about as common as the orchestra, but there is not three hundred years of literature written for it. Today's composers are quickly filling that gap. Do you prefer to write for wind ensemble than orchestra?

KRM: No. I have never had my orchestra pieces performed, and I haven't written a lot for orchestra. I would rather write for orchestra, but in today's world your chances of getting a wind ensemble piece played are better. Of course, I've only had two performances of my wind ensemble pieces in my entire life where I was featured. I went up to Southern Methodist University to have the *Monk* piece played and I had one movement of the *Mingus Fantasy* played – I'm dying to get the other movements played, but it's too hard and too weird. The piece is definitely different from what people are used to. The performers would have to rehearse a lot. The third movement is the strongest, I was able to put together a lot of elements, but I don't know if it will ever be played. Having said that, most of my works that are performed are chamber pieces. I'm not a very successful composer in that sense. I'm having trouble getting large element pieces played – it's hard.

ACC: Especially getting a good performance, because you might get a student group to do it, but it might not be the quality of performance you want.

KRM: Right. Exactly.

Performances of Works

ACC: How has your affiliation with organizations of composers benefited you? Like the Society of Composers, for instance?

KRM: If you become a professor, it's how you get tenure. You have performances of your pieces at these conferences, and you put that on your faculty evaluation and submit it every year. They want to know "Why should we keep you in this job?" And you say "Well, the reason you should keep me in this job is because I did this and that performance here at SCI and with CMS, etc." So that's the great benefit. Without it, I probably wouldn't have gotten tenure.

ACC: You have a local organization as well, the Composers' Alliance of San Antonio. Tell me a little more about that.

KRM: That's helped me a lot, too. Particularly, because I get to listen to other composers around me. I get to be influenced by other composers, and I get critical feedback. I thrive on criticism. You can't say anything to me that I won't take something positive from and that I'll try to build from. I invite criticism, I like criticism – I'm cool with criticism – that helps me to grow. In fact, people that just tell me "Your music is great," are not really helping me. I need to ask "What's wrong with this music? How can I make it better?" That's always my goal: "How can the next piece be better than the last piece?"

ACC: Universities in Arkansas have programmed your pieces several times. What is your relationship with them?

KRM: I don't have a special relationship with Arkansas, but there have been a lot of SCI and CMS regional conferences there, so I've had performances there.

ACC: I was just noticing on your CV –

KRM: Arkansas, Arkansas, Arkansas ... No, I don't have a relative that lives in Little Rock. I wish I did.

ACC: Dr. [Russell] Riepe also just went there to give a performance.

KRM: Well there's stuff going on there. They want people to come there.

Compositional Approach

ACC: Stravinsky wrote about composing within strictures or guidelines. Do you ever find that useful?

KRM: Oh yes, as he said: "Only through limitation did I find freedom." That's true. It's not only what you say – it's what you don't say. It's not only how you say it – it's how you don't say what you don't say [laughter], if that makes sense. By limiting what you're doing, it forces you to find other avenues for creativity.

ACC: Are there any techniques or approaches of your own that you frequently employ?

KRM: I don't know how to answer that. I would say the only idea I frequently employ is *the motive of the motive*. Before I start, I try to figure out what it is that will motivate the motives that I come up with. How I can extract meaning from what I'm doing. *Jihad* worked really well for me, because I was able to extract motives by the free usage of the note names. That's a hard question. Each piece brings with it its own approach and its own techniques.

ACC: That kind of fits with the Stravinsky approach. Is there a common thread to all of your music? A Metz sound?

KRM: This I don't know. That's up to somebody else to figure out. I only know that I try to write stuff that surprises the listener. Beethoven was great at surprising. He'd play

something, he'd play it again, and just when you were thinking, "Okay, he's going to play that again," that's when he wouldn't play it. So I think surprise is a very important element in music. Have you ever noticed the dog's ear? When dogs listen, their ears move. Whatever it takes to get that ear to move is what I'm trying to be able to do in music. I don't think I always do it. Sometimes I'm a little too theoretical, and sometimes the music is not as exciting as I would like it to be. Another problem is that a lot of times performers can't play the piece as intended. I'll have a fast tempo and I'll have a slow tempo and what ends up happening is that they play the fast tempo too slow and the slow tempo too fast, and it sounds like I have two pieces at the same tempo. I would like to be able to write music that musicians are actually able to play at the tempi I'm thinking of. I don't know if there is a sound to my music, I wouldn't like to think there is. I'd like to think that my music is still evolving, that each piece has a unique sound. You've listened to some stuff. Do you have an opinion?

ACC: I guess, I definitely noticed a jazz influence when I listened to the *Mingus* piece and when I listened to the Brazilian piece I noticed the Brazilian influence. I noticed more variety of sounds and style in the *Mother Goose* cycle. There was one song in particular, in the middle of the cycle, where I noticed some jazz voicings and then some of the pieces were ...

KRM: More folky ...

ACC: And then the last one had an imitative piano part.

KRM: Almost twelve-tone.

ACC: I noticed a lot more variety of sound within that work, but the *Mingus* and *Villa-Lobos* pieces didn't sound similar to each other. Within each piece there seemed to be a consistent idiom.

KRM: They're pretty tonal.

ACC: I noticed that rhythm was very important in both *A Mingus Fantasy* and *Musico Visto que Villa-Lobos*.

KRM: Yes.

ACC: You are very busy with teaching, how do you find time to compose? Do you have a composing routine: time of day, home or office, etc.? When and how does notation software factor into your process?

KRM: Well, *Finale* I've always got, I use it every day. The answer to that is I use teaching theory as an avenue for composition. I write melodies with certain features for use in aural skills, or I compose in a style for theory. I integrate teaching theory with composition. Then once in a while, some of the things I've done in theory class turn out to be good ideas that I could easily make into good pieces, and I have done that to some extent. Otherwise, I write in the summer – that's what summers are for.

ACC: To do big projects?

KRM: Yea.

ACC: What are your current projects and future plans?

KRM: I have been working on a string quartet right now, for no apparent reason. As far as future plans go, I have an offer to write a bass concerto that could be premiered at Shanghai – I'm thinking about that one.

ACC: And then you could have an orchestral performance. That would be ...

KRM: ... Wonderful.

Philosophy on Education

ACC: You studied at large public universities and now teach at a small private university? What are the advantages of those environments as opposed to the perhaps more rigorous and intense environment of a conservatory? Particularly for young composers today.

KRM: Of course, at a large public university you have more opportunities to have your works performed. You're also likely to receive better performances from the students that are there. University of Texas at Austin had a lot of great performers, so I was able to have strong performances of my pieces. Large institutions are also more likely to have guest composers visit and students are exposed to more music.

Now I teach at a private university. It turns out that because I'm affiliated with CASA, I'm still able to have performances of chamber works but it's difficult to find a large ensemble opportunity. The biggest advantage of a small private university is that students are able to develop in their own space and there aren't as many external influences – which can be a good thing. I'm able to give my students more guidance than they would get at a large university, but overall the opportunities for student composers are greater at a large university.

ACC: And students are exposed to other student composers as well. What about the conservatory environment?

KRM: To be in a very intense musical environment with serious people really trying to be on the cutting edge is ideal.

ACC: How does compositional pedagogy differ from theory or instrumental pedagogy?

KRM: A very, very difficult question. I don't know that there really is a single compositional pedagogy. I think it depends on whom you're dealing with and where they come from. There's so many variables that I don't think that there's one way to do it. You have to have many possible strategies for compositional pedagogy so you can individualize your approach to each student. With theory pedagogy, there's a body of knowledge that needs to be explained. When you're teaching an instrument, there's a technique of playing you need to show them: how to use their hands and how to read the notes. So compositional pedagogy is a very different kind of thing.

ACC: Do you discourage your students from relying too heavily on notation software?

KRM: I don't discourage them, I encourage them to become experts in the software but they often don't seem to be able to do that they seem to be more needing of guidance than I would like to see. I would like to see them be able to do more. As far as composition, I don't require that they use software. I prefer it, but I don't require it and I think that a lot of good stuff can be done with paper and pencil and also by the way I think learning good calligraphy is very important.

ACC: I have had professors who do not have Finale or any notation software installed.

Thus, if I want to bring in a score and a MIDI realization to a lesson, I have to print it out and burn a CD. The reasoning is that they don't want to see students composing at the computer.

KRM: True, I understand this point and I agree with it. However, I'm a little more liberal than that – its up to the student.

ACC: Do you ever assign compositional exercises, such as writing a serial piece?

KRM: I do in theory class. As far as composition goes, I would if a student showed an inclination or interest in that area.

ACC: What about a dry spell, would you assign exercise? Say, they wanted to start writing music but they hadn't really yet?

KRM: Do you mean the first thing a serial piece (incredulous)?

ACC: That's just an example, but some sort of assignment with parameters?

KRM: Again, there's various ways to approach working with a student. For some students it would work fine to use a form. Compose a minuet or compose a parallel period. There's nothing wrong with that, there's lots of good parallel periods that still need to be composed.

ACC: After graduation, how can composition students, and music students at large, translate their very academic skills into a career inside or outside of academia?

KRM: Any composition student should have a good dose of theory in their program. The other thing is strong keyboard skills. In order to get into academia these composition students should really be able to serve as adjuncts competently for theory classes because that's where there is a demand. As far as composition at an academic institution, I don't think that there's a lot of opportunity. Are you a theory and composition major at Texas State?

ACC: If not more theory, but I take as much composition as a major.

KRM: You want a balance. There are places that will hire composers but if you look in the advertising for academic positions, they want applicants who are theorists. If you are a composer, they also want you to wear the hat of a theorist. Inside academia, the key is

either having keyboard skills or being qualified to teach applied lessons on an instrument. So we have to have versatility.

Outside of academia there are things to do, believe it or not. I don't know the best route to those things, but there are applications out there, whether it's actually composing or providing support for composition. Then, of course, you can always put on concerts and try to develop your own enterprise in this area and there are people that are successful at that. I have a student that has made more money from composition than I ever have, she put out relaxation CDs and believe it or not she sold them. Being entrepreneurial, having that spirit can work. There's the commercial world and nowadays it's a lot easier to break into that commercial world because of the technology, we can just email an MP3 to somebody – no problem.

ACC: As an educator, do you feel a responsibility to prepare your students for a career?

KRM: My tendency is to aim them directly to graduate school and my aim is for them to be educators also, to clone myself. I see it as part of my responsibility to pass on the knowledge that I have acquired. That's my main objective in preparing them for a career. I also think that music theory, more than composition, can teach people how to think. You are preparing them for a career if you're preparing them to be able to handle information, process it and deal with it in a systemized way. Preparation for a specific career may happen unintentionally. Someone I teach computer skills may go on to a career in computers, but I don't consciously guide them to that.

ACC: One way strictly academic composers support themselves is to try for commissions, grants and awards is that a way to support yourself?

KRM: In addition to compositional skills, that's a matter of having business and management skills. And there are composers that succeed at that. But it's very few compared to the number of composers that are out there. This might be the place to give you my spiel about the academic institution as a sort of wildlife refuge. I'm an endangered species and I need to be protected and this is where I can be protected. In an academic institution nobody tells me what I have to write, how I have to write or what I need to do with my work. There are pressures to be productive, but those are induced by the situation more than the fact that I'm going to starve if I don't write anything.

ACC: Is composing music in service of other mediums a viable alternative to pure musical composition?

KRM: I haven't done a lot of that. I helped a student do the music for a short film and that's about the only time I've done that. Yes, it is, and I actually would enjoy doing that. I think it really helps you to view music in a different way. When you're writing pure music you're trying to get people's attention and when you're writing for film music you're trying to not get people's attention. You're trying to stay out of the way of the drama and trying to write so that you support the drama. I think that's a healthy exercise but I don't have a lot of experience with it.

Composition Today

ACC: What is the role of technology both as an aid for instrumental composition and as a medium for composition itself?

KRM: Technology is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, I can sit here at this little computer and I can write a score for an orchestra. But on the other hand, how it sounds

on the computer according to Finale is often not at all how it's going to sound when it's performed. The skill is to be able to tell the difference and the problem is that young people aren't going to be able to do that. A student might bring in a piece for piano with one hand playing a 22nd harmonic interval and when I point out that it's impossible, they say "Well, the computer can do it" – but people can't. These are pitfalls that actually hinder developing composers, but on the other hand if you have a hard time hearing MIDI can help. Notation software is good for editing because you can make a mistake without having to use an eraser. Technology facilitates the process and I think it's inevitable that students will use notation software to compose music at some point in the process.

ACC: Do you think there are more composers because notation software is available?

KRM: Yes, I think there are, and I think that it is very powerful. We maybe killing musicians by doing this kind of stuff, but it seems inevitable that we have to use the technology and be current with the technology.

ACC: Is theoretical analysis relevant to contemporary works?

KRM: I'm a big believer in theoretical analysis. The main benefit of theoretical analysis is that it helps us to know more about why we're doing what we're doing, why we choose the notes we choose and why we don't choose other options. Again, we go back to the concept of *the motive of the motive*: theoretical analysis through any of the various methods can give us certain insights into how composers work. It is important to develop an editor, the part of you that makes the final cut of what you produce has to be refined and has to be objective. Only through theoretical analysis can we really help develop our editor.

ACC: With classical era compositions, there is a technique, a methodology that can be applied to everything. You can't really do that with modern works. When you talk about *the motive of the motive*, you're trying to get at the idea behind the material. Does this mean that you have to develop a new paradigm for each piece, instead of just applying it to Roman numeral or Schenkerian analysis?

KRM: I view any analysis or any attempt to explain what it is you are doing as analysis, whether it is using roman numeral analysis which you might be able to do for some works or a motivic analysis. It's still beneficial.

ACC: You can also analyze a work in terms of a program, but you don't think there's a specific methodology that works for all modern works. La Rue Style analysis works for lots of pieces, are there any other useful techniques you can think of?

KRM: Is there one way to assure yourself that you are having success with your analysis? That's hard, because you can't apply the same technique to everything. But there are some aspects that seem to be important for all music. For example, is there enough change to keep interest? But that can be challenged too. It could be growth, it could be drastic contrast – by what method is the piece achieving an increase of interest? The worst thing in the world is to have a piece where you lose interest, that's for certain, no matter what style the piece is in. Of course, Steve Reich challenges that idea, but he always has change, the rate of change is just slower. Its like the dog – does the dog move its ear? That's what we want to go for. A good piece increases interest, perhaps to a golden mean point, and builds to climax then there can be denouement, there can be the return to equilibrium. We can talk about the principle of Le Chatlier, where everything

tends towards equilibrium. Can we fairly say that every piece must do this? I don't think so, but if it doesn't do that then what have you got?

ACC: So in modern analysis, we're looking for how a composer creates interest as opposed to looking for the cadences or looking for a traditional form?

KRM: Right, because there's so many ways besides the traditional ways to create something that makes the dog's ear move.

ACC: And Le Chatlier? I'm not familiar with him.

KRM: He's a chemist. The equilibrium principle is that in a chemical reaction you heat the chemicals until you get to a maximum level where the heat catalyzes the reaction. The reaction is change and after the change there is a return to equilibrium—this is a general principle of the world.

ACC: I've heard equilibrium talked about before in musical semiotics, and that can actually be applied to classical music as well as modern music.

KRM: Across the board. Maybe there isn't one theoretical technique that does this but certainly we could imagine that this is something that might work. Again, I think there are successful pieces that are more exciting at the beginning than they are at the end, but it's a hard thing to do

ACC: What is the relationship of contemporary composers to today's audiences and society?

KRM: This is another difficult question to answer because it depends on which audience – there's so many. My audience right now is composers. Most of the time, my music is performed for a group of composers at a symposium or conference, or musicians at CMS. My audience is a few educated people. I have a relationship to them, but I don't have

much of a relationship to the average person who shops for music at Wal-Mart. They would regard me as some type of strange bird most likely (laughter). My relationship to society I need to be kept in the wildlife refuge, I am an endangered species and I would not make it in the world.

ACC: Or you might be writing very different music?

KRM: Well, that's true. It might force me to do something else that was more cogent to the consumption idea, but luckily I'm not in that situation.

ACC: Well, I thought you're tribute to Villa-Lobos was very appealing.

KRM: Under the guise of trying to be folky and using popular music I allowed myself to be corrupted.

ACC: I thought it was interesting, especially rhythmically. It has an infectious rhythm and that's something that appeals to lots of people.

KRM: Well sure, and again rhythm is a very important element in what makes the dog's ear move. I always tell people that good rhythm will get you a lot farther than good pitches. Good pitches without rhythm – you've got nothing. With good rhythms and white keys you can write a great piece!

When I can give way on my aesthetic ground as I did with the Monk or the Mingus piece, I gave up something of me and I gave it to them and I benefited from it because I grew from it and its all about growth. I hope that the next piece I write is better than the last piece I wrote and as long as I'm doing that I'm okay, I'm doing good stuff.

ACC: What we accept as classical art music now was also the popular music 200 years ago in Europe, but the art music of today is far removed from popular music. I don't know whether there are more composers today, but even highly successful art composers,

such as Corigliano or John Adams, aren't familiar to somebody on the street the way people knew Haydn or Handel when they went to London?

KRM: Well, they might know Corigliano from his film music, but not by name. And isn't that funny? Although, one wonders how many average people really knew who Haydn was. His music was played for the elite. Haydn was a court musician all his life. Did he ever have public consumption of his music? Yes, but only to educated people, so it may not be that different.

ACC: So maybe academia is not that different from the court system, in its patronage of composers?

KRM: More or less. I recommend going to the symphony. If you don't go as much as possible, go just to investigate what's going on there. It's predominantly a wealthy, white audience.

ACC: White haired typically ...

KRM: Other races are not well represented, it's mostly still a white European audience at the symphony and they're wealthy and they like to dress up.

ACC: The music that is being played typically, at the San Antonio Symphony for instance, or the Dallas or the Austin Symphony for that matter, is going to be pretty familiar stuff.

KRM: Fairly true.

ACC: A lot of the time they'll do kitschy stuff by bringing in a torch singer or something.

KRM: Yea, or they'll do a Schoenberg piece but they'll apologize before they play it. As if saying, "We know you aren't going to like this, but we feel obligated to play it."

ACC: So the most pertinent audience for most composers is each other?

KRM: Yes.

ACC: So having a dialogue with other composers is a kind of audience.

KRM: It's very important.

ACC: Does American composition have an identity or do you feel that art music has more of an international exchange and it doesn't fall along national boundaries?

KRM: Yea. I would say that the latter is probably true. Nowadays, we're global. Yes, there is an American music and it has some sort of identity...

ACC: But that kind of comes from Copland and Ives? That's kind of our nationalistic music and maybe we've gotten away from that?

KRM: There's no discernibly American music emerging right now. In fact what is emerging in American music right now is the idea of diversity. Women composers are emerging, Asian composers, Latino composers – black musicians seem to be gravitating towards various popular formats.

ACC: A lot of our most revered American composers are black. We already talked about Mingus and Monk, and then of course there's Ellington.

KRM: Well that's jazz, which raises another question: how do we include jazz into this equation? Yes, of course, Charlie Parker is under-recognized as a great American composer – Ellington, Monk, Mingus – all these people had a very important impact on American music. But it's still looked down upon by academia – they say “Ah, that's jazz,” “No fair – jazz!” They blow the whistle on you.

ACC: And jazz composition is segregated from composition at the University of North Texas and University of Texas – It's a separate degree.

KRM: If there's too many triads, seventh chords, ninth chords, that's jazz.

ACC: Recently, I tried to play a composition for Dr. Riepe, one of my “jazz” compositions, and he said, “You shouldn’t ask me because I have no idea.”

KRM: Within that realm though, there’s plenty of room for creativity because pitch and interval content is only one facet.

ACC: How do we raise awareness and interest in new art music?

KRM: We just do what we’re doing and we don’t worry about, you try to get yourself into a refuge as soon possible.

ACC: So you don’t think there could be a resurgence of interest in art music?

KRM: I think that really what needs to happen and I’m not doing it enough is we need to get involved with the educational system. I just wrote a minor version of “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” for young people and I’m going to take it over to my friend whom is a teacher.

ACC: Did you have to really limit your demands?

KRM: I did, I limited myself to range and I also restricted the rhythms. I’m not going to have (sings) “Da da da da duh-duh-duh [getting faster and faster] ... DA!!” I’m not going to do anything like that, but even as you limit, limit, limit, limit, you still have a way to move the dog’s ear – “Uh!?” You can still do it even lots of limits, like no accidentals, it’s possible – its not easy.

ACC: Yea, it’s probably more difficult.

KRM: It’s really a challenge. Our culture is not reaching out to kids enough. First of all, we have to encourage music education in academia. As much as I disagree with music educators much of the time, I support them completely, even the band director who is

nothing short of a barking metronome is important. In some ways they're killing music, but at least they're sticking the horns in their hands.

ACC: Well people from the Northeast would say that type of band director is a Texas phenomenon – the overly technical, rhythmic exactness.

KRM: Well, it's very important that music is a part of their education; we have to keep that going.

ACC: A lot of the music that's being written right now and what's being accepted in academic circles is perhaps a little bit of a return to consideration of the audience, an incorporation of jazz in some cases, a little bit less of a Babbitt model of "Who needs an audience anyway?"⁵

KRM: No way.

ACC: So do you think there can be any resurgence in interest by the general public?

KRM: That's a tough issue. For myself, I don't consider it at all, I just write and I let the rest take care of itself. My thing is not to try to do this or try to be that. My goal is to make music that is interesting and has something meaningful in it. Sometimes I try to make music that is fun or humorous – humor is an undervalued element in music. But if you are a composer you just do what you're doing and don't let that other stuff be your concern because you can't go chasing after a style.

ACC: I don't think you should either, but I think I could take a layman, a non-academic listener to a concert with Adams and Corigliano – and your music – and be confident that they would enjoy it.

KRM: Well that's good so there's something to be said for that idea.

⁵ This refers to Milton Babbitt's famous article "Who cares if you listen?" published in 1958 (see bibliography)

ACC: I would be hesitant to take that same person to a concert of serialist or electro-acoustic music.

ACC: Well, wait until you teach a music appreciation class. It's so much fun to sit there and put on Milton Babbitt and groove to it and say "What, you don't like that?" The fact of the matter is Milton Babbitt did what Milton Babbitt did for the same reason scientists do basic research. In science, there's some research that gets the grants because it's going to cure cancer but then there's some research that is funded purely because humans want to know more. And so it is with music. As a composer, I think it's more important that we do basic research, and have that type of attitude rather than to do something where we try to cure cancer.

ACC: What are your thoughts on composer-in-residence programs?

KRM: Those are kind of hard to get, you have to be really established to get one.

However, there are composer-in-residence programs in public school systems for people who are less established.

ACC: That would be a good way to connect with younger people and make them aware of new art music. How about composition organizations, do they have important role in preserving the practice of art music and getting it to the audiences that desire it?

KRM: Well they're very important. I just came from a meeting about scholarship. If you become a professor, it is incumbent upon you to produce scholarship. These organizations are for people who need demonstrate their scholarship, so I am very grateful to these various groups that I'm a member of: SCI, CMS, the Composers' Alliance of San Antonio.

ACC: That seems like a unique organization and that's the one that I was gearing this question towards.

KRM: It's been very helpful. Composers need other composers, to listen and share, to discuss ideas and music, so that you don't live in a fish tank by yourself. The other benefit is that we share opportunities with each other.

ACC: So beneficial in terms of networking as well as sharing ideas.

KRM: Networking, exchange, collegiality and scholarship. See that big thick book up there (points), I have to collect all the crap I do and put it in that thing. That's why they gave me tenure, because I did all that stuff. I have pictures of performances, programs – always save your programs, et cetera.

ACC: I definitely do that. How do you build an audience for CASA? And what's the difference between having a concert and just getting together and playing your works for each other?

KRM: Well, first of all we have a budget to advertise and we also get the critic there so we can have peer review—that's a very important thing to have your concert reviewed even if it's a terrible review and I've gotten many terrible reviews, let me tell you.

ACC: But you're reviewed, you're in JSTOR.

KRM: Exactly, I'm cited, I'm reviewed, if you Google me you'll find something about me, it may not be very flattering but hey ...

ACC: It was worth writing about.

Music and Numbers

ACC: You're a chemist so I can only assume you know a lot about science and math.

How do you relate number theory to music theory?

KRM: Well in music you're throwing around numbers all the time, the first beat of the second measure of the third movement of the fourth piece...Numbers are phenomenologically always occurring. It is my belief that numbers also imply certain organizational relationships that occur in and of themselves and this occurs on so many different levels that you can literally use this idea as a generative tool in music.

Schillinger's method was based on a numerical approach to rhythm and what to do with pitch. Schillinger was a very interesting guy, although his pieces were not very successful, this quantitative idea inputted into musical devices is really intriguing and it can happen in so many ways.

ACC: Pitch, rhythm, dynamics...

KRM: All of that.

ACC: So how is that different from super-serialism?

KRM: We are conditioned to think of numbers as sort of democratic. We imply equality of units between the value of one and the value of two even if we're counting a little rock and a big rock. The abstract unit of enumeration is taken for granted as a given, But originally in Pythagorean concept of numbers, numbers also had a spatial character as well as an abstract numerical entity. In other words, numbers in geometry were intricately linked to each other. For example, the number three was the triangle and the number four was a square, so we have this idea of the platonic solids. Even in sound where we cannot

experience the dimensionality of the numbers because our ears only hear things as events, we can't describe that in tangible terms but we nonetheless experience numerical relationships. It's no accident that in a circle of fifths progression, sevenths are prepared and resolve to thirds and the seventh that resolves to the third then becomes the seventh for the next third, and so its not just a circle of fifths its also a recurring circle of sevenths.

ACC: Thirds and sevenths can move down by half-step.

KRM: 7-3-7-3. Exactly. So we can see that there's a special relationship that exists between those particular numbers. I wrote a paper about this called "Why Seven?" Why are there seven pitches in each mode and how does the seventh scale degree create this urgency for eight? In other words, there's something inherent to the enumeration that gives structure to musical sound. It's something you can't really put your finger on, but it is going on. So if you try to ride that horse it leads you to new avenues of possibilities.

ACC: Are serialism and set theory ways to do that?

KRM: This might seem insane, but I figured out that this series of numbers has very unique characteristics:

3-5-6-10

Three over five and six over ten are equivalent fractions:

$$3/5 = 6/10$$

Six times five and three times ten are the same:

$$6*5 = 3*10 = 30$$

And three plus five is half as much as six plus ten:

$$3+5 = (6+10) / 2$$

So there's this network of nesting that happens which I think is unique. This particular thing is reproduced no matter what numbers you're on, it all can be reduced to this particular pattern. Then you can quickly see that the chord is the root, the third and the fifth. Scale degree six is very important. Then there are the thirds and the sixths – harmony begins to reveal itself within this system. I've always tried to think about twelve as well: the twelve tones, the clock, twenty-four hours. What's happening in musical development is that we hear the line but what makes the line is the circle and what makes growth is not an increase but rather the spiral. If we can picture our music in terms of numerical expansions, we began to have another way of looking at how development can grow to a climax and return to equilibrium, a quantitative approach. Now will that make your compositions great? Not in and of itself, but it's certainly something to work with.

ACC: So how do you translate this into musical ideas? Into pitches, rhythms and dynamics?

KRM: To write *Jihad*, I set up a system where I could use the notes G, E, B, A, and D or I could flat them or sharp them. How the system unfolds will depend on other aspects, but the word Jihad is the motive and is always present in the piece.

So when did you write that piece and when did you start thinking about composing this way?

I'm not saying that I do compose that way, but my interest in relating number theory to music theory goes back to a Pythagorean concept, the *Tetraktys*.⁶ Pythagoras thought this was the most important thing in the world. If you take these rows of dots they add up to 10.

⁶ Metz thoroughly explores the concepts of Pythagoras and the Tetraktys model and their relationship to music in his paper *Why 7?* (see bibliography).

ACC: And it also makes an equilateral triangle.

KRM: If you continue this idea, the next triangular number is five and here we have the fifteen major keys [including the enharmonic spellings]. Nature builds upon these relationships.

ACC: Do you think part of the reason music relates so well to numbers is because of acoustics or is it more abstract?

KRM: A lot of is acoustics.

ACC: It's seems to me that we've constructed a very numerical system in terms of our notation and tunings.

KRM: It's the clock. It's all about the regulation of the second.

ACC: The minor second?

KRM: No, the ticking second. When they were able to make that consistent then that's what led to gears, to circularity, to the organizational principles ... It's the result of making one second the same length of time as the 2nd second and the 3rd second. It's a very abstract concept when you consider that time seems to be a liquid. To me, there's not one second, then another second and then another second – there's just [throat sound like wind in a tunnel] going on. So the question is how do we dive into that flux and that's where we have imposed this whole music theory. The idea of rhythm is based on the democratization of time increment and so are many things in western thought. Once you've got the clock, you've got everything you're looking for. This musical system goes back to Pythagoras, about 500 B.C., and even before with the Byzantines. So I've begun to view numbers and how they relate to music in special ways that can be very interesting.

ACC: Different from our normal model.

KRM: The biggest burden of being a composer is to find new paths. I call it the tyranny of innovation.

ACC: So you think all serious composers need to try to be avant-garde in some way?

KRM: We aren't contributing if we don't at least try to do that in some way. Not to say that you can't take the tonal system and be innovative still. You can use I-V-I and still be innovative, but it's harder than ever to do that.

ACC: I think there's some that would disagree with you on that, I'm not one of them, but there are definitely academics that feel like you can't really write original music with such a progression.

KRM: And I would say that they are probably not very creative people. Because it's not the pitches, it's not even where they go necessarily, it's how they get to where they're going. It's not whether they were triads or how they were organized, though that important. Schoenberg said, "There are still plenty of great pieces to be written in the key of C." I believe that Schoenberg was right about that.

III. ANALYSIS OF *SONGS FROM MOTHER GOOSE*

Mother Goose in Cultural Context

Mother Goose nursery rhymes are embedded in the consciousness of Euro-centric culture. Picking a familiar text provides a beacon of familiarity to a general audience that is frequently bewildered by art music. Thus, selecting nursery rhymes provides some of the same relevance that setting an acclaimed poet does, without the obstacle of having the rights to use the text. In addition, nursery rhymes are not over-laden with complex meaning and interpretations as much as literature is – instead, they are more like riddles. Discussions of how to interpret nursery rhymes offer few definite answers and even fewer that have seeped into the shared cultural experience that accompanies these perennial favorites (Oring and Jones 1987, 114). Yet, Mother Goose rhymes remain a vital part of literature as an (partially) innocuous way to teach rhyming, rhythm, and syntax (or lack thereof) to young children and provoking the imagination of all ages.

Though many Mother Goose enthusiasts can enjoy the rhymes without a reading of what's inside, a composer using them as a text for a song must have an interpretation, even if the listener is not aware of it. The meaning of nursery rhymes is relative to the context in which they are presented, or as Marshall McLuhan would say: “the medium is the message” (McLuhan 1964, 7). People often identify a certain style of children's book illustrations (images) or simple songs (melodies) with nursery rhymes, and those associations have become as significant as the rhymes by themselves.

In letters submitted to the journal *Western Folklore*, Elliot Oring (a literary folklorist) challenges Steven Jones' belief that folklore should be interpreted through the lens of the specific cultural context from which they arose (the view of an anthropological folklorist), arguing that an interpretation based on cross-cultural universality is superior (Oring and Jones 1987, 107-114). Nursery rhymes that have entered the oral tradition have cultural resonance and are often flexible in terms of interpretation, particularly with regard to the lines and verses that do not make sense. The nursery rhymes that have only provincial relevance have not resonated across time and space and therefore have not entered into, or remained in, the common vernacular or in print. While I agree with Darnton and Oring that it is useful to return to the origins of the rhymes in order to fully comprehend the embedded symbolism and colloquialism, we need not dwell on those elements in order to appreciate or extract meaning from these rhymes. It is the elements that transcend time and place by defying the pinning-down of meaning – the nonsense – that characterizes nursery rhymes. The following is a prime example of a rhyme that has captured the imagination of children in Europe and America for generations, replete with nonsense phrases and wild personifications. It was also selected by Metz as a text for song cycle.

Hey, diddle, diddle!

The cat and the fiddle,

The cow jumped over the moon;

The little dog laughed

To see such sport,

And the dish ran away with the spoon (Cormier 1998).

Once a rhyme has reached the height of familiarity that this rhyme has, it becomes even harder to decode any symbolism that might have been associated with it in the first place. The relevance that transcends generation and location is in the rhyming and imagery that appeals to readers and listeners alike. The nonsensical narrative creates syntax without the need for interpretation, ideal for reading to children who are still acquiring language, similar to a Dr. Seuss book. On the other hand, it is possible to read more into that very same nonsense and attribute meanings that one is not likely to find in recent children's literature.

Ken Metz began his relationship with Mother Goose rhymes (as an adult) when he read them to his kids. He “would always give a dramatic presentation.”⁷ While providing educational entertainment for his children, Metz became fascinated with “hidden meanings” he detected in the rhymes.⁸ The nonsense in many cases can be explained by returning to the cultural roots of the rhyme using an ethnographic (anthropological) approach – but a little intuition and a good deal of imagination may be an effective alternative. Barnett states that “nonsense syllables have arisen independently and universally in all cultures” and proposes five ways in which they occur (Barnett 1959, 20-21):

1. As imitation of a foreign language;
2. As a form of censorship;
3. As onomatopoeia;
4. For ease of learning (through imitation);
5. In order to combine singing or dancing.

⁷ See the Interview with Metz, Chapter II of this thesis.

⁸ Ibid.

A prime example of the first of these explanations is another rhyme that Ken Metz selected to set: “Solomon Grundy”. The title is a corruption, or perhaps extrapolation, of an English dish, *salmagundi*, which is a salad “comprising cooked meats, seafood, vegetables, fruit, leaves, nuts and flowers and dressed with oil, vinegar and spices” which is derivative of the French word *salmagundis* denoting “a disparate assembly of things, ideas or people, forming an incoherent whole” (“Salmagundi” 2009).

Solomon Grundy,

Born on a Monday,

Christened on Tuesday,

Married on Wednesday,

Took ill on Thursday,

Worse on Friday,

Died on Saturday,

Buried on Sunday.

This is the end

Of Solomon Grundy (Cormier 1998).

This particular rhyme could hardly be classified as nonsense because of the clear representation of “the seven ages of man” (later explored in the analysis), but it is an apt illustration of Barnett’s principle nonetheless. “Solomon Grundy” is somewhat less opaque than other Mother Goose rhymes, but its layers of meaning hint at what the others may be hiding in their apparent ‘nonsense’. After confirming through research that “Solomon Grundy” is in fact an imitation of a foreign language (the first of Barnett’s explanations), one can easily imagine that the phrase “Hey diddle diddle” could be

explained by one of the five rationales (particularly 2, 3, 5, or a combination thereof) as well. There is a human desire to maintain the integrity of rhyme and rhythm, once one has commenced with it.

Mother Goose and Melody

No matter how one interprets the text of Mother Goose rhymes, a significant facet is missing from the published collections that originated in the 18th century – the music.⁹ Barnett explains that “in some instances ... separate publication probably accounts for the loss of an original tune” (Barnett, 1959, 20). It is logical to assume that many of the rhymes, especially those with a lyrical nature, originated with music in mind. There can be little doubt that the folk melodies were simple and fairly imprecise. If it were possible to hear an 18th-century peasant sing “Hey Diddle Diddle” or “Solomon Grundy”, it would likely provide a stark contrast to the settings that will be examined later in the paper. But singing enhanced the pleasure of reciting the rhymes and was a highly effective mnemonic device among illiterate people.

Nevertheless, it is conceivable that rhymes were conjured up to accompany melodies. This would explain the metric contrivance that might in turn account for some nonsensical content. After all, not every amateur poet can be Shakespeare, and it is not always easy to accommodate a meter. It is the lineage of printed Mother Goose collections that has guided our knowledge of folk rhymes, and these publications have traditionally not included notated music, and recording technology was not available until the 20th century. Thus, we have disembodied rhymes that “seem to demand music so

⁹ An early and notable attempt to reconnect the rhymes with melodies was J. W. Elliott’s *Nursery Rhymes and Nursery Songs*, first published in 1870 (Elliott, et al. 2001). A recording of these settings was consulted (see bibliography).

strongly that numerous composers have since been moved to replace the missing tunes” (Barnett, 1959, 20). But there are rhymes that have not lost their association with a tune, and Metz includes some of the most famous examples in his cycle. The challenge of setting these rhymes is that they already have a rich heritage of rhythm and often melody.

Any work that utilizes a subject as ubiquitous as the most famous nursery rhymes is borrowing, intentionally or otherwise, the cultural relevance of that rhyme to grab the attention of the audience, and it is in turn, creating new associations for the rhyme, which may or may not stick with that receiver or develop a larger cultural resonance. For example, “Cradle Song” (aka “Lullaby”) is strongly identified with a melody. It is apparent that the text itself has a lyric quality, and it is therefore likely that it has always been associated with some tune or another. But because it is unattributed, it is outside of our realm of knowledge whether the melody we now know is the original melody. Though the rhythm is strongly implied by the text, and therefore it seems likely that the folk melody has at least been similar to its current form. In effect, when someone chooses to use this text for any purpose, they are also choosing to remind us of that melody. Instead of attempting to re-identify us with a new melody, Metz chooses to play with this association, in effect setting not only the text but the melody as well, similar to Ives’s quotation of tunes associated with our American identity in his compositions. In the case of Ives, the tunes are likely to elicit a more varied and complex emotive response than “Lullaby”, such as feelings of nationalism, patriotism, or some counterpart, but both may well provoke a sense of nostalgia.

When using these rhymes as artistic subjects, specifically texts for song settings, the medium provides context for the rhyme, but does not necessarily attribute meaning so

much as a narrative tone. As is frequently the case though, a setting can enhance meaning by emphasizing parts of a text that reading it off the page does not. But more importantly, setting these rhymes to music, similar to reading them with an inflection as Metz did with his children, colors the text. In essence, the composer has the opportunity to once again complete the rhyme by setting it to music, providing a backdrop or perhaps even foreground that has been lacking for centuries. When reading the rhymes to his children, Metz “began to hear how the oddities in Mother Goose could become chromatic ideas that [he] could inflect into folk sounds.”¹⁰

It is hard *not* to hear music insinuated by many of the rhymes of *Mother Goose*. Barnett observes “a striking resemblance between the patterns of harmonic rhythm appearing in art-compositions and the rhythmic patterns on which the nonsense lines of Mother Goose ... are based” (Barnett 1959, 20). Barnett is referring to the conventional use of functional harmonic rhythm of the common practice era (18th and 19th centuries) illustrated by his correlation of the metric underpinnings of lines of text with phrases from Bach, Mozart and Schubert.

In the next section, the affinity between nursery rhymes and harmonic rhythm will be further explored by examining music inspired by Mother Goose. There have been and continue to be numerous musical realizations of nursery rhymes for use in educational settings and in popular culture, from Victor Herbert’s light opera *Sweethearts* (1938) to Wyclef Jean’s *If I Was President* (2008).¹¹ Indeed, hip-hop shares a propensity for flexible syntax and poetic license for the sake of rhythmic integrity with nursery rhymes. Furthermore, both hip-hop and light opera possess tonal harmonic rhythm that is aligned

¹⁰ See Interview with Metz, Chapter II of this thesis.

¹¹ *If I Was President* adapts the text of *Solomon Grundy*, while preserving the meter, to ruminate on what might happen if a black man was President of the United States.

with the meter (similar to that of Mozart), but what of art compositions? It can only be assumed that Barnett is referring to Schubert and the archetypal art song, and not the later works of Schoenberg or his serialist disciples. Though the palette of contemporary composition is broad, common practice concepts of functionality and harmonic rhythm are no longer a staple, even among tonal adherents. In the 20th century and beyond, art song composers have avoided metered and/or rhyming texts because of the affinity to and expectation of functional harmony. But there are some notable exceptions, including Ken Metz, who have chosen instead to embrace Mother Goose rhymes as a text resulting in a variety of stylistic interpretations.

Mother Goose and Art Songs

A search of DRAM¹² revealed four art song compositions based on either Mother Goose rhymes or texts inspired by Mother Goose in addition Ken Metz' composition¹³: Henry Cowell's *Mother Goose Rhymes* (1937), Philip Batstone's *A Mother Goose Primer* (1969), Donald Draganski's *Six Songs on Mother Goose Rhymes* (1969, 1975), George Walker's *Mother Goose (Circa 2054)* (1992). Two of these compositions, those by Henry Cowell and Donald Draganski, follow a song cycle model like Ken Metz' *Songs from Mother Goose* (2003).

Henry Cowell (1897-1965) composed *Mother Goose Rhymes* (L. 538) in 1937 while incarcerated at San Quentin for "statutory charges involving a 17-year-old boy" (Lichtenwanger 1986, xxix). "The Manuscript is crowded and scarcely legible, as if Cowell were trying to minimize the amount of precious manuscript paper he used to

¹² Anthology of Recorded Music, <http://www.dramonline.org>.

¹³ There may be other art song compositions using Mother Goose texts extant, there are certainly instrumental compositions inspired by the rhymes including Ravel's *Ma Mère l'Oie*.

notate the songs” (Osborne 1997, 5-6). He was “fully pardoned” in December of 1942 at the request of the prosecuting attorney (Lichtenwanger 1986, xxix). As the earliest of the three art song cycles based on Mother Goose, Cowell’s work sets a few precedents that the others seem to follow.

The first parallelism is the number and nature of the selections. Cowell selected six rhymes, Draganski six, and Metz seven. All three selected some of the simple, silly rhymes; e.g. “Goosey, Goosey, Gander” selected by Cowell, “Peter Peter, Pumpkin Eater” selected by Draganski, and “The Cat and the Fiddle” selected by Metz. But Draganski and Metz also deviate from the familiar rhymes: Draganski coined a few himself, and Metz sought out some of the more bizarre fare, such as “Fishpond” and “Jack and his Fiddle”.

The second similarity is the relative brevity of all three of the song cycle compositions. When working with a short text, it seems to follow that the setting may also be concise, especially when compared with settings of long poems, necessitating strophic forms. Cowell’s songs could almost be classified as miniatures, and this is not the case with the settings by Draganski and Metz.

A final parallel can be drawn with the aid of Barnett’s observation about the affinity of the rhymes with harmonic rhythm, which can be observed in all three works if using a less conventional definition than is illustrated by Barnett’s examples of common practice composers. In the context of these 20th century works, the harmonic rhythm cannot be demarcated with a Roman numeral analysis. But the Cowell, Draganski and Metz settings exhibit clear patterns in the changing of harmony that are tied to the meter of the rhyme. The harmonic rhythm may be on the order of a quarter note, a measure, or

an expanse of measures, and it is a reflection of the metered text. In all three composers' works, the setting of the text is representative of the non-pitched chanting rhythm, with a sprinkling of spoken utterances, and indeed a tonal (though rarely functional) harmonic rhythm reflects this style of setting. This is accompanied by awareness of, and to some extent an adherence to, the folk melody roots of these rhymes. These song cycles embrace and even toy with this identification

Table 1: *Mother Goose Rhymes* by Henry Cowell, Durations¹⁴

<i>Mother Goose Rhymes (L. 538)</i>	2:16
Curly-Locks	0:50
Three Wise Men of Gotham	0:25
Dr. Foster went to Gloucester	0:15
Goosey, Goosey, Gander	0:23
Tommy Trot	0:21

Table 2: *Six Songs on Mother Goose Rhymes* by Donald Draganski, Durations

<i>Six Songs on Mother Goose Rhymes</i>	15:18
Whistle, Daughter, Whistle	2:09
Dance, Little Baby	1:36
Peter Peter, Pumpkin Eater	2:02
Counting	1:59
Hot Cross Buns	2:38
Tom the Piper's Son	4:51

Table 3: *Songs from Mother Goose* by Ken Metz, Durations

<i>Songs from Mother Goose</i>	12:05
The North Wind	1:27
The Cat and the Fiddle	1:35
Jack and his Fiddle	0:58
Pussy Cat	1:57
Solomon Grundy	2:19
Cradle Song	1:31
Fishpond	2:18

¹⁴Lichtenwanger's catalog lists "Polly Put the Kettle On" as the second rhyme setting in the cycle (1986, 154). Table 3 is based on the audio recording *Songs of Henry Cowell*, which omits this movement.

Six Songs on Mother Goose Rhymes (1969, 1975) by Donald Draganski (born 1936) was composed initially for soprano and piano (1969). The accompaniment was later arranged for woodwind quintet (1975), was recently recorded, and is now available in that format on Albany Records.¹⁵ The rhymes vary from the familiar (“Peter Peter, Pumpkin Eater” and “Hot Cross Buns”) to original rhymes by the composer based in the tradition of Mother Goose (Draganski 2002, 4). His setting is firmly rooted in the stylistic mainstream of American concert music (e.g. Copland or Bernstein), and is further separated from the others by the emphasis of thicker textures with layers of activity and diversity of instrumental color. Cowell and Metz both fuse tonal and atonal idioms in their pieces and have a sparser texture. The instrumentation (woodwind quintet v. piano accompaniment) accounts for some – but not all – of this divergence. The selection of a baritone vocal range also allies Metz with Cowell, and not Draganski who chose soprano. At moments in Draganski’s setting, the woodwind quintet becomes the focal point, even when text is present. The piano texture never overwhelms the text in Cowell’s setting, and rarely in Metz’ cycle. In combination with an eclectic style, the strong presence of the voice in the Cowell and Metz settings portrays a broader range of emotion. But none of the three miss the opportunity to display the humor that is central to Mother Goose.

A Mother Goose Primer (1969) by Philip Batstone (1933-1992) was composed the same year as Draganski’s initial setting (1969), but bears no likeness in compositional language. This contemporaneous dichotomy of stylistic idioms is highly reflective of the disparate worlds of composition that existed at the time. Batstone’s piece was composed for (dedicated to), and performed by, Bethany Beardslee (born 1927) with ‘Pierrot

¹⁵ See bibliography.

Ensemble'¹⁶ and percussion and included staging. Beardslee was famous for performing works of the second Viennese school, particularly Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* (1912) and premiered works by American serialists, such as Milton Babbitt's *Philomel* (1964) (Plante 1969, 4).

A Mother Goose Primer is a dramatic music-word poem. It contains no music which is independent of the words; no words – beyond merely individual lines – which can in any way be thought of as independent of the music. The creation, the arrangement, the composition of the words, the music, and the staging was simultaneous and interdependent...

This work is strictly serial with regard to both pitches and rhythms. It is dedicated with admiration and respect, to Miss Bethany Beardslee (Batstone 1969, 7).

Batstone's serial treatment of the text sets his piece apart from the other settings of Mother Goose. The theatrical presentation bears some resemblance to the approaches of the tonal composers, all of whom at least briefly employed recitative, but Batstone utterly abandons the tonal pretexts that Barnett observed, severing all folk music ties the text possessed. Thus, in this case, Mother Goose is just a text and not a cultural tapestry. Batstone freely borrows from the rhymes without ever giving a discreet presentation, creating a continuous staged narrative that lasts for the entire piece (10 minutes and 27 seconds). The inclusion of two lines from *I saw a fishpond all on fire* is worth mentioning for the consideration of the tonal settings, because Metz later set the entirety of this lesser known rhyme.

¹⁶ An ensemble based on the instrumentation to Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* (1912). flute, clarinet, piano, violin, and cello; often referred to as a 'miniature orchestra'.

George Walker (born 1922) was the first African American recipient of the Pulitzer Prize for Music in 1996 for his work *Lilacs*. His setting of Irene Sekula's poem *Mother Goose (Circa 2054)* was composed in 1992 (Jarvis, 2008). The poem is a prime example, along with Wyclef Jean's *If I Was President*, of the practice of appropriating familiar Mother Goose rhymes as a means of social commentary.

Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall

A non-electro magnetic ball

All the Super's polariscopes

Couldn't revitalize his isotopes.¹⁷

In her poem, Sekula maintains formal ingredients from the original rhyme, including the narrative flow, number of lines and the rhyming scheme, while at the same time transforming the temporal and cultural setting by injecting contemporary technical jargon.

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,

Humpty Dumpty had a great fall;

All the King's horses, and all the King's men

Cannot put Humpty Dumpty together again (Cormier, 1998).

Likewise, George Walker's setting (Figure 8) recalls a 19th century setting of the original rhyme by J. W. Elliott (Figure 9).

¹⁷ This poem was published in *Fantastic Story Magazine* in 1953.



Figure 8: Opening of J. W. Elliott's setting of "Humpty Dumpty" (Elliott et al, 2001)¹⁸



Figure 9: Soprano entrance of George Walker's setting of "Mother Goose (Circa 2054)" (Walker 1992, III:1)

The melodic contour and rhythmic emphasis of the first four syllables in Walker's setting are eerily reminiscent of Elliott's diatonic setting. The first three pitches of the two settings are a half step apart and then converge on the same note on "-ty." After this however, there is a total divergence, Walker applies modern compositional technique even more freely than Sekula applies modern language.

Though the text is a reinterpretation, Walker's interpretation shares some stylistic features with Cowell and Metz. The melodic line fluctuates between the sing-song character of Mother Goose and the jagged, chromatic contours we are more accustomed to in contemporary art song. But while Walker's compositional language parallels the Sekula text that juxtaposes a traditional rhyme against futuristic language, it is less clear how art song interpretations of the actual folk rhymes reflect the character of the historic texts.

¹⁸ This is an aural transcription of Robin Hendrix's recording (see bibliography under Elliott).

These reflections on the heritage of Mother Goose within the macrocosm of our culture, and the microcosm of the twentieth-century art music canon, will serve as the backdrop for a detailed analysis of Ken Metz' *Songs from Mother Goose* (2003).

Songs from Mother Goose by Ken Metz

I. The North Wind

Cold and raw the North wind blows,

Bleak in the morning early.

All the hills are covered with snow.

*Winter has now come fairly.*¹⁹

The baritone range seems appropriate from the outset, personifying the North Wind with a deep and powerful voice. But even before the first entrance of the voice, Metz finds an opportunity to depict the imagery of the text with dramatic flourishes in the accompaniment. This opening is the first of many mood-enhancing examples, conveying the bleakness of a harsh wintry day, along with declaring Metz' freely chromatic tonal language and circuitously providing the baritone's first note (see Figure 10).

¹⁹ All rhyme texts included from this point forward are taken from Ken Metz' score. He cites *The Real Mother Goose* as his main source (Ken Metz, email to the author, April 2 2009). The content of that public domain book has been transcribed by Johanna Cormier and is available online (see bibliography).

Freely without measured time

Figure 10: I. The North Wind, mm 1-2

“All the pitches in the piano opening point to D somehow, it’s kind of a weird beginning.”²⁰ There are two ways that Metz “points to D”, the first of which is by constructing the piano opening symmetrically around a D-axis, a technique of tonal assertion developed by Béla Bartók.²¹ Each of the three cells of activity is consistently symmetric around this axis. The first cell is two double-whole notes (C[#] and E^b), both a minor second away from D. In the second cell, the first two notes are a major second from D (C and E), followed by two notes a minor third from D (B and F). The third cell begins with notes a major third from D (F[#] and B^b), followed by notes a perfect fourth away (A and G), with the other pole of the D axis (G[#]) inserted between, which evenly divides A and G as well as all the other pairs of notes. A pattern emerges along with this idea of symmetry, the intervals are augmenting: m2, M2, m3, M3, P4 (see Figure 11): a construction reminiscent of Metz’ spiraling chromatic motive for his piece *Ouroboros*, inspired by the symbolic creature: the snake eating its tail.

²⁰ See Interview with Metz, Chapter II of this thesis.

²¹ For more on symmetric tonality see Elliott Antokoletz’s book *The Music of Béla Bartók A Study of Tonality and Progression in Twentieth-Century Music*.



Figure 11: Augmenting symmetrical intervals around a D-axis

The other method by which Metz “points to D” is making use of every pitch in the chromatic collection, except for D. By completely surrounding D, a tendency towards that pitch is created. Although this chromatic aggregate is consistent with the D-axis, the presence of the aggregate alone does not strongly imply symmetry. The construction, especially the augmentation of intervals about the axis, expanding towards the other axis point $G^\# / A^b$, is what makes the symmetry so apparent and so successful. “I somehow manage to lead the singer to the first note, D, for the word ‘Cold’.”²²

The tonal center is revealed at the entrance of the baritone. The emphasis of D and the key signature of one flat would indicate d minor; however, there is considerable use of mode mixture and chromatic neighbors in the vocal line. The Phrygian mode is indicated by the presence of E^b . Alternately, D Dorian is indicated by B (natural), but is obscured by visits to $C^\#$ Dorian, supported by E and $F^\#$ Major triads. $C^\#$ Dorian dominates the vocal content from measure 17 to the end of the song. The restless and constant shifting to both closely-related and disparate modes, and sometimes even non-diatonic scales, immediately becomes a defining characteristic of Metz’ melodic setting of the rhymes. The accompaniment of “North Wind” juxtaposes bass tones against unrelated triads – a technique that is used in some of the following songs as well. Barnett would be pleased to note a harmonic rhythm that is strongly tied to the meter, but Metz is more likely alluding to folk song than art song, judging by our conversation about the piece:

²² See Interview with Metz, Chapter II of this thesis.

“there are a wealth of sounds that one can use to evoke a folk quality.”²³ In later correspondence, he stated “the words led him to the rhythms.”²⁴

Following the introduction, the formal design comprises two verses of eight measures each, strophic in terms of the melody, but not the accompaniment, followed by a six-measure coda. The first strophe is:

*Cold and raw the north wind blows,
Bleak in the morning early,*

The second strophe with only minor rhythmic alterations to accommodate the syllables is:

*All the hills are covered with snow,
Winter has now come fairly?*

Metz exploits the lower, more pungent tones of the baritone range at the beginning of each phrase, then slowly rises to a lilting conclusion. As a coda, the stressed syllables from the first line are reprised: “cold, raw, north wind blows,” a recurring formal device that concludes several of the settings in the cycle.

In the final bars, the root movement of G to C would seem to indicate a dominant-tonic relationship: A six-measure G pedal tone begins in measure 17 and arrives on C in measure 23. But as might be expected by the harmonic language used thus far, the resolution is not supported by the tertian harmonies (E and F[#] Major triads) in the upper staff of the piano and the vocal line, which both indicate C[#] Dorian.²⁵ Polytonal content is not unique to this movement, though it is often more fleeting in other instances.

²³ See Interview with Metz, Chapter II of this thesis.

²⁴ Ken Metz, e-mail message to author, September 27, 2008.

²⁵ D[#] is the only pitch missing from the C[#] Dorian collection, but is implied by the presence of A[#] (enharmonically spelled as B^b), which follows D[#] in the circle of fifths.

The harmonies are largely tertian, and occasionally quartal, over a chromatically descending bass of non-chord tones. The notable exception is a 5-pitch sonority that appears in mm. 4, 6, 12, and partially in 14 (see Figure 12). This sonority contains the first two and last three pitches from the opening, in other words notes that are a m2, P4 and +4 away from the D axis (see Figure 13).



Figure 12: I. The North Wind, m. 4

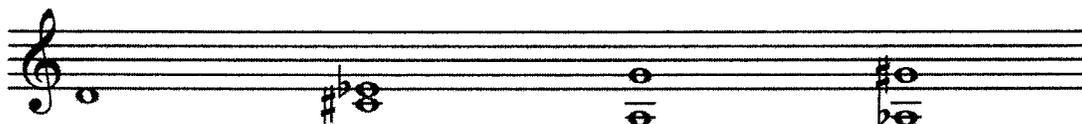


Figure 13: Pitches a m2, P4 and +4 away from a D-axis

The full chord coincides with an E^b in the melody, which indicates that the E^b in the melody may not be part of a Phrygian collection at all, but instead an allusion to the opening, where it is the upper note of the first sonority. It is important to note that this sonority also shares three pitches with the $C^\#$ Dorian scale that concludes the movement: $C^\#$, E^b ($D^\#$), and $G^\#$. However, when $C^\#$ Dorian is emphasized at the end of the song, E^b / $D^\#$ is avoided in stark contrast to its prominence in the symmetrical material at the opening, the strophes and the five-pitch sonority. The tension in this movement is between the D and notes a half-step away. Thus, while it is not the full resolution that landing on D would provide, Metz partially relaxes the m2 tension by coming to rest on

notes a M2 from D (C and E) in the company of the other axis (G#), very appropriate for a rhyme that is a harbinger of winter,

The two pages of “The North Wind” score are dense with ideas, but not notes. This unembellished style contributes to the lucidity of both the textual presentation and Metz’ subtle chromatic relationships.

IIa. The Cat and the Fiddle

*Hey! Diddle Diddle,
The cat and the fiddle,
The cow jumped over the Moon.
The little dog laughed
To see such sport
And the dish ran away with the spoon.*

There is no doubt that “The Cat and the Fiddle” (“Hey Diddle Diddle”) has been associated with many melodies, in the folk, popular, and educational idioms especially. Perhaps, this rhyme even began as a sung lyric. In keeping with a folk melody style, Metz employs a basic, familiar rhythmic setting of the text similar to a spoken recitation, then he disassembles the phrases into short utterances: “diddle diddle” and “cat and fiddle” placed out of context.

There have traditionally been two types of rhythms associated with the singing of this rhyme: simple duple or triple. The triple meter found in J. W. Elliott’s familiar setting (Elliott, et al. 2001), often heard and sang by young children, provides minimal

rhythmic variety with the same value given to nearly all of the syllables, creating no small degree of monotony (see Figure 14).

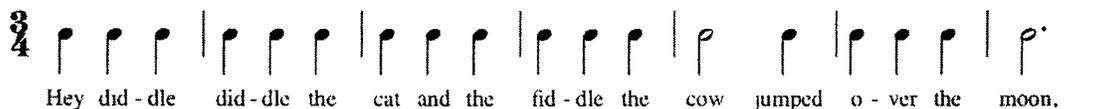


Figure 14: Elliott's rhythmic setting of the opening phrase of "Hey Diddle Diddle" (Elliott, et al. 2001)

In contrast, Metz uses a more varied duple rhythm that is made up of long and short syllables more similar to the spoken rhythm and subdivisions of the beat (see Figure 15).

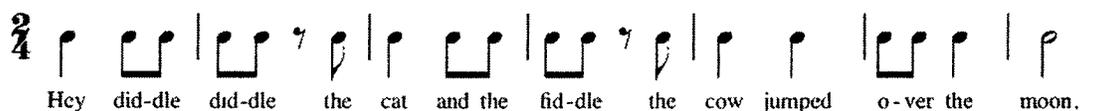


Figure 15: Metz' rhythmic setting of the opening phrase of "Hey Diddle Diddle"

After the initial statement of the rhyme, key phrases are extracted from the whole and repeated, similar to the repetition of certain words in the first movement. "Diddle diddle" and "cat and fiddle" provide a percussive foreground amidst the background of a simple piano texture, separated by rests and then in rapid succession, rising and falling by fourths (see Figure 16).

Figure 16: IIa. The Cat and the Fiddle, mm. 32-38

In this movement, fourths have a linear presence, in the descending bass line and in the vocal motif. The disjunct intervals and persistent staccato articulation of the voice

contrasts the connected lines of the other movements and reveals the humoristic approach shared by Cowell and Draganski.

This setting is in many ways the least adventuresome in terms of chromaticism. The accompaniment keeps a consistent bass note and triad texture, and often these two layers are consonant with each other, even producing complete and unobstructed tertian sonorities (triads, seventh, and ninth chords; as seen in Example 2). Unlike other movements, the pitch content remains mostly within the key signature: B^b minor with a few alterations. The setting is tagged with an E^bm11 (IV¹¹), rising into a quartal flourish in the stratospheric register of the piano.

IIb. Jack and His Fiddle

“Jackie come and give me thy fiddle,

If ever you mean to thrive.”

Nay! I’ll not give my fiddle to any man alive.

If I should give my fiddle,

They’ll think that I’ve gone mad;

For many a joyous day,

My fiddle and I have had.

Nay! I’ll not give my fiddle to any man alive.

“Jack and His Fiddle” follows the “The Cat and The Fiddle” forming a movement related by the subject of a fiddle. Both are full of linear quartal content, often in an upward gesture. “Jack and His Fiddle” extends this facet to the harmony.

At the outset, the gently rising and falling bass line meanders in a slow 6/8 meter. The middle vocal register and lyric quality also contribute to a mood that contrasts the first movement. The result is that the text is more fluid and a character is revealed. Jack is told that he must give up his fiddle “to thrive,” but Jack refuses: “Nay! I’ll not give my fiddle to any man alive²⁶.” Then, after a brief silence, the accompaniment becomes atmospheric, the voice broodingly introspective. The open strings of the violin (transposed up an octave) ring out in the piano and are sustained as Jack continues with a quotation of the melody from the first movement of Tartini’s *“Devil’s Trill” Sonata*²⁷. This allusion symbolizes that Jack’s fiddle has possessed him. The bitonal split caused by the E^b-E-dichotomy between the voice and piano parts contributes to an uneasy feeling of manic desperation. The parts then come into agreement as Metz focuses a dissonance on the word “mad” by introducing A^b / G[#] amidst the otherwise innocuous quintal sonority (see Figure 17).

The image shows a musical score for two parts: Baritone (Bar.) and Piano (Pno). The Baritone part is in bass clef, 6/8 time, and contains the lyrics: "If I should give my fiddle They'll think that I've gone mad;". The Piano part is in treble and bass clefs, 6/8 time, and features a complex texture with sustained open strings and a dissonance on the word "mad". The score includes dynamic markings such as *pp* and *ppp*, and a *Leg.* marking at the bottom left.

Figure 17: IIb. Jack and His Fiddle, mm. 9-12

The tension is partially relaxed when Jack speaks of the joyous days he has had with his fiddle. Jack again refuses to give up his fiddle, and the open strings of the violin sound

²⁶ On the score, “Nay!” is emphasized with a sforzando, which is somewhat understated on CASA’s 2005 recording with baritone Chia-We Lee.

²⁷ The fourth movement contains the trill for which Tartini’s *Sonata* is nicknamed (Kennedy, 2008).

once more. Mother Goose rhymes are often open-ended, with unsettling conclusions. Metz' settings of "The North Wind" and "Jack and His Fiddle" reflect these incomplete narratives so precisely. When the strings of Jack's violin sound the last time, I am left wondering why Jack must give up his fiddle, and I return to the second line: "if ever you mean to thrive." In Metz' setting, these words are not said harshly, but instead sound as if they are coming from a voice of concern. Then I think of musicians, academic or otherwise, who take pride in their work and hope that their children will be talented in music as well, but would never encourage them to follow a similar path. A simpler and more likely explanation is that in the time and place of this rhyme, music was considered an idle pastime.

III. Pussy Cat

Pussy Cat, Pussy Cat

Where have you been?

I've been to London to visit the Queen

Pussy Cat, Pussy Cat

What did you there?

I frightened a little mouse under a chair.

A familiar structural pattern is reasserted with the next setting. As in previous movements, after completing a full setting of the text in strophic fashion, excerpts from the text are repeated with some variance. In this case, variety is provided through different pitch content in the melody, while the accompaniment and rhythmic elements remain much the same.

The upper tertian emphasis of 7ths and 9ths coupled with gentle modulations and a lyric quality, would have made this setting of “Pussy Cat” a fine tune for a torch song, despite the restless tonal center. In the introduction and coda of this movement, a simple piano motive emphasizes the 7th and 9th above the root. The motive moves downward by half step in a sequential modulation, enhanced by the anticipation of the 5th of the new center in the lowest voice. And in true Baroque proportion Metz breaks out of sequence on the third repetition (see Figure 18).

Figure 18 shows a piano accompaniment for measures 37-43 of the song "Pussy Cat". The score is divided into three systems, each with a different key signature: D^b: I⁹, C: I⁹ (2nd Inversion), and B: I⁹ (2nd Inversion). The first system is marked "Rubato" and "pp". The second system is marked "Calmly" and "ppp". The third system is marked "I.v." and "ppp". The piano part features a simple motive in the upper voice and a more complex accompaniment in the lower voice.

Figure 18: III. Pussy Cat, mm. 37-43

The anticipatory notes could also be interpreted as common tones of the adjacent scales, if the mode of the scales was designated as Lydian (e.g., G is a raised 4th in relation to Db and a 5th in relation to C). The exploration of the Lydian mode is further exemplified by the entrance of the voice, rising from the 7th to a raised 4th, B natural, in the key of F (see Figure 19).

Figure 19 shows the vocal line and piano accompaniment for measures 12-13 of the song "Pussy Cat". The vocal line is in the bass clef and starts with the lyrics "Pu - ssy Cat Pu ssy Cat". The piano part is in the treble and bass clefs, marked "p".

Figure 19: III. Pussy Cat, mm 12-13

Another familiar device from the first movement returns in this setting. A chromatically descending bass is utilized persistently throughout “Pussy Cat.”

IV. A Little Folk Interlude (Introduction to Solomon Grundy) and Solomon Grundy

Solomon Grundy

Born on a Monday

Christened on Tuesday

Married on Wednesday

Took ill on Thursday

Got worse on Friday

Died on a Saturday

Buried on Sunday

This is the end of Solomon Grundy.

Metz enters into new territory with “Solomon Grundy”, a rhyme that has not been a popular folk melody nor set with didactic or artistic aims. But it has been the subject of numerous allusions and the source of much inspiration in popular culture, as the name of a Batman adversary and as a model for hip-hop rhymes. While it is nearly impossible to verify a claim that it has never been sung in its pristine form before this setting, which seems unlikely considering the lyric quality of this rhyme, it suffices to say that there are no familiar tunes in the common vernacular. Thus, where the listener has been challenged to look for subtle rhythmic references or quotations from the past with the rest of the cycle, the listener can now relax their memory and skills of aural observation.

Despite the sing-song nature of the text with a nearly parallel structure for each line, it is not hard to imagine why this rhyme has not been the subject of popular melodies. Mother Goose rhymes all tend to inhabit a fanciful world, but vary greatly from innocuous nonsense to cautionary tales conveying the harsher realities of life. “Solomon Grundy” depicts a brief and mundane life that is little more than a cycle of growth and decay – spanning a week, no less. The seven days of the week and corresponding events represent the seven ages of life (Stewart, 1989, 191), depicted in Shakespeare’s “All the world’s a stage” monologue from *As You Like It*, an accepted philosophy of life in medieval and renaissance Europe (Goodich, 2001).

“A Little Folk Interlude” introduces the setting with an elaboration of what will become the accompaniment. The three-measure phrase (see Figure 20) repeats; the last note becomes the first note of the repetition, depicting the circuitous portrait of life found in the rhyme. After pulling away from A minor, the momentum subsides for the first appearance of the vocal theme (played by the piano), followed by a piquant sonority: a D+M7 chord over a G[#] descending to a G.



Figure 20: IVa. A Little Folk Interlude, mm. 1-4

The propulsion of the first few bars resumes after a fermata and continues in the key of A minor until a BbMM7 is substituted for the FMM7 in the progression.

The vocal accompaniment is spare, almost desolate. The highest degree of activity is found emphasizing the word “Died”, when the composer revisits his D+M7 chord and spells out D-E-A-D with a grace-note flourish in the bass. The vocal line insists upon a

similar gesture throughout the setting: a three-note scalar rise, followed by a downward leap in most cases, and more stepwise motion in others. Each repetition of this gesture adds a nuance, becoming less of a transposition and more of a corruption, increasingly chromatic and dissonant after Solomon becomes “ill on Thursday” (see Figure 21).

♩ = 84

Bartone

So - lo - mon Grun - dy Born on a Mon - day - Chris - tened on Tues - day

Piano

4

Bar

Ma - rried on Wednes - day took ill on Thurs - day got worse on Fri - day Died

Pno.

DEAD

8

Bar

on Sa - tur - day bu - ried on - Sun - - - - day

Pno.

Figure 21: IVb. Solomon Grundy, mm. 1-11

While Jack was merely possessed by the Devil's fiddle, Solomon meets a hasty demise by the seventh measure. Surprisingly enough, Jack's madness was colored by a minor second, a more discomfiting interval than Solomon's death, which received an augmented fifth – a less piquant dissonance than in the surrounding measures that are populated with minor seconds and tri-tones. Perhaps Solomon's death was a release from a miserable existence. In any case, we do not get to know Solomon as a narrator as we do with Jack; the rhyme merely lets the composer and listener observe from the third person.

The setting is concluded with a reprisal of the introductory material, providing a clear punctuation to a text that has a clearer outcome than the other rhymes. But the feeling of circuitousness of the "Folk Interlude" indicates that Solomon Grundy is not just one person, but many, and the cycle continues.

V. Cradle Song

Hush-a-bye baby upon the tree-top,

When the wind blows the cradle will rock.

When the bough breaks, the cradle will fall

And down will come baby cradle and all.

"Cradle Song" is rich with many levels of allusion to the familiar tune strongly attached to this rhyme. The folk melody immediately becomes playful fodder from the outset as a rhythmic motive for the piano introduction. In combination with the subdued tempo and gently extended tonal language, the emphasis of beat two in a slow triple meter is reminiscent of Satie's "Gymnopodies."

The rhythm of the lullaby is ubiquitous to Metz' setting: in the piano introduction, throughout the melody, and in the bass line. Despite the relatively generic nature of this rhythmic theme, its permeation of the piece immediately evokes the origin, especially in the presence of this text (see Figure 22).

Rock - a-bye ba - by in the tree top when the wind blows the cra - dle will rock

Hush - a-bye ba - by up - on the tree top when the wind blows the cra - dle will rock

Figure 22: First phrase of V. Cradle Song: Folk melody above, Metz's setting below

The composer extends the breadth of the allusion to the pitch material in the first two measures of the vocal line and to the melodic contour with the text "... when the wind ..."

When the bough breaks, the cra - dle will fall and down will come ba by cra - dle and all

When the bough breaks, the cra - dle will fall and down will come ba by cra - dle and all

Figure 23: Second phrase of V. Cradle Song: Folk melody above, Metz's setting below

There are fewer analogs in the second strophe (see Figure 23), but the soothing rhythm of the lullaby overwhelms the subtle dissonances in the harmony, populated by major seconds and the (at this point) familiar sonorities of tertian and quintal chords juxtaposed above a chromatic bass. An open quotation of the familiar folk melody concludes the piece (see Figure 24), accompanied by the recurring sonority of an E Major triad over an F (natural) bass tone (itches which could also be voiced as a F diminished triad with a major seventh (E)). This collection is found more than once in this and previous movements.²⁸

²⁸ This sonority is found in measures 15 and 23 in movement III and measure 20 of this movement.

The musical score for 'Cradle Song' (mm. 36-41) is presented in a two-staff format. The top staff is for the voice (Bar) and the bottom staff is for the piano (Pno). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The vocal line starts with the lyrics 'cra - dle and all' and includes a fermata over the final note. The piano accompaniment features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand, with dynamic markings 'p' and 'ppp'.

Figure 24: V. Cradle Song, mm. 36-41

One could imagine a wholly different type of setting, akin to Philip Batstone's serialist interpretation of the rhymes perhaps. A setting in which the metric fundamentals of the rhyme are lost, replacing the step-wise motion with sharp angles – in short: a dissociative experience. But Metz instead decided to work within the rhythmic parameters, beginning with a similar melodic contour and evolving away from it. Re-harmonization is a common practice in jazz, wherein a melody remains intact while the harmony that usually accompanies that melody is changed. In this setting Metz employs a less common technique of *re-melodicization*, by giving new pitches to a familiar lyric without altering the rhythmic profile. This movement offers a gentle respite before the harshest setting in the collection.

VI. Fishpond

I saw a fishpond all on fire!

I saw a house bow to a squire,

I saw a parson twelve feet high,

And a cottage near the sky!

I saw a balloon made out of lead

I saw a coffin drop down dead.

I saw at least two of each of the following items:

Two sparrows run a race!

Two horses making lace?

Nay! It may have been macramé!

I saw a girl just like a cat

And a kitten wear a hat!

I saw a man who saw these too

And said though strange they all were true.

I saw a fishpond all on fire!

“Fishpond” is the most bizarre, and least decipherable, rhyme selected for this cycle. Correspondingly, Metz does not waste the opportunity to employ modernist language, abandoning the folk milieu (and prevailing diatonicism) that has thus far defined the cycle. Phrases inhabiting whole-tone (see Figure 25), octatonic (see Figure 26) and chromatic (see Figure 27) collections dominate the vocal line.

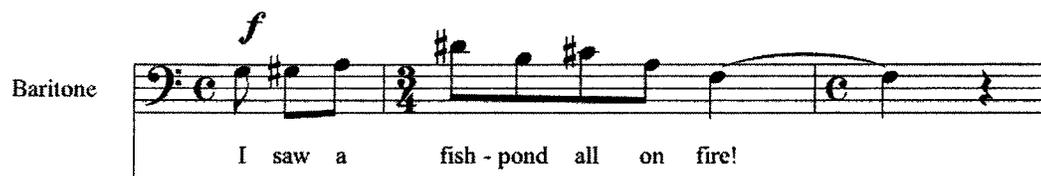


Figure 25: VI. Fishpond, mm. 1-2, is comprised of whole-tone material with the exception of the G[#], and includes an entire collection (F, G, A, B, C[#], and D[#])



Figure 26: VI. Fishpond, mm. 9-10, is comprised of octatonic material and includes an entire collection with the exception of A[#] / B^b (G, A, C, D^b, E^b, E (natural), F[#])

15 *p*

Bar. *p*

I saw a coffin drop down dead.

Figure 27: VI. Fishpond, mm. 15-17, is comprised of a descending chromatic scale from F to A (with the exception of E^b)

In the accompaniment, major seventh chords with the 5th omitted [015] and various voicings and transpositions of the Viennese Fourth Chord [016] punctuate an active bass texture that fluctuates between dead silence, spontaneous eruptions, and a spiraling ostinato. The recurring bass ostinato can also be grouped as sets [0125] and [0126] that strongly resemble the harmonic sets (see Figure 28).

21 *mf*

[015] [016] [016] [015] [016] [016]

Simile

[0126] [0125] [0126] [0125]

Figure 28: VI. Fishpond, mm. 21-22

The major seventh, one possible subset of the recurring sonority [016], is also used repeatedly. In the passage below (Figure 29), an octatonic melody is doubled an octave above and transposed down by a major seventh.

Figure 29: VI. Fishpond, mm. 29-31

The major seventh is also found in the next figure. If all the pitches in this excerpt are considered, an octatonic collection is once again implied (see Figure 30).

Figure 30: VI. Fishpond, mm. 40-41

The intentional fallacies, wild personifications and physical impossibilities found in the rhyme are deftly translated into music by abandoning the tenuous tonal syntax of previous movements. The unifying feature of the rhyme is the parallelism of each line, supported by the rhythmic emphasis of the text setting: the subject noun falling on the downbeat in each phrase.

Outside of the fluctuating non-diatonic collections (whole-tone, octatonic, chromatic), the harmonic language is more consistent and identifiable than in the rest of the cycle. The nuances of the setting are found in the textural and tempo changes: voice solo, piano solo, contrasting activity, similar activity, singing vs. speaking, constant motion vs. sporadic activity with silences, fast vs. slow. Metz saves many of his creative

forces for this final movement, eliciting humor and frenetic energy from the existing rhyme and even adding some new text, though to a lesser extent than Draganski. After stating that he saw “two horses making lace,” the baritone second-guesses himself: “Nay! It may have been macramé²⁹!”

Metz chooses to set a rhyme depicting a world upside down with chromatic sets and non-diatonic scales. Although these systems are derived from logic, the perception by a general audience is often that it does not make sense – and Metz seems to enjoy this fact. He values and often practices modernist techniques. He also values functional tonal music and thinks that it can still be written with artistic merit, though he does not typically practice it himself. In *Songs from Mother Goose*, Ken Metz draws on our experiences of, and mental associations with, Mother Goose, including folk melodies. But in addition, he manipulates our perceptions of art music. Using a palette with few boundaries, he molds his style to his interpretations of the rhymes – interpretations that are tied to our common experience of Mother Goose.

Songs from Mother Goose in Context

If Ken Metz had chosen an unknown text, one would have the luxury of examining his work solely on the basis of that text and his setting of it. Instead, the task was to put his work in the context of these Mother Goose rhymes and the many other folk rhymes under that umbrella, along with a number of other art songs based on folk rhymes. But the purpose is not to make a value judgment about this or the other works that have been considered in this investigation.

²⁹ This phrase is an addition of text, poetic license on the part of the composer.

Virgil Thomson wrote that “Cowell’s music covers a wider range in both expression and technique than that of any other living composer ... No other composer of our time has produced a body of works so radical and so normal, so penetrating and so comprehensive” (Thomson 2002, 167). A similar assertion could be made about Metz, particularly with reference to *Songs from Mother Goose*. They are both experimenting composers, not content to remain fixed on a style.

According to Lichtenwanger, the term *trans-culturism* (but I will refer to it as transculturalism) is often used in reference to Cowell’s music, and is exemplified by his vocalized desire to “live in the whole world of music” (Lichtenwanger, 1986, xiv). It would seem that Donald Draganski and Ken Metz share Cowell’s stated ideal, but it is embodied by different approaches and produces different results in each case.

Draganski, in his works *Klezmer Music* (1985), *Variations on Bosnian Kolo* (1994), and *Trio from Rio* (1998), presents interpretations of the respective folk styles adapted to the textures and forms of American concert music. The bending of pitches and glissandi in the clarinet melodic line in *Klezmer Music* exemplifies how Draganski borrows characteristics of the style he is portraying while remaining firmly footed in the forms and textures of chamber music, reminiscent of how a film scorer might depict an exotic locale. And he does so with great *affect* and polish.

Metz has also incorporated elements of world music into his art music, but with a less consistent approach. *Musica visto que Villa-Lobos* is fully immersed in the dance rhythms of Brazil, from the instrumentation to the form, and perhaps has more in common with its model than the majority of chamber music except for the fact that it is notated. *A Mingus Fantasy* for Wind Ensemble has a “jazz sound” because of the timbres

and rhythms, but the pitch content and structure identify it with art music. In contrast, it is not hard to classify Metz' *Songs from Mother Goose* as a fairly standard collection of art songs above all else, yet there are overtones and undertones of folk melody, jazz harmony, and a plethora of twentieth-century techniques, embedded in the work. Once again, this strongly allies Metz to Cowell. But Cowell's breed of transculturalism is fully integrated, wherein his influences are fully synthesized and congealed to the point where they are no longer decipherable parts of the whole – in other words, the influences of other cultures are abstractions. This achievement could largely be attributed to his lack of schooling and penchant for experimentation with the fundamentals of sound (Lichtenwanger, 1986, xiii). Metz is not disguising the disparate elements, they are still identifiable, and for this reason, it may not be transculturalism but *multi-culturalism*. Likewise, Draganski's interpolation of foreign stylistic devices within a conventional art music idiom might instead be termed *inter-culturalism*. And all these culturalisms can be considered different types of eclecticism.

The common interest in reaching outside of art music shared by these three composers is consistent with the choice of reaching outside of poetic literature (the proscribed music of the art song), and looking instead to the folk rhymes of the oral tradition. And although Philip Batstone's piece is not eclectic and clearly belongs to a distinct tradition within art music, Batstone, along with Cowell and Draganski, was likely attracted to the rhymes for many of the reasons as Ken Metz: for their humor, irony and indecipherable oddities.

I did not expect it when I first encountered Ken Metz' piece, but Mother Goose rhymes are a staple text for settings across the spectrum of art music. These rhymes are a

uniquely apt source of inspiration for an art form whose practitioners value experimentation to varying degrees. Three composers who share a penchant for the fusing of styles chose to set Mother Goose rhymes independently, unaware of the other settings.³⁰ These works were conceived and realized in isolation from each other, and by their coincident existence reveal a truth about both Western art music and folklore: they are open to interpretation and dissecting the content does not determine meaning so much as anatomy.

Searching for a depth of meaning in Mother Goose Rhymes may be a partially fruitless endeavor, not only because our knowledge of their origins is approximate, but because they are frivolous in nature. The common features of the rhymes are their relative brevity as well as the strong meters and rhyming scheme. At their most complex, they are riddles, at their most prosaic, infectious nonsense. In all cases, they are sounds as much as words, with tone more than meaning. In effect, these composers were choosing not a text but a sound of words in combination that follow a general format. And as Barnett established nonsense rhyming is not unique to western culture (Barnett 1959, 20-21), thus the rhymes collected under the heading of “Mother Goose” (which is not a consistent canon) are examples of a basic creative impulse of all humanity. These rhymes have some of the same meaningless beauty as Noam Chomsky’s famous illustration of correct grammar without semantic weight: “Colorless green ideas sleep furiously” (Chomsky 1957, 15). But at the same time the rhymes have a certain levity and banality that places an emphasis on fun. And they possess a cultural significance that can be summed up most simply as familiarity, whether they are as well-known as “Hey Diddle

³⁰ None of the pieces are distributed by a publisher and the Cowell, Draganski and Metz pieces were recorded and released after the date of the most recent composition (Metz’s setting composed in 2003).

Diddle” or not, as in the case of “I saw a fishpond all on fire”. There are many more folk rhymes left to be set to music – but those that already have been set can be re-harmonized, re-melodicized, or given a whole new musical context.

IV. CONCLUSION

The review that Ken Metz received after the first performance of *Songs from Mother Goose* described the work as “Lee Hoiby in a funk” (Winderler 2003). I have provided a few sources on Lee Hoiby (b. 1926), a light opera composer (Jackson 2008), in the bibliography, and after reading more about Hoiby, my primary reaction to the review is that it displays a complete ignorance about the rest of Metz’ work, which is entirely appropriate for a critic attending a single performance of a composer’s work. Actually, I rather like the review, it makes me chuckle, and I find it somewhat accurate. Hoiby often selects sentimental texts (including some written by himself) and gives them a fairly consistent treatment (see Forman 1996). If Metz were to be compared to Hoiby at all, I think “in a funk” is an apt description. First of all, art songs are not his only medium, and secondly, the dissonance and thornier sounding techniques in the work are not likely to be found on the stage of a lyric opera. At the same time, the review reveals the potential for an academic composer such as Metz, who does not have the stylistic consistency of a composer like Hoiby, to be misunderstood.

The unifying feature of Metz’ *Songs from Mother Goose* is the text. And the selected text it is an enigmatic choice, full of humor and irony, fundamentally different from the elevated (or sentimental) poetry that is often used as a subject for art songs. Metz frequently uses extra-musical ideas as the foundations for his work, as in *Jihad*,

Orca Pequeño, and *Ouroboros*.³¹ Likewise, *Mother Goose* is an extra-musical idea that is reflected by the metric presentation of the text and the incorporation of folk idioms.

These consistent stylistic features of the work are contrasted by a plethora of modern compositional techniques that explore the tone and character of each rhyme. As was stated in the introduction, this work was chosen because it exhibits Metz' broad compositional vocabulary. Composers are frequently identified with a style, we call it "finding a voice." Reducing Metz' style to a few words would be almost impossible, but that does not mean he does not have a "voice."

In the interview in Chapter II, there was much discussion of what we are trying to accomplish as art music composers. To determine this, it would be helpful to first define what art music is, and there was some discussion of that in the interview as well. I think it is safe to say that someone who holds advanced degrees in composition and who writes without the expectation of remuneration is an art music composer, though I am not in a position to define "art music" itself as opposed to jazz or any other sincere musical expression.

Two key viewpoints on the purpose and nature of academic composition in contemporary culture stand out in the interview. Metz states that "As a composer, I think it's more important that we do basic research, and have that type of attitude rather than to do something where we try to cure cancer."³² This perspective is reflective of his background as a scientist and is very compatible with the role of music in academia. While this ideal is somewhat relaxed from the total refutation of the need for an audience, it harkens back to the sentiment espoused by Milton Babbitt's memorable article "Who

³¹ See Interview with Metz in this thesis, subchapter "Language, Style and Idiom".

³² See Interview with Metz in this thesis, subchapter "Composition Today".

Cares If You Listen?” from 1958, in which Babbitt declares that academic composers need not concern themselves with seeking traditional audiences, freeing them up to innovate. My research on Metz and his compositions indicates that he does value music as “basic research”, and the reader of this thesis should not be misled by my choice of one of his more accessible works for analysis and discussion. Part of scientific research is reconfirming past research and synthesizing it in new ways, and Metz effectively translates this to his music.

The second viewpoint that I would like to highlight is revealing about Metz as a mentor to composition students. The final comments of the interview refer to an idea that he attributes to the father of the Second Viennese School, Arnold Schoenberg. Schoenberg is primarily known as the inventor of serialism, but Metz reveals another side of Schoenberg that is more optimistic about the future of tonality. Metz paraphrases Schoenberg as saying: “There are still plenty of great pieces to be written in the key of C.”³³ Schoenberg himself began his career as a practitioner of Wagnerian tonality, before endeavoring and succeeding at becoming a great innovator. Another Viennese born composer, Ernest Krenek (1900-1991) (see Bowles 2009), wrote an early article on “The Teaching of Composition” that had great foresight and resonates to this day:

In America, as well as Europe, instruction in writing music is very often called “theory” ... This approach to the teaching of composition may have been legitimate when the quality of a composer was measured by the extent to which he fulfilled the stylistic ideal of his period. But that time is long past... Today distinction is measured by the originality with which the musician expresses his own personality (Krenek 1940, 148) ... A seemingly primitive eight-measure

³³ See Interview with Metz in this thesis, subchapter “Music and Numbers”.

period offers essentially the same artistic problems as an extended symphonic movement, though on an appreciably reduced scale. Seen from this angle, instruction in writing music loses the character of pale “theory” and becomes what it should be – the teaching of composition (Krenek 1940, 153).

The palette of techniques available to contemporary composers continues to broaden to this day, and a prevailing style has not come into focus, making Krenek’s statements more pertinent than ever. Krenek’s opening and concluding remarks (from his article) indicate that compositions should not be judged based on the stylistic idiom employed, but instead based on the execution of ideas. Krenek’s thoughts on pedagogy share an affinity to Metz whose method of evaluating compositions is finding a balance between “predictability and surprise³⁴.” This approach makes him adept at working with a wide variety of students who may have disparate goals.

The *Grove Music Online* article on Ernest Krenek describes him as writing “in a wide variety of contemporary idioms” (Bowles 2009). I was somewhat frustrated, and also pleased, to find that I could not peg Ken Metz with this or that *-ism*. The somewhat liberal view of what makes for “good” composition allies Krenek and Metz pedagogically, and compositionally, which is not to say that their music sounds similar in the least. I view them both as experimental and progressive composers because of an evolving language. Which leads me to concluding question and answer: is experimentation and progressiveness in composition restricted to the development of new or novel techniques? My answer is no. Metz’ approach to composition is more based on a philosophy of music than on a particular style, or refinement of that style. He finds a voice for each new work he creates.

³⁴ See Interview with Metz in this thesis, subchapter “Language, Style and Idiom”.

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VITA

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