

“Biographical Milestones”: Interpreting Sixty Years of Larry
Sitsky’s Stylistic Evolution in Australia (1959–2019) Through
a Comparative Analysis of His Solo Flute Works.

Stephanie Athina Shon

ORCID: 0000-0002-0493-6864

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Abstract

This thesis interprets the stylistic evolution of Australian composer, Larry Sitsky, by categorising his compositions (1959–2019) into five distinctive ‘periods’. An analysis of Sitsky’s six solo flute works composed between 1959 and 2019 provides a framework for this examination. The near-equidistant placement of the solo flute works within Sitsky’s compositional timeline renders them useful milestones from which to analyse his creative evolution. The underpinning research question asks what identifies the stylistic characteristics of Larry Sitsky’s works across his compositional evolution, as seen through the prism of his six works for solo flute? This research draws upon historical and descriptive musicological methodologies and uses case studies and analysis as the main tools. The stylistic periods are identified through an analysis of the distinguishing compositional influences, devices, and styles used in Sitsky’s compositions at various stages in his career and explores how these characteristics were influenced by extramusical stimuli and contemporaneous compositional developments. Sitsky’s compositional evolution reveals a process of constant and conscious transformation across five periods. First, Sitsky’s “Early Mature Period”, dating from 1959 to 1962, is characterised by his efforts to embrace a more modern idiom in his earliest mature compositions. Second, the “Modernist Period” from 1963–1969 exhibits his exploration of Modernist compositional techniques such as serialism, aleatoricism, and *musique concrète*. The composer’s adoption of Expressionism and engagement with Asian and mystic stimuli is observable in the “Mystic Expressionism Period” which dates from 1970–1982. Sitsky’s fourth period, the “Armenian Period” traverses the years 1983–1986 and includes a series of works for solo instruments inspired by Armenian folk-music. Fifth, the “Late Mature Period” reveals a neo-romantic though eclectic synthesis of earlier compositional experiments from the years 1987–2019. By exhibiting the characteristics of the five chronological periods, Sitsky’s flute works embody a microcosm of his compositional oeuvre. This thesis also identifies distinctive stylistic qualities that contribute to a ‘Sitskian’ aesthetic, such as: an Expressionistic character, chant topics and *portamento*; chromatic or bitonal ‘smudging’; irregular rhythms and polymetre; mosaic and episodic forms or improvisatory structures; small recurring chromatic cells; decorative fioritura; the portrayal of a musical progression from one ‘state’ to another; and, the use of non-programmatic extramusical springboards inspired by mystical or mythological sources. By drawing upon an historical examination of Sitsky’s compositional trajectory and artistic context in Australia from the late 1950s until 2019, this thesis situates Sitsky’s compositional periods in relation to several sociocultural

developments. While existing scholarship on this composer has explored aspects of his compositional language, none provide a detailed explanation or contextual overview of the compositional shifts. This thesis addresses a scholarly lacuna by clearly identifying the characteristics and context of Sitsky's stylistic evolution. It also addresses a gap in scholarly engagement with Australian flute music. By connecting the musical analysis to related historical and social aspects, this thesis offers a many-dimensional illumination of an aspect of this era of art music composition in Australia.

Declaration

This is to certify that:

- i) the thesis comprises only my original work towards the Master of Music
- ii) due acknowledgement has been made in the text towards all other material used;
- iii) the thesis is fewer than 50,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies, and appendices.

Signature:

Name: Stephanie Athina Shon

Date: April 3 2021

Preface

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Introduction

The 1960s saw a profound transformation of art music composition and performance in Australia. This transformation coincided with significant social changes resulting from Australia's receding ties with Britain, such as the abolition of the White Australia Policy and ensuing focus on multiculturalism and changing diplomatic relations with Asia.¹ Australia's art music transformation was marked by new infrastructure and statutory funding and an uptake of musical Modernism amongst a younger generation of Australian composers.² Despite its relatively late arrival, Modernism in Australian art music negated³ the prevailing "English pastoral" musical aesthetic.⁴ Included in this younger generation of Modernist Australian composers was Larry Sitsky (b. 1934) – a "New Australian"⁵ immigrant born in China to Russian-Jewish parents. A leader in advancing the Australian Modernist movement in the 1960s, Sitsky continues to compose to this day and has amassed a prodigious output of over 200 compositions.⁶ Sitsky's vast and lengthy contribution to the Australian art music canon carries a significance that arguably places him amongst the most influential musicians in Australian music history.

In 1970, Sitsky delivered a lecture on his compositional output, during which he declared that his compositions could be "regarded as biographical milestones on the road to self-awareness".⁷ In the same lecture, Sitsky expressed his distaste for the "composer who

¹ James Curran, *The Power of Speech: Australian Prime Ministers Defining the National Image* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2004), 19; James Curran and Stuart Ward, "Remaking Australia," in *The Knowledge Solution: Australian History*, ed. Anna Clark (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2019), 196–207; James Curran and Stuart Ward, *The Unknown Nation: Australia After Empire* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2010); John Hirst, *Looking for Australia: Historical Essays* (Melbourne: Schwartz Publishing, 2010), ProQuest Ebook Central.

² Michael Hooper, *Australian Music and Modernism, 1960-1975* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019).

³ "Negated" is used consciously to reflect the intention of the younger generation of composers to challenge the prevailing "pastoral" aesthetic. Aesthetic "negation" in avant-garde cultural production is discussed at length by music sociologist and anthropologist Georgina Born in *Rationalizing Culture*. For example, "[t]his general feature of modernist art is often referred to as the negative aesthetic or simply negation, since the prime motive is a negation of the previous tradition..." Georgina Born, *Rationalizing Culture: IRCAM, Boulez, and the Institutionalization of the Musical Avant-Garde* (California: University of California Press, 1995), 41.

⁴ The English Pastoral school refers to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century English nationalist compositional movement led by Ralph Vaughan Williams and Gustav Holst. The composers of this school drew upon English folk songs and hymnody as well as earlier English composers such as Henry Purcell and Thomas Tallis. Roger Covell, *Australia's Music: Themes of a New Society* (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1967), 144, 147. Eric Saylor, *English Pastoral Music* (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 2017); accessed March 17, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/j.ctt1q3lscq>; Richard Taruskin, *Music in the Nineteenth Century*, vol. 3, *The Oxford History of Western Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 801–815.

⁵ Mark Lopez, *The Origins of Multiculturalism in Australian Politics 1945–1975* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2000), 47.

⁶ <https://www.australianmusiccentre.com.au/artist/sitsky-larry>

⁷ Sitsky, "Sitsky on Sitsky," *Music Now* 1, no 4 (April 1971): 11.

writes the same piece all their life” and when describing his own works, sought to highlight the evolving nature of his style.⁸ The existing research on the work of Larry Sitsky does not provide a comparative, contextual analysis of his compositional evolution. Additionally, there is a lack of investigation into Sitsky’s most recent works. This thesis addresses this scholarly lacuna through the following research question: what are the stylistic characteristics of Larry Sitsky’s works across his compositional evolution, as seen through the prism of his six compositions for solo flute?

Through an investigation of Sitsky’s evolving compositional style from 1959 to 2019, I argue that his stylistic development can be interpreted through five distinct stylistic phases, or ‘periods’. The selection of this 60-year window was guided by two factors: first, Sitsky’s first acknowledged mature composition the Sonata for Unaccompanied Violin dates from 1959,⁹ and secondly, the concurrence of the commencement of this research in 2019 with the completion of Sitsky’s sixth work for solo flute – Sonata No 5 for Solo Flute, *The Pied Piper*. In order to contextualise Sitsky’s stylistic evolution, this thesis examines his six solo flute works as a microcosm of his compositional oeuvre. The flute occupies a special place within Sitsky’s oeuvre, and his connection with the instrument dates back to his childhood in China.¹⁰ The composer has written six compositions for solo flute and over ten chamber works that include the flute, which range from standard combinations such as flute duets and woodwind quartets, to unusually-scored ensembles such as unison flute choir and a trio for flute, percussion and piano.¹¹ Due to their near-equidistant placement within Sitsky’s compositional timeline (appearing in all but one of the compositional ‘periods’), the solo flute works are useful milestones from which to analyse Sitsky’s creative evolution. Interestingly, Sitsky’s compositional activity has not extended to the more common combination of flute and piano, and he has acknowledged that “for a pianist, he is strangely

⁸ Sitsky, “Sitsky on Sitsky,” 6.

⁹ Patricia Shaw, “Larry Sitsky’s Music for Violin, and Jan Sedivka,” *Context: A Journal of the Postgraduate Students of the University of Melbourne School of Music* 8, Summer (1994): 13–21; Sitsky, “Sitsky on Sitsky,” 6; Larry Sitsky, *Sonata for Unaccompanied Violin*, (Wollongong: Wirripang, 2015) https://www.australiancomposers.com.au/products/sonata-for-unaccompanied-violin?_pos=1&_sid=3e2e292fe&_ss=r.

¹⁰ Sitsky, “Interview with Larry Sitsky,” interview by Andrew Ford.

¹¹ Larry Sitsky, *Woodwind Quartet* (London: Boosey and Hawkes, 1974); Larry Sitsky, *Chant for Massed Unison Flutes* (2013); Larry Sitsky, *Trio No 10 Sandakan for flute, percussion & piano* (2015); Larry Sitsky, *Canonic Variations for Two Flutes* (Wollongong: Wirripang, 2016).

repelled by the combination”.¹² The composer cites the incompatibility of the flute’s inherent flexibility of pitch with the piano’s “cage of equal temperament”.¹³

Sitsky’s close friendship and ensemble performances in the 1950s with flautist Peter Richardson, a fellow Sydney Conservatorium student, also affected Sitsky’s insight into the capabilities and limitations of the flute. Whilst composed for advanced or professional-level performers, Sitsky’s compositions for flute are largely idiomatic and do not place unmanageable technical demands on the performer. Sitsky partially attributes his knowledge of the flute’s technical capabilities to his relationship with Richardson, explaining that this knowledge stemmed from “playing a lot with Peter – we did a lot of repertoire ... I acquired a kind of feel for the other guy’s [Richardson as flautist] problems”.¹⁴

Composed in 1959, Sitsky’s first solo flute work is his second acknowledged mature composition,¹⁵ and his sixth and most recent solo flute work was composed in 2019¹⁶ – thus, his flute oeuvre encompasses the entirety of the six decades discussed in this thesis. Out of Sitsky’s six solo flute works, only the first is played regularly, and there is a general lack of awareness of the remaining five works. By examining all six works, this thesis brings these later works out of scholarly obscurity – providing a resource for musicians to better understand Sitsky’s compositional style and their context within his oeuvre.

By tracing Sitsky’s stylistic evolution within the context of a nation experiencing its own cultural transformation in the post-World War II era, I argue that certain sociocultural developments influenced the composer’s creative direction. The sociological nuances of Australia’s social transition are beyond the scope of this thesis. However, I aim to provide a sense of the broader cultural climate as I situate Sitsky’s compositional ‘periods’ in relation to specific sociocultural transformations. Additionally, issues of cultural appropriation are common within twentieth century composition in Australia.¹⁷ This is no less true for Sitsky’s

¹² Larry Sitsky, email correspondence, March 6, 2019.

¹³ Larry Sitsky, email correspondence, March 6, 2019.

¹⁴ Larry Sitsky, in conversation with the author, July 28, 2020.

¹⁵ Larry Sitsky, *Sonata for Solo Flute* (Wollongong: Wirripang, 2019)

https://www.australiancomposers.com.au/products/sonata-no-1-for-solo-flute?_pos=1&_sid=e02eb4d1c&_ss=r.

¹⁶ Larry Sitsky, *Sonata No 5 for Solo Flute, The Pied Piper* (Wollongong: Wirripang, 2019)

https://www.australiancomposers.com.au/products/sonata-no-5-the-pied-piper?_pos=10&_sid=e02eb4d1c&_ss=r.

¹⁷ Neil Currie, “Issues in the Appropriation of Sources for Musical Composition,” *Sounds Australian: Journal of Australian Music* 30, Winter (1991): 15–17; Jonathan Paget, “Has Sculthorpe Misappropriated Indigenous Melodies?,” *Musicology Australia* 35, no 1 (2013): 86–111; Hooper, *Australian Music and Modernism*, 154; Ian McDonald, “Cross-Fertilisation or Cultural Imperialism?,” *Sounds Australian: Journal of Australian Music* 15, no 50 (1997): 24–25; James Penberthy, “Aboriginal Influence,” *Sounds Australian: Journal of Australian Music* 30, Winter (1991): 23–24.

compositions, which utilise a number of non-western musical sources. However, the complexities of Sitsky's position as a member of a migrant minority in twentieth century Australian society preclude an in-depth analysis of cultural appropriation issues in this relatively short thesis. This topic, then, requires further in-depth study which is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Representing Sitsky's compositional output through five distinctive stylistic periods contributes to the existing body of knowledge by providing contextual insight into the overarching features and contrasts of his creative practice. As expected, marking the trajectory of a composer's creative evolution is immensely challenging due to the gradual way in which a compositional style can develop. The subtleties of any stylistic changes and the presence of overarching creative tendencies across different periods causes considerable ambiguity when defining clear stylistic divisions. It is important to note that the division of each 'period' was not conceptualised in a vacuum; each period can and should be considered as part of a process of organic creative development in which any stylistic period can bear reference to another. By acknowledging the fluidity and overlap between the periods, I seek to avoid imposing a rigid segmentation of the composer's aesthetic trajectory or oversimplification of his creative development.

As periodisation is ultimately a retrospective construct, studies of this nature are susceptible to selective representations that corroborate the author's narrative.¹⁸ Efforts have been made to provide empirical representations of each work's compositional attributes. In responding to critiques of periodisation, I have sought to avoid the ubiquitous tripartite life division of beginning, middle, and end; or, in music studies, early, middle, and late.¹⁹ My approach to periodisation supports a nuanced diachronic analysis that allows for shared characteristics between periods. Nonetheless, these five periods are a retrospective construct that seek to investigate Sitsky's verbal descriptions of his commitment to avoid creative stasis. Periodisation in this sense is a conscious heuristic from which to approach, contextualise and understand the breadth of Sitsky's artistic trajectory.

¹⁸ Tia DeNora, "Deconstructing Periodization: Sociological Methods and Historical Ethnography in Eighteenth-Century Vienna," in *Music-in-Action: Selected Essays in Sonic Ecology*, Ashgate Contemporary Thinkers on Critical Musicology Series (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2016), 31–45.

¹⁹ DeNora, "Deconstructing Periodization," 35; Maynard Solomon, "The Creative Periods of Beethoven," in *Beethoven Essays* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 116–25.

Note on Terminology

The discussion in this thesis makes numerous references to musical Modernism. Definitions of musical Modernism are complex, ambivalent and many.²⁰ Indeed, recent scholarship has reassessed the boundaries, qualities, and politics of musical Modernism.²¹ Attempting to define Modernism in any definitive way is beyond the scope and aims of this thesis; however, for the purposes of the ensuing discussion, Modernism refers to the radical aesthetic developments of the twentieth century composers as they reacted against the compositional traditions of the nineteenth century. Specifically, the term Modernism encompasses developments such as the expansion and rejection of tonality through atonalism or pantonalism; serialist techniques; the pursuit of more irregular rhythmic and metric devices; a questioning of conventions and functions of beauty in sound; the espousal of more formalist procedures; a shift away from direct extramusical representation; and experimental developments in electronic and chance music.²² Whilst inclusive of disparate aesthetic movements, this definition of Modernism does not seek to necessarily link Modernist strands such as the Second Viennese School and the North American Experimental composers such as Varèse, Cowell, and Cage. Indeed, scholarly discourse has interpreted the American experimentalists as *Postmodernists* owing to their use of indeterminism and inclusion of popular music and culture.²³ However, the extent to which the devices listed above were explored in Australia (and within Sitsky's own oeuvre) during the 1960s and 1970s justifies adopting this particular definition of Modernism.²⁴ Modernism thus functions as an umbrella term to best reflect the work of those composers interested in a determinedly 'progressive' aesthetic landscape in Australian art music and to provide clarity and cohesion throughout this discussion.

²⁰ See for example: Daniel Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent: Modernism in Music, Literature, and Other Arts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); Leon Botstein, "Modernism," *Grove Music Online*, 2001; Accessed 14 March 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.40625>.

²¹ Sarah Collins, *Lateness and Modernism: Untimely Ideas about Music, Literature and Politics in Interwar Britain*, *Music Since 1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); J.P.E Harper-Scott, *The Quilting Points of Musical Modernism: Revolution, Reaction, and William Walton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Björn Heile and Charles Wilson, eds., *The Routledge Companion to Modernism In Music* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2019); Daniel M. Grimley, *Carl Nielsen and the Idea of Modernism* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2010).

²² Botstein, *Modernism*; J. Peter Burkholder, Donald Jay Grout, and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 10th ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2019), 754–953.

²³ Born, *Rationalizing Culture*, 61–65.

²⁴ Hooper, *Australian Music and Modernism*.

It is important to note that the vast majority of Sitsky's works abide by the rule that "accidentals refer only to the individual note" and "if a note does not have an accidental in front of it, it must be a natural. If a note with an accidental is tied, the tied note is the same."²⁵ Occasionally, this rule has not been observed by copyists who have reverted to standard notation practices where accidentals apply for the duration of a bar. In this thesis, all musical examples have been reproduced as per the published score.

The analyses in this thesis include some analytical shorthand. The terms Primary Theme and Secondary Theme are labelled as 'PT' and 'ST' respectively. Variations of themes and motives are indicated with the superscript suffix 'var'. Transpositions and retrograded themes, motives, and cells are respectively indicated with the superscript suffix 't' and 'ret'.

Literature Review

Oeuvre and compositional style

Despite a recurring reference to Sitsky's ever-evolving compositional style in much of the scholarship on the composer, the level of detail entered into by the respective authors varies greatly. The following discussion will illustrate that the existing literature ranges from general and unsupported assertions to specific, though uncontextualised, references to compositional devices, and finally to the composer's own perspective on his compositional practice. For example, articles by Patricia Shaw and Christopher Lyndon Gee as well as transcripts of Sitsky's interviews and orations regularly include references to the composer's ever-changing compositional style; however, none provide a detailed explanation or contextual overview of the compositional shifts.²⁶

Robyn Holmes, Patricia Shaw, and Peter Campbell's publication *Larry Sitsky: A Bio-Bibliography* provides a comprehensive overview of Sitsky's life and ensuing compositional output up until the book's publication in 1997.²⁷ Reference is made to the characteristics of

²⁵ Larry Sitsky, *Piano Sonata No 2* (Wollongong: Wirripang, 2016), foreword; Larry Sitsky, *The Jade Harp: Seven Songs for Voice and Fortepiano* (Wollongong: Wirripang, 2016), note by the composer.

²⁶ Jim Cotter, *Sitsky: Conversations with the Composer* (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2004); Christopher Lyndon Gee, "An Eclectic in Australia", *The Musical Times*, 133, no 1793 (July 1992): 334–335, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1002556>; Patricia Shaw, "'Getting my hands dirty': Larry Sitsky in interview," *Context*, no 11 (1996): 26–31; Larry Sitsky, Interview with Hazel de Berg, *Recorded Interview with Larry Sitsky*, Hazel de Berg Collection of Tape Recordings (November 4, 1967); Sitsky, "Sitsky on Sitsky."

²⁷ Robyn Holmes, Patricia Shaw, and Peter Campbell, *Larry Sitsky: A Bio-Bibliography. Bio-Bibliographies in Music: No 65*. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997); Sitsky, "Sitsky on Sitsky."

Sitsky's juvenilia, his early endeavours into mature compositions, and a number of his large-scale works and operas. The compositions put forward as examples are not discussed chronologically but are instead presented thematically according to Sitsky's underlying creative influence, and are sometimes referred to more than once in order to demonstrate their relevance to more than one theme. This structure is most efficacious when presenting Sitsky's creative practice and multifaceted extramusical interests.

A thorough discussion of Sitsky's violin works composed for violinist Jan Sedivka is also included in the bio-bibliography by Holmes *et al.* The discussion undoubtedly draws upon Patricia Shaw's research into Sitsky's violin works and the way in which these works were influenced by the composer's relationship with Jan Sedivka. Indeed, there exists something of an overlap between the information presented in the bio-bibliography and Shaw's publications "Larry Sitsky's Music for Violin, and Jan Sedivka" (1994) and "The Law of Three and the Law of Seven: Larry Sitsky's Violin Concerto No 2 (1983) and the Influence of Georges Gurdjieff" (2007), which together provide an in-depth study into the compositional style, form, features, and influences of Sitsky's violin works.²⁸ Through her analytical findings, Shaw provides an unparalleled insight into Sitsky's creative process with particular emphasis placed upon the influence that the composer's various creative stimuli have over his compositional process. Notated musical examples that illustrate and support descriptions of Sitsky's compositional style are notably absent in the bio-bibliography; although as the text serves mainly to provide a biographical catalogue of his output, it may be argued that it is not necessary to include musical analyses and examples. Yet, claims such as "there is a distinct shift in musical style, thinking and sound world that came about after each of the trips to Russia and to China that Sitsky undertook in the 1970s and 1980s" would have benefited from musical examples to illustrate the points being made.²⁹ Hence, my research aims to provide a more detailed analysis of Sitsky's flute works than is currently provided in the existing literature.

It is important to note that the bio-bibliography, along with a number of sources examined in my reading, includes direct commentary and explanations from Sitsky himself. This includes the respective authors' personal interviews with Sitsky as well as transcripts of

²⁸ Patricia Shaw, "Larry Sitsky's Music for Violin, and Jan Sedivka," *Context: A Journal of the Postgraduate Students of the University of Melbourne School of Music* 8, Summer (1994): 13–2; Patricia Shaw, "The Law of Three and the Law of Seven: Larry Sitsky's Violin Concerto No 2 (1983) and the Influence of Georges Gurdjieff," *Musicology Australia* 29, no 1 (2007): 23–41, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08145857.2007.10416587>.

²⁹ Holmes, Shaw, Campbell, *Larry Sitsky*. 44.

past interviews by other researchers.³⁰ This common thread across the literature is inevitable given that Sitsky himself is still alive, which is in itself a relatively rare luxury in musicological study. Input from the composer himself provides an unparalleled insight into his own experience and intentions, though it is important to acknowledge that intentionality does not necessarily determine reception of meaning.

Scholarly work authored by Sitsky's students is an important part of the literature. In particular, examinations of Sitsky's operas *The Golem* (1980) and *Fall of the House of Usher* (1965) and his chamber music works with piano have been written about by ex-pupils Judith Crispin, Ann Ghandar, and Edward Neeman.³¹ The influential relationship between pupil and teacher here provides a particular perspective that allows in-depth knowledge of the subject yet also runs a risk of partiality. The potential for a lack of objectivity is recognized by Patricia Shaw in her review of Crispin's book *The Esoteric Musical Tradition of Ferruccio Busoni and Its Reinvigoration in the Music of Larry Sitsky*.³² Shaw critiques Crispin for being "far more acolyte than scholar" and that her "work reveals the problem of using only the subject's own point of view as the basis for research: a distinct lack of the distance and objectivity needed to investigate, interrogate and critique the ideas underlying the topic."³³

Analytical studies

When considering the scale of Sitsky's compositional oeuvre and how it is discussed in the existing literature, it is apparent that there is a paucity of analytical studies concerning a significant portion of his works. With the exception of the examination of Sitsky's earliest

³⁰ Judith Michelle Crispin, *The Esoteric Musical Tradition of Ferruccio Busoni and Its Reinvigoration in the Music of Larry Sitsky: The Operas Doktor Faust and the Golem* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2007); Holmes, Shaw, Campbell, *Larry Sitsky*; Shaw, "'Getting My Hands Dirty': Larry Sitsky in Interview"; Wendy Penny, "The Music of Larry Sitsky" (Master's Thesis, University of Queensland, 1980); Sitsky, Interview with Hazel de Berg; Sitsky, "Sitsky on Sitsky"; Larry Sitsky, "Sitsky at 80," Interview by Judith Crispin, *Resonate Magazine*, September 8, 2014. <https://www-australianmusiccentre-com-au.ezp.lib.unimelb.edu.au/article/larry-sitsky-at-80>; Sitsky, "Interview with Larry Sitsky," Interview by Andrew Ford; Larry Sitsky interviewed by Ruth Lee Martin, Recorded Interview with Larry Sitsky, National Library of Australia, NLA.oh-3969-0007, May 4, 2001.

³¹ Crispin, *The Esoteric Musical Tradition*; Judith Michelle Crispin, "Pillars of the Temple: The Busoni Sitsky-Esoteric Tradition," (PhD Thesis, Australian National University, 2003); Ann Ghandar, "Melodic Structure in Two Arias from the Fall of the House of Usher," *Miscellanea Musicologica* 15 (1988): 276–83; Edward Neeman, "Sitsky's Chamber Music," in *Australian Chamber Music with Piano*, edited by Larry Sitsky (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2011), 137–158, https://www-jstor-org.ezp.lib.unimelb.edu.au/stable/j.ctt24hb8p.11?refreqid=excelsior%3Ac033d8fac6accba10811aedefcaf5de1b#metadata_info_tab_contents.

³² Patricia Shaw, review of *The Esoteric Musical Tradition of Ferruccio Busoni and Its Reinvigoration in the Music of Larry Sitsky: The Operas Doktor Faust and the Golem*, Judith Crispin Context: *Journal of Music Research*, no 34 (2009): 121–124.

³³ Shaw, review of *The Esoteric Musical Tradition*, 121.

compositions in Wendy Penny's analytical thesis,³⁴ and overviews of Sitsky's output in chapters by Andrew McCredie, James Murdoch, and Donald Thornton,³⁵ the majority of the existing comprehensive analyses focus on Sitsky's violin concertos and the operatic works.³⁶ Indeed, *The Golem* (1980) and *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1965) have provided a subject for scholarly examination with authors Judith Crispin and Ann Ghandar each contributing to the analytical literature through their distinct representations of the compositional devices used in the aforementioned operatic works.³⁷ Crispin's comparative study of *The Golem* and the ending to Busoni's *Doktor Faust* highlights the "esoteric tradition" of the Busoni-Sitsky style through an examination of the shared structural devices used by Busoni and Sitsky.³⁸ Ghandar's examination of arias from *The Fall of the House of Usher* discusses the melodic structure through an analysis of Sitsky's modified row procedure. The use of differing analytical approaches for the common medium of opera is particularly relevant to my examination of Sitsky's flute sonatas. Whilst each flute sonata exhibits elements of Sitsky's overarching style, they also show more individual characteristics reflective of the compositional period within which they were composed and require more individual or tailored analytical approaches. The differing approaches used by Crispin and Ghandar in their analyses of Sitsky's operatic works has helped inform and shape my methodology for the musical analysis in my thesis.

Detailed analyses spanning over more than one compositional medium occur only in Wendy Penny's thesis *The Music of Larry Sitsky*, which provides an analytical survey of Sitsky's works ranging from his earliest compositions through to 1980.³⁹ The analyses go into considerable detail and give a thorough insight into the structural, harmonic and rhythmic content of Sitsky's compositions – ranging from early keyboard works to commissioned pieces for the young guitar student. Whilst providing a thorough analysis of individual works, the context surrounding the compositions is discussed only briefly. Additionally, there is

³⁴ Penny, "The Music of Larry Sitsky."

³⁵ Andrew McCredie, *Music by Australian Composers Survey No 1* (Canberra: Advisory Board: Commonwealth Assistance to Australian Composers, 1969); James Murdoch, *Australia's Contemporary Composers* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1972), 174–180; Donald Thornton, "Larry Sitsky," in *Australian Composition in the Twentieth Century*, by David Tunley and Frank Callaway (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1978), 191–96.

³⁶ Ka Wong, "East Meets West Technical Solutions to Cross-Cultural Performance Practice Issues in Violin Concertos by Larry Sitsky and Tan Dun," *Music* (PhD Thesis, Hobart, University of Tasmania, 2008); Shaw, "Larry Sitsky's Music for Violin, and Jan Sedivka"; Shaw, "The Law of Three and the Law of Seven."

³⁷ Crispin, *The Esoteric Musical Tradition*; Crispin, "Pillars of the Temple"; Ghandar, "Melodic Structure in Two Arias from the Fall of the House of Usher."

³⁸ Crispin, *The Esoteric Musical Tradition*, 1.

³⁹ Penny, "The Music of Larry Sitsky."

limited discussion of Sitsky's evolving style, the overarching compositional features, and any recurring themes between the works analysed. Furthermore, as Penny's thesis was published in 1980, the works that were composed after this date remain unanalysed – leaving a thirty-nine-year period of unexamined works and no discussion of the mid-career compositional shifts of the composer. Of the six solo flute works only two had been composed at the time of Penny's research, with the second sonata *The Fourteen Days of Bardo Thödol* (1979) included as the most recent of the instrumental works examined in her thesis. Consequently, Penny's thesis does not attempt to identify an overarching style in Sitsky's compositional output. Nevertheless, her thesis presents a valuable and thorough analysis of Sitsky's early works, which clearly represents the characteristics of Sitsky's early style, including the first two solo flute sonatas, thereby establishing a basis from which to compare with the later works. In addition, her tailored, detail-oriented analysis provides a useful foundation for the analysis conducted in my own research.

Lawrence Whiffin's exemplary analytical discussion of Sitsky's song cycle *Music in the Mirabell Garden* (1978) provides further insight into aspects of Sitsky's compositional style.⁴⁰ Through a detailed analysis of the musical depiction of textual "recurring imagery," Whiffin's study demonstrates Sitsky's creative treatment of Georg Trakl's original poetry and the way in which it determines the construction of the song cycle.⁴¹ This analysis, which includes insight into Sitsky's 'flexible' application of a serial-tone row and chord row, is a valuable resource for my research into Sitsky's creative practice. Indeed, when examined alongside other sources such as the analyses by Penny and Shaw, Whiffin's analysis helped identify overarching stylistic characteristics and thus helped define the dates of Sitsky's five compositional periods.⁴²

⁴⁰ Lawrence Whiffin, "Music in the Mirabell Garden: A Song Cycle for Soprano and Eight Players Composed by Larry Sitsky: Analysis" (M.Mus Thesis, University of Melbourne, 1982); Lawrence Whiffin, "The Use of Recurring Imagery as a Structural Device and a Free Approach to Serialism in the Song Cycle 'Music in the Mirabell Garden' for Soprano and Eight Instruments by Larry Sitsky," *Musicology Australia* 10, no 1 (Jan 1987): 31–40.

⁴¹ Whiffin definition of "recurring imagery" is as follows: "In the writing of this song cycle Larry Sitsky exploits a particular aspect of the poetry of Georg Trakl in which certain evocative words recur with great frequency. Sitsky's system consists of illustrating each main word in a characteristic musical way which is repeated with the recurrence of the word." Lawrence Whiffin, "The Use of Recurring Imagery," 31.

⁴² Penny, "The Music of Larry Sitsky"; Shaw, "The Law of Three and the Law of Seven."

Compositional influences

A widely discussed concept within the literature is that of Sitsky's varied compositional influences. This is of particular relevance to an examination of the five flute sonatas, as each of the sonatas features a specific and unique creative impetus behind its composition. *Larry Sitsky: A Bio-Bibliography* by Holmes *et al.* contributes to the existing body of knowledge through a thorough discussion of Sitsky's major influences presented from a chronological and biographical viewpoint.⁴³ Included in their discussion are the influences of Busoni, Eastern European and Asian culture and folk music, mysticism, the supernatural and the occult, and a wide variety of literary sources.⁴⁴ The presence of these influences is linked to biographical milestones and is tied in with a discussion of the relevant compositions. Such influences are acknowledged by Sitsky himself in the various published interviews conducted by Cotter, Shaw, de Berg, Lee Martin, Crispin, and Ford, which further provides valuable insight into the effect of these influences upon his creative process.⁴⁵ These insights help to contextualise Sitsky's compositions and are useful in illustrating the shifts in Sitsky's compositional processes and overarching tendencies.

There is a discernible grouping of Sitsky's creative stimuli observable within the literature, which appears to fall into two main categories: first, the Rubinstein-Busoni pianist-composer tradition, and second, mysticism and the occult. Within these groupings there are various sub-categories, and many sources discuss an overlap between the two larger categories.⁴⁶ A recurring 'sub-category' is the influence that the intended performer's performance style has over the construction of a work. This concept is discussed in detail by Patricia Shaw in her papers on Sitsky's violin works, Roger Woodward in his contribution to *Australian Piano Music of the Twentieth Century*, Holmes *et al.* in *Larry Sitsky: a Bio-Bibliography*, and indeed, by Sitsky himself who states: "I write for people that I know or picture them playing".⁴⁷ Indeed, the frequency with which this notion (of the intended

⁴³ Holmes, Shaw, Campbell, *Larry Sitsky*.

⁴⁴ Holmes, Shaw, Campbell, *Larry Sitsky*, 4–6, 18–19, 22–24, 32–25.

⁴⁵ Cotter, *Conversations with the Composer*; Crispin, *The Esoteric Musical Tradition*; Gee, "An Eclectic in Australia"; Shaw, "Getting My Hands Dirty"; Sitsky, interviewed by Hazel de Berg; Sitsky, interviewed by Ruth Lee Martin; Sitsky, "Interview with Larry Sitsky," interview by Andrew Ford; Sitsky, "Interview with Larry Sitsky," interview by Judith Crispin.

⁴⁶ Cotter, *Conversations with the Composer*; Crispin, *The Esoteric Musical Tradition*; Gee, "An Eclectic in Australia"; Holmes, Shaw, Campbell, *Larry Sitsky*; Penny, "The Music of Larry Sitsky"; Shaw, "Getting My Hands Dirty"; Shaw, "The Law of Three and the Law of Seven."

⁴⁷ Shaw, "Larry Sitsky's Music for Violin"; Shaw, "The Law of Three and the Law of Seven"; Roger Woodward, "Sitsky's Keyboard Music: Si Yeoo Ki." In *Australian Piano Music of the Twentieth Century*, ed. by

performer) is alluded to; the precise descriptions by Holmes *et al.*; and also, Shaw's and Woodward's respective publications (of the manifestation of this influence in a wide cross-section of the composer's works), indicates that it is a recurring aspect within Sitsky's compositional process.

Busoni tradition

Judith Crispin's extensive research into Sitsky's music examines the interrelationship between the occult and the Busoni tradition. Her publications *The Esoteric Musical Tradition of Ferruccio Busoni and Its Reinvigoration in the Music of Larry Sitsky* and *Pillars of the Temple: The Busoni-Sitsky Esoteric Tradition* both analyse how Sitsky's own compositional style reflects and is informed by the creative practices of Busoni.⁴⁸ Crispin draws attention to the presence of an esoteric tradition of music composition and examines this practice through the lens of the "Busoni-Sitsky esoteric tradition".⁴⁹ Emphasis is placed upon Sitsky's assimilation and re-appropriation of Busoni's concept of *Junge Klassizität*, or 'Young Classicality,' and the way in which music is seen as having the power to elevate the listener to a place beyond normal human experience.⁵⁰ Specifically, Crispin examines Busoni's and Sitsky's practice of including "encrypted symbols". She compares the compositional devices used by each composer in their operas and the way in which she believes the process reflects each composer's esoteric convictions.⁵¹ Whilst an interesting viewpoint, claims such as "*The Golem* like *Doktor Faust* conveys a *legominism*⁵² about the true esoteric nature and function of composition"⁵³ and "each layer of *Doktor Faust*'s structure is an occult vessel designed specifically to contain some kind of supernatural force,"⁵⁴ would benefit from objective substantiation. Crispin's standalone presentation of Sitsky's compositional devices is nonetheless relevant to my research, and her book has the dual purpose of providing an

Larry Sitsky (Westport: Praeger, 2005); Larry Sitsky. Interview by Holmes, Robyn, Patricia Shaw, and Peter Campbell. *Larry Sitsky: A Bio-Bibliography*. September 20, 1994. 36.

⁴⁸ Crispin, *The Esoteric Musical Tradition*; Crispin, "Pillars of the Temple".

⁴⁹ Crispin, *The Esoteric Musical Tradition*, 141.

⁵⁰ Crispin, *The Esoteric Musical Tradition*, 11, 17.

⁵¹ Crispin, *The Esoteric Musical Tradition*, 111.

⁵² "The term *legominism* was coined by G.I. Gurdjieff to discuss the transmission of ancient wisdom through "customs and ceremonies, in oral traditions, in memorials ... and various rituals." Crispin, *The Esoteric Musical Tradition*, 21.

⁵³ Crispin, *The Esoteric Musical Tradition*, 138

⁵⁴ Crispin, *The Esoteric Musical Tradition*, 66.

insight into Sitsky's connection with Busoni and his interest in the occult, whilst also elucidating Sitsky's creative process.

Russian tradition

Roger Woodward's 2005 chapter "Sitsky's "Keyboard Music: *Si Yeoo Ki*" in *Australian Piano Music of the Twentieth Century* (edited by Sitsky himself) provides an in-depth discussion of Sitsky's keyboard works.⁵⁵ Woodward presents a complementary viewpoint to Crispin's publications by highlighting the influence of the Russian pianistic tradition, specifically that of Anton Rubinstein, on Sitsky's creative practice. Woodward contributes to the existing literature that focuses on Sitsky's manifold interests (by authors such as Holmes, Campbell, Shaw, and Crispin)⁵⁶ and particularly emphasises "the powerful Hebraic, Russian and Chinese forces that . . . shaped his [Sitsky's] creative idiom."⁵⁷ In doing so, Woodward comparatively downplays the importance of the Busoni tradition as a creative influence upon Sitsky and instead portrays the influence of Busoni as secondary to the Russian Rubinstein legacy. Woodward's perspective may be explained by Sitsky's shifting style and creative inspirations as Woodward's chapter was published in 2005 – a period of time that Holmes *et al.* claim comes well after "the heat of the Busoni experience had been played out."⁵⁸ Indeed, whilst Sitsky's Russian influence is indeed noteworthy, Woodward's standpoint subtly though knowingly contradicts other contributions to the literature. He states that, "although Sitsky's well-intentioned biographers often seem to dwell on the impact of his Busoni-Liszt inheritance they sometimes neglect the deeper significance of his cultural displacement and . . . his possession of two entirely separate musical traditions. The first was the Russian tradition . . . The second was his Busoni-Liszt scholarship."⁵⁹ The reliability of this claim is questionable for the following reasons: first, Woodward contradicts his statement that the two musical traditions are "entirely separate" by suggesting an association between Busoni and Rubinstein stating that "the historic visit [to the USSR] also enabled Sitsky to understand what Busoni had before him, that it was, fundamentally, not Liszt but Anton Rubinstein . . .

⁵⁵ Woodward, "Sitsky's Keyboard Music."

⁵⁶ Peter Campbell and Patricia Shaw, "Seeking Pearls in a Magpie's Nest: The Larry Sitsky Papers." *Voices* 5, no 1 (Autumn 1995): 47-60; Holmes, Shaw, Campbell, *Larry Sitsky*; Shaw, "Getting my hands dirty"; Crispin, *The Esoteric Musical Tradition*.

⁵⁷ Woodward, "Sitsky's Keyboard Music," 176.

⁵⁸ Holmes, Shaw, Campbell, *Larry Sitsky*, 44.

⁵⁹ Woodward, "Sitsky's Keyboard Music," 200.

who had in fact provided the main role model for him as a pianist”.⁶⁰ Second, Woodward’s claim that Sitsky biographers “neglect” to mention the significance of the Russian tradition is arguably overstated. Indeed, other sources note that Sitsky’s interest in Rubinstein began to surface after his trips to the USSR in the late 1970s and early 1980s⁶¹ – after a reasonable portion of the literature on Sitsky had already been written. Furthermore, Rubinstein and the Russian tradition are indeed recognised as significant influences in key sources published after Sitsky’s trips to the USSR, including *Larry Sitsky: A Bio-Bibliography* and in Patricia Shaw’s interview-article “‘Getting My Hands Dirty’: Larry Sitsky in Interview”.⁶²

Woodward’s other critique that Sitsky biographers “dwell” too much on the Busoni-Liszt inheritance is also unreasonable as the influence of Busoni, whilst mentioned frequently in the literature (including in Woodward’s own chapter on Sitsky),⁶³ does deserve to occupy a significant portion of the existing research due to its role in shaping Sitsky’s creative output.⁶⁴ Furthermore, references to Busoni in the literature on Sitsky are not usually referred to as the “Busoni-Liszt” influence. Whilst background reading would suggest that there is indeed a connection between these two composers, to assume that any reference to Busoni’s influence on Sitsky automatically incorporates Liszt’s legacy is questionable: it can be argued that Busoni was no more influenced by Liszt than he was by Johann Sebastian Bach or Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (both of whom are acknowledged as significant influences upon Busoni).⁶⁵ Woodward’s chapter and perspective on the development of Sitsky’s language is nonetheless a valuable contribution to the literary discussion of Sitsky’s influences. However, substantial claims made by Woodward, like those mentioned above, or quotations and criticisms of the (incorrectly dated) bio-bibliography by Holmes *et al.*, would have benefitted from substantiating citations and more transparent reasoning.

Unsurprisingly, the research surrounding Sitsky’s creative influences and artistic identity arrives at differing viewpoints when the earliest literature is compared with the most recent publications. This variance reflects the changing influences and evolving compositional approaches across the duration of Sitsky’s career. The later sources inevitably cite a larger spectrum of these influences and discuss how certain creative influences have

⁶⁰ Woodward, “Sitsky’s Keyboard Music,” 200.

⁶¹ Holmes, Shaw, Campbell, *Larry Sitsky*, 32.

⁶² Holmes, Shaw, Campbell, *Larry Sitsky*; Shaw, “Getting my hands dirty.”

⁶³ Woodward, “Sitsky’s Keyboard Music,” 176, 186, 188–190, 192, 194, 200–201, 210–212.

⁶⁴ Erinn E. Knyt, *Ferruccio Busoni and His Legacy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), 319.

⁶⁵ Antony Beaumont, *Busoni the Composer* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 21, 39–40.

affected Sitsky's output as his career has evolved.⁶⁶ Peter Campbell and Patricia Shaw's article "Seeking Pearls in a Magpie's Nest: The Larry Sitsky Papers" recounts Sitsky's contribution to music in Australia through a representation of the composer's extensive and eclectic manuscript collection held at the National Library of Australia.⁶⁷ Describing Sitsky as "an inveterate collector of all kinds of cultural artefacts," Campbell and Shaw's article highlights the breadth of Sitsky's interests and accumulated knowledge.⁶⁸ Similarly, papers by Christopher Lyndon Gee, Patricia Shaw, and Judith Crispin accentuate Sitsky's diverse interests.⁶⁹ My research will use the information presented in the literature as a starting point to demonstrate the effect of Sitsky's ongoing extramusical pursuits upon the overarching themes of his creative process as seen through the lens of the six solo flute works.

Australian art music

There is a comparatively modest body of musicological literature on Australian composition that engages with the era explored in this thesis. The majority of this scholarship on Australia's art music provides either composer interviews or biographies,⁷⁰ monographs examining individual composers' works,⁷¹ or a general survey of influential composers, compositions, and trends during this period.⁷² For example, the first (and only) general history of art music composition in Australia, Roger Covell's *Australia's Music: Themes of a New Society* provides an overview of art music composition since European settlement until its date of publication in 1967.⁷³ Admirable as the foundational academic study of Australian

⁶⁶ Crispin, *The Esoteric Musical Tradition*; Holmes, Shaw, Campbell, *Larry Sitsky*; Shaw, "The Law of Three and the Law of Seven"; Woodward, "Sitsky's Keyboard Music."

⁶⁷ Campbell and Shaw, "Seeking Pearls in a Magpie's Nest."

⁶⁸ Campbell and Shaw, "Seeking Pearls in a Magpie's Nest," 48.

⁶⁹ Gee, "An Eclectic in Australia"; Shaw, "Getting my Hands Dirty"; Crispin, "Pillars of the Temple."

⁷⁰ Rosalind Appleby, *Women of Note: The Rise of Australian Women Composers* (Fremantle: Fremantle Press, 2012); Brenton Broadstock, ed., *Sound Ideas: Australian Composers Born Since 1950, a Guide to Their Music and Ideas* (The Rocks: Australian Music Centre Ltd, 1995); Jim Cotter, *Sitsky: Conversations with the Composer* (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2004); Martin Greet, "Against the Tide: Julian Yu and the 'New Wave' of Chinese Music," *Context: Journal of Music Research*, no 17 (1999): 69; Jaslyn Robertson, "A Brain That Keeps Working: An Interview with Helen Gifford," *Context: Journal of Music Research*, no 45 (2019): 75.

⁷¹ Elliott Gyger, *The Music of Nigel Butterley* (Kingsgrove: Wildbird Music, 2015); Michael Hannan, *The Music of Richard Meale* (Kingsgrove: Wildbird Music, 2014); Rhoderick McNeil, *The Music of Carl Vine* (Kingsgrove: Wildbird Music, 2017); John Peterson, *The Music of Peter Sculthorpe* (Kingsgrove: Wildbird Music, 2014).

⁷² Frank Callaway and David Tunley, *Australian Composition in the Twentieth Century* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1978); Covell, *Australia's Music*; Joel Crotty, "Towards an Australian Art-Music Canon," *Quadrant* 55, no 10 (2011): 91; Gordon Kerry, *New Classical Music: Composing Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2009); McCredie, *Music by Australian Composers*; Murdoch, *Australia's Contemporary Composers*; Donald Peart, "The Australian Avant-Garde" (London, Royal Musical Association, 1966).

⁷³ Covell, *Australia's Music*.

composition, Covell's book nonetheless lacks analytical depth and critical engagement with the compositions surveyed. This critique can be applied to most of the academic discourse covering Australian music in the 1960s and 1970s such as James Murdoch's *Australia's Contemporary Composers* and Andrew McCredie's 1969 survey of music by Australian composers.⁷⁴ These sources were written by scholars with limited knowledge of the Modernist compositional techniques they were writing about – providing no further detail about the musical construction than anecdotal accounts found in programme notes.⁷⁵ Michael Hooper's recent scholarship on Australian Music 1960–1975 is a notable exception to the above criticism.⁷⁶ Providing an overview of the Modernist movement in Australian composition 1960–1975, Hooper's book fills a gap in Australian musicological discourse through a rigorous analysis of the Modernist works composed by Don Banks, Nigel Butterley, David Lumsdaine, Richard Meale, and Peter Sculthorpe. Hooper outlines some of the surrounding social circumstances but, due to its musical/analytical focus does not have the scope to explore societal factors in great depth. This thesis builds upon Hooper's book in contributing to a body of analytical music research on late-twentieth century music in Australia that also examines the surrounding social context.

Biography

One of Australia's most prolific and extensively commissioned composers, Larry Sitsky, has made a significant contribution to the fabric of the musical and cultural life in Australia through his fervent multi-disciplinarian approach as a performer, educator, scholar and composer. Born in Tianjin, China, in 1934 to Russian-Jewish emigré parents, Sitsky received a substantial music education that was firmly centred on the “traditionally oriented Russian-school [of] piano playing” owing to the presence of an extensive migrant population in the cosmopolitan and culturally diverse city.⁷⁷

After the establishment of the people's republic of China in 1949 and upon the passing of an edict that all Europeans must leave China, Sitsky and his family migrated to Australia in 1951. After experiencing life in Tianjin with its simultaneous blend of cosmopolitanism and cultural vibrancy, and the sanctions and regulations of military occupation, 1950s Sydney was something of a culture shock for Sitsky. Indeed, upon his

⁷⁴ McCredie, *Music by Australian Composers*; Murdoch, *Australia's Contemporary Composers*.

⁷⁵ Hooper, *Australian Music and Modernism*, 14.

⁷⁶ Hooper, *Australian Music and Modernism*.

⁷⁷ Cotter, *Sitsky*, 16.

arrival, he found it "quite exhilarating" to be able to "go anywhere, look at anything, read anything [and] no one gave a stuff".⁷⁸

After abandoning tertiary study in engineering at the University of Sydney – an attempt made upon the wishes of his parents, Sitsky began studying piano with Winifred Burston at the Sydney Conservatorium in 1952.⁷⁹ Study with Burston proved successful for Sitsky who described her as "absolutely the right teacher."⁸⁰ It was upon Burston's suggestion that Sitsky moved to the United States to study further with Egon Petri – a protégé of the prominent twentieth century pianist-composer Ferruccio Busoni. A formative influence upon Sitsky, Burston herself was a pupil of Busoni and it was through her mentorship that Sitsky was introduced to the legacy of Busoni – a legacy that was developed more extensively through Sitsky's study with Petri. Indeed, Sitsky's education with Petri in America resembled that of master and disciple as Petri sought to foster a candidate whom he could entrust to "pass on the torch" of the Busoni tradition.⁸¹ The profound impact and artistic/personal significance of his tutelage under Petri is substantiated by Sitsky who attests that "Petri affected not only my pianistic development, but, possibly accidentally, affected my compositional life by introducing me to the ideas of Ferruccio Busoni."⁸²

Sitsky's study in America between 1959–1961 exposed him to the creation and performance of new music that was, at the time, largely unplayed and ignored in Australia. Indeed, the environment in Australia prior to his departure for America was so creatively arid for Sitsky that his compositional activity, previously a key source of creative expression and exploration, ceased entirely and he reflects that "composition became a pointless activity: if there was no way to use it, it seemed wasteful doing it".⁸³ Exposure to new ideas and a more fertile creative environment in America proved to be the impetus for Sitsky to continue his compositional activity and his new works were well-received by American reviewers who praised Sitsky's "up to date and meaningful" musical language.⁸⁴

Sitsky returned to Australia in 1961 to accept a post as chief study teacher of piano at the Queensland Conservatorium in Brisbane. It was in this year that Sitsky married Czech-

⁷⁸ Cotter, *Sitsky*, 28.

⁷⁹ Holmes, Shaw, Campbell, *Larry Sitsky*, 8.

⁸⁰ Cotter, *Sitsky*, 34.

⁸¹ Crispin, *The Esoteric Musical Tradition*, 174.

⁸² Gee, "An Eclectic in Australia," 334.

⁸³ Holmes, Shaw, Campbell, *Larry Sitsky*, 9.

⁸⁴ Holmes, Shaw, Campbell, *Larry Sitsky*, 20. Jack Loughner, "Aussie Sitsky's Music Has Ideas," *San Francisco News-Call Bulletin*, 15 June 1960, 38.

born Magda Wlczek. Whilst in Brisbane, he also developed a close personal friendship with like-minded fellow teacher, violinist Jan Sedivka. Sitsky's friendship with Sedivka would have an immense creative impact upon him and his compositional output across many decades.⁸⁵ Sitsky remained in Brisbane until 1966 when he moved to Canberra to accept a position at the newly formed Canberra School of Music. The nation's capital proved to be a more suitable creative habitat for Sitsky than the deeply conservative Brisbane and it has remained his permanent home and place of employment until the present day.⁸⁶

Sitsky's return to Australia in the early 1960s saw him exposed to the artistic challenges of being a composer during the inevitable growing pains of a nation developing its own musical identity independent to the musical influence of the 'motherland'. Along with colleagues such as Richard Meale, Peter Sculthorpe, Helen Gifford, Nigel Butterley, and Felix Werder, Sitsky was part of a group of Australian composers in the mid-twentieth century who helped forge a path for a new aesthetic of music to emerge from the constraints of the 'traditional' English pastoral style.⁸⁷

The incorporation of Modernism into the Australian musical fabric was not without controversy, however, and the reception of Sitsky's *Woodwind Quartet* in 1963 at the inaugural National Conference of Australian Composers is indicative of the resistance that was faced by composers writing in a more progressive style. The quartet attracted hissing from the audience and subsequent stinging criticism for its inaccessible, overtly abstract sound world, being entirely athematic, arrhythmic, and aleatoric,⁸⁸ and was described by the composer himself as musical "anarchy".⁸⁹ It is interesting to note that the *Woodwind Quartet* was not a product of Sitsky's aesthetic sensibilities but was rather a satirical attempt to challenge the "establishment, [the] conservative stream" of the older composers of the time.⁹⁰ Since then, Sitsky has written 10 operas, over 50 keyboard works, 15 concertos for various instruments, dozens of instrumental solos and has given numerous performances of the piano works of Ferruccio Busoni and Anton Rubinstein, as well as championing the works of Roy Agnew and other Australian composers.⁹¹

⁸⁵ Shaw, "Larry Sitsky's Music for Violin, and Jan Sedivka."

⁸⁶ Sitsky, interviewed by Ruth Lee Martin.

⁸⁷ Covell, *Australia's Music*; Murdoch, *Australia's Contemporary Composers*.

⁸⁸ "His Quartet Draws Hisses!," *Sunday Truth*, 28 April 1963.

⁸⁹ Sitsky, "Sitsky on Sitsky," 7.

⁹⁰ Larry Sitsky, interviewed by Robyn Holmes, Canberra 20 September 1994, see: Holmes, Shaw, Campbell, *Larry Sitsky*, 25.

⁹¹ Catalogue – supplied by composer.

In addition to his compositional and pianistic contribution, Sitsky's musicological pursuits have seen him author books on the life and works of both Ferruccio Busoni and Anton Rubinstein, as well as other titles including *The Classical Reproducing Piano Roll*,⁹² *Music of the Repressed Russian Avant Garde*,⁹³ and *Australian Piano Music of the Twentieth Century*.⁹⁴ He is the recipient of countless awards, fellowships and grants, as well as being appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia for services to Australian music and culture.⁹⁵

Methodology

This research draws upon historical and descriptive musicological methodologies and uses case studies and analysis as the main tools. I periodically sought the composer's perspective in supplement to these methods. Whilst I asked the composer a set of formal interview questions, the length and conversational nature of this exchange precludes constructive reproduction in this thesis. Instead, Sitsky's responses provided further insight into my musicological and historical findings and are cited "in conversation with the author". The five compositional periods were devised through a comparative analysis of approximately 65 scores. These selections were made from a pool of over 200, as they exhibit a diverse range of idioms and techniques – facilitating a nuanced analysis of the full range of Sitsky's stylistic exploration. The complexities of Sitsky's musical language necessitated archival research, through which I was able to consult the composer's manuscripts and pre-compositional materials. Where analyses already exist in the literature, efforts have been made to convey new analytical data in this chapter in order to present novel information.⁹⁶

My analytical methodology draws on Jan LaRue's and John White's analytical approach as a starting point and much of the terminology used in this thesis derives from their guidelines.⁹⁷ In particular, my analysis draws upon the concepts of "growth", and "macro", "middle", and "micro" (or "background", "middleground", and "foreground") dimensions for examining musical construction.⁹⁸ However, much like the evolution of

⁹² Larry Sitsky, *The Classical Reproducing Piano Roll: A Catalogue-Index* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990).

⁹³ Larry Sitsky, *Music of the Repressed Russian Avant Garde: 1900–1929* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994).

⁹⁴ Larry Sitsky, *Australian Piano Music of the Twentieth Century* (Westport: Praeger, 2005).

⁹⁵ Catalogue – supplied by composer.

⁹⁶ Mark O'Leary, "Australian Flute Music: A Discussion of Significant Australian Compositions for Solo Flute and Flute and Piano with a Comprehensive Catalogue of Compositions for Solo Flute and Flute with One Other Instrument" (B.Mus. (Hons) Thesis, The University of Melbourne, 1983); Penny, "The Music of Larry Sitsky".

⁹⁷ Jan LaRue, *Guidelines for Style Analysis* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1970); John D. White, *The Analysis of Music* (New York: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1976).

⁹⁸ LaRue, *Guidelines for Style Analysis*, 3; White, *The Analysis of Music*, 14–19.

Sitsky's compositional style, my analytical framework underwent its own transformation as the characteristics of each period were identified. Thus, a self-reflexive process guided my analysis: the analysis identified the characteristics, which, in turn, informed the analytical process. I also adopt an historical approach – drawing on archival research and oral history to examine the compositional decisions and the influence of sociocultural factors.

The framework for this thesis builds upon earlier studies of Sitsky's oeuvre. In particular, Patricia Shaw's extensive research into the composer's violin works,⁹⁹ Lawrence Whiffin's analysis of Sitsky's use of "recurring imagery",¹⁰⁰ Wendy Penny's early research into the composer's entire output prior to 1980,¹⁰¹ and the 1990s bio-bibliography project conducted by Robyn Holmes, Patricia Shaw, and Peter Campbell.¹⁰² The existing recorded or transcribed interviews with the composer also informed my approach.¹⁰³ When devising the interview questions, effort was made to avoid duplicating existing records and to elucidate the composer's contemporary perspectives. In addition, Michael Hooper's research into the Modernist movement in Australian composition in his book *Australian Music and Modernism: 1960–1975* informs the paradigm of this thesis.¹⁰⁴ My research builds upon Hooper's combination of rigorous musical analysis with historical and sociocultural contextualisation.

Chapter Outline

Organised into five chapters, this thesis defines Sitsky's five compositional periods and their key characteristics and contextualises these in relation to broader sociocultural developments. The analytical findings are represented in relation to a framework that incorporates creative impetus, extramusical influence, and compositional characteristics and devices. As 'case studies' of each compositional period, each chapter includes comprehensive analyses of Sitsky's complete works for solo flute. The examination of each solo flute work includes a discussion of the way and extent to which each work conforms to the characteristics of the corresponding compositional period.

⁹⁹ Shaw, "Larry Sitsky's Music for Violin, and Jan Sedivka."; Shaw, "The Law of Three and the Law of Seven."

¹⁰⁰ Whiffin, "The Use of Recurring Imagery".

¹⁰¹ Penny, "The Music of Larry Sitsky."

¹⁰² Holmes, Shaw, Campbell, *Larry Sitsky*.

¹⁰³ Larry Sitsky, interviewed by Hazel de Berg; Larry Sitsky, interviewed by Robyn Holmes; Shaw, "'Getting My Hands Dirty'"; Larry Sitsky interviewed by Ruth Lee Martin; Sitsky, "Interview with Larry Sitsky," interview by Andrew Ford; Sitsky, "Sitsky at 80," Interview by Judith Crispin.

¹⁰⁴ Hooper, *Australian Music and Modernism*.

The first chapter, Early Mature Period (1959–1962), examines Sitsky’s first mature compositions and his first solo flute work, the Sonata for Solo Flute (1959).¹⁰⁵ The second chapter, Modernist Period (1963–1970), outlines his further exploration and personal adaptation of avant-garde compositional techniques. As Sitsky did not compose a solo flute work during his Modernist Period, no solo flute case study is included in this chapter. Chapter 3, Mystic Expressionism Period (1970–1982), explores the composer’s adoption of a more Expressionistic compositional style and embrace of a range of mystic sources. Sitsky’s Sonata No 2 for Solo Flute, *The Fourteen Days of Bardo Thödol* (1979) constitutes the solo flute case study in Chapter three.¹⁰⁶ The fourth chapter examines the brief, but prolific Armenian Period (1983–1986), which exhibits a more clearly defined shift and includes a series of works inspired by Armenian folk and sacred music. Sitsky’s *Two Pastorales* for Solo Flute (1984) forms the solo flute case study for this chapter.¹⁰⁷ Chapter 5 details the Late Mature Period (1987–2019), which is characterised by the consolidation and continuous evolution of Sitsky’s mature compositional language. The longest of all compositional periods identified in this thesis, Chapter 5 includes analyses of three of Sitsky’s solo flute works: Sonata No 3 for Solo Flute, *The Jade Flute* (1994);¹⁰⁸ *Song of the Shaman*: Sonata No 4 (2015);¹⁰⁹ Sonata No 5 for Solo Flute, *The Pied Piper*.¹¹⁰ The disproportionate length of this period may seem questionable; however, the diversity of Sitsky’s compositional approach and his near constant stylistic evolution during this period renders this demarcation as the most accurate and appropriate representation for this thesis. The discussion in Chapter 5 loosely groups this period into two ‘sub-periods’ from 1987–2000 and from 2000–2019 in order to account for a subtle shift in Sitsky’s creative practice. However, these sub-periods are not distinct enough to be considered individual periods. The sixth chapter discusses Sitsky’s personal compositional aesthetic through an identification of his overarching stylistic characteristics.

This thesis aims to characterise the trajectory of Sitsky’s stylistic evolution and assess how this is reflected through the compositional devices used in the flute works. The

¹⁰⁵ Sitsky, *Sonata for Solo Flute*.

¹⁰⁶ Larry Sitsky, *Sonata No 2 for Solo Flute, The Fourteen Days of Bardo Thödol* (Wollongong: Wirripang, 2019).

¹⁰⁷ Larry Sitsky, *Sonata No 3 for Solo Flute, The Jade Flute* (Wollongong: Wirripang, 2020).

¹⁰⁸ Larry Sitsky, *Sonata No 2 for Solo Flute*.

¹⁰⁹ Larry Sitsky, *Sonata No 4 for Solo Flute, Song of the Shaman* (Wollongong: Wirripang, 2019).

¹¹⁰ Larry Sitsky, *Sonata No 5 for Solo Flute*.

following chapter begins this discussion – detailing Sitsky’s Early Mature Period dating from 1959 to 1962.

Chapter 1: Early Mature Period (1959–1962)

Sitsky's "Early Mature" Period dating from 1959 to the early 1960s is marked by the composition of his Sonata for Unaccompanied Violin, which he labelled his "Opus One".¹ The composer had commenced his formal music training in 1952, after an argument with his parents about his decision to study music instead of pursuing a more traditional career.² Sitsky was awarded a scholarship to study piano at the New South Wales Conservatorium of Music with Winifred Burston. Sitsky's education with Burston, herself an ex-student of Ferruccio Busoni, was pianistically and musically fertile. However, Sitsky felt alienated from the conservative creative environment at the conservatorium, which was deeply embedded in the English "Pastoral" tradition.³ Sitsky recalls, "new music was not only exotic, it just didn't occur enough for it to even have a label attached to it".⁴ As a result, Sitsky largely abandoned his compositional practice while studying in Australia, despite the fact that composing had previously been a key part of his creative expression.

In 1959, Burston coordinated for Sitsky to study in San Francisco with Ferruccio Busoni-protégé, Egon Petri. Study abroad marked the end of Sitsky's extended 'silent' period of no compositional activity.⁵ Affording him new creative opportunities, Sitsky saw his travels as a chance to "escape from the old shackles of the then oppressive and largely traditional musical world [in Australia]"⁶. Indeed, it was during the boat trip from Australia to America in 1959 that Sitsky rediscovered his impetus to compose, and he began work on the Sonata for Unaccompanied Violin (1959). Described by the composer as his "Opus One", the violin sonata is the first and only work granted an opus number by the composer – a fact that is dually symbolic for its implied acknowledgement as his first mature composition and for the association with Busoni.⁷ The violin sonata is acknowledged by Sitsky as his "first

¹ Larry Sitsky, "Sitsky on Sitsky," *Music Now* 1, no 4 (April 1971): 6.

² Sitsky's parents initially pressured Sitsky to pursue study in engineering, see: Jim Cotter, *Sitsky: Conversations with the Composer* (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2004), 30.

³ Roger Covell, *Australia's Music; Themes of a New Society* (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1967), 144, 147.

⁴ Larry Sitsky, "Interview with Larry Sitsky," interview by Andrew Ford, *Resonate Magazine*, (September 2009): <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ram&AN=A730121&site=ehost-live> <http://www.australianmusiccentre.com.au/article/interview-with-larry-sitsky>.

⁵ Australian composers contemporaneous to Sitsky, such as Richard Meale, Peter Sculthorpe, and Ross Edwards all went through what has been described as a 'silent' period in which they did not compose. However, the reasons listed were different to Sitsky as these latter composers reportedly did not compose due to changes in their creative language. See Michael Hooper, *Australian Music and Modernism, 1960–1975* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 181.

⁶ Sitsky, "Sitsky on Sitsky," 6.

⁷ In an interesting parallel, Ferruccio Busoni also referred to one of his violin compositions, the Second Violin Sonata (op. 36a) as his "opus one" and further went on to say that "I found my way as a composer in the Second Violin Sonata". Ferruccio Busoni, *The Essence of Music: And Other Papers* (London: Rockliff, 1957), 78.

real step into contemporary music” and its use of a rudimentary 12-tone row scheme reflects his desire to compose in a more “up-to-date” idiom.⁸

The Early Mature Period compositions represent Sitsky’s search for new means of expression befitting of the Modernism ubiquitous during the post-World War II era. Described by the composer as “transitional”, the Early Mature Period compositions explore modern compositional devices, such as extended techniques and dodecaphony, but are fairly traditional overall – mostly exhibiting conventional forms and notation.⁹ The compositions from this period also reflect Sitsky’s desire to “acquire a new ‘pure’ style based on linearity and true melodic sense”.¹⁰ Motivated to purge his compositional style of the Romantic pianistic tendency toward harmonic emphasis, Sitsky commenced a self-imposed exercise to compose a series of compositions for single-line, non-keyboard instruments.¹¹ However, with the exception of the above-mentioned violin sonata and the 1959 Sonata for Solo Flute, most of the works for solo instruments were not completed in this period.¹² Interestingly, Sitsky only completed the series of works for solo instruments decades later in his ‘Armenian’ Period (1983–1986), which is discussed in Chapter 4.

Composing for solo instruments in his Early Mature Period freed Sitsky of his harmonic ‘dependency’ and even the compositions with piano from this period reflect his intention to compose in a more linear style. Sitsky’s treatment of the piano does not adhere to a traditional harmonic and chordal basis. For example, Sitsky’s 1962 Fantasia No 1 *In Memory of Egon Petri* for Solo Piano opens with a monophonic line doubled at a distance of four octaves between the two hands (see Figure 1.1). This non-chordal, linear opening can be considered as a deliberate eschewal of the vertical, chordal emphasis that Sitsky previously felt hindered by.

⁸ Sitsky, “Sitsky on Sitsky”, 6.

⁹ Sitsky, “Sitsky on Sitsky”, 6.

¹⁰ Sitsky, “Sitsky on Sitsky”, 6. Emphasis in original.

¹¹ The only other remaining composition for solo instrument apart from the solo sonatas for flute and violin was the Improvisation and Cadenza for solo Cello, which was “dug up from old notebooks” and finally realised in 1967. Sitsky, “Improvisation and Cadenza for Solo Cello” 1969, Papers of Larry Sitsky, MS 5630/Folio Box 3/32, National Library of Australia.

¹² Larry Sitsky interviewed by Ruth Lee Martin, *Recorded Interview with Larry Sitsky*, National Library of Australia, NLA.oh-3969-0007, May 4, 2001.

Figure 1.1: Sitsky, Fantasia No 1, *In Memory of Egon Petri* for Solo Piano, bar 1. Monophonic line doubled four octaves apart between left and right hands.



Additionally, the 1962 Sonatina for Oboe and Piano entirely circumvents a chordal or harmonic use of the piano. The traditionally-scored oboe part is predominantly set over the accompaniment of amplified, percussive extended techniques on the piano, which include a combination of percussive raps on the soundboard in addition to the plucking and striking of the strings (see Figure 1.2). The more traditional sections of the piano part include short passages of linear, single-lined, and occasionally polyphonic material.

Figure 1.2: Sitsky, Sonatina for Oboe and Piano, Mvt I, bars 1–3. Extended technique in piano part where pianist is instructed to perform fingernail *glissandi* on strings.



Rhythm

Sitsky's treatment of rhythm evolves across the duration of this Early Mature Period. The earlier works from this period exhibit mostly regular rhythms and metres and are mostly barred. The second and fourth movement of Sitsky's Sonata for Solo Flute (1959) presage Sitsky's later use of irregular rhythms – the second movement is entirely unbarred with free, improvisatory rhythms, and the fourth movement exhibits constantly shifting polymetre.¹³

¹³ Throughout this thesis "polymetre" refers to "the successive use of different metres in one or more parts". Alison Latham, "Polymetre" (Oxford University Press, 2011), accessed July 16, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acref/9780199579037.013.5270>.

The later works from this period, such as the *Fantasia No 1 for Solo Piano* (1962), and the *Sonatina for Oboe and Piano* (1962), exhibit irregular metres and phrase lengths, and are comprised of both barred and unbarred passages.

Motives/Cells

The works from this period are constructed upon a small number of motives and cells that are repeated and developed throughout. The terms ‘motive’ and ‘cell’ are used deliberately in order to classify their respective musical function. In this discussion, ‘motive’ denotes a musical idea with a distinctive character and ‘cell’ refers to a structurally important, recurring fragment that is not individually distinctive enough to be considered a motive. Sitsky’s use of motives and cells evolves across this Early Mature Period. The earlier works are almost exclusively built upon the repetition of a few motives and cells, which undergo minimal development. In contrast, the later works combine the development of a few key motives with a range of musical devices, which creates contrast and a more rhapsodic structure. This difference in structural development between the earlier and later works from this period reveals a gradual stylistic transition as Sitsky sought to cultivate a contemporary compositional language.

Whole movements or sections of early works from this period are entirely constructed upon the repetition and reorganisation of the same musical fragments. For example, the first movement ‘Prelude’ and the last movement ‘Postlude’ of the early *Sonata for Solo Violin* (1959) are almost entirely based on the same four motives, which are derived from the opening theme of the first movement (see Figure 1.3).

Figure 1.3: Sitsky, *Sonata for Unaccompanied Violin*, Mvt I, bars 1–7, Theme 1. Motives 1, 2, 3, and 4.

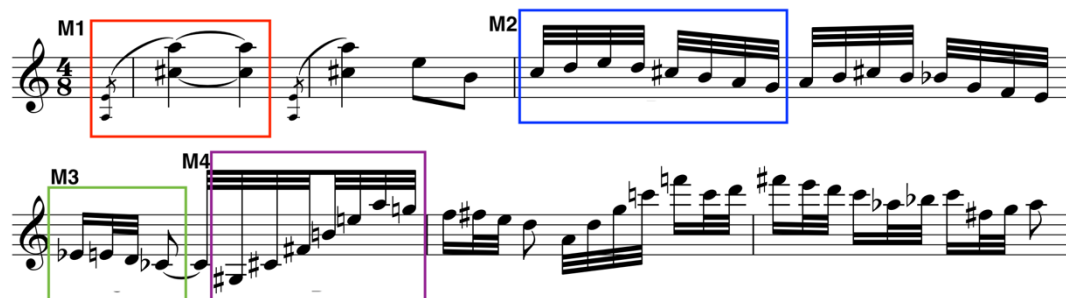


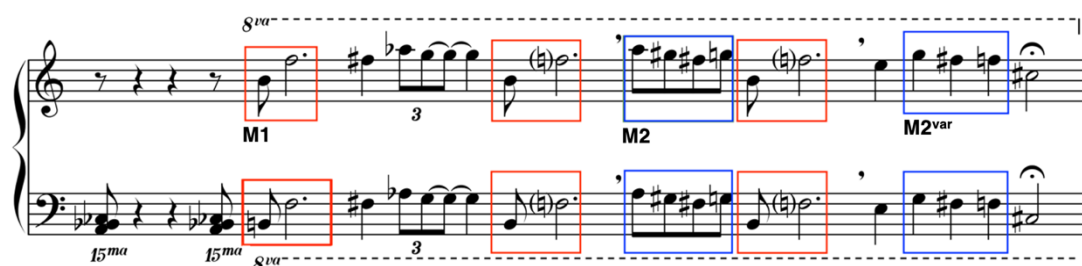
Table 1.1 shows the use of Motives 1 and 2 in the violin sonata and highlights the shared motives that are common to the first and last movements. Both movements are in ABA form and are nearly identical in motivic construction – differing only in the B Section (the B Section of the ‘Postlude’ contains a retrograde of the first part of the ‘Prelude’ B Section).

Table 1.1: Form and use of themes in Sitsky, Sonata for Unaccompanied Violin.

	I: Prelude									V: Postlude							
Form	A			B		A				A		B		A			
Bar No	1 - 28			29 – 38		39 - 57				134 - 145		146 - 167		168 - 186			
Internal Divisions	i	(ii)	(iii)	(i)	(ii)	(i)	(ii)	(iii)	Coda	(i)	(ii)	(i)	(ii)	(i)	(ii)	(iii)	Coda
Themes	T1	T2	T1			T1	T2	T1	T2 T1	T1	T2			T1	T2	T1	T2 T1
Cells Used	M1 M2 M3 M4	M1 M2	M1 M2 M3 M4	M4	M4	M1 M2 M3 M4	M1 M2 M3 M4	M1 M2 M3 M4	M1	M1 M2 M3 M4	M1 M2	M4	M2 M3	M1 M2 M3 M4	M1 M2 M3	M1 M2 M3 M4	M4

The slightly later works, the Sonatina for Oboe and Piano and Fantasia No 1 for Solo Piano (both from 1962), are both constructed upon the improvisatory repetition and development of several key motives. The single-movement Fantasia No 1 is constructed upon the development of two small motives that are presented in the opening material: a tritone derived from Ferruccio Busoni’s initials (B–F) and a three-note chromatic cell E–F–F# (see Figure 1.4). These motives are subtly woven into the work’s highly chromatic fabric – acting as a series of auditory “signposts” that give the work a sense of aural continuity.¹⁴

Figure 1.4: Sitsky, Fantasia No 1 for Solo Piano, Page 1, System 1. Motives 1 (red) and 2 (blue).¹⁵



¹⁴ Roger Woodward, “Sitsky’s Keyboard Music: Si Yeoo Ki,” in *Australian Piano Music of the Twentieth Century*, ed. Larry Sitsky (Praeger, 2005), 189.

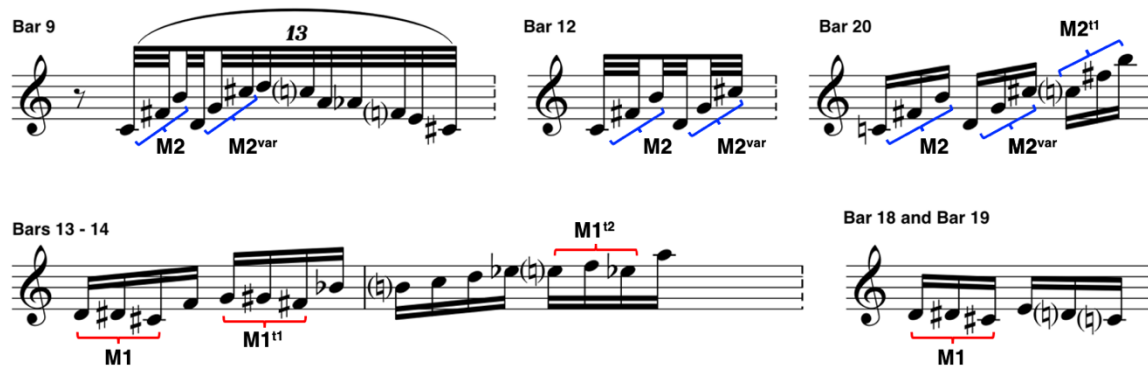
¹⁵ Page and system numbers are listed instead of bar numbers as the Fantasia is mostly scored without barlines.

Similarly, the four-movement *Sonatina* for Oboe and Piano (1962) draws upon two motives presented in its opening bar (see Figure 1.5a). Motives 1 and 2 recur in different permutations throughout the first movement, which contributes to aural continuity, or what Sitsky calls “compositional glue” (see Figure 1.5b).¹⁶

Figure 1.5a: Sitsky, *Sonatina* for Oboe and Piano, Mvt I, oboe part, bars 1–2. Motives 1 and 2.



Figure 1.5b: Development of Motives 1 and 2 in oboe part of *Sonatina* for Oboe and Piano, Mvt I.



Sitsky’s treatment of these motives resembles the practice of “developing variation” – a term coined by Arnold Schoenberg that refers to structuring a work on the constant development of germinal motives or ideas.¹⁷ As Modernist composers in the twentieth century sought new methods for composing, the constant variation of a few small motives provided a means for cohesion and development in complex Modernist scores. The development of motives 1 and 2 in Sitsky’s oboe sonatina reflects this practice as he eschewed thematic repetition and sought more contemporary methods for achieving a cohesive structure.

This aural continuity is also achieved in the fourth movement of the oboe sonatina, which recalls motives from the first three movements. For example, bar 11 of the fourth movement quotes material based on Motive 1 from the first movement (see Figure 1.6). The excerpt utilises the pitches and intervals from Motive 1 (See Figure 1.5a: C–F#–B,

¹⁶ Sitsky, in conversation with the author, Canberra, July 28, 2020.

¹⁷ Ethan Haimo, “Developing Variation and Schoenberg’s Serial Music,” *Music Analysis* 16, no 3 (1997): 349–65, <https://doi.org/10.2307/854403>.

Augmented Fourth followed by a Perfect Fourth) and utilises the ascending shape for subsequent flourishes.

Figure 1.6: Sonatina for Oboe and Piano, Mvt IV, bar 11 of oboe part, use and development of Motive 2.

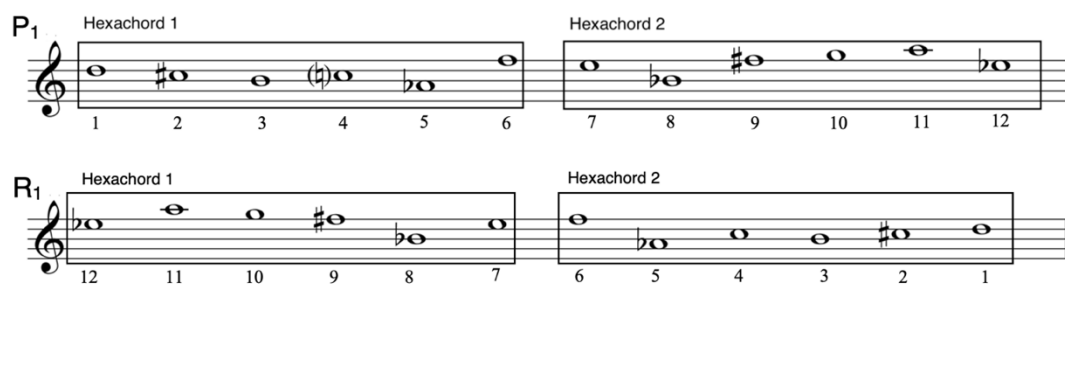


Dodecaphony

Sitsky's Sonata for Solo Violin (1959) exhibits a straightforward use of dodecaphony. During the boat trip to America in 1959, Sitsky taught himself the basics of Schoenberg's twelve-tone technique. In this Early Mature Period, Sitsky utilises standard serial permutations such as Inversion, Retrograde, and Retrograde Inversion, uses smaller subdivisions of the row, and repeats pitches within one row presentation. In Sitsky's Sonata for Solo Flute (1959), a 12-note row (11 pitches, with C $\flat$ repeated and C $\sharp$ omitted) is used sparingly in only one variation of the third movement Theme and Five Derivations. The row forms the basis for the fourth 'derivation' and is stated four times in four different permutations: Prime, Inversion, Retrograde, and Retrograde Inversion.¹⁸

The Sonata for Unaccompanied Violin exhibits a more extensive exploration of 12-tone composition, with the entire third movement, March, based on a 12-tone row. This movement is composed in a simple ABA form and the final A Section is an exact repeat of the first A Section. The Prime and Retrograde row is given in Figure 1.7.

Figure 1.7: 12-tone row from Sonata for Unaccompanied Violin, Mvt III: March. Prime (P₁) and Retrograde (R₁) rows.



¹⁸ See examples and full discussion of this movement later in this chapter in Case Study 1: Sonata for Solo Flute (1959), Mvt III: Theme and Five Derivations.

After the initial (complete) statement, the Prime row is divided into hexachords. Sitsky employs a type of arch structure in the march theme. The arch is comprised of four hexachord statements: first, pitches from P₁ hexachord 1, second, pitches from P₁ hexachord 2, third, pitches from R₁ hexachord 1, and fourth, the pitches from R₁ hexachord 2 complete the arch (see Figure 1.8). Remarkably, and in spite of being self-taught, Sitsky's first venture into dodecaphonic methods displays considerable assurance.

Figure 1.8: Sitsky, Sonata for Unaccompanied Violin, Mvt III: March, bars 1–12.¹⁹ Use of hexachords 1 and 2 from P₁ and R₁.

The musical score is written for violin in 4/4 time. It consists of four systems of music. The first system (bars 1-4) begins with a dashed box labeled 'P₁' and a bracket labeled 'P₁ hexachord 1'. The second system (bars 5-8) includes a bracket labeled 'P₁ hexachord 2' and a bracket labeled 'R₁ hexachord 1'. The third system (bars 9-11) includes a bracket labeled 'R₁ hexachord 2'. The fourth system (bar 12) continues the sequence. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-4 below the notes. Trills and glissandos are marked with 'tr' and 'gliss' respectively. The score is divided into measures by vertical bar lines.

Musical derivation

The works from this early period have been described by scholars and the composer himself as being “derivative”.²⁰ A number of the works from this period exhibit some form of

¹⁹ Larry Sitsky, *Sonata for Unaccompanied Violin* (Wollongong: Wirripang, 2015), 1.

²⁰ Patricia Shaw, “Larry Sitsky’s Music for Violin, and Jan Sedivka,” *Context: A Journal of the Postgraduate Students of the University of Melbourne School of Music* 8, Summer (1994): 13; Wendy Penny, “The Music of Larry Sitsky” (Master of Arts Thesis, University of Queensland, 1980), 16–26; Sitsky, “Sitsky on Sitsky”, 6.

compositional ‘borrowing’ from other composers such as Bartók, Busoni, Bloch and Hindemith – either by means of concept or technique, or direct quotation. Sitsky thus drew upon the ideas and works of composers he admired in order to develop his own compositional voice. This recalls a central tenet of Modernism – the creation of something new or distinctive, whilst still bearing reference to the past.²¹ Sitsky’s violin and flute sonatas both make use of Hungarian and Slovakian folk songs from the Bartók folk song collections (see Tables 1.2a and 1.2b).²²

Table 1.2a: A comparison of folk song No 138 from the *Hungarian Folk Song* by Béla Bartók (top) and Sitsky’s Sonata for Unaccompanied Violin, Mvt IV, bars 1–16: Theme (bottom).²³

Folk Song No. 138 from the <i>Hungarian Folk Song</i> by Béla Bartók	Tempo giusto. III. Körösladány (Békes), Kerekes Julia (17), 1918, B. 138. 1. Mi-kor me-gyek Ro-má-ni - a fe - lé, még a fá-k is sír - nak, Rez-gő nyár-fa hul-lat-ja le - ve - lét, az is en-gem si - rat. Si-rass, si-rass, rez-gő nyár-fa, bo-rul - jál a ba-bám vál-lá-ra, Sűgjad né-ki be-le a fű-lé-be: fáj, fá-j, fá-j a szí-ve-m ér - te, ba-bám, fá-j, fá-j, fá-j a szí-ve-m ér - te.
Theme from Mvt IV Theme and Five Variations from Sonata for Unaccompanied Violin (1959) by Larry Sitsky	Theme: Andante non troppo: sonore ♩ = 100 Violin attacca

²¹ J. Peter Burkholder, Donald Jay Grout, and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 10th ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2019), 770–847.

²² The third movement of Sitsky’s Sonata for Solo flute is a theme and *derivations*. Larry Sitsky, *Sonata for Solo Flute* (Wollongong: Wirripang, 2019), 6.

²³ Béla Bartók, *The Hungarian Folk Song* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), 257; Sitsky, *Sonata for Unaccompanied Violin*, 8.

Table 1.2b: A comparison of No 28 “The Shepherd’s Pipe” from *For Children*, Book 2 by Béla Bartók (top) and Sitsky’s Sonata for Solo Flute, Mvt III, bars 1–18: Theme (bottom).²⁴

Folk Song No. 128 ‘The Shepherd’s Pipe’ from <i>For Children</i>, Book 2 (after Slovakian folk songs) by Béla Bartók	28. The Shepherd's Pipe
Theme from Mvt III Theme and Five Derivations from Sonata for Solo Flute (1959) by Larry Sitsky	

As is shown in Tables 1.2a and 1.2b above, the themes of Sitsky’s violin and flute sonatas use the folk material faithfully. Sitsky’s violin sonata adds a double-stopped harmonic accompaniment, and his flute sonata (unavoidably) subtracts the chordal accompaniment from Bartók’s piano setting. Furthermore, Sitsky’s solo flute and violin sonatas also incorporate other aspects of Bartók’s music, such as themes, quotations and allusions to Bartók’s compositions. For instance, the medium of the unaccompanied sonata in Sitsky’s solo flute and violin sonatas can be traced back to Bartók’s own sonata for solo violin. In addition, the opening of the fourth movement of Sitsky’s Sonata for Solo Flute is based on

²⁴ Béla Bartók, *For Children vol. 2* (London: Boosey and Hawkes, 1947); Larry Sitsky, *Sonata for Solo Flute*, 6.

the opening of the fourth movement of Bartók's violin sonata and the third variation, *Melodia*, from Sitsky's violin sonata is based upon the third movement, *Melodia*, of Bartók's sonata (see Figures 1.9a and 1.9b and 1.10a and 1.10b).

Figure 1.9a: Bartók, Sonata for Solo Violin, Mvt IV: Presto, bars 1–11.

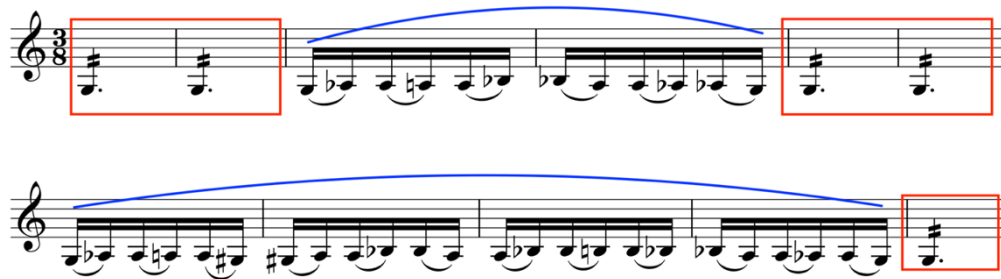


Figure 1.9b: Sitsky, Sonata for Solo Flute, Mvt IV: Perpetual Motion, bars 1–11. Thematic and structural similarity to Bartók's Sonata for Solo Violin.

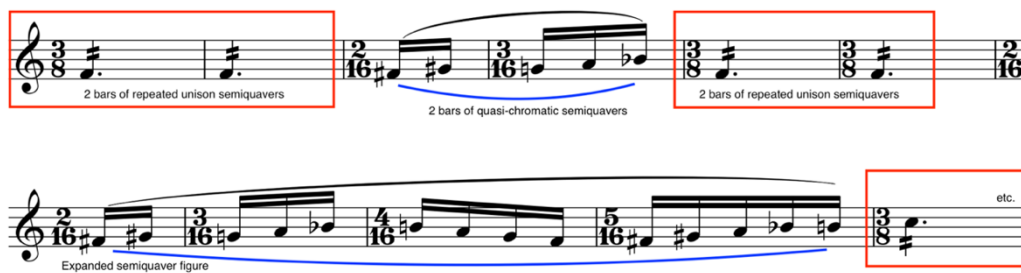


Figure 1.10a: Bartók, Sonata for Solo Violin, Mvt III: *Melodia*, bars 1–3.



Figure 1.10b: Sitsky, Sonata for Unaccompanied Violin, Mvt IV: Theme and Variations, *Melodia*, bars 1–4. Motivic and structural similarity to movement III of Bartók's Sonata for Solo Violin.



It is also possible to trace the influence of German composers Paul Hindemith and Boris Blacher in Sitsky's Early Mature Period works. The influence of these composers will be

discussed in detail in the analysis of Sitsky's Sonata for Solo Flute (1959) in the case study of this chapter.

Sitsky's absorption of Busoni's compositional aesthetics and ideas are particularly noteworthy in this period. Indeed, the Busonian legacy is so pervasive in Sitsky's oeuvre that it can be considered a continuous thread connecting the works of this compositional period with his entire creative output. This emphasises the significance that the Busoni "legacy" held for Sitsky.²⁵ The way Sitsky incorporates Busonian elements in his own compositions is more complex than his borrowing of Bartók's themes in the 1959 sonatas for violin and flute. Busoni's influence on Sitsky in the Early Mature Period is most clearly observed in the Sonatina for Oboe and Piano and the Fantasia No 1 for Solo Piano in *Memory of Egon Petri*. For instance, Sitsky's Sonatina for Oboe and Piano pays considerable homage to Busoni's 1912 piano composition *Sonatina Seconda* – both structurally and conceptually. The correlation between the titles is no coincidence as the first movement of Sitsky's Sonatina for Oboe and Piano is loosely modelled on Busoni's work – drawing upon the rhapsodic style of phrasing and certain motivic shapes, including the improvisatory interval row that occurs at the opening of both works (see Figures 1.11a and 1.11b).

Figure 1.11a: Busoni, *Sonatina Seconda*, bar 1, improvisatory ascending line.



Figure 1.11b: Sitsky, Sonatina for Oboe and Piano, Mvt I, oboe part, bars 1–2. Similarity in structure and contour to Busoni's *Sonatina Seconda* bar 1.



Sitsky's Sonatina for Oboe and Piano also quotes a canonical passage from Busoni's *Sonatina Seconda*. The contour, rhythm and voices of Busoni's canon are preserved in Sitsky's quotation, but the pitch content and intervals are not quoted exactly (see Figures

²⁵ Erinn E. Knyt, *Ferruccio Busoni and His Legacy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), 319.

1.12a and 1.12b). The inexact quotation of Busoni in these examples suggests that rather than recreate Busoni's compositions Sitsky sought to respond to them in his own compositions.

Figure 1.12a: Busoni, *Sonatina Seconda*, Page 9, Third System. Canon.



Figure 1.12b: Sitsky, *Sonatina for Oboe and Piano*, Mvt IV, bar 3. Inexact quotation of the canon from Busoni's *Sonatina Seconda* shown in Figure 1.12a.²⁶



Sitsky's *Fantasia No 1 in Memory of Egon Petri* exhibits a similar conceptual connection with a Busoni composition. Sitsky composed the fantasia after the death of Egon Petri (who Sitsky describes as his "musical father") and includes a quote from Busoni's own *Fantasia nach Johann Sebastian Bach* – composed as a memorial for Busoni's own late father.²⁷ The

²⁶ Sitsky, *Sonatina for Oboe and Piano* (Wollongong: Wirripang, 2013), 10.

²⁷ Ferruccio Busoni, *Fantasia Nach Johann Sebastian Bach* (New York: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1909); Sitsky, interviewed by Ruth Lee Martin.

references to Busoni's compositions in Sitsky's *Fantasia No 1* and *Sonatina for Oboe and Piano* highlight Sitsky's engagement with Busoni's music and ideas during this period.

Conclusions

Comprised of Sitsky's first mature compositional endeavours, the Early Mature Period demonstrates the composer's earliest experiments with twentieth century compositional techniques, such as dodecaphony and extended techniques. Despite his relative compositional inexperience, the Early Mature Period works demonstrate considerable compositional assurance and skill as he sought to cultivate a more Modernist idiom. The discussion will now examine Sitsky's first Sonata for Solo Flute (1959) as a case study of this stylistic period.

Case Study 1: Sonata for Solo Flute (1959)

Sitsky's 1959 Sonata for Solo Flute is the second composition of Sitsky's mature output – composed shortly after his first acknowledged mature work, the Sonata for Unaccompanied Violin (1959). The flute sonata was a continuation of Sitsky's self-described compositional “fresh start” in his Early Mature Period in which he gravitated towards a more linear compositional style.²⁸ In writing the flute sonata, Sitsky recalls that he “just wanted to write a piece that pushed the reliance on a single note as far as it could go”.²⁹ Sitsky was deeply engaged in the music and theories of Boris Blacher, Paul Hindemith, and Béla Bartók at the time of writing the flute sonata – a fact that is reflected in the sonata's construction and musical language. Unlike his Sonata for Unaccompanied Violin (1959), which was composed in two weeks, writing the Sonata for Solo Flute was laborious for Sitsky, who struggled with the realisation of the fugue and cadenza.³⁰ Despite the fact that Sitsky considers the work a “baby piece”, the Sonata for Solo Flute is performed extensively in Australia and is the most frequently performed and recorded of all of Sitsky's flute works.³¹ The Sonata for Solo Flute is structured in four movements and each movement employs a conventional form. The first, second and fourth movements are in ternary form, and the third movement is a theme and variations. Furthermore, the sonata predominantly exploits traditional melodic devices with

²⁸ Sitsky, interviewed by Ruth Lee Martin.

²⁹ Sitsky, interviewed by Ruth Lee Martin.

³⁰ Robyn Holmes, Patricia Shaw, and Peter Campbell, *Larry Sitsky: A Bio-Bibliography*, Bio-Bibliographies in Music: No 65 (Greenwood Press, 1997), 20.

³¹ Sitsky, interviewed by Ruth Lee Martin.

only scant use of extended techniques such as flutter tongue (second and third movement) and harmonics (third movement).

Movement I: Lied

The first movement of the Sonata for Solo Flute, titled “Lied: Allegro Robusto” is structured in a ternary arch form with an extended *cadenzato* in the middle of the movement. As demonstrated in Table 1.3 on Page 37, the first A Section contains four main statements of the primary thematic material (see Figure 1.13): first, in normal order; second, inverted with the addition of ‘simulated’ accompaniment or polyphony; third, three transposed and varied fragments of the theme; and fourth, a reiteration of the original theme with slight alterations. The length and complexity of this theme can be considered as an indicator of Sitsky’s conscious effort to break with tradition.

Figure 1.13: Sitsky, Sonata for Solo Flute, Mvt I, bars 1–7. Primary Theme.

Primary Theme (bars 1–7)



The B Section contains the secondary thematic material (see Figure 1.14), which is stated twice on either side of the *cadenzato*.

Figure 1.14: Sitsky, Sonata for Solo Flute, Mvt I, bars 24–27. Secondary Theme.

Secondary Theme (bars 24–27)



The final A Section sees a return of the first two statements of the primary thematic material (as stated in the first A Section) with the addition of a five-bar coda derived from a combination of the Primary and Secondary Themes (see Table 1.3).

Table 1.3: Ternary arch form structure of Sonata for Solo Flute (see Figure 1.20 on Page 41 for cells used in *cadenzato*).

Section	Theme	Description
A (bars 1–22)	PT	Bar 1–7: PT (Primary Theme) Bar 7–11: PT ^{var1} (Primary Theme transposed and inverted with added simulated accompaniment/polyphony) Bar 12–16: PT ^{var2} (Fragment of Primary Theme transposed up a perfect fourth followed by two transposed fragments of P1 in rhythmic diminution) Bar 16–22: PT (Repeat of first five bars of Primary Theme with altered ending)
B (bars 23–35)	ST	Bar 23: presentation of cells used in <i>cadenzato</i> Bar 24–27: ST (Secondary Theme) Bar 31–35: ST ¹ (Secondary Theme transposed up one octave with simulated accompaniment/polyphony)
<i>cadenzato</i> (bar 36)	Cells 1 2 3 4 5 6	Bar 36: <i>cadenzato</i>
(bars 37–48)	ST	Bar 37–40: ST ² (Secondary Theme transposed down one semitone with added embellishment) Bar 41–44: ST ³ (Secondary Theme transposed up augmented fourth with simulated accompaniment/polyphony) Bar 45: Descending wholetone scales herald recapitulation of A
A (bars 49–59) <i>Coda</i> (bars 60–64)	PT	Bar 49–55: PT (Primary Theme) Bar 55–59: PT ^{var1} (Primary Theme transposed and inverted with added simulated accompaniment/polyphony) Bar 60–64: Coda (Varied fragments of Primary Theme)

Around the time of the Sonata’s composition, Sitsky was engrossed in the compositional theories expounded by Hindemith in the latter’s *The Craft of Musical Composition*.³² Sitsky reflects that:

Like many of my generation I thought that Hindemith's writings were so logical, they read so beautifully. Modern music was in such a mess, and I thought here was an answer that explains everything. But all it really explained was how Hindemith composed and I just didn't realize that at the time.³³

Sitsky’s engagement with Hindemith’s theories is particularly evident in the melodic structure of the themes in the first movement, which embrace Hindemith’s ideas surrounding chordal association, step and melodic degree-progression.³⁴ For instance, Hindemith’s belief that “frequent changes from one harmonically articulated melodic fragment to another

³² Paul Hindemith, *The Craft of Musical Composition*, book. 1, rev. ed., trans. Arthur Mendel (New York: Associated Music Publishers, Inc, 1945); Holmes, Shaw, Campbell, *Larry Sitsky*, 20.

³³ Larry Sitsky, interviewed by Wendy Penny, 1978 in Penny, “The Music of Larry Sitsky,” 19.

³⁴ Hindemith, *The Craft of Musical Composition*, 175–201.

produce a fresh exciting effect” is observable in the structure of the flute sonata’s principal theme.³⁵ The principal theme exhibits these “frequent changes” and oscillates between major and minor tonal centres of C, B, and F, whilst being predominantly rooted in C (see Figure 1.15).

Figure 1.15: Sitsky, Sonata for Solo Flute, Mvt I, bars 1–7. Frequent changes from one harmonically articulated fragment to another.



Additionally, the primary and secondary thematic material of the flute sonata adheres to Hindemith’s theory that “the primary law of melodic construction is that a smooth and convincing melodic outline is achieved only when [the] important points [in the melody] form a progression in seconds.”³⁶ Figure 1.16, from Hindemith’s explanation of his theory, demonstrates a more complex application of his progression of seconds theory and includes simultaneous step-progressions, which are demonstrated by the overlapping square brackets.³⁷

Figure 1.16: Paul Hindemith, *The Craft of Musical Composition*, Figure 175. Simultaneous step-progressions in a “well-constructed melody”.³⁸



The Primary and Secondary Themes of the first movement in Sitsky’s Sonata for Solo Flute can be analysed through the framework of Hindemith’s ‘progression of seconds’ principle. Like the example from Hindemith’s treatise, it is possible to discern the presence of overlapping simultaneous step-progressions in the Primary Theme (see Figure 1.17).

³⁵ Hindemith, *The Craft of Musical Composition*, 181.

³⁶ Hindemith, *The Craft of Musical Composition*, 193.

³⁷ Hindemith, *The Craft of Musical Composition*, 194.

³⁸ Hindemith, *The Craft of Musical Composition*, 194.

Figure 1.17: Sitsky, Sonata for Solo Flute, Mvt I, bars 1–7, Primary Theme. Simultaneous step-progressions.



The top bracket from Figure 1.17 encompasses the progression C, B, A, Ab, which features a major ninth (B descending to A) and a diminished octave (A to Ab), instead of major or minor seconds alone. This practice aligns with Hindemith’s approval of octave transposition in stepwise progressions. Indeed, Hindemith’s treatise acknowledges that “in the step-progression, octave transposition may take place, so that sevenths and ninths may replace seconds.”³⁹ The use of this device further indicates the influence of Hindemith’s theories on Sitsky’s early compositional practice.

In contrast, the Secondary Theme displays a slightly less complex example of Hindemith’s structural model, with only three overlapping step-progressions (see Figure 1.18).

Figure 1.18: Sitsky, Sonata for Solo Flute, Mvt I, bars 24–27, Secondary Theme. Simultaneous step-progressions.



The Secondary Theme (ST) is generally more conjunct than the Primary Theme (PT). This conjunct contour becomes an important characteristic for maintaining thematic clarity and cohesion in its subsequent statements (there are four statements of the Secondary Theme in total – these subsequent statements are transpositions of the theme and will be labelled as ST^{t1}, ST^{t2} and ST^{t3}). In the subsequent statements of ST, Sitsky either adds a simulated accompaniment (a Baroque-style technique of creating counterpoint by combining melody and accompaniment in a single line) to the transposed secondary thematic material (ST^{t1} and ST^{t3}) or embellishes the theme with virtuosic flourishes (ST^{t2}) (see Figures 1.19a and 1.19b).

³⁹ Hindemith, *The Craft of Musical Composition*, 195.

Figure 1.19a: Sitsky, Sonata for Solo Flute, Mvt I, bars 30–35. Secondary Theme transposed up one octave with added simulated accompaniment.⁴⁰

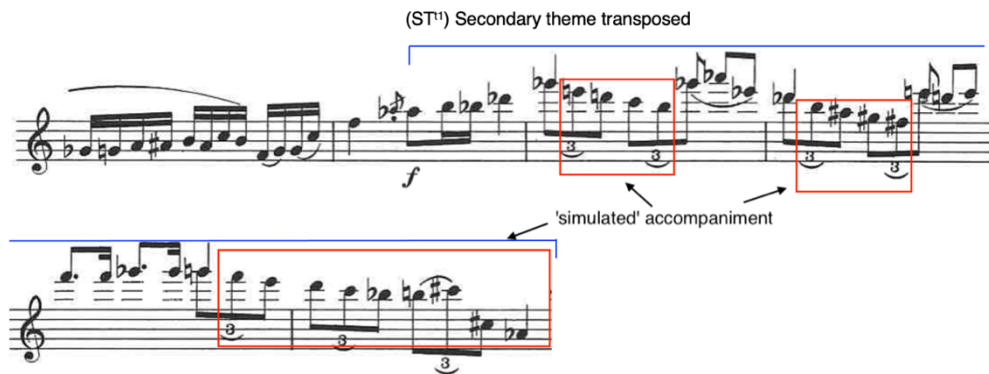
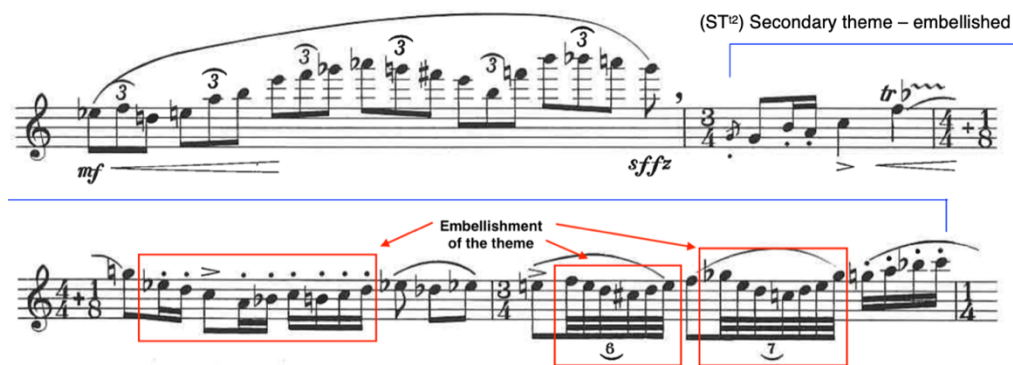


Figure 1.19b: Sitsky, Sonata for Solo Flute, Mvt I, bars 36–39. Secondary Theme transposed down one semitone with embellishment.⁴¹



Due to the strong ascending stepwise direction of ST, the alterations to the theme in ST¹, ST², and ST³ do not affect the overall contour and growth. Thus, the aural connection resulting from the underpinning step-progressions creates thematic consistency and cohesion as the texture becomes more complex.

The *cadenza* occurs at bar 36 in the middle of the B Section. It fulfils an important structural function as the midpoint of the whole movement and thus of the whole arch form structure. ‘Cells’ are used in the construction of the *cadenza*, which signals Sitsky’s exploration of new means for structural development. Eschewing the development of motives or themes through variation, Sitsky inserts the cells into the *cadenza* in a type of ‘patchwork’ or ‘collage’ pattern without variation or development. The cells that comprise

⁴⁰ Sitsky, *Sonata for Solo Flute*, 2.

⁴¹ Sitsky, *Sonata for Solo Flute*, 2.

the *cadenza* are derived from bar 23 – the first bar of the B Section. These cells serve a cellular rather than motivic function and are not individually distinctive enough to be considered motives. These cells only appear in bar 23 and the *cadenza* and can be considered as an additional thematic ‘unit’ to the Primary and Secondary Themes. There are six cells in total (see Figure 1.20), which are combined in an accumulative, spiralling structure that revolves around the repetition of cell 5 (see Figure 1.21).

Figure 1.20: Sitsky, Sonata for Solo Flute, Mvt I, bar 23. Cells 1–6 used in *cadenza*.

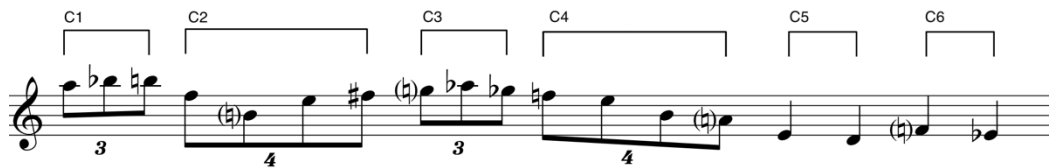


Figure 1.21 shows the process in which the cadenza is composed through the addition of one cell unit in each ‘revolution’: C5+C2; C5+C2+C1; C5+C2+C1+C3, etc. The *cadenza* culminates with two extended virtuosic flourishes, which are comprised of each cell retrograded, and in reverse order to the first occurrence in bar 23: C6^{ret}, C5^{ret}, C4^{ret}, C3^{ret}, C2^{ret} and C1^{ret}.

Figure 1.21: Sitsky, Sonata for Solo Flute, Mvt I, bars 34–36.⁴² Cellular construction of *cadenza* (cells labelled and indicated with coloured boxes).



Movement II, Mystic Interlude

The second movement of the sonata was inspired by Sitsky's first hearing of Olivier Messiaen's music.⁴³ The movement is composed entirely without barlines – lending a free, rhapsodic character to the movement that is typical of Sitsky's overarching treatment of rhythm. Indeed, in an early interview with Wendy Penny, Sitsky reflected that "the second movement was the only one that's really me in any sense. It's freeish, it's rhapsodic but at the same time it has some organization and that's the sort of music I try to write."⁴⁴ Structured in three parts, ABA, the A Sections are slow in tempo and are subtitled "Mystic Interlude: Lento, *expressivo*," and the contrasting B Section is subtitled "A wild and desperate dance: Allegro". There is a transitional section at the end of the B Section, which facilitates a smooth transition to the reprise of A, and another at the conclusion of the movement, which acts as a coda – heralding the rather abrupt ending of the movement.

⁴² Sitsky, *Sonata for Solo Flute*, 2.

⁴³ Sitsky, interviewed by Ruth Lee Martin.

⁴⁴ Sitsky, interviewed by Wendy Penny, 1978 in Penny, "The Music of Larry Sitsky", 22.

This movement is solely constructed upon the development and repetition of small cells. As in the first movement *cadenzato*, the cells found in the second movement are so identified (as cells rather than motives) as they are not individually distinctive enough to have a developmental, motivic function. The cells contribute to the structure through their repetition and collage-like incorporation. The cellular structural device is so pervasive in this movement that nearly every note can be traced back to a cell derived from the first presentation of the A Section (see Figures 1.22a and 1.22b). Twelve cells can be identified in the A Section, which includes eleven ‘standalone’ cells and one composite cell made up of three adjacent cells (two smaller cells, plus a fragment of another). The B Section and the transitional section are comprised of a reordered combination of these cells, which are either stated in their original format, or reordered, fragmented, retrograded, and occasionally transposed.

Figure 1.22a: Sitsky, Sonata for Solo Flute, Mvt II, Systems 1–3. A Section. Individual cells used in movement II indicated with coloured squares (composite indicated with dashed line).⁴⁵

Mystic Interlude: Lento, espressivo ♩ = 96 (very free)

The musical score for the A Section of Sitsky's Sonata for Solo Flute, Mvt II, Systems 1–3, is shown. The tempo is Lento, espressivo, with a metronome marking of ♩ = 96 (very free). The score is divided into three systems. The first system contains measures 1–5, with cells C1, C2, C1, C2, and C3 identified. The second system contains measures 6–10, with cells C4, C5, C6, C3, and C7 identified. The third system contains measures 11–15, with cells C8, C9, C10, C2, and C11 identified. A dashed line labeled 'Composite' spans measures 11–13, indicating that these three measures form a single composite cell. Cells are highlighted with colored squares: C1 (purple), C2 (purple), C3 (red), C4 (orange), C5 (blue), C6 (green), C7 (pink), C8 (cyan), C9 (green), C10 (red), C11 (black). Dynamics include *mf* and *pp*.

⁴⁵ Sitsky, *Sonata for Solo Flute*, 4.

Figure 1.22b: Colour-coded representation of cells used in Mvt II. A Section (top), B Section (middle), and return to A Section (bottom).⁴⁶



The table demonstrates the mosaic effect and the symmetry of the cell organisation in this movement. This highlights the highly structured organisation of the movement and also suggests that Sitsky was exploring new, non-thematic means of development and structure.

Movement III, Theme and Five Derivations

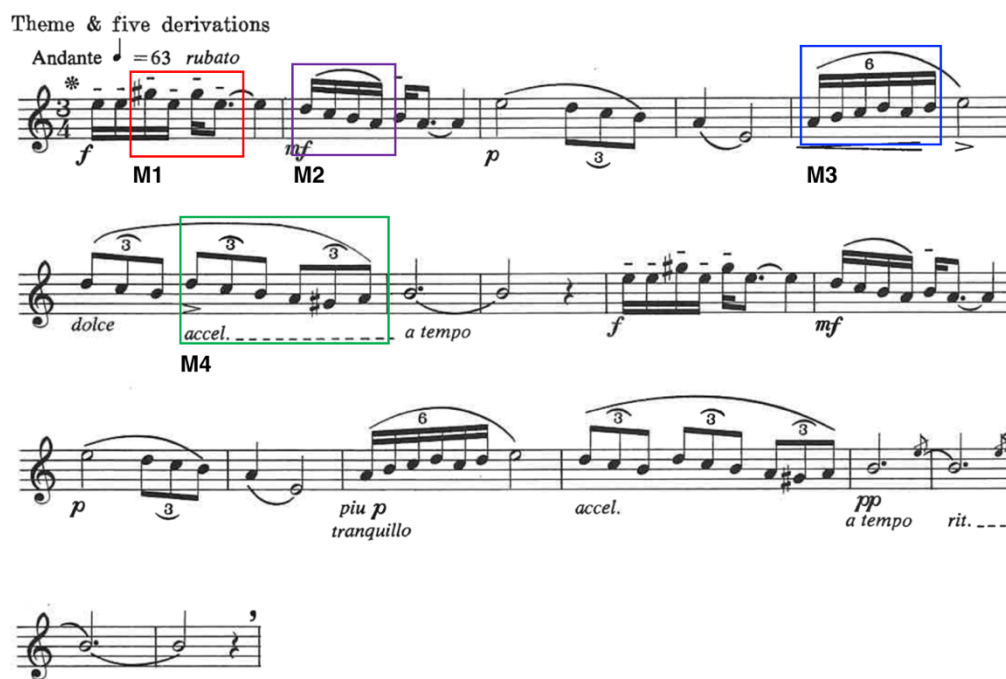
As discussed earlier in this chapter, the third movement of the Sonata for Solo Flute, “Theme and Five Derivations”, takes its theme (see Figure 1.23) from the second book of Bartok’s *For Children* folk-song collection, which is based on Slovakian folk songs.⁴⁷ Sitsky employs Number 28: “The Shepherd’s Pipe” for the theme of the third movement. Sitsky’s choice to use a song about a shepherd’s pipe for a flute sonata does not seem purely coincidental and

⁴⁶ Systems are indicated as the entire second movement is unbarred. The cell occurrence in each system is preserved, though the table is not to ‘durational’ scale. See appendix.

⁴⁷ The first book of Bartok’s *For Children* collection presents Hungarian folk songs.

can be considered an early example (dating from 1959) of an extramusical reference or “springboard” in his compositional practice.⁴⁸

Figure 1.23: Sitsky, Sonata for Solo Flute, Mvt III: Theme and Five Derivations, bars 1–18, Theme.⁴⁹ Principal motives (Motives 1–4) indicated with coloured boxes in the first statement.



As can be ascertained from the title, the movement consists of a theme and five variations (Sitsky preferred ‘derivations’ over ‘variations’ as the musical material deviates significantly from the thematic material), which are structured to conform to an overall arch form. The derivations vary considerably from the main theme. Sitsky only obliquely refers to small motivic fragments from the theme in their construction. This approach to variation form suggests that Sitsky was exploring new means of using traditional forms. Figure 1.23 shows the four principal motives used in the derivations. Sitsky exploits the different characteristics of these motives in the derivations – either emphasising their intervals, contour, or rhythmic characteristics. The recurrence and development of these motives contributes to aural cohesion in an otherwise disparate set of variations.

⁴⁸ “Springboard” is the term Sitsky uses for a creative stimulus and is discussed in more detail throughout Chapters 3–6. See also: Michal Rosiak, “Mapping a Creative Symbiosis Between the Composer and the Performer” (DMA Thesis, Queensland Conservatorium, 2018), 27. <http://hdl.handle.net/10072/380296>.

⁴⁹ Sitsky, *Sonata for Solo Flute*, 8.

Table 1.4: Structural organisation of Mvt III: Theme and Five Derivations (see Figure 1.23 for motives).

Section	Motives	Description
Theme bars 1–18	M1 M2 M3 M4	Folk Song No. 28 “The Shepherd’s Pipe” from Bartok’s <i>For Children</i> Vol. 2 based on Slovakian folk songs
Derivation 1 bars 19–35	M1	Based on the repetition of seven separately formed cells
Derivation 2 bars 36–46	M2 M3	- Two-part scalar variation utilising the contour of Motive 2 and 3 - Second part is a repeat of the first part transposed an octave higher
Derivation 3 bars 47–81	M1 M3	- Adheres to an arch-form that begins and ends with material based on Motive 1 and Motive 3 - Middle section is comprised of virtuosic scale and arpeggio passages
Derivation 4 bars 82–92	Theme	- Four statements of a twelve-note row: Prime, Inversion, Retrograde, and Retrograde Inversion - Row statements are based on rhythm of opening Theme
Derivation 5 bar 93* unbarred cadenza	M1 M2 M3 M4	Unbarred cadenza built upon variations of Motives 1–4
Theme bars 94–113	M1 M2 M3 M4	Embellished repeat of opening theme

Table 1.4 shows the structural organisation of, and the use of motives in the Theme and Five Derivations. The movement begins with a statement of the theme and is followed by the first derivation, which exploits the combination and repetition of individual, separately formed cells (see Figure 1.24).

Figure 1.24: Sitsky, Sonata for Solo Flute, Mvt III, bars 16–30, Derivation 1: Fantastically.⁵⁰ Cells indicated with colour-coded boxes. G#–E motive (M1 – indicated in red), which is derived from opening bar of Theme (see Figure 1.23).

These cells range from single pitches to short fragments of up to six notes. Once again, these cells do not undergo any motivic development, but are repeated almost exactly. Motive 1, which is derived from the first bar of the theme (see Figure 1.23), comprises one of the cells in this derivation. Exploiting the major third interval of G# and E, Motive 1 has a distinct aural quality and assumes a developmental function in later derivations (so has thus been labelled as a motive). However, in this derivation, this Motive 1 is used cellularly in that it is incorporated and repeated in a type of collage effect and does not assume a developmental function.

The second derivation is divided into two sections: the second section simply repeats the first section an octave higher. This derivation exploits the shape of Motive 2, the descending semiquaver figure in the second bar of the theme, and also includes a transposed variant of Motive 3 – an ascending sextuplet (see Figure 1.25).

⁵⁰ Sitsky, *Sonata for Solo Flute*, 4.

Figure 1.25: Sitsky, Sonata for Solo Flute, bars 41–42, excerpt from Derivation 2. Development of Motive 2 and 3 from Theme (see Figure 1.23 on Page 45).



It is possible to consider the variations of Motive 2 in Figure 1.25 as simple scalar movement. However, their strong aural connection to the theme and their prominence within Derivation 2 validates the analysis of these figures as motivic development. Sitsky's subtle reference to the theme in this derivation demonstrates how he explored different structural approaches as he sought to develop his own compositional language.

The third (and middle) derivation exhibits its own internal symmetry and adheres to a kind of arch form. It begins and concludes with the same ascending triplet scales and disjunct quavers based on Motive 3 and Motive 1 respectively (see Figures 1.26a and 1.26b).

Figure 1.26a: Sitsky, Sonata for Solo Flute, Mvt III, bars 47–54, opening of Derivation 3. Development of Motives 1 and 3.

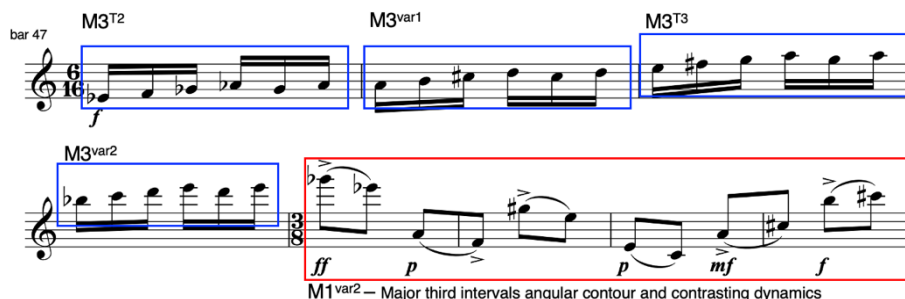
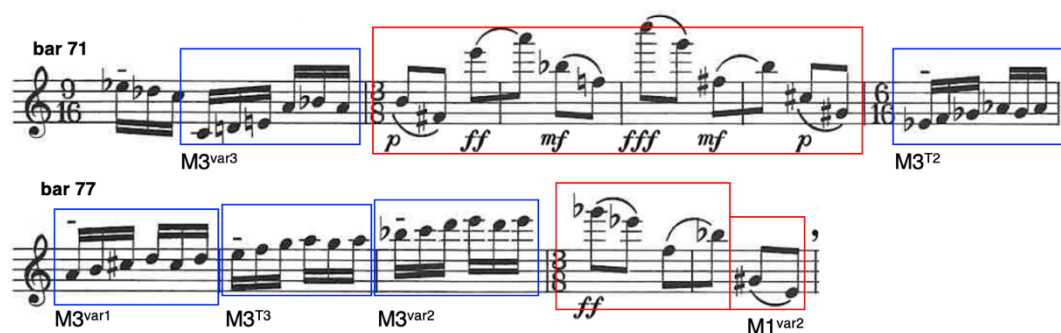


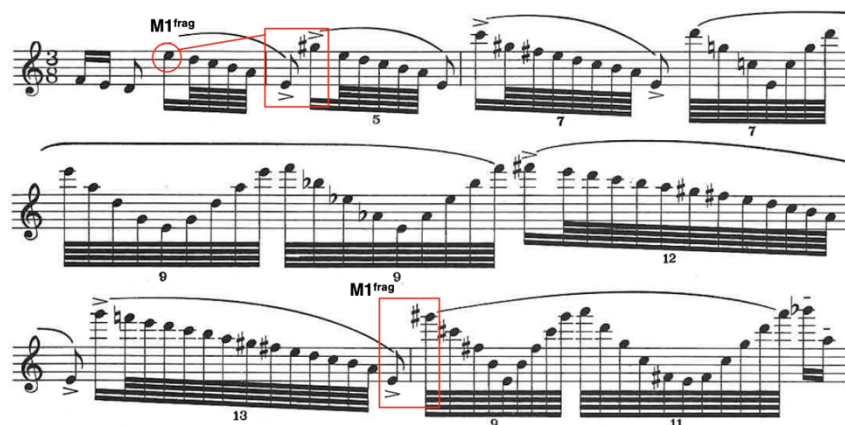
Figure 1.26b: Sitsky, Sonata for Solo Flute, Mvt III, bars 71–81, conclusion of Derivation 3.⁵¹ Repeat of material from bars 47–54 at beginning of Derivation 3.



⁵¹ Sitsky, *Sonata for Solo Flute*, 8.

This repeated material borders the middle section of the derivation, which consists of virtuosic scale and arpeggio flourishes that begin and end with subtle references to Motive 1 (see Figure 1.27).

Figure 1.27: Sitsky, *Sonata for Solo Flute*, Mvt III, bars 60–65.⁵² Virtuosic flourishes with fragments of Motive 1 (indicated in red).



Utilising the rhythm of the Theme, the fourth derivation features four statements (Prime, Inversion, Retrograde, and Retrograde Inversion) of a 12-note row (see Figures 1.28a and 1.28b). Interestingly, Sitsky does not use all 12 pitches of the chromatic scale: the Prime row repeats C and omits C#.⁵³

⁵² Sitsky, *Sonata for Solo Flute*, 8.

⁵³ It is unclear whether this is a publishing error or if Sitsky deliberately omitted the C# in the Prime row: “It is very possible that I found something offensive with the strict row and so without any hesitation changed it. The original intent was certainly to present a dodecaphonic version of the theme.” Larry Sitsky, email correspondence, March 26, 2021.

Figure 1.28a: 12-note row used in Sonata for Solo Flute Mvt III, Derivation 4. Rows: Prime, Inversion, Retrograde, Retrograde Inversion.

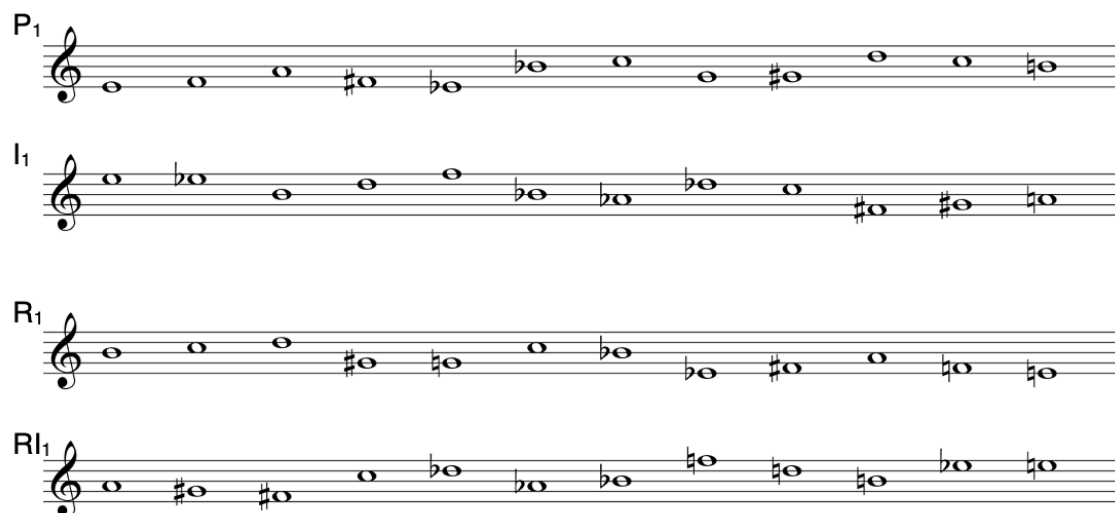
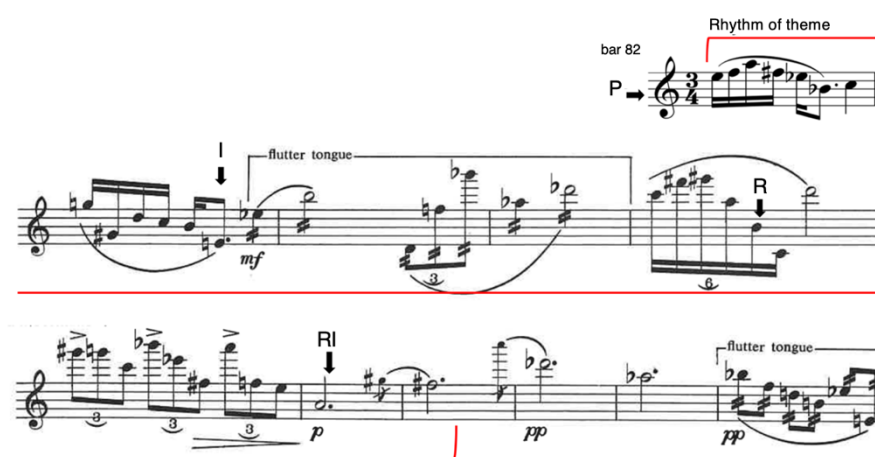


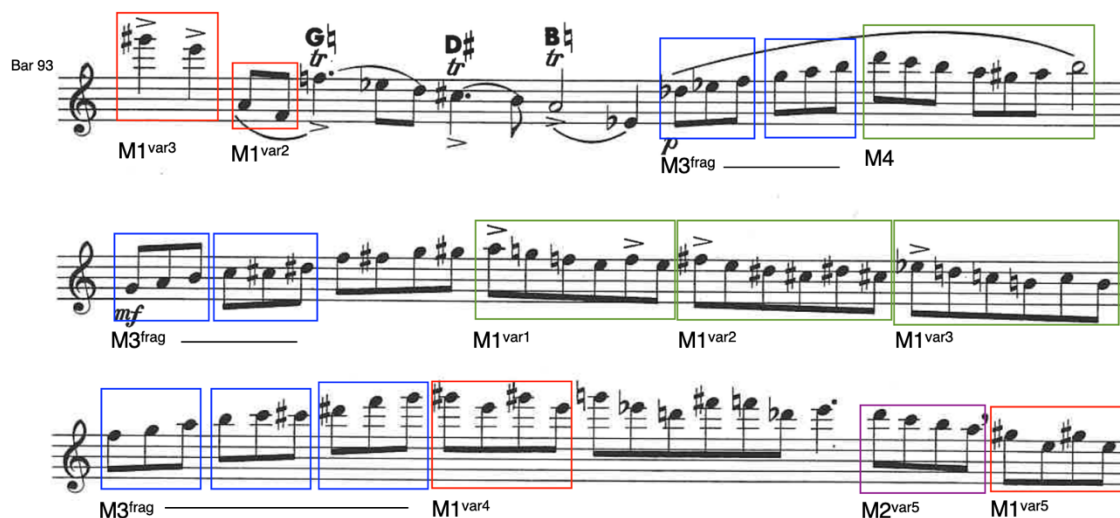
Figure 1.28b: Sitsky, Sonata for Solo Flute, Mvt III, bars 82–92, Derivation 4.⁵⁴ Four statements of the note row: Prime, Inversion, Retrograde, and Retrograde Inversion in the rhythm of the main theme.



The fifth and longest derivation – the cadenza – makes use of a Motives 1–4 quoted either exactly or with small alterations. For instance, in addition to variations of Motive 1, the highly scalic cadenza includes permutations of Motive 4 and its scalic material is also built upon variations of Motives 2 and 3 (see Figure 1.29).

⁵⁴ Sitsky, *Sonata for Solo Flute*, 8–9.

Figure 1.29: Sitsky, Sonata for Solo Flute, Mvt III, bar 93, Derivation 5.⁵⁵ Use and development of Motives 1–4 from the main theme.



The arch structure of the third movement is completed with a final statement of the theme with grace-note arpeggiations (see Figure 1.30).

Figure 1.30: Sitsky, Sonata for Solo Flute, Mvt III, bars 95–114. Reprise of the Theme with grace note arpeggiations.



⁵⁵ Sitsky, *Sonata for Solo Flute*, 9.

Movement IV, Perpetual Motion

The fourth and final movement of the Sonata for Solo Flute, “Perpetual Motion”, is (as its title suggests) a perpetual motion of continuous semiquavers in ternary form. This movement displays the influence of a fourth composer, Boris Blacher,⁵⁶ on Sitsky at the time of the work’s creation. According to Wendy Penny in her 1980 master’s dissertation, Sitsky was particularly influenced by the German composer at the time of writing the Sonata for Solo Flute.⁵⁷ Blacher’s influence manifests most clearly in the fourth movement, which employs a cyclic permutation of constantly-shifting, metric expansion that was often exploited by Blacher in his own compositions. Figure 1.31 shows the opening of the first movement of Blacher’s Piano Sonata Op. 39, which exploits a similar expansion and contraction of metre to that employed by Sitsky in the fourth movement of his Sonata for Solo Flute.

Figure 1.31: Boris Blacher, Piano Sonata Op. 39, Mvt I, bars 1–23.⁵⁸ Expanding metric pattern indicated in bracketed groups.

Allegro ma non troppo $\text{♩} = 144$
23, 234, 2345 234 . . 89,
8 8 8 8

Boris Blacher, Op. 39

⁵⁶ Boris Blacher (1903–1975) was a German composer of Baltic descent who was born in Yingkou (previously Niu-chang), China. The biographical parallels between Sitsky and Blacher are remarkable: both composers were born in China and share Jewish and Russian heritage. Similar to Sitsky’s brief period as an engineering student, Blacher studied architecture and mathematics in Berlin at the request of his parents before commencing his music studies. Additionally, Blacher spent much of his compositional career as an educator at various institutions in Berlin, including the Berlin Hochschule für Musik. See: Josef Häusler, “Blacher, Boris,” *Grove Music Online*, 2001; Accessed September 10, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.03180>.

⁵⁷ Penny, “The Music of Larry Sitsky,” 19.

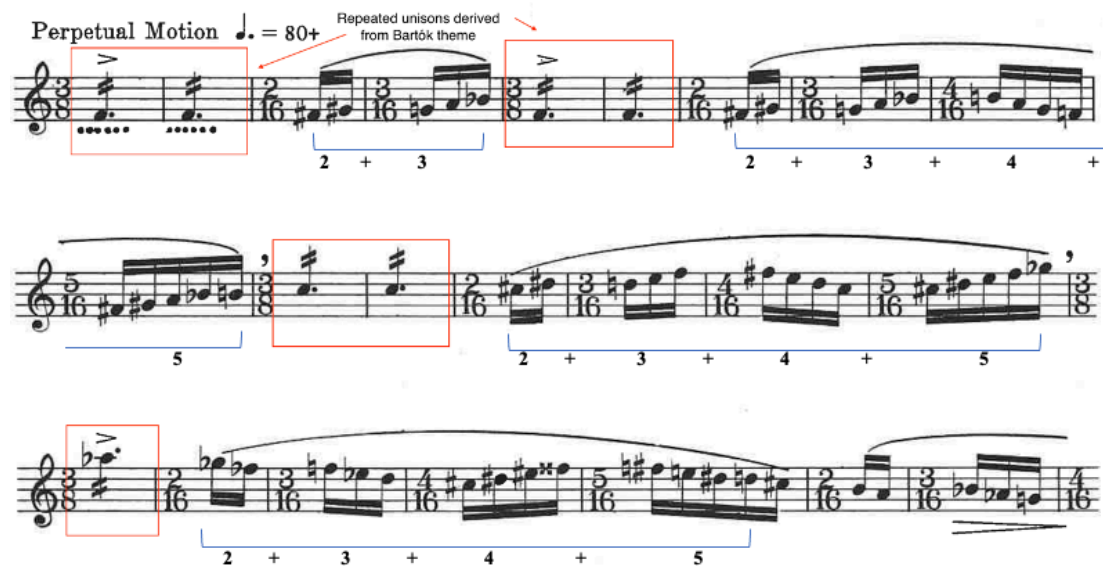
⁵⁸ Boris Blacher, *Sonate* (Berlin, Ed. Bote and G Bock, 1951), 1.

The opening of Blacher's sonata follows a systematic process of metric expansion and contraction, which is achieved through a process of additive and subtractive patterns. Figure 1.31 shows a two-bar unit of $2/8 + 3/8$ followed by a three-bar unit of ' $2/8 + 3/8 + 4/8$ '. This is added to in a cumulative process in which each unit is repeated and expanded (the next being a four-bar unit ' $2/8 + 3/8 + 4/8 + 5/8$ ' until it cycles through to completion with the eight-bar statement of ' $2/8 + 3/8 + 4/8 + 5/8 + 6/8 + 7/8 + 8/8 + 9/8$ ' at bar 35). Once the pattern is complete, it begins to contract via a reverse process of subtraction until it arrives back at the origin of the pattern – a single bar of $2/8$ at bar 63.

Whilst similar in concept, Sitsky's use of additive metres in the flute sonata differs in application to Blacher's sonata in several ways. As discussed earlier in this chapter, Sitsky uses the theme of the fourth movement from Bartók's Sonata for Solo Violin as a model for the thematic material in the fourth movement of his own flute sonata (see Figures 1.9a and 1.9b on Page 32). Essentially, Sitsky combines the theme from Bartók's violin sonata with a version of the metric expansion and contraction used in Blacher's piano sonata. This not only highlights the influence of Blacher on Sitsky, but also reveals Sitsky's Modernist approach to rhythmic irregularity in this period.⁵⁹ The recurrence of the motives from Bartók's sonata in Sitsky's composition slightly subverts the metric expansion and contraction that is so clearly expressed in the Blacher sonata. For instance, the unit of two $3/8$ bars of repeated semiquavers from Bartók's theme recurs on every metric 'cycle' in Sitsky's sonata (see Figure 1.32). Sitsky's metric pattern is not as systematic as Blacher's: Sitsky employs only two individual patterns of an expanding cycle: $2/16 + 3/16$ and $2/16 + 3/16 + 4/16 + 5/16$.

⁵⁹ Burkholder, Grout, and Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 804–847.

Figure 1.32: Sitsky, Sonata for Solo Flute, Mvt IV, bars 1–23.⁶⁰ Combination of motive from Bartók's Sonata for Solo Violin with expanding metric pattern indicated in bracketed groups.



Additionally, Sitsky freely shifts between metres ranging from 2/16 to 3/8 (6/16) in the later sections of the fourth movement (see Figure 1.33).

Figure 1.33: Sitsky, Sonata for Solo Flute, Mvt IV, bars 60–65. Non-systematic metric shifts in each bar.⁶¹



Sitsky uses various combinations of metres ranging from 2/6 to 6/16 (3/8) in the B Section and Coda and does not adhere to a consistent shape of expansion or contraction in these sections. Sitsky's freer application of Blacher's metric device suggests that he sought to explore the effect in his own style without strictly adhering to the process outlined in Blacher's piano sonata.

Conclusions

Sitsky's first mature compositional efforts make up his Early Mature Period. Dating from 1959 to 1962, this period shows Sitsky's earliest dodecaphonic experiments and his pursuit of

⁶⁰ Sitsky, *Sonata for Solo Flute*, 11.

⁶¹ Sitsky, *Sonata for Solo Flute*, 12.

a more linear compositional style through works for solo, single-line instruments. Most of the works from this period exhibit traditional forms and notation; however later works from this period such as the *Fantasia No 1 for Solo Piano* (1962) and the *Sonatina for Oboe and Piano* (1962) show a more rhapsodic approach to form and an increased application of extended techniques. In addition, Sitsky drew inspiration from a number of different composers, such as Hindemith, Messiaen, Blacher, Bartók, and Busoni in his works from this period.

The *Sonata for Solo Flute* is the second of Sitsky's surviving mature works and exhibits musical characteristics consistent with those of Sitsky's Early Mature Period. These characteristics were shown to include a focus on linearity and melody over harmonic emphasis, cellular construction, use of arch forms, and experimentation with dodecaphony. Sitsky's preoccupation with the melodic line in his Early Mature Period is demonstrated in the *Sonata for Solo Flute* through its instrumentation for a solo, single-line instrument and the simulated counterpoint technique that incorporates melody and accompaniment in a single line. Sitsky's use of dodecaphony and extended techniques in the third movement attests to his desire to compose in a more "up-to-date" idiom.⁶² Furthermore, Sitsky's collage-like use of cells as distinct from traditional motivic development reflects his search for new means of structural development in this period. Cells are distinguished from motives as being small, repeated fragments that are not particularly distinctive in themselves, but which are used as building blocks. Perhaps most significant are the derivative aspects in this *Sonata*: Sitsky's application of Hindemith's theories in the melodic material of the first movement, the 'borrowing' of folk material collected by Bartók in the third, and the amalgamation of thematic and metric ideas from Bartók and Blacher in the fourth movement of the sonata all illustrate the derivative nature of the works from Sitsky's Early Mature period. This chapter explored Sitsky's earliest mature compositions including his *Sonata for Solo Flute*. The next chapter examines his exploration of Modernist techniques during the 1960s.

⁶² Sitsky, "Sitsky on Sitsky", 6.

Chapter 2: Modernist Period (early 1963–1969)

The beginning of a new compositional period in Sitsky's oeuvre can be observed from the early 1960s as Sitsky began to incorporate a number of contemporary Modernist techniques within his compositions. These included *musique concrète*, aleatoricism, 12-tone serialism, and integral serialism. In the 1960s, a change in the broader social climate in Australia elicited a move towards a more modern, progressive and less British-identifying society.¹ Increased transnational dissemination of musical material such as scores and recordings (not least expedited by a wave of European immigration to Australia after World War II) facilitated unprecedented access to musical ideas from the European and American Modernist movements.² Additionally, local musicians, like Sitsky, increasingly pursued further education overseas.³ This resulted in a more cosmopolitan generation of composers, who drew upon techniques sourced from newly available books and scores, or their education abroad.⁴

These developments had significant ramifications for the aesthetic trajectory of art music in Australia. Social change combined with the transnational dissemination of contemporary musical ideas in Australia during the 1960s mobilised a tacit Modernist 'movement' amongst a younger generation of composers in Australia. In addition to Sitsky, these composers included Richard Meale, Helen Gifford, Nigel Butterley, and Peter Sculthorpe.⁵ The ensuing exploration of Modernism in Australia negated the prevailing "English organist" or "pastoral" musical aesthetic as composers drew upon a diverse range of models, such as Michael Tippett, Witold Lutoslawski, and Pierre Boulez.⁶ For Sitsky, exploring a range of techniques born from musical Modernism was driven by two main motivators. First, he possessed an artistic curiosity to explore contemporary Modernist techniques.⁷ Second, Sitsky sought to assert his "independence" from what he perceived as

¹ James Curran, *The Power of Speech* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2010); Jon Piccini, *Transnational Protest, Australia and the 1960s* (New York: Springer, 2016).

² Michael Hooper, *Australian Music and Modernism, 1960-1975* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 6, 15.

³ Hooper, *Australian Music and Modernism*, 31–60.

⁴ Hooper, *Australian Music and Modernism*, 45–47, 66–67, 78–82, 109, 116–118, 164–165, 179.

⁵ "New Stirrings In Composers' Art," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, December 11, 1963; Covell, Roger, "New Stature in Creating," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, July 13, 1964; Roger Covell, *Australia's Music; Themes of a New Society* (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1967); 146; Hooper, *Australian Music and Modernism*.

⁶ Covell, *Australia's Music*; Hooper, *Australian Music and Modernism*; "Helen Gifford – War, Craft, and The Making of a Modernist Composer," *Resonate Magazine*, September 22, 2015.

⁷ Larry Sitsky, in conversation with author, July 22, 2020.

the rampant aesthetic conservatism of the “Establishment” or “conservative stream” composers of the day.⁸

A new national consciousness infiltrated the Australian art music field from the 1960s.⁹ However, as musicologists Sarah Collins and Dana Gooley note, “[t]he movement of notated scores – and in later periods, of recordings – serve as an agent of displacement, resituating a musician in a “place” that cannot be reduced to a geographical origin or local network.”¹⁰ This concept was magnified in an increasingly multicultural Australia with ambiguous national myths.¹¹ The highly ambivalent nationalism was not taken up enthusiastically by all composers and efforts to define a “distinctively Australian” music were uncertain and highly contentious.¹² It is important to emphasise that Sitsky never sought to compose in an ‘Australian’ style and entirely rejected the concept of nationalist composition in Australia.¹³

Sitsky’s creative exploration during this period was highly experimental and he eventually abandoned the compositional processes that did not suit his personal creative vision. Sitsky’s Modernist Period is particularly indicative of his creative temperament as the compositional devices that he eventually abandoned – and his reasons for doing so – provide insight into his overarching compositional philosophy. Sitsky’s Modernist Period is largely one of creative exploration; the characteristics of the works from this period are unified by the fact that they are experimental and utilise a range of Modernist techniques. The following discussion analyses Sitsky’s personal application of Modernist techniques in several key compositions.

‘Satirical’ compositions

The 1963 Woodwind Quartet is the first of Sitsky’s two satirical compositions from this period and can be considered as the inception of Sitsky’s Modernist Period. Sitsky composed the five-movement quartet for the inaugural Australian Composers’ Seminar in Hobart in

⁸ Larry Sitsky interviewed by Robyn Holmes, National Library of Australia, N 016.78092 H752 and NL 016.78092 H752, October 28, 1994.

⁹ Hooper, *Australian Music and Modernism*; Williamson, Malcolm. “How Australian Can Australian Music Become?” *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 118, no 5167 (1970): 414–24.

¹⁰ Sarah Collins and Dana Gooley, “Music and the New Cosmopolitanism: Problems and Possibilities,” *Musical Quarterly* 99, no 2 (Summer 2016): 140, <https://doi.org/10.1093/musqtl/gdx006>.

¹¹ Curran, *The Power of Speech*; Curran and Ward, *The Unknown Nation*.

¹² Hooper, *Australian Music and Modernism*, 1, 6, 7.

¹³ Helen Frizell, “No Wattle Music . . . Please!,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, April 21, 1973; Sitsky, interviewed by Ruth Lee Martin.

1963. According to Sitsky, he composed the quartet “in cold blood” in order to challenge the older generation of Australian composers (such as Clive Douglas and John Antill) who pursued traditional compositional aesthetics.¹⁴ Described by Sitsky as “anti-music”, the quartet was merely a technical exercise, designed to shock.¹⁵ The fact that Sitsky felt no personal creative connection with the quartet highlights his personal detachment from overly cerebral, process-driven composition. Sitsky recalls that he initially wished to compose a work that “had a random element to it” and was entirely computer-generated.¹⁶ However, none of the computers he had access to were advanced enough to process the formula he had devised, so Sitsky resorted to realising the formula manually at his kitchen table. Described by the composer as “musical anarchy” that was “athematic, arhythmic and a-everything else”, the quartet is composed upon a purely mathematical formula of four layers of 12 numbers corresponding with duration, rests, intensity and attack.¹⁷ The random element was achieved in the score with the assistance of Sitsky’s wife, Magda, who would say a number from one to twelve – spurring the composer to enter the corresponding pitch, rest or duration. Each of the four parts of the quartet is totally independent and the players are instructed to not try and fit in with each other. The random element and independence between parts contributes to the chaotic effect that Sitsky sought to achieve in order to shock the audience.

Dimensions for Piano and Two Tape Recorders (1964) is the second of Sitsky’s satirical works from this ‘phase’. Composed for one of his students to perform in a graduation concert at the Brisbane Conservatorium, the *Dimensions* premiere prompted the board of governors to ban performances of “works of this nature” at future graduation concerts.¹⁸ Compared to the relatively progressive musical environment that he experienced in San Francisco, the conservatism in Brisbane was something of a culture shock for Sitsky. Indeed, the entrenched conservatism and traditional programming at the Conservatorium led Sitsky to refer to the institution as a “Preservatorium” where it was “relatively easy to shock” audiences and faculty alike.¹⁹

As the title of *Dimensions* indicates, this piece is composed for piano and two pre-recorded tape tracks. The pitch content of the piano part is dodecaphonic, and is combined with extended aleatoric techniques such as palm, fist, and forearm clusters. Utilising *musique*

¹⁴ Sitsky, interviewed by Robyn Holmes.

¹⁵ Sitsky, interviewed by Ruth Lee Martin.

¹⁶ Sitsky, interviewed by Robyn Holmes.

¹⁷ Larry Sitsky, “Sitsky on Sitsky,” *Music Now* 1, no 4 (April 1971): 7

¹⁸ Sitsky, interviewed by Robyn Holmes.

¹⁹ Sitsky, interviewed by Robyn Holmes.

concrète techniques, the tape parts employ pre-recorded sounds ranging from notated music, to percussive effects, and *glissandi* performed on the strings of the piano with a pencil. Later works such as the opera *Fall of the House of Usher* (1965) and the *Sinfonia for 10 Players* (1964) make use of pre-recorded tape effects. However, *Dimensions* was the first and last work to explore *musique concrète* on a large scale. Sitsky's renouncement of *musique concrète* further emphasises the exploratory approach to composition during this Modernist period, and suggests that the sound world emitted by this device did not align with his creative philosophy.

It is not without paradox that the first two of Sitsky's 'Modernist' Period compositions are works of satire: Modernist music is usually not satirical. Jonathan Kramer identifies the embrace of irony and contradictions both as markers of musical Postmodernism.²⁰ Although Sitsky utilises Modernist techniques in these two satirical works, this aspect of Sitsky's Modernist period can be described as proto-Postmodernist because of its satirical approach.

Aleatoricism

Aspects of aleatoricism are present in the majority of Sitsky's Modernist Period works. *Dimensions for Piano and Two Tape Recorders* (1964) represents Sitsky's most significant experimentation with aleatoricism. The work is constructed upon an aleatoric system where its five-part structure can be played in any order according to the performer's wishes. The five sections are further subdivided into smaller sections, which can also be performed in any order, on the proviso that they are contained within their corresponding larger section. Sitsky does retain some control over the structure of the work as he stipulates that the parts comprising the tape sections may not be intermixed – i.e., Tape I Part II and Tape II Part II must be played simultaneously. The tapes are replayed over two loudspeakers in performance at composer-indicated speed and specifications (Tape I at half speed, Tape II at double speed, and a portion of Tape II is played backwards), which creates three aural 'dimensions' when simultaneously performed with the live piano part. Sitsky also explores spatial effects in *Dimensions*. In performance, Sitsky instructs that the three sound sources (Piano, Tape I and Tape II) are to be placed in a triangle formation around the audience: the piano at the front

²⁰ Jonathan D. Kramer, *Postmodern Music, Postmodern Listening*, ed. Robert Carl (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 9; Linda Ioanna Kouvaras, *Loading the Silence: Australian Sound Art in the Post-Digital Age* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2013), 147–70.

and the two speakers in the middle of the hall – one each at the “extreme right and extreme left.”²¹ Brimming with contemporary Modernist techniques, *Dimensions* represents Sitsky’s exaggerated efforts to shock the conservative audience in Brisbane in an effort to influence aesthetic change.

After composing *Dimensions*, Sitsky’s creative practice began to shift away from free aleatoricism.²² Sitsky explained that he has “various technical and philosophical objections to aleatoric writing,”– citing that his “main objection is the lack of control on the composer’s part”.²³ Sitsky began to pursue a more controlled aleatoricism – similar to the “limited” or “controlled” aleatoricism often employed by Polish composer Witold Lutoslawski.²⁴ This apparently oxymoronic designation refers to extended sections in Lutoslawski’s music in which the players are instructed to perform the notated pitches and rhythms unsynchronised. At a cue point the ensemble either repeats, moves on to the next section, or stops entirely. The use of this somewhat paradoxical device is representative of Sitsky’s growing aversion to ‘chance’ composition and highlights his adaptation of certain techniques to better suit his creative intentions.

Compositions such as the *Sinfonia for 10 Players* (1964), the opera *Fall of the House of Usher* (1965), and the Concerto for Two Solo Pianos (1967) exhibit Sitsky’s ‘controlled aleatoricism’ technique. For instance, in VII: The “Storm Scene” of the one-act opera *Fall of the House of Usher*, the violin section has a notated *pizzicato* passage during which each violin is instructed to play “completely ad-lib ... [and] to finish its part regardless of whether the next section has commenced”.²⁵ The conductor cues the beginning of the “next section”, which consists of strictly notated percussion and piano (See Figure 2.1).

²¹ Sitsky does not stipulate which tape should be performed from which speaker. Larry Sitsky, *Dimensions for Piano and Two Tape Recorders* (Sydney: Australian Music Centre), 4.

²² The description “free aleatoricism” is largely a tautology; however, I use this term to differentiate between it and Sitsky’s later use of the paradoxical “controlled aleatoricism”.

²³ Sitsky, “Sitsky on Sitsky”, 9; Larry Sitsky, interviewed by Wendy Penny, 1979 in Wendy M. Penny, “The Music of Larry Sitsky,” (Master of Arts Thesis, University of Queensland, 1980), 78.

²⁴ Steven Stucky, *Lutoslawski and His Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 109.

²⁵ Larry Sitsky, *Fall of the House of Usher* (Sydney: Australian Music Centre, 1965), 75.

Figure 2.1: Sitsky, *Fall of the House of Usher*, VII: "Storm" Scene, Page 2.²⁶ Ad-lib string pizzicati.

Handwritten musical score for Figure 2.1. The score is for a percussion section (Perc. (Kyl.)) and three woodwinds (3 W. Woods). The percussion part has two 'CUE' boxes. The woodwind parts are for Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), and Clarinet (Cl.). The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. At the bottom, there are handwritten instructions for the violins and a note about the section's duration.

Violins: completely ad lib. Dynamics in range PP → mf. NOT LOUDER. Conductor: cue percussion

3 proceed to next section: each violin to finish its part regardless of whether the next section has commenced. Approximate duration of ad lib section = (20")

The random aspect of the overhanging ad-lib violin *pizzicati* juxtaposed with the measured quality of the ensuing percussion section demonstrates Sitsky's personal adaptation of 'controlled aleatoricism'. This further emphasises the omnipresence of Sitsky's adaptation of Modernist devices to suit his artistic vision within this Modernist Period.

Similarly, in the Concerto for Two Solo Pianos (1967), the performers are occasionally instructed to play independently of each other. Specifically, at Rehearsal Marks 11 and 15, the players are instructed to start together, though the performance of their respective lines is intended to be free and independent of the other (see Figures 2.2a and 2.2b). Piano I is instructed to repeat material until Piano II reaches a certain point in the score, which acts as a cue for the commencement of the next (non-aleatoric) section. Such use of a cue as a point of alignment is once again similar to Lutoslawski's particular brand of aleatoricism and can also be seen in the music of Sitsky's Australian contemporary Peter

²⁶ Larry Sitsky, *Fall of the House of Usher*, 75.

Sculthorpe.²⁷ Sitsky's more controlled approach to aleatoricism demonstrates his adaptation of the technique as a means to retain control as a composer whilst still incorporating elements of chance.

Figure 2.2a: Sitsky, Concerto for Two Solo Pianos, Rehearsal Mark 11. Notation boxes indicating 'controlled aleatoricism'.²⁸

Figure 2.2b: Sitsky, Concerto for Two Solo Pianos, Rehearsal Mark 15. Section of 'controlled aleatoricism' with specific instructions from the composer.²⁹

* I and II move independently. R.H. of P.II has most important material. L.H. of P.II a pianistic "timpani" sound is fitted in "approx - imately" to the R.H. P.I acts as background colour.

Rhythm

The complex rhythmic qualities of the Concerto for Two Solo Pianos exemplify Sitsky's treatment of rhythm in this period. These qualities range from constant polymetre, to

²⁷ Gordon Kerry, *New Classical Music: Composing Australia* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2009), 52.

²⁸ Larry Sitsky, *Concerto for Two Solo Pianos* (London: Boosey and Hawkes, 1971), 11.

²⁹ Sitsky, *Concerto for Two Solo Pianos*, 13.

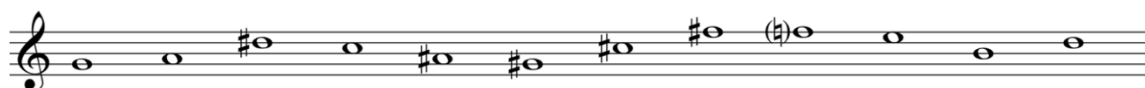
passages of complex polyrhythms, distorted metric accents and syncopation. For example, the concerto is based on the simultaneous juxtaposition of four independent rhythmic lines – one for each staff, or ‘hand’. This results in considerable rhythmic complexity, with frequent polyrhythms between parts. Such rhythmic complexity reflects the characteristics of musical Modernism in the twentieth century and can be considered as another manifestation of Sitsky’s exploration of Modernism.

Serialism

Sitsky experiments with various serial techniques in the compositions from this Modernist Period, including 12-tone serialism and integral serialism. The seven-movement *Sinfonia for 10 Players* (1964) is particularly noteworthy for its extensive use of serial procedures – particularly 12-tone serialism. In addition, The *Sinfonia* exhibits tape-recorder effects and elements of aleatoricism. However, the composition also reflects the exploratory nature of this period as Sitsky recalls that “the *Sinfonia* is the closest that I came to serialisation, and I didn’t relish the experience!”³⁰

The pitch material of the entire *Sinfonia for 10 Players* is based on a 12-tone row (see Figure 2.3).

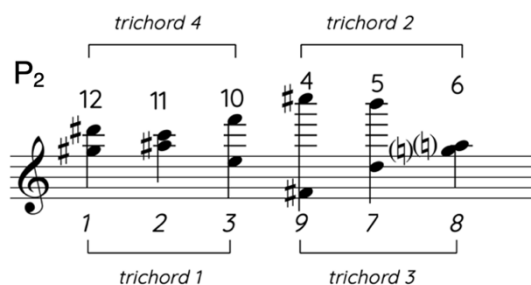
Figure 2.3: 12-tone row from *Sinfonia for 10 Players*. Prime row.



In the first movement, the 12-tone row is subject to the four main operations (original or Prime, Retrograde, Inverse, and Retrograde Inversion) and is used both harmonically and melodically. The row is often fragmented into smaller subsets. Figure 2.4 shows a fragmented and reordered permutation of the original row creating 6 dyads (see Figure 2.4).

³⁰ Larry Sitsky, email correspondence, May 30, 2020

Figure 2.4: Sitsky, *Sinfonia for 10 Players*, Mvt I, Page 1. Excerpt from xylophone Cadenza. Reordering and segmentation of the row into superimposed trichords to create six harmonic dyads. Numbers indicate position within the Prime row (see Figure 2.3).



The second movement of the sinfonia features an overlapping, constantly unfolding rhythmic canon between the violin, flute, saxophone, and double bass. This movement is a rare example of Sitsky's use of complete and exact tone row statements and contrasts with his more ubiquitous method of fragmenting the row into smaller subsets. Sitsky's dissatisfaction with rigorous serialism is reflected in the fact that he never repeated the serial approach used in this movement. In this movement the rows overlap as each instrument cycles through successive row statements at different transpositional levels (see Figure 2.5). The flute part is solely comprised of the Retrograde Inversion row whilst the other instruments cycle through the Inverse and Prime row for the duration of the movement.

Figure 2.5: Sitsky, *Sinfonia for 10 Players*, Mvt II, bars 1–20. Overlapping row statements in rhythmic canon.

The completion of the *sinfonia* and the derived *Seven Statements for Piano*³¹ can be considered as a turning point within Sitsky’s Modernist Period. Sitsky’s subsequent compositions began to exhibit less of what he referred to as “angst-ridden, angular, Germanic” application of serialism.³² After using 12-tone rows in earlier works such as *Dimensions for Piano* and *Two Tape Recorders* (1964) and *Sinfonia for 10 Players* (1964) Sitsky began to use ‘extended’ rows that repeat pitches in his 1965 opera *Fall of the House of Usher*.³³ Representative of Sitsky’s gradual transition toward a more personal idiom, the one-

³¹ The seven-movement *Sinfonia for 10 Players* was composed for the Western Australia Ballet, but was never performed, which resulted in Sitsky reworking the materials into the 1964 composition *Seven Statements for Piano*.

³² Jim Cotter, *Sitsky: Conversations with the Composer* (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2004), 94.

³³ Libretto by Gwen Harwood.

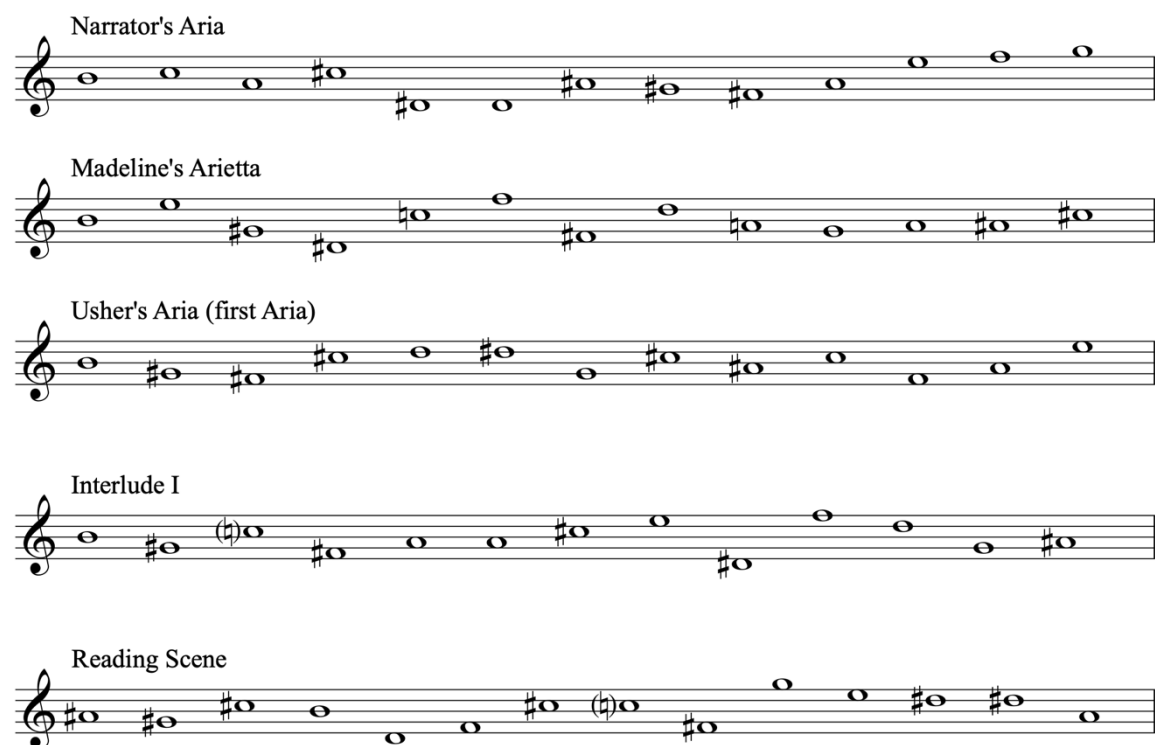
act opera is based on Edgar Allen Poe’s short story of the same name and is divided into ten distinct sections (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1: Scene structure in Sitsky’s *Fall of the House of Usher*.

Scene	Title
I	Overture
II	Narrator’s Aria
III	Usher’s First Aria
IV	Madeline’s Arietta
V	Narrator Greets Usher
VI	Usher’s Aria – with mimed death of Madeline
VII	Storm Scene
VIII	Reading Scene
IX	Usher’s Monologue
X	The Death of Usher

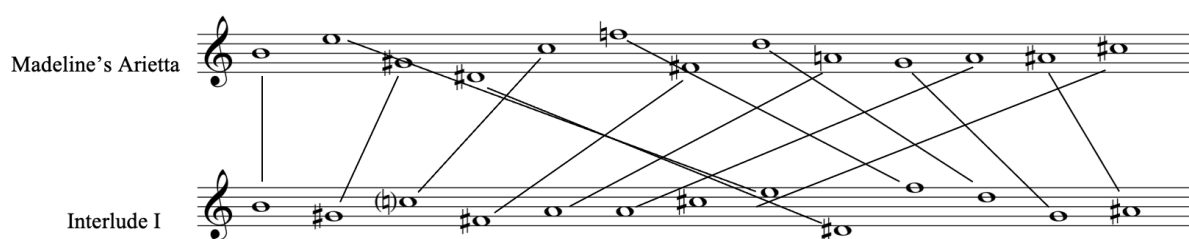
Sitsky ‘assigns’ a linear note row to each scene of the opera, which forms the pitch material of the corresponding scene (see Figure 2.6).

Figure 2.6: Character and scene note rows from *Fall of the House of Usher*.



These ‘extended’ note rows include at least 13 or 14 notes and signal a more individual application of row technique. Thus, the rows in *Fall of the House of Usher* can be considered as a subtle indicator of Sitsky’s subsequent shift away from, and personal response to, what he considered as the overtly systematic confines of serialism and dodecaphony. Sitsky furthered this method of using ‘extended’ note rows in his next compositional period as he sought a more individual approach to serialism. The rows in *Fall of the House of Usher* are subtly interrelated in their construction – often employing similar contours. Certain rows are derived from others such as the row pertaining to the Orchestral Interlude, which takes every second note from the row from Madeline’s Arietta (see Figure 2.7).³⁴ This systematic generation of rows contrasts with Sitsky’s more melodic construction of note rows in later periods. This emphasises that whilst he was searching for a more personal, expressive idiom, the works from this period are still largely Modernist in conception.

Figure 2.7: Interrelated linear rows from *Fall of the House of Usher*. Row (a) from “Madeline’s Arietta” and row (b) from the “Orchestral Interlude”.³⁵



Fall of the House of Usher is characteristic of Sitsky’s Modernist Period and includes electronic effects, such as amplified harpsichord and pre-recorded female voices. The opera is structured upon a symbolic progression from innocence to evil, which contrasts with the wider Modernist eschewal of extramusical representation in favour of formalism.³⁶ This concept of a progression, or journey unfolding across the duration of a composition becomes a recurring theme in the works from Sitsky’s later periods – highlighting his continued shift away from Modernism. The progression from innocence to evil is achieved musically through the gradual transformation of the vocal style from lyricism to *sprechstimme*. Indeed,

³⁴ See Wendy Penny and Donald Thornton for a more detailed discussion of the interrelationship between linear rows in *Fall of the House of Usher*: Penny, “The Music of Larry Sitsky,” 265; Donald Thornton, “Larry Sitsky,” in *Australian Composition in the Twentieth Century*, edited by David Tunley and Frank Callaway (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1978), 191–96.

³⁵ Penny, “The Music of Larry Sitsky,” 265.

³⁶ Simon Shaw-Miller, “Modernist Music,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Modernisms*, ed. Peter Brooker, Andrzej Gąsiorek, Deborah Longworth, and Andrew Thacker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 599–617.

in the revised version of the penultimate scene,³⁷ IX: “Usher’s monologue”, Sitsky indicates that the end of the monologue “can now be shrieked, *with no attempt at pitch at all*”.³⁸ *Fall of the House of Usher* is the first of Sitsky’s works to exhibit this theme of progression from one state to another. Thus, it can be considered as an early compositional manifestation of Sitsky’s belief in the transcendental power of music.³⁹ The fusion of this Journey Theme with Modernist devices such as pre-recorded tape, *sprechstimme* and note rows creates a non-unified sound-world and can be considered proto-Postmodern. It aligns with Kramer’s paradigm that Postmodernism “is not simply a repudiation of Modernism or its continuation but has aspects of both a break and an extension.”⁴⁰

Integral Serialism

The Concerto for Two Solo Pianos (1967) employs a type of integral serialism – representing a further example of Sitsky’s exploration of serialism. In this concerto Sitsky has built upon the concepts established in Pierre Boulez’s *Structures I* and *II* for Two Pianos (1952 and 1961 respectively), in which the French composer explored strict permutations of pitch, dynamics, and duration.⁴¹ Sitsky pushed the boundaries of the two piano combination further by exploring the possibilities of the four hands of the two pianists working as four rhythmically independent parts. Similar to the thematic procedure used in *Fall of the House of Usher* Sitsky bases the pitch material in the Concerto for Two Solo Pianos on four different “themes” or note rows: 1) Row theme, 2) Spiral theme, 3) Fragmentary theme, and 4) Chordal theme (see Table 2.2).

³⁷ Pitches were not set to the text in the original version. Sitsky, *Fall of the House of Usher*, 98–103.

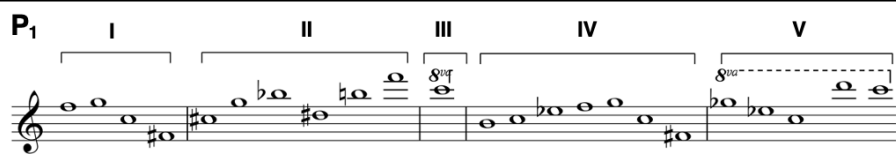
³⁸ Sitsky, *Fall of the House of Usher*, 103. Emphases are Sitsky’s own.

³⁹ “...the purpose [of music], one way or another, is to elevate the human spirit.” J.M. Crispin, *The Esoteric Musical Tradition of Ferruccio Busoni and Its Reinvigoration in the Music of Larry Sitsky: The Operas Doktor Faust and The Golem* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2007), 183.

⁴⁰ Kramer, *Postmodern Music, Postmodern Listening*, 9.

⁴¹ “Pierre Boulez.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, March 22, 2021. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Pierre-Boulez>.

Table 2.2: Materials for the four main themes in Concerto for Two Solo Pianos.

Row Theme	P₁ 
Spiral Theme	P₁ 
Fragmentary Theme	P₁ 
Chordal Theme (melodic outline)	P₁ 

These themes represent Sitsky's ongoing personalisation of serial note rows as he continued to develop his compositional language. These themes all repeat at least one pitch and, in the case of the Fragmentary Theme, omit and repeat pitches. This shift from 12-tone rows to *note* rows of unfixed quantities, especially when considered alongside the rows used in the preceding composition *Fall of the House of Usher*, is significant as it indicates Sitsky's conscious shift toward a more personalised use of rows. This verifies the concept that Sitsky's creative practice (particularly *vis à vis* Modernist compositional techniques) was undergoing constant experimentation and development in this period.

The concerto can be conceptualised in five sections and is constructed as a set of twenty-three variations that are built upon one or more of the four themes shown in Table 2.3 (see Table 2.3).

Table 2.3: Formal structure of Concerto for Two Solo Pianos.⁴²

Section	‘Variations’	Themes used
I (Beginning to RM 19)	1 - 11	• Theme I – Row theme • Theme III – Fragmentary theme • Theme IV – Chordal theme
II (RM 19 to RM 29)	Fugue	• Theme II – Spiral theme • Theme III – Fragmentary theme
III (RM 29 to RM 37)	12 - 18	• Theme I – Row theme • Theme II – Spiral theme • Theme III – Fragmentary theme • Theme IV – Chordal theme
IV (RM 37 to RM 51)	Cadenza	• Theme II – Spiral theme
V (RM 51 to end)	19 – 23 Coda	• Theme I – Row theme • Theme II – Spiral theme • Theme III – Fragmentary theme • Theme IV – Chordal theme

In Variation 1, Sitsky employs a type of integral serialism reminiscent of Boulez’s *Structures* and also Messiaen’s 1949 *Mode de valeurs et d’intensités* (‘Scheme of note values and dynamics’).⁴³ Similar to these compositions, Sitsky uses a scheme of pitches, durations, and dynamics (Messiaen also uses a ‘scheme’ of attacks). Sitsky’s scheme in the concerto is organised into four overlapping musical lines or ‘divisions’, with one division for each ‘hand’ or staff of the two pianos (see Figure 2.8).

⁴² ‘RM’ indicates Rehearsal Mark.

⁴³ Messiaen’s *Mode de valeurs et d’intensités* formed part of his four *Études de rythme*: a “study of ‘hypostatization,’ the total determination ... of a limited assemblage of sonic elements or events.” See: Richard Taruskin, *Music in the Late Twentieth Century*, vol. 5, The Oxford History of Western Music (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 23.

Figure 2.8: Sitsky, Concerto for Two Solo Pianos. Integral Serial 'Divisions' I–IV.

The image displays four musical staves, each representing a different 'Division' of integral serialism. Division I (treble clef) is marked with a 15-measure duration and includes dynamics like *pp*, *f*, *ff*, *p*, *pp*, *sfz*, *f*, and *ff*. Division II (treble clef) is marked with a 3-measure duration and includes dynamics like *p*, *pp*, *p*, *mf*, *f*, *p*, *pp*, *ff*, *mf*, *ff*, and *p*. Division III (treble clef) is marked with an 8-measure duration and includes dynamics like *pp*, *p*, *mf*, *f*, *ff*, *pp*, *mf*, *p*, *ff*, and *fff*. Division IV (bass clef) is marked with an 8-measure duration and includes dynamics like *ff*, *p*, *mf*, *f*, *p*, *p*, *pp*, *pp*, *sfz*, *f*, *mf*, and *ff*. Each division is characterized by a unique combination of pitch, duration, and dynamics.

These divisions are characterised by a unique combination of pitch, duration, and dynamics. In Variation 1 the divisions cycle through a series of repetitions. Due to their different overall durations, each division undergoes a different number of repetitions in Variation 1: Division I is repeated four times; Division II is repeated twice; Division III is repeated four times; and Division IV is stated once.

The pitch material is comprised of Sitsky's 13-note 'Row' Theme (see Table 2.2 on Page 48): Division I employs the Prime row; Division II employs the Inversion; Division III employs the Retrograde; and Division IV employs the Retrograde Inversion. Within each division, each pitch is assigned a duration. This pitch-duration assignment is mostly fixed throughout Variation 1. The durations of the divisions are constructed upon an accumulative process. Divisions I and III are based on the accumulation of demi-semiquavers, Division II is based on the accumulation of semiquavers, and Division IV is based on the accumulation of quavers. However, Sitsky's application of integral serialism in the Concerto for Two Solo Pianos is quite freely implemented – displaying his personal adaptation of the technique and his gradual search for a more rhapsodic approach to composition. For instance, the durational accumulation is only strictly observed in Division IV. Indeed, the durational accumulation is more a point of departure from which to structure the durations. Grace notes or semiquaver triplets are occasionally substituted for demi-semiquavers in Divisions I and III and occasionally some durations are altered slightly on repeat occurrences. Dynamics are

assigned to either a single pitch, or a group of pitches. In the score to the concerto, Sitsky describes the use of these schemes as “atomization” – which refers to the organisation of these elements across the four hands of the piano (see Figure 2.9).⁴⁴ Whilst the assignment of pitches, durations and dynamics is highly systematic, the occurrence and overlap of these divisions is ultimately random. This heterogeneous mixture of highly systematic procedures and chance is characteristic of Sitsky’s compositional approach in this Modernist Period.

Figure 2.9: Sitsky, *Concerto for Two Solo Pianos*, Rehearsal Mark 2, Variation 1, bars 1–12. Atomised application of four divisions (the start of each division statement is indicated with an *).

The musical score is presented in three systems, each corresponding to a rehearsal mark of 15. Each system contains staves for Piano I and Piano II. The notation includes various dynamics (pp, p, mf, f, ff) and articulations (accents, slurs). Four divisions are marked with red asterisks and labels: Division I, Division II, Division III, and Division IV. The score is divided into three systems, each with a rehearsal mark (15, 15, 15) and a first ending bracket. The notation includes various rhythmic values, including triplets and sixteenth notes, and a key signature of one sharp (F#).

⁴⁴ Sitsky, *Concerto for Two Solo Pianos*, preface.

Conclusions

Emblematic of the rise of musical Modernism in the 1960s, Sitsky's Modernist Period compositions exhibit his exploration of a wide range of contemporary Modernist compositional techniques. Sitsky's compositions from this period incorporated elements of electronic music and *musique concrète*, aleatoricism, serialism, indeterminacy, and a range of extended techniques. The satirical works composed during this period reveal Sitsky's creative discontent and his efforts to negate the conservative aesthetic environment in Australia. The way that Sitsky used Modernist devices changed across the duration of this period – signalling a gradual evolution within this timeframe. Sitsky's compositions dating from the mid-to-late 1960s still made use of serialism and elements of chance. However, the works from the late 1960s did not exhibit the same academic application of serialism, aleatoricism, and *musique concrete* that characterised the earlier satirical works. Indeed, the use of aleatoric elements and serial procedures became less systematic in works such as the opera *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1965), and the Concerto for Two Solo Pianos (1967).

Sitsky did not compose a work for solo flute in this period. Sitsky's conception of the flute as “an instrument encompassing those expressive facets of the human psyche...” suggests that he felt it incompatible with formalist, non-representational Modernism.⁴⁵ This concept is supported by Sitsky's ‘return’ to composing for solo flute in later periods. Sitsky's highly personal adaptation of serialism and aleatoricism demonstrates both creative curiosity and a process of continued stylistic evolution. Indeed, the composer's eventual shift away from Modernist techniques emphasises the exploratory nature of this period. The following chapter further investigates Sitsky's compositional exploration through a series of Expressionist works inspired by Asian and mystic sources.

⁴⁵ Larry Sitsky, *Sonata No 2 for Solo Flute, The Fourteen Days of Bardo Thödol* (Wollongong: Wirripang, 2019), programme note.

Chapter 3: Mystic Expressionism Period (1970 to 1983)

Sitsky's third compositional period "Mystic Expressionism" dates from 1970 as Sitsky's compositional style began to embrace a more Expressionistic and highly personal idiom. The 1960s gave rise to a gradual change in both public and critical reception of modern composition in Australia.¹ As the 1960s progressed, the number of concerts featuring new Australian compositions had increased and there were a number of societies, workshops and lectures devoted to the furtherance and improved understanding of new music.² The reception of Sitsky's music was reflective of the growing acceptance of contemporary music in Australia – he had gone from being mocked in newspapers for his experimentation with electronic *musique concrète*³ to being labelled as one of "Australia's leading composers".⁴

Enthusiasm for new music continued into the 1970s with further commissions, composers' workshops, and festivals either devoted to, or inclusive of new music, such as the Composers' Workshops held by the Australian Broadcasting Commission and the International Society for Contemporary Music, and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's *Australia 75* festival.⁵ Despite his own contribution to the cause for modern music in Australia,⁶ Sitsky was critical of Australian music critics' about-face *vis-à-vis* contemporary music. He believed that the critics' antics only served to "confuse" the public and that their "over-enthusiasm [for modern music] might almost make as much damage [to its reception and development] as the other extremes."⁷ Sitsky's abandonment of his 'satirical' avant-garde compositions coincides with his departure from Brisbane in 1966 due to his appointment as head of keyboard at the newly formed Canberra School of Music.

From this Mystic Expressionism Period onwards, Sitsky's creative practice bears the hallmarks of an engagement with a range of extramusical stimuli including a vast array of philosophical and mystical sources and a more obvious re-engagement with Busonian

¹ W.L. Hoffmann, "Getting to Know Today's Music," *Canberra Times*, January 19, 1967.

² W.L. Hoffmann, "Music of Our Times," *Canberra Times*, February 7, 1968; Pleiades, "Music Festival to Open on Thursday," *The Mercury*, August 17, 1965; Athol Thomas, "Success on a Shoestring," *Canberra Times*, February 23, 1968.

³ Ian Gall, "Concrete Music Recital [Cartoon]," *The Courier-Mail*, May 4, 1962.

⁴ Kenneth Hince, "Octagonal First for Perth," *The Australian*, January 1968.

⁵ The International Society for Contemporary Music, Composers' Workshop (program), 19–21 May, 1972, Papers of Larry Sitsky, MS 5630, National Library of Australia; 1974 Festival of Perth, Australian Composers' Workshop (program), 7 February 1974, Papers of Larry Sitsky, MS 5630, National Library of Australia; *Australia 75* (program), Papers of Larry Sitsky, MS 5630, National Library of Australia.

⁶ See for example: "Emergence From A Cult Of Musical Cobwebs," *Sydney Morning Herald*, December 30, 1964; Larry Sitsky, "New Music," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, April 6, 1971.

⁷ Larry Sitsky, "Recorded Interview with Larry Sitsky," interview by Hazel de Berg, *Hazel de Berg Collection of Tape Recordings*, (November 4, 1967).

philosophies. His approach to serialism became increasingly flexible, serving only an ancillary role in his compositions. When reflecting on his evolving style and the incorporation of mystic influences during the 1970s, Sitsky explains that “I had found an escape from post-World War II serialism that was at once free and logical and suited my temperament.”⁸ The Mystic Expression period was comparatively prolific for Sitsky and its twelve-year duration saw the production of five operas, numerous large-scale keyboard and instrumental works, three song-cycles, and four concerti. Due to the overwhelming number of compositions dating from this period, I outline the characteristics of this period through a discussion of selected works, namely: Sitsky’s 1973 piano work, *Twelve Mystical Preludes*; the 1972 Violin Concerto No 1 *Mysterium Cosmographicum*; *Seven Meditations on Symbolist Art* for Solo Organ (1974); the Sonata No 2 for Solo Flute, *The Fourteen Days of Bardo Thödol*; the song cycle *Music in the Mirabell Garden* (1978); and the operas, *Lenz* (1970), *The Golem* (1980), and *De Profundis* (1982).

Expressionism

The characteristics of the works from this period occupy a significant place in Sitsky’s output and are instrumental in establishing the characteristics of future compositional periods. Described by Sitsky as being “expressionistic”,⁹ the compositions from this period bear the hallmarks of expressionism exhibited in the non-serial atonal compositions by Second Viennese School composers Alban Berg and Anton Webern – in particular Berg’s opera *Wozzeck* (1914–1922).¹⁰ Together with their intensely emotional character, Sitsky’s compositions from this period are largely rhapsodic and are marked by extreme dynamic, textural and registral contrasts, long, angular melodies, and an absence of cadences. Sitsky’s treatment of rhythm, whilst still complex, becomes freer in this Mystic Expressionism Period. Indeed, Sitsky’s treatment of rhythm recalls his Early Mature Period works, such as the 1962 compositions *Fantasia No 1* for Solo Piano and the *Sonatina* for Oboe and Piano. This demonstrates similarities between these periods – emphasising that cross-fertilisation does occur. Entire compositions, or large sections of works from the Mystic Expressionism period are unbarred with irregular rhythmic and metric accents and phrase lengths. These irregular

⁸ Larry Sitsky, email correspondence, March 6, 2019.

⁹ Larry Sitsky, “Sitsky on Sitsky,” *Music Now* 1, no 4 (April 1971): 7.

¹⁰ David Fanning, “Expressionism,” in *Grove Music Online*, 2001; Accessed 18 July 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.09141>.

phrase lengths are often indicated with commas and can transition abruptly into the next phrase.

The sixth movement of Sitsky's *Seven Meditations on Symbolist Art* for Solo Organ (1974), "Odilon Redon: A Mask Tolls the Knell" clearly demonstrates the characteristics of his Mystic Expressionism Period. This movement exhibits sudden and extreme dynamic contrasts, angular melodies that exploit the wide range of the organ, and sudden shifts between contrasting thematic material (see Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1: Sitsky, *Seven Meditations on Symbolist Art*, VI: "Odilon Redon: A Mask Tolls the Knell", Page 1, Systems 4–6.¹¹ Examples of Expressionist characteristics.

The image shows a handwritten musical score for three systems of music. The notation is dense and angular, characteristic of Expressionism. Several annotations with boxes and arrows point to specific features:

- Disjunct melody – wide range:** A red box highlights a melodic line in the first system that spans a wide range of the staff.
- Abrupt shifts between ideas:** A green arrow points to a measure in the first system where the musical idea changes abruptly.
- Sudden and extreme dynamic contrasts *ff-p*:** A blue box highlights a measure in the second system showing a sharp dynamic shift from fortissimo (*ff*) to piano (*p*).
- Disjunct melody – wide range:** A red box highlights another melodic line in the third system that exploits the wide range of the organ.

Other markings include *f* (forte), *scorrevole* (scorched), *Red. v.* (Redon's voice), and *leggero* (light).

In addition to the musical characteristics listed, Sitsky's compositional approach during this period reflects the mystical inspirations and ideologies of the wider Expressionist movement in art and literature. Mysticism was a central extra-musical influence upon Sitsky's compositions in this period and became an enduring component of his creative practice in later periods.

Stylistic cross-fertilisation

Sitsky's first opera from this period, *Lenz* (1970), contains a passage of 'controlled aleatoricism' – a technique common in the preceding Modernist Period. The entire orchestra

¹¹ Larry Sitsky, *Seven Meditations of Symbolist Art for Solo Organ* (Sydney: Australian Music Centre, 1974), 22.

has repeated articulated, or *pizzicato* notes of varying rhythmic groupings that are marked *presto, ad-lib*. The notation is merely a starting point as the rhythmic realisation of this section is indeterminate – concluding after approximately 10 seconds and upon the sounding of a cue from the timpani. Despite the fact that ‘controlled aleatoricism’ is more ubiquitous in Sitsky’s Modernist period, its presence in the Mystic Expressionism period is an example of ‘cross-fertilisation’ between periods and highlights the highly organic diachronic evolution of Sitsky’s style.

Mystic ‘springboards’

Almost all of the Mystic Expressionism Period compositions have an Asian mystical or mythological stimulus. The vast majority of these works include a reference to their extramusical stimulus, what Sitsky calls a “springboard”, in their title.¹² Sitsky elucidates the role of the springboard, stating “[w]hat’s difficult to explain is that these non-musical sources are the beginning – they are not the end. That the idea, or the mythology, or a piece of poetry, starts the sound in my head. It’s not a literal interpretation.”¹³ Tables 3.1 and 3.2 below detail these springboards in relation to each work. For instance, the 1975 piano trios *Narayana* and *Atman: A Song of Serenity* draw upon Hindu concepts in their construction and the *10 Sephiroth of the Kabbalah* for SATB Choir (1974) is based on the Jewish mystic teaching of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life (see Table 3.1). Despite a personal cultural connection with these sources, Sitsky had previously not felt enabled to incorporate the influences of non-Western sources. Sitsky credits his compositional engagement with Asian and Jewish sources to the changing socio-political climate in Australia as the nation moved from a policy of assimilation to multiculturalism under the Whitlam and Fraser governments in the 1970s.¹⁴ Table 3.2 shows a full list of the non-operatic works bearing titles that refer to their extramusical source material. Sitsky’s operas are presented on a separate table to the non-operatic works from this period.¹⁵

¹² Michal Rosiak, “Mapping a Creative Symbiosis Between the Composer and the Performer” (DMA Thesis Queensland Conservatorium, 2018), 27.

¹³ Jim Cotter, *Sitsky: Conversations with the Composer* (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2004), 102.

¹⁴ Cotter, *Sitsky*, 44; Elsa Koleth, “Multiculturalism: a review of Australian policy statements and recent debates in Australia and overseas,” Parliament of Australia Research Papers, Date (8 October 2010), https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1011/11rp06.

¹⁵ Non-operatic works are presented separately in order to highlight Sitsky’s idiosyncratic use of extramusical source material for non-theatrical compositions.

Table 3.1: Non-operatic compositions from Sitsky's Mystic Expressionism Period and their extramusical influences.

Title	Extramusical influence	Source
Concerto No. 1 for violin orchestra and female voices, "Mysterium Cosmographicum" (1971)	Astronomy Busoni*	The concerto is named after the 1595 astronomy book "Mysterium Cosmographicum" by Johannes Kepler. The female chorus sings a setting of text derived from another of Kepler's mystical texts: Harmonices Mundi.
Petra (1971) <i>Solo Piano</i>	Literature	This work for solo piano is named for the Ancient city of Petra after Sitsky reading Lowell Thomas's "With Lawrence in Arabia" and is also dedicated to Sitsky's daughter who shares the same name.
A Whitman Cycle (1972) <i>Low Voice and Piano</i>	Transcendental literature	Setting of texts by transcendental poet Walt Whitman
Twelve Mystical Preludes after the Nuctemeron of Apollonius of Tyana (1973) <i>Solo Piano</i>	Ancient Greek Neopythagorean philosophy	The twelve hours of the Nuctemeron of Apollonius of Tyana are reflected in the division of the work into 12 preludes. Each of the preludes bears a subtitle pertaining to each hour of the Nuctemeron and certain words from the subtitles are symbolised in the musical material.
Eight settings after Li Po (1974) <i>Low Voice, Flute, Cello, and Piano</i>	8 th century Chinese poetry	Eight poems by 8 th century Chinese poet, Li Po (or Li Bai) are set in this work. Settings I and IV evoke aspects of the text in the musical material.
Sonata for solo guitar, "The Five Elements" (1974)	Tibetan Buddhist philosophy	The sonata is based on the five elements found in the Bardo Thödol, the "Tibetan Book of the Dead": Fire, Air, Water, Earth, and Ether (the green light). The work is divided into five interconnected subsections – one for each element.
Ten Sephiroth of the Kabbalah (1974) <i>SATB Choir</i>	Kabbalah – Jewish esoteric mysticism	Based on the Kabbalistic tree of life and its ten emanations of God, Sitsky's Ten Sephiroth of the Kabbalah is structured in ten movements. The subtitles of each movement pertain to each 'branch' of the tree of life: I, Malkuth; II, Yesod; III, Hod; IV, Netzach; V, Tiphereth; VI, Geyurah; VII, Hessed; VIII, Binah; IX, Hokhmah; X, Kether elyon.
Narayana (1975) <i>Piano Trio</i>	Hinduism	This piano trio was named for 'Narayana' – the Hindu deity known as the 'supreme' or 'eternal' being.
Atman – A Song of Serenity (1975) <i>Piano Trio</i>	Hinduism	This work for piano trio re-uses materials from Narayana and was also inspired by the Hindu term for 'essential self', or 'soul'. The instrumentation of the trio is used symbolically with the Cello part symbolising 'Atman' in its quest to achieve spiritual tranquility whilst the violin and piano symbolise the "restless influences" of the "unsteady mind and shifting passions".
The Legions of Asmodeus (1975) <i>Four Theremins</i>	Jewish legend	This work for four theremins is inspired by the Jewish legend of Asmodeus, the king of demons.
Music in the Mirabell Garden (1977) <i>Soprano and Eight Players</i>	Expressionist literature	This seven-part song cycle is set to seven poems by Austrian expressionist poet, Georg Trakl.
Sonata No. 2 for solo flute, "The Fourteen Days of Bardo Thödol" (1979)	Tibetan Buddhism	The Sonata is named for the Tibetan Book of the Dead, and features Buddhist chant as its source material.
Concerto for clarinet and strings "Santana" (1982)	Reincarnation	This concerto is inspired by the Buddhist concept of reincarnation and the title <i>Santana</i> is Sanskrit for "continuity".
Concerto for trombone, keyboards and percussion, "Kundalini" (1982)	Hinduism and Armenian philosopher Georges Gurdjieff	This concerto re-uses material from the Sonata No. 2 for Solo Flute <i>The Fourteen Days of Bardo Thödol</i> and its title is reflective of a dual extramusical influence: the Hindu concept of the 'serpent of fire' and philosopher George Gurdjieff's erroneous interpretation of said concept.

*The influence of Busoni is not obvious from the title and will be explored further in the text.

Table 3.2: List of operas from Sitsky's Mystic Expressionism Period and their extramusical influences.¹⁶

Title	Author of source text	Source Material for the Libretto
Lenz (1970)	Georg Buchner	Sitsky and Harwood's <i>Lenz</i> is an adaptation of Georg Büchner's novella of the same name. The opera is divided into seven sections and depicts the stages in the central character's psychological decline: the loss of spiritual love; the loss of physical love; rejection of other people; rejection of God; rejection of self (through attempted suicide).
Fiery Tales (1975)	Geoffrey Chaucer and Giovanni Bocaccio	The third of Sitsky and Harwood's collaborations, <i>Fiery Tales</i> is a comic opera based on tales from Middle Ages authors Geoffrey Chaucer and Giovanni Bocaccio.
Voices in Limbo (1977)		The opera explores various mystical and spiritual encounters such as spirit guides, otherworldly experiences, and "the world of demons and angels" (see footnote)
The Golem (1980)	Kabbalah (Jewish Mysticism)	<i>The Golem</i> is based on a 16 th century legend from Jewish Kabbalah (a branch of esoteric thought or mysticism).
De Profundis (1982)	Oscar Wilde	<i>De Profundis</i> is based on Oscar Wilde's letter of the same name, which was composed during the playwright's incarceration in 1897. Sitsky and Harwood's work is in seven sections and depicts the psychological journey of the author's self-reflection.

These tables present the title of the work, the mystical or philosophical influence that inspired the work, and briefly explain how the composition reflects the extramusical stimulus. It is imperative to emphasise that these works are by no means program music. Sitsky has not sought to depict the source material in his music; the springboard is merely an impetus that has inspired his creative process. However, certain aspects of the source occasionally manifest within the musical material of a composition. For instance, a numerical aspect of the springboard can influence the structure of the work such as in the *Ten Sephiroth of the Kabbalah* for SATB chorus (1974), *The Five Elements: Sonata for Solo Guitar* (1974), and *Twelve Mystical Preludes* for solo piano (1973). The number of movements in these works – 10, 5, and 12 respectively – are associated with a significant numerical aspect of their corresponding springboard (see Table 3.1). For instance, the ten movements of *The Ten Sephiroth of the Kabbalah* correspond with one of the ten emanations, or powers of God's creation depicted in Jewish mysticism, and the five movements of the Sonata for Solo Guitar relate to the five elements from the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*.

The *Twelve Mystical Preludes* for solo piano, exemplifies Sitsky's creative practice in his Mystic Expressionism Period. The work was inspired by the twelve hours of the

¹⁶ Robyn Holmes, Patricia Shaw, and Peter Campbell, *Larry Sitsky: A Bio-Bibliography*, Bio-Bibliographies in Music: No 65 (Greenwood Press, 1997), 42.

nuctemeron of the Greek philosopher, Apollonius of Tyana.¹⁷ The twelve hours of the *nuctemeron* are reflected in two different ways in Sitsky's *Twelve Mystical Preludes*: firstly, through the composition's twelve-minute duration; secondly, through its division into twelve, clearly defined sections, or movements. Each movement represents one of the twelve hours and is subtitled accordingly from the first movement "The First Hour" through to the twelfth movement "The Twelfth Hour". Each movement is also prefaced with an inscription taken from Éliphas Lévi's recount of the twelve hours of the *nuctemeron* of Apollonius.¹⁸

Occasionally, the springboard can influence other features of a composition. For example, in the *Twelve Mystical Preludes* it is possible to identify musical symbols in some preludes that reflect the inscription in the preface. The inscription prefacing the "The Eighth Hour" of the *Twelve Mystical Preludes* reads: "chains of harmony create unison between all natural things".¹⁹ This text is reflected in the musical material through 'chains' of repeating C# unisons pulsing for the duration of the movement (see Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2: Sitsky, *Twelve Mystical Preludes* for Solo Piano, VIII: "The Eighth Hour", bars 1–3. "Chain"-like repeated unisons.²⁰



Sitsky's engagement with extramusical sources can also be observed through his use of Jewish folk music in the 1980s grand opera *The Golem*, and Buddhist chant in both the Sonata No 2 for Solo Flute, *The Fourteen Days of Bardo Thödol* (1979) and the Concerto for Trombone, Keyboards and Percussion, *Kundalini* (1982). Sitsky's treatment of the original

¹⁷ The *nuctemeron* originates from ancient Assyrian transcendental magic and can be understood as "light issuing from darkness."¹⁷ The twelve hours specifically refer to the ritual in which the spirit of Apollonius is raised from "Hell to Light," which can be interpreted as a symbol for the way in which one can transcend and be liberated from the darkness of human experience. Holmes, Shaw, Campbell, *Larry Sitsky*, 42.

¹⁸ Wendy M. Penny, "The Music of Larry Sitsky," (Master of Arts Thesis, University of Queensland, 1980), 107.

¹⁹ Larry Sitsky, *Twelve Mystical Preludes for Solo Piano* (Sydney: Australian Music Centre, 1973), 31.

²⁰ Larry Sitsky, *Twelve Mystical Preludes*, 30.

Buddhist and Hebraic source material in the above compositions is not that of literal transcription but rather his own assimilation and interpretation of the folk and sacred music. Sitsky often combines his transcriptions of these sources with techniques such as multiphonics, extended techniques and atonal note rows. The composer's method of drawing upon and assimilating other musical sources in his own musical language is a key aspect of his overarching compositional practice. This method is observable in a number of compositions dating from this period onwards, which suggests that the Mystic Expressionism Period signifies the beginning of Sitsky's mature compositional voice.

Busoni influence

The influence of Busoni is significant within Sitsky's Mystic Expressionism Period compositions. This period coincided with Sitsky's scholarly engagement with Busoni's music, which ultimately resulted in Sitsky's published book *Busoni and the Piano: The Works, the Writings, and the Recordings*.²¹ Elements of Busoni's compositional theories and musical philosophy permeate Sitsky's own compositional landscape in this period. These elements range from subtle references to Busoni's compositions, such as a veiled reference of Busoni's *Doktor Faust* in Sitsky's 1970 opera *Lenz*, to modelling entire large-scale works on the Italian composer's compositions. Sitsky's 1971 Concerto No 1 for Violin, Orchestra and Female Voices, *Mysterium Cosmographicum* is modelled on Busoni's own colossal Piano Concerto Op. 39.²² Sitsky's violin concerto shares the five-movement structure of Busoni's piano concerto and where Busoni uses a male choir in the fifth movement, Sitsky uses a female choir in his concerto's fifth and final movement. Indeed, the mystical element of Sitsky's creative practice during this period can be linked to his connection with the Busoni legacy and Sitsky has acknowledged that his "attitude to music ... the mystical aspect – all that comes from that [Busonian] source ... well at least a lot of it comes from that source."²³

Sitsky's treatment of serial, aleatoric, and extended techniques in this period highlights his shift away from an overtly systematic application of Modernist compositional techniques. Sitsky has reflected on why he sought a new creative direction in this period, explaining that "what I finally found unacceptable was a situation where the process was

²¹ Larry Sitsky, *Busoni and the Piano: The Works, the Writings, and the Recordings* (New York, Greenwood Press, 1986).

²² Patricia Shaw, "Larry Sitsky's Music for Violin, and Jan Sedivka," *Context: A Journal of the Postgraduate Students of the University of Melbourne School of Music* 8, Summer (1994): 16.

²³ Larry Sitsky interviewed by Robyn Holmes, National Library of Australia, N 016.78092 H752 and NL 016.78092 H752, 1994–1996.

becoming more important than the sounds; the sound was relegated to a by-product of the process.”²⁴ Reflective of this statement, Sitsky’s use of note rows, extended instrumental techniques and elements of aleatoricism in the Mystic Expressionism Period compositions prioritises the “sound” above the “process”. For instance, in the 1979 Sonata No 2 for Solo Flute Sitsky’s use of microtonal pitch bends, multiphonics, and singing whilst playing affect the specific sound qualities of Tibetan Buddhist Chant²⁵ such as *portamento*, overtone singing, and the “nose-type” voice.²⁶ This contrasts with his satirical works from the 1960s, such as the *Dimensions for Piano and Two Tape Recorders* (1964) in which extended techniques were exploited to incite a reaction from the audience. Sitsky’s use of these techniques for representational and expressive purposes in Sonata No 2 for Solo Flute further demonstrates his adaptation of compositional techniques to suit his creative vision.

The pitch content of most of the works from this period is derived from extended note rows and chord sets. Sitsky uses rows freely in this period, adding pitches from outside the row, reordering the row, and occasionally combining the row with other thematic material. The note rows from this period include repeated pitches, and as a result, are longer than dodecaphonic tone rows; occasionally containing 20 or more notes. These extended note rows exemplify Sitsky’s shift away from dodecaphony as he sought to broaden the possibilities afforded by 12-tone rows. This can be considered as an adaptation of the serial 12-tone rows from his 1960s Modernist Period. Sitsky partitions the rows from the Mystic Expressionism period into irregular-sized subsets. Figure 3.3 shows an example of a partitioned note row from this period.

Figure 3.3: Partitioned 18-note row from *Seven Meditations on Symbolist Art*.²⁷



These subsets are used to reorder the row in a type of ‘patchwork’ method, which results in a reorganisation of the pitch and intervallic content. The segmentation and reordering of the

²⁴ Patricia Shaw, “‘Getting My Hands Dirty’: Larry Sitsky in Interview,” *Context: A Journal of the Postgraduate Students of the University of Melbourne School of Music*, no 11 (Winter 1996): 28.

²⁵ Tibetan Buddhism forms the ‘springboard’ for this work. See Table 3.1.

²⁶ Francesca Tarocco, “Buddhist Music,” *Grove Music Online*, 2001; Accessed August 29, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.04254>.

²⁷ NLA MS 5630/Folio box 43.

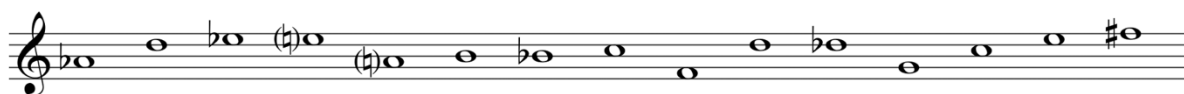
row highlights certain intervals, as some intervallic combinations recur more often when Sitsky uses certain subsets of the row more frequently. The repetition of certain intervals contributes to a sense of aural continuity in an otherwise complex texture, which reveals how Sitsky achieved unity whilst working with note-row technique.

Leitmotifs

Sitsky also employs *leitmotifs* as a means of aural continuity in this period. Sitsky's *leitmotif* technique takes three forms: (1) character-specific note rows which generate the pitch material for the vocal lines of the corresponding character (or the surrounding musical material); (2) *leitmotifs* derived from contiguous subsets of the row are assigned to a recurring keyword; and (3) *leitmotifs* of single pitches or intervals (not derived from rows) are assigned to recurring keywords. The first *leitmotif* technique is a continuation of Sitsky's earlier practice first observed in his Modernist Period opera, *Fall of the House of Usher* (1965) (see Chapter 2). In the Mystic Expressionism Period Sitsky assigns specific note rows to characters in the operas *Lenz* (1970) and *The Golem* (1980). The intervallic content of these rows contributes to continuity; however, the rows constitute a starting point only, and are often combined with pitches from outside the row or one of the other *leitmotif* techniques.

Both the first and second *leitmotif* techniques are observed in Sitsky's 1970 opera, *Lenz*. Sitsky assigns note rows to specific characters. This practice resembles Alban Berg's use of "interrelated rows ... as character motifs" in his 1937 opera *Lulu*.²⁸ Figure 3.4 shows the eponymous Lenz's note row from Sitsky's opera.

Figure 3.4: Lenz's character row from the opera *Lenz*. Prime row (P_1).



More common at the beginning of the Mystic Expressionism Period, the second technique where a motif is derived from contiguous row subsets can be considered as a precursor to the third *leitmotif* technique (discussed below). In *Lenz*, Sitsky uses a four-note *leitmotif* each time the eponymous Lenz sings the name of Frederike, or simply when Frederike is sung

²⁸ Andrew Clements, "Lulu (ii)," *Grove Music Online* 2002, 7–8; Accessed 2 April 2021. <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-5000902871>; The connection between the operas of Berg and Sitsky is discussed in more detail by Donald Thornton, see: Donald Thornton, "Larry Sitsky," in *Australian Composition in the Twentieth Century*, edited by David Tunley and Frank Callaway (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1978), 197–98.

about. This *leitmotif* is comprised of a composite segment of subsets derived from the rows R_{12} and R_{11} of Lenz's row: F, E $\flat$, E $\natural$, D (see Figure 3.5). Figure 3.5 shows the first four occurrences of the Frederike *leitmotif* and its origins from contiguous rows R_{12} and R_{11} . This "Frederike" *leitmotif* is never stated in the same setting twice – appearing in different registral combinations (and occasionally, different transpositions) at each recurrence. This subtle alteration of an otherwise repetitive cell contributes to contrast.

Figure 3.5: Sitsky, *Lenz*, I: "Lenz and Frederike in the Village Square", bars 33, 35, 36, 54–55, Lenz vocal line. "Frederike" *leitmotif*.²⁹

The figure illustrates the "Frederike" leitmotif through four musical examples and their source rows. The top section shows the motif in bars 33, 35, 36, and 54-55, each derived from a composite of pitches from rows R_{12} and R_{11} . The bottom section shows the full R_{11} and R_{12} rows, with a red box highlighting the specific pitches used in the leitmotif. A red arrow points to the text: "Frederike" leitmotif is a composite subset of these pitches.

The third *leitmotif* technique where specific pitches or intervals are assigned to recurring keywords occurs in compositions dating from the late 1970s to early 1980s, such as *Music in the Mirabell Garden* (1977), *De Profundis* (1982) and *The Golem* (1980). Similar to the Frederike *leitmotif* in Lenz, the specific pitch or interval occurs each time the corresponding keyword is stated. However, in this technique, the pitches and intervals are not derived from a note row. In *Music in the Mirabell Garden*, which is a setting of James McAuley's translation of seven poems by Georg Trakl,³⁰ Sitsky assigns pitches to a number of keywords, such as "dark" and "golden" (C and E respectively). In his 1987 analysis of *Music in the Mirabell Garden*, musicologist Lawrence Whiffin describes this technique as "recurring imagery": a "system [that] consists of illustrating each main word in a characteristic musical

²⁹ Larry Sitsky, *Lenz: an Opera in One Act* (Sydney: Australian Music Centre, 1970), 5, 6, 9.

³⁰ I: Winter Nightfall, II: Music in the Mirabell Garden, III: In a deserted room, IV: Lament, V: The farmhands, VI: In Winter, VII: Grodek: Larry Sitsky, *Music in the Mirabell Garden* (Sydney: Australian Music Centre, 1977).

way which is repeated with the recurrence of the word”.³¹ This technique is also used in Sitsky’s 1982 opera *De Profundis* where Sitsky assigns specific pitches and intervals to recurring keywords such as “season”, “sorrow”, and “terrible”. For example, “season” and “sorrow” are always set to a descending minor third: E–C# and Ab–F respectively (see Figure 3.6). “Terrible” is always set to three repeated unison Es (see Figure 3.6).

Figure 3.6: Recurring interval and pitch settings of the words: “season”, “sorrow”, and “terrible” in *De Profundis*.



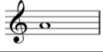
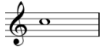
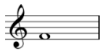
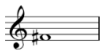
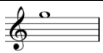
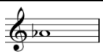
This ‘recurring imagery’ or *leitmotif* technique is another example of Sitsky’s continuing relaxation of serial procedures and demonstrates his adaptation of the first *leitmotif* technique. This reveals how Sitsky’s creative practice evolved within the Mystic Expressionism Period. Furthermore, as Whiffin also notes, there is an inverse relationship between Sitsky’s use of *leitmotifs* and note rows in *Music in the Mirabell Garden*: “the row becomes more and more loosely applied as the recurring images gradually assume the structural mantle”.³² This is also observed in Sitsky’s opera *The Golem*, which combines the third “recurring imagery” *leitmotif* technique with the first *leitmotif* technique of character note rows. In her book *The Esoteric Musical Tradition of Ferruccio Busoni and its Reinvigoration in the Music of Larry Sitsky*, Judith Crispin outlines the full list of recurring keywords and their corresponding pitches and intervals in *The Golem*. Table 3.3 provides a small sample of these keyword *leitmotifs*.³³

³¹ Lawrence Whiffin, “The Use of Recurring Imagery as a Structural Device and a Free Approach to Serialism in the Song Cycle ‘Music in the Mirabell Garden’ for Soprano and Eight Instruments by Larry Sitsky,” *Musicology Australia* 10, no 1 (January 1, 1987): 31.

³² Whiffin, “The Use of Recurring Imagery”, 31.

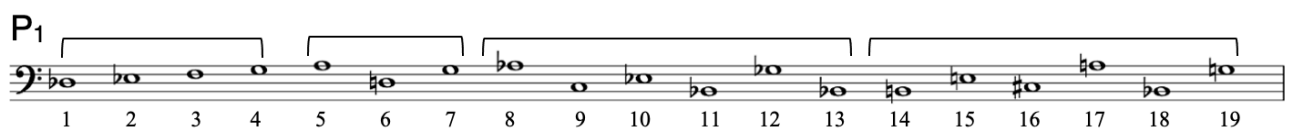
³³ Judith M. Crispin, *The Esoteric Musical Tradition of Ferruccio Busoni and Its Reinvigoration in the Music of Larry Sitsky: The Operas Doktor Faust and The Golem* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2007), 118.

Table 3.3: Judith Crispin's identification of Sitsky's assignment of specific pitches to recurring keywords in *The Golem*.³⁴

Assigned pitch	Keywords
	Soul, Bones, Cry
	One, Stars, Mouth, All, Air, Clay, If Dust, Weep, Sons, Raised, Ash
	Dogs, Man, Jews, Your, Master, Sleep, Eyes, Howl
	God, Death, Spoken, Seal, Work, Home, Speak, Down
	Thighs, Word, World, Sun, Give,
	Gold, Enemies, Light, She, Wine, Rock, Forehead
	Life, Strange, Tongue, Day, Age, Lord, Truth, Old, Child, Watch, In, Stream
	Earth, Sword
	Smoke, Name, Water, Sign, Find, Murder, Place, Night, End, Nakedness
	Fire, Face, Blood, Christians, Love, Peace, Hell
	Die, Thief, Formed, King, Bless, Drank, Drunk Voice, Books, Hair, Stones
	Holy, Burn, Come, Whore, Shadow, Fall

Sitsky also assigns a note row to each major character and combines fragments of the row with the recurring keyword *leitmotifs*. The Golem's row, which the composer partitions into four subsets, is shown in Figure 3.7.

Figure 3.7: The Golem's row from *The Golem*. Prime row.



For instance, words that are not assigned keyword *leitmotifs* are often set to pitches of the note row. Thus, the text setting includes keyword *leitmotifs* set amidst fragments of the note row (see Figure 3.8). This ancillary role of the note rows demonstrates Sitsky's evolution away from serial procedures as he explored new ways of creating aural continuity within his compositions.

³⁴ Crispin, *The Esoteric Musical Tradition*, 118. Table re-typeset by the author.

Figure 3.8: Sitsky, *The Golem*, excerpt of “The Golem’s Aria” from Act III, Scene 6, bars 1–12.³⁵ Combination of character row subsets with recurring *leitmotifs*.

The musical score is in bass clef, 4/4 time. It features three systems of music with lyrics. Red boxes highlight specific musical phrases and lyrics. Dashed boxes labeled P1, R6, P2, and P9 indicate recurring leitmotifs. The lyrics are: "now you are what I have al-ways been. You are death, si- lence, the so-li- tude of earth. You will not be raised from sleep. An- gels howl in the hol- lows be- tween the stars."

Conclusions

Sitsky’s continued shift away from post-World War II compositional techniques in his Mystic Expressionism period highlights the evolutionary nature of his style. The adoption of a more expressive idiom and personalisation of devices such as row technique and extended techniques demonstrate his shift toward a more rhapsodic style of composition. The following section analyses Sitsky’s Sonata No 2 for Solo Flute as a case study of his Mystic Expressionism Period.

Case study 2: Sonata No 2 for Solo Flute, *The Fourteen Days of Bardo Thödol* (1979)

Sitsky’s Sonata No 2 for Solo Flute, *The Fourteen Days of Bardo Thödol* (1979), was composed twenty years after his first Sonata for Solo Flute. Commissioned as the competition piece for the 1980 Flute Convention in Canberra, the Sonata No 2 for Solo Flute takes its title from the Tibetan Buddhist text, the *Bardo Thödol*.³⁶ Literally translated as “Liberation in the Intermediate State Through Hearing” the *Bardo Thödol* is more commonly known in English as the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* – a designation that refers to the ritual in which the *Bardo Thödol* is recited to recently deceased persons to guide the consciousness through the after-death plane into an auspicious rebirth.³⁷ The concept of a soul’s progression from one life to the next embodies the Journey Theme that is present in many of Sitsky’s

³⁵ Recurring *leitmotifs* identified by Judith Crispin, see: Crispin, *The Esoteric Musical Tradition*, 124–125.

³⁶ Larry Sitsky, *Sonata No 2 for Solo Flute, The Fourteen Days of Bardo Thödol* (Wollongong: Wirripang, 2019), programme note.

³⁷ *Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v. “Bardo Thödol,” accessed August 23, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Bardo-Thodol>.

compositions from his Mystic Expressionism Period, such as the operas *Lenz* (1970) and *The Golem* (1980). Furthermore, the presence of an extramusical influence, or springboard, inspired by Asian mystic ritual is typical of Sitsky’s creative practice during this period. In addition to consulting relevant literary sources on the *Bardo Thödol* and general Buddhist philosophies, Sitsky studied Buddhist chant and incorporated his findings into the sonata.³⁸ The Sonata No 2 for Solo Flute is the most overtly Modernist of all his solo flute works and reflects the considerable transformation that Sitsky’s compositional style underwent in the twenty years since his first Sonata for Solo Flute was composed.

Musical ideas and themes

Sitsky’s Sonata No 2 for Solo Flute evokes the “third stage of the Bardo, called the *Chönyid Bardo* when the Karmic apparitions appear” and is structured in two-movements: I: “The Dawning of the Peaceful Deities”, and II: “The Dawning of the Wrathful Deities”.³⁹ Both movements are built upon recurring episodes of two distinct musical ideas, 1) “Chant” and 2) “Chorale”, which are both developed as the sonata progresses. There are five “Chant” episodes and five “Chorale” episodes across the duration of the sonata. These episodes are clearly labelled as “Chant I”, and “Chorale I”, through to “Chant V” and “Chorale V”. The episodes adhere to an inverted pattern across the sonata, as the structure in the first movement is inverted in the second movement (see Table 3.4).

Table 3.4: Inverted pattern of Chant and Chorale occurrences in Sonata No 2 for Solo Flute.

Movement I	Movement II
Chant I Bars 1–13	Chorale III Bars 57–68
Chorale I Bars 14–17	Chant IV Bars 69–81
Chant II Bars 18–31	Chorale IV Bars 82–91 (presto) Bars 92–174
Chant III Bars 32–43	Chorale V Bars 175–180
Chorale II Bars 44–56	Chant V Bars 181–208

³⁸ Larry Sitsky, email correspondence, October 16, 2020.

³⁹ Sitsky, *Sonata No 2 for Solo Flute*.

The musical characteristics of the two ideas reflect the sonata's Buddhist source material, or springboard, in a number of ways. The "Chant" idea is built upon Sitsky's transcription of what he considers "pure" Buddhist chant: a slow, drone-like, monophonic and largely static melodic line that centres around the repetition of a single pitch and the notes immediately above or below.⁴⁰ The Chant idea emulates the pitch bends often employed in Tibetan Buddhist chant: exhibiting significant amounts of *portamento* and microtonal pitch bends. In addition, Sitsky exploits extended flute techniques, such as singing whilst playing. This evokes the differing tonal qualities and singing techniques employed by Tibetan Buddhist monks in traditional chant (see Figure 3.9). This material forms Primary Theme 1 (PT1).

Figure 3.9: Sitsky, Sonata No 2 for Solo Flute, Mvt I, bars 1–12. Chant I, Primary Theme 1 (PT1): "pure" form of Buddhist chant featuring frequent *portamento* and singing whilst playing.⁴¹

In addition to the drone-like Buddhist chant transcription, "Chant" episodes II–IV also contain a note row that consists of 25 notes in total. The pitches from the note row contribute to aural consistency across both movements of the sonata and can be considered as the Secondary Thematic material (ST). The note row used in the sonata is typical of a 'Sitskian' row from this period: it contains all 12 pitches but through the repetition of certain pitches, is extended to 25 notes and partitioned into smaller subsets I, II, III, and IV (see Figure 3.10).

⁴⁰ Sitsky, *Sonata No 2 for Solo Flute*, 1.

⁴¹ Sitsky, *Sonata No 2 for Solo Flute*, 3.

Figure 3.10: Secondary Theme (ST) from Sonata No 2 for Solo Flute. Partitioned 25-note row used in Chant sections.⁴² Prime row.



The “Chorale” idea is comprised of a progression of microtonal multiphonics and can be considered Primary Theme 2 (PT2) (see Figure 3.11).

Figure 3.11: Sitsky, Sonata No 2 for Solo Flute, Mvt I, bars 14–17, Chorale I.⁴³ Primary Theme 2 (PT2).



Biphonic chant, or overtone singing, is an important musical practice of Tibetan Buddhists and it involves singing a low fundamental pitch, whilst simultaneously producing overtones or partials of the fundamental.⁴⁴ The microtonal multiphonics in the Chorale episodes of Sonata No 2 can be considered as an emulative technique that refers to the Tibetan practice of overtone singing. Sitsky’s use of extended techniques to achieve this effect shows that this emulation is not merely mimicry but his personal, artistic response to the source.

It is important to note that the unique characteristics of each musical idea are contained within each particular section of the sonata. That is to say that multiphonics only occur in “Chorale” episodes, and static chant and note row permutations only occur in “Chant” episodes.

Form

Table 3.5 shows the form, themes used, overall dynamic indications, and range of each episode in the Sonata. Only the highest pitch is given in the rows pertaining to the Chorale

⁴² Row partitioning as per Sitsky’s facsimile matrix. See: NLA MS 5630/Folio box 13/7.

⁴³ Sitsky, *Sonata No 2 for Solo Flute*, 1.

⁴⁴ Carole Pegg et al., “Tibetan Music,” vol. 1, *Grove Music Online*, 2001; Accessed August 26, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.52037>.

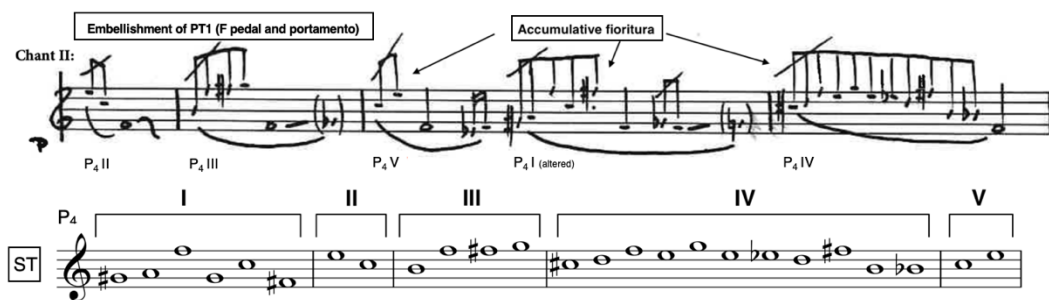
sections as it is not readily possible to aurally discern the lowest pitch during the multiphonic sections. In addition, providing the highest pitch in the table more accurately conveys the contour of the Chorale sections. The bracketed note-heads in the table indicate pitches from outside the section's normal tessitura and which are usually contained in transitional moments.

Table 3.5: Structural organisation of Sonata No 2 for Solo Flute.

Section	Theme	Dynamic	Range/ Highest Pitch	Description
Movement I				
Chant I Bars 1–13	PT1	<i>ppp</i> <i>pp</i>		• Presentation of Buddhist chant theme • Largely rhythmically and melodically static with much portamento and sections of singing and playing
Chorale I Bars 14–17	PT2	<i>p</i>		• 4-bar chorale of microtonal multiphonics
Chant II Bars 18–31	PT1 + ST	<i>p</i> <i>pp</i> <i>p</i>		• Second occurrence of Buddhist chant theme which is embellished with rapid fioritura • Fioritura pitches are statements of reordered subsets of the tone row • Introduction of key motive of percussive and rhythmic repeated unisons • Extended techniques
Chant III Bars 32–43	ST PT1	<i>mf</i> <i>f</i>		• Derived from PT1 but only peripherally refers to the monophonic drone figure • This section instead further develops the row theme, ST – expanding on the virtuosic passages and repeated unison motive from Chant II
Chorale II Bars 44–56	PT2	<i>f</i>		• 14-bar chorale of microtonal multiphonics
Movement II				
Chorale III Bars 57–68	PT2	<i>ff</i>		• 11-bar multiphonic chorale + 1 bar transition, which heralds Chant IV
Chant IV Bars 69–81	ST	<i>ff</i>		• Material based on ST • Exploitation of portamento and motive of repeated rhythmic unisons (M1)
Chorale IV Bars 82–91	PT2	<i>ff</i>		• 10-bar multiphonic chorale
(Presto) Bars 92–174	PT1 + ST	<i>pp - ff</i>		• Highly virtuosic quasi-cadenza section that builds upon M1 • Angular, rhythmic, with some polymetre. • All pitch material (with exception of chant-like repeated unisons) is derived from row subsets
Chorale V Bars 175–180	PT2	<i>fff</i>		• Indeterminate: jet whistle – highest pitch possible • 4-bar multiphonic choral • Culminates with jet-whistle + flutter tongue
Chant V Bars 181–208	PT1	<i>p - pp - ppp</i>		• Return to (slightly varied) opening monophonic chant (PT1)

The recurrence of the Chorale idea (two episodes in movement I, and three in movement II) unfolds quite simply with no additional contrasting thematic material added. In contrast, the development of the Chant sections is more complex: Chant Sections II, III, and IV and the ‘Presto’ Section feature a combination of Primary Theme 1 and the Secondary Theme. The middle Chant Sections (Chant II and Chant IV) simultaneously exploit permutations of the note row (ST), and build upon the chant characteristics of Primary Theme 1, such as melodic concentration around a recurring pitch centre, frequent *portamento*, and singing and playing. For instance, Chant II at bars 18–31 features expanding or accumulative *fioritura* embellishment of the ‘pure’ chant heard in Chant I (see Figure 3.12). The *fioritura* figures are comprised of reordered fragments from the note row of the Secondary Theme.

Figure 3.12: Sitsky, Sonata No 2 for Solo Flute, Mvt I, Chant II, bars 17–20.⁴⁵ Embellishment of the chant based on reordered segments of note row P₄ (pictured below).



In addition, Chant II presents a motive of repeated staccato unisons (see Figure 3.13).

Figure 3.13: Sitsky, Sonata No 2 for Solo Flute, Mvt I, bar 31.⁴⁶ Motive 1 based on repeated unisons.



This becomes a structurally important motive in later sections of the sonata. Indeed, Chant sections III, IV, and V all feature variants of this motive, and the Presto Section ‘grows’ out of its repetition and development (see Figure 3.14).

⁴⁵ Sitsky, *Sonata No 2 for Solo Flute*, 4.

⁴⁶ Sitsky, *Sonata No 2 for Solo Flute*, 4.

Figure 3.14: Sitsky, *Sonata No 2 for Solo Flute*, Mvt II, Presto, bars 92–113.⁴⁷ Material based on Motive 1 (see Figure 3.13) and Secondary Theme (see Figure 3.10).

Structural development

Table 3.5 also shows how dynamics, register and tessitura are used as a structural device. As is to be expected, louder dynamics, wider tessitura and higher register all contribute to an increase in intensity as the sonata progresses. Sitsky takes great care in the placement of these moments of high intensity to control the overall growth of the sonata across both movements. This provides a marked contrast with the quiet stasis of the ‘pure’ Chant Sections at the beginning and end of the sonata in Chant I and V. The dynamic column in the table shows that a clear increase in dynamics occurs in each subsequent occurrence with the exception of the final section, Chant V, which concludes the work with a pianissimo reprise of the opening Primary Theme 1. In addition, the tessitura becomes progressively wider and higher in register in each subsequent occurrence of the Chant and Chorale sections. The use of tessitura to create intensity is further observed in the Chant Sections II–IV, which become more disjunct with large registral leaps as the sonata progresses (see Figure 3.15).

⁴⁷ Sitsky, *Sonata No 2 for Solo Flute*, 9.

Figure 3.15: Sitsky, Sonata No 2 for Solo Flute, Mvt II, bars 68–70. Transition into Chant IV (Chant IV begins bar 70).⁴⁸ Disjunct tessitura.



The Presto Section can be considered as an extended cadenza. This section appears to be the exception to this overall increase in both dynamics and register as it begins *pp* (see Table 3.5). However, its dynamic progression can be considered as a microcosm of the Sonata’s overarching structure. The internal structure of the presto section imitates the overarching increase in dynamics and register of the whole sonata: beginning pianissimo and undergoing an odyssey of dynamic indications to reach fortissimo at its conclusion. Such use of register, tessitura, and dynamics as a developmental device can be considered as a symbolic, structural manifestation of the departed soul’s progression into the afterlife. The inclusion of this symbolic progression is a key feature of Sitsky’s Mystic Expressionism Period and highlights the significance of this theme within his oeuvre.

Extended techniques

Sonata No 2 for Solo Flute explores the sonic possibilities available to the modern flute and employs extended techniques such as multiphonics⁴⁹ and pitch vocalisation whilst playing. Within an historical context, the idiom of Sitsky’s Sonata No 2 for Solo Flute was consistent with wider compositional developments during the 1970s and was just one of a number of experimental solo flute compositions to materialise during this decade. Indeed, the 1970s saw the composition of landmark Modernist solo flute works such as Toru Takemitsu’s *Voice* (1970), Brian Ferneyhough’s *Unity Capsule* for Solo Flute (1976), and Karlheinz Stockhausen’s *In Freundshaft* (1979), all of which exploit various extended flute techniques such as breath sounds, multiphonics, key clicks, and unconventional effects such as spoken inflections and choreography. Sitsky’s own use of multiphonics as an extended technique in Sonata No 2 came about after a rigorous study of “The Other Flute” by Robert Dick and “The

⁴⁸ Sitsky, *Sonata No 2 for Solo Flute*, 7.

⁴⁹ Multiphonics refer to “Sounds generated by a normally monophonic instrument in which two or more pitches can be heard simultaneously.” Murray Campbell, “Multiphonics,” *Grove Music Online*, 2001; Accessed August 25, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.43536>.

Avant-Garde Flute” by Thomas Howell.⁵⁰ With the aid of these sources Sitsky made a comprehensive list of the multiphonics he felt suitable for the sonata. The multiphonics echo the subtle pitch variation of the *portamenti* in the chant sections and successive chords differ only microtonally – resulting in near-imperceptible, chant-like shifts between chords.

In her article on Buddhist music, Francesca Tarocco describes how Tibetan Buddhists employ four different tonal qualities when singing: the resonant ‘body-cavity’ voice, and the throat, mouth, and nose-type voices.⁵¹ Sitsky’s indication for the flautist to sing and play in unison can – depending on the interpretation of the performer – alternately create a nasal tone-colour alike the nose-type voice, or simulate a type of overtone singing (or indeed affect another quality of Tibetan music, such as the sound of the reed aerophone, the *rgya-gling*, or ‘Indian Trumpet’). In Sitsky’s Sonata No 2, the type of sound the flautist achieves when performing the extended techniques in the Chant and Chorale sections will affect a different singing style or instrument sound. The realisation of these extended techniques in performance will shape the analytical conclusions about which Tibetan element, if any, the composer was alluding to in his notation. Thus, a reflexive, performance led approach can result in myriad hermeneutic interpretations of Sitsky’s inclusion of this singing and playing technique. The indeterminate way in which this technique can be interpreted by the performers, and subsequently the audience, is reflective of the sonata’s purpose as a competition piece – designed to test not only technique but also interpretative ability.

Conclusions

Sitsky’s third compositional period dates from 1970 to 1982. Named the Mystic Expressionism Period for the qualities of the works and engagement with mystic sources, this period saw Sitsky’s continued shedding of post-World War II compositional techniques. This period also saw the first compositions with mystic, or mythological extramusical stimuli, or springboards – an enduring aspect of Sitsky’s creative practice. Thus, the characteristics of this period can be considered to indicate the beginning of his mature compositional practice.

Sitsky’s Sonata No 2 for Solo Flute was composed in 1979 towards the final stages of the composer’s Mystic Expressionism Period. The sonata reflects Sitsky’s engagement with a variety of mystical and philosophical springboards during this period. The sonata additionally exhibits the Expressionist characteristics typical of this period, such as angular gestures and

⁵⁰ Sitsky, *Sonata No 2 for Solo Flute*, performance notes.

⁵¹ Tarocco, “Buddhist Music”, 4.

extreme dynamic, textural and registral contrasts. Finally, the sonata is concerned with a theme of a journey or progression from one state to another – specifically, the journey of a departed soul from one life to the next. Furthermore, this sonata still exhibits the vestiges of Sitsky's exploration of contemporary Modernist techniques, with partitioned, extended note rows, extreme dissonance, and extended techniques. His expressive and free treatment of these devices in the flute sonata reflects his individual adaptation of Modernist practices in his Mystic Expressionism Period more broadly. Whilst Sitsky's use of microtones and multiphonics can be considered as an evocation of the Buddhist chant source material it is not only possible, but prudent, to consider these devices as a continuation of Sitsky's experimentation with extended techniques. Indeed, Sitsky's use of a range of extended techniques such as flutter-tongue, tongue-blocked key slaps, jet whistle, key vibrato, as well as the aforementioned singing whilst playing, *portamento*, and microtonal pitch variations is reflective of the Modernist compositional era (both Sitsky's and that of the wider compositional world) in which the Sonata No 2 was composed. Additionally, Sitsky's engagement with a wide range of extramusical sources within this period shows the enabling power of sociocultural change as a result of the introduction of multicultural policy in Australia. Having briefly explored the effects of multiculturalism on Sitsky's output in this chapter, the following chapter furthers this discussion by examining his compositions inspired by Armenian folk and sacred music.

Chapter 4: Armenian Period (1983–1986)

Sitsky's "Armenian" Period, dating from 1983–1986, exhibits his most profound shift in style and is comprised of a series of works inspired by Armenian folk music. The manifold impetuses that ignited Sitsky's profound interest in Armenian folk and sacred music are almost mystic in the fortuitous series in which they unfolded. In the 1960s, Jan Sedivka introduced Sitsky to the teachings and ideas of Armenian mystic and philosopher George Gurdjieff, which included the latter's "little-known" four-volume anthology of Armenian folksongs.¹ In 1977, the Australian Government appointed Sitsky as an emissary for the Cultural Relations Program with the Soviet Union. The Whitlam government of the early-to-mid-1970s had advocated for détente between global superpowers, and Gough Whitlam himself became the first Australian Prime Minister to visit the Soviet Union in 1975.² The Cultural Relations Program involved a series of cultural exchanges with the Soviet Union as "[t]he Government sought to cultivate positive and mutually beneficial relations with the USSR in several areas."³ The exchange enabled Sitsky to travel to Armenia and personally experience its musical culture. The cultural exchange also involved the Australian visit of Armenian composer Karen Khachaturian (nephew of the more renowned composer Aram Khachaturian). During this visit, Khachaturian alerted Sitsky to the presence of an entire generation of Russian composers who had been silenced by Soviet control – sparking Sitsky's curiosity and subsequent scholarly engagement in the history of these composers. The cultural exchanges marked what Holmes *et al.* have described as "the beginning of... [Sitsky's] long and intense period of re-engagement with Russian music" and "a distinct turning point away from the systematised techniques of his earlier works".⁴

Sitsky's renewed engagement with Russian music coincided with his exploration of Armenian folk music and symbolised a growing reconnection with his Russian ethnic heritage. Sitsky's move away from Modernism and interest in Armenian and Russian music coincided with a wider contemporaneous return to tonality. Both within Australia and abroad,

¹ Patricia Shaw, "Larry Sitsky's Music for Violin, and Jan Sedivka," *Context: A Journal of the Postgraduate Students of the University of Melbourne School of Music* 8, Summer (1994): 16.

² James Curran, *The Power of Speech: Australian Prime Ministers Defining the National Image* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2004), 95.

³ Department of Foreign Affairs, *Annual Report 1977: Parliamentary Paper No 159/1978* (Canberra: The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1977), 66. <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-1457885513/view?partId=nla.obj-1460965459>.

⁴ Robyn Holmes, Patricia Shaw, and Peter Campbell, *Larry Sitsky: A Bio-Bibliography*, Bio-Bibliographies in Music: No 65 (Greenwood Press, 1997): 32, 45.

numerous composers began rejecting Modernist aesthetics and composing in a more tonal idiom. This broader revival of more traditional melodic and harmonic principles was subject to considerable debate within Australia and created a rift of sorts between the Modernists and Postmodernists.⁵ Australian composers such as Richard Meale, Ross Edwards, Colin Brumby, and Carl Vine who chose to move away from Modernist aesthetics were criticised for their stylistic “nostalgia”⁶ and “regressions”.⁷ Sitsky was also censured by prominent contemporaries such as Barry Conyngham, Graham Hair, and Christian Wojtowicz for his move to a more tonal idiom and remembers being accused of “not being true to [him]self”.⁸ Conflicting opinions in the discourse surrounding the perceived stylistic dichotomy in Australian music continued to surface well into the 1990s as composers and critics alike considered the future direction of composition in Australia.⁹

Having visited Armenia on his trip to Russia in 1977, Sitsky returned there during another trip abroad in 1983, when he was on his second diplomatic mission to China. The composer amassed a significant collection of Russian and Armenian music during his travels and through his subsequent study of Armenian folk and sacred music at the Armenian Cultural Centre in Sydney.¹⁰ The linear and melodic qualities of Armenian folk music inspired Sitsky to complete his unfinished series of works for solo instruments, which he began in his Early Mature Period. Sitsky acknowledges the role of Armenian folk music in completing this task – citing that the “strongly melodic [qualities of the] original sources... [were] suited to various solo instruments”.¹¹

⁵ Michael Hooper, *Australian Music and Modernism, 1960-1975* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 61–69; Melanie Walters, “Crossing the Modernist-Postmodernist Divide: Performance Challenges in Late Twentieth Century Australian Flute Music: A Portfolio of Recorded Performances and Exegesis,” (Master’s thesis, The University of Adelaide, 2011), 1–5, <https://digital.library.adelaide.edu.au/dspace/bitstream/2440/69336/8/02whole.pdf>.

⁶ Walters, “Crossing the Modernist-Postmodernist Divide,” 1–5.

⁷ Hooper, *Australian Music and Modernism*, 63–64.

⁸ Larry Sitsky interviewed by Ruth Lee Martin, *Recorded Interview with Larry Sitsky*, National Library of Australia, NLA.oh-3969-0007, May 4, 2001.

⁹ Roger Covell, “An End to Modernity in Music?,” *Quadrant* 21, no 4 (1977): 22; Linda Kouvaras, Letters to the editor, *Context: Journal of Music Research*, no 3 (Winter 1992): 84; Ian Shanahan, “The Malaise of (Not Just) Australian Music,” *Context: Journal of Music Research*, no 2 (1991): 34; Walters, “Crossing the Modernist-Postmodernist Divide,” 1–5.

¹⁰ Patricia Shaw, “The Law of Three and the Law of Seven: Larry Sitsky’s Violin Concerto No 2 (1983) and the Influence of Georges Gurdjieff,” *Musicology Australia* 29, no 1 (2007): 25.

¹¹ Larry Sitsky, email correspondence, March 6, 2019.

Solo works

The above circumstances combined to cause a domino effect – resulting in an intense period of creative activity inspired by Armenian folk music in the early to mid-1980s. Sitsky's earliest engagement with Armenian music is visible in 1982, through his inclusion of a short Armenian folk-tune in his collection for young pianists, *Century*.¹² The beginning of his deeper engagement with Armenian music is marked by the composition of his second violin concerto, entitled *Gurdjieff*, in 1983. Inspired by the namesake's 'compositions'¹³ and philosophies on music, the second violin concerto draws upon Gurdjieff's Armenian folk music sources. Sitsky completed a prolific output of works for solo instruments in 1984 (see Table 4.1) after being awarded the Australian Composer's Fellowship by the Music Board of the Australia Council.¹⁴ This highlights the enabling function of statutory arts funding on Sitsky's output.

Table 4.1: Larry Sitsky's compositions for solo instruments, 1984.

Title	Year	Instrumentation
<i>Dagh</i>	1984	Solo Trumpet
Fantasia No. 5, <i>Sharagan</i>	1984	Solo Piano
Fantasia No.6 in memory of John Crocker, <i>Maherq</i>	1984	Solo Bassoon
<i>Khavar</i>	1984	Solo Trombone
<i>Mertzazil</i>	1984	Solo Horn
<i>Sayat Nova</i>	1984	Solo Oboe
<i>Armenia</i> : a Suite for Solo Saxophone	1984	Solo Saxophone
Two Pastorales	1984	Solo Flute
<i>Vartarun</i>	1984	Solo Clarinet

¹² Larry Sitsky, *Century Vol I* (Wollongong: Wirripang, 1990), No 25.

¹³ An inept musician himself, Gurdjieff required assistance with the musical notation of his music and his compositions were notated by follower, Ukrainian composer Thomas de Hartmann (1885–1956). See: Shaw, "The Law of Three and the Law of Seven," 29–30; John Mangan, "Thomas De Hartmann: A Composer's Life.," *Notes* 53, no 1 (September 1996): 18.

¹⁴ "Australia Council Awards Alumni," Australia Council for the Arts, Accessed March 19, 2021, <https://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/news/events/australia-council-awards/australia-council-awards-alumni/>; Catalogue, supplied by the composer.

Characteristics of Armenian music

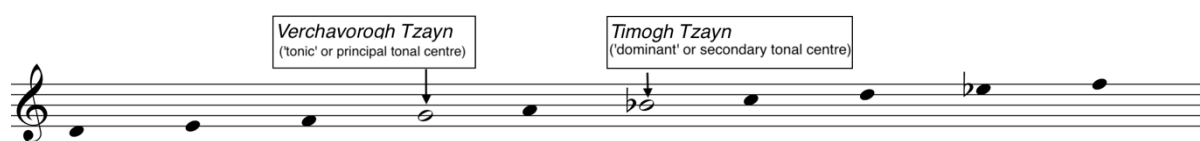
Armenian music is constructed upon its own modal system and is made up of identical overlapping tetrachords where the highest note of one tetrachord becomes the lowest note of the next (see Figure 4.1).¹⁵

Figure 4.1: Overlapping tetrachords in the basic scale used in Armenian music.¹⁶



Largely monophonic, the melodic material revolves around principal and secondary tonal centres, similar in function to the tonic-dominant basis of Western diatonicism. The *finalis* or tonic note, more correctly called the *Verchavorogh Tzayn*, usually occurs in the middle of the scale. The secondary tonal centre the *Timogh Tzayn*, which is similar in function to the dominant, occurs on either the third, fourth, or fifth degree higher than the ‘principal’, *Verchavorogh Tzayn* (see Figure 4.2).¹⁷ The modes are not equal-tempered and whilst chromaticism does not play a role in Armenian melodies, the notes below and above the principal are raised and lowered respectively – creating a centripetal gravitation towards this tonal centre.

Figure 4.2: An example of principal and secondary tonal centres in Armenian music.¹⁸



The presence of a drone is a common feature of Armenian music and is normally played by the *duduk*, a traditional double-reed instrument. Interestingly, the sustained drone note is not usually the ‘tonic’ pitch but is the secondary tonal centre, *Timogh Tzayn*. The secondary tonal

¹⁵ Hasmig Inejikian, “Sayat Nova and Armenian ‘Ashoogh’ Musical Tradition,” (Master’s dissertation, McGill University, 1992); Alina Pahlevanian, A Kerovpyan, and S Sarkisyan, “Armenia,” *Grove Music Online* 18 (2011).

¹⁶ Pahlevanian, Kerovpyan, Sarkisyan, “Armenia,” 20.

¹⁷ Inejikian, “Sayat Nova and Armenian ‘Ashoogh’ Musical Tradition,” 65–71.

¹⁸ Inejikian, “Sayat Nova and Armenian ‘Ashoogh’ Musical Tradition,” 71.

centre also assumes a melodically and metrically important role through its frequent repetitions and metric emphasis. The highly improvisatory character of the music features complex rhythms, irregular metres and phrase lengths, and, in addition to simple and compound metres, mixed metres such as 5/8, 7/8, and 11/8 are also frequently employed. The melodic structure is similar to spoken intonation and is based on the repetition of melodic and rhythmic patterns, which can undergo a vast array of permutations and embellishments.

Whilst Sitsky stresses that his exploration of Armenian music has nothing to do with “musical archaeology” in that his compositions do not seek to exhume and replicate traditional folk and sacred music, the works from this period nonetheless exhibit numerous characteristics of Armenian music in their construction.¹⁹ All but one of the works composed during the years 1983–1986 were influenced by Sitsky’s engagement with Armenian music. Additionally, most of the works feature titles derived from the Armenian language, such as *Sayat-Nova* for Solo Oboe,²⁰ and *Dagh* for Solo Trumpet.²¹ The one outlying work, the 1985 *Fantasia No 7 On a Theme of Liszt* for Piano, was commissioned by the Liszt Society to commemorate the centenary of Franz Liszt’s death. The *Fantasia* is based upon the theme from Liszt’s Hungarian Rhapsody No 14 and of the work Sitsky says, “In writing it I strove to bring to mind the many facets of Liszt’s genius: the extrovert bravura, the introvert probing, the late pieces, the *Weinen Klagen* Variations”.²² The proximity of the *Fantasia No 7* with its grounding in the Romantic piano tradition to the compositions based on Armenian sources is an example of Sitsky’s organic and complex compositional evolution. Furthermore, the commission brief from the Liszt Society highlights the importance of a springboard for Sitsky’s creative practice in that it acted as an impetus for a specific work in a specific style.

The strong linear emphasis and simple, repetitive melodic structure of Sitsky’s Armenian Period works is particularly striking, especially when considered alongside the angularity and textural complexity of Sitsky’s earlier works. Almost without exception, the melodic material of the Armenian Period works is structured around pitch centres²³ and exploits a very narrow tessitura – a factor that further distinguishes these compositions from

¹⁹ Sitsky, “*Gurdjieff*”: *Concerto No 2 for Violin and Small Orchestra* (Sydney: Australian Music Centre, 1983), 4.

²⁰ Named for the pseudonym of eighteenth-century Armenian troubadour, Aruthin Sayadian.

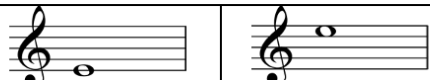
²¹ Named for a genre of Armenian music.

²² Larry Sitsky, *Fantasia No 7 on a Theme of Liszt* (Perth: The Keys Press, 2004).

²³ “Pitch” centres are used deliberately in this discussion to distinguish between the tonal qualities of Armenian music and Sitsky’s post-tonal compositions.

those found in Sitsky's earlier periods. It is important to emphasise the presence of plural pitch centres as the Armenian system of principal and secondary tonal centres discussed above – whilst not strictly employed – permeates a number of compositions such as the *Two Pastorales* for Solo Flute (1984), *Gurdjieff*: Concerto No 2 for Violin and Small Orchestra (1983), and *Mertzazil* for Solo Horn. This can be observed in Table 4.2, which presents examples of principal and secondary pitch centres used in the first movement of these three works and their correlation to the tonal centres of traditional Armenian modes.

Table 4.2: Examples of principal and secondary pitch centres in "*Gurdjieff*": Concerto No 2 for Violin and Small Orchestra, *Mertzazil*, and *Two Pastorales*.

Title	Year	Pitch Centre(s)	
"Gurdjieff": Concerto No. 2 for Violin & Small Orchestra I. Dolce, rubato	1983	Principal (<i>Verchavorogh Tzayn</i>) 	Secondary (<i>Timogh Tzayn</i>) 
Mertzazil for Solo Horn I. Cerimonioso	1984	Principal (<i>Verchavorogh Tzayn</i>) 	Secondary (<i>Timogh Tzayn</i>) 
Two Pastorales for Solo Flute I. Slow	1984	Principal (<i>Verchavorogh Tzayn</i>) 	Secondary (<i>Timogh Tzayn</i>) 

It is possible to identify a reasonably strict application of specific Armenian *tzayns* in some of the Armenian Period compositions through the traditional function of typical 'principal' and 'secondary' pitches. For example, the opening of the second movement of *Armenia: A Suite* for Solo Saxophone has a 'principal' of G and alternates between a 'secondary' of D and C (see Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3: Sitsky, *Armenia: A Suite* for Solo Saxophone, Mvt II: Allegro, bars 1–6. Principal and secondary pitch centres.



Secondary: D
Yergorrt Tzayn

Secondary: C
Tchhorrt Tzayn

A leads to
principal G

Principal - G

Principal - G

These principal and secondary pitches are representative of the natural modes *Yergrort Tzayn* and *Tchorrort Tzayn* respectively. These modes are two of three Armenian ‘minor modes’, *Tchorrort Goghm*, *Tchorrort Tzayn* and *Yergrort Tzayn*, that are related through their common tonic note G and pitch collection, which includes a ‘minor 3rd’, B $\flat$ (see Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.4: Armenian 'minor' Tzayns: *Tchorrort Goghm*, *Tchorrort Tzayn*, *Yergrort Tzayn*.²⁴



It is not unusual for these modes to shift or ‘modulate’ from one to the other, as this modulation is achieved quite simply through a shift in emphasis from the *Timogh Tzayn* of one mode to that of the other.²⁵ Sitsky’s use of this traditional melodic device imparts a distinctly Armenian flavour to the opening phrase, as the metric emphasis and frequent recurrence of the respective *Timogh Tzayn* pitches clearly evokes the sound world of Armenian music.

The rhythmic structure of the opening phrase of the suite for saxophone is similarly characteristic of Armenian music as, in addition to shifting between four contrasting metres (5/4, 4/4, 7/8 and 5/8) in the first six bars, the phrasing of the melody crosses the barlines (see Figure 4.3). Indeed, the rhapsodic nature of the irregular phrase lengths and constantly shifting metres in Armenian music fascinated Sitsky, and all of the Armenian Period works exploit this rhythmic complexity. It is interesting to note that the presence of fluctuating metres was already observable in Sitsky’s earliest mature works, including the Sonata for Solo Flute (1959).²⁶ This rhythmic characteristic can be considered as an enduring compositional feature that continues to be employed in his most recent works.

Often unbarred and unmetred, Sitsky’s Armenian works exhibit ever-varying phrase lengths, with phrases, breaths and points of repose indicated by commas and (often) a return to the principal pitch. This is clearly observable in the first movement of *Mertzazil* for Solo Horn (see Figure 4.5).

²⁴ Iniejikian, “Sayat Nova and Armenian ‘Ashoogh’ Musical Tradition,” 71.

²⁵ Iniejikian, “Sayat Nova and Armenian ‘Ashoogh’ Musical Tradition,” 71.

²⁶ See Chapter 1.

Figure 4.5: Sitsky, *Mertzazil* for Solo Horn, Mvt I. Commas indicating phrase breaks and return to pitch centres.



In the instances where time signatures are included, it is usually to facilitate a constantly shifting polymetre, as shown in the fourth movement of *Sharagan*: Fantasia No 5 for piano (1984) (see Figure 4.6). The melody, which evokes the sound of the Armenian *Quanun* through its perpetual repeated notes, features metric changes in every bar and often incorporates complex and specific internal divisions such as the 4 + 3 + 4/16 time signature found in bar 8.

Figure 4.6: Sitsky, Fantasia No 5, *Sharagan*, Mvt IV: Presto, bars 1–8. Constant polymetre and composite metre (bar 8).



It is worthwhile noting that this approach to rhythm and metre corresponded well with Sitsky's overarching aesthetic as polymetre, free rhapsodic lines, and displaced metric accents are all characteristics of his earlier (and indeed, later) works. Despite the abundant presence of Armenian influences, it is important to note that Sitsky's Armenian Period works are first and foremost modern compositions written for modern instruments in the modern era. They are emblematic of the composer's personal evocation of a sound world and they do not seek to recreate traditional folk music. This concept is also observable in Sitsky's earlier

Mystic Expressionism Period, where Tibetan Buddhist music acted as a creative impetus for the composer's personal artistic expression in the Sonata No 2 for Solo Flute (see Chapter 3). This emphasises the presence of cross-fertilisation of ideas and creative approaches between compositional periods. Furthermore, Sitsky has recognised that his engagement with Armenian music acted as a trigger for aesthetic change, stating "it's not so much that I've written Armenian music, I haven't done that. But it [Armenian music] gave me the impetus, or the strength or the inspiration to move in a new direction. I suddenly realised that good tunes were Kosher."²⁷

Stylistic cross-fertilisation

Whilst these works do reveal a shift in creative direction, there are certain compositional characteristics and devices present that are indicative of Sitsky's earlier creative practices. The collage-like incorporation of multiphonics, extended-techniques, chromaticism, and passages utilising all twelve pitches in close juxtaposition with tonal, folk-like melodies contributes to a melting-pot of musical idioms and techniques. For example, compositions such as *Armenia: A Suite for Solo Saxophone* and *Maherq* for Solo Bassoon both include multiphonic interjections within the folk melody setting (see Figures 4.7a and 4.7b).

Figure 4.7a: Sitsky, *Armenia: A Suite for Solo Saxophone*, Mvt I, bars 1–5.²⁸ Multiphonics (bars 2 and 4) interspersed with folk melodies.



²⁷ Sitsky, interviewed by Ruth Lee Martin.

²⁸ Larry Sitsky, *Armenia: A Suite for Solo Alto Saxophone* (New York: Seesaw Music, 1984), 1.

Figure 4.7b: Sitsky, *Fantasia No 6 for Solo Bassoon, Maherq*, Mvt III, bars 1–10. Multiphonics (bars 5 and 10) interspersed with folk melodies.²⁹



This combination of Modernist techniques with more traditional melodies emphasises the evolutionary nature of Sitsky’s compositional trajectory. In addition, it indicates that his move towards a more lyrical compositional style was not so much a total renunciation of his previous work as a natural extension and incorporation of new creative ideas. Sitsky’s Armenian Period works thus deconstruct a number of ‘boundaries’, through combining sources from different cultures and by challenging “‘either/or’ dichotomies”³⁰ of tradition vs progress, Modernism vs Postmodernism, and folk vs art music.³¹ Sitsky’s acknowledgement of this particular creative transformation validates the notion of an organic aesthetic evolution as he reflects that:

I’ve always thought of myself as being neither an extreme avant-gardist or [sic] an extreme conservative. I always thought I was somewhere in the middle. I’m happy to try things out and if they work for me, I’ll leave it, or use it, or if they don’t, I’ll chuck it away.³²

Musical derivation

Despite the overwhelming Armenian influence in the works from this period, it is also possible to discern a Busonian ‘heritage’ in Sitsky’s compositional approach. Sitsky likens his Armenian-inspired works to Busoni’s engagement with the music of Indigenous Americans and describes the latter’s *Indian Diary* (1915) as the “daddy” of his own

²⁹ Larry Sitsky, *Maherq Fantasia No 6, In Memory of John Crocker, for Solo Bassoon* (New York: Seesaw Music, 1987), 5.

³⁰ K. E. Goldschmitt, “Hybridity,” *Grove Music Online*, 2014, 1; Accessed February 21, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.A2256796>.

³¹ Néstor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*, trans. Christopher L. Chiappari and Silvia L. Lopez (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995); Goldschmitt, “Hybridity”; Alejandro L. Madrid, *Nor-Tec Rifa!: Electronic Dance Music From Tijuana To The World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Sunaina Marr Maira, *Desis In The House: Indian American Youth Culture in NYC* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1bw1j00.8>.

³² Larry Sitsky interviewed by Ruth Lee Martin, *Recorded Interview with Larry Sitsky*, National Library of Australia, NLA.oh-3969-0007, May 4, 2001.

Sharagan.³³ Furthermore, Busoni's practice of re-using and re-working his own and other composers' musical material is also observable in Sitsky's Armenian works. For instance, Sitsky's *Two Pastorales* for Solo Flute (1984) feature an incorporation and reworking of materials found in the first movement of *Sharagan* (1984) (see Figures 4.8a and 4.8b).

Figure 4.8a: Sitsky, *Fantasia No 5, Sharagan*, Mvt I. Theme later re-used in *Two Pastorales* for Solo Flute.

The musical score is presented in three systems, each consisting of a treble and bass staff. The first system features a melodic line in the treble staff and a wavy line in the bass staff. A red arrow points to the first measure of the treble staff. A text annotation reads: "continue ad. lib, interrupted when shown by low 'D' octave." The second system shows a more complex melodic line with triplets in the treble staff and a wavy line in the bass staff. A red arrow points to the first measure of the treble staff. The third system shows a melodic line with a quintuplet in the treble staff and a wavy line in the bass staff. A red arrow points to the first measure of the treble staff.

³³ J.M. Crispin, *The Esoteric Musical Tradition of Ferruccio Busoni and Its Reinvigoration in the Music of Larry Sitsky: The Operas Doktor Faust and The Golem* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2007), 177.

Figure 4.8b: Sitsky, *Two Pastorales* for Solo Flute, Mvt I, bars 1–6. Re-use of theme from Fantasia No 5, *Sharagan*, Mvt I. Transposed up one octave.



Similar to Busoni's method of re-use, Sitsky's material undergoes such a rigorous transformation through re-setting that it ultimately assumes its own unique character and is only subtly discernible as the same material.

Sharagan contains another example of musical borrowing, though this time of a different composer's material. The second movement quotes and is modelled on the Basso Ostinato from Russian composer Rodion Shchedrin's *Two Polyphonic Pieces* for piano (see Figures 4.9a and 4.9b).

Figure 4.9a: Rodion Shchedrin, Basso Ostinato from *Two Polyphonic Pieces for Piano*, bars 1–6.³⁴



Figure 4.9b: Sitsky, Fantasia No 5, *Sharagan*, Mvt II, bars 1–6. Quotation of Shchedrin *Basso Ostinato*.

Although this quotation is much less subtle in its reference to the original source it is by no means an exact quotation and deliberately deviates from Shchedrin's work in the notated pitches. Thus, it becomes its own creative entity. The conspicuousness of such a reference and the pronounced discrepancies suggests that this is no instance of creative exploitation, but is rather Sitsky's response to, or commentary on Shchedrin's composition. This is also reflected in Sitsky's treatment of the Armenian folk sources and his adaptation of Modernist techniques more broadly. When discussing the notion of transcription more generally in an interview with Judith Crispin, Sitsky advances the idea of a composer "writing a commentary

³⁴ Rodion Shchedrin, *Two Polyphonic Pieces: Two-Part Invention* (Moscow: Musyka, 2018), 45.

on the work of another” and describes a “transmutation” process where “the original [work] becomes almost unrecognisable.”³⁵

Conclusions

The observable influences of Armenian Folk music, Busoni’s compositional philosophies, and the teachings of Gurdjieff in this period demonstrate Sitsky’s engagement with a wide spectrum of creative sources. The presence of manifold influences highlights the accumulative nature of Sitsky’s compositional practice and evolution. The highly personal way that Sitsky incorporates these varied sources creates a musical hybrid that assumes the qualities of these elements, but which ultimately retains its own unique flavour. This musical hybrid reflects Sitsky’s cultural liminality as an immigrant within a nation that had been homogenised by nationalist narratives. Drawing upon Armenian folk sources within a Western art music frame, Sitsky’s Armenian Period works reveal his process of cultural negotiation in an era of increasing globalisation. In addition, his Armenian-inspired works reflect the socio-political climate in Australia as result of political détente and increasing acceptance of multiculturalism during this period. Whilst not composed with explicit political intent, the fusion of music from different cultures within Sitsky’s compositions from this period challenges the concept of ‘autonomous’ art production. Sitsky’s Armenian Period works show a departure from his earlier style; however, he did not totally renounce his earlier creative efforts. By dismantling aesthetic dichotomies of folk and art music (and thus, ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture) and Modernism and Postmodernism, these works reveal further stylistic hybridity. Sitsky’s tendency to ‘cherry-pick’ certain aesthetic practices and discard others has resulted in a varied, though still organic, compositional evolution. The next section considers Sitsky’s third solo flute work *Two Pastorales* for Solo Flute as a case study of his Armenian Period.

Two Pastorales for Solo Flute (1984)

Sitsky composed his third solo flute work, *Two Pastorales* in 1984. The *Pastorales* contrast significantly with Sitsky’s earlier Sonata No 2 for Solo Flute (1979), which was composed only five years earlier. This contrast epitomises the composer’s stylistic transformation that occurred between the 1970s Mystic Expressionism Period and the Armenian Period of the

³⁵ Crispin, *The Esoteric Musical Tradition*, 179.

early 1980s. As discussed in Chapter 3, the Expressionistic Sonata No 2 utilises a variety of unconventional extended techniques. In stark contrast, the *Two Pastorales* exhibit characteristics of Armenian folk music and represent the composer's return to a more tonal, lyrical idiom. Unlike Sitsky's other solo flute works, the *Two Pastorales* are not designated as a "sonata" and, in this sense, they are something of an outlier. However, as the only solo flute work composed during Sitsky's Armenian Period, and one that is clearly representative of the distinctive characteristics that identify this stylistic period, a detailed analysis of the *Two Pastorales* helps to elucidate the traits of the composer's compositional evolution.

Hindemith influence

As discussed earlier in the chapter, a period of intense compositional activity in 1984 saw Sitsky compose a series of pieces for solo wind and brass instruments based on the characteristics of Armenian folk music. Sitsky's systematic intention to compose a solo piece for all of the wind and brass instruments resembles a similar project undertaken by Paul Hindemith between 1935 and 1955, in which the German composer completed a total of twenty-six sonatas for winds, strings, piano, organ, and harp.³⁶ Motivated by a desire to contribute to what he believed to be a paucity of repertoire for the wind and brass instruments, Hindemith sought to capture the individual characteristics of each instrument in its respective sonata. The similarity of Sitsky and Hindemith's compositional projects can be considered as an additional example of Hindemith's influence on Sitsky.

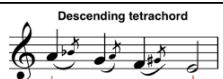
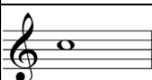
As can be ascertained from the title, the *Two Pastorales* consist of two separate movements (or 'pastorales') – each with its own unique thematic material and characteristics. This contrasts with the second sonata, where the two movements share the same thematic and motivic material. The internal structure of each movement is built upon the frequent repetition of cellular units. As detailed below, both movements exhibit characteristics of Armenian folk music such as improvisatory, monophonic melodies, the presence of principal and secondary pitch centres, irregular phrase lengths, complex shifting metres, and highly melismatic ornamentation of the melody.

³⁶ "The Sonatas," Paul Hindemith, <https://www.hindemith.info/en/life-work/biography/1933-1939/work/the-sonatas/>.

Pastorale I

The first of the *Two Pastorales* consists of three distinct thematic sections that recur to form an overall form of ABCBCB (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3: Form, tempo, pitch centre, and motives from Mvt I of *Two Pastorales*.

Section	Tempo	Pitch centre P = Principal S = Secondary	Motives	Description
A bars 1–5	Slow			• Self-quotation of theme from Fantasia No. 5, <i>Sharagan</i> • Transposed up two octaves from original • Recurrence of secondary tonal centre (B) • Repetition of descending tetrachord
B bar 6 (Page 1, systems 3–4)	Moderato		 	• Unbarred section, built on Armenian <i>Horovel</i> characteristics: • Recurrence of triplet motive (Motive 1) • Zigzag motive (Motive 2) • Chromatic obfuscation of repeated motives
C bars 7–10	Deliberately	—		• Descending scale embellished with grace notes • Expressionist: angular, uses all 12 pitches • Clear rhythmic pulse and constant time signature
B bar 11 Page 1, system 3 Page 2 systems 1–2			As above	• Exploits motives from earlier B section • Motive 1 and 2 transposed. • Uses a varied/disguised form of descending tetrachord from A
C bars 12–14	Deliberately	—	As above	• Altered repeat of earlier C section – longer fioritura figures
B bar 15 Page 2 systems 4–6			As above	• Near-exact repeat of earlier B section transposed up an octave

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the A Section of the first movement is an instance of self-borrowing and is derived from the first movement of Sitsky's Fantasia No 5, *Sharagan* for Solo Piano, which was composed in the same year. The A Section only occurs once and presents a recurring descending tetrachord that is also alluded to in the B Sections at bars 6 and 11 (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4: Descending tetrachord from the A Section and variations of the tetrachord in the B Sections.

Section	Description	
A bar 1	Descending tetrachord: T – T – ST	
B bar 6	Variation of descending tetrachord: • transposition up a minor third • reordering of intervals	
B bar 11	Variation of descending tetrachord: • transposition up a perfect fourth • reordering of intervals	

Repetition is a key structural device in the first movement. In addition to the recurrence of the B and C Sections, the internal divisions feature the repetition and development of key motives. For instance, the unbarred B Sections are structured upon the development of two motives (see Table 4.3 above): a semiquaver triplet upbeat to the sustained pitch centre (Motive 1), and a ‘zig-zag’ motive of ascending and descending 2nds and 3rds (Motive 2). The second B Section is an altered repeat of the first B Section, and the final B Section is a near-exact repeat of the beginning of the second B Section. Similarly, the second C Section is a repeat of the first C Section and differs only in its slightly shorter duration and increased embellishment.

The first pastorage largely exhibits the cantilena style of Armenian folk song and specifically resembles the Armenian *Horovelner* or ploughing song. *Horovelner* are characterised by the presence of a strong tonal centre (or centres), an improvisatory quality, monophonic lines that are melodically and rhythmically varied, and the inclusion of “powerful descending recitative phrases”.³⁷ The A and B Sections of Sitsky’s *Pastorage I* exhibit the improvisatory, monophonic cantilena style, varied rhythms and melodic phrases common to the *Horovelner*, and the C Sections feature a descending scale that is embellished with grace notes, which can be considered as a reference to the descending ‘recitative’ phrases. The A Section exhibits the Armenian modal system of principal and secondary pitch centres and has a principal pitch centre or *Verchavorogh Tzayn* of E and a secondary pitch centre or *Timogh Tzayn* of B (see Table 4.3). The secondary pitch centre, B (which can be likened to the dominant in Western diatonicism) occurs frequently and in metrically

³⁷ Pahlevanian, Kerovpyan, and Sarkisyan, “Armenia,” 5.

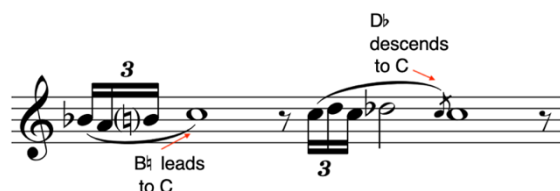
important points within the opening melody of Sitsky's *Pastorale I*. The principal pitch centre, E (alike the Western tonic) often occurs at the end of phrases or at points of repose (see Figure 4.10).

Figure 4.10: Sitsky, *Two Pastorales*, Mvt I, bars 1–2.³⁸ Principal and secondary pitch centres in A Section.



The melody in the B Sections concentrates around a single pitch centre of C and the centripetal pull of this single pitch centre is clearly observed. For instance, a narrow range is maintained within a minor third on either side of C, and occasionally, the upper and lower neighbour notes are lowered and raised respectively, enacting a strong semitonal pull (see Figure 4.11). This centripetal pull affects a tendency to move towards the pitch centre of C.

Figure 4.11: Sitsky, *Two Pastorales*, Mvt I, bar 6. Centripetal attraction towards the pitch centre with raised and lowered neighbour notes.



It is important to note that the *Two Pastorales* (like all of Sitsky's compositions dating from the Armenian period) are not merely recreations of Armenian folk tunes. Indeed, it is possible to detect characteristics of Sitsky's artistic signature in all sections of the first movement. Whilst the A and B Sections exhibit the characteristics of the Armenian *Horovelnar*, Sitsky subverts the traditional modal basis of the melody through the frequent addition of chromatic auxiliary notes. For example, a motive stated twice in immediate succession is a common feature of the B Sections and, in the second statement of the motive, at least one of the original pitches is usually chromatically altered (see Figure 4.12).

³⁸ Larry Sitsky, *Two Pastorales* (Wollongong: Wirripang, 2019), 1.

Figure 4.12: Sitsky, *Two Pastorales*, Mvt I, bar 6 (excerpt). Chromatic alteration of a repeated motivic figure.



This chromatic alteration, which is accentuated by close proximity to the ‘original,’ serves to distort, or obscure, the modal basis of the melody, and imparts a subtle Modernist aesthetic to the traditional qualities of the folk melody. In addition, Sitsky achieves contrast in this movement through the integration of other qualities typical of his Mystic Expressionism period, such as the (sparing) use of flutter tongue towards the end of the movement. The C Sections contrast markedly with the A and B Sections as they are rhythmically and metrically regular, utilise all 12 chromatic pitches, and include angular, disjunct grace notes as a means of embellishing the descending scale (see Figure 4.13).

Figure 4.13: Sitsky, *Two Pastorales*, Mvt I, bars 7–9.³⁹ Contrasting C Section featuring descending scale embellished with disjunct fioritura.



Thus, Sitsky creates a stylistic hybrid by combining Expressionist and Modernist devices with musical characteristics derived from Armenian folk music. Sitsky’s treatment of the Armenian source material can be considered as that of inspired creator rather than slavish imitator, which emphasises the importance of a springboard for the composer’s creative process.

Pastorale II: Fantastico

The unhurried, cantilena style of the *Pastorale I* contrasts markedly with the lively, unbarred, dance-like *Pastorale II*. The form of this second movement can be grouped into six sections: ABABCA. Sitsky instructs the performer to gradually crescendo over the course of the

³⁹ Sitsky, *Two Pastorales*, 1.

movement.⁴⁰ Interestingly, the A, B, and C Sections are identified by their tessitura and pitch centres rather than by their thematic or rhythmic characteristics (which largely remain similar throughout). Identifying the pitch centre of each section is made more complex by the overwhelming presence of chromatic alterations of the pitch centre, which in the A section especially, create ambiguity. For instance, B $\flat$ is the principal pitch centre of the A Section, however, the pitch centre is destabilised by the frequent recurrence of B $\sharp$ in metrically important points in the phrase. In addition, there are brief passages within the A Section where the pitch centre is A $\sharp$. Despite the fact that pitch centres are usually defined by the predictable return to a stable home pitch, this chromatic obfuscation is characteristic of Sitsky's compositional style from this period (and indeed, of later works) and can be considered as a deliberate subversion of the non-chromatic folk source material. This subversion demonstrates stylistic hybridity by challenging the aesthetic boundaries of folk and art music and also Modernism and Postmodernism. The B Sections have a clear pitch centre of E. The brief C Section has a pitch centre of A but deliberately exploits the tritonal pull between the pitches A – E $\flat$, which are the two pitches that comprise the LA-rry S-itsky signatory motif: LA= A S = E $\flat$ using cryptogrammic equivalents.

As mentioned earlier, the form of *Pastorale II* is determined by the transposition of the pitch centre and the resulting tessitura. Figure 4.14 shows the tessitura and concentration of pitches around the pitch centre in each section of the second movement. Each pitch is represented by a coloured bar from dark to light according to the number of occurrences in each section with the darkest colour indicating the most occurrences, and thus, the pitch centre. 'Outlier' pitches with only one or two occurrences are indicated with one or two asterisks respectively.

⁴⁰ Indicated in the score as "*Poco a poco cresc. al fine*". See Larry Sitsky, *Two Pastorales*, Mvt II, bar 1.

Figure 4.14: Pitch concentration and tessitura in *Two Pastorales*, Mvt II.

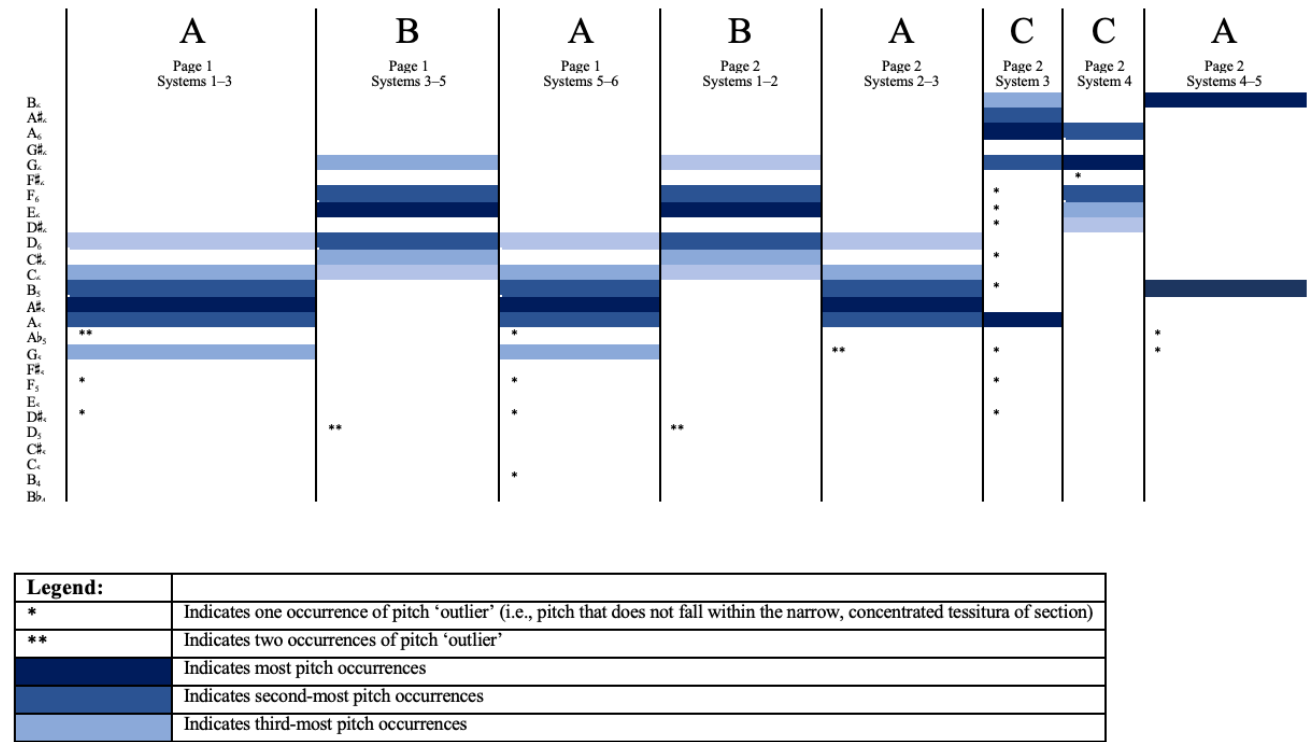
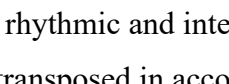


Figure 4.14 shows the clear shift in register when each section is ‘transposed’ to a new pitch centre. The narrow tessitura emphasises the centripetal pull of the pitch centre.

The thematic material of this movement is built upon the constant repetition and development of several key rhythmic cell fragments. Table 4.5 shows the cells that recur throughout the movement.

Table 4.5: Recurring cells in *Two Pastorales*, Mvt II.

C1 		C2 		C3 		C4 	
C5 		C6 		C7 		C8 	
C9 							

The rhythmic and intervallic content of these cells remains constant in each section and they are transposed in accordance with the pitch centre of the respective sections. For example, Cell 1, which acts as an upbeat to the pitch centre is comprised of the pitches A – G – A in the A Sections (pitch centre B $\flat$) and is comprised of D – C $\sharp$ – D in the B Sections (pitch centre E). Cells 7 and 8 feature repeated semiquavers in a ‘zigzag’ contour, which is built on

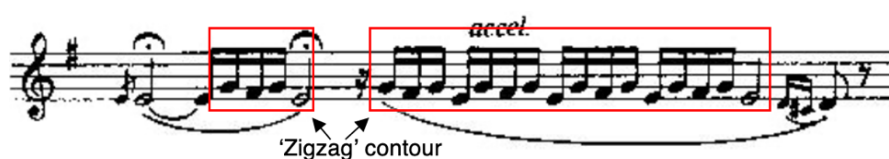
a traditional scale in thirds (up a third, down a step). These cells are usually repeated in groups of three or four, and the player is instructed to *accelerando* across this grouping (see Figure 4.15).

Figure 4.15: Sitsky, *Two Pastorales*, Mvt II, Third System. Accelerating 'zigzag' semiquaver figure based on Armenian pastoral music.⁴¹



These passages are characteristic of Armenian pastoral music that is usually played on the *Blul*, or shepherd's flute (see Figure 4.16).

Figure 4.16: 'Zigzag' contour and accelerando in an Armenian pastoral tune typically played on the *Blul*.⁴²



Conclusions

The Armenian Period dating from 1983–1986 is the fourth stylistic period identified in this thesis. A short but extremely prolific compositional period, Sitsky's Armenian Period included a series of works inspired by Armenian folk and sacred sources. Adopting qualities of Armenian music, the compositions from this period also incorporated extended techniques and chromaticism – contributing to a type of stylistic and cultural hybridity. The musical characteristics of Sitsky's *Two Pastorales* for Solo Flute (1984) are representative of this period. As was demonstrated in this chapter, the composer's Armenian Period works exhibit characteristics of Armenian folk music such as monophony, embellished melodies with strong pitch centres, and considerable repetition. In addition, Sitsky typically combines aspects of Modernism (such as extended techniques) with the folk source material – resulting in stylistic hybridity. Such hybridity reflects the contemporaneous aesthetic and social

⁴¹ Sitsky, *Two Pastorales*, 3.

⁴² Transcribed by R. At'ayan. Pahlevanian, Kerovpyan, and Sarkisyan, "Armenia," 12.

circumstances in Australia as Postmodernism and multiculturalism gained prevalence. The *Two Pastorales* exhibit specific characteristics of Armenian folk music such as the cantilena style of the *Horovelner* and the oscillating *accelerando* of pastoral tunes played on the *Blul*. Furthermore, each *Pastorale* includes strong pitch centres – similar to the principal and secondary tonal centres characteristic of Armenian folk music. Sitsky's incorporation of free chromaticism, atonality, extended techniques, and angular *fioritura* contrasts with the traditional Armenian folk sources. This fusion of styles suggests that Sitsky's compositions inspired by Armenian folk music were not an example of stylistic regression but rather a synthesis of two musical traditions. This chapter explored Sitsky's synthesis of Armenian folk music with Modernist techniques from the Western art music tradition. The following chapter further explores the concept of creative synthesis, in Sitsky's Late Mature Period.

Chapter 5: Late Mature Period (1987–2019)

In his 1922 treatise *The Essence of Music*, Ferruccio Busoni coined the term *Junge Klassizität* (“young Classicism”) as a means to elucidate his theories on the true purpose of music and composition. Busoni explains that “By ‘Young Classicism’ I mean the mastery, the sifting and the turning to account of all the gains of previous experiments and their inclusion in strong and beautiful forms.”¹ This message exemplifies the consolidatory, though still evolutionary characteristics of Sitsky’s last compositional period identified in this thesis, the Late Mature Period. Dating from 1987 to the present day, the characteristics of Sitsky’s Late Mature Period bear the hallmarks of a composer who has reached creative maturity. The synthesis and consolidation that occurred during this period should not be confused with creative stasis, as Sitsky’s compositional practice continues to evolve and develop to this day. Indeed, Sitsky repeatedly emphasises this point; connecting his constant absorption of new ideas and influences with the fact that he does not “relish the thought of repeating an aesthetic experience.”²

This period traverses the contentious “style wars” of the early 1990s, during which the Modernist and Postmodernist composers in Australia clashed over the legitimacy of their respective compositional styles.³ Initially unable to reconcile their artistic differences, a type of Postmodern pluralism gradually became the stylistic norm in Australia from the mid-1990s.⁴ Despite his neo-Romantic espousal of “kosher tunes” during his Armenian Period, Sitsky’s music never completely rejected Modernist elements. His style from this period can be considered as exhibiting its own type of Postmodern pluralism – an eclectic style combining elements of Romanticism, Modernism, and Expressionism, amongst others.

Sub-Periods

The longest of all the compositional periods identified in this thesis, Sitsky’s Late Mature Period can itself be divided into two sub-periods: 1987–2000, and 2000–present. The dates of

¹ Ferruccio Busoni, *The Essence of Music: And Other Papers* (London: Rockliff, 1957), 20–21.

² Busoni, *The Essence of Music*, 94.

³ Andrew Ford, Gerard Brophy, and Neil Currie, “Style Wars: The ‘New Complexity’ and Australian Music (Debate).,” *Sounds Australian: Journal of Australian Music* No 28, Summer (1991–1990): 6–14; Andrew Ford, “Style Wars II: The Discussion.,” *Sounds Australian: Journal of Australian Music* No 29, Summer (1991): 5–13, 20; Warren Burt, “Essay on Postmodernism,” *Sounds Australian: Journal of Australian Music* No 33, Autumn (1992): 18–24, 27.

⁴ Linda Ioanna Kouvaras, *Loading the Silence: Australian Sound Art in the Post-Digital Age* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2013), 3–13.

the prescribed sub-periods should be regarded flexibly, as there is no clear division or proverbial ‘line in the sand’. However, this subdivision is not an arbitrary construct. The year 2000 marks the composition of Sitsky’s first symphony, the *Symphony in Four Movements*. Sitsky adopted a new approach to form in composing the symphony, as he constructed the work according to a plan of unfolding dynamic gestures.⁵ Acknowledged by the composer himself as a “departure”, a number of works succeeding the symphony also exhibit this dynamic-based formal approach.⁶ In addition to this newfound approach to form, Sitsky’s creative philosophy became even freer around this time. It is important to emphasise that the post-2000 sub-period signals a gradual furtherance of the more intuitive compositional style Sitsky embraced from the beginning of the Late Mature Period. The shift at the year 2000 does not mark a new compositional period or even a distinct stylistic change: all works from the Late Mature Period (pre- and post-2000), share overarching characteristics such as the fusion of neo-Romantic and Modernist devices, increased use of mosaic forms, the inclusion of culturally diverse musical sources, a rhapsodic compositional approach, and irregular rhythms.

Sitsky’s travels to Russia and China in the 1970s and 1980s triggered his feeling of creative emancipation during this period. These voyages were something of a spiritual homecoming for the composer, who experienced a kind of cultural affirmation upon reacquaintance with his ethnic heritage. Born in China, Sitsky had never been to Russia prior to his role as emissary, but, as has been noted by Holmes *et al.*, “his first trip to Russia awakened in him an overpowering sense of returning, culturally home” as he “intuitively grasped the essence of the culture, the way people acted, thought, expressed themselves and made music.”⁷ This experience profoundly affected Sitsky’s creative output, and his music began to more fully and unapologetically incorporate Russian, Jewish and Chinese influences. Asian and Jewish mystic influences are present in Sitsky’s earlier stylistic periods, such as his Mystic Expressionism and Armenian Periods. However, the presence of these influences became more ubiquitous in his Late Mature Period, as multiculturalism became the accepted norm in Australia during the 1980s and 1990s.⁸

⁵ Jim Cotter, *Sitsky: Conversations with the Composer* (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2004), 98.

⁶ Cotter, *Sitsky*, 98.

⁷ Robyn Holmes, Patricia Shaw, and Peter Campbell, *Larry Sitsky: A Bio-Bibliography*, *Bio-Bibliographies in Music*: No 65 (Greenwood Press, 1997), 44.

⁸ Cotter, *Sitsky*, 44.

Extramusical ‘springboards’

The presence of extramusical ‘springboards’ in the Late Mature Period is a continuation of Sitsky’s earlier creative practice, which originated in his Mystic Expressionism Period of the 1970s. A significant majority of the compositions from Sitsky’s Late Mature Period are inspired by an extramusical springboard (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1: Selection of works from the Late Mature Period with an extramusical springboard.

Title	Year	Extramusical influence	Source
Concerto No. 3 for Violin and Orchestra “ <i>I Ching</i> ”: <i>The 8 Kua</i> (Trigrams)	1987	Ancient Chinese divination text	The eight trigrams of the <i>I Ching</i> – the Chinese Book of Changes, are reflected in the division of this concerto into 8 movements. Reflecting the source, the concerto evokes a Chinese sound world through pentatonic melodies.
Four Mystical Pieces for Violin and Piano, <i>Tetragrammaton</i>	1987	Hebrew name for God	This work for violin and piano is named after the four-letter transliteration of the Hebrew name for God and is inspired by Sitsky’s and dedicatee Jan Sedivka’s shared Jewish heritage.
<i>The Secret Gates of the House of Osiris</i> Flute, Viola, Cello, and Piano	1987	The Egyptian Book of the Dead	Inspired by the Egyptian Book of the Dead, the twelve movements of this composition refer to the twelve symbolic ritual stages, or “gates” of the afterlife as articulated in Egyptian mythology.
18 Aphorisms for Clarinet and Piano <i>Necronomicon</i>	1989	A fictional grimoire	This piece for clarinet and piano is named for <i>Necronomicon</i> , or “book of the dead” – a fictional grimoire created by H.P. Lovecraft.
<i>The Phantom Drummer of Tedworth</i> Solo Percussion	1990	17 th century poltergeist	This work for percussion is inspired by reported Poltergeist activity in Tedworth (now Tidworth, UK) between the years 1662–1663.
Concerto for Piano and Orchestra, <i>The 22 Paths of the Tarot</i>	1991	Esoteric Tarot	The Concerto for Piano and Orchestra is inspired by the occult practice of Tarot. The concerto is divided into 22 movements, each of which corresponds with one of the 22 Tarot cards or “trumps” of the major arcana.
Concerto No. 4 for Violin and Small Orchestra, <i>The Dreaming</i>	1998	Australian Aboriginal philosophy	Inspired by the ancient Australian Aboriginal philosophy relating to the origins of the universe, Sitsky’s Concerto No. 4 for Violin draws upon Australian Aboriginal musical sources.
<i>The Way of the Seeker</i> Solo Piano	2004	11 th century Sufi poetry	This large-scale piano solo piano work was inspired by an 11 th century text <i>Sair al-Ibad ila’l Maad</i> (“The Way of the Seeker”) by the Sufi poet Hakim Sanai.
<i>The Golden Dawn: A Suite for Solo Piano in 7 Movements</i>	2009	20 th century magical society	This suite for piano solo takes its title from an early 20th century magical society. Each movement is assigned a title from the ‘Angelic’ language “Enochian”: I: Mahorela (Dark Heavens), II: Malpirgi (Fiery Darts), III: Vinu (invoke), IV: Ser (lamentation), V: Luciftias (brightness), VI: Yor (roar), VII: Vaoan (truth)
Sonata No. 4 for Solo Flute, <i>Song of the Shaman</i>	2015	Shamanism	Sitsky’s fourth sonata for solo flute is inspired by Shamanic healing.

In addition to Chinese and Jewish sources, Sitsky's compositions demonstrate his engagement with myriad mystic sources such as the Egyptian Book of the Dead (*The Secret Gates of the House of Osiris*), Magic, Sufi poetry (*The Way of the Seeker*), and Occultism. The continued presence of an extramusical springboard in Sitsky's creative practice emphasises the diachronic process of creative synthesis that characterises the Late Mature Period. The springboard does not exert a programmatic function. However, as detailed in the discussion on Sitsky's earlier Mystic Expressionism Period, certain features of the source occasionally manifest within the musical material of a composition. For instance, in Sitsky's Late Mature Period, the springboard occasionally influences the formal structure of a work, such as in the Concerto for Piano and Orchestra, *22 Paths of the Tarot* (1991) and the chamber work *The Secret Gates of the House of Osiris* (1987). The number of movements in these works – 22 and 12 respectively – are associated with a significant numerical aspect of their corresponding springboard. The Concerto for Piano and Orchestra is divided into 22 movements, each of which correspond with one of the 22 Tarot cards or “trumps” of the major arcana.⁹ The 12-movement *The Secret Gates of the House of Osiris* is based on the 12 symbolic ritual stages, or “gates” of the afterlife, detailed in the Egyptian Book of the Dead.¹⁰

Compositional devices

Sitsky's Late Mature Period compositions exhibit an amalgamation of compositional devices from his earlier stylistic periods but also demonstrate his continued artistic exploration. Sitsky's engagement with Romantic Russian piano music in the late 1970s and 1980s prompted him to explore and more fully embrace a freer, neo-Romantic musical language.¹¹ Sitsky also began embracing more chordal textures, which is a notable contrast from the more linear writing exhibited in the Mystic Expressionism and Armenian Periods. Free from any perceived stylistic confines, Sitsky's musical language from this period shows considerable breadth: from traditional, onomatopoeic word painting of rooster crows in the 2005 song cycle for voice and viola, *Seven Zen Songs*, to pages of elbow and forearm clusters in the 2008 piano cycle *Dimensions of Night* (see Figures 5.1a and 5.1b).

⁹ Larry Sitsky, *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra* (Sydney: Australian Music Centre, 1991).

¹⁰ Holmes, Shaw, Campbell, *Larry Sitsky*, 42.

¹¹ Holmes, Shaw, Campbell, *Larry Sitsky*, 45.

Figure 5.1a: Sitsky, *Seven Zen Songs*, Mvt II.¹² Onomatopoeic word painting of rooster call – contrasting with Modernist keyboard clusters in *Dimensions of Night* (Figure 5.1b).

The image shows a musical score for a piece titled "The Rooster Crows". It features two staves: Voice (treble clef, 2/4 time) and Viola (bass clef, 3/4 time). The lyrics are "a la waltz Koo - koo roo - koo! Koo - koo roo - koo!". The score includes musical notation with annotations. A red box highlights the "Koo - koo roo - koo!" phrase in the Voice staff, with an annotation "Rooster crow emulated through ascending/descending fourth". Another red box highlights the "Koo - koo roo - koo!" phrase in the Viola staff, with an annotation "descending/ascending Major 3rd emulates bird call". The score also includes a list of two exercises: "1. Crows the cock before the morn" and "2. Ear - ly birds begin their singing;". The score is written in 2/4 time and includes a key signature of one flat (B-flat).

Rooster crow emulated through ascending/descending fourth

descending/ascending Major 3rd emulates bird call

1. Crows the cock before the morn _____

2. Ear - ly birds begin their singing; _____

Figure 5.1b: Sitsky, *Dimensions of Night*, Mvt VII: “Chant Ceremony of the Yei Gods”.¹³ Various cluster techniques.

The image shows a musical score for 'The Great Gate of Kiev' by Scriabin. It features two staves: a piano (p) staff and a celesta (cel) staff. The piano part includes markings for 'RH palms', 'chrom. elbow clusters both arms', and 'LH elbows'. The celesta part includes 'brillante' and 'molto' markings. The score is in 3/4 and 2/4 time signatures, with various accidentals and dynamic markings.

The creative synthesis that occurred during this period was tinged with a distinctively Romantic flavour. This amalgamation underlines the premise concerning consolidation and synthesis of earlier experiments. Earlier devices such as fioritura embellishment, and modal

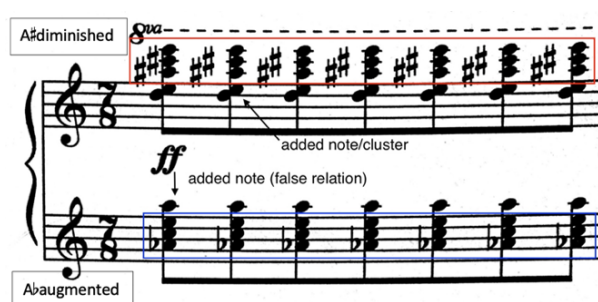
¹² Larry Sitsky, *Seven Zen Songs* (Wollongong: Wirripang, 2005), 3.

¹³ Larry Sitsky, *Dimensions of Night* (Wollongong: Wirripang, 2009), 85.

melodies from Sitsky's Armenian Period; angular, disjunct melodies, extreme textural and dynamic contrasts, and extended note rows and chord sets from the Mystic Expressionism Period, all feature throughout the Late Mature Period works. Sitsky's treatment of rhythm is typical of the irregular, shifting rhythms, metres and phrase lengths identified in all earlier periods. A rhapsodic, improvisatory rhythmic approach is also common within this period. In addition, extended techniques such as keyboard fist and forearm clusters, flutter tonguing, and *Sprechstimme* are also compositional features of the Late Mature Period. In this period, however, extended techniques do not evoke a Modernist soundscape but are instead incorporated fairly inconspicuously in an almost neo-Romantic, colouristic manner. This use of extended techniques contrasts both with the more conspicuous use in Sitsky's Modernist and Mystic Expressionism Periods. Other recurring devices from earlier periods such as chant-like melodies with frequent *portamento* inspired by Jewish and Buddhist music also feature prominently in Sitsky's Late Mature Period. Indeed, the chant topic is one of the most prevalent devices within Sitsky's later works.

In addition, a type of harmonic ambiguity is clearly observable in a number of compositions from this period. Sitsky employs a type of chromatic alteration similar in effect to the false relations of polyphonic music.¹⁴ Sitsky often alters simple chords with the addition of these chromatic alterations or juxtaposes unrelated chords simultaneously (see Figure 5.2).

Figure 5.2: Sitsky, Piano Sonata No 1, Mvt III, Page 24.¹⁵ Juxtaposition of unrelated chords including added false relations.

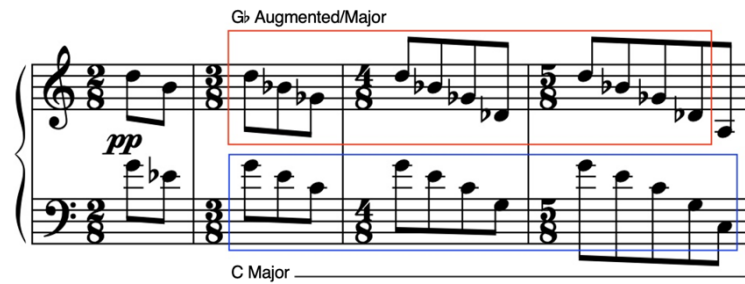


This technique is also realised through polytonal passages (see Figure 5.3).

¹⁴ George Dyson, "False Relation," *Grove Music Online*, 2001; Accessed 1 April, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.09269>.

¹⁵ Larry Sitsky, *Piano Sonata No 1*, (Wollongong: Wirripang, 2009), 24.

Figure 5.3: Sitsky, Piano Sonata No 1, Mvt I, bars 1–4.¹⁶ Polytonal arpeggios: G $\flat$ augmented/major in the right hand and C major in the left hand.



In a 1996 interview with Patricia Shaw, Sitsky explains this process, stating that “composers so inclined develop their own techniques ... in my case, a kind of deliberate ambiguity (smudging) occurs in the music to give it an enigmatic quality.”¹⁷

Note rows and chord sets

Sitsky’s use of extended note rows and chord sets continues from his Mystic Expressionism period into his Late Mature Period. Chord sets and note rows are used intermittently throughout this period and these devices are used in both the pre- and post-2000 sub-periods. The compositional weight that these devices have upon the structure of a composition vary between works. In works such as *The Secret Gates of the House of Osiris*, these pre-compositional materials act as the springboard for melodic and harmonic development and are used quite loosely with frequent deviations. This method is similar to Sitsky’s use of chord sets and note rows during his Mystic Expressionism Period (1970–1982).

A 13-note row provides the sole basis for the structural unfolding of the 17-bar composition for solo piano, *Nocturne Magique* (2011). The work is dedicated to pianist Eleonora Sivan and the row is derived from a cryptogrammic realisation of the thirteen letters of her name (see Figures 5.4a and 5.4b).

¹⁶ Sitsky, *Piano Sonata No 1*, 1.

¹⁷ Patricia Shaw, “‘Getting My Hands Dirty’: Larry Sitsky in Interview,” *Context: A Journal of the Postgraduate Students of the University of Melbourne School of Music*, no 11 (Winter 1996), 30.

Figure 5.4a: Cryptogrammic alphabet used in *Nocturne Magique*.¹⁸

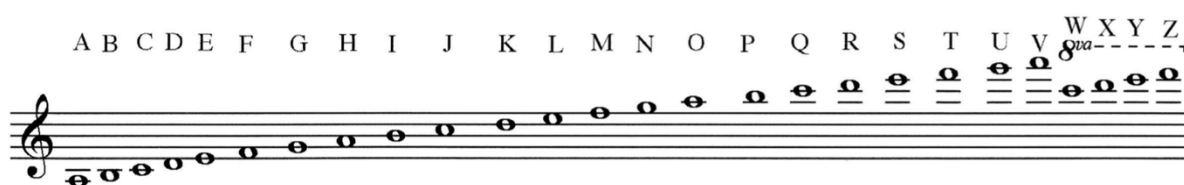
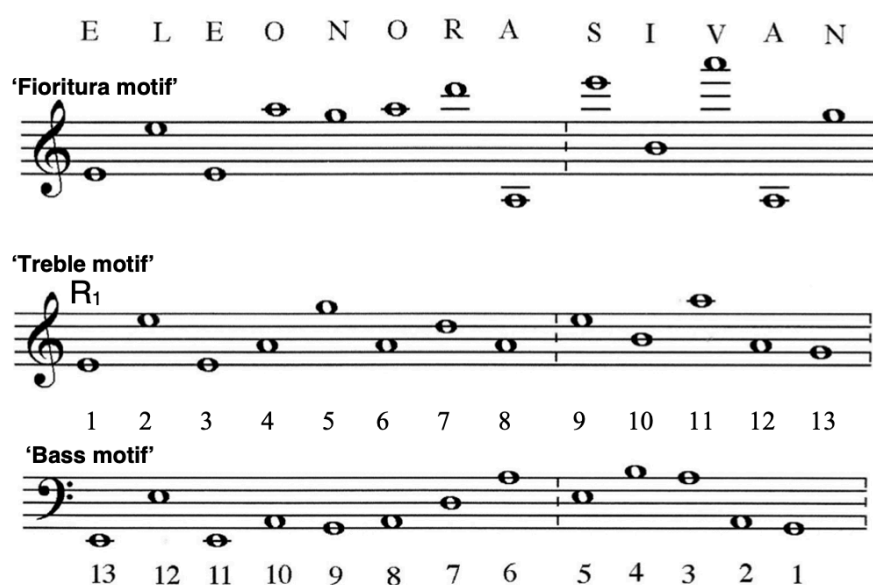


Figure 5.4b: Sitsky, *Nocturne Magique*, 13-note row based on cryptogram of the dedicatee's name ('Fioritura' motif). Derived 'Treble' and 'Bass' motifs.¹⁹



Each bar of the piece is constructed upon the row. In the score, Sitsky clearly details how the row is used in the piece's construction. There are three basic variations of the row: 1) the 'Fioritura motif' – the basic cryptogram row, 2) the 'Treble motif' – the 'Fioritura motif' adapted for the treble clef, and 3) the 'Bass motif' – the 'Fioritura motif' adapted for the bass clef (see Figure 5.4b). Throughout the piece, Sitsky adds accidentals to the row "as desired".²⁰ The work begins and ends with the 'Fioritura motif' stated forwards and backwards (bars 1–2 and bars 15–17). Each of the middle 12 bars contains material based on the 'Treble motif' in the right hand, and the 'Bass motif' in the left hand. The right hand of the piano cycles through the treble motif matrix, and Sitsky details that the left hand 'Bass

¹⁸ Larry Sitsky, *Nocturne Magique*, (Beacon Hill: The Keys Press, 2011), composer's note.

¹⁹ Sitsky, *Nocturne Magique*, composer's note.

²⁰ Sitsky, *Nocturne Magique*, composer's note.

motif “rotate[s] after 2 statements. Work with new starting bass note each time” (see Figure 5.5).²¹

Figure 5.5: Sitsky, *Nocturne Magique*, bars 3–4.²² Pitch material based on ‘Treble’ and ‘Bass’ motif permutations (see Figure 5.4b).

The figure displays two systems of musical notation, labeled R₁ and R₄, representing pitch material from Sitsky's *Nocturne Magique*. Each system consists of a treble staff and a bass staff, with a brace indicating they are part of a single system. The treble staff is labeled 'treble motif' and the bass staff is labeled 'Bass motif'. The R₁ system shows a treble motif with triplets and a bass motif with a single note. The R₄ system shows a treble motif with triplets and a bass motif with a triplet. Below the staves are numerical indices for each note, indicating their position in a sequence of 13 notes. The R₁ system has indices 2, 3, 5, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 1, 2. The R₄ system has indices 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 1, 2, 3.

With the row contributing to motivic consistency throughout the piece, Sitsky creates contrast through his setting of the row motifs. Thus, this piece can be considered as a type of theme and variations. Contrast is achieved through the rhythm, texture, register and dynamic marking of each bar.

Sitsky's monumental 10-piece solo piano cycle, *Dimensions of Night* (2008) features a chord set of 21 chords. These chords enact a similar function to the recurring *Thème d'accords* ("Theme of Chords") from Olivier Messiaen's epic cycle *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus* – contributing to aural continuity throughout the cycle.²³ Sitsky's chord set is presented in its full 21-chord format in the fourth movement, and fragments of the chord set are alluded to in earlier movements (see Figure 5.6).

²¹ Sitsky, *Nocturne Magique*, composer's note.

²² Sitsky, *Nocturne Magique*, 1.

²³ Peter Hill, "Piano Music I" in *The Messiaen Companion*, ed. Peter Hill (London: Faber and Faber, 2008). Kindle.

Figure 5.6: Sitsky, *Dimensions of Night*, Mvt IV: “Mara”, Page 31.²⁴ First presentation of 21-chord set.



This 21-chord set operates as compositional ‘signposts’ that recur in strategic moments (either in their complete set or fragmented) throughout the cycle. For example, in movement VIII: “Lord of the Smoking Mirror” the chord set is fragmented to 13 chords and occurs in a polymetric setting that is built upon additive durations. The metre, which begins 3/16, expands by one semiquaver-beat in each bar of the chord set statement – eventually reaching 15/16 (see Figure 5.7). A gradual diminuendo occurs across the 13 chords, which, when combined with the gradually expanding metre, conveys the impression of a sound disappearing into the distance. Thus, Sitsky not only uses the chord set as an aural signpost but also to communicate a progression, which can be considered as an example of his Journey Theme device in miniature.

²⁴ Sitsky, *Dimensions of Night*, 31.

Figure 5.7: Sitsky, *Dimensions of Night*, Mvt VIII: “Lord of the Smoking Mirror”, Page 88.²⁵ Fragmented, polymetric setting of the 21-chord set (see Figure 5.6).

The musical score for Figure 5.7 is a fragmented, polymetric setting of a 21-chord set. It is divided into four systems, each with a piano and a bass staff. The first system includes dynamic markings like *ppp*, *sub. ff*, and tempo markings like *secco, staccatissimo*. Chords are numbered 1 through 13 in boxes. The time signatures are 9/4, 3/16, 4/16, 5/16, 6/16, 7/16, 8/16, 9/16, 10/16, 11/16, 12/16, 13/16, 14/16, 15/16, and 16/16.

Form

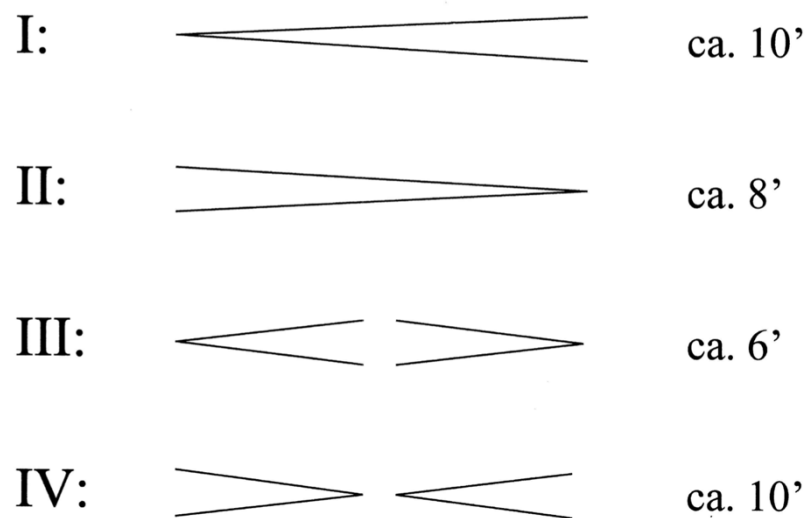
Sitsky explores new approaches to form in his Late Mature Period. In addition to structuring works upon a numerical aspect of the extramusical springboard, Sitsky also exploits different musical devices as building blocks for large-scale forms. For instance, Sitsky’s first symphony, the *Symphony in Four Movements* (2000) is structured according to a plan of unfolding dynamics. This process of formal organisation was a stylistic departure for the composer, who explained:

²⁵ Sitsky, *Dimensions of Night*, 88.

... I hadn't thought of using an envelope of dynamics as the building block of a work. The dynamics always seem to be less important than shapes, thematic development, thematic repetition, harmonic movements, all that, and suddenly I am concerned primarily with dynamics and with colour change.²⁶

Each movement of the symphony has its own overarching dynamic plan that is implemented freely in sections, rather than adhering to a rigid structure. The first movement starts very soft and progresses to very loud, the second movement reverses this plan and begins very loud, progressing to very soft. The third movement's organisation of soft–loud–soft is inverted in the fourth, which progresses from loud–soft–to loud (see Figure 5.8).

Figure 5.8: Sitsky, *Symphony in Four Movements*. Dynamic plan for movements I–IV.²⁷



This method of using dynamics as a “building block” for the form of a composition is exhibited in other works from Sitsky’s Late Mature Period, such as *Concerto for Solo Piano*, “*Apochryphon*” (2019) and *The Golden Dawn*, *Seven Pieces for Solo Piano* (2009).

However, dynamics are merely a springboard for a composition’s unfolding. The structure does not unfold overly systematically and can be better understood as a rhapsodic exploration of colour. This compositional approach reflects Sitsky’s structural freedom in this period.

Certain compositions from this period exhibit episodic forms containing contrasting episodes that are built upon a small number of musical ideas. Indeed, building a large-scale

²⁶ Cotter, *Sitsky*, 100.

²⁷ Larry Sitsky, *Symphony in Four Movements*, (Sydney: Australian Music Centre, 2001), ii.

work upon the development of a few musical ideas is a key recurring feature of Sitsky's Late Mature Period. The essential motives are often stated quite early in the piece and are weaved throughout the entire composition – contributing to continuity in an otherwise free and complex structure. The execution of this episodic approach to form evolves throughout Sitsky's Late Mature Period. In the fifteen-year sub-period before 2000, the overall development of the musical ideas and the delineation between episodes occurs rhapsodically and organically, or as Sitsky himself describes – in the manner of a “Listzian symphonic poem”.²⁸ In these pre-2000 examples of episodic form, the musical ideas form a type of motivic foundation from which the entire work, or movement grows. This organic approach to episodic form can be observed in two compositions dating from 1993: Sonata No 3 for Solo Flute, *The Jade Flute*; and the Trio No 6: *Samsara* for Flute, Clarinet, and Piano. Indeed, in the preface to *Samsara*, Sitsky explains that “raw material is constantly manipulated, within the scope of one movement, to give the semblance of different movements”.²⁹ The manipulation of the raw material underpins the growth of the trio, which contributes to aural continuity. However, the organisation of different permutations of material into a series of contrasting episodes contributes to a feeling of a constantly shifting episodic structure.

In the post-2000 sub-period, the episodic form is developed further. Certain works employ a mosaic form of recurring episodes that are built on ‘blueprints’ of unique tempo, dynamic, registral, and thematic characteristics. Sitsky's mosaic forms resemble the formal structure of Igor Stravinsky's *Symphonies of Wind Instruments* and the “mosaic” forms employed by Michael Tippett and Nigel Butterley.³⁰ In their 2006 article, “On Montage Technique,” Louis Andriessen and Elmer Schönberger describe Stravinsky's *Symphonies* as having “short, continually-returning fragments each with their own identity, abruptly alternated with contrasting structures, each of which can be defined by a limited number of characteristics.”³¹ Similarly, musicologist David Clarke describes that Tippett's mosaic forms “eschew extended developmental periods ... construct[ing] its linear sequence instead

²⁸ Larry Sitsky, *Trio No 6: “Samsara”* (Sydney: Australian Music Centre, 1993), preface.

²⁹ Sitsky, *Trio No 6*, preface.

³⁰ Nigel Butterley, *Uttering Joyous Leaves* (Sydney: Australian Music Centre, 1981); David Clarke, “Tippett, Sir Michael,” *Grove Music Online*, 2001; Accessed March 20, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.28005>; Elliott Gyger, *The Music of Nigel Butterley* (Kingsgrove: Wildbird Music, 2015).

³¹ Louis Andriessen and Elmer Schönberger, “On Montage Technique,” *The Apollonian Clockwork: On Stravinsky*, trans. Jeff Hamburg (Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 162. <http://www.jstor.org.ezp.lib.unimelb.edu.au/stable/j.ctt46n29p.33>.

through the juxtaposition of ideas, as a ‘mosaic of musical gestures.’”³² The different sound-worlds of each blueprint in Sitsky’s mosaic forms can be likened to both these descriptions: the blueprints have their own defining characteristics, which alternate without points of rhythmic or cadential closure. This contributes to an effect where each blueprint episode transforms into the next. The shared similarities of these forms highlight how Sitsky was influenced by his contemporaries, whilst the subtle differences demonstrate how he developed his own unique language.

Such works include Sitsky’s Sonata No 4 for Solo Flute, *Song of the Shaman* and Sonata No 5 for Solo Flute, *The Pied Piper*. Unlike the earlier, more rhapsodic episodic forms observed in Trio No 6 and Sonata No 3 for Solo Flute, the episodes in the later mosaic forms are clearly marked on the score either by tempo marking (Tempo I, Tempo II, or Tempo III), or by an alphabetical label (A, B, C or D). Table 5.2 shows the episodic organisation of the four blueprints in Sonata No 5 for Solo Flute, *The Pied Piper*.

Table 5.2: Organisation of blueprint episodes in Sonata No 5 for Solo Flute.

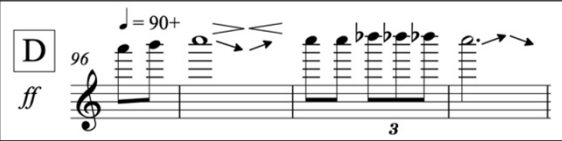
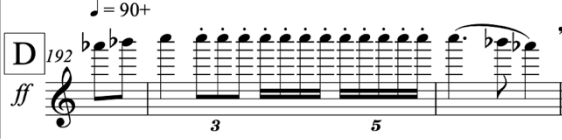
A ¹	B ¹	A ²	B ²	A ³	B ³	C ¹	A ⁴	B ⁴	C ²	D ¹	A ⁵	B ⁵	C ³	A ⁶	D ³	C ⁴	B ⁶	A ⁶	D ⁴	C ⁵	B ⁷	A ⁷
♩=70	♩=90	♩=70	♩=90	♩=70	♩=90	♩=100+	♩=70	♩=90	♩=100+	♩=90+	♩=70	♩=90	♩=100+	♩=70	♩=90+	♩=100+	♩=90	♩=70	♩=90+	♩=100+	♩=90	♩=70

Sitsky likens these contrasting blueprints to the contrasting masks, costumes, and dialects of the characters from a *Commedia dell’Arte* performance.³³ Similar to the clear distinction between characters in *Commedia dell’Arte*, the musical characteristics of Sitsky’s contrasting blueprints are preserved for the duration of the sonata. For instance, the D blueprint of Sitsky’s Sonata No 5 for Solo Flute, *The Pied Piper*, contains pitches from the flute’s highest register, and is characterised by the tempo ♩=90+, *fortissimo* dynamic marking, and its own thematic material. Each subsequent episode of this blueprint observes and preserves these musical characteristics. Table 5.3 shows how the first D blueprint episode beginning at bar 96 has the same dynamic and tempo marking, a similar tessitura, and exploits the same motivic material.

³² Clarke, “Tippett, Sir Michael”, 9.

³³ Larry Sitsky, in conversation with the author, 4 November, 2020. For further information on the contrasting characters of *Commedia dell’Arte* see for example: John Rudlin, *Commedia dell’Arte: An Actor’s Handbook* (London: Routledge, 1994), 67–162.

Table 5.3: Sitsky, Sonata No 5 for Solo Flute. Comparison of musical characteristics in episodes D1 and D3.

Section	Bars	Tempo	Dynamics	Tessitura	Excerpt
D¹	96–115	$\text{♩} = 90+$	<i>ff</i>		
D³	192–215	$\text{♩} = 90+$	<i>ff</i>		

One constant connects the organisational structure of the works in this Late Period: a rhapsodic, almost improvisatory approach to form. Indeed, both the episodic and dynamic based forms unfold freely according to an overall contour rather than a rigid compositional scheme. Thus, a sense of freedom can be observed in Sitsky’s style from this period, which is inclusive of the freedom to experiment further.

The Way of the Seeker

The Way of the Seeker for Solo Piano (2004) exemplifies Sitsky’s creative evolution in his Late Period. This monumental work exhibits a shift towards the rhapsodic, improvisatory style of composition. However, it is also constructed upon several key motives and an unfolding plan of dynamics: each movement is given a “predominant dynamic marking” that the performer must keep in mind.³⁴ Inspired by an eleventh century Sufi text by the poet Hakim Sanai, *The Way of the Seeker* is structured in six movements, according to Sitsky’s own six-part division of the epic poem. The inner four movements of *The Way of the Seeker* outline what Sitsky himself calls a “progression from darkness to light” and each of these movements is subtitled according to the different stages of the journey: “Birth”, “The Guide”, “The Journey”, and “Beyond Time”.³⁵ This exemplifies the Journey Theme underpinning the majority of Sitsky’s mature compositions. Thus, *The Way of the Seeker* is not only inspired by an extramusical springboard, but its construction reflects aspects of the source. Whilst not programmatic, the text also informs and influences aspects of the musical material. For instance, Sitsky explains that “when the poem goes into highly coloured

³⁴ Larry Sitsky, *The Way of the Seeker* (Wollongong: Wirripang, 2016), note by the composer.

³⁵ The two outer movements are subtitled Prologue and Epilogue. Larry Sitsky; Michael Kieran Harvey, *The Way of the Seeker*, Move MD 3309, 2006, compact disc.

embryonic development of a small number of melodic fragments that are presented in the first movement, which is a key characteristic of Sitsky's Late Mature Period. These motives recur at critical moments throughout the work – forming what Sitsky refers to as musical “signposts”.⁴⁰ *The Way of the Seeker* features a central motive that consists of rhythmically irregular, chant-like repeated unisons. Stated quite early in the piece, this motive is embellished in subsequent developments (see Figures 5.10a and 5.10b).

Figure 5.10a: Sitsky, *The Way of the Seeker*. Chant-like motive from Mvt I: “Birth”.⁴¹



Figure 5.10b: Sitsky, *The Way of the Seeker*, Mvt V: “Beyond Time”, Page 76. Embellished permutation of chant motive from Mvt I: “Birth”.

The sparse texture and serene mood of this chant figure contrasts with the dense, loud and disjunct qualities of the earlier excerpts (see Figures 5.9a and 5.9b). Thus, *The Way of the Seeker* exemplifies the compositional characteristics of the period through the juxtaposition of sparse and dense textures, contrasting moods, and extreme dynamic contrasts. Additionally, this composition is significant for its implicit rejection of contemporaneous socio-political constructs. In the midst of the contentious “War on Terror” in the early 2000s,⁴² Sitsky’s salutation to Sufi culture provided an alternate viewpoint to the political

⁴⁰ Sitsky; Harvey, *The Way of the Seeker*, Move MD 3309, 2006, compact disc.

⁴¹ Sitsky, *The Way of the Seeker*, 18.

⁴² R. Jackson, "War on terrorism," *Encyclopedia Britannica*; Accessed April 1, 2021. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/war-on-terrorism>.

Othering of Islamic culture.⁴³ In this sense, Sitsky knowingly positions himself outside of society, which further reinforces Sitsky's creative nonconformity during this period.

Conclusions

The longest of Sitsky's compositional periods, his Late Mature Period demonstrates a neo-Romantic synthesis of earlier compositional experiments. The characteristics of this period were shown to include a continued shedding of Modernist aesthetics and a reengagement with Romantic qualities such as melodic and structural freedom and a reinvigorated preoccupation with the mystic and mythological. Reflective of the contemporaneous Postmodern pluralism in Australia (and beyond), Sitsky's compositions from this period demonstrate considerable eclecticism and creative freedom. However, numerous stylistic traits, such as the improvisatory development of a few key ideas, experimentation with new approaches to formal organisation, recurring chant topoi, melodic and harmonic ambiguity, and irregular rhythms create consistency across a diverse range of idioms. Due to increased structural freedom and the adoption of broad, dynamic-based forms in Sitsky's creative practice in the years after 2000, this period can be grouped into two sub-periods: pre-2000, and post-2000. Demonstrating Sitsky's simultaneous evolution and consolidation, a number of works from the Late Mature Period exemplify the essence of the composer's overarching personal aesthetic. The following discussion will consider Sitsky's third, fourth, and fifth sonatas for solo flute as case studies of this Late Mature Period.

Case Study 4: Sonata No 3 for Solo Flute, *The Jade Flute* (1994)

To date, Sitsky has composed three solo flute sonatas in this Late Mature Period: Sonata No 3 for Solo Flute, *The Jade Flute* (1994); Sonata No 4 for Solo Flute, *Song of the Shaman* (2015); and Sonata No 5 for Solo Flute, *The Pied Piper* (2019). There are significant stylistic commonalities between these sonatas, and in order to avoid repetition, I will provide a comprehensive analysis of only one of these works – the 2015 Sonata No 4 for Solo Flute. Less-detailed analyses of Sonatas Nos 3 and 5 are included, and this section concludes with a comparative contextualisation of Sonatas 3–5 both within the Late Mature Period, and in relation to Sitsky's oeuvre more broadly.

⁴³ See for example: Randa Abdel-Fattah, *Islamophobia and Everyday Multiculturalism in Australia* (London: Routledge, 2017), 26–29.

The Sonata No 3 for Solo Flute, *The Jade Flute* was composed in September 1994 – the first of the three sonatas from Sitsky’s Late Mature Period. Commissioned as the test piece for the 7th Australian Flute Competition in 1995, *The Jade Flute* was dedicated to Virginia Taylor – Sitsky’s colleague and Professor of Flute at the Australian National University School of Music. The sonata is simultaneously inspired by a poem by the Chinese poet Li-Po and the ancient Chinese veneration of the mineral jade’s “ability to produce a pure musical tone”.⁴⁴ This springboard reflects Sitsky’s reengagement with Chinese music after his return visits to China in the late 1970s and early 1980s. As discussed in Chapters 3–5, Sitsky’s creative output saw an upsurge in compositions with a variety of Asian sources as a result of Australia’s newfound multicultural focus between the late 1970s to the mid-1990s. In the preface to the score, Sitsky includes the following extract from the poetry of Li-Po:

Whence comes the sound of the jade flute,
Flying through the dark,
Coming with the spring wind, Hovering over Loyang?⁴⁵

The composition of the sonata as a test piece must be acknowledged as the work was composed to exploit the technical capabilities of the competing flute players.⁴⁶ Thus, the inclusion of extended techniques, opportunities for displaying a range of articulations, and virtuosic passages can be attributed to the work’s intended purpose.

Form and musical ideas

The single-movement sonata is structured in a type of ‘mosaic’ form consisting of numerous episodes of contrasting, but largely neo-Romantic musical material. The episodes are built on a small number of musical ideas which recur and evolve as the work progresses. The episodes are not rigidly organised and unfold like an improvisation with irregular metres and phrase lengths, sporadic use of barlines, and frequent tempo changes, all of which contribute to a free, improvisatory character. The sonata can be broadly grouped into three large sections, each of which contains smaller episodes. The first section – spanning from bar 1 to bar 63 – presents four musical ideas, which form the motivic basis for the whole sonata. The first of these ideas consists of a chant-like drone that is embellished by upper and lower

⁴⁴ Larry Sitsky, *Sonata No 3 for Solo Flute, The Jade Flute* (Sydney: Australian Music Centre, 1994), preface.

⁴⁵ Sitsky, *Sonata No 3 for Solo Flute*, preface.

⁴⁶ Stephen Rosenberg, “The Jade Flute of Larry Sitsky,” *Flute Australis* no 1 (1995): 14.

neighbour grace notes, which vary between major seconds, minor seconds, and micro intervals such as quarter tones (see Figure 5.11).

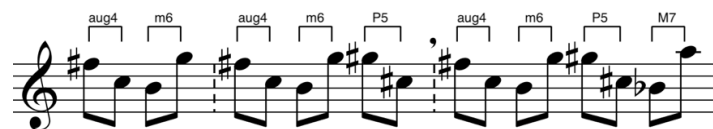
Figure 5.11: Sitsky, Sonata No 3 for Solo Flute, bars 1–6, Musical Idea 1. Chant-like figure with sustained E notes and microtonal embellishment.⁴⁷



A strong pitch centre is established through the centripetal function enacted by the small and micro intervals towards the central pitch of the chant. The essential characteristics of this chant figure are exploited in various permutations throughout the sonata.

The second musical idea is an expanding figure of oscillating intervals: a descending augmented 4th (F#–C), an ascending minor 6th (B–G), a descending perfect fifth (G#–C#), and an ascending major 7th (Bb–A) (see Figure 5.12). This figure cycles through a pattern of expansion: beginning with two pairs of quavers, followed by three pairs, followed by four pairs.

Figure 5.12: Sitsky, Sonata No 3 for Solo Flute, Musical Idea 2: Expanding intervallic pattern.



Upon examining the pattern of these intervals, two parallel lines emerge – each forming a four-note chromatic cluster (see Figure 5.13). This becomes structurally important in later episodes.

Figure 5.13: Four-note chromatic cluster derived from upper and lower lines of Musical Idea 2 (see Figure 5.12).



⁴⁷ Sitsky, *Sonata No 3 for Solo Flute*, 2.

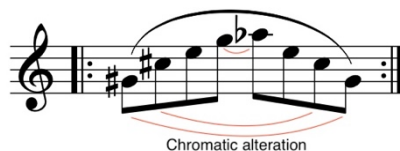
The third musical idea consists of fioritura figures (see Figure 5.14). Whilst the pitches vary across the duration of the sonata, fioritura embellishment is used as a means of development in later episodes.

Figure 5.14: Sitsky, Sonata No 3 for Solo Flute, bar 22, Musical Idea 3. Example of fioritura embellishment.



The fourth musical idea consists of an ascending four-note arpeggio immediately followed by a descending four-note arpeggio (see Figure 5.15). The descending arpeggio is essentially a chromatic alteration of the ascending arpeggio with the exception of the E, which remains unaltered. This chromatic obfuscation is a central characteristic of the sonata, and indeed of Sitsky's entire Late Mature Period.

Figure 5.15: Sitsky, Sonata No 3 for Solo Flute, bar 41, Musical Idea 4. Ascending and descending arpeggios with chromatic alteration.



The second section of the sonata spans across bars 64–125 and is the most texturally dense of the three sections – exhibiting frequent tempo changes and the most complex permutations of the sonata's basic materials. The third and final section presents an extended modal theme before concluding with virtuosic runs based on earlier material. As subsequent episodes move progressively further away from the original material, unity is achieved through the development of material that has already been established – recalling the practice of 'developing variation' exhibited in Sitsky's Early Mature Period. Table 5.4 summarises the episode occurrences within the three larger sections.

Table 5.4: Summary of episode form in Sonata No 3.

	Tempo	Bars	Dynamics	Description
1	$\text{♩} = 70$	1–12	<i>pp</i>	• Musical Idea 1: chant figure centred around E
2		13–15	<i>p</i>	• Musical Idea 2: expanding intervallic pattern
3		16–17	<i>mf</i>	• Musical Idea 1 ^{var1} : chant figure centred around E with added material
4		18–21	<i>p</i>	• Musical Idea 2 ^{var1} : expanding intervallic pattern with some variation
5		23	<i>f(p)</i>	• Musical Idea 3: Fioritura figure
6	$\text{♩} = 105+$	23–27	<i>mf</i>	• Musical Idea 1 ^{var2} : chant figure centred around E with added material
7		29	<i>p</i>	• Musical Idea 2 ^{var2} : expanding intervallic pattern
8		31–33	<i>mf</i>	• Musical Idea 1 ^{var3} : chant figure centred around C
9	$\text{♩} = 80$	34	<i>p</i>	• Symmetrical triplet arpeggios
10	$\text{♩} = 105+$	35	<i>mf</i>	• Musical Idea 1 ^{var4} : chant figure centred around G
11		36		• Musical Idea 1 ^{var5} : chant figure centred around C
12		37–40	<i>mf</i>	• Phrase built on A minor triad (pitches A–C–E)
13	$\text{♩} = 95$	41	<i>p</i>	• Musical Idea 4: Ascending and descending arpeggios with chromatic alteration
14	$\text{♩} = 105$	42–56	<i>mf</i>	• Musical Idea 1 ^{var6} : chant figure centred around C with fioritura embellishment and added material based on A major/minor triad.
15		57–63	<i>f</i>	Transition
16	$\text{♩} = 95$	64–65	<i>f</i>	• Musical Idea 4: Ascending and descending arpeggios with chromatic alteration
17	$\text{♩} = 122$	66–69	<i>f(p)</i>	• Simulated polyphony (indicated through based on four-note chromatic cluster from Musical Idea 2 melody: <i>f</i> simulated accompaniment: <i>p</i>
18	$\text{♩} = 95$	70–71	<i>p</i>	Transition
19	$\text{♩} = 122$	72–92	<i>f(p)</i>	• Simulated polyphony based on four-note chromatic cluster from Musical Idea 2 melody <i>f</i> simulated accompaniment <i>p</i>
20	$\text{♩} = 80$	93–95		• Transitional Material: Ascending major and minor third tremolos Flutter tongue Tremolo major triad fragments
	$\text{♩} = 83$	96–98		
	$\text{♩} = 90$	99		
	$\text{♩} = 83$	100		
	$\text{♩} = 90$	101		
	$\text{♩} = 83$	102–104		
	$\text{♩} = 90$	105		
	$\text{♩} = 83$	106		
	$\text{♩} = 90$	107		
	$\text{♩} = 83$	108		
	$\text{♩} = 90$	109		
21	$\text{♩} = 100$	110–115	<i>p</i>	• Musical Idea 1/Musical Idea 2: Alternating C and D $\flat$ crotchets with ascending and descending fioritura embellishment (chromatically altered)
22	$\text{♩} = 70$	116–119	<i>p</i>	• Musical Idea 4 ^{var1} : Ascending and descending arpeggios with chromatic alteration. Multiphonic interjections
23	$\text{♩} = 60$	120–121	<i>p</i>	• Musical Idea 3: Fioritura figure
24		120–125	<i>p</i> <i>poco a poco</i> <i>cresc</i>	• Musical Idea 1/ Musical Idea 2: accumulative episode built upon four pitches D, C $\sharp$, C, B • Exploits repeated unisons and limited pitch material of Musical Idea 1 • Exploits four-note chromatic cluster of Musical Idea 2
25	$\text{♩} = 90$	130–154	<i>ff</i>	• Modal theme
26		155–159	<i>mf</i>	• Musical Idea 2 ^{var2} : expanding intervallic pattern
27		160–166	<i><fff</i>	• Musical Idea 2 ^{var3} : expanding descending and ascending intervals

Structural development

Accumulation is a key developmental device in the sonata. The sonata grows in intensity through a gradual increase of dynamics, tessitura, texture, and rhythmic truncation. For example, in the sonata's final episode (see Table 5.4, Row 27), the tessitura in each of the final arching arpeggios is increasingly broadened across its seven bars: the first descending arpeggio spans a major 9th and the final ascending arpeggio spans over three octaves (see Appendix).

Articulation is also used as a structural device. For example, the contrast between the legato of the early episodes and the incorporation of staccato in the later sections contributes to growth through deviation from the original legato soundscape. The alternation between legato and staccato in the final arching arpeggios furthers this notion with staccato occurring the second time – suggesting that the staccato implies evolution and succession beyond the 'stasis' of the legato opening material.

The final episode in the second section (see Table 5.4, Row 24) can be considered as a microcosm of the sonata's overall growth. This entire episode contains only four pitches – a four-note chromatic cluster D–C#–C♭–B (see Appendix). Each note is 'assigned' to one of the four octaves of the flute: D1, C#2, C♭3, and B4. These octave assignments are strictly maintained for the duration of the episode (i.e., B only ever occurs in the fourth octave). The episode is structured upon an accumulative process and begins *p* with only two crotchet notes: D–C# a major seventh apart. The remaining two pitches are individually accumulated in successive cycles. With each 'cycle' of accumulation the dynamic increases through a *poco a poco crescendo* and the texture becomes denser through repetition and rhythmic truncation. The episode ends *f* with a final statement of all four pitches.

The greatest example of accumulative development across the sonata can be observed in the work's overall transformation from beginning to end. The sonata begins *pp* with a sustained, sparse texture and concludes with *fff* rapid ascending arpeggios and an ascending glissando in the flute's highest register (see Table 5.5). This transformation can be considered to embody a transcendence, which is consistent with the Journey Theme present in a number of Sitsky's compositions dating from 1970 onwards.

Table 5.5: Comparison of the opening and closing bars demonstrating accumulative ascent across Sonata No 3.⁴⁸

Bars 1–6	Bar 166 (Final bar)
	
<i>pp</i> melodically static	<i>crescendo fff</i> ascending arpeggios ascending glissando

The Sonata No 3 was composed in 1993 – within the pre-2000 sub-period of Sitsky’s Late Mature Period. The characteristics of the sonata, such as the presence of an Asian springboard, the improvisatory, episodic form that conveys a journey or progression, the prominent use of chant-inspired figures, and frequent chromatic obfuscation, all reflect the characteristics of Sitsky’s Late Mature Period. A synthesis of earlier creative practices is a key characteristic of this period and it is worthwhile noting that the individual characteristics listed above do not deviate significantly from Sitsky’s earlier compositional practice. For instance, chant is widely used in the 1979 Sonata No 2 for Solo Flute, and chromatic obfuscation is frequently employed in Sitsky’s Armenian Period. However, the comparative freedom with which he employs these devices in the Sonata No 3 is characteristic of the creative emancipation Sitsky experienced in his Late Mature Period.

Case Study 5: Sonata No 4 for Solo Flute, *Song of the Shaman* (2015)

Sonata No 4 for Solo Flute was commissioned in 2015 by Dr Michal Rosiak for his Doctoral research into the collaborative process between the performer and composer.⁴⁹ After reading an anecdote recalling Sitsky’s childhood experience with a shamanic healer in China, Rosiak approached Sitsky with the idea for a flute composition that “underlines and *heals* all impairments implied in my other projects”.⁵⁰ When conceiving the work, Sitsky consulted a number of Tibetan texts to find Shamanic references – visualising “particular dress, animal

⁴⁸ Sitsky, *Sonata No 3 for Solo Flute*, 2, 7.

⁴⁹ Michal Rosiak, “Mapping a Creative Symbiosis Between the Composer and the Performer” (DMA Thesis, Queensland Conservatorium, 2018), 6, 18.

⁵⁰ Rosiak’s other collaborations incorporated the concept of “disabilities within a musical form.” Rosiak, “Mapping a Creative Symbiosis,” 19.

skins, decorations, small drums” as a “non-musical background” to the sonata.⁵¹ Thus, the sonata was formulated in a typical ‘Sitskian’ fashion – with an extra-musical springboard acting as creative inspiration. Sitsky was inspired to explore the different octaves of the flute’s range, stating that:

I treated the three octaves of the flute as symbolic: middle octave – the Shaman sings in our world, lower octave – he travels to the nether regions, upper octave – he flies in a bird/spirit body. Musically, this meant that a different kind of music had to be conceived for each region, and that is essentially what goes on in the *Sonata*.⁵²

Rosiak describes the manifestation of Sitsky’s creative process in the composition of this sonata, explaining that “the idea of playing the flute to a patient was now used to depict [a] shaman at work. To perform the ritual of healing, the shaman devoured the spirits and travelled to all three worlds – Lower World, Middle World and Upper World.”⁵³

Musical ‘blueprints’

The sonata is built upon three distinct musical ‘blueprints’, which reflect Sitsky’s symbolic treatment of the flute’s registers. These blueprints are indicated by their respective tempo marking: A) Tempo I, ♩ = 65; B) Tempo II, ♩ = 50; and C) Tempo III, ♩ = 120+.⁵⁴ These three tempo blueprints symbolise the ‘middle world’, the ‘lower world’, and the ‘upper world’ respectively. In addition to a unique tempo marking, each blueprint has its own unique musical characteristics – incorporating register, dynamics, thematic and motivic content, intervals, rhythmic traits, articulation, texture, scales, and extended techniques. The blueprints can be likened to a musical subject – the unique characteristics of each providing a framework for subsequent development and evolution. The characteristics of each blueprint are summarised in Table 5.6.

⁵¹ Rosiak, “Mapping a Creative Symbiosis,” 27.

⁵² Larry Sitsky, email correspondence with Michal Rosiak, 15 March 2015.

⁵³ Rosiak, “Mapping a Creative Symbiosis,” 27.

⁵⁴ In the score these tempo blueprints are referred to only as ‘Tempo I’, ‘Tempo II’, and ‘Tempo III’. Letters have been added by the author to facilitate explanation.

Table 5.6: Inherent musical characteristics of the three contrasting blueprints in Sonata No 4.

Blueprint	A Tempo I	B Tempo II	C Tempo III
Tempo	♩ = 65 (Moderate)	♩ = 50 (Slow)	♩ = 120+ (Fast)
Register	Middle	Low	High
Dynamic	<i>f</i> / <i>mf</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>ff</i>
Tessitura	Moderate	Narrow	Wide
Articulation	Legato	Legato	Staccato Accented
Rhythm	Unsyncopated	Unsyncopated	Syncopated
Melodic motion	Conjunct	Conjunct	Disjunct

Sitsky exploits extremes in the B and C blueprints. The B blueprint, or ‘lower world’, is characterised by a slow tempo, low register, narrow range, melodic stasis, and a soft dynamic. In contrast, the C Section, or ‘upper world’ in which the Shaman flies, is characterised by a fast tempo, wide range, melodic angularity, loud dynamics, complex, syncopated rhythms, and the exploitation of the flute’s high register. The A blueprint, which symbolises the Shaman singing in ‘our world’, occupies the middle ground between B and C, and is characterised by moderateness: moderate tempo, middle register, neither a wide nor narrow tessitura, moderate to loud dynamic, and is melodically conjunct without stasis. Despite its non-programmatic function, the springboard influences the characteristics of each blueprint.

In addition to their unique essential characteristics, each blueprint contains its own ‘native’ themes or motives. For example, the sonata’s Primary Theme, which is initially stated at the beginning of the work, occurs only in the A Sections. This theme embodies the moderate characteristics of the A blueprint, such as its scoring in the middle register, stepwise movement, and moderate tempo, and consists of three different motives (see Figure 5.16).

Figure 5.16: Sitsky, Sonata No 4 for Solo Flute, bars 1–6. Primary Theme (PT) containing Motives 1–3.



Whilst the Primary Theme is occasionally repeated in its entirety, the growth and structural cohesion of the sonata relies more upon the repetition of the smaller motivic fragments,

which are reproduced and varied throughout. In total, there are nine primary motives employed in the sonata. These motives reflect the musical characteristics of their respective blueprint and are shown in their basic form in Table 5.7.

Table 5.7: Sitsky, Sonata No 4 for Solo Flute. Nine basic motives.

	Motive	Native Blueprint	Description
M1		A	Descending perfect fourth (upper tetrachord) of the Aeolian or Phrygian mode (T-T-S)
M2		A	Ascending three-note scalic figure Dotted quaver-semiquaver-minim
M3		A*	Three-note figure consisting of a descending tone followed by an ascending semitone *This motive is so ubiquitous in the sonata, and occurs in so many permutations across <i>all</i> blueprints, that it is also depicted in the table without specific pitches
M4		A	Sustained pair of unison notes with dynamic swells
M5		B	Portamento figure
M6		B	Four-note figure: descending m2-ascending m3-descending M2-portamento on single note (pitch bend)
M7		B	Ascending perfect 4th
M8		C	Repeated unison 'chant' figure
M9		C	Descending hexachord with octave displacement

The nine motives are not all extremely distinctive; however, the development of these motives and frequent permutations contributes to aural continuity across the single-movement sonata. In addition to the nine motives shown in Table 5.7, blueprint C makes use of other musical ideas, such as grace note embellishment, frequent augmented triads, and

rapid scalar passages. These devices contribute to the specific sound world of blueprint C but are not unique enough to be considered as motives.

Form

As can be observed in Table 5.8 below, the sonata is structured in a ‘mosaic’ form organised into fifteen small sections in total. The fifteen sections are comprised of alternating occurrences of each of the three blueprints. Thus, the development of each blueprint unfolds episodically. The table’s columns show the organisation of the three alternating blueprints: six episodes of A, four episodes of B, and five episodes of C. It is important to note that the last four episodes of C are repeated fragments of the first C occurrence (with some added material). In Table 5.8, C is split into three main sections C (i), C (ii), and C (iii). These episodes have been so labelled in order to show the instances of direct repetition of C material in the work.

Table 5.8: Mosaic form construction of Sonata No 4.

[illegible]

The specific characteristics of each blueprint episode are portrayed in descending columns under the relevant section headings in Table 5.8. The compositional growth of the work is depicted through the following categories: form, duration, motives, scales, intervals, pitch centre, range, and articulation. These musical parameters are displayed in horizontal rows, showing their exact correspondence with the episodes of the sonata.

Row 5 shows the nine motives and their subsequent occurrences or permutations. These motives undergo a number of alterations including fragmentation, rhythmic diminution and augmentation, transposition, and subtle pitch variation. However, Motive 3, which originates in the A blueprint, can be found in all three blueprints (see Table 5.8, Row 5, Columns 2, 3, and 5). In order to maintain the contrast between blueprints whilst maintaining a unified soundscape, the development of Motive 3 is altered to conform to the musical characteristics of both the B and C Blueprints. Motive 3^{var1}, which occurs in C¹ (ii), is an example of this alteration (see Figure 5.17). Sitsky has transposed the motive, added a grace note flourish, augmented the rhythm and has inverted the intervals – resulting in wide disjunct motion. The high register, wide leaps, and embellishment are all representative of the characteristics of Blueprint C. Thus, Motive 3^{var1} can be considered as a Blueprint A motive that has been appropriated by Blueprint C.

Figure 5.17: Cross-fertilisation of motives between contrasting blueprints. Appropriation of Motive 3 by Blueprint C.

M3	M3 ^{var1}
	
First occurrence: A ¹	First occurrence: C ¹ (ii)

Throughout the sonata's fifteen episodes, other examples of motivic 'appropriation' or cross-fertilisation occurs. The appropriated motives adopt the essential characteristics of the other, non-native blueprints when they occur outside of their original setting. For example, Motive 1 is native to the A blueprint and generally occurs in A episodes only (see Table 5.8, Row 5, Columns 1, 4, 6, 8, 12, and 15). However, a variation of this motive (M1^{var2}) also uncharacteristically occurs in episode C² (i) (see Table 5.8, Row 5, Column 7).

Figure 5.18: Cross-fertilisation of motives between contrasting blueprints. Appropriation of Motive 1 by Blueprint C.

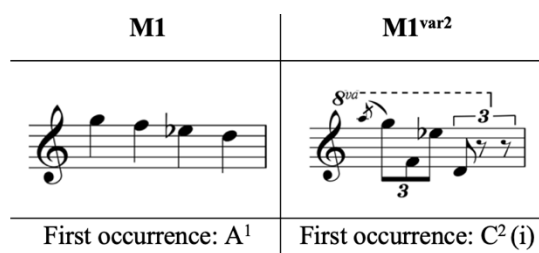


Figure 5.18 demonstrates how Motive 1 has been embellished with a grace note, rhythmically altered, transposed up an octave, and displaced across an octave – creating large leaps. These characteristics are typical of Blueprint C. This type of motivic cross-fertilisation creates unity within the work whilst still maintaining the essential fabric of the different tempi.

Additionally, the presence of these ‘amalgamated’ motives is a compositional device that supports the symbolic representation of the Shaman’s journey, and more simply, contributes to cohesion and unity between sections of different Blueprints.

Rows 6, 7, and 11 of Table 5.8 respectively include a list of the types of scales and modes, intervals, and articulations used in each episode. The range row indicates the range and register in which the flute plays in each episode. The range of each episode is indicated with the lowest and highest pitches of each particular episode being represented in the corresponding column. Pitches that are indicated in brackets are effectively pitch ‘outliers’ – i.e., they denote the most extreme pitch (either high or low) found in a section but are not indicative of a section’s average tessitura.

The sub-columns labelled ‘trans.’ represent the transitional bars that combine the blueprint characteristics of the current episode and that of the approaching episode. These bars facilitate a smooth transition between contrasting blueprint episodes. The transitions are interesting models of the way that Sitsky connects one section to another for two reasons: firstly, they generally go beyond the characteristic range of their relevant blueprint boundary in order to match the register of the approaching blueprint episode; and secondly, they often use a synthesised form of the motivic material of the current and approaching blueprints, which further contributes to a seamless link between episodes. Examples of these transitions can be seen in bars 69–72, 144, 208, 219, 225, and 236 (see Table 5.8, Columns 2, 5, 9, 10, 11, and 13).

Bar 236 connects B⁴ to C⁵ (iii) and features an ascending whole-tone scalic run traversing nearly two octaves (F4–E6) interspersed with an ascending augmented triad (see

Figure 5.19). The augmented triad is a common recurring device in the C Sections and the register in which the scale finishes is well beyond the typical range of Blueprint B. The wide range of the scale connects the registral characteristics of Blueprints B and C and provides a smooth transition between contrasting episodes.

Figure 5.19: Sitsky, Sonata No 4 for Solo Flute, bars 235–236.⁵⁵ Transition from episode B⁴ to C⁵ (iii) through ascending scales and augmented triads.



Structural development

Sitsky's treatment of the transitional material is analogous to the sonata's overall growth and development. As the work progresses, each blueprint is symbolically transformed through a process of appropriation where 'native' musical material from one blueprint is altered in order to conform to the characteristics of another. To understand this transformation process, Sitsky's symbolic intention to depict three different worlds through register and a different kind of music in each blueprint is of prime importance: the development appears to have a creative as well as structural purpose.

Central to this concept is the development of the six episodes of Blueprint A. These episodes gradually transform as the sonata progresses through a gradual adoption of characteristics associated with Blueprint C. This transformation is most notably achieved through a progressive registral ascent and the presence of larger intervals and disjunct motion in each subsequent episode (see Table 5.8, Row 9, Columns 1, 4, 6, 8, 12, and 15). With the exception of the penultimate A episode at bar 226 (A⁵), the flute plays in a higher register in each successive episode of A. This process eventually culminates in A⁶ with a partial repeat of A¹ transposed up an octave (see Figure 5.20). The transition from the middle register to the high register is facilitated by two ascending augmented triads. As discussed earlier, augmented triads are characteristic of Blueprint C, or upper world. Thus, the ascending triads in an A blueprint episode also symbolise the Shaman's transcendence to the upper world.

⁵⁵ Sitsky, *Sonata No 4 for Solo Flute*, 8.

Figure 5.20: Sitsky, Sonata No 4 for Solo Flute, bars 257–274, A^{6.56} PT and material from A¹ transposed up one octave.

Ascending augmented triads

Material from A¹ transposed up one octave

ff *Primary Theme transposed up one octave

3

3

3

rit.

3

When accounting for the symbolic significance of register in this sonata, the recurring Journey Theme found within a number of Sitsky’s compositions, and Sitsky’s enduring interest in the ‘transcendental’ power of music, it is not implausible to ascertain from the registral contour of Blueprint A that the Shaman somehow reaches a higher plane by the conclusion of the work.⁵⁷ Thus, it appears that the notion of growth in the work is at once both a structural and conceptual factor that adheres to a Journey Theme – a trait that is consistent with the overarching formal characteristics of a number of Sitsky’s compositions dating from the mid-1960s onwards.

Case Study 6: Sonata No 5 for Solo Flute, *The Pied Piper* (2019)

The Sonata No 5 for Solo Flute, *The Pied Piper* was composed in April 2019. Written shortly after Sitsky’s nine-movement Concerto for Solo Piano, *Apochryphon* (2019), the idea for Sonata No 5 had been “brewing” in Sitsky’s mind for more than a year before the sonata was

⁵⁶ Sitsky, *Sonata No 4 for Solo Flute*, 8.

⁵⁷ Crispin, *The Esoteric Musical Tradition*, 185.

realised.⁵⁸ Interestingly, Sonata No 5 breaks with Sitsky's custom shown in the flute sonatas 2, 3, and 4 of composing flute sonatas inspired by an Asian extramusical source. However, it is still consistent with Sitsky's need for a compositional springboard in two ways. First, it was inspired by the mythological legend of the Pied Piper of Hamelin; and secondly, Sitsky commenced writing the Sonata at the prompting of the author.⁵⁹ Despite the common association with the legend, Sitsky was interested in exploring alternate meanings of the title's words. Sitsky explains:

I deliberately did not add "of Hamelin" to the title, because for me the word "Pied" is more important: i.e. 'drunk', 'high', and little crazy?, maybe ecstatic?, entranced etc etc⁶⁰

Thus, the title bears no programmatic significance and merely acts as a starting point for the sonata's construction.

Musical 'blueprints'

The Sonata No 5 exhibits a similar mosaic form and episodic construction to the 2015 Sonata No 4, *Song of the Shaman*. Sonata No 5 is built upon four distinct musical blueprints, which once again reflect Sitsky's partitioning of the flute's registers. Sitsky clearly delineates these four blueprints in the score through a letter (A–D), dynamic, and tempo marking. The characteristics of the four blueprints are summarised in Table 5.9.

Table 5.9: Inherent musical characteristics of the four contrasting blueprints in Sonata No 5.

Blueprint	A	B	C	D
Tempo	♩ = 70	♩ = 90	♩ = 100+	♩ = 90+
Register	Low	Low-Middle	Middle-High	High
Dynamic	<i>p</i>	<i>mf</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>ff</i>
Articulation	Legato	Legato Staccato	Staccato Accented	Legato Staccato
Rhythm	–	Some syncopation	Constantly shifting polymetre	Unsyncopated
Melodic motion	Static	Conjunct	Disjunct	Conjunct
Extended techniques	Portamento	–	–	Flutter tongue Portamento

⁵⁸ Larry Sitsky, email correspondence, January 18, 2018.

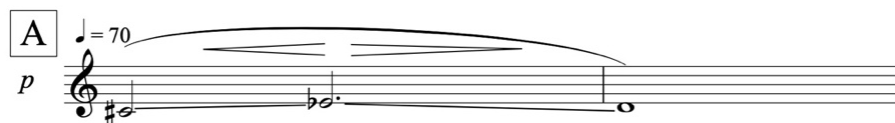
⁵⁹ Larry Sitsky, email correspondence, March 6, 2019: "Now that you have reminded me, I have activated the brain towards the Pied Piper!"

⁶⁰ Larry Sitsky, email correspondence, December 16, 2019.

Similar to the blueprints of Sonata No 4, the four blueprints in Sonata No 5 correspond with a specific register and have their own unique characteristics – once again incorporating register, dynamics, thematic and motivic content, intervals, rhythmic traits, articulation, texture, and extended techniques. In the score, Sitsky states that the “groups A, B, C, and D, should have their own strictly defined character.”⁶¹ Sonata No 5 is built on a compressed palette of themes and motives. Unlike Sonata No 4, there is limited observable cross-fertilisation of characteristics between blueprint episodes. The palette of ideas can be summarised as follows:

Blueprint A is associated with the low register of the flute and exclusively contains sustained *portamenti* (see Figure 5.21). The *portamento* figure of this blueprint is a central ‘refrain’ point that recurs at key moments throughout the sonata.

Figure 5.21: Sitsky, Sonata No 5 for Solo Flute, Mvt I, bars 1–2.⁶² Blueprint A: *piano* low register *portamento*.

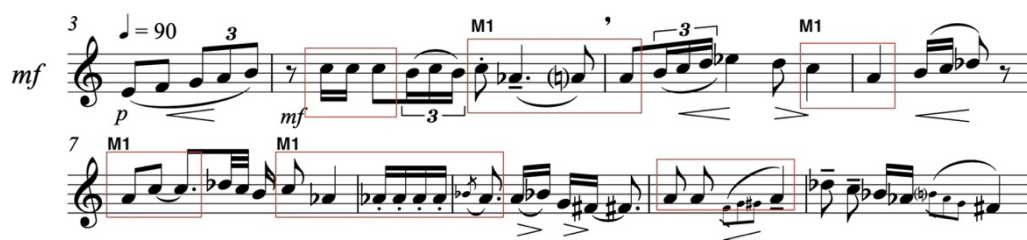


Blueprint B is associated with the low-to-middle register. It contains the primary thematic material and presents two key musical ideas or motives. The Primary Theme (PT) exploits the interval of a minor (or major) third through the interplay between the pitches A (or Ab) and C (see Figure 5.22). This forms the main musical idea, or Motive 1 (M1), which is found in Blueprints B and D in the sonata. These two pitches are often chromatically altered – juxtaposing major and minor thirds in close proximity and subtly obscuring the strong minor third basis. This process of chromatic alteration is frequently employed by Sitsky in both his Armenian and Late Mature Periods.

⁶¹ Larry Sitsky, *Sonata No 5 for Solo Flute, The Pied Piper* (Wollongong: Wirripang, 2019), 2.

⁶² Sitsky, *Sonata No 5 for Solo Flute*, 3.

Figure 5.22: Sitsky, Sonata No 5 for Solo Flute, Mvt I, bars 3–11, Blueprint B.⁶³ Primary Theme (PT) based on Motive 1 (M1): the interplay of pitches A/Ab–C.



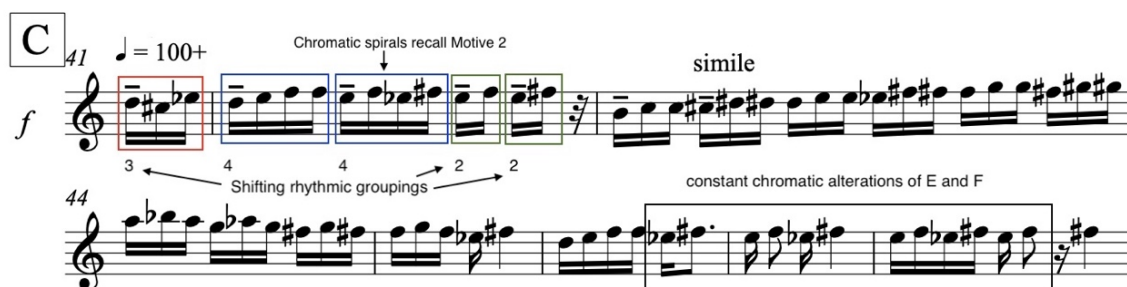
Later Blueprint B episodes also exploit Motive 2 (M2): a chromatic figure that incorporates the pitches E, F, F#, G, G# (see Figure 5.23). This motive and subsequent permutations contributes to aural continuity through frequent repetition, and is also used in Blueprint C.

Figure 5.23: Motive 2 (M2) from Blueprint B: chromatic figure incorporating the pitches E, F, F#, G, G#.



Blueprint C is associated with the middle-high register and its rhythmically and melodically angular material draws upon the shape of Motive 2. Episodes of this blueprint feature chromatic, polymetric, dance-like sections. Figure 5.24 provides an excerpt of typical Blueprint C material: constantly shifting polymetre and metric groupings (frequent shifts between groups of 2, 3, and 4 semiquavers), exploitation of Motive 2, and frequent chromatic alteration.

Figure 5.24: Sitsky, Sonata No 5 for Solo Flute, Mvt I, bars 41–48.⁶⁴ Excerpt from Blueprint C.

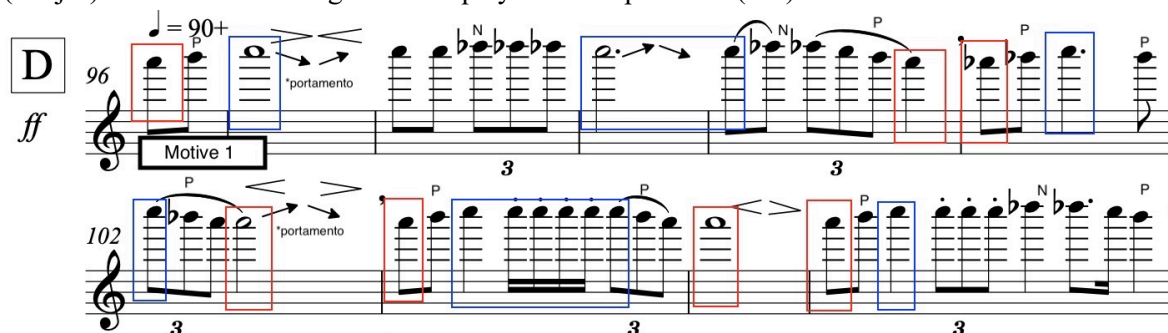


⁶³ Sitsky, *Sonata No 5 for Solo Flute*, 3.

⁶⁴ Sitsky, *Sonata No 5 for Solo Flute*, 4.

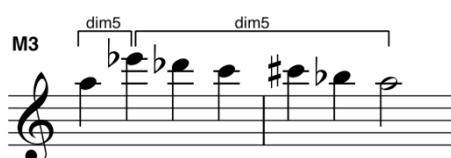
Blueprint D exploits the flute's highest octave and contains the secondary thematic material, which develops Motive 1. The Secondary Theme is built upon the interval of a minor (/major) third and features a constant interplay between the pitches A(/A $\flat$)–C with the addition of passing, and upper and lower neighbour notes. The Secondary Theme also includes pitch bends that recall the *portamento* from Blueprint A (see Figure 5.25).

Figure 5.25: Sitsky, Sonata No 5 for Solo Flute, Mvt I, bars 96–105, excerpt from Blueprint D.⁶⁵ Secondary Theme (ST) constructed upon the characteristics of Motive 1: repetition of a minor (/major) third interval through the interplay between pitches A(/A $\flat$)–C.



Blueprint D also introduces Motive 3 (M3): a descending scalic figure that outlines a diminished fifth: A–E $\flat$ (see Figure 5.26).

Figure 5.26: Sitsky, Sonata No 5 for Solo Flute. Motive 3 (M3) featured in Blueprint D.



Form

Unlike the other flute sonatas from Sitsky's Late Mature Period (Sonatas Nos 3 and 4), which are both single-movement works, Sonata No 5 is structured in two movements. The four blueprints are organised episodically in mosaic form, and the musical content is consistent between both movements (i.e., both movements utilise the musical material of Blueprints A–D). The formal organisation of the sonata is shown in Tables 5.10a and 5.10b.

⁶⁵ Sitsky, *Sonata No 5 for Solo Flute*, 5.

Table 5.10a: Mosaic form construction of Sonata No 5, Mvt I.

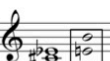
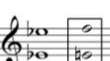
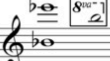
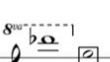
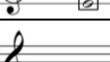
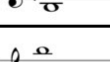
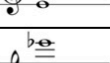
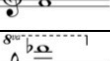
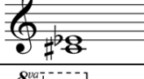
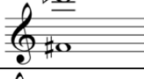
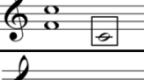
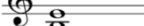
Movement I						
	Section	Bars	Tempo	Dynamics	Range	Description
1	A ¹	1–2	♩ = 70	<i>p</i>		• Low register portamento
2	B ¹	3–11	♩ = 90	<i>mf</i>		• PT (M1, M2)
3	A ²	12–15	♩ = 70	<i>p</i>		• Low register portamento
4	B ²	16–29	♩ = 90	<i>mf</i>		• Repeat of PT bars 16–24 • PT ^{var1} : Addition of new material based on M1 and M2 bars 25–29
5	A ³	30–33	♩ = 70	<i>p</i>		• Low register portamento
6	B ³	34–40	♩ = 90	<i>mf</i>		• PT ^{var2} : simplified variation of PT based on M1 and M2 • Bar 40: chromatic transition to C
7	C ¹	41–58	♩ = 100+	<i>f</i>		• Dance-like material with constantly fluctuating metres • Highly chromatic with mostly small intervals
8	A ⁴	59–64	♩ = 70	<i>p</i>		• Low register portamento • Bar 64: transition to B with variation of opening scale from PT
9	B ⁴	65–75	♩ = 90	<i>mf</i>		• PT ^{var3} : variation of PT based on M1 and M2 with increased fioritura figuration • Bar 75: ascending scale transition to C
10	C ²	76–95	♩ = 100+	<i>f</i>		• As before, now with individual repeated bars recalling Armenian folk music • Bar 95 ascending leap transition to D
11	D ¹	96–115	♩ = 90+	<i>ff</i>		• ST (M1 and M1 ^{var1}) • Flutter tongue and portamento • M3 • Bars 114–115: descending scale transition to A
12	A ⁵	116–122	♩ = 70	<i>p</i>		• Low register portamento with extended range
13	B ⁵	123–141	♩ = 90	<i>mf</i>		• PT ^{var4} : variation of PT based on M1 and M2 with increased fioritura figuration and wide tessitura
14	C ³	142–177	♩ = 100+	<i>f</i>		• Variation of earlier C episodes with octave displacement of chromatic lines – resulting in wide leaps
15	D ²	178–191	♩ = 90+	<i>ff</i>		• ST ^{var1} (M1 and M1 ^{var1}) • Bars 178–183: based on M1 ^{var1}

Table 5.10b: Mosaic form construction of Sonata No 5, Mvt II.

Movement II						
	Section	Tempo	Bars	Dynamics	Range	Description
1	D ³	♩ = 90+	192–215	<i>ff</i>		• ST^{var2} (M1 and M1^{var1}) • Descending triplet scales based on M3
2	C ⁴	♩ = 100+	216–267	<i>f</i>		• Variation of earlier C episodes with octave displacement of chromatic lines – resulting in wide leaps
3	B ⁶	♩ = 90	268–282	<i>mf</i>		• PT^{var5}: variation of PT based on M1 and M2 with increased fioritura figuration with wide tessitura
4	A ⁶	♩ = 70	283–285	<i>p</i>		• Low register <i>portamento</i>, original range
5	D ⁴	♩ = 90+	286–291	<i>ff</i>		• ST^{var3}: Fragment of ST • Bars 290–291: descending fragment transition to C
6	C ⁵	♩ = 100+	292–297	<i>f</i>		• Fragment of earlier C episodes: chromatic scales with octave displacement
7	B ⁷	♩ = 90	298–300	<i>mf</i>		• PT^{var6}: Fragment of PT based on M1 and M2
8	A ⁷	♩ = 70	301–305	<i>p</i>		• Low register <i>portamento</i>, extended range

The entire sonata forms an arch structure that is preceded by an extended introduction. As shown in Table 5.10a, the first movement is organised into fifteen episodes. Whilst it consists of an odd number of episodes, the first movement can be considered as consisting of two ‘halves’ on either side of a fulcrum point: C¹. The episodes prior to C¹ (A¹B¹A²B²A³B³) can be considered as the introduction during which the Primary Thematic material is established. The episodes after C¹ (A⁴B⁴C²D¹–A⁵B⁵C³D²) signal the beginning of the arch. The second movement consists of eight episodes that reverse the ABCD pattern shown in the second half of Movement 1 – consisting of D³C⁴B⁶A⁶–D⁴C⁵B⁷A⁷. Thus, the pattern of the mosaic form consists of an introduction of six episodes (A¹B¹A²B²A³B³) that reaches a fulcrum point (C¹), followed by an arch form with eight episodes on ‘either side’ of the arch (A⁴B⁴C²D¹ A⁵B⁵C³D²– D³C⁴B⁶A⁶ D⁴C⁵B⁷A⁷). Sitsky clearly utilises the characteristics of the Blueprints A and D in articulating the arch form. The sonata (and the arch) begins and ends with Blueprint A: episodes of *piano*, low register portamenti. The mid-point, or climax of the arch is marked with consecutive D blueprint episodes, which are marked *fortissimo* and exploit the highest register of the flute. Thus, Sitsky creates an arch with register and dynamics and not only uses the blueprint characteristics for contrast and colour, but also as structural pillars.

Tables 5.10a and 5.10b show how certain episodes also contain transitional bars that link contrasting blueprint episodes. These transitions combine the blueprint characteristics of the current episode with that of the approaching episode. An example of such a transition can be found in bar 64. This bar links an episode of Blueprint A (A⁴) with an episode of Blueprint B (B⁴) and features a variation of an ascending E major pentachord (see Figure 5.27). This scale deviates from the *portamenti* from Blueprint A and recalls the opening bar of Blueprint B's Primary Theme (see Figure 5.22 on Page 153). This process is similar to that used in Sonata No 4 – again emphasising the stylistic practices common to Sitsky's Late Mature Period.

Figure 5.27: Sitsky, Sonata No 5 for Solo Flute, Mvt I, bars 59–64, A⁴.⁶⁶ Transition (bar 64) from A⁴ to B⁴ using scalic material native to Blueprint B.



Structural development

In order to achieve growth across the sonata, each blueprint undergoes its own development. For Blueprints A and D, this process is minimal: the range of Blueprint A is occasionally extended from a diminished 3rd to a perfect fourth, and D³ features a set of descending scales built on Motive 3 – heralding the descent of the arch. For Blueprint B, the developmental process is achieved through an increasing number of fioritura figures embellishing the Primary Theme in B⁴, B⁵ and B⁶. In Blueprint C, tessitura is used as a device to create intensity. Each subsequent episode becomes more disjunct with numerous wide intervals, which contributes to textural density and increased intensity.

Sitsky's Sonata No 5 for Solo Flute is the third, and most recent solo flute work composed in Sitsky's Late Mature Period. Indeed, it is the most recent work analysed in this thesis. Demonstrative of Sitsky's continued evolution, the structure of Sonata No 5 shows a continued development of the episodic 'mosaic' form favoured by Sitsky in this period. The formal arch organisation of the episodes follows a stricter pattern than in the more rhapsodic Sonatas No 3 and 4. However, Sonata No 5's mosaic form exhibits uncanny similarities to

⁶⁶ Sitsky, *Sonata No 5 for Solo Flute*, 4.

the form of Sonata No 4: both sonatas are constructed upon a number of distinct musical blueprints that are based on the different octaves of the flute; and, the development of these blueprints occurs through an episodic, or mosaic-style juxtaposition. When compared to the more linear development of Sonata No 3's episodic form (which is not built on register-based musical blueprints), the similarities between Sonatas No 4 and No 5 validates the sub-division of Sitsky's Late Mature Period into two sub-periods: pre- and post-2000.

Conclusions

The fifth and final period identified in this thesis, Sitsky's Late Mature Period spans from 1987–2019. Marked by a type of Postmodern pluralism ubiquitous in Australia since the late 1980s, Sitsky's compositions from this period simultaneously exhibit a neo-Romantic synthesis of his previous compositional periods and a continued stylistic evolution.

Characteristics of this period include: the increased integration of mystic, mythological, and culturally diverse musical sources; a freer, more rhapsodic approach to development; the inclusion of mosaic forms and forms built upon dynamic gestures; irregular rhythms; and, melodic and harmonic "smudging" through the close juxtaposition of unrelated chords, bitonality, and chromatic obfuscation. This period can be viewed through the prism of two sub-periods: the first from 1987–2000, and the second from 2000–2019. The year 2000 was chosen as it marked a new approach to form and increased structural freedom. However, these two factors are not distinct enough to mark individual stylistic periods as Sitsky's output from this period, despite its eclecticism, remained stylistically consistent.

The length of this period may seem questionable due to its disproportionate length. However, the diversity of Sitsky's compositional approach and his near constant stylistic evolution during this period highlights the challenge of categorising a composer's creative life into chronological periods. It is important to emphasise that periodisation was employed as a means for understanding and contextualising Sitsky's compositional style – not for artificially partitioning it to fulfil an academic agenda.

The Sonatas 3, 4, and 5 for Solo Flute all exhibit musical characteristics consistent with those of Sitsky's Late Mature Period. The mystic and mythological springboards behind all three Late Mature Period solo flute sonatas are consistent with Sitsky's mature creative practice. All three sonatas exhibit Sitsky's renunciation of overt Modernist aesthetics and reveal the composer's focus on melodic line. Extended techniques such as flutter tongue and multiphonics are used sparingly in order to achieve colour rather than to produce a Modernist sound world. In addition, the three sonatas all include examples of the chromatic obfuscation

that is characteristic of this period. This device can be considered as a continuation from Sitsky's Armenian Period. Crucially, all three sonatas exhibit a sense of creative freedom as the musical material develops organically and rhapsodically.

The episodic and mosaic forms of all three Late Mature Period flute sonatas reflect Sitsky's formal experimentation during this period. The constant variation and continued evolution of this episodic approach to form – demonstrated through the subtle contrasts between the last three flute sonatas – is also consistent with Sitsky's continuous creative evolution in this period. Indeed, a spectrum of development can be observed across the three sonatas – reinforcing the concept of a slight shift in Sitsky's creative approach after the year 2000. Sonata No 3 is constructed upon the development of a small number of musical ideas, and its accumulative, ascending structure suggests the presence of an underlying Journey Theme. Sonata No 4 also communicates a Journey Theme; however, it contrasts with Sonata No 3 through the presence of three distinct musical blueprints. Sonata No 5 is built upon distinct musical blueprints; however, the overall structure conforms to an arch form of symmetrical episodes preceded by an extended introduction. All three sonatas are constructed upon a limited palette of musical materials, which undergo an organic, almost improvisatory development. As the forms of these three sonatas include alternating sections or episodes of contrasting material they can be considered as evolved relatives of the 1979 Sonata No 2 for Solo Flute from Sitsky's earlier Mystic Expressionism Period (1970–early 1980s). However, the earlier Sonata No 2 exhibits less variation and development of material across its duration and does not feature any cross-fertilisation between contrasting sections. In this regard, the episodic form not only evolves within Sitsky's Late Mature Period but exemplifies a continued evolution across different compositional periods. The previous five chapters have analysed the transformations of Sitsky's creative process over a period of six decades. The next chapter adopts a different focus by identifying the overarching characteristics, or 'constants' within Sitsky's compositional style.

Chapter 6: A ‘Sitskian’ Aesthetic: Overarching Characteristics

Stylistic evolution is a constant theme within Sitsky’s compositional style; however, overarching characteristics do contribute to a certain ‘Sitskian’ aesthetic. These characteristics create a sound world akin to an aural signature – a type of compositional identity embedded in the score.

Extramusical ‘springboards’

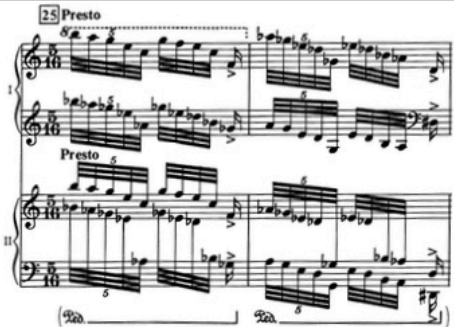
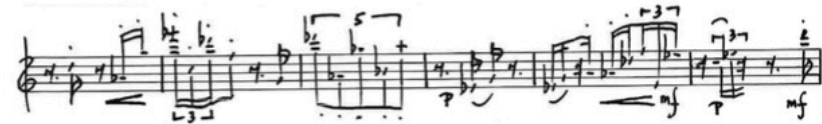
Sitsky’s practice of creating a work upon the prompt of an extramusical springboard is an enduring and distinctive compositional trait. As discussed throughout the proceeding five chapters, the extramusical sources that have triggered Sitsky’s imagination are often based on mystic or mythological topoi. Closely linked to his use of mystical springboards is the presence of a ‘Journey Theme’ across the duration of a work. Observable in a number of Sitsky’s compositions, the journey, or a progression from one state to another is often communicated through (depending on which direction the journey is going) a registral ascent or descent, an increase or decrease in texture, an increase or decrease in dynamics, and an increase or decrease in rhythmic durations or tempo.

Irregular rhythms and metres

The vast majority of Sitsky’s music exhibits irregular rhythms and metres. Sitsky explains that his deliberate “subversion” of regular, predictable metric accents through syncopation and tied triplets and tuplets are a conscious means for “avoiding the obvious beat”.¹ Indeed, such is the prevalence of the odd-numbered tuplet, that there is scarcely a piece by Sitsky that does not contain a quintuplet (see Table 6.1).

¹ Larry Sitsky, in conversation with the author, July 22, 2020.

Table 6.1: Examples of quintuplets from each stylistic period.²

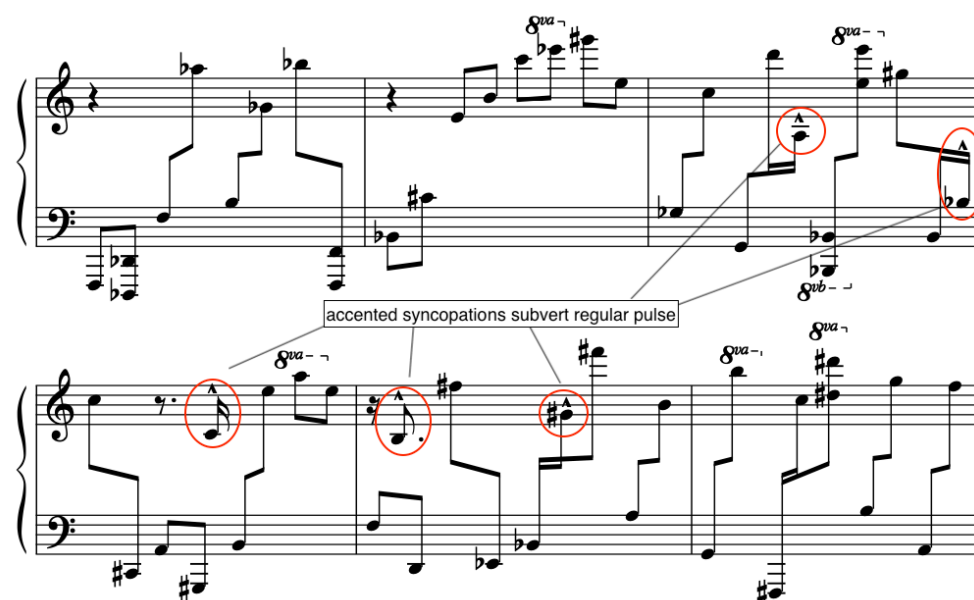
Title Sonatina for Oboe and Piano (oboe part) Mvt I, bar 15 <i>Early Mature Period</i>	1962	
Title Concerto for Two solo Pianos Variation X RM 25 <i>Modernist Period</i>	1967	
Title Sonata No. 2 for Solo Flute, The Fourteen Days of Bardo Thödol Mvt II, <i>Presto</i> <i>Mystic Expressionism Period</i>	1979	
Title Two Pastorales for Solo Flute I: Slow, bars 4–5 <i>Armenian Period</i>	1984	
Title Dimensions of Night for Solo Piano III: 'Thoh' <i>Young Classicism Period</i>	2010	

A significant majority of Sitsky's compositions contain unbarred passages and are often scored without time signatures. And when time signatures are included, compound metres, or other unusual time signatures are ubiquitous. In instances where Sitsky uses a common time signature, or other clear pulse, rhythmic consistency is subverted through notated accents that change the metric accents or otherwise obscure a steady pulse. For example, in the third movement of the solo piano cycle, *Dimensions of Night*, the vast majority of the work is

² Larry Sitsky, *Sonatina for Oboe* (Wollongong: Wirripang, 2013), 4; Larry Sitsky, *Concerto for Two Solo Pianos* (London: Boosey and Hawkes, 1971), 22; Sitsky, *Sonata No 2 for Solo Flute*, 10; Larry Sitsky, *Two Pastorales* (Wollongong: Wirripang, 2019), 1; Larry Sitsky, *Dimensions of Night* (Wollongong: Wirripang, 2009), 27.

scored in 4/4, with constant quavers or semiquavers. However, the clear pulse set by the metre and constant quavers is subverted by intermittent accented and syncopated notes which are foregrounded as a type of counterpoint (see Figure 6.1).

Figure 6.1: Sitsky, *Dimensions of Night*, Mvt III: “Thoh”, bars 7–12. Constant 4/4 pulse subverted by accented syncopations.



Busoni legacy

The Busonian compositional tradition is another connecting thread observable throughout Sitsky's compositional oeuvre. It is important to note that Sitsky's music is influenced by the aesthetic traditions of pianist-composers such as Anton Rubinstein, Olivier Messiaen, Béla Bartók, and Alexander Scriabin. However, the Busoni influence is perhaps the most enduring. Sitsky's early tutelage under Busoni pupils Egon Petri and Winifred Burston inspired his lifelong engagement with the works and writings of the Italian composer. Indeed, at the time of writing, Sitsky's most recent volume on Busoni's works is being prepared for publication – thirty-five years after Sitsky's first book *Busoni and The Piano* was published by Greenwood Press.³ Busoni's influence manifests remarkably subtly in Sitsky's music. Indeed, the Busoni legacy prevails in Sitsky's compositions through a shared musical philosophy rather than aesthetic.⁴ Examples of Busoni's and Sitsky's shared philosophies include their misgivings with program music, their belief in the transcendental, or mystic,

³ Larry Sitsky, email correspondence, February 4, 2021.

⁴ Erinn E. Knyt, *Ferruccio Busoni and his Legacy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), 319.

power of music, and their emphatic belief that the interpretation of a performer plays a vital role in a piece's communication.⁵

Certain references to Busoni's music are frequently observed in Sitsky's compositions. These references range from sections of music that are modelled on figures found in Busoni's music; to structuring whole works in response to an earlier work by Busoni. Examples of the latter include Sitsky's first violin concerto, which was modelled on Busoni's piano concerto,⁶ and his 2018 virtual opera *Doctor Faustus*, which has an obvious connection to Busoni's opera *Doktor Faust*.

Characteristic motives

Additionally, certain motivic devices contribute to Sitsky's unique aesthetic. In particular, the recurring presence of a chant topic in a significant number of Sitsky's compositions adds a certain identifiable character to his works. Recognised either through a drone-like, sustained melody with or without *portamento*, or through an unfolding line of repeated unisons, the chant theme is a key motivic "signpost" that contributes to aural continuity in dense textures or long and complex improvisatory forms.⁷ These two devices are acknowledged by Sitsky to represent chant and are manifestations of the influence of his childhood exposure to both Chinese and Jewish music.⁸ Furthermore, Sitsky often uses small chromatic motives of no more than three or four notes. These chromatic motives usually consist of an ascending (or descending) semitone, followed by a descending or ascending tone (as a 'set' in best normal order: [012]) and permeate many of Sitsky's works (see Figure 6.2).

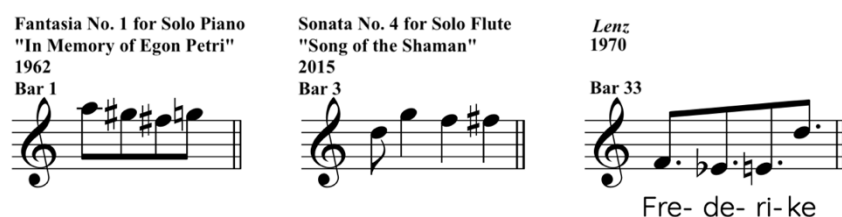
⁵ Ferruccio Busoni, "Sketch of a New Esthetic of Music," in *Three Classics in the Aesthetic of Music* (New York: Dover Publications, 1962), 78, 84; J.M. Crispin, *The Esoteric Musical Tradition of Ferruccio Busoni and Its Reinvigoration in the Music of Larry Sitsky: The Operas Doktor Faust and The Golem* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2007).

⁶ See discussion in Chapter 3. See also: Patricia Shaw, "Larry Sitsky's Music for Violin, and Jan Sedivka," *Context: A Journal of the Postgraduate Students of the University of Melbourne School of Music* 8, no Summer (1994): 15.

⁷ Larry Sitsky; Michael Kieran Harvey, *The Way of the Seeker*, Move MD 3309, 2006, compact disc.

⁸ Personal communication, *Music Magick and the Muse*, Canberra February 16th, 2019.

Figure 6.2: Examples of three- or four-note chromatic cells.



Whilst a seemingly minor compositional detail, this three-note chromatic motive features prominently throughout Sitsky's output – particularly in large-scale forms that are built upon a few key motives. The recurring presence of these motives contributes to an idiosyncratic aural aesthetic. Sitsky's ubiquitous use of the tritone – particularly the pitches A–E $\flat$ – further contributes to a distinctive 'Sitskian' sound world. When utilising cryptogrammic pitch name equivalents, A and E $\flat$ correlate with Sitsky's initials: "La" = A and S = E $\flat$. Sitsky shares this signatory tritone with Ferruccio Busoni (F–B). The pitches F–B are also frequently observed in Sitsky's compositions.

This chapter identified overarching features of Sitsky's stylistic language; however, perhaps most notable overall, is Sitsky's eclectic style and his constant rejection of creative stasis. Nonetheless, certain devices such as chant topoi, chromatic cells, chromatic 'smudging', irregular rhythms and metres, episodic and improvisatory forms, and extramusical springboards contribute to a 'Sitskian' aesthetic. When asked to deliberate on the notion of his own compositional aesthetic, Sitsky reflects that "composers have their own language, and this of course shines through, no matter how the other parameters are managed."⁹

⁹ Larry Sitsky, email correspondence, July 4, 2019.

Conclusion

This thesis has demonstrated that Larry Sitsky's compositional output in the years 1959–2019 is defined by a constant, and conscious, evolution through a series of pronounced shifts. This finding illuminates a previously underexplored aspect of the composer's oeuvre by clearly identifying characteristics and context of Sitsky's stylistic evolution. The musical characteristics of Sitsky's stylistic shifts were identified by providing a comparative diachronic analysis of the musical devices that shaped his compositional evolution. Sitsky's compositional evolution was shown to traverse: his efforts to embrace a more modern idiom in his earliest mature compositions from 1959; an exploration of Modernist techniques such as serialism, aleatoricism, *musique concrète* in the 1960s; the adoption of Expressionism and engagement with Asian and mystic stimuli in the 1970s; a series of works for solo instruments inspired by Armenian folk music in the early-to-mid-1980s; and, a neo-romantic though eclectic synthesis of earlier compositional experiments in the late 1980s to 2019. These main characteristics led to the identification of specifically-defined stylistic periods. In Chapters 1–5, Sitsky's compositional 'periods' were identified as follows:

1. Early Mature Period (1959–1962)
2. Modernist Period (1963–1969)
3. Mystic Expressionism Period (1970–1982)
4. Armenian Period (1983–1986)
5. Late Mature Period (1987–2019)

Sitsky's six solo flute works, the Sonatas No 1–5 for Solo Flute and *Two Pastorales* for Solo Flute were analysed as case studies of each period (except the Modernist Period, which did not include a solo flute work). The first chapter has demonstrated how Sitsky sought to compose in a more modern idiom in his "Early Mature" Period by adopting a linear (as opposed to harmonic) approach, using dodecaphony, polymetre, extended techniques, and development of small motives and cells. Often derivative, the Early Mature Period works nonetheless demonstrate considerable compositional mastery and display Sitsky's own personal style as he explored various approaches to musical Modernism. The second chapter examined Sitsky's exploration of a range of contemporary Modernist techniques in both serious and satirical compositions during his Modernist Period from 1963–1970. Sitsky's use of devices such as electronics and *musique concrète*, aleatoricism and indeterminacy, integral and 12-tone serialism, and extended techniques was highly exploratory as he sought to

develop his own musical language. Indeed, the composer's use of these devices underwent significant adaptation during this Modernist Period, which reveals his process of adapting techniques to better suit his creative intentions.

Stylistic evolution was shown to occur both within and across periods, and revealed a process of constant creative exploration, accumulation, shedding, and transformation. Indeed, the third chapter revealed Sitsky's continued shedding of post-World War II compositional techniques in his Mystic Expressionism Period in the years 1970–1982. Sitsky's compositions bear the hallmarks of Expressionism in this period and are marked by extreme dynamic, textural and registral contrasts, long, angular melodies, and an intensely emotional character. Furthermore, a number of Sitsky's works from this period were influenced by mystic or Asian sources – further reflecting the ideology of wider Expressionist movements. Ultimately, Sitsky's stylistic evolution across both his Modernist and Mystic Expressionism Periods saw the eventual rejection of Modernist techniques. However, certain devices such as 'controlled aleatoricism', row technique, and some extended techniques continued to surface in compositions from later periods. This inconsistency reveals the composer's non-formalist eclecticism or Postmodernism characteristic. In other words, Sitsky freely draws upon different techniques to achieve a desired sound world or effect – often combining disparate techniques in the one composition.

Sitsky's Mystic Expressionism Period also contained Sitsky's first compositions with mystic or mythological stimuli, or extramusical springboards. The discussion of the extramusical springboard in this thesis illuminated its ubiquity and function within Sitsky's oeuvre. Whilst the springboard is non-programmatic, numerical or symbolic aspects of the source can still influence aspects of the composition such as its form and structural development. This process became an enduring aspect of the composer's creative practice, which suggests that his Mystic Expressionism Period works indicate the beginning of his mature compositional style.

Chapter 4 examines the characteristics of Sitsky's most profound shift in style during his "Armenian Period" from 1983–1986. The compositions from this period draw upon Armenian folk sources within a Western art music frame and incorporate Modernist elements such as extended techniques, atonality, and free chromaticism. This fusion reveals a cultural and stylistic hybridity that reflects Sitsky's liminality as an immigrant within an increasingly multicultural and globalised society.

Chapter 5 identifies how Sitsky's style underwent a simultaneous process of consolidation and continued development in his Late Mature Period (1987–2019). Reflective

of the contemporaneous Postmodern pluralism, Sitsky's Late Mature Period works include an increased integration of culturally diverse musical sources, a rhapsodic approach to form, the inclusion of mosaic forms and forms built upon dynamic gestures, irregular rhythms, melodic and harmonic 'smudging' through the close juxtaposition of unrelated chords, bitonality, and chromatic obfuscation. The stylistic heterogeneity of the works from this period emphasises Sitsky's continued search for a personal compositional language. His near-constant exploration and adaptation of different techniques demonstrates how he continually stretched compositional boundaries.

Notably, the analysis across these chapters revealed that Sitsky's stylistic evolution occurred gradually with numerous shared characteristics linking periods. For instance, the composer's early dodecaphonic experiments in his Early Mature Period Works evolved from a dedicated exploration of 12-tone serialism into a freer and more lyrical adaptation of serial row technique in his Mystic Expressionism and Late Mature Periods. In addition, this thesis also illuminated specific compositional devices that were previously underexplored. For instance, the compositional illustration of a 'Journey Theme' – a progression from one state to another – was shown to be closely linked with tessitura, register, dynamics and texture. Interestingly, these devices were shown to be important means of development and growth in Sitsky's improvisatory episodic, or 'mosaic' forms.

Through detailed analysis across six case studies, the solo flute works were shown to reflect the stylistic characteristics of their respective compositional periods and provide further insight into the composer's overall compositional trajectory. Dating from 1959 to 2019 the six solo flute works show the trajectory of Sitsky's compositional evolution from his earliest mature compositions through to some of his most recent works. In particular, the solo flute works exemplify the specific traits of each period, for instance: Sitsky's exploration of Modernism across his Early Mature and Modernist Periods, and his subsequent renunciation of post-World War II compositional techniques beginning from the Mystic Expressionism Period onwards; his reengagement with culturally diverse sources from the 1970s onwards as a result of Australia's acceptance of multiculturalism; an attraction to Armenian folk music in the Armenian Period; and creative emancipation and stylistic synthesis in his Late Mature Period.

The absence of a solo flute work in Sitsky's Modernist Period is notable for the insight it provides into both Sitsky's compositional philosophy and his personal view of the flute. It suggests that he believed the expressive capabilities of the flute incompatible with formalist, non-representational Modernism. Sitsky's return to composing for the solo flute

from the Mystic Expressionism Period onwards reflects his wider return to Expressionist and neo-Romantic composition. Thus, as a microcosm of Sitsky's wider compositional oeuvre, the solo flute works support and help define the division of Sitsky's creative practice into five distinct periods.

The prevalence and significance of the solo flute works also highlight Sitsky's prolonged personal and professional connection with the flute. From his early years as a child in China hearing a Shamanic healer, to his youthful friendship with flautist Peter Richardson as a student, to professional connections with flautist colleagues at the Australian National University School of Music, the flute proves to be a pervasive influence in Sitsky's musical life.

Furthermore, this thesis demonstrated how Sitsky's creative practice was influenced by sociocultural factors in Australia, such as the rise of musical Modernism in 1960s, the introduction of the multicultural policy in the 1970s, the acceptance of Postmodernism pluralism in the 1980s and 1990s, and a rejection of political Othering in the early 2000s. Sitsky's creative practice took inspiration from and responded to his diverse cultural experiences and social circumstances. In particular, this thesis has shown that these influences triggered different outcomes: first, Sitsky's reactive negation of aesthetic conservatism in Australia by pursuing satirical avant-garde works in the 1960s; second, the enabling function of both multicultural policy in facilitating his creative engagement with culturally diverse sources from the mid-to-late 1970s, and also statutory arts funding in the production of new works; and third, the inspiring impetus of various compositional and cultural traditions. Indeed, Sitsky's creative negotiation of these developments resulted in instances of cultural and stylistic hybridity – particularly in the Armenian Period works. Sitsky's artistic response to these external circumstances resulted in a distinctive compositional identity. This suggests he neither composes in an intellectual vacuum, nor as slavish imitator of the prevailing fashions of the day.

This thesis also identified distinctive stylistic characteristics that contribute to a 'Sitskian' aesthetic, or style. The analyses contained within Chapters 1–5 identified distinguishing traits between the five periods but also revealed considerable overlap between the stylistic periods. Thus, whilst each compositional period was shown to have its own identifiable characteristics, certain shared characteristics were observed across all (or most) periods as stylistic consolidation occurred. In Chapter six, the characteristics of Sitsky's overarching aesthetic were shown to include chant *topoi* and *portamento*; chromatic or bitonal 'smudging'; irregular rhythms and polymetre including frequent subversion of the

beat through the use of quintuplets and tied triplets; mosaic and episodic forms or quasi-improvisatory structures; small recurring chromatic cells; decorative fioritura; the portrayal of a Journey Theme, or a musical progression from one ‘state’ to another; the use of non-programmatic extramusical springboards inspired by mystical or mythological sources; and, the recurring presence of ‘signatory’ tritones A–E♭¹ and F–B.²

The structure and growth of Sitsky’s oeuvre highlight the importance of certain compositional devices within Sitsky’s compositional practice. Indeed, building a large-scale form with a reduced palette of musical ideas and exploiting devices such as register, tessitura, and dynamics in order to achieve growth are recurring themes within Sitsky’s compositional output. Certain ‘unique’ or distinctive characteristics within Sitsky’s style have links to other composers and traditions. For example, Sitsky’s connection with chant derives from his childhood experiences with traditional Jewish and Chinese music, his musical connection with mysticism has links to Busoni, and his use of cryptogrammic signatory motives continues an established practice within the Western art music tradition. Sitsky’s creative practice, then, remains connected to the traditions of the past whilst pursuing an individual language. Somewhat paradoxically, one of the greatest unifying features of Sitsky’s output is his pursuit of near-constant stylistic change. Sitsky’s stylistic evolution is demonstrated not only between compositional periods, but also within them. Thus, a gradual and continuous process of transformation is a key identifier of Sitsky’s compositional style.

This thesis addresses the gap in scholarly engagement with Australian flute music. It provides a tailored analytical approach that can be applied in other studies. Through analysing approximately 65 compositions, my analytical approach evolved to adapt to the stylistic characteristics of each piece under study. Rather than attempting to apply a uniform analytical template, I developed a tailored analytical approach that facilitated a nuanced representation of aspects such as cellular as distinct from motivic development, and the quasi-improvisatory, rhapsodic style of development or ‘growth’. Additionally, studying the solo flute works as a set provides a framework for further comparative study of different instrumental genres within Sitsky’s output. My position as a trained flautist influenced my decision to view Sitsky’s evolution through a solo flute lens, and I had performed two of the six works prior to commencing this research. This prior knowledge provided a certain level

¹ Larry Sitsky: “La” = A and “S” = E♭

² Ferruccio Busoni: F–B

of insight into the compositions, such as a familiarity with how they ‘work’ in relation to the instrument’s limitations and idiomatic conventions. However, the analysis in this thesis was theoretical rather than practice-led, and my performance perspective did not significantly influence my findings.

Some scholars may reject the division of Sitsky’s output into periods, critiquing that selective representation can artificially reify my analysis. However, through the careful analysis and inclusion of ‘outlying’, or unexpected, characteristics, I emphasise that the compositional periods comprise a varied array of musical characteristics. By providing a diachronic and non-teleological reading of Sitsky’s compositional evolution, this thesis provides a non-hierarchical representation of his stylistic periods – thereby not devaluing nor venerating any of the individual stylistic periods. Categorising Sitsky’s compositional shifts into periods contributes to a more nuanced understanding of his style. It is important to emphasise that the stylistic periods represent a pattern of similar compositional ideas in close proximity and were shown to be evolutionary rather than static. This subsequently combats reductionist typecasting of the composer’s aesthetic to a particular genre and compositional approach.

Nevertheless, the periodisation framework presented certain challenges. Periodisation was an effective methodology for the first 30 years of Sitsky’s oeuvre – the first four periods during which his compositional explorations were more pronounced. In contrast, the evolution that Sitsky’s style underwent since the mid-to-late 1980s was much more subtle and does not lend itself readily to neat demarcation. Indeed, within the space of several years, or indeed within a single work, numerous contrasting styles are observed. Thus, the fifth period – Late Mature – may be criticised due to its comparatively sizeable timespan of over 30 years. The breadth of Sitsky’s oeuvre combined with the scope of this study has facilitated only a relatively broad overview. Indeed, it is possible that further detailed study may uncover more stylistic sub-periods within this era of this prolific composer’s life. This period of Sitsky’s creative activity ultimately provides an opportunity for further research. However, a proposed alternative to periodisation for this era could involve an analysis of the evolution of individual instrumental genres in his post-1987 output.

Lastly, this thesis provides insight into an underexplored area of Australian music history. By not divorcing the close-reading musical analysis from its related historical and social aspects, this thesis offers a many-dimensional illumination of an aspect of this era of art music composition in Australia. Studying Sitsky’s output over the course of six decades highlights the myriad aesthetic and social transformations that transpired in late twentieth

century Australia and into the first two decades of the new millennium. In particular, the effects of the abolition of the White Australia Policy and adoption of Multiculturalism, the rise of Modernism and later acceptance of Postmodernism pluralism, and the influence of statutory arts funding apparatuses. Thus, there is opportunity for further study to explore the transformation and changes of Australian art music composition during this period. The enormity of Larry Sitsky's compositional oeuvre also provides a wealth of resources for further study. Further research of the composer's works, in particular the individual periods, or genres is needed to help understand the artistic contribution and originality of this significant figure in Australian art music.

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