

## Henry Brant: *Verticals Ascending* (1967)

Henry Brant has always been an original: an original in his concept of music, an original in his composing and orchestration, an original in his approach to life. One of my most unforgettable experiences as a music student was hearing Henry's music for the first time on a recording: such energy, such instrumentation, such wild exuberance and humor! ... Henry Brant is a living national treasure. As with other composers of stature, what makes his music of lasting value is its content and what Henry has to say as a human being to the rest of us. The originality, the eccentricities of combinations of performing forces, the cleverly funny titles and the high level of compositional craftsmanship are at the service of a musical content and ideal that speak to us with an honesty, an energy, and a warmth that enrich and refreshes us all.

Richard Pittman, director of Boston's *Musica Viva* (1989)

Of all the very young composers in America, Henry Brant, the Jewish-Canadian American, has the most original things to say and the most perfect technique for saying them...No more perfect examples of modern counterpoint come from our best composers [than Brant's *Variations for Four Instruments*...which] are a rigidly intellectual working out of a fine musical scheme. It is also wonderful that Brant should have the courage to be deliberately intellectual: "intellectual" music is in very bad repute, even among people who should know better and who admire intelligence in other fields. The idea which Brant has carried out in the *Variations* is the result of examining musical resources clearly, with a mathematician's mind as well as a musician's ear...All these examples illustrate his way of thinking and show how original his approach is and how fearlessly he takes any necessary step, no matter how unpopular, to preserve the inherent ideas in his works...Brant is a musician with knowledge, technique, original ideas, feeling, something to say, and courage. Nothing is too great to expect from him in the future.

Henry Cowell, in *Composers in Review of Other Composers* (1932), when Brant was only eighteen years old

Cowell's prediction seems to have been born out: in 2002, Henry Brant (b. Montreal, 15 September 1913) added a Pulitzer Prize (for *Ice Field*, commissioned and premiered by the San Francisco Symphony, Michael Tilson Thomas, director) to an already lengthy list of recognitions that includes two Guggenheim Fellowships (1947 and 1956), the distinction of being the first American composer to win the Prix Italia (1955), and election in 1979 to the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters. As Barney Childs wrote in his *Contemporary Composers on Contemporary Music* (1967, rev. 1998), "Bearing out the indications of his first works, published in the 'New Music Quarterly' when he was in his teens, Brant has remained a witty and immensely inventive composer and theorist."

Brant developed his experimental attitude towards music in boyhood: at the age of nine he was composing for his own homemade instruments and organizing performances with them. His primary composition teachers were George Antheil and Wallingford Riegger; he studied at the McGill Conservatorium, Montreal (1926–9), the Institute of Musical Art in New York (1929–34) and the Juilliard Graduate School (1932–4). After graduation, though, Brant found a musical climate less than accepting of his avant-garde music. As he wrote:

One consequence of the Depression in the Thirties was that complex, radical, experimental music which had flourished (if such music can ever be said to have "flourished" in the usual sense) in the Twenties, found itself almost abruptly without performers willing to present it, or audiences willing to listen to it, at least in the U.S.... After the Second World War, our composers gradually discovered that they could again safely write as wildly as they pleased, and many did. A surprising number, however, still stuck pretty much in the same bland musical straightjackets of the Depression.

Until he accepted faculty positions at Columbia University (1945–52) and the Juilliard School (1947–54), Brant worked primarily as a freelance commercial orchestrator. Although he still wrote experimental music, he was afraid to have any of it played, writing: "I was afraid of getting a black eye in the press and losing the slender market I had for my conservative concert music."

With the financial stability of his first university positions coupled with the artistic freedom found after WWII, Brant was again able to focus exclusively on writing experimental, avant-garde music. Through his extensive oeuvre, Brant has become closely associated with spatial music, or music for spatially separated groups, a genre that he has pioneered. In 1950, he wrote that traditional music in a single style "could no longer evoke the new stresses, the layered insanities, and multi-directional assaults of contemporary life on the spirit." One direction he began exploring was that of "spatial music in temporal polyphony"—in essence using space as another dimension in music. Concerned about the ability to discern contrapuntal details in dense textures, he found that the physical and sonic separation of performers solved some of that perceptual problem; he found that when he wrote twelve contrapuntal

lines to be played simultaneously, “you really couldn’t identify the details in the compound result...But there didn’t seem to be a necessary reason why music should be limited to even twelve horizontal events at once. Why not more than twelve? The ear never said, ‘I refuse to listen.’” Brant spoke to the solution, which was influenced strongly by his early studies of Charles Ives’s music (including *The Unanswered Question*), in his 1965 essay “Space as an Essential Aspect of Composition”: “If the music is so written that the separated groups are in a contrasted polyphonic-rhythmic relation to each other, the separation will *enhance* contrapuntal clarity and distinctness to a marked degree.”

Brant’s principal works since 1950 are all spatial; his catalogue now comprises over 100 such works, each for a different instrumentation, each requiring a different spatial deployment in the hall, and with maximum distances between groups prescribed in every case. His breakthrough came with *Antiphony I* (1953) for five widely separated orchestral groups, a work that predated the signal European spatial work—Stockhausen’s *Gruppen*—by three years. Unlike Stockhausen, Brant developed Ives’s ideas of stylistic contrast, and in most of his spatial works wrote music quite diverse in style, texture, and timbre for the spatially-separated groups. As Brant-scholar Kurt Stone has written: “His use of space became central to his conception of a poly-stylistic music, and his experiments have convinced him that space exerts specific influences on harmony, polyphony, texture, and timbre. He regards space as music’s ‘fourth dimension,’ (the other three being pitch, measurement of time, and timbre).” In the 1980s, Brant expanded his concept of stylistic diversity to include the musics of non-Western peoples; for example, his *Meteor Farm* (1982) is a multi-cultural work for expanded orchestra, two choirs, jazz band, Indonesian gamelan ensemble, African drummers/singers, and South Indian soloists (each group retaining its traditional music unaltered). Demonstrating his eclectic, eccentric creativity, other recent works include: *Orbits* (1979) for high soprano, organ and 80 trombones (each of which plays an independent part, the coincidence of which often results in quarter-tone clusters); and *Fire on the Amstel* (1984) for four boatloads of 25 flutes each, four jazz drummers, four church carillons, three brass bands, and four street organs—a three-hour aquatic procession through the canals in the center of Amsterdam.

Perhaps his most famous piece, ***Verticals Ascending*** displays many of Brant’s concerns in a compact package. Composed in 1967 (during Brant’s twenty-four year tenure on the faculty of Bennington College), the piece reflects in sound a visual counterpoint of the Watts Towers, a folk sculpture suggesting the work of Catalan architect Gaudí.

Believed to be the largest structure ever made by one man, the **Watts Towers** are a folk art/assemblage construction in the Watts district of South-Central Los Angeles, built entirely by Simon Rodia (1879-1965), working alone from 1921-1955. Named a National Landmark in 1990, the Towers have been called “a monument to human energy, consistency, and skill.” In 1959, during a battle to save the Towers from demolition, the International Association of Art Critics described them as “a unique combination of sculpture and architecture and a paramount achievement of twentieth-century folk art in the United States.” Built on a small plot of land (less than 1/10 of an acre) on which Rodia lived, the Watts Towers are a collection of seventeen sculptures—including three tall spires, two walls, several small towers, and a gazebo, ship, and patio—which Rodia called *Nuestro Pueblo* (“our town”). The tallest tower rises to almost 30 meters (100 feet), while the other two are 29.5 and 17 meters tall, respectively. The entire construction was built without bolts, rivets, or welds; Rodia simply bent scrap steel into the shape he wanted, wrapped around the steel whatever kind of wire and wire mesh he had on hand, and held it all together with his own mixture of cement—as various parts of the structure hardened, he would climb upon them to continue building higher. Embedded in the mortar are objects and materials that Rodia found discarded in his neighborhood; Bud and Arloa Goldstone (co-authors of *The Los Angeles Watts Towers*), have described the Towers as an above-ground archeological site—“a rich repository of elements that have played a part in the life of almost every American between at least 1900 and 1950.” William Seitz, author of *The Art of Assemblage* (1961), believes the Towers are one of the most significant American artworks of the twentieth century:

The Watts Towers were built by an Italian tilesetter, Simon Rodia, of steel rods, wire screening and concrete, broken dishes and colored glass, pieces of green Seven-Up, blue milk of magnesia, and other bottles, fragments of mirror, shells, and a variety of stones and other mineral substances...To dismiss this unique creation as a quaint folly—as one more bizarre production of an eccentric folk artist—would be an error. Less capricious than many of Gaudí’s structures, Rodia’s towers are much more than uncontrolled accretions of junk. His innate artistry is evident everywhere in masterful contrasts and analogies of sizes and textures, man-made and natural materials, organic and geometric form, monochromatic and complementary color schemes, and opacity and transparency. From the brilliant collages of broken dishes, cup handles project outward, inviting the touch, and patterned fragments are sharply set against soft flat stones; as in Byzantine mosaics or the pointillist paintings of Seurat, touches of red or orange enliven large fields of

varied blues and greens. Rodia separated soft-drink bottles melted in the incinerator from those cleanly broken, to make homogeneous compositions of swirling forms. Against assembled panels, lunettes, and finials, he placed other units varying in size and color, or uncovered areas of concrete in which the design is built up by impressions from tools, cookie molds, corncobs, and even projecting casts from boots and shoes. On a larger scale of relationship, these elements and groups are harmonized with the total structure. The patterned pavements, as beautiful in their rhythmic line, pale colors, and varied repetitions as those of Spain and South America, have designs resulting from multiplied impressions of scrap ironwork...The Watts Towers are a unique creation of inspiring power and beauty.

To describe the sheer amount of disparate materials located at every point of the Towers, the artist/sculptor Richard Ogniz has coined the phrase “density of incident.” This phrase seems no less apt in describing Brant’s *Verticals Ascending*, with its exacting, almost excruciating level of detail. Scored for two small wind bands (which Brant indicates “*must be widely separated—ideally one should be on stage, the other at the back of the hall, with their own conductors*”), *Verticals Ascending* is the aural equivalent to Rodia’s creation. As Rodia used discarded pieces of “junk” as his artistic material, Brant eschews traditional melodies and harmonies, instead building his piece through seemingly trivial motives; it is in their interaction—in the complex layering and development—that Brant is able to depict the monumentally-ascending Towers. Motives that are first stated in octaves (sometimes up to four octaves of the exact same material sound simultaneously) are coupled with their inversions, usually in canon (one line becomes two); these then are split into lines of parallel motion (two lines now become four); and then Brant layers in additional melodic lines. While his contrapuntal development is somewhat transparent, the resulting combination is an opaque sound mass. As if the complexity within each individual group was not enough, *Verticals Ascending* is fundamentally concerned with the articulation of a 3:4 poly-rhythmic ratio. While Group I (rear of the hall) plays in 4/4, Group II (on stage) plays in 3/4. As Brant writes in the score: “One measure of 4/4 is equal to one measure of 3/4; the first beat of each 4/4 measure must coincide with the first beat of the corresponding 3/4 measure, and the resulting effect will be that of ‘3 against 4’ *throughout*, whenever both groups are heard simultaneously.” Perhaps John Henken, program annotator for the Los Angeles Philharmonic says it best when he writes, “As the Watts Towers challenge contextual perceptions, *Verticals Ascending* requires a complex interaction of performers and listeners in space, integrating a sort of meta-polyphony.” As when visitors apprehend the Towers and each visitor makes complex associations between the detail and the whole, Brant hopes his listeners will do the same—appreciating both the intricate, dense detail and the overwhelming totality that is created by the accumulated detail.

### **Louis Andriessen (b. 1939): *De Stijl* (1985) from *De Materie* (1985-1988)**

“*De Stijl* is a snarling, clotted, brilliant piece of work...all musical lines are warped, twisting continually between the pure geometries of conceptual music and the abrupt graffiti of jazz.”

*Globe and Mail*

Minimalism is often viewed as a phenomenon born, nurtured, and developed in the United States. But it quickly became an international movement, one whose exhilarating pulse, unrepentant tonality, and clarity of structure offered a way out of the dead-end of serialism. East Europeans such as Arvo Pärt, Henryk Górecki, and Giya Kancheli combined minimalism with local folk and religious styles, while the English composer Michael Nyman turned minimalism to the service of an array of historical manners. It was Louis Andriessen, however, who achieved the most startling synthesis of all, forging a unique language informed as much by European modernism as American minimalism... [His works’] strident timbre is much more uncompromising than the softer touch of American minimalism. “It is not the cosmic sound of those pieces which Reich and Glass wrote at the same time,” [Andriessen] says. “What is different from my music is that in America there is not enough angst! I’m much more aggressive, I would say.” ...Andriessen remains very much a European modernist, and so [his] scores possess a gritty dissonance and a spiky chromaticism that speaks as much of Stravinsky, Messiaen, and Ligeti as of Reich. “I am a European composer, and so even now I deal much more than the Americans with chromaticism. That’s why Stravinsky is my guru.”

K. Robert Schwarz, author of *Minimalists* (1996)

When asked how he became a composer, Louis Andriessen (b. 1939, Utrecht, Holland) will usually answer: “I merely joined my father’s business.” The Andriessen family boasts generations of musicians, beginning with Louis’s great-grandfather Cornelis (1816-1893), a choir conductor and music teacher, and his grandfather Nicolaas (1845-1913), a prominent Dutch organist. Louis grew up hearing the music that was admired by his father Hendrik (1892-1981) and brother Juriaan (1925-1996), both composers and his first two teachers. As Louis recalled, his father “favored a French classicist approach to music. Music was extremely important as an objective beauty, and we should therefore realize that we are not important, it is the music that is important. That means that almost any French composer was

better than any German Romantic composer. He also liked Stravinsky a lot....” Juriaan was influential in introducing Louis to American jazz of the 1940s and 50s, especially the music of Count Basie and Stan Kenton. As Andriessen readily admits: “I must say that what was the most influential on my music, when I look back now, was the big-band culture: the writing, settings, arrangements, the harmonies of large groups of brass instruments. It all came from Stan Kenton, Dizzy Gillespie, and others.” Additional influences on the development of his unique compositional style were Kees van Baaren (the first Dutch serialist and Louis’s first non-familial teacher) at the Royal Conservatory of The Hague, and Luciano Berio, with whom he studied for two years. Andriessen also states an admiration of Maurice Ravel, whom he believes to be the first truly avant-garde composer, and for Olivier Messiaen, with whom he “shares a fascination of harmony.” Beginning in the 1970s, Andriessen began to accept minimalism as an important influence, incorporating aspects into his style for both political and aesthetic reasons. Andriessen describes his musical style: “From Stravinsky to Steve Reich, from the gamelan to Miles Davis and Stan Kenton, this is all part of my musical language. But one thing is clear: I almost completely shied away from the nineteenth century [Romanticism].” He takes as the ultimate compliment the indictment made by Dutch playwright Karst Woudstra: “That Andriessen is a bloody classicist!” He is the epitome of The Hague School; which is characterized as writing loud, aggressive, rhythmically energetic music devoid of all neo-Romantic sentiment; he is regarded as the most influential Dutch composer—and one of the most important international composers—of his generation. He believes that his music has “something to do with a combination of aggression and coolness, the passion of severity.”

A self-professed Marxist and Catholic, Andriessen was very involved in socio-political movements in the 1960s and 70s in the Netherlands. He played an active role in the increasing politicization of the arts, put into practice during the Holland Festival in 1969 with the collective work *Reconstructie*, a music-theater morality based on Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* and the life of Che Guevara, composed jointly with four other former students of van Baaren. Later the same year Andriessen was involved in the *Notenkrakersactie*—the disruption of a concert by the Concertgebouw Orchestra—whose artistic policy the protesters regarded as reactionary. This controversial act has since come to be seen as a turning-point in postwar Dutch musical life, after which the “ensemble culture” of Holland emerged.

For Andriessen it led to the permanent abandonment of the medium of the symphony orchestra and the creation in 1972 of the first of two new ensembles, Orkest de Volharding (Orchestra of Perseverance), to not only perform his music, but to redefine the role of musical performance in socio-cultural terms. (The second ensemble, Hoketus, was formed in 1976.) A democratic ensemble, the members of Volharding select the music to be performed, often work without a conductor, and produce a sound characterized by extreme individualism and a lack of homogeneous blending. Established, in the words of Tira Gijs, to remove the “ludicrous discrepancy between the two forms of music, jazz and classical,” Volharding is an “enhanced” big-band—three saxophones, three trumpets, three trombones, flute, horn, bass, and piano. (Andriessen’s *M is for Man, Music, Mozart*, performed by Symphonic Winds on 20 November 2004, was written for Volharding) Speaking of this instrumentation, Andriessen comments: “I have always used instruments in my work which, from their birth, have been regarded as not good enough for ‘real’ music: saxophone, guitar, keyboards, bass guitar, whatever you like, as long as it is *dirty stuff*.”

**De Stijl** (“The Style”) was written for an unprecedented combination of the Volharding and Hoketus ensembles to be performed at the 1985 new music festival Kaalslag (“Demolition”); the piece fit in nicely with Andriessen’s plans “to establish the Terrifying Orchestra of the Twenty-first century...an orchestra that rigorously and vociferously breaks with the division between ‘high’ and ‘low’ art, to the chagrin of those of the conservative mind-set.” Although originally conceived as an independent work, *De Stijl* ultimately became the third movement of a larger, non-narrative music-theater piece (**De Materie**), premiered on 1 June 1989 at the Holland Festival in a production directed by Robert Wilson. In *De Materie*, Andriessen examines the relationship between matter and spirit from four discrete perspectives. His pursuit was inspired by Marx, who believed that the spirit of man was determined by social forces, writing: “It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence that determines their consciousness.” Andriessen states that in *De Materie*: “I try to show that it is somewhat more complicated than Marx had thought. I won’t say that the spirit can change matter, but it can be very influential on the organization of the psyche.... The mind really does have a significant influence on your material being, on your attitude towards the world and on your position in the world.” Andriessen views *De Materie* as a musical analogue to Brecht’s *Galileo*, which he describes as “an exemplary combination of spirituality and matter and that’s what I was after. I wanted to show, in four different ways, how the mind, the person, deals with tangible surroundings.” Elmer Schönberger (co-author with Andriessen of *Apollonian Clockwork*) has provided the following synopsis of *De Materie*:

Matter as a philosophical concept and a Marxist, artistic, and scientific notion, inspired the composer between 1984 and 1988 to write four musical essays...The dramaturgy is that of a *tableau vivant*, peopled by (mainly Dutch) historical figures; they sing their own historical words thereby continually throwing new light on the subjects. These figures are united by their scientific, religious, artistic, and political idealism, as well as their common willingness to pay the price exacted by their ideals. In part 1, Gorlaeus, the early seventeenth-century philosopher who died a young age, reinstates the ancient Greek theory of atomism. In part 2, Hadewijch, the thirteenth century poetess from Brabant, sings the praises of the *unio mystica* in music rooted in a rational compositional architecture based on the proportions of a cathedral dating from the same century. Both part 2 and part 3 ("De Stijl") suggest that despite its title *De Materie* is mainly concerned with the limits of rationality. In "De Stijl," whose form and instrumentation were modeled on Mondrian's *Composition with Red, Yellow, and Blue*, the emphasis is on the metaphysical inspiration of Neo-Plasticism. Finally part 4 once again takes up the theme of science—this time personified by Marie Curie—but also the themes of love and death as expressed by the Dutch symbolist poet Willem Kloos.

*De Stijl* views the relationship between matter and spirit from an artistic perspective, specifically that of the Dutch abstract painter Piet Mondrian (1872-1944), one of the most profound, austere, influential artists of the twentieth century. In the words of Mondrian protégé Harry Holtzman: "It is impossible to imagine twentieth-century painting, sculpture, and architecture without Mondrian's oeuvre." During World War I, Mondrian stayed with the composer Van Domselaer and his wife at Laren, an artist's colony near Amsterdam. There he met two other individuals who greatly impacted his artistic development: the artist Theo van Doesburg, with whom he created the influential art journal *De Stijl*, and the theosophist mathematician Schoenmaekers, who greatly influenced his artistic ideals. (Although a strict Christian, Mondrian became a member of the Dutch Theosophical Society in 1909.) In *De Stijl*, Mondrian published many articles and essays detailing his new abstract, non-objective style, which he called "Neo-Plasticism," a name derived from the writings of Helena Blavatsky, one of the modern founders of Theosophy. The technique restricted the use of shapes purely to rectangles and with a limited color palette of the three primary colors (red, yellow, and blue) and what Mondrian believed to be the opposite of color—black, white and grey. Holtzman describes Mondrian's Neo-Plastic style as the "complete annihilation of the dominance of subject matter [that] begins to conspicuously reveal the plastic structure, the elements of the painting itself—the interaction of the planes and color, their movement, harmony, and rhythm." Mondrian's minimal style of abstraction can be seen in relation to his study of Theosophy, in his quest for the "Absolute": in trying to eradicate all elements of the subjective—the transient, and the personal—Mondrian found that the only materials left to express his universalist ideals were severely abstracted. While Mondrian's works may appear cold and calculated, they are actually the result of what he called "pure intuition." As David Sylvester writes:

Mondrian wanted the infinite, and shape is finite. A straight line is infinitely extendable, and the open-ended space between two parallel straight lines is infinitely extendable. A Mondrian abstract is the most compact imaginable pictorial harmony, the most self-sufficient of painted surfaces. At the same time it stretches far beyond its borders so that it seems a fragment of a larger cosmos or so that, getting a kind of feedback from the space which it rules beyond its boundaries, it acquires a second, illusory, scale by which the distances between points on the canvas seem measurable in miles.

Perhaps, though, Mondrian's unique artistic vision can be best articulated in his own words:

I construct lines and combinations of color on a flat picture plane with the aim of deliberately depicting a *general sense of beauty* as far as is possible. Nature (or what I see) inspires me, gives me, as it does virtually every painter, the emotion from which the urge derives to create something. But I want to approach truth as closely as possible, and thus I abstract everything until I come to the essence (always the external essence) of things...I believe this can be achieved through horizontal and vertical lines, constructed in a *conscious* but *non-calculated* way and guided by a large degree of intuition, and reduced to rhythm and harmony...To a more perceptive person, there is nothing vague about this, it is only vague to a trivial person looking at nature. (From a letter to art critic H.P. Bremmer [1914])

In order to approach the spiritual in art, one employs reality as little as possible...This explains logically why primary forms are employed. Since these forms are abstract, an abstract art comes into being. Art must transcend reality—Art must transcend humanity. Otherwise it would be of no value to man. This transcendent character appears *vague* and dreamy to the materialist, but for the spiritual person it is precisely positive and clear....The principle of this art is not the negation of matter, but love of matter, viewed in the most intense manner and expressed in form in the artistic creation." (From a sketchbook [1914])

Everybody knows that painting and sculpture are concerned with the expression of the essence of art and not with the representation that cloaks it. But not everyone is convinced that the essence can be plastically expressed exclusively through line, color, form, and their mutual relationships, thus without particular subject matter...The essence of art

expresses or evokes our emotions of beauty. It is universal and lies outside our subjective vision. The more that subjective vision is excluded, the purer the expression of art. All true art arises intuitively from the universal. The essence of art is the plastic expression of life, which is equally indescribable in its richness and fullness. (From "Art without Subject Matter" [1938])

In *De Stijl*, Andriessen is exploring the murky metaphysical roots behind Mondrian's modernism—and perhaps most surprising, Mondrian's love of jazz, specifically boogie-woogie dance music. (In 1926, learning that the Charleston might be legally banned in Holland because of its "sensuality," Mondrian wrote from Paris: "If the ban on the Charleston is enforced, it will be a reason for me never to return." In addition, his last two works were named "Broadway Boogie-Woogie" and "Victory Boogie-Woogie.") Andriessen writes: "Mondrian's peculiar love for wildness coupled with his innate sobriety is reflected in my piece *De Stijl* in the boogie woogie which is a passacaglia." Like both boogie-woogie music and Baroque passacaglias, *De Stijl* is built on an obsessively repeated *basso ostinato* (what Andriessen calls both a funky "disco bass" and a "contemporary reinterpretation of boogie-woogie"). This bass line dictates almost the entire course of the movement; it may be rhythmically displaced, it may become the subject for canonic and fugal imitation (often at fiendishly dense temporal intervals), it may migrate to the upper voices, it may even disappear periodically—however, its metric structure, based on a 12-bar blues pattern, is omnipresent. (Andriessen has re-interpreted the classic 12-bar blues—48 beats, grouped in 12 measures of 4/4 time—into his own tricky, syncopated 48-beat bass line—8 measures of 3/4 followed by 6 measures of 4/4.)

Set above this disco bass, however, are two of the least likely texts to have been set to music: Dr. Schoenmaeker's theories on "The Perfectly Straight Line" and Van Domselaer-Middlekoop's touching reminiscences of Mondrian. (Translations are below.) Between the two, a full portrait of Mondrian emerges. We see the pseudo-scientific basis for his fascination with straight lines and what he took as "proof" of the inherent perfection of the "cross figure"—a confirmation of his Christian beliefs; alongside this theosophical treatise, though, we see Mondrian as his avant-garde friends saw him, his love of dancing (the physical) contrasted with his love of the spiritual.

Despite what Schwarz calls its "impudent surface," *De Stijl* is strictly structured. Andriessen took Mondrian's *Composition with Red, Yellow, and Blue* (1927) and, by translating its geometric proportions into metrical terms, derived the large-scale form of the music. In a 1999 interview, Andriessen said:

*De Stijl* is structurally based on a painting of his which I found in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam; a poster of it still hangs in my study. I measured the circumference of the painting—2400 millimeters—and decided to use the same number of quarter-notes in my piece. The structure of *De Stijl* is entirely based on the painting: I could even say that I painted my own Mondrian in music. This is how it works. The painting consists of five elements: three colors (yellow, red, blue), the black lines, and the grey squares. After reading the painting from top to bottom and from left to right, I made a sketch of all these elements and divided the orchestra into five groups, which were assigned to the various colors, lines, and squares. I did not forget the dancing, of course. An important part of the music is the equivalent of the black lines provided by the long bass line, which is a reference to certain types of pop music and to boogie-woogie. [In a different lecture, Andriessen commented that the trumpets and voices represent the red, saxophones yellow, trombones blue, and the grey being the "surprise element"—although, he added, "these relationships between colours and instrument groups should be taken with a substantial pinch of salt because I allocate sounds to colours quite arbitrarily."]

Andriessen admits, however, that the "true spirit of the piece" is actually J.S. Bach; Andriessen regards *De Stijl* not only as a passacaglia, but as a chorale fantasy. Throughout the piece, Andriessen often utilizes the B-A-C-H motive (B-flat, A, C, B-natural) to highlight key formal nodes. Interesting is the parallel that Andriessen draws: the motive functions as the aural equivalent of the "the cross figure." As author Maja Trochimczyk, writes: "This motive of the cross plays a fundamental role in...*De Stijl*, [which] explores the contradictions between Mondrian's Christian beliefs and his less spiritual inclinations. Here, the B-A-C-H motive's appearance alongside a boogie-woogie melody emphasizes the 'mind-body' contradiction between Mondrian's strict Christian beliefs and his love of dancing, condemned by his Calvinist faith." While in part II of *De Materie (Hadewijch)*, the opposition between the material/physical and the spiritual is questioned, in *De Stijl*, this opposition is highlighted through Andriessen's use of Christian numerology, particularly the connotations of the number 3 with all things spiritual/godly and the number 4 with all things earthly (literally, *materie*). For example *De Stijl* is built with the superimposition of three-pitch harmonies (generally in the three flutes) contrasted with four-pitch harmonies (voices/trumpets/synthesizer), and the metric structure is a combination of 3/4 and 4/4—at numerous levels, the juxtaposition of 3 and 4 is central to *De Stijl*. (In contrast, *Hadewich* consists almost entirely of 3-pitch harmonies in 3/4.) The connection between these two

movements does not end with numerology, though. The notes that begin *De Stijl* are identical to the notes of Hadewijch's intimate final song; Andriessen thought it was "gruesome and ironic to connect the holiest moment of *Hadewijch* with a 'common' theme." He continues: "The great outburst at the end of *De Stijl* [is], if you know only *De Stijl*, an odd occurrence. But seen in the context of the entire *Materie*, it turns out to be a fairly emotional recollection of *Hadewijch*, part 2 of *De Materie*." As in many works by Stravinsky, *De Stijl* ends with an apotheosis—in recalling *Hadewijch* to serve this function, Andriessen seems to resolve the mind-body opposition on the side of the spiritual.

Dry analysis, however, can't convey the contagious exuberance of *De Stijl*. Your feet move to the unrelenting, granitic force of the bass and the truly nasty crashes of percussion; your head nods along with the blasts of brass and winds; your spirit soars with the ethereal vocal parts. Sure, the timbres are abrasive, the dynamics loud, the effect unremittingly harsh. But this is music with roots in the power of pop, the repetition of minimalism, the linearity of Stravinsky, and the formalism of Bach—none of which cares much about coddling the ears."

K. Robert Schwarz

People often say that the piece sounds like nothing Mondrian. From this we can derive a wonderful fact: evidently people have an idea how Mondrian should sound in music. All the same, I can really see that.

Louis Andriessen

### **Claude Debussy: *La cathédrale engloutie* (1910) (arranged by Merlin Patterson)**

He received his most profitable lessons from poets and painters, not from musicians.

Louis Laloy, Debussy's first French biographer (1909)

*J'aime presque autant les images que la musique.* ("I love pictures almost as much as music.")

Debussy

**Claude Debussy** (1862-1918) is, without question, one of the most significant composers of his time; his harmonic and formal innovations have had a profound influence on generations of composers—Stravinsky wrote, "The musicians of my generation and I owe the MOST to Debussy," Bartók described him as "the greatest composer of our time," and Virgil Thomson wrote, "Debussy is to our century everywhere what Beethoven was to those of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century: our blinding light, our sun, our central luminary." Paul Griffiths wrote in his book *Modern Music: A Concise History*:

If modern music may be said to have had a definite beginning, then it started with [a] flute melody, the opening of *Prélude à "L'après-midi d'un faune"* by Claude Debussy...[He] opened the paths of modern music—the abandonment of traditional tonality, the development of new rhythmic complexity, the recognition of colour as an essential, the creation of a quite new form for each work, the exploration of deeper mental processes.

While Debussy was not directly inspired by a specific work of art to compose *La cathédrale engloutie* ("The Engulfed Cathedral"), connections and parallels between this piano prelude and other works of art are plentiful. Artists as diverse as M.C. Escher and Birger Carlstedt were inspired by Debussy's piece to create paintings; another artist, the Englishman Ceri Richards (1903-1971), even created a "series of semi-abstract seascapes that are a direct response to a much-loved piece of music"—*La cathédrale engloutie*. As Richards wrote: "I am not illustrating, I am reacting in a whimsical manner to a vital piece of music that I sincerely admire...Debussy is a visual composer. His sounds and structures are derived from a visual sensibility. He gives me a feeling of the sounds of nature, as Monet does." Pianist Paul Roberts, author of *Images: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy*, sees an even more vivid analogy—between Debussy's piano prelude and Monet's Impressionist series of *Rouen Cathedral* paintings:

The parallel that can be drawn between the colossal proportions of a cathedral and the resounding grandeur of the middle section of *La cathédrale engloutie* is obvious. But the parallel applies to more than the *fortissimo* middle section: the architecture of the opening section is equally bold, despite the mist.... The pulse is implacable, though *fluide*, while the deep bass chords, resonating sonorously against the upper line (also implacable, never deviating in pitch as the bass falls), creates a sense of looming presence which might be compared to the effect of Monet's cathedral paintings. Monet's *Rouen Cathedral—Morning Effect*, for example, is remarkable in the way in which, despite its soft, enveloping blur, it represents not only mass, but line.... The visual analogy is inescapable, whether it is with the paintings of Monet or with an imaginary cathedral arising from the sunken city of Ys on the Brittany coast.... It is impossible to say whether Debussy admired Monet's series paintings of the 1890s, but he could not have failed to know them. The paintings of Rouen Cathedral, in particular, established Monet once and for all as among the greatest of French painters. "You do me a great honour by calling me a pupil of Claude Monet," Debussy wrote to the critic Émile Vuillermoz in 1916. The comparison between the composer and the painter, especially in regard to *La cathédrale engloutie*, would have been the

obvious one to make for Debussy's audience, always eager to relate music and painting. When Vuillermoz linked Monet and Debussy, it is likely that he had this prelude in mind.

In 1910 and 1913, respectively, Debussy composed two books of *Préludes* for piano solo that, in the words of Cecilia Dunoyer, "bring the development of the independent prelude to its highest point by their complexity and brevity, their infinite variety of moods, textures, subject matter, emotions and the richness of the tonal palette. Humor, disenchantment, parody, joy, fear, tragedy, loneliness, serenity, silence, light, darkness—all are concisely contained in these musical pages, conceived by a genius at the apex of his creative powers." *La cathédrale engloutie* (Book I, no. 10) may be the closest example in Debussy's oeuvre of program music. The prelude was inspired by an ancient Breton legend of the Isle of Ys. To punish the people for their sins, the Cathedral of Ys is engulfed by the sea. Once a year (or, in a different version of the legend, at sunrise on clear mornings), the sunken cathedral rises out of the sea briefly—bells tolling, organ rumbling, and priests chanting—before once again returning to the bottom of the sea. Debussy evoked this miraculous phenomenon by suggesting the parallel harmonies of Medieval organum and the smooth melodic voice-leadings of Gregorian chant, as well the chiming of bells and the organ pedal points. The work is one of Debussy's most popular works, not only in its original version for piano, but also in numerous transcriptions (including one by Leopold Stokowski) that tend to heighten the programmatic nature of the piece. As Roberts writes: "The prelude evokes uncannily the misty waters, the sound of cathedral bells and plainchant, and the awe inspired in those who have experienced the supernatural. Yet the tale is only a pretext for a piano piece, a structure from which music can evolve." Paul Jacobs extended this contention further when he wrote: "The precise relationship between music and title in Debussy's *Preludes* cannot be ascertained without taking into account the composer's manner of inscribing the title at the *end* of each prelude, perhaps to suggest that he did not want the allusions to be taken too seriously, or quite possibly to reveal that the title was suggested by the music, and not the other way around." Debussy would certainly agree:

Let us maintain that the beauty of a work of art must always remain mysterious; that is to say, it is impossible to explain exactly how it is created. Let us at all costs preserve this magic peculiar to music, for of all the arts it is the most susceptible to magic... In the name of all the gods, let us not attempt to destroy or explain it.

### **Guy Woolfenden: *French Impressions* (1998)**

Founder of Neo-Impressionism, Georges Seurat (1859-1891) was one of the most influential artists of the late nineteenth century. Many art historians have observed Seurat's significance: Meyer Schapiro (1963) cites Seurat as the "single major influence on the art of the important younger painters in Paris in the later '80s.... Van Gogh, Gauguin and Lautrec were all affected by [his work]"; Alain Madeleine-Perdrillat goes further, believing that Seurat's Neo-Impressionism paved the way for "the great liberation of color which came with the explosion of Fauvism ten years later"; and Phillipe de Montebello (director of the Metropolitan Museum Of Art) praises Seurat's "theoretical and aesthetic importance in the development of modern art, from the Fauvists to the Cubists and the pioneers of abstraction." Perhaps the ultimate example of the artist as scientist, Seurat spent his life studying color theories and how different linear structures could change the look or texture of a canvas; interest in the laws of optics led him to systemize the practices of the Impressionists and to develop a set of color theories that were to lead to more realistic lighting effects. He developed theories of the expressive value of light, color, and the direction of lines based on the research of his friend, the scientist Charles Henry. Using tiny brushstrokes to portray the play of light, Seurat developed a technique that became known as pointillism (or divisionism); using this technique, he created huge compositions comprised of tiny, detached strokes of pure color too small to be distinguished when looking at the entire work, but making his paintings shimmer with brilliance. Seurat's friend and fellow artist Signac commented on the importance of color purity in a pointillist piece, writing:

I attach more and more importance to the purity of the brushstroke—I try to give it maximum purity and intensity. Any defiling sleight of hand or smearing disgusts me. When one can paint with jewels, why use [manure]? Each time that my brushstroke happens to come up against another, not yet dry, and this mixture produces a dirty tone, I feel great physical disgust! It is this passion for beautiful colours that makes us paint as we do...and not the love of the "dot," as foolish people say.

In his short life, Seurat created seven large canvases, sixty smaller paintings, and hundreds of drawings and sketches. Guy Woolfenden's *French Impressions* is a musical representation of four of the large canvases.

A self-described musical “enthusiast,” the eccentric, English **Guy Woolfenden** (b. 12 July 1937) is internationally recognized as a composer of theater music, much of which is regarded as the finest written in the last fifty years. In 1961 he joined the music staff of the Royal Shakespeare Company at Stratford-upon-Avon, serving as head of music and resident composer (1963–98); he composed over 150 scores for the company, including incidental music for all of Shakespeare’s plays. His musical based on *The Comedy of Errors* won the Ivor Novello Award and the Society of West End Theatre Award for the best British musical of 1976. Woolfenden has worked with many of the major European theatre companies, including the Comédie-Française (Paris), the Burgtheater (Vienna), the Teatro di Stabile (Genoa), and the Norwegian National Theatre (Oslo). He has also written music for films (including two 1968 films—*A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *Work is a Four-Letter Word*) and for television (including “Playing Shakespeare,” 1983; “Heart of the Country,” 1986; and “A Doll’s House,” 1991). Mervyn Cooke writes:

Woolfenden’s incidental music is distinguished by his ability to evoke a period atmosphere without sacrificing individuality or an awareness of contemporary styles, chiefly by a subtle manipulation of archaic techniques such as organum and hemiola, and a resourceful harmonic language firmly rooted in the modality of earlier English composers. His concert works, several of which are derived from theatrical scores, are cast in an accessible and melodically memorable idiom; they include a significant body of music for wind ensemble, of which *Gallimaufry* (1983), based on material originally composed for Shakespeare’s *Henry IV* plays, is the best known.

Woolfenden is also active as a conductor. In addition to serving as principal conductor of the Liverpool Mozart Orchestra (1970–92) and Warwickshire Symphony Orchestra (1972–present), he has conducted concerts with many of the major British symphony and chamber orchestras. As an opera conductor, he has worked with the Chelsea Opera Group and Scottish Opera. In collaboration with choreographer André Prokovsky, he has arranged the music for four full-length ballets, which he has subsequently conducted in productions with Australian Ballet, Royal Ballet of Flanders, Hong Kong Ballet Company, Scottish Ballet, and Asami Maki Ballet of Tokyo. Woolfenden was the first artistic director of the Cambridge Festival (1986–91) and he has served as Chairman of the British Association of Symphonic Bands and Ensembles (1999–2002). Woolfenden offers the following about his *French Impressions*:

On my shelves is a curious book called *The Music Lover’s Birthday Book*, and I have got into the habit of glancing at it most days to discover when its featured composers and performers were born. The book is full of beautifully chosen photographs and paintings, one of which, *La Parade de Cirque: Invitation to the Sideshow* by Georges Seurat caught my eye on the very day that I was asked to compose a piece for the Metropolitan Wind Symphony. This picture features a strange and rather sinister-looking Trombone player in a curious pointed hat, accompanied by several other shadowy wind players. A Wind Band work inspired by the paintings of Seurat seemed to suggest possibilities, so I looked at all his other paintings, including, of course, *A Sunday Afternoon on La Grande Jatte*—which I had to reject, as I could not get Stephen Sondheim’s marvelous musical *Sunday in the Park with George*, which was inspired by this great masterpiece, out of my mind. When considering the second movement two other paintings caught my eye: *Le Cirque*, left unfinished at Seurat’s tragically early death in 1891 at the age of 32, and *Le Chahut*, which depicts a curiously stylized Can-Can in full swing, accompanied by a pit orchestra. The phrase “faire du chahut” means “to make a racket”, which I think I have achieved in the second movement! I felt that the first movement needed a more gentle, open-air theme, to contrast with the sinister, claustrophobic, gas-lit sideshow of *La Parade*, and I found what I was looking for at The National Gallery in London, which has long housed Seurat’s huge canvas *A Bathing Place, Asnières*. This wonderful picture presents a cool, blue river Seine lapping a sun-drenched green, grassy bank, on which pale-skinned bathers, stare fixedly across to the opposite shore, while the smoke from the distant factory chimneys reminds us—and them—that this industrial Parisian suburb is somewhat removed from The Garden of Eden. I have not attempted to slavishly reproduce Seurat’s paintings in music, nor essay in sound his astounding pointillist technique, but certainly these four paintings were the inspiration for a piece that I greatly enjoyed writing.

While there is a relaxed, Impressionist quality to Seurat’s first large painting, *Une Baignade, Asnières* (1883-84), Seurat’s use of color creates an oppressive atmosphere, the light weighing more heavily than the shadows. Madeleine-Perdrillat believes that there is a “sense of strangeness which inspires at first glance...One could say that [the] particular quality of emptiness, silence and suspended time, even more than [the] immobility of the figures in the large painting, are the hallmarks of Seurat’s art.” In *Parade de cirque* (“Circus Sideshow”) (1887-1888), the natural or studio light, whose effects Seurat had explored in his earlier large-scale works, is replaced by artificial light, provided by gas and acetylene lamps. As Gary Tinterow writes: *Parade* is “Seurat’s most mysterious painting, a brooding masterpiece...The evocative depiction of ethereal, penumbral light is unquestionably the key feature.” Madeleine-Perdrillat praises the modernist mystery of the painting, believing it to be an image acknowledging itself as image:

What Seurat in fact wanted to render visible was not so much a particular spectacle, as the disquieting power of illusion, nowhere so perceptible as in those places of passage between reality and fiction, as when we enter a theater, for example, when the play has already begun...Illusion takes everything over one element at a time, except us, for we see the illusion as the painter discloses it to us by accentuating its effects.

*Le Chahut* (1889-90) may be Seurat's most controversial painting. It has been described as "a disconcerting picture; everything about it appears strange, neither real nor unreal, neither gay nor humorous...It seems to be the last circle of Seurat's hell." Robert Hebert, though, believes that Seurat's contemporaries would have recognized its colors and its lines and angles that flared upward as motifs expressing gaiety. Seurat's last work, *Le Cirque* ("The Circus") (1891) was exhibited in its unfinished state at the seventh Salon des Independants; barely a week after its opening, Seurat suddenly died, on 29 March 1891. Although heavily criticized at the opening, it has become a 20<sup>th</sup>-century icon—in 1911, the modernist poet Apollinaire wrote: "Seurat, with a precision akin to genius, made some pictures...in which the firmness of the style matches the almost scientific accuracy of the conception (*Cirque* might almost be classified as scientific Cubism)." *Le Cirque* is in a similar vein to *Le Chahut*, although the colors and tone are quite different; as Madeleine Perdrillat writes: "Irony makes way for humor and there is a veritable grace in the tension....And yet this picture does not exactly produce an impression of pure lightheartedness and carefreeness."

### **Karel Husa: *Les Couleurs Fauves* (1995)**

While clashes and dissonance appear in his paintings, there are also incredibly subtle nuances. The forcefulness of his expression is always tempered by a lyrical freshness and exquisite harmonies.

Russell Clement, writing about Henri Matisse, *Les Fauves: A Sourcebook*

Perhaps no other composer has had such an impact on the development of the contemporary wind band than has Karel Husa...It is clear that Husa's music has influenced composers, conductors, performers, and audiences like very few composers of [the twentieth and twenty-first centuries]...Perhaps Mr. Husa's biggest contribution has been the influence he has made on the thousands of young musicians who have either performed his music or have played under his baton. Every person who has met Karel Husa knows him to be a kind and gentle soul, whose music seems to radiate from deep within. His love and compassion for others is reflected through his music.

Rodney Winther, Music Director, CCM Wind Symphony

Sadly, for Karel Husa (b. Prague, 7 August 1921), the beginning of a life in music was neither kind nor gentle, as he deserved—his early education was under the shadow of the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia. A student protest in 1939 provided the Germans with the pretext they sought for closing all the universities in Prague, including the technical institute where Husa was then pursuing studies in engineering. Further, they ordered most of the students deported to Dresden for work in munitions factories. The conservatories of art and music were allowed to remain open, however, and in 1941 Husa barely escaped deportation by gaining admission to the composition class at the Prague Conservatory. While he developed rapidly, his studies at the Conservatory were carried out in an atmosphere of constant stress and uncertainty; in the final year of the war, all classes at the Conservatory were suspended until the liberation of Czechoslovakia in 1945. The following year, Husa was granted a fellowship by the French Government and traveled to Paris, where he studied with Arthur Honegger at L'École Normale de Musique, as well as unofficially with Darius Milhaud at the Paris Conservatoire and with Nadia Boulanger. Almost immediately, Husa's music began to attract attention: his lyrical *String Quartet No. 1* was awarded the Prix Lili Boulanger and won praise from influential Parisian music critics. Although in 1948 a music critic in Prague hailed Husa as "one of the greatest hopes for Czech music," by 1949 the newly installed Communist government revoked his passport when he declined to return to Czechoslovakia to serve an oppressive regime. A refugee, Husa lived a precarious existence in Paris, earning an irregular income as a free-lance conductor. In 1954, at the invitation of the American musicologist Donald Grout, Husa accepted a position at Cornell University—initially teaching music theory and conducting the university orchestra—where he remained, teaching composition to countless young composers, until his retirement in 1992.

Husa's creative strength derives from his uncompromising individuality, logically construed aesthetic principles, and firmly held ethical beliefs. His style is capable of assimilating and adapting such varied techniques as serialism, microtones, and aleatorism within a wide expressive range. He has composed for an impressive array of instrumental combinations, and has explored virtually every important musical genre except opera. His early works are in a broadly neo-classical idiom, reflecting the influences of Honegger and Stravinsky, the Czech nationalists, and Czech and Slovak folk music. By the end of the 1950s, Husa began to move away from these styles—and the extended tonality on which they were predicated—towards a more austere, atonal idiom. He experimented with serial

techniques, adapting them to his own expressive purposes, writing with characteristic vital rhythms and an unerring dramatic flair. Husa's mature style, then, is perhaps best described as a personal synthesis of all of these features: he retained the clarity and formal logic of neo-classicism, the expressive qualities and intervallic contours of the folkloric idiom, and the intricate motivic interrelationships derived from serialism—all combined with his ongoing fascination with exploiting new and unusual instrumental techniques and combinations.

Husa is best known for a series of large scores that, according to Husa biographer Byron Adams, "derive their considerable power from the combination of coruscating orchestration and formal invention with an emotional depth that reflects his political, ethical and humanitarian concerns." Foremost among such works are those Husa calls his three "manifests" (scores intended to address serious issues of international concern): *Music for Prague 1968*, *Apotheosis of this Earth* (1971, rev. 1972) and the ballet *The Trojan Women* (1981). While the introspective *String Quartet No. 3* (1968) was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1969, its success has been overshadowed by the "manifest" written the same year—*Music for Prague 1968* for concert band, which has received over 10,000 performances. Inspired by the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, *Music for Prague 1968* is more than a memorial to a tragic episode in the history of one city; as Adams writes: "its cries of anguish and indignation are relevant wherever the innocent are crushed and victimized by the strong."

The fall of the Communist government in 1989 paved the way for Husa's triumphant return to Prague. On 13 February 1990, Husa realized a long-time (twenty one-year) dream—performing *Music for Prague 1968* (in the orchestral version) in Prague, conducting the State Symphony Orchestra. Husa was given a tumultuous reception by both the orchestra and the audience, and learned that tapes of his music had circulated underground, just as in his youth the forbidden scores of Bartók, Honegger, and Stravinsky were distributed in quiet defiance of the Nazi oppressors. He has since become a welcome visitor to Prague, often conducting his works with ensembles such as the Czech Philharmonic. In the fall of 1995, President Vaclav Havel of the Czech Republic recognized Husa's central importance to the ongoing tradition of Czech music by awarding him the Gold Medal of Merit of the Czech Republic—perhaps fulfilling the early critic's prophesy that Husa was "one of the greatest hopes for Czech music."

Through his long and distinguished career, Husa has received significant recognition for his musical contributions. In addition to winning the Pulitzer Prize, Husa has been awarded: grants from the National Endowment of the Arts, Koussevitzky Foundation commissions, two Guggenheim Fellowships (1964, 1965), the Friedheim Award of the Kennedy Center (1983), the first Sudler International Wind Competition prize (1983) for *Concerto for Wind Ensemble*, the Grawemeyer Award (1993) for his *Cello Concerto*, and the Czech Academy for the Arts and Sciences Prize. He was elected to the Royal Belgian Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1974, and to the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1994. He has received honorary doctorate degrees from more than ten schools, including the Cleveland Institute of Music, Ithaca College, New England Conservatory, and the Academy of Musical Arts in Prague. Karel Husa has conducted many of this country's most prominent wind ensembles and the world's major orchestras, including those in Paris, London, Prague, Zurich, Hong Kong, Singapore, New York, and Boston.

***Les Couleurs Fauves*** (1995) is the latest in a list of pieces that Husa has written for wind ensemble/band, that includes *Divertimento for Brass and Percussion* (1958), *Music for Prague 1968*, and *Apotheosis of this Earth* (1971), in addition to concerti for alto saxophone (1967), percussion (1970), and trumpet (1974). Interestingly, and perhaps betraying the "visual" nature of Husa's music, Adams has written: "In [Husa's] search for colourful and novel sonorities, he creates vividly expressive musical canvases, filled with arresting timbres and startling juxtapositions of texture." As Henry Brant found sympathetic associations with Simon Rodia's "Watts Towers," Husa recognizes his kinship with visual artists—specifically, the Fauvists.

The advent of Modernism is often dated by the appearance of the Fauves in Paris in 1905; while Fauvism was once thought of as a minor, short-lived, movement, it is now recognized as having paved the way to both cubism and modern expressionism in its disregard for natural forms and its love of unbridled color. The Fauves exploded onto the scene with a wild, vibrant style of expressionistic art that shocked the critics, as described by Russell Clement:

The scandal of the Parisian art world in 1905 was Salle VII of the third annual Salon d'Automne in the Grand Palais. Its walls throbbed with raw color—color squeezed straight out of tubes, ravishing the eyes and senses, clashing in dreamy harmonies flung directly on the canvas; color that dared to tint human flesh pea green and tree trunks a violet red; color that not only refused to imitate nature, but was used to suggest form and perspective. The public was confused. Angry critics ridiculed these paintings and their makers. In jest, one critic dubbed these artists "*les fauves*" or wild beasts. (Louis

Vauxcelles walked into Room VII, spotted a bronze neo-Renaissance bust of a child by sculptor Albert Marque, surrounded by the carnival of colors blazing on the walls, and wisecracked, “*Donatello parmi les fauves*”—“Donatello among the wild beasts.”) The name stuck.

*Les Fauves* (led by Henri Matisse, and including his friends Marquet, Derain, Vlaminck and Braque) greatly admired van Gogh, who said of his own work: “Instead of trying to render what I see before me, I use color in a completely arbitrary way to express myself powerfully.” The Fauvists carried this idea further, translating their feelings into color with a rough, almost clumsy style. The Fauvists believed absolutely in color as an emotional force—color lost its descriptive qualities and became luminous, creating light rather than imitating it. As Sarah Whitfield writes: “The act of painting itself was at the heart of the matter. Fauvism was the first ‘movement’ to insist in explicit terms that a painting is the canvas and the pigments. The idea that a picture is the sum of the marks made on the canvas rather than a mirror held up to life, or to nature, or to literature accounts for the chief characteristics of the first true Fauve paintings being composed of briskly applied strokes, patches and dabs of brilliant colour.”

Clement’s description of Matisse—“While clashes and dissonance appear in his paintings, there are also incredibly subtle nuances. The forcefulness of his expression is always tempered by a lyrical freshness and exquisite harmonies.”—seems equally accurate when describing Husa’s music, especially his *Les Couleurs Fauves*, commissioned by Northwestern University School of Music in tribute to its director of bands, John Paynter, upon his retirement after forty years of teaching. (Sadly, Paynter died before the work’s premiere in November 1996.) Husa writes the following about his work:

I have always been fascinated by colors, not only in music, but also in nature and art. The paintings of the Impressionists and Fauvists have been particularly attractive to me, and their French origin accounts for the French title of my piece. The two movements gave me the chance to play with colors—sometimes gentle, sometimes raw—of the wind ensemble. I was reminded of those French painters, whom I admired as a young student in Paris. They called themselves fauvists (vivid, wild), for they used both, often powerful strokes of brushed with unmixed colors. Their paintings, though, breathe with sensitivity, serenity, and gentleness.

In the first movement, “Persistent Bells,” Husa has created a tableau where the sounds of bells are ever-present, the entire wind ensemble transformed into an enormous, resonant bell choir. In 1992, Husa said that, to serve as a contrast to *Music for Prague 1968*, he “would like to write a piece about Prague that would be beautiful and happy, because [his] years there were beautiful.” Perhaps this is it. Prague, known as the “City of Hundreds of Towers,” has used its church bells as calls of distress and calls of victory. Here, Husa seems to be creating the effect of bells ringing around the city of Prague—not in war, but in peace and beauty. A haunting melody in the oboe hovers weightlessly, answered by the distant sound of pealing bells. The solo then becomes a duet, then a trio, continuing to grow until all of the woodwinds have joined the reaching, hopeful song. This process of melodic expansion is paralleled in the underlying harmonies. Like ringing bells, sounds may slowly dissipate, but they do not stop; the fabric’s density increases as each pitch is sustained: B, A#, G#, and so on—until the entire B-major scale resonates simultaneously. Once the scale is “built,” the brass explode into a shimmering chorale of dense, bright harmonies. In palindromic fashion, the clustered scale-harmonies (forcefully articulated) break-off one at a time, leaving a lone piccolo—the wind ensemble’s smallest, highest “bell”—barely audible, nervously fading into the distance.

The modernist interest in the “primitive,” which led Matisse and his followers to adopt a deliberately “simple” approach to their painting, also led many artists to collect African masks that would become integrally important to early 20th-century art; “Ritual Dance Masks” is Husa’s attempt to aurally interpret the symbolic meaning of such “primitive” art. On a technical level, and like the first movement, “Ritual Dance Masks” is about the layering and development of motivic processes. One could speak of ostinati, canons, inversions, and retrogrades, of pitch clusters, aleatoric moments, complex poly-rhythms, and virtuosically-difficult writing—but those are just the logical, methodological tools of Husa’s craft. What he has created—through the most meticulous (if not easily-apprehended) means—is a powerful, primitive, ritualistic procession of uncommon passion. Overwhelming in its intensity, frenetic in its energy, Husa offers a compelling, if frightening, analogy to the visual Fauvists. “Ritual Dance Masks” is completely unrelenting. Propelled by the convergence of the multiple melodic ideas (underpinned by the *Bolero*-esque ostinato of the snare drum), the piece ends in a cathartic, apothecotic eruption—marked by Husa: “*Exaltando*.”

To me music is excitement, enjoyment, exultation. It’s such a joy to prepare a work, then to perform it. After that one can say, “I didn’t like the piece.” I would hate to create music that is boring. That would be the end.

Karel Husa

## Koor

Een volstreekte cirkellijn (is) geen volstrekteid van eerste orde. Een volstreekte cirkellijn is volstrekt als *lijn*. Maar zij is niet volstrekt zonder eenige beperking, zij is niet volstrekt als oneindige *lijn*, zij is geen volstrekteid van eerste orde, zij is niet de volstreekte lijn.

De volstrekt-rechte lijn is 'de' volstreekte lijn.

Waarom?

Omdat alléén zij als *lijn* een volstrekteid is van eerste orde. Ook haar straal, de volstrekt-oneindige straal, is volstrekteid van eerste orde. De volstrekt-oneindige straal is ook "de" volstreekte straal. Want alléén hij is *als straal* een volstrekteid van de eerste orde.

De kruisfiguur

De figuur, die de begripvoorstelling van het paar volstrekteden van eerste orde objectieveert, is de figuur der volstreekte rechtehoekigheid of: de kruisfiguur. 't Is de figuur, die straal-en-lijn voorstelt, herleid tot volstrekteid van eerste orde. Zij karakterizeert de verhouding der volstrekteden van eerste orde als een volstrekt rechtehoekige verhouding, een "kruis" verhouding. Deze figuur is wezenlijk "open".

## Dancer (spoken):

In those days, Piet Mondrian sent a message that he was in Holland and that he could not return to Paris. Mrs. Hannaert invited him to stay, and when one afternoon I arrived, he was sitting with her at the table. He made a curious impression upon me because of his hesitating way of speaking and the nervous motions of his mouth. During the summer of 1915 he stayed in Laren and rented a small atelier in the Noolsestraat. In the evenings we would go to Hamdorf because Piet loved dancing. Whenever he made a date (preferably with a very young girl) he was noticeably good-humored. He danced with a straight back, looking upwards as he made his "stylized" dance-steps. The artists in Laren soon began to call him the "Dancing Madonna"!

In 1929 I was with him one afternoon in Paris and met the Hoyacks in his atelier. After a while, without saying anything, he put on a small gramophone (which stood as a black spot on a small white table under a painting of which seemed to be the extension) and began quietly and stiffly, with Madame Hoyack, to step around the atelier. I invited him to dine with me as we used to do in the old days. Walking on the Boulevard Raspail suddenly I had the feeling that he had shrunk. It was a strange sensation. In the metro we said good-bye; when we heard the whistle he placed his hand on my arm and embraced me. I saw him slowly walking to the exit, his head slightly to one side, lost in himself, solitary and alone.

That was our last meeting.

## Koor

Een "kruis"-verhouding.

Deze figuur is wezenlijk "open".

We kunnen haar trekken dóórtrekken naar alle zijden zoover we willwn, zonder haar wezenlijk karakter te veranderen, en he ver we de trekken dier figuur ook dóórtrekken, zij krijgt daardoor nooit een "omtrek", ze wordt daardoor nooit "gesloten", ze is geheel en wezenlijk onbegrensd, en daadwérkelijk onbegrensd: ze sluit alle begrenzing uit. Omdat die figuur geheel vanzelf uit onze begripvoorstelling geboren wordt, karakterizeert zij de begripvoorstelling van volstreekte tegendelen van eerste orde, als een begripvoorstelling van het wezenlijk "opene", het wezenlijk en daadwerkelijk "onbegrensd".

**Chorus:** fragments from Dr. M.H.J. Schoenmaekers, *Beginselen der beeldende wiskunde (The Basic Principles of Expressive Mathematics)*, C.A.J. van Dischoeck, Bussum, (1916).

**Dancer:** fragment from M. van Domselaer-Middlekoop, *Herinneringen aan Mondrian (Memories of Mondrian)*, Maatstaf (1959/1960).

## Chorus

The line of a perfect circle is not perfection of the first order. The line of a perfect circle is perfect as a *line*. But it is not perfect without limitations, it is not perfect as an *unending* line, it is not perfection of *the first order*, it is not *the* perfect line.

The perfect straight line is "the" perfect line.

Why?

Because it is the only perfection of the first order. Likewise its ray, the perfect eternal ray, is perfection of the first order. The perfect-eternal ray is also "the" perfect ray. For only it is as ray a perfection of the first order.

The cross-figure

The figure which objectifies the concept of this pair of perfections of the first order is the figure of the perfect right-angledness: or, in other words, the cross-figure. This is the figure that represents a ray-and-line reduced to perfection of the first order. It characterizes the relationship between perfections of the first order as a perfect right-angled relationship, a "cross" relationship. This figure is actually "open."