

Charles Wuorinen's *Reliquary for Stravinsky*

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Wuorinen's *Reliquary for Igor Stravinsky* is based on the Russian composer's final sketches; Wuorinen used these as the basis for a symphonic work of great depth and intensity. In the work's opening section, the younger composer fashioned a musical continuity by forging together some of the sketches and elaborating others. In certain cases, notes were added to complete the underlying tone-rows; usually fragments had to be orchestrated. This article describes some of Wuorinen's far-reaching transformations of Stravinsky's serial procedures, and his exploration of some new 12-tone operations. There is a consideration of the work's formal dimensions, and its subtle use of pitch centricity.

KEYWORDS: Reliquary, Igor Stravinsky, sketches, serialism, rotational technique, pitch centricity

A little less than a third way through Wuorinen's *Reliquary for Igor Stravinsky*, there is an extraordinary series of events; the music seems to veer off into uncharted realms conjuring up startling shapes and colors, seeming to push the limits of what might be imagined. A trumpet motive - Db—A—C—F# — ushers in a sustained brass chord, a high piccolo trill pierces through xylophone and flute attacks, timpani accentuate a brief march-like passage for basses, cellos and tuba, and a tam-tam begins to amplify yet a new series of bold harmonies and tantalizing contours. How was such a passage inspired and how was it composed? It occurs between measures 132 and 142 of the *Reliquary*; it may likewise be found about midway through program number 22 on the magnificent recording of this work by Oliver Knussen and the London Sinfonietta (Deutsche Grammophon 447-068-2).

This passage does not sound like the stately ideas that precede it, nor like the beautiful lament for solo violin that follows. Indeed, Wuorinen's *Reliquary* is a work of sharp contrasts reflecting its nature and purpose: it is at once an homage to Stravinsky and an exploration of how the composer might have realized his final thoughts in the very personal idiom of his last years. Wuorinen, who from student days had been markedly influenced by Stravinsky's late works was the ideal composer to undertake the task of bringing the senior master's final sketches to fruition. Previously, Wuorinen had composed works using pre-existing source material; his hobby of recasting Renaissance music for modern instruments led to the composition of his popular *Bearbitungen über das Glogauer Liederbuch* (1962). Much later, he used movements of early Mozart piano sonatas and excerpts from *Don Giovanni* as source material for a ballet, *Delight of the Muses* (1991). A composer, whose interests and tastes have always been wide ranging, Wuorinen has incorporated into his idiom such diverse influences as Indian ragas, the shakuhachi flute, and the sounds of the gamelan.

The *Reliquary* was composed in a burst of inspiration. At a dinner with Robert Craft, Vera Stravinsky, and composer Peter Lieberson, Wuorinen learned of the sketches and asked permission to fashion them into a suitably appropriate work. Permission had to be obtained from Stravinsky's publisher, Boosey & Hawkes, but on 28 January 1975, a mere three weeks after the sketches were delivered, Wuorinen completed the score. The first performance took place at the Ojai Festival in California on June 13, 1975, with Michael Tilson Thomas conducting.

The *Reliquary* is grounded in eight pages of brief musical notations plus five pages of accompanying row charts. These were to be the basis of a new orchestral work and were composed shortly before Stravinsky's death. Some of Stravinsky's fragments are complete ideas, others are more tentative formulations. Wuorinen numbered the more important of the sketch pages 1 through 5; an additional page was numbered 12 by Stravinsky himself. For simplicity, I will use these numbers in identifying the musical fragments. Wuorinen chose to introduce Stravinsky's ideas early on in the *Reliquary*, using the accompanying row charts for further development. A look at the music's opening section illustrates how the fragments were interwoven into a flowing musical continuity.

INVOCACIONI

Allegretto $\text{♩} = 80$

3/4

Picc. p

Fl. p

Tpt. 1. p

INV

R-INV

INV-R

Tbn. 2. p. marc.

R-INV-R

B. p. marc.

0 Timp. p. marc.

Pno. p. marc.

3/4 6

(+ = stopped)

7

4/4 8

Vns. 1. ord. p

Vle. ord. p

1^a Volta

2^a

1^a

Tbn. 2. come sopra

B. come sopra

10a p

10b p

11a come sopra

11a bis

12a

Timp. p

Hp. p

Pno. p

Vln. 1. ord.

Vle. ord. p

2

This important 2-measure gesture is followed immediately by the music of fragment 2b (sketch page 2 contains two fragments), a high solo trumpet line which gives way to short piccolo, flute, and string sonorities (mm. 8-10, figure 1). It is easy to see why Wuorinen grouped fragments 3 and 2b together: the trumpet line in measure 8 reiterates the opening line of the first trombone in measure 6.

The gesture of mm. 6-7 is repeated often - figure 1 alone contains two statements. Following is a return to the introductory chords, then a new idea of Wuorinen's own creation appears (mm. 16-27, figure 6c). This passage, a quirky, dense texture, highlighted by a prominent, sustained solo trumpet line, provides a counterweight to the music of figure 1, and suggests a rhythmic augmentation of mm. 6-7. A similar sense of balance is created elsewhere in the Exposition of the *Reliquary*: because the fragments are short, a gesture or phrase of Stravinsky's is often followed by a complementary one of Wuorinen's. Though Stravinsky's ideas periodically return, the sketches, by themselves, are not extensive enough to provide the fabric for an entire section's worth of music.

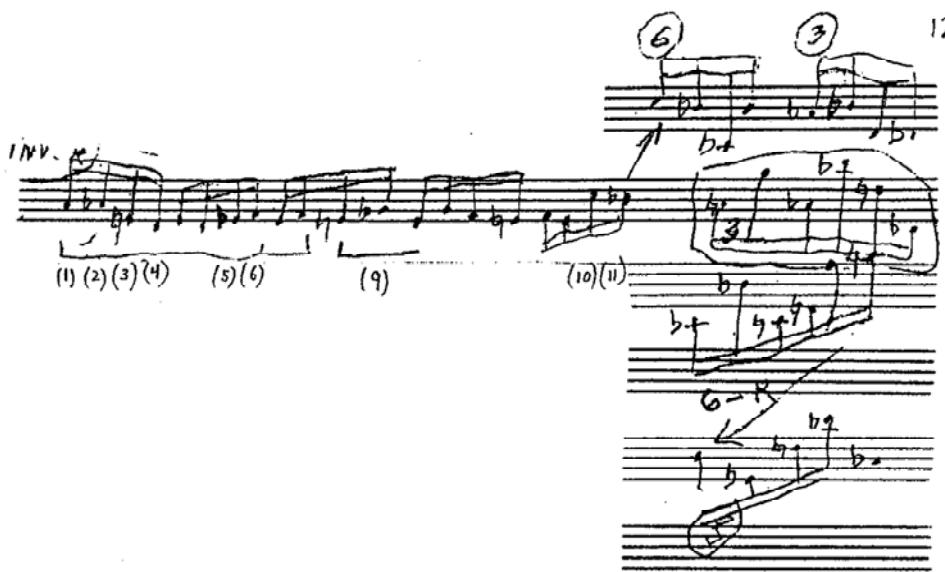
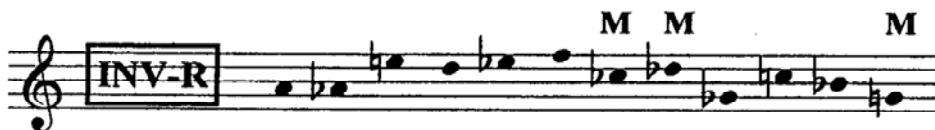


Figure 2a
Stravinsky's sketch "12"



The image shows a musical score for the piece *Reliquary*, measures 28 through 31. The score is arranged in two systems. The top system contains two staves for Trumpets 1 and 2. The bottom system contains two staves for Violoncello (Vc.) and Contrabass (Cb.). The time signatures for the measures are 3/4, 3/8, 5/4, and 7/16. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like *f*, *mf*, *marc.*, and *sf*. Vertical dashed lines connect the measures across the staves. A box labeled 'Hn. 1' is at the end of the trumpet staves. Another box highlights the pizzicato and arco markings for the cello and contrabass.

Figure 2c
Reliquary, mm. 28-31. © 1978. Used by permission of Boosey & Hawkes, Inc. and
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The dense textures of figure 1 and figure 6c are complemented by transparent ideas such as the trumpet duet of mm. 28—31. Figures 2a, b, and c illustrate how Wuorinen comfortably filled out one of Stravinsky's less annotated sketches, turning a single line into a duet, choosing the instrumentation, and adding resonance by way of pizzicati embellishments. The notes of the embellishments — Cb, Db and G — are present in the row but missing from the fragment itself.¹

In such ways, the Exposition of the *Reliquary* introduces Stravinsky's ideas and forges them into a sustained continuity. The first appearance of each fragment is helpfully marked in the Peters Edition of the score (#66631).

To understand in depth how the *Reliquary* was created, one must delve into its row structure. Such an endeavor unlocks some remarkable secrets, revealing a varied musical landscape unified in the most compelling of ways.

Stravinsky left clear indications as to the kinds of serial techniques he would have used to compose his orchestral work. Wuorinen followed these clues, at times expanding Stravinsky's range of transformational procedures. Stravinsky's first page of row charts lists his original row and five other forms (see figure 3).

In addition to prime, inversion, retrograde, and retrograde-inversion forms, Stravinsky added two more: R-INV-R, which is also I8, and INV-R, which is also RI2 (using G, the first pitch of form 0 as a starting point). As has been noted, only fragment 3 combines all six row forms; fragment 1 uses 0 only, fragment 2b uses R-INV, and fragment 12 begins with INV-R before moving on to increased complexity.



Figure 3
Stravinsky's primary row forms

Stravinsky's charts contain rotations based upon each of the six row forms. A characteristic working method of his later years, each row is divided into two hexachords, and each hexachord appears in six guises. The beginning of each of the six guises employs a successive note of the original hexachord, but otherwise preserves the original ordering. Additionally, each rotation is transposed so that its starting point is identical to that of the original hexachord from which it was derived. Examples of these rotational patterns are shown in figures 4, 5 and 6a.

Stravinsky based three of his sketches — 2a, 4a, and the end of 12 — on this rotational technique, choosing to work with groups derived from INV in the case of 2a, and INV-R for fragments 4a and 12. Figure 4 illustrates the use of the rotational technique in the poignant fragment 2a. Note that the verticals resulting from the rotations are the units from which Stravinsky worked; the rotated forms were used horizontally only once — this is at the end of fragment 12.²

The figure displays musical notation for several instruments and a rotational chart. At the top left, staves for Flute (Fl.), Clarinet (Cl.), and Bassoon (B.C.) are shown, featuring triplets and dynamic markings like *p*. To the right, staves for Flute (Fl.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (B.C.), Violin 1 (Vin. 1.), and Oboe (Ob.) are shown. The Oboe part includes the instruction *cutti pizz.* and *poco sf*. Below these staves is a rotational chart for row INV, consisting of six staves numbered 1 through 6. The chart is divided into two sections, α and β , with a box labeled 'inv' above the first staff. The chart shows a sequence of notes across the staves, with dashed lines indicating connections between notes in different staves. Below the chart, the numbers (1) through (6) are listed.

Figure 4
Reliquary, mm. 72—73; rotational chart for row INV. © 1978. Used by permission of
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1 vln. solo
 vln. 1, 2
 (1) (2)

(2) (2) (2) (3) (4)

Chimes
 Hp.
 Pno.
 152 153 154 155
 (Pno. col pedale)
 p sempre
 (f sempre)
 5
 3 3 3
 (3) (4) (5) (6)

O

α β

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6)
 ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑

Figure 5
Reliquary, mm. 151—155; rotational chart for row O. © 1978. Used by permission of
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A magnificent example of Wuorinen's own application of this technique may be found in the haunting Lament at the very center of the *Reliquary*. A solo violin line soars over chords struck by chimes, piano, and harp. The violin solo sounds almost improvised, but it is decidedly not: figure 5 shows the derivation of its notes (both melody and accompaniment) from row form 0 and its rotations.

The passage of Wuorinen's own invention noted earlier, mm. 16-27, illustrates an expansion of Stravinsky's methods. For each set of rotated hexachords (there are twelve such sets, since each of the six row forms generates two sets of rotations), Wuorinen traced along the diagonals of the resulting blocks of pitches, writing out subsets with 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 notes, respectively. Figures 6a, b, and c illustrate this procedure as it applies to measure 16. The reader may also trace the procedure in the example as it applies to measure 17.

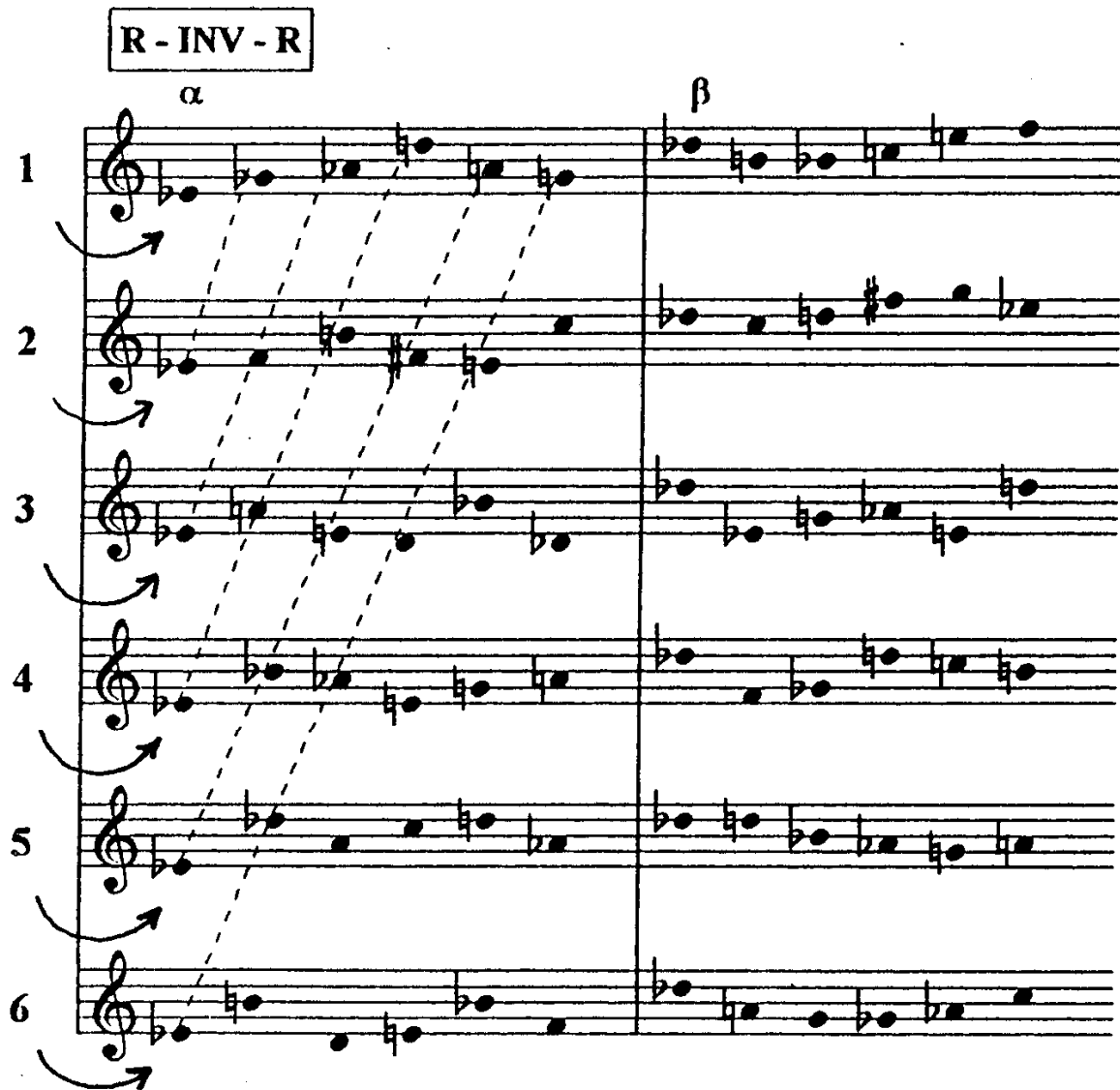


Figure 6a

Rotational chart for row R-INV-R



Figure 6b
Wuorinen's "diagonal" operation. © 1978. Used by permission of Boosey & Hawkes, Inc.
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This technique generates all of the music for mm. 16-27, using the following order of row forms and their rotations: R-INV-R, INV-R, R, R-INV, 0, and INV. Possible reasons for this ordering will be discussed shortly. Wuorinen's inspiration for this technique were diagonal lines Stravinsky himself drew on his rotational charts. It is likely that Stravinsky drew these to clarify the derivation of each rotation from the original hexachord. None the less, it was intriguing for Wuorinen to imagine using the diagonals compositionally. "I was trying to think in ways he might have thought," Wuorinen mused some twenty-five years later. "The technique seemed similar to others Stravinsky had embraced, and seemed consistent with his generally unconstrained and non-academic approach to twelve-tone writing." Even Wuorinen was amazed by Robert Craft's subsequent comment that Stravinsky had indeed considered composing in this very same way.³ Wuorinen, for his part, returned to the procedure after a hiatus of twenty years in his ballet, *The River of Light*.

Before leaving the area of serial technique, it is pertinent to address one of the most fascinating aspects of the sketches – Stravinsky's occasional deviations from his rows.

Figure 6c (beginning)
Reliquary, mm. 15-17. © 1978. Used by permission of Boosey & Hawkes, Inc. and
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There are errors in the rotational charts leading to "wrong" notes in the fragments; some of these are shown in figures 4 and 5 (the notes in parentheses were written in Stravinsky's versions of the rotations). Yet, perhaps the most intriguing discrepancy occurs in one of the composed fragments. In the first trombone line of fragment 3, the ninth note of R-INV is written as F instead of D (see figure 1). The correct version of the row is used in fragment 2b, shown in the third measure of figure 1, but this is different music altogether. Fragment 3 returns time and time again in the *Reliquary*, and although it is fleeting in its first appearances, elsewhere – most notably in the work's luminous coda – the pace is more sustained. It is impossible to know what Stravinsky might have done had he the luxury of working further with these sketches; Wuorinen, for his part, was reluctant to alter discrepancies already part of completed musical thoughts. Wuorinen's difficult, though carefully considered choice was to use the sketches (here and elsewhere) as Stravinsky had composed them. Conversely, before composing new music based on the rotations, Wuorinen rewrote Stravinsky's charts to correct inconsistencies.⁴

The formal plan of the *Reliquary* seems outwardly simple, but it is not as straightforward as first inspection might suggest. Section I is measured in tone and expositional in character. It is purposefully imitative of Stravinsky's late style. A "Variation" follows; this is forceful and virtuosic music, though it will be shown to be completely derived from Section I. The Lament, already remarked upon, interrupts the Variation. Ending with calm blocks of chords traded among groups of strings, winds and percussion, the Lament is followed by Variation Continued, with the music resuming a more extroverted course. A climax is reached at measure 244, after which the Variation gradually subsides, leading to a complete restatement of Section I followed by the brief coda. Thus, the expressive projection of the piece is that of an arch (see figure 7).

(2) 1. Bn. *mf*

(3) 2. Bn. *(mf)*

(1) Tpt. 1. *fp* *mf* *p* *fp* *(p)* *fp*

(4) 1. Bn. *(mf)*

(5) 2. Bn. *(mf)*

(6) 4. Bn. *(mf)*

Pno. *sf*

18 19 20 21 22

1. Bn. *mf*

2. Bn. *mf*

Tpt. 1. *fp* *fp*

1. Bn. *mf*

2. Bn. *mf*

4. Bn. *mf*

Pno. *sf*

23 24 25 26

Figure 6c (continuation)
Reliquary, mm. 18-26. © 1978. Used by permission of Boosey & Hawkes, Inc. and
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1. Bn.

2. Bn.

27

Tpt. 1

1. Hn.

2. Hn.

4. Hn.

Pno.

Vc.

pizz. ord.

Cb.

poco sf

3 4

3 4

Figure 6c (conclusion)
Reliquary, m. 27. © 1978. Used by permission of Boosey & Hawkes, Inc. and
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The Variation is remarkable in that it recasts all the music of Section I. On first hearing, it is virtually impossible to believe that this is the case. That these two sections are similarly constructed becomes apparent when, with score in hand, one begins to trace the note-for-note parallels. The following may serve to illustrate. Measures 3—4 of the *Reliquary* contain two incisive 12-note introductory chords followed by a short lyrical phrase played by the oboes and bassoons. One is struck immediately by the visual difference of its counterpart, mm. 118—119 (figures 8a, b). The notes and rhythms of these measures are virtually identical, but the music has been thoroughly recomposed. The two 12-note chords,

(2)

Picc.

Fl. 1. 2. 3.

4

Ob. 1. 2.

(3)

to Vibn (G), then vc (B, C)

(5)

Cl. 1. 2.

to Mar. / Xyl.

Bn. 1. 2.

Ctn.

133 134 135 136 137

Tpt. 1. 2.

(f) ten.

(6)

to pnr.

(5)

3

Fl. 1. 2. 3. 4.

(1)

(2)

(6)

(a2)

(2)

Tbn. 1. 2.

B. T.

Tba.

(2)

(1)

Xyl.

Chk.

(3)

Xyl.

to tpt. 2

(5) (V.)

Vibr.

Timp.

f sec.

Pno.

(6)

(6)

Vln. 1. 2.

pizz.

arco

Vlo.

pizz.

arco

(4)

Vc.

Cb.

Figure 6d
Reliquary, mm. 133-137. © 1978. Used by permission of Boosey & Hawkes, Inc. and
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M. 1	M. 114	M. 151	M. 183	"da capo"
Reliquary	Variation	Lament	Variation continued	Reliquary + Coda
A	B	C	B'	A
"stately"	"restless"	"mournful"	"restless"	"stately"

Figure 7

Reliquary, formal plan

connected and registrally identical to each other in measure 3, are now rearranged — pitch-wise and registrally — and are struck at two different dynamic levels. Even more importantly, the two chords of measure 3, having functioned as a motivic unit, are now split gesturally, so that in measure 118, the first represents the completion of one phrase, and the second, the start of another. Although phrase structure is shifted in fascinating ways in the Variation, basic metrical patterns surprisingly are left largely intact. Thus, the three-eight meter of measure 3 becomes three-four in measure 118, and the seven-sixteen of measure 4 becomes seven-eight in measure 119. The musical ideas of measure 4 (composed using verticals derived from the rotations of hexachord b of R-INV-R) are likewise transformed in measure 119, but most importantly, the upper Db of the first flute in measure 118 is extended (along with five other pitches) to connect with the last note, C#, of measure 119, thus cementing two elements previously unlinked.

Searching further, one arrives at the remarkable music described initially (mm. 132-144). This music, too, has its analogue in the opening section — none other than the passage composed using Wuorinen's "diagonal" technique: mm. 16—27.⁵ A comparison of portions of these two passages, mm. 18—20 and mm. 135—137 is particularly revealing (see figures 6c, d). The lines of mm. 18—20 are composed from the diagonals of INV-Ra (m. 18), INV-Rb (m. 19), and Ra (m. 20). (These rotational charts are not shown in figure 6.) The recomposition of the strands is traced from the Exposition to the Variation. Note how the trumpet line in the first statement — B—A—F — is re-registered in the Variation, leaping from horn (with flutter-tonguing) doubled by xylophone, to piccolo and glockenspiel, then catapulting to the bass in measure 137 with five incisive timpani attacks. The primary change in the Variation is registral expansion, and this passage has such marked effect, I believe, because the extensive re-registration crystallizes the individual lines into strongly etched contrapuntal ideas. A web of complex linear unfolding comes to the fore; until this point, the contrapuntal possibilities have been noticeably understated. For another notable example of this expansion, compare the 2-note figure of the bassoon in measure 20 with its exuberant counterpart, ranging over three octaves in measure 137, and divided

to Vera Stravinsky and Robert Craft
A RELIQUARY FOR IGOR STRAVINSKY

Charles Wuorinen
 (1974 - 75)

(Reliquary)
 ♩ = 80

1. 2. 3. 4.
 Flutes

Fl. 4 → Picc.

1. 2.
 Oboes

1. 2.
 Bassoons

1. 2. 3. 4.
 Horns

Piano

1. 2.
 Violins

1. 2.
 Violas

1. 2.
 Cellos

1. 2.
 Basses

Tbn. →
 Timp →

Basses sound as written.

Figure 8a
Reliquary, mm. 1-5. © 1978. Used by permission of Boosey & Hawkes, Inc. and
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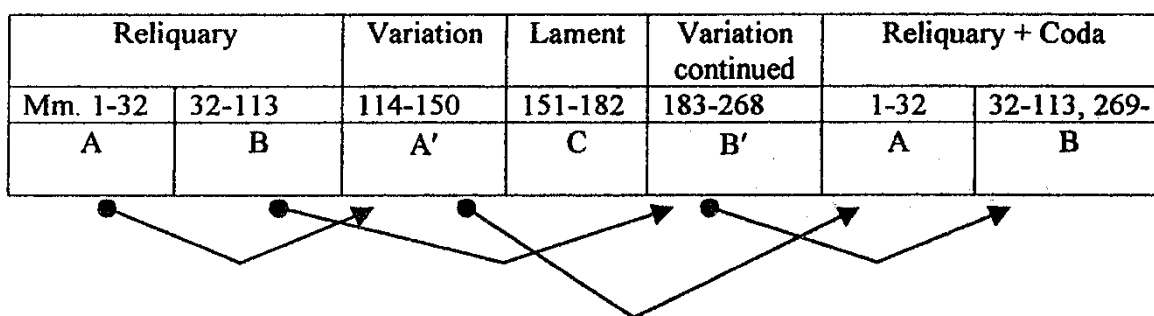


Figure 9

Reliquary, formal plan 2

between piano, tuba and horns. Thus, the remarkable effect of this passage; it is noteworthy music by itself, but even more so in context.

Returning briefly to the question of form, the musical content of the Variation and Variation Continued counters the conception of the work as a simple arch form (see figure 9).

Stravinsky's influence on Wuorinen included the Russian composer's tendency - even in his late works - to emphasize certain notes within sections of pieces; these notes would take on, if not the character of a tonic pitch, at least that of a "pitch center." Claudio Spies (1972) has remarked on this tendency in Stravinsky's *Requiem Canticles*, for example. There are noteworthy moments of centricity in the *Reliquary*, although this characteristic does not rise to the level of importance it assumes in such works of Wuorinen's as the *Violin Concerto*, *Fortune*, and *Speculum Speculi*.

Stravinsky's choice of row forms and his preference for transposing each rotation to the starting pitch of the generating hexachord suggests centering possibilities around the pitches G and F - the first notes of 0, NV, R, and R-INV. In the Coda, Wuorinen altered Stravinsky's fragment 3 to end the work with an F major triad in second inversion followed by a held G embellished by its upper fifth - D - in the chimes. That the work concludes in such fashion is intriguing in its implications. There are centric-sounding chords in the Lament, where a stately progression seems to tonicize the F# of the fifth accompanying chord of figure 5. This tendency is reinforced as the Lament progresses. F# is a fitting region in which to linger - the passage is the central portion of the composition, and the pitch is midway between F and G.

Moving backwards towards the opening, one notes a concentrated grouping of prominent Fs and Gs in the already much discussed music between mm. 15-27. The trumpet line concentrates these pitches towards the end of this passage (mm. 22-27) highlighting them forcefully (see figure 6c). Could this have been the reason for the ordering of families of rotations described earlier?

Thus, Wuorinen's *Reliquary* is a moving tribute to Stravinsky on many levels, technically, musically, and spiritually. "A structure built to contain sacred icons" is how Peter Lieberman has characterized the work; to that I would simply add "and a structure most worthy of them."

Acknowledgements

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Notes

1. The row, INV-R applies to notes 1–20 of Stravinsky's sketch and will be discussed shortly, along with the technique used to generate the remainder of the sketch.
2. Stravinsky's charts contain some errors; his inconsistencies are noted in parentheses. This aspect of the sketches will be discussed shortly.
3. Conversation with Charles Wuorinen, 28 September, 1999
4. *Ibid.*
5. Although the "diagonal" technique begins in measure 16, the musical phrase starts one measure earlier. Measure 15 corresponds to measure 132.

References

Spies, Claudio (1972) *Some Notes on Stravinsky's Requiem Settings, Perspectives on Schoenberg and Stravinsky*. New York: W. W. Norton and Co.