THE SOLO PIANO WORKS OF ALEXANDER MÜLLENBACH:
AN INTRODUCTION AND APPROACH TO PERFORMANCE

D.M.A. DOCUMENT

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ABSTRACT

Alexander Müllenbach (b.1949 in Luxembourg) is a prodigiously gifted and award-winning composer whose life and versatile career in music may inspire the reader, and whose fascinatingly original works for piano warrant thorough study. The performing artist carries the responsibility to effectively communicate the composer’s music to the audience through an edified, inspired, and creative performance approach. Through examination of his piano compositions, and by communicating directly with the composer about his life and work through interview, I hope to enable such an achievement. I initially learned of Müllenbach through performances of his compositions during my graduate studies at the Universität Mozarteum in Salzburg, where he serves as Professor of Composition. My research consisted of an interview with the composer and exploration of his compositional world as revealed through his published and unpublished works for piano, which include: *Three Winter Pieces, Preludes and Fugues, Night Music, Unter dem Regenbogen*, and *To B (or not...)*. It is my hope that this document will promote further study and enjoyment of Müllenbach’s compositions so they may thrive in institutions of higher learning and in the concert hall, and that it may play a vital role in promoting modern art music in the classical performing tradition for students and pianists of future generations.
Dedicated to

Crystal Ann Stabenow

My parents, Robert and Patricia Behan

My brothers, Robert, Michael, and Patrick

My grandparents, Robert and Dorothy Noonan, Robert and Jeanette Behan

My aunts, uncles, and cousins, especially Kenneth Behan

Dorothy Mackenzie Price
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ............................................................................................................... ii

Dedication .......................................................................................................... iii

Acknowledgments ............................................................................................... iv

Vita .................................................................................................................... v

List of Figures .................................................................................................... viii

Introduction ........................................................................................................ 1

Chapters

1. A Brief Biography of Alexander Müllenbach ............................................... 5

2. The Origins of a Performance Approach ...................................................... 9
   2.1 Perceiving Music ...................................................................................... 9
   2.2 Musical Inspiration .................................................................................. 11
   2.3 Correspondences ..................................................................................... 12
   2.4 Crossing the Divide ................................................................................ 16

3. Three Winter Pieces (1965-1975) ................................................................. 18
   3.1 Paysage hivernal ..................................................................................... 18
   3.2 Pastorale de Noël .................................................................................... 23
   3.3 Klavierstück ............................................................................................ 26

   4.1 Prelude (1983) ...................................................................................... 32
   4.2 Fugue (1974) ......................................................................................... 34
   4.3 Prelude “les ailes du soir descendent dans la vallée” (1983) ............... 36
   4.4 Fugue in C (1980) ................................................................................. 38

  6.1 Uraltes Lied .............................................................. 47
  6.2 Kleiner Waltzer .......................................................... 48
  6.3 Es war einmal ............................................................ 49
  6.4 Romanze für Onkel Gabriel (Fauré) ....................................... 50
  6.5 Regentropfen ............................................................ 51
  6.6 Toccatina ................................................................. 52
  6.7 Jolly Joker ............................................................... 53
  6.8 Regnerischer Nachmittag ................................................ 54
  6.9 Abend am Meer .......................................................... 55
  6.10 Sternennacht ............................................................ 56
  6.11 Katzen aller Arten ..................................................... 57

7. To B. (or not...?) (2007) ................................................................. 58

Conclusion ................................................................................... 63

Appendices
  A. Chronological List of Works ................................................. 64
  B. Discography .......................................................................... 69
  C. Interview with Alexander Müllenbach .................................. 70
  D. List of Terms used by the Composer in His Works for Piano .... 82
  E. Müllenbach Abridged Vita ................................................... 84

Bibliography .................................................................................. 86
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Jacob van Ruisdael, <em>Little Winter Landscape</em></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Pieter Bruegel, <em>Hunters in the Snow</em></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Müllerbach, <em>Three Winter Pieces</em>, “Paysage hivernal”, mm.1-3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Müllerbach, <em>Three Winter Pieces</em>, “Paysage hivernal”, mm. 13-18</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Müllerbach, <em>Three Winter Pieces</em>, “Paysage hivernal”, mm. 37-41</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Albrecht Dürer, <em>Madonna with the Child</em></td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Müllerbach, <em>Three Winter Pieces</em>, “Pastorale de Noël”, mm. 1-5</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Müllerbach, <em>Three Winter Pieces</em>, “Pastorale de Noël”, mm. 27-31</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Albrecht Dürer, <em>Madonna with the Child</em></td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Müllerbach, <em>Three Winter Pieces</em>, “Klavierstück” mm. 1-5</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Müllerbach, <em>Three Winter Pieces</em>, “Klavierstück” mm. 19-21</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Müllerbach, <em>Prelude (1983)</em>, mm.1-12</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Müllerbach, <em>Fugue (1974)</em>, mm.1-6</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Müllerbach, <em>Prelude “les ailes du soir descendent dans la vallé” (1983)</em>, mm.1-4</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Müllerbach, <em>Fugue (1980)</em>, mm.1-10</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Müllerbach, <em>Night Music</em>, mm. 1-9</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Müllerbach, <em>Night Music</em>, mm. 34-35</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Müllerbach, <em>Night Music</em>, mm. 107-117</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
19 Müllenbach, *Night Music*, mm. 156-169 ................................................................. 45
20 Müllenbach, *Unter dem Regenbogen*: “Uraltes Lied”, mm. 1-16 ....................... 47
22 Müllenbach, *Unter dem Regenbogen*: “Es war einmal”, mm. 1-7 ...................... 49
23 Müllenbach, *Unter dem Regenbogen*: “Es war einmal”, mm. 24-28 ................. 49
24 Müllenbach, *Unter dem Regenbogen*: “Romanze für Onkel Gabriel”, mm.1-8 .... 50
25 Müllenbach, *Unter dem Regenbogen*: “Regentropfen”, mm. 1-4 ...................... 51
26 Müllenbach, *Unter dem Regenbogen*: “Toccatina”, mm. 1-10 .......................... 52
28 Müllenbach, *Unter dem Regenbogen*: “Jolly Joker”, mm. 16 ............................ 53
29 Müllenbach, *Unter dem Regenbogen*: “Regnerischer Nachmittag”, mm. 1-5 .... 54
30 Müllenbach, *Unter dem Regenbogen*: “Abend am Meer”, mm. 1-10 .............. 55
31 Müllenbach, *Unter dem Regenbogen*: “Sternennacht”, mm. 1-5 ...................... 56
32 Müllenbach, *Unter dem Regenbogen*: “Katzen aller Arten”, mm. 1-11 ............. 57
33 Müllenbach, to B. (or not...?), mm. 1-11......................................................... 59
34 Müllenbach, to B. (or not...?), mm. 26-30.......................................................... 60
35 Müllenbach, to B. (or not...?), mm. 124-128..................................................... 61
36 Müllenbach, to B. (or not...?), mm. 291-294..................................................... 62
37 Müllenbach, to B. (or not...?), mm. 304-306..................................................... 62
INTRODUCTION

“A joking proverb says: ‘there is no bad composition; there is only a bad interpretation’. That is mostly true. It means that the performer should be well prepared, well trained; giving his utmost in skill, competence, and imagination in order to render a composition the most convincingly possible.” (Interview, 76)

This quotation potently expresses at once, in its conciseness, the tremendous responsibility to the composer, composition, and audience, as well as the untold hours of thoughtful, dedicated practice inherent in the profession of the interpretive performing artist. Throughout my studies in music I bear witness to impassioned debates between nameless performers and composers who speak of ideal realizations of their work, which sometimes seek to even remove their counterpart from the end product entirely. Such ways of viewing the subject of music-making have only sharpened and reinforced my own thoughts and opinions, so for this I am thankful. Thus, I believe that the composer-performer relationship is mutually dependent, and it is by striking this fine balance of interpreting the composer’s thoughts and feelings through the performer’s heart and mind that creates the most wondrous beauty found in art music.

The approach to performance discussed herein begins by reaching behind the written notes on the page of a composition in an attempt to arrive at a deeper understanding of the composer’s intentions. To initiate this process the pianist must ask simple questions: what could have inspired the composer to write this, and what could he or she be describing or communicating? The performer then interprets the answers to
these questions through the filter of his or her private library of experiences. Then these answers inform decisions for tone construction and production to vividly recreate the music through performance.

The piano compositions of Alexander Müllenbach invite the pianist to this (re)creative experience. To enable and facilitate a performance approach through this document I interviewed the composer on his life, approach to composition, and his specific works for piano. As a most seasoned and internationally distinguished composer, Müllenbach generously rewards every cognitive and imaginative effort in bringing his compositions to life through convincing performance. Furthermore, one may find through this performance approach that the sources of inspiration which conceive and generate these compositions, as well as emotional and abstract concepts found in his work for the pianist to interpret, will ultimately inform the fundamentals of *musizieren* as means to an artistic end; not the technical means. Complementary technical suggestions will be included, however, which I believe will assist in pointing the reader towards realizing this performance approach. Consequently, I entrust the larger discussion of the technical means in the production of sound (for example: posture, use of arm weight, forearm rotation, application of specific fingerings, etc.) to the teacher for cultivation of the student’s individual growth within the privacy of the piano studio.

The first chapter is a brief biography of Alexander Müllenbach including his studies in music and life as a pianist, composer, and educator. The second chapter contains portions of our interview devoted to his views on composition, and serves as a foundation for a performance approach to his works. The remaining chapters introduce each of his works for solo piano chronologically, *Three Winter Pieces (1965-1975)*,
Preludes and Fugues (1974-1983), Night Music (1987), Unter dem Regenbogen (1991), and To B (or not...?) (2007), and include topics for a performance approach based upon both the composer’s thoughts and my own observations and interpretive ideas. In conclusion, I hope to enlighten the reader on specific methods used in a performance approach to the works of Alexander Müllenbach, which may be applied to other compositions, new and old. Each of the chapters devoted to his piano works (Chapter Three through Chapter Seven) offers introductory material which may include a description of the compositional background or an overview of form for each piece. Furthermore, each chapter continues with a discussion of subjects vital to this performance approach, which may include subjects such as rhythm, harmony, melody, tempo, dynamics, phrasing, accents, balance, touch, voicing, voice leading, articulation, and pedaling.

Since Alexander Müllenbach’s compositional style has remained independent and unique through his having processed tonal, atonal, dodecaphonic, post-serial and serial techniques (Weber, 371), a versatile musical language befitting of a composer from the trilingual country of Luxembourg (Luxembourgish, German, and French are its official languages), his harmonic language will be discussed within the context of a performance approach. Each piece welcomes new, inspired, creative and technical solutions on the part of the pianist. The titles themselves (such a Night Music, Winter Pieces, and Unter dem Regenbogen) suggest the opportunity for dream to play a role in interpretive decisions. 2 Preludes and Fugues highlights his unique compositional approach within this traditional genre mastered by Johann Sebastian Bach, and later by Dmitri Shostakovich. Additionally, the pianist will find a vast playground of interpretive
challenges through ever-changing levels of technical difficulty: *Unter dem Regenbogen*, a collection of works for the beginning and intermediate level pianist, published by Doblinger in Vienna, as well as *Night Music* and *To B (or not...?)*, which were both commissioned for the International Mozart Competition in Salzburg, Austria and the International Beethoven Competition in Bonn, Germany, respectively. These piano compositions are available through the composer and Musikverlag Doblinger in Vienna. Thus, it is an honor for me to introduce the works for solo piano by Alexander Müllenbach: *Three Winter Pieces, Zwei Praeludien und Fugen, Night Music, Unter dem Regenbogen, and To B. (or not...?)*, and offer a meaningful approach to their performance.

**PROCEDURE**

CHAPTER ONE

A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF ALEXANDER MÜLLENBACH

“...my music should touch the listener; it should have a little bit of that magic faculty which Orpheus’ chant had, that could move and tame the animals. My music should be beautiful and true; beautiful as an expression of our constant longing for beauty, and true as an image of the many tensions of our torn world in which beauty risks to vanish from us more and more” (Interview, 75)

Born into a musical family in Luxemburg in 1949, Alexander Müllenbach was destined to become a consummate musician, performer, artist, and composer from his early years. The atmosphere was fertile with free-spirited musical creativity: his mother played the piano, his father the violin, and his uncle the accordion. When asked about his initial music training, Müllenbach replied:

In my family I learned to sing folk songs and other melodies. So, when at the age of six I got as a present a little mouth-harmonica, I was, after twenty minutes, able to play all these folksongs on it. ... shortly after the mouth-harmonica, I got a small accordion, on which I improvised Waltzes, Tangos, etc. I also accompanied- on the accordion - my grandfather who was improvising little pieces on the mouth-harmonica (Interview, 70).

As a child Müllenbach showed an extraordinary talent for both music and painting, and, under the tutelage of Pierre Drauth at the Luxemburg Conservatory, his skills in piano and harmony were carefully fostered (Wagner, 87). There he devoured the works of, among others, Beethoven, Chopin, Liszt, Mendelssohn and Tchaikovsky. Before his twelfth birthday he had already begun to compose works which were heavily
influenced by Mendelssohn, Liszt, and Chopin (Interview, 70). At the recommendation of a friend, however, he began listening to Prokofiev, Poulenc, Roussel, Shostakovich, Honegger, Milhaud, and Stravinsky, and soon thereafter learned the piano works of Debussy and Ravel: “All this had a huge influence on me. I immediately evolved. I began exploring enlarged tonality, invented new themes, bold dissonances, and new rhythms. I can say that in that time I developed the roots of what constitutes the fundamental characteristics of my style still today.” (Interview, 71)

In 1962 he moved to northeastern France and enrolled in the Conservatoire Régional de Metz where, after only one year of study, he won the First Prize in Piano (Wagner, 88). In the fall of 1963 he was accepted into the “Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique” in Paris where he studied with Pierre Sancan (piano), Henri Challan (harmony), Pierre Pasquier (chamber music), and Jean-Claude Henry (counterpoint) (Interview, 71). Concerning his studies in Paris, Müllenbach wrote: “Here I had contact with the French Composition School which inspired and influenced me a lot: Dutilleux, Messiaen, Ohana, Varèse, Jolivet, Rivier, my master Pierre Sancan…(beside the great masters I knew already before: Debussy, Ravel, Roussel, Fauré, Koechlin).” (Interview, 71) He concluded his studies there with four first prizes and two first place medals; one of which being the prestigious “Premier nommé” for excellence in piano (Wagner, 88).

From this time onwards he was highly sought after as a concert pianist, yet realized that his musical interests and versatility would lead him to a variety of areas in addition to performing. In 1970 he became Professor of Piano at the Luxembourg Conservatory, after which he assumed the position of President to the “Forum
d’Expression Musicale”, and served as Director of the Luxembourg Chamber Orchestra from 1970 to 1974 (Wagner 88).

In 1975, however, he withdrew from the position to dedicate himself to composition:

After my return to Luxembourg, I developed my own way, discovering and studying Lutoslawski, Penderecki, Ivo Malec, Kurtag, George Crumb, Charles Ives, the American School, the English composers (Walton, Britten, Maxwell Davies), Paul Hindemith and so many others. I also studied carefully quite a lot of books on composition, for instance Hindemith’s “Unterweisung im Tonsatz” or Messiaen’s “Technique de mon Langage Musical”. (Interview, 71)

In 1977, at the age of 28, he decided to move to Salzburg, Austria, in order to study composition with Gerhard Wimberger at the Mozarteum:

Here I dealt more specifically with Schoenberg, Berg, and Anton Webern on one hand, but with many other contemporary composers, among them many colleagues on the other hand. The excellent library of the Mozarteum made it possible to study so many contemporary scores (Stockhausen, Berio, Donatoni, Boulez, Nono, Henze, Rihm, Schnittke etc.), to listen to them, to analyze them, and to deduce out of them my proper conclusions.

From my composition teacher Gerhard Wimberger I learned professionalism and conscientiousness, and the courage to be incorruptible in what concerns the distinction between good music and simply “New” music. With Cesar Bresgen I studied music ethnology, which confirmed in me the necessity to stay always “in relationship with the earth”, which means in musical terms never give up a certain melodic conciseness and a certain elementary rhythmic feeling for a mere abstract numeric thinking which was frequent in contemporary music.

Though I have always been adept towards experimentation, trial and widening of limits, it seemed to me that one must not confound an experimental lab work with a true masterpiece, which is a frequent matter in the contemporary music scene. My compositional studies were completed by masterclasses with Ton De Leeuw, Boguslav Schaeffer and Andrei Eschpai (Interview, 71-72).
During his studies in Salzburg he produced a work for flute, violin, clarinet, trombone, and piano entitled *Hard by a Crystal Fountain* (1979), which earned him first prize in the Composition Competition of the Österreichischen Runkfunks (ORF). He graduated in 1980 and in the following year was awarded the “Bernhard Paumgartner Medal” from the International Mozarteum Foundation, as well as the “Chambre Syndicale des Arts et Lettres” Prize in Luxemburg (Wagner, 88).

Müllenbach has been Vice President of the Austrian Ensembles for New Music, and from 1979 to 1983 he was Vice President of the International Festival for New Music “Aspekte” in Salzburg. In 1983 he founded the Lëtzebuerger Gesellschaft fir Nei Musék, serving as president until 1994. From 1990 to 1996 he served as president of the European Music Academy IME in Besançon. Since 2000 he has been President of the Conseil Supérieur de la Musique in Luxembourg, and since 2002 Director of the International Summer Academy at the Mozarteum in Salzburg. Alexander Müllenbach is currently on faculty as Professor of Composition at the Universität Mozarteum in Salzburg and at the Luxembourg Conservatory (Müllenbach Abridged Vita, 84). He continues to compose and perform as solo pianist, chamber musician, accompanist, and conductor throughout Europe and Canada.
2.1 Perceiving Music

“Every piece of music that you know and love was at one time new to you. Every composer whose work you know and love was at one time a new composer. Every musical style and idiom that is now part of your musical experience was at one time not a part of that experience. Your first approach to a new piece, a new composer, or a new idiom, should continue to be what it has always been. You should listen to it in the same spontaneous, intuitive, and immediate way as you always have, on a first hearing, to the older music that is now part of your listening experience.” (Perle, 302)

“To understand music, you must listen to it. But so long as you are thinking, ‘I am listening to music,’ you are not listening.” – Alan Watts (Smith, 185)

Naturally, any musician who reads these lines has been confronted with defining, either to a student or to themselves, a fundamental approach to performing art music. To be certain, a great deal has been written on the subjects of interpretation and performance, as well as a variety of conceivable facets of music pertaining to its conception, production, reception, and meaning. The act of listening to music, this first step towards a performance approach, however, must be a perceptive act if one is to recreate the work of a composer.

Before an approach to these works can be discussed, allow me first to define the necessary mindset for perceiving music, and therefore, the beginning of an understanding
as to how Müllcnbach’s piano compositions may be examined, through quotations from
the German composer of twentieth-century music, Paul Hindemith:

Whatever sound and structure [music] may assume remains meaningless
noise unless it touches a receiving mind. But the mere fact that it is heard
is not enough: the receiving mind must be active in a certain way if a
transmutation from a mere acoustical perception into a genuine musical
experience is to be accomplished (Hindemith, 14). [Furthermore] in
producing and perceiving music you must keep your feet on the solid
ground of our earth, although with your imagination you may rove through
the universe (Hindemith, 24).

Hindemith’s depiction of the performer maintaining rooted contact in the physical
world, while connecting with a seemingly infinite number of expressive possibilities in
both the tangible and ethereal realms, reflects the nature of my approach to the works of
Müllcnbach. The idea of “keeping your feet on the solid ground of earth” is certainly
open to interpretation, but I believe he may be implying the necessity to adhere closely to
the musical notation by the composer which points towards this universe of imaginative
possibilities.

In the search for what the composer may be meaning to communicate it is
important to understand that the pianist must find relationships in the music which refer
to something beyond itself. “Meaning is defined in terms of the relationship between a
stimulus and the thing it points to or indicates, but such a relationship must be perceived
by the listener. Meaning thus arises out of a triadic relationship among (a) stimulus,
(b) that to which it points, and (c) the conscious observer.” (Boyle and Radocy, 303)
Therefore, the active mind must be perceptive before one can begin to make interpretive
decisions concerning what it may be that the composer is expressing and ultimately, how
it may be expressed. To begin to understand what it is that may be expressed in these
works this stimulus must be revealed by tapping into Müllcnbach’s sources of inspiration.
2.2 Musical Inspiration

“Although we must admit that musical inspiration is, in its ultimate profundity, as unexplainable as our capacity of thinking in general, we must not think of it as an irrational, entirely uncontrollable mental manifestation. After all, musical inspiration, like any other kind of artistic or scientific inspiration is not without bounds. It operates within the limitations drawn by both the material qualities of the artistic medium that causes the aforesaid effects and the state of mental erudition and preparedness in the mind of the individual who experiences them.” (Hindemith, 47)

Searching for and perceiving the inspirational stimulus of a composition is fundamental in forming a performance approach to the works of Alexander Müllenbach: the pianist may therefore become equipped with initial references for interpretation of the emotional, mental, physical, imaginative, musical, or extramusical source of a single note, chord, phrase, or even an entire piece. It is neither possible, nor is it important, that the pianist know the exact source of inspiration for each moment of each work. The knowledge in itself of the existence of potential muses is essential to the performer who must then draw upon his or her own life experiences, thoughts, and imagination which may relate to the musical content. When asked about the inspiration of his compositions, Müllenbach replied: “I take inspiration from: Nature and Surroundings (colors, movements, events), Space and Eternity, Life (my own and others), and Death; also, the Human Condition, Feelings (Love, Fury, Hatred, Sadness, Pain, Anxiety, Hilarity, Indolence, and Violence), History, Literature and Arts.” (Interview, 72-73)

Upon playing a composition for the first time the pianist must begin to ask specific questions, for example: “Do I sense that the composer’s inspiration for this work is evoking a particular emotion, thought, mental state, or perhaps an image?” The pianist may then begin to understand what it may be that the composer means to express and how it may be expressed through its correspondence to elements of the musical language.
2.3 Correspondences

One of the most fascinating music theories concerning the relationship between music and emotions may be the doctrine of affections (also known as the doctrine of affects, or Affektenlehre in German); this doctrine “dates back to Greek antiquity, when the correlation between music and soul was accepted as scientific fact. The Greek word for affectus is pathos, which conveys the meaning of deep emotion” (Slonimsky, 5) In the Renaissance period theorists included tempo, rhythm, registers, and dynamics into the doctrine of affections, and musical philosophers of the Baroque period “drew comparative tables between states of mind and corresponding intervals, chords, tempos, and the like.” (Slonimsky, 5) According to the Harvard Dictionary of Music this aesthetic theory was also expressed in detail by Johann Mattheson (1681-1764), the German singer, conductor, and music theorist, in his treatise Der vollkommene Capellmeister (1739) in which he listed more than twenty affections and how they should be expressed in music, for example: “Sorrow should be expressed with a slow-moving, languid and drowsy melody, broken with many sighs.” (Randel, 9) However, in the 20th century the application of the doctrine has practically vanished and has “been replaced by structural analysis unconnected with emotional content.” (Slonimsky, 6)

Music is a subjective art. Although I do not believe such a table can objectively define relationships between the aforementioned “states of mind and corresponding intervals, chords, tempos” because of the inherent subjectivity of music, I must maintain that, whether due to nature or nurture, music and its functional elements has the capability to affect two different people in similar ways. In general, one can argue that a major key corresponds to a joyful sound, and a minor key corresponds to feelings of
sadness. Likewise, an ascending interval of a perfect fourth may correspond to a proud trumpet call, whereas a descending fourth may correspond to a mournful cry. Tempo, dynamics, and register also affect how musical material corresponds to more specific ideas: for example, imagine the “proud trumpet call” played in a slow tempo, pp, and in a low register. The perceived meaning of the interval has been altered. Similarly, if the descending fourth is played quickly, in a high register, and ff, the “mournful cry” disappears and is thus transformed; not to mention if the interval were played against a major harmony.

When asked about his approach to composition, Müllenbach graciously imparted a wealth of insight which ultimately stands to inform an approach to performance. The following is an excerpt from our interview in which he describes his belief that music possesses the ability to communicate a seemingly infinite number of emotions and mental states:

One of the most important and exciting phenomena is what Baudelaire used to call “Correspondences”; correspondence between colors and harmonies, between movements and musical figures, between drawing lines and melodic lines, between space and sound space, etc. (Interview, 73). My harmonic palette is as large as possible and doesn’t respect any tabu. I try to find consciously or unconsciously the most appropriate "correspondence" for every feeling, movement, or color: soft or harsh, dark and light, aggressive or peaceful, happy or sad, angry or anxious, red or blue or yellow. Every nuance should be possible to be expressed (Interview, 74-75).

A testament to his acute sensory perception (perhaps further developed through his talent in painting) the piano works of Müllenbach reveal his approach to composition according to what he refers to as “correspondences”. The term can be traced to the teachings of the 18th century theologian Emanuel Swedenborg. Swedenborg believed
that there was a relationship between the physical and spiritual worlds, and described the relationship of “correspondences” in his book “The Soul, or Rational Psychology”:

It is the relation of the affluent waves of ether to the eye; of the eye to the sensory fibre, of the fibre to the cortical gland; of the gland to the common sensory; of the sensory to the imagination; of the imagination of the intellect; of the intellect to the soul; of the soul to God. By correspondence the outer affects the inner without becoming one with it; by correspondence things totally different in degree and in substance are nevertheless so adapted that motions or tremulous vibrations in one may be continued throughout the other, or converted into some modification of the other’s state. So the soul corresponds in general and in every particular to its body (Swedenborg, xv).

The term “correspondences” implies an absolute and direct relationship between all things, as if there has been a lost key which, if found, would open the door to view the secret links connecting all entities, real and surreal (Wilkinson, 19). Perhaps this key is the vital role the arts play in establishing this connective tissue. For example, Müllenbach cites the French poet, Charles Baudelaire, who was influenced by Swedenborg’s writings and wrote a sonnet entitled “Correspondences”: “if the poem harks back to Romantic notions of an allegory of nature, it uses this context in order to suggest how language might function to evoke meanings that are sensuous and resonant” (Wilkinson, 20). As spoken language evokes meanings which resonate with the listener, musical language, when understood and clearly rendered by the performer, may serve a similar purpose. The perceived musical inspiration manifested in the works of Müllenbach is thus communicated through "correspondences": relationships between the spiritual and abstract worlds with the human senses which the allegory of his music seeks to connect.

The approach to performance of his works discussed herein is, therefore, rooted in a concept introduced by Leonard Meyer called “referentialism”. A referentialist
approach to music maintains that music “communicates meanings which in some way refer to the extramusical world of concepts, actions, emotional states, and character”. (Meyer, 1) An opposing camp Meyer refers to as “absolutists” holds that “musical meaning lies exclusively within the context of the work itself, in the perception of the relationships set forth within the musical work of art,..”; yet, he continues: “it seems obvious that absolute meanings and referential meanings are not mutually exclusive: that they can and do coexist in one and the same piece of music, just as they do in a poem or painting.” (Meyer, 1) Therefore, music may be approached from either a referentialist or absolutist perspective; it is a matter of subjective philosophy. Whether or not one subscribes to Swedenborg’s theory that all things affect each other through mystical “correspondences”, Müllenbach expresses that his compositional material is designed to correspond or refer to something other than itself. It is then the responsibility of the performer to be perceptive to what the music may correspond or refer.

In attempting to bond what images or feelings the composer is evoking via correspondences with the listener the pianist may begin to ask new questions, for example: “Based upon the composer’s possible sources of inspiration for a particular piece and how I perceive and relate to these sources, what emotions and images are evoked and how do they correspond to the musical material? Furthermore, how might I interpret these correspondences in my own terms, and by what means may they be clearly articulated to the listener through performance?” At this point the pianist may begin to define the specific performance means necessary to cross the divide between the imaginary world behind the seemingly lifeless pages of music and the physical realm of musical recreation.
2.4 Crossing the Divide

The perceptive pianist may now begin to trace a connective line, drawn from the pool of artistic inspiration, flowing through the composer’s conscious or unconscious corresponding musical material, filtered through one’s individual interpretation, and finally, reflecting as to how the music may be clearly defined through performance. Rhythm, harmony, and melody converge and challenge the pianist to make specific decisions with regard to tempo, dynamics, phrasing, accents, balance, touch, voicing, voice leading, articulation, and pedaling; resulting in an release of sound which, originating in the composer’s own life experiences, is transmitted to the listener through artistic expression.

To make a comparison: the composer, through his or her composition, has “written a story” which the performer must “tell”, just as an actor must understand the writer’s inspiration, crawl inside the mind of a character, and communicate meaning through corresponding physical gestures, facial expressions, and spoken words. Although physical gestures and facial expressions are certainly a part of live musical performance (some of which may distract the listener from the music), it is the actor’s sentences and spoken words which may be likened to the elements of music and music-making. They must carry a perceptible rhythm with tempo fluctuations, use varying dynamics, achieve a rise and fall of each phrase, be clearly articulated and colorfully shaded according to how the actor wishes to communicate the corresponding emotion, thought, or image represented by a sentence or single word. To illustrate this point further, one need only read these very lines aloud in a single, steady rhythm, stressing every syllable of every word equally in a completely monotone voice, and slur every
consonant and vowel together with total disregard for articulation. One may go a step further and attempt this experiment in front of another person: the amusing expression on the listener’s face will more aptly correspond to their sense of confusion than the spoken words will correspond to their intended meaning.

The piano compositions of Alexander Müllenbach afford the performer every opportunity to listen with active perception, draw conclusions as to what may have inspired the musical content, decipher how the various musical elements correspond to emotions, ideas, and images evoked by these conceivable stimuli, contemplate one’s own understanding of the material, and finally, cross the divide between the written music and tone production by clearly communicating the work through performance. Rhythm, harmony, melody, tempo, dynamics, phrasing, accents, balance, touch, voicing, voice leading, articulation, and pedaling will be examined through a performance approach in the following chapters so that the works of Alexander Müllenbach may be expertly crafted with the full capabilities of the performer’s heart and mind.
CHAPTER THREE

THREE WINTER PIECES (1965-1975)

3.1 ‘Paysage hivernal’

*Three Winter Pieces* was composed when Müllenbach was just sixteen years old and revised ten years later: “they already show, though all three are quite different in grounding and atmosphere, my personal style, harmonically as well as melodically. The first, called ‘Paysage hivernal’ (‘Winter Landscape’), was inspired by two famous winter paintings by Jacob van Ruisdael and Pieter Bruegel (Figures 1 and 2). Especially in Ruisdael’s painting we find a frozen, immobile and somewhat lonely atmosphere, depicted by huge dark-grey clouds in a mighty evening landscape in which men are merely like little ants.” (Interview, 77)

![Fig. 1. Ruisdael Little Winter Landscape](image1)

![Fig. 2. Bruegel, Hunters in the Snow](image2)
The first piece entitled “Paysage hivernal”, an homage to Ruisdal, “is expressed through minor ninth and major seventh intervals, (often polarized by minor third or tritone) in combination with chromaticism or polytonality. Several tonal passages (tragic C Minor bar 12; empty B flat Major in bar 24; peaceful G Major in bar 30; finally B Major in bar 38) give a tonal frame to the work.” (Interview, 77) It can be divided into a three-part form: A B A¹. The beginning A section (mm. 1-11) carries a tempo indication of a single emotional state: Triste (sad), and corresponds to loneliness by its static initial motive in minor ninth harmonies and the silent two-voice answer (see Figure 3). Müllenbach describes the following B section (mm. 12-32) as a “somewhat sad though peaceful chorale with birdlike chants as figurations; they express hope for spring (see Figure 4). After a cascade from the high to the lower region comes the return of the frozen A passage (mm. 33-41) which is ending with the initial static ninth motive. Now shortened and, after a brutal last emerging (brusquement), the minor ninth motive is dissolving into the air like a bell sound full of sadness and death-feeling (see Figure 5).” (Interview, 77-78)

The paintings used as inspiration for the work and the words used by the composer to describe the painting are the two decisive sources from which one may begin to draw a performance approach. The performer should take into account the words used by the composer to describe the paintings, and therefore the piece itself: frozen, immobile, and lonely. For example, words like frozen and immobile will dictate ideas of tempo, frozen signals a colder touch and sound emanating from the piano, and lonely expresses a sense of introspection. By erecting these emotional and psychological parameters the
pianist will be able to isolate specific ideas concerning performance related issues to create this cold and lonesome soundscape.

The tempo indication states Triste (sad), and there are no other indications that define tempo throughout the piece. The absence of a metronome indication presents an opportunity for the pianist to make an interpretative decision based on how desolation, coldness, and despair evoked through the paintings correspond to the pulse. Müllenbach refers to the opening motive as “static”, so the quarter-note pulse should resist forward flight. One must feel as if time is standing still from the opening bars; as if the listeners can feel themselves growing older, waiting for the frozen landscape to thaw. Therefore, I suggest that the quarter-note does not exceed a metronome marking of 50 because I believe that one’s “internal rhythm” unconsciously succumbs to the second-hand pulse of a clock, and therefore one can manipulate the listener’s perception of the passage of time by playing slower than that of passing seconds.

Müllenbach’s creative use of intervals such as the empty, dissonant minor ninth, corresponds to the distant, crystalline scene. To enable this corresponding atmosphere I suggest voicing the upper and lower notes in the ninth intervals, with the inner voices remaining distant (Figure 3, mm.1 and 3). These intervals permeate the entire piece and provide a cohesive, aural atmosphere. The major second mordent in m.2 may correspond to chattering teeth in response to the frigid cold; they may be played softly and détaché.

Fig. 3. Müllenbach, Three Winter Pieces, “Paysage hivernal”, mm. 1-3
There are few pedal markings in *Paysage hivernal*, but this does not mean that the use of pedals is prohibited in areas where there are no indications. However, one should take into account how the pedals may be used to correspond to the effect of the harmonies. A frozen effect may be created if neither the soft nor damper pedal is used; just the fingers. This is due to the warm quality that the damper pedal may add to a note or chord when applied, and the soft pedal tends to round a more direct sound; either pedal, if applied, may undermine the cold, brittle, sound necessary for the introduction to this piece (see Figure 3).

The application of *agogic* (an “accent”, not in dynamic level or touch, but in duration: the time taken *before* a note or *on* a note to magnify expressivity) (Randal, 10) may be applied in m.13 to heighten the *brutal* effect directed by the composer and signal the arrival of the contrasting B section (Figure 4). This brutality represents the unrelenting, inescapably frigid state. For example, to enhance the dynamic level of *fortissimo* without actually playing louder, the performer delay the arrival of the down beat, slightly extend time on this initial Major/Minor harmony, and then delay the arrival of the C Minor harmony in the lower register by a nuanced amount of time.

This clash of simultaneous Major/Minor harmonies in mm.13-14 provides the appropriate correspondence for the desperation and desolation. For the Major/Minor harmonies which appear on the downbeats of m.13 and m.14, I suggest voicing of the E-natural to create the biting effect since an E-flat is prominently represented in the pure C Minor harmony immediately thereafter in the lower register (Figure 4, mm. 13 and 14). I suggest the pianist play in strict rhythm in mm.13-14 to magnify the relentlessly brutal condition, but then allow for more rhythmical freedom in mm.15 on the melody marked
bien chanté. The musical material is therefore easily differentiated between that which corresponds to the unforgiving elements of nature, and that which corresponds to the voice of the living.

Fig. 4. Müllenbach, *Three Winter Pieces*, “Paysage hivernal”, mm. 13-18

Fig. 5. Müllenbach, *Three Winter Pieces*, “Paysage hivernal”, mm. 37-41
3.2 ‘Pastorale de Noël’

The second piece is entitled “Pastorale de Noël” (“Pastoral Christmas”) and was inspired by a painting by Albrecht Dürer entitled *Madonna with the Child* (Figure 6). This composition, like the painting, evokes feelings of peace and joy. It is in three part form: A B A¹. In the beginning A section, a songful and pastoral Siciliano-tune in F-sharp Minor (in dorian mode with the raised sixth) is presented. The B section arrives at m. 13, and announces a joyful round in B Major, which becomes more unchained and accelerated exiting B Major on its return to F-sharp Minor. After a climax on a dominant pedal point (C#) the Sicilian-tune reappears to signal the return of the opening pastoral melody (A¹ beginning in m.30) in the left hand, but is now combined with elegantly flowing garlands representing diminutions of the round theme from the B section in the right hand. At the end the round dissolves in the upper region and the Sicilian tune disappears into the wintery night (Interview, 78).

![Fig. 6. Albrecht Dürer *Madonna with the Child*](image-url)
There is no tempo indication at the beginning, yet there are two factors that contribute to a decision of tempo: time signature and program. First of all, the time signature is 12/8, this means that the pianist must not feel, for example, a quarter-note pulse subdivided into triplets; instead, every eighth-note must be perceived as a pulsation in its own right. This requires a slower tempo than if the time signature was 4/4.

Secondly, I associate the word *pastoral* with the broad and peaceful landscape found in Dürer’s painting: there is no need to hurry through the piece. Therefore, I suggest the pianist aim for a corresponding tempo marking of approximately 138 = eighth-note; this provides movement to the music and also captures the expansiveness of a calm, pastoral setting, thereby allowing the listener to enjoy the exquisite melody without experiencing either hurried angst or idleness (Figure 7).

Fig. 7. Müllenbach, *Three Winter Pieces*, “Pastorale de Noël”, mm. 1-5
At the end of the beginning A section there is a repeat sign; this provides the pianist with an opportunity to build expressivity after a more simply stated rendition of the opening Sicilian melody in which the uppermost voice is projected. When the section is repeated the pianist may highlight one of the beautiful counter-melodies; this is achieved by voicing them in greater proportion (but still in lesser dynamic) to that the soprano. For example, either of the voices, played with the thumbs in the right or left hand in mm.1-2 (see Figure 7) and continuing until m. 12, can enrich the prevailing soprano melody with greater intensity throughout the repeat. Perhaps the pianist can vary the melody further by voicing the c#-d#-e-f# ascending inner voice line in the right hand mm.1-2, then switch the emphasized voicing by projecting the left hand descending voice line a-g#-f#-e in mm.3-4.

As the opening melody of the A sections returns in m.30 it is combined with the round theme from the B section (see Figure 8). In order for the two simultaneous themes to be presented clearly, the pianist is required to perform two distinct types of articulation: Müllenbach marks espressivo in the left hand with a dynamic marking of mf, and slurred phrase groups marked p in the right. I recommend a legatissimo articulation in the right hand, and quasi parlando and détaché in the left hand. The return of the Siciliano theme is no longer a distant tune as it was heard in the opening of the piece, but rather a joyful song. Therefore, a deliberate détaché in the left hand (directed by the absence of slurs) will create a clear rendition of the melody at a greater dynamic level, and will cut through the dense accompaniment of the round theme in the upper register it will automatically. In addition to observation of the dynamic markings, a velvety
legatissimo articulation in the right hand will aid in correct balance between the voices: the closer the pianist’s hands stays to the keys the easier it becomes to play piano.

![Musical notation](image)

Fig. 8. Müllenbach, *Three Winter Pieces*, “Pastorale de Noël”, mm. 27-31

### 3.3 Klavierstück: Zum Jahresanfang

The third piece, ‘Klavierstück: zum Jahresanfang’ (‘Piano piece: For the Beginning of the Year’), was inspired by a lithography by Maurits Cornelis Escher entitled *Snow in Switzerland* (Figure 9). Similar in form to ‘Pastorale de Noël’ in its three-part form, it presents “a slow and serene cantilena in the A section (mm.1-4), accompanied with chromatically descending sixth intervals. The following B section (mm.5-23) contrasts with A by its harsh, aggressive, and existential chords which resound like big bells. The climax is mighty and dreadful. Then suddenly, the soft theme from the opening A section reappears (A¹ mm.24-35), but now at counterpoint with a crystalline and peaceful garland in the upper region of the piano. Reminiscent of the jubilant combination of the A and B themes in the preceding piece; ‘the New Year has
swept away the pains of the old’” (Interview, 78), and the work is left open-ended by exiting on a dominant ninth harmony, which may correspond to the fact that the new year has just begun – a “resolution” to the tonic may come with next year’s “resolutions”.

![Image](image.jpg)

Fig. 9. Albrecht Dürer *Madonna with the Child*

As “Pastorale de Noël” ended in F-sharp Minor this final piece creates an almost seamless transition into reflections of the past year’s events by beginning in the relative major key of F-sharp Major (see Figure 10). To create a seamless transition I suggest the pianist begin at a dynamic equivalent corresponding to the dynamic level that finished the ‘Pastorale de Noël’. The slow-moving, descending chromatic intervals, mixed with a kaleidoscope of major and minor harmonies, and descending strings of fourth-chords, may refer to the reconciliation of a multitude of various fleeting memories before the New Year begins; they should remain *pianissimo* to create this nostalgic effect (see Figure 8, mm.1-4). Additionally, if the thick inner-voices are diminished to a level of *pp*, then it will thin the texture enough for the melody to sing, and the balance of all voices
will combine to realize the written dynamic marking, \( p \). This technique may be applied throughout the piece as needed.

One of the challenges in performing this piece is projecting the opening melody; the upper-most line on c# connected by the legato slur (see Figure 10). Due to its proximity to neighboring voices it is in constant danger of becoming overshadowed by the dense note groupings in the middle register. To add to the challenge, the melody consists of three static c#’s leading to an octave leap. I suggest that the pianist project the upper melody at a dynamic level of \( mf \) and imagine a crescendo through each note towards the highest point of the phrase. Before the downbeat in m.5 the pianist may place an agogic to articulate the key change, and another agogic may be placed after the chord is struck in order for the bright harmony to be \textit{digested} by the listener.

![Fig.10. Müllenbach, Three Winter Pieces, “Klavierstück” mm. 1-5](image)

Furthermore, the opening melody which comprises mm.1-4 of the A section may correspond to bells, ringing out the past year, which anticipate the bells of the B section. Here, Müllenbach indicates \textit{rein und friedlich} (pure and peaceful) at a tempo of
84=eighth-note. This slow moving melody in the upper voice can achieve the purity of bell-like sounds by using a supported, curved finger, with a quick attack in the middle of key area. For touch in the peaceful, lower voices the pianist should use a softer, slower attack with flat fingers, utilizing more surface area of the finger, so the distinction may be made between the calm accompaniment and the resounding, bell-like melody.

The clashes of conflicting harmonies, which may correspond to the “pain of the old” in the B section climax, are created by intense dissonances marked ffff pairs of perfect fourths and tritons juxtaposed with a wash of descending chromatic thirds (Figure 11, m.20). Despite the dynamic indication which directs one to create as much volume as possible, I maintain the suggestion to voice the lowest half-note C-E-F# in the bass clef (mm. 20-21) to create the sound of enormous gongs. The outermost notes in the right hand may be voiced second in the hierarchy to correspond to bells at different pitches. The pendulating bells that resound in the bass clef in m. 19 may increase the climactic tension by the pianist placing an agogic on each quarter-note beat. In turn, the added length will diminish the length of the eight-note up-swing, otherwise a rallentando may ensue and ruin the intensity.

Fig. 11. Müllenbach, Three Winter Pieces, “Klaviersstück” mm. 19-21
CHAPTER FOUR

2 PRELUDES AND FUGUES (1974-1983)

Preludes belong to a time-honored genre found in the catalogue of works of such composers as Bach, Chopin, Rachmaninoff, Scriabin, and Debussy, just to name a few. The earliest known preludes corresponded to the significance of their title: they prefaced another work or set of pieces with an improvised aesthetic; only later, as found in the preludes of Chopin and Debussy, for example, did the genre become a piece in itself that did not precede a work of a different genre (Slonimsky, 405). In similar fashion, the fugue, the highest form of polyphonic achievement, famous for its accompanying prelude as in Bach’s Well-Tempered Clavier, can stand as its own composition without preceding or following material.

Müllenbach’s 2 Preludes and Fugues represent examples of the dual nature inherent in the genre’s compositional history. As we will learn from his comments below, the first fugue, composed in 1974, was written long before its prelude (composed in 1983), yet the prelude itself was developed through the interval of a fourth which characterized the fugue, making the two a cohesive unit of works which may be performed together. The remaining prelude and fugue, written in 1983 and 1980, respectively, may be similarly performed as a pair or separately. When asked about his interest in composing preludes and fugues, Müllenbach replied:

Fugues and fugatos fascinated me already from the age of thirteen; not the savant fugues of Bach or the academic ones, rather the diabolic or condensed ones like in Brahms’ First Piano Concerto or Liszt’s Sonata in
B Minor, or the final fugue in Britten’s Variations on a Theme by Purcell, or Hindemith’s great Passacaglia in *Nobilissima Visione*, or William Walton’s final fugue of his *Variations on a theme by Hindemith*. I also played, with enthusiasm, Liszt’s transcription of Bach’s *Prelude and Fugue in A minor*. My great love for Bach came a bit later when I heard the whole Well-Tempered Clavier live, first by Sviatoslav Richter, a short time after by Friedrich Gulda, and finally by Glenn Gould. The latter was a fantastic revelation.

My first “fugal temptation”, which already bore the characteristic features of my style, was for mezzo-soprano and string-quartet, on a poem by my school-friend Jean Krier. It has stayed unfinished. In 1974 I started to write a sort of “Canzone” for double brass-choir in homage to Giovanni Gabrieli, it soon turned out to have a rather pianistic texture, where the ending arpeggio-apotheosis required more *forte* “orchestral” than the brass alone. Nine years later I decided to complete this fugue by putting a prelude before it, which I developed from the fourth-intervals which characterize the theme and the harmonies of the fugue.

In the meantime I had written another fugue, a special one, where the theme appears in its four forms (prime, inversion, retrograde, and retrograde inversion). The entrances are organized by the different notes of the theme. Before it I set a rather impressionistic prelude “*les ailes du soir descendent dans la vallée*” (*the wings of evening lay over the valley*), which was conceived on a walk through the beautiful valley of “Blumtautal” near Salzburg.

The *2 Preludes and Fugues* were premiered in Brussels, Belgium by myself and were transmitted directly by radio shortly after their completion, and then played in several other cities (Interview, 78-79).
4.1 Prelude (1983)

This prelude may be divided into four sections. The beginning of the piece (section 1, mm.1-10) is a slow chorale consisting of chords built of perfect and diminished fourth intervals, through which descending minor seconds may correspond to a peaceful, yet mournful, song. Violence may correspond to figures consisting of shrill trills in the right hand, and harsh chords (built of major seventh intervals, polarized by thirds) signal the new and contrasting second section (mm.11-37). The third section (mm.38-50) repeats these chords which explode and accumulate in an increasingly violent ostinato. The fourth and final section shows the return of the peaceful chorale section of the beginning with the fourth chords.

The first Prelude (1983) (Figure 12), for example, allows freedom with regard to tempo due to the absence of tempo indication. This absence affords the pianist opportunity to interpret time fluctuations based on any conceivable correspondences between the musical content and the composer’s perceived compositional intent. For example, mm.1-2 of this prelude may suggest pain through the imitation of falling minor seconds (Bb to A in the left hand m.1; F# to F in the right hand in m.2). I suggest a metronome marking of 50=quarter-note for the first two measures to correspond to a slow decent to despair. The ascending line comprised of minor seconds and leaping tritones which follows in mm.4-5 may represent a cry anger, and through their heated rise may be assisted by a poco a poco accelerando, culminating in a slightly faster tempo (63=quarter-note).

I suggest voicing every single, descending minor second figure in mm.1-3 to achieve a balance in the chorale setting and to assist in displaying the mournful cries.
Furthermore the violence inherent in the clash of the seventh intervals with thirds in mm.11-12 may be represented by voicing primarily the fundamental and the seventh, and applying minimal damper (if any) to maximize the harsh sounds of violence. The pianist should also maintain a deliberate sense of rhythmic integrity in mm.11-12 to correspond to the relentless, unchecked aggression associated with violence.

Fig. 12. Müllenbach, Prelude (1983), mm.1-12
4.2 Fugue (1974)

The composer offers a detailed description of his first fugue through our interview:

It presents a vigorous, stringent theme in ¾ beat (Allegro energico), which is a kind of homage to Paul Hindemith who was one of my spiritual masters in 1974 when I conceived the work.

It’s a three-voice fugue, but towards the end it gets rather orchestral by adding full chords and octave doublings. In the initial exposition the different voices enter with a special tone-system: the theme starts with the note C and ends with G#. So the upper voice starts with C; the middle voice starts with G#; the lower voice comes in with E. The end of the exposition is in C again.

Through the alternation of several expositions and longer interludes the fugue gets more and more straight; the theme appears in diminutions and sequences; this leads to a huge climax where it is literally celebrated in a grandiose and solemn apotheosis in C. (Interview, 79)

As the composer stated in Chapter Two, one of his known inspirations is imagining specific instrumental playing: this fugue (Figure 13) was originally intended to be performed by brass choir, and the pianist’s specific articulation may correspond to this desired effect. The long tentuto markings imply both length and calculated separation between notes. To achieve a corresponding sound ideal which simulates a brass ensemble, I suggest the pianist imagine the slight break of air between notes as microscopic, yet audible, Luftpausen (air-breaks) which are so often heard in trombone performance. The metallic sound of brass instruments may be realized at the piano by not curving the fingers; straigh, stiff fingers thrust directly to the bottom of the key bed, while using as much surface area of the fingertip as possible, will enable the desired timbre. The following notes articulated staccatto notes may be executed using the same
corresponding “instrumentation”, with an even faster attack and more space between notes to create the sound effect of trumpets; capable of rapid, punctuated articulation. Furthermore, I suggest a shallow depression of the damper pedal on each note to add a resonating affect which refers to the full sound of brass. Additionally, the release of the damper pedal between notes may also refer to the *Luftpausen.*

![Fig. 13. Müllenbach, *Fugue* (1974), mm.1-6](image)
4.3 Prelude “les ailes du soir descendent dans la vallé” (1983)

In his Prelude “les ailes du soir descendent dans la vallé” (1983) (Figure 14) the composer provides a programmatic image for the pianist to paint through sound: an impression of an evening in a shadowy valley:

“Inspired by a walk through this extraordinary poetic valley not far from Salzburg, the music tries to express the silence on a ground of sources and waterfalls, and the serene gravity of the site, when at dusk shadows grow longer and longer. A long chorale-like melody in additive rhythm, harmonized in a combination of octaves and tritones on several levels, develops in several sections, and cascades of fourth- and major seventh-combinations. The dominating harmonic axis is G#-D-G#.” (Interview, 79-80)

The 32nd note ascending figures using this axis of G#- D- G# found throughout mm.1-4 may correspond to the gleam of the distant waterfalls, and may be depicted using a legato-based touch (informed by the slurs) but with the addition of a fast attack using limited surface area of the finger (i.e. the finger tips). I believe the word “wings” in the title is used metaphorically as the “shadows in the valley”, which may be depicted through tonal representation in the chords found in the low register (mm.1-4), and executed by applying a fast, flat-fingered attack which only penetrates to the middle of the key bed. The formless, substance-less “shadows” may best correspond to this lighter, indefinite concept of sound. I suggest avoiding a deeper touch towards the bottom of the key which may create a thick, dark, and more “realistic” texture. Additionally, the “serene gravity” may be experienced through corresponding voicing of the lowest notes in the chords (mm.1-4). Conversely, the chords written in the upper register may have the upper notes voiced; corresponding to the outline of the mountain tops on the sides of the valley.
Although there are no pedal indications and an absence of phrase slurs (with the exception of the 32\textsuperscript{nd} note upbeats) I recommend phrasing the upbeat to m.1 and the subsequent fourth-chords on beats 4 and 6 under one full depression of the damper pedal. The justification for this application is that the combinations of the notes constitute one harmony, and furthermore, it serves an artistic purpose: the simultaneous, high and low ranges of register under one pedal give the impression of being in a valley, viewing the mountain tops from the lowest point of the earth.

Fig. 14. Müllenbach, Prelude “les ailes du soir descendent dans la vallée”, mm.1-4
4.4 Fugue in C (1980)

The theme is constructed primarily on the interval of a fourth (a motivic element form the preceding prelude). The different entrances present the theme in its four forms (prime, inversion, retrograde, retrograde inversion) and are organized by a twelve tone series. Müllenbach further explained: “The character of this fugue is chromatic, slowly creeping and wistfully nostalgic. The stretta brings the theme in augmentation in the bass and the work ends beautifully in a calm and serene C Major.” (Interview, 79)

In order for the entrances of the subjects to be heard distinctly in Müllenbach’s *Fuge in C* (Figure 15) the pianist must use proper dynamic balance and touch between the voices. The thick, complex polyphonic texture must communicated clearly to the listener. Each entrance is labeled with a number: (1) in m.1, (2) in m.2, (3) in m.6. To begin, I recommend that each entrance of the subject be heard clearly by lowering other voices to a decreased dynamic level to allow for optimal balance between voices.

Furthermore, I suggest corresponding each ascending or descending interval or melodic fragment in the subject with an image, thought, or emotion. This will assist in maintaining consistency in touch. For example, the slurred, two-note ascending minor second in m.1 may correspond to hope, followed by its opposite, the descending minor second with a fourth which may correspond to sighs of the aforementioned nostalgia. The ascending interval of “hope” may correspond to a deep, round tone with a *poco crescendo*, and the “nostalgic sighs” may correspond to a *poco decrescendo* with a softer, dream-like, “brush” touch achieved by lightly stroking the keys starting from the back of the key and moving towards the front of the keyboard. In turn, a brighter touch assisted by a deep attack may evoke feelings of hope, and a slow, shallow touch may correspond
to a hushed anxiety. I would even suggest that the pianist write these descriptive words next to each slurred group of notes.

The continuation of the subject in the left hand of m.3 may refer simply to linear movement of time and life (one of the sources of inspiration listed by the composer in Chapter Two) which “passes the baton” to the next entrance of the subject. To facilitate this “movement” the pianist may insert minute dynamic swells (crescendos) assisted by poco accelerando within the confines of each slurred phrase.

Fig. 15. Müllenbach, Fugue (1980), mm.1-10
CHAPTER FIVE

*NIGHT MUSIC* (1987)

Music competitions frequently commission works from the most well-known composers to be learned and performed by all competitors at a particular stage. Often times these works demand not only a formidable technique on the part of the competitor, but also highly imaginative interpretation that may set oneself apart from the other competitors. *Night Music* requires both dazzling skills and immense creativity for convincing performance. “The work was commissioned in 1987 by the Mozarteum in Salzburg to serve as a compulsory work for the 4th International Mozart Contest 1988. Like almost all of my compositions, this piece dwells with dualism and dialectics: night as a tender dream of peace and tranquillity on one hand; but night also in a metaphorical sense as the dark, as evil, aggression and destruction on the other hand.” (Interview, 80)

“The dialectic tension is symbolized right from the beginning section: ‘Night Music’ opens with ‘Death-tone’ B natural in the lowest register, followed immediately by ‘Life-tone’ C in the highest region of the piano (Figure 16). Out of star-like Introduction-sounds appears a tender, soft cantilena, which progressively develops, swells on and leads to a rough Toccata-like and percussive ‘Allegro furioso’ (Figure 17). After a series of increasingly wild ‘Strettas’ it culminates in a big, explosive climax (Figure 18). Thereafter, slowly by slowly, the tension turns down, initially still interrupted by sudden
eruptions; the soft cantilena reappears and at the end we return again to the initial “Star-Music” (Figure 19).” (Interview, 80)

The opening page of this ethereal and nightmarish piece (Figure 16) presents a number of elements in a performance approach which demand address, including touch and voicing. In m.1 Müllenbach writes two indications which correspond to touch: dolce and stellaire (sweet and of the stars, respectively). The work begins as if the pianist is describing the initial, peaceful descent into sleep. The touch applied to the low B must be kept p but must also resonate through the pedal until its return in m.2. It also corresponds to what the composer describes as the “Death-tone”; it must carry a foreboding gravity and depth of touch, not a quick, light, and superficial attack. Therefore, I suggest a slow, dark, penetrating touch to the bottom of the keybed; the entire arm may assist in pressing downwards through the finger. The “Life-tone” high C which follows in the upper register corresponds to a bright, ever-lasting star in the heavens, immune to the worldly fate of fleeting mortality. Therefore, I suggest a fast attack through a plucking-motion of the finger towards the palm of the hand; this provides a minute, yet penetrating burst of colour which corresponds to the “star” and stands in direct opposition to the preceding note.

In m. 6 the composer introduces the first melodic element: the Hauptstimme (“Main Voice”, designated with the letter “H”). The upper note of the two-note Hauptstimme should be voiced over the lower note due to the fact that the composer describes it as a cantilena (Italian for cradle song), specifically marked ben cantando (well sung). However, this melody does not possess the gentle tonal harmonies that carry a child to blissful dreams as in the Wiegenlied of Brahms, but rather is reminiscent of the
dissonant, morbid melodies in *Trauergondola* of Franz Liszt. Since this melody, sung against a dissonant major sevenths and tritons to its lower counterpart, corresponds to the nightmarish aspects of the dream, the touch employed must be present, but veiled through a light touch assisted by a lifting of the hand immediately after contact with key to ensure a soft, dream-like tone. As indicated, the damper pedal may be used liberally to blur harmonies and correspond to a less “realistic” atmosphere. However, I suggest flutter pedal technique (*vibrato* pedal; quickly depressing the pedal halfway down and releasing it upwards towards the top, but not completely, to limit total blurring of sound) so that the melody may still be heard throughout the sonorous accompaniment.

![Fig. 16. Müllenbach, Night Music, mm. 1-9](image)
The Allegro furioso (Figure 17) incorporates rhythmic accentuation and new, varied articulation and dynamics between the hands to refer to the onset of a dark, aggressive stirring in the dream. The right hand must stay close to the keys and assume a legato-based touch with slight separation between notes to achieve non legato, which makes controlling the hairpin dynamic swells. The left hand performs an entirely different articulation, marked martellato e feroce (hammering and ferocious); the hand itself free to come up quickly from the keyboard and retreat downwards with the same speed to contrast the right hand touch with brutality. The rhythmic displacement of the left hand notes (they never appear on strong beats, except to reinforce the downbeat of each measure), enhanced by the contrasting articulation, increases instability in a downward spiral towards a nightmare.

![Fig.17. Müllenbach, Night Music, mm. 34-35]

The dramatic arrival of the climax in m.113 (Figure 18) may be intensified through agogic, strict observance of tempo, voicing, phrasing, and creative pedaling. Müllenbach writes non rallentare (not to slow down) so that the intensity is not diminished, yet an agogic may be placed before the downbeat of m.113 to articulate the arrival of the climax, and therefore what the music may refer to as a corresponding
epitome of evil (the most intense moment of the nightmare), and also enhance the effect of fff. The composer notates tied, dotted half-notes in the bass in m.113, yet the harmonies change according to every quarter-note beat for the following four measures. Therefore, I suggest application of the sostenuto pedal to hold the low octave E with the left foot while the right foot is free to pedal each change of harmony with the right foot. Additionally, to cut through the thick texture, a two-bar melody (mm.113-114, repeated in mm.115-116) appears in the top voice of the left hand which I suggest be voiced above the chord. It may also be phrased by the pianist imagining a hairpin dynamic crescendo/decrescendo.

Fig.18. Müllenbach, Night Music, mm. 112-117

The return of the cantilena (Hauptstimme; “H”) at the end of the dream (Figure 19) is marked tranquillo, achieved by its one-note, singular nature, and corresponds to the hazy memory of the dream experience. It is shadowed, however, by the entrance of a
Nebenstimme (accompanying voice, marked by the letter “N”). The tones produced by the Nebenstimme utilize many of the same tones found in the entrance of the Hauptstimme in the beginning of the piece; this achieves a more immediate recall of the opening in the listener’s ear, yet it must not overpower the presence of the Hauptstimme.

The pianist can effectively maintain the coexistence of the two voices by proper voicing to achieve optimal balance: the right hand must play considerably louder than the left hand, not just due to the indication in dynamics, but because the left hand is in a higher register, and the listener may perceive a melody in that location of the keyboard as the main melodic material. To further emphasize the entrance of the Hauptstimme I suggest placing an agogic before its entrance in m.158. This emphasizes its place in the melodic hierarchy, and also helps in slowing of pulse into the designated tranquillo. Additionally, the fanning out of 32\textsuperscript{nd} note flourish indicates an accelerando towards the top of the run.

Fig.19. Müllenbach, *Night Music*, mm. 156-161
Composing music for children and intermediate level pianists is crucial in the development of imagination and piano skills, and it can also foster a deeper appreciation and understanding of the more advanced works of a composer as the student matures. For me, the works found in J.S. Bach’s Anna Magdelana, Muzio Clementi’s beloved Sonatinas, and Debussy’s Children’s Corner, to name but a few, were highly influential in providing an understanding of harmony, phrasing, form, technique, and style, and increased my confidence and enthusiasm to pursue the more challenging works suitable for mature pianists, such as the partitas, the larger classical sonatas of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, and the books of Images. In the foreword to his Unter dem Regenbogen (Under the Rainbow) Müllenbach reflects upon their raison d’être:

With this series of eleven little pieces, which run gradually from “very easy” to “medium difficulty”, I wanted to verify if my compositional tools were able to function even in the most simple way for children; like Bartok who tried (and succeeded) the same in his Mikrokosmos. Colorful, fantasievoll little sketches, landscapes, stories which are capable of pleasing to young (and old) people (Interview, 80). During my long activity as a piano teacher, I have seen that, among the huge quantity of pianistic works for young people, it is rare to find pieces that on one hand are easy to play, on the other take into consideration the evolution of contemporary music and correspond to the real musical needs of young pianists (Müllenbach, Unter dem Regenbogen, Foreword).

In this chapter I will examine a portion of each piece from which a specific musical lesson may be learned to further develop the beginning pianist’s imagination and piano skills.
6.1 Uraltes Lied

*Uraltes Lied* (translated directly from German: *Ancient Song*) sets the tone for the high standard of imagination the younger pianist must develop in order to perform all of the works in this collection. This “song” does not resemble a familiar nursery rhyme, and it does not begin in a major key, but rather in Phrygian mode which refers to a song that the student must imagine having been sung long ago, in a distant land. Due to its close relation to the natural minor scale I suggest having the student first play the piece in E Minor with the raised F-sharp, fill in the open fifth intervals in the left hand with a minor third, then play the piece again, this time as written, so that the foreign flavor of the new sounds are more apparent to the ear, and imagination is activated.

As this piece may have been inspired by the sounds of antiquity, tempo and pedaling may be altered to enhance the affect of an ancient atmosphere. I suggest the young pianist listen to Gregorian chant so that the tempo fluctuations and freedom of movement with the rise and fall of voices may be understood and applied within the clear and accommodating four-bar phrase structures. The damper pedal may then be applied liberally (but to each note so as to not develop poor pedaling habits) to simulate the reverberating affect and ubiquitous sound atmosphere as if the piece were being “sung” in an old, European Gothic cathedral.

*Fig. 20. Müllenbach, *Unter dem Regenbogen*: “Uraltes Lied”, mm. 1-8*
In Kleiner Waltzer (Little Waltz) the student may experience the pulsating swing of the waltz through its stressed and unstressed dance steps as they correspond to the emphasized and deemphasized strong and weak beats of the four-bar phrase structure. The young pianist may first “dance the waltz” solo (without the potentially embarrassing need of a dance partner) to the designated metronome marking of 144 = quarter-note by moving the left foot to the side with emphasis while strongly counting “one” aloud, followed by the weaker arrival of the right foot and repeating step of the left while counting “two-three”. This figure is then repeated in the other direction beginning with the right foot, but “one” must be spoken with lesser stress than when the left foot received the downbeat stress. The student should repeat this two-bar pattern, but now with more strength and emphasis on the second arrival of the left foot on the downbeat, to complete what constitutes a four-bar phrase with its emphasis on the downbeat of m.3 – the middle of the phrase. Over the downbeats of the first four measures the student may then write symbols traditionally associated with those found in analysis of prosody: (―) = stressed; to be written over the downbeats in measures one and three, and (U) = unstressed; to be written over the downbeats in measures two and four.
6.3 Es war einmal

*Es war einmal* (or *Once upon a time*) is an important exercise in describing the idea of programmatic elements in music: a character is presented, tension arises, and resolves for the character in the end. The teacher can tell the student to imagine that he or she “singing a fairytale” by pointing to the indication of *cantabile* in m.1. This emphasizes the pianist’s role as narrator. The student may even invent a story which involves a character who they imagine can be associated with the music. The piece begins calmly: “Once upon a time….” (Figure 19)

![Fig. 22. Müllenbach, Unter dem Regenbogen: “Es war einmal”, mm. 1-7](image)

Then, the imaginary character encounters a minor struggle as experienced by the heightened tension through dynamic *crescendo* and *espressivo* indications... (Figure 20):

![Fig. 23. Müllenbach, Unter dem Regenbogen: “Es war einmal”, mm. 24-28](image)

...Fortunately, the narrator lets everyone know that “they all lived happily ever after” from the final cadence in C Major. Envisioning the elements of a story (characters and plot, etc.) may assist in developing an understanding of larger sections of music and even *characterization* of themes in this piece, as well as those yet to be learned.
6.4 Romanze für Onkel Gabriel (Fauré)

Fig. 24. Müllenbach, *Unter dem Regenbogen: Romanze für Onkel Gabriel (Fauré)*, m.1-8

This piece introduces the term *rubato* to the pianist to help characterize the *romanze*. A *romanze* is a short romantic song or instrumental piece (Slonimsky, 445) and *rubato* is an expressive tool of the Romantic era performing practice. *Rubato*, in Italian, means *to steal time*, whereby one plays with a free treatment of the melody, particularly by prolonging melody tones or chords which requires an equal acceleration which follows through notes of lesser rhythmic value, which are therefore “robbed” of a fraction of their length; the accompaniment stays steady (Slonimky, 450). Müllenbach writes *espressivo e rubato* (to be played expressively and with *rubato*) in mm.1-2. The pianist may imagine that he or she is both a singer and the accompanist. I suggest two locations to apply *rubato* in the first four-bar phrase: (1) in m.2 the A in the right hand arrives just before the low D in the left hand, and (2) in m.3 the C in the right hand arrives shortly after the D in the left hand. For practice, the pianist may also attempt to play only the accompaniment while singing words appropriate to the rhythm and emotion of the melodic notes in the right hand with great expression and freedom. After the student’s ability to play the melody freely against the accompaniment progresses, he or she may begin to experiment with *rubato* elsewhere throughout the piece.
6.5 Regentropfen

Regentropfen (Raindrops) allows the young pianist to experiment with a new kaleidoscope of sounds as the composer indicates that the III pedal (sostenuto pedal) be applied after keys in the lower register are silently depressed, over which the written notes are then plucked from the keys like drops of rain, stimulating the rise of overtones (harmonics). The notes are marked staccatissimo and mf so that the ring of the overtones may be heard between notes, and that the dynamic level is of substantial volume to force the strings held under the sostenuto pedal to vibrate. I suggest that the pianist use either plucking action of the finger towards the palm of the hand, or that a soft drop of the hand from the wrist be applied to achieve staccatissimo. Furthermore, to hold down as many keys as possible in the lower region of the piano I recommend slowly depressing the white keys with the forearm of the left arm, and the black keys with the right forearm; this will ensure that each note played in the upper register will affect its corresponding undertone. The pianist may experiment with each note individually, for example, by holding down a low E, then strike the E octave above; the student may then slowly learn of the division of notes and their overtones - a complex lesson in itself, but an imaginative introduction to the piano’s broad spectrum of expressive capabilities.
6.6 Toccatina

The first piece in the collection to demand *presto* tempo, this piece requires creative placement of hands on keyboard, acute hand coordination concerning alteration of rhythmic stresses, and rapid changes in articulation (*portato*, *accented staccato*, and *legato* - hence the name *Toccatina*; *toccata*, in Italian, means *to touch*). In mm.1-6 the pianist must play the black keys in the left hand using the space closest to the back of the key towards the board (or keyboard lid) as the right hand plays the white keys in the space closest to the front. This allows the hands to play on top and underneath each other, to prohibit interference of hands. To facilitate hand coordination despite changes in location of downbeats I suggest the incorporation of downward arm movement which will assist muscle memory. For example, if the right arm in thrust downwards only on downbeats of mm.1-5 (without heavy accentuation of the note) and allowing only the fingers to properly execute articulation, then the left arm is employed in a similar manner on the downbeats of mm.6-10, the switch in rhythmic emphasis in *presto* may be easier to achieve.
6.7 Jolly Joker

The Jolly Joker presents a multitude of new, colorful harmonies for the young pianist to explore. In the beginning of the piece (Figure 24) both hands exhibit figures which outline augmented triads (although they are not spelled that way in certain cases). Punctuated with various accents (accented staccato, staccato) one may imagine the jester performing tricks, such as juggling, adding mocking laughter in 6/8 with the sounds “Ha-ha-ha-ha, Ha-ha-ha-ha!” This may teach the young pianist how music can be humorous, not just “serious”.

Additionally, the pianist may be introduced to the bright and dazzling energy of the pentatonic scale (Figure 25). Except for the inclusion of middle C and its octave, it presents an opportunity to invent creative fingerings for use on the black keys, and develops the student’s recognition of pentatonic scales and harmonies which will be immediately grasped in the more advanced works of Debussy and Ravel, for example.
6.8 Regnerischer Nachmittag

![Musical notation]

Regnerischer Nachmittag (Rainy Afternoon) is contrasted with the first piece which includes a rain theme (Regentropfen) in that it teaches the young pianist that one can depict and paint a subject from different viewpoints, using various colors and emotions. For example, as Regentropfen represented the image of rain in an emotionally neutral setting with rain drops articulated *staccatissimo*, Regnerischer Nachmittag paints the rain with a soft, *legato* touch, and presents the opportunity to seek possible correspondences between intervals and emotions. For example, m.1-3 in the bass clef consists of a melancholy chain of descending minor seconds and minor thirds. The young pianist may then note the presence and rhythmic augmentation of these intervals found in the right hand in mm.2-3. Additionally, the tempo may be discussed through envisioning oneself sitting motionless indoors as one watches the rain; the feelings of isolation from being trapped inside make the minutes seem to pass more slowly (hence the metronome marking 50 = quarter-note) and may assist in creating the melancholy effect and “bored” atmosphere (as directed by the composer in the tempo indication).
6.9 Abend am Meer

Abend am Meer (Evening on the Sea) creates a sense of the still, almost motionless waters which correspond to the long note values (Figure 27); the sky reflects evening colors of blue, orange, and crimson, and darkness approaches after the setting sun on the horizon. This piece employs rhythmic values which will increase the young pianist’s proficiency in counting. Although there is no metronome indication, I suggest a marking of 40=quarter-note. The young pianist may count aloud in 16\textsuperscript{th} note subdivisions (One – e – and – a, Two – e – and – a, etc.) for three measures to establish a steady sense of pulse. To play with rhythmic precision the pianist may then play the initial C-sharp on the down beat counting “one” aloud, and then play the following D-natural halfway between counting the following syllable “e” aloud (mm.1-3). Once the pianist gains rhythmic integrity, however, he or she should cease counting using subdivisions, and count only according to the quarter-note pulse for it may be easier to play contrasting figures such as the triplet followed by duple eighth-notes (m.5).
6.10 Sternennacht

*Sternennacht* (Starry Night; Night Fantasy) employs a large spectrum of sound possibilities for the young pianist and introduces them to a variety of techniques which utilize the various sound capabilities of the piano. A piano which may be opened to expose the strings the pianist has to reach is necessary for this piece (i.e. a grand piano or an upright where the strings are accessible from behind the music stand). In Figure 28 mm.1-3 the crosses underneath the notes direct the pianist to damp the strings with one hand, and play the corresponding key with the other hand. This muted, singular sound may signify the dim and most distant stars in the night sky. In m. 4 the symbol which looks like a tilted crescent moon means to use the finger nail to *glissando* on the strings as the ascending arrow underneath the bass clef instructs the pianist to begin from the lowest region of the strings. The ensuing stream of colors may refer to the colors and swirl of spiral galaxies. Throughout the piece the composer writes *pizzicato* over certain notes, and directs the pianist to also *glissando* the inside strings with the entire bottom of the finger (without the nail). The brightest stars correspond to the luminescent pizzicato plucking of strings, and the *glissando*, using the soft part of the finger create a velvety stream of sound, creates a dreamy exit from the celestial experience.
Katzen aller Arten (All Kinds of Cats) may be an introduction to the young pianist as a piece without a time signature. Cats can be mischievous and unpredictable, perhaps the very attributes which correspond to the unpredictable number of beats found in measures throughout the piece. In Figure 28 one finds seven eighth-note beats in m.1, eight beats in m.2, seven beats in m.3, nine beats in m.4, and the great variety continues. Although the composer indicates a quarter-note pulse (Allegro; 116=quarter-note) I suggest the pianist count one full beat aloud for every corresponding eighth-note throughout each measure, instead of “One-and-two-and” for every quarter-note and eighth-note subdivision, because of the irregularity and odd number of beats in each measure. The metronome indication thus should only be used to check tempo, not pulse.
CHAPTER SEVEN

TO B. (...OR NOT?) (2007)

The latest work by Alexander Müllenbach was composed in 2007 and bears the title To B. (...or not?). Upon first glance the title appears slightly enigmatic. The composer enlightens the pianist, however, with some background information for the piece which may assist in developing a specific performance approach:

The piece was commissioned by the International Beethoven Competition (Bonn) as a compulsory work for the semi-fina. The piece opens by a theme deduced closely from the last movement of Beethoven’s D-Major Sonata (Pastorale), but appearing here in a kind of pastoral Raga (Figure 33). It leads way to a hammering toccata in irregular meters (Figure 34). The middle section “pensieroso” picks up the main theme of the late B-flat Major Sonata (Hammerklavier) as if it was recreated by both Shostakovich and Schubert (Figure 35). Then, there is a reappearance of the toccata, and finally the glorious apotheosis of the Pastoral Raga theme (Figure 34), ending abruptly in a brilliant and rapturous coda (Figure 36) (Interview, 81).

Ludwig van Beethoven, one of the composers in the famous three B’s (a trio including Bach and Brahms) is most likely the B behind the initial. The letter “B” itself is ambiguous, however, as it also implies the verb “to be”. In a sense, the composer, known through the previous pieces for his fondness of double meanings and dualities, may be implying that because of references to themes from two sonatas of Beethoven, the piece is “being” the composer; one can imagine that Müllenbach is putting on a type of Beethoven suit, or a disguise. The themes used from Beethoven’s compositions assert a tonal and rhythmically stable feeling. However, the irregular rhythms and wild
harmonies of Müllenbach create an effective contrast; the composer will maintain his own sense of individuality and compose according to his own vision. Therefore, he does not have “to be” anyone but himself.

The first theme (section A, mm.1-25) appears (Figure 33) which is based on the pastoral setting of last movement of Beethoven’s D Major Sonata. The open octaves in mm.1-3, spread over three octaves provide the corresponding setting for the expansive nature of pastoral fields: each note may refer to the summit of the low rolling hills which add some sense of dimension to the spacious landscape. This effect is enabled by the corresponding tempo indication *tranquillo* which the pianist should strictly observe. There is no pedal indication. I suggest liberal use of the damper pedal for mm.1-3, but when the theme in stepwise diatonic movement appears (also with leaping intervals of thirds and fourths) I suggest application of the *sostenuto* pedal to the lowest octave D’s in m.4, so that the melodic notes may be freely pedalled, or played *non legato*. The danger
avoided is that of a blurred, more impressionistic sound which, although characteristic of liberal pedal usage in the third movement of Beethoven’s *Waldstein* Sonata, for example, was not intended in the similar theme from his *Pastoral* Sonata.

Fig. 3. Müllenbach, *to B. (or not...?)*, mm. 26-30

The explosive “hammering toccata in irregular meters” (section B, mm. 26-78, see Figure 34) interrupts the Pastoral theme so abruptly, as if the composer were could not wait another millisecond to shred the façade of Beethoven from himself. Müllenbach’s tenacious rhythmic drive forces the music forward. The rhythmic inspiration will be communicated clearly, however, through articulation markings which must be distinct and consistent. This section corresponds to the composer’s telltale rhythmic inspiration. The pianist should note that the wedge accents, slurs, and *staccato* notes are used according to their rhythmic and intervalllic locations; any deviation in articulation may blur what must become a vivid, rhythmic fireworks display. The rhythm, despite its perceived irregularity due to changes in strong-beat emphasis between hands, may prove clear and effective if the pianist recognizes the second beats by exaggerating the *tenuto* markings (for example mm. 26, 28, and 30). Additionally, I recommend a pedal application limited only to the slurred notes in the right hand (for
example the two notes slurs in the treble clef, m.26, 28, and 30). The A section returns now *calmo e pastorale* (mm.79-92), and the rhythmic impetus of the B section returns in mm.93-102, followed by transitional material in mm.103-123.

In Figure 35 (beginning of section C, mm. 124-148) the composer alludes to the main theme of the first movement in Beethoven’s *Hammerklavier* Sonata. Müllenbach, however, cleverly strips away the energetic associations of Beethoven’s original theme (plus the accumulated momentum built through the preceding *toccata* section) by dramatically reducing the tempo to *Lento*, with a metronome marking of 50=quarter-note. Here, it appears that Müllenbach is inspired by disguises of a different kind: he cloaks Beethoven’s theme using pianistic textures of Schubert (the octave with the addition of the third; refer to Schubert’s Sonata post. 164, first movement, for example), with varying harmonic juxtapositions switches associated with the music of Schostakovich (for example the G Major implied harmony on the third beat of m.125 in the left hand with C-flat Major (B Major) implied harmony in the right hand). To help the listener in the realization of the allusion to Beethoven’s theme, I suggest inserting phrase slurs to group the notes for clarification. For example, I would draw a phrase slur from the downbeat in m.124 to the second eight-notes in m.125. Then I would place an agogic before the second beat *with* a phrase slur over beats two and three in m.126 to articulate both the end of the previous phrase and the beginning of a two-note answer; simulating a call and
response which is more evident in the Beethoven’s theme, as the two note response is placed in the higher register from that of the theme.

![Fig.36. Müllenbach, to B. (or not...?), mm. 291-294](image)

The return of the first Pastoral theme (Figure 36) is now displayed on a scale of great grandeur. The damper pedal may be applied liberally to reinforce the necessary volume for the corresponding triumphant climax.

![Fig.37. Müllenbach, to B. (or not...?), mm. 304-306](image)

The coda (Figure 37) is again driven by rhythmic inspiration. As shown in the toccata section, clear articulation is required to enable a rhythmic drive. The challenge in this section is allowing the notes that are staccato in the right hand, and severely detached in the left hand, to speak; both are in the low region of the keyboard, where the sounds emerge more slowly from the soundboard than the notes in the higher register. The solution is to apply a fast, superficial touch at a dynamic level of \textit{mf}, while the downbeats and accented noted are played \textit{f}: the effect will be that of \textit{forte} without each note having to be played according to that dynamic.
CONCLUSION

The piano works of Alexander Müllenbach introduced in this document offer the pianist a unique opportunity to bring them to life through meaningful performance. A subjective performance approach begins with active perception, and requires drawing conclusions as to what may have inspired the musical content, deciphering how the various musical elements refer or correspond to emotions, ideas, and images evoked by conceivable stimulus, contemplating one’s own understanding of the material, and finally, crossing the divide between the written music and tone production to clearly express the work with the full capabilities of mind, heart, and body. In the future, Müllenbach hopes to compose two or three collections for piano, called “‘sketches’, ‘aquarells’, ‘impressions de voyage’; that means very free, colorful and multiform pieces of rather short duration.” (Interview, 76) “One of my great plans consists in writing a big Multi Media Oratorio about the human condition; that means Love, Life and Death.” (Interview, 77) It is my hope that this introduction and performance approach will promote further study and enjoyment of all Alexander Müllenbach’s compositions (including those yet to be written), that it may also be successfully applied to other composers’ works, and that it may stimulate further discussion of music’s possible correspondences to nature, the universe, and the human experience. As a result, I hope this document may serve to effectively communicate art music to a perceptive, appreciative, and supportive audience through this great classical performing tradition.
APPENDIX A

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF WORKS ACCORDING TO GENRE

OPERA

_Die Todesbrücke_ nach einem Libretto von Dževad Karahašan approx. 1 hour 40 minutes

ORCHESTRAL WORKS

_Reflective II_ für großes Orchester (1985) 17 minutes 22 seconds

_Stimmen der Nacht_ für Sopran und großes Orch. (nach G. Trakl) (1986) 18 minutes

_Tenebrae_ für großes Orchester (1989) 20 minutes 23 seconds

_Umbrae_ für großes Orchester (1992) 12 minutes 43 seconds

_Flugsand_ für großes Orchester (1993) 24 minutes 46 seconds

_Memento_ für großes Orchester (1997) 14 minutes 28 seconds

_An die Königin der Nacht_ für Orchester (1997) 18 minutes

_Dark Crystal_ für großes Orchester (1999) 9 minutes

_Gloire et Décadence_ für Streichorchester (2001) 12 minutes

_Augenmusik für Wolfgang_ für Orchester (2005) 7 minutes 56 seconds

_Antiphonien_ für 2 Ensembles (2005) 11 minutes 43 seconds

_Opal_ für Großes Orchester (2008) 17 minutes 25 seconds
CONCERTANTE WORKS

*Evasion* für Violoncello, Klarinette u. Streicher (1987) 9 minutes

*Konzert* für Violoncello und Streicher (1995) 29 minutes
(Litanies de l’Ombre et de la lumière)

*Time Cycle* Konzert für Schlagzeug und Grosses Orchester (2006) 13 minutes 30 seconds

*Konzert* für Marimba und Streichorchester (2009) 13 minutes

CHAMBER MUSIC

*Correspondances* f. Flöte, Klarinette, Violine, Violoncello (1981) 7 minutes 10 seconds

*3 Epigramme* für Flöte und Gitarre (1981) 9 minutes 9 seconds


*Drei Sätze für Streichsextett* (1987) 18 minutes 15 seconds
- *Scherzo notturnale* 4 minutes 30 seconds
- *Cantabile* 8 minutes 30 seconds
- *Toccata* 5 minutes 15 seconds
arr. für Streichorchester (2000): *Tryptichon*

*Art Gallery*, ein musikalisches Gesellschaftsspiel
für Violine solo (1987) 16 minutes

*Karma I* für 2 Klaviere (1987) 14 minutes 35 seconds

*Karma II* für 2 Klaviere (1991) 17 minutes

*Lost Islands* f. Klavier, Violine und Klavier (1988) 17 minutes 30 seconds
- *Re-Morse* 6 minutes 30 seconds
- *Isolation* 6 minutes 25 seconds
- *Destruction-Mechanics* 4 minutes 35 seconds

*Partita Nr. 1* für Violine solo (1992) 11 minutes 48 seconds

*Partita Nr. 2* für Violoncello solo (2006) 11 minutes 1 second

*Volutes* für Bläserquintett (1992) 8 minutes
Fluidum für Klarinette und Klavier (1992) 6 minutes 07 seconds

Für Orlando di Lasso für 2 Violinen (1993) 6 minutes 47 seconds

Capriccio per Niccoló Paganini für Violine solo (1994) 3 minutes 10 seconds

Streams für Violine, Kontrabass und Klavier (1994) 14 minutes 20 seconds

4 Miniaturen für Flöte und Klavier (1996) 10 minutes 8 seconds

Styx für Violine und Viola (1996) 20 minutes

1. Streichquartett “Constructions in Metal” (1997) 28 minutes 40 seconds
   Woven Structures 9 minutes
   Desert 7 minutes 35 seconds
   Fluorescences 5 minutes 45 seconds
   Obsession 6 minutes 25 seconds

2. Streichquartett (2006) 10 minutes 30 seconds
   Allegro energico 3 minutes 24 seconds
   Andante maestoso 7 minutes 10 seconds

Le 14 juillet f. Fl, Klar, V, Vc, Hf, 1998 8 minutes 30 seconds

Klavierquintett (1999) 21 minutes 34 seconds

Country Music für Violine und Marimba (2004) 8 minutes 13 seconds

Conversations in times für Violine und Kontrabass (2005) 8 minutes 13 seconds

Aimez-vous...Brahms? für Violine solo (2002) 4 minutes

Zeit – Schatten (Quartett auf das Ende vom Lied)
für Klarinette, Violine, Violoncello und Klavier (2002) 12 minutes
   Prolog
   Darkness ("Heulen und Zähneknirschen")
   Gesang des Schwarzen Vogels
   Choral der Ungläubigen
   Das Ende vom Lied
   Epilog ("Asche – verweht")

From this work:
Gesang des schwarzen Vogels für clarinette solo 2 minutes 30 seconds
“Wie Haar, das über Steine rinnt…”
für Clar., Vl, Vc, Klavier u. Schlagzg (2004) 4 minutes 48 seconds

“Floating Music” für Flöte, Klarinette, 2 Schattengeigen, Streichquartett, Klavier und Schlagzeug (2 Spieler) (2007) minimum 8 minutes

“Darkness” für Bassclarinette (oder Contrabass + Bassclarinette 1 Spieler) 2 Synthesizer und Schlagzeug (2008) 10 – 15 minutes

**VOCAL WORKS**

*Brixham*, 4 Lieder für Mezzosopran und Klavier
nach Gedichten von Jean Krier (1974 – 81) 9 minutes 48 seconds

*Brixham I* 2 minutes 49 seconds
*Brixham II* 1 minute 41 seconds
*Brixham III* 1 minute 41 seconds
*Brixham IV* 3 minute 37 seconds

*Tre Madrigali Amorosi* (Drei Lieder von Liebe und Frühling)
für Tenor, Flöte und Gitarre (1982) 8 minutes 28 seconds

*Beim Muschelsuchen (Lope de Vega)* 2 minutes 15 seconds
*Das Rosenband (Klopstock)* 4 minutes 58 seconds
*An einen Gürtel (Edmund Waller)* 1 minute 15 seconds

*Schattenraum*, 4 Lieder für Mezzosopran und 10 Instrumente
nach Gedichten von Peter Härtling für Fl (Picc, G-Fl), Ob (EH), Klar (Bklar), Pos, V, Vc, Hf, KL, Schlz (1991)

*fast morgen – plötzlich – oase – meer* 15 minutes 30 seconds

*Ma vie est un bateau abandonné…..*, 5 Lieder nach Texten
von Fernando Pessoa, für Bariton u. Streichorchester (1999) 12 minutes 33 seconds

*Fünf Lieder nach Gedichten von Giuseppe Ungaretti*
für Sopran, Violoncello und Klavier (2000) 8 minutes 30 seconds

“In den Wänden des Windes...” 6 Lieder nach Gedichten von
Bert Brecht, Kurt Marti u. Paul Fleming
für Mezzo-Sopran und Streichquartett (2001) 14 minutes

“Aus Silberfäden zart gewebt...” 3 Lieder nach Gedichten von Else Lasker-Schüler,
Georg Trakl u. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart Für Sopran und Orchester (2002) 12 minutes

*3 Lieder nach Gedichten von Claudia Storz*
für Bariton und Gitarre (2005) 9 minutes 48 seconds
PIANO AND ORGAN WORKS

*Three Winter Pieces* für Klavier solo (1965 – 1975) 8 minutes 30 seconds

*Zwei Praeludien und Fugen* für Klavier solo (1975 – 1981) 13 minutes 21 seconds

*Night Music* für Klavier solo (1987) 9 minutes 48 seconds

*Under the Rainbow*, Eleven Pieces for young pianists (1991) 15 minutes 30 seconds

*Tombeau* in memoriam Luigi Nono für Orgel 29 minutes

*Drei Choralvorspiele* für Orgel (1991) 11 minutes

*To B. (or not…?)* for piano solo (2007) 7 minutes
APPENDIX B

DISCOGRAPHY

“Capriccio per Niccolo Paganini”

*Guarnieri: Violin Sonatas Nos. 4-6*

*Guarnieri: Violin Sonatas Nos. 2, 3, and 7, and Cancao sertaneja*

“Night Music for Piano Solo”
APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW WITH ALEXANDER MÜLLENBACH

(A compilation of telephone and written correspondence from 3.15 – 5.10.2009)

Ryan Behan: Were you born into a musical family?

Alexander Müllenbach: Yes, in my family almost everybody played an instrument as an amateur. My mother played the piano, my father the violin. One of my uncles played the accordion; he made a special impression on me, because he was also composing. With him I heard for the first time what composing means.

RB: What was your earliest musical training like?

AM: In my family I learned to sing folk songs and other melodies. So, when at the age of six I got as a present a little mouth-harmonica, I was, after twenty minutes, able to play all these folksongs on it.

RB: Did improvisation play a role at this early stage of development?

AM: Yes, shortly after the mouth-harmonica, I got a small accordion, on which I improvised Waltzes, Tangos, etc. I also accompanied on the accordion - my grandfather who was improvising little pieces on the mouth-harmonica.

RB: I read that you began composing at age twelve, and that around 1970 you began crossing the boundary into atonality…

AM: After my “Waltz and Folksong” Period, I began playing the piano and studying at Luxembourg Music Conservatoire. I discovered Beethoven, Chopin, Liszt, Mendelssohn and Tschaikowsky, and many others. My first “classical” compositions were evidently influenced by Mendelssohn, Liszt, and Chopin. Then, one of my friends (he was a bit
older than I) made me listen to Prokofiev, Poulenc, Roussel, Shostakovich, Honegger, Milhaud, and Stravinsky. And in the piano class I discovered Debussy and Ravel. All this had a huge influence on me. I immediately evolved. I began exploring enlarged tonality, invented new themes, bold dissonances, and new rhythms. I can say that in that time I developed the roots of what constitutes the fundamental characteristics of my style still today.

RB:

I read that you went to three schools, and that you graduated from the Paris Conservatory in 1970, became Professor of Piano at Luxembourg Conservatory, and then resumed studies at the Mozarteum in 1977. How did your teachers in Salzburg, Gerhard Wimberger and Cesar Bresgen, help build upon your existing body of experience as a composer, and what led you to continue your studies?

AM:

I began to study music (piano, music theory, harmony, chamber music) at Luxembourg Conservatoire. Then, at the age of twelve, at Conservatoire Régional de Metz (in northeastern France) and at thirteen, I entered the “Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique” at Paris where I studied piano, chamber music, harmony, counterpoint, sight reading, music history, etc. Here I had contact with the French Composition School which inspired and influenced me a lot: Dutilleux, Messiaen, Ohana, Varèse, Jolivet, Rivier, my master Pierre Sanca... (beside the great masters I knew already before: Debussy, Ravel, Roussel, Fauré, Koechlin). After my return to Luxembourg, I developed my own way, discovering and studying Lutoslawski, Penderecki, Ivo Malec, Kurtag, George Crumb, Charles Ives, the American School, the English composers (Walton, Britten, Maxwell Davies), Paul Hindemith and so many others. I also studied carefully quite a lot of books on composition, for instance Hindemith’s “Unterweisung im Tonsatz” or Messiaen’s “Technique de mon Langage Musical”.

At the age of twenty-eight I decided to move to Salzburg in Austria. Here I dealt more specifically with Schoenberg, Berg, and Anton Webern on one hand, but with many other contemporary composers, among them many colleagues on the other hand. The excellent library of the Mozarteum made it possible to study so many contemporary scores (Stockhausen, Berio, Donatoni, Boulez, Nono, Henze, Rihm, Schnittke etc.), to listen to them, to analyze them, and
to deduce out of them my proper conclusions. From my composition teacher Gerhard Wimberger I learned professionalism and conscientiousness, and the courage to be incorruptible in what concerns the distinction between good music and simply “New” music. With Cesar Bresgen I studied music ethnology, which confirmed in me the necessity to stay always “in relationship with the earth”, which means in musical terms never give up a certain melodic conciseness and a certain elementary rhythmic feeling, for a mere abstract numeric thinking which was frequent in contemporary music. Though I have always been adept towards experimentation, trial and widening of limits, it seemed to me that one must not confound an experimental lab work with a true masterpiece, which is a frequent matter in the contemporary music scene. My compositional studies were completed by masterclasses with Ton De Leeuw, Boguslav Schaeffer and Andrei Eschpai.

RB:

Your musical life has certainly been shaped by a multitude of artists. In what ways have certain composers and their works influenced you?

AM:

There are different kinds of influence. When I think about composers like Bach, Brahms, Beethoven or Mozart, they show me at what highly professional and moral level you should aim, in order to be able to write music which both satisfies the intelligence and moves the soul.

Messiaen inspired me to think in my own way about music, and, out of these personal findings and conclusions, to forge my personal compositional tools. Some other composers whose music enlightened my own musical thinking and feeling: Dutilleux, Hindemith, Schnittke, Webern, Berg, Donatoni, Lutoslawski, George Crumb, Ligeti, and, of course, my teacher Wimberger. But, let me quote a funny, but true, story which illustrates the problem humorously. Maurice Ravel was asked by a reporter what, he believed, was originality. Ravel replied: “If I want to imitate somebody, but I don’t succeed anymore!”.

RB:

From what do you take inspiration?

AM:

I take inspiration from: Nature and Surroundings (colors, movements, events), Space and Eternity, Life (my own and others), and Death; also, the Human Condition, Feelings
(Love, Fury, Hatred, Sadness Pain, Anxiety, Hilarity, Indolence, and Violence), History, Literature and Arts, thinking about compositional possibilities, impossibilities, solutions, imagining rhythms, melodic lines, figures, chords, sonorities, instrumental playing and articulation possibilities, and the collaboration with a great performer for whom I write a piece.

RB: Does your art influence your music and/or vice versa?

AM: Yes, it does! One of the most important and exciting phenomena is what Baudelaire used to call “Correspondences”; correspondence between colors and harmonies, between movements and musical figures, between drawing lines and melodic lines, between space and sound space etc.

RB: Schoenberg was a painter – have you ever felt any special affinity to him through your similar methods of communicating through various mediums?

AM: I must confess that Arnold Schoenberg is not one of my favorite composers, even if his double talent is quite sympathetic to me.

RB: You mentioned your studies in music ethnology. How did this influence your views on composing?

AM: Studying music ethnology revealed for me the significance of the attribute “new” which was devised especially in the sixties, seventies, eighties. One could learn that very old music from abroad could sound completely new, because one simply doesn’t know it yet. In studying by example Greek rhythms from Peloponnesus, I saw –like Messiaen by the way - exciting possibilities of “new” rhythmic concepts.

RB: From initial impetus to final product, how might you describe your compositional process?

AM: For me composing functions in two slightly different ways, which, some time ago, I named, in reference to Monteverdi, “Prima e Seconda Pratica”. Prima Pratica: singing inwardly; a stream of melodic lines, chords and sonorities emanates spontaneously and is shaped according to certain intervallic and rhythmic principles. These lines are developed and brought into a larger form. Seconda
Prattica: thinking about musical possibilities, properties, and also its limits. Explore the musical space; deducing, imagining, developing new musical concepts, inventing special solutions. In some of my compositions (for example “In den Wänden des Windes...”) I try to touch and warn the society by putting into music poems or texts which express human misery, sadness or cruelty.

There are generally two kinds of “booster detonations” for a composition: either it comes out of a spontaneous idea or somebody commissions a piece. According to that idea, or according to the commissioner, and also according to time circumstances, I begin to compose in two different manners, Prima and Seconda Prattica, or I simply let come out the stream and I mold it in order to drag out in the best way its inherent form and content properties. Or I make a long and intense reflection and speculation on parametrical possibilities in order to develop a musical concept, which I realize thereafter.

I always tried to find or adopt fundamental compositional techniques which would not strangulate me, but would on the contrary help me to realize most lively, expressive works which nevertheless have a maximum of logic and coherence, both for the ear and for the intellect.

Specific forms or unusual forms generally grow out of a special compositional concept. It happens also that I put into music a text or a poem which “dictates” to me a specific formal conception.

RB: So, you can either work within the form or allow the gestures to freely generate?

AM: Both things happen, but I am convinced (and my experience has taught me) that freely generated forms are richer in information, and more manifold, unpredictable and therefore more interesting.

RB: In what harmonic world, would you say, does your work exist?

AM: My harmonic palette is as large as possible and doesn’t respect any tabu. I try to find consciously or unconsciously the most appropriate “correspondence” for every feeling, movement or color: soft or harsh, dark and light,
aggressive or peaceful, happy or sad, angry or anxious, red or blue or yellow. Every nuance should be possible to be expressed. The only premise: I avoid bad taste. You could ask me: what is bad taste? I would answer you: I know it (for myself)!

RB: Has teaching composition affected your own compositional style and process?

AM: Oh, yes! It has certainly enriched me and it has précised and enlarged my musical thinking. Teaching obliges you to think intensively and extensively about the musical phenomena and properties. Looking at the students’ works, you are often confronted with a kind of music you would never write yourself. But you have to find out its specific quality and properties and then consult the student in how he (she) can best find his (her) way. This reevaluates your convictions and makes you re-examine them constantly. At the end you really find out quite many genuine fundamental properties which give you help in your composing.

RB: The music critic Loll Weber described your music in the New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians as “strictly independent, avoiding all dogma; he has processed tonal, atonal, dodecaphonic, post-serial and sometimes also serial techniques into a language of both impressive craftsmanship and powerful expressivity, in which soft and dreamlike soundscapes or lonely cantilenas contrast with exploding, relentless toccata-like eruptions and surreal sonic ‘nightmares’.” ……

Do you endorse this statement? Do you agree that is sums up your compositions and you as a composer? If you were to describe your work, would you have anything to add?

AM: This statement, done by one of Austria’s best music critics, renders very well the properties and qualities of my compositional processes as well as of my compositions. And it is still valid. I could add that my music should touch the listener; it should have a little bit of that magic faculty, which Orpheus’ chant had, that could move and tame the animals. My music should be beautiful and true; beautiful as an expression of our constant longing for beauty, and true as an image of the many tensions of our torn world in which beauty risks to vanish from us more and more.
RB: What is required for a convincing interpretation on the part of the performer?

AM: A joking proverb says: “there is no bad composition; there is only a bad interpretation”. That is mostly true. It means that the performer should be well prepared, well trained; giving his utmost in skill, competence, and imagination in order to render a composition the most convincingly possible.

RB: What are the necessary ingredients for an effective communication of the composer’s ideas through the performer and to the audience?

AM: The efficiency of communication depends on the music itself, on its communicative properties, on the quality of the performer and his performance, and on the receptivity and the musical and intellectual level of the audience. In many cases a sympathetic, intelligent, clever and sensitive introduction, presenting the work before the performance, can “sensibilize” the audience quite a lot.

RB: Who is your audience?

AM: Most of my pieces are performed in “normal” classical concerts, together with Beethoven, Brahms, Shostakovich, etc. Some were played on more special occasions, like Festivals for Contemporary Music, contemporary workshops, multi-media-projects, etc.

RB: How does modern music play a role in today’s society?

AM: If the word “modern” means the so-called “serious” music of our time, it is obvious that this music reaches only a relatively small part of the society, depending of course to a certain extent on the intensity of publicity. For those people who listen to it, and try to be open minded, contemporary music can offer a large horizon of unusual beauty, fantasy and experience.

RB: Do you have plans to write any more piano works?

AM: I would like to write two or three collections of “sketches”, “aquarells”, “impressions de voyage”; that means very free, colorful and multiform pieces of rather short duration. But I am always open for commissions of any length.
RB: Where do you think composition will take you in the future?

AM: One of my great plans consists in writing a big Multi Media Oratorio about the human condition; that means Love, Life and Death.

RB: What do you think is the future of music, or “new” music?

AM: What we see now, is that the borders between the different genres are melting more and more, creating fusions and new crossover-productions. The academic concept of musical evolution fades and gives way to a more “Darwinist” sight, where young, fresh and academically not trained musicians create and produce music in a more naive, careless way. Computers, synthesizers, movie and multimedia concepts have already created a new situation.

RB: Please tell me about one of your first works for piano, Three Winter Pieces (1965-1975).

AM: These three pieces, composed when I was sixteen, and revised ten years after, already show, though all three are quite different in grounding and atmosphere, my personal style, harmonically as well as melodically.

The first called “paysage hivernal” was inspired by two famous Winter Paintings by Jacob van Ruisdael and Pieter Bruegel. Especially in Ruisdael’s painting we find a frozen, immobile and somewhat lonely atmosphere, depicted by huge dark-grey clouds in a mighty evening landscape in which men are merely like little ants. The frozen atmosphere is expressed through minor ninth and major seventh intervals, (often polarized by minor third or tritone) in combination with chromaticism or polytonality. Several tonal passages (tragic c minor bar 12; empty B flat major in bar 24; peaceful G Major in bar 30; finally B Major in bar 38) give a tonal frame to the work. The form is A B A. The passage A expresses loneliness by its static initial motive in minor ninth harmonies and the silent two-voice answer. In B begins a somewhat sad though peaceful chorale with birdlike chants as figurations; they express hope for spring. After a cascade from the high to the lower region comes the return of the frozen A passage which is ending with the initial static ninth motive. Now shortened and, after a brutal last
emerging (brusquement), the minor ninth motive is
dissolving into the air like a bell sound full of sadness and
death-feeling.

The second is a 12/8 “Pastorale de Noël” full of peace, joy
and shining radiance. In A, a singing Siciliano-tune in
dorian mode f sharp minor is presented. Passage B
announces a joyful round in B Major, which becomes more
and more unchained and accelerated. After a mighty
climax on Dominant Pedal c# the initial tune reappears,
but now combined to elegantly flowing garlands
representing diminutions of the round theme B. At the end
the round theme dissolves in the upper region.

The third piece, similarly shaped to the second, presents a
slow and serene cantilena A section accompanied with
chromatically descending sixth intervals; it has a slightly
American refrain.
Then a middle section B contrasts with A by its harsh
aggressive and existential chords which pendulate like big
bells. The Climax is mighty and dreadful; and then,
suddenly, reappears the soft Theme A, now counterpointed
by a crystalline and peaceful garland in the upper region of
the piano. The New Year has swept away the pains of the
Old.

RB: The next set of pieces which I will examine are your
2 Preludes and Fugues. What prompted you to compose in
this genre?

AM: Fugues and fugatos fascinated me already from the age of
thirteen; not the savant fugues of Bach or the academic
ones, rather the diabolic or condensed ones like in Brahms’
First Piano Concerto or Liszt’s Sonata in B Minor, or the
final fugue in Britten’s Variations on a Theme by Purcell,
or Hindemith’s great Passacaglia in Nobilissima Visione, or
William Walton’s final fugue of his Variations on a theme
by Hindemith. I also played, with enthusiasm, Liszt’s
transcription of Bach’s Prelude and Fugue in A minor. My
great love for Bach came a bit later when I heard the whole
Well-Tempered Clavier live, first by Sviatoslav Richter, a
short time after by Friedrich Gulda, and finally by Glenn
Gould. The latter was a fantastic revelation.

My first “fugal temptation”, which already bore the
characteristic features of my style, was for mezzo-soprano
and string-quartet, on a poem by my school-friend Jean Krier. It has stayed unfinished. In 1974 I started to write a sort of “Canzone” for double brass-choir in homage to Giovanni Gabrieli, it soon turned out to have a rather pianistic texture, where the ending arpeggio-apotheosis required more forte “orchestraly” than the brass alone. It presents a vigorous, stringent theme in ¾ beat (Allegro energico), which is a kind of homage to Paul Hindemith who was one of my spiritual masters in 1974 when I conceived the work. It’s a three-voice fugue, but towards the end it gets rather orchestral by adding full chords and octave doublings. In the initial exposition the different voices enter with a special tone-system: the theme starts with the note C and ends with G#. So the upper voice starts with C; the middle voice starts with G#; the lower voice comes in with E. The end of the exposition is in C again. Through the alternation of several expositions and longer interludes the fugue gets more and more straight; the theme appears in diminutions and sequences; this leads to a huge climax where it is literally celebrated in a grandiose and solemn apotheosis in C. Nine years later I decided to complete this fugue by putting a prelude before it, which I developed from the fourth-intervals which characterize the theme and the harmonies of the fugue.

In the meantime I had written another fugue, a special one, where the theme appears in its four forms (prime, inversion, retrograde, and retrograde inversion). The entrances are organized by the different notes of the theme according to a twelve tone series. The character of this fugue is chromatic, slowly creeping and wistfully nostalgic. The stretta brings the theme in augmentation in the bass and the work ends beautifully in a calm and serene C Major.

Before it I set a rather impressionistic prelude “les ailes du soir descent dans la vallé” (the wings of evening lay over the valley), which was conceived on a walk through the beautiful valley of “Blumtau” near Salzburg. Inspired by a walk through this extraordinary poetic valley not far from Salzburg, the music tries to express the silence on a ground of sources and waterfalls, and the serene gravity of the site, when at dusk shadows grow longer and longer. A long chorale-like melody in additive rhythm, harmonized in a combination of octaves and tritones on several levels, develops in several sections, and cascades of
fourth- and major seventh-combinations. The dominating harmonic axis is G# - D - G#.

The 2 Preludes and Fugues were premiered in Brussels, Belgium by myself and were transmitted directly by radio shortly after their completion, and then played in several other cities.

RB: I will be performing the next work for discussion, Night Music for Solo Piano, on an upcoming concert. What should a performer know about this piece?

AM: Like almost all of my compositions, this piece dwells with dualism and dialectics: night as a tender dream of peace and tranquility on one hand; but night also in a metaphorical sense as the dark, as evil, aggression and destruction on the other hand. The dialectic tension is symbolized right from the beginning section: "Night Music" opens with "Death-tone" B in the lowest register, followed immediately by "Life-tone" C in the highest region of the piano. Out of star-like Introduction-sounds appears a tender, soft cantilena, which progressively develops, swells on and leads to a rough Toccata-like and percussive “Allegro molto”. After a series of increasingly wild “Strettas” it culminates in a big, explosive climax. Thereafter, slowly by slowly, the tension turns down, initially still interrupted by sudden eruptions; the soft cantilena reappears and at the end we return again to the initial “Star-Music”.

The work was commissioned in 1987 by the Mozarteum in Salzburg to serve as a compulsory work for the 4th International Mozart Contest 1988.

RB: You also wrote a set of pieces for the beginning pianist, Unter dem Regenbogen. What was your aim in writing these compositions?

AM: With this series of eleven little pieces which run gradually from “very easy” to “medium difficulty”. I wanted to verify if my compositional tools were able to function even in the most simple way, for children; like Bartok who tried (and succeeded) the same, in his Mikrokosmos. Colourful, phantasyful little sketches, landscapes, stories which are capable of pleasing to young (and old) people. I offered it to Doblinger who printed it soon.
RB: The last piece I will discuss is one that composed recently, *To B. (...or not?)*. Why was it composed and what may the title imply?

AM: *Commissioned by the International Beethoven Competition (Bonn as a compulsory work for the semi-finale, the piece opens by a theme deduced closely from the last movement of Beethoven’s D Major Piano Sonata (Pastorale), but appearing here in a kind of pastoral Raga. It leads way to a hammering toccata in irregular meters. The middle section “pensieroso” picks up the main theme of the late B-flat Major Sonata (Hammerklavier) as if it was recreated by both Shostakovich and Schubert. Then, there is a reappearance of the toccata, and finally the glorious apotheosis of the Pastoral Raga theme, ending abruptly in a brilliant and rapturous coda.*
APPENDIX D

LIST OF TERMS USED BY THE COMPOSER IN HIS WORKS FOR PIANO

Aquatico = aquatic
Ben cantando = well sung
Bien chanté = well sung
Breit und mächtig = broad and powerful
Brusquement = suddenly
Calando poco a poco = decrease in loudness (and usually tempo) little by little
Cambiare Ped (1/2) ad libitum = change the damper pedal (halfway) freely
Come prima = like the beginning
Commodo = easy; leisurely
Cantabile = in a singing style
Con grandezza = with breadth
Cantando = stinging; smooth and flowing
Delicato = delicate
Duro e martellato = hard and hammered
En dehors = from the outside
Energico e feroce = energetic and fierce
Et doux melancholique = a soft melancholy
Fluido = fluid; flowing
Fondu = melted
Furioso = furious
Giocoso = playful; jesting
Gioioso = joyful
Grandioso e giocoso = grand and playful
Kraftvoll und entschlossen = forceful and resolved
Kurz = short
Legato cantabile = in a smooth, connected and songful manner
Leggiero = light
Leggiero scherzando = in a light, sportive, toying manner
Leise verklingen = softly fading away
Lunga = long
Martellato = hammered
Martellato e feroce = hammered and fierce
Misterioso = mysterious
Molto marcato = with much distinctness and emphasis
Molto tenero = very tender
Morbido = soft; smooth
Morendo = to die out
Murmorando = in a murmuring manner
Non rallentare = do not slow down
Pensieroso= contemplative
Piu calmo = more calm
Precipato = precipitous
Preciso = precise
Rein und friedlich = pure and peaceful
Sarcastico = sarcastic
Secco = dry
Secco e molto ritmico = dry and very rhythmic
Sehr versponnen = very meditative
Smorzando = to die away
Stellaire = stellar (of the stars)
Stretto = strict
Stringendo = gradually faster
Smorzando = to die away
Très rapide et fondu = very quick and coalesced (or melted)
Triste = sad
Verklingen lassen = let [the sound] fade away
Verschmolzen = melded
Volti subito = sudden turn
Weich = soft
Zärtlich = sweetly
APPENDIX E

MÜLLENBACH ABRIDGED VITA

Alexander Müllenbach has been Vice President of the Austrian Ensembles for New Music, and from 1979 to 1983 he was Vice President of the International Festival for New Music “Aspekte” in Salzburg. In 1983 he founded the Lëtzebuerger Gesellschaft fir Nei Musék, serving as president until 1994. From 1990 to 1996 he served as president of the European Music Academy IME in Besançon. Since 2000 he has been President of the Conseil Supérieur de la Musique in Luxembourg, and since 2002 Director of the International Summer Academy at the Mozarteum in Salzburg. Alexander Müllenbach is currently on faculty as Professor of Composition at the Universität Mozarteum in Salzburg and at the Luxemburg Conservatory.

Müllenbach has written over one hundred works in differing genres: an opera, thirteen orchestral works, concertante, and chamber music, as well as works for voice, choir, organ, and piano. Countless performances of his works on the international stage, at the most prestigious festivals, and at the hands of the world’s most revered conductors and instrumentalists, serve as a testament to his success as a composer. To include an abridged version of this impressive list: his compositions have appeared at the Salzburger Festspiele, Festival International Echternach, Steirischer Herbst, Festival du MIDEM Classique Cannes, Internationale Mozartwoche Salzburg, Winter Festival Moskau,
Krakau Festival 2000, Europa Musicale München, Bussotti-Festival Genazzano,
Internationale Sommerakademie Mozarteum Salzburg, Osterfestspiele Salzburg,
Europäische Musikwoche Passau, Sandor Vegh Festival Azoren, Anzio Festival, Musica
Strasbourg, Festival der Mozartstädte, Clerkenwell Music Series London, Johan
Willgren-Festival Orivesi (Finland), Barbican Center Music Series, and the IGNM
Musikfest; by interpreters such as Heinrich Schiff, Boris Pergamenschikow, Marjana
Lipovšek, Roberto Fabbriciani, Irena Grafenauer, Eliot Fisk, Kurt Widmer, Edoardo
Catemario, Tsuyoshi Tsutsumi, Christina Ortiz, Roberto Szidon, Edda Silvestri, Gottfried
Schneider, Lewis Kaplan, Yair Kless, Frank Wibaut, Antonello Farulli, Frederico
Mondelci, Maria Christina Kiehr, Elena Denisova, Velislava Georgieva, Françoise
Grobén, Ionel Pantea, Frank Stadler, and Iride Martinez; by ensembles such as Wiener
Streichsextett, Hagen Quartett, Camerata Salzburg, Musica Viva Dresden, Alter Ego
Rom, Atelier Musique Nouvelle de Paris, Klangforum Wien, Österreichisches Ensemble
für Neue Musik, Wiener Kammerorchester, Philharmonische Virtuosen Berlin, Parnassus
Ensemble London, Mozarteum Quartett Salzburg, Vilnius-Quartett, Stadler Quartett, and
Pierrot Lunaire Ensemble Wien; and under the direction of composers such as Ernest
Bour, Leopold Hager, David Shallon, Stanislaw Skrowaczewski, Philippe Entremont,
Hubert Soudant, Hans Graf, Günter Neuhold, Antoni Wit, Jari Hämälainen, Jaap
Schroeder, Pierre Cao, Johannes Kalitzke, Marc Soustrot, and Sylvain Cambreling.


Published and Unpublished Works for Piano


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