

AN ANALYSIS AND PERFORMANCE GUIDE TO
BENJAMIN LEES'S *ODYSSEY I* AND *II*

D.M.A. DOCUMENT

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By

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ABSTRACT

This document provides analyses and performance guidelines for Benjamin Lees' *Odyssey I* (1970) and *II* (1986). This paper also discusses the composer's biographical background and musical style. I will identify in particular the similarity between art and music from a surrealistic perspective.

This document contains five chapters: Chapter 1, Introduction; Chapter 2, biography of Benjamin Lees and surrealism; Chapter 3, style analyses of Lees's *Odyssey I* and *II*; Chapter 4, performance guidelines for *Odyssey I* and *II*; Chapter 5, conclusion.

Musical examples are included and the email correspondence from the composer, the catalogue of Lees' piano music and the discography are provided in the Appendix.

Dedicated to my mom in Heaven

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

It can be difficult for both laymen and professional listeners to understand Contemporary music without musical knowledge. That is a reason many performers avoid playing contemporary music. This document examines solo piano works composed by Benjamin Lees (b. 1924), one of the United State's most prominent composers, by analyzing two selected works, *Odyssey I* (1970) and *Odyssey II* (1986). In addition, I have created a performance guideline in Chapter 4 that includes practice suggestions and personal insights into performing this work.

With respect to *Odyssey I* and *II*, Lees synthesizes tonality and atonality as well as melodic elements. The form has neo-classical features such as thematic variations and some sonata-allegro characteristics.

While Lees is not a Surrealist who describes an imaginary vision from his subconscious mind, the idea of Surrealism is indirectly applied to his music. His *Odyssey*

I and *II* show dramatic, sensitive and expressive qualities in a surrealist style.

Odyssey I and *II* are challenging pieces for a pianist. They require a virtuosic technique and a keen sense of rhythm. Rhythmic elements include minimalist-passages as well as repeated septuplets, nontuplets and tentuplets. Thus, pianists need to express various characteristics and moods in each section of these works.

In this document, the second chapter provides a brief biographical overview of the composer and his musical style. In particular, since there are similarities between art and music in their respective surrealistic features, I will examine the relationship between Lees' music and specific paintings of Chagall based on the concept of Surrealism.

Chapter 3 presents an analysis of two works, *Odyssey I* and *II*. My initial discussion begins with a formal structure of each piece; motivic and thematic ideas are the basis of the works. Additionally, I will describe the various characteristics and moods of each section.

Chapter 4 discusses performance guidelines of *Odyssey I* and *II*. For pianists, this study provides practical suggestions and useful information. During the course of my doctoral studies at the Ohio State University, I

performed and recorded *Odyssey I* and *II* in concert. The recordings are provided with this document as a listening resource. Listed in Appendix A is a series of email communications with the composer, a very helpful source in my research. Dr. Lisa Florman, Associate Professor of Art History at The Ohio State University, has been most helpful sharing her knowledge of Surrealism.

CHAPTER 2

BIOGRAPHY OF BENJAMIN LEES AND HIS MUSICAL STYLE

2.1 Background of Benjamin Lees

Benjamin Lees is an outstanding American composer of Russian parentage. He was born in Harbin, China on January 8, 1924. When he was young, he and his parents moved to San Francisco where they eventually became American citizens. At sixteen years old, they moved to Los Angeles, thus he was raised and educated in California.¹

After serving in the United States Army from 1944-45, Lees studied composition with Halsey Stevens and Ingolf Dahl while attending the University of Southern California. Additionally, he studied counterpoint and orchestration with George Antheil from 1949-1954. Privately, he took

¹ Joe Cooper Galyon, "Benjamin Lees's Concerted Works for Piano and Orchestra, 1953-1996" (D.M.A. diss., University of Cincinnati, 2000), 6.

lessons with George Antheil for five years.²

Lees received several awards and fellowships. He was the first recipient of the Fromm Foundation award for his *String Quartet No. 1* and *Sonata for Two Pianos* in 1952. In 1955, he received the Copley Foundation Award, after which Mrs. Copley became a patron of Lees throughout his career. He held the Guggenheim Fellowship in 1954 and 1966. With a Fulbright Fellowship in 1956, he went to Europe. He lived in various cities in Europe, such as Helsinki (1956-57), Vienna (1955-56) and Paris, but he mostly spent time in a small town near Paris. He received the Lancaster (PA) Symphony Orchestra Composer's Award in 1985.³

During the time Lees was in Europe many eminent composers studied with Nadia Boulanger, the famous pedagogue, in Paris. He also studied composition with Nadia Boulanger as did, Ned Rorem, Aaron Copland and Lee Hoiby. However, Lees was active as a composer who has his own style after returning to the United States, while other composers, including Aaron Copland, Walter Piston, Roy Harris and Virgil Thomson, established a new school of composition based on her teaching.

² Ibid., 6.

³ Ibid., 6.

In Europe, he received the Sir Arnold Bax Society (London) Medal in 1958, the first non-British composer to do so. Lees also received the UNESCO Award in London for *String Quartet No. 2*. In 1962, Lees returned to the United States having written mature and impressive compositions.

Lees held positions in composition at several schools in the USA. He was a Professor of Composition at Peabody Conservatory (1962-64, and 1966-68), Queens College (1964-66), Manhattan School of Music (1972-74), and The Juilliard School (1976-77). In addition, he was invited to visit the former Soviet Union as an official guest of the Union of Soviet Composers in 1967. His *Silhouettes* for "Ballet of the Five Senses" was broadcast nationwide on the NET public television network. In 2003, his Symphony No. 5 was nominated for a Grammy Award ("Kalmar Nyckel").

Deryck Cooke explains:

To describe the character of Lees' music, one might use two dangerous current terms and say that it is at once 'neo-classical' (in its clear-cut textures and rhythms) and 'neo-romantic' (in that it is unmistakably expressive), and achieves a sane balance between the two. Like the best type of music of classical periods, it uses clearly intelligible forms to express in a general way certain basic elements of contemporary human psychology. Lees composes neither as a pure intellect, nor as an emotional complex, but as a complete man. He himself says (I quote from his answers to a questionnaire I put to him): 'I compose

because I must, just as I must eat, live, breathe, and love... When I compose I express myself, so perhaps in that sense one could call my music expressive. I consider music generally to be expressive of the composer's feeling... By trying to master form where I can experiment on an intelligent and intelligible level with new forms in my compositions I consider form on a par with expression...⁴

Nicolas Slonimsky described Benjamin Lees' music as "...so personal, so distinct, so assertive are the stylistic and idiomatic usages in the works of Benjamin Lees that an immediately recognizable *Gestalt* is formed from an attentive perusal of his scores."⁵

Bret Johnson characterizes that the "Lees Sound" possesses "a strongly individual personality."

He has always possessed a strongly individual personality, and the 'Lees Sound' is unquestionably unique, even through his exposition and development of musical ideas and the technique of continual evolution which he favours at present derive, at source, from his most important early musical teacher: George Antheil.⁶

Generally, Lees' music is based on traditional methodology. He has developed his musical style which is comparatively free from the influence of avant-garde

⁴ Deryck Cooke, "The Music of Benjamin Lees," *Tempo* 51 (Spring-Summer 1959): 21.

⁵ Nicholas Slonimsky, "Benjamin Lees in Excelsis," *Tempo* 113 (June 1975):19.

⁶ Bret Johnson, "Benjamin Lees: Quo vadis?" *Tempo* 175 (December 1990): 11.

fashions and schools.⁷ His basic musical language is thematic and harmonic, using the tonal system, but neither that of the nineteenth century nor that of the more experimental period of Hindemith and Bartok.⁸ He uses a straightforward key-system, as Stravinsky did, which involves using key-centers, such as an octave, a fifth and triads in a way that was unique to the twentieth century.⁹

Hyung Bae Kim mentions that Lees is clearly concerned with establishing tonal centers; however, he wishes to avoid clear-cut traditional harmonic practices and frequently blurs the tonal focus by emphasizing tones removed by a minor second, a major second, and a tritone.¹⁰ In addition, Kim points out that Lees uses all twelve tones freely, creating his own unique harmony to express himself, and Lees also augments the simple triad to create his own neoclassical tonal language, as Stravinsky did.¹¹ According to Kim, Lees' music has no roots; rather he has insisted on

⁷ *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Vol.14, (Ed. By Stanley Sadie, Second Edition, New York: Grove's Dictionaries Inc., 2001), 465.

⁸ Cooke, 22.

⁹ Ibid., 22.

¹⁰ Hyung Bae Kim, "The Solo Piano Works of Benjamin Lees Published from 1956 to 1976" (D.M.A. diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1981), 54.

¹¹ Kim, 70.

discovering for himself the roots most appropriate to foster his own individual creative gifts.¹²

There are four main sources of Lees' compositional style: traditional symphonic technique, the server style of Bartok, the ironic approach of Prokofiev, and certain aspects of the neoclassical method of Stravinsky.¹³ Bartok used symmetric phrases, such as 2+2, 4+4 and 8+8 as Bach did. Stravinsky provided a specific key or note in his music. These features show his musical personality, including the serious, the austere, the lyrical, the fantastic, the sardonic, and the detached characteristics.

2.2 Surrealism

Surrealism is a style in which fantastic visual imagery from the subconscious mind is used with no intention of making the artwork logically comprehensible.¹⁴ It is similar in some respects to the late 19th century Symbolist movement, but deeply influenced by the

¹² Ibid., 4.

¹³ Cooke, 22.

¹⁴ www.artclopedia.com/surrealism.html, 1.

psychoanalytic work of Freud and Jung.¹⁵ It is a branch of expressionism, and it emphasizes "positive expression."¹⁶ In the 20th century, there were many great artists in the surrealism movement, including Jean Arp, Max Ernst, Giorgio de Chirico, Man Ray, Joan Miro, Rene Magritte, and Salvador Dali.

Otto Deri explains surrealism, "An increased emphasis on the visionary and an even greater leaning toward a fantasy world," and he also mentions that Chagall is one of the best known exponents of this style.¹⁷ Chagall tried to express the Surrealist artist's imagination, which is so powerful it transcends all boundaries of reality. Also, Deri points out that Surrealism produces suggestive imagery, which is the arbitrariness of the dream world.¹⁸

On the other hand, according to Lisa Florman, Associate Professor of Art History at The Ohio State University and a specialist in Surrealism, Chagall was not actually a member of this group.¹⁹ She points out that Chagall's work incorporates some aspects of Surrealism, such as agitated, fantastic, imaginative, orientated, and

¹⁵ Ibid., 1.

¹⁶ www.surrealist.com/, 1.

¹⁷ Otto Deri, *Exploring Twentieth-Century Music* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, INC., 1968), 9.

¹⁸ Ibid., 1968, 9.

¹⁹ Lisa Florman, interview by author, November 2004.

unexpected features. Because Chagall was not fully involved in the group, his work should be called "surrealist", rather than "Surrealist," which involves real movement with artists such as Dali who has a very aggressive and frightening means of expression.²⁰

While Lees is not a Surrealist, but he displays certain characteristics of Surrealism in his music. He mentions that the Surrealistic features which he uses come about quite naturally in the course of the compositional process.²¹ In addition, Lees points out that "I employed Surrealistic features, i.e., the use of the unexpected, the element of surprise, a sudden change in dynamics, the use of fantasy, the occasional insertion of humor or sarcasm, and the employment of discomfort."²²

In fact, the way that Chagall used Surrealism in his paintings is analogous to Lees approach in his music. Cooke describes the expressionism of Lees as follows:

"...his own attempt at a "surrealist" approach to the psychological elements in music, e.g., humour, anger, sweetness, surprise (being with the second symphony), and returns to stress that he 'wants and needs humour and anger both. Clearly, we have here a complexity of feelings arising naturally out of contemporary life.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Benjamin Lees, e-mail message to author, November 2004.

²² Ibid.

But how are they expressed in the music? ... Here are some of the intervals of twentieth-century tonal language: the 'bare', 'austere' fourth and fifth, the 'biting; semitone, major seventh and minor ninth; the 'sinister' augmented fourth; all often combined with the 'narrow', 'dark' minor third. All this is natural potential for expressing 'anger' in an 'age of strain'; and with 'humour', in that the intervals are contradictions not yet loose in a void but linked to the firm consonances of the tonal system."²³

Lees wrote in the program note of his *Odyssey*:

"It is an exploration of textures and techniques, together with a working out of musical materials which seem to generate a sense of journey through some surrealist landscape. There is both violence and lyricism each sharing equal space in the construction of this work."²⁴

He also wrote in the last part of *Odyssey I*; "From here to the end the feeling should be almost surrealistic."²⁵

Therefore, his use of Surrealism in music is similar to Marc Chagall's in art. Here is an example of Chagall's representative work, *I and the Village* (1911) (Plate 2.1).

²³ Cooke, 22.

²⁴ Benjamin Lees, *Odyssey I and II* (New York: Boosey & Hawkes, 1972), ii.

²⁵ Lees, 10.



Plate 2.1

As can be seen from Plate 1, the imagination of Chagall is very powerful. It appears that both expressionism and surrealism were influenced by the advent of psychoanalysis.²⁶ The unconscious, hitherto repressed, yielded new source material for the artist. Furthermore, due to the new psychological insights, the symbolism of

²⁶ Deri, 9.

ancient and primitive art was perceived in a totally new light.²⁷

This painting is divided into various sections which are connected through imagination, expressivity, and a sense of agitation. Chagall described a symmetrical idea in his art throughout dividing sections.

Compared to Lees' piece, *Odyssey I* and *II* are unexpected and surprising by using contrasting dynamics. For example, the first theme of *Odyssey I* is *p*, while the second theme is written in *subito ff* (Example 2.1).

BENJAMIN LEES
1970

The musical score for Benjamin Lees' 1970 piece 'Odyssey I' (measures 1-5) is presented in two systems. The first system, marked 'Slow, with strange foreboding' and 'p' (piano), features a melody in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The second system, marked 'Faster, ♩ = 84' and 'ff subito' (fortissimo subito), shows a more rhythmic and intense passage, with a 'p' (piano) marking at the end. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Example 2.1: *Odyssey I*, mm. 1-5

²⁷ Ibid., 11.

He also writes splendid places, employs minimalism, with the indication of *fancifully* in *Odyssey II* (See Example 2.2). Minimalism is that "The simplest possible material is repeated many times, with small changes introduced gradually or with the addition of other comparably simple repetitive in its synchronization."²⁸ Lees expresses a fantastic and fanciful passage using a minimalist feature.

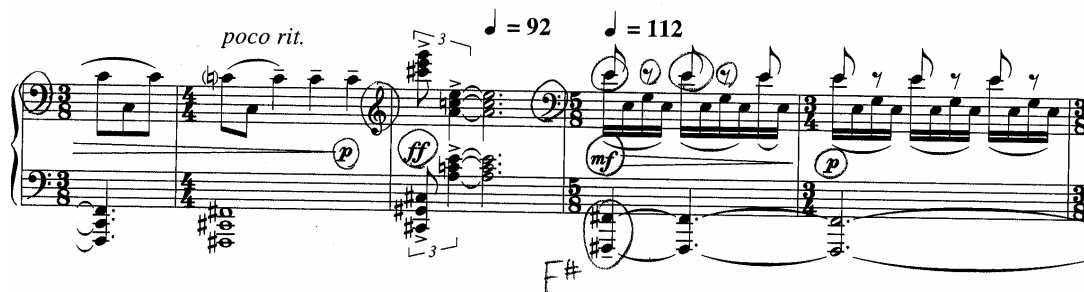


Example 2.2: *Odyssey II*, mm. 93-99

He sometimes inserts humorous and sarcastic features in his music. As shown in Example 2.3, Lees uses minor triads with a long rhythmic value and fast passages with sixteenth notes alternately in measures 123-125 of *Odyssey*

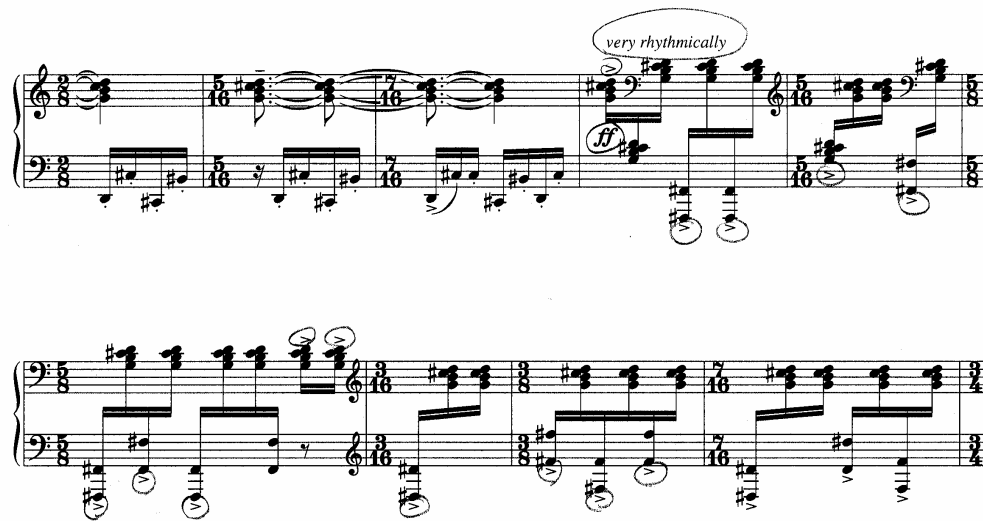
²⁸ *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Classical Music*, (Ed. By David Cummings, New York: Random House, 1997), 426.

II. A contrasting mood creates because of alternating between minimalism passages and unexpected triads. In addition, the dynamics are changed from *ff* to *p*, so the contrasting dynamics support the contrasting textures (think chords vs. fast minimalist-like melody) as well.



Example 2.3: *Odyssey II*, mm. 121-125

In addition, Lees writes rhythmical and percussive sections in *Odyssey II*. He expresses compact chords using triads with major seconds and sevenths in the right hand giving it a thick and tight sounding texture in section B. This fast-tempo section creates a strong percussive quality. It is also humorous and noisy with consistent *ff*, accented rhythms (Example 2.4).



Example 2.4: *Odyssey II*, mm. 25-33

Odyssey I and *II* are sectional, but these pieces are devoted to an arch form as the ending section always returns to the beginning. Additionally, like Chagall's work, this music is quite dramatic and agitated with contrasting dynamics and rhythms. Lees frequently writes very specific directions for performers in his music, such as, *dark, mysterious, very dramatically, very intensity, stentorian, sadly, delicate, and brusquely*. Like Chagall, Lees writes surrealistic features in his music. There are similar characteristics in which he presents feelings of "imagination, passion and unexpectedness."²⁹ Both creators

²⁹ Lisa Florman, interview by author, November, 2004.

employed surrealistic elements in their works although they were technically not "Surrealist."

CHAPTER 3

STYLE ANALYSES OF *ODYSSEY I* AND *II*

3.1 Style Analysis of *Odyssey I*

Lees' music is thematic. There are themes and figures in *Odyssey I* and *II* (See p. 21 and 33) and these present throughout the pieces. For example, Figure A is heard in sequence throughout measures 7-12 in *Odyssey II*. Moreover, there is a place that uses three figures, Figure A, B and C from measure 58. Figure A and C present with the same manner, however Figure B uses an inverted and opposite scale utilizing an ascending chromatic scale while the original one provides a descending whole tone scale.

Lees' music is also sectional. *Odyssey I* consists of five sections, A-B-C-D-A'. It is common for Lees to finish a piece with the same section as the beginning. This formal design demonstrates a connection to sonata-allegro form in that section A and A' function as an exposition and

a recapitulation respectively, and the middle sections can be considered developmental. This is a common characteristic of Lees.

Lees' harmonic technique, the use of intervals such as a perfect fourth and fifth, a major second and seventh, a minor second and seventh, and an octave, is prominent in many places in *Odyssey I* and *II*.

There are many features of Surrealism in this piece as mentioned at the previous chapter, such as characteristic themes, unexpected surprise, the use of fantasy and contrasted dynamics. In addition, a rhythmic element is important, using septuplets, nontuplets, and minimalist passages.



Figure 3.3: Figure B, Rhythmic nontuplets

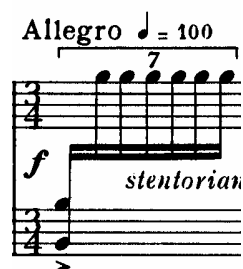


Figure 3.4: Figure C, Septuplets

In Section A, the first theme consists entirely of octave unisons (Figure A). This theme is composed of five different minor triads, which are broken. This provides a perfect fifth, one of Lees' important intervals. It also consists of tritones between the first and the second chords and the third and the fourth chords (Example 3.1).

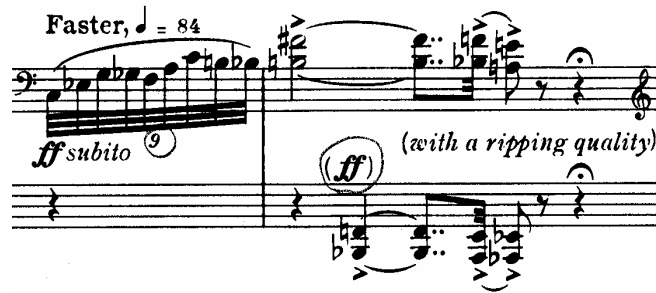


Example 3.1: *Odyssey I*, mm. 1-3

This theme begins with the dynamic indication of *piano*. The sound feels empty and strange as Lees indicates, *with strange foreboding*.³⁰ This is related to the texture which appears in the high and low registers, two octaves apart. The rhythm is a sequence between measure 1 and measure 2.

The second theme appears in the second part of measure 3 (Figure B). It is very rhythmic, using nontuplets, thirty-second notes, and dotted notes (See Example 3.2). The contrasting dynamics between the first theme and the second theme are one of surrealistic features that Lees suggests.

³⁰ Lees, 1.



Example 3.2: *Odyssey I*, mm. 3-4

The nontuplets, which are located in the first part of the second theme, consist of two triads and chromatic descending notes (Example 3.3).



Example 3.3: *Odyssey I*, m.3

The second part of this theme descends chromatically and it is composed of intervals of perfect fifths. Each hand plays intervals of perfect fifths, but when played together this creates minor seconds, resulting in dissonant

harmonies. To emphasize rhythmic thirty-second notes, Lees writes "with a ripping quality," and adds accents.³¹

While the first theme is quiet, the second is dynamically contrasting from the first theme, using "*subito ff.*" In addition, the tempo is faster than the first theme. Two of the themes have fermatas, which give pause between the next phrases.

The remainder of Section A, from measure 5 to measure 24, shows a combination of these two themes. Throughout measures 5-6, there is a sequence of the first theme, but Lees uses the minor second to make a dissonance in the first beat rather than unison (Example 3.4).



Example 3.4: *Odyssey I*, mm. 5-6

There is rhythmic diminution in measure 7, using thirty-second notes instead of eighth notes.

³¹ Ibid., 1.

From measure 9 to measure 15, the second theme develops with alternations of two hands. The tempo increases and diminished rhythms become more exciting. After the second theme is gradually developed, the first theme returns in the high register while the second theme's open chord, constructed in fifths, is sustained in the pedal. This passage also provides a surrealistic features using sudden change in dynamics (Example 3.5).

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2

1st theme

Example 3.5: *Odyssey I*, mm. 10-15

In measures 17-18, the first theme appears again, however, the sound becomes dissonant by sustaining the previous wide chord with a pedal point, which contains perfect fifth and minor second chords. Throughout measures 17-20, the range is wide between the first theme, played in the high register, and the second theme, in a much lower register.

In Section B, Figure C, septuplets, are prominent. The rhythm is based on the second theme which uses dotted notes and thirty-second notes. The consistent rhythm is very important in this section, however, these septuplets are parts of a melody line as well. For example, in measure 25, the last note, which is B flat of the septuplets, is a part of the melody, which consists of four notes, G, B flat, F sharp, and F (Example 3.6).



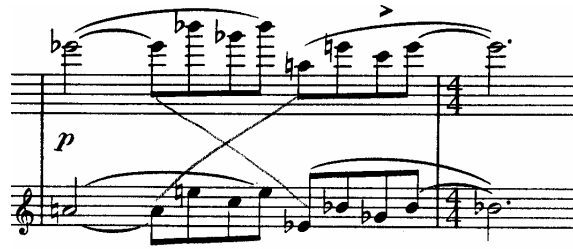
Example 3.6: *Odyssey I*, mm. 25-26

The meter is changed frequently in this section, with constantly repeated septuplets. There are important intervals in the left hand in Section B. The first interval is the fourth, which appears in the chromatic descending scale, and the second one is the minor second in the cluster chord (Example 3.7).



Example 3.7: *Odyssey I*, mm. 29-30

In Section B, the first theme also appears in measure 48. However, it is no longer a unison because there is a voice-exchange between the hands (Example 3.8).



Example 3.8: *Odyssey I*, mm. 48-49

There is a transition between Section B and Section C in measures 55-58. This transition establishes the tempo and dynamics for the next section.

Section C is subdivided into four parts. The first part is from measure 59 to measure 86. The second part is from measure 87 to measure 126. The third part is from measure 127 to measure 136. The last part is from measure 137 to measure 154.

The first part of Section C is contrasted with the previous section. The dynamic level of Section C is greatly reduced, and the register is usually high. The left hand has an ostinato rhythm, which is related to a perfect fifth, melodically. The B flat is repeated frequently in the right hand. This part has sequence by phrases and the meter changes often.

The second part of Section C is very dramatic. The hands share alternating octaves. It gradually develops by accenting the first beat to emphasize E flat, B flat, C, F, G flat, A flat, B flat and finally E flat, to create the climax. The meter changes each measure. After the climax there are two echoes and each descends to the lower register from measure 124 to measure 127.

The third part of Section C consists of the elements of the first part of this section and the second theme. Tempo and dynamics are decreased.

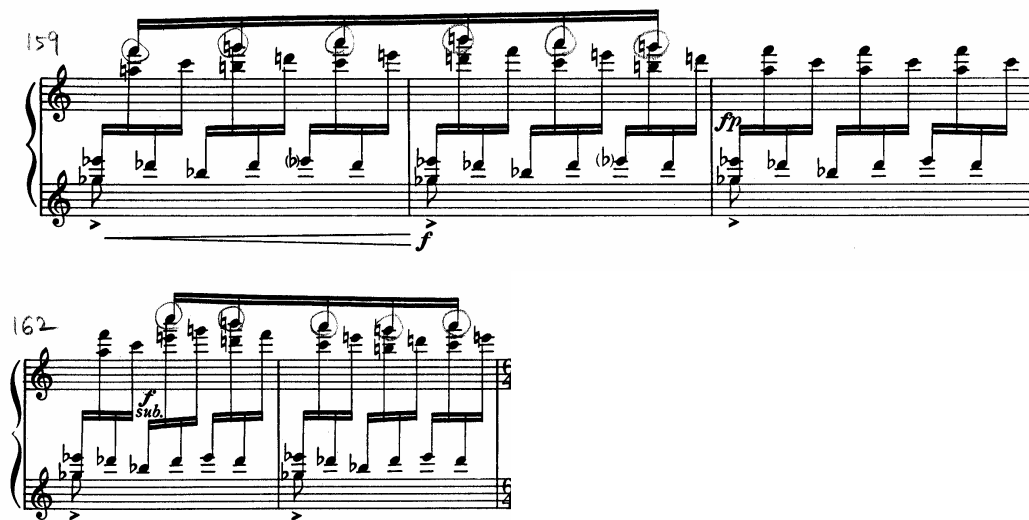
The last part of Section C is similar to the first part. It is in the upper register, quiet, and has an ostinato rhythm in the left hand. The difference between this and the first section is that the ostinato is comprised of harmonic intervals of a fourth, and the right hand repeats mainly intervals of a seventh within a narrow range (Example 3.9).



Example 3.9: *Odyssey I*, mm. 137-140

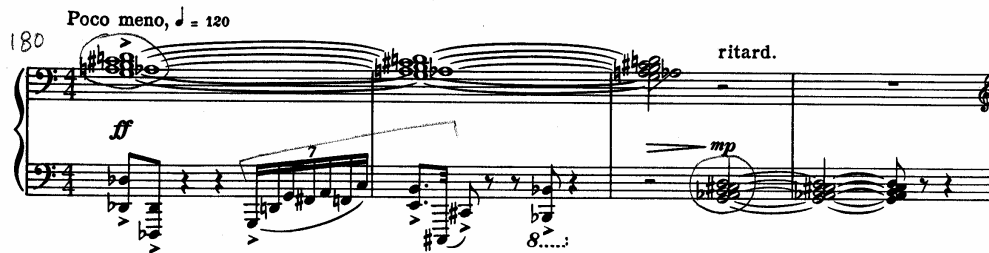
The meter changes frequently. The last part of this section, which consists of sixteenth notes, prepares the next section.

Section D consists primarily of sixteenth notes with alternations between the right and the left hand. The dynamic is soft except for *subito ff*. This section employs elements of minimalism, which will be discussed in the next chapter. Also, evident is the surrealistic feature that uses fantastic mood. The top notes delineates the melodic line, such as the ascending scale in measures 159-160, and the descending one in measures 162-163 (Example 3.10).



Example 3.10: *Odyssey I*, mm. 159-163

It closes with a tone cluster preceded by the second theme (Example 3.11).



Example 3.11: *Odyssey I*, mm. 180-183

Section A' returns to end the piece. It closely resembles the first section, as two themes are prominent. Intervals of a fifth are important in this section especially in measure 200 which has descending open fifths. The primary difference in this section and the first section is the ending, which includes tone-clusters and a sudden appearance of *subito fff*. Tone-clusters appear three times and each time they descend to a lower register. These are very dramatic gestures to bring this piece to its conclusion.

3.2 Style Analysis of *Odyssey II*

This piece consists of seven sections, ABCDEFA'.

Form	Measures	Characteristics
A	1-27	Introduce themes
B	28-50	Percussive, rhythmic
C	51-74	Similar to A
D.1	75-88	Ostinato in minor second
D.2	89-177	Minimalism
E	178-200	Dramatic
F.1	201-218	Quiet, sad
F.2	219-234	Delicate
F.3	235-250	One voice
A'	251-273	Similar to A

Figure 3.5

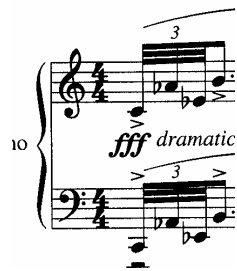


Figure 3.6: Figure A, Triplets



Figure 3.7: Figure B, Descending chromatic scale



Figure 3.8: Figure C, Leaping chord



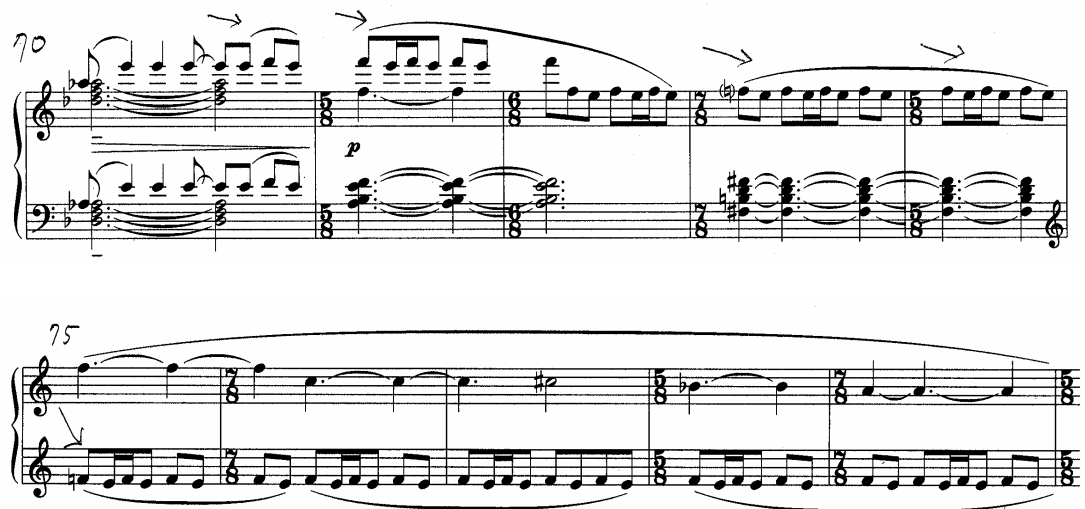
Figure 3.9: Figure D, Rhythmic motive

Section A is from measure 1 to measure 27. Section B is from measure 28 to measure 50. Section C is from measure 51 to measure 74. This piece is constructed so that a rhythmic or melodic motif from a section is used as entry material to the forthcoming section, acting as a bridge. For example, to prepare Section B which is very rhythmic in nature, a consistent rhythmic pattern of sixteenth notes in the last part of Section A appears in the left hand throughout measures 18-27 (Example 3.12).



Example 3.12: *Odyssey II*, mm. 16-29

In addition, from measure 71 to measure 74, the ostinato pattern appears in Section D. Thus, this section foreshadows the next section (Example 3.13).



Example 3.13: *Odyssey II*, mm. 70-77

Section D is subdivided into two parts. The first part is from measure 75 to measure 88, and the second one is from measure 89 to measure 177. Section E is from measure 178 to measure 200. Section F is also subdivided into three parts, measure 201 to measure 218, measure 219 to measure 234, measure 235 to measure 250. The last Section, A', is from measure 251 to measure 273.

As in *Odyssey I*, the theme in Section A is written in octave unisons, however, his application of dynamics is different. Lees writes "dramatically" with a marking of *fff*, while the first theme of *Odyssey I* is very quiet. The theme consists of two parts; the first measure (Figure A)

and the remaining two measures. Figure A shows the rhythmic motto, using a *triplet* with accents. The second part of the theme has a descending whole-tone scale with a diminuendo. The theme has a wide dynamic range from *fff* to *piano*. The contrasted dynamics are also related to a surrealistic feature (Example 3.14).

BENJAMIN LEES
1986

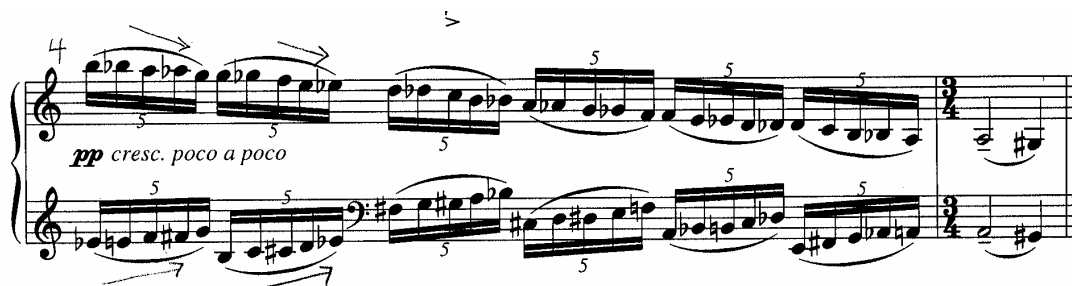
Not too fast ♩ = 92

Piano

The musical score for Example 3.14 is for a piano piece. It begins with a tempo marking 'Not too fast' and a quarter note equal to 92 beats per minute. The score is for a piano, as indicated by the 'Piano' label. The first measure features a triplet of eighth notes with accents, marked with a fortissimo (fff) dynamic and the instruction 'dramatically'. The second measure contains a descending whole-tone scale, marked with a piano (p) dynamic. The score is labeled 'Piano' and includes a 'dramatically' marking.

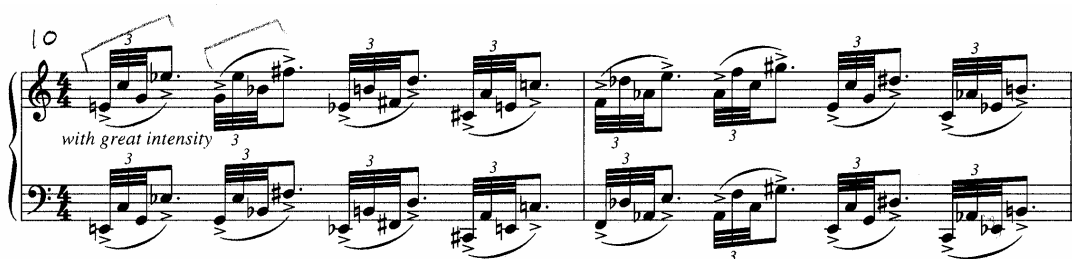
Example 3.14: *Odyssey II*, mm. 1-3

After the first theme, descending chromatic scales appear from the upper register. These scales are generated from the second part of the first theme, descending octave scales. However, both hands play chromatic scales in contrary motion (Example 3.15).



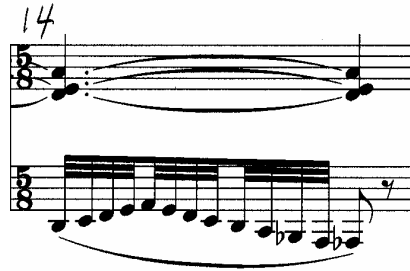
Example 3.15: *Odyssey II*, mm. 4-5

Figure C, leaping triplet chords, is followed by Figure B. The characteristic of Figure C is also rhythmic and harmonic using dissonant minor triad triplets. This creates vertical triads while Figure A and Figure B are linear lines. These three figures frequently appear throughout the piece. From measure 8 to measure 12, Figure A develops extensively. There is a sequence between measure 10 and measure 11 (Example 3.16).



Example 3.16: *Odyssey II*, mm. 10-11

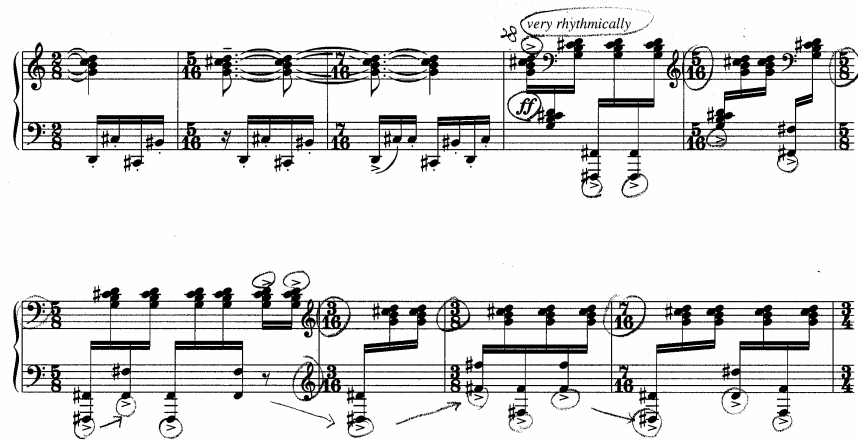
In this section, the left hand frequently plays scales which are from the second part of the theme (Example 3.17).



Example 3.17: *Odyssey II*, m. 14

As mentioned, there are rhythmic patterns in the left hand which prepare the next section.

Section B is percussive, rhythmic and dry, and played without pedal. The tone-clusters, which consist of a major triad and a major second, are repeated throughout the section. This section creates a surrealistic feature using an unexpected rhythm and employment of discomfort in the harmony (Example 3.18).



Example 3.18: *Odyssey II*, mm. 25-33

The left hand plays F sharp consistently in various registers. Accents are irregular, and the meter is changed in each measure.

Section C consists of all figures, which appear in Section A. It begins with Figure A, a duplication of Section A. Lees uses rhythmic diminution in this section. There are two notes, G sharp and F sharp, to prolong a specific rhythmic idea in measure 55. It begins with triplets changes to sixteenth notes, and then proceeds to quintuplets, and finally changes to a trill. This pattern is reminiscent of composition in the Romantic period. Romance Op.118, No. 5 by Johannes Brahms was written in a similar manner (Example 3.19).

mm. 17-18

Allegretto grazioso

molto p e dolce sempre

mm. 25-26

p dolce

mm. 33-34

p leggiero

Example 3.19: Brahms, *Klavierstücke*, Op. 118, no. 5,
Romance, mm. 17-18, 25-26 and 33-34

Lees uses Figure B, which is a descending scale, in measure 60 and measure 64. This time, however, two hands play alternately, creating an ascending chromatic line. Moreover, Figure B appears in measure 68 to measure 70, using a descending scale. In this case, Lees emphasizes every first eighth note throughout each measure.

Figure C appears in measure 60 and 64 and is combined with Figure B, which ornaments the note "E" (Example 3.20).



Example 3.20: *Odyssey II*, mm. 58-66

From measure 71, the right hand plays an ostinato, which appears in the next section in the left hand. This phrase is a preparation for Section D.

Section D is subdivided into two parts. One is from measure 75 to measure 88, and the other is from measure 89 to measure 177. In the first part of this section, there is an ostinato, emphasizing the minor second (Example 3.21).

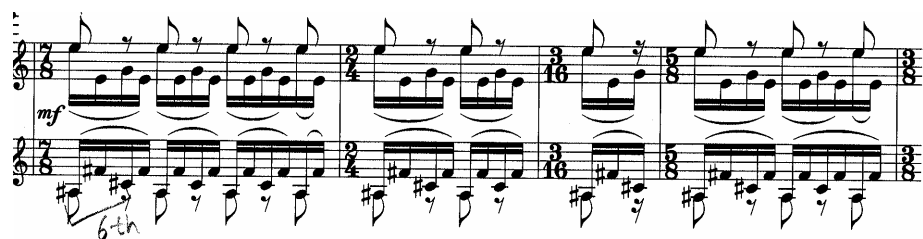


Example 3.21: *Odyssey II*, mm. 75-79

This ostinato figure was introduced at the end of the previous section in the right hand, in measure 71 to measure 74. This figure moves within a narrow range. A rhythmically simple right hand melody made of tied quarter notes or dotted quarter notes is accompanied by the rhythmical ostinato left hand. The ostinato grows from one voice to octave unisons and it becomes dyad of the interval sixths. These sixths prepare the next part which begins with the same interval.

The second part of Section D is the longest in the piece. The concept is minimalist, based on repeated melodic sixth intervals and repeated broken chords. This minimalist section is related to a surrealistic feature to

create a fantastic sound as I mentioned in Chapter 2
(Example 3.22).



Example 3.22: *Odyssey II*, mm. 127-130

The left hand repeats the same interval of a sixth while the right hand plays repeated broken triads with moving top notes. The top notes present the melody, a descending scale derived from Figure D. The meter frequently changes and the tempo is faster. Figure C, a large chord, often appears between each minimalist phrase (Example 3.23).



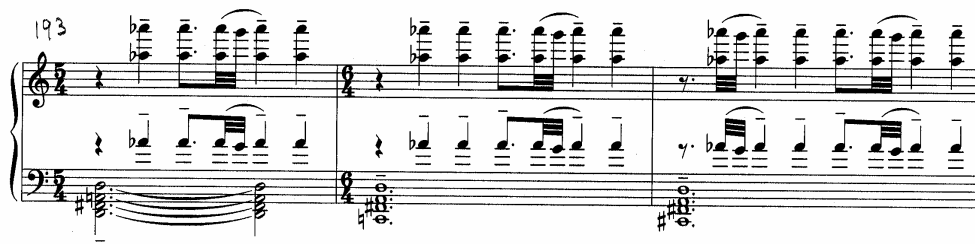
Example 3.23: *Odyssey II*, mm. 136-137

In Section E another rhythmic motive (Figure D) appears, and it is developed and prolonged. For example, throughout measures 178-182, Figure D is repeated and connected with sixteenth notes which are in octave unison, using the interval of a major seventh (Example 3.24).



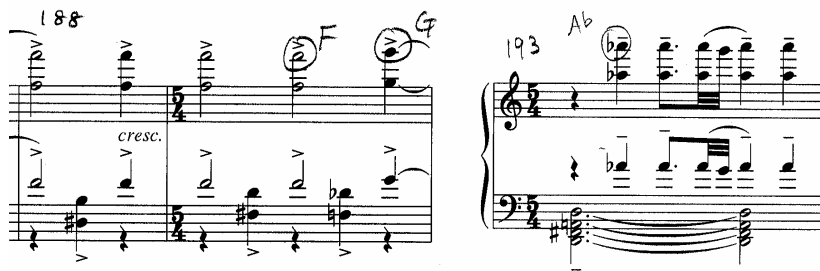
Example 3.24: *Odyssey II*, mm. 178-181

In addition, from measure 193 to measure 200, there is a march-like theme which sounds like a fanfare by using a long pedal point and repeated steady rhythm in the high register (Example 3.25).



Example 3.25: *Odyssey II*, mm. 193-195

The repeated fanfare note goes up to the high point, F and G and Figure B, which is a scale mode (Example 3.26).



Example 3.26: *Odyssey II*, mm. 188-193

The fanfare changes to a sixteenth note, and it descends to finish this section at measure 200. It provides a flexible mood using *ritardando* and holding note F in both hands.

Section F consists of three parts. The first part is measure 201 to measure 218, the second part is from measure 219 to measure 234 and the last part is from measure 235 to

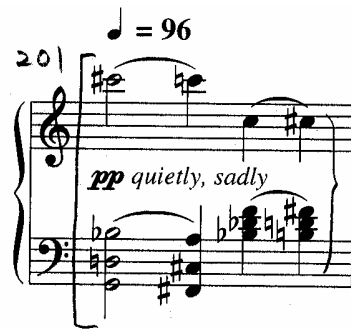
measure 250. The first part of Section F is somewhat different from the entire piece. This section is very *quiet, even sad*, as Lees mentioned. The range is wide between the first two notes and the last two notes in each measure (Example 3.27).



Example 3.27: *Odyssey II*, mm. 201-205

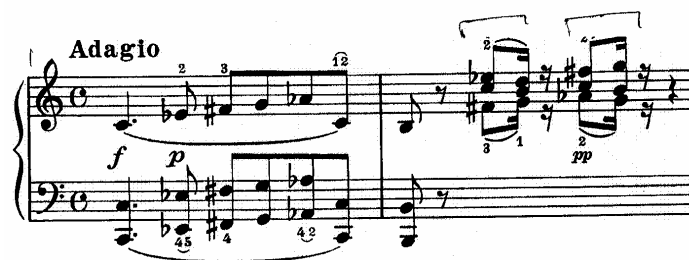
It emphasizes the use of minor seconds in the right hand, while the left hand plays minor triads in alternating closed and open position.

The first minor second phrase in measure 201 plays in the upper register in the right hand and the lower for the left hand, while the rest of the notes are played in the middle register (Example 3.28).



Example 3.28: Odyssey II, m. 201

The first two-note phrase suggests a feeling of sighing. The following slur creates an echo-like feeling. This effect is related to the concept of the Classic period. Wolfgang A. Mozart used a sigh-phrase, which consists of two notes, a device that was common in that period (Example 3.29).



Example 3.29: Mozart, *Fantasie* K V 475, mm. 1-2

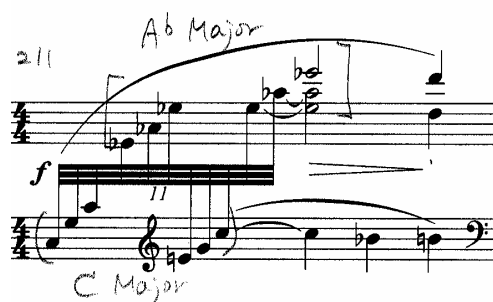
This two-note phrase is decorated in several ways. First, thirty-second notes are added in measure 207 to measure 209 (Example 3.30).



Example 3.30: *Odyssey II*, mm. 207-209

Additionally, the phrase uses an arpeggio in measure 211 to measure 213 and measure in 216. This arpeggio shows a poly-chord, which uses two different chords, C major and A flat major, producing a harp-like sound (Example 3.31).

m. 211

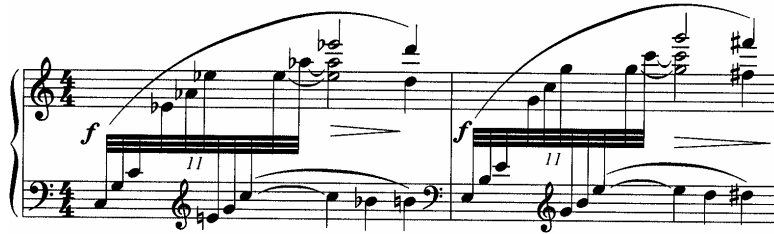


Example 3.31: *Odyssey II*, m. 211, mm. 213-214

Continued

Example 3.31 continued

mm. 213-214



While the sigh-phrase is decorated with arpeggiation, tentuplets appear in the echo phrase (Example 3.32).

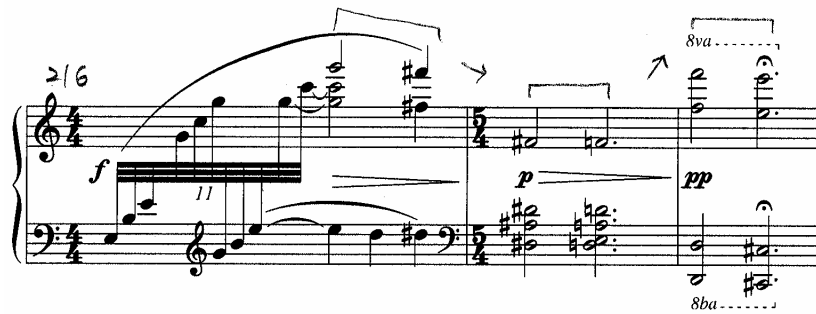


Example 3.32: *Odyssey II*, m. 212

Tentuplets consist of the trill motive and the chromatic scale.

In the last three measures in this part of Section F, the two note phrase appears in three different registers.

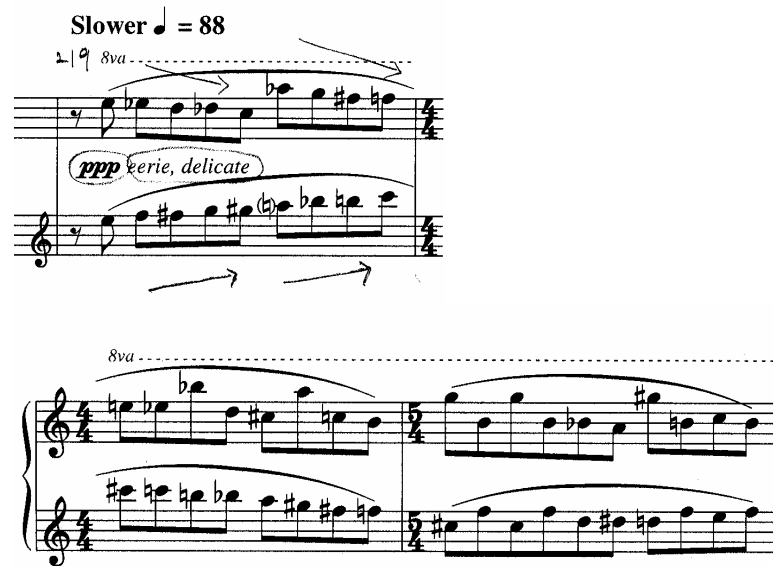
The first phrase, measure 216, is in a high register, the second phrase is in the middle register, the last phrase is in the top register for the right hand and the very low bass for the left hand (Example 3.33).



Example 3.33: *Odyssey II*, mm. 216-218

Each phrase descends dynamically from *f* to *pp*.

As shown in Example 3.34, the second part of Section F consists of two chromatic lines in the opposite direction. In m. 219, the right hand shows a descending line and the left hand plays an ascending line with a delicate sound.



Example 3.34: *Odyssey II*, mm. 219-221

This part is very quiet and delicate. Lees also uses intervals of a minor second in measure 233 to measure 234, and a major seventh in measure 223 to measure 228.

The third part of Section F consists mostly of triplets in one voice. It is interesting that Lees uses rhythmic diminution here again, as he did in Section A. The difference is that in Section F Lees uses this rhythmic idea as a structural concept while in Section A he focuses on the tempo, using repeated notes. For example, he writes duple eighth notes in measure 219 to measure 234, changing to triplets from measure 235 to measure 247, and then to

thirty-second notes in measure 248 to measure 249 (Example 3.35).

m. 219



mm. 235-236



m. 248



Example 3.35: *Odyssey II*, m. 219, mm. 235-236 and

m. 248

The tempo is also faster with progressing rhythms, but the most important feature is that the rhythmic diminution that serves as a preparation to the concluding Section A'. In measure 250, the duple sixteenth notes explain this arch-like rhythmic structure employing a slower tempo.

Here, a voice moves in a narrow range with alternations between the right and the left hands. This one-voice melody ascends to the climax, which appears in octave unisons instead of a single line in measure 246 (Example 3.36).

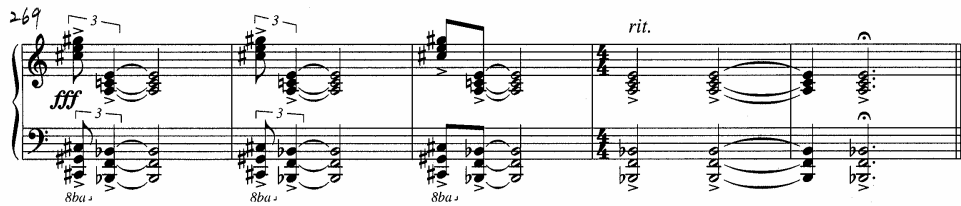


Example 3.36: *Odyssey II*, m. 246

After the climax in Figure B, the chromatic scales, which are in the first note of the each beat, descend.

Section A' is very similar to Section A, using Figures A, B, and C. As previously noted, it is common for Lees to

complete a section in the same manner as he begins. To conclude this piece, Figure C appears three times and three chords are repeated (Example 3.37).



Example 3.37: *Odyssey II*, mm. 269-273

This is related to the use of perfect fifths and minor triads creating a very dramatic and powerful ending.

CHAPTER 4

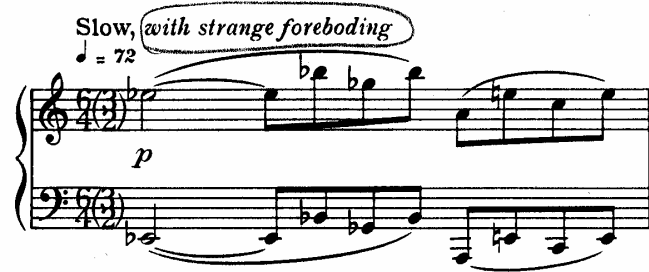
PERFORMANCE GUIDELINE FOR *ODYSSEY I* AND *II*

4.1 Performance Guideline for *Odyssey I*

An important and perhaps, essential element of every performer's interpretation is understanding the composer's intent. Aaron Copland says about Lees, "he gives us himself."³² Lees helps by inserting expression marks, such as *strange*, *dark*, *mysterious* and *calm* (See Example 4.1). It is the performer's task to understand these markings in relationship to the score and communicate them effectively.

³² Aaron Copland, *What to Listen For in Music* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1957), 158.

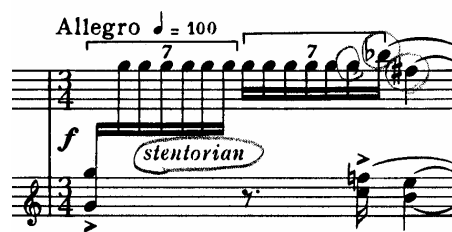
m. 1



m. 7



m. 25



Example 4.1: Lees' unique expression markings are demonstrated on the score in *Odyssey I*, m. 1, 7, 25, 59, 106 and 137

Continued

Example 4.1 continued

m. 59



m. 106



m. 137

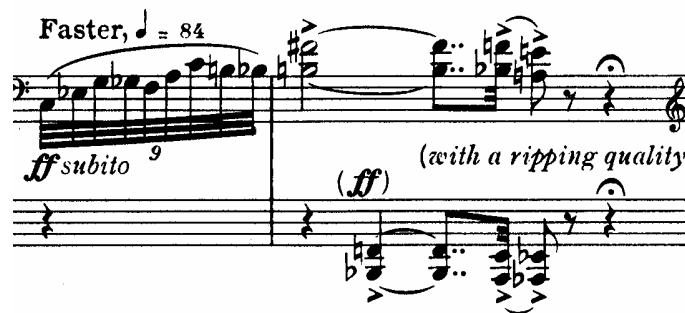


It is helpful for the performer to detect, understand and interpret the surrealistic features in *Odyssey I* and *II* as I mentioned in Chapter II. There are two themes which have very different characteristics in this piece. The first theme is quiet, slow and rhythmically steady contrasting with the second theme which is intense, fast and rhythmically varied using nontuplets, dotted notes and thirty-second notes. Therefore, performers need to play each theme according to its distinct characteristic. The first theme is stable while the second theme is movable. Additionally, the mood of the first theme is *quiet and strange*, as Lees specifies with a nervous quality. Performers can depict this mysterious mood by depressing the *una coda* pedal to mute the sound while emphasizing the left hand for a darker quality.

It should be felt as one large phrase even though there are five slurs indicated. To achieve legato playing for one large phrase, I suggest holding the damper pedal much longer on the fourth note of each group. For example, B flat in measure 1 is the last note of the first group. The reach between B flat which is the last note of the first group and A which is the first note of the next group is difficult to complete. Therefore, B flat needs to

sustain until the next note is played (See Example 4.1, m.1).

In contrast, the second theme is rhythmically active with strong accents. It creates a short and storm-like effect. This unexpected theme creates a surrealistic mood. Rather than using the indicated dynamic marking, *fff subito*, one can start at the lower dynamic of *f* and then make a crescendo toward F sharp. To express more dramatic sound, Figure B needs to go to note F sharp and E with a staccato attack. Physically, performers could redistribute notes to better achieve the rapidity of these nontuplets as I mentioned in Chapter 3 (Example 4.2).



Example 4.2: *Odyssey I*, mm. 3-4

However, if this passage is redistributed it needs to sound as one voice. To create a powerful sound in a slur

which is marked as a *subito ff*, the left hand can help the right hand by playing the first several notes. Moreover, these nontuplets, which require a fast attack employing wrist rotation, should be played directly to the next half note without any hesitation. Maintaining strict rhythm is also important in playing this theme. In measure 4, Lees writes *with a ripping quality*, for the short thirty-second and the eighth notes. He often writes such descriptions in his compositions.

The alternation of relaxation (the first theme) and tension (the second theme) is important in this piece. Two contrasted themes frequently occur throughout the piece, thus one can immediately change mood both musically and technically.

Throughout measures 9-15, there is a development with canonic ideas that is shared with the right and left hands (Example 4.3).

poco a poco accel.

mp ff *(ff)*

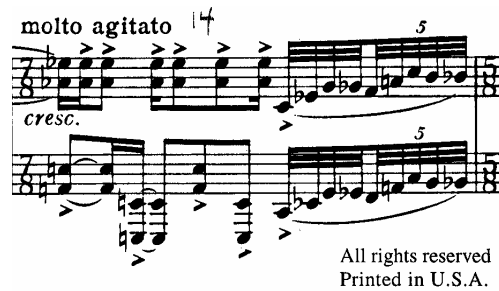
poco a poco cresc. *molto agitato*

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Example 4.3: *Odissey I*, mm. 10-14

In measures 10-11, there are chromatically descending motions using open fifth between both hands, creating dissonant and percussive sounds. Rhythmic diminution with frequent meter changes occurs in a faster tempo. In this exciting moment, a performer would be wise to carefully plan how to arrive at the climax. Starting with a moderate dynamic gives more opportunity to develop an idea dramatically. One should relax the body, especially the shoulders and arms. For the fast rhythmic septuplets and nontuplets, it is important to employ wrist rotation. To emphasize this rhythmic diminution, I suggest playing accents for each E flat in the right hand in measures 12-14; E flat becomes shorter such as a dotted quarter note to a quarter note to an eighth note (See Example 4.3).

The animated canonic passage finishes with the final octave statement in measure 14 (Example 4.4).



Example 4.4: *Odysseus I*, m. 14

This unison is the final statement between alternating hands. Figure B shows four times in one voice in measures 11 to 14, and it becomes a unison for both hands in measure 14; therefore, the last unison needs to play aggressively and frantically to finish the phrase. In order to best achieve the necessary intensity, I suggest emphasizing the left hand, which can produce a dark sound. Frequently, the right hand plays slightly faster than the left hand in a unison scale, creating a disjunctive sound. The solution for this problem is to concentrate on listening to the left hand while playing the right hand.

From measure 16 to measure 20, it is important to use controlled pedaling. I suggest a half pedal for greater

clarity. The pedal is sustained from the last note of measure 15, and the first theme appears above this sustained-chord in measure 17 (Example 4.5).

2

Example 4.5: *Odyssey I*, mm. 15-18

Pedaling is difficult in this passage. As the first theme re-enters at a *p* dynamic level, the pedal must continue to hold the *fff* last note of the previous phrase. Therefore, the performer should change to a half pedal while holding the note in measure 16. One could release the sustaining pedal very slowly, leaving the pedal half depressed during measure 16. In this method, the first theme reappears with a deep and dark quality. Moreover, in measure 17 to measure 20, this phrase is played using the entire range of the keyboard. For example, from measure 17 to measure 18,

the theme is in the upper register. Next, the two notes of melody are in the middle register, while the next part is in the lowest register (Example 4.6).

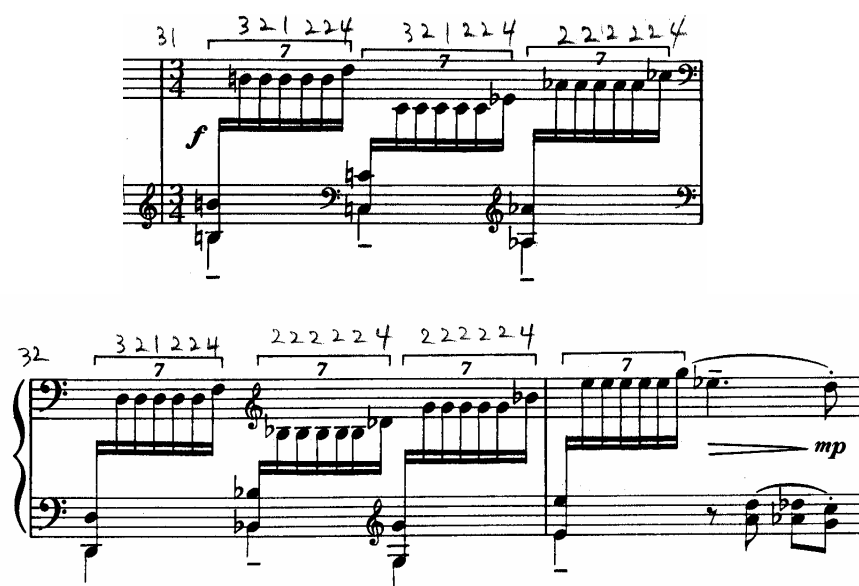
2

Example 4.6: *Odyssey I*, mm. 15-21

One should strive to play this as one phrase to create a continuous melody even though there are three contrasting registers.

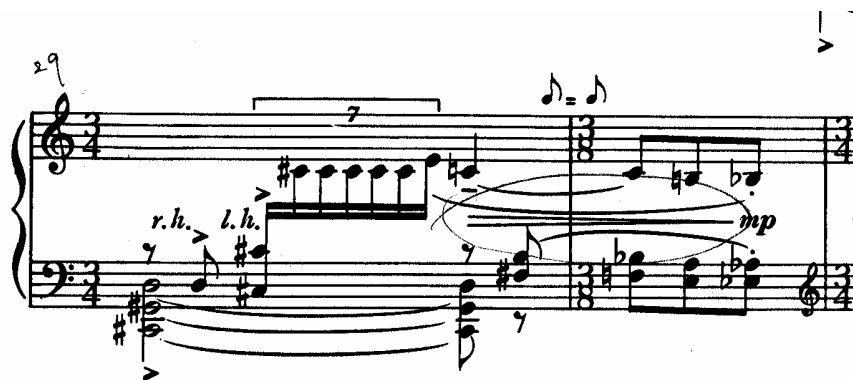
Section B is one of the most technically challenging parts in this piece because it consists of repeated notes in a fast tempo. Lees often uses septuplets to present repeated notes in this section. One of his important compositional techniques is his use of rhythm.

At this tempo repeated notes are a challenge, therefore, fingering is important. Usually, it is easier to play with alternating fingers, such as 3-2-1 rather than using the same finger. However, there are some difficulties in using alternating fingering. Firstly, these repeated notes are a part of the melody, which is usually located in the last note, thus, the last note should be heard clearly. For this reason, the 3-2-1 alternating fingering pattern is frequently omitted. Secondly, the intervallic range is wide here so performers often shift their body weight from side to side. This also hinders the alternating fingering pattern. Thirdly, repeated notes are located not only on white keys, but black keys. An alternating fingering pattern is more difficult to play because black keys are narrower. Fingers tend to slip and touch neighboring keys while alternating 3-2-1. I suggest alternating between same-finger repetition and alternating-finger repetition. For example, from measures 31-32, play the first white key septuplets with 3-2-1-2-2-4. The last note is part of the melody (Example 4.7).



Example 4.7: *Odyssey I*, mm. 31-33

However, the last septuplets in measure 31 should be played with a 2-2-2-2-2-4 pattern because it is on the black key, continuing with 3-2-1-2-2-4, 2-2-2-2-2-4, and 2-2-2-2-2-4 in measure 32. Use a one-finger repetition pattern on the last septuplet group. Because the melody ascends to the upper register, the body moves from the left side to the right side and there is not enough time to use an alternating finger pattern. Expressing the melodic line as well as addressing the technical issue in this passage is critical. Make a phrase from repeated notes to descending eighths while diminishing the dynamic level (Example 4.8).



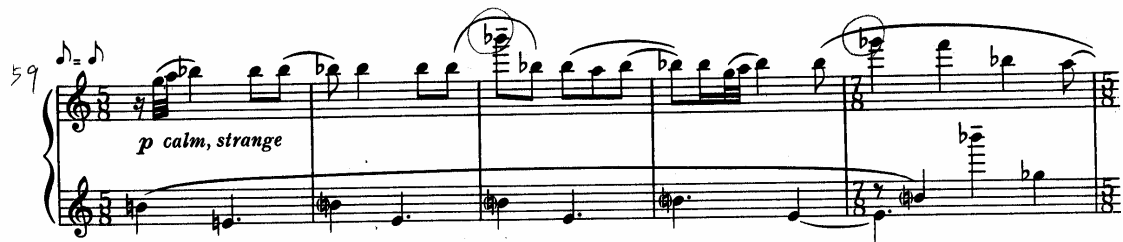
Example 4.8: *Odyssey I*, mm. 29-30

In Section B, finger independence and greater use of the wrist is required to achieve consistency in these repeated notes. Relaxation of shoulders and arms is also important in Section B. In particular, throughout measures 43-48, there are thick chords in the left hand, and these need to be played using the weight of the whole arm while the right hand plays septuplets with active fingers and wrist, employing minimal arm weight.

In contrast, Section C requires a very delicate and light fingertip touch. Lees writes *calm, strange*, so one should follow his direction and create an effective mood. In a contradiction of sorts, this part feels not only peaceful but also nervous due to the use of tritones and minor seconds. Creating a sparkling tone on the high B

flat will give a shiny sound to the cozy mood created in this passage (Example 4.9).

5



Example 4.9: *Odyssey I*, mm. 59-63

This section also requires the use of independent fingers. In measure 63, the left hand should play without accent when it crosses over the right hand (Example 4.9 and 4.10).

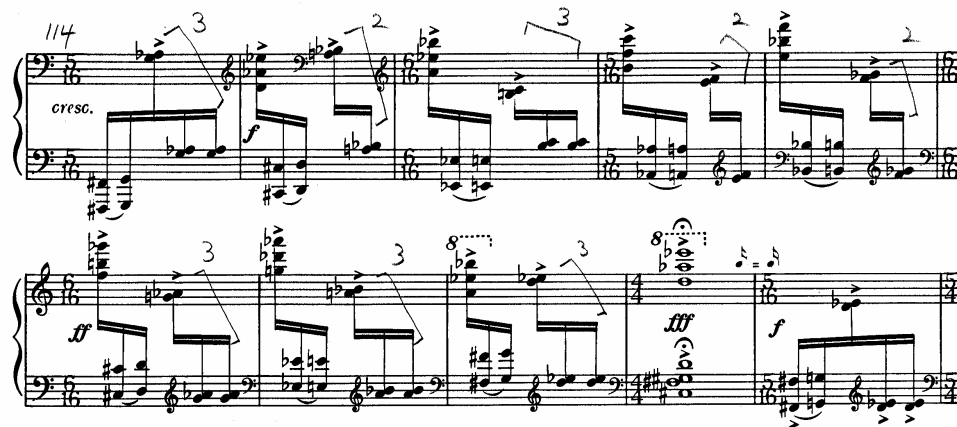


Example 4.10: *Odyssey I*, mm. 64-67

The second part of Section C is also technically challenging for pianists. This agitated storm-like section should be played dramatically and excitedly with an

accented octave pattern. Since the range is wide, the body moves with the direction of the phrase.

There is a long dramatic phrase from measure 116 to measure 123. A melody is located at the top of each ninth chord found on the first beat of every measure. It is important to arrange rhythmic groups which are 3-2-3-2-2, etc. because the meter frequently changes and the accents are irregular (Example 4.11).



Example 4.11: *Odyssey I*, mm. 114-123

This phrase keeps building tension steadily while maintaining the tempo so that the final note comes as a dramatic relief. To help with accuracy, the right hand should play intervallic positions which keep the same shape for wide chords. Having the left hand play the last note

of each measure gives the right hand time to prepare for the next chord.

It may be difficult to play a ninth chord if one's hands cannot reach this interval. Suggestions include: First, play a minor second instead of minor ninth. That means the lower note could play an octave higher. Second, use a quick *glissando* for a ninth chord. Third, the left hand could help by playing the lower note of a ninth chord. I prefer the first solution because the tempo is so fast in this section.

For the climatic chord in measure 122, use full body-weight to press the wide chord with flat fingers. This process will produce a magnificent sound because the range is wide and the dynamic is *fff*. It could be played at a slower tempo than the previous measure.

Section D, is a minimalist type passage that should be played very clearly and delicately with finger independence. Since it is written *marcato*, one needs to play non-legato in a fast tempo without accents in the high register. The body should move to the right to play evenly with relaxation. The right hand top note, from measure 159 to measure 160 should be played clearly and should crescendo to a climax in this section. The fifth finger of

the right hand needs to voice the upper voice while the remainder of notes are played quietly, thus making a clear and sparkling melody (Example 4.12).



Example 4.12: Odyssey I, mm. 159-161

The phrase in measures 180-184 functions in two ways; to finish the consistent rhythm passage and to prepare for the return of the A' section. It is common for Lees to return to the beginning at the last section. This allows for a calm and restful ending. The cluster chord in the right hand needs intensity and depth of sound to sustain longer. The left hand needs a focused sound because it is in a very low register. In measure 184, there is no note in this measure, only a rest. However, this rest is still a part of the end of Section D, so I suggest respecting this silence (Example 4.13).



Example 4.13: *Odyssey I*, mm. 180-186

In Section A', harsh tone-clusters appear three times and need to be played as Lees indicates in the score, "Palmclusters, as many black and white notes to the pressed as possible." The challenge here is to play this large cluster with great power.

The range is very wide; the right hand plays in the upper register while the left hand plays in the very low register, the dynamic indication *fff subito*. To accomplish this, the body should maintain a balanced center of gravity.

The last cluster chord, which is firm and grand, is played by palms of the hands. One should continue to sustain the last chord with the keys depressed.

This piece is very challenging to a pianist because it requires not only a thorough understanding of Lees' keyboard style but also the ability to realize all the technical and musical demands.

4.2 Performers Guideline for *Odyssey II*

Lees comments, "I think the big difference between *Odyssey I* and *II* is that *II* is more dramatic in scope and feeling and somewhat more complex in harmonic structure."³³ He also points out in the program notes of *Odyssey II*, "Again, a feeling of journeying through some strange landscape. This time, however, the emphasis is on ornamented figurations, dramatic outbursts alternating with calmer sections."³⁴

I find *Odyssey I* and *II* are both challenging pieces for a pianist both technically and musically. Compared to *Odyssey I*, *Odyssey II* is broader and more decorative using dynamics in wide ranges. The beginning of *Odyssey II* starts with triplets in *ff* to create drama, compared to *Odyssey I*, which starts quietly with simple quarter notes. However,

³³ Email from Lees.

³⁴ Lees, i.

Odyssey II has similar characters in rhythm, harmony and form as with *Odyssey I*. There are several characteristics in each section that present a distinguishing idea; dramatic, delicate, brilliant, sorrowful, peaceful, magnificent, etc.

Like *Odyssey I*, it is important to interpret specific characteristics according to Lees' suggestions, and indications (Example 4.14).

m. 1



m. 10



m. 28



Example 4.14: *Odyssey II*, m. 1, 10, 28, 67, 84, 201,
219 and 250

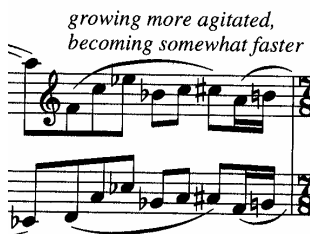
Continued

Example 4.14 continued

m. 67



m. 84



m. 201



m. 219



m. 250



In Section A, the piece begins with an octave unison marked *fff*, using a rhythmic motive, Figure A. Lees marks the score "dramatically," thus, performers should clearly

make two accents, on the first and the fourth beats as written, and play with a forceful tone. Figure A uses octave unisons of a descending scale to emphasize intervals of a major seventh and a tritone. Figure A is connected to Figure B, a descending motion; therefore, a diminuendo to *piano* in this descending scale is necessary in measure 2. It is important to decrescendo from *fff* to *piano* in one measure, utilizing strict dynamic control of each note realizing *ff*, *f*, *mf*, *mp*, *p*. On the other hand, there is a very delicate chromatic scale in measure 4, requiring a sensitive and light touch. One should use a blurred pedal effect to create a mysterious sound. As this passage also has a big crescendo, one should start very softly and gradually play louder.

In measures 6-7, Figure C consisting of two chords, is played at a forte level. This figure is harmonic while Figure A is rhythmic and Figure B is melodic. One should prepare intervallic finger positions for both hands in the early stages of practice so as to be able to move in a wide range. For this phrase, it helps to feel hand positions of intervals of a fifth to easily anticipate the next chords.

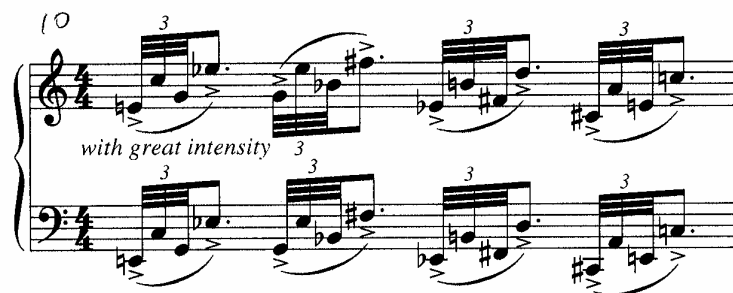
Throughout measures 8-12, Figure A develops rhythmically in sequence, so it is important to keep even

rhythmic patterns while maintaining intensity. Employ rotation of the wrist. Lees frequently writes octave unison phrases to emphasize a rhythmic motive. These unison phrases provide a dramatic mood so one should concentrate on a rhythmic idea (Example 4.15).

m. 1



m. 10



Example 4.15: *Odyssey II*, m. 1, 8, 196 and mm. 249-250

Continued

Example 4.15 continued

m. 196



mm. 249-250



Section B needs to sound percussive. Play accents clearly and produce a dry sound without pedal. Meters and accents are frequently changed in this section, thus, one should plan to play accented F sharps according to the ascending line which is located in the left hand. Additionally, it is important to produce a sharp and crisp sound to make the passage effective. To achieve this sound,

I suggest focusing on a rhythmic shape with accents. For example, in measures 28-31, the meter changes from 7/16, 5/16 and 5/8. The group of 16th notes should be grouped into patterns of 3-2-2, 3-2, 2-2-3-3, and 3 (Example 4.16).



Example 4.16: *Odyssey II*, mm. 28-32

In addition, this section needs a very percussive and dry sound because it consists of mostly rhythmic elements. The cluster chords in the right hand and the F sharp which appears consistently in the bass create a frightening aura. This unexpected rhythm and interval are also related to a surrealistic feature. It creates an effect as if glass windows are breaking. It is best to maintain a consistent

pulse even though there are constant meter changes. It should be played as steadily as possible to avoid breaking the rhythmic pattern. One should be prepared for sudden body shifts because the range is wide and it changes frequently. The torso should move with the direction of the musical passage and the shoulders and arms should be flexible. The cluster is almost in the same hand position, so it is important for each hand to keep the same finger arrangement of intervals even though the range changes often. I find it helpful to think orchestrally to depict the variety of colors and moods as suggested by the score.

In the first part of Section D, the left hand plays an ostinato, which consists of two minor second notes. The left hand should maintain a steady tempo against the right hand that plays a melody with a different rhythm. It is important to avoid accents in the ostinato. A similar compositional technique is used in Etude Fantasy No. 5 by John Corigliano (see Example 4.17). Corigliano uses a two-note minor third ostinato.

Odyssey II, mm. 75-79



Corigliano, *Etude Fantasy*, No. 5, mm. 1-4

Etude N° 5: Melody
Adagio ♩ = 50

pp legato and even
con pedale

p *desolate (pp)*

pp *l.h.* *r.h.*

Example 4.17: *Odyssey II*, mm. 75-79

Corigliano, *Etude Fantasy*, No. 5: Melody, mm. 1-4

The second part of Section D sounds both delicate and tasteful because of minimalist sounds. To make an effective sound, the fingers of both hands need to touch the keys quickly, *staccato*, while being attentive to the sound of each individual note. Consistency of touch is important. Additionally, these groups of sixteenth notes should be played evenly to avoid an unexpected accent. One should strive for a sparking quality of sound in the ascending scale passage in measure 101. It helps to emphasize the first sixteenth note of each group while playing the other notes more softly (Example 4.18).



Example 4.18: *Odyssey II*, mm. 100-103

In general, it is important to keep the rhythmic pulse steady in this part. One should play with *legato* finger-independence and use rotation of the wrist. In addition, shoulders and arms should be relaxed to avoid tension in this section.

Throughout measures 151-161, the left hand plays a rhythmic melody, crossing over the right hand while the right hand plays repeated patterns. Clarity is needed in this passage. This rhythmic motive uses a thirty-second note, and the left hand would benefit from well-round fingers using a re-bounding motion when it crosses over the right hand (Example 4.19).



Example 4.19: *Odyssey II*, mm. 151-157

There are spontaneous and dramatic passages using *subito ff* in Section E. Imagine a fanfare-like sound here. In order to achieve that, fingers should be shaped to reach an octave. Moreover, the pedal must be depressed from the first note, which is the bottom note of the left hand, to

maintain the bass line. Although each measure repeats the same rhythmic and harmonic pattern from measure 190 to measure 195, the performer should strive to make a long phrase without breaking the line.

To create a powerful sonority in this section, it is best to keep body movement still while playing with relaxed shoulders, arms, and hands. In particular, for the fanfare-like sound, try to imagine the sound of a brass instrument such as a trumpet. After playing the last note in each measure, a rebounding-motion of the arms is recommended to create a more ringing sound in measure 190 to measure 195.

The fast, forte, unison sixteenth notes in measure 196 present a great difficulty. It is essential to play all of these notes evenly in one phrase. The beginning of the phrase could start with a slower tempo and *accelerando*. This creates a dramatic effect. Because it is descending, the body should follow the hand and move to the left side. Additionally, shoulders and arms should be flexible as the repeated motion may cause tension. The choice of fingering is important in enabling the performer to play this difficult passage with comfort. Fingering, such as 5-4-2-1

for the right hand, 1-2-5-4 for the left hand is suggested (Example 4.20).



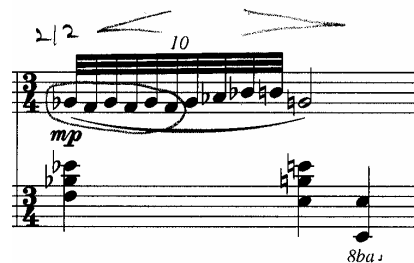
Example 4.20: *Odyssey II*, mm. 196-197

In the first part of Section F, *slow and quiet*, the biggest challenge is tone production. Following Lees' indication of "sadly," this section should be emotional and sorrowful. The *una coda* pedal is recommended for the first six measures, and fingertips should be very delicate with the wrist using a down-up motion for each slur to create a sigh-like effect. I suggest making a diminuendo in each slur (Example 4.21).



Example 4.21: *Odyssey II*, mm. 201-205

At measure 212, there is a combination of tentuplets between trills and scales. Start a trill under tempo and increase the tempo. This is divided into two groups; the first six notes like a trill, and the moving four notes. I suggest making a crescendo for the first group and making a slight diminuendo for the second group (Example 4.22).



Example 4.22: *Odyssey II*, m. 212

There is a decorative phrase throughout measures 201-216. It starts with a simple rhythm and becomes more

complicated, however, the basic figure, which consists of a half note and a quarter note, remains the same (Example 4.23).

m. 201



m. 207

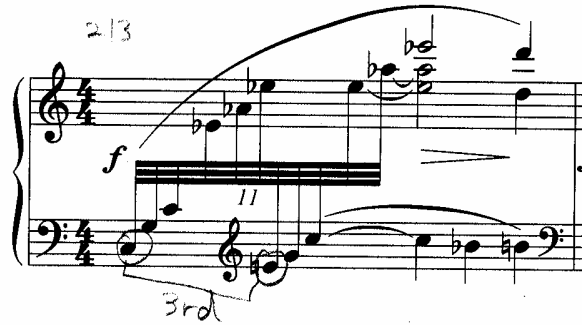


Example 4.23: *Odyssey II*, m. 201, 207 and 213

Continued

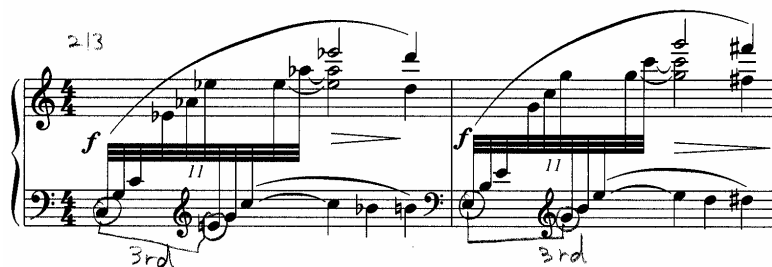
Example 4.23 continued

m. 213



One can make a grand crescendo at measures 213-214 and I suggest shifting the body-weight to the right side because this passage ascends from the lower to the higher registers. This passage creates a wave-sound (See Example 4.24). Corigliano also writes a similar decorative phrase in his *Etude Fantasy No. 4* (Example 4.24).

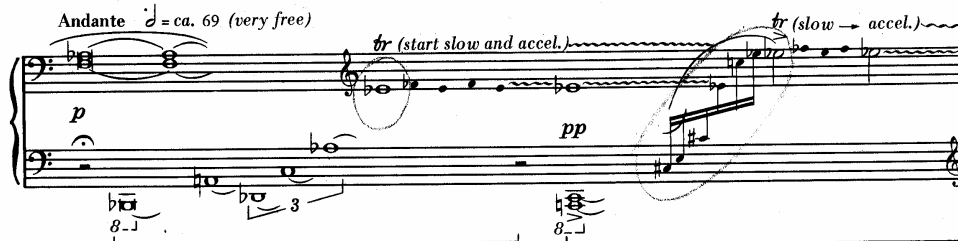
Odyssey II, mm. 213-214



Etude Fantasy No. 4, m. 1

Etude N°4: Ornaments

Andante $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 69$ (very free)



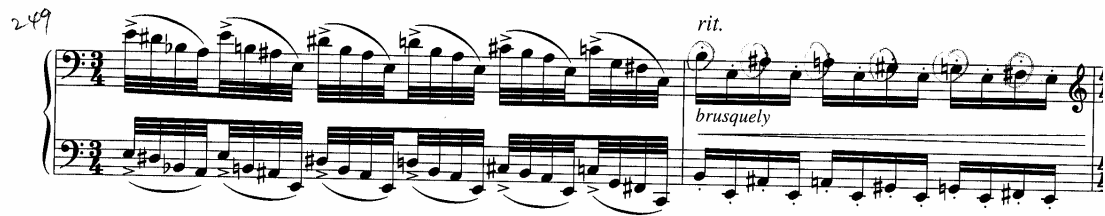
Example 4.24: *Odyssey II*, mm. 213-214

Corigliano, *Etude Fantasy No 4: Ornaments*, m. 1

In the second part of Section F, a delicate sound for both hands is necessary because the registers are so high, and the dynamic is marked *pp*. Each hand plays chromatic scales using contrary motion: the right hand descends while the left hand ascends. This treatment makes this section sound nervous and tense despite the quiet dynamic indication.

Throughout measures 235-250, a brilliant passage in one voice is transformed into an octave-unison. The passage needs to sound as one voice while redistributing, as indicated. Use a down-up wrist motion to connect the passage from one slur to the next.

Clarity and intensity are important in the virtuosic, final large passage in measures 246 to 250. This requires a shift in the body-weight from the right side to the left side because the passage starts from the very high register and moves to the very low register. At measure 250, there is a bridge to Section A'. It is described as *brusquely*, so one should play heavy staccatos, emphasizing the descending line (Example 4.25).



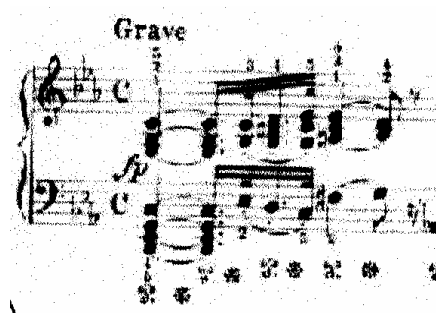
Example 4.25: *Odyssey II*, mm. 249-250

The concluding A' section differs from the opening A section only in the last five measures. From measure 269 to the end, the leaping chord of Figure C appears three times. To create heavy and thunderous sounds, one needs to play the chords with accented and focused arm weight. Although this chord is non-harmonic, it may be compared to the first c minor chord of the first movement of Beethoven's *Pathétique Sonata* for its emotional quality (Example 4.26).

Odyssey II, m. 269



Beethoven, *Sonata Op. 23, no. 8*, m. 1



Example 4.26: *Odyssey II*, m. 269

Beethoven, *Sonata Op. 13, no. 8 in C minor*, m. 1

The last three chords need a thundering quality. As with the end of *Odyssey I*, it is important to maintain a center of gravity in these measures.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In the previous chapters, I analyzed Benjamin Lees' most significant works for solo piano, *Odyssey I* and *II*, and provided approaches to aid in the performance of these pieces. These works are atonal with tonal tendencies. The melodies outline traditional major or minor triads, and the harmonies are also based on the major-minor system. Each section presents its own characteristics and moods, and Lees specifically indicates expression markings in the score. He uses traditional formal structure, which is similar to the sonata-allegro form. He also employs thematic variation based on the initial idea of the piece. *Odyssey I* and *II* present this feature, using themes and figures throughout the pieces.

Besides musical concepts, extra-musical knowledge is also required to understand these pieces. They are influenced by the idea of Surrealism. Lees' subconscious

mind is indirectly reflected in his music. Imagination, expressivity and a sense of agitation are blended in his music. Lees also inserts humorous and sarcastic features in *Odyssey I* and *II*. Therefore, it is helpful for a performer to maintain surrealistic features during the playing, i.e., the use of the unexpected, the element of surprise, sudden changes in dynamics, the use of fantasy, the occasional insertion of humor or sarcasm, and the employment of discomfort.

The title *Odyssey* is named by the composer because the nature of the piece suggests a journey. Lees composed *Odyssey I* in 1970 and *Odyssey II* in 1986. These long intervals of time between two pieces exist in a number of his pieces, so it is not unusual.

Odyssey I and *II* have similar characteristics in terms of rhythm, harmony, intervals and structure. Both works are thematic in nature. The big difference between the two pieces is that *Odyssey II* is more dramatic in scope and feeling than *Odyssey I* and more complex in harmonic structure. In *Odyssey II*, the emphasis is on ornamented figurations using a wide range of dynamics.

Lees' *Odyssey I* and *II* are musically and technically difficult. Virtuoso passages are challenging and require

many pianistic techniques such as octave unisons in rapid tempi, repeated note patterns, thunderous chords and varied, complex rhythms. Moreover, throughout these pieces melodic lines appear in wide ranges of the keyboard and must be played with clarity.

For those pianists interested in performing these works, this document provides an analysis of Lees' compositional style and a clear path to understanding the musical and technical challenges. The author suggests solutions and practice suggestions in the hope of allowing greater accessibility and insight into these wonderfully creative works by one of America's most gifted if not overlooked composers of the twentieth century.

Appendix A

Email correspondence with Benjamin Lees

Nov 3, 2004

1. Why the title "Odyssey?"

Because the nature of the piece suggests a journey. I first wanted to call it a Ballade, but upon further reflection it seemed that Odyssey was a more accurate description.

2. Was there an inspiration to compose these pieces? Did you travel to a specific place?

No, I did not travel to a specific place. I wrote it for my friend John Ogdon, the late British pianist.

3. Why is there a time-gap of 16 years between Odyssey I and II?

These long intervals of time exist in a number of my pieces and are not unusual. For example, String Quartet #2 was written in 1955, while String Quartet #3 was written in 1982.

4. Did you have any influences when composing this music? In my feeling, I found some oriental rhythmic features here. (By the way, I'm from Korea.)

No, I have no conscious influences when writing my compositions. I don't know what oriental rhythmic features sound like.

5. What is the big difference between I and II?

I think the big difference is that No.2 is more dramatic in scope and feeling and somewhat more complex in harmonic structure.

6. Could you recommend books, articles, or a web site that I can read? I've already found two dissertations (Hyungbae Kim, 1981-even though he is a Korean, I don't know him

personally-, and Shirley Westwood, 1980), and some articles by Cooke, Slonimsky and O' Loughlin.

There is a lengthy thesis on my piano works by Joseph Galyon for his D.M.A. from the University of Cincinnati, 2000. Mr. Galyon concentrated on my works for piano and orchestra. You can write to the Division of Research and Advanced Studies of the University of Cincinnati, College-Conservatory of Music, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Finally, I wish you much good luck on your recital in February!

Sincerely,

Benjamin Lees

Nov 22, 2004

How are you?

Recently, I'm studying 'surrealism' to understand your *Odyssey* more.

I met Dr. Lisa Florman, a specialist for surrealism at the School of Art, OSU, and I got an idea about it. I want to ask you whether you wrote *Odyssey* as a surrealist or you used surrealist features, such as fantastic, unexpected, and imaginative.

I employed Surrealist features, i.e., the use of the unexpected, the element of surprise, sudden changes in dynamics, the use of fantasy, the occasional insertion of humor or sarcasm, and the employment of discomfort.

I believe no one, included me, calls you a "surrealist". So may I say you were interested in surrealist features in your *Odyssey*?

It is not so much that I was interested in surrealist features. Rather, these features come about quite naturally in the course of the compositional process.

Moreover, I am planning a performance guideline to be included in my doctoral document. Would you care to make recommendations as to sound, etc...?

The performance guide is quite simple if you read what I just told you about the surrealist elements. If you wish, I can send you a performance CD of Odyssey 1 & 2 and you will understand at once what the guide is. For this I shall need your address.

Sincerely,

Benjamin Lees

I appreciate the time spent in responding to my questions and I look forward to hearing you.

Thank you very much again.

Sincerely, Youmee Kim

Nov 23, 2004

Dear Ms. Kim,

The CD of Odyssey 1 & 2 was mailed to you this morning. I hope you will find it helpful.

Sincerely,

Benjamin Lees

Nov 30, 2004

Dear Ms. Kim,

I am happy that the CD arrived and you found it helpful. Do keep me posted on your progress.

Sincerely,

Benjamin Lees

Appendix B

Catalogue of Benjamin Lees' Piano Music³⁵

Piano Solo

Toccata (1947) 5'

FP: 1947, Private Recital, San Francisco, CA

Fantasia (1954) 7'

FP: 1954, Vienna, Frederick Marvin, piano

Fantasy Variations (1983) 28'

FP: February 1984, 92nd Street Y, New York, Emanuel Ax, piano

Kaleidoscopes (1958) 10'

Ten pieces for piano solo

FP: January 12, 1955, Town Hall, New York, Aurora Mauro-Cottone, piano

Mirrors (1992-2003) 35'

FP: May 17, 1992, Orchestra Hall, Chicago, Illinois, Ian Hobson, piano

Odyssey (1970) 9'

³⁵Benjamin Lees's official Web site, "benjaminlees," <http://www.benjaminlees.com.html> (accessed April 9, 2007).

FP: 1971 US tour John Ogdon

Odyssey II (1986) 10'

FP: May 27, 1992, Merkin Concert Hall, New York, Miriam Conti, piano

Piano Sonata No. 4 (1963) 22'

FP: January 7, 1964, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio, Gary Graffman, piano

Six Ornamental Etudes (1957) 15'

FP: February 16, 1961, Judson Hall, New York, Joseph Bloch, piano

Sonata Breve (1956) 12'

FP: December 9, 1956, Town Hall, New York, Aurora Mauro-Cottone, piano

Three Preludes (1962) 9'

FP: January 14, 1963 Town Hall, New York, Joseph Bloch, piano

For Two Pianos

Sonata (1951) 16'

FP: November 5, 1952, McMillan Hall, Columbia University, New York, William Masselos and Irene Rosenberg, pianos

Tableau (2003) 10-11'

FP: August 9, 2003, Nashville Tennessee, Nathan Smith and Janet Fetterman, pianos

Works for Piano and Orchestra

***Double Concerto for Piano, Cello, and Orchestra* (1982) 20'**

FP: November 7, 1982, Carnegie Hall, New York, Harry Clark, cello; Sanda Schuldmann, piano; American Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sergiu Comissiona

***Etudes for Piano and Orchestra* (1974) 20'**

FP: October 28, 1974, Jones Hall, Houston, Texas, James Dick, piano; Houston Symphony conducted by Lawrence Foster

***Piano Concerto No. 1* (1955) 24'**

FP: April 26, 1956, Grosse Saal, Konzerthaus, Vienna, Austria. Alexander Jenner, piano; Vienna Symphony Orchestra conducted by Charles Adler

***Piano Concerto No. 2* (1966) 25'**

FP: March 15, 1968, Symphony Hall, Boston, Massachusetts, Gary Graffman, piano; Boston Symphony Orchestra conducted by Erich Leinsdorf

***Variations for Piano and Orchestra* (1976) 18'**

FP: March 31, 1976, Music Hall, Dallas, Texas, Eugene List, piano; Dallas Symphony Orchestra conducted by Louis Lane

Chamber Music

***Contours* (1994) 10'**

for piano, violin, cello, clarinet and French horn

FP: November 12, 1994, Sea Cliff Theater, Sea Cliff, Long Island, New York. Long Island Sea Cliff Chamber Players

clarinet, horn, violin, cello and piano

Dialogue for Cello and Piano (1977) 10'

FP: March 2, 1977, 92nd Street Y, New York, Harry Clark, cello; Sandra Schuldmann, piano

Piano Trio No. 1 (1983) 17'

for piano, violin and cello

FP: September 8, 1983, Williams College, Williamstown, Massachusetts, Williams Trio

Piano Trio No. 2 ("Silent Voices") (1998) 15'

for piano, violin and cello

FP: May 31, 1998, Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington DC, George Marsh, violin; Steven Honigberg, cello; Joseph Holt, piano

Sonata No. 1 (1953) 17'

for violin and piano

FP: February 1953, Brooklyn Museum, Abraham Shevelov, violin; Ruth Bromberg, piano

Sonata No. 2 (1972) 22'

for violin and piano

FP: May 4, 1973, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, Rafael Druian, violin; Ilse von Alpenheim, piano

Sonata No. 3 (1991) 19'

for violin and piano

FP: November 12, 1991, The Green Room, Veteran's War Memorial, San Francisco, California, Daniel Kobialka, violin; Machiko Kobialka, piano

Tapestry (2003) 17'

for flute, B-flat clarinet, cello and piano

FP: April 27, 2004, UCLA Faculty Center, Los Angeles, CA,
Mark Carlson, flute; Jerry Gray, clarinet; David Speltz,
cello; Ayke Agus, piano

Three Variables (1955) 9'

for oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, and piano

FP: October 1955, American Embassy, Vienna

Appendix C
Discography

Complete Violin works of Benjamin Lees

Sonatas Nos. 1, 2 & 3 for violin and piano; Invenzione for solo violin

Albany Records Troy 138

Ellen Orner, violin; Joel Wizansky, piano

Works for Piano

Piano Sonata No. 4; Mirrors; Fantasy Variations

Albany Records Troy 227

Ian Hobson, piano

Concerto for French Horn and Orchestra

New World Records 80503-2

Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, Loren Maazel, conductor;
William Caballero, hornist

Violin Sonata #2

Polytone Records 136

Rafael Druian, violin; Ilse von Alpenheim, piano

Concerto for Violin and Orchestra

VoxBox CDX 5158 The American Composers Series

American Symphony Orchestra, Kazuyoshi Akiyama, conductor;
Ruggiero Ricci, violin

Concerto for Violin and Orchestra

EPR-96020

SWF-Sinfonie Orchester, G. Brott, conductor; Ruggiero Ricci,
violin

Prologue, Capriccio and Epilogue

CRI CD-634

Portland Youth Symphony, Jacob Avshalomov, conductor

Symphonies #2, #3 & #5, Etudes for Piano and Orchestra

Albany Records Troy 564/65

Staatsphilharmonie Rheinland-Pfalz, Steven Gunzenhauser,
conductor (Symphonies)

James Dick, piano; Texas Festival Orchestra, Robert Spano,
conductor (Etudes)

Symphony #4 ("Memorial Candles")

NAXOS 8.559002

Ukrainian National Symphony, Theodore Kuchar, conductor;
Kimball Wheeler, mezzo-soprano; James Buswell, violin

Concerto No. 2 for Piano and Orchestra

Albany Records Troy 441

Albany Symphony Orchestra, David Alan Miller, conductor;
Ian Hobson, piano

Concerto No. 1 for Piano and Orchestra

Pierian 0010

National Orchestral Association, John Barnett, conductor;
Joseph Bloch, piano

Piano Trio No. 2 ("Silent Voices")

Albany Records Troy 518 (DARKNESS & LIGHT VOL. 4)

George Marsh, violin; Steven Honigberg, cello; Joseph Holt,
piano

Passacaglia for Orchestra

Delos DE3291 (AMERICAN CONTRASTS)

Oregon Symphony, James DePreist, conductor

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