TURNING POINTS for wind quintet and accordion

By

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Abstract: **Turning Points** for wind quintet and accordion

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The title of the work refers to its frequent changes in style and mood around various points. The rhythmic 'shot' chord which opens the work serves a colotomic function throughout, 'announcing' transitions to new material. A second transitional figure, consisting of a simple trill, functions in a similar way. Thus the work 'turns' throughout the piece to a change, often a striking change. There is also a gradual 'turning' throughout the piece from the dissonant, complex opening to the more consonant, rhythmically simple ending.

Formally the work exhibits an arch-like structure, with shorter sections towards the beginning and end, longer sections towards the middle. These sections are based on units of 45" multiplied by 1, 2, 3, 5 or 8 (these numbers taken from the Fibonacci series) so that the longest (middle) section is 6'00" (8 x 45") long. Many of these divisions are further divided.

Pitch material is almost entirely derived from the 'octatonic' scale, which is occasionally in its scalar form, but most commonly as aggregates from which pitches are chosen freely. There are a variety of chord structures employed, which range from full eight note
aggregates to chords found in functional harmony, especially the 'dominant seventh' sonority. Rhythmically much of the work is concerned with juxtaposing sections which obscure any sense of pulse with sections in which a pulse is obvious.

The element of texture is one of the work's most important aspects. The traditional, contrapuntal approach to wind quintet writing was abandoned in favour of a homogenous treatment. The use of the accordion to blend the colours of the other instruments is an important aspect of the piece.

Stephan Chatman, Thesis Supervisor
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Turning Points
for wind quintet and accordion

Peter Hatch

flute

oboe

clarinet in Bb

french horn

bassoon

accordion

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* as fast as is comfortably possible. Coordination between parts is only approximate.
** fade out, take a quick breath, then fade back in.

dim.  cresc + rit...  accel + dim.  cresc.
ALLEGRO MODERATO \( \frac{d}{104-112} \)

\( \text{switch to oboe} \)

\( \text{switch to Bb clarinet} \)

\( \text{Tempo rubato (solo)} \)
Switch to the flute

(odds and ends if wanted)
MOLTO RALLENTANDO

Trill shall gradually slow down so that just prior to dropping out they are moving at about 8th note speed after 48.
Turning Points: An Analysis

Turning Points for wind quintet and accordion continues compositional thought of mine that began while I was a student at the University of British Columbia with the work Lagtime for solo marimba. The title of the work refers to its frequent changes in style and mood around various points. The rhythmic 'shot' chord which opens the work serves a colotomic function throughout, 'announcing' transitions leading to letters C, K, S, and W. This gestural figure is developed only once—at the accordion solo of letter G. A second transitional figure, consisting of a simple trill, is used leading into letters C, D, E, G, W, and X. This idea is developed at letters C, E, and W. Thus the work 'turns' at these points to a change, often a striking change. There is also a gradual 'turning' throughout the piece from the dissonant, rhythmically complex opening to the more consonant, rhythmically simple ending.

My approach to this work differs from most approaches to writing for the wind quintet. Whereas most composers treat this ensemble in a contrapuntal fashion, emphasizing the diverse timbres of the various instruments, I have tried to create a homogenous treatment, with the instruments often playing in similar ranges and crossing each other's lines. The accordion plays an extremely important role in blending the various timbres of the wind instruments throughout the piece.

A major influence on my writing of this piece and all of my works of the past few years has been the compositions of composer Gyorgy Ligeti, especially his works of the late 1960's—the Chamber Concerto, the Second String
Quartet, Continuum for harpsichord, and the Ten Pieces for Wind Quintet. Ligeti's concept of micropolyphony, his emphasis on texture as a formal determinant, and his use of the octatonic scale are all factors found in his works which I feel have influenced me. Other composers whose influence I see in this work are the Canadians Bruce Mather (particularly his Eine Kleine Bläsermusic for wind quintet) and R. Murray Schafer (particularly his String Quartet No. 2, subtitled 'Waves').

Another extremely important influence on my thinking in this work is my involvement with electro-acoustic music, particularly my work on the POD system at Simon Fraser University. Much of the compositional work done on this system is based on the concept of the 'tendency mask', where the 'tendency' of pitch range, density, dynamics and/or texture to change can be controlled while individual decisions about events are left for the computer to decide. Although there are no random procedures used in Turning Points, the idea of 'tendency to change' pervades my thinking throughout the work. The very opening shows 'masks' of increasing density (accelerandi), while the section beginning at letter A shows a pitch range which spreads out from a unison F to a full one and a half octave 'cluster' chord. Section E consists of a trilling cluster which ascends in pitch range to letter F, there to be joined by a low cluster which gradually ascends until both clusters descend to a unison trill before letter G.

Other influences from electro-acoustic music which can be seen in this work are the use of digital delay—or 'echo'-like effects (seen at letters D and K) and the use of a 'random' scalar line such as at letters H and V. The static 'non-vibrato' lines of letter S are also reminiscent of electro-acoustic music.
Formally, the work reflects and arch-like structure, with shorter sections towards the beginning and end, and longer sections towards the middle. These sections are based on units of 45" multiplied by 1, 2, 3, 5, or 8 (these numbers taken from the Fibonacci series) so that the longest (middle) section is 6'00" (8 x 45") long. These lengths of time are, of course, only approximate, controlled as they are by the performers' tempi. Many of these divisions are further divided. (A chart of the formal layout of the work is given as Example 1.) The transitions to the main sections are much more prominent and sudden than those to the subsections.

There are common references made on either side of the middle section which serve to help bind the work together. There is only one section of music which is directly referred to more than once, this being the trilling section found at letters E and W. Sections of unison writing which feature timbral modulation (a device found in such works as Elliott Carter's *Eight Etudes and a Fantasy* for wind quartet) are found at letters A and S. Another, more transitional figure which is repeated is the 16th note run which appears at both letters H and V. There are pitch references made throughout which form the notes of the octatonic scale, ascending from D to B and descending back to D. The pitch F is prominent at letter A and before letter W, while the pitch B is prominent throughout the section beginning at letter L. In this way the so-called 'false dominant' relationship is created, a device used in many of the works of Bela Bartok. (Example 1) Also important formally are the transitional 'shot' chords and trill figures mentioned earlier to which the title refers. A major concern of the work was that the sections should 'flow' into each other as smoothly as possible.

Pitch material in this piece is almost completely derived from the 'octatonic' scale, which consists of alternating major and minor seconds.
This scale is used occasionally in its scalar form (such as at letter L) but more commonly to form eight-note aggregates from which pitches are chosen freely. As there are three possible non-transposable octatonic scales, a common working method was to use the eight notes of one aggregate, then the eight notes of a second aggregate and finally the eight notes of a third aggregate. This produces a kind of chromatic constellation while maintaining the diatonic 'feel' which the octatonic scale possesses.

Vertically there are a wide variety of chord structures employed which range from full eight note aggregates (such as the opening 'shot' chords and the chord found two measures before letter B) to chords found in functional harmony, such as the 'dominant seventh' (Mm7th) sonorities which end the work. As mentioned earlier, there is a gradual movement from dissonance to consonance in the work.

A number of traditional chord sonorities can be extracted from the octatonic scale, the most obvious being the 'diminished seventh' sonority, formed by every other note in the scale. Two such chords a semitone apart form the complete scale. An example of these two chords juxtaposed ends the work. A half-diminished seventh chord can also be extracted using steps 1, 2, 4 and 6 of the scale. (In this discussion the form of the scale being referred to begins with a major second step.) This chord is used as an important sonority at letter T. The notes which remain in the scale—steps 3, 5, 7 and 8—form the sonority which is most important to the work—that of the 'dominant seventh' chord. This sonority is the basis of the section which begins at letter L, in which it is somewhat clouded by the addition of other notes of the octatonic scale. The final section, at letter X, is based on four dominant seventh chords with roots a minor third apart. These four chords are the possible dominant
seventh chords which can be extracted from an octatonic scale. Thus, letter X is approached by a complete octatonic aggregate divided into four trills which then slow down until X, where each instrument alternates between the two notes on which it had been trilling, forming the above-mentioned dominant seventh chords.

Melody takes on a variety of guises in this work, none of them a traditional approach. At letter C the melody of the clarinet and bassoon is treated heterophonically, while at letter D it is accompanied by 'echoes'—the English horn presenting the melody while the other instruments imitate that melody at slower rhythmic values and at softer dynamic levels. Letter E contains a melody in the horn (marked 'wild and crazy') which is essentially aimless and static. Letter L contains melodic material which develops slightly but is essentially static. Interest in the melodic line in this section is achieved by small variations on the line, changes in orchestration, harmonic changes and a gradual change in the accompaniment from legato to staccato and back to legato.

Rhythmically, much of the work is concerned with textures which obscure any sense of pulse. These sections are juxtaposed with a section beginning at letter K which has an obvious eighth note pulse. The section at E is marked by the indication 'as fast as comfortably possible' for all instruments except the horn, whose melody acts as a cue for the other instruments. A similar section is found at letter W.

The element of texture in the work is one of its most important aspects. As mentioned earlier, the traditional, contrapuntal approach to wind quintet writing was abandoned in favour of a homogenous treatment. Extreme care was taken in choosing the exact range needed from each instrument. The use of
alto flute, Eb clarinet and English horn aided this approach, while the use of the accordion to blend the colours of the other instruments is a critical aspect of the piece. There are many examples of timbral modulation (most notably at letter A), and letters E and W are examples of a 'sound-mass' approach to composition.

Turning Points represents a very important work in my compositional thinking. Having worked on it for almost two years, I have had two works (Lagtime for solo marimba and Eurhythmy for two clarinets) emerge as by-products of this piece and many other ideas suggest themselves to me for future works. It represents, I feel, a creative approach to wind quintet writing and fills an important gap in the literature of the accordion, a literature which contains works for accordion and string quartet and accordion and brass quintet but none, as far as I know, for this combination. It is also an important work for me in terms of its dealing with the use of chords taken from 'traditional' tonality but used in a non-traditional way and for the problems posed by its extended length, single movement format.
Example 1

Formal Layout—Turning Points

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Prominent Pitches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 x 45&quot;</td>
<td>INTRO.</td>
<td>Shot Chords</td>
<td>D, Eb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 x 45&quot;</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>F unison. Timbral modulation.</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 x 45&quot;</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Melody on A accompanied by trill</td>
<td>A, F, F# (trill)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Echoes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 x 45&quot;</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Trilling with melody in horn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>G</td>
<td>Accordion solo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H</td>
<td>16th note runs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 x 45&quot;</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Echoes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Steady 8th note pulse and static melody</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 x 45&quot;</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>C unison. Timbral modulation.</td>
<td>C, Ab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>Long sustained notes accompanied by 32nd note runs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16th note runs to F pedal</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 x 45&quot;</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Trilling with melody in clarinet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 x 45&quot;</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Sustained chords</td>
<td>D, Eb</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>