

Current Issues in Music

Volume 2 (2008)

In Search of New Worlds: A Festschrift for Larry Sitsky

Edited by Linda Kouvaras, Ruth Lee Martin
and
Graham Hair

Southern Voices

ISSN – 1447 – 7939

First published in 2008 by
Southern Voices
38 Diamond Street
Amaroo, ACT 2914
AUSTRALIA

Southern Voices Editorial Board:

Dr Ruth Lee Martin, School of Music, Australian National University, Canberra
Dr Linda Kouvaras, University of Melbourne
Professor Andrew Schultz, University of Wollongong
Ms Robyn Holmes, Curator of Music, National Library of Australia
Professor Graham Hair, University of Glasgow, United Kingdom
Professor Nicola LeFanu, University of York, United Kingdom

Distributed by The Australian Music Centre, trading as *Sounds Australian*
PO Box N690
The Rocks
Sydney, NSW 2000
AUSTRALIA
tel +(612) 9247 - 4677
fax +(612) 9241 - 2873
email info@amcoz.com.au
website www.amcoz.com.au/amc

Copyright © individual authors, 2008

This book is copyright. Apart from fair dealing for the purposes of private study, research, criticism or review as permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, no part may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission. Enquiries to be made to the publisher.

Copying for educational purposes

Where copies of part or the whole of the book are made under section 53B or 53D of the Act, the law requires that records of such copying be kept. In such cases the copyright owner is entitled to claim payment.

ISSN: 1447 – 7939

Peer-Review

All contributions to *Current Issues in Music* are peer-reviewed

* in their entirety

* in advance of publication

* by independent expert readers

The readers are either members of the International Editorial Board, or independent expert readers appointed by the editors.

Current Issues in Music is included in the Australian DEST Register of Refereed Journals.

Printed in Australia by QPrint Pty Ltd, Canberra City, ACT 2600
and in the UK by Garthland Design and Print, Glasgow, G51 2RL

Acknowledgements

Extracts from the scores of works by Larry Sitsky in this volume are used by permission of the composer.

Editorial

Graham Hair

Current Issues in Music is a new journal of Australian provenance which incorporates writing about any aspect of music by authors of international provenance. However, no attempt will be made to disguise the 'local accent' with which the journal speaks, and each issue will include at least one article by an Australian-based author and at least one article about an Australian-based composer, or an issue relevant to Australian music.

This second issue comprises a *Festschrift* for one of Australia's leading modernist composers, Larry Sitsky, now in his seventy-fifth year.

Current Issues in Music

Volume 2 (2008)

In Search of New Worlds: A Festschrift for Larry Sitsky

Graham Hair	Editorial	
Judith Crispin	The <i>Nuctemeron</i> of Sitsky	7
Graham Hair	Review: Two Publications by and about Larry Sitsky	39
Patricia Shaw	Review: Two Publications by and about Larry Sitsky	39

The Nuctemeron of Sitsky

Judith Crispin

Nuctemeron signifies the day of the night or the night illuminated by day. It is analogous to the “Light Issuing from Darkness”, which is the title of a well-known Hermetic work.¹

In this chapter it will be argued that, as with Busoni, the music of Larry Sitsky functions within and is generated by a wider interest in the supernatural and, thus, cannot be meaningfully understood without reference to that interest. It is to be proposed that Egon Petri initiated Larry Sitsky into Busoni’s esoteric tradition,² believing he had the potential to fulfil Busoni’s prediction that “there must be someone who will save what is essential and pass it on.”³ Further, it will be argued that the core ideas of Busoni’s *Junge Klassizität* are present in the compositional aesthetic of Sitsky. The thematic model from chapter two, used to isolate the core ideas of *Junge Klassizität* will be applied to Sitsky’s aesthetic to illustrate this point.

As with Busoni, Sitsky’s nisus towards mystical transcendence has primarily manifested in music. This essential characteristic motivated Petri’s cultivation of Sitsky as a torch-bearer of *Junge Klassizität*. He knew that the esoteric core of Busoni’s teaching could be grasped only by a person for whom music was already a language of theurgy. Sitsky’s interest in the supernatural was already well established by the time he came to study with Petri. In his own words:

... in my case, there’s a double-bunger, if you like, of the mystical tradition. There’s the big injection of Theosophy and Gurdjieff on one side, on the other side there’s this European mysticism embodied in Faust which I explore...and then, of course, being Jewish, which Busoni was not, there’s the Kabbalistic tradition. So given all that and probably a predilection towards reading material of that kind it’s probably inescapable that it’d come out that way in my music. I think I’ve written more pieces based directly on some sort of mystical tradition than Busoni, in fact.⁴

Background: The influence of Asian mysticism

Larry Sitsky was born to Russian Jewish parents on September 10, 1934 in Tientsin, China. A child prodigy, he performed his first public piano concert at the age of ten.⁵ Sitsky’s aptitude for the piano was matched by an equal gift for composition. Even as a very small child he had ruled staves opposite the printed music for the *12th Rhapsody* of Liszt and attempted early compositions.⁶

Tientsin proved fertile ground for the young musician, who began to frequent the Chinese opera, intoxicated by its heavy saturation of percussion instruments. Later he would describe multitudes of gongs and cymbals as being “the sound I remember from as far back as I can recall.”⁷ The ornate costumes of the Chinese opera and its use of highly stylised singing to depict the realms of the fantastic, starkly contrasted against the music from Sitsky’s upbringing – cantor melodies from the synagogue and late romantic piano repertoire. It was his exposure to Chinese opera that first caused Sitsky to question the western ideal of music as a universal language. These doubts were later reinforced when Sitsky played a recording of Bach’s *Mass in B minor* to a Chinese friend. The friend started to laugh, finding the music “rhythmically, so primitive” that he assumed it was a joke.⁸

Before long Sitsky’s musical curiosity brought him into contact with Asian mysticism. He became a regular

visitor at the local Buddhist temples, drawn there by the sounds of chanting. The local monks received Sitsky kindly, readily explaining their religious practices to him. The freedom and equality of Asian spirituality compared favourably, for Sitsky, to the pyramid-like, hierarchical structure of the Jewish synagogue with the rabbis at the apex.⁹ The combined influence of ghost stories from Chinese opera and the Buddhist insistence on a spirit world, nurtured in him a fundamental belief in the supernatural that has endured to the present day. Now, almost sixty years later, he recalls the experience that first reconciled him to the possibility of a spiritual plane:

It was on the top of a hill – a local temple abandoned – fairly spooky-looking I must say. And the Chinese said it was inhabited by devils and no one would go near it. Something must have gone wrong there for it to have been abandoned, but it was. And I had a dog then as a pet and, naturally, being world-wise and brave and all of that, I thought “that’s nonsense. I’ll show them!” As I went up the hill – it’s fairly steep, because you know that many Chinese and Orientals build temples high up so that you have to bend over to approach it – a point came along the hill where the dog started howling and refused to go a step further. It just wouldn’t go. It was sitting there howling, you know singing, and I must say – you can perhaps tell me it was suggestion because of what I’d heard about the place – all I can tell you is that as I walked further it was as though someone was pushing me back. I eventually went back, actually I never made it to the top. It was almost a physical force pushing me back, so it was kind of, probably, the first time when I thought there are perhaps things that are unseen that are around us which we have to reckon with – and of course I relayed the story, but the Chinese just said to me, “but we told you.”¹⁰

Asian mysticism has profoundly influenced Sitsky’s total creative output. This is made evident by many of the titles of his works. In almost every case, Sitsky entitles his pieces accordant with the esoteric doctrine from which their materials and structures have been drawn.¹¹ Sitsky’s titles provide the key to understanding his musical constructions within the context of their intrinsic deeper meanings.

Sitsky’s works that directly relate to Asian mysticism include the following titles: *Sonata No. 2 for solo flute, The Fourteen Days of Bardo Thödol (1979)*;¹² *Trio No. 6, “Samsara” (1993)*;¹³ *Concerto for trombone, keyboards & percussion, “Kundalini” (1982)*;¹⁴ *Lotus (1995)*;¹⁵ *Lotus II (1996)*; *Sonata for solo mandolin, “The Three Names of Shiva” (1992)*;¹⁶ *Narayana (1969)*;¹⁷ *Atman – A Song of Serenity (1975)*;¹⁸ *Concerto No. 3 for violin & orchestra, “I Ching: the 8 Kua (Trigrams)” (1987)*;¹⁹ *Sonata No. 3 for solo flute, “The Jade Flute” (1994)*;²⁰ *Eight Oriental Love Songs (1960)*; *Eight Settings after*

Li-Po (1974);²¹ *Shih Ching – The Book of Songs (1996)*;²² *Fantasia No. 12 for solo guitar, “Pashupati Nath” (2000)*.²³

Initial studies with Egon Petri

In 1951 Sitsky was accepted as a piano student of Winifred Burston at the New South Wales State Conservatorium of Music in Sydney, Australia.²⁴ His family had been forced to emigrate, following Mao Tse-tung’s 1949 edict, which ordered all Europeans out of China. Burston was a forward thinking, highly respected pianist and educator. She championed new music and often returned from her frequent trips abroad with new piano works. In 1911, as a girl, she had been a piano student of Busoni and Egon Petri in Berlin. She corresponded regularly with Petri until his death in 1962.²⁵

Sitsky was fascinated by her stories of Busoni’s master-classes:

If you look in the index [to Busoni's letters] she's there, oh its just a brief mention but he says-for many weeks...the only civilised individual I've met...so it's quite nice. But it was on these occasions that he [Busoni] had quizzed Winifred about Canberra and she didn't know anything and was really embarrassed and then she sat there kind of goggle-eyed when Schoenberg came in and they discussed theory (laugh).²⁶

In the late 1950s Busoni's music was virtually unknown in Australia. Burston introduced Sitsky to her small collection of Busoni's piano works, beginning with his transcriptions of Bach, then progressing to original works including *Sonatina Seconda* and the *Indian Fantasy*. The esoteric, occult colour of these pieces intrigued Sitsky, who had been drawn to the music of Scriabin and Bartók²⁷ for similar reasons. Sitsky became convinced that Busoni's scores conveyed a 'text within a text,' a philosophical meaning that was simultaneously revealed and concealed. This extra-musical dimension in Busoni fascinated Sitsky, who began to search for way to meaningfully decipher the allegorical content of the music. He found it incomprehensible that a composer of Busoni's calibre had been so apparently overlooked by musical history. As Alfred Brendel has commented:

At present the compositions of Busoni are suffering a similar fate to those of Liszt: they are written in an ink that, as it were, begins to glow only when the right eye falls on it.²⁸

In 1958 Burston told Sitsky that she had taught him everything within her capacity.²⁹ His best course of action, she suggested, would be to undertake further study with Egon Petri, despite the fact that Petri was in his seventy-eighth year. This prospect appealed to Sitsky – not only as a chance to embrace the same pianistic tradition as Burston, but also as an opportunity to learn about Busoni from his most famous disciple.³⁰

Burston often sent her better students to play for Gordon Watson, a well-known concert pianist and former student of Petri's.³¹ Watson resided in England but would periodically visit Australia to give lectures and concert tours, one of the very few touring musicians of that time to program contemporary repertoire. At Burston's request, Watson agreed to listen to Sitsky's playing and provide him with a second opinion about his future direction.³² After careful consideration, Watson concurred that Sitsky's musical interests would be best served by a period of study overseas. Burston then wrote to Petri at his home in Switzerland, enclosing an audition tape of Sitsky's playing, together with her personal recommendation. In due course Petri responded with the news that he had recently accepted a teaching position at the San Francisco Conservatory and suggested that he arrange a scholarship for Sitsky to attend his studio there.

Sitsky studied with Petri in San Francisco from May of 1958 until the end of 1961.

The San Francisco master-classes were modelled on Busoni's, excepting that Petri did not teach composition.³³ This omission did not deter Sitsky from showing Petri the score of his newly completed *Opus 1* Violin Sonata,³⁴ and asking for his opinion. On Petri's advice, Sitsky took his sonata to the virtuoso violinist Joseph Szigeti for technical comments.³⁵ Before very long, Petri's interest in Sitsky's compositions was piqued. He began to offer Sitsky technical advice, drawn from his memory of Busoni's composition teaching, with which he had been greatly familiar. In fact, his musical development had been so strongly influenced by Busoni that, for Petri, the dividing line between them had always been blurred. This topic was often raised in Sitsky's lessons, as he recalls:

[Petri] said to me on more than one occasion that "to this day," that is when I was with him which was from 1958 to 1961, Busoni had died in 1924, so he said to me "to this day I sometimes have trouble separating what is Busoni and what is me," in other words the personality of the man was so strong that Petri felt at times swamped and a quarter of a century-plus later he still had a problem (laugh) working out just what was him and what had come from Busoni, so he obviously exerted a huge influence over Petri and it came out in various direct and indirect ways within his

music-making.³⁶

At Sitsky's request, Petri introduced him to those pieces by Busoni that he considered to be the most profound. He played him *Fantasia nach Bach*, which Busoni had written after his father's death and he lent Sitsky his own copy of the *Opus 39* Piano Concerto, which was then largely unknown. It was during this period that Sitsky began work on an edition of Busoni's *Fantasia Contrappuntistica* for solo piano, an ambitious project that would culminate in his *Concerto for orchestra, a completion and realisation of Busoni's 'Fantasia Contrappuntistica,'* (1984.)³⁷

Significantly, Petri spent many hours talking with Sitsky about Busoni's unfinished opera *Doktor Faust*. Together they read through the whole score, Petri playing the orchestral part, which he had himself reduced for Busoni, and Sitsky playing the singers' melodies.³⁸ It is clear that Petri, quite literally, saw Sitsky as a posthumous composition student of Busoni. His lessons on *Doktor Faust* provided Sitsky with, not only a paradigm of Busoni's compositional technique, but also a working model of *Junge Klassizität*, as esoteric philosophy realised in sound. Ronald Stevenson once described Busoni as his 'master in *absentia*', to whom he had been drawn against all advice.³⁹ Sitsky's San Francisco *composition* studies can be similarly understood to have been conducted under Busoni's tutelage – provided 'in *absentia*'.

Marc Roberge lists four composers: Alan Rawsthorne,⁴⁰ Denis ApIvor,⁴¹ Ronald Stevenson and Larry Sitsky as having been posthumous students of Busoni. These composers, who Roberge credits as having been "especially active and successful in keeping alive their master's memory,"⁴² have effectively preserved Busoni's legacy for the benefit of future generations.

Taking up the torch

When his studies in America had concluded, Sitsky visited Petri to bid him farewell. On this occasion, Petri urged Sitsky to ensure that the Busoni esoteric tradition was not lost.

I remember coming to say goodbye to him [Petri] and he had provided a reference for my first job in Australia, which was at the Queensland Conservatorium – and he said to me "you are now a member of this club and it's your duty to pass the torch on." And that kind of stuck in my head... (Sitsky)⁴³

Sitsky and Petri both knew that very few people possessed the requisite knowledge, motivation and ability to keep Busoni's tradition alive. In the modernistic climate of the early sixties Busoni was popularly dismissed as a conservative advocate of retrospective music. Sitsky became a somewhat quixotic champion of *Junge Klassizität*, driven by his belief in Busoni's ideals and his refusal to abandon his legacy to obscurity. He was determined to keep his promise to Petri, irrespective of any potential damage to his public profile.

I suppose Petri was, in one sense, concerned that that tradition was in danger of dying out. And, maybe I'm flattering myself, but I would think that he was also looking for certain people that could, in his view, pass on the tradition...I said to him that I would do all in my power to do that. We left it at that."⁴⁴

Egon Petri died on May 28, 1962, scarcely a year after Sitsky's departure. Later that same year, Sitsky composed his *Fantasia No. 1, in memory of Egon Petri*. The *Fantasia* affirms the promise Sitsky made Petri, in its establishment of Busoni's initials: the pitches 'F' and 'B'. The *Fantasia's* use of a quotation from Busoni's *Fantasia nach Bach*, written after the death of Busoni's father's, illustrates the significance, to Sitsky, of his relationship with Petri. As he has explained: "I'm simply proclaiming in this piece that my musical father has died."⁴⁵

Petri's use of the word 'torch'

Over forty years have passed since Sitsky's last conversation with Petri and yet he still remembers his *exact* words, 'its your duty to pass the torch on.' This phrase seemed significant to Sitsky for reasons that were unclear at that time. Certainly Petri's meaning was greater than implied by the popular metaphor – 'to pass the torch'.

The imagery of fire is commonly used to symbolise God, the Mystical experience, or transcendence of spirit. The Bible avers that, on Mount Sinai, the Holy Spirit appeared to Moses in the form of a burning bush.⁴⁶ Next to the dove, the 'seven-tongued flame' is the most commonly used symbol of the Holy Spirit which descended as 'tongues of fire' to rest on the foreheads of the apostles on Pentecost.⁴⁷ Similarly, the mystical writings of Mechtilde of Magdeburg⁴⁸ envisage God as a stream of fire flooding over the world. The Kabbalah holds that *Atzilooth* (the realm of fire), is the closest state to *Ain Soph Aur* (God) – the Boundless Light from which the world emanates.

The poetry of Goethe,⁴⁹ which Busoni had greatly admired, contains numerous allusions to the 'secret fire,' the primary agent of transmutation according to Medieval Alchemy.⁵⁰ His poem *Selige Sehnsucht* (Trance and Transformation), typifies Goethe's use of fire to symbolise transcendence:

Do not tell anyone but the wise, because the mob will mock immediately:
stuff of life is what I praise, that longs to die in flames.
In the assuagement of those nights of love which begot you,
in which you have begotten,
strange presentiments come upon you when the quiet candle gleams.
You remain no longer held in the overshadowing darkness,
and new desire sweeps you upward to more exalted mating.
No distance makes you hesitate, you come flying and enchanted and at last,
a moth eager for the light, you are burnt.
And until you have grasped this – 'Die and be transformed!'
– you will be nothing but a sorry guest on the sombre earth.⁵¹

The flaming serpent of Yogic Kundalini is another example of a fire simile for mystical experience. Freemasons, Templars and Rosicrucians were historically known as Fire-Philosophers, a term inherited from alchemy.⁵² Similarly, Madame Blavatsky predicted the coming of a "torch-bearer of truth" who would carry forward the ideas of theosophy and enrich them with new truths.⁵³

That Busoni understood the 'torch' symbol in a mystical or masonic⁵⁴ sense is evidenced by the invocation scene in *Doktor Faust*, where conjured demons appear as tongues of fire. Further evidence can be drawn from a letter, written by Busoni in 1924 to his friend Jella Oppenheimer, which reads:

At the moment a remainder of the work [*Doktor Faust*] is still 'within the soul of the creator', assuming that he possesses a soul at all. ... Leonardo (as d'Annunzio once said to me) was a skeleton that carried a blazing torch in place of a skull. I think (in a different sense from d'Annunzio) that the head of even a dead body can still glow.⁵⁵

It is important to note that Busoni had considered Leonardo as a parallel to himself.⁵⁶ In such a light, the import of Busoni's words to Jella Oppenheimer and of the promise exacted from Sitsky by Petri, becomes clear. Suffering from a fatal illness, Busoni wrote to his friend of his belief in Mystical transmutation, not in an abstract or philosophical sense, but as a very real possibility for himself.

Petri shared Busoni's belief in music as *Axis Mundi*, and, in fact, he directed Sitsky to read Sorabji on the topic of 'psychically charged' music.⁵⁷ Accordingly, it seems probable that the wording of Petri's request that Sitsky 'pass on the torch' was a deliberate allusion to some esoteric substratum beneath the surface of Busoni's legacy. It will be later argued that Busoni had conceived of his unfinished opera *Doktor Faust* as an occult ritual, by which he had intended to achieve some form of personal transmutation. Only months before his own death, Petri, who had been Busoni's sole confidant regarding the score of *Doktor Faust*, cultivated Sitsky as a 'torch-bearer of truth' just as Busoni, like Blavatsky, had prophesied. Whatever knowledge Petri had possessed of the esoteric orientation of *Junge Klassizität* and of the true function of Busoni's *Doktor Faust*, was thereby delivered into Sitsky's keeping.

The torch-bearer

After his return to Australia, Sitsky decided to honour his promise to Petri by way of performances, documentation, pedagogy, transcriptions, compositions and through further developing Busoni's ideas. In 1966 Sitsky celebrated the centenary of Busoni's birth by touring Australia playing concerts of Busoni's major piano works. His documentary efforts have included catalogues of Busoni's reproducing piano rolls,⁵⁸ scholarly articles,⁵⁹ and a book: *Busoni and the Piano: the works, the writings and the recordings*,⁶⁰ which includes an appendix of previously unpublished music. In a letter to Mr Alessandro Olschi, Sitsky mentions this appendix as an illustration of the importance of oral tradition:

...it may interest you to know that I studied intensively for some years with Egon Petri, Busoni's greatest disciple. The music of Busoni received particular attention. Appendix (no. 20 in the list of contents) is an example of this sort of oral tradition passed down through Petri which would otherwise be lost."

Appendix no. 20: unpublished material

- Cadenza to Mozart 2nd Piano Sonata
- Piece 'Prologo' (1918)
- New ending to All'Italia etc. [copy]⁶¹

During the writing of his book on Busoni, Sitsky made several unsuccessful attempts to buy the Petri-Busoni letters.⁶²

Sitsky has completed seven creative transcriptions of Busoni to date: *Bach, J.S. Chaconne in D minor* (1959) for left hand alone, performed that year by Sitsky in Petri's master-class; *Sonatina Seconda* (1978), transcribed for ensemble with the canons, implied in the original piano version, written out fully; *Sonatina nach Bach* (1981), transcribed for strings and trumpet⁶³; *Sonatina 1910* (1981), freely transcribed for ensemble; *Fantasia Contrappuntistica* (1983), incorporating unpublished manuscript fragments provided by Petri and his annotated copy of the single-piano version; *Concerto for orchestra, a completion and realisation of Busoni's "Fantasia Contrappuntistica"* (1984) and the same work (*Fantasia Contrappuntistica*) edited and completed for solo piano and two pianos (1983). Sitsky is presently working on his eighth creative transcription of Busoni, an ending to *Doktor Faust*, to be completed by his seventieth birthday in 2004.

Many of Sitsky's original compositions have been composed in response to Busoni, as he has attested:

An early example of mysticism in Busoni's music is the *Piano Concerto Opus 39* and I responded to that with my own violin concerto, which has connections of all kinds with the Busoni model. My second connection with Busoni is the list of fantasias, which are modelled on his fantasia written when his father died – and my third, and most important I suppose is my response to his opera and so it took the form of an opera.⁶⁴

It is interesting to note that several works by Sitsky directly relate to fire symbolism, for example his *Concerto for trombone, keyboards & percussion, "Kundalini"* (1982); *The Secret Gates of the House of Osiris* (1987) and *Fantasia No. 12 for solo guitar, "Pashupati Nath"* (2000).

A strong belief in the importance of teaching is common to Busoni, Petri and Sitsky. In 1921 Busoni wrote to Volkmar Andreae, saying:

The younger generation (in particular those who are not professional musicians) is apathetically allowing the building to dilapidate. This is happening without hatred or demonstration: with tragic indifference. - Therefore, unfortunately, nobody is taking the trouble to replace the edifice [Wagner cult] with a new one: and this is where we, who have become 'durch Mit-Leid [sic] wissend', have to take action, have to teach.⁶⁵

Sitsky has taught composition, piano and musicology at the Canberra School of Music, Australian National University for thirty-seven years to date (1966-2003) and, previously, for five years at the Queensland Conservatorium of Music (1961-1965). His classes continue, as Petri's had, in the tradition of Busoni's famous master-class.

Yet Sitsky has not merely carried on Petri's efforts to preserve the Busoni tradition. Through his composition and teaching he has further developed it. The tradition, which may be validly described as the Busoni-Sitsky tradition, has been faithfully maintained, but it is a living and evolving tradition and in Sitsky's hands it has been reinterpreted and revitalised. To return to the metaphor employed in chapter two, the light passing through the prism has remained light but the prism has revealed previously unseen colours of the spectrum. Similarly, whilst the esoteric core of Busoni's philosophy has remained unchanged, the exoteric manifestations of *Junge Klassizität* have varied as the tradition has been passed on down line. It may be argued that the core originated even earlier than Busoni who had, himself, inherited the Masonic ideals of Mozart and Liszt, and he certainly saw *Junge Klassizität* as a seed rather than the fully-grown plant. Indeed he looked forward to its subsequent development and growth. This is evident from the prediction he made in the closing pages of *Doktor Faust*:

Still unexhausted all the symbols wait
That in this work are hidden and concealed;
Their germs a later school shall procreate
Whose fruits to those unborn shall be revealed;⁶⁶

To consciously place oneself within a tradition is not the same practice as to merely emulate historical models. For tradition to remain alive it must be ever renewed, invigorated with new ideas, expanded and developed. To reconcile tradition with innovation, as Busoni sought to do, one must first understand the core, or essence of any given tradition. Only this core should be retained in its original form – it is the seed of the tradition, already pregnant with the total potentiality of forms into which it may grow. In other words, tradition does not deny itself the chance to freely develop, rather, it perpetually seeks new forms in order to avoid stagnation. Further, the internal cohesion of any tradition is ensured by its esoteric core, by which it is philosophically orientated, and not by its myriad of external forms. In this respect tradition resembles a musical motive, as Busoni has observed: "Every motive – so it seems to me – contains, like a seed, its life-germ within itself."⁶⁷

Accordingly, the esoteric core of *Junge Klassizität* is fundamentally unchanged by its manifestation in the Busoni-Sitsky tradition, and may, therefore, be understood within the same thematic model:

1. The theory of inter-generational succession
2. The composer as priest

3. The concept of *die Ur-Musik*, or *objective* music
4. Oneness in music: The composer as a transcriber or medium
5. Music as transfiguration and evocation

The theory of inter-generational succession

I was quite moved to discover that world outlooks of composers such as Scriabin, Obukhov, Vyshnedgradsky and others were close to mine and that I belonged in one sense to that lineage of mystical composers. (Sitsky)⁶⁸

Petri had written a reference for Sitsky's first teaching position, at the Queensland Conservatorium of Music. Soon after his arrival, Sitsky met and befriended Jan Sedivka, a Czech virtuoso violinist and fellow teacher at the Conservatorium.⁶⁹ It was Sedivka that first introduced Sitsky to Gurdjieffian and Ouspenskian⁷⁰ philosophy. He had established a Gurdjieff study group in Brisbane, an act that caused him to be branded a 'black magician' by the locals.⁷¹ It is interesting that Gurdjieff had prepared a nucleus of people to transmit his teachings after his death. Centres all over the world have now been established for the dissemination of Gurdjieffian philosophy.⁷² Why Busoni's similar efforts failed to achieve the same positive result is largely a matter for conjecture.

Sitsky's affinity for Gurdjieff's ideas is reflected in a number of works, including:⁷³ *Concerto No. 2 for violin & small orchestra*, "Gurdjieff" (1983); *Suite for solo saxophone*, "Armenia" (1984);⁷⁴ *Fantasia No. 5*, "Sharagan" (1984); *Sharagan II* (1988); *Khavar* (1984); *Dagh* (1984); *Mertzazil* (1984); *Sayat-Nova* (1984); *Vartarun* (1984); and *Zuqerq* (1984).⁷⁵

Intergenerational succession, within the Busoni-Sitsky tradition, is given internal impetus by its own esoteric content. The various mystical and occult doctrines it has assimilated, are unified, not only by their common nisus towards transcendence, but also by the shared notion of a master and an apprentice. In Sitsky's words:

...bringing up someone and then letting them go is a long tradition, not only among musicians but certainly among magicians and people practicing any kind of esoteric discipline. You study with a master and then the master, one day, says 'I can't teach you anything more, you're on your own'. And so there's a feeling of that, I think, which gives unity to what might, on the surface, seem disparate activities. You see, to me the piano playing, the composition, the research, the teaching – to me they're not separate things. They're simply different aspects of the same thing. It's a way of looking *at* music, which goes beyond the facade of the notes. I suppose that's the clearest way I can put it.⁷⁶

An emphasis on cultivating self-sufficiency in the student, as against the common methods of teaching-by-emulation, is fundamental to Sitsky's pedagogical philosophy.⁷⁷ In his view, the teacher's role is to guide the student, to bring them to the very doors of tradition, then to let them freely choose whether or not to cross the threshold. This belief that a person consciously chooses to participate in tradition, is a central theme in both Busoni's *Doktor Faust* and Sitsky's *The Golem*.

Busoni saw himself as a Faust figure, that is, someone who's seeking after truth of some kind. The Rabbi in 'The Golem' is, in his own way, doing the same thing – creating something which he then has to take responsibility for – there are the Rabbi's students, just like in Faust there are a group of students around him. So it also deals with the passing on of tradition and wisdom. (Sitsky)⁷⁸

Striking biographical similarities between the two composers has, no doubt, strengthened Sitsky's sense of affinity with Busoni. Both men were/are: child prodigies who became pianists, composers, pedagogues, musicologists and transcribers; both composers whose status as such was at one time overshadowed by their respective reputations as pianists; both multilingual – Busoni spoke French, German, Italian and English and Sitsky speaks Russian, Hebrew, English, Japanese and Chinese; both interested in Eastern mysticism and magic, and also occult novels such those by Poe,⁷⁹ Hoffman, Merezhkovsky and others;⁸⁰ both gifted writers, sharing an opinion that “an illiterate composer is unthinkable”⁸¹ – Sitsky has written poetry in Russian and in English⁸² and Busoni's literary contributions have been well documented; both were interested in Jewish music – both Busoni's *Brautwahl* and Sitsky's *The Golem* use Hebrew synagogue melodies; and both rejected an early body of work designing, in both cases, a violin sonata, as their ‘Opus 1’ – Busoni wrote in 1898 that his “existence as a composer really begins with the [second] violin Sonata.” Further, just as Busoni had speculated about being reincarnation of E. T. A. Hoffmann,⁸³ so Sitsky considered he might be the re-incarnation of Alexander Blok.⁸⁴ A diary entry from 1961 reads:

Working very hard to complete a set of [Bagatelle?] poems inspired by Alexander Blok, before I leave. Blok has always had a mysterious influence and a fatal fascination on me – the combination of morbidity – the sudden flashes of especially hopeless human, the extreme exaltation – a general weariness – all this is more than just familiar – it seems to be an innate part of me to the extent that re-reading Blok I seem to re-read personal experiences of a far-off day. Perhaps there is such a thing as re-incarnation after all? ⁸⁵

Sitsky and Busoni share a connection with Anton Rubinstein, who had influenced the early development of both pianists. Busoni had admired Anton Rubinstein, even more than Liszt, and had often heard him play⁸⁶ – he had also won the Rubinstein prize early in his career.⁸⁷ Sitsky's book on Rubinstein had been written in an attempt to draw the threads of his musical heritage together,⁸⁸ as he has said:

It's a kind of debt to the past...I'm paying my musical debt, if you like. And I suppose I'm responding in a way to what it means to belong to a tradition... in the real sense.⁸⁹

Both men have written extensively about the generation of composers that directly preceded them, - Busoni's writings include commentaries on Liszt, Debussy, Bach, Beethoven and Mozart. Sitsky has written books on Busoni, Rubinstein and the composers from the repressed Russian avant-garde⁹⁰ – as well as an article on Alkan, and a bio-critical handbook of the twentieth century musical avant-garde (various essays compiled and edited by Sitsky).⁹¹

The composer as priest

...Homage again and again is all one can offer to the great artist - priest one is tempted to call him - Egon Petri, true and only successor of his immortal master, Busoni, for at this exulted level art is no longer merely art, it is religion, and the artist becomes a high priest - a hierophant. (Sorabji)⁹²

Ideally, for Sitsky, the composition of music is analogous to a journey that begins in darkness and ends in light. Like the symbol of fire, light imagery is commonly used to denote deity.

St Hildegard of Bingen referred to God as *Lux vivens* (living light); the resurrected Christ is described in Matthew 28, 3 as having a ‘countenance of lightning’; Matthew 24, 27-28, prophesies that Christ's return will be ‘like lightning coming from the east and shining far into the west’. The Mahabharata tells of Vishnu appearing in a lightning flash. Similarly, the Jewish *Sepher Yetsirah*⁹³ states that God appears in the form of a lightning flash. The

same text gives the Absolute God the name of *Ain Soph Aur* (the boundless light). The progression towards light, then, is a progression towards God, or towards mystical enlightenment.

The emergence from darkness into light is a recurring theme in Sitsky's works, many of which document the various stages of a mystical journey. Sitsky's *Twelve Mystical Preludes after the Nuctemeron of Apollonius of Tyana* (1973) is structured around the 1854 ritual used by Elphias Levi to summon the spirit of Apollonius of Tyana.⁹⁴ This ritual is also an allegory of the transformation of a human spirit over twelve successive hours. *Mysterium Cosmographicum* is another of Sitsky's compositions to have been structured around the various stages of mystical experience. He describes this work as "a journey that culminated in light."⁹⁵ The whole of Sitsky's compositional output can be understood to be the audible documentation of an individual mystical journey.

Music is to me a mystic experience, in the broadest understanding of that word; the mystic state can be achieved, even within music, in a number of ways. Taken in such a light, my compositions can then be regarded as biographical milestones on the road to self-awareness.⁹⁶

The Busoni-Sitsky tradition maintains that artistic endeavour should be motivated by a higher purpose, that is, by something beyond mere egotistical self-expression or the desire to be liked. Busoni's conception of the composer as a musical priest has already been mentioned;⁹⁷ Roger Covell has commented on Sitsky's "priestly" approach to composition,⁹⁸ a term used also by the composer:

I've always regarded being a composer as a kind of priesthood... Being an artist is not an occupation, but a priestly calling. It's something of that kind. And I take it like that.⁹⁹

An understanding of the urge to create as a kind of spiritual calling, is shared by both Busoni and Sitsky. For them, the learned aspects of compositional craftsmanship should be subordinated to this higher purpose in music.

[The composer has] a spiritualising role. In other words, I'm not in disagreement with composers like Scriabin who saw the function of the composer as elevating the human spirit – raising it to a higher level – and when I teach I suppose I do try to pass that on, together with aspects of craft and technique and all that – of course we need that, we can't do without it – but in the end it's only a means towards this higher ideal.¹⁰⁰

Like Busoni, Sitsky advocates an elitist, esoteric tradition to which entry is intentionally difficult:

I would like to think that it [music] not only has a higher function and purpose but I would think that it's like a secret society into which it is not, and should not be easy to belong. And that you have to fight for a place in that club, to understand what music is, what it might be in the future and what it has been in the past.¹⁰¹

The origins of Sitsky's view of composition as an exclusive tradition are firmly rooted in Busoni's own teaching. Sitsky remembers Petri telling him that:

...there was a sort of tradition in music that wasn't mainstream and, if not deliberately hidden, wasn't obviously populist, and wasn't geared towards proselytising itself. It was meant for a limited circle of people who would only be admitted into the tradition – if I want to use that term – if they'd done their homework. If you admitted someone who hadn't they wouldn't understand anything and it was a waste of time anyhow.¹⁰²

This attitude is shared by other composers situated on the Busoni line.¹⁰³ Once Sitsky asked Petri why *Doktor Faust* was not better known. “It never will be,” Petri had replied, “and that’s more of a compliment than it sounds.”¹⁰⁴ A similar sentiment is expressed by Franz Liszt in the preface to his score of *Apparitions I*, which states “this music is not for everyone”. Busoni’s disciple Sorabji was famous for not allowing his pieces to be performed in public.¹⁰⁵ There are many who would find Sorabi’s position unthinkable. His perspective can be only appreciated by accepting that music has a spiritual function; that the measure of an artist has little to do with wealth or popularity. For Sitsky, the act of composition is equivalent to a magical conjuration, as he has openly stated:

People become composers because they are trying to say something that cannot be said using words, maths, architecture etc. either alone or in combination, although such elements are important and exist in the organisation of sounds. Music interests me as a primal force, owing its origins to ritual, religion, magic and mysticism. It is this hidden (‘occult’) power of music that is MY chief concern and which accounts for many of the titles as well as the atmosphere of much of my music. Music, then, as a conjuration of sorts, with its power to play on our emotional centres, is what concerns me as a composer.¹⁰⁶

The existence of objective music (*die Ur-Musik*)

Oh no, these sounds have always sobbed to themselves in infinite space.
(Alexei Tolstoy)

The belief that music, of some kind, exists independently of the human senses is common to many mystical and occult doctrines,¹⁰⁷ specifically Gurdjieffian philosophy.¹⁰⁸ Sitsky and Sedivka’s shared interest in ‘objective’ music, or *die Ur-Musik*,¹⁰⁹ has inspired a number of Sitsky’s violin works. The first of these was his *Concerto No. 1 for violin, orchestra & female voices, ‘Mysterium Cosmographicum’* (1971), after Kepler’s treatise *Harmonices Mundi*.¹¹⁰ In this treatise Kepler describes a mystical journey in five discrete stages, the titles of which are set for choir in Sitsky’s concerto. In 1978 *Mysterium Cosmographicum* was performed by Sedivka as a double bill with Sitsky’s performance of the Busoni piano concerto.¹¹¹

The second concerto written for Sedivka by Sitsky was his *Concerto No. 2 for violin & small orchestra* (1983), ‘*Gurdjieff*’, which was constructed according to certain of Gurdjieff’s ideas drawn from *Beelzebub’s tales to his Grandson*.¹¹²

Gurdjieff believed that there is ‘subjective’ music, which is what we tend to write, but there is also an ‘objective’ music which is, in an ideal world, beyond time, beyond space and a music which, he believed, had a truly universal effect on whoever listened to it – out there, somewhere in space there is totally ‘objective’ music – and the composer sometimes tunes in on it and occasionally we get glimpses of it. He certainly believed that music had this kind of power, and that’s why he spent many years collecting very old melodies from monasteries and brotherhoods around Central Asia. He was looking for some evidence of this kind of music.¹¹³

The raw materials for the second concerto were derived from ancient melodic shapes; transcriptions of melodies collected by Gurdjieff while travelling through Asia,¹¹⁴ and then privately published.¹¹⁵

One of those few to have understood the true ambition of Sitsky’s work was the late Australian poet Gwen Harwood.¹¹⁶ Sitsky met Harwood in 1963 at a composer’s symposium in Tasmania. At that time she had completed a book of poetry, which had not yet been published.¹¹⁷ During their brief meeting they discovered a common interest in German Expressionism and in the same European painters and writers. After hearing his music, Harwood

composed a short poem entitled 'New Music', and posted it to Sitsky, to whom it was dedicated.

New Music (To Larry Sitsky)
Who can grasp for the first time
these notes hurled into empty space?
Suddenly a tormenting nerve
affronts the fellowship of cells.
Who can tell for the first time
if it is love or pain he feels,
violence or tenderness that calls
plain objects by outrageous names

and strikes new sound from the old names?
At the service of a human vision,
not symbols, but strange presences
defining a transparent void,
these notes beckon the mind to move
out of the smiling context of
what's known; and what can guide it is
neither wisdom nor power, but love.

Who but a fool would enter these
regions of being with no name?
Secure among their towering junk
the wise and powerful congregate
fitting old shapes to old ideas,
rocked by their classical harmonies
in living sleep. The beggar's stumps
bang on the stones. Nothing will change.

Unless, wakeful with questioning,
some mind beats on necessity,
and being unanswered learns to bear
emptiness like a wound that no
word but its own can mend; and finds
a new imperative to summon
a world out of unmeasured darkness
pierced by a brilliant nerve of sound.
(Gwen Harwood)¹¹⁸

When she next met with Sitsky in 1965, Harwood had already completed the libretto for the first opera of their collaboration – *Fall of the House of Usher*.¹¹⁹ Thus an artistic partnership and friendship was forged, that would last until Harwood's untimely death in 1995.

Oneness in music: Musical form as an empty vessel.

For Sitsky, like Busoni, all potential music already exists 'out there'. The task of the composer is to draw some of that cosmic substance into musical form, and the sensory world. In this sense, the form acts as a parenthesis

– overlaying conceptual boundaries on *die Ur-musik*, which are lifted at the conclusion of the ‘piece’. Busoni eloquently set out his views on this subject in his poetic essay, ‘The Realm of Music’, which reads:

COME, follow me into the realm of music. Here is the iron fence which separates the earthly from the eternal. Have you undone the fetters and thrown them away? Now come. It is not as it was before when we stepped into a strange country; we soon learnt to know everything there and nothing surprised us any longer. Here there is no end to the astonishment, and yet from the beginning we feel it is homelike.

You still hear nothing, because everything sounds. Now already you begin to differentiate. Listen, every star has its rhythm and every world its measure. And on each of the stars and each of the worlds, the heart of every separate living being is beating in its own individual way. And all the beats agree and are separate and yet are a whole.

Your inner ear becomes sharper. Do you hear the depths and the heights? They are as innumerable as space and as endless as numbers. Unthought of scales extend like bands from one world to another, stationary and yet eternally in motion. Every tone is the centre of immeasurable circles. And now sound is revealed to you!

Innumerable are its voices; compared to them the murmuring of the harp is a din; the blare of a thousand trombones a chirrup. All, all melodies heard before or never heard, resound completely and simultaneously, carry you, hang over you, or skim lightly past you - of love and passion, of spring and of winter, of melancholy and of hilarity, they are themselves the souls of millions of beings in millions of epochs. If you focus your attention on one of them you perceive how it is connected with all the others, how it is combined with all the rhythms, coloured by all kinds of sounds, accompanied by all harmonies, down to unfathomable depths and up to the vaulted roof of heaven.

Now you realise how planets and hearts are one, that nowhere can there be an end or an obstacle, that infinity lives in the spirit of all beings; that each being is illimitably great and illimitably small: the greatest expansion is like a point; and that light, sound, movement and power are identical, and each separate and all united, they are life.

The superimposition of all possible music would surely be experienced as silence – we know from basic wave mechanics that two tones of equal frequency and amplitude, when super-imposed exactly out of phase, cancel each other out (Fig. 1:4).¹²⁰

Fig. 1:4 Two sine waves placed exactly ‘out of phase’, cancelling one another out.

The notion that music can exist ‘objectively’ has much in common with the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum physics.¹²¹ This interpretation proposes that, until observed, a quantum entity exists as a wave, or, as the superimposition of its total possible states. The act of observation forces the entity to collapse into a particle – one specific state. When the observation ceases the quantum entity dissolves back into a superimposition of states. Note that the observer cannot perceive the wave state – the quantum entity collapses into particle immediately it is observed.

Fig. 2:4 Wave-particle duality.

If one considers *Ur-Musik* as a vibrational entity, existing in a parallel state to the quantum wave, then audible ('subjective') music can be regarded as that same entity collapsed into a quantum particle state. This entity would be imperceptible in its wave, or *Ur-Musik* state; but, in the presence of a listener, *Ur-Musik* would collapse into a particle, or audible, state.

In other words, audible music can be understood as one possible manifestation of *Ur-Musik* that reverts to an indiscrete form, in the absence of a conscious listener. As *Ur-Musik* is imperceptible, audible music would seemingly begin and end in silence, or, as

Sitsky has said, the music "comes from an initial inner stillness and retreats back into it when the piece is over, (many of my works begin and end softly)." ¹²²

In such a conception of music, the task of the composer is merely to draft instructions, so that the *Ur-Musik* wave state can be deliberately collapsed into a particular audible instance – one that has been previously imagined. When these instructions are subsequently carried out by musicians, the *reality* of the sensory world is actually changed. The realisation of audible music from score alters the nature of space, setting in motion predetermined vibrations, in place of those determined by chance. As the Jewish composer Mordecai Sandberg has commented "music is sounding Kabbalah." ¹²³

Not all music can be understood in terms of this artistic cosmology. Many pieces, from both popular and artistic genres, are significant only to the generation that has created them. In contrast, there are pieces that have been formulated in response to some essential truth and, accordingly, remain significant for many generations. Sitsky believes such music possesses 'layers' of meaning:

Art has many layers of meaning. The most obvious, the surface layer, is readily understood; but then, if the work is to survive, it must have other layers beneath, so that each generation and each new hearing peels off another layer and reveals another meaning below. Works that inhabit both popular and high art mediums possess such layers... ¹²⁴

The composer-transcriber as a medium

Sitsky's vision of the composer as transcriber, is logically concluded from his belief in *Ur-Musik*. Cosmic vibration, physically imperceptible as sound, is somehow accessed by the composer's imagination and transcribed as music. In other words, the act of composition is merely the writing out of what already exists in the imagination. Sitsky describes the compositional act thus:

When it's shaped enough then I sit down and try to capture the perfect and often elusive sound that's floating about in there because, as you know, it's always perfect isn't it? And then when you try to put it down on paper a huge compromise already occurs, because you're trying to capture something that's like capturing fog... ¹²⁵

In this context it is easy to understand the view that the transcription of another composer's music is a form of 'psychic possession'. Like an occult medium, the composer-transcriber is not a mere artisan but one who divines that which already exists in the ether and seeks to record it in a form that will be accessible to others. It was through Sitsky's interest in Busoni that he encountered this conception of transcription, which was a recurring topic of conversation between himself and Petri. Sitsky recalls that:

[Petri] told me that Busoni was very interested in such matters, by that he meant magic, the supernatural, philosophy, what we might broadly call today metaphysics or esotericism, and that writing the piece [*Doktor Faust*] was Busoni's final expression of those interests. He pointed out to me that these interests weren't just in his music in that piece, but exist in other pieces,

and I remember we also looked at *Die Brautwahl*, which is based on a story by Hoffmann, the supernatural German writer, E.T.A Hoffmann. So he was at some pains I suppose to indicate that it wasn't a one-off matter and that, in fact, even the business of transcribing was a kind of, how did he put it, – psychic possession by one composer of the music of another. ¹²⁶

Transcriptions, for the Busoni-Sitsky tradition, are more than just arrangements of existing music for different instruments, rather, they are creative and original commentaries on past music, and works of art in their own right.

¹²⁷

My interest in music is not antiquarian. If I perform a piece, it is not 'old', but alive. In other words, if the music is alive, whether written yesterday or in the 17th century, it is worth playing. If a transcription is necessary, to a large or small extent, I accept it as not destroying the essence of the piece, but sometimes even illuminating it. If the piece is dead, I am not interested in it. Exhumation and ancestor-worship are not part of my make-up. ¹²⁸

In this conception the second composer does not merely inherit or appropriate the music of the first. Rather, like the first, the second composer seeks to divine the music and, perhaps, to reveal another aspect of the piece. Sitsky speaks of the musical piece as being “like a sculpture that moves through time...a sculpture in space and time.”¹²⁹ To an observer, watching the sculpture of music move through time and space, only the plane he or she immediately faces can be seen. For Sitsky and Busoni, the task of the composer-transcriber is to illuminate the sculpture from a hitherto unexplored perspective, to preserve and record with what further insight or clarity of musical expression he or she is capable of.

Transfigurations and Evocations

The idea that music can function as a doorway in reality is central to the Busoni-Sitsky tradition. In this conception, the open doorway of music can enable both the evocation of beings beyond the sensory world, and the transfiguration of normal humans into a new level of being. In other words, the door is open from both sides – through it one may draw phenomena into the world, spirits or ghosts for example, or one may exit the normal world, to a new, unfathomable existence. Perhaps this idea is best illustrated by way of an allegory. A composer has a small door in his or her mind. The act of composing begins with opening the small door. Through the open doorway musical inspiration pours into the mind as unformed material. The composer shapes this material and puts it down as notes. What might happen should the composer exit through the door, is a source of great curiosity for Sitsky, as it was also for Busoni.

“Music either overtly or covertly has mystical power, is magical...it has the power to move people, to...elevate oneself. I like to think of it as a kind of door opening to another dimension which is beyond our everyday world, because music is such an abstraction, because it has such incredible power.”¹³⁰

One cannot overstate the influence of the Kabbalah¹³¹ on Sitsky's work. ¹³² The Kabbalistic texts are a body of occult knowledge, originally Jewish, upon which the western tradition of magic was founded. This tradition, called the 'Yoga of the west' by Dion Fortune, ¹³³ amalgamates various esoteric orders and secret societies, including freemasonry, Rosicrucianism and the Golden Dawn. ¹³⁴ Occultists have studied the Kabbalah since the fifteenth century. Notable Kabbalistic scholars include: Cornelius Agrippa, ¹³⁵ Paracelsus, ¹³⁶ Pico della Mirandola, ¹³⁷ Robert Fludd, ¹³⁸ Eliphas Levi, S. L. Macgregor Mathers¹³⁹ and Aleister Crowley.¹⁴⁰ Two Kabbalistic texts of particular importance to the western tradition of magic are the *Sepher Yetzirah* (the Book of Formation) and the *Sepher ha-Zohar* (the Book of Splendour).¹⁴¹

Most of Sitsky's compositions directly relate to the western tradition of magic, or the 'secular' Kabbalah¹⁴². Examples of such works include: *Concerto for piano & orchestra, 'The 22 Paths of the Tarot'* (1991);¹⁴³ *Sephardic Concerto for mandolin and small orchestra*,¹⁴⁴ *'Zohar'* (1998); *Four pieces for violin & piano, 'Tetragrammaton'* (1987);¹⁴⁵ *Ten Sephirot of the Kabbalah* (1974);¹⁴⁶ *Claviculis Salomonis* (1989);¹⁴⁷ *Trio No. 7, 'Enochian Sonata'* (1999);¹⁴⁸ *The Secret Gates of the House of Osiris* (1987);¹⁴⁹ *Concerto for cello & orchestra, 'Sphinx'* (1993);¹⁵⁰ *Sonata for solo guitar, 'The Five Elements'* (1974);¹⁵¹ *Necronomicon, 18 Aphorisms for clarinet & piano* (1989);¹⁵² *Sonata for violin & piano, 'Omnia Exeunt in Mysterium'* (1995),¹⁵³ *Twelve Mystical Preludes after the Nuctemeron of Apollonius of Tyana* (1973) and *The Secret Doctrine - Seven Epigrams* (1995).¹⁵⁴

Composition, for Sitsky, functions as a kind of dialogue with the dead. His idea that music is somehow connected with death has generated the composition of a number of fantasias, composed *in memoriam*, including: *Fantasia No. 7, on a theme of Liszt* (1985); *Fantasia No. 2, in memory of Winifred Burston* (1980); *Fantasia No. 1, in memory of Egon Petri* (1962); *Fantasia No. 8, on D-B-A-S*, [in memory of Don Banks] (1990); *Fantasia No. 3, in memory of Don Banks* [based on Busoni's *Sonatina nach Bach*] (1981)¹⁵⁵ and *'Maherq' Fantasia No. 4, in memory of John Crocker* (1984).

Underpinning the Busoni-Sitsky tradition are the interdependent ideas that: (a) music is somehow connected with the dead, and (b) music can be a doorway to transcendence. In other words, this tradition proposes that there is a kind of doorway through which the composer draws *Ur-Musik* into the world as sound; and that, potentially, through that very same doorway, a human being might literally exit the sensory world – like the biblical Enoch or Elijah, who ascended to heaven without dying. Sitsky's *Sonata No. 2* for solo flute is based on the Buddhist idea of "the liberation of the soul through sound".¹⁵⁶ Busoni's belief in such a possibility was discussed in chapter two. Scholars who have understood Busoni's ambition to escape, like Faust, into the pages of his music, must have wondered whether such an attempt was actually made – and whether it succeeded. One could be forgiven for wanting such a romantic ending to the Faustian tale of Ferruccio Busoni.

In 1977 Sitsky wrote to the English psychic Rosemary Brown, via her agent Basil Ramsey.¹⁵⁷ Mrs Brown was believed to have channelled several deceased composers, most notably Liszt. She claimed that the spirits of these composers often dictated new pieces to her and that, despite a limited musical knowledge, she had produced musical scores on their behalf. Sitsky's letter reads:

Apart from being a great admirer and advocate of Liszt myself – and it seems that Liszt is the prime mover in all this – two of my great influences have been Egon Petri (with whom I studied) and Ferruccio Busoni (about whom I have written a book and whose music I have played extensively); both of these were great Liszt performers, one was an important composer. If some communication from or about these two could be received it would add an enormous amount of veracity to anything I could say, particularly if the information from someone like Petri was personal and could not possibly have been known to Mrs Brown. I realise of course that such things cannot be dished up to order!¹⁵⁸

Ramsey forwarded Sitsky's letter to Mrs Brown, who replied that she had not been in contact with either Petri or Busoni, but that she would make an attempt at communicating with them. A second letter was sent by Sitsky to thank Mrs Brown, reassure her of his complete faith in her gift,¹⁵⁹ and to reiterate his inquiry regarding Busoni and Petri:

I am hoping (reminded from your letter regarding cross-evidence) that, now that we have made contact, that you may receive some evidential material from Egon Petri and/or Ferruccio Busoni; but of course such things cannot happen 'on order'.¹⁶⁰

Sitsky's faith in Mrs Brown resulted in him organising a concert series of her 'transcriptions' entitled 'Music From Beyond'.¹⁶¹ A program of new works by Bach, Schubert, Chopin, Beethoven, Rachmaninov, Brahms, Liszt and Schumann was performed by Sitsky in Queensland, Tasmania and Canberra, and was broadcast by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. The holdings of the Sitsky archive, at the National Library of Australia, include several boxes of correspondence between Sitsky and Mrs Brown. These letters span a twenty-year period, during which time Mrs Brown periodically wrote of her unsuccessful attempts to contact Busoni or Petri.¹⁶² The most recently archived letter from Mrs Brown, from 5 July, 1995, informs Sitsky of her long awaited success:

Dear Larry,

...I have had some contact from Busoni who seems a very effusive soul, but so far I have had no music from him. I don't think he wants to join those composers transmitting music to me: it seems he is engaged in some other project to do with music.¹⁶³

It cannot be determined at this stage, whether Mrs Brown experienced any further contact from Busoni. Although they continued corresponding for several years after Mrs Brown's 1995 letter, Sitsky 'doesn't remember' whether Busoni's spirit was mentioned again.

In January of 2002, I posted a letter to Mrs Brown, asking if she'd experienced any contact from Busoni subsequent to 1995. The letter was returned unopened, together with notice that Rosemary Brown had passed away one month earlier. When I related this sad news to Sitsky he remarked, "Well, now you'll need to find a medium to channel the medium!"

Conclusions

It is difficult to refute Sitsky's status as the torch-bearer of an esoteric tradition of composition, which he had been initiated into by Petri. Sitsky is directly descended from Busoni, through his studies with both Petri and Burston. His initial piano studies, with Burston, brought Sitsky into contact with Busoni's music as a performer. His subsequent composition studies, with Petri, involved playing through the entire piano score for *Doktor Faust*, the piece into which Busoni had encrypted his entire esoteric philosophy. Moreover, Petri had specifically asked Sitsky to "pass the torch on."

The seriousness with which Sitsky treated Petri's request has been demonstrated by his many performances and transcriptions of Busoni's pieces, his documentation of Busoni's work, the obvious influence of Busoni on Sitsky's compositions and teaching aesthetic and in his tireless promotion of Busoni as an artist. In Sitsky's hands the Busoni esoteric tradition, once primarily hermetic in character, has expanded to reflect new influences, including Asian mysticism and Gurdjieffian philosophy. The Busoni-Sitsky esoteric tradition is rooted in the notion of a priesthood of composers, whose works serve to illuminate the mystic path for those who follow.

Endnotes

- 1
- 2 Petri once presented Sitsky with a copy of the Petri-Lieberman notes on piano technique, inscribed: "To one of the best students I have ever had the privilege of working with, affectionately, Egon Petri."
- 3 Busoni quoted in T. Levitz, (1996) p. 82.
- 4 L. Sitsky, (2001) – see appendices to this volume.

- 5 Sitsky presented a program of Beethoven, Liszt and Gounod.
- 6 L. Sitsky, (2002) p. 27.
- 7 Sitsky quoted in R. Holmes, P. Shaw and P. Campbell, (1997) p. 48.
- 8 L. Sitsky. Interview by R. Lee-Martin (2002). op. cit. p. 18.
- 9 See *ibid.* pp. 20-21.
- 10 *Ibid.* pp. 21-22.
- 11 Sitsky [L. Sitsky, (2002) p. 155.] has expressed the hope that:

...either by the music, or by the experience of hearing it in a certain setting with a certain title, that someone will go away and think about what it might mean...it's the desire, I suppose, to leave the world a miniscule amount better than when you entered it.

- 12 *Bardo Thödol* is the region of the dead through which, according to the Tibetan Buddhists, all departed souls must pass. It relates to the Tibetan Book of the Dead's allegorical argument for "the liberation of the soul through sound." [L. Sitsky, (2002) p. 138.] For further discussion see: W. Y. Evans-Wentz, ed., (1960)
- 13 *Samsara* is a Sanskrit word which means a turning or revolving wheel. It refers to the endless cycle of reincarnation to which the human soul is condemned according to certain Eastern religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism. The goal of the religious adherent is attain *Moksha* (release from Samsara) through various methods, including Yoga, Dharma, meditation and rituals. The attainment of *Moksha* causes the human soul, or *Atman*, to unite with ultimate reality, or *Brahman*, like the raindrop falls into the ocean. For further discussion of Samsara see: R. C. Zaehner, (1966)
- 14 *Kundalini* is the fire-serpent of Yogic doctrine, which is coiled at the base of the spine, symbolising the sleeping power of magic within the human body. Through meditation the fire-serpent can be awakened, causing it to rise in two spiralling columns through various spiritual centres to ultimately leave the body through a thousand petalled Lotus at the crown of the head. For further discussion of Kundalini Yoga see: Yogi Ramacharaka, (1964); or De Barina, (1995)
- 15 The Lotus is an important symbol of rebirth in both Hinduism and Buddhism. According to Buddhism the human heart is like an unopened Lotus which blossoms only with spiritual awakening. For the Chinese Buddhists the Lotus is the footprint of Buddha. The Hindu God Brahma was said to have issued forth from out of a Lotus blossom and is often depicted sitting on a Lotus. In Indian religions, created universes are brought forth through the opening of a pure gold lotus flower, resembling the sun, with one hundred petals which manifests on the waters of the cosmos. The *Sahasrara* (thousand) Crown Chakra, also called the 'Lotus of a Thousand Petals'(see note 14,) symbolises spiritual awakening in a human being. It is the physical meeting point of *Kundalini* with Pure Consciousness. The petals of the *Sahasrara* Crown Chakra Lotus are inscribed with the letters of the Sanskrit alphabet, representing all possible articulated sounds. For further discussion of the 'Lotus of a Thousand Petals' see: J. Mumford, (1995)

- 16 This deity is one third of the Hindu trinity of Brahma (the creator), Vishnu (the preserver) and Shiva (the transformer.) Shiva is the god of Yoga, often depicted holding a drum (*Damaru*), his arms and neck adorned with serpents. Shiva represents the opening of the mystical third eye, or the realisation of one's own consciousness. He is often smeared with ashes – all that remains of the universe which has dissolved under the gaze of the third eye. Shiva rules over ghosts, elementals and flesh-eaters, and is often identified with the star Sirius. For further discussion of Shiva see: F. W. Clothey, and B. J. Long, ed., (1983)
- 17 *Narayana* is the seven-headed serpent, a symbol of the creator-god (the seven-headed intellect) from the ancient nation of Mu. For a further discussion of *Narayana* see: J. Churchward, (1960)
- 18 *Atman* is the Vedic, or Hindu, word for 'soul'. It is often contrasted with *Brahman* 'the creator of the cosmos'. For further discussion of these terms see: M. Muller, (1979)

The *I Ching*, or Book of Changes, is a Chinese oracular system said to be more than 3,500 years old. It originated with a clan of female diviners from the Shang dynasty, who predicted the future by reading turtle-shells. By the time of the Zhou dynasty, diviners had substituted yarrow sticks for turtle-shells. These are arranged in the following eight trigrams: *Ch'ien* ☰ (creative force), *Sun* ☱ (wind or wood), *K'an* ☵ (water), *Ken* ☶ (mountain), *K'un* ☷ (earth), *Chen* ☳ (thunder), *Li* ☲ (fire), and *Tui* ☱ (lake). For further discussion of the I Ching see: J. E. McCaffree, (1967)

- 19 The jade flute is a recurring symbol in Chinese mythology and poetry. The great Chinese poet Li Po wrote "in what house, the jade flute that sends these dark notes drifting, scattering on the spring wind that fills Lo-Yang? Tonight if we should but hear the willow-breaking song, who could help but long for the gardens of home?" Han Hsiang Tzu, one of the eight immortals of Taoism, is traditionally symbolised by a beautiful jade flute. He represents the ideal of the true scholar. Han Hsiang Tzu is a great poet and the patron of all musicians. The legend of Zhong Kui also features a jade flute. The Emperor Xuanzong (685-762), during an illness, had a nightmare in which the demon Xu Hao stole his jade flute and his consort's perfume bag, before being caught and eaten by another demon. This second demon introduced himself to the Emperor as Zhong Kui. He explained that, a century earlier, he had been a failed scholar and had committed suicide. Now he would like to become the Emperor's exorcist. Upon waking the Emperor commissioned a painting of Zhong Kui.
- 20 Li Po (701-762), whose name is often anglicised as Li Pai, Li T'ai-po, and Li Bai, was considered one of China's greatest Taoist poets. He and Tu Fu are remembered for having raised the Shih form of poetry to an unparalleled level. For further discussion of Li Po see: A. Waley, The Poetry and Career of Li Po, 701-762 A. D. Ethical and Religious Classics of East and West no. 3 (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1950.)
- 21 The *Shih Ching* (Book of Songs) is a collection of Confucianist poetry from which the poetic form 'Shih' was derived. It is falsely alleged that Confucius himself compiled the three hundred and five poems of the *Shih Ching*, which exemplify the humanistic essence of Confucianism. For the full text and further discussion of the Shih Ching see: The Book of Songs (1954) translated by A. Waley.
- 22 *Pashupati Nath* is the name of a Hindu holy place in Nepal. The Temple at *Pashupati Nath* is dedicated to Satidevi, the first spouse of Shiva, who was burned to death in the fire ritual of her Father. The festival of *Shivarati* (the holy night of Lord Shiva) is held each year at *Pashupati Nath* and many thousands of devotees light ceremonial fires.

- 23 Winifred Burston (1889-1976)
- 24 See: L. Sitsky, (2001)
- 25 L. Sitsky, (2001)
- 26 Sitsky was the winner of the first Bartok piano competition in Sydney in 1956. He had previously performed the Australian premiere of Bartok's 3rd Piano concerto at the Sydney Conservatorium in the early 1950s.
- 27 A. Brendel, (1976) p. 110.
- 28 See: L. Sitsky, (2002) p. 65.
- 29 See: L. Sitsky, (2001)
- 30 Gordon Watson also introduced Humprey Searle to Egon Petri.
- 31 Sitsky had played for Watson a number of times previously.
- 32 See: L. Sitsky, (2001)
- 33 Sitsky subtitled this work *Opus 1*, to signify it as his first composition he felt to be satisfactory. It was the first piece he had written since beginning his American studies and its composition had required Sitsky to teach himself twelve-tone technique.
- 34 The Hungarian violinist Joseph Szigeti (1892-1973) had also been part of Busoni's circle.
- 35 L. Sitsky, (2001)
- 36 L. Sitsky, *Concerto for orchestra, a completion and realisation of Busoni's "Fantasia Contrappuntistica."* (1984)
- 37 L. Sitsky, (2001)
- 38 Stevenson quoted in M. Roberge, (1991) p. 72. Ronald Stevenson (b. 1928) is a Scottish composer and pianist. He studied orchestration with Guido Guerrini, a student of Busoni.
- 39 Alan Rawsthorne (1905-1971) was an English composer and a former student of Egon Petri.
- 40 Denis ApIvor (b. 1916) is an Irish composer and a former student of Alan Rawsthorne.
- 41 M. Roberge, (1991) p. 70.
- 42 L. Sitsky, (2001)
- 43 *ibid.*

- 44 L. Sitsky, (2002) pp. 72-73.
- 45 Exodus III, 2-5; Acts VII, 30.
- 46 Acts II, 1-4.
- 47 Mechtilde of Magdeburg (1217-1282) was a German Mystic and writer.
- 48 The flame is also a recurrent symbol in Goethe's Faust.
- 49 For further discussion of the alchemical 'secret fire' see: J. Sadoul, (1972) pp. 230-233, particularly the chapter entitled: 'The Secret Fire or Prime Agent.'
- 50 J. W. Goethe, "Selige Sehnsucht (Trance and Transformation)." In The Penguin Book of German Verse. (1957) p. 227.
- 51 R. Swinburne Clymer defines the aim of Rosicruciansim thus:
- ...to know the nature of the Secret Fire that regenerates the world and which renders him who comes into its possession immortal. All philosophies are based on the Fire Mystery and no one can reach perfect Initiation unless he unravels this mystery and learns to Love.
- For further discussion of the aim of Rosicruciansim see: R. S. Clymer, (1906)
- 52 Many theosophists, including Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater, believed that the mystic Krishnamurti was the torch-bearer Blavatsky had prophesised.
- 53 Busoni's interest in freemasonry was discussed in chapter two.
- 54 Letter to Jella Oppenheimer, Berlin 5 March 1924. Translated in F. Busoni, (1987) p. 375-76.
- 55 Busoni wrote to Gerda on November 8, 1908, saying: "Perhaps I am mistaken, or do I believe I see some similarities in this figure to my own much smaller one?" F. Busoni, (1975)
- 56 See: "The Metaphysical in Music" in K. S. Sorabji, (1947)
- 57 See: L. Sitsky, Index of the Classical Reproducing Piano Roll. (1989), and L. Sitsky, The Repressed Russian Avant-Garde 1900-1929. (1993)
- 58 For a full listing of Sitsky's writings on Busoni see appendices.
- 59 L. Sitsky, (1986)
- 60 L. Sitsky, Letter to Alessandro Olschi, (Sitsky archive, National Library of Australia.) Folder 122.
- 61 L. Sitsky, Letter regarding the Busoni estate, (Sitsky archive, National Library of Australia.) Folder 119

- 62 Sitsky's transcription of *Sonatina nach Bach* is entitled *Fantasia no. 3 – in memory of Don Banks*.
- 63 L. Sitsky, (2001)
- 64 Letter to Volkmar Andreae. 14 May, 1921. In F. Busoni, (1987) pp. 333-34.
- 65 F. Busoni, *Doktor Faust*. Epilogue.
- 66 "Sketch of a New Esthetic of Music" in F. Busoni, (1962) p. 81.
- 67 L. Sitsky, (1996) p. 26.
- 68 Jan Sedivka (b. 1917).
- 69 The Russian author, mathematician and mystic Piotr Demianovich Ouspensky (1878-1947) was a disciple of Gurdjieff's from 1915-1918. From 1918 on, he promoted Gurdjieff's ideas through his writings and study groups. See: P. D. Ouspensky, (1987)
- 70 Sitsky remembers an amusing story about the vilification of Jan Sedivka in Brisbane:
- Because there was so much talk and so on, there was a period, at one time, when the house was watched. Jan was living not far from us... he was renting a house on a fairly large block... anyway, they had a cop sitting on the fence there and they noticed that every night there was what appeared to be a candle-lit procession going down the stairs of the house, which was a real Queenslander on stilts, and going under the house. And, naturally, one added two and two and got fifty-seven. This was obviously some sort of satanic rite that was occurring. I can tell you what was occurring, because I was there many times when this happened. There was no electricity under the house and one had to round up all the ducks and put them in an enclosure so they wouldn't be eaten by foxes. So the cop who was watching this managed to fall off the fence and break his leg and, of course, this was construed also as some sort of voodoo curse that had been put on him. [L. Sitsky, (2002) pp. 83-84]
- 71 An organization called 'The Fellowship of Friends' operates Gurdjieff-Ouspensky Centres in Canada, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, America, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Lithuania, Holland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, the Ukraine, Britain, Australia, India, Japan, Singapore and Taiwan.
- 72 For further discussion see: G. I. Gurdjieff, (1950)
- 73 Gurdjieff was native to Armenia.
- 74 *Sharagan, Khavar, Dagh, Mertzazil, Sayat-Nova, Vartarun, Zuqerq* are all Armenian words.
- 75 L. Sitsky, (2001)

76 On the question of developing a 'Sitsky School' of composition, Sitsky is recorded as saying:

Oh God. It even *sounds* ghastly. When I was in America I was at a few institutions observing the result of Hindemithism. There were hundreds of little Hindemiths running around because he'd written a book on how to...and there was a kind of detailed guide as to what you do and what you can't and so on. And he'd *taught* that way. And I didn't like the result because they were just little Hindemiths. They were just pale copies of the original. [L. Sitsky. (2002) pp. 120-121.]

He describes his method of composition teaching thus:

I don't follow any prescribed program of instruction...and I don't believe that composition can be taught....I say this quite openly, that anyone that says to you 'I can teach you to become a composer' is actually a swindler. What I can do and what I try to do is open doors...I can't actually teach you to be [a composer] it has to be inside and if you have it in you to become a composer, you'll become one. All I can do is facilitate it a bit. If you haven't got it, I can stand on my head – it's not going to make any difference. [ibid. p. 109.]

77 L. Sitsky, (2001)

78 Poe's Gothic stories provided impetus to Sitsky's early orientation towards mysticism. In *Fall of the House of Usher*, Poe describes Usher's study, listing various book titles from his shelves. Many of these titles were imaginary but there were several that were real. Sitsky used Poe's *Usher* list as a reading guide for private research into the occult. Pieces composed by Sitsky in response to Poe include his *Fall of the House of Usher* (1965) and *In Pace Requiescat (song cycle after Poe)* (1989.) In a diary entry from 9 June, 1959, Sitsky records a conversation he had had with Petri about Busoni's interest in Poe, and particularly in *Fall of the House of Usher*. (Manuscript. Sitsky Archive. Box 27. National Library of Australia.)

79 Another Gothic novelist to have influenced Sitsky was H. P. Lovecraft. Pieces written by Sitsky in response to Lovecraft include: *Necronomicon (18 Aphorisms for clarinet & piano)* (1989) and *The Music of Erich Zann* (1988.)

80 L. Sitsky, (2002) p. 139.

81 Sitsky once thought seriously of becoming a poet. He began work on a libretto for the Australian composer Richard Meale on Ben Johnson's *Volpone*. (1976)

82 This has been discussed in chapter two.

83 Sitsky has also translated the complete poems of Alexander Blok into English.

84 L. Sitsky, Diary entry, 20th November 1961 (Sitsky Archive, National Library of Australia.)

85 Liszt's influence on Busoni was primarily to do with composition, rather than the piano. Busoni did not hear Liszt play until he had already passed his prime.

86 Busoni won the Rubinstein Prize for Composition in 1890, the year in which he married Gerda

Sjöstrand.

- 87 L. Sitsky, (1998)
- 88 L. Sitsky, (2001.) p. 8.
- 89 See: L. Sitsky, (1986); L. Sitsky, (1993); L. Sitsky, (1998), and L. Sitsky, ed., (2002)
- 90 Busoni, Petri, Sorabji and Sitsky share an interest in the Jewish composer-pianist Charles Morhange, also known as Alkan (1813-1888). Like, Liszt, Busoni and Sitsky, Alkan did not use his pianistic talent to promote his own work. He began an annual series of concerts to perform the music of other composers. He was a friend of Liszt and Anton Rubinstein.
- 91 K. S. Sorabji, (1929)
- 92 The *Sepher Yetzirah* (Book of Formation) is a Jewish mystical text thought to have originated in the 2nd century BC., although more recent material has subsequently been included. According to the *Sepher Yetzirah*, everything in existence is an emanation from a single immanent and transcendent God. It gives a detailed account of the creation of all phenomena from the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet and of the 10 *Sephirot*, or regions, through which all emanations pass. For the text of the *Sepher Yetzirah* see: A. ben Joseph, (1970)
- 93 Elphias Lévi was the pen name of Alphonse Louis Constant (1810-1875). Lévi was considered an expert in the Rosicrucian interpretation of the Kabbalah. In his youth he had trained for the Catholic priesthood but had been expelled from the seminary for promoting unsanctioned and illicit doctrines. From 1825 Lévi devoted himself to the occult sciences about which he has written extensively. Apollonius of Tyana was a magician from the first century A. D. His gifts of prophesy and sorcery were said to be due to magical rings, given to him by an Indian prince. For Lévi's account of invoking the spirit of Apollonius see: Lévi, E. (1995) pp. 153-156. For the text of the Nuctemeron of Apollonius of Tyana see: *ibid.* pp. 500-509. For further discussion of Apollonius of Tyana see: A. Daraul, (1971) pp. 25-27. The word 'Nuctemeron' means 'the progression from darkness to light.'
- 94 *ibid.* p. 135.
- 95 Sitsky quoted in M. Hooper. "Zohar: Sephardic Concerto for Mandolin and Small Orchestra, Larry Sitsky." 2001. Web Page. (last accessed: 10 August. 2002) <<http://members.optushome.com.au/hoopermusic/repertoire/zohar.html>>.
- 96 See chapter two.
- 97 R. Covell, "(Note 80) Australian Anthology of Music on CD." Australian National University. p. 5.
- 98 L. Sitsky, (2002) p. 110.
- 99 *ibid.* p. 111.
- 100 L. Sitsky, (2001)

101 L. Sitsky, (2002) pp. 70-71.

102 Composers on the Busoni line to have expressed this attitude include Alkan and Liszt (pre-dating Busoni), Sorabji, Varese and Wolpe.

103 L. Sitsky, (2001)

104 In July 1962 Sorabji wrote to Frank Holliday after the pianist John Ogdon had requested permission to record the *Opus Clavicembalisticum* [quoted in A. Corleoni, (1993)], saying:

I DO NOT WANT PUBLIC PERFORMANCE OF MY WORK EITHER BY OGDON OR ANYONE ELSE AT ALL,,, I have set out my views about this often enough AND NOTHING NOR NO ONE WILL MAKE ME CHANGE THEM, SO THAT IS THAT, ISN'T IT?

Ten years later Sorabji abandoned this stance, by which time most of the pianists who had wanted to play his pieces were dead anyway.

105 L. Sitsky, (1996) p. 29.

106 This is clearly illustrated by the Hindu idea of 'Om'; the Zoroastrian belief that the world was created by sound; the Buddhist hope that the soul might be liberated through sound and the Pythagorean and Keplerean theories of the Harmony of the Spheres. Needless to say there are many more examples of this idea in Mysticism. For further discussion see: J. Godwin, (1987)

107 See: G. I. Gurdjieff, (1950)

108 For the sake of clarity I have continued to use Busoni's term *die Ur-Musik* rather than Gurdjieff's 'objective music'. The two concepts are identical and easily interchangeable. A further reason for using the term *die Ur-Musik*, is that Kandinsky uses the word 'objective' in very different sense to Gurdjieff. see: W. Kandinsky, (1979.) The artistic philosophies of Busoni and Kandinsky are very closely related (Schoenberg once wrote to Kandinsky of the similarity of Busoni's ideas to their own). Accordingly, the word 'objective', in the context of this discussion, might present a semantic problem.

109 J. Kepler, (1997)

110 This concert took place on 6 September, 1978 at the Sydney Opera House. The Sydney Symphony Orchestra and the Sydney Philharmonia Choir were conducted by Charles Mackerras.

111 G. I. Gurdjieff, (1950.) Gurdjieff's ideas have been most clearly expounded by his disciple P. D. Ouspensky in his books In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching, (1931), and A New Model of the Universe, (1987)

112 L. Sitsky, (2001)

113 A fortunate co-incidence allowed Sitsky to visit Gurdjieff's native Armenia in 1983, the year of the second concerto's composition.

- 114 These melodies were transcribed, privately published in four volumes and arranged by Thomas de Hartmann. The results have been criticised by Sitsky and others as sounding like poor Rachmaninoff.
- 115 By strange coincidence Harwood worked as a medical secretary in 1964 for a doctor who had also studied piano with Egon Petri. See: "Memoirs of a Dutiful Librettist" in G. Harwood, (1987) p. 4.
- 116 This was published under the title *Poems* in 1963 and a second volume was subsequently published in 1968.
- 117 Reproduced in R. Holmes, P. Shaw and P. Campbell, (1997) preface.
- 118 The choice of Poe as an operatic subject was inspired by Sitsky's discussions with Petri about Busoni's interest in that subject.
- 119 For a basic overview of wave mechanics see: J. Gribbon, (1999)
- 120 An interpretation of quantum physics largely formulated by Niels Bohr whilst working in Copenhagen. From the 1930s to the 1980s this view held great sway in universities and scientific circles. It is important to note that the Copenhagen interpretation is one of many possible perspectives from which quantum physics may be viewed. For a basic overview of the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum physics see: *ibid.*
- 121 L. Sitsky, (1996) pp. 29-30.
- 122 "Concert of Sandberg's music in Toronto in 1998." (last accessed: 25 August. 2002) <<http://www.yorku.ca/ycom/release/archive/021398.htm>>.
- 123 L. Sitsky, (1996) p. 27.
- 124 L. Sitsky, (2002) p. 122.
- 125 L. Sitsky, (2001)
- 126 Sitsky's creative transcriptions, excluding those from Busoni, include works from: Alpheraky, Arensky, Bach, Balakirev, Bartók, Borodin, Cui, Dargomyzhsky, Debussy, Gershwin, Glinka, Gretchaninov, Ilyinsky, Kalinnikov, Karganov, Korestchenko, Ladoukhin, Levitzki, Liadov, Moussorgsky, Pachelbel, Poushnov, Rachmaninov, Rebikov, Rimsky-Korsakov, Rubinstein, Schumann, Scriabin, Shcherbachev, Sokalsky, Taneev, Tchaikovsky and Wihtol.
- 127 L. Sitsky, (1966) p. 34.
- 128 L. Sitsky, (2002) pp. 115-116.
- 129 L. Sitsky, (1994)
- 130 The word 'Kabbalah' means 'received tradition' or 'received doctrine'.

- 131 Alternate spellings of 'Kabbalah' include: 'Cabala', 'Cabbalah', 'Kabala', 'Qabala', and 'Qabbalah'.
- 132 Dion Fortune referred to the western tradition of magic as the 'Yoga of the west'. See: D. Fortune, (1984) pp. 1-8.
- 133 Other societies belonging to the 'Yoga of the west' include Martinism, the Illuminati of Avignon and the Priory of Sion; as well as any other societies that are primarily concerned with the doctrines of theurgy, alchemy, Gnosticism, Paracelsianism, theosophy, occultism or the ancient mystery religions.
- 134 Henricus Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim (1486-1535) was an alchemist, magician and, for a time, a Professor of Hebrew at the University of Dole in France. Agrippa is best known for his construction of magical and secret alphabets and his supposed ability to conjure visions. For further discussion of Agrippa see: A. Daraul, (1971) pp. 72-80.
- 135 Theophrastus Paracelsus (1493-1541) was a physician, astrologer, theologian, magician and mystic. He is best known for his studies on alchemy and early pharmacology. For further discussion of Paracelsus see: M. P. Hall, (1964); or T. Paracelsus, (1894)
- 136 Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494) was a Neo-Platonic philosopher with a deep interest in the Kabbalah. At the age of twenty-four he posted nine hundred theses for public debate in Rome. Many of these texts were to do with magic and, particularly, the Kabbalah. Pope Innocent VIII commissioned an inquiry into Pico's theses, which resulted in thirteen theories being deemed heretical or erroneous. In a published apology from 1487, Pico defended his thirteen theories, accusing his judges of ignorance and heresy and of being "stammering barbarians." Pico was targeted by the inquisition and fled to France, where he was arrested and incarcerated. Lorenzo de' Medici intervened on his behalf and Pico was allowed to return to Italy but died shortly thereafter. For further discussion of Pico della Mirandola see: K. Seligmann, (1997) pp. 309-311.
- 137 Robert Fludd (1574-1687) was a scientist and mystic, best known for his magnum opus, *Utriusque Cosmi Maioris scilicet et Minoris Metaphysica, Physica atque Technica Historia* (an all-encompassing history of the Macrocosm and Microcosm), which attempted to connect all documented knowledge of his time. Fludd formulated theories that are related to the concept of *die Ur-Musik* – he proposed the existence of cosmic musical scales spanning three 'octaves' which connect all of the various levels of existence, from catacombs beneath the earth to the angelic realms. His writings were extensively illustrated with cosmological engravings. For further discussion of Robert Fludd see: W. H. Huffman, (1988)
- 138 Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers (1854-1918) was a famous occultist, and scholar who wrote many of the rituals of the hermetic order of the Golden Dawn, of which he was a founding member. He is widely regarded as a leader of the occult revival in the late 1880s. Mathers claimed that his teachings were derived from 'the secret chiefs' an order of superhuman adepts, he campaigned for women's rights as well as for the restoration of the Scottish Stuarts to the throne. He believed he was the reincarnation of the magician James IV, King of Scots, and often rode his bicycle through Paris in full Highland dress. The contribution of the Golden Dawn to the western hermetic tradition was their synthesis of Kabbalistic, alchemical, astrological, numerological, masonic and magical doctrines into a single coherent system. For further discussion of S. L. Macgregor Mathers see: I. Colquhoun, (1975)

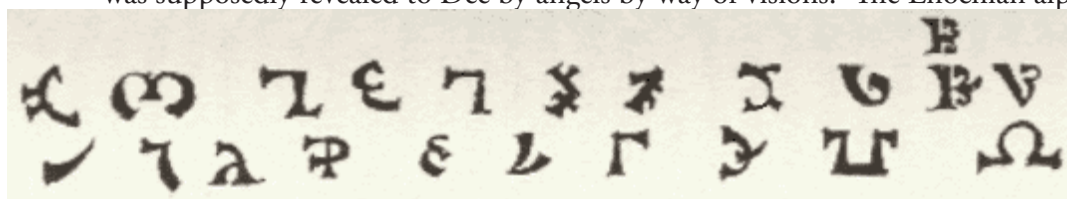
- 139 Aleister Crowley (1875-1947), who believed himself to be the reincarnation of the occultist Eliphas Levi, was a member of the hermetic order of the Golden Dawn, led by Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers. In 1900, he became eligible for elevation the rank of Adeptus Minor, but the order refused to advance him, because of his homosexual deviancy. Crowley travelled to Paris and convinced Mathers to perform the ceremony. Several outraged London members resigned and Mathers was eventually expelled from the order for revealing his (correct) suspicions that certain founding of the order's documents had been forged by another member. Crowley was expelled from the order after attempting to steal the order's property for Mathers, interrupting one of their rituals in full Highland dress and a black hood. In 1907, Crowley formed the *Argentum Astrum*, the order of the Silver Star, a magical organization centered around his *Liber AL vel Legis* (Book of the Law) manuscript. In 1910, he was contacted by the head of the *Ordo Templi Orientis*, (the order of the Templars of the east, or the order of the Temple of the Orient) who accused Crowley of having published the secret of their IXth degree. Crowley's published ideas were so similar to those espoused by the O.T.O, that they had assumed he had somehow gained access to them. This led to Crowley joining the order and, in 1912, he became the head of the English speaking branch. In 1916 Crowley promoted himself to the rank of Magus through a ceremony, which supposedly involved baptizing a toad, then crucifying it. In 1920 he founded the Abbey of Thelema in Sicily. When one of one of the initiates died from drinking polluted water, his wife sold her story to the London tabloids. Crowley was expelled from Sicily in 1923. In 1925 he was elected the World Head of the O.T.O. For further discussion of Aleister Crowley see: P. R. Stephensen, and I. Regardie, (1970)
- 140 The *Sepher Ha-Zohar* (Book of Splendour), commonly known as the *Zohar*, is a thirteenth century Jewish mystical text attributed to Moses de Leon. It is comprised of eighteen parts: (1) commentary on the *Torah*; (2) 'Book of concealment,' commentary on Genesis; (3) 'Greater Assembly,' a dramatic account of mysticism and death; (4) 'Lesser Assembly,' a development of the former; (5) 'Assembly for a Lecture on the Tabernacle,' mystical prayer; (6) 'The Halls,' an account of the *Merkabah*; (7) 'The Old Man,' a dramatic account of the soul; (8) 'The Child,' a child's account of the *Torah*; (9) 'Head of the Academy,' a vision of Paradise; (10) 'Secrets of the Torah,' interpretation of *Torah* symbols; (11) further commentary on the *Torah*; (12) commentary of the 'Song of Songs'; (13) 'The Mystical Standard of Measure,' commentary on Deuteronomy 6,4; (14) 'Secrets of the Letters,' explanation of the Tetragrammaton; (15) commentary on the *Merkabah*; (16) 'Mystical Midrash,' further commentary on the *Torah*; (17) interpretation of the 'Book of Ruth'; (18) three further commentaries of different authorship. For further discussion of the *Sepher Ha-Zohar* See: The Zohar. (1958)
- 141 As against a religious, or orthodox, interpretation of the Kabbalah.
- 142 Occultists such as Eliphas Levi proposed an esoteric link between the tarot and the Kabbalah. The Kabbalistic glyph of Tree of Life consists of ten Sephiroth connected by 22 paths. These correspond to the major and minor arcana that comprise the structure of the tarot. The 22 paths on the Tree of Life correspond to the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet as well as to the 22 cards in the major arcana of the tarot. The ten Sephiroth on the Tree of Life correspond to the ten numbered cards in each suit of the minor arcana of the tarot.
- 143 The word *Sephardic* refers to Judaism of a descent other than German or eastern European.
- 144 Sitsky's *Tetragrammaton* is comprised of four pieces for piano and violin, written "For my dear friend Jan Sedivka on his 70th birthday" (inscribed on the score). Its title: 'Tetragrammaton' (from the Greek 'tetra', four and 'gramma', letter) designates the four Hebrew letters Yod, He, Waw and He - the personal name of God. It transliterates into English as IAUE, YHWH or YHVH – pronounced 'Yahweh'. Traditionally

the enunciation of the Tetragrammaton was forbidden to the Jews, who substituted the word 'Adonai' (Lord) instead. The Tetragrammaton is deeply significant also to the non-Jewish esoteric traditions. Donald Tyson describes it as "the occult key that unlocks the meaning behind astrological symbolism, the tarot, the mysteries of the Old Testament and the book of Revelation, the Kabbalah, the Enochian magic of John Dee, and modern ritual magic." For further discussion of the Tetragrammaton see: D. Tyson, (1995)

145 The *Sephirot* are ten regions or spheres, through which the emanations from God are passed resulting in the creation of the sensory world. They are *Keter* (the crown); *Chokmah* (wisdom); *Binah* (understanding); *Chesed* (mercy); *Geburah* (justice); *Tipheret* (beauty); *Netzach* (eternity); *Hod* (glory); *Yesod* (foundation) and *Malkuth* (presence in the world). For further discussion of the Ten Sephirot of the Kabbalah see: D. Fortune, (1984); or Akiba ben Joseph, (1970)

146 *Claviculis Salomonis* is the Latin title of one of the most famous grimoires, or books of magic, 'The Key of Solomon' (*Maftea Shelomo* in Hebrew.) If Solomon was actually the author of this grimoire, as it is generally claimed, then the original text is more than 3000 years old. The Key of Solomon, which was banned by the inquisition in 1559, is often confused with The Lemegeton, or the Lesser Key of Solomon, which is also a famous occult work and contains the seals and signatures of various demons. At present, the only reputable version of the Key of Solomon is the translation by S. L. Macgregor Mathers: The Key of Solomon the King: Calvicula Salomonis, (2000)

147 Enochian magic was developed by John Dee and Edward Kelly between 1582-1587. It was inspired by the biblical Enoch who lived for 365 years before being taken into heaven without having ever suffered death. Enoch could speak with spirits, angels and demons because he 'walked with God'. The Book of Enoch, one of the Dead Sea scrolls, speaks of the revelation of knowledge to Enoch by the archangels Uriel and Annael. Dee and Kelly's system is rooted in the Goetic arts (magic that is concerned with the demons of King Solomon) and in necromancy (divination via the dead.) It uses its own language, called Enochian, which was supposedly revealed to Dee by angels by way of visions. The Enochian alphabet looks like this:



[Image from "Enochian language." Web Page. (last accessed: 2 December. 2002) <<http://www.geocities.com/xeroiii/5EnochianLanguage.htm>>.]

In addition to the Enochian language a number of magical seals and tables were also communicated to Dee by various angels and spirits. The combination of language, seals and tables allowed Dee and Kelly to construct eighteen keys, or calls, the first of which reads:

I rayng over you, sayeth the God of Justice, in power exalted above the firmaments of wrath: in whose hands the Sun is as a sword and the Moon as a through thrusting fire: which measureth your garments in the midst of my vestures, and thrust you together in the palms of my hands: whose seats are garnished with the fire of gathering, and beautified your garments with admiration. To whom I made a law to govern the holy ones and delivered you a rod with the ark of knowledge. Moreover you lifted up your voices and swear obedience and faith to him that liveth and triumpheth

whose beginning is not, nor end cannot be, which shineth as a flame in the midst of your palace, and reigneth amongst you as the balance of righteousness and truth. **Move, therefore, and show yourselves:** open the mysteries of your creation: Be friendly unto me: for I am the servant of the same your God, the true worshipper of the highest.

Sitsky's Enochian Sonata is prefaced with the words "Move and show yourselves," which can also be interpreted as an observation that the musician is revealed through the movement of playing their instrument. For further discussion of Enochian Magic see: J. Dee, (1994)

- 148 *The Egyptian book of the dead*, commonly known as *prt m hrw* (manifested in the light) was taken from the 1240 BC. *Papyrus of Ani*, which documents the passage of Ani through the realm of the dead. The Egyptians believed that those deceased who successfully traversed the underworld in the space of a single night would be transformed and emerge with the morning sun. *The Egyptian book of the dead* lists the names and incantations the deceased must recite in order to pass by various obstacles. Firstly, the heart of the deceased was weighed against *Ma'at* (truth, balance and order) and, if its weight was the lesser, the deceased was devoured by the demon Ammut. Assuming this first trial was survived, the deceased must then pass through seven *Arit* (doors) and twenty-one *Pylons* (gates) to reach the domain of Osiris. The names of certain doorkeepers, watchers and heralds, together with magical incantations, must be recited to attain safe passage. The *Papyrus of Ani* records that, after successfully emerging from the underworld, Ani was transformed into a physical amalgamation of various gods: he had the eyes of Hathor, the face of Ra, the cheeks of Isis, the backbone of Set, the belly of Sekhmet, buttocks of the eye of Horus, the phallus of Osiris, the thighs of Nut and the feet of Ptah. He told the gods Isis and Nephthys, "I am a perfect soul dwelling in the divine egg of the Abtu Fish. I am the Great Cat which dwelleth in the Seat of Truth, wherein the god Shu riseth." For the text of *The Egyptian book of the dead* see: [The Egyptian Book of the Dead \(The Papyrus of Ani\)](#). (1967)
- 149 The Sphinx is a creature with the body of a lion and the head of a man, the earthly representation of the Egyptian god Horus. The Greek Sphinx has the head and bust of a woman, eagle's wings and snake's tail – the Sphinx of Greek legend asks travellers riddles and devours those who answer incorrectly. The Great Sphinx at Gizeh is called "Abu el-Hol" (the Father of Terror) by the Arabs. It was claimed by Pharaoh Amenhotep II (1448-1420 B.C.) that the Great Sphinx is older than the Pyramids and had been buried in the sand until one of his ancestors had been told of its existence in a dream. Modern efforts to restore the Egyptian Sphinx have resulted in the discovery of an ancient passageway leading beneath the statue's body. Investigations with ground-penetrating radar have detected the existence of underground chambers to the north and south of the statue, possibly connected by a tunnel. A further chamber was detected between the statue's front paws. The famous psychic Edgar Cayce believes the Sphinx was built in 10,500 B.C. by survivors from Atlantis. He predicts the discovery of their Hall of Records, concealed beneath the Sphinx, which contains sacred writings and the history of their lost civilization. Cayce predicted that this Hall of Records would be found by 1998.
- 150 An ancient Indian text, the *Ayurveda*, proposed that the four elements of Earth, Water, Fire and Air arise from the fifth element, or quintessence, called Ether. This view was shared by Pythagoras, the alchemists and several branches of Chinese mysticism. Ether was thought to pervade the entire universe, a view that has been revived as part of the modern scientific debate about dark matter. For further discussion of the relationship between dark matter and quintessence see: L. Krauss, (1990) For further discussion of the *Ayurveda* see: H. Johari, (1998)

- 151 The *Necronomicon of Alhazred* (the Book of Dead Names), which has also been known as the ‘Book of the Arab’ or the ‘Book of Al Azif’, was written in Damascus by Abdul Alhazred in 730 A.D. Although the original Arabic manuscript has been lost a Latin translation was made in 1487 by the Dominican priest Olaus Wormius, who was burned as a heretic for his efforts. Almost every copy of the Necronomicon in Latin translation was burned with the translator, however in 1586 a copy surfaced in Prague and was purchased by Dr John Dee’s assistant Edward Kelly. Dee translated the text into English and gave it the title *Liber Logaeth*. It became part of Elias Ashmole’s collection and was eventually lodged at the Bodleian Library at Oxford. John Dee’s translation has been posthumously published by Corgi Books. The Necronomicon has been popularised through the occult novels of H. P. Lovecraft, most notably ‘The Call of Cthulhu’ from 1926. He later denied the existence of an actual Necronomicon, claiming that the book referred to in his stories was of his own invention and purely fictional. Although there is no evidence that Lovecraft had personally seen the original Necronomicon, he had most likely been told of its existence by his wife Sonia Greene. Aleister Crowley, whose *Book of the Law* significantly resembles the Necronomicon, had been romantically involved with Sonia Greene prior to her marriage to Lovecraft. Crowley is generally thought to have been well acquainted with Dee’s translation.
- 152 *Omnia Exeunt in Mysterium* is Latin for ‘Everything ends in mystery’.
- 153 *The Secret Doctrine*: a document central to theosophy, sets out Madame Blavatsky’s views on science, religion, mythology and the evolution of the cosmos. Volume I states that “An archaic manuscript [sic]– a collection of palm leaves made impermeable to water, fire, and air, by some specific unknown process – is before the writer’s eye.” This manuscript, ‘Seven stanzas from the Book of Dzyan’, was translated by Blavatsky from Sanskrit and it forms the basis of *The Secret Doctrine*. For the full text of this work see: H. P. Blavatsky, (1888)
- 154 *Fantasia No. 3 – in memory of Don Banks* is a transcription of Busoni’s *Sonatina nach Bach*.
- 155 L. Sitsky, (2002) p. 138.
- 156 Rosemary Brown (1916 – 2001) was a middle-aged London widow who claimed to have transcribed new works for the ghosts of over twenty composers. These composers included Liszt, Bach, Chopin, Stravinsky, Schubert, Grieg, Debussy, Rachmaninov and Beethoven. Of particular importance to Mrs Brown was the spirit of Liszt, whose ghost she had first seen during her childhood, and whose return in 1961 heralded the beginning of her clairvoyant experiences. For Rosemary Brown’s testimonies see: R. Brown, (1971); and R. Brown, (1974)
- 157 L. Sitsky, letter to Basil Ramsey (Rosemary Brown’s agent), 14 April, 1977 (Sitsky Archive, National Library of Australia.)
- 158 Composers, other than Sitsky, to express their belief in Rosemary Brown’s ability include Ian Parrot and Richard Rodney Bennet.
- 159 L. Sitsky, letter to Rosemary Brown, 13 April, 1978 (Sitsky Archive, National Library of Australia.)
- 160 Printed programs from the ‘Music From Beyond’ concert series are part of the holdings of the Sitsky archive, National Library of Australia.

- 161 L. Sitsky, letters to Basil Ramsey and to Rosemary Brown expressing complete belief in her abilities as a medium, from 1977, 1979, 1981, 1982, 1984. (Sitsky archive, National Library of Australia.) Box 1, Folder 6; Box 12, Folder 118; Box 31, Folder 241; Box 48, Folder 345.
- 162 R. Brown, letter to Larry Sitsky from Rosemary Brown, (Sitsky archive, National Library of Australia.) Box 65, Folder 451.
- 163

Two Reviews of Publications About and By Larry Sitsky

Graham Hair

Cotter, Jim (2004)

Sitsky. *Conversations with the Composer*. (Canberra: Nation Library of Australia)

ISBN 0 – 642 – 27606 – 4

Larry Sitsky is one of Australia's foremost senior composers (he turned 70 in 2004). This handsomely-produced book consists of selected recent conversations with Jim Cotter (a colleague on the staff of the ANU School of Music and himself a composer), complemented by a wonderful array of photographs, taken at different stages of Sitsky's life.

The conversations are grouped in eleven chapters. Sitsky recounts aspects of his early life in a Russian family in China (1934 – 1950), his immigration to Australia after the Chinese communists came to power, his student years in Sydney, and the various chapters of his life thereafter, through his time in Brisbane and Hobart, down to the now 30 years or so during which he has presided over aspects of the life of the School of Music in Canberra, become one of the elder statesman of Australian composition, and (recently) written his First Symphony. Other chapters record Sitsky's sometimes trenchant opinions on Australian musical life, and yet others explore Sitsky's own compositional development through his vast output, from piano solos to operas.

Composers and lexicographers are most likely to link Sitsky's name with two other figures in Australian modernism, Don Banks (1923 – 1980) and Keith Humble (1927 – 1995): the radicals of that generation. Sitsky's work also shows that being an Australian composer can mean relating to aspects of Australian intellectual life – for instance through his friendship and collaboration with poet Gwen Harwood – as well as to Australian geography and landscape, which dominated the attention of some of his contemporaries. Sometimes the 'dissenting' aspect of Sitsky's personality raises its head, particularly when he speaks of run-ins he has had with conservative mandarins, and one or two 'scandals' which his work provoked. Yet his interest in the music of earlier generations of Australian composers (eg Roy Agnew), and his evocation of his Russian heritage in recent years, particularly after his return to Russia in middle age, belie this 'tearaway' image.

Much of Sitsky's life has been devoted to pianistic activities as well as to composition. He studied in Sydney with Winifrid Burston – something of a visionary in Australian musical life in her time – and in San Francisco with the distinguished pianist Egon Petri, a pupil of Busoni. Thus an account of 'the Busoni tradition' – Sitsky's part in it, and the attitudes to composition and performance, music more broadly, and indeed life in general which this history has engendered – places Sitsky's work in an international as well as an Australian context.

The conversations are preceded by Cotter's introduction, and followed by a glossary of 'who has been who' in Sitsky's life and times. A bedside-table book, perhaps, but a fascinating, revealing and very readable one.

Sitsky, Larry (2005)

With a contribution from Roger Woodward.

Australian Piano Music of the Twentieth Century (Westport, Conn: Praeger)

ISBN 0-313-32286-4

ISSN 0736-7740

Larry Sitsky (70 in 2004) is one of Australia's foremost senior composers and pianists, but has for many years been active in musicology too: for example, his book on the post-World War I composers of the Russian Avant-Garde is widely considered a definitive work on that topic.

From its title, one might suppose that his latest publication is a reference book, and, up to a point, it is. It's large (335 pages) and covers a lot of ground: almost 150 composers rate at least a mention, and 63 are honoured with quotations. Indeed the inclusion of so many musical examples contributes a lot to the specificity of the impressions given.

Nevertheless, the author's style is anything but a bland 'encyclopaedic' one. Consider the title of its last section ("Conclusion. The Anti-Composer in Australian Society: Kitsch is Alive and Well") to get an idea of its tone in some passages. To be fair, this last section (a diatribe about the prominence of careerists with defective musical skills but well-developed networking talent) occupies only 8 pages, but I suspect it's included because Sitsky feels the evaluation of Australian music has been distorted by such 'anti-composers', and one intention of the book is to 'set the record straight', for there are other passages of rather strident polemic elsewhere (of which more below).

Some idiosyncratic attitudes flow from this outlook of respect for doers rather than talkers: for example, some sections are divided into "Pianists" and "Non-Pianists" (though the latter are not quite relegated to second-class status). The category of "Australian" composers, on the other hand (composers who cultivate local cultural or geographic references, as opposed to others, presumably considered "internationalists"), a category which appears in 3 of the book's 4 parts, takes up the theme of many earlier histories of Australian music.

The polemical passages also point to the book's real nature: even if it is published in Praeger's "Music Reference Collection" it is not so much a reference work as a personal, critical view of one slice of our musical history.

It has some attractive and distinctive features. One is that it does not assume that Australian music in some sense "came of age" after the World War II, as so much historical writing of the previous generation did, thereby relegating earlier music to "preludial" status. Part 1: The First Generation about the music of the earlier 20th century is one of the most interesting, especially the sections on Brewster-Jones (1887-1949) and Roy Agnew (1891-1944). Few Australian pianists know much about this material, so Sitsky's 20 pages on the former and 10 on the latter provide a valuable introduction.

Nevertheless, Sitsky clearly regards the modernists of his own generation as the weighty figures in this history and Part 2: The Second Generation, which deals with them and their contemporaries, is the longest. Werder, Banks, Humble, Williamson, Meale, Hollier, Kos and Butterley are included here. Composers of this generation not considered to be part of this modernist group are given a separate category entitled "Retrospective Composers". Also within this second part of the volume, there is a special section not by Sitsky but about him. It is a genial tribute from one major Australian pianist (Roger Woodward) to a colleague. It is also the longest section by far on a single composer (44 pages): the same length as the entire Part 3: The Third Generation, where 58 composers are discussed, also in 44 pages.

It is perhaps understandable that Sitsky feels less sympathy for this last, younger group of composers, especially those (probably the majority) who have departed from precepts which have been central to his own career and approach. To see ourselves in the mainstream and those who differ from us as small backwaters is a natural human instinct, whereas to acknowledge the importance of some of these recent developments might risk describing the tide of history flowing away from us.

Nevertheless, some preoccupations of this generation rouse Sitsky's ire more than others: as he says (page 235), "The mere whiff of a school of composition makes my blood run cold". Thus Maximalism (Dench, Smetanin, Brophy, Formosa) receives the most trenchant polemic in the whole volume. But he is not very sympathetic to approaches at the other end of the aesthetic spectrum either: Vine, one of the most-performed Australian composers in recent years, is castigated for "a simplistic melodic approach", "flirtation with commercialism" and being "showy but not profound".

Still, there are, throughout the book, many illuminating vignettes where Sitsky's sympathies are engaged. Composers such as Don Hollier (longtime colleague and friend) and Ann Ghandar (former pupil) receive more extensive attention than they are likely to receive from others, and it is good to have a perceptive account of such contributions.

In Part 4: The Australian Piano Concerto the chronological view is abandoned for the generic, giving a quick overview of 100 years' worth of concertos down to Smalley's (1985) and Vine's (1997); the latter's receives kinder treatment than his solo works! The chapter ends with another diatribe, this time against the ABC for not supporting more performances of these many interesting pieces: a familiar Sitsky theme.

A book that deals with so much material, piece by piece, inevitably cannot delve in depth into particular composers, works, historical movements or aesthetic issues. It gives a reasonably comprehensive, but nevertheless impressionistic overview of the topic outlined in the title, from a well-defined individual perspective, but leaves quite a bit of room for further words to be uttered. If I'm not mistaken, I hear a *riposte* or two already in the offing ...

Gurdjieff and Larry Sitsky's Violin Concerto No 2 (1983)

Patricia Shaw

Larry Sitsky's "Opus One," the point of departure for his mature compositional style, was his Sonata for Unaccompanied Violin (1959) written at the beginning of his period of post-graduate study in the USA. Since then he has composed a large number of works for violin and other stringed instruments, most significantly the three violin concertos. These concertos have all been written for Jan Sedivka, and are all quite different in style, form and extra-musical associations, albeit with the common thread of mysticism. This paper addresses the relationship between style, form and extra-musical associations in Sitsky's second concerto, *Gurdjieff*, for violin and small orchestra, written in early 1983. This concerto comes from a comparatively lean year in his compositional output, between two very prolific years, and was written quickly due to the pressure of other commitments and activities. It is, more importantly, the most extensive and concentrated use of material drawn from Sitsky's long-held interest in Armenian music and in the early twentieth-century Armenian philosopher, mystic and teacher Georges Ivanovitch Gurdjieff. This interest is especially significant to music composed in the 1980s, and was an element in Sitsky's partial move away from modernist compositional aesthetics and techniques towards more traditional musical materials.

The violinist for whom Sitsky has written his concertos, along with several chamber works, is Jan Sedivka, the Czech performer and teacher who arrived in Australia from London in 1961. His first post was at the then recently opened Queensland Conservatorium in Brisbane. Also in 1961, Sitsky returned from his studies in the USA and gained his first teaching job, at the same institution. The two new staff members formed a close personal and professional relationship which continues to this day. Sitsky's Czech-born wife Magda and Sedivka's wife, pianist Beryl Sedivka, have also contributed to this close relationship. Sitsky and Sedivka have a great deal in common: a love of cats, literature and philosophy; a dry and witty sense of humour blended with intense seriousness; their Eastern European cultural background; and, of course, music. In particular, they share a fundamentally Romantic musical aesthetic and a passionate approach to playing and performing, which encompasses a healthy disrespect for the dots on the page and a formidable virtuosity, in the face of which technical difficulties seem to vanish.¹

Most of Sitsky's works are based in a complex of extra-musical and musical ideas, often with cultural symbolism infusing the work at its conception, forming "a basis for the logical generation of the musical materials intrinsic to that work."² This is particularly true for the violin concertos, partly because of their association with Sedivka and the interests shared by the composer and violinist. Sitsky's first work for Sedivka was the Concerto for Violin, Orchestra and Female Voices "Mysterium Cosmographicum" (1969–72), which was his first concerto for any instrument. It draws for both structure and text on two major writings, *Mysterium Cosmographicum* and *Harmonices Mundi*, by the seventeenth-century astronomer, Johannes Kepler. The third concerto, *I Ching* (1987), has an eight-movement structure based on a quasi-programmatic realisation of the eight trigrams found in the ancient Chinese Book of Oracles, while its melodic material is in a personalised pentatonicism. This concerto represents both a manifestation of the interest in Chinese culture prompted by Sitsky's formative years in Tianjin,³ as well as an interest in religious philosophies shared with Sedivka.

The second concerto, *Gurdjieff*, has an even more direct connection with Sedivka, for it was he who introduced

1 See Sedivka's reminiscences in Marcia Ruff, "Sitsky: The Man and His Music," *Canberra Times* 9 Sept. 1984:11–12.

2 Robyn Holmes, Patricia Shaw & Peter Campbell, *Larry Sitsky: A Bio-bibliography*, Bio-bibliographies in Music 65 (Westport CT: Greenwood, 1997) 39.

3 The son of White Russian émigrés, Sitsky was born and grew up in the French concession of Tianjin, arriving in Australia only in 1951.

Sitsky to the Armenian guru's teachings in the early 1960s in Brisbane, through a study group that he set up. The group's activities aroused some suspicion in the conservative environment of Brisbane in the early 1960s, which was a "significant factor" in Sedivka's departure for the newly formed Tasmanian Conservatorium in 1965.⁴ Sitsky subsequently developed a substantial interest in Armenian music and culture. He travelled to Armenia during his Cultural Exchange visits to the USSR in 1977 and China in 1983, and collected a large number of songs through the Armenian cultural centre in Sydney.⁵ He also hosted the Armenian composer Karen Khachaturian (nephew of the more famous Aram) on his visit to Australia in 1977,⁶ and no doubt discussed Armenian music with him.

Sitsky's first work to be partly inspired by Gurdjieff was the *Concerto for Trombone, Keyboards and Percussion: "Kundalini: The Fire Serpent"* (1982), some of whose music derived from *Sonata No. 2 for Solo Flute: "The Fourteen Days of Bardo Thödol"* (1979). Kundalini is a term found in yoga to describe the latent psychic energies in a person, depicted as a sleeping serpent.⁷ However, it is also found in the teachings of Gurdjieff, who noted that it was often wrongly considered to be sexual energy, but is really "the power of imagination, the power of fantasy [...] which] can act in all centers and with its help all the centers can be satisfied with the imaginary instead of the real. [...] Kundalini is the force that keeps [men] in a hypnotic state."⁸ The interest in Armenian culture is also reflected in the use of Armenian folk melody in the pedagogical piano collection *Century*, written the same year as *Kundalini*.

Although Sitsky had composed prolifically in 1982,⁹ *Gurdjieff* was the only original work he wrote in 1983,¹⁰ when he was preoccupied with administrative tasks at the Canberra School of Music, working on his book on Busoni and the piano, and his first return visit to China since his family had fled over thirty years earlier. However, late that year he was awarded an Australia Council Composer Fellowship which allowed him to devote himself to composition full-time the following year.¹¹ 1984 was therefore much more prolific. In addition to his orchestration of Busoni's *Fantasia Contrappuntistica* as *Concerto for Orchestra*, he returned to the rich vein of Armenian folk music, which he mined extensively in a series of chamber works composed between April and September (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Sitsky's "Armenian" works of 1984

Title	Instruments	Date
<i>Sharagan: Fantasia No 5 for piano</i>	pf	8 Apr. 1984
<i>Suite for Solo saxophone "Armenia"</i>	alto sax	13 June 1984
<i>Khavar</i>	tbn	20 June 1984
<i>Dagh</i>	tpt	3 July 1984
<i>Sayat-Nova</i>	ob	11 July 1984

4 Holmes, Shaw & Campbell 22.

5 Holmes, Shaw & Campbell 47.

6 Holmes, Shaw & Campbell 33.

7 Holmes, Shaw & Campbell 59.

8 P.D. Ouspensky, *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1950) 220.

9 In addition to *Kundalini* and *Century*, he completed the concerto for clarinet and strings *Santana*, the settings of Oscar Wilde's letters from Reading gaol *De profundis*, *A Running-Game Song*, a fanfare for the Pacific Games, and an arrangement of Rubinstein's suite for wind quintet.

10 The only other work that year was the completion of Busoni's *Fantasia Contrappuntistica* (1983) for two pianos.

11 Holmes, Shaw & Campbell 35.

<i>Barerq</i>	vn, hn, pf	27 July 1984
<i>Mertzazil</i>	hn	28 July 1984
<i>Two Pastorales</i>	fl	1 Aug. 1984
<i>Fantasia No 6: In Memory of John Crocker: "Maherq"</i>	bsn	20 Aug. 1984
<i>Vartarun</i>	cl	17 Sept. 1984
<i>Zuqerq</i>	cl, bongos	28 Sept. 1984

Most of these also use Armenian word for their titles, and/or have other connections. "Sayat-Nova," for example, is the name of an Armenian troubador, some of whose melodies Sitsky used in much altered form in his oboe work.¹² In *Zuqerq*, the composer recommends using a C or even E-flat clarinet "because of the folk-nature of much of the material."¹³ The horn trio, *Barerq*, is an arrangement of the third movement of *Gurdjieff*, which features a prominent horn solo with violin obbligato, and a simple chordal texture which is easily transferred to the piano. Sitsky subsequently returned to Armenian sources again, in works including *Yeraz* (1986) for natural trumpet and organ, *Nabroski* (1990) for two recorders (one player) and bongos, and *Sharagan II* (1988) for cello and piano, which recycles the third movement of *Gurdjieff* again, along with two movements from *Sharagan*. Of all these works with Armenian inspiration, *Gurdjieff* is by far the most substantial: a seven-movement work lasting approximately 23 minutes, and employing an orchestra which, although small, includes a large percussion section. This perhaps reflects the importance to the composer and his soloist of Gurdjieff's ideas and the fruitfulness of the guru's musical output, which provided a two-fold inspiration for the concerto.

Georges Gurdjieff was a Greek-Armenian philosopher, mystic and guru, born on the borders of Russia and Armenia some time between 1866 and 1877.¹⁴ Between c.1885 and c.1911 he travelled extensively through the Middle East and Asia, eventually returning to Russia, where he gathered many students and followers with his idiosyncratic mystical, philosophical and quasi-religious teachings. These are based on and shared concepts with a number of religious and philosophical traditions, including ancient Asian and Middle Eastern beliefs, Christianity, Judaism and Islam, and modern thinking such as Theosophy. After the Bolshevik Revolution, Gurdjieff left Russia with several of his followers and, after travelling through Turkey and Europe for several years, ending up in Paris. Here he established his Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man at the Château de Prieuré at Fontainebleau in October 1922. He travelled to the USA, where established a wide following, and eventually moved to New York, where he died in October 1949, leaving his followers under the leadership of Jeanne de Salzmann.

Gurdjieff's teachings were recorded in extensive writings which were circulated to his followers in Europe and the USA in privately produced copies, and eventually published after his death. The principal writings are the three volumes of the series *All and Everything: Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* (written in the 1920s), the quasi-autobiographical *Meetings with Remarkable Men* (finished in 1932), and the allegorical narrative *Life is Real Only Then, When "I Am"* (1927–35). However, Gurdjieff's writings are typically opaque, and require a level of gloss to become comprehensible to the novice. The first published account of his teachings was *In Search of the Miraculous* (1950) by one of his principal early disciples, Peter D. Ouspensky. They met in Moscow in 1915, and Ouspensky fled Russia with Gurdjieff, but later left the group to teach privately in London and New York. Before his death in 1947, Ouspensky had compiled an account of Gurdjieff's teachings which his widow submitted to the guru. Although it was based on Ouspensky's study with him decades earlier, Gurdjieff approved of the writings and encouraged publication, and *In Search of the Miraculous* is still considered a comprehensive outline of his

12 Sitsky, Programme note, *Sayat-Nova: for solo oboe* [1984] (New York: Seesaw Music, 1987).

13 Sitsky, Programme note, *Zuqerq: for solo clarinet, accompanied by 3 bongos, or by piano with lid down over the keyboard* [1984] (New York: Seesaw Music, 1987).

14 Biographical sources give a variety of dates, often with question marks.

teachings,¹⁵ which is, moreover, much more straightforward and comprehensible.

In his teaching, Gurdjieff placed great emphasis on music, although as a means to an end, rather than an end in itself. He believed that musical vibrations, because they are based on precise mathematical proportions, are able to evoke human responses through the relation of the vibrations to our receptive apparatus, both conscious and unconscious. The purpose of music is to tune human emotions so that difficult ideas can be grasped.¹⁶ Music is based on the two fundamental laws of the universe: the Law of Three and the Law of Seven. The Law of Three is the teaching that all phenomena are the result of the combination or meeting of three different and opposing, but equal, forces: active (or positive), passive (or negative) and neutralising (or reconciling). New phenomena can only be created by the combination or meeting of these three forces. Each of them “contains within it the possibility of all three forces, but at the meeting point of the three forces, each of them manifests only one principle.”¹⁷ Ouspensky gives the example of a man who wishes to change his own characteristics in order to attain a higher level of being. The active force is his initiative or desire to change and the passive force the natural inertia of human habit. These will counterbalance each other until a third force, new knowledge, is introduced, enabling the man to achieve personal growth¹⁸ The Law of Three is also “echoed in the triadic structures of music, in which combinations of three tones constantly give birth to new combinations, with certain tones in common.”¹⁹ Gurdjieff’s view of music is clearly based on tonal and modal pitch organisation, as is indicated also by his teaching regarding the nature of octaves.

The Law of Seven, or Law of Octaves, is based on Gurdjieff’s diagrammatic “Ray of Creation” (see Figure 2). Everything emanates from the Absolute, which is the least mechanical level of existence, and a human being can ascend through this octave by working on him-/herself to become less mechanical. One can, of course, also descend.

Figure 2: Gurdjieff’s “Ray of Creation” representing the Law of Seven

- o Absolute
- o All Worlds
- o All Suns
- o Sun
- o All Planets
- o Earth
- o Moon²⁰

The Law of Seven is predicated upon regarding the universe as consisting of vibrations of all kinds, moving in all directions, from all sources, continually intersecting and colliding with one another. According to Gurdjieff, vibrations do not move continuously with uniform depletion of their energy (as modern science believes), but discontinuously, with periodical acceleration and retardation, becoming alternately weaker and stronger, whether ascending or descending in frequency. After a certain period of time, vibrations double in frequency, i.e. reach the next octave. However, the periods of acceleration and retardation within the octave are not regular, but divided

15 J. Walter Driscoll, *Gurdjieff: An Annotated Bibliography*, Garland Reference Library of Social Sciences 225 (New York: Garland, 1985) ix; Michel de Salzman, “Footnote to the Gurdjieff Literature,” in Driscoll xviii; Sophia Wellbeloved, *Gurdjieff: The Key Concepts* (New York & London: Routledge, 2003) xxv.

16 J.G. Bennett, *Gurdjieff: Making a New World* (New York: Turnstone, [1973]) 167.

17 Ouspensky 79.

18 Ouspensky 77–79.

19 Laurence Rosenthal, “Gurdjieff and Music,” *Gurdjieff: Essays and Reflections on the Man and His Teaching*, ed. Jacob Needleman & George Baker (New York: Continuum, 1996) 301–10.

20 Ouspensky 82.

into eight unequal parts; in addition, increase is retarded at two points. This “formula of cosmic law” applies to the vibrations of all kinds of physical phenomena such as light, heat and magnetism.²¹ In music, the Law of Seven “presents the specific form of the major scale in music, with its succession of tones and semitones. The semitones [i.e. mi-fa and si-do] form the “intervals” that block or deflect the progression of any process and which require new sources of energy in order to be bridged, allowing evolutionary movement to continue.”²² This scale was explained by Gurdjieff in terms of the frequency ratios in the major scale (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Ratios of frequency within the octave²³

<i>frequency</i>	1	9/8	5/4	4/3	3/2	5/3	15/8	2
<i>scale degree</i>	do	re	mi	fa	sol	la	si	do
<i>interval ratio</i>		9:8	10:9	16:15	9:8	10:9	9:8	16:15

These are clearly based on the ratios of the natural harmonic series, although Gurdjieff did not put it in these terms, and none of his followers seems to have had enough knowledge of musical acoustics to do so either. For Gurdjieff and his followers, the accelerations and retardations produced by this “cosmic law” explained why things do not develop in a regular straight line, but proceed discontinuously and experience changes of direction, sometimes resulting in eventually becoming their own opposite.²⁴ These teachings provided part of the complex of cultural reference behind Sitsky’s composition of *Gurdjieff*. He wrote in his programme note to the concert: “The choice of seven movements and the placement of the cadenza as the fourth movement have at least partially something to do with Gurdjieff’s teachings concerning the Octave, the law of Seven, and the Law of Three.”²⁵

The other element of the cultural reference was the actual music used by Gurdjieff to evoke appropriate emotional responses and achieve understanding through music’s effect on human beings. An integral part of Gurdjieff’s teaching was that physical postures correspond to inner states; thus he devised the Movements, or Sacred Dances: physical exercises which followers practised in order to experience and observe themselves in new postures and thus achieve a new inner state.²⁶ These were done to music devised by the guru himself. Music was also played before and after readings from his writings, in order to affect the response and understanding of his pupils.²⁷ However, Gurdjieff had little or no musical education, and certainly no formal training; his lack of musical education is revealed not only in his understanding of musical acoustics and scale formation, but also in a comment to a pupil that it is only after a long time listening to music and doing exercises or physical movements that “you hear [the music] from inside when no music is playing outside.”²⁸ One would expect a trained musician to have a much more developed inner ear than this. Gurdjieff thus required assistance to put his music into a form which could be circulated to followers as well as recorded and preserved along with his writings. The Movements were similarly recorded in a form of diagrammatic notation.

Assistance with musical notation came from Thomas [de] Hartmann (1885–1956), a Ukrainian composer

21 Ouspensky 122–25.

22 Rosenthal 308.

23 Ouspensky 125.

24 Ouspensky 127–29.

25 Sitsky, Programme Note, *Gurdjieff: Concerto No 2 for Violin and Small Orchestra* (The Rocks: Australian Music Centre, 1983).

26 Wellbeloved 147.

27 Bennett 167.

28 Paul Beekman Taylor, *Shadows of Heaven: Gurdjieff and Toomer* (Maine: Samuel Weiser, 1998) 182, cited in Wellbeloved 148.

and conductor from St Petersburg, who was married to a singer Olga Arkadievna de Schumacher. They met Gurdjieff in 1916, joining his 'Seekers of the Truth,' and fled Russia with him and his other followers, ending up in Paris. There they assisted the guru to record his teachings: Olga helped him with *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* and Thomas notated all his music. Although they left the Paris group in 1929, they remained faithful to Gurdjieff's teachings and continued to promote his work after his death, especially through the publishing and recording of the music.²⁹

All of Gurdjieff's music was "composed" with the assistance of Hartmann in Paris between 1922 and 1927. In the first two years they wrote the music for the Movements, nineteen short hymns and thirty-six untitled pieces in three groups: "Seekers of the Truth," "Journey to Inaccessible Places" and "Rituals of a Sufi Order."³⁰ Between 1925 and 1927, Hartmann notated a large number of short pieces that were designed to be played before and after readings from *Beelzebub's Tales* and other writings. The pieces are grouped into four volumes, published in the early 1950s as *The Works of G. Gurdjieff and Thomas de Hartmann*:

- I. Songs and Rhythms from Asia
- II. Dances and Chants of the Seids
- III. Dervish Songs and Dances
- IV. Sacred Hymns

Gurdjieff wrote no more music after 1927, although he recorded a number of short improvisations on harmonium and organ in New York in 1949, shortly before his death.³¹

The purpose of the compositions was not only to record Gurdjieff's music for future use and distribution to his followers, but also as a "personal exercise" for Hartmann to enable him to "find the right way" through his work;³² the notation of the guru's music was the reconciling force which enabled him to grow. Hartmann described the process of "composition" in some detail in his memoirs. When Gurdjieff started to whistle his Eastern-style melodies or play them on the piano with one finger, Hartmann would rush into the room with manuscript paper and pencil. To transcribe these melodies into Western notation "required a *tour de force*:" although they seemed at first to be monotonous, sometimes comprising only two notes, they were complicated, with "tortuous shifts and turns," irregular rhythmic and metrical patterns and accentuations, and sometimes employing micro-intervals. Gurdjieff would then tap out a rhythm for the accompaniment, as if playing a percussion instrument in Eastern music. Hartmann had to make the entire melody fit with this background rhythm, without changing anything in the melody, and then improvise a harmony as he played the music back to the guru and his assembled followers. He found it difficult to harmonise the melodies, in their unfamiliar Eastern modes. Although Gurdjieff admonished him to do it "so that every idiot could play it," "God saved [him] from taking these words literally" and he attempted to find a harmonisation to suit each individual melody.³³

The music seems to have been a mixture of folk melodies learnt—but how well remembered?—during Gurdjieff's childhood and his travels before 1911, and music composed intuitively, based on the melodic and rhythmic characteristics of Eastern folk musics. Despite the complexity of the philosophical ideas underlying Gurdjieff's attitude to music, the pieces are not based on, nor do they reveal, any formal compositional theory. The four volumes are no ethnomusicological collection either; like Gurdjieff's teachings, they are his interpretation of a number of different sources. The music itself is often quite simple: melody plus accompaniment texture, modal

29 Wellbeloved 235; Driscoll viii; Detlef Godjowy, "Hartmann, Thomas (Alexandrovich de)," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 2001). For publications and recordings of the music see Driscoll Entries 12–30.

30 Published as *Musique pour les mouvements de G.I. Gurdjieff and Hymnes d'un grand temple* (both Paris: Janus, 1950), and *The Three Volumes* (New York: Gurdjieff Foundation, 1970); Driscoll Entries 12–13, 18–20.

31 Driscoll Entries 8–11.

32 Thomas Hartmann & Olga Hartmann, "Music: *Our Life with Mr Gurdjieff*," *Gurdjieff International Review* 2.4 (Summer 1999) [rpt of Chapter 23 of *Our Life with Mr Gurdjieff* (New York: Cooper Square, 1964)].

33 Hartmann & Hartmann.

with a few chromatic notes, and sometimes quite repetitive, as for example in “Holy Affirming, Holy Denying, Holy Reconciling,” composed in 1926 (see Figure 4). The Law of Three is clearly represented in the title of this piece, but also in the three-fold repetition in the opening section and its simple triadic harmony.³⁴

Figure 4: Gurdjieff/Hartmann “Holy Affirming, Holy Denying, Holy Reconciling”
Notated 8 Oct. 1926³⁵

Th. Hartmann "Holy Affirming, Holy Denying, Holy Reconciling transubstantiated into
my being!" 13 same Affirmation etc. Fontainebleau, Friday 8 October 1926. 13 D-81(x)

Lento espressivo $\text{♩} = 48$

mf *poco marcato* *mf*

senza pedale ped. senza ped. ped.

senza pedale ped. senza pedale ped.

senza pedale ped.

AESTHOPHONIE No. 932 P-3 Paris

Copyright © 1989 Thomas C. Daly

During Gurdjieff’s lifetime, this music was played and circulated privately amongst his followers. It was first published between 1950 and 1955, although in a small number of limited-circulation copies which were difficult to obtain. The collection to which Sitsky and Sedivka had access, and from which the composer drew material for *Gurdjieff*, was the four-volume *Works*. That Sedivka and Sitsky had copies of this music at all is testament to the level of their interest in the philosopher. However, Sitsky described the pieces in the four-volume collection as “very ancient melodies from Central Asia” and “newly unearthed folk melodies,”³⁶ rather than the type of composition described by Hartmann. This appears to be obfuscation, as Sitsky hesitated about acknowledging the source of the musical ideas at all, in either the title of the work or his programme note, because of the lack of clarity over

34 Gurdjieff/Hartmann’s music has been republished under the title *Music for Piano*, ed. Linda Daniel-Spitz, Charles Ketchan & Laurence Rosenthal, 3 vols (Mainz: Schott, 1996). Dozens of recordings of various pieces are also available.

35 Facsimile from *Gurdjieff International Review* 2.4 (Summer 1999).

36 Programme Note, *Gurdjieff*.

copyright.³⁷ In any case, while he drew on the “rich fund of ancient music as material for this concerto [...his] treatments of these melodies have nothing to do with musical archaeology.”³⁸ This procedure is typical of Sitsky, and was repeated the following year in the entire series of “Armenian” works.

Unlike the first violin concerto, which had taken nearly seven years to write,³⁹ *Gurdjieff* was composed in three months, between December 1982 and March 1983. Not only was Sitsky short of time and in need of the commission fee for the work,⁴⁰ but he was also writing a shorter and much less complex concerto and basing it on existing musical material, rather than on abstract ideas alone. *Gurdjieff* was complete in short score except for the first half of the fourth movement by 20 February 1983; Sitsky asked Sedivka to send him the second volume of the *Works*, “Dances and Chants of the Seids,” for material for the missing section, which he finished on 22 March.⁴¹ He also contemplated adding a coda based on material from this volume, writing to Sedivka: “Whether the ascent to the next octave is necessary, unsure.”⁴²

Also unlike the first concerto, which is modelled heavily on the Busoni piano concerto, *Gurdjieff* has a unique formal structure and solo-tutti relationship that largely ignore genre traditions, instead drawing on the Laws of Three and Seven. The orchestra, for example, is in three distinct groups, which act upon the central protagonist, the solo violin, in varying ways throughout the work; note also that within the percussion section, instruments are in groups of three apart from the timpani, cymbals and gong:

1. winds: flute, clarinet, horn, trumpet
2. percussion:
 - 2 timpani, 2 suspended cymbals, gong
 - 3 tam-tams
 - 3 congas
 - 3 tom-toms
 - bongo, side drum, snare drum
 - xylophone, vibraphone, glockenspiel
3. strings: a small body

On the large scale, the Law of Seven inspired the concerto’s division into seven movements, arranged in a symmetrical pattern (see Figure 5). The solo violin plays continuously in every movement except for the first half of Movement III, and the orchestral strings also play most of the time, with the notable exception of the violins in Movement III. Both Movements I and VII comprise an extended solo violin rhapsody with textural accompaniment over a low pedal, and feature an isorhythm on the vibraphone and long trills on large metal percussion. In Movements II and VI, a canonic led by the soloist lies over an isorhythmic pattern in the xylophone / glockenspiel, paired with deep-toned drums. Movements III and V feature a lyrical solo brass instrument, embellished with a loosely imitative but highly ornate violin obbligato, accompanied by simple chordal strings. The central movement is a cadenza-like solo with minimal skins for accompaniment; its first half looks back to the rhapsodic nature of the opening, while the second half, actually titled “Cadenza,” is a dazzling *moto perpetuo* with irregular groups of repeated semiquavers. Fortunately for the overall shape and balance of the concerto, the coda Sitsky had considered writing did not

37 Letters to Sedivka, 15 Dec. 1982 & 21 Feb. 1983; Sitsky Papers, National Library of Australia MS 5630, 20/171 & 44/314.

38 Sitsky, Programme Note, *Gurdjieff*.

39 see Patricia Shaw, “Larry Sitsky’s Music for Violin, and Jan Sedivka.” *Context* 8 (Summer 1994–95): 13–21.

40 Letter to Sedivka, 21 Feb. 1983; Sitsky Papers, 44/314.

41 Letters to Sedivka, 8 Feb., 21 Feb. & 22 Mar. 1983; Sitsky Papers 20/171, 44/314 & 20/171.

42 Letter to Sedivka, 21 Feb. 1983; Sitsky Papers 44/314.

eventuate; its absence results in a more balanced musical structure, and “leaves the question open-ended at its close: will human behaviour move from the seventh degree to the next octave?”⁴³

Figure 5: *Gurdjieff*: movement plan

Mvt	Tempo	Orchestral Instruments
I	Dolce, rubato	tam-tams, vibr, timps-str
II	Allegro	tom-toms, xyl, tam-tam- fl, cl-str
III	Allegretto	solo hn-gong-str (no vns)
IVa	Andantino-	SD, Sn D-
IVb	Allegro “Cadenza”	bongo, congas
V	Andante con moto	solo tpt-str
VI	Allegretto-Allegro	timps, glock-str
VII	Larghetto- più lento	susp cymb, vibr, SnD, timp-fl, cl, tpt, hn-str

Many of the characteristics of Gurdjieff/Hartmann’s music are, not surprisingly, echoed in Sitsky’s violin concerto. Melodies are modal while the accompanying harmonies vary from diatonic tertial chords in the hymn-like Movement III to chromatic polyphony in the canonic sections of Movements II, VI & VII. Melodies also have irregular phrase lengths and use inexact repetition; typically, successive phrases begin alike but unfold differently. In Movement I, for example, many of the solo violin’s phrases are variations on the descending melody first played at bar 3, with different rhythmic durations and accentuations each time; a few of these variations are shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6: *Gurdjieff*: Movement I, solo violin melody only

The figure displays five musical staves, each representing a variation of a descending melody. The first staff is labeled 'bar 3' and shows a descending eighth-note melody in 7/4 time. The second staff, 'bars 4-5', shows a variation with a triplet and a change to 3/4 time. The third staff, 'bars 6-9', features a slur over the first four notes and a triplet. The fourth staff, 'bars 18-21', shows a variation with an accent on the first note and a change to 4/4 time. The fifth staff, 'bars 27-29', includes a triplet and a change to 3/4 time.

43 Holmes, Shaw & Campbell 41.

Echoing the relationship between melody and rhythmic accompaniment described by Hartmann, Sitsky's *Gurdjieff* makes extensive use, in the percussion parts, of isorhythmic patterns which operate quite independently of the melody and its complex phrase structures. In Movement II, for example (see Figure 7), the violin melody proceeds in a steady triple metre in a continuous series of short phrases. The three tom-toms, on the other hand, play an eight-bar pattern based on the subdivision of each bar into five crotchets, followed by five bars' rest; this is repeated ten times. Two bars' rest precede the first eight-bar pattern, leaving three bars' rest for the end. Similar isorhythmic procedures are used for the percussion instruments in all movements except III and V, the lyrical brass solo movements.

Figure 7: Solo violin phrase structure versus tom-toms isorhythm in Movement II

Shading represents rest bars

bars	1	3	5	7	10	12	14	15	18	21	23
Violin	2	2	2	3	2	2	1	3	3	2	2
Tom-toms	8		8		8		8		8		8

bars	25	30	33	35	37	40	42	45	47
Violin	5	3	2	2	3	2	3	2	3
Tom-toms	8		8		8		8		8

bars	50	53	57	61	66	68	70	72	75
Violin	3	4	4	5	2	2	2	3	2
Tom-toms	8		8		8		8		8

bars	77	79	80	83	86	88	90	95	98	100
Violin	2	1	3	3	2	2	5	3	2	2
Tom-toms	8		8		8		8		8	

bars	102	107	110	112	115	118	122	126	130
Violin	5	3	2	3	3	4	4	5	
Tom-toms	8		8		8		8		8

Formal repetition in *Gurdjieff* is based largely on the solo violin's repetition of an extended melody line at the octave above, usually with some embellishment or small alterations. In the *moto perpetuo* cadenza (Movement IVb), bars 36–58 are repeated up the octave at bars 59–82, creating an ABB' structure. However, semiquavers are occasionally added to make the grouping of the repeated notes even more irregular, and the repetition is also varied by the addition of accompaniment from the three congas. In Movement II the violin repeats bars 1–65 up the octave from bar 66 to the end, with some embellishment. However, the formal repetition is substantially obscured not only by the tom-toms' isorhythm described above but also by the entries of the wind in canon with the solo violin (flute at bar 14 and clarinet at bar 30), not to mention the cloud of *ad libitum* pizzicato semiquavers in the lower strings beginning at bar 42. This frequent use of repetition at the octave replaces other transpositions and modulations.

The Law of Three often appears to govern the solo-tutti relationship in *Gurdjieff*, with the orchestral instruments acting as active, passive and reconciling forces in relation to the solo violin. In the first half Movement I (bars 1–56), for example, the perfect-fourth drone on two cellos and the continuous tam-tam trills are a passive force, the orchestral violin pizzicato quavers an active force, while the vibraphone is a reconciling force. The meeting of these three forces eventually brings about change in the main agent, the solo violin, which makes a

transition to new material (see Figures 8a and 8b).

Figure 8a: *Gurdjieff*: Movement I, bars 42–45.

Figure 8b: *Gurdjieff*: Movement I, bars 55–58; new material at bar 57

* a fraction more prominent than the violins

Movement III presents a different solo-tutti relationship. Here, the entire 43 bars are repeated, the first time with only the horn solo and slow, repeated dyads in the lower strings (the active and passive forces respectively). The second time through, the ornate violin obbligato, loosely imitating the horn, is a reconciling force which drives the change to a richer texture in the strings, and offers the listener a more complex version of the fundamental melody (see Figure 9).

Figure 9: *Gurdjieff*: Movement III, bars 8–14

In the final movement, the violin is again the reconciling force, neutralising the potential confusion of a texture which quotes heavily from all previous movements (see example in Figure 10). From Movement I comes the vibraphone’s isorhythmic motive, the continuous metallic trill, but transferred from tam-tams to suspended cymbals, and the solo melody, now played by clarinet. Horn and trumpet reprise their lyrical melodies from Movements III and V respectively, while the flute plays the subject of the strings’ canon from Movement VI. Snare drum and timpani have their motives from Movements IVa and VI respectively. The power of the solo violin to reconcile the active and passive forces and effect change results in the transition to the final section (bar 39 to the end), where the solo violin initiates yet another canon in the strings. This canon has one significant difference from those in earlier movements, however, in that the melody is almost all step-wise, and is played “gradually more and more portamento after each entry [is] established, eventually quitting the note and moving away from it at once,”⁴⁴ i.e. glissando from note to note in all the parts. The semitone “block” in progress through the octave described by Gurdjieff is, in the final section of Sitsky’s concerto overcome by the new source of energy—the solo violin’s new melody,—allowing for the possibility that “evolutionary movement” may continue.

44 Sitsky, performance direction in *Gurdjieff* 58.

Figure 10: *Gurdjieff*: Movement VII, bars 29–35

The musical score for Movement VII, bars 29–35, is presented in two systems. The first system (bars 29–35) is in 4/4 time and includes parts for Solo Violin, Trumpet, Horn, Percussion (Timpans), and Double Bass. The Solo Violin part begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and features a melodic line with a fermata. The Trumpet and Horn parts are marked *pp* (pianissimo) and muted. The Percussion part includes Timpans and Snare Drum, with the Snare Drum playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The Double Bass part is marked *pp non vib.* (pianissimo non vibrato). The second system (bars 32–35) is in 3/2 time and includes parts for Solo Violin, Flute, Trumpet, Percussion (Snare Drum), and Double Bass. The Solo Violin part begins with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic and features a melodic line with a fermata. The Flute part is marked *mf* and features a melodic line with a fermata. The Trumpet part is marked *p* (piano) and features a melodic line with a fermata. The Percussion part includes Snare Drum, which plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The Double Bass part is marked *p* (piano) and features a melodic line with a fermata.

While there are, of course, other analytical frameworks which yield insights into Sitsky's *Gurdjieff* concerto, this exploration of some of the connections with Gurdjieff's teachings and music sheds light on the complex of cultural symbolism infusing the work at its conception and generating musical materials and procedures unique to the work. Sitsky's affinity with the melodic, rhythmic and harmonic materials of Gurdjieff's music is typical of the composer's ongoing interest in the musical heritage of the Far, Middle and European East, while his reference to Gurdjieff's Law of Three and Laws of Seven and the Octave, which he first studied with Jan Sedivka, reflect the importance to him of crafting works that relate to the specific performer for whom he is writing and strengthen his professional and personal musical relationships.

