

- PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLE -

A Trojan Horse deconstructed: structural procedures in Michael Tippett's Second Piano Sonata

Nicholas Haralambous
Royal Northern College of Music

I.

War, lust, and fate, all played out under a blistering Aegean sun, make for heady subject matter in Michael Tippett's second opera, *King Priam* (1961). Written between 1958 and 1961, *King Priam* proved a crucible of conflict and transformation, resulting in a stylistic shift of aptly Homeric scale. Tippett's Piano Sonata No. 2, completed in close proximity with *Priam*, is inextricably linked with the opera, not least in the motivic material it shares with it. On an immediate level, the Sonata shares an acerbic and fragmentary sound world with its operatic progenitor which, while initially conceived as a vehicle for *Priam*'s violent subject matter, remained an aesthetic cornerstone of Tippett's post-*Priam* style.

Echoing the conceptual (and material) connection between the two works, Alastair Borthwick has referred to the Second Sonata as a "Trojan Horse",¹ an apt epithet indeed. Ostensibly radical in its eschewal of Tippett's earlier neo-classical structural rhetoric, on closer inspection the Second Sonata disguises rigorous motivicism and traditional, albeit innovative, structural techniques behind a veil of avant-garde gesture with all the guile of its mythological namesake. Indeed, rather than a structural and organisational volte-face, Tippett's Second Sonata constitutes a reworking of the traditional notions of motivic and formal logic present in his pre-*Priam* work, recasting them as a vehicle for the aesthetic demands of the composer's new style.

This paper will attempt to demonstrate, care of a bipartite analytical reading in Section II, the extent to which the Second Sonata is permeated with organisational structural procedures which defy a surface reading of the work as an essay in

gestural juxtaposition. Admittedly, teleological notions of development are conspicuously absent in the work, replaced rather by the immediacy of mosaic-like juxtaposition. This absence, however, only underscores the organisational importance of Tippett's motivic and structural framework. The analytic goals of this paper are thus twofold: firstly, although broadly acknowledged as organisational devices, the scope and nature of the Sonata's motivic and cellular unity has hitherto remained unexamined; Section 1 of the analysis attempts to redress this. Section 2, by contrast, posits a new macro-structural shaping of the work, allowing for a functional model heavily influenced by archetypal sonata theory.

'King Priam' and Tippett's new style

While Tippett had always enthusiastically embraced gradual innovation as a means to personal development and rejuvenation, the aesthetic gulf between the Second Symphony (1957), the last major work of Tippett's 'first period', and *King Priam* signalled something akin to a developmental leap. Indeed, many contemporary critics reacted with disbelief, finding it difficult to reconcile the broad lyricism of the *Midsummer Marriage* (Tippett's first opera, completed in 1952) and the acerbic abstraction of the new opera which, ostensibly at least, stemmed from the same compositional ethos. Ian Kemp has written of how for many contemporary commentators, this radical change seemed frivolous and unnecessary:

It seemed the product of change for change's sake, sad witness of a misguided attempt on Tippett's part to restore failing creativity by tearing his natural composing style from its roots and filling the void with all that was uncharacteristic of him – hard, intractable sonorities, an aggressively dissonant harmonic idiom and construction by means of stringing together gestures both crude and short-winded. Superficial, and on this level of observation, gauche echoes of the music of Britten, of Stravinsky (especially of *Agon*) and even Webern gave substance to such criticisms.²

While such sentiments, and variations thereof, emanated from many a critic's pen, public reception of *King Priam* was, if slightly puzzled, by no means hostile.

Any concrete motivation for this drastic change in style is, of course, mere speculation. Kemp, however, posits two plausible reasons. Firstly, in the music of the *Midsummer Marriage*, Tippett had reached the apotheosis of a line of

development set in motion by his early works; rather than ‘resting on his laurels’, however, Tippett chose to innovate and pursue a new line of compositional thinking.³ Secondly, Kemp suggests that *King Priam* was the natural outcome of an ‘accelerating stylistic development’⁴ which, having already been present before the opera, continued after it, albeit at a far slower pace and without any dramatic schism.

Whatever the impetus behind this shift, the style ushered in by *King Priam* was characterised by a distinct set of musical features, hitherto largely absent from Tippett’s music, and solidified in a group of three near-contemporaneous works, which Iain Stannard refers to as the “*Priam* group”:⁵ the opera itself (1961), Piano Sonata No. 2 (1962), and the Concerto for Orchestra (1963). These features included the greater use of rhythmic ostinatos, multiple tempo juxtapositions and modulations, astringent non-goal directed harmony, thematic layering or stratification, and a neo-expressionist emotional immediacy. Perhaps the most important feature of Tippett’s new style, however, was the gestural quality of the music. Tippett’s earlier music, whether expansively lyrical or contrapuntally dense, had been composed primarily of broad brushstrokes, reflecting a largely neo-classical syntax of (often regular) musical paragraphing.⁶ The music of the *Priam* group, however, was composed primarily of shorter thematic gestures, often aphoristic in character, the juxtaposition and development of which constituted the musical rhetoric. Naturally, this reliance on myriad thematic fragments rather than broad traditional ‘themes’ necessitated the formulation of new structural vehicles, discussed in relation to the Second Sonata in Section II below.

It is important, amid the seemingly overwhelming evidence to the contrary, to underscore that this was not a wholesale eschewal of Tippett’s ‘old’ style. As Ian Kemp points out, many of the most salient features of Tippett’s first period are readily evident in *King Priam* and its satellite works: lyricism, where it occurs, is easily recognisable; Tippett’s word-setting practices are preserved;⁷ the earlier habit of building melodic paragraphs by varied sequence persists; and the ebullient rhythmic vitality of the pre-*Priam* music remains undimmed.⁸

Piano Sonata No. 2: the new style in microcosm

After the completion of *King Priam*, Tippett developed the opera's new stylistic premises by commencing a series of works in which the actual material of the opera acts as a musical progenitor. The *Songs for Achilles* (1961) are elaborations of vocal numbers within the opera while both the Second Sonata and Concerto for Orchestra make use of its instrumental material. Written for Margaret Kitchen and premiered at the 1962 Edinburgh Festival, the Second Sonata is the most concise work of the *Priam* group, presenting a neat microcosm of the new style.

Kemp has pointed out that while the initial justification for the gestural, non-developmental procedures of *King Priam* had been dramatic, the composition of the Second Sonata (and later the Concerto for Orchestra) provided an opportunity to work out these procedures in a medium in which structural justification would, by necessity, be abstract and purely musical.⁹ New approaches to structure (and indeed to notions of musical rhetoric) were needed to support this gestural thematicism. In a programme note to the Second Sonata, Tippett explains this new approach:

Everything in the sonata proceeds by statement. The effect is one of accumulation: through constant addition of new material; by variation and repetition. There is virtually no development, and particularly no bridge passages. The formal unity comes from the balance of similarities and contrasts. The contrasts are the straightforward ones of timbres and speeds. But there are also contrasts of function. Music can appear to flow; or to arrest itself, especially through the device of ostinato; or temporarily to stop in a silence. These kinds of contrast are used constantly.¹⁰

Accumulatory effects are by no means unprecedented in Tippett's work. Indeed, the developmental processes of early works such as Piano Sonata No. 1 are in a sense non-developmental, insofar as they eschew notions of motivicism in favour of thematic juxtaposition. Here too, the effect of thematic accumulation, albeit on a vastly smaller scale, is achieved by the balance of similarities and contrasts.¹¹ Other earlier foreshadowing of such accumulatory effects can be seen in the finales of the First String Quartet and the Concerto for Double String Orchestra, both of which rely on the massing of vast amounts of thematic material (in both of these cases, rhythmically complex contrapuntal lines).

Even though accumulatory procedures were undoubtedly salient in Tippett's earlier compositional thought, their usage in the Second Sonata is fundamentally different on two levels. While accumulation and non-developmental procedures had previously been used to create musical effects within an essentially traditional structural framework, in the Second Sonata these procedures *become* the framework itself. Furthermore, the homogeneous nature of the material used to create such accumulatory effects in Tippett's earlier music is replaced by material in which unforgiving, even antipodal, contrasts are the norm. In this respect, Tippett's new rhetoric is constructed entirely of juxtaposition, distilling the Beethovenian concept of thematic polarity and presenting it starkly shorn of bridging and developmental procedures. In essence, the Second Sonata is perhaps an apogee of a line of thinking, initiated in the closing decades of the eighteenth century, in which musical argument arises from the dialectical interaction of two (or more) thematic sections.

Naturally, in a piece as ostensibly concerned with innovation as the Second Sonata, Tippett's own conception of the work's debt to historical archetypes was ambiguous. Indeed, Tippett was for a time undecided as to whether it was even a sonata at all. Alternative titles, such as *Mosaics* and *Arrest and Movement*, were posited before the final, more prosaic, choice was made. This titular confusion, however, is telling. The fact that Tippett chose the title 'Sonata' at all indicates that on some level, if not a superficial one, an engagement with archetypal models informed the compositional process and even the material of the work itself. If anything, the archetype most obviously suggested by the Sonata, the Lisztian single-movement model, is perhaps the most misleading. Although superficially comparable to the cyclical nature of the Lisztian paradigm, Tippett's compositional processes (for example, structural rather than transformational motivicism, and dialectical juxtaposition of thematic material) rather suggest the lasting influence of Beethovenian archetypal models. The two rejected titles – *Mosaics* and *Arrest and Movement* – are equally elucidatory: the first underscores the fragmentary structure of the work which, as in mosaic art, uses the accumulation and juxtaposition of fragments to make sense of the whole; while the second points to the two contradictory musical functions which inform the composition.

II.

The mosaic-like sectional nature of the Second Sonata, in which motivic and structural relations rather than traditional development are foregrounded, precludes, to my mind at least, a bar-to-bar analysis. I have thus structured this part of the paper in two sections, the first of which deals with the micro-workings of the Sonata while the second addresses large-scale structural concerns.

1. Gestural and motivic content

The fragmentary, mosaic-like nature of the Second Sonata is intrinsically tied to the use of gestural procedures. Rather than traditional themes or subjects, Tippett draws the musical material of the Second Sonata from a series of seventeen gestural units, labelled ①–⑰ for the sake of clarity (see Ex. 1 below). These units cover a wide spectrum of musical ideas – from harsh octave doublings to melodious lyricism and contrapuntal vigour – and differ greatly in length, texture, articulation, register, and an abundance of other parameters. It is the considered placement and juxtaposition of these gestural units that gives rise to the large-scale rhetorical and structural content of the work.¹²

① **Tempo 1**
1 *ff risonando*
3

② **Tempo 2**
5 *ff marc. pesante*
8^{va} 8^{va}
8^{va} *sf sf*

③ **Tempo 3**
8 *con forza ed energia*
8^{va}

④ **Tempo 4**
15 *p leggero scorrevole*

⑤ **Tempo 5**
 22 *trmm* *trmm* *(2+3)*
p marc. *non troppo* *p* *f (secco)*

⑥ *sw*
 34 *[p] dolce cantabile*

⑦ *sw*
 63 *[ff]*

⑧ **Tempo 6**
 69 *p leggero beno articolato*
ten. *trmm*

⑨
 70 *[p] carillonando non legato*

⑩
 2 72 *p* *preciso* *pochiss. più mosso*
meno p *sonoroso poco pes.*

⑪
 76 *poco f claro*

⑫
 85 *mf più caloroso* *p*

⑬
 86 *brillante* *f sub.*

Ex. 1 Tippett, Piano Sonata No. 2: gestures ①–⑰

Copyright © Schott & Co., 1962.

If the gestural units themselves represent the building blocks of intra-sectional contrast, Tippett's tempo indications provide larger structural paragraphs under which these units are organised. As such, there are eight discrete tempi in the work,¹³ each of which is associated with different gestural units (each gestural unit, according to the logic of the work, can only appear in one tempo). While the gestural units themselves provide the immediate juxtapositions of the music, these larger tempo-sections provide a further, if often less readily perceptible, layer of contrast.

The organisation of the seventeen gestural units is by no means haphazard with the gestural juxtapositions of the work arising from a calculated internal logic. As the work ostensibly eschews the organisational framework of conventional sonata-allegro technique, internal cohesion is maintained through a set of loosely observed 'rules' which govern the placement and juxtaposition of gestural units (see Table 1).¹⁴ This framework rejects more systematic serial and aleatoric procedures, the

then-fashionable solutions to organisational conundrums, in favour of a wholly idiosyncratic approach. Tippett's approach shapes our perception of both immediate gestural contrasts and their broader significance by fixing gesture-units in set configurations which appear, constellation-like, across the fabric of the Sonata. The recurrence of such configurations infers structural (and, by implication, functional) meaning, orientating the listener within the fragmentation of the music's surface.

This organisational method allows for a certain discernible logic and inevitability in the music without entirely submitting to the prescriptions of a dogmatic system, thus preserving a (rather significant) degree of artistic and compositional licence. In its regulation of parameters such as dynamic level, duration, register, and attack, Tippett's approach displays an almost neo-Weberian sensitivity for the textural and colouristic implications of organisational logic. While not as systematic as Webern's approach (see, for example, the uncompromising organisation of Webern's Opus 27 Variations), the conceptual similarities seem to indicate an intimacy with Weberian thought.¹⁵ Tippett's rules do, however, prove surprisingly rigorous and are adhered to strictly for the majority of the Sonata. While such internal logic breaks down in the final section of the work, this constitutes not a lapse in discipline, but rather a part of the musical rhetoric which charts a trajectory from the concrete towards the fragmentary.

As Tippett's gestures are, by necessity, diverse in musical material and character, a complex system of motivic and intervallic relationships is used to provide a degree of integration. As such, all gestures are derived organically from a three-note Basic Cell (BC) which acts as the nucleus of the entire work. Rather than acting as a unifying device, Kemp and Borthwick posit that such cellular motivicism falls short of achieving discernible coherence in the work with this function fulfilled by the Sonata's macro-structural massing and expressive juxtaposition.¹⁶ Although admittedly not immediately audible at surface level, the Sonata's motivicism cannot be viewed in isolation as a mere compositional conceit. Rather, motivic unity should be understood as a manifestation of the work's overarching organisational preoccupation, inclusive of both micro- and macro-organisational procedures.

Table I: organisational 'rules' in the Second Sonata

Gestural unit	Configurations	Parameters employed
①	Alone; in combination with ⑭	<i>ff, risonando</i>
②	Alone; in combination with ⑦	<i>ff</i>
③	No set pairings	<i>ff</i>
④	In combination with ③	<i>p, legato</i>
⑤	Alone	<i>Secco, p</i> (first half), <i>f</i> (second half)
⑥	No set pairings	<i>pp, dolcissimo, sotto</i> <i>voce</i>
⑦	In combination with ②	<i>ff</i>
⑧, ⑨, ⑩, and ⑪	Recurring four-part pattern	Each unit preserves individual parameters
⑫	In combination with ⑬	<i>mf</i>
⑬	In combination with ⑧, ⑨, ⑩ or ⑫	<i>f, brillante</i>
⑮ and ⑯	Paired together	<i>f, marcatissimo,</i> <i>martellato</i>
⑰	Alone	<i>p, pesante</i>

The BC, drawn from Hector and Achilles' war music in *King Priam* (Act II, Scene I), is subject to two transformations which, together with the original version, constitute the three prime intervallic cells upon which the work is built. The first transformation (BC¹) contracts the whole-tone pattern of the BC to an interval pattern of 1+2 semitones (or, interchangeably, its inversion 2+1); the second transformation (BC²) reduces the BC to a three-note chromatic cluster (1+1). These three cells are

presented as the first three prime chords in ①, their importance highlighted by their placement at the beginning of bb. 1, 2, and 4 (Ex. 2 below).

Ex. 2 Tippet, Piano Sonata No. 2, bb. 1–4.

Each of the subsequent gestural units is constructed from one of these cells or from a combination of all three. Such construction can be both horizontal (for instance, the doubled octaves of ③ in bb. 8–9) or vertical (BC² sounded as a chord at the beginning of ⑤ in b. 22). In other cases, combinations of two or more cells are used to create chromatic or whole-tone complexes. This approach can be seen in ⑬ (b. 86^c) which combines BC and BC¹ in a cluster chord. The apogee of this approach, however, is illustrated by the Tempo 8 section (bb. 240–248) in which ⑰ is constructed of an harmonic complex consisting of BC, BC¹, and BC² (see Ex. 3). This

Ex. 3 Tippet, Piano Sonata No. 2, b. 240:
harmonic superimposition of basic cells.

compendium-like presentation of the cellular bones of the work reflects the important structural implications of this section, expanded on in the next section of this analysis. Whatever the intricacies of their derivations, pertinent here is the fact that each gestural unit shares a common genetic cell (BC). An exhaustive illustration of each gestural unit's

derivative procedures, while no doubt illuminating, is unfortunately beyond the scope of this paper in which only a few such elucidatory examples are listed (in Ex. 4).

The image displays three systems of musical notation for Michael Tippett's Piano Sonata No. 2. The first system is in bass clef, marked *con forza ed energia*, and features a sequence of notes with structural labels BC^1 , BC , BC^1 , and BC^2 above it. The second system is in treble clef, marked *p marc*, *non troppo*, and *f (secco)*, and includes trills and dynamic markings with structural labels BC^1 and BC^2 above and below the staff. The third system is in treble clef, marked *[p] carillonando non legato*, and shows triplet figures with structural labels BC^1 , BC , and BC^1 above and below the staff.

Ex. 4 Tippett, Piano Sonata No. 2: cellular derivation of ③, ⑤, and ⑨.

This intricate mesh of cellular interrelationships is reinforced by a set of motivic relationships which provide a further level of coherence to the musical material. This is particularly evident in Section 2 of the Sonata (marked 'Tempo 6' in the score, bb. 69–134). Section 2 constitutes the first of two 'slow movements' within the work¹⁷ and introduces *x*, an important motive derived from BC^1 which features prominently both here and later in the Sonata. This motive is drawn from the upper voices of ⑩ in b. 73, its pitch content (E – D – C-sharp) outlining BC^1 . Motive *x* serves as the basis for ⑭ which presents the motive in a more readily recognisable version (bb. 112^c–113); here, *x* is subjected to rhythmic augmentation and interval

displacement with the concluding minor second of the original altered to a leap of a major seventh, a characteristic gesture which appears in all subsequent versions of x . We may call this transformation x^1 . The second transformation of x is a purely rhythmic one, subjecting x^1 to rhythmic diminution; we may call this transformation x^2 . This second transformation is first presented as a counterpoint to ⑨ in bb. 120–121, functioning as a thematic recollection of ⑭, heard ten bars earlier. The final version of x (designated x^3) to appear in this section subjects x^2 to intervallic diminution, with the intervallic content of x^2 reduced from 2+1 semitones to 1+1 semitones (or BC²). The first appearance of x^3 is at b. 122^{c2}–123 in which it is presented alongside, and indeed overlaps with, x in its original form. All three versions of x are outlined in Ex. 5 below.



Ex. 5 Tippett, Piano Sonata No. 2: x and its transformations.

The coda of the work (bb. 301–316) introduces the most complex arrangement of x in which it constitutes a decorated form of ⑭ which is juxtaposed with the return of ①. Here, x^1 , x^2 , and x^3 are superimposed to create a chromatic complex of descending sevenths, providing a foil to the perceived diatonicism of ①.

2. Macro-structural concerns

The organisation of the Second Sonata's seventeen gestural units is, as has been shown above, highly systematic. It is unsurprising then that the macro-organisation of these units is similarly rigorous. At a macro-structural level, Tippett's gestural units are associated with eight discrete tempi which organise the music (which is by nature fragmentary) into a set of larger structural paragraphs. These tempo-units are explicitly marked by the composer in the score and delineate medium-scale structural groupings, alternating between topoi of arrest and movement. Although promulgating the arrest-movement juxtapositions so integral to work, the tempo-

units provide no readily perceptible structural logic in themselves. Indeed, Iain Stannard has perceptibly posited that coherence, demonstrated on a cellular scale in the construction of the gestures, relies on the apportioning of functional significance to tempo-unit groupings.¹⁸ Such functional rationalisation may seem at odds with the ostensible juxtapositional 'anti-logic' of the work, which Tippett assures us is devoid of both development and transition.¹⁹ If everything does indeed 'proceed by statement', as the composer suggests, notions of overarching structural function within the work are entirely inapposite. The theoretical absolutism of Tippett's juxtapositions, however, is by no means readily perceptible to the listener. While undoubtedly elegant as a compositional conceit, the functional egalitarianism upon which Tippett's non-development is predicated proves ultimately impractical. Changes of register, tempo, and material all facilitate a process of perceptual structural massing in which listeners divide the musical material into discrete sections, inevitably apportioning some degree of functional significance to them in the process.

Indeed, issues of macro-structural massing are evident in Tippett's earliest sketches for the Sonata which clearly arrange 'arrest' and 'movement' juxtapositional blocks into a neatly articulated ternary scheme. Stannard has shown how Tippett's formal ideas for the work developed over three sketches, charting a path from an initial, essentially ternary, structure towards the fragmentation of the final work.²⁰ The basic tripartite blueprint of Tippett's initial sketch, however, remains constant throughout the various stages of compositional planning and is articulated largely through the use of blocks of Tempo 1 material as framing devices. If such large-scale organisational tendencies are evinced, admittedly obliquely, in the composer's earliest sketches of the work, it is not inconceivable that Tippett himself apportioned functional significance to tempo-unit groupings. Sketched terms such as 'reversed' and 'plunging down' (as opposed to 'plunging up') suggest inversional, quasi-palindromic structural relationships, outlining a formal arc at odds with Tippett's proclaimed non-functional contrasts.

The analytical problem here is thus not so much the existence of large-scale functionality, an inevitable by-product of any structural massing, as it is the *nature* of such functions. Kemp has posited a model drawn from sonata theory, suggesting

an organisation of tempo-units into four ‘movements’ separated by bridging episodes. While persuasive in its usage of sonata terminology, Kemp’s reliance on the dispersion of tempo- rather than gesture-units overlooks significant structural delineations. In practice, contrasts between different kinds of material (that is, the substance of the mosaic ‘tiles’ themselves) are more readily perceptible than tempo contrasts, which are often confused by counterintuitive rhythmic divisions. I have thus predicated my own structural partitioning upon a gesture-based dispersion of materials, suggesting a structural functionality which expands Kemp’s four-movement sonata model.

In the model posited in this analysis, the Sonata’s gestural units are subjected to an organisational process, dividing the entire work into eight discrete sections. The delineation of these sections, which are not analogous with the eight different tempi, is far from arbitrary and takes into account factors such as marked textural, registral, and character changes; prolongation of a single tempo indication; and, primarily, the dispersion of the gestural material itself. The eight sections are outlined in Table 2 below.

Table 2: macro-structural delineation in the Second Sonata

Section (Function)	Bars	Tempo	Gestural units
A (Exposition)	1-68	1-5	①-⑦
B (Slow movement I)	69-134	6	⑧-⑭
A ¹ (Development I)	135-173	3-5	③-⑤
C (Scherzo)	174-206	7	⑮-⑰
A ² (Development II)	207-239	2-4	②-③, ⑥-⑦

D (Slow movement II)	240–248	8	①–⑦
A ³ (Recapitulation)	249–300	2–4, 6–8	②–④, ⑥–⑪, ⑬, ⑮–⑰
Coda	301–316	1	①, ⑭

The dispersion of gestural material throughout the work is of paramount importance to its structural workings. The seventeen different gestural units are apportioned between four different functional groupings (referred to as A, B, C, and D in the table above). Both A and B are allocated seven units each (①–⑦ are associated with A, and B is comprised of ⑧–⑭) while C and D reflect allocations of relative paucity: two units (⑮ and ⑯) are associated with C, and D is comprised of a single unit (⑰). Whereas the last three of these groupings remain static in the use of their gestural units, group A employs various configurations of its material at each subsequent appearance. As such, A behaves in the manner of a rondo theme in which subsequent entries (in this case A¹ and A²) display different facets of the section's original material (here, A¹ employs ③, ④, and ⑤ while A² is comprised of ②, ③, ⑥, and ⑦). A³, by contrast, presents a near-complete recapitulation of the work's gestural gamut (excluding only ①, ⑤, ⑫, and ⑭). Here, fragments of both 'thematic' material (drawn from A) and 'episodic' material (drawn from B, C, and D) are compressed into a climatic Tippettian 'jam session'. This gestural configuration suggests an idiosyncratic sonata-rondo scheme as a plausible underlying structural design. As such, the Sonata's macro-structural layout may be read as follows: A B A¹ C A² D A³ Coda.

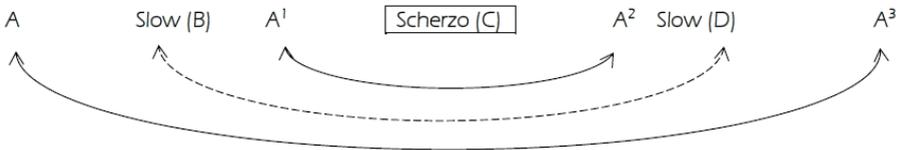
This structural model allows for the episodic nature of the B, C, and D sections but fails to account for the combined momentum of the A sections themselves. Indeed, any sense of 'development', insofar as variation can be seen as representative of it, is largely confined within the A sections. Material presented in B, C, and D is extended, transposed, and metrically displaced but hardly ever subjected to variational procedures (inversion and canonic imitation are prominently exhibited only in A sections).²¹ Such functional momentum may seem at odds with the ostensible anti-developmental procedures of the work. It does

account, however, for the readily perceptible goal-orientation of the Sonata which tracks, in its A sections at least, a course from initial statement (A) through variational permutations (A¹ and A²), fragmentation (A³), and re-statement (coda), a trajectory not wholly dissimilar to sonata-allegro teleology. Stannard recognises the potential of such momentum (particularly evident in the initial grouping of Tempos 1–4) in generating ‘a sense of coherence across disparate [structural] groups’,²² but finds it ultimately frustrated by the inconsistent grouping of these tempo-units elsewhere in the Sonata. The model posited in Table 2, however, allows for recurrent configurations of Tempos 1–4 which although interrupted by the ‘arrest’ of Tempo 5 at bb. 21–28, 42–45, and 162–173, maintain enough momentum to infer a functional progression across the disparate A sections.²³

The nature of this inferred functionality owes much to sonata-allegro archetypes, and the A groups may be productively read as functionally analogous to intra-movement sonata-allegro sections. Furthermore, instead of merely serving as episodes in a rondo-like structure, B, C, and D fulfil musical functions analogous with the internal movements of a traditional four-movement sonata scheme. B and D both behave as ‘slow movements’ within a large-scale sonata structure: B is constructed in simple ternary form (often associated with slow movements),²⁴ and is indeed marked *Andante*, while D functions as an *intermezzo* between two predominantly fast sections. C, on the other hand, functions as a *scherzo*, a function mirrored in the material itself (Ⓐ and Ⓑ) which abounds in rapid repeated notes and glissando flourishes.

While B, C, and D fulfil the functions of such inner sonata movements, A (in its various manifestations) is concerned with the function of various intra-movement sonata-allegro sections. Thus, A acts as an exposition, A¹ and A² as developments of the expository material, and A³ as a recapitulation (the two developmental sections are necessitated by the quasi-palindromic symmetry of the Sonata, in which C acts as a structural fulcrum, see Ex. 6). A³ is an integral section in the work, fulfilling a twofold function as the recapitulation of both A (the sonata-allegro material of the work) and B, C, and D (the sonata-movement material). These two discrete strands of structural thought are linked by A³ which combines the gestural content of both, in fragmentary form, solidifying an ingenious conflation of sonata

and sonata-allegro structures. A³ is followed by the eighth, and final, section which acts as a coda to the work, recapitulating some of the material not included in A³ (① and ⑭) and affirming the cyclical nature of the Sonata through its emphatic use of ①.



Ex. 6: Cyclical structural mirroring in the Second Sonata.

Tippett conceived the rhetoric of the Second Sonata in terms of three distinct musical functions: music can flow, become static (especially through the use of ostinato), or stop completely. All three of these approaches are used throughout the work. Indeed, the opening three bars of the Sonata present a microcosmic succession of these approaches: the music begins with a static *risonando* chord, moves (or ‘flows’) in b. 2 with a cascade of semiquaver chords, and is completely silent with an entire bar of rests in b. 3. While these three functions are evident throughout the work, undoubtedly its most salient rhetorical functions can be seen in the Sonata’s arrest-movement dichotomy. Most of the gestural units themselves can be explained in terms of either arrest or movement, with ④ and ⑰ constituting acmes of these functions respectively. For the most part, however, the musical material lies somewhere in the middle of this spectrum and consists of either a juxtaposition of arrest and movement (as in ⑩) or a combination of the two concepts (③ combines an ostinato-like rhythmic drive with a sense of intervallic movement). Pertinently, the arrest-movement dialectic is inextricable from the material itself. In this, Tippett substitutes Classical (and Neoclassical) rhetorical construction with a dialectic which functions in much the same manner. Here, rather than a radical restructuring of traditional rhetoric, Tippett is presenting a model which distils the precepts of dialectical construction.

Although an arguably subjective construction, as analytical models inevitably are, the structural model proposed in these paragraphs does illuminate aspects of the Sonata's nature which defy a reading predicated on anti-developmental juxtaposition. It is not inconceivable that, to echo Stannard's palaeography, aspects of sonata-allegro thought survive in the Sonata as a kind of proto-blueprint, informing Tippett's organisational impetus. Whether a subliminal projection of sonata paradigms or not, the existence of such functional organisation underscores the continued importance of historical archetypes in Tippett's post-*Priam* writing.

III.

In the Second Sonata's gestural abstractions and thematic dialogue, the stylised Classical drama of *King Priam* is never far away. Although Tippett never provided an explicit programme for the Sonata, a narrative spirit suffuses the work. Indeed, the narrativity of the Sonata stems from an almost seamless transferral of dramatic impulse from operatic stage to instrumental abstraction, with the Sonata embodying Fred Everett Maus' notion of music as stage-drama.²⁵ Here, narrativity is played out as the action and interaction of various musical agents (analogous to dramatic characters). That Tippett's gestural units (the 'agents' of the drama) are partly derived from the material of actual operatic characters (the BC is drawn from Hector and Achilles' music in *King Priam*) further highlights the fluidity with which the composer's dramatic impulse ran between stage and score.

The narrativity of both Tippett's dramatic and instrumental scores, however, is always bolstered by rigorous organisational procedures. Structure in the Second Sonata, rather than being entirely subsumed by the fragmented surface of the musical language, is all the more tautly argued for it (as, incidentally, it is in *King Priam*). This rigour is reflected in all facets of the work's organisation, from the motivic links of the (seemingly disparate) gestures to their calculated dispersion and macro-structural grouping. Rather than Borthwick's 'mere suggestion'²⁶ of large-scale sonata organisation, Tippett's Second Sonata may be read as a reappraisal of Classical sonata archetypes, conflating as it does the interests of intra-movement sonata-allegro process and inter-movement contrast. In its

embrace of the dialectics of arrest and movement, the Sonata presents not as much an eschewal as an adaption of archetypal (Beethovenian) sonata-allegro rhetoric.

The Second Sonata remains a multi-layered jewel of a work, constantly refracting our structural and dramatic expectations in its seemingly intuitive juxtapositions. Beneath this surface iridescence, however, lies a tautly organised structural machinery, not wholly unlike Homer's fabled machine of war.

Nicholas Haralambous is a South African pianist and researcher. A graduate of the University of Cape Town and the Royal Northern College of Music, his research interests, which often intersect with his performance activities, include formal analysis, hermeneutics, South African modernism, and the Second Viennese School. His current work is concerned with the late music of Stefans Grové. ntharalambous@gmail.com

References

- Borthwick, Alastair. "The four piano sonatas: past and present tensions." In *The Cambridge Companion to Michael Tippett*, edited by Kenneth Gloag and Nicholas Jones, 190–205. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Gloag, Kenneth and Jones, Nicholas eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Michael Tippett*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Kemp, Ian ed. *Michael Tippett: A Symposium on his 60th Birthday*. London: Faber & Faber, 1965.
- Kemp, Ian. *Tippett: the composer and his music*. London: Eulenburg Books, 1984.
- Mason, Colin. "The Piano Works." In *Michael Tippett: A Symposium on his 60th Birthday*, edited by Ian Kemp, 194–210. London: Faber & Faber, 1965.
- Maus, Fred Everett. "Music as Drama." *Music Theory Spectrum* 10 (1988): 56–73.
- Stannard, Iain. "'Arrest and Movement': Tippett's Second Piano Sonata and the Genesis of a Method." *Twentieth-century music* 4:2 (2007): 133–161.
- Stannard, Iain. "Tippett's 'great divide': before and after *King Priam*." In *The Cambridge Companion to Michael Tippett*, edited by Kenneth Gloag and Nicholas Jones, 121–143. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Tippett, Michael. *Moving into Aquarius*. St Albans: Paladin Books, 1974.
- Tippett, Michael. *Sonata No. 2: in one movement*. London: Schott & Co., 1962.

¹ Alastair Borthwick, "The four piano sonatas: past and present tensions," in *The Cambridge Companion to Michael Tippett*, ed. Kenneth Gloag and Nicholas Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 195.

² Ian Kemp, *Tippett: the composer and his music* (London: Eulenburg Press, 1984), 322.

³ Kemp, *Tippett*, 323.

⁴ Kemp, *Tippett*, 323.

⁵ Iain Stannard, "Tippett's 'great divide': before and after *King Priam*," in *The Cambridge Companion to Michael Tippett*, 122.

⁶ See, for example, the remarkable motivic seamlessness of the Concerto for Double String Orchestra (1939) and the expansive lyricism of the Piano Concerto (1955).

⁷ Kemp explains Tippett's word-setting practices as "the colouring of particular words and the derivation of musical rhythms from the spoken rhythms of English" (1984, 333).

⁸ Kemp, *Tippett*, 333.

⁹ Kemp, *Tippett*, 375.

¹⁰ Tippett, quoted in Colin Mason, "The Piano Works," in *Michael Tippett: A Symposium on his 60th Birthday*, ed. Ian Kemp (London: Faber & Faber, 1965), 206.

¹¹ Accumulatory approaches to development would, in turn, be eschewed: Piano Sonata No. 3 is a veritable essay in teleological neo-Beethovenian development.

¹² Tippett's comparison with the art of mosaic-making is clear in this regard, with individual gestural units analogous to mosaic tiles.

¹³ Marked Tempos 1–8 respectively in the score.

¹⁴ I am by no means suggesting that these rules acted as a pre-compositional rubric; any such suggestion would be entirely unsympathetic with Tippett's non-prescriptive compositional thought.

¹⁵ Indeed, Tippett was broadly receptive of the Second Viennese School and presented three talks for the BBC Third Programme as part of a radio obituary marking the death of Arnold Schoenberg in 1951. These were later published as essays in *Moving into Aquarius* (1959).

¹⁶ Kemp, *Tippett*, 380; Borthwick, "The four piano sonatas", 198.

¹⁷ The full extent of the section's structural significance is outlined in greater detail in the second part of this analysis.

¹⁸ Stannard, "'Arrest and Movement': Tippett's Second Sonata and the Genesis of a Method," *Twentieth-century Music* 4:2 (2007), 153.

¹⁹ Tippett, quoted in Mason, "The Piano Works", 206.

²⁰ See Stannard (2007) for an exhaustive discussion of these sketches.

²¹ It is worth noting here that the extended use of stable temporalities in B, C, and D further mark out these sections as functionally distinct from their more fragmentary counterparts. While each A section is comprised of myriad tempo-units, sections B, C, and D all maintain a single tempo.

²² Stannard, "Arrest and Movement," 156.

²³ Although Stannard's momentum is largely couched in terms of relative speed, the recurrence and reconfiguration of orientational blocks of material infers a *thematic* momentum, functioning in conjunction with its temporal counterpart.

²⁴ B once again uses gestural dispersion to achieve its structural aims: the outer sections of the ternary scheme are comprised of formations of (8), (9), (10), and (11) while the middle section is based on (12) and (13).

²⁵ See, for example, Maus: "Music as Drama," *Music Theory Spectrum* 10 (1988), 56–73.

²⁶ Borthwick, "The four piano sonatas", 197.