

A

SYNTHESIS OF VARIOUS ELEMENTS IN SELECTED PIANO WORKS OF
FREDERIC RZEWSKI

by

JEE-YOUNG SHIN

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Music in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts, The City University of New York

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ABSTRACT

SYNTHESIS OF VARIOUS ELEMENTS IN SELECTED PIANO WORKS OF
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The purpose of this dissertation is to bring the reader to understand the many levels of synthesis (musical/pianistic style, philosophy and aesthetics) at work in the piano works of Frederic Rzewski. The following two areas will be of primary importance in the discussion: 1) the synthesis of the old and new – the use of modern compositional devices within the framework of traditional forms; and 2) the various aspects of the composer's particular artistic development, philosophy and techniques.

The adaptation of variation form or a sonata structure to the world of modern composition by Rzewski represents a particularly good example of the synthesis of the traditional and the innovative; in Rzewski's variations especially, the utilization of variation form as a structural framework for organizing musical ideas is successfully demonstrated.

At the same time, judging from the fact that most of Rzewski's piano works are known for their enormous technical difficulties and interpretive challenges, the following criteria were applied to each individual work:

First, technical and interpretive idiosyncracies, including possible solutions to the problematic features and interpretive suggestions that are going to be derived, possibly from the composer himself and from performers who specialize in Rzewski's music, are discussed. Second, the special pianistic skills needed to perform his music as well as improvisational technique are discussed.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT OF THESIS.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	vi
Chapter I	
Introduction.....	1
Frederic Rzewski - Experimentalist of the Old and the New In Search of a Romantic Ethos (Neo-Romanticism)	
Chapter II.....	10
Eclecticism and Originality Rzewski's Overview, Background and Stylistic Approach.	
Chapter III.....	17
The Treatment of Themes and Improvisation Technique within Variation Form	
1. <i>No Place To Go But Around</i>	
2. <i>Andante con moto</i>	
3. Summary	
Chapter IV.....	73
Aspects of His Pianistic Style	
1. <i>Four Pieces for Piano</i>	
2. <i>The Turtle and the Crane</i>	
3. Summary	
Chapter V.....	121
Summary and Conclusion	
<i>No Place To Go But Around, Andante con moto,</i> <i>The Turtle and the Crane, Four Pieces for Piano:</i> Historical Significance and Musical Achievements	
Appendix.....	126
List of Works (Solo Piano Compositions)	
Bibliography.....	127
Score and Discography.....	131

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Frederic Rzewski

The Experimentalist of the Old and New
In search of a Romantic ethos (neo-Romanticism)

Every so often, certain people come into being who possess the talent and will to bring about a new understanding of previously accepted concepts or ideas and endow the world with art that is ever-changing, fresh and exciting, restoring our belief in a world too often perceived as lacking historical and social consciousness. Such a person is Frederic Rzewski, born in 1938, whose intense desire to communicate through music stands at the forefront of late twentieth-century composition. The uniqueness of the man is undeniable, and his approach to composition is honest.

Throughout his life, Rzewski has striven to understand the world and its people, and music is the medium he has chosen to express his feelings and ideology. He has searched for a universal music, a music for the whole human race, yet admits that this is perhaps not achievable.

It would seem to me that the only kind of music that today should achieve something like universality would be a music that would take sides in some way. On the other hand, the more you take sides, the less universal you are. . . .¹

Undoubtedly, the twentieth century was a time of change and rapid growth, but it was also a time of tremendous frustration and unhappiness, and there is a sense

¹ Lillian Tan, "Rzewski Fuses Jazz with Classical Music to create Conciousness-Raising Concerts," *Keyboard Magazine* 11 (Dec. 1985): 103.

in the world today that people are lost and are looking for ways to find a path through the tangled web. Rzewski feels and understands this conflict, and his musical development thus reveals a desire to understand and accept many different centuries and ideologies. In our age of complexity and anxiety, his musical language speaks with such sincerity that one is transformed.

. . . He is able to juxtapose many styles with ease and conviction. This process of cross-fertilization made its way into Rzewski's music in the form of popular motives from folk music, classical elements and improvisation . . . Rzewski believes that in the twentieth century a large gap exists between real art music and folk music, in contrast to previous periods when that was not true. By incorporating folk elements into many of his works, Rzewski attempts to recall the past, believing that this makes his music more accessible to a larger audience.²

The term "the new accessibility" was suggested by Eric Salzman in his book, *Twentieth Century Music*.

Co-existent with minimalist, post-minimalist, and new-age music were, of course, other types of American music, some conceived along more "traditional" lines, some pursuing a post-Cageian path of experimentalism, some moving into technological no-man's lands. . . . artists were reaching out to audiences rather than communing only with themselves, secure in the certainty that posterity would understand their message. Thus a major trend of the period might be termed "the new accessibility."³

In striving to find a deeper connection with the world and in his attempt to convey this in music, Rzewski's thinking reflects various musical traditions and many accepted and successful ideas of musical composition that have dominated Western music for centuries. To call Rzewski a neo-Romanticist is to deprecate his extensive contributions to the development of twentieth-century music in general. In an effort to

² Ronald Edwin Lewis, *The Solo Piano Music of Frederic Rzewski*, D.M.A. document. The University of Oklahoma, 1992 (Ann Arbor, UMI, 1993): 121.

³ Eric Salzman, *Twentieth Century Music* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Third Edition, 1988): 320.

bring about certain changes, his compositions display many new and remarkable ideas that nonetheless incorporate traditional techniques or formal principles. In realizing his vision, Rzewski offers new ways for the continued adoption and appreciation of pre-existing music.

In tracing the history of Western music, especially its “common practice” period with its defining genres of variation, sonata, symphony and solo concerto, certain underlying principles of the compositional process emerge. These principles similarly dominate the musical composition of Frederic Rzewski, setting up models for comprehensibility, while also using the twelve-tone row.

Classical music, in its broadest sense, emphasizes formal clarity and motivic development; these characteristics are exemplified in many works of Rzewski. Often, the formal structure of the music is meticulously planned. Tom Johnson states:

Every piece he writes adheres rigorously to some sort of structural logic. It is never necessary to understand the particular logic in order to appreciate the music, but there is always plenty of intellectual substance to sink your teeth into if you feel like it.⁴

Formal restraints are present in all of Rzewski’s works. Pieces which at first reflect a diversity of elements reveal, on closer investigation, an intellectual formal structure. The primary conception of each piece is governed by this idea.⁵

The many descriptive titles given to Rzewski’s works reflect his socio-political agenda. And many of Rzewski’s works are political in content, intellectual in form, and

⁴ Tom Johnson, “Rzewski as Formalist,” *Village Voice* (4 Feb. 1980): 64.

⁵ Lewis, “The Solo Piano Music,” 121.

unprecedented in approach.⁶ For example, the origins of *No Place To Go But Around* lay with the people of Chile and the terror of the Allende power struggle of the early 1970's.⁷ Although socio-political issues are present within his pieces, Rzewski does acknowledge that the most important aspect is how to communicate with the audience. In other words, no matter how important his political agenda in music may be, the value of musical and formal ideas is what ultimately counts. In *No Place To Go But Around*, aside from political influences, contrasts emerge among the variations. Tightly-woven into eight sections, each variation has the distinctive purpose of highlighting musical elements (e.g. rhythm) or techniques. The last variation serves as a summation.

Rzewski also believes that music is a “form of spiritual expression that potentially influences masses of people.”⁸ In music, he aims to characterize maximum pianism: he introduces pianists to many compositional techniques, including improvisational techniques. His pianistic skills are associated with his skills as a composer.

He's a pianist of remarkable virtuosity, combining formidable technique, a commanding tone, and pinpoint textural clarity. He improvises at the keyboard with uncommon fluency. . . Both his performing skills and his energetic, challenging scores place him squarely within the nineteenth century tradition, now almost entirely lost, of the virtuoso pianist-composer, a successor to Chopin, Liszt, and Anton Rubinstein.⁸

Composing piano music is for Rzewski an extremely systematic process. His composition *Four Pieces for Piano* (1977) is a good example of his compositional skills, his unique understanding of pianistic sonorities and musical form, and his desire for communication with the audience.

⁶ Tom Johnson, “Rzewski Talks,” *Village Voice* (3 September 1979): 73.

⁷ Seth Beckman, “Traditional,” 52.

⁸ Joshua Kosman, “Improvising with pencil: The Piano Music of Frederic Rzewski,” *Piano and Keyboard* (March/April 1993):30.

The 1977 *Four Pieces* (really a piano sonata without benefit of clergy) are multifaceted works. This is Playing music [sic]--a kind of contemporary Gebrauchsmusik but without Hindemith's neo-baroque pedantry. Unlike a lot of the best new music, these pieces belong to the central concert tradition, . . . As such, they ought to be played in concert halls, and played a lot.⁹

Unlike his earlier works, Rzewski's later music achieves a formal freedom, a departure from the strictness of the German models, where the lack of defining tonalities, formal artifice and motivic working-out produce a new music, full of pianistic color and sonorities well-preserved, with a revolutionary concept of time and direction. As shown in *The Turtle and the Crane*, it is clear that Rzewski drew on a random flow of thoughts in the construction of the piece, in which the flow of time is as far from traditional thought as possible, appearing more in touch with natural cycles.

The choice of a title is highly suggestive for Rzewski, and seems to have evoked the most imaginative response from him. Hence, the titles of Rzewski's compositions are significant, acting as stimuli to his compositional craft. For example, in *No Place To Go But Around* (1974), the title has deep associations with his socio-political agenda, his powerful, personal inner feeling; and the piece itself derives a certain direction from its own voice. *Andante con moto* was written after Rzewski's period of exploration and represents the composer at his most confident and flexible. His works contain all his concepts of what a piece of piano music should be and how it should proceed, challenge classical pre-conceived notions of form and direction, re-interpret the genre of the variation form and offer new directions of pianistic expression through his expert use of the piano.

⁹ Eric Salzman, "Rzewski: Piano Music," *Stereo Review* 46 (Oct 1981): 128.

During Rzewski's peak compositional period, his music emphasizes improvisation, texture and color, and is in constant flux registrally. Rzewski often juxtaposes highly disparate textures and seems to be concerned with sonority of sound—the space between sound and silence. His pieces contain motives which often return throughout the course of the works, providing a memory web for the listener. The music moves and pauses continually, with one phrase seeming to slip out of another within an overwhelmingly transparent texture.

Rzewski has been influenced by all the trends of the twentieth century (e.g., minimalism, serialism, jazz, chance processes, free improvisation, and music theater), but for him, music is not about principles or plans, but about communication among human beings. Rzewski calls it “human realism.” The term suggests a desire to communicate ideas to the audience, and a willingness to use any stylistic means necessary—tonal, atonal, minimalist, structuralist, collage—to get his political points across.¹⁰

Present State of Research

There is no extensive research that has addressed these works in depth. The literature available on Rzewski's work is not large. Gerald H. Groemer's 1984 dissertation, “Path to the New Romanticism: Aesthetic and Thought of the American Post Avant-garde as Exemplified in Selected Tonal Piano Music,” discusses neo-Romanticism along with composers (George Rochberg, William Albright and Frederic

¹⁰ Kyle Gann, “Roll Over Liszt (Concert at Kitchen),” *Village Voice* (5 May 1998): 76.

Rzewski) who were associated with the post-World War II avant-garde and who have severely altered their compositional style and embraced a tonal musical language.

In this dissertation, Groemer has chosen to address the philosophical agendas of three composers instead of detailed discussion of their works. For example, in the chapter on Rzewski, Groemer's main focus is on Rzewski as political musician; he emphasizes the political content of Frederic Rzewski's music rather than analyzing it. There is a brief discussion of Rzewski's piano pieces *The People United Will Never Be Defeated* and *No Place To Go But Around* with no detailed analysis. Another dissertation, from 1992, by Dolly Eugino Kessner, "Structural Coherence in Late Twentieth-Century Music: The Linear-Exploration Paradigm Applied to Four American Piano Compositions of Diverse Musical Styles (Martino, Rzewski, Crumb and Adams)," examines the developmental process of generating musical structures.

Although her focus on Rzewski's work is limited to one chapter, which is primarily a discussion of *North American Ballads*, Kessner offers in-depth theoretical analysis of four ballads. She emphasizes the functional structure of works when the linear-extrapolation paradigm is applied. The dissertation also covers historical and musicological aspects. A 1996 dissertation, "The Traditional and the Avant-garde in Late Twentieth-century Music," by Seth Beckman, discusses three works by Rzewski: *The People United Will Never Be Defeated*, *North American Ballads* and *De Profundis*. Beckman's dissertation, including an interview with Rzewski, is devoted to three piano works by Rzewski. The dissertation is not a detailed theoretical analysis, but it is a stylistic review of Rzewski's compositional process. Another dissertation, "The Solo Piano Music of Frederic Rzewski," was written by Ronald Edwin Lewis and finished in

1992. The dissertation is a general view of Rzewski's works for piano through 1991, and no theoretical analysis is included. Instead Lewis has chosen to offer a general survey of Rzewski's compositional works for piano including unpublished works. It also offers a general commentary on compositional background. Although these dissertations are devoted to the piano music of Rzewski, there is very little in-depth analysis with a theoretical or stylistic perspective. Instead, a brief synopsis of Rzewski's piano works is offered. In particular, such unpublished works as *Andante con moto* and *The Turtle and the Crane* have never been analyzed in a scholarly context.

The Works to be discussed

This dissertation examines how Rzewski uses a variety of elements, in keeping with his personal aesthetics, to produce a unique compositional style. It examines four piano works: *No Place To Go But Around* (1974), *Four Pieces For Piano* (1977), *The Turtle and the Crane* (1988) and *Andante con moto* (1992).

By selecting four of Rzewski's works in different styles, the author's intention is to demonstrate how his compositional techniques evolved during his lifetime.

Rzewski's main publisher is the Tokyo-based Zen-on, but only a handful of his works—*The People United Will Never Be Defeated*, *Squares*, *North American Ballads*, and *Four Pieces For Piano*—are in print. Other scores circulate in manuscript. Says Rzewski, "If people write to me saying they want a particular piece, I just send it."¹¹

¹¹ Joshua Kosman, "Improvising":31.

Purpose of the Dissertation

As mentioned earlier, Rzewski's compositional style is diverse in that he has assimilated influences from other composers, to which he has added his own aesthetic and concept of time and timbre as well as his passion for philosophy to form his own unique voice. Frederic Rzewski is considered to be

. . . a composer and a pianist fluent in the style of traditional pianism as well as the contemporary avant-garde. His musical breadth is more clearly demonstrated through his piano compositions, which are often large-scale, virtuosic and mostly tonal. For these reasons, they are frequently compared to works of the Romantic era. Furthermore, his pieces also display experimental, avant-garde leanings and thereby demonstrate complexity and eclecticism."¹²

Unfortunately there is very little discussion of his piano music and few of his pieces are available, although there are exceptions such as *The People United Will Never Be Defeated*, *North American Ballads* and *Squares*. His music illustrates his concepts of what a piano music should be, challenges preconceived notions of time and direction, reinterprets traditional genres [e.g., variation form, sonata, etc.] of piano works and offers new sounds, techniques and colors through his expert use of the keyboard. The music emphasizes texture, timbre and color in constant flux with regard to register. It is time to reflect on his contributions to the music world at large, and it is my intention to do this through a discussion of the four piano compositions listed above.

¹² Seth Victor Beckman, "The Traditional and Avant-garde in Late Twentieth-Century Music." D.A. dissertation, Ball State University, 1996.

CHAPTER II

Eclecticism and Originality

Rzewski's Overview, Background and Stylistic Approach

Rzewski's aim is to change the direction of classical music through his own, unique ideas. Kosman states:

As an American composer who has lived for nearly all of his career in Europe, as an avowed "experimentalist" with impeccable academic credentials, as an avant-garde performer and composer pursuing his own idiosyncratic version of a Romantic ethos, Rzewski seems almost determinedly difficult to pigeonhole. His music is widely eclectic in its stylistic allegiance, dabbling liberally in minimalism, jazz, chance processes, free improvisation and music theater.¹³

Born in Westfield, Massachusetts in 1938, Rzewski started playing piano when he was three and began formal lessons by the time he was four. After graduation from Harvard, where he studied with Walter Piston and Randall Thompson, he went on to Princeton to study with Roger Sessions and Milton Babbitt. In 1960, he went to Italy on a Fulbright scholarship and studied composition with Luigi Dallapiccola. He later became one of the founding members of *MEV* (*Musica Elettronica Viva*), founded in Rome in 1966 to specialize in live/electronic music and improvisation. Beckman notes:

Rzewski helped to organize *Musica Elettronica Viva*, an association of musicians which worked to unite electronic music and multi-media theater into "a truly collective artform in which the distinction between composer and performer would be abolished." Improvisation and audience participation were valued as essential compositional elements, as represented by *MEV*'s reliance upon the "live" setting for compositional inspiration.¹⁴

¹³ Joshua Kosman, "Improvising," 31.

¹⁴ Seth Beckman, "The Traditional," 3.

Bringing together both classical and jazz avant-gardists, MEV developed an esthetic of music as a spontaneous collective process, an esthetic which was shared with other experimental groups of the same.¹⁵ By this time he had met the composer Cornelius Cardew, a former avant-gardist turned communist agitator. Rzewski was deeply influenced by Cardew.¹⁶ In 1971 Rzewski moved to New York, a few months before a violent uprising at the New York State Prison at Attica. He responded musically with “Coming Together” and “Attica,” using leftist texts culled from *Ramparts* magazine. The most controversial side of Rzewski is his belief that music can have a political effect.¹⁷ *No Place To Go But Around* is a landmark in Rzewski’s own development. In the 1970’s, he concentrated on politically oriented pieces for several years, and produced excellent works such as *The People United Will Never Be Defeated*. Beckman states:

His political representation in music may be inadvertent, but its presence does not supersede the value of musical and formal relationship. Rather, they work concurrently.¹⁸

He currently resides in Rome, teaches in Belgium, and performs throughout Europe, the United States and Canada. Rzewski’s compositions include more than twenty works for keyboard and a total of over sixty compositions for voice, chorus and various types of large and small instrumental ensembles.

Frederic Rzewski’s music shows an intriguing variety of influences. His works reflect the influence of earlier composers from the fifteenth century through the twentieth century, including Beethoven, Liszt, Busoni, Babbitt, Sessions and Piston. Yet Rzewski

¹⁵ Extracted from internet <http://radio.cbc.ca/programs/new_musicfest/new/calendar/f_rzewski.htm/>
18 March 2003.

¹⁶ Extracted from internet <<http://www.Americancomposers.org/bio011099.htm>>

¹⁷ Lillian Tan, “Rzewski Fuses,” 103.

¹⁸ Beckman, “Traditional,” 53.

is reluctant to pin himself down when it comes to discussing his own compositional style.

He strives to make each work completely different from the previous one:

I've never been able to come to grips with the concept of style. I don't seem to be able to hold on to a style for a long time. I tend to approach each piece with its own particular set of problems, and also I've learned over the last ten years or so, that it's best, when one is writing a piece, to try to form a clear idea of who's going to play it, and who's going to listen to it.¹⁹

The influences on Rzewski at various times in his life have resulted in the different styles seen in his compositional output. His works between 1979 and 1981 show a return to experimental and graphic notation in comparison to the works of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Most of these early works combine elements derived equally from written and improvised music. Rzewski also revealed in this early stage a passion for experimenting further with forms in which style and language are treated as structural elements. Through much of the 1980s he explored new ways of using the twelve-tone technique. A freer, more spontaneous approach to writing can be found in his recent work.²⁰

From 1953-1961, Rzewski not only confined himself to the discipline of Western classical music, but also absorbed styles hitherto unknown to him. Such works as *Chain of Thoughts* (1953), *Preludes* (1956) and *Poem* (1958) are examples from this period.

Although Rzewski did not compose solo works between 1962 and 1970, his music in this period, such as *Les Moutons de Panurge* (1969), shows the spirit of experimentation. As mentioned previously, between 1971 and 1979, Rzewski experienced live electronic music. Also he experimented further with forms in which

¹⁹ Tom Johnson, "Rzewski Talks," 73.

²⁰ Mark Alburger, "Coming Together for and Interview with Frederic Rzewski," *Twentieth Century Music* 4 (November 1997): 15.

style and language are treated as structural elements; the best known work of this period is *The People United Will Never Be Defeated*, a 50-minute set of piano variations.²¹ The music of this period also shows the influence of *Musica Elettronica Viva (MEV)* by combining elements of traditional notation with improvised music.²² By this time, he began to show his interest in social issues, to find his voice and to incorporate aspects of it into his music. The mixture of musical and non-musical influences had a profound impact on his music. Rzewski needs to feel a connection with the audience and has striven throughout his life to produce a universal music, in which all societies and cultures are reflected, where the music would have life and beauty for all people. Rzewski's awareness of his socio-political agenda aided in this process and he began to express it through his music. Rzewski believes in the power of music and its ability to change people's lives. Beckman emphasized that "to understand Rzewski's connection with socio-political themes, one must first understand the basis for the movement in the twentieth century."²³ The historian Albrecht Betz states:

The roots of his compositional trend can be traced through the ideas of German composer Hans Eisler (1898-1962). Although closely-associated with the production of *Gebrauchs-Musik* (e.g., music for film and incidental music), Eisler remains known primarily for his decidedly political compositions.²⁴

Beckman, however asserts that in Rzewski's music, the political and social aspects are subservient to purely musical ones:

Socio-political content may enrich the fabric of Rzewski's compositions, offering detail and insight into varied societal

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ronald Edwin Lewis, "The Solo Piano Music," 11.

²³ Seth Beckman, "Traditional," 50.

²⁴ Albrecht Betz, "Hans Eisler: Political Musician," trans. Bill Hopkins (Cambridge University Press, 1982): 242-243.

interests, relationships, and conflicts. Such contents do not eclipse his use of musical elements. Rather they work concurrently, enlightening his art in the process. Political content as demonstrated in music is more volatile than neotonicity, but equally prevalent within Rzewski's output.²⁵

Rzewski believes that the successful political composer must recognize the unequivocal connection between composition and its culture. Without this association, the piece is positioned to be nothing more than rhetoric.²⁶

For example, although *No Place To Go But Around* (1974) has political undertones, the piece makes sense in purely musical terms.

Rzewski also reveals at this stage a passion for jazz avant-garde technique, particularly improvisational technique, an interest that has remained with him throughout his life, profoundly influencing his compositional thought processes. Rzewski believes that "improvisation is the soul of classical music."²⁷ Beckman states:

A tremendous contrast to the activities of the avant-garde lies in Rzewski's promotion of improvisation, the most traditional musical value. Ironically, his use of it appears almost revolutionary, as if it were a part of the avant-garde with which he has, at times, been associated. This is the direct result of the virtual disappearance of improvisation by classical pianists of this century, a historical anomaly of sorts. Rzewski welcomes improvisation back into the contemporary pianist's bag of tricks and in doing so, encourages the performer to be open to this creative and speculative musical venture.²⁸

Rzewski also elaborates:

One should remember that most of the well-known classical composers, up to and including somebody like Brahms, were

²⁵ Seth Beckman, "Traditional," 53.

²⁶ Frederic Rzewski, *Desert Plants: Conversation with 23 American Musicians*, ed. Walter Zimmermann (Vancouver, A.R.C. Publications, 1976): 305.

²⁷ Ken Terry, "Frederic Rzewski and the Improvising Avant-garde," *Down Beat* 46 (Jan. 1979): 20.

²⁸ Seth Beckman, "Traditional": 40.

at least as well known for their improvising gifts as for their work in the form of written composition. This was especially true for somebody like Beethoven. The solo improvising of Beethoven was the main attraction at a typical Beethoven concert.²⁹

Between 1979 and 1981, some of his works, such as *le silence des espaces infinis* and *The Prince of Oil* show a return to experimental and graphic notation.³⁰

By the early 1980s, Rzewski was exploring new ways of using twelve-tone technique and looking for a new concept of sound. Two features are noticeable in his music at this time: additive process (both rhythmic and melodic) and fragmentation of themes: they became characteristic features of his compositional style. The music continued to display a high degree of musical complexity, with dense dissonant textures providing an indication of his continuing experiments.

Rzewski's *The Turtle and the Crane* (1988) was written for the Japanese pianist Aki Takahashi. The idea for the piece came from observing a rock garden called "The Turtle and the Crane."³¹ This music shows Rzewski's new-found understanding of Japanese myth and a desire to integrate aspects of it with his Western musical concepts. The piece is written to highlight the symbolism of the Turtle and the Crane—both stand for longevity in Eastern cultures. Rzewski's ultimate goal was to connect his music to the "myth" that runs through Japanese culture. By the 1980s, a political strain is either entirely absent or at least deeply submerged in the artistic workings of a Rzewski score.³² Rzewski continued to develop his works with various ideas while at the same time exploring new ways to make each piece distinctive. An additional quality found in these

²⁹ Tom Johnson, "Rzewski Talks": 73.

³⁰ Mark Alburger, "Coming Together," 20.

³¹ Frederic Rzewski, Program notes, manuscript: 1988.

³² Seth Beckman, "The Traditional," 25.

later compositions is a deep psychological element. By focusing on the elements of struggle, Rzewski strives to bring the human factor into these works. At the same time, he became interested in new ways of exploring twelve-tone rows.

The works of the 1990s reveal a remarkable richness of texture and color, testifying to Rzewski's discovery of his own understanding of sound and an inner contentment. The dense texture of the works, with their expressive melodic lines, reveals a certain connection with the writing of late Beethoven, Busoni and Schoenberg (*Sonata, Andante con moto* and *Ludes*). In Rzewski's recent works, with their more dissonant sonorities and linear textures, we witness a characteristic calmness, where "a freer, more spontaneous approach to writing"³³ can be found. Rzewski's music undergoes a transformation as he becomes clearer in his compositional goals. The projection of a multitudinous array of colors and sounds is emphasized above all, with the pieces being made up of fragments of material revealing particular concern for direction of development.

³³ Mark Alburger, "Coming Together," 5.

CHAPTER III

The Treatment of Themes and Improvisation Technique within Variation Form

Variation form is employed in both *No Place To Go But Around* and *Andante con moto* as the framework within which the musical elements are original. However, unlike *No Place to Go But Around* (1974), which is written in a comparatively more conventional way, *Andante con moto* demonstrates a unique synthesis of Rzewski's compositional technique.

The adaptation of variation form or a sonata structure to the world of modern composition represents another significant synthesis of tradition and innovation; in Rzewski's variations, especially, the utilization of variation form as a structural framework for organizing musical ideas is successfully demonstrated.

In this chapter, thematic treatment and the use of melody, harmony, rhythm and structure for each variation of the two pieces (*No Place To Go But Around* and *Andante con moto*) will be discussed in order to understand their organization, strategies, and the many meanings of the term "variation form" as utilized by Rzewski. The special pianistic skills needed to perform his music as well as improvisational technique will also be discussed.

No Place To Go But Around: The Theme and Variation For Piano

No Place To Go But Around: The Theme and Variations for Piano was written in 1974 while Rzewski was beginning to show his concerns for social issues.

The title of this piece is highly evocative for him, recalling imaginative responses from him for his earlier journey between New York and Rome. Rzewski recalls:

In 1973, when I was commuting between Rome and New York, my family was in Rome and I was working in New York; and I was going back and forth every few months or so. One thing that struck me about the difference between these two places was that in Rome a year later, say in the fall of 1974, many Chileans had arrived. Italy had thrown open its doors to the flood of Chilean refugees, because there had been a similar attempt at a coup d'état in Italy the previous year. So Italy had an uncomfortably close scrape with experiences which were very similar and which created among many Italians a sense of unity and bonding with Chilean peoples. . . And there were huge demonstrations of solidarity, with hundreds of thousands of people and all of them were singing this song, "El Pueblo Unido" at the end. . . It is a very powerful sound when a hundred thousand people are chanting or singing. Then I would go to New York, when nobody had ever heard of Chile, . . . nobody paying any attention to them. And I felt, God damn, maybe you can't change the world with music, but you could do something. It's better than just sitting there or standing there and doing nothing, and I am going to write a piano piece about this song.³⁴

The piece also came out of some incidental music that Rzewski was composing for the Living Theater,³⁵ for a play, *The Tower of Money* (1972). The basic idea and structure of the pieces are closely related. Rzewski stated:

I liked what I did with it: a series of variations (*No Place To Go But Around*), actually, that had to do with the structure of a play (*The Tower of Money*). It was a cyclical situation which gradually built up. . . The construction of the play produced a structure which was something like variations.³⁶

Rzewski also recalls:

³⁴ Mark Alburger, "Coming Together": 15.

³⁵ It was established in 1946, and developed a reputation for showing social interest in radical theater activity or productions dealing with social subjects. Also there is a new book on the Living Theater by John Tytell, a professor of English at Queens College.

³⁶ Mark Alburger, "Coming Together": 15.

each class of society is associated with a different kind of rhythm. on the bottom, you have the lumpen proletariat, . . . they move at a very slow crawling rhythm. . . Above them in the next level. . . the working class. They move at a somewhat faster rhythm and in a more mechanical way. . . Above them you have the middle class. They are characterized by a kind of operatic, hysterical, emotional rhythm.³⁷

The piece is also influenced in many ways by English composer Cornelius Cardew's

Thälmann Variations for Piano. Rzewski recalls:

when I was in Berlin, and Cornelius Cardew happened to be there and he had just written a piece of piano music, which he played. Christian Wolff and I went to a concert and heard him play it. It was called "Thälmann variations". . . I think it got me interested again in trying to do something along similar lines.³⁸

The form of *No Place To Go But Around* is a theme and eight variations; although it is written as continuous variations, it can be heard as sectional variations as well (figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1. Rzewski, *No Place To Go But Around*

mm.1-12	13-36	37-60	61-84	85-108	109-132	133-144	145-168	169 - 180	
Theme	var. 1	var. 2	var.3	var. 4	var. 5	var. 6	var. 7	transitional section	
Optional cadenza 181-252 253-264									
		var. 8	coda						

The theme (mm. 1-12) contains all twelve notes of the chromatic scale; it is a free-floating chromatic melody with octave displacement. Although he is using all twelve pitches, the pitches G, B-flat, C and D (scale degrees 1, 3, 4 and 5) receive special

³⁷ Frederic Rzewski, Program notes: "The Tower of Money (1972)."

³⁸ Mark Alburger, "Coming Together": 15.

emphasis; G functions as the tonal center of the variations. This tendency is quite apparent throughout the variations (ex.3.1).

Example 3.1. *No Place To Go But Around*. Theme, mm.1-12

In very strict time throughout

The musical score is written for piano and consists of three systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The tempo is marked $\text{♩} = 96$. The first system includes the instruction *una corda* and *pp*. The second system includes *Ped. sempre*. The third system includes *poco* and *(Ped.)*. The music is in 4/4 time and features a simple melodic line in the right hand and a supporting bass line in the left hand. The key signature has one flat (B-flat).

The theme is twelve bars long and the theme itself is rather simple (ex. 3.2). I have elected to divide the theme into three phrases based on the phrasing features used in variations I and II; one might extend these features to the theme itself. Other divisions of the theme, not based on later events, might be equally valid.

Example 3.2. *No Place To Go But Around*, thematic material

The musical notation shows a melodic line on a treble clef staff with notes numbered 1 through 12. The notes are: 1 (G), 2 (A^b), 3 (E), 4 (D), 5 (D), 6 (A^b), 7 (G), 8 (F), 9 (G^b), 10 (D^b), 11 (C), 12 (B). Below the staff, the melodic material is analyzed into three phrases:

First phrase: G A^b E D D A^b G G^b

Second Phrase: F G^b D^b C B G^b F E

Sub-phrases of the First phrase: E^b E B B^b and D E^b B^b A

Sub-phrases of the Second Phrase: D^b D^b A A^b E^b D

Third phrase: (This label is positioned below the sub-phrases of the second phrase)

The second and third phrases derive their melodic shapes from the first phrase. The thematic idea of the three-phrase melody (see ex. 3.2) is basically derived from the Chilean revolutionary folk song *El Pueblo Unido* (ex. 3.3), although its rhythm has been disregarded.

Example 3.3 *El Pueblo Unido*, mm. 1-8

The musical notation shows the first eight measures of the folk song *El Pueblo Unido*. It consists of three staves of music in a treble clef. The first staff has a key signature of one flat and a common time signature. The melody is written in a simple, rhythmic style with some rests and repeat signs. The second and third staves continue the melodic line.

Rzewski uses bits of this folk song as a motivic idea and develops it by octave displacement (ex. 3.4).

Example 3.4



These motives are related through similarity of contour and manipulated through the variations.

The first variation in measures 1-8 (ex.3.5) breaks away entirely from the texture of the theme, although the melodic ideas have been maintained and are recognizable both in the soprano and tenor voices (ex. 3.6). Rzewski presents a new bass line here labeled as *e1*, which is found in his previous work *The Tower of Money* and is maintained throughout most of the piece (ex. 3.7), and which he uses like a passacaglia or ground bass. These pitches, plus the use of triads, give *No Place To Go But Around* an underlying sense of G-minor tonality.

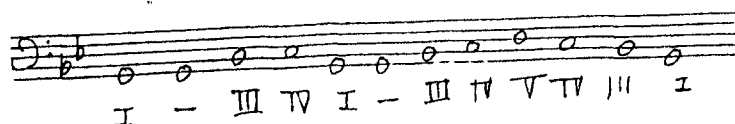
Example 3.5. *No Place To Go But Around*, variation 1, mm. 1-8

The image shows two systems of musical notation for piano accompaniment. Each system has a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The right hand features complex, rhythmic patterns with many beamed notes and slurs, including some triplets. The left hand has a simpler, more rhythmic bass line. The key signature has one flat (F major or D minor).

Example 3.6 soprano and tenor part

The image shows a single system of musical notation for a vocal part. It features a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The right hand has a complex, rhythmic pattern with many beamed notes and slurs, similar to the piano accompaniment in Example 3.5. The left hand has a simpler, more rhythmic bass line. The key signature has one flat.

Example 3.7 *No Place To Go But Around*, bass line (e1) of variations.



The texture of this variation is homophonic and various thematic materials are used.

In most of the variations, Rzewski presents the theme twice. A few exceptions, such as the transitional section to the improvised cadenza and variations 7 and 8, are treated more freely. Harmonically, the bass-line emphasizes scale degrees 1, 3, 4 and 5 in the key of g; it gives a strong sense of stability and a tightly-woven unity to the whole piece. Although variation 1 is clearly an immediate change in texture and character from the free-floating monophonic chromatic theme, the theme and variation 1 form a single unit in terms of dynamic level—*una corda* is marked through the entire passage. Although variation 1 is homophonic, the tenor part creates some interest through its rhythmically independent line. Besides the thematic idea *a1*, Rzewski uses another bit of the folk song (slightly varied), labeled *b1* (ex. 3.8) as the tenor part.

Example 3.8. original

The image shows three staves of music in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The top staff contains a melodic line with two bracketed sections labeled '1' and '2'. The middle staff contains a melodic line with a bracketed section labeled 'a'. The bottom staff contains a melodic line with a bracketed section labeled 'b'. The notation includes various rhythmic values such as eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests.

Tenor part (*b1*)

In variation 2, one finds more rhythmic activity in the right hand over the steady bass-line and the tenor, which is clearly derived from the theme. The texture remains homophonic for the duration of variation 2; the dynamic level is increased by Rzewski's *tre corde* indication (ex. 3.9).

Example 3.9. *No Place To Go But Around*, variation 2, mm. 37-48

A piano score for measures 37-48. It consists of three systems of two staves each (treble and bass clef). The right hand features complex triplet patterns, while the left hand has a steady bass line. The first system begins with the marking 'tre corde'.

In variation 2, the intervallic relationships are emphasized more, as the triplets focus on the intervals of different kinds of triads such as G minor, D-flat major, A-flat, G, G-flat and B. In the last twelve measures of the second variation in measures 49-60 (ex. 3.10a), tonal shift occurs in each measure. Frequent tonal shift is also occurred in measures 25-

36 (ex. 3.10b) in the first variation. Rzewski brings back memories of some passages to pair up the first and second variations (ex. 3.10a).

Example 3.10a. *No Place To Go But Around*, variation 2, mm. 49-60

Example 3.10b. *No Place To Go But Around*, variation 1, mm. 25-36



Compared to the first variation, the quarter-note triplets in the second variation that project the melody employ wider intervallic leaps with slight embellishments. The focus is still on the same texture as variation 1 throughout this variation, with the melody heard in the three (soprano, tenor and bass) voices. Besides their textural and rhythmic similarities, variation 1 and variation 2 are closely related in terms of melodic contour. The three voices (soprano, tenor and bass) move towards a wide pitch range, although the triplets in the right hand incorporate wider intervallic leaps here. While the thematic material *a1* appears exclusively in the soprano part, one finds both *a1* (see ex. 3.4) and *b1* (see ex. 3.8) in the tenor part over the bass line labeled as *e1*. The unity of variation 1 and variation 2 is also reinforced through the return to the original dynamic level at the end of the first variation in measures 29-36 (ex. 3.11a) and the second variation in measures 53-60 (ex.3.11b)

Example 3.11a. *No Place To Go But Around*, variation 1, mm. 29-36

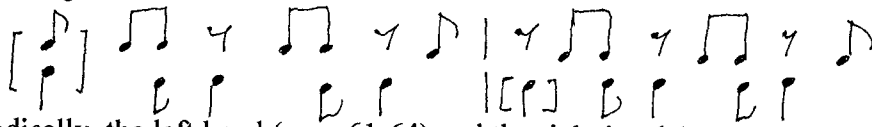
Example 3.11b. *No Place To Go But Around*, variation 2, mm. 53-60

In variation 3, Rzewski focuses on rhythmic manipulation to create a jazz-like portion of the variation in measures 61-84 (ex. 3.12).

Example 3.12. *No Place To Go But Around*, variation 3, mm. 61-68

Rhythmically, right hand and left hand are out of phase with each other, each with its own syncopated pattern (fig. 3.2).

Figure 3.2



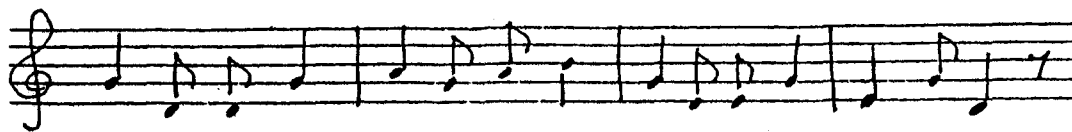
Melodically, the left hand (mm. 61-64) and the right hand (mm. 65-68) present the whole theme (see ex. 3.12) using a different rhythmic figure. Rhythmic manipulation is maintained in the fourth variation (mm. 85-108, ex. 3.13), wherein Rzewski further intensifies the setting with accented syncopated rhythmic fragments in the right hand against duple meter in the left (ex. 3.13).

Example 3.13. *No Place To Go But Around*, variation 4, mm. 85-92

Rzewski uses almost the same melody (circled) in the first eight measures (mm. 85-92) as in the last eight measures of the first variation (mm. 29-36, see ex. 3.3), while another voice (bracketed) introduces a new rhythmic figure *d* (ex. 3.14). Here Rzewski quotes a rhythmic idea from Cornelius Cardew's *Thälmann Variations* (ex. 3.15).

Example 3.14. *No Place To Go But Around*, mm. 89-92

Example 3.15. The Theme of *Thälmann Variations*, mm. 1-4



The rhythmic character of the fourth variation seems somewhat similar to that of the previous variations, but the rhythms used here are much more unpredictable and focused, suggesting a more jazz-like quality. Now the legato inner voice has disappeared, and accented off-beat figures often function as sequential build-ups (ex. 3.16).

Example 3.16. *No Place To Go But Around*, variation 4, mm. 93-100

Thälmann Thematic Figure

The pre-existing melodic fragments with new melodic materials are supported by the bass line that is the only steady pulse in variation 4. The accented duple off-beat fragments incorporate wider intervallic leaps in this variation, and the music becomes more driven at mm.101-108 by the addition of octaves to both hands (ex.3.17).

Example 3.17. *No Place To Go But Around*, variation 4, mm 101-108

According to Rzewski, like the relationship between the first variation and the second variation (ex. 3.18a), variation 3 and variation 4 have many similarities in texture, melody, harmony and character (ex. 3.18b) and therefore, they can be considered as “continuous” or “paired” variations.³⁹

Example 3.18a. *No Place To Go But Around*, variation 1, mm. 13-20

³⁹ From a private conversation between pianist Jed Distler and Frederic Rzewski, reported by Distler to the present author.

No Place To Go But Around, variation 2, mm. 37-44

Musical score for variation 2 of "No Place To Go But Around" (mm. 37-44). The score is written for piano and features a treble clef staff labeled "tre corde" and a bass clef staff. The music consists of two systems of four measures each. The upper system (treble clef) contains complex rhythmic patterns with triplets and slurs. The lower system (bass clef) contains a more rhythmic accompaniment with slurs and accents.

Example 3.18b. *No Place To Go But Around*, variation 3, mm. 61-68

Musical score for variation 3 of "No Place To Go But Around" (mm. 61-68). The score is written for piano and features a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The music consists of two systems of four measures each. The upper system (treble clef) contains complex rhythmic patterns with slurs and accents. The lower system (bass clef) contains a more rhythmic accompaniment with slurs and accents.

No Place To Go But Around, variation 4, mm. 85-92

Musical score for variation 4 of "No Place To Go But Around" (mm. 85-92). The score is written for piano and features a treble clef staff labeled "tre corde" and a bass clef staff. The music consists of two systems of four measures each. The upper system (treble clef) contains complex rhythmic patterns with slurs and accents. The lower system (bass clef) contains a more rhythmic accompaniment with slurs and accents. A label "Thälmann rhythmic Figure" is placed below the bass clef staff in the second system.

While the element of rhythmic manipulation was Rzewski's focus in the third and fourth variations, a sudden shift in texture and mood occurs in the fifth variation, measures 109-132 (ex. 3.19).

Example 3.19. *No Place To Go But Around*, variation 5, mm. 109-114

In this variation, Rzewski creates a more flowing feeling by changing the meter from 4/4 to 12/8. This is maintained until twelve measures before the eighth variation. Variation 5 is definitely more lyrical than the previous variations. While presenting the melody, Rzewski juxtaposes *al* and new melodic fragments *c* and *d*; sometimes they become overlapped (ex. 3.20).

Example 3.20.

c → although it is new melodic material,
rhythmic figure came from "Thälmann
rhythm"

tenor

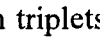
Unlike the third and fourth variations, the thematic material *a1* in the first half of this variation remains less distinctive and hidden throughout. Instead, new motives *c* and *d* (ex. 3.22) dominate the fifth variation. It is particularly interesting to note the unusual texture. There is a concurrent presence of the four thematic motives (*a1*, *c*, *d* and *e1*). Rzewski now emphasizes every voice, highlighting melody over coherent bass-melody (ex. 3.22).

Example 3.21. Melody from the original material (see ex. 3.3), *El Pueblo Unido*

Example 3.22. *No Place To Go But Around*, variation 5, mm. 115-118

bass line



Following variation 5, the rhythm is still focused on triplets (), with the continued stress upon the bass line in the sixth variation (ex. 3.23).

Example 3.23. *No Place To Go But Around*, variation 6, mm. 133-138

Musical notation for variation 6, consisting of three systems of two staves each (treble and bass). The notation is complex, featuring many accidentals (sharps, flats, naturals) and a dense texture. The bass line is particularly prominent, with many notes and rests.

As in previous variations, the twenty-four-bar pattern (12-bar thematic pattern which is repeated each time) remains the same, although one has to count the repeat in variation 6 in measures 133-144 to achieve that number of measures (see figure 3.1). Thematic material *a1* is slightly varied in the right hand, while the texture is exclusively homophonic in this variation.

The seventh variation (ex. 3.24) stands out for its different character. Although the repeated thematic pattern appears the same as before, the harmonic structure is no longer centered on g minor in this variation. The rhythmic activity of this variation is heightened throughout: eighth notes are replaced by sixteenth notes, which pervade every measure.

Example 3.24. *No Place To Go But Around*, variation 7, mm. 145-148

With the stress upon either a major second or minor second note group, the texture is now extremely simple with virtuosic figuration, presenting a simple melody in sixteenth notes with occasional left-hand octaves with added notes. Although variation 7 continues to exhibit a lyric quality, the main feature is unrelenting rhythmic activity. In terms of tonality, the pitch G plays a less prominent role as the tonal center of this variation. Followed by the transitional section to the improvisational cadenza in measures 169-180, the earlier I – III – IV – V progression (used by Rzewski in previous variations to provide an underlying sense of stability) disappears in this transitional passage (ex. 3.25a) as it leads to the improvisation.

The rhapsodic passage in measures 169-180 concludes on C-sharp, followed by an improvised cadenza. In other words, the dominant D is confirmed at the very end of variation 7 with C-sharp in the left hand, which resolves to D, acting as a basis for the improvisation in the opening of the cadenza (ex. 3.25b).

Example 3.25a. *No Place To Go But Around*, variation 7, mm. 169-174

Musical score for Example 3.25a, measures 169-174. The score is written for piano and consists of three systems of staves. Each system contains a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a single bass clef staff. The music is highly rhythmic and melodic, featuring many accidentals and complex chordal structures. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 2/4. The piece concludes with a C-sharp in the left hand.

Example 3.25b. *No Place To Go But Around*, variation 7, 175-180

Musical score for Example 3.25b, measures 175-180. The score is written for piano and consists of three systems of staves. Each system contains a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a single bass clef staff. The music is highly rhythmic and melodic, featuring many accidentals and complex chordal structures. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 2/4. The piece concludes with a C-sharp in the left hand.

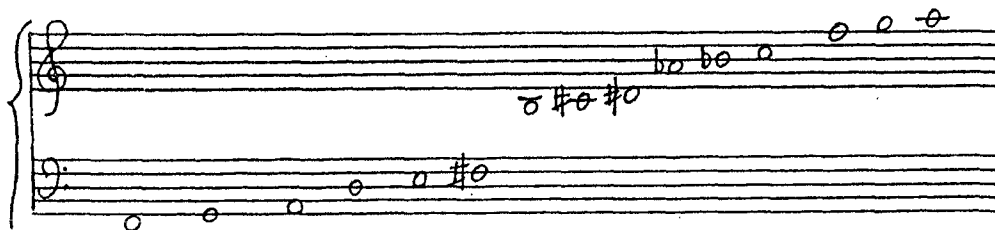
At the peak of the rhythmic activity, an improvised cadenza is introduced. In Rzewski's own recording (Finnadar SR-9011), the opening motive from an Italian revolutionary song, "Bandiera Rossa," is included (ex. 3.26).

Example 3.26. The opening melody from "Bandiera Rossa"



Rzewski also provides the performer with a series of pitches on which to improvise (ex. 3.27); he also adds that one does not need to follow these pitches when a performer attempts to improvise (it is just a suggestion).

Example 3.27. Pitch material for the improvisation



The performer must employ improvisational technique with confidence. Although the outcome of the improvisation is unpredictable, its beauty lies in endless possibilities to the performer. Here are some of my ideas of improvisation (ex. 3.28):

Example 3.28. Example of improvisational cadenza

Handwritten musical notation for Example 3.28, illustrating improvisational techniques for a cadenza. The notation is written on a single treble clef staff.

- The first line shows a sequence of notes with accidentals (flats and naturals) and a slur. Below it, the text "(continue the pattern in any order)" is written.
- The second line features a bracket labeled "8" above it, with the text "(notes approached by slide)" to its right. Below the notes, it says "repeat the group of notes for". To the right, there are notes with a slur and the text "trills shuffled or lazy beat".
- The third line shows a sequence of notes with a slur and the text "free repetition of these notes: free rhythm" written below it.

At 83 measures (mm.181-252), variation 8 (ex. 3.29) is the longest variation of the entire work.

Example 3.29. *No Place To Go But Around*, variation 8, mm. 181-192

Handwritten musical notation for Example 3.29, showing variation 8 of "No Place To Go But Around". The notation is written on three systems of grand staff (treble and bass clefs).

- The first system shows a complex melodic line in the treble clef and a rhythmic accompaniment in the bass clef.
- The second system continues the melodic and rhythmic development, with various accidentals and slurs.
- The third system concludes the variation with a final melodic phrase and accompaniment.

The clarity of the first through sixth variations, which was somewhat diluted in the second half of the seventh variation through the improvised cadenza, now recovers in this variation. Rzewski also keeps continuity by collecting all the materials that were previously used. Variation 8 serves as a recapitulation to the whole piece and summarizes the preceding seven variations. The piece ends with a 12-measure coda in measures 253-64 (ex. 3.30) that relates the theme, unifying the whole piece in texture and style.

Example. 3.30. *No Place To Go But Around*, coda, mm. 253-264

The image shows a handwritten musical score for the coda of the piece. It consists of three systems of music, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The first system begins with a 4/4 time signature. The notation includes various notes, rests, and dynamic markings such as *mp* and *p*. Pedal markings are present: "Ped. sempre" under the first system, "hold to extinction" under the third system, and "gradually release pedal" at the bottom right. The score is written in a clear, legible hand.

No Place To Go But Around is one of Rzewski's major works of the 1970s that exhibits a strong emphasis on tonal centers. According to Tom Johnson, although Rzewski uses tonality, it is very different from "traditional European Tonality."

Johnson states:

The great difference between the new tonality and traditional European Tonality is that the recent music doesn't have much to do with chord

progressions. . . you hear basically a scale, and the chords and melodies that arise may be any combinations of notes from this scale. . . There is often, if not always, a tonal center, but this is usually just the note that comes up most often and at the most important points.⁴⁰

Along with the bass line, which integrates the stylistic diversity of each variation, another unifying factor is thematic melody. Although presented in various styles, the theme, especially *a1* and *b1*, consistently appears with *e1*. It is interesting that, despite the complicated texture, one can easily recognize one or more melodic lines from beginning to end.

No Place To Go But Around represents not only musical but also political ideas. The most interesting aspect of this work lies in the unique approaches used by Rzewski to express his ideology by incorporating both musical and non-musical ideas (as was previously mentioned on pp. 18-19). Rzewski often quotes from different kinds of music as Charles Ives did. In this work, he quotes from political folk songs as well as other composers' works.

Although he used a free-floating 12-tone melody as thematic material, he thought it would not be appropriate to apply 12-tone technique in this piece. Rzewski stated:

The basic improvisational technique is to take well-known traditional songs, chop them up into little pieces, and to let bits of them be heard in various tonalities. It is very interesting. . . For some reason, a traditional tune like that can be dealt with in a way which, say, a 12-tone row cannot. . . you can hear a bit of it, the beginning or the end, and you recognize it. It has a strong identity, which a 12-tone row does not have.⁴¹

This factor is closely related to an essential characteristic of Rzewski's treatment of the thematic material in this work, namely his use of variation form.

⁴⁰ Tom Johnson, "The New Tonality," *Village Voice* 23 (16 October): 15.

⁴¹ Tom Johnson, "Rzewski Talks.": 4.

There are not only a number of registral shifts among variations, but also sudden textural shifts occur frequently throughout the variations. It is essential for the performer to execute and integrate those sections smoothly. The pianist also should deal with rhythmic challenges, stylistic and emotional coherence, and needs to apply both a strong technique and a creative mind. The bass line serves as a harmonic grounding, as in a passacaglia, where thematic structures of a certain length and phrase are preserved almost exactly throughout this set of variations.

2. *Andante con moto: 14 variations without a theme by Beethoven* (1992)

Andante con moto was written in January and February 1992. It was composed at the request of Tomoko Mukaiyama⁴² and is dedicated to Betty Freeman.⁴³

As in other periods, structure in music of the twentieth century is the result of a combination of old “forms,” new vocabulary, and innovative process.⁴⁴ Although Rzewski chose traditional variation form as a basis, the real issue of the piece is improvisation, and the music explores the entire range from restriction (framework) to freedom (improvisation). In particular, by using a theme by Beethoven, Rzewski combines his compositional technique with a European Classical tradition.

⁴² Ms. Tomoko Mukaiyama made herself quite a name as a concert piano player and she plays the music of various contemporary composers. In Rzewski’s manuscript, it is spelled Mukayama. Extracted from internet <<http://www.sospeso.com/contents/musicians/mukaiyama.html>> 6 September 2003.

⁴³ Betty Freeman began her activities as a philanthropist and supporter of musicians in 1961 by contributing to a young musician’s legal defense. Extracted from internet www.newmusicbox.org 6 September 2003.

⁴⁴ Mary Wennerstrom, *Perspectives of Twentieth-Century Music: Form in Twentieth-Century Music* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1975).

This piece is, in fact, a series of continuous variations based on the theme of the second movement of *Beethoven's* Piano Sonata in F minor, op. 57 (*"Appassionata"*). But Beethoven's theme does not itself appear in its original form. Some of the variations resemble the harmonic and rhythmic structures of "the original theme"; others, especially towards the end, depart from it, as if in preparation for a free improvisation.

The piece calls for two optional improvised cadenzas, a "humorous" one before variation 13 and a somewhat longer, "serious" one (specifically indicated by the composer in terms of the length of the cadenza) before the last variation.

The design of this work can be described as 14 variations with 2 optional improvisatory cadenzas between variations (figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3

1-32	33-64	65-96	97-128	129-160	161-186	187-201	202-217	218-257
var.1	var.2	var.3	var.4	var.5	var.6	var.7	var.8	var.9
258-289	290-321	322-359	a humorous cadenza	360-391	a serious cadenza			
var.10	var. 11	var.12	optional	var.13	optional			
392-407 (var.14)								

In the opening section of Var. 1, even with the amount of change in texture and register, the main motive appearing in measures 1-8 is derived from Beethoven's original theme (ex. 3.31) although the melodic line has been altered (ex. 3.32).

notes of Beethoven's most striking harmony, the German sixth chord at the end of m. 6 (see ex. 3.31), at precisely the same place (see ex. 3.32, m. 6, right hand). In the first variation, one recognizable factor in relation to Beethoven's *Appassionata* is rhythmic similarity. For these reasons, the passage should be executed by the performer in precise rhythm. Besides the rhythmic similarity and distinctive intervallic features (the leap of in the bass in m. 1 is derived from Beethoven's m. 1), the number of measures in variation 1 is exactly equal to that of the original theme by Beethoven (figure 3.4).

Figure 3.4.

Beethoven's Original theme

4 + 4 :: 4 + 4 ::||

Rzewski's Variation 1

$$4 + 4 + \underbrace{4 + 4}_{\substack{\text{written-out} \\ \text{repetition}}} \quad 4 + 4 + \underbrace{4 + 4}_{\substack{\text{written-out} \\ \text{repetition}}}$$

The theme includes two periodic structures, and each period contains written-out repetitions. While the pitch D-flat in Beethoven's original theme receives consistent emphasis, functioning as the tonal center of the variations, all twelve notes (see ex. 3.32) are presented within the first eight measures in *Andante con moto* (ex. 3.33).

Example 3.33

While mm. 1-8 and mm. 17-24 are closely related through similarity of melody (although it is hardly recognizable by ear, all notes are well-preserved) and rhythm with the original theme (see ex. 3.20), the written-out repetitions (mm. 9-16 and mm. 25-32) are more disguised in terms of projecting melodic fragments (ex. 3.34) through the use of different kinds of rhythm (ex. 3.35). In other words, the first and second periods are based on the

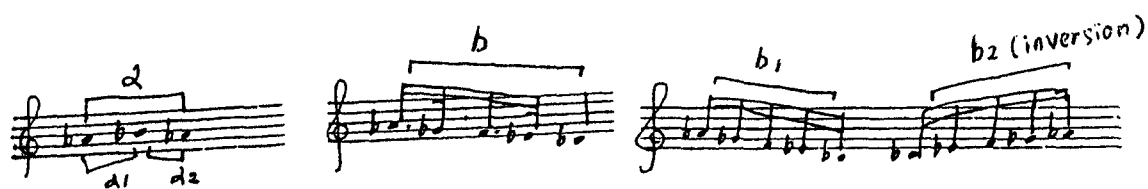
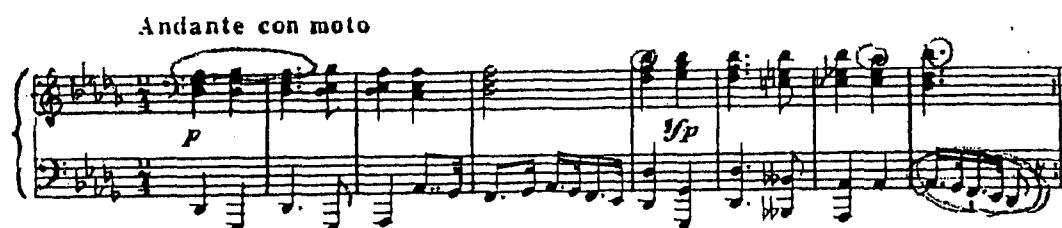
original melody while each of the repetitions is constructed from melodic fragments of the theme.

Example 3.34. *Andante con moto*, first variation, mm. 9-16

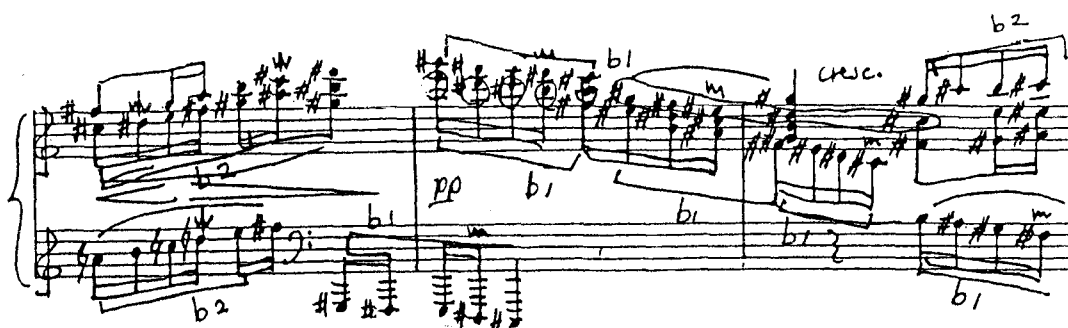
Beethoven's *Piano Sonata op. 57*, second movement, mm. 1-16

Andante con moto

Example 3.36b.

Example 3.36c. Beethoven's *Piano Sonata Op. 57*, second movement, mm.1-8

The second variation is definitely more lyrical than the first variation; Rzewski's focus here is on contrapuntal texture—canonic imitation between left and right hands (see ex. 3.36a). Rzewski's use of the theme in variation 2 becomes more motivic in that he uses only a portion of the tune at a time. In other words, the melodic motives previously mentioned as *a*, *a1*, *a2*, *b1* and *b2* are cut into small bits for developmental purposes. In the opening of variation 2, Rzewski takes a stepwise descending bass line (labeled as *b1*) from the original theme and develops it. These five descending notes begin to dominate the surface of the variation along with their inverted form, labeled *b2* (ex.3.37), as the music thickens.

Example 3.37. *Andante con moto*, second variation, mm. 39-43

In measures 49-56, the music becomes increasingly active, preserving canonic motion and inversion as before, and changing from sixteenth notes to thirty-second notes, creating a rhythmic acceleration (ex.3.38).

Example 3.38. *Andante con moto*, second variation, mm. 49-56

The listener hears motives *b* and *b1* clearly from the opening of variation 2 through measure 56. From the second half of variation 2 (mm.46-64), the theme is the focal point, presented in both hands and further embellished with running thirty-second notes and motive *a* (ex. 3.39).

Example 3.39. *Andante con moto*, second variation, mm. 33-34, mm.41-44

The image displays three systems of handwritten musical notation for piano. The first system is marked 'poco meno mosso' and 'mp', with a 'cresc.' marking. The second system is marked 'pp' and 'cresc.', with a measure number 'm. 41' indicated. The third system is marked 'allargando'. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Variation 2 ends with a reminiscence of the original theme by Beethoven, lasting 8 measures. Measures 57-64, compared to the preceding 24 bars, mark an abrupt shift in character and texture. In these measures, the texture becomes more homophonic and there is a feeling of stillness (ex. 3.40). Rzewski produces a quality of lyricism throughout this variation, by shifting from a contrapuntal to a homophonic texture. Another augmented-sixth chord is featured at the end of m. 64; as at m. 6 (ex. 3.32), the chord is spelled like

an incomplete dominant seventh. The chord resolves to D-flat in m. 65, the beginning of variation 3.

Example 3.40. *Andante con moto*, second variation, mm. 57-66

Handwritten musical score for Example 3.40, second variation, measures 57-66. The score is written for piano and includes various annotations such as "rit.", "ten.", "P sub.", "cresc.", "mf", "p", "b augmentation", "sf", "p", "b inversion", and "b". It shows a complex harmonic progression with many accidentals and dynamic markings.

The major force in the first half of variation 3 in measures 65-80 (ex. 3.41) lies in articulation and the prevalence of the perfect fifth, which probably comes from Beethoven's bass line (see ex. 3.31).

Example 3.41. *Andante con moto*, third variation, mm. 65-72

Handwritten musical score for Example 3.41, third variation, measures 65-72. The score is written for piano and includes various annotations such as "b1 inversion (= b2)", "b1 inverted (b2)", "motive of inverted and augmented", "cresc.", "mf", "dim.", "p", "f", "p", "f", "b", "b1", "b2", "b3", "b4", "b5", "b6", "b7", "b8", "b9", "b10", "b11", "b12", "b13", "b14", "b15", "b16", "b17", "b18", "b19", "b20", "b21", "b22", "b23", "b24", "b25", "b26", "b27", "b28", "b29", "b30", "b31", "b32", "b33", "b34", "b35", "b36", "b37", "b38", "b39", "b40", "b41", "b42", "b43", "b44", "b45", "b46", "b47", "b48", "b49", "b50", "b51", "b52", "b53", "b54", "b55", "b56", "b57", "b58", "b59", "b60", "b61", "b62", "b63", "b64", "b65", "b66", "b67", "b68", "b69", "b70", "b71", "b72". It shows a complex harmonic progression with many accidentals and dynamic markings.

In the second half of variation 3 (mm. 77-96), motive *a* is stressed in various forms, as the triplets become the accompaniment (ex. 3.42).

Example 3.42. *Andante con moto*, third variation, mm. 77-82

The image displays three systems of musical notation for piano. The first system shows a treble clef staff with a melodic line and a bass clef staff with a piano accompaniment. The second system continues the accompaniment with dynamic markings 'mf' and 'dimin.'. The third system shows further development of the accompaniment with a 'cresc.' marking. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

Var. 4 (ex. 3.43) is designed to focus on chords. Chords are struck in various registers of the keyboard, as Rzewski explores the spacing of sonorities in the first half of this variation (measures 97-114).

Example 3.43. *Andante con moto*, fourth variation, mm. 97-114

Handwritten musical score for Example 3.43, mm. 97-114. The score is in 4/4 time with a tempo of $d=64$ and the marking "misterioso". It features three systems of piano accompaniment. The first system includes a circled "T" and a circled "b2". The second system includes "Ger. 6th". The third system includes "a2" and "b1". Dynamics range from *pp* to *ppp*. The notation includes various chords, arpeggios, and melodic lines with slurs and accents.

Compositionally, motive *a2* is used predominantly with *b1* in this variation (ex. 3.44).

Example 3.44: *Andante con moto*, fourth variation, mm. 108-20

Handwritten musical score for Example 3.44, mm. 108-20. The score is in 4/4 time. It features two systems of piano accompaniment. The first system includes a circled "a2" and a circled "b1". The second system includes "a2 augmented" and a circled "a2". Dynamics range from *p* to *pp*. The notation includes various chords, arpeggios, and melodic lines with slurs and accents. A "(Ped sempre)" marking is present at the beginning of the first system.

In variation 5, motives *a*, *a1*, *a2* and an augmented form of *b1* appear sometimes simultaneously (ex. 3.45a) and other times alternately (ex. 3.45b). The use of motives *a* and *b* plays a large role in the variation, and Rzewski is able to achieve a sense of expansion (augmentation) and contraction (grace note figure) through variants away from and back to the original theme.

Example 3.45a. *Andante con moto*, fifth variation, mm. 129-34

Example 3.45a shows two systems of musical notation. The first system consists of a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff contains notes and rests, with a handwritten 'p' (piano) dynamic marking. The bass staff contains notes and rests, with a handwritten 'b' augmented' marking. Above the treble staff, there are handwritten 'a2' markings. The second system is labeled 'tre corde' and also consists of a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff contains notes and rests, with a handwritten 'a2' marking above it. The bass staff contains notes and rests, with a handwritten 'p' dynamic marking.

Example 3.45b, *Andante con moto*, fifth variation, mm. 154-60

Example 3.45b shows two systems of musical notation. The first system consists of a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff contains notes and rests, with a handwritten 'tinnere wistfully' marking above it. The bass staff contains notes and rests, with a handwritten 'p' dynamic marking and a 'cres.' (crescendo) marking. The second system is labeled 'una corda' and also consists of a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff contains notes and rests, with a handwritten 'a2' marking above it. The bass staff contains notes and rests, with a handwritten 'p' dynamic marking, a 'pp' dynamic marking, and '3' and '4' markings above it.

The music then moves into a more complicated region in which Rzewski has more freedom to manipulate rhythmic activity with motives (ex. 3.46); melodic fragments predominate, and the rhythm becomes more and more flexible and jazzy.

Example 3.46. *Andante con moto*, fifth variation, mm. 146-53

The image shows a handwritten musical score for three systems of piano music. The notation is dense and includes various dynamics (f, p, pp, cresc.), articulation (accents, slurs), and performance instructions like 'sust. ped.' and 'D#'. The score is written in a style that suggests improvisation or a working draft.

In the sixth variation (ex. 3.47), motives are more fragmented than in previous variations. Rzewski's main focus is on motives *a*, *a1*, and *a2*, along with new rhythmic figures that make this variation one of the most interesting. These new rhythmic figures, labeled *c* and *d* (ex. 3.48), come from the original theme by Beethoven (ex. 3.49); they are well manipulated by Rzewski through the use of syncopated rhythm.

Example 3.47. *Andante con moto*, sixth variation, mm. 161-64

Andante con moto, sixth variation, mm. 167-70

Example 3.48.

Example 3.49. Beethoven's *Piano Sonata* op. 57, second movement, mm. 1-4

Andante con moto.

As the variation progresses, both hands become more interconnected, especially in terms of rhythm in measures 175-79 (ex. 3.50). The syncopated left hand (mm. 175-79), accented on the off-beats, incorporates wider leaps with duple fragments in the right hand while projecting b' -(modified b) in a hidden level.

Example 3.50. *Andante con moto*, sixth variation, mm. 175-79

Handwritten musical score for Example 3.50, sixth variation, mm. 175-79. The score is written for piano and features two systems of music. The first system shows measures 175-179 with a syncopated left hand and a right hand with duple fragments. The second system continues the piece, ending with an 'extended b1' in the right hand. Annotations include 'cresc.', 'f', 'p', 'Ped.', and 'pp sub.'

With a continuous use of syncopation in variation 6, the rhythmic activity found in the seventh variation is the most crucial element along with frequent meter change (ex. 3.51).

Example 3.51. *Andante con moto*, seventh variation, mm. 187-90

Handwritten musical score for Example 3.51, seventh variation, mm. 187-90. The score is written for piano and features two systems of music. The first system shows measures 187-190 with frequent meter changes (5/4, 3/4, 4/4) and syncopation. The second system continues the piece with further meter changes (5/4, 2/2). Annotations include 'f', 'p', 'a inverted', 'a2', and 'd2'.

Rzewski preserves a jazz-like quality throughout the variation (ex. 3.52) by disguising the changing meter through the use of different rhythmic patterns (fig. 3.5).

Figure 3.5. *Andante con moto*, seventh variation, mm. 187-201

mm.187 | 188 | 189 | 190 | 191 | 192 | 193 | 194 | 195 | 196 | 197 | 198 | 199 | 200 | 201
 $\frac{5}{4}$ $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{5}{4}$ $\frac{2}{2}$ ----- $\frac{5}{8}$ ----- $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{2}{4}$ $\frac{5}{4}$ $\frac{3}{4}$ ----- $\frac{4}{4}$

Example 3.52, *Andante con moto*, seventh variation, mm. 187-201.

The image displays a handwritten musical score for Example 3.52, consisting of four systems of piano music. The score is written in treble and bass clefs with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The first system (mm. 187-190) features a 5/4 time signature, marked with a forte (f) dynamic and includes circled fingering numbers 5 and 4. The second system (mm. 190-194) is marked with a fortissimo (ff) dynamic and includes circled fingering numbers 5, 4, 2, and 2, with the annotation "Octave displacement" written below. The third system (mm. 194-197) is marked with a piano (p) dynamic and includes circled fingering numbers 5 and 8, with a "rit." (ritardando) marking above. The fourth system (mm. 197-201) is marked with a piano (p) dynamic and includes circled fingering numbers 3, 4, 2, and 4. The score is filled with complex rhythmic patterns, including slurs, ties, and various note values, reflecting the changing meters indicated in the caption above.

Variation 8 draws immediate attention to the key signature; Rzewski cancels the four sharps (#), previously used with melodic fragments from Beethoven's theme (ex. 3.53).

Example 3.53. *Andante con moto*, eighth variation, mm. 202-209

Although the harmonic material is polychordal (perfect fifths with other pitches: marked in the score), a general aura in this variation resembles Beethoven's original theme, especially in measures 210-17 (ex. 3.54; Beethoven's theme is reproduced in ex. 3.54b). Now the center of D-flat is gone, as is the key signature. Although the melodic contour in measures 210-14 is the same as Beethoven's in measures 9-12, Rzewski favors a very dense texture in this variation.

Example 3.54a. *Andante con moto*, eighth variation, mm. 210-17

Example 3.54a shows two systems of musical notation for the eighth variation. The first system consists of a treble clef staff with a melodic line and a bass clef staff with a dense, polychordal accompaniment. The second system continues the piece with similar complexity. Handwritten annotations include 'pp', 'p', 'b1 fragments', 'b2 fragments', and a circled 'T'.

Example 3.54b. Beethoven's *Piano Sonata Op. 57*, second movement, mm. 9-16

Example 3.54b shows two systems of musical notation for Beethoven's original theme. The first system consists of a treble clef staff with a melodic line and a bass clef staff with a dense accompaniment. The second system continues the piece with similar complexity. A 'cresc.' marking is visible in the first system.

The opening of variation 9 presents triplets in perpetual motion (ex. 3.55a).

Despite the textural differences, the sound effect recalls the fourth movement of Chopin's Sonata in B minor, op. 58 (ex. 3.55b).

Example 3.55a. *Andante con moto*, ninth variation, mm. 218-221

Musical score for Example 3.55a, showing the opening of variation 9. The score is in G major and 3/4 time. It features a right-hand melody with triplets and a left-hand accompaniment with a similar triplet pattern. Handwritten annotations include '12', '8', 'p', 'sotto voce', and 'tre corde'.

Example 3.55b. Chopin's Piano Sonata, op. 58, fourth movement, mm. 1-10

Musical score for Example 3.55b, showing the opening of Chopin's Piano Sonata, op. 58, fourth movement. The score is in B minor and 3/4 time. It features a right-hand melody with triplets and a left-hand accompaniment with a similar triplet pattern. Handwritten annotations include 'Agitato', '5', '2', '3', '4', '5', 'p', and '20'.

Towards the end of variation 9 (mm. 248-57), the piece returns to a reminiscence of Beethoven (see ex. 3.31), and ends with characteristic melodic and rhythmic figures shown in both pieces (ex. 3.56).

Example 3.56. *Andante con moto*, variation 9, mm. 248-57

Following variation 10 (ex. 3.57), which mainly incorporates the motives *a* and *b1*, variation 11 (ex. 3.58) becomes technically more complicated and very much improvisatory in character due to the inclusion of sweeping scale passages with sixteenth notes and triplets.

Example 3.57. *Andante con moto*, variation 10, mm. 258-66

Example 3.58. *Andante con moto*, variation 11, mm. 296-303

Handwritten musical score for Example 3.58, showing three systems of piano accompaniment. The notation includes complex rhythmic patterns with many beamed notes and slurs. Dynamics include *f* and *cresc.* with a circled *1* above it. The key signature has two flats.

The rhythm becomes more interesting when Rzewski manipulates motive *b* in various ways (ex. 3.59).

Example 3.59. *Andante con moto*, variation 11, mm. 306-11

Handwritten musical score for Example 3.59, showing two systems of piano accompaniment. The notation features rhythmic motifs labeled *b1* and *b2* with various annotations like *rit.*, *p*, and *cresc.*. The key signature has two flats.



In measures 314-17 of the same variation (ex. 3.60a), unlike the previous section, there are periods of stasis created by the left hand. Melodic fragments from the second half of Beethoven's original theme appear in the right hand (ex. 3.60b).

Example 3.60a. *Andante con moto*, eleventh variation, mm. 314-17

Example 3.60b. Beethoven's Piano Sonata op. 57, second movement, mm. 9-16

Variation 12 is less structured and more improvisatory, with motives *b1* and *b2* remaining as a reminder of the theme (ex. 3.61).

Example 3.61. *Andante con moto*, variation 12, mm. 322-25

The musical score for Example 3.61 consists of two systems of piano music. The first system is marked with a 21/4 time signature, *pp una corda*, and an 8-measure rest. It features a complex texture of chords and moving lines, with circled notes and dynamic markings *b1* and *b2*. The second system begins with a *rit.* marking and an 8-measure rest, continuing the complex texture with circled notes and dynamic markings *b1*, *b2*, and *mf*.

While motives *b1* and *b2* are used exclusively here, cadential trills at the end of variation 12 directly lead to the first improvisatory cadenza, called “a humorous cadenza” (ex. 3.62).

Example 3.62. *Andante con moto*, variation 12, mm. 343-46, 356-59

The musical score for Example 3.62 consists of two systems of piano music. The first system is marked with *riten. --* and *mf*. It features a complex texture of chords and moving lines, with circled notes and dynamic markings *b1* and *b2*. The second system begins with a *f* marking, followed by *dim.* and *p*. It continues the complex texture with circled notes and dynamic markings *b1* and *b2*.

Handwritten musical score for piano, showing a section with a "humorous cadenza" and various performance markings. The score is written on four staves. The top staff is for the right hand, and the bottom two staves are for the left hand. The music features complex rhythmic patterns, including syncopated off-beat rhythms and unpredictable rests. The tempo is marked as "rit." (ritardando). The dynamic markings include *pp* (pianissimo) and *ppp* (pianissimissimo). The section is labeled "(tre corde)" and "(Ped.)" (pedal). The cadenza is marked "[humorous cadenza (optional)]" and includes a circled "T" (trill) and a circled "P" (pedal). The score is annotated with "alignement" and "trill".

In the improvisational section, Rzewski does not indicate anything specific about this cadenza—except for the character indication “humorous”—which gives a performer both freedom and direction. There are many factors to make the music humorous: syncopated off-beat rhythm, unpredictable rests, major sonorities in a high register, fast, scherzo-like tempo and so on. Here are some possible opening sections to the improvisational cadenza that the author can offer (ex. 3.63).

Example 3.63. “Humorous cadenza,” opening

Handwritten musical score for piano, showing the opening of a "Humorous cadenza." The score is written on four staves. The top staff is for the right hand, and the bottom two staves are for the left hand. The music features complex rhythmic patterns, including syncopated off-beat rhythms and unpredictable rests. The tempo is marked as "rit." (ritardando). The dynamic markings include *pp* (pianissimo) and *ppp* (pianissimissimo). The section is labeled "(tre corde)" and "(Ped.)" (pedal). The cadenza is marked "[humorous cadenza (optional)]" and includes a circled "T" (trill) and a circled "P" (pedal). The score is annotated with "alignement" and "trill".

Handwritten musical score for two systems. The first system shows a treble and bass clef with various notes and accidentals. The second system features a large, sweeping melodic line in the treble clef with a 'ppp' dynamic marking in the bass clef.

Following the first improvisation in variation 13, a final glimpse of motive *al* is encountered in measures 360-361, but soon it is transformed into an overwhelming pianistic effect with tremolos (no more thematic material is found) from the upper through the lower register of the piano (ex. 3.64).

Example 3.64. *Andante con moto*, variation 13, mm. 360-71

Handwritten musical score for three systems, featuring dense tremolos in both hands. The first system is marked "ppp una corda" and "espressivo, con rubato". The second system is marked "poco a poco crescendo". The third system continues the tremolo texture.

The transformed idea (tremolos developed from *al*) permeates this variation, and gives it variety and a constantly changing face. It is a good example of how Rzewski likes to emphasize small melodic fragments (ex. 3.65).

Example 3.65. *Andante con moto*, variation 13, mm. 372-90

8

8

8

(loco) gradually release una corda pedal

p poco a poco crescendo (trem.)

legatissimo (trem.)

tre corde, ped. sempre

N.B. — If a cadenza is improvised, it should be long (arg. $\frac{1}{2}$ the length of the preceding music), and may or may not refer to theme.

Serious Cadenza (optional)

(Ped)

Along with an overwhelming effect with its discordant tremolos throughout the wide range of the piano, Rzewski brings back motive *b* briefly for the last 6 measures of this variation (see ex. 3.65), but soon it directly leads to the second improvisatory section called “Serious Cadenza.” Rzewski gives instructions specifically for the second improvisation just before “Serious Cadenza”: “if a cadenza is improvised, it should be long (e.g. $\frac{1}{2}$ the length of the preceding music) and may or may not refer to the theme.”⁴⁵ Compared to the previous “humorous” cadenza, the “serious” cadenza should be considered more important, according to the composer, and may include the following factors: heavy chords, minor (serious and sad qualities), lower bass, tremolos and so on.. Here are some examples the author can offer (ex. 3.66).

Example 3.66. “Serious cadenza,” opening

The musical notation consists of three systems of grand staff notation. The first system shows a treble clef with a melodic line and a bass clef with a bass line. The bass line starts with a dynamic marking *fff* and includes notes with flats. A dashed line labeled *8va* indicates an octave shift. The second system continues the melodic line with various intervals and accidentals. The third system features a treble clef with notes labeled *slightly depressed note* and *rolled clusters*, and a bass clef with a complex chordal texture.

⁴⁵ Frederic Rzewski, *Andante con moto: 14 Variations without a theme by Beethoven: 33* (music acquired directly from the composer).

Following the second cadenza, in variation 14, Rzewski is able to project seemingly unrelated motives, now completely varied and fragmented, which are connected only through their relation to the pitch D-flat, which continues to play a prominent role as the tonal center. But soon, the mass of dissonant chords resolves into a final six bars of the note C in consonance in measures 395-403 (ex. 3.67).

Example 3.67. *Andante con moto*, variation 14, mm. 392-99

The musical score for Example 3.67 shows two systems of piano accompaniment. The first system is marked *ppp* and *tre corde*. The second system is marked *cresc.* and *ff*. The score consists of a series of chords, with the final chord being a fortissimo (ff) C. The score is marked with 'ppp' and 'cresc.'.

The repeated C's are nearly inaudible, until the last *ff* C. Without the mass of sound, Rzewski still creates a dramatic effect (ex. 3.68).

Example 3.68. *Andante con moto*, variation 14, mm. 400-407

The musical score for Example 3.68 shows two systems of piano accompaniment. The first system is marked *p* and *(m. d. ff sempre)*. The second system is marked *pp*, *ppp*, and *fff*. The score consists of a series of chords, with the final chord being a fortissimo (fff) C. The score is marked with 'p', 'pp', 'ppp', and 'fff'.

It also suggests an original stroke on the part of Rzewski by the avoidance of an expected D-flat (C-sharp), which has been projected throughout. Rzewski never brings back motives, including motivic fragments, in this variation. The rhythmic activity diminishes, but the overall mood is still dramatic.

Andante con moto is an intense work, heightened by the atonal quality depicted in both melodic and harmonic writing. The harmonic language combines a sense of free tonality with its use of dissonance. To proceed from one variation to another, Rzewski often uses a rhythmic device to create rhythmic acceleration, as does Beethoven. The piece is based on a simple, homophonic melody that is then developed in an evolutionary manner. With regard to performance practice, the pianist plays a role as the means for experimentation, faced with the challenges of projecting lyricism through Rzewski's melodic language. Moreover, faced also with the challenge of improvising, the pianist is invited to serve as both performer and creator.

The main motives *a* and *b* appear with greater rhythmic freedom and different shapes of melodic contour in various tonalities compared to the original theme. The thematic treatment in these variations occurs on three levels: reconstructing of Beethoven's theme by means such as registral displacement; altering the tonality and rhythms of the original theme as well as changing the melodic contour; and creating new thematic ideas through a modification of "the theme."

* * *

Andante con moto is an example of “absolute” music, while *No Place to Go But Around* is grounded in both political and musical ideas. In *No Place To Go But Around*, Rzewski presents the leading tune (theme) in a straightforward and un-manipulated manner. The listener can easily recognize themes used throughout the variations, in the key of G minor. On the other hand, in *Andante con moto*, Rzewski uses a theme from Beethoven and divides the theme into two motivic ideas. It is not the original theme itself that is crucial to the variations, but motivic fragments found throughout the piece. Rzewski often uses these ideas a portion at a time, so that sometimes they are recognizable, other times not, because it is motivically so fragmented and rhythmically transformed. It is particularly interesting to note that a very tonal theme is the basis of an atonal work.

Most of the thematic ideas in *No Place To Go But Around* are presented in a straightforward manner with a strong sense of tonality. In *Andante con moto*, Rzewski also did not use a modern tonal language such as the twelve-tone technique (his strong opinion of avoiding twelve-tone music in favor of composing improvisational music based on quoted melodic fragments has been mentioned before). Instead he offers to the performer indeterminacy (with regard to improvisational technique) at a deeper and more sophisticated level. It is true that improvisation is a prominent component in *No Place To Go But Around* and *Andante con moto*. But unlike *No Place To Go But Around*, where the improvised cadenza gives a performer such directions as pitch material and a certain song to work with, Rzewski only makes comments about the lengths of the improvisational sections in *Andante con moto*; the rest completely depends on a

performer. The original theme is presented from the very beginning, already fractured in presentation. Motives, rather than lyric melodies, are the initiating components of the piece and the whole tune is not heard at the end; the listener senses that the theme is nearby but never hears it.

CHAPTER IV

Aspects of His Pianistic Style

1. *Four Pieces For Piano*

Four Pieces For Piano was written in 1977; it is dedicated to Ursula Oppens and was premiered by her in Avery Fisher Hall as part of her Avery Fisher Prize.⁴⁶ This work represents Rzewski's eclectic style, including the tonal tendencies of his "neo-romanticism" phase; all thematic ideas are presented with a strong sense of tonality. The adoption of folk music elements also strengthens the diatonic feel of Rzewski's tonal language, although one also finds modern elements, such as the twelve-tone technique.

Although there is no literal quotation of folk music, various characteristics of folk music are reflected in *Four Pieces For Piano*. The work has a cyclic structure in that all movements are based on the same folk-like tune.⁴⁷ David Burge describes the opening theme "as a folk tune waiting to be born,"⁴⁸ and Leighton Kerner observes that South American folk tunes are emulated but not quoted.⁴⁹ *Four Pieces for Piano* belongs to Rzewski's "neo-romanticism phase." Compared to his previous works, in which various folk elements are used more or less directly, this work (in the process of this composition) became more abstract and complex with the addition of more innovative musical devices (e.g., atonality, serialism), and advanced forms. Despite the absence of genuine folk music in *Four Pieces for Piano*, Rzewski creates his own version of 'music

⁴⁶ Allan Kozinn, "Rising Young Solo And Ensemble Pianist," *Contemporary Keyboard* (Dec. 1985): 16.

⁴⁷ Ronald Edwin Lewis, "The Traditional," 53.

⁴⁸ David Burge, *Twentieth-Century Piano Music* (New York: Schirmer Books): 321.

⁴⁹ Leighton Kerner, "Avery Fisher Squares the Winner," *Village Voice* (22 January 1977): 67.

in folk style' by incorporating its various aspects--melody, rhythm, structure, mood and spirit. According to David Burge,

The *Four Piano Pieces*, lasting slightly over half an hour, are the composer's least "specific" piano music insofar as extramusical connotations are concerned. No folk tunes or other songs are quoted in any of the movements. The music is charged with emotion, nevertheless. The first piece, starting with what might be described as a folk tune waiting to be born, quickly turns to subterranean tremolos and violent, agitated gestures requiring virtuoso control of the entire keyboard.⁵⁰

Rzewski referred to this compositional period as follows:

I've never been able to come to grips with the concept of style. I don't seem to be able to hold onto a style for a long period of time. I tend to approach each piece with its own particular set of problems, and also I've learned over the last ten years or so, that it's best, when one is writing a piece, to try to form a clear idea of who's going to play it, and who's going to listen to it.⁵¹

As also mentioned earlier, although all movements are based on the same folk-like tune, this tune is evidently original with Rzewski, although he was convinced for some time that it was a Chilean popular melody.⁵² Ronald Lewis states:

The four-movement work resembles a sonata structure in its number and order of movements. Even though Rzewski admits that he did not have this in mind at the time, the idea now seems appropriate to him. The prelude-like opening movement is followed by a second movement reminiscent of a scherzo. The thoughtful third movement precedes a toccata-like finale.⁵³

⁵⁰ David Burge, *Twentieth-Century Music*, 321.

⁵¹ Tom Johnson, "Rzewski Talks," *Village Voice* (3 September 1979): 73.

⁵² Leighton Kerner, "Composers Defiant Will Never Be Refuted," *Village Voice* (22 January 1979): 65.

⁵³ Lewis, "The Solo Piano Music," 53.

a) First Movement

The first movement (ex. 4.1), which Rzewski calls a “prelude,” is impressionistic “in a modern way,”⁵⁴ as it deals primarily with color and abstract sounds.⁵⁵

Example 4.1. *Four Pieces for Piano*, first movement, m. 1

The piece is fantasy-like in character and Rzewski considers that it is basically a written-out improvisation.⁵⁶ The overall structure (fig. 4.1) is as follows.

Figure 4.1

mm. 1	2 - 12	13 - 27	28 - 34	35 - 43
theme	the first written-out improvisatory section labeled I	theme appears	the second long written-out improvisatory section labeled II	reminiscence of thematic material

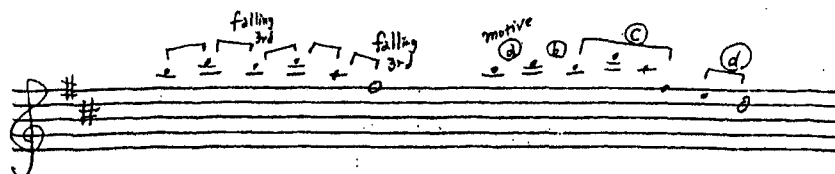
It is in the key of B minor, and the intervals of the third and the fifth, which appear frequently in this piece, are a significant feature of this work. These intervals, especially the minor thirds (ex. 4.2), are the building materials of the theme throughout the movement.

⁵⁴ Joel Rothstein, “Record Reviews: Four Pieces/Ballad no. 3: Which Side Are You On?” and “Blues, Ballads and Rags.” *Down Beat* 49 (January 1983): 42.

⁵⁵ Lewis, “The Solo Piano Music,” 54.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

Example 4.2



The theme displays a distinctive, folk-like character and tonality. In the opening (see ex. 4.1), the melodic lines are often doubled a third below in parallel motion. The theme is folk-song-like in character here; the third occurs both horizontally and vertically. It also shows imitative motion between left and right hands.

Following the theme, improvisation I (mm. 2-12) expresses movement in contrast to the stillness of the theme; it conveys a sense of mysticism with an improvisatory quality. In contrast to a song-like theme, marked “dreamlike,” I is marked “Violent, impulsive”; it displays a strong instrumental flavor in its brilliant technique and complicated rhythms. This stylistic contrast between tranquility and lively energy makes this section distinctive (ex. 4.3).

Example 4.3. *Four Pieces for Piano*, first movement, mm. 2-8

Handwritten musical score for piano, showing two systems of music. The first system includes a 'Free time' section. The notation is dense with dynamic markings like 'f', 'ff', and 'p', and includes fingerings and articulation marks.

After a brief restatement of the theme at measure 13 (ex. 4.4a), there is a strong preference, in the left-hand accompaniment, for tremolos and rapid repeated-note figures in measures 14-27 (ex. 4.4b). The figure, which according to Rzewski mimics European folk instruments such as the cimbalom, adds to the folk quality of the piece.

Example 4.4a. *Four Pieces for Piano*, first movement, m.13

Handwritten musical score for piano, showing a single system of music starting at measure 13. It includes a tempo marking '(f=50)' and a dynamic marking 'f'. The notation includes a 'dim.' marking and a '4/4' time signature. A note is circled and labeled '(14) f.:(=60) with a heavy feeling'. A handwritten note at the bottom right says 'example for the next measure'.

Example 4.4b. *Four Pieces for Piano*, first movement, mm. 14-18

Although II (mm. 28-34), the second written-out improvisatory section (ex. 4.5), may appear free and un-structured, the small melodic cells from parts of the theme form the basis of the music (fig. 4.2).

Example 4.5. *Four Pieces for Piano*, first movement, mm. 28-9

Handwritten musical score system 1, featuring a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. The music includes complex chordal textures and melodic lines, with a fermata over the final measure. A dynamic marking 'f' is present at the end.

Handwritten musical score system 2, continuing the piece with similar complex textures. It includes fingerings such as '2 3' and '1 2 3' above the notes.

Handwritten musical score system 3, featuring a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. It includes fingerings such as '2', '1 1 1', and '2' above the notes, and a dynamic marking 'ff' at the end.

Handwritten musical score system 4, starting with a measure number '34'. It includes fingerings such as '1' and '3' above the notes, and a dynamic marking 'f' at the end.

Handwritten musical score system 5, starting with a measure number '35'. It includes fingerings such as '2' and '3' above the notes, and a dynamic marking 'f' at the end.

In measures 34-43, the recurring intervals of thirds are used as a unifying device (ex. 4.8).

Example 4.8. *Four Pieces for Piano*, first movement, mm. 38-43

The improvisational character of the first movement is expressed, with a few exceptions, through the absence of a time signature, along with a loosely-written rhythm. Additionally, melodies are often doubled and embellished with tremolos in order to suggest an improvisatory quality. (The idea of using a theme followed by a large number of short variations has become characteristic for Rzewski by this time in pieces such as *No Place To Go But Around*, *The People United Will Never Be Defeated*, and others.) In the fifth variation, the tonal center B is reestablished, leading directly to the second movement.

b) Second Movement

In comparison to the first movement, the second movement offers a more modern approach in terms of tonality and compositional technique. It is characterized by the extensive use of modern compositional devices such as serialism, the use of cells and symmetry. The second movement is in ternary form (ABA') and has a scherzo-like character (fig. 4.2)

Figure 4.2

A (mm. 1 - 59)

a	b (includes materials from a)	a'
1-46	47-56	58-59 (fragments of 12-tone row)

B (mm. 60 – 201)

c	d	c
60-75	76-166	167-201

A' (mm. 202 – 248)

a'	b'	a'
202-19	227-46	247-48
inverted		

The pitch B is important in this movement; however, its function as a tonal center is not obvious due to Rzewski's choice of musical language for this movement--a twelve-tone row and tone clusters. His use of a tone-row helps to articulate the main thematic ideas of the A section (ex. 4.9), and the first twelve pitches at the beginning project the prime form (P-0) of the row (ex. 4.10).

Example 4.9. *Four Pieces for Piano*, second movement, mm. 1-8

Example 4.10.

P-0

P-0 is soon followed by I-7 as a second phrase in mm. 2-3; these two forms of the row provide the basic material for this section (ex. 4.11).

Example 4.11.

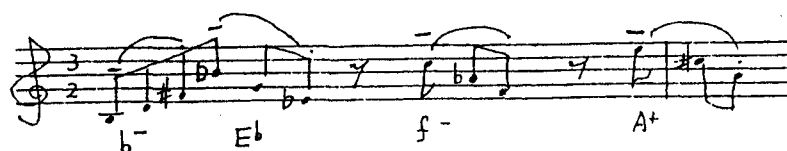
P-0

I-7

The first two phrases (see ex. 4.9) comprise 3+4+4+4 eighth-note groups. The basic metrical unit is the half note, while the basic surface motion is in eighth-notes, which are articulated by slur, staccato and tenuto.

P-0 is constructed to display four triads (two major and two minor); it offers some opportunities for the performer to present the underlying harmonic rhythm by emphasizing agogic accents (ex. 4.12).

Example 4.12.



The pitch B does not, however, receive emphasis at cadential moments.

At measure 5, P-0 is heard again, though with a slight permutation of the pitch order; the second hexachord contains one displaced pitch in relation to the original (ex. 4.13).

Example 4.13.

mm. 1-2



m. 5



At measure 6, a mirror is established from the previous measure (ex. 4.14).

Example 4.14.

m.5

m. 6



Figure 4.3. Set forms

prime form
→

	0	3	7	11	8	4	1	9	6	5	2	0	
↓	0	B	D	F#	B ^b	G	E ^b	C	A ^b	F	E	C#	A
	9	A ^b	B	D#	G	E	C	A	F	D	C#	A#	F#
	5	E	G	B	E ^b	C	A ^b	F	C#	A#	A	F#	D
	1	C	E ^b	G	B	G#	E	C#	A	F#	F	D	A#
	4	E ^b	F#	A#	D	B	G	E	C	A	G#	F	C#
	8	G	B ^b	D	F#	D#	B	G#	E	C#	C	A	F
	11	B ^b	D ^b	F	A	F#	D	B	G	E	D#	C	G#
	3	D	F	A	C#	A#	F#	D#	B	G#	G	E	C
	6	F	A ^b	C	E	C#	A	F#	D	B	A#	G	E ^b
	7	F#	A	C#	F	D	B ^b	G	E ^b	C	B	G#	E
	10	A	C	E	G#	F	D	A#	F#	D#	D	B	G
↑	2	C#	E	G#	C	A	F	D	B ^b	G	F#	D#	B

← Retro

↑ Retrograde
inversion

In measures 28-32 (ex. 4.15), the left hand is P-5 and the right hand is I-5 with three pitches (fig. 4.4a) of the original displaced. More specifically, in the right hand, there are three displacements within the row and one of these three segments is not only displaced but also retrograded (fig. 4.4b).

Example 4.15. *Four Pieces for Piano*, second movement, mm. 28-32

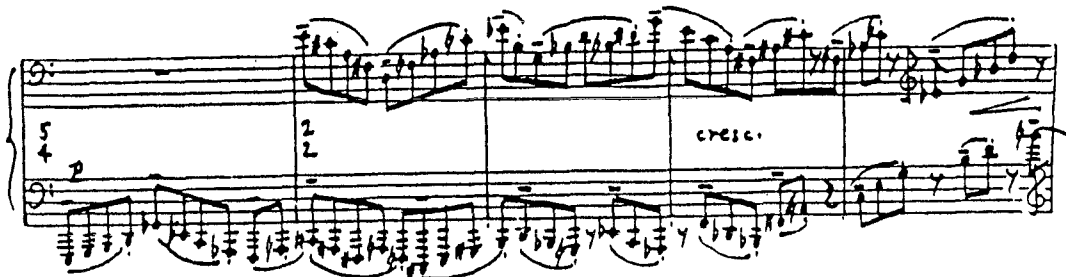
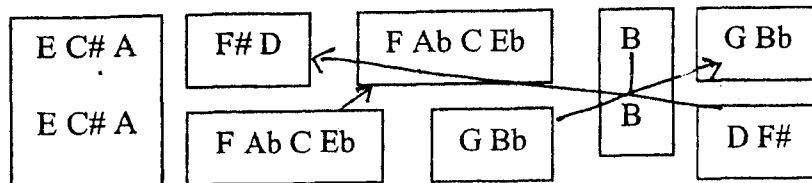


Figure 4.4a

r.h. ; E, C#, A, F#, D, F, A^b C, E^b, B, G, B^b
 I₅ ; E, C#, A, F, G#, C, D#, G, A# B, D, F#

l.h. ; E, G, B, D, G^b, E^b, C, A^b, F, A, C#, A#
 P₅ ; E, G, B, E^b, C, A^b, F, C#, A#, A, F#, D

Figure 4.4b.



Following the inversion of P-0 (with four displaced pitches) along with P-0 with displaced pitches in the left hand in measures 42-46 (ex. 4.16), the cyclical theme appears in a tonal section in measures 47-57 (ex. 4.17).

Example 4.16. *Four Pieces for Piano*, second movement, mm. 42-46

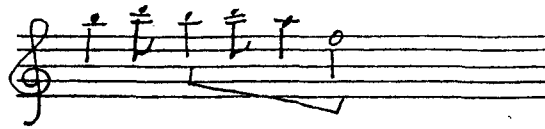
l.h. ; ① B D F# A D^b B^b G E^b C E G# E# (P₀ with displaced pitches)

r.h.
 B G# E C# A C E^b G A# F# D F
 (I₀ with displaced pitches)

Example 4.17. *Four Pieces for Piano*, mm. 47-52

The B section is completely different from the preceding section; it is not based on a twelve-tone row. The opening of the B section also can be called a trio; the characteristic angular melody recalls the cyclical theme from the first movement (ex. 4.18).

Example 4.18a. *Four Pieces for Piano*, first movement, cyclical theme, m. 1



Example 4.18b. *Four Pieces for Piano*, second movement, mm. 60-75

Following the section in measures 60-108 (ex. 4.19), a rhapsodic character is created through rhythmic activity (ex. 4.20).

Example 4.19. *Four Pieces for Piano*, second movement, mm. 76-84

Example 4.20. *Four Pieces for Piano*, second movement, mm. 109-114

In measures 153-166, the triplet is interrupted by a tonal melody in 3/4 meter (ex. 4.21).

Example 4.21. *Four Pieces for Piano*, second movement, mm. 150-162

The cyclical theme (see ex. 4.2) is restated in measures 167-201, but is now augmented by a thicker chordal texture (ex. 4.22).

Example 4.22. *Four Pieces for Piano*, second movement, mm. 167-180

By switching the trills (mm. 68-75) to tremolos (mm. 168-201), Rzewski creates a fuller texture. It is followed by the 'a' section of the first theme, which features an inverted form of the row (ex. 4.23b).

Example 4.23a. *Four Pieces for Piano*, second movement, original form, mm. 1-2

Example 4.23b. *Four Pieces for Piano*, second movement, mm. 202-205

I0: B G# E C E b G B b D F# A C#
 Ps: E G B E b C A b F D b B# A F# D
 I3: D B G E b G b B b D F A b A C E

The falling figures in measures 241-244 (ex. 4.24), using a melodic contour similar to that heard in the first movement, aim finally at the note D. The tonality shifts down to B followed by the 'a' theme, which is characterized by the rapid motion of two hands as mentioned previously; following this rapid motion, the theme is stated again in twelve-tone rows.

Example 4.24. *Four Pieces for Piano*, second movement, mm. 241-245

The return of the 'a' theme concludes with the disappearance of the tonal center B at mm. 247-248 (ex. 4.25), leading into the third movement, which serves as the slow movement of the work.

Example 4.25. *Four Pieces for Piano*, second movement, mm. 247-248

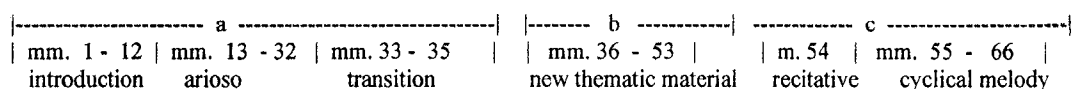
In summary, the second movement functions as a scherzo (ABA'), and the recurring thematic ideas of each section are derived from separate creative impulses: a modern tonal language based on symmetrical pitch arrangement and the use of a tone-row for the A section, and the tonal section based on a melody from the first movement for the B section. The four thematic areas presented in this movement are articulated through the use of contrasting harmonic languages, mainly, the twelve-tone row, triadic harmonies, a combination of the chromatic segments (cell), and diatonicism. A complete synthesis of modern compositional technique and folk-music elements is achieved in this movement.

c) Third movement

Rzewski applies the character of vocal music in the slow movement. The formal design of this movement is a three-part song form (fig. 4.5). The noticeable feature of this movement is that the A and B sections especially, are articulated by the use of distinctive vocal styles, such as recitative and arioso.

Figure 4.5.

A (mm. 1 - 66)



B (mm. 67 – 100)

| mm. 67 - 77 | mm. 78 - 94 | mm. 95 - 100 |

A' (mm. 101 - 104): shortened in length

|----- b' -----|
| mm. 101 - 104 |

Although this section has only 4 measures, the actual length is quite long.

Coda (mm. 105 – 135)

|mm. 105 – 106| mm. 107 - 123 | mm. 124 - 127 | mm. 128 - 135 |
 cyclical melody transition

The unison texture is the most striking aspect of the opening passage in this piece, which is also characterized by frequent meter changes (ex. 4.26), producing a feeling of great rhythmic irregularity.

Example 4.26. *Four Pieces for Piano*, third movement, mm. 1-9

The image displays two systems of musical notation for piano. The first system consists of two staves with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It features a complex, unison texture with frequent meter changes indicated by time signatures (5/8, 6/8, 7/8, 4/4, 3/4, 7/16, 11/16, 9/8, 3/4, 7/8) and dynamic markings (f, p, sf, pp, f). The second system continues the piece, showing further meter changes (4/4, 3/4, 7/8, 11/16, 9/8, 3/4, 7/8) and dynamic markings (pp, f, p, pp). The notation includes various articulations, slurs, and phrasing marks, illustrating the rhythmic irregularity mentioned in the text.

Figure 4.6.

m. 1	m. 2	m. 3	m. 4	m. 5	m. 6	m. 7	m. 8	m. 9	m. 10	m. 11	m. 12
5/8	6/8	3/4	5/8	7/8	4/4	3/4	7/16	11/16	9/8	3/4	7/8

The introduction is followed by an *arioso* (mm. 12-16), which is accompanied by a rhythmic ostinato figure (m. 13) and sixteenth-note passages that embellish the melodies (ex. 4.27).

Example 4.27. *Four Pieces for Piano*, third movement, mm. 12-16

The image shows two systems of musical notation for piano. The first system (measures 12-15) features a right-hand melody with sixteenth-note passages and a left-hand accompaniment with a rhythmic ostinato figure. The second system (measures 16-18) continues the piece with similar textures and dynamics like *p* and *f*.

The transitional material at measure 33 is constructed from the chromatic scale (ex. 4.28).

Example 4.28. *Four Pieces for Piano*, third movement, mm. 33-35

The image shows a single system of musical notation. The right hand features a chromatic scale with a tempo marking of *poco più mosso* and a dynamic of *pp*. The left hand has a *marcato, quasi staccato* accompaniment with broken chords. There are three repeated sections marked with '3x'. Dynamics range from *pp* to *f*. A *sust. ped.* marking is present at the bottom.

A new thematic idea accompanied by “cimbalom-like broken chord figurations”⁵⁷ (ex. 4.29) appears in measures 41-46, which directly leads into a recitative (ex. 4.30).

⁵⁷ Burge, *Twentieth-Century*, 321.

Example 4.29. *Four Pieces for Piano*, third movement, mm. 41-46

Example 4.30. *Four Pieces for Piano*, third movement, mm. 54-55

Following the recitative section (m. 54), a reminiscence of the cyclic theme appears extensively in measures 56-66 (ex. 4.31). There is a reminiscence of the first and the second movements of this work as the cyclical theme (ex. 4.32) is accelerated in its second and third occurrences.

Example 4.31. *Four Pieces for Piano*, third movement, mm. 56-64

then becoming more confident, but always expressive, with subtle variations of speed.

Example 4.32. Cyclical theme

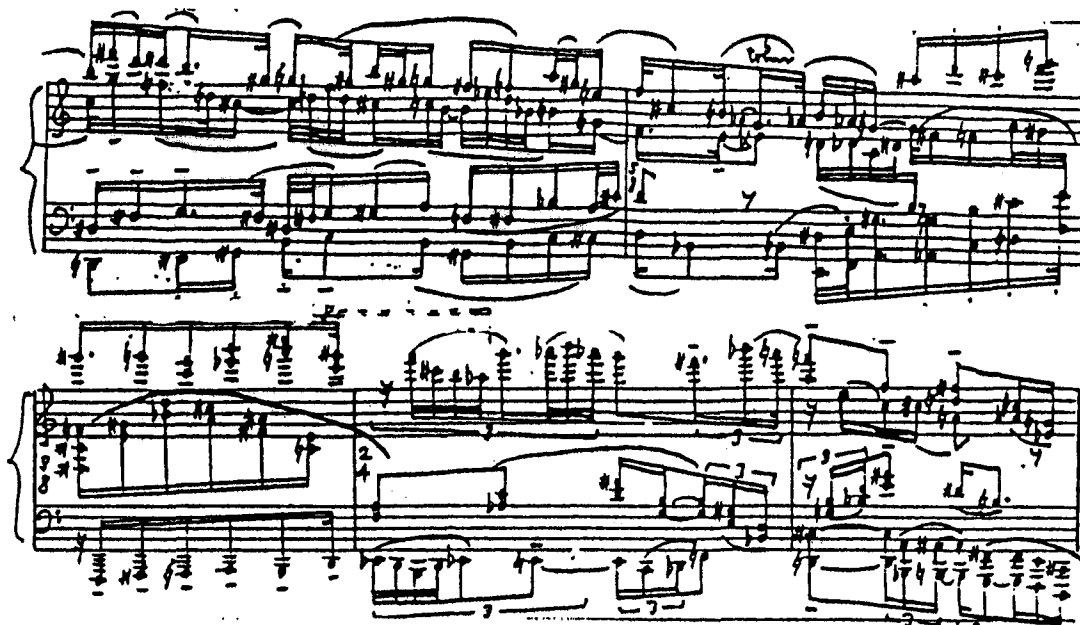
Figure 4.11, cyclical melody

These falling thirds, which are a primary component of the cyclical theme, occur in every presentation of the B section in measures 67-100 (ex. 4.33).

Example 4.33. *Four Pieces for Piano*, third movement, mm. 67-74

The middle of the B section contains a contrapuntal structure (mm. 83-90) of voices that displays great textural complexity due to irregular leaping motions of the voices (ex. 4.34), each of which is independent.

Example 4.34. *Four Pieces for Piano*, third movement, mm. 86-91



The texture becomes more complex and more rhythmically free in various ways. David Burge refers to this texture as “three-handed counterpoint.”⁵⁸

Thirds and major and minor triads frequently appear throughout the movement. With the frequent use of scale passages in the transitional sections, chromatic scales appear as an important factor. Modern compositional technique and the folk-music element are especially well combined in this movement.

After a brief recurrence of the ‘b’ theme in measures 101-104 (ex. 4.35), a statement of the chromatic scale passage occurs in the coda (ex. 4.36), now extended and strengthened compared to the transitional section in measures 33-35 (ex. 4.37).

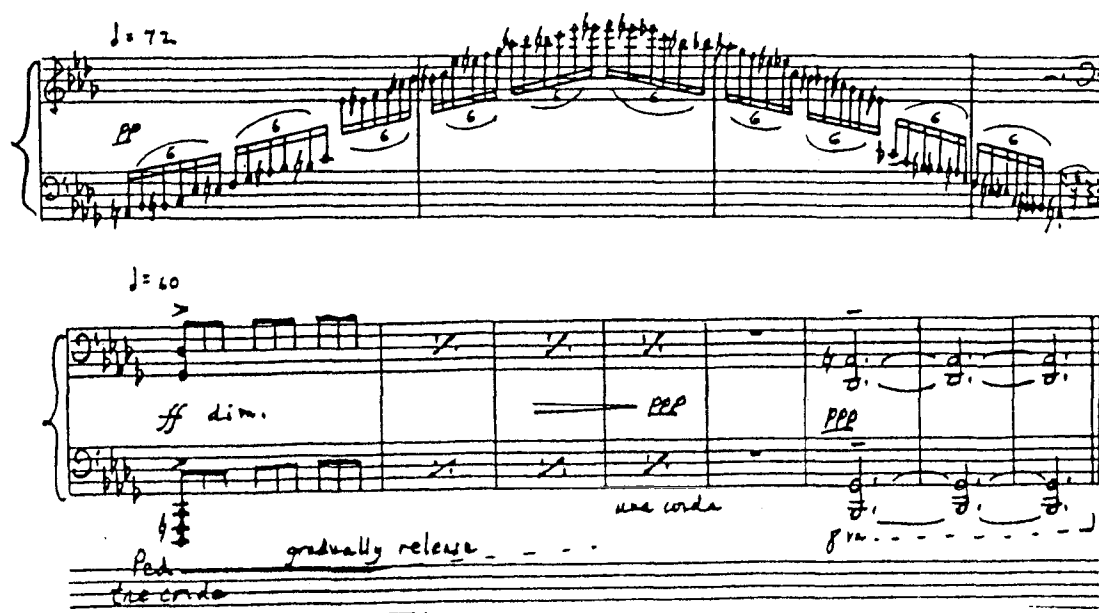
⁵⁸ Ibid.

Example 4.35. *Four Pieces for Piano*, third movement, mm. 101-104



Handwritten musical score for Example 4.35, mm. 101-104. The score is in G major and 3/4 time. It features a complex texture with multiple layers of sixteenth-note patterns. Performance instructions include "cut off tacet short, then proceed.", "ff", "f", "pp una corda legatissimo", and "2x" markings. A tempo of quarter = 60 is indicated. A note below the score reads: "N.B. The groups of 10 may be stretched by lengthening the first few notes and accelerating the rest, but without delaying the pace of the quarter note. Literally 'tempo rubato'."

Example 4.36. *Four Pieces for Piano*, third movement, mm. 124-136



Handwritten musical score for Example 4.36, mm. 124-136. The score is in G major and 3/4 time. It features a complex texture with multiple layers of sixteenth-note patterns. Performance instructions include "♩ = 72", "pp", "ff dim.", "ppp", "una corda", "Ped.", "gradually release", and "una corda". A tempo of quarter = 60 is indicated.

Example 4.37. *Four Pieces for Piano*, third movement, mm. 33-35

d) Fourth Movement

Unlike the other movements, the fourth movement is short, concise and technically less demanding. According to Rzewski, the fourth movement also works well as a separate piece.⁵⁹ This movement exemplifies most successfully Rzewski's technique of juxtaposing contrasting elements such as mechanical repetitive rhythm and neo-Romantic melody. This duality is observed especially in two areas, in his use of tonal language and the use of repetitive rhythmic elements. The tonal language used in this movement represents a successful synthesis of neo-Romantic chromaticism in the Western art-music tradition and the diatonicism of Western folk music. The repetitive rhythmic structure introduced in this movement became one of Rzewski's characteristic compositional techniques in his later pieces, such as *North American Ballad*, *Squares*, and *The People United Will Never be Defeated*. This movement exploits acoustic effects as well as the maximum possibilities of piano sonority in terms of projecting sound. Pianist Lisa Moore says:

Frederic Rzewski is an inspirational figure to young composers today. I think Rzewski's piano piece No. IV shows a complete understanding of what the piano is able to do—vibrate its sound board. It's an acoustic phenomenon and the personal pulsating. The piece focuses on one of the most obvious characteristics of

⁵⁹ Rzewski, program notes to Vanguard VA 25001.

the piano—striking, hammering the strings and building up resonance. It starts at the top of the piano with a pulsating note that grows. Adding note as it goes.[sic] And develops into a huge chord. It takes tremendous strength and stamina. And the result is about the closest you can get to an exploding piano....And it's true that without intention, the music sounds as if it were coming from somewhere else. The resonance builds up and vibrates off the walls. Frederic is a pianist who writes music to the measure of his own virtuosity and really hit the nail on the head with this one.⁶⁰

The fourth movement is a two-part form (AA1+ coda) in the style of a toccata (fig. 4.7).

Figure 4.7.

A	introduction mm. 1– 12 (including rhythmic section as link)		cyclical theme (a1) mm. 13 - 29		transition mm. 30–35	
A1	cyclical theme (a2) mm. 36 - 49		remembrance of the opening in the first movement (a) mm. 50 - 59			

Coda

mm. 60 - 65 |

The first A section contains an introduction, one thematic idea (the cyclical theme), a transitional section, and a sequence of repeated notes I have labeled as 'link.' In the introduction (ex. 4.38), the shift from the high register to the low register of the keyboard is a noticeable feature; it is reflected in the first part of the A1 section (mm. 43-49). However, unlike the A1 section beginning at measure 36, which is followed by the cyclical theme from the opening of the first movement in measures 50-56 (ex. 4.39), the direct use of the thematic material does not occur at the beginning.

⁶⁰ Lisa Moore, program notes to Vanguard VSD 71248.

Example 4.38. *Four Pieces for Piano*, fourth movement, mm. 1-2

Handwritten musical score for piano, consisting of three systems of staves. The first system includes a grand staff with a treble clef and a bass clef. Above the first staff, there are notes and a dynamic marking *pp*. A handwritten instruction reads: "pp, gradually growing to *mf*, then dying down again to *pp*". Below the grand staff, there is a wavy line representing a pedal effect, with the instruction "Ped. sempre →" and "etc.". A large block of handwritten text provides performance directions: "Maintaining a constant pulse of ca. 6 attacks per second, repeat each chord any number of times (the former durations for each chord, with an average duration of 1-1 seconds), fading in and out of each chord imperceptibly, with transitions as smooth as possible. The notes should be 'stacked' rather than slurred, as if one were exciting a large gang, the object being to make the entire instrument speak, throughout to spectrum."

The second system continues the grand staff notation with a wavy line above it, and the instruction "Ped. sempre →" below.

The third system features a grand staff with a wavy line above it. Annotations include: "durations for each chord gradually longer" above the first part; "barely audible and very spaced at first, then accel." above the second part; and "maintaining constant pulse, play single in these chords as cloudy and ind. ca. 5''" above the third part. Dynamic markings include *ppp* *cresc.* and *ppp sempre*. Below the grand staff, there is another wavy line with the instruction "Ped. sempre →" and "allow time for to be heard".

Example 4.39. *Four Pieces for Piano*, fourth movement, mm. 43-56

Handwritten musical score for the fourth movement of *Four Pieces for Piano*, measures 43-56. The score is written on four systems of grand staves. The first system includes performance instructions: "ppp cant." and "as softly and as smoothly as possible (repeat chords smoothly as possible as above)". The second system includes "una corda" and "Ped sempre". The third system includes "Ped sempre". The fourth system includes "pp" and "Ped sempre".

Instead of including any significant melodic material, the opening section might be called a study of repetition. Rzewski uses repetition as an end in itself. He uses the repetition of single notes, chords, and whole patterns of notes. In the opening of the fourth movement, Rzewski specifically indicates in the score:

Maintaining a constant pulse of ca. 6 attacks per second, repeat each chord any number of times (different durations for each chord, with an average duration of 2-3 seconds), fading in and out of each chord imperceptibly, with transitions as smooth as possible. The note should be “stroked” rather than struck, as if one were exciting a large gong: the object being to make the entire instrument speak, throughout its spectrum.⁶¹

The rapid repetitions of block chords (with occasional reductions to a single note) lead into the alternation between left hand and right hand that produces a coloristic piano effect.

The repeated rhythmic pattern that Rzewski often uses in his later works, such as *North American Ballades* and *Squares*, is introduced for the first time in measures 3-12 (ex. 4.40).

After two opening measures, a rhythmic pattern (a rhythmic structure that is repeated) implies an underlying sense of pulse, which foreshadows a pre-existing tempo; the music is fairly fast while the underlying sense of pulse is quite slow due to the repetition and its steady rhythmic pattern. According to Rzewski, Rzewski’s compositional use of the repeated rhythmic structure is derived from American Gospel song.⁶²

⁶¹ Rzewski, manuscript (1977).

⁶² Information obtained from Mr. Jed Distler.

Example 4.40. *Four Pieces for Piano*, fourth movement, mm. 3-12

♩ = 120 Let the pulse emerge imperceptibly

pp *sempre*

pp *sempre*

pp *sempre*

In measures 13-20 (ex. 4.41a), the cyclical melody is followed by the section that displays rhythmic permutations at measure 34 (ex. 4.41b).

Example 4.41a. *Four Pieces for Piano*, fourth movement, mm. 13-20.

p

f

Example 4.41b. *Four Pieces for Piano*, fourth movement, m. 34

Repetitions and permutations of units a, b, c, d ad lib.
 (Suggested order: 2a-3b-a-2b-c-b-2c-d-c-2d-a-b-c-d)

The score shows a piano accompaniment in 2/2 time and a right-hand part with various rhythmic patterns. The units a, b, c, and d are indicated by brackets above the right-hand staff.

The second section, A1 (ex. 4.42), quotes the cyclical theme once more. Material from the beginning (m. 1) of the first movement is restated in A1 (ex. 4.43b) and is articulated in almost the same way as it was at the opening of the first movement (ex. 4.43a).

Example 4.42. *Four Pieces for Piano*, fourth movement, mm. 35-42

The score features a piano accompaniment and a right-hand part. A bracket labeled '2x' spans the first two measures of the right-hand part. Dynamic markings include *f*, *pp*, and *p*. A handwritten instruction at the bottom reads "gradually add pedal - (Ped)".

Example 4.43a. *Four Pieces for Piano*, first movement, m. 1

The score shows the beginning of the first movement with piano accompaniment and right-hand part. Dynamic markings include *pp*, *p*, and *ppp*. A handwritten instruction at the top right reads "poco rit.".

Example 4.43b. *Four Pieces for Piano*, fourth movement, mm. 53-56

The musical score for Example 4.43b consists of two systems of piano music. The first system shows a piano (p) dynamic and a handwritten instruction: "gradually release soft pedal". Below the first system, there is a note: "Ped sempre →". The second system shows a mezzo-piano (mp) dynamic and another handwritten instruction: "gradually release pedal".

The coda (ex. 4.44), based on both melodic and harmonic material derived from previous sections, leads into virtuosic closing material exhibiting rapid hand alternation, strong chords, and a series of repetitive figures. But, suddenly, the thick texture thins out while the pedal is held through to the end.

Example 4.44. *Four Pieces for Piano*, fourth movement, mm. 60-65

The musical score for Example 4.44 consists of two systems of piano music. The first system shows a subito piano (pp) dynamic and a handwritten instruction: "poco - poco cresc.". The second system shows a fortissimo (ff) dynamic and a handwritten instruction: "cresc.". Below the second system, there is a note: "gradually add pedal".

Handwritten musical score for piano, consisting of two systems. The first system shows a piano introduction with dynamics *f* and *ff*. The second system contains detailed performance instructions:

- ppp* (intermittently) niente
- (maintain pulse as evenly as possible)
- etc. →
- etc. →
- N.B. (at least 2 repetitions after the B has ceased to sound; then hold pedal to extinction.)
- (ch. sempre →)
- repeat sporadically (on the average, every 2 seconds, but irregularly)

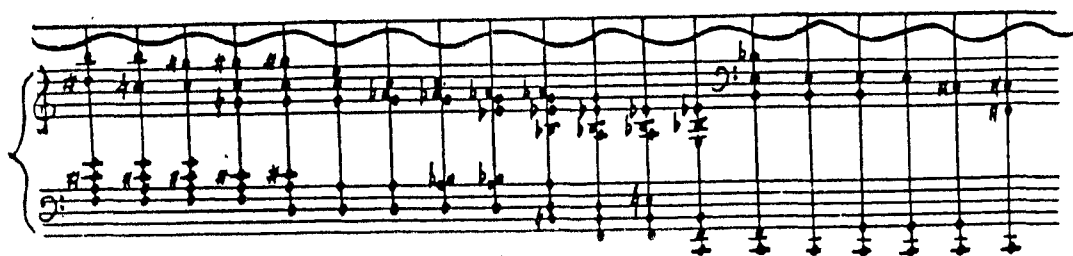
Handwritten signature and date: *Kona-Woodstock June-July 1977*

The acoustical effect of the opening chords recurs briefly in the coda; a short restatement of opening materials (ex. 4.45a) also appears in the coda (4.45b), although right hand and left hand are reversed this time.

Example 4.45a. *Four Pieces for Piano*, fourth movement, mm. 1-2

Handwritten musical score for piano, mm. 1-2. The score shows a piano introduction with dynamics *pp* and *ff*. Performance instructions include:

- pp*, gradually growing to *ff*, then dying down again to *pp*
- etc.
- etc.



Example 4.45b. *Four Pieces for Piano*, fourth movement, m. 60

A musical score for piano, consisting of two staves. The upper staff has a melodic line with a wavy line above it, marked with 'ff' and 'cresc.'. Below the staff are performance instructions: 'ca. 10"', '(repeat chords as above)', 'etc.', and 'gradually add pedal'. The lower staff contains a dense texture of chords and clusters, marked with 'f' and 'sempre ff'.

Rzewski revels in the resonance of the piano and his piano writing reveals an attachment to the instrument. He demonstrates a fondness for sustained, vibrating sonorities in all the registers, a preponderance of chordal texture, and extended areas of repetitive rhythmic passages. In the fourth movement, Rzewski's music subverts the piano's contrapuntal capabilities. Instead, the establishment of a sonority and its subsequent fading away that produces the characteristic Rzewski rise and fall of texture takes priority. These blocks of sustained sound and the use of clusters in the piano texture of high density speak of a young, impressionable Rzewski, eager to explore new horizons.

* * *

Summary

The folk elements (e.g., a European cimbalom-like accompaniment in the left hand and a folk-like theme) discussed in this chapter are skillfully assimilated into Rzewski's own musical language. The thematic idea--the cyclical theme presented at the opening of the first movement --portrays the mood and the energy of the folk-song character although it does not include any preexistent folk tune or rhythm. The interval of the third in *Four Pieces for Piano* is an important compositional device, which acts as the cell within the theme.

The second movement contains two sections in opposing styles, the twelve-tone (modern) and the diatonic/triadic (folk). Interestingly, this concept can be applied on a larger scale. The second and the fourth movements are mostly based on a modern compositional language, while the first movement is rather folk-oriented.

Four Pieces for Piano is very different from *No Place To Go But Around* (see chapter III) although they were written during the same creative period. In *Four Pieces for Piano* the movements are more loosely organized and fantasy-like. There Rzewski does not ask the performer to improvise in any of the four movements because they are already improvisatory in character. In this work, Rzewski sought to utilize modern compositional devices within a Romantic framework—the sonata form⁶³ in cyclical structure. By studying his work closely, one can distinguish between primary structural

⁶³ Maurice Hinson, *Guide to the Pianist's Repertoire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2nd ed., 1987): 611.

elements and pianistic effects, both of which were commonly used by Rzewski in order to achieve his musical goals.

2. The Turtle and the Crane

The Turtle and the Crane was written in 1988 for pianist Aki Takahashi. Based on Japanese mythology about a turtle and a crane, which are symbols of longevity, this work offers an interesting example of Rzewski's music written after his visit to Kyoto, Japan.

The Turtle and the Crane (1988) is "a sparse essay in long stretches of single, related notes with subtly varying dynamics."⁶⁴ Rzewski recalls his visit to a rock garden called "The Garden of the Turtle and the Crane":

You spend time in these gardens, and in a state of repose, you experience all the little things that go on, like puffs of wind, the song of birds, the rustling of leaves, the sound of water. You spend a long time in this meditative environment. You become aware of little things that happen in a short time. Because you are sitting there for a long time, you are able to become aware of something that ordinarily would escape you, like a leaf falling, etc. It concerns relationships between short and long durations. The long durations make it possible to experience the short durations.⁶⁵

The powerful force of the classical music tradition is often too strong a magnet for composers to overcome, but Rzewski was able to absorb Japan's rich history and myth, assimilate certain aspects of it and add his own technique. Thus, as mentioned earlier, certain elements that are considered fundamental to composition in various schools of thought are de-emphasized by Rzewski in order to achieve a more faithful depiction of the workings of nature, the source of his inspiration.

⁶⁴ Joshua Kosman, "Improvising": 31.

⁶⁵ Rzewski, program notes (1988).

Many of Rzewski's solo works written between 1980 and 1994 utilize serial technique, and, in many respects, *The Turtle and the Crane* embodies the ideals and techniques of this style. Although the twelve-tone row is crucial to the musical texture of *The Turtle and the Crane*, Rzewski does not use a tone-row for an entire section, namely measures 1-36.

It is not only Rzewski's expert combining of thematic materials but his placement of them with respect to each other that marks his music as distinctive. Four themes in this work are juxtaposed with two other important motivic ideas called by the composer "turtle duration (ex. 4.46a)" and "crane duration (ex. 4.46b)." Rzewski comments:

The turtle duration lasts a long time, many tiny things go on in it. Given the unpredictable factors of physical fatigue, mechanical irregularities of the instrument within this kind of texture [i.e. rapid repeated notes], many things happen which are not under your control. Then you shift to the crane duration, which is very long, but nothing happens. Then the turtle again, etc. Basically, this is a dialogue between the two mystical creatures who co-exist in abstract time and space and communicate with each other over a vast distance.⁶⁶

Example 4.46a. *The Turtle and the Crane*, mm. 52-54

⁶⁶ Ibid.

Example 4.46b. *The Turtle and the Crane*, mm. 29-35

To symbolize a certain layering of ideas, Rzewski alternates the motivic ideas of “turtle duration” (see ex. 4.46a) and “crane duration” (see ex. 4.46b), expressing the perpetual tension and relaxation throughout the work.

The work contains four themes (ex. 4.47); they are separated from the preceding statement of turtle- and crane-duration.

Example 4.47a. *The Turtle and the Crane*, first theme, m. 73

Example 4.47b. *The Turtle and the Crane*, second theme, mm. 89-90

Example 4.47c. *The Turtle and the Crane*, third theme, mm. 100-102

Example 4.47d. *The Turtle and the Crane*, fourth theme, mm. 141-145



At the beginning of the piece (mm. 1-36), Rzewski develops a form in *The Turtle and the Crane* in which musical and textural changes occur over a specific period of time. In this piece (fig. 4.8), as in the *Four Pieces for Piano*, changes occur every twelve measures.

Figure 4.8.

First period mm. 1-12	Second Period 13-24	Third Period 25-36
--------------------------	------------------------	-----------------------

The opening (mm. 1-12), which contains the repeated note D, does not reveal the important role that pitch will play in the structuring of the piece (ex. 4.48). However, at measure 13, it is combined with a G#, which will assume a large role in this piece.

Example 4.48. *The Turtle and the Crane*, mm. 1-12

In measures 14-24 (ex. 4.49), the constant use of repeated notes allows Rzewski to build up a characteristic sonority within a homogeneous texture.

Example 4.49. *The Turtle and the Crane*, mm. 13-24

In measures 25-28 (ex. 4.50), Rzewski suggests motion by moving from sixteenth notes to thirty-second notes (tremolos) to create a feeling of movement.

Example 4.50. *The Turtle and the Crane*, mm. 23-28

The “crane duration” of mm. 29-36 (see ex. 4.45b) provides a sense of non-motion due to the homophonic texture, while the “turtle duration” of mm. 52-56 (see 4.45a) offers a flow through the contour of its line. Rzewski juxtaposes moments of exaltation with quiet contemplation, as if life is a mixture of joy and thought.

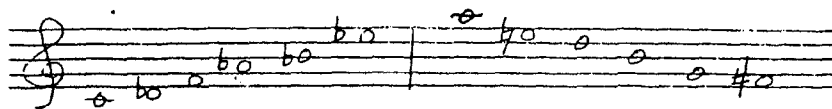
The fourth period, measures 37-48 (ex. 4.51), is entirely based on a twelve-tone row (see ex. 4.52).

Example 4.51. *The Turtle and the Crane*, mm. 37-48



Rzewski divides the row into two hexachords (ex. 4.52). The way the row is constructed, the listener hears fragments of traditional diatonic scales; that is, the hexachords are diatonic.

Example 4.52. *The Turtle and the Crane*, two hexachords



Once again, fluid “turtle duration” (mm. 52-56, m. 59, m.63 and m.67) and static or sustained “crane duration” (mm. 57-58, mm. 60-62, mm.64-66 and m.68) alternate to create a feeling of rhythmic motion with harmonic stasis (ex. 4.53)

Example 4.53. *The Turtle and the Crane*, mm. 52-68

Following the first theme (m.73), the opening figure is repeated in measures 78-83, now transposed down a minor second with the hand parts exchanged (ex. 4.54).

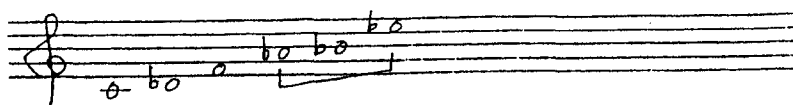
Example 4.54. *The Turtle and the Crane*, mm. 78-80

The horizontal occurrence of the twelve-tone row in the second theme (mm. 89-90) is developed from the row's second trichord (ex. 4.55) in retrograde.

Example 4.55a. *The Turtle and the Crane*, mm. 89-91

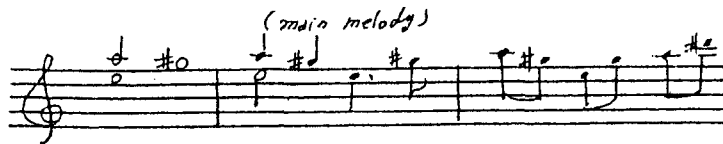


Example 4.55b. The row's first hexachord (with the second trichord bracketed)

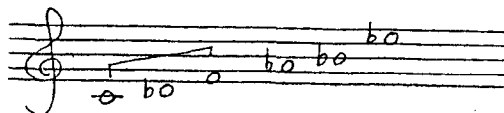


Following the second theme (ex. 4.56a), the third theme appears in measures 100-105; it is an inversion of the first three notes of the first hexachord (ex. 4.56b).

Example 4.56a. *The Turtle and the Crane*, mm. 100-105.



Example 4.56b. The row's first hexachord (with the first trichord bracketed)



The fourth theme is found in mm. 141-146 (ex. 4.57a). It is a modification of the first theme (ex. 4.57b).

Example 4.57a. *The Turtle and the Crane*, fourth theme, mm. 141-146

Example 4.57b. *The Turtle and the Crane*, first theme, m. 73

The peaceful conclusion contrasts sharply with the more dynamic endings of many other Rzewski works where intense joy would be the desirable conclusion.

The piece incorporates moments of repose, where notes are allowed to vibrate freely; silence; and moments of motion, featuring fast notes that rush to form a large gesture. The music is constantly starting and stopping within a continually varied textural design. Rzewski's *The Turtle and the Crane* is unique in that, rather than emphasizing one principal theme or motive, it displays multiple aspects of sound and ideas. There is continuity within each period, although the overall effect is a sense of variety and

diversity in style. The music oscillates between sections supported by important bass notes, such as those utilizing ostinato or homophonic textures, and sections that appear to have no foundation, where a twelve-tone row is emphasized. Small motives also permeate the work, giving it tremendous variety and a constantly changing face. There is more one- and two-part writing (except for the presentation of the four themes) rather than the complex textures found in his previous works.

* * *

Summary

1. Even with the enormous amount of change in textures, register and melodic ideas, one has the impression that most of the material is derived from a basic source, that being the twelve-tone row. With its special built-in symmetry, the harmony provides a static background for Rzewski to work with, which is a source he draws on in many of his later works. From this blanket of sound, the twelve-tone row is able to project seemingly unrelated motives, varied and fragmentary, which are, nevertheless, connected through their relation to the one source, as in mm. 46 and 89. Here, each measure is a special moment, related through the tone row, but one not being dependent on the other.
2. Once again, Rzewski juxtaposes large and small gestures, expansive and contracted registers, building his music from these contrasts.

3. The piano is always an extremely expressive instrument for Rzewski and he has physically related his music to this instrument. The piano—its sonorities, its textural possibilities, its idiomatic expansive possibilities and limitations—is the vehicle Rzewski used to discover and work out his compositional ideas, its sustaining and coloristic powers obviously being a source of inspiration.
4. *The Turtle and the Crane* portrays the composer's inner world that results from a combination of mythical textures, a desire for non-direction, but contentment with each moment, and the choice of thematic, harmonic and melodic materials, specifically a twelve-tone row that, in its symmetry, speaks of stasis and gentle colors. Rzewski's music suggests a maturity of compositional skill and a less forceful desire to communicate, a refinement of musical understanding. One need only look at *Chain of Thought* (1953), an earlier work for piano, to appreciate the gulf between Rzewski's late and early works and to witness a remarkable transformation.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Frederic Rzewski entered the musical world at a time of unprecedented experimentation, with post-war developments such as the total serialism of Boulez, the American serialism of Babbitt, the chance procedures of Cage and the music of Stockhausen. Not content to become an exponent of these “systems” of composition, he sought out his own path in music, acknowledging Bach, Beethoven, Liszt, Busoni, Dallapiccola and Cage as major influences on his development⁵⁹ (in this dissertation, the author has only considered Beethoven). Although he combines many different styles, what is most prominent is his originality. Rzewski refuses to belong to any tradition or stylistic frame, but challenges people to listen to his music with open, unfettered ears and minds.

What is consistently striking about Rzewski’s best music is the extent to which it adopts the cardinal virtues of nineteenth-century Romanticism within a thoroughly contemporary context. It is music that is rhetorically direct and unabashed in its appeal to a listener’s emotions without indulging in the kind of sentimentality and gooey nostalgia that characterizes much of the so called neo-Romanticism.⁶⁰

No Place To Go But Around (1974), like the composer’s well-known *The People United Will Never Be Defeated* (1975), is based on a melody from the “Revolutionary Song” movement of Chile. During this period (1970s) he had been concentrating on politically oriented pieces for at least five years. Unlike his programmatic work *No Place To Go But Around*, a freer, more spontaneous approach to writing can be found in

⁵⁹ Seth Beckman, “The Traditional,” 52.

⁶⁰ Joshua Kosman, “Improvising,” 31.

Andante con moto (1994), a piece of absolute music. Both compositions display distinct improvisatory cadenzas, and certain commonalities are shared in the area of variations. A number of differences have also been noted, reflecting compositional techniques commensurate with his changing compositional periods from the 1970s to the 1990s. Most of the thematic ideas in *No Place To Go But Around* are presented in a straightforward manner, while the thematic ideas in *Andante con moto* have been fragmented and skillfully manipulated. Aside from differences of thematic treatment, a contrast emerges between *No Place To Go But Around* and *Andante con moto*. *No Place To Go But Around* consists of a theme and eight variations; each variation is tightly woven and has the distinct purpose of highlighting certain musical elements and techniques. Along with the thematic melody, the bass line integrates the stylistic diversity of each variation. Despite the fact that Rzewski used a free-floating twelve-tone melody as thematic material in the opening, *No Place To Go But Around* is rooted in tonality throughout the variations. Furthermore, thematic melodies derived and varied from several sources are supported by a solid harmonic structure. *Andante con moto* is an example of “absolute” music, while *No Place To Go But Around* is grounded in both political and musical ideas. It is particularly interesting to note that a very tonal theme is the basis of an atonal work in *Andante con moto*.

As mentioned earlier, one specific technique is used in both sets of variations: indeterminacy or improvisation. Although it is not the only technique used, it is the most salient one. Although an improvisational section is optional in *No Place To Go But Around*, it seems that improvisation plays an important part in the style of this work, in view of Rzewski’s specific instructions for the improvisatory cadenza, which are

designed to help performers in the process of their improvisation. Improvisation requires a working knowledge of the language and experience in its use. Although it is necessary to consider melodic figures, motives and phrases on which a performer may construct a section of his own, improvisation is a creative process which depends on many personal factors such as inventiveness, intellect, technical abilities, the performer's musicianship and even his presence of mind. Improvisation represents the individuality of the player and is an extension of the element of chance. Rzewski states:

A good improvisation sounds as though it might have been written and similarly, a good interpretation of a written piece sounds as though it might have been improvised. I'm sure this is the basic reason why still today in the classical concert ritual it is obligatory for pianists to play without the music. Not because the music actually sounds better this way, but because it creates an illusion that the pianist is making up the music on the spot, even though everybody knows it isn't true.

Andante con moto (1992), derived from Beethoven's theme (op. 57, second movement), consists of fourteen variations. In size and scope, this work differs from *No Place To Go But Around*; it is more complex in texture and longer in duration. In this piece, Rzewski takes a very tonal theme (Beethoven's) and manipulates it in various ways. Since the presentation of thematic material is fractured and well-manipulated, the material is sometimes recognizable, at other times not. Although frequent stylistic references occur among the variations, including references to Chopin (variation 9) and Prokofiev (variation 5), they are not literal quotations. Unlike *No Place To Go But Around*, where thematic materials were used in a straightforward manner, in *Andante con moto* they are often concealed (and they are largely absent from the last two variations). More specifically, rather than using literal quotation, Rzewski relied on his own personal

style combined with his interpretation of other composers of his choice—including, of course, Beethoven.

Compared to *No Place To Go But Around*, improvisation is more crucial in *Andante con moto*. In *No Place To Go but Around*, Rzewski gives the performer pitch material to work with in the optional cadenza. The cadenzas in *Andante con moto* are still optional, but Rzewski gives only instructions for their durations and specific characters; everything else is to be determined by the performer.

The third piece discussed, *Four Pieces for Piano* (1977), represents Rzewski's stylistic eclecticism quite well. Although the cyclical theme at the opening of the first movement contains a folk-like tune, it is not directly quoted from Chilean song. By incorporating the folk element into his works, Rzewski attempts to recall the past, believing that this makes his music more accessible to a larger audience.⁶¹ Among the works discussed in this dissertation, *Four Pieces for Piano* is, pianistically speaking, on another level. Aside from the fact that this work requires a higher level of understanding on the part of the performer, the work represents an immense exploration of the possibilities of the modern piano. Unlike in other works, Rzewski paid closer attention to the sonorities and acoustical qualities of the piano than he did to the work's thematic materials.

In 1984, Rzewski wrote *The Turtle and the Crane*, during a period in which his use of serialism was concentrated and refined. His style during these years included not only serialism but also his cherished philosophical thoughts. This work appears to have been conceived in the wake of his visit to Japan, where Japan's traditional and cultural myths left an indelible mark on his musical thought.

⁶¹ Ronald Lewis, "The Traditional," 120.

What are some of the distinguishing traits, after all, of Rzewski's music?

Although a simple answer cannot be given, his music is characterized by a constant juxtaposition of freedom and formality. Freedom (the improvisational techniques, the choice of musical language and so on) is one of his prime traits; formality (the structure of the musical framework) is another. Rzewski is a unique composer who has composed music as individual as Bach, Brahms, or Ives. It is my firm belief that Rzewski's distinguished works will be widely studied, analyzed, and appreciated by scholars and performers world-wide in the years ahead.

APPENDIX

FREDERIC RZEWSKI

SOLO PIANO COMPOSITIONS

1953	Chain of Thought
1954	Tabakrauch
1956	Preludes
1958	Poem
1960	Study
1961	Study II (Dreams)
1971	Falling Music (Amplified Piano and tape)
1974	No Place To Go But Around
1975	The People United Will Never Be Defeated
1976	Four Pieces
1977	Squares
1978	North American Ballads
1986	Eggs
1988	The Turtle and the Crane Mayn Yingele
1989	Short Fantasy on "Give Peace a Chance"
1990	Bumps
1991	Ludes Sonata
1992	Andante con moto De Profundis

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