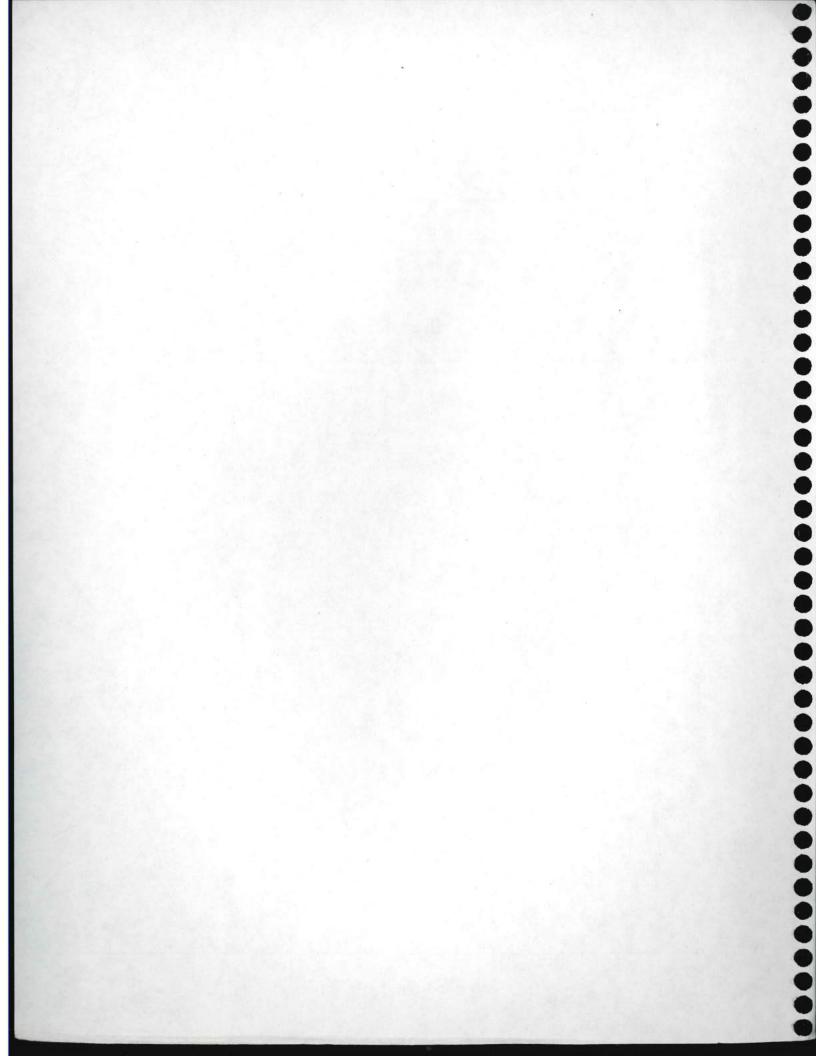
# Techniques for Algorithmic Composition, part 11

A brief Treatise outlining processes for manipulating melodic, harmonic and rhythmic progressions

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# TECHNIQUES for ALGORITHMIC COMPOSITION part II

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### TABLE OF CONTENTS

- I. Introduction
- II. A Brief word about the Format
- III. Algorithms for Manipulating Harmony
  - 1. Pitch-relative Harmony
    - Composition
    - Analysis and function
  - 2. Rotational Pentachords
  - 3. Encrypted Trichordal arrays
    - · A brief review of sequence filtering
    - Creating asymmetrical trichordal arrays
    - · Purpose of encryption
    - Description of the encryption process
  - 4. 12-tone Chordal counterpoint
- IV. Algorithms for Manipulating Melody
  - 5. 12-tone scales

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- 6. Index Subset Permutations of 12-tone rows
- V. Algorithms for Manipulating Harmony, Melody and Rhythm
  - 7. Rotational Rhythm arrays

### I. Introduction

This paper is an extension of a previous treatise which was completed in December 2004. It is the second part in a series which may eventually become a full-length textbook. The topics contained herein represent the continuing evolution of certain algorithmic techniques which I use for music composition. A number of ideas discussed in this paper are previously undescribed, while others constitute the further development of algorithms introduced in the first paper.

While I consider these techniques to be unique or unusual enough to warrant further study and exploration, I do not claim that these are completely novel ideas from a theoretical standpoint. Each technique that I will be discussing here can generally be shown to have a precedent based on the work of another composer. Wherever possible, I have made every attempt to cite the relevant works of those individuals, and show how their compositional methods provided the inspiration for these ideas.

-David M. Shere January 22, 2006 Santa Barbara, CA

### II. A Brief Explanation of the Format

As this is the first draft of this treatise, each key concept will be explained as concisely as possible, and briefly illustrated with accompanying figures and/or musical examples from my own work. The verbal explanations comprise the main body of the paper; the musical examples can be found in the first appendix. The second appendix contains a template of a checklist of chromatic aggregates; the third appendix contains the bibliography.

With regard to the ordering of topics: Each concept has been presented more or less in order of historical precedent, evolution and degree of complexity, beginning with topics that apply to neo-tonality and centricity, and progressing to more complex dodecaphonic procedures. I have also made every effort to distinguish, by order of presentation and sub-grouping, those topics which apply to manipulating harmony from those topics which apply to manipulating melody; however, there is a certain amount of overlap between the two ideas, and it is not possible to completely separate these topics by this distinction. Processes which apply to manipulating harmony may also be applied to manipulation of melody, and vice versa.

### III. Algorithms for Manipulating Harmony

### 1. Pitch-relative Harmony

In the context of post-modern music and the *avant-garde*, the technique of constructing a harmonic progression is no longer bound by any common-practise set of rules whatsoever. Consequently, harmonizing a given melody has become an exercise in truly arbitrary decision-making. This technique can be found to some degree in the harmonic language of every known composer from the late Romantic period until the present day. While it is not a novel idea, it bears a certain amount of description in order to lay the foundation for certain techniques which will follow it in this paper.

### Application

A single pitch can be harmonized by any triad, 7<sup>th</sup> chord, embellished chord, or chromatic pitch-set one chooses [example 1-1]. When a single pitch is used as a centric point around which all of the harmony in a composition is organized, the contemporary term for this organizational scheme is "pitch-axis harmony". In and of itself, the pitch-axis technique is somewhat limited, and ultimately is not exceptionally interesting. However, if we take a given melody [example 1-2] and treat every pitch in that melody as a harmonic axis [example 1-3], generating a series of variations on the melody in which the harmony for each pitch-class changes with every variation [example 1-4], we can achieve truly interesting compositional results.

### Analysis and harmonic function

In the same way that the choice of harmony for any pitch-class has become arbitrary, the analysis of that harmony in context can also be viewed as somewhat arbitrary. The harmonic nomenclature becomes dependent on 1) what system of analysis you choose to use (Roman numeral, jazz chord symbol, set theory, etc.), and 2) what you choose to view as the root of the harmony. Several examples showing multiple analyses of a single harmonic setting can be found in the appendix [example 1-5].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Marshall, Wolf. Joe Satriani: Surfing with the Alien. "Introduction." Cherry Lane Music Company, Inc.: Port Chester NY, 1987.

### 2. Rotational Pentachords

Any 12-tone row can be divided into two hexachords [example 2-1], which can then be treated as verticalities. If we place these two hexachords side-by-side, the first descending vertically and the second ascending vertically [example 2-2], the row takes on the visual characteristic of having been "wrapped around" a vertical axis. We can then manipulate the row according to this characteristic.

If we "rotate" the row 5 times around this imaginary vertical axis for a total of six pairs of vertical hexachords [example 2-3], an extremely interesting pattern emerges. Notice the numerical relationship that emerges between the top two rows, where pairs of numbers manifest a consistent diagonal relationship with one another. From a pitch-class perspective, this amounts to a continuous voice-exchange between these two upper row positions.

If we eliminate one of these top two rows [example 2-4], we are left with a peculiar series of 12 vertical pentachords comprised of 5 independent horizontal rows, in which every pitch-class is displaced from all other iterations of that pitch-class by the maximum possible horizontal distance. Furthermore, no two vertical pentachords in this series contain exactly the same pitch-class content; each vertical sonority is unique and distinct.

The compositional possibilities of such a pentachord series are endless. This technique has the advantage of generating rich, interesting harmonies while avoiding undue pitch-class repetition or centricity, and without violating the fundamental serial aesthetic.

### 3. Encrypted Trichordal arrays

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A brief review of sequence filtering, or serial encryption

A 12-tone row can be manipulated in a cryptographic manner similar to any type of information which has been stored in an array. Each element in the array can be assigned an index value. Index patterns may then be created, and the positions of the

elements in the array may be manipulated according to these patterns [example 3-1].

This index-pattern manipulation process is essentially a rudimentary form of encryption.

### Creating asymmetrical trichordal arrays

Any 12-tone row may be used to create a trichordal array, by rotating the original row four times and "stacking" the results to create tetrachordal verticalities [example 3-2]. Any trichordal array which is "asymmetric" does not conform to the typical definition of trichordal arrays, which requires that all four trichords in a row should have the same prime form.

### · Purpose of encryption

The drawback of any typical trichordal array (whether symmetrical or asymmetrical) is that it limits the practitioner to exactly four discrete horizontal trichords and three distinct vertical tetrachords derived from any given row. While the interval content of each tetrachord verticality varies somewhat, the pitch-class content does not [example 3-3]. The horizontal trichord content is typically fixed and does not vary.

In order to derive greater harmonic and melodic variety from a single row, it is possible to apply serial encryption methods to a trichordal array. This process can essentially be described as filtering the pitch-class and interval-content identity of one row through the index-sequence identity of another row, resulting in an encrypted trichordal array.

### Description of the encryption process

Each vertical tetrachord may be treated as an element in an array and assigned an index value [example 3-4]. An index pattern may then be created [example 3-5] with which to manipulate (or encrypt) the positions of the elements in the array. In my own work, I construct these index patterns according to specific guidelines which prevent iterations of the same pitch-class in close proximity with each other. Essentially, every tetrachord belongs to one of three "families", and its position may be "swapped" (interchanged) with any other member of that family, without affecting the proximity of any pitch-class with other iterations of that pitch-class within the trichordal matrix. Thus, each index position may also be associated with one of three families [example 3-6], and

index patterns may be constructed by cycling through the contents of each family systematically [example 3-7], essentially interchanging index positions which are related to one another.

Each transposition of the of the index pattern [example 3-8] may then also be used as an encryption filter (as well as the retrograde, inversion, and retrograde-inversions of the index pattern and their transpositions, if the practitioner wishes). The resulting encrypted arrays [example 3-9] can each clearly be seen to have a new melodic profile for each component row. This process defeats the original limitation of four discrete horizontal trichords.

The identity of each vertical tetrachord verticality remains intact; however, this limitation may also be defeated. By transposing dichords within the trichordal matrix [example 3-10], rotating a single row one place to the left or right, or some other additional method, the result is 12 distinct vertical tetrachords, no two of which have exactly the same pitch-class content. Basically, by using encryption one may derive 48 distinct horizontal rows and 144 distinct vertical tetrachords from a single twelve-tone row.

### 4. 12-tone Chordal counterpoint

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Interesting vertical sonorities can be constructed using all 12 pitch-classes

[example 4-1]. These types of harmonies are evident in the works of composer Witold

Lutoslawski, among others, and are also thoroughly discussed in the Thesaurus of Scales

and Melodic Patterns by Nicholas Slonimsky.

Any given 12-tone chord may then be used as a basis for counterpoint, by applying voice-exchanges from one sonority to the next to create a 12-tone chord progression [example 4-2]. While the goal of this technique is to have all 12 pitch-classes present in every consecutive harmony, the nature of each sonority changes significantly with successive manipulations of the interval content.

### IV. Algorithms for Manipulating Melody

### 5. 12-tone scales

An interesting application of the serial technique is to create scale-like structures which contain all 12 pitch classes. Included in the appendix are a few examples of possible 12-tone "scales" [example 5-1]. The compositional interest of these constructs is that they permit a relatively greater degree of idiomatic application and traditional figuration writing than typical 12-tone arrays, due to their incorporation of predominantly smaller intervals arranged in step-wise fashion in a single direction.

### 6. Index Subset Permutations of 12-tone rows

Within a given 12-tone row, the contents of smaller subsets of elements can be manipulated. The index order of these subsets may be interchanged, creating melodic variations on that row which bear a strong resemblance to the original row [example 6-1]. This technique is useful for deriving melodic and harmonic variety from a single row, without introducing completely new and unrelated rows to the compositional mix. The question this process raises is, "How many index changes can a row sustain before it has completely lost its individual identity as a series?" At this time, the answer to this question is unclear.

### V. Algorithms for Manipulating Rhythm

### 7. Rotational rhythm arrays

In the same manner that a fixed series of pitches may be contrived and used as a compositional device, it is also possible to contrive a fixed series of rhythmic values. This is essentially a type of integral serialism, as exhibited in the works of composers such as Olivier Messiaen, Pierre Boulez, Karl Stockhausen, Milton Babbitt, and others<sup>2</sup>.

In my own work, I have used such a rhythmic series as a rotational array, in conjunction with a pitch series [example 7-1]. Initially, each rhythmic value in a table

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Chung , Ki Hyang. Integral Serialism and the Rise of the International Avant-garde. 1/31/06. <a href="http://www.usc.edu/dept/polish\_music/578/aug05.html">http://www.usc.edu/dept/polish\_music/578/aug05.html</a>

corresponds to a specific pitch-class value. As the rhythm array is rotated through the table, the corresponding pitch-class values change accordingly, permitting every pitch-class to correspond with every rhythm value in the array by the end of the process.

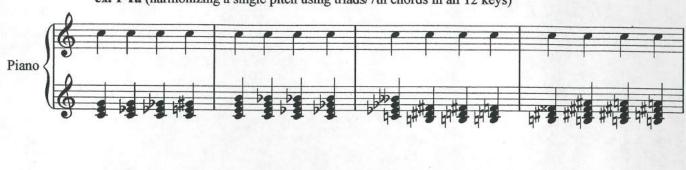
There are endless possibilities for constructing a rhythm array. In my own work, I "weight" my arrays according to what types of rhythmic values I wish to emphasize. Included in the appendix are several more examples of possible rhythm arrays, demonstrating weighted use of one or more rhythmic denominations [example 7-2].

# Appendix 1 Musical Examples

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ex. 1-1a (harmonizing a single pitch using triads/7th chords in all 12 keys)













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8/24/05 - Hexachardal rotations (resulting in pentachords) [example 2-4]

rendered in standard

2/8/06 - Leview of serial energytions [example 3-1]

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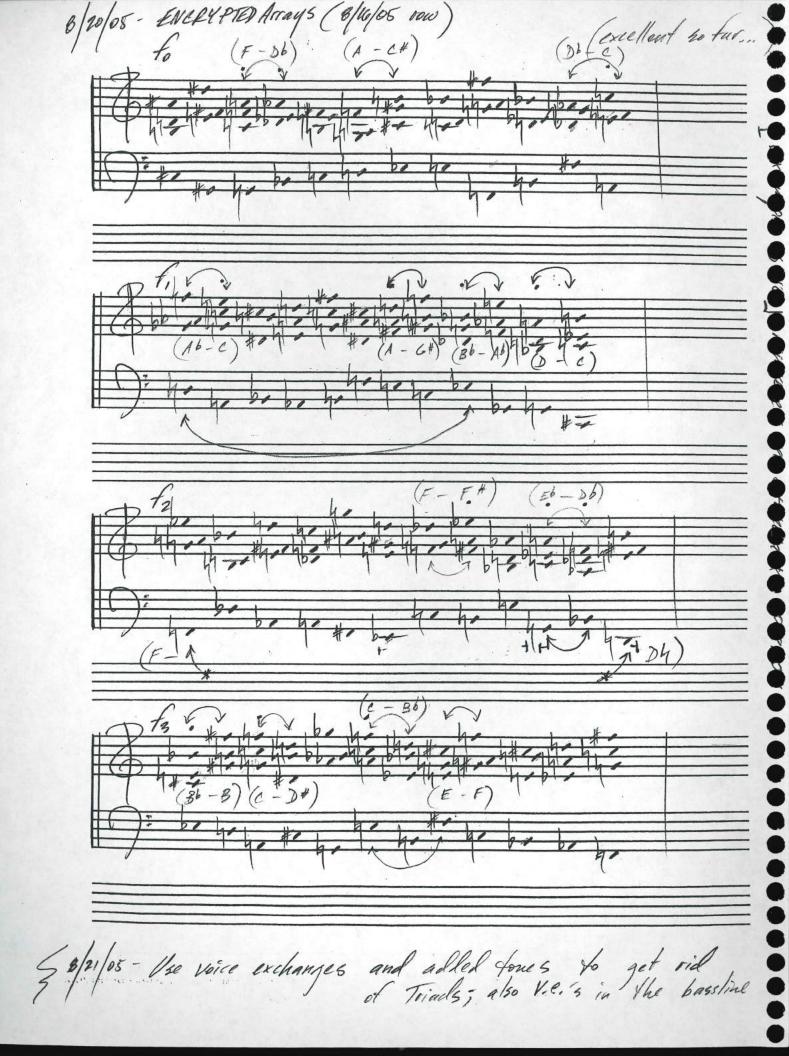
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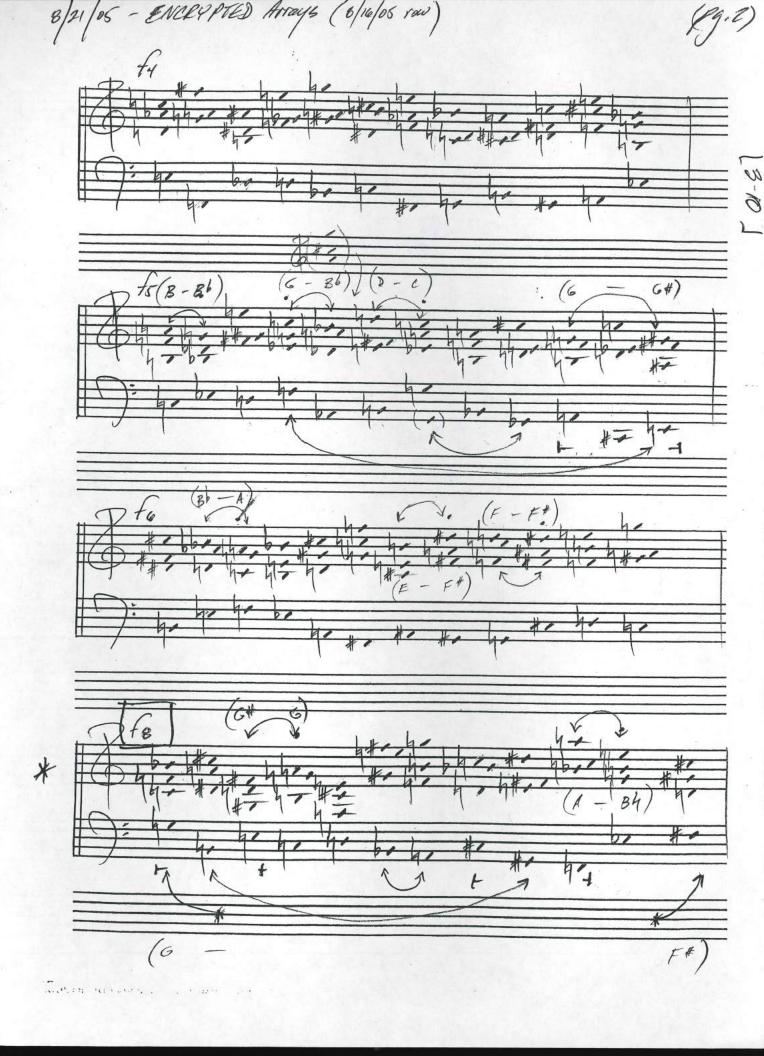
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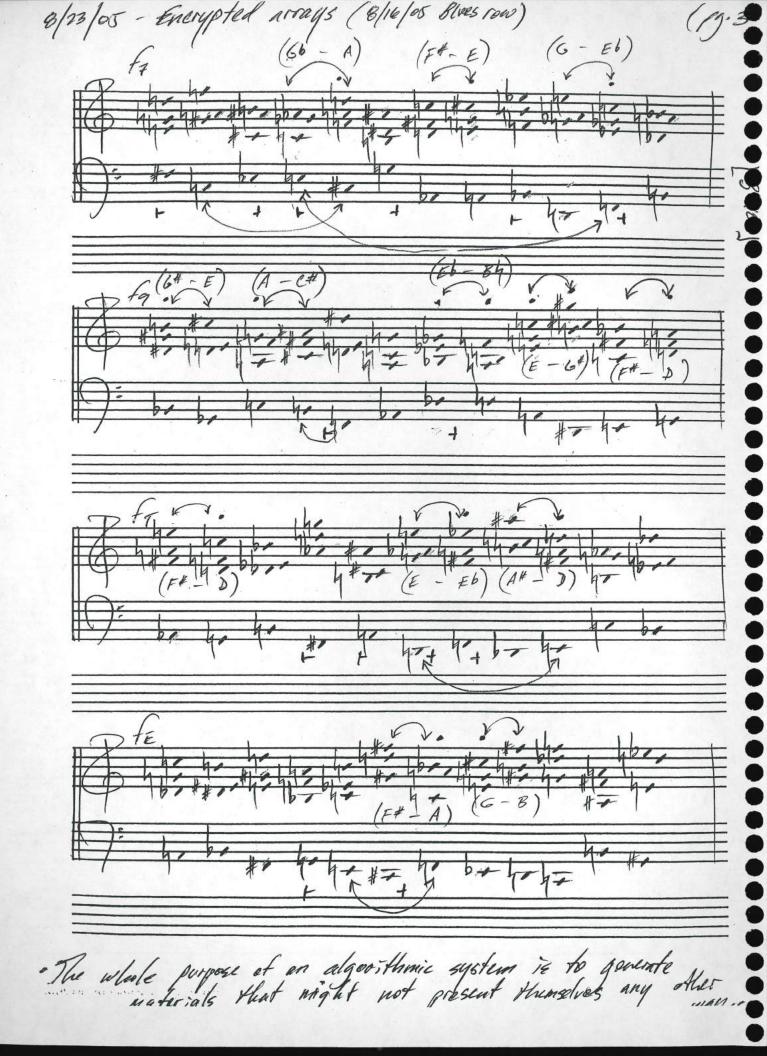
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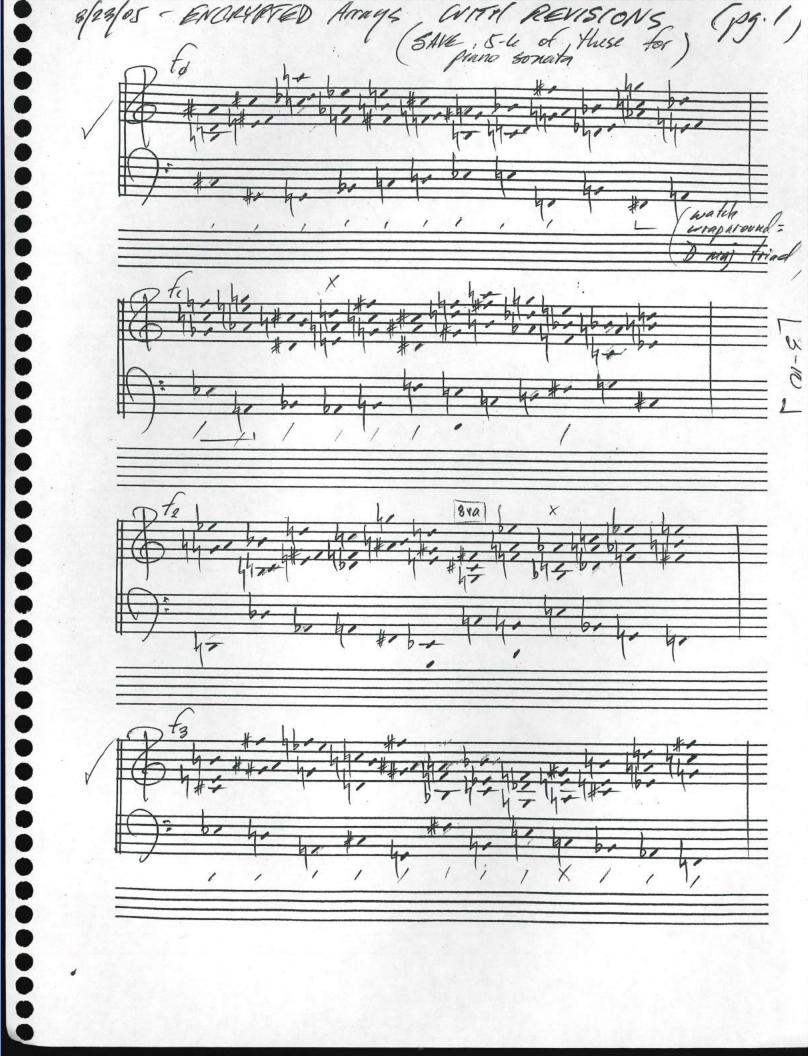
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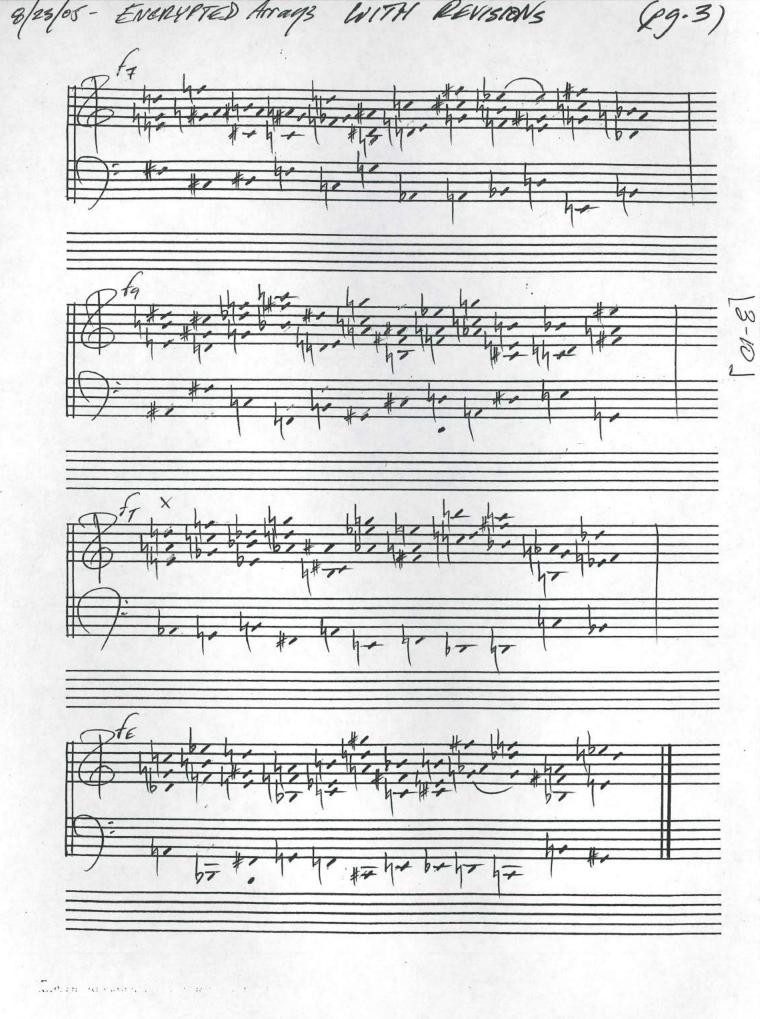
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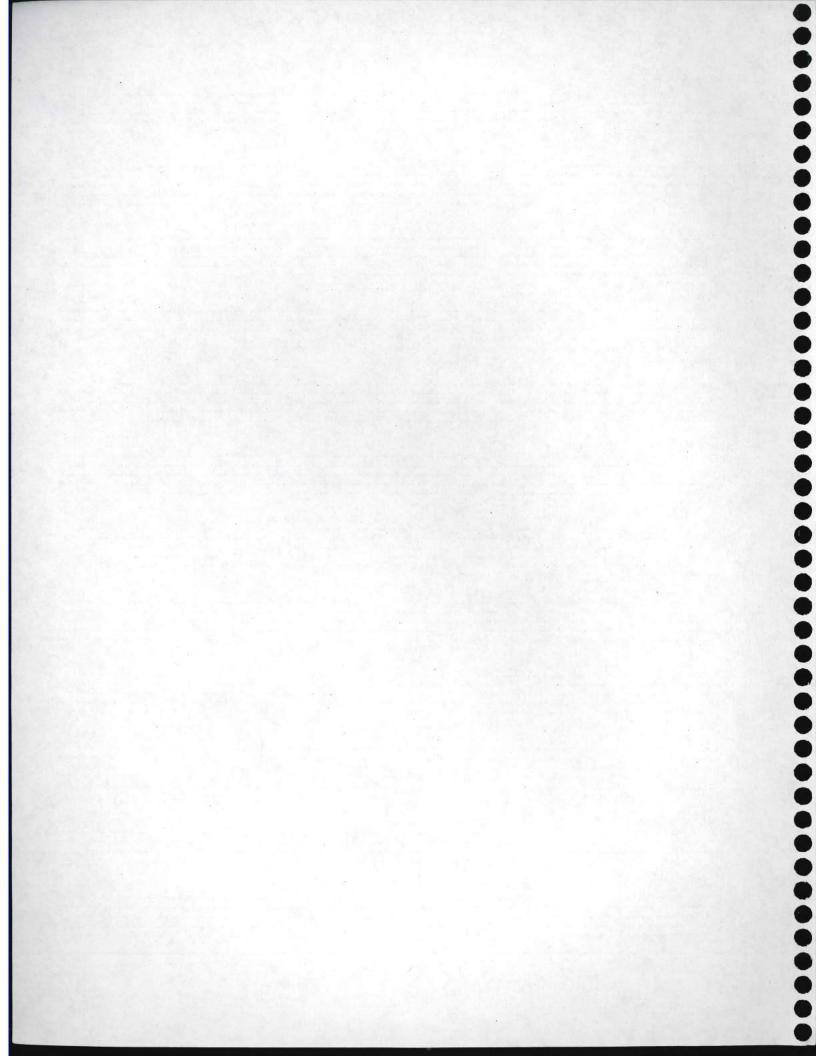


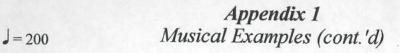




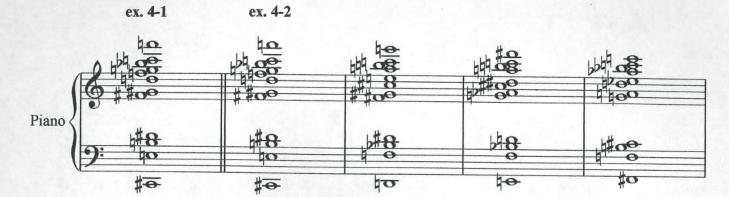








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## APPENDIX 2: BIBLIOGRAPHY (Recommended Reading)

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