CHAPTER FOUR

Nigel Butterley (1935 -)

Nigel Butterley was born in Sydney in 1935 to a deeply religious Anglican family. Religion has always remained an integral part of his life and its influence can be seen in nearly all of his compositions, most of which are based on mystical themes.[1]

As a child, he was constantly surrounded by musical activities and, at the age of six, commenced piano lessons with Shadforth Hooper, and began composing soon after. At fifteen Frank Warbrick became his teacher, and it was through him that Butterley became familiar with some of the twentieth century composers.

In 1951, Butterley found employment with the A.B.C. and also enrolled as a part-time student at N.S.W. Conservatorium of Music, studying composition with Dr. Noel Nickson. Compositions dating from this time show the influence of the English Pastoral school as did the majority of Australian composers' works written in Australia about this time.[2] In 1955, he was transferred to Adelaide and it was there that the *Blake Songs* for baritone and piano were composed. Butterley returned to Sydney in 1957 and continued his studies in composition with Noel Nickson and later Raymond Hanson who acquainted him with the harmonic

[1]Roger Covell, *Australia's Music: Themes of a New Society*, (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1967), p.225.

[2]James Murdoch, *Australia's Contemporary Composers* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1972), p.45.

principles of Hindemith. Butterley comments on the style of his early compositions:

> The sort of music I wrote until I was about twenty-six--which was when I went overseas to study--was a bit like Vaughn Williams at first, a bit more like Benjamin Britten later on, a bit more like Bartok and Hindemith later on, as I began to get to know the different sorts of contemporary music.[3]

In 1957, he write the song cycle *Child in Nature* for soprano with pianoforte accompaniment to poems by Robin Gurr, then followed a carol for soprano and flute called *Joseph and Mary* and in 1959, he composed the *Canticle of David.*

At the end of December 1961, Butterley suddenly decided to go overseas and left for a tour of Europe and the Holy Land. On arrival in England, he commenced studies in composition with Priaulx Rainier, a South African composer and former pupil of Nadia Boulanger. Of Ranier's teaching, Butterley writes:

> I found the right teacher in Priaulx Rainier, in London, who made me realize to what extent I had been working automatically in nineteenth century moulds, without thinking out each work, and each sound afresh. She helped invigorate my feeling for sounds and shapes, and to indicate the kind of direction in which I should turn.[4]

Butterley returned to Australia in 1963. Later that year, Professor Donald Peart approached him to write a work for the 1964 Adelaide

[3]Nigel Butterley, "Butterley on Butterley," *Music Now*, 1 (February, 1969), 30.

[4]Andrew D. McCredie, *Musical Composition in Australia* (Canberra: Government Printing Office, 1969), p.3.

Festival of the Arts. Butterley composed *Laudes (Praises)* and it was this work which established Butterley's reputation as one of the leaders of the younger generation of Australian composers. *Laudes* represents the end of Butterley's struggle with tonality, for in this work he evolves his own individual style through the incorporation of serial techniques.

Most of Butterley's major works after *Laudes* incorporate serial techniques.[5] In May 1961, a piece for three amateur instrumental groups called *Canticle of the Sun* was composed, and in 1965, a work commissioned by Dr. Carl Dolmetsch and Joseph Saxby called *The White-Throated Warbler* appeared. Butterley employs twelve-note rows in both these pieces.[6] During that same year, his *String Quartet* was given its premiere performance.

In 1966, Butterley composed *In the Head the Fire* which he entered in the Radio Musical Composition Section of the Italia Prize. From the sixteen entries, including works by some well-known established composers, his entry was chosen the winner. This put him alongside other well-known Australian composers such as Sculthorpe and Meale.

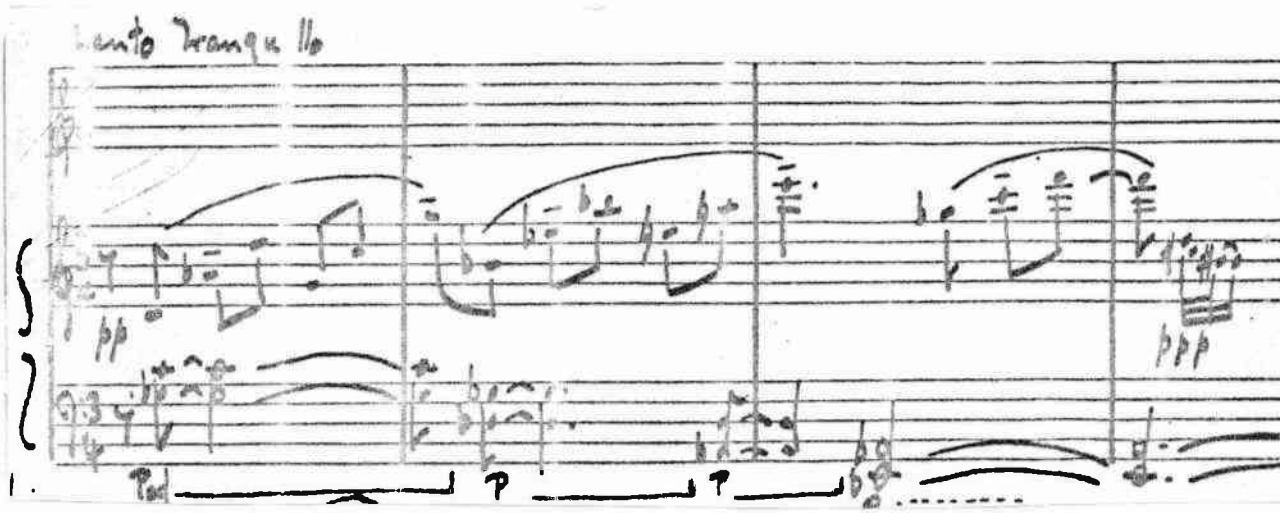
Nigel Butterley's vocal compositions comprise much of his early works. One of them is the song cycle *Child in Nature*, a cycle of seven songs written to poems by the England-based Australian poetess Robin Gurr. Like many of Butterley's early works, the *Child in Nature* cycle

[5]David Swale, "Nigel Butterley," *Australian Composition in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Frank Callaway and David Tunley (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1978), p.203.

[6]*Ibid.*, p.203.

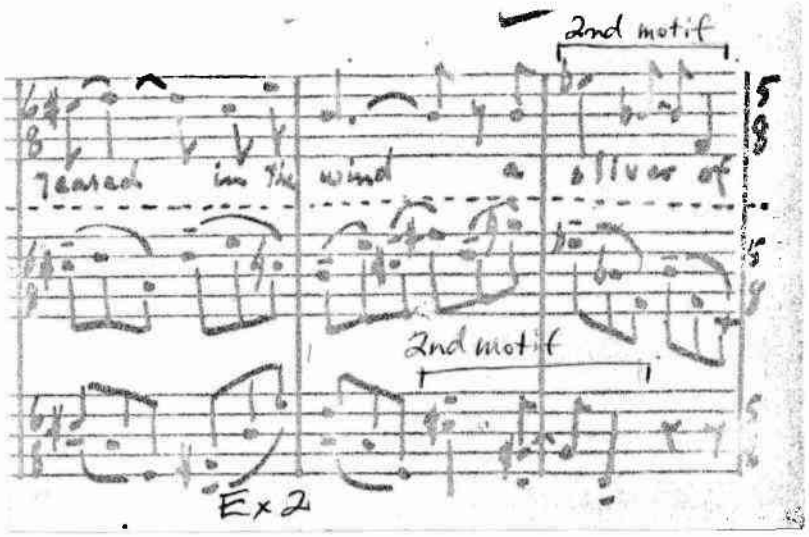
is written in the tradition of the English Art Song. This is not to say that these settings are unoriginal.

Each song is characterized by a recurring motif, stated at the very beginning in the piano part, which serves a twofold purpose: firstly, structural unity is achieved through its constant repetition, and, secondly, it characterizes the title of the song. This is clearly exemplified in the fifth song, "The Cricket":



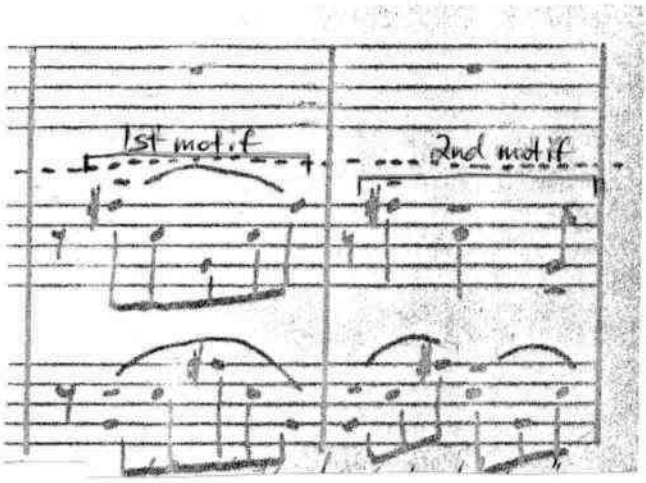
Ex. 1

He often introduces a second motif as a means of contrast:



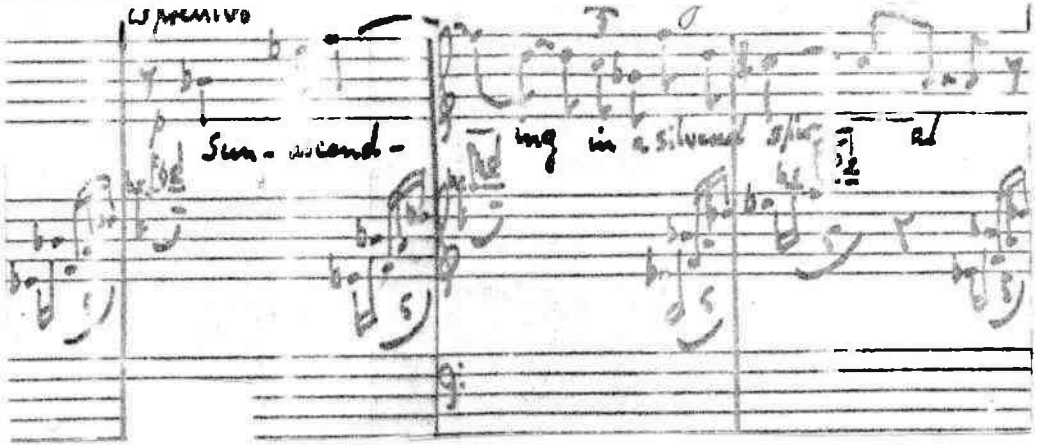
Ex. 2 from "The Spider's Web"

which is later used in conjunction with fragments of **the** first theme:

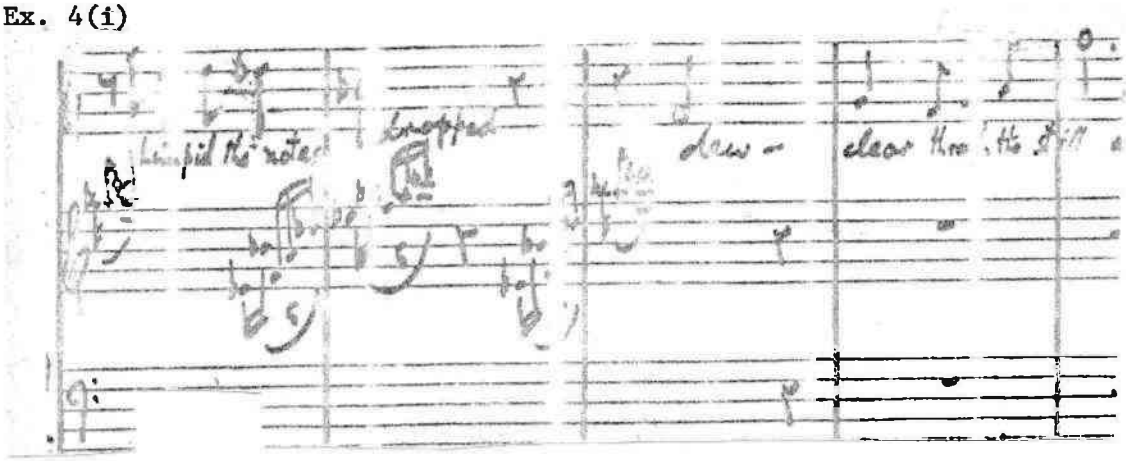


Ex. 3

Occasionally strophic form is employed in conjunction with the above as another means of gaining unity. This is well illustrated in the second song, "The Bird":

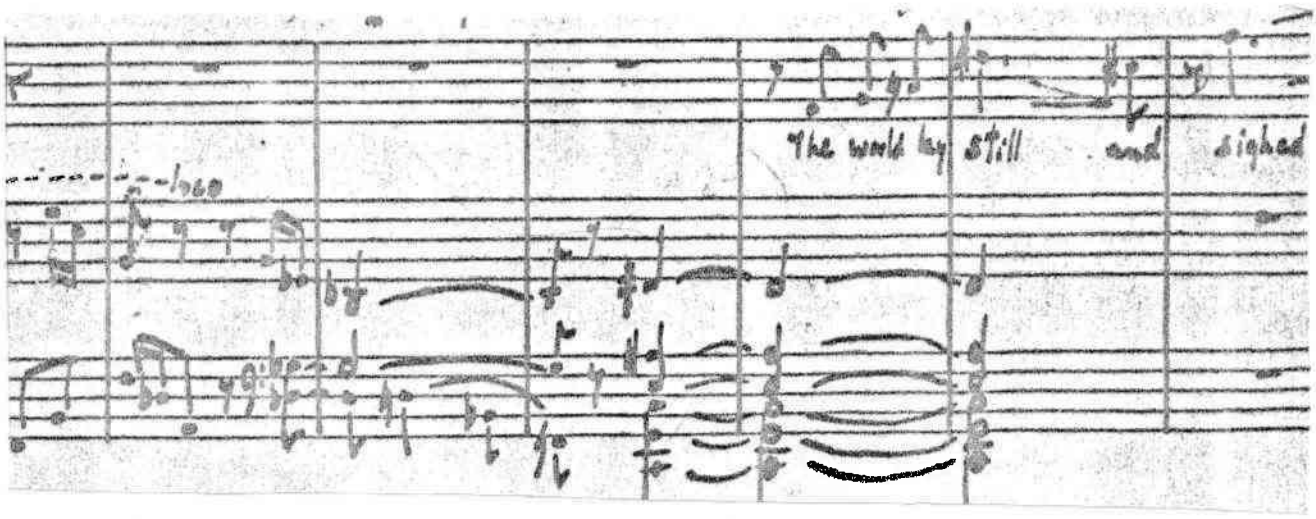


Ex. 4(i)



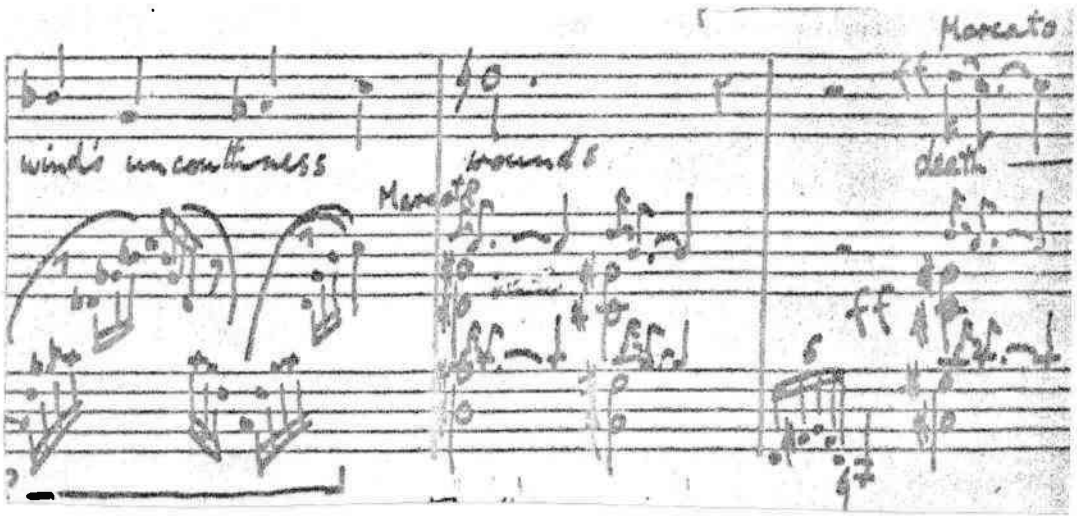
Ex. 4(ii)

Butterley accomplishes overall structural unity through the repeated use of a particular chordal structure peculiar to this work. It appears in the majority of the songs as a representation of a change of mood, as it does in the first song, "The Child":



Ex. 5

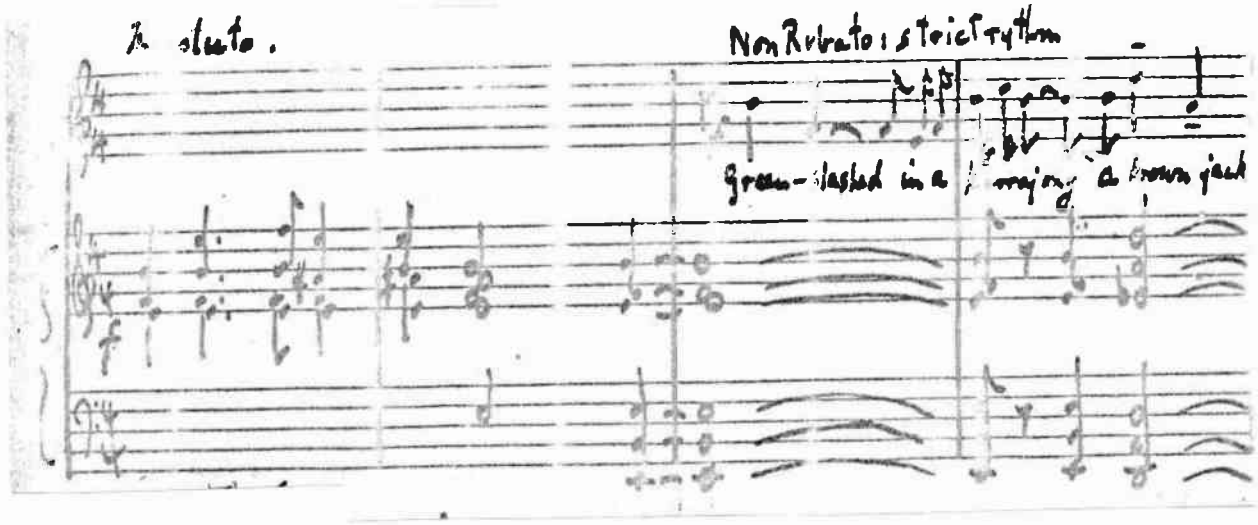
and in the sixth song "The Wind and the Song":



Ex. 6

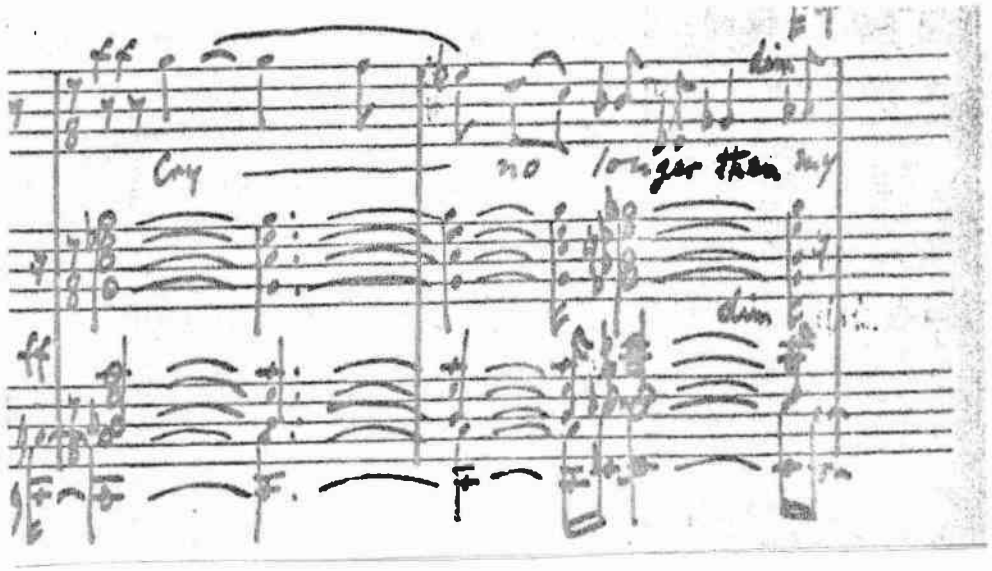
These chords also appear in the two songs in which Butterley has employed a chordal accompaniment exclusively. The first is "Brown Jack", the third song, written in a recitative-like style in order to achieve the

suitable dramatic effect suggested by the text:



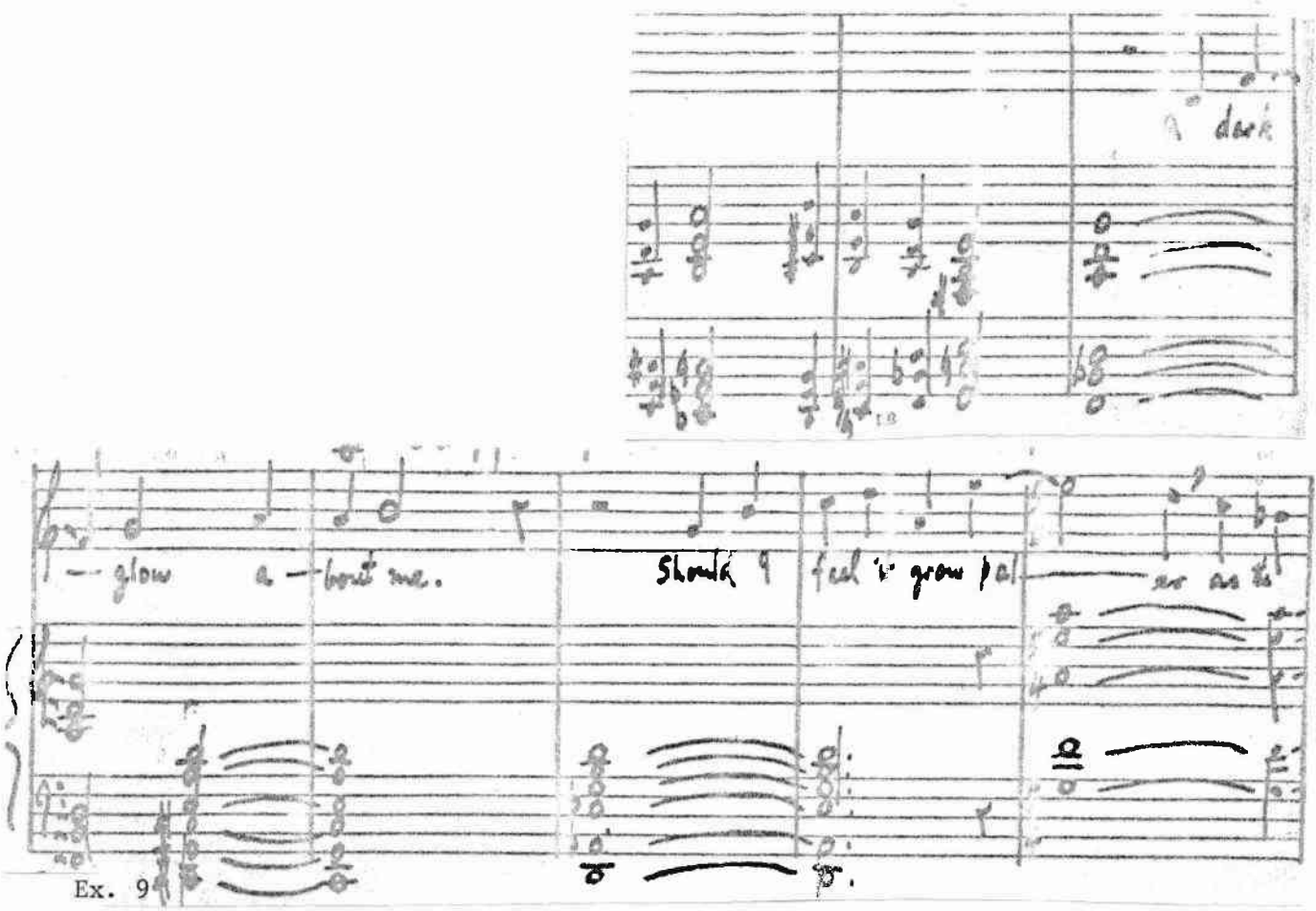
Ex. 7

For a heightened dramatic effect the same chordal structure is employed but filled out:



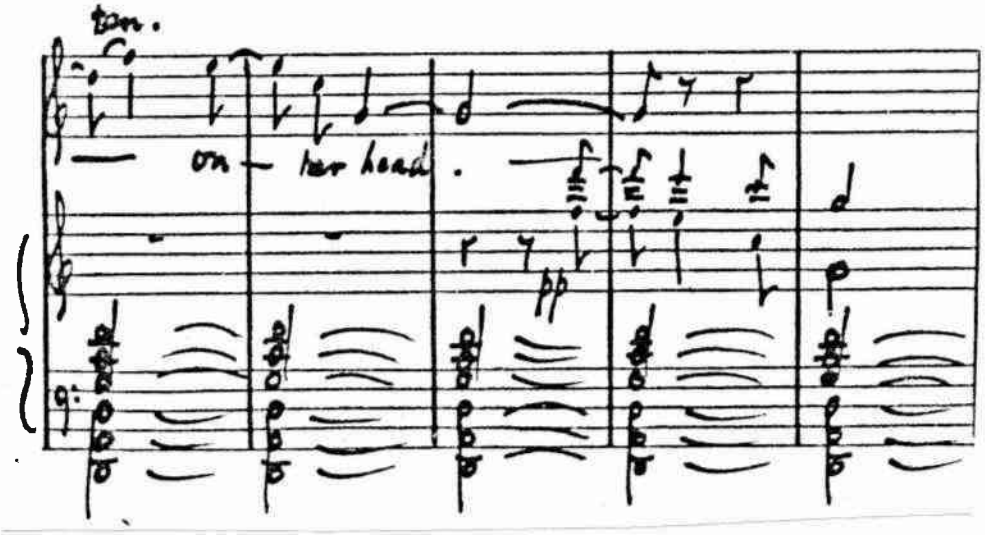
Ex. 8

The other song utilizing these chords is the last song "A Dark Glow Around Me". Here they are used to create the atmosphere conveyed by the text.



Ex. 9

There is scarcely any sharing of thematic material between the vocal part and the accompaniment with the exception of some instances where the piano part echoes that of the voice:

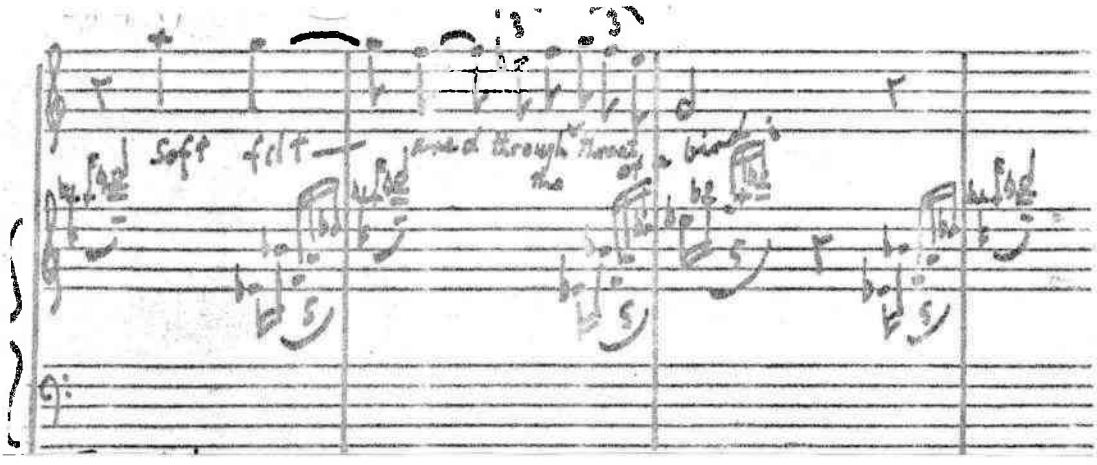


Ex. 10

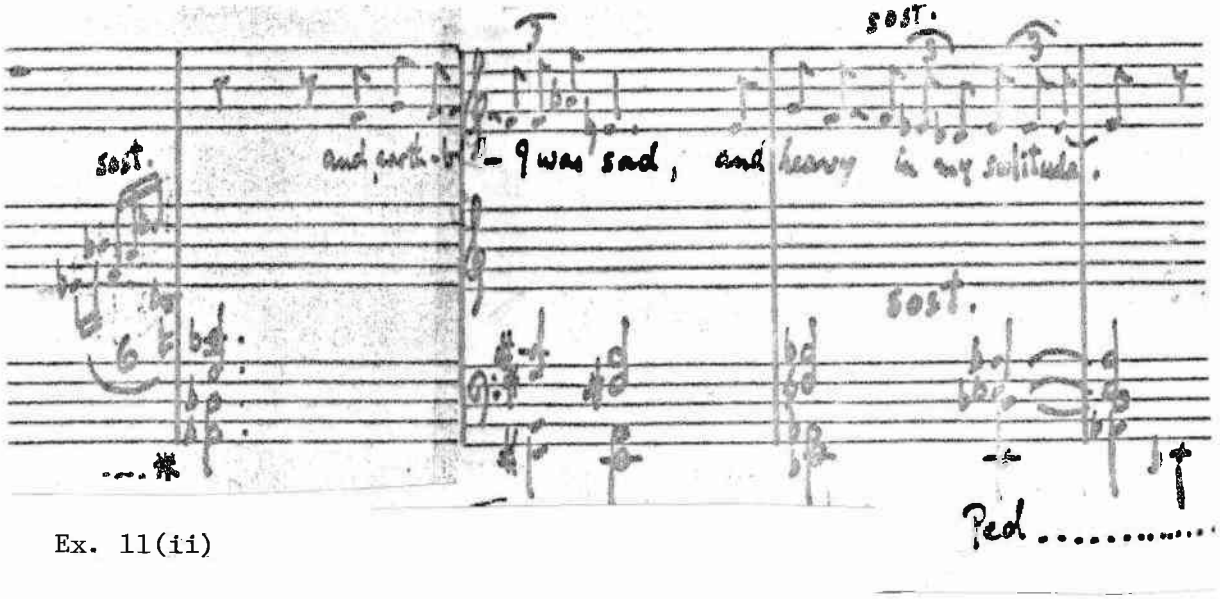
For the remainder, both parts move quite independently of one another while, at the same time, fusing together to form an effective representation of the text.

Butterley creates some interesting effects in both the vocal and the piano parts as a means of emphasizing certain words in the text. This is exemplified in the first song where the stressing of the phrase "the world lay still and sighed" is accomplished by the change from a fairly animated style of accompaniment to a simple chordal one (see Example 5). The word "sighed" is emphasized by placing the rest of the beat preceding it.

Butterley's talent for writing a skilfully controlled melodic line is very evident in the vocal writing of this song-cycle. A lyrical style of singing is demanded coupled with the ability to cope with his fondness for groups of five, six and seven notes. The vocal part is set mainly in the middle to upper registers of the voice with the extremities of the range reserved for special effects:



Ex. 11(i)



Ex. 11(ii)

Certain aspects of Butterley's style changed following the year of study with Priaulx Rainier. Many of these were realized in *Laudes*, composed in the year following his return from overseas: "... the use of opposing, clearly-defined instrumental groups, the use of fragmented figures of widely disparate rhythm, and the capacity for long, unbroken lines ...".[7] A most important stylistic addition was that of serial techniques which are utilized in one form or another in most of his mature works.

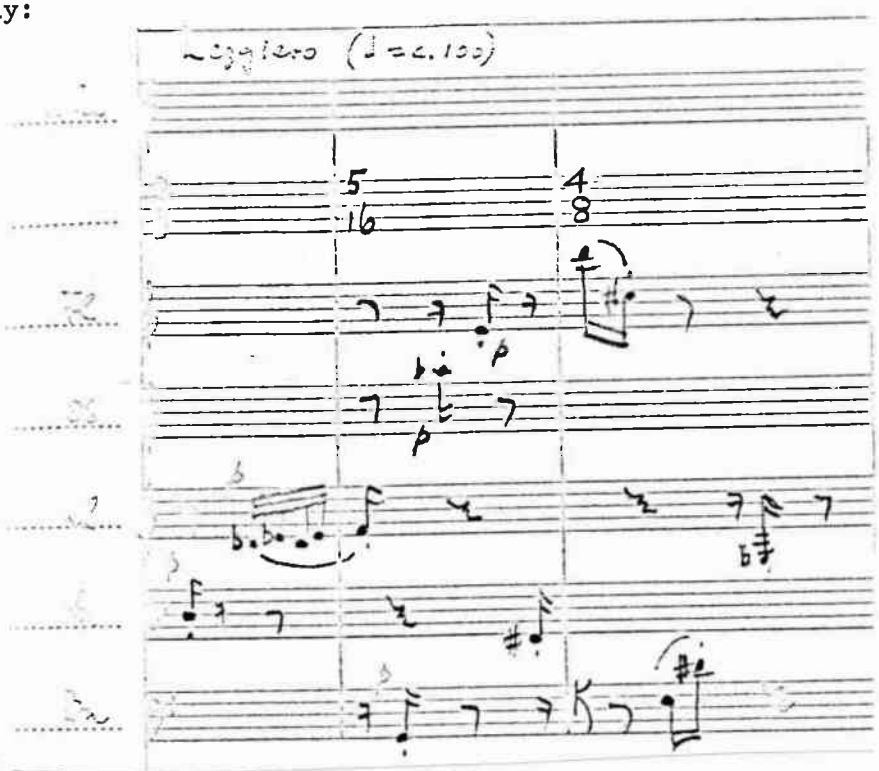
He did not, however, employ these techniques for *Carmina: Four Latin Poems of Spring* for mezzo-soprano (or baritone) and wind quintet--flute, oboe, clarinet, horn and bassoon. The work is essentially tonal, although highly chromatic in character. *Carmina*, commissioned by the A.P.R.A. (Australian Performing Rights Association) was written in 1968 and composed specially for Lauris Elms and the New Sydney Quintet.

[6] *Ibid.*, p.203.

For a text, Butterley used four latin poems of spring by poets dating from 300 - 500 A.D., a reflection of his interest in medieval music.

Stylistically, *Carmina* presents a mixture of both old and new. Various characteristics of Butterley's early vocal works are still evident, such as: a fondness for triplets and groupings of five, six and seven notes in both instrumental and vocal parts; changing time signatures, resulting in a constant shifting of stress; the vocal part and the accompaniment moving independently of one another; the use of recurring motives to achieve structural unity. To these Butterley adds other elements which are outlined in the ensuing discussion of *Carmina*.

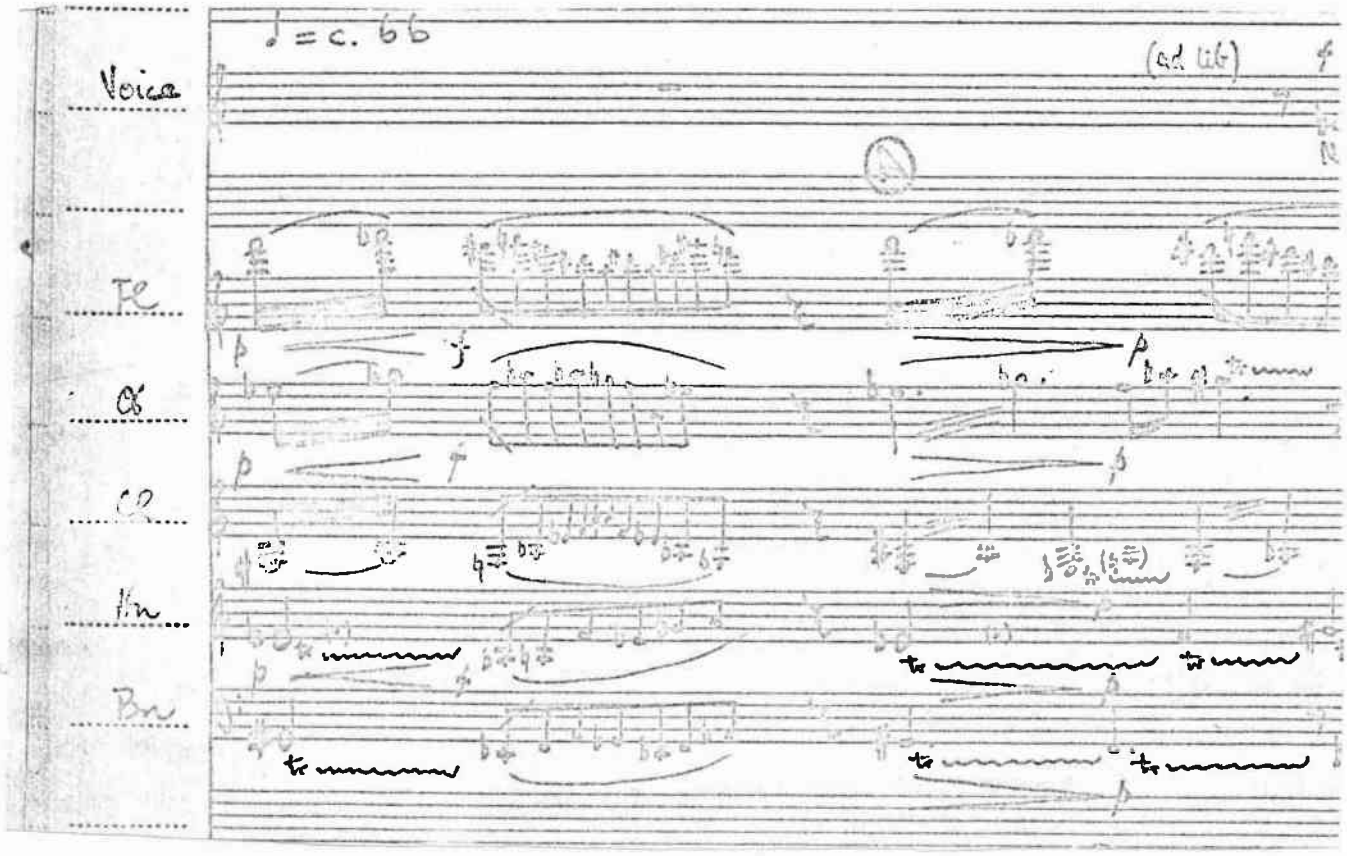
His writing is essentially linear; the melodic line extended but flexible. This is evident in the treatment throughout the piece of the vocal line which demands a flowing, langurous line. On the other hand, use is made of fragmented, disparate rhythms, the best illustration of which can be found in "The Little Dog" where they are used almost exclusively:



Ex. 12

In the other three songs, these rhythms are employed mainly as a means of contrast.

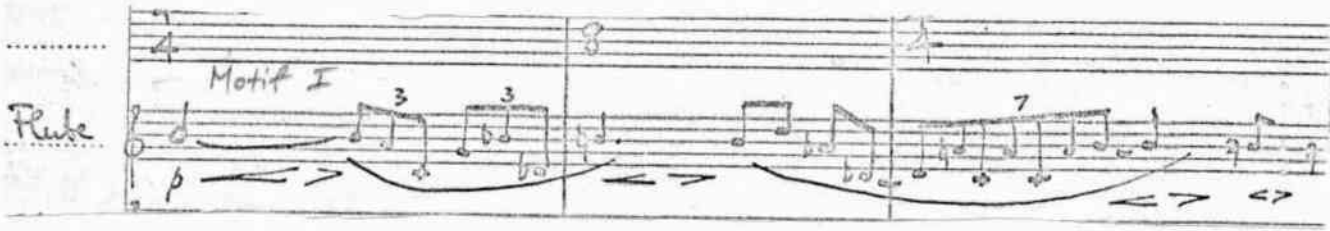
A preoccupation with texture is reflected in his extension of the Stravinskian technique of multiple ostinato figures which feature prominently throughout the work but are best illustrated in "The Salmon" which consists entirely of this technique:



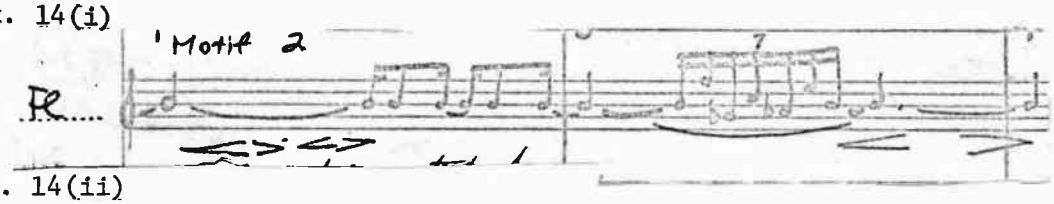
Ex. 13

In each song, structural organization is achieved solely through the restating of contrasting motives. The beginning of the first reveals two contrasting motives which are introduced within a short space of each other. The first motif is essentially melodic while the

second, derived from the first, is fragmented and short.

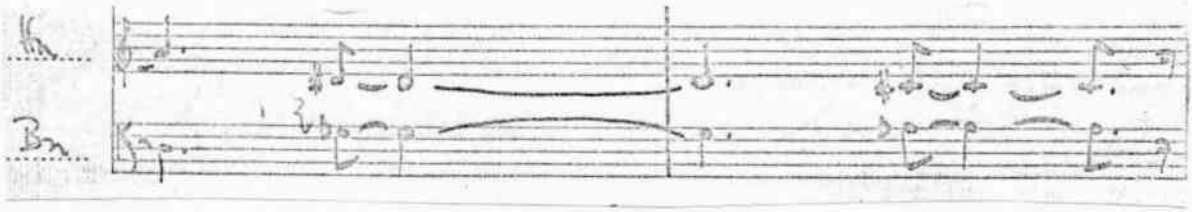


Ex. 14(i)



Ex. 14(ii)

In fragmented form, they are often juxtaposed against their inversions:



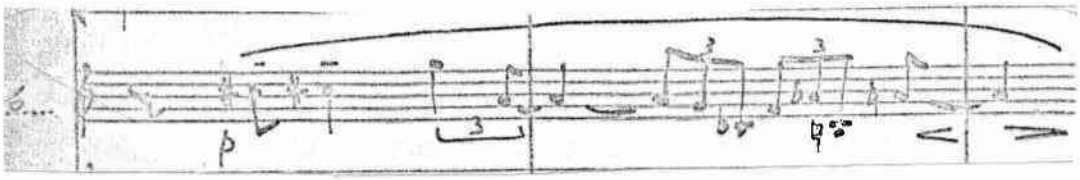
Ex. 15

However, in the third song which is characterized by a chant-like vocal line and multiple ostinato figures, Butterley employs a strophic form to establish unity. His treatment of the vocal line and instrumental parts is almost the same.

Butterley achieves morphological unity through the repetitive use of the following rhythmic motif:

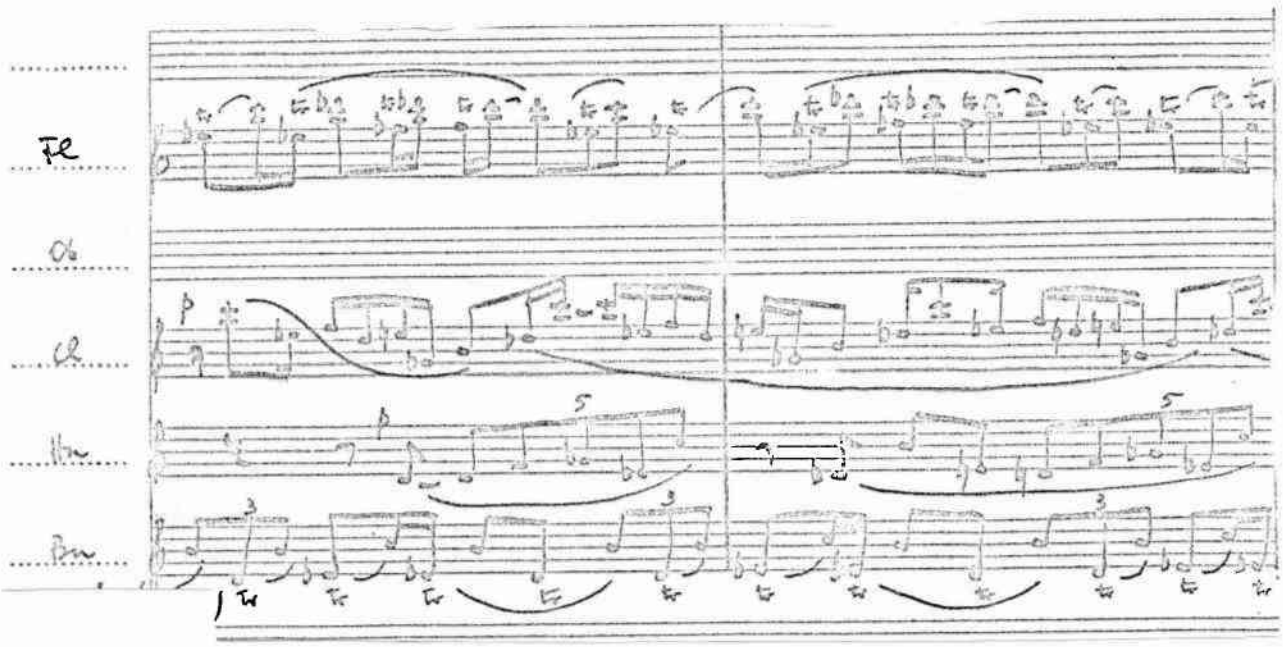
Ex. 16

and by relating the first and last songs through the sharing of motivic **material:**

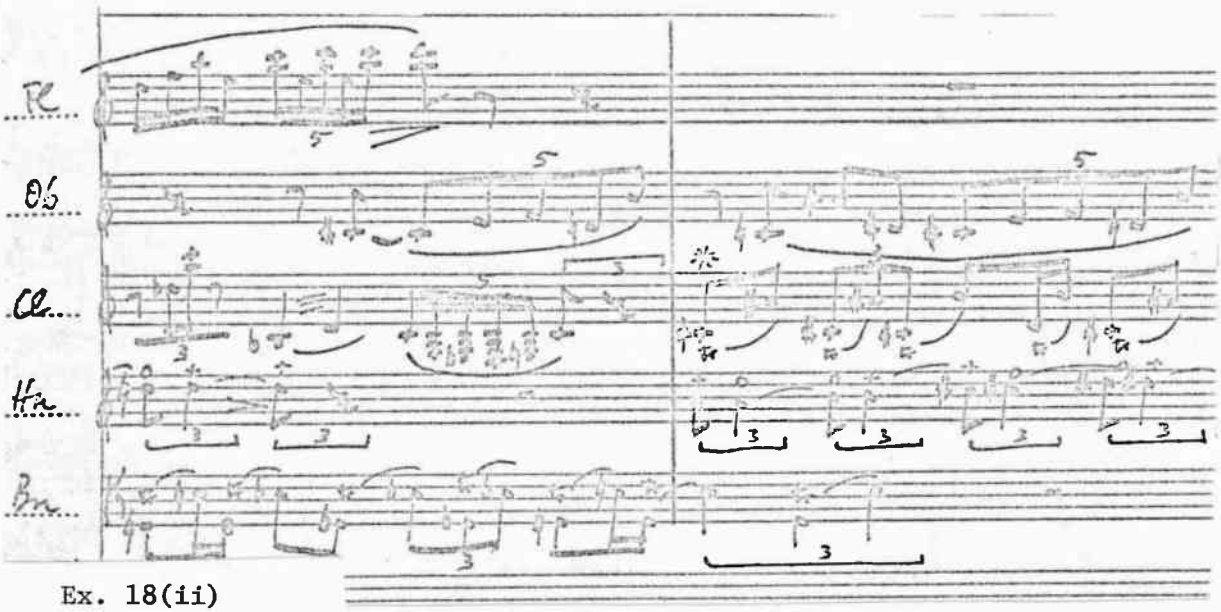


Ex. 17

Also, the formal structure of the last song is almost identical to that of the first song and both can be divided into three sections. In the first section, all the parts move quite independently of one another. Then, in the second section, they gradually become more intertwined until they finally culminate in an extended multiple ostinato in the third section which, in both movements, are closely related to each other.



Ex. 18(i)



Ex. 18(ii)

Although *Child in Nature* and *Carmina* are not usually included amongst Butterley's more well-known works, they represent two different creative phases in his period of composition. *Child in Nature* is typical of the earlier compositions in which he was continually searching for a suitable individual, whereas *Carmina* is characteristic of the type of music he has written following the overseas trip in 1961--a combination of old and new.

CHAPTER FIVE

George Dreyfus (1928 -)

George Dreyfus was born in Wuppertal, Germany, in 1928 and migrated with his family to Australia in 1939 in order to escape the Nazi persecution of the Jews. As a young child, he learnt piano, progressing to clarinet which he learnt privately from Ernest Pettifer at the Melbourne University Conservatorium of Music. In his final year at school he decided to change instruments again, this time to bassoon as there was a vacancy in the Junior Symphony Orchestra. Unfortunately, Dreyfus failed his exams that same year.

Shocked and humiliated by these failures, he applied himself to his bassoon studies, and was rewarded in 1947 by being engaged as the second bassoonist with the Victorian Symphony Orchestra. In 1954, he took leave of absence and left for Vienna to study bassoon with the renowned teacher, Professor Karl Oehlberger.

Dreyfus returned to Australia in 1956, and joined the Perth Symphony Orchestra. Then, in 1958, he took up his former position with the Victorian Symphony Orchestra in Melbourne. During this time, a number of works were composed: the Trio for flute, clarinet and bassoon (1956), which was first performed in Perth in 1956; the *Galgenlieder* (1957) for baritone, flute, clarinet, violin and bassoon; *Songs Comic and Curious* (1959) for baritone and wind quintet, which won the Louis Lavater Prize in 1960; and the *Wilhelm Busch Lieder* (1959) for high voice and woodwind trio.

Dreyfus regards 1961 as the turning point in his composing career. Through records, scores, books and journals, he acquainted himself with the works of the Borlez-Stockhausen generation of composers in Europe. His response to these sources of stimuli became apparent in two serial works: *Music in the Air* (1961), a setting of a poem by Ronald McCuaige,[1] and *From Within Looking Out* (1962).

In 1963, Dreyfus began his career in film music, supplying scores for two television films: *The Adventures of Sebastian the Fox* and *The Painters*, extracting from the latter *The Seasons* (1963) for flute, viola, vibraphone and percussion. Dreyfus has since acquired a sound reputation as a composer of incidental music for films and television with such works as the above-mentioned *Sebastian the Fox, Treasures of the National Gallery* (Melbourne), and, more recently, *Rush* and *Marion*.

After a successful year of writing film music and commercial jingles, Dreyfus decided to leave the security of his position with the A.B.C. and devote himself fully to composition. From 1965-66, he composed his first opera *Garni Sands* and, while working on this, produced the *Wind Quintet* (1965), first performed by the Adelaide Wind Quintet at the 1966 Adelaide Festival of the Arts.

In 1966, Dreyfus was awarded a UNESCO Fellowship which enabled him to visit Europe for six months, attending Stockhausen's course for New Music. He reacted strongly to the contemporary idiom and musical tech-

[1]Roger Covell, *Australia's Music: Themes of a New Society* (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1967), p.192.

niques he found there and, as a result, turned his back on his 1960-1966 compositions.

On his return in 1967, Dreyfus took up a Creative Arts Fellowship at the Australian National University, Canberra, and it was during this time that two works reflecting his changed attitudes were written: *Music for Music Camp*, written for performance at music camps around Australia, and the eclectic Symphony No. 1.[2]

Other orchestral works include *Jingles* (1968) ... *and More Jingles* (1972), both light-hearted and sophisticated works, inspired by Dreyfus's work in the commercial radio world of advertising. In recent years, Dreyfus has composed many works for young people demonstrating an ability to write striking music for such performers. They include *Reflections in a Glass-house: An Image of Captain James Cook* (1969);[3] *The Takeover* (1969), a school opera in one act; and *Song of the Maypole* (1968), a cantata for children's choruses. Another highly successful work is the Sextet for didjeridoo and wind instruments (1971), "the most successful synthesis of Aboriginal and Western music in an Australian composition so far ...".[4]

Dreyfus is virtually a self-taught composer. He received no real formal music education other than his lessons in piano, clarinet and bassoon. Almost all his compositional experience was gleaned from the

[2]Elaine Dobson, "George Dreyfus," *Australian Composition in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Frank Callaway and David Tunley (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1978), p.128.

[3]*Ibid.*, p.130.

[4]*Ibid.*, p.132.

close study of available scores along with the performance of chamber music as a student and playing in various orchestras.[5]

Vocal music occupies a prominent position in relation to his total output, and the composer himself regards the early vocal works as representative. *Galgenleiden (Gallows Songs)* (1957), first performed at the 1960 Adelaide Festival of the Arts, are settings of the ironical and whimsical poems of the Austrian writer, Christian Morgenstern. The Brittenish song cycle *Wilhelm Busch Leider* followed in 1959. Both works are incisive and high-spirited, as are most of his early works.[6] The same can be said of *Songs Comic and Curious* which appeared also in 1959.

Perhaps the work which has done most to establish Dreyfus's reputation as a serious composer is *From Within Looking Out*, written in 1962 and selected as Australia's musical entry for the 1965 Italia Prize. It and *Music in the Air* were both written as an assimilation of the twelve-tone technique. However, *From Within Looking Out* is, according to Dreyfus, the antithesis of *Music in the Air*:

> It [*From Within Looking Out*] was an inward act, just as the music is an inward piece. Unlike the hysterical mood of *Music in the Air*, the work is calm, sustained, almost introverted.[7]

The text is a free translation of an Ammanese Street Song and the simplicity of the text has allowed the composer to string the words out.

[5]Andrew D. McCredie, *Musical Composition in Australia: The Composers and Their Work* (Canberra: Government Printing Office, 1969), p.6.

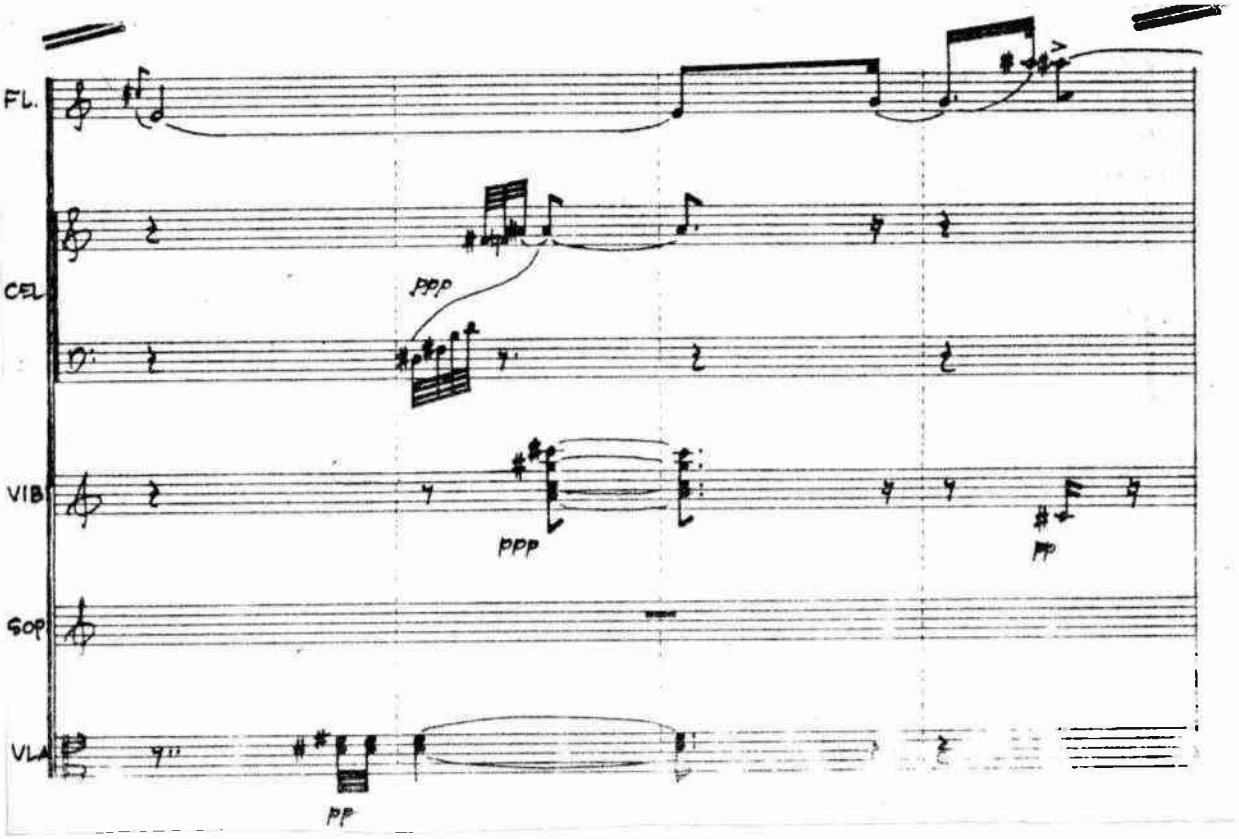
[6]Covell, pp. 191-92.

[7]McCredie, p.6.

This has, in turn, enabled the voice to be treated as a fifth part of the instrumental ensemble which includes the flute, viola, celeste and vibraphone. Small groupings of words in the text, with their association of ideas, dictate both the mood and structure of each of the five movements.

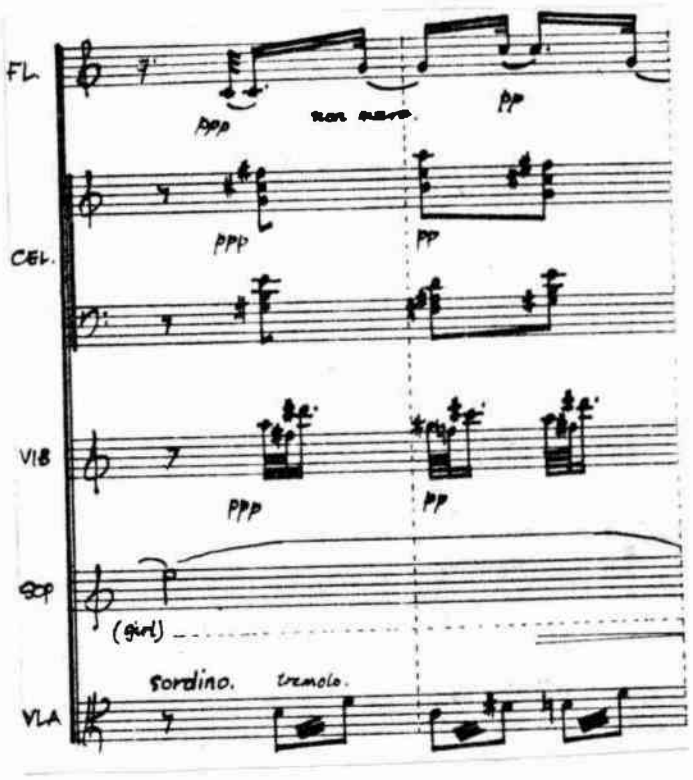
The first movement, for instruments only, acts as an introduction to the work, foreshadowing the serenity and tranquility which pervades the entire work, as well as the use of twelve-tone technique in the second movement and the "cantus firmus" idea of the last movement. It may be divided into two parts: the first led by the long, tenuous line of the flute contrasted by periods of delicately interwoven material from the other instruments (see Example 1); the second led by the viola, closely following the rhythm and shape of the flute line. This is then followed by a passage of thickly textured writing which culminates in "a moment of radiant brightness"[8] when all the instruments move up and down the scale of C major. The "brightness" suddenly fades as the instruments in turn cluster around b above middle c and the movement ends with the viola playing a melody reminiscent of the opening melodic line.

[8] *Ibid.*, p.7.



Ex. 1

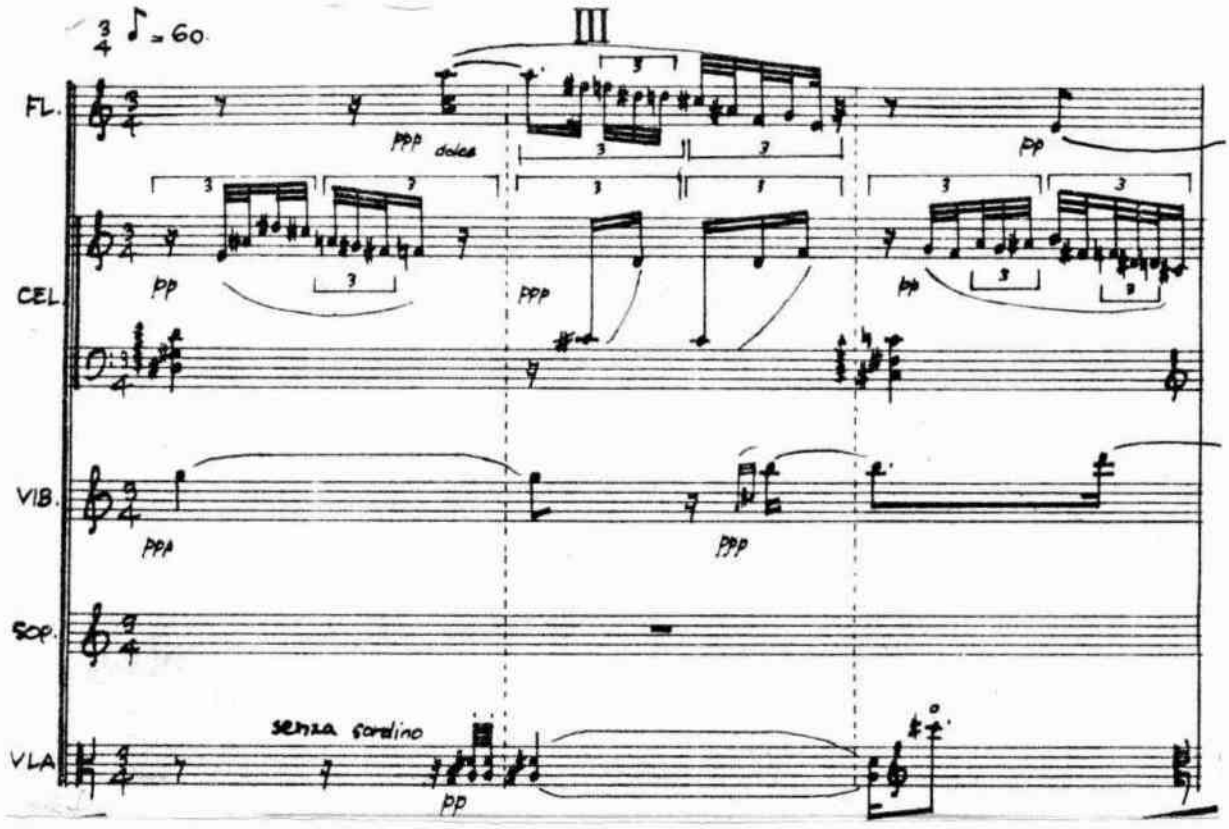
The text of the second movement is as follows: "I live all alone; I am a young girl. I write long letters and do not know anyone to send them to". It begins with the soprano part which, together with the flute, weaves a highly filigreed dialogue. A twelve-note theme forms the basis of the vocal part from which the rest of the movement is derived. Flute and voice, working in dialogue, lead directly into the strict arch-design of the movement. The first two bars contain all twelve notes of the theme, sounding together as a chord:



Ex. 2

Then, the material gradually disintegrates into a horizontal line, the number of simultaneously sounding voice parts decreasing thus: first four voices sounding together, each with a three-note melody; then, three voices sounding together, each with four notes; then two with six notes, then, finally, the original line of twelve notes emerges shared by the various instruments. From this point, the procedure is reversed, the vertical lines return, the movement concluding in the original chord of twelve notes. The second half of the arch forms a complete retrograde of the first, but compressed into half the original duration.

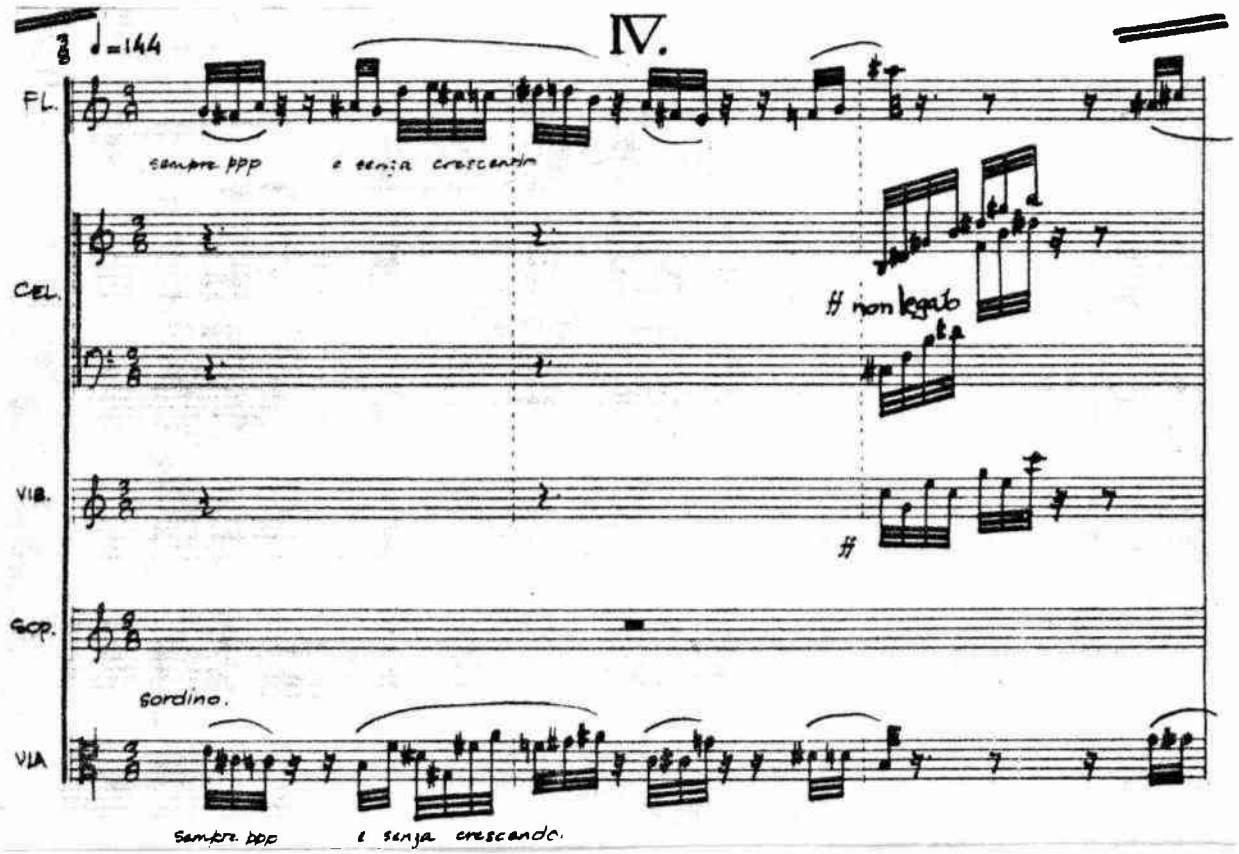
The third movement is an expression of tenderness, rhapsodic in style, using the words: "Most tender things speak to my heart". It is characterized by continuous murmuring and highly filigreed rhapsodic passages between the instruments:



Ex. 3

Throughout, the dynamic level is consistently low--few phrases are marked above "piano" (p) and the viola is muted throughout.

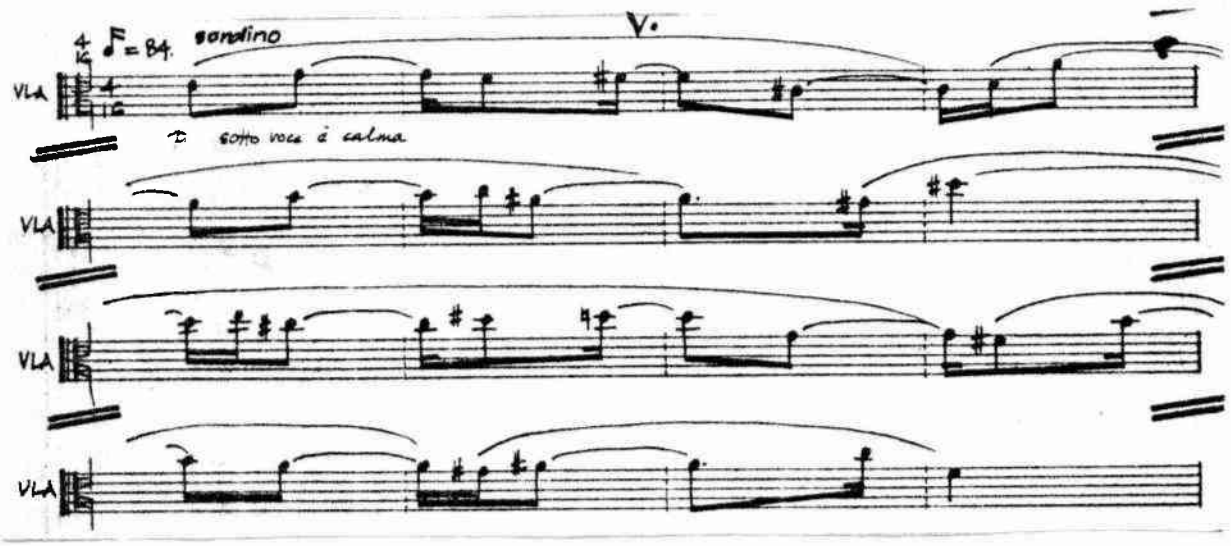
A similar mood of tenderness is conveyed in the fourth movement, the music a reflection on the words which are imagined in the text: "I can only say them to the bamboos in the garden". The imagery of "tender things" eddying around the jutting lines of bamboo canes is suggested by each instrument moving in rhythmic unison with its partner: the flute and viola; the vibraphone and celeste. Each pair play together in whispering demisemiquavers, spinning a fine web of dissonances over the whole piece, the celeste and vibraphone spasmodically sounding fortissimo tritonal arpeggios:



Ex. 4

Structural detail returns in the final movement which is dominated by the image and significance of shadows: "Waiting on my feet; all day I watch the shadows of people that pass".[9] The long, four-bar melody on the muted viola at the beginning of the movement acts as a "cantus firmus". Pitchwise, the second half of this melody is an inversion of the first half, and the rhythm varies little here or in subsequent repetitions:

[9]McCredie, p.6.



Ex. 5

The soprano's entrance is in strict canon with the viola, its line treated as a vocalise. During the third repeat of the "cantus firmus", a series of vibraphone interpolations occur (thematically related to the "cantus firmus") which are in turn repeated by either the flute or celeste, gradually breaking up the "cantus firmus" line. Instead of continuing the "cantus firmus" line, the viola joins with the other instruments. The fragments (representing shadows) gradually become shorter in preparation for the climax when the soprano speaks, during which, all the instruments play a seven-second random sequence of shortened fragments. Juxtaposition of a number of phrases brings the movement to a close "with an increasingly subdued and fading elongation of sound, suggesting the mystery and arrested time of twilight".[10]

Dreyfus has played a vital role in the contemporary music scene in Australia: he formed the New Music Ensemble in 1961, which performed

[10]McCredie, p.7.

works of many local composers; and in 1965, the Melbourne branch of the I.S.C.M. was formed with Dreyfus as a foundation committee member. His music also holds a prominent position in the music of Australia and this is indicated by the various awards and commissions which he has received.[11]

[11] Dobson, p.133.