Morton Feldman: The Johannesburg Masterclasses, July 1983
Session 8: Works by Graham Newcater

Transcribed by Dirk de Klerk

Voices heard: Morton Feldman (MF)
Barry Jordan (BJ)
Dirk de Klerk (DdK)
David Kosviner (DK)
Peter Klatzow (PK)
Jacques de Vos Malan (JdVM)
Graham Newcater (GN)
Roelof Temmingh (RT)
Unidentified Voices (UV)

MF: I realise, waiting for Jacques and Peter, [...] that hardly ever did I direct the seminars into discussions about composition *per se*. That I seem to be getting involved with instrumentation and in orchestration and things like that. [...]

And I think a lot of it has to do with, which came first, the chicken or the egg, kind of thing. In other words, say, the idiomatic writing of Scarlatti - giving way to ideas to keep it going - or do you have ideas and then you kind of find the instruments to keep it going. Which came first, the chicken or the egg?

PK: The soufflé. [Laughter]

MF: This country makes me see everything that happens to me symbolically, I don't know why. *No* other country, no other country. I mean, for example, with breakfast. The Bishop [who Feldman was staying with during his visit] has a totally black dog. And he was sitting there looking up at me. And I gave him a biscuit. And he swallowed and he walked away. And I saw it as the whole political situation in this country... The same thing last night, when we had dinner and we ordered a chocolate soufflé. And it came, and there was no chocolate. There was absolutely no chocolate. And the owner said, “Well, this is a chocolate soufflé.” And we sent it back. We refused to eat and pay for it.

PK: We've managed to eliminate everything dark. The chocolate was sent back to the homelands. [Laughter]

[A recording of a symphony by Graham Newcater is played]

MF: Well, I'll put it this way, it's just a perfect example how much young composers really have to begin to really have a personal or historical selection of what they identify with. That is what I said earlier about believing in the material, you see.

For example, let me just point all the things that I don't particularly identify with, and yet it makes the piece. For example, *not* using the, say, twelve tones. Not using it structurally.

Let me begin with a piece of Varèse’s. I'm not known for my academic concerns, but for some particular reason, I was discussing Varèse in my classroom. And we got to his last piece, *Déserts*. Which I wasn't discussing that afternoon, but I knew that the next week I was going to get to *Déserts*. And I start to think about *Déserts* without looking at the music. I remember the work quite well. And what was characteristic about *Déserts,* unlike any other piece, was a very interesting observation I made: there were no tunes in it. Consequently, I went into the score. Where are the tunes? [Sings the tune of *Send in the Clowns?*] Where are the tunes? And I found that it was a twelve-tone work.

Now I knew that the electronic [interpolations] were really written separately. They were going to go into an experimental film by a friend of his on deserts, on the South West deserts. And she asked him to write the music. [...]

Actually, after the big performance of that with Bernstein, I went backstage to say hello to both Varèse and Bernstein. And there was Bernstein on the couch telling Varèse that he was putting them in at the wrong places! [Laughs] Poor Varèse!

OK, but that's not the point. The point is that it is essentially twelve-tone, and how he's using it I don't know. It's not used structurally *at all*, I don't know why he had to use it. One time he used the same row, but every time the note came back it was in another register. And I completely analysed the piece. And another thing that was interesting was the fact that this was the largest piece he's ever wrote, essentially. Maybe, I don't know, just *Intégrales*, maybe…but I think this is larger.

And I don't know *how* he was using it, because it had no function in terms of any structural element of the piece. What he did was characteristic of other styles in which he didn't use the row. He started off - if you know the opening, for example, of the *Déserts* - he just started off fluctuating between one or two pitches, three pitches, then he'll add another, then he'll add another. And, usually, the tenth and the eleventh and the twelfth pitches was part of the pyramid to the point of arrival. So every time he used the row the music changes, which is essentially what happens here. [...] And I feel that as in Varèse's *Déserts* which you really can't call a twelve- note piece… You can't call a twelve-note piece something where you really don't know what the hell the function of the twelve notes were. Except to get through a block of time. And I find this [Graham Newcater's piece] somewhat similar as *Déserts* and its construction.

I feel what happens is, because of the use of the row in that way, the work has a tendency to both get involved with fixed registration, and creates a certain type of *exulté* characteristic of his music. And all I really want to point out is that, if Graham didn't work this way, the work wouldn't have that kind of personality. So this is not a criticism. I'm not using an analysis to criticise the piece.

Oh, for example another thing which I never use, really, and which I'm not that sympathetic to, works beautifully here. And that's the whole idea of family blocks. Woodwinds, here. It adds to the *exulté*. And probably wouldn't have done if he didn't use the notes in that way. In other words, you were pushed into orchestration, into colour as an alternative to other structural considerations here.

Another thing that is remote to me, is the dramatic use of percussion. The timpani. Even the vibes has a more dramatic aspect, in my ears, than colouristically. It's a beautiful colour, especially at the beginning of the piece.

And maybe, because you keep it going for a certain time, where it becomes so primary, it develops an attitude or an aspect of *subject*. And you're trying to find out what is the subject here. And it develops a kind of dramatic thing, like in the timpani. And then the timpani and the coda at the end. And also in that *exulté* world, a world in a sense distant relatives of Scriabin… *Mahler*.

You see, the *family* of this exalted world is another thing. It's, "Don't look for analogies on the score itself, but look for analogies in the whole *family*, or *tradition*." We all have a *tradition*, you see. So look for it in the family of this tradition rather than just close yourself up. The piece is not eclectic in that sense but just relates itself to a tradition. And I feel that there's an aspect here that reminds me very much, I don't know how much you're familiar with the music of Ruggles, a piece like *Men and Mountains*?

GN: That's the only piece I've heard recently.

MF: Well, that's also part of this *transcendental, visionary* tradition of the piece. So all the things that I don't relate to are what makes the piece successful, you see.

What's really remarkable, and I don't know how composers do it, is how they take a group of instruments and you feel a kind of *symbolic*… if not *actual presence*. In this sense, I would say transcendental, exalted.

And what I like about it, instead of being loosely knit piece in terms of its form, it's where the first movement is a very beautiful balanced ABA. Which I don't think could be done in instrumental music, but could be done in orchestral music, to balance out an ABA like that. I love the entrance, two after 80.

GN: Oh, the bass reeds?

MF: Yes. They're very, very beautiful.

I think there are a lot of beautiful moves in this piece. Moving to the piccolo, a very beautiful move.

[...] I remember a very knowledgeable young lady who knew a lot of my music. After hearing a new piece, I asked her, "What do you think of it?" She was a little reluctant to tell me because she thought she was going to get her teeth kicked in! And she said, "You've got to stop using the bass drum." I said, "What's the matter?" She said, "You're using it in too many scores." I said, "Well what's wrong with it?" and she said, "It's too dramatic."

I never thought of it as dramatic. I could never use it again after she said that. I threw it out because I then heard the drama. And I think this is a very difficult thing, the inherent symbolic aspect of certain

instruments. [...] Very difficult for me to use chimes again. I think *Flute and Orchestra* was the last time I used chimes, but then I used three sets. And chords.

DK: Can I ask you something? Just in relation, I was thinking about that as well. The way you used, in *Flute and Orchestra,* the blocks of percussion: *Three* glockenspiels, *three* chimes, *three* timpani. And we hear Graham with that also. The chimes is not an isolated note. It's chords, it's clusters, etcetera. I mean, obviously, a different dynamic level, and maybe fulfilling different functions in the music, but nevertheless the whole way of using chords on the chimes, not just isolated notes.

MF: Yes, well, there's a beautiful tradition. America seems to have it, too, also involved with story telling in its orchestration. There's a wonderful piece, a marvellous piece by Ives called *From the Steeples and the Mountains.* I got a performance of it with the New York Philharmonic, it was terrific.

The only thing is, Ives used chimes which were so low that we couldn't find them in New York, or anything. So what David Tutor did, was to simulate, on some kind of preparation of piano that particular mood, like the chimes. It's just flanked by, maybe, two brass and then the chimes. And you really get the whole *feeling* of the atmosphere, where the chimes are kind of abstraction, kind of a hallucinated abstraction of church chimes and things like that, as the partials reach us. Or maybe in a bell loft, where you hear it, and you don't hear *nothing* because of the chimey element.

I think it's a wonderful piece [Graham's symphony]. And I love the tightness of the forms, I think it helps it. *Everything* I don't like, I think, makes the piece. Wonderful! I think it's a very beautiful piece it has a marvellous atmosphere, wonderful atmosphere.

What I would like to ask you, Graham, is what do you feel that the essential ABA structure of the piece does to the piece? In other words, why did you feel that you were opting for that particular concept?

GN: I think that it's to make it as simple as possible, because I don't believe that one should have structures that are so impossible to follow that the listener doesn't quite know when the piece is ended, or why it's ended, or where was the high point, or was there a high point? And that's why… the canons being so complicated, and twelve-part canons, and all this. If I'm going to make this, next time inverted and then reverted and this upside down and so on that's why I kept it as simple as possible so that the listener can hear it just as an arch.

MF: And that's why the canons were so literal?

GN: Yes.

MF: And literally also following in sequence and time?

GN: In sequence, yes. Otherwise it becomes to the listener, general listener, something that you cannot follow. It's just a lot of ill-organised noise, as it were.

MF: You know, Ives, with all his innovations, was a very literary composer. And he's done fantastic instrumental images, only because of the literary. I don't think he's ever written a totally abstract piece in his whole career, Ives. Say, for example, *The Unanswered Question*, which I'm sure you all know. And if you don't you shall hear it tomorrow. In that, you have this gorgeous trumpet thing. And that goes into other musics with the marvellous string writing, back and forth, to some degree. But it takes on a kind of programmatic aspect. You feel that it's programmatic even if you don't know the programme.

PK: Especially there, because the trumpet is offstage, in a different room.

MF: Oh yes, the trumpet is offstage.

OK. What I wanted to ask is [...] to what degree do we actually feel, in a hierarchical sense, that some instruments have more *meaning* than others? For example, your use of the cello as an emotional conveyer belt. That's what it is! Meaning is on the rosin! [Laughs]

I know when I wrote my first and last organ piece, everybody thought, because I was writing for an organ, I had some kind of programmatic element. That I couldn't really write for the organ unless there's an abstract colour that I had to demonstrate something.

But how do we feel about that? Rather than instruments having a kind of *indigenous* element to make the style successful. I mean, for example, like in the early twentieth century, I don't think they could do anything without a bass clarinet coming in, [Laughs] and things like that. And, certainly, the whole growth of certain type of instruments that Boulez would use - or earlier Berio - would be instruments that could move in that kind of polyphonic way. And I always wondered if it was really *polyphony*. But again, which came first, the chicken or the egg? That a certain use of polyphony only for the *instrumental* fluidity and virtuosity. Like in the [Berg] *Chamber Concerto*, you know, which would be the granddaddy of that

particular piece, or that particular *attitude*. That virtuosity. Bringing the virtuosity. How are you going to bring the virtuosity? You can't have harmony holding back that bass clarinet all the time, you know.

Again, which came first, the instruments or other tenets in the composition? [...] What do you feel about instruments having symbolic content?

GN: I don't believe they do. It depends on the music. It's the music that creates the style or the cliché of the period.

MF: Yes, but then we have to orchestrate that music, and we have to orchestrate it with something that maybe symbolises, maybe, the *formality* of the piece itself without its emotional content. That's also a kind of symbolism, I think. But I'd like to ask this young gentleman, what he thinks?

DdK: I think seeing instruments in terms of what they used to represent is very destructive for the music, because then you cannot really see them in terms of the sound they produce on their own. I mean for instance like a drum which is a rumble, which are used in movies when there's a war or when Red Indians come trotting along. It's destructive… As well as the trumpet reminding people of the army and things like that. It's destructive for the sound of the piece, for the appreciation of the instrument *as it is*, that's what I think.

[...]

JdVM: I think we have to distinguish between uses of instruments and instruments themselves. There are ways of taking instruments that are very characteristic of certain things, that have certain connotations in *reducing* that as far as possible. But there are other instruments where I think it becomes very difficult even to do that. And the guitar is one of them. You have to write *so* carefully for a guitar not to hear Spain in it somewhere. And, for example a bass drum. You can get away from the parade ground implications of the bass drum only by confining the way in which you use it to very careful areas. Castanets, another example. The organ.

MF: How about instruments used very personally in your own work, but, as we say in the old country, because it brings in historical references. For example, Bunny's [Bunita Marcus's] use of the tenor trombone which I think is terrific in the meleé of material. I'd never tell her but I'm thinking of a certain section in *Les Noces*.

RT: Yes, it's the same feeling at the end of Graham's symphony. The Mahler…

MF: The trombones… The Mahler.

JdVM: But also something in Bunita's piece, which presumably is deliberate, is the sliding scales on the flute, which is very Japanese.

MF: Well, then that was subliminal, that was subliminal.

Actually the sliding thing came in terms of Jasper Johns: "Do something and then do it another way." She has reinvented, in my ears, the major sixth, it was just another way of orchestrating a major sixth, you see.

But these things happen willy-nilly. We hear instruments, they have a kind of historical… I mean, how could anybody write a piece that's *pianissimo* any more? How can you write a piece with just brass that's not going to remind you of Varèse? And you know when it's all out - I mean a chamber piece with that marvellous sad dissection of a register when that horn and when he breaks it up and it just breaks your heart. How could you do it you see? All these things *do* evoke either historical connotations...

A very interesting use of instrumentation - back to Bunny - is again through Jasper Johns where, in some of his writings and jottings, he would say, "Only use material that's flexible." That's helped her instrumentation. Fantastic. She applied it into her own composition.

She's not embarrassed, she'll take up influences from anywhere. But it helps very much to actually scrutinise your instrumentation.

I don't allow a student - for the past two years - to pick their own instrumentation. We discuss the instrumentation they want to make for a piece. And I would say, "Well look, you really want this? It's going to stick out. What are you thinking of doing with this?" Or, that the instruments they use have no mileage, have no flexibility. Or define themselves immediately. That's another question, to what degree you want the instrumentation to take over. Just coming in and taking over the damn piece! And there are some instruments that define our ideas a little too quickly and a little too strongly.

PK: There's a point I think that what one might make here and that is that all the virtuoso - in the usual sense of that word – orchestration that we know, and all the great treatises on orchestration are really from Berlioz onwards. In other words, if we're looking at orchestration, we're using it combined with a sort

of high romantic atmosphere. So I think that to a certain extent it's very difficult to get away from a connotation of expressionism, romanticism and orchestration being the same thing. We learn our orchestration through romanticism.

MF: But also there's some remarks Wagner uses about his reluctance to give up the natural horn for the valve horn, which was around way before Wagner matured. To me, you know, it's like giving up silk stockings for nylon stockings or something. I just don't know the value of silk stockings as it helps to make a woman's leg look like a million bucks. That's what my mother told me. She could talk about those things. She's eighty-seven. She said nothing could ever take the place of silk stockings and what it did for a leg, especially with the seam. But that's remote! It's like going back to the open horn, or something. So a lot of those things, the nuances are just… the nuances are left forever. For example, unless you want to get away from certain type of breaks, why you might pick, say, an A clarinet instead of a B-flat clarinet because you take a look at your clarinet material, and you see that the notes seem to be going into breaks, and it annoys you to death. In fact, when I first got interested in the oboe, I asked this fabulous oboe player, "What shall I watch for?" And she said, "Just between B and C." Then I never heard no more from the oboe! And I even had to ask Bunita, for this clarinet quintet I'm writing, "What is some of the best notes?" Not that I'm going to use them, but I want to know them. And so she gave me half an hour practical - not a demonstration, but a conversation on them.

OK, so that's a thing when I don't have in my ears, like a Brahms would have in his ears, the distinction say between a certain colour of the A clarinet and the B-flat clarinet. I really don't have it. Not that I can't tell the difference between the both, but I don't have it as a kind of important factor. And so forth and so on.

But we are, again, programmed. One of the most difficult things in instruments is, when I use the alto flute in a high register. Conventionally you don't use the alto flute in a high register. But through the years I became quite friendly with the alto flute and I liked it up there. It helped the grittiness of the piece. That you're reaching for it with a little effort rather than just bending down and getting it pitched, and then putting it on the paper. Which I would have done with a normal flute. [...] And I think I'm right, I think that the regular flute up there would have softened the piece.

Well I don't know maybe that's the use, a kind of a symbolic use in that particular work, I don't know what terminology to use. I'd just rather use the term that it was an appropriate choice for the style of the piece.

PK: Yes, then also those double bass chords in *Flute and Orchestra*.

MF: [Slowly] Ah yeah. They knock me out! [Laughter] They're another example. Now, it wasn't the fact that as a High School kid I played the double bass. I don't think I ever played a harmonic on a double bass when I was at High School.

PK: Stravinsky is actually marvellous at using instruments in unusual ranges. For example in *Agon* there's a very beautiful little chorale sort of fragment for, I think it's four double basses, all playing harmonics. I'm trying to remember exactly which movement it is. And it's quite high, and it has a quite unearthly sort of sound. It couldn't be produced in any other way.

MF: I do, for example, like the quality of an E-flat clarinet rather than a regular clarinet in certain registers even though it would be comfortable for a clarinet to play. But my mind is going into another direction here. The use of instrumentation: Is it for *safe* registration, a *safe* performance?

PK: No, I don't think so.

MF: In other words, I wonder why a kind of characteristic instrumentation would be just where most music is. Like in the *middle*. In the orchestration seminar, my Korean student... Very charmingly, I ask her, "Where is that?" And she said, "In the high middle." Then I ask her again where something else was, and she said, "In the middle middle." [Laughs] And she was kind of right! [...] A lot of work would be with pieces where the orchestrator is orchestrating the middle. Remember I told you about this whole business, how many pennies you can get into a [glass filled with water]. And the *greatest* one for that, the guy who *really* could just superimpose and superimpose something in the middle, was Ives. He's fantastic at it, especially in his piano writing. It's just fantastic. It doesn't bother him, it doesn't bother him. And it really it makes for Ives! All the things that we wouldn't do... it's interesting. [...]

But instrumentally I want to suggest the piece that you to look at in terms of Ives... Maybe it's his reaction to the chorales of his environment, I don't know but in that gorgeous piece, perhaps one of the most beautiful pieces in the twentieth century... And that is the *Housatonic*, which is a marvellous, wonderful

river going down New England where he lives, a beautiful river. I mean you can't you can't… You know, you could make some jokes about the Danube being so dirty. But you can't make jokes about that river. And that's gorgeous, the *Housatonic* movement, in the *Three Places in New England.*

Look at that piece, listen to that piece, it is gorgeous. And it will help you hear better. And I wouldn't say there's such a thing as any kind of characteristic national bent for orchestration, because we had the extreme parameters between Ives and Copland, which is so Aryan, you see.

Also the whole use of families. That's a fantastic piece in terms of the use of families. But the families are very peculiar in terms of how they're put together. We have a tendency for clarity. We feel that orchestration should be involved with a great degree of clarity. And if you ever wrote film music you'll certainly learn that overnight.

One of the most interesting things that really didn't help my orchestration, but it taught me one thing - and I'll get to it - is that I wrote [music for] some documentary. And it had to be put on to a 16mm [film], and I lost everything. I lost everything! And they knew it, even though it was my music, they knew it. I lost everything. I was very lucky that I got another job after that.

So the whole idea of when I did this commercial work I scored *specifically* - especially on a low budget - for those instruments where I wouldn't lose information [when transferred to the film]. And this is very interesting. I was told something similar about magazine colour, magazine illustrations. We had something that just died after a hundred years: the *Saturday Evening Post*. And they would have a colour thing and in order to get the colours he wanted [the illustrator] would have to use other colours for it to come out that way. So his original thing would be a garish purple, to come out to be a just a nice royal blue. I'm not accurate about this, but you could take it on from there. And it gave me a very interesting idea. And the whole idea was, is there a possibility that the whole thing might exist in orchestration well? That I might have to do one thing for it to sound like something else.

And I think we all do this in some ways, even unconsciously. Like Mahler introduced - and which Berg did fantastically in his *Altenberg Lieder* - the whole transformation, or transition from noise into pitch, which is an aspect of the orchestration in that particular piece. They were all involved with that and they got it from Mahler.

So where are we? We were talking about orchestration. I look at what kind of orchestration would Wagner use if he's in *Parsifal*, opting for the transparent strings as a kind of story telling. So if the story telling of the story doesn't get you, the story telling of the compositional idea gets you! [...]

I would suggest, if you're interested in songs and things like that, why then do you have to opt just for piano and voice? Because you're getting into a mess that even big professionals can't get out of. Or go a more modest way. There's nothing like a nice voice, say, against the flute. The flute just lacing. Then you'll be able to get ideas of just keeping up the continuity of the flute. There's something about that. You wouldn't have the flute drop dead, because if the flute drops dead, as a composer, *you* drop dead. So you're going to keep going. You'll get ideas for it. The other way with the piano, you're thinking of harmony, you're thinking of this, you're thinking of that. I feel that a lot of music that I've seen by the young people here is almost an *exaggeration* of music: an exaggeration of melody and accompaniment, an exaggeration of communication, an exaggeration of a programmatic element.

DK: Can I just say something, to get back to [Graham's symphony]. I also felt this kind of thing with Ruggles. It's almost like a monumental, or monolithic, kind of construction. Which I think is helped by using families of instruments in blocks. [...]

PK: There is a further point of course that, since the material is divided up in this piece into blocks very clearly, there are certain functions that only certain families of instruments can do. For example, these long string glissandi. You *can't* do that on the other instruments. And the very sharp punctuations belong to the tenor drum, or the side drum, or whatever it's going to be.

MF: I like the glissandi. Unlike… Jeanne's not here, and I don't want to criticise Ligeti's glissandis. I prefer your glissandis, because I feel that it's very sensitive the amount of time it really could take to get from the bottom to the top. In other words, I feel that's what the instrument could do just at that right tempo. And rather than establishing a certain type of overall tempo, like [Ligeti] does, in the way it moves, and they become glissandis, I didn't have the feeling here, and I like that. [...] The pacing of the glissandis are quite elegant.

PK: Yes, I think probably very much in this piece, the orchestration is the material and vice versa. Going to write this music I would have orchestrated it for want of a better term in exactly the same way, have conceived of it in terms of block family relations.

MF: [...] If you have too much *composition* then you're not going to get to this other thing [orchestration]. It's very difficult. What we're really getting at, is, "Where do you find the balance [between] the chicken and the egg… the chicken and the egg?' The best way to do that is to kill a chicken, and coat it with an egg, and fry it. [Laughter]

No, but seriously, I once had a student, I said, "I want you to take five or six big names and bring back all the things they said about orchestration." She didn't have too much experience, she'd just entered into the university and she thought she was just going to go to the books and find things that composers... I'm talking about contemporary composers, I'm talking about Stravinsky, I'm talking about orchestration in their own music. There's very little. Then I said to another student, "Go back all the writers on music in the twentieth century and make extracts of any discussion they would have about orchestration as important to a piece." Came back with very little. Didn't get some of them, say, the book by a very nice man who died a few years ago, [Hans] Redlich, the biographer of Berg, and studied with Berg. Redlich is the only one in his books that would talk about the primary colours of Mahler, little things like that. But there's very, very little written in contemporary literature or annotated from composers itself on orchestration. [...]

But orchestration is the last frontier. Nobody can help you with it, that's what I mean by the last frontier! [Laughs] It's as if in America at a certain point the trains stopped, and from there you had to go on by covered wagon to the West. And if starvation didn't get you, then the Indians did. It's the last frontier.

Another thing that no teacher could really help you with, and very, very difficult, is to tell you - remember my Alexei Haieff story about Stravinsky saying it was a trumpet concerto not a violin concerto - the right kind of instruments to use. Very, very difficult to give someone *else*… It's like saying you look good in a white shirt and yellow sports jacket. I mean you can't. You could *counsel,* you could say what I say, "Well you're not going to get too much mileage here." Or, "That that doesn't have enough flexibility."

Or how about instruments with too much flexibility? Like the kind of diarrhoea. [Laughter] Really, instrumental diarrhoea brought on with that kind of Berio notation adding to it, you know. *Prrrrr*! Oi, I have to go! [Laughter] Kind of instrumental Exlax [brand name of a laxative] isn't it? As a percussionist you know better than all of us. I think that's a disaster in notation. But I love the way to see, you know, and how it gets faster with that *growth*, you know. That gestural school in contemporary music I think is just loathsome, *loathsome*.

PK: Which one exactly?

MF: Gestural.

PK: *Who* are you thinking of, for example?

MF: Imitation Boulez and Berio. The imitator Boulez has a little restraint at holding back the rhythm. The imitator gets a little nervous and, *prrrrt*! He's in a hurry to get to that point.

[Gap in recording]

MF: I want to insult him [Peter Maxwell Davies] terribly. However, as certain scores of his visually come to mind, I think he writes beautifully for instruments in terms of the rhythm and the pacing. However, I feel that, for some particular reason - maybe my psychoanalysis of Richard Strauss, trying to drown his wife - he uses the piano many times to make a wash over his orchestration. But individually, I find that his instrumentation is beautifully paced and very elegant rhythm. And very idiomatic for the instrument. Each instrument has it's own rhythmic world, and very idiomatic. I don't like what comes out, but it's beautifully written.

PK: But I was thinking that in the small stage works that it certainly is a very gestural world. Right down to the fibre of the music.

MF: Yes, but it's done, it's done very, very well and with some *control*. Maybe what I'm really talking against is that kind of gestural writing that is to some degree out of control, instrumentally. They are like toss-offs, tossed-off you see. And they're usually… you can see it in scores. You could always see it. It's as if there is music, and then there are these toss-offs. And then they go back to music again. Then they toss something else off, you can see it in the notation. He doesn't do that. In fact if it is gestural, it still part of the formal aspect of the piece, you see.

[...]

Let's talk about instruments that we feel that are not successful. You notice how instruments in a sense really go across the racial line, that is, the style line? You know it really goes right across. It's like money. Everybody uses money, regardless of what you look like, and that's what instruments are. I think instruments are our money. [...]

You know the whole thing about the Japanese stealing those computer chips? That was what they wanted to steal, they didn't want to steal what a game was about. And to me the computer chip is the right instrumental combination.

Let's say that what was stolen in contemporary orchestration for the past forty years was the orchestration of *Pierrot Lunaire*. In other words, I think that the instrumental ideas in the work are much more ripped off, and determine the colour of an age, the climate of an age, instrumentally, rather than the compositional ideas themselves.

PK: Stockhausen, I think, put this idea when he said that he would really like to see a provision for copyrighting of a particular group of instruments.

MF: Not bad.

PK: He felt that that should be like, just as important as the tune, or whatever.

MF: I think if you could do that, think of it, if Haydn copyrighted the string quartet. Wouldn't that be marvellous?

PK: We'd have a lot of troubles. We'd be writing pieces for eight tubas and piccolo. [Laughter]

DK: Weren't you once complaining writing a piece for some bizarre combination like three clarinets and three xylophones or something?

PK: Three clarinets, two xylophones and piano - must have sounded ghastly!

MF: I wonder if that young guy recorded his piece for four recorders? I mean, copyrighted it? I'm only being facetious. That would be a marvellous idea. That would be. Imagine, amid all the Watergate scandals?

UV: I copyright the piano solo!

RT: Aren't contemporary composers - or a lot of them - too percussion minded?

PK: That's also the last frontier.

BJ: If you can't think of anything else to do then you put in a pretty percussion piece.

UV: But I think that very little of the percussion writing we hear in contemporary music is really functional.

MF: I became an instant authority on this because of an excerpt shown in an American percussion magazine. I did a piece years ago that was novel in percussion music. It was called *The King of Denmark* and what it just said - I didn't like percussion, so I said, "Use your fingers!" That's like my grandmother, with "No ladies!" No percussion. How am I going to write a percussion piece that's not a percussion piece? Many times I take that attitude. How am I going to write an organ piece that's not an organ piece? What was interesting in my interview about this percussion piece, I pointed out that all these idiomatic percussion pieces written for the kind of Strasbourg sound - which is terrible - the important landmark pieces were not written for people that were percussion specialists. They were like freak pieces, one of a kind pieces, and just by chance pieces, written for the percussion and became added to the percussion literature.

There's a marvellous piece you should do here, it's wonderful. Why can't I remember his name? It's just six little pieces. He was kind of very interested in jazz, and he wrote them in the 30's. I'll think of his name before I go. They're recorded. They're wonderful pieces. They'll be a big success, they're marvellous. He dropped out somewhere. I don't know - I'll try and remember him.

PK: Was he American?

MF: American... American.

[...]

Yeah, but a lot of the percussion sounds as we know were done accidentally - like John Cage's, they had no money and they had to augment a piano *L'Histoire du Soldat*: [Stravinsky] was broke and he had to go on tour with a piece with Ansermet, and he used flexible instruments in terms of taking care of everything. [...]

PK: It's very interesting actually because we did a production of *L'Histoire du Soldat* and I think it must be done, and look as though it's done, economically. I think that otherwise the piece is spoilt. If you have a very glamorous production of *L'Histoire*, which is done from time to time, it looks all wrong.

MF: Never use a pantomime. It's so corny it kills the piece. You do it with narrators?

PK: Yes, and actors.

MF: No,no. No actors, that's corny.

PK: But that's the piece.

MF: No. We don't do it any more.

PK: That's like doing only stage performances of *Aida*.

MF: No, no actors! Do it without actors. This is what you do, this is the way it's done now. There's a tradition now in the States of how to put on *L'Histoire*. You do it on the opening evening to raise money in a new music society. And what you do then is that you have, like, the head of the SABC play the devil. I did it with John Cage as the devil and was he terrific! Elliot Carter, who has a dumb face, played the soldier. Aaron Copland played the narrator. So what you do is, use the cast of characters.

We did it another time where we used the richest man in town as the narrator, because he had no capabilities to do anything.

PK: Did you have to pay him? [Laughter]

MF: But it's a lot of fun now to treat it as a kind of fund raising situation. Fun and fund raising situation. It's a marvellous piece. I'm nuts about it.

PK: I don't understand how it works, but it does work. It's a very, very strange combination. It holds together like a bomb.

MF: Well, he had a think about what's flexible and he came up with that.

JdVM: What you said about instrumental ensembles is so true, that if anybody anywhere is putting together a new instrumental ensemble, I mean there's a standard line-up of seven instruments that you have to have to play three-quarters of the repertoire since the Second World War.

MF: Well listen, we learned that, because I was in charge of an institute for young, professional performers to come and play the new music. And we needed a core. You know there's some things you need. We needed two percussionist because there was too much work, and you couldn't give the one percussionist every damn piece to do.

UV: You must have half a dozen pianists.

MF: Well, pianists were always around but we always hired one. Everybody's a pianist. We had to hire two violinists, because there's too much work. I hired one cellist. So essentially, we had a few violinists around, two percussionists, who did a little student teaching. You know we can always find something for you to do. And top-notch violinists also for a little student teaching, because there's so many violin students. So there's a lot of violin students and there's a lot of violin parts in the music. We have a lot of percussion students in the States. OK, so we see already that the violist… It's no sense having a violist. I mean, how many *Viola in My Lifes* can I write?

PK: Well, in a sense that is almost like the extra instrument. It comes back to being the *Pierrot* legacy, and the fact that a lot of pieces have been created for that combination. I think it's a very successful combination, why fight it?

MF: Especially to double with the viola?

PK: Yes.

DK: But then again the *Fires of London,* it's a *Pierrot* ensemble. [...] It actually started off as the *Pierrot Players*.

MF: That was it. Until recently, that was the standard core orchestration of every group that I know about.

DK: It's almost like a chamber orchestra.

PK: Then the guitar got in.

MF: Not really, unless you had people writing for it, you know. I mean, you might do a piece of Henze with the guitar, but you know that's…

Oboe? We hired an oboe play only because she's fabulous, and she brought in a lot of literature. What happens if we bring in somebody with a big amount of literature? They're out!

I have to tell you a very humorous situation where Takemitsu was coming to Buffalo, and we put on an all Takemitsu programme. And I looked through a lot of the pieces and there was nothing for contrabass *at all*.

We had a young French, tough, woman from Paris. She was a contrabass specialist. [...] I don't speak French well enough to get in an argument, and Yvonne who speaks a lot of languages says to me, "Morty,

she's very upset she's not playing the concert." I said, "Bring her in and we'll discuss it". So the conversation was, "We are paying you, we want to use you, you are a wonderful bass player, don't you think we want to use you?" "But I feel, I don't like," you see. "We're going to have an all Takemitsu concert, we're not going to have you do a bass improvisation. It's nothing to do with *you*, this has to do with Takemitsu."

"I want to play," she says to me in English. She wants to play. I start all over again. She says, "I want to be on the concert." So I leaned over to Yvonne, and I said, "Tell her she's fired!" And we paid her for a whole year. It was a very simple solution. [...] She was just absolutely unreasonable.

You know the Bishop's mother? You know, I was staying at the Bishop's house. She was complaining about the Brussels sprouts.

She says, you know, you really can't have good Brussels sprouts unless it has a little frost at first. And she says, "I wouldn't eat a South African Brussels sprout." And she said the parsley also needs a little frost. So instead of having greenhouses, you should have kind of nice little icehouses, put a little frost down it, with both [vegetables] to give it another kind of taste.

But it's interesting, I think that most time you use instruments, you're using Brussels sprouts without the frost. It's not indigenous to your own piece to use such instruments, it really belongs in his piece not in your piece. And that happens all the time.

But, essentially, what I really want to say, getting back to Takemitsu, is that, take a look at his instrumentation. Always very much the most successful instruments imaginable. To make one of his most fantastic pieces, Takemitsu, where he doubles the most successful instruments, and it's his most, I think it's a fabulous piece for two harps and two percussion. It's sensational. It's called *Bryce*. You know it?

DK: It's a fairly recent piece.

MF: It can't be that recent, it can't be that recent because he wrote it for a Canadian, for a Toronto percussion player and that was like when they had a son that was just born, and he was called Bryce, that's where the name comes from.

And recently I was with Takemitsu, and we went out and had breakfast the following morning at these people's house and in comes Bryce. And Bryce was a big kid already, about 14. So it must be about 14 years old.

But that's an example where he really milks, milks the instrumentation. I also alluded earlier how much I like conventional instruments. Only because, it's like in a family you can't have an eccentric wife and an eccentric husband. I mean you'd go berserk! One's enough! So that's the way I see that. My music is crazy enough. I don't want some ad-hoc nutty type of instruments doing it, that doesn't really tell you how crazy the music is!