Morton Feldman: The Johannesburg Masterclasses, July 1983
Session 9: Works by Peter Klatzow & Feldman (*The Turfan Fragments*)

Transcribed by Dirk de Klerk

Voices heard: Morton Feldman (MF)
Dirk de Klerk (DdK)
David Kosviner (DK)
Peter Klatzow (PK)
Jacques de Vos Malan (JdVM)
Roelof Temmingh (RT)
Jeanne Zaidel-Rudolph (JZ-R)
Unidentified Voices (UV)

[A recording of Peter Klatzow's *Chamber Concerto for 7*, for flute, clarinet, horn, organ, piano, guitar and percussion, is played]

MF: One of the most formal things in the twentieth century is orchestration as an aspect of form. From the old hero *Pierrot Lunaire* days to the *Marteau* days. That is, continual variation as applied to instrumentation.

So the breakdown of this piece would be in terms of its first solo - an organ solo - a lengthy piano solo, a lengthy flute solo. Of course, there might be things in between. Then there's the fast tutti, and then a very, very, very, very long guitar solo.

Then we're back to a flute solo, which is either a virtue or disappointment, because we have three other choices. Now we're interested in choices. We could have gone to a percussion solo. We could have gone to a horn solo, which would have continued the aspect of variations. And did I mention clarinet? So what's missing here, essentially, in the piece, is the fact that there's no lengthy horn solos, no lengthy clarinet solos.

After the long guitar, and after we get back to the flute, there's a tutti section and then there's a very short little episode between the flute and the horn. I thought that Peter tried to match up the flute more with other instruments than, for example, the flute and organ, as the piece goes on. And then the very short coda from earlier material. Was it the opening material?

PK: In the last movement?

MF: Yes, the last few measures.

PK: Yes.

MF: It doesn't make any difference whether a composer is aware of this kind of breakdown in form. I mean, variation started when one composer said to a student, "Look, will you make it a little more interesting?" I mean, that's all serialisation is, isn't it? And it happened way back in history.

What's interesting for me are the choices that were *not* made in this piece, not the choices that were made. The fact that Peter wouldn't go into a clarinet solo, or a horn solo, or percussion solo. And the most important question is, as composers, when do you do something a little much out of a kind of international style. You see, this piece has a lot of virtues. You could complain that it's not international enough, and you could complain that it's virtue is that it deviates from international practice.

International practice in a piece like this would be a very much like Bunita Marcus's score, to some degree, but more so, in terms of a purely democratic… No-one really playing too long, you know. Beautiful balance, a beautiful integration, which is essentially what the *Marteau* is all about, isn't it? That would be the prototype of an international style.

Now, *I* feel that it's not important whether the piece works or not when you get to this high level of professionalism. It's not a question of dismissing it, which so many students do in professional works they don't like. If it goes some place where you feel that no-one else goes or it shouldn't go that way, don't dismiss it, but try and find out - not what mistakes were made - but try and find out to some degree what the composer is trying to do, as there's no formal analysis that's going to help you. I need a little more time with

this piece. This is the second time I've heard it. I haven't studied it. [...] However I wonder whether it should have been a chamber concerto? It might have been a concerto, perhaps, for harp and instruments, guitar and instruments and so on. Just a question that I raise.

Very difficult to write all this stuff when they go into long solos. In fact, I don't know any piece that does it. Most composers get out of it pretty quickly. I mean there are a lot of interesting things that you're trying to do here, you see? It's not a question of whether it's a success or failure here. It's not a question of even making it better. I think the question initially is either to make a more bullet proof form out of the piece by being conventional, you know, by being *Pierrot Lunaire*, or opting for a real concerto, with a solo instrument.

PK: For me in this piece, all the solo passages to a certain extent represent a kind of polarisation and static moments. In the sense that you're focusing basically on one *kind* of something. Even the beginning, which is really a coloured piano solo. You know, in a sense, that they are different timbres, but you are aware of them only in relation to what the piano is doing, the piano is holding them altogether.

MF: Well, would you say the question would then be, “How long do they play?”

PK: Yes.

MF: And maybe that depends not so much on the formal basis, in terms of using orchestration as a form or hearing afterwards as a form. Maybe you never even thought about these things. But it becomes a form because of this breakdown in division of the orchestration.

Essentially what I'm really getting at is *material*. The kind of material that might be more successful to give the thing a little more longevity, you see. [...] As you establish the total orchestration of the piece, and as it begins to travel, it is very, very gorgeous. And it's some of your best instrumental writing. But that's not an aspect of form, you see. That's what's interesting. Then it doesn't become an aspect of form, because then you’re not going to make any mistakes. You're just going to see that the boat doesn't sink. No problems.

You see, the problem is, perhaps, write a kind of chamber concerto with what appears to be a hierarchal voice, or colour, that really *isn't.* Only because it seems to be the best instrument to go with all the other instruments in that kind of situation. Rather than in a polyphonic field. A polyphonic field, you can make it work. But as soon as it becomes an overall tutti field, for whatever reason, it cannot be analysed *why* the harp, *why* the guitar comes up as *the* instrument that really could lead them. To me that was the most successful section. Also, it was a colour and a sound that I wasn't familiar with. Also, the way you orchestrated and registered the low clarinet, everything beautiful, you know. Everything you did was just beautiful.

RT: May I ask a question?

MF: Yes.

RT: About my horn problem of yesterday, is there not a horn problem here?

MF: I checked up on this and I don't think the problem was the horn itself, but perhaps the horn player. But when you have friends who are instrumentalists, there is a tendency to over use the instrument when you write a piece. I found that very much when I was having a romance with an oboe player. I made a lot of mistakes because I was very close to that particular instrument at that particular time. But then, overall, it's a question of prejudice. I have, again, a prejudice about the horn.

RT: But I am very aware of this, as you mentioned yesterday. And every time the horn enters in this piece, the whole colour of the orchestration changes.

MF: I agree. Well, it changes for a lot of reasons. It changes because I don't know one international style piece which features a horn in this particular kind of chamber writing. I mean continental piece. I can't think of one.

PK: Can I copyright that? [Laughter]

MF: What? Can you think of one?

PK: No, I can't.

MF: OK. I think in a sense that Peter you should be commended essentially.

You see, the problem is that we all know that Peter could write an extremely successful piece.

PK: Ouch!

MF: I think he can be commended for writing a piece that asks a lot of questions. Because I'm sure that he could say exactly the same thing that I'm saying about the piece, about his own piece, I'm convinced of it. The only thing is that I have a little distance from it.

The fact that you're letting the guitar run, the fact that you're not killing it off for any kind of a priori conceptual reason, is something that you should be commended upon.

Just a very basic question: Why didn't you think of a clarinet solo?

PK: I felt…

MF: I even ignored that [when] the flute came back. I thought [...] now we're going to hear a clarinet solo [and] the flute grounded into a colour I already knew! I expected a clarinet solo. It didn't have to be much. There is not one place where this damn clarinet really takes an act of participation! How the hell… how the hell did you decide to… where did you get the restraint? [Laughter]

DK: As you say, you're *expecting* the clarinet solo and the whole thing, and then you've been waiting, like here's going to come a clarinet, and then surprise, surprise! you don't get it.

MF: That's no surprise, that's when you walk out. [Laughter]

DK: Well, either it's going to be a big high and you're expecting it as a surprise or it's a total anti-climax.

MF: And who the heck wants to hear a piece where there's no surprises?

DK: But it *is* a surprise because as you said yourself you are expecting the clarinet solo but it didn't appear.

MF: I once visited Christian Wolff and he was playing... Who's that composer that if you played him today they'd start booing? Sweelinck? Sweelinck. That's all Christian Wolff liked, he didn't want any surprises, he wanted this nutty music. I think it's nutty music and his music was very influenced by this guy and it's also nutty, no surprises!

PK: Listen, I must be quite honest with you that the clarinettist said to me exactly what you're saying. He said, "Where's my solo? What am I going to do in this piece?"

MF: And how about not having a horn solo? How about a horn solo? I don't know what the hell could happen in this piece, Peter, but I'm interested in the decisions you *didn't* make! And I think especially the students should hear the decisions you didn't make, rather than talking about things we did because we're so smart.

PK: I don't know, I didn't really feel I needed a clarinet solo in the piece. And I know that that sounds very lame. And not only the clarinettist has mentioned it to me, but other people in the ensemble have said, "What have you got against the clarinet? Where is his bit? And where is the percussion bit?" I really felt of them not as voices, in a sense, but as blending factors. I didn't need a percussion solo. It would have been easy to write a long lick for the marimba, he's a very good marimba player. The clarinettist was an absolute ace. I just didn't want it.

MF: Alright, then lets structurally…

RT: There's just one thing I wanted to say.

MF: Yes please.

PK: Actually the flute solo, am I correct, is always accompanied?

PK: Yes.

RT: So there is not one solo, one voice?

PK: That's why I mean the guitar can play…

MF: The piano and the organ are solo.

RT: There's not one solo, in a sense that it's a single line.

PK: No.

JdVM: There's a short guitar passage.

RT: Yes, but I mean…

DK: But even then there's sort of an harmonic... rather than totally linear.

RT: I'm trying to defend the piece.

MF: Well, you know, it's perfectly alright. But it's as if, you know, you put a little rouge on the background. I mean it's still flute, you know. In fact, I would prefer maybe… I don't know about flute and organ. That was the one combination which I kind of lifted up my ear.

DK: Also about the percussion, I don't think it actually needs a percussion solo, you know. From the point of view that, in fact, the percussion is a very kind of soloistic thing, and it always comes out. The thing is it's something you always hear. Even the xylophone in that crazy 6/16 passage in the second movement, you always hear it. It always comes out, almost like solo.

MF: Listen. One of the most fortunate things is that we don't need anything. I mean, *actually*. I mean, there's a marvellous thing in the *Talmud* about why you shouldn't have two wives, especially one that's young and one that's old. The old one pulls out the black hairs so you don't have any illusions that you're young, and the other one pulls out the white hairs because she doesn't want to be with an old man. And I think orchestration is very, very much like this. And we're completely pulling out… I want to pull out the white hairs of the organ here, it's a little too old for me. I want to make it young with black hairs.

[This is] a perfect example of an association of an instrument like the organ: Can you think of it abstractly?

PK: I do because for me it's a plain and uninflected kind of colour. It's dead flat.

MF: I have the unfortunate aspect of being Jewish. So the organ is, like, remote to me. It's the other part of town. [Laughter] It *is*! I'm sure it affected my whole attitude. I think that, if I was brought up with an organ, I would think nothing of it, like my students. They don't have any problems with organ.

[...]

PK: Actually, I must be honest. The organ does have an association for me, but it's not a religious one. It's purely musical one. And it is, in a sense, contrapuntal.

MF: Why? We got a problem. A man wants to write a chamber concerto - we all want to write a chamber concerto - and it's been one of the most successfully exploited mediums in the past forty-five years, fifty years. How do we do it? The way the guy sitting next to you did it last week! It's a terrific problem. And Peter is faced with the problem here in terms of putting this instrument and that instrument, using this and using that, you know, it's a terrific, terrific problem. Some people found other solutions like the Berg *Chamber Concerto*, you divide it between two instruments. So the problem here is, it's a chamber concerto in search of a form.

PK: Yeah. In some ways.

MF: On one hand, one began to think that the form is going to be in its orchestration. It didn't happen. I'm not going to consider that the return of the flute is a return to A.

PK: No.

MF: OK. So we're going along. And here is a very interesting thing, that maybe some pieces cannot be composed. Maybe some pieces could only be assembled.

DK: Isn't that by implication saying *composed*? Isn't composition just…

MF: No, no. Assembled. Re-composed.

Is there anything written in either the *Old Testament*, or the *New*, that because we have ideas in some kind of continuous way, we can't reassemble it, like a movie or anything else? I mean many compositions are written that way.

In other words, it would be a very interesting thing, Peter, if in a studio, to make a different type of organisation of this piece in terms of, which segments could go with which and what?

PK: Mm.

MF: You see, maybe the problem is just of *this* to *this* to *this* to *this,* you see. Maybe just open up with the guitar and the instruments. And then just let it bleed into... I don't know. In other words, the way I feel about the piece is that there's something open about it. That it's not lacking in form, that there's something open about it. And the success of the form of the piece is also the colour modulation, the right kind of colour modulation in these block segments. The right kind of colour modulation, and a much more studied and self-conscious durational relationship between one movement and another. For example, not to throw out or revise something but maybe it's in the wrong place.

I once had a formula. It's something I forgot, but Bunny [Bunita Marcus] uses it all the time. It's indispensable to her thinking. I said, "Never change the note, try it in another register. If it doesn't work in another register, then try to change the note." And I'm saying this, "Never really throw anything out or decide that it doesn't fit - like the extensive length of the guitar thing - but *re*-place it some place else." And in a sense, this is the way Schoenberg wrote *Pierrot Lunaire*. Those pieces were *not* written on a chain of a continuity. He wrote all those things - what were they, twenty-one poems? - he wrote all those things in just a few days and then he reassembled them. [...]

A *very* interesting book on the life of Tolstoy, written by his daughter. She was the typist, she did all the typing on *War and Peace.* And this is the way he wrote *War and Peace*. It was referred to as *noodles* in the house. A sentence would be on one line, the next sentence would be on another line, another line. And then she would cut it out of the page - shades of John Cage - she would cut it out of the page, and then he

would start moving it around. The flexibility of, maybe I should put this here, put that there. A hundred years later, one of the most pornographic vanguard books ever written, *Naked Lunch,* was written the same way.

So in that sense, in a cinematic way, edit. I think there's great mileage. I think that's the new form. I think assemblage is essentially the new form. In other words, instead of censuring your mind, let it run, and then, reorganise it. Not in terms of form. If you want to consider proportion form, you can. You *can*. And that's what I feel this piece is. It's that, after this piece is over in its continuity, in my mind, I'm, like, picking up big chunks of pieces that fell off buildings. [Laughter] You see what I mean! And I'm putting this, really putting it together again! [...]

I mean, how are you going to write a kind of chamber concerto today? How the hell you going to do it? All I'm really trying to say is that there are implications in this piece for me. I don't think of the piece as a success or a failure. If I would listen to this piece, I would say, well, it doesn't do this and it doesn't do that. But there are implications of the piece that you didn't catch.

PK: You see, my way of working is not to take every potential situation and then decide how to use them. And I think that if I had worked from the point of view that *everything* was available to me from the very beginning, then I would have come out with a piece that was more evenly proportioned. But something that *absolutely* evenly proportioned doesn't interest me all that much. What I *do* do is, starting at the beginning, go through, and - I can only describe it this way - as I develop certain hungers in the piece, I need to satisfy them.

MF: Yes, well, you *certainly* had a craving for guitar.

PK: In the third movement I had. By then I really felt I needed to just hear the guitar.

MF: Well, you see, I don't make an excuse of movements. That's again what I mean by the danger of movement thought.

It's not a movement, you've got to know why you called it a movement. I think it's just going.

PK: Yeah.

MF: Because you have changes in the first two sections, between the organ and the piano solo, and they are not movements, right?

PK: Right.

MF: OK. So just because you changed the thing, it doesn't mean that it's a movement.

PK: Well, in a sense, what makes the effective partition is the second part.

MF: Yes.

PK: If we're not going to call it a movement.

MF: Yes.

PK: Because, if we're using the current terminology, that is a flat surface for me.

MF: Yes. Well, we've got a big problem here, because you're not really interested in the *form* of the piece. You're interested in the *rightness* of the piece, it seems to me: it has to be right. In other words, you are the form of the piece as composer.

PK: Yes.

MF: You see?

PK: Yes.

MF: There's no formula here for form.

PK: No.

MF: You see? In fact shall I tell you something? And I think this is terrific. If you went to a clarinet, the piece would have been a disaster, because then you would have given it a *very* self-conscious form.

PK: I'm absolutely willing to agree with you.

RT: And if it went to the horn?

MF: The horn? [Laughter]

DK: Then it would have been Scandinavian!

MF: You think I'd write an orchestral piece without the horn? I think in an orchestral piece its [use is] as *bridging*, the way everybody else uses it. And by bridging it in another registration way, you know. It might be underneath the trombones, but just as filling up. I mean, something has to fill that space. I might want a different kind of colour balance here, but it's indispensable for me as an instrument. As a solo instrument, there's something about it that disturbs the surface of the piece.

RT: But this in this case I feel very strongly, because it is rather high in the register, the whole thing changes!

MF: Alright, but it's a virtuoso piece! It's out of the Schoenberg. It's out of the beginning of another tradition, that you can take a horn and use it virtuosically. Or the flute is virtuosic. I mean, it's a tradition of a virtuoso piece, and that's the whole problem with polyphony. If, for example, he was working just vertically and harmonically, you're not going to find those horn notes that high, you see, or doing some of the things that he would be doing. And notice that even when he uses it in a vertical structure, almost like a little motif, notice that the horn always comes in as an upbeat, see, to those other instruments, right? He introduces it with the horn as an upbeat into those other instruments. So there's an instinct there to justify its use. But it's a little too strong for a kind of contemporary surface. Sometimes, in a romantic surface, it's marvellous. I mean, when the horn comes in in the Brahms [Sings]. I mean, it just absolutely breaks your heart! No other instrument could do it.

PK: Maybe I have that [romantic] streak.

MF: A lot of broken hearts around here!

[...]

On one hand, the piece succeeds when you're not looking at the score. Because I heard it the other day, and I had no problems whatsoever. Without really *scrutinising* the score, let's put it that way, instead of *looking* at the score. When you look at the score, you see not so much that the piece has problems, but the whole idea of writing a chamber concerto.

[...]

Now I'm getting down to the crux of what I want to say. That organ is an anchor. And it's going down, down, down like tonality goes down, down, down, to the root. Then we begin again, and we can't get started. It's like the puttering of a boat after when it first starts. I feel that it's having trouble getting up again. Then we go onto the piano, and we go down, down, down, and to what degree it should be that *long* to make the transition.

I have this trouble with other... a lot of times people do it because they want to write a solo part for their wife. [In] a very important piece by Messiaen, the piano part is too long. He wants to take her on tour, she has something to do, he gives her this long part that has absolutely nothing to do with the goddamn piece. So, you know, it kills the piece. A lot of times we do that, you see.

I think it's a question of proportion. I think it's a question of proportion, not self indulgence. Because you're doing something *intrinsically*, which I'm saying one should do. Let it bleed out for what you feel is the natural proportion of the material, which is exactly what you're doing here, you see. The only thing is, the only thing is, is that I just feel that some of the juxtapositions, if they were thought differently, could absolutely make the piece. I think you could reassemble this piece without changing a note, and it would be a masterpiece. You could, just by reassembling it. Without changing a note.

[...]

Do you mind me going into this piece this much?

PK: No, no, no, no, no.

[...]

MF: I think it's an assemblage job. I think it's like the movies, as if I saw a terrific movie and I say, "Look, why don't you put that scene over here and then put this over here?" You wouldn't bat an eye, you wouldn't even think it's a criticism. You'd say, "Thanks." Only in *composition* do we feel that because we have B following A, it comes from heaven. Only in music.

[...]

PK: It comes down, in the end, to who makes the decisions, I suppose. And it's very difficult. I appreciate what you're saying, and I'm not so precious about my material that I would resist the idea of hacking it up, and rethinking it altogether. But the point is this, you have to decide to start the piece in a certain way. Once you've made that decision about a start, I feel that if you really get into the piece, certain things follow with a kind of consequent logic for you. What that logic is I'm not always absolutely certain about, but it does become like a set of appetites that are gradually, if you like, satisfied.

MF: I feel the organ is a wrong move. We're playing chess. We're playing chess. It's the first move, right?

PK: Yeah.

MF: It's the first move, whether you win or lose. The organ is a wrong move. I'll tell you why I feel the organ is the wrong move. If you're starting, for example, in a certain type of register… Anybody that's written a lot of music knows how difficult it is to get down there. You just can't play that pedal tone down there and think you are going to get away with it. You have to get there somehow, and it takes a little time. I think there was not enough music going before I heard the organ. I use the word "colour-modulation." "Colour-gradation." All I'm trying to say is that an organ is going into a piano. Logically, you would say a piano should go to an organ

PK: It does.

MF: OK, or maybe I would say that flute and horn to an organ. Because what you have here, is that with every orchestration, instrumental combination, you *do* have, you have different kind of music. You have contrapuntal, you have polyphonic, you have harmonic. And maybe that then affects which should go after another too!

You see, you're mixing it all up. And it's a minimal piece insofar as how many moves… *Every music* is minimal. How many moves do we have? We have *symbolic* moves. That's why because someone puts a bassoon in B and then puts a horn in B, they feel they're writing bits of music. For me it's *B*, you understand? A *real* B is when there is real *structural* differences from A, and not so much in material.

That marvellous movement in [Stravinsky's] *Requiem Canticles* - A is consistent, every time it comes back it's consistent. B is like a rubber band, different all the time. It's one of the great ABAB situations I think within the history of music. It is magnificent.

JdVM: Just to push your analogy of a movie a bit further: Why do we not have recaps in movies? Why don't we reiterate material?

MF: In music?

JdVM: No, in film. I'm just thinking of what would happen if you re-ran a scene in a film. People would think you were nuts. I can't think of a single film in which it happens.

MF: Well, I remember in an early string quartet of mine I had an unusual ostinato. And Columbia Records said they got a few letters saying they had defective records because of the ostinato, you see.

OK, Peter, we're finished with you and we're going to go onto me for the next thirty-five minutes!

OK, now this piece of mine [*The Turfan Fragments*]. Let me just tell you a little bit about this piece. And the reason I want to play it is not only because I'm here; because I thought it was another aspect of different kinds of combinations. Where Graham's piece was for big symphonic orchestra, and Peter's piece is the chamber situation. My piece is for just 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2. I threw out the violins.

In other words, let's put it this way, I had so many instruments given to me, and I selected from what they gave me, rather than building up an orchestration in another way. So I threw out the harp, I threw out the orchestral pianist, and I threw out the orchestral percussion too.

[...]

PK: Two of each of the strings as well?

MF: No. Six violas, six cellos and six contrabass.

Right, this is *The Turfan Fragments.* Because of my rug interest, this is one of the few pieces I ever had where I got the idea... I usually don't grasp on poetry or things like that. But I remember very well the whole genesis of my idea. The Turfan fragments are in Central Asia. And at the turn of the century an Englishman - of course - out in that part of the world, discovered these burial grounds. And in these burial grounds were tiny little fragments of rugs. Piled carpets, no design.

Now you know that any kind of archaeologist, just finding fragments, could then reconstruct the whole. So, just by the knotting and the expertise... They don't even have to know what the plants were. Plants don't change that drastically in an area which hasn't changed too badly. You just look around and see what plants are there, and you see the kind of combinations that could happen in terms of the natural dyes that could be made. And there is usually very basic, maybe three colours. There's anatta – red. There is the blue that you have in jeans, that helps make a lot of things. And then there's a kind of saffron - brownish yellow. And then there's natural colours itself. And a lot of rugs are variations of just very few basic colours. Only in the commercial, expensive Persian rugs, on occasion they might buy dyed yarn from a peddler that's coming by and selling them ready dyed. When they dyed it themselves, they made variations from just these basic colours.

OK, there were some colours on the rug. There was no information about the rug. But what information could be on the rug in terms of the design? You can look to other artifices in the burial mound, and you could see it's going to have to reflect that.

So it's going to reflect the objects that they're using in daily use, or the rug could also reflect nature: animals, plant life, maybe, and kind of shamanistic symbols or what would be shamanistic symbols of their time. So we know that we're not going to see Marilyn Monroe! And this is with no information. Because of the context, it's not going to be Marilyn.

So let's put that aside. And then there was a remark of Kafka, that, since I was a kid, always freaked me out. Kafka wrote, "We already know everything." I kind of like that. We already know it. And if you teach graduate students in America, you'll understand. [Laughter] Because they feel they already know everything! So, based on that, I had this - I think - a marvellous idea. *Don't write a piece!* We already know everything. What are we going to do that cannot be done? What's going to happen? We know everything. [...]

OK. What characterises at least where the thing comes from, when we then could say, "Oh, we already know it?" Like, I'm sure I could take your attitude about certain modernistic music. You hear one measure of Darmstadt, you don't want to hear the rest! You feel you already *know* everything about it. And to some degree you do.

What is given here is the orchestration. It has to be twentieth century orchestration in terms of the way I use it, without the percussion without everything. Just a fragment of anything here. And also there's very little material, so I extend the metaphor. And I think... I don't remember, but I think there's only four notes. I use four notes over and over again in different ways, as if different fragments of just the four notes. [...]

So, basically, the piece goes for a long time with just giving you, like, *slides* of rug fragments, that you're analysing, the knotting, you know. [Laughs] The colour a little bit, and you're really not getting the complete piece of the thing, you see. So it's a *display*. It's a nice display of all these things mounted, and you're walking around, and you're looking at this, and you're looking at that, and it doesn't mean anything to you if you're not a rug expert. So a piece like this is only made for rug experts that would say, "Oh I know everything, but I don't know *this*."

I like the piece. And what was so funny was that I never would have written this piece. It was a commission from Swiss Radio, and I wanted to try it out in Switzerland before I would send it to someplace else. And it was a big success, actually. It's really a very strange piece, but it was a big success. And then the New York Philharmonic wanted something, and this was sent along, and they picked this, [from] the tape! And when you hear it, it's very peculiar, and I don't know why they liked it. Because of the novelty of it? Or the fact they know everything, so they didn't have to hear a piece! It's a mystery to me why this piece is kind of catching on. Maybe people are tired of hearing pieces, maybe people are tired of hearing non-pieces, maybe this was like something in-between.

OK.

[A recording of *The Turfan Fragments (1980)* is played]

MF: I'm not going in that direction, but I enjoyed doing it.

DdK: Don't you think you would take it up?

MF: Pardon me?

DdK: Don't you think you would take it up in your further compositions, somehow or another.

MF: Oh, it's there in some degree. I mean, if you have a right to write a piece based on, say, serialisation, you certainly have a right to write pieces based on how much *weight* can you give - in a durational sense - to an area, you know? It was an *étude*, in a sense, getting away from the fragment. I'm not doing it as a demonstration.

Also, I said the other day that I'm very interested in the two aspects of twentieth century music: reiteration and variation. It seems to be something I'm *very* interested in, and I want to see if I can take it into other areas. I don't know what those areas would be. But essentially it's the combination of reiteration and… Reiteration is a very interesting thing, because it deals not only… Other words come into it, repetition is not reiteration do you know what I mean, you get involved with all the cracks of the possibility of reiteration. To *stagger* it some time, not to stagger it some time. The material that you can reiterate, and the

material that can't. To me a very mysterious thing is - why can you repeat something so many times and [another thing] you can't repeat? And Boulez asked Stravinsky this question of the great *bum-pum* [in *The Rite of Spring*], you know: "Why do you do it so many times?" And Stravinsky didn't have an answer. He said, "I liked it."

But here I didn't do it because I liked it. This is essentially the most clinical… It's not an experimental piece, I'm too old to experiment. But it's a clinical piece, and I didn't experiment clinically enough when I was younger. So I'm kind of meeting material half way. And if you meet your material half way, you become clinical.

So this thing's going on for a long time, like watching insects, rather than recording them. Watching insects on a screen… on a thing, you know. And just watching the bug move. Like DNA. It's essentially like DNA. We're reading a lot about DNA in 1980. Different kind of formations, like they're viruses – let's see what happens in terms of combinations. And it was fascinating! Just moving it like a bug on a slide and if you keep your cool, even without worrying, things are going to happen. What I wanted to show you… [Turns pages of the score]

Look, you get very interesting ideas if you just look at your whole page. Turn to page 17, ladies and gentlemen. Notice that the second system *here*, with different instrumentation and different kind of chordal formations, happens in the same time space as the patterns on the top system. The whole piece is chocked full with all kinds of goodies like that. Well, I got the idea just by looking at the page. For example, I didn't have to serialise this – pages 18 and 19. Just by looking *here,* from one system - I always work with this - this is, like, my *copy.* By working here very quickly, I work between the cracks. I worked with this years ago, with the graph music. Then I had this over here and this is a block of time. Notice that I did this where this is consistent and what I did was just put it in in places and time patterns that didn't exist either here, here, or there.

And without actually any kind of intellectual acumen or sweat, I got a very nice kind of thing like that.

Sometimes it's dangerous, sometimes it doesn't work. You have to pick it up if you want to be involved with something. Just see what you did before. And this essentially is - do it once, and do it another time in a different place with different notes. Essentially it's the same whole idea, without even thinking of it as variation. But it is variation. It is a kind of serialisation of different material as it goes along.

Here's a perfect example here. Page 21. Juxtapose visually the top system to the bottom system, and you see the places of *pdim-pdim, pdim* are different. *Immediately,* visually, I had different time places to put those nutty triplets. You see the way it is in relation between the top system and the bottom system. Just visually I found the placement in a serialistic way.

Of course, if I wanted to do this, and do this, the whole section could have gone on. I mean, you could just fill in the cracks. It's like washing the floor, there's always a place you forget. There's no end to it. It's like cutting a lawn, you know. [Laughs] But it was a device that I picked up for this piece. I did it early with my graph music, where I would superimpose the same grid on another grid to get a feeling what my instinctive placement for that particular piece was, and to see whether I should go along with it, or vary it. This is another example.

The chord is the same, its rhythmic placement varies. The rhythmic placement is the same, the chord varies. All aspects. But I usually don't remember these things. I grab on anything to keep the piece going. The great household joke was, I said, "Hey! I invented a role for the moment!" Anything, *anything* to keep the piece going!

Of course, where does aesthetic judgement come in? Remember, I made this remark that Stravinsky was lazy and just ended with a good cadence? I thought of him when I wrote this piece because I just figured how am I going to get out of this? Make a nice cadence, and get out of it! I did the same thing! [Laughs] It's a nice pyramid isn't it, it's very nice. It works beautifully.

JdVM: Isn't that one of the most difficult things to do once you start something going it's hard to get out.

MF: Well, I told you - the Houdini School of Composition - how to get out of the trunk! I'm much more interested in that than getting into something. I feel that students get into something, professionals get out of them. I like to get out of things. I think that most of my ideas come just how to get out of things rather than get into things. And you hear it sometimes.

And the best way to hear it, if you remember my remark, and you listen to the Beethoven *Bagatelles*, I actually hear his brain ticking, "How am I going to get out of this one?" All these little moves he's making. It's kind of like an early movement form - *moment* form, you know. "How am I going to get out of this?" That's what a bagatelle is. God knows it's not a *fugue*, you know. I'm a little more loose and I actually hear his head, going. And, to some degree, as a kid, stylistically, in a kind of mercurial way, I was influenced by some of the *Bagatelles*, because I played them. But listen to them now in terms of not getting *into* a mess, but how to get *out of* what is already going on.

If you didn't hear my spiel, if you didn't hear my introductory comments, and you came to a concert, and you heard this piece - and I usually don't have picturesque programme notes about the starving children in India, I just have some kind of formal thing about the piece, I find something formal to say about a piece, I might not even tell you what the Turfan fragments are in detail - would you think it's a piece?

DK: But this [raises]the whole question of what is a composition? What is a piece of music? What is a piece of art? If you consider this to be art, and I presume you do.

MF: Listen. John Cage came back from Germany fifteen years ago and he said, "I finally found out why I'm famous." I said, "Why are you famous?" He says, "Look, well, my pieces are very long. So they think it's important." [Laughter]

UV: Professor Feldman?

MF: Yes.

UV: When I listened to the piece, I sometimes felt it was like a big pot with different textures and colours in it. But I sometimes felt it just needed one stir to make the textures some of them flow into one another. I don't know what you think. I mean, I just felt that it just needed one big wooden spoon, just to give it one stir to make some textures mesh into other textures, here and there, maybe. And have some others, or some of them clearly cut off, like most of it is.

MF: That's sounds like a terrific piece for you to write, doesn't it?

UV: Yes, except that I'm not Morton Feldman.

MF: Well, I don't think this sounds like Morton Feldman, this piece, does it?

RT: It does.

MF: It does?

RT: It does.

UV: I mean I think the technique is just absolutely incredible.

MF: What technique? I don't feel it's my technique. I'm watching these bugs on a slide! *I'm watching this!* Forget about the top system in relation to the bottom system. I'm watching going here, going there. Just as a *metaphor* that - what's that thing when I was a kid - *The Scarlet Pimpernel*? – "They seek him here, they seek him there, damnedest Pimpernel, he's everywhere!" Something like that. I mean, that's what they are. Where is it? The slide is the structure. The slide is the structure. It's not going over into the next measure, so in a sense it's a very modular construction. The minute I know the size of the slide, and I know that the bugs not going to go *off* the slide, then I'm just watching it. That's my frame, you see. I really was, like, listening, listening. Like, for example, I got into the habit of dissecting, say, a total chord. Take out the *stomach.* It's really kind of genetic engineering in some of these things. I leave the head on, I put the head on back someplace else. I mean, they're real. That's what I'm telling you. That's why I take out the chord, I take out the middle, then I put it back with something else. It's a kind of DNA, genetic engineering, or something. And I think I might have been influenced... I mean, if you read *Time Magazine*, maybe the best sources for composition is just reading through the *Time Magazine*. [Laughter] Who did I study with? *Time Magazine*! [Laughter]

DK: PhD from *Time Magazine*!

MF: OK, Kossi, wind us up here. The last words. The final word.

DK: But I want to get back to that thing, is it a piece? Did you write it with the intention that it should performed and that it should be listened to by an audience?

MF: I wrote it to be performed in Lugano, listened to by an audience.

DK: Maybe then it's a piece. Then it's a composition, it doesn't matter what the content is.

MF: That's a very simplistic definition.

DK: But we're talking about a piece, we're not talking about… Is a piece defined by the material in it?

JdVM: It's not a chamber concerto.

DK: No, it's not a chamber concerto.

MF: What is it, is it a small orchestra piece?

DK: It might be considered a chamber orchestra.

MF: To me it's a Radio Orchestra piece. [Laughs] Somebody would look at the score and it would say chamber piece, right? I mean, to me, it's a Radio Orchestra piece. I wrote it. I knew exactly what I was getting into. It's a Radio Orchestra piece! If I put in the piano, if I put in the piano or percussion, it would become like a *demented* Radio Orchestra piece, you know. A little, *prrrrrsh!* you know, as we say in the old country, *Potsky.* Remember that word?

DK: I've heard it occasionally.

MF: Potsky means… I don't know… *'fancy it up*.'

No, I originally wanted to not even have the identification of that 2 2 2 2 thing about it. It's a very interesting thing, the fact of the transparency of essentially what would be a classical orchestration. That the writing didn't have any of the virtuoso orchestral writing, say, of *Flute and Orchestra,* which was a big piece for orchestra. There, you would think in terms of 2 2 2... you know, 3 3 3... In other words, this is less virtuosic than a big orchestra only because here everything was exposed. So to some degree the orchestration determined the material. What do you *do* with 2 2 2 2 today, what the hell do you do with it? It's nothing, you know. It's like going to Sun City with fifty Rand, what are you going to do with it? A few lemonades! [laughs]

DK: That's the thing. I mean, you look at it, you look at orchestration, and you think, what can you do with it? But I mean that is the whole challenge of the piece.

MF: The whole what?

DK: The whole challenge of writing for this kind of combination is what are you going to do with this combination? And to try and do something different, something...

MF: Oh it's a very interesting field, a textural field of just seconds, and it's done canonically. If I use, canonically, material the way, like in Graham's piece... If I use this in the big piece, it will sound like hell. Here it sounded OK. So it's a question if you want to use certain type of devices, you see.

JdVM: I think the score gets in the way of the piece. I'm sorry that I heard the piece the first time with the score.

DK: That argument that can be levelled at a hell of a lot of music.

JZ-R: I didn't feel that with this one. I agree, with some. This one, the kind of framing is so visual, you know that the whole conception was there for me, visually, I didn't think about the orchestration at all, afterwards. It was just a conception which I saw visually and it was there.

MF: But, you see, here's influence, here's influence! Bunita liked this piece. She looked at it, and said, "It's far out!" I think that what she got was the orchestration of a run, which she has done better than me. I do it very conceptually, in the layout, but I think the orchestration of a run was - maybe not consciously, but subliminally - in her mind with the orchestration of her runs. I never orchestrated a passage like that. I wasn't really that interested in the run itself, I was interested in how it gets… how it's top heavy on the bottom with the chord. [Laughs] I liked that. That's what I was after. That kind of… I thought that was interesting. It wasn't *that* interesting.

So I really opted out. Being that my focus was not on the run *per se* but on that kind of weight, I opted for a more conceptual… you know… basement, first floor, second floor type of… almost conventional orchestration. And maybe if I really, really try to do it a little more interesting the way she did in this context, I would have fell on my face. So there's an instinct: don't get fancy. It's not a chamber piece where you *have* to be fancy. That's what is unfortunate about the chamber pieces. Chamber pieces are fancy.

Every chamber piece, big chamber piece, you can think of is very fancy. Ligeti's *Chamber Concerto*. They are all fancy pieces.

But maybe we could finish up tomorrow with the whole *role playing* of what is chamber and what is symphony.

And that's where I think that Stravinsky is very important to us. Because, Stravinsky could take a piece and you don't know what the hell it is. It's another category. It's not that chamberistic, you don't know what the hell it is. It's Stravinsky. You know the way he writes a piece. It doesn't go into the style of chamber music, the style of orchestra music.

DK: Yes, certain passages in the *Symphony in Three Movements* come to mind, where you don't know what the hell it is. It could be chamber ensemble playing along but then it's a symphony orchestra.

J Z-R: In all three movements.

DK: Yes, and it's sort of changing all the time.

MF: Yes, and the way he uses the orchestral piano in a symphony.

DK: That's right.

MF: And even his sense of drama. Re-listen to *Persephone*. Do you know the opening great xylophone thing?

DK: I don't know *Persephone* well, no.

MF: OK. Listen to that. It is fabulously dramatic, and yet it's not really dramatic.

Write it down, listen to *Persephone,* and then listen to Honegger's *Joan of Arc,* and you'll see exactly what I mean. This whole idea of the role playing. The pompous, campy, ridiculous, unnecessary, vogue, cheap, middlebrow aspect of Honegger doing Joan of Arc. After all, if it's Joan of Arc, you're not going to write a minuet, right? [Laughter]

Before I go, I have to tell you what I opted for in a movie. I was hired to write a United Artists big Hollywood movie. And there was a story conference in which they wanted to hear the music I wrote for when the superstar [Carol Baker] was being raped in Central Park. The director was the superstar's husband. I had a string quartet in E major just playing this... [Sings]

OK, I think it was a sixth chord. If I do commercial work I think of those things. Anyway, I think it was in E major with a sixth chord, pizzicato on the cello and then... then on the black notes you hear a celesta going something like E flat, D flat, E flat, G flat, D flat [Sings]. That's in the celesta. When it comes back again, it's in the French horn. Against this lovely thing [in the string quartet]. And I'm playing it, I'm playing it beautifully, you know, and giving this kind of Woody Allen scenario. And Hollywood is sitting around me and the director gets up: "My wife is being raped! That's the kind of music you're writing!?" So I said, "What kind of music do you want?" He said, "[Sings opening to Shostakovich's *Fifth Symphony*]" – Shostakovich!

Three days later I got a phone call from Aaron Copland, and he's laughing and he said, "Morty, what happened?" And I said, "What, did they ask you to write the film?" And he says, "Yes!" And I told him what happened. And he laughed, and he says, "Oh, I suppose you're not going to go back on it, so I might as well tackle it."

And so Copland wrote this film. It was a disaster, and he got the most money ever written for a film in film history. I think he got around a hundred and twenty thousand dollars. The film was called *Something Wild*.

And that was funny, my encounter with orchestration for Hollywood: "My wife is getting raped, and all you can think of is a string quartet!" [Laughs] It would have been *beautiful* if he had left it alone!

It would have been beautiful, so sad, the ambivalence. You don't know if the rape is in one key or in the other key, you know. The whole thing was so lovely and sad. The juxtaposition was kind of sad, tender thing, you know. He made a mistake. And the big mistake he made was that the rape took place - and this is how I got the idea - the rape took place after her church choral rehearsal. [Laughs] She's in church… I had to pick the music for the thing - they kept that in - I picked a gorgeous thing by William Byrd.

And they said, "Well, we don't hear Carol!" So I wrote in a little line, where I kind of skipped two measures, and you hear her coming out of the crowd in a kind of fake thing. But not too much, you know, because she couldn't sing! I had to spend hours with her, teaching her how to sing. So the quality of the Byrd, and then walking into the darkness of Central Park, you see, where it was nice.

The Byrd… it made the rape even more terrible. Maybe that's why this Shostakovich here I hear all the time is annoying. [Laughter] But it's great, I got paid for the job; totally, completely. But it was so funny with Copland calling up, laughing, "What happened?"

UV: Are you going to tell us what your pseudonym is for your [film] music?

MF: One's on Australia. I don't know what it's called, but it's made for the Australian Government, and they hired out a New York firm to come down here and do it. And the other one was a film for American Samoa, but I don't know what the name was. I wrote a great hit tune in that.

You know, what are you going to do with American Samoa? It opens up and there are these canoes, and they go in the water, and it's gorgeous, and it's fantastic. And I had this kind of harp going... [Sings] And there was *two* harps, actually. And they were both brothers, and these two guys dominated the work in the New York Philharmonic. So I had these two harps going. You didn't know what it was, the orchestration, because the two harps were beautiful. And against that I had a cornet doing a *very* nice little tune against

these two harps, just strumming along nicely, you know, against the canoes in the water and everything. There were no rapes in that film! [Laughter]