

Introduction

JULIAN BREAM IS RIGHTLY HERALDED as having almost single-handedly cultivated a “vital contemporary language” for the classical guitar, often associated with a particularly British school of guitar composition.¹ That Bream’s recording career (running from the mid-1950s onwards) and his subsequent commissioning of music from the latest modern composers ran in tandem with the rise to prominence of the Manchester Group (late 1950s to early seventies) and William Glock’s tenure as Controller of Music at the BBC (1959–72) is noteworthy: guitaristic modernism came into being symbiotically with the institutionalization of musical modernism in Britain more broadly.² This was no accident. The guitar offered itself as a *tabula rasa* that relieved progressive composers of the anxiety of influence associated with instruments of the classical past; modernist compositions, in turn, consolidated the guitar’s “reputation as a major solo instrument in the concert halls of the world.”³

While the formation of the British Bream repertoire is known in broad brushstrokes, there is an important lacuna in our understanding of that repertoire’s relationship to continental musical modernism. That is to say, we lack a thoroughgoing, technical understanding of just what the “vital contemporary language” that Bream cultivated consisted of. Particularly important in the nascent stages of the guitar’s modernist development, for example, was its relationship to twelve-tone serialism. Benjamin Dwyer has made the claim that it was between Reginald Smith Brindle’s *El Polifemo de oro* (1956) and Richard Rodney Bennett’s *Impromptus* (1968)—twelve-tone pieces both—that “the guitar finally caught up with modernist development in music.”⁴ This isn’t hyperbole. The general condition of modernist composition

- 1 A. F., quoted in Graham Wade, *The Art of Julian Bream* (Blyden on Tyne: Ashley Mark, 2008), 42.
- 2 For a history of the Manchester Group, see Philip Rupprecht, *British Musical Modernism: The Manchester Group and Their Contemporaries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015). On Glock’s BBC years, see Humphrey Carpenter, *The Envy of the World: Fifty Years of the BBC Third Programme and Radio 3, 1946–1996* (London: Orion, 1997), especially 194–9.
- 3 Tony Palmer, *Julian Bream: A Life on the Road* (London: MacDonald, 1982), 86. For an adoption of the Bloomian concept of “anxiety of influence”—a theory of poetic influence—to the contexts of twentieth-century musical modernism, see Joseph N. Straus, *Remaking the Past: Musical Modernism and the Influence of the Tonal Tradition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).
- 4 Benjamin Dwyer, *Britten and the Guitar: Critical Perspectives for Performers* (Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2016), 12.

during this time, Philip Rupprecht has argued, was captured by “[Pierre] Boulez’s assertion [in 1952] that ‘all composition other than twelve-tone is *useless*’... His critique of Schoenberg’s own serial music as ‘twisted romantic classicism’ set the scene ... for a decade of debate among young composers.”⁵ Whether one followed Boulez’s radical path, rejected it all together, or sought pragmatically to draw serial and tonal worlds together, became defining aesthetic choices.⁶ Either way, one’s attitude to dodecaphony was pivotal. After a time lag, real or imagined, between continental developments and their absorption into contemporary British musical life, there was a belated surge of interest in twelve-tone serialism in the mid-to-late 1950s, with the years 1959 and 1960 being “a sort of high-water mark for the public discussion of serialism in British music.”⁷ After this, twelve-tone composition began to slip into a state of slow but inexorable decline — at least in the European context.⁸ “Nobody in his or her right mind would write strict twelve-tone music today,” Bennett declared in a 1999 interview.⁹

Given this historical trajectory, it will come as little surprise that, of the six solo guitar pieces written on Bream’s request between 1953 and 1960, two of them were twelve-tone.¹⁰ The pieces in question were Smith Brindle’s aforementioned *El Polifemo de oro* (1956) and Denis ApIvor’s Variations (1958). During the “post-high-water mark” years, by contrast, only *one* of the Bream commissions was to be written in a straightforwardly twelve-tone idiom: Bennett’s *Impromptus* (1968). The opening movement of Bennett’s later Sonata (1983) — dedicated to, rather than commissioned by, Bream — while still being twelve-tone serial, might also be explained in other ways: its first movement arguably uses an eighteen-note row, for instance, and at

- 5 Rupprecht, *British Musical Modernism*, 185.
- 6 See Reginald Smith Brindle, *The New Music: The Avant-Garde Since 1945*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987 [1975]), 5.
- 7 Rupprecht, *British Musical Modernism*, 48; 187. See also Arnold Whittall, *Serialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 150–55.
- 8 See Anthony Meredith (with Paul Harris), *Richard Rodney Bennett: The Complete Musician* (London: Omnibus Press, 2010 [1988]), 130. Meredith cites the death of Wolfgang Steinecke, director of courses at the Darmstadt summer school, as a turning point: “[it] seemed to put an official closure to a short period when there had been ‘unanimity of taste and homogeneity of purpose,’ and heralded instead the plethora of musical styles which were to characterize the next half century.”
- 9 Quoted in Jim Tosone, *Classical Guitarists: Conversations* (North Carolina: McFarlane, 2000), 71.
- 10 For a full list of works written for, or dedicated to, Julian Bream, see: <http://www.julianbreamguitar.com/works-written-for-julian-bream.html> [accessed 05/04/2021]. One might wonder about the absence of Humphrey Searle’s “Five” (1974) from a potential list of twelve-tone serial compositions associated with Bream, but as Searle points out in his memoir, “I did not want to write something in the conventional Spanish style [when composing “Five”] but stuck to my own method of writing, *not strictly twelve-tone, but atonal and chromatic*” [my emphasis]. See *Quadrilles with a Raven*, chapter 17, para 29: <http://www.musicweb-international.com/searle/labyrinth.htm> [accessed 12/05/2023].

points abandons strict serialism altogether (as does the finale).¹¹ The second movement *Lento* uses an eleven-tone row, as Jim Tosone has pointed out;¹² but I pursue a reading that emphasizes its whole-tone background.

A composer whose career spanned this change in dodecaphony's fortunes, and who arguably captured something of this miniature historical panorama in his guitar music, was Thomas Wilson. He wrote his first twelve-tone guitar work, *Three Pieces*, in 1961, when the method's vogue was near its height. By the time he came to write *Soliloquy* for Bream in 1969, however, he had rejected any orthodox commitment to the technique, keeping it on as an assimilated, albeit still generative, part of a freer overall language.¹³ While the earlier work is not associated with Bream, its study is essential if we are to understand the sublimated twelve-tone aspects of the latter.

Together, these pieces — by Smith Brindle, ApIvor, Wilson, and Bennett — form the corpus of this focused study. Bream would have played other twelve-tone music, of course; but it was these pieces that he explicitly commissioned, or with which his name was allowed subsequently to be associated. No single scholarly work yet exists that delves comprehensively into the idiosyncratic dodecaphonies of these composers during this special period in the guitar's development, nor which contextualizes their adoption of twelve-tone technique in relation to the aesthetic questions sparked by iconoclasts such as Boulez. This short book seeks to do just that.

Methodology

Twelve-tone composition is not stylistically homogeneous; “counting to twelve” is not its *raison d'être*. The composers featured in this study adopted and/or developed different aspects of twelve-tone technique for divergent compositional ends. Music analysis provides an indispensable means of conceptualizing and demonstrating these differences in a clear and rigorous way. Pitch-class set theory and “classical” twelve-tone theory thus form the foundation of this book's analytical method.¹⁴ While such approaches are sometimes caricatured as positivist, my analyses — in common with the orientation of modern post-tonal theory in general — aim to be interpretative, rather than merely descriptive. The production of inert repositories of pc sets, or endless, plodding row counts, is not permitted to serve as a goal in itself.

11 See Lance Bosman, “Richard Rodney Bennett's Sonata for Guitar,” *Guitar International* 14, no. 4 (1985): 16–20.

12 See Jim Tosone, “An Analysis of Richard Rodney Bennett's Guitar Music,” *Guitar Review* 106 (1996 Summer): 18–22.

13 The trajectory of Wilson's career parallels that of countless other twentieth-century composers, in this respect: for example, the African-American composer George Walker.

14 For a comprehensive but accessible overview of these fields, see Joseph N. Straus, *Introduction to Post-Tonal Theory*, 3rd ed. (Harlow: Pearson, 2014), Miguel A. Roig-Francolí, *Understanding Post-Tonal Music* (London: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2008), and Michiel Schuijter, *Analyzing Atonal Music: Pitch-Class Set Theory and Its Contexts* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2008).

For what material reason might the opening of a twelve-tone movement or section be considered to be incomplete, unbalanced, or ambiguous? And how might it be completed, balanced, or clarified by its end, as part of an overall teleological trajectory? Similarly, how might affirmative conclusions of these kinds be hinted at but ultimately rejected, and what would that mean? These are the kinds of questions this book looks to answer.¹⁵ Given the general dearth of in-depth post-tonal analyses of guitar music, it is my hope that the analytical frameworks developed in response to such questions — see the chapter summaries below for a preview — will have an applicability beyond the book’s intentionally limited scope.¹⁶

Some readers may have been surprised to see teleology invoked in the foregoing paragraph. Isn’t teleology something we associate with tonal music? And wasn’t one of the principal contributions of musical modernism exactly to *negate* goal-directed motion: i.e., not simply to imply a resolution and then merely withhold it, *à la* Wagner, but never to entertain resolution as a condition of possibility in the first place? Instead of relying on premade models of expression and resolution — read: tonality — modernist composers cultivated private languages characterized by protean surfaces, formal antagonisms, and gnomic syntaxes. They strove to demonstrate the irreconcilability of their own, unique musical utterances with the overarching systems that they had inherited from the past.¹⁷ While this characterization of modernism well-describes the music of the Second Viennese School — at least in part — it is less applicable to the mid-twentieth-century British composers who are the objects of this study. Smith Brindle offers a compelling characterization of the latter’s position:

To many composers of the post-war period it appeared that between the more conventional musical languages and serialism lay an immense field which must be explored and made familiar before music could again move forward. Particularly critical seemed such factors as harmony, melody, and form. Serialism had changed these so radically, had challenged traditional concepts so brusquely, that it seemed necessary to spend a long period reconciling the new language with more orthodox conventions. In fact, whether they intended it or not, composers of a whole

- 15 I have been particularly influenced by the work of Joseph N. Straus and Jack Boss in this respect. Relevant articles and books will be introduced as and when they are integral to a particular music-theoretical argument.
- 16 For existing analyses of 20th-century post-tonal guitar literature see: Steven C. Raisor, *Twentieth-Century Techniques in Selected Works for Solo Guitar* (Lampeter: Edwin Meller Press, 1999); Zachary Johnson, *The Solo Guitar Works of Sir Richard Rodney Bennett: A theoretical analysis of Impromptus and Sonata for Guitar* (Lambert Academic Publishing, 2011); Jonathan Leathwood and Daphne Leong, “Local Frictions and Long-Range Connections in Carter’s *Changes for Guitar*” in Daphne Leong, *Performing Knowledge: Twentieth-Century Music in Analysis and Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 287–331; and Sundar Subramaniam, “Pitch Structures in Reginald Smith Brindle’s *El Polifemo de oro*,” *Ex Tempore* 14, no. 2 (2009): 78–93.
- 17 For two different but very accessible approaches to the history of musical modernism see Richard Taruskin, “Inner Occurrences (Transcendentalism, 111),” chap. 6 in *Music in the Early Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), and Andrew Bowie, *A Very Short Introduction to Theodor W. Adorno* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 94–8.

generation dedicated their efforts in one way or another to the *exploration of the field between tonality and atonality*, and to the *integration of serialism into a more accessible language*.¹⁸

In order to account for the possibilities of this field and of that language, my analyses attempt to demonstrate how *sui generis*, post-tonal musical narratives can sometimes interact with—and, indeed, are in some instances dependent on—tonal effects. While the abstraction of set-theory is one of its greatest strengths—revealing connections in modern musical languages that would be obscured by more traditional theories, or estranging us from over-learned habits of cognition when encountering already familiar sounds¹⁹—it may sometimes be instructive to use purposefully “neutralizing” designations in a “biased” way. For example, one might describe movement from a more to a less chromatic pc set as being quasi-cadential in effect (see chapter 1); or one could point out the potentially triadic or scalar semblances of two tetrachordal sets, particularly if their juxtaposition potentially invokes a traditional progression: e.g., {A, C, D, E} → {D^b, E^b, F, A^b}, which resembles a transformation from a flattened, minor “submediant” (Am) to a major “tonic” (C#/D^bM), often used by Romantic composers as an aural symbol of the uncanny.²⁰ (For a “A Very Brief Explanation of Set-Theoretical Terminology,” see page 16.)

As the Smith Brindle quotation above attests, many mid-century British composers attempted to marry different musical idiolects together. This makes a hybrid theoretical language particularly well-suited to analyzing their music. But the context for post-tonal *cum* tonal interpretations is actually much broader than this. *Tonality is second nature*. Western ears are enculturated to listen for tonality—the organization of music around a central pitch or home—from the moment they are born, whether through singing hymns or nursery rhymes in school, listening to canned music in a fast-food restaurant, or having an allergic reaction to their bank’s on-hold music.²¹ We cannot turn such enculturation off. Take the following, hypothetical example: if

18 Smith Brindle, *The New Music*, 5 (italics added).

19 Perhaps one of the most powerful examples of this that I have encountered was in Milton Mermikides’s keynote at the 2022 Guitar Foundation of America Convention. He points out that the well-known “Hendrix chord,” <E, G[#], D, G>, is an all-interval tetrachord: it contains every possible interval class (semitone, whole-tone, minor-third, major-third, perfect fourth, and tritone) between its pitch classes. Pc set theory would thus describe it as a species of [0146] chord. Understanding Hendrix’s signature sonority in this way completely changes our understanding of it. Gone is the need to debate enharmonic equivalence—“Is it F^x or G[?]?”—or even to regard it as a dominant *without* a fifth. It becomes, instead, a “color chord” whose essence is defined by its own internal qualities—i.e., intervallic surplus—rather than by its place in a functional chain, or through its relation, as a shadowy simulacrum, to the “Platonic form” of a dominant seventh. See *Diamonds, Abaci & Hexagrams: Exploring the Guitar Fretboard*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b7wpqo75ecM>.

20 For an example of this embedded, “hexatonic-polar” relationship “in the wild,” see mm. 19–21 of Louise Talma’s “La Corona” and Joseph N. Straus’s analysis of it in *The Art of Post-Tonal Analysis: Thirty-Three Graphic Music Analyses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 78.

21 For further discussion of this provocative claim, see J. P. E. Harper-Scott, “Review: Felix Wörner, Ullrich Scheideler and Philip Rupprecht (eds.), *Tonality 1900–1950: Concept and Practice* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2012).” *Music Analysis* 33, no. 3 (2014): 388–405.

someone instructed you to hear random scrapes and vibrations rather than “music” when listening to a competent violin recital, then they would be out of luck: your established listening habits would inevitably overpower suggestion or command; you would hear it *always already* as music.²² In a similar way, I argue, post-tonal repertoire might sometimes be *heard* as an example of bent-out-of-shape tonality, even if it was *composed* according to a very different logic. To be open to the possibility of tonal suggestion is thus merely to be open to the possibility of listening in the world.²³

That said, this book is not motivated by a bias toward tonality; the pieces of music under consideration are best understood, I argue, in terms of their own special conditions of post-tonal organization. (It is just that the reception of those conditions is necessarily contingent, to a certain extent, on broader listening habits—hence the rationale of the paragraph above.) Indeed, while these pieces can be profitably examined in relation to contemporary developments and techniques on the continent, many of them present novel, individual solutions to the “problems” of twelve-tone composition more generally: How to develop chordal and melodic variety from a “fixed” intervallic repository? How to create harmonic action and repose in a post-triadic environment? How to create large-scale form in the absence of conventional tonal areas? And how to make all of this synthesize well with the fretboard?

This last question brings me to an important point: namely, that the analyses in this book were all worked out by means of scribbling on an electronically displayed score while balancing a guitar on my knee. In general, my approach consisted of playing the piece, formulating separately an abstract idea about it, and then testing that idea against my own embodied experience in repeat performance of a given passage. The readings that resulted are sometimes quite abstract, but invariably they grew out of, or entered into dialogue with, a tactile familiarity with the music. For this reason, I hope that the book will be interesting to performers, as well as to music theorists. How one understands this music when it is played is sometimes different from how it might be understood analytically; but, more often than not, the two approaches can be made to interact dialectically.²⁴

I try, where possible, to ground my analyses in ideas available to the composers of the pieces in question. But, as Carl Dahlhaus has noted, musical works have a complex

- 22 I take this example from Andrew Bowie’s excellent, *Music, Philosophy, and Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
- 23 In making this argument, I hope to build on the work of a number of other authors who have sought tonality (full-blooded, spectral, topical, or “punning”) in the twelve-tone row: see, for example, Daniel Harrison, “Samuel Barber’s Nocturne: An Experiment in Tonal Serialism,” in *Tonality 1900–1950: Concept and Practice*, ed. Felix Wörner, Ullrich Scheideler, and Philip Rupprecht (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2012), 261–76; Michael Cherlin, “Schoenberg and *Das Unheimliche*: Spectres of Tonality,” *Journal of Musicology* 11, no. 3 (1993): 357–73; Jack Boss, *Schoenberg’s Twelve-Tone Music: Symmetry and the Musical Idea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), particularly chapter 6; Joshua Banks Mailman, “Portmantonality and Babbitt’s Poetics of *Double Entendre*,” *Music Theory Online* 26, no. 2 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.30535/mt0.26.2.9>.
- 24 For an excellent example of theory and practice supporting one another in the analysis of guitar music, see Leathwood and Leong, “Local Frictions and Long-Range Connections in Carter’s *Changes* for Guitar.”

ontology: they are “primarily aesthetic objects and as such also represent an element of the present; only secondarily do they cast light on events and circumstances of the past.”²⁵ To study them is thus to study them for our time, as well as for their own. That is why this book makes full use of modern music theories, at the same time as emphasizing the aesthetic experiences immanent to a work’s contemplation and performance. It is not “a history” in any orthodox sense.²⁶

While the possibilities of compositional technique are to a certain extent historical and therefore *reconstructible*, representations of those techniques have to be *constructed* by the analyst, present-day or otherwise.²⁷ This is because music theories take a necessarily *narrative* form—“Procedure *x* results in outcome *y*; *this* relates to *that*”—which scores, pitches, and matrices, in and of themselves, do not. (A piece of music cannot contemplate its own unfolding; an analyst animates it with metaphorical agency.) One might accuse this book, then, of being partly a work of the imagination; but I’d conjecture that most composers would rather that we talk about their work in terms of imagination than in terms of proof. And, while written sources about this music are scarce, making a traditional history extremely difficult (if not impossible) to write, surely the most important artifacts bequeathed to us by these composers are the pieces themselves.²⁸ Any account of this topic, historical or otherwise, would be deficient without careful contemplation of the music itself.²⁹

Chapter Summaries

In the previous section, I cited Smith Brindle’s claim that “a whole generation [of composers] dedicated their efforts in one way or another to the exploration of the field between tonality and atonality, and to the integration of serialism into a more

25 Carl Dahlhaus, *Foundations of Music History*, trans. J. B. Robinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 4.

26 That said, examining Smith Brindle’s and Wilson’s music takes us to both Florence and Glasgow—locations at a marked geographical remove from the Darmstadt and Dartington centrality that often characterizes accounts of British musical modernism. Furthermore, the sophistication of ApIvor’s understanding of Schoenberg’s twelve-tone method, modeled in his own compositions, demonstrates that his music forms an important part of anglo-phone Schoenberg reception: something that his exclusion from, or drastic marginalization in, history textbooks has obfuscated (see chapter 2). While my corpus is small, then, the conclusions that can be drawn from close study of it allow for the larger histories in which it is embedded to be subtly reframed.

27 For a readable account of the differences between reconstructive, constructive, and deconstructive attitudes to music history, see J. P. E. Harper-Scott, *The Event of Music History* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2021), chapter 2.

28 Smith Brindle and ApIvor are the only composers featured who wrote about serialism in a theoretical way.

29 I take Roman Ingarden’s view that musical works are supratemporal, intentional objects, irreducible to, but accessible through, material traces (e.g., a score, a performance, etc.). See his *The Work of Music and the Problem of Its Identity*, ed. Jean G. Harrell, trans. Adam Czerniawski (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

accessible language.”³⁰ But how was such integration actually to be achieved? Chapter 1 addresses this question from a music-theoretical perspective. In an attempt to explain how post-tonal harmonic progressions might “make sense,” Smith Brindle himself formulated theories of *tension flow* and *tonal-atonal equilibrium* in his 1966 textbook, *Serial Composition*. The former theory compares the number of consonant and/or dissonant intervals between chords, albeit without providing a consistent means of distinguishing between similar sonorities; the latter observes that various musical passages strike a balance between functional and non-functional harmony, albeit without explaining the nature of said balance (or, indeed, what it is for something to be functional or non-functional). While his ideas are evocative, they lack theoretical finesse. Placing them in dialogue with recent developments in post-tonal scholarship helps to unlock their potential. Joseph Straus’s theory of voice leading in set-class space, for example, defines tension flow more rigorously: coherent post-tonal progressions often move smoothly from an initial, chromatically compact set class to one that is more open and spacious.³¹ To my mind, sets of the latter type — e.g., [0369], [0268], [0258] — resemble traditional seventh chords; they contain a tritone that requires resolution. If this tritone resolves to a third, then a contrapuntal resolution takes place, *even if that third is housed in a dissonant harmony*. Smith Brindle’s concept of tonal-atonal equilibrium neatly captures this effect — of simultaneous melodic release and increased harmonic tension. I explore the practical implications of these ideas through analysis of *The Harmony of Peace* from Smith Brindle’s *Ten Simple Preludes* (1979) and the first fragment of his *El Polifemo de oro* (1956). I conclude the chapter, however, with an analysis of the latter piece’s third fragment, in which tonal-atonal equilibrium is manifested by non-dodecaphonic means. Rather than clinging to serialism unthinkingly, Smith Brindle uses it as a creative spur to craft his own system and affects.

Perhaps guitar composers innovated in the field of twelve-tone composition because they were not really aware of what their colleagues, continental or domestic, were doing? They had latched onto an abstract, theoretical principle, detached from the rich Second-Viennese repertory that had given it life, and then developed it in their own way and for their own ends. Chapter 2 suggests that this narrative would be too reductive. It argues that the opening *Poco lento* from ApIvor’s Variations, Op. 29, demonstrates the composer’s sensitivity to, and detailed understanding of, the ways in which Schoenberg used intervallic symmetry as an ideal that structured the unfolding of an entire dodecaphonic piece — by means of that ideal’s being hinted at, frustrated, and then ultimately realized.

As the first variation develops, ApIvor uses the collectional invariance afforded by hexachordal combinatoriality to manipulate row order, thus facilitating the eventual realization (after a thwarted attempt) of the previously inchoate symmetrical

³⁰ Smith Brindle, *The New Music*, 5.

³¹ Even though Straus’s terminology is intentionally “neutral,” he goes on to state that “the relationship between consonance/dissonance or stability/instability and evenness/compactness is reasonably clear”: Joseph N. Straus, “Voice Leading in Set-Class Space,” *Journal of Music Theory* 49, no. 1 (2008): 45–108, 77.

potential of its two constituent hexachords. This aspect of Schoenberg's twelve-tone technique — dynamic and developmental — has only recently received full explication in Jack Boss's magisterial study *Schoenberg's Twelve-Tone Music: Symmetry and the Musical Idea*.³² That ApIvor had potentially recognized its importance as early as 1958 suggests the inherent interest of the Variations as a document of anglophone Schoenberg reception. Furthermore, the variation's symmetrical solution — a new ordering of the basic row — is wonderfully idiomatic, consisting of a sliding-sixths hand shape and open strings. Far from the adoption of a modernist idiom forcing the guitar to behave as if it were something other than itself, twelve-tone denouement here coincides exactly with the music's becoming most guitaristic. The Variations might thus be thought to represent an important point of synthesis between the history of musical modernism and the history of guitar composition.

Chapter 3 pursues a different line of inquiry. Is the history of British twelve-tone guitar music a binary one, characterized by devotee practitioners and their vituperative detractors, or did some British guitar composers experiment with, but ultimately remain ambivalent about, dodecaphony? The solo guitar pieces of the Glaswegian composer, Thomas Wilson, might be thought to provide a provisional set of answers to these questions. In a nutshell: they manifest critiques of dodecaphony in the form of musical notation.

Writing at a distance from the modernist centers of British musical fashion — London, Dartington, and Cheltenham — Wilson started to experiment with both guitar composition and twelve-tone serialism in the early 1960s. His first guitar work, *Three Pieces*, bakes a problem into its opening row: potential inversional symmetry (both in terms of pitch and order-number position) between its first and third tetrachords is disrupted, resulting in an otherwise impossible foreground transpositional consistency between dyads on the surface of the music. Much of the movement is spent trying to resolve this tension between different pitch parameters, operational at different structural levels. Because Wilson sticks doggedly to a *single row form* in the piece's opening *Allegro molto*, however, this proves to be a difficult task. Whether this is down to an impoverished understanding of the possibilities of serialism, or because the method's "inherent" restrictions (as Wilson saw them) were being purposefully caricatured, the resulting harmonic monotony leads to a non-row derived pentachord's becoming the work's expressive apex.

This desire for variety — "impossible" within a serial universe, at least as Wilson presents it — leads to a freely atonal slow movement. The Finale attempts to synthesize these two extremes: namely, strict serial procedure and free post-tonal composition. No clear reconciliation is reached, however, and the movement's expressive apex is once again a non-row derived pc set. While the work's end marks a return to the opening row, its gelid articulation does not suggest attainment or triumph.

In the later *Soliloquy*, it seems at first glance as if Wilson has turned away from dodecaphony proper. It becomes apparent, on closer inspection, though, that a

32 Jack Boss, *Schoenberg's Twelve-Tone Music: Symmetry and the Musical Idea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

twelve-tone “chorale” near the end of its first section might function as a skeleton key: it unlocks a fresh understanding of the generation of the work’s opening materials, which are based on exactly the same set classes. While dodecaphony is portrayed in *Three Pieces* as a barrier to creativity—as something to be overcome—in *Soliloquy*, it provides a sublated means of freeing up creative possibilities. The consequence of its acceptance by Wilson, however, is that the row basically vanishes from the musical surface. *Soliloquy*, in classic dialectical fashion, both *is* and *is not* a twelve-tone work.

In chapter 4, I explore the ways in which analyzing guitar works by those who wrote principally for other mediums can be a useful means of measuring overall changes in a composer’s evolving style. Take the development of Richard Rodney Bennett’s compositional method between the late 1960s and the early eighties, for example: a response, in part, to his growing disillusionment with modernism. This encompassed a move from a strict, albeit highly individual interpretation of dodecaphony, to an arguably looser, more expansive form of serialism. (Note the separability of those terms here.) This chapter argues that Bennett’s solo guitar works—the *Impromptus* (1968) and the *Sonata* (1983)—capture this shift perfectly. Rather than representing pieces that are peripheral to his overall compositional development, Bennett’s guitar works provide a means of understanding one of the most important stylistic changes of his career.

One of the recurrent technical aspects of Bennett’s guitar works, which makes other stylistic changes all the more recognizable, is his use of exclusively *pandiatonic* pc sets, and of his treatment of tone rows as generating complexes rather than as themes (i.e., row boundaries are never accented on the musical surface; the row itself is merely a conceptual inkwell from which musical content can be drawn). Richard Cohn defines pandiatonicism (after Slonimsky) as “using diatonic scales without triads.”³³ I use the term principally to refer to diatonic, non-triadic sets that are combined in (often freely) chromatic combinations. In the first of the *Impromptus*, the pandiatonic quality of the row’s constituent sets represents an almost incidental facet of the overall musical argument, which privileges more standard means of post-tonal motivic development (e.g., the composing-out of surface pc sets by means of related networks of transposition and inversion).³⁴ Pandiatonic sets account mostly for the relative consonance of the surface, although they can still be understood abstractly to frame sections in ways *almost* suggestive of a tonal center. In the final *Arioso*, however, a single, prolonged set class, intoned melodically, is juxtaposed with and contextualized by a number of different pandiatonic verticals. The levels of relative dissonance or consonance that result are dependent on scalar proximity

33 Richard Cohn, *Audacious Euphony: Chromatic Harmony and the Triad’s Second Nature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), xiv.

34 Joseph N. Straus describes the relationship between the interval of a given transposition and the intervallic contents of a given pc set in terms of the Schenkerian concept of “composing-out”: i.e., that which is stated vertically (harmonically) as a pc set can be “represented” horizontally (melodically) by an isomorphic network of transpositions. See *The Art of Post-Tonal Analysis: Thirty-Three Graphic Music Analyses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 207.

or distance (as determined by the cycle of fifths). Furthermore, the unfolding of the piece — readily described in terms of *home*, *departure*, and *return* — is determined by the “prolonged” pandiatonic set class’s becoming increasingly “denatured” (i.e., turned into a fully chromatic pitch grouping) in its middle section, before being restored at the beginning of the movement’s final section. Pandiatonicism thus comes to control both content *and* form.

In the opening *Allegro* of the Sonata, by contrast, a twelve-tone row is arguably supplanted by an initiating eighteen-note gestural shape, which is then transformed serially. Bennett’s new, more extensive row ultimately carries his earlier pandiatonic arguments one step further, modeling a vectored motion from pandiatonic overdetermination (i.e., sets possibly belonging to many diatonic collections) to pandiatonic specificity (i.e., sets belonging to the fewest possible number of diatonic collections). Even where strict serialism is decentered, in sections of the *Allegro* and the work’s other movements, this is in aid of creating a richer harmonic argument, juxtaposing pandiatonic sets with chromatic, octatonic, hexatonic, and whole-tone sets (thus building on the “denaturing” process encountered in the *Arioso*). In such circumstances, I use Kenneth Smith’s recent innovation of “drive analysis” — a theory whereby chromatic polychords are broken up into constituent dominant-seventh-like sonorities (i.e., “drives”) — to demonstrate how Bennett is able to cultivate meaningful differentiation between foreground and background levels. Background pitch collections — synonymous with the root notes of any given number of possible drives heard over time — are referenced by, but subtly dissonant with, the surface pc sets on which they are contingent (i.e., a given chromatic polychord).³⁵ This kind of structuring technique provides an alternative means of organizing pitched materials, distinct from serialism, even if the pieces themselves remain serial. In short, Bennett’s Sonata makes similar, but ultimately more intensive and directed musical arguments than in the *Impromptus*, albeit that Bennett now does this through freer harmonic means.

What were these composers’ different attitudes to twelve-tone composition *on the guitar*? How did their compositional techniques interact with, and respond to, the instrumental medium through which they were expressed? Answers to these more guitaristic questions emerge through the course of the following chapters. Roughly speaking, though, the composers under consideration can be divided into two groups: namely, those that allowed the guitar “to speak” *through* dodecaphony (ApIvor and Bennett); and those that understood the guitar to show its true colors when twelve-tone syntax breaks down (Smith Brindle and Wilson). (In the latter case, “breakdowns” are aesthetically marked events as opposed to mere deficiencies.) Either way, the twelve-tone system gave life to all of these pieces, which formed part of an exciting new wave of guitar composition, fostered by Julian Bream. It is my hope that this book might shed new light on this important period in the guitar’s development. Furthermore, I hope to facilitate new perspectives on already cherished works, and

35 See Kenneth Smith, *Desire in Chromatic Harmony: A Psychodynamic Theory of Fin de Siècle Tonality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), chapter 6.

to renew interest in those more marginal pieces that still played a vital role in the development of British guitaristic modernism. More generally still, I hope that this book might contribute to the presently burgeoning field of guitar studies, and to secure the place of music theory and analysis as a vital tool within it.