overall effect of the music on the listener. Its chameleon-like interaction with the sound world of the instrumental layers – acting as subject, object, and an almost imperceptible element among equal voices in a global texture or structure – brings together dramatic, narrative, and purely structural dimensions.

Despite the politically loaded references and symbolism of the texts, both works refrain from making any authoritative statement about musical or political meaning. The polyphony of the compositional methods employed can be understood as an affinity for the metaphors of "polyphony" or "plurality of voices" in literary criticism as developed by Mikhail Bakhtin and Jacques Derrida, among others. Bakhtin describes the polyphonic novel as a situation in which an author or narrator no longer has control over the characters, but acts with them on the same hierarchical level:[38] "There is no third person to bring unity to the confrontation between the two; they do not culminate in a stable 'I' which would be the 'I' of the monologic author."[39] In my compositions, however, "polyphony" is not limited to the hierarchical balance of different musical and textual layers, but might also be connected to Derrida's idea of an inner polyphony within voices and single words:

> Voice can betray the body to which it is lent, it can make it ventriloquize as if the body were no longer anything more than the actor or the double of another voice, of the voice of the other, even of an innumerable, incalculable polyphony. A voice may give birth […] to another body.[40]

> Already when a word has several meanings – and this plurality is irreducible – you can hear in it, or it lets you hear even if you don't take the initiative, several meanings and thus several voices. There are several voices already in the word. One can give this plurality of voices in the word itself its freedom, more or less freedom.[41]

4. Composition as Polyphony: Creating, Performing, and Perceiving Music Non-Hierarchically

When we speak of "polyphony" in the context of this book, this naturally implies the idea of an "(inter)cultural polyphony," the idea of an "encounter" or "confrontation" between two (or more) different systems or understandings of sound and listening that may or may not have common features, common ground. Bhaktin's and Derrida's decentering of the subject as condensed into the metaphor of polyphony, outlined above, has profound musical implications. In contemporary music, however, the term "polyphony" has rarely been used after 1945, probably because of its close association with past musical epochs such as Renaissance or Baroque (not to mention "counterpoint," which, owing to its image as a narrowly rule-based and outdated method, has temporarily disappeared almost entirely from compositional discourse).[42] A "radicalized" polyphony, a simultaneous occurrence of different musical layers or personae, however, is at the core of many new music poetics, as demonstrated in preceding chapters (→ V.3, VI.1).

38 See Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 5–46.

39 Kristeva, "The Ruin of a Poetics," 111.

40 Derrida, *Points… Interviews 1974–1994*, 161.

41 Ibid., 392–393.

42 See the detailed discussion of these terms and their applicability to new music in Kleinrath and Utz, "Harmonik / Polyphonie."

John Cage is an obvious example: from the early 1950s, he created many pieces or collections of pieces that can be performed simultaneously in any combination, often without any specified restrictions. In 1991, experiencing a complete simultaneous performance of Cage's *Ten Thousand Things*, a collection of solo pieces for piano, violin, percussion, and speaker completed between 1953 and 1956,[43] was a revelation for me as a young composer. It motivated me to engage more self-consciously with the idea of simultaneous musical structures that would not be coordinated precisely by a score, but rather allow for different versions and interconnections in each performance.

It seems that some recent developments in contemporary art music tend to give up the kind of pleasantly disorienting complexity that I associate with such an experience of musical simultaneity, and I feel that this leads to a certain dependence on "designed" but one-dimensional musical surfaces. (This may seem an overly generalized criticism, but it will suffice here to point to common experiences I might share with many colleagues in daily encounters with "academic" new music, however broadly defined.) That is why I feel a certain necessity to insist on "polyphony" as a fruitful component of a critical music of our time. In approaching this dynamic, I will proceed by discussing a number of my own works from perceptual perspectives, leading into a theoretical-psychological excursus and closing with analytical remarks on my recent work *walls* for ensemble (2018), premiered in Beijing in July 2018.

Several years after my 1991 "Cage experience," the problem of simultaneous layers reoccurred in my music when I tried to find compositional solutions to the challenge of musical interculturality. Simultaneity in a narrower sense, explored repeatedly in this book, seemed to be a valid option for combining East Asian and Western instruments in the same ensemble, as suggested most prominently by Tōru Takemitsu's well-known (and Cage-influenced) work *November Steps* from 1967 (→ III.4, VI.1). As elaborated earlier, the cultural essentialism inherent in such a conception appeared increasingly problematic to me. How, then, was it possible to put "Asian" and "Western" parts of an ensemble on the same footing without reducing them to a static image of associated local, national, or "cultural" traditions – but also without subsuming them under an authoritative compositional concept that does not allow any kind of idiomatics to emerge?

The preceding analyses aimed to demonstrate the answers to this intricate compositional problem that I have attempted to provide in a series of chamber music pieces composed between 2001 and 2006, in which Western instruments mix with Korean, Chinese, and Japanese instruments. The principal idea on which these works are based may be understood as evoking the image of a broad three-dimensional sonic and temporal space subjected to constant kaleidoscopic transformation during the listening process. These works aim at a sonic situation in which foreground and background are permanently reconfigured; culturally defined idioms may be incorporated as inseparable parts of this sonorous environment, partly preserved, partly dissolved.

As we have seen, *Interference* and *together//apart* from 2001 employ culturally defined structural layers as key materials: Webern's piano variations op. 27, *Xing jie* from the South Chinese Silk-and-Bamboo repertoire (*sizhuyue*), the Korean court music piece *Sangnyŏngsan*, and Isang Yun's duo *Together*. In many parts of *Interference*, the different materials are still recognizable, remaining broadly indebted to Takemitsu's idea of enhanced cultural difference preserved in a montage-like simultaneity, especially in the first part, where the mosaic-like surface consists of easily distinguishable layers (→ VI.1). Although there are multiple processes of interaction between these layers, most notably in a transformation of the *zheng* zither in the direction of the piano's Webernian idiom, the idea of enhanced cultural difference is expressed in a rather

43 See Pritchett, *The Music of John Cage*, 95–103.

crude montage-like simultaneity. Similar processes operate in the background of *together// apart*, though here the original materials largely "disappear" in a dense polymetric and polytemporal structure. The layering of meter and tempo in this work serves to communicate a refined form of heterophony or slight "asynchronicity" in response to traditional Korean ensemble playing, resulting in a mode of performance that "collapses" toward the end and gives way to a more propulsive ensemble structure (→ VI.2).

Three to five years later, I further radicalized the idea of simultaneous layering in *the wasteland of minds* and *Glasakkord*. Here, I increasingly associated the idea of simultaneity with conflict and "incompatibility," resulting from a more "pessimistic" perspective on interculturality in the wake of 9/11 and the Iraq War. The dense layering of proportional structures of asynchronous and cyclical rhythmic layers is continuously transformed by live electronics in *the wasteland of minds* and destroyed by increasingly contrasting interruptions in *Glasakkord*.

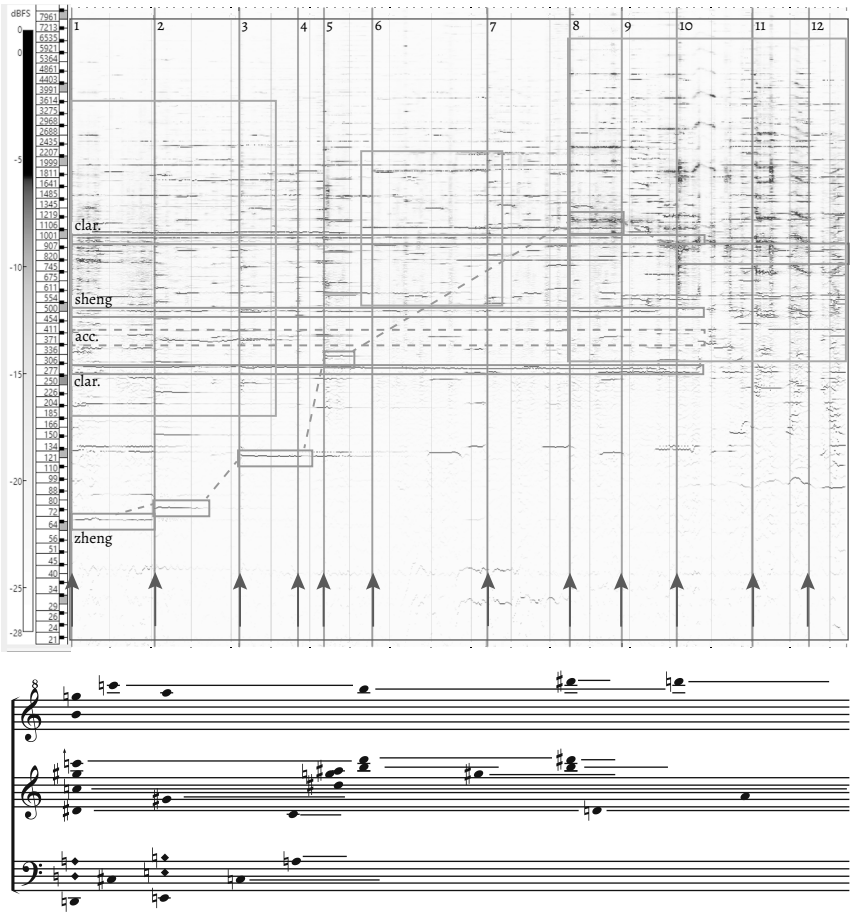
In turning to my more recent research on the phenomenological and performative aspects of musical listening,[44] I would like to convey a somewhat more precise idea of the experience of hearing sound structures as resulting from layered structures, as in *the wasteland of minds* (→ VI.1, Ex. 6.3–6.6). What is the auditory consequence of this kind of enhanced layering? One might emphasize the diversity of perceptual approaches that this layered structure affords, something that might be described as "performative listening": the option to fluctuate or switch constantly (or selectively) between different "listening attitudes." If we take the beginning of *the wasteland of minds* (mm. 1–8), it is intended to allow for – at least – four different attitudes of listening. Needless to say, these attitudes are not mutually exclusive, but rather overlap or can be considered complementary to some degree (Fig. 6.2):

1. An "isolationist" or *analytical mode* would carefully distinguish between the different sound strata or streams: the sustained clarinet, the nervous gestures of the accordion, the plucked impulses of the *zheng*, etc. Heard in this way, the music seems literally to place ("-pose") together ("com-") different characteristic and superimposed elements in an almost montage-like manner that can be related to one another by multiple cross-connections (dotted lines).
2. Listening to this section "holistically" would imply considering the different elements as "sub-streams" of an overall transformative sound process; this attitude is suggested by the rudimentary transcription of the sonographic analysis to score notation, demonstrating several layers of sonic continuity; in consequence, one might perceive this opening as a single constantly transforming and evolving sound.
3. In yet another listening attitude, we might focus on *cues* in the overall musical process, *salient*, outstanding events that organize the temporal flow of the sound, marked by vertical lines on the sonogram. These are most notably the plucked impulses of the *zheng* but may also include entries of new registers or timbres.
4. Finally, one can practice an attitude of *presentist* listening, focusing on the sound events as they occur in real time, without analytical distinctions between streams or segments. This mode would largely relate to what Stockhausen has described as "moment form,"[45] adopted

44 See, among other publications, Utz, "'Liberating' Sound and Perception" and Utz, "Time-Space Experience in Works for Solo Cello." My research on performative listening and performative analysis has been conducted since 2009, documented in around twenty articles, and is set to appear in a monograph in 2021.

45 Stockhausen, "Momentform."

*Figure 6.2: Christian Utz, **the wasteland of minds**, mm. 1–8, sonagram and rudimentary transcription; the graphic elements suggest four different modes of listening: "analytical" (small gray boxes and dotted lines), "holistic" (large black box around the entire sonagram excerpt), "cue-oriented" (arrows and vertical lines), and "presentist" (mid-size gray boxes)*



by Jonathan Kramer as "moment time"[46] – a type of listening less reliant on memory and expectation than on a contemplation of the present moment.

The plausibility of these listening attitudes surely changes as the piece progresses; toward the end of the first phase of the piece, after about five minutes, a "collapse" of the layered structure occurs, resulting in a high density of cue-based fragmentation that disrupts the temporal flow and can already be inferred from the scattered impression of the score (→ VI.1, Ex. 6.6).

Another type of listening experience can be triggered if we jump to a later stage: roughly six minutes into the piece, in the middle of its second phase, a more rigid and repetitive, less gestural version of the layered structure evolves, so here the transformative, "holistic" and/or presentist listening attitudes surely gain importance. In later stages of the piece, the dense and tightly layered model continuously disintegrates, giving way to more prominent soloistic articulations such as a solo by the Chinese ocarina *xun* performed by the *sheng* soloist, which is

46 Kramer, *The Time of Music*, 201–220.

singled out in the listening act because of its unfamiliar and unique timbre as a prominent *cue* in the large-scale formal process.

A Map of Musical Simultaneities

Some of the terminology I have used here is taken from psychological and psychoacoustic theories of perception, such as those summarized in Albert Bregman's major book *Auditory Scene Analysis* from 1990.[47] I will now expand these categories as basic parameters of a "map of musical simultaneities" (Fig. 6.3) and explain different categories and examples with reference to this map.

Musical perception might be described as building spatiotemporal relationships between sounds. This process involves many preconditions, not least an implicit and explicit knowledge of everyday and musical sounds, most of them acquired during our experience as lifelong listeners. Establishing spatiotemporal relationships during musical perception means that we organize sound in a twofold manner: sounds occupy an imaginary spatial "map" on which we locate sound events and processes simultaneously and sequentially or linearly. The simultaneous dimension might be described as a continuous space between segregation and fusion of sound layers or *streams*, while the linear dimension lets sound events appear either in isolation, prompting the model of a large-scale architectural form of different events in time, or as part of an ongoing process or continuity without clear-cut segmentation.[48]

Placing concepts of musical simultaneity in music on this map first requires looking at the most common concept established for this phenomenon in music theory: *polyphony*. Western polyphonic music might be grasped as an ensemble of independent voices, intertwined in a sonorous space, subject to a hierarchical system of note relations but appearing free and unique in their melodic contour and registral space. Ernst Kurth's 1918 definition of polyphony captures some of these features while notably emphasizing the priority of overall coherence over an independence of parts:

> The highest law of polyphonic structure is that the complex of voices must always appear as a unity; the multiplicity of voices never suppresses the sense of a totality into which the lines are woven, and at the same time, omitting a single voice would not only lead to a reduction of the complex of lines but would mean its organic distortion.[49]

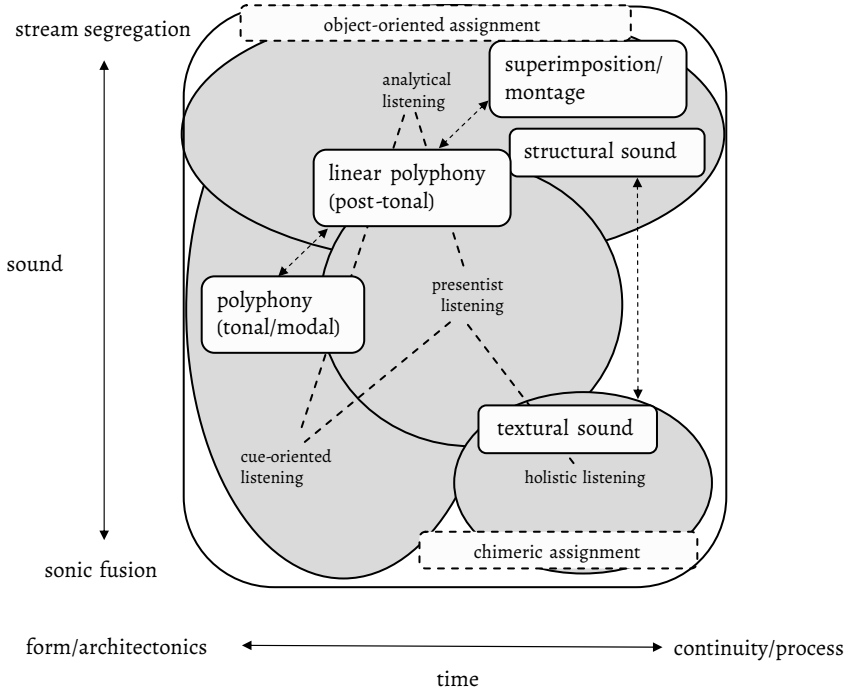
Established notions of polyphony had been challenged as early as 1911 (six years before Kurth's monograph *Grundlagen des linearen Kontrapunkts*) in Arnold Schoenberg's *Theory of Harmony*, where harmony in modern music is described as a result of musical lines that are pursued with

47 Bregman, *Auditory Scene Analysis*. See also Deutsch, "Grouping Mechanisms in Music" and Deliège and Mélen, "Cue Abstraction in the Representation of Musical Form."

48 There is a huge number of studies on these two conflicting conceptions of musical listening and musical form, which I have summarized and transformed into analytical perspectives on music from Dufay to Varèse in the extended article Utz, "Räumliche Vorstellungen als 'Grundfunktionen des Hörens.'"

49 Kurth, *Grundlagen des linearen Kontrapunkts*, 351 ("Das oberste Gesetz polyphoner Struktur besteht darin, daß der Stimmenkomplex stets als eine Einheit erscheint; nie verdrängt die Häufung der Stimmen den Eindruck einer Gesamtheit, zu der die Linien ineinandergeflochten sind und andrerseits würde das Weglassen einer einzigen Stimme nicht eine bloße Verdünnung des Linienkomplexes darstellen, sondern seine organische Zerstörung.")

Figure 6.3: A map of musical simultaneities



a particular degree of independence.[50] Schoenberg elaborated on this point in the 1931 manuscript "Der lineare Kontrapunkt."[51] Here, he insisted on the "carelessness" (Unbekümmertheit) of simultaneous lines and suggested avoiding all progressions that might remind one of tonal cadences or fundamental chord relationships.[52]

This perspective had far-reaching consequences: in dodecaphony and (proto-)serial music, note rows and aggregates are superimposed in a rigorous manner, as did, even earlier, the tunes of military bands, Protestant hymns, folk songs, and quotations of art music in the works of Charles Ives, testifying to a simultaneity of independent events or "personae" as a key experience of modernity (→ V.3, VI.1). Many serialist approaches to musical structure were derived from radical interpretations of polyphony akin to Schoenberg's. In a 1955 radio program,

50 "For it is apparent […] that we are turning to a new epoch of polyphonic style, and as in the earlier epochs, harmonies will be a product of the voice leading: justified solely by the melodic lines!" (Schoenberg, *Theory of Harmony*, 389; "[…] anscheinend […] wenden wir uns einer neuen Epoche des polyphonen Stils zu, und wie in den früheren Epochen werden die Zusammenklänge Ergebnis der Stimmführung sein: Rechtfertigung durchs Melodische allein!" (Schönberg, *Harmonielehre*, 466.) In the preface to the third edition of his monograph from 1927, Kurth insisted that a "harmony-free patching together of pitch lines" ("harmoniefreie[s] […] Zusammenflicken von Tonlinien," *Grundlagen des linearen Kontrapunkts*, third edition, XVI) had in no way been implied in his use of the concept of linearity. He thus rejected the idea that his title "linear counterpoint" suggested a radicalization of linear independence to the point of making the resulting harmonies a byproduct of the complex of lines.

51 Schoenberg, "Linear Counterpoint."

52 Ibid., 291–292.

Stockhausen was particularly explicit about the consequences of (post-)serial composition for a non-hierarchical musical perception:

> We listen to the whole, retaining an overall impression in which the details are distinguished from one another sufficiently strongly to prevent any interconnections that might become more important than others. […] As far as possible, everything composed should be part of the formal process, nothing should dominate […]. […] the music is in a state of constant flux […], without lingering on the instantaneous, on the beautiful moments […].[53]

Following Kurth's, Schoenberg's, and Stockhausen's definitions, we might place the three concepts of (tonal) polyphony, linear (post-tonal) polyphony, and superimposition on a diagonal line on our map. Of course, these areas on the diagonal are to some degree arbitrary and should be regarded as movable, at least in the horizontal; in general, the relationship between polyphony and superimposition appears not as a categorial distinction but as a permeable relationship indicated by the dotted arrows on the map.

In John Cage's *45' for a Speaker* from 1954, a component of the *Ten Thousand Things*, a radicalized form of superimposition is interpreted as a logical consequence of the decision to "give up counterpoint": "Giving up counterpoint one gets superimposition and, of course, a little counterpoint comes in of its own accord. How I wouldn't know."[54] For Cage, non-hierarchical simultaneity is closely connected to the abandonment of "form" and leads to the model of presentist listening.

The term "polyphony" is also used in another key concept of musical simultaneity that must complement our map: in 1963, nine years after Cage's *45' for a Speaker*, Helmut Lachenmann first developed his much-cited sound typology in a series of lectures (→ VI.1). As outlined above (→ VI.1), this typology insists on the key model of "structural sound" (*Strukturklang*) as a "*polyphony* of orderings."[55] Lachenmann's idea of structural sonority suggests that the "development of each element is traceable by the listener" resulting in "a sort of montage of different structures [that] actively dispels any sense of hierarchy or priority."[56]

The most efficient compositional tool Lachenmann invented in order to realize such "structures" is the idea of "sound families." The key feature of this idea is that, similar to Ludwig Wittgenstein's idea of family resemblance, family affiliations are not exclusive.[57] This means that, for example, the flutter tongue of a flute in the middle register might be part of three families at once: the family of flute sounds, the family of middle-register pitched sounds, and the family of "perforated" tremolo sounds. A work like Lachenmann's orchestral piece *Kontrakadenz* (1970)

53 Stockhausen, "Gruppenkomposition: Klavierstück I," 65, 67 ("Wir hören vielmehr auf das Ganze hin, behalten einen zusammenfassenden Eindruck, in dem die Einzelheiten so gleich stark auseinandergehalten werden, daß keine Verbindungen auftauchen, die wichtiger als andere werden […]. Möglichst alles Komponierte soll gleich stark am Formprozeß beteiligt sein, und nichts soll dominieren […]. […] die Musik [befindet] sich ständig im Fluß […], ohne das Verweilenwollen beim Augenblicklichen, bei den schönen Stellen […].")

54 Cage, "45' for a Speaker," 164.

55 Lachenmann, "Klangtypen der Neuen Musik," 18 ("Polyphonie von Anordnungen;" emphasis is mine).

56 Heathcote, "Liberating Sounds," 28.

57 See Neuwirth, "Strukturell vermittelte Magie," 79–82. Wittgenstein's concept has been thoroughly explored and adopted for musical analysis by Dora A. Hanninen ("Associative Sets, Categories, and Music Analysis," 160–163).

exemplifies how Lachenmann creates a universe of interacting and superimposed sounds from this framework.[58]

Albert Bregman's distinction between "natural" and "chimeric" assignment is equally relevant to a further analysis of such situations, and is an important addition to our map:[59] in the case of "natural assignment" (which I prefer to label "object-oriented assignment"), the identification of the sound source is a vital part of musical experience, connecting it with everyday audition where we are used to identifying sound sources. In many other musical cases, which Bregman labels "chimeric assignment," several sound sources create a composite timbre, or the originating sound object is obscured for other reasons. In Lachenmann's *Kontrakadenz*, both types of assignment are clearly contributing to the listening experience; at the beginning, rotating metal discs and table tennis balls are identified as "non-musical" sounds unexpected in an orchestral piece, but they soon merge with other members of the sound family "accelerating impulses" into a chimeric situation. Ultimately, it becomes clear that many composers (including myself) were or are seeking musical situations that enable perception to fluctuate continuously between the whole and individual streams or segments, between "chimeric" and "object-oriented" listening situations.

walls: Ongoing Processes of De- and Restabilization

In order to contextualize these attempts to systematize polyphony and simultaneity in music in a broader research context, one might refer to the question of hierarchies in music. These may be configured in two different ways, along the two axes of our map in Figure 6.3:

1. events in time may be singled out as particularly important, suggesting a large-scale formal architecture with the most salient events building the foundation of a hierarchical temporal-architectonic structure; this is a common description of formal perception in music psychology;
2. concurrently experienced events may be brought into a hierarchical relationship with louder, higher, more clearly "pronounced" or "articulated" sounds dominating a hierarchy of streams or voices.

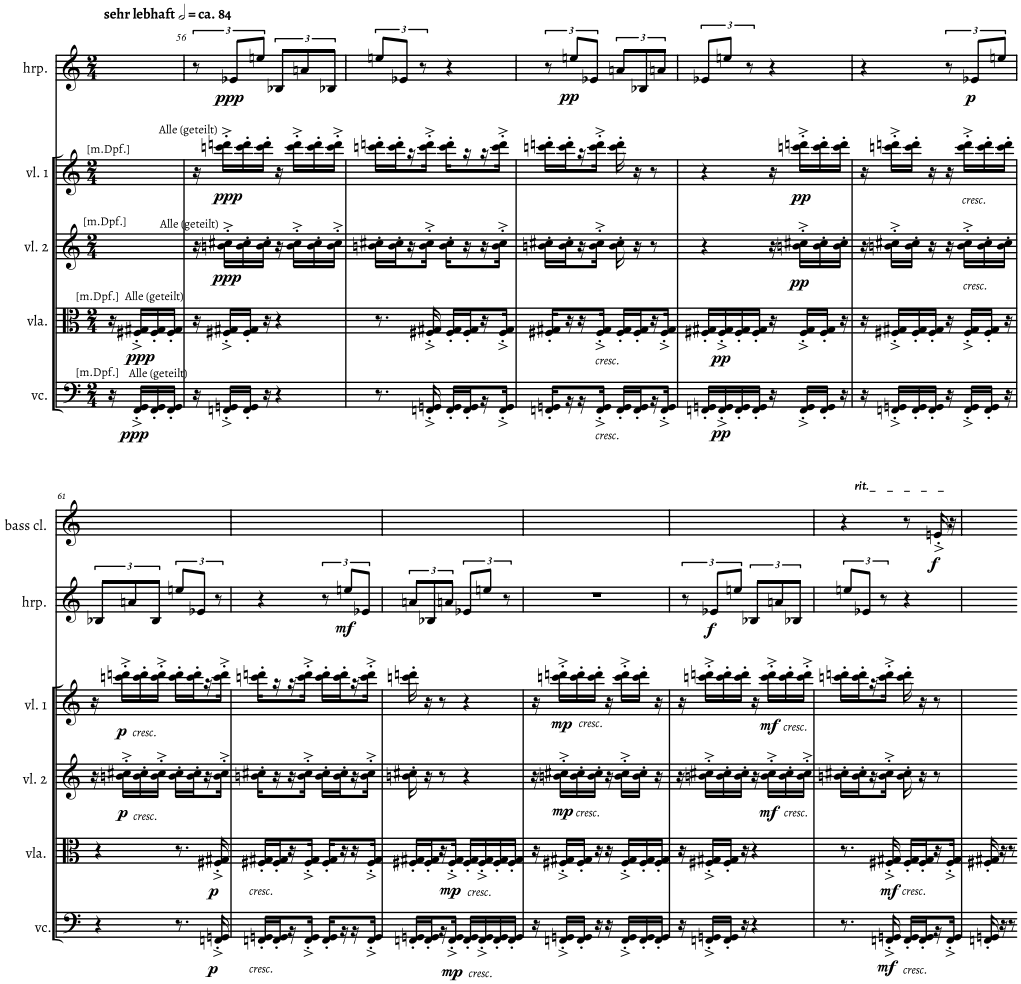
While it is clear that both kinds of hierarchy can be reduced to a minimum, musical experience is never entirely hierarchy-free. A valuable artistic aim may thus be defined as developing compositional ideas that result in spatiotemporal constellations that are sufficiently multivalent to allow for both increasing and decreasing simultaneous and sequential hierarchies during the act of listening.

These ideas were triggers for my most recent work to be discussed here, *walls* for chamber ensemble and electronics (2018), which is predominantly a piece for Western ensemble, interrupted three times by electronic ritornellos accompanied by the instruments on stage – but eventually extending into the audience space, where two Chinese instruments (*zheng* and *xun*) act as surprising and unfamiliar "sounds from afar." The metaphor of "walls" not unintentionally invokes cultural and political references (the Great Wall of China, the Berlin wall, the wall built recently between the United States and Mexico, the firewall censoring the Chinese internet, etc.) but it

58 See the analyses of this work in Nonnenmann, *Angebot durch Verweigerung*, 80–137 and Utz, "Auf der Suche nach einer befreiten Wahrnehmung," 48–49.

59 See Bregman, *Auditory Scene Analysis*, 459–460.

Example 6.21: Anton Webern, ***Symphonie op. 21****, second movement, variation V; the structural model explored in Utz,* ***walls*** *for ensemble and electronics*



is also used and deconstructed in the compositional process. Imaginary "walls" are necessary in order to construct the two hierarchical concepts during listening, as explained above: simultaneous and sequential "walls" may help to distinguish formal sections or polyphonic layers.

In composing this piece, I once again used a preconceived structure, serving here as a representation of a "stable" system of walls: Variation 5 from the second movement of Anton Webern's *Symphonie* op. 21 (1928) (Ex. 6.21). In a complex conceptual transformation, this rhythmic canon was expanded to a duration of twenty minutes. Although I originally intended to preserve and continue this expanded canon until the end of the piece, it soon occurred to me that this would have resulted in an overly deterministic, overly even formal process. Thus, the stability of the "Webern wall" is continuously challenged and eroded by all sorts of "distur-

bances," most prominently by three loop-saturated sequences of electronic sound, using excerpts from one of my early electronic pieces (*time freeze*, 1996), which resonate with Webern's ostinato structures. The musicians initially attempt to "integrate" the electronic sounds, but the situation gets increasingly "out of control." The Chinese instruments *zheng* and *xun* enter from afar, completely denying the "controlled time" of the Western ensemble and introducing, among other things, allusions to the *qin* classic *Guang ling san* (*Shen Qi Mi Pu*, 1425). Thus, the music in *walls* moves from a clear and probably somewhat overemphasized focusing of perceptual attention (a single dodecaphonic sonority, repeatedly introduced, opens the piece, Ex. 6.22) to situations of changing, movable, transforming centers of perceptual attention. The "walls" in the music lose their stability, and an open space of conflicting layers gains prominence (Ex. 6.23).

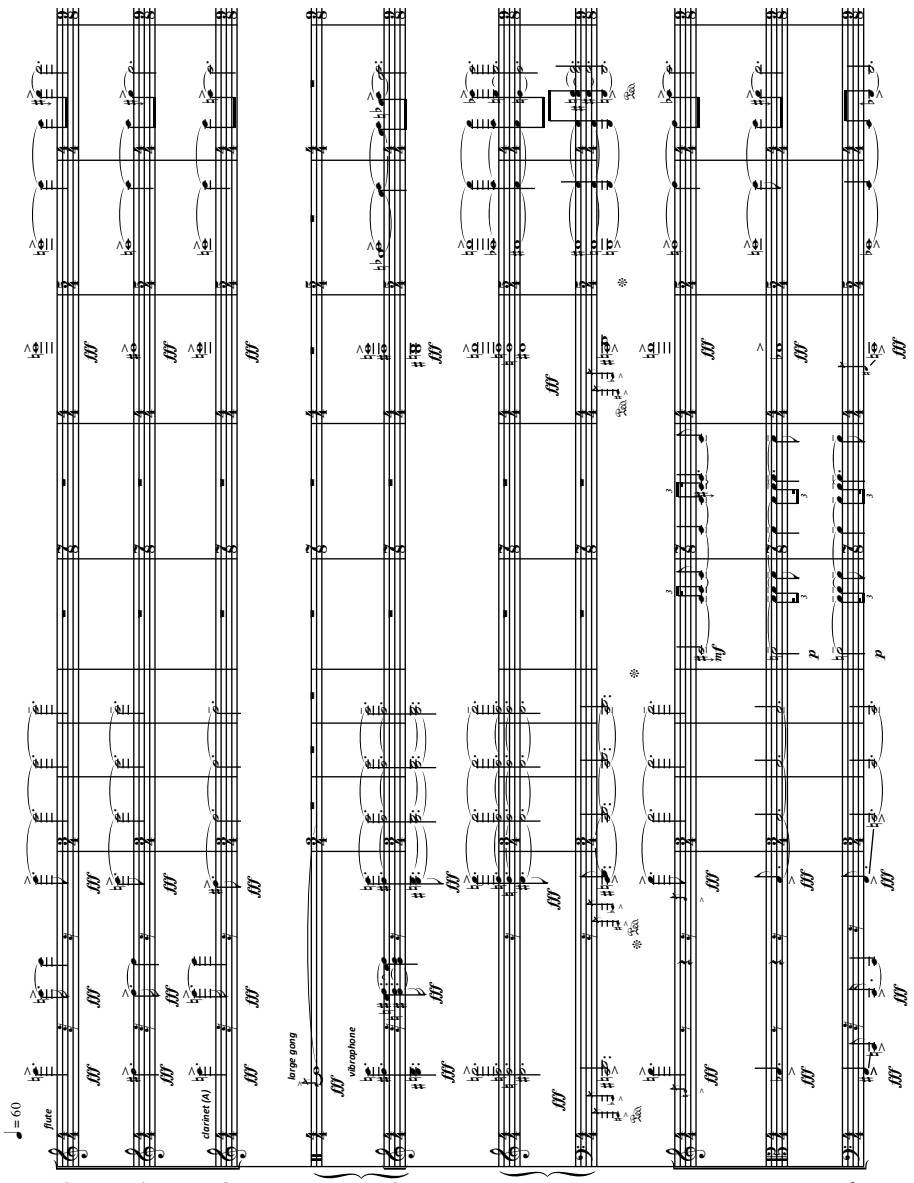
The idea of simultaneity and non-hierarchy also has consequences for performance – indeed, the question of musical hierarchies is not least a question of performance in general. In the more recent performance practice of contemporary music, a brilliant, virtuosic, "philharmonic" sound has prevailed which tends to hierarchically separate foreground and background, and to accentuate formal segmentation even in cases where the musical score might be ambiguous in these respects.[60] Thus, the idea of rediscovering ambiguity and *polyphony* might also provide inspiration for performers who seek to go beyond the harsh "synchronizing" effects of formal contrast. This is a point that cannot be elaborated upon here, as it has been explored quite extensively in recent studies on musical performance that aim to draw conclusions from both quantitative measurements of recorded performances and the aesthetic ideas guiding individual interpretations.[61]

Ultimately, the metaphor of *fabric*, in French "agencement," a key term in Gilles Deleuze's and Félix Guattari's *Thousand Plateaus*, seems an adequate model for the interaction between the different types of simultaneities, non-simultaneities, hierarchies, and non-hierarchies in music and elsewhere. In the *rhizomatic* "agencement" of Deleuze and Guattari, hierarchies are not resolved by compromise or consensus, but by a non-localization of things; this invokes a "perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one *and* the other away, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle."[62]

60 I have critically described this tendency especially in the example of performance practice of Giacinto Scelsi's music; see Utz, "Scelsi hören," 166–169.

61 See especially Cook, *Beyond the Score*.

62 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 25.



Example 6.22: Christian Utz, ***walls*** *for ensemble and electronics, opening, mm. 1–9*

*Example 6.23: Christian Utz, **walls** for ensemble and electronics, beginning of the closing section, mm. 144–151*