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Variation, Symbolism, and Synthesis:
The Hidden Teachings of Great Piano Cycles

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Music

by

Anthony David Constantino

2021

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Variation, Symbolism, and Synthesis:
The Hidden Teachings of Great Piano Cycles

by

Anthony David Constantino

Doctor of Philosophy in Music

University of California, Los Angeles, 2021

Professor Richard Dane Danielpour, Chair

Between March and November of 2020, I composed my piano cycle, *Arcanum Perpetuum*, in partial fulfillment of this dissertation. I consider this work to be a significant milestone in my compositional development not only due to its large scale but also because of its personal nature. In many ways, this work is an amalgamation of the composers and works that have greatly influenced my compositional style. Some aspects of this influence I have intentionally integrated into the various movements of my cycle, while others have subconsciously affected my compositional process.

Examination of these influences brings me to four specific large-scale works for piano: J.S. Bach's *Goldberg Variations* (1741), Ludwig van Beethoven's *Diabelli*

Variations (1823), Olivier Messiaen's *Vingt Regards Sur l'Enfant Jésus* (1944), and Richard Danielpour's *An American Mosaic* (2020).

This monograph will illuminate connections between my own piano cycle and these great works that inspired it. My goal is not to provide in-depth analysis of these works; however, I will discuss details that reflect their individual brilliance and their seminal places in the history of piano repertoire. The following chapters will consider these four cycles in chronological order, exploring the stylistic elements that most greatly impacted my own composition. It is my hope that through this process of discovery, I can illuminate the way that powerful and significant works, both old and new, contain essential lessons for young composers who are striving to make their own contributions to the repertoire.

The dissertation of Anthony David Constantino is approved.

Ian Krouse

William Andrew Kinderman

Kay Kyurim Rhie

Timothy Hoft

Richard Dane Danielpour, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2021

This monograph is dedicated to my steadfast mentor, Richard Danielpour,
who has been a constant source of confidence and inspiration,

to my parents, Gregory Constantino and Denise Fosco,
to whom I owe so much love and gratitude,

and to my beloved wife, Rachel Constantino,
who has always supported me fiercely and unconditionally.

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in Figures 3.5, 3.6, and 3.7.

An American Mosaic

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VITA

Composer Anthony Constantino has written for a variety of ensembles ranging from chamber and orchestral to vocal and electroacoustic. His music has received numerous accolades and has been performed internationally and within the United States in prestigious venues, schools, and summer festivals such as Carnegie Hall, the Edinburgh International Festival, the Kennedy Center, and the Chigiana Academy in Siena, Italy. He has participated in many commissions and collaborations with organizations, ensembles, and artists.

Constantino's music draws from a wide scope of American influences, intertwining the driven coolness of the west coast with the wild passion of the east coast. A mix of sweeping lyricism and jarring dissonance, his work aims to connect on a deeply emotional level. He received his B.M. at Manhattan School of Music, where he studied with Richard Danielpour, and completed his graduate studies at UCLA.

CHAPTER 1: VARIATION

Bach & Beethoven

Two of the most important composers of the Western Classical canon, J.S. Bach and Ludwig van Beethoven, wrote piano cycles in their late periods, Bach composing the *Goldberg Variations* and Beethoven the *Diabelli Variations*. Although both works are sets of variations, they approach the process of musical variation in entirely different ways. While Bach uses a fixed harmonic progression and structural consistency as the foundation of the *Goldberg Variations*, Beethoven focuses on highlighting and exaggerating specific motivic elements from Diabelli's waltz, often to the point of parody. Despite these key differences, both cycles are long-form works for solo piano and employ a great deal of musical contrast from movement to movement. In composing my own cycle, I took note of the importance of contrast between movements in a work of large scope.

Bach's *Goldberg Variations* were published in 1741. There is no doubt that they exhibit some of Bach's greatest contrapuntal and compositional achievements. Consisting of an aria and thirty variations, the work's structural organization and musical contrast are particularly striking. The concept of *variation* as it relates to this work does not refer to the variation of a particular melody or tune, but rather to a foundational chord progression introduced in the opening *Aria*. Naturally, this progression also provides a foundational structure for each individual movement. Without counting repeated bars or multiple endings, both instances of the aria and every variation are either 32 or 16 bars long. Each 16-bar variation includes two chords of the foundational progression per bar. Each variation, like the foundational progression, is further divided into two sections of a standard binary form. The only exception to this rule is Var. 16, the French Overture, in

which the first section is 16 bars and the second section is 32 bars. Although the second section of the Overture is twice as long, it is set in a fast 3/8 meter, with one chord every two bars, so it remains proportionally consistent with the other variations.

Goldberg Variations Foundational Progression

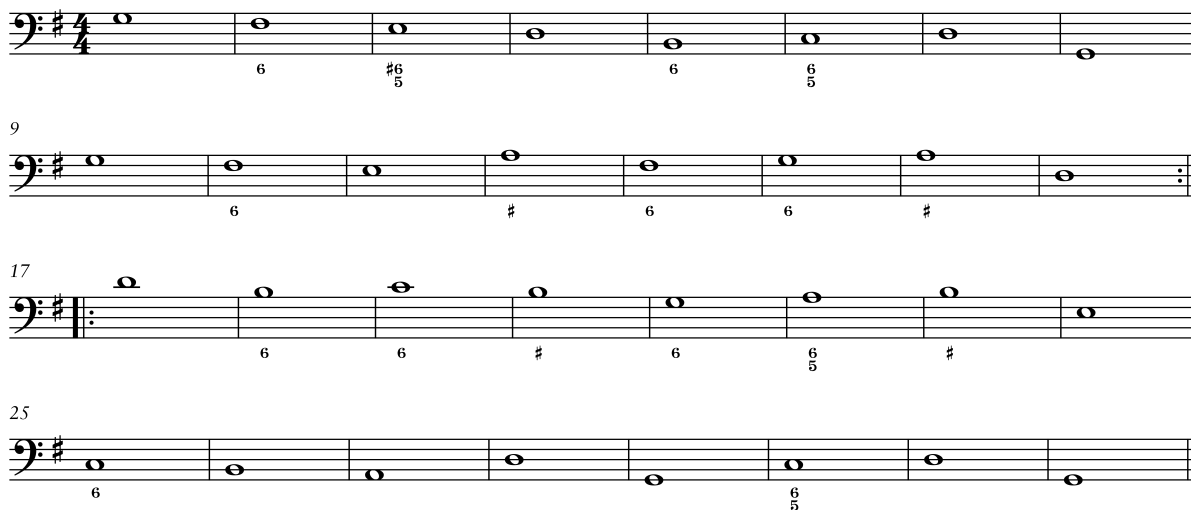


Fig. 1.1

Since each variation utilizes the same foundational progression and is proportionally consistent, it can be inferred that any two of the variations can be superimposed and harmonize successfully. The three outliers are Vars. 15, 21, and 25, the minor-key variations. These are the only variations in the cycle written in the parallel minor, but they retain the same chord progression in a minor-mode transformation. It is obvious that superimposing a major key variation with one of these minor key variations would result in significant harmonic dissonance; however, superimposing any two of these minor variations reveals consistent musical logic. In effect, these three minor-key variations fit together as a distinct tryptic—a smaller collection within the larger form.

There are several layers of this kind of structural formation within the *Goldberg Variations*. At the global level, the 32-bar structure of the foundational progression

mirrors the 32-movement structure of the entire work; the binary division in each variation is likewise present in the overall form. Var. 16 marks the second half of the cycle, especially in its designation as an overture. Its stately grandeur, produced by its restrained tempo, ornamental flourishes, and emphatic opening and closing chords, differentiates it from the other variations. Staying true to the French Overture form, it is also the only variation in which the first and second sections present distinct compositional styles.

The *Goldberg Variations* could be described as a long-form work for a solo instrument in which the key and harmonic progression never change. Although technically accurate, this description gives the impression that the work is monotonous and uninteresting. This is certainly not the case—Bach’s unpredictability engages the listener by introducing contrasting elements in each movement. The relatively short duration of each variation ensures that the cycle never becomes stagnant. Since Bach stays true to the structure of the foundational progression, each variation is limited by the same proportion. Tempo indications are given only in Vars. 15 and 25 while all other variations are unmarked. Although there is certainly room for interpretation across recordings of the *Goldberg Variations*, variations are usually played quite fast, lasting about one or two minutes, with few exceptions. This allows Bach to present new material at a quick pace without lingering on any single variation.

Another inherent structure within the *Goldberg Variations* demonstrates a possible formula producing the contrast between consistency and unpredictability. Bach embeds nine canons within the variations. They occur every third variation,¹ and the interval at which the canon appears increases by one diatonic step with each successive canon. Var.

¹ Considering the numerological importance of the number 3 in Christian theology, Bach is likely implying a spiritual connection through this formal structure.

30 replaces the expected canon at the tenth with a quodlibet, breaking the pattern just before the *Aria da Capo*. If you separate them from the larger work, it is possible to interpret these interspersed canons as a hidden set of their own, beginning with Var. 3 (*Canon at the Unison*) and culminating in Var. 30 (*Quodlibet*) as a finale. This set is structurally interesting, in that two of the canons, *Canon at the 5th* and *Canon at the 7th*, are g-minor variations. In considering these canons and the *Quodlibet* separately, these two minor movements fall at the halfway point and close to the Golden Section, respectively. There is no evidence that Bach produced this structure intentionally; however, it is likely that he was aware of the Golden Section and used it, consciously or subconsciously, in his formal construction.

My own work, *Arcanum Perpetuum*, draws heavily from the *Goldberg Variations* in both structure and musical contrast. Modeled on the Tarot deck, which consists of twenty-two Major Arcana, numbered 0 to 21, the cycle begins with a Prologue and ends with an Epilogue, leaving twenty movements in between. The middle of the cycle acts as a division between the first and second halves. As in Bach's cycle, this division is not explicitly notated; rather, it is indicated musically by a unique quasi-improvisatory movement, *X. Fortune*, which closes the first half. *X. Fortune* consists of ten cells, the order and presence of which are determined by the performing pianist's name. Most of the musical parameters in this movement, including tempo, dynamics, articulation, register, transposition, rhythm, pedaling, and overall form, are left to the pianist to improvise. This is the only movement of *Arcanum Perpetuum* that is structured to be distinct across performances, making it similar to Bach's Overture, which is unique within the *Goldberg Variations* as the only movement that contains two sections at different tempi.

Although *Arcanum Perpetuum* is not a set of variations, the Prologue introduces a recurring melodic theme that re-emerges at various points throughout the cycle.

Arcanum Perpetuum Recurring Melodic Theme



Fig. 1.2

There is symbolism behind this motive and its recurrences, which will be discussed in Chapter 2, but on a technical level, it draws directly from Bach. In lieu of a grand introduction, the *Prologue* opens the cycle with a simple, quiet, moderately paced chorale, not dissimilar in character to the *Aria* from the *Goldberg Variations*. The rhythm of this chorale is that of a sarabande—also like Bach’s *Aria*.² The similarity continues with the following movement, a fast, high-energy toccata that contrasts the Prologue’s meditative quality. My decision to employ such dramatic contrast at the beginning of *Arcanum Perpetuum* was inspired by the relationship between the opening aria and Var. 1 of the *Goldberg Variations*. Additionally, my Prologue and Epilogue are directly related, using the same melodic motive. Unlike in Bach’s cycle, they are not identical—the Epilogue is much longer than the Prologue, and it acts as an expansion and development of the Prologue rather than simply a return. Nevertheless, my work’s relationship to Bach’s is apparent as the cycle opens and closes with the same material.

² The saraband aria of the *Goldberg Variations* can be traced as an influence on other important piano works such as Brahms Op. 10 No. 4 and the final movement of Beethoven Op. 109, the latter having been written during the same time period as the *Diabelli Variations*.

Ongoing musical contrast is an important element of *Arcanum Perpetuum*. In *Table 1.1* below, the movements of my cycle are listed with general categorizations of their tempi, dynamics, and overall character:

Tempi, Dynamics, and Character of Movements of *Arcanum Perpetuum*

Movement	Tempo	Dynamic	Character
0. The Fool (Prologue)	Moderate	Soft	Meditative
I. The Magus	Fast	Soft	Toccatà, intense
II. The Priestess	Moderate	Soft	Flowing,
III. The Empress	Slow	Soft	Lullaby, sparse
IV. The Emperor	Slow	Loud	Grand, monolithic
V. The Hierophant	Slow → Fast	Soft → Loud	Meditative → Intense
VI. The Lovers	Moderate	Soft	Dreamlike
VII. The Chariot	Fast	Loud	Intense, violent
VIII. Adjustment	Slow	Soft	Serene
IX. The Hermit	Moderate/Slow	Soft	Flowing, reflective
X. Fortune	N/A	N/A	N/A
XI. Lust	Fast	Loud	Energetic, virtuosic
XII. The Hanged Man	Slow, freely	Soft → Loud	Meditative → Intense
XIII. Death	Slow	Soft	Flowing, songlike
XIV. Art	Fast	Soft	Toccatà, flowing
XV. The Devil	Slow	Soft	Disturbing
XVI. The Tower	Very fast	Loud	Violent, chaotic
XVII. The Star	Slow	Loud → Soft	Triumphant → Reflective
XVIII. The Moon	Slow	Soft	Duet, with longing
XIX. The Sun	Fast	Soft	Playful, scherzo
XX. The Aeon	Slow	Soft	Fugue, meditative
XXI. The Universe (Epilogue)	Slow/Moderate	Soft/Loud	Resolving, final

Table 1.1

Although there is certainly more nuance within each movement than what can be described above, no two movements carry the same combination of characteristics. The only possible exception is the final two movements, which are *attacca* and function as two parts of a whole.

Within its form, *Arcanum Perpetuum* contains subsets of movements that together create their own embedded structure. One instance is drawn from Bach's three g-minor variations. The g-minor variations are conspicuous within the *Goldberg Variations* due to their stark contrast from the other variations in both mode and, depending on the performance, tempo. Similarly, I structured three movements in my cycle as a separated triptych: VI. *The Lovers*, XI. *Lust*, and XIX. *The Sun*. In addition to their Tarot associations outlined in my program notes (see Appendix), each of these movements voice a different kind of love: romantic love, physical love, and familial love respectively. While they are not musically unique within the cycle, the fact that these three movements are dedicated to the same person, and this dedication is indicated in the score, implies this connection. This is the only instance in my cycle where one person receives multiple dedications. If a performer desires, these three movements can be performed as a separate, independent work.

Another aspect of *Arcanum Perpetuum*'s internal structure is directly inspired by Beethoven's *Diabelli Variations*. While musical contrast is just as foundational to Beethoven's work as to the *Goldberg Variations*, Beethoven's last nine variations are particularly striking. William Kinderman discusses Vars. 25–28 in his thorough and compelling analysis *Beethoven's Diabelli Variations*, saying that "careful examination of the four variations beginning with the waltz parody reveals...that they are intimately related as members of a series. In fact, it is doubtful that either Var. 25 or Var. 28 can be

justly appreciated if they are divorced from this context, since they are in a sense less autonomous than most of the other variations.”³ This interpretation, made more convincing with analysis of the rhythmic diminution and increased dissonance through these four variations,⁴ suggests that together they create a trajectory that leads to the starkly contrasting adagio of Vars. 29–31. These slow variations form a triptych of their own and, as Kinderman describes, “move into a new world of sound beyond, a transfigured world, in which the most direct ties to the waltz, and to the world it represents, are permanently severed.”⁵ Beethoven ends his monumental work with a massive, driving triple fugue followed by a Mozartian minuet, which closes the variation cycle with an allusion to his own Op. 111 sonata.

The smaller, multi-movement structure within the larger form of the *Diabelli Variations* is both technically and psychologically intriguing. By the arrival of Var. 25, Beethoven has established an expectation of separate, standalone variations that are, though not randomly ordered, largely independent of one another. In treating several movements as a single, elongated section, the composer can subvert this expectation and explore material with more depth and complexity. In Beethoven’s case, Vars. 25–28 are a necessary bridge to transport the listener from the mostly grounded, parodic work to the contrast in Vars. 29–31, which represent a psychological and spiritual transcendence. The juxtaposition between the human and the superhuman or divine is a common phenomenon and a significant factor in Beethoven’s late works such as the Ninth Symphony, the late string quartets, and the late piano sonatas, among others.

³ Kinderman, *Diabelli Variations*, 111.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, 114.

This spiritual trajectory within the *Diabelli Variations* can also be linked to a convincing extra-musical interpretation of the *Goldberg Variations* from the liner notes of pianist Murray Perahia's recording. Bach's Var. 25, the final of the three g-minor variations, represents a turning point in the cycle which is established through increased intensity, chromaticism, and an overall darkness of character. Placed within the context of Bach's religious music, this suggests that Var. 25 is a representation of the Crucifixion.⁶ The following variations are described by Perahia as having a "headlong drive," and, represented through counterpoint and trills, would therefore be representative of the Resurrection.⁷ Finally, with its "earth folk songs and animated rustic feel," the *Quodlibet* represents a return to earth.⁸ If this interpretation is accepted, the connection to the final variations of Beethoven's *Diabelli Variations* is clear and undeniable, especially considering the musical link and similarities between Bach's Var. 25 and Beethoven's Var. 31.

In *Arcanum Perpetuum*, movements XV. *The Devil*, XVI. *The Tower*, and XVII. *The Star* are similarly treated as a single structure. They are intended to be played *attacca*, and their connection is indicated in the score by the absence of a double bar until the ending of *The Star*. Additionally, they are three of the six movements without a marked dedication, joined only by the Prelude, Epilogue, and VIII. *Adjustment*. Together, *The Devil*, *The Tower*, and *The Star* form a narrative of personal struggle based on the traditional interpretation of the Tarot. *The Devil*, with its quiet, blurred rumble in the bass register, conveys an ominous sense of dormant malignancy. The first section alludes to the melody from the Prologue which, at this point, has appeared twice in preceding

⁶ Perahia, liner notes.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

movements (Fig. 1.3). In measure 19, a delicate new theme appears in the upper register as the rumbling bass continues (Fig. 1.4).

XV. *The Devil* Reference to Prologue Melody

The musical score is presented in two systems. The first system begins at measure 6, marked with a repeat sign and the tempo marking *(And.)*. The right hand starts with a *pp* dynamic, playing chords in the upper register, with a *8va* marking above the staff. The left hand plays a rumbling bass line. The second system begins at measure 12, also marked with a repeat sign and *(And.)*. The right hand features a melodic line with a *3.5* marking and a *p* dynamic. The left hand continues the rumbling bass line with *f sub.* and *p* dynamics, and includes triplet markings (*3*) in measures 14 and 15. A *8ba* marking is present at the end of the system.

Fig. 1.3

XV. *The Devil* New Theme

Musical score for measures 19-22 of 'The Devil' New Theme. The score is in 2/4 time and consists of three systems. The first system (measures 19-20) features a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a dynamic marking of *pp*. The second system (measures 21-22) continues the piece with a bass clef and a dynamic marking of *pp*. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and accidentals. Below the main staff, there is a section labeled *ped.* (pedal) and *una corda al fine*, with a dynamic marking of *pp*.

Fig. 1.4

As *The Devil* ends and *The Tower* begins, this new theme takes over, now a violent display of pianistic virtuosity representing the aforementioned internal struggle (Fig. 1.5).

XVI. *The Tower* Beginning

Musical score for the beginning of 'The Tower'. The score is in 6/8 time and consists of five systems. The first system (measures 1-2) features a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a dynamic marking of *ff*. The tempo is marked *Presto* with a metronome marking of $\text{♩} = 320$ ($\text{♩} \approx 106$). The second system (measures 3-4) continues the piece with a bass clef and a dynamic marking of *ff*. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and accidentals. Below the main staff, there is a section labeled *ost.* (ostinato) with a dynamic marking of *ff*.

Fig. 1.5

Finally, *The Tower* climaxes in fortissimo palm clusters at the extreme registers of the piano, resolving into a C-Major sonority in *The Star*. *The Star* represents personal triumph over this struggle, reintroducing the theme from the Prologue as grand, *maestoso* chords that eventually settle into a dream-like chorale.

With *The Star* as a pivot point, the cycle transitions within these three movements into the celestial realm of the remaining Tarot cards, XVIII. *The Moon*, XIX. *The Sun*, XX. *The Aeon*, and XXI. *The Universe*. These final movements, like the tryptic of *The Lovers*, *Lust*, and *The Sun*, each represent a different kind of love: close friendship, familial love, love for music, and the love and acceptance of self. As in Beethoven's variations, these movements re-orient the emotional direction of the work from more "earthly" or human references to these transcendent representations of love, which approach the spiritual or divine. Finally, mirroring the *Diabelli Variations*, the penultimate movement (XX. *The Aeon*) is a fugue that leads directly into the Epilogue. This fugue marries multiple influences, written in the style of Bach and structured as a Beethovenian bridge to the end of the cycle.

CHAPTER 2: SYMBOLISM

Messiaen

Arcanum Perpetuum draws most of its conceptual influence from Messiaen's monumental cycle *Vingt Regards Sur l'Enfant Jésus* (Twenty *Regards*⁹ of the Infant Jesus). With twenty movements and nearly two hours of music, *Vingt Regards* is the most expansive of these four cycles and the most technically demanding for the pianist. Messiaen provides extensive program notes for this work, detailing each individual movement and the work as a whole.

Unlike the cycles above which are structured through variation, *Vingt Regards* holds together through its extra-musical influence. As with most works by Messiaen, this cycle is programmatic and shaped explicitly by his Roman Catholic faith. In his program notes,¹⁰ Messiaen explains how each movement of *Vingt Regards* represents a different element of the Catholic Nativity and its *regard* towards the infant Jesus. Each movement title identifies one of these elements:

I. *Regard* of the Father

II. *Regard* of the Star

III. The Exchange¹¹

IV. *Regard* of the Blessed Virgin

V. *Regard* of the Son upon the Son

⁹ The word *regard* does not translate directly from French to English. It may mean a physical gaze or look at an object, but it can also refer to a consideration, contemplation, or expression towards something.

¹⁰ Messiaen, front matter.

¹¹ Referring to the interaction of the human and the divine that Jesus represents

VI. Through Him Everything was Made¹²

VII. *Regard* of the Cross

VIII. *Regard* of the Heights (Skies)

IX. *Regard* of Time

X. *Regard* of the Spirit of Joy

XI. First Communion of the Blessed Virgin

XII. The All-Powerful Word

XIII. Christmas

XIV. *Regard* of the Angels

XV. The Kiss of the Child Jesus

XVI. *Regard* of the Prophets, the Shepherds, and the Magi

XVII. *Regard* of Silence

XVIII. *Regard* of the Awesome Anointing

XIX. I Sleep, but my Heart Wakes¹³

XX. *Regard* of the Church of Love

By assigning a specific extra-musical focus for each movement, Messiaen's compositional decisions are determined by how each element fits into his narrative. Whereas individual variations in Bach and Beethoven are primarily determined by formal necessities and emotional trajectories, Messiaen's work represents aspects of the physical

¹² A musical representation of the Creation brought upon by the Word of God.

¹³ Referring to the spiritual enlightenment of Man as brought upon by Jesus.

world and religious belief. As such, Messiaen develops upon the type of non-musical associations found in Debussy's *Preludes*. Each of Debussy's *Preludes* are labelled with an associated object or phrase; located at the end of each piece, however, these labels do not restrict interpretation—Debussy's music can be received independent of these assigned associations. Conversely, if one were to divorce the movements of *Vingt Regards* from their respective titles, the work as a whole would be stripped of all its inherent meaning.

Messiaen does not create programmatic associations solely on the level of the movement; he also establishes several recurring musical themes with their own labels and representations. The score's front matter explicitly identifies three such themes: the Theme of God, the Theme of the Star and Cross, and the Theme of Chords.¹⁴ Additionally, he mentions the Theme of Joy and the Theme of Love in both the score and program notes. These motivic cells appear constantly throughout the cycle and play an important role in the musical unification of all twenty movements. His use of these themes is strategic and shows the relationship between the programmatic subjects of the movement and the theme.

For instance, the Theme of God is presented in full at the beginning of the work in *I. Regard du Père*. It is not heard again until *V. Regard du Fils sur le Fils*. The movements in between I and V do not directly reference God the Father, but in the Catholic belief of the Holy Trinity, Mvt. V's reference to the Son is also a direct reference to the Father, showing the Theme of God to be a logical choice. In other movements of the cycle, the Theme of God manifests the presence of God in various contexts. In *VI. Par Lui tout a été fait*, the Theme of God represents His role in the creation of the universe; in *X. Regard de l'Esprit de joie*, the theme echoes its use in Mvt. V. In the following movement, *XI. Première communion de la Vierge*, the Theme of God reappears to represent the presence

¹⁴ Messiaen, front matter.

of God alongside the Virgin Mary. After several more iterations, the Theme of God culminates in a grand presentation, which Messiaen labels as a “Glorification” at the end of the final movement.

The Theme of God is the central motivic element for Messiaen’s cycle, but the other named themes are treated in a similar manner—as symbols of their programmatic associations. The only exception is the Theme of Chords, which Messiaen notates in his program notes as a series of chords rather than a musical passage.¹⁵ The Theme of Chords is found everywhere throughout the cycle, and it serves two important functions. First, it provides a consistent motivic idea that Messiaen can invoke at any point regardless of programmatic context; secondly, it provides a consistent harmonic foundation that unifies the work.

Messiaen also employs Christian numerological symbolism throughout his cycle. Although the order of movements is partly determined by musical contrast, nearly half of them are placed strategically within the structure so that their movement numbers align with a particular meaning, including Mvts. I, V, VI, VII, IX, X, XII, XV, and XX. Mvts. I, V, X, XV, and XX mark equal divisions of the cycle and function as formal pillars within the overall structure. They each address a subject directly related to God, and all of them feature the Theme of God prominently. As seven is considered the “perfect number” in Christian theology, Mvt. VII represents the Cross upon which Christ suffered to offer salvation. Mvt. IX, *Regard du temps*, is a reference to the nine months of Christ’s fetal development. VI. *Par Lui tout a été fait* and XII. *La parole toute puissante* both represent the Creation, with the number six signifying the days God took to create the world as written in the Book of Genesis.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Within this context surrounding the Tarot, *Arcanum Perpetuum* as a spiritual work is closely connected to *Vingt Regards*. Although the specific origins of the Tarot have been lost to history, the deck has gained universally accepted meanings since its first traces in 15th-Century Italy.¹⁶ It has evolved from a simple card game to a significant divination tool of the occult and certain non-organized religions like Modern Paganism.¹⁷ Mystical associations aside, each Major Arcana of the Tarot has come to represent an archetype of the human experience; the cards can serve as a mirror into the human psyche, and the deck is often studied for the secular purpose of spiritual growth and exploration.

I have drawn heavily from the thematic, numerological, and programmatic symbolism in *Vingt Regards*; however, since the Tarot is a personal practice, the programmatic elements are not extra-musical but autobiographical. Rather than a religious contemplation, my work is a secular exploration of my own spiritual growth and a reflection on the people who have impacted my life. Most of these people are indicated directly in the score as dedications; some are also mentioned in my program notes, and some are not indicated. Although the style and associations of each movement are determined by its associated Tarot card, the order in which these dedications appear in the cycle are mostly chronological. This was not initially planned but discovered after the work's completion. As Messiaen constructs a religious narrative with his cycle, I construct a personal narrative that is made universal through its frame of the Tarot.

Also influenced by Messiaen's *Vingt Regards*, *Arcanum Perpetuum* contains two musical elements that function symbolically within the cycle: a recurring melodic theme (*Fig. 1.2*) and a chord that appears in most of its movements. Like Messiaen's treatment

¹⁶ Pollack. 3-11.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

of the Theme of God, *Arcanum Perpetuum's* recurring melodic theme appears in its entirety in the Prologue movement (*Fig. 1.2*). The Tarot counterpart of the Prologue movement is 0. The Fool, which represents the Tarot practitioner at the beginning of a journey—this theme represents myself through the work's narrative. To that end, the first phrase of the Prologue theme is created from a conversion of my full name, Anthony David Constantino, into musical notes with some liberties taken. This process involved numbering each letter in alphabetical order and treating each number as a pitch-class with pitch-class C as zero. For double-digit alphabetical indexes, the two digits were added together, producing a new single-digit number. *Table 2.1* below illustrates this process: the first row of numbers represents each letter's place in alphabetical order, and the second row of numbers shows the sequence after the addition process is performed so each letter is assigned a number between 0–9. In the case of “S,” the 19th letter of the alphabet, I decided that 1+9 should result in 0 rather than 10 because there were no other opportunities to generate pitch-class 0 from this system.

Letter-to-Number Conversion Table

A	N	T	H	O	N	Y	D	A	V	I	D	C	O	N	S	T	A	N	T	I	N	O
1	14	20	8	15	14	25	4	1	22	9	4	3	15	14	19	20	1	14	20	9	14	15
1	5	2	8	6	5	7	4	1	4	9	4	3	6	5	0	2	1	5	2	9	5	6

Table 2.1

Realization of Name Conversion to Pitches

The figure shows two staves of musical notation. The first staff is for the name 'ANTHONY DAVID' and the second for 'CONSTANTINO'. Each letter is placed above a note on a treble clef staff. The notes are: A (C2), N (D2), T (E2), H (F2), O (G2), N (A2), Y (B2), D (C3), A (D3), V (E3), I (F3) on the first staff; and D (G2), C (F2), O (E2), N (D2), S (C2), T (B1), A (A1), N (G1), T (F1), I (E1), N (D1), O (C1) on the second staff.

Fig. 2.1

Utilization of Name-Pitches as Melody

Andante ♩ = 72

A N T H O N Y D A V I D C O N S T
 1 (5-1) 2 8 6 5 (7-1) 4 1 (4+1) 9 4 3 6 5 0 2

10
 A N T I N
 1 5 2 9 5

Fig. 2.2

Figure 2.1 shows the realization of this name-to-melody conversion, and *Figure 2.2* illustrates how this was formed into the Prologue melody along with the liberties taken for musical and aesthetic purposes. I altered the 2nd, 8th, and 11th pitches from the sequence by a value of 1 to create melodic interest. The 6th, 14th, and 21st letters in the sequence are accompanied by non-sequence tones which function as passing tones to the next letter—these are indicated by dotted slurs. I omitted the final letter of my name, “O,” from the initial melody shown here; I delay its arrival until the end of the movement when it occurs as the melodic tone in the final chord (*Figure 2.3*).

Arcanum Perpetuum Prologue Final Chord

Fig. 2.3

After the Prologue, this theme appears explicitly in VII. *The Chariot* (Fig. 2.4), XVII. *The Star* (Fig. 2.5), and XXI. *The Universe (Epilogue)* (Fig. 2.6). The material in I. *The Magus* is also derived from the Prologue motive; however, it is not a direct restatement. The opening *ostinato* in the low register is drawn from the first four notes of the theme, and the upper register melody in the B-section, starting at measure 21, is a transformation of the theme's second phrase. Although not employed as frequently as Messiaen's themes, this Prologue motive marks four significant points in the autobiographical narrative of the cycle.

Prologue Melody in VII. *The Chariot*

55

60

65

70

75

f sub.

8ba

8ba

8ba

Detailed description: This musical score is for the Prologue Melody in VII. The Chariot, covering measures 55 to 84. It is written for piano in 3/4 time. The score is divided into five systems. The first system (measures 55-59) features a right-hand part with a melodic line of eighth notes and a left-hand part with a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. The second system (measures 60-64) continues this pattern. The third system (measures 65-69) introduces a right-hand part with chords and a left-hand part with a more complex rhythmic pattern. The fourth system (measures 70-74) continues the right-hand part with chords and the left-hand part with eighth notes. The fifth system (measures 75-84) concludes the piece with a final chord in the right hand and a rhythmic accompaniment in the left hand. The score includes various musical notations such as accidentals, dynamics, and articulation marks.

Fig. 2.4

Prologue Melody in XVII. *The Star*

The musical score is divided into four systems, each with a treble and bass clef staff. The first system (measures 3-7) features a complex texture with triplets and various ornaments. The second system (measures 8-10) includes a *poco rit.* marking and a fortissimo (*sf*) dynamic. The third system (measures 11-14) is marked *a tempo* and *pp dolcissimo*. The fourth system (measures 15-18) includes an *8va* marking and a *poco rit.* marking, ending with a pianissimo (*ppp*) dynamic.

Fig. 2.5

Prologue Theme in XXI. The Universe

Like the beginning ♩ = 72

18 *pp misterioso*
(Sost.)
Rit.

Detailed description: This system contains measures 18 through 25. The music is in a key with one sharp (F#) and a 3/4 time signature. The tempo is marked as 72 quarter notes per minute. The dynamics are *pp* (pianissimo) and the mood is *misterioso*. The piece begins with a *Sost.* (Sostenuto) marking. The right hand features a melodic line with a 7-measure rest at the start, while the left hand plays a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes.

26 *p cantabile*
(Sost.)
rit. a tempo
una corda

Detailed description: This system contains measures 26 through 33. The tempo changes from *rit.* (ritardando) to *a tempo*. The dynamics are *p* (piano) and the mood is *cantabile*. A *Sost.* marking is present. The right hand has a melodic line with a 7-measure rest, and the left hand continues with eighth notes. A *una corda* marking is indicated with a star symbol.

34 *pp*
(u.c.)
rit. a tempo
tre corde

Detailed description: This system contains measures 34 through 42. The tempo changes from *rit.* to *a tempo*. The dynamics are *pp* (pianissimo). The marking *(u.c.)* (una corda) is present. The right hand has a melodic line with a 7-measure rest, and the left hand continues with eighth notes. A *tre corde* marking is indicated with a star symbol.

Detailed description: This system contains measures 43 through 48. The right hand has a melodic line with a 7-measure rest, and the left hand continues with eighth notes.

Detailed description: This system contains measures 49 through 53. The right hand has a melodic line with a 7-measure rest, and the left hand continues with eighth notes.

54 *molto rit. poco a poco*
cre - - - scen - - - do - - - poco - - - a - - - poco
(Rit.)
Sost.

Detailed description: This system contains measures 54 through 61. The tempo is marked *molto rit.* (molto ritardando) and *poco a poco* (poco a poco). The dynamics are *pp*. The marking *(Rit.)* is present. The right hand has a melodic line with a 7-measure rest, and the left hand continues with eighth notes. A *Sost.* marking is present at the end of the system.

Fig. 2.6

The recurring chord in *Arcanum Perpetuum* functions like Messiaen's Theme of Chords in that it occurs throughout the cycle, it is not symbolic of anything extra-musical, and it works to harmonically unify the entire work. The chord in its basic form, seen below, can be succinctly classified as an a-minor 7th chord in second inversion with an added D. However, its voicing with E-natural and C-natural in the bass suggests an unstable C-Major 9th chord in first inversion, towing the line between C-Major and E-minor (*Figure 2.7*).

Arcanum Perpetuum
Recurring Chord

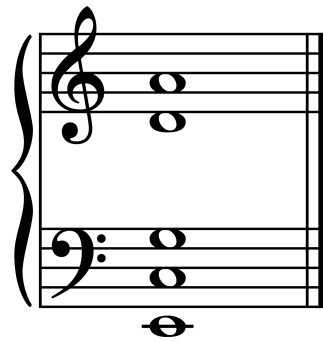


Fig. 2.7

This ambiguous diatonic sonority plays an important role in every movement of the cycle. Hints of the chord in transposition are introduced at the end of the Prologue, which can be perceived as both an E-flat-minor-7th and a C-flat-Major-9th). The chord is foreshadowed again at the end of *II. The High Priestess* with the D-natural in the bass and the A-natural omitted (*Fig. 2.8*). The chord finally appears in its true form in measure 8 of *III. The Empress* and is used liberally throughout that movement (*Fig. 2.9*). It makes further appearances at the end of *IV. The Emperor* (*Fig. 2.10*), throughout *VI. The Lovers* (*Fig. 2.11*), just before the climax of *IX. The Hermit* (*Fig. 2.12*), in cell 8 of *X. Fortune*, at the climax and ending of *XII. The Hanged Man* (*Fig. 2.13*), at the midpoint and ending of

XIII. *Death* (Figs. 2.14, 2.15), and at the end of XXI. *The Universe (Epilogue)*, which concludes the cycle (Fig. 2.16). The final instance of the chord includes an F-sharp, strengthening the E-minor sonority.

II. *The High Priestess Ending*

Even slower ♩ = 60 rit. ♩ = 44

8va

31

pp

Red.

Red.

Detailed description: This musical score is for 'The High Priestess Ending'. It features a piano part with a treble and bass clef. The tempo is marked 'Even slower' with a quarter note equal to 60 beats, followed by a 'rit.' (ritardando) section where the tempo is 44 beats per quarter note. The score starts at measure 31. The right hand has a melodic line with a trill-like figure and a long slur. The left hand has a bass line with a trill-like figure and a long slur. There are two 'Red.' markings below the staff, indicating reductions. A 'pp' (pianissimo) dynamic is marked. An '8va' marking is above the first measure.

Fig. 2.8

III. *The Empress First Instance of Recurring Chord*

6

3

8va

ppp

p tranquillo

Red.

11

8va

3

ppp

p

ppp

ppp

ppp

Detailed description: This musical score is for 'The Empress First Instance of Recurring Chord'. It is divided into two systems. The first system starts at measure 6 and ends at measure 10. The second system starts at measure 11 and ends at measure 15. The score is in 3/4 time. The right hand has a melodic line with a trill-like figure and a long slur. The left hand has a bass line with a trill-like figure and a long slur. There are two 'Red.' markings below the staff, indicating reductions. Dynamics include 'ppp' (pianississimo) and 'p tranquillo'. An '8va' marking is above the first measure of the second system. There are several '3' markings above the staff, indicating triplets.

Fig. 2.9

IV. The Emperor Ending

Musical score for 'The Emperor Ending' (Fig. 2.10). The score is in 2/4 time and starts at measure 58. It features a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. The piece begins with a piano (*pp*) dynamic. The right hand plays a series of chords, while the left hand plays a rhythmic accompaniment. The dynamics increase to fortissimo (*ff*) in the middle section and reach fortississimo (*fff*) in the final section. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

Fig. 2.10

VI. The Lovers Ending

Musical score for 'The Lovers Ending' (Fig. 2.11). The score is in 3/4 time and starts at measure 39. It features a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. The tempo is marked as $\text{♩} = 38$. The piece begins with a piano (*pp*) dynamic. The right hand plays a series of chords, while the left hand plays a rhythmic accompaniment. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings. Below the score, there is a marking: *Red.* una corda al fine.

Fig. 2.11

IX. The Hermit Recurring Chord

Musical score for 'The Hermit Recurring Chord' (Fig. 2.12). The score is in 3/4 time and starts at measure 20. It features a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. The tempo is marked as *Tempo II*. The piece begins with a piano (*pp*) dynamic. The right hand plays a series of chords, while the left hand plays a rhythmic accompaniment. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings. Below the score, there is a marking: *(Red.)*.

Fig. 2.12

XII. The Hanged Man Climax

37 $\text{♩} = 72$ 8va

ff martellato sfz sfz

sfz sfz sfz

Red.

Fig. 2.13

XIII. Death Midpoint

29 *poco rit.*

p mp mf f ff

Red.

Fig. 2.14

XIII. Death Ending

49 *poco rit.* *a tempo*

mf f pp ppp

Red.

Fig. 2.15

XXI. *The Universe* Ending

75 Slow ♩ = 30

pp *ppp*

una corda al fine
ped.

The musical score for XXI. *The Universe* Ending, measures 75-80, is in 4/4 time with a tempo marking of 'Slow' and a metronome marking of ♩ = 30. It features a piano (pp) and pianissimo (ppp) dynamic range. The score includes a 'una corda al fine' instruction and a pedal point marked 'ped.'. The right hand plays a melodic line with a fermata over the final chord, while the left hand provides a harmonic accompaniment with a sustained pedal point.

Fig. 2.16

In addition, several important moments in the cycle borrow the dichotomous major/minor relationship established by this chord: these moments include the dissonant B-flat-major-7th in first inversion with an added E-flat in bar 121 of *XI. Lust* (Fig. 2.17), the ending sonority of *XIV. Art* (Fig. 2.18), the ending sonority of *XV. The Devil* (Fig. 2.19), several corresponding moments throughout *XVI. The Tower*, which uses the same material (Fig. 1.5), and the climactic chord in measure 10 of *XVII. The Star* (Fig. 2.5).

XI. Lust Measures 120-122

120

fff

ped.

The musical score for XI. *Lust* Measures 120-122 is in 4/4 time. It begins at measure 120 with a forte (fff) dynamic. The right hand features a melodic line with a fermata over the final chord, while the left hand provides a harmonic accompaniment with a sustained pedal point. The score includes a 'ped.' instruction.

Fig. 2.17

XIV. Art Ending

rit. poco a poco.....

52

dim. al fine

(Ped.)

Fig. 2.18

XV. The Devil Ending

26

(Ped.)

(u.c.)

Fig. 2.19

The numerological aspects of each Tarot card serve as unique harmonic identifiers for each movement. With some aesthetic liberties taken, the material in Mvts. 0–X of *Arcanum Perpetuum* is based upon each Tarot number’s corresponding musical interval. Movements with single-digit numbers correspond to their simple non-compound interval. Movements with double-digit numbers correspond with their compound interval, the non-compound version of that interval (e.g., P12=P5), and the sum of both digits added together (e.g., P12 → M/m3 because 1+2=3). This addition system was also used to generate the Prologue melody. While the Prologue, number 0, is exempt from this rule, Movement I begins the pattern by relying heavily on fast-moving unison lines. The pattern continues through *XV. The Devil* and is then abandoned in the final six movements. As mentioned above, these final movements shift the cycle’s trajectory as it approaches its conclusion, and the intervallic relationship between movements becomes symbolically irrelevant as the music culminates in the Epilogue and a more transcendental character. The excerpts below show brief examples of this intervallic use, and *Table 2.2* provides a complete catalogue of the intervals in each movement and a brief description of how they are used.

Accompaniment 2nds in *II. The High Priestess*

The musical score is for a piano accompaniment in 4/4 time, marked *Moderato* with a tempo of 72 beats per minute. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). The score is divided into two systems. The first system is marked *p molto legato* and features a bass line with a *Red.* (ritardando) marking. The second system is marked *dolcissimo* and includes a *8va* (octave) marking above the treble clef staff. The music consists of eighth-note patterns in the bass and a more melodic line in the treble, with various articulations and dynamics.

Fig. 2.20

Motivic 3rds in III. *The Empress*

Lullaby ♩ = 56

pp sempre dolcissimo

pp

This musical score is for a lullaby in 4/4 time with a tempo of ♩ = 56. It features a piano accompaniment with a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The piece is marked *pp sempre dolcissimo* and *pp*. It includes a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand and a triplet of quarter notes in the left hand.

Fig. 2.21

Chords Built in 4ths in IV. *The Emperor*

poco accel. *a tempo* *8va* *poco accel.*

53

(p)

p echo

This musical score is for a piece in 4/4 time. It features a piano accompaniment with a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The piece is marked *poco accel.*, *a tempo*, and *poco accel.*. It includes a *8va* marking and a *(p)* dynamic marking. The score shows chords built in fourths and includes a *p echo* marking.

Fig. 2.22

Melodic Parallel 5ths in V. *The Hierophant*

Largo misterioso ♩ = 40

ppp

Sost.

5

pp

(Sost.)

This musical score is for a piece in 3/4 time with a tempo of Largo misterioso ♩ = 40. It features a piano accompaniment with a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The piece is marked *ppp* and *Sost.*. It includes a *5* marking and a *pp* dynamic marking. The score shows melodic parallel 5ths and includes a *(Sost.)* marking.

Fig. 2.23

Motivic 6ths in VI. *The Lovers*

25 *molto rit.*

This musical score shows measures 25 through 32 of a piece. It is written for piano in 3/4 time. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The music features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The right hand contains a series of sixths, with some notes beamed together. The left hand provides a harmonic accompaniment. The tempo marking 'molto rit.' is placed above the right-hand staff.

Fig. 2.24

Textural 7ths in VII. *The Chariot*

95 *Tempo I* *molto rit.*

8va

p cresc. *ff* *ff*

ff

sed.

This musical score shows measures 95 through 102 of a piece. It is written for piano in 6/8 time. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The music features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The right hand contains a series of seventh chords, with some notes beamed together. The left hand provides a harmonic accompaniment. The tempo marking 'Tempo I' is placed above the right-hand staff, and 'molto rit.' is placed above the right-hand staff with a dotted line extending to the right. The dynamic markings 'p cresc.', 'ff', and 'ff' are placed below the right-hand staff. The marking '8va' is placed above the right-hand staff. The marking 'sed.' is placed below the left-hand staff.

Fig. 2.25

Arcanum Perpetuum Interval Content

Movement	Intervals	Description
0. The Fool (Prologue)	N/A	N/A
I. The Magus	P1	Fast moving unison lines
II. The Priestess	M2/m2	Accompaniment all 2nds
III. The Empress	M3/m3	Bell-tone 3rds
IV. The Emperor	P4, A4	Most chords build upon quartal harmony
V. The Hierophant	P5	Parallel 5ths, quintal harmony
VI. The Lovers	M6/m6	Motivic accompaniment in 6ths
VII. The Chariot	M7/m7	Most chords built upon 7ths
VIII. Adjustment	P8	Majority of movement is in octaves
IX. The Hermit	M9/m9	First motive spans a 9th, 9th chords
X. Fortune	M10/m10	Main motive Cell 0 built with 10ths
XI. Lust	A4/d5	Motivic cluster chords span tritone
XII. The Hanged Man	P5, M3/m3	Quintal harmony, bell-tone 3rds
XIII. Death	M6/m6, P4	Left-hand built in 6ths, quartal harmony in B-section
XIV. Art	M14/m14	Motivic gestures span 14ths
XV. The Devil	P15, P8	Octave motive in bass, upper lines spanning multiple octaves
XVI. The Tower	N/A	N/A
XVII. The Star	N/A	N/A
XVIII. The Moon	N/A	N/A
XIX. The Sun	N/A	N/A
XX. The Aeon	N/A	N/A
XXI. The Universe (Epilogue)	N/A	N/A

Table 2.2

In addition to its recurring elements, *Arcanum Perpetuum* also uses musical quotes and techniques that do not recur throughout the piece; however, when these occur, they symbolize the person to which the movement is dedicated or the interpretive meaning of the corresponding Tarot card. The melody of III. *The Empress*, for example, is dedicated to my mother and echoes the tune of a lullaby she sung to me as a child (Fig. 2.26). V. *The Hierophant*, dedicated to the poet Rainer Maria Rilke, quotes a melody from Richard Danielpour's work *Sonnets to Orpheus*, which is a setting of Rilke's poems (Fig. 2.27). VI. *The Lovers* quotes the melody of the 2nd movement of Reinhold Gliere's Horn Concerto (Fig. 2.28). VIII. *Adjustment*, which does not bear a dedication, is a musical palindrome mirroring the Tarot card's expression of alignment and balance (Fig. 2.29). XII. *The Hanged Man*, dedicated to composer Ian Krouse, quotes an *ostinato* figure from his work *Armenian Requiem* (Fig. 2.30).¹⁸ Finally, XX. *The Aeon* is a slow fugue in honor of its dedicatee, J.S. Bach. The modal center of the fugue is C-sharp as an acknowledgment to Bach's slow C-sharp minor fugue in *The Well-Tempered Clavier Book 1* (Fig. 2.31).

¹⁸ Krouse's *ostinato* in question from the *Armenian Requiem* is itself a quote from Bach's *Tocatta in D Major*, BWV 912. Although XII. *The Hanged Man* is specifically referencing Krouse's work and his distinct use of this *ostinato*, it is therefore also an indirect reference to Bach.

III. The Empress Quote

5

pp

3

3

8^{va}

8

ppp

p tranquillo

3

3

8^{va}

(Red.)

Fig. 2.26
Melody in top voice of top staff

V. The Hierophant Quote

Largo misterioso $\text{♩} = 40$

The image displays a musical score for a piano piece. It consists of three systems of music, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The first system starts with a *ppp* dynamic marking. The second system begins at measure 5 and includes a *pp* dynamic marking. The third system begins at measure 8. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings. Below the piano accompaniment, there are three horizontal lines with upward-pointing triangles, likely representing a performance or recording timeline. The first line is labeled *Red.* and *Sost.*. The second line is labeled *(Sost.)*. The third line is labeled *(Red.)* and *(Sost.)*.

Fig. 2.27
Melody in top voice of top staff

VI. The Lovers Quote

Dream-like, simply flowing ($\text{♩} = 42$)

The musical score is presented in three systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a separate middle staff. The first system begins at measure 29 with the instruction *pp sempre dolciss.* and a tempo marking of $\text{♩} = 42$. The middle staff is introduced with the instruction *(bring out the middle staff)* and a dynamic marking of *p*. The second system starts at measure 32. The third system starts at measure 35 and concludes with the instruction *poco rit.* The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the right hand and a more active bass line in the left hand, including a five-fingered scale-like passage in measure 30. The middle staff contains a melodic line that is primarily composed of eighth notes and rests, with some slurs and ties.

Fig. 2.28
Melody in middle staff

VIII. Adjustment Palindrome

Serene ♩ = 60

8^{va}

pp sempre, chant-like

Sost.

9

8^{va}

(Sost.)

Sost.

17

8^{va}

(Sost.)

Sost.

25

8^{va}

ppp

(Sost.)

Sost.

Fig. 2.29

XII. The Hanged Man Quote

Con rubato ♩ = ca. 76

8va

p 3 *pp* *p*

4 *pp* *p* *pp*

(Red.)

Fig. 2.30

XX. The Aeon Fugue Exposition

Adagio (fugue) ♩ = 54

p sempre legato

Red. as needed

7

12

Fig. 2.31

Although *Arcanum Perpetuum* is quite distinct from *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant Jésus*, Messiaen's work inspired the core idea to anchor my cycle to extra-musical meaning. As demonstrated by Bach and Beethoven, a programmatic intent or non-musical reference is not necessary to compose a great piano cycle. In the case of my own work, however, I believe these elements add interpretational depth that both holds the work together musically and strengthens its communicative intent.

CHAPTER 3: SYNTHESIS

Danielpour

The new piano cycle by American composer Richard Danielpour, *An American Mosaic*, is a 15-movement long, semi-programmatic cycle composed between June and August of 2020. Although it does not follow a particular narrative or story, it engages with the COVID-19 Pandemic and various groups of people affected by it. In the composer's words, the work "was written as a tribute to the heroic Americans who have suffered, struggled, prevailed, and perished during this terrible pandemic."¹⁹

Danielpour's cycle shares a unique relationship to my own as both were composed within the same year. Additionally, in my position as Danielpour's engraver, I worked closely with him on his work's development while simultaneously composing *Arcanum Perpetuum*. My exposure to the creation of *An American Mosaic* provided me a mentor's reference while making important compositional decisions and undoubtedly influenced my own composition. The element of Danielpour's cycle most immediately striking to me was its layered form; however, as I continued to engrave and examine the music, I recognized a complex synthesis of works that have influenced Danielpour throughout his life.

The movements of *An American Mosaic* can be sorted into three distinct categories: Tributes, Consolations, and the Central Triptych. Tributes (Mvts. II, III, IV, VI, XI, XII, XII, and XIV) constitute most of the cycle. These movements are each associated with a specific group of people, usually in pairs of related occupations (e.g., Parents & Children, Teachers & Students, Nurses & Caretakers). They are intended to acknowledge the struggles that these groups endured during the pandemic. They are also free-composed

¹⁹ "A Note from Richard Danielpour, Composer."

and functional as independent pieces. Additionally, each of these Tributes are marked with a dedication to specific people in Danielpour's life who belong to the group in question. The only exception is movement *XIV. Prophets & Martyrs*, which is dedicated "in memory of Black Lives lost."

The Consolations—movements I, V, X, and XV—serve as structural pillars within the work, grounded by the same melodic motive. According to Danielpour, "these Consolations are...an evocation and musical image of angels who have come to comfort the suffering in their time of great need." The Prologue, prominently featuring a monophonic, chant-like melody, serves as the genesis for this shared motive, with the other three Consolations as variations on the Prologue: the Second Consolation (Mvt. V) is a two-part invention, the Third Consolation (Mvt. X) is a three-voice fugue, and the Fourth Consolation (*XV. Epilogue*) is a chorale that expands upon the Prologue. As each Consolation adds an additional voice to the musical and contrapuntal texture, by the end of the work, all four angels are present.

The Central Triptych is a group of three movements at the center of the cycle (Mvts. VII, VIII, and IX), which are musically independent but thematically linked. Movement *VII. The Visible Enemy* is a distortion of "America the Beautiful," a direct reference to former President Donald Trump who was in office at the time of composition. It is dedicated "to all who oppose tyranny, racism, and greed." Movement *VIII. An Elegy for Our Time* is the central point and emotional catharsis of the cycle—a tender, lyrical remembrance of "those who perished during the COVID-19 Pandemic in America." Movement *IX. The Invisible Enemy* confronts the COVID-19 virus and acknowledges the survivors of the pandemic. Whereas the Tributes reference the struggles of specific groups of people, these three movements address the root causes of all other hardships in 2020:

political unrest and instability, collective grief for the hundreds of thousands who perished due to the virus, and the drive to survive in the face of a worldwide crisis.

An American Mosaic Movement-by-Movement Structure

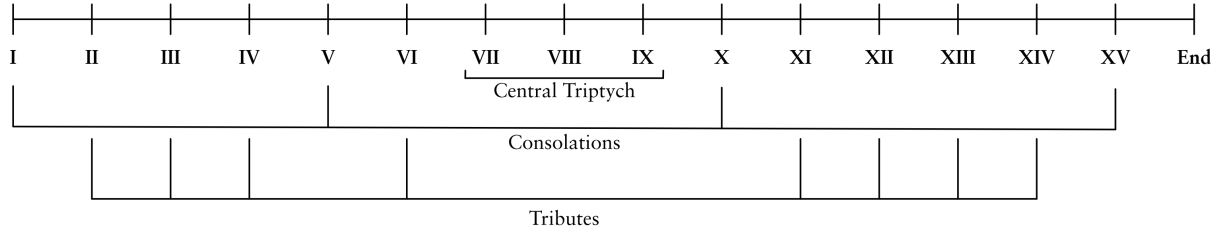


Fig. 3.1

Figure 3.1 above outlines the movement-by-movement structure of *An American Mosaic* with visual identifications of each movement category. This presentation reveals how the cycle is built upon two overlapping structures. The first and most straightforward is the arch form outlined in *Figure 3.2*. If the Central Triptych is viewed as an independent section, the remainder of the work is divided into two equal parts of six movements each, labelled here as Part 1 and Part 2. Although they are ordered slightly differently and not perfect reflections of each other, Part 1 and Part 2 both contain two Consolations and four Tributes.

An American Mosaic Arch-Form Structure

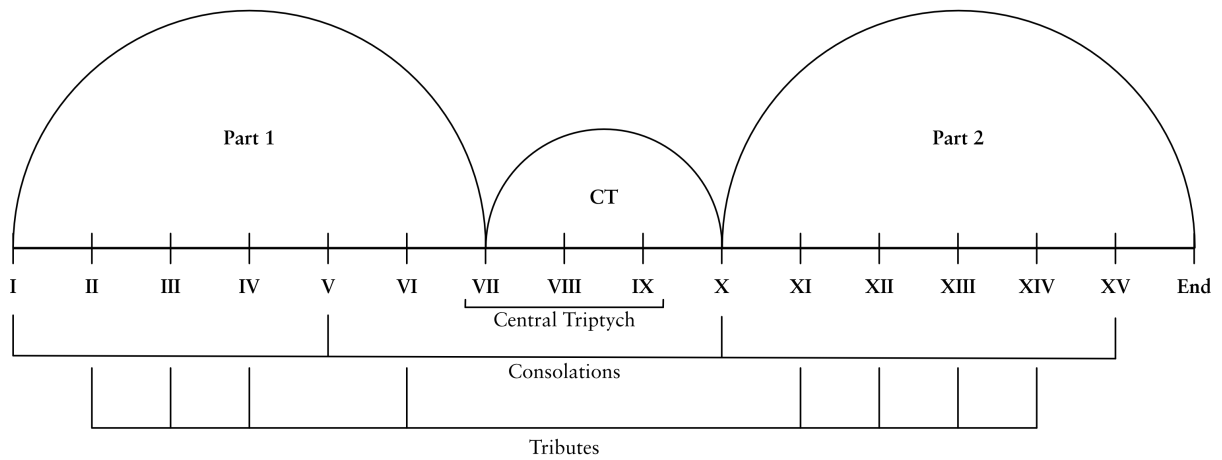


Fig. 3.2

An American Mosaic Three-Part Division

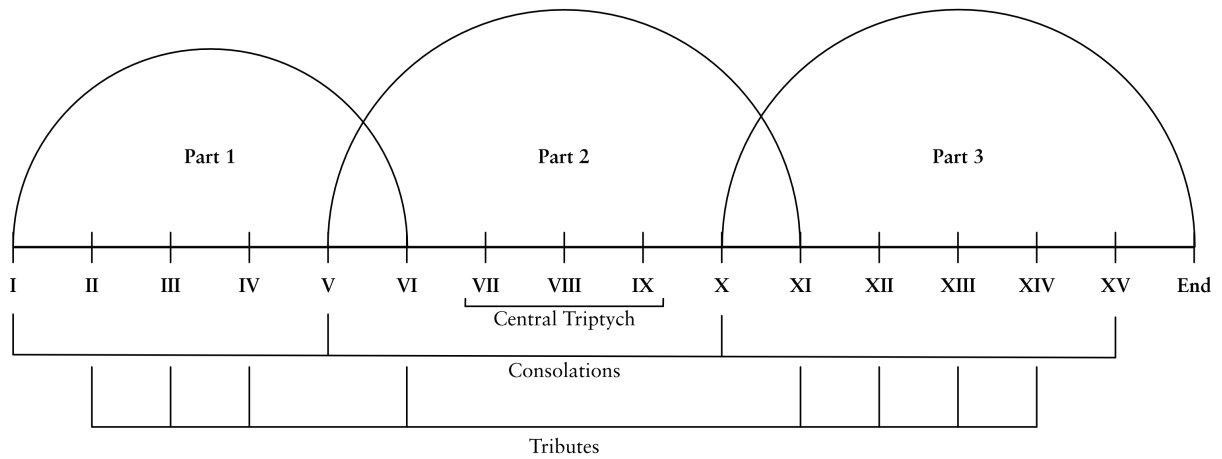


Fig. 3.3

The second overlapping structure, illustrated above in *Figure 3.3*, defines the Interlude-Consolations as division points, resulting in three nearly equal parts. In this case, the Second and Third Consolations (Mvts. V and X) each function as both the ending of one

section and the beginning of the next section. In this way, they serve as structural pillars within the overall form while the triptych remains at the center of the cycle.

An American Mosaic Overlapping Structures

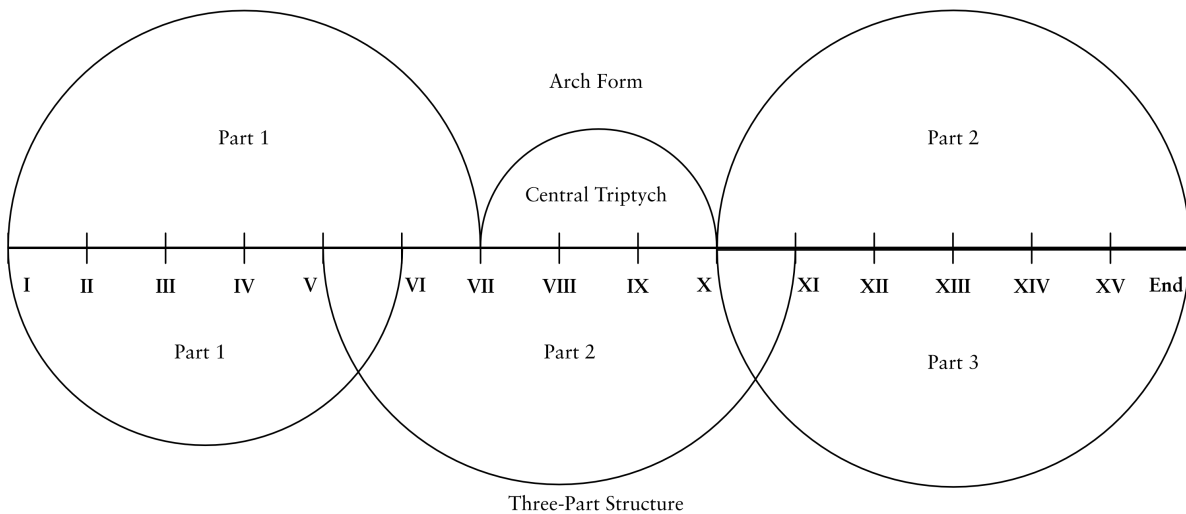


Fig. 3.4

Figure 3.4 shows how these two formal divisions overlap and ultimately join in the last five movements of the cycle. Once aware of these structures, one can interpret the work either way. If *An American Mosaic* is experienced without bias, these overlapping forms complement each other to create an entirely unique trajectory. This effect is made stronger by the formal unification in the final movements. This phenomenon is not apparent without prior study of the work, but it nevertheless provides a sense of unpredictability which ultimately transforms into musical and formal inevitability.

This structural superimposition suggests a clear connection between *An American Mosaic* and the *Goldberg Variations*. In fact, the influence of J.S. Bach is central to Danielpour's cycle. Before composing the work, Danielpour connected with pianist

moving in places to three or five voices. *An Elegy* is also composed with the resonance of the piano in mind, using the pedal to sustain harmonies through longer phrases (Fig. 3.6).

Modified Chorale Texture in VIII. *An Elegy for Our Time*



Fig. 3.6

The Invisible Enemy contains a coda at measure 45 that restates the theme from the Prologue transposed but otherwise verbatim. The theme is then expanded into a third phrase which is not present in the Prologue but returns in the further expanded chorale of the Epilogue (Fig. 3.7).

None of the Tributes reference Bach in this manner; however, this contrast adds additional depth within the structure of *An American Mosaic*. Danielpour's interpretation of the Consolations as "four angels" gives them a decidedly sacred connotation; their extra-musical relationship to Bach becomes clear in light of the religious nature of all of Bach's music. Conversely, the Tributes reference various human struggles that these angels have come to comfort. The Central Triptych serves as both a reflection of this sacred nature and a bridge connecting these human and divine counterparts, not only through its

Consolation Motive in Coda of IX. *The Invisible Enemy*

45

p sotto voce, *delicato*

(p sotto voce)

pp *dolciss.*

bring out

pp

(pp)

(Led.)

51

p *dolce*

pp

(Led.)

Fig. 3.7

structural placement, but also through its combination of musical elements from both the Consolations and the Tributes. Mvts. VII and IX, *The Visible Enemy* and *The Invisible Enemy*, introduce a decidedly dark and unsettling character to this combination. The chorales in Mvt. VII are dissonant, written in a low register, and surround the most violent, powerful climax in the cycle. Mvt. IX creates a similar sense of disturbance through its Major/minor harmony and perpetual low quarter-note pulse. The chorale at the coda provides resolution from this uncomfortable atmosphere. While they do not reference specific groups of people as the Tributes do, these movements reference distinct human struggles, both physical and spiritual, inflicted by the pandemic. The dark quality

of these two movements is unique throughout the cycle and functions as the antithesis to the comforting Consolations. If the Consolations can be described as divine, then Mvts. VII and IX can be described as diabolical. The juxtaposition and intertwining of the human with the divine strongly connect the work to Beethoven. As previously discussed, an example of this can be found in the final variations of the *Diabelli Variations*. With its central position in the cycle, Mvt. VIII. *An Elegy for Our Time* functions as the bridge between these two worlds, joining the musical elements of the Consolations and the Tributes without the corrupting darkness of its counterparts.

It is clear how Danielpour's use of musical, structural, and extra-musical elements from other great works are integrated, synthesized, and transformed by his own personal musical language into something entirely his own. This realization greatly impacted *Arcanum Perpetuum* and its incorporation of the previous influences that have been discussed on a global scale. This combination of influences, made unique and personal, is at the core of what makes a composer's music distinguished. A specific link of formal and spiritual layering can be drawn from Danielpour, to Beethoven, and finally to Bach. Witnessing the compositional process of *An American Mosaic* was an invaluable experience for me while composing *Arcanum Perpetuum*, and it provided me a necessary example of how one's influences can be traced back and synthesized into a new work of distinct meaning and profundity.

CONCLUSION

While this monograph has discussed the ways in which four seminal piano cycles guided the planning and composing of *Arcanum Perpetuum*, *An American Mosaic* inspired my most important realization: in order for a large-form piano cycle to be a successful example of its genre, it must contain multiple layers of musical, psychological, and interpretational depth. These layers of meaning can then combine and communicate more effectively than any single-faceted work ever could. These four cycles adopt various strategies in achieving this rich complexity, and I approached the composition of *Arcanum Perpetuum* with many of them in mind. Despite their differences, these works together reveal how the music of the future is connected and shaped by the music of the past, not only compositionally, but also in how compositional techniques can be used to create a meaningful work of art. In prioritizing layered form, extra-musical reference, musical symbolism, numerology, and personal connection, my hope is that my cycle will communicate universally and effectively in multiple dimensions of intention and significance.

APPENDIX

Prefatory Note for *Arcanum Perpetuum* from the Score

In 2016, having just begun my graduate studies at UCLA, I was struggling to devise a concept for a large-scale piano cycle, which I desperately wanted to compose. The idea to base the work on the Major Arcana of the Tarot was suggested by my partner, who has practiced reading Tarot for several years. I found the Tarot to be particularly fascinating, not as an occult or divinatory tool, but as a representation and mirror of the human psyche. As they are commonly used for fortune-telling or divination, each card holds meanings which are general, non-specific indications of events or people in a person's life. The interpretation of the Tarot is a personal practice heavily influenced by the specific question being asked and the context surrounding it. For instance, if someone selects a card to question the future of their relationship, The Tower (representative of a sudden change, chaos, or destruction of a current foundation) would indicate that the relationship is headed toward an unexpected end. Although The Tower holds a negative connotation, it can also be interpreted as representing a necessary struggle towards a positive conclusion. The relationship which is about to end may be unhealthy in some way, and the inquirer might be better off after recovering from the initial emotional shock. This concept of contextual interpretation offers a window into this person's psyche. The Tarot practitioner can subconsciously interpret a reading based on what they already want or expect will happen. A reading may also subliminally affect how a person leads an aspect of their life. Considering these variables, the suggestions from a Tarot reading can hold great power, and the way in which a reading is interpreted can consequentially reveal much about the interpreter.

It took me until the beginning of 2020 to completely formulate the concept of the work. Originally, I planned to write a piece that would examine the Tarot as an objective entity and engage heavily with the numerology and symbolism inherent to each card. I soon realized that I could not view such a personal system so impersonally. The first card of the Major Arcana is The Fool, and my realization came with the epiphany that I was, myself, The Fool. As The Fool indicates the beginning of a journey, it was fitting that I consider my own journey and the people who have significantly impacted my life. Each movement of *Arcanum Perpetuum* is about someone, living or passed, who has played an important role in my development as a composer and as a person. Most of these people are indicated with dedications, though some are not.

One final note: The Major Arcana referenced in *Arcanum Perpetuum* are those from the Thoth Tarot, which are slightly different from the traditional Rider-Waite deck. When a new Tarot practitioner chooses a deck to use, this decision is based largely on an intuitive connection or admiration of the art in a particular deck variant. My selection of the Thoth Tarot for this work was made with the same sentiment.

~ Anthony Constantino

Los Angeles, January 2021

Program Notes for *Arcanum Perpetuum* from the Score

0. The Fool (Prologue)

Representing the beginning of a journey, The Fool opens the cycle with a simple melody presented within a chorale setting. This theme reappears throughout the cycle.

I. The Magus

Indicative of the powers of will and communication, The Magus wastes no time diving into its complex texture. When achieved effectively, communication can become a powerful magic to wield.

II. The Priestess

The Priestess is an androgynous figure representing balance, intuition, and self-trust. A graceful melody soaring above a gentle, flowing accompaniment serves as a reminder to stay grounded—but not too heavily. Dedicated to my piano teacher who, in a time of great need, taught me to trust myself.

III. The Empress

Mother and benevolent goddess, The Empress embodies the principles of love and wisdom. In honor of my own mother, to whom I owe much wisdom and even more love, The Empress is a lullaby which was often sung to me as a child.

IV. The Emperor

Crowned and throned, The Emperor is a symbol of power and leadership. It serves as a reminder that one must center themselves mentally and spiritually to make effective decisions and take action. This movement is in honor of my father, who taught me that one must know how to lead themselves before they can lead others.

V. The Hierophant

Faith is a concept inherent in much of the human experience. The Hierophant represents trust in this faith and the lessons learned from resulting experiences. This movement is a repetition of a simple melody that gains more substance with each repetition.

VI. The Lovers

The Lovers are the archetype of relationships of all kinds. As a pair, they serve as a reminder that relationships must be cultivated and nourished by both parties, and that through them, stability is gained. In honor of my wonderful partner, who is my consistent source of stability.

VII. The Chariot

Constantly charging ahead, The Chariot is a symbol of change and, consequentially, evolution. One must often decide to make changes in life to move forward; therefore, it is important to make the correct changes. Dedicated to my first great composition mentor who showed me, in so many ways, the correct path.

VIII. Adjustment

Alignment and balance are achieved through Adjustment, both physical and spiritual. With balance comes symmetry, represented in this movement through a musical palindrome centered around middle C. Adjustment is the counterpart of Justice in the traditional Tarot.

IX. The Hermit

The secluded Hermit represents the value of contemplation and introspection. At times, one must choose to shield themselves from outside influence to discover their own unique potential. Gaining this wisdom is key in creating a positive impact on the surrounding world. The music alternates between bursts of energy and thoughtful reflection.

X. Fortune

Represented as a great wheel, Fortune embodies opportunity, expansion, and the blessings that can come when an opportunity is met. This guided improvisation is dedicated to any pianist who performs the work. The musical material utilized in the improvisation is determined by the pianist's name, creating a wide scope of possibilities and directions that the music can follow.

XI. Lust

Lust, though suggestive in its name, represents the power of inner beauty in taming the demons we all carry within. Though it is a lifelong struggle, our beautiful (or positive) qualities can overcome fear, resentment, and weakness. Dedicated again to my partner, who helps me cultivate my most beautiful qualities. Lust is the counterpart of Strength in the traditional Tarot.

XII. The Hanged Man

Hanged upside-down, The Hanged Man views everything from an entirely different perspective. It is an invitation to do the same so that stagnant patterns and habits might be recognized. In honor of my second great composition mentor, who invited me to welcome a new artistic perspective.

XIII. Death

Death is commonly misrepresented as a foreboding symbol within the Tarot; it is often forgotten that Death walks hand-in-hand with Rebirth. Before something can be born, another thing must die. Through letting go, one opens themselves to the possibility of personal growth.

XIV. Art

An incarnation of beauty, Art is the symbol of synthesis, integration, and balance. It is also an Art for one to cultivate these qualities within themselves. Through the combination and reconciliation of opposing energies, something new is created that is greater than the sum of its parts. Art is the counterpart of Temperance in the traditional Tarot.

XV. The Devil

Depicted as a smiling goat, The Devil poses a challenge to face inner strife and temptation with tenacity and a sense of humor. Musically, this is the first of a group of three (The Devil, The Tower, The Star) that flow, one into the next, without pause. Before one can face their inner demons, they must first acknowledge that they exist.

XVI. The Tower

Often viewed as a symbol of destruction and calamity, The Tower is a herald of awakening and change. It is painful when an existing foundation comes crashing down, but through suffering, one often finds a new, more fulfilling truth. The demons, having been acknowledged, must now be faced head-on.

XVII. The Star

The Star is a strong representation of confidence in oneself and the inherent brilliance that occurs as a result. Acceptance of the self allows one to truly define who they are as a person and as a creative being. To emerge victorious in the struggle, one must accept that the demons are a part of them. Acceptance comes with the wisdom to live alongside the demons without allowing them to become overbearing. With this balanced confidence and assuredness, it is impossible to stray from the path.

XVIII. The Moon

The Moon is a symbol of authenticity and the choices that support one's "authentic self." One must decide each day whether they will present themselves authentically or falsely. Honesty with others and with the self is a powerful factor in shaping one's life. A sparse duet between two lines represents the interplay of these choices.

XIX. The Sun

Always shining brightly and vibrantly, The Sun is a representation of life, creativity, and the potential found in collaboration. This potential holds true for collaboration with others and collaboration of complementary ideas within oneself. It is through such synergy that individual creativity can be harnessed and expressed to its fullest. Dedicated once again to my partner and our cat Molly who, at the time of writing this piece, are my family and my most valuable collaborators.

XX. The Aeon

Regardless of the qualities or talents that one might possess, they cannot be used effectively without good judgement. It is this concept of discernment that The Aeon represents. When looking to history for answers, one must be mindful of the "big picture" in which all things are connected. This penultimate movement of the cycle is a fugue, a timeless musical form that informs and challenges composers of the past, present, and future. For a fugue to be successful, careful consideration of the musical subjects and the manner in which they are used is required. The Aeon is the counterpart of Judgement in the traditional Tarot.

XXI. The Universe (Epilogue)

Encompassing all that ever was and will be, The Universe is the final culmination of the cycle. Coming full circle, the chorale from The Fool returns. In essence the same chorale, it has changed and evolved. Through the integration of all symbols and archetypes present in the Major Arcana, one can achieve a state of wholeness and transcend any limitation. The Universe is the counterpart of The World in the traditional Tarot.

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